

The Literary Archaeologies of Théophile Gautier

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Abstract: In her article, "The Literary Archaeologies of Théophile Gautier," Sasha Colby considers the relationship between archaeology as an emerging nineteenth-century discipline and the history of modern poetics. By explicating Gautier's fiction and poetry within an archaeological context, Colby suggests the ways in which archaeology became not only an intriguing subject for late romantics and early modernists but also the ways in which archaeology conditioned an excavational mode of fictional and poetic practice. Incorporating history, Egyptology, psychology, and literary theory, Colby explores the impact of the archaeological enterprise on the nineteenth-century imagination through the work of one of its most influential experimenters.

Sasha COLBY

The Literary Archaeologies of Théophile Gautier

More than any other emerging discipline tied to the mid-nineteenth century rise of the humanities and the social sciences, archaeology embodied the temporal tensions of its age. Prehistoric archaeology, thrust into the spotlight by Darwin's 1859 publication of the *Origin of the Species*, supplied a history of human evolution that reinforced a teleological world-view, a view that frequently cited the value of technology, including the advanced stratigraphic machinery that was employed on archaeological sites by the mid-nineteenth century. Archaeology was, therefore, very much a science of the future, enabled by technology and lending scientific support to the ideology of human progress over time. At the same time, archaeology fed a cultural hunger for origins by establishing concrete, material bonds with the distant past. This tension between evolution, progress, and technology on the one hand and the desire to heal the rift between modernity and the rest of history on the other characterizes a fundamental schism in nineteenth century thought. In a similar manner, in the twentieth century, archaeology's perceived ability to tap into primal energies and intensities through disruptive modes of invasion -- the destruction of the surface combined with the uncovering of something "new" from the rubble of the past -- made the aesthetics of excavation powerful modes of modern expression. For pre-modernist and modernist writers, archaeology was not just a discipline; it was a series of imaginative templates -- a sequence of methods or approaches enriched by the constant oscillations between the object and the civilization it evoked, the fragment and the totality it called into being, solid earth and the layers that belied it. Changing in dynamics, subtlety and emphasis but retaining a nexus or complex of ideas, archaeological modes of thought tunnel through nineteenth and twentieth century writing, where the texts themselves are the topographies of sedimented meanings and encrypted significances.

One localized early example of archaeology's impact is in the work of the French Romantic writer Théophile Gautier. Egyptology, as a discipline, was still relatively unknown when Gautier began writing about it in the 1830s evidenced by the etymological appearance of *égyptologue* in 1827. While it had spawned an entire genre by the end of the nineteenth century, Gautier was one of the first literary writers to broach the archaeological project in the East. A blending of fact gleaned from emerging archaeological texts and blatant imaginative exoticism, Gautier's Egyptian antique nears the deepest stratum of what would become the layered folds of the Western archaeological imagination, a configuration that would become increasingly dense and complex as time went on. In this sense, Gautier's work can be considered at the base of archaeological modalities, containing some of the most basic implements for probing archaeological motifs, tools that would, nonetheless, create templates for subsequent evolutions in literary-archaeological approaches. These fundamental themes include the auratic importance of the archaeological relic, the parallel between archaeological regressions and dreams, the reclamation of the lost pantheistic landscape, and the mummified woman who embodies a conception of woman-as-earth and woman-as-past that pervades the modern literary topos. Additionally, and perhaps because Gautier's archaeology was so thoroughly a text-learned archaeology acquired through exposure to archaeological written accounts, writing itself is foregrounded, with particular attention to hieroglyphs, codes, and encryptions. Texts that are literally about archaeology, Gautier's scripts within scripts and sedimented significances also create a veritable archaeology of the text. The French interest in Egypt, in particular, gathered momentum throughout the nineteenth century, reaching its peak with the colossal display of Egyptian monuments and antiquities at the Parisian universal exhibition of 1867. Throughout the 1800s, publications, exhibitions, and salons propelled the rage for all things Egyptian: members of archaeological and tourist expeditions published articles and books; luxury and antiquarian imports from Egypt commanded top price on the European market; hair-styles, clothing, home decorating and architecture defined the look of the "Egyptian vogue"; intellectuals and artists attended the Louvre's exhibitions of Egyptian antiquities and read Champollion's *Monuments d'Égypte et de la Nubie* and Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute-Egypte* (*Voyage in Upper and Lower Egypt*); Paris celebrated the *peintres-voyageurs* Alexandre Decamps,

Eugène Delacroix, and Eugène Fromentin, created a visual imaginary of the Orient as the locus of the feminine erotic, the festive and the vibrant as well as the cruel and sadistic through scenes of Egyptian harems, baths, festivals, dances, seductions, and slaves. At the center of it all, an enormous obelisk from Egypt's Luxor Temple was erected at la Place de la Concorde in 1831. This symbol of colonial and archaeological appropriation standing at the crossroads of the modern metropolis was emblematic of the ways in which archaeology was imbedded in the very heart of an emerging modernity.

Egyptomania held equal sway in the literary sphere. Chateaubriand and Lamartine published two of the foundational Egyptian travelogues with *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* and *Souvenirs, impressions, pensées et paysages, pendant un voyage en orient (1832-1833)*. Gerard de Nerval also published an account of his Egyptian adventures, *Voyage en Orient*, the definitive version of which was published in 1852. Perhaps the most notorious adventurers in Egypt, Maxime du Camp and Gustave Flaubert, toured around the country for du Camp's government commissioned mission, taking calotypes of ancient Egyptian monuments. While Flaubert was more interested in the daily bustle of Egyptian life than in its artifacts, even he was disturbed by modernity's intrusion into an antique oasis and by the sense that the texture of ancient Egypt was corroding in the face of the modern Western invasion: "It is time to hurry," he wrote in a letter to his friend, Théophile Gautier: "Before very long the Orient will no longer exist. We are perhaps the last of its contemplators" (qtd. in Reid 87). Gautier did not arrive in Egypt until 1859, when he was commissioned to report on the Suez Canal ceremonies for the *Journal Officiel*. Even then, he saw very little of the country as he dislocated his shoulder boarding the ship in Marseilles and was mostly hotel-bound during his stay in Cairo. Before this ill-fated foray into the "land of dreams," however, Gautier had written extensively on Egypt and Egyptological themes in, among others, *Une nuit de Cléopâtre* (1838) and *Le Pied de Momie* (1840), and most famously, *Le Roman de la Momie* (1857). Considered to be some of the most influential archaeological texts of the nineteenth century and often accurate in their most minute descriptions of ancient sites, Gautier wrote them before ever seeing Egypt. Yet the fact that these Egyptological works are imaginary, drawn from archaeological records and accounts, salon paintings, world exhibitions, travels in Spain, Algeria, and Constantinople and from conversations with du Camp, de Nerval, and Flaubert, is perhaps more telling than if Gautier had written on the shores of the Nile. More than any other writer of the time, Gautier's writings are illustrative of a French *mentalité* of Egyptology, a world-view constructed through the web of archaeological texts and images of Egypt that flooded mid-nineteenth century Paris. At once an exotic dream world and an increasingly excavated, charted, and quantified location, Gautier's renderings of ancient Egypt vacillate between decadent aesthetic fantasy and historical exactitude. As Luc Vives has aptly put it, in writing his archaeological romances, Gautier was enmeshed in a double preoccupation: "maintaining the Egyptian phantasm (l'Égypte rêvée) and egyptological erudition (l'Égypte textuelle) ... in sum, dreaming knowledge and disciplining the imagination" (54). And as Jean Carré has noted, most of Gautier's archaeological education came from books and his ability to accurately depict ancient landscapes increased in accordance with the growing availability of archaeological texts. In 1838, when Gautier composed *Une nuit de Cléopâtre* (*One of Cleopatra's Nights*), only the first volumes of Champollion's posthumous *Monuments d'Égypte et de la Nubie* (*Monuments of Egypt and Nubia*) had been published. The works of D'Avennes, Lepsius, and Rosellini that would create an archaeological paradigm for the nineteenth century reading public were not yet available. As a result, Carré notes that Gautier's early archaeological novels are full of historical flaws and Greek and Roman substitutions, anachronisms that disappear in Gautier's later work as accurate Egyptological texts became increasingly available.

It was not until 1852, during the writing of *Le Roman de la Momie*, that Gautier claimed that he was finally able to make Egypt "amusing" without sacrificing "rigorous exactitude" in all "historical and archaeological details" (qtd. in Carré 151). Most of this newly acquired knowledge of archaeology came through the library of his friend Ernest Feydeau, a respectable Egyptologist, whose main contribution to archaeological scholarship was *Histoire des usages funèbres et des sépultures des peuples anciens*, a volume on the funeral practices of the Egyptians in the 18th and

19th dynasty (1500 B.C.). In Feydeau's library, Gautier immersed himself in some of the most important archaeological texts of the mid-1900s: *Travels in Ethiopia* by Hoskins, *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* by Wilkinson, Belzoni's *Researches and Operations in Egypt and Nubia*, plus the collected works of Champollion, Rosellini, Lepsius, and d'Avennes. *Le Roman de la Momie* is dedicated to Feydeau, and the wording of the dedication is indicative of the ways in which Gautier valued the scholarship imparted to him by his friend: "I dedicate this book to you, which is your due; in opening up to me your erudition and your library, you made me believe I was a scholar and that I knew enough about ancient Egypt to describe it; in your footsteps I walked in temples, in palaces, in hypogeums, the city of the living and the city of the dead; you lifted the mysterious Isis before me and resuscitated a giant disappeared civilization. The history is from you; the novel is from me; all I had to do was reunite through style, like through the cement of a mosaic, all of the precious stones that you brought me" (*The Mummy's Romance*). The most interesting line of this dedication is perhaps the last one, where Gautier suggests that "style" is the unifying "cement" that allows the author to create a historical novel from archaeological sources. In essence, this suggests that archaeological details are fragments which must be pieced together through the artist's talent. This reconstructive act of piecing fragments together to create a coherent narrative is one of the ways in which Gautier seems to be suggesting that writing, too, is an inherently reconstructive and, therefore, "archaeological" act. Yet this posture is also illustrative of early archaeological aesthetics, where it is assumed that fragments must be narrated into coherent wholes. The aesthetic of the shard, unadulterated and unornamented, was a later development in modern poetic adoptions of archaeological remains.

The Mummy's Romance, Gautier's most accurate narration of archaeological fragments, is in fact a double narrative, as it is a text within a text, a story encased within another story. The prologue features two British explorers, the scholar Rumphius and his patron, Lord Evandale, who follow their Greek guide into the Valley of the Kings and discover an unviolated Egyptian tomb. Contrary to their expectations, the tomb belongs to an Egyptian queen, Tahoser, rather than to one of the pharaohs. While examining the mummy, the adventurers find a papyrus. The second part of the novel is ostensibly Rumphius' translation of the hieroglyphs, which tell the story of Tahoser, a young woman, who falls in love with an Israelite but marries the Pharaoh, who also desires her, in order to prevent him from massacring the Israelites. When the Pharaoh dies, Tahoser rules over Egypt, and it is her body that is entombed along with the papyrus that describes the course of her life. The motif of a deciphered papyrus within a text was a theme that had been written into nineteenth century French literature before. In Baudelaire's translation of "The Young Enchanter," a scholar cannot unroll a newly discovered papyrus and read the story written on it without another part of the tale disintegrating. This material difficulty is echoed in *The Mummy's Romance* through Rumphius's concern that all of the hieroglyphics on the Tahoser papyrus are not completely legible. This occlusion, a distance, or an inability to achieve perfect translation are suggestive of the ways in which texts themselves were increasingly perceived as material sites that conceal. Partly metaphorical, the challenges of disintegration and decipherment literally correlate with the acknowledged difficulties of the nineteenth century archaeological enterprise. Antonio Piaggio, a custodian of the Vatican library, was well known across Europe for building a complicated machine of pigs' bladders, thread, and winches precisely for the purpose of unrolling papyri without having them disintegrate. Similarly, the agonies of decipherment were disseminated through tales of the thirty-year process of decoding the Rosetta Stone. A daily concern in archaeology, the labours of unearthing, deciphering, decoding, and translating became processual metaphors for literary pursuits. Vives, for example, points to Victor Hugo's comment: "we arrive at the truth that everything is hieroglyphic, and we know that symbols are only relatively obscure ... What is a poet (I use this word in its largest sense), if not a translator, a decipherer?" (64). In Gautier, the role of the poet as translator is compounded by a sense of writer as archaeologist: a stylistic cements of archaeological erudition, an adventurer, decoder, and encryptor in one. In addition to highlighting the material nature of the textual, or the archaeological depths of the text, Gautier's archaeological tales are also elaborately inter-textual. Most of his archaeological storylines, for example, derive from various non-fictional accounts of excavation. Gautier's inspiration for *The Mummy's Romance* came

from one of Champollion's anecdotes in *Letters from Egypt and Nubia 1828-1829*, which makes note of the legend of Tahoser and the tomb of a queen who had exercised sovereign power. However, according to Gautier's daughter, details for the novel came from a variety of sources, literary and painterly, which were strewn across the Gautier living room during the composition process (see Carré 178).

Quite often archaeological verisimilitude in Gautier's texts was achieved either through direct transcription of archaeological accounts or direct descriptions of archaeological plates and paintings. Carré has documented the ways in which various scenes from *The Mummy's Romance* are pulled directly from the pages of archaeological texts: the doors, corridors, and depths of the tomb, for example, follow the exact details of the hypogeum of Seti I, discovered and described by Belzoni (153); the point by point description of details, colors, and decorative motifs are taken from illustrations in Feydeau's book (154-56) and the fictional party's approach to the mummy's tomb are drawn from Mariette's 1851 account of his entry into the Serapeum of Saaqqara (157). In addition, descriptions of Tahoser's lifestyle and daily activities can be traced to Wilkinson, while the passages on musicians and costumes are taken from d'Avennes. Carré also speculates that the funeral dinner is transcribed from Feydeau (159) while the Pharaoh's physical characteristics mirror Belzoni's description of the head of Ramesses II. In addition to supplying Gautier with precise historical detail, archaeological accounts also often provided him with plot outlines. *Le Pied de Momie*, for example, is derived from Vivant Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute-Egypte (Voyage in Upper and Lower Egypt)* (1802). In this account of traveling with Napoleon in Egypt, Denon includes the anecdote of snatching "a little mummy's foot ... without doubt the foot of a young woman, a princess, a charming being" (278) in the Valley of the Kings. Denon's description provides the basis for Gautier's central object, the foot of the embalmed Egyptian Princess Hermonthis. In Gautier's tale, it is a dandy who is struck with object-fetish and who purchases the foot in a bric-à-brac store in Paris. The dandy selects the foot from among a number of other antique items and once home uses it as a paperweight. From here, the story progresses in a humorous sort of way and greatly elaborates on Denon's original anecdote: After dining out with friends, the dandy returns home and falls asleep, only to be awakened by the incarnated princess, who is trying to reattach the foot to her body. The narrator gallantly returns the foot to the princess, who in turn offers to take him back to her father's house. The Pharaoh, relieved that the princess's foot has been returned, instructs the dandy to choose his reward. The dandy asks for the princess's hand in marriage in exchange for the return of the foot -- a request the Pharaoh refuses, mocking the dandy's young age in contrast with the princess's three thousand years of immortality. The dandy awakes in his own room and finds the mummified foot gone, replaced by an iconic figure of "green paste."

Both *The Mummy's Foot* and *The Mummy's Romance* are inspired by textual archaeology in that they both draw on archaeological texts for plot and details. But an archaeological mode of creation, a hieroglyphics of inscription, is also implicit in the creation of these two texts. In *The Mummy's Romance*, Rumphius is said to have "translated the papyrus" after "long study," thereby gaining a place alongside Champollion in such a way that would make Lepsius "die of jealousy" (38). Here, Gautier interpolates fictional characters into the "story" of archaeology by invoking some of its best-known characters. Through the ritual of textual translation, Rumphius gains his own place in the historical documentation of an unfolding discipline. Moreover, the papyrus itself is the key to the story, the heart of the tomb. While the (dead) mummy is an object of interest and desire, there is no interpreting the significance of her life without an entry into her story through language. It is the text that preserves her life, just as embalming preserves her form or as Rumphius seeks to be preserved by the text of archaeological history. This tension between mortality and immortality, which drives the story, is mediated by text; without the papyrus the explorers would not know Tahoser, and without the story of Lord Evandale and Rumphius the reader would not know of their adventures. Life is, therefore, infinitely preserved through the artistic processes of textual production and decipherment, procedures the reader both reads about and participates in. Likewise, in *The Mummy's Foot*, the foot is purchased for the very specific purpose of "paper weight." Before he goes to sleep, the narrator sets the foot on a pile of papers and half-

written stories. It is easy to infer that the object, which lends "weight" or veracity to the tale, is secondary to the stories themselves, which come to encompass the object and generate a narrative. When the narrator awakens, our attention is again drawn to the texts as the idol left by the princess as proof of her presence also sits on the pile of papers. As Sima Godfrey notes, "the real fetishes of the tale, the incomplete poems, unfinished articles, misplaced letters and censored words that speak in differing and displaced codes ... utter no less persuasively the permanence of a dream" (311). And while the dream may be of archaeological or hallucinogenic inspiration (as the green paste idol suggests), it is through the text that the image becomes real, material, and lasting. Despite the Pharaoh's disdain for the narrator's mortality, ultimately it is the narrator who tells the story and gains artistic permanence through the text.

Within this textual archaeologizing, in which the word is of primary importance, material objects also have a central role. As Edna Epstein has noted, the most common pose for Gautier's heroes is "'transfixed' before objects" (7). The talismanic quality of the object, its own outstanding properties as well as its ability to evoke an entire civilization is a theme that runs throughout archaeologically influenced literature. The closest we might come to understanding the quality of these objects is through Walter Benjamin's description of "aura": that "unique phenomenon of distance, however close it may be" (1109). In Gautier's texts the object always retains the quality of distance that is particular to the vanished civilization. Moreover, because these objects are originals, which as Benjamin notes is the "prerequisite of the concept of authenticity" (1107), they are the guarantors of another time, the bridge between past, present and future. Like auratic objects, archaeological fragments remain "imbedded in the fabric of tradition" (1109) and are symbolic of a wholeness and completeness that exceeds a shattered modernity. The mummy's foot, for example, is not just the surviving fragment of another age; it is also a metonymic emissary that carries with it the full presence of its original time and place. While a variety of objects hold magnetic appeal for Gautier's heroes, there is none as compelling as the figure of the mummy. This is true not only for Gautier's heroes, but for Gautier himself, who declared that the unwrapping of a mummy, which he witnessed at the 1867 universal exhibition, was in fact a truer experiencing of the Orient than his actual voyage to Egypt. Part of Gautier's literary interest in mummies seems to derive from their ability to encapsulate several themes and ideas at once; in some sense, the mummy is Gautier's ultimate hieroglyph at once object and a series of infinitely shifting and translatable meanings. At its most basic level, the mummy is the ideal in art, a symbol of immortalized beauty, a metaphor that is consistently compounded by comparisons to Greek statues and the Venus de Milo, which also highlights Gautier's preoccupation with the parallels between archaeology and sculpture. But the mummy is also emblematic of the unfolding narrative and narrative desire. In *The Mummy's Romance*, for instance, the drawn out hunt for the tomb's entrance, the search through its lavish interior, and the opening of the coffin culminate in the act of removing the mummy's wrappings: "The doctor removed the wrappings of the body, and, the last obstacle removed, the young woman was seen in all the chaste nudity of her beautiful form, guarding, in spite of the centuries, all the roundness of her former contours and the supple grace of her pure lines of breed" (34). In this moment of discovery, Rumphius, the guide, and Lord Evandale issue a "cry of admiration." This experience of privileged voyeurism, of seeing the unobtainable without her "veil" or "wrappings," is a suspended moment of both scopophilic and epistemological importance. In essence, it is the climactic narrative moment in a journey that has been motivated by the desire to see and know. The tale of Rumphius and Evandale ends shortly after with Rumphius' promise to translate the papyrus and the narrator's suggestion that Evandale will always remain retrospectively in love with the figure of Tahoser.

While there are several ways in which the violation of the tomb and the stripping of the mummy suggest a sexualized overcoming of the past, of the feminine, and of the Other, it seems to me the more interesting parallel is actually between the unwrapping of the mummy and the reader's unraveling of the text. In "The Unbinding Process," André Green suggests that "unbinding" is one of the most fundamental mechanisms of reading. Recognizing the text as "textile," Green argues that the threads of meaning, propelled by narrative desire, at once bind the text and unbind it as readers follow the thread provided by the author and unbind it with meanings of their own. In the

case of the mummy, the unwrapping can be seen as the unraveling of the narrative's mystery but also as the liberation of meaning from fixed boundaries. Like the hieroglyph, which must be deciphered to be understood, the unbinding of the mummy creates a proliferation of meanings. Assuredly the mummy's "corpse" is the object of desire, but it is the process of unraveling, deferment and suspense -- in other words, the mechanisms of narrative which create the climate of desire, both for the mummy's body and within the body of the text. While the mummy metaphor stands for both the ideal in art and the narrative itself, she is also symbolic of a glorified and unobtainable pantheistic past. The Orient Gautier presents is not the modern Orient, which he himself professed to be illusory and disappointing, but an archaic and exotic counterpart to Western modernity. Within this temporal topology, the elements of Otherness associated with the East are combined with the temporal Otherness of the past. The Ancient Orient, removed from the aesthetic hideousness of Modern Europe, is a double-ideal; it is a "paradis artificiel" built out of an Otherness that is at once Other-place and Other-time. As Elizabeth Dahab has noted, the Orient has several precise functions in Gautier's imagination: it "served as an alternative to the West," as "the elsewhere where [he] could find beauty and escape from the ugliness of ... society" and as an exit from "mediocrity" and "usefulness" (<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss4/5/>>). While it may be tempting to ascribe Gautier's "archaeological mode" and all of its thematic trappings: writing, Otherness, objects, dreams, to a particular type of Orientalism, it is important to recognize that these preoccupations also exceed Gautier's Egyptian oeuvre. Published in *La Revue de Paris* in 1852, "Arria Marcella" belongs to a line of Pompeian fictions produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, yet also surpasses these works in its conglomeration of archaeological motifs. Beginning with Goethe's *Italienische Reise 1786-1788* (*Italian Journey 1786-1788*), Pompeii had become a thematic landscape for meditations on the brevity of life, fate, and the eternity of art. Of the archaeological novels that followed, Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* is the most well known. But in Gautier, the Pompeian motif shifts to include a more full-bodied reclamation of the archaeological object, the archaeological gateway to the pagan past, and the archaeological nature of the subconscious.

"Arria Marcella" begins in the Studi Museum in Naples in the nineteenth century with three young Parisian friends touring the archaeological artifacts. One of them, Octavian, becomes transfixed by a typically Gautierian archaeological relic: a petrified lava cast of a woman's breast and hip "a piece of coagulated black ashes, bearing a hollow impression ... the curve of a beautiful breast and of flanks as faultless in outline as those of a Greek statue" (106). Later that day, the friends take a tour of Pompeii, including the villa of Diomedes Marcellus, where the guide informs the three friends that the body of "the lady whose mold is shown in the museum at Naples" was found. That evening, after dinner, Octavian wanders back to the excavation site in a somnambulant state where he is transported to the Pompeii of 79 A.C.E. He is possessed by the idea of finding the woman whose calcified figure he had admired at the museum. He finally finds her at the theatre and Arria Marcella sends her maid to summon Octavian back to her villa. Arria Marcella tells Octavian that the force of his passion on seeing her archaeological cast brought her back to life. They embrace. The scene is interrupted by a Nazarene, who chastises Arria Marcella. Arria Marcella protests that the Nazarene should not subject her to the doctrines of a religion that was never hers, for she believes in the ancient gods who love life, youth, beauty and pleasure (161). The Nazarene utters an oath and Arria Marcella disintegrates into ash and bones. Octavian wakes up to his friends shaking him in the ruins of the Marcellus villa. That evening, he returns to the archaeological site but is unable to return to the Pompeian epoch. He resigns himself to marry and leads a typical bourgeois life in Paris, although his wife always suspects him of harboring a hidden love. In this particular short story, Gautier refers explicitly to a theme that pervades his work, the "incurable homesickness" (110), a retrospective longing that is particular to archaeological modes of desiring. Sensuous and immediate, Octavian's experiencing of the past is a fevered reverie that in all senses seems more real than the present. Indeed, Gautier's archaic reversions are the locus of desire, and the talismanic objects that transport the narrators to imaginative locations are only useful insofar as they provide entry into another realm. Unlike the "antiquary" who would have been driven "mad with joy" by the sight of a restored Pompeii, Octavian "saw naught but the deep,

black eyes of Arria Marcella, and that superb bosom, triumphant over time, which even universal destruction had chosen to preserve" (156). Passion, not pottery or possessions is the past's seduction, and the subtle incorporation of the antiquarian figure is a sly dig at the difference between the repressed archaeology of collecting artifacts and the highly erotic archaeology of filling the "hollow impression" of an antiquarian relic with completing fantasies of reconnection, transforming an aesthetic of absence into an erotically charged full-presence.

In "Arria Marcella," then, we can discern the themes that characterize Gautier's Egyptological tales: the fetishistic object that gives rise to another reality, the beautiful, unobtainable woman to whom it belongs, the remote pantheistic landscape, and the dream or period of unconsciousness. In that "Arria Marcella" takes place at Pompeii instead of in Egypt, however, it is possible to discern that these themes for Gautier are not simply part of an Orientalist mode but also central to an archaeological mode, which borrows from the exoticized ambience of Orientalist discourse. Just as the phenomenon of Orientalism can be said to define Western modernity, the past seems to provide Gautier with another Other: feminine, pagan, antique. Hence, in so far as totalities invoke their opposite, the archaeological past underwrites Gautier's project of masculine, modernist literary production. Another aspect that differentiates "Arria Marcella" from the Egyptological tales is that Gautier had in fact visited Pompeii before writing his archaeological romance. This fact challenges the idea that Gautier's textual encryptions are the result of textually mediated archaeological experience. Yet in "Arria Marcella" writing stands out as a primary theme. For Franc Schuerewegen, for example, the lava from Vesuvius creates an *écriture naturelle* on the flanks of the mountain (326). The idea of a natural writing produced by the volcano opens up a suggestive line of thinking into the ideas of "trace" that become prominent in later archaeological works. Additionally, Gautier deliberately likens the character of Arria Marcella to textually produced heroines, citing Octavian's preference for the ideal in art rather than its incarnation: "Like Faust he had loved Helen ... He had formed for himself an imaginary harem, with Semiramis, Aspasia, Cleopatra, Diane de Poitiers, and Joan of Aragon" (130). At once material trace come to life and literary creation, we can infer that Arria Marcella, while tied to the physical cast of her hip and breast, is essentially an archaeological fantasy, a "retrospective ideal" (131) whose resurrection is brought about by a desire for the past that is projected onto the written page. The dominating feature of Gautier's tale, therefore, remains the unrequited desire for the past as embodied through the unobtainable woman. Fundamentally, Tahoser, the Princess Hermonthis and Arria Marcella are ghostly embodiments of the pantheistic past, the loci of generative poetic power. Ancient Egypt and archaic Pompeii, in their subscription to sensuous, material-based religion, are also the root of culture, an assumption Gautier illustrates through significant detailing of the artisanship of Egyptian tombs as well as the craftsmanship of the theatre at Pompeii. In addition to consolidating Gautier's appreciation for the pagan world-view and his desire to retrieve it, *Arria Marcella* is also Gautier's most extensive elaboration of the connection between archaeology and the subconscious. As Jean Pierrot has pointed out, while in some sense "'dream' in this period had become merely a synonym for escape from the real" (183), dream is also a gateway to the forgotten past as well as the entry point into a more creative state of mind. As a result, Octavian's journey from Paris to Pompeii is paralleled by a movement from north to south, modern to ancient, Christian to pantheistic, surface to subterranean, and waking to dream. Of all of these associations, Gautier draws dream to the forefront from the beginning of the tale. On seeing Arria Marcella's petrified cast, Octavian retreats from consciousness; all of Naples appears to him as a dream world where he falls into a "somnia-phant state" (120), the regression to Pompeii in 79 A.C.E. is said to be "the accomplishment of his dearest dreams" (125) and at the theatre he finds himself "face to face with his chimera" (131). Moreover, ancient Pompeii disappears for him at the moment where his friends shake him awake at the excavation site. For Gautier, the archaeological site is, therefore, not just illustrative of the relationship between past and present, it is also a powerful metaphor for the relationship between unconscious and conscious mind, between dormant creative energies and rational thought, and between a repressed memory of pre-oedipal fulfillment and adult fetishism and anxiety. While there have been few psychoanalytic readings of "Arria Marcella," fifty years later Wilhelm Jensen published "Gradiva: A Pompeian Fantasy," a very similar short story that would be-

come the basis for Freud's archaeological metaphor for repression and the mind.

Gautier's fiction consolidates a series of themes characterizing archaeological modes of imagining: the archaeological object, the femme fatale, the pantheistic past, the reanimating dream, and various forms of encryption and decipherment. However, to gain a fuller sense of archaeological modes of writing, it is useful to briefly turn to Gautier's poetry. While the themes explored above also appear in Gautier's verse, it is in the poetry that there is a more pronounced sense of play surrounding archaeology's formal possibilities, a more detailed intermarrying of the sculptural and the archaeological, and a more ambiguous approach to the past's erotic potential. Published in 1852, the same year as "Arria Marcella," *Enamels and Cameos* enacts many of the archaeological structures Gautier forged in his short fiction. But these poems are also illustrative of the ways in which the idea of the archaeology of the text gives rise to a poetic mode of composition. Egyptologically loaded in both form and content, "Nostalgia of the Obelisks" is a clear starting point for poetic archaeological analysis. This pair of poems is written from the perspective of the two Luxor Obelisks: one in Luxor, one transplanted to Paris, with each obelisk professing a desire to inhabit the space of the other. Yet the archaeological motif is not limited to the invocation of hieroglyphically inscribed objects. An archaeological resonance formally reinforces the themes of nostalgia and memory and evokes the ambience of the tomb, as illustrated by this stanza uttered by the obelisk in Paris: "Sur l'échafaud de Louis seize, / Monolithe au sens aboli, / On a mis mon secret, qui pèse / Le poids de cinq mille ans d'oubli" ("Nostalgie d'Obélisques," *Émaux et Camées* 72) (On the spot where *Louis Seize* / Died, they set me, meaningless, / With my secret which outweighs / Cycles of forgetfulness" ("Nostalgia of the Obelisks," *Art and Criticism* 82). Here, in the French, the repeating "i" sound in "Louis," "monolithe," "aboli," "mille," and "oubli" creates a wandering echo through the solid confines of the quatrain. This chambered sound is made explicit later in the poem when the Obelisk of Paris refers to the sacred soil of Egypt where underfoot "sounds the crypt" (*Émaux et Camées* 74). In this stanza, the crypt is literally "sounded-out" through the reverberating syllable. That the words for "abolished" and "forgetfulness" both contain the repeating sound contributes to the sense that the past is only heard or remembered through a kind of play of resonance and distorted repetition. The layering of sound also contributes to Gautier's sense that historical topographies are sites of overlap and sedimentation: where Louis XVI was executed now stands the symbol of Egyptian civilization, which in its transposed location is also a symbol of the history of French colonialism. The obelisk is, therefore, not only heavy with its own ancient Egyptian history but also saturated with the weight of its new "place" in French culture. In contrast, the Obelisk of Luxor laments that he is left in an antiquated Egypt, unappreciated, unnoticed, while the obelisk in Paris is surrounded by curious spectators who attempt to decipher the hieroglyphics carved into the stone: "Là-bas, il voit à ses sculptures / S'arrêter un peuple vivant, / Hiératiques écritures, / Que l'idée épelle en rêvant" (*Émaux et Camées* 74) ("For he looks on living men, / And they scan his pictures wrought / By an hieratic pen, / To be read by vision-thought" [*Art and Criticism* 87]).

Again, and this time to reinforce ideas of encryption and decipherment, Gautier uses the repetition of syllables and sounds to emphasize the archaeological aspects of the poem. The word "écriture" could be spelled phonetically with the letters in the word *hiératique*, an encryption which underlines the ways in which writing is a site where words and letters are combined to both reveal and conceal. The only other words in the stanza which use the *é*, are *épelle*, meaning to spell, and *idée*, which creates a synthesis of sound that joins the words for writing, hieratic, spelling, and thought. This syntactical structure is situated right next to the articulation of a hieroglyphic mode of reading where "idea is spelled through dreaming." A decipherment where understanding takes place within a dream evokes all of Gautier's archaeological fictions, where epiphany occurs through a subconscious reunion with the distant past. The motif that is generally considered to hold *Enamels and Cameos* together, however, is not the archaeological but the sculptural. As Russell King notes, almost every poem in *Émaux et Camées* contains at least one specific reference to sculpture, whether it be through statues, obelisks, marble, Carrara, or Paros (82). King further argues that the direct referencing of sculpture is reinforced through certain "stylo-linguistic" effects (84).

For King, the way in which Gautier distances himself from the poems in *Émaux et Camées* gives the poems an object-like status, an "impersonalized independence" where the "syntactical structures of each verse and each strophe organize themselves into regularized 'blocks' that suggest masonry" (85). This analysis reinforces the position that Gautier's leitmotifs are illustrated both through direct reference as well as through more occluded formal effects. But it would be wrong to suggest that the sculptural and the archaeological motifs are distinct. For Gautier, there is a strong set of correspondences between sculpting and exhumation in the sense that chipping away stone to reveal a statue is mirrored by the archaeologist's reclamation of statues from the earth. In this sense the archaeologist, belatedly, performs the same task as the original sculptor: removing a surplus to reveal the hidden aesthetic object. In combining these motifs in the poems of *Émaux et Camées*, Gautier suggests a kind of poetic dialectic where the act of unveiling, of revealing inner form, becomes an intention that supersedes the literal acts of excavation and sculpting to become a mode or reflex appropriate to composition. This thematic nexus of archaeology, sculpture, and writing and the affiliations with stone, emergence, removal and resurgence, is a complex of ideas that reoccur throughout nineteenth- and twentieth-century writing.

As a final point of analysis on the differences between Gautier's archaeological fictions and the archaeological resonance in his poetry, it is interesting to note the ways in which the poetry presents a shift in the gendering of the past and the nature of memory and desire. Where the narratives always present the past in the form of a curvaceous young woman, Gautier's poetic invocation of the sculptural aesthetic also draws on the homoerotic associations of ancient art. In "Contralto," Gautier evokes the completeness of the past through the description of a hermaphroditic sculpture, or at the very least one where the sex is indistinguishable: "On voit dans le musée antique, / Sur un lit de marbre sculpté, / Une statue énigmatique / D'une inquiétante beauté. // Est-ce un jeune homme? est-ce une femme, / Une déesse, ou bien un dieu? / L'amour, ayant peur d'être infâme, / Hésite et suspend son aveu" (*Émaux et Camées* 60) ("There lies within a great museum's hall, / Upon a snowy bed of carven stone, / A statue ever strange and mystical, / With some fair fascination all its own. // And is it youth or is it maiden sweet, / A goddess or a god come down to sway? / Love fearful, hesitating, turns his feet, / Nor any word's avowal will betray" [*Art and Criticism* 70]). Here, the statue, which has been exhumed from the ground and displayed in a museum, presents an interpretational conundrum. Is the "enigmatic sculpture / of disturbing beauty" male or female? Viewers, inscribed and prescribed by their own time, are thrown off balance by their inability to distinguish a gender and, therefore, to determine if the statue is an "appropriate" object of desire. This poem, more than any of Gautier's archaeological fictions, presents the possibility for an archaeological escape from social and sexual rules. In its ambiguity, the statue, like the past, is semi-observed and indistinguishable, a ready canvas for varied fantasies and projections. Interestingly, while Gautier was willing to allow this multiplicity of desire and interpretation to emerge from the depths of the text, his English translators were not. In this 1903 translation by Agnes Lee the lines: "Love fearful, hesitating, turns his feet, / Nor any word's avowal will betray" are a much more obscure way of saying what Gautier does: "L'amour, ayant peur d'être infâme, / Hésite et suspend son aveu" -- "Love, afraid of infamy, / hesitates and suspends its desire." Even while archaeological modes of emergence were giving rise to new forms and types of fantasy and expression, then, it is clear that an equal number of ways were being devised to reinter them. This pressure between private emergence and social re-burial would continue to exercise a powerful influence on the form and structure of the nineteenth century aesthetic text.

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