



appreciating satire for which the topical references are now obscure. But it is impossible to encounter such a superbly gestural drawing style (one much admired by the Impressionists) and feel it as an academic exercise. Standing in the empty gallery after the tour had ended, I was surprised to realize how strongly I had been affected by Daumier's sentimental side. But I still doubted that I could forgive him the joke in one of his *Bluestocking* lithographs, which shows a woman "in a fever of composition" at her writing desk while her baby drowns in the bath.

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Reference

Gregory S. *Daumier*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada; 1999.

The Daumier exhibition continues in Ottawa until September 6, 1999. It will then travel to the Musée d'Orsay in Paris from October 5, 1999, to January 3, 2000, and to The Phillips Collection in Washington DC from February 19 to May 14, 2000.



RMN-Arnaudet

Honoré Daumier, *The Laundress*, c. 1860–1861. Oil on wood, 49 cm × 33.5 cm. Musée D'Orsay, Paris

Oh, I was there, too
(Swissair flight 111, Peggy's Cove, September 1998)

for Dr. John Butt

Among the things that startle
are a set of lungs
perfectly removed from a body,
such that their owner
could float along
and aspirate water yet
never taste burning salt,
the brine merely washing in and out
of that terrified O, a hole gushing fear,
in a palsy the signature of death.

Tourists gaped at the rescue effort,
gasping when helicopters would plunge
from inland to offshore
reclaiming bodies.
Their mouths would ape terrified O's,
murmuring while contemplating flowers littered on the rocks,
the scent of ocean stinging their exposed eyes,
breath taken shallowly
and not such a draught
of rarefied air
as must be in a pressurized cabin
the moment before framing the grimace
which would drink deep
and not taste.

I climbed nimbly over
ancient pathos and guilt
while gazing up at the sun
which rendered Icarus-like
a flaming airborne apparatus,
and I too vicariously followed helicopters out to sea,
then back again,
while others watched on,
some with salt-stained eyes
and terrible exhalations
of hot, painful air
rendered humid and filtered,
coming in jagged waves and
slowly I left that place
as if waking tenderly from
a salt-stained bed of Gothic rocks,
licking my lips as
local fishermen were interviewed
as authorities on this sort of thing,
everyone forming their words from a platform of open mouths
and those lungs again
drinking deep now

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