

Dissertation Defense: Caroline Strobbe

Tuesday, August 16, 2011

2:00 pm

Ballantine Hall,

Room 141



COMMITTEE IN CHARGE

Sonya Stephens,

Chair, French and Italian

Rosemary Lloyd,

Co-Chair, French and Italian

Shehira Davezac,

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Essential Backgrounds: Caricature and Realism in Balzac and Daumier

In this dissertation I argue that the understanding of architectural backgrounds and features are essential to understanding caricature and realism in Daumier and Balzac.

Despite Baudelaire's frequently-quoted remark that the caricatures of Daumier were the visual equivalent of Honoré de Balzac's novels, collectively titled *La Comédie humaine*, few critics have offered a close analysis of the ways in which caricature was used to extend the possibilities of realism, especially in the rapidly-growing urban environment of the mid-nineteenth century. By focusing on how architectural features were treated in the verbal and visual caricature of these two artists, and how people were related to them, my dissertation sheds new light on the development of 19th-century society and its history as perceived and lived by its contemporaries. Balzac's characteristic *modus operandi* provides the underlying structure of my dissertation. I begin by considering the bird's eye view and the panorama and then proceed to buildings: from the window to the door, and onto the street. Deepening the narrative codes examined by Roland Barthes in his exploration of a Balzac text, *S/Z*, the gnomonic, hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic and proairetic, enables a sharper analysis of what techniques and patterns are specific to caricature in literature, especially in the great realist novels of Balzac. Studying Daumier in parallel to Balzac further facilitates a demonstration of the differences and similarities between visual and verbal caricature. I argue that through the wide variety of techniques and codes deployed by Balzac and Daumier in creating their caricatural depiction of contemporary society, these two figures not only made their work a testimonial to the society of their times but also furthered two domains, that of caricature in general and that of realism more particularly.