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L'Hirondelle et le Corbeau: Écrits sur Gérard de Nerval (Book Review)

Juliana Starr

University of New Orleans, jstarr1@uno.edu

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In an essay comparing Bourget's brief columns published in *Le Parlement* with longer pieces written for *La Nouvelle Revue* (subsequently published as *Essais de psychologies contemporaines*), André Guyaux describes how Bourget became a sharp and insightful critic of the literature of his time. Laurent Dubreuil examines Paul Bourget's criticism, in particular the relation between Bourget's "subjectivity" as a reader and his "objective" knowledge of society. In her informative essay, Silvia Disegni recounts Bourget's relationship with Count Primoli, Princess Mathilde's nephew, who served as Bourget's Cicerone in Rome. Four essays offer different views of Paul Bourget, the writer. Jean Borie's well-documented essay examines *Le Disciple* as a remake of Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir*, and identifies Bouget's ideological affinity with the conservative ideas expressed in Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules* and Paul Adam's *Le Mystères des foules*. Béatrice Laville analyzes Bourget's *L'Étape* and uses that novel to discuss the problems inherent in the *roman à thèse*, a genre often reviled by writers. With an insightful essay comparing Bourget with Maupassant, Laure Helms discovers a shared point of interest in human beings incapable of loving, in Maupassant's *Notre cœur* and Bourget's *Un Cœur de femme*. Daniel Sangsue's perceptive analysis of Bourget's fantastic short stories and the novel *Fantôme* provides context about the spiritualism that was the rage of the times. Marie-Ange Fougère adds a nuanced discussion of the wit (*esprit*) that she discovers primarily in Bourget's critical writings. The remaining articles of the volume broach subjects as diverse as Bourget's interest for the young generation (Denis Pernot); the double yet opposing influences of Hippolyte Taine and Herbert Spencer on early Bourget works (Sophie Spandonis); the relevance of Bourget's writings to contemporary literary criticism (Laurent Dubreuil); Bourget's "Paradoxe sur la couleur" (Michela Tonti); and the symbolist writers' rejection of Bourget's "Théorie de la décadence."

This collection of diverse, edifying essays is a welcome and long overdue prelude to Paul Bourget studies that, one may hope, will contribute to a richer understanding not only of Paul Bourget but of the complex literary scene in *fin de siècle* France. This book should make it impossible for students of the Nineteenth century to ignore Paul Bourget's perceptive insights into the French society and literature of his time. The present volume may also stir the interest of readers ready to embark on a new literary journey. Let us hope that new editions of Bourget's best fiction works will follow.

Gautier, Théophile. *L'Hirondelle et le corbeau: Écrits sur Gérard de Nerval*. Eds. Michel Brix and Hisashi Mizuno. Bassac: Plein Chant, 2007. Pp 221. ISBN 978-2-85452-285-3

Juliana Starr, University of New Orleans

"Nos écritures étaient sœurs comme nos cœurs étaient frères." Thus wrote fondly Théophile Gautier in 1872 of his good friend and fellow writer three years his senior, Gérard de Nerval, deceased since 1855. The significant number of texts that Gautier wrote about his friend have remained largely scattered throughout disparate periodicals, despite the renown of both authors and the considerable amount of research dedicated to them. But with their collection of Gautier's writings on Nerval from 1837–72, Michel Brix and Hisashi Mizuno attempt to remedy this problem by assembling these

little-known texts – mostly reviews and prefaces – for the first time in a single volume. Hence, one of the main merits of the book is that it allows us to form a coherent view of Nerval and his work through the eyes of his friend and contemporary. Perhaps the most surprising result of this felicitous effort is the emergence of a unique image of the translator of Faust and the author of *Sylvie*, *Aurélia* and *Les Chimères* – that of a talented playwright and librettist! Indeed, who knew? Apparently, before 1855, every time that one of Nerval's plays was being performed on a Parisian stage, Gautier never failed to write an article.

The first half of this volume thus offers, in chronological order, Gautier's complete reviews, published in *La Presse* from 1837–51. Included among others are *Piquillo* (a three-act comic opera, with libretto by Nerval and Alexandre Dumas), *L'Alchimiste* (a Faust-themed, five-act drama in verse, another collaboration with Dumas), *Léo Burckart* (a five-act drama set in Germany, yet another collaboration with Dumas), *Les Monténégrins* (a three-act comic opera and Bohemian ghost story, with music by the little-known Belgian composer Limnander), *Une Nuit blanche* (an unpublished, one-act fantasy), *Le Chariot d'enfant* (an adaptation by Nerval and orientalist Joseph Méry of a 4th-century Indian melodrama), and *L'Imagier de Harlem* (a five-act drama about the invention of the printing press). Thus, if the fact that Nerval wrote plays and librettos is surprising, so too is the method, for virtually every work is a collaboration of at least two authors – something quite difficult to imagine in an icon of Romanticism, in a supposedly solitary genius. Surprising also is the knowledge with which Gautier writes about opera. Far from offering a mere analysis of the plot elements and costumes, something that many literary types are constrained to do, Gautier writes skillfully about musical phrasing, colors, melody, motifs, and counterpoint, while drawing comparisons between little-known and well-known composers. Gautier's insights about music are surely one of the most unique aspects of this book.

If the first half of the volume paints Nerval as a man of the theater, the second, with its reviews of prose texts and travel narratives, its prefaces and necrological article, is dedicated to Nerval's tragic death, love of the Orient, and contributions to Romanticism – contributions which are seen as being largely in the domains of theater and prose. Indeed, according to the editors' introduction, Gautier's assessment of Nerval differed greatly from ours, his challenging and much-admired collection of sonnets, *Les Chimères*, remaining largely unread and misunderstood during his lifetime. The introduction is also of great interest in its moving portrait of a lifelong friendship – one that began at the collège Charlemagne in Paris, where the two young students were voracious readers who often played hooky, then continued through the prestigious gatherings at Victor Hugo's Cénacle. The editors trace the friendship through the author's rooming with Arsène Houssaye, their collaboration on the newspapers *Figaro* and *La Presse*, and finally, through Nerval's many bouts with mental illness. Gautier was one of the first to go identify Nerval at the morgue, and contributed, with Houssaye, to the purchase of his tombstone. Such moving details make this book worthwhile reading. What emerges is a greater understanding of Gautier's affinity for perhaps the most German of all the French Romantics – one who attempted to reconcile dream and reality, spirit and sensation, the ideal and the concrete, magic geography and local color – in short, a writer who sought to join German reverie

and French irony. Hence, in somewhat the same way that Gautier's writings impacted Nerval's legacy, (both Proust and Breton, for instance, admired Gautier's 1868 preface to Nerval's *Œuvres Complètes*), so this book makes an important contribution to the posterity of both authors, by showing them in a new and different light.

Brix, Michel. *Hugo et Sainte-Beuve: Vie et mort d'une amitié "littéraire."* Paris: Editions Kimé, 2007. Pp. 144. ISBN 978-2-84174-413-8

Isabel K. Roche, Bennington College

In this essay, Brix revisits the Hugo-Sainte-Beuve friendship and its demise, seeking to nuance the widely accepted biographical explanations for the split (Sainte-Beuve's romantic relationship with Adèle, his envy of Hugo's success) by exploring the significant role in their falling out played by a number of literary factors, namely tensions within the Romantic movement and divergent positions relative to the role of the critic and the function of art. In this, Brix succeeds not only in illuminating the multiple and lesser-known sources of discord in their relationship but also in making a compelling case for restoring the often-maligned Sainte-Beuve to a more prominent place in literary history.

The first chapter, "Biographiques," traces Hugo and Sainte-Beuve's friendship from its harmonious beginning in the late 1820s to its acrimonious end in the mid 1830s. Brix supplements the chronological biographical account that he provides of this period with critical commentary that lays the groundwork for the arguments that will be made in subsequent chapters relative to Sainte-Beuve's esthetic penchants, literary models and poetics, and views on the role of the critic and literary criticism in general. The portrait of an earnest, disciplined, and sympathetic Sainte-Beuve concurrently draws one of a largely unlikable Hugo, whose megalomania was fueled early on by the mutual adoration society of the *Cénacle* and a desire to "voir ses proches servir sa gloire naissante" (19). Anyone at odds, then, with Hugo's views, or who dared to offer constructive or outright criticism, was cast out of the inner circle. Carefully supporting his claims by an able use of primary sources (letters, articles and *comptes rendus* from contemporary literary journals), Brix suggests that, from Hugo's perspective, Sainte-Beuve's literary betrayal (his independent and sometimes negative judgments of Hugo's work) was in fact more significant than his personal one (the affair with Adèle).

The subsequent chapters chip further away at facile explanations for the falling out, each developing an aspect of the literary divide. In the second ("Le 'Judas' du Cénacle?"), Brix raises doubts around assertions that cast Sainte-Beuve in the role of traitor or Hugo-hater, proposing rather that Sainte-Beuve was torn between the desire to please his friend and the conviction that the literary critic must do his job dispassionately. Brix underscores the consistencies in Sainte-Beuve's criticisms of Hugo's poetry, theater, and novels – most notably the zest for excess and exaggeration – as well as the respect Sainte-Beuve earned from other nineteenth-century authors who recognized him as a skilled and thoughtful critic most often on the mark. Despite Hugo's revisionist claims that he had plucked Sainte-Beuve from obscurity, Sainte-Beuve established himself from early on as a critic of integrity and worth who was not afraid to ruffle feathers and whose advice was often sought out and heeded. The third chapter, "D'un