



Le médecin,

*Pourquoi, diable! mes malades s'en vont ils donc tous? j'ai bue les saignées,
 les purges, les drogues..... je n'y comprends rien!*

IMAGINATION

A lithograph by Honoré Daumier (1808-1879). New Haven, Yale Medical Library, Clements C. Fry Collection.

The *Charivari*, an early illustrated periodical and precursor of the English *Charivari*, *Punch*, first published this print in 1833. This journal as well as Philipon's *Caricature* carried many of Daumier's lithographs. The bourgeoisie and their provider, the government of Louis Phillipe, were the usual butt of the cutting remarks of Philipon and his politically dissatisfied clique, which included such notables as Balzac. Some of the more incisive journalists were imprisoned under the press laws of 1830. In 1832, when Daumier was twenty-four, he, too, served a sentence and during this time composed the fifteen plates in the series "L'Imagination."

Daumier sketched not only the doctor mountebank, but also the excessively academic or public doctor, such as the surgeon J. B. Dumas or the successful Dr. Prunelle. This print, however, is of a philosophical rather than satiric turn, as the doctor sits watching the inevitable procession of his patients casketed by demons and led away by a skeleton carrying the scythe of Time.

The authorship of the caption is questionable although it is agreed that Daumier was responsible for the series title, *Imagination*.¹ Four of the series deal with medical problems. Number ten, for example, depicts the hypochondriac envisioning stages on the way to his grave, number six, the thought of colic. *Imagination* had by now become a faculty of the medical arts. Mesmerists and magnetists utilized its powers. John Haygarth, an English doctor, wrote a treatise on imagination as a cause and cure of disorders of the body which had been translated and printed in France.² Here he showed that the confidence of a doctor in such false methods as Perkinian electricity could inspire health in the patient. He also noted the role of imagination in hysterical symptoms. Thus Daumier's portrait of a hypochondriac was suited to the current idea of imagination, a faculty that could fool one and make one susceptible to error. In this last melancholy print, imagination is the disorder of the doctor. Yet does his imagination deceive him?

L.M.K.

¹ Ghirardelli, Yvez. *The artist H. Daumier, interpreter of history*. San Francisco, The Grabhorn Press, 1940, p. 15.

² Haygarth, John. *Of the imagination as a cause and cure of disorders of the body*. London, 1801, p. 43.