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Musical Landscapes: Theophile Gautier and the Evolution of Nineteenth Century French Poetry

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Musical Landscapes: Théophile Gautier and the evolution of nineteenth century French poetry

By

Dana Milstein

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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By 

Dana Milstein

Théophile Gautier’s first edition of *Emaux et camées* (1852) marks the juncture at which Romantic, Neoclassical, and nascent Symbolist poetic theories converged under the umbrella ideology of “Parnassianism.” *Emaux et camées* synthesizes the aesthetics promoted by these diverse groups, primarily by 1) using “musical” and “painterly” language, 2) emphasizing correspondences among arts, and 3) paradoxically demanding an attention to form and the artist’s labor while also emphasizing art’s inutility during a century characterized by Progress. Gautier’s *Emaux et camées* bridges painterly and musical poetics to create a new model for poetry.

While the vocabulary of painting captivated many nineteenth century writers, music became increasingly admired by poets because of its freedom from representation, and as an “intention-less language.” “Musical” poets indemnified the mantra “art for art’s sake” and touted the intermingling of art forms, belief systems, and cultural practices during a time when usefulness, authoritarian rule, and homogeneity were staunchly reinforced in the political and public spheres. *Emaux et camées* appeared in 1852, marking a point of departure for poetry. Gautier preserved earlier poetic principles, but also invested a robust work ethic and a devotion to form in his collection. Numerous offshoot poetic groups arose as a result of Gautier, who had reclaimed music’s nuanced, fragmented, performative, and anti-utilitarian nature for poetry and poetics.
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I dedicate this dissertation to my friend, David McRae (1985-2014),
whose joy, wit, and exuberance sustained me these 14 years.

Fortitudine.
“Alphabets”

From time to time we take our pen in hand
And scribble symbols on a blank white sheet.
Their meaning is at everyone’s command;
It is a game whose rules are nice and neat.

But if a savage or a moon-man came
And found a page, a furrowed runic field,
And curiously studied lines and frame:
How strange would be the world that they revealed.
A magic gallery of oddities.
He would see A and B as man and beast,
As moving tongues or arms or legs or eyes,
Now slow, now rushing, all constraint released,
Like prints of ravens’ feet upon the snow.
He’d hop about with them, fly to and fro,
And see a thousand worlds of might-have-been
Hidden within the black and frozen symbols,
Beneath the ornate strokes, the thick and thing.
He’d see the way love burns and anguish trembles,
He’d wonder, laugh, shake with fear and weep
Because beyond his cipher’s cross-barred keep
He’d see the world in all its aimless passion,
Diminished, dwarfed, and spellbound in the symbols,
And rigorously marching prisoner-fashion.
He’d think: each sign all others so resembles
That love of life and death, or lust and anguish,
Are simply twins whom no one can distinguish
Until at last the savage with a sound
Of mortal terror lights and stirs a fire,
Chants and beats his brow against the ground
And consecrates the writing to his pyre.
Perhaps before his consciousness is drowned
In slumber there will come to him some sense
Of how this world of magic fraudulence,
This horror utterly behind endurance,
Has vanished as if it had never been.
He’ll sigh, and smile, and feel all right again.

Herman Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game*
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Rumor has it that Théophile Gautier possessed a remarkably flawless penmanship. When asked how he avoided deletions in his press copies, Gautier responded with a question: “Why expect corrections in my manuscripts when none existed in my head?” This curious detail comprises an entire paragraph of three devoted to Gautier and his position in a trinity of top literary journalists (with Charles Sainte-Beuve and Prosper Merimée) of the mid-nineteenth century (Avenel 454). Gautier’s insistence that his error-free calligraphy mirrored his cerebral process may be self-aggrandizing, but it also reveals something key: Gautier did not take communication lightly, and intended for readers to unquestionably accept the views he stated as sincere, truthful, and accurate.

An unwavering commitment to ideas and ideals, nevertheless, poses difficulty for readers of Gautier’s complete works. Unlike other canonized poets of the period (i.e., Hugo, Verlaine, Rimbaud), Gautier defies categorization. Gautier’s poems contain Neo-Classical, Romantic, Parnassian, Decadent and Symbolist structures, themes, and contexts. We cannot affix Gautier to a literary movement; rather, he is the chief pioneer of an eclectic, musical poetry—a poetry that perfectly blends traditional musical and poetic devices with a new musical aesthetic. In Gautier’s works, one notes an effort to re-bridge what remained linked in music, but had become separated in poetry as a result of the writing and “reading” of rhetorical elements in poetry as musical elements: immediate and essential meaning.
Gautier's poetry (both early and mature) abounds in musical devices, but only his later works reveal a complex musical aesthetic. The rudiments of Gautier's musical aesthetic include the art for art's sake motto, lyricism, universality and suggestiveness, and a preference for the fantastic and grotesque as represented by pantomime; more importantly, these fundamentals are incipient facets in two authentic qualities underlying all of Gautier's work: impassivity and the impair. In the maturation of Gautier's musical aesthetic, readers observe the following tenets:

a) disinterested beauty: art is an end rather than a means (links to art for art’s sake and inutility);

b) fragmentariness (impair): art must be incomplete in order to present its ephemeral, suggestive, and universal tributes, and to defy utility;

c) musicality (hieroglyphic): in order to liberate language from its materiality and return it to a mythic function, music became the art form to emulate precisely because it is, Gautier says, distanced from the visually or conceptually determined world of objects and freed from the magic of making anything happen;

d) jeu (impassive), as noted in Gautier’s use of fantastic and grotesque elements: masks, pantomimes, and the supernatural allow for a certain universality and ideality that mediates between art and life. Jeu in this dissertation is linked to Richter’s theory of play, irony, and the dialectical inversion or annihilation
of opposites. Gautier explores *jeu* in ballets and pantomime, and early works like *Comédie de la mort*, because it allows the poet to “atteindre à une certaine universalité, une certaine idéalité qui est l’instrument de médiation nécessaire entre l’art et la vie” *(Moniteur Universel, 1872)* (“aspire toward a certain universality, a certain ideality that acts as the necessary intermediary between art and life”).

Over time, Gautier built a unique aesthetic that combined these elements, which are often separately attributed to the Neoclassical, First and Second generation Romantic, Symbolist, and Parnassian Movements, and other -isms. Most importantly, and as this dissertation will aim to prove through an examination of Gautier’s work and experiences, Gautier’s impudent sarcasm, detachment, and perfectionist obsession with form allowed him to reclaim from music what had been taken centuries earlier. He pioneered the non-representational yet formally structured work in which a morphology of meaning is derived from physical rather than emotional or ideological attributes.

In Gautier’s early works, particularly in the *Comédie de la mort*, there is a poet’s attempt to create a musical structure by reliance on rhetorical devices of rhyme, meter, and repetition; as several scholars have noted, it is as if Gautier were writing with the intent to create poems that can be set to music. In fact, composers of the Art Song preferred Gautier’s earlier works, probably because of what Camille St-Saëns refers to as “rhythms and sonorities of verses...which ask for singing to emphasize them, singing being a superior form of declamation” (75). Composers found it easier to embody (and often destroy the poetic effect of) Gautier’s early poems in sound, likely due to their
rhetorical and narrative elements, and reliance upon poetic forms traditionally linked to song (i.e., ballads, romances, laments and barcarolles).

Conversely, poems from Émaux et camées are rarely set to music by composers; aside from the poem “Noël,” less than a handful of poems were transposed musically by a single composer, and did not achieve (in music circles) the recognition or popularity of the earlier Gautier songs. Nevertheless, poems from Émaux et camées are his most musical poems, in that they perfectly blend musical devices with musical aesthetic. In this collection, Gautier achieved what Rilke aspired to when he wrote, “it is after all my aim to fill with my own creative output the whole artistic space that offers itself to an idea in my mind. I hate to believe that there could be any room left over for another art, which would itself then be interpretative and complimentary” (246). Poems from Émaux et camées were less likely to be set to music because in them Gautier had achieved a perfectly poetic and musical form. Rhythm, rhyme, and the use of musical forms were still totally present in the poetry of Gautier’s time; however, Gautier redirects poetry toward being a language in sound rather than exclusively in meaning.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Gautier’s poetic-musical model. First, I will explore Gautier’s study and use of musical devices and musical notions in early poems and pantomimes, looking carefully at the influence of Hugo, Balzac, and Nerval on Gautier’s unripe aesthetic. Second, I will expose composers’ setting of Gautier’s earlier poems to music, and discuss the relationship between poetic texts with musical titles and their musical scores. Third, musically titled poems from Émaux et camées will be assessed. Finally, I will demonstrate Gautier’s unique aesthetic through a close reading of three poems from Émaux et camées —“Symphonie en blanc majeur,” “Affinités Secrètes,” and
“Poème de femme”—none of which were set to music, but together most clearly represent Gautier’s accomplishment of his musical aesthetic.
**Suite (Four Themes)**

**Theme A: Art for Art’s Sake and Disinterested Beauty**

Scholars have misattributed Gautier’s “art for art’s sake” motto, his adoration of Hugo, and his obsession with marble and fantasy as the *modus operandi* for *Émaux et camées*. In fact, “art for art’s sake” was a whimsy tossed casually among young Gautier’s Romantic peers; only with Gautier does it become an actual mantra that easily associates with musicality. Because music is composed of unconsummated signifiers, poets of the late 18th and 19th centuries (whether wrongly or justifiably) ascribed to it a less artificial, less arbitrary, and more “pure” and affective value; lack of definitive meaning liberated music from intent and usefulness. Though some composers attempted to assign narrative meaning to a piece, and while numerous studies (especially prior to the 20th century) described music as either exclusively imitative of nature or limited to emotional signification, no assigned system, chord progression, or programmatic notation in one composition could be ascribed the same meaning universally in every musical work. Consequently, modern artists often reductively stated that each musical work exists independently, with no gross purpose other than to be performed: Stravinsky argued that “music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all” (53).

Similarly, many argued, no usefulness can be attributed to an unpredictable work in which the poet refuses to follow prescribed poetic rules; in Hugo’s work, Gautier compliments the asymmetry, the displacement of caesura, and variety of pattern (“Benvenuto Cellini,” *La Presse*, 17 Sept 1838). Gautier praises Hugo for removing utility from poetry by freeing poetry of cadences and predetermined pauses. He emphasizes the
need for poets to liberate themselves from “old classical rhythm with unending drone.” This idea appears in numerous works, including the *Voyages littéraires*, in which Gautier traces a chronological development of poetry. First, Gautier argues, a Classical period of poetry arises during which all poets were philosophers. Second, poets and all other artists imitated the theater. Third, a poetry evolves during the “revolutionary” period that was sensible and philanthropic. Finally, poetry of the 1830s developed, and is described as part “intime,” “passionnée,” “moyen âge,” and of a “couleur locale” (deeply personal, impassioned, medieval, and of a local character) (35).

Gautier, who in his early poetic production includes quasi-musical devices such as meter and rhyme, borrows from a combination of these periods, but his aesthetic is still largely shaped by the politics of his own period. The Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830), which during Gautier’s youth had furthered the gap among artists vying for support as the country’s leadership, oscillated between ultra-royalist conservatism and progressive liberalism. Nevertheless, several milestones were reached during that 15-year period. Catulle Mendès proclaimed 1830 a watershed year marking the birth of French Literature.

Coincidentally, in 1830 the 19-year old Gautier had abandoned his ambitions as a painter and joined Victor Hugo’s troupe of admiring young writers. Prior to 1830, Gautier had aspired to be a painter, and had briefly studied under Louis Rioult (1790-1855). Gautier made a poor first impression and was labeled “too chic” by Rioult at his first lesson. According to his biography, Gautier’s preference for an inanimate marble statue over a flawed, living nude arose during his first sketch of a posing nude who “me parut pas beau et me désappointa singulièrement, tant l’art ajoute à la nature la plus parfaite” (“did not seem
beautiful and singularly disappointed me, so much does art add to nature even at its most perfect”) (37).

During this period, his first literary inclinations surfaced, and they were nuanced with ekphrastic qualities: Gautier mentions in his *Souvenirs Romantiques: Gautier par lui-même* that his first poem was titled “Le Fleuve Scamandre,” and was inspired by Lancrenon’s painting *Le Fleuve Scamandre et la jeune Callirhoe* (1794). The painting was exhibited in the Salon of 1824 and represents a Greek mythical landscape in which a semi-nude woman sits on a rocky jut as the fully naked river God, Scamander, ascends from the water and firmly grabs her waist in an attempt to abduct her. Gautier’s interest in this Greek subject matter for poetry (also represented in his second planned poem on Helen’s abduction from Troy) and appreciation of Lancrenon’s work suggests that, prior to meeting Hugo, he was still primarily influenced by neoclassical principles of design and theme; these principles manifest themselves in his lifelong attention to poetry’s structure and form.

Dismissed by Rioult in 1829, Gautier joined Gérard de Nerval and began attending meetings held by Charles Nodier. Nodier’s circle at this time was pro-monarchy and pro-church, and was attended by Nerval, Hugo, Vigny, Musset, Dumas and Balzac. It opposed Delécluze’s circle, which included Mérimée and Stendhal and was considered liberal and anti-clerical. During this period, three important literary figures adopted and influenced Gautier in the early 1830s during his literary formation: Victor Hugo—his mentor and then leader of the Romantic camp; Gérard de Nerval—his roommate, longstanding friend, and perhaps the most well-read in music, mysticism and eccentric texts; and Honoré de Balzac—his employer, for whom he did research, assisted in writing journalistic bits, and composed poetry for the *Comédie Humaine*. 
Gautier’s early poem, "A un jeune tribun" (1838), was first published in the *Charte de 1830*, a short-lived publication edited by Nestor Roqueplan. The poem reveals the young poet’s blend of poetry and anti-utility with traditional devices like rhyme. The journal’s title refers to the political Charter of 1830, which had abolished press censorship and Catholicism as the nationally declared religion, and which established a liberal constitutional monarchy. In Roqueplan’s “moderate” journal, Gautier presents a “moderate” poem. He addresses a “young tribune,” first stating that the tribune is beautiful in his austerity, his scientific analysis, his hard work to ensure that his poems rhyme, and his evaluation of each object’s worth only in terms of its utility. As the poem progresses though, Gautier criticizes the tribune’s artificiality and refusal to listen to the nightingale or interact with nature (“vous passez sans répondre au gai salut des merles”) (“you pass without responding to the joyous greeting of the blackbirds”); indeed, Gautier insists that the July Revolution was in vain if this poet forgets the joys of youth and nature. He is concerned not only with the sights that nature has to offer, but, more importantly, the *sounds*. He urges the poet not only to write verses “imprégnées [qui] sentent le serpolet, le thym et la framboise,” (“impregnated verses, that smell of wild thyme, thyme, and raspberry”) but also to prohibit “le tonnerre des Grecques d’une bouche formée aux chants élégiaques” (“the thunderous Greek [orator’s] voice to escape from a mouth formed for elegiac chants”). In rather morbid fashion, Gautier ends the poem with an announcement that Death alone makes all people equal, respects nobody and nothing, and appears at random. Because of Death, Gautier writes, “quelle chose est utile en ce monde où nous sommes?” (“what thing in our world is useful”)? The poem is a direct refutation of Comte’s materialist philosophy of Positivism, and Gautier ends with a simple, if fatalistic, question:
L’existence est un songe
Où rien n’est sûr, sinon que le même ver ronge
Le corps du citoyen utile et positif
Et le corps du rêveur et du poète oisif.
Entre la fleur qui s’ouvre et le cerveau qui pense,
Entre néant et rien quelle est la différence?

[Existence is a dream
in which nothing is certain, apart from the very worm gnawing at
the body of the useful and progressive citizen.
Between the flower that blossoms and the brain that thinks,
Between néant and nothing, what is the difference?]

Though the concern with nature and Death are generally characterized as Romantic concerns, they also link closely to the musical. François Brunet notes that Henrich Heine, who was influenced by Hegel’s ideas about music, was likely a direct influence upon Gautier’s musical vision. Importantly, Heine had written (*La Gazette d’Augsbourg*, 21 April 1841) about the relationship between death and music, stating that

La spiritualité perfectionnée, la pensée abstraite, imagine des sons et des accords pour exprimer ou plutôt pour bégayer une sublimité de sentiments, qui n’est peut-être rien autre que la dissolution de tout le monde corporel: la musique pourrait bien être le dernier mot de l’art, comme la mort est le dernier mot de la vie.
[Perfected spirituality, abstract thought, create sounds and
chords to express, or rather to stammer out a sublimity of
feelings, which is perhaps nothing other than the total
dissolution of the physical body: music could be the final word
in art, just as death is the final word in life.]

Death and music are linked through the notion of disembodiment or desubjectification. Heine clearly states that sound is the only form that links something to the spiritual. If poetry were to reclaim its stature, it too had to be disembodied or desubjectified.
\textbf{\textit{Theme B:}} The impair and poetry’s performativity

The attempt to decode language’s semantic and syntactic constructs is apparent in the numerous grammars, dictionaries, and thesauri that are published during the nineteenth century for a variety of world languages. For Gautier and other poets, music’s suggestive, purposeless, and universal qualities link it with the \textit{impair}. In literature (the word is part of the mathematical and physiological lexicons as well), the word “impair” commonly belongs to the art of versification, and represents odd meter in poetry; however, nineteenth century writers sometimes describe an emotional effect or reaction of using odd-metered verse. Raoul de La Grasserie describes the odd rhythm as a type of musical “minor mode”:

\begin{quote}
Nous sommes amenés ainsi à confondre l'idée du majeur avec celle du pair, et l'idée du mineur avec celle de l'impair...transportons-nous au rythme poétique, et voyons si les mêmes impressions n’ont point pour cause un mécanisme identique ou analogue...si le nombre pair n’est pas caractéristique du \textit{mode majeur} poétique, et le nombre impair du \textit{mode mineur} (7).
\end{quote}

[We are led to confuse the idea of the major with being even, and the idea of the minor with being uneven...let’s think for a moment about poetic rhythm, and determine if the same impressions can’t be found there...that evenness is characteristic of the poetic major mode, and unevenness of the minor mode.]
For La Grasserie and others, the *impair* produces a catalectic effect: because a line ends incompletely and abruptly, its meaning is suppressed; and, he argues, the acoustic sensation represents and produces a feeling of sorrow. To make an emotional parallel to a musical and poetic device is to commit the same error of arbitrary signification that Gautier and other poets wanted to avoid. For these writers, the word “impair” acquired aesthetic value: it symbolized something “mysterious and incomplete,” something that (because of its imbalance and incompleteness) leads to “anxiety, quickened breath, a quest for the infinite, and a premonitory feeling,” something that represents the ephemeral, suggestive, purposeless, and universal tributes (La Grasserie 7).

Part of lyric poetry’s crisis during the 19th century is related to its widespread non-performative function as something to be silently read and deciphered. In the Ancient Western world, poetry, music, dance and rhetoric had been disciplines gathered under a single term, “song” (*aoidos*). Even ordinary speech had possessed a basic melodic structure based on pitch variations indicated by accents, syllables, and vowel combinations. Winn notes in *Unsuspected Eloquence* that these musical disciplines were increasingly separated as rules were developed for each form, and as crafters became more specialized in one discipline. In order to maintain its artistic and sacred intent, Poetry as an art form needed to be separated from Rhetoric, which also possessed musical elements but was used purposefully for oratory and politics. Winn observes that as rhetoricians used wax tablets to plan out musical devices in their orations, they increasingly started to code “complex devices that were discernible [only] to the eye” (i.e., homoeoteleuton, parison, isocolon, antithesis) (17).
By the Renaissance’s end, poetry separated from rhetoric as embraced by the Rhétoriqueurs, and then further split to emphasize types of poetry. Lyric poetry was detached from dramatic and epic poetry as it became more used for entertainment and artful purposes. In order to maintain poetry’s integrity and status, troubadours and poets increasingly produced their works for reading or private consumption; they did this to separate lyric poetry from popular and folk poetries. Like ancient oratory, lyric poems of this period were endowed with numerous visual devices that could not be aurally discerned (i.e., anagrams, acrostics). This written transmission in some ways made lyric poetry a “dead” or “static” art form as its aural qualities were diminished (or in the least, unable to offer a total meaning solely through aural recitation). Gautier laments this in the article “Utilité de la poésie,” and he writes in Fusains et eaux-fortes that “before the invention of the printing press and propagation of writing, only poets existed” (212). This writing and publishing of poetry severed the poem from its musical, sacred, and performative origins.

Some scholars have insisted that reading a written poem is a performance, but to accord it the same value as aural performance is pure hyperbole and absurdity. The word “performance” (Old Fr. parfornir) means to finish or discharge something. Recent neurological studies of music’s effect on the mind and body find that naturally occurring music making is more therapeutically and educationally effective than learning music by reading notation. In their article on Shared Affective Motion Experience (SAME), Katie Overy and Istvan Molnar-Szakacs argue that music should be conceived of not as “humanly organized sound and soundly organized humanity, but as...an extraordinary case of being together in time” (499). Can we think of this as a type of harmony? The study examined
autistic children and active music listening, and they determined that listening aids not only in acquiring cultural knowledge about music's meaning, but also that affect, language development, and intrapersonal relations are improved due to music's agency (active operation). In the case of reading, the reader is both performer and receiver, the transmission is interior (physically evaluated by neural stimulation, not “producing” anything exterior and tangible) rather than discharged, so the aural elements remain caged or frozen.

*Poiesis* enables the reader-as-performer to imagine a work’s possible sound and meaning. The reader of poetry reads silently, only conceiving the sound and musicality of a poem—the sound is not released into time and space, and therefore cannot resolve. A reader does not read letters, words, and phrases as annotations that give cues on how to orally recite (L. *citare*, “to move”) the poem; she reads to *envision* (this is one reason that poetry is so easily linked to painting during the early 19th century) and to *decipher* (Ar. “zero,” “empty”) by adding personal, coded meanings. The reader of poetry reads perhaps with a sense of how the sounds might be carried out, but her main purpose is the debridement of layer upon layer of crusted, *infected* (“put in,” also linked to “performed”) meanings in order to reach some “truth.” The reader’s *connotations* (“marking along with”) embody a vitalized poem, not the *denotations* (primary meanings) of the words themselves. Writers like Gautier sensed this fraudulent and artificial performativity that was taking poetry’s life force and diminishing it to the reader’s subjective and reductive whim.

*Esthesis*, on the other hand, is not concerned with the artificial hearing, but rather is concerned with perceptive, outward behaviors that manifest themselves when a listener hears something exteriorly. Reading is an intentional act—the eyes cannot passively
absorb words; rather, the reader must make an effort to perceive the poem and actively transmit that absorbed material to the logical side of the brain, where it is then processed, translated, and disseminated to the feeling parts of the mind. Appreciating music is passive and intention-less but also dependent upon being exuded and taken in. The ears cannot shut out, as eyes can, with eyelids; they absorb sound even against a person’s will. The audience can sit without effort and hear a performance with transmission that overrides the logic center of the brain and travels directly to the feeling and thinking (cathectic) parts of the mind. Because the transmission is passive and immediate, music during Gautier’s period was still being attacked as imitative and/or limited to emotion. Several important musicians themselves believed that music could be saved only by a fusion with poetry and other arts.

Prior to Gautier’s creation of a musical aesthetic in poetry, the idea that even a written word could be musical was reaffirmed in Dante’s *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (II: 4 and 8), where he wrote that poetry could resemble music by using rhyme and meter to organize sound patterns into a melody; this achievement, nevertheless, was still thought to occur only through use of musical devices. Similarly, Gautier’s exercises in the Alexandrine and other musical-dance forms of poetry represent an attempt to make poetry’s sounds less arbitrary.

Poets of the period, no matter what their affiliations or attributions, recognized Gautier as a chief and progenitor of a new poetic model. Though Symbolist writers like Rimbaud called Gautier an “envisioning” writer (the title “Visionary” is first bestowed upon Baudelaire), Symbolists acknowledged this same problem in poetry, and would try to overcome the false and interior performativity by dissociating (de-subjectivizing) the self-
poet with self-reader; as Rimbaud famously stated, “Je est un autre” (“I is an Other”).

Decadents like Swineburne glorified Gautier as a poet through whom “our spirit of sense perceives, as threads in the unseen woof thy music weaves,” while other poets (Parnassians, Decadents, Romantics) would rely upon poetic guidelines established by Gautier, whom they revered in their funeral poems as a “magicien” (Baudelaire, Franck), “forgeur mystérieux” (Hugo), “Maître” (Banville, Cazalis, Coppée, Glatigny, Mallarmé, Payne), and poetic God (Swinburne, Houssaye), among other laudatory appellations.
Theme C: How to Make Poetry more Musical

Any attempt to describe, decipher, or define music quickly becomes juvenile and redundant. Music is paradoxical. As Nietzsche wrote in the Birth of Tragedy, "Music overcomes a gap that ordinary consciousness cannot transgress. It crosses the divide between the phenomenal world and a deeper reality subject to primordial contradiction and unity" (112). Our understanding of music—whether it is a language, whether it has meaning, or how it stimulates our neurons—is still extremely limited and contradictory. As a result, music gets pegged as a universal form precisely because (to date) no definitive pattern or meaning can be universally assigned.

Likewise, theorists have been stumped (or trumped) by the strange freedom music possesses from time and space, even though it is more dependent upon time and space to unfold itself. As Lawrence Kramer notes, “the music of poetry and the poetry of music are one and the same thing: the shaped flow of time produced by the unfolding of structural rhythm, especially where that rhythm has a cathectic basis” (241). Music evades exterior definitive meaning and utility yet occurs within place. Music’s fruition (completion) occurs only after it is de-subjectified: it leaves an instrument and is transmitted to the listener’s ear. To read a musical composition is not to fulfill it. Reading only subjectivizes it.

Thus, Raymond Monelle wrongly ascribes to the Romantics what really became true in Gautier’s and later poets’ writings: “to unite the signifier and signified by removing the subject from the utterance. Nature would no longer be the material of the poet, the idealized topic of thoughtful verse; it would speak for itself in an immanent utterance, an indexical showing forth of its very being rather than the descriptive projection of a human subject [emphasis mine]” (174). Gautier is among the first poets of his generation to
identify this effortless, immediate and direct transmission—this necessity of exterior performativity—as relating not only to inutility, but also as being the only way to reach the poem’s essential and immediate meanings.

Part of the artificial and fraudulent nature of poetic language links to what Mallarmé felt was an arbitrary assignation of sound for words. Music might imitate natural sounds, but it is more logical for this imitation, and more likely to appeal to the emotions and senses. Writing about the words *jour* and *nuit*, for example, Mallarmé questions why the first word’s vowel tones “sound” dull and dark, while the latter’s are perceived as bright and shiny. The *sounds* of words, he felt, should be truthful to the *meaning* of the words. However, to correlate a word’s sound with a single meaning raises several questions: Why must certain sounds be associated with dull and dark objects? Mallarmé is concerned with false meanings that arise when we assign an arbitrary semantic value to sounds (and, as discussed in the next section, when we distinguish arbitrary syntactic patterns of meaning), and when we focus on what words and sounds universally (even if arbitrarily) mean or state, rather than on how those words function as what Tarasti calls “performatives—events complete in themselves” (12). How can an association or meaning be static? As Lacan writes, signification is always arbitrary, because “no signification can be sustained except by reference to another signification” (Lacan 420). In other words, if the pronunciation of *jour* sounds “dull,” what does “dull” sound correspond to that explains its meaning? Any response will create a fallacious syllogism (“if *jour* sounds dull and dull feels like death, *jour* feels like death”), or at least an argument that is logical only in one of infinite combinations. The point is that a musical or poetic gesture can only be given an arbitrary signification, and that signification can only be based in the present moment in
which the gesture is being or doing something. Meanings and values arise not through a consistent, static set of relations and patterns, but rather though what Greimas calls “stereographic plurality,” meaning that signifiers overlap, echo, and build upon each other in manifold ways (Barthes 159). Borrowing from Greimas, Roland Barthes explains that, “The text is plural. This does not mean just that it has several meanings, but rather that it achieves a plurality of meanings, an irreducible plurality. The text is not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, traversal; thus, it answers not to an interpretation” (155-64). This is what ties music and poetry to jeu, or the mythic.
\textbf{\textit{Theme D}: Poetry, “jeu” and the Mythic}

By Gautier’s time, as stated earlier and as is evident to any current scholar, the “poet” is one of several categories of literary professionals, and poetry is “written” as a stylized art form for consumption rather than produced for a sacred, performative function. Like music, poetry should possess a construct, but become more a system of relations and movement than act as a system of recorded and final moments.\textsuperscript{1} This would return poetry to its original mythic function, and the poet to his status as a prophet or creator who disseminates a message to the people. “Mythic” is used here in the original etymological sense—the root \textit{mu} can be translated as “sound with the mouth” and forms the Greek word \textit{muthos}, which meant a story or word communicated orally—rather than in the modern sense of narratives dealing specifically with supernatural, divine, or legendary events with religious significance.

Impermanence also relates to myth and \textit{jeu}: the disembodiment of music not only in its notation, but also, in its travel from composer’s page to performer’s instrument to listener’s ear it is gestural. This gesture for Gautier is closely linked to pantomime and ballet, and is implicit in the title for Gautier’s collection, \textit{Émaux et camées}. In \textit{The Raw and the Cooked}, Claude Lévi-Strauss discusses music’s mythic function, and describes music as a kind of hieroglyphic language. Like these ancient written forms, in music there is no extramusical connotation—the truth-value is present in the performed musical sound, just as it is present in the hieroglyph rather than signified by it. As with myth and music, Lévi-Strauss states, only the “shadows are actualized” with “conscious approximations of inevitably unconscious truths.” In ancient writing systems, symbols represented the truth form of things rather than acting (as words do) as a metonymy or metaphor for those
things. Originally, hieroglyphs did not correspond to phonetic or symbolic values; thus, the hieroglyph fulfilled or carried out ("per-formed") the meaning of the thing rather than implying or signifying it. Like music, the hieroglyphic is auto-referential, or as Schopenhauer would say of music, it is "not a copy of the phenomenon, or, more exactly, of the will’s adequate objectivity, but directly a copy of the will itself" (260).

Music and original hieroglyphics are not polysemic. The hieroglyph might be criticized as being too mimetic of the natural world, or, on the opposing side, as Derrida warns in *Glas*, being assumed to conceal a metaphysical knowledge of the universe or act as a remnant of divine speech:

GL

je ne dis pas le signifiant GL, ni le phonème GL, ni le graphème GL. La marque ce serait mieux si on entendait bien ce mot ou si on lui ouvrait les oreilles ; ni même la marque donc.

Il est aussi imprudent d’avancer ou de mettre en branle *le* ou *la* GL, de l’écrire ou de l’articuler en majuscules. Cela n’a pas d’identité, de sexe, de genre, ne fait pas de sens, ce n’est ni un tout défini, ni la partie détachée d’un tout.

gl reste gl

tombe comme il faut le caillou dans l’eau – à ne pas prendre encore pour une archiglose (puisque ce n’est qu’un morceau de glose, mais pas encore une glose et donc, élément détaché de toute glose, beaucoup plus et autre chose que l’*Urlaut*), pour des consonnes sans voyelles, des syllabes
« sonnantes », des lettres non vocalisables, sur quelque base pulsionnelle
de la phonation, une voix sans voix étouffant un sanglot (137-9).

[GL - I am not saying the signifier GL, nor the phoneme GL, nor the
grapheme GL. The sign would be better if one heard this word clearly, or if
one opened his eyes; not even the sign then.

It is also imprudent to put forth “le” or “la” GL, to write it or to articulate it
in capital letters. It has no identity, sex, genre, makes no sense, is neither a
defined whole nor a detached part of a whole.

     gl remains gl

fall as it must the pebble in the water – to not consider it as an archiglose
(arch-gloss), (since it is nothing more than a fragment of gloss and
therefore, an element detached from all gloss, even more and separate
from the Urlaut (Ger. “elemental sound”), as consonants without vowels,
as “sounding’ syllables, as silent letters, some base swelling of phonation
(voicing), a voice without sound, suffocating a sob…]

As Derrida notes later in the text, a word’s meaning may be lost, miscoded, or double-coded,
which of course for any Deconstructionist only promotes the playfulness of the content
rather than a flaw or limitation.

The same problems with reading an annotated musical composition exist if one
reads it like a literary text. The hieroglyphic, like music and myth, may be assigned an
arbitrary phatic-connative function in a given moment (Lévi-Strauss states that these two
functions are inseparable in music, and they also seem to be inseparable in the case of myth
and hieroglyph), but it is not dependent upon nor does it admit of that function on a
universal level in all texts. Like music, hieroglyphs had to evolve from simple, auto-
referential representations to also include phonetic and symbolic additions that explained
the context of that pictograph. Hieroglyphic, music, and myth are at once “intelligible and
untranslatable,” lacking polysemy at their root level, but capable of being assigned a variety
of meanings by performers and audience in that isolated incident (though some critics have
argued that polyphony is the musical equivalent of polysemy). The written word, on the
other hand, is polysemic by nature, and incapable of being reduced to a simple meaning in
itself. Foucault described this noticeable change in how modern philosophers approached
verbal and written language when, in Les mots et les choses, he states that during the
nineteenth century,

Language is sought in its most authentic state: in the spoken word - the
word that is dried up and frozen into immobility by writing. A whole
mystique is being born: that of the verb, of the pure poetic flash that
disappears without trace, leaving nothing behind it but a vibration
suspended in the air for one brief moment. By means of the ephemeral
and profound sound it produces, the spoken word accedes to
sovereignty. And its secret powers, drawing new life from the breath of
the prophets, rise up in fundamental opposition (even though they do
tolerate some overlapping) to the esoteric nature of writing, which, on
the other hand, presupposes some secret permanently lurking at the
centre of its visible labyrinths. Language is no longer to the same
extent that sign - more or less distant, similar, and arbitrary - for which
the Logique de Port-Royal proposed as an immediate and evident
model the portrait of a man, or a map. It has acquired a vibratory nature which has separated it from the visible sign and made it more nearly proximate to the note in music (285).

This emancipation from representation, Foucault argues, allowed words to “manifest” rather than “point to” or be “the instrument of” something else, to have an “irreducible value” rather than act as an “imitation and duplication of things” (289).

It is irrelevant whether or not Gautier contemplated these questions, or whether or not they belong more to the realm of questions asked by contemporary critical theorists (again, as in Gautier’s time, affiliating themselves with or being unfairly assigned to a specific camp that disjointed itself from others). What matters is that these problems of poetry and its original mythic function were lost to poetry but were maintained in music, and that Gautier succeeded in retrieving the musical, playful, and mythic in Émaux et camées. The title’s reference to “enamels” and “cameos” links it to music, which also contains “tokens” and “emblems” (Dodd, Introduction). The title also recalls the relationship of emblems and cameos with hieroglyphics—both of which derive historically from petroglyphs.

Today, as in Gautier’s time, the cameo had already become limited to ornamental and decorative use, and usually limited itself to portraying a profile of a woman’s face. In fact, the young Gautier (still an aspiring painter) created several cameos—an ivory miniature of a brunette in a white robe (1825), and two tableaux shaped as oval medallions depicting young women (~1829, described by Bergerat in his biography on Gautier). In ancient times, though, the cameo functioned similarly to the petroglyph: it depicted an ethic or moral, acted as a physical demonstration of a person’s loyalty or affiliation, and
was used as a seal to ward off evil, prevent poisoning and illness, or bring the wearer good luck.

The cameo, in other words, possessed a mythic function in that (in its origins) as symbol it performed an act of protecting, identifying, or educating those who viewed and possessed it. Levi-Strauss identifies music’s “primary level of articulation created by culture,” stating that like a system of ideograms, music can only exist as a culturally-created system; if one relegates it to sounds mimicking the natural world, music can only be called “noise.” Similarly, the cameo is, by nature, a culturally fashioned artifact at its primary level of articulation; it is made entirely from natural resources (shell, gems, stone), but the design is manufactured completely on the surface. Enamels, too, were relegated to a minor art form by Gautier’s time but, like cameos, the enamellist relies upon a process in which natural glass and pigments are used to add layers of color and design to an object in a transparent or opaque manner; historically, enamel was applied to decorate miniature scenes with direct representations of religious or mythical motifs.
Partitas (Variations on Four Themes)

§ Variation on Theme A

From his early poetry onward, Gautier is a chameleon, shifting his interests not only with new poetic movements and changing political and cultural milieus, but also as a result of his work as an editor and journalist. He blends stylistic devices from movements that scholars describe as being in complete disjuncture with each other, particularly the Romantic and Neoclassical Movements.

Neoclassical writers were interested in representing the nature of things—they believed that ancient Greek and Roman writers should be imitated to achieve a truthful representation using restraint, simplicity, and impersonality. Neoclassical artists generally held coveted, prestigious positions awarded by the government; therefore, they supported art as a useful commodity that could educate the masses, glorify Restoration ideologies, and promote Progress. They embraced Enlightenment principles of Reason and Balance while Romantics viewed this as promoting philistinism and utilitarianism. Gautier's marble and statuary fetish; his work as a researcher, librarian, and journalist for the bourgeois reader; and his repeated attempts to become part of the government's literary cabinet link him to the Neoclassical School, which clearly influenced elements of his poetic ideology.

Romanticism itself was divided into strains of nationalists, utopians, mystics, and bohemians whose work often contradicted or bled into each other's poetics. Most Romantics adopted a pantheistic interest in discovering a "hieroglyphic" language that would show parallels between all phenomena; each strain possessed a different motive for
doing so—nationalists and utopians to speak for “humanity” and establish a “new” France; mystics to secularize myth or to recall a pure, uncorrupt medium of expression; and bohemians as a means of subverting bourgeois culture to promote individualism. Some critics have warned that Romantic poetry imitates Nature directly (whereas the Neo-Classical poet imitates the Classical imitation of Nature). Much Romantic poetry is concerned with polarities between finite/ infinite, real/ideal, and representation/abstraction and a desire to shift from the former to the latter concepts. While the vocabulary of painting captivated many writers, Romantics increasingly admired music because of its freedom from representation. A vague Romantic notion that eventually became Gautier’s mantra, “art for art’s sake,” and Romantics’ obsession with intermingling art forms, belief systems, and cultural practices, were indemnified by musical principles during a time when usefulness, authoritarian rule, and homogeny were staunchly emphasized in the political and public sphere.

In France (and therefore in Gautier’s early poems), these facets merged into a muddy conglomerate of Progress, belief in universalism (particularly of a primitive, universal language), significance of nature for the poet, value of irony or farce, and—most importantly—questions about whether or not poetry must have a social or didactic purpose. Victor Cousin’s incongruent approach resulted in different factions among French Romantics, making it difficult not only for scholars but also for the writers themselves to commit to a set of views and literary practices. In Cousin’s lectures “Du Beau, du Vrai, du Bien” from 1815-21, contradictory views are presented that corroborate the dialectical relationships in Hugo’s work and are echoed in Gautier’s later aesthetic manifesto, _L’Art Moderne_: 
1. God is indefinable, lacking determined attributes; in spite of this impalpability, people will discover that God is “nécessairement la substance de tout” (necessarily the substance of everything). Gautier adopts this idea in *L’Art moderne*, in which after covering numerous philosophies of beauty, he states that “Le beau dans son essence absolue, c’est Dieu” (beauty, in its absolute essence, is God) (161).

2. God is a source of two forms of Beauty—being simultaneously “une énigme impénétrable et le mot le plus clair” (an impenetrable enigma and the most transparent word). Gautier confirms this idea in *L’Art moderne*, by stating that the artist finds his creative alphabet in the visible world, though the idea of beauty itself already exists within each person (157).

3. Beauty comes from a combination of unity and variety (i.e., a rose must have proportion and nuances in color). This idea is captured almost word for word in Gautier’s *L’Art moderne*, in which he attributes the initial formula to Mendelsohn rather than Cousin (“its essence is unity in variety”) and rewrites it using the same idea as Cousin—that “le beau existe au dessus et en dehors des conditions d’unité et de variété” (beauty exists above and beyond the conditions of unity and variety) (157).

4. Art is a reproduction of both ideal and natural beauty. The goal of art “est donc de produire des œuvres qui, comme celles de la nature, ou
mème à un plus haut degré encore, aient le charme de l’infini” (is therefore to produce works that, like those of nature, or to perhaps a greater degree even, possess the charm of the Infinite). As a corollary to #1 above, Gautier states in *L’Art moderne* that because beauty is derived from God, it is also, therefore, spiritual, invariable and absolute (161).

5. Poetry bridges the gap between words and music to form universal symbols: « la parole est l’instrument de la poésie; la poésie la façonne à son usage et l’idéalise pour lui faire exprimer la beauté idéale….elle en fait quelque chose d’intermédiaire entre la voix ordinaire et la musique, quelque chose à la fois de matériel et d’immatériel, de fini, de clair et de précis, comme les contours et les formes le plus arrêtées, de vivant et d’animé comme la couleur, de pathétique et de l’infini comme le son. Le mot en lui-même, surtout le mot choisi et transfiguré par la poésie, est le symbole le plus énergique et le plus universel…La musique seule a quelque chose de plus pénétrant que la poésie, mais elle est vague, elle est bornée, elle est fugitive» (the word is the instrument of poetry; poetry fashions the word for its own use and idealises it to make it express ideal beauty…it makes it an intermediary between the mundane voice and music, sometimes both material and immaterial, finite, clear and precise, like the most settled contours and forms, living and animated like color, moving and infinite like sound. The word in
itself, especially the word transformed by poetry, is the most vivid and universal symbol...only music has something more penetrating than poetry, but it is vague, limited, and fleeting). Numerous articles may be cited, but specifically, Gautier writes of music that “…elle rend tout ce qu’il y a dans l’âme de vaguement sonore, d’onduleux, d’infini, d’inexplicable, tout ce que le verbe n’a pas pu formuler…c’est la langue sacrée et mystérieuse qui a précédé tous les idiomes, la langue universelle…” (music makes everything within the soul vaguely résonant, ondulant, infinite, inexplicable, all that the verb cannot formulate…it is the sacred and mysterious language that precedes all idioms, the universal language) (La Presse, 9 Dec 1844).

Cousin’s lectures were typically French in that he placed ideas into systems with central principles, but with other European contemporaries his works demonstrate a fissure or shift in how art should be viewed. Ultimately, a concern grew regarding the “purpose” of art—must it convey ideas and be subject to system, or is it free and beyond the limits of rational inquiry?

The most influential philosopher on nineteenth century views of art and utility was Emmanuel Kant. In his Critique of the Power of Judgment, Kant proposes two important views of art: First, that art is subjective because its beauty can only be understood aesthetically (based on the subject’s feeling of pleasure) rather than logically (based on understanding the object cognitively). Second, that the subject’s pleasure of the artwork is divided into three categories based on whether or not it is agreeable (gratifying, pleases the senses), beautiful (pleasing), or good (esteemed or approved, objectively quantifiable).
According to Kant ("Second Moment of the Judgment of Taste," 6), only pleasure based on the beautiful is disinterested and free because it has no obligations to the senses or reason, and therefore needs no approval; additionally, only the beautiful could be universal because it provides satisfaction without interest.

Readers may identify why Romantics were now bound in an endless redefining of and reaction against “art for art’s sake.” For some groups, the subjective appreciation of art alone rendered it purposeless; sensory gratification and goodness were not considered threatening to art’s “inutility” if they happened unintentionally. For some critics, the ability for art to be solely an end rather than a means was vainglorious and absurd precisely because these unintentional purposes naturally arose as a result of producing art. Though Kant never uses the phrase “art for art’s sake” and would likely have disdained it, the idea is implied in the concept of the beautiful as disinterested and free because it suggests that art should be an end in itself rather than a means to something else. Art should not be a place for attaining aesthetic ideals, but rather a space in which the beauty present in all things is concretely and universally expressed.

Considering the environment in which Gautier as young poet was writing, by “art for art’s sake” it seems most first generation Romantics meant that art allows man to achieve a form of understanding that rational knowledge cannot provide. However, early Romantics still generally viewed the artist as a secular priest channeling this understanding to the people through something more transcendent than the empirical world could provide.³ By 1878 George Sand criticized Hugo and the entire movement, stating that it is impossible to divorce an artwork entirely from a purpose. By mid-century, even Hugo attempted to withdraw or diminish some of the stakes he had placed in the motto. In the preface to
Lucrèce Borgia (1833), Hugo affirms theater’s purpose as a national, social, and human mission, but immediately follows with a caveat that pure “art” requires nothing of the poet. The writer who glorified his own play, Cromwell, as un-performable, as a grotesque proof of art as a means rather than an end, frequently wrote contradictory ideas in a single preface, and these were confusing ideas to which an impressionable Gautier found himself indisposed.

Gautier’s vision of “l’art pour l’art” evolved from his first encounters with Hugo and the pre-1830s understanding of this concept, appearing in nascent form in Albertus, as a concrete profession of his aesthetic vision in Mademoiselle de Maupin, and reaching fruition as presented in L’Art moderne. Scholars generally and unfortunately ignore the early poem “À un jeune tribun” and pay scant attention to Albertus, and instead quote Gautier on “l’art pour l’art” from Mlle de Maupin, in which he writes that “il n’y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut server à rien, tout ce qui est utile est laid car c’est l’expression de quelque besoin” (only that which serves no purpose can be truly beautiful; anything useful is ugly because it is the expression of some need) (45). The statement makes a sharp break with previous views of “l’art pour l’art” proposed by Hugo in the Orientales:

Orientales : « Si donc aujourd’hui quelqu’un lui demande à quoi bon ces Orientales? ... Que signifie ce livre inutile de pure poésie, ... Où est l’opportunité ? A quoi rime l’Orient ? Il répondra qu’il n’en sait rien, que c’est une idée qui lui a pris, et qui lui a pris d’une façon assez ridicule» (3).

[If, therefore, someone asks him what good these Orientales serve? What does this unusable book of pure poetry signify...where is the
appropriateness? The rhyme? He will respond that he knows nothing, that it was an idea that seized him, and seized him in ridicule]


[What purpose does this book serve? How can it be applied to teaching morality and well-being to the common poor? What! Not a word of society’s needs, nothing civilizing and progressive! How, in order to achieve a great synthesis of humanity, and to travel the roads of history, the periods of regenerative and providential ideas, can one make poetry and books with no purpose, which do not propel a generation on the path of the future?]

In the two prefaces, both writers describe their works as being unusable and against Comte’s materialist promotion of Progress. Hugo lackadaisically ascribes his inspiration for the _Orientales_ to a random summer sunset. In this preface, Hugo gives the poet complete
creative and spiritual freedom and a divine ability to manage time and space. Similar to Oscar Wilde’s later preface to *Dorian Gray*, Hugo states that in poetry there are no good or bad subjects, only good and bad poets. Hugo’s “liberty of Art” possessed a social target by virtue of its attempt to wipe out the view of art as a pleasurable and didactic form.

Gautier, conversely, maintains the Kantian sense of art and “disinterested beauty,” which connotes the *impassive*. He boldly responded to critics of his period and attempted to demonstrate that they were upholding the motto that they attempted to destroy. In the chapter entitled “Le Beau dans l’art” in *L’Art moderne*, Gautier proclaims that Töpffer has achieved “art for art’s sake” in spite of himself; Gautier gives a precise definition of “art for art’s sake” that recalls Kant’s original statement on “distinterested beauty” (151). In the span of 20 pages, Gautier covers theories on “le beau” from Kant, Winkelmann, Burke, Marmontel, Diderot and numerous other writers before providing a specific list that bears strong resemblance to the eclectic ideas first promoted in Cousin’s lectures (see above for a comparison of Cousin and Gautier quotes).

As a last resort, if no definition of “le beau” can be discovered, Gautier urges readers to stick with Plato’s statement: “le beau est la splendeur du vrai” (the beautiful is the splendor of the true) (166). Gautier’s mature vision of “art for art’s sake” promoted an all-encompassing ideology, which excused the poet from producing moral and didactic art, and allowed him to focus on writing devoid of obvious or meaningful principles; very easily, this universalism—this impassivity as a result of being an end rather than a means—was linked to pantheism and became the primary trait of Romantic “lyrical” writing.

Gautier, as a young man, was mentored by Hugo and colluded with other young writers (Nerval) who initially aligned themselves with the Romantics. However, Gautier
was less interested in making a sharp distinction between Romantic and Neoclassical Movements or limiting himself to one poetic practice. Gabriel de Gonet (Reflets poétiques et artistiques du Xe au XIXe siècle) reports on Gautier as an audacious young man who confronted Sainte-Beuve in 1828 to get feedback on his poem “La Tête de mort,” a title Sainte-Beuve found extremely somber. Sainte-Beuve was pleased that Gautier appeared to be reading poets that taught the art of musical devices: Gautier had been reading 16th century Pléiade and Classicist writers including Baïf, Malherbe, and Passerat. Baïf had founded an Academy of Poetry and Music and promoted Plato’s theory on the union of poetry and music; Malherbe was an “excellent arranger of syllables” and taught restraint in form and purity of diction, while Passerat composed villanelles that set the standard form for upcoming generations.

Gautier’s first critiqued poem is appreciated for its attention to traditional devices, particularly its precise and impeccable rhyme. The subject matter is Romantic: Gautier examines a tête de mort inside a haunted room and imagines that its naked scalp and hollow eyes were once animated as a blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman who (as in most early Gautier poems) is vain and unwilling to return affection. The poem is ingenious in its use of lyric and dramatic development. Initially, the architectural space of the room is described, followed by a realization that the poet’s friends will one day pass and be forgotten, and ending with a resurrection of this concept in the fantasized body of an unobtainable young woman. The poem is analogique because it makes a proportionate comparison (almost like a fable, which contains an aspectual lesson) rather than making a direct substitute as one finds in metaphor. The tête de mort of the uninhabited haunted room resembles the unresponsive gaze of the haunting female. It is musical and metrical, as
Sainte-Beuve notes, due to the mastery of hemistich—rhyme and caesura work fluidly and seamlessly to produce “true poetry.”

This combination of musical devices abounds in many early Gautier works. For example, in the *Contes Humoristiques*, Gautier’s tale « La Conversion d’un classique » illustrates a balance between Neoclassical and Romantic:

Daniel Jovard avant sa conversion :
Quel saint transport m’agite, et quel est mon délire !
Un souffle a fait vibrer les cordes de ma lyre
O Muses, chastes sœurs, et toi, grand Apollon,
Daignez guider mes pas dans le sacré vallon !
Soutenez mon essor, faites couler ma veine,
Je veux boire à longs traits les eaux de l’Hippocrène,
Et, couché sur leurs bords, au pied des myrtes verts,
Occuper les échos à redire mes vers.

[Daniel Jovard before his conversion:
What holy transport moves me, delights me!
A breeze made the strings of my lyre vibrate
O Muses, chaste sisters, and you, grand Apollo
Deign to guide my steps in the sacred valley!
Support my flight, make flow my vein,
I want to drink greedily from the waters of the Hippocrene,
And, lying on their edge, at the foot of green myrtles,
Busy the echoes to repeat my verses.]

Daniel Jovard, a Neoclassical Poet, calls upon the Greek Gods and Muses to guide his creation. The poem's setting is idyllic: nature and poet mimic and repeat each other. The first section of Gautier's poem represents Neoclassical tenets to aim for imitation and “conforme aux règles générales...sur le choix des sujets, sur la vraisemblance, et plusieurs autres points” (conform to standard rules...on the choice of subjects, verisimilitude, and several other points) (Marmontel 460). Neoclassical poets borrowed the Greek idea that Poetry is formed of a reunion between the accents in music and color in painting, and in its completion becomes the true language of the gods. Just as musical works retain cadences and musical propositions, so too would oratory arts “concatenate a certain number of propositions according to grammatical, logical, and oratorical order” (Momigny 321).

Gautier’s character inundates the first half of the work with Neoclassical elements. Like other poetic movements of the time, Neoclassical writers were interested in representing the nature of things; however, they believed that ancient Greek and Roman writers—due to their “restraint, simplicity, and impersonality”—should be imitated to achieve this representation (Harrison 825). Therefore, Odes, Idylls, and Hymns—due to their highly formalized content and rigid rules of lyricism—best serve as the poets’ form in Neoclassical poetry. Gautier’s “Daniel Jovard” converts, though, and after his conversion writes:

Par l’enfer! Je me sens un immense désir
De broyer sous mes dents sa chair, et de saisir,
Avec quelque lambeau de sa peau bleue et verte,
Son cœur demi-pourri dans sa poitrine ouverte.
Like hell! I feel an immense desire within me
to grind my teeth into her flesh, and seize,
from some shred of the blue and green skin,
the half-rotten heart from its open chest.]

DJ's conversion to Romanticism no longer portrays an idyllic setting; instead, an emotional and violent tone is presented as the writer now uses color and nature to present a nightmarish, vivid scene. Gautier, in the Histoire de Romantisme, remarked that the purpose of art is not the exact imitation nature (this mimesis belonged instead to the Neoclassical writers), but rather "la précision, au moyen des formes et des couleurs qu'elle nous livre, d'un microcosme où puisse habiter et se produire les rêves, les sensations et les idées qui nous inspire l'aspect du monde" (the precision, at least of forms and colors that it delivers, of a microcosm in which dreams inhabit and are produced, and the sensations and ideas that inspire us) (226). These Romantic sensory correspondences (which are impassive) assimilate with the structured yet "incomplete" aspect of Neoclassical work (the impair), and together create the first stirrings of musical aesthetics in Gautier's poetry.

In his biography, Bergerat noted that 1836, the year in which Gautier published "Fortunio" under the title "El Dorado," marks a new period of writing for Gautier. Between 1832-1836 appeared the novels Les Jeunes France and Mademoiselle de Maupin, articles forming Les Grotesques, and short stories including "La Cafetière" (1831), "Onuphrius" (1832), "Nid de rossignols" (1834), "La Morte amoureuse" (1836), and "Fortunio." By 1836 he had become an art and drama critic for La Presse. In 1837 Gautier wrote his first musical
criticism, and many ensuing critiques were written largely in collaboration with Nerval’s musical lexicon or borrowed in consultation with musicians.

Not long after 1838, after a banquet for the centième of Hugo’s *Ruy Blas* at the Odéon, Gautier met Hugo for one last time. During this meeting Hugo proposed that Gautier move to Guernesey with him where they could walk the beach and write *rimes riches*, but (according to Bergerat) Gautier refused because it was too far from his beloved Neuilly.

Shortly thereafter, Gautier was inspired to write poetry again, particularly for a journal he admired, *La Vie Parisienne*, edited by Marcelin. He recalls wanting to write “vers de Musset rimés par Banville; à la fois souple et ferme” (verses by Musset and rhymed by Banville, both supple and firm). According to Stéphane Escobet, Gautier’s poems of the period seem written expressly to be put into music. Escobet notes that of 550 works by Gautier that were set to music, only 76 derived from what literary analysts call the culmination of his aesthetic—*Émaux et camées*.

Gautier’s appreciation of music still remained superior to his appreciation of poetry prior to 1848. For example, in an article about Nierdereyer’s *Marie Stuart* (*La Presse*, 9 Dec 1844), Gautier wrote (cited earlier in this thesis) that “La musique, c’est la beauté, elle commence où finit la parole…elle rend tout ce qu’il y a dans l’âme de vaguement sonore, d’onduleux, d’infini, d’inexplicable, tout ce que le verbe n’a pas pu formuler” (Music is beauty, and begins where the word leaves off…rendering everything in the soul vaguely sonorous, undulant, infinite, inexplicable, and all that the *verb* cannot express). For the young writer, music is still a more sacred and mysterious language, a more universal language that preceded all others. The words “universal” and “transparent” would increasingly appear in his critiques during this period, and were mirrored not only in his
appreciation of dance and commedia dell’arte, but also in other writers’ appreciation of correspondences and pantheism as modes of achieving universality and transparency between everything.⁴

In his 1868 report on the progress of poetry for the Ministry of Public Education, Gautier states that “modern” poetry began with André Chenier, whose works were imbued with a sense of eternal youth and endowed with the Greek spirit, and who utilized elements of the Alexandrine to create, above all, fragmentary or unfinished works similar to Greek bas-relief figures that would inspire a new generation of poets (Féval 68). According to Gautier, Banville’s work is “invincibly lyrical,” and he removed the stigma of referring to Greek myths that had developed with the Romantics and their attempt to dissociate from the Neoclassical writers. Gautier admires Banville’s talent for its double nature: he is a poet of two masks—one serious and the other comic.

In his review of later poets of the generation, Gautier repeats a number of phrases that are more helpful because they reveal his aesthetic preferences than because they give an objective overview of the poetry produced. He despises political, philosophical, and didactic poetry. His chapter abounds with praises for the coloriste (colorist) and for poetry that is lyrique et buffon (lyrical and comedic). Gautier modestly reviews his own work in the style of an omniscient commentator: his poetry appearing from 1830-38 is categorized as belonging to “le cycle carlovingien du romantisme” (the Carlovingian Romantic cycle), while works appearing after represent a new period. The 1853 edition of Émaux et camées is hyped as possessing all of the qualities covered previously in the review. By 1853, Gautier’s style had deepened and distilled into a poetry aesthetic that moved beyond focus on musical devices.
Gautier designates 1848 and its aftermath as a period in which poetry was largely absent. Because the public was so political and utopian that the poet’s voice was self-suppressed, a new aesthetic of poetry arose. Gautier personifies poetry as an angry goddess who would not be ruled by law, doctrine, fanfare, or national hymns, and who retires to the woods until a new poet—Leconte de Lisle—surfaces and woos her with a dogma of *impassivity*. His works are imbibed with Greek spirit but still maintain a personal sensibility, and his style is lyrical because it resonates musicality and the harmonic. As a poet, Gautier admires Leconte de Lisle’s ability to reflect on the universe like a *disinterested* Olympian God, with perfect detachment—this is the mission of de Lisle’s art—it links the Vedic with Orphic (*Histoire du Romantisme* 333-5). Gautier labels Leconte de Lisle as the herald of the Parnassian movement, as the central sun of a new poetic system in which “beauty is sculpted, thought is transformed like a marble statue, and writers contemplate nature while aspiring to the Idea” and poets study the *science* of versification. He addresses the current youth group of poets by acknowledging that there are innumerable sects of Parnassians such that the new generation of poets evades categorization: some imitate Leconte de Lisle’s “serene impassivity,” others Banville’s “ampleur harmonique” (harmonic fullness), some Baudelaire’s pungency, and others the “grandeur farouche” (wild grandeur) of Hugo’s late works. In these categorizations, readers will notice the four elements of musical poetry: impassivity, musicality, impair, *jeu*.

Nowhere in Gautier’s review does he address the influence of his magnum opus, *Émaux et camées*, upon the Parnassian movement, nor is the ever-pervading “l’art pour l’art” motto mentioned other than as one of several reasons that Maxime du Camp felt contemporary poetry had fallen into a disgraceful state (Gautier offers no apology to
defend the motto he courageously upheld long after he admitted its stupidity and naïve idealism to a colleague). Gautier’s musical text invited a meeting of old and new writers, true geniuses and dilettantes, and non-poets to try their hand at poetry under the auspices of what was now labeled Parnassian. This “non_movement” was best described in Catulle Mendès’ Legend of Contemporary Parnassus: a colossal text that indebts the new generation of poets to Gautier as inheriting his “cult of form,” impassivity, and abstraction (the latter two concepts being largely explored in the context of music). Mendès rightly took caution in asserting Parnassianism as a “non_movement” because of the large disparity in quality and style of works, and this may echo Gautier’s reason for declining to mention his designated title as the movement’s progenitor in his 1868 report. One might argue that Gautier’s Émaux et camées received little attention from composers precisely because Gautier had achieved a complete musicalization of poetry. But what did this “musicalization,” already hinted at in the collection’s title, fully entail?

A main distinction is based on the orthography of music and poetry. Historically (in the Western world), poetry and music were both acoustic art forms that imitated sounds from the natural world; the poet held status as a prophet whose words were divinely inspired by the Muses and gods to sing the mythology and legends of the people. Music was added for entertainment value, and musical elements were used mainly as mnemonic devices rather than to aggrandize the poem as a cultivated art form. As poetry became more secularized and as the writing and recording of poetry became more prominent, poetry lost its original sacred function—sound combinations were used (in poetry and rhetoric) to affect the audience’s emotional state. Poetry as a “product” led to increased analysis of poetic semantics in terms of structural and contextual elements. The
employment and career of being a poet, the marketing and printing of poetry to
disseminate it to a broader readership, and—more importantly—the writing of poetry to
formalize it and distinguish it from popular or folk song were changes that (Gautier felt)
devalued poetry and the poet.
Variation on Theme B

By Gautier’s time, poetry was more read than it was read aloud for any performative function. The 19th century represents a period in which linguists and philosophers become fascinated with the archaeology of language and the attempt to uncover and create universal languages. Jean François Sudre (1817) had attempted to develop Solresol, in which letters were transposed into musical notes, and his work coincided with attempts to create other artificial musical languages such as Aimé Paris’s Langue de durées, L’évêque Wilkins’s Langue musicale, Thicknesse’s system, and Frédéric d’Ostingen’s structure. The German poet Novalis, borrowing from Christian Gottlieb Schocher’s treatise on creating a universal language (1791), contended that contemporary language was toneless (noise or reverberation) and that it needed to return to song again. Gautier and other poets were not heralds but rather inheritors of a belief that human language was derived from music, and that music was the primordial symbolic language that corresponded to all things.

The “writing down” and “reading” of poetry is contrary to the original nature of poetry, which, as Sir Philip Sidney brilliantly noted, is a prosopopoeias—the giving of a voice to the inanimate, absent, or dead. In early literary criticism, there is no distinction between poets, dramatists, or storytellers. Up through Corneille’s time, they are all still categorized as “poets,” precisely because the poet wasn’t someone who wrote in verse but rather someone who created works that gave life by virtue of their performativity. Only after the advent of printing and “writing” do “poets” start to get categorized based on the type of writing they produce. Orthography petrifies meaning and allows a function to be assigned beyond simple entertainment, but this comes at the price of performance. Thus, while poetry gained layers of meaning by being committed to page, it also simultaneously
lost value because it could only be appreciated latently. Other means had to be discovered and used to give written, lyric poetry a dramatic quality. Part of Gautier’s musical mastery evolved as a result of his experiments with non-verbal gesture through the creation of pantomimes and ballets, and of course in his fascination with death as a means of de-subjectification.

As Gautier became increasingly interested in theater, particularly after his 1840 trip to Spain, the role of Spanish Golden Age drama, the picaresque (pícaro) genre, and Spanish dance and music became important influences on his evolution from “poet of musical devices” to “poet aesthete.” Spanish art was not only exotic (a main appeal for Romantics), but the Spanish use of masks and farce, of dance and music in macabre situations, appealed to Gautier. In L’Art romantique, Baudelaire mentions the Spanish elements of Gautier’s poem “Ténèbres,” and compares its musical quality to a symphony: “….l’admirable paraphrase de la sentence inscrite sur le cadran de l’horloge d’Urugne: Vulnerant omnes, ultima necat, enfin la prodigieuse symphonie qui s’appelle “Ténèbres.” Je dis symphonie parce que ce poème me fait quelquefois penser à Beethoven” (the admirable paraphrase of the sentence, written on the sundial of the clock at Urugne: all hours wound, the last kills, end in the prodigal symphony that is titled “Ténèbres.” I say symphony because this poem sometimes makes me think of Beethoven) (125).

Early works contain references to death that reveal Gautier’s musical notion of de-subjectification and jeu. Gautier’s stories disclose his morbid obsession with the supernatural, and his own friends note that during this period he was often frequenting cemeteries. But his view of death was not sappy or sentimental as one finds in earlier
Romantic works; it is the theatrical and playful jest that one finds in pantomime and commedia dell’arte:

Le Don Juan et le Faust de cette poésie, en tant qu’interlocuteurs, réunissent les deux traditions espagnole et allemande dans une glace jumelée d’outre-tombe qui reflète les simulacres de la condition humaine selon le Till Eulenspiegel...L’esprit blagueur, l’esprit ludique de ces deux traditions et surtout de la tradition espagnole, se fit l’une de caractéristiques principales des premiers écrits de Gautier (Freeman 75).

[The Don Juan and Faust of this poetry, as the interlocutors, unite the Spanish and German traditions in twin mirrors of the afterlife that reflect the simulacra of the human condition of [the trickster figure] Till Eulenspiegel...The jesting mind, the ludic spirit of these two traditions and particularly of the Spanish tradition, is one of the principal characteristics in the early writings of Gautier.]

In 1830, Gautier’s literary talents were immature and confused; he characterizes his first published compilation, simply titled Poésies, as containing strange epigraphs in foreign languages he didn’t speak, as embodying the trendy style of the period, and as possessing a “flair des commotions politiques” (flair of political commotion) that characterized the author’s own inner political turmoil and tempestuous life. According to his biographer,
Gautier’s father footed the bill for printing *Poésies* with Rignoux and Ch. Mary (printed in a second edition with Paulin in 1833, under the title *Albertus*) (Jules le Petit 50). Gautier was clearly experimenting with different musical-poetic structures and devices, creating elegaic couplets, sonnets, and quatrains. These early poems typically dealt with Romantic themes: virginal damsels in distress with blonde eyes and blue hair who require a chivalrous knight; seductresses who refuse the poet’s love; hunting and other references to medieval courtly entertainment; and gothic architectural references and sublime landscapes. In the poems “Les Deux Ages,” “Stances,” “La Demoiselle,” “Elegy I,” “Elegy II,” and “La Jeune Fille,” the archetypal Arthurian maiden or an exotic *fata morgana* torments the poet, making him wish he had never known or could forget her. Poems including “Le Sentier,” “Far Niente,” “Le Coin du feu,” “Veillée,” “Paysage,” and “Moyen Age” are interesting for Gautier’s exophoric and homophoric lists of architectural elements, scenery, and interior decoration. During this period Gautier is also interested in binaries; the narrators of his poems enjoy reading poetry with musical devices: lais, ballads, fantasia of possession and legendary battles ensue until the sunrise outshines the fictional fantastic world created indoors by candlelight (“Veillée”).

“Sonnet I” contains numerous correspondences between sound and visual, evoking a kind of musical ekphrasis by comparing manmade architecture and natural landscape: the basilica’s interior is illuminated by stained glass windows lit by the exterior sunset, the moon’s rays cast shadows on branches of sad pine tree that resemble the tower’s needle, and the clock’s vibrations resemble a ghostly voice imitated by the wind. The poet reflects on these correspondences while seated near a stream—everything takes on a transient,
musical quality and is described as “fugitive notes in a dream” that guide the poet toward melancholy reminiscence.

Several of the early poems deal with emotional responses to the real world and make inferences to performance and musical gesture. “Colère” retains Catholic overtones of the Seven Deadly Sins: the poet criticizes the world for its hypocrisy and compares people to pantomimed actors who make false statements and gestures, and wear cloaks and masks. The poem is, like many others of the period, a detailed list. “Types” of women are exposed: Virgins, enchantresses, spinsters, and above all the hedonistic women of cavalier poetry (i.e., Lovelace’s work) all disappoint and disgust. The poet alone is capable of loving in a saintly, godly manner that can never be requited given the women of his time. In “Les Souhaits,” Gautier stops listing natural and architectural elements that correspond to his inner thoughts and emotions, and instead lists things he would ask for if a fairy granted his wishes. The long response is an itemized list—above all, he desires a heart that feels, loves, understands, and reciprocates the feelings of his own naïve heart.

Two poems of the group stand out as precursors of a musical aesthetic, and form (unintentionally) a diptych that formally represents the dialectical content presented in the other early poems. “Cauchemar” and “Rêve” denote two faces of the same coin—the dual perspective Gautier holds as a poet-artist and poet-laborer. “Rêve” paints a typical early Gautier paysage, similar to a fairytale setting with myriad sounds and gestures: as the poet idly daydreams inside a profound forest, a vermillion sunset tints a myriad of rainbowed flowers, singing birds’ songs are carried softly on the wind, and a woman he had deeply and secretly pined for approaches him softly on the crumpled grass. Her gestures are sweet and playful, and she blushes in leaning forward to whisper an unidentifiable phrase, not unlike
what readers find in Baudelaire’s “Correspondances” (emphases throughout are mine). The poet awakens full of resentment that night has tricked him. Reverie countermands the poet’s will and desire, making it impossible to reconcile fantasy with reality. Only a single, final line is devoted to that reality, which seems more impassive than the dream that is vividly described.

“Cauchemar” is a much longer poem, and is more graphic and disturbing in its description of a physical desubjectification. The nightmare opens with a hand that severs itself from its body and attempts to seize the poet with its mangled claws. Mythical references to gods and heroes guilty of committing hubris are implied in the images of bird beaks attempting to devour the poet’s bones, wolves and serpents chewing his flesh, an abyss drowning him, and a marsh of blood appearing where the dead visit to drink and teach him the mysteries. Rather than gain the prophetic foresight one would find in Greek myth, these mysteries induct the poet into an occult group performing gestures reminiscent of a witch’s Sabbath: sorcerers dance close to him and he transmutes into a carnivorous creature. Read figuratively, the poem represents an overworked hand that severs itself from the poet's body until he is willing to be initiated as a Romantic writer of the grotesque and absurd. It recalls the short story “Onuphrius” in that the poet becomes demented and loses his ability to produce “real” and classical works that would be purchased and read by the public. In “Onuphrius” the painter becomes catatonic; in “Cauchemar” the poet dons a costume and becomes a flesh-seeking zombie. “Cauchemar” represents Gautier’s real struggle as a poet trying to establish his place in the Romantic circle and make a living; “Rêve” designates the poet’s concern with unrequited emotions and needs.
In “Cauchemar” and “Rêve” readers note the pervading influence of Hoffman and Hugo’s fantasy and grotesque worlds; Swedenborgian, Hoffmanesque and Baudelairean correspondances, and the Romantic penchant for folktales, landscapes, and fairytale settings; they become a means for Gautier to express his inner emotions in a fictional landscape, thereby representing a nascent form of the impassive that would take over Gautier’s work more blatantly in the next decade.

Poetic works written during the years after the embarrassing reception of Poésies—namely, Albertus, Comédie de la mort, and a handful of poems published in La Vie parisienne—continue where Poésies leaves off. Gautier’s use of musical devices in his poetic structure is increasingly complemented by a musical aesthetic (in which poetry, music, mysticism, and “jeu” are combined as a manifestation of the impassive and evoke the impair, the universal and ephemeral), and boost Gautier’s confidence in his abilities as a writer who could sell a product.

Gautier completed Albertus (1832), which he baptized a “knavish piece of work” in its preface, the same year that Nerval wrote the musically-aligned poem “Fantaisie.” Nerval’s poem combined color, music, and architectural imagery to describe a moment in which hearing an ancient song evokes images of 17th century luxury and an image of a woman in a window—a woman “blonde aux yeux noirs, en ses habits anciens” (blonde with black eyes, in ancient clothing) who affronts Nerval’s occult sensibilities as a woman he recognized from a previous existence. The poem makes homage to whom Nerval lists as three great Romantic composers (Rossini, Mozart, and Weber), but also states that the aural stimulus is “Un air très vieux, languissant et funèbre” (a very old melody, languishing,
The title recalls the important musical term *fantaisie (fantasia)*, which designates works originating in the 17th century, generally grounded in improvisation and characterized by alternating rapid and slow sections or clashing harmonies. As discussed earlier, this musical form translated into literature as a form in which caprice and imagination take precedence over stylistic rules, and in which the fantastic becomes associated with the grotesque.

Gautier’s *Albertus* is lacking in Nerval’s pre-Proustian use of sensory stimulation to arouse memory and illusions, but he does use allegory to create a modern theological legend about the illusions and grotesque of “magical” or improvised love. In many of his earlier works, the theme of “unrequited” love frequently appears as a parallel to a musical theme or legend addressed in musical compositions, and is often accompanied by death; love is *impassive* and *impair*—it is unachievable due to masks, illusions, and confusion between the sensory world and the ideal/anterior world.

Instead of noticing the most bewitching woman at the opera, Albertus’ interest is turned toward music, “and his heart as it beat, fluttered and sang with purest voice, for he alone thy meaning caught” (Lee 239). The poem’s narrator bemoans his own ability to choose art over love, interjecting himself into the story at this point to complain that for four months he has lacked time to write poetry and “use it to compass words” due to the “frenzy of love.” He speaks of poetry and painting in divine terms, as intermediaries between the sublime and the grotesque, as making correspondences between reality and art, and as fantastic (“wondrous impostures”) representations doubled in and by nature. Ross Chambers better explains this spiritual theme when he describes the follies of d’Albert in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, stating that “at desperate position of being in love with an ideal
form which he cannot touch, he launches consequently into a long defense of his classical
taste for beauty of form, independently of any engagement of the Christian soul (and hence
of the sense of guilt)” (42).

The narrator may be Gautier, quipping that the poem might have been completed in
1829 had he “had leisure” to write the poem as one “strings pearls upon a string.” In reality,
however, Gautier was only 18 in 1829; his published music criticism suggests that his first
“real” attendance of an opera—Beethoven’s Fidelio (coincidentally, a story also involving a
woman who disguises herself as a man for love)—did not occur until 1831. It is more likely
that the narrative is named (as is the story’s cat) after Hoffmann’s fantaisie text, Don Juan.
Hoffmann’s fantasy text describes a similar bizarre moment in which a traveler attends
Mozart’s Don Giovanni and magically spends an evening in his box-bedroom kissing the
opera’s singer, who he discovers had died the previous night.

Later in Albertus, the narrator interjects with another apology for poetry, or perhaps
a prototype for l’art pour l’art and the artist’s right to write whatever he wishes: “I am not
of those whom a bosom bared or a skirt rather short compels aside to look; my gaze on
these things does not rest by preference. Why declaim so much against an artist’s work?
What he does is sacred. Pray, ye rigorous critics, do you see naught else than that?” Another
musical reference is made to Meyerbeer’s opera, Robert le diable (1831). As François
Brunet notes in Théophile Gautier and Music, Gautier’s appreciation of the opera stems
from Meyerbeer’s use of an extraordinary character, Bertram. The Meyerbeerian devil’s
first appearance, and first important musical attribution in Gautier’s major literary work, is
the dandified Devil of Albertus; he will reappear in Gautier’s play Larme du diable (1839).
Music and *jeu* are present in the work’s conclusion: Gautier’s Devil arrives on the scene and is entertained by a “symphony with brilliant pizzicato” and several dances; amidst this entertainment, Albertus’ life comes to an abrupt and farcical ending when he pronounces “God bless you” after the Devil sneezes. Albertus’ body emerges mangled and tortured the next day, and the narrator concludes his story as a “Homeric poem, a wondrous allegory profound.” In jest the narrator closes with an absurd request and further reference to Rabelais: “Close the door. Give me the tongs, and tell my man to bring me a volume of *Pantagruel*.” Whether as allegory or an attempted *fantaisie*, Albertus provides a glimpse into Gautier’s growing aesthetic and his early literary development under Hugo’s tutelage, during which the musical elements of suspended lyric, surreal juxtapositions, and disruptions make first entrances.

The *Comédie de la mort* opens with “Portal,” comparing verses to embellished tombs that sing and hide a “corpse”: “Mes vers sont les tombeaux tout brodés de sculptures,/ Ils cachent un cadavre, et sous leurs fioritures/ Ils pleurent bien souvent en paraissant chanter/ Chacun est le cercueil d’une illusion morte…” (My verses are tombs embroidered in sculpture, / they hide a corpse beneath their flourishes/ each is the coffin of a dead illusion). The word *fioriture* is a musical term suggesting ‘embellishment’: the corpses buried within each coffin include aborted dreams, ambitions, suppressed zeal, and unfulfilled passions. Implied in Part I of the text is a rite of passage into mature writing, but an inability to completely “bury the dead.” Nevertheless, in the poem’s second section the writer laments over the death of mysticism and the promotion of Science and Liberty as new gods in an age of Progress. It is now time to say goodbye not only to the “mystic rose,” but also to love and “ancient poetry.” In the section titled “La Mort dans la vie,” the *néant*
makes a brief cameo—it is what the poet finds at the end of his lease on life. In death, though, the poet is desubjectified: He is resurrected as a living cadaver. In order to achieve this “nothingness,” he has gone to great efforts to scatter his soul in the wind. Gautier’ text presents the reader with an eschatological journey, a concern with man’s destiny and final events. Death becomes something relieving in its resolution—a salvation and deliverance from life’s grotesque realities.

In addition to examining musicality via the themes of death and incomplete love, Gautier also experimented with pantomime and ballet as art forms for achieving the four elements of musicality. Peter Brooks offers an interesting argument about the role of music for creating “emotional immediacy” in written works by creating gesture to replace missing aural cues:

The thrust of Romantic drama and melodrama toward the trope of the inarticulate suggests, on the one hand, why so much Romantic drama would find its fulfillment in opera, where music would be charged with the burden of ineffable expression. On the other hand, it indicates still another reason for the emergence of the novel as the characteristic modern form. Diderot’s dramatic aesthetics are subtended by his desire to introduce onto the stage some of the emotional immediacy achieved by Richardson in the novel, and the whole evolution of drame and mélodrame would bring the theater much closer to the modes of fiction. The nineteenth-century novel is itself
full of gesture, full of significant nonverbal signs that carry a
great weight of expression—something that has no doubt long
been recognized, but never much attended to. In fact, many of
the nineteenth-century novel’s most highly charged meanings
are postulated as being expressed by gesture (562).

Among Gautier's favorite novels was *Paul et Virginie*. Interestingly, within the novel at one
point Paul and Virginie execute a pantomime. The novel’s writer, Bernadin de Saint-Pierre,
attributes pantomime as a primitive language not unlike the hieroglyphic—understood by
all, expressive, and natural:

> Quelquefois, à la manière des noirs, elle exécutait avec Paul une
pantomime. La pantomime est le premier langage de l'homme ;
elle est connue de toutes les nations. Elle est si naturelle et si
expressive, que les enfants des blancs ne tardent pas à
l'apprendre, dès qu'ils on vu ceux des noirs s'y exercer.

[Sometimes, in the manner of the black peoples, (Virginie)
executed a pantomime with Paul. The pantomime is the first
language of mankind; it is known in all nations. It is so natural
and expressive that the children of white peoples easily learn it
after watching the black children perform it.]

The nature of pantomime allowed for reconciliation between mortal man and the creation
of art as a modern ritual akin to a Mystery or other rite. Helen Borowitz noted that
Champfleury’s work *Pierrot Valet of Death* was inspired in part by Gautier’s pantomime,
“Shakespeare aux Funambules” (24). In both works, the triumph over Death represented reconciliation between the various dualities that have been explored in this chapter. Mallarmé, too, wrote “Mimique,” in which silence and whiteness are paramount.6

Throughout Gautier’s drama, the animation of inanimate objects and concepts represents this conversion of silence into expressive gesture and speech. According to Hilda Nelson, the main purpose of this unnatural perversion is to safeguard the author from the néant: “irony and humor are often the safety valves of sensitive men whose sensitivity has to be camouflage[d]. Throughout his works, fear of the néant, of death, was a constant preoccupation with Gautier, so constant that one can easily call it an obsession. It is around this obsession that revolve many, if not most, of Gautier’s ideas pertaining to art, time, pure thought, the double vie, the doubling of the self, and the void, all of which feature in his later, more musical poems” (Nelson 820).

Gautier’s interest in body movement through ballet, pantomime, and commedia dell’arte gesture directly influenced his use of musicality in his mature poetry. In a later review of Maurice Sand’s Masques et bouffons, Gautier emphasizes division between real life and the fantastic landscape of the commedia dell’arte: “You are propelled outside of real life, into the fullness of art—into an atmosphere of caprice and fantasy where the imagination has plenty of elbow-room, and where it reproduces not the world itself but a shadow theater of the world, much more exact than the copy made laboriously after nature” (Storey 109).

Une Larme du diable (1839), for example, was written as a mock mystery play shortly after Gautier’s trip to Belgium in 1836, and performed one year prior to Nerval’s publication of his Faust translation. Performances within the play are equally important to
the slapstick humor, and many references are made to Opera. Atypically, God and his heavenly assistants listen to light music composed by mortals: in Scene IV Saint Cecil appears and offers to play whatever God requests. He suggests either Mozart or Cimarosa—both known as composers of farcical operas. A choir of wolves appears with music by Scribe and words by Auber; Satan remarks after their performance that it is pure comedy, and that only Parisians would be capable of understanding such words with such music. A choir of butterflies earns the devil’s loathing, while he voices a monologue about nature’s monotony, saying there is nothing more annoying except bucolic poetry.

Le Tricorne enchanté (1845) is a play set in the 17th century, and named after the hat adopted from Spain and worn until just prior to the French Revolution. Gautier wrote of the play that he was tempted to reduplicate the original

en rimant une comédie où vous pourriez vous tromper, —si
mes vers n’étaient mieux rimés que ceux du modèle....

[by rhyming a comedy in which you could be fooled—if my verses were no better rhymed than those of my model]

The play is a difficult read, not because the plot is intricate or the characters complex, but because there are a number of ellipses and interrupted thoughts, and these artificial enjambments create an illusion of action that is not really taking place. The play’s language and structure seem to replicate the musical qualities that Gautier admired in his 1838 review of Hugo’s Benvenuto Cellini—asymmetry, the displacement of caesura, and variety of pattern. Rhymes carry over between characters, further perpetuating the idea that there is one single character split among two—Frontin and Mariette. At one point, both vie for a position under Géronte, and it is difficult to distinguish one from the other:
FRONTIN. Monsieur, je suis honnête

Actif, intelligent, mangeant peu, buvant moins.

MARINETTE. Pour un maître, monsieur, j’ai mille petits soins :

Je bassine son lit, je chauffe ses pantoufles,

Je lui tiens son bougeoir, je lui fais...

FRONTIN. Tu t’essouffles,

Ma chère! Laisse-moi la parole un moment.

Si je m’offre, monsieur, c’est par pur dévouement;

Je ne veux rien de vous, rien, ou fort peu de chose;

Vingt écus !

[FROTNIN. Sir, I am honest, active, intelligent, eat little, drink even less.

MARINETTE. For a master, sir, I have a thousand small cares: I

warm up his bed, I heat up his slippers, I hand him his

candlestick, I make...

FRONTIN. You run out of steam,

My dear! Give me the floor for a moment.

If I offer myself, sir, it is with pure intent. Devotion;

I want nothing from you, nothing, or at least very little;

Twenty crowns!]
Géronte himself becomes confused throughout the play, not knowing which of the two characters to choose due to the intermingling of their words. Dialect, odd phrasings, and puns further confuse the communication (Frontin’s “I’d like to offer my two cents” is proceeded by Marinette’s absurd “my three cents,” which is followed by Géronte’s even more absurd remark “a profit!”). By the end of Scene IV, Géronte’s even comments about feeling duped:

Marinette, Frontin, je vous crois l’un et l’autre;
Et sur chacun de vous mon avis est le vôtre.
[Marinette, Frontin, I believe both of you;
And my opinion about each of you is your opinion]

Though the characters and themes of the commedia are not directly present, Gautier’s experimentation with farce in language makes a pronounced appearance in this drama. The play resolves when Géronte learns that the hat is a fake and that Inez and Valere have married. Rather than express anger, he forgives them, thereby inviting the playwright to speak directly to the viewer in order to establish the play’s moral: To play the uncle for a day and forgive the playwright while applauding his play. Attention is given in particular to the language:

Oiseaux de gai babil et de brillant plumage,
Nous différons des geais et des merles en cage.
Les auteurs font pour nous de la prose et des vers ;
Mais sans être sifflés nous apprenons nos airs.
[Bird of joyous babble and brilliant plumage,
We are different from caged jays and blackbirds.
The authors have created for us both prose and verses;
But without being booed (or, whistled at) we take our bows.]

Though the play is not a pantomime, Gautier's writing in “Shakespeare aux Funambules,”
which identifies the pantomime stage as “the fantastic, extravagant, impossible theater,”
relates to pantomime’s nature as an artwork—true farce is serious, not comical, and it is
serious as a result of language and character reversals.

Gautier’s interest in ballet and pantomime, I would argue, is the most significant
contributor to shaping the musical aesthetic in his later poetry. According to John Chapman,
Gautier’s primary contribution to the genre was in shifting ballet from silent “drama” to
silent “dream”:

By the time Gautier began writing ballet reviews—indeed,
even by 1832 when Janin started—ballet had already changed.
Dancers such as Marie Taglioni and Jules Perrot demonstrated
an unprecedented command of a much expanded ballet
vocabulary. Their technical facility lent even the most difficult
feats a sense of ease and naturalness that made dance appear
to be their normal means of movement. Taglioni, as the ghostly
nun in Robert le Diable (1831), had demonstrated that dance
could contribute depth to illusion and subtlety to character
portrayal…. Gautier quite simply denied the importance of
depicting emotions, representing dramatic actions, and
offering insights into human existence (372).
Gautier himself reworded “C’s” review in an article for *La Presse* (21 February 1848), writing that “a ballet is a visible symphony...gestures, like the notes of music, have no precise sense, and each person, except for a general significance, can interpret in his own manner. It is a silent dream.” The reference to symphony and self-interpretation are critical here; it demonstrates Gautier’s unique ability to link the dualities of reality/illusion and nature/the artist. Poets would increasingly compare poetry to symphony; for example, Auguste Apel (1860) argued that poetry, like a symphony, should be written so that the idea is divorced from its original form. The word “divorced” is not a far stretch from the concepts “disembodiment” or “desubjectification” addressed earlier.

Mallarmé would later refine Gautier’s notions of ballet, describing them as hieroglyphs or emblems that link directly to poetry by virtue of being suggestive rather than mimetic (implied representation rather than verisimilitude). In his essay “Ballets,” Mallarmé describes dance (like music) as poetic text (“the illiterate ballerina giving herself up to her profession”), and suggests that

> la Fleur d’abord *de ton poétique instinct*, n’attendant de rien
> autre la mise en évidence et sous le vrai jour des mille
> imaginations latentes : alors, par un commerce dont son
> sourire paraît verser le secret, sans tarder elle te livre à travers
> le voile dernier qui toujours reste, la nudité de tes concepts et
> silencieusement écrira ta vision à la façon d’un Signe, qu’elle est (Shaw 307).

[the Flower first of all, of your poetic instinct, waiting for nothing other than the proof brought to light from under a]
thousand, latent imaginations: so, through a statement in
which its smile seems to tell the secret, without hesitation it
gives itself to you across the last remaining curtain, the
nakedness of your concepts, and in silence will write your
vision in the manner of a Sign, which it is.]

This not unlike Foucault’s statements, that meaning comes not from arbitrary parallels and
imitations, but rather by allowing a word or thing to “curve back in perpetual return upon
itself,” to affirm its own existence (299). The concept is represented in Mallarmé’s “Toast
Funèbre,” in which Gautier (now dead and desubjectified) becomes a living emblem, and
the poem becomes the sarcophagus in which that emblem is enshrined. As Mallarmé wrote
in an 1866 letter, “Je suis mort et ressuscité avec la clef de pierreries de ma dernière
cassette spirituelle. A moi maintenant de l’ouvrir en l’absence de toute impression
empruntée” (I died and rose from the grave with a treasured key to open the spiritual
casket. Now, for me to open it without any borrowed impressions.). Some critics have
compared Mallarmé’s ideas to Plato’s world of forms; but, it seems more plausible that, for
these poets, the key is to examine something as it is suggested in a real, present moment
rather than to give it permanent meaning based on an abstract ideal or on ascribed
relationships to other things.

Unlike earlier critics, Gautier and Mallarmé view dance and pantomime’s suggestive
quality as sacred rather than simple; they are among the first to accord ballet and music a
position as serious art forms. Gautier seemed to hold both arts in high reverence, and
wrote of the unique challenges a librettist faces in conveying ideas and emotions without
using direct language. He scolded the scenarist Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges (with
whom he had collaborated on the scenario of *Giselle*) for resorting to written captions painted on stage clouds, and in a review of *La Gipsy* (1839) wrote, “A ballet scenario is more difficult for a writer to compose than you would think.... To devise a plot and order the action in a manner that is always clear to the spectator, to find events and passions that can be conveyed by easily understood poses and gestures ... those are the troubles and difficulties that attach to this futile pastime that is called a ballet and is not even literature.”

Gautier became entranced with pantomime precisely because it was silent, and thereby allowed the viewer more lapses into the world of his own imagination:

The great advantage of the pieces performed at the Funambules is that no one talks of them. While this silent poem unfolds in front of you, your mind is at work your imagination in ferment; you follow with an indefatigable attention these mysterious signs, living hieroglyphics that are sketched out and effaced with the rapidity of lightning. It’s delightful!

...nothing fixes your thought, nothing arrests your reverie. The pantomime shares this advantage with music, that it is vague, indefinite, immense, obscure, and yet comprehensible to all: the coarsest and finest minds take an equal pleasure in it

[emphasis mine] (Storey 106).

By this time, Gautier’s poetic aesthetic has fully matured, and is ready to be inherited by Verlaine, Mallarmé, and the Parnassians. The ideal poem would be like music in the sense that it would be vague, unfixed, subjective, and “silent,” as a sort of dramatic reenactment of both the writer's and the viewer’s imagination.
Variation on Theme C

Music manages to escape the imprisonment of writing in spite of attempts to record it using typographies, tablatures, and other means. The letters “b-a-g” combined in written English commonly signify an inanimate object used to contain and carry other items, but if one indicates the notes “b-a-g” on a blank sheet of paper, no such reference can be gleaned. Not only can no signified object be determined, but very little can be determined about how the notes “b-a-g” associate with each other. No tempo, duration, or other musical qualities to create the sound “b-a-g,” all of which would aid the “music reader” to understand how these notes are performed in relation to each other, are provided. In the case of music, not only is the signified removed (it is impossible to use any proscribed set of notes to designate the object “bag” universally in musical composition), but the writing down of the signifiers themselves and attempt to understand their relationship to each other is completely meaningless without an addition of musical notation.

Furthermore, the current system of Western notation tends to define a “note” in terms of its potential duration (related to the idea of Shared Affective Music Experience, described earlier as “being together in time”). Initially, text and symbols were used to create a fundamental sense of how the song should be performed; then, the “sound” of the note (i.e., fa, A-sharp) was written alongside dots on a staff; finally, different symbols representing potential durations (i.e., half-note, whole note) arise and are placed on a staff to define their pitch, but notations about the tempo, time-signature, the instrument and range (i.e. alto, bass), and various nuances and flourishes (i.e., dynamics, mordents) are equally essential to create a complete “musical picture” that gives clues about the composer’s intentions. Thus, in writing, the letters “b-a-g” placed together can only denote
a limited number of meanings, whereas the notes “b-a-g” or the notation “0 - – -” designate neither a meaning nor hints about their pitch, tone, or volume, what instruments sound them, the speed at which they are to be played, or even their duration.

Additionally, the composer’s creation of a complete musical picture in the form of a musical score may give the performer enough hints about how the work was intended to be performed, but musicians hold that these are only ideas to be considered rather than dutifully respected. Ultimately in music, the performance context matters more than the composer’s intent, and it is the performer’s discretion and right to interpret the music to reflect the standards and taste of his own time, culture, and personal preferences and motivations. In the case of music, an orthography or typography is possible but needless; a musical work cannot be completely realized through written notation, and the subtleties that relate specifically to music’s emotive function are often vaguely attributed or, more often, completely absent from the composer’s annotations. The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* on “Notation” states that Western art music is more dependent on notation and concerned with a mere reproduction by performers in order to distinguish it from popular music; in other world music, notation is limited to symbols and notions that hold little bearing on performance, which is held as primary.
Variation on Theme D

As an aspiring painter prior to his induction as a writer, Gautier would have possessed some knowledge of enamels and cameos. To that effect, he wrote about the June 1844 exhibition of these minor arts promoted by the highly esteemed goldsmith, Froment-Meurice. In his work *Rapport sur le progrès de la poésie française* (1868), Gautier explains the purpose of his designated title:

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[...]
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de traîter sous forme restreinte de petits sujets tantôt sur la plaque d’or
ou de cuivre avec les vives couleurs de l’émail, tantôt avec la roué de
graveur de pierres fines sur l’agate, la cornaline ou l’onyx. Chaque pièce
devait être un médaillon à enchâsser sur le couvercle d’un coffret, un
cachet à porter au doigt, serti dans une bague, quelque chose qui
rappelât les empreintes de médailles antiques qu’on voit chez les
peintres et les sculpteurs.

[to treat, in restrained form, small subjects sometimes on the sheet of
gold or cover with vivid colors of enamel, as those with the engraving of
fine stones on agate, carnelian, or onyx. Each work should be a
medallion to set on the lid of a casket (or jewelry box), a seal to carry at
one’s whim, set in a ring, some thing that would recall the imprint of
antique medals that one sees by painters and sculptors.]
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Gautier justifies the use of alexandrine verse, which he chooses stylistically, while warning that these allusions to enamels and cameos cannot be the sole device for his work:
Mais l'auteur ne s'interdisait nullement de découper dans les tranches laiteuses ou fauves de la pierre un pur profil moderne...L’alexandrin était trop vaste pour ces modestes ambitions, et l’auteur n’employa que le vers de huit pieds, qu’il refondit, poli et cisela avec tout le soin dont il était capable. Cette forme, non pas nouvelle, mais renouvelée par le soin du rythme, la richesse de la rime et la précision que peut obtenir tout ouvrier patient terminant à loisir une petite chose, fut accueillie assez favorablement, et les vers de huit pieds groupés en quatrains devinrent pour quelque temps un sujet d'exercice parmi les jeunes poètes.

[The author could not forbid himself from cutting a pure profile of modern life in the milky slices or jags of stone...the Alexandrine was too immense for these modest ambitions, and the author used only lines of eight feet, which he recast, polished, and chiseled with all the care of which he was capable. This form—though not novel, was renovated through the attention to rhythm, the richness of rhyme and the precision that any patient worker can obtain in finishing a small thing at his leisure—would be favorably received, and the lines of eight feet grouped into quatrains would become for quite some time an exercise among the young poets.]

Raymond Monelle, writing about the tritone as a musical “token” or “emblem,” remarks that “musical meaning is typically a matter of direct emotional expression—that music always signifies by ratio difficilis—and that a conventional reference like passus duriusculus
(augmented fourth, as used in early madrigals) is therefore exceptional” (198). Cameos, emblems and other tokens in music, sculpture, and poetry, and hieroglyphics are objective and absolute; since there are no arbitrary words used, there is no signification.

Immediately prior to the nineteenth century, Diderot (in Lettre sur les sourds et muets, 1751) had appropriated all imaginative representation to hieroglyph, writing that “synthetic and simultaneous clusters of images, the material of poetry, form ‘a tissue of hieroglyphs’ that represent feelings and states of mind existing as a whole.” If emotion arises, it is because no correlative signification exists. Rousseau (Essay on the Origin of Languages), Chastellux (Essay on the Union of Poetry and Music, 1765) and Chabanon (Music Considered in Relation to Words, Poetry, and Theater, 1785) corroborate the ideas about music’s “empty signs” and “figurative value,” link the figurative to both feeling and hieroglyphic, and designate music as the art form to achieve this.

Music is often described as a mythic language because of its ability to suggest relationships, or correspondences, between ideas and things rather than limiting meaning to one possibility. Music is, therefore, analogic: it retains a hieroglyphic function in its ambiguity and inscrutability, and becomes what Adorno calls “a demythologized prayer that aims at intenion-less language” (114). François-Bernard Mâche repeatedly iterates that music’s ultimate object is to be a quale rather than a quantum (17). The four properties generally ascribed to qualia include the a) ineffable (only communicated directly), b) intrinsic (properties remain independent of experience), c) private (direct interpersonal comparisons are impossible), and d) directly and immediately apprehensible in consciousness. Music as quale may be defined in terms of being situational (aspectual-analogique) rather than wholistic (metaphoric); this is why Jakobson states that in music
“the questions of intrinsic relationships prevail over the tendencies of an iconic order,” because music can only be understood by a principle of similarity (Pomorska, Rudy 452). In these theorists’ statements, the bases for art for art’s sake and music as a suggestive, hieroglyphic language are represented; consequently, music’s object to be quale is also directly linked to its impassivity—the focus is on its disinterestedness, or what Susan Langer calls “significant form” (a complex symbol that suggests emotion nondiscursively) and Adorno calls “alienating concentration” (“Music gazes at the listener with empty eyes….In music, what is at stake is not meaning, but gestures,” 139). Because “the assignment of one rather than another possible meaning is never explicitly made,” music can only act as an end in itself (Langer 240).

Like Mallarmé’s attempt to prove that the written word can have an observable grammar (syntax) that is, nevertheless, completely devoid of (semantic) rational meaning (i.e., “Who can shave an egg?”), Gautier wanted to create (not write) poetry in which the morphology garnered from a poem that is composed using “absolute rules” is no more significant or successful than a poem that is created haphazardly with ambiguity, irrationality, formlessness, or emotion. In early works, Gautier favors style and rules to the detriment of musicality, and the nondiscursive nuances only faintly present themselves.
Several early Gautier poems, including “Barcarolle (1834),” “Lamento (1837, 1838),” and “Villanelle Rhythmique (1837),” are titled after Italian music forms. This is odd, considering that Gautier often criticized Italian music as being vulgar and simple in spite of applauding the Italian melody for being pleasing and giving an impression of spontaneity and facility. The poem “Lamento” (1837, “ma belle amie est morte”), which was set by at least a dozen composers, initially seems problematic for several reasons. First, the refrain appears to be a literal translation of a well-known Venetian gondolier song rather than authentic writing by Gautier. Second, in spite of its probable derivation from a gondolier song, Gautier had not visited Italy until 1850; he had written an article titled “Venice” for *Le Landscape français* in 1832, but had borrowed heavily from other poetic travel literature of the era, and the article bears strong resemblance to Chateaubriand’s writings on Venice as a dead, decorative landscape. Third, and perhaps more importantly, the literal translation of the gondolier poem and content of “Lamento” seem more derived from E.T.A. Hoffmann’s short story “Doge and Dogess” than from any Italian musical inspiration. From a critical standpoint, these issues might devalue Gautier’s poem; however, Gautier was deviating from the traditional forms, using trial and error to create a new musical aesthetic characterized by impasive, *impair, jeu* and myth.

During the decade that “Lamento” (“ma belle amie est morte,” 1837), “Barcarolle” (“dites, la jeune belle,” 1834) and “Lamento” (“connaissez-vous la blanche tombe,” 1838) were composed, Gautier likely shared E.T.A. Hoffmann’s influential view of Italian music: he
appreciated Italian composers’ ability to produce effusive melodies and for Italian singers to give theatrically adept performances, but argued that Italian compositions lacked cohesiveness or a sense of complete unison between melody, words, and instrumentation. Gautier’s musical criticism echoes a general disdain for *urlo francese*, a style that French singers used during the Empire and Restoration, which was abandoned in favor of a style that required more focus on tone, fine legato, and ease of range than the declamatory Italian style (which conveyed dramatic force). In Gautier’s early reviews, Rossini is praised as writing youthful and delightful melodies that possess good entertainment value but generally lack musical substance and ability to convey finer nuances. To some extent, Balzac (at one point his employer) may have influenced this view: Balzac appreciates Rossini with enthusiasm, but is more impressed by the enigmatic silences and extremes present in Beethoven’s work (Kolb 25-61). Bellini and Donizetti receive harsher compliments, in which the “simplicity” of their melodies is often blurred by a sense of something Gautier felt was banal and facile. Gautier’s view of Italian song did not change until after the 1840s, when Ernesta Grisi, the Italian contralto, became his companion.

Like twenty-odd other Gautier poems, “Lamento” (1837) seems to be written specifically for musical setting. Yet, the poem contains a refrain that is a close translation of a well-known Venetian gondolier song:

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Que mon sort est amer;           Ah! Senza amare
Ah, sans amour, s’en aller sur la mer!  Andare sul mare
Col sposo del mare,             Non puo consolare.
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Gautier often disdained artists who repeated, borrowed or re-hashed ideas and forms from others’ works. In a review of the three-act opera *Barcarolle* (1845), for example, Gautier criticizes Auber for presenting, re-presenting, and repeating a principal phrase, and for using a form that does not have “assez de nouveauté” (enough newness). Literal translations of foreign poetry were not unfamiliar to Gautier, who had translated (among other works) a poem from Heine’s *Lyrisches Intermezzo* ("Aus meinen Tränen spriessen") for private musical entertainment in his home. Nevertheless, as François Brunet notes, Gautier rarely acknowledged popular music in spite of the relevance of folkloric music for Romantic writers, Nerval’s attention to folkloric tunes, and the fact that Gautier’s early poems are styled after popular songs (i.e., romances, ballads, and boat and drinking songs).

In *La Nature chez elle* (1891), Gautier briefly grants that the monotony and vague assonance used to end each line of a popular stanza are reminiscent of simple natural sounds like rain drops or rustling leaves (74); however, the mediocrity of songs composed by common laborers degrades any lyrical elements. Why, then, is “Lamento” presented as a *fisherman’s* lament?

Several Gautier works are sea-inspired and were also set to music (“Barcarolle,” “L’Ondine et le pêcheur,” and “Les Matelots”), and the translated Heine poems are appealing for the fantastic, Hoffmannian elements of a fairy bride buried at sea by giants.

As a college student, Gautier also wrote a treatise titled *Arte natandi*, and throughout his life was an ardent rower. Perhaps, like later poets of the century (Rimbaud’s “Le bateau ivre,” Mallarmé’s “Un coup de dés,” numerous Baudelaire voyage poems, and “Le Rameur” by Valéry), Gautier was attracted to nautical adventures and legends. Or, Gautier’s interest pre-dates Verlaine and composers like Debussy and Fauré, who wrote works devoted to
the Italian *carnaval*, the *commedia dell’arte* and pantomime, which exuded nostalgia for the *fête galante* (Faure 17). More likely, though, the poem “Lamento” was inspired by Gautier’s own article on “Venice” and reviews of Hoffman’s tales (1831, 1836).

In Gautier’s article, Venice is depicted as a “strange and fantastic” place. He describes the city as an “admirable decoration,” and criticizes the Italians for living a monotonous lifestyle. In Gautier’s review, the gondoliers are no longer singers of barcarolles, but rather gluttonous sea monkeys who sit around eating lasagna and macaroni all day. Two historical details are mentioned: the Bucentaur, which was burned by the Napoleon in 1798 to declare his victory over Venice, and Marino Faliero, the fourteenth-century Doge who was beheaded for attempting to install himself as Prince of Venice. The latter event is not historically accurate in Gautier’s work. He focuses on an ominous moment during Ascension Day when Faliero is trapped in a tempest at sea and forced to disembark before completing a ritual ceremony in which Doge and sea are married.

Gautier’s revisionism recalls other literary undertakings on the Faliero history, which were being written *en masse* just prior to Gautier’s “Lamento.” Goethe, whose *West-Östlicher Divan* (published in French in 1835 by J. Albert Merklein) would be referenced in the EC Preface, has the poet Hatem make reference to the Venetian Doge in Book VIII (Book of Zuleika). Not only does an influential version appear in Hoffmann’s “Doge and Dogess,” but Lord Byron had also written the play *Marino Faliero* (1820). Donizetti composed an opera (1835) based on Byron’s play and Casimir Delavigne’s play (1829, also inspired by Byron’s play). Neither in Byron’s play nor in Delavigne’s play does a fisherman’s lament emerge. A barcarolle does exist in Donizetti’s opera, but it is a gondolier’s plea for the sea to
remain placid, and acts as a respite for other laboring "children of the night." Gautier's reference to Faliero and the Bucentaur in the "Venice" article and translation of the gondolier's refrain in "Lamento" are more similar to Hoffmann's short story "Doge and Dogess."

Gautier wrote of Hoffmann as early as 1831, stating that his works demonstrate mastery of music's subtlety and emotion. Brunet argues that Hoffmann above all other German writers influenced Gautier's theories about the transposition of music into words (27). Hoffmann, rather unfortunately, held a sentiment similar to many popular theorists of the time: that music's main function was to produce a sense of joy or "coziness" in the listener. Whereas other philosophers such as Kant argued that this lack of intellectual stimulation subordinated music to the other arts, Hoffmann suggests that music is granted a superior status because, unlike the other arts that require thought and fantasy to appreciate them, music's purity is "wholly moral and can be in no way an evil influence" (29). This view bears similarity to supporters of absolute music, who felt that instrumental music without narrative would be the most simple but also the most transcendent creative form. In his Extremely Random Thoughts, Hoffmann maintains that listening to music creates a delirium for him in which colors, sounds, and odors are generated into a unified concerto (39). This evocation is narrated in a pseudo-allegorical short story titled "Kreisler's Musical-Poetical Club," a tale in which a small group gathers to hear Kreisler improvise on the piano during an evening soirée. All but the bass piano strings snap when the guest Circumspect drops a pair of candle shears inside the piano. Kreisler claims he can still play the piano, and after requesting that all the lights be extinguished so the guests can "fantasize" in total darkness, he proceeds to verbalize with poetic imagery and lyrical
narrative the ideas that should have been expressed by the now missing strings.

Hoffmann’s tale does not share absolute music’s purity—there is a distinct narrative and it is laid bare with human language that creates an oddly anthropomorphic natural environment in which correspondences are made. Playing a modest range from A-Major through C-Minor, Hoffmann compares sounds to emotion, gemstones, an ideal landscape, and death.

Gautier’s 1831 review of Hoffmann’s tales made a direct reference to “Doge and Dogess,” and he comments on Hoffman’s descriptions of Venetian history during Faliero’s time. He reviewed the tales again in the *Chronique de Paris* (14 August 1836), and praises Hoffmann for capturing the “vif et vrai” (spirit and truth) of Nature in spite of the fantastic and inexplicable elements in his tales. Hoffmann is compared to Callot and Goya—both artists not only of the fantastic but also of depicting the grotesque nature of pantomime and masks. Importantly, Gautier argues that “something false in art can be very truthful, and something truthful can be very false.” Of “Marino Faliero” and a handful of other Hoffmann tales, Gautier writes that they are stories in which the “merveilleux s’explique le plus naturellement du monde” (the marvelous appears as the most natural thing in the world). In Hoffmann’s works, Gautier finds a precedent for “disinterested beauty”: the point of a work is not to be useful or accurate, but rather to convey a message by whatever means the artist prefers, and to be interpreted however the audience desires.

The nature of myth is to combine the past and future in the present, which results in a *stereographic* work that creates constellary relations between different places and moments, both real and fictitious (Barthes 159). In this poem, Venetian history and its reworking as myth in Hoffman’s fantasy tale becomes poetic-musical fodder for Gautier.
Painting, a song inscription, and a historian’s recount of *commedia*-like characters and grotesque mysticism comprise Hoffmann’s entire tale, which begins as a review of an art-catalogue depicting 1816 works in the style of C. Kolbe, a real German landscape and portrait artist. The refrain “Ah! Senza amare” appears as a mysterious inscription discovered on a framed painting of Faliero and his young wife. Hoffmann’s narrator remarks upon the painting’s purpose, and questions whether the inscription and painting act together as a “mere picture, the temporary situation of a decrepit old man...unable to satisfy the desires of a heart” or whether it is an illustration and moral of a real historical event. In a salute to “art for art’s sake,” two characters engaged in discussion point out that the painting and accompanying inscription should be enjoyed without “some jejune interpretation or explanation,” until a stranger arrives and interprets the puzzling inscription on the painting’s frame. He weaves a star-crossed lover’s tale of youngsters Annunciata and Antonio, in which grotesque, *commedia* elements include: Antonio’s childhood maidservant disguised as a crone with clairvoyant skills, a ritual nuptial ceremony between Doge Faliero and Sea, and Faliero acting more like the pantomime character Pantalone than as a commander of the sea and city. The “Ah! Senza amare/andare sul mare” inscription from the painting materializes only toward the story’s end, when it is initiated by a soft male voice and adopted by an urban chorus as the Doge explains the purpose of Ascension Day and his nuptial ceremony with the sea. The refrain enchants Annunciata, who enters a trance-like state and recognizes her doomed love for Antonio. At this point Hoffmann’s tale returns to historical events and addresses Faliero’s known attempted coup, and the executions staged for him and other conspirators in Venice. The story ends with the jealous Sea drowning Antonio, Annunciata, and the disguised hag
to vindicate her dead Doge; in the frame narrative, the strange storyteller leaves, and the paintings’ viewers re-examine the painting, now noticing cursory signs of arrogance on Faliero’s face, an “unknown pain and dreamy aspirations of love” on the Dogess’ face for Antonio, and elements of threatening death and destruction on the sea.

Gautier takes great liberty with Hoffmann’s story, again “borrowing” history for his “Lamento,” which he was writing to be set to song by friend and collaborator Allyre Bureau. The refrain is sung in “Doge and Dogess” as Antonio’s laments that he is not with his beloved; it is adopted by Annunicata to lament that she is married and cannot reunite with Antonio. Hoffmann’s lament is sung by Antonio, disguised as a gondolier, and picked up by a chorus of Venetian voices before Annunciata internalizes and repeats it to herself.

In Hoffmann’s story, Donizetti’s opera, and Byron and Delavigne’s plays, the gondolier’s song upholds the barcarolle style, which evokes a wave-like motion and was a vital component of 18th and 19th century opera. Though “Lamento” contains a barcarolle refrain and gondolier theme, Gautier’s title, structure, and content do not adhere to the barcarolle style. Gautier had written a “Barcarolle” (1834) that adhered to the traditional barcarolle in style and context. In this poem, a young girl asks her beloved where he will travel, and begs him to take her with him to a land where people love forever. The refrain recalls the back-and-forth motion of the waves:

Dites, la jeune belle,

Où voulez-vous aller?

La voile ouvre son aile,

La brise va souffler!

[Pray tell, beautiful girl

78
Where do you want to go?

The sail opens its wing

The breeze is going to blow!

Gautier’s attention to musical devices including alliteration, consonance and assonance complement the musical structure. Gentle waves are evoked not only rhythmically, but also in the use of consonance for *voulez/vous/voile/ouvre/va*; the assonance of vowels in *Où/voulez/vous/ouvre*; *dites/brise* and *voulez/aller/souffler*; the soft consonant “l” for *belle/voile/aile* and “f” in *souffler* to evoke a rolling lull. The refrain is divided into two couplets that form a question and rhetorical answer, which creates contrary, back-and-forth motion. A partial rhyme couplet (*belle/aile*) and complete couplet (*aller/souffler*) represent wave variation, while the repetition of opening phrases at the end (*La voile/ La brise*) establishes ordered movement. Gautier’s “Barcarolle” is clearly written in traditional style for the form, and cleverly uses language, meter, and structure to create a pantheistic correspondence in which gentle fluctuations of the heart mimic pacific movements of the sea.

If Gautier wrote “Lamento” expressly to be set to music, the setting of a male’s lament for female voice departs from rules for the traditional lament song in both content and form for the Mediterranean lament (caveat: he may not have been aware of Mediterranean lament form if he had borrowed the theme and content from Hoffmann). Kinswomen and female strangers traditionally sang laments to honor the dead. According to Margaret Alexiou, a lament consisted of formal verses, presented in the third person, in which the deceased is addressed by name in order to either ease the spirit in untimely death, or to rouse it for vengeance. Each lament stanza normally contained a refrain that
reiterates a wail or cry, and repetition of the deceased’s name to call the spirit. Other elements of a traditional lament include use of binaries—both contextual and stylistic—to emphasize conflicting emotions; the repetition of an emotive word or use of alliteration, assonance and consonance both to rouse the spirit and to highlight grief; an opening question either to stress caution or recognize the mourner’s condition; and a contrast between time when mourner and deceased both lived and the present, to underscore the disparity of the lamenter’s and dead’s fates. The point of a lament is not only to express grief but also to evoke grief in the listeners. As musical poetry, the lament should evoke the impair specifically because it “seeks out the threshold of the utterable, and defies realism and representation” (Saunders 77).

Gautier’s “Lamento” maintains some qualities of the traditional lament while abandoning or even challenging other elements. Aside from structural and contextual deviations in myth, Gautier playfully (jeu) creates role reversals in the delivery of the song. “Lamento” is written from a fisherman’s perspective but set by composers for female voice. Antonio, Faliero, the crone, and Annunciata are not mentioned in this poem: it is written as a fisherman’s song for his dead beloved, who has been taken to heaven by an angel that left him behind; all surroundings and objects in the animate world recall death and mourning for him. Some composers may have set Gautier's “Lamento” for female voice because, traditionally, women performed laments. Nevertheless, Gautier’s poem is written from the fisherman’s perspective, and the role reversal is grotesque or casually ignored. As Alexiou notes, the women’s lament was more related to tragic elements and ecstatic ritual; traditionally, men did not sing laments but rather elegies, which were commemorative and proverbial, and used to educate and praise rather than to entertain or evoke emotion (103).
Interestingly, though, the separation between gendered representations of grief disappeared as funeral inscriptions arose and replaced the oral feminine lament. Like other poetry of early times, the written lament became more poetic and more detached. Similarly, in Hoffmann’s “Doge and Dogess” the lament refrain is first presented as a written inscription on the painting frame, and only later re-presented as a song performed by the Antonio (disguised as gondolier).

Gautier’s “Lamento” also differs from other Laments of the period that were better known, such as Shelley’s “A Lament” (1821), which is a theatrical work that uses rhetorical elements to achieve the sublime. Allardyce Nicoll describes Shelley’s and other English Romantic laments as melodramatic gesture of the ineffable, and Dennis Kay examines laments in Romantic ballets and older English elegies as dramatizations of the sublime. Scholars often look for evidence of hysterical response, “woe through aposiopesis, [and] movement toward silence,” in the refrains and ellipses of traditional laments.  

Gautier’s “Lamento” contains few of these rhetorical devices; in fact, the musical elements in this poem oppose rhetorical devices used by other poets. These devices, along with rhythm and rhyme, were maintained from ancient times when poetry and music initially split, and in our time they are still conventionally evaluated as the musical assets of a poem. Throughout his career, even in his younger years, Gautier dismisses the value of rhyme and rhythm; in his preface to Albertus, he writes a pejorative response to the utilitarians, utopians, economists, Saint-Simonians, and any others who may ask “à quoi cela rime,” (how does this rhyme) by responding that “the first verse rhymes with the second when the rhyme isn’t poor, and so on.” Rhyme and rhythm in this early preface are “useful” tools, and immediately after this retort Gautier states that the point of his work is
simply to be beautiful (l’art pour l’art), not to be useful or enter \textit{la vie positive} (a Positivist front), at which point poetry becomes like prose, enslaved by rhetoric and effort. Art, instead, is “la liberté, le luxe, l’efflorescence, c’est l’épanouissement de l’âme dans l’oisiveté” (freedom, luxury, efflorescence, the blossoming of the soul through idleness).

Rather than use polyptoton or anaphora, Gautier appears to defy word repetition or modulation; instead, he uses antonyms to emphasize opposing or similar relationships. In the opening two lines, for example, “morte” and “toujours” partially rhyme as sounds but oppose each other as finite and infinite concepts. In the same lines, contextually, the author’s possession of his beloved (“ma belle amie” is opposed with the beloved’s possession of his soul and love (“mon âme et mes amours”)). Throughout the poem, opposite concepts with similar sounds are placed together: \textit{morte/toujours, sans m’attendre/ s’en retourna, amer/amour, l’absent/ sent, l’inceul/ le ciel/ seul, je l’aimais/ ja-mais}. Synonyms are juxtaposed to enrich the poem and avoid repetition: \textit{emmena/prendre, pleure et songe/ pleure et sent, oubliée/ dépareillée}.

Additionally, in Gautier’s poem the generally animate parts of life are metonymically replaced with inanimate things that take on a grotesque life of their own: the living beloved becomes a dead “white creature,” the poet’s audience is the sky/heavens, night shrouds the poet in darkness, and the disembodied poet’s soul and emotion (which the dead beloved has taken) become the poem’s narrator. The only animate creature to retain its original identity and musical talent is the dove, and it reappears as a symbol in the second “Lamento” to sing its grievances under a yew tree. In the early, musically-titled poems, several symbols make frequent appearances: doves and other birds, a white creature or angel, the poet’s soul, and the sky are important motifs. Writing of music appreciation,
Gautier describes a scene in which Allyre Bureau executes the *lamento*—not in a concert hall or formal audience, but in an intimate, relaxed setting with friends; the nostalgic review (*La Presse*, 23 Mar 1840) of sharing music together recycles several of the motifs repeated in his early poems:

On se sentait remuer dans l’âme comme des colombes mal
étouffées des anciens instincts poétiques qui voudraient sortir
et revoir la pure lumière du soleil.

[One felt a moving in his *soul*, like the *doves* that were badly stifled by the awful instincts old poets, wanting to depart and see again the pure light of the sun]

The use of a dove to *symbolize* the poet, like other elements of Gautier’s “Lamento” and early poems, was typical for the period but limiting for Gautier. Brunet and other scholars have created detailed charts in which animals and references to the four elements form an entire musico-poetic universe for Gautier. The same tetrad-based parallelism (which allows for double complements) will resurface in later poems, but Gautier will employ these symbols only as *tokens* that act as stepping off points into other myths and their symbols.

Gautier uses carefully formulated similes to set the landscape: It must be wintertime with snow because nature is cloaked in white mourning shrouds, just as the dead person—now referred to as a “white creature”—is encased in a coffin (this scenario will reemerge several times in Gautier’s “white” poems of *Émaux et camées*). The poet’s soul cries like the male dove, which pairs for life and uses a plaintive song to recall his lost mate home. “Comme” in the poem is used not only to establish simile, but also as anaphora in the
closing emotional exclamations along with the word “que,” which does represent rhetoric in the traditional lament style (“comme elle était belle et comme je l’aimais! ... je n’amerais jamais une femme autant qu’elle/ que mon sort est amer…”).

In Gautier’s poem there is inconsolable grief, and, as Saunders notes of laments, language is rejected “as a replacement for the lost object” (xvii). However, it is not rejected and substituted by rhetorical elements that suggest lack of articulation; rather, in Gautier’s poem, the signs (dove, sky, soul, white creature) compensate for loss by claiming the poet’s disembodied voice and reverberating his grief. In this way, the poet achieves the impasive and impair: he is de-subjectified. The work also functions as a system of final moments (stanza 1: beloved takes poet’s soul and love to heaven; stanza 2: poet and dove are blended in traditional symbolism; stanza 3: beloved in heaven, who has poet’s soul, is the only person who can hear and appreciate the lament) rather than as a system of arbitrary relations. The language and structure are not primary as they are in Gautier’s later poems; but are still inundated with Romantic symbolism and intentional phatic-connative function.

“Lamento” offers insight into what the younger Gautier considered poetry that could be set to music, not what would later constitute his “musical poetry,” which was less dependent on musical devices or poetic rhetoric. In a letter to Allyre Bureau (1834), which discusses their collaboration on the poem “Barcarolle” as the art song “Le Pays inconnu,” Gautier complains that some articulations in Bureau’s song did not uphold his vision of the original poem’s sound and structure: “Je ne pense pas qu’il y ait là rien qui accroche. Il y a un point au quatrième vers et une suspension au septième, exactement observée dans tous les couplets. La strophe doit être assez longue comme cela” (I find nothing tenacious in the song. There is a point in the fourth verse and a suspension in the seventh, to be precisely
maintained in all the couplets. The stanza must be long enough as it is). This statement illustrates how important it still was for the young poet to maintain contrived relationships between signs using aural and metrical devices.

Gautier may have felt torn about using borrowed refrains and popular forms; he offered both Bureau and Bazin two different versions of a poem (with and without the refrain), leaving the decision to use or eliminate it to each composer’s taste. In another sea-inspired poem, “Les Matelots,” Gautier added metrical marks and suggested note names and notations to his script (Louvenjoul, C442 f.40). Although he uses them incorrectly and reveals his lack of knowledge about nineteenth century proscribed rules for song poems, the effort shows his concern with preventing composers from bastardizing his poetry once set to song.
**Musical Settings of Gautier’s “Lamento”**

Often in Western music, the consonant articulates the note while the vowel adds body or weight to it. The French language presents difficulties with musical settings because, as opposed to German or English, French is a vowel-based language. Pierre Bernac notes in *The Interpretation of French Song* that singers are prohibited from singing consonants except in the case of special effect, even where double consonants appear. Important and peculiar to the French language is the practice of liaison, in which a word ending on a normally silent consonant gets pronounced by linking it with a succeeding word that begins with a vowel. In French song, however, there are varying degrees of liaison permitted; combinations are forbidden, for example, if two words are not closely connected, or after a proper name, conjunction, or adverb. Bernac adds other important distinctions, remarking that liaisons are appropriate in lyrical poems but not in folksongs, as they are too refined to match the nature and content of the folksong. Most importantly, Bernac cites Henry Barraud’s idea that, in the interpretation of French melody, the point of the music is to bring the inexpressible parts of a work to the fore, but to do so through the art of suggestion. Overall, precision and lyricism (stylistic clarity and contextual suggestion) are the basis of the French melody, and would later become facets of Symbolist and Parnassian art song (Bernac 19-35). The “Lamento” is set as “Chanson du pêcheur” art songs by Félicien David, Gabriel Fauré, and Charles Gounod; by Jacques Offenbach as “Ma belle amie est morte” in *Les voix mystérieuses*; and by Hector Berlioz as “Sur les lagunes” in *Les Nuits d’été*. Each composer highlights and superimposes musical devices in the original, written poem.
Though no accessible scholarly reviews exist for Fauré’s work, scholars have written extensively on Venice as a “dead, fascinating” city and source of numerous barcarolles written by Fauré. Gautier had written several reviews on David and Berlioz, finding commendable and unique qualities in each composer’s work. In an 1845 review (La Presse, 20 Jan 1845), Gautier wrote that David’s songs are pantheistic, somnambular, and evoke a harmony of the spheres—he viewed David as an orientalist and Platonist, and as a promoter of the bizarre and weird.

Gautier dedicated more than 40 reviews to Berlioz, whom he grouped with Hugo and Delacroix as forming a Romantic Trinity (La Presse, 7 Dec 1846). In Berlioz, as in Hugo’s poetry, he most admires the composer’s ability to change time and trick the ear that anticipates symmetry and resolution. Berlioz, he writes (La Presse, 17 Sept 1838), uses orchestration for color and for an abundant variety of motifs, which compensates for the capricious rhythm. Importantly, Gautier’s review on La Damnation de Faust (La Presse, 7 Dec 1846) provides us with the explicit definition of *impair* as a musical quality. Gautier describes Berlioz as a poet, in whose works

> les nombres impairs ont quelque chose de mystérieux et d’incomplet qui représente l’inquiétude, l’aspiration, la recherche de l’infini, le sentiment de l’avenir; tandis que les nombres pairs symbolisent, par leurs décompositions symétriques, les chose accomplies, les rites acceptés et subis, l’héritage solennel du passé...

> [the numerous *odd numbers* offer a mysterious and incomplete quality that represents inquietude, aspiration, the quest for the
infinite, and hope for the future; while the numerous even numbers symbolize, by their symmetrical decomposition, things accomplished, adopted and sustained rites, the ceremonial inheritance of the past...]

Each of the composers transforms Gautier’s “Lamento” into art song using different techniques, none of which adequately capture (nor need they, according to art song aesthetics) the poem’s original structure and form.

David’s composition is a cut and dried, rather understated work that treats only the first two stanzas of Gautier’s poem. It is written in 6/8 time and marked allegretto, similar to a gondolier’s song. David respects original phrasing in the poem: “Ma belle amie est morte/ sur la tombe elle emporte” and “je pleurerai toujours/ Mon âme et mes amours” follow parallel notation. The word “prendre,” which is the final word in the first stanza before the refrain, is oddly divided into two sustained notes (pren-/ -dre) that diminish into a soft piano before the refrain is sung at forte and regular tempo; the same division and notation is used to separate the final syllable of the second stanza’s last word (déparaeillée) (lé-/ -e) with sustained notes on each of the divisions, and the earlier “ne voulut me” in the first stanza corresponds to the notation for “qu’elle est dépareil-”: 
This is an unnatural division compared to Gautier’s original poem, as the parallel notation to set up the refrain does not correspond to a contextual or syllabic parallel in the final line before the refrain of the first and second stanzas. There is a brief shift to bass clef between the first refrain and the second stanza to keep the listener interested. As opposed to the emphasis on parallel and lack of contrast in the majority of the song, the last two bars of the song contain no lyrics, and musically imply contrary motion:

![Musical score image]

The middle moves upward while lower notes move further down. The song ends on a lower yet only slightly variant note to signify “finality.” Musically, David provides a square, conservative interpretation, which might be considered as a minimalist and prudent way to honor a secreted or missing love.

Fauré treats all three stanzas of Gautier’s poem. His work is written in moderate tempo, and opens with a softer declaration of the beloved’s death. His rendition uses simple, minor chords for the piano and creates a sense of energy by making a trade off between piano and vocal parts. At times the vocals are eerily performed without accompaniment for four beats (“belle amie est morte, je pleurerai”/ “tombe elle emporte, mon âme et mes”), which does correspond to parallels in rhythm and sound in Gautier’s poem. The silence that accompanies these vocal systems creates a sense of contracted space, as does the fact that
the work is written in four beats but contains elements of three in the accompaniement and in the false triplets (see "pleurerai" below):

\[\text{ Ма моя любовь умерла, я буду плакать до смерти.}\]

At times, two melodic voices play together; sometimes in call and response, sometimes in contrast; this fusion, as well as the play of vocals/silence and mixed beat elements, creates a more dynamic and passionate song. Fauré’s piano part also indicates significant pedaling of ascending triplets until the closing two bars, likely to evoke the smooth and tranquil pattern of waves on the sea. Like David’s song, this work ends in two bars without lyric, and makes a modest descent to signify finality.

Offenbach’s version is sung by a woman and follows a narrative pattern in which each stanza gets divided into three systems: The first four lines of each stanza are presented in a light, jovial tempo at medium volume; they correspond to the first four lines of each stanza, which introduce a primary character: the dead beloved, the white creature, and the immense night. In Offenbach’s song, the tone, volume and chord progression become more grave and pronounced, and correspond in the three stanzas to the voice of the secondary character: the angel, the dove, and the sky/heavens. The refrain presents as a withdrawn modulation and is sung almost flippantly; rather than emphasize the refrain as a couplet, the vocals focus on the capricious and contrary motion created by “s”
consonance and liaison in the final line: san-sa’mour, sen’all-er, sen’all-er/ sur’la-mer. As with Berlioz’s rendition, Offenbach’s song ends on an unexpected chord. If Gautier’s poem was inspired by Hoffmann’s tale, Offenbach’s division more clearly represents the narrative progression: l’amour/ l’amer/ la mer (love rediscovered, bitterness at love’s loss, and triumph of the Sea). The word’s sounds convey more information than the objects that they modify (l’amie morte/ la colombe/ la mer); in Offenbach’s arrangement, in other words, essential and immediate meanings are directly connected, whereas in the written poem they remain invisible due to poem’s visible structure. Gautier admires music’s ability to make emotions and ideas understood simply by using different voices and timbres. Poetic language cannot accomplish this, because everything has to be specified and signified (La Presse, 9 Dec 1844).

Where David, Fauré, and Offenbach produce more traditional compositions that typify the French art song, Berlioz clearly creates a work that could later be arranged as a movement or more fully orchestrated work, which he intended when he later set “Lamento” as “Sur les Lagunes” (the third work in the song cycle Les Nuits d’été, 1841). Berlioz’s “Sur les lagunes” is extremely complex and written in F-minor. Like the barcarolle, it is also written in 6/8 meter to evoke the sea, and begins using the Italian tempo marking andantino. All three stanzas of the original poem are treated, and each stanza is given its own “mini-movement” that links to the others but includes important variations in tempo, notation, and progression. The traditional couplet is not respected; for example, rather than emphasize the end rhymes of couplets (i.e., toujours/amours), Berlioz emphasizes assonance in words that appear mid-line (i.e., tom/ be mon/âme). In the first system, the second vocalist bar shifts from F-minor to D-minor7 while the melody barely ascends. In
bars three and four, an inconspicuous chord change is used, more for decorative flourish to avoid droning-on, which would diminish the effect of passion for the listener. The chord change is discreet, compatible, and allows for smooth, if uncanny, transition. Startlingly, the second system’s second line moves into G-flat, which holds a very dramatic relationship to F-minor. Berlioz makes this change either to suggest a different chord progression or an upcoming modulation, but it does not correspond to a dramatic change in the poem’s content. Berlioz’s change arises in the third system but is moved to the left hand of the piano to diminish its sound, and the change is used liberally throughout the refrain. The shifts from loud to soft tend to be more extreme: in the first stanza, each line crescendos until midway and then decrescendos, but an abrupt shift to pp occurs on the phrase “sans m’attendre,” and repeated again with an even quieter “pas me prendre”:

Here Gautier’s parallel between the two similar words is emphasized, though in this song the poet’s self is even more quiet than the angel that refused to take his soul, also suggesting that, for composers, emmener holds greater weight than its sometimes synonymous verb, prendre.
Most traditional, classical songs establish a key and remain there for at least four bars, and then perhaps use minimalist changes, but Berlioz makes a striking progression by the third bar of the second system: the vocal and piano move together, upward a third to create gentle tension, and an abrupt chord change from C-major to A-flat7 is done tastefully to toy with major and minor. Just before the second stanza, contrary motion is introduced as the piano moves upward and vocals downward, signifying the end of the first part. “Ah!” in the refrain is the highest pitch and loudest note throughout the song, quickly followed by a descending scale that ends on the lowest note in this section, “mer,” to signify not only initial outpouring of grief, but also that without love (“Sans amour”), the poet feels despair that leads to death (“mort”). Berlioz switches from F-minor to B-Flat major, and continues in the second half to smoothly and subtly introduce motifs that were hinted at earlier in the song. The most bewildering shift in Berlioz’s song may be in the closing, anaphoric section of the third stanza (the repeat of “comme” and “que”)

in which 32nd notes are used in the piano part to give an impression similar to ringing bells underneath the vocals; this continues until just before the final refrain. Berlioz takes liberties with the final refrain, adding elements more aligned with the traditional lament, such as emotional and repeated “Ah!” exclamations as the song resolves instrumentally
over 15-20 seconds with no vocals and at increasingly diminished volume to almost complete silence:

The song’s last chord is a C-major, which ends the song on an unexpected fifth. Overall, Berlioz’s version best captures the musicality that Gautier would master in later works—lacking in rhetoric, and emphasizing fragmentary, liberated, and grotesque elements.

Musical settings of Gautier’s poem did not serve to make Gautier’s poetry more musical, though Modern composers did embed grotesque and fragmentary elements in their compositions. In Manuel de Falla’s “Seguidille,” for example, notes are, at times, spoken rather than sung; the notes are there simply to show the shape of the spoken words from high to low:
The work is full of accents and articulation markings that make it more fit for choreographing dance moves. The vocal part is scalar but not rudimentary, and main motifs reappear with liberal changes to confuse the listener: at one point, instead of copying established rhythm, the composer starts a system on up beats instead of a down beat to fit with an improvisatory tone. Like Gautier’s “Seguidille,” the composer captures the varied and improvisatory nature of the Spanish folksong; he achieves this, however, without overriding Gautier’s poem.

Though we may appreciate the musical settings of Gautier’s poem, they did not serve to make Gautier’s poetry musical any more than Gautier’s own use of meter and rhyme. Only after experiencing political and personal events from 1848-onwards did the poet reform his aesthetic, to finally achieve a fully musical poetry in Émaux et camées.
Intermezzo

Analysis of the Writing and Cultural Milieu that Led to the First Edition (1852) of Émaux et camées

In his recollection of dinners at Théophile Gautier's home, Edmond de Goncourt remarks upon personal quirks that also manifest themselves in Gautier’s creative output. Gautier fancied himself a polymath who in the span of a single dinner conversation could poetically debase the bourgeoisie, critique fashion, expound on etymology, teach art history, toast mythical references, and still manage to pull off tomfooleries while proudly serving gourmet inventions like spinach with apricot pits. Gautier’s table accommodated family, worldly, and even animal guests—one of the family cats, Eponine (named in honor of Hugo’s street urchin), had her own seat just as any personne naturelle, and Gautier took pleasure in this diverse company, once remarking that “avec ma table, on aurait pu faire le tour du monde sans interprète!” (at my table, one could have traveled around the world without need of an interpreter).

Goncourt’s observations extended beyond mealtime descriptions; he reported on qualities that were present not only in Gautier’s everyday habits but also in his aesthetic and journalistic creations. Gautier was a prolix reader—he was well versed on many subjects and able to seamlessly and fluidly articulate correspondences between ideas and disciplines. He despised the middle class and extolled conversation without linguistic or natural boundaries. As a dandified prankster, he revered his mentor Victor Hugo while making him the victim of jest and pranks, and always managed to play a formidable host for his guests. Goncourt specifically referred to Gautier as possessing a unique language, a
“parler imagé” (a parlance full of imagery), “peints à les écouter” (painted for the purpose of hearing them). In this painterly description readers may identify the kernel of Gautier’s aesthetic—not the inutility of art, pantheism, the importance of fantasy and gest, nor the interest in music as a universal language, but two concepts underlying all of these—the *impair* and the *impassive*.

The civil unrest of 1848 disrupted Gautier’s life emotionally and practically—his social life and job situation dramatically changed and his practical affairs became mixed with his creative output. Maxime du Camp remarked in his work on Gautier that the Revolution destroyed the sense of tranquility, stability, and (perhaps) “illusory” life Gautier had established after joining *La Presse* in 1836:

> Si, comme l’a écrit Gautier, son entrée au journal *la Presse*, en 1836, mit fin à sa vie indépendante, on peut affirmer que la révolution de 1848 a tué la tranquillité de son existence. C’est à partir de cette heure, en effet, que les difficultés s’accumulent autour de lui et l’étreignent si étroitement, que plus d’une fois il y faillit succomber. A force de patience et grâce à un labeur assidu, il avait vaincu la mauvaise fortune; il sortait de la fondrière où il s’était si longtemps débattu, il en était sorti, lorsque la révolution du 4 septembre 1870 l’y replongea de nouveau. Douloureuse ironie du sort qui frappe par la politique un homme auquel la politique a toujours été si indifférente, qu’il n’a peut-être pas connu le nom des ministres de son temps. Peu de mois avant sa fin, alors qu’il était affaissé sous le
poids de sa propre ruine, il s’écria : « Je suis une victime des révolutions. » On en a souli, on a eu tort; il n’avait dit que la vérité.

[If, as Gautier wrote, his employment at La Presse in 1836 put an end to his independent life, one may affirm that the 1848 Revolution eliminated any tranquility in his existence. It was at this time that difficulties accumulated in his life, gripping him so tightly that more than once he almost succumbed to them. Only through patience, grace and painstaking diligence did he survive this ill fortune; he quit the establishment where he had a long time struggled, until the revolution of 4 September 1870 re-immersed him in it anew. This was a sad irony of late where politics strike the man who was so apathetic to politics that he did not know the names of the ministers of his period. Less than one month before his death, when he was collapsing under the weight that became his literal demise, he cried, “I am a victim of revolutions. Right or wrong, he spoke only the truth.”]

While du Camp pigeonholed the Revolution as a negative influence, some current scholars argue that Gautier, “in openly effusive tones, welcomed the revolution as marking the dawning of a new age, and as opening up the possibility of a new and revitalized artistic culture” (Harrison 315). Certainly, evidence of both is presented in Gautier’s article “L’Art en 1848,” published May 15, 1848 in L’Artiste.
How unimportant is the bustle of the street, and the fear of the bourgeoisie! As one looks on, *impassive*, dreamy, interrupting its reverie from time to time to pick up the pen, the brush, or the chisel...Now, at last, comes the time when *man must work*, and we will soon see what the power of thought, freed from its yoke, is capable of producing. From nature and freedom, combined with imagination, new unexpected marvels will spring forth, and soon a wave of universal belief will buoy up even the heaviest of spirit [emphasis mine].

In a Romantic sense, Gautier touts art’s ability to endure and remain eternal in spite of revolutions or progress, and he praises young and upcoming artists. In a revolutionary sense, he speaks of disruption—of abandoning “old and ancient emblems,” and starting a new symbolic system that responds to modern needs and contemporary disciplines. These contradictions are reconcilable, however, as the ideas of universalism, imagination, youth, and scholarly systems had been cultivated years earlier and continued to be refined through Gautier’s collaborations with Balzac, Nerval, and others; indeed, the early Romantics were also interested in creating new symbols, though perhaps based on interior sentiment rather than external/impersonal representations.

Over time, two elements visibly define the musical nature of Gautier’s work, and they round out an aesthetic that Parnassians would later embrace. The first is the *impassive*—a word that begins appearing everywhere in poetic theory and poems, particularly in those of Parnassians led by Catulle Mendès; in fact, Daudet later wrote a
spoof entitled *Parnassiculet contemporain* to mock the Parnassians, at one point mocking a
color who declares “C’est nous qui sommes les Impassibles!” (It is we who are the
Impassives!) (Lemer 15). Maurice Spronck mistakenly identifies Gautier’s *Comédie de la
mort* as the transitional work from sentimental to impersonal poetry, writing that it
marked the periods between his sentimental and personal period, and his purely aesthetic,
impersonal period. The seeds of the impassive were present in Gautier’s early poems and
in his art for art’s sake model, but they did not reach maturation until his later poetry.
Some writers used the words “impassive” and “impersonal” synonymously, while others
used them as separate descriptors during Gautier’s period.

A reviewer in *Le Gaulois* of October 26, 1872 comments on Gautier’s well-known
reputation for the impassive: “Que de fois n’avons-nous pas entendu reprocher à Gautier,
dans des critiques littéraires, sa prétendue froideur, et son impassibilité? Aussi éclatant et
impersonnel qu’un miroir, disait-on de l’auteur d’Émaux et camées.” (How many times
have we seen Gautier reproached by literary critics for his so-called coldness, his
impassivity? They say the author of *Émaux et camées* is as bright and impersonal as a
mirror). Although impassivity as a Parnassian requisite will be discussed in a later chapter,
it’s adaptation as a facet of Gautier’s earlier “art for art’s sake” is crucial for interpreting his
poetry of this period. According to “l’art pour l’art” philosophy, poetry should not have a
social or political agenda or any utilitarian or educational purpose; rather, it would exist
solely for itself, with no moral or cultural judgments allowed. With this increased
distancing naturally arose an increased “impersonality,” or what others have referred to as
absence of sentiment and focus on the exterior (or absence of emotion and focus on form).
Accordingly, the Goncourt Brothers note in a journal entry of 3 January that Gautier
frequently and lovingly repeated the phrase “de la forme naît l’idée” (idea is born from form), which became the formula for the Parnassian school. Parnassian artists thereby became devoted to a “cult of form” and the impassive reference to noumenon; the words “impersonal” and “impassive” became synonymous for Parnassian poets, and (whether having misinterpreted or perverted his intent or not), this synonymity derived from Gautier’s statements.

What strikes me as incongruous and completely contrary to Gautier’s aesthetic lifestyle is his identification with bourgeois culture as a journalist; indeed, his inability to keep his creative and professional lives separate caused confusion for critics of his own era. In spite of the fact that Gautier criticizes bourgeois tastes and their interest in sensational and Realist literature, at times he seems to embrace and promote the elements that best typified the middle class: their material lifestyle and work ethic. His poetic interest in form and style—on writing poetry as an “exercise” rather than for emotional purposes, reflects this inherent contradiction. At other times, however, he despises the effects his professional career had on his literary aspirations. The Goncourt Brothers’ Journal entry of 20 January 1857 quotes Gautier as complaining ashamedly of being forced to write in order to feed his family:

Vraiment, je rougis du métier que je fais! Pour des sommes très modiques qu’il faut que je gagne, parce que sans cela je mourrais de faim, je ne dis que la moitié du quart de ce que je pense…et encore je risque, à chaque phrase, d’être traîné derrière les tribunaux.
[Truly, I blush on account of my career! For very modest wages that I have to earn in order to stave off dying of hunger, I express less than a half a quarter of what I am thinking...and always I risk, with each sentence, being bullied by the magistrates.]

Gautier’s sheer number of published reviews and critiques, written ostensibly to feed his family and pay rent, may have resulted in shoddy works of questionable authenticity. Some journalists, publishers, and producers also dismissed Gautier’s journalistic and theatrical efforts as money pits, and accused him of writing plagiarized reviews. Michael Spencer writes about Gautier’s employment with Girardin at La Presse after 1836 and his eventual sacking in 1855, citing a letter from Girardin to Rouy (La Presse’s cashier) that Gautier “had not fulfilled his contract to write 72 articles per annum for the sum of 10,000 francs,” and that he was dismissed as a result of claiming money for articles he had never written. Spencer himself criticizes Gautier’s music reviews, arguing that

There is a fundamental conservatism running throughout all branches of Gautier’s criticism, of a kind [that] runs parallel to and merges with a fundamental laziness, the refusal to try and improve on his knowledge already mentioned, or to try and accept innovations. In his music criticism this is combined with an almost total lack of technical knowledge. Nevertheless, it is interesting to learn what perhaps the most influential critic of his day made of his contemporaries, and one might well reflect
on the standards of French journalism in the nineteenth century, which allowed a man of such genial ignorance to wield so much power in the columns of the most prominent newspapers of his time (15).

Some critics from Gautier’s period argued that friends including Nerval, Berlioz, and Reyer helped Gautier with vocabulary and content for these reviews, and maybe even wrote parts of them, though others have noted that the music reviews are so superficial or outright erroneous that it would have been impossible for a colleague knowledgeable in music to contribute anything.¹¹

Rumors that Gautier hated music also abound during his period and in our times. Firmin Maillard was not the only critic to state that Gautier hated music, writing that “chacun sait que notre poète a pour la musique une sainte horreur” (everyone knows that our poet has a holy disgust of music), which is why, Maillard argues, the poet relied on notes from Reyer and others for insights and content. An article in Le Monde Artiste (3 Dec 1905) prefaced a notoriously confusing quotation from Gautier as evidence that he was unfit to write music reviews:

On sait l’opinion qu’on prête au grand poète des Émaux et camées: « La musique est le plus cher et le plus désagréable de tous les bruits. » Considérant donc que le piano jouissait d’une détestable renommée, qu’on est souvent pincé par des musiciens cruels qui vous infligez des heures entières de Schumann et de Hummel; que, comme circonstance aggravante, Théophile Gautier avait la réputation de ne point apprécier le bruit produit
par les touches d’ivoire sur les cordes sonores, Léopold de Mayer résolut de couler à fond la question du piano et de déclarer de suite qu’il n’était pas un homme mal intentionné.

[We all know the opinion attributed to the grand poet of Émaux et camées: “Music is the draining and most disagreeable of all noises.” Considering, therefore, that if the piano is played by someone of detestable renown, that one is often trapped by cruel musicians who torture the ears with Schumann and Hummel, and that, as an aggravating circumstance, Gautier was reputed to dislike the sound produced by the ivory keys upon sonorous strings, Léopold de Mayer resolved to thoroughly defuse the question and to immediately declare that Gautier was not a man with malicious intentions when he uttered this.]

Whether Gautier hated music and his profession, or adored both, didn’t change the fact that by 1848 his enthusiasm for the ideology of bohemianism and Romanticism had waned. Gautier published an essay on “Obesity in Literature,” observing that genius is proportionate to portliness, and that only a handful of “dreamers” of the Romantic school were skin and bones:

Cependant, quoique la graisse soit à l’ordre du jour, il faut avouer qu’il y a quelques génies maigres : M. de Lamartine, M. Alfred de Musset, M. Alfred de Vigny, M. Arsène Houssaye, et quelques autres ; mais il est à remarquer que toutes ces gloires,
dont les os percent la peau, sont des rêveurs de l’école de la
Nouvelle Héloïse ou du jeune Werther...

[Nevertheless, as much as fatness is the order of the day, one
must admit that there are thin geniuses: Lamartine, Alfred de
Musset, Alfred de Vigny, Houssaye and some others; but it is
remarkable that all of these whose bones show through the
skin are dreamers from the school of [Rousseau’s] Nouvelle
Héloïse or of [Goethe’s] young Werther...]

Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Byron and others are caricatured for their eating habits and growing
bellies. Gluttony was tantamount to middle-class eating habits, as was relying upon a
career with a title. Brunetière, in his biography of Gautier, portrayed Gautier and a friendly
rival, Théodore de Banville, and noticed the inner struggle that poets as journalists endured.
As “true poets, true artists, over-anxious indeed to find new and singular expression of art,
but ha[ving] the misfortune to be also journalists and men about town” (270). Brunetière
remarked on the incongruous and paradoxical nature of working as a poet/aesthete versus
writing “serious utterances” as an earning professional, and suggests that Banville received
little noteworthiness due to a “prankish” personality whereas Gautier was more influential
due to working in various careers out of necessity (Brunetière 273).12

The internal struggle with his career affected Gautier’s social interactions, where he
vividly expressed guilt, anger, and resentment about his role as a journalist—not only
because of the sacrifices he had to make, but also because of the drives and obsessions for
money and promotion that it created in him. In his 1913 psychological study on “Ennui,”
Emile Tardieu cites a letter written by Gautier in 1858, and writes of Gautier’s boredom and disgust with journalism, which Tardieu argued had bled into the poet’s creative works:

Rappelons le cas de Théophile Gautier. Il dut son ennui résigné et gémissant aux souffrances ressenties dans sa nature du poète tombé au métier de critique, condamné au feuilleton forcé. « On peut dire, sans exagération, que pendant toute son existence de critique dramatique, il a fait ses articles avec découragement, sinon avec dégoût’. » Il confessait ne vivre que par devoir lorsqu’il écrivait : « Vous savez dans quel dégoût et quel ennui je suis des hommes et des choses; je ne vis plus que pour ceux que j’aime, car, personnellement, je n’ai plus aucun agrément sur terre. L’art, les tableaux, le théâtre, les livres ne m’amusent plus : ce ne sont pour moi que des motifs d’un travail fastidieux, car il est toujours à recommencer. »

[Remember the case of Théophile Gautier. His resignation to ennui and complaint about the sufferings he felt were attributed to the nature of a poet turned critic, who is condemned to the mandatory writing of a serial. One might say, without exaggeration, that during his time as a theater critic, Gautier wrote his articles despondently if not with disgust. He confessed to survive only by working when he wrote: "You know what disgust and ennui I harbor for men and things; I live only for what I love now, because, personally, I have]
nothing further to appreciate in this world. Art, tableaus, theater and books no longer amuse me: they are no more than motifs in a tedious labor that needs to be continuously undertaken.

Reviewing Gautier’s personal correspondence, it is clear that the majority of letters and personal effects dealt not with his poetry and passions, but were either love letters or (more often) letters written by artists and composers to request that Gautier review their work favorably in his journal. Even the attendance at performances and reading of literary works are relegated to labor, as Gautier more often than not read them with a critics’ pen in hand.

Still, in spite of a loathing for work, acclaim and success as an author haunted Gautier’s ambitions. He became the first Chair for the Société Nationale des Beaux-arts (1862), which may have further impressed the need for title and influence upon him. Gautier’s obsession and guilt with gaining an influential title manifested itself during the years 1867-69, during which he applied and failed on three occasions to become an immortel of the illustrious French Academy. Léonce Dupont stated (Le Gaulois, 26 Oct 1872) that Gautier was refused a position because, unlike men including Jules Favre, Gautier refused to take a public political stance. Though the Academy held no political power, it acted as an advisory board and authority on language and publishing the nation’s official dictionary; members wore official uniforms to public ceremonies and functions, and their general tone and tenor was criticized as being purist and limiting creativity and taste of French writers.
Ernest Feydeau wrote on the events, noting that Gautier said to him, “Je te prie de m’excuse pour cette faiblesses, mais je t’avoue sincèrement que j’aurais éprouvé un réel plaisir à me voir, comme on dit, l’un des quarante’. Il en est de l’Académie comme de la croix de la Légion d’honneur. (I beg you to excuse me for this weakness, but I sincerely avow that I would have felt a true pleasure to see myself lauded as ‘one of the forty’. It is the same with the Academy as with the cross of the Legion of Honor) (Feydeau 306).

Gautier needed literary acknowledgment among his peers and desired this position; yet, he criticized the Academy for being a political club or salon and that awarded membership to unimpressive people from various walks of life. Feydeau asserts that Gautier reminded himself that Balzac, Sand, and Dumas elder never received candidacy to the Academy, but this did not placate him; he closed the discussion with an apology for this need, calling it a weakness, and stating that nobody is perfect. In the end, he settled by going to work as a librarian for Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, the “Second Empire’s officially sanctioned token bluestocking Liberal” whose Salon he began attending in 1865 (it is rumored that his work for Bonaparte negatively impacted his application to the Academy), and who gave him access to the Court of Napoleon III.

Labor triumphed over creativity. Within nine months of the 1848 Revolution, Gautier wrote almost one hundred articles. Three years later he became director of the Revue de Paris, left (or was dismissed from) La Presse to write for Le Moniteur universel (odd that the supposedly apolitical Gautier chose to write for the government’s official public press) and was compiling new and previously published poems into the work most literary scholars deem to be his poetic masterpiece, Émaux et camées.
The years 1848-51 marked a period of republicanism and universalism in France, at least in appearance if not in reality. Karl Marx referred to this brief period as the “universal brotherhood swindle,” in that while the provisional government extended tokens to the laboring force with shorter work days and government aid, and while “republicans and Catholics worked together more intimately than they had ever done before,” class conflicts eventually resurface (Wright 124). From 1846-51 a massive depression overtook France, and a cholera epidemic in 1849 led to population decline. Richard Wagner outlined his views on the Gesamtkunstwerk in the Art Work of the Future (1849), and the Goncourt Brothers began publishing their journal in 1851, the same year that Hugo went into self-imposed exile and scandal remained unresolved over Courbet’s Stonebreakers and Burial at Ornans. Balzac had died August 18, 1850. Nerval had travelled after Jenny Colon’s death in 1844, and would soon publish, among other works, Voyage en Orient and Lorely (1852).

The 1848 Revolution epitomized the “Fourierist invocation of a universal analogy which bears a resemblance to the Idéologues’s notion of a universal language of nature,” notes Lynn Wilkinson (220), and likely she is correct in stating that Baudelaire (who fought with the insurgents in June 1848) and other younger writers seamlessly linked their predecessors’ interest in Swedenborg and esoteric bohemianism to these social and political visions. Jonathan Crary also observed that from 1850 onwards, the word “phantasmagoric,” representing an interest in illusions and mysticism, became prevalent (Crary 132). In spite of these kindred interests among three generations, however, for many writers (including Gautier, Nerval, and Hugo) the events of 1848 signal a retreat from their culture rather than adaptation to the new, republican and urban climate. By 1852, when a new Bonapartist régime was established, even the younger writers commented on
the alienation. Ross Chambers identifies the period as a time of literary deterritorialization, during which “new legal requirements are eluded and mocked...referentiality is trivialized,” and writers like Nerval wrote “October Nights” to attack a new trend toward realism, which “represents the rational world of material reality clearly associated with constraints of a bourgeois worldview, the judgmental moralism of a strictly policed society—in short, a politics of control” (Hollier 711-16).

The early 1850s establishes two dominant paths—one still grounded in 1840s Romantic and bohemian aesthetics, and one tending toward a realist literature tailored for middle-class or utopian/socialist consumption. Champfleury lamented the latter trend in his essay on Courbet’s *Burial at Ornans*, remarking that “these days it is customary to find out whether the pen of a novelist is dipped in communism, whether the melody is Saint-Simonian, or whether the brush is egalitarian...these dangerous fantasies could lead to the classification of artists in parties...” (Harrison 64-73). Where other writers chose a path and walked deliberately, Gautier seemed to remain in a state of limbo—apolitical yet aspiring toward a work ethic and poetry as an exercise in form, moving away from the emotional and sentimental trend in poetry toward one that was impersonal and impassive. Some saw the former as evidence of bourgeois practices while others viewed the latter as representing a bourgeois trend.

Gautier’s first edition of *Émaux et camées* appeared in 1852. It consisted of 18 poems written between the years 1847-52—several had been published previously in journals. Again, in spite of Gautier’s claim that art should not be useful and his own apolitical stance, scholars including Jean Pommier note that the pieces included in the first edition reflect the
national interest in liberty, and that the reestablishment of the Empire a few months afterward secured the edition's success. If *Émaux et camées* is considered the epitome of what Gautier offered to the younger generation, it is important to look at the collections of poems based on their initial dates of creation. Numerous scholars writing on this text have mistakenly attributed poems to the 1852 edition that were, in fact, published in the 1878 edition or not written until well after. Many scholars looking at only the 18 poems in the 1852 edition fail to include the poems written prior but not published until later editions.

“Plaintive Tourterelle” was written in May 1840 for Mademoiselle Darcier, set to music by Allyre Bureau, and initially titled “La colombe messagère,” but it was not included in the first edition. “Camélia et pâquerette” was written in June 1849 but not included until the 1872 edition. It is important to group the poems by edition and chronology to get an accurate idea of Gautier’s poetic development. To analyze the final edition poems is pointless, as it covers forty years of writing and was not the edition that most influenced the younger generations. Thus, for purposes of this analysis, I will consider the following poems from the first edition in 1852 plus two poems written prior to 1852 but published in later editions. Chronologically, the poems include:

- **Plaintive Tourterelle** (set to music by Allyre Bureau and dedicated to Mlle Darcier in May 1840, under the title “La colombe messagère”)
- **Rondalla** (initially untitled in *Militona* in *la Presse*, 6 January 1847, and again in *l’Artiste* as “Sérénade du torero” on 1 December 1849)\(^\text{13}\)
- **Affinités secrètes, Le Poème de la femme, Symphonie en blanc majeur** (*Revue des Deux-Mondes* 15 January 1849 as “Variations nouvelles sur de vieux thèmes”)\(^\text{14}\)
- **Variations sur le Carnaval de Venise** (*Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 15 April 1849)\(^\text{15}\)
- **Camélia et pâquerette** (in Mme Regina Lhomme’s album as written in London, June 1849)
- **Contralto** (*Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 15 December 1849)\(^\text{16}\)
- **Vieux de la vieille** (*Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 1 January 1850 as « Le quinze décembre »)
- **A une robe rose** (*L’Artiste*, 15 February 1850)\(^\text{17}\)
• Diamant du Cœur (*Revue de Paris*, 1 January 1852 as collected poetry with Careulei oculi/Tristesse en Mer, but written 12 August 1850)
• Première sourire du printemps (*la Presse*, 7 April 1851, but written 30 March 1851)
• Nostalgies d’obélisques, Coquetterie posthume, Etude de mains (published together under the title “Poésie. A Maxime du Camp” *la Presse*, 4 August 1851)
• Caerulei oculi (*Revue de Paris*, 1 January 1852 initially published as a single work in two parts as “Marine : Flots verts, Yeux verts,” it was later divided into two poems—Caerulei oculi and Tristesse en mer (published in 1 June 1852 edition). Note: published 1 January 1852 as collected poetry with “Diamant du Cœur”)19
• Préface (sonnet, 18 May 1852)
• Tristesse en mer (*Revue de Paris*, 1 June 1852)
• Inès de la Sierras (written during the summer of 1852, during Gautier's voyage to the Orient)
• Le monde est méchant (*L’Artiste*, 1 August 1852)

The above works were published in four journals—*Revue de Paris, Revue des Deux-Mondes, L’Artiste*, and Gautier’s home journal, *La Presse*. *L’Artiste* ran as a weekly fine arts and literary review from 1831-1904, eventually becoming focused exclusively on literature. Regular contributors included Gautier’s friends and influences—Balzac, Nerval, Banville, and others like Murger, Sue, Janin, and Champfleury; in addition to occasional poems, Gautier regularly contributed articles on arts and novelties (i.e., stained glass windows, works at Versailles, writers). Louis Veron founded the *Revue de Paris* as a literary magazine in 1829—Balzac, Dumas, Flaubert, and Sue were popular contributors. The magazine was shut down in 1845 and revived by Gautier, along with Houssaye and Cormanin, and headed by Maxime du Camp in 1851, after which point it was occasionally shut down by the government for publishing troubling works including Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*; it was notorious for publishing writers rejected by the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, its main rival, which published works by authors including Hugo and Sainte-Beuve. Prosper Maurois and Ségar-Dupeyron established the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* in 1829 to publish reviews and critiques on the arts and culture; it was edited in Gautier’s time by François Buloz (1831-
77) and Ferdinand Brunetièr (post-1893). *La Presse*, created as a Conservative penny press in 1836 by Emile de Girardin, was half the price of other newspaper subscriptions, sold by street vendors, and its founder aimed to support the government without relying on party affiliations as other newspapers had (which limited those paper’s readership). By nature, penny presses were designed as popular literature or tabloids with sensational and superficial topics for common readership, and therefore carried a reputation as being crude or substandard. Additionally, Girardin’s personal political whims affected the paper’s ambiance—he once supported Louis Napoleon’s election and later became vehemently opposed to the leader; he sold the paper in 1856, a year after “dismissing” Gautier, and rejoined it in 1862 until its demise shortly thereafter. Is it fair to accuse Gautier of writing hollow or questionable reviews given the publication’s readers and erratic overseer? Are Gautier’s ethics compromised by the fact that he used a journal where he worked to promote his own creative works?

As with Gautier’s moral character and lifestyle, the critical reception to *Émaux et camées* was mixed; initial critics of the work included Flaubert and Baudelaire, who became receptive to Gautier and his poetry only years later. Paul Souday records that “Flaubert fut même, au début, un peu injuste pour le charmant Théo, et s’exprime avec quelque injustice sur les *Émaux et Camées*. … Cependant, il y a entre Gautier et lui une parenté littéraire certaine” (At first, Flaubert was a bit unfair toward charming Theo, and spoke negatively about his *Émaux et Camées*...however, one noted a definite literary similarity between them) (Souday 157). Ernest Reynaud, in his work on Baudelaire and Dandyism, describes Baudelaire’s initial diatribe and late affection for Gautier, writing that
Peut-être Gautier se vengeait-il d'avoir lu dans l'Echo des Théâtres (5 août 1846) ces lignes signées de Baudelaire: « Théophile Gautier est un banal enfileur de mots. Gros, paresseux, lymphatique, il n'a pas d'idées et ne fait qu'enfiler la perle des mots à la manière des colliers d'orages. » O ironie de la destinée! Ces deux hommes qui se détestaient cordialement en arriveront, pour avoir joué, un jour, devant la galerie de la comédie de l'admiration mutuelle, à passer à la postérité, lié d'une étreinte indissoluble.

[Perhaps Gautier was vindicated when he read these lines, signed by Baudelaire, in the Echo des Théâtres (5 août 1846):

Théophile Gautier is a banal weaver of words. Fat, lazy, lymphatic, he lacks ideas and does nothing but thread fine words together like cluttered pearl necklaces. Oh, the irony of destiny! These two men who cordially despised each other, one day met in gest and took aim at each other, and developed a mutual admiration, to posterity linked by an indissoluble bond.]

The negative estimation of Gautier's texts is often based on a concern with his “impersonal” tone and obsession with form over content, the superficial or even false impression he gave as a journalist and critic, and confusion as to whether or not Gautier even liked music and theater—both which play a significant thematic role in his creative writings.
Critics seemed unable to resolve their dislike of Gautier’s form-aesthetics and impassivity with their love for his musical vocabulary and style. Initially, reviews abound with references to Gautier’s “cult of form,” “exterior versus sentimental writing,” “musicality.” Gautier is characterized as a sculptural poet whose work is admirable yet lacking due to the focus on form over sentiment:

...qu’il accomplissait une sorte d’exercice d’équilibriste ; cela n’était pas exact. Quand on a analysé le talent de M. Gautier, on sait qu’il n’y a pas la moindre gageure dans sa manière. Il n’y a pas parti pris chez M. Gautier, il y a une nature. L’auteur d’Émaux et Camées fait de sa phrase poétique ce qu’un ténor italien fait de sa voix. De ce qu’on pouvait reprocher à M. Gautier, avec plus de raison, c’était d’oublier, dans son culte ardent pour la forme, le côté intérieur de l’art, le côté du sentiment... Je ne veux pas oublier de faire remarquer que chez M. Gautier, comme chez tous les vrais poètes, l’œuvre de prose qu’il accomplit n’a en rien altéré son instrument poétique (Limayrac 214).

[...that he accomplished a type of equilibrist exercise; this was not correct. When one has analyzed Gautier’s talent one knows that there was not the least challenge in his style. There is not choice in Gautier’s work; there is nature. The author of Émaux et Camées does with his lines of verse what an Italian tenor does with his voice. The only thing for which one can
reasonably reproach Gautier in his ardent cult of form is that he forgets the interior side of art, the feeling side...I cannot forget to mention that, as with all true poets, the prose that he wrote did not at all alter his poetic instrument.]

While Limayrac felt that Gautier's journalist profession had not inhibited his writing, other critics viewed his profession as manifesting itself in the “exterior” or impersonal nature of the works; the poems are rendered as painfully constructed work pieces, and one critic uses a vocabulary of production and labor to describe the writer's effort:

La forme extérieure, l'aspect des choses, sont rendus pénibles, vont deux par deux, souvent la rime est pauvre; cependant ce sont des vers. La forme extérieure, l'aspect des choses, sont rendus avec le plus grand relief et la couleur la plus vraie. Les Émaux et camées sont des chefs-d'œuvre de facture, de l'orfèvrerie, de la gravure en pierres fines, un art patient, la perfection des ouvriers de l'Inde, des œuvres à la fois lourdes et délicates, parfois frustes en certains détails, comme sont les sculptures de cet étonnant pays. Ses successeurs semblent chanter pour les yeux.... forte, des coupes plus variées, l'emploi, qui paraît contradictoire, d'un vocabulaire plus riche et de mots plus rares, des rimes plus sonores, des césures plus fréquentes ou plus légèrement marquées; tout cela est acquis, c'est la musique harmonique succédant à la musique mélodique; mais il ne faut pas dire que le nouveau système soit
plus artiste que l’ancien, il est plus savant. L’art actuel ressemble assez à notre nouvelle musique, qui n’est pas franchement wagnérienne et qui a perdu les grâces faciles et naturelles de l’Italie sans acquérir la profondeur et la force systématique du génie allemand (Jacques de Boisjoslin 412-18).

[The exterior form and appearance of things are rendered painful, and often the rhyme is weak; nevertheless, they are verses. The exterior form and appearance are made with great structure and rich color. Émaux et camées is a technical masterpiece, of the goldsmith’s art, of engraving in fine gems, a patient art, the perfect work of Indian laborers, both weighty and delicate, sometimes coarse in certain details, like the sculptures of this remarkable country. Its successive works seem to be music for the eyes...strong, with varied phrases, with a use (which seems contradictory) of rich vocabulary and unusual words, sonorous rhymes, and erratically placed caesuras; all this accomplished, it becomes a harmonic music replacing a melodic music; it is not more artistic, but rather more skillful. This art more resembles our new music, which is not overtly Wagnerian, and which has lost the lucid and natural flow of Italian music without acquiring the profundity and systematic force of German genius.]
Some reviewers seemed to outright despise Gautier’s efforts. Maurice Spronck recounts the critiques by Zola and Faguet, writing that

M Emile Zola s’attachait à démontrer que Gautier ne fut jamais qu’un rhéteur prodigieusement habile, et dont l’œuvre ne renferme ni une pensée ni même un sentiment réels. Selon M Emile Faguet, il ne manque à Gautier que les idées, la sensibilité et l’imagination ; pas d’amour, pas même “la volupté tendre, comme chez les anciens” à peine, pour remplir et vivifier parfois la splendeur creuse et vide de sa forme, une certaine poésie de la mort, ou plutôt “la peur atroce” de la mort (Spronck 34).

[Emile Zola was eager to show that Gautier was never anything more than a prodigiously able rhetorician, and that his work, therefore, contained neither thought nor real feeling.

According to Emile Faguet, all that Gautier lacked was ideas, sensitivity and imagination—not love, nor even “tender sensuality” as one finds in the Classics, to enrich and vivify the hollow splendor and emptiness of his form, which marks a definitive poetry of death, or more so, “the dreadful fear” of death.]

Numerous critics tried to find a happy balance by classifying Gautier as a brilliant word-chiseler who, nevertheless, lacked imagination and ideas. In this case, the precision and
focus on form and exteriority are praised, though they seem praised for the effort and workmanship put into the work rather than the beauty or quality of the product:

Je vous ai dit que T. Gautier n’a guère d’idées. Il n’a pas beaucoup plus de sentiments. Mais il y a autre chose : il a une vision d’extérieur, plus nette, plus précise que personne ne l’avait eue avant lui. Il s’est défini lui-même par certains aphorismes qui ont forme de boutades. Ainsi, T Gautier dit que son mérite à lui, c’est d’être « un homme pour qui le monde extérieur existe. » ....Il est en vers un peintre. Il l’avait été en réalité ; il avait commencé par l’être dans un atelier de peinture. C’est un peintre manqué qui a fait en vers un peintre excellent (Doumic 86).

[I have remarked that T. Gautier has few ideas. He doesn’t have a lot more feelings. But he has something else: he has a vision of exteriority that is more clear and precise than any other writer possessed before him. He characterizes himself by certain aphorisms that take the form of jokes. Thus, T. Gautier says that his own merit is to be “a man for whom the exterior world exists.” ....He is a painter in verse. In truth, he had been a painter, having started his career in a painting atelier. He is a failed painter who created excellent painting in verse.]
Other critics, unable to appreciate Gautier’s poems, were still willing to credit him with giving the younger generation of poets a strong work ethic and desire to improve the French poetic craft:

Le tumultueux auteur du *Capitaine Fracasse* s’est montré dans *Émaux et camées* un artiste minutieux et patient, un ciseleur amoureux du métal qu’il cisèle, d’un trumeau, d’une porcelaine, d’une arme damasquinée, de toutes les choses d’art dont il s’occupe et qu’il décrit (Chambrier 202).

[The turbulent author of *Capitaine Fracasse* becomes, in *Émaux et camées*, a meticulous and patient artist, a loving engraver of the metal that he engraves—of the pier glass, porcelain, revealed weapon, and all artistic things that interested him and that he described.]

Though not impartially, the poet’s friends and collaborators were able to glean numerous positive developments from Gautier’s work. One acquaintance viewed the work as perfectly crafted and without precedent:

*Émaux et camées*, cela donne l’idée de quelque chose d’achevé et de contenu tout ensemble, un dessin pur, une exécution correcte, la supériorité du travail dans l’exquise distinction de la matière, la beauté dans la rareté. Au lieu de cela, M. Théophile Gautier nous donne, sans doute en dérision de son titre, un recueil de fantaisies sans nom, sans date, sans choix, sans précédent, une espèce de défi très cavalier à la langue, à la
poésie et à la pruderie (*Journal de Débats du dimanche*, 19 Dec 1852).

[Émaux et camées gives the idea of something finished and whole, a pure design, of a proper execution, of superior labor held in the exquisite distinctiveness of the material, of beauty in rarity. In all this, Gautier gives us (without doubt derived from the title) a collection of fantasies without name, date, choice or precedent, a challenging collection that is very cavalier in language, poetry and prudery.]

Finally, there were ardent supporters for individual poems and editions. Barbey d’Aurevilly, though he did not write a comprehensive review of the first edition, did write a strong accolade for the poem “Diamant du cœur,” writing in an 1852 review that

Il y a enfin une âme ici (dans Émaux et camées), une âme ingénue et demeure dans cet homme voué, disait-il, au procède! Il a beau écrire Diamant du cœur...l’émotion est plus forte que sa volonté. Son titre est vaincu par son livre! Ce titre ne dit pas la moitié du livre qu’il nomme. Il en dit le côté étincelant et sec, il n’en dit pas le côté noyé, voilé et tendre. Ces émaux ne se dissolvent pas. Le livre de M. Gautier devrait s’appeler plutôt Perles fondues, car, presque toutes ces perles de poésie, que l’esprit boit avec des voluptés de Cléopâtre, se fondent en larmes aux dernières strophes de chacune d’elles, et c’est là un charme, un charme meilleur que leur beauté!
Finally, there is a soul here (in *Émaux et camées*), a naïve and demure soul in this man, devoted to procedure! Although he writes “Diamant au cœur,”...the emotion is stronger than his determination. The title is vanquished by the book—it doesn’t reveal even a half of the book that it names. The title tells only the sparkling and austere side, nothing of the sorrowful, tender and veiled side. These enamels do not dissolve. Gautier’s book would be better titled Dissolved Pearls, because, all of these poetic pearls (which the mind drinks with the passion of Cleopatra) end in tears in their final stanzas, and therein lies a charm that is greater than their beauty.]

Sainte-Beuve also wrote a series of generous reviews in 1863 (though some modern scholars argue this was done to maneuver Gautier into a titular position rather than out of authentic appreciation), and, as stated earlier, some of the original opponents or halfhearted supporters became devoted allies in later years.

These critiques, rather than limiting or labeling Gautier and his poetry, actually represent the irreducible plurality of ways in which his poetry influenced the writers and critics of the coming generations. Whether his work is critiqued in terms of material production, as painterly writing, as musical writing, or other, Gautier was an inimitable poet, irrevocably devoted to developing a new poetic program, which he furtively achieved with *Émaux et camées*. 
Tetrads and Repunits:
The Musical Ekphrasis of Émaux et camées

Ce qu’il est facile d’observer dans la musique chinoise comme dans la musique arabe, c’est que la mélodie est souvent dans l’accompagnement, tandis que le chant est une broderie dont les commas et les groupetti forment le caractère principal.

(Gautier, L'Orient)

In his collected correspondence, Gautier rarely speaks about his poetic endeavors after Comédie de la Mort. Early letters reveal Gautier’s effortless manufacturing of poetry: he could expel it involuntarily—“j’ai rimé environ une vingtaine de vers élégiaques, plats à vomir dessus” (“I’ve rhymed twenty-odd elegiac verses, which are so banal that you’d want to puke”) (10 Sept 1830, letter to Auguste Maquet), and estimated his work to be on par with those of established poets. He asked Renduel in a letter (2 Apr 1835) to publish the Comédie de la Mort alongside Mademoiselle de Maupin, lauded it as “likely the best anthology that will have been published since Hugo’s Feuilles d’automne (1831)” and stressed that publishing the volume was a life and death matter.

After 1838, perhaps due to his increased journalism activity and travels abroad, Gautier’s ability to produce what he deemed quality poetry was more elusive; he refers to poetry as a “dismal occupation” in a letter to Hippolyte Lucas (February 1838), writing that they must help each other with poetry as they struggle with the same “infirmity—to rhyme three letters, more or less.” Six months later (August 1838), Gautier found himself embroiled in an authorship debate: Ernest Falconnet had taken credit for Gautier’s poem “Les Colombes,” and the Corsaire published on its front page a polemic titled “The Twelve Printed Verses in the Toulouse Journal—Are They Mr. TG’s or Mr. Ernest Falconnet’s?”
Oddly though, the years leading up to the creation of Émaux et camées are empty with regard to letters dealing with poetic creation or contracts. Armand Baschet requested more information for a biography of Gautier (27 Oct 1851), but the response letter was brief, lackadaisically summarizing some trips, and journalist and early creative endeavors. Gautier made no mention of Émaux et camées, which would be published in its first edition only seven months later. Most letters mentioning poetry deal with specific poems to be set to music: an 1840 letter to Charles de Boigne refers to Gautier’s poem “Les Esclaves” with hopes that the poetry is musical enough; a series of letters exchanged in May 1841 with François Bazin regarding the poem “Soupir du roi Maure” deals with the musicality of the poem and whether the verses may be adapted to be more musical if needed, and an October 1842 letter from Escudier requests a copy of a now lost poem entitled “Josué,” that was to be set to music by Meyerbeer. During this decade, letters often comprise love notes exchanged between Gautier and numerous ladies and mistresses, authors and composers’ requests to have their work positively reviewed and/or mentioned in La Presse, and communications requesting that borrowed books be returned or descriptions of far-away places be provided.

Though no extant and detailed commentaries survived to posterity, scholars can derive from Gautier’s requests for books and information on distant places the inklings that may have inspired the framework for poems of Émaux et camées. During the 1840s, Gautier was clearly fascinated with “oriental culture” and the learning of hieroglyphs (1838, letter to Emile de Girardin). He blended his illusory, Western perception of the “Orient” (for him, the “Orient” seems to have comprised China, Egypt, Persia and India as well as Turkey and parts of the Classical world) with whatever “facts” could be gleaned from publications on
those places. He and Nerval exchanged a series of letters in July-August of 1843 while Gautier was writing the ballet *La Péri*. In the initial letter, Gautier refers to himself as a Turk—not from Constantinople, but from Egypt. Gautier sensed that he had formerly lived in the Orient, and described a recent carnival he attended, during which he had borrowed a caftan and tarbush, and could “re-acquire his true habits” in that costume. Nerval responded that he would “not dare deprive [Gautier] of his illusions...[but here there are no] four-leaf clovers, small pillars, or porcelain panels...it is only in the Paris cafés that one finds these things.” As with musical poetry, Gautier’s fancy and reality blended in a way that their sum appeared greater than any individual part, even if their superficial, surface structure seemed naïve to others.

In addition to travels to Spain, Italy, Belgium and other places, Gautier was reading prolifically about foreign cultures during this decade. He sought a copy of Guillaume Pauthier and Bazin’s *L’univers pittoresque* (1837) (requested in a letter to Henry Berthoud 10 Jan 1840), a 700-plus-page work that contained a detailed analysis of Chinese grammar and writing, a catalogue of flora and fauna, and information about Chinese porcelain, enamel making and gemstones. In this compendium, Gautier would have discovered ideas not unlike his own aesthetic leanings: First, “each word in a Chinese phrase is placed there for emphasis, and one must consider it in relation to all the different relationships with other words before proceeding. Since the liaison of ideas is born from these relationships, this purely meditative work comprises a large part of their grammar” (348). This linguistic structure parallels Gautier’s aesthetic (stated earlier)—that hieroglyphic, music, and myth are at once “intelligible and untranslatable,” lacking polysemy at their root level, but capable of being assigned a variety of meanings by performers and audience. Second, music
and poetry were either synonymous or symbiotic ("contemporary") in Chinese Literature, and Bazin claimed that, as in the Classical world, “only he who understands music is capable of governing.” According to this text, ballet-pantomime and dance, too, were ancient and important elements of Chinese life, representing “the same scenes that one finds in Greek choruses” (392). Though little mention is made of Chinese poetic verse other than the strict attention to meter, lack of enjambment, and simplicity of content in dramatic verse, the musical-ballet-ideological relationship of literature to Chinese culture must have resonated well with Gautier’s poetic inclinations, in which (stated earlier) the ideal poem would be like music: vague, unfixed, subjective, and “silent,” as a sort of dramatic reenactment of both the writer’s and the viewer’s imagination. Third, Chinese porcelain makers created surface figures on otherwise transparent material, producing an illusion of relief. Figures became animated on the surface. For example, Pauthier cites P. Dentrecolles, who described a porcelain cat that perfectly mimicked reality: “a lamp is placed on its head such that the flame forms its glowing eyes, creating a figure so realistic that rats flee from it at night” (434). In addition to being fantastic and grotesque, the art of decorating porcelain complements Gautier’s description about precision, at least of the forms and colors that it delivers, of a microcosm that dreams inhabit in which they are produced, and of the sensations and ideas that are inspired. Porcelain, like the enamel and cameo, is an important art form because it is impassive and impair—it is a precise and detailed craft, and grasping its content is unachievable due to illusions, and confusion between the sensory world and the ideal/anterior world.

In *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification*, music semiotician Naomi Cummings describes Peirce’s theory of signs in relation to their interpretants: signs that
represent a way of seeing things without asserting a fact about them are rhemes, those pointing to definite facts are dicents, and those proceeding from logical relationships are arguments (96). Readers of Émaux et camées quickly discover that Gautier has moved away from signs that relate to objects (symbol, index, icon) that were present in earlier poems: he is less concerned with tone color, emotional nuances, symbols, and imitations of natural sound, and shows increasing preference for signs in relation to interpretants. In “Affinités Scrètes,” real places and objects appear (many described in the compendiums that he reads, places he travels to, and works that he reviews during this decade), but Gautier often displaces, distances and disembodies them in a world of fantasy and emotion.

Gautier, like the German philosopher-poet Goethe to whom he compares himself in the 1852 Preface to Émaux et camées, developed his compilation amidst revolution and imperialism, during which he was traveling and reading many books about foreign places. During the 1840s, the French conquest of Algeria (1843), Tangiers (1844), the abdication of Louis-Philippe and end of the constitutional monarchy (1848), and the creation of a Second Republic amidst a period of European Revolutions (1848) created a situation in which Gautier found himself, like other artists, struggling with social restrictions and individual expression.

The preface to Émaux et camées opens with reference to Goethe’s Divan occidentale (West-Östlicher Divan, 1819), a collection of poems based on Persian divan poetry in which varying images are juxtaposed within a strict metrical framework to allow for multiple meanings, double entendre and word play. Goethe’s collection blends west-east expression and values, but may also be read as a fictional account of his intrigue with Marianne Willemer, set in Persia with Persian characters. If Gautier read Goethe’s collection, he
would have found in the poem “Imitation” an argument favoring idea over form—cadence is charming and the craftsman’s skill may be most visibly apparent in the poem’s structure, “unless to some new form its thought be led/ making an end of form outworn and dead.” Like Goethe, Gautier straddled the fence between the Classicist focus on structure and rule, and the Romantic emphasis on emotion and imagination.

Gautier, too, was in the process of creating a poetry that would be complex, playful, impassive and infinitely untranslatable. In the Preface to Émaux et camées, he mentions Nisami and Hafez, who were both inspirations for Goethe’s work, but more importantly, who historically wrote elaborate love poems containing complex, figurative phrases that made the works impossible to translate. Natural sounds would play less a role for their musical value than for what Suzanne Langer called “incipient themes, musical models that the artistic imagination may seize upon to form tonal ideas” (247). Sounds would serve less a poetic function and more an aesthetic function—just as with sounds, in poetry root concepts are stacked to become motifs, and are modified and harmonized so that motivic elements are augmented and diminished unexpectedly and seamlessly throughout a poem.

Not trivially, the same year that Gautier published the two most critiqued poems of Émaux et camées, “Symphonie en blanc majeur” and “Affinités secrètes,” he wrote that, in music, one discovers “la forme des vibrations et la couleur des notes, de sorte que l’on peut dire mathématique d’un son: il est rond, ou oval, ou sinueux, il est rouge, bleu ou jaune” (the shape of vibrations and color of notes, such that one can speak of the mathematics of a sound: it is round, oval, or winding, it is red, blue or yellow). For Gautier, music represented the infinite and inexplicable. Music is expressly forbidden to specify anything because of its nature; it is able to accomplish these results by “suscitant des images
analogues et en transposant les effets d'un art dans un autre” (evoking analogous images and transposing the effects from one art to another) (La Presse 12 Mars 1849, emphasis mine). Only nine months after publishing these two poems, he wrote to Alphée Bourdon de Vatry (26 December 1849) to request a position as Inspector of Beaux Arts, speaking of the urgency to fulfill “the dream of [his] life”: to have more time exclusively devoted to writing poetry and high literature. Having published the two poems of Émaux et camées most often appraised by scholars as musical, he seemingly craved more time to develop this new aesthetic.
I

“Affinités Secrètes”

Gautier embeds an “old theme” in the poem “Affinités Secrètes: Madrigal Pantheiste”: in karmic fashion, lovers are soul mates infinitely bound together in a cycle of life and death, and their material appearances may take different forms. The trite theme “love” is not what makes the poem musical or impressionable; rather, it is the complex interweaving of places, concepts, words with multiple meanings, and blend of reality and myth from Gautier’s travels and readings that imbue the poem with the four musical qualities: disinterestedness, impair, jeu, and the impassive.

The main title may be traced to Goethe’s novel, Elective Affinities, which (like the West-East Divan) may be read as a literary autobiography on the nature of Goethe’s interpersonal romantic relationships. The novel uses the scientific metaphor of “elective affinities” to examine not only how things “adhere to themselves” but also how “just as each thing has an adherence to itself, so it must also have a relationship with other things” (52). Goethe’s character Charlotte notes that

One has to have these entities before one’s eyes, and see how, although they appear to be lifeless, they are in fact perpetually ready to spring into activity; one has to watch how they seek one another out, attract, seize, destroy, devour, consume one another, and then emerge again form this most intimate union in renewed, novel and unexpected shape; it is only then that one credits them with eternal life, yes, with possessing mind and reason (56).
In addition to suggesting a perpetual cycle in which entities meet, unify, dissolve, and recombine, Goethe’s work is also concerned with the physics concept *actio in distans*, in which there is no known mediator or “frame” that physically joins two objects or enables them to interact; similarly, Adorno states that there is a break between the language of signs and the “thing” those signs arbitrarily communicate—language is only an artificial construct: “the capacity of texts...touch the kin of non-conceptual truths” only through their “resemblance to themselves” (104). Disciplines, themselves, are artificial frameworks that transmit the same information. In his work *Theory of Colors*, Goethe states that music and color are “like two rivers that have their source in one and the same mountain...acting according to the general law of separation and tendency to union, of undulation and oscillation...in different modes, on different mediums, for different senses” (299). For Goethe, each language or form bears correspondence to the others: the plus and minus of math are equivalent to the major and minor in musical modes of melody, showing not only the arbitrary nature of language and sign, but also the infinite possibility of affinities to be expressed among things.

From Goethe’s work, Gautier borrows the notion that the “eternity” or musicality of an object, relationship, or thing is derived from the *traces* left from these transformations and evolving affinities. The use of poetic devices is merely an artificial and arbitrary mediator to disembodied, connect, and dissolve things in a process of permanent transformation.

Multiple actions, objects, correspondences, anachronisms and paradoxical meetings of *topoi* act as polyphonic devices, and they are suggested in Gautier’s subtitle, “pantheist madrigal.” The madrigal is a musical form that “expresses the essence of personality with
impersonal means” (Einstein 1). Though mastered during the Italian Renaissance, Einstein found that Dutch and French musicians constructed the form (Einstein carefully emphasized that it is artificially constructed, and does not originate with Dutch and French musicians as a free art form). Rules governing the madrigal include a) “the most accurate and untrammelled declamation must be observed in each part” (480), b) that one often finds a four-part structure within which shorter, two-part responses are discovered, and c) tone painting, in which visuals substitute for sounds (i.e., Einstein noted that the concept “darkness” would be symbolized not by an audible descent into a lower register, but rather as an illustration of blackened notes in the singer’s part-book). Einstein also compared the madrigal technique to the art of “glazing,” as found in the making of enamels and porcelain: chromatic shades are placed one upon the other, resurfaced and transformed such that there are “infinitely delicate intensifications and attenuations in minute, but always distinctly recognizable gradations” (482). Indeed, the madrigal form itself is manmade by various cultures adding to, retouching, and resurfacing it such that no origin even for its etymology can be determined (Biadene 124).

That Gautier titled his poem with reference to Goethe's Elective Affinities and subtitled it as a “pantheist madrigal”21 is not to pay homage to the madrigal form or Goethe’s novel, but rather because his poem embodies the artifices represented in those works: in “Affinités Secrètes,” readers find physical-alchemical transformations, or what one might call a glazing/resurfacing of elements painted upon the surface of stanzas, not only through the use of two pairs of four objects (marble block, pearls, roses, doves) but also in the four-part division of the poem and four readings (mythical-tangible, historical-biographical, topographical-botanical, transformative-alchemical) coded in an artificial
structure; ultimately, this enabled Gautier to produce an extremely complex work that is disinterested, impassive, playful, and impair.

The form of “Affinités Secrètes” is structured such that it is divided into four main sections of four stanzas each, with each stanza consisting not only of ‘intertwined’ couplets (ABAB pattern) but also of intertwined pairs of concepts within each stanza, leading into alternating and intertwined pairs of stanzas (1 with 3, 2 with 4) within each section and alternating and intertwined pairs of sections:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STANZA</th>
<th>SECTION 1</th>
<th>SECTION 3</th>
<th>SECTION 2</th>
<th>SECTION 4</th>
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</table>
| 1      | Ancient temple  
-2 marble blocks  
-blue Attic sky  
-juxtapose white dreams | sympathies  
-impériuses douceurs  
-averted souls recognize their sisters | -all dissolves/ disintegrates  
-colombe  
-pearl dissolves, marble falls, flower withers, bird (oiseau)  
-flees | -love forgotten reawakens  
-the past vaguely reborn  
-flower on vermeil mouth breaths and recognizes itself |
| 2      | Nacre  
-Venus’ tears  
-2 pearls  
mots inconnus | smell, light ray, color  
atome vole vers l’atome  
-bee to flower | Crucible  
Prima Materia  
Mold  
God | Nacre→smile  
White pearl→virgin flesh |
| 3      | Generalife  
-Fountains  
-2 roses  
jaser fleurs | reveries  
-fronton (temple)/ mer (nacre)  
-conversation (fleuries)  
-fontaine/ flot clair | Transformation  
Marble→flesh  
Rose→lips | Dove’s (ramier)  
Voice/ echo  
-Resistance s’emmousser  
-Inconnu becomes lover |
| 4      | Venice domes  
-2 doves/red feet  
-nest  
-se sont posés | Kisses→flapping wings  
Domes→golden balls  
Molecules→attraction | Dove  
coo→heart  
murmur  
Pearls→teeth / smile | Poet burns/ trembles  
Flot, fronton, rosier, dome  
Perle, marbre, fleur, ramier |

The poem may, at surface glance, deal with four main objects that correspond to four alchemical elements (and the eight-fold cycle that ends and renews with detachment),
which scholars insist is a schema that appears in earlier Gautier poems as well. These tetrads correspond, as well, to the four stages or narrativity that Tarasti references from Arnold Salop: organization of musical elements to establish a pattern, reversal to avoid a “sense of contrived, mechanical motion,” culmination, resolution and renewal (24). In this poem, readers will identify Stephane Escobet’s claim—that in the later poems one finds a language that “is not purely linear, and which functions as a system of echoes and responses” (357).

Fragments and incomplete processes best typify the “parts” introduced in the first section of this poem to establish a pattern; the parts are in a process of becoming (impair), and readers will note an “annihilation of opposites (jeu).” In part 1, each stanza introduces a main and sub-concept that is, paradoxically, more “natural” in spite of arising from the “constructed” thing: the manmade ancient temple with two marble pillars and the juxtaposed “white dreams” they produce, the liquid secretion (tears) of Venus (produced from Uranus’ sperm and arising out of the foam rather than as a result of procreation) and the two pearls arising from her tears, the built fountains at Generalife and the release of roses’ scent emanating from the watered pairs of flowers, and the architectural domes of Venice and the dove pairs that nest and breed in them.

The first four stanzas link to each other through a series of unobstrusive relationships that, themselves, are often linked to pairs that are not mentioned in the poem (hieroglyphic, impassive). Though with poems a scholar should not forcefully ascribe a specific location or purpose, Gautier’s travel writings and letters often provide justification for some correlations. In his travel writing about Greece, for example, Gautier notes the effect of whiteness produced everywhere as a result of the light and stone, which resembles
cultivated flowers, which readers will find again in the third stanza with the cultivated roses at Generalife:

Son teint d’une blancheur particulière...ressemblait à la pulpe des pétales de certaines fleurs de serre qui ne reçoivent jamais l’impression directe de l’air ou du soleil; on y sentait la fraîcheur incoloré.

[This specific shade of white...resembled the pulp found on the petals of certain greenhouse flowers that never receive direct air or light; one felt their uncolored freshness.]

The effect of light on stone puts Gautier to sleep, and his “dream” becomes more real than the artificial whiteness created by light:

Mes yeux ouverts dans l’ombre finirent par se fermer, quelque effort que je fisse pour ne pas m’endormir. Quand je me réveillai frissonnant sous l’impression glaciale du matin, de faibles lueurs blanchâtres commençaient à éclaircir le bord du ciel, les étoiles s’étaient éteintes; Vénus seule brillait encore, et sa réverbération faisait une traînée de lumière dans l’eau; une ligne sombre se dessinait confusément à l’horizon, c’était la Grèce, c’était l’Attique.

[My eyes, opened in the shadow, now closed in spite of my efforts to not fall asleep. When I woke, shivering under the impression of an icy morning, whitish weak glimmers began to shine from the sky, the stars dimmed; only Venus still sparkled,
and its reverberation created a streak of light in the water; a
dark line took vague form in the horizon—it was Greece, it was
Attica.]

In this quotation one notes the intermingling not only of dream and reality, but also of the impressions of one reality (the reflection of a planet) leading toward and mirroring a more material reality in the horizon (Greece). Musical language emerges before devolving once again into the visual, as “trilling” (shivering) into white wisps and as “reverberation” into “design taking shape,” and immediately after as the day “rising slowly with a crescendo of tints as famous as the crescendo of violins in F. David’s Désert “like an azure tint painted on a white temple frieze,” not unlike the blue, Attic sky under which an ancient temple sits in the first stanza of “Affinités Secrètes.”

In his travel descriptions, Gautier blends various locations in the Attic geography: he provides not only a description of Piraeus but also the city of Aptera, which was historically renowned as a musical center, and where (recorded myth suggests) Muses and Sirens once held a musical competition in the Temple of Muses. Defeated by the Muses, the Sirens shed their feathers into the sea, which were then transformed into the white islands of Lefkae. In his travel accounts, Gautier mentions the Temple of Victory of Aptera; two pillars in the interior indicate entryways into an area where two women—one winged but leaning to earth to fix her sandal, the other terrified by a bull—are made of a marble that appears as lifelike as flesh, made “expressly to embody one’s visions of immortal beauty.”

In the manner of a stereographic plurality, did these descriptions, painstakingly described in his travelogues, make their way as irreducible and unresolved motifs into the first stanza of “Affinités Secrètes”? The “juxtaposed white dreams” under the blue, Attic sky
would refer not only to the ideal feminine statues in the temple but also to the white islands formed, a myth explains, as a result of a constructed musical competition between two entities (Muses and Sirens) and evolving into natural island bodies from the feathers of legendary (immaterial) creatures. Alternatively, one might assume that Gautier, here, is creating a double-entendre using the geographical location Portara, the 2,500 year-old doorway on the island of Naxos, which is likely dedicated to Apollo (god of music and orderly poetry) and stands on Palatia. Generalife is a palatio in Spain, and the Naxos temple was dismantled during Venetian-Moorish rule to build a castle, thereby leaving the temple unfinished, with a door leading nowhere. The polyphony of meaning, no matter what account (if either) one takes, creates artificial correspondences between Gautier’s travel writings and the poem, the first four stanzas on a geographical level, an instance of hidden word play (palatia/palatio) and a declamation of “secret love” appearing in different affinities. Not only does one find playfulness and universality here, but the comparison is both incomplete and devoid of personal meaning to the author—readers may assume that Gautier undertakes to mask his relationship in the poem, but with whom? During this time, letters show that Gautier is romantically flirting not only with a host of women (the Grisi women, an unnamed Spanish mistress, Eugénie Fort, Madame Sabatier, etc.), but is also writing ‘loving’ notes to his peers, his “master” Hugo, and in reference to places and concepts.

Myth and hieroglyph create additional values that build crust upon crust of meaning rather than duplicate or imitate the travel references. From the first stanza, which involves Greek myth and worship on ground (earth), Gautier seamlessly uses the “white dreams” to flow into the “dreams” (myths) of Greek water by introducing Venus in the form of
Aphrodite. Aphrodite’s epithet is “pearl of the sea,” and she too, like the pearls transformed from her tears, is embodied from something disembodied—the semen falling from Uranus’ castrated (disembodied) genitals. White elements associated with Aphrodite—sea foam, tears, pearls—link to the complicated myths surrounding Venus and the “two pearls” that, plunged into the abyss, are speaking/ passing for “unknown words.” Just as ‘white islands’ are associated through a myth at Aptera in the first stanza, Venus here is associated with the islands of Paphos and Cyprus, which became verdant as she stepped on their shores with her rosy feet (just as the doves with their rosy feet will step upon the radiant domes in Venice). According to other myths, Venus was born of an egg laid by a dove that fish rolled from the banks of Euphrates River, where doves nested on it and hatched it (thereby relating to the nesting doves in Stanza 4), and the shellfish “speaking unknown words to each other” beneath the sea may refer to the ear-mussels known as “Aphrodite’s Ear” by the Aeolians, which parallels the musical myth coded into the first stanza. Though we cannot be certain that Gautier read the ancient works, a similar myth linking poet/musician with pearl and water is referenced in Goethe’s poem (which Gautier would have read) the titled “Song and Plastic Art,” in which waters of the Euphrates cool the poet’s passion, and poetry “rounds to a crystal sphere.” Perhaps, too, Gautier is paying homage to Hugo’s “Ecrit sur la plinthe d’un bas-relief antique,” in which ships’ flanks are washed by waves, and in which references to enamels and sororities are made (section three, stanza 1 of “Affinités Secrètes”).

Gautier’s substitution for or transformation of nature into artifice across stanzas is used cleverly in the form of word play: “nacre” is a white material within the shell that reflects light to produce varying colors at different angles, and can be stripped from a shell
and placed as a thin layer on any surface to give the illusion of marble (it creates ‘white dreams’). The *larmes des flots* (tide of tears) formed by Venus *pleurant* (crying) transforms into the *jet d’eau* (water sprays) that are always *en pleurs* (streaming) at Generalife; the watery *gouffre* (abyss) into which the pearls sink underwater corresponds to the *nid* (nest) in which two doves of Venice settle and lay their eggs. The “hatching” of these eggs corresponds not only to the alternate myth of Venus’ birth as an egg that hatched from the Euphrates, but also to the roses that are *écloses*, a word that means both “to be born” and “to hatch from an egg.” These silent correspondences reinforce the nature of language quoted from Diderot earlier in this work, in which “synthetic and simultaneous clusters of images, the material of poetry, form ‘a tissue of hieroglyphs’ that represent feelings and states of mind existing as a whole.” As in music, a stereographic plurality is achieved through the echoing and overlapping of the signifiers.

In Part 1, Stanza 3, Gautier provides the reader with an identifiable, historical reference from Spain that corresponds to his description in the travel writings there. Writing of the Justicia Gate, the main entrance to the Alhambra that was completed by Yusuf I in 1348, Gautier remarks on the hieroglyphic symbols of hand and keys carved into the marble keystone, which have not only Islamic significance but also appear in alchemical illustrations:

The key is a symbol of great veneration among Arabs due to a Koranic verse that begins with the words “It opened,” and several other hermetic meanings; the hand was destined to ward off the evil eye. There was an ancient prediction stating that Grenada would not be taken unless the hand seized the
key; nevertheless, though, the two hieroglyphs remain in their place still; Boabdil, the boy king...uttered this historical groan outside of Granada, now known as the Pass of the Moor’s Sigh, the rocks so-baptized in the Sierra Elvira of Spain (221).

Gautier admires the Arabs’ ability to mould, harden and carve plaster, and writes that they had advanced the art form to the point of creating the same durability of stucco without its ugly, gleaming look. Gautier values the decorative elements shaped on the surface or by artificial means more than anything practical or historical; it is a picturesque place where reverie matters more than reality.24 Of the Generalife gardens, he writes that

The true charm of Generalife is its gardens and waters. A canal, cloaked in marble, occupies the entire length of the enclose and flows abundantly and rapidly under a suite of arcades of foliage, formed by yews that are contorted and strangely trimmed....The perspective ends with a gallery-portico of water fountains and marble columns. The canal turns, and you enter other enclosures decorated with water works, and where the walls conserve traces of frescoes from the sixteenth century. At the middle of these pools (bowls) blooms, like an immense basket, a gigantic rose bush of particular beauty and splendor. At the moment I saw it, it was like an explosion of flowers, like a bouquet of artificial, vegetal fire; a fresh and vigorous splendor almost noisy, if one can apply this word to colors...its beautiful flowers burst outward with all the ardor of desire
toward the pure light of the sky; its noble leaves, shaped
expressly by nature to crown the glory, were bathed by the
drizzling of the fountains, and sparkled like emeralds in the
sun. Nothing ever gave me a more vivid feeling of beauty than
this rose bush at Generalife (222-7).

In the third stanza of “Affinités Secrètes,” the two flowers represent Ferdinand and Isabella, to whom Boabdil gave Granada in exchange for his freedom. The artificial water garden as human construct parallels the natural water garden (ocean) in which Venus has hatched and released her two eggs (pearls). Gautier describes the roses’ action using the verb jaser, which is often translated as spreading scent, but etymologically relates to “pronouncing human words,” especially relating to the chattering of birds. The verb suggests not only musical sounds put forth by animals and plants, but also links the stanza to the white dreams, unknown words, and cooing doves of its three sister stanzas. Everywhere in the stanzas musical myths are laced beneath the images, proving Gautier’s earlier quoted contention (L’Art Moderne) that the artist finds his creative alphabet in the visible world, though the idea of beauty itself already exists within each person (157).

The final stanza of section one refers to two doves that nest in the cupolas of Venice, another historical reference that has already appeared in Gautier's earlier poem “Lamento.” Venice is described in his travel writings, like Generalife, as a place of surface beauty with little interest in its historical relevance. Two wild Stock Pigeons grace the Venice cupolas, where they nest and breed on a May evening. Gautier’s doves will transform into colombe in the second section of this poem, indicating a segue from natural imagery to alchemical transformation and spiritual correspondences that are not indicated in the first section of
the poem where opposites are born from each other rather than disembodied from and re-
blend with each other. This fourth stanza is also linked to the second in that, just as two
pearls exist beneath the sea, these pigeons lay two eggs when they mate. The white dreams
juxtaposed between the marble pillars of stanza one correspond to the pigeon’s white
under-wing, and pigeon’s red feet to the red roses of the third stanza. Similar to Generalife,
which was built over succeeding centuries and incorporated architectural elements from
the orient, Islam, Christianity and antiquity, and to the possible reference to Portara
(unfinished because its materials were disassembled and used to build castles), some parts
of Saint Mark’s Basilica in Venice incorporate columns, capitals and ornament not only
from other parts of the world but also from other eras to the extent that the exterior has
parts that are older than the building itself. The musical theme is perpetuated in this final
stanza of section one through Gautier’s choice of the Stock Pigeon, which is known for its
distinct call that bears resemblance to “roaring,” and thereby links to the noisy rose bush of
Generalife and unknown words murmured by the underwater mussels.

The mash-up of objects, places and references in the first four stanzas serves no
singular function, nor can any meaning be derived from these correspondences or the
underlying myths they may constellate. Hugo had written (1833), in “Ecrit sur la plinthe,”
that “music is in everything”; the poem is a pantheistic hymn in which Hugo takes the bas-
relief of a shepherd playing his flute with lowered eyelids as inspiration for the harmony,
song, and melody found in the sounds of young lovers’ passion, cityscapes, seasonal
changes, and in Nature’s command that everything sing. Gautier diverges from natural
pantheism, focusing less on sounds and song and more on textures created by
intermingling objects, senses, ideas, and histories. Musicality, therefore, occurs less in the
rhyme and meter of Gautier’s stanzas, and more through the polyphony of motifs, which are constantly evolving, vague, and liberated from any final meaning, and which represent impersonal references to noumenon.

Henri Bergson, in *Time and Free Will*, suggests a paradox in which multiplicity—or layered, fixed moments—cohabit together as *durée* (“Our perceptions, sensations, emotions and ideas occur under two aspects, the one clear and precise, but impersonal; the other confused, ever changing, and inexpressible,” (129); and for Bergson, at least, this process is closely linked to dis-embodiement and re-embodiment:

[The poet] has made us reflect by giving outward expression to something of that contradiction, that interpenetration, which is the very essence of the elements expressed. Encouraged by him, we have put aside for an instant the veil, which we interposed between our consciousness and ourselves. He has brought us back into our own presence (133-4).

Section two comprises stanzas five through eight of the poem, and alludes to the higher-level alchemical transformation and transmutation of the four main objects designated in the first four stanzas: marble, pearl, rose, “dove.” The Stock Pigeon (*ramier*) is transformed through word play into *colombe* in the first stanza of section 2, indicating that the poet is moving away from gross/material references to intangible/spiritual allusions; the dove as *ramier* represents not only Venus and passionate love, but as *colombe* is an elevated symbol for the Holy Spirit, Eucharist, or virginal maiden. The eight steps of the alchemical process and their respective symbols appear in a seventeenth century French hermetic illustration that bears uncanny resemblance to the images related in Gautier’s poem (see Appendix).
Two marble pillars are inscribed with two axioms: “Fire and Azoth suffice” (Azoth represents the universal solvent, and the two combine as Pearl of Wisdom), which is juxtaposed on the other pillar with a warning that “Whatever is beautiful is difficult,” represented as a rose surrounded by a crown of thorns; the combined axioms suggest that hard work and obscure efforts will yield perfumed results. Above them, an eagle (Venice) and salamander (Spain) nest; from their nests are born more pearls and the caduceus, both of which represent music and speech acts (“mots inconnus” and the caduceus as a symbol of Hermes, who transmitted alchemy and invented the lyre inherited by Apollo, god of poetry). The upper half of the illustration represents higher-level processes, or what readers find in the second section of Gautier’s poem: transmutation, transformation, and a renewal of the process; the central hieroglyph, “Mercury of the World or Magnesia,” represents the unification of all attributes, where the fixed and volatile indissolubly meet and, in unity, multiply (what Gautier calls “ces sympathies aux impérieuses douceurs”). Similarly, though these higher-level processes take place in section 2 of Gautier’s poem, the third and fourth sections re-establish and renew the cycle, but in material and conceptual rather than alchemical form. Stanzas nine through twelve of Section 3 represent Step 8 of the Alchemical process, in which the poem “arrive[s] back where [it] started from, only now empowered and embodied in an eternal Stone that represents an incorruptible higher consciousness” (Hauck 168). This section parallels Section 1 in the re-introduction of the four objects, now new and re-formed. Section 3 amasses and confuses already established connections. Atoms obey the call of each other, now transformed from objects into senses and actions: aroma (rose), ray (marble) and color (pearl), atoms “fly” (dove) toward each other. Words from section 1 reappear in section 3, stanza 3 in new form:
Le fronton d'un temple antique  
Leurs rêves blancs  
flot clair  
des conversations  
fleuris  
sur le fronton  
des rêveries  
larmes des flots  
des mots inconnus  
jaser leurs fleurs  

Corporeal actions are also implied as objects transform, particularly related to touch and taste:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marble</th>
<th>white flesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roses</td>
<td>rosy lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupolas</td>
<td>“boule d’or” (sun, crown, or melon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dove’s coo</td>
<td>murmuring hearts of lovers/ flapping wings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nacre/ pearl</td>
<td>saliva/ teeth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shifting into the fourth section, Gautier moves the reader from remembering the dreams of four objects and what they represent to real, forgotten love awakening between the two people that have taken physical form from those former objects. In Gautier’s poem, layer upon layer of a static past builds an active, mutable present, and creates what Adorno calls “sensory infinity” (139). In Gautier's poem, readers discover that “it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another” (Bergson, 84).

Instead of chattering, the flower as lips now *smells* itself; instead of pearls forming from nacre, teeth now *glisten* (sight) in a salivated smile; instead of opposing their white dreams, moving flesh *feels* its freshness; instead of nesting, the Stock Dove *hears* the echo of a former plaint. Everything becomes less shrill, all resistance fades as things blend from arbitrarily chosen objects that represent love (*l'inconnu*) into a flesh-and-blood lover (amant).

Roses ont fait jaser leur fleurs  
Perles se sont dit  
se respire et se reconnaît  
revoit
No indication in his letters or journals suggests that Gautier was directly referencing a particular alchemical text; however, as indicated earlier in this dissertation, Gautier spent several years learning hieroglyphics and myths from the “orient,” worked closely with Nerval and Balzac (both writers were very interested in the esoteric), and read Goethe and other Germans known for their arcane references; he would, therefore, have been aware of the most basic alchemical processes and symbols, and they are presented in the following areas of the poem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alchemical Process</th>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Emotional Parallel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcination</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>white dreams drawn out from the marble columns</td>
<td>burning off volatile compounds</td>
<td>shedding ego, driving off of negative emotions and libido</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Earth = marble columns Air = blue sky, dreams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissolution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>pearls formed from nacre, or formed from dissolved tears</td>
<td>salt in tears as a remnant of crystallized thoughts that have been broken down (Hauck 197)</td>
<td>ego is removed, soul and spirit brought up from unconscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Water = pearl, tears</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>blossoming roses formed from the tears, release their fragrant breath (noise = prana)</td>
<td>Air, wind, spiritual insight (prana and chi)</td>
<td>death and hope, rational mind analyzes the hidden material to extract a person’s true essence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ramiers se sont posés trouve une voix douce
Marbre juxtaposé leurs rêves blancs sent sa fraîcheur
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fire = rose bush</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>4 end of Material/ Gross, or Lower Level Functions in Alchemical Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two doves mate, two eggs hatched beneath a heavenly dome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Air = doves</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two white birds raise a crown to heaven, lovers, sun and moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cleansed parts reunite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermentation (Putrefaction + Fermentation)</td>
<td>5 shift to Spiritual or Higher Level Functions in Alchemical Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“tout se dissout, tout se détruit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Putrefaction: the pearl liquefies, the marble is calcined, the rose withers, the bird flees</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fermentation: all parts are placed in the creuset (crucible) where the “universal substance” (pâte universelle) augments, and is made of substances originally formed by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>matter is resurrected with the influx of bacteria (mold) (239)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ego is totally annihilated, will (Sulfur) and imagination (Mercury) combine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distillation</td>
<td>7, 8 slow and repeated transformation in different bodies (se refont): white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rejuvenation and rebirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>separation and recombination of gross aspects of the personality; rejuvenation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Coagulation | 9, 10, 11, 12 shift back to gross world, renewal of process | From this distillation is born unity, no resistance (impérieuses douceurs), “everywhere sisters recognize each other” such that colors, sounds, scents atoms become kindred in matter and spirit

Blend of images and actions from section 1, stanzas 1-4: flowers speak (instead of pearls), fountain | ultima materia, kundalini, vibrational state | Body is made spiritual and spirit is made corporeal (271); no separation | and rebirth (251-2) |

| marbles become ivory flesh, red roses become rosy lips, newborn Stock doves’ murmurs become the hearts of young lovers languor toward each other, pearls molded to a jewelry box sparkle like teeth within a laughing mouth | | | | | |
waters crystallize (instead of pearls), dreams fall to the sea (instead of between pillars), birds wings take flight from the architectural dome toward golden balls (gold, the ultima material)

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Within “Affinités Secrètes,” “one notes pairings, units of four, and repeated concepts in new form, all of which lend to madrigal and pantheist tendencies. Tetrads of stanzas and sections build upon each other, intermingle, and are eternally twisted not to form new things but rather to renew and emphasize different facets and relationships among those things. In color theory, tetradic (double complementary) schemes are the most complicated because harmonizing color pairs is difficult—four colors cannot be equally used at any given time, and the scheme is balanced only when one dominates the others. Tetradic structures and elements (like carbon) remain unchanged, whether flipped, mirrored or reversed; repunits contain only a single number or concept and can be used to predict cyclical patterns—they represent universality or the pantheist-alchemical notion that One is part of all, and all are part of One.
Gautier’s poem, alluding to Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*, achieves musicality much in the way that, if I may borrow his more eloquent wording, Benedict Taylor describes Mendelssohn’s achievement of musicality in *Opus 20*:

The supreme reconciliation and integration of every individual into the whole is always imminent but never arrives. The two approach each other asymptotically to produce what Hegel would call “bad infinity.” More likely...the final realization of this process is reached in the very last passage that synthesizes first movement and finale into one. This realization achieved, the piece ends; time ceases. The “frame” at either side of the [poem] is the annulment of time, the silence at the end of the work, the sound of eternity” (131-59).

In “Affinités Secrètes,” musicality is more apparent, because one finds a recapitulation and synthesis of all previous poetic content within its lines and all its discreet references, allowing the poem to act as both summation and apogee; it achieves Beauty because, as cited earlier, “le beau existe au dessus et en dehors des conditions d’unité et de variété” (*L’Art Moderne*, 157). This is exactly what Lévi-Strauss means when, writing of myth, he states that “multiplicity is an essential characteristic [of myth], which coincides with its object by forming a homologous image of it but never succeeds in blending with it...Since it has no interest in definite beginnings or endings, mythological thought never develops any theme to completion: there is always something left unfinished. Myths, like rites, are “in-terminable” (6). The poem meets the criteria for musicality because it is vague, unfixed, subjective, and “silent,” acting as a dramatic reenactment of both the writer’s and the
viewer’s imagination, completely detached from any specific moment or place, ever-evolving, and engaged in a cyclical and circular structure of constant reprise and recapitulation.
The mingling and transformation of objects, ideas, senses and histories develops not only within “Affinités Secrètes” but also as a theme across groups of poems. Gautier published this poem along with the “Poème de femme” and “Symphonie en blanc majeur.” The three poems together combine in a fourth work titled, wholistically, *Variations nouvelles sur de vieux thèmes* (1849). Scholars have discussed an influence by Paganini, whose violin *Caprici* (1802-20) inspired a series of variations on the original theme by Paganini, Rachmaninoff, Brahms (1862-3), Liszt (1838), Robert Schumann (1832) and others. In his review of Paganini’s work (*La Presse*, 11 April 1843), Gautier writes that

Le vieux air vénitien qui sert de thème à ces merveilleux caprices est délicieux et vaut plusieurs charretées d’opéras: il est joyeux et mélancolique à la fois; les pleurs y sont tout près du rire, et quand on l’entend jouer par Sivori, toutes sortes de folles visions vous traversent la fantaisie. Vous voyez nager dans l’azur les ramiers blancs de Saint-Marc, filer les gondoles sous les ponts de marbre, chaque note en passant devant vous enveloppée de la haute de dentelles noires, soulève un instant son loup de velours et vous découvrez une figure aimée autrefois. Les modulations vous bercent languissamment comme les flots assoupis, et la rêverie s’emparerait tout à fait
de vous si une phrase nasillarde et chevrotante comme l'éclat de rire d'un groupe de masques ne venait vous réveiller tout à coup et faire renaître le sourire sur vos lèvres.

[The old Venetian air that serves as a theme for these wonderful caprices resonates well in several opéras : it is simultaneously joyous and melancholic; laughter and tears blend, and if you listen to it played by Sivori, you imagine all kinds of strange visions. You see, swimming in the blue, the white woodpigeons of Saint Mark's, gondolas slipping under the white marble bridges, each note passing before you enveloped from above in black lace, stirring up its velvet hem, as you discover a beloved figure of olden days. The modulations rock you gently like lulls of the tide, and the revery seizes you suddenly as if a twangy and quavering phrase like a burst of laughter from a group of masques fails to wake you and revive the smile on your lips.]

If Paganini inspired Gautier, I would argue that it was solely in the appeal of elements of virtuosity (a lifetime of practice), infinite variation (impassive and impair), and the response of other composers, who took the original material and encoded or redeveloped it in their own work (as Gautier does in his poems). Gautier in many literary critiques refers to “love” as the oldest of themes, and not only does each of the three poems recycle and reenvision an external source poem or event, but each subsequent poem in the triad builds
upon or lends material to its companion works. In some ways, each poem in the *Variations* collection acts as a tone poem or symphonic poem on the subject of “woman.”

Hugo’s “Nouvelle chanson sur un vieil air” (1834) seems to be the literary starting point not only for its titular influence on Gautier’s three-poem collection, but also for the motifs that appear in “Poème de femme.” Hugo’s poem retains the stylistic elements of a song, with each of the three stanzas opening “Si’il est,” with each closing couplet ending “J’en veux faire [object] où ton [object] se pose,” and with each of the three stanzas creating sets of objects: gazon/chemin/pied, sein/coussin/front, and rêve/nid/coeur. Not only is the female body dissected into symbolic parts, but the series of words also act as anaphora (co-referents) for each other. The poet wishes to be the garden path on which the woman’s foot steps, the cushion on which her body lies, and the nest in which her heart is placed. Each verse represents a different type of woman: natural, manmade, spiritual.

Gautier’s “Poème de femme” is, likewise, about a woman who transforms across time, but this time in tetradic rather than triadic fashion—as Infante, Venus pudica, odalisque and European courtesan. As stereographic plurality, each of these four forms corresponds to cultural issues developing in France during the first half of the nineteenth century, and on the literary front reflects writers’ Orientalist fixation. In 1843, Gautier, writing to Nerval on the development of *La Péri*, lamented that he could not travel to meet Nerval “voir des femmes jaunes, noires, bleues, vertes” (“to see yellow, black, blue and green women”), and would therefore have no recourse but to “construire un Orient et un Caire, rue Lepelletier…à dix minutes de chemin de chez moi” (“make my own Orient and Cairo, Lepelletier Street, ten minutes’ walk from my place”).
As noted in earlier chapters, Gautier often takes historical material from either his own travels or from the reading of contemporary travel guides and embeds it into his poetry as impersonal noumenon. Events are built on the same place, which creates multiple layers or isotopic incidences, and this is what moves the text (much like music arises through the performance of the music). Eco appropriately noted that Greimas' interpretation of isotopy in semiotics was flawed; the term works more as “going in a direction” rather than as simple “repetition” (1980: 34-45). Commenting on musical isotopy and memory, Tarasti notes that

When a new isotopy is introduced into a piece, bringing with it an entirely new field of signification, a change also occurs in the paradigm of memory, and the accumulation of elements begins again, right from the beginning...the memory is not only repetitive, but also creative (63).

The ideal woman is created/moved by metamorphosis. Gautier imagines her first in Spain, then Greece, the Orient and finally as the poet's “real” object of desire, Carlotta Grisi, for whom he wrote a number of reviews and developed the scenario for *Giselle*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infante</th>
<th>Venus Anadyomène</th>
<th>Odalisque</th>
<th>French Mistress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“avec des airs d'infante”</td>
<td>“Elle semblait en Vénus Anadyomène”</td>
<td>“La Géorgienne indolente”</td>
<td>“le tableau dans son jour”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art: La Pâïva: elle brille...dans les chants des musiciens</td>
<td>Art: marbre, Apelle, Clémène, Phidias</td>
<td>Art: tapis, Ingres</td>
<td>Art: marbre de Clésinger, linceul de point d'Angleterre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place: Italiens</td>
<td>Place: Venise</td>
<td>Place: Cachemire</td>
<td>Place: Angleterre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Structurally, the poem follows the same 4x4 (tetradic) structure just like its companion poems. Though divided into nineteen stanzas, Gautier uses the first stanza as a prelude to the actual poem, and the final two stanzas as the poet’s written lament over her death:

[prelude: female, her body performing as poem]

Un jour, au doux rêveur qui l’aime
En train de montrer ses trésors,
Elle voulut lire un poème,
Le poème de son beau corps.

[One day, to the sweet dreamer who loves her,
As she exposed her treasures to me,
She wanted to read a poem,
The poem of her beautiful body.]

...

[postlude: male poet, offering lament]

Que les violettes de Parme,
Au lieu des tristes fleurs mortes
Où chaque perle est une larme,
Pleurent en bouquets sur son corps!
Et que mollement on la pose
Sur son lit, tombeau blanc et doux
Où le poète, à la nuit close
Ira prier à deux genoux.

[Parma violets,
in place of sad mourning flowers,
where each pearl is a tear,
cry in bouquets on her body!
And gently may she be born to her bed,
A white and tender tomb
Where the poet, at nightfall
Will go to pray on his bent knees.

The pre- and postlude to the poem (stanzas 1, 18 and 19) represent a shift from female, poetic performance to male, prayerful lament. The poem in between is composed in four sections of four stanzas each and becomes a performance “read” aloud playfully to the poet using her body rather than through written words; the words are desubjectified and represented through the woman's gesture and transformation. Four motifs exist in each stanza, and they transition across the four sections of the poem based on location, fashion, artwork and historical context, and gesture being performed by the woman reading the poem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANZA</th>
<th>SECTION 1</th>
<th>SECTION 2</th>
<th>SECTION 3</th>
<th>SECTION 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-ceremonial dress</td>
<td>-Apelles/Cleomenes</td>
<td>-antique art</td>
<td>-lazy odalisque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-airs of an Infante</td>
<td>-marble flesh</td>
<td>-Phidias/Venus</td>
<td>-painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-flood</td>
<td>-Venus Anadyomene</td>
<td>-plastic pose</td>
<td>-diamond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-“pale-red” velvet</td>
<td>-sea</td>
<td>-charms revealed</td>
<td>-coral smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-opera box</td>
<td>-pearls of Venice</td>
<td>-Cashemere rug</td>
<td>-head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Italiens</td>
<td>-water droplets</td>
<td>-Sultane/harem</td>
<td>-breast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-praise</td>
<td>-iridescent gems</td>
<td>-mirror</td>
<td>-arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-songs</td>
<td>-satin skin</td>
<td>-coral smile</td>
<td>-cushions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-artistic flair</td>
<td>-ravishing things</td>
<td>-Georgienne</td>
<td>-eye lids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-“weighty” velvet</td>
<td>-divine nudity</td>
<td>-supple hookah</td>
<td>-silver eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-opaque batiste</td>
<td>-strophe poses</td>
<td>-opulent hip</td>
<td>-pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-proud contours</td>
<td>-hymn</td>
<td>-crossed feet</td>
<td>-nacre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gautier is not inclined toward a specific woman until the poem's final section when his detachment is resolved through mourning of the beloved. The poet is concerned with the paradox of women of questionable reputation—the “real” women (actresses, courtesans, prostitutes) who possessed sexual dominance over men were supposed to be morally devalued by their societies, and so are transformed in Gautier's work as legendary goddesses and political leaders from different cultures. The real mistresses that served as models for these artists’ works are presented as aesthetic ideals: they lie semi-inclined with one arm lifted above the head, the other arm either draping or covering the female genitalia in pudica form (see Appendix IV). Viewers of the works (and readers of Gautier’s poem) will note that these women are not presented in relaxed or sedentary manner; rather, they are contorted, distorted, twisted and perversely elongated to simulate a performance for the viewer and to emphasize their unreality.

Several objects and motifs reappear from the previous poem (pearl, marble, tears, waves) as do the triad of places (Spain, Venice, Greece). New motifs are introduced: Turtledove (as opposed to Stock Pigeon and Dove), Parma Violets (as opposed to roses), England and Cashmere (new travel references with new textiles—shroud and carpet). New symbols are introduced, which may represent the shift toward a Parnassian or Symbolist lexicon to replace Romantic symbols, or may represent a political agenda: The Parma Violet, for example, was artificially cultivated and possessed a delicate scent, but it was also a
flower adopted by Napoleon (nicknamed the Caporal Violet) and first made into a perfume by Napoleon’s wife Marie Louise, who died in 1847. That the woman’s grave is covered with violets strikes the reader as odd, since the rose, morning glory and immortelle would have been more fashionable choices as mourning flowers during the nineteenth century.

The introduction of a third type of dove simulates a shift from *ramier* to *colombe* to *tourterelle*—from whore to virgin to corpse. The Turtledove mates for life, symbolizes devotion and mourning due to its soft, purring song (the bird’s name is based on the sound of its *coo, turr turr*), and unlike the European doves and pigeons of “Affinités Secrètes,” lives in Northern Africa and is therefore associated with the Orient.

As in “Affinités Secrètes,” the four fragments of each stanza are parts used to establish a pattern: the natural woman performs (is becoming, *impair*) and either an isolated body part or inanimate, manmade piece of cloth “responds,” creating the same annihilation of opposites (*jeu*). Fire is the first section’s element: In section 1:1, she enters and behind her follows red-orange velvet (this velvet becomes deadweight in 1:3, and is replaced by her glowing (red-passionate), living contours). In 1:2 she is a voyeur, *aflame* in her box, and praise is bestowed upon her through musician’s songs; this is reversed in 1:4, in which she becomes exhibitionist when her chemise actively falls, making her now white flesh the object of attention. Water is the second section’s element, and there is an emphasis on manmade rather than natural woman: in 2:1, she transforms into Venus Anadyomene (living flesh), posing like marble (manmade) for Apelles or Cleomenes; this is reversed in 2:3, in which the manmade strophes and hymnes substitute for her “divine nudity.” In 2:2, the manmade pearls replace tears and they fall upon the woman’s flesh, now transformed into satin (instead of wearing velvet as in section 1); this is reversed in
2:4, in which her graceful, artificial movements now mimic the natural waves and
trembling moonlight upon those waves. In section three, earth dominates as element, and
the natural again dominates over manmade. Section three also responds to Section one, so
that velvet and voyeurism will now be revisited: In 3:1, the living woman unveils her
charms (exhibitionist), moving away from weary Classical form; this is reversed in 3:3, in
which her feet are crossed prudishly to veil her inner thighs, while the manmade hookah is
exposed and supple. In 3:2, the woman’s red smile (now a live, coral smile instead of
deadweight, red velvet) laughs at the mirror that observes her, and she becomes a Sultane
(voyeur) who watches her harem from a cashmere carpet (instead of opera box). This is
reversed in 3:4, in which the manmade Odalisque of Ingres replaces the natural beauty, and
reveals her physical contortion and deformity, just as she is revealed and replaced as white
corpse at the end of section 1:4. Section four typifies the air element, and responds to
Section two. In 4:1 she is an idle painting (as in 2:1 she is an idle statue) turned to natural
diamond; this reverses 2:1, in which natural Venus appears on a constructed shell. In 4:2
her natural respiration is emphasized: her head turns, she breathes, she dreams and falls
upon her cushions; conversely, in 2:2 she cries and the tears fall upon her satin skin. In 4:3,
her eyelids involuntarily close upon silver eyes and her eyes, like those of saints, look
upward toward death; however, in 4:1, she is no longer the painting of a goddess, but
becomes a crying saint; it also opposes 2:3, in which divinity is reduced to a physical level,
and her poses become the saintly hymns and angelic strophes. In 4:4, she wears a saintly
shroud (instead of white flesh, she is covered in white mourning cloth), and like a saint, she
dies in ecstasy and ascends from earth to heaven; this reverses 4:2, in which she falls to
earth upon her cushion; and 2:2, in which tears of sadness fall from downcast eyes as pearls
upon her flesh. The parallels between sections are less profound than in “Affinités Secrètes,” but nevertheless follow a similar motivic structure. In these multi-layered poems, as in music, one must “invent, or discover, a deep structure out of which that marvelous surface structure has been generated….result[ing] from a chain of possible and desirable combination of elements” (Bernstein 87).

The stanzas and sections are also linked through relationships that are only implied in the poem (hieroglyphic, impassive) rather than are directly connoted; readers will again note elements of mythical-tangible, historical-biographical, topographical-botanical, transformative-alchemical. Tarasti writes of music that the same theme or idea can be presented in different lights and can lead to different results, including dramatic colution, achievement, or unfulfillment of the action (10). Hilda Nelson and Georges Poulet describe a trip undertaken by Gautier and Nerval to Belgium prior to the development of this poem. Poulet notes that the two men were “in search of an ideal” woman, and that “it is only when he [saw] the Madeleine of Rubens in Notre-Dame d’Angers that [Gautier was] confronted, for the first time, with his ideal, the eternal feminine” (Nelson 12). Since it was inspired by a Rubens’ painting more than by a real mistress or flesh-and-blood Belgian beauty, readers glean that, as in all other Gautier poetry, ideality and eternal beauty are only discovered in art. Through this poem, the development of an idea (“woman”) leads to repetitions or isotopies of that woman—and they function simultaneously in the same passage.

Rubens’ Magdalene was not the sole artwork to make an impression upon the poet. The painter Gervex was inspired by Musset’s “Rolla” (1833) to paint a courtesane in the nude. Rather than placing the events in a fictitious or faraway setting, Gervex took the original fodder and made the work local and contemporary. Both Musset’s poem and the
painting emphasize female—a fallen woman's—empowerment over men, both in wealth and in their ability to have men give them their possessions and souls in order to have one night of pleasure. Alexander Dumas revisited the same theme in his novel *Lady of the Camellias* (1848). Gautier is believed to have initiated the rumors about Clésinger's statue, *Femme piquée par un serpent* (1847), by spreading word that it was a copy of a real woman, Madame Sabatier, rather than modeled to the artist's fancy. Gautier's poem, some critics have argued, is inspired by Esther Lachmann, known as La Païva, the most prominent courtesane at the Italiens whose lavish parties Gautier attended during the two years preceding the production of this poem. Whether as odalisque or as European whore, she is the unobtainable female, both idealized and devalued by the poet.

Moving from the Italiens woman in section one of “Poème de Femme,” Gautier references two Venus artworks in section two: The first by Phidias, the sculptor of the Venus de Milo—a statue that held great political and cultural significance for Nineteenth Century France; the second, a painting by Greek artist Apelles—who allegedly used Alexander the Great's mistress Campapse as a model for his painting of Venus Anadyomene (now lost). The Classical courtesane Phryne inspired Apelles's painting's theme, which depicts Venus surrounded by a transparent veil formed by water droplets being squeezed from her hair (again, this shows a parallel between sections two and four of Gautier's poem, in which the natural, silver veil of water is replaced with a manmade, white mourning shroud). That Phryne the courtesane (as Venus Anadyomene) was squeezing water from her hair and surrounded by a veil of water suggested that irreputable women should be transformed through washing and restoring their natural appearance.
The Medici Venus was internationally touted as possessing the “ideal” feminine form. Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing about her on a trip to the Uffizi, remarked that “this beautiful form is but nature’s plan for all womankind...I think that the world would be all the richer if the Venuses, their Greek Slaves, their Eves were burnt into quicklime, leaving us only this statue as our image of the beautiful.” Initially, the French had come into possession of the Medici Venus when Napoleon Bonaparte seized it from the Italians; in 1815, the French returned the work and in 1821 acquired the Venus de Milo to replace several works reclaimed by the Vatican, British and Italians. Through propaganda to retain French nationalism, French authorities promoted the Venus de Milo as a more significant sculpture than the Medici Venus, and this effort is mirrored in the copious poetic works devoted exclusively to or referencing the Venus de Milo during the the 1820s-1850s, including poems by Gautier, Théodore de Banville and Leconte de Lisle.

 Appropriately for this poem, the Medici Venus was not authentic; rather, it was a first century reproduction after an original sculpture by Cleomenes. The reproduction was known to have been not only adorned with jewels but also painted with red lips and golden hair, all of which were unceremoniously removed during a botched restoration in France. Scrubbing or removing moral impurities held particular relevance for the French: During the 1840s, courtesans used disproportionate amounts of water, and private bathing became habitual. After the loss of the Medici Venus, subsequent poetry and artistic works focus more on the courtesane-inspired Venus transformed into a modest and pure Venus: Canova, a Neoclassical sculptor, sculpted the Venus Italica (1811) after the Medici Venus, but shrouded her in thick folds of drapery and placed her in a pudica pose to shield her (and observers) from nude sensuality. Christine Havelock notes that “for Bernoulli there
was a logical link between Phryne as a member of the demimonde and impurity and bathing, and the Aphrodite of Knidos’ garment reflected her need for privacy” (25). Havelock cites Degas’ illustrations of prostitutes taking solitary sponge baths.

More poems post-1821 use the Venus de Milo as subject matter, and she becomes more a political symbol of French nationalism and cultural representation of purity than her Medici/Anadyomene predecessors. Théodore de Banville’s poem (1842) refers to the Venus as a “grand poème de pierre” (great poem in stone) who has taken on a warrior’s role (“guerrière au flanc nerveux”), and desires for her “blanche tunique” (white tunic) to fall to her feet, as it does in Gautier’s poem. Leconte de Lisle’s “Vénus de Milo” (La Phalange, 1846) describes Venus as a symbol of the impassive—as sacred marble, pure and harmonious, rather than full of laughter as the Anadyomene Venus, rather than adulterous as the Cyntherean Venus, and rather than idolatrous as the Astartian Muse (“les Ris et les Jeux...ne t’accompagnent pas”). Like Théodore de Banville’s work, Gautier’s poem is transfigured through the woman’s body as poem; like Leconte de Lisle’s composition, Gautier’s poem examines woman in different forms, both idolizing and devaluing her according to her representation in different cultures, and objectifying her body while subjectivizing his poet’s response to her form. Musicality is achieved because the woman’s body's signification is “based on the continuous becoming and changing” (Tarasti 18). Rather than placing a direct communicative function about a specific woman during a real time, readers find permutations; the poem "transforms into a new super-surface, and aesthetic surface,” that is “not equitable with linguistic surface structure” (Bernstein 82-3). A deep structure is formed through the combination of elements—multi-layered histories,
myths, and irrealsities—on the theme of woman. Returning to the theory of music (and musical poetry) as *quale*, the concept of woman is situational rather than wholistic.

Gautier’s female grows weary of her Venus form and transforms into Odalisque. Historically, the Turkish chambermaid sometimes trained as a concubine to serve her sultan in a sexual capacity, and thereby became a Sultana of the harem. The reference to Odalisque may be a salute to the Romantics and their fascination with Orientalism and the exotic; Gautier had written a poem titled “La Jeune Fille” (1830) that describes a young girl first as svelte brunette, then as blonde and pleading, both playing the role as an Occidental Sylph and an Oriental Peri. But, it may also be a cultural reference to the French conquest of North Africa taking place during this period. Gautier, in his recollection on dramatic arts, discussed a drama he developed in 1846 titled *La Juive de Constantine*. The idea for this work arose from the desire to write a modern melodrama, and Gautier describes the problems that arose during the collaborators’ efforts: first, the language of melodrama was neither theoretically outlined nor represented by contemporary works. Second, though they wanted to place the work in Northern Africa, Gautier says that the French had not yet moved beyond their prejudiced stereotypes of Algerians as being poor and dressed in rags (nor had they moved past the tradition of using Jewish or Spanish stand-ins to serve as models for Muslim women).

The play’s plot structure and audiences’ reactions do retain characteristics of Gautier’s poem: a woman’s transformation through life and death, and the humor that arises through grotesque representation of that transformation using gesture. The play stemmed, Gautier writes, from his knowledge of a Jewish cemetery in which fake funerals had been held for women who were still alive but had been disowned by their Jewish
communities for their romantic involvement with Christians. “They have the singular privilege of being able to read the date of their death, written on the tombstone, and to be able to place flowers on their own graves” (Art dramatique 4: 356). Gautier encountered one of these disavowed women in Constantinople, and her story held a certain “grandeur and poetry” for him. With Parfait he developed the drama of a living dead girl, which solicited unintended laughter in several scenes:

The fourth act was disturbed by laughter where frankness was intended; there was nothing amusing intended—the scene took place in a cemetery beneath a moon covered by clouds, and representing a young Jewess leaving her false coffin, appearing as a shadow to her lover, and placing, before forever quitting her homeland, a tear and flower on her mother’s tomb...this is neither new nor shocking; but certainly, it isn’t funny, and we confess in all sincerity that we wouldn’t have suspected this to be comical material (4:359).

Is the woman with the “airs of an Infante” based on the Jewess Esther Lachmann, the character represented in the play, or a combination of both? Gautier had visited Algeria in 1845, and he and his co-writer Noël Parfait had visited Istanbul, so their source material for this play is based on real experiences. But, as with his poem “Lamento” (with references to Italy and Venice), readers also find Gautier making reference in “Poème de femme” to a place and personage he would not have encountered until two decades after writing this poem, in this case, the “indolent Georgian woman.” Gautier visited Russia in 1860, eleven years after writing “Poème de femme,” and based on these travels wrote the short story “A
Winter in Russia,” which refers to Russian cold and snow as a “white vertigo” that delighted him (the obsession with “whiteness” echoes already in earlier poems). Though Gautier had no encounter with Russian culture and women at the time of writing “Poème de femme,” as with “Lamento,” he had access to travelogues and peer descriptions. Balzac had visited Russia in 1843 and remained there with Madame Hanska until his wedding in 1850. Astolphe de Custine wrote the pervasive and influential book *Russia in 1839: Empire of the Czar*, which was published in 1843. Stephanie Lin notes (2003) that post-Revolutionary France “discovered a formidable political and military enemy in tsarist Russia...[which] appeared in the eyes of many a French traveler as the diametrical opposite of post-Revolutionary France founded on liberal Enlightenment ideals” (114). Though Gautier had not visited Russia until more than a decade after writing his poem, he does, nevertheless, reference Georgian women in the 1843 letter written to Nerval that focuses on developments with *La Péri*:

> Ce n’est pas l’intrigue, l’aventure, les complications, les maris trompés, que cherche mon Don Juan; c’est la possession de la beauté dans toutes ses formes et sous tous ses aspects. Chrétien, il eût été un grand peintre; mais, dans une religion qui ne permet pas la reproduction de la figure humaine, de peur d’idolâtrie, il ne peut fixer ses rêves que par des tableaux réels. Dans ce sérail unique, se trouvent réunis tous les types de la perfection feminine: la Géorgienne aux formes royales, la Grecque au profil droit découpée en camée, l’Arabe pure et fauve comme un bronze, la juive à la peau d’opale, inondée
d’opulents cheveux roux, l’Espagnole fine et cambrée, la
Française vive et jolie, cent chefs-d’œuvre vivants que
signeraient Phidias, Raphaël, Titien; et cependant Achmet
répète tout bas cette ghazel mélancolique que le sultan
Mahmoud jetait à l’azur du Bosphore, du haut des terrasses du
serail: “J’ai quatre cents femmes, et je n’ai pas d’amour.”

[My Don Juan does not seek intrigues, adventures,
complications or cuckoldry; he seeks to possess beauty in all
its forms and types. Christian, he would have been a master
painter; but in a religion that forbids reproduction of the
human figure as a form of idolatry, he had no recourse but to
attach his fantasies to living works of art. In this unique
seraglio, one discovers all types of perfect, feminine beauty: the
royal Georgian, the Greek with her side profile chiseled into a
cameo, the pure and tawny Arab like a bronze statue, the fine
Spaniard with arched back, the lively and sweet Frenchwoman,
the Jewess with opal skin and flowing copper locks, one
hundred living masterpieces the likes of which Phidias,
Raphael and Titien would create; nevertheless, Achmet softly
repeats the melancholy ghazal that the sultan Mahmoud
exclaimed from the terrasses of his harem to the Bosphorous
strait: “I have four-hundred women, but not love.”]
The Georgian woman represents royalty and the exotic, though in this excerpt readers trace the same place names and women described in Gautier’s poem—the Spaniard who in the poem had the the royal airs of an Infante is “fine with high arches,” the Grecian, who in the poem is deminude, here is “shaped with cameo profile,” and the Arab, who in the poem is a Sultana, here appears as “pure and tawny.” Like the Sultan or Don Juan of his work, Gautier too had had many mistresses, but had not yet known true love. It is similar to what Daniel Levitin writes of memory (whether real or imagined) and cues in *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of Human Obsession*:

> Memories are encoded in groups...that, when set to proper values and configured in a particular way, will cause a memory to be retrieved and replayed in the theater of our mind....The problem is finding the right cue to access the memory and properly configure our neural circuits (Chapter 5).

In this poem, “woman” is cue, and the memories and fantasies are encoded into the stanzas.

Russia is the most logical place name to mention in this poem if readers assume that Gautier’s literary geography chronologically traces his romantic geography. From his devotion to the Jewess Esther Lachmann (La Païva), to the Spanish beauty with whom he exchanged anonymous love letters while in Spain, to his idealization of marble, the production of *La Péri* coincides with his love affair with Carlotta Grisi, for whom he developed the scenario for *Giselle*, and with whom he is believed to have engaged in an affair briefly in 1842 through 1843 (after which his affections were turned toward her sister, Ernesta), and whom he and Ernesta (as his wife) visited in the mid-1840s before she moved to Russia to be with her husband (1850).
Gautier wrote numerous reviews on Carlotta Grisi, at first lukewarm but then entirely devoted after viewing her performance in Gaetano Donizetti’s *La Favorite* (1840). The opera’s plot is set during the Moorish invasions of Spain, and follows a love triangle between King Alfonso XI, his mistress Leonora, and her lover Fernando (ironically, Gautier would have an affair with Carlotta, who was married to Balletmaster Jules Perrot, and would continue to write love letters to her in the 1860s). Of her dance style, which critics at the time described as a poetic lyricism, Gautier wrote that she dances “avec une perfection, une légèreté, une hardiesse, une volupté chaste et délicate...[et] pour la pantomime, elle a dépassé toutes les espérances; pas un geste de convention, pas un mouvement faux; c’est la nature et la naïveté” (“with a perfection, ease, boldness, and voluptuousness that is chaste and sweet...[and] in pantomime, she surpasses all expectations; not a conventional gesture, not a false movement; her style is both natural and raw”). In his recollections of the “beautiful women at the Opera,” he describes Carlotta as “pudic” like Fanny Elssler, and as dancing with the “nervous desperation of an Andalusian girl” (Souvenirs de théâtre, 95-98). Gautier’s obsession with female form was lifelong, but seems particularly pervasive during the 1840s, when he wrote not only poems, dramas, and a scenario for a ballet, but also created artworks of several women for these works, notably for *La Juive de Constantine* (1846) and of Carlotta in costume for *Giselle* (see Appendix IV).

Gautier and Grisi probably first consummated their relationship during his trip to London in 1842, where he was visiting for the premiere of *Giselle*. Uncanny similarities between this letter’s description of Carlotta and the poem’s content develop; she seems to be the culmination of the four women described in the poem: England and its white shroud, a marble Venus that laughs in the (reflective mirror) conche of her shell, her ballet
performance as a Persian fairy who seduces Achmet through opium dreams in La Péri, and the heavy breathing and collapse before Gautier-as-lover as narrated in Gautier’s poem correspond to a description he gives of Carlotta in the 1843 letter to Nerval:

Si tu savais avec quel chaste embarras Carlotta se débarrasse de son long voile blanc; comme sa pose, alors qu’elle est agenouillée sous les plis transparents, rappelle la Vénus antique souriant dans sa conque de nacre; quel effroi enfantin la saisit lorsque l’abeille irritée sort du calice de la fleur!

Comme elle indique bien les espoirs, les angoisses, toutes les chances de la lutte! Comme la veste et l’écharpe et le jupon où l’abeille cherchait à pénétrer, s’envoltent prestement à droite, à gauche, et disparaissent dans le tourbillon de la danse! Comme elle tombe bien aux genoux d’Achmet, haletante, éperdue, souriant dans sa peur, plus désireuse d’un baiser que des sequins d’or que la main du maître va poser sur le front et sur le sein de l’esclave! Si mon nom ne se trouvait pas sur l’affiche, quels éloges je te ferais de cette charmante Carlotta! J’ai vraiment regret d’avoir fourni quelques lignes de programme qui m’empêchent d’en parler à ma fantaisie...

[If you only knew with what chaste embarrassment Carlotta removes her long, white veil; how her pose, when she is kneeling under transparent folds, recalls an ancient Venus smiling in the conch of nacre, and with what childish terror she
is seized when the angered bee departs from the flower’s calyx.
How well she performs to the hopes, despairs, and unexpected struggles! How the scarf, jacket and skirt dash nimbly to the right and left as the bee tries to penetrate, and vanish in the turbine of her dance! How well she falls and kneels before Achmet, breathless, passionate, smiling with fear, more eager for a kiss than for the gold baubles that he sets upon this slave’s breast. If my name did not appear on the theater bill, what praises I would sing to you of this charming Carlotta! I truly regret having written several lines for the program, which now prevent me from speaking about it at will...

The fragmented blend of history, other artists’ works and Gautier’s works establishes a process of becoming and an annihilation of opposites: “Poème de femme” is a poem about woman, expressed gesturally through a woman’s body as hieroglyph (per-formed or carried out rather than implied or signified), and as a play between what is natural (real women) and what is constructed (Gautier’s fantasies about those women). There is not an extrinsic story or specific feeling illustrated in the poem; rather, by Gautier achieves “intrinsic musical meanings, [which] are generated by a constant stream of metaphors” (Bernstein 131). Musicality is achieved through the permutations and transformations (isotopies as moving the text) on the theme of woman.
III

“Symphonie en Blanc Majeur”

Why should not I call my works “symphonies,” “arrangements,” “Harmonies,” and nocturnes? As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with the harmony or sound of color....Art should be independent of all clap-trap—should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it, and that is why I insist on calling my works “arrangements” and “harmonies.”

James Whistler, letter to The World (London, 22 May 1878)

With “Symphonie en blanc majeur,” Gautier coined a title that became a byword for fin-de-siècle and early twentieth century culture and, more importantly, created the quintessential ballet poem—a genre that is still largely overlooked by scholars. V. La Prade published a collection of poems titled “Symphonies” (1855), Mallarmé a “Symphonie littéraire” (1865) Marie Krysinska a “Symphonie en gris” (1882), Paul Ginisty a “Symphonie en vert majeur” (1888) and “Symphonie en rire majeur” (1890), and Rene Maizeroy a “Symphonie en rose majeur” (1882). In the “Symphonie littéraire,” Mallarmé wrote reflections on the effect of reading three poets—Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, and Théodore de Banville—on his poetry. Of Gautier, he reminisces that

Bientôt une insensible transfiguration s’opère en moi, et la
sensation de légèreté se fond peu à peu en une de perfection.

Tout mon être spirituel, — le trésor profond des
correspondances, l’accord intime des couleurs, le souvenir du
rhythme antérieur, et la science mystérieuse du Verbe, — est
requis, et tout entier s’émeut, sous l’action de la rare poésie
que j’invoque, avec un ensemble d’une si merveilleuse justesse
que de ses jeux combinés résulte la seule lucidité (L’Artiste 1
February 1865).
[Soon, an imperceptible change took place in me, and I felt, little by little, a feeling of lightness melts into a perfection. My entire spiritual being—the profound treasure of correspondances, the intimate relationship among colors, the memory of anterior rhythm, and the mysterious science of the Word—was summoned and moved by the action of rare poetry that I invoked, together with such a wonderful accuracy that from their harmony arose a unique lucidity.]

Jacques Villebrune wrote a series of symphony poems of various colors (1886), Charles de Pomoy a “Symphonie en blanc majeur,” and Leon Laleau and Auguste Audy each wrote a “Symphonie en noir majeur” (1907, 1887). A series of parodies also arose, including the Hydropathes’ “Symphonie en lac majeur” (1928) and Adoré Floupette’s “Symphonie en vert mineur” (1885), which mocked the entire Parnassian movement that was influenced by Gautier’s work. Monnier, too, refers to a “Symphonie en flirt majeur” in his book Flirts; silhouettes de jeunes filles étrangères (1903). In La Brune et la blonde, Richard O’Monroy writes of a gathering of spectators at the Potinière, reffering to it as a “symphonie en blanc majeur” (1888). Writing of Jundt’s Parrain et marraine in his publication on the Beaux-arts exposition and salons of 1863-67, Maxime du Camp describes Jundt’s work as a “souvenir of the Alps...a symphonie en blanc majeur as a poet of our time might call it” (280). Paul Eudel refers to an Algerian scene as a “grande symphonie en blanc majeur” in “D’Alger à Bou-Saida” (1904), and Ernest Dupuy esteemed Vigny’s Eloa as the “second symphonie en blanc majeur” in his publication on Vigny (1912).
Gautier’s title resonated with painters and artists as well. James McNeil Whistler, who lived in Paris from 1855-59, painted a *Girl in White* series that featured his mistress Johanna Heffernan; he later referred to these works as the *Symphony in White* nos.1, 2 and 3 to promote his art for art’s sake belief, and to emphasize that composition, not subject, was central to his painting. Across these variations, Whistler’s painting became increasingly vertical and manifold much like Gautier’s poetry—not in emphasizing “whiteness” so much, but rather in correspondences that could be made, and in showing that all colors are contained within white and are therefore (at least, abstractly) a form or shade of white. In his book *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, Whistler defends the title as figurative rather than literal, responding to a critic’s disparagement by asking, “Does he then, in his astounding consequence, believe that a symphony in F contains no other note, but shall be a continued repetition of F, F, F?” (1890). Charles Fremine later referred to the painterly nature of Gautier’s poem, asking in *Promenades et rencontres* (1905):

> Mais comment peindre la neige? Il n’est point, parmi les blancs que la chimie élabore, un blanc qui approche de son éclat. Une vessie du blanc le plus pur, crevée sur la neige, y fait tache. Dans sa symphonie en blanc majeur, où les blancheurs des trois règnes de la nature se trouvent condensées, TG n’est arrivé à produire qu’une merveilleuse grisaille…c’est l’eau-forte, en définitive, avec ses blancs et ses noirs savamment opposés (179).

> [How, however, does one paint the snow? There is not, among the white tones that chemistry develops, a white that]
approaches its brilliance. A white vesica the most pure, 
bursting on the snow, is but a blot upon it. In his symphony in 
white major, where the whitiness of three kingdoms of the 
natural world are concentrated, Gautier succeeds only in 
creating a wonderful greyness...an etching, in fact, with its 
black and white tones intelligently opposed.]

As with its two sister poems, “Symphonie en blanc majeur” develops out of a combination 
of travel literature and fiction—it seems mainly inspired by Heinrich Heine’s travelogue, 
Gautier’s contributions to the ballet Giselle, a short story by ETA Hoffmann, and the poems 
“Fantômes” (1828) by Victor Hugo and “Symphonie de la neige” (1844) by Théodore de 
Banville.

In 1841, Gautier wrote Heinrich Heine one of the longest letters in the collected 
correspondence, discussing the perfect nature of Heine’s work on the Wilis for a ballet—a 
ballet Gautier would soon write and title Giselle (28 June 1841). Heine had written a text on 
is travels through Germany as a series of “travel pictures” from 1826-29, and had 
published a number of songs and “dance poems” after moving to France in 1831. In de 
l’Allemagne (1855 edition), Heine describes the Wilis’ origin in Slavic folklore; they are 
young women whose white skin is whiter than snow, who died before their nuptials and 
who now cannot find repose; as a result, they rise from their graves at midnight as noctural 
beings, dancing in troupes, and forcing their fiancés to dance with them until the men 
collapse and die. They often appear in animal form including wolf and swan. Heine also 
finds a parallel between the female swans and the swan that tows Helias, the Princess 
Beatrice of Cleves’s husband, to shore with a golden thread (the narrative repeats in
Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin*). In his letter, Gautier remarks that he was inspired by the passage

> où vous parlez des Elfes à la robe blanche dont l’ourlet est toujours humide, des Nixes qui font voir leur petit pied de satin au plafond de la chambre nuptiale, des Wilis au teint de neige, à la valse impitoyable, et de toutes ces délicieuses apparitions que vous avez rencontrées dans le Hartz et sur le bord de l’Ilse.

[in which you speak about Elves in white dresses with perpetually damp hems, of Nixie who reveal their small satin foot on the ceiling of the nuptial bedroom, of Wilis the color of snow, in a ruthless walse, and all kinds of marvelous apparitions that you recounted from Harz and on the edge of the Ilse.]

Gautier’s desire to transpose Heine’s work into a ballet did not initially reach fruition; he explains that he found it nearly impossible to translate the fantastic elements of Heine’s description into ballet, and revisited the theme only after reading Hoffmann’s tales and, likely, other German Romantic works translated or discussed by Nerval. The concept of “flying women” appears in the Walpurgis Night of Goethe’s *Faust*, which Nerval had translated between 1828-1840. It should be noted that the presence of swans was common in German, Slavic and Russian fairytales and folklore. Gautier’s poem, in my opinion, bears more similarity to Johann Karl August Musäus’s “The Stolen Veil” (1786), which was translated into French in 1844 and considered a primary influence on Tchaikovsky’s ballet *Swan Lake*. The story is a romance involving swan maidens descended from Leda (and who
speak only Greek), who renew their beauty by visiting magical springs located in Ethiopia, Asia and Germany. Friedbert, a knight, possesses Zoe’s ruby ring and steals her daughter’s “veil” (swan skin), and does not admit of it until he is betrothed to Kalliste. Musäus’s story carries intended satire, not lost in the closing lines of Gautier’s poem (“qui pourra mettre un ton rose dans cette implacable blancheur!”).

To date, no scholar has written adequately on Gautier’s “Symphonie en blanc majeur” as a libretto transposed into ballet poem. During the nineteenth century, libretti were detailed programs that outlined the story and scenes of the ballet. Gautier’s libretto for Giselle adapts Heine’s and others’ writing for dance-pantomime. Libretti involving swans and dangerous nymphs were popular in the decades preceding Gautier’s Giselle and “Symphonie en blanc majeur.” August Bournonville’s La Sylphide was performed at the Paris Opera in 1832, and Nourrit loosely based its scenario on Charles Nodier’s Trilby, ou Le lutin d’Argail. Bournonville’s ballet is noteworthy for introducing the ballet blanc, in which the corps de ballet appears on stage dressed entirely in white; during the nineteenth century, the ballet blanc generally performs after the first section of the work, and is associated with dream, vision, and the fantastic, or as a dance of supernatural or mythical creatures (Scholl 25-7). The notion of a dancing, white swan becomes the frame narrative for the first section of Gautier’s poem, where an ensemble of women-swans performs a ballet blanc on snowy branches. One soloist descends, and the remainder of the poem becomes the poet’s microscopic critique and comparison of her form and movement to the natural and mineral world.

Gautier again returns to a tetradic structure in “Symphonie en blanc majeur,” where four new types of women emerge, all representing an anthropomorphosis or androgyny, all
symbolizing unrequited love and either miraculous or destructive intervention in men’s lives. The poem consists of 18 stanzas so that, unlike its sister poems, it cannot neatly be divided into structural tetrads; however, the poem is divided into four topoi: the first four stanzas act as a frame to introduce the swan legend and single out one that becomes the subject for Gautier’s poem; the subsequent sixteen stanzas make reference to the female body, mineral and natural elements (inanimate), and the living animal and natural world. Each of these sections is headed by a female archetype and represents a specific geography; each is a shapeshifter and either associated with androgyny (a male disguised in the stolen swan coat) or with human-animal hybridity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Animal/ Natural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman: Wilis</td>
<td>Woman: Séraphita</td>
<td>Woman: Madone des neiges</td>
<td>Woman: Sphinx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place: Slavic</td>
<td>Place: Norway</td>
<td>Place: Italy</td>
<td>Place: Greenland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of striking departures from these original influences upon Gautier’s ballet and poem. In traditional folklore, the swan maidens are legendary creatures whose feathery robes, when stolen by a hunter or young man, transform them into human figures; the women are then married to or controlled by the man until they reclaim their down. In Gautier’s ballet *Giselle*, the dead heroine protects her beloved Albrecht from the Wilis, who appear and seek vengeance upon men that abandoned them on their wedding day. Gautier actually described two different deaths for Giselle: in the libretto she dies of a weak heart; in his discussion of Heine’s work, she commits suicide and stabs herself to death. The ballet takes place in a Thuringian valley, and is clearly set in springtime-early summertime, as the stage directions state that she picks wild daisies (marguerites) and plays the “she loves me,
she loves me not” game with its petals for proof that Loys loves her. During the second act, the Queen of the Wilis brings her fellow maidens to life by touching various objects; each of those Wilis represents a different type of woman and creates, as Gautier explains in his letter to Heine, a “spectral uniformity” (Théâtre, 268)—Moyna, an odalisque; Zulmé, an Indian bayadère (a troupe of bayadères had visited Paris in 1839, and Gautier later wrote about its principal dancer, and based his Sacountalâ of 1855 partially on her biography); two French females, who perform a menuet; and Germans, who perform a waltz. When the white Giselle appears and is transformed into a Wili, vocabulary not unlike that of Gautier’s poem is used: Albert pursues her as one tries to capture a butterfly on a flower, and she jumps from place to place like a fearful dove.

In “Symphonie en blanc majeur,” winter and whiteness, not springtime and color, abound everywhere. The swan maiden’s white skin is compared to budding camellias, which bloom only in late fall, winter and early spring. Where Gautier is inspired by the German lore of the swan maiden and used it as a frame narrative for “Symphonie en blanc majeur” to establish movement, transformation, and unrequited love as the poem’s themes, the actual setting and references in the poem are more inspired by the poems of Victor Hugo and Théodore de Banville.

Hugo’s “Fantômes” introduces death and three types of women: the first is “rose et blanche” (red and white), the second “semblait ouïr de célestes accords” (seemed to hear celestial chords), and the third “faible, appuyait d’un bras son front qui penche, et, comme en s’envolant l’oiseau courbe la branche, son âme avait brisé son corps” (weak, rested her forehead heavily upon her arm, and, like a bird taking flight bends the branch from which it takes flight, her soul had broken her body). The poem is a tribute to the death of young
women whose passage from life to death parallels natural cycles—the flow of water coursing through valleys, the blossoming of the crab apple tree whose flowers are the snow of springtime. In section III, Hugo introduces two ghosts with whom the poet’s soul forms a sorority; he dances with them, and through dance daydreams and remembers one specific girl—a young Spaniard with white hands, who died not of love but rather for loving dance too much. The remaining three sections of the poem narrate the girl’s obsession with dance, her death, her resurrection by a specter who leads her in a “danse fatale,” and a warning to young women to remember that the girl died because she stopped to reap the “roses de la vie” (roses of life)—beauty, pleasure, youth and love. Gautier’s poem lacks a moral, and though it uses a frame (the swan maiden legend) in the first section of the poem, Gautier is more concerned with dissecting the female body (desubjectivizing it) and reassembling it with comparisons to inanimate natural elements, and with pondering the poet’s (rather than other women’s) relationship with the female.

Théodore de Banville’s “Symphonie de la neige” opens with a passage from the Chinese Enlightenment Novel Ping-Chan-Ling-Yen, quoting specifically a work by Chi-ta-pen, who uses figurative language to describe swallows. The Orientalist reference, the narrative structure in six parts, and the use of musical language render the poem Romantic and, perhaps, too easily compared to the structure, devices and elements of program music. Stanislas Julien, translator of the 1860 edition of the Chinese work, notes that

Les expressions que Youên-kaï trouvait trop transparentes,

mais où le lecteur français aurait de la peine à reconnaître les hirondelles blanches, sont renfermées dans les mots “couvertes de neige, poirier du Japon, à fleurs blanches, éclat de la lune,
perles (blanches), ciseaux de jade (blanc),” allusion à la queue de l’hirondelle, qui a la forme de ciseaux ouverts, mouettes et cormorans, oiseaux au blanc plumage.

[The expressions that Youên-kaï found too transparent, but in which the French reader may find difficulty in recognizing the white swallows, are present in the words “covered in snow, white flowers, moonlight, white pearls, jade shards, allusion to the swallow’s tail, which takes the form of open scissors, like seagulls and cormorants, birds with white plumage.]

The legend of bird-women, as discussed earlier, was international, and in “Symphonie de la neige” this global myth is explored. From Théodore de Banville’s poem, Gautier borrows anthropormophosis and the impair—young girls who revitalize themselves in whiteness, and the poet struggles to detach himself from his observation of the movement of white-upon-white (which is pure paradox, as such movement would be undetectable). Banville’s poem introduces snow in the first section, and a poet who daydreams as he ponders the harmony of whitenesses that develop from the “ancient dreams” whose voices now combine like a symphonie.” Readers will recognize these phrases and musical references to harmony, melody and secrets that appear in “Affinités Secrètes.” As in Musäus’s “The Stolen Veil,” Théodore de Banville’s swan maidens come from Greece, and are associated with now-familiar elements in Gautier’s work: nacre, marble, and pearls. Pairs of birds and an anaphora of flora and fauna present in “Symphonie de la neige,” and the poet concludes, as will Gautier in “Affinités Secrètes,” that the “pale beloveds of flower and sculpture” that sing to him literally pale in comparison to the serene soul, the “unviolated Lilly” that he
loves; the poem is, therefore, a source of inspiration for at least two of the three poems in Gautier’s *Variations* sequence.

In Gautier’s poem, sets of places, objects and concepts emerge, some old and some new, some referencing myth or other artwork and some making specific attribution to Madame Kalergis (see Appendix IV). Kalergis was known among artists of the day as the “white siren,” and many dedicated their works to her, on themes already touched upon—“color” poems and shipwrecks (namely, Heine’s “The White Elephant” and Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*). Numerous writers—Alfred de Musset, Mme. de Girardin and others—refer to her as a delight to both the ears and the eyes due not only to her beauty but also her musical abilities as one of Chopin’s foremost pupils. Gautier attended Kalergis’s salon between 1847-56, and Madame C. Jaubert read his “Symphonie en blanc majeur” to Henrich Heine later on, in order to “pique his interest” in Kalergis and distract him from a current heartbreak. In her memoirs, Jaubert records that Heine returned not only with gratitude, and announced that Kalergis was not a woman, but rather a “monument, the Cathedral of the god Love!” (305).

In his “Symphonie en blanc majeur,” the real Madame Kalergis and Gautier’s feelings for her are displaced by a catalogue of different shades of white like nuances or isotopies. After the ballet poem frame is introduced, a series of fragments of white tones and their interplay with each other upon the woman’s skin create *impair* in the work; these tones derive from various flora, fauna, mineral and celestial references:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANZA</th>
<th>SECTION 1</th>
<th>SECTION 2</th>
<th>SECTION 3</th>
<th>SECTION 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-breast</td>
<td>-mica</td>
<td>-weasel</td>
<td>-Greenland / Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-white</td>
<td>-reed’s pith</td>
<td>-shivers</td>
<td>-Seraphita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>camellias</td>
<td>-host / candle</td>
<td>-fur</td>
<td>-Madonna of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-dress</td>
<td>-skin</td>
<td>-shoulders / coat of</td>
<td>Snows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-“combats insolents”</td>
<td>arms</td>
<td>-white Sphinx</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2 | -“batailles blanches”
- satin
- flowers
- jealous people | -milky tear
- blue sky
- lilly
- white foam | -whimsical flowers
- stained-glass windows
- white lace of basins
- ondine’s tears | - avalanche
- glacier
- white breast
- frozen white secrets |
| 3 | - shoulder
- Paros marble
- polar evening
- invisible frost | -white marble
- pewter
- milky opal
- clear waves | - hawthorne
- “blancs frimas”
- alabaster
- pallor | - ice
- heart
- red tone
- whiteness |
| 4 | n/a | - ivory
- white butterflies
- notes
- kisses | - dove’s down
- rooftops
- stalactite
- black den/white tear | - n/a |

Readers should note the verbs, more than a catalogue of white materials, that give action to the subjects. Gautier utilizes words that emphasize transformation, illusion, and shift from pure, virginal white to tainted shades; and these creates a sense of annihilation (jeu). In stanzas three and four, the satin dress and white camellias turn yellow with jealousy as the woman’s white breast takes the upperhand. In stanza five, “powderiness” rather than a stable and eternal solid is emphasized: the dazzling speckles in the Paros grain and evening frost are compared to the glitter that rests upon the woman’s shoulders; the unstable substances are then compared to mica flakes, reed pith and the first sacrament of Communion, in which host and candle symbolize transubstantiation and faith. From transformative substances, Gautier then moves to references that taint or create optical illusions in color. In stanza seven, the stars are “milky drops” that stain (tacher) the blue
winter sky, the white lilly exudes a silvery pulp when pierced, and the sea spits forth a white froth; in other words, the whiteness in this section stems from turbulent activity (white stars burn hottest, pulp bleeds out, froth is formed from agitation of the seawater). Stanza eight introduces the marble idol, pewter, and the milky opal; all of these materials give false illusions: the idol is an inanimate statue inhabited by the gods, fake silver replaces fine metal, and the iridescence of opal creates an optical phenomenon through which rainbow colors reflect. As quasi-musical reprise, stanzas nine through eleven reintroduce the motifs of stanzas three through eight, now by comparing them to art forms.

The woman's hands are compared both to ivory and white butterfly wings, and a singular musical reference is made—her hands, like ivory keys, like fluttering butterfly kisses, execute a trill (“baisers tremblants”) in the upper notes (“notes frêles”) of the keyboard. She is like a blemished (souillure) white ermine that quilts its white fur to avoid the cold. She is transformed not like the quicksilver-colored pith of flowers, but like stained-glass windows and filigree bowls, whose patterns form like snowflakes (the frozen tears of water nymph). Finally, stanzas twelve and thirteen introduces the negative verb shifts: the hawthorne folds under the weight of its white flowers, alabaster houses melancholy, the dove sheds its down upon the rooftops, and the stalactite falls from the ceiling like a white tear. Each of these images evokes a different shade of white, but throughout the poem, readers will sense that this is a tragic and melancholic list of white rather than the traditional associations of white with purity and virtue. Is she, as in Heine's poem, Gautier's "white elephant," a rare and valuable, but perhaps undesired, object?

In Gautier’s typical use of the hieroglyphic, the closing stanzas provide the answer to this riddle through a series of veiled relationships to outside works. Gautier compares the
unnamed woman first to Séraphita, after the protagonist of Balzac’s mystical novel (first published in 1834). Balzac explained in the introduction to his *Comédie Humaine* (1842) that Séraphita is “the doctrine in action of the Christian Buddha.” Séraphita’s androgyny and suicide form the basis of the story, which examines a human’s struggle to annihilate its earthly imperfection and, through transformation, achieve heaven. Balzac’s work is an attempt to apply Swedenborgian principles in fiction; in Gautier’s poem, the reference to Séraphita not only permits the mystical-alchemical parallels that readers find in the two sister poems, but it also introduces the theme of an unobtainable and transgressive female. Gautier then introduces the Madonna of the Snows, which relates back to the improbable snowfall in Rome during the summer of 352 C.E.; the miracle indicated the place at which the Virgin Mary wanted devotees to build a church in her honor. Here, the woman appears as a commanding apparition, and she requires adoration rather than an equal relationship. Finally, Gautier references the Greek Sphinx, known for being merciless toward those who could not solve her riddle (“blancs secrets gelés”). The women of this poem—Wilis, Séraphita, Madonna of the Snows, and Sphinx—are those who cannot be appeased; they are, as Gautier remarks in the closing stanza of his poem, calm and powerful, impossible to stir to a healthy and symbiotic passion (“qui pourra mettre un ton rose dans cette implacable blancheur!”). The reader feels the author’s sexual and emotional frustration. If familiar with Gautier’s womanizing, the reader will find the closing lines particularly amusing, as this was (from a close scrutiny of his collected letters and materials) one of the only, if not the only time that a woman rejected Gautier.

*
In his triad of poems Gautier examines the “old theme” of love in three different scenarios:
In the first, love is symbiotic and finds parallels among couples; in the second, the woman’s body and identity transform as one of several mistresses adored and discarded by the poet; in the third, a single female catches the poet’s attention, but remains unappeased and untained by the multitude of authors, artists and composers (Gautier included) that sought her favor.

These three poems set a precedent for the musical aesthetic that shapes all of Émaux et camées. In the remaining poems, readers will find the elements of disinterestedness, impair, hieroglyphic, impassive and jeu conjoined. These poems exist with no specific purpose or definitive attribution. Correspondences are made between people, concepts and things; between fiction and reality; between the material, the mystical and the alchemical; and between lived experiences and imagined desires. The poet’s feelings are desubjectified from the poems, and are suggested in hieroglyphic manner—by creating layers of meaning rather than using obvious musical and literary devices, Gautier creates poems that are universal. His collection represents both impassive and jeu through emphasis on transformation, inversion, annhilation of opposites, and gesture. This mature musical aesthetic inspired a generation of future poets, who are indebted to Gautier’s legacy for new developments in the poetic craft.
In his study “Art Poétique Reexamined,” Alfred Wright postulates that Verlaine’s “Art Poétique” is a response to Gautier’s “L’Art” (1857). Assuming he is correct, it should be noted that Gautier’s poem itself was a response to de Banville’s Odelette, “A T. Gautier” (1856), which in turn received a counter response by Banville, entitled “T. Gautier” (1872). Presupposing Wright’s argument is true, should Verlaine’s notion of the “musical” be traced not to Gautier as the single primary source, but to two writers locked in a fifteen-year debate?

Gautier and Banville’s debate arose over whether or not the Ode was considered the most “musical” poetic form. Banville’s odelette about Gautier’s writing habits was less than favorable; affronts are made against Gautier’s seemingly lax and unrestrained method of working, as well as his animated, capricious personality:

Le poète oiseleur/ manie/ l’outil du ciseleur

Car il faut qu’il meurtrisse/ Pour y graver son pur Caprice/

un métal au cœur dur.

[The poet bird-catcher/ handles/ the chisler’s tool

because he must bruise/ in order to carve his pure Caprice/

a metal with a sturdy heart.]

He insinuates that Gautier’s attention to the traditional ode is a sham, and paints the poet as a euphoric daydreamer who preaches love of the green laurel and finds himself too worthy to labor at so arduous a form:
Toi qui, fou d'extase/.../qui sur une grève/ sais prendre en ton
réseau le Rêve/.../
Qui nous enseigne/ l’amour de vert laurier/ tu daignes être un
bon ouvrier.
[You who, mad with ecstasy/.../who on a shore/ knows how to
take the Dream into your faint constellation/.../Who teaches
us/ the love of the green laurer/ you deign to be a good
laborer.]
Gautier responded to de Banville with “L’Art,” which is generally considered along
with the prefaces to Albertus and Mademoiselle de Maupin to represent the Parnassian
ideology. In “L’Art,” the poet becomes a sculptor whose poetic work, like fashioned
marble, is eternalized by virtue of its enduring qualities. “L’Art” opens in praise of
impulsive labor:

Oui, l’œuvre sort plus belle/ d’une forme au travail/ rebelle
[Yes, the artist's work comes out more beautifully from a form that is
rebellious to work]

The Muse must wear a less constricting costume, and advice is given to poets,
sculptors, and painters for creating immortal works:

Fi du rythme commode
Statuaire, repousse/l’argile qui pétrit/le pouce
Peintre, fuis l’aquarelle/et fixe la couleur/trop frêle/au four de
l’émailleur/Fais les Sirènes bleues/tordant de cent façons leur
queues
[To hell with conventional rhythm
Sculptor, reject/ the clay that shapes/ the thumb
Painter, flee watercolor/ and fasten color/ that is fragile/ on
the enamelist’s kiln/ Make blue Sirens/ who twist their tails in
a hundred ways]

Gautier ends with a caveat: Everything, even the gods’ lives, comes to an end, and only a robust work, formed by a vigorous artist, will survive eternally. The bust survives the city, and the laborer finds a medal underground long after the Emperor has died. To the poet a final word of advice: “Les vers souverains demeurent plus forts que les airains” (sovereign verses survive more permanently than arains.”

Banville composed an insolent response; it seemingly praises Gautier’s talents, but is written as an Elegy that essentially invites the proud and impetuous poet to smile proudly and die.

Théophile Gautier! Poète/ au regard limpide et vermeil/ dont
l’œuvre fut un hymne et fut à la vie ivre du soleil !/ A l’heure où
la Mort en délire/ avec un regret insensé/ admire encor ton fier
sourire/ qu’elle éteint de son doigt glacé.

[Gautier ! Poet/ with a limpid and vermillion glance/ whose
work would be a hymn to a life drunk on sunshine !/ At the
hour when Death, in frenzy/ with insane regret / again admires
your proud smile/ that her icy finger extinguishes.

Throughout, de Banville gratuitously refers to Gautier as master and friend, yet excuses himself from wasting tears on mourning or suffering his own pride to be
saddened. It is Envy, and not the Muse, who will make Gautier's name and work radiate in a “flamboiement mélodieux” (melodious blaze), which he says is fitting for any lyric poet. Hints are made at Gautier’s liberal approach to form. Rhyme, for example, is insulted as Gautier's young and submissive mistress, always bending to the poet’s will. In the closing lines, de Banville invites Gautier to take his place among the gods of Art—oddly between two writers that de Banville respected—Rabelais and Ronsard. I would conjecture that these two were chosen, respectively, for their witty and dangerous attack of traditional culture, and a daring attempt to change poetry’s language and form.

It seems unlikely that Gautier would have denied de Banville’s estimation of his technique; unlike his predecessors, he does acknowledge the limits of defining music in terms of the Pythagorean laws of harmony, rhythm, and motifs (Brunetière 208). Unfortunately though, he never fully escaped what evolved for later poets as the Parnassian aesthetic, and he eventually conceded that the poet is indeed a laborer, needing no more intelligence than a laborer possesses (Bordeaux).

On May 16, 1873, Verlaine wrote an enthusiastic letter to his friend Lepelletier speaking of new ideas and truly beautiful projects, of a system of impersonal art and objective poetry. His ambition was to write poetry about the life of things; man was to be divorced—“complètement banni”—from it (Verlaine 1141). In two later prefaces to Parallèlement he reiterated this quest for impersonal works. How, though, does objective and impersonal art differ from the aesthetic proscribed in Gautier’s “L'Art”?
The “Epilogue” to Verlaine’s Poèmes Saturniens fittingly concluded his Parnassian aesthetic (if not always in practice, at least in theory) and ushered in Symbolist thinking.

By the time Verlaine published the Romances sans Paroles, an end would be brought to jingling verses, sonorous rhymes, and the Supreme Poet who chisels “les mots comme des coupés” (his words by cutting them), coldly composes his “émus” (emotional) verses, and studies unremittingly and with unprecedented effort (Fêtes galantes 92-3). Four months prior to meeting Verlaine, Rimbaud had steered away from what had become the Gautier-inspired Parnassian approach. He called for a new “objective” poetry in a letter written to his former teacher, Georges Isambart (May 13, 1871):

Au fond, vous ne voyez en votre principe que poésie subjective:

votre obstination à regagner le râtelier universitaire, – pardon!

– le prouve ! Mais vous finirez toujours comme un satisfait qui
n’a rien fait, n’ayant voulu rien faire. Sans compter que votre
poésie subjective sera toujours horriblement fadasse. Un jour,
j’espère, – bien d’autres espèrent la même chose, – je verrai
dans votre principe la poésie objective, je la verrai plus
sincèrement que vous ne le feriez ! – Je serai un travailleur :
c’est l’idée qui me retient, quand les colères folles me poussent
vers la bataille de Paris – où tant de travailleurs meurent
pourtant encore tandis que je vous écris ! Travailler
maintenant, jamais, jamais; je suis en grève.
Je veux être poète, et je travaille à me rendre *voyant* : vous ne comprendrez pas du tout, et je ne saurais presque vous expliquer. Il s’agit d’arriver à l’inconnu par le dérèglement de *tous les sens*.

[Basically, your theory is limited to subjective poetry : Your obstination to reclaim your university denture, pardon me, proves it ! But you will end up as the satisfied person who did nothing, and who desired to do nothing. Without including your horribly tasteless subjective poetry. One day, I—and others—hope that we will see an objective poetry in your work, and I wish this more than you can imagine ! I will be a laborer : this is the idea that contains me when my rage pushes me toward the Parsian battles—where so many laborers are dying even as I write you ! Work now, never never. I am on strike.

I want to be a poet, and right now I am working to make myself a visionary. You would not understand, and I would not even know how to explain it to you. It deals with arriving at the unknown through the deregulation of *all the senses*.]

According to this letter, it is the artist’s responsibility to look objectively at not only his identity but also the identity of objects outside the personal symbolism he develops in relation to them. Rimbaud, was reacting against the Cartesian application of the Self, which was essentially flawed because Descartes’ *cogito* cannot escape being defined in dialectical relation to an ‘Other’ (be it God or things outside a solitary
existence). Rimbaud’s theory allows escape by virtue of observing the Self as an object rather than subject—this, in turn, allows a person to constantly redefine his Self. This relates to issues with poésie objective and poésie subjective, terms used primarily by Hegel. Subjective poetry is created for the individual’s personal satisfaction; objective poetry is Active—created by the individual who is Becoming, constantly redefining the Self, not thinking but being thought. This Rimbaldian Quandary—the mastery over rather than observation of the Self/Other, and making one’s art a process rather than solution, epitomizes Verlaine’s new impersonal, objective art. Readers will note the similarity that this aesthetic presents compared to Gautier’s use of the impair, in which something is also on the route to becoming, often through a process of desubjectification.

Borrowing from Rimbaud’s metaphor that he uses later in the letter to Georges Izambard (a piece of wood unwittingly transformed into a violin and scorned by thoughtless people who cavil over its identity while ignoring the truth of its being, 13 May 1871), objective and impersonal poetry would be: vague, constantly evolving, liberated from the finality of form by virtue of this perpetual evolution, open to scrutiny by or identification with others, not just the poet. Everything satisfying these requirements would be emulating music. Anything not satisfying these requirements would be labeled “literature.”

During the nineteenth century the word littérateur connoted a man of letters or person in the profession of writing and/or interpreting literary works. A littérateur possessed a philosophical mind and, based on the Latin etymology, was a
grammari and teacher who knew the alphabet, literature, and *belles lettres*.

*Littérateur* in the Verlaniend sense refers to any works that have a definitive, obvious, formal, and singular meaning and, respectively, any man who views works in these terms. In 1888 Charles Morice (to whom “L’art poétique” was dedicated) ardently stated that “Il n’y a point d’homme de lettres en Verlaine.”

The Abbe F. Montagnon consigns any writings involving erudite practices and a scientific dissection of words to the realm of prose. Likewise, for Verlaine prose and literature are synonymous. Montagnon distinguishes between poetic and prosaic writings in the same sense Verlaine would:

Prose: comprend la philosophie et spécialement la philosophie morale, l’éloquence, l’histoire, le roman, la lettre, la critique...un mode de pensée particulier...[où] les mots n’ont guère qu'une seule fonction, celle de *signes de la pensée*, [et] le rythme est naturel.

Poésie : Ce rythme...est irrégulier et approximatif...c’est cette variabilité même qui, avec l’absence de consonances régulières, distingue essentiellement la prose du vers dans la langue française (Montagnon 85-92).

[Prose : includes philosophy, especially moral philosophy, eloquence, history, the novel, letters, criticism...a specific mode of thought...in which words have only a sole purpose, that of signs of thought, [and] the rhythm is natural.
Poetry: This rhythm...is irregular and only approximate...it is
this variability, even, that, with the absence of regular
consonances, essentially distinguishes prose from verse in
French language.]

Poetry’s quality lies in expression while prose’s lies in thought; poetry’s rhythm is
inexact while prose’s is precise. Given this definition, one easily sees how prose can be
poetic and poetry prosaic; in fact, Montagnon lists Pascal, Bossuet, Rousseau, and
Chateaubriand as being prose writers with poetic spirit. Verlaine, in calling for a
poetry that resembled music—essentially depreciated his contemporaries’ poetry to a
literary medium based on the rules and rhythm of everyday speech. Verlaine called
for music above all else because music’s implicit value (and to some, deficiency) lay in
its expressiveness, vagueness, and freedom from formal constraints. If poetry had
become condemned to being read off a page rather than performed and improvised, at
least let it attempt to fight limits that govern visual arts—space and time. Additionally,
musical poetry should be written in the *impair*. Clive Scott mentions that *vers impair*
traces back as far as the sixteenth century ode and that, “because of its lack of self-
assured equilibrium,...it can be regarded as intrinsically anti-oratorical and
particularly suited to the depiction of moods which are shifting, nervous, ill-defined,
or ironic and mischievous” (Scott 84). If any credit is to be given, it rests with
Verlaine’s borrowing of Rimbaud’s idea, which in turn is not dissimilar to Gautier’s
theory—that poetry, like music, should be a process of becoming, not being.
In a letter written to François Coppée dated 1866, three decades before his “Coup de Dés” was published, Mallarmé stated that “le hasard n’entame pas un vers, c’est la grande chose.” The concept of Chance in this letter was not presented with a particular poem in mind, but to divulge Mallarmé’s belief that in poetry words should suggest relations rather than maintain an absolute meaning, similar to transitions in a musical scale. Verlaine’s tenets of musicality—vagueness, liberated from finality, constantly evolving, and open to mass-association—are present (“ne plus avoir leur couleur propre”), but Mallarmé expands with a formal comparison to the musical scale and accolade to Chance. Transitions in a musical scale do not always refer to a shift from one note to the next, but also to the variation of timbre, amplitude, pitch, and other musical elements that can vary and mutate within a single note. Chance is reflected in these mutations: Rules of probability dictate that the same note can be reproduced twice, but the likelihood of a perfect repetition given these variables is impossible. Mallarmé’s attempt to create a “musical” poetry extended beyond Verlaine’s ambiguous focus on the naïf, becoming more scientific and mathematical in approach; ironically, his obsession for creating a logic of musical poetry served to prove that, regardless of observable rules, meaning itself can remain illogical, improbable, unrepeatable, and subject to infinite variations and interpretations.

While Mallarmé’s poetic principles vary from one personal letter, essay, or review to the next, his teaching principles present an all-encompassing approach to probability, language, and meaning. Mallarmé worked as an English teacher from 1864 onwards in Tournon, Avignon, and Paris during which time his mastery of language’s rules evolved. He
used a collection of proverbs, adages, and phrases titled *Thèmes anglais* to teach basic English grammatical rules for writing a sentence: definite and indefinite articles were followed by possessive then relative pronouns, etc. Amusingly, the phrases and sentences in *Thèmes anglais*, while perfectly obedient to the rules of English grammar, would have been nonsensical to a native English speaker, and, even when they did make sense, were antiquated and outmoded at least a century or two prior. As the *Thèmes anglais* phrases demonstrate, even a strict adherence to grammatical rules and form will not result in a coherent or logical meaning. Similarly, results garnered from a poem composed of “absolute rules” are, therefore, no more significant or successful than works created haphazardly with ambiguity, irrationality, formlessness, or emotion in mind. Mallarmé’s lessons taught that free association of an individual word (or among words) takes place as a result of grammatical emphasis; the absurd result is poetry. In fact, Mallarmé, in “Réponse à une Enquête” (1891), specifically states that versification always occurs as a result of these efforts, and that, as a result, prose cannot really exist:

Le vers est partout dans la langue où il y a rythme, partout, excepté dans les affiches et la quatrième page des journaux.

Dans le genre appelé prose, il y a des vers, quelquefois admirable, de tous rythmes. Mais, en vérité, il n’y a pas de prose: il y a l’alphabet, et puis des vers plus ou moins serrés, plus ou moins diffuse. Toutes les fois qu’il y a effort au style, il y a versification (57).

[Verse is present everywhere in language where one finds rhythm, except in public notices and the fourth page of]
newspapers. In the genre called prose, there is verse, sometimes admirable, comprised of all sorts of rhythms. But, in truth, prose doesn’t exist: there is an alphabet, and more or less constructed and diffuse verses. Anytime there is an attention to style, there we find versification.]

Within this quotation the words ‘rhythm’, ‘concise’, and ‘vague’ are used to categorize word moments. Mallarmé does not even commit to an absolute “either vague or concise,” but leaves wiggle room for each. This almost a yin-yang characterization in which each linguistic moment possesses a little of both is elucidated in his work Divigations, in which he criticizes his contemporaries’ desire to separate the immediate from the essential meanings of a word:

Un désir indéniable à mon temps est de séparer comme en vue
d’attributions différentes le double état de la parole, brut ou
immédiate ici, là essential.

[An undeniable wish for my era is to separate (considering their different attributions) the double nature of the word, which is at once raw and immediate, and on the other hand essential.]

The literary critic Achille Delaroche (La Plume) noted that the convergence of both immediate and essential within Mallarmé’s poetry is what rendered his works truly musical:

Il conçut le poème en musique—non l’inarticulé balbutiement,
dont chaque flot sonore meurt perpétuellement au seuil de
l’inexprimé—mais la vraie, l’idéale musique abstraite,
dégageant le rythme épar des choses, douant d’authenticité...

[He conceived a poem musically—not babbled inarticulately,
with each sonorous wave perpetually dying at the brink of the
inexpressible—but as truth, as ideal abstract music, freeing
scattered rhythm from things, endowing it with authenticity...]

Alongside writers who characterized themselves as Symbolists and heralded Verlaine’s
aesthetic as an opportunity to reclaim the musical by liberating poetry of formal
constraints or meaning, Mallarmé alone created musical poetry by producing rhythmic
verses that remained constant instead of falling apart under the weight of “inexpressible”
meaning. His approach paralleled T.S. Eliot’s musing in “Music of Poetry” that some kind of
stable structure is required as a media to convey the varying meanings of the poem:

[The poet] is not necessarily concerned with the clarity of
meaning in a prosaic sense, but prefers to allow a greater part
of what he wants to say to fall to the emotional meaning of
words in so far as emotional meaning is dependent on
structural elements. Structure is poetry’s only stable element;
the meanings of poems can and do vary according to the
individual reader’s education, experience and insight (26-38).

A confusing paradox thus arises when looking at Mallarmé’s beliefs. First, Mallarmé
aimed—like Verlaine—to move away from the Parnassian devotion to Classical Form, yet
form still takes a visible shape in his writings. In her seminal work Mallarmé et la Musique,
Bernard attempts to resolve this paradox: while Classical form was abandoned by Verlaine
and later writers, form still presented itself by making rhythm more fluid and irregular.\textsuperscript{28}

Second, in spite of his attempts to emulate music due to it theoretically being liberated from space and time—Mallarmé’s work calls for a highly calculated, mathematical construct through which his ideas could be transmitted. In a letter to E. Gosse, Mallarmé seemingly invalidates his criticism of the Parnassian focus on construct by stating that he will employ music in the Greek sense: “Employez musique dans le sens grec, au fond signifiant idée ou rythme entre des rapports” (Bernard 75). How can a work be systematically constructed, yet still be liberated from space and time? Again Bernard provides an answer: she claims that Mallarmé realized that even music possesses a construct, but it is more a system of relations and movement than a series of recorded moments.\textsuperscript{29} When Mallarmé wrote the Preface for the “Coup de Dés,” he remarked that the poem might be read as a musical score. Word groups and individual words would reveal a varying rhythm from allegro to legato, scansion, dominant and adjacent motifs would present themselves across the page, and narrative (“récit”) sketches would be avoided. A few sentences later though, Mallarmé writes that he reclaims for literature the elements of music heard in concert, and that the genre would become “un comme la symphonie,” while still leaving older verse “intact” and of pivotal importance to passion and dreams.\textsuperscript{30} Mallarmé’s work requires—even glorifies—chance as something that is ever-present in spite of the probability that a model will endure.
*The Parnassians*

Though the bulk of their oeuvre is dismissed as trite and poorly written, the Parnassians—especially headed by Catulle Mendès—adopted values of a strong work ethic, a poetry in accordance with art for art’s sake and signifying nothing, a cult of Form, and an aesthetic theory based on “sonorities verbales dépouvrues de tout sens” and the impassive. In his scathing critique of this band, Max Nordau argues that an “impassive” art cannot exist in the sense of indifference to nature and life; it is psychologically impossible, he argues, because “all artistic activity is...a reaction against received impressions” (56). Indifference, perhaps better described as “apathy,” would not result in art, because artists would not be reacting to anything. Nordau’s statement is interesting because it recalls Levitin’s discussion of music and memory—without a “cue,” memory cannot be recalled, and nothing can happen. Instead, Nordau characterizes the Parnassian corpus as Ivory Tower writing—without emotion, without experience, without vitality.
Agréments
## Appendix I: Gautier Poems with Musical Appellations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem with Musical Title</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Famous Composers</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballade (~1832)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Kreutzer</td>
<td>“Quand a peine un nuage”</td>
<td>Popular song, narrative and strophic; orally transmitted and connected to dance. Form: Tags: France, 14-15th c., carole; French art song; archaism; secular; solo singer and unison choral refrain; forme fixe (pp72-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballade (~1832)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Cher ange, vous êtes belle”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanson à boire (~1863)</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td></td>
<td>“A Bacchus, biberon insigne”</td>
<td>See pp159-61 for history of the chanson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chant du Grillon (~1832)</td>
<td>CdlM</td>
<td>Kreutzer</td>
<td>“Regardez les branches”</td>
<td>“Song, melody; voice part separate from accompaniment” (p162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Chanson de mignon (~1833-38)</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Ange de poesie, o vierge blanche et blonde”</td>
<td>See pp159-61 for history of the chanson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contralto (1849)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td></td>
<td>“On voit dans le musee antique”</td>
<td>Lowest female voice or male altos (p212)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegie I, II, III, IV (~1830-32)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>11, 46, 50, 104 “Nuit et jour, malgré moi,” “Je</td>
<td>Mourning or melancholy poem or song. Tags: lamento, planctus,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantaisies d’hiver (1854)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>“Le nez rouge, la face bleue”</td>
<td>Fantaisie: “An ingenious and imaginative instrumental composition characterized by distortion, exageration and elusiveness resulting from its departure from current stylistic and structural norms,” or “a piece that gives the impression of flowing spontaneously from a player’s imagination” or “esoteric work of the composer.” Tags: Improvisation, chamber music, popular song, patriotic airs, landscape, sonata, caprice (pp307–8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lamento (~1837)</td>
<td>CdlM</td>
<td>Berlioz (1841), F. David, Faure, Gedalge, Gounod (1841, 1872), Lacombe, Monpou, Offenbach (1852), Paladilhe, Viardot-Garcia, Vivier, Bertrie, Radoux, Wily de Rothschild, Th. Jouret, Bruguiere, Saussoigne-Mehul, Bellini, Puget, Lenepveu, Lefebvre, Feret Set for Hippolyte Monpou</td>
<td>“Ma Belle amie est morte”</td>
<td>Song of mourning Tags: 17th C. Venetian Opera, madrigal, monody, ostinato bass of descending tetrachord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamento (~1838)</td>
<td>CdlM</td>
<td>Berlioz (1841), Duparc (1883), J. Philipot Set for Allyre Bureau and dedicated to Mlle Nau</td>
<td>“Connaissez-vous la blanche tombe”</td>
<td>See above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lied (1854)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>“Au mois d’avril, la terre est rose”</td>
<td>German lyric and strophic poem or song; single</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Piece</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Author/Composers</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Mélodie et l’accompagnement (1869)</td>
<td>Sonnets</td>
<td>“La beauté, dans la femme, est une mélodie”</td>
<td>Applies to musical texture: one or more primary melodic parts supported by subordinate material, generally of harmonic rather than melodic character</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Noël (1861)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>L. Hillemacher, Rhene-Baton (1922?)</td>
<td>“Le ciel est noir, la terre est blanche”</td>
<td>Carol or semireligious Christmas song with strophic text; production halted at French Revolution “but the genre revived in the late 19th c.” Tags: keyboard, 17th C., timbres drawn from popular music (p563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odelette anacréontique (1854)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>L.-G. Bellini</td>
<td>“Pour que je t’aime, o mon poète”</td>
<td>Lyric poem for ceremonial purpose, originally intended for song-dance performances, irregular lines. Tag: aeidos (poet, song), Ronsard (p580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocaille (~1833-38)</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>L.-G. Bellini</td>
<td>“Conaissez-vous dans le parc de Versailles”</td>
<td>17th C. France, ornament, elegance, wit. Tags: opera-ballet, chamber ensemble, motivic play / 17th C. Italy, opera buffa, popular and public (p736)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance (~1838)</td>
<td>CdlM</td>
<td>Duparc, Kreutzer, A. Coedes, A. Le Beau, V. Masse, E. Michotte, F. Koenig, Ed. Garnier, F. Raynal, A. Lionnet, Ch. Poinsot Set for Allyre Bureau</td>
<td>“Au pays ou se fait la guerre”</td>
<td>See Ballad: “most characteristic is stanzas of four 8-syllable lines, assosance in even-numbered lines.” Also: 18th C. France “lyrical, strophic poem on an amorous or epic subject…genre changed in the 19th century and fused with melodie” Tags: Middle Ages, oral, opera comique (p737)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rondalla (1847)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Viardot-Garcia</td>
<td>“Enfant aux airs d’imperatrice”</td>
<td>Serenade form, Medieval Spain, plectrum ensemble Serenade: music work “intended for evening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Performance Description</td>
<td>Tags</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seguidille (1845)</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>Manuel de Falla, E. Bourgeois, Pierre Nargeot</td>
<td>“Un joup serres sur les hanches” Spanish verse “consisting of one or more strophes of four or seven lines each with assonance within the pairs of 5-syllable lines.” Also: a couples dance accompanied by guitar in moderately fast triple meter.” Tags: popular, 16th Century, couples dance (p767)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Serenade (1841)</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Sur le balcon où tu te penches” Vocal or instrumental work for evening performance, generally “to seek the favor of someone.” Renaissance tradition: courter sings beneath lady’s window (see opera arias)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variations sur des vieux thèmes (Affinités secrètes, Le poème de la femme, Symphonie en blanc majeur) (1849)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Dans le fronton d’un temple antique,” “Un jour, au doux rêveur qui l’aime,” “De leur col blanc courbant les lignes” Musical idea is modified, melody or accompaniment elaborated. Begins in 16th C. Italy and Spain based on dance music Also: “Theme and variations embodies a principle of strophic repetition: a theme with particular structure is followed by a series of discrete pieces with similar structure.” Tags: affect, extra-thematic quality, constructive elements (bass, harmony, structure), fantasy variation, formal-outline variation (pp940-2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Variations sur le Carnaval de Venise (1843-44)</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Il est un vieil air populaire” See above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villanelle Rhythmique(~1837)</td>
<td>CdlM</td>
<td>Berlioz (1841), Gedalge (1878), E. Lavigne, H. Reber</td>
<td>“Quand viendra la saison nouvelle” Italian vocal music, 1530-1600s; refrain between adjacent couplets; often</td>
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Set for Xavier Boisselot

rustic “parodies of high-flown poetic language are common, proverbial expressions are used.” In Music: “three voices in homophonic style, lively and dancelike” Tags: madrigal comedies, parody (p949)
Appendix II: 19th Century References to Musicality

1802 Chateaubriand writes his *Génie du Christianisme*, a work filled with harmonious phrases, and a tribute to the organ. According to *Evolution*, he “réintroduit dans la littérature l’instrument de musique et le charme de son timbre dénué de paroles.”

1806 The German writer Johann August Apel published an article proposing that music and poetry had the “presentation of an idea” in common.

1807 Germaine de Staël, in *Corinne ou l’Italie*, speaks of the Italian language as beautiful due to the pleasurable “sound” of its words: “L’italien a un charme musical...que ce langage mélodieux et colore s’est formé.” She also describes the technique of clair-obscur as musical: “L’heureuse combinaison des couleurs et du clair-obscur produit, si l’on peut s’exprimer, un effet musical dans la peinture.”

1823a Desjardins, in the *Muse Française*, speaks of poetry as a daughter of universal harmony, arguing that “la lyre,” les harpes de la poésie des anciens sont descendues aux profondeurs de l’âme moderne.”

1823b Stendhal speaks of harmony in relation to poetic description: « Voilà comment les gens de génie emploient l’harmonie en musique, exactement comme Walter Scott se sert de la description dans *Ivanhoe*; les autres, le savant M. Cherubini, par exemple, jettent l’harmonie comme M. L’abbe Delille entasse les descriptions les unes sur les autres dans son poème de *la Pitié*. ”
1825 Vigny employs correspondences and writes synaesthetic poetry by speaking of the “Beauté idéale” as a “triple lyre,” comprised of poetry, painting, and music, in which ‘la couleur, comme le son, est employée.”

1829 Sainte-Beuve announces that poetry, more than the other arts, is more linked to a universal harmony: “L’artiste...a reçu en naissant la clef des symboles et l’intelligence des figures: ce qui semble a d’autres incohérent et contradictoire n’est pour lui qu’un contraste harmonique, un accord à distance sur la lyre universelle...il marie l’écho de sa voix à la musique du monde. Cela est vrai surtout du poète lyrique, tendre et rêveur.”

1831 Edme-François Jomard speaks of the “violent pleasure” experienced in aural contemplation versus books: “Ainsi, pourquoi y-a-t-il un rapport nécessaire entre le mot juste et le mot musical? Pourquoi arrive-t-on toujours a faire un vers quand on resserre trop sa pensée? La loi des nombres gouverne donc les sentiments et les images.”

1832 A group of Saint-simoniens speaks of music as a form of “langage indéfini”: En prononçant ici le mot MUSIQUE comme forme indéfini du langage, comme VERBE TRANSCENDANTAL, j’ai établi naturellement un rapprochement entre l’ART et la SCIENCE. Several lines later they criticize the Neoclassical attempt to relate the musical with politics or morals: “Je demanderai aux artistes l’abolition d’un vieux préjugé musical qui correspond a un préjugé moral et politique.” Here they contended that whereas Rameau gave precedence to the major mode, contemporary works illustrated that the minor mode had equal priority.
1834 Flaubert, in his *Correspondences*, speaks of general and lyrical notions in poetry. Though he was overly intolerant of poetry and poets, under the General Notions he outlines qualities of the “Thème Musical”: “Ce mot appartient a la langue de la musique; il signifie sujet, motif, sur lequel le compositeur écrit des variations.”

1836 Giuseppe Mazzini compares music to faith in a world where poetry and philosophy are synonymous: “Music begins where poetry leaves off, and proceeds directly according to general formulae while its sister arts must move from specific cases and subjects to reach that point.”

1837a Balzac writes *Gambara*, in which the protagonist struggles to discover his own aesthetic. “En musique, les instruments font l’office des couleurs qu’emploie le peintre.” Balzac takes a Classical approach, stating that music obeys the laws of physics and mathematics. Gambara speaks of the “principe musical,” focusing on the celestial, abstract method of writing poetry. He states “Ma musique est belle, mais quand la musique passe de la sensation à l’idée, elle ne peut avoir que des gens de génie pour auditeurs, car eux seuls ont la puissance de la développer.” He later adds that only musical language has the power to “nous faire rentrer en nous-mêmes.”

1837b Hugo, in “Que la musique date du seizième siècle,” ascribes a mystical and sublime value to poetry, stating that the modern poet is a new Orpheus—a musician, not painter or sculptor—who “n’apporta que l’art du mystère et du vague.”
1839a In Balzac's *Massimilla Doni*, the Duchesse speaks of musical language in relation to depicting our memories: “Dans la langue musicale...peindre, c’est réveiller par des sons certains souvenirs dans notre Cœur, ou certaines images dans notre intelligence.”

1839b In homage to Lamartine, Amedée Pommier makes a correspondence between physical and divine music in his *Oceanides et fantasies* : « La Nature a ses symphonistes/ ses menestrels et ses artistes/ a la melodiuse voix/Dieu, l'harmoniste supreme...Suave Lamartine, ainsi ton luth est-roi:/ Nous sommes les oiseaux, le rossignol c’est toi! »

1840a Senancour assigns melody with the power to create a sense of the Infinite.

1840b Sainte-Beuve, in an epistle to Villemain, provides his own Art Poétique: “Plus es souple le vers et côtoyant la prose/ plus pauvre de belle ombre et d'haleine de rose/ et plus la forme étroite a lieu de se garder/.../C'est la rime avant tout de grammaire et d'oreille/ c'est maint secret encore, une coupe, un seul mot/ qui raffermit à temps le ton qui baissait trop/ un son inattendu, quelque lettre pressée/ par où le vers poussé porte mieux la pensée.”

1842 In a letter from Felix Mendelssohn to Marc-André Souchay, an argument is made that, contrary to popular belief, music is more understandable and definite than the spoken word: “The same word means one thing to one person and something to another, because only song can say the same thing, can arouse the same feelings in one person as in another—a feeling which is not, however, expressed by the same words.”
1847 The Academy of Sciences speaks of the “sources physiologiques du rythme musical,” in relation to animal’s respiration.

1851 Baudelaire, in the *Paradis Artificiels* article “Du vin,” refers to a moral barometer in Hoffmann’s *Kreisleriana*, and describes a fraternity between these psychological divisions and the musical qualities of wine. Similarly, he ends the article “Du Hachisch” in accord with music theorist Auguste Barbereau’s argument that true poets and philosophers need only exercise their will, not depend on artificial stimulants, to achieve a state necessary for good writing: “un état où ils sont à la fois cause et effet, sujet et objet, magnétiseur et somnambule.”

1852 Barbereau had published a treatise on the theory and practice of musical composition in 1845; one year after Baudelaire’s reference to him, he published *Etudes sur l’origine du système musical*, in which he proposes a theory of Range based on the combination or general principles common not only to music but to other artistic, intellectual, and physical phenomena.

1853 Balzac criticizes “l’abus musical du mot felichitta, prodigué par le poète,” in his *Petites misères de la vie conjugale*.

1854 Edouard Hanslick speaks of music’s sound as an “end in itself,” versus the spoken word in which sound is merely a “sign...and end which is entirely distinct from its end.” More interestingly, Hanslick argues that no synthesis between the two forms of expression can occur. He criticizes Rameau, Rousseau, and Wagner’s disciples as impeding music with the “construction of speech.”
Maxime du Camp says that both music and poetry are in a state of chaos and discordance, with “fracas remplaçant la mélodie” and “images sur images, hyperboles sur hyperboles...” He compares contemporary writers to pianists who “ execuent des impossibilités incompréhensibles, mais qui sont hors d’état d’inventer une mélodie, une arietta, une note.”

Lamartine states that the poète must be “une véritable lyre vivante à toutes cordes.” In his Méditations poétiques, he compares himself to a composer: “J’étais comme le musicien qui a trouvé un motif, et qui se le chante tout bas avant de le confier à l’instrument. L’instrument pour moi, c’était l’impression. Je brulais d’essayer l’effet du timbre de ces vers sur le cœur de quelques homes sensibles.”

Baudelaire, in his essay on Théophile Gautier, speaks of correspondences and argues that poetic and musical expression are equal but should not be confused: “...par la poésie et a travers la poésie,” “par la musique et a travers la musique,” one finds eternal beauty.

Baudelaire, influenced by Sainte-Beuve’s “Calme,” writes “La Musique” as an allusion to poetic inspiration. Music embodies the sea that carries a vessel—the poet—who “sens vibrer en moi toutes les passions,” and whose inspiration varies with the storm, winds, and tranquility that mirror his soul.

Scudo’s la Musique en l’année 1862 explores several aspects of musical language. Firstly, it is superior to articulated language because “comme lieu l’intonation est phylogéniquement et ontogéniquement bien antérieur.” Secondly, musical language, like all language, has a driving force and a
sensorial force. The former is an active form of expression, the second passive perception. Thirdly, musical phrases are a system of associations based on rhythm and combination. They are parallel to the syllables of words. Finally, a definition of musicality in relation to literature: "langage musical visuel," based not only on auditive perception and the interpretation of sound, but equally in the rhythm and movement of an excerpt: “De même que le langage écrit est beaucoup moins répandu que le langage oral; de même, en musique, les sujets capables de comprendre a l’audition le sens d’une œuvre sont beaucoup plus nombreux que ceux qui joignent a cette faculté auditive la faculté visuelle de la lecture musicale.”

1867 Alfred de Musset attempts to equate the melody of verse with the musical phrase: “La poésie est si essentiellement musicale, qu’il n’y a pas de si belle pensée devant laquelle un poète ne recule si la mélodie ne s’y trouve pas, et, à force de s’exercer ainsi, il en vient à n’avoir non seulement que des paroles, mais que des pensées mélodieuses.” Here the term “pensées mélodieuses” takes on the Swedenborgian concept of something being divine in nature.

1870 Lautréamont publishes Poésies, in which he states that poetry should be written by all people, not a select group of artists. For Lautréamont poetry has as its goal “la vérité pratique.” It enunciates the relationships between the first and second principles of life. Lautréamont demeans the Romantic movement for its focus on the Self, on melancholy, and lack of focus on
academic form. Instead, the goal of poetry is “la vérité pratique.” One very brief and ambiguous mention is made to music: “Allez, la musique.”
L’ouverture de l’escolle by David de Planis Campy (1633)
Appendix IV: Images of Woman

La Païva, Esther Lachmann (artist unidentified)

Image after Apelles, *Venus Anadyomene*
Ingres, *Odalisque with Slave* (1842)

Clésinger, *Femme piquée par un serpent* (1847)
Gautier, Portrait of Carlotta Grisi (1841)
Pastel

Gautier, *Juive de Constantine en pied* (1845)
Aquarelle et rehaut de gouache blanche
Maria Kalergis, by Eugene Delacroix (1847)
Shelley’s poem contains no ellipses or refrains, but is declamatory: Shelley directly addresses the figures of Time, Nature and World as a sorrowful rather than joyful reminder of his past as a young man. Youth and the passing of seasons are lamented in an exclamation that is uncannily similar to the refrain for Poe’s speaker in “The Raven,” as he bemoans, “No more – Oh never more!” Shelley’s poem contains traditional rhetorical elements of a Lament: syntactical inversions (“when will return the glory of your prime”), disjoints between articulations (“with hoar… but with delight… no more,”), binaries (day/night, fresh spring and summer/ winter hoar), a question (“when will return…?”), and apostrophe (invocation to “World, Life, Time” in the poem’s opening line). The poem ends nihilistically, with the poet having “nothing more” to say at his loss as he stands and contemplates his adulthood in utter despair.

Gautier was one of numerous critics for bourgeois literary preferences. Ernest Renan, in his essay L’Avenir de la science, pensées de 1848, stated of the new Republic and bourgeois that « In the productions of the mind, as in all other kinds, the question of supply and demand prevails, and it must necessarily happen that it is wealth which makes the demand… Is it serious literature? Is it high philosophy, or, in the way of art, pure and severe productions, high moral creations? Assuredly not. It is amusing literature; serial stories, romances, clever pays in which his opinions are flattered, and so on.” [In Art in Theory : 320-24].

Spencer refers to J. Torchet, who writes in Le Guide Musical (23 Oct 1904) that Gautier’s interpretation of opera singers is erratic, and Georges Servieres, who discusses the errant analysis in Gautier’s “Tannhäuser” article as proof that Ernest Reyer, a reputable composer, could not possibly have contributed to the article. René Brancour’s
analysis of Gautier’s critiques on Weber, Beethoven, David, and Berlioz is also cited as evidence that Gautier had little ability for music theory and analysis.

12. "Were they sincere, or were they laughing at their readers? In the case of Banville the suspicion is stronger, for in the earlier work one perceives the 'dandyism' of Musset, the Musset of Mardoche and of Namouna. The mere title of one of his collections, Odes Funambulesques, which appeared in 1857, sufficiently indicates the prankish side of his nature, and shows too why it is that his influence was so limited. Gautier, on the other hand, urged by the spur of need, did so much work of all sorts that the hack novelist pressed close upon the heels of the poet...." See Ferdinand Brunetière "French Poetry in the Nineteenth Century," published in The Living Age: A Magazine of Contemporary Literature and Thought. No. 2900. February 1900: 273.


14. Published with Forcade’s writing on Charle’s Lamb’s intimate and literary life, Belgojoso’s Italie et la revolution italienne, Merraua’s Une Expédition de la marine anglaise sur le Niger, Valon’s Le Châle Vert, Guizot’s La Démocratie et la société française, Pontmartin’s Revue littéraire

15. Published with Vitet’s Les Etats d’Orléans, Gabriel Ferry’s Les Squatters: Souvenirs d’un Emigrant Pt II, Carlyle’s Life and Works by M.E. Montegut, Eugene Forcade’s Des Devoirs et de la défense de la société française depuis février, and political overview of bi-monthly.


17. Published with Anatole de Montaiglon’s “Antoine Caron,” Arsène Houssaye’s “Une Larme du Diable II,” Gustave du Puynode’s “Les Arts à Madrid,” » Renoir’s « De la Liberté des Théâtres, » and X. Aubreyt’s « Nuit d’Hiver » and « Mouvement des arts. »


21. The subtitle may also be a nod to Houssaye’s “Ode Panthetiste » (1841).

22. Apuleius, The Golden Ass 4. 31 ff (trans. Walsh) (Roman novel C2nd A.D.): "Then she [Venus, Aphrodite] made for the nearest shore lapped by the waves. With rosy feet she mounted the surface of the rippling waters, and lo and behold, the bright surface of the sea-depths was becalmed."

23. Pseudo-Hyginius, Fabulae 197 (trans. Grant) (Roman mythographer C2nd A.D.): "Into the Euphrates River an egg of wonderful size is said to have fallen, which the fish rolled to the bank. Doves sat on it, and when it was heated, it hatched out Venus, who was later called the Syrian goddess. Since she excelled the rest in justice and uprightness, by a favour granted by Jove [Zeus], the fish were put among the number of the stars, and because of this the Syrians do not eat fish or doves, considering them as gods." Athenaeus, Deipnosophistae 3. 88a (trans. Gullick) (Greek rhetorician C2nd to 3rd A.D.): "Antigonos of Karystos, in his treatise on Diktion, says that this shell-fish [the ear-mussels] is called ‘Aphrodite's ear’ by the Aioliains."

24. Gautier’s description is lengthy but revelatory; while at Generalife and looking upon the mountains, he comments on the whiteness and mystery produced by the snow, which inspires him to compose poetry: “The snow began in thin streaks, in metallic sheets in the shadowy crags...until the sun’s rays no longer had the strength to melt it. We were next to the Genil River, which we perceived as a blue ribbon frozen with silvery streaks...sublime, I scribbled several verses in my notebook, though they lacked proper phrasing, at least had the merit to be the only alexandrines composed at such a lofty site. My stanzas ended, I fabricated an excellent dessert for us from the snow, with sugar, citrus and eau-de-vie. Our encampment was picturesque...."

25. The reference is not dissimilar to the Persian work Conference of the Birds by Farid ud-Din Attar (1177 CE), in which one finds an oft-quoted stanza:

Come you lost Atoms to your Centre draw,
And be the Eternal Mirror that you saw:
Rays that have wander'd into Darkness wide
Return and back into your Sun subside

Readers might make further inquiry into Gautier’s inspiration on Whistler’s musically-titled works, which also include the « Symphony in Grey and Green » (1866).

Moricè argues that the Art Poétiques final line affirms the vital character of his art: “Verlaine chant comme l’homme agit et souffre, et comme il joit, et comme il crie.” Even Verlaine’s literary criticism, he continues, is not prosaic—they are passionate, living commentaries that are personal reflections rather than elucidation’s of the writers’ works. Moricè On Verlaine: 1888; 61.

“De ce rythme libre, vivant, que Verlaine substitue aux régularités métriques, et qui prépare les voies au vers libre; de la aussi cet “impressionisme” verlainien, agissant à la fois par l’imprécision du vocabulaire et par la fluidité du rythme, continuité musicale sans rupture du premier au dernier vers” (13).

ibid.,“Chaque son s’évanouit et disparaît pour laisser la place a un autre; mais en même temps il prend sa place dans un ensemble, un système de relations qui n’aura sa pleine existence qu’une fois l’œuvre entendue en son entier.” Bernard then cites Aristoxène, who says “one must perceive that which is the state of approaching, one must remember that which has passed” (43).

Leur réunion s’accomplit sous une influence, je sais, étrangère, celle de la Musique entendue au concert; on en retrouve plusieurs moyens m’ayant sembler appartenir aux Lettres, je les reprends. Le genre, que c’en devienne un comme la symphonie, peu a peu, a cote du chant personnel, laisse intact l’antique vers, auquel je garde un culte et attribue l’empire de la passion et des rêveries.
Closing Reflection

This project is a mirror (though poorly polished) of the fiction work that I think of as the literary version of my dissertation—Hermann Hesse’s *The Glass Bead Game*. I randomly picked this book up in 2008, at a time when I was considering dropping out of my doctoral program due to sheer exhaustion and frustration. Where I initially disliked—no, abhorred—Gautier, reading Hesse’s novel sparked a new admiration and fascination for the poet. Hesse’s content resonated strongly with what I wanted to say in my own work about Gautier and what I saw taking place in his poetry:

A game, for example, might start from a given astronomical configuration, or from the actual theme of a Bach fugue, or from a sentence out of Leibniz or the Upanishads, and from this theme, depending on the intentions and talents of the player, it could either further explore and elaborate the initial motif or else enrich its expressiveness by allusions to kindred concepts...It represented an elite, symbolic form of seeking for perfection, a sublime alchemy, an approach to that Mind which beyond all images and multiplicities is one within itself—in other words, to God...They considered their Games a path from Becoming to being, from potentiality to reality (Hesse 40).

In Hesse’s work, as in Gautier’s poetry, the focus had become on the journey—not the destination—as the real reward. From this we find a host of new poetic genres and practices that shaped the poetic practices of the nineteenth century and beyond.
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