Dandy, Interrupted: Sublimation, Repression, and Self-Portraiture in Maurice Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909–1912)

MICHAEL J. PURI

During the past century of critical discourse surrounding Maurice Ravel and his music, the concept of sublimation—which includes but is not limited to explicit citations of the term—has figured significantly in evaluations of the composer’s life, his compositions, and their interrelation. Commentary with an aesthetic focus most often invokes the concept to articulate a perceived “elevation to a higher state or plane of existence” or even a “transmutation into something higher, purer, or more sublime,” while commentary with a more biographical bent capitalizes upon the concept’s psychoanalytic sense: “the refining of instinctual energy, especially that of the sexual impulse, and its manifestation in ways that are socially more acceptable.”

In appealing to the latter definition, biographers are usually rationalizing Ravel’s apparent lack of a sex life—part of the phenomenon known during the composer’s lifetime as his “sexual enigma”—by proposing that his libido was sublimated into the production of his artworks. However, the multivalence of the concept of sublimation, which is implicated in a variety of discourses including the geological, the chemical, the alchemical, the magical, the religious, the poietic, and even the ethical, has allowed its use in Ravel criticism to proliferate well beyond psychobiography. Under the rubric of sublimation, scholars

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1. The two definitions are drawn from the fifth entry for “sublimation” in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989).

have discussed such topics as the role of the mechanical in his dramatic output, musical representations of class-historical membership, orchestral techniques and effects, relations between his ballet music and its choreography, and stylistic shifts that mark his development as a composer.\(^3\)

In this essay, I seek to braid together many of these strands of discourse in a discussion of the dandy, the elegant and cultured figure who, as Baudelaire asserted, “aspires to be sublime without interruption.”\(^4\) Appearing in fiction by such authors as Balzac, Stendhal, Huysmans, Wilde, Proust, and Nabokov, and theorized at length in two famous French literary essays from the mid-nineteenth century, Barbey d’Aurevilly’s *Du dandyisme et de George Brummell* (1845) and Baudelaire’s “Le peintre de la vie moderne” (“The Painter of Modern Life”) from the *Journaux intimes* (1863), the dandy was recognized for an elegance in dress and comportment that often involved androgyny and narcissistic self-adoration, an aristocratic demeanor that shunned vulgarity and demonstrations of passion, and an independence of character that manifested itself in behavior ranging from apathetic nonchalance to scathing derision, noble stoicism to fierce antisociality, and impish playfulness to forbidding chilliness. From this repertoire of behaviors the dandy dynamically fashioned his persona; as Barbey says, the dandy is an artist whose artwork is “his life itself.”\(^5\)

Personal reminiscences and biographical accounts of Ravel consistently affirm his dandyism. A lifelong connoisseur of Baudelaire, Ravel would undoubtedly have been familiar with the poet’s comments on the dandy in “Le peintre de la vie moderne” and elsewhere. Moreover, it is certain that he knew


and cherished Barbey d’Aurevilly’s *Du dandysme*: according to Ricardo Viñes’s private journal, the twenty-two-year-old Ravel lent him a copy of this book on 8 May 1897.6

In an effort to bring the man and his music into a more intimate relation, some critics have proposed that certain compositions by Ravel can fruitfully be understood as self-portrayals of the artist-as-dandy. Referring to “Le paon,” the first song from the cycle *Histoires naturelles* (1907), Theo Hirsbrunner has suggested that “the peacock with its dandyist behavior is nothing other than the allegory of an artist of the *fin de siècle* who, caught up in his own wishful fantasies, was frequently encountered at that time in Paris.”7 Benjamin Ivry goes even farther than Hirsbrunner, identifying Ravel with both the swan (“Le cygne”) and the peacock in that cycle, and calling attention to the closet knowledge about the composer that such an interpretation seems to suggest. Both birds are described by Ivry as “aloof and disdainful of others, showing but never offering themselves. Ravel may have intended a self-portrait in the peacock, who cries ‘Léon, Léon’ [his absent bride], surely not coincidentally, the name of Ravel’s beloved friend, Fargue.”8

Instead of dismissing Ivry’s implicitly gay reading of “Le paon” as unfounded or even tendentious, it is more profitable to recognize that discussions of the (male) dandy almost inevitably prompt the question of his sexuality, and for good reason: not only was the category of “homosexual” coalescing at about the same time as the emergence of the dandy, but his sublimity also implicates him in a history of strategies designed to cope with sexual desire in repressive cultural contexts.9 These points notwithstanding, to discuss Ravel’s sexuality remains a difficult and contentious matter—and not merely because of the apparent absence of information about his intimate relationships. In fact, the issues involved here are strikingly similar to those that have swirled even more contentiously about Handel, as are the solutions that Ravel’s biographers have come up with to deal with this question; the Ladyfriend Trap, the Mother Alibi, the Sexless and Celibate Syndrome, and

the Aesthetic Fallacy—the primary means of rationalizing and refuting potential evidence of homosexuality in Handel’s life, as labeled and discussed by Gary Thomas—have all played important roles in Ravel biography as well.\(^\text{10}\)

While the association of dandyism with sublimation would seem to position it beneath the rubric of the Aesthetic Fallacy (in sum: “I have sacrificed my personal self to my art”), its “scattered field of reference” has allowed it to slip through the disciplinary clutches of heteronormative discourse, both in Ravel’s time and our own.\(^\text{11}\) In this essay, we will not use the notion of dandyism to deliver a verdict on Ravel’s homosexuality, but rather will allow the dandy to maintain his fullness as a queer figure whose embodied opposition to bourgeois norms extends to his sexuality, regardless whether this opposition be a counterproposal (of homosexuality) or a dismissal (i.e., that the issue of sexuality cannot be resolved in any current categories).

As we are beginning to see, the issues surrounding this phenomenon are quite rich—richer, in fact, than scholarship has generally suggested hitherto. Dandyism is neither an inert fact of Ravel’s personal life, nor a simple pretext that allows us to treat particular musical-dramatic characterizations in his work as self-caricature, nor a means by which we may declare him once and for all to have been gay. Rather, it is a comprehensive and queer orientation toward the world that installs sublimation at the center of an individual’s life, investing it with supreme value as a means by which the individual may negotiate the demands that it, others, and culture at large make upon its appearance and behavior. Thus, investigating dandyism in Ravel’s music promises to shed light upon sublimity as both a guiding poetic principle and a means of interrelating the artist and his art.

The composition by Ravel that I have chosen for this project, and which I would argue is best suited for it, is his “choreographic symphony,” \textit{Daphnis et Chloé} (1909–1912).\(^\text{12}\)

In an influential and compelling essay Lawrence Kramer locates sublimation in both the work’s elevation of commercial exoticism to the status of high art and its implementation of various compositional strategies to organize and control a motley group of exotic themes, motives,


and textures. Like Kramer, I, too, am interested in assessing the specific means by which beauty is produced in Daphnis—in particular, the beauty that the dandy cultivates in his person; unlike Kramer, I invoke sublimation more explicitly as a psychoanalytic concept that can be applied directly to the behavior of the characters in the ballet.

From my analytical viewpoint, sublimation is featured throughout the ballet as the psychic means by which raw sexual desire is modulated to produce seemly and even beautiful gestures of courtship, and as the musical process by which noise is transformed into serenade. In the first third of this lengthy ballet, both procedures of sublimation not only outline Daphnis’s character in general, but also lend him the specific profile of a dandy. The centerpiece of this analysis is the “Danse légère et gracieuse de Daphnis” (“Light and Graceful Dance of Daphnis”), a solo number in which (ironically) a trio of figures—Ravel, Daphnis, and the dandy—join hands in a round of displaced identities. Before we focus upon the Dance of Daphnis, however, we must first examine its point of origin in a passage that we will henceforth refer to as the “volte-face” (“about-face”) and which begins with a “geste brusque” (“brusque gesture”) by our protagonist.

Desire and Its Sublimation in the Volte-face

At R29, shown in Example 1, Daphnis performs a “geste brusque” to separate Chloe from his rival Dorcon just as the latter is going to kiss her. This gesture is contextually marked in at least two respects: it is one of the first acts performed by an individual acting independently, rather than as part of a group, and it is also the first display of violence in a narrative that has hitherto presented only gentle and fluid acts of dance, prayer, and courtship.

With this gesture Daphnis vents the feelings of jealousy that had accrued within him during the previous section I am calling the Dance of the Youths (R17–28). His jealousy is an effect of an underlying sexual desire that the naive protagonist understands imperfectly, if at all. In the Greek novel by


14. Rehearsal (R) numbers are given only in the orchestral scores, not in the piano scores.

15. No pertinent primary source for Daphnis—neither the 1910 piano score, nor the 1912 revised piano score, nor the 1912 autograph manuscript of the full score, nor the 1913 publication of the full score—provides a title for this dance section. The title that I have given it, the Dance of the Youths, summarizes the general action across its three internal phases: the “Danse des jeunes filles” (R17–20), the “Danse des jeunes gens” (R21–R25), and the “Danse générale” (R26–R29.3).
Longus that served as the literary source for the ballet libretto, Daphnis and Chloe have been constant companions since infancy. Upon awakening to their sexual desire for each other—and to sexuality altogether—they are disturbed and dumbfounded by it.

Well attuned to the novel, the ballet only gradually sexualizes the protagonists’ relationship. Daphnis and Chloe make their debut (R10) as individuals, which underplays their status as a couple; when they eventually appear as a couple (R15), their act of religious devotion diverts attention away from the more personal aspects of their relationship; during the subsequent episode, the Dance of the Youths, they begin at last to experience desire for each other—but only indirectly, in the form of jealousy. Daphnis’s “geste brusque” unveils sexual desire as the truth that, underlying the whole scenario, can no longer be suppressed.

The “geste brusque” participates in a rough transition between two formal sections that incorporates two moments of disruption: the shift from the three measures of “Beaucoup moins vif” to the three measures of “Vif” at R29, and then a shift back from “Vif” to “Moins vif.” The latter reversal coincides with Daphnis’s volte-face, as he turns away from Dorcon to “approach Chloe tenderly.”

Example 1  The “geste brusque” (R29.1–2)

Mais, d’un geste brusque, Daphnis écartere le bouvier


17. While the orchestral score, published by Durand in 1913, has “Moins vite” (“less fast”) here, both the 1910 and the 1912 revised piano score and the manuscript of the full score have “Moins vif” (“less lively”). If one were to adopt the markings of the latter three sources, as I do, the tempo sequence between R17 and R29 would become internally consistent, alternating simply between different degrees of “Vif.” In a dissertation that compares Ravel’s signed and dated 1912 manuscript of the full score to the 1913 Durand publication (plate no. 7937) in order to identify errors in the latter, Steven Carl Bird recommends the same emendation (“A Preliminary Comparison of the Autograph Score of Maurice Ravel’s Ballet Daphnis et Chloé with the 1913 Edition of the Full Score by Durand et Fils,” 2 vols. [PhD diss., University of Texas, 1989]). I thank the staff of the Harry Ransom Humanities Center at the University of Texas at Austin for giving me access to the Daphnis manuscript.
As shown in Example 2, the music of the *volte-face* represents the dramatic action by pivoting from the “geste brusque” to what I am calling the waltz theme, an expansive serenade sung by the solo first violin beginning at R29.4. Roland-Manuel, Vladimir Jankélévitch, and Deborah Mawer are among those to have proposed that we assign the waltz theme to Chloe. However, in my study of *Daphnis* I have noted that only two of its six separate appearances (R29–30, R51–52, R64–65, R131 and R140, R164, and R204–5) are associated exclusively with Chloe (the middle two), while the other four involve the couple. This aspect has suggested to me that we might better understand the waltz phrase to be a love theme secondary to the one that frames the ballet (see R1 and R209), and this seems to operate at a greater remove from the dramatic action. Indeed, it is quite natural that a waltz theme represent the desire that binds a couple in love, given the sexual threat that this dance has held during its history.

The *volte-face*, which encompasses both the “geste brusque” and the waltz theme, might at first glance seem merely to be the farcical agon that occurs when men jostle for a woman’s attention. The comic aspect of this moment is not only undeniable but also has precedent in Ravel’s comic one-act opera *L’heure espagnole* (1907–9): realizing that Concepcion, the female protagonist of this tale, does not favor him, the pompous and portly Don Inigo decides to exchange his “imposing and severe appearance” (“mine imposante et sévère”) for a lighter and more appealing persona (see scene 9). Simultaneous with this decision, the music transposes its material from one genre to another, transforming a ponderous overture into a light waltz in a gesture that is quite similar to the *volte-face*; one commentator has even described the product of this motivic transformation—the waltz—as revealing the *figure* of Inigo’s sexual desire, a multivalent French term that we may understand as either his “face” or his whole person as a “figure” for desire within this sex-obsessed romp. Nonetheless, insofar as the *volte-face* plays a central role in Daphnis’s complex psychological development in the ballet, its comedic aspect cannot aspire to a status beyond that of a fragile veneer.

Both elements of contrast and continuity between the “geste brusque” and the waltz theme in *Daphnis* lend far-reaching significance to the *volte-face*, which, on the basis of its musical gesture alone, is quite startling: upon hearing the violent and discordant musical “geste brusque,” who would anticipate its sudden translation into a waltz? Moreover, while it is common in Western


classical music to find thematic wholes dissolving into motivic fragmentation, it is less common to find a fragment succeeded by its whole. The conspicuous strangeness of this passage begs interpretation.

I propose that this surprising transformation is best understood to represent the sublimation of sexual desire. Sublimation, in this context, refers specifically to the Freudian “vicissitude of the instinct” or “destiny of drive” (the two standard English translations of the original German *Trieb-schicksal*). Across the measure of rest that separates the “geste brusque”

21. Steven Huebner has associated the sublimation of desire with the music of Massenet, a potentially important precursor for Ravel. Describing Athanaël’s dream in *Thaïs*, Huebner suggests that it “elaborates sublimated desire, anticipating the later symphonic interlude where Thaïs mimes the loves of Aphrodite; harp and harmonium scoring lend an especially oneric aspect to the passage. This is precisely the sort of sexual fantasy that the other monks wish to be spared” (*French Opera at the Fin du Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 157–58). Ravel’s interest in Massenet’s music, at least as an example of compositional craft, is evident in his direction that his student Roland-Manuel analyze the dream of Des Grieux from *Manon*; see Roger Nichols, ed., *Ravel Remembered* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987), 142.

22. The other three *Trieb-schicksale* that Sigmund Freud discusses in the essay “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” are “reversal into its opposite,” “turning round upon the subject’s own self,” and “repression” (“Instincts,” in vol. 14 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. J. Strachey (New York and London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957), 126. Repression and sublimation, the two vicissitudes that receive the clearest treatment in “Instincts” and are cited most frequently in his work, are also the two that will prove most useful to us in our investigations here.
from the waltz theme, Daphnis’s sexual desire undergoes a transformation whose effect is simultaneously visible, legible, and audible. At the level of dramatic action sexual aggression gives way to a gentle “tenderness,” and lustful physicality is refined into the stylized courtliness of the waltz. The French libretto, which helps to shape the audience’s comprehension of the relation between the music and the drama, switches from the brutish écarté to the more elegant s’approcher de.

One might object to this interpretation on the grounds that, in the “geste brusque,” Daphnis’s desire is not expressed directly toward its object, Chloe, but rather as aggression toward the potential obstacle to its satisfaction, Dorcon. In answering this objection, I would mention again that the “geste brusque” vents the jealousy felt by Daphnis during the immediately preceding Dance of the Youths, and further points to its musical genesis from a motive that the libretto explicitly associates with jealousy (see the alto flute’s syncopated repeated tone at R20.8 and R25.7). Freudian psychoanalysis, on the other hand, would account for this displacement of both object and affect as a typical example of sadism, in which aggression “cannot be conceived of at all without envisaging its fusion with sexuality.”

In sublimating the music of the “geste brusque,” the waltz theme turns it inside out. The snarling instrumentation of the “geste brusque” cedes to the waltz’s abyssally capacious texture, projecting the melody up three octaves into the first violin solo, which—like a daring funambulist—capers vertiginously above a low B♭3 in the double basses while the intervening four octaves are only sparsely populated by strings. The catapulting of the “geste brusque” melody up three octaves across the grand pause (R29.4) is even more striking in its musical context, insofar as it is preceded by a precipitous three-octave fall of musical material (R28.9–29.4). Further, the solo violin melody is not

23. The word in the score is “tendrement.”

24. A copy of Durand’s twelve-page libretto for Daphnis et Chloé (Michel Fokine, Daphnis et Chloé: Ballet en 3 tableaux [Paris: Durand, 1912]) is registered in the Paris Bibliothèque de l’Opéra as Livret 874. I am grateful to the library staff of the Opéra for granting me access to this libretto as well as to related material.

25. Without our indulging in a lengthy analytical digression to undergird this claim, it should suffice here to note that the Dance of the Youths falls musically and dramatically into three parts (R17–20 [women], R21–25 [men], and R26–29.3 [both]), each of which ends with a formulaic series of motives (R20, R24–25, and R28–29), the last of which is always the jealousy motive. In the final iteration of this series, Ravel postpones the arrival of this motive by interpolating a “false coda”—exactly at the moment that Dorcon, Chloe’s equally mismatched suitor, goes to kiss her (at “Beaucoup moins vif,” R28.7–9)—which then allows Ravel to bring back the jealousy motive under twofold transformation: as Daphnis’s “geste brusque,” and as the incipient motive for the Dance Contest, rather than simply the concluding motive of the Dance of the Youths.


27. The entity that falls across these measures is the semitonal line that begins with d♭2 in the second flute and ends at the BB♭ of the double basses, passing through the d♭1 of the strings and horn in R29.1 and the c and c♭ of the “geste brusque” melody in R29.1–2.
reinforced by a doubling at the octave below, as in the “geste brusque,” but rather is shadowed intermittently by a similarly unmuted solo cello at a greater distance of two octaves. The dynamics shift from an accented *forte* to *piano espressif* [*sic*], and the violins, muted and bowed on the fingerboard (“*sur la touche*”), implore gently.

These transformations in gesture, language, and music all bespeak the process of sublimation, which not only refines musical-dramatic behavior across the grand pause, but also raises its aesthetic and cultural value in progressing from fragment to phrase, cacophony to euphony, percussion to song, brutality to tenderness, and violence to dance. Even the shift in tempo across the measure of rest betrays the presence of sublimation: the “*Viif*” expression of the sexual instinct in the “geste brusque” undergoes audible suppression in transition to the “*Moins viif*” waltz theme.

The comparative adverb “*moins*” suggests that sublimation in the *volte-façe* has not eliminated sexual desire, but rather only lessened its expressive force. This statement is not necessarily a contradiction in terms as several scholars have claimed, including Mary Ann Doane in her widely read *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. Viewing sublimation as a process of complete and irreversible desexualization, Doane interprets various attempts by psychoanalytic theorists to resexualize this concept as an indication that it is basically untenable or, at least, extremely tenuous.28 Her understanding of sublimation seems to me unnecessarily restrictive, however, especially in light of the notion of partial sublimation in Freud’s *Three Essays*, in which he proposes that sublimation need neither eradicate the expression of sexuality nor permanently suppress the sexual instinct.29 More recently, in his 1959–60 seminar on sublimation and ethics, Jacques Lacan also warned against the equation of sublimation with desexualization, asserting that the former “does not on all occasions necessarily follow the path of the sublime. The change of object doesn’t necessarily make the sexual object disappear—far from it; the sexual object acknowledged as such may come to light in sublimation.”30 To my ear, the systolic and diastolic rhythms in each two-measure subphrase of the sublimated waltz theme—as emphasized by dynamic swells, chordal pulsation in the accompaniment, *tenuto* articulation, and Ravel’s specific bowings—keep the physical body and its lusts in mind by transforming the music into a *corps sonore*.


The Dance Contest and the “Danse grotesque de Dorcon”

In the wake of the *volte-face*, the ballet stages what I will refer to as a Dance Contest between Dorcon and Daphnis so that they may properly resolve their claims to Chloe’s affections.\(^{31}\) The *volte-face* and its ensuing material are consequently absorbed into the Contest as the “refrain” (A) of its rondo-like structure (ABA’CA’). Simultaneous with its subsumption into this structure, the *volte-face* is also projected on a larger scale: just as the elegant “waltz theme” succeeded the violent “geste brusque” in the *volte-face*, so too does the “Danse légère et gracieuse de Daphnis”; R43–50) follow the “Danse grotesque de Dorcon” (“Grotesque Dance of Dorcon”; R32–40).

This fascinating pair of dances, as well as its isomorphic relation to the *volte-face*, has received short shrift, perhaps due to its ostensible conventionality. In a review of the ballet’s 1912 premiere performance in Paris, Gaston Carraud actually uses the Dance Contest as a club to beat the overall ballet scenario: “The libretto of *Daphnis et Chloé* is surprisingly poor and banal. One would believe it to have been made for the Opéra and the *Prix de Rome*. We even see a dance contest—this supreme cliché of the genre!—whose prize is a kiss from Chloe.”\(^ {32}\) While dance contests may indeed have become commonplace in ballet by 1912, the role of the Dance Contest in the work’s ongoing narrative of male sexual desire and its sublimation lends it a contextual value that transcends mere cliché.

In the pursuit of this value, however, we should not disregard the pointed reversal of characterization that occurs here: Dorcon’s suavity in his attempted kiss is transferred to Daphnis in his “light and graceful” dance, and Daphnis’s violence in the “geste brusque” is transferred to Dorcon in his “grotesque” dance. This chiasmus ostensibly dissociates Daphnis from unseemly expressions of desire while ascribing them to Dorcon, who is consequently treated as a scapegoat and driven off by the jeering crowd.

The “Danse grotesque” is, accordingly, a brutish piece whose harshness of tone is mitigated by the dance’s overall buffo character. The allusion to *opera buffa* spectacle is precise: in the libretto that Ravel’s audience would have held in their hands (Durand plate number 8434), the role of Dorcon is described as “1er danseur bouffé.” Possibly taking a cue from the libretto, the critic Émile Vuillermoz acknowledged the generic aspect of Dorcon’s dance in his review

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31. In the literary source for the libretto, the Dance Contest is actually a war of words. See Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 295–96 (I.16). As the translator, Christopher Gill, also mentions in footnote 10 on page 295, verbal contests are tropic to ancient pastoral literature, finding their most famous example in the Fifth Idyll of Theocritus.

of Adolf Bolm’s *création du rôle:* “Bolm triumphed in a boldly designed *buffo* dance in which he demonstrated a truly heroic rhythmic precision.”

The stomping bass and guttural noises of the three bassoons at the beginning of the first theme limn Dorcon’s physical (and presumed vocal) traits. In addition, the bizarre and multifarious succession of triads—E♯, F♯, G/g, G♯/g♯, A♯, b—that unfolds after the beginning is a musical correlative to the “awkward gestures of the cowherd” (“gestes gauches du bouvier”; R 40) that Dorcon produces in attempting to perform within a genre unsuited to him. As the dance continues, Ravel constantly broadens the range of musical techniques available to convey Dorcon’s *gaucherie,* foremost among which is a lack of coordination among tonal entities. Salient instances of intensive dissonance include chromatic clustering around the root in the climactic chords of the second theme (R 34) and widespread incongruity between the bass and accompanying harmonic structures. Examples of extensive dissonance include botched harmonic arrivals at the end of phrases and chromatic slippage in the bass line. Adding insult to injury, Ravel follows the first successful harmonic arrival at the A-major tonic (R 39) with a glissando in the trombones that reels drunkenly between B-minor and B♭-major triads.

Articulation, dynamics, rhythm, meter, and instrumentation complement harmony in outlining Dorcon’s crudeness as a dancer and an individual. Percussive accentuation and violent *subito* outbursts pervade the musical texture, generally recalling the uncontrolled rages of *buffo* basses in opera (Osmin, for example), and specifically bringing to mind Daphnis’s earlier “geste brusque.” A trace of the marking, “lourdement rythmé,” which originally stood at the head of the dance in the 1910 piano score, appears in R40’s “Pesant,” at which point the crowd imitates ironically the cowherd’s ungainly gestures.

Thoughts of buffoonery and furious Osmins lead quite naturally to the recognition of the “Danse grotesque” as a piece of Turkish janissary music. Although it is removed by over a century from its heyday in the repertory of Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, Ravel’s “Danse grotesque” nevertheless fulfills a similar Orientalist purpose of caricaturing the Other; as Mary Hunter has explained for the eighteenth century, the *alla turca* style represents Turkish music “as a deficient or messy version of European music rather than as a phenomenon with its own terms of explication and reference.”


tion featuring bass, military, and snare drums, tambourines, cymbals, a triangle, and a wind band; melodic turns (in the middle of the first theme, R32.5–6); sudden shifts in mode (the A-major second theme at R34); various uses of the stereotypical short-short-long usul rhythm; and a conspicuously repetitive thematic design. At one level, the “Danse grotesque” is a bit of campy, musical-historical kitsch that allows Ravel to represent Dorcon’s masculinity as ridiculous, thereby rendering him quite obviously unsuitable to be paired with the delicate Chloe. At another, it is potentially a piece of musical invective that is aimed at a specific Other, thereby implicating the Dance Contest in a political situation contemporary to the ballet’s composition, as we will soon explore.

The “Danse légère et gracieuse de Daphnis”

Within the volte-face formed by the Dance Contest, the “Light and Graceful Dance of Daphnis” corresponds to the second of the two original terms; thus, to move from Dorcon’s dance to Daphnis’s dance can be understood as a progression from an unsublimated to a sublimated representation of the self-in-desire. This musical, dramatic, and choreographic progression simultaneously engages other binarisms of character, shifting from the awkward to the graceful, the ugly to the beautiful, and the primitive to the civilized.

While Fokine’s original choreography may be lost, qualities of sound and gesture in Ravel’s music make the diametrical contrast between dances and dancers immediately apparent. As the “Danse grotesque” gives way to the “Danse légère,” so too does a growling bass yield to elevated melodic undulation, tortured chromaticism to effortless diatonicism, and percussive outbursts to mellifluous serenade. Further, while Dorcon is unable to end the “Danse grotesque” on his own terms—his prerogative rudely overridden by the mocking crowd—Daphnis offers not only a coda but also a pair of additional ornamental gestures (the trill and glissando of R50.8–11) that manifest a certain self-mastery in his ability to lend closure to his performance.

We need not wait until the conclusion of the Dance Contest to determine its victor, since the adjectives “grotesque” and “graceful” alone make sufficiently clear who will win. No matter: the fascination of the Contest depends most strongly on the Dance of Daphnis. In forty-seven finely wrought

35. While the 1912 (revised) piano score presents the dance as “gracieuse et légère,” the 1913 full score describes it as “légère et gracieuse.” Although it ultimately does not inflect my argument in any way, I have nevertheless assumed that the later publication incorporates revisions by the composer that the former lacks, and have consequently chosen to adopt the 1913 nomenclature throughout.

36. Deborah Mawer describes the transition between the two dances in similar terms, characterizing it as “a progression from the ridiculous to the sublime” (Ballets of Maurice Ravel: Creation and Interpretation [Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006], 106).
measures, Ravel not only paints a portrait of Daphnis as dandy—the highly cultured figure that, as Baudelaire asserted, aspires to be “sublime without interruption”—but also shatters the dandy’s typical self-composure by exposing him to the rending force of erotic desire. Tracking the psychological vicissitudes of the dandy-in-love, the Dance of Daphnis oscillates between a celebration and a critique of sublimation.

The presence of an autobiographical element in this Dance raises the stakes for our analysis even higher. Ravel’s identification with Daphnis through the notion of dandyism, as well as his disidentification with Dorcon’s “Turkish music” as the unskilled craft of his enemies, invites us to interpret the Dance Contest as an aesthetic and tendentious reenactment of Parisian musical politics circa 1910, pitting the bungling exoticism of Vincent d’Indy’s Société Nationale versus the iridescent art of Ravel and his newly formed Société Musicale Indépendante. From these considerations the Dance of Daphnis emerges as an aesthetic manifesto, drafted by the composer at the height of his artistic productivity and incorporated as a centerpiece into his most prestigious work thus far—prestigious not only for its monumental, “symphonic” proportions, but also for its status as one of the first ballet scores that Diaghilev commissioned from a Western composer for his Ballets russes.

Aspiring toward the Waltz

The musical face that Daphnis turns toward us in the opening measures of the A section in this arch form (ABA’, which corresponds to the C section of the five-part Dance Contest) could hardly contrast more strongly with Dorcon’s: unlike the trio of bassoons that began Dorcon’s dance, the wind trio in Example 3 is elevated in register and eschews chromaticism, drawing its triads exclusively from a hexachordal subset of the diatonic scale—the one that excludes the leading tone. While the low tessitura of Dorcon’s bassoons bespeaks a barbarous masculinity, the higher tessitura of Daphnis’s flutes projects a youthful androgyny. In addition, the rhythmic homogeneity and undulation of the melody, the choral facture of the flute trio, the compound meter, and the leisurely tempo all recall the genre of the barcarolle, as Jankélévitch has noted.37

To the extent that this music is meant to seduce, appearing as it does within a ritual of courtship, it proffers to the object of seduction a Baudelairean “invi-

37. Jankélévitch, *Ravel*, 47. The barcarolle reference at the beginning of Daphnis’s Dance may betray a debt to Fauré, Ravel’s friend and former teacher, who composed his thirteen barcarolles for piano between 1880 and 1915. Features common to Ravel’s Dance and Fauré’s barcarolles include oscillation between compound duple and triple meter, arpeggiated accompaniment that begins low and rises in register; frequent alternation between upper and inner melodies, and scalar coda gestures that cascade down registrally from high to low and back up to high, ending in a trill; Barcarolles 1 (ca. 1880), 2 (1885), and 9 (1909) are particularly salient for these
tation to the voyage,” promising “luxe, calme et volupté” in a musical phrase whose periodic recurrence correlates it to the poem’s well-known refrain. But the listener would be hard pressed to discern a note of importunity in this seduction; rather, as courtier Daphnis seems to place himself on display as a beautiful presence to be desired and courted. In fact, it was this apparent contradiction—a courtier playing “hard to get”—that first turned my attention to this piece, and it was Ravel’s “L’indifférent,” the third song from the cycle 
*Shéhérazade* (1903), that assured me that there was, indeed, something to investigate more deeply here. The “indifferent” character in Tristan Klingsor’s poem is a beautiful, exotic androgyne whose momentary encounter with a first-person, presumably male narrator provokes the latter’s admiration and desire. It is easy to imagine the first sentence of the poem applied to the Daphnis of the “Danse légère”: “Your eyes are gentle like those of a girl, / Young stranger, / And the delicate curve / Of your beautiful face shadowed by down / Has an even more seductive line.”

To convey the auratic beauty of the innocent androgyne, as well as the euphoria of the desiring subject, Ravel chooses materials very similar to those that begin Daphnis’s Dance: a slow, quiet, diatonic barcarolle in compound duple meter that exudes luxury, repose, and pleasure.

The impulse in Baudelaire and Ravel to marry nature and art under the banner of hedonism is fundamental to *Daphnis et Chloé* and its thematics of sublimation; its strong presence here indicates the importance of Daphnis’s characterization to the aesthetic profile of the entire artwork while simultaneously incorporating the “Danse légère” into a network of internal relations. In

Example 3 The opening of Daphnis’s “Danse légère et gracieuse” (R43.1–2)

![Example 3](image)

comparisons. The author of three books dealing with Fauré—*Gabriel Fauré et ses mélodies* (1938), *Le nocturne* (1957), and *Fauré et l’inexprimable* (a revised and expanded version from 1974 of the 1938 volume)—Jankélévitch would surely have been amenable to these comparative efforts on behalf of the barcarolle.

particular, the beginning of this Dance recalls the beginning of the ballet. Melodic emphasis upon the fifth scale degree and the rising bass figure in Example 3 create an openness of sound and an organicism of gesture that also appeared as effects of the quasi-acoustic series of ascending perfect fifths in the ballet’s initial measures.

Both in Daphnis’s Dance and at the beginning of Daphnis the sounds and gestures of nature have been stylized in a manner reminiscent of Art Nouveau in France at the end of the nineteenth century. As Debora Silverman has explained, this revival of the rococo “glorified nature as its subject and fashioned all the elements of interior space into animated, undulating, and asymmetrical forms derived from the flowing trellises of plants and the scroll and serpentine fan shapes of grottoes and shells.” 39 In Example 3, the bass overtone figure climbs upward on the notated page like ivy to fold its tendril into the melodic superstratum. Repeated at the beginning of each phrase in the two A sections, these overtone gestures culminate at the fourth and final instance (R49), where the trombones present the first ten elements of the harmonic series in order. Here, the dialectic of nature and art hits fever pitch: the furthest exploration of the natural overtone series within the dance, reinforced by harmonics in the flutes, is coextensive with the desire to move among the upperpartials, its more refined members. 40

The appel (“call”) motive also contributes to this web of relations. As shown in Example 4, appel is an alternation between two trichords separated by step that has its debut in the horns of the ballet’s sixth measure and subsequently appears passim throughout the entire work; although the three-voice undulation of the flutes does not incorporate the dotted rhythm of the appel, its influence upon the F-major/G-minor triadic successions is no less palpable. By recognizing the presence in this passage of appel—a beckoning choral gesture reminiscent of Debussy’s “Sirènes”—we add further support to our description of the Dance’s opening as both a barcarolle and a musical seduction: a siren song which, by definition, sounds at a distance (and awakens our desire to overcome that distance). 41

40. I am grateful to Bruce Brown for this insight.
41. Ravel collaborated with Raoul Bardac to transcribe Debussy’s orchestral Nocturnes for two pianos, most likely inspired by the premiere of “Nuages” and “Fêtes” on 9 December 1900. In a letter to Florent Schmitt dated 8 April 1901, Ravel mentions that he “was assigned the task of transcribing the third piece, ‘Sirènes,’ all alone,” and continues by declaring it “perhaps the most perfectly beautiful of the Nocturnes and certainly the most perilous to transcribe, particularly as it hasn’t been heard.” See Ravel, Ravel Reader, 58–59. From the diary of Ricardo Viñes, we know that Ravel was soon able to remedy this lack by attending the first complete performance of Debussy’s Nocturnes on Sunday, 27 October 1901, at the Concerts Chevillard; see Gubisch, “Journal inédit de Ricardo Viñes,” 198. Although it may seem strange to suggest that Ravel would have had “Sirènes” on his musical mind eight years after the fact, the transcription was
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Example 4  Several instances of the *appel* motive

(a) R.0.6–1.1 (muted horns)

(b) R.4.4–5 (SATB chorus)

(c) R.54.6–7 (SATB chorus)

Subtler but more significant than these genealogies is the relationship of these measures to the waltz theme from the *volte-face*. To perceive this relationship we must attend to aspects of the music that are less readily apparent to the analytical eye than themes and gestures: the registral distribution of tones within certain chords and the temporal distribution of these chords across the four phrases of the two A sections in the “Danse légère.”

Example 5 juxtaposes the initial sonority for the waltz theme (Ex. 5a) with the initial sonorities for each of the four phrases in the dance’s A sections as they occur chronologically (Exx. 5b–e). While Example 5b may already evoke the waltz theme quite well, Example 5e is an exact match (that is, if we disregard the waltz theme’s middle register as a site for mere doublings). Further,

actually not first published until 1909, the year in which he began work on *Daphnis*. Ravel made a further gesture of personal and artistic identification with the *Nocturnes* by giving a premiere performance of his transcription of them at one of the initial concerts of his own Société Musicale Indépendante on 24 April 1911; these biographical details are presented in Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York: Dover, 1991), 241. Simon Morrison also proposes that the wordless female chorus of “Sirènes” is a strong predecessor for the wordless chorus in *Daphnis* ("The Origins," 62–63).

42. The four phrases are at R.43, R.44, and R.48, R.49.
the series of phrase openings outlines a teleology: Example 5c transforms the F triad of Example 5b from major to minor and raises it to its goal register, Example 5d places the upper triad into a major ninth chord (lacking a chordal third), and Example 5e transposes this chord into its proper register and pitch level.

Insofar as this teleology is the red thread that binds together both A sections, and the A sections are representative of the dance as a whole, the entire “Danse légère” can be summed up as an emulation of the waltz theme that gradually draws closer to its sublime ideal.\(^43\) The wit of this compositional gesture lies in its reflexive allusion: advancing gently toward its object of desire, the dance courts the waltz theme just as Daphnis previously courted Chloe to it. This analysis thus bears out the initial proposition that the Dance Contest is the \textit{volte-face} writ large: the “Danse grotesque” corresponds to the “geste brusque,” the “Danse légère” corresponds to the waltz theme, and the operation that transforms the expression of desire from the first to the second dance is sublimation.

Daphnis as Dandy

The emulation of the waltz theme in Daphnis’s Dance figures his aspiration toward a sublimity of self, which itself coincides with the dandy’s quintessential aim to be “sublime without interruption.”\(^44\) Dandyism in this dance is first

\(^{43}\) Jankélévitch’s description of the waltz theme as a “\textit{valse gracieuse}” calls attention, whether intentionally or not, to its affinity with the “Danse légère et \textit{gracieuse} de Daphnis,” as well as its potential genealogical relation to the Dance (\textit{Ravel}, 46). The italics in both quotations are mine.

\(^{44}\) In a footnote to a letter included in \textit{A Ravel Reader}, Arbie Orenstein suggests that Ravel may have found justification for his scandal-causing refusal to accept the Chevalier’s Cross of the Legion of Honor in 1920 in a passage from Baudelaire’s \textit{Journaux intimes}, in which the poet argues that official decoration is irrelevant or, worse, opposed to personal merit. It can only strengthen our interrelation of Ravel with the Baudelairean dandy to note that the poet’s comment about the dandy’s uninterrupted sublimity, as cited above, appears immediately after these comments on decoration in part 3 of “Mon cœur mis à nu.” For Orenstein’s footnote, see \textit{A Ravel Reader}, 199.
evident in the adjectives “légère” and “gracieuse” that appear in its title. While these descriptors may render explicit the contrast between the two competitors and their respective dances, they also project feminine qualities onto Daphnis, elevating him beyond the mere youth of Longus’s novel to become one of Barhey’s dandy-androgynes that transcend dichotomous gender.45 At first glance one might also suppose that this adjectival couplet of “light and graceful” verges on a hendiadys-like redundancy, but this is not necessarily so: the French adjective “léger” may mean not merely “light” but also “frivolous,” which brings to mind Baudelaire’s claim that the dandy exemplifies a socially contrarian “gravity in frivolity” (“gravité dans le frivole”) by embodying a decorative and nonutilitarian way of life.46 Dancing above the pedestrian world of utility and duality, Ravel’s Daphnis resembles Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, likewise a daring funambulist; how distantly related, in fact, is the shepherd’s crook, which Nijinsky used in the premiere,47 to either the dandy’s walking cane or Zarathustra’s balancing pole?

The musical persona of the dandy—a being of apparently pure and perfect exteriority—speaks to us from the A sections of the dance: from its “façade,” rather than from its interior B section. The “ancient repose” that the strange and wonderful apparition of Barhey’s dandy reintroduces into “the bosom of modern anxieties” appears in the barcarolle topic of the first few measures, as well as the archaic purity of its voice leading;48 the fleet arpeggios that interrupt each A phrase at its midpoint only set into further relief the basic

47. It is evident from the reviews of two contemporary critics that Nijinsky incorporated a crook into the choreography of his dance. In a review for Comœdia illustré, Henri Gauthier-Villars remarked: “Daphnis’s poetic dance, in which the naked arm of Nijinsky, bursting out from [his] immaculate and broadly vented tunic, stretches out elegantly upon the crook that bends the nape of the neck, will count among the most artistic inventions of this stunning creator of visual rhythms” (“La danse poétique de Daphnis où le bras nu de Nijinsky jaillissant de la tunique immaculée largement fendue, s’allonge élegamment sur la houlette qui courbe sa nuque, comptera parmi les plus artistiques inventions de cet étonnant créateur de rythmes visuels”); Gaultier-Villars, Review of Daphnis et Chloé, in Collection des plus beaux numéros de “Comœdia illustré” et des programmes consacrés aux Ballets et Galas Russes, depuis le début à Paris, 1909–1921, ed. Maurice de Brunoff and Jacques de Brunoff, (Paris: Brunoff, ca. 1922), n.p. The balletomane Cyril Beaumont also called attention to the “white wand” that Daphnis “takes into his hand” at the onset of his dance (Michel Fokine and His Ballets, 2nd ed. [London: C. W. Beaumont, 1945], 97). On page 72 of “The Origins of Daphnis et Chloé” Simon Morrison briefly notes Fokine’s use of the crook, as well, in two photographs from the Fokine archive at the State Theatre Library in St. Petersburg.
48. Cited from Barhey d’Aurevilly, Du dandysme, 45n2. Irving Wohlforth finds the same sentiment repeated in Baudelaire’s writings on the dandy, in which the poet “rehabilitates leisure”
equanimity of this music, which resumes after the interruptions as if nothing had occurred. And when it resumes (R43.4–6), the texture becomes even more recognizably antique: a faux fifteenth-century fauxbourdon replete with parallel 6/3 chords, a slightly decorative melody, and a triple-meter feel.

Involving the dandy in our analysis of the “Danse légère” also enhances our understanding of overtone gestures in the bass. The Art Nouveau–inspired mixture of nature and artifice in these gestures is representative for the dandy, whom Baudelaire at one point describes as a “sublime deformation of nature,”49 and whose prerogative has otherwise been expressed as an attempt to “overcome the conflict between nature and culture.”50 Moreover, the slow ascent of brass instruments from their registral depths—akin to awakening from a state of dormancy—captures the dancing Daphnis in his identity as a dandy-ist “Hero of idle elegance” who brings his body into motion just as Apollo plays a prelude upon his lyre.51 Moreover, the rising bass does not merely figure the gradual overcoming of physical inertia (note the relatively long duration of the incipient tone), but rather sublates the body in the full threefold sense of the Hegelian dialectical Aufhebung, elevating, negating, and preserving the corporeal in a musical incorporeality. As Wanda Klee has noted, this

through the figure of the dandy (“Aspects of Baudelaire’s Literary Dandyism” [PhD diss., Yale University, 1970], 170). Walter Benjamin also associates the refrain of Baudelaire’s “L’invitation au voyage” with the dandy: “This famous stanza has a rocking rhythm; its movement seizes the ships which lie moored in the canals. To be rocked between extremes: this is the privilege of ships, and this is what Baudelaire longed for. The ships emerge at the site of the profound, secret, and paradoxical image of his dreams: the vision of being supported and sheltered by greatness. . . . The ships combine airy casualness with readiness for the utmost exertion. This gives them a secret significance. . . . To Baudelaire, the dandy appeared to be a descendant of great ancestors” (“The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” In Selected Writings, vol. 4, 1938–1940, trans. Edmund Jephcott and others (here, by Harry Zohn), ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 59–60. To my mind, Benjamin hereby makes explicit an association that Baudelaire seems to offer in a parenthetical pun that is found in the “Fusées” section of the Journaux intimes: “These large and beautiful ships, rocking (waddled [dandinés]) imperceptibly upon tranquil waters, these robust ships, with an idle and nostalgic air, don’t they say to us in a silent language: ‘When are we leaving for happiness?’” (in Œuvres complètes, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec and Claude Pincois [Paris: Gallimard, 1961], 1253).

49. Baudelaire, “Peintre de la vie moderne,” 1184. Tobias Plebuch has compared the difference between the overtone series and its stylization in Daphnis to that between real and plastic flowers: “The pose of artificial naturalness is also found in Ravel’s early works. The overtone series that he composed out in Daphnis et Chloé are, of course, just as ‘natural’ as well-made plastic flowers” (“Die Pose der künstlichen Natürlichkeit findet sich auch in den frühen Werken Ravel’s. In Daphnis et Chloé hat er Obertonreihen auskomponiert. Doch das ist freilich so natürlich wie gut gemachte Plastikblumen”); “Der stumme Schrecken, Ravel’s Frontispice,” in Hommage à Ravel, 1987 (Bremen: Hochschule für gestaltende Kunst und Musik Bremen, 1987), 164.


51. Barbey d’Aurevilly’s description of the dandy as “le Héros de l’élégance oisive” appears in Du dandysme, 32n1.
Musical and masterful performance of the body is a hallmark of the dandy: “The overemphasis of the corporeal through clothing and posture serves to negate the body as an end-in-itself. . . . The body is at best, therefore, a skilfully employed instrument upon which the dandy knows how to play virtuosically.” The complex interaction of body and music in the opening bass gesture of the “Danse légère” is yet another way in which the dance emulates and tropes upon its ancestral volte-face, which also invokes sublation in transforming the somatically driven “geste brusque” into the ideally conceived waltz theme.

The contradiction that the double arpeggios introduce into the A phrases is equally characteristic of the dandy, whose caprices help him to maintain his independence from behavioral norms and expectations. In more specific terms, these sudden and disruptive gestures musically instantiate the techniques of “l’imprévu” (“the unforeseen”) and “l’inattendu” (“the unexpected”) that the dandy cultivates in his conversation, conduct, and attire. Here, the illocutionary force of “l’imprévu” derives not only from its rupturing of musical texture but also from its palpable displacement of tonal trajectory, diverting the opening A-section phrase from F major to A-flat major (R43), the second from F minor to G major (R44), the third from B-flat major to A-flat major (R48), and the fourth from E-flat major to D-flat major (R49), all of which involve a key change of at least two accidentals. Ravel compounds the element of surprise by repeating each arpeggio after its harmony has been resolved and its textural ebullience quelled, thereby intensifying the effect of the jibe from merely amusing to disconcertingly mordant.

While these arpeggios may raise listeners’ eyebrows, they are nonetheless subtly prepared in multiple musical dimensions. For example, in the melody of the first A-section phrase, a leap from c² to f² in the second measure helps to mitigate the startling effect of the subsequent octave leap from c² up to c⁵ (flute 1 of R43.2 to violin 1 of R43.3; likewise, the appearance of the D-half-diminished-seventh chord in the second measure is initially enigmatic—its questioning quality heightened by an agogic accent—but it may be accounted for, in retrospect, as an applied leading-tone sonority (vii⁰⁷/V) that enables

53. Barbey d’Aurevilly, Du dandysme, 110. In calling these arpeggios “interjections,” Deborah Mawer also presents an understanding of them as elements of verbal discourse (“Ballet,” 147).
54. The end-keys projected by each displacement are drawn from its final measures, rather than from the final measures of the phrase that it displaces; consequently, the end-keys of the former do not necessarily coincide with those of the latter. For example, the local tonic of A-flat major at R43.3–4 does not represent the tonic for the phrase cadence at R43.6, which is C major.
modulation into A-flat major; moreover, the arpeggios in the third and fourth measures can be heard as rhythmically contracted but registrally expanded versions of the opening bass ascent.

The relation between the bass ascent and the arpeggios continues the Dance’s dialogue between music and the dancing body. According to Michel D. Calvocoressi, Ravel composed these arpeggios in homage to the spectacular leaps of Nijinsky who, as Diaghilev’s premier danseur at the moment of the ballet’s commission in 1909, was slated to dance the role of Daphnis at the premiere.\(^{55}\) If, in the initial measures of the dance, Daphnis resembles the dandy in Baudelaire’s description of him as a “idle Hercules,” he suddenly draws upon his reserves of strength mid-phrase and springs into action, reminding us that the dandy’s idleness and nonchalance can be a dissembling ruse carefully designed to augment the effect of his eventual and impertinent éclat.\(^ {56}\)

Who better than Nijinsky to play both androgyne and strong man? Catching sight of him once in a dressing room, Calvocoressi noted that “although his muscles were on the big side, his body suggested that of a Greek athlete, reposeful as well as strong. . . . It had none of the almost feminine grace which he so often showed when appearing in stage costume—in Armide, for instance, and later in Le Spectre de la Rose”—curiously enough, the two ballets in which Nijinsky was known to show off his miraculous sideways leaps.\(^ {57}\) This perspective from one of Ravel’s closest associates deserves our attention, for it is likely that Ravel’s musical portrayal of Daphnis was influenced by an overall sense of Nijinsky similar to Calvocoressi’s, not just a narrower appreciation of his ability to leap sideways. Nijinsky’s perceived androgyny would only have strengthened Daphnis’s characterization as a dandy. According to Charles Batson, “Nijinsky was not ‘ordinarily’ masculine, but neither was he feminine: his performances, acted out on and with his flesh, point to some combination of two genders that reveal themselves not to be mutually exclusive.”\(^ {58}\) Compare this description of Nijinsky with Jessica Feldman’s quite similar remarks on the dandy-as-androgyne: “To be an androgyne is to sacrifice one’s own gender in order to exist outside gender category, neither male nor wholly female, but paradoxically both or neither.”\(^ {59}\) The affiliation between Nijinsky and dandyism is only further supported by Deborah Mawer’s description of him as “emotionally detached,” a quality also reminiscent of the characteristically impassive dandy.\(^ {60}\)

\(^{55}\) Michel Calvocoressi, *Music and Ballet* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 79.

\(^{56}\) Baudelaire, “Peintre de la vie moderne,” 1180. “Idle Hercules” translates Baudelaire’s “un Hercule sans emplot.”


\(^{59}\) Feldman, *Gender*, 118n43.

\(^{60}\) Mawer, *Ballets of Maurice Ravel*, 109.
Just as the arpeggios/leaps stir up a musical discourse in danger of congelation (as Roland Barthes would say), so too does impertinence enliven the dandy’s persona and bring its complex of behavioral elements into mutual complementation. In order to explicate the role that impertinence plays in the dandy’s autopoetics, Barbey devises a genealogical scheme in playful allusion to Hesiod, Apollodorus, and other ancient mythologists:

Daughter of Lightness and Aplomb . . . Impertinence is also the sister of Grace, with which it has to remain united. Both render each other more beautiful through their mutual contrast. Without Impertinence wouldn’t Grace resemble a too dull blonde, and without Grace, wouldn’t Impertinence be a too piquant brunette? So that they remain what they are separately, it is advisable to mix them together.61

Gathering together lightness, grace, aplomb, and impertinence in the space of only six measures, each of the four A phrases in Daphnis’s dance represents the dandy in his identity as an exacting epicure of the self; the crystalline tones of the jeu de timbres that characteristically crown the end of each phrase bespeak these qualities with perfect concision.

**Ravel as Dandy**

Given the central role that self-reflection plays in dandyism—requiring, as Baudelaire asserted, that the dandy maintain his uninterrupted sublimity by “living and sleeping in front of a mirror”62—it follows naturally that the creators of fictional dandies and the theorists of dandyism have often been dandies themselves who have transformed their art into another reflecting surface. Solely responsible for tailoring Daphnis’s musical character to the contours of the dandy, Ravel is no exception to this phenomenon. Confirmation of Ravel’s personal dandyism, which appears throughout biographical accounts of the composer, is well represented by the following statement by Roland-Manuel: “The Ravel who wears sideburns and sacrifices discreetly but assiduously to the demands of fashion successfully fits the type of the Baudelairean dandy: elegant coldness and horror of triviality and of all emotional outpourings.”63 Even at age fifty-two he remained the stylish and impertinent

61. The original text, appearing on pages 69–70 of Barbey d’Aurevilly’s Du dandysme, reads as follows: “Fille de la Légèreté et de l’Aplomb . . . [l’Impertinence] est aussi la sœur de la Grâce, avec laquelle elle doit rester unie. Toutes deux s’emblissent de leur mutuel contraste. En effet, sans l’Impertinence, la Grâce ne ressemblerait-elle pas à une blonde trop fade, et sans la Grâce, l’Impertinence ne serait-elle pas une brune trop piquante? Pour qu’elles soient bien ce qu’elles sont chacune, il convient de les entremêler.” Emilien Carassus devotes a brief chapter to the dandy’s impertinence in Le mythe du dandy, 119–24.
63. “Le Ravel qui porte des favoris et sacrifie discrètement, mais assidûment aux exigences de la mode, offre le type achevé du dandy baudelairien: froideur élégante, horreur de la trivialité et de toutes les effusions du sentiment” (Roland-Manuel, Ravel, 54).
dandy, as evident in Olin Downes’s 1927 encounter with Ravel in Paris: “His dress was exceedingly plain, fastidious, exotic. And now he sat in a very charming garden known to a few, fussing with his food, sampling a Ravelian liqueur, saying the most monstrous things, in phrases that cut so swiftly that seconds flew by before the full and awful import of the words sank into a slower brain.” Characteristic posturings of the dandy also suffice Ravel’s written correspondence, which demonstrates a consistent inclination toward esoteric allusion and evasive circumlocution. Two letters by Ravel illustrate his dandyist tendencies quite effectively, the first of which being the earliest that appears in the collection edited by Arbie Orenstein. Writing to Madame René de Saint-Marceaux on 28 August 1898, Ravel refers to himself as both “the little symbolist [“symbolard”]” and a present-day Alcibiades. Not only are both references uttered from a position of ironic remove from the self that is customary to the dandy, but the latter identification is even explicit in its association with dandyism: together with Caesar and Catiline, the Athenian general Alcibiades is one of the ancient-historical dandies cited by Baudelaire in “Le peintre de la vie moderne.”

The second letter, addressed on 12 June 1906 to Maurice Delage, contains a moment of self-deprecation that articulates in dandyist terms an awareness of his own penchant for writerly esotericism: “The bosom of the Naiads, where I go each morning to imbibe some conceptual forces for the day, has been unable to refresh me: understand by that image, whose elegance surpasses its simplicity, that I often visit the Grande Jatte baths, which are not far from my home.” The self-deprecation here is of a piece with Ravel’s self-description as a symbolard, whose outright neologism is just as conspicuous as its pejorative suffix.

It is only appropriate that dandyism, which seeks to transform life into art, should play such a central role in the music of a composer who provocatively proclaimed art to be “the supreme imposture” and delighted in feats of pure originality. Calvocoressi is once again a useful resource on this point, having emphasized Ravel’s concern with “points of originality in idiom and texture.

64. Olin Downes, reprinted in Ravel, Ravel Reader, 448.
65. An English translation of this letter appears in ibid., 53. Orenstein reproduces the original letter in plate 5 of his Ravel: Man and Musician.
66. It may be of interest to mention that Jacques Amyot, the royal preceptor famous for having first translated Longus’s Daphnis and Chloe into French (in 1559), was also the first French translator of Plutarch’s Lives, which contains an important biography of Alcibiades. This coincidence should not be too startling, however, since classical civilization was a common and attractive resource for genealogists and mythographers of dandyism—both for its human examples of splendor, deviance, and excess, as well as its (apparently) indifferent relation to the historical present, one that helps to prevent such knowledge from becoming utilitarian.
67. Ravel, Ravel Reader, 82.
68. A basic source for this well-known proclamation of an aesthetics of imposture is Ravel’s article from 1931 entitled “Memories of a Lazy Child,” which has been reprinted and translated into English on pages 393–95 of Ravel, Ravel Reader.
When calling attention to some beautiful thing, he would often wind up with ‘No one had ever done that before, you know!’  

69. The valorization of originality is a defining mark of the dandy; when attempting to explain the passion that fueled dandyism, Baudelaire proposed that “it is above all the burning need to make an originality of oneself . . . ”  

70. That the dandy should draw upon pastiche in his quest for originality is a paradox that suits him to a tee.

The Interrupted Dandy and the Return of the Repressed

Ruffling feathers with his provocative utterances and air of superiority, the dandy has been a lightning rod of critique ever since he came into being. If, for the dandy, to be is to seem, for his critics this seeming can be a mere dissembling that often leads to the question: what is he trying to hide? Those who have viewed the dandy in relation to his social-economic situation have proposed that an abiding fear of obsolescence, coupled with a desire for self-preservation, may have compelled him to cultivate an impregnable façade in order to stave off quasi-aristocratic déclassement in an increasingly democratic, capitalist, and bourgeois society. Deborah Houk has made this point clearly, and perhaps even sympathetically: “Viewed in the context of his loss of power in the public sphere, the dandy’s project of constructing his self as an impenetrable outer shell represents a defensive reaction to a very real social threat.”  

Although Daphnis is only a fictional character drawn from an ancient Greek romance, the music composed for him may nevertheless bear the traces of Ravel’s contemporary understanding of the dandy and his plight. Already by 1909, when Ravel began work on Daphnis, the dandy had become a potential object of nostalgia: two years earlier, the littérateur Marcel Boulenger had lamented that “the dandies are no more,” attributing their extinction to a world “too vast, too congested, and too dispersed for an undisputed supremacy to be established.”  

While the delicate texture of the A-section phrases may help to indicate the fragility of the dandy as a social-historical entity, for many critics the greatest threat to him as an individual is he himself. Having described dandies as quasi-religious figures that are at once “the priests and the victims” of their stringent regimen of self-surveillance, Baudelaire was just as aware as Irving Wohlfarth that the repressive self-containment of the dandy was self-destructive, and knew just as well as Emilien Carassus that “eros is the passion

69. “Et puis, vous savez, on n’avait jamais fait ça!” (Nichols, Ravel Remembered, 181).

70. Baudelaire, “Peintre de la vie moderne,” 1178.


72. These remarks appear in Boulenger’s Lettres de Chantilly (1907), which is excerpted in Carassus, Mythe du dandy, 274–75.
that most threatens [the dandy’s] impassive rule.”

How can we reconcile the hypothesis of a sublimation of desire with one of repression without risking contradiction? An orthodox understanding of Freud does not seem to admit the simultaneous operation of these two destinies of drive, as confirmed by Volney Gay’s assertion that “repression prevents sublimation, is its opposite, because it ‘drags down’ actions and thoughts associated with the forbidden topic into the unconscious.” Without straying too far afield from a basis in Freudian hermeneutics, I propose that a solution to this conundrum has already been articulated above in the notion of a partial sublimation of libidinal impulses, which can be further supplemented by the idea that every destiny of drive must be dynamically maintained, rather than established once and for all. Nonetheless, we should not imagine that the two destinies of drive are supposed to coexist peacefully, but rather that repression stands in a critical relation to sublimation, raising doubt as to whether the nonlibidinal Aesthetic Self is only an Aesthetic Fallacy (to reinvoke the terms of Gary Thomas’s discourse analysis).

The potential for Eros to interrupt the dandy’s sublimity leads us to revisit the initial thesis that prompted our analysis of the Dance Contest: namely, that the latter composes out the *volte-face* by expanding the “geste brusque” into Dorcon’s “Danse grotesque” and the waltz theme into Daphnis’s “Danse légère.” In the *volte-face* the waltz theme reflects an “ego ideal,” Freud’s term for a model image of selfhood that is assembled from cultural norms and “possessed of every perfection that is of value” to the subject. The dandy’s narcissistic obsession with his ideal image jibes nicely with Baudelaire’s mandate that he “live and sleep in front of a mirror.” Thus, the “aspiration toward the waltz” that we discerned in the succession of A phrases in the “Danse légère” represents Daphnis’s attempt to emulate his ego ideal—an asymptotic approach toward sublimity that Jessica Feldman has described as characteristic of the Baudelairean dandy: “The dandy . . . is one distant from the ideal, but who is nevertheless moving toward it.” As mentioned earlier, Daphnis, Ravel, and the dandy join in a Matisse-like round dance, insofar as this perfectionist attitude toward the self is echoed in remarks that Ravel once made.

about his own poetics: “My objective . . . is technical perfection. I can strive unceasingly towards this end, since I am certain never to attain it. The important thing is to draw ever closer to it.”

If the sublimation of desire helps to elevate the dandy toward his lofty ego ideal, the psychic strategy of repression threatens to make him lose control over the repressed contents and to send this Icarus plummeting back toward the earth. The particular notion of repression involved here, as well as the strategies for its musical representation, can be elucidated through three secondary sources. First, in his essay on narcissism, Freud explains the occasion for repression as one in which libidinal impulses “come into conflict with the subject’s cultural and ethical ideas.” Second, in a widely disseminated chapter from Feminine Endings Susan McClary has described how the outer sections of ABA(‘) structures have been used by composers to contain or “frame” material that is deemed threatening to the cultural status quo, especially representations of madness and the feminine. Third, Robert Fink has extended McClary’s idea of the musical frame to instantiate not only the containment of the feminine by the masculine (and all other relevant binarisms) but also “the internal contradictions of a sexuality turned neurotically against itself,” as in the psychic mechanism of repression.

If the B section represents the return of repressed desire in all its immoderate excess, the A sections represent the repressive frame that brackets the B section in three related senses: framing, parenthesizing, and marginalizing it to the point of its virtual erasure from memory. When the third A phrase (R48) resumes its aspiration toward the waltz, it is as if the frenzied B section had never occurred; making pointed reference back to the measure of rest that separated the “geste brusque” from the waltz theme, the grand pause between the B and A’ sections seems to symbolize the impasse that cleaves the dandy’s psyche in two. In contrast to the waltz theme in the volte-face, the Dance of Daphnis does not simply attempt to produce the sublime self but rather critiques, through the palpable intrusion of Eros, the phenomenon of sublimation in its alleged purity and durability.

78. Ravel, “Some Reflections on Music,” in Ravel Reader, 38. Upon consulting the original French text, I have slightly modified Orenstein’s translation. In the editor’s first footnote on the same page, Orenstein mentions that “according to Roland-Manuel, this statement concluded the interview which resulted in the Autobiographical Sketch [of 1928].” Steven Huebner has also cited this passage in a paper on Ravel’s perfectionism that he read at the Seventy-First Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society in Washington, October 2005.


A Premonition of Erotic Interruption

While the repressed libido may completely shatter the prevailing texture and mood at the beginning of the B section of the “Danse légère et gracieuse” (R45.1–3), its presence can be felt earlier as well—as early as the first two measures of the piece, where metrical and harmonic discontinuities intimate that not all is “luxe, calme et volupté” in the dandy’s dominion. When we separate the emblematic texture of the A section into its seven component rhythmic layers, we can see in Table 1 not only a general discrepancy between the apparent simplicity and actual complexity of the musical facture, but also a specific clustering of metrical and submetrical “grouping dissonances.” This term and its orthography are drawn from Harald Krebs’s *Fantasy Pieces*, in which he defines it as “the association of at least two interpretive layers whose cardinalities are not multiples/factors of each other,” labeling it with a “‘G’ followed by a ratio of the cardinalities involved.”82 For example, in this notational scheme a “five-against-three” within a 3/4 measure would be designated as “G5/3; unit = quarter.” In our analytical excerpt, the hemiola is the primary type of grouping dissonance, arising threefold from the simultaneity of Layers 2 and 3 (a G6/4; unit = eighth), Layers 4 and 5 (a G3/2; unit = eighth), and Layers 6 and 7 (a G3/2; unit = sixteenth note). Insofar as both

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The discrepancy and the clustering of metrical dissonances are involved in representing Daphnis’s character here, they bespeak a seething interiority that belies the dandy’s placid countenance. Eros is superheating Daphnis; at the slightest disturbance, desire, suppressed according to the dictates of dandyism, will erupt.

Upon approaching the midpoint of the phrase, the music gradually becomes entangled in various aspects of melody, harmony, and meter. The repetition of the F-major tonic triad on the second eighth-note of measure 2 (R4 3.2) interpolates a stutter into the treble texture that halts the melodic undulation, aborts the smooth continuation of Layer 3, and displaces Layer 5 by an eighth note, thereby shifting the hemiöla into a syncopated position within the measure—which, in turn, introduces yet another level of metrical dissonance, the Krebsian D2+1 (unit = eighth).83 This dissonance is a “displacement dissonance,” which results from “the association of layers of equivalent cardinality in a nonaligned manner”; the first number denotes the cardinality of the layers and the second the units by which it has been displaced. My determination here of a D2+1 is slightly speculative, since the layer against which the D2+1 of measure 2 is displaced is not literally present in the texture, but rather is virtually extended from the hemiölic Layer 5 of measure 1 (where the three quarter-note pulses of Layer 5 dissonate metrically against the two dotted-quarter-note pulses [beats] of Layer 4). This speculative maneuver has precedent in Krebs’s system, however, and can probably be subsumed under his category of “subliminal dissonance,” which he defines as “dissonance formed by the interaction of at least one explicitly stated interpretive layer and at least one conflicting layer that is only implied (by the context and by the notation).”84

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83. Krebs provides an overview of displacement dissonance on pp. 33–39 of *Fantasy Pieces*.
84. Ibid., 253 and 255, respectively.
Our analysis must become a bit more detailed to register the subtle harmonic changes in this measure (R.43.2) that follow in the wake of these metrical shifts. When the G-minor triad that the stutter had displaced arrives an eighth note later, it is marked by its deferral: an f^2, the highest melodic tone so far, is superimposed upon the triad, transforming it into a minor seventh chord, the first harmonic dissonance in the subphrase. If we interpret the superimposed f^2 as tonal “residue” from the tonic stutter, then the subsequent harmony appears to respond in kind, inflecting the F-major triad’s mode to minor and superposing its own “residual” tone (d^1) to form the half-diminished-seventh chord that ends the subphrase.

This point of relative harmonic obscurity is also a moment of relative semiotic clarity in which the bass and treble—united at last—gesture toward Eros as the invisible genius behind these disruptions in musical flow. Within the ballet, the half-diminished-seventh chord harmonizes Daphnis and Chloe’s primary love theme, the central leitmotif whose eleven integral statements over the course of the work help to articulate its overall musical-dramatic narrative. Beyond the ballet, of course, the chord is conventionally recognizable as (a transposed version of) the harmony that Wagner uses to symbolize the bond of the lovers in Tristan und Isolde. Ravel had already made explicit the primary love theme’s debt to Tristan in the Introduction to the ballet (R.2.5–6), whose statement of the theme reproduces the prototypical version of the Tristan chord (one rooted in F) in such a way as to suggest that the whole romance is born from an arch-Romantic Sehnsucht: immediately after the chord sounds, the Introduction comes alive, building to a massive climax as the empty stage starts to fill with both the dance troupe and the members of the hitherto invisible chorus. So, too, in the “Danse légère” does the chord of desire spark a vital response: the previously discussed leaps, understood here as unexpected displays of wit that allow the dandy to remaster his desire and thereby regain control over his musical-choreographic performance.

Musical Erotics in the Interior of the “Danse légère”

Through a rift in the dandy’s sublime façade Daphnis’s repressed libido returns with a vengeance into full view at the opening of the B section (R.45.1–3; see Ex. 6), his Baudelairean “latent fire” now a firework whose scintillating parabola is traced in the opening measure by a sudden fortissimo harp glissando upward, and followed by the slower registral descent in pizzicato strings and flutes; rapid flutter-tonguing in the flutes extends the opening’s passionate

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85. The apparent Wagnerism of the love theme’s harmony can be tentatively explained as a way in which Ravel attempted to acknowledge the commission’s origin in the Ballets russes, whose collaborative modus operandi derived justification, impetus, and prestige from Wagner’s poietic theories (in particular, the notion of the Gesamtkunstwerk).
energy by adding a lambent quality to the melody. Passing into the second measure, the music changes fourfold: the fleet melody of measure 1 gives way to plangent sighs in a muted solo trumpet, harmonic support is transferred from horns to strings and harp, an F-minor triad cedes to the alternation of major ninth chords rooted on A and E♭, and the meter switches from compound triple to compound duple. The opening two measures, in their juxtaposition, exemplify the characteristics of the B section as a whole: melodic discontinuity, harmonic incongruity, orchestral promiscuity, and metrical inconsistency.

These two measures portray the dandy in a moment of crisis as he slips into a dangerous psychic state; delving further into Baudelaire’s notions of subjectivity, we may describe the transition from the A section to the B section as reflecting a shift from the “centralization” of the self to its “vaporization.” According to the poet, the dandy doggedly maintains the first in order to ward off the second, which Wohlffarth has explained as indicating the “evaporation and dissipation of the self,” while Bernard Howells has defined it more broadly: “any kind of ‘jouissance’ in which consciousness is dispersed into its objects: sexual desire, reverie, memory and anticipation, religious feeling, political enthusiasm, identification with the life of the crowd and the city, or with complex rhythmic movement.”

A concept of dispersion that is, appropriately enough, dispersed in various forms throughout Baudelaire’s poetry and prose—the erotic vaporization of the self—might find its neatest summary in a non-Baudelairean text, Sapphic Fragment 130:

Eros once again limb-loosener whirls me
sweetbitter, impossible to fight off, creature stealing up.

Long prized for its pungent insight into the nature of desire, Sapphic Fragment 130 encapsulates several aspects of erotic experience conjured up by the B material in the “Danse légère”: the suddenness with which it erupts captures Eros in its predatory surprise and violence; its unabated freneticism be-speaks the “loosening” and whirling of dancing limbs; melodic-harmonic sighing and swooning in R45—whose rhythm makes yet another reference to Tristan, this time to a Liebesmotiv that I have labeled on Example 6 as “Leiden

im Sehnen” (“suffering in desire”)—expresses the pleasurable pain of eros, its “sweet bitterness”; the resurgence of the B material of the “Danse légèrê” in the coda (R50) shows that Eros has “once again” stormed the ramparts of the dandy’s psyche in a return of the repressed.

In both the A and B sections, the image of the passionate body finds acute reflection in arpeggiated textures, as the sudden leaps of the A phrase give way to the rolling arpeggios of the B section. Associations between the arpeggio and the body already form part of our music-metaphorical language, in which the arpeggio is often described as “fleshing out” a texture and, perhaps in a more choreographic vein, “supporting” a solo melody. Running the gamut between the flayed Marsyas of Greek mythology, the suffering Christ, and the Romantic protagonist-as-Aeolian-harp, associations between the arpeggio and the passionate body have historically featured the harp (or lyre, or cithara) as a mediating figure that represents the body under performance by external dominating forces; Ravel’s sole assignment of the arpeggio to the harp in the B section, as well as its featured position as accompaniment to the “Leiden im Sehnen” motive, reinforces this association.

Together with our interpretation of the B section as an expression of the libido unleashed and the incorporation of upbeat rhythms into its musical design, Ravel’s unusual parenthetical marking at the head of the B section “sans décomposer”—loosely translated as a direction for the musicians to gallop through this stretch without breaking stride—brings to mind a passage from The Ego and the Id in which Freud suggests: “In its relation to the id [the ego] is like a man on horseback who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse... Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of

90. Christian Thorau has proposed “Leiden im Schnen,” or, alternatively, “Sehnen im Leiden,” as synoptic terms that may help to unify the variety of nomenclature that has historically been applied by commentators on Tristan to the opening two chromatic motives in the Prelude (Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit: Studien zu Rezeption und Zeichenstruktur der Leitmotivtechnik Richard Wagner [Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003], 190–91).

91. Bruce Holsinger discusses the musical symbolism of passion involving both Marsyas and Christ on pages 54 and 58 respectively of Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hindggard of Bingen to Chaucer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001). Swinburne’s poem “Anactoria,” which Lawrence Kramer discusses on pp. 78–79 of his Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), is a good example of a work of literature that views the subjectivity of the Aeolian harp from a sadomasochistic perspective. See also Jessica Feldman’s description of Baudelaire’s “vaporization of the self” as “an extreme of the Romantic image of the self as lyre, played upon by the winds of divine inspiration. Here, the self dies into expression, losing its boundaries” (Gender, 135).

92. “(Sans décomposer)” cancels “(Décomposez),” which appears at the beginning of the “Danse légèrê” and presumably encourages the musicians to take the necessary time and make the requisite effort to bring out the internal contrasts of the A phrases.
transforming the id’s will into action as it if were its own.”

93 Before this precipitous journey draws both rider and beast spiraling down into the abyss at R47, they endure a series of shocks and blows rendered by the textural shifts at each bar line across R45 and R46. At R47, however, the metrical whipping administered by the shifting bar line gives way to a more consistent beating by a sequence of minor ninth chords rooted upon the nodes of the octatonic collection OCT_{0,1}.

The second “return of the repressed” at R50 initiates another musical adventure that is just as harrowing as the B section, but traverses a different tonal landscape and enjoys a firmer sense of arrival. The music at R50 begins with a tonic harmony compromised by an E♭ and a G♭ which extend the F-major triad into a minor-ninth chord that is familiar from the B section, thereby using harmony to collapse together the rhetorical functions of large-scale cadence (of the A’ section) and continuation (of the B section). Next, a complete D-flat acoustic scale leads into a G-flat acoustic scale before the latter yields to the tonic in an altered descending circle-of-fifths progression. If, as shown in the lowest row of Table 2, we measure degrees of tonal shading by the number of flats in each collection, we may chart a progression from “dark” (three flats) to “darker” (five flats), “darkest” (six flats), and then to the “brilliantly light” space of the flatless F-Lydian hexachord; the pairing between the latter two collections is reinforced by their aggregate complementarity: between the two, every note in the chromatic scale is represented, and only C is represented twice.

According symbolic significance to these black-key/white-key relations, which Ravel’s music elsewhere invites us to do, we may understand the


94. At a certain moment in After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), the musical-hermeneutic situation also arises for Lawrence Kramer to liken the notational convention of the bar line to a rod, which is “at once the traditional symbol of authority, discipline, and punishment, and a simple tool for measuring, pointing, upholding, divining, and beating” (61).

95. This nomenclature for octatonicism is taken from Joseph N. Straus, Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005), 144.

Table 2  The Tonal Design of the Music in the “Danse légère et gracieuse” at R50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character:</th>
<th>Nonsublimated</th>
<th>Sublimated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures:</td>
<td>1.5–2</td>
<td>7.5–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2–3.5</td>
<td>8–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5–7.5</td>
<td>10–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content:</td>
<td>B-section material</td>
<td>Cadence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalar Collection:</td>
<td>(OCT0,2)</td>
<td>D-flat acoustic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[DbEbFGAbC♭]</td>
<td>[GbB♭CD♭E♭F♭]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonic Function:</td>
<td>Tonic (compromised)</td>
<td>The Dominant of . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
passionate subject in the music of R50 to undergo once again a harsh trial at the hands of Eros, suffering the most severe torments before—in a miraculous turn of events—reemerging unscathed.

A Dialectics of the Dandy

The music of R50 glides by so lightly and gracefully that we might feel compelled to reevaluate the B section as a mere pantomime of erotic passion and its effects: all along, it seems, the dandy was in perfect control of himself. Or perhaps the sentiments expressed in the B section were sincere but ephemeral—passing, like any other fancy that he might entertain. The suddenness of such apparent recovery from the afflictions of Eros brings to mind the volte-face that the dandy Swann performs at the very end of the first novel in Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu, having finally awakened from his nightmarish obsession with the courtesan Odette. Looking back upon this period, Swann expresses surprise over his behavior in a single, blackly humored phrase whose blunt indifference gives it a particular salience for those readers who have just witnessed his sufferings and self-mortifications for 150 pages: “To think that I’ve wasted years of my life, that I wished to die, that I had my greatest love for a woman who didn’t please me, who wasn’t my type!”

To endorse this interpretation, however, would force us to turn a deaf ear to the dialectical dimension of the codetta. The trill between F major and G major triads in this passage may refer summarily back to the opening measures of the first A phrase, which featured a leisurely alternation between tonic and minor supertonic triads, but it also recalls the much earlier tremolo between tonic and major supertonic triads in the Introduction’s ecstatic apotheosis of the appel motive (appearing predominantly in the violins, harps, and clarinets of R4.4–9). In fact, the codetta as a whole springs from a topos of ecstasy: following a tremolo between major tonic and supertonic chords with a quick downward pentatonic riff strongly resembles the climactic final measures of Debussy’s L’île joyeuse (1905), albeit at a considerable diminution of scale.

The suggestion of ecstasy within the sublimely poised codetta complements a suggestion of sublimity within the otherwise ecstatic B section (see Table 3). Sentential design operates at two levels of form in the B section: a fifteen-measure-long sentence (S) divides into a three-measure-long basic idea (BI), its slightly varied repetition (BI’), and a nine-measure-long continuation (C),

97. “‘Dire que j’ai gâché des années de ma vie, que j’ai voulu mourir, que j’ai eu mon plus grand amour, pour une femme qui ne me plaisait pas, qui n’était pas mon genre!’” (Marcel Proust, À la recherche du temps perdu, ed. Jean-Yves Tadié [Paris: Gallimard, 1999], 305).
98. Ravel heard L’île joyeuse before its public premiere in a private performance by Ricardo Viñes at the salon of Madame de Saint-Marceaux on 13 January 1905. He later made the criticism that the piece seems to be a piano reduction of an orchestral score, and was thus nonidiomatic for the instrument (Ravel Reader, 21).
while the continuation is itself a smaller-scale sentence (s) that builds to the climactic onset of the octatonic spiral before subsequently subsiding and trailing off into silence.

The lower appendages to Table 3 mark out concealed references to two musical emblems for Daphnis’s sublime self: the gentle melodic cadence that ends the A phrases, and the waltz theme. Modally mapped from a diatonic to an octatonic scale, the phrase cadence of A is easier to identify in its new guise than is the waltz theme, which has undergone not only melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic distortion but also dismemberment into its three two-measure subsets.99 In Baudelaire’s terms, the concentrated self is here demonstrably vaporized; in Nietzsche’s, the Apollinian individual has been torn apart, delivered up to a Dionysian dismembering.100 Singing Liebe smotive, the first two memb ra disiecta (R45.2–3 and 5–6) pay homage to the desire that has disfigured the sublime Orphic body almost beyond recognition.

99. The six 3/4 measures of the original waltz theme are compressed here into three 6/8 measures. The brackets below Table 3, however, involve five 6/8 measures, not three, leaving us to figure out which two measures of the five seem to be superfluous within this derivation. While R47.4 clearly corresponds to mm. 5–6 of the original waltz theme, the measures that match mm. 1–4 of the original are either R45.1+5, R45.2–3, or R45.5–6. Although it is not crucial that we determine one “correct” way to hear and understand this passage, I nevertheless incline toward R45.1+5, since the measures that follow these are exact thematic repetitions of their predecessors, unlike mm. 3–4 of the original.

100. Lest one uncritically suppose Nietzsche’s conceptualization of the Apollinian/Dionysian dialectic is purely historical in its philology, we should recognize Albert Henrichs’s argument that the strong association of Dionysus with suffering, violence, and the loss of self, all of which are involved in the notion of a Dionysian sparagmatics, originated in the nineteenth century and was given new impetus by the classicists Nietzsche and Erwin Rohde toward the end of the century (Henrichs, “Loss of Self, Suffering, Violence: The Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard,” Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 88 [1984]: 205–40).
Dandy contra d’Indy

To the extent that we wish to view this “Danse légère” as the composer’s musical self-portrait, its conflicted subjectivity leads us to question any commentary that has presented Ravel’s dandyism as a source of stable and unproblematic personal identity. Indeed, it is hardly a coincidence that the B section reaches out toward a Tristan-indebted semiotics to give voice to passionate suffering. Deeply moved by an orchestral performance on 1 November 1896 of the Prelude to Wagner’s music drama, the pianist Ricardo Viñes was unexpectedly touched on the hand by his companion Ravel, who had apparently noticed his friend’s reaction and sympathized with it, confessing that, “It’s always like that, every time that I hear it.” As Viñes relates in his diary, at this moment “Ravel, who appears so cold and cynical, the super eccentric decadent, was trembling convulsively and crying like a child—but deeply, since his sobs escaped only in fits and starts [par à-coups].” Nowhere else in biographical commentary on Maurice Ravel do we find so clear an image of the dandy, interrupted in his sublimity.

Considering the “Danse légère” in its negative narrative role—that is, as opposed to the “Danse grotesque”—returns us to our initial perspective upon the Contest as a large-scale projection of the dichotomous volte-face. Moreover, if we may understand their opposition as establishing a contrast between “good” and “bad” music, as the dramatic scenario invites us to do, then the Contest must convey some sense of Ravel’s musical and aesthetic values. In fact, once we situate Daphnis’s Dance within both the ballet and his compositional career, it attains the status of an artistic manifesto. Shortly before Ravel received the commission for this ballet in 1909, he complained to his friend Cipa Godebski about the “rotten musicians” of the Société Nationale who, according to the composer, “can’t even orchestrate so they fill in the gaps with ‘Turkish music.’ Craftsmanship is replaced by fugal diversions, and themes from Pelléas make up for the lack of inspiration. And all of this makes a noise! from the gong, tambourine, military drum, glockenspiel, and cymbals, used at random.” As is well known, Ravel’s discontent with the administration and the aesthetic priorities of Vincent d’Indy’s Société Nationale inspired him to found a rival concert society, the Société Musicale Indépendante, whose first concert took place on 20 April 1910 in the Salle Érardin in Paris. As demonstrated in this debut, which featured Ravel’s Ma mère l’oye, Debussy’s D’un cahier d’esquisses, and Fauré’s Chanson d’Eve, the SMI embraced a lighter

102. Ravel, Ravel Reader, 103. The music that so disgusted Ravel on the 13 March 1909 Société Nationale concert included some or all of the following: Marcel Orban’s Symphony in D Minor, Pierre Bretagne’s Chants d’automne, Pierre Coindreau’s Le Chevalier Moine et les diables dans l’abbaye, Henri Mulet’s La Toussaint, Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht’s symphonic poem Pour le jour des premières neiges au vieux Japon, and the third movement from Paul le Flem’s Symphony in A (ibid., 104–5).
musical aesthetic than the SN, presenting the work of “a less organized group of young, free-spirited people” who “strove to perceive [their natural instinct’s] slightest external manifestations profoundly, and with more subtlety.” 103 The parallelism between the Dance Contest in *Daphnis* and the musical politics that coincided with its composition should now be clear: as the only instance of Turkish music that Ravel ever wrote, the “Danse grotesque” mercilessly caricatures the “rotten musicians” of the SN. Just as the SMI arose to challenge the preexisting SN, so too does the “Danse légère” succeed the “Danse grotesque” to exemplify a more attractive counterideal. Calvocoressi’s testimony that Ravel began composition of *Daphnis* with the music for the “Danse légère” suggests that he may have identified with the Dance and its protagonist. 104

While we may never know whether d’Indy ever grasped the covert polemics in the Dance Contest, during the period of *Daphnis*’s composition he was formulating a musical-political critique of his own in the opera *La légende de Saint-Christophe*, composed between 1903 and 1915. 105 Here, he mocks the Impressionists in terms resembling those in which Ravel lambasted his group in the “Danse grotesque”—as the producers of formless, arbitrarily designed, garishly exoticized rubbish. When a visual image of the guild of “False Artists” (“Faux Artistes”) is presented in *La légende*—the foremost members bearing a gray standard emblazoned with the Latin word “Pigritia” (“Sloth”)—some carry “shapeless blocks of stone,” others “canvasses spotted with various colors,” and a third group “bizarre oriental instruments that they don’t even seem able to play,” all of them chanting the following:

> Instigators [“Fauteurs”] of a rare and tenuous art,  
> We make fashion and follow it.  
> Let everything be lowered to our height [“taille”].  
> Down with enthusiasm! Down with Ideal Art!  
> No more rules, no more studies,  
> Let’s make it small, let’s make it original. 106


106. “Fauteurs d’un art tenu et rare, / Nous faisons la mode et nous la suivons. / Que tout soit abaissé à notre taille. / Haine à l’enthousiasme! Haine à l’art idéal! / Plus de règles, plus d’études, / Faisons petit, faisons original” (d’Indy, piano-vocal score for *La légende de Saint-Christophe* [Paris: Rouart, Lerolle & Cie., 1918], 100–101 [R89.7–91.1]). In his stage directions for *La légende*, d’Indy makes clear that the various guilds are not to be represented by actual
Martin Cooper has described the music of the False Artists as “a parody, fairly nondescript, of ‘modern’ cacophony,” adding that “it would not be difficult to understand it—especially in conjunction with ‘faisons petit’—as a hit at Ravel.”

As shown in Example 7a, percussion, offbeat outbursts, and tone clusters are just as important in the music of the False Artists as in the “Danse grotesque” for representing poorly crafted cacophony and bungled exoticism. (Note especially the use of the bass drum, military drum, tambourine, and cymbals to similar purpose in the two pieces.) Despite these musical coincidences, however, d’Indy’s caricature differs fundamentally from Ravel’s: the hypermasculine Dorcon cannot be confused with the effeminate False Artists, whose music sounds mainly in an upper register, is adorned with high trills and tremoli, and is garnished with capricious ornamentation and swooping glissandi. In Example 7b the coup de grâce—with an emphasis upon “grâce”—occurs simultaneously with the line that Cooper singles out as most clearly directed at Ravel, at which point we hear quasi-Baroque dotted rhythms that debouch into a succession of added-note sonorities reminiscent of the Histoires naturelles and the Valses nobles et sentimentales. If Ravel slandered d’Indy and his ilk as Turkish brutes in Daphnis, d’Indy reviles Ravel and his artistic kin in La légende as effete dandies pursuing originality through the most frivolous of means.

**Dandyism beyond Daphnis**

If one wished to articulate a more general phenomenon of musical dandyism in Ravel’s œuvre, grace, caprice, irony, paradox, and pastiche—all of which help to unify Ravel’s otherwise variegated repertory—would undoubtedly figure significantly as stylistic determinants. Current research on Ravel invites the theorization of musical dandyism just as readily as earlier commentary by Roland-Manuel and Vladimir Jankélévitch, who introduced the now widely accepted, dandy-related notions of “imposture” and “masks” over seventy years ago. More recently Thomas Kabisch, author of the entry on Ravel in the second edition of Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, has placed dandyism at the center of reception history for this composer, claiming that “problems of understanding between Ravel and subsequent generations generally

performers marching across the stage, but rather either by the gradual unfolding of a panorama or by “colored projections”; the chorus that sings the various guild songs can be seated onstage, but should be hidden from the audience by the placement of the scenery (ibid., 90).


Example 7 The music of the “false artists” in d’Indy’s *La légende de Saint-Christophe* (Piano-vocal score, Paris: Rouart, Lerolle & Cie, 1918)

(a) R89.1-8

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89
Grosse Caisse – Cymbales
Tamb. de Basque – Tambour

Xylophone, Celesta et Harpe.

mf

Tén.

LES FAUX ARTISTES

Bas.

Faub teurs d’un art té nu et

Fau teurs d’un art té nu et

sfz
```
stem from the fact that he, in both his life and his music, followed the Baudelairean model of the dandy, whose modernity and anti-bourgeois impulse were no longer immediately comprehensible after World War I, at the very latest." 109 Although the phrase “subsequent generations” is most likely supposed to refer to members of the postwar European avant-garde (Les Six and Boulez, for example), what intrigues me in this claim is the potential

impact that a clear and comprehensive theory of Ravel’s dandyism would have upon the current reception of this composer, which is still very much unsettled and would benefit greatly from any attempts to air and resolve these “problems of understanding.” My efforts here to theorize dandyism in the “Danse légère” are intended, of course, to make some contribution to such a rapprochement.

Any resonance between Ravel’s musical dandyism and “camp” could offer a new and illuminating perspective on his artistic achievements, and thus a fresh way to think about its relevance to our time, especially as queer art. Immediately, however, we must confront a question that affords no easy answer: what is camp? Having recently compiled a massive anthology and bibliography of camp, Fabio Cleto is in a good position to speak to this issue:

Tentatively approached as sensibility, taste, or style, reconceptualised as aesthetic or cultural economy, and later asserted/reclaimed as (queer) discourse, camp hasn’t lost its relentless power to frustrate all efforts to pinpoint it down to stability, and all the ‘old’ questions remain to some extent unsettled: about how camp might be defined and historicised, about its relation—be it ontological or happenstantial—to homosexuality (is it an exclusively gay cultural mode of representation, or what? if so, how subversive is it and how much does it comply, or has it historically complied, with the compulsory heterosexual, and both gyno- and homophobic, dominant structures of interpelling?), where and in what forms it can be traced, and about its relation to postmodern epistemology and theories of textuality/subjectivity.110

These enormous issues notwithstanding, an obvious (albeit controversial) starting point for such inquiry might be Susan Sontag’s 1961 essay “Notes on Camp.” After describing camp at length in dandyist terms—as decoration, artifice, style, play, being as seeming, Baudelairean “gravity in frivolity,” andrognity, archaeophilia, eighteenth-century rococo, and Art Nouveau—Sontag finally declares camp to be “the modern dandyism.”111 According to Sontag, the main distinction between the original dandy and his modern


111. Susan Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’ ” in Against Interpretation and Other Essays (New York: Dell, 1961), 288. Since its appearance almost fifty years ago, Sontag’s essay has been criticized as energetically as it has been celebrated; controversial aspects have included her alleged desexualization and depoliticization of camp, her alignment of camp with bourgeois practices, and her spurious distinction between “naive” and “deliberate” camp.
counterpart is the latter’s ability to delight in vulgarity and mass culture, instead of despising and repudiating them.

Although “vulgar” might ultimately be too strong to describe any aspect of Ravel’s meticulous art, several potentially campy examples of a departure from highbrow aesthetics immediately come to mind: the colloquial declamation of French in the *Histoires naturelles*, the moment-by-moment mimicry of stage action in the operas and ballets, and the whole-hearted embrace of pastiche throughout. In addition, in his essay on *Daphnis* Lawrence Kramer entertains the possibility that the ballet, with its commodified artifice, was designed for mass consumption—an appreciation, in other words, of “modern dandyism” in Ravel that awaits a more general application to his repertory. But the campiest aspect of these tendencies might be the apparent *exuberance* with which Ravel engages in them; one need only recall the loud, fast, and flamboyantly dissonant opening to the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* to reexperience this overflowing joy.

Lacking the time and space necessary to flesh out these macroscopic possibilities, however, we will instead track the dandy’s footprints in Ravel’s œuvre so that we may fit the image of Daphnis-as-dandy into a fuller context. It can hardly be coincidence that several examples—*Jeux d’eau* (1901), the setting of Tristan Klingsor’s poems in *Shéhérazade* (1903; see the discussion of “L’indifférent” above), *Miroirs* (1905), and the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (1911)—are associated with the Apaches, the group of male artists to which Ravel belonged, and which met regularly from the turn of the century up to World War I, forming a greenhouse for the communal fostering of refined aesthetic sensibilities. Before a single note of the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* sounds, its allegiance to dandyism is already evident in the epigraph from the Apache Henri de Régnier that Ravel pinned to the work’s lapel: “The delicious pleasure of a useless occupation,” which unmistakeably recalls Baudelaire’s categorical imperative of the dandy not to reduce life to a “repugnant *utility,*” but rather to take pleasure blatantly and flagrantly in uselessness. *Jeux d’eau* (1901), the other work by Ravel to feature an epigraph by Régnier—“the river god laughing at the water that tickles him”—exhibits a dandyist flair for textural differentiation and frequent, unexpected transformation rivaled only by “Noctuelles.” A fleet-fingered study in musical volatility and coquetterie, this quasi-prelude to the piano set *Miroirs* (1905) assumes as its proper register a relatively high range, which it leaves frequently to indulge in cadenzas that cascade up and down the piano; sudden changes in

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113. Baudelaire, “Peinture de la vie moderne,” 1178. This attitude surfaces not only in Ravel’s specific choice of epigraph for the *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, but also in a letter of 10 January 1923 in which he recommended that a young Jean Françaix pursue the ‘pleasurable’ career of composition (*Ravel Reader*, 232–33).
meter and texture demonstrate the dandy’s penchant for l'imprévu in a manner that recalls Daphnis’s leaps in the “Danse légère.” Since each piece in Miroirs is dedicated to a member of the Apaches, it is reasonable to suppose that the moths fluttering about in the prose poem by Léon-Paul Fargue from which “Noctuelles” drew its title represented, at least for Ravel, the like-minded members of this homosocial group and their late-night conviviality.

The more specific issues of the dandy’s sublimity and its “interruption” arise in a series of three pieces—“Le paon” (“The Peacock”); from Histoires naturelles), “Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête” (“Conversations of Beauty and the Beast”; from Ma mère l’oye [1908–10]), and “Placet futile” (“Futile Petition”; from Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé [1913])—that share with the “Danse légère” several characteristics: each is in F major, draws upon that key’s historical connotations of pastorality and eros, sets a dramatic scenario that is concerned with courtship, and features a musical process that interrelates primary, dandified material cast in a precious, static, and antiquated style, and secondary “interruptive” material whose chromaticism and dynamism differentiate it from the primary material.

As a member of the scandal-causing Histoires naturelles, “Le paon” helps to fulfill the cycle’s twin dandyist aims to find gravity in the frivolous and frivolity in the serious: framing a rustic scene within the urbane genre of the mélodie (and the Baroque instrumental genre of the pompous overture) realizes the former, while the depiction of the peacock’s desperation realizes the latter. The critical-parodic impulse here ostensibly derives from Renard’s poetry, which illuminates cracks in the façade of the beautiful by laying bare the self-delusion that buoys up the peacock’s pride.

Just as the peacock abandons its self-composure to cry out for its fiancée, so too does their music—as the mirror before which these dandies “live and sleep”—deviate from its established patterns to register the interruption of his sublimity; the shrieks of “Léon! Léon!” at the midpoint of the song are violent and tragic, replacing the peacock’s Don Inigo–like persona as a self-important


115. I find especially attractive the possibility of understanding the inordinately blurry tonal and metrical design in “Noctuelles” as representing the sound of the typically frenetic but titillating conversation among the Apaches, those nocturnally social butterflies.

116. The phrase “gravity in the frivolous” (“gravité dans le frivole”) appears in the famous chapter (9) on the dandy in Baudelaire’s “Peintre de la vie moderne,” 1179.
buffoon with that of the abandoned lover.\textsuperscript{117} The return of the peacock’s impassivity after its disruption is perhaps even more unsettling than the disruption itself. Once interrupted, sublimity, like innocence, can never be fully restored to its pristine state; likewise, elements of the reprise subsequent to measure 41 are subtly dislodged from their original pitch levels.

Unlike “Le paon,” “Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête” initially distributes sublime and nonsublime qualities between two characters before it maps them onto a single one: the Beast-turned-handsome-prince; “Les entretiens” thus incorporates the structures of both the Dance Contest and the “Danse légère.” Its musical-dramatic form can be divided into four sections that reduce the children’s tale to its essential elements: the presentation of the two characters (mm. 1–68), two bouts of pleading by the Beast and resistance by the Beauty that culminate in crises (mm. 69–105 and 106–45), the Beast’s transformation into the handsome prince as an ultimate solution to these crises (mm. 146–58), and a “happily ever after” codetta.\textsuperscript{118} It might seem as if the “Les entretiens” lacked a dandy-androgyne altogether, if one did not actually hear the music that Ravel composed to represent the Beast’s sublime transformation into a male Beauty. The contrast made by transposing the contrabassoon’s original theme up five octaves into the solo violin (using harmonics to begin on a stratospheric f\textsuperscript{#4}) is even more exaggerated than that in the related \textit{volte-face} in \textit{Daphnis}, thereby making the prince’s melody sound unnaturally, almost grotesquely “beautiful”—it does not represent a musical persona that we would normally associate with any male character (except, perhaps, for a castrato). On the one hand, the codetta of “Les entretiens,” like that of the “Danse légère,” reinforces the moral of the story by recapitulating it in small: the momentary incursion of a black-key altered dominant recalls the libidinally charged, beastly episode of the story proper, while the dominant’s resolution reassures us that the unseemly threat has indeed been dispelled. On the other hand, lingering memories of the Beast’s transformation seem to admonish us to be careful about what we wish for, else these musical genetics present us with an unclassifiable member of the third sex—a prince more “beautiful” than Beauty herself.

As in both “Les entretiens” and the \textit{volte-face}, the assignment of specific themes to distinct registers is crucially important for Ravel’s setting of

\textsuperscript{117} An interesting comparison can be made between “Le paon” (1907) and Debussy’s first \textit{Ballade de François Villon}, “Ballade de Villon à s’amye” (1910), a lamentation on love lost whose climax at m. 20 (“Haro, haro, le grand et le mineur!”) bears close affinity to the climax of “Le paon.” Arbie Orenstein presents Debussy’s two contrasting comments from 1907 on Ravel’s \textit{Histoires naturelles} in \textit{Ravel: Man and Musician}, 53, and reprints the originals in \textit{A Ravel Reader}, 86–87.

\textsuperscript{118} This version of the tale is drawn from the collection \textit{Magasin des enfants} (1756) by Marie Leprince de Beaumont. Ravel’s version makes explicit the relevant moments of their conversations by including them in the piece as epigraphic material.
Mallarmé’s “Placet futile.” The song begins with an instrumental prelude that is structured as a pantomime between an abbot and the princess he adores. A capricious motive relatively high in the winds evokes her presence, while an inversion of this motive set low in the first violin marks his. The lack of dynamic or expressive inflection in her motive bespeaks a cool indifference, whereas the warmth of his motive (given dynamic shape and played on the G string, *expressif* and *très ralenti*) communicates ardent desire. After this exchange is repeated once, the singer enters with the abbot’s petition for her affectionate attention. In light of the hyperbolic preciosity of the petition, which culminates in the abbot’s request to be named the “shepherd of [her] smiles,” he seems to tread the same fine line between dependent courtier and independent dandy that Daphnis does.

The music of “Placet futile” cleaves closely to Mallarmé’s sonnet, its thematic material dividing into halves between the second quatrain and the first tercet, and subdividing further to distinguish the individual quatrains and tercets in each pair. While registering the poem’s natural division into two, and even four, segments, Ravel nevertheless manages to embed a tripartite scheme into the two quatrains whose ABA’ divisions align exactly with the first three rehearsal numbers. Similar to the “Danse légère,” this scheme allows Ravel to represent the dandy in his contrasting states of composure (the A sections) and emotional dissolution (the B section). The emotion that radiates from lines 5 and 6—the lines set by the musically fluent B section—is a bitter jealousy, legible in the sense of the text and audible in its phonology (“Comme je ne suis pas ton bichon embarbé, / Ni la pastille, ni du rouge, ni jeux mièvres”). The music for these lines does not adopt the caustic, reproachful tone of the text, however, but rather surges up and down pitch space in small durations, counterpointing the Princess motive against the rising motive that first appeared in the first violin of measure 7. While the former enters in stretto as the plaything of a jealous mind, the latter is enlarged to a symmetrical sighing gesture—the “petition” in all its glorious hope and despair—that crescendos and decrescendos over two measures.

Thus, we may add “Placet futile” to the group of pieces by Ravel that represent the dandy in both his sublimity and its interruption. In addition, the coordination of the musical interruption with the dandy’s expression of jealousy is reminiscent of the link between jealousy and desire that we established in the opening discussion of the “geste brusque” in *Daphnis*. Here, however, the importance of “Placet futile” exceeds these points by speaking to the situation of the artist between desire and its sublimation into art, and the role that the

119. This embedded structure is probably what Robert Gronquist was referring to when he described “Placet futile” as having a “tripartite form” (“Ravel’s *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé,*” *Musical Quarterly* 64 [1978]: 517).

120. “Since I am not your bewhiskered lapdog, / Nor lozenge, nor rouge, nor affected games” (translation from Maurice Ravel, *Songs 1896–1914* [New York: Dover, 1990], xxv).
imagined Muse plays in sustaining both. Of equal significance to the magnification of desire’s symbol in the B section is the ambitus of its swell, which seeks to overcome the registral distance separating the Princess’s tessitura from the abbot’s. The rise and inevitable fall of the petitioning sigh recalls the white fountain’s parabola toward and away from the azure ideal in the first poem of Ravel’s Mallarmé set. In both contexts, the feminine figures invoked—the “calm sister,” the Princess—stand in for the artist’s Muse, whose presence (and degree of distance) drives the production of art; if the petition were ever to be granted, desire would cease, as would the art that it helps to generate.

In his 1907 setting of Verlaine’s “Sur l’herbe” (“On the Grass”), Ravel treats the figure of the abbot more whimsically, as befits the character’s distracted, flirtatious conversation in the poem. In Mallarmé/Ravel’s solitary scene, however, the abbot commands attention, not simply because he is richly dandified, but rather because he represents the (symbolist) artist in his oscillation between the poles of desire and its sublimation. At this point in our discussion, we progress from “Dandyism beyond Daphnis” to “Daphnis beyond Dandyism.” Mallarmé’s representation of the artist as a flutist in the penultimate line of “Placet futile,” as well as Ravel’s incorporation of a musical pantomime in the instrumental introduction, brings to mind one of the classic representations of desire and its sublimation: the myth of Pan and Syrinx, as performed in the Pantomime from Daphnis. In this scene Daphnis and Chloe act out the myth of Pan and Syrinx in homage to the pastoral god who rescued Chloe from the pirates; the performance of this myth is a reflexive moment that allows Daphnis and Chloe to rehearse their courtship in masquerade. As is well known from Ovid’s Metamorphoses, when Pan pursues Syrinx, she flees his lust and vanishes into a bed of reeds; his desire unrequited, Pan cuts some reeds from the bed, fashions from them a flute (namely, the “syrinx” or “panpipes”), and—according to the ballet libretto—plays “un air mélancolique” to which Chloe dances.

The reflexive import of this myth extends well beyond its relation to the protagonists. Rather, it suggests that the entire artwork Daphnis et Chloé originates in desire and its sublimation: male desire, specifically for Chloe, drives the drama; the sublimation of unrequited male desire brings music into the world as a means of expression and consolation; dance arises in response to music, thereby restoring embodiment to music’s sublimated desire. Insofar as Pan uses his “air mélancolique” to reminiscence dolefully upon his failed encounter with Syrinx, the close relation between this flute solo and the equally improvisational opening theme of Daphnis (R1) invites us to interpret the


122. For an interpretation of the Pan/Syrinx myth according to the notion of sublimated desire—one that happens to resonate well with Mallarmé’s poetics of absence—see Lacan, Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 163.
whole work as an extended, fantastic reminiscence, born from the desire to resurrect an irrecoverable past.\textsuperscript{123}

\textbf{Mirrors of Ink and Sound}

Our broader consideration of musical dandyism in Ravel originated in the analysis of the \textit{volte-face} in \textit{Daphnis et Chloé}, the moment at which Daphnis shoves aside Dorcon before turning tenderly to Chloe. This musical-dramatic sequence is as provocative as it is brief, projecting upon Daphnis a psychological complexity that he previously lacked. At first glance, the subsequent Dance Contest would seem to eliminate this complexity by dissociating violent expressions of sexual desire from Daphnis and ascribing them instead to Dorcon. A more sensitive musical analysis, however, suggests that the “Danse légère et gracieuse de Daphnis” does not disregard the psychological implications of the \textit{volte-face}, but rather incorporates them in a more refined manner. The framing sections of this dance instantiate the dandy as the personification of sublimated desire, while the contrasting interior section represents the Baudelairean “interruption” of this sublimity. The extremity of this contrast compelled us to consider the psychic processes-under-representation to have not merely sublimated but also repressed these libidinal contents, which erupt with a virulence typical of a Freudian “return of the repressed.” Finally, we traced the thread that sublimation, interruption, and the dandy combine to form in Ravel’s work, while also pursuing the political and autobiographical implications of the Dance Contest that inhere in comments made by Ravel and Viñes.

The most direct way to extend these findings is to continue developing our inchoate notion of musical dandyism. In addition to a consideration of “camp” in Ravel as “modern dandyism,” as we have discussed above, one could also investigate the contribution that the specific figure of the dandy made to modernist European music. The best-known representation of the dandy in this repertoire is probably Schoenberg’s “Der Dandy,” the third song from \textit{Pierrot lunaire} (1912). Most recently, Jennifer Goltz has isolated various details in this piece that help to characterize the dandy in his vanity, effeminacy, and inconstancy: a high instrumental tessitura, volatile and ornamental textures, and dramatic shifts in dynamics, declamation, and register.\textsuperscript{124} Equally significant for our concerns, however, is the association that both poet and composer make between Pierrot, sublimation, and the dandy. Schoenberg first

\textsuperscript{123} I intend to pursue the interrelation of memory, desire, and sublimation in Ravel’s music at greater length in a monograph.

invokes the special timbre of harmonics in the piano to reflect in tones the “sublime style” in which Pierrot powders his face at the end of the song. This timbre notably reappears in “Rote Messe” (“Red Mass”; no. 11 in *Pierrot lunaire*) to accompany the same harmony (a minor-major seventh chord) in a song whose spectacle of rent vestments and a torn-out heart is otherwise a gory interruption of the dandy’s sublimity.

Another explicit contribution to the musical representation of the dandy is *Les trois valses distinguées du précieux dégoûté* (*The Three Distinguished Waltzes of a Jaded Dandy*), composed by Erik Satie in 1914. Given the extravagant appearance of the dandy, as well as the excessive attention that he is thought to lavish upon his appearance, most portraits of the dandy, whether literary or musical, are simultaneously caricatures of this creature in his narcissism. Thus, it is only natural for scholars to have understood Satie’s set as a parody, especially since he named each waltz after an aspect of the dandy that he would presumably fetishize: his waist, his monocle, and his legs. Satie’s first biographer Pierre-Daniel Templier suggested in 1932 that Satie was aiming at Ravel in his parody of the dandy, but it is probably more profitable to imagine, as Steven Whiting has recently suggested, that Satie was caricaturing himself as well.125 Indeed, the excessive accoutrement of the music with verbal texts of various sorts—the near-alexandrine of the set’s title, the individual titles and choice literary epigraphs for each waltz, the running narrative of the actions and thoughts of the dandy, and the directions for the pianist—is reminiscent of Barbey’s conspicuous footnoting of *Du dandysme* some sixty years before, an ornamental treatment of the text that he declared to be a signature gesture of the literary dandy. There is no space here to provide a thorough analysis of either the music of *Les trois valses* or its relation to the accompanying texts, but we can nevertheless mention a few points of overlap with the “Danse légère”—particularly in Waltz I—that help to support our interpretation of the latter as a representation of dandyism: a precious reference to fifteenth-century music in the “air” that the dandy hums to himself; a Baudelairean attitude of leisure in the tempo, meter, motivic repetition, and diatonicism of the waltz; and a disruption of this leisure by skewed, provocative harmonizations of the opening melody, in addition to subtler indications of psychological strain in subsequent textural discontinuities.

The reference to the *gommeur*—the eccentric character in *fin-de-siècle* Parisian cabaret—at the end of Satie’s first waltz opens up yet another path for future research: the relation of the dandy to a set of satellite figures that include not only Pierrot and the eccentric, but also the trickster and the androgynous. For anyone who has studied the music of this historical moment, this

motley crew would probably bring Debussy more swiftly to mind than any other composer, especially in light of his musical sketches of General Lavine, Pierrot, Pickwick, Puck, and Saint Sebastian. Indeed, once we realize how closely related the dandy is to these and other figures, the similarity of the opening of *Les trois valsest* to Debussy’s “Minstrels” (mediated through the eccentric) and “Danseuses de Delphes” (mediated perhaps through the gymnopedic androgyne) is so striking that one wonders why such a connection has not yet—at least to my knowledge—been mentioned and explored in print.

The force that holds these figures in orbit around the dandy might not, in fact, simply be a similarity in character (Baudelaire’s “gravity in frivolity”?) but also a shared potential for self-portraiture. I am using this term in two senses: as a representation that is merely secondary to the authorial self, and as a representation that actually constitutes this self. While the first form of self-portraiture is easily grasped, the second is somewhat more complex. A book that can help us clarify the second concept is Michel Beaujour’s *Miroirs d’encre: Rhétorique de l’autoportrait* (translated as *Poetics of the Literary Self-Portrait*). According to Beaujour, in response to the basic question that autobiography poses to its authors, “Who am I?” the self-portraitist typically replies, “I am this appearance”; I am, for instance, my ‘styles,’ my ‘writing,’ my ‘text’; or even, more radically, I am style, writing, text.”

In applying the Beaujourian notion of self-portraiture to Ravel, I do not wish to replace but only to offer an alternative to the more common model of autobiography whereby the textual self refers to a primary, nontextual self. Exclusion of the latter would needlessly dissolve the valuable links that we forged between the Dance Contest and contemporary musical politics, as well as threaten to lead us back into Thomas’s Aesthetic Fallacy and once again compel us to commit the crime of relegating queer sexuality to the domain of the imaginary and impersonal, instead of the real and personal. But the alternative of Beaujourian self-portraiture is no less valuable, insofar as it highlights the dandy’s greatest aspiration as an autobiographer: the transformation of the self into art through an act of sublimation that redefines the textual self as the primary self and the nontextual as the secondary. The continual possibility to fashion and refashion the self that this reversal offers—a possibility limited only by the imagination of the self-portraitist—inspires the production of a potentially disorienting autobiographical text that suspends such dichotomies as true/untrue and authentic/inauthentic. Considering the thrall in which these dichotomies have often held Ravel reception over the past century, a theoriza-
tion of self-portraiture in his music might help us at last to escape these eddies of discourse and develop more productive ways to interrelate the man and his music—including, most prominently, dandyism, a life philosophy that aspires toward the pure fictionality of self, regardless of the artistic media into which it is transposed. For Ravel, the mirror in which he saw himself—the mirror before which, as Baudelaire says, the dandy lives and sleeps—was to adopt and extend the original title from Beaujour’s book, a mirror of ink and sound.

Works Cited


**Abstract**

Whether understood as the elevation of material to a higher state of aesthetic being or the redirection of the libido toward socially seemly ends, the concept of sublimation has played a central but underappreciated role in accounts of Ravel and his music over the past century. Similarly, Ravel’s identity as a dandy—who, according to Baudelaire, aspires to be “sublime without interruption”—has been mentioned consistently in biographical appraisals, but never deeply investigated. Incorporating a representation of the dandy’s genesis from the sublimation of desire, Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909–1912) offers the analyst an excellent opportunity to examine both entities in depth while also broaching a variety of related topics: repression, queer sexuality, camp aesthetics, contemporary musical politics (dandyism versus d’Indyism), and theories of autobiography.

Keywords: Ravel, *Daphnis et Chloé*, dandy, sublimation, repression