ONE. Poetic Language and the Language of Poetry

1 The term register is also used as an equivalent to these expressions, but I prefer to use it in a more precise sense, as detailed below.

2 It should be kept in mind, however, that dialectal and archaic expressions can play an important role in poetry, too. In fact, archaism is often a significant component of poetic diction.

3 Ure and Ellis give an overview and a bibliography of the literature on language varieties through 1966. More recent descriptions of these categories, with some variation in terminology and order, are given in Gregory, Turner (165-202); Enkvist (59-62); and chap. 3 ("Stylistic Analysis") of Crystal and Davy. Halliday elaborates on them in "Text as Semantic Choice" and in Language (33-35, 62-64, 142-50). Other ways to classify the components of speech situations have been proposed by Hymes, who sets up a sixteen-part schema (51-62); Joos, whose five levels of style (from intimate to frozen) are more or less a description of the dimension of tenor; and Jakobson, who analyzes language according to function. I will be discussing various classifications of French language levels later on.

4 For an expanded description of these dimensions, see Halliday, Language (142-45).

5 For more examples and further discussion, see Halliday et al. (92-97) and Gregory and Carroll, chap. 6.

6 Kerbrat studies the connotative value of phonetic, morphological, and syntactic aspects of language as well as vocabulary. I will concentrate on lexical elements, but all these aspects are closely interrelated.

7 Delas and Filliolet point out the limitations of the idea that certain terms have an "evocative" effect and emphasize instead the structuring of the text as a whole (96, 98; see also 116). Indeed it is only when it is actualized in discourse that, as Kerbrat shows: "un mot peut se poétiser, se vulgariser, ou perdre au contraire sa marque connotative, et les effets du contexte peuvent neutraliser un terme marqué ou marquer un terme neutre" (97). Enkvist gives an overview of the ways context has been defined in relation to literary texts, including Riffaterre's distinction between microcontext and macrocontext (54-62).

8 Catford suggests "a 'poetic genre' as a super-variety characterized by potential use of features appropriate to all styles" (85), whereas Ure and
Ellis as well as Halliday et al. (92) see literature as a register in itself. Bally places literary language alongside the language of science, administration, and sports, albeit in a "place d'honneur" (28). Vinay and Darbelnet, discussing "niveaux de langue," put "langue littéraire" and then, "langue poétique" at the top of their hierarchy (34), with technical languages or "jargons" on a horizontal axis equivalent to "langue écrite." Joos likewise associates his most formal category, "frozen style," with literature (27). I will not enter into the debates about the relation of poetic to "standard" language. Fowler presents criticisms of the "poetic language" fallacy (184-86); and he recommends taking language varieties into account (20-21). Iser summarizes the objections to the concept of style as deviation from a norm (86-92); and Kerbrat outlines various theories of the "neutral" term and proposes instead the kind of conventional and contextual norms I am presenting here (96-98).

9 For a critique of such "romantic" theories of poetic discourse, see Todorov (99-104) and Molino and Tamine (86). On the romantics' resistance to convention, see Manley (34-39). Pleynet studies the way the poetry of the last century has attempted to come to terms with the way the literary text "est appelé à dialectiser son rapport à la convention (au code) s'il veut donner un maximum de rendement" (98).

10 Iser discusses such expectations in the constitution of a text's "repertoire" (69-71). See Manley for definitions of different kinds of conventions (33, 47).

11 For example, Zumthor has studied what he calls the "register" of medieval poetry (but what could more properly be called its code), defined as "a pre-existent network of lexical, rhetorical, and even syntactic probabilities . . . [that] constitutes the basis of the poetic expression of the trouvère: it provides him with a set of predetermined poetic requirements" (273).

12 Meschonnic takes the position that any word has the potential of becoming "poetic" (Poétique, 55-62); whereas Kerbrat points out that there are words "à vocation poétique" (95). Riffaterre distinguishes between the poetic potential of a word in the langue from its use in the parole of a particular text, where its context may neutralize its poetic connotations (Essais, 204). He studies the various ways terms and phrases that are conventionally poetic are used in literary texts (182-202).

13 The poetry Aristotle is discussing here, however, is not lyric poetry. Genette points out that he does not discuss lyric poetry at all in the Poetics (Architexte, 16).

14 Aristotle indicated a style for three kinds of rhetoric and distinguished between written and spoken styles in his Rhetoric (bk. 3, chap. 12); and Cicero also divided oratorical style into three levels, linking subject-matter and formality (bk. 4, §§8-11, 252-69). Although these classifications addressed oratory in particular, many genre systems were based on these distinctions. Some critics of the French neoclassical period like La Harpe and Bonald criticized such systems, however.

15 Mailloux points out that "how a particular author's practices relate to
the tradition, how he uses the conventions according to his purposes, and what literary and extraliterary meaning his use of them produces are always specific to his unique context of writing" (403, his italics).

16 Ullmann points out the comic effects that can be elicited by the introduction of vulgarisms and technical terms (162, 167). As we shall see, many other effects are possible.

17 Zola was aware that it was his language that outraged his critics. He wrote in his preface to the novel that "La forme seule a effaré. On s'est fâché contre les mots. Mon crime est d'avoir eu la curiosité littéraire de ramasser et de couler dans un moule très travaillé la langue du peuple. Ah! la forme, là est le grand crime!" (33). He was responding to critics like "Dancourt," who had written: "Il a imprimé dans un feuilleton . . . des mots jusqu'ici confinés dans les dictionnaires et que l'éducation la plus élémentaire interdit de prononcer" (La Gazette de France, 20 avril 1876, quoted in Deffoux, 59).

18 It is a historical irony that *langue bourgeoise* (as Guiraud calls it in *Le Français populaire*) should now be the term for the high style: the *bon usage* of the seventeenth century was the language of the court, certainly not that of the bourgeoisie.

19 Other novels using argot include Balzac's *La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin* (1847) and Hugo's *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* (1828) and *Les Misérables* (1862).

20 Brunot finds that it was during the course of the nineteenth century that bourgeois speech "a été envahie par le parler libre et coloré des classes populaires" (Petit de Julleville, 8:829-30); whereas Valdman thinks the "brassages sociaux" of the twentieth century opened the frontiers between the two.

21 Riffaterre rightly points out, however, that poetic effects are not limited to contemporary reactions, even supposing that these could be accurately determined (Essais, 205-6).

22 On Littré's methods and categories as well as reactions to them, see Chaurand, 136-38.

23 Other sources for information about levels of formality in the nineteenth century include both lexicons of poetic words and expressions (I will examine in more detail the kinds of language they included and excluded) and dictionaries of slang like those of Larchey, Delvau, and Delasalle. Unfortunately, these slang dictionaries are not altogether reliable; and they tend to disagree on where many terms should be assigned. Cressot criticizes them for including terms accepted by the official dictionaries, omitting others that are not, and tending to classify as *argot* words that are merely familiar (335).

24 Despite wide recognition of the rigidity of neoclassical poetics, theorists and historians have analyzed its rules in very different ways. Molino and Tamine point out that there were many kinds of styles, according to the many possible genres (99). Ullmann summarizes systems like these in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (158). Often, however, genres have been grouped into either two or three main categories. Bonnard, for example, finds the three "species" we usually call genres, (epic,
lyric, and dramatic), at both levels of his two "genres," the public and the domestic (889). Fontanier sees tropes as appropriate according to subject matter as well as the nobility of the genre: "Ainsi, les Tropes conviennent moins sans doute à la tendre et plaintive Elégie, qu'à la Satire maligne ou piquante; moins à la Comédie, dont le ton n'est que celui d'une noble et élégante conversation, qu'à la Tragédie . . . moins à la Tragédie, dont les personnages doivent, par la vérité et le naturel de leur langage, faire oublier le poète, qu'à l'Epopée . . . moins à l'Epopée . . . qu'à l'Ode" (181). In Brunot's Histoire Bruneau calls the second of the three usual categories "noble" rather than médiocre or tempéré; the high style is "langue ornée" (12:57). François divides his genres according to social category represented (heroes [nobles], bourgeois, and people) (2:90). His analysis reflects the confusion between moral qualities and social status Genette notes in Aristotle's formulations (Architexte, 16-17). Houston points out that despite such discrepancies, these theories had real influence (Demonic Imagination, 21). For my purposes the precise assignment of language levels to genres is less important than the fact that a correlation was perceived. The result was the constitution of a "noble" language.

25 It should not be forgotten that "noble" language was originally that of the court, to be imitated in society conversation and only secondarily in literature. "Precious" language in conversation is another, and a well-known, story, however. On the other hand, the supposedly conversational style in neoclassical poetry did not incorporate familiar language. Genette has pointed out that the "simple" style was really only "un style moins orné, ou plutôt, orné plus simplement" (Figures, 208).

26 Historians of French language and literature have examined neoclassical style in much more detail than is necessary here. See especially Bruneau, Histoire, 12:21-79; François, especially 2:89-100; and Barat, 5-35. For a summary of contemporary English poetic language, which used many of the same devices as the French, see Sherbo, 1-16.

27 See Molino and Tamine for examples (106-7). The special vocabulary and the ornaments of neoclassical style have become marked terms. Ruffatërre has studied the stylistic effects of their use in postclassical poetry in Essays (182-202) and Semiotics (27-28).

28 On Delille's innovations and their limitations, see Bruneau, Histoire, 12:63-64. Houston studies his role in the changing language of late neoclassicism in The Demonic Imagination, 3-21. Chaurand discusses Delille's ideas on language and Hugo's opposition to him (129-30).

29 In his "Vie de Joseph Delorme," Sainte-Beuve excuses himself (in the name of his nom de plume) for having introduced into his poetry "quelques mots surannés ou de basse bourgeoisie exclus, on ne sait pas pourquoi, du langage poétique" (Poésies, 26). Note that he descends no lower than the "basse bourgeoisie."

30 Genette notes that modern literature has its own rhetoric, which is just the refusal of rhetoric (Figures, 221). Meschonnec says that this anti-rhetoric reveals a consciousness of rhetoric's power (Poétique, 123). Molino points out both that nineteenth-century literature is highly rhetor-
ical (in the sense of persuasion) and that it functions as a rhetoric, though a negative one (188-89).

31 Note how, once taken in its figurative sense, acier can mean iron. Such tropes do subvert simple reference.

32 The classic statement of this point of view, often attributed to Dumar­


33 Angelet provides the most complete study of Corbière's "oral" vocabu­

34 Both Cressot (8) and Bruneau, Histoire, 12:77, give 1880 as the date by which the romantic linguistic revolution had been completed.

35 On the "code struggle" between verse and prose poems see Johnson, especially 9-10 and chap. 5. Wing's analyses of Rimbaud's Illuminations include excellent treatments of the stylistic functions of varied diction in prose poetry.

TWO. Hugo: Responding to "Réponse"

1 Edmond Caro, Revue contemporaine (15 juin 1856), quoted in Gély, Fortune (51).

2 Ullmann calls the freeing of "banished" words merely a "réforme," but continues, "C'était le triomphe du mot propre, du mot simple et fort, sur la périphrase d'une rhétorique classicisante. . . . [in 1834] Victor Hugo fit le point de la victoire romantique dans sa célèbre Réponse à un acte d'accusation" (Précis, 178-79). A quotation from the poem follows.

3 According to Vianey in his edition of Les Contemplations, it was Veuil­

4 For a stylistic definition of periphrasis as riddle and its conventional character, see Riffaterre, Essais (193-94) and Production (53-54).

5 Houston sees both of these characteristics as part of romantic verse's movement in the direction of prose (French Symbolism, 96-97).

6 It should be noted, too, that in a very few instances, like "Réverie d'un passant à propos de son roi" (Feuilles d'automne), a more conversational tone is used in a text with a political message. On the other hand, once the scene from contemporary life has been set in this poem, the poet's reflections are on a markedly higher plane in diction as well as subject.

7 In Intimité Gély has studied in detail Hugo as a "poète de l'intimité" and his relation in this respect to other poets of the period.

8 Voltaire praised Malherbe for having used cabane, a word that was "agré­able et du beau style" rather than taudis, "expression du peuple" (quoted in François, 2:95).
9 The *Larousse du XIXe siècle* lists the word as familiar in the sense of a "terme d'amitié que l'on adresse à des enfants mignons et éveillés." a sense not mentioned in the other major nineteenth-century dictionaries.

10 Bérenger himself was condemned for turning the light genre of songs into aggressive satire. The prosecutor of his 1821 trial claimed he had corrupted this genre, "celui dont on excuse le plus volontiers les licences. L'esprit national le protège et la gaité l'absout." After the Revolution, because of agitators like Béranger, "la muse des chants populaires devint une des furies de nos discordes civiles" (quoted in Zevaès, 20-21).

11 On Musset's practice in this respect, see Bruneau, *Histoire*, 12:253; Gautier, *Histoire* (297); and especially Houston, *Demonic Imagination*, (35-42), who sees Musset's practice as the result of his "indifference to certain niceties of diction" (38).

12 Gaudon calls *Eblouissements* a "poème exemplaire" (Temps, 177); and the Pléiade editor calls it "un des poèmes les plus caractéristiques des Châtiments" (2:1104).

13 Meschonnic studies this breaking down of the proper name until it becomes a common noun, thereby losing its stability (Hugo, 280-85).


THREE. Banville the Funambulist

1 "Avertissement de la deuxième édition" des *Odes funambulesques*. *Oeuvres*, 6:2. Quotations from Banville will usually be taken from this edition of his works, published in the 1890s, which includes Banville's 1873 commentary on the *Odes funambulesques*. The first edition of the *Odes* was published in 1857; and the second edition (1859) includes twelve new pieces (see the "Note des éditeurs," 291-94). I will refer to the variants from this edition as "1859."

2 See Badesco on Banville's influence (2:1113-42), and that of the *Odes funambulesques* in particular (2:1116-17). Although Banville's humorous verse appears in several collections, including *Odelettes* and *Trente-six Ballades joyeuses*, I will be concentrating mainly on his most famous work, the *Odes*. In *Les Stalagtites* (1846) Banville uses refrains from popular songs like "Nous n'irons plus au bois"; but rather than incorporating popular language, he uses the archaisms and traditional subjects that characterize such songs.

3 Banville was aware of the dangers of writing satire on contemporary themes. In his 1873 commentary he quotes a note to his poem "Evohé" from the 1857 edition: "Rien de plus difficile que de faire comprendre après dix ans une plaisanterie parisienne . . ."; and he goes on, "J'écrivais cette note en 1857; que dirai-je aujourd'hui, en 1873?" (6:303-4). Needless to say, in the 1980s . . .
4 Bruneau mentions these devices in his overview of Banville's language (Histoire, 13:55-64); see also Rivaroli (50) and Charpentier (155-56).
5 Harms compares these two poems in discussing Banville's parodies of Hugo (47-49). This section was retitled "Autres guitares" (still an allusion to Hugo) in the 1873 edition, and the title Les Occidentales was used for the 1869 collection that continued the Odes.
6 For a discussion of eating as the sign of the prosaic, opposed to the lyrical, see Johnson's contrast between Baudelaire's two versions of "Invitation au voyage" (103-7). Ironically in this context, the Baudelaire quotation exemplifying this contrast in codes is taken from his article on Banville, whom he sees as the very paradigm of the lyric poet.
7 Bruneau points out, however, that when Banville uses true argot like balle for head or voyou, he puts the terms in italics (Histoire, 13:61).
8 I have given the 1859 version. The last lines of the 1873 edition are:

Triste comme un bonnet, ou comme ces croûtons
De pain que nous cache une malle!

9 In his commentary Banville points out that the hatred for the bourgeois associated with the romantic era underlies his whole book: "en langage romantique, bourgeois signifiait l'homme qui n'a d'autre culte que celui de la pièce de cent sous, d'autre idéal que la conservation de sa peau, et qui en poésie aime la romance sentimentale, et dans les arts plastiques la lithographie coloriée" (6:294).
10 See King, "Poet as Clown" (240). Bray points out that the first instance of this theme in Banville appears in the poem "A Méry," from the Odelettes (267). Starobinski has studied this subject in the arts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
11 In his commentary on this poem, Banville says he was trying to express "ce que je sens le mieux, l'attrait du gouffre d'en haut," a theme that doubtless arose from his admiration for Hugo. Storey discusses this theme but somehow sees no apotheosis in this poem, despite the last lines: "Le clown sauta si haut, si haut, / Qu'il creva le plafond de toiles/ . . . / Et, le cœur dévoré d'amour, / Alla rouler dans les étoiles" (4-5). Mallarmé seems to echo this poem in his article "Théodore de Banville" when he writes, "J'attends que, chauve-souris éblouissante et comme l'éventement de la gravité, soudain, du site par une pointe d'aile autochtone, le fol, adamantin, colère, tourbillonnant génie heurte la ruine; s'en délivre, dans la voltige qu'il est, seul" (O.C.t 521).

FOUR. Baudelaire: De quelle boue?
1 Gautier's article appeared in L'Univers illustré in 1868 and was published as the "Notice" to the 1868 edition of Les Fleurs du mal.
2 Royère also sees mysticism as leading to "catachresis" in Baudelaire's language (104). Grava studies the metaphysical implications of these "bipolarities," but unlike Cellier he underlines the importance of maintaining a tension between the opposite poles.
3 See Genovali, 14-19; Jouve, 2-4; and especially Wing, who shows how
“rhetorical devices are associated with a style level consistently deflated by contextual elements” (“Stylistic Function,” 451).

Genovali, following Royère, uses “catachresis,” to refer to stylistic incongruities in general. In its implication of a “forcing” together of disparate words, it is an apt term.

Letter of 26 janvier 1866 (Correspondance, 2:578). Mendès did not accept the poem, and it appeared in Les Epaves.

Other critics who have called attention to the contrasts between modern or “prosaic” elements and neoclassical diction and rhetoric in Baudelaire include Riffaterre, Essais (182-88); Antoine (5-12); and Houston, Demonic Imagination (85-124).

Jenny has examined in more detail these transitions and their import.

Jauss sees fosse commune as a “fall from stylistic heights” (Toward an Aesthetics, 155). He notes the incongruousness of the objects thrown together in the boudoir section of the poem, but sees them as “prosaic objects” rather than examining the prosaic terms (153-54). Like Auerbach, he takes cerveau to be a “technical medical term” (153) and calls it an “explosively prosaic rhyme-word” (163).

Jenny points out that “les deux principes métaphorique et métonymique se nourrissent l’un l’autre dans la construction du poème” (447).

For a detailed treatment of the stylistic shiftings in these lines (but classifications and interpretations of the terms grouiller and fangeux that differ from mine), see Genovali, 118-20.

See in particular Bersani (105-11) and Joxe (especially 145-48), where she discusses the “transmutation de la ville.”

Under the heading “roux,” Littré quotes Hamilton on a “Mme la marquise de Senantes,” who “passait pour blonde . . . elle aimait mieux se conformer au goût du siècle, que respecter celui des anciens.”

The connotations of “pauvre homme” supply a further link between gambling and sexuality, again implying a lack.

FIVE. VERLAINE: WRINGING THE NECK OF ELOQUENCE

1 The obsolete term patiner means “to caress.”
2 Because of its “prosaism,” however, Genette sees in it a possible echo of Coppée (Palimpsestes, 138).
3 Cuénot notes that in revising the poem, Verlaine added more familiar terms than in earlier versions (156).
4 In his edition Dansel claims that in his cell, “Verlaine, démoralisé, opère un retour sur lui-même, sans indulgence” (72). Zimmermann sees it as one of the poems that express Verlaine’s “sentiment de vide, d’abandon, son désespoir” (125-26).
5 Loos takes the word in its familiar sense (current since 1845, according to Robert) of “padding” a piece of written work, and he remarks, “Es ist vielleicht das erste Mal, dass ein französischer Dichter dieses Verbum in einer solchen Umgebung anwendet” (15-16). But in the context “ainsi qu’une rôtie,” the first meaning (to spread on bread) seems most applicable.
6 Genette points out that a true self-imitation is impossible, being in principle indistinguishable from any other work of the author. Its existence depends entirely on its being designated as such (Palimpsestes, 138-39).

7 *C'est la mère Michel qui a perdu son chat,*
  Qui cri' par la fenêtr', qui est-c' qui lui rendra.
  Et l'compèr' Lustucru qui lui a répondu:
  "Allez, la mèr" Michel, vot' chat n'est pas perdu." . . .
  "Si vous rendez mon chat, vous aurez un baiser."
  Le compèr' Lustucru, qui n'en a pas voulu,
  Lui dit: "Pour un lapin votre chat est vendu."

8 In his edition Robichez points out these elements as "inédits" (513).

9 Cf. Hugo's line "Plante là toute rhétorique" (see chap. 2 above).

10 Mitchell also notes this repetition of the word *nuance* ("Mint," 241). He shows "the discrepancy between the advice [this poem] proclaims and the manner in which it advises" (240), pointing out its didacticism, its rhetorical nature, and its humor. Grimaud also points out the devices typical of eloquence in this supposedly antieloquent poem, such as exclamations, capitalizations, and *pointes*. He also shows the ways rhyme is emphasized rather than "assagie." Verlaine was aware of this latter contradiction. In his response to the article "Karl Mohr" had written in *La Nouvelle Rive Gauche* attacking "Art poétique," he writes, "D'abord, vous observerez que le poème en question est *bien* rimé" (quoted in Stephan, 53, Verlaine's italics). Neither Mitchell nor Grimaud, however, discusses the ways in which advice and manner coincide in the poem.

11 Baudelaire had used the term in "Le Monstre" (see chap. 4 above) although he wasn't sure of its use. He asked Poulet-Malassias, "Le mot *Cas* peut-il s'appliquer au *Cul* comme à la pine, ou en est-il l'antipode? // s'agit du Diable (Trouver, s'il est possible, un exemple") (quoted in O.C., 1:1147).

12 Marcel Cressot wrote of him in 1938:

> Verlaine a été l'introducteur dans la langue "sacrée" de la poésie, du mot familier, brutal, bas, de la syntaxe de la langue familière, de l'image qui se réfère à l'objet vulgaire. . . . Que ces mots et ces tours reçoivent droit de cité dans la poésie, c'était là un fait sensationnel, que cet emploi s'accompagnât d'effets très délicats, c'était une révélation: la cause était gagnée. (10)

The works by Bruneau, Cuénot, and Loos I have cited list and classify these innovations.

13 Philip Stephan has studied Verlaine's work in relation to the use of neologism, popular diction, foreign words, latinisms, as well as the subjects typical of decadent verse, especially in chapters 6 and 7.

14 J.-S. Chaussivert points out its use in *La Bonne Chanson* (79-80).

15 Sainéan refutes the idea that *argot* changes "avec une rapidité surprenante" (291). He shows how nineteenth-century *argot* retained much of that of previous centuries (290-94).
Notes

16 For the distinction between the ways “vulgar” is used, to refer to the signifier and to the signified, see chap. 1 above.

SIX. Rimbaud: Poetics and Politics

1 Lapeyre writes: “Tout le poème est conçu pour mettre en valeur le dernier mot, pour aboutir au bureau prosaïque” (420). See also Guisto (132).

2 Chambers examines the ways critics have tried to find referential “keys” to Rimbaud’s poetry, especially his later works; and he shows how such referential readings counter these texts’ “symbolisation.”

3 Todorov has also examined the role of romantic theories of the symbol and their relation to modern literary criticism (101-4).

4 Rimbaud’s mentor, Georges Izambard, “corrected” the line, “Et mes désirs brutaux s’accrochent à leurs lèvres” to “Et je sens les baisers qui me viennent aux lèvres.” Ruff and the Pléiade edition use the original line; others, including Bernard’s, the Izambard version.

5 In his edition Ruff claims that the returning Parisians described in the poem are those who had fled the city during its bombing by the Prussians in February and March of 1871, a return Rimbaud might have witnessed. Other commentators have not been convinced by his demonstration. It does not matter for the purposes of my argument which event it is, except that the very fact the question is raised should give us pause regarding the poem’s relation to historical reality.

6 See also Kerbrat’s discussion of the relation of connotation to ideology (215-29).

7 Bachelard has examined the “transaction du petit et du grand” in this text in *La Poétique de l’espace* (155-57). See also Kittang (170-71).

8 Suzanne Bernard gives the first in her edition of Rimbaud’s *Oeuvres* as does Marcel Ruff in his edition of the *Poésies* (113). Antoine Adam gives the latter in the Pléiade edition, and Bernard’s successor A. Guyaux follows him. None of them give their sources, but Charles Bruneau defines “fouffe” as a “gifle” in his article “Le Patois de Rimbaud” (5).

9 See Lapeyre (405-22) for a discussion of Rimbaud’s use of rhetorical figures, especially in the prose works.

10 Baudry’s position is similar to Todorov’s, while he situates Rimbaud’s language in an interrelation with his social text: “Cette langue se distingue radicalement de la langue considérée comme moyen de communication et d’expression. . . . Loin donc d’être l’expression d’une réalité extérieure à elle . . . elle est intérieure au texte général (qui pour être texte est toujours en quelque sorte déjà théorisé) et en relation dialectique avec lui” (59, his italics). Paul de Man, however, in criticizing theories that link modern poetry with the loss of representation, shows that “all allegorical poetry must contain a representational element that invites and allows for understanding, only to discover that the understanding it reaches is necessarily in error” (*Blindness*, 185).

SEVEN. Conclusion

1 In his commentary Banville calls the pencil-merchant who was followed
by a trumpet-player as he displayed his wares “le symbole vivant de la Réclame moderne” (6:356).

2 The poem includes “ce tas de crimes-là,” marmot, cancan, and ordures (referring to people), as well as tapage.

3 In this connection see Burch (158-215) and Sonnenfeld (176-97).

4 Richepin was prosecuted and condemned for offending public morals. He was sentenced to a month in prison, a fine of 500 francs, and loss of his civil rights. The first edition of La Chanson des gueux was destroyed, and five poems were either cut or eliminated from further editions. Needless to say, the resulting succès de scandale made Richepin’s career as a poet.

5 Already in the 1870s, La Renaissance littéraire et artistique and La République des lettres published poems presenting contemporary urban scenes. Alongside its serialization of Zola’s l’Assommoir, the latter periodical printed some of the Chansons des gueux and other poems by Richepin as well as a number of drinking songs like Raoul Ponchon’s “Chanson vinoise”: . . . / Et puis ce post-scriptum / Pour mon nez, géranium / Digne d’un muséum. . . . Je ne distingue plus . . . / Le jour de la nuit, l’une / De l’autre blonde et brune, / Et mon cul de la lune!” In the 1880s La Basoche, La Nouvelle Rive Gauche (Lutèce after 1883), and Le Chat noir were among the journals publishing the work of Verlaine and the younger poets who took him as their model. In their pages “low” language as well as technical expressions appear in frequent representations of urban life, as many of the poems’ titles suggest: Ajalbert’s “Les Balayeurs” and “Chronolithographie,” Vautier’s “Crépuscule (Charbon),” and Fernandez’ “Nocturnités.”

6 Works like Lorrain’s Modernités play on the parallel between modern life and the decadent periods of antiquity that is the defining characteristic of the Decadent movement. Along with a wish to startle and provoke, it is this simultaneous preoccupation with and rejection of the modern world that often motivates the use of slang in such works. Decadent style has been analyzed at greater length than is necessary here by Carter (123-43); Stephan (throughout, but especially 99-123); and Houston, French Symbolism (117-30).

7 The “Tombeau” to Verlaine includes a colloquial construction—“Verlaine? Il est caché parmi l’herbe, Verlaine”—but not only is this the only such instance in a sonnet marked by Mallarmé’s usual dislocated syntax, not only is it surrounded by words with particular Mallarméan resonances, like “de maints/Nubpoets’ influences on other poets later in the nineteenth and in the twentieth century. Stephan discusses Verlaine’s influence on the younger generation (173-200). Houston’s French Symbolism is a sustained effort to draw comparisons between French poetry of the late nineteenth century and modern poetry.

9 Trézenik, one of the editors of Lutèce, defends the decadents by linking their goal of originality to that of the romantics: “Il y a tendance de la jeune littérature à faire neuf, et pour cela à faire autre. Les étiquettes ne signifient si bien rien que les prétendus décadents ont déjà été affublés de l’épithète de néo-romantiques, parce que ‘romantisme,’ au
fond, au temps de sa gloire et de son audace, ne voulait que dire changememt” (italics Trézenik’s, quoted in Stephan 94).

10 This passage, from an 1822 article in Le Miroir des spectacles, des lettres, des moeurs, et des arts is quoted in Carpentier (ix).