Certain of the Chansons des rues et des bois and Les Châtiments show one of the more obvious results of the collision between elevated and familiar diction in poetry, its comedy. The master of such comic possibilities is surely Banville. His satire does not have the violence of Hugo’s polemical attacks, but what it lacks in bite it makes up in humor. Baudelaire pointed out that the very excess of “bouffonnerie” in Banville destroys its bitterness, “et la satire, par un miracle résultant de la nature même du poète, se déchargera de toute sa haine dans une explosion de gaieté, innocente à force d’être carnavalesque” (2:167).

Banville was very conscious of his role in creating “une nouvelle langue comique versifiée, appropriée à nos moeurs et à notre poésie actuelle.”1 The importance of his work and, at the same time, the subversive power of this new poetry were widely recognized, especially after the publication of the Odes funambulesques in 1857.2 What Banville saw as appropriate to his time was “la chanson bouffonne et la chanson lyrique,” pointing to a joining of dimensions traditional genre distinctions prohibited (“Préface,” 6:8). On the other hand, he did not make great claims for these pieces. He called them “des fantaisies plus que frivoles” and excuses himself for republishing them in book form. In fact, he did not sign the first edition. Banville maintained in practice as well as theory the distinction between such poetry and his serious works; as Verlaine points out, “dans ses merveilleuses œuvres purement lyri-
ques,” Banville avoided “les à-peu-près et les calembours, exquis dans les Odes funambulesques” (Letter quoted in Stephan, 53).

Although he saw rhyme as the main instrument of his new comic verse, Banville was able to draw humorous effects from his diction as well, and in so doing, he introduced a good number of familiar expressions into poetry. It was here in fact that he was a major innovator (from 1846 on, when the first of the Odes were published) for unusual rhyme was a major stylistic device in traditional satire. Banville created comic effects both through discordances between subject-matter and treatment and through the juxtaposition of disparate registers in the same text. It is useful to look in some detail at this too-neglected work, not only to rediscover some of its charm, but also to see the workings of discordant style in a vein very different from those of Hugo or Baudelaire. Many of these pieces have lost their relevance and even their humor as their targets have been forgotten, but some of them retain interest because they allow a glimpse of a new, intermediate style, neither satirical nor somber, ironic, yet good-humored.³

I. “Où sont les plâtres de Dantan?”

The phrase I have used for the title of this section, taken from the “Ballade des célébrités du temps jadis,” shows one of the major sources of Banville’s humor: the contrast between an established lyrical form (and its corresponding diction) and a contemporary or banal subject. Such contrasts are especially sharp in poems written in the archaic verse forms that Banville renewed—virelais, rondeaux, and so on—but they appear throughout his comic verse. In “La Ville enchantée,” for instance, various landmarks of contemporary Paris are described in long, elegant periphrases. Banville’s Odelettes function in a similar way; he defines the odelette as “une manière de propos familier relevé et discipliné par les cadences lyriques d’un rythme précis et bref” (“Préface” to the Odelettes, 2:101). A corresponding and opposite method of disjoining subject and treatment is the trivialization of a traditionally lyrical subject.⁴

A good example of the first of these procedures is the poem
“Monsieur Coquardeau,” subtitled “Chant royal.” Its subject is a Gavarni character, the type of the bourgeois (like Monnier’s “M. Prudhomme,” to whom he is compared in the third line):

Roi des Crétins, qu’avec terreur on nomme,
Grand Coquardeau, non, tu ne mourras pas.
Lépidoptère en habit de Prudhomme,
Ta majesté t’affranchit du trépas,
Car tu naquis aux premiers jours du monde,
Avant les cieux et les terres et l’onde.

The mock nobility of these lines is created in large measure by their rhetorical flourishes: the series of apostrophes, the capitalization of Crétins, the interjection “non, tu ne mourras pas,” the inversion, the metaphor in the third line, and the measured rhythm of the sixth. Conventionally noble terms like trépas and onde contribute to this effect, and even the technical term lépidoptère has an elevated ring in this linguistic milieu. The familiarity of crétin is all but submerged in it, too. The humor is created by all this expense of rhetoric on the insignificant subject: “Grand Coquardeau” is virtually a contradiction in terms. Such a text, exactly contemporaneous with the publications of Les Contemplations, is based on a caricature of precious language as “Réponse” was; but here the target is different: its subject is the bourgeois, not poetic language. Despite the difference in object and tone, however, Banville’s poem indirectly offers a critique of the neoclassical style: it undermines its rhetorical and lexical conventions by sapping their usual power to confer “nobility” on a text.

Similar effects can be found in the parodies of other poems, Hugo’s in particular. One section of the Odes is called “Les Occidentales,” and it includes poems like “V . . . le baigneur” (based on “Sara la baigneuse”), describing a paunchy old doctor in his bath. Banville points out that the poems of this section are “rigoureusement écrits en forme d’odes, dans lesquels l’élément bouffon est étroitement uni à l’élément lyrique” (6:331). This combination creates the tone of whimsy for which Banville is justly noted. But it is the lyric element, or at least, traditional lyrical devices themselves that are often the point of the parodies, as in the following lines from “Le Critique en mal d’enfant”: 
Il invoquait les Muses, l'une
Ou l'autre, et leur disait : "Erato, mon trésor!
Thalie! ô Melpomène à la chaussure d'or!"
Il disait à la Lune : "O Lune!"

By showing how the critic misuses apostrophe, classical allusions, and neoclassical diction, Banville foregrounds these devices; and their usual connotations function ironically. An especially clear instance of the dismantling of traditional figures occurs in the following lines from "L'Odéon": "... ce rire usité/chez les hommes qu'afflige une gibbosité." The convoluted periphrase, when translated, turns out to conceal the familiar expression "rire comme un bossu" (Fuchs, 191).

The other side of this procedure is the intrusion of "unpoetic" elements and language in descriptions of traditionally poetic subject matter like a beautiful woman, the poet's muse, or the arrival of spring. Such elements include references to food like rôtis cuits à point, sorbets à la neige or the refrain in "Le Flan dans l'Odéon." We also find illnesses and their remedies (ulcers, chlorosis, tuberculosis, emetics, and cataplasms) and unattractive bodies, like the description of Dr. V... or the line "Us pendent en lambeaux comme de vieilles gorges" (from "Académie royale de musique"). What is most improper to allude to in poetry seems to be what is closest to bodily functions, and Banville clearly takes pleasure in flouting the interdictions against such lexical fields. As he notes proudly in his preface to the Odes, "la borne idéale qui marque les limites du bon goût y est à chaque instant franchie" (6:5). (Even in this comic verse, however, Banville holds back from the explicitly sexual and scatalogical elements that Rimbaud will use in satirical and more serious poetry alike.) Related to the evocation of the body are the mentions of clothing and makeup, not clothing described in vague, ethereal terms, but the precise item, a corset, a detachable collar, face powder, sometimes including the object's brand name. Items of apparel often appear as the accoutrements of the people caricatured, but they are used in other contexts, too, as when the poet describes tenors "qui durent un an, comme la crinoline" ("Académie royale de musique").

The beginning of "L'Amour à Paris" shows how the intro-
duction of the paraphernalia of everyday life can create tensions within these texts:

Fille du grand Daumier ou du sublime Cham,
Toi qui portes du reps et du madapolam,
O Muse de Paris! toi par qui l'on admire
Les peignoirs érudits qui naissent chez Palmyre.
Toi pour qui notre siècle inventa les corsets
A la minute, amour du puff et du succès!

*Peignoirs érudits* shows in condensed form the stylistic shocks created by juxtaposing elements from conflicting registers. These juxtapositions are the framework on which the poem is constructed. Inverted syntax, apostrophe, traditional epithets and metaphors, and the subject matter (an invocation to the poet's muse) tell us to read the poem in one way; but the references to clothing, to the dressmaker Palmyre, and to the two contemporary caricaturists make a traditional reading impossible. *Corsets à la minute* is incongruous in an address to the muse not only because it refers to underclothing, but also because it is the antithesis of the eternal: this kind of corset was a novelty in 1846, when the poem was written. Besides, in his note to the poem Banville points out that at the time, these corsets were considered “pernicieux”: only women of questionable morals wore them (6:316-17). The language is likewise of its time: the fashionable anglicism *puff*, meaning deception, has itself gone out of style.

This poem shows clearly how everyday elements can fix the poems in their period. So do the many allusions to the artists, actors, demimondaines, and Parisian characters of the day. These people appear not only as subjects of satirical attack, but as figures from the passing scene or just people whose names are good for a joke. Thus, the phrase “plus de collet” in “La Tristesse d’Oscar” brings forth “pas même un collet née Révoil” (as Louise Colet signed her works); and there is a rondeau to a woman called Désirée Rondeau: “son nom créait ici une nécessité absolue” (“Commentaire,” 6:363). Many of the objects that came into use in the nineteenth century also find their place in these texts: broughams, rubber erasers, theater gaslights, photographs, and so on. So do many anglicisms like *steam-boat*, *twine*, *gin*, and *spleen*, used not for exotic effect,
but as a reflection of fashionable speech and the anglophilia of the time. Its accent on the evanescent, on fashion, lends this verse much of its lightness of tone: it is a refusal of the realm of Poetry, the eternal. Although this attachment to its time makes many of these verses hard to follow or inconsequential today, it is also what makes them novel.

The other major component of this comic treatment of traditionally serious themes is the use of familiar language. Popular and familiar expressions like *par exemple, mamelu, marmots, pingres,* and *tartines* for an author's work appear throughout the *Odes.* These terms are complemented by terminology from special registers, especially the language of journalism and theater slang. Usually, such language is used to puncture a more conventionally lyrical mood that has been established by the use of the staples of neoclassical diction. *Lyres, astres,* and *clairons* are just as abundant in these poems as more familiar language. In fact, it is usually the conjunction of the two kinds of language that creates the humor of these verses. So it is not sufficient to divide Banville's comic verse into two categories, serious subject/frivolous language and vice versa. They are often intermingled: even in the "Chant royal" to M. Coquardeau, the familiar term *crétin* was used; and the title *Odes funambulesques* itself contains the kind of contradiction in connotation that is so central to this collection. In addition, the contrasts in tone this mixing of styles establishes can carry significance beyond its humor.

II. "Bonsoir, chère Evohé"

Contrasts in diction appear from the first poem of the collection, "La Corde roide," on. Its second stanza includes the lines, "J'ai comme un souvenir confus / D'avoir embrassé la Chimère. / J'ai mangé du sucre candi / Dans les feuilletons du lundi: / Ma bouche en est encor amère." Such combinations of registers appear frequently in the *Odes,* often in startling collocations like *ces culs-nus d'Amours.* A look at a stanza from "La Tristesse d'Oscar" shows some of the levels at which this mixing of styles occurs. The poem mocks a successful publicist who is afraid that his resemblance to a famous actor will hurt his political career.
Il rayonne, il est mis comme un notaire en deuil.
Et cependant toujours parmi l'or de son oeil
Brille une perle lacrymale;
Il erre, les regards cloués sur les frontons,
Triste comme un bonnet, ou comme des croûtons
De pain, à l'Ecole normale!

Disparate fields of discourse are brought together: the Ecole normale, tympanums (as on temples or churches), a notary in mourning, gold and pearls. On the level of formality, the noble expressions and constructions, like rayonner and parmi with a singular noun, are deflated by the use of the colloquial phrase triste comme un bonnet. Lacrymale is an intrusion from the register of scientific discourse. Such elements are in tension with the verse form (adapted from Hugo's "La Douleur du Pascha," according to Banville) and the grandiloquent tone it creates. The main rhetorical figure here is the simile, but rather than elevating the style, the similes link the character with distinctly common things: a nightcap, the notary's clothing, and food — very poor food at that. They are one of the first instances of the subversion of the word comme, a feature that other nineteenth-century poets and, later, the Surrealists will adopt. On an intertextual level, beyond the allusion to the Orientales, the poem's title obviously recalls Hugo's "Tristesse d'Olympio"; and a further tension results from the contrast between the very different subjects of the two poems. Banville has marshalled quite a panoply of devices and a wide range of registers and allusions to create the comic effect of these lines.

Another level of comedy arises through the device Banville sees as the major source of his humor, rhyme, enriched in these poems by the use of unconventional vocabulary. In his Petit Traité de versification française, Banville calls attention to the increased possibilities for rich and varied rhyme provided by an expanded poetic lexicon, and he makes full use of them throughout the Odes. Foreign words, technical terms, and proper names often have unusual sounds whose humorous potential is realized when they appear at the end of lines like: "Bugeaud veut prendre Abd-el-Kader:/A ce plan le public adhère." Thus, we get rhyming words like dodécahèdres, topinambou, and madopolam/Cham, as well as internal rhymes
like "Shakespere expire." When used in short verses, rhymes come up more frequently, and in forms like the rondeau and the triolet they are repeated several times, offering a frequency in sound-repetition that can be funny in itself. The rondeau to Arsène Houssaye does not even mention his name but begins "Où sait-on" and rhymes "en veste de Lami-Housset" with "Plus d'une encor fait voir au blond Arsène/Où c'est." Such effects are obviously heightened by mixing allusions to disparate sources and stylistic levels:

Le beau Tassin, en matassin,
N'est pas de ceux dont on se fiche.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

On eut pris pour un faon, Tassin
Quant il figurait dans La Biche

Using unconventional expressions like the popular on se fiche as rhyming words calls attention to them. Banville's rhymes often bring together elements from very disparate registers, fields, and tenors, like the familiar term godiches rhyming with colonnes-affiches or Ajax with clairon de Saxe. In the following lines from "Eveil,"

Lesbienne rêveuse, éprise de Phyllis,
Tu n'as pas, il est vrai, célébré S........,

the rhyme allows Banville a word he hesitates to print. But leaving it blank and rhyming it with a Greek name make it all the more striking.

These examples show the way Banville mixes classical and contemporary elements in his blending of linguistic registers. As we have seen, Hugo will put this device to good, but very different use in his Chansons. Thus, Banville describes a theater "Où passent à la fois Cléopâtre et Lola." In one of the rondeaux, "Junon, Pallas, Vénus au bel orteil,/ Même Betti, le cèdent à madame/Keller." Colloquial language plays an important part in this deflation of the traditionally noble classical allusion, as in "L'Amour à Paris": "Ah! nous avons vraiment les femmes les plus drôles/De Paris! Périclès vit chez nous en exil,/Et nous nous amusons beaucoup. Quelle heure est-il?" In Banville the results are obviously very funny. They can also
create a tone of fantasy, as in the description of Paris in "La Ville enchantée":

Il est de par le monde une cité bizarre,
Où Plutus en gants blancs, drapé dans son manteau,
Offre une cigarette à son ami Lazare,
Et l’emmène souper dans un parc de Wateau.

Beyond their comedy such descents in style often carry a more serious message: one of the major themes of this collection is the decline of contemporary France. This decline is seen in the lack of appreciation of the arts by an uncomprehending public, in the arts themselves, and in the period in general, dominated by the crass, unappreciative bourgeois. As Banville writes in the first satire of "Évohé," "Eveil": "Vois, le siècle est superbe et s’offre au satirique." It is often shifts in diction that mark the difference between an ideal past and present mediocrity. In "Académie royale de musique," the poet salutes the Opéra in a long passage of neoclassical verse, ending in the lines: "O temple! clair séjour de la danse et du luth!/Parnasse! palais d’or! grand Opéra, salut!" The next lines destroy the illusion of the Opera’s grandeur, both in what they describe and in their prose rhythm: "Le cocher s’est trompé. Nous sommes au Gymnase./Un peuple de bourgeois, nez rouge et tête rase,/Étale des habits de Quimper-Corentin." The passage that follows incorporates allusions to contemporary life like the men’s sideburns and the newspaper a woman is reading, pejorative similies ("Un notaire ventru saute comme un pantin"); "sa gorge a l’air d’une maison"), and familiar expressions like ce sujet for the notary’s wife, tendrons for the young girls an old banker pursues, and rats for the dancers at the opera. Diction, then, is used to reflect value. What it describes and inscribes is in fact a change in values: the triumph of the bourgeois (like those described in this poem) leads to the fall of poetry. Thus, in this age "L’artiste ne peut guère, avec son luth divin,/Réaliser assez de rentes" ("A un ami"): the register of finance has come to replace that of high art in Banville’s verse as well as in life. This point is made especially clearly in "La Corde roide": "Quittons nos lyres, Erato!/On n’entend plus que le râteau/De la roulette et de la banque." In "Eveil," Banville opposes his poetry, in the person of his muse.
to the productions of other poets, including two writers of semi-obscene verse:

Tu n'as . . .

Ni fait de Giraudeau ton souteneur en titre;
Ni dans des vers gazés, qui font rougir un pitre,
Fait éclore, en prenant la flûte et le tambour,
Un édit paternel pour les filles d’amour.

Anticipating Baudelaire these lines bemoan the prostitution of art.

In lines like these, Banville extends his sense of decline to the subject of love. He goes on:

Lorsque Antoine est mangé, Cléopâtre vers Londre
Vole comme un oiseau, sur l’aile du steamer,
Et, de Waterloo-Road affrontant la rumeur,
Puise à ces fonds secrets que, pour ses amourettes,
La perfide Albion avance à nos lorettes. (1859 edition)

Here, the classical allusions, Albion for England, and the convoluted periphrase of the last lines are countered by the contemporary steamer and the familiar expressions lorette and “Antoine est mangé” (Antoine est à sec in the 1873 version). The fifth satire, “L’Amour à Paris,” is a longer development of the same theme. In the passage from this poem quoted above, the contemporary Parisian muse is a very superficial one, with her corsets and stylish peignoirs. She has sold out: the muse and love have become what Parisian style dictates through its caricaturists and its fashion houses. In a theme Baudelaire develops too, the modern world is presented as one defined by its products. Ideal poetry and the language of ideal poetry, we are led to conclude, cannot survive in such circumstances.

III. “De son vil échafaud”

When Banville uses traditionally elevated diction and its opposite in this way, he is not propounding the kind of leveling in style Hugo proposes in “Réponse” and practices in the Chansons. On the contrary, even as Banville breaks down traditional distinctions, he reinforces what they stand for. Baude-
laire points out that the recurring term (what Guiraud would call a *mot-thème*) in Banville's verse is *lyre*. For Baudelaire, Banville is the absolutely lyrical poet. Looking at Banville's diction confirms both the importance of this term and what it implies. The word *lyre* is part of the neoclassical poetic lexicon: if the poet and his muse have to lay down their lyres, or their *lyres*, it means the end of poetry.

This emphasis on lyricism is related to Banville's opposition to realism. This is one of the recurring themes in the *Odes*, despite the many references to contemporary life they contain. In “Réalisme” the poet exclaims “Regardez ce que font ces imbéciles-là!” In “Bonjour Monsieur Courbet!” (based, of course, on Courbet's painting with the same name), the poet finds that his beloved countryside has been ravaged: the trees are twisted, the colors are ugly. He asks Cybèle what has happened, and she explains that Courbet has passed through. Sure enough, he hears the leaves and grasses calling “'Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet le maître peintre!/Monsieur Courbet, salut! Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet!’” Here again, the descent from lyricism is marked by a descent in poetic language, in expressions like those just quoted, the phrase *les astres rabougris*, and the descriptions of the destroyed landscape.

Banville, then, seems very much tied to the conventional divisions into genres and the diction corresponding to them. But there are some texts that gesture towards new possibilities, among them the last piece in the *Odes*, “Le Saut du tremplin.” This poem has become one of Banville's most famous both because it departs from the satirical tone of the rest of the collection (and so can be taken more seriously) and because it is one of the first instances of a conceit that was to have a long posterity, the image of the poet as clown. The poem presents an acrobatic clown who is able to jump higher than all the others. But he wants to go still higher, and he asks his springboard to push him up to where he can no longer see the vile crowd below him, “Jusqu'à ces sommets où, sans règles,/Embrouillant les cheveux vermeils/Des planètes et des soleils,/Se croissent la foudre et les aigles.” In the last lines of the poem and the collection, he jumps so high “qu'il creva le plafond de toiles/Au son du cor et du tambour,/Et, le coeur dévoré d'amour,/Alla rouler dans les étoiles.”
Clearly, the central contrast here is again that between the real and the ideal worlds. One of the groups of people the clown wants to escape are "des réalistes en feu"; and he is obviously himself the figure of the misunderstood romantic poet. When he speaks to his springboard, "Cet émule de la Sa-qui/Parle bas en langue inconnue," and it will be up to posterity to rediscover him, "sa plaie au flanc." Banville says this poem expresses "l'attrait du gouffre d'en haut" (6:385), and it is, not surprisingly, through the metaphor of height and depth that he articulates his vision.

The language he uses parallels this opposition: "low" language tends to be used for "low" subjects, whereas elevated language expresses what is literally and figuratively elevated. Some of the devices used in the more satirical pieces, like rhymes with unusual words and references to contemporary figures still appear in this text: Madagascar rhymes with car, qui with Saqui (Madame Saqui was a famous acrobat). The phrases en vérité and selon tous les principes appear when the clown is described early in the poem, and the other acrobats call him "'ce diable-là'." But by and large, a more conventional diction is used. Such language translates the poet-clown's aspirations and his search for the ideal world: "Jusqu'à ces éthers pleins de bruit/Où mêlant dans l'affreuse nuit/Leurs ha-leines exténuées,/Les autans ivres de courroux/Dorment, échevelés et fous,/Sur les seins pâles des nuées." When the clown turns his attention to the bourgeois in his audience, there is a corresponding drop in the poem's stylistic level:

Frêle machine aux reins puissants,
Fais-moi bondir, moi qui me sens
Plus agile que les panthères,
Si haut que je ne puisse voir
Avec leur cruel habit noir
Ces épiciers et ces notaires!

Conventionally poetic devices in these lines include the periphrase denoting the springboard (part of an extended apostrophe covering six stanzas), the inversion of nouns and adjectives, and "poetic" epithets like agile. Even the fifth line is ennobled by its syntax. When Epiciers and notaires appear in the last line, with the connotations these professions have,
these terms are out of place in their linguistic surroundings. High language, then, equals high subjects and vice versa.

On the other hand, there are some indications of a breaking-down of this structure. The subject of the poem, an acrobatic clown, is hardly a noble one, and the first line of the text ("Clown admirable, en vérité") is a kind of stylistic paradox. A springboard is an unlikely subject to be addressed in an apostrophe, too; and its response to his plea is not the discourse of a noble shade, but its propelling him up to the sky. As the clown addresses his springboard, the nobility of his language transmits his growing elation until he cries out "'Plus haut! plus loin! de l'air! du bleu!/Des ailes! des ailes! des ailes!' " But the last stanza includes a surprising feature, a repetition that gives it a colloquial tone, as though the poet were addressing a child: "Enfin, de son vil échafaud,/Le clown sauta si haut, si haut." In these lines the word haut itself is brought down; spoken language is adequate to express the poet-clown's ultimate apotheosis.

The image of the clown himself points the way to an aesthetic no longer tied to genre distinctions: his face may be "barbouillé de blanc," but his soul is that of a poet. He is the figure of a new sensibility that can find the lyrical in what is usually considered base. It is thus in a poem like this one rather than in those where he criticizes his society overtly that Banville foreshadows the work of the later Hugo, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé. In most of his satirical work, Banville reinforces the distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable language even as he accomplishes an expansion of the poetic lexicon: he needs these distinctions to create his mock heroic style. True, in doing so, he foregrounds neoclassical diction and rhetoric and thereby demystifies them and exposes their arbitrariness. But the shocks in diction are there to create laughter; through their comic effect they may contribute to a text's social or artistic criticism, but they do not figure it. Only when the familiar discourse works with, not against, the lyrical elements is there the glimpse of a new level of style. In his preface to the Odes’ sequel, Les Occidentales, Banville professes himself "content d'avoir fait pressentir le parti immense que la langue française pourrait tirer de l'élément bouffon lié à l'élément lyrique" (7:3). It is in poems like
“Le Saut du tremplin,” with their whimsical, fantastic texture, that he is able to realize the new kind of lyricism such linkings can create.

We have seen some of the same devices in Banville as in Hugo. Both use striking contrasts in diction, a caricature of precious style, and names of contemporary figures in incongruous linguistic settings. But in Banville there is no discernable poetic program of mixing styles or introducing everyday elements into serious verse. Nor do we find Hugo’s biting satire and political criticism. We will see much of the same vocabulary in Baudelaire as in Banville, references to contemporary life and medical terms as well as familiar language. We will also find the contrasting structure of poeticization of the banal and deflation of conventional rhetoric and diction. But again there is no place in Banville’s sunny, lighthearted world for what we will find in Baudelaire. As Baudelaire writes, “dans ses œuvres, vous n’entendrez pas les dissonances, les discordances des musiques du sabbat, non plus que les glapissements de l’ironie, cette vengeance du vaincu” (2:168). Banville’s work shows us how the same structures, when used in comedy, carry different messages. The polemical power and the dark vision these shifts in diction can connote are, in his work, defused by laughter.