

1.1 Dupinade, French Caricature, 1831

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Caricature doesn't so much report the news as comment from a blatantly partisan point of view on news that everyone already knows. In periods of censorship, however, its message must be delivered obliquely, through visual symbolism and a complex interplay of visual and verbal puns and allusions. *Dupinade* stands as a watershed in the history of caricature; prosecuted because of its all-too-recognizable portrait of King Louis Philippe, it gave rise to the most famous symbolic representation of a monarch in the history of caricature: the pear.

Dupinade was published anonymously on 30 June 1831 in the journal *La Caricature*, founded the year before by Charles Philipon, the seminal figure in nineteenth-century French caricature. He published journals and prints, collaborated with the most important graphic artists of his day, and possibly drew *Dupinade* himself. *La Caricature* took strong positions on political events, and so Philipon soon found himself in difficulties with the authorities. Louis Philippe had been installed as king after the July Revolution of 1830 ushered in France's first Constitutional Monarchy. The Charter that the new king accepted as condition of his rule guaranteed basic freedoms, but he soon reneged and reinstated the press laws of the repressive Restoration monarchy. "Attacks by the press against the rights and authority of the King" would be punished with a prison sentence of three months to five years and a fine of 300 to 6,000 francs.¹ *Dupinade* was cited for mounting just such an attack; the criminal charge against Philipon was that he had depicted "Authority, recognizable as the King, dressed as a mason, covering up the inscriptions of July."²

Philipon's plasterer is, indeed, a recognizable portrait of King Louis Philippe. Known as "the citizen king," he is here portrayed wearing a mason's blue blouse, his arm tattooed with the names of the Revolutionary battles Valmy and Jemappes that were won by citizen armies. He is depicted eradicating the last vestiges of the July Revolution, symbolized by the graffiti on the wall. His means of doing so is contained in the trough at his feet labeled *Dupinade*, a reference to André Dupin, the royal Procureur Général [Attorney General] and Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies. Dupin was its most outspoken conservative voice, opposing every reform that the revolution was intended to guarantee, from freedom of assembly to freedom of the press. The "dupinade" with which Louis Philippe is attempting to carry out this feat of collective amnesia is also a pun on the verb "duper" — to dupe, suggesting that the nation was misled when it installed its new king. The pun Dupin/duper/Dupinade invented here that fused the name of a repressive jurist with the abandonment of revolutionary promises proved fruitful in the literary realm



Figure 1.1 Anon., *Dupinade*, hand-colored lithograph. Lith. Michel Delaporte, Dist. Aubert, Published in *La Caricature*, 30 June 1831, plate no. 70.

as well, inspiring the neologism “dupinade” that soon made its way into popular literature.³ This concision and interplay of visual symbolism and verbal shorthand is what gives caricature its many-layered charge.

Louis Philippe’s trowel, loaded with “dupinade” is labeled “Response to Metz,” the town in Eastern France whose mayor launched a movement of noted liberals united in opposing any return to repressive legitimist rule. Widespread riots against the regime followed, crushed by the military, and Louis Philippe’s

response to Metz was this attempt, depicted symbolically, to eradicate all remnants of the revolution that had brought him to power. The inscriptions that he is erasing include the sign “Street of July 29”—the day the monarchy fell and was replaced by the provisional government that appointed him; the slogan “Liberty or Death”; and below that, already partially erased, the name of the Marquis de Lafayette, the leader of the National Guard and one of the most prominent signatories of the Metz petition. We also see “Distribution of rifles at Lepage rue Richelieu” (a gathering point for revolutionaries in 1830) and, just above Louis Philippe’s hand, “Liberty will spread through the world July 29.” “Crédeville is a thief” is written below; Crédeville was a popular character, a con man, criminal, and thief who became symbolic of the regime’s dishonesty.⁴

The king was not amused. Philipon was arrested and tried on 14 November 1831. His defense was that there was no proof that his mason represented the king because his caricature bore no mention of the king’s name or titles, nor any depiction of royal insignia: “It is Authority that I represent, through an image that could refer to a mason as well as to the king.”⁵ Claiming that his critics could see the king’s resemblance in anything, he drew a series of images showing the head of Louis Philippe transformed into a pear. His conclusion: “You would condemn a man to two years in prison because he drew a pear that resembled the king!”⁶ The jury was unmoved and sentenced him to six months in prison and a 2,000 franc fine. But Philipon had the last word. He published his image of Louis Philippe transformed into a pear in *La Caricature* on 26 January 1832, and even released it as a poster, the proceeds from its sale going to pay his fines. The pear became the symbol of the despised king, appearing everywhere, both in caricature and in street graffiti. Artists had found a way to evade the law against depicting the monarch and—since *poire* also meant dupe, dope or half-wit—managed to ridicule him twice over, both in word and in image.

Notes

- 1 “10 novembre = Pr. 1^{er} décembre 1830—Loi qui punit les attaques contre les droits et l’autorité du Roi et les Chambres par la voie de la presse,” in Jean-Baptiste Duvergier, *Collection complète des lois, décrets, ordonnances, règlements, avis du Conseil d’état*, 78 vols (Paris: Guyot et Scribe, 1824–78), vol. 30: 274.
- 2 A. A. “Cour d’assises. Procès du N° 35 de *La Caricature*, audience du 14 novembre 1831,” *La Caricature*, 17 November 1831.
- 3 See, for example, Louis Reybaud and Auguste-Marseille Barthélemy, *La Dupinade ou La Révolution dupée, Poème Héroï-comique en Trois Chants* (Paris: A.-J. Denain, 1831), and the review in *Le Mercure du dix-neuvième siècle*, vol. 32 (1831): 546.
- 4 Traviès published a caricature, *The Pear has become popular!*, showing a street urchin drawing pears on a wall, one of which is labeled “Crédeville Voleur”; “*La Poire est devenue populaire!*,” *Le Charivari*, 28 April 1833.
- 5 A. A. “Cour d’assises. Procès du N° 35 de *La Caricature*, audience du 14 novembre 1831,” *La Caricature*, 17 November 1831.
- 6 A. A. “Cour d’assises. Procès du N° 35 de *La Caricature*, audience du 14 novembre 1831,” *La Caricature*, 17 November 1831.