

## **KERI BERG**

### **Taming the Bourgeoisie: Grandville's *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1840-1842)**

Writing in 1842, an unnamed critic for *L'Artiste* described the caricaturist

hybrid creatures—animal heads atop human bodies—that visually and literally metamorphosed the person figured. Grandville’s banker is not *like* a turkey; he *is* a turkey, his human head replaced with avian beak, eyes and feathers. Under Grandville’s hand, nineteenth-century, French society takes shape as a menagerie of insects, birds and beasts.

Like the majority of French caricature from the same period, *Les Animaux*’s primary target was the bourgeoisie, the men and women of the July Monarchy (1830-1848) who increasingly dominated political and social life. The bourgeoisie was also the main consumer of period caricature. Indeed, it was the likes of Grandville’s banker and landlord who could afford to purchase satirical newspapers, illustrated books and individual prints.’tevf 0 Tc 07.04-s-(t)-2(evf 0 Tc 07.8

Given the originality of Grandville and the continued interest in caricature, the artist and his work have been the subject of much scholarship. Judith L. Goldstein, for example, explores the artist's animal metamorphoses in his early work, considering the images in terms of realism and the depiction of women.<sup>5</sup> Philippe Kaenel and Clive Getty also focus on Grandville's use of the animal, comparing the artist's illustrations and caricatures with period discourse and practices of zoology and physiognomy.<sup>6</sup> The article that follows complements this work, yet takes a different approach, exploring Grandville's parody of the bourgeoisie in *Les Animaux* as a means to tease out the interstices between the burgeoning class and the growth of visual culture during the July Monarchy. Detailed analyses of individual images, the work's sales, and reviews, serve to contextualize Grandville's portraits and their reception within the period's growing field of popular visual imagery. Such an analysis expands our understanding of Grandville's work, while adding to the stu7w [(e)4(x)(hi4(')3(s)-1.cw [(T)i2(s)]>.16(e tu.35 -2.3 e(od Tc 0.004 Tw)-4(u)-4(t)-b2r-



agencies to the bourgeoisie, breaking the aristocracy's stronghold on government appointments. Progress was temporarily stalled under the Restoration (1815-1830), during which time the Bourbons restored the aristocracy to power, purging the government and military of Bonaparte sympathizers, many of whom were bourgeois. The Bonaparte witch hunt was only one of many policies that privileged the aristocracy at the expense of the bourgeoisie. Repeat dissolutions of parliament, increases in the level of taxes that governed eligibility to vote, tightening of press laws and the monarchy's open favouritism of the Catholic Church eventually led to the revolution of July 1830: three days of fighting on the streets of Paris that resulted in the ousting of the Bourbon king Charles X.

The workers and lower ranks of the bourgeoisie who fought on the barricades had hoped for a republic. They got the Orléanist prince Louis-Philippe instead, who, in a concession to the popular forces, was proclaimed "King of the French" rather than "King of France."<sup>12</sup> The newly crowned citizen King appointed Jacques Lafitte, an untitled banker, as prime minister, an unprecedented choice that set the stage for the regime's political, social and, most notably, economic programme.<sup>13</sup> As Lafitte's and, later, fellow banker Casimir Périer's appointments illustrate, this was a regime that favoured *la grande bourgeoisie*: the wealthiest echelon of the bourgeoisie, such as bankers and early industrialists, who when locked out from government and military appointments during the Restoration turned to the realm of finance and commerce, worlds rejected by the traditional aristocrat. The move paid off as the *grande bourgeoisie*, with the help of Louis-Philippe, replaced the landed aristocracy to become the July Monarchy's new ruling class. The wealthy bourgeoisie, however, was no more democratic than its aristocratic predecessors. As Roger Magraw explains, "despotism shifted from château to Stock Exchange. The new elite represented narrowly oligarchical interests, extended the franchise only marginally

to 200-franc taxpayers, indulged in a quest for bureaucratic posts and sought to annihilate those popular forces which put them in power.”<sup>14</sup>

While such actions did not benefit the bourgeoisie at large in terms of direct political participation, t

foreign affairs, rejecting calls to aid nationalist movements in Germany and Italy, as well as colonial expansion.<sup>18</sup> He applied a comparable strategy to domestic issues, refusing, for example, to intervene in the face of recession. As for the electorate, Guizot infamously retorted that if the non-voting public wanted to participate in government, it simply had to “get rich,” or in other words, earn enough money to pay the taxes required for voting rights. Change was possible; it was merely a question of hard work and money: the new keys to success. These actions and figureheads portrayed the monarchy as a reflection of the king’s moniker: a government by and for the bourgeoisie. Although technically it was the *grande bourgeoisie* that ruled, the bourgeoisie at large dominated in the realm of social influence, its values and ideals ultimately replacing aristocratic tradition. As the writer E. Duclerc argued in 1842, just two years after Guizot’s appointment to Prime Minister: “The Bourgeoisie dominates. It is the new aristocracy, the nobility of the nineteenth century.... This domination... is consecrated, proclaimed by the political institutions. It’s the Bourgeoisie that makes the law, it’s the Bourgeoisie that applies it.”<sup>19</sup>

Writers and artists echoed Duclerc, making the bourgeois the personification of the July Monarchy. And just like fellow critics, they were quick to heap all of the period’s social and political woes on the bourgeois’ back. The trend was particularly acute in the arena of caricature and, in fact, intensified following the press laws of 1835, which reinstated prior censorship for all images. No longer able openly to parody the king, caricaturists turned their pencils on the bourgeois. Artists such as Henry Monnier and Honoré Daumier indirectly critiqued Louis-Philippe and the July Monarchy through recurring characters who doubly incarnated the bourgeoisie and the regime. Henry Monnier’s Joseph Prudhomme, for example, stood as the “good bourgeois, without ambition, who desires to gently finish his career.”<sup>20</sup> Prudhomme

represents the bourgeois of the July Monarchy, his contentment with the status quo the result of his own economic comfort: an income of twelve thousand francs a year compared to the average annual salary of a worker, which totalled six hundred francs. Not surprisingly, Prudhomme is eager to guard his wealth and corresponding social status, and thus fully embraces the period's social hierarchy, of which he anchors the healthy middle. In his words: "to each his place, to each his responsibilities."<sup>21</sup> Monnier's Prudhomme took the notion of the *juste milieu* to such



impossible. Prior to 1835, Grandville worked as a political caricaturist, contributing to *La Silhouette*, *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*. In 1829, he published his first collection of hybrid animal-human figures: *Les Métamorphoses du jour*. Although the bourgeoisie is the subject of several of the album's lithographs, the critique is much more light-hearted—a bourgeois husband flirting with the maid, for example. The satire is also distributed among different social groups: painters, teachers, soldiers, writers. It is only later, in 1840 with the publication of *Les Animaux*, at the height of bourgeois power, that the bourgeoisie takes centre stage in Grandville's work.

*Scènes de la vie privée et publique des Animaux* opens with a revolution: the animals at the Parisian zoo decide to publish a collection of their own stories as a means to counter what they see as man's misrepresentation of animal life. As the title indicates, the work is to be a behind-the-scenes look at the animal kingdom. The title itself is a play on the writings of Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), the master of *scènes*, the collected tales of his *Comédie humaine* (1842-1848) divided into *scènes de la vie privée*, *scènes de la vie de province*, *scènes de la vie parisienne*, etc. Following Balzac's model, *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* is an unveiling: the animal authors reveal the intricacies and intimate details of both their public and private lives. The animal, however, is merely, in the publisher Pierre Jules Hetzel's (1814-1886) words, "a cover."<sup>23</sup> The real target, as Hetzel continues, is man and "the foibles of our time."<sup>24</sup> Enter the bourgeoisie, the personification of the period and all its ills. Take the landlord, for example. In Grandville's animal kingdom, the landlord is a vulture dressed in a black overcoat, white cravat, vest and top hat, holding a cane with snuffbox and pocket watch tucked in vest (figure 1). His body and attire suggest the perfect bourgeois gentleman. Yet his head argues otherwise. The conflation: man and beast, landlord and vulture, is, of course, the source of Grandville's critique. The landlord as vulture implies that he is rapacious and feeds on carrion,

specifically renters, leading his tenants to their financial death. A similar metonymic substitution



well as physical: they are of one mind *and* one body. The human body-animal head pairing also invites a dual reading: man as animal, animal as man. By fusing physical elements from both man and animal, Grandville moves beyond anthropomorphism, asking viewers to see society in terms of its animal qualities. Indeed, Grandville's choice of specific animal-human combinations demands such a reading. The bourgeois landlord of the nineteenth century is much more a vulture than the vulture a landlord.

This visual and metaphorical paradigm is repeated throughout *Les Animaux*. Consider Grandville's portrait of a banker, whose profession as owner of property and/or capital parallels that of the landlord, placing him at the top of the bourgeoisie (figure 2).



Fig. 2. J. J. Grandville, "A Banker." Illustration from *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1842).

Like the very real Lafitte and Casimir Périer, the banker is the new king of the July Monarchy's political jungle. In Grandville's animal kingdom, however, the banker is a turkey, stuffed into a waistcoat of feathers, his plumes bursting out of his buttoned vest. Like the landlord/vulture, the banker is neither entirely human nor entirely animal: he has the legs and partial body of a man and the head of a turkey. The fusion of animal and human forces viewers to compare the two: both are greedy, insatiable beasts. And as the turkey scours the ground for grain, the banker hunts for gold, his perch lined with bags of coins. Yet what the banker possesses in wealth, he lacks in intelligence, as the turkey is commonly believed to be one of the least clever birds—

celebratory feast (figure 3). The accompanying narrative explains how this particular group is celebrating the recent *coup d'état*, which it orchestrated, installing a new editor for their collected

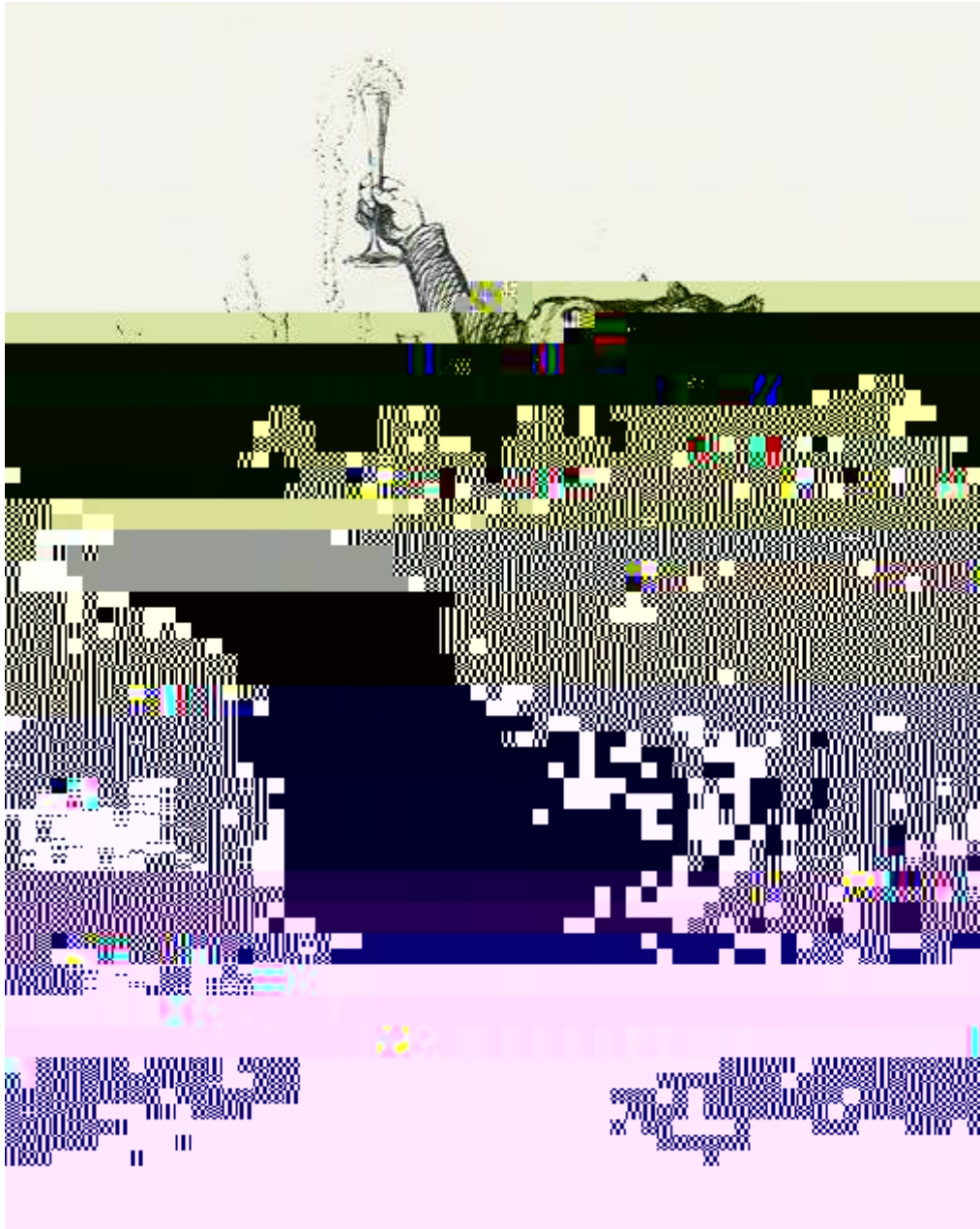


Fig. 3. J. J. Grandville, “A Banquet.” Illustration from *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1842).

stories. Although all of the characters in the narrative are animals, Grandville gives each a human body, blurring the boundaries between man and animal. It is this ambiguity that allows us to read the image in both ways: animals acting like humans and humans acting like animals. In the case of the former, the animals mimic nineteenth-century French politics, namely the revolution of 1830, in which the bourgeoisie led the charge against Charles X. In the animal narrative, the deposed editor is a monkey, and the new leader a Reynard. This reversal suggests that the animals, like the bourgeoisie, have ousted a buffoon only to install a cunning fox. As noted, initial hopes for a republic were quickly dashed when Louis-Philippe took the throne. For the wealthy bourgeoisie, however, this is of no concern. They have obtained exactly what they wanted: they have replaced the landed aristocracy to become the period's new ruling elite. In Grandville's image, the animals celebrate that victory, drinking, eating and, as the caption states, "toasting the fair sex," the party punctuated with all the trappings of human consumption.

We can read this same image in reverse: the bourgeoisie of 1830 as a herd of animals, from hippopotamus to pig. The varying species reflect the diverse nature of the bourgeoisie, which is nonetheless united in its shared appetite for power. The bottle of champagne, the remnants of food on the plates, as well as the drooling pig and the hippopotamus's lascivious tongue imply unbridled indulgence. Here, we have the new ruling class, or in Duclerc's words, the new aristocracy: a lazy, dirty, fat pig; a bulbous frog, who spends his days catching flies on the lily pad; and the buck or deer, whose homonym in French is *serf*, a word-play that emphasizes the bourgeoisie's supposedly common origins. Their spokesman is a hippopotamus, his size reflective of the bourgeoisie's growing political and economic stature. However, the ape implies that this new class is a mere parody, a paltry imitation of the aristocracy's *ancien régime*. What is more, this is the same class that will eventually turn its back on the workers and peasants

who helped it to power. As Roger Magraw explains, “the distinctive feature of ‘1830’ was the success with which the bourgeoisie incited and manipulated popular unrest to oust the regime, and then turned to repression of artisan and peasant agitation.”<sup>29</sup> In public, the bourgeois is the self-proclaimed gentleman, espousing hard work, democracy and fraternity. Yet in the private dining room of his club, he is an animal.

The landlord, banker and men’s club dinner, albeit only a few of the many images in *Les Animaux*, illustrate both Grandville’s aesthetic and his critique of the bourgeoisie. Here the focus has been predominantly on *la grande bourgeoisie*. However, the work’s critique extends to the bourgeoisie at large, including civil servants, doctors, lawyers, scientists; the new bourgeois art of photography; as well as bourgeois courtship, marriage, motherhood and family. And while *Les Animaux* also



viewers an actual simulation: the landlord *as* vulture. It is Grandville's process of visualization that allows the viewer literally to see the bourgeoisie's animal nature. Through the lens of his parody, the so-called new aristocracy appears as beasts in human clothing.

### **For Sale: The Bourgeoisie and Book Illustration**

*Les Animaux*'s fierce parody of the bourgeoisie did not dampen sales. As stated, the work sold a reported fourteen thousand copies within its first months of publication. It is important to note, however, that *Les Animaux* was initially published in serial format: fifty weekly instalments, published from November 1840 to November 1841, each comprised of eight pages of text along with in-text illustrations, plus two individual, pull-out plates.<sup>31</sup> The instalment system boosted sales in that people could purchase the work one issue at a time, making small weekly payments. It also attracted occasional buyers, whose sporadic purchases equally increased sales. In the case of *Les Animaux*, the instalment system proved so successful that the work's publisher, Hetzel, quickly signed Grandville for an extended contract of fifty additional issues, which appeared the following year: November 1841 to December 1842. The second series achieved similar success, pushing sales to an estimated twenty-five thousand copies.<sup>32</sup> *Les Animaux* maintained its popularity throughout the century with reprints and/or re-editions in 1844, 1852, 1866, 1867 and 1868.<sup>33</sup> As Annie Renonciat concludes, *Les Animaux* was "one of the most successful works of the time and Grandville's best."<sup>34</sup>

In the critics' minds, what made *Les Animaux* great were its images. As noted, *Les Animaux* is an illustrated text. Grandville's portraits are accompanied by short narratives by some of the period's most popular writers: Honoré de Balzac, Charles Nodier, Jules Janin and Alfred de Musset. While these narratives are an important element to the work, they fall outside



*Animaux* being one of a number of illustrated books, anthologies and albums from the same period, such as *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840-1842), *Le Diable à Paris* (1845), Tony Johannot's

high versus low art. On the one side, metal engraving reigned as the “academic technique *par excellence*.”<sup>41</sup> Time-consuming and costly, metal engraving mirrored the paintings and sculptures it reproduced, earning the status of a fellow member of the *beaux-arts*. Wood engraving anchored the opposite end of the aesthetic scale. Although the introduction of the burin, or line-engraving tool, resulted in more precise and detailed images, wood engraving maintained its reputation as a “popular” art, with its crude images that were cheap, easy to produce and destined for the public at large. For these latter reasons, wood engraving was the medium of choice for the majority of publishers during the 18th century.

that was nevertheless dominated by the bourgeoisie. Grandville documents this audience in an illustration from *Les Animaux* in which a pair of street hawkers distributes flyers for the forthcoming work (figure 4). The two salesmen have attracted a crowd of potential consumers, including workers—the dog in his apron, the crow in a maid’s cap and shawl—as well as petit-



Fig. 4. J. J. Grandville, “Street Hawkers.” Illustration from *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1842).

bourgeois and bourgeois customers—the frog in elegant jacket; the owl, parrot and crane, dressed in hat and necktie, the window frame suggesting a bourgeois family. This is the audience

of *Les Animaux*, the bourgeoisie punctuated by an occasional worker. In the vein of many satirical texts, *Les Animaux* thus parodies its primary audience, mocking bourgeois greed, wealth and consumption as the same bourgeois consumes the artist's images. As *Les Animaux* and Grandville's portrait of street hawkers bear witness, what the bourgeoisie, if not the public at large, wants is not just illustrations, but images of itself: a mirror, as the critic for *L'Artiste* stated, in the form of an illustrated book.

### Conclusion: Taming the Bourgeoisie

Grandville illustrates the web of visual pleasure, parody and consumption that grounds *Les Animaux* in a final image set in the Museum of Natural History (figure 5).

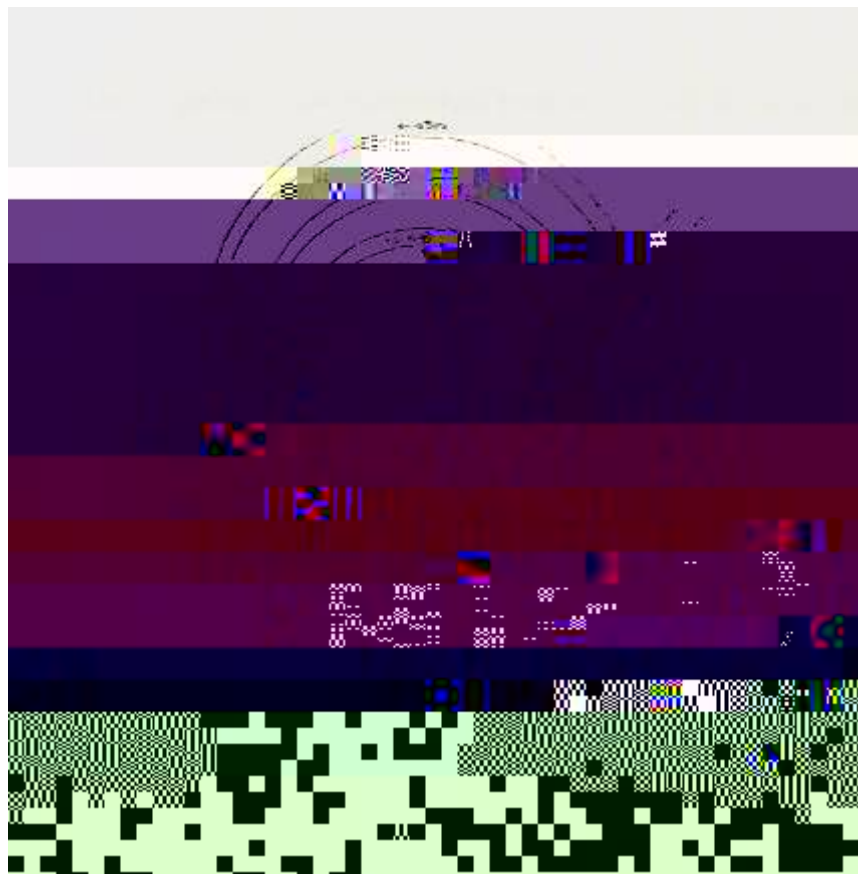


Fig. 5. J. J. Grandville, "The Museum of Natural History." Illustration from *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1842).



then mapped on to the human figure. In



publish several later illustrated works, in which he was the sole artist. The bourgeoisie proved to be Grandville's favorite target, his best customer and one of his greatest aesthetic achievements. This formulation coincides with Grandville's chosen medium: caricature. As Michele Hannoosh argues, "caricature follows the path of all revolutionary forms and activities: it binds itself to the model it is dethroning, and is sustained by the system it attacks."<sup>46</sup> Grandville takes a similar road, mocking the bourgeoisie while relying on its support. His signature on the life-sized statue in the museum image testifies that Grandville, the artist, is a part of the very world he critiques. Earning an average of 8,000 francs a year—compared with the annual salary of an engraver, of 1,000-1,500 francs, and that of a diplomat, of nearly 10,000 francs—Grandville was himself, at least financially, a bourgeois.<sup>47</sup> The artist thus finds himself locked in his own cage.

From satire to sales, *Les Animaux* attests to the simultaneous rise of the bourgeoisie and the image. Moving to the forefront of social and political debate, the bourgeoisie garnered greater attention and critique from artists, writers and political adversaries. This attention included caricature and visual satire, as the bourgeoisie became the stand-in for the July Monarchy and its ideology. As evinced by *Les Animaux*, the adjective "bourgeois" came to signify greed, wealth, idleness, exploitation and mediocrity, ironically a description quite similar to traditional critiques of the displaced aristocracy. The bourgeoisie was also one of the greatest consumers of this same satire, funding a large portion of the wave of illustrated texts that swept through the July Monarchy. Their affinity for *Les Animaux* supports the adage that, above all, we prefer our own image. *Les Animaux* lays bare this process, its portrait of the bourgeoisie an important record of the bourgeois' ascendancy in the nineteenth century and its role in the growth of visual culture. Moreover, Grandville's hybrid figures are just as unique and powerful today as they were in 1840. Unlike the majority of contemporary, popular animal imagery—

Disney being the example *par excellence*, which adorns animals with human accoutrements, speech and behaviour, yet leaves their physical bodies intact—Grandville’s figures block any such comfortable transfer. In Grandville’s visual formulation, the human body and all its functions are part of the animal world. His singular combination of human bodies and animal heads forces each of us to confront our own animal within.

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*Thanks are due to my fellow panelists and all those who participated in the session. Their comments and our lively*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>14</sup> Magraw, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Daumard, 43.

<sup>16</sup> César Graña, *Bohemian Versus Bourgeois: French Society and the French Man of Letters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 10.

<sup>17</sup> Paul H. Beik, *Louis Philippe and the July Monarchy* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1965)