

THE AESTHETICS OF DANCE: THE WRITINGS OF  
NOVERRE, KLEIST AND GAUTIER  
IN THE CONTEXT OF  
THEIR TIMES

by

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Abstract

Leaving aside the classical world, Dance as an art form (as distinct from folk-dance) emerges with the renaissance. Combinations of dance and drama are seen in the court entertainments sponsored by Catherine de Medici in France and in the masques of Ben Jonson, John Milton and Henry Lawes, the composer, in England. These dance-dramas shared the contemporary fondness for lavish sensuous spectacle, with mythological and allegorical subjects full of youth and beauty.

The seventeenth century saw, in this new form of art, the development of stage and set-design as well as the emerging importance of the individual performer. The foundation of Richelieu's *L'Académie Française* (1635) which concerned itself with language and literature was paralleled by Louis XIV's *L'Académie Nationale de Musique et de la Danse* (1661). The baroque and rococo characteristics of other arts are reflected in the ballets of Lully and Rameau.

In the eighteenth century, theoretical works appear in which the dance is treated as parallel to the other arts. The *Lettres sur la Danse* (1760) of Jean-Georges Noverre (a friend of Garrick) stresses "nature"

and design as do the literary treatises from Dryden to Samuel Johnson, (e.g. Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765), and *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81). Carlo Blasis' *Treatise on the Art of Dancing* (1803) is as much concerned with perfection of technique as the most ardent prosodists of the period.

The so-called "Classical Ballet", however, was the expression of romanticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century as much as in literature and the other arts. It sought to add strangeness and wonder to beauty and to escape from reality into fairyland or dreamland. It dominated ballet throughout most of the century and is seen in well-known works like *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*. Literary and artistic parallels abound, of course. However, the Dance is the last of the arts to develop a critical theory as it is the last of the arts to emerge as an aesthetically self-conscious, serious and professional form of expression from what had been vestigial and fragmentary. Even musical and dramatic renditions have left at least the score and the script. But the Dance, after its last performance, was largely a matter of fast-fading memory and variable hearsay.

This thesis will endeavour to trace the development and changes in aesthetic outlook of the latter

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries through a comparative study of the writings of Jean-Georges Noverre, Heinrich von Kleist and Théophile Gautier. As far as one can judge from any available materials and sources of reference, bringing together these three writers whose work contains both literature and dance criticism, poetics and what might be called "balletics", has not been undertaken before; this is also the first time that Kleist has been given a significant place in a discussion of dance theory.

It is the chief aim of this study to point out and elucidate the pattern of relationships between dance as an art form and literature. The relationships of theory and practice in the arts are no less complex here than in any other periods. Noverre, for example, as a theorist, was a consistent and articulate late eighteenth century classicist (looking forward to romanticism); but as a professional man of the theatre, he had a keen eye for popular taste, even if it catered to fashions he must have considered antiquated or cheap. Gautier, on the other hand, though he possessed no practical knowledge of the dance, he analyzed it so persuasively, so variously, and had such a wide audience that he strongly influenced the public taste for these aspects of romantic dance. It is doubtful whether Kleist was known to the world of dance, whether he was really influenced by it,

or had any direct influence on it in any way. Yet, his essay *Ueber das Marionettentheater* (1801) might well serve as a manifesto for the new romantic form of dance when it was just being born.

As a result of the analysis of these writers, it becomes apparent that all three, Noverre, Gautier, and Kleist, represent stepping-stones in the development of dance from the early stages of superficial extravaganzas, through the clearly defined measures of eighteenth century dance, to the natural expression of spontaneous movement in the next century. Hence, they can be said to define the basic progression from classicism to romanticism in the art of dance.

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To Ines and Meredith  
for their continuing encouragement,  
and to Danaë



Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,  
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,  
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.  
O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,  
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

--W. B. Yeats

## Introduction

Until the seventeenth century, dance in Europe was largely a form of general social diversion, whether the participants were the folk in round dances on the village green or the nobility themselves performing in elaborate fêtes and pageants at court. A prime example of the latter is the *Ballet de la Nuit* (1653), in which Louis XIV danced the leading role and from which he derived his favorite and famous eponym, *Le Roi Soleil*. Otherwise the ballet was a self-congratulatory (panegyrical) opus said to have lasted thirteen hours!

By this time, however, and owing to the high standards of *maîtres* like Jean-Baptiste Lully and Charles-Louis Beauchamp, professional dancers inevitably assumed more and more importance and the viewing crowd stopped participating in the dance - and so joined what audience there was. From the late seventeenth century, parallel to developments in drama and opera, the professional *danseur* was joined by the professional *danseuse*. There followed throughout the eighteenth century, in France, a glittering succession of

brilliant, beautiful and incredibly agile female dancers who, in the nineteenth century, as we shall see, all but banished their male counterparts completely.

But more important developments were also taking place in England and France during the seventeenth century. From the earliest times, dance of any kind was usually in measure mimetic and to some extent dramatic. As an art, distinct from a folk diversion, it developed to a very large extent as a subsidiary and subservient aspect of drama and opera, often as a mere *entr'acte* unrelated to the main plot. But other species flourished - like the English *masque* and the French *ballet de cour* in which dance was of much greater importance.

Finally, during the eighteenth century, dance became the last of the arts to attain conscious independence with its own standards and its own *raison d'être*. And no name is more outstanding in this long slow development than that of Jean-Georges Noverre. He sought to raise the status of the dance by having it take over the functions of drama, that is, by creating dramatic ballet or, as it was properly called, *ballet d'action* - emphasizing plot and pantomime. Hence arose a still unsettled rivalry between dramatic and abstract dance in ballet, though, in practice, they are seldom mutually exclusive and can be artistically blended.

By Gautier's time, as we shall see, the pendulum had swung the other way from the style and teaching of Noverre.

In all the arts, the last thing to emerge, usually after long and significant practice, is a tradition of critical and aesthetic theory. It is not remarkable that dance - to this day - has comparatively few outstanding critics or theorists, and that these seem to occur sporadically rather than appear in a continuous school of critical thought. Moreover, as in the case of music, one must endeavour to separate a variety of technical treatises - however important these may be - from works of genuine critical theory and aesthetic appreciation. Nevertheless, it becomes possible to envisage with some clarity the standards and ideals of dance in certain periods of the past. Then, by comparison with the theory and practice of other arts, it also becomes possible to show that these same standards and ideals are the expression of aesthetic traditions prevailing generally at the time.

This will be attempted in this thesis for the period which may be dated approximately 1750-1850. Actually these are two overlapping periods: a) The period of eighteenth century classicism in its last days, when, though it was still "intact", it was becoming more and more liberalized and tinged with romanticism. Jean-Georges Noverre (1727-1810), the most literary and possibly most learned

of all the professional *maîtres* who have written on dance, perfectly represents this period; b) The period of nineteenth century romanticism, best represented among writers on dance by Théophile Gautier who was not a dance professional at all but a poet, novelist and aesthete. There were other writers, of course; but none so prolific and, what is more important, so influential as these two. However, there is a considerable gap between them since Gautier was born as late as 1811, the year after Noverre's death. Moreover, Gautier, although he gives us the best and fullest picture of dance and dancers of his own or probably of any past age, as a dance critic was often rather superficial and better represents the tinsel and froth of romanticism than its profounder aspects. For these reasons, I have included Heinrich von Kleist - a German writer unknown to histories and encyclopaedias of dance - not only because his work bridges the time gap referred to above, but mainly because his extraordinary essay *Ueber das Marionettentheater* seems based on the assumptions and philosophic principles underlying romantic dance and romantic aesthetics in general.

Thus, the following chapters deal respectively with Jean-Georges Noverre, Heinrich von Kleist and Théophile Gautier.

## I

Jean-Georges Noverre,  
and the Aesthetic Traditions of his Time

One of the most powerful influences on the development of the classical dance over the past fifty years has been the virtual rediscovery of Noverre's *Lettres sur la Danse et les Ballets*, first published in Lyons and Stuttgart in 1760, revised and variously translated up to 1804. Noverre was born on April 29th, 1727 and died on October 19th, 1810. His long career in dance began in 1743, at the age of 16, on the stage of the *Opéra Comique* at the *Foire St. Laurent* in Paris, and shows that, like most other arts, dance depended for its existence on royal, princely or state patronage. Hence, we find Noverre, in order to survive, at Fontainebleau, Lyons, London, Berlin, Milan, Stuttgart, Vienna and other places in Europe, under the patronage of such courts as those of Frederick the Great, the Duke of Würtemberg and Queen Marie Theresa, creating and presenting an art of dance that, as Haydn said of music, was an international language, becoming more popular with the passage of time. And yet, like most other arts at the time, dance was very much under the French influence and Paris, especially the Paris Opera, was its headquarters.

The dramatist Charles Collé, after seeing Noverre's

ballet *Les Fêtes Chinoises* in Paris noted with great admiration in the July 1754 edition of his *Journal* the following:

...He (Noverre) seems to have a wide and agreeable imagination for his profession. He is novel and prolific, varied and a painter. It is not by the *pas* and the *entrées* that he pleased, it is by the variegated and novel tableau that he achieved this prodigious success. If there is anyone who can drag us out of the childhood in which we are still in this matter of ballets, it must be a man such as this Noverre. The Opera should secure and pay well such talent; but for the very reason that they should do so, they will do nothing of the sort...<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur Collé's prophesy and critical thought proved to be right. Wherever Noverre went he was plagued and pursued by the vicious intrigues and jealousies created by his colleagues. Chief among the hardships caused by these enmities was that Noverre, unquestionably a great figure in the art of dance at the time, was forced to spend most of his career away from Paris, the center of the dance world; and except for occasional and/or lesser appointments, as at the *Opéra Comique*, it was only in his last years through the influence of Queen Marie Antoinette (who had been his pupil in Vienna) that he was given the coveted post of *Maître de Ballets* to the *Académie Royale de Musique* (known in English as the Paris Opera) in August 1776.

The stature of Noverre is due to his versatility;

not that it is so rare for a man to be both dancer and choreographer - the latter, especially as age lessens his agility. In Noverre's case, it was an unfortunate accident to his foot early in his career which forced him to stop dancing and devote his time to choreographing, staging and writing. It was not just this combination; it was the excellence and wonderfully innovative quality of everything he did that made history. Furthermore, what makes Noverre unique was that he was also a philosopher of the dance, a dance theorist, one of the few and certainly the greatest up to his time and for long after. His *Lettres sur la Danse*, translated into almost every European language, are couched in the formal style of the eighteenth century; they are the letters of an educated man using the language of criticism of his time and, on the whole, represent the liberalized classicism of the latter part of the period. Noverre could not fail to be influenced by the great creative artists and writers with whom he was brought into contact (David Garrick, Voltaire, Diderot *et al*) and this, more than anything, relates him to current aesthetic traditions, though to complete the picture we will have to examine to some extent what we can recapture of his choreography.

A recent book on Voltaire says that he represents an age "caught between a dying classicism and a Romantic



period waiting to be born".<sup>2</sup> This is equally true of his friend, Noverre, whose eager inquisitive mind, his creative critical thought and the essence of his aesthetic theory make him stand as the advocate of intellectual light in the art of dance in an age steeped in the aesthetic theories of classicism. It is no news to state that the eighteenth century was, par excellence, the age of classicism, however we qualify this term: neo-classicism, Augustan or pseudo-classicism. This was the dominant style but, as in all periods, the dominant style has undercurrents, some from the past and others pointing to the future - and most if not all works of art blend them.

Here it is not necessary to point out that the eighteenth century did not invent classicism. There is a continuing tradition down from ancient times which is expressed in an evolving corpus of aesthetic theory and in stylistic phenomena which vary greatly from age to age. The immediately previous epoch of Louis XIV and Versailles was the highwater mark of classicism as manifested in a particular kind of grandiose, ornate classicism called baroque, and of its meretriciously decorative cousin, the rococo - also classical in origin. Baroque and rococo are both lavishly ornamented developments of classical elements, the former an outgrowth of renaissance classicism, the latter blended with later neo-classicism. Often both styles

move toward each other, so that, especially with architectural interiors, it is sometimes not easy to label the result as definitely baroque or rococo. And yet, in "pure" or extreme forms, contrasts are obvious: baroque is all pomp and circumstance, grandiloquence and "sublimity" and lofty rhetoric; rococo is mannered elegance, courtoisie, preciousness, prettiness and repartee. Rococo appears in the refinement, or even sometimes the effeminacy, which ideas of interior or detailed decoration impose upon baroque; it is of a lighter mood, kinetic rather than dynamic (for example *The Rape of the Lock* is the most perfect rococo poem in the English language). At its best, the baroque was spendorous; but at its worst it was bombastic and inflated. However, both the vices and virtues of the style are significant characteristics in themselves.

Both styles persisted even when neo-classicism had become dominant in the eighteenth century and had applied wholesale artistic restraint and sobriety to the classical style. This persistence was particularly marked on the stage in both drama and opera, serious and comic, despite all the cultural evolution that also occurred. Here the dance, or the ballet, emerged as an art form out of the various court extravaganzas, such as those of the *Roi de Soleil* in which King and court participated; then the danced *entr'actes* in plays and operas danced by "professionals",

and finally, owing to the work of Lully, Rameau, Noverre and others, ballet became an integral part of dramatic action, or sometimes an "action" complete in itself. The ballet emerged from the outward splendour of the seventeenth century and, with its mythological, allegorical, and pastoral themes and its artificial passion, became the child of baroque, compounded of the most authentic ingredients and sometimes attaining the sublimity of genuine baroque. All this sounds as if it were a progression, though in fact the various kinds or functions of dance long co-existed.

Gaston Vuillier (1730-1780), a dance historian, records vividly in the following passage the state of the artistic temperament apparent in the early and middle eighteenth century in France:

The opening of the eighteenth century was marked by a reaction against the majestic solemnity, the monstrous etiquette and the official piety that had prevailed during the later years of the Grand Monarque. The art of the new era inclined to artificiality ...painters sought inspiration in love and joy, in sylvan delights, in dainty idylls... great financiers began to patronise dawning talent, and to encourage the growth of a luxurious elegance. It was a reign of daintiness and of taste...perhaps a little mincing and affected. Pictorial art lacked energy and deep feeling - lacked greatness, in a word; but it was pretty, it was seductive.<sup>3</sup>

A study of Noverre's ballets and especially those of which he left analyses in detail, indicates that in subject matter, being classical, mythological, heroic, legendary or pastoral, as well as in certain matters of choreography and technique, he followed contemporary fashions, apparently with approval and certainly with profit, and continued baroque and rococo aesthetic traditions in so doing. For example, the first scene in his ballet *La Toilette de Vénus* (1757), a ballet partly heroic and partly pantomimic, is a perfect picture of rococo lavish richness and adornment in costume, colour, ornate setting and subject matter which may be compared with the opening scene in Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (1712), where Belinda is depicted solely devoted to her adornment at her toilette. Also in his ballet *Les Fêtes Chinoises* (1754), with decor by François Boucher, there are instances of the Chinese rococo, like Chinese Chippendale and Sevres china, and other forms of orientalism which were absorbed into French rococo art at that time. This was a ballet which Noverre came to dislike tremendously: and he was forced to admit "that of all my ballets it is the one which had made the least sensation."<sup>4</sup> The "ill-arranged colours" of the costumes which "resembled too closely those of the scenery" thus creating a disagreeable effect for the eye, presenting no contrast of details, was the main reason for Noverre's negative comments. The mistake, it seems, prompted Noverre

to say that "a scene of any kind is a large picture awaiting the painting in of the figures" and "in order that the picture shall please and not offend the sight, a just proportion must reign equally over all the different parts of which it is composed."<sup>5</sup> This is the language of a painter seeking to express the essence of ballet in spatial terms.

Noverre saw the ballet as a sister to the dramatic arts, in which the dance had to acquire the same expressiveness and emotional content as the lines in a play, and the dancer develops as an interpretive artist in the same manner as the actor. He was the first artist to compare the structure of the ballet to the classical format of plays as well as to fine paintings and sculpture. The analogy which Noverre draws between the composition of a ballet and that of a painting is more than a figure of speech for, in the *Lettres sur les Arts Imitateurs*, 1. 1X. 125, he states that he has taken advantage of his visits to Italy, Germany, and England to visit the finest galleries and has made a point of meeting the most famous artists. In his letter VII he affirmatively tells us that:

If ballet is to be accounted brother to the other arts, this relationship is dependent on its possessing all their characteristics, and it can hardly be considered worthy of the glorious designation having regard to its present pitiful condition....<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in his first letter he has "...dared to fathom the art of devising ballets with action; to reunite action with dancing; to accord it some expression and purpose."<sup>7</sup> In the tradition of the *ballet d'action* he tells us that a *scène d'action* is "where the dancer should speak with fire and energy where symmetrical and formal figures cannot be employed without transgressing truth and shocking probability, without enfeebling the action and chilling the interest."<sup>8</sup>

Following in the Aristotelian classical tradition of drama he advises that "a *ballet d'action* should be constructed accordingly; it should be divided into scenes and acts, and each scene should possess, like the act, a beginning, central portion and conclusion; that is to say its introduction, plot and climax."<sup>9</sup> Thus, in the literary tradition of Shakespeare, the British and French dramatists,<sup>10</sup> he decrees that a ballet, not necessarily bound by Aristotle's theory of unities of time, place and action, must be

a picture, or rather a series of pictures connected one with the other by the plot which provides the theme of the ballet; the stage is, as it were, the canvas on which the composer expresses his ideas; the choice of the music, scenery and costumes are his colours; the composer is the painter.<sup>11</sup>

This is Noverre, the classicist. His *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets*, show that, however representative of other traditions his "practice" may have been, once he put pen to paper, like the Elizabethan literary critics<sup>12</sup> when "practice" was even more divergent, he was predominantly the classicist in theory. This is even more apparent in the later title of a revised edition, *Lettres sur les Arts Imitateurs en Général et sur la Danse en Particulier* (1807).

In a brief and perhaps over-simplified statement, eighteenth century neo-classicism was, in its broader aspects, an anciently derived sense of form, artistic restraint and decorum, universality or the pursuit of general truth. By the eighteenth century, however, very much in accord with its scientific rationalism and middle-class matter-of-factness and sobrieties, these ideals had often hardened into a rigid prescription of form, correctness, the restraint of imagination and limiting of general truth to abstract equation and cold precept. It was often the contention of neo-classical rationalism that this standard was to be known and achieved by a proper use of method and rules. The importance of these aesthetic rules, as they were evolved by seventeenth century French criticism and reiterated in English neo-classicism, is that they were regarded as part of an infallible and universal rule of order, and are thus, as Charles Gildon (1665?-1724?) wrote, among "the laws of nature, which always acts with uniformity,

renews them incessantly and gives them a perpetuate existence."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the neo-classical aesthetic values of unity, simplicity and the natural and harmonious adaptation of parts to the whole, (borrowed directly from classical precepts), are founded upon a confidence in the truth and grandeur of ordered generality.

The neo-classic merging of aesthetic rules into a part of the infallible machinery of universal order was propelled indirectly by the growth of seventeenth and early eighteenth century rationalistic philosophy. Such an attitude (or belief) in hierarchical order, in "a great chain of being", helped to evoke the rationalistic conviction that the "Law of Nature" is a codification of unalterable but intelligible rules which find their closest parallel in mathematics, and hence aesthetic "rules" were similarly venerated and held to be unalterable.

To this must be added a battery of critical concepts and jargon which are earmarks of the period: *Imitation of Nature*, *Imitation of Models* (*Imitatio Veterum*), *The Kinds* (*genres*), *The Unities*, and above all, as mentioned earlier, *The Rules*. Jean-Georges Noverre utilizes them all as we shall see shortly. Critical summations of this credo are numerous because the eighteenth century was more interested in ethics and aesthetics than in metaphysics and dogmatic theology. Pope and his contemporaries



were ready to submit to the authority of the ancients because they were the exponents of "reason"; and reason was called on, not to remake the world, but to validate things as they were. Thus, we find no more influential writings than Boileau's *L'Art Poétique* (1674), based on Horace, and Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), based on Boileau. Dryden, Boileau and Pope, applying neo-classical theory, trying to steer in the middle, sought to mediate between nature and art, imagination and reason, delight and instruction. And literature was, more than in any other period, dominated by its critical background so that writers, not predominantly literary theorists, nevertheless evidenced the same credo when they wrote. This is true of Voltaire (1691-1778) and Diderot (1713-1784) among Noverre's contemporaries.

By the time of Noverre's *Lettres*, the "dying classicism" making a last stand, had become heavily doctrinal, nowhere more so than in Samuel Johnson's famous Chapter X in *Rasselas* (1759) and his *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765). But even here and in works like Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1769), and *Laocoön* (1766), the old severity is frequently liberalized, perhaps "humanized". In the following couplet even Boileau cautions the poet:

*Que dans tous vos discours la passion émue  
Aille chercher le coeur, l'échauffe, et le remue.*<sup>14</sup>

In order to illustrate the aesthetic critical concepts of this doctrine, passages from Noverre's *Lettres* will be set against passages from other classicists under headings already listed. Thus, *Imitation of Nature*: that art was mimetic in the Aristotelian sense (as the title of Noverre's 1807 edition of his collected works suggests) was and is self-evident. When Aristotle defined poetry as an "imitation of nature", he did not mean the portrayal of what is general and representative in man. "What is natural", said Hugo Grotius, "we must judge by those in whom nature is least corrupt; and those who are as concrete are not wholly ideal standards for the natural are those who are the most civilized."<sup>15</sup> Therefore Dryden had written that the "imitation of nature is justly constituted as the general, indeed the only rule of pleasing both in Poetry and Painting" with one differentiation: "the principal end of painting is to please, of Poetry to instruct"<sup>16</sup> and, I may add, of dance, quoting Noverre, not just to "entertain":

...dancing is a beautiful statue pleasantly designed that it is distinguished equally for its contours, its graceful positions and the nobility of its attitudes...it must be animated by feeling, to be lit up by genius and to be taught to express itself intelligently.<sup>17</sup>

"Nature", says Noverre categorically in his *Lettre XIV*, "is the sole model I have looked upon and which I am disposed to follow, although my imagination does sometimes lead me astray."<sup>18</sup> One cannot achieve distinction on the stage, in art, he tells us, "except one be aided by nature":

If, Sir, the arts help one another, if they offer their assistance to dancing, nature seems eager to provide it at each moment with new resources; the court and village, the elements, the seasons, everything contributes to furnish it with means to be varied and to please...This, Sir, is the illusion produced on the stage when the details of the production are in harmony, and when artist's take nature as their guide and model.<sup>19</sup>

The key word in the above is "nature" - which to the eighteenth century classicist, was approximately equivalent to general truth or, indeed, abstract reason. The exercise of reason and its proper use in experience, in classical philosophy and in humanistic studies in general, results in forming the temper and tone of character, the standard of judgement, purpose and conduct, and the subsequent retention of that standard, which together constitutes the fulfillment of man's "nature". "Nature", said the British *littérateur* John Dennis (1657-1734) is "that rule and order and harmony which we find in the

visible Creation," while "Reason is the very same throughout the invisible Creation. For Reason is Order and the Result of Order."<sup>20</sup> Alfred N. Whitehead (1861-1947) said that the eighteenth century is "an age of reason based upon faith"<sup>21</sup> - "a faith in the order of nature",<sup>22</sup> of the universal frame. And Dryden had said: "From heavenly harmony this universal frame began."<sup>23</sup>

Classicism places universal "nature" as that centripetal and "just standard" which, said Pope, is "at once the source, and end, and test of art" and which also comprises "the source, and end and test" of all that may be called the ideal in man:

First follow nature, and your judgement frame  
By her just standard, which is still the same;  
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,  
One clear, unchanged, and universal light,  
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,<sup>24</sup>  
At once the source, and end and test of Art.

In the above, the very "nature" of man's "judgement" exemplifies order and harmony; and its "unerring", "unchanged" quality characterizes Nature as the persuasive force infiltrating and ever "lighting" man's moral character, which is a vital aspect of the means by which art simultaneously "delights and teaches." It furnishes both the process and the aim.

"Nothing can please many," wrote Johnson in his much quoted *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765), "and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied."<sup>25</sup> He goes on to say that "Shakespeare's plays...are compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingles with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the source of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend..."<sup>26</sup> Thus, by employing human sentiments and passions, Shakespeare presents on stage a picture of the world outside, showing human nature "as it acts in real exigencies", holding the mirror up to the human condition, mirroring selected "crimes of men", "absurdities" of their actions, "distress" and prosperity, exciting laughter and sorrow in the spectator. Just as Shakespeare and Pope have taken "nature" as their guide, so does Noverre, who tells us that we should indeed

be guided by nature, forever by nature, and our compositions will be beautiful. Away with art if it owes nothing to nature, if it be not embellished by her simplicity! Art captivates only in proportion as it is concealed, it does not succeed except it be so disguised as to be mistaken for nature herself.<sup>27</sup>

"Art" says Pope, comes from nature, "from that fund", the source of "Life, force and beauty":

Art from that fund each just supply provides,  
Works without show, and without pomp presides.<sup>28</sup>

The conception of "nature" as the ultimate standard, as the essential meaning and final aim of life, underlies the classical conviction that the end of art is the revelation to man and the rational, ethical consciousness in him of that ideal perfection of which he is a particular if only a faulty image. "Nature", says Noverre,

does not always afford us models of perfection, hence one must possess the art of correcting them, of presenting them in a pleasing light, at an appropriate moment, in agreeable situations which, while veiling their defects, still confer on them the graces and charms which they ought to possess to be really beautiful.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, Shakespeare, by holding the mirror up to nature, by imitating nature itself, produced "pain or pleasure, not because these imitations are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind,"<sup>30</sup> presenting a picture of life, a slice of reality. "A well-composed ballet", says Noverre,

is a living picture of the passions, manners, customs, ceremonies and customs of all nations of the globe, consequently, it must be expressive in all its details and speak to the soul through the eyes;...this form

of art will not admit to mediocrity;  
like the art of painting, it exacts  
a perfection the more difficult to  
acquire in that it is dependent on  
the faithful imitation of nature. <sup>31</sup>

Another doctrine in the neo-classical code is the *Imitation of Models*. To the strict classicist this meant *Imitatio Veterum* (imitation of the ancient authors). The artist must study the works of the ancient authors, No-verre says, as "it is certain that the tears of Andromache, the love of Junia and Britannicus, the passion of Merope for Aegisthus, the submission of Iphigenia and the eternal love of Clytemnestra would be much more interesting than our present Fairy Tales."<sup>32</sup>

But how is one to imitate? When Pope advised his readers to make "...Homer's works your study and delight,/ Read them by day, and meditate by night,"<sup>33</sup> he did not mean that they should laboriously copy Homer; but rather that they should learn from Homer or other ancient authors, the proper use of method and rule in revealing the manners of men to men. Aristotle had stated that the subject of poetry, was less the exposition of moral theory than the revelation of "the manners of men", and Hume said that "History's chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature."<sup>34</sup> "For what ought we to admire the poet?" asked Aristophanes; and his answer was "because the poet makes better men!"<sup>35</sup> Thus, study "each

Ancient's proper character", Pope demands, in agreement with Aristophanes; study

His Fable, Subject, scope in every page;  
Religion, Country, genius of his Age:  
Without all these at once before your eyes,  
Cavil you may, but never criticize.<sup>36</sup>

The craft of imitation and successful writing does not come easily nor by some lucky occurrence; it is achieved by the proper use of great learning:

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,<sup>37</sup>  
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

By "art" in this passage Pope means the actual act of laboring over one's invention, i.e. craft.

Noverre respected the classical authority and precedent which he found in the works of the classicists he admired, and similarly he revered the authority of great writers of the most recent past: "masterpieces of men" like Racine, Corneille, Voltaire and Crébillon serve as subjects for ballet in the grand style;"<sup>38</sup> and he gives an instance of how it may be done: "condense the plot of *L'Avare*, cut out all the quiet dialogue in the piece, bring the incidents together in closer relation, unite the scattered episodes, and you will succeed."<sup>39</sup> Thus, Noverre's practice is consistent with Pope's advice: He knows well



his "ancient's proper character" whence he forms his proper "Judgement" for his ballets:

Thence form your judgement, thence your maxims bring,  
And trace the Muses upward to their spring.<sup>40</sup>

Again, when describing his Spanish ballet, *Jaloux sans Rival* (1957), Noverre says that "this ballet is simply a combination of the most striking scenes in our dramatic literature. They are pictures by the best masters which I have brought together;"<sup>41</sup> and he means such masters as Diderot, Molière, Racine, and Crébillon. He knows his neo-classic exemplars very well.

Another preoccupation of the neo-classicists was the ancient tradition concerning "the kinds", or genres used by the ancients; the belief that they were being followed in eighteenth century poetry, drama, opera and dance. This scientific age was fond of analyzing, classifying and constantly defining the approved genres in literature. The neo-classical programme was laid down by the great French critic Boileau in the seventeenth century who helped to free the literature of western Europe from mannered, ornate and extravagant styles (e.g. the bombastic style of Restoration heroic plays).

Boileau discovers the guide to the correct imitation of nature, and the very test of its correctness, in the imitation of the classics. The ancients are great, not because they are old, but because they are true, because they knew how to see and to imitate nature.<sup>42</sup>

Boileau's message to the authors of his time was simply that they should obey the rules of antiquity; and thus in his *L'Art Poétique*, he explicates and defines *the kinds*: The Pastoral-Eclogue, The Elegy, the Ode, the Epigram, Satire, Tragedy, and the Epic. Dance had some claim to be considered one of "the kinds" in as much as it was thought to be derived from a direct imitation of the ancient Greek chorus, and the Opera-Ballet of the first half of the eighteenth century was a sort of opera where dancing and orchestral music predominated.

Noverre found the opera of his time rather boring without much to say and achieve as a spectacle. Of course, the Opera-Ballet used different literary types of "the kinds": in Lully's lyric drama, the restoration of the pastoral and the use of tragedy and comedy was still predominant. Noverre, in his own ballets uses the pastoral, (i.e. *La Toilette de Vénus*), but he found Lully's dance music "cold, tedious and devoid of character", while Rameau's harmonious compositions "are so full of wit and expression and", therefore, "are the cause of the recent

improvement in dancing"<sup>43</sup> in the Opera-Ballet productions.

In the following passage Noverre expresses his disgust for ignorant directors who too closely follow the traditional rules, for he did not believe in a slavish following of them; thus, when lamenting Rameau's inability to carry out his more progressive ideas, he refers to

the annoyances which every author experiences from the directors of the Opera. To those gentry an author is devoid of taste unless he cling to the same ancient tenets as their own. It is a profanation, with them, not to follow blindly the old laws and ancient rubrics which have been handed down from father to son.<sup>44</sup>

"I have always regarded an opera", says Noverre later on in the same letter,

as a fine picture which should express all that painting can offer in the manner of the wonderful and sublime...In opera there is nothing too small or too insignificant... This type of spectacle cannot afford to be mediocre, it captivates in proportion as it is perfect in all its parts...Success depends primarily on the poet, since it is he who places, draws and invests the picture with more or less beauty, more or less action, and consequently more or less interest, according to the measure of his genius.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, he advises:

let the poets come down from the sacred Vale, let the artists charged with the different parts which make up an opera work in collaboration and aid each other mutually, and this type of spectacle will then achieve the greatest success...Regard the poet as the father and the dance as the child.<sup>46</sup>

Noverre urges the skilled artist to remember that art should transport as well as persuade. He puts emphasis upon clarity of form, boldness of line, employment of traditional genres and the grandeur of conception. He also expresses interest in the pathetic and the lively, the raising of passions brought about by the differing "kinds". This serves as an authoritative rallying point for his defense of a subjective and emotional style. In this connection the "mixed drama", and, of course, Shakespeare, was much debated. In his *Preface to Shakespeare*, Johnson says:

In tragedy he (Shakespeare) is always struggling after some occasion to be comick; but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature.<sup>47</sup>

In his plays there is "an interchange of seriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time and exhilarated at another."<sup>48</sup> Noverre, in his letter XI on styles in dance shows a close relation to the doctrine of "the kinds":

The serious and heroic style itself bears the impression of tragedy; the semi-serious, generally known as demi-character, bears the impression of high comedy; whereas the grotesque dance borrows its features from low and broad comedy...A dancer in the serious style undoubtedly requires a noble and elegant stature...a dancer in the demi-character

and voluptuous style undoubtedly requires to be of a medium height which can partake of all the beauties of elegant stature...A dancer in the comic style needs fewer physical perfections; the shorter he be, the more will his body afford grace and attractive charm to his expression.<sup>49</sup>

Noverre's creative mind is always clearly conscious, deliberately operating according to a rational and discoverable pattern. He believes, teaches and practices the precepts of neo-classicism (rules such as those governing unity and "decorum" in drama) for it must of necessity be that even works of genius must likewise have their rules. It cannot be by chance that excellent art is produced with any constancy or certainty, for this is not the nature of chance. "It is a capital fault", Noverre cautions,

to associate opposite styles and to mix them without distinction; the serious with the comic, the noble with the trivial, the elegant with the burlesque...The character and style of ballet must never be disfigured by episodes opposed in style and character...<sup>50</sup>

"A strict attendance to the Rules of Nature and Reason," said Gildon, "can never embarrass or clogg an author's Fancy, but rather enlarge and extend it."<sup>51</sup> Dennis confessed that the end of logical thought "Is to bring Order, and Rule, and Method to our conceptions, the want of which causes most of our ignorance, and all our Errors."<sup>52</sup> Thus the codification of rules, like the

formulation of the "unities" was to be formed primarily by an extensive theoretical education in classical literature; and a *maître de ballet* (the choreographer), according to Noverre, must be as educated as the poet who in the eighteenth century was expected to be a man of profound general education:

If you consult Lucian, you will learn from him, Sir, all the qualities which distinguish and characterize the true *maître de ballet*, and you will observe that history, fable, the poems of antiquity and the knowledge of past times demand his whole application.<sup>53</sup>

"Unity of action", Gotthold E. Lessing (1729-1781), said

was the first dramatic law of the ancients; unity of time and place were mere consequences of the former which they would scarcely have been observed more strictly than exigency required had not the combination with the chorus arisen.<sup>54</sup>

Noverre's philosophy on the subject directed that the plots of ballets should be unified in design, with logical and understandable stories that contribute to a central theme:

According to Aristotle, a ballet, like poetry, of whatever style should contain two different parts, that of quality and that of quantity... however, they (ballets) differ from tragedies and comedies in that they are not subject to unity of place, time and action; but they demand absolute unity of design, so that all

the scenes converge and lead to the same end. Ballet then is brother to poetry, it cannot support the restraint of the narrow rules of drama.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, one should be able to see the wood in spite of the trees.

The codification of rules shows the tendency of neo-classical concepts to coalesce, as well as an *a priori* view of artistic creation which is the opposite of romantic spontaneity. By following the rules one follows "nature" and the ancients whence they are derived:

Those Rules of old Discovered, not devised  
Are Nature still, but Nature methodized;  
Nature, like Liberty, is but restrained  
By the same Laws which first herself ordained.<sup>56</sup>

The rules are appropriate to the "kinds" and govern the "unities" which in essence are obeyed to this day by modern playwrights. Thomas Rymer (1641-1715), tells us that:

Critical learning, in the modern conception, is commonly taken for a thorough understanding of classical authors, and an exact knowledge of those rules by which men judge and determine nicely of all the finer parts and branches of humane literature.<sup>57</sup>

However, the greater artists, although they respect the rules, do insist that they sometimes "know better".

Thus Pope declares:

Music resembles Poetry, in each  
Are nameless graces which no methods teach  
And which a master hand alone can reach;<sup>58</sup>

and Noverre insists that "a genius may break ordinary rules and advance by new paths when they lead to the perfection of his art."<sup>59</sup> This enthusiasm for rules long outlasted Noverre, and is an important element in the writings of Carlo Blasis (1795-1878) who was the leading theorist of the dance in the age following Noverre. In spite of these passages from the *Lettres*, the extent to which Noverre's neo-classical theorizing affected his practice as a choreographer is up to a point debatable. The titles of Noverre's ballets recorded in his letters<sup>60</sup> suggest that although Noverre was classical in theory, he was in practice bound by the wishes of his patrons.

There were other general aspects of the period that affected him greatly. First, the scientific spirit of the "age of reason" which in religion and thought gave rise to Deism and philosophic Rationalism and, at a more work-a-day level, to an emphasis on common sense and hard facts—man gets on best by considering his limitations earnestly. "Common sense", a feeling that what is possible or desirable for man in general, ruled the day. The same doctrine or concept was often called "reason", but



it has little in common with the speculative reason of the scientist. "It is good sense", wrote dramatist Marie-Joseph Chénier (1764-1811),

reason which does all - virtue, genius, soul talent and taste. - What is virtue? reason put in practice; - talent? reason expressed with brilliance; - soul? reason delicately put forth; - and genius is sublime reason.<sup>61</sup>

Noverre, indeed a thorough rationalist, was much interested in common sense, realism and reason and had much to say. On reason; "Yes, Sir, it is shameful that dancing should renounce the empire it might assert over the mind and only endeavour to please the sight;<sup>62</sup> And, much later, defending Mlle Clairon's caprice for stripping herself of ornament and the costumes of current customs, he says: "Reason, wit, common sense and nature led her to institute this reform."<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, in spite of his emphasis on the rules, Noverre knew that genius was essential to great art:

Diana and Acteon, Diana and Endymion, Apollo and Daphne, Tito and Aurora, Acis and Galatea, as well as all other themes of this nature, cannot provide the plot for a *ballet d'action* without the inspiration of a truly poetic genius;<sup>64</sup>

And later on, he rhetorically poses a classic question:

What are our capabilities if they be not aided by genius, imagination and taste? How can obstacles be overcome, difficulties smoothed away, the limits of mediocrity be passed, if there have not been planted in one the seed of one's art?<sup>65</sup>

Also on the less precisely definable desideratum of good taste:

Nothing is so difficult to achieve as what is termed a pleasing grace; it is good taste to make use of it and a fault to pursue and diffuse it everywhere alike ...Taste is the arbiter, it is that which affords graces their value and makes them pleasing; if they be used without it they lose their names, charms and effect.<sup>66</sup>

The neo-classic "School of Taste" in England drew encouragement from the rising popularity of the famous treatise attributed to Longinus, *On the Sublime*. Longinus urged that the psychological and emotional elements important for the creation and understanding of art are what constitutes a subjective and emotional taste. Leonard Welsted, who translated Longinus (1712), considered that taste is inborn and cannot be reduced to a science nor taught by any mathematical equation. The object of taste is aesthetic "truth", a truth which is qualitative rather than quantitative and experience and knowledge are necessary to attain it. The general principles of taste arise from that internal sense of beauty which everyone possesses in some degree. "It is not given to everybody," Noverre

writes, "to have taste, nature alone bestows it; education refines and perfects it; all the precepts that could be drawn up to produce it would be useless. It is either born in with us or it is not."<sup>67</sup>

The word "taste" came to constitute for most neo-classicists the faculty of judgement and was broadened to include a capacity for judgement which is augmented and directed by experience and by learning. Thus, a *maître de ballet*, should be a scholar of antiquity and must know well the other arts; he must also study human nature and, by practice, achieve "fame" like the poet and the painter, the scholar and the great actor. He "should be acquainted with both the beauties and the defects of nature;"<sup>68</sup> because this study will enable him always "to choose discriminately":

Since nothing comes amiss to genius, the same should hold good of a *maître de ballet*. He cannot distinguish himself in his profession unless he apply himself to the study of those arts which I have mentioned: to insist that he should possess them all in that high degree which is attained only by those who concentrate on one of them, would be asking the impossible; but, if it cannot be so in practice, it should be so in theory.<sup>69</sup>

As the "Age of Reason" gave emphasis to common sense and simplicity, in the arts (e.g. in painting, prose-fiction, poetry, and dance), one becomes aware of the shift towards a greater realism than ever before. Discussing

some of the stagings at the Opera, Noverre categorically states that

the bounds of propriety must not be transgressed, but above all the action must display a sense of truth and reality...Let us have less of the Fairy Tale, less of the marvelous, more truth and more realism, and dancing will appear to much better advantage.<sup>70</sup>

Speaking with great admiration of his English friend the great actor Garrick, who called Noverre "The Shakespeare of the Dance", Noverre praises him as "faithful worshipper of nature, he knew the value of selection, he preserved that sense of propriety which the stage requires even in the parts least susceptible of grace and charm;"<sup>71</sup> and also the manner in which Garrick represented "the characters of his personages and still more the passions" on stage impressed Noverre tremendously:

That realism, that enthusiasm which distinguishes the great actor and which is the life-blood of the fine arts is, if I may so express myself, like an electric spark. It is a fire which spreads rapidly, and in a moment captivates the imagination of the spectator, stirring his soul and rendering his heart susceptible to every emotion.<sup>72</sup>

Noverre, like Shakespeare, was engaged in representing real emotions on stage, exciting laughter and sorrow because he believed that peoples' pleasures and vexations are natural-

the discriminations of true passion are the colours of nature. It is always the artist's duty to present serious and truthful imitations which produce pain or pleasure.

To this aesthetic trend, realism, more than any other, we might attribute some very important aspects of Noverre's choreographic practice. His reform of costume:

I will banish all uniformity of costume, an indifferent, ungraceful device which owes its origin to lack of taste. I should prefer light and simple draperies of contrasting colours, worn in such a manner as to reveal the dancer's figure. I should like them to be airy, but without stinting the material. I desire beautiful folds, fine masses with the ends fluttering and producing ever-changing forms as the dance becomes more and more animated; everything should convey a sense of filminess. A bound, a lively step, a taking to flight would waft the drapery in different directions and bring us nearer to a painting and consequently to nature;<sup>73</sup>

The reform of costume was necessary, not only for providing greater ease of movement, but also so that the costume would be appropriate to the theme of the dance. With an eye of a painter and a great desire for the use of the chiaroscuro effect in his ballets, he believes in "the laws of perspective", as dance is seen from a distance, and he speaks of ballets as "pictures presented through the medium of dancing"; thus, there must be striking features, strong situations, well-defined character, bold masses

with contrasts of light and shade both arresting and artistically contrived."<sup>74</sup> He begged dancers to throw away masks and wigs, to get rid of paniers and do away with stiff clothes because "simplicity in any style demands the greater perfection; that beauty can be simple and becoming, and that the less she is clothed the more graceful she is."<sup>75</sup>

With regard to music he insisted that as the plots of ballets should be unified in design, with logical and understandable stories that contribute to a central theme, so the music should be especially written so as to be suitable for the dance as well. Music, "the harmonic succession of sounds must...imitate those of nature and suggest a dialogue" because

music is to dancing, what words are to music; this parallel simply means that dance music corresponds, or should do, to the written poem and thus fixes and determines the dancer's movements and actions;...dancing with action is the instrument, or organ by which the thoughts expressed in the music are rendered appropriately and intelligibly.<sup>76</sup>

Because he believed that music and dance "are brothers and go hand-in-hand...as their combined effect offers animated pictures to our eyes and ears" conveying to "the heart and soul...the harmony and intelligence of these two arts,"<sup>77</sup> he insisted that movement should not

only be technically brilliant, but founded on actual and natural human gesture, should stir the audience emotionally through its dramatic expressiveness.

Noverre makes great use of pantomime but not at the expense of dancing: "Dancing is the fundamental basis for ballet,"<sup>78</sup> he cries. However, there is a kind of pantomime which he does reject "that low and trivial form of expression which Italian players have introduced in France,"<sup>79</sup> and advises the students of dance to study the art of "noble pantomime" which is the art of "natural gesture" which depicts "the true expression of our movements." Another aspect of Noverre's realism lies in his insistence that "gesture is the countenance of the soul, its effect must be immediate and cannot fail to achieve its aim when it is true."<sup>80</sup> In this respect he was greatly influenced by David Garrick, who had changed the style of English acting, substituting freedom of movement - natural movement compared with the stiffness and pomposity of previous actors - changing statues into human beings. Thus, Noverre rejected the form of ballet that consisted of abstract gesture within abstract design in favour of the representation of continuous "plot", which we would call "dance-drama", which was then called *ballet d'action*.

But there is more to be said regarding Noverre's reforms. The year 1760 saw the first appearance of Noverre's

*Lettres* in which a late doctrinal classicism persisted or, to repeat, "a dying classicism" - and also "a Romantic period waiting to be born"<sup>81</sup> were both manifest.

This later period is also being born in Noverre's *Lettres*, as for example in his fondness for exotic, escapist subjects, for *coups de théâtre* and striking tableaux, and, more generally in such definitions as:

Action, in relation to dancing, is the art of transferring our sentiments and passions to the souls of the spectators by means of the true expression of our movements, gestures and features.<sup>82</sup>

Here is a new and different conception of art, not merely the "imitation of models" according to "the rules" so that abstract truths conveyed with faultless precision, cultivated taste and correctness of form might delight the mind and generally improve the morals. Here artistic "expression", a favourite word of Noverre's, is based on "our sentiments and passions" conveyed to "the souls" of others. What is conveyed? Doubtless, according to Noverre, something "too high for syllables to speak."

This greater emphasis on "sentiments" as the main spring of art points directly, as everyone knows, to romanticism. It was not a unique discovery of Noverre, but an inevitable and hence ubiquitous swinging of the pendulum in life generally and art particularly after the



intellectualism, too often narrow and restrictive, that prevailed throughout most of the eighteenth century. As the renaissance, to speak very broadly, had rediscovered the whole man, the romantic period rediscovered his emotions - the whole range of emotions from instinctive passions to the loftiest transports of spiritual vision. Though, admittedly, all this range of rediscovery did not happen overnight.

In the time of Noverre's *Lettres* another friend of his, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was publishing a varied series of works<sup>83</sup> which rocked the foundations of eighteenth century society, thought and art. Deeply influenced by eighteenth century rationalism, he pushed reason to utmost extremes revealing the absurdity and injustice of most existing institutions, mores and social forms - and so became a revolutionary. To Rousseau "nature" was "the state of nature" in which man, following his natural passions, (which are untutored and therefore uncontaminated), enjoys ideal freedom, goodness and happiness. This "primitivism" or "natural-man philosophy" had profound effects on romantic art.

Noverre was, of course, not a philosopher in the sense that Rousseau was; nor, indeed, would he have gone so far in his revolutionary thought. Moreover, it might well be argued that his enthusiastic affirmation of

"sentiments" and "passions" and "souls", is not just in accord with what he says before. In all strictness this is probably true; but we might also argue that such inconsistencies as might be found in his theories would be unimportant in his practice as a choreographer. Like most of his great contemporaries in the later eighteenth century, he had both classicism and romanticism in him. Voltaire pays tribute to him in his letter of 11th October, 1763: "You are a Prometheus; you must form men and breathe life into them."<sup>84</sup> It was evidently his "romantic" side that appealed to that eminent art historian, Curt Sachs, when he calls the *Lettres*:

...one of the most revolutionary essays in the history of the arts. Nature, character, soul, truth, and passion are his key words; mere technique is worthless. The dancers must, if necessary, give up their prescribed movements in exchange for a soul.<sup>85</sup>

And finally Noverre speaks with a romantic tongue in the following brief advice he gives to the dancers:

Bring love as well as enthusiasm to your art. To be successful in theatrical representations, the heart must be touched, the soul moved and the imagination inflamed.<sup>86</sup>

In Noverre, therefore, we have one of the chief exponents in theory and practise of eighteenth century neo-classicism and, by reflection, of its intellectual

counterpart rationalism. But we are also reminded by him that, in all periods, those artists who preeminently represent prevailing contemporary tendencies may, and most often do, represent also undercurrents containing the past or anticipating the future. Among eighteenth century English writers, no more complete neo-classicist exists than Alexander Pope; and yet Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (1712-1714) has been very aptly described as a *Rococo-Epic*,<sup>87</sup> while his *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717), according to Cazamian, must "be reckoned among the most certain preparations of Romanticism."<sup>88</sup> If such diversity is to be found in the eighteenth century at the peak of classicism, it is even more characteristic of the transitional late eighteenth century, the Age of Noverre, as has hopefully been demonstrated. Though predominantly classical, it is noteworthy that the baroque/rococo still persists in limited ways; but it is only to be expected that art (including dance) "grows warm and begins to have some breathings of the heart in it."<sup>89</sup> The romantic dawn is just over the horizon.

## II

Heinrich von Kleist and Romantic Aesthetics

This chapter must differ from the preceding one. For, despite many crosscurrents in the eighteenth century, developments in the arts, in their underlying aesthetics and in different countries, are all comparatively concurrent. Moreover, in the aesthetics of dance where exponents are always so few, there is a consummate figure in Noverre, whose theories were solidly rooted in praxis, for he was also the most outstanding choreographer and *maître* in all of Europe.

In the nineteenth century - more specifically in its first half, arbitrarily designated the romantic period - such a degree of concurrence no longer exists, especially in the first quarter. Yet it is not without some justice that the period is sometimes said to begin in 1798 with the publication of *The Lyrical Ballads* in England and the beginning of the Schlegels' lectures<sup>1</sup> in Germany. Kleist's *Die Familie Schroffenstein* (1803) in drama and Wordsworth's famous *Preface* (1800) in aesthetic theory are similarly epoch-marking.

But in France, partly because of social upheaval

and partly because of the persistence of waning neo-classicism at its European centre, the literary period from 1789-1830 was, according to Saintsbury, "almost sterile".<sup>2</sup> This is an overstatement of fact, for romantic elements were present in both imaginative and critical writings of Chateaubriand, and German influences (so important to French romanticism) in the work of Mme. de Staël. Yet it is again not without justice that the romantic period is said to begin - in France - with Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830. This was a revolutionary and rebellious production which expressed a new mood of flamboyant optimism.

Because European dance had its chief centre in France, and also because its development was closely associated with that of drama, it was also late in turning romantic;<sup>3</sup> Filippo Taglioni's *La Sylphide*<sup>4</sup> (1832) is called the first romantic ballet, though it had antecedents, of course. In the period, the most prolific writer on the dance, Carlo Blasis (1795-1878) was, like Noverre, both dancer and choreographer; and, moreover, his highly influential text books<sup>5</sup> were first published within Saintsbury's "sterile" period; but Blasis was concerned with dance technique only. In his strict insistence on "form" and "rules", we may see another late classicist; but, in fact, Blasis was not interested in aesthetics as such.

There is in fact no Noverre in this period (or since). The two most distinguished contributors to romantic balletics were Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) and Théophile Gautier (1811-1871), the former a dramatist mainly, the latter a poet and a critic - neither a professional dancer or choreographer. They make an interesting contrast - aside from the fact that Kleist died the year of Gautier's birth. Kleist's literary career belongs mainly to the years 1803-1811, and variously represents the earlier development of romanticism in North Germany (Prussia). He has been called "a lone wolf on the fringe of the romantic pack"<sup>6</sup> and his little essay *Ueber das Marionettentheater* (1801) is also a lone wolf among his works and in its unique interest to dance theory. The last may well have been unintended. Kleist simply used a dancer as persona and the movements of the marionette, the dancer, to embody aesthetic, ethical and mystical notions all thoroughly romantic. From this and from his other works - with some amplification from more direct aesthetic treatises of the time - may be outlined the general romantic theory which the dance inherited when it burst forth in full flower in the thirties. This will be attempted in this chapter.

The *Marionettentheater* is a beautiful literary metaphor exemplifying the nature of the dancer in relation to life. It is also a metaphor for man's spiritual

venture. The narrator (presumably Kleist) is inviting us to experience the paradox of sight and blindness through to the end. It is a dialogue between the narrator and a dancer he calls "Mr. C." who derives from the movements of puppets what is, in effect, a whole philosophy of romantic art - as we shall see. Mr. C. says 'that a dancer who wished to perfect his art could learn many things from them,"<sup>7</sup> and conversely "if a mechanic were to construct a marionette according to the requirements which he would demand, he could perform a dance with it which (in symmetry, mobility and ease) neither he nor any skilled dancer of his time, not even Vestris, could attain."<sup>8</sup>

Mr. C., suggests that marionettes have the perfection of spontaneous, unconscious movements because they have only one centre of gravity. Their movements are controlled from one point. The puppeteer has control only of this point.

Every movement, he explained, had a centre of gravity; it was sufficient to direct that within the puppet, and the limbs being nothing but pendulums followed mechanically without assistance. This movement was very simple, he added; whenever the centre of gravity was moved in a straight line, the limbs describe a curve, and often, if shaken accidentally, the whole figure developed a kind of rhythmic movement as in a dance.<sup>9</sup>

There is much more technical description in what is evidently the exact language of scientific dynamics - which is very difficult for us (e.g. the 'relationship... of the asymptote to the hyperbole") but it does not necessarily convince us or the narrator of the superiority of the marionette's movement.

I said that however clearly he pleaded the cause of his paradoxes, he would never make me think that there could be more charm in a mechanical puppet than in the structure of the human body.<sup>10</sup>

Before explaining Mr. C.'s extraordinary praise of puppets one must note:

First, he is obviously thinking of movements in the abstract. That the puppets are in fact performing "little dramatic burlesques interwoven with song and dance"<sup>11</sup> is not important to Mr. C. (though the subject would have been very important to Noverre) and therefore Mr. C. would probably be in favour of abstract ballet rather than *ballet d'action*.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly he agrees with the narrator that the puppeteer must himself have "an idea of the beauty of the dance"<sup>13</sup> in other words, that he dances himself - in the puppets - which is obviously consonant with a romantic view of art as individual self-expression.

But in the main, both of these considerations



are beside the point - for the operator does no more than give initial impulses to the mechanism of the puppet. All the rest of its complex and beautiful movements, even though up to a point they may be foreseen by the operator, are, in an absolute sense, strictly its own - as the natural force of gravity draws upon its many parts.

Obyious as all this may be, the conclusions Kleist draws therefrom are still striking: the art of puppetry or of dance or indeed any other art, achieves its apex of "grace" when it is most in accord with natural law (here represented by gravity) rather than when this accord is impeded by outside influence, premeditation or self-consciousness. Nothing could more vividly illustrate the central principle of spontaneity in romantic aesthetic current at the time - the very opposite of that emphasis on rules and models which characterized the neoclassicism of Noverre's time.<sup>14</sup> Thus Shelley's voice, from his *To a Skylark*, (a very "romantic" bird), echoes in joyous agreement:

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!  
 Bird thou never wert,  
 That from heaven, or near it,  
 Pourest thy full heart  
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.<sup>15</sup>

And Wordsworth in his celebrated *Preface* to the second

edition of *The Lyrical Ballads*: "For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquillity."<sup>16</sup>

But apparently, says Mr. C., this "excellent quality" of spontaneity "is sought in vain by the greater number of our dancers."<sup>17</sup>

"Look at Miss P. when, performing Daphne pursued by Apollo, she looks behind her," he continued, "her soul is in the small of her back. She bends as if she would break, as a Naiad from the school of Bernini. Look at young F. when he stands as Paris amid the three goddesses and delivers the apple to Venus. His soul, how terrible to see, is right in his elbow."<sup>18</sup>

Thus, because man is not a mechanical puppet but a conscious being - he is usually too self-conscious (like the unfortunate "Miss P." or "young F.") to attain or retain "grace" either in dance or life. To enforce this lesson the narrator (who has begun to understand) provides another excellent example. He tells of the extremely "gracious" youth whose beauty rivalled a celebrated Greek sculpture (The "Thorn-Puller") until the sad day when he looked in a mirror and discovered the fact. Thereafter he self-consciously tried harder and harder to maintain a grace that had

been unconscious;

He began to stand before the mirror for days, and lost one charm after another. An invisible and inconceivable power had come like an iron net about the free play of his gestures, and after one year there was not a trace of his charm which before had delighted the eyes of his companions.<sup>19</sup>

But evidently (to quote an earlier passage)

"Such mistakes are unavoidable...since we ate of the Tree of Knowledge...Paradise is bolted, and the cherub is behind us."<sup>20</sup>

Leaving aside (for the present) the religious significance of this for Kleist - in the context of the foregoing examples, it adds to the concept of romantic spontaneity, something akin to the Rousseauistic naturalism or primitivism so influential at the time. Rousseau had taught - notably in *Emile* (1762) and *The Social Contract* (1762)<sup>21</sup> that man is born good, free, and is later corrupted or enslaved by most forms of education, social order, intellectual and artistic disciplines - notions which were very popular in a romantic and revolutionary age that wanted to escape into dream worlds or primitive exotic lands, and that idealized noble savages and "uncontaminated" peasants and babes. Thus Wordsworth based his *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* on the central (Rousseauistic) idea that

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy", and, not inconsistently, wrote that, in the best poetry (his own),

Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language.<sup>22</sup>

As we shall see in the next chapter, this primitivism and escapism of the period greatly affected the substance of Romantic Ballet.

But the central thesis of Kleist - his doctrine of "grace" - is carried further in two directions, viz:

Mr. C. responds to the narrator's story of the youth, by pushing the argument for primitivism to its logical conclusion (in one sense). He admits to being a skilled swordsman, who, in Russia once, endeavoured to fence with a trained bear. However hard he tried, the bear with no apparent effort successfully parried every feint, pass and lunge. For, of course, the bear fenced by instinct, by reflex action and "natural law". Does Kleist mean that an animal - which is certainly more primitive - is superior to man? Certainly not. But he does illustrate by this rather extreme example the validity of "grace" as he understood it. The bear achieved by instinct what the puppet is given by gravity

and the young man lost by sophistication.

The other dimension of Kleist's doctrine - perhaps most important of all to him - is found in the strong religious element that runs through the essay. To be in accord with natural laws (gravity, instinct, etc.) is to be in tune with the infinite, with God. In other words, the "grace" achieved is something more than physical grace - it is spiritual grace through passive conformance to God's law. Moreover, the image of the marionette designates a motive force originating in a realm lying beyond consciousness. This comes out of the characteristic philosophy of the period that ranged from the abstruse technical concepts of metaphysical idealism to the highly poetic visions of the infinite (and man's relation thereunto) in the transcendentalism of the romantic poets. Therefore it has affinities with Wordsworth's

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,  
That givest to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, different men have different views of how communion or union with the infinite might be attained. In Wordsworth, for all his predilection for the state of innocence (as in the *Ode* quoted above), it was essentially the result of a long disciplinary intellectual

and ultimately mystical process - as much so as for any of the saints of the Church.

...That serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and... We see into the life of  
things.<sup>24</sup>

But, for Kleist, the stance would seem to be closer to the Gospel's:

"Consider the lilies of the field  
They toil not neither do they spin" ...

and

"Except ye become as little children  
ye shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven."<sup>25</sup>

The figures of the graceful but unconscious dancer strongly suggest that Kleist glimpses a redemptive quality in those powers of the soul which are at the farthest removed from the fully-developed intellect.

Associated with this is the attitude that runs through the essay that "Reflection" or "Knowledge" is somehow the cause of our fall from "grace". Hence:

"We see that the darker and weaker is  
Reflection in the organic world, the more  
apparent Grace becomes, shining and ruling."<sup>26</sup>

This is, at any rate, a good example of romantic hyperbole. Literally interpreted it would make Kleist a complete anti-intellectual - which is absurd. For if paradise is 'bolted' since our feast of forbidden fruit, perhaps (he says) it is "open at the back",<sup>27</sup> though we must make "a voyage round the world" to find out! This is by no means simple. Nor indeed is the exalted ending with its visionary union of Knowledge and Grace:

"So, when Knowledge has gone, so to speak, through the infinite, Grace returns again, appearing at the same time, most purely in the structure of a body which has either no Knowledge, or an infinite Knowledge, to wit:

"Therefore, we must eat again of the Tree of Knowledge to return to a state of innocence?" I said, a little distracted.

"Indeed," he answered, "that is the last chapter in the history of the world."<sup>28</sup>

Is this pre-lapsarian fantasy (not uncommon among the romantics) or does it involve some cyclical view of human history as in the final chorus of Shelley's *Hellas*?

The world's great age begins anew,  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn.<sup>29</sup>

Not necessarily either: in the context of the essay as a whole, Kleist is simply saying, figuratively, that art (and man) cannot reach the highest possible perfection by excessive premeditation and conscious effort<sup>30</sup>

since these inevitably direct and too often misdirect the inner instincts that stem from the basic pulse of life.

Other important aspects of romanticism in addition to those suggested by the *Marionettentheater* are represented by Kleist's other works. In his own day, he was chiefly known as one of the most important writers of *Sturm and Drang* dramas;<sup>31</sup> and even if their violent passions were considered morbid by Goethe and their outlook too negative by Heine,<sup>32</sup> there can be no denying the romantic heightening of subjects set in earlier Germanic history, as Scott (very differently) did with earlier British history. But, in a word, Kleist was characteristically "morbid".<sup>33</sup> The lighter, brighter side of romanticism, its love of gracious beauty in nature and man and art, its dreams of unattainable idealism, its softer intimate sentiments and its nobler social aspirations,<sup>34</sup> its lyricism and its dedication - all these were not characteristic of his writing. In so far as the *Marionettentheater* contradicts this statement, it is the exception. These other aspects of romanticism - or many of them - will be found in the writings of Gautier and exemplified in the romantic ballet, as will be seen in the next chapter.



## III

Théophile Gautier and the Romantic Ballet

Théophile Gautier's relation to the dance is quite different from that of Noverre and Kleist. In extensive critical writings that began in the eighteen thirties, he was the chief voice and advocate of romantic ballet at its height and, especially, of beautiful romantic ballerinas. His particular aesthetic preoccupations remind us of something else that is very important, namely that though romanticism in the ballet owed much to the general aesthetic environment exemplified in Kleist, it perhaps owed much more to developments, some progressive and some revolutionary, in the technique of the art itself - and, of course, as in the other arts, to the existence of great artists at the time. For, however impressive Kleist may be as a representative of the romantic sensibility and philosophy, it is unlikely that even his Marionette piece had any direct influence on the growth of romanticism in ballet. As in the other arts, this transition had a long pre-history. Its first portent could have been Noverre's insistence that ballet "speak to the heart". Another landmark was the dance of rural life and characters in Dauberval's *La Fille Mal Gardée* (1789); another the

"dance of lapsed nuns(!) rising...from their tombs in the cloister in eerie moonlight" in *Robert le Diable* (1831);<sup>1</sup> still another the use of natural landscape as the setting of *La Fille du Danube* (1836);<sup>2</sup> and most importantly *La Sylphide* (1832) burst upon a Paris audience.

Like the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) of Wordsworth and Coleridge, *La Sylphide* combined a wide range of romantic "elements", most of which, perhaps, had already been introduced or at least foreshadowed in earlier works. These included most of the aspects of romanticism not implied by Kleist.<sup>3</sup> Like Wordsworth, *La Sylphide's* "author" (the libretto was based on a fanciful Scottish tale by Charles Nodier (1780-1844)) deserts urban and aristocratic milieux for the countryside and the peasantry - in this case, of rural Scotland - where the homespun nuptials of James and Effie are about to take place. But a Sylph - one of the spirits of air - has fallen in love with him and on that very morning awakens him with a kiss...James leaves poor Effie *et al* waiting at the altar and takes off in amorous pursuit of the unattainable, into a world of misty beauty that crosses the borders of fairyland. As Kirstein says:

The second scene reveals a mysterious glade. An unearthly flight of Sylphides, their wings shimmering in pink and blue sequins, flutter through the gnarled limbs of forest oaks. The sorority

of virgin rays shimmer in timid  
vibration about the white holiness  
of their prime sister.<sup>4</sup>

The romances of Sir Walter Scott were widely translated in the nineteenth century and whether or not German influence is at work here (as is probable), it is all lyricism and escape. And the tragic ending is very much a romantic denouement.

Filippo Taglioni was in Vienna when he composed and choreographed this ballet for his remarkable daughter, Marie - one of the greatest ballerinas. All at once the romantic ballerina emerged in full glory; and, with her sister sylphs, dominated the ballet, as the female dancer for a very long time demoted the male dancer, to the servility of supporting roles leading to his decline throughout succeeding decades. This was the balletic expression of the general feminizing of romantic art; the woman had conquered the world of dance by her seeming abdication of the flesh. The emphasis on star personalities ended the equality of male and female and after relegation to mere support or body-bearer function, the former *danseur noble* reached his nadir when he became, briefly, a source of mere physical and psychological support. *La Sylphide* established the mystique of the Ballerina; the sylph became dominantly feminine, a symbol of lightness, who conquered air

and space and gained freedom from the tyranny of the down-to-earth; she was a metaphor of evanescence, transparency, floating, the essence of ballet as an ideal concept."<sup>5</sup>

"Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight  
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light."<sup>6</sup>

*La Sylphide* was also marked by two technical innovations which are still *sine qua non* to romantic ballet.<sup>7</sup> One was the white *tutu* by which female dancers were "veiled diaphanously in misty muslin"<sup>8</sup> and produced the highly romantic choric spectacles of the so-called *ballet blanc*. The other was the first use of "points", which Kirstein calls "a final realization of the body's verticality".<sup>9</sup> It is said that these innovations were first used in *La Sylphide* and by Marie Taglioni. The effect was electrifying. She "glides over flowers without bending them."<sup>10</sup> Critics endeavoured to surpass themselves and attributed to her dancing implications of the loftiest kind of spiritual ascent to which poets like Wordsworth gave verbal expression.<sup>11</sup>

Thus:

She 'danced what Kant purely thought,'  
what Novalis of the blue flower sang,  
what Hoffman and Lenau nocturnally  
imagined. Everything in her expres-  
sion had an inherent duality; the real  
world, immediate and everyday, jux-  
ta-posed to an ideal, higher plane of  
essential reality. Thus, the ballet

also proved the vanity in appearances, the truth of dreams. Everywhere a transcendental fiction gave a deeper significance to actual existence.<sup>12</sup>

However, according to Anatole Chejoy and P.W. Manchester "It is doubtful whether the romantic ballet could have achieved its significance if ... Gautier ... had not taken such an active part in it."<sup>13</sup> According to Deirdre Pridden, he was "the greatest direct literary influence in the (whole) history of ballet."<sup>14</sup> Though he never quite understood dance technique as a dancer does, he wrote vividly about dance and has left a better picture of dance and dancers in that age than any other of which there is record. He also provided plots for two ballets in his time,<sup>15</sup> *Giselle* (1841) and *La Péri* (1843), of which the former, like *La Sylphide*, holds the stage to this day. Many years later, (1911) Michel Fokine (1880-1942) choreographed a ballet, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, a beautiful evocation of Gautier's own poem, with Vaslav Nijinsky as the spirit of the rose.

Literature is Gautier's world. When Hugo's *Hernani* appeared in 1830, Gautier was a leader of the clique that applauded that revolutionary work. His cherry-coloured waistcoat and his mane of flowing hair were symbols of the youthful extravagances of a circle which included Musset, de Vigny, de Nerval, Dumas, and Delacroix. Their motto was "morte aux péroques", or

"death to the wigs", that is, to the old-fashioned classicists whose taste they ridiculed. Théophile Gautier was a fertile and versatile writer, author of scores of works of fiction, poetry, drama, travel and miscellaneous journalism. The experience of *Hernani* led Gautier to give up painting for writing. Now he is remembered as one of the most flamboyant young men of the romantic generation and also as one of the originators of the later doctrine of "art for art's sake". He is perfectly clear about the details of his aesthetic creed. Art, Love and Nature are his Romantic Trinity of the real. Gautier's view of Nature was limited to his sensuous experience, unlike many other romantics, he excluded social concerns from art. However, he well exemplified the romantic programme of extending the boundaries of human experience into strange and unexplored areas including the contemporary fondness for the supernatural; some writers evoked the past (Scott), others travelled in imagination to new continents (Chateaubriand voyaged to America), invoked the Devil (Goethe, *Faust*), took drugs (De Quincey, Coleridge) and cultivated their hallucinations. At times Gautier was writing under the influence of an undigested diet of Shakespeare; he was bewitched by the opalescent magic of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but understood nothing of Shakespeare's dramatic power. In Shakespeare's

renaissance comedies the mood is graceful, idyllic and artificial, never voluptuous as in Gautier's *Mlle. de Maupin*. What the pioneer of 1835 says is that the world of the senses is the gateway to the world of art, and art is the justification of life.

Gautier's greatest work apart from *Giselle* was *Émaux et Camées*, published in 1856 and revised in 1872. This was a slim collection of poems written and polished with meticulous care that suggests the carving of a gem. The last poem, entitled "L'Art", is a famous and much-quoted manifesto of Gautier's artistic principles: that the finest work is that done in the most difficult medium, and that the artist must avoid anything easy, vague or imprecise:

Oui, l'oeuvre sort plus belle  
D'une forme au travail  
Rebelle,  
Vers, marbre, onyx, émail.

...

Fi du rythme commode,  
Comme une soulier trop grand,  
Du mode  
Que tout pied quitte et prend!

...

Tout passe. - L'art robuste  
Seul a l'éternité:  
Le buste  
Survit à la cité.<sup>16</sup>

Théophile Gautier saw in life but one thing:

Art. He is an aesthetic rather than an intellectual type; his poetic imagination was almost entirely directed towards the quest for beauty. For him as for Keats "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Beauty was the one object of his existence. "Plato's definition is enough for me," he says; "beauty is the splendour of truth."<sup>17</sup> The social philosophies and political theories of his age provoked his scorn; in politics he saw nothing but a "bitter mockery," an "unintelligent buffoonery".<sup>18</sup> For him man's perfectibility was a rejected notion of the classical belief that the human body was beautiful and divine "for man is everywhere and always ugly. He spoils creation for me. Beauty is to be found nowhere but in nature and the arts."<sup>19</sup> Though Keats did not overtly scorn socio-political implication, in practice he avoided it. It may well be that neither he nor Gautier were greatly endowed with social awareness or conscience.

The purpose of art is not to remind us of our wretchedness by portraying life as it is, but to free us from it by revealing to us better things. For him art is an escape from the every day common-place humanity: "Art is what best consoles for living,"<sup>20</sup> while the theatre is to free us for a while from our surroundings by laughter or by beauty.

As Keats said,



A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
 Its loveliness increases; it will never  
 Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet  
 breathing.<sup>21</sup>

Gautier's temperament inclined towards the exotic and colourful side of romanticism. The ardent young romantic sought to escape from the pettiness and squalor of existence; and with his youthful enthusiasm and love of the fantastic, he was in accord with romantic sentiments found in various English writers: a nostalgic Ossianism as in MacPherson, taste for northern myth and legend as in Gray, a desire for mystical reverie as in Shelley, as well as a great liking of the pale, supernatural German moonlight as in Coleridge. But Gautier was not of a sufficiently philosophical turn of mind to find metaphysical reasons for his despair of reality. He revels in the theatre world with its false sun, moon and forests and in all the illusions of the "fantastic universe". This taste for artificiality, combined with his love of luxury, explains his sharing the contemporary fondness for Oriental scenes with their bright colours and obvious jewellery.

At the beginning of his literary career Gautier plunged with fervour into the most excessive romanticism. His natural gaiety of temperament considered poetry as an outpouring of joy. Beauty is joy, for ugliness and

vice can only inspire sadness and horror. Gautier writes that

Poetry should be produced at the age when one is happy. It is during the period of youth, strength, and love, that this language should be spoken.<sup>22</sup>

Wordsworth (more philosophically) found in the beauty of nature "the deep power of joy"<sup>23</sup> and even in recollection

"...my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils."<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, the poetry of dancing is also an expression of joy. The sensuous strain found in Gautier was heightened by the amazing exuberance of his youth. Thus in *Mlle. de Maupin* he carries his youthful love of pure form to a sheer delight in erotic description. The preface of this book is a minor treatise formulated with all the witty crudity of which its young author is capable.

Gautier frankly accepts what others called immorality to satisfy his romantic notions as he sees virtue as a negative force which only fetters youth. By "virtue" he doubtless meant a too rigid morality. His was the kind of romantic protest that was widespread, as in Blake's

Prudence is a rich ugly old maid  
courted by Incapacity.<sup>25</sup>

For Gautier, art is the positive element in life, is above ethical considerations and should never be hindered by them. Beauty should take the place of morality because beauty is the highest of human values while "ugliness is always indecent" and "true voluptuousness is always chaste".<sup>26</sup> According to Gautier the poet should be under an obligation to produce only that which is beautiful, for the beautiful is the pathway to the good. His Platonic belief is that art and religion are one.

This greater dependence on art led him to seek a more elevated ideal of beauty and in his later life he accepted beauty itself as the highest value, transferring his ideal from the existence to the essence, from the concrete to the abstract. It was this Platonic conception which best consoled him for living. Such was also the case with Shelley who in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" invokes the "Spirit of Beauty".

Thus let thy power, which like the truth  
Of nature on my passive youth  
Descended, - to my onward life supply  
Its calm, to one who worships thee,  
And every form containing thee;<sup>27</sup>

In dance Gautier found a relief from the stifling morality of everyday life, which regarded nature as sinful and physical beauty as immodest. Since he believed the theatre was not a place for social reformers he used his reviews to preach the most extreme anti-

utilitarian theories. Art and Utility seemed to him completely incompatible:

Generally speaking, when a thing becomes useful, it ceases to be beautiful...There is nothing really beautiful except that which cannot be used for anything; everything useful is ugly for it is the expression of some need: and the needs of man are base and loathsome.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, as ballet was the least utilitarian thing in the contemporary art world, Gautier gave it his admiration and support above all other theatrical art forms.

As early as 1837 Gautier formulates his definition of the dance:

Dancing after all has no other object but the revelation of beautiful forms in graceful attitudes and the development of lines which are agreeable to the eye.<sup>29</sup>

This view of dance as an abstract art would be acceptable to Kleist (for whom it would have more profound philosophic implications): but it is the exact opposite of the view of Noverre as represented in the *ballet d'action*. Actually, however, the relationship of abstract and realistic (in both dancing and poetry) is usually a matter of degree.

Gautier's devotion to antiquity (Greek art) is an important factor in his conception of the dance. Greek art is essentially plastic and human, and is

based on the beauty of the body. Dancing, then, since it is pre-eminently human, though abstract, is capable of the heights of Greek art. For Gautier, beauty is made in the likeness of Man (and more especially of woman), and he considers as great arts those which are concerned with the human form. As a former student of painting, he is by nature also a sculptor. Even in his writing he remains a "sculptor" in style. In his eyes the poet or choreographer is a god who infuses matter not with ideas and emotions but with the essence of beauty, the calm majesty of Venus. Dancing is "mimed poetry". "Dancing is poetry composed with arms and legs."<sup>30</sup> *Paquita* (a popular Spanish ballet (1847)) is a "melodrama" and *Giselle* a "poem".

Look for sentimentalism in poetry! It is not that. Words which radiate, words of light together with rhythm and music, that is what poetry is. It proves nothing, it relates nothing.<sup>31</sup>

The soul of the theatre is emotion and action but Gautier has a more abstract, static and visual conception of the ballet, like a sculptor or a painter; and he believes (as Noverre did) that

A ballet should be a kind of painted bas-relief or sculptural painting...Each of its situations must be arranged as a picture...anything which is not reducible to design, grouping or perspective is not of its essence.<sup>32</sup>

But, unlike Noverre, what he is not aware of is that these comparisons denote only the poses of a dance and not the transitions, which are the dance itself. He sees in a ballet not so much the dancing as a living painting but as "a succession of choreographic poses."<sup>33</sup>

In dancing he sees the expression of the plastic and the pictural, rather than the infinite range of human emotion, and throughout his own life he sought only to attain a state of oriental calm. While he was susceptible to all the visual types of beauty from Asiatic luxury to vibrating exotic Spain, once he had outgrown the romantic stock in trade, the superficialities of which he was quick to realize, he devoted himself almost entirely to the study of Greek art. He aims at Greek simplicity and naturalness, and concentrates on the universally beautiful. In his dance appreciation too, the romanticist gives way a little to the classicist which had always existed in Gautier. His conception becomes less sensuous and more abstract; passion gives way to line; in a word, the dance becomes, in his eyes, less pagan than Parnassian. It is something more than a sensual pleasure - it is an art. Nevertheless of the three great dancers, Marie Taglioni, Fanny Elssler and Carlotta Grisi, it was Elssler, the most sensuous of the three, who approached most nearly to his artistic ideal, and his pagan conception of the dance.<sup>34</sup>

The exclusion of morality, philosophy and in fact everything except formal beauty is characteristic of the art for art's sake aesthetic which he defended throughout his career. Art has no mission but the establishment and expansion of the kingdom of beauty. The dance which he conceived as being pure form, is therefore pure art and has no other message. Thus, because of his formalist conception of the dance, he takes correspondingly less interest in the content of a ballet. He proclaims that "the true, the unique, the eternal subject of a ballet is dancing"<sup>35</sup> but the limited means of expression at the dancer's disposal makes ballet an unsuitable medium for dramatic action. His view does not agree with Noverre's idea of the *ballet d'action* because Noverre feels that dancing is of secondary importance to plot. What pleases and attracts Gautier's attention in the *ballet d'action* of Noverre and Salvatore Vigano (1769-1821)<sup>36</sup> is the sculptural aspect and not the dramatic.

We persist nevertheless in considering that the *ballet d'action* is outside the conditions of real dancing...A play translated into mimic signs and accompanied by a divertissement is not a ballet.<sup>37</sup>

Also, the gestures of the *ballet d'action* which Noverre emphasized in his writings, as well as in his ballets, Gautier finds unsuitable to dance. But he goes on to

say that with regard to content:

Ballet is a special genre which demands subjects of a particular nature where dancing occurs necessarily and unavoidably and is used for the very expression of the story.<sup>38</sup>

For Gautier the ballet needs a clear and easily comprehensible action, one that will lift the spirits of the spectator and communicate joy, for dancing is lightness, lightness means joy and joy is the summit of human fulfillment. Dancing, for Gautier, provided a means of escape into the worlds of fantasy and illusion, the romantic world of golden dreams.<sup>39</sup> And Gautier would also concur when Nietzsche, in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883, 1891), speaks of dancing as being symbolic of wisdom, the kind of wisdom in which man learns to find joy in order to alter "the muddy afflictions" of reality:

Clear in his eyes, nor lurketh any  
loathing about his mouth. Goeth he  
not his way like a dancer? And though  
the earth hath its marshes and muddy  
afflictions, he that hath light feet  
runneth over the mud, and danceth  
as on well-swept ice...Learn my  
wisdom of me, I pray; even the  
worst thing hath two good other  
sides, even the worst thing hath  
legs for dancing.<sup>40</sup>

This could have been written by Kleist.

Gautier's conception of ballet is such that

in reality the characters are  
anonymous and are summed up by



those eternal types which have afforded themes for dramatic action since the beginning of the world. The father, the old man, the lover and his beloved, a young girl or a sylph, the servant, and then the good or evil genius who aids or thwarts; with these pawns differently placed, one can compose all the ballets imaginable.<sup>41</sup>

The realm of dancing is fairyland where reside "the mythologies of every age and country...legends, fairy stories, hashish and opium-inspired dreams, all the fantasy beyond the realms of possibility."<sup>42</sup> All this sounds much like what Noverre wrote in his letters; but the difference is that Noverre was a more serious thinker and a philosopher of the ballet while Gautier was a sensualist delighting in the theatrical décor and choreographic posturing rather than the allegorical and philosophic allusions that ballet may inspire.

While Noverre spoke of the dancer, male or female, with respect and artistic approbation (he himself was a distinguished dancer in youth), and Kleist saw the dancer in abstract terms, Gautier despised the male dancer as much as he adored the ballerina. The female form with its full curves and absence of masculinity recalls, for Gautier, Greek sculpture, such as the Venus de Milo, which is the embodiment of feminine grace. The supreme revelation of feminine beauty is

for Gautier - dancing. He thinks that the male body with its inner dynamism and taut muscles is possible for dance but not essential. Moreover, a ballet without male dancers is for him the height of good taste,

for nothing is more abominable than a man who displays his red neck, his great muscular arms, his legs with calves like church beadle's, his whole heavy masculine frame, shaken with leaps and pirouettes.<sup>43</sup>

Lucien Petipa (1815-1898) is the only dancer of whom Gautier approves, because of his excellent miming, and this is the only reason. He goes as far as to state that:

for us a male dancer is something monstrous and indecent which we cannot conceive...Strength is the only grace permissible to men.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, Gautier, was partly responsible for the sheer supremacy of the contemporary *prima ballerina*; and this had repercussions, at that time and in the near future of the ballet, not only in matters of subject and technique but also on the other dancers in the cast. Unfortunately, the power of the critic overpowered the mind of the public as well as that of the artist.

Thus, as one might have expected, one of the lasting effects of this kind of criticism was the low-

ered status of the male dancer. While the romantics seized upon the ballet as an ideal medium for the development of their poetic themes, woman became the symbol of the unattainable, an elusive spirit moving from place to place just out of man's reach causing havoc to the heart of man - a *femme fatale*, "La Belle Dame sans Merci". This conception and its treatment in the ballet, rendered the male passive, unable to attain and seize the ideal while the female rose to artistic heights of predominance. The balance of the male and female elements (energies) was immediately broken, as the male partner was allowed few opportunities for dancing. Unfortunately this was the case for many years to come.

*Giselle, ou Les Wilis* (1841) establishes Gautier as one of the leaders of the French romantic movement. In truth we cannot classify him among the very greatest but among those whom Eric Aschengreen has so aptly titled "the disappointed Romantics".<sup>45</sup> These did not commit suicide (as Kleist did) when reality did not blend with fantasy, but came to accept the juxtaposition of one with the other. It is for this reason that *Giselle's* original ending is so different from that of its precursor, *La Sylphide*. In the latter, James cannot return to reality and so he swoons or dies:

in the former, Albrecht returns to Bathilde when Giselle sinks back into her grave. It is no coincidence that Gautier wrote a poem praising Bathilde, the earthly beloved of Albrecht, rather than the unreachable Giselle:

Ode à Bathilde  
 Giselle meurt, Albert éperdu se relève,  
 Et la réalité fait envoler le rêve,  
 Mais en attrait divins en chaste volupté,  
 Quel rêve peut valoir votre réalité?<sup>46</sup>

The ending of the story of Giselle as presently performed enlarges the romantic quality showing Giselle returning to her grave while Albrecht is left with his memories, alone and remorseful - a perfect romantic hero. But Gautier's original conception was rather different. He had been inspired by Heinrich Heine's *D'Allemagne*,<sup>47</sup> (thus the setting of the ballet is the remote province of Germany called Silesia), and before he handed his ideas over to his collaborator, Vernoy Saint-Georges,<sup>48</sup> Gautier had conceived the ballet with the first act set in a ballroom. This idea came from Victor Hugo and it was based on a sequence of verses called "Fantômes" included in the collection, *Orientales*. But Gautier's interest was concentrated on the second act of the ballet (which was as nearly as possible "an exact translation" of Heine), during which his obsession with vampirism and the *femme fatale* was satisfied in the creation of the Queen of the Wiles, Myrtha.<sup>49</sup> Cyril Beaumont, in his

fine study, *The Ballet Called Giselle*, (1969), tells us that the legend of the Wilis is of Slavonic origin, and that the word Wili is derived from *vila* (plural *vile*) meaning vampire. As it is well known, a curiosity about vampires was an abiding feature of the romantic age and, as Mario Praz points out in *The Romantic Agony*, this can be found in the works of Byron, Poe, Gautier, Baudelaire and Flaubert, among others. To this must be added an obsession with woman as a bringer of death and corruption that is found continually in novels and poems of that time. The theme of the betrayal of innocence also held fascination for writers of the romantic era. Woman as the destroyer, the bringer of evil, is a concept that goes back to the legend of the Garden of Eden, and it is to be found also in the Greek myths (Medea, Clytemnestra, Helen, etc.). The destruction of innocence is a central theme throughout the greatest of literature from *Iphigenia* to *Billy Budd*. These two ideas, symbolized in *Giselle* by the characters of Giselle herself and Myrtha provide the ballet with its central conflict, the ancient struggle between good and evil.

Gautier's article on *Giselle* in *Les Beautés de L'Opéra* informs us that Giselle, who is so fond of dancing, is warned by her mother that, if she dies, she will become a Wili, and

tu iras au bal de minuit avec une robe de clair de lune et des bracelets de perles de rosée à tes bras blancs et froids; tu entraîners les voyageurs dans la ronde fatale, et tu les précipiteras dans l'eau glaciale du lac tout haletants et tout ruisselants de sueur.<sup>50</sup>

In this picture we have Gautier's romantic fondness for the German moonlight, the hours of witchery, when the emotions soften and breezes are wafted into the misty, unlimited distance. Exactly how Giselle was originally supposed to die Gautier informs us:

Cela est ainsi, pourtant, et la fatale vérité va paraître dans tout son jour terrible, car voici le trouble-fête Hilarion. Que le diable l'emporte, lui et ses bottes de daim, et sa casquette de peau de loup, et son justaucorps vert! Il apporte le manteau, les éperons et l'épée du faux Loys, qu'il démasque devant le duc, Bathilde et tous les seigneurs.<sup>51</sup>

Gautier arranged this scene so that there is a reason for Giselle's sympathy for Bathilde at the end of Act II, when the Wili returns Albrecht to his waiting fiancée. The poetry of the second act lies in the exquisite balance of the choreography and the manner in which the ghost of Giselle assumes a palpable reality: being at first little more than a figment of Albrecht's imagination and tortured conscience, she should be seen weightless, above the earth, like a marionette.

When she is seen first by Albrecht she rises from the night in the swaying mist, her form shaped like the ghost of his lost girl; she should be floating away, dissolving, melting into the darkness, no more than a wisp, or a haze. It must feel to him that all his invocations, all his night's orisons, will never give being to this illusion, seemingly imprinted by chance design in the air. To dream that she had returned, and then to know it was nothing - how absolute must have been his desolation and how total his solitude! The extreme cruelty of the Queen of the Wilis, Myrtha, towards Albrecht, is not that she tries herself to force him to dance to his death, but that she uses her power over Giselle to bring this about. Giselle warns Albrecht to cling to the cross on her tomb in order to be saved: Myrtha's wand will break when it touches the cross. But Myrtha reminds Giselle that, although this be true, Giselle is still under her spell. She orders her to dance her most modest yet voluptuous dance, and give her loveliest smile, so that Albrecht will leave the cross by himself. Reluctantly Giselle complies because she is totally bound - she is Myrtha's creature. Only by the power of Eros, her love for Albrecht, will she be able not only to save him but also to release herself. The second act is about the search for this freedom for them both. As the act progresses, Giselle gains more

freedom from Myrtha, and the dawn marks her victory: the light of the coming day represents the victory of love over the powers of darkness. Thus, the great dance poem of *Giselle* ends in a reconcilliation of life and death; when Giselle stretches out her arms towards Albrecht, she wills with all her spent being that he shall live. It is her dawn, her victory, as no invocation from beyond the grave will ever draw her from her sleep again.

An important feature of the great literary allegories is the contrast between the world of illusion (dream) and that of reality. In the symbolic world of the romantic ballets the hero's quest for reconcilliation with his loved one is central to the myth which is the essential element of plot in the romantic ballets. The complete form of the romance is the hero's successful quest towards his self-exaltation, either as a hero, symbolically, or his self-realization, psychologically. Thus the idea of rebirth is central to the myth as it might well be considered the basic theme of art as also of life. The ancient myth of the spring kissing the dead year to wakefulness is part of the cyclical legend and it is customary to set the dream sequence of the allegory in a wood, or a forest, (as in *The Sleeping Beauty's* scene of awakening) so that



the rebirth of nature is also symbolically represented. Northrop Frye informs us that:

Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality.<sup>52</sup>

The stories of the romantic ballets are those where the spirit is refined in this way by suffering to achieve an inner reconcilliation. After the winter comes the spring symbolized in the reconciliation of two hearts. This is clearly seen in *Swan Lake* and also in *Giselle*;<sup>53</sup> but in *Giselle*, also, the rebirth of the love of Giselle and Albrecht is found beyond the grave, where again the victory of the forces of good over evil is won. Here reconcilliation is achieved through grief and suffering - which is a common feature of this kind of allegory. Albrecht kills Giselle by his betrayal, but he grows in maturity and understanding because of this. *Giselle* is a ballet of autumn and winter - the autumn of a dying love, the winter of the grave. There is no summer in it, no spring. Autumn, is, of course, the time for parting and, with the sound of the hunting horns, which are in its music of farewell, the darkness comes early. There is a cruel irony in this - that the story of young love should be set in

such a time with undercurrents of sadness, of impending loss, symbolized in autumn trees, as the fading light and bleak wind permeate the first act.

A multiplicity of images that explore reality at several different levels - spiritual, psychological and universal, surround the character of doomed innocence portrayed in *Giselle*. The dance itself which was her greatest joy ironically becomes the instrument that hurts the man she loves. So too, the images of flowers, most ancient symbol of love, as well as the dying of such love, are used in the first act to garland her brow, while in the second act they become the symbol of grief, her grief and falling tears, like the falling autumn leaves in the first act - the complete cycle of a dying human love. What is left behind, after *Giselle* is gone forever, is only a rose picked from her tomb, a rose on which her soul, as Gautier's text tells us, has left its "chaste perfume".<sup>54</sup> This is what Albrecht, rushing into the foliage after *Giselle*, finds; and, shattered with grief and emotion, he falls unconscious into the arms of Bathilde and Wilfrid, who have gone to seek him:

Albrecht, éperdu, hors de lui,  
se précipite à travers le feuillage,  
mais il ne voit plus rien. Une rose  
qu'il cueille sur la tombe, une rose  
ou l'âme de *Giselle* a laissé son  
chaste parfume, voilà désormais

tout ce qui reste au comte Albrecht  
de la pauvre villageoise.

Navré de douleur, brisé d'emotion,  
il tombe sans connaissance dans les bras  
de Bathilde et de Wilfrid, que  
l'inquiétude avaient conduits à sa  
recherche.<sup>55</sup>

Such writing, typical of Gautier, represents a high-water mark of romance.

After the opening of *Giselle*, in 1841, he wrote:

Giselle has conquered Paris. The  
pale and shadowy figures of the  
Wilis have received a reception  
undreamed of. The director and  
the public have not offered the  
least objection à-la-Voltaire.  
This ballet will last as long  
as there is beauty.<sup>56</sup>

As a critic, Gautier, tried to communicate to his public his sensitivity to poetic effects, educating the public to a keener appreciation of the art of dance. Although he shows an amazing ignorance of the technical side of dancing, on the aesthetic side of dance criticism, he showed extraordinary sensitivity and perception. He is keen in observing talent in a female dancer; his ideal seems to be a combination of a Taglioni on points with an impassioned pantomime technique of an Elssler and the flawless performance of a Grisi.<sup>57</sup> At the beginning of his career as ballet critic, Gautier hardly speaks of the choreographer, because choreography showed

little advance in this century. Rather, because of the change in spirit and style, the librettist dominates at the expense of the choreographer and even the composer of the music. But Gautier too readily admits his visual preference, declaring the supremacy of line over music; and, as far as the choreographer is concerned, he insists that he is only an intermediary, a mere link between the poet and the dancer. The visual effect of a ballet impressed Gautier tremendously. And far greater than his concern for theatrical decor was his love of costume. He devotes much thought to the costume of the dancers as he complains that "we no longer love pure form and beauty enough to endure them unveiled."<sup>58</sup> His romantic temperament and painter's eye are delighted by the "charming peasant costume all in lace, satin and flowers"<sup>59</sup> which Cerito wears in Gautier's own ballet *Pâquerette*. Gautier grew tired of the virgin "white muslin" which Taglioni wore in the *ballet blanc* and his romantic tendencies delighted in more exotic and voluptuous costumes:

...Feathers, flowers, tinsel, silver  
worked gauze, gold and silver sequins,  
that, we continue to repeat, is what should  
form the basis of a *corps de ballet's* attire...<sup>60</sup>

Gautier's value as a ballet critic is immeasurable. His weekly reviews, written by a literary man of genius have preserved the romantic ballet for us today.

He has also given us a picture of the sensibility of that age as he "declares that the people of a later day can hardly understand the effervescent enthusiasm of that time. There was a new sap of life, an intoxicating atmosphere, an absolute surrender to the poetic ideal."<sup>61</sup> Charvet writes of Gautier that "as a journalist he was a power in the world of art", as "from 1833 he never missed an exhibition of pictures; from 1837 he was a regular 'firstnighter'".<sup>62</sup> Gautier wrote of several arts, but his romantic nature found in ballet

the realization of beauty for beauty's sake, and the fantasy which he believed to be the true domain of the theatre, and so he was provided with a ready-made example on which to base his ideal.<sup>63</sup>

Sometime in 1850 he said:

To be of one's own time - nothing seems easier and nothing is more difficult. One can go straight through one's age without seeing it, and this is what has happened to many eminent minds.<sup>64</sup>

As he grew older, "seeing it" all, the beauty of illusion and ugliness of reality, he grew more disillusioned and fell into "a melancholic nihilism".<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately for him the dreams of his youth came to seem illusory and the ideal of abstract beauty faded in his mind.

### Conclusion

The foregoing chapters should have made it apparent that the theory of dance, as compared with other arts, has had a sporadic history, containing fewer writers and consequently perhaps, considerably less critical discussion and contention than in the other arts. And yet a very definite sequence and development can be traced in dance theory, as elsewhere in cultural history.

Moreover, this sequence, roughly parallel to that of the other arts, presents the same traditions and developments as are found, for example, in literature, and uses the same critical terminology. In fact, if we did not have the rich body of writings on general aesthetics and literary theory, the main lines of aesthetic development might be discerned from the much rarer critical literature of dance.

To represent the periods chosen for this study - that is the periods of late (neo) classicism and emerging romanticism (c1750-c 1850) - I have inevitably chosen, for the former, Jean-Georges Noverre, and for the latter, Théophile Gautier, because they were undoubtedly

the greatest among the writers on dance in their times. But Gautier, however prolific he was, does not quite do justice to the full range of romantic expression found in dance. For this reason, Heinrich von Kleist has been introduced, largely because of one very short but highly seminal piece, *Ueber das Marionettentheater*. So far as bibliographical study for this essay has indicated, this is the first time that Kleist has been given a significant place in a discussion of dance theory; and he might have been surprised to find himself there. Generally speaking, he is unknown to the histories and other reference works of dance.

Since the formulation of critical theory is, of course, a verbal process, it is important that all of the above, Noverre, Kleist and Gautier were accomplished men of letters. And yet, differently in each case, writing on the dance was probably for them a secondary matter. Noverre was first of all an enormously busy *maître* and practical man of the theatre. Kleist was and is chiefly known as a dramatist and short story writer. Gautier was a painter, poet, novelist, and essayist. These other preoccupations of the three men served to bring their dance theories into a wider context of the general aesthetics in their times. In the

foregoing chapters, therefore, many affinities have been found between stated theories of dance and the critical theories of other arts, especially literature. Judging by the existing bibliography, it would seem that this study of particular affinities has not been attempted so fully before. The history of dance theory is in its infancy.

And one must add to this general statement various specific influences. Noverre, whose whole conception of dance was predominantly dramatic, was very much influenced by the classicizing drama (and opera) of this day and above all by the words and example of his great friend and English sponsor, David Garrick. Kleist, the most genuinely philosophic of the three, bears witness in his brief tract to Rousseauistic naturalism on the one hand and lofty romantic transcendentalism on the other; and so, intentionally or not, brought dance theory into relationship with the prevailing currents of philosophic thought at the time. Gautier's training as painter and poet, his plastic imagination and his theory of art-for-arts sake determined his taste and critical judgement in matters of dance; these were certainly the main source of his strength and possibly also a source of limitation or bias.



The relationships of theory and practice in the arts are no less complex here than in any other periods - as the above chapters have attempted to show. Noverre, for example, as a theorist, was a very consistent and articulate late eighteenth century classicist (looking forwards to romanticism); but as a professional man of the theatre, he had a keen eye for popular taste, even if this catered to fashions he must have considered antiquated or cheap. Nevertheless he kept moving closer to his ideal, and as late as 1910/11, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.) could say,

The ballet has never advanced beyond the stage to which he brought it; it has rather gone back.<sup>1</sup>

This may be an overstatement; but it emphasizes the lasting and salutary nature of his influence.

It is doubtful whether Kleist was known to the world of dance, whether he was really influenced by it, or had any direct influence on it in any way. And yet his *Marionettentheater* might well serve as a manifesto for the new romantic dance when it was just being born.

As for Gautier, to quote C. W. Beaumont again,

These charming pages, with their fine phrasing, their glowing colour, and their wealth of poetic imagery, do enable us to form a very fair idea of the appearance and ability of the past, but by no means faded, glories of the Romantic Ballet. Indeed, they constitute the chief source of our knowledge respecting that Golden Age, which saw the dance no longer employed mainly to titillate the senses, but to create a new mystic world in which the spirit triumphed over the body, a completely new conception in which the art of classical ballet became elevated almost to a religion.<sup>2</sup>

Here there is a noteworthy difference between Gautier and Noverre. Both described the dance with great fullness; but Noverre, because of his extensive technical knowledge gained from many years both as dancer himself and as the greatest *maître* in Europe, also shaped the art from within and gave it lasting direction. Gautier possessed no such practical knowledge, but he wrote so persuasively, so variously and had such a wide audience that he strongly influenced public taste for those aspects of romantic dance (and for romantic ballerinas) of which he approved.

Two subsidiary conclusions remain: First, what have probably been main points of theoretical contention - between the unattainable extremes of dramatic dance à la Noverre and abstract dance à la Gautier - still remain unresolved, except (as it ought to be resolved) by blending the two in practice. And, finally,

dance has not yet produced a continuous sequence of theoretical criticism; and it has produced no criticism more brilliant than that of the men studied in this thesis.

NotesChapter I

1. Charles Collé, *Journal* (July 1754), as quoted in Deryck Lynham, *The Chevalier Noverre* (London: Dance Books, 1974), p. 21.
2. Haydn Mason, *Voltaire* (London: Oxford Press, 1975), p. 11.
3. Gaston Vuillier, *A History of Dancing* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1897), p. 39.
4. Jean-Georges Noverre, *Letters on Dancing and Ballets*, tr. Cyril W. Beaumont (New York: Dance Horizons Incorporated, 1930), Letter VI, p. 43; hereafter cited as *Letters*.
5. *Letters*, VI, pp. 43-44.
6. *Letters*, VII, p. 51.
7. *Letters*, I, p. 10.
8. *Letters*, I, p. 13. John Weaver (1673-1760) was famous as a dancing master, theatrical dancer, choreographer, teacher and author. His fame in dance history is as the first producer of pantomime ballets, in the classic sense of the term - the *ballet d'action*. The first formal libretto of a *ballet d'action* published in London in 1717 is Weaver's first "serious" large scale work, *The Loves of Mars and Venus*.
9. *Letters*, III, p. 22.
10. There are two sides to Noverre, the classicist and the romantic. Noverre also is the theorist who, like Shakespeare, believed in the Aristotelian laws of drama; but in practice; again like Shakespeare, became a radical and followed his own whims. Thus the excessive mythologizing in his ballets (an obvious romantic device). Like the British dramatists of the age, as Samuel Johnson showed in his criticism of the Bard, all followed strict rules in theory but not in practice. A good example is Shakespeare's *Othello* where the "unity of time", as a dramatic principle, is defied.
11. *Letters*, I, p.9.
12. Literary criticism in the main lines of romantic literary criticism was the sort that was found

in England during the Renaissance in writers like Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), Ben Jonson (1573-1637) and George Putnam (15??-1590). But most outstanding writers did not follow the strict rules, as for example, in drama the unities or prohibition of mixed drama. It was strictly against mixed drama; but, in practice, like Shakespeare and as Samuel Johnson wrote in his criticism, most of the writers did not follow the rules. Thus, Noverre in theory is a classicist but in practice there is no proof of this because we have no information of how he constructed his ballets other than his own writings on the subject, which is not enough.

13. Charles Gildon, *Complete Art of Poetry*, tr. Sir W. Soame and J. Dryden (London: n/p 1719), I, p. 135.
14. Nicholas Boileau, *L'Art Poétique*, Canto III, ll. 15-16.
15. Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 10.
16. John Dryden, "Of Dramatic Poesy" included in *The Great Critics, An Anthology of Literary Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951), p. 342.
17. *Letters*, VII, p. 54
18. *Letters*, XIV, p. 144.
19. *Letters*, VI, pp. 38 & 47.
20. "The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry" in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward N. Hooker (2nd Vol., Baltimore, 1938-43), p.335.
21. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World, Lowell Lectures, 1925* (New York: The MacMillan co., 1950), Chapter IV, p. 83. Alfred N. Whitehead (1861-1947) wrote with Bertrand Russell *Principia Mathematica* (3rd Vol., 1910-1913) and other mathematical and philosophical works. His books on philosophy set forth an idealism, (philosophy of organism), in which God is viewed as the principle of union in a universe where interrelated organisms adjust to the environment.
22. *Ibid*, p. 83.
23. John Dryden, "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1687", I, ll. 1-2.

24. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, I, ll. 68-73.
25. James H. Smith and Edd W. Parks, *The Greek Critics, An Anthology of Literary Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951), p. 445.
26. *Ibid*, p. 448.
27. *Letters*, VI, p. 42.
28. *Essay on Criticism*, I, ll. 74-75.
29. *Letters*, VI, p. 42.
30. Smith and Parks, p. 457.
31. *Letters*, II, p. 16.
32. *Letters*, VIII, p. 77.
33. *Essay on Criticism*, I, ll. 124-125.
34. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Robert Maynard in the *Great Books* (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1951), V, 35, p. 465.
35. Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, ll. 1008-1010.
36. *Essay on Criticism*, I, ll. 119-23.
37. *Ibid*, II, ll. 362-363.
38. *Letters*, VI, p. 39.
39. *Ibid*, VI, p. 39.
40. *Essay on Criticism*, I, ll. 126-27.
41. *Letters*, XV, p. 162.
42. Professor Spingarn gives an excellent summary of Boileau in his *Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, p. 134-35 as quoted in Smith and Parks, p. 271.
43. *Letters*, VIII, p. 60.
44. *Ibid*, VIII, p. 58.
45. *Ibid*, VIII, p. 65.
46. *Ibid*, VIII, p. 64.
47. Smith and Parks, p. 450.

48. Ibid, p. 450.
49. *Letters*, IX, pp. 88-89.
50. Ibid, II, p. 18.
51. *Complete Art of Poetry*, p. 136.
52. *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, Vol. 2, p. 339.
53. *Letters*, V, pp. 32-33.
54. Smith and Parks, p. 470. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) was born at Kamenitz, Saxony. In his early life he was given strict training in theology and morals by his clergyman father, but being less interested in theology he pursued a career in philosophy and drama, becoming a very successful dramatist. The production of *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755), was one of the first great bourgeois tragedies; in 1758 he wrote *Literaturbriefe* in Berlin, and the prose tragedy *Philotus*; *Laocoön* was published in 1766; *Minna von Barnhelm*, his most successful play from the dramatic standpoint, in 1767. In that year Lessing settled in Hamburg, and his experiences with that theatre led to the writing and publication of the periodical, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. The successful tragedy, *Emilia Galotti*, was published in 1772, and in 1779 appeared the last of his great works, *Nathan der Weise*.
55. *Letters*, VII, p. 53.
56. *Essay on Criticism*, II, pp. 88-90.
57. "Essay Concerning Critical and Curious Learning", (1698). *A Literary History of England*, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: W.W. Norton, 1948), p. 720.
58. *Essay on Criticism*, I, pp. 143-45.
59. *Letters*, II, pp. 16-17.
60. In 1757, he obtained the post of *maître de ballet* in a large theatre at Lyons where he produced these comedy ballets:  
*La Mariée du Village*, *Les Fêtes du Vauxhall*, *Les Recrues Prussiennes*, *Le Bal Paré*; and the more serious ballets such as *La Mort d'Ajax*, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, *Renaud et Armide*, *Les Caprices de Galatée*, *La Toilette de Vénus*, *Les Jalousies ou les Fêtes du Sérail*, *L'Amour Corsaire* and *Les Jaloux sans Rival*.

In 1760, in Stuttgart, Noverre became the *maître de ballet* of the court of the Duke of Würtemberg. Here he produced the following ballets:

*Les Amours d'Henri IV, La Jugement de Paris, Médée et Jason, Antoine et Cléopâtre, La Mort d'Hercule, Psyché et l'Amour, Diane et Endymion, Vénus et Adonis, Renaud et Armide, Orpheus et Eurydice, Der Sieg des Neptun, Admète et Alceste, Alexandre et Les Danaïdes, Hypermnestra.* Under his direction Stuttgart, for eight years became the dancer's Mecca.

In 1767, Noverre went to Vienna as *maître de ballet* to the Imperial Theatres. Here he composed and produced for the Court Theatre the following:

*Iphigénie et Tauride, Les Grâces, Alceste, Les Amours d'Enée et Didon, Adèle de Ponthieu, Les Horaces, Semiramis, Apelles et Campaspe and La Mort d'Agamemnon.*

From Vienna, Noverre went to Milan in 1774 to arrange a ballet on the occasion of the marriage of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria with the Princess Beatrice of Modena. While in Milan he produced many other ballets:

*La Rosière de Salency, La Foire du Caire, Ritiger et Wenda, Galéas-Duc de Milan, Erthymes et Eucharis, Belton et Eliza and Hyménée et Cryséis.*

61. Smith and Parks, p. 599. Marie-Joseph-Blaise Chénier (1764-1811) was a dramatist emphasizing national history with a strong revolutionary undercurrent which was a highwater mark of romantic tragedy during the French Revolution.
62. *Letters*. VI, p. 29.
63. *Ibid*, X, p. 75.
64. *Ibid*, II, p. 17.
65. *Ibid*, X, p. 100.
66. *Ibid*, X, p. 100.
67. *Letters*, X, p. 101.
68. *Ibid*, V, p. 35.
69. *Ibid*, V, p. 37.
70. *Ibid*, VIII, pp. 73 & 76.
71. *Ibid*, IX, p. 83.



72. Ibid., X, p. 107.
73. Ibid., VIII, pp. 73-74.
74. Ibid., III, p. 21.
75. Ibid., XV, pp. 166-167. Noverre believed in and practiced "realism": for example, in his description in Letter XV, pp. 159-162 of the ballet *Jaloux sans Rival* he speaks of realism, emotion and drama being employed to express the plot of love and intrigue between Inez, Fernando, Clitandre, and Beatrix. But again what we have is only Noverre's thoughts in words and not a visual proof in actual dance movements.
76. Ibid., VIII, pp. 60 and 72.
77. Ibid., XII, p. 129.
78. Ibid., VII, p. 50.
79. Ibid., X, p. 99.
80. Ibid., X, p. 100.
81. Haydn Mason, p. 11.
82. *Letters*, X, p. 99.
83. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), *Emile* (1762), *Le Contrat Social* (1762), etc.
84. Theodore Besterman, *Select Letters of Voltaire* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1963), p. 160.
85. Curt Sachs, *The Commonwealth of Art* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1946), p. 163.
86. *Letters*, IV, p. 30.
87. Friedrich Brie, *Englische Rokoko-Epik, 1710-30* (Munich: n/p, 1927), p. 16.
88. Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, *A History of English Literature* (London: J. M. Dent, 1930), p. 756.
89. Pope (to Miss Blount) regarding the poetry of his *Eloisa* quoted in Edith Sitwell's *Alexander Pope* (Harmonsworth: Penguin Books, 1930), p. 130.

Notes

Chapter II

1. August, Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) was appointed professor at Jena University in 1798. Also at Jena was his brother Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) who in 1798 wrote *The History of the Poetry of Greece and Rome*, and in 1799 wrote *Lucinde* - an unfinished romance showing romantic demand for ethical freedom. Both brothers published the *Athenaeum*, a leading journal of the Romantic School.
2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (11th Edition), "French Literature".
3. For more information refer to Lincolnd Kirstein, *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing*, (New York: Dance Horizons, 1965), p. 260-263.
4. The libretto for *La Sylphide* was based on a fanciful Scottish tale by Charles Nodier. A full-length ballet of two acts rather than an opera interlude, it became the prototype of Romantic ballet, wherein the sky, sea, magic lake or haunted glen became the habitat for flesh-and-blood ballerinas, *La Sylphide's* heirs would include *Giselle* (1841), *La Péri* (1843) and later *Swan Lake* (1877-95), finding an ultimate abstraction in Fokine's *Les Sylphides* (1909).
5. *An Elementary Treatise upon the Theory and Practice of the Art of Dancing* (1820), *The Code of Terpsichore* (1828).
6. C. P. Magill, *German Literature*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 89.
7. Heinrich von Kleist, *Ueber das Marionettentheater*, translated by Cherna Murray and published in *Life and Letters To-Day*, Vol. XVI, No. 8, Summer 1937, p. 101.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

9. Ibid., p. 101
10. Ibid., p. 103
11. Ibid., p. 101
12. V. Ch. I, fn. 8.
13. *Ueber das Marionettentheater*, p. 101.
14. For more information refer to pp. 8-10 in the first chapter.
15. Lines 1-5.
16. Thomas Hutchinson ed. *Wordsworth, Poetical Works*, (London: Oxford University Press,) 1904, p. 238.
17. *Ueber das Marionettentheater*, p. 103.
18. Ibid., p. 103.
19. Ibid., p. 104
20. Ibid., p. 103.
21. In view of the profound influences that these works had on romantic theory, it is interesting to note that they were published just two years after the first edition of Noverre's letters.
22. *Wordsworth, Poetical Works*, pp.734-735.
23. *Prelude*, Bk. I, 401-4.
24. *Tintern Abbey*, ll. 41-46, and 49.
25. *The New Testament*, Matt. XVIII, 3 and VI, 28 & 29.
26. *Ueber das Marionettentheater*, p. 105.
27. Ibid., p. 103.
28. Ibid., p. 105.
29. Stanza IV, ll. 1-4.
30. What Ilse Graham calls "that destructive reflection which...is...the arch-enemy of grace

and indeed of innocence"; in *Heinrich von Kleist, Word into Flesh, A Poet's Quest for the Symbol* (Berlin, N.Y., 1977) p. 22. Robert E. Helbling (*The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, New York, 1975) sees profounder philosophic implications. To him the essay ("restates in emblematic form Kant's insights into the limitations of human reason", and envisages "a direct intellectual perception or intuition... the ideal faculty of immediately apprehending things-in-themselves", (p. 37) - which may be reading too much into the text.

31. For example, *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, *Hermannsschlacht* and his most famous *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*. His own theatrical death-pact and suicide in 1811 is of the same order.
32. "To an older contemporary like Goethe, however, he embodied the most distasteful side of Romanticism - its morbidity. A generation later, Heinrich Heine had Kleist among others in mind when he said: 'Beyond doubt there is a curse on German poets.' Heine, while conceding occasional virtues to the Romantics, deplored the life-denying strain in them." Magill, op. cit. p. 89.
33. Though he did write a very successful comedy in *Der zerbrochene Krug*.
34. But there is sharp political satire of Napoleonism in *Hermannsschlacht*.

Chapter III

1. Fernando Reyna, *The History of the Ballet* (London: Hogarth press, 1965), p. 97.
2. Ibid., p. 105.
3. *Supra*, chapter on Kleist, p. 10.
4. *A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing*, p. 244. Kirstein notes the increased romantic effect of the recently introduced gas-lighting with its flickering flame and shadows. (Ibid., p. 255).
5. Lincoln Kirstein, *Movement and Metaphor: four centuries of ballet* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 146.
6. Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto II, pp. 61-62.
7. Now arbitrarily called "classical" - evidently to distinguish it from other "modern" forms of dance. Gautier, after having seen a revival of *La Sylphide* (September 17, 1838) wrote the following:

The theme of *La Sylphide* is one of the most delightful themes for a ballet that could possibly be encountered; it includes an idea at once moving and poetic, a rare thing in a ballet, and we are delighted that it is to be staged again; the action is self-explanatory and can be understood without any difficulty, and lends itself to the most graceful pictures - in addition, there are hardly any dances for men, which is a great comfort.

Théophile Gautier, *The Romantic Ballet*, tr. C.W. Beaumont (New York: Dance Horizons, 1947), p. 27.
8. *A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing*, p. 244.
9. Ibid., p. 242.
10. Ibid., p. 244. Gautier, upon the revival of *La Sylphide* on September 17, 1838, painted the most delicate romantic picture with his writing (for the audience) of Marie Taglioni:

Mlle. Taglioni reminded you of cool and shaded valleys, where a white vision suddenly emerges from the bark of an oak to greet the eyes of a young, surprised, and blushing shepherd; she resembled unmistakably those fairies of Scotland of whom Walter Scott speaks, who roam in the moon-

light near the mysterious fountain, with a necklace of dewdrops and a golden thread for a girdle.

*The Romantic Ballet*, p. 27.

11. *Supra*, Chapter on Kleist, p. 10.
12. *A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing*, p. 245.
13. Anatole Chujoy and P. W. Manchester, compiled and edited *The Dance Encyclopaedia*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 464.
14. Deirdre Priddin, *The Art of the Dance in French Literature, from Théophile Gautier to Paul Valéry*, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1952), Chapter 1, p. 18.
15. On February 4th, 1839, regarding the construction of a ballet and its plot, Gautier wrote the following:

A ballet, as we have already observed, is much more difficult to construct than would be believed. It is not easy to write for legs. There you have neither bombastic tirades, nor beautiful verses, nor poetic commonplaces, nor fine-sounding words, nor puns, nor harangues against the nobility - nothing but the plot and again the plot. Thus a good ballet is the rarest thing in the world; tragedies, operas, and dramas are nothing in comparison with it. To invent a plot whose action shall be ever visible, to find events and passions capable of being expressed in easily understood poses and gestures, to make use of considerable numbers of people, to set them in motion without creating confusion, to choose a period and a country whose costumes are brilliant and picturesque, a locality which lends itself to a beautiful setting - these are some of the cares and troubles entailed in connection with that futile amusement called ballet, which is not even literature. Many other things classed as serious pursuits can be achieved with far less effort.

16. Théophile Gautier, *Émaux et Camées*, (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1945), p. 130.

17. Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, tr. Jacques Barzun (New York: The Heritage Press, 1944), p. 23. And later on, (p. 84), Gautier romanticizes about beauty:

Beauty, the only thing that cannot be acquired, inaccessible forever to those who are without it at first; ephemeral and fragile flower which grows without being sown, pure gift of heaven! O beauty! the most radiant diadem wherewith chance could crown like all that is beyond the reach of man, like the azure of the firmament, like the gold of the star, like the perfume of the seraphic lily! We may exchange a stool for a throne; we may conquer the world, and many have done so; but who could refrain from kneeling before thee, pure personification of the thought of God?

18. *Preface to Maupin*, p. XXXIV.
19. E. Bergerat, *Théophile Gautier: Souvenirs, Entretiens, Correspondance*, (Paris, 1879). In the *Preface to Maupin*, (p. XXX), he states that:

There is nothing truly beautiful but that which can never be of any use whatsoever; everything useful is ugly, for it is the expression of some need, and man's needs are ignoble and disgusting like his own poor and infirm nature. The most useful place in a house is the watercloset.

20. *Maupin*, p. 92. On page 174 he defines "the theatre" which he loves to see:

But there is a theatre which I love, a fantastic, extravagant, impossible theatre, in which the worthy public would pitilessly hiss from the first scene, for want of understanding a single word.

It is a singular theatre. Glow-worms take the place of Argand lamps, and a scarabaeus, beating time with his antennae, is placed at the desk. The cricket takes his part; the nightingale is first flute; little sylphs issuing from the peas-blossom hold basses of citron-peel between their pretty legs which are whiter than ivory, and with mighty power

of arm move their bows, made with a hair from Titania's eyelash, over strings of spiders' thread; the little wig with its three hammers, which the scarabaeus conductor wears, quivers with pleasure and diffuses about it a luminous dust, so sweet is the harmony and so well executed the overture!

21. *Endymion*, ll. 1-5.
22. *Maupin*, p. 155.
23. *Tintern Abbey*, l. 48.
24. "I wandered lonely as a cloud", ll. 23-24.
25. "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", proverb of Hell No. 4.
26. *Maupin*, p. 84.
27. ll. 78-82.
28. *Preface to Maupin*, p. XXX.
29. *The Romantic Ballet*, p. 23.
30. *Ibid*, p. 83. He also says that "Ballet is a particular type of entertainment, which demands themes of a quite special nature, in which dancing enters forcibly, imperiously, and is even used to explain the story. A play translated into terms of mime and accompanied by a *divertissement* is not a ballet. This fact is very often forgotten. Craftsmen skilled in dramatic joinery err in applying their usual methods to choreography. A poet explaining his ideas to an artist who expresses them in sketches, that is the best combination for the production of a fine theme for a ballet, a much rarer occurrence than would be believed, because it is difficult to make a theme perpetually clear by means of graceful form." (pp. 80-81).
31. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 17. In *Maupin*, p. 197, Gautier expresses his wish to become a sculptor in order to capture beauty in a plastic form:



I decidedly believe that I must become a sculptor, for to see such beauty and to be unable to express it in one way or another is sufficient to make a man furious and mad. I have made twenty sonnets to these shoulders but that is not enough: I should like something which I could touch with my fingers and which would be exactly like; verses express only the phantom of beauty and not beauty itself. The painter attains to a more accurate semblance, but it is only a semblance. Sculpture has all the realities that anything completely false can possess; it has a multiple aspect, casts a shadow and may be touched. Your sculptured differs from your veritable mistress only in this that she is a little harder and does not speak - two very trifling defects!

33. *The Romantic Ballet*, p. 26.
34. "Fanny Elssler's dancing is quite different from the academic idea, it has a particular character which sets her apart from all other dancers; it is not the aerial and virginal grace of Taglioni, it is something more human, more appealing to the senses ....Fanny is a quite pagan dancer; she reminds one of the muse Terpsichore, tambourine in hand, her tunic, exposing her thigh, caught up with a golden clasp; when she bends freely from her hips, throwing back her swooning, voluptuous arms, we seem to see one of those beautiful figures from Herculaneum or Pompeii which stand out in white relief against a black background, marking their steps with resounding cymbals;" (*The Romantic Ballet*, p. 16-17).
35. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
36. Salvatore Vigano was born in Naples of a family of dancers. As a youth he was more interested in literature and music than in dance, but gradually he turned to the latter. His acquaintance with Dauberval increased Vigano's interest in the dance, especially in choreography. Vigano was producing ballets that were very dramatic; his music, often a clever use of the works of several composers, or even composed by himself if he could not find what he wanted. Beethoven composed *Prometheus* especially for Vigano's ballet (1801). Of his more than forty ballets the best known were: *Gli Strellizi* (1809),

*Dedalus* (1809), *Otello* (1818), *La Vestale* (1818), and *I Titani* (1819).

37. Ibid., p. 29. Gautier writes that the ballet "*La Gipsy*" belongs to that type of ballet called *bal-let d'action*, which means that pantomime plays a larger part in it than the dancing, and that its story is much more complicated than that of purely spectacular ballets. Since *La Somnambule*, *Clari*, and *La Fille Mal Gardée*, we have not had any *bal-let d'action* - it is a novelty, as are all forgotten things." (Ibid., p. 29).
38. Ibid., p. 80-81.
39. "I am a man of the Homeric times; the world in which I live is not mine, and I have no comprehension of the society which surrounds me. Christ has not come for me; I am as much a pagan as were Alcibiades and Phidias. I have never gone to pluck passion flowers upon Golgotha, and the deep river which flows from the side of the Crucified One and forms a red girdle round the world has not bathed me in its flood. My rebellious body will not recognise the supremacy of the soul, and my flesh does not admit that it should be mortified. I deem the earth as fair as heaven, and I think that correctness of form is virtue. Spirituality does not suit me, I prefer a statue to a phantom, and noon to twilight. Three things please me: gold, marble and purple, splendour, solidity and colour. My dreams are composed of them, and all my chimerical palaces are constructed of these materials." (*Maupin*, p. 136).
40. Otto Manthey-Zorn, ed. *Nietzsche: An Anthology of His Works* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964). Part IV, "Of Greater Men", p. 98.
41. *The Romantic Ballet*, p. 26.
42. Ibid., p. 63.
43. Ibid., p. 24. And on the subject of "woman" he wrote: "I look upon women with the eyes of a sculptor and not of a lover... Just now I said that Christ had not come for me; Mary, star of the modern Heaven, sweet mother of the glorious babe, has not come either... Since the time of Christ there has not been a single human statue in which adolescent beauty has been idealised and represented with the care that characterises the ancient sculptor. Woman has become

the symbol of moral and physical beauty: man has really fallen from the day that the infant was born at Bethlehem. Woman is the queen of creation; the stars unite in a crown upon her head, the crescent of the moon glories in waxing beneath her foot, the sun yields his purest gold to make her jewels, painters who wish to flatter the angels give them women's faces, and certes, I shall not be the one to blame them." (*Maupin*, pp. 137 and 146).

44. Ibid., p. 43.
45. Erik Aschengreen, "The Beautiful Danger: Facets of the Romantic Ballet" in *Dance Perspectives*, 58, 1974, p. 9.
46. "Giselle dies, Albrecht rises bewildered, and reality puts dream to flight; but in divine charms and in chaste voluptuousness, what dream can equal your reality?" (Deirdre Priddin, p. 31). It is interesting to note that in the scenario and this poem Gautier refers to his hero as "Albert", but in his review, *Les Beautés*, and all subsequent references he becomes Albrecht which he has remained to this day.
47. This work, written in French, appeared first in a Paris Journal, called *Europe Littéraire*, during 1833. In the same year it appeared in German under the title, *Zur Geschichte der neueren schönen Literatur in Deutschland*. The first French edition, called *De l'Allemagne*, was published in 1835. (*The Romantic Ballet*, p. 50).
48. Jules Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, one of the most prolific writers of *scenarii* for ballets and libretti for operas, of the nineteenth century. Among the numerous ballets he wrote, or collaborated in writing, the following are known: *La Gipsy* (1839), *Le Diable Amoureux* (1840), *Giselle* (1841), *La Jolie Fille de Gand* (1842), and *Le Corsaire* (1856). (Ibid., p. 51).
49. Myrtha is "the Queen of the *Wilis*. With her characteristic melancholy grace she frolics in the pale star-light, which glides over the water like a white mist, poises herself on flexible branches, leaps on the tips of the grass, like Virgil's Camilla, who walked on wheat without bending it, and arming herself with a magic wand, she evokes the

- other *Wilis*, her subjects, who come forth with their moon-light veils from the tufted reeds, clusters of verdure, and calixes of flowers to take part in the dance. She announces to them that they are to admit a new *Wili* that night." (Ibid., pp. 55-56).
50. Théophile Gautier, *Oeuvres Complètes*, VIII (Geneve: Slatkine Reprints, 1978), p. 101. "...dances at midnight in a robe of moonlight with bracelets of rose pearls on her cold white arms; she will entice travellers into the fatal dance and throw them, all panting and streaming with sweat, into the icy waters of the lake." (*The Romantic Ballet*, p. 54).
51. Ibid., p. 102. "...her strength is soon exhausted, she staggers, sways, seizes the fatal sword brought by Hilarion and would have fallen on its point if Albrecht had not turned it aside with the quickness born of despair. Alas, the precaution is in vain; the blow has struck home; the heart is pierced and Giselle dies; consoled at last by her lover's grief and Bathilde's tender pity." (*The Romantic Ballet*, p. 54.)
52. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism, Four Essays* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 193.
53. "Here indeed is the classic encounter between dark and light, the primal myth of all mankind. In this respect *Swan Lake* expresses the same theme that is found in the Second Act of *Giselle*, where the Queen of the Wilis and Giselle fight for the soul of Albrecht, making each of these works similar products of the Romantic imagination, where the difference between the Romantic and Classical, so often made between them, is seen to be without foundation." Quoted in Richard Austin, *Images of the Dance*, (Great Britain: Clarke, Doble, Brendon Ltd., Plymouth, 1975), p. 98.
54. The rose, in the sweet brevity of its flowering, is a symbol of the fleeting nature of youth and love, where joy has no more permanence than a rose. Blake has metaphorically described the rose's short joy of life and death:
- O Rose, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night,  
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed  
 Of crimson joy,  
 And his dark secret love,  
 Does thy life destroy.  
*The Sick Rose*

55. *Oeuvres Complètes*, p. 110.
56. *The Romantic Ballet*, p. 51.
57. "If one make use of the expression, Mlle. Taglioni is a Christian dancer, Mlle. Fanny Elssler is a pagan dancer - the daughters of Miletus, beautiful Ionians, so celebrated in antiquity, must have danced in the same manner...Carlotta (Grisi) resembles the ethereal dancer whom the poet sees descend and ascend the crystal staircase of melody in a deep-toned mist of light!" (Ibid., pp. 27, 59, & 60).
58. *Maupin*, p. 129.
59. *The Romantic Ballet*, p. 17.
60. Ibid., p. 44.
61. William A. Nitze and E. Preston Dargan, *A History of French Literature, From the Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1938), p. 518.
62. P. E. Charvet, *Histoire du Romantisme* (Paris: n/p, 1974), p. 305.
63. Ibid. p. 304. "An unrewarding novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* shows Gautier's ideal of beauty, plastic, pagan, combining masculine strength and feminine grace in the hermaphrodite personality of the heroine.  

"Gautier's pessimism also responded to this ideal. Throughout his work, poetry and prose, the ephemeral nature of life, the fragility of human things, the idea of death as final are very marked; hence his striving after a form of beauty that would resist the erosion of time." (Ibid., p. 309).
64. Quoted in Jacques Barzun, *The Energies of Art: Studies of Authors, Classic and Modern* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 160.

65. Deirdre Pridden, p. 32. Stéphane Mallarmé never forgot Gautier's genius and on his death, paid him homage in the poem, "*Toast Funèbre*", (1874).

Notes

Conclusion

1. p. 101
2. *The Romantic Ballet*, pp. 9-10.

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