

GROTESQUE AND PERFORMANCE IN THE ART OF AUBREY BEARDSLEY

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5. Paris Performance Alive and Dead

“Si j’allais à Paris, je guérirais,” so John Gray reminded French readers of his obituary in *La Revue blanche*, echoing Aubrey Beardsley’s own words: “If I went to Paris, I would recover.”¹ Beardsley’s wishful thinking was not to be granted, although his art had repeatedly benefitted from a deeply rooted Francophile inspiration. As for Oscar Wilde, France was for Beardsley the land of free morals and free expression, as opposed to British prudery and conservatism. In his short life, the artist had enjoyed four lengthy stays in Paris. First in May 1892, when he first visited the Louvre, discovered the Salons and a wealth of exhibitions; then in May 1893, with his sister Mabel and the Pennells, to more Salons, the opera, the Latin Quarter, and the thrill of new acquaintances (including the poet Stéphane Mallarmé); then again in February 1896, initially with Leonard Smithers, when he went not only to parties and on other intoxicating adventures, but also to the *Salomé* premiere performed at the Comédie Parisienne by the Théâtre de l’Œuvre company, and was hard at work illustrating Alexander Pope’s heroic-comic poem, amongst his masterpieces; lastly, from April 1897 to his death on 15 March 1898, he stayed partly in the capital and partly travelled around France. For the first part of this final visit, he experienced a brief improvement in health, was in exhilarating spirits, and met the novelist Rachilde and her Decadent protégés. He stayed in Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Dieppe, then returned to Paris. His last trip in 1897 took him to Menton, on the French Riviera, whence he would not return.

1 John Gray, “Petite gazette d’art: Aubrey Beardsley,” *La Revue blanche*, 14 (May 1898): 68.

Early on he had shown his first work to Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, the symbolist painter, then President of the Champ de Mars Salon, who was also in the habit of drawing caricatures and grotesques.² An avid reader of French literature, Beardsley artfully employed French captions, usually with a naughty double entendre, in his drawings. He cultivated a French aesthetic when he decorated his rooms at 114 Cambridge Street, and put French inflections into the titles of his works. At the age of fifteen, he began applying the French article *La* to French or Frenglish words, paying no attention to the rules of gender. In a series of sketches caricaturing Ebenezer J. Marshall, headmaster of Brighton Grammar School, young Beardsley labelled them *La Apple*, *La Discourse*, *La Lecture*, *La Chymist* (Zatlin 89–92). At sixteen, he performed with his schoolmates in Thomas J. William's farce *Ici on Parle Français* on French travellers' linguistic exertions in England, and produced more sketches (Zatlin 98–103). Confined to bed by frequent haemorrhages between autumn 1889 and spring 1890, he read numerous French novels and drew a rich gallery of characters from Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*; Alexandre Dumas fils's *La Dame aux camélias*, the consumptive courtesan with whom he identified; Alphonse Daudet's *Tartarin de Tarascon*, *Sappho*, and *Jack*; Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*; Victor Hugo's *L'Homme qui rit*; Honoré de Balzac's *Le Curé de Tours*, *Le Cousin Pons*, and *Les Contes drolatiques*; and even Jean Racine's *Phèdre* (Zatlin 146–63, 165–67). He also often portrayed French writers in his own artwork: *Alphonse Daudet* (Zatlin 159), *Émile Zola* (Zatlin 288 and 289), *Henri Taine* (Zatlin 300r and 300v), and *Molière* (Zatlin 221). His early drawings and Japoniques used French titles and characters as in *The Birthday of Madame Cigale* (Zatlin 266) and *La Femme incomprise* (Zatlin 264). He slipped French words into his plates after Wilde's play (*Salome on a Settle*, *Maîtresse d'Orchestre*; *The Toilette of Salome*, Zatlin, 878, 871 & 877). Already in 1893, he had read it in its original French and his design and drawings for the English translation would establish him as a designer. The first drawing he made for it bears in French the tragedy's key line, "*J'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokanaan, j'ai baisé ta bouche*" ("I have kissed your mouth, Iokanaan, I

2 On this less known aspect of Puvis de Chavannes's work, see *Les Caricatures de Puvis de Chavannes, préface de Marcelle Adam* (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1906).

have kissed your mouth") (Zatlin 265), and startled the English public as it was published in the first article introducing his art.³

He excelled in hints and innuendos taken from French literature with a twist or a double meaning: if information is lacking on *Notre Dame de la Lune* (Zatlin 196), *Le Dèbris d'un poète* (Zatlin 244) relates to Beardsley himself an ironic quip from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, as shown in Chapter 3. *Il était une Bergère* (Zatlin 263) plays with Yvette Guilbert's spicy apex of a French folk song. *Les Revenants de Musique* (Zatlin 267) pictures a character, possibly Beardsley himself, haunted by the figures of Wagner's operas. In *Les Passades* (Zatlin 337), he projects onto two street-walkers the double meaning of the colloquial *la passade*, both "short-lived love affair" and "partner in such an affair." *L'Éducation Sentimentale* (Zatlin 889a) transposes the title of Flaubert's novel from Frédéric Moreau, Flaubert's "young man" (after the subtitle), to the lewd education of a young girl (see Fig. 5.4). Beardsley is supposed to have painted a portrait of Alfred Jarry's *Faustroll*, the inventor of "'pataphysics," and Jarry, impressed by *The Rape of the Lock* plates wrote an inspired piece in his honour, entitled "Du pays des dentelles" ("From the Land of Lace"). An admirer of the French language, Beardsley dreamt of importing French words into English, according to Blanche.⁴ In a nutshell, he was "the first Englishman who turned whole-heartedly to France," as Julius Meier-Graefe put it.⁵

This chapter explores Beardsley's reception in French periodicals and the press. It is a subject that has already received significant critical attention: following a 1966 article by Jacques Lethève,⁶ Jane Haville Desmarais has shown how Beardsley deliberately promoted his "French" and "Decadent" persona through press interviews.⁷ Yet in her attentive

3 Joseph Pennell, "A New Illustrator: Aubrey Beardsley," *The Studio*, 1:1 (15 Apr 1893): 14–19, reproduced 19 (full page). On Pennell's article, see Chapter 4.

4 Jacques-Émile Blanche, "Aubrey Beardsley," *Antée: Revue mensuelle de littérature*, 3:11 (1 Apr 1907): 1106; Blanche, *Propos de peintre. De David à Degas, 1^e série* (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1919), 113.

5 Julius Meier-Graefe, "Aubrey Beardsley and his Circle," in *Modern Art: Being a Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics*, trans. by Florence Simmonds and George W. Chrystal, 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons; London: William Heinemann, 1908), II, 253.

6 Jacques Lethève, "Aubrey Beardsley et la France," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 68:1175 (Dec 1966): 343–50.

7 Jane Haville Desmarais, *The Beardsley Industry: The Critical Reception in England and France, 1893–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 34–35, 46–48, 56–57.

comparative study of Beardsley's critical fortunes in Britain and France, Desmarais focuses on the text of these reviews, hardly mentioning the images. By contrast, I argue that reproductions of Beardsley's work were in fact a more potent and pliant means of diffusion and influence than any text. Although I give text due consideration, this chapter focuses specifically on the visual aspect of Beardsley's performance in French periodicals. Using new archival data, it explores the reproduction process he used so effectively, and analyses the impact of his images.

In doing so, it shows not only Beardsley's eagerness to shock Britain by his French publications, but also his readiness to adapt his work to a foreign magazine's varied contents and commercial considerations. His reception eludes expected patterns. Larger-circulation magazines wanted him more, and earlier, than avant-garde reviews. His death and the media chorus that mourned him gives final proof that Beardsley had lost control of his own image: although he did not wish to be associated with the potentially mawkish figure of Pierrot, it was the pathetic clown that became his posthumous symbol in the press. These two very different phases of Beardsley's representation in the French fin-de-siècle press – before his demise when he exercised some control, and after his death when he had none – have a common denominator: the centrality of images in understanding the artist's media performance and shaping his legend.

Entering the Stage

Beardsley's French reception through periodicals stands out for three reasons. First, it was rapid. It preceded the Italian *Emporium* (Sept 1895) by two years, the Berlin *Pan* and the Russian *Mir iskusstva* (1899) by five, and the Catalan *Juventut* (1900) by six. Second, it bears witness to personal relationships, which Beardsley harnessed to graft his personality and artistic persona onto Victorian clichés of French Decadents, French mores, and French literature. When first mentioned in John Grand-Carteret's *Le Livre et l'Image*, for instance, the magazine takes pride in implying direct contact: "a 20-year-old young artist, presently in Paris [...]," although this is but a brief allusion to his effective presence in the

capital.⁸ Contrariwise, Theodore Wratislaw had styled “the precocious development of [his] brain before the hand has been sufficiently trained” as a result of French influence on his work. His drawings were the only ones to reflect “the modern neurosis, the delight in anything strange and depraved, the curiosity of a decadent style.”⁹ Yet his reception in France, surprising and free, is at odds with established ideas.

Such freedom shows in the type of magazine to first host his work on French soil for quite some time. Jules Roques’s *Le Courrier français*, an illustrated Saturday weekly, founded in 1884 in Montmartre as an advertiser for Géraudel’s cough and cold tablets, covered literature, fine art, theatre, and additionally but sparsely, also medicine and finance. It promoted spirited and risqué drawings and a range of authors from Paul Verlaine to Jean Lorrain. It opened with a “rhyming gazette,” gossip in verse by Raoul Ponchon, a bohemian painter who loved songs, cabarets, and the bottle. Copies sold for 50 centimes with subscriptions at 12 francs 50 for six months and 25 francs for a year. The magazine served as a springboard for several new talents in illustration, as Roques constantly sought to renew its visual content by means of eye-catching effects, just as he used advertisement, literature, and politics.¹⁰

Le Courrier earned a reputation for being wicked: the writer Marcel Schwob’s liberal family advised him against writing for *Le Messager français*, with his father describing it in an 11 March 1891 letter as “a competitor in pornography of *Le Courrier français*.” He continued: “You are light-heartedly compromising your *agrégation* candidature, if you have not even dealt it a mortal blow. This is very, very unfortunate, and it almost seems as if you did it on purpose...”¹¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was in Roques’s journal that the first Beardsleys appeared in France in all their shocking variety. A book-enthusiasts’ journal like *Le Livre et*

8 Un Book-Trotter, “L’Image: Titres réduits des nouveaux périodiques anglais,” *Le Livre et l’Image*, 2:6 (Aug 1893): 57: “un jeune artiste de 20 ans, actuellement à Paris [...]”

9 Pastel [Theodore Wratislaw], “Some Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley,” *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, 14 (1 Sept 1893): 259.

10 See Laurent Bihl, “Jules Roques (1850–1909) et *Le Courrier français*,” *Histoires littéraires*, 12:45 (Jan–Feb–Mar 2011): 43–68; and Bihl, “*Le Courrier français*,” *Ridiculosa*, special issue “Les revues satiriques françaises” (18 Nov 2011): 146–49.

11 Marcel Schwob, *Correspondance inédite précédée de quelques textes inédits*, ed. by John Alden Green (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1985), 72.

l'Image, which had preceded Roques's by a year, had simply restrained itself to the medieval compositions of *Le Morte Darthur*.

There are two Beardsley seasons in *Le Courrier français*. The first, between November 1894 and April 1895, when Roques was the driving force, followed Roques's prolonged London stays between 1893 and 1894 to escape legal proceedings, after which he hosted a series on British graphic artists. Beardsley would be by far the most active and productive of these, though the extent of his involvement is ambiguous: for Jacques-Émile Blanche, who knew him closely, the artist either "collaborated" or "collaborated a little" with *Le Courrier français*.¹² The second period ran from February to July 1896, after a meeting in 1896 between Beardsley and two young men who would do much for him in French journals: the translator and critic Henry-D. Davray and the author and critic Gabriel de Lautrec, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's cousin.

Beardsley was first mentioned in *Le Courrier français* on 11 November 1894 in an article on a poster exhibition. Roques made reference to Beardsley's "uncommon weird imagination," and included three drawings that had made headlines in London.¹³ Although evidence is lacking, it is safe to surmise that Roques's weekly developed into a scandal platform, ably used to respond to the barbed judgements of the British press that Beardsley went about liberally provoking. In order to accomplish this, a main weapon was the choice of images, as shown in the initial three drawings that appeared in the French periodical. The first, *Une femme bien nourrie* (Fig. 5.1), also known as *The Fat Woman* and titled *A Study in Major Lines* in the *catalogue raisonné* (Zatlin 932), had shocked Lane with its sexual explicitness (a prostitute waiting for customers at the Café Royal) and the allusion to Degas's *The Absinthe Drinker* then exhibited in London.¹⁴ Lane had refused publication in the *Yellow Book* and the drawing had appeared in *To-Day* magazine on 12 May 1894. The second (Fig. 5.2), the frontispiece to John Davidson's *Plays* (Zatlin 331) drew on recent theatre events, a genre sponsored

12 Blanche, *Propos de peintre*, 113: "collabora." The first version, in the Bruges review *Antée*, 3:11 (1 Apr 1907): 1106, reads "with which he collaborated a little and in which he met with success right away" ("auquel il collabora un peu et où il réussit du premier coup").

13 Jules Roques, "Une exposition d'affiches artistiques à l'Aquarium," *Le Courrier français*, 45 (11 Nov 1894): 2–5.

14 See Linda Gertner Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016), II, 142 and 144.

by *Le Courrier français*, to create an ambiguous universe by mixing real people, magnified by their momentous fame, with mythological characters.¹⁵ The *Daily Chronicle* had called it an “error of taste” because it displayed the easily recognisable portraits of Wilde and theatre manager Sir Augustus Harris. Beardsley had brazenly retorted that one of the gentlemen pictured was handsome enough to stand the test of portraiture (Wilde), the other owed him half a crown.¹⁶ As for the third drawing (Fig. 5.2) – a poster for T. Fisher Unwin’s “The Pseudonym and Autonym Libraries” (Zatlin 969) – it was, with its angular lines, Japanese perspective, and deliberately warped female figure, a comeback to the controversy caused by the poster for John Todhunter’s play *A Comedy of Sighs!* pasted all over London. It had caused a stir, which would be relayed as far as Italy.¹⁷



Fig. 5.1 Aubrey Beardsley, *Une femme bien nourrie* [*The Fat Woman*], catalogued as *A Study in Major Lines* (by Mar 1894), Tate collection, London, repr. *Le Courrier français*, 45 (11 Nov 1894): 5. BnF, Paris

15 *Ibid.*, 9.

16 See Aubrey Beardsley, *Under the Hill, and Other Essays in Prose and Verse* (London and New York: John Lane, 1904), 70.

17 See Chapter 4.



Fig. 5.2 *Le Courrier français*, 45 (11 Nov 1894): 9, reproducing bottom left Aubrey Beardsley, *Les Pièces de M. John Davidson* [Frontispiece to John Davidson's *Plays* (late Nov 1893)], and bottom right *Affiche en 4 couleurs de M. Beardsley* [Poster for T. Fisher Unwin's *The Pseudonym and Autonym Libraries* (early 1894)]. BnF, Paris

The next month, Beardsley was formally introduced by *Le Courrier français* as part of a series of articles on emerging British poster artists, painters and press illustrators. A dozen of them were reviewed, but most artists had a more realistic and literal style: Phil May, Dudley Hardy, Leonard Raven-Hill, Maurice Greiffenhagen, J. Wright T. Manuel, Oscar (?) Eckhardt, Fred Pegram, Edmund Sullivan, Alfred Chantrey Corbould, Archibald Standish Hartrick and Frederick Henry Townsend, the art editor of *Punch*.¹⁸ In his general introduction to the series, Roques, conscious of the fact that previous lawsuits had granted his paper more than a whiff of scandal, took a stand on a recent London affair: the closing of the promenade and the ban on selling spirits at the Empire Theatre (similar to the Élysée-Montmartre, the venue he himself ran undercover and where the annual ball of *Le Courrier français* was held). He was looking for a promising new market in the English capital. He introduced English artists that he had personally met as the equals of "the most artistic of course, something like the equivalent of Messrs. Forain, Willette, Chéret, Legrand, Lunel, Anquetin, Grasset, L. O. Merson, Pille, Hermann Paul, Renouard, Raffaëlli, etc."¹⁹

By featuring Beardsley's interview in the 1894 Christmas issue (the series had started on 18 November with Dudley Hardy), Roques granted him a special place in the series (Fig. 5.3). The interview reflects Roques's astonishment at the young age of this much-publicised artist; the curiosity and discomfort triggered by his drawings; admiration for his unique style; Beardsley's acute feeling for distortion and the grotesque; and his ability to split a character into its real figure and its ghostly double. Some of these insights echo comments from the English press as steered by the artist himself. Others are more specifically French, such as references to Edgar Allan Poe, already used by Joris-Karl Huysmans in his art criticism

18 *Le Courrier français* presents them in the following order: Phil May on 18 Nov 1894, Dudley Hardy on 25 Nov, Chantrey Corbould on 2 Dec, Eckhardt on 9 Dec, Fred Pegram on 16 Dec, Beardsley on 23 Dec, J. W. T. Manuel on 30 Dec, Leonard Raven-Hill on 6 Jan 1895 (this issue also contains an invitation to exhibit, addressed by the Chelsea Arts Club artists to their French colleagues), A. S. Hartrick on 13 Jan, F. H. Townsend on 20 Jan, Edmond Sullivan on 27 Jan, Maurice Greiffenhagen on 3 Feb.

19 Roques, "Courrier de Londres," *Le Courrier français*, 44 (4 Nov 1894): 4a, "les plus artistes bien entendu, quelque chose comme l'équivalent de MM. Forain, Willette, Chéret, Legrand, Lunel, Anquetin, Grasset, L. O. Merson, Pille, Hermann Paul, Renouard, Raffaëlli etc."

to comment on Odilon Redon's dark lithographs. Roques obviously borrowed from avant-garde journalism to comment on the British artist. His account, as delicate as it is fantastic, reveals fascination for Beardsley's personality and the prospect for Roques to choose drawings to reproduce at will. Beardsley's refusal to be paid for the interview (which must have delighted Roques) showed that he was ready to adapt in order to have his work published and diffused in France.



Fig. 5.3 Beginning of Jules Roques's article, "Les artistes anglais: M. Beardsley," *Le Courrier français*, 51 (23 Dec 1894): 6, reproducing the drawing *The Wagnerites* (May 1893–June 1894), V&A, London, repr. *The Yellow Book*, 3 (Oct 1894): 55. BnF, Paris

8

LE COURRIER FRANÇAIS

Le Tambour-Major

de Henry Lévêq
Est tout couru d'or...

Pendant les grandes manœuvres dans les environs de Paris, une division de vachers transformés provisoirement en sailli de rapport. Le colonel Mollet, commandant le 31^e de ligne (régiment mixte) est assis devant une table en bois blanc, manœuvrant des cartes de sonnet et de vin, auprès de lui sont assis le gros major, le capitaine trésorier et quelques officiers, dont le lieutenant Dubois, pendant les onze autres mois de l'année des professions tranquilles, telles que pharmacien, huissier, etc.

Le COLONEL MOLLET (après avoir parlé de choses tellement intéressantes que la plupart des assistants s'ennuient et dédaignent de la tête) réparent ainsi la nuit mal passée chez l'habitant, s'écrit d'un ton d'un homme qui vient d'apercevoir une comète). — A propos, messieurs, vous savez que nous avons un tambour-major.

(Chœur des officiers.)
— Ah! bah!...
— Tiens, tiens!...
— Ah! nous avons un tambour-major! etc.

(Et les officiers, pendant un quart d'heure, se réjouissent de la bonne nouvelle. Le lieutenant Dubois a un tambour-major?)
— Oui, dit le colonel, mais il ne sait pas la canne!
(Et le chœur des officiers se se tait.)
— Diable...
— Sacré!...
— Ah! il ne sait pas la canne...
— Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un tambour-major qui ne sait pas la canne?

— Le GROS MAJOR (après un quart d'heure de réflexion laborieuse). — Eh bien, mon colonel, le tambour-major apprendra la canne!

(Approbation générale du chœur, dont chaque membre se demande individuellement comment cette idée ne lui est pas venue.)

Le COLONEL (approuvant aussi). — Parfait!... (Appelant.) Lieutenant Dubois!...

Le LIEUTENANT DUBOIS. — Mon colonel?...
Le COLONEL. — Vous voulez à ce que le tambour-major apprenne la canne.
Le LIEUTENANT DUBOIS (ahuri). — Mais, mon colonel, moi non plus je ne sais pas la canne.
Le COLONEL (ironique). — Ah! vous ne savez pas la canne?
Le LIEUTENANT DUBOIS (muet). — Hélas! non, mon colonel!...

Le COLONEL (cherchant). — Eh bien... vous apprendrez... (Se tournant vers les autres officiers.) A ce propos, messieurs, je viens de recevoir, dans le courrier du ministre, la sonnerie du régiment...
(Le chœur des officiers.)
— Ah! bah!...
— Tiens, tiens!...
— Ah! nous avons une sonnerie!...
Le COLONEL. — Oui, messieurs... (Appelant.) Lieutenant Dubois!...

Le LIEUTENANT DUBOIS (inquiet). — Mon colonel?...
Le COLONEL. — Voici la sonnerie du régiment, portez-la au tambour-major pour qu'il la fasse étudier.
(Le lieutenant Dubois va et se rend dix minutes, après il revient, l'air très courroucé.)
Le COLONEL. — Eh bien?
Le LIEUTENANT. — Mon colonel, le tambour-major ne sait pas la musique!
(Et le chœur des officiers se se tait.)
— Diable...
— Sacré!...
— Ah! il ne sait pas la musique...
Le GROS MAJOR (après être resté un moment pensif). — Eh bien! mon colonel, il apprendra la

musique. (Nouvelles approbations du chœur.)
Le COLONEL, appelant. — Lieutenant Dubois, songez... Mon colonel?
Le COLONEL. — Allez ne chercher ce tambour-major qui ne sait pas la canne ni la musique!
(Le lieutenant Dubois va et sort. Il revient dix minutes après, avec le tambour-major. Situation.)
Le COLONEL. — Vous apprendrez la musique?
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Oui, mon colonel.
Le COLONEL. — Vous ne savez pas la canne?
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Non, mon colonel.
Le COLONEL. — Un tambour-major ne doit pas ignorer la canne!
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Vous apprendrez la canne!
Le COLONEL. — Il paraît aussi que vous ne savez pas la musique!
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Oui, mon colonel.
Le COLONEL, domné. — Vous la savez?
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Non, mon colonel.
Le COLONEL. — Oui, c'est ce que je disais... Eh bien! un tambour-major doit savoir la musique.
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Vous apprendrez la musique.
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Mais, mon colonel, pour apprendre tout cela il faudrait plus de vingt-huit jours!
(Et le chœur désigné reconnaissant l'impossibilité d'acquiescer au tambour-major tant de matières en si peu de temps.)
— Diable...
— Sacré!... etc...
Le COLONEL. — Pourquoi, malgré cet état d'incapacité, vous n'avez été élevé à la dignité

de tambour-major?... Quel état exercez-vous dans la vie civile?
Le TAMBOUR-MAJOR. — Huissier à la préfecture de la Seine, mon colonel, et comme j'avais quelques recommandations et que je suis pas mal grand...
HENRY LÉVÊQ.

LES ÉPREUVES

La Révolte de l'Âme.

N'est-ce pas...
Que l'âme d'une vierge soit une pièce d'homme l'âme d'homme.
(A. de Messier, *Idylle*, III.)

Dans le trébuchement obscur, sur les toits, sur les ardoises et sur les chaumes, s'enveloppent, lentes et tristes, les notes basses de la cloche d'airain cachée dans l'égérie aux volutes et aux dalles de marbre. Et la neige, la neige pâle, la neige vierge tomba sur la terre que crevassait le gel. Elle tomba longtemps... — Qu'importe l'hermine — pour assourdir le bruit que fait le pas des hommes fourbes et méchants.

Les chènes hautains et fiers, comme les felles arborescentes en couvrent leurs bois morts; et les oiseaux mièvres semèrent leurs plumes dans les plaines, et de froid périrent.

Dans le cœur de tous les êtres coulaient de longues larmes et une tristesse sourde étouffait chacun. Un bandeau grisâtre recouvrait le vieux ciel (d'azur de l'éclat), et telles furent toutes les pensées: grises et mortes.

Dependant, ignorés de tous et presque isolés des humains, Aella et Rivio songèrent, près des flammèches jaunes que les lèches plaçaient dans l'âtre en un ordre savant, jetant dans la demeure aux meubles de chêne.

Sur le même siège ils étaient assis, les cœurs proches et Rivio pressait entre ses mains fines les doigts de la vierge.

Ella était venue, parce qu'il lui avait dit sa volonté. — Et elle l'aimait...
Leurs yeux noirs se fixaient sans qu'ils pussent détourner leurs regards et le feu des prunelles de l'homme s'enfonçait, brillant, dans celles de la femme. Leurs âmes, alors, furent vraiment unies, et nulle pensée ne les agita. Leurs lèvres se scellèrent dans un baiser infini et mystique; et ils palpitèrent.

Mais ce temps d'oubli parfait du monde et des autres dura un instant très court, et après s'être exhaussés à l'abîme du supême, ils retombèrent, plus faibles, dans la réalité malheureuse. Car Rivio sentit sa chair mordue par le désir. Comme son corps se soulevait, et qu'il aspirait d'instinct il y eut en lui une lutte avec son âme.

Sa matière se révolta de la contrainte, mais aussi, de dégoût son âme se révolta contre sa matière. Il combattit dedans son cerveau, il combattit à l'extérieur, et garda par son amour superbe. Mais ses sens vainquirent. Le rut effrayant et qui tortura les épaules s'empara de lui. Le rut terrible et étrange fit choir toute sa substance dans la boue: son esprit et son corps.

Comme ses nerfs l'agitaient, il se redressa et voulut s'éloigner de la vierge. Il marcha dans la chambre, à pas désespérés, il s'approcha du feu, et le regarda (sans voir). — puis sur l'épave, il s'écroula, voulant faire fuir sa pensée, la chasser de son corps, la débarrasser de l'enveloppe empoisonnée. — J'élevé. Mais il ne put: il songeait toujours à son corps.

Alors Rivio cessa de résister. Il bondit, et sautant près d'Aella, il l'enlaça de son bras vigoureux. Puis, il l'appuya contre sa poitrine, voulant respirer son parfum charnel: il sentit

Fig. 5.4 Aubrey Beardsley, *L'Éducation Sentimentale* (ca. Feb–Mar 1894), *The Yellow Book*, 1 (16 April 1894): 55, repr. *Le Courrier français*, 6 (10 Feb 1895): 8. BnF, Paris

The British series in *Le Courrier français* came to an end, yet Beardsley's drawings continued appearing. They ardently prolonged the provocation of the British establishment on an ethical and aesthetic level: *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, a drawing published in the first volume of the *Yellow Book* in April 1894 that re-appropriates the

title of Flaubert's novel to name a brothel scene (Zatlin 889a), had incited the *Westminster Gazette* to demand "a short Act of Parliament to make this kind of thing illegal."²⁰ *Le Courrier français* reprinted it on 10 February 1895 (Fig. 5.4).

A fortnight later, Roques's magazine credited Beardsley with a portrait of Andrea Mantegna in the manner of the Flemish Primitives, which contrasted both with the designer's graphic style and the periodical's usual iconography.²¹ It corresponded to another polemic: Beardsley had published it in the third volume of the *Yellow Book* (Oct 1894), signing it with the pseudonym Philip Broughton (Zatlin 905). The English press had admired it, contrasting it with works by Aubrey Beardsley, an illustrator "who could not draw." It was a good opportunity for the artist to reveal the hoax in England – a pleasure extended in France by attributing it to himself outright.

During this first phase, twenty Beardsley drawings, either in his new black-and-white manner or from *Le Morte Darthur*, ran through the pages of *Le Courrier français* over a six-month period, sometimes on a weekly basis. One of them, captioned *Wagnériens et wagnériennes* in the periodical (catalogued as *The Wagnerites*, see Fig. 5.3, Zatlin 908), was part of the *Courrier français* drawings sale on 18 February 1895 under the title "À une représentation de Tristan et Izeult." It fetched the price of 150 francs, amongst the highest. In terms of drawings selected for the journal, much depended on Roques's personal interests and taste. He approved of trestle theatre (two drawings from *The Comedy-Ballet of Marionettes, as Performed by the Troupe of the Théâtre-Impossible*) and privileged French subjects (two drawings of actress Réjane), but also piquant scenes such as Beardsley's frontispiece for John Davidson's novel *Earl Lavender* (Zatlin 944), a text inspired by Darwinian theories, which extols the virtues of flogging the weary souls of the time.

20 See preface by John Lane, in Beardsley, *Under the Hill*, vi; and Zatlin, *Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 79.

21 *Le Courrier français*, 8 (24 Feb 1895): 3 (reproduction).

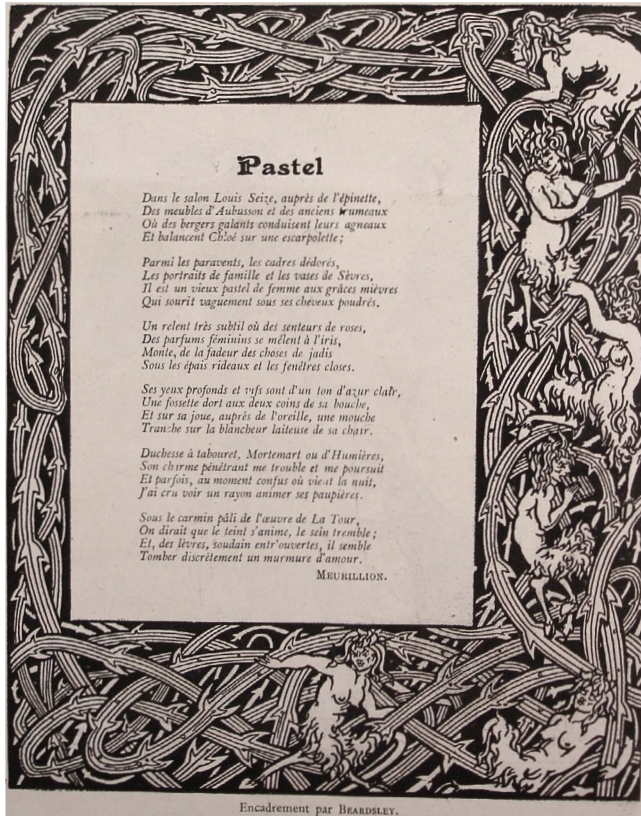


Fig. 5.5 Aubrey Beardsley, framing with she-fauns from *Le Morte Darthur* reused for Meurillon's poem "Pastel," *Le Courrier français*, 12 (24 Mar 1895): 8 (detail). BnF, Paris. The frame is *Satyrs in Briars* (autumn 1892), from Bk. II, chapter 1 (Zatlin 371)

Roques exploited the drawings as he pleased, subjecting them to heavy-handed alterations and appropriating them into new contexts. A frame with female fauns in the 24 March 1895 issue, taken from *Le Morte Darthur* (*Satyrs in Briars*, Zatlin 371), hosts a Louis XVI "Pastel" signed Meurillon, an innocuous and obscure rhymist (Fig. 5.5). Another, on 14 April 1895, with a highly stylised cluster of grapes (*Hop Flowers on Vines*, Zatlin 666), houses a "Ballade du vieux buveur solitaire" by Émile Lutz. Lastly, on 17 February 1895, the first of the three *Comedy-Ballet of Marionettes*, as *Performed by the Troupe of the Théâtre-Impossible, Posed in Three Drawings*, changed into a poster (Zatlin 895), advertises the popular Géraudel cough tablets, the very *raison d'être* of Roques's paper.

Beardsley – who was more than willing for his work to be appropriated – had wonderfully adapted it to Roques’s commercialism. In the first *Yellow Book* version (Fig. 5.6), the dwarf holds a mask in his hand. In *Le Courrier français*, the mask becomes a round box of lozenges, while an added inscription states in French: “If You Cough Take Géraudel’s Pastilles” (Fig. 5.7).



Fig. 5.6 Aubrey Beardsley, *The Comedy-Ballet of Marionettes, as Performed by the Troupe of the Théâtre-Impossible, Posed in Three Drawings, I* (by 27 June 1894), repr. *The Yellow Book*, 2 (July 1894): 87. Courtesy Y90s



Fig. 5.7 Aubrey Beardsley, *The Comedy-Ballet of Marionettes I*, transformed into a billboard with the inscription "If you cough | take | Géraudel's | pastilles," *Le Courrier français*, 7 (17 Feb 1895): 10. BnF, Paris

Take offense? Why? The reproducibility and plasticity of Beardsley's works, their adaptability, were part and parcel of an expansion strategy, deliberately deployed in France. This country Beardsley loved to visit because, as John Gray's moving recollection put it after his demise, there

one could see “*si nettement*.”²² It little mattered that Roques’s gazette often reproduced the drawings in quarter-page format, mingling them with a motley content, and with inking flaws that reproductions show. What mattered was that he published them. A strong aesthetic and ideological standpoint underpins this constraint-free use of images: to address the greatest number possible and educate the eye of the man in the street, as Beardsley’s manifesto on the modern poster claimed.²³ Such reuse takes advantage of the forms’ malleability in a press itself pliable and highly plastic. A case in point is the regular Beardsley spoofs in *Punch*. By parodying the artist, they propagated the “Beardsley style” and amplified it.²⁴ For an artistic personality such as Beardsley’s, which changed styles with a speed rarely seen, and quickly turned every lit straw into a bonfire, such open-mindedness, if not open incitement, was crucial.

Adaptable, critical, and probably involving the draughtsman himself, the *Courrier français* reproduction of Beardsley’s work was exceptional, and in terms of its flexibility and scope, outshone Beardsley’s controlled presence in the British press. Roques’s presentation of Beardsley was not devoid of blunders. He misconstrued an allusion by Beardsley to the novel he planned to write based on Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*, and read Walter Sickert’s signature on the artist’s portrait as “sickest” (“*très malade*”), attributing the piece to Beardsley himself.²⁵ Later on, Franz Blei and Carl Sternheim’s *Hyperion* would repeat the slip-up and publish this portrait as a work by Beardsley, made in Paris for *Le Courrier français*, which proves the pull of the Montmartre weekly to Viennese and German aesthetic circles.²⁶ The Russian *Mir iskusstva* reproduced the gaffe yet again.²⁷

22 Gray, “Aubrey Beardsley,” 68.

23 Beardsley, “The Art of the Hoarding,” *The New Review*, 11 (July 1894): 53–55, collected in A. E. Gallatin, *Aubrey Beardsley: Catalogue of Drawings and Bibliography* (New York: The Grolier Club, 1945), 110–11, and in *Decadent Writings of Aubrey Beardsley*, ed. by Sasha Dovzhyk and Simon Wilson, MHRA Critical Texts 10, Jewelled Tortoise 78 (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2022), 188–89.

24 Further on this, see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

25 Roques, “Les artistes anglais: M. Beardsley,” 8. Sickert’s portrait of Beardsley, a sketch, is signed above right. The caption however reads: “Aubrey Beardsley, by himself” (“*Aubrey Beardsley, par lui-même*”).

26 See *Selbstbildnis von Aubrey Beardsley aus dem Jahre 1894*, *Hyperion: Eine Zweimontasschrift*, 2 (1908), last plate but one with the indication: “in Paris gezeichnet für den ‘Courrier français’ [sic].”



Fig. 5.8 Charles Huard, *En attendant la pratique* (Waiting for the client), repr. *Le Courrier français*, 10 (8 Mar 1896): 2 (detail). BnF, Paris

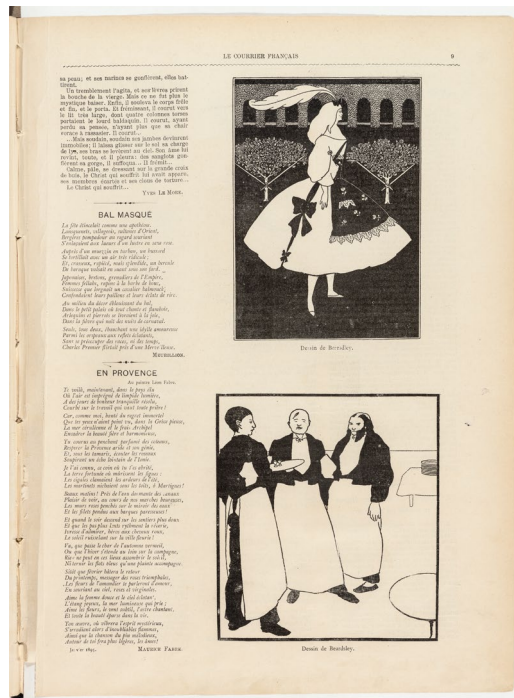


Fig. 5.9 Aubrey Beardsley, *Garçons de Café* (by June 1894), repr. *The Yellow Book*, 2 (July 1894): 93, catalogued as *Les Garçons du Café Royal*, repr. *Le Courrier français*, 6 (10 Feb 1895): 9. Above, reproduction of Beardsley, *The Slippers of Cinderella* (by 27 June 1894), MSL coll., Delaware, repr. *The Yellow Book* 2 (July 1894): 95 (Zatlin 899). BnF, Paris

27 O. Mek Koll', "Obri Berdslei," *Mir iskusstva*, 3:7–8 (1900): 84 (in Russian, without mentioning *Le Courrier français*).

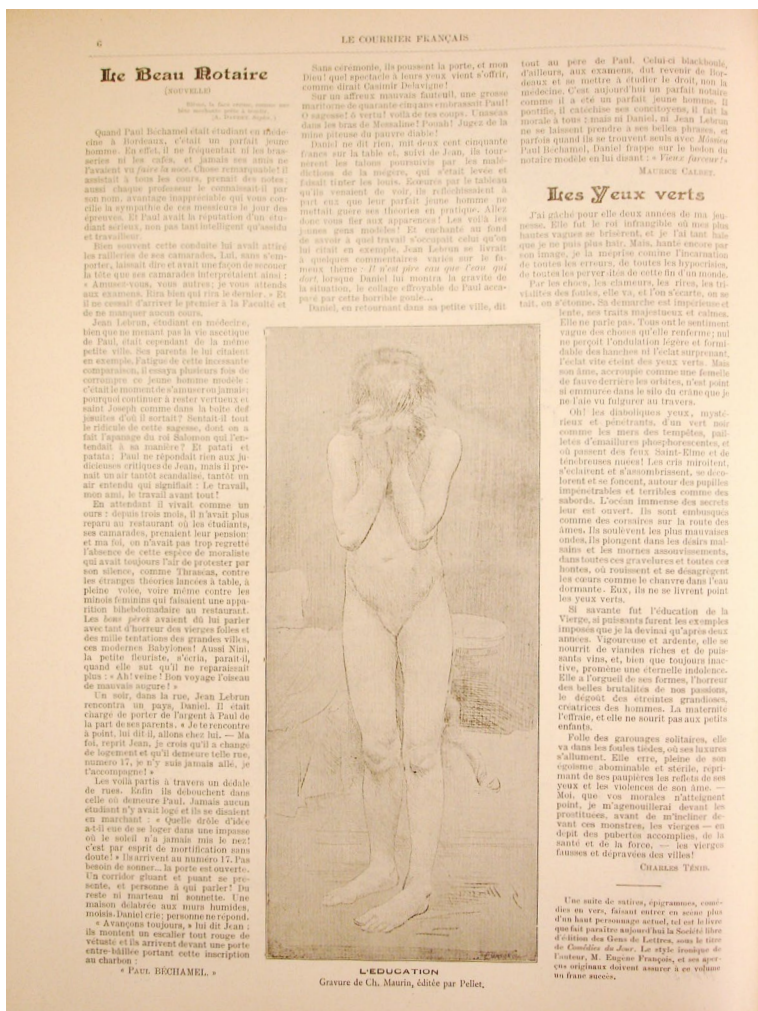


Fig. 5.10 Charles Maurin, Untitled plate from the series *L'Éducation sentimentale* (Gustave Pellet, 1896) repr. as *L'Éducation, Le Courrier français*, 23 (7 June 1896): 6, BnF, Paris

Still, *Le Courrier français* acted as a French podium and a mirror. Thanks to it, Beardsley influenced a number of French artists: Charles Huard's drawing *En attendant la pratique* (Fig. 5.8) was surely inspired by Beardsley's *Les Garçons du Café Royal* (Zatlin 898), published in the second volume of the *Yellow Book* as *Garçons de Café* (Fig. 5.9). *L'Éducation sentimentale* by Charles Maurin, a set of coloured etchings and dry-points issued by Gustave Pellet in 1896 with plates detailed

in *Le Courrier français*, may have borrowed the idea of the title and the feminisation of the subject from Beardsley. In Beardsley's drawing, an old madam is educating a lewd young girl (see Fig. 5.4). In Maurin's, a young woman grooms a little girl, in delicate nudity, foregrounded in "a very remarkable sensual atmosphere."²⁸ In two of these engravings, the mother figure has disappeared. The print in which the naked child stands, her face hidden in her hands in an attitude of deep sorrow (Fig. 5.10a–b), has a rather blatant meaning in a journal in which painters like Adolphe Willette and Jean-Louis Forain overtly criticised the abuse of girls.²⁹ Yet Beardsley himself may have been inspired by continental artists, and Jacques Lethève has related his *Wagnerites* and *Garçons du Café Royal* to wood engravings by Félix Vallotton.³⁰

Periodical Networking: *Le Courrier français* and the *Savoy*

Transfers, circulation of images, and extensive use of media formed the basis of the artist's strategy for self-promotion. As we saw in the previous chapter, reproductions of Beardsley's work challenge the supposedly watertight partition between large-circulation periodicals and art and literature reviews. The artificial divide is likely based more on the presumptions and constructs of literary history than on reality. This is certainly the case in France. From February 1896, Roques's weekly became the outlet for the *Savoy*, the aesthete art and literature journal, newly founded in London with Beardsley as art editor and Arthur Symons as literary editor. Once the *Savoy* had been introduced,³¹ *Le Courrier français* regularly announced its contents and reproduced drawings, including those by Beardsley. A prose poem by Lautrec bears the inscription "Pour mon ami Aubrey Beardsley" as a tribute.³²

28 Charles Maurin, *un symboliste du réel, textes de Maurice Fréchuret*, ed. by Gilles Grandjean (Lyon: Fage éditions; Le Puy-en-Velay: Musée Crozatier, 2006), 79: "une atmosphère sensuelle très remarquable." The print has sometimes be arbitrarily named *La Pudeur* (Bashfulness).

29 A lovely print of the original etching and drypoint with different coloured inks on pale green coloured paper may be seen here: <https://www.navigart.fr/MAMC-saint-etienne-collections/artwork/charles-maurin-petite-fille-debout-nue-le-visage-cache-dans-les-mains-240000000005197>

30 Lethève, "Aubrey Beardsley et la France," 347, fig. 5.

31 Gabriel de Lautrec, "Une nouvelle revue," *Le Courrier français*, 5 (2 Feb 1896): 8–9.

32 Lautrec, "Pour un Démon," *Le Courrier français*, 7 (14 Feb 1897): 6.

Shipments to Lautrec from Leonard Smithers, Beardsley's and the *Savoy's* new publisher, were regular.³³

One might be tempted to think that the bold drawings and spicy literature favoured by Roques reflected a bond with Smithers, notorious for his collection of erotica and books traded under the counter, disparaged by a conservative Britain, and known for having once displayed in his window the provocative notice "Smut is cheap today." Yet the artist's choice of both Roques and Smithers guaranteed above all freedom of expression. Rejected by John Lane, the rising and cautious *Yellow Book* publisher, Beardsley had readily been sponsored by Smithers. James G. Nelson's fine study has shown the central role Smithers played in promoting the avant-garde in prudish Britain.³⁴ Similarly, despite his opportunism, Roques was a patron of the avant-garde and a virtuoso of cultural networks.

As it happened, there was nothing particularly objectionable or controversial about Beardsley's drawings in *Le Courrier français* during his second phase of involvement. They were representative of his most beautiful and fine graphic style, the plates for Pope's heroic-comic masterpiece *The Rape of the Lock*. In May 1896, Lautrec gave the first French description of this book he had just received,³⁵ and which he may have lent to Jarry. "Du pays des dentelles," Jarry's splendid text inspired by Beardsley's plates after Pope, was published two years later in the *Mercure de France*. A central drawing in this series, *Le Rapt de la boucle*, an accurate translation of *The Rape of the Lock* (Zatlin 982), featured in *Le Courrier français* (Fig. 5.11), as did several other pieces: the cover of the first issue of the *Savoy*; Beardsley's mischievous self-portrait *A Footnote* (see Fig. 3.4); the drawing *L'Ascension de Sainte Rose de Lima* (*The Ascension of Saint Rose of Lima*, Zatlin 1005), taken from the first version of Beardsley's unfinished novel *Under the Hill*, published in instalments in the English magazine; and the plate *The Coiffing* (Zatlin 1009) accompanying Beardsley's poem "The Ballad of a Barber."³⁶

33 *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, ed. by Henry Maas, J. L. Duncan, and W. G. Good (London: Cassell, 1970), 231, letter dated 22 Dec 1896 to Smithers: "You generally send him [G. de Lautrec] (on account of the *Courrier Français*) a copy of my books."

34 See James G. Nelson, *Publisher to the Decadents: Leonard Smithers in the Careers of Beardsley, Wilde, Dowson* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

35 Lautrec, "Envois de Londres," *Le Courrier français*, 22 (31 May 1896): 5–6.

36 *Le Courrier français*, 5 (2 Feb 1896): 9 (cover of the *Savoy*, no. 1); 20 (10 May 1896): 9 (*A Footnote*); 22 (31 May 1896): 5 (*The Ascension of Saint Rose of Lima*) and 6 (*The*

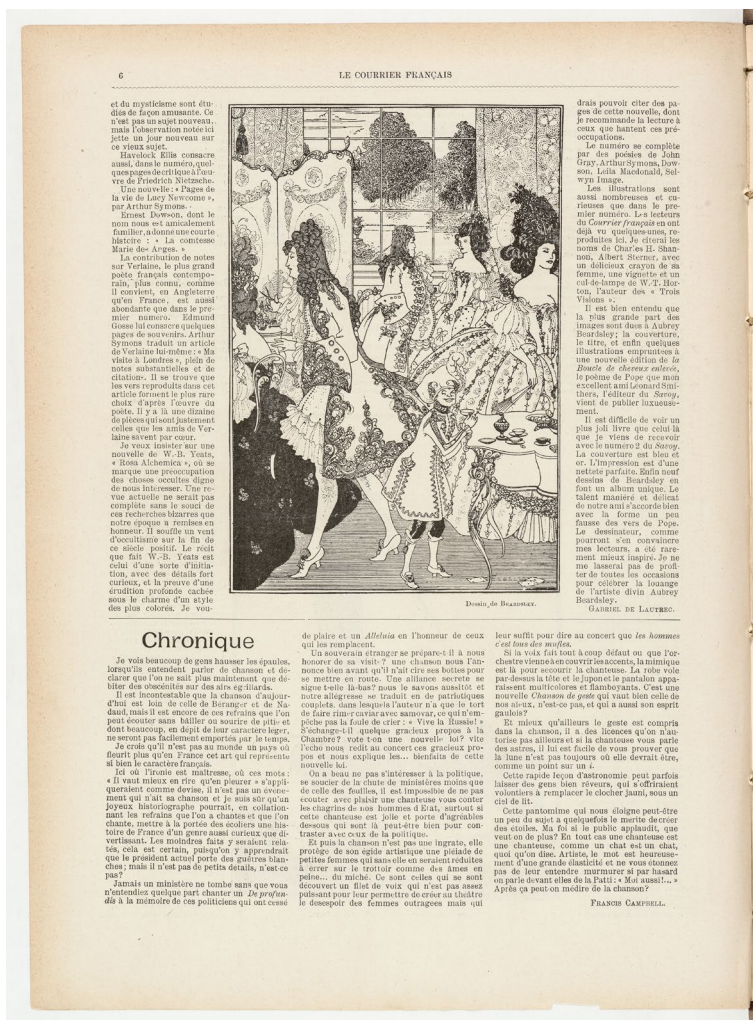


Fig. 5.11 Aubrey Beardsley, *Le Rapt de la boucle* [*The Rape of the Lock*] (by late Feb 1896), priv. coll., New York (Zatlin 982)], repr. *Le Courrier français*, 22 (31 May 1896): 6. BnF, Paris

It was therefore not avant-garde art and literature reviews that welcomed Beardsley in France, as one might have expected, but a weekly of broad circulation and high reputation, promoting graphic innovation. If Beardsley's own periodicals, the *Yellow Book* and the *Savoy*, welcomed and publicised modern art and literature, as did their French peers,

Rape of the Lock); 27 (5 July 1896): 11 (*The Ballad of a Barber*, taken from the July issue of the *Savoy*, reproduced without the poem).

6 LE COURRIER FRANÇAIS

et du mysticisme sont étouffés de façon amusante. Ce n'est pas un sujet nouveau, mais l'observation notée ici jette un jour nouveau sur ce vieux sujet.

Harvard Elle consacre aussi, dans le numéro, quelques pages de critique à l'œuvre de Frédéric Nietzsche. Une nouvelle: « Pages de la vie de Lucy Newman », par Arthur Symonds.

Ernest Dowson, dont le nom nous est amicalement familier, adonne une courte histoire: « La comtesse Marie des Arques ».

La contribution de notes sur Verlaine, le plus grand poète français contemporain, plus connu, comme il convient, en Angleterre qu'en France, est aussi abondante que dans le premier numéro. Edmund Gosse lui consacre quelques pages de souvenirs. Arthur Symonds traduit un article de Verlaine lui-même: « Ma visite à Londres », plein de notes substantielles et de citations. Il se trouve que les vers reproduits dans cet article forment le plus rare choix d'après l'œuvre du poète. Il y a là une mine de pièces qui sont justement celles que les amis de Verlaine savent par cœur.

Je veux insister sur une nouvelle de W.B. Yeats, « Rosa Alchemica », où se marque une préoccupation des choses occultes digne de nous intéresser. Une revue actuelle ne serait pas complète sans la section de nos recherches littéraires que notre époque a tenté en honneur. Il souffle un vent d'occultisme sur la fin de ce siècle poétique. Le récit que fait W.B. Yeats est celui d'une sorte d'initiation, avec des détails fort curieux, et la preuve d'une érudition profonde cache sous le charme d'un style des plus colorés. Je vou-



Beardsley.

Chronique

Je vois beaucoup de gens hausser les épaules, lorsqu'ils entendent parler de chanson et déclarent qu'ils ne savent plus maintenant ce que diabolent des obscénités sur des airs de liurda.

Il est incontestable que la chanson d'aujourd'hui est loin de celle de Beranger et de Nodding, mais il est encore de ces refrains que l'on peut écouter sans baliiser ou sourire de pitié et dont beaucoup, en dépit de leur caractère léger, ne seront pas facilement emportés par le temps.

Je crois qu'il n'est pas au monde un pays où fleurisse plus qu'en France cet art qui représente si bien le caractère français.

Il est évident, en effet, que les mots, et il vaut mieux en rire qu'en pleurer, s'appliquent comme des fleurs, et il n'est pas en soi-même qu'il n'y ait des chansons et je suis sûr qu'un joyeux historiographe pourrait, en collationnant les refrains que l'on a chantés et que l'on chante, mettre à la portée des couleurs une histoire de France d'un genre aussi curieux que divertissant. Les modernes d'ici y seraient jaloux, cela est certain, puisqu'ils y apprendraient que le président actuel porte des gilets blancs; mais il n'est pas de petits détails, n'est-ce pas?

Jamais un ministre ne tombe sans que vous entendiez quelques parts chanter ce *De profus* dis à la mémoire de ces politiciens qui ont cessé

de jouer et un *Albion* en l'honneur de ceux qui les remplacent.

Un souverain étranger se prépare: il a le bon honneur de sa voir: une chanson nous l'annonce bien avant qu'il n'ait été des bottes pour se mettre en route. Une alliance secrète se signe telle la bas? nous le savons aussitôt et notre allégresse se traduit en de patétiques couplets, dans lesquels l'auteur a à que le tort de faire trop coïncider avec son œuvre, ce qui n'est pas la faute de crier: « Vive la Russie! »

S'échange-t-il quelque gros mot, à la Chambre? vote-t-on une nouvelle loi? vite l'on nous rend au concert ces grands propos et nos esprits les... détails de cette nouvelle loi.

On a beau ne pas s'intéresser à la politique, se soucier de la chute de ministères moins que de celle des feuilles, il est impossible de ne pas écouter avec plaisir une chanson vous conter les intrigues de nos hommes d'Etat, surtout si cette chanson est joyeuse et porte d'agréables dessins qui sont là peut-être bien pour contraster avec ceux de la politique.

Et puis la chanson n'est pas une imprécation, elle protège de son égérie attitudinal une poignée de petites femmes qui sans elle se seraient réduites à errer sur le trottoir comme des âmes en peine... du monde. Ce sont celles qui se sentent découvertes un flot de voix qui n'est pas assez puissant pour leur permettre de crier au tueur de despoir les femmes outragées mais qui

drais pouvoir citer des pages de cette nouvelle, dont je recommande la lecture à ceux que hantent ces préoccupations.

Le numéro se complète par des poésies de John Gray, Arthur Symonds, Dowson, Lalla Macdonald, Selwyn Image.

Les illustrations sont aussi nombreuses et curieuses que dans le premier numéro. Les lecteurs du *Courrier français* en ont déjà vu quelques-unes reproduites ici. Je citerai les noms de Chas. H. Stannard, Albert Stern, avec un délicieux crayon de femme, une vignette et un rot de l'imp de W.T. Horton, l'auteur des « Trois Visions ».

Il est bien entendu que la plus grande part des images sont dues à Aubrey Beardsley: la couverture, le titre, et enfin quelques illustrations empruntées à une nouvelle édition de *Le Boisé de chaux ensole*, le poème de Pope qui nous excellent ami Lionel Lincoln, l'éditeur du *Savoy*, vient de publier luxueusement.

Il est difficile de voir un plus joli livre que celui là que je viens de recevoir avec le numéro 2 du *Savoy*. La couverture est bleu et or, l'impression est d'une netteté parfaite. Enfin tout dessein de Beardsley en fait un album unique. Le talent maître et délicat de notre ami s'accorde bien avec la forme un peu fumeuse des vers de Pope. La destination, comme pourrait s'en convaincre nos lecteurs, est de nous faire mieux inspirer. Je ne me lassais pas de profiter de toutes les occasions pour célébrer la beauté de l'artiste divin Aubrey Beardsley.

GABRIEL DE LAURENCE.

leur suffira pour dire au concert que les hommes c'est tous des musiciens.

Si la voix fait tout à coup défaut ou que l'orchestre vienne à se couvrir les accents, la musique est là pour secourir la chanteuse. La robe vole par-dessus la tête et le jupon se voit à l'aise, apparaissent multicolores et flamboyants. C'est une nouvelle Chanson de geste qui vaut bien celle de nos aïeux, n'est-ce pas, et qui a aussi son esprit gaillard?

Et mieux qu'ailleurs le geste est compris dans la chanson. Il a des bonces qu'on a l'air de sautiller par ailleurs et si la chanteuse vous parle des autres, il lui est facile de vous prouver que la lune n'est pas toujours où elle devrait être, comme un point sur un i.

Cette rapide leçon d'astonomie peut parfois laisser des gens bien rêveurs, qui s'efforcent volontiers à remplacer le ciel par le ciel de lit.

Cette pantomime qui nous éloigne peut-être un peu du sujet à quel point le monde descer des étoiles. Ma foi le public applaudit, qu'il en soit de plus! En tout cas une chanteuse est une chanteuse, comme un chat est un chat, quel qu'il en dise. Artiste, le mot est inexactement d'une grande élasticité et ne vous donne pas de leur extrême murmurer si par hasard on parle devant elles de la Patrie! Moi aussi... »

Après ça peut-on croire de la chanson?

FRANÇOIS CARPILL.

the correspondence one might have expected between them is not confirmed. Media promotion was the keyword, and both Roques and Beardsley benefited from it in turn. Additionally, *Le Courrier français* also enabled Beardsley to feature alongside those who practised an art as demanding, innovative and disruptive as his own in France: Adolphe Willette, Jean-Louis Forain, Félix Vallotton, Jules Chéret, Armand Rassenfosse, Louis Legrand, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec for a time, as well as the American Will Bradley.

Baffling Associations

From a present-day standpoint, it might be assumed that French avant-garde journals would have followed *Le Courrier français* and discussed Beardsley's art much earlier. Yet, only in April 1897 did *L'Ermitage* grant him an article in his lifetime, three years after *Le Courrier français*, thanks to Henry-D. Davray.³⁷ A key translator of English texts, Davray wrote influentially in the *Mercure de France* on British literature, and spent time with Beardsley, whom he trained in oral French. An exclusive publication, *L'Ermitage* was in that phase open to Anglophone input (maybe encouraged by Stuart Merrill and Francis Vielé-Griffin, two Franco-American authors on its editorial team) and to images (under the artistic leadership of Jacques Des Gachons). In his *Ermitage* article on Beardsley, Davray himself aspired to comprehensive criticism, far from the hubbub, judging and defending a work of art because it is admirable though it may not please all. His efforts at completeness drew on a recent publication, Beardsley's album *A Book of Fifty Drawings* (issued by Smithers), which made gauging the artist's diverse styles possible. Davray's article included a single illustration, highlighted as a full-page plate, the openwork medallion concluding Ernest Dowson's *The Pierrot of the Minute* (Fig. 5.12, Zatlin 1043), on which Davray also commented in the *Mercure de France*.³⁸ Further exchanges with Davray show Beardsley's strong desire to participate in the illustrated edition of *L'Ermitage* in 1898.³⁹ His death prevented him from so doing.

37 Henry-D. Davray, "L'Art d'Aubrey Beardsley," *L'Ermitage*, 14 (Apr 1897): 253–61.

38 Davray, "Lettres anglaises," *Mercure de France*, 22:90 (June 1897): 582.

39 *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, 419 (letter dated 7 Jan 1898): "Certainly I shall be only too pleased to let you have something for the new *Ermitage*."



Fig. 5.12 Aubrey Beardsley, *Cul-de-lampe* (12–16 Nov 1896), Lessing J. Rosenwald coll., Library of Congress, Washington, DC, repr. as final plate in *Pierrot of the Minute*, 44. PE coll.

In the meantime, the artist had contributed to the Salon des Cent organised by yet another avant-garde review, *La Plume*, and several of his posters had appeared in a *Plume* special issue on this new art form that had launched a craze.⁴⁰ As shows a 13 August 1893 autograph receipt signed by Edward Bella,⁴¹ he had made a colour cover for *La Plume*, which was never published.⁴² Several French books in a variety of genres had

40 "Les affiches étrangères," *La Plume*, 155 (1 Oct 1895): 410 (*Affiche anglaise pour la galerie Goupil, à Londres*), 424 (*Affiche pour la Librairie Children's book [sic]*); "L'Affiche anglaise," *ibid.*, 428 (*Affiche "Autonym" pour une librairie*); "Supplément," 457 (*affiche pour A Comedy of Sighs!*), 459 (*Affiche anglaise*). Several of these will find their way into Uzanne's *Les Évolutions du bouquin*.

41 Edward Bella owned with his brother the paper firm "J. & E. Bella." He was a poster enthusiast, organiser of poster exhibitions, and the London correspondent for *La Plume*'s Salon des Cent. Further on Bella, see Philipp Leu, "Les revues littéraires et artistiques, 1890–1900. Questions de patrimonialisation et de numérisation," 2 vols. (PhD diss., Université Paris-Saclay, 2016), I, 103, n. 257, <https://theses.hal.science/tel-03606156>, and Zatlin, *Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 185, 191 and 194.

42 *The Gallatin Beardsley Collection in the Princeton University Library. A Catalogue Compiled by A. E. Gallatin and Alexander D. Wainwright* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

mentioned him. Gabriel Mourey, the correspondent and manager-to-be of the *Studio* in France (from 1899), introduced him in *Passé le détroit*, his promenade on new art discoveries beyond the Channel.⁴³ Jean Lorrain mentioned him in his Parisian chronicles: commenting on the Parisian staging of Wilde's *Salomé*, he acclaims no other décor and costume designer than Beardsley, Wilde's "designated illustrator."⁴⁴ Following a Lautrec quote, Lorrain stressed the artist's "frail and tormented grace, the light and sometimes caricatural sensuality."⁴⁵ Octave Uzanne, who had met Beardsley three years earlier in London, commended him in *Les Évolutions du bouquin*, reproduced three drawings (praising the controversial *Comedy of Sighs!* poster, see Fig. 4.2), and announced a promising future.⁴⁶ Keen on new book genres and book design, he further introduced Beardsley in *L'Art dans la décoration extérieure des livres* with five covers and book bindings reproduced either in-text or as inserted plates.⁴⁷

Unlike the Italian articles discussed in the previous chapter, which often included all sorts of biographical information at the expense of Beardsley's art – with ruminations on the British education system –, none of these numerous mentions in the French press offered witty or troubling comments on the artist's life. Except for a few sparse

University Library, 1952), 18.

43 Gabriel Mourey, "Quelques-uns et leurs œuvres: Aubrey Beardsley," in Mourey, *Passé le détroit: La Vie et l'art à Londres* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1895), 268–71.

44 Jean Lorrain, "Pall-Mall semaine," *Le Journal* (16 Feb 1896): 2: "l'illustrateur désigné pour les œuvres de Wilde."

45 *Ibid.*: "la grâce frêle et tourmentée, la sensualité légère et parfois caricaturale." See also Lorrain, *Poussières de Paris* (Paris: Fayard frères, 1896), 150. Lorrain would also comment on Beardsley in *Poussières de Paris* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1902), 100, reproducing "Pall-Mall Semaine," *Le Journal* (25 June 1899).

46 Octave Uzanne, *Les Évolutions du Bouquin. La Nouvelle Bibliopolis: Voyage d'un novateur au pays des néo-icône-bibliomanes, lithographies en couleurs et marges décoratives* par H. P. Dillon (Paris: Henri Floury, 1897), 41, 148, 151, 154, 161, 170, with four reproductions (two of which posters). See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8560074/f11.planchecontact>

47 Uzanne, *L'Art dans la décoration extérieure des livres en France et à l'étranger, les couvertures illustrées, les cartonnages d'éditeurs, la reliure d'art* (Paris: Société Française d'Éditions d'Art, L. Henry May, 1898), 105 (cover for the *Savoy*), 108–109, 113, 147 (spine and front cover for *Le Morte Darthur*), 151 (binding for *A Book of Fifty Drawings*); insert plates between 96–97 (faun reading to a young lady), 104–105 (title page for the *Savoy*), 152–53 (blue printed boards on blue cloth for *Pierrot!* by H. de Vere Stacpoole). See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96299956/f8.planchecontact>

allusions to his youth, comments focused on his art accomplishments. Art criticism prevailed in France, unlike in Italy, where personal data was mixed with limited comments on the art and rumour harvested from other magazines (although French newspapers were not above reporting scandalous anecdotes). It was only on Beardsley's death that French obituaries and posthumous celebrations led to a motley concert of biographical articles.

Tribute and Din

Obituaries are a tricky business. Two obituaries, closely following on Beardsley's demise that I discovered in the press and ascribed to their authors, were by men of taste who knew the artist well. The artist Jacques-Émile Blanche (only signing by his initials), who had painted a splendid 1895 portrait of Beardsley, penned the first in the supplement of *La Gazette des beaux-arts*.⁴⁸ Octave Uzanne, under the pseudonym Isis, contributed the second on the front page of *Le Figaro*, a widely distributed daily.⁴⁹ Curiously, their thoughtful tributes were offset by a racist anecdote on the front page of the *Journal des débats* a fortnight later: a poster by Beardsley is bought at a low price by an American, who then offers it to another as a specimen of modern art. Although this man takes the poster, he despises it, and uses it to wrap his dirty linen to take to the laundrette. The Chinese laundryman discovers the poster, marvels at it, hangs it up and has it admired. From one buyer to the next, its price rises to 500 dollars (2,500 francs). It ends up in the home of a wealthy Chinese gentleman in San Francisco, above an altar where a lamp burns night and day. "New prospects open up for misunderstood artists," concludes dryly the (unsigned) article.⁵⁰ Less than a month after the artist's demise, such a yarn sounds so inappropriate that neither prudery nor

48 J.-E. B., "Aubrey Beardsley," *La Chronique des arts et de la curiosité. Supplément à la Gazette des beaux-arts*, 13 (26 Mar 1898): 111.

49 Isis [Octave Uzanne], "Paris partout," *Le Figaro*, 89 (30 Mar 1898): 1. Attributed thanks to La Cagoule. Octave Uzanne, *Visions de notre heure. Choses et gens qui passent, notations d'art, de littérature et de vie pittoresque* (Paris: Henri Floury, 1899), 95–97, same text. Most of the chronicles included in this book were published in *L'Écho de Paris*, yet not the one on Beardsley.

50 "Au jour le jour," *Journal des débats*, 100 (11 Apr 1898): 1: "Des horizons nouveaux s'ouvrent pour les artistes incompris."

narrow-mindedness exonerates it. The conventional French press had a field day over it, propagating it from one paper to the next.⁵¹ The din went on, mocking the work in the absence of the self-jeering artist.

The anecdote had reached the French press from the British dailies and must be apocryphal. First published in the *Westminster Gazette* in August 1894, amid the Beardsley boom, it was repeated there on 17 March 1898, and relayed by the *Daily Mail* two days after the artist's death.⁵² Its coarseness speaks volumes of the principles guiding press journalism at the time. Beardsley's oeuvre may have taken advantage of the uproar of outrage. Outrage turned against him at his departure. It took a year for the *Journal des débats*, and the publication of a new book of his drawings, to concede a fairer article to Beardsley, likened to Pierrot, "gay, mocking, suffering, doomed to die young."⁵³ The image springs from the work itself by way of the avant-garde journals. And it looks at an impressive future ahead albeit its meaning.

Pierrot Beside Himself: Exit Scenarios

The *Mercure de France* and *La Revue blanche* commemorated Beardsley in unison. The *Mercure* had announced Beardsley's passing already in April in a dense unsigned paragraph recalling the most important phases of his style.⁵⁴ The May 1898 *Mercure* issue turned to a plural tribute: Davray translated Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol," by then in its sixth printing, whose poignant stanzas struck a melancholic chord, while Jarry published "Du pays des dentelles" celebrating Beardsley's last *ajouré* style after *The Rape of the Lock*, under the aegis of his *Faustroll* texts.⁵⁵ Davray's article on Beardsley was the issue's major

51 *La Justice* (12–13 Apr 1898): 3; *Le Radical* (16 Apr 1898): 2; *Le Bulletin de la presse*, 4:3, 54 (21 Apr 1898): 484 (abridged).

52 See Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 121 (in note).

53 Charles Legras, "Au jour le jour: Aubrey Beardsley," *Journal des débats*, 87 (29 Mar 1899): 1: "gai, moqueur, souffrant, destiné à mourir jeune."

54 "Échos," *Mercure de France*, 26:100 (Apr 1898): 335.

55 For an analysis of Jarry's tropes and the ways he gathers inspiration from Beardsley's work, see my article "Jarry et Beardsley," *L'Étoile-absinthe. Les Cahiers iconographiques de la Société des amis d'Alfred Jarry*, 95–96 (2002): 49–67, http://alfredjarry.fr/amisjarry/fichiers_ea/etoile_absinthe_095_96reduit.pdf

accolade, drafting the artist's intellectual portrait.⁵⁶ It was not illustrated but turned out to be almost as good as any illustration at proffering a poignant image of the artist's passing. Davray opened it and closed it in English and in italics, using at the opening Beardsley's full-length caption to *The Death of Pierrot* from the October 1896 *Savoy* (Zatlin 1015), and a few fragments of the same in his final words:

As the dawn broke, Pierrot fell into his last sleep. Then upon tiptoe, silently up the stair, noiselessly into the room, came the comedians Arlecchino, Pantaleone, il Dottore, and Colombina, who with much love carried away upon their shoulders, the white frocked clown of Bergamo; whither, we know not.⁵⁷

Both the caption and the absent plate staged the artist's exit, forlorn in his ultimate bunk, miles away from the cheek and vivacity of his mischievous portraits. Misfortune would have it that such a melodramatic curtain was at complete odds with the artist's own intentions, even though he had multiplied his Pierrot self-portraits from the very beginning. An early identification of the artist as the white-faced pining clown, in which Decadence saw the image of the poet, featured in an August 1893 letter to Robert Ross. Beardsley asked him for a prologue in verse for a projected book, *Masques*, which never materialised. It would have been spoken by Pierrot, i.e., himself.⁵⁸ A serious health crisis in 1896 surely encouraged the affinity. Yet Beardsley had clear reservations about associating himself with the potentially facile and overly maudlin image of Pierrot. He had deferred publishing *The Death of Pierrot* in the *Savoy*, unwilling for it to feature as an epitaph.⁵⁹ He would have been "seriously distressed" to see it published on its own, without any other accompanying drawings. It would have looked, he admitted to Smithers, like a confession of helplessness and illness.⁶⁰

The *zeitgeist*, however, worked against him: Pierrot's enigmatic sadness and loneliness had grown hugely popular both in England and

56 *Mercury de France*, 26:101 (May 1898) includes Oscar Wilde, "Ballade de la geôle de Reading," 350–70, translated by Davray; Alfred Jarry, "Gestes et opinions du Dr Faustroll, pataphysicien: V. Du pays des dentelles, à Aubrey Beardsley," 399–400; Davray, "Aubrey Beardsley," 485–91.

57 *The Savoy*, 6 (Oct 1896): 32–33; *Mercury de France*, 26:101 (May 1898): 485.

58 *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, 51.

59 See Zatlin, *Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 284.

60 *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, 143 (ca. 11 July 1896 letter to Smithers).

in France.⁶¹ In 1896, Lane published a series of four novels, "Pierrot's Library," with all volumes in identical front, back, and spine designs (but different colour by volume), title pages, front and back endpapers conceived by Beardsley (Zatlin 958–62). In 1897, Beardsley also designed the binding, ornaments, and plates for Ernest Dowson's melancholy fantasy, *The Pierrot of the Minute* issued by Smithers (Zatlin, 1040–43). The *Cul-de-lampe* for this shows a sad, aged Pierrot leaving a lush garden, the oval-shaped medallion set in an elaborate *ajouré* frame of garlands and roses with a mirror effect (see Fig. 5.12, Zatlin 1043). The *Cul-de-lampe* was no tailpiece but an ostentatious final image, a decorative oculus through which Pierrot looked back at the entire text itself.⁶² Davray had publicised it in France as an openwork ornament set within his *Ermitage* article on Beardsley, the only text on the English artist to appear in a French avant-garde journal in his lifetime. A nearly blank page introduced it, bearing only its new title in French, *Le Pierrot d'aujourd'hui* (*The Pierrot of Today*).⁶³ White became Pierrot and blank announced his impending silence. Such an arrangement set the tone for Beardsley's farewell chorus. Davray's article in the *Mercure de France* did the rest.

With the help of the French press, *The Death of Pierrot* ended up becoming an inadvertent self-portrait and one of Beardsley's most iconic images. The drawing depicts several *commedia dell'arte* characters tiptoeing towards Pierrot on his deathbed, a finger against their lips (Fig. 5.13, Zatlin 1015). Pathos is at its highest but, nevertheless, impertinence is still present. The scrawny figure of Pierrot, lost under a swelling bedspread and an oversized bed, is the ultimate version of *Portrait of Himself* (see Fig. 3.3) minus the mischief. Fletcher notes "a bulging forehead that suggests the fetus image [...] with a bandage for headress round the sharp contoured features of the dead face."⁶⁴ Half of the figures beckon at an audience: the unseen spectators, and ourselves, the viewers. Death has

61 See Andrew G. Lehmann, "Pierrot and Fin de Siècle," in *Romantic Mythologies*, ed. by Ian Fletcher (London: Routledge/Kegan Paul, 1967), 209–23; Robert F. Storey, *Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); Jean de Palacio, *Pierrot fin de siècle ou Les métamorphoses d'un masque* (Paris: Séguier, 1990).

62 See Zatlin, *Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 334–35.

63 Davray, "L'Art d'Aubrey Beardsley," 257.

64 Ian Fletcher, *Aubrey Beardsley* (Boston, Mass.: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 119.

become a performance enacted on a stage-like podium. The imaginative dimension of the drawing makes art even out of ultimate demise.



Fig. 5.13 Aubrey Beardsley, *La Mort de Pierrot* [*The Death of Pierrot* (by first week of July 1896), repr. *The Savoy*, 6 (Oct 1896): 33], here illustrating Gabriel de Lautrec's belated article, "Note sur Aubrey Beardsley," repr. *Le Courrier français*, 21 (21 May 1899): 3. BnF, Paris

Critics adored the stage-like quality of the piece, and claimed it as an ideal dénouement. Exploited to accompany many posthumous articles,

it turned into a pathetic – and influential – symbol of the artist's early passing. *Le Courrier français* published it in 1899 with a Lautrec article (see Fig. 5.13), a tribute quite belatedly paid to the man who had much contributed to Roques's fortunes.⁶⁵ So did *Emporium* in 1904 under Vittorio Pica's seal.⁶⁶ As for *Kunst und Künstler*, in 1903 it replicated the Dowson *ajouré* Pierrot as a final image, this time a real tailpiece concluding Emil Hannover's article.⁶⁷ In their wake, Julius Meier-Graefe's study on Beardsley became an explicit farewell. It adopted as motto Beardsley's translation of Catullus's Latin farewell⁶⁸ and concluded with two Pierrot pictures, the Dowson *Cul-de-Lampe* and *The Death of Pierrot*, the latter, again detailed and dramatised in words.⁶⁹ The drama had been played out. Text and pictures grieved.

A similar mood prevailed in *La Revue blanche*. In a touching article, written and published in French on 1 May 1898, probably supervised by Félix Fénéon,⁷⁰ John Gray, a close friend of Beardsley's, called Pierrot "a sad biography" ("*une triste biographie*"). Additionally, Gray's opening sentence, "An artist has just died," echoed "M. Gustave Moreau has just died." Moreau had passed away on 19 April, following Beardsley. The first chronicle and its initial line, a tribute to the French artist, heralded the last, a homage to the British, under the common heading "Petite gazette d'art." Thadée Natanson, who had signed most of its entries, must have been no stranger to such an arrangement.⁷¹ *La Revue blanche* thus expressed its dedication to two artists of stature, Gray's contribution being yet another shilling paid into the coffers of Franco-British

65 Lautrec, "Note sur Aubrey Beardsley," *Le Courrier français*, 21 (21 May 1899): 3.

66 Vittorio Pica, "Tre artisti d'eccezione," *Emporium*, 19:113 (May 1904): 351, see https://emporium.sns.it/galleria/pagine.php?volume=XIX&pagina=XIX_113_351.jpg

67 Emil Hannover, "Aubrey Beardsley," *Kunst und Künstler*, 1:11 (Nov 1903): 425, see https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kk1902_1903/0434/image/info

68 See Catullus, "Carmen CI," in *Decadent Writings of Aubrey Beardsley*, 181.

69 Meier-Graefe, "Aubrey Beardsley and his Circle," 265–66, text 258–59.

70 In a letter to Gray, dated 17 Apr 1898 and authored on *La Revue blanche* paper, Fénéon writes to his friend Gray: "The lines you dedicate to his kind memory are exquisite, and you will find them printed as they stand, or nearly so." See Félix Fénéon – John Gray, *Correspondance*, ed. by Maurice Imbert (Tusson: Du Lérot, 2010), 76: "Les lignes que vous consacrez à sa gentille mémoire sont exquises, et vous les trouverez imprimées telles quelles, ou à peu près."

71 "Petite gazette d'art," *La Revue blanche*, 16 (May 1898): 65–70 (the Moreau article opens the column, Gray's article on Beardsley ends it, 68–70).

friendship. Ironically, Moreau had shunned the public and eschewed clamour, quite the contrary to Beardsley.

Both the *Mercure* and *La Revue blanche* tempered, however, the pathos of that adieu. The *Mercure* article closes with a grotesque tailpiece by Joseph Sattler, who pictured a fancy grimacing Beardsley with faun's ears, ironically haloed with a crown adorned by a single laurel leaf (Fig. 5.14). In *La Revue blanche*, Beardsley's portrait by Vallotton, a black-and-white "mask," stands out against a black patch, a dripping ink blot that redrafts his profile in caricature (Fig. 5.15): the melancholic tribute is tempered by the grotesque in response to the artist who had stated that, if he was not grotesque, he was nothing.

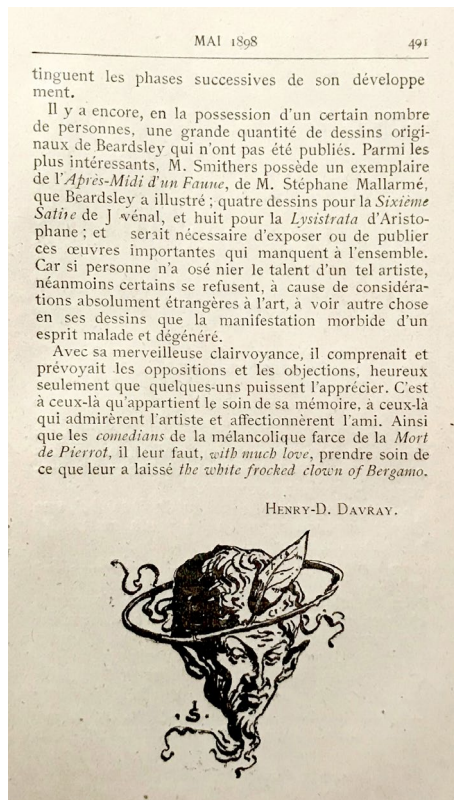


Fig. 5.14 Joseph Sattler, *Grotesque of Aubrey Beardsley*, tailpiece of Henry-D. Davray's article, "Aubrey Beardsley," repr. *Mercure de France*, 26:101 (May 1898): 491. Author's photograph

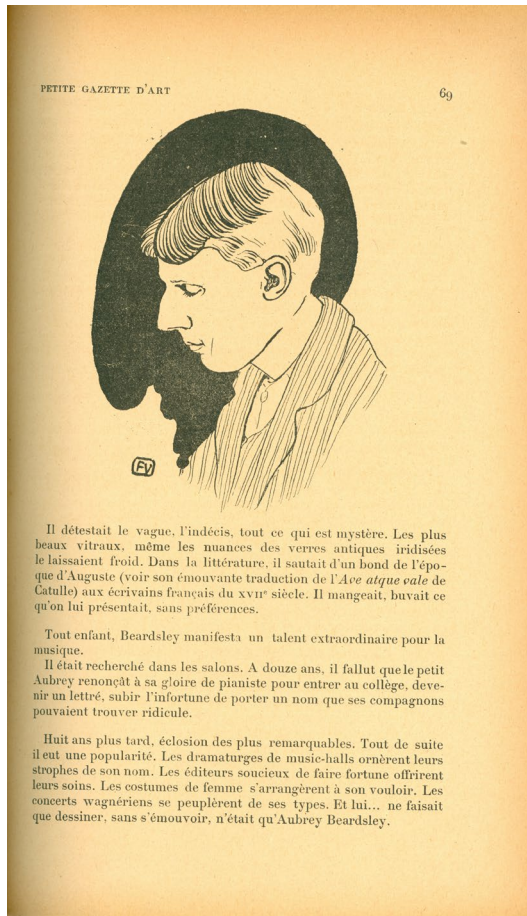


Fig. 5.15 Félix Vallotton, *Aubrey Beardsley's mask*, with John Gray's article in "Petite gazette d'art," repr. *La Revue blanche*, 16 (May 1898): 69. Author's photograph

It is therefore halfway between the white Pierrot and the grotesque vignettes that Beardsley's portrait as "dandy of the grotesque"⁷² finally took shape in French and European periodicals. The white frock is but an evanescent bust. Yet a bust all the same. Witness Matthew Sturgis's Beardsley biography, which chooses no other image and no other heading to conclude. His last chapter is "The Death of Pierrot," and it

72 Partial title of Chris Snodgrass's study, *Aubrey Beardsley, Dandy of the Grotesque* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

uses the homonymous plate as chapter frontispiece.⁷³ Yet, Pierrot's loose white blouse and wide white pantaloons are perhaps nothing more than an ultimate mask enclosing nothing, a blank surface on which commiseration and pathos may glide and thrive. It brought the wide circulation of images of the "puerile" Beardsley to a stop, in obvious contradiction to an icon status long shaped by an aura of scandal and clever wit.

French Aftermath and Follow-Up

Two tributes in larger circulation periodicals addressed the general public at the time of Beardsley's death: Gabriel Mourey gave an overall approving evaluation of Beardsley's art, admiring his precociousness, in *La Revue encyclopédique*;⁷⁴ and Tristan Klingsor added a more descriptive piece in the *Revue illustrée*.⁷⁵ It was not until July 1899 that Davray wrote an "epitaph" in *La Plume*, echoing several English authors, and listing the print runs of the albums and the retail prices of several illustrated books.⁷⁶

All the same, these articles signal a missed rendezvous. More often than not, the same facts and features about Beardsley passed from one author to the next, embellished with a few descriptions after reproduced drawings. The avant-garde reviews remained soberly illustrated. In these publications it was the work's originality and its boldness that moulded the words. The larger-circulation magazines had significant financial means, which the avant-garde journals could not compete with, so it was up to publications like the *Revue illustrée*, to provide reproductions of fine drawings requested from London. In this way, Beardsley's images reached a wider public through popular, general-interest magazines, guided by his legendary reputation. As Desmarais shows in her comparison of Beardsley's reception in England and France,

73 Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 340–51.

74 Mourey, "Aubrey Beardsley," *La Revue encyclopédique*, 8:248 (4 June 1898): 520–21.

75 Tristan Klingsor, "Aubrey Beardsley," *Revue illustrée*, 13:13 (15 June 1898): n.p. The issue again relates Beardsley to Gustave Moreau under a cover showing Adolphe Willette in a Pierrot costume. Klingsor draws the Moreau/Beardsley parallel by calling Beardsley "some ingenious sorcerer's apprentice" ("*quelque ingénieux apprenti sorcier*"). The phrase refers to "Un maître sorcier" ("A Master Sorcerer"), the title of Jean Lorrain's opening article on Moreau in the same issue.

76 Davray, "Aubrey Vincent Beardsley," *La Plume*, 24:246 (15 July 1899): 449–51.

the French often stressed deformation, grotesqueness and perversity in their treatment of Beardsley.⁷⁷ A Robert de Montesquiou article, based on *A Book of Fifty Drawings* and *A Second Book of Fifty Drawings* is titled "Le Pervers,"⁷⁸ even though Montesquiou had no access to Beardsley's erotic work.

The beginning of the twentieth century extended this trend: Beardsley's work was troubling and potentially embarrassing, yet interest in it was still growing. His legend still held but was also receding in knowledgeable publications. Arthur Symons's book, one of the most thorough studies of Beardsley's art at the time, republished in 1905, was translated into French in 1906.⁷⁹ In February 1907, the Shirleys gallery, at 9 Boulevard des Malesherbes, organised a major exhibition of original drawings. Attendance was so large that it was extended by a week. On this occasion, an unexpurgated version of the *Salome* drawings was published in book form, as was the French translation of Beardsley's incomplete novel, *Under the Hill*. Robert de Montesquiou reviewed the exhibition on the front page of *Le Figaro*, describing Beardsley's line as "traced on a mirror with the edge of a diamond."⁸⁰ Jacques-Émile Blanche lengthily recorded his memories in the journal *Antée* and as a preface to the Paris and Bruges editions of *Under the Hill*.⁸¹

In 1907, the theatre manager Gabriel Astruc organised a grand production of Richard Strauss's *Salome* in its German version, with Strauss himself on the podium and Natalia Trouhanova and Aïda Bini

77 Desmarais, *The Beardsley Industry*, 117–22.

78 Robert de Montesquiou, "Le Pervers," in Montesquiou, *Professionnelles beautés* (Paris: Félix Juven, 1905), 85–104.

79 Arthur Symons, *Aubrey Beardsley*, traduit par Jack Cohen, Édouard et Louis Thomas (Paris: Floury, 1906).

80 Montesquiou, "Aubrey Beardsley," *Le Figaro* (21 Feb 1907): 1: "un trait tracé sur une glace par la pointe d'un diamant;" collected under the title "Beardsley en raccourci," in *Assemblée de notables* (Paris: Félix Juven, 1908), 19–27.

81 Blanche, "Aubrey Beardsley," *Antée*, 3:11 (1 Apr 1907): 1103–22; Blanche's text would serve as "Preface" to Beardsley's unfinished novel, "Sous la colline, une histoire romantique, traduit de l'anglais par A.-H. Cornette," published first in *Antée*, 2:6 (1 Nov 1906): 539–72, then by *Antée*'s publisher Arthur Herbert in Bruges with Blanche's preface, and finally in Paris (Floury, 1908) again with Blanche's preface. It was later included in Blanche's *Essais et Portraits* (Paris: Dorbon Aîné, 1912), 135–49, and *Propos de peintre. De David à Degas, 1^e série* (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1919), 111–31. Curiously the Bruges edition is not mentioned in Andries van den Abeele, "Une maison d'édition brugeoise: Arthur Herbert (1906–1907)," *Textyles*, 23 (2003): 95–101, <https://doi.org/10.4000/textyles.796>

alternating in the dance of the seven veils.⁸² The press was again aflame with articles on Wilde and Beardsley. Despite this popularity, proper academic evaluation of the artist was slow to emerge. Armand Dayot's assessment in *La Peinture anglaise* in 1908 stands out from the crowd by concluding with the *Lysistrata* erotic drawings as the artist's masterpiece of synthesis.⁸³ This is more than unusual. However, still in the 1930s, a nostalgic view again emerged in an article by Edmond Jaloux for the newspaper *Le Temps*, on the occasion of another demise, that of Ellen Beardsley, the artist's mother, who had passed away in poverty.⁸⁴

The French record is thus in keeping with what Roques had predicted in December 1894: "He will be excessively disparaged by some, frankly admired by others; he will be indifferent to no one."⁸⁵ This is apposite. The artist's choice of *Le Courrier français* was a lucky one when compared to other avant-garde reviews, which were moved by his death, but visually coy. Subscribers to *L'Ermitage* were estimated at 400 at best. *Le Courrier français*, for its part, may have run to 25,000 to 30,000 copies at its heyday between 1891 and 1896. Its fame, its distribution in the provinces and abroad, its longevity, its large number of illustrations, and the part it played in artistic life make it the "most important and most representative" paper of the nineteenth century's last decade.⁸⁶ All in all, the comparison shows, despite Beardsley's praise, a certain reserve and distance of the avant-garde journals regarding his radical graphic design, only imperfectly rendered by words. The divergence points to an antagonism between what appeals to the eye and what compels the intellect. Such is the paradox of Beardsley's ultimately intellectual art: to have imposed itself only through its own graphic form and the myths he himself fostered.

82 See Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 277.

83 Armand Dayot, *La Peinture anglaise de ses origines à nos jours* (Paris: Lucien Laveur, 1908), 339–41.

84 Edmond Jaloux, "L'époque de Beardsley," *Le Temps* (26 Feb 1932): 3.

85 Roques, "Les artistes anglais: M. Beardsley," 7: "Il sera dénigré à outrance par les uns, franchement admiré par d'autres; il ne sera indifférent à personne."

86 Raymond Bachollet, "Les audaces du *Courrier français*," *Le Collectionneur français*, 218 (Dec 1984): 9.

