

PIERRE LOUÏS,
JEUNE HOMME DE LETTRES

by

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To my parents, William and Claudette.

Thank you for all your love, guidance, and support through the years.

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INTRODUCTION

A 'JEUNE HOMME DE LETTRES'

In November of 1891, at age twenty, Pierre Louÿs enters Stéphane Mallarmé's salon at 89 rue de Rome as he had for the last several months: graciously and politely. Édouard Dujardin, author of *Les Lauriers sont coupés* and a long time regular of the salon, heralds Louÿs' arrival, as well as that of his equally young counterparts, as the Second Generation Symbolists.¹ Born in the last years of the 1860s, into the early 1870s, this group includes Paul Claudel, Marcel Proust, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Marcel Schwob, Remy de Gourmont, Jean de Tinan, and Alfred Jarry, among others. Louÿs, however, is a singularly ambitious young man whose wit, humor, erudition, not to mention his fine clothing and etiquette, set him apart from his contemporaries. Already, by this date, he has spoken intimately with Paul Verlaine on more than one occasion, become a regular of the important literary salon, held by the Parnassian poet José-Maria de Heredia, and published a luxury literary revue, *La Conque*, which includes at the opening of each edition rare or unpublished poetry by the most distinguished poets of the day. November and December 1891 mark another important period in Louÿs' life, the beginning of his friendship with the great esthete and English decadent Oscar Wilde who would, the following year in London, present the young poet to Sarah Bernhardt, the original

¹Édouard Dujardin, *Mallarmé par un des siens* (Paris: Éditions Messéin, 1936) 6.

inspiration for what would become his best selling novel, *Aphrodite*, published in 1896.

Few of these meetings, however, occurred by happenstance. Louÿs did not just happen to fall into Mallarmé's salon, nor into Heredia's; and neither is his self-presentation or etiquette the result of a haphazard coming together of disparate elements. Pierre Louÿs is a magnificent specimen precisely because he has willed and cultivated his own ego and appearance, and has learned to manipulate the determinants which define the Parisian literary habitus of the 1890s, those that were largely formed through the 1870s and 1880s. For Pierre Bourdieu, a habitus is a specific social space within a given society constructed by economic, historical, and social norms, rules, and values which have been integrated into an individual's frame of reference.² The literary habitus which Louÿs successfully enters in the early 1890s is one among many, and is determined not only by the French literary tradition, but also in relation to other habituses, those constructed around the aristocracy and bourgeois, for example. Louÿs' etiquette, attitude, and literary esthetics, coupled by his carefully chosen attire and accoutrements are key determinants which can be understood by, and can also be considered as defining factors of, this habitus. Thus, determinants are both material and behavioral: his cane, top hat, gloves, and boutonniere, as well as the thin moustache above the upper lip, dress a physical disposition sometimes of aloofness and calm, sometimes of great enthusiasm and engagement, but always of erudition and intellect. Other

² See Pierre Bourdieu, "Le Chapitre Trois: Structure, habitus, pratiques," in *Le Sens pratique* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980) 87-109. and Pierre Bourdieu, "Introduction," in *La Distinction* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979) I-VIII.

members of the literary habitus, such as Mallarmé and Heredia, are seduced not only by Louÿs' display and manipulation of these dispositions, but also by his extreme youth and intelligence. Dressed as such, posed as such, Pierre Louÿs is the very definition of the literary dandy.³

From its earliest inception, theories of Social Constructionism have argued that individual and interpersonal human identities are the products of their social context.⁴ Not only does this context inform how individuals dress and behave, but also how they know what is accepted and required from the society in which they live. Sociocriticism, particularly as proposed by Claude Duchet, “supposes a definition of literature as the expression, through the mediation of writing, of an experience of the social—a writing whose very work conceals and reveals its dual function as a consumer and producer of ideology.”⁵ The intersection of literature and the social is at the heart of the following study of Pierre Louÿs as a literary dandy. Thus, it is a work of literary history, of socio-criticism, and of sociology. The main points of interrogation concern Louÿs' social and historical context, the transference of esthetics and ideologies through mentorship, peer influence, and the literary tradition, and finally on Louÿs as an individual who navigates the literary habitus through a careful manipulation of its determinants, that, as suggested earlier, are both material and ideological. Because literature and the literary tradition are at the core of Louÿs' habitus, both the consumption of literature and

³ The concept of the literary dandy, as well as its relations to the dandy as defined by Honoré de Balzac, Barbey D'Aurevilly, and Charles Baudelaire, will be explored in detail in Chapter Chapter Four of this study.

⁴ See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The social construction of reality; a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).

⁵ Claude Duchet and Françoise Gaillard, “Introduction: Socio-Criticism” *SubStance* 5:15, 1976 2-5.

the production of it, the esthetics attached to it manifest in the clothing, objects, and decor which color it. Over the last few decades, gender theorists have regularly referred to the “body as text”⁶ which can be read and interpreted by observers. Throughout the following study, both subtly and explicitly, Louÿs’ body, his behavior, his relationships, the clothing and objects he surrounded himself with, and finally the literature he produced will all be “read” in a way that shows how they are inextricably linked. To begin this “reading” of Louÿs, we must first look at the social and historical context that informed him.

It should be noted, however, that that the following study relies heavily on the biographical work previously done on Pierre Louÿs by such historians as Jean-Paul Goujon, Robert Fleury, and H.P. Clive, among others. It is also dependent on published letters and journals, many of which have only become available in recent years. Such texts are essential to conducting a sociological reading of Louÿs’ literary production and self-representation. By evaluating these texts, particularly in relation to one another, elements of Louÿs’ material life and literary production can be understood in their broader context as well in the ways Louÿs specifically manipulates them.

⁶ See, for example, Philip Culbertson, editor, “The Male Body as Text” *The Journal of Textual Reasoning* (Vol. 7 1998). And Lawrence Schehr, *Parts of Andrology: on representations of men's bodies*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

A Biographical Sketch

Born on December 10, 1870 in Ghent, Pierre-Félix Louis, who would begin signing the stylized *Louÿs* as a teenager,⁷ is truly a child of the Third Republic.⁸ While his father is required to stay in the capital during the siege and the Commune, the rest of his family flees the invading Prussian Army and is forced to live temporarily as vagabonds through this turbulent time. As a teenager, Louÿs' first personal journals attest to a swell of patriotism and romanticism provoked by the General Boulanger,⁹ and although he would fall to the right through the Dreyfus Affair, he would largely distance himself from the embittered politics that ravaged France through the 1890s.¹⁰ Despite the scandals which define much of the Third Republic and impressed so many of his generation, as a young man, Louÿs is first and foremost a 'jeune homme de lettres,' a social status which became current in the 1880s but has since been used by historians to describe the first steps of a young writer's career, which, for Louÿs, begins in high school. As a student at l'École Ascacienne in Paris, in which he enrolled in 1882, Louÿs befriends the young André Gide, whose literary ambitions and intelligence matches his own. Though they both left this school to complete their *baccalauréats* elsewhere, Louÿs at the Lycée Janson-de-Sailly and Gide at the Lycée Henri IV, the two maintain an intense, though

⁷ Pierre Louis writes his name as *Louÿs* for the first time in a letter written to André Gide on September 16, 1890 at age nineteen.

⁸ Louÿs' life runs contemporarily to the major developments of the Third Republic ; those events that are both political and cultural. See Pierre Miquel. *La Troisième République* (Paris: Fayard, 1989) ; Adeline Daumard, *Les Bourgeois et la bourgeoisie en France depuis 1815* (Paris: Aubier, 1987) and Adeline Daumard, *Les bourgeois de Paris au XIXe siècle*. (Paris: Flammarion, 1970).

⁹ Pierre Louÿs, *Mon journal : 22 mai 1888 - 14 mars 1890* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

¹⁰ André Gide, Pierre Louÿs, and Paul Valéry, *Correspondances à trois voix : 1888-1920* (Paris : Gallimard, 2004).

sometimes quarrelsome friendship which through their correspondences and personal trials, becomes more intimate. Together they compose their first works, discuss their evolving literary esthetics, and take their first steps into the Parisian literary world.

Sadly, in April of 1889, Louÿs' seventy-six year old father passes away. Although he was largely ineffectual with his son, even quite severe, and although nearly sixty years separated them in age, his father's death had a striking affect on the young man whose childhood had already been filled with loss. Louÿs' mother had died when he was nine years old and his brother Paul, with whom he was quite close, passed away five years later from tuberculosis. As Louÿs is born of his father's second marriage, he has an older half sister, Lucie Aimée, and a half brother, Georges, who would play a preponderant role in his life, both personally and financially. Twenty-three years his senior, Georges would come to occupy the dual role of surrogate father and older brother as the two share an apartment from 1885 through 1890 then engage in a lengthy and important correspondence throughout their lives. In a letter to André Gide at the time of his father's death, Louÿs observes the importance of his brother and his need for friendship: "Nous voilà orphelins tous les deux [...] Après ma mère, après Paul, c'est lui maintenant ; je n'ai plus personne de ceux qui m'on connu enfant [...] Aime-moi plus encore : il ne me reste que mon frère et toi."¹¹

¹¹ André Gide, Pierre Louÿs, and Paul Valéry, *Correspondances à Trois Voix* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004) 61. Letter of April 14, 1889.

The specter of his own demise from the same malady which took his brother would cast a shadow over Louÿs' entire life, particularly through his younger years. Thinking that he would die at an early age, he indulges every whim, and generally opens himself to every sensual and emotional experience, from prostitutes and general debauchery to passionate love affairs and whole-hearted friendships. Most of all, however, these deaths seem to free Louÿs of certain insecurities and self-doubt which often inhibit the young. It is for this reason, perhaps, that from such a strikingly young age Louÿs so courageously seeks to conquer literary Paris by the force of his personality and the talent of his poetics.

Apart from his brother Georges, the poet José-Maria de Heredia comes to occupy a familial, even paternal space for the young man. As he frequents the Parnassian's Saturday evening salon, beginning in 1891, Louÿs and his friend Henri de Régnier both fall in love with Heredia's middle daughter, Marie. However, because he is economically and socially well-situated, and because he agrees to pay Heredia's gambling debts, Henri ultimately wins Marie's hand in marriage. After learning that Louÿs was also in love with her, and after realizing that she had been more or less 'bought' by her new fiancé, Marie rejects all intimacy with her husband and, within a year of her marriage in 1896, begins a passionate love affair with Louÿs which results in a child. Marie names the baby after the child's father, Pierre, although the family affectionately called him 'Tigre.' Through this same period, that is to say between 1896 and 1898, Louÿs also maintains a romantic affair with his North African mistress Zohra bent Brahim which provokes jealousy and anger on the part of Marie. Knowing that they could never be together due to her marriage

and family, and because of pressure from Heredia himself, Louÿs agrees to marry the poet's youngest daughter Louise in 1899. The result is a rather unhappy, childless marriage that ends in divorce in 1913.¹²

These romantic and familial relations aside, Louÿs' friendships play a key role in his relation to the literary habitus and to his literary production. Louÿs befriends André Gide while a high school student in 1887 at L'Ecole Ascienne and later on, after becoming a fixture in the Latin Quarter and Saint-Germain des prés, he associates himself with Léon Blum, Maurice Quilliot, and Camille Mauclair who would collaborate with him in his 1891 revue *La Conque*. Additionally, Paul Valéry, who the poet meets in Montpellier in the spring of 1890 just as he is making plans of literary conquest, becomes life long friend and early collaborator. In 1892, Louÿs meets the then little remarked musician Claude Debussy and, in 1894, he befriends both Jean de Tinan and André Lebey, then later associates himself with Henri Albert. Together, this latter group founds the short run 1896 revue *Le Centaure* which would also mark Louÿs' definitive break with André Gide. Although it could be said that the break occurred over general esthetic differences, the reasons are related more to personality conflicts which had troubled their relationship from the beginning. The occasional literary celebrity aside, these young men are Louÿs' primary entourage through the 1890s. Many of his first literary endeavors, particularly his revue *La Conque*, are created to publicize and establish his equally young friends. A constant champion of talent and a loyal and trustworthy

¹² Robert Fleury, *Pierre Louÿs and Gilbert de Voisins, Une curieuse amitié* (Paris: Éditions Tête de feuilles, 1973).

companion, Louÿs regularly seeks to support his peers, either through publishing articles on them, as in the case of André-Férodinand Herold in the *Mercure de France*,¹³ or in the case of Debussy for whom Louÿs rents a piano for his small apartment so the composer could perform extracts of his *Pelléas et Mélisande* before a small yet elite audience.¹⁴

Louÿs is best known as the author of *Les Chansons de Bilitis* (1894), *Aphrodite* (1896), *La Femme et le pantin* (1898), and *Les Aventures du roi Pausole* (1901). Of these it is his 1896 work *Aphrodite* which brings him great celebrity and notoriety. An immediate bestseller, the novel also helps to financially launch its publisher, Le Mercure de France. *La Femme et le pantin* would experience many reincarnations through the twentieth century, first in the 1935 film starring Marlène Dietrich as Concha Perez, then in 1955 in a version starring Brigitte Bardot, and finally in 1977 in an adaptation by the Spanish director Luis Buñuel under the title *Cet obscur objet du désir*. Louÿs published the majority of his poetry and prose between 1891 and 1898 before becoming a recluse and dedicating himself to book collecting, bibliographical work, and his own personal erotic writing. Jean-Paul Goujon, the inarguable authority on the life and work of Louÿs, compares the volume of this erotic output to that of the Marquis de Sade.¹⁵ The majority of this work, however, is published posthumously after 1925. As for journalistic publications, it is only in Louÿs' very early years that he contributed to revues like the *Mercure de France* and

¹³ Pierre Louÿs, "Le Victorieux," *La Mercure de France* June 1895 no. 66.

¹⁴This small recital is held at Louÿs' rue Grétry apartment on May 31, 1894.

¹⁵Jean Paul Goujon. Preface. *L'œuvre érotique / Pierre Louÿs*, ed. Jean-Paul Goujon. (Paris: Sortilèges, 1994).

La Revue blanche as he is better suited as a poet than a critic. In fact, he appears to have had a disdain for journalism, as he once told his friend Camille Mauclair, “Un poète qui se respecte n’écrit pas dans ces choses basses et insanes qu’on appelle les journaux!”¹⁶

As a young man who believes he was not long for this world, Louÿs works through his meager yet reasonable inheritance by 1894, spending his money on literary productions at La Librairie de l’art indépendant, tailored clothing, expensive objects to fill his apartment, food, entertainment, and gifts for his friends. He also embarks on numerous trips abroad, first to Bayreuth on pilgrimage to see Wagner’s *Parsifal*, then to London where he spends time with Oscar Wilde, John Gray, and Lord Alfred Douglas. Between 1894 and 1896, Louÿs is in constant need of funds and regularly solicites his brother to help with his debts and living expenses. Fortunately, the 1896 success of *Aphrodite* provided Louÿs with the means to travel once more and indulge in the vices he was at pains to give up. *La Femme et le pantin* contributes considerably to the resources of this young esthete, but after his 1899 marriage to Louise de Heredia, and with little literary output suitable for publication, Louÿs would spend the rest of his life in financial distress, often retreating to his study to work and to flee increasingly tenacious debt collectors as well as the domestic demands of his wife. After his divorce in 1913, Louÿs has an affair with Aline Steenmackers, which produces a child, Suzanne. He eventually marries this young woman in 1923, then, after a long period of declining health, he dies in poverty two years later.

¹⁶ Camille Mauclair, *Mallarmé Chez Lui* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1935) 27.

The Parisian Literary Field by 1890

At the time of Louÿs' arrival on the Parisian literary scene in the early 1890s, the French literary tradition is entering an important stage, a fact which the young esthete clearly notes in his personal journals and letters of the period. Although deeply influenced by the Parnassian school of poetry, Louÿs is able, particularly through his 1894 free verse work *Les Chansons de Bilitis* and his 1896 novel *Aphrodite*, to streamline and make accessible to the greater public literary and poetic esthetics, notably antique themes and free verse poetry, that the preceding Parnassians and Symbolists had consciously obfuscated. Remarkably, as high school students in 1889, Louÿs and Gide make the following tableau of the nineteenth century literary tradition:

Ecole Romantique	1830-1845 (quinze ans) (Hernani, 1830) (Burgaves, 1843)
Anarchie	1845-1860 (quinze ans)
Ecole Parnassienne	1860-1875 (quinze ans) (Poèmes antiques, Leconte de Lisle) (Derniers poèmes de Sully Prud'homme)
Anarchie	1875-1890 (quinze ans)
Ecole... ?	1890- ? ¹⁷

As 'jeunes hommes de lettres,' Louÿs and Gide believe they stand on the frontier of new literary school. However, historical realities would make a clear break difficult, particularly as no one single cohesive esthetic is quite ready to dominate the esthetic 'anarchie' of the 1880s.

The esthetics of the Parnassian school of poetry had a greater impact on the young Pierre Louÿs than any other literary movement. Although he was deeply

¹⁷ Pierre Louÿs, *Mon Journal*.

influenced by a range of poets, especially Victor Hugo and Ronsard, it is the Art for Art's sake esthetic which appeals to him the most, because it declared that art and literature represent a domain separate from utilitarian life. The roots of the Parnassian school are deeply embedded in the Romantic tradition, which was often socially and politically charged through its connections to the French Revolution, the cult of Napoleon, and the desire, on the part of those musicians, writers and artists associated with it, to break free of convention.¹⁸ Historians generally mark, just as Louÿs did, 1830 as the triumph of Romanticism as it is in this year that Victor Hugo's *Hernani* is performed for the first time and Alphonse de Lamartine is accepted into the Académie Française. For both of these poets, life, art, and politics are inseparable. Concurrently, the socialist writings of the Comte de Saint-Simon influence the politically conscious generation of 1820 to participate in the events of the Trois Glorieuses. Lamartine himself would go on to play a role in the founding of the Second Republic, and as a sign of political protest, Victor Hugo would put himself in exile in 1852 when Napoleon III succeeds in a coup d'état that installs him as dictator. However, Romantic ideology did not form one cohesive school as it developed over successive generations and among diverse writers and artists, and at different points depending upon the country about which one is speaking. One of these divergent groups created 'Le petit Cénacle' whose members include Gérard de Nerval, Alexandre Dumas, and Théophile Gautier. It is Gautier's preface to his 1834

¹⁸ For a preliminary introduction to the relationship between politics and romanticism, see Jon Mee and David Fallon, editors, *Romanticism and revolution : a reader* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). For a more comprehensive study of Romanticism in its broader political, historical, and cultural context, see Michael Broers, *Europe after Napoleon : revolution, reaction, and romanticism, 1814-1848* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996).

novel *Mademoiselle Maupin* that draws a line between society and art. In this preface he writes, “Rien de ce qui est beau n’est indispensable à la vie. [...] Il n’y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien ; tout ce qui est utile est laid [...]”¹⁹ Although this preface had little immediate impact—Romanticism and politics were still happily married at this point—the disfavor that Romanticism endured after 1850, what Louÿs remarks in his tableau as “Anarchie,” allowed for a re-evaluation of the role of art in life.

It is thus through the patronage of Théodore de Banville and Leconte de Lisle as well as Charles Baudelaire, although he never wrote what could be called Parnassian poetry, that the movement of l’Art pour l’Art is formed around Théophile Gautier in the early 1860s. For these poets, the creation of poetry is not a romantic affair colored by subjectivity and sentimentality; these poets categorically refute the work of Alfred de Musset and Lamartine. They are, in essence, positivists, as evinced in their attitudes and literary production which emphasize form over content, objectivity over subjectivity. The Parnassian poets are rational thinkers, skilled craftsmen who are not the victim of a romantic muse but the master of their talents. They write on Greek Hellenistic themes in strict verse and behave and dress as professionals, not disheveled young men. First brought together in the 1860s around Catulle Mendès’ publication *La Revue fantaisiste*, the group soon declares itself Parnassian, publishing three volumes of the *Parnasse Contemporain*, first in 1866 then in 1871 and 1876 through the publisher Alphonse Lemerre. Apart from Leconte de Lisle and Théodore de Banville, the primary participants are José-Maria

¹⁹ Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) (Paris: Charpentier, 1876).

de Heredia, Catulle Mendès, Sully Prudhomme, Stéphane Mallarmé, François Coppée, Charles Cros, Léon Dierx, Paul Verlaine, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam and Anatole France. Pierre Louÿs confesses in his early journals a great admiration for Leconte de Lisle, Sully-Prudhomme, and Heredia although among his friends, as evinced in his adolescent 'fumiste' revue, *La Potache revue*, he attacks them as being passé, as that is the general attitude of those coming of age in the late 1880s.

Having dominated the literary scene through the 1870s, the Parnassian aesthetic is sharply attacked by the arrival of what can be termed Decadent and Symbolist esthetics. To fully understand Louÿs' place in the literary tradition, it is necessary to discuss in detail the literary climate of the 1880s which can rightly be named as a period of esthetic anarchy. This is the period which directly precedes Louÿs' arrival and which forms the lexical and esthetic field within which he must operate. It is in Paul Verlaine's poem *Langeur*, published in *Le Chat noir* on May 26, 1883 that the poet writes "Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence." According to many contemporary critics, including Gustave Kahn and Guy Michaud, this sonnet by Verlaine helped popularize the term decadence.²⁰ However, Paul Bourget had already published in 1881 his now famous article on Baudelaire in which he defines the decadence as follows:

Un style de décadence est celui où l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser place à l'indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase pour laisser la place à l'indépendance du mot.²¹

²⁰ See Gustave Kahn, *Symbolistes et décadents* (Paris: L. Vanier, 1902) 37. and Guy Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme*, Vol. II (Paris: Nizet, 1947) 247.

²¹ Paul Bourget, "Psychologie contemporaine : Charles Baudelaire." *La Nouvelle Revue* 3.11, Tome 13, (1881): 413.

The decadence, then, according to these two esthetes, is at once degeneration and uniqueness, or rarity; words become rare gems. At the end of a long drawn out century, fatigued by political instability and the much explored 'ennui,' as well as an economic depression that hit France in the 1880s, a very strong sense of pessimism became prevalent not only among the youth, but among the literary elite. In 1884, J.K. Huysmans publishes *A rebours*,²² effectively sticking his thumb in the eye of Zola's Naturalism²³ through the morose and perverse esthete Des Esseintes. In 1884, Verlaine publishes his series *Les poètes maudits* which includes poems by Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Tristan Corbière. Paul Bourget publishes his collection *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* in 1883,²⁴ which includes a republication of his essay on Baudelaire as well as studies on Stendhal, Ernst Renan, and Gustave Flaubert. Bourget's work essentially became a handbook for the nihilistic dandy of the 1880s and was read widely by every young esthete for the next two decades, including Pierre Louÿs as evinced in his private journals.

Apart from the esthetics of decadence proposed by such literary works, which will be discussed shortly, a general and widespread sense of pessimism seems to grip the generation coming of age in the mid 1880s. In 1885 the publication of both Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*²⁵ and Paul Bourget's *Cruelle Enigme*²⁶ provokes an important polemic that leads to a clear definition of the pessimism that

²² J. K. Huysmans, *A rebours*, 1884 (Paris: Folio-Gallimard, 1983).

²³ Zola, *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1880).

²⁴ Paul Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1883).

²⁵ Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-Ami* (Paris: Victor-Harvard, 1885).

²⁶ Paul Bourget, *Cruelle Énigme* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1885).

characterizes the youth. It is in the spring of 1885 that the polemic begins. Speaking in reference to Bourget's *Cruelle Enigme*, the literary critic Francisque Sarcey notes in *La Nouvelle Revue*: "Je suis étonné de voir comment les écrivains de la génération nouvelle ont l'imagination tourmentée, le tour d'esprit bizarre et triste." These youth are "raffinés et cruels" with a "ton de haine farouche contre la vie, ou de mélancolie désespérée, qui semble être la caractéristique du roman contemporain. Lisez *Sapho*, lisez *Germinal* ou la *Joie de vivre*, lisez *Cruelle énigme*."²⁷ Such readings are both attractive and revolting but the fact that he groups Alphonse Daudet (*Sapho*, 1884),²⁸ with Zola (*Germinal*, 1885)²⁹ and Bourget proves that these themes are transcendent of genre and school and represent a general trend.

The article of Dionys Ordinaire, which follows a month later, is just as noteworthy as he searches for the causes of this new "mal du siècle." Ordinaire blames the philosophy which "souffle d'Allemagne, depuis quelques années sur notre jeunesse française, un vent aigre et malsain qui nous apporte une épidémie nouvelle, inconnue à notre vieille Gaule".³⁰ This pessimism has had so much of an effect that even those adolescents and young men who have not read this literature are influenced by it. Ordinaire describes the pessimist in "un état de désespérance, de lassitude, d'abattement moral, interrompu par des crises soudaines de colère et de révolte." He goes on to write : "Mais l'état de malade est généralement calme : il se plaint de la vie (...) il accuse la douleur, il accuse le plaisir [...]" Finally, these

²⁷ Francisque Sarcey, "Les Livres," *La Nouvelle Revue* 15 juin 1885.

²⁸ Alphonse Daudet, *Sapho* (Paris: G. Charpentier et cie., 1884).

²⁹ Emile Zola, *Germinal* (Paris: G. Charpentier et cie., 1885).

³⁰ Dionys Ordinaire, "La jeune génération," *La Revue Bleue* 6 juin 1885. This German influence is largely in reference to Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and his notion of 'Vouloir-vivre.'

young men want nothing but to “aspérer à la mort comme au bonheur suprême.”³¹

The calm of these “pessimistes” is perhaps the faculty that this critic finds most disturbing as the young men are able to hide behind a veneer of elegance and nonchalance. But pessimism, according to Ordinaire, also has its origins in France. Stendhal and Flaubert have contributed to this “dégout de la vie,” as well as Musset and Baudelaire.

The real import of Jules Lemaître’s article, which follows one month later in *La Revue Bleue*,³² comes when he lists the causes of the generation’s pessimism. According to him, they are: 1) the war of 1870, which was a cause of national humiliation 2) the political climate under the Third Republic which is often precarious and contradictory 3) contemporary literature which is full of sad and vile stories and whose form is more important than its content 4) a rupture of physiological equilibrium, that is to say “la grande névrose” 5) the excitement of Parisian life and 6) a preoccupation with death. This public argument is extremely important as it clearly defines both the pessimism and decadence of this generation and explains its causes at the time that these tendencies are occurring. It is only months after this discussion that Moréas publishes his *Symbolist Manifesto* with the somewhat awkward and pretentious notion that he is speaking for this decadent generation.

Moréas’ goal in writing the *Manifesto* is to canalize the heterogeneous ‘decadent’ generation by providing a clear aesthetic which is situated in the literary

³¹ Ibid.

³² Jules Lemaître, “La jeunesse sous le Second Empire et sous la Troisième République” *La Revue Bleue*, 13 juin, 1885.

tradition. Moréas' young contemporaries stand largely against the esthetics of the Parnassian school of poetry, as well as against the deterministic and sociological literature of Naturalism, particularly as embodied by the work of Emile Zola. Claiming its roots in Romanticism, Moréas names Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine as Symbolism's intellectual and esthetic masters. In describing the Symbolist doctrine, Moréas most notably writes, "Ennemis de l'enseignement, la déclamation, la fausse sensibilité, la description objective, la poésie symbolique cherche à vêtir l'Idée d'une forme sensible qui, néanmoins, ne serait pas non but à elle-même, mais qui, tout en servant à exprimer l'Idée, demeurerait sujette."³³ More than saying what the Symbolists are, Moréas is declaring what they are not. They are not Parnassian whose philosophy of *l'Art pour l'art* celebrates the objective, impersonal description of objects and whose philosophy refuses the idea of the social utility of art. For the Parnassians, the perfection of the form of the poem is the goal of poetry in and of itself. Moréas notes that this form is important, but it is not a goal in and of itself.

Through this period, an immense amount of literary and social criticism is published in the 'petites revues.' This is a trend Louÿs and his cohort participate in, first with *La Potache Revue* in 1888, then with *La Conque* in 1891, and finally with *Le Centaure* in 1896. The explosion of literary revues produced by young poets and writers in the mid 1880 and 1890s is without precedent. Cheap modes of production makes this possible and writers are able to fund the revues individually,

³³ Jean Moréas, "Un manifeste littéraire," *Le Figaro, Supplément Littéraire* 1886.

as Maurice Barrès had done with his 1884 series *Les Taches d'encre*,³⁴ or collectively in small groups, which was more often the case. The year 1886 marks a key moment in the birth of many 'Symbolist' journals such as *Le Scapin*, *Le Décadent*, *La Décadence*, *La Vogue*, and *Le Symboliste*. These journals not only publish the works of Mallarmé and Verlaine, but also originals and forgeries of Arthur Rimbaud, who had become a cult hero and who inadvertently led the battle of prose poetry. This battle over verse poetry and prose poetry is essentially what characterizes what becomes known as "la crise des vers" as articulated in Mallarmé's famous article "Vers et musique en France."³⁵

Among the more interesting and less mainstream of the short lived journals is *Le décadent*, founded by Anatole Baju and Maurice de Plessys who were in their early twenties at the time of its one-year run from April to December 1886.³⁶ For lack of a publisher, Baju purchased all the characters, ink and paper needed to print the journal in his own sixth floor apartment. Tired of his generation being described by cynical and unsympathetic critics, Baju and Plessys wanted to give their generation a voice. In their second edition, Baju declares: "Nous sommes Décadents. Toutes les nuances de la décadence sont représentées dans notre journal : décadence de la forme, décadence de l'idée jusqu'à la déliquescence pure ».³⁷ Elsewhere he writes: "La société se désagrège sous l'action corrosive d'une civilisation délétère. L'homme moderne est un blasé. Affinement d'appétits, de

³⁴ Maurice Barrès. *Les Taches d'encre : gazette mensuelle* (Paris: Imp. René Brissy, 1884-1885).

³⁵ Stéphane Mallarmé, "Vers et musique en France," *The National Observer* 26 March 1892: 360.

³⁶ Anatole Baju, editor, *Le Décadent* (Paris : L'Arche du livre, 1886).

³⁷ Anatole Baju, "A nos Lecteurs," *Le Décadent* 17 April 1886.

sensations, de goût, du luxe de jouissances : névrose, hystérie, hypnotisme, morphinomanie, charlatanisme scientifique, schopenhauérisme à outrance, tels sont les prodromes de l'évolution sociale."³⁸ In one breath he sums up many of the confused ideologies torturing his generation. For Baju and Plessys, their journal is open to anyone who chooses to be "novateur." However, with lack of an esthetic or clear ideology, their message is confused. Everywhere they name what they are not without naming what they are. However, they do name Mallarmé, Verlaine, and Rimbaud as masters and are actually able to publish several previously unpublished poems by Verlaine as well as a few of those already published by Mallarmé. They do publish forgeries of poems attributed to Rimbaud to increase their reputation and readership. By soliciting these occult poets, they are in turn legitimizing their own journal, a tendency that was common at the time.

Although the decadents of Baju are quick to denounce Naturalism as « le fils dénaturé du romantisme » in a state of decay, their mission is not necessarily to found something new but to destroy. Louis Villatte writes: « Ils n'ont qu'à détruire, à tomber les vieilleries et préparer les éléments fœtusiens de la grand grande littérature nationale du XXe siècle ».³⁹ While their spirit appears inexhaustibly romantic in sentiment, these writers were not able to canalize their published works into a school or cohesive ideology.

The Decadence, then, in strictly literary terms, can be considered as the immediate precursor to Symbolism. The manner by which these short run decadent

³⁸ For an excellent study of *Le Decadent*, see Noël Richard, *A l'aube du symbolisme; hydropathes, fumistes et decadents* (Paris: Nizet, 1961).

³⁹ Louis Villatte, "Chronique littéraire," *Le Décadent* 10 avril 1886.

journals were produced as well as the fact that their reading audience was quite limited, highlights the significance of the fact that Moréas' *Symbolist Manifesto* was published in the *Supplément littéraire* of the *Figaro*.⁴⁰ The legitimacy that the mainstream *Figaro*, the oldest running journal in France having begun in 1826, provide Moréas with a much wider readership consisting largely of conservative bourgeois. The process of publication, its material production, as well as its reception can barely be compared to the ardent rebellious spirit of Baju and Plessys' journal.

Despite the widespread acknowledgement of Moréas' *Manifesto*, the term Decadent persists throughout the period and is inextricably bound to Moréas' own term of Symbolism. However, the terms Decadence and Symbolism are not restricted to poetry, as they are extended to describe works by painters such as Gustave Moreau and Paul Gauguin, and novelists such as Maurice Barrès. Although Moréas draws a line between Parnassian and Symbolist poetry, his manifesto does not necessarily create animosity between the two schools (if the latter can even be called a school as it did not form one cohesive whole). The first revue of *Parnasse contemporain* was published in 1866 and the second was published in 1870 but not distributed until 1871 after the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. With only a few Parnassians, such as Théodore de Banville, José-Maria de Heredia, and Leconte de Lisle, still loyal to the doctrine nearly twenty years after its inception, the two schools coexist somewhat harmoniously, though with incomprehension on the part of the older Parnassians. Leconte de Lisle, for example, tells Jules Huret in his series

⁴⁰ Jean Moréas, "Un manifest littéraire," *Le Figaro, Supplément Littéraire* 1886.

Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire, "[C]omme je ne comprends absolument pas ce qu'ils [les Symbolistes] disent, ni ce qu'ils veulent dire... je n'en pense absolument rien!"⁴¹

Perhaps most importantly in this regard is that Jean Moréas' 1886 *Manifesto* launched what was to be known as *La Guerre de Petites Revues*.⁴² This 'war' was largely over definitions of Decadence and Symbolism, their similarities and differences, as well as a jockeying for leadership among the groups, both within the journals, as witnessed between Gustave Kahn, Francis Viele-Griffin, and Adolphe Retté, among others, and between the journals, as illustrated in arguments and responses between Baju's *Le Décadent* and René Ghil and Ernest Raynaud's *La Décadence*.⁴³ For example, in a response to an article by d'Orfer in *La Décadence* of October 1886, Baju replies the following month:

Symboliste, en dehors de sa signification étymologique, désigne un autre groupe d'écrivains qui suit les traces des Décadents. Mais les symbolistes n'ont rien apporté de neuf, ils se servent des idées de leurs devanciers pour les tronquer, ce sont des pseudo-décadents... Il n'y aura donc plus à s'y tromper : les Décadents sont une chose, les symbolistes sont l'ombre de cette chose.⁴⁴

The argument, of course, does not stop there and is carried on in Alfred Vallette's *Le Scapin* after *La Décadence* is absorbed into that journal after only a short run.

Vallette goes on to found *Le Mercure de France* in 1890, a journal and publishing house that Louÿs collaborates with and publishes his 1896 *Aphrodite*. However,

⁴¹ Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (Paris: José Corti, c1999). [Sixty-four interviews, first published in the "Écho de Paris" March 3-July 5, 1891].

⁴² For a thorough exploration of *La Guerre de Petites Revues*, see Pamela Genova, *Symbolist Journals: A Culture of Correspondence* (Berlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

⁴³ Genova 115.

⁴⁴ Anatole Baju, *Le Décadent* 15 November 1888.

despite these squabbles, which are provoked more often by journalists than the poets themselves, Mallarmé, Verlaine, Baudelaire and Rimbaud are regularly heralded as the movement's forbearers, with Verlaine more often associated with ideas of the Decadence, and Mallarmé with Symbolism. So despite the arguments and the constant power grabs, there are many similarities between both the journals' goals and the material they produce. These can be summed up as 1) a veneration for subjectivity in the arts 2) a sense of idealism which argues that the ultimate nature of reality is based on the mind and ideas and 3) a reevaluation of prosody, or meter, in poetry, meaning that free verse and prose poetry are just as valid as metered rhyme.

Interestingly, it is one of Louÿs' peers, Camille Mauclair, born in 1872, who best articulates the 'anarchie' of the 1880s. Mauclair arrives on the literary scene around the same time as Louÿs, contributes to Louÿs' revue *La Conque* and is a regular of Mallarmé's Tuesday evening salon as well as Louÿs' rue Grèty salon. A historian of Symbolism himself, Mauclair largely rejects the notion that Symbolism is in fact a school or a movement per se. He writes in his *mémoires Servitude et grandeur littéraire*:

On s'est évertué à juger « le mouvement symboliste ». Il n'a jamais existé. Ces mots n'ont désigné qu'un groupe d'artistes opposés au naturalisme et cherchant une forme poétique nouvelle, chacun à sa manière ; toute licence, sauf contre l'idéalisme. Et puis, des artistes unis dans le dégoût de la littérature industrielle, de la presse boulevardière et incompétente, dans l'amour de quelques grands méconnus, dans l'amour de la liberté de l'esprit. C'était là leur credo, mais ils n'ont pas formé une Ecole, et ils ont même donné l'exemple singulier de gens différents au souci de faire constater la validité d'un ensemble d'idées par la ratification du public.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Camille Mauclair, *Servitude et grandeur littéraire* 47-48.

Mauclair is describing a general tendency, rather than a movement or a school. Given the diversity of the themes, genres, styles, and general esthetics treated by writers included under the term of 'Second Generation Symbolists' such as André Gide, Marcel Proust, and Jean de Tinan, Mauclair's characterization is the most apt for describing the group of poets and writers coming of age and producing their first works through the 1890s.

A break with the past, the attitudes of the new generation

One major element which distinguishes Pierre Louÿs' generation from the immediately preceding Decadents and Symbolists is a rejection of the baggage these two terms acquired over the previous decade. Louÿs seeks a new literary school, dubbed a *renaissance*,⁴⁶ that rejects the polemics of the last five years and denies a pure, or fundamentalist definition of Symbolism. In 1890 he writes to his friend Paul Valéry that the term Symbolist "a des significations trop précises et trop étroites."⁴⁷ Although he at first concedes in the same letter, "'décadent'" pour moi veut dire artiste ultra-affiné, protégé par une langue savante contre l'assaut du vulgaire, encore vierge des sales baisers du professeur de littérature, glorieux du mépris du journaliste, mais élaborant pour lui-même et quelques dizaines de ses pairs [...],⁴⁸ he does not accept the title, *Décadent*, with a capital 'D,' as a status.

⁴⁶ Gide, et. al. 209. Letter from Pierre Louÿs to Paul Valéry, June 17, 1890.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 209. Letter of June 22, 1890.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

“Sous cette injure, je serais capable de rompre.”⁴⁹ He seeks a renaissance in literature, an attempt at newness. Similarly, André Gide seeks to write the modern novel, and create the modern ‘type’ in the character of André Walter. He writes to Louÿs, “Le héros de *L’Education* [Sentimentale] doit peindre un type près de passer, celui du décadent et du dilettante improductif. [...] Alain [André Walter], au contraire, doit être l’avenir, il doit créer la génération nouvelle.” Gide goes on, blurring the lines between the fictive character of André and the artist which creates him, “Il faut donc inventer du tout point le type, ou du moins ne pas prendre d’autre modèle que soi.”⁵⁰ There is a reliance for Gide, and others of his generation, on this “soi,” or self, which emphasizes, under the influence of Maurice Barrès and his *Culte du Moi*⁵¹ trilogy, subjectivist and relativist art which deviates from the dogmas of determinism, scientism, and naturalism which had so affected the previous two generations. Philippe Lejeune describes this overlay between literary production and biographical inspiration as “l’espace autobiographique” as works such as *Les Cahiers d’André Walter*, and more particularly *Se le grain ne meurt*, are not autobiographical texts *stricto sensu*. They operate in an autobiographical “space” which allows the writer, according to Lejeune, to articulate biographical elements in literature from “une perspective mobile.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid. 228.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 105.

⁵¹ The first volume in the trilogy by Maurice Barrès is *Sous l’oeil des barbares* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1888), the second is *Un homme libre* (Paris: Perrin et Cie, 1889) and the third is *Le jardin de Bérénice* (Paris: Perrin et Cie, 1891).

⁵² Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1975). See particularly Lejeune’s chapter titled “Gide et l’espace autobiographique.”

Louÿs' 1891 luxury revue, *La Conque*, is in many ways an attempt to break with the esthetic polemics of the last generation as it contains no manifesto or literary critique. With a poem by the venerated and still respected Leconte de Lisle as the frontpiece of the first volume, the journal heralds the work of the then unknown Paul Valéry, Léon Blum, and André Gide. In many ways, this revue can be viewed as the conclusion of 'La Guerre de Petites Revues,' not because it suddenly ends the esthetic polemic but because it presents a group of poets, or more importantly, of poetry, in a non-argumentative way. Further, with an extremely restricted printing run, only an elite group of consumers are able to read this poetry. By including the work of recognized Parnassian poets, such as Heredia and even Mallarmé, the journal was creating a bridge between the two generations, signaling respect and veneration while hailing these poets as masters.

The literary esthetic polemics aside, Louÿs and his cohort largely reject the pessimism of the preceding generation. Louÿs' good friend Jean de Tinan (1874-1898), who would tragically die at twenty-four years of age, writes in his novel *Penses-tu réussir !*:

Il paraîtrait que « nos aînés d'il y a dix ans » furent surtout mélancoliques... Je n'en sais rien. Mais tant pis pour eux si c'est exact. C'est notre gaieté qui unifie, de salons en réductions, de réductions en salons, de brasseries en promenades, les façons de voir et les façons de penser ; elle les unifie parce qu'elle les rend toujours supportables, qu'elle nous permet de nous amuser de toutes—(Eclectismes ? Oui. Oui. Oui.)⁵³

The salons, cafés, studio apartments, the grand boulevards and the carriages which fill them not only serve as the stage of Jean de Tinan's literature, they are the real life

⁵³ Jean de Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir !* (1897) in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions 10/18, 1980) 221.

venues where Pierre Louÿs and his friends play out their literary dreams and exhaust their youth. The early to mid 1890s may be considered some of the most exciting of La Belle Epoque. Despite the social and political turmoil provoked by the anarchist attacks, the rise of nationalism and anti-semitism, the menace of war with Germany, and the continual labor strikes and government scandals, the literary and bourgeois salons remain fairly insular and stable. The Dreyfus affair has yet to divide them, and although they are heterogenous in nature, they coexist fairly harmoniously. Pierre Louÿs, Jean de Tinan, André Lebey, Claude Debussy, and other such young men, are enthusiasts for literature and life, seeking a confluence between the two which is evident in their camaraderie and literary output.

Louÿs in the Labyrinth

In his 1983 introduction to J. K. Huysmans' *A rebours*, M. Fumaroli provides the perfect description of the way in which a figure such as Louÿs must maneuver through the literary habitus of the 1890s: "Dans une civilisation tardive, surchargée de mémoire, envahie de chefs d'œuvres, historiciste, éclectique et sceptique, l'artiste lui-même, le créateur, ne peut faire autrement que d'être aussi et d'abord amateur d'art, critique littéraire, consommateur érudit et douteur, avant s'il se peut de trouver sa propre voie dans le labyrinthe."⁵⁴ As Pierre Louÿs enters Mallarmé's salon, he is in fact entering a labyrinth. He must take on different roles at different times, but above all else he must have the cultural capital to manipulate the recognized signs. For most individuals, according to Bourdieu, this act is

⁵⁴ M. Fumaroli. *Préface* in J. K. Huysmans, *A rebours* (Paris : Gallimard, 1977) 33.

unconscious, but Louÿs' journals and private correspondences prove that he is in fact extremely conscious of the game he is playing.

The entire lexical and ideological field thus far discussed is fully formed by the time Pierre Louÿs and André Gide arrive on the scene in 1890. As young poets and ambitious 'jeunes hommes de lettres' just at the start of their literary careers, it is this cultural baggage with which they must contend. But rather than slip into it like a well-made suit, they reject it and search for a new esthetic. Louÿs picks up the Hellenistic themes proposed by the Parnassians while at the same time embracing the developments of free verse poetry. *Les Chansons de Bilitis*, published in 1894 is the crowning achievement of this marriage between Symbolist form and Parnassian theme as Louÿs chooses ancient Alexandria to place a young courtesan who indulges in the sensual pleasure of her body, including lesbianism. Pretending that the work is in fact a translation of a recently discovered poem, Louÿs is able to 'translate' rhythmic verse into free verse poetry and treat sexual themes that may not otherwise have been readily accepted in contemporary society because the poetry hides behind the guise of a 'found' work. André Gide, for his part, will explore a personal literature, first in his 1891 *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*,⁵⁵ then later in 1896 with *Paludes*.⁵⁶ The first of these, *Les Cahiers*, explores the rather decadent themes of 'la nevrose' and passionate literary production framed within a highly intellectual and analytical framework inspired by Maurice Barrès' *Homme libre*. Interestingly,

⁵⁵ André Gide, *Les Cahiers d'André Walter, oeuvre posthume* (Paris: Perrin, 1891) and (Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1891).

⁵⁶ André Gide, *Paludes* (Paris : Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1895).

throughout their lives, Louÿs will be referred to as a Parnassian, while Gide will frequently be named a Symbolist.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ H. P. Clive, *Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925): A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

CHAPTER ONE

LITERARY INTOXICATION: SEDUCTION, IMITATION, AND THE POET AS HERO

With the address scratched on a note card folded in his front breast pocket, André Gide has come with his friend Pierre Louÿs to see if this particular '*chambre*' might suit their needs. They quickly climb the six flights of stairs to the small studio apartment at 22 rue Monsieur-le-Prince on the edge of Paris' sixth arrondissement. As the door opens, their literary aspirations pour in. This is where they dream of holding their *Cénacle*, where they will write poetry and discuss Beauty and Art. Already they have printed, in their meager way, their first literary journal, *La Potache-Revue*, and within one year they will enter some of the most exclusive literary salons in Paris. But for the moment, their ambitions are slightly more meager. They dream only of the poor student's life whose days are filled with study and whose nights are filled with conversation and friends.

In the fall of 1889, both Pierre Louÿs and André Gide are enduring the trials of their high school baccalaureate exams. Having met a few years before as students at L'Ecole Alsacienne in Paris, they have maintained a rather intimate relationship based on their love of poetry and their own literary ambitions. In order to help her son prepare for the exams, André Gide's mother has agreed to pay for a small studio in the Latin Quarter where he can work and receive private tutors. The two teenage boys, however, have other designs. Like Rastignac, Paris is at their feet. This modest room, the work table its greatest asset, is all the fortune a poor student could ask

for. Pierre Louÿs' eyes flicker as he peers out the window. Then Gide raises a fist and declares with force "Et maintenant... à nous deux!"⁵⁸

Although this short anecdote has been retold many times by biographers and literary historians, its theoretical significance has never been fully explored, especially in relation to the contemporary literary climate and the larger nineteenth century literary tradition. At eighteen and nineteen respectively, Pierre Louÿs and André Gide are both as unknown and as common as their fellow schoolmates. They have been raised on the romantic poetry of Musset and Vigny, and have been taken by the realism of Balzac and Flaubert. Their education has taught them Greek drama and Latin poetry, and they know Rousseau just as well as Voltaire and Diderot. But beyond this simple reading list operates another unspoken, almost mystical force, what Paul Bourget maintains at the core of his *Essais de psychologie contemporain*: 'l'intoxication littéraire.' These two boys, standing with Paris at their feet, mimicking Balzac's hero, are drunk on this exquisite elixir.

The modern reader must remember that the youth of the last two decades of the nineteenth century have no rock music, no record players, no glossy pop magazines. So for them, in a classical and at times very intellectual way, their idols, their heroes, their *rock stars* are poets, novelists, painters, and composers. "Hugo et Wagner sont toujours mes dieux," Louÿs writes in his journal earlier that year.⁵⁹ This sentiment is reflected in Gide's writing as well, as he desires nothing more than to write the modern novel—to create a revolutionary form of it in fact. As Louÿs and

⁵⁸ André Gide, *Journal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996) 103. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.

⁵⁹ Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 119.

Gide stand in the small studio apartment at 22 rue Monsieur-le-Prince in the fall of 1889 they are looking to both Balzac and Rastignac as their literary idols.

Our discussion here will go beyond the idea of influence and look closely instead at *manifestation*. The actions, words, dress, and even the objects that Louÿs surrounds himself with are all manifestations of literary intoxication. As we will see, very specific decisions are made by these young men based on a desire to become not just the hero of the novels they read, but the writers who create them. In many ways, as will be particularly argued in Chapter Four, Louÿs' body can be viewed as a text which is 'read' by observers. Elements of this 'body as text' can be discerned and coming directly from the cultural literary tradition and the material life surrounding it—elements which were valorized long before Louÿs' arrival in the late 1880s. This literary metaphor of the human body can be enlarged to include Julia Kristeva's notions of Genotext and Phenotext.⁶⁰ According to Kristeva, the Genotext refers to the process of generating the signifying system, or the generation of meaning, which in our argument is the process of literary intoxication. As Louÿs seeks esthetic elements, among all possible choices, in the lives of the literary figures which appeal to him, this genesis results in a Phenotext, which can be interpreted as the material manifestation of his clothing, domestic decor, and the objects he chooses to surround himself with.

Literary manifestation, however, is not just a vertical process, that is, where ideas are passed from established writers or recognized texts to debutants, but also a horizontal one. Pierre Louÿs, like André Gide, is heavily influenced by the

⁶⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Semeiotike. Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).

contemporary writers and poets he reads and interacts with socially. He is also extremely influenced by his particular moment in time. Louÿs is defined by the fact that he is born in 1870 and comes of age after Naturalist, Decadent, and Symbolist tendencies in art, literature, and poetry have firmly asserted themselves. Louÿs inevitably engages with these ideas but in a sort of *post* way. Although it has been argued that the arrival of Louÿs, Gide, and Paul Valéry mark the second generation of Symbolists, it could also be argued that they are post-Symbolist and post-Decadent, a point explored further on in the chapter.

Before exploring Louÿs' dress and fetishism as it relates to the literary tradition and the contemporary literary climate, which will be covered in the following chapters, we must first look closely at the ways in which his ideology, esthetics, ambitions, and behavior are affirmed and constructed by the literature he reads. In this way, we can carefully look at the literature which in fact *intoxicates* him. The anecdote which opened the chapter comes to us from Gide's journal written at the time of the event, and is confirmed in Louÿs' journal as well. It is Gide who gives the event its Rastignac feel, but the passage suggests that the two boys are mutually conscious of the game they are playing. Thanks to both his journals and correspondences, particularly with Gide, Paul Valéry, and his brother Georges, a rather detailed list of the books Louÿs was reading in these early years can be made. However, our eye is on the ways in which these texts manifest in Louÿs' behavior and attitudes. Only those writers and pieces of literature to which Louÿs consistently and substantially refers will be explored in this study. By such an

approach we avoid making blanket conclusions such as assuming that Louÿs was a Byronian poet in the model of Manfred just because he read that poet's work.

“L’Intoxication littéraire,” generations, and the literary tradition

Although Louÿs was clearly not a literary ‘analyste’ or ‘psychologue’—two terms and tendencies very much in vogue through the 1880s and 1890s—he was conscious of the trends and did read several of Paul Bourget’s novels as well as his *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*. Bourget had made a name for himself as an analyst through the 1880s with his literary criticism which focused on the psychology of writers such as Stendhal and Baudelaire while at the same time explaining the sociology of the readers. Simply put, where Saint-Beuve’s mantra was ‘you show me the book and I’ll show you the *writer*,’ Bourget stated something along the lines of ‘you show me the book and I’ll show you the *reader*.’ In this way, he was able to speak to and for the generation coming of age in the early to mid 1880s which included the first generation of Decadents and Symbolists such as Maurice Barrès and Jean Moréas, among others. Bourget’s influence was thus important and substantial, particularly as his work dealt with the youth which he sought to understand and analyze. This is easily evinced in his novels *Cruelle Énigme* (1885),⁶¹

⁶¹ Paul Bourget, *Cruelle Énigme* (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1885).

Mensonges (1887),⁶² and *Le Disciple* (1889),⁶³ the last of which includes a letter addressed to “un jeune homme.”⁶⁴

Among his principal notions is that of ‘l’intoxication littéraire’ which he began exploring in his *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* and continued through *Le Disciple*. In speaking of his own youth in an autobiographical letter of 1894, Bourget notes that his unhappiness and pessimism was due to his readings of such authors as Stendhal, Musset, and Baudelaire as they provoke disequilibrium and disenchantment. “Qui étais-je ? Qu’aimais-je ? Que voulais-je ? Que croyais-je ? (...) Je me façonnais tour à tour d’après les descriptions des livres.”⁶⁵ For Bourget, as well as for many young men coming of age in the 1870s, the romantic literature they read filled them with false dreams of what life could be. The result, then, was that a generation of young men grew up to be pessimists. Of his unhappiness, Bourget writes in the same autobiographical letter:

Cette cause je crus la trouver—où elle était en effet—dans cette sorte d’intoxication littéraire qui m’avait empêché de vivre ma vie à moi, de me façonner des goûts à moi, de sentir par moi-même enfin. Réfléchissant à ce fait il me sembla que mon mal ne m’était point particulier. Je reconnus que beaucoup de mes contemporains, troublés du même trouble, avaient pareillement demandé aux livres d’être des éducateurs de leur sensibilité.⁶⁶

Bourget clearly blames the literature he read for his pessimism which is essentially based on an unbalance between the real world and his dreams. As Georges Poulet writes in *Phenomenology of Reading*, such readers achieve a “union” with the text

⁶² Paul Bourget, *Mensonges* (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1887).

⁶³ Paul Bourget, *Le Disciple* (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1889).

⁶⁴ See Goetz, T.H. “Paul Bourget’s *Le Disciple* and the Text-Reader Relationship,” *The French Review* 52.1 (Oct. 1978): 56-61.

⁶⁵ Paul Bourget, *Lettre autobiographique* (1894) in *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1993) 452.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 453.

“without comprehension” because they identify so completely with what they are reading that they lose sight of themselves and their Will. Proximity blinds the reader by blinding his prospect, Poulet explains.⁶⁷ Both the disillusionment with romantic literature and the continued influence of pessimistic literature through the 1880s were largely blamed for the overall pessimism of the entire generation.

Louÿs, however, is coming of age after Romanticism, Realism, and Naturalism as well as after the terms Decadence and Symbolism had been fully defined in the press. Further, he is not weighed down by pessimism as the generation immediately before him was. Louÿs is very conscious of the literary tradition and his place in it and seeks positive affirmation in the literature he reads rather than allowing himself to be simply seduced and deceived as the generation before him purports to have been. In fact, Louÿs’ journals and letters mark a clear break in ideology from the preceding Symbolist and Decadent generation. To put this in perspective, Bourget’s *Le Disciple*, which stands as the high water mark of a decade long critique on the perverting influence of literature, was published in 1889, the same year that both Louÿs and Gide were finishing high school and enthusiastically declaring their literary ambitions to the rooftops of Paris *à la Rastignac*.

It is Louÿs’ correspondence with Paul Valéry that provokes him to define his relationship with the generation of writers and artists that immediately precedes him. These comments are important as they situate Louÿs among his contemporaries and affect the literature he reads. In June of 1890, Louÿs and Valéry

⁶⁷ Georges Poulet, “Phenomenology of Reading,” *New Literary History*, 1.1, New and Old History (Oct. 1969): 63.

are just at the beginning of their lifelong friendship and literary correspondence, having met the month before in Montpellier. After Valéry refers to himself as a decadent, Louÿs responds sharply:

[J]e ne peux pas souffrir ce mot « décadent ». Vous n'êtes pas décadent du tout, par la raison que c'est toute une renaissance qui se prépare, et non une chute [...] Vous n'êtes pas symboliste non plus, pas plus que moi, parce que ce mot (qui autrement nous conviendrait assez) s'est trop précisé en désignant des artistes qui diffèrent de nous et sur les traces desquels nous refusons de marcher. Car vous n'imiterez personne, j'espère ?—Attendez donc d'avoir produit davantage avant de chercher un mot qui vous définisse ; il sera créé bien assez tôt. Pour le moment soyez valériste et rien d'autre et nous verrons plus tard à prendre le nom d'*ESTHETES*.⁶⁸

Louÿs is responding here to both the terms Decadent and Symbolist as well as to the generation and ideology behind them. Louÿs views the decadence as an end, as death and decay, while he champions a renaissance in the form of a new generation of writers and poets. As for the term Symbolist, he argues that this term is over used and over defined. He does not want Valéry to copy or follow any previous school, but to be entirely original, to be *valériste*.

In a letter that follows just two weeks later, Louÿs chastises his friend once more for employing the term decadent. He scolds:

[N]e m'appellerez plus *DECADENT*. Sous cette *injure*, je serais capable de rompre. Les seuls décadents, ce sont les odieux « fin de siècle », c'est à dire Lemaître, Gyp, Rabusson (que je ne connais pas), Barrès, et tous les renaisants dont pas un ne comprend Renan ; c'est même leur trait distinctif. Mais Régnier, Griffin, Merrill, Ribaux, Darzens, vous, moi, nous sommes *renaisants*, au contraire, et jeunes de cœur et de corps, bien plus jeunes que les romantiques, bien plus vivants que les parnassiens ! Jamais école n'a été moins décadente que la nôtre et je ne veux pas de ce titre, que Mallarmé renie, que Verlaine hait et que personne n'emploie plus. Si vous ne voulez pas

⁶⁸ Gide et. al. 201. Letter from Pierre Louÿs to Paul Valéry June 17, 1890.

du mot *esthète*, attendez qu'on en forme un autre ; cela viendra assez tôt. Nous avons l'idée, on trouvera bien le mot.⁶⁹

Louÿs names both novelists and critics as decadents, as well as the Maurice Barrès who had a marked influence on both him and Gide. With lack of a better term, Louÿs calls himself and his friends *renaissants* in order to clearly distinguish themselves from the pessimism and *odieux « fin de siècle »* which are still in their midst.

We clearly see that Louÿs is trying to define a new generation of writers and poets. What is important for our purposes here is that these comments mark a break in the way this emergent generation, particularly Louÿs among them, reads the same texts read by the previous generation. Despite Gide's Rastignac call on rue Monsieur-le-Prince, there are limits to the influence romanticism holds over them, an influence which does not lead to pessimism as expressed by Bourget. Further, Louÿs is not the same reader Bourget was in his youth. He does not lose sight of himself in the texts he reads. Despite his dandyism, Louÿs is very much a man of action in terms of his literary endeavors. He not only seeks inspiration in the texts he reads, but practical guidance. The lives of his most admired poets and writers as well as the actual works they created influence Louÿs in such a profound way that he consciously seeks to manifest very specific aspects of them in his own life. In this way, abstract readings become concrete actions.

⁶⁹ Gide et al. 229. Letter from Pierre Louÿs to Paul Valéry July 5, 1890.

Le Cénacle and the Revue

As high school students, Louÿs and Gide discuss the idea of creating a 'Cénacle' extensively. To these ambitious teenagers, the project of uniting a group of friends and launching a new literary school seems an entirely achievable goal. After all, in February of 1889 they had produced a "fumiste," or satirical revue titled *Potache-Revue*⁷⁰ in which they declare "Mort au Parnassiens', / Le vers, libre ! Notre *Potache* / A pris sa hache / Et plus de roi !"⁷¹ Publishing under the pseudonyms Fernand Tellore and Zan-bal-Dar, Louÿs and Gide, respectively, clearly enter what has been termed 'La Guerre des Petites Revues.' The Parisian literary scene with which Gide and Louÿs are flirting in 1889 is marked by an incredible effusion of small literary journals produced by individuals or small groups such as Louÿs and his cohort. Like most of these groups, they affirmed specific esthetic and ideological visions of modern literature which were, perhaps, in conflict with other groups producing revues, hence the term 'Guerre.'⁷² Although this was hardly a serious endeavor and appears to have gone entirely unnoticed as so many high school revues did in the 1880s, it does mark an important step in their development. In a way, they were children *playing at* being literary men. Further, seeing their work in print proved that their dreams could become a reality and that collective efforts could bare fruit. Of the publication, Louÿs notes in his personal journal, "Imprimé

⁷⁰ In 1888, after transferring from L'Ecole Alcaissienne, where he had met Gide, to another high school, Janson-de-Sailly, Louÿs fell in with a group of young poets like himself: Marcel Drouin (future brother-in-law of Gide), Maurice Legrand, and Maurice Quillot. Thanks to Quillot, the revue was printed in Nevers. See Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 65-66.

⁷¹ As cited in Clive 7.

⁷² For a thorough exploration of *La Guerre de Petites Revues*, see Genova.

pour la première fois ! joie d'enfant. Je tremblais."⁷³ Although not published in the first number, Gide is equally touched. In his own journal, he writes, "Voir que Louis est imprimé, c'est voir que j'aurais pu l'être et cela m'a donné un grand coup en changeant instantanément tous les rêves dorés et fuyants en la permanence de la réalité."⁷⁴ Although only three issues were printed, this first step meant to the young men that more would come if their zealous ambitions did not fade.

The idea of producing a journal through the cooperation of a 'Cénacle' was not born out of thin air. Not only do Louÿs and Gide have the precedents of the *Parnasse contemporain* and the innumerable Symbolist and Decadent journals, they have the legend of Victor Hugo and the Romantics. It is this latter inspiration which influenced them more than any other. As mentioned, Louÿs admired and idolized Victor Hugo above all others. In wanting to create a new poetic 'renaissance' with a group of fellow poets, he was also seeking to recreate something of 'la bataille romantique' as articulated by the great master in his *Préface de Cromwell*⁷⁵ which resulted in the formation of the famous 'Cénacle.' Of course, the esthetic and ideological battle associated with the Romantics resemble nothing of the literary climate of 1890, but the passion and model are there and it is this literary and historical structure, a type of meme, that Louÿs seeks to manifest in uniting a group of like-minded poets.

It is thus in December of 1889, Louÿs just then turning nineteen, that the poet concretely lays out the plan that will lead to his own Cénacle and his own

⁷³ Pierre Louÿs, *Mon Journal*.

⁷⁴ Gide 42.

⁷⁵ Victor Hugo, *Preface de Cromwell* (1827)

literary revue. In his journal dated *Noel 5 h ½*, Louÿs recounts a conversation held between himself and Gide the week before. The idea of a Cénacle is already well worn when Gide brings it up again. Louÿs makes a gesture of boredom and sighs, but the conversation becomes more serious and the plan is hatched. The dialogue runs as follows:

[Gide]: Il faut louer une chambre, un atelier, où on se réunirait. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on dit dans un Cénacle ?

[Louÿs]: Ca ? Sais pas trop.

[Gide]: C'est égal il faut commencer, ne pas perdre de temps. Et puis il faudrait un lien, quelque chose, un prétexte à réunions.

[Louÿs]: Une revue ?

[Gide]: J'y pensais !

[Louÿs]: Oh ! Mais épatant ! Une revue sérieuse, plus de *Potache*.

[Gide]: Naturellement !

[Louÿs]: Nous sommes cinq, ça ira très bien. Et c'est ça qui nous poussera à écrire. Blum et toi vous écrirez des contes, Walconkenaer et moi des vers, et Bertholet de la critique.

[Gide]: Et nous ouvrirons la Revue à tous les jeunes.⁷⁶

Their naïveté is slightly charming in that they are unsure of how a 'Cénacle' functions. At Hugo's apartment on rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, the Romantics read Shakespeare, Scott, Byron, Goethe, and Schiller so surely the reading and sharing of poetry is in order. Despite their ignorance, the conversation is a call to action. Louÿs immediately begins taking notes on the plan which he elaborates upon in the same journal entry. "J'étais triomphant," he writes. "Elle serait bi-mensuelle, in-8°, sur beau papier et en caractères elzéviens. On mettrait en tête trois préfaces, une pour les poètes, une pour les romanciers, une pour la critique—ce serait le manifeste de la révolution." But here he pauses before asking, "Cette révolution, dans quels sens ?"

⁷⁶ Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 169.

and then adds “*Qu’ai-je en moi ?*”⁷⁷ It is precisely here that romantic musings confront historical reality.

In 1890 there is very little to revolt against as the diversity and plurality of the literary production of the last ten years has already confronted every ideological and esthetic challenge. As Baju’s revue *Le Décadent* shows us, the generation of the 1880s had torn down everything the Parnassians and Naturalists had stood for leaving little room for *revolutionary* ideology to take root. However, although Louÿs’ dreamed of revue *La Conque*, which is published the following year in March of 1891, contains no such manifestos, the impetus which led to its creation is based on romantic and revolutionary passions. In this sense, it is not what was actually created that is of importance, but what Louÿs and Gide had dreamed of it being. The truth is, that the poets whose work was published in the first edition of the *La Conque* did not need a manifesto. Rather than destroy as the Decadents had, it was time to build and affirm, to take those elements of the revolutionary literary tradition in which they believed and do nothing less that write and publish beautiful and remarkable poetry.

Returning to Louÿs’ question “*Qu’ai-je en moi ?*,” his journals written at the close of 1889 seek to find a response. At last he succeeds. “Je veux faire de la poésie musicale. Je veux faire avant tout du RHYTHME et non de la rime.” Then after discussing *le vers* and *la strophe* notes: “Conclusion: il faut donc faire *du vers libre non rimé, c’est-à-dire de la prose scandée.*”⁷⁸ The first edition of *La Conque* does not

⁷⁷ Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 169.

⁷⁸ Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 177.

in fact contain any free verse poetry and it would be several years before Louÿs himself would begin to master this emergent genre as it is not as simple as it may seem. *Le vers libre*, or prose poetry, is not without structure. It is a form that is worked and reworked with every word and every rhythm carefully chosen. Of the nature of prose poetry, Louÿs writes, “[C]’est-à-dire tout ce qu’il y a de plus difficile au monde, précisément parce que cela *semble* facile et qu’il faut les faire très beaux pour qu’ils plaisent.”⁷⁹ Although in 1889 and 1890 Louÿs venerates prose poetry, it will not be until 1895 that he publishes in this form with his *Chansons de Bilitis* which is published in *L’Art Indépendant*. Without going too in depth with this work, it suffices to say that Louÿs presented this poetry as if he had discovered it from Ancient Greece and had translated it himself. The false pretense that these poems were “translated” from their original Greek, allows Louÿs to write in free verse poetry. For example, we find these exquisite lines:

Je baiserais d'un bout à l'autre les longues ailes noires de ta nuque, ô doux oiseau, colombe prise, dont le coeur bondit sous ma main...

And

Les feuilles sont chargées d'eau brillante. Des ruisseaux à travers les sentiers entraînent la terre et les feuilles mortes. La pluie, goutte à goutte, fait des trous dans ma chanson...⁸⁰

What may appear to be a simple form actually proves quite difficult to produce well, as Louÿs has noted.

⁷⁹ Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 127-128.

⁸⁰ Pierre Louÿs, *Les Chansons de Bilitis, traduites du grec pour la première fois par P. L.* (Paris: Librairie de l'art indépendant, 1895).

At the same time that Louÿs is developing his project of the Cénacle and the Revue, he discovers another great poet whose work and life he comes to greatly admire. Thanks to his letters and journal, we know that Louÿs was quite taken by the pre-Raphaelite poet and painter Dante Garbriel Rossetti, particularly as the poet is portrayed by Joseph Knight in his 1887 work *The Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*⁸¹ which Louÿs reads with great care and attention in English. As he cites Rossetti's poetry for many years in his correspondences where he discusses his biography as well, Rossetti's influence on Louÿs cannot be ignored. There are thus two ways of reading this influence. First, there is the poetry itself whose humanist and classical themes resemble much of Louÿs' *Astarté* and *Chansons de Bilitis*. Louÿs names several poems in Rossetti's first collection *Poems*, published in 1870, which he admires and discusses, as well as the four sonnets of *Willowwood*. In fact, after reading these poems, Louÿs writes to the poet's sister, Christina Rossetti, to ask permission to publish *Song and Music* as a front-piece to his Revue.⁸² The second way of reading Rossetti's influence is through the biography by Joseph Knight. As Hugo's Cénacle had inspired Louÿs in his endeavors, Rossetti *reinforced* them. As one reads Knight's biography, one begins to find striking similarities between the two poets. Like Rossetti, Louÿs also has a fondness for painting and for a time considers it as a career path instead of poetry as if it were a choice based on ambition rather than a calling dictated by talent. But in terms of character, both

⁸¹ Joseph Knight, *The Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Walter Scott, 1887). Louÿs purchases and reads this book in February 1890. See Gide et al. 144-145.

⁸² Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 194.

Rossetti and Louÿs appear to be the Pied Piper of their group and their aspirations appear to be quite similar, notably a call for a new renaissance.

In speaking of the meager beginnings of the Pre-Raphaelites, Knight writes, “The meeting of these fervid youths, devoted to the study and practice of painting and poetry, led naturally to schemes for the regeneration of the art they loved and to the foundation of a species of *Cénacle* [...] The date when the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was established was the autumn of 1848.”⁸³ Like Louÿs, the Pre-Raphaelites call for a renaissance which Knight defines by citing the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Louÿs reads in the pages of the Rossetti biography: “[T]he Renaissance of Wonder consists in going back from the “temper of imitation, prosaic acceptance, pseudo-classicism and domestic materialism” to the “temper of wonder, reverence, and awe.””⁸⁴ As Louÿs had written to Valéry in scolding him for the use of the term decadent, the poet is against imitation which is why he refuses to be associated with the Symbolists. In 1890, this school had already been over defined and so to be a part of it would require imitation of it. *Be unique, be yourself*, is Louÿs’ mantra. He wants to shed off old traditions while still finding inspiration in those elements which keep his poetry moving forward. For Louÿs, this inspiration comes from music, most notably that of Wagner who the poet admires as much as his god Hugo. But where Louÿs finds inspiration in music, Rossetti finds it in painting and there is no doubt that Louÿs is conscious of this inter-genre crossover as it could lead to innovation beyond compare. In discussing Rossetti’s work *The Blessed Damozel*,

⁸³ Knight 23.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 26.

which is also noted by Louÿs in his letters, Knight writes, “Apart altogether from the question of the poet’s age when it was written, it is the most remarkable poem of its day. [...] Nothing in it is directly assignable to the influence of the early reading of Shakespeare, Byron, or Scott, [...] Such inspiration [...] belongs assumably [sic] to the pictures of those early Italian painters, whom Rossetti had lovingly studied [...].”⁸⁵ Not only could the themes in poetry be influenced by other genres, but so too could its form and this is what Louÿs is after in choosing to pursue prose poetry which he considers more rhythmic than verse poetry.

These two similarities aside, there is also the question of the Pre-Raphaelite revue titled *The Germ: Thoughts toward nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art*⁸⁶ whose first edition appeared on the first of January 1850. Throughout his discussion of it, Knight emphasizes the extreme youth of those involved and excuses them for what may be considered juvenile. For the Pre-Raphaelites, this journal was a launching pad which led to remarkable careers. Of the movement and of the revue, Knight writes, “Its influence, as a protest, was enduring, its tendency was beneficial, and the men, nurtured in its faith, however much they have diverged from their first convictions, have attained the foremost places in their art. [...] Time has vindicated the aim and the exertions of the Pre-Raphaelites [...].”⁸⁷ Louÿs very much sees the publication of a revue as an essential part of the beginning of a long career. It is important for Louÿs to “faire date” with his work, in other words, to publish while

⁸⁵ Ibid. 57.

⁸⁶ William Michael Rossetti, *The Germ: Thoughts toward nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art* (n° 1-4, Jan.-May 1850).

⁸⁷ Knight 32.

he is still young so that historically this moment can be marked. In a letter to Paul Valéry in September of 1890, Louÿs writes, “[J]’aurai vingt ans dans quatre mois et je tiens à avoir achevé quelque chose avant cette date qui m’effraye.”⁸⁸ Throughout his teens, Louÿs is in a rush to get work done, not only because he fears he may die of consumption like his brother and mother, but also because it is a part of the literary tradition in which poets of genius write and publish from a very early age. Once this time has passed for Louÿs, there is no way he can reclaim it.

One last important aspect of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which finds its direct parallel in Louÿs’ relationships with his friends and the construction of the Cénacle, is that the creative association of these young poets is founded solely on male relations. Writing of the Brotherhood, Herbert Sussman notes, “The ties of the male community had been that of ‘social intercourse,’ a rather nice Victorian phrase for what we would now call the homosocial, chaste affective bonds between men.”⁸⁹ The term ‘homosocial’ was popularized by Eve Sedgwick in her 1985 study *Between men: English literature and male homosocial desire*,⁹⁰ which itself was an elaboration of René Girard’s triangular theory of desire (subject, object, mediator) as presented in his 1961 *Mensonge romantique et vérité Romanesque*.⁹¹ For the moment, in relation to Louÿs’ creative output and the formation of the Cenacle, the question of desire is of little importance. What is noteworthy, and which will be elaborated on in the chapters ahead, is fact that Louÿs’ creative relations are based on male relations,

⁸⁸ Gide et al. 279.

⁸⁹ Herbert L Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 111.

⁹⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁹¹ René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Grasset, 1961).

a fact which will come to play a more distinct role in his rivalry with Henri de Régnier over Marie de Heredia, as well as in his friendship with Jean de Tinan and the group surrounding the 1896 revue *Le Centaure*. We see here, however, the roots of these homosocial relations which will play an integral role throughout Louÿs' most productive years.

The Romantic Tradition and the Problem of Genre

Both Louÿs and Gide are very conscious of the fact that their journals and letters are genres of a literary tradition dating back hundreds of years. It is, however, in the nineteenth century that this genre is expanded exponentially. In the second half of the century, for example, the first of nine volumes of *Le Journal des Goncourts*⁹² begins appearing in 1887 and the *Correspondance entre George Sand et Gustave Flaubert*⁹³ is published as early as 1863, two publications which are referred to periodically in the correspondences of Gide, Valéry, and Louÿs. Of the genre of correspondence, Gide makes an easy transition from personal writing to public writing in noting, "La correspondance de Gustave [Flaubert] fait rudement philosopher ; cela est sublime ; il te faut le lire cela, mon vieux bon. Les lettres à Louis Colet semblent des chapitres d'*Adolphe*. C'est la même sentiment."⁹⁴ If the personal writings of novelists and poets are confused so easily with the fiction they produce, then why would it not be the same for these young men? There appears

⁹² Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt. Premier volume, 1851-1861* (Paris : G. Charpentier, 1887).

⁹³ Gustave Flaubert and George Sand, *Correspondance entre George Sand et Gustave Flaubert* (Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1863).

⁹⁴ Gide et al. 134. Letter of André Gide to Pierre Louÿs December 22, 1889.

thus to be a self-consciousness in the tone of the journals and letters that materially is difficult to pinpoint yet gives the impression that Louÿs and Gide are writing with a sense that there is a reader peering over their shoulder. In one particularly striking recognition of a third party reader, Louÿs chastises Gide in July of 1892 for his homoerotic language and tone. In speaking of both Gide and their friend Quillot, Louÿs writes:

[J]e t'en supplie, et je l'en supplie, usez d'un autre vocabulaire quand vous m'écrivez. Si vous devenez Goethe ou Shakespeare, comme je n'en doute pas, je serai obligé de publier vos lettres et la postérité croira que nous avons eu des mœurs infâmes. Il faut le détromper dès maintenant, d'abord parce que ce n'est pas vrai, et ensuite parce que les femmes ont horreur de ça et que nous serons déchirés comme de pauvres petits orphées.⁹⁵

The reference to the women of Thrace tearing apart the poor Orpheus gives the situation a classical dimension so common to their correspondence. But more importantly, this remark makes it explicitly clear that Louÿs is aware that their letters may one day find other readers than those intended.

Another literary convention that Louÿs and Gide uphold is publishing in pseudonym. As mentioned, they had done this in *La Potache-Revue* with Louÿs as Fernand Tellore and Gide as Zan-bal-Dar. It is not surprising that they would do this in a satirical revue with hyperbolic pseudonyms, but this activity does become more complicated as they begin to publish more serious works. Most obviously, we see this with Gide's early work *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*. The novel is presented to the reader as being the found journals of André Walter with a notice from Pierre C*** explaining that the author had died of "une fièvre cérébrale" and that these

⁹⁵ Gide et al 609. Letter from Pierre Louÿs to André Gide July 23, 1892. For more of discussion on issues of homosexuality in the Gide/Louÿs relationship, see Clive 67 and 83.

notebooks were found after his death. Such a notice gives the work a romantic dimension and an intrigue that would hopefully peak the reader's interest, although after its publication, Gide is quick to let it be known that he is in fact the author. The Pierre C*** is none other than Pierre Chrysis, better known as Pierre Louÿs, whose given name is spelled Louis. Feeling that the name Louis is too banal and common, Louÿs begins signing his name as such in the summer of 1890. In a way, it is like a stage name where the player is at once himself *and* a character. In other such public texts, however, as in the case when Louÿs publishes the article, "Le Naturalisme survivant," in *Art et Critique* in 1890 under the pseudonym Claude Moreau, the use of the pseudonym is to keep his journalistic writing separate from his poetic writing as he would not want the reader to confound the two.

There is, however, something more going on with the use of these false names. In their correspondences, Gide signs his name as Alain, André Walter, as well as Han, after a character in a Hugo novel.⁹⁶ The specifics of the variants are not as important as what they represent to these young men. Of course, on the one hand this is a game among friends, but on the other it is the admission of a multiplicitous self with pseudonyms often being the anagram of their proper names, as in Sivol for Louis.

One of the main topics of conversation between Gide and Louÿs in these early years is the issue of Form and Idea, or Sentiment, in poetry. Is one superior to the other? Which takes precedent? Such questions are popular in the press as they define the main struggle of the "Crise de vers" and are indicative of the battle

⁹⁶ Gide et al.

between Parnassian and Symbolist esthetics, or verse poetry and prose poetry. In discussing this duality, Gide compares it to his own multiplicitous self. He writes, “Je suis double pour cela et c’est pourquoi je prendrai deux pseudonyms, je te l’ai dit, un pour l’âme, l’autre pour le sens, ou la forme si tu veux ; mais je ne me cache pas que les deux se confondront maintes fois.”⁹⁷ The pseudonyms represent then the various selves of the individual and allow the writers to play with ideas without committing. “Ecris-moi encore sur toi, sur André Walter,” writes Louÿs to Gide, “car de nous deux c’est *moi* qui désire le plus voir l’œuvre de l’autre.”⁹⁸ Along with the use of pseudonyms—letters addressed to and signed with various names—is the very question of *le Moi*. “A vrai dire, je crois plus que jamais que je suis plusieurs ! Ainsi aujourd’hui je ne suis pas moi,” writes Valéry in August of 1890.⁹⁹ Along these lines, Louÿs notes in his journal around the same time, “Le moi se manifeste à ma conscience sous différents modes, exactement comme Dieu lui-même, et je ne connais pas plus mon moi intime que je ne connais Dieu.”¹⁰⁰ More than the ubiquitous “Je est un autre,” of Rimbaud, the question of *le Moi*, its cultivation and multiplicity, is made popular by Maurice Barrès in his trilogy *Le Culte du Moi*, whose first and second volumes, *Sous l’oeil des barbares* and *L’Homme libre*, have both been read by Gide and Louÿs by late 1889 when these discussions begin.

At the same time as these discussions, that is to say in late 1889 and early 1890 before the publication of Louÿs’ revue *La Conque* and before the Banquet of

⁹⁷ Gide et al 103. Letter from André Gide to Pierre Louÿs. October 1, 1889.

⁹⁸ Gide et al 299. Letter from Pierre Louÿs to André Gide. September 13, 1890.

⁹⁹ Gide et al 273. Letter from Paul Valéry to Pierre Louÿs. August 30, 1890.

¹⁰⁰ Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 200.

Moréas in February of 1891, Gide is diligently working on his *Cahiers d'André Walter* which will be published in the first months of 1891, shortly after the Banquet. The advice that Louÿs gives his friend concerning this work, and their subsequent discussions of it, are revelatory of Louÿs' relation to the French literary tradition, particularly the romantic inheritance, and his questioning of genre and desire for innovation and modernity.

Despite the fact that Louÿs has "horreur" of Lamartine and finds Vigny "trop austère,"¹⁰¹ he is still taken by romantic fancy being an admirer of both Byron and Musset. In a trip to Venice in the late summer of 1889, then being eighteen years old, Louÿs finds himself on a pilgrimage to the enchanted city. He writes to Gide:

Et Venise ! L'extase d'entrer dans une ville figée depuis trois cent ans, de revoir le Grand Canal comme l'ont vu tous ceux qu'on aime, depuis Desdémone qui y a connu Othello, jusqu'à Wagner qui y a fait Tristan et Isolde, jusqu'à Byron qui y a écrit Don Juan, jusqu'à Musset qui y a aimé George Sand. On montre leurs chambres, leurs maisons. C'est là que Byron rentrait toutes les nuits à la nage sortant de chez son amie. C'est là que Musset a été malade, c'est pendant cette maladie qu'il a accusé Georges Sand, d'où sont nés « La nuit d'octobre », le « Souvenir », Elle et Lui. Chambre n° 13.—J'ai déjà vu, à Vérone, la maison de Juliette, sombre et étroite et crevassée à souhait, avec de vieux balcons où l'on suspend Roméo.¹⁰²

Clearly under the intoxication of the romantic literature of his youth, he seeks the material manifestations of his dreams. But Louÿs' relationship with the romantic tradition is a complicated one. As previously discussed, he seeks innovation in poetry and art based on Form above all else. That is to say, where the romantics gave in to sentiment, Louÿs would argue that this sentiment must give itself over to

¹⁰¹ Louÿs, *Mon journal* 94.

¹⁰² Gide et al 92-93. Letter from Pierre Louÿs to André Gide. September 1, 1889.

Form. "Je suis parnassien dans l'âme,"¹⁰³ he tells us just months after these romantic musings. In seeking to align himself with the Parnassian esthetic of Art for Art, Louÿs is breaking with the romantic tradition in both form and content.

The advice, then, that he gives to Gide just one month after this romantic flight is directly related to this emerging ideology and esthetic. "[O]ublie tout," Louÿs tells Gide concerning *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*. "Ne sache plus qu'il existe un *Werther*, un *A rebours* ; sans faire de bizarre, sois extrêmement original surtout dans le plan," and "Pour l'amour de Dieu, pas de *René* surtout !" ¹⁰⁴ These comments come only months after he had praised Gide's poetry of which he says, "[C]'est absolument nouveau, cela ne ressemble à rien. Il a crée un genre. Oh ! il deviendra célèbre. Maintenant j'en suis sûr !" ¹⁰⁵ Although such writings could be shrugged off as mere youthful enthusiasms, they clearly highlight the esthetic which was to stay with Louÿs throughout his life. Simply stated, Louÿs calls for innovation above all else but with an adherence to Form whose only requisite is Beauty.

Conclusion

Let us return to Louÿs and Gide in the fall of 1889 peering out the window at 22 rue Monsieur-le-Prince. Gide's fist is still clenched and raised to the sky and Rastignac's words are just then pouring from his lips. Drunk on the literature of their youth, they see their futures rising before them as smoke on the rooftops. Despite these youthful declarations, we know that this literary intoxication proves

¹⁰³ Louÿs, *Mon Journal* 200.

¹⁰⁴ Gide et al 99. Letter from Pierre Louÿs to André Gide. End of September 1889.

¹⁰⁵ Louÿs, *Mon Journal*.

more substantial than their foggy dreams. In bringing their friends together, the boys produce a Cénacle modeled on the romantic tradition which in turn produces a revue that in fact did “faire date” in their literary careers. Although the literary climate of 1889 and 1890 was not ripe for a revolution, it was ready for a “renaissance,” to use Louÿs’ own term. The time was right for a new generation to sort through the revolutionary and destructive rhetoric of the past decade and assert a coherent and stable esthetic as well as an emergent genre, prose poetry. In speaking of his generation and the privileges that come with their arrival, Louÿs’ states in his 1895 article “Le Victorieux,” “[L]a prose, toute la prose, avec ses ressources infinies, s’offrait à eux [voir *nous*], à eux seuls.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Pierre Louÿs, “Le Victorieux,” *Le Mercure de France* June 1895: 347.

CHAPTER TWO

CHER MAÎTRE: LITERARY SALONS AND THE PROCESS OF INDUCTION

La Rencontre

“Vivre, c’est habiter,”¹⁰⁷ or less poetically, “living is *inhabiting*.”¹⁰⁸ Leonard Woolf writes in his autobiography *Beginning Again*, that the rooms one inhabits cut the “deepest channels in our lives [...] deeper even than ‘marriage and death and division.’”¹⁰⁹ Mallarmé’s salon on rue de Rome, Heredia’s salon on rue de Balzac, Verlaine’s hospitals, and the innumerable cafés, garçonnières, journal offices and bookstores are the rooms in which the French literary tradition is played out, rooms that can only be accessed through a careful manipulation of etiquette, behavior, and signs, what Pierre Bourdieu calls determinants. These rooms, however, can be metaphorically enlarged to include the abstract spaces of relationships, particularly in literary society, those founded around journalistic publications. After all, in a certain way, these spaces are ‘inhabited.’

It is perhaps fitting, then, that Pierre Louÿs meets Paul Valéry for the first time in an open space, at an outdoor festival in the coastal town of Palavas-Les-Flots. At eighteen and nineteen, respectively, Paul Valéry and Pierre Louÿs are just then

¹⁰⁷ Antoine Bertrand, *Les curiosités esthétiques de Robert de Montesquiou*, T. 1 (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1996) 60.

¹⁰⁸ Martin Heidegger’s influential writings explore the relation between meaning and space which has been elaborated upon by many twentieth century critics. For a secondary study of Heidegger’s writings on place, see Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s topology : being, place, world* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 2006) .

¹⁰⁹ Leonard Woolf, *Beginning again: An autobiography of the years 1911-1918* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964) 60.

entering adulthood. As a representative of the Sorbonne, Louÿs had come from Paris to participate in the celebration of the six-hundredth anniversary of the University of Montpellier. The festivities had gone on for several days and were just then reaching their climax at a grand banquet on the coast when chance put these two dreamers side by side for a few brief moments. In a way, the few words they exchange are sacrosanct. The names Hugo, Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Wagner drip from their lips like precious jewels. These powerful symbols are all that are needed to spark an “amitié spontanée” and a poetic partnership that would last until Louÿs’ death in 1925. “Pendant cinq minutes nous nous sommes communiqués nos idées essentielles du moment,” writes Valéry, “Avec un feu et une sympathie qui ne laissaient pas d’étonner nos camarades [...] Ce jeune homme me donna sa carte : ‘Pierre Louis’ ... puis nous nous perdîmes dans la foule. »¹¹⁰ The determinants named in this short exchange are the crucial elements which define their relationship, allowing them to establish a sense of deep communication and fraternity. In that brief moment, an entire literary tradition is evoked, mingled with the youthful aspirations of two young poets “pressés de vivre.”¹¹¹

Although in May of 1890 Louÿs had yet to penetrate the important literary salons of the day, he is still an ambitious and talented young man who is preparing his first real literary conquests. Louÿs could boast to his new friend Valéry that he himself was preparing a collection of poetry while his best friend, Gide, was then writing his first novel, *Les Cahiers d’André Walter*. As a Parisian poet, though

¹¹⁰ F. Lefèvre, *Entretiens avec Paul Valéry* (Paris: 1926) 30-31.

¹¹¹ André Lebey, *Jean de Tinan, Souvenirs et Correspondance* (Paris : H. Floury, 1922) 8.

unpublished, Louÿs maintains a status, and possesses a cultural competence, the provincial Valéry could only dream of.

As debutants, Louÿs and Valéry would soon seek guidance from living, established poets such as Mallarmé, Verlaine, and Heredia. In the French literary tradition, these poets are masters and the young men their disciples. This relationship is inevitably a vertical one and is only truly realized through a process of initiation. Not surprisingly, the codes and etiquette which permit entrance are both material (printed poetry, material publication) and abstract (behavior, taste), and are themselves essential products of a long evolving tradition.

For Louÿs, as for others in his position as a 'jeune homme de lettres,' movement in the literary habitus is both vertical and horizontal. The study of this axis, and the materiality of the social spaces which compose it, are at the core of the following two chapters. Vertically, Louÿs must gain access to the elite literary salons, such as those already mentioned, through a careful process of induction. He must also gain access to special events and literary banquets, like that held for the Parnassian poet Léon Dierx in July of 1890 and the one for the Symbolist Jean Moréas in 1891. Where the vertical aspect is defined hierarchically by masters and disciples, or superiors and inferiors, the horizontal plane is composed exclusively of peers, or other 'jeunes hommes de lettres.' Examples of these spaces are Louÿs' own literary salon at rue Grétry, the cafés of the Latin Quarter where the boys meet, and the bookstores and "maisons d'édition" such as Bailly's Art Indépendant. The manipulation of clothing, décor, printed poetry, and published volumes are essential

to the mechanics of these spaces as are the abstract aspects of behavior and etiquette.

Lastly, one important idea that will be expounded upon in the following two chapters is the notion of induction. This is a process in which new members, or debutants, are inducted into the habitus by members who are established and who manipulate the determinants which govern it. For example, after Louÿs gains access to Mallarmé's salon, he inducts his friend Paul Valéry into the same social space he had once entered. Peers who induct new peers on the horizontal plane can, for a moment, serve as masters who gain prestige on the basis of having brought a new member into the fold. This will become clear in Louÿs' relationship with the younger André Lebey, as well as with Claude Debussy and Jean de Tinan, relationships which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Artistic talent aside, essentially at play in all such processes is the rise and fall of status and knowledge in a symbolic marketplace of literary and artistic production and representation.

In this chapter Stéphane Mallarmé and Jose-Maria de Heredia's literary salons will be explored in order to show how Louÿs manipulates the determinants which compose it so as to gain entrance as well as elevate his own status among his peers. Further, it will become clear how the esthetics, attitudes, and behavior of these masters directly influence Louÿs as their disciple and come to manifest themselves in his first important literary production, a poetic revue titled *La Conque*.

Through the period of our study, Louÿs is in his early twenties, so he can still get away with *playing at* being an 'homme de lettres,' which is a form of mimicry that shows his recognition of the induction process essential to the vertical

movement within the literary habitus. This behavior is encouraged by Marie de Heredia in her joyful parody of the Académie Française; as *La Reine* of the *Académie Canaque*, Marie organizes picnics, meetings, and an informal literary journal with fellow members which include Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry, Léon Blum, and Henri de Régnier, among other members. A careful look at this youthful association casts new light on the process of entering the literary world.

From parody to formalized ritual, this study will then turn to the literary banquets which become common in the early 1890s. These events are used to sanctify named masters while also helping coalesce the young readership which through the late 1880s had been discordant, even antagonistic to various esthetic philosophies. Special attention will be brought to the banquet held for Jean Moréas in 1891 to celebrate the publication of *Le pèlerin passionné*. Although Louÿs is in attendance, our focus will be on his friend André Gide whose role and actions at the banquet are supported by the theoretical model proposed here. Unwittingly following literary convention, Gide first encounters Maurice Barrès who in turn introduces the young man to Stéphane Mallarmé. Just as is for Louÿs, Gide's meeting with the master is extremely formative and telling of the ways in which young writers are inducted into the literary habitus.

***Cher maître...* Mallarmé and his literary salon**

It is not by happenstance that Pierre Louÿs first came in to contact with Stéphane Mallarmé. Like so many other young poets of that era, Louÿs wrote directly to the master, despite not ever having seen or met him before. Twenty years

earlier, an unknown Arthur Rimbaud had sent samples of his poetry to both Théodore de Banville and Paul Verlaine, effectively beginning his literary career; but unlike Banville and Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé's status as master was achieved not so much through his published poetry—he had published very little by 1890—but through the praise of his established peers, notably J.K. Huysmans¹¹² and Verlaine¹¹³, through the mystery surrounding his unpublished work, and through the reputation of his Tuesday night salons. As James McNeill Whistler writes to Mallarmé in 1891, “Les Mardis de Mallarmé sont maintenant historiques—exclusifs—et réservés aux artistes hon[n]êtes—et une preuve de valeur—Une distinction dont nous sommes fiers.”¹¹⁴ Seeking to affirm this “preuve de valeur,” Louÿs takes the liberty to write to Mallarmé without any other type of presentation. In so doing, it could be said that Louÿs is inviting himself to his first *tête-à-tête* with the master.

The subject of their first meeting on June 19, 1890 is not so much Louÿs' poetry as it is the project of a literary revue, or an anthology of contemporary poetry. Although the details of their conversation are not known, Louÿs reports to Gide that the master said to him, “Mais, monsieur, non seulement je vous approuve et je vous soutiens, mais je vous promets l'appui de tous mes amis.”¹¹⁵ This benediction is essentially what Louÿs had been after; not only could Mallarmé and his cohort influence the reputation and importance of the journal, they would most

¹¹² *A rebours*, 1884

¹¹³ *Poètes maudits*, published in the revue *Lutèce* from December 1883 to January 1884.

¹¹⁴ James McNeil Whistler, Letter of November 2, 1891 in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance. IV, 1890-1891 ; recueillie, classée et annotée par Henri Mondor et Lloyd James Austin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) 323.

¹¹⁵ Gide et al. Lettre from Pierre Louÿs to André Gide June 26, 1890.

of all be its readers. The desire to produce poetry for only a small group of intimates and friends reflects an essential unease with the greater public, an element that Louÿs admired in Mallarmé. As the historian Jean-Paul Goujon notes in his biography of Louÿs, it is not so much Mallarmé's poetry which affects Louÿs, but the life Mallarmé led as the incarnation of the archetypal poet who Louÿs sees as an "excellent maître" who is "modeste, courtois, indulgent, et doux."¹¹⁶

During this first meeting, Louÿs is invited by Mallarmé to attend his Tuesday evening salon the following week. Louÿs' entrance thus marks the second wave, or second period, in the history of the salon, as he arrives with a new generation of poets and authors born around the year 1870. The period of 1884 to 1890 is generally considered as the first period of the salon, while 1890 to 1898 marks the second period. Edouard Dujardin, René Ghil, Stuart Merrill, Henri de Régnier, Francis Viéle-Griffin, and André Fontainas, among others, are in regular attendance from 1884 on. From 1890, Louÿs is joined by Marcel Proust, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Marcel Schwob, Camille Mauclair, and Paul Claudel.¹¹⁷ Along with these young men come an assortment of the most impressive names of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, including Oscar Wilde, Auguste Renoir, Paul Verlaine, Claude Debussy, James McNeill Whistler, Édouard Manet, Paul Gauguin, Alfred Jarry, and Maurice Barrès. These names alone should highlight the significance of the salon as a meeting place of the most influential artists, poets, and writers of the time.

¹¹⁶ From an unpublished letter cited by Jean Paul Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 99-100.

¹¹⁷ See Gordon Millan, *Les Mardis de Stéphane Mallarmé : Mythes et réalités* (Saint-Genouph: Librairie Nizet, 2008).

The smaller, more intimate group that comprised the first period of the salon meant that Mallarmé could sit in his regular armchair and speak to his guests as a group, as he was known to do; however, after 1890, the small salon was often filled with more bodies than chairs, and the master was obliged to stand by the fireplace to give his oral dissertations on art and poetry while the group did their best to stay comfortably still. Although more numerous, this new wave of guests is very aware of the protocol of the salon as Camille Mauclair notes in his mémoire *Mallarmé chez lui*: “Quand je pénétrai dans cette petite pièce, les rites étaient déjà fixés par des aînés.” He then goes on to recall his encounter with these “rites” at his first meeting. “Je me souviens que, quelques minutes après mon entrée, Mallarmé ayant émis je ne sais quelle opinion en se tournant interrogativement vers moi, je lui répondis en contestant respectueusement un détail.” Mauclair continues, “Il dialogua de bonne grâce, mais je remarquai avec surprise les regards scandalisés des assistants, et lorsque nous partîmes on me dit adieu sur le palier avec une grande froideur. [...] Louÿs m’y retint tout exprès pour me gronder. Il était convenu de laisser parler le maître, tout au plus en l’orientant par une insinuation brève et adroite.”¹¹⁸ The importance of these remarks is that they highlight the set of codes that govern the salon which are reinforced not by Mallarmé, but by the guests. New guests had to be initiated and adhere to these rules if their presence was to be accepted.

Throughout the evening, Mallarmé would speak for long periods, as the guests listened. Many guests later suggested that Mallarmé prepared his talks beforehand, while others disagree, arguing that they were often impromptu and

¹¹⁸ Mauclair, *Mallarmé chez lui* 19-21.

unpracticed. Remarkably, it seems that no witnesses wrote down in detail what the master said, although Gide notes that they resembled his written *Divagations*.¹¹⁹ The significance of Mallarmé's talks, it seems, was not necessarily their content, but the overall sensation the guests experienced as they listened; as such, they were akin to a sort of performance art, described by Edouard Dujardin, a long time regular of the salons, who notes in his *Mallarmé par un des siens*:

Il était possible de résumer un de ces conversations, de rappeler certaines phrases—et c'est ce que quelques-uns parmi nous ont fait, et si incomplètement ! Mais comment restituer une dialectique si délicate que la moindre méprise en aurait faussé le sens ? Et le ton de cette parole, comment le retrouver ? En réalité, le sténographe invisible, ou mieux le microphone enregistreur soigneusement dissimulé qui eût été nécessaire aurait inévitablement réduit à l'état de cendres cette vie vivante.¹²⁰

Just as Louÿs observed, Mallarmé embodies the very definition of the archetypal poet able to evoke the heavens with his soothing voice and slow gestures. Again, it is not necessarily what he says that is so impressive, but how he says it. Added to this, what so impacts Louÿs is how Mallarmé lives his life, not as a decadent poet in pearl studded gloves and silk ties à la Robert de Montesquiou, but as a humble artist whose life purpose is the creation of poetry.

As a schoolteacher, Mallarmé and his family live meagerly in a modest fourth floor apartment which resembles, according to Camille Mauclair, “une maison banalement bourgeoise.”¹²¹ Mallarmé often welcomed his guests himself into the small entranceway which opened to a room that served as both a salon and a dining room. In one corner is a stove, along with a few pieces of unremarkable furniture, a

¹¹⁹ Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations* (Paris : E. Fasquelle, 1897).

¹²⁰ Edouard Dujardin, *Mallarmé par un des siens* (Paris : Ed. Messein, cop. 1936) 6.

¹²¹ Mauclair 19.

small dining table with a Chinese porcelain bowl full of tobacco, and somewhere in the room prowls Lilith, the cat. Although Louÿs is first put off by Mallarmé's habit of pontificating, he quickly grows accustomed to his manner. He writes in his private journal at the time, "[N]on seulement c'est un grand poète, mais c'est un homme très intelligent, et cela ne s'accorde pas toujours."¹²² Louÿs finds Mallarmé's humble existence, his intelligence and warm personality inspiring.

A short time after his first visit to Mallarmé's, Louÿs encounters Paul Verlaine on rue Montmartre. A ruined alcoholic who spent much of his time in hospitals or at the mercy of friends, Verlaine at this time is barely able to walk an account of an abscessed knee. Upon seeing the poet, Louÿs rushes to his aide and takes him to a café where the two sit and talk for nearly an hour. Verlaine tells the young man, "Oui, monsieur, la pauvreté, à un certain point, est sainte, vraiment sainte. Croiriez-vous qu'il y a une heure, dans un café, le garçon a voulu me chasser parce que 'j'étais trop mal mis', et que 'je relevais de l'Assistance publique' ?"¹²³ As they sit there talking, Verlaine's old friend arrives, Tailhade, who gives Verlaine a few francs, which bring tears to the old poet's eyes. Although Louÿs is horrified by his poverty, he is in awe of the older man. He continues in the same letter to Valéry, "Et quand je pense que, si Mallarmé n'avait pas appris l'anglais, il en serait là, lui aussi. C'est la légende d'Homère qu'ils vivent, d'Homère mendiant par les chemins."

This, however, is not Louÿs' first meeting with the master; he and Gide had visited the poet the previous January at the hospital Broussais where Verlaine was

¹²² Louÿs, *Journal Intime*. 16 October 1890.

¹²³ Gide et al. 262. Letter to Paul Valéry. July 24 1890.

in convalescence. As with Mallarmé, Louÿs had taken it upon himself to write to the author of *Poèmes Saturniens* to request a meeting to discuss his plans for a literary revue. Egged on by Gide, who is too timid to speak, Louÿs overcomes his own nervous apprehension and presents himself and his friend. The two young men are immediately struck by the depravity of Verlaine's material situation: "Quelle misère !" Louÿs writes in his personal journal. He goes on:

Sur un lit de fer, des draps grossiers et sales, et, au fond, adossé sur un oreiller presque vide, et lisant *l'Intransigeant*, il avait sur la tête un bonnet de coton pâle, d'où tombaient sur un gros cou des mèches droites de cheveux gris, et sur le corps une chemise en grosse toile marquée de majuscules noires HOPITAL BROUSSAIS. La chemise, entièrement ouverte par devant laissait voir sa poitrine velue, grise et grasse.¹²⁴

Stacked around the poet and under his bed are manuscripts, books and old newspapers. The nightstand, which normally holds the chamber pot, is also full of papers, including the proofs of *Poèmes Saturniens* which was to be reprinted. Verlaine speaks for some time, then rises and dresses himself, inviting the boys to take a walk in the hospital gardens. "Il enfile pesamment un vieux pantalon, puis un gilet gris maculé de taches et tout effiloché, puis la robe de chambre en gros drap bleu usé des malades d'hôpital."¹²⁵ Louÿs learns that Verlaine is desperate for money and was planning to write for a few Parisian journals. They speak of the completion of Verlaine's present project as well as of Rimbaud, Mallarmé, René Ghil and Henri de Régnier. At the end of the conversation Louÿs ventures to ask the poet what his favorite verses are out of all his own poetry. When Verlaine responds,

¹²⁴ Pierre Louÿs, "Paroles de Verlaine," *Vers et prose* Sept 1910: 3.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 5.

Louÿs ventures a more precise guess which the poet corrects. Verlaine smiles, “Vous avez vingt ans. J’ai cent ans !”¹²⁶

It might at first seem counter-intuitive, but Verlaine’s material poverty and Mallarmé’s humble subsistence lead directly to a sense of elitism. The young waiter who tried to chase Verlaine from the café for his appearance is ignorant of the fact that the man limping before him is actually a brilliant poet, no less than a master for the generation of emerging poets. Within Mallarmé’s shabby apartment congregate some of the most brilliant and influential minds of the period. Remarkably, Louÿs writes in his journal on July 24, 1890, the same day as his letter to Valéry recounting the story of Verlaine:

C’est la horde de poètes qu’il faut, au haut des vers, conquérir—et non cette infâme et infime tourbe populaire qui grouille dans les salons illettrés sous la livrée des habits noirs. Oh l’horrible peuple! La hideuse engeance. Non! Ils ne les liront pas, mes vers, même pas ils ne baveront dessus, de haine et d’admiration; non. J’ai assez de dix poètes, non de mille bourgeois...

Despite what is often invoked as material opulence surrounding the French Decadence, the key motivator for such poets as Louÿs and Mallarmé is not wealth, material comfort, or even fame, it is an audience of elite intellectuals and poets, a status not gained through money or birthright, but by the sheer force of talent. To restrict his reading public, as noted in his journal and letters to Valéry and Gide, Louÿs intends to publish less than a hundred copies of his collected poetry. Further, out of that one hundred, several versions of the same book would be published on varying qualities of paper, the most exclusive and expensive reserved for a very select few. Louÿs also writes in his journal that he plans on publishing successive

¹²⁶ Ibid. 5.

books of poetry under different pseudonyms “pour dérouter encore plus ce vulgaire profane pour qui j’ai de la pitié comme homme, de la pitié religieuse, mais du mépris comme poète, du mépris souverain.”¹²⁷ Although Mallarmé never speaks of such a “mépris,” Louÿs admires the poet’s sense of “humble” elitism. Not surprisingly, then, this attitude comes to manifest itself directly in Louÿs’ material production—the project that he had perhaps spoken about with Mallarmé on their first meeting: a literary journal.

As the terms “bourgeoisie,” “bourgeois,” “aristocracy” and “aristocrat” will appear ubiquitously throughout the following study, it is essential to define them in clear and relevant terms. To begin with, the argument of whether the nineteenth century was in fact a “bourgeois century” was essentially put forth by revisionist scholars in the 1960s who were interested in revisiting Karl Marx’s use of the term which he proposed in 1850 with *The class struggles in France, 1848-1850*¹²⁸ and then in 1852 with *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.¹²⁹ These two works provided a definition and history of class in France that remained unquestioned for more than a century. In the 1960s, however, revisionist scholars began questioning Marx’s assertions. In 1964 Alfred Cobban asked in his work *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*, “In the first place, was it a class?”¹³⁰ Without swerving from Marx’s materialist approach, Cobban turns to the material make up of society in

¹²⁷ Clive 26.

¹²⁸ Karl Marx, *The class struggles in France, 1848-1850* (1850) (New York: International Publishers, 1964)

¹²⁹ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) (New York, International Publishers 1981, c1963)

¹³⁰ Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964)

eighteenth century France. His conclusion is that there was in fact no industrial wealth in the country before 1850 that could have produced the bourgeoisie as Marx defined it. Cobban's conclusions are widely accepted today, and the term bourgeois remains problematic. In picking up the revisionist line of questioning in 2003, Sarah Maza coherently sums up the problems of the term "bourgeois." In *The Myth of the French Bourgeois* she writes:

To state that the elite of post-revolutionary France was the bourgeoisie means very little beyond saying that they were not noble. [...] The question of the bourgeoisie is a puzzle badly in need of a solution. The elements of the puzzle are the near-total absence of industrial capitalism in France before 1850; the overabundance of meanings of the term "bourgeois" both for the French historically and for us today; the resistance of French people both in the past and today to calling themselves bourgeois; and the attachment of contemporary scholars to a term that is imprecise and unhelpful.¹³¹

Clearly, Cobban and Maza are looking at the term "Bourgeois" from an economic and materialist perspective, attacking first and foremost the word's accuracy and usage. They recognize that the popular and academic application of the term is problematic. For our purposes, it is important to note this polemic but there is no need to engage in it.

There is another way, however, of looking at the term "bourgeois" which is in line with contemporary definitions of the 1890s. This is to look at in purely cultural terms rather than economic ones. For this reason, it is not a stretch to evoke Flaubert's *Le dictionnaire des idées reçues*¹³² and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*¹³³ in relation

¹³¹ Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, M.A., 2003) 4.

¹³² Gustave Flaubert, *Le dictionnaire des idées reçues* ; texte établi d'après le manuscrit original et publié avec une introduction et un commentaire par E. L. Ferrère (Paris: L. Conard, 1913)

¹³³ Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (Paris : Lemerre, 1884)

to Pierre Louÿs' use of the word. Both texts view the bourgeoisie in negative terms. From Louÿs' perspective, the bourgeoisie represents mass culture and consumption. Further, a bourgeois individual is an uncultured and unrefined individual. As a literary dandy, Louÿs defines himself in opposition to this "bourgeoisie," although, in fact, economically he may be considered, like his friend Gide, as a member of it.

The definitions of "aristocracy" and "haut-bourgeois" can be viewed similarly, that is, in cultural rather than economic terms. Marcel Proust famously chronicled the aristocracy of fin-de-siècle France in *A la recherche du temps perdu*.¹³⁴ Although Proust, as a writer and individual particularly situated in this class, offers a subjective interpretation of it, his views overlap with Louÿs.' For our purposes, it suffices to define the aristocracy of the 1890s as those individuals of noble birth who maintain a socially recognized title. For Louÿs, aristocrats are cultured, cultivated individuals of refined taste. This generalization extends also to the "haut-bourgeois." Although these individuals do not possess a title, they do possess the economic and cultural competence to move in aristocratic circles and are considered to be part of the culturally elite.

From a military family of no title, economically, Pierre Louÿs is bourgeois, yet culturally, in literary circles, he defines himself in opposition to this group. For the young man, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, and José-Maria de Heredia represent literary aristocracy, that is, economically they are not men of great means, nor of noble title, yet they exercise enormous cultural capital due to their literary

¹³⁴ Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Editions de La Nouvelle Revue française, 1919-1927)

production and recognized status as literary masters. By cultivating his “esprit,” his manner of dress, his affected behavior, and his literary production, Louÿs seeks to gain status in this type of literary milieu. Unfortunately, such a lifestyle strains Louÿs’ pocket book, and like another famous literary dandy, Charles Baudelaire, Louÿs spends his inheritance within a few years of receiving it. Economics aside, the importance of all these terms, from “bourgeoisie” to “aristocracy,” lies in their cultural definition, not necessarily their economic one.

Cher maître, Cher père... José-Maria de Heredia

Before delving into Louÿs’ first major literary project, it is important to look at Jose-Maria de Heredia, another influential poet who held a weekly salon which Louÿs attends beginning in 1890. Heredia is an original Parnassian, whose esthetics had the deepest impact on Louÿs’ developing poetic vision. Like Mallarmé, Heredia was part of the Parnassian coterie publishing in all three editions of the *Parnasse Contemporain* and releasing his first poetry in the early 1860s. Also like Mallarmé, by late 1890 when Louÿs became a regular of his Saturday evening salons, the poet had not yet published one single ‘magisterial’ work. That would not come until 1893 with *Les Trophées* which would establish him not only historically as a major figure, but would ensure his entrance into the Académie Française in 1894 and to the directorship of the Arsenal library, a post once held by Charles Nodier.¹³⁵ Although Heredia’s salon began in 1885, it was not until the early 1890s that this weekly event would gain so much notoriety among the young Symbolists who came to show

¹³⁵ Charles Nodier is named to the post at the Arsenal January 3, 1825.

their respect for the master and speak warmly and casually with peers. For the debutants, there was also the possibility of meeting other established poets such as Leconte de Lisle who was a good friend of Heredia's and would occasionally come by.¹³⁶

As with Mallarmé, it was both the poet and the person that attracted Louÿs. Always fascinated by what is rare and difficult to find, Louÿs is only able to obtain copies of both these masters' poetry by hand copying the work himself. For instance, Louÿs had to go to the Bibliothèque Nationale to transcribe Mallarmé's rare edition of *Poésies* which had been published in 1887. Copied on luxury paper and scrawled in Louÿs' beautiful and distinct calligraphy, these copies so impressed Mallarmé that he himself wrote at the head of the manuscript:

Louÿs, ces vers recopiés
Ô svelte enchantement, la Stance
Fleurit et rit mieux de ses pieds
Que dans une autre circonstance.¹³⁷

Similarly, in 1891, before they were published in volume, Louÿs was able to hand-copy *Les Trophées* as the manuscript had been lent to the young poet by Heredia himself. Such an exchange between master and disciple highlights the genuinely exclusive and fraternal relationship that was developing between these poets. Further, as will shortly become evident, the literary esthetics and personal attitudes toward poetry and its production that were essential to the master poets would quickly come to deeply affect Louÿs' own literary production.

¹³⁶ André Lebey, "Chez Heredia," *Disques et pellicules* (Paris: Librairie Valois, 1929) 31-36.

¹³⁷ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 100.

A contemporary acquaintance of Louÿs, who was a regular of both Mallarmé and Heredia's salon, paints one of the best portraits of the convivial atmosphere found at 11 bis rue Balzac. Camille Mauclair writes:

Je n'ai avalé autant de fumée de tabac que chez Mallarmé ; mais comme le salon de Heredia était six fois plus grand que la petite salle à manger de Mallarmé, à nuage également dense je conclus qu'on y fumait six fois d'avantage. Autant on parlait bas chez Mallarmé autant on criait fort chez l'auteur des Trophées. Il en donnait dès l'entrée la raison de la façon la plus gaie : « Parlez très fort, car je vous préviens que je suis sourd ! »

Mauclair goes on to describe the poet himself :

C'était un beau cavalier avec sa barbe et ses cheveux drus et crémeux, ses yeux flambants, son air fier, son rire sonore : et c'était surtout un brave homme, très bon, très compatissant, heureux de sa gloire, heureux de ses trois filles, heureux de ses amis, et désirant que tout le monde fût heureux, avec une insouciance, une grandiloquence et un fatalisme de créole.¹³⁸

Similarly, Henri de Régnier describes Heredia at this time as being "plein de santé, de verve, de jeunesse."¹³⁹ Paul Valéry, who of course came to know the poet through Louÿs, describes Heredia as "notre autre maître,"¹⁴⁰ highlighting again the dual influence that Mallarmé and Heredia had on the younger generation. Ironically though, underscoring the difference in tone and character of the two masters, Heredia's son-in-law, René Doumic, describes the poet as a sort of anti-Mallarmé.¹⁴¹

As with Mallarmé, Louÿs' first contact with Heredia is epistolary. On May 12, 1890, shortly before meeting both Paul Valéry and Mallarmé for the first time, Louÿs sends Heredia a letter signed *Chrysis*, a pseudonym which Louÿs had taken from a

¹³⁸ Camille Mauclair, "Le Salon de José-Maria de Heredia," *Servitude et Grandeur littéraires* 1922: 89-90.

¹³⁹ Henri de Régnier, "La vie courante," *La Revue de France*: 804.

¹⁴⁰ As cited in Michel Jarrety, *Paul Valéry* (Paris: Fayard, 2008) 125.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 215.

poem by Henri de Régnier, and which he would use in poetry and prose through the 1890s. In this first letter, Louÿs sends Heredia, an admitted admirer of Ronsard, two rimes by the great master taken from the 1609 edition of *Les Amours de Cassandre*. He suggests that Heredia employ these lines to inspire a new poem for *Les Trophées*. A second letter is sent by *Chrysis* on the 8th of June from Bourgueil where Louÿs is on a 'pèlerinage Ronsard.' This letter is simply meant to draw the older poet's attention to their common love for the author of *Les Amours de Marie*. Not surprisingly, Heredia is tickled by such thoughtfulness and when Henri de Régnier, Louÿs new friend who he had met at Mallarmé's Tuesday evening salon, shows the master Louÿs hand written poetry, Heredia immediately recognizes the writing and asks Régnier if he could bring the young poet along to his next Saturday evening salon. In manipulating the determinants of the habitus—Ronsard, letters written in pseudonym, hand written poetry—Louÿs gains access to the salon and the master. This first meeting, through the intermediary of Régnier, takes place in December 1890 just days after Louÿs' twentieth birthday.

Perhaps it is for Louÿs admiration of Ronsard, or for Heredia's other favorite poets Chenier and Hugo, or perhaps it is for Louÿs' surprising erudition, but Heredia takes an immediate liking to the young man, a sentiment that is enthusiastically reciprocated. Louÿs describes the meeting to Gide in a letter written on Sunday December 12th :

“[Q]uand j'ai pris congé de lui, il m'a précédé dans l'antichambre pour me mettre mon manteau (ma parole !) et qu'il m'a serré la main en me disant que j'étais son ami, qu'il fallait que je revienne régulièrement le samedi, et que « j'aillais être l'enfant de la maison » puisque j'étais le plus jeune... Ah ! mon ami, quel homme supérieur !”

This personal rapport between the master and disciple is complemented by an intellectual one: “Il a vidé sa bibliothèque devant moi [...] il me demandait mon avis sur tout.”¹⁴² The two poets are also great bibliophiles, a hobby of sorts they share throughout their lives.¹⁴³ Further, Louÿs describes their encounter on mythic terms: “Heredia m’a reçu comme Jupiter aurait reçu Ganymède si Ganymède avait été Orphée, ou comme le Christ a dû accueillir Saint Jean la première fois qu’il se sont rencontrés.”¹⁴⁴

As noted, Louÿs hand copied the poetry of both Mallarmé and Heredia; this activity, along with personal contact, came at a key moment in the poet’s early development and its influence has been readily acknowledged by literary scholars.¹⁴⁵ Louÿs’ early poetry, including *Astarté*, *Iris*, and *Aquarelles*, is influenced by many contemporary poets, notably those who employed the antique themes that were so much in fashion through the last three decades of the 19th century, set into verse with a sonority and tone that recalls Heredia’s.¹⁴⁶ However, unlike Heredia who was a strict Parnassian in form and theme, Louÿs ventured into prose poetry, a genre that was quickly denounced by the master after reading Louÿs’ collection *Astarté*: “Votre extrême jeunesse ne se décèle que par quelques bizarreries qui

¹⁴² Pierre Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites à Georges Louis : 1890-1917* (Paris : Fayard, 2002).

¹⁴³ See Jean-Paul Goujon, “Littérature et bibliophilie dans la correspondance Heredia-Louÿs,” *José-Maria de Heredia, poète du Parnasse* (Paris: Presses de l’université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006).

¹⁴⁴ Gide et al. 370-371. Lettre de 21 décembre 1890.

¹⁴⁵ See Jean-Paul Goujon “Introduction” *José-Maria de Heredia-Pierre Louÿs Correspondance inédite (1890-1904)* (Paris: Editions Champion, 2006) 15. and notes by A. Michel in *Les Poèmes de P. Louÿs*. T.1. (1945) 343.

¹⁴⁶ Jean-Paul Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 119.

passeront avec l'âge, trop heureux jeune homme !"¹⁴⁷ Heredia wrongly imagines that the "bizarreries" of prose poetry, which had been proliferating in France for some time, were nothing more than an aberration. It was not, and this likely remained a point of contention between the two as Louÿs continued to write prose poetry, particularly in his work *Chansons de Bilitis* which, under the guise of being a translated work of a found text, is actually a purely imaginative work in prose poetry. It is perhaps for this reason that Heredia rather coldly remarks to Jules Renard at the time of Louÿs' great success with *Aphrodite* in 1896, that Louÿs' poetry is "franchement médiocre."¹⁴⁸ This difference of opinion, however, does not cool their friendship which would become familial in 1899 when Louÿs marries Heredia's youngest daughter, Louise. Some years later, Louÿs begins addressing his letters to Heredia "Cher père" and was to write to his brother Georges, "Ce qui me lie à lui n'est certainement pas la famille et c'est de moins en moins la littérature. C'est lui-même."¹⁴⁹

Louÿs' literary production: *La Conque*

Louÿs' revue, *La Conque*, came to be realized in the spring of 1891.

Interestingly, both Verlaine and Mallarmé had been solicited throughout the 1880s by other debutants who sought to validate their own literary ventures by including the poetry of these recognized masters among other unknown poets, and, both

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Jose-Maria de Heredia to Pierre Louÿs in *Correspondance inédite (1890-1904)* (Paris : Editions Champion, 2006) 41.

¹⁴⁸ As cited in Jean-Paul Goujon "Introduction" 15.

¹⁴⁹ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 118.

Verlaine and Mallarmé's somewhat occult reputation was largely created in these revues. Remy de Gourmont, who published a short study in 1900 titled *Les Petites Revues* writes, "Je dirai seulement ceci que jamais, à aucun moment de leur carrière, ni Villiers, ni Verlaine, ni Mallarmé ni Laforgue ne publièrent leurs œuvres que dans des revues si 'petites' que leur nom est devenu une énigme."¹⁵⁰ The arrival of Pierre Louÿs' *La Conque* in 1891 marks the continuation, if not the apex, of this effusion of short-lived journals. However, Louÿs literary goals and esthetics stand apart from the norm and help define what historians name as the second generation of Symbolists.

The revues of the late 1880s such as *Le Décadent*, *La Décadence*, *Le Scapin*, *La Vogue*, and *Le Symboliste* stand in direct contrast to Louÿs' plans for *La Conque*. *La Conque* was to be a 'revue de luxe,' and was to contain no manifesto or any type of literary critique whatsoever. As a purely poetic publication, it could be considered *le nec plus ultra* of Symbolism, as Jean-Paul Goujon calls it.¹⁵¹ Further, by omitting a manifesto and literary commentary, Louÿs avoided the possibility of contradicting himself and of being confused with the rebellious decadents who defined themselves in opposition to the older generation. The historian André Dinar notes that these revues were typically "un cri de coeur" with articles that were "vite écrits et vite oubliés."¹⁵² Louÿs sought to put together a work that was less ardent and more durable, more respectful and noncombative. At twenty years old in the spring of 1891, Louÿs is a wholly refined young man who exemplifies, through his poetry

¹⁵⁰ Remy de Gourmont. *Les Petites Revues* (Paris: Librairie du Mercure de France, 1900) 2.

¹⁵¹ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 124.

¹⁵² André Dinar, *La Croisade symboliste* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1943) 147.

and personal friendships, the literary bridge that was maintained between the Parnassians and Symbolists through the 1890s. The innumerable literary revues, with their hyperbolic language and literary declarations, may make it appear that there was a clear rupture between these two literary schools, but if one looks closely at the poetry itself, such as in the work of Jean Moréas and Henri de Régnier who were both considered Symbolists, one sees more similarities than differences. Further, the personal friendships between Parnassian and Symbolist poets show to what extent the two schools were in dialogue with one another, rather than in revolt. In his private journal just a few weeks before the appearance of the *La Conque* Louÿs describes his intentions. He writes: "Je veux cette revue comme une sorte de très jeune anthologie de poètes inédits, présentés et soutenus par les grands poètes de ce temps,"¹⁵³ and this is in fact exactly what he produced. The revue printed as a front-piece to each volume one single poem by an established poetic master. Leconte de Lisle's poetry appears in the first volume followed by Léon Dierx, Heredia, Mallarmé, Swinburne, Judith Gautier, Paul Verlaine, Jean Moréas, Charles Morice, and Maeterlink. Henri de Régnier's poetry graces the opening of the eleventh and final volume. Of course, As Michel Jarrety notes in his biography of Paul Valéry, Henri de Régnier, at age twenty-six is certainly not a master in the same way Leconte de Lisle and Verlaine are. However, as an established regular of both Mallarmé and Heredia's weekly salons, and as a published and respected poet, Régnier was seen perhaps as an older brother to Louÿs and his cohort. Maurice Barrès is seen in much the same way as he too is not

¹⁵³ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 125.

yet thirty in this period. Louÿs had met Régnier at Mallarmé's salon, and it was Régnier who introduced Louÿs to Heredia after sharing his poetry with the master. Among the *poètes inédits* that Louÿs chose to publish with these masters is Paul Valéry, André Gide, Leon Blum and Camille Mauclair, among a few others. Interestingly, again Louÿs and Gide occasionally apply pseudonyms to their poetry published here, Claude Moreau and André Walter respectively. As a side note, Paul Valéry had also published his poem "Hélène la reine triste" under a pseudonym in the small Montpellierian revue the *Chimère* in August of 1891. In doing so, the young poets were continuing a literary convention very much in fashion at this time.

Although it could be said that the innumerable decadent and symbolist revues of the late 1880s and early 1890s were produced for and by consumers, a tendency remarked upon by Pierre Bourdieu in *Les règles de l'art*,¹⁵⁴ the production and consumption of *La Conque* stands as a unique example. First of all, only one hundred and twenty copies of each revue were printed, all on luxury paper; one hundred on *hollande*, and twenty on *japon*, each one numbered by the editors. Secondly, the cost was extremely high. Each copy cost 10 francs (today 30 Euros /40 U.S. dollars) or 100 francs for a complete subscription that was to count twelve volumes. In fact, only eleven volumes were printed as Félicien Rops, the artist who had intended to provide a frontispiece for the final volume, never turned in his work. Louÿs was counting on the patronage of bibliophiles who would have had the interest and the money to consume such an expensive and rare object; however, as

¹⁵⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art : genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1992)

the young poet himself confessed, a large number were sent at no cost to *littérateurs*, that is, known writers and poets who unfortunately did not conserve them.¹⁵⁵

The revue was not an economic success, but its purpose was not to make money; Louÿs wanted to establish his name, along with those of his friends, in the literary world, and in this regard it succeeded. Anatole France noted the appearance of *La Conque* in *Le Temps* and another chronicler did the same in the *Journal des débats*. Additionally, a longer article written by Henri Chantavoine in the *Débats* paid special attention to the poetry of Paul Valéry, the friend and poet Louÿs most highly regarded. Although Valéry was irritated by the journalist's observations, Louÿs was happy that the revue and its content had made a splash.¹⁵⁶

With the publication of *La Conque*, whose sentry with each volume was an established poetic master, Louÿs edified a pantheon of young writers. This social and literary space acts on both the vertical and horizontal axes outlined at the beginning of this chapter. As Louÿs had written to his friend Valéry, "J'ai assez de dix poètes, non de mille bourgeois..." More importantly than being just the producers of poetry, Louÿs' metaphoric *dix poètes* are also the consumers he was trying to reach with the revue. Not only could Louÿs rise on the vertical axes by handing his masters a beautiful literary work, he could also bring his friends along with him. After having read Paul Valéry's poetry aloud to Mallarmé, and after publishing his work in *La Conque*, it is Louÿs who introduces his young friend into both Mallarmé and

¹⁵⁵ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 125.

¹⁵⁶ For a discussion of the publication of *La Conque* and for Valéry's reaction to the journalistic critique, see Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 124-129. and Jarrety 70-75.

Heredia's company. By manipulating both etiquette and material objects (printed poetry in this case) which determine the literary habitus, Louÿs had successfully insured both his and his friends' entrance who were then permitted to move up with him by employing the new cultural capital they were slowly gaining.

Horizontally, Louÿs' revue brought together a society of young men, what Eve Sedgwick would name as a *homosocial* group as women are largely excluded and are defined by their relationships to these men. Collectively, these poets are creating a literary revue, a genre which had been established in the literary tradition for nearly a century, and replicating it on a horizontal plane just as their decadent predecessors had done. Before producing the revue, these poets were simply a rabble of young men defined more by their ambition than by their production. But with the publication of *La Conque*, their definition and status changes not only to the masters whose presence they sought, but also among their peers who were not included in the revue. One can imagine that as a group having drinks in a café in the Latin Quarter, Louÿs and his friends stand apart. They had befriended the most venerable poets of the day and had been published beside them in a luxurious literary revue. Of course, very few people had access to this revue, and its exclusivity added to its allure, but Louÿs' reputation, as well as that of his equally young peers, surely would have been enhanced among the youth at the Sorbonne and in the Latin Quarter.

Playing at being an homme de lettres and the seduction of ‘jeunes filles en fleurs’ : Marie de Heredia and l’Académie Canaque

While Louÿs’ first true literary endeavor, *La Conque*, can be considered a serious publication, it can also be considered a youthful, if not naïve one. The economic miscalculation, although the first in a lifetime of poor financial decisions, as well as the desire to produce for a severely restricted audience, show to what extent Louÿs is a literary idealist. At twenty years old, he is still *playing at* being an ‘homme de lettres.’ Recall that as a high school student, Louÿs and his friends produced a ‘fumiste,’ or humorist revue titled *La Potache-Revue* in which Louÿs and Gide published their writing under pseudonyms and mocked popular poetry through parody. This literary project was a type of game that had no real world consequences, and yet, both Louÿs and Gide would go on in adult life not only to write for ‘real’ literary revues, but also to help found a few. Louÿs assisted Henri Albert with his short run *Centaure*, and *La Nouvelle Revue Française* was established under the patronage of Gide in 1908.

In this sense, parody becomes a type of practice in which one takes a given model, or meme, and plays it out in a safe environment. Nowhere is this sense of parody, or *playing at*, more evident for Louÿs than in the salon of Maria-Jose de Heredia where literary discussions are enlivened by the gregarious host as well as by his three beautiful daughters, Hélène, Marie, and Louise. Among these three, Marie stands apart for her beauty and intelligence as well as for her literary gifts. In 1894, at the age of eighteen years, she is actively publishing poetry in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* under the signature of “XXX,” referred to as “Trois étoiles,” – three

stars. After 1903, she will take the pseudonym Gérard d'Houville and publish novels, poetry, and essays and will remain friends with many of the most prominent European literary figures. Additionally, she will become Louÿs lover as well as the wife of Henri de Régnier later in 1895, points that will be explored in Chapters Five and Six. However, in 1894 and 1895, young hearts are not yet broken, and the three daughters are free to carelessly laugh and flirt with the young poets who pay their father visit each Saturday.

In February of 1894, Heredia is elected into the Académie Française, an event celebrated by family and friends. To commemorate the election, Hélène, Marie, and Louise found the Académie Canaque, or the Canaquadémie as it was also called. Marie, who is named la Reine, or queen of the academy, declares to its members, “Le canaque, en dehors de sa grimace de réception, devait écrire des poèmes fantaisistes, assister chaque samedi aux réunions, se plier aux exigences de jeux variés, et jurer aide et assistance aux membres de la confrérie.”¹⁵⁷ Members are obligated to write “fanciful” poetry as well as submit to the requirements of the various games played. They regularly go on picnics where they drink champagne and eat exquisite tarts. Paul Valéry notes that even entrance into this familial aspect of their master Heredia’s Saturday salons is selective and discriminatory: “De temps à autre la porte qui donnait du cabinet de travail sur le salon s’ouvrait, mais pour se refermer aussitôt ; seuls, quelques privilégiés passaient de monsieur chez madame ou de madame chez monsieur.”¹⁵⁸ He notes that as Heredia received literary men in

¹⁵⁷ Private letter of Marie de Heredia cited by Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 297.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Jarrety 138.

his salon, his wife and daughters received friends in theirs. The young poets who were members of the Académie Canaque had one foot in each world, the serious world of letters, and the humorous, familial world which parodied it.

Apart from Louÿs and Heredia's three daughters, prominent members include, Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry, Léon Blum, Henri de Régnier, Fernand Gregh, Ferdinand Hérold, the brothers Daniel and Philippe Berthelot as well as the economist Raphael-Georges Lévy.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, very little poetry or notes remain from the Canaque but we know that Proust, who served as the "premier canaque de France" and the secretary of the club, called "Marie la Reine des Canaques" throughout her life, and signed a copy of his *A l'Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* as "un Canaque fidèle."¹⁶⁰ Each week or so, the collected poetry of its members was placed in an album and preserved, with a page set apart for each participant. Only a fragment of poetry remains from Marcel Proust as well as three quatrains by Paul Valéry who under his name gives the qualification of "poète démissionnaire."¹⁶¹

This fanciful and farcical association, imbued with flirtation and feminine charm, allows the young male poets to open themselves to varied possibilities of collaboration and production under the guise of 'parody.' Where Louÿs' ideal cenacle as well as his publication *La Conque* are fundamentally based on the association of male writers and collaborators—apart from Judith Gautier, daughter of Théophile Gautier, who contributed one front-piece to *La Conque*—the spirit of

¹⁵⁹ P. O. Walzer, "Marie de Heredia, Pierre Louÿs, Proust, Valéry et l'Album canaque," *Versants* 4 (1983): 137-141.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 138.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 139.

the Académie Canaque allowed the young poet to expand definitions of collaboration and legitimization, if only briefly. In an otherwise male dominated literary world, women, especially young beautiful ones in this case, gained entrance through the back door. Just as Louÿs was playing at being a 'jeune homme de lettres,' Marie de Régner, who would become a widely read novelist, was also playing the same game. Several members of the Académie Canaque would go on to become members of the real Académie Française: Paul Valéry, Henri de Régner (Marie's future husband), and Fernand Gregh are all sanctified by this distinguished honor. Just as with Louÿs' fumiste revue, Marie de Heredia's Académie Canaque allow these future professionals and distinguished poets to *play at* being the 'homme de lettres' they would one day become.

The Banquets, *L'Homme Libre*, and Gide's Moment of Arrival

Our study thus far of Mallarmé and Heredia's weekly salons, as well as of the ways in which Louÿs used his literary journal, *La Conque*, to legitimize his and his friends' poetry, show to what extent the literary world of the early 1890s is structured hierarchically and how one could gain access and ascend the social ladder through a careful manipulation of the determinants which define the habitus. The literary banquets that become very much in vogue in this same period, however, are an entirely different beast. They are meant more to edify and solidify the literary hierarchy rather than encourage it to be a fluid space of vertical and horizontal movement. Although literary lunches and dinners had been held throughout the nineteenth century—for example, there are the famous dinners at

the restaurant Chez Magny with George Sand, Sainte-Beuve, and Flaubert in attendance,¹⁶²—it is not until the early 1890s that the literary banquet establishes itself as a formalized structure of legitimization, specifically on account of the banquet held in 1891 for Jean Moréas, author of the *Symbolist Manifesto*, as well as the series of banquets which followed it, *Les Dinners de la Plume*, which ran from 1892 to 1894.¹⁶³

The late 1880s and early 1890s mark an extremely acrimonious period in French literary history due in large part to ‘La Guerre des Petites Revues,’ as well as the arguments over ‘la crise des vers’ and ‘la crise du roman.’¹⁶⁴ The *Dîners de la Plume*, which were organized by Léon Deschamps, director of the literary journal *La Plume*, were held in order to help create a more harmonious, if not formally respectful, literary meeting place for authors of varying esthetics. As a Postface to the December 1892 volume of his revue, Deschamps clearly outlines the purpose of the dinners:

Supprimer l’acrimonie et la violence injurieuse dans les controverses littéraires et artistiques ; opérer un changement total dans les relations entre maîtres et nouveaux venus ; remplacer envers les aînés la blague par le respect affectueux, cela en les faisant mieux connaître ; enfin provoquer une sorte de fusion des anciens les plus jeunes, permettant à ces derniers l’accès des salles de rédaction et des librairies.¹⁶⁵

Invitations to the dinners were printed in the publicly sold revue, meaning that anyone could attend, and were by no means exclusive engagements. At each dinner

¹⁶² Robert Baldick, *Les Dinners Magny* (Paris: Denoël, 1972).

¹⁶³ While much of the information for the following discussion comes directly from the literary revue *La Plume*, my discussion is deeply indebted to Julien Schuh’s article “Les dîners de la Plume,” *Romantisme Revue du dix-neuvième siècle* 137: 2007.

¹⁶⁴ See Michel Raimond, *La Crise du roman* (Paris: J. Corti, 1966).

¹⁶⁵ Léon Dechamps. Banquets de *La Plume*, « Postface à l’année 1892 de *La Plume*, » *La Plume* 88, 15 décembre 1892 : 536.

participants were permitted to vote for the honorary titles of select guests as well as for who was to preside over the following banquet. This approach gave the dinners a somewhat republican feel and may have contributed to their success.

Unlike private salons, these banquets were media events. Numerous journalists from various newspapers were invited to participate and record guest lists, toasts, and seating arrangements. In 1893, some time after the first banquet, Roland de Marès writes in the *Figaro*, “Les célébrités du monde des lettres vinrent y occuper le fauteuil présidentiel. Ce furent tour à tour MM. Zola, Coppée, Vacquerie, Scholl, Mallarmé, Verlaine ; hier, le rédacteur en chef du Figaro, M. Magnard. N’est-ce pas une preuve d’esprit de la part de ces ‘chers maîtres’ que d’être venus s’asseoir parmi des jeunes qui les discutent parfois avec si peu de ménagements !”¹⁶⁶ This short citation highlights the way vocabulary surrounding the notion of ‘maîtres’ is applied in social discourse¹⁶⁷ and to what extent the hundred or so young men in attendance are interpreted as admirers, if not disciples, of the literary ‘celebrities’—celebrities they often contested. The diners, then, served to legitimize named masters—Mallarmé, Verlaine, Zola, Coppée—as well as aid in the cohesion of the reading public. They were at once a means of auto-glorification and a *mise en scène* of the literary habitus as they were covered extensively in *La Plume* and could be read as a sort of barometer of the contemporary literary scene.

¹⁶⁶ Roland de Marès, “Les jeunes revues,” *Le Figaro* 12 mai 1893. As cited in “Les diners de la Plume,” *Romantisme, Revue du Dix-neuvième siècle* 137 (2007).

¹⁶⁷ For a definition of social discourse, see Marc Angenot, “Introduction,” *1889: un état du discours social* (Longueuil, Québec : Le Préambule, c1989)

Louÿs, for his part, was not a regular participant of these literary banquets, preferring instead intimate encounters with his small group of literary *maîtres*. He was also not impressed by celebrity itself, but rather by the talent those celebrities possessed. Before the *Dîners de La Plume* were founded, Louÿs attended a banquet in July of 1890 held for the Parnassian poet Léon Dierx. In presence were an array of Parnassian poets such as Heredia and Mallarmé, as well as Georges Rodenbach, Catulle Mendès, Jean Lorain and Edmond Lepelletier. Louÿs, however, is not impressed by this hoard, but rather repulsed by their slanderous talk. He notes in his personal journal, “Quelle vilaine race ! Ils n’ont pas cessé de dire du mal les uns des autres.”¹⁶⁸

Because of their association with the revue *La Plume*, it can be argued that the series of banquets beginning in 1892 were inspired by the banquet held for Jean Moréas on February 2, 1891 to celebrate the publication of his work *Le Pèlerin passionné*. Organized by the poet’s friends Maurice Barrès and Henri de Régner, this banquet immediately came to symbolize the apotheosis of the Symbolist school. Several members of the generation of 1870 were in attendance, including Pierre Louÿs and the twenty-one year old André Gide who was just then publishing his first novel *Les Cahiers d’André Walter*. Unfortunately, Louÿs journals and letters are silent about its proceedings; he was just one month away from the publication of the first volume of *La Conque*, his thoughts were clearly occupied with other matters. However, as a friend of Régner, a co-organizer of the event, and as a new familiar of Mallarmé, Louÿs was part of the inner sanctum.

¹⁶⁸ As cited in Goujon. *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 106.

Like Louÿs, André Gide has extraordinary literary ambitions, but unlike his friend, he is timid and socially awkward. He pays little attention to those objects often fetishized by others such as canes, gloves, and hats, and there really is nothing of the collector about him, nothing of the aforementioned dandy. It's not that he neglected his appearance, but rather it was surely secondary, if relevant at all. Gide's stiffness and distance are often attributed to his Protestant upbringing, a fact which Louÿs often criticizes. When Louÿs begins attending Mallarmé and Heredia's salons in the second half of 1890, he does not include his friend Gide, who, for the most part, is away in La Roche working on *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*.

The banquet of February 2nd belongs to the young Gide because it marks his true entrance into the Parisian literary world. Though his first book, *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*, will not be sold publicly until later that month, it is just then available in print at the bookstore of his editor, Paul Perrin, situated at 35 quai des Grands-Augustins.¹⁶⁹ The day before the banquet, on the first of the month, Gide stops by the store to view his freshly printed creation, and by happy circumstance runs into Maurice Barrès, who was also published by Perrin. While waiting at the editor's office door, standing beside a stack of his own newly printed books, Gide chats with Barrès, who, flipping through the young writer's first work, mutters to Perrin that it is "stupéfiant."¹⁷⁰ Interested in Gide's work, Barrès invites the young

¹⁶⁹ Gide will also publish this same book, as well as *La Poésie d'André Walter*, the same year at La Librairie de l'art indépendant.

¹⁷⁰ André Gide and Paul Valéry. *Correspondance 1890-1940*, ed R. Mallet (Paris: 1955) 52. Letter of André Gide to Paul Valéry, February 11, 1891; Jean Delay, the biographer of André Gide, contests Gide's account of this story, but for our purposes we can accept Gide's word. Jean Delay, *La jeunesse d'André Gide*, T. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1957) 37.

man to his apartment at 12 rue Legendre, just off Parc Monceau in the same neighborhood where Louÿs will be living a short time later.

The next morning, the day of the banquet, Gide is ushered in to Barrès' elegant office, or 'cabinet' as it is called. Like Jean Moréas, or the more familiar Henri de Régnier, Barrès, at only twenty-eight years is already considered a literary master. He is just about to release the third volume of his *Culte du Moi*¹⁷¹ trilogy, a series which greatly influenced the generation coming to age in the late 1880s and early 1890s. In fact, Louÿs and Gide discuss Barrès' work extensively in their letters to one another, with Louÿs using the second book in the series, *L'Homme Libre*, as a manual for spiritual and intellectual cultivation, although he ultimately repudiates Barrès' approach.¹⁷²

The invitation that Barrès extends to Gide is extremely significant as it is obtained through the manipulation of one particular determinant: an author's first novel. Barrès' 'cabinet' as a literary social space, is just as significant for Gide as Mallarmé and Heredia's salon had been for his friend Louÿs. Like the banquets, these more intimate spaces are also used for the *mise en scène* of the literary habitus and their contents should not be overlooked as they follow certain patterns, ones that will be explored extensively in the following chapter.

The study is furnished with an oriental divan, an Italian cabinet made of ebony and ivory, medieval paintings on the walls, and Louis XIII armchairs. A large chimney, carved in oak, dominates the room while small lead-lined windows allow

¹⁷¹ Maurice Barrès, *Le jardin de Bérénice* (Paris : Perrin et Cie, 1891)

¹⁷² See letter Pierre Louÿs to André Gide September 9, 1890. Gide et al. 281-282.

light to pass through silk curtains. Small stacks of papers and books sit on the large oak desk as do cigarettes and a tall slender vase containing anemones sent from Nice by the mother of Marie Bashkirtseff¹⁷³ with whom Barrès had begun a correspondence and friendship after being permitted to read the artist's unpublished journals.¹⁷⁴ With an ironic smile characteristic of the esthete, the host warmly receives his guest. They sit and speak of Barrès' latest book, *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, as well *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*. Gide is invited to stay for lunch, and so the two dine on a meal prepared by the maid. They speak of art, poetry, and the current literary climate. Gide plays the role of the disciple, faithfully listening to the older mentor's advice and opinions. Charmed by his attentive pupil, Barrès invites him to Moréas' banquet which is to be held that evening. Gide quickly accepts.

After four years of the polemic which Moréas had launched with his *Symbolist Manifesto*, the banquet held for him and the special edition of *La Plume* entitled *Le Symbolisme de Jean Moréas*, published a month before, are meant to herald the poet's *Pélerin passionné* as the exemplary work of the Symbolist school. However, given the author's controversial history with both the public and the term, it is not insignificant that the special issue of *La Plume* gives the explicit impression that this is Symbolism *according to* Moréas. Further, the preface of the collection presents a new literary school, *L'École romane*, which opposes itself to the vaguely emotional and subjective work of the Symbolists in favor of more classical restraint. This new orientation, which argues that Mediterranean and neo-classical themes are

¹⁷³ The description of Barrès' office comes to us from the article by Jules Huret published in his series *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* page 66.

¹⁷⁴ Yves Chiron, *Maurice Barrès : le prince de la jeunesse* (Paris: Libr. académique Perrin, 1986) 107.

the source of ideal beauty in art, unapologetically aligns itself with the Greco-Latin tradition in an explicit attempt to break with decadent themes rooted medievalism, pessimism, and 'la névrose,' so popular among contemporary poets.

From the moment of its public inception and presentation in 1886 with Moréas' *Manifesto*, Symbolism was as heavily mediatized as Zola's Naturalism. With the publication of the special Symbolist edition of *La Plume*, the media endeavor was able to reach a climax as many diverse journalists, writers, and poets were festively brought together in one room for an occasion they would publicize in the "Comptes rendus" of their respective newspapers. From *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires* to *Le Figaro* and *le Mercure de France*, the most important journals of the day were unwittingly included in this media blitz. Intoxicated by what some historians call a "collective illusion",¹⁷⁵ the festivities of the event were presented as a harmonious coming together of esthetics, ideologies, and schools to celebrate *Art* and *Poetry* in their ideal sense. For example, in *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*, Francis Viélé-Griffin describes the event in religious terms: "[C]e banquet, auquel plusieurs s'étaient rendus, le sourire au lèvres, avait pris, dès l'abord, le caractère incontestable, et, nous dirons à bon droit, *religieux*, d'une manifestation de solidarité en le culte de (...) *La Poésie* ».¹⁷⁶ The *Mercure de France* canonized the event and showed its respect for the participants by publishing the toast of Mallarmé and Barrès, among others, along with a list of those in attendance.

¹⁷⁵ Robert A. Jouanny, *Jean Moréas, écrivain français* (Paris: Lettres modernes, Minard, 1969) 478.

¹⁷⁶ Francis Viélé-Griffin, "Le Banquet d'hier," *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*. 2.11 (1891): 58.

Entirely unknown, except to his friends Louÿs and Henri de Régner, of course, Gide is awkwardly hustled in the crowd at the Hotel des Sociétés Savantes which is just off Saint Michel in the Latin Quarter. Fortunately, they are seated at the same table, although the other guests begin to realize there may not be enough seats for everyone. For a moment tensions increase as chairs are reached for and defended; Barrès endures a few moments of panic, fearing the Banquet could turn out to be an utter disaster. Just then, a messenger arrives with a hand full of telegrams arriving from Spain, Italy, Greece, and even Norway. As the brief messages containing warm felicitation for Moréas' literary success are read aloud, the room erupts in warm, shared enthusiasm, and any sense of frustration or discomfort drifts away with the fading cigarette smoke. More chairs are brought in and guests huddle together, not minding so much the crowd.¹⁷⁷

After the speeches and toasts, guests begin to move around the room. Gide cautiously approaches his new friend Barrès, and Mallarmé, whom he has not yet met. Only days before, on January 26, 1891, Gide had written to Paul Valéry that not only did he know himself to be a Symbolist (he had just barely become familiar with the school), he was entirely convinced of Mallarmé's mastery of poetry. Mallarmé, Gide writes, is "parnassien peut-être de la forme, mais symboliste dans l'âme" and "Il a fait tous les vers que j'aurais revé de faire." Gide goes even further, declaring to Valéry, "Donc Mallarmé pour la poésie, Maeterlinck pour le drame—et quoique

¹⁷⁷ This description of the Banquet is provided by Maurice Barrès in Willem Gertrude Cornelis Byvanck, *Un Hollandais à Paris en 1891 : sensations de littérature et d'art* (Paris: Perrin, 1892) 76-77.

auprès d'eux deux, je me sente bien un peu gringalet, j'ajoute Moi pour le roman."¹⁷⁸

This is a rather audacious claim for a debutant but it shows to what extent he sees himself as being part of the literary habitus as well as the ideological school of Symbolism.

After a brief introduction by Barrès, who inevitably evokes *Les Cahier d'André Walter*, Gide is permitted to write to Mallarmé the next day, sending a dedicated copy of his new book. In so doing, Gide is following the literary tradition of the habitus just as Louÿs had. Mallarmé responds, praising the work, and invites Gide to come "avant personne Mardi soir, dès à peine huit heures"¹⁷⁹ so the two can speak more intimately. The letter, the signed book, as well as Barrès' introduction, are the determinants which permit entrance into the master's weekly salon. Like Louÿs, Gide is taken first and foremost by the person of Mallarmé. "Chose étrange : il pensait avant de parler !" He is seduced by the performance aspect of Mallarmé's speech as already remarked upon by Edouard Dujardin. Gide goes on to write: "Et pour la première fois, près de lui, on sentait, on touchait la réalité de la pensée : ce que nous cherchions, ce que nous voulions, ce que nous adorions dans la vie, existait; un homme, ici, avait tout sacrifié à cela. Pour Mallarmé, la littérature était le but, oui la fin même de la vie."¹⁸⁰ Mallarmé is the incarnation of the archetypal poet who lives and breathes the literature and poetry he loves. Gide cannot help but be taken aback.

¹⁷⁸ Gide and Valéry 46. Letter of January, 26, 1891.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ As cited in Delay 41.

Gide's meeting with Barrès and his presence at Moréas' Banquet are formative events in Gide's life and are rather typical of the way the 'jeunes hommes de lettres' of the early 1890s entered the literary world. For Gide, Mallarmé's words are a sort of benediction, which give him the courage to continue on his path. He writes to Valéry, "[C]et éloge de Mallarmé m'a été plus sensible qu'aucun autre... jusqu'à présent."¹⁸¹

Conclusion

The vertical axis of the Parisian literary habitus described in this chapter was certainly not without its critics. Apart from the ideological and esthetic conflicts within the habitus—René Ghil, for example, broke with Mallarmé in 1888 for these reasons—the status of *maître* was not incontestable. While Mallarmé was well respected by the younger generation, there were those who criticized the weekly talks he gave at his salon for being nonsensical. Maurice Barrès slyly criticizes the poetic work of the *master* in Willem Byvanck's *Un Hollandais à Paris en 1891* for being, in fact, non-existent.¹⁸² And Louÿs himself is put off the first time he visits Rue de Rome, remarking: "Mallarmé pontifie d'une façon insupportable."¹⁸³ This attitude, of course, was to quickly change, but it shows to what extent Louÿs, and others, had to be initiated into the particular rituals of the salon, that is, the fact that Mallarmé disserted through the majority of the evening. Additionally, while Paul

¹⁸¹ Gide and Valéry 46. Letter of January, 26, 1891.

¹⁸² Byvanck 76-77.

¹⁸³ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 99.

Valéry considered J.K. Huysmans to be a master, particularly in light of his work *A rebours*, Louÿs sharply criticizes this judgment.¹⁸⁴

It is perhaps André Gide's critique of Heredia's salon that is most stinging as it takes a cynical look at what has thus far been described as a cordial event. More than a meeting of poets, Gide sees the salon as a place where poets seek to launch their career. He writes to Valéry in 1891:

J'étais vraiment terrifié de cette féroce curée que c'est—le "monde de lettres." On s'entremange furieusement... Tout devient matière à journalisme et à lancement—le salon de Heredia ressemble à une agence de réclames—et c'est pour ça que Louÿs et Régnier m'y ont mené—mais j'en ai eu assez d'aujourd'hui...¹⁸⁵

The description of the participants *eating each other* as well as the notion that conversations are meant to fill newspapers casts the "monde des lettres" in egotistical and superficial terms. Gide's observations portray this literary world as a market, where not only are one's works 'bought and sold' but so to are individuals.

However, although he was sometimes elusive, Gide was in fact present at many of these events. In this way, Gide himself was a character, or a player, just as much as Louÿs was. Maurice Barrès writes that Gide "se fabriquait un personnage literature, grelottant, guindé, enfantin, un peu fol, très cultivé, et d'ailleurs charmant."¹⁸⁶ More pejoratively, Henri de Régnier writes: "Il était bien prétentieux et guindé."¹⁸⁷ His pretentiousness could be due either to youthful insecurity or a genuine sense of superiority. Whatever the case, whether he liked it or not, Gide was

¹⁸⁴ See the letter Pierre Louÿs a Paul Valéry, September 22, 1890. Gide et al. 300-305.

¹⁸⁵ Gide and Valéry 46. Letter of January, 26, 1891.

¹⁸⁶ M. Martin du Gard, *Les Mémoires*, T. 1 (Paris: 1957) 336.

¹⁸⁷ Clive 42.

a part of this literary world. As he fumbled through it through the early 1890s he learned the essentials of how it operated, but perhaps more importantly, he learned where he was to fit into it as a novelist in a world of poets and journalists. The 'crise du roman' of this period has been much attributed to the stifling machine of Zola and his entourage of Naturalists who often claimed to be pseudo-scientists studying society and the formation of individuals within it from a determinist perspective. While Huysmans had broken with this philosophy early on with *A rebours*, and though Maupassant disliked this term, Naturalism was much more than just a literary trend. Many believed that it marked the end of the evolution of the novel and that the genre had nowhere else to go.¹⁸⁸ Gide did not believe this, and attempted, quite successfully in fact, to criticize the stifling literary climate at the end of the nineteenth century in his remarkable little book *Paludes*, published in 1895.

Louÿs, ever the social climber, was dismayed by Gide's indifference to 'le monde des lettres.' In a letter written early in 1891, he sends his friend a list of rules which he calls "les règles de l'autolançage." These rules are written from a farcical, ironic point of view, typical of Louÿs, but they are somewhat revelatory. They are as follows:

1. Ne jamais demander quoi que soit à personne.
2. Faire croire qu'on n'a besoin de personne.
3. Laisser entendre qu'on a le grand honneur d'être accueilli avec bienveillance par d'autres.
4. Parler peu; être toujours modéré et silencieux sur soi-même.
5. N'être jamais collant afin de se faire désirer, mais répondre à toutes les invitations pour faire connaître sa tête.

¹⁸⁸ See Raimond.

6. Enfin, sans faire jamais de requête, provoquer des obligations spontanées.¹⁸⁹

The most remarkable of these rules is the last, which requires the provocation of “obligations spontanées.” The idea of indebtedness and exchange is interesting in light of Gide’s remark that Heredia’s salon was like “une agence de réclames.” One needs to sell one’s self in this literary world and in order to do so one must exchange cultural capital based on published works, the entourage with which one is associated, and one’s reputation. Although Pierre Louÿs is remembered today for *Les Chansons de Bilitis* (1894), *Aphrodite* (1896) and *La Femme et le pantin* (1898), he was popular in his time among the literary elite mostly for the cultural capital he exercised which was largely based on those with whom he was associated as well as his own reputation as a courteous and enjoyable social companion. Once established in these circles, he was able to help others, by introducing them to one another. After all, he is credited with introducing Paul Valéry to Mallarmé, which birthed a friendship and mentorship that was to profoundly influence each poet’s work.

¹⁸⁹ Clive 54.

CHAPTER THREE

CAFÉS, CABARETS, BACHELOR PADS, AND BOULEVARDS

In the *mêlée*

Far from the romantic *Ivory Tower* described by Sainte-Beuve,¹⁹⁰ the young Parisian poets of the early 1890s sought a virile confluence between the social spaces they inhabited and their literary production. “Jean de Tinan travaillait partout,” Rachilde writes, “Sur les tables de café, entre deux bals [...] il écrivait aussi sur ses manchettes.” In the cafés and cabarets, in the salons, journal offices, and bookstores “la littérature mène à tout”¹⁹¹ and *partout*. For writers like André Gide and Jean de Tinan, these contemporary spaces are represented in their literature, which become a *mise en scène* of their own lives.¹⁹² Although Pierre Louÿs resisted this approach, choosing instead ancient Alexandria for his 1896 *Aphrodite* and Seville for *La Femme et le Pantin*, literary production and social spaces are still intimately linked for the writer. Bookstores such as La Librairie de l’Art Indépendant and journal offices and salons such as those of the *Mercure de France* served not only as places of publication but also as meeting points where young men with dreams of literary glory could meet their peers.

¹⁹⁰ In a poem titled “Pensées d’août,” Sainte-Beuve writes in 1830: “Vigny, plus secret, / Comme en sa tour d’ivoire, avant midi, rentrait”; Charles Augustin Sainte Beuve, *Les Consolations* (Paris : U. Canel, 1830). He also makes reference to Vigny’s “tour d’ivoire” in the speech he gives on the occasion of Vigny’s acceptance into the Académie française in 1845.

¹⁹¹ Rachilde “Le beau ténébreux,” *Portraits d’hommes* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1930) 127.

¹⁹² See, for example, *Penses-tu réussir!* (1897) by Jean de Tinan, and *Paludes* (1895) by André Gide.

Literary reviews, such as Louÿs' 1891 *La Conque*, function on both the horizontal and vertical axes of our theoretical model. Within the Parisian literary habitus of the early 1890s, literary masters such as Mallarmé and Heredia, with their salons and banquets, served to legitimize the work and person of young poets as well as induct, or initiate them into their social and professional domains. Although the literary revue is a key determinant in the vertical movement of a young *arriviste*, the revues also function on the horizontal plane as they define and shape the homosocial sphere of peers based on creative collaboration. It is on this horizontal axis that lay the journal offices, publication houses, the *garçonnières*, or the boys' bachelor pads, and the cafés of the Latin Quarter. The physical spaces, or rooms, which bring these young men together serve as essential meeting points where life and literature merge. Thanks to a large body of personal letters as well as the published literature of Pierre Louÿs' two closest friends through the 1890s, Jean de Tinan and André Lebey, these spaces are recreated in vivid detail where the décor takes on just as much personality as the literary alter-egos of our young poets.

While publishing houses and journal offices may be categorized as more formal spaces, if only because they involve the economic and material aspect of literary production, the role of the cafés in the Latin Quarter, the cabarets in Montmartre, and the small studios or apartments of Pierre Louÿs and Jean de Tinan, define a more *ludique*, or playful space. The following chapter will be divided into two parts in order to articulate these differences. Part one will focus on publication and the ways in which bookstores and literary revues encourage and inspire collaboration while at the same time physically bringing together poets and writers

of divergent literary interests. La Librairie de l'Art Indépendant and Le Mercure de France serve both as publishing houses and meeting places while the literary revue *Le Centaure*, whose collaborators include André Gide, Pierre Louÿs, Paul Valéry, Jean de Tinan, and Henri Albert, the French translator of Frederic Nietzsche, is born in the shadow of the Sorbonne at the café d'Harcourt in the Latin Quarter. Part two will explore the importance of the Latin Quarter itself as represented in the literature and private letters of our young writers where the narrative passes from cafés and restaurants to carriages and studio apartments overlooking the Luxembourg gardens. From the Left Bank to Montmartre, from cabarets to Louÿs' weekly salon where Claude Debussy plays a private concert for friends and where Marcel Proust passes through for an *apéritif*, literary production and inspiration are born in laughter and camaraderie, and the eternal quest for the ideal *femme*. Not surprising though, it is fame which causes Louÿs to rupture with his collaborators at Le Mercure de France, and it is disputes of esthetics and morality, as well as essential character differences, that cause him to break once and for all with his oldest friend, André Gide, while collaborating on *Le Centaure*.

Part One

La Librairie de l'Art Indépendant

Looking in the window of the Librairie de l'Art Indépendant at 11 rue de La Chaussée-D'Antin, a stone's throw from the Palais Garnier, nineteen year old Jean de

Tinan dreams of becoming a member of what he calls “la jeune Ecole.”¹⁹³ In 1893, Pierre Louÿs, André Gide, Henri de Régnier, Claude Debussy, and Paul Claudel are breathing new life into the literary world as the Second Generation Symbolists. Most of them are, of course, regulars of Mallarmé and Heredia’s weekly salons, among others, and thanks to *La Conque* have become recognized names in the avant-garde. But as an outsider, Tinan is only familiar with the books he has come across at Edmond Bailly’s Librairie such as Henri de Régnier’s *Poèmes anciens et romanesques*,¹⁹⁴ André Gide’s *Le Traité du Narcisse*,¹⁹⁵ *Le Voyage d’Urien*,¹⁹⁶ and *Les Cahiers d’André Walter*,¹⁹⁷ and Pierre Louÿs’ *Astarté*,¹⁹⁸ *Chrysis*,¹⁹⁹ and *Léda, ou la Louange des bienheureuses ténèbres*.²⁰⁰ The young man notes in his private journal, “Gide, Louÿs, Régnier, Herold, Debussy, etc.—cette école je ne suis guère,—et c’est de ceux-là que je voulais faire la connaissance chez lui.”²⁰¹ Tinan recognizes that there is a locality to the literature he admires; not only can books be found at 11 rue de La Chaussée-D’Antin, but also the poets and novelists who write them. He endeavors, then, to publish his first book at L’Art Indépendant, *Un document sur l’impuissance d’aimer*.²⁰²

¹⁹³ Jean de Tinan, *Cahiers 1893-1894*, cited in Jean-Paul Goujon, *Jean de Tinan*, (Paris: Plon, 1991) 78-79.

¹⁹⁴ Henri de Régnier, *Poèmes anciens et romanesques* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1890)

¹⁹⁵ André Gide, *Le Traité du Narcisse* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1891)

¹⁹⁶ André Gide, *Le Voyage d’Urien* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1893)

¹⁹⁷ André Gide, *Les Cahiers d’André Walter* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1891)

¹⁹⁸ Pierre Louÿs, *Astarté* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1891)

¹⁹⁹ Pierre Louÿs, *Chrysis, ou la cérémonie matinale* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1893)

²⁰⁰ Pierre Louÿs, *Léda, ou la Louange des bienheureuses ténèbres* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1893)

²⁰¹ Jean de Tinan, *Cahiers 1893-1894*, cited in Jean-Paul Goujon, *Jean de Tinan*, (Paris: Plon, 1991) 79.

²⁰² Jean de Tinan, *Un Document sur l’impuissance d’aimer* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1894)

The importance of La Librairie de l'Art Indépendant for the generation coming of age in the early 1890s cannot be overlooked. While the name Alphonse Lemerre is quickly associated with the Parnassians of the 1870s, and Léon Vanier with the Décadents and Symbolists of the 1880s, including Verlaine and Laforgue, the name Edmond Bailly has only recently been recognized by scholars as being inextricably linked to the generation of 1890.²⁰³ Beyond those writers already mentioned, Stéphane Mallarmé and Oscar Wilde can be added to the pantheon of those published by l'Art Indépendant.²⁰⁴ In 1890, Bailly began publishing the important revue *Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, which was founded by Francis Vielé-Griffin, Henri de Régnier, Paul Adam, and Bernard Lazare. Along with Paul Claudel, who published *Tête d'or* anonymously in 1890, and Pierre Quillard, Henri de Régnier is one of the first to publish with Bailly. It is most likely the latter poet who introduced the publishing house to Louÿs and Gide.

Although Edmond Bailly is a rather enigmatic figure, the basic facts of his life remain available.²⁰⁵ Born in 1850, Henri-Edmond Limet later changed his name to Edmond Bailly, possibly inspired by his mother's maiden name, Bally. Although there is no proof that he fired the last shot of the Commune at Père-Lachaise, as he so often claimed, like Paul Verlaine he maintained the reputation of a Communard

²⁰³ Jean-Paul Goujon treats the publishing house in *Jean de Tinan* and *Pierre Louÿs*, while a master's thesis was written on the subject by Frédéric Maget at the Université de Saint Quentin en Yvelines, 2006.

²⁰⁴ Mallarmé published *Villiers de L'Isle-Adam* in 1890 while Oscar Wilde published *Salomé* in 1893.

²⁰⁵ This biographical sketch comes from: Frédéric Maget, *Edmond Bailly et la Librairie de l'Art indépendant (1889-1917)*. Mémoire de Master 2, Centre d'histoire culturelle des sociétés contemporaines, Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 2006.

throughout his life.²⁰⁶ As a writer and publisher, Bailly's principal interests were music and esoteric texts. Although the occult was reaching the mainstream through the late nineteenth century, this type of production assured that the publishing house would never reach a large audience. Bailly, however, like his friend Mallarmé, was very much a man of the decadent strain in that he abhorred the tendencies of mass literary production which defined publishers like Larousse and Hachette. In fact, no more than three hundred copies of any given text were published, and usually the numbers were much smaller, and books were printed on varying types of paper at varying costs and reserved only for true bibliophiles. Furthermore, and to add to the fetishism of those objects, Bailly even refused the sale of a book if he did not like the look of a customer.²⁰⁷

The appeal of such a character as Bailly, who, according to André Fontainas, "portait la discrétion,"²⁰⁸ should be evident. The high quality of production and the editor's discerning taste assured that only collaborators of talent would be received. Beyond the books published by Bailly, the editor also sold works produced by other small publishing houses. The poetry and prose of Lautréamont, Huysmans, Mallarmé and Laforgue assured "un mélange fatal de livres symbolistes et de documents théosophique," as Paul Valéry notes.²⁰⁹ Henri Régner describes the store as being "une étroite boutique dont la devanture offrait au passant un étalage de livres, accompagnés de tableaux et de gravures d'un symbolisme qui ne laissait

²⁰⁶ Concerning the Commune, refer to Jacques Rougerie, *Paris Libre, 1871* (Editions du Seuil: Paris, 1971.)

²⁰⁷ Lebey, *Souvenirs de Jean de Tinan* 7.

²⁰⁸ André Fontainas, *Souvenirs du symbolisme* (Paris: Edition de la nouvelle revue critique, 1927).

²⁰⁹ Paul Valéry, Preface to André Lebey, *Poèmes choisis*. (Mercure de Flandre, 1926) 20.

aucun doute sur les tendances de la maison.”²¹⁰ Along with poetry, literature, and theosophical texts, Bailly also published engravings both as frontispieces and as collections on their own by artists such as Félicien Rops, who designed the company’s insignia which may be interpreted as a type of winged sphinx with the head and breasts of a woman and the tail of a serpent. To complete the scene described by Régnier, André Lebey notes, “Un chat noir, tout à tour bondissant et immobile, familier et hiératique, complétait cet ensemble d’alchimie.”²¹¹ Like others, Lebey describes the boutique in mystical terms, as if Bailly and his wife were sorcerers or members of an occult secret society.

One of the key aspects of Bailly’s bookstore is that it served as a meeting point of young writers where many, in fact, met for the first time. It is here, in 1894, that Louÿs meets two friends that would become constant companions through the 1890s: Jean de Tinan and André Lebey. Although Tinan would die in 1898, Lebey remained Louÿs’ loyal friend for the following three decades up until Louÿs’ death in 1925. Publishing his first poetic work with Bailly, *Les Chants de la Nuits*²¹² and then an autobiographical novel *Les Premières lutttes*²¹³ with another publisher, Lebey went on to specialize in historical research, writing on Napoleon III and the Freemasons and becoming for a short time a socialist deputy at the end of World War I. Like Louÿs and Tinan, Lebey is a dandy who was called later in life “le citoyen

²¹⁰ Henri de Régnier. *Revue Musicale* May 1, 1926: 89.

²¹¹ Lebey, *Souvenirs de Jean de Tinan* 6-7.

²¹² André Lebey, *Les Chants de la Nuits* (Paris: Librairie de l’Art indépendant, 1893).

²¹³ André Lebey, *Les Premières lutttes* (Paris : E. Fasquelle, 1897).

Brummel” by Jean Jaurés.²¹⁴ Born in 1877, Lebey is a mere teenager when he meets Louÿs for the first time in 1894, an event he describes as follows: “Un jour j’y rencontré un jeune homme aux cheveux magnifiques qui fumait un bon cigare, serré dans une longue redingote, son chapeau haute de forme sur ses genoux.” The cigar, frock coat, and hat are key determinants of Louÿs’ social milieu and esthetic attitude which clearly catches Lebey’s eye. Louÿs gives the appearance, according to another observer, of someone who “n’aimait pas trop la bohème.”²¹⁵ Perhaps what attracts Lebey most, however, is that the young writer “semblait heureux en même temps que pressé de vivre.”²¹⁶

Like Lebey, Jean de Tinan also frequents the bookstore with plans to publish as well as meet other writers. “A quelques jours de là,” Lebey writes, “J’en vis un autre, plus jeune, tout en noir, avec une lavallière de même couleur tournée deux fois autour d’un col assez haut [...] il portait un feutre mou fendu à large bords et, sous le macfarlane, la main qui en sortait, pâle, longue, ornée d’une bague d’argent à l’améthyste claire, s’appuyait sur une canne d’ébène.” Lebey notes that the two were presented by Bailly and that after accompanying Tinan to rue Cambon, where Tinan was living with his parents, Lebey ceased to feel alone, realizing that he found someone with whom he could confide his literary dreams. Sadly, the time Tinan had with Lebey and Louÿs was short as he died four years later in 1898, at age twenty-four, of a respiratory infection. However, Tinan spent his youth in a blaze of glory leaving behind a startlingly large body of mostly autobiographical work which

²¹⁴ Goujon, *Jean de Tinan* 90.

²¹⁵ Léon-Paul Fargue, “Hommage à Vallette,” *Mercure de France* December 1, 1935.

²¹⁶ Lebey, *Souvenirs de Jean de Tinan* 8.

intimately features his divers lovers as well as his friends Louÿs and Lebey. His most important works include *Penses-tu réussir ?* (1897),²¹⁷ *Aimienne* (posthumous 1899),²¹⁸ *Maîtresse d'esthètes* (1897)²¹⁹ which he produced as a ghostwriter for Willy, as well as an extraordinary chronicle for the *Mercure de France* called *Cirques, cabaret et café-concerts*, later published as *Noctambulismes* by Francis Carco in 1921.²²⁰ Perpetually heart broken, Tinan embodies the modern romantic, who in the model of Barrès' *Homme libre* and Gide's *André Walter*, seeks to analyze his emotions and sketch what he considers to be a realist portrayal of his own thinly disguised adventures. He is also of an ironic character, a farceur, and like Louÿs, has a mania for all things erotic, which includes regularly taking prostitutes in the Latin Quarter and describing, sometimes in vulgar detail, his sexual escapades. Interestingly, it is Bailly who introduces Lebey and Tinan to Mallarmé one Tuesday evening, and it is Louÿs who introduces them to Heredia and his beautiful daughters. These social relations and the venues in which they are played out cannot be separated from literary production not only because these close friends represent one another fictitiously in their literature, but because it is within these spaces that these young men debate literature and encourage one another to write and express themselves.

To this refined rabble of poets another friend can be added, the avant-garde musician Claude Debussy. Although it is at Mallarmé's salon where Louÿs meets

²¹⁷ Jean de Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir ? ou les Diverses amours de mon ami Raoul de Vallonges* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France", 1897).

²¹⁸ Jean de Tinan, *Aimienne, ou le Détournement de mineure* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France", 1899).

²¹⁹ Jean de Tinan, *Maîtresse d'esthètes* (Paris: R. Simonis Empis, 1897).

²²⁰ Jean de Tinan, *Noctambulisme*, Préface de Francis Carco (Paris: R. Davis, 1921).

Debussy in 1892, it is at Bailly's bookstore that the two speak for the first time and become more intimate. Bailly had published Debussy's *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire*²²¹ in 1890 which the composer had put to music. "Sortant de chez Bailly," Louÿs writes, "Je l'interroge sur Wagner."²²² It is their mutual love for Wagner that brings them together, and it is music which runs through their relationship from 1892 to 1914, from Debussy's virtual obscurity to his European fame. The details and dynamic of their friendship will become evident when it comes to our discussion of Louÿs' salon and the life of these young men in the Latin Quarter, but for the moment, it suffices to say that it is at Bailly's bookstore where they meet for the first time and bond over literature, music, and the pleasure of producing their own work in luxury editions.

It is remarkable to note how well associated Pierre Louÿs is with the Parisian avant-garde by 1894. Having a keen eye for talent and the drive required to see it realized, he had quickly latched on to an unknown Paul Valéry in 1891 and a little-remarked Claude Debussy in 1892. By 1894 he is already associated with Oscar Wilde, an intrigue which will be discussed in the following chapter, as well as with Marcel Proust, who visits his apartment at rue Grétry on more than one occasion. He is also close friends with Henri Albert whose translations of Frederic Nietzsche in the *Mercure de France*²²³ will have a profound effect on French intellectual thought throughout the twentieth century. These friends form a network that is quite

²²¹ Claude Debussy, *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1890).

²²² Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 198.

²²³ For an excellent discussion of the publication history and influence of Friedrich Nietzsche in France, see Jacques Le Rider, *Nietzsche en France : de la fin du XIXe siècle au temps présent* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1999)

literally the pulse of the generation. Tinan, for example, becomes good friends with Toulouse-Lautrec who designs a lithograph for the cover of his 1898 *L'Exemple de Ninon de Lenclos amoureuse*.²²⁴ Further these young men occasionally find themselves in the presences of Colette, whose husband Willy is intimately linked to the troupe and is also a friend of Rachilde and Alfred Vallette. These rather intimate relations should not pale in comparison to the celebrities Louÿs regularly encounters at Mallarmé and Heredia's weekly salons, or the rising talent with which he is associated at the *Mercure de France* and the *Revue Blanche* where he publishes *Chrysis*²²⁵ in 1893. Not surprisingly, Tinan and Lebey are essentially social creatures who accompany and encourage Louÿs in both his literary and amorous debaucheries.

When it comes to the material production of these young men's first editions, with their carefully chosen paper, engravings, and type print, it is essential to cast their production in the decadent esthetic which was well established in the 1880s, if not well before.²²⁶ This esthetic is essentially *recherché*, anti-bourgeois, anti-mass production. As early as 1890 at age nineteen, Louÿs had voiced these anti-bourgeois feelings in his journal, such as this entry on April 15, 1892: "Très probablement je changerai de pseudonyme à chaque ouvrage pour dérouter encore ce vulgaire profane [...] je veux rester célèbre au milieu d'un petit groupe d'amis, je veux être

²²⁴ Jean de Tinan, *L'Exemple de Ninon de Lenclos amoureuse, roman* (Paris: Édition de "Mercure de France", 1898).

²²⁵ Pierre Louÿs, "Chrysis" in *La Revue Blanche* (July-August 1893)

²²⁶ See the chapter "Byzance" in Mario Praz, *La Chair, la mort et le diable dans la littérature du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1977). Original Italian title: *La Carne, la morte e il diavolo nella lettera romantica* (Firenze: G. S. Sansoni editore, 1966).

aimé de vingt personne et encore est-ce beaucoup."²²⁷ In *La Conque* and in the press, Louÿs did use several different pseudonyms, but not in his work published at *L'Art Indépendant*. Of the seven texts he publishes with Bailly, five of them are accomplished with around one hundred and twenty copies, with portions of those on high quality paper and often numbered. Five hundred copies, however, of Louÿs' more popular works, *Les Poésies de Méléagre*²²⁸ and *Les Chansons de Bilitis*,²²⁹ are printed to reach a larger audience.

Louÿs and his friend Gide appear to have rivaled over the quality of the production of their work. For his part, Gide also publishes seven books with Bailly, including a second edition of *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* which was also published through Perrin. In a letter to Louÿs on November 5, 1894, Gide writes:

Je reçois ton *Ariane*. C'est une jolie plaquette (je ne parle que de l'apparence), une des plus jolies que Bailly ait données. Ce que j'admire surtout c'est votre toupet à Hérold et à toi, de prendre le papier que m'étais réservé pour la couverture de *Valentin Knox* et que Bailly promettait de ne montrer à personne. J'aurais souhaité pour *Ariane* une couverture couleur de chauve-souris et légère : je me ferai faire à mon goût pour l'exemplaire sur papier rare que j'espère que tu me réserves.²³⁰

Essentially, Gide is accusing Louÿs of stealing from him the paper that was promised by Bailly, an accusation which speaks volumes of their quarrelsome relationship. Only twenty copies of Louÿs' plaquette *Ariane* were printed, a production which stays in line with the poet's esthetic and ideology, while Gide in fact never completed *Valentin Knox*.

²²⁷ Cited in Clive 26.

²²⁸ Pierre Louÿs, *Les Poésies de Méléagre* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1893).

²²⁹ Pierre Louÿs, *Les Chansons de Bilitis, traduites du grec pour la première fois par P. L.* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1895).

²³⁰ Gide et al. 745.

Apart from the quality of the prints, another defining characteristic of Louÿs' approach is to be found in the printed dedication that appears in nearly every work. Of course, most were signed by the authors when presented to friends, but the dedication stands apart as a mark of friendship, gratitude, and fidelity as it is on display for all to see and will be included in future republications. This tendency extends beyond 1894 when the group began publishing with the *Mercure de France*, but its roots are in these first editions. For example, Louÿs dedicates *Chrysis, ou la cérémonie matinale*²³¹ to André Gide in 1893, *Ariane*²³² to Henri de Régnier the following year, and *La femme et le pantin*²³³ to André Lebey in 1898. Although Louÿs is not surprised to see that Gide had dedicated *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* to Madeleine with whom Gide was in love, he was disheartened to find his friend had dedicated *Le Traité de Narcisse*²³⁴ in 1891 to Paul Valéry, even though Louÿs had supported Gide through the production of this work and had in fact drawn the frontispiece. However, it is not until 1894 when Gide dedicates *Paludes*²³⁵ to Eugène Rouart that Louÿ is truly wounded and takes this slight as a slap to the face. "Tu me feras le plaisir," Louÿs writes, "de considérer désormais nos relations comme terminées. / Fixe-moi dans la journée de samedi, chez Herold que je vais prévenir, une heure où tu me rendras mes lettres et tu recevras les tiennes avec les manuscrits d'André Walter et du Narcisse."²³⁶

²³¹ Pierre Louÿs, *Chrysis, ou la cérémonie matinale* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1893).

²³² Pierre Louÿs, *Ariane ou le chemin de la paix éternelle* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1894).

²³³ Pierre Louÿs, *La femme et le pantin* (Paris: A. Borel, 1899).

²³⁴ André Gide, *Le Traité de Narcisse* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1893).

²³⁵ Gide, *Paludes*

²³⁶ Gide et al. 776.

Louÿs makes a similar about face with Oscar Wilde who in 1893 dedicates *Salomé* to him as the two had become friends and Louÿs had helped him with the manuscript which was published by l'Art Indépendant. It is at this time that Wilde's relationship with Alfred Douglas is becoming a subject of gossip, and Louÿs is trying to distance himself from the playwright. After seeing the dedication, Louÿs sends a glib note of thanks which greatly hurts Wilde who responds: "Mon cher Pierre, est-ce que le message ci-joint est vraiment tout ce que vous avez à me dire pour me remercier de vous avoir choisi entre tous mes amis pour la dédicace de Salomé? Je ne puis vous dire combien je suis blessé [...] C'est une nouveauté pour moi d'apprendre que l'amitié est plus fragile que l'amour."²³⁷ There are, of course, many more dedications between these writers—Tinan dedicates *Penses-tu réussir !* to Louÿs, for example—but Gide's snub of Louÿs and Louÿs' snub of Wilde show the significance of such gestures which can either bring friends and writers closer together, or become a symptom or cause of a break.

It could easily be said that the heyday of Bailly's *Art Indépendant* was between 1892 and 1895 when "la jeune école" was taking its first steps onto the literary scene. The insignia of the serpentine sphinx by Félicien Rops is prominently placed on these early works but disappears with the departure of these young men. Bailly publishes thirteen volumes in 1892, eighteen in 1893, and twenty-four in 1894, but soon after, that number drops dramatically as the group begins collaborating with Alfred Vallette's revue *Le Mercure de France*, handing over the majority of their work to the revue's new publishing house which is established in

²³⁷ Cited in Jean-Paul Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 212-213.

1894. It is at this time that Bailly begins concentrating more on esoteric and theosophical texts.²³⁸ It is also possible that the editor began to tire of the demands made by his writers who were extremely exacting and, perhaps hypocritically, began demanding that the editor publicize their works more in the press. Jean de Tinan notes in his private journal dated March 4, 1894, “J’ai compris un peu la sortie de Bailly dans l’après midi—Il y eut un incident entre lui et Louÿs—je ne sais pas quoi juste, mais Louÿs, l’avis de Régnier étant pris, veut retirer ce qu’il a chez lui. Bailly d’ailleurs voudrait ou ne plus éditer que des livres d’occultisme, ou s’arrêter tout à fait. Ils lui reprochent de ne pas se donner assez de mal pour vendre leurs livres [...]”²³⁹ Bailly’s goal had never been to reach a large public, and finances were clearly not his strong suit, but there seems to be no proof that the editor ever tried to mislead these young poets. Although the *Mercure* offers these writers a larger reading public, it does not allow them to make the same type of demands on the quality of the editions. Even if it is only fleeting, four years in fact, Bailly’s collaboration with “la jeune école” defined and shaped their material literary production at the same time that the bookstore itself at 11 rue de la Chaussée D’Antin brought the emerging generation together.

²³⁸ These figures and observations come from Frédéric Maget, *Edmond Bailly et la Librairie de l’Art indépendant (1889-1917)*. Mémoire de Master 2, Centre d’histoire culturelle des sociétés contemporaines, Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 2006.

²³⁹ Cited in Maget 21.

Le Mercure de France

Le Mercure de France, along with *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (1908) and *La Revue Blanche* (1889), is one of the most important literary journals and publishing houses of the turn of the century. Although much of its success is due to the talent which it attracted, the vision of its creator Alfred Vallette, along with the support of his wife, the infamous Rachilde, turn the revue offices into a meeting place of historical and literary significance. It is here that Alfred Jarry will publish *Ubu Roi* in 1895, where nearly the entirety of Frederic Nietzsche's philosophy will be translated by Henri Albert, and where Pierre Louÿs and Jean de Tinan will publish some of their most important work. It is also here that Gide will publish *L'Immoraliste*²⁴⁰ and *Les Nourritures Terrestres*²⁴¹ and where the success of Louÿs 1896 *Aphrodite* will launch the revue financially. Beyond its importance as a vehicle of publication, *Le Mercure* is significant because of the social life it offered its collaborators and its spirit of inclusive debate rather than ideological dogma.

As Michel Décaudin explains,²⁴² the roots of the *Mercure de France* are found in another literary revue, *La Pléiade*, which had two short runs, first from March to November 1886, then from April to October 1889. Not only are many of the collaborators the same, from Henri de Régnier to Ernest Reynaud, but the two revues share similar ideological goals: not to be a combative, partisan journal, and to be as inclusive of various esthetics and of philosophically divergent writers as

²⁴⁰ André Gide, *L'Immoraliste* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France", 1902)

²⁴¹ André Gide, *Les Nourritures Terrestres* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France," 1902).

²⁴² Michel Décaudin, "Le « Mercure de France » : Filiations et Orientations," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* 92.1 (Jan.-Feb. 1992): 7-16.

possible. 1886 marks a major moment in the history of the Symbolist/Decadent period with the publication of Jean Moréas' "Un manifeste littéraire," or *Symbolist Manifesto*, in the mainstream newspaper *Le Figaro*, as well as the apparition of the partisan and combative journals *Le Scapin* (Dec. 1885),²⁴³ *Le Décadent*, *La Vogue*, *Le Symboliste*, and *La Décadence*.²⁴⁴ With these publication *La Guerre des Petites Revues* is launched. *Le Mercure*, like its predecessor *La Pléiade*, which also had a recognizable violet cover chosen by Vallette's wife Rachilde, seeks to rise above the partisan bickering. As Vallette states in the first volume of *Le Mercure*, the goal is not to make money, nor to form a literary school, but to "publier des oeuvres purement artistiques et des conceptions assez hétérodoxes."²⁴⁵ The literary climate is not ripe for a new school and it would be unwise, according to Vallette, to choose sides in an unwinnable battle. This decision proves to be the wise one, as the *Mercure* was able to keep its doors open from 1890 to 1965, while no other competitor lasted half that long.

Just as 1886 marks a historical moment in the literary tradition, so too do the pivotal years, 1889 and 1890. Beside *Le Mercure*, an assortment of literary revues appear in Paris such as *L'Hermitage*, which contains a manifesto of sorts in its first volume, *La Revue Blanche*, whose cover was white because it is "la somme de toutes les couleurs," and the *Entretiens politiques et littéraires* which is a "revue de combat," according to one well known collaborator.²⁴⁶ Flipping through the table of

²⁴³ Alfred Vallette, founder of *Le Mercure de France*, served as the rédacteur en chef of *Le Scapin*.

²⁴⁴ Décaudin "Le « Mercure de France » : Filiations et Orientations" 7.

²⁴⁵ Alfred Vallette, "Le Mercure" *Mercure de France* 1.1 Jan 1890.

²⁴⁶ Décaudin "Le « Mercure de France » : Filiations et Orientations" 9.

contents of these various revues, one observes that its collaborators overlap, as writers and poets as diverse as Paul Valéry, Jules Renard, Henri de Régnier, Jean de Tinan, and Laurent Tailhade offer poetry and write for one and the other revue at any given time. This spirit of “hétérodoxi” between the journals, encouraged by *Le Mercure* in particular, did not end, of course, the esthetic and partisan acrimony between competing schools. After all, Saint-Pol-Roux felt a need to call for a truce in the October 1891 edition of the *Le Mercure* with his article “La Gent irritable—La Trêve.”²⁴⁷ However, *Le Mercure* does articulate the current literary climate and puts writers and poets with opposing esthetics in dialogue, both in person and in the printed text.

For Pierre Louÿs, Jean de Tinan, Henri Albert, and André Lebey the horizontal, dialogic-style interactions within the literary habitus that *Le Mercure* supports are embodied most in the weekly salons held in the journal offices on rue de l’Echaudé in Saint-Germain des Prés late every Tuesday afternoon. The weekly salon began several years before the foundation of the revue by Vallette’s wife Rachilde. This first salon is held at 5 rue des Ecoles, where Rachilde, “la Reine des décadents,”²⁴⁸ received Jean Lorrain, Maurice Barrès, Laurent Tailhade, and Jean Moréas, among other notables, between five and seven in the evening. Although she held no official position at the revue, her role was preponderant in the revue’s success not only because of the reputation she brought as a novelist in her own

²⁴⁷ Saint-Pol-Roux “La Gent irritable—La Trêve.” *Mercure de France* 22, Oct. 1891: 139.

²⁴⁸ Ernest Gaubert, “Rachilde,” *Mercure de France* 211, April 1, 1906: 339.

right, or as a “pornographe distinguée,”²⁴⁹ as she was named by Barbey D’Aureville, but because of the social role she played in bringing together writers and poets of divergent perspectives to discuss literature and the arts in an amicable, respectful way.

In the professional literary world of the 1890s, Rachilde and Vallette form a powerful couple, appealing to both the intellect and the imagination of their collaborators and friends.²⁵⁰ While Vallette could focus on the nuts and bolts of running the revue, and then the publishing house which was established in 1894, Rachilde could animate lively discussions and encourage young writers, such as Tinan and Louÿs, in their fantastic literary and social endeavors. According to Paul Valéry, in the revue offices, Vallette “introduisait le calme [...] la simplicité et la supériorité implicite.” He was a man “qui organise, qui administre ; qui fait de l’ordre avec du désordre.” In short, Vallette was a sharp thinking, rational businessman who “a compris fort tôt que tout ce qui vit de rapports avec le public exige une politique, une stratégie, et une économie soigneusement suivies.”²⁵¹ Rachilde, on the other hand, who often dressed in men’s clothing, was attracted to questions of sexual identity and the rather ambiguous aspects of human psychology

²⁴⁹ Dauphiné, Claude. “Rachilde et le “Mercure,” *Revue d’Histoire Littéraire de la France* 92.1 jan.-fév. 1992: 19.

²⁵⁰ For an excellent discussion of Vallette, Rachilde, and the beginnings of *Le Mercure de France* see: Edith Silve, “Rachilde et Alfred Vallette et la fondation du Mercure de France,” *La Revue des revues*. 2, November 1986: 13-16. et 3, printemps, 1987: 12-17.

²⁵¹ Paul Valéry, “Souvenir d’Alfred Vallette” in “Hommage à Alfred Vallette,” *Mercure de France* December 1, 1935: 343-344.

which she discusses in such books *Monsieur Vénus* (1884),²⁵² *La Marquise de Sade* (1887)²⁵³ and *Les Hors nature* (1897).²⁵⁴

In her 1889 work, *Le Mordu, mœurs littéraires*,²⁵⁵ Rachilde paints a double of herself in the person of Maurice de Saulérian who in his weekly salon “défilaient des jeunes, [...] tous les doubleurs d’étapes de l’époque, les singuliers, les énervés, les délicats, les monomanes, les maladifs.” Although this description was written shortly before the arrival of Louÿs and Tinan and paints a rather *decadent* image more common in the 1880s, it shows to what extent Rachilde encourages “la perpétuelle application de l’antithèse” in her social sphere,²⁵⁶ a trait that very much attracts the two young men who profess a mania for the erotic. Rachilde would not have judged their otherwise ‘immoral behavior’ which includes regularly taking prostitutes and, in Louÿs case, photographing them nude, sometimes in the presence of Tinan and Lebey.

Like many revues of the period, the *Mercure* is meant to be a mouthpiece of the young. Rachilde, in fact, referred to it as the “Revue des deux Mondes des jeunes,”²⁵⁷ a title that underscores the revue’s seriousness. In the same work, written while she was nearing the end of her life, Rachilde describes the offices of the *Mercure*. She writes:

Au rez-de-chaussée, des employés silencieux qui font des paquets de livres à couverture mauve... ou jaune... L’escalier est assez étroit, rien d’un escalier dit d’honneur, mais c’est là pourtant que sont montés vers la gloire tant de

²⁵² Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus* (Bruxelles: A. Brancart, 1884).

²⁵³ Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade* (Paris: E. Monnier, 1887).

²⁵⁴ Rachilde, *Les Hors nature, mœurs contemporaines* (Paris : Mercure de France, 1897).

²⁵⁵ Rachilde, *Le Mordu, mœurs littéraires* (Paris: F. Brossier, 1889).

²⁵⁶ Rachilde, *Le Mordu, mœurs littéraires* 224.

²⁵⁷ Rachilde, *Duvet-d’Ange. Confession d’un jeune homme de lettres* (Paris: Messein, 1943) 117.

grands poètes, tous les grand noms de l'époque dite symboliste et je défile, pieusement, comme un chapelet dans une église, ces noms qui sont maintenant célèbres, ou dans l'empire des morts ou dans la république des lettres.

Ah ! priez pour moi, Henri de Régnier, Albert Samain, Paul Valéry, André Gide, Pierre Louÿs, Remy de Gourmont, Jean de Tinan, Viellé Griffin, Stuart Merrill, Verhaeren, Maurice Maeterlink, vous tous morts ou vivants, tous les saints du calendrier des Muses [...] ²⁵⁸

Rachilde's salon, the revue, and the publishing house form a sort a family enterprise.

As the historian Edith Silve writes, "La structure des lieux où vécurent les époux parle pour eux : on passait, rue de l'Echaudé, de l'appartement à la salle de rédaction ; tandis que le salon de l'appartement s'ouvrait, tous les mardis, aux jeunes talents."²⁵⁹ The physical space offers fluidity between literary production and social animation. Although the writers do not form a school in the strictest sense of the word, they are brought together in one room, in one publication, that comes to define their generation.

From the literary salons to the office of the *Mercure*, spaces that might at first seem incidental, in fact, play decisive roles in the literary habitus. For example, Paul Valéry, the lifelong friend of Pierre Louÿs, and the novelist and journalist Paul Léautaud, are brought together by their work at the *Mercure*. This common space, and the determinants which compose it, along with mutual admiration for poetic masters such as Mallarmé, structure the relationships of these two young men. Note how in this passage from Léautaud's journal of September 10, 1898, the way determinants come to play a decisive role. Both young men are twenty-six in 1898 while Mallarmé is fifty-six at the time of his death. Léautaud writes:

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 118-119.

²⁵⁹ Silve 14.

C'est Mallarmé, je crois bien, qui décida de mes relations avec Valéry. Je l'avais jusqu'alors vu aux mardis du *Mercure* sans guère lui parler. Un mardi que j'allais au *Mercure*, j'entrai au bureau de tabac de la rue de Seine, entre la rue Saint-Sulpice et la rue Lobineau. Valéry en sortait. Il m'attendit et nous fîmes le chemin ensemble. Je ne sais plus ce qui l'amena à prononcer le nom de Baudelaire. Je lui répondis qu'il y avait un poète que je mettais bien au-dessus : Mallarmé. Depuis que je ne sais quelle sympathie me lie avec lui, nous en avons souvent parlé ensemble. Il devait même, un soir de cet hiver, m'emmener avec lui rue de Rome. Je n'aurai pas ce plaisir. J'avais projeté d'écrire sur Mallarmé un « Hommage au Poète ». Ce travail est encore à faire.²⁶⁰

It is perhaps Mallarmé who solidifies their relationship, but it is their collaboration at the *Mercure* which brings them together. Additionally, the name Baudelaire is added to the conversation, the same way, perhaps, it had when Valéry met Louÿs for the first time in 1891. Léautaud's contact with Valéry also permits the young man to enter Mallarmé's sacred apartment on rue de Rome, although the master had unfortunately passed away by that time.

Le Centaure

The short lived literary revue *Le Centaure*, which in fact only published two volumes in 1896, provides an extraordinary example of the ways in which friendship, literary production, and social space intersect in a lively yet concrete fashion. This "revue d'amis,"²⁶¹ as Paul Léautaud, a long time collaborator of *Le Mercure*, called it, was not born in an office space or a salon, but on the terrace of the café d'Harcourt on Boulevard Saint-Michel, ou Boul' Mich' as Tinan and Louÿs affectionately refer to it. Although Louÿs had gained experience with *La Conque*,

²⁶⁰Paul Léautaud, *Journal Littéraire*, Vol. 1 and 2 (Paris: Mercure de France, 1954) 21.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

serving as judge, jury, and executioner of the short run luxury revue in 1891, his social and professional relations in 1896 gave him more confidence in a collaborative project. In fact, the idea for the revue was likely born in a conversation between himself, Jean de Tinan and Henri Albert (1868-1921).²⁶² Albert's translation of *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra*²⁶³ had a great impact on Jean de Tinan, and some scholars have argued that the majority of the work which appeared in the two volumes of the *Centaure*, including Paul Valéry's *Monsieur Teste*,²⁶⁴ exhibits this influence and the drive of the collaborators to realize Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.²⁶⁵ This argument is perhaps over-exaggerated, but it does show to what extent philosophy and artistic esthetics were shared freely between friends and collaborators.

In the bustling café where Tinan, Louÿs, Lebey, Debussy, Albert, and Paul Valéry often meet for lunch, and where they sometimes close their evenings singing loudly and drunkenly with 'des femmes faciles,' the group meets to discuss their plans for the revue. Over a period of just a few weeks, from January to February 1896, plans are drawn up, letters exchanged discussing proposals and ideas such as dedications to venerated masters, all which lead to the moment when the tenets of the revue are agreed upon. "Cette revue," Henri Albert writes in a notice which accompanies the subscription applications, "Serait plutôt le prétexte d'une

²⁶² Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 327-328. See Le Rider, *Nietzsche en France*.

²⁶³ Frédéric Nietzsche, trans. Henri Albert, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra: un livre pour tout le monde et personne* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France", 1898)

²⁶⁴ Paul Valéry, "Monsieur Teste," *Le Centaure* vol. 1-vol. 2 (Paris (9, rue des Beaux-arts): [H. Albert], 1896)

²⁶⁵ Anne Mairesse, "La Revue du Centaure: Textes et contextes d'une oeuvre esthétique et littéraire." *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 32.1 and 32.2 (Fall-Winter 2003-2004): 104-120.

association intellectuelle entre les jeunes écrivains de la génération toute récente, leur offrant de se solidariser et les unissant, ainsi, sans préjudice à leurs efforts particuliers, en un groupement central.”²⁶⁶ This grouping is pointedly not a literary school, but an association of friends who come together in solidarity to support one another as the newest and boldest members of the emerging generation. This endeavor is different from the *Mercur* or other such journals as it will be a “revue de luxe” modeled after *The Yellow book*²⁶⁷ or *The Savoy*²⁶⁸ where art, poetry and prose are paired at the exclusion of literary reviews and polemics of any sort. There is no such literary and artistic revue in Paris at this time, and as the young men are well connected socially, a sophisticated readership is assured.

In a letter to Henri Albert, Tinan describes what type of revue he envisions. He notes: “Rédaction fermée et sans collaborateurs, Suppression des Chroniques théâtrales et autres, Elimination de la génération plus âgée, Rédacteurs déjà choisis : Albert Fargue Gide Lebey Louÿs de Tinan Valéry—et s’entendre pour en ajouter d’autres s’il y a lieu.”²⁶⁹ The most important aspect of this description is the exclusivity of the revue, both among peers and among the older generation. No one is permitted outside the circle of friends, and no one is permitted outside the generation. These limits cause disputes between several of the participants, those associated with other writers such as Francis Vielé-Griffin, for example, who is not a

²⁶⁶ Papers of *Le Centaure*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France site François Mitterand; call number: rés grz 245 (1 à 3)

²⁶⁷ Henry Harland, editor, *The Yellow book: an illustrated quarterly* Vol. 1 (1894, Apr.)-vol. 13 (1897, Apr.) (London : Elkin Mathews & John Lane ; Boston : Copeland & Day, 1893-1897)

²⁶⁸ Arthur Symons, editor, *The Savoy : an illustrated monthly* No. 1 (Jan. 1896)-no. 8 (Dec. 1896) (London: L. Smithers, 1896).

²⁶⁹ Letter from Jean de Tinan to Henri Albert, January 22, 1896. (private collection). Cited by Goujon, *Jean de Tinan* 187.

familiar of all the collaborators. However, these arguments aside, the contract of the revue is “lu et approuvé” by mid February 1896. After each name of the seven members of the editorial board, the title “Homme de lettres” is clearly noted, which is significant in that it definitively names the social status and career path these young men assert and defend. The majority of these writers and poets, including André Gide and Paul Valéry, are in their early to mid-twenties, the youngest among them being nineteen year old André Lebey. Among peers, there in black and white on a professional document, this title of “Homme de lettres” serves as a sort of agreement. It is a key element to the notion of solidarity these young men profess, naming a sort of micro-society in the larger literary society of the 1890s, what Colette calls “la jeunesse littéraire du d’Harcourt.”²⁷⁰

While the texts published in the two volumes of the revue are noteworthy, specifically the publication of Paul Valéry’s *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste*,²⁷¹ the importance of this revue lies in the social and collaborative spirit of its production. Although Henri Albert establishes an office for the revue at 9 rue des Beaux Arts where he holds office hours from three to six every Friday afternoon, the team never separates itself from the jovial atmosphere of the café. On a printed invitation inserted in the revue, appears the following note:

Les rédacteurs du Centaure
Dînent tous les lundi soirs
Au café d’Harcourt
Boulevard Saint-Michel.”²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Colette, *Mes apprentissages: ce que Claudine n’a pas dit* (Paris: Ferenczi, cop. 1936) 129.

²⁷¹ For a discussion of the principal texts published in *Le Centaure*, see Mairesse 104-120.

²⁷² Papers of *Le Centaure*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France site François Mitterrand; call number: 245 (1 à 3).

Although it's unlikely that the more prestigious subscribers of the revue, such as Georges Hugo, the Prince de Polignac, or the socialite Madame de Bonnières,²⁷³ would attend these Monday evening dinners, the open, informal invitation encourages an amiability and fluidity between the writers and the public that is not always common with such publications. By contrast, the *Dîners de la Plume* were formal events with presidents and honorees. Monday nights in the Latin Quarter would have been first and foremost a youthful event animated by food, cocktails, and innumerable cigars. Added to this, the café was known to welcome young women of easy virtue who made themselves available to students and poets alike.

The association of male friendships, creative output and cooperation, and the bonds built through the enjoyment of one another's company are reminiscent not only of Louÿs' first projects of *La Potache Revue* and *La Conque*, but also of the Pre-Raphaelite's *The Germ: Thoughts toward nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art* which Louÿs had been familiar with from an early age thanks to his reading of Joseph Knight's *The Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, published in 1887 and read by Louÿs in 1890. The similarities between the PRB (Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood) and Louÿs' coterie surrounding *Le Centaure* should not be over-exaggerated, however it is necessary to point out the homosocial nature of these creative collaborations and their mutual rejection of bourgeois norms through a bohemian lifestyle.

In the 1840s and 1850s, the PRB lived in downtrodden lodgings for the poor, thus rejecting the bourgeois dream of social mobility. Louÿs's group, on the other

²⁷³ The subscription notices are included in the Papers of *Le Centaure* at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

hand, rejects this same bourgeois value by embracing the upper class esthetics of refinement and taste that come with 'la vie élégante' as outlined by Balzac. Throughout the 1890s, Louÿs presents himself well through his etiquette and dress. Although Tinan has much more of the troubadour about him, both seek to define their identities, both masculine and artistic, outside of the bourgeois norm. Further, while the Brotherhood was based on a celibate and monastic lifestyle, Louÿs and Tinan are very much womanizers who regularly take prostitutes and had built a reputation as such in salons such as Rachilde's at *Le Mercure de France*. "Pre-Raphaelite" is a direct correlation to Catholicism while "Brotherhood" suggests Romanist monasticism. With the celebration of Greek and Latin paganism and sexuality, Louÿs and his friends are embracing the diversity of sexuality, mainly lesbianism, and an estheticism which ties them to the Earth, rather than the Christian heavens. Their lifestyle is certainly not an ascetic one. This Dionysian vision is in line with the nietzschian philosophy their close friend Henri Albert is translating and publishing throughout this period, although Louÿs was influenced early on, before any contact with Nietzsche, by Hugo's *Les Légendes des siècles*,²⁷⁴ as well as antique themes venerated by the Parnassians, which is clearly evinced in his *Chansons de Bilitis* and other similar works published at La Librairie de l'art indépendant.

On the 18th of May 1896, to celebrate the first publication of *Le Centaure*, a banquet is held at the d'Harcourt. Along with Tinan, Louÿs, Lebey, Albert, and Valéry, the principal participants of the revue, in presence are also Willy and Colette,

²⁷⁴ Victor Hugo, *Œuvres poétiques. La Légende des siècles* (Paris: Charpentier, 1891).

Rachilde, Vallette, Marcel Schwob, Alfred Jarry, and Lord Alfred Douglas.²⁷⁵ In a letter to his brother written just a few days later, Pierre Louÿs recounts the events of the evening. “Il y avait là 55 personnes, et parmi elles Mme H. G.-V. [Colette] qui disait à son voisin : “Dites donc à P.L. que j’ai autant de cheveux que Chrysis.” Tu vois le ton de cette soirée. Il y avait là aussi Bonnières entre deux actrices symbolistes, et plusieurs autres personnes connues.” The group dines at the d’Harcourt then attends the ball Bullier, where they dance “une farandole monstre,” or traditional French dance, then returns at midnight to the d’Harcourt “pour accoutumer nos aînés aux mœurs de la nouvelle génération.” On the first floor of the restaurant, Louÿs observes, “Pas une femme mariée n’était partie, naturellement; elles étaient même ravies.” At two in the morning the group begins to break up, though a troupe of them head to Les Halles “où nous resoupons.” Louÿs continues:

A cinq heures du matin, Lebey et moi, seuls survivants, nous avons été voir lever le soleil sur le lac du Bois de Boulogne. C’était simplement admirable [...] Alors, indignés de penser que Tinan dormait avec une tranquillité insolente, nous sommes revenus de la Porte Maillot au boulevard Saint-Michel où nous l’avons réveillé violemment. Il s’était endormi une heure avant, le malheureux.²⁷⁶

Dancing, drinking, singing, the evening is charged with youthful energy and sexual bravado that ends the following morning with the rising sun and a wanton visit to a sleeping friend.

Apart from Valéry’s highly intellectual *Monsieur Teste* in the second and last volume of the revue as well as Henri Albert’s philosophical *Les Dangers du*

²⁷⁵ The participants of the Banquet signed a copy of *Le Centaure*, as described in *Le Catalogue de l’exposition “Paul Valéry” à la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 136 (1956): 23.

²⁷⁶ Letter from Pierre Louÿs à Georges Louis, February 26, 1896. Pierre Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites à Georges Louis : 1890-1917*, ed. Jean-Paul Goujon (Paris : Fayard, 2002) 192-195.

moralisme, the pages of *Le Centaure* are full of mythical fantasies in prose and images, as well as poetry and stories of unhappy or unrequited love. Although there is nothing perversely sexual or unnervingly immoral in the texts of *Le Centaure*, it has been suggested that André Gide's wife Madeleine encouraged her husband to split from both the revue and its collaborators for these reasons, or, at least, the collaborators believed it was for this that Gide gave his demission after reading through the first volume.²⁷⁷ His estrangement from *Le Centaure* caused much confusion and disrupted the publication of the second volume by several months.²⁷⁸

Although he eventually returned to the revue, Gide's acrimony sent a clear signal to Louÿs and the other collaborators that the author of *Paludes* was nothing less than a prude. In a letter to Valéry, Gide is not shy about saying "[L]a littérature de Tinan et d'Albert me dégoûtait" for moral and philosophical reasons, as the historian Claude Martin explains.²⁷⁹ Of course, Tinan, Louÿs and Lebey speak regularly of their promiscuous lifestyle, of their prostitutes and 'libertinage,' which would have unnerved Gide for several reasons. However, the cause of his separation from the revue is most likely intimately tied to his development as an intellectual and from his resentment of Louÿs' strong personality which held sway over the others.

For some time, Gide had sought to break from the constraints of the Symbolist esthetic as well as with the Parisian literary world he felt Louÿs and his

²⁷⁷ Claude Martin, *La Maturité d'André Gide de Paludes à l'Immoraliste (1895-1902)* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1977) 138-139.

²⁷⁸ Frank Lestringant, *André Gide l'inquisiteur* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011).

²⁷⁹ Martin 138-139.

entourage exemplified. Early on in their friendship, Gide criticized Louÿs' maneuvering in the literary world, particularly in relation to the salons he frequented such as that of José-Maria de Heredia. Michel Décaudin notes in *La Crise des Valeurs symbolistes* that "par sa séparation [du Centaure], Gide dissipait toute équivoque et refusait une conception purement formelle de la littérature autant que la complaisance dans une sensualité frelatée."²⁸⁰ In other words, Gide did not want to be part of their "school" nor blaspheme sensuality and sexuality through promiscuous behavior or through degenerate representation in literature.

It has been argued by André Gide's latest biographer, Frank Lestringant, that the writer felt he thrived most when others around him failed.²⁸¹ In a perhaps more passive aggressive way, Gide's personality is just as defined and strong as Louÿs', a fact which had made their relationship sometimes violently quarrelsome from its beginnings. Gide could not follow Louÿs, and Louÿs never gave a thought to following Gide. The only choice, then, was to separate as they could not coexist, in Gide's mind, as equals. In his letters to Valéry at the time of his separation from *Le Centaure*, Gide notes that Tinan, Lebey, and Henri Albert, are essentially Louÿs' followers, a notion which he cannot support.²⁸² Gide's failed collaboration with *Le Centaure* is the last straw in their relationship and it is after this that the two never

²⁸⁰ As cited in Martin 140.

²⁸¹ Lestringant 107. "Pour que Gide grandisse, il fallait que Démarest diminue, mais cela est aussi vrai de Pierre Louÿs, d'André Walckenaer ou de Marc de Lanux, et de tant d'autres. C'est là l'application littérale d'une phrase de l'Évangile de Jean (III, 31) que Gide cite à propos de son apprentissage à la pension Keller: "Il faut qu'il croisse et que je diminue [...] Pierre Louÿs, André Walckenaer, Albert Démarest ou Marc de Lanux [...] Leur destin, sanctionné par l'échec ou par la mort, ou par les deux successivement, prépare le sien, tout en donnant par avance l'image imparfait et retournée."

²⁸² André Gide and Paul Valéry *Correspondance: 1890-1942* Nouvelle éd., établie, présentée et annotée par Peter Fawcett (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).

speak again. In November 1896, sometime after Louÿs had sent Gide a cruelly farcical letter ridiculing his separation from the revue and his contributions to it, Gide writes to André Ruyters concerning his feelings: “Pierre Louÿs [...] est maintenant, je le crains, mon ennemi le plus intime, à moins que ses rancunes, comme les miennes, ne se soient calmées.”²⁸³ Rather than bringing them closer, their collaboration on *Le Centaure* definitively drives them apart.

Part Two

Noctambulismes: Cafés, Cabarets, and ‘femmes faciles’

Through the 1890s Pierre Louÿs and his young companions Jean de Tinan and André Lebey prowl the cafés and cabarets of the Latin Quarter and Montmartre with an incomparable verve. In one way, they are running toward life, feverishly embracing their fleeting youth, but in another way, in a concrete and pointed way, they are running from the very real specter of death. In just four short years, from 1894 to 1898, from the age of twenty to twenty-four, Jean de Tinan lived in a blaze of sentimental and sensual glory. Throughout his adolescence and early twenties, Tinan suffered from respiratory problems which left him bed ridden or hospitalized for weeks at a time, sometimes unable to speak or read. At nineteen, in July of 1893, he writes in his private journals, “Je veux vivre intensément puisque je dois mourir jeune.” He then writes to André Lebey a short time later, “Je veux connaître les émotions de ceux qui ont su sentir, pour savoir ensuite jouir de toutes les

²⁸³ As cited in Martin 161.

miennes.”²⁸⁴ As a young man, the shadow of death inspires a passion for life, but as a refined intellectual, Tinan knows that this passion cannot be satisfied by vulgar or erratic indulgences. Emotions and sensuality can be refined the same way taste can and just as one learns to compare fine wine or perfume, one can also learn the different hues of one’s emotions. This is the lesson that Maurice Barrès offers in his *Culte du Moi* series which the boys unironically use as a handbook of self cultivation. For these young men of refined taste, Paris can be thought of as a marvelous boutique, or perhaps as one of the arcades in Montmartre so clearly described by Walter Benjamin.²⁸⁵ Each boutique offers a different pleasure such as fine tobacco, foreign liqueurs, lively conversation and song, or even beautiful women. After all, women are bought and experienced by these young men as easily as any luxury item.

Louÿs found in Tinan not only an accomplice to his debauchery, but a companion who understood death the way he did. Sadly, Louÿs’ mother died when he was eight years old and one of his older brothers, Paul, died when Louÿs was just turning fourteen, both from complications related to pneumonia. In 1893, Louÿs’ young friend and lover, who went by the nickname Marcelle, died suddenly and unexpectedly. Perhaps it was that Louÿs had been so familiar with the smell and feel of her flesh—“J’ai senti sur sa joue des chaleurs cramoisies, et son souffle précipité, brûlant, suffoquant,” as he writes in his journal some years before²⁸⁶—or perhaps it

²⁸⁴ Both citations taken from Goujon, *Jean de Tinan* 58-59.

²⁸⁵ Walter Benjamin, Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, *The Arcades Project*, (New York: Belknap Press, 2002).

²⁸⁶ Louÿs, *Mon Intime*. Decembert 29, 1890. Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 86.

is their proximity in age, but for the first time in his adult life, Louÿs experiences death as he had not before. “Avant,” he writes of the experience, “Je ne savais pas ce que c’était la mort. Du moins je ne savais pas tout. Je l’ai appris pendant l’insomnie de la nuit suivante.”²⁸⁷

Perhaps even more impressive than the death of those close to him, is the threat of his own death. Given his family history with pneumonia, the romantic notion of death, so common to the adolescence of every artist takes on a pressing reality. After reading Marie Bashkirtseff’s *Journal*,²⁸⁸ he writes privately, “Et moi aussi je mourrai poitrinaire, et comme elle je l’aurai su avant même que la maladie n’éclate, quand mes poumons la contenaient en germe. Oui, je mourrai de cela, peut-être cette année, peut-être dans deux ans, peut-être beaucoup plus tard à vingt-cinq ou trente ans, mais j’en mourrai, je le sais.”²⁸⁹ Several years later, in February 1897, Louÿs does come close to dying while abroad in Algeria. Writing to his brother after the worst of the crisis has passed, Louÿs remarks, “Vers la 70^e heure de mes 40^e5 de fièvre je me sentais tellement faible, tellement anéanti que je me suis demandé très sérieusement si je n’allais pas “passer” avant ton arrivée. Et l’idée de faire cela sans toi m’était odieuse.”²⁹⁰ Death is a constant companion for both young writers through the prime of their youth.

This terrible specter has two major consequences for Louÿs, both of them intimately related. One is that it pushes him toward life and literary glory with

²⁸⁷ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 228.

²⁸⁸ Marie Bashkirtseff, *Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff* (Paris, G. Charpentier, 1888).

²⁸⁹ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 55.

²⁹⁰ Unpublished letter to Georges Louis February 19, 1897. Cited by Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 372.

conviction and impatience. He desires to experience all things at all times, from fine food, clothing, and women, to all night walks through Paris and endless debates and conversations with friends. As for literary glory, the publication of his revue *La Conque* in 1891 at age twenty, and his daring self-introductions to the most venerated names in literature from Paul Verlaine to Stéphane Mallarmé and José-Maria de Heredia attest to this. But as Maurice Barrès notes, “Il faut tant d’argent pour être bohème aujourd’hui.”²⁹¹ The second effect, then, is that between 1892 and 1894 Louÿs spends the entirety of the inheritance he received from his father, forcing him to become financially dependent on his brother, Georges, until the success of *Aphrodite* in 1896, then again after his literary fortune is spent. Although Tinan does not have the same financial means as Louÿs, he still lives life to the extreme even when it is greatly detrimental to his health.

Not surprisingly, all this affects the way the young men view their living spaces and the quartiers they inhabit, particularly the Latin Quarter, where Tinan lives at 75 Boulevard Saint-Michel, and Montmartre, where the boys frequent the cafés and cabarets of Place Pigalle. Through much of the 1890s, Louÿs travels for short stints abroad, to Seville and Algeria, leaving Tinan and Lebey to their own devices, or *vices*, in the city of light. Tinan, for his part, is not a traveler by nature, and remains in France through this period, occasionally returning to stay with family at Jumièges, often to recuperate from sickness. Despite this coming and going, the landscape of Paris remains imprinted in their minds and, for Tinan and Lebey, becomes the stage upon which their literary dramas are played out. To be more

²⁹¹ Cited in Jean de Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir ?* 130.

precise, their books, particularly Tinan's *Penses-tu réussir !*, serve as virtual maps of this landscape. This is one of the reasons their literature is so important. At a time in history before video cameras or sophisticated recording devices—other than Louÿs' *Kodak*—Tinan's literature serves as a witness to this unique moment in history. Unabashedly autobiographical, he represents Louÿs in *Penses-tu réussir !*²⁹² as Lionel Silvande, himself as Raoul de Vallonges, and Lebey as Gérard de Kerante. This intriguing novel does not follow one single narrative, but paints their life in Paris in brief monographs centered on specific women, events, or places. André Lebey, for his part, uses different pseudonyms for his friends in *Les Premières Luttes*.²⁹³ Pierre Louÿs becomes Georges Bartel, Tinan is Gérard de Quérante, and Lebey himself is Jacques. Both of these novels are published in 1897 and qualify as what Jean-Paul Goujon calls 'personal literature.' Because true stories are manipulated to fit into the literary narrative, and because most of the names have been changed, this literature cannot be deemed strictly autobiographical. Tinan does explicitly name and discuss, however, among others, Maurice Barrès, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Alfred Jarry in relation to *Ubu Roi*, as well as specific cafés like the café d'Harcourt where the banquet for *Le Centaure* was held. Fortunately, our interest here is not strictly biography but the confluence between literature and place, two spaces these young men equally inhabit.

²⁹² Jean de Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir ! ou les Diverses amours de mon ami Raoul de Vallonges* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France", 1897).

²⁹³ André Lebey, *Les Premières luttes* (Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1897).

Les Boulevards

In many ways, the boulevards and the crowds of the Latin Quarter can be taken to be the uneven and undulating waves of the *human* sea—driven by Schopenhauer’s *vouloir-vivre*—which lap upon the café terraces. “La foule, instable et mobile, coule sur les boulevards, sous les arcades, autour des jardins,”²⁹⁴ Tinan writes in *Penses-tu réussir !* Under the influence of Maurice Barrès, he concedes “Il y a un *sens* de la foule.”²⁹⁵ Within this admirable flow of unconscious energy, it is the individual who counts most, who differs not by the sensations they experience, but how they experience these sensations. “Les hommes diffèrent moins par la sensation que par la façon dont ils l’accueillent.” Riding these gentle waves down the Boulevard Saint-Michel, Tinan writes, “Et Vallonges arriva au d’Harcourt, tourna lentement le coin de la place de la Sorbonne, jouissant, dans la lumière crue, des allées et venues, des toilettes claires, des figures jeunes, des boissons voyantes, de l’odeur de femme, de fumée et d’alcool, du perpétuel rire crié de cette foule...” This is Tinan’s Paris, a place where “tout le long des terrasses” he gives in to “ce grand mouvement de *laisser vivre* si réel qu’il influe sur l’aspect même des avenues, des places et des jardins, en agitant cette foule d’un rythme coordonné et précis dont l’harmonie ne peut être rencontrée nulle par ailleurs dans cette ville... trépidante où, figures de leurs intérêts, les chemins pressés se heurtent et se croisent.” Vallonges/Tinan intoxicates himself on this enveloping movement, follows it right up to the café terrace where he joins his friends. However, always the ironist, he

²⁹⁴ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir !* 191.

²⁹⁵ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir !* 189.

concludes “Je commence déjà à trouver cela plutôt monotone... d’ailleurs.”²⁹⁶ Like the crowd, Tinan is always in movement, unable to stay for any length of time in any one place, or focused on any one single object.

Passing from the Latin Quarter to Montmartre, André Lebey’s alter ego Jacques strolls the boulevards in order to forget his troubles. *Les Premières lutttes* is a simple story written in the realist style of Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola, though less sociological, psychological, and naturalist than any of these models. The novel follows Lebey’s first steps into the Parisian literary world, his first publications at La Librairie de l’Art Indépendant, his first true friends, Tinan and Louÿs, and his first loves which include married women and prostitutes. Less of a broken hearted romantic than Tinan, Lebey’s romantic sadness turns quickly into anger and jealousy. One evening, after seeing his lover with another man, he heads out into the night to forget his worries “dans la fumée des cigarettes, l’excitation des boissons, le sourire des femmes, enfin sur un lit de fille.”²⁹⁷ He passes along the quays of the Seine and up the Avenue de l’Opéra. Although still greatly influenced by the work of Barrès, Lebey is less interested in the movements of the unconscious crowd and more taken by the beauty of the city itself and the pleasures it offers. On the walk to Montmartre he ruminates through Jacques, “Il sentait qu’il était pris par Paris comme il l’aurait été par une femme et que passer une soirée sans jouir des plaisirs que Paris lui offrait lui était devenu trop difficile.” He goes on, “L’agitation incessante répandue partout l’emportait avec elle dans son rythme consolateur de

²⁹⁶ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir!* 112.

²⁹⁷ Lebey, *Les Premières lutttes* 298.

tant de détresses, de tant de regrets, de tant d'ennuis." Paris appears as a sensual and emotional being that provokes various sensations perhaps as a lover would. As a writer, Lebey spends his days working alone, but believes that Paris nightlife is his real life, and that all of his day's work is in preparation for the moment it begins. "Oubliant sa douleur, il frappait l'asphalte de sa canne."²⁹⁸ He stands for a moment in front of the windmill of the Moulin Rouge considering the pleasures that await him inside.

Tinan and Lebey, of course, are not the first cartographers of Paris. Among the many that came before, Tinan is most influenced by the intellectualism of Maurice Barrès and his small pamphlet *Sensation de Paris: Le Quartier Latin*²⁹⁹ which the esthete published in 1888. Although his elder by only twelve years, Tinan refers to Barrès as a "maître" and dedicates the preface of *Penses-tu réussir !* to him. The correlation between Barrès' illustrated text of thirty-five pages, and Tinan's book of nearly two hundred, highlights the way in which Tinan's work is more than a novel in the traditional sense. It truly is a *map*, or a guidebook, of both the physical space of the Latin Quarter, its cafés, gardens, and boulevards, and of the life Tinan and his friends live there as *hommes de lettres*. In this sense, as Tinan himself declares, it is a psychological work in the realist vein. As mentioned, the cultivation of the senses and *l'esprit*, or the mind, is fundamental to Barrès' esthetic ideology which he outlines in his trilogy *Le Culte du Moi*, published between 1888 and 1891. Not only did Barrès' *Sous l'oeil des barbares* and *Un homme libre* influence the entire

²⁹⁸ Lebey, *Les Premières lutttes* 299-300.

²⁹⁹ Maurice Barrès, *Sensations de Paris: Le Quartier Latin* (Paris: Ch. Dalou, 1888).

generation of young men coming of age in the late 1880s and early 1890s, it served as a literal intellectual 'how to' manual for Pierre Louÿs and André Gide. Gide's *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* is greatly influenced by these works and Louÿs studied *Exercices spirituels* of Loyola, as Barrès' Philippe once did, on an intellectual retreat in the Grande-Chartreuse.³⁰⁰ As for Tinan, the young writer does not hide his indebtedness to *le maître*, citing the introduction of *Sous l'oeil des Barbares* in the preface of his own work.

Although he only extracts the first line of Barrès' own introduction, it is worth looking closely at the entire passage alongside elements of Tinan's own preface in order to fully grasp Tinan's intentions and the significance of his work to the concepts of literature and space. Tinan writes: "Voici quelques études où sont exposées [...] la "sensibilité amoureuse" d'un jeune homme de ce temps." After noting that the "héros" of the novel is as young as the writer, that he intends on portraying authentic situations, and after citing the first line of Barrès' *Sous l'oeil des barbares*, Tinan concludes, "Si quelques bons esprits veulent bien reconnaître à ce volume le même genre d'importance et d'intérêt un peu spécial que l'on attache, par exemple, aux travaux de sciences naturelles qui s'intitulent : *Documents pour servir de contribution à l'étude de...*, l'auteur se déclarera très satisfait."³⁰¹ Tinan is proposing that his work is of scientific and cultural value because it is "a study." Written nearly ten years after the work which it cites, Tinan's novel follows the

³⁰⁰ Letter from Pierre Louÿs to Paul Valéry. September 9, 1890. Gide et al. 275-281.

³⁰¹ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir !* 21.

same esthetic and intellectual ideology outlined by Barrès who in his own brief introduction writes:

Voici une courte monographie réaliste. La réalité varie avec chacun de nous puisqu'elle est l'ensemble de nos habitudes de voir, de sentir et de raisonner. Je décris un être jeune et sensible dont la vision de l'univers se transforme fréquemment et qui garde une mémoire fort nette de six ou sept réalités différentes [...] C'est ici l'histoire des années d'apprentissage d'un Moi, âme ou esprit.³⁰²

Barrès' brilliance, which is in line with his own intellectual master's writings, that of Paul Bourget, is that he weds realism and scientism to subjectivity and psychology which in many ways resolves the nineteenth century artistic and intellectual battle between Realism/Naturalism and Symbolism/Neo-Platonism. Tinan has inherited and developed this line of thought in a remarkable document which, for our purposes, does in fact represent a *Document to Serve as the Contribution to the Study of... a jeune homme de lettres* at the end of the nineteenth century. Further, by explicitly linking his novel to Barrès *Sensations de Paris: Le Quartier Latin*, he maps out one particular neighborhood in late nineteenth century France. In his short pamphlet, Barrès explicitly links topography to social mores and studies various "specimens" in a way similar to Tinan.³⁰³

Clearly, Jean de Tinan is conscious of the varying types of literary genre which populate his bookshelves, but extracts taken from any one of his personal letters, published novels and plaquettes, or chronicle entries such as *Cirques, Cabarets, et café-concerts* written for the *Mercure de France*, appear to vary little in style and theme. Tinan is above all passionate for life and literature, and the venues,

³⁰² Maurice Barrès, *Sous l'oeil des barbares*.

³⁰³ Maurice Barrès, *Sensation de Paris : Le Quartier Latin* (Paris: C. Dalou, 1888).

people, and artifacts which populate Paris and the Latin Quarter are the décor which the young man mines for inspiration and sensation. In a letter written to a friend at three-thirty in the morning on December 20, 1895, Tinan describes his life and Paris while at the same time blurring the lines between literary genre, literature *tout court*, and life. He writes:

[J]e me suis pris à aimer passionnément la *Vie*—elle n’a pas été douce pour moi, mais elle est étrangement belle. Je sors tous les soirs à minuit, je marche quelques heures à travers les brasseries et les music-halls, le long des avenues vides et noir[e]s et des terrasses bruyantes des cafés. Le grouillement de la vie me donne des émotions de *Mille et une nuit*—il me semble quelque fois jusqu’à la folie que tout cela n’a pour but que de faire un joli décor—et lorsque je choisis dans le bruit une petite fille un peu jeune au vice naïf—je parviens quelquefois en défaisant sa robe à baiser sa gorge comme d’autres font des vers. Emotions rares et fugaces mais précieuses.³⁰⁴

The quest for adventure drives Tinan through the streets of Paris where specific places provoke specific sensations whose kin is found only in literature (*Mille et une nuit*). Women become objects, like the décor, and he makes love as a poet writes poetry. Life, literature, place, and passion merge into one single movement through the person of Jean de Tinan.

All this movement, and the sensations they provoke, become what Tinan calls *Noctambulisme*, or night walking. For the young man it is an art only accomplished in a city such as Paris. Although Tinan can do this alone, wandering the streets, penetrating the cabarets where he runs into familiars and easy women, the evening is usually best experienced in the company of friends, which include the likes of Louÿs and Lebey. One can imagine this group of boys, with their fine clothes, canes,

³⁰⁴ Jean de Tinan, *Correspondance inédite*, ed. Jean-Paul Goujon. (Tusson, Charente: Du Lérot, 2005) 39.

gloves, and pointed moustaches as they run from one bar or cabaret to another.

Tinan writes in *Penses-tu réussir !* :

Et si la soirée est libre quand même, - s'il n'y ni famille, ni salon, ni maîtresse, ni travail, ni théâtre, ni cher maître, ni cher ami, ni rien... ce sera le non noctambulisme ; les bandes d'amis se divisent le long des trajets ; à deux, en promenade, ce sont des conversations affectueuses ; à quatre en fiacre, on se sent tous les coudes. On boit de la bière, des cocktails et des kummels, au hasard ; on entre dans des endroits où on chante et dans des endroits où l'on ne chante pas ; à propos des aspects des brasseries, des éclairages des rues, ou des charrettes de choux-fleurs, ou d'une fille un peu jolie ou d'une autre particulièrement ignoble, les appréciations et les dépréciations s'enchevêtreront, se grefferont et se contrediront, et ce sera gai, toujours...³⁰⁵

Francis Carco, who published Tinan's *Noctambulismes* with his own introduction in 1921, describes what an effect this literature had on him as a young man. In essence, he notes that every young man of his generation, that is to say of the early nineteen hundreds, came to Paris with three books in their suitcases: *Penses-tu réussir !* by Jean de Tinan, *Le Petit Ami*³⁰⁶ by Paul Léautaud, and *Mon Amie Nane*³⁰⁷ by Paul-Jean Toulet. These three examples show to what extent literature and life merge in the landscape of Paris and how this combination inspires and motivates other generations of writers and poets to do the same. Tinan's passion for life leaps off the page, giving the reader the sensation that they too are crammed in the fiacre with Tinan and his friends, and that they too prowl the streets of Paris looking for adventure and camaraderie.

³⁰⁵ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir !* 206.

³⁰⁶ Paul Léautaud, *Le Petit ami, roman* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France", 1903).

³⁰⁷ Paul-Jean. Toulet, *Mon amie Nane* (Paris: Société du "Mercure de France", 1905).

Behind Closed Doors: Apartments and salons

Although Pierre Louÿs does not place his characters in the Latin Quarter or Montmartre—he is much too *Parnassian* for that—his own biography does, as evinced in his personal letters and journals. Additionally, like the cafés on Boul' Mich,' his various apartments in Paris through the 1890s, from rue Rembrandt near the park Monceau, rue Grétry in the Opera, to boulevard Chataubriand off Champs Elysées, and another on Boulevard Malesherbes, serve as key meeting points between his friends, young writers, poets and musicians just at the start of their careers. In this way, his apartments, and the weekly salon he holds there, operate strictly on the horizontal axis of our theoretical model. Neither Mallarmé nor Heredia will ever penetrate Pierre Louÿs' private rooms, where Louÿs is the sole master. As with Marie de Heredia's farcical *Académie Canaque*, where Louÿs *plays at* being an homme de lettres in his own salon hosting a group of friends such as Paul Valéry, Claude Debussy, and Marcel Proust, or holding a tête-à-tête with a single friend, is a space free from the literary rat race of social climbing. It is a place full of laughter and song, out of the gaze of women—besides Louÿs' North African lover Zorah, although only in the later years—and out of the 'official' gaze of established masters or publishers like Edmond Bailly.

It is at 1 rue Grétry, in a three-room apartment, that Louÿs receives his friends every Friday from three to seven in the evening from January 1894 to July 1895. In his memoirs, André Lebey notes, "Louÿs recevait ses amis comme aucun homme de lettres ne le fait plus, s'ingéniant, non seulement à leur faire plaisir, mais à leur venir en aide ; et il y parvenait avec une délicatesse telle que plusieurs ne s'en

apercevaient pas.”³⁰⁸ Support and pleasure are the two touchstones which define Louÿs’ weekly gatherings and occasional dinners. For the pleasure of his guests, he offers fine tobacco and liqueur, and along with his friends such as Tinan, Régnier, Debussy, and Proust, he sings comical opérettes such as *L’Œil crevé* by Hervé.³⁰⁹ He also reads the poetry of Rimbaud and Baudelaire aloud and discusses the latest publications and literary polemics.

In May of 1894, Tinan dines for the first time at rue Grétry, of which he notes in his private journal: “Dîné chez Louÿs avec Lebey et Debussy—comme ils sont gentils d’esprit alerte délicat ouvert—comme ils valent mieux que moi—oh moi je ne vaudrais rien [...]” He then adds, “Ce Louÿs est le charme même (cette discussion après dîner sur Chénier Hugo Baudelaire—Je pensais qu’il était vraiment bien que ces quatre jeunes gens fussent réunis [...])”³¹⁰ Louÿs inspires his younger counterparts with genuine intellectualism as well as with a true passion for the literature they discuss. The material and theatrical aspects of Louÿs’ apartment and the objects it contains will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, but for the moment it suffices to say that Louÿs’ salon offers an experience both of camaraderie and of genuine literary import. Of his own first visit to Louÿs rue Grétry apartment, which he notes after his friend’s death, André Lebey, who was only sixteen or seventeen at the time recalls: “Quand je le quittai [...] je me sentais un autre. Mon pas léger volait sur l’asphalte. [...] Je remontait vite m’enfermer dans ma chambre,

³⁰⁸ Lebey 212.

³⁰⁹ See Pierre Louÿs, *Correspondance, 1894-1898 / Pierre Louÿs, Jean de Tinan*, ed. Jean-Paul Goujon. (Paris: Editions du Limon, 1995) 40.

³¹⁰ Louÿs, *Correspondance, 1894-1898* 36.

puis je tirais, d'un tiroir fermé à clef, mon trésor—mes manuscrits.”³¹¹ Louÿs inducts the young man by reading to him for the first time *Les Illuminations* of Arthur Rimbaud, inspiring him to create his own literature. It is as if Louÿs has cast a spell on his young friend, convinced him that he too can be great and create remarkable literature. Both Lebey and Tinan approve a great affection and sense of loyalty for their older friend. The same is true for Claude Debussy, who, ten years Louÿs' elder, feels the same sense of admiration that the teenage Lebey feels. In the many letters sent from Debussy to Louÿs over the course of their friendship, the musician signs his letters with such salutations as “Ton double,” “Tout à fait ton,” “Ton inusable,” and “Ton indélébile, Claude.”³¹²

In order to understand Louÿs' charm, and the importance of his salon, it is important to contrast this refined creature with the mass of students and posers that fill the cafés of the Latin Quarter. In *Les Premières Lutttes* of 1897, André Lebey describes his frustration with the “poets” he meets. Lebey writes of these pretenders:

A les entendre parler, un étranger les eût supposés pleins d'avenir ; ils discutaient en effet bruyamment avec de grands gestes et des figures irritées ; leurs projets étaient grandiose mais jamais entrepris. Ils étalaient avec affection leurs vêtements de velours, leurs longues cravates et leurs vastes chapeaux ; ils passaient avec fièvre la main sur leur front tourmenté où retombaient leurs cheveux, mais leur génie était tout extérieur ; ils causaient art et littérature sans les connaître réellement, ne parvenant même pas à épater les filles qui les écoutaient en bâillant et qu'ils appelaient fièrement en faisant ronfler leurs maîtresses.³¹³

³¹¹ André Lebey, *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs* (Paris: Éditions du monde moderne, 1930) 55.

³¹² Claude Debussy, *Correspondance de Claude Debussy et Pierre Louÿs* (Paris: José Corti, 1945).

³¹³ Lebey, *Les Premières Lutttes* 129.

The description goes on for another page in the same vein as Lebey remarks that all these young men do is drink and go out until all hours of the night, produce poor, negligible poetry, and ridicule one another. Although elsewhere in the book, Lebey criticizes the literary milieu just as harshly, noting that even though these groups pretend to be literary, they are nothing more than examples of bourgeois salons, he does remark on the difference of Louÿs' receptions. The attendees are not false, but they do have strong egos. "[C]hacun se tenait sur ses gardes," Lebey writes.³¹⁴ Of Georges Bartel's salon, aka Pierre Louÿs, Lebey writes: "Dans la chambre aux murs cachés par les livres ou les tableaux, assis sur de confortables divans ou dans des fauteuils à la mode anglaise, au milieu de la fumée des cigares et des cigarettes, on causait du dernier volume, du dernier bon mot d'un tel, et des nouvelles du jour."³¹⁵ For Lebey, what counts is individual friendship, not the crowd of poets, hence the importance for him of individuals like Louÿs and Tinan.

Louÿs supports his friends indominably through this period. In 1893, Louÿs begins encouraging his good friend Claude Debussy to compose the music for Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas et Mélisande*.³¹⁶ The painter Jacques-Emile Blanche warmly recalls listening to extracts of this piece at Louÿs apartment along with Henri de Régnier, Jean de Tinan, and Paul Valéry, among others.³¹⁷ Louÿs had a piano installed in his apartment in May of 1894 just so Debussy could play "pour

³¹⁴ Ibid. 128.

³¹⁵ Ibid. 128.

³¹⁶ Debussy 17. Introduction by G. Jean-Aubry.

³¹⁷ Jacques-Emile Blanche, *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs* (Paris: Éditions du monde moderne, 1930) 95.

cinq ou six amis.”³¹⁸ It is touching to imagine the musician bent over his piano playing this extraordinary piece of music eight years before it will be shared with the public. Along with a few of the regular attendees is Léon Blum and Camille Mauclair whose enthusiasm for the piece greatly encourages the musician to continue on his path. This type of moral support, orchestrated by Louÿs, is typical of his behavior toward the friends in whom he sees great potential.

Of course, André Lebey and André Tinan have their own small apartments, but they do not serve the same function as Louÿs’ salon. Tinan’s single room entresol studio at 75 Boulevard Saint-Michel is jokingly used to host women whom he calls his “camarades variées et complaisantes,”³¹⁹ and serve as a garçonnières where friends like Louÿs and Lebey smoke, drink, and discuss women and literature. This small apartment, from whose window he can see the gold tipped fencing of the Luxembourg gardens and a fountain jetting streams of water, is immortalized in the first few pages of *Penses-tu réussir!* Using the third person perspective, Tinan describes it as a kind of bachelor pad:

Son appartement est un peu trop « liberty » et « Art nouveau », naturellement ; les tables sont encombrées ; il y a des bibliothèques tournantes ; il y a une bibliothèque fermée pour les livres d’amis sur grand papier ; il y a des estampes ; des moulages ; des choses assez simples, mais que l’on aime... vous voyez cela d’ici.³²⁰

In this tiny apartment, the boys smoke cigar after cigar, of which Tinan, from the outset, warns the reader: “J’aime autant vous avertir tout de suite: on fumera beaucoup de cigares dans ce livre, et d’innombrable cigarettes. Mais c’est comme

³¹⁸ Debussy. Letter from Pierre Louÿs May 31, 1893.

³¹⁹ Tinan, *Correspondance inédite* 33.

³²⁰ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir!* 25.

cela.” Tinan could hardly be called a poser given his massive literary production as well as his numerous publications in the 1890s, but he still likes to leave his writing on the table for effect so that any guests entering the apartment will be sure to know that the young writer is hard at work.³²¹

A new café and Louÿs’ terrible success

In October 1896 a new café is inaugurated in the Latin Quarter at the corner of Boulevard Saint-Michel and Rue Soufflot, quite nearly in the shadows of the Panthéon, just at the gates of the Luxembourg gardens. Appropriately named *Le Taverne du Panthéon*, the café immediately becomes Jean de Tinan’s newest haunt as well as an element of his literature. In his regular chronicle in the *Mercure de France, Cirques, cabarets, et café-concerts*, Tinan evokes Master Franck, the café’s bartender who teaches him the virtues of the cocktail. Like fine wine or perfume, the various tastes, on a scale from sweet to bitter, provoke delicate sensations meant to be savored and appreciated. Of the café itself, Maurice Magre observes in his preface to Tinan’s *La Petite Jeanne Pâle*, “Il y avait [là] les femmes du quartier Latin, il y avait les étudiants d’aspect bourgeois ; il y avait les derniers anarchistes, ceux qui voulaient brûler leur jeunesse et ceux qui voulaient la prolonger jusqu’aux dernières limites de l’âge.”³²² In this somewhat luxurious café, Tinan would appear to be in his element among the easy women, bourgeois students, anarchists, and older gentlemen not yet willing to give up their youth. Like other writers and artists who

³²¹ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir!* 194.

³²² Jean de Tinan, *La Petite Jeanne Pâle*. Preface by Magre, Maurice. (Editions L. Delteil, 1922). Cited in Goujon, *Jean de Tinan* 13.

have emigrated from d'Harcourt just down the street, Tinan becomes a familiar of the *sous-sol*, or basement bar.

Less at ease in Paris as he had previously been, in the spring of 1896 Pierre Louÿs flees the capital due to the dizzying success of his novel *Aphrodite*. First published in serial in the *Mercure de France* under the title *L'Esclave*, Louÿs' book is a virtual overnight success after the benedictory article written by the academician Francis Coppée is published in *Le Journal* on April 16, 1896. A Parnassian and respected poet, Coppée's blessing comes as a surprise given the erotic themes and moral ambiguities of Louÿs' book which include lesbianism and profane uses of biblical passages. The poet's article is significant, Louÿs tells his friend Jean Lorrain, because "il signale mon livre à tout un public familial qui l'eût excommunié sans sa recommandation."³²³ Not only is the book accepted by this larger reading public, it alights their imaginations and provokes a new craze for ancient literature and classical themes.

Set in Alexandria in 57 B.C., the narrative follows a young artist, Démétrios, as he quests after three objects—a mirror, a brush, and a necklace—for the courtesan Chrysis, with whom he has fallen in love. Although she disrobes for all of Alexandria, she refuses to allow the young man to touch her until he has obtained these objects. However, after a rapturous dream in which Démétrios fully possesses the courtesan, he suddenly refuses her, stating that the dream is better than the reality. Shamed and heartbroken, Chrysis appears in public wearing the three articles stolen by Démétrios, and is then imprisoned and sentenced to death. In front

³²³ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 336.

of the implacable artist, she drinks the poison and dies. Démétrios then sculpts a masterpiece inspired by the beauty of her dead body. 31,000 copies of the book are sold in 1896 alone,³²⁴ making the young man both rich and famous, and no longer dependent on his brother for survival.

Louÿs' fame, however, entirely changes his relationship to Paris, the salons he used to frequent and the cafés which had always been such an important part of his life. His literature and celebrity has made it impossible for him to casually dine with friends at the café d'Harcourt; of this terrible deception, Louÿs writes two years later:

Quand j'avais vingt ans, j'attendais le succès littéraire comme un événement prodigieux ; et puis j'ai brusquement cessé de le désirer. Le jour où il m'est venu, j'aurais presque pleuré de voir que je n'en avais en somme aucune joie. Je me disais : N'est-ce que cela ! –et depuis vingt cinq mois je n'ai pas travaillé trois semaines. Je n'aime plus du tout la littérature. Ou du moins, j'aime écrire, mais je n'aime plus être lu ; et l'un me gâte l'autre.³²⁵

Louÿs' wish had always been to write for a handful of select intellectuals, and now he is on the lips of the very masses he disdains.

The correlation between his celebrity and notions of literature and place discussed in this chapter may not at first seem evident. Thus far, the focus has been on literary production in relation to space, i.e. journal offices like the *Mercure de France*, bookstores like Le Librairie de L'Art Indépendant, cafés like d'Harcourt, and the very streets of Paris where Tinan and Louÿs wander through the night. Louÿs' problem with celebrity boils down to a question of readership, which, now

³²⁴ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 350.

³²⁵ Letter from Pierre Louÿs to Mme Bulteau, September 1898 (private collection) Cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 354.

expanded, changes his relationship to these spaces. At *L'Art Indépendant*, Louÿs had published a very restricted number of each of his works on fine luxury paper destined to an extremely restricted audience. This was not just an esthetic choice, but an ideological one that had its roots in his first dreams of literary glory which did not include the mass populace, and it is from this perspective that the adult Louÿs betrays the idealistic teenage one. Further, at the *Mercure de France*, many of the collaborators such as Jules Renard and Vielé-Griffin resent the twenty-five year old's success.³²⁶ Blackballed by these collaborators, Louÿs steps away from the revue, essentially ending his short but important collaboration. In a different way, mobs asking for autographs in the Latin Quarter, and incessant discussion in the salons, which largely praised the writer, made it impossible for the young man to frequent the places he once had enjoyed so carelessly. Essentially, Louÿs is alienated from the spaces—the revue offices, the salons, and the cafés—which had for so long been at the core of his literary life.

Conclusion

From Mallarmé and Heredia's formalized, or rather, socially recognized and legitimized salons to Louÿs' playful rue Grétry salon and the cafés and garçonniers where the boys drink, discuss literature, and enjoy one another's company, the stage is set for Louÿs and his cohort to actualize their roles as 'jeunes hommes de lettres.' The discussion will now pass from questions of the physical spaces which these you

³²⁶ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 349.

men inhabit, to the young men themselves as agents in a literary tradition, specifically that related to dandyism and the esthetics of clothing and decor. Further, discussion of the body, affectation, and masculinity will elucidate the ways in which these young men, Louÿs in particular, maneuver within the labyrinth of the literary habitus of the early to mid 1890s.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOUÏS ON THE STAGE: THE LITERARY DANDY AS PERFORMER

Although Pierre Louÿs was an intensely private person, particularly after 1900,³²⁷ he spent much of his literary youth (1889 through 1899), as a performer, a literary dandy conscious of the ideology, etiquette, and esthetic materialism which defined the social milieu he was struggling to become an integral part of. As such, Louÿs is the inheritor of a long historical tradition epitomized by the likes of Balzac, Barbey D'Aurevilly, and Baudelaire, and then elaborated upon by contemporaries such as Paul Bourget and Maurice Barrès. Whether or not Louÿs, Jean de Tinan, and André Lebey read Barbey's study of Brummel, Balzac's treaty on "la vie élégante," or Baudelaire's essay on the dandy, the "myth" of the dandy had become so ubiquitous within bourgeois society, particularly within the literary milieu, that the qualities of this social "type" could easily be named and recognized apart from these key texts.

For the generation coming of age in the late 1880s and early 1890s, Paul Bourget's *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*³²⁸ and Maurice Barrès' trilogy *Le Culte du moi*³²⁹ defined the modern dandy. Apart from his attention to appearance and etiquette, this dandy is a nihilist and an intellectual, who is often morally versatile, that is, his morality is often not fixed. Bourget makes this particular point

³²⁷ Robert Fleury et al.

³²⁸ Paul Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine : études littéraires*, 1st edition, vol 1, 1882 (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

³²⁹ Maurice Barrès, *Le Culte du moi*, 1888-1891 (Paris: Plon, 1966).

in his essay on Ernest Renan who he provides as an example of the modern 'dilettante philosophe.'³³⁰ According to Barrès, the dandy seeks to cultivate his Moi, or his ego, and to perfect his tastes and his intellect so as to better experience his own self.³³¹ The ego is at the heart of the late nineteenth century dandy, and theorized in a way that had not been as clearly developed by earlier writers, which is perhaps the greatest contribution of Bourget and Barrès in this domain. In many ways, their novels and essays were used as handbooks by young intellectuals in the first decades of the Third Republic.

Invariably and quite obviously, Tinan and Lebey were deeply influenced by these writings on the ego and the quest for sensation which they articulate in their own writing. Tinan dedicates the preface of *Penses-tu réussir !* to Maurice Barrès while Lebey calls himself an "homme libre" in *Les Premières luttes*.³³² There is less of a direct influence of Barrès and Bourget in the published writing of Pierre Louÿs, although he does discuss these writers in depth in his letters to Paul Valéry and

³³⁰ Using Ernst Renan as a model, Bourget notes: "Il est difficile, en effet, de sortir de soi et de se représenter d'une façon très différente ; plus difficile encore de dépasser cette représentation et de revêtir soi-même, si l'on peut dire, cette façon d'exister, ne fût-ce que durant quelques minutes. La sympathie n'y suffirait pas, il faut un scepticisme raffiné à la fois et systématique, avec un art de transformer ce scepticisme en instrument de jouissance. Le dilettantisme devient alors une science délicate de la métamorphose intellectuelle et sentimentale." Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine : études littéraires* 39.

³³¹ Barrès observes in 1892 in *l'Examen des trois roman idéologiques* which serves as the frontpiece of the complete trilogy: "Notre Moi, en effet, n'est pas immuable ; il nous faut le défendre chaque jour et chaque jour le créer. Voilà la double sur quoi sont bâtis ces ouvrages. Le culte du Moi n'est pas de s'accepter tout entier. Cette éthique, où nous avons mis notre ardente et notre unique complaisance, réclame de ses servants un constant effort. C'est une culture qui se fait par élaguement et par accroissements : nous avons d'abord à épurer notre Moi de toutes les parcelles étrangères que la vie continuellement y introduit, et puis à lui ajouter. Quoi donc ? Tout ce qui lui est identique, assimilable ; parlons net : tout ce qui se colle à lui quand il se livre sans réaction aux forces de son instinct." Maurice Barrès, *L'Examen des trois roman idéologiques*, 1892 in *Romans et Voyages* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1994).

³³² Lebey, *Les premières luttes* 372.

André Gide throughout his early youth.³³³ Louÿs does not appear to believe that sensation necessarily leads to self-knowledge, because for him, sensation is a goal in and of itself. Perhaps it is for this reason that he wrote so much private erotic literature, and, moreover, that he chose to keep it unpublished. Writing was a pleasure, as was reading and the collecting of rare books. They were ends in and of themselves that appear to be extensions of the self, not necessarily gateways to the ego.

Sensation, ideology, and ego aside, the focus of the following chapter is Louÿs' material dandyism with specific emphasis on objects, clothing, and the body, as well as on theatricality and performativity. The objective in discussing Louÿs, Tinan, and Lebey in terms of the dandy as a literary and cultural type is not to limit them to this definition by assessing their life and work according to some kind of checklist of what is and is not a dandy. If there were such a thing, it would be largely ideological, not material, and besides, the dandy is malleable, often contradictory, and very much changes over place and time. He transcends class—one in fact can be a “poor” dandy—and he also transcends gender—Rachilde, Colette, and Brooke could be considered female dandies. The purpose of framing Louÿs in relation to the dandy as type is to gain a greater knowledge of his material life and mode of expression. It is also to understand Louÿs in his specific historical and cultural moment, at a time when dandyism is the trademark of the generation. In employing the term dandy, the goal is to expand on our understanding of Louÿs, not to limit him to a category. It is for this reason that Balzac, Barbey, and Baudelaire's theories

³³³ Gide et al. 63, 120, 164, 187.

on the “artist” as type will be included in our discussion. These foundational writings on the artist, like those on the dandy, had by the 1890s become an integral, if unconscious, part of Louÿs’ literary milieu and were known to the poet and his entourage. Interestingly, Louÿs considered himself an artist above all else, as evinced in his journals and personal letters, an important fact that cannot be overlooked.

In *Le Mythe du Dandy*, Emilien Carassus provides a useful description of the way the dandy is constructed and operates in society:

Le dandysme, en effet, apparaît comme un système de signe : le dandy se révèle, se montre comme dandy. Loin de dissimuler honteusement, comme fait le snob pour son snobisme, il manifeste son dandysme. Or, parmi les signes qui contribuent à cette mise en évidence, certaine ordonnance de l’espace intervient. (Londres, Paris)... Le dandy ne peut déployer ses talents que sur une scène convenable...³³⁴

Carassus evokes several key elements that will be expanded on in the following pages in direct relation to Louÿs, Tinan, and Lebey. First of all, Carassus observes that the dandy works within a system of signs. These “signs” can be in reference to objects such as canes, hats, and gloves, for example, to historical or literary references such as the person and writing of Stendhal and the poetry of Rimbaud, and to etiquette and behavior, that is, the use of calling cards, dedications written in books, or even appearance at specific social events. Secondly, these signs reveal the dandy, they expose him and allow him to manifest his social identity within a specific space. Carassus signals the cities of London and Paris, but more specifically, for our purposes, they are the salons and apartments where the literary tradition is

³³⁴ Emilien Carassus, *Le mythe du dandy* (Paris: A. Colin, 1971) 20.

played out. Invariably, the dandy needs an audience, needs an “other” to witness him. In many specific ways, the objects and décor of Louÿs’ apartment and the salons he frequents compose the stage which allow him to perform his dandyism.

So much has been written on the dandy, on his historical and cultural significance, his various manifestations over the last two hundred years, as well as his relation to the snob³³⁵ and the dilettante,³³⁶ that an in-depth study here would be counter productive to our specific discussion on Louÿs and his entourage.

However, a very brief historiography, which touches on the works of Balzac, Barbey D’Aurevilly, and Baudelaire—the three “theorists” as it were of nineteenth century dandyism—will help situate Pierre Louÿs, Jean de Tinan, and André Lebey in their proper historical context. Additionally, Louÿs’ friendship with Oscar Wilde, which lasted between 1891 and 1893, will play a key role in the poet’s early development as an esthete. For this reason, Wilde will be evoked throughout the study in relation to the topics discussed. From history and ideology, our focus will turn to the scene where Louÿs performs his dandyism and the role clothing, objects, and décor play in reflecting and enforcing their historical and ideological significance.

³³⁵ Émilien Carassus, *Le Snobisme et les lettres françaises de Paul Bourget à Marcel Proust, 1884-1914* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966).

³³⁶ Jean-François Hugot, *Le dilettantisme dans la littérature française d’Ernest Renan à Ernest Psichari* (Lille: Atelier National, Reproduction des Thèses, Université Lille III, 1984).

Towards a definition: the dandy and the artist

In his 1830 text, *Traité de la vie élégante*, Balzac distinguishes between “L’homme qui travaille,/ L’homme qui pense,/ et l’homme qui ne fait rien.”³³⁷ The man of wealth, who is not obligated to work, has the luxury of self-cultivation. “La vie élégante,” the author writes, “est la perfection de la vie extérieure et matérielle,”³³⁸ but this does not exclude the interior aspects of taste and intelligence. Balzac’s *Traité* is a dissertation on the *elegant life*, opposing itself to *dandyism*, which at this time in French cultural history is nothing but a superficial and shallow version of this elegant life. Toward the end of his essay, Balzac writes: “En se faisant Dandy, un homme devient un meuble de boudoir, un mannequin extrêmement ingénieux qui peut se poser sur un cheval ou sur un canapé, qui mord ou tête habilement le bout d’une canne ; mais un être pensant ?... jamais.” He goes on to declare: “La vie élégante n’exclut ni la pensée, ni la science ; elle les consacre. Elle ne doit pas apprendre seulement à jouir du temps, mais à l’employer dans un ordre d’idées extrêmement élevé.”³³⁹ In other words, the elegant life is a mode of living with depth, both in material tastes and in interior self-cultivation, while the dandy, at this time, is nothing but the superficial aspect of the elegant man. He is no more profound than a piece of furniture or a finely filled out suit.

³³⁷ Honoré de Balzac, “Traité de la vie élégante,” *La Mode*, 1830, (Clermont-Ferrand, France: Presses Universitaires Blaises Pascal, 2000) 75.

³³⁸ Ibid. 83.

³³⁹ Ibid. 140.

Barbey D'Aurevilly follows Balzac's important text in 1843 with *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell*.³⁴⁰ However, he appropriates the word dandy to stand for everything Balzac had termed *la vie élégante* in order to give the word a positive connotation which he applies directly to the British esthete George Brummell. Like Balzac, he does make clear the difference between the superficial and the profound, writing: "Les esprits qui ne voient les choses que par leur plus petit côté, ont imaginé que le Dandysme était surtout l'art de la mise, une heureuse et audacieuse dictature en fait de toilette et d'élégance extérieure. Très certainement c'est cela aussi; mais c'est bien davantage." After conceding the materialism and superficiality of the dandy, Barbey goes on, "Le Dandysme est toute une manière d'être [...] entièrement composée de nuances, comme il arrive toujours dans les sociétés très vieilles et très civilisée [...]"³⁴¹ *Paraître* (appearance) becomes synonymous with *être* (being) where interior and exterior cultivation converge to form a single subject.

Lastly, in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, in the section *Le Dandy*, published in 1863, Charles Baudelaire makes a similar observation about superficiality and depth. He writes: "Le dandysme n'est même pas [...] un goût immodéré de la toilette et de l'élégance matérielle. Ces choses ne sont pour le parfait dandy qu'un symbole de la supériorité aristocratique de son esprit."³⁴² This superiority is essential to the

³⁴⁰ Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell*, 1845 (Paris: Oeuvres romanesques et complètes. Editions de la Pléiade. Gallimard, 1966).

³⁴¹ Ibid. 673-674.

³⁴² Charles Baudelaire, "Le Dandy" in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, 1863, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Robert Laffont (Paris: Bouquins, 1980) 807.

dandy whose goal is to “fonder une espèce nouvelle d’aristocratie.”³⁴³ This is precisely where the three texts converge, that is, at the point of superiority and revolt. Essentially, according to these three writers, the French Revolution destroyed the previous superiority of the aristocracy, forcing it to compete in a democratic and industrial world ruled by uncultivated and avarice bourgeois. The dandy is the hero who stands against this vulgarity with every fiber of his being. Barbey defines this goal most clearly in writing: “Le Dandysme [...] se joue de la règle et pourtant la respect encore. Il s’en réclame quand il y échappe ; il la domine et en est dominé tour à tour : double et muable caractère !”³⁴⁴ In other words, the dandy is a *player* of the game. He is not a revolutionary standing at the garden gates throwing stones. He is in the salon seducing and conquering the inner lives of his enemies and rivals, both bourgeois and aristocratic. He *is* a revolutionary, a “caractère d’opposition et de révolte,”³⁴⁵ but one who works from the inside out, who transforms himself and others through his intellect, his conversation, his elegance and the manipulation of his décor.

The interior cultivation of intelligence, knowledge, and taste is what permits the dandy to so successfully revolt against the democracy and industrialization of the modern world. The term cultivation implies a process, one that is driven by a self-conscious assertion of the will upon one’s own character. Balzac writes in his *Traité*, “Tous les enfants de l’aristocratie ne naissent pas avec le sentiment de l’élégance, avec le goût qui sert à donner à la vie une poétique empreinte.” These

³⁴³ Ibid. 807.

³⁴⁴ Barbey d’Aurevilly 675.

³⁴⁵ Baudelaire, “Le Dandy,” 807.

children arrive at this sense of elegance through “L’éducation, l’habitude.” The true privilege of the aristocracy is not that they are born into wealth, but that they are “élevés par des mères élégantes, dont les langages et les mœurs gardent toutes les bonnes traditions.”³⁴⁶ Further, “l’intelligence résulte d’une perfection intérieur.”³⁴⁷ Education and study are essential for the rich man to reach perfection which his birth cannot do alone. By extension, in a bourgeois society, any individual of interior quality can cultivate and develop his or her intelligence and taste.

As a performer and revolutionary, the dandy exercises power over those around him through the force of his entire character. Barbey provides an over all portrait of this effect. Using George Brummell as an example, he writes, “Son action sur les autres était plus immédiate que celle qui s’exerce uniquement par le langage. Il la produisait par l’intonation, le regard, le geste, l’intention transpirante, le silence même [...]”³⁴⁸ The dandy’s mode of communication is extra-linguistic, realizing itself in tone, look, gesture, and silence. Added to this are clothing and décor, which place him on his proper stage in the proper attire. Like the historian Emilien Carassus, Balzac also notes in his *Traité* that all these elements compose a system. He writes, “La vie extérieure est une sorte de système organisé qui représente un homme aussi exactement que les colleurs du colimaçon se reproduisent sur sa coquille. Aussi, dans la vie élégante, tout s’enchaîne et se commande.” It is this totality which is essential to understanding Pierre Louÿs’ material, social, and artistic life as he plays

³⁴⁶ Balzac 111.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. 112.

³⁴⁸ Barbey d’Aureville 696.

it out in the Parisian literary salons, and in his own apartment, which serve as the stage of this performance.

Although dandyism according to Balzac, Barbey, and Baudelaire provides an excellent framework for understanding Pierre Louÿs's material life as well as his process of self-cultivation, there are many elements which are inconsistent with his character. For example, in comparing the dandy to "la femme," Barbey notes, "Il y a dans le Dandysme quelque chose de froid, de sobre, de railleur et, quoique contenu, d'instantanément mobile, qui doit choquer."³⁴⁹ Louÿs does not maintain himself as an aloof and cold figure, constantly trying to shock or manipulate. To the contrary, he is an enthusiast, erupting with passion, and he is also a farceur, someone who loves to play jokes on his friends and who maintains a strong sense of irony in nearly all of his social relations. There are other such inconsistencies in the texts thus far discussed that cannot be applied to Louÿs or his friends, but the dandy as type is a deeply paradoxical figure who is malleable and who does not fit one single definition. Additionally, he is a figure which changes over time, adapting to his particular social milieu. Because of these inconsistencies, it is helpful to look at the social type Louÿs most strongly identified with, and that is the "artist."

At the opening of *La Traité de la vie élégante*, Balzac writes "L'artiste est toujours grand. Il a une élégance et une vie à lui, parce que chez lui tout reflète son intelligence et sa gloire." He then provides the aphorism: "Un artiste vie comme il veut, ou... comme il peut."³⁵⁰ The question for Balzac is how the artist lives.

³⁴⁹ Barbey d'Aurevilly 710.

³⁵⁰ Balzac 87.

Particularly as he may not be born of material means, his material life is often dependant on what little means he has. Concerned with money in a way the aristocrat may not be, the artist must earn his bread one way or another, but he does not live to work, or define his identity, like the baker, or the businessman, on his material profession. The artist, for Balzac, fits into the category of “L’homme qui pense.” Similarly, Baudelaire concedes in *Mon Coeur mis à nu*: “Il n’existe que trois être respectables : Le prêtre, le guerrier, le poète. Savoir, tuer et créer.”³⁵¹ All other men, according to the poet, exercise professions. Quite simply, the artists works to live because he must. This situation, however, does not exclude him from the superior status enjoyed by the dandy, nor does it exclude him from being a revolutionary. In a series titled *Des artistes*, published in *La Silhouette*, Balzac writes: “Un homme qui dispose de la pensée, est un souverain. Les rois commandent aux nations pendant un temps donné, l’artiste commande à des siècles entiers ; il change la face des choses, il jette une révolution en moule, il pèse sur le globe, il le façonne.”³⁵² Barbey D’Aurevilly, highlights the notion, picked up again by Baudelaire, that the dandy puts his art into his life, but does not negate the fact that he can be an artist. For the non-artistic dandy, his life is his art, as in the case of George Brummel who Barbey notes was a poor poet. Oscar Wilde, however, a published novelist and dramaturge was both a dandy and a writer who was known to say: “I put all my genius into my life; I put only my talent into my works.”³⁵³

³⁵¹ Charles Baudelaire, “Le Dandy” in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, 1863, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Robert Laffont (Paris: Bouquins, 1980) 410.

³⁵² (p. 708)

³⁵³ "Oscar Wilde." thefreelibrary.com 11 December. 2011 <http://wilde.thefreelibrary.com/>

The dandy and the artist as social types are not mutually exclusive, clearly evinced in the notion of the literary dandy, or even the artist dandy, which became so prevalent toward the end of the nineteenth century and reigned supreme through the twentieth with such figures as Jean Cocteau and Salvador Dali. Taken together, these two notions, the dandy and the artist, provide a fuller picture of the ways in which Louÿs conceived of himself in society and the ways others interpreted him. From henceforth, Louÿs can be referred to as a literary dandy.

Gender and the arts; affectation and the body

Pierre Louÿs very likely met Oscar Wilde at Mallarmé's Tuesday evening salon in November 1891 when the playwright had come to Paris to meet the important poets and writers of the day and establish his reputation on the continent. Wilde had, after all, recently published the *Portrait of Dorian Gray*, and had produced several plays in London. For the three weeks he was in Paris, twenty year old Pierre Louÿs and twenty-one year old André Gide barely quit his side. Because of this, the influence of the playwright's esthetics and attitude on the young men cannot be overlooked. André Gide would go on to see Wilde after his unfortunate 1895 trial and write several important essays on his friend, while Louÿs would break with the esthete in 1893 after being scandalized by his entourage and angered by his treatment of his estranged wife. Louÿs and Wilde's friendship will be discussed in detail in chapter six of this study, but for the moment, our interest lies in the material and esthetic relationship between the two.

Upon his arrival in Paris, the French press treated Wilde with intrigue.³⁵⁴ As was the case in England, Wilde's feminine qualities were sometimes evoked, usually in relation to his clean-shaven face and charm. Hugues Le Roux writes in an article titled *Oscar Wilde*, published in the widely read *Le Figaro*: "Une merveilleuse éloquence de causeur, la souplesse de dialectique d'un platonicien, un extérieur un peu inquiétant où s'alliaient à la vigueur virile un charme féminin, une grâce presque enfantine, conquièrent toutes les sympathies."³⁵⁵ Childish and feminine, clearly not masculine and virile, Le Roux notes elsewhere Wilde's unshaven face; this at a time when facial hair is a sign of virility. Léon Daudet notes these same characteristics in *Souvenirs des milieux littéraires*, particularly his childishness and the duality of his nature. He writes: "Voilà une physionomie singulière, un mélange de bon et de mauvais, de grossier et de raffiné, de vicieux et de spiritualisé, de sincérité et de posse, comme en ont rarement produit une littérature et une pays." After recounting a short anecdote involving Wilde, Daudet concludes: "Puis Wilde pouffait d'un rire de grosse commère satisfaite et commandait à haute voix au garçon un breuvage compliqué."³⁵⁶ Essentially, duplicitous in every aspect, Wilde would roar with laughter like a fat, satisfied woman. Daudet's description casts Wilde in rather vulgar terms, but still associates him with the feminine. Further, both of these descriptions note the physical presence, the affectation of character through

³⁵⁴ For an in depth discussion of Oscar Wilde's arrival in Paris at this time and the effect of his scandal in Parisian society, see Nancy Erber, "The French Trials of Oscar Wilde," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6.4 (April 1996): 549-588.

³⁵⁵ Hugues Le Roux, "Oscar Wilde," *Le Figaro* December 2, 1891: 3.

³⁵⁶ Léon Daudet, *Souvenirs des milieux littéraires, politiques, artistiques et médicaux* (1931-1936). In *Souvenirs et polémiques* (Paris: Bouquins, 1992) 278-279.

gesticulation, as well as the sharp wit and intellect of this brilliant “causeur,” thus observing the total effect of Wilde’s body and intellect.

In the *Wilde Century*, Alan Sinfield gives a brief but detailed historiography of how estheticism, in England especially, became associated with femininity throughout the nineteenth century. “The modern conception of poetry,” Sinfield writes, “Developed as the alternative ethos within the dominant nineteenth-century, middle-class ideology of utilitarianism and political economy, the market and empire.” Because industry, the market, and all things rational and utilitarian were associated with the masculine and the patriarchal, its alternative in art, irrationality, and beauty became associated with the feminine. The bourgeois public viewed art and estheticism largely in three terms. Firstly, it was frivolous and trivial; secondly, it was to be the servant of commerce and industry; thirdly, it was something entirely separate from utilitarian life, another realm, so to speak. By the 1890s, this last idea had largely won out; poetry and estheticism were viewed as an autonomous, visionary domain that served no real purpose in daily life. Sinfield continues by associating estheticism with middle class dissidence which “constitutes poetry, literature, the spirit, nature personal religion, intimate and family relations as the ‘human’; it sets them over against mechanical, urban, industrial and commercial organization in the modern world.”³⁵⁷ Additionally, as of the early 1890s, the word decadent became a sort of catchword of the British literary scene and, thanks to Wilde, it came to be associated with the cult of personality which encouraged a

³⁵⁷ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century : Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1994) 86.

willful confusion between art and life.³⁵⁸ This confusion, in the British context, resulted in a feminine identity, or persona, for dandies such as Wilde, Alfred Douglas, Lionel Johnson, and John Gray, the latter of which was arguably not homosexual.

Although many links can be made between estheticism and femininity, or even homosexuality—subjects much discussed in the French press through the Wilde trials³⁵⁹—, there is another element attached to art that is largely born after the Prussian invasion of France in 1870: degeneracy. France’s crushing defeat at the hands of the Prussian army, the fall of Napoleon III and the aristocratic order, and the messy politics of the founding of the Third Republic, all contributed to anxiety surrounding masculinity, the solidity of the family, and the durability of ‘la patrie.’ The French Decadence of the 1880s, its literature, theater, and painting, is inextricably associated with the resulting pessimism of these defeats and the social, political, and economic insecurities which followed. Not surprisingly, social degeneracy became associated with psychological, sexual, and behavioral degeneracy. Robert Nye thoughtfully discusses fin de siècle constructions of masculinity in *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*,³⁶⁰ highlighting the medical and psychiatric introduction of sexual perversity and otherness in Chapter Six of his study. Nye writes, “[I]f doctors supplied much of the vocabulary for the process of constructing sexual “others,” they were aided in the invention and

³⁵⁸ Jerusha Hull McCormack, *John Gray: Poet, Dandy, and Priest*. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press; Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1991) 107-110.

³⁵⁹ Erber 567-570.

³⁶⁰ Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor In Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

dissemination of these cultural representations by public officials, literary figures, and even by the individuals who were the objects of the medical gaze.”³⁶¹ This general dissemination of sexual ‘others’ manifests itself clearly in the French decadent esthetics of the 1880s, as well as in the general ‘névrose’ and ‘pessimisme’ which appears to saturate literary production throughout this period. Huysmans’ *Des Esseintes*, as presented in *A rebours* in 1884,³⁶² is the obvious example of a sickly esthete whose poor health and weak body are results of a purely ‘unnatural’ and artificial mode of life. Paul Bourget’s *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*,³⁶³ however, published as a collection in 1883, lays out the ways degeneracy is directly attached to the arts, either through the poetry of Baudelaire, the pessimism of Flaubert, or the nihilistic diletantism of Renan. These essays were read by Louÿs, as indicated in his letters and private journal, as well as by his friends André Gide, and Paul Valéry.³⁶⁴

Since none of his writing up to 1895 suggests any gender insecurity Louÿs probably would not have been concerned with being viewed as feminine on account of his esthetic tastes, literary production, or clothing and behavior. Furthermore, he most likely would have laughed at the idea of the arts being attached to degeneracy and sickness; he was, after all, living in the constant shadow of his own possible demise from respiratory weakness. However, remarkably, both Jean de Tinan and Pierre Louÿs are regularly described in memoirs of the period in feminine terms. In

³⁶¹ Nye 98.

³⁶² Huysmans.

³⁶³ Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*.

³⁶⁴ Gide et al.

Mes Apprentissages, Colette describes Tinan as “fin et doux, la main un peu plus délicate qu’il n’est permis à un homme, et des cheveux noirs en boucles sur un front qui ennoblissait tout son visage, Jean de Tinan promis aux lettres et à la mort, était tantôt affecté comme un enfant, tantôt d’une grâce naturelle qui pouvait passer pour de l’affection.³⁶⁵” Like Wilde, Tinan is portrayed as being soft and childlike, qualities which are associated with his charm. Because his poorly defined masculinity is so disarming, he easily attracts young women, mostly prostitutes and lower class girls of the Latin Quarter, who become associated with his identity as a heart broken romantic. Similarly, Rachilde describes Tinan as “joli” and “charmant” in *Portraits d’Hommes* and describes in detail his affective behavior and gesticulations as an artist in the romantic vein of 1830 who pays great attention to his clothing and presentation. She writes, “Le beau ténébreux portait des gilets de velours noir à vingt-cinq ou trente boutons d’argent, des cravates à deux tours, quelquefois des violettes sortant de la poche, côté cœur. Très pâle, les yeux cernés, le sourire de temps en temps mélancolique [...]”³⁶⁶ In 1894, in his personal journal, Tinan himself notes his affective attitude toward clothing and behavior, writing: “Adopté une coiffure et une attitude d’un 1830—1824 est mieux, plus pur—cela m’amuse—et vaut mieux que d’abuser de l’absinthe aux verts piliers.”³⁶⁷ As Margret Waller describes in *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel*,³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ Colette. *Mes apprentissages; ce que Claudine n’a pas dit*. (1936) in *Romans, Récits, Souvenirs* (1920-1940) (Paris: Bouquins, 1989) 1225.

³⁶⁶ Rachilde, “Jean de Tinan,” *Portraits d’hommes* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1930) 124.

³⁶⁷ *Cahiers 1894*. Jean de Tinan. Cited Auriant, “Petite histoire littéraire et anecdotes,” *Mercure de France* June 15, 1939. Also cited by Goujon in *Jean de Tinan*, 63.

³⁶⁸ Margaret Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

the romantic esthetic, as portrayed in literature and cultivated in the popular imagination throughout the nineteenth century, is essentially non-virile.³⁶⁹ The romantic hero does not conquer foreign lands or seek power in his own society. He is essentially weak and lamentable. With a flower in his breast coat pocket, wearing a cape of felt and satin, his skin pale, his disposition melancholic, Tinan is in turns effeminate and childlike. But in contrast to the Romantic hero as described by Waller, Tinan is in reality a womanizer who describes himself in *Penses-tu réussir !*, and is described by his friends, as a “pute,” or whore which, again, casts the young man in feminine terms.³⁷⁰

Physically, Louÿs is also described as “joli” and non-virile. While it seems that mostly women viewed him in these terms, men also remarked his disposition and physicality. Léon-Paul Fargue notes that Louÿs “avait un des plus jolis visages de l’époque, douce volute sur le front, voix comme satinée.”³⁷¹ One of his friends, Camille Mauclair writes that Louÿs “était un jeune dandy d’une beauté un peu féminine, précieux, cérémonieux, fugace, timide, fébrile, ouvrant de grands yeux étonnés sous des bandeaux de cheveux.”³⁷² As a lover, Louÿs is sometimes cast as the desired one, or the pursued, rather than as the pursuer. One of Louÿs former lovers, a young woman named Polaire, tells Colette that even though her relationship with the young man is tumultuous and even violent, she cannot help

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir*.

³⁷¹ Léon-Paul Fargue, *Portraits de famille* (Paris: J. B. Janin, 1947).

³⁷² Mauclair, *Mallarmé Chez Lui*, 25.

but be seduced. Polaire bemoans, “Ah ! Colette, ce qu’il peut sentir bon, ce salaud-là, et cette peau, et ces dents... vous ne pouvez pas savoir...”³⁷³

Polaire describes Louÿs later in her mémoires in the following terms: “Ah ! ces grands yeux bleus, froids, qui semblaient jeter des regards de faïence, cette nonchalance, comme efféminée, de la demarche, cette lenteur dans la conversation!”³⁷⁴ Of course, just because a man is desired, this does not make him effeminate. However, it is poignant to note such descriptions and such role-play between lovers in light of concurrent descriptions of Oscar Wilde’s effeminacy and sexuality, observations which destabilize traditional articulations of masculinity, a subject which will be covered in detail in chapter six. In essence, however, these descriptions of Louÿs and Tinan provide excellent examples of their physical presence as well as how they were viewed in society.

Clothing

Discussions on the body and affectation naturally lead to questions of clothing, and as Fred Davis notes in his book *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*,³⁷⁵ there are essentially two ways of theoretically *reading* clothing. The first is that it communicates through a “visible language, with its own distinctive grammar, syntax, and vocabulary.” The second is that its meaning is more elusive than this, more along the lines of music which evokes “emotions, allusions and moods;” these are abstract states which resist direct intellectual engagement. Each point of view

³⁷³ Colette 1225.

³⁷⁴ Polaire, *Polaire par elle même* (Paris: Figuière, 1933).

³⁷⁵ Davis.

offers a specific way of reading clothing, but as Davis affirms, the reality is most likely a blending of the two.³⁷⁶ The dandy, particularly the literary dandy, operates with a mode of expression that is at once linguistic (conversation, oral stories, poetry, letters) and a mode that is extra-linguistic (gestures, attitude, silence, clothing, objects). As a self-conscious socialite working within a specific literary habitus, Louÿs must consciously communicate on both levels. Clothing and etiquette are considered just as seriously as words, and when applied carefully, both seduce and conquer.

In the larger bourgeois society, one very important aspect of Louÿs' self-presentation is a desire to distinguish himself from the work-a-day bourgeois who normally dressed in dark colors, conveying a sense of seriousness and practicality. Rose Fortassier writes in *Les écrivains français et la mode*: "Notre écrivain du XIXe siècle a soif de fantaisie et de rêve, il n'aime pas le bourgeois, il a jugé le mondain : et le voilà condamné à la vulgarité du vêtement moderne en général et au deuil de l'habit en particulier!"³⁷⁷ Before the Revolution of 1789, according to Fortassier, the black suit was generally worn by salesmen, reformed officers, rentiers, and authors. In the nineteenth century, the black suit is *imposed* on the "homme élégant," especially in eveningwear. The dandy, however, seeks to express his innermost self through his clothing and to distinguish himself within any crowd. In wearing a powder blue suit, a flower patterned tie, and a long pointed mustache Louÿs could visibly show that he was of an elite group of artists and intellectuals, a group which

³⁷⁶ Davis 3.

³⁷⁷ Rose Fortassier, *Les écrivains français et la mode : de Balzac à nos jours* (Paris: PUF, 1988) 8.

also distinguished itself from the aristocrats, or “les hommes élégants.” Louÿs’ clothing then serves to articulate, as Davis puts it, “social differentiation and social integration.”³⁷⁸ Because of this, his clothing locates him “in some structured universe of status claims and life style attachments.”³⁷⁹ It also implies what Joanne Finkelstein describes as “the individual’s intention to act in the same way as others who are similarly attired.”³⁸⁰

The confluence between habitus and intention produces a contextualized meaning of the clothing worn. According to Davis, this meaning refers to “the images, thoughts, sentiments, and sensibilities communicated by a new or old fashion and the symbolic means by which this is done.”³⁸¹ The meaning produced by clothing works on two levels: firstly, it works as an explicit language serving as the determinant which differentiates and integrates the individual from/in a particular habitus; and second, it works as a subtle activity which creates an effect on other individuals. Neither mode is as highly refined as oral and written language, yet they work in similar, if not more obscure ways to communicate symbolically. In the past several decades, the field of semiotics has been applied to the “code” communicated by clothing. Evoking Umberto Eco’s *A Theory of Semiotics*, Davis argues that clothing’s code is of “low semanticity” and should be viewed as an incipient or quasi code.³⁸² This throws clothing back into the subtle sphere of effect.

³⁷⁸ Davis 4.

³⁷⁹ Ibid. 4.

³⁸⁰ Finkelstein (p. 109) “The assumption is that a similitude exists between the appearance of the individual and the demeanour, even personal characteristics, which s/he can be expected to possess.”

³⁸¹ Davis 4.

³⁸² Ibid. 5.

Anne Hollander, in *Seeing through Clothes*, argues, like Davis, that clothes cannot be directly compared to verbal or written language. “One might say that individual appearances in clothes are not “statements,” as they are often called, but more like public readings of literary works in different genres of which the rules are generally understood.” Any social genre, or habitus to use Bourdieu’s term, develops its style out of the previous habitus which is continually being modified by groups and individuals. In other words, the style of every habitus is cut from the cloth of the habitus from which it evolved. Hollander goes on, “Thus Western clothing is not a sequence of direct social and esthetic *messages* cast in a language of fabric but, rather, a form of self-perpetuating visual fiction, like figurative art.”³⁸³ The visual fiction that Louÿs articulates through his clothing is read *through* the habitus itself, by those around him, and by historians who are able to identify this visual language.

Concerning the overall effect that clothing produces, especially combined with other extra-linguistic modes of communication, Hollander writes that clothing is like the tone of one’s voice and the speed of the utterances. Clothing conveys a “moral quality—the texture and style and flavor of the self [...] In a sense, beautiful clothes *are* beautiful manners [...]” She goes on to clarify, “Clothes make the man, not because they make up or invent what the man is or dress him up for show but because they actually create his conscious self. You are what you wear [...] When you are dressed any particular way at all, you are revealed rather than hidden.”³⁸⁴ Hollander argues that Balzac “was one of the first to express this idea at length in

³⁸³ Anne Hollander, *Seeing through clothes* (New York: Viking Press, 1978) XV.

³⁸⁴ Hollander 444.

narrative without laughing, apologizing, or keeping up the old fiction that natural grace and beauty may function and flourish under the oppressive habits of grimy and awkward and threadbare garments.” She also adds that clothes unmake the man (or woman), as in the case of Cinderella who endures a corrosion of spirit locked away in her rags. The connection between morality and clothing is an important one, as it directly infers that material presentation is an articulation of the deepest self. Additionally, as Balzac makes clear in his *Traité* and by example throughout *La Comédie Humaine*, elegant qualities are not innate, they are taught and cultivated, which has a democratizing effect on the notion of aristocratic moral superiority. It has been argued time and again that the nineteenth century is a bourgeois century, which came to full realization under the Third Republic.³⁸⁵ Individuals such as Pierre Louÿs, André Lebey, and Jean de Tinan represent the actualization of the cultivated, superior bourgeois who are not limited by the materialism of their birth.

That clothing, for Hollander, reflects manners and morality and makes manifest the conscious self, and articulates a direct correlation between psychology (the self, or the *Moi*, according to Barrès) and material expression. In this aspect, even from appearance, Louÿs’ portraits, either photographed or painted, allow the historian or theorist to ask, who is this young man? Louÿs’ codified clothing—the cane, coat, gloves, hat, and flower—place him in a precise social and cultural milieu

³⁸⁵ Adeline Daumard, *Les Bourgeois et la bourgeoisie en France depuis 1815* (Paris: Aubier, 1987).; Adeline Daumard, *Les bourgeois de Paris au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970).; Carol E. Harrison, *The bourgeois citizen in nineteenth-century France: gender, sociability, and the uses of emulation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).; Jean-Claude Yon, *Le Second Empire: Politique, société, culture* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2009).

saturated by philosophical, esthetic, literary, and even political ideology. Although not as precise as language, much of this is communicated through this superficial appearance.

Objects, Fetishism, and Identity

In many ways, for the literary dandy of the late nineteenth century, the objects which fill his salon and apartment—whether they be the ubiquitous “bibelots,” otherwise known as knick-knacks, or fine pieces of art—are just as revealing of his character and just as important to the construction of his identity as the clothes he wears and the accessories he carries on his person. Because of this, his own salon, filled with these objects, becomes directly associated with his innermost self. As Antoine Bertrand observes in relation to the great esthete Robert de Montesquiou: “[D]ans son emplacement, son architecture, son agencement et sa décoration, la demeure apparaît aux visiteurs comme l’émanation immédiatement appréhendable de la personnalité profonde des habitants.”³⁸⁶ He goes on to note that this personal space is where the esthete can escape contemporary society, can experiment with his own freedoms, and cultivate his individuality. “Art appliqué au décor de la vie, l’art décoratif entre ainsi en résonance profonde avec ‘l’art de vivre’.”³⁸⁷ The decorative arts, thusly, are one additional element in the totality of the dandy’s persona.

³⁸⁶ Bertrand 57

³⁸⁷ Ibid. 58.

Emilien Carassus, in *Le Mythe du dandy*, elaborates on the link between the decorative arts and identity: “[L]es objets d’art eux-mêmes l’intéressent [le dandy] dans la seule mesure où ils renvoient à un style de vie, et ne sont pas l’objet d’une délectation solitaire de collectionneur.”³⁸⁸ This observation highlights the social function of the objects. They compose the stage upon which the dandy performs. Further, like clothing, objects can serve as a language ‘read’ by observers. Carassus goes on: “Tout autant que l’oisiveté et plus que la richesse, le raffinement esthétique prend place dans le système de significations que le dandy donne à déchiffrer, et dont autrui doit composer son image.”³⁸⁹ These objects serve as an intermediary between the dandy and the world meant to be interpreted in a semiotic system beside clothing, language, and behavior.

The valorization of objects and clothing in relation to the individual and society is the very definition of ‘fetishism.’ Deriving from the Latin ‘facticius,’ the term was first employed in the modern sense in 1482 in the Portuguese word ‘feitiço’ which designates an object which is considered sacred or ritualized by the “primitive” peoples of Africa. As Christians explored Africa, and then the New World, they noted again and again the way native peoples religiously or magically imbued certain objects with spiritual or social significance. The French version of the word ‘fétiche’ is defined similarly in Diderot and Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* in reference to the people of Guinea: “Cette idole est un arbre, une tête de finge, un oifeau, ou

³⁸⁸ Carassus, *Le Mythe du dandy* 85.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 85.

quelque chose de semblable, fuivant leur fantaisie.”³⁹⁰ Along these lines, more than a hundred years later in 1887, A. Binet writes in an article titled *Le Fétichisme dans l’amour*: “Le fétichisme religieux consiste dans l’adoration d’un objet matériel auquel le fétichiste attribue un pouvoir mystérieux ; c’est ce qui indique l’étymologie du mot fétiche ; il dérive du portugais *fetisso*, qui signifie chose enchantée, chose fée.”³⁹¹ The significance of both of these definitions, of Diderot and Binet, is that they underscore the way in which societies symbolically valorize objects, in this case, in religious and spiritual terms.

In an article which appeared in the *Gazette rhénane* on November 3, 1842, Karl Marx employed the term ‘Fetish’ in a discussion of the “Vol de bois” in Cuba, where “les Sauvages” threw stolen wood into the river for religious reasons. Marx cites the theories proposed by the Enlightenment thinker Charles de Brosses in his study *Du Culte des dieux fétiches ou Parallèle de l’ancienne religion de l’Egypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie* (1760). Brosses was one of the first philosophers to offer a materialist reading of religion and belief systems by which groups of individuals extend powers or significance to inanimate objects, thus giving them agency. It is this notion of agency of objects which Marx elaborates upon in *Das Capital* (1867). Essentially, Marx discusses the ways in which objects produced by labor are valorized in a capitalist society which quantifies and transforms their utilitarian value through its exchange in a monetarily driven system. This process detaches the

³⁹⁰ Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Nouvelle impression en facimilé de la première édition de 1751-1780 (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1976).

³⁹¹ A. Binet, “Le Fétichisme dans l’amour,” *Revue philosophique*, 1887: 143.; réédition: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, Préface d’André Bejin (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 2000) 30.; cited in Laurent Fedi, *Fétichisme, Philosophie, Littérature* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002) 6.

means of production from the actual object, causing the object to take on an intrinsic value, thus gaining agency separate from labor.³⁹² Marx's definition is important because it removes the religious or spiritual element from the valorization of objects.

Doctors and psychologists in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth also began to employ the term 'fetishism' to sexual desire and displacement. Richard von Krafft-Ebing presents this in his article *Fétichisme*,³⁹³ published in 1900, while Sigmund Freud explores the issue in his 1905 *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Freud is concerned with the substitution of the sexual object and the displacement of desire from erogenous zones to objects or parts of the body not normally associated with sexual intercourse:

What is substituted for the sexual object is some part of the body (such as the foot or hair) which is in general very inappropriate for sexual purposes, or some inanimate object which bears an assignable relation to the person whom it replaces and preferably to that person's sexuality (e.g. a piece of clothing or under-linen). Such substitutes are with some justice likened to the fetishes in which savages believe that their gods are embodied.³⁹⁴

Interestingly, Freud's last line links the term fetishism back to its original European definition which is in relation to "savages" and the spiritual valorization of the objects they ritualize. Moreover, what links Freud to the definitions thus far

³⁹² "Dans le procès de circulation des marchandises, l'origine de la valeur et le vrai rapport de l'argent aux marchandises passent inaperçus. Dès lors, la valeur d'échange s'objective en valeur intrinsèque, se fixe dans les choses ; ce qui est rapport social passe pour un attribut de la marchandise elle-même," Laurent Fedi writes of Karl Marx's theory in Fedi 282.

³⁹³ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, "Fétichisme," *Médecine légale des Aliénés*, trans. Dr A. Rémond, ed. Octave Douin (Paris: 1900) 384-385.

³⁹⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The Sexual Aberrations," *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol VII. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953).

presented is not so much the displacement of desire upon an object, but desire for that object. By desiring an object, an individual inculcates it with meaning and significance. It thus takes on an agency of its own and within a specific social milieu, or habitus, the group itself imbues the object with signification.

There is a spiritual and egotistical element to the manipulation of clothing and objects which serve not only to communicate the innermost essence of the cultivated individual, but also to serve as one element in a system of linguistic and nonlinguistic signs employed to create an overall effect. Here again, Carassus provides an excellent summary of the ways in which the dandy functions in society:

Acteur et plus qu'acteur, puisqu'il construit son propre personnage, le dandy a besoin d'un public : autre différence avec l'esthète. Ce dernier peut se complaire dans la jouissance solitaire, s'enivrer de ses richesses artistiques comme l'avare de son or. Non le dandy : il n'est pas, pour ce prodigue, de trésor caché, secrètement soustrait aux regards envieux. Il se construit dans la création même de son être, au jour le jour, et en plein jour.³⁹⁵

Again, the nature of the dandy's fetishism of objects is their social value, that is, the way others read and valorize them.

Within Carassus' description is the notion of envy on the part of the other. The painter Jacques-Emile Blanche, friend of Pierre Louÿs and Claude Debussy, describes a certain aspect of the poet and the musician's relationship while emphasizing the valorization of "bibelots," or decorative objects. He writes in *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs* in 1925:

Pierre Louÿs achetait des objets parfois très chers et sans valeur artistique, mais tentants pour des camarades moins prodigues, ou pauvres, comme Debussy, que nous observâmes grillant d'envie, tourner, semaine après semaine, autour de certain grès émaillé, de Delaherche je crois. Claude, le

³⁹⁵ Carassus, *Le Mythe du Dandy* 91.

préfééré de Louÿs, finit par obtenir ce bibelot, mais que n'obtenait-il pas de notre hôte ? Claude était fort peu cultivé, presque illettré. Louÿs dirigea ses lectures avec amour, fit de son élève l'étonnant délicat au jugement si sûr qu'il devint ensuite. L'influence de Pierre Louÿs, personne n'aurait pu s'y soustraire.³⁹⁶

Many elements of our discussion of dandy appear in this brief passage. First of all, we note the process of cultivation which Louÿs oversees in his friend Debussy whom he provides with books and instruction. Secondly, it is clear that through Louÿs' influence that Debussy valorized the glazed pottery of Delaherche, and through Louÿs he learned to appreciate rare or finely made objects. Debussy attaches this object to Louÿs' status of a cultivated, educated, and intellectual individual, a status Debussy aspired to reach. The purchase, or collection of particular objects signifies for the musician a step in the realization of this status in himself. Lastly, evident through the entire passage is the importance of Louÿs' influence on his friend, a man who would develop into a world famous musician. Louÿs educates and inducts his friend into the cultivated habitus of artists and intellectuals, a habitus determined by the valorization of such objects.

In addition to objects-as-symbols being attached to individual identities and social status, there is also a way in which they overlap with clothing and writing that makes them inseparable from the milieu in which they function. More than just simple characteristics which describe the social milieu, these objects, clothing, and behaviors come to define it. Camille Mauclair, contemporary and acquaintance of Louÿs and Tinan throughout the 1890s, and a regular of many of the same salons, (particularly Valette and Rachilde's which was held in the offices of the *Mercure de*

³⁹⁶ Jacques-Emile Blanche, *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs*, (Paris: Éditions du monde moderne, 1930).

France) observes this layering of objects, clothing, behavior, and attitudes, which he attaches to a notion of 'mania' characteristic of his generation. He writes in his memoirs of their literary milieu:

Il y eut aussi la manie des hautes cravates à triple tour, celle des écritures « faites » qu'on s'efforçait de rendre aussi moyenâgeuses que possible (on copiait celle de Pierre Louÿs, le suprême du genre !) et enfin la manie des encres, cires et papiers de nuances extraordinaires, luxe des symboliste fortunés, auxquels le stylo, alors dans les limbes comme l'auto, eût fait horreur, sans même parler de l'affreuse machine à écrire ! Cette manie eut son complètement dans les tirages à part « hors commerce » de plaquette invendables qu'on imprimait, pour subjuguier l'hypothétique bibliophile, sur des papiers saugrenus aux noms et nuances fantasques [...] ³⁹⁷

From the specific fashion of a folded tie, to the writing style "moyenâgeuses" typical of Pierre Louÿs and his entourage, to the collection of fine quills, ink, and paper, and finally to the production of literature on rare, exquisitely named papers, all come together to become the very skin of the social milieu. It is also remarkable to note the generation's disgust for industrialism, particularly in the domain of literary production, that is to say, in regard to automatic pens and typewriters. This aversion very much roots the generation coming of age in the 1890s in the nineteenth century and clearly underscores their aversion toward naturalistic and utilitarian tendencies in both artistic production and in 'l'art de vivre.'

Louÿs on the stage

Pierre Louÿs regularly frequented some of the most important literary and mondain salons of the 1890s, including those of Heredia and Mallarmé, as well as others, including one hosted by Mme Bulteau on Sunday evenings, and another

³⁹⁷ Maclair, *Servitude et grandeur littéraire* 46.

hosted by Robert de Bonnières, whose wife, Henriette de Bonnières, attracted much attention for her character and strange beauty.³⁹⁸ These aforementioned salons, attended by artists, poets, writers, and aristocrats, allowed Louÿs to come into contact with some of the most distinguished minds and socialites of the 1890s. Rachilde's salon in the offices of *Le Mercure de France* offered the lustful Jean de Tinan and promiscuous Pierre Louÿs a sophisticated outlet for their extravagant tastes and behavior. Jean-Paul Goujon notes in his biography of Tinan that the young writer's dandyism created a sensation in the small salon. Dressed in a vest and cape in the romantic style of 1830, one observer, Henri Ghéon, writes dryly to André Gide, "M. de Tinan trône au Mercure."³⁹⁹ In many ways, the salon is a theater space where characters like Alfred Jarry, the actress Fanny Zaessinger, and Pierre Louÿs can perform the most exaggerated and playful versions of themselves. Léon-Paul Fargue, a regular guest of Rachilde's salon, describes Louÿs and his companions in these exquisite terms:

Pierre Louÿs, qui avait un des plus jolis visages de l'époque, douce volute sur le front, voix comme satinée, habillée à la mode de ce temps, importable jusque dans le toquard, col très haut, large cravate à trois tours timbrée d'un camée au d'une monnaie antique, revers en frottoirs d'allumettes, vêtement-type de l'artiste qui se plaisait aux grâces mondaines et n'aimait pas trop la bohème. Jean de Tinan, André Lebey, compagnons de route élégants et fins."⁴⁰⁰

In many ways, these young men are bohemian, but they are of the elegant sort modeled on Maurice Barrès for whom canes, hats, and gloves reflect an interior refinement as much as an exterior one. Although Tinan and Louÿs are jokers and

³⁹⁸ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 226.

³⁹⁹ Henri Ghéon and André Gide, *Correspondance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) 141-142.

⁴⁰⁰ Fargue.

parodists through their literature and behavior, and although they are known to spend their nights dancing or lounging with prostitutes, they are careful to present themselves correctly in the intellectual and artistic society which serves often times as an improvisational actors troupe who perform as much for themselves as for others. Camille Maclair writes of Louÿs at the same period, “Le précieux, hésitant, fugace et fébrile Pierre Louÿs, blond et étonné [...], ciselant des sonnets, latinisant, ronsardisant, recherchant reliures et estampes, et tout à coup disant : ‘Adieu, je pars dans une heure pour l’Egypte.’”⁴⁰¹ Maclair notes Louÿs’ mania for collecting rare books and prints, his persona as a poet attached to Latin verse and Ronsard, and the spontaneity of his character, or at least the air of spontaneity Louÿs conveyed in announcing exotic voyages almost off handedly, as if popping over to North Africa were a simple and casual affair.

These very public, though exclusive, salons apart, the Louÿs’ apartments and those of his friends served a capital roll in their performance as literary dandies. Although Tinan’s apartment at 75 Boulevard Saint Michel never served as a literary salon, the young man still entertained his male friends and hosted young women from the neighborhood. And although he never appeared to collect objects the way Louÿs did, Tinan’s dress and attention to etiquette and affectation mean that he was conscious of the ways material objects and behavior created an effect on others. In *Penses-tu réussir !* after writing for a few hours alone at his desk, Tinan’s alter-ego Vallonges steps back and looks at the papers before him. He notes: “Les pages noires et blanches, éparses sur la table, faisaient vraiment un bel effet, —ça vous avait un

⁴⁰¹ Maclair, *Servitudes et grandeurs littéraires* 35.

petit air studieux... Vallonges mis son chapeau, ses gants, pris sa canne et sortit.”⁴⁰²

Perhaps he will return home alone, perhaps with friends or with a girl. In either case, Tinan is aware of the ‘effect’ that the papers on the desk leave, one of studiousness that is inevitably attached to the identity of the writer. Added to this, just before stepping off the ‘stage,’ he puts on his hat, gloves, and takes his cane in hand. All of these objects are essentially extensions, or modes of communication of his innermost being, which is that of a literary dandy. Further, Tinan often worked laboriously while feigning that he did not work at all, giving the impression in his social milieu that he was a young man of leisure, although his vast body of work, produced over only a few short years, and his lack of great monetary means, contradict, or at least complicated the social self he presented in salons in cafés.

All of these elements—affectedness, attitude, the manipulation of clothing and objects upon the stage of the salon—come together in an extraordinary description by one of Pierre Louÿs’ most intimate life long friends, André Lebey. The two met at Bailly’s Librairie de l’art indépendant in 1893 when Lebey was still a teenager, just a few short years before Louÿs achieved success with *Aphrodite*. At this time, Louÿs is living in an apartment on Rue Rembrandt. Later in 1893 he will move to rue Grétry where he will begin holding his Wednesday evening salons. Jean de Tinan, André Lebey, Léon Blum, Marcel Proust, André Fontainas, Henri Albert, Paul Valéry, Henri de Régnier, Jacques-Emile Blanche, and Claude Debussy will come, if not in regular attendance, from time to time for a special concert by Debussy, or for an aperitif before dinner. Even Oscar Wilde, José-Maria de Heredia, Gustave Kahn, and Robert

⁴⁰² Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir!* 210.

de Bonnières will pay visit to Louÿs either at rue Rembrandt or rue Grétry where the young poet, then still in his early twenties will arrange a plenteous stage upon which he will play the literary dandy. The importance of Louÿs' salon as a meeting place for "la jeune littérature"⁴⁰³ was discussed in detail in the previous chapter. Here our attention will turn to his performance as a dandy.

The extraordinary account of André Lebey's first visit to Louÿs' rue Rembrandt apartment was recorded in an article titled "Le captif immortel," published in *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs* in 1925 shortly after the poet's death. At the heart of Lebey's article is the notion of initiation. He writes at the opening: "Si Jean de Tinan me fut l'initiateur de l'amitié, Pierre Louÿs me fut celui de la littérature, car tout ce qu'on est appelé à aimer, comme à servir, comporte une initial réelle, mystérieuse et indéfinissable, où l'exemple entre pour une bonne part, qui est celle de l'affranchissement, peut-être."⁴⁰⁴ Having himself been initiated into the literary world in the salons of Mallarmé and Heredia, Louÿs is conscious of the key elements which define this habitus. Lebey begins by describing the apartment itself: "Il habitait alors un rez-de-chaussée étroit, de deux pièces parallèles, ouaté d'étoffes orientales, plaqué de livres et de graveurs, rue Rembrandt. Dès la porte fermée, la ville et la vie moderne disparaissaient ; on passait le seuil de quelque mille et unième nuit." Not only are a few of the essential objects contained inside described, but Lebey notes the over all sensation of being removed from the industrial, modern

⁴⁰³ André Lebey, "Le Captif immortel," *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs* 54.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. 49-50.

city. Once the doors are closed, he is transported to another time and place, intoxicated by the literary tradition Louÿs consciously evokes.

Lebey goes on to describe the objects he encounters inside and the sensations they provoke. He writes:

Tous apparaissait nouveau pour moi, du petit bureau blanc de Maple où deux lynx bleus de Deck Veillaient l'encrier de Delaherche, hérissé de gros porte-plumes, à un lavabo japonais fabuleux, à la cheminée de bois aux deux colonnes où la vitrine centrale, en demi-cercle, laissait voir une Astarté verte, modelée par Judith Gautier. L'odeur du tabac blond épaississait l'atmosphère en la parfumant, et il y avait toujours, à portée de la main, d'innombrables boîtes de cigarettes et de cigares près des divans, de même que, sur le bureau, de nombreuses bouteilles d'encre recherchées, de plusieurs couleurs. Le bec Auer, dans une tulipe épaisse, entretenait une clarté opaline à laquelle ajoutait le silence, rarement troublé par un fiacre dans cette rue muette, comme provinciale, qui finissait, courte, au Parc Monceau.⁴⁰⁵

One can observe the inkpot designed by Delaherche, the same object coveted by Debussy some years later. The words 'fabuleux' and 'recherchées' describe the rare objects which decorate the room such as the Japanese wash bowl and the collection of colored ink for which Louÿs was known. A piece of art designed by Judith Gautier, daughter of Théophile, the great poet and theorist of 'l'Art pour l'art,' establishes a personal connection between the old 'maître' and the young 'disciple.' Additionally, the odor of blond tobacco perfumes the room which is cast in a light described as 'une clarté opaline.' These objects, carefully chosen and carefully placed, become a mode of communication which express a cultural tradition and a literary habitus that become essentially linked to Louÿs' own identity. As he looks around the room, Lebey is 'reading' these objects.

⁴⁰⁵ Lebey, *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs* 51.

To this Louÿs adds the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, who until then had been unknown to the young Lebey. By evoking Rimbaud, Louÿs is putting himself in line with avant-garde, almost occultist literature. The name and poetry of Rimbaud is thus a sign employed similarly to the objects in the room. In the same description, associated then with this poetry, Lebey includes a portrait of Louÿs:

Pierre Louÿs m'y révéla le poète des *Illuminations*, dont il me lut le *Bateau Ivre*, sanglé dans une de ces redingotes au large col qu'il portait assez souvent. Pâle sous ses cheveux assez longs, mais très soigneusement coupés, la moustache relevée, une moustache sous la lèvre, d'un visage quelque peu Louis Treize, quoique très moderne, le front large bosselé d'une sorte de triangle dont la pointe finissait au nez, nerveux et fier, il lisait les vers sonores, la cigarette jetée, en frappant par moments ses doigts les uns contre les autres, d'un geste qui lui était familier, la voix pleine de feu.⁴⁰⁶

In a redingote and high collar, Louÿs 'performs' the poetry of Rimbaud. His haircut and thin moustache complete the look, creating a link between a historical tradition and modernity. Not only is his clothing and body described, but so to is his manner which is 'nerveux et fier.' Further, he reads the poetry slowly, while tapping his fingers to give an overall effect which impresses the young auditor.

Lastly, when Lebey leaves the apartment, he is fully intoxicated by the experience, having been seduced by Louÿs' refined taste as evinced in his objects and dress, by his manner of reading and speaking, as well as by his evocation of a cult poet. Lebey describes the sensation he experienced on leaving his new friend:

Quand je le quittai, avec la peur d'être resté trop longtemps,—il m'avait confié un jour, que les amis ne savent pas, quelquefois, s'en aller,—je me sentais un autre. Mon pas léger volait sur l'asphalte. La pente de l'avenue de Messine me portait comme celle d'une voix triomphale. Je remontais vite

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. 51-52.

m'enfermer dans ma chambre, puis je tirais, d'un tiroir fermé à clef, mon trésor—mes manuscrits.⁴⁰⁷

Remarkably, Lebey observes, “je me sentais un autre.” Is he now a poet? A writer? An artist? He returns directly to his apartment and takes from a drawer his own manuscript and presumably begins to write, or at least dream of what he will write. The young man has now been inducted into the literary habitus by his older friend through a careful manipulation of all of the elements discussed in this chapter.

Conclusion

It is not difficult for discussions of the dandy to fall into cliché, a point discussed by many twentieth century observers including Susan Sontag in her 1964 article “Notes on Camp.”⁴⁰⁸ Louÿs’ mania for collecting rare books, his attention to clothing and the art of conversation, as well as his affective writing style—large round letters written in purple ink—easily fall into the category of cliché. Jean de Tinan cannot escape this either, particularly in one scene in *Penses-tu réussir !* where the young Vallonges takes a long bath then spends an excessive amount of time at his toilette preparing himself for the day. However, these behaviors and interests are essential elements in the dandy-as-type. Some of them are self-conscious nods to this model, while others are simple coincidences of taste or attitude. All in all, they come together in what Fred Davis calls a “structured universe of status claims and life style attachments”⁴⁰⁹ which firmly place the two esthetes in a particular habitus.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. 52.

⁴⁰⁸ Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp” *Against interpretation, and other essays*. (New York: Dell, 1966).

⁴⁰⁹ Davis 4.

Like his friend Oscar Wilde, or even like his acquaintance Maurice Barrès, Pierre Louÿs is conscious of the ways his clothing, behavior, and the objects he surrounds himself with become articulations of the very essence of his being. They form a sort of hieroglyphic language meant to be 'read' by others. They also seduce, or conquer, to use a term applied by Barbey D'Aureville, which influences the attitudes and behavior of those in Louÿs and Tinan's entourage. Lebey's visit to Louÿs apartment at rue Rembrandt clearly shows how these elements come together not only to provide an overall effect but to directly influence other individuals, even induct them into the same literary habitus.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LITERARY DANDY: PHOTOGRAPHY AND PAINTED PORTRAITURE

In the spring of 1893, at twenty-two, Pierre Louÿs sat for his first painted portrait (Figure 1).⁴¹⁰ At a time when photography was making portraiture broadly accessible, democratizing in effect a privilege reserved for centuries to the well-born classes,⁴¹¹ such a portrait was a means of preserving a long cultural tradition while at the same time allowing the sitter to distinguish himself amongst the bourgeoisie. There could be nothing worse for Louÿs than being mistaken for a bourgeois gentleman, and yet despite his desire for singularity, this portrait has recognizable characteristics within the genre. Carefully arranged in the image is the cane, the top hat, the flower in the left breast pocket, the gloves, the gray suit, the waistcoat, the tie and the high collar, as well as the obligatory long thin moustache above the upper lip; all this accompanied by the disinterested, calm gaze of the sitter. If Louÿs were a rare butterfly, we could pin him to a framed canvas with the following note: Family: *Homme de lettres*, Genus: *Poet*, Species: *Dandy*. His natural habitat is the salon, the café, the bookstore and his diet of choice meat and fine wine is supplemented by cigarettes, cigars and exquisite liquor. Although for much of his later life, Louÿs found himself out of sorts with the modern industrialized world

⁴¹⁰ Louÿs had sat for the artist Jacques-Emile Blanche with Henri de Régner the year before, but the 1893 portrait by the same artist is his first solo portrait.

⁴¹¹ See John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

whose touchstones were speed and mass production, there was one particular mechanized technology that he did fully embrace: the photographic camera.

As a proper dandy and young socialite, Louÿs was often preoccupied with his image and reputation, and so in choosing Jacques-Emile Blanche to paint his portrait, he was assured that both would be carefully represented by an artist of reputation and skill who himself was a member of the same social elite to which Louÿs aspired. Because he chose the painted portrait, Louÿs was obligated to put the creation of his image in the hands of another. However, with photography, Louÿs would be able to take control of his own self-representation as well as the representation of his friends. Louÿs' relationship with the camera and the photographic image itself is ultimately dependant and intertwined with the emerging cultural norms and brief historical legacy of this new technology. Although it was an instrument largely used to serve the middle class and the bourgeoisie, there were specific ways in which Louÿs and other cultural elites were able to incorporate it into their lives in a way that would not compromise their social superiority.

The Literary Dandy in Portraiture

One of the key figures in the visual representation of the literary dandy through the 1880s and beyond is Jacques-Emile Blanche. Although born in 1861, making him a near exact contemporary of Maurice Barrès, Blanche became quite close to the generation of poets and writers born ten years later, including Pierre Louÿs, Paul Valéry, and André Gide. Beginning in the early 1880s, Blanche aligned

himself with much of the Parisian avant-garde, supporting Édouard Dujardin's short lived but influential *La Revue Wagnérienne* as well as Félix Fénéon and Georges Chevrier's 1884 *La Revue Indépendante*.⁴¹² Symbolist *avant la lettre*, the collaborators of the *La Revue Indépendante* adhered to the emerging school's symbolist esthetic which sought to incorporate contemporary and subjective themes in forms familiar to the Parnassians. Paul Verlaine, Henri de Régnier, J. K. Huysmans, Jules Laforgue, Gustave Kahn, Villiers de l'Isle Adam along with the painters Pissaro, Signac, Seurat and Whistler gathered around *La Revue Indépendante* and together they had a profound and lasting effect on the innovative modernist esthetics of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. For these artists and poets, the wealthy Blanche proved to be an invaluable asset as he introduced many of the most brilliant minds of his generation to one another. As Édouard Dujardin, author of the 1888 *Les lauriers sont coupés* (which greatly influenced James Joyce) noted just before his death, it was Blanche who, through his connections in Paris and London, helped launch and sustain his revue. Of the painter, Dujardin notes, "J'étais ébloui par son raffinement, sa culture, son élégance."⁴¹³

As a painter, Blanche was conscious of the ways in which members of his entourage manipulated their clothing, posture, and accessories in order to create a coherent representation of the avant-garde artist. Not only did Blanche pose the models which sat for him, he also posed himself in several self-portraits. One such

⁴¹² For a discussion of Blanche's relationship to these revues, see Georges-Paul Collet, *Jacques-Émile Blanche : biographie* (Paris: Éds. Bartillat, 2006) 41-47.

⁴¹³ Collet 41.

portrait comes to us from 1890, titled *Self-Portrait with Raphael de Ochoa* (Figure 2). With his grey suit, high collar and tie, as well as the disinterested gaze, Blanche presents himself as the “painter” dandy. In an article published July 4, 1891, Téodor de Wyzewa writes in *L’Art dans les deux mondes* of Blanche’s overall character:

C’est aujourd’hui un grand garçon plutôt maigre, rasé de près avec un sourire ironique, des yeux pleins d’enthousiasme, et toujours la cravate, le veston et le pantalon les plus élégants que l’on puisse imaginer. [...] Le cas de l’âme de M. Blanche est tout à fait singulier. C’est le cas d’une âme de peintre qui possède autant que nulle autre les qualités artistiques les plus rares et les plus précieuses, mais en partie stérilisés par l’excès même qu’elle en a.⁴¹⁴

The dandy, then, is much more than the simple sum of his clothing. He is “singular” with an “ironic smile” whose distance gives the over all affect a sterilizing quality which is just as important as the tall, thin, clean shaven figure in a tie and elegant pants which Wyzewa describes. The classic dandy does not reveal his emotions and so he is often described as aloof and cold. In combining both this aloofness of character and the clothing and accessories commonly associated with the dandy, Blanche has cast himself as the “painter” dandy, which will later become the “painter-writer” dandy through his many literary publications which include memoirs and novels.

Blanche’s famous portrait of Marcel Proust, painted in 1892, has become the ubiquitous visual definition of the literary dandy (Figure 3). The painter and writer had met sometime in 1885 or 1886 while Proust, born in 1870, was still a teenager. Associated through family relations, Proust recalls the artist’s studio as the “Auteuil

⁴¹⁴ Collet 47.

de mon adolescence.”⁴¹⁵ The painting had originally been conceived as a standing portrait, but was partially destroyed by Blanche on account of his dissatisfaction with the work. Proust salvaged the image and framed it as an upper body portrait. In the image, the then twenty-two-year-old Proust is represented in evening wear, an orchid serving as his boutonnière, and wearing a silk tie made of one of Princesse Mathilde’s robes. Although the subject appears to look directly at the viewer, his gaze is at once unarmed and aloof. The stylish thin moustache is barely visible, his hair is oiled and neatly combed, while his soft white skin attests to the Parisian life of the unlabored, un-sunned, young man whose life is consecrated to the arts and cosmopolitan pleasures.

Interestingly, Proust describes this portrait in his first novel written in the same period. The title character of *Jean Santeuil* serves as the young writer’s thinly veiled alter ego. Of the image, and of himself, Proust writes:

[L]e brillant jeune homme qui semblait encore poser dans tout Paris, sans timidité comme sans bravade, le regardant de ses yeux allongés et blancs comme une amande fraîche [...]. Les joues pleines et d’un rose blanc qui rougissait à peine aux oreilles que venaient caresser les dernières boucles d’une chevelure noire et douce, brillante et tordue, coulante, s’échappant en ondes comme au sortir de l’eau. Une rose coupée au coin de son veston de cheviotte vert, une cravate d’une légère indienne [...] sa beauté non pas pensante mais peut-être doucement pensive, de la délicatesse heureuse de sa vie.⁴¹⁶

Again, all the same elements are touched upon in the description. Along with the tie and flower, the author emphasizes the “softly pensive” gaze which appears to be an essential element of the young writer’s identity.

⁴¹⁵ Collet 61.

⁴¹⁶ Marcel Proust, *Jean Santeuil*, (1952) (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) 626.

Similar in form and content to the portrait of Proust, is that of Maurice Barrès which Blanche painted in 1891 (Figure 4). An anonymous chronicler of *La Dépêche* of Nancy gives a description of the painting which is in coherence with the paintings of both Louÿs and Proust of the same period. He writes September 21, 1891:

Le jeune député est représenté en face, en paletot gris, la boutonnière égayée d'une fleur aux tons fanés qui n'est ni un œillet, ni une rose, ni un lys et qui pourrait bien être le produit incestueux de ces trois sortes de fleurs. L'artiste a très habilement reproduit les traits de son modèle ; c'est bien là la figure maigre, effilée, tranchante, l'expression dédaigneuse, le regard vague de l'auteur d'Un homme libre. Le coloris a l'aspect d'un pastel à demi effacé.⁴¹⁷

The description of Barrès' boutonnière as an "incestuous product of these three sorts of flowers" aligns both the subject of Barrès and the object of the flower with the unhealthy pessimistic and nihilistic tendencies attributed to the Decadents and Symbolists of the period. But more interestingly, the chronicler gives us a physical description of the dandy who projects a certain attitude. The "thin, frayed, sharp" figure of the dandy is framed by a "scornful" and "vague" gaze. The combination of the clothing and accessories with the gaze and posture completes the image, highlighting the fact that one is inseparable from the other.

The interplay between the art of portraiture and the art of writing, whether that be in publicly sold revues like *L'Art dans les deux mondes* or *La Revue Indépendante*, in private journals and letters such as in the case of J. E. Blanche's published correspondences, or in fictional literary representations as seen in Barbey D'Aurevilly's short stories or J.K. Huysmans' novels, attest to the complicated nature of the representation and construction of self beyond any one specific medium.

⁴¹⁷ As cited in Collet, Georges-Paul (67-68).

Further, it should be recalled that publicly displayed portraiture—the painting of Proust was shown at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars in May of 1893 while the painting of Louÿs was displayed that same year at the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts—was much discussed and viewed not only by the literary and artistic elite, but also by the greater bourgeoisie, as illustrated by articles in the popular press such as the *Figaro*. The fictional writing of the time blurred the lines between artist and subject, between fiction and reality which was as common for the Romantics—Byron’s *Manfred*, Goethe’s *Werther*, and Chateaubriand’s *René*—as it was for the Decadents. By 1890, after a century of development and evolution, the dandy-as-type was a fully developed figure complete with “irony,” a disinterested gaze, and accoutrements which included such accessories as the silk tie, the boutonnière, the cane, the top hat, and the thin, pointed moustache.

Blanche’s 1923 description of his life-long friend Proust attests to the transmutability of image to language and vice versa. Blanche describes the Proust he knew at the time the portrait was painted in the early 1890s:

Cravates de soie vert d’eau nouées au hasard, ses pantalons tire-bouchonnants, sa redingote flottante, tenant en main une canne de jonc, des gants gris de perle à baguettes noires, froissés, plissés, salis, un chapeau haut-de-forme incroyablement hérissé ; à sa boutonnière se fanait quelque orchidée, un cadeau sans doute de lord Lytton, l’ambassadeur d’Angleterre. Il s’accroupissait aux pieds d’une belle dame, levait vers elle son charmant visage rasé la veille, aussi galant et cérémonieux avec une Odette Swann, qu’avec une Oriane de Guermantes, ou qu’avec la tenancière d’un “buen Retiro” des Champs-Élysées.⁴¹⁸

This description, above all others, gives the dandy an aristocratic air, where even the women become accessories of the young man. Further, Blanche suggests that the

⁴¹⁸ J.E. Blanche, “Quelques instantanés de Marcel Proust,” *La NRF* January, 1, 1923.

boutonnière is a gift, perhaps from the British ambassador, which signals the superiority and exclusivity of the dandy's company.

If we revisit Wyzewa's description of J.E. Blanche in *L'Art dans les deux mondes*, we see that the linguistic portrait of the artist is equitable to those which describe both Barrès and Proust and which are represented in all four portraits. Although these images do appear to be reflections of one another—if the faces were transposed, the outfits would be the same—their similarities do not diminish their singularities. Like the individuals they represent, these paintings, produced in the early 1890s, were one of a kind. The spectators stood before them and contemplated intellectually and imaginarily, transforming the dandy into a work of art. Further, the status that such a painting gave to the sitter cannot be ignored. For the young Louÿs, who at twenty-two at the time of this painting had only published a very small amount of poetry and a revue, *La Conque*, the portrait painted by a friend of Mallarmé and Whistler, among many others, demonstrated that the young poet was part of this same coterie. In other words, for Louÿs this portrait was a sign of great cultural capital, to use Bourdieu's term.

The Camera and the Dandy

For the literary dandy, exclusivity and singularity are the touchstones of an eccentric and cultivated identity, and therefore painted portraiture was one way to perform this identity. However, the popularity and widespread accessibility of the photograph in the second half of the nineteenth century threatened the discriminative nature of this exclusive genre. Despite this threat, there were ways in

which the haute-bourgeois, the aristocracy, and the avant-garde artists managed to preserve their distance from the masses by using both cultural and financial means.

In order to discuss the photographic portrait of the 1880s and 90s, we need not evoke the name of Daguerre, but instead two other photographers and entrepreneurs whose approach to artistic production contrasted sharply one from the other, but whose work and technique was to greatly influence the norms of production and consumption of photography in the last decades of the century: André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri and Nadar.⁴¹⁹ Between the two, it was Disdéri who contributed most to the changing status of the photographer from supposed artist, or innovator, to simple technician, or laborer, a move which eventually, thanks to innovations in technology, put the camera in the hands of the average consumer, eliminating the photographer all together.

In 1854, in France, Disdéri patented the “carte-de-visite” photograph which used a technique that produced paper prints using a camera that contained several lenses, allowing for four to eight photographs to be taken at one time.⁴²⁰ Not only could the subject be quickly arranged—poses were formulaic and props were available for every type of setting from interior living spaces to outdoor gardens—but the photographers themselves were largely technicians. By creating a sort of assembly line of production, one group of tradesmen would be taught how to load and use a camera while others were trained on the development process. With the economic prosperity the Second Empire experienced under Napoleon III, it was not

⁴¹⁹ Nadar is the pseudonym of Gaspard-Félix Tournachon.

⁴²⁰ André Rouillé, *La Photographie en France : textes & controverses, une anthologie, 1816-1871* (Paris: Macula, 1989) 356.

difficult for Disdéri, with a little entrepreneurial skill, to capitalize on this new market using his freshly patented technology. Costing approximately twenty francs for a dozen, each one approximately six by nine centimeters,⁴²¹ these images could be produced while the clients waited.⁴²² Because of this cheap and accessible means of production, Disdéri's clients were either aspiring bourgeois, or the petty officers and civil servants of the Second Empire. With their redingotes and staged bourgeois domesticity, these middle class consumers were consciously constructing an image of themselves separate from both the lower class artisans as well as the haute-bourgeois and aristocracy.⁴²³ As inspired consumers, they helped Disdéri, whose studio in the center of Paris was known as the "Temple of Photography," bring in nearly 4,000 francs a day in portrait revenue and in the sale of celebrity images.⁴²⁴

In contrast, Nadar took a much more artistic and elitist approach; on the level of consumption and accessibility, his portraits were much larger, and more expensive. The size and quality difference offered a visual contrast readily detectable in the material object, but more importantly perhaps, the difference in price assured the haute-bourgeoisie as well as the intellectual and cultural elite, that the product they were purchasing was both rare and more difficult to obtain. For example, where Disdéri charged his patrons twenty francs for a dozen small "carte de visites," Nadar charged one hundred francs for a single eight by ten inch print,⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ Approximately 2.36 x 3.5 inches

⁴²² Tagg 49.

⁴²³ For a discussion on the implication of the new cheaper photography on the construction of the bourgeois as a class, see André Rouillé, *Le marché, la monnaie* in *La photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005) 58-63.

⁴²⁴ Tagg 50.

⁴²⁵ Tagg 215.

and where Disdéri herded his patrons through the studio, quickly taking one photograph then moving on to the next, Nadar sought to maintain the traditional relationship between patron and artist. Opening his Paris studio in 1853, around the same time that Disdéri was beginning his own enterprise, Nadar's clients largely came from artistic, literary, and political circles as well as from the fashionable and elite bohemia. Nadar's approach provided an entirely different experience for the patron, which was for them just as important as the product. This approach allowed clients to maintain a more cultured relationship with this new mechanized technology.

Although Nadar was able to legitimize photography as an art among some circles there was still much resistance by many critics and the majority of French painters. On the 15th of December 1862, Ingres, Hippolyte Flandrin, and Constant Troyon, among others, signed a petition titled "Protestation émanée des grands artistes contre toute assimilation de la photographie à l'art" in *Le moniteur de la photographie*, in which they write that photographic images "ne peuvent, en aucun circonstance, être assimilée(s) aux œuvres fruit de l'intelligence et de l'étude de l'art."⁴²⁶ This popular nineteenth century argument that photography was not an art, that the photographer was not an artist, and that photography could never equal the status of painting, was in fact a polemic that lay at the heart of modernity.

Baudelaire, however, takes his attack on photography to another level as he sees the polemic as a battle for "l'esprit" and "le génie français." In a portion of *Le Salon de 1859* entitled *Le Public moderne et la photographie*, Baudelaire writes: "La

⁴²⁶ Rouillé, *La Photographie en France : textes & controverses, une anthologie, 1816-1871* 399.

poésie [art] et le progrès [photography] sont deux ambitieux qui se haïssent d'une haine instinctive, et, quand ils se rencontrent dans le même chemin, il faut que l'un des deux serve l'autre."⁴²⁷ Photography must be "la servante des sciences et des arts, mais l'humble servante, comme l'imprimerie et la sténographie qui n'ont ni créé ni suppléé la littérature." He explains that the reason photography is such a threat is because of the public's demand for the real. In a period dominated by a realist aesthetic, the public (wrongfully) believes that art should be the exact reproduction of nature which leads them to deduce that industry has provided them with a means of faithful reproduction in the camera. But this is only the baseline of his argument as he inflates the meanings of both "poésie" and "progrès." Poetry is the *inutile*, the imaginative, the cultivated, the idle, the aristocratic in every sense of the word, while progress is the useful, the active, the democratic, and most importantly, the *real*. For the spiritually noble, the artistically driven, and the socially aristocratic, industrialization and democracy threaten to remove established elites from their privileged status and so, if we allow ourselves to extrapolate, they must master progress, in this case photography, before it masters them.

By the 1880s and 1890s the essential argument of the place of photography in the arts had still not been resolved but after three decades of the ubiquitous "carte de visite" and the larger and now cheaper portrait meant that like many things in this bourgeois century, convenience and accessibility won over tradition and elitism. However, as the cost of photography continued to drop, even as quality

⁴²⁷ Charles Baudelaire, "Le Public moderne et la photographie" in *Le Salon de 1859* (Paris : H. Champion, 2006).

benefitted from new technology, the social elite still sought to distinguish themselves in the medium, producing and consuming exclusively for themselves.

Before delving into the finer details of the consumption and exchange of the photographic image *chez* our “jeunes hommes de lettres,” let us first look closely at our pinned specimens. In Figure 5 we have Pierre Louÿs, defiant, proud, his head held slightly askance, his eyes fixed in a disinterested gaze. He is wearing his usual powder blue suit with a patterned tie carefully knotted around a high stiff collar that frames the fashionable, yet discrete, moustache. It only takes a quick glance to see that standing (or sitting) before the camera is the elusive “jeune homme de lettres.” This photograph was taken in August of 1892 while Louÿs was attending the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth. Like so many of his generation, Louÿs was captivated by the genius of Wagner who had by the late 1880s acquired a cult following in France due in part to the praise of such figures as Charles Baudelaire, Catulle Mendès, Stéphane Mallarmé, Maurice Barrès, and Robert de Montesquiou, among countless others, who championed the composer’s work. In 1885 Edouard Dujardin founded the widely influential *La Revue wagnérienne*⁴²⁸ which provided an outlet to analyse, praise and promote Wagner’s operas. In August of 1892, Louÿs is on his second pilgrimage to hear “*Parsifal* pour la 7^e et dernière fois,”⁴²⁹ because Wagner’s music was for him a religious experience, held in a theater that was akin to a sacred temple. But he was far from the only one of his generation to be converted by the

⁴²⁸ For an excellent study on the influence of Wagner in France, see: Elwood Hartman, *French literary Wagnerism* (New York: Garland, 1988).

⁴²⁹ Louÿs recounts this and his previous trip to Bayreuth to his brother in various letters: Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites à Georges Louis : 1890-1917*. (Août 1892)

new gospel. In 1891, on his first visit to Beyreuth, a young Englishman had committed suicide, leaving a note stating, "I've heard *Parsifal*. Now I know what happiness is. Life doesn't interest me anymore. I'm leaving."⁴³⁰ Interestingly, Louÿs had dined that same year, 1891, with Maurice Barrès, just three weeks after the "Prince de la jeunesse" had married a young woman named Paule Couche with whom he would have his only son, Philippe. Speaking of the newlyweds, Louÿs writes to his brother, "L'homme libre se promène seul et quand l'heure du repas les rapproche il semble ignorer complètement sa voisine sans prêter aucune attention à ce qu'elle dit. Il porte dans sa poche le code du divorce, et il est parti ce matin pour Paris avec sa femme, pour retrouver pendant huit jours sa maîtresse qu'il n'a pas quittée ; puis il reprendra son voyage de noces."⁴³¹ Apparently, disinterest is an attitude reserved also for one's spouse.

These anecdotes aside, the photograph of Louÿs is consistent not only with the painted portraiture, as seen in the clothing and attitude, but also by the fact that it was taken on an artistic pilgrimage and sent, as indicated on the reverse side, to Louise de Heredia, whom Louÿs would marry seven years later. Daughter of Jose Marie de Heredia, the venerated Parnassian, this young woman is, in a certain way, French literary aristocracy. Louÿs is using the image as a sort of currency which highlights his own status as an avant-garde artist, and it gives us a direct indication of his manner and behavior at large. One could imagine that he is dressed similarly

⁴³⁰ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 131.

⁴³¹ Ibid. 66-67. Letter of August 11, 1891.

as he dines with Barrès, as he attends the theater, as he strolls through the street with a top hat and cane.

To this image, we add a photographic portrait of Maurice Barrès of approximately the same period (Figure 6). Remarkably, the young man stands with his arms crossed, mimicking the same posture he held for Blanche. However, rather than stare intently into the camera, Barrès has turned to the side, a posture which communicates the implacability of his character and intellect. In comparing the photographic portraits of Barrès and Louÿs, we see that they are dressed remarkably similarly, with patterned ties and light suits. Further, neither writer is wearing a flower. Perhaps the photograph was taken at the spur of the moment; but more likely, the boutonnière is reserved for special occasions such as luncheons, dinners, and salons. Where the bourgeois tended to wear dark colors in their portraits—brown, black, and dark gray—these young men sought to distinguish themselves from their work-a-day counterparts by wearing light colors and by assuming poses less inviting and more challenging to the viewer, although the upper classes commonly wore black evening wear. Proust's portrait (Figure 7) offers a more lackadaisical, dreamy portrayal of the literary dandy. The hand to his face, the curl on his brow, he is in fact warm and inviting in this portrait. He is a young man of leisure, dressed in velvet, appearing as if he may actually be taking an interest in the viewer.

Lastly, we come to the photograph of the painter Jacques-Emile Blanche in his studio (Figure 8) which presents quite a different scene than that of his self-portrait. The painting portrays the artist in the vein of the literary dandy—similar in

costume, gaze, and posture. But the photograph portrays an artist truly at work. His back is turned to the camera and the subject he is painting, Marie de Heredia (soon to be Marie de Régnier), is brought into focus. It is as if the artist is telling us that it is this subject that is the focal point and purpose of the painting, not the artist. Further, his stance is consistent with the painters of his time in that his turned back suggests an attitude which states that the photograph is not art, that it is a tool, a recording device that shows the artist at work, in process, so to say. The candid nature of the shot also suggests that even the photographer would not have viewed this particular photograph as art.

The three photographs of Proust, Barrès, and Louÿs were taken in studios as large format “cartes-de-visite.” Their experiences taking these photographs would have been similar to the average bourgeois consumer, save for the choices made of self-representation. The “carte-de-visite” in the second half of the nineteenth century was a rather ubiquitous and banal object. Even Nadar had begun producing them by 1860 for anyone willing to pay the fee, highlighting the fact that his artistic agenda was ultimately informed by commercial interests.⁴³² This change in approach reflects the public’s and the artist’s new relationship with photography. In fact, the public of the 1860s has been described as being in a state of “cardomania” where for the first time average consumers could purchase photographic portraits of political figures, actors and actresses, artists and writers, and perhaps most importantly, of Europe’s royal families. Tens of thousands of such photographs were

⁴³² For a brief yet concise study of Nadar’s photographic career, see: Roger Cardinal, “Nadar and the Photographic Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France,” *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1992).

sold at a time, not only affecting the economics of the new photographic market, but also the way these consumers conceived celebrity. Celebrities and aristocrats could now be purchased, consumed, and collected both abstractly and materially. Of course, lithographs had been available since the beginning of the century, but they were never produced and consumed the way these new photographic “cartes postales” were.

Another dimension of the studio portrait is that it allowed the literary dandy to perform his role as the writer/poet by staging a “literary scene.” Props were regularly employed on the studio stage, and the three photos of Maurice Barrès (Figures 9, 10, and 11) at one such studio are remarkably for their artificiality. These photographs, included as supplemental material in Barrès complete works,⁴³³ are attributed to the time of *Sous l'œil des barbares*, that is to say, in the late 1880s. Having self-published his short run literary review *Taches d'encre* as well as *Sensations de Paris: Le Quartier Latin* some years before, the young writer had already made a reputation for himself as a literary dandy. It was not until his first book, *Sous l'œil des barbares*, was published in 1888 that Barrès would receive great notoriety. This was due in large part to the friendly, welcoming article by the well known and respected Paul Bourget, author of *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, who also noted him by name in his open letter *A un jeune homme* served as a front-piece to his immensely popular *Le Disciple* of 1889. Because Bourget was considered to be an intellectual “maître” of the current generation, as noted even by Pierre

⁴³³ Maurice Barrès, *L'Oeuvre de Maurice Barrès*, Vol. 1-20, Annotated by Philippe Barrès, Preface by François Mauriac (Paris: Club de l'honnête homme, 1965).

Louÿs in letters to Paul Valéry and André Gide,⁴³⁴ it is significant that he too chose to pose artificially at a writing desk in a professional studio (Figure 12). We can note the unnatural pose as well as the painted backdrop that is meant to look like a library or study. As hand held personal cameras were just beginning to enter the market in the late 1880s and early 1890s, it is unlikely that Bourget would have possessed his own camera which would have allowed him to take the photographs at his own desk. In these series, both the “maître” Bourget and the “disciple” Barrès are playing the role of the “homme de lettres.” Accompanying this image is a photograph of the two together, apparently studying a written document (Figure 13). This photograph was also taken in a studio as others in the series reveal similar artificially posed portraits. Although well established at this time, Barrès, positioning himself beside such a widely influential and well respected best-selling author as Bourget, gives the young man the opportunity capitalize on Bourget’s cultural capital as an established writer, while at the same time permitting Bourget to associate himself with Barrès’ growing celebrity. To highlight the widespread acceptance of such posed studio images, we add a photograph of Stéphane Mallarmé (Figure 14), the ultimate “maître” of the reigning elite literary circle. This photograph is taken by Paul Nadar, son of the original “Nadar,” perhaps adding to the prestige of the actual photograph, although Nadar junior’s studio was open to the average consumer able to pay the production fees.

Returning to the notion of celebrity as bought and sold in the form of the “carte-de-visite” and “carte postale,” the widespread acceptance and use of the

⁴³⁴ Gide et al.

studio portrait and the posed photograph by the Parisian literary elite provide a clear indication of how the new technical medium was being appropriated. By the 1890s when Proust, Barrès, and Louÿs sit for their portraits, they are, perhaps, playing for themselves and their small coterie, who will view the photographs of the literary celebrity. While Barrès was in fact a literary star, widely read and recognized by 1891 with the last installment of his *Culte du moi* series, Louÿs and Proust were still then only socialites, imaginary celebrities playing the roll it would take them some time to actualize. But the idea of mimicking celebrity is essential to understanding how these “jeunes hommes de lettres” related to the mechanized photograph and conceived of themselves as commodities in the literary field, exemplified by Louÿs’ role as amateur photographer and collector.

Dandy as Collector

One of the clichéd characteristics of the dandy is his mania for collecting rare objects. Huysmans had canonized this notion as early as 1883 with *des Esseintes* who collected, among other things, rare jewels, perfumes, flowers, and books. Although it would be unjust to make a direct link between *des Esseintes*’ imaginary mania and Pierre Louÿs’ real life fixations, the comparison is worth making because this mania “was in the air” through the period. Louÿs maintained throughout his life a penchant for amassing cigarette cases, rare colored inks, antique books, manuscripts, and photographs, particularly those of his friends as well as those of an erotic nature. The exchange of such “cartes-de-visite,” signed and dedicated by the subject, is the very definition of what Bordieu notes as the phenomenon of

consumers producing for consumers.⁴³⁵ Where painted portraits cannot be produced and consumed so readily, the photograph could be produced literally “a dime a dozen,” to apply an Anglophone term. In this way, the exchange of the large format “carte-de-visit” can truly be defined as the commodification of the literary dandy—not the commodification of his literary production, but of the person, or, the *persona*.

Because Louÿs was such an avid collector, we have our choice of dedicated images, but we’ll begin with a portrait of Louÿs himself from 1892 (Figure 15). Again, as with the two previous portraits, we see that all the elements are there—the mustache, the light colored suit, the patterned tie. This carte-de-visite is dedicated to Henri de Régnier, Louÿs’ good friend and romantic rival as explained in the previous chapter. As with Louÿs’ portrait from Bayreuth, dedicated to Louise de Heredia in 1893, this photograph shows that Louÿs did not hesitate to produce images of himself to serve as a cultural commodity. We add to this an 1894 “carte-de-visite” from Jean de Tinan (figure 16) with the dedication, “Pour la collection de photographies de Pierre Louÿs.” Along with André Lebey, Jean de Tinan was one of Louÿs’ closest friends in the early to mid 1890s. In their small circle, the exchange of such images was an affirmation of friendship and fidelity, hence the significance of the inclusion of a portrait of Tinan dedicated to Lebey (Figure 17). Similar to Tinan’s dedication to Louÿs, is that of Gilbert de Voisins who, in 1899, writes, “A mon cher Pierre, son ami, Voisins” (Figure 18). Although Voisins was to later marry Louÿs’ wife, Louise de Heredia, such an exchange offered proof of friendship, where one

⁴³⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l’art* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

friend would explicitly dedicate his “amitié” in a format other than in private letters. Further, Louÿs’ friends were aware of his collection and very likely the young esthete shared it with them. Their inclusion in his collection gave them a sort of stature in his personal “Panthéon.”

Louÿs and his friends were far from the only ones in literary and artistic circles to dedicate and collect these cartes-de-visite. For example, Proust dedicated once such image to “Mon cher petit Robert” in 1891 (Figure 19) and Maurice Barrès collected images of those he admired in the political arena (Figure 20). A Boulangist deputy in 1890, Barrès was an avid follower, attested to in the “carte-de-visite,” or “carte postale,” of the general dedicated to him in 1889. Such images were bought and sold regularly at newsstands and in photo studios, and it’s possible that either Boulanger possessed a quantity of these images of himself to sign and send to admirers or that Barrès purchased this image and asked the General to sign it for him. In either case, images of Boulanger, as well as other military figures, deputies in government, and members of the royal families of all nationalities, were readily available.

The last dedicated portrait of importance brings us to our next subject of inquiry, which is Louÿs as amateur photographer. The two portraits of Paul Valéry (figures 21 and 22) were taken by Pierre Louÿs himself, very likely at his apartment at rue Malesherbes. Both images are rather extreme close-ups, an angle not regularly employed in a professional studio. The first commercial cameras available for widespread consumption in France were produced in the early 1890s, thanks largely to George Eastman and his company Kodak. Because of the great innovations

of this entrepreneur and inventor, as well as a wave of new technological innovations occurring in America and France, the mechanized camera became both affordable and portable. It could perhaps be argued that the slogan “You push the button, and we do rest” was at once the death knell of traditional portraiture and the herald of all things commercially available in the age of industrialization. It is not entirely clear when Louÿs purchased his first camera, but we do know that he bought the very latest Kodak available in 1895 while in Algiers, Algeria thanks to a letter written to his brother at the time.⁴³⁶ Further, there are numerous references to his photography in letters before this date.

Although Valéry was nothing of the literary dandy Louÿs was, being more intellectual than dilettante and more reserved than playful, and because he did not have the financial means as Louÿs did at the time (or rather, because he chose not to go into debt the way his friend did) Valéry could only be described as fashionable yet practical, although his long pointed mustache in the 1894 photograph visually separates him from the laboring bourgeois (although he could also have been mistaken for a student). But his clear blue eyes, the intense close-up of Figure 21, and the “in awe” look of Figure 22, are meant, it would seem, to be a conscientious effort by Louÿs to represent his brilliant friend as “the poet” he was. In contrast to these handsome photographs meant to positively portray these young men, is the intense portrait of Claude Debussy taken in 1895 (Figure 23). This photograph is not meant to please, but rather it disturbs and challenges the viewer. The camera is so close to the composer’s face that the lens is unable to capture the entire subject,

⁴³⁶ Pierre Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites à Georges Louis : 1890-1917*. (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

as if the black shadows surrounding his head were a radiant, inverted halo. Louÿs is not trying to portray the composer as a dilettante, but as a possibly troubled, intense musician whose strong emotions and thoughts produce the genius and power of the music he wrote. Further, this image reveals Louÿs' creativity as a photographer. He is willing to experiment and take risks in an attempt to deviate from the norm and distinguish his vision from the bourgeois mass.

One element is conspicuously absent in Louÿs' representation of himself and his friends, an object that would be featured, sometimes prominently, in many twentieth century portraits of writers, poets, and artists: the cigarette. In fact, between Barrès and Louÿs particularly (Proust did not smoke on account of his acute asthma), it is extremely rare to find a photograph of them smoking. In the ones that do exist, we find our "jeunes hommes de lettres" taken off guard in exterior shots where the cigarette is an incidental accessory.⁴³⁷ Although cigarettes, and particularly cigars, were common in the drawing rooms, salons, and cafés frequented by these writers, it has been argued that it was an object "that served as a nexus for marginalized social identities in the 1890s." Patricia G. Berman discusses in detail the significance and representation of the cigarette in this period, concluding in her article "Edvard Munch's Self-Portrait with Cigarette: Smoking and the Bohemian Persona": "At the time, the cigarette was associated with social deviancy—café society, poverty, and illness—and with death. Suggesting a slippage between social categories—identity both male and female, upper- and lower-class—

⁴³⁷ There are several photographs of Pierre Louÿs smoking on the street in Amsterdam where he was on holiday with Marie and Henri de Régnier in 1898.

and between intact and disintegrating mental states and physical and political bodies, the cigarette challenged the notion of their boundaries.”⁴³⁸ This deviance and slippage is counter to the cultivated aspirations of the dandified “jeune homme de lettres.”

Horrified to even be considered regular members of the bourgeoisie, they certainly would not have wanted to slip any lower. But the prevalence of it in their lives and in the literature they read (some contemporary critics of des Esseintes cite his cigarette smoking as a sign of moral depravity) complicates their conscientious choice not to be painted or photographed with it. After all, André Lebey, Louÿs good friend in the early 1890s, notes of his apartment, “L’odeur du tabac blond épaississait l’atmosphère en la parfumant, et il y avait toujours, à porté de la main, d’innombrables boîtes de cigarettes et de cigares près des divans.”⁴³⁹ Further, in his remarkable account of their life in Paris, Jean de Tinan writes on the first page of *Penses-tu réussir!* that “[O]n fumera beaucoup de cigares dans ce livre, et d’innombrables cigarettes.” He goes on to clarify: “Le cigare est tout ce que nous avons de meilleur, il est le temps perdu, il est la douleur bercée, il est aussi la précieuse transition, et il est toute notre imagination qu’il symbolise.”⁴⁴⁰ Tinan does stress the cigar over the cigarette in his book, and Berman maintains that the cigar held a status higher than that of the cigarette. Further, for Tinan, the cigar is a utensil of *oisiveté*, or idleness, that was part of the dandy persona. It needs to be

⁴³⁸ Patricia G. Berman, “Edvard Munch’s Self-Portrait with Cigarette: Smoking and the Bohemian Persona,” *The Art Bulletin*, 75.4 (Dec., 1993): 627-646.

⁴³⁹ Lebey, « Le Captif immortel, » *Le Tombeau de Pierre Louÿs*.

⁴⁴⁰ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir ; ou, Les diverses amours de mon ami Raoul de Vallonges*.

stressed, however, that Tinan was trying to portray the Parisian bohemian life they were living in the 1890s, similar to that of poor students, while Louys, as a literary dandy mingling with literary aristocracy, sought to portray himself in similar aristocratic terms. There is an important difference between the deviant, neurotic, or perverse bohemian, as exemplified in the smoking self-portrait of Edvard Munch and the photographic *Self-Portrait* of Auguste Strindberg (1888) (where the rising smoke of their cigarettes adds mystery and fantasy to their images), and the cultivated, elitist, aristocratic bohemian as articulated by Robert de Montesquiou. Barrès and Louys, as well as Proust, were part of the latter category, and though they may have smoked, they would not have liked this fact included as a symbolic element attached to their persona the way a figure like Strindberg would have, a figure who was known to be “*hypersensible*” and “*névrosé*.”

Added to the amateur portraits Louys took of his friends, are the self-portraits he took in the privacy of his apartment on rue Malesherbes. While many of these self-portraits, like those of his contemporaries, are serious, calm, and posed, there are a few that stand apart, particularly one (Figure 24), which positions itself between self-portraiture and the candid shot. Remarkably, given the tilted angle of the camera, the uncentered placing of the subject to the right, it is very likely that Louys is holding the camera with his left hand as he attempts to pour himself a glass of wine, or other such beverage, with his right hand. This positioning highlights Louys’ comfort with the mechanized device and the manner in which it has so thoroughly been incorporated into his domestic life. In many ways, it has become another personal accessory. Not that it could ever be thought of as fashionable or

even practical, like a cane, hat, or gloves, but it is still easily within reach and quickly employed.

The movement from portrait to candid shot is a quick step, and the two genres are easily confused once the camera is placed in the hands of the average consumer, or in Louÿs' case, the extraordinary literary dandy; but we need to pause here a moment to put these images in perspective. The historian John Tagg cautions us to reevaluate our modern gaze which has been informed by more than one hundred years of the photographic image and the creation of the cultural norm which have informed poses and perspectives, and which we regularly take for granted, often assuming that they are "natural." In *A Democracy of the Image*, he writes:

Each of these images belongs to a distinct moment; each owes its qualities to particular conditions of production and its meaning to conventions and institutions which we may no longer understand. The transparency of the image is its most powerful rhetorical device. But this rhetoric also has a history, and we must distance ourselves from it, question the naturalness of portraiture and probe the obviousness of each image. As we begin to do this, they must appear strange, often incompatible one with another. Comfortable notions of the history of photography and sentimentalities about the Family of Man must be left behind.⁴⁴¹

If we look again at all of the images thus far presented, from the painted portraits by Jacques-Emile Blanche to the studio shots and the "cartes-de-visite," we are struck by how similar they are. The etiquette of the painted sitter seems to have translated directly to the photographic portrait where everything from dress and posture, to the serious, unsmiling face, is repeated. Louÿs' candid self-portrait is the first deviance from this formula and the birth of the norms our twentieth century eyes no

⁴⁴¹ Tagg 35.

longer remark. With all of our devises, from television and film, to digital cameras and webcams, we must recall that the moment Louÿs turned the camera on himself, in an awkward, candid pose—the ultimate sign of narcissism—he has taken his first step, or opened the path, to what was normalized through the following century. We are witnessing the appropriation of this device by an individual who seeks to define his personal, social, and artistic life outside the norms dictated by the average bourgeois. What we have, essentially, is a creative eye peering onto a world experiencing utter transition and mutation. In all other aspects of his life, Louÿs is not one to dirty his hands on the social and mechanized aspects of industrialization. However, contrary to Baudelaire’s original vision of the purpose and roll of the mechanized camera in relation to Art, Louÿs seeks to employ the device in ways other than practical.

To further highlight how the mechanized camera has blurred the lines between portraiture and the candid shot, we turn our attention to another image taken by Louÿs in his apartment rue Malesherbes (Figure 25). In this photograph, Zohra, Louÿs’ short term though greatly influential “maîtresse,” stands in the left-hand foreground while to the right, Louÿs is captured peering into the camera in the mirror behind her. Given the fact that he is occupied by the mechanism, with his attention focused not on the mirror where his reflection is caught, it is impossible to determine what he was intending. Is it intentional that his image is also captured in the photograph? Did he accidentally hit the ‘déclencheur’ before he had a chance to pose properly? Is Zohra ready, or is she still waiting for a sign from Louÿs? All these questions, impossible to answer, highlight the unpredictability and unstable nature

of the candid shot. This photograph is followed by a domestic scene titled “the pleasures of the rocking chair” (Figure 26) in which Louÿs is slouching deeply in his seat, his legs resting firmly on Zorah’s shoulders. Clearly a third party has taken the photo, likely Debussy who was often at the poet’s apartment. Both Zohra and Debussy appear often in Louÿs’ photographs, many of them seeming to have been taken at the same time as they appear in the same clothing, or in Zohra’s case, the same costumes. Such a series highlights once again the incorporation of the mechanized camera into the daily lives of these avant-garde artists. It also underscores the playful nature in which it is employed. It is an object which increases pleasure, which captures beautiful, happy moments. It is not a typewriter or a stenograph—its status and utility is more fluid than Baudelaire would have imagined. When Baudelaire was writing, personal, hand-held cameras were not yet available.

Through the early to mid 1890s, Louÿs’ apartment became a veritable studio where he both playfully and seriously photographed Claude Debussy, Jean de Tinan, Paul Valéry, Henri et Marie de Régnier, as well as Zohra bent Brahim. Such photographs were produced and consumed for a very small group of intimates and for Louÿs himself. Thus, an object consumed and adored *en masse* by the bourgeois had been incorporated into a circle of cultural elites and had been personalized and employed to produce unique and rare objects of consumption.

Among these rare objects are Louÿs’ erotic photography. At the risk of opening a Pandora’s box of nineteenth century erotic and pornographic photography, we will limit our discussion to the two particular subjects Louÿs

regularly treated—Marie de Régnier and Zohra bent Brahim. Louÿs was an active collector of erotic photography, and he himself took hundreds of erotic photographs, not only of his mistresses, but of young prostitutes both in France and Algeria. As of September 1897, his collection included 2167 images.⁴⁴² Before treating the images themselves, it is necessary to place Marie and Zohra in their social and biographical contexts in relation to Louÿs. Coming from very different worlds, Louÿs cannot help but capture, or reflect, their social status in the photographs he took of them. As explained in the previous chapter, both Louÿs and Henri de Régnier had fallen in love with Marie de Régnier who, as the daughter of Jose Maria de Heredia, the most famous of the living Parnassians having published *Trophées* in 1893 and having been accepted into the Académie française in 1895, was not only a society woman, but true literary aristocracy.

To become the son of in law of such a figure as Heredia was to marry into this cultural elite and contribute to the family line. Despite the fact that a pact was made between Louÿs and Régnier, the latter went ahead and asked for Marie's hand in marriage. As Régnier came from family money, he could easily pay off the father Heredia's gambling debts and comfortably provide for Marie and so, in 1896, the marriage was confirmed and Louÿs was left heartbroken. Marie viewed the marriage as a financial arrangement, never forgiving her husband for having 'purchased' her for she was in love with Louÿs. Shortly after the marriage she made advances to the young writer who at first rejected her. Writing to his brother in February of 1896, Louÿs says that he does not want any part of a situation "comme

⁴⁴² Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 384.

une comédie où je joue une rôle, et plus du tout comme un événement de ma vie.”⁴⁴³

However, some months later, in the fall of 1896, Louÿs recants and takes the young woman as his mistress. The first stint of this passionate liaison remains rocky, however, and lasts only until December of that year.

Just as their relationship was beginning, so too was Louÿs’ success as a writer due to the publication of *Aphrodite* which became a veritable best-seller. Unhappy with the obligations this newfound celebrity forced upon him, Louÿs fled Paris, eventually ending up in Algeria. Although he was quite ill at the beginning of his trip with pneumonia, by March 1897 Louÿs recovered and was able to return to his normal activities. It was at this time, in a residence called Fontaine-Bleue, in Alger, that Louÿs met a young Moorish woman named Zohra bent Brahim. Although she could not read or write, Zohra spoke perfect French with an “accent sucré” as Paul Valéry was to later state.⁴⁴⁴ Perhaps still heartbroken over his affair with Marie, Louÿs indulges in the sexual pleasure and easy company of this young Algerian. In order to capture her in a way that was more tactile than the beautiful poetry he wrote describing her, Louÿs employed his camera and photographed her. Having purchased the latest Kodak camera in Alger,⁴⁴⁵ he proceeded to capture her from every angle, and in a letter dated April 20, 1897, Louÿs writes to his brother, “J’aurai bientôt plus de cent poses absolument vivante de cette petite sauvage. Penses-tu à ce que serait pour nous d’avoir un album pareil sur chacun des êtres perdus ?

⁴⁴³ Letter of Pierre Louÿs to Georges Louis, February 1, 1896.

⁴⁴⁴ Letter from Paul Valéry to André Gide, May 3, 1897.

⁴⁴⁵ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 376.

Comme on devient heureux.”⁴⁴⁶ These photographs provide Louÿs with a way to capture, collect, and categorize one of the many “êtres perdus ” he had met through his amorous escapades. But as a letter written to his good friend Claude Debussy shows, his relationship with Zohra was much different from the “filles des rues” that he frequented in Paris. He writes:

Je ne sais plus rien, sinon que je suis collé depuis trente et un jours (oui, mon vieux, ça t'épate ?) avec une jeune Mauresque qui répond au nom de « Zohra ! Zohra ! viens ici bien vite ! » et au récent pseudonyme de « Pot-de-Moutarde ». Nous sommes comme deux chiens dans la rue ; je ne lui permets pas de monter cinq minutes sans moi chez sa couturière ; je deviens maigre tel Jehan Rictus et livide tel Mr La Jeunesse.—Et je vais faire la bêtise d'emmenner ce portrait colonial à Paris, tout comme si je ne savais pas que c'est le commencement de la fin pour ton ami P.L. Ah ! ce que c'est que de nous deux !⁴⁴⁷

Clearly, this “jeune Mauresque” or young Moor, who Louÿs describes as a “colonial portrait,” maintains a very different social status than Marie de Régnier, both in Louÿs’ eyes and in the eyes of Parisian polite society. With her dark skin and sugary accent, she seems to be more of an animal to Louÿs than a emotional, intellectual human being. “Zohra ! Zohra ! venez ici bien vite !” he says as if she were his pet, then describes them being stuck together like two dogs in the street.⁴⁴⁸ Further, in letters to his brother, Louÿs refers to her as “Dahlia,” while also giving her other pseudonyms like “Pot-de-Moutarde.” In a letter to Claude Farrère, Louÿs writes, “Il n’y qu’une race de femme qui sachent baiser. Ce sont les Maresques”⁴⁴⁹ After much debate with his brother and friends who attempt to dissuade him, Louÿs decides to

⁴⁴⁶ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 377.

⁴⁴⁷ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 374.

⁴⁴⁸ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 374.

⁴⁴⁹ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 373.

bring Zohra to Paris. On the 30th of April 1897, the couple enters the gates of the capital, still aglow from the southern sun.

It is at 147 Boulevard Malesherbes where the most important and provocative pictures of Zohra and Marie de Régnier are taken. Perhaps it was Marie's jealousy of Zohra that drove her back to Louÿs, perhaps it was her unhappy marriage, but whatever the cause, by October 1897, Louÿs and Marie are once again in each other's arms. As Zohra was then living with Louÿs, the two lovers chose to communicate through small announcements in the *Echo de Paris* and meet at a "garçonnière" on avenue MacMahon. This did, however, give Zohra the entire summer to play mistress of the house with Louÿs and his friends.

The intrigues of the romantic affairs apart, the photographs that Louÿs took of Marie and Zohra, clothed and unclothed, reveal much of the women's social status and, similarly, how each one conceived themselves in the eyes of Louÿs, our ardent photographer. The five photographs provided (Figures 27 through 30) were taken at Louÿs apartment on boulevard Malesherbes in 1897. The first image (Figure 27), portrays Marie as the society woman, with her hair braided up into a hat laden with bows. She wears a silk tie close around her neck, and the light color of her dress suggests this is daywear. In other available photos of this type, she is dressed similarly, or even more glamorously, in furs. Her nude poses are classic, discrete, even conservative, clearly on the side of erotica rather than pornography, and so even undressed, she is not able to shed her social placing, not open her legs before the camera or bend in front of it. In other nude photographs of her standing or

sitting, she poses as if she were a statue in the Louvre, or a painting in a great master's studio. She preserves, quite consciously, her status as a "lady."

Zohra, on the other hand, is not constrained by such social constructs. In this sense, for the Parisian polite society, she is the clown, the gypsy, the actress. Although he was often timid in front of such a public, Louÿs allows himself to be carried away with the social freedoms and playfulness Zohra's position permits, using her even to provoke this same society. It is not surprising, then, that a great number of photographs portray her in costume. Whether at home with Louÿs' friends Debussy, Jean de Tinan, Gilbert de Voisins, or Paul Valéry, or at the Comédie-Francaise where one night Zohra wore a startling red costume rented by Louÿs, Zohra is free to play the fool. Like Marie de Régnier, Zohra's social status carried over to the bedroom where she posed for her lover. Figure 29 shows Zohra in one of her many costumes which is fairly typical of this period. Added to the clothing is her placement on the floor, a position a woman such as Marie would be amiss to assume.

The following photograph (Figure 30), offers a fairly classic nude image, similar to the pose offered by Marie, although the fact that she is lying in a bed suggests a more sexual nudity than what Marie displays. To this we add one of the less provocative nude photographs (Figure 31), but one that can inarguably be termed erotic. In a prostrate position before the camera, bent forward as if in prayer, Zohra's nude rear is raised in an explicitly sexual position. With the camera's view capturing the subject from the front, rather than from behind, the *mise en scène* of the young woman's body seems to objectify her rear rather than sexualize it. However, other such images of the "jeune Mauresque" are much more explicit and

less erotic, that is to say, they blur the lines between what may be considered art, or erotica, and pornography.

Conclusion

Taken together, these painted portraits, “cartes-de-visite,” candid shots, and erotica offer a startling and vivid example of the ways in which photography, and importantly the newly available hand held camera, were incorporated into the daily lives and artistic visions of those who considered themselves to be part of the social elite. Our twenty-first century gaze must pause and remind itself that not only was this technology new and emerging, but so too were the norms of its consumption and application. Although prominent nineteenth century figures like Baudelaire and Ingres railed against the role of photography in the arts, the “magic” that these images capture lives on even today.

For the German philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin, this “magic” is revelatory of the unconscious aspects of human behavior and identity. In referring to a portrait taken of a groom and his fiancé, the critique observes:

Si l'on s'est plongé assez longtemps dans une telle image, on aperçoit combien, ici aussi, les contraires se touchent : la plus exacte technique peut donner à ses produits une valeur magique, beaucoup plus que celle dont pourrait jouir à nos yeux une image peinte. Malgré toute l'ingéniosité du photographe, malgré l'affectation de l'attitude de son modèle, le spectateur ressent le besoin irrésistible de chercher dans une telle image la plus petite étincelle de hasard, d'ici et maintenant, grâce à quoi la réalité a pour ainsi dire brûlé de part en part le caractère d'image le besoin de trouver l'endroit invisible où, dans l'apparence de cette minute depuis longtemps écoulée, niche aujourd'hui encore l'avenir, et si éloquemment que, regardant en arrière, nous pouvons le découvrir. Car la nature qui parle à l'appareil est autre que celle qui parle à l'œil; autre d'abord en ce que, à la place d'un

espace consciemment disposé par l'homme, apparaît un espace tramé d'inconscient.⁴⁵⁰

The painted portrait, which can take days, weeks, even months to complete, offers nothing of the “hazard,” or chance, that the photographic image does. Benjamin argues that not only is the language of photography different from its counterpart the painting—that the two mediums are read differently—but they offer the viewer an insight into the unconscious mind of the subject. The viewer “naturally” looks for clues into the life and mind, even future of the sitter through unconscious gestures and expressions as well as the unconscious choices of clothing and objects. The importance of the emerging technology is the way it altered how the unconscious aspect of art is conceived. Where it is the artist’s unconscious mind that is arguably revealed in paintings, the photographic image offers the unconscious mind of the *sitter* or the subject. As photography became industrialized, photographers quickly became technicians; but even when an “artistic” photographer such as Nadar offers an image of Baudelaire, it is not Nadar’s unconscious mind that the viewer is seeking to discover, it is Baudelaire’s. This shift can readily be seen in the collection of paintings and photographs offered in this study. Where Louÿs appears serious and aloof in the painted portrait, or even in his studio photography (Figures 1 and 5), his true nature as prankster and humorist is betrayed in his candid shots, particularly in the self-portrait provided here (Figure 14). Unless a painter were painting from a photograph, such an expression would be difficult to capture. Additionally, the

⁴⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin, “Petite histoire de la photographie,” *Études photographiques*, 1 Nov 1996, Web. 29 Oct 2010 <<http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/index99.html>>.

tradition of French portraiture would not have permitted such a “ludique” scene; it simply was not yet accepted, or even considered legitimate.

Despite “la plus petite étincelle de hasard” which may be revealed in a particular image, for Louÿs and other such literary dandies there is still the overwhelming element of intention. In his studio photographs, Louÿs *chooses* how to dress and hold himself. In the portraits of his friends, though possibly through negotiation, he *chooses* how to represent them and where to place the camera. In his candid shots, he *chooses* when to pick up the camera and where to point it. These intentions are consistent with the construction of a cohesive persona which, for Louÿs, is based on refinement, exclusivity, eroticism, and ultimately playfulness. Louÿs is inextricably bound to his milieu and his moment in history, which gives his images an inescapable authenticity, another notion essential to Walter Benjamin’s theories on photography. However, Henri Cartier-Bresson, the celebrated twentieth century photographer and father of photojournalism, walks us through the transition from the painted portrait to the candid shot in a way that captures the essence of the elements discussed throughout our study. In “L’instant décisif,” which served as an introduction to his first album *Images à la sauvette*, Cartier-Bresson writes in 1952:

[N]’attribue-t-on pas à la découverte de la photographie l’abandon par les peintres d’un de leurs grands sujets, le portrait ? La redingote, le képi, le cheval rebutent désormais le plus académique d’entre eux, qui se sentira étranglé par tous les boutons de guêtre de Meissonier. Nous, peut-être parce que nous atteignons une chose bien moins permanente que les peintres, pourquoi en serions nous gênés ? Nous nous en amusons plutôt, car à travers notre appareil nous acceptons la vie dans toute sa réalité. Les gens souhaitent se perpétuer dans leur portrait et ils tendent à la postérité leur bon profil ; désir souvent mêlé d’une certaine crainte magique, ils donnent

prise. Un des caractères émouvants du portrait, c'est aussi de retrouver la similitude des hommes, leur continuité à travers tout ce qui décrit leur milieu; ne serait-ce que dans l'album de famille, prendre l'oncle pour son petit neveu. Mais, si le photographe atteint le reflet d'un monde tant extérieur qu'intérieur, c'est que les gens sont « en situation », comme on dit dans le langage du théâtre. Il devra respecter l'ambiance, intégrer l'habitat qui décrit le milieu, éviter surtout l'artifice qui tue la vérité humaine et aussi faire oublier l'appareil et celui qui le manipule.⁴⁵¹

In giving way to the photographic portrait, the painted portrait appears canonical, traditional, even historical, and all of its norms of etiquette and its fundamental characteristics become stiflingly academic and inconsistent with modernity.

Because of this, and because of the speed and the fleeting nature of its subjects, photography may be less permanent than painting in historic cultural traditions.

Nevertheless, the photograph captures, as Cartier-Bresson highlights, life in all its reality. Further, as in the case of Louÿs among the other literary dandies such as Barrès and Proust, among also his many literary and artistic friends, a continuity is discovered between them, marrying them at once to one another and to the greater family album of man. Lastly, the photographic image inextricably links them to their moment in time and to the place in which they are captured. It may appear at first contradictory, but even Barrès at his false writing desk is in many ways a natural setting as it is contributes to an overall identity expressed in a historical and cultural tradition.

⁴⁵¹ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Images à la sauvette* (Paris: Éd. Verve, 1952).

CHAPTER SIX

PROSTITUTES AND PLAY THINGS: AFFIRMATIONS OF MALE FRIENDSHIP

Homosexuality vs Homosociology

When Oscar Wilde was called to trial in London in 1895,⁴⁵² a fairly intimate letter written by the esthete to Lord Alfred Douglas was read aloud in the courtroom. To accompany this short correspondence, a poem by none other than Pierre Louÿs was entered into evidence. Louÿs' literature was in fact a poetic translation of the correspondence written at the request of Wilde and Douglas who thought they could obfuscate the letter's content by associating it with literary production. Luckily for Louÿs, the poem had been signed "by a poet of no importance" in Lord Douglas' Oxford Journal *The Spirit Lamp*;⁴⁵³ however, upon learning of his implication in the affair, Louÿs was horrified.

Pierre Louÿs first became friends with Wilde in 1891 when he was twenty years old, and he broke with the playwright two years later when Wilde refused to separate from Lord Douglas and continued to freely tout his homosexuality, becoming a subject of gossip and scandal even before the trial. "Ah! vous ne savez pas?..." Henri de Régner says to Edmond de Goncourt over dinner in April of 1893, shortly after Louÿs' break with the Irishman. "Du reste, il ne s'en cache pas. Oui, il

⁴⁵² This is the third of three trials. See Sinfield 1.

⁴⁵³ This poem was published in *The Spirit Lamp* on May 4, 1893 and signed: "Sonnet. A letter written in prose poetry by M. Oscar Wilde to a friend, and translated into rhymed poetry by a poet of no importance."

s'avoue pédéraste."⁴⁵⁴ That Wilde was ostracized by both British and French polite society in the period leading up to the trial is a well known fact, but the scandal had far reaching effects to those close to him in Paris. For example, when Jules Huret, author of the important 1891 series *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire*, implied in the French press that Catulle Mendès was an intimate of Wilde's, Mendès challenged the journalist to a duel to protect his honor.⁴⁵⁵ Essentially, Wilde's homosexuality, his brazen assertion of it, and his easy incorporation of feminine qualities into his own masculinity, were a threat to a heterosexual male order that condemned such deviations. Throughout this period, social constructions of gender and sexuality kept both men and women in their proper spheres, but while female homosexuality was largely tolerated as an erotic element of male heterosexuality, male homosexuality disrupted male homosocial relations, the patriarchal phallogocentric power model, and threw into question traditional definitions of masculinity.

The Parisian literary world of the 1890s is very much a man's world, where female writers have little choice but to define themselves or model their gender in relation to male norms. Colette, born in 1873, often dressed as a schoolgirl, an outfit fetishized by her husband Willy. Rachilde, a friend of Pierre Louÿs and author of *Monsieur Vénu*s (1884), often wore men's clothing, signed her calling cards 'homme de lettres,'⁴⁵⁶ and was called by Maurice Barrès, "Mademoiselle Baudelaire."⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Edmond de Goncourt, *Journal; mémoires de la vie littéraire*, Édition définitive, publiée sous la direction de l'Académie Goncourt (Paris : E. Flammarion, 1935). Entry of Dimanche 30 avril 1893.

⁴⁵⁵ Nye, 123.

⁴⁵⁶ For an excellent study of Rachilde's cross dressing and gender manipulation, see Melanie Hawthorne, "Writing as Cross Dressing" in *Rachilde and French Women's Authorship : From Decadence to Modernism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

Marie de Régnier, daughter of José-Maria de Heredia, signed her name, like George Sand, under a male pseudonym, Gérard d'Houville. By appropriating male qualities, these writers could be accepted in varying degrees in a literary world dominated by men. Female homosexuality, a common literary theme throughout the nineteenth century, —beginning with Baudelaire, and treated extensively in the work of Pierre Louÿs, —was accepted because it did not threaten male dominance or male homosocial relations.⁴⁵⁸ Lesbianism, or Saphisme as it was often called at the time, was widely practiced, if not partly accepted, in aristocratic and artistic circles; Colette, for instance, wore a bracelet with the inscription “J’appartiens à Missy” her girlfriend the Marquise de Belbeuf and daughter of the duc de Morny. Other such well-known relationships include Renée Vivien and Natalie Clifford Barney, Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma, and the Baroness Deslandes and the Countess D’Orsay. In this aristocratic and literary society, three well-known ladies of respectable reputation held salons where lesbians could discretely yet unashamedly share their sexuality, and meet others of similar desire. These are the Princesse de Polignac, an American of the Singer sewing machine dynasty, Mme Bulteau, a friend of both Pierre Louÿs and Marie de Heredia, and the Baroness Delandes.⁴⁵⁹ These salons, frequented by many of the most prominent names of the period, show to

⁴⁵⁷ Yves Chiron, *Maurice Barrès : le prince de la jeunesse* (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin, 1986) 115.

⁴⁵⁸ Lawrence Schehr, *Parts of an Andrology: On Representations of Men's Bodies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997) 10-11.

⁴⁵⁹ For an excellent study of lesbianism in the Parisian salons and among the aristocracy, see Michel De Cossart, *The Food of Love: Princesse Edmond de Polignac (1865-1943) and her Salon* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978).; for a brief list of names involved in lesbian relationships, see Robert Fleury, *Marie de Régnier: l'Inconstante* (Paris : Plon, 1990) 61-62.

what extent lesbianism was present and visible in the circles Pierre Louÿs and his friends frequented.

Male homosexuality, on the other hand, finds no equivalent mode of expression in late nineteenth century Paris. Although Paul Verlaine's relationship with Rimbaud was known, and Robert de Montesquiou had intimates who were aware of his own homosexual relationships, aristocratic and literary society was not generally accepting of overt male homosexuality. In fact, within bourgeois society, it was considered a pathological disorder that was repressed by medical and judicial institutions when possible.⁴⁶⁰ As Eve Sedgwick notes in *Between Men*,⁴⁶¹ female homosexuality does not, for the most part, disrupt female homosocial relations (relations between people of the same sex) as expressed through friendships, families, or through more formalized female associations because it is viewed as one element in the continuum of female relations which, in general, support the cause of women. Male homosexuality, to the contrary, is entirely disruptive to the patriarchal phallogocentric power structure and is not considered an element of normal male homosocial relations. In fact, Sedgwick notes that "*obligatory heterosexuality* is built into male-dominated kinship systems, [...] that homophobia is a *necessary* consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage."⁴⁶² French society at the end of the nineteenth century did not tolerate male homosexuality on any level, but it was not treated as a crime, in the way it was in England and other

⁴⁶⁰ See Guy Hocquenghem, *Le désir homosexuel* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1972). (Chapitre 1 La paranoïa anti-homosexuelle).

⁴⁶¹ Sedgwick.

⁴⁶² Ibid. 3.

European countries, due to the long standing Napoleonic Codes. Law enforcement appears to have focused on prostitution and public lewdness, arresting mostly lower class citizens who had to look for homosexual encounters in public spaces or in risky venues upper class men could avoid.⁴⁶³

As evinced in the duel between Catulle Mendès and Jules Huret, the 1895 trial and public shaming of Oscar Wilde had far reaching effects in the Parisian literary community. Wilde's overt homosexuality not only disrupted otherwise heterosexual male relationships, it deeply impacted the definition of masculinity as well as the nature of certain homosocial relations for one of Wilde's close Parisian friends, Pierre Louÿs. Because of this, both the person of Oscar Wilde and the scandal surrounding his 1895 trial can be viewed as an essential problematic in relation to accepted forms of masculinity. The question of Louÿs' masculinity as it relates to the body, performativity, sexual and emotional relationships with females, mainly prostitutes and Louÿs longtime love interest Marie de Heredia, as well as his homosocial relationships with contemporaries like Jean de Tinan and Henri de Régnier, are the essential points of interrogation of the following chapter. As one of Pierre Louÿs' closest friends between 1894 and 1898, Jean de Tinan plays an important role in the following discussion of masculinity and gender, particularly because his novel, *Penses-tu réussir !*, in which Louÿs appears under the pseudonym Lionel de Silvande, autobiographically portrays Louÿs' relationships with women, his friendships with men, and his life in the Latin Quarter throughout this period. Additionally, Louÿs' correspondences reveal much about his sex life as well as his

⁴⁶³ Nye 105.

behavior and attitudes toward masculinity and women. While he will remain in the shadows for much of the discussion, the specter of Oscar Wilde is never far. Because of this, the chapter begins with a summary of Louÿs relationship and his break with the esthete.

Oscar Wilde and Pierre Louÿs

In February of 1893 Pierre Louÿs received a copy of *Salomé* which included a formal dedication to him by the author, Oscar Wilde. Louÿs had helped Wilde edit the French text and it can be presumed that he recommended it be published at Edmond Bailly's La Librairie de l'Art Indépendant. However, upon seeing his name in print in the same work as Wilde, Louÿs responds only with a laconic note of thanks. André Gide had very likely warned him in December of 1892 that Wilde was openly flaunting his homosexuality, a fact that could have serious repercussions for the young writer if such behavior were attached to his own reputation.⁴⁶⁴ After responding tersely to the gesture, Wilde writes, "Is the enclosed really all that you have to say to me in return for my choosing you out of all my friends to whom to dedicate *Salomé*? I cannot tell you how hurt I am... It is new to me to think that friendship is more brittle than love is."⁴⁶⁵ Louÿs quickly realizes his faux-pas, and as a sign of friendship sends Wilde a poem titled *Salomé*. Although John Gray had warned Louÿs to break off his friendship with the playwright,⁴⁶⁶ and after Gide's

⁴⁶⁴ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 212.

⁴⁶⁵ Cited in Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987) 370.

⁴⁶⁶ John Gray and Pierre Louÿs, *A Friendship of the Nineties: Letters between John Gray & Pierre Louÿs* (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1984).

comments about the Irishman's behavior, Louÿs still felt loyal to Wilde who had shown him so much kindness and had even introduced him to Sarah Bernhardt, who became the first inspiration for what was to become *Aphrodite*. Wilde responded to Louÿs' poem by inviting him to Paris to attend the opening night of *A Woman of No Importance*.⁴⁶⁷

It is at this time, in the spring of 1893, that Louÿs becomes fully aware of Wilde's homosexuality. Up until then, for Louÿs, Wilde's homosexuality had been only rumor, or facetious provocation by the esthete in the form of the poetic euphemisms for which he was known. In *Si le grain ne meurt*, Gide writes, "On ne prenait pas Wilde bien au sérieux."⁴⁶⁸ Constantly in Lord Douglas's company during this visit, as well as with his entourage of young men, Louÿs sees first hand that the talk of homosexuality, or sodomy as it is referred to at the time, was not just provocative rumor.⁴⁶⁹ It is Wilde's relationship, after all, which brings about his own downfall as the boy's father pursues the esthete in court. Louÿs writes to his brother Georges, "Londres est charmant mais je suis dans une société qui me gêne un peu, je te dirai pourquoi."⁴⁷⁰ In fact, Louÿs is present in the Savoy Hotel, according to Richard Ellmann, Wilde's biographer, when Wilde's wife arrives to find the double bed her husband shared with Douglas. According to Edmond de Goncourt, Wilde

⁴⁶⁷ Louÿs is in Paris from the 19th to the 22nd of April 1893.

⁴⁶⁸ André Gide, *Si le grain ne meurt in Souvenirs et Voyage*. Vol. II. (Paris: Editions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2001) 299.

⁴⁶⁹ Gide, *Si le grain ne meurt in Souvenirs et Voyage* 300. Gide notes that Louÿs described two men in Wilde's entourage marrying one another.

⁴⁷⁰ Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites de Pierre Louÿs à Georges Louis: 1890-1907* 115.

told Louÿs at this instant that he had made three marriages in his life, one to a woman and two to men.⁴⁷¹

Despite his unease and clear disapproval, Louÿs still agrees at this time to turn a letter that Wilde had written to Lord Douglas into a poem. The two lovers were afraid of being blackmailed by Alfred Wood who possessed the letter; they thought that if it were turned into a poem in French they could argue that it was of artistic importance and not personal.⁴⁷² Louÿs agreed, and the poem was published in Lord Douglas's Oxford Journal the *Spirit Lamp* on May 4, 1893. The first quatrain of the poem *Hyacinthe* reads:

Hyacinthe ! O mon cœur ! jeune dieu doux et blond !
Tes yeux sont la lumière de la mer ! ta bouche,
Le sang rouge du soir où mon soleil se couche...
Je t'aime, enfant câlin, cher aux bras d'Apollon.⁴⁷³

Sexuality, sensuality, and emotion are clearly brought together in homosexual terms. When one looks closely at the letter, dated January 1893, from which the poem is 'inspired,' one sees that there is little resemblance between the two, save for the lips and reference to Apollo. Wilde writes:

My Own Boy, Your sonnet is quite lovely, and it is a marvel that those red rose-leaf lips of yours should have been made no less for music of song than for madness of kisses. Your slim gilt soul walks between passion and poetry. I know Hyacinthus, whom Apollo loved so madly, was you in Greek days. [...] Always, with undying love, yours, Oscar

When the poem and letter were presented in court in 1895, the ploy clearly did not work, and Louÿs was unfortunately brought into the well-publicized drama which

⁴⁷¹ Goncourt, *Journal; mémoires de la vie littéraire*. Entry of Dimanche 30 avril 1893.

⁴⁷² Ellmann 370- 371.

⁴⁷³ Cited in Ellmann 371.

brought about Wilde's downfall. Sadly, the esthete was condemned to two years hard labor, irreparably destroying his literary reputation at home and abroad.

Before observing Louÿs reaction to the trial, it should be pointed out that Louÿs broke with Wilde in May 1893, shortly after his visit to London, at the Hôtel des Deux-Mondes on the Avenue de l'Opéra in Paris. Although no detailed record remains of their discussion, Wilde notes in a letter from Reading Prison to More Adey that Louÿs basically gave him an ultimatum: renounce Alfred Douglas or end their own friendship.⁴⁷⁴ Wilde clearly chose not to break with Douglas and, sadly, had to say goodbye to his young friend, saying, "Adieu Pierre Louis. Je voulais avoir un ami ; je n'aurai plus que des amants."⁴⁷⁵ While in Prison, Wilde begins to deeply regret his break from Louÿs, as well as from John Gray. Wilde writes to Alfred Douglas from prison, "When I compare my friendship with you [Alfred Douglas] to my friendship with such still younger men as John Gray and Pierre Louÿs I feel ashamed. My real life, my higher life was with them and such as they."⁴⁷⁶ For the esthete, Douglas represented the banal, earthly life, perhaps of physical pleasure, while Gray and Louÿs were for him poets who represented the realm and power of art.

⁴⁷⁴ "I am so glad Pierre Louÿs has made a great name for himself. He was most cultivated, refined, and gentle. Three years ago he told me I would have to choose between his friendship and my fatal connection with A. D. [Alfred Douglas]. I need hardly say I chose the meaner nature and the baser mind." Letter from Oscar Wilde to More Adey. Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000) 666.

⁴⁷⁵ Gide, *Si le grain ne meurt in Souvenirs et Voyage* 306.

⁴⁷⁶ Wilde 686.

When news of the trial breaks into the press in 1895, Louÿs is in Seville. He writes to his brother, "Cela devait arriver mais quelle terrible aventure."⁴⁷⁷ He notes the sad inevitability of Wilde's downfall and pities the situation of his old friend. However, once back in Paris, he must contend with his own implication in the trial as well as with his well-known friendship with the playwright. Louÿs writes to his brother after his return to the capital: "Je n'ai plus ni sommeil ni repos, et pourtant il faut que je sorte tous les jours, tous les soirs, et que je voie tout le monde afin d'observer quelle mine on me fait. [...] Quelle abomination et comme je me suis trompé !" Louÿs must show a positive face in society in order to maintain his reputation. He continues, making reference to the *Hyacinthe* poem, "Heureusement tout ce que j'ai écrit, toute ma vie sauf cela, et tous mes goûts démentent ce qu'on pourrait penser ; mais cela suffit-il ? Je me vois poursuivi jusqu'à la fin de ma vie par cette histoire. C'est à devenir fou."⁴⁷⁸ His published works, most notably *Les Chansons de Bilitis*, as well as his reputation as a man about town, thanks to Tinan and Lebey, attest, he believes, to his masculinity as a person and as a writer.

Louÿs never questions his own heterosexuality, but he does worry about how others perceive his masculinity. This worry is rather significant in the construction of his masculinity, especially given that at twenty-four years old during the trial, Louÿs is still in the process of becoming a grown man with his entire career ahead of him. Jean-Paul Goujon notes that just two years later Louÿs still worries about his masculine/heterosexual reputation, writing to his brother from Algeria in 1897, "Tu

⁴⁷⁷ Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites de Pierre Louÿs à Georges Louis: 1890-1907* 155. 11 mars 1895 Séville.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid. 156. 12 avril 1895 Paris.

devines les cancans que feraient mes bons amis si l'on apprenait que j'habite seule avec ce jeune Omar [young male Arabe servant] une villa isolée d'Afrique."⁴⁷⁹ In essence, Louÿs is worried what his friends will say when they learn that he is living alone, in rather isolated conditions, with a young male servant. Additionally, as Goujon notes, it is at this moment that Louÿs rejects any notion of male homosexuality, in either his life or his work. His literature, however, will be filled with female homosexuality, as well as the reversal of sexual gender roles between men and women, issues that will be discussed later in the chapter.

More than issues of sexuality, Louÿs relationship with Wilde bring up questions of gender, masculinity and homosociology. Male homosociology and homosocial desire, according to Eve Sedgwick, are terms that describe relations strictly between men, regardless of sexuality. This can easily be applied to the often all male society Louÿs surrounds himself with. For the most part, Louÿs appears to have no homosexual tendencies or desires, yet he has a relationship with a society of homosexuals in London, which does not seem to bother him until the question of the social is brought in to play. It seems, then, that although he disagreed with homosexuality, he was not initially repulsed by the idea and was not necessarily homophobic in the modern sense of the word. However, his contact with these men raises the question of his own masculinity, an idea that is not necessarily easy to unravel and is complicated by his male relationships.

⁴⁷⁹ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrete* 301.

Prostitutes and Play Things as Affirmations of Male Friendship

A standard model for interpreting male homosocial relations was proposed by René Girard in his 1961 *Mensonge romantique et vérité Romanesque*,⁴⁸⁰ in which desire is represented as triangular: subject, object, mediator. The mediator can take different forms, whether it be an example in literature or other media which directs the subject to the object, or another subject who seeks the same object, thus provoking the first subject to compete for and desire the primary object. Eve Sedgwick elaborates on this triangularity in *Between Men*, showing in which ways males bond over their mutual desire for the same object. For Pierre Louÿs, Jean de Tinan, and André Lebey, the prostitutes of the Latin Quarter are the objects which strengthen their homosocial bonds and become the play things which define the parameters of their friendships and contribute to their definition of masculinity. Although both Girard and Sedgwick present their theories through the study of literature and literary history, their ideas have been elaborated upon by subsequent social theorists who apply them in sociological terms, mainly those relating to feminist and queer theory. The lines between life and literature are constantly blurred for these young men, a fact which allows our study to pass from journal entries and personal letters to the literature and poetry where their homosocial relations and gender constructions are played out and recorded, often in biographical terms.

As casual observers, Colette and Rachilde's descriptions of these young men provide somewhat objective insight into how they bonded over their relationships

⁴⁸⁰ Girard.

with women, and how as a group, Tinan, Louÿs, and Lebey formed a singular identity. Again, in *Mes Apprentissages* Colette observes:

Heureux de plaire, il [Tinan] était clément aux petites filles du D'Harcourt, les appelait à notre table, où Pierre Louÿs les contemplait de près, d'un œil myope d'entomologiste. Je pense qu'en bons amis tous trois se partageaient une petite Loute de dix-neuf ans, en culotte et casquette de cycliste, plus riche de perfections que toutes les beautés célèbres. Quels longs yeux bleus entre les bandeaux « à la Cléo de Mérode », et comme Loute semblait heureuse, assise sur un genou de Pierre Louÿs, et peignant des doigts les cheveux de Tinan, qu'une autre femme avait parfumés...⁴⁸¹

Sitting on Pierre Louÿs' knee, Loute, a young girl who could have easily been a prostitute, combs Tinan's hair with her hand, hair which, according to Colette, had been perfumed by another girl. The two young men are literally linked by the girl between them, entranced by her beauty and sensuality. Rachilde also notes that these young men "partageaient les filles."⁴⁸²

One of the reasons their mutual desire appears to strengthen their friendship, as evinced elsewhere in their writings, is that the three young men generally consider women, particularly prostitutes, as objects of pleasure and a means to sensation. In Lebey's *Les Premières lutttes*, in which the author presents himself as the hero named Jacques, the narrator observes that Jacques studies prostitutes "comme il avait étudié son art, comme il avait étudié ses livres [...] La sensation était devenue sa seule recherche."⁴⁸³ Never mind these women as individuals: they are a means to an end, objects of study, and tools used to understand one's sensations. In *Penses-tu réussir !* Tinan evokes Socrates' disciple

⁴⁸¹ Colette.

⁴⁸² Rachilde.

⁴⁸³ Lebey, *Les premières lutttes* 314.

Aristippe in order to say the same thing: “[I]l jugeait que la femme n’est qu’un instrument, parfois merveilleux, un moyen d’émotion et non un but—comme l’Art, Messieurs et Dames, comme l’Art.”⁴⁸⁴ Lebey goes on in *Les Premières lutttes*, speaking in first person through his alter-ego Jacques, “Une femme ne vaut vraiment pas la peine que nous l’aimions. C’est un être de second ordre, tout de caprice, incapable d’une intellectualité sérieuse ; elle ne peut pas être toute notre vie ; c’est un joujou ; [...] les femmes ne doivent être que les poupées des hommes.”⁴⁸⁵ One can easily imagine Loute, sitting on Louÿs’ knee, stroking Tinan’s hair, as a doll, a plaything passed between the boys.

Key to René Girard’s triangular model of desire (subject, object, mediator) is the battle between multiple subjects for the same object, producing and increasing desire for that object. Here, Louÿs and Tinan offer a textbook example of Girard’s model in a correspondence from May 1896. At this time, the two are collaborating on the *Centaure*, and *Aphrodite* is just then making Louÿs a celebrity thanks to Coppée’s article which appeared in April. Apparently, Louÿs took home a “femme facile,” Thérèse, whom Tinan had already “claimed,” causing a spat of jealousy. On the 11th of May, Tinan sends Louÿs an angry letter accusing him of taking his “maîtresse provisoirement définitive” home under the false pretense of having gotten his authorization. Tinan admits that there must have been some miscommunication between them, but chides his friend for the indiscretion. It is

⁴⁸⁴ Tinan, *Penses-tu réussir!* 109.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid. 155.

worth citing Louÿs response at length in order to understand how the young men view women, and their own relationship. Louÿs writes May 18, 1896:

Avertissement. Cette lettre doit être lue sur le ton le plus affectueux.

FIN

DE L'AVERTISSEMENT.

Mon cher Jean

Il est parfaitement exact que je n'ai pas pour Thérèse une passion fatale. Je lui ai parlé, un peu au hasard, à Bullier, au moment où tu venais de me dire : je suis brouillé avec elle. Et tu me l'as *offerte*, à ce moment-là, à la place de Suzanne qui n'était pas libre.—Je la prends à ma table, tu me la souffles.

Louÿs goes on to say that Tinan had explicitly told him three times that he did not want to take Thérèse home, but later threw a fit (“tu te tenais en marie dans la voiture”), showing that he was ultimately angry about the situation. Louÿs goes on :

Comme tu couches avec tout le monde, je ne pourrais jamais trouver une femme au quartier qui ne t'ait pas appartenu et qui soit cependant potable. Tu as tous les avantages puisque tu *vis* au quartier, et moi pas.

Quand une de tes femmes ne nous plaît pas, tu l'abandonnes. Ainsi pour Mimi, Jeanne et d'autres.—Quand elle nous plaît, elle devient pour toi la 35^e grande amante, et on n'a plus le droit d'y songer—Choisis, je t'en prie, une maîtresse, mais choisis-là une fois pour toutes, et dis : c'est elle. On le saura.

[...] Maintenant tu m'offres une femme dont tu ne veux plus, et dès que je l'accepte, non seulement tu me la reprends mais tu m'accuses de vilaines manœuvres ! Je ne m'en blesse pas, parce que c'est de toi, mais tout de même cela est bien incohérent[.]

Louÿs concludes by asking Tinan to tell him each time he arrives in the Quartier which girl he has claimed so that Louÿs can stay away. “Est-ce Jeanne, Stéphanette, Blanche-Marcelle, Juliette, Yvonne, Mimi ou Thérèse ? – Tu me le diras ; et je ne y toucherai pas. Je le promets.”⁴⁸⁶ These are not just names that Louÿs is throwing out to be spiteful, these are real lovers that the boys have taken in the Latin Quarter as

⁴⁸⁶ Pierre Louÿs and Jean de Tinan, *Correspondance 1894-1898* (Paris: Editions du Limon: Paris, 1995. (pp. 158-159) Letter of 18 May 1895.

evinced in letters and in Tinan's *Penses-tu réussir !* and *Aimienne*. The sheer number is somewhat laughable as they in fact represent only a small fraction of the prostitutes the boys frequent.

The caution on the first line of this letter stands out, as it underscores the reconciliatory nature of the correspondence which seeks to bring the friends closer together rather than drive them apart. In the body of the letter, Louÿs makes it clear that his feelings for Thérèse are nothing more than a transitory desire, something easily let go or replaced. He highlights the fact that Tinan *offered* him (*italics his*) the young woman. She is traded between them like a commodity, no better than livestock. Louÿs had originally wanted another girl, Suzanne, but she was not free, possibly taken by another man, suggesting that other clients are in the market for these girls of easy virtue with whom Louÿs and Tinan must also compete. Apart from Tinan's accusations of villainy, which shows the competitive pretense of his unease, Louÿs asks Tinan to claim, or label the girls, again, highlighting their role as a commodity exchanged between the men with little to no free agency of her own.

Of course, these prostitutes do have free agency and individual personalities that express themselves differently between the boys. However, they will always remain prostitutes, or at least creatures of the subordinate class which could never aspire to the same social status or achieve the financial security that Tinan, Louÿs, and Lebey are privilege to. Tinan's *Penses-tu réussir* stands not only as an autobiographical work of his friends and his own life in the Latin Quarter, but also as a sort of collection of young women who largely cause Tinan great heartbreak as he often falls in love with women who do not, or cannot love him. One prostitute in

particular stands out in the letters, personal journals, and literature of Tinan, Louÿs, and Lebey. This is Blanche-Marcelle whose name appears in Louÿs' letter to Tinan cited above. In *Penses-tu réussir !*, Tinan says that he met Marcelle in an omnibus station, when in reality he met her on the terrace of the D'Harcourt where he exchanged a drink for her pleasant company. As Tinan and Louÿs' biographer Jean-Paul Goujon notes, such transactions were common in the Latin Quarter which was full of young male students who might otherwise have been put off by looking for prostitutes in less respectable places. On such café terraces, one could buy a beautiful young woman a drink or a meal and either leave it at that or take the party elsewhere.⁴⁸⁷ After buying her a few drinks, Tinan likely took her back to his apartment down the street at 75 Boulevard Saint-Michel. Differently from Thérèse who had caused much tension between Tinan and Louÿs, the three young men seem to have no problem "sharing" the young woman. Personal letters evince that the boys took turns sleeping with her and on one occasion Louÿs took nude photos of her dressed as Danaé, the mother of Perseus, in the presence of Tinan and Lebey.⁴⁸⁸

What is remarkable about their relationship with Marcelle is that although Lebey and Tinan both fell in love with her, they feel no sense of competition to possess her as ultimately neither of them can. As a low class prostitute, Marcelle's first instinct is to survive which means taking money and doing favors for men whenever it is materially beneficial for her. The boys sometimes would see her in the company of other men who were not as kind as them and they felt pity for her.

⁴⁸⁷ Goujon, *Jean de Tinan* 134.

⁴⁸⁸ Goujon, *Jean de Tinan* 134.

Believing he could help her escape her situation, Lebey gave her one hundred francs, equal to several hundred U.S. dollars today. However, rather than escape her lot with the money, Marcelle spent it in the cafés of the Latin Quarter. Sometime later, both heartbroken, Lebey and Tinan see Marcelle at a café concert. In his private journal, Tinan makes this important entry concerning his friendship with Lebey:

J'avais de la peine vraiment. J'ai vu que mon amitié pour Lebey était une belle chose pour tenir si bien. Ce n'ai [Sic] pas que j'ai trouvé en moi aucun sentiment analogue à la générale jalousie, c'était ceci : Je me sentais froissé de sentir auprès de moi, presque identique, la même peine—j'en étais touché aussi délicieusement. Et c'était si intense cette sensation que j'avais comme un désir dans les mains de jeter quelque chose à la tête de Marcelle qui là-bas se forçait à l'indifférence si les larmes s'entêtaient à ne pas mouiller mes paupières... Lebey a dû souffrir à peu près comme moi, peut-être plus vraiment. Lorsque nous somme sortis j'ai senti nettement qu'il ne pouvait pas parler à Marcelle, je me raidissais contre le même sentiment.⁴⁸⁹

Their mutual pain brings them closer together, a sentiment that is stronger than their jealousy. Further, Tinan's anger is not directed at Lebey, his competitor, but at the love object herself for whom he feels a nearly physical anger toward. This particular relationship reinforces their friendship just as Tinan and Louÿs spat over Thèrese had reinforced theirs.

L'Homme Seducteur and the anti-phallogocentric model

Pierre Louÿs' relationships with Zohra bent Brahmin and Marie de Heredia, daughter of José-Maria de Heredia and wife of Henri de Régnier, reveal much about constructions of class in the 1890s. They also reveal much about the ways Louÿs viewed women as well as his own sexuality and gender. Louÿs had met Zohra in

⁴⁸⁹ As cited in Goujon, *Jean de Tinan* 136.

Algeria in the spring of 1897 where he took dozens of nude photos of her at his residence in Fontaine-Bleue. As noted in his letters of the time, their relationship was based on sex and sensuality more than any type of intellectual connection. Like his friends Jean de Tinan and André Lebey, Louÿs viewed women like Zohra as playthings. In an aforementioned letter to Claude Debussy, Louÿs refers to her in animal terms: “Je ne sais plus rien, sinon que je suis collé depuis trente et un jours (oui, mon vieux, ça t’épate ?) avec une jeune Mauresque qui répond au nom de « Zohra ! Zohra ! viens ici bien vite ! » et au récent pseudonyme de « Pot-de-Moutarde ». Nous sommes comme deux chiens dans la rue.”⁴⁹⁰ Additionally, once in Paris, Louÿs parades “ce portrait colonial,” as he calls her, around in costume to the opera and to salons with his friends. She is a sort of showpiece, used as a novelty to shock polite society and, unintentionally, provoke anger and jealousy from Marie de Régnier with whom Louÿs’ affair had not yet begun. Once Louÿs begins sleeping with Marie later that year, he drops Zohra, putting her up in her own apartment before ultimately sending her back to Algeria.

Louÿs relationship with Marie de Heredia is much more complicated and in many ways fits the standard homosocial model of desire laid out by René Girard and Eve Sedgwick. There is, however, a second way of interpreting their relationship which casts Louÿs as the desired object whose masculinity is seen in sexual terms rather than power terms. Before exploring this new and fecund mode of interpretation, it is valuable to first interpret it through Girard’s triangular model as

⁴⁹⁰ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 374.

it explains much about his relationship with his rival/friend Henri de Régnier and Marie's father, José-Maria de Heredia.

Louÿs had made Henri de Régnier's acquaintance in 1891 and the two frequented both Mallarmé and Heredia's weekly salons, but it was Régnier who introduced Louÿs to Heredia after the young poet had sent the master two anonymous letters signed with a pseudonym. Early on, the two men were quietly seduced by Marie de Heredia who was a constant and charming presence at her father's salon. On July 13, 1895, Régnier and Louÿs speak intimately of Marie and it is at this time that Régnier makes his intentions of marriage known to his friend. Louÿs keeps his own desires secret throughout his friend's confession, but immediately after Régnier leaves, Louÿs sends a letter in which he confides, "Je suis follement amoureux de Marie, et depuis longtemps."⁴⁹¹ After a quick exchange of several short letters, the two make a pact that they will confess their love for Marie at the same time and allow her to choose. As a model example of René Girard and Eve Sedgwick's theory on homosocial bonds, the two young men note that this rivalry will bring them together, rather than drive them apart. Régnier writes to Louÿs, "L'événement qui nous arrive était de nature à rompre pour toujours une amitié ordinaire. Il faut donc que la notre soit d'espèce bien rare et bien profonde qu'au lieu de s'en altérer, elle s'en soit trouvée accrue."⁴⁹² He concludes by saying that whoever Marie chooses, the other will be happy for their happiness. However, Régnier does not hesitate to go behind Louÿs' back to ask Marie's hand in marriage.

⁴⁹¹ Pierre Louÿs, *Dossier secret Pierre Louÿs-Marie de Régnier*, Comments by Jean-Paul Goujon, In collaboration with Thierry Bodin, (Paris: C. Bourgois, 2002) 26. (p. 26)

⁴⁹² Ibid. 28.

He sends Louÿs a pneumatic—a letter sent through air tubes—to say that he has decided to act that very night.⁴⁹³ Louÿs responds with his own pneumatic, asking Régnier to wait until the following day to make his declaration so that he will have a chance to speak to his brother Georges who will be arriving in Paris shortly. Régnier does not receive this letter before making his move. He first asks Marie for her hand, a rather unconventional approach which was done perhaps out of respect for Louÿs, although he does not mention his friend’s intentions. He then speaks with her father.

As Marie has no dowry, and due to her father’s rather significant gambling debts, Régnier agrees to take care of the family’s finances and take full financial responsibility of Marie. This is a tempting agreement that the Heredia’s could not pass up as their private financial situation was rather dire. Indeed, Robert Fleury, in his biography on Marie, titled *L’Inconstante*, notes that the financial element to the marriage played a capital role.⁴⁹⁴ In essence, Régnier “bought” Marie’s hand in marriage, reinforcing the traditional phallogocentric power relations between the sexes; but notable as well is Marie’s agency in the situation; indeed, it should come as no surprise that the young woman does indeed feel “bought,” particularly after she learns of the pact the two rivals had made. She makes it clear to her future husband, as well as to Louÿs later on, that she would have chosen to marry Louÿs, despite the fact that he had nothing financially to offer her or her family. According to Robert Fleury, Marie turns to her younger sister for emotional support as her older sister, Hélène, reminds her that Régnier is a gentleman of old noble birth, a

⁴⁹³ Ibid. 29.

⁴⁹⁴ Fleury, *Marie de Régnier : l’inconstante* (Paris: Plon, 1990) 41.

literary master of the new poetic school (a reputation that would not last more than fifty years), and a respectable man of monetary means who could offer their family financial stability and add to their reputation.⁴⁹⁵ Louÿs could offer none of this at this stage of his career. Marie and her family, it should not be forgotten, have much to contribute Régnier's reputation as well. They are, after all, true *literary* aristocracy.

This assertion is widely held and easily recognized by the sheer list of names in attendance at their October 17th wedding: François Coppée, Sully Prudhomme, Alexandre Dumas fils, Stéphane Mallarmé, Catulle Mendès, Judith Gautier, Hippolyte Taine, Leconte de Lisle, as well as Jacques Emile Blanche, among many other notables. Earlier in 1895, Heredia was accepted into the Académie Française, the most prestigious literary institution in France, one that Régnier never made any secret about wanting to join. According to Pascal Pia, both Paul Léautaud and Paul Valéry accused their friend Régnier of deserting Mallarmé and his daughter Judith for Heredia and Marie in the belief that his relationship would open up the doors to the Académie.⁴⁹⁶ Whatever Régnier's motivations, he was in fact admitted into the Académie Française in 1911, although he would pay dearly with a terribly unhappy marriage.

Marie reacts in two critical ways to the engagement and the marriage. The first is to tell Régnier that although she will marry him, she does so only at the wish of her parents, and to "punish" him, she assures the poet that their marriage will

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid. 43.

⁴⁹⁶ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 306, 812.

never be consummated. Secondly, she offers herself to Louÿs in September of 1895, shortly before her October wedding. To her, and his, astonishment, Louÿs refuses her offer, not accepting the second place of “lover” to “husband.” As Goujon poetically notes, like Louÿs character Démétrios of his novel *Aphrodite*, the poet prefers the dream (marrying Marie) to the reality (being her lover).⁴⁹⁷ Louÿs leaves Paris shortly after. He avoids the fanfare of the wedding and at the same time he distances himself emotionally from Marie. In January of 1896, Louÿs, whose passions for Marie appear to have cooled, returns to the Heredia’s salon where he encounters Marie in more amicable terms. After seeing his former love interest for the first time, Louÿs writes to his brother Georges that Marie “a l’air lugubre depuis son mariage et que tout paraît déjà craquer.”⁴⁹⁸ Marie did pass through a period of deep depression after her marriage but by all accounts she seems to have been revived by the desire to reconquer Louÿs who, at this time, has kept his distance and remained civil, much to Marie’s chagrin. He still admires her, noting in the same letter to his brother, “Tu ne connais pas la jeune femme ; elle est aussi inimaginable que le père. C’est une enfant primesautière et bonne ; je crois que cette définition-là explique tout son caractère.”⁴⁹⁹ Perhaps her spontaneity and impulsiveness are what both attract Louÿs and keep him on guard. Marie remains persistent, though, embarrassing Louÿs in the company of the Heredias and invited guests by flirting with the poet.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites à Georges Louis : 1890-1917* 176.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

This biographical information is essential to understanding Louÿs' masculinity and sexuality because it is directly informed by his triangular relationship with Marie and Henri de Régnier. While the obvious reading of this dynamic is in line with Girard and Sedgwick, a new perspective by Lawrence Schehr, as presented in his work *Parts of an Andrology*, allows for a reading of Louÿs' masculinity that is outside of the phallogocentric power model. The notion of the phallogocentric model, akin to the patriarchal model, argues that society is organized around perceived male dominance based on the power of the Phallus which is a social representation of the anatomical male penis. The French theorist Jacques Lacan, whose theories deeply engage those first proposed by Sigmund Freud, was instrumental in articulating the symbolic representation of the male phallus, particularly noted in *Le Séminaire*.⁵⁰⁰ Lacan's writings and teaching directly informed several generations of literary critics and gender theorists, including Judith Butler and Lawrence Schehr. According to these theorists, real male anatomy is hidden behind this power representation.⁵⁰¹ Schehr argues that phallic masculinity is a perversion of maleness because "[i]t dismisses a model of pleasure that does not find its anchor in a model of power; it artificially separates sexualities, grosso modo, homo- hetero- of the male variety, with no valid reason other than ideological stricture. And it is so powerful a model, if not to say compelling, it forces

⁵⁰⁰ Jacques Lacan. *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan; texte établi par Jacques-Alain Miller*. (Paris: Seuil, 1973)

⁵⁰¹ See, for example Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 84. And Lawrence Schehr, *Parts of an andrology : on representations of men's bodies* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

our readings against it into aberrant categories."⁵⁰² In other words, it distorts men's true experiences and distances them from realizing a fuller experience of gender and sexuality. The phallogocentric model takes up so much space in the reading of men and masculinity that it makes all other readings and possibilities appear as deviant and subversive, particularly in moral terms. "All escape from the model," Schehr writes, "becomes a distortion, a perversion of desires, for the institutionalization of desire, the effect of the subject is always subsumed under this phallic totalization."⁵⁰³ Oscar Wilde's sexuality is considered deviant to nineteenth century norms because it did not submit to the phallogocentric power structure. Wilde's articulation of homosexuality was based on pleasure and esthetics which, as Alan Sinfield remarks, are superfluous to bourgeois utilitarian and pragmatic values.

The same is true of phallogocentric readings of female desire and sexuality. Pointedly, Schehr writes that female desire and identity are "seen as products or constructions of a phallogocentric system." He goes on to suggest that "in this phallogocentric order of power, man's desire is for a woman, for the possession, in its fullest economic sense, of her body, counted as a conquest, as chattel, as possession. Her body is present, but it is always marked by the signs of the male investment in it." Thus far, the phallogocentric model has been sufficient in describing Louÿs' relationships with the prostitutes of the Latin Quarter because he in fact has monetary influence over them—he indeed "purchases" them for a period of time; additionally, he exercises cultural capital over them, that is to say, he is of a cultural

⁵⁰² Schehr 27.

⁵⁰³ Ibid. 27-28.

class that these “femmes de trottoirs” have no access to. This is also applicable to Zohra bent Brahim who is financially, materially, and socially entirely dependent on Louÿs. Schehr adds, still referring to the phallogocentric reading of female sexuality, “Forbidden is her desire, not as one of Eve’s daughter’s, but as one of Lilith’s; the only desire she is allowed is one deemed complementary to or reflective of, what a man wishes.”⁵⁰⁴ This is why female homosexuality is so widely accepted at the end of the nineteenth century in Paris. It fits easily in to the phallogocentric power structure because it is complementary to a man’s desire. However, once a woman’s desire begins to deviate from this model, she is deemed an outcast, just as the figure of Lilith who refused to submit to Adam’s authority.

One could say that while Henri de Régnier and Louÿs are competing for Marie, the two men, along with her father, exercise phallogocentric power over the young woman. But when Louÿs loses out on that arrangement, his phallic power diminishes. After Louÿs returns to Paris with Zohra in 1896, Marie is then married and though she is defiant, she is still entirely financially dependent on her husband and father. Louÿs exercises virtually no social or economic influence over her. However, as Marie’s biographer Robert Fleury makes abundantly clear, Marie is in love with Louÿs even after her marriage and does everything she can in order to seduce him, much to Louÿs’ irritation. In a letter addressed to his brother Georges, dated February 2, 1896, the poet writes,

La comédie de Marie de Régnier continue de plus belle. C’est vraiment ridicule ! Je suis allé hier chez son père pour la première fois depuis un mois, elle est venue s’asseoir sur un canapé entre sa sœur et moi, presque

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid. 10-11.

sur moi, et devant cinq visiteur, dans le plus grand silence, elle a fait des phrases comme celles-là : « Ah ! venez donc me voir, je m'ennuie tant chez moi !... Vous me donnerez un exemplaire de votre roman pour moi toute seule » Tout cela avec la voix de Fédora disant : « Il n'est pas mal ? » et avec les yeux de Levantine.⁵⁰⁵

Louÿs' two literary references emphasize the romantic and sexual nature of Marie's comments. More remarkably though, Louÿs has taken on the role of the love object. He is the one desired and as he retreats, Marie advances, much to his embarrassment. He does note in the same letter, however, that: "En somme cela continue à m'intéresser beaucoup comme une comédie où je joue un rôle ; mais plus de tout comme un événement de ma vie ; et je trouve que cela serait plus drôle si c'était moins public."⁵⁰⁶ As in the case with Wilde, Louÿs is very aware what is and is not acceptable but does not repress what may be pleasurable behind closed doors, that is, a sexual relationship with Marie.

Throughout 1896 and 1897, Marie, on occasion, continues to pursue Louÿs, even becoming jealous of Zohra who she calls a "singé savant."⁵⁰⁷ It has been suggested that it is through this period that Marie begins to have lesbian relationships with women she meets at the salons of the Princess de Polignac, Mme Bulteau, and the Baroness Delandes, although this claim has been difficult to verify.⁵⁰⁸ Little is known of her lesbian relationships of this time, but clearly this area of her life and sexuality could prove to be quite important. Of these salons, Robert Fleury notes, "Marie de Régnier sera plus particulièrement assidue dans les

⁵⁰⁵ Louÿs, *Mille lettres inédites de Pierre Louÿs à Georges Louis: 1890-1907* 182.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid. 182-183.

⁵⁰⁷ Fleury, *Marie de Régnier : l'inconstante*. (p. ?)

⁵⁰⁸ See Michel de Cossart, *An American in Paris* and Fleury, *Marie de Régnier : l'inconstante* 62-61.

salons où, si le saphisme de la maîtresse est connu de tous, il est beaucoup moins voyant, là où l'on applique la règle d'or de la société mondaine : les apparences doivent être respectées."⁵⁰⁹ This remark not only places Marie in her particular social milieu, but it also places lesbianism in the same context. Interestingly, clandestine, these relations for Marie remain outside of the phallogocentric power structure dominated by her husband and father. In the salon of Mme Bulteau, it is the woman who is the supreme master.

Although Louÿs remains evasive with Marie, she is ultimately able to seduce him through a sort of game she plays in which she writes in the "Petites Annonces" of the *Echo de Paris*. By signing H.M.L., presumably standing for the three Heredia daughters Hélène, Marie, and Louise, she catches Louÿs' attention. She writes the ---: ---. Louÿs responds ---, also signing H.M.L. Thus their affair begins. In December of 1897, shortly after the beginning of their relationship, Marie discovers she is pregnant with Louÿs' baby, forever linking her life to her lover's.

Returning to Lawrence Schehr's writing on the phallogocentric model, essential to his critique is male desire and male beauty. Of the latter, Schehr writes, "In any period during the last three centuries or so, masculine beauty has, in the West, at least until the advent of film, been by and large consigned to a realm in which its presence was suspect, whether it be the two simpering marquis of Molière's play *Le Misanthrope*, George Brummel, or Oscar Wilde." After citing Baudelaire, who associates dandyism with decadence in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, Schehr concludes, "Male beauty is stylized and the sign of a decadent civilization, or it is

⁵⁰⁹ Fleury, *Marie de Régnier : l'inconstante* 53-54.

effeminate and a sign of a problem at some local point within the civilization.” To be sure, the scandal of Oscar Wilde provoked much discussion in the French press not only about homosexuality but about effeminacy to which male beauty is often attached.⁵¹⁰ It is at the time of Wilde’s trial that Louÿs demonstrates much gender insecurity, not only because he has been associated with Wilde, but because he must surely be aware that women perceive him as “joli,” which has already been remarked upon concerning Colette, Rachilde, and Fargue. These descriptions may not be slights on his sexuality, yet they do cast him in the role of the desired, the admired, and the objectified. These roles are traditionally attributed to women, and when applied to men become suspect of deviance. This desire *for* Louÿs can also be applied to the incredible and unexpected celebrity he experiences in the spring of 1896 with the success of *Aphrodite*. Pulled in so many directions, Louÿs eventually flees the capital to escape this public desire. In Girard’s model, this celebrity can also be considered as the mediator which increases Marie’s desire for the poet, a mediator with which she must compete. Although Louÿs’ celebrity increases both his cultural and financial capital, it is still not enough to exercise phallogocentric power over Marie who is now restrained by the institution of marriage. What remains between them is an essential desire that is not subject to the power model, particularly as their relationship is not publicly known. They are thus able to subvert the power structures which had up until then inhibited them from acting on their desires.

⁵¹⁰ Nancy Erber, “The French Trials of Oscar Wilde” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 6:4 (University of Texas Press, 1996) 594-588

The penis as material object has been subsumed behind the phallus, that is to say, behind power structures which turn anatomy into symbols. In his discussion of Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, Schehr writes that the main character, Georges Duroy, is the incarnation of this "missing" penis, that is, he is a sexually charged object of desire who operates outside of the traditional power structure. Duroy is the one gazed upon, the one desired. Louÿs can be described in very similar terms, particularly in reference to Marie. Although he may be stripped of his phallic power in many ways concerning his relationship with her, his masculinity does not have to be interpreted as either effeminate or subversive. As a love object desired sexually and romantically, perhaps Louÿs, like Georges Duroy, is a "well-dressed penis."⁵¹¹

Behind closed doors: Private writing and gender instability

Up until his death in 1925, Louÿs' literary reputation was based on his major works *Les Chansons de Bilitis*, *Aphrodite*, *La femme et le Pantin*, and *Le Roi Pausole*, as well as a handful of poetry and short stories published in the early 1890s at La Librairie de l'Art Indépendant and in journals such as *Le Mercure de France* and *La Revue Blanche*. This public literature, largely placed in antique or foreign settings, expresses at its core male heterosexual desire for which female homosexuality is one unproblematic element. Added to this literature, Louÿs' reputation was shaped by his regular procurement of female prostitutes, his love affair with Marie de Régnier, which resulted in a child, and his marriages to Louise de Heredia and Aline Steenackers. Through the 1890s, it was well known that Louÿs, Jean de Tinan, and

⁵¹¹ Schehr 99.

André Lebey sought to conquer prostitutes and lovers in the Latin Quarter and Montmartre, a fact remarked upon by Rachilde and Colette and professed in Tinan's *Penses-tu réussir!* and Lebey's *Les premières luttes*. Despite his friendship with Wilde and his fears surrounding its repercussion, Louÿs was perceived throughout his life as being unequivocally heterosexual with largely socially acceptable sexual desires.

After his death, many new aspects of Louÿs' literature and sexual proclivities became known to a larger public. Because he essentially died in financial ruin, Louÿs' inheritors were forced to sell his entire private library, his extensive collection of hand written manuscripts, his private letters, as well as his largely unknown private erotic writings, which, according to Georges Hugnet, totaled "*quatre cent kilos de manuscrits obscènes.*"⁵¹² Additionally, his collection of erotic photography, much of which includes images taken by Louÿs himself of lovers and prostitutes, was put up for auction or sold to dealers. Together, this literature and curiosa began to paint a more complicated portrait of Louÿs' sexual desires and the role literature played in expressing them. Perhaps even more than the public scandal surrounding Oscar Wilde's relationship with Lord Douglas, Louÿs' erotic literature, as well as a few remarkable letters, paint a richer portrait of the late nineteenth century conflict between sexuality and gender, particularly as it relates to public identity and performance.

It is remarkable that a great majority of the biographical work done on Pierre Louÿs, particularly by those historians who evoke Louÿs in reference to Wilde, Gide,

⁵¹² Robert Télin, *Apparences et paradoxes* (Paris: Au Lys Rouge, 1928) 6-7.

and even John Gray, describe Louÿs' "distaste for homosexuality."⁵¹³ This distaste is sometimes cited as the cause of his breaks with both Wilde and Gide, which is an inaccurate assertion. Louÿs broke with Gide because of fundamental character differences, exasperated by esthetic and ideological differences.⁵¹⁴ It appears that Louÿs separated himself from Oscar Wilde because of the harm he was doing to his wife and children, and because his behavior was destroying his reputation as a writer and bringing down those around him.⁵¹⁵ For Louÿs, the reputation of homosexuality and the social fallout of being associated with it were worse than the act itself. Louÿs was keenly aware of the social world he inhabited, as evinced in his conscientious befriending of Mallarmé and Heredia in 1891, and his conquering of literary salons throughout the 1890s. He knew homosexuality was not accepted in society and its revelation meant social death. Even though Jean-Paul Goujon, the inarguable authority on Pierre Louÿs, articulates the poet's curiosity and tolerance of homosexuality in the early 1890s, he makes it clear elsewhere in his work, particularly in the period after 1895, that the poet fully revoked male homosexuality in his life and literature.⁵¹⁶ The evidence does not support such an unequivocal declaration. Although Louÿs' feelings about male homosexuality very likely may have changed throughout his life, theoretically at least, it fits into his overall view of sexuality which, essentially, did not waver over the years and maintained at its core an essential desire for sexual liberation, at least behind closed doors. Although the

⁵¹³ Jerusha Hull McCormack, *John Gray: Poet, Dandy, and Priest* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1991) 106.

⁵¹⁴ Lestringant.

⁵¹⁵ Gide, *Si le grain ne meurt in Souvenirs et Voyage* 299-304.

⁵¹⁶ Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrete* 301.

date of the following text, cited by Jean-Paul Goujon, is not available, Louÿs' logic concerning sexuality is laid out quite clearly, point by point:

1. A première vue, il apparaît que l'amour de l'homme et de la femme est le seul légitime, puisque seul il engendre un être vivant.
2. Mais il y a présomption à limiter ainsi nos sens mystérieux et à juger d'une fin que nous ne connaissons pas ; car qui sait si l'amour n'a pas sa fin en lui-même et si la fécondité est le dessein du Créateur ?
3. C'est pourquoi tu obéiras à la grande voix intérieure qui détermine tes penchants, car ton désir descend d'une source divine et tu n'as pas de droits contre lui.

The emphasis here is on *Mais*, which opens up an entire realm of sexual desire and activity whose essential element is its "fécondité," even its plurality, whose goal is not reproduction but pleasure. Louÿs commits himself to obeying "la grande voix intérieure" and underlines the notion that these desires, corporal in nature, come from a power beyond him and should not be shamed or repressed. Sex, then, for Louÿs, is an articulation of nature. He continues, giving specific examples:

4. Tu ne condamneras la femme qui aime la femme, car elle agit selon son désir et son désir lui vient de Dieu.
5. Tu ne condamneras pas la bergère qui vit seule dans les montagnes, et prend son bouc pour amant, car elle agit selon son désir et son désir lui vient de Dieu.
6. Tu ne condamneras pas la vierge qui est amoureuse de son rêve et se possède elle-même dans l'ombre, car elle agit selon son désir et son désir lui vient de Dieu.
7. En toutes Choses tu respecteras le goût de ton prochain s'il ne porte atteinte à personne, et, sous la même condition, tu ne rougiras pas du tien.⁵¹⁷

Louÿs accepts lesbianism, bestiality, and masturbation but seems to conspicuously exclude male homosexuality. This seems slightly strange given that the three examples he provides of otherwise "deviant" sexuality, which are expressly condemned by bourgeois culture, fit into a logical, or "natural" schema that includes

⁵¹⁷ As cited in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète* 432.

female homosexuality. Additionally, although it appears that he never experienced bestiality, as evinced in his personal and erotic writing, Louÿs does not condemn it. Why should it not be the same for male homosexuality? Because no date is provided with this text, it is impossible to place it in Louÿs biography, however an event which occurs in Louÿs life in 1891, that is to say at the age of twenty, just as he is making his first steps into the literary world, and just before he meets Oscar Wilde for the first time, are rather revelatory and lead us to suspend all definitive judgments of the poet's sexuality.

In the spring of 1891, when Louÿs was in Montpellier for the six hundredth anniversary celebration of the university there (the same trip in which he made Paul Valéry's acquaintance for the first time), Louÿs met another young man, a Swiss student named John Bérard. Although Jean-Paul Goujon cites this friendship, even the letter which will be cited below, this source is another biography written by Paul-Ursin Dumont, and published in 1985 in Paris. No other biographers or researchers have noted these letters or the journal entry which has just recently become available. At the opening of the first letter addressed to his brother, dated May 1891 and written in Montpellier, Louÿs introduces his new friend Bérard, describing how they are virtually inseparable. These descriptions are dreamy and idyllic, even romantic. After a fantastic night of celebration and camaraderie, full of literary discussions, Louÿs and his new friend return from Palavas-les-Flots to Montpellier, the same day and place he met Paul Valéry for the first time. "Ah ! la bonne soirée ! Après une heure, nous sommes revenus avant l'heure du train, et dans la salle d'attente, l'un contre l'autre, joue à joue, nous avons dormi tandis que je

me plaisais à réfléchir que des sots pourraient médire de nous, et s'en rire, et nous blâmer." Their physical, emotional, and intellectual proximity is well noted, but does not appear out of the heterosexual norm. At the end of the passage, Louÿs remarks that others, "des sots," might laugh at them, or ridicule the intensity of their feelings. Although he doesn't seem to mind such an idea, this observation shows that Louÿs is aware of what is permitted and that their behavior borders on this acceptability. He then highlights the intensity of his feelings in writing:

J'étais mieux auprès de lui qu'aucune femme ne sera jamais, et je l'aimais, plus qu'il ne sera jamais, de personne, adoré. Et le jour de son départ, c'est cela que je me rappellerai ! Je me vois encore, regardant sans pouvoir y croire, le billet vert sur lequel on avait écrit à la plume Genève. Autour de nous, une foule grouillait que je voyais à peine. Ce mot seul : Genève me hantait comme le nom d'un exil qui me l'arrachait. J'étais fou à la pensée que dans quelques minutes je ne le verrais plus, et je ne trouvais rien à lui dire, et je simulais l'indifférence de peur de me l'aliéner par un empressément maladroit... »⁵¹⁸

Despite the intensity of the emotions, Louÿs' description could hardly be called sexual. Most of all, he signals his admiration for his new friend, the closeness of their bond, and the distress caused by their separation. They are two friends, standing in a noisy crowd, who are forced to say their goodbyes, all which appears quite normal in the schema of male homosocial relations, even banal.

It is in a second letter to Georges that Louÿs begins to discuss his romantic and sexual feelings which complicate the traditional reading of the poet's sexuality.

He writes:

Dis-toi donc qu'il n'y a rien de mauvais en moi. On est bon ou mauvais. Je suis bon. (Faut-il que je me sente un avec toi, pour te parler ainsi comme à

⁵¹⁸ Cited in Paul-Ursin Dumont, *Pierre Louÿs : L'Ermite du Hameau* (Paris: Librairie Vendôme, 1984) 47-48. (Private Collection Georges Serrières)

moi-même dans un examen de conscience). Le sentiment dont je vais te parler serait mauvais chez un autre ; chez moi rien de pareil, il faut que tu te le dises. Or voici ce que j'ai à te dire : j'ai aimé d'amour un jeune homme. Je te parle ainsi parce que je sais que toi seul tu n'y verras pas d'équivoque. C'est un amour plus que pur, mais c'est bien autre chose qu'une amitié. Par Gide je connaissais l'amitié. Je savais d'autre part qu'il est des liaisons honteuses ; mais comme entre les deux passions je ne voyais aucun rapport, je ne leur supposais pas de moyen terme, et la possibilité d'un amour entre hommes, qui fût pur, ne m'était jamais apparue.

Ah ! Faut-il continuer ? Je ne sais que dire.

Je n'ai pas de doute pourtant, et dès que je m'analyse je trouve en moi un sentiment qui en est la double preuve : d'une part, avec les yeux du cœur comme dirait Maupassant, je vois tout en bien chez l'ami dont je te parle (comme chez un femme ; est-ce drôle cet amour. Je ne puis y croire et je m'attriste) ; d'autre part, les yeux du corps me dévoilent qu'il n'a rien de plus que les autres hommes. Il est intelligent sans être original ; il est bon, cela il est très bon, très ami, mais d'autres le sont. Alors pourquoi ? Tu vois bien que c'est de l'amour puisque c'est fou.

The fear of being “mauvais” is rather touching and is contrasted by the description of purity which he evokes several times in reference to both his feelings and their relationship. He admits, “j'ai aimé d'amour un jeune homme” and then contrasts these feelings with his friendship with Gide, which is decidedly not romantic, or intense in the same way. His friendship with Bérard “est bien autre chose qu'une amitié” but it remains something very different from “des liaisons honteuses” which can be interpreted as purely sexual relations between men. In the second part of the passage, Louÿs highlights the banality of this particular friend, that in fact, he is a boy just like all the others, a fact which seems to confuse him. *Why this boy?* he seems to ask. Because he has no answer, because any answer would be entirely irrational, it must be love, he concludes.

He then unequivocally asserts in the same letter, “Et je l'aime, non pas comme j'aimerais une femme, mais comme une femme l'aimerait. Je te dis que je

déraisonne.” This powerful assertion is remarkable because it evokes female gender and sexuality in relation to male homosexual relations. Louÿs genders the type of love he feels for Bérard; it is not male love for an object, but female love, which, for Louÿs is clearly very different. Additionally, it puts Louÿs in the female role, that is to say, in the phallogocentric model, the passive role. Elsewhere, Louÿs admits his “admiration” for Bérard which gives his friend an elevated status, not just above the other boys, but above Louÿs himself. At a time in French history when female hysteria is synonymous with emotional irrationality and the complete loss of emotional control, it is interesting that Louÿs, who had previously described his feelings as “fou” and confesses “je déraisonne,” would associate his passions with such a stigmatized type of love. From there, he goes on to analyze his feelings:

Suis-je heureux de ceci ? Non. Longtemps je n’ai pas osé me l’avouer, car je n’aime pas à sentir en moi les perversions de tendances, les greffes de sentiments, les croisements d’amour, toute cette têtologie décadente que je nie chez les autres, qui m’indigne, que je combats, et qui m’effraie, qui m’épouvante quand je la vois germer sur moi-même.

Et pourtant pourquoi le combattre ? Tant que l’amour est pur pourquoi l’interdire aux hommes envers les hommes ? Les hommes sont dignes d’amour eux aussi puisque les femmes ne voient qu’eux. Et même, si j’osais dire, devant le monde aveugle et partial n’est-ce pas moi le clair-voyant, qui vais de l’un à l’autre sexe avec une égale puissance d’aimer ?

Louÿs admits his fears and his aversion to what he terms as a perversion associated with decadence. This description begins to blur the lines between his initial delineation between “bon” and “mauvais” as he confesses that what he feels may in fact be termed perverse. He concludes with a declaration that is in line with the seven-point outline previously cited of what is acceptable in love and sexuality. These homosexual feelings he has are pure, he argues, they come from nature and so

cannot be wrong no matter what others say. He concludes this letter by speaking in more general terms of his sexuality. He writes: “J’ai besoin d’un amour incessant, une sympathie toujours en éveil et prête à s’attacher au premier regard qui la comprenne [...] je crois bien que je ne tourmenterai personne car j’ai assez d’amour pour plusieurs...”⁵¹⁹ As evinced in his sexual relations and romantic life beyond this one “deviation,” Louÿs is an individual of intense desire who does not need to, or in fact cannot, fix himself on one single object for satisfaction. His desires are plural which means so too is his sexuality. Throughout his life, he maintained a real passion for lesbian encounters as evinced in his immense erotic output as well as in his published works. These lesbian depictions often involve orgies, which are by definition plural.

Added to these two letters is Louÿs’ journal entry from the same year which is written several months after his first meeting with Bérard. In August, the poet traveled to Switzerland to meet up with his friend. This passage, which may be titled “L’Amour pur et l’amitié vraie,” is written as an essay on friendship, perhaps akin to Montaigne’s essay *De l’Amitié*, or Socrates’ description as written by Plato, *Lysis*. He writes in his private journal, in a passage which has only recently been made available: “L’amour pur et l’amitié vraie sont absolument synonymes. C’est la même fougue, la même invraisemblance, le même élan sans raison. Si Bérard était une femme, je ne l’aimerais ni plus, ni autrement que je l’aime.” Louÿs goes on to voice his frustration that Bérard is not taken by literature the same way he is. In fact, it appears that Bérard refuses to speak of literature and considers it childish. The poet

⁵¹⁹ Ibid. 48-49.

writes: "J'attendais je ne sais quoi ; je voulais avoir fait plus de vers moi-même afin de lui faire accepter par affection ce qu'il ne pouvait aimer par goût ; mais aujourd'hui il refuse ! Il ne veut plus que je lui montre ceux que j'aime ; il déclare que jamais il ne changera plus d'avis, qu'il est trop vieux pour cela ! Trop vieux ! Il est plus jeune que Verlaine, il est beaucoup plus jeune que Mallarmé, pourquoi ne pense-t-il comme eux ?" He forgives his friend for his disinterest and concludes, "Et l'année prochaine, dans trois mois, nous nous reverrons, nous causerons, je le conduirai au concert, je le convertirai à mes idées. Nous aurons de bonnes heures." He imagines that their camaraderie will lead to artistic and literary conversion.

As in the letter to his brother, Louÿs compares this relationship to his new friendship with Paul Valéry. Further, he evokes the irrationality of his feelings and his desire to be physically close to his friend. He writes:

[...] et Valéry. Valéry lui-même m'importuna, car tout ce qui n'était pas Bérard me devenait odieux ; c'était vrai, je ne le reconnaissais pas sous ses vêtements de soldat et j'écoutais à peine ce qu'il me disait tout en entendant bourdonner dans ma cervelle le souvenir de l'autre. Et sans mon billet pris pour un autre itinéraire, sans la crainte du ridicule auprès de Georges, sans une autre voix affaiblie mais impérieuse qui m'interdisait l'oubli d'autres yeux, j'aurais suivi n'importe où celui qui désormais était tout pour moi.

Again, Louÿs discusses "la crainte du ridicule" as well as the conviction to follow the one who is now everything to him. As for the physicality of their relationship, Louÿs writes, "Je l'ai revu ce soir et j'ai plus de confiance ; j'ai passé une heure sur son épaule/ La place où reposa la tête de l'apôtre/ et il ne m'a pas repoussé. Peut-être

même avait-il plaisir à ce que je reste.”⁵²⁰ He hopes that Bérard also finds pleasure in their physical contact but this pleasure must remain unspoken between the two.

What Louÿs appears to feel for Bérard, which is nothing compared to the passion and sexual pleasure he experiences later with Marie de Régnier and Zohrabent Brahim, is both fixation and identification. Bérard is his counterpart. Though not a poet, he still represents the masculine ideal which Louÿs strives to realize in himself. “[J]e me suis senti pris de passion,” Louÿs writes, “pour ce grand Suisse maigre et carré, à la figure taillée à coups de hache, aux longues mains brunes, aux yeux bons.”⁵²¹ Further, Louÿs’ feelings for Bérard will never be able to go further than admiration. Their relationship is never consummated physically, and does not endure the test of time; it ends rather anti-climactically after Louÿs meets Bérard’s fiancée that same year.

In the context of Louÿs romantic life, as well in the context of his literature — both published and clandestine — this short “affaire” appears as an aberration; it is not consistent with any of his other relationships but is still, contrary to Goujon and others’ conclusions that the poet had a distaste for male homosexuality. Louÿs is twenty years old at this time, and it is possible that he has not yet had sex with a woman; further, he is a very particular individual, a passionate poet with antique inclinations, an interest that deeply impacts not only the settings of his novels and poetry but also the morality of his main characters which was very different from late nineteenth century France. Louÿs thought he could find in antiquity an “art de

⁵²⁰ Jean-Claude Vrain, *Pierre Louÿs*, Preface by Jacques Duprilot (Paris, Librairie J.C. Vrain , 2009) 22-23.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

vivre” modeled on the poets and historical figures he admired.⁵²² This homosexual flirtation is not inconsistent with such interests although male homosexuality never appears again in his sexual life or explicitly in his erotic literature. Further, he appears to tolerate it at first in London when he is confronted by Oscar Wilde’s licentious and provocative entourage, but later distances himself from any association with both the esthete and his sexuality in later life.

However, in the context of Louÿs’ erotic writing, which he began in earnest around this time and continued throughout his life, this homosexual flirt is rather revelatory. To date, the largest portion of Louÿs’ erotic poetry, plays, and literature was published in one volume in 1994 by Jean-Paul Goujon under the title *L’Oeuvre érotique*.⁵²³ Although some of these works appeared as individual volumes posthumously and although Goujon’s collection is by no means definitive, it provides enough varied examples to give an excellent idea of Louÿs’ intellectual and physical proclivities as they relate to gender and sexuality. This private erotic literature reveals an approach to sexuality that is not constrained by social rules or fears and does not limit itself to scripted gender or sexuality roles. As this erotic writing consists of a vast body of work, much still unpublished, many books could be written on their content. Here, however, the focus is specifically on the fluid nature of gender roles in relation to masculinity and male desire.

⁵²² See Chapter 7, “Versions Grecques” in Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: Une vie secrète*.

⁵²³ Pierre Louÿs, *L’œuvre érotique*, ed. Jean-Paul Goujon (Paris: Sortilèges, 1994).

Conclusion

Louÿs' first public foray into erotic writing began with a few small publications at Edmond Bailly's La Librairie de l'Art Indépendant beginning with *Astarté* in 1891 and leading up to *Les Chansons de Bilitis* in December of 1894, which at five hundred copies provided the author with a larger audience, thus expanding his reputation as a poet of antique and sexual themes. Bilitis is, after all, a courtesan who proudly affirms her sexuality. It is, however, Louÿs' preface to *Aphrodite* in 1896, published in the *Mercure de France*, that allows the author to formulate his erotic esthetics in a sort of manifesto. Mallarmé called this preface "une fière page"⁵²⁴ for its deviations from traditional moral norms and for Louÿs' unabashed declaration: "[L]a sensualité est la condition mystérieuse, mais nécessaire et créatrice du développement intellectuel."⁵²⁵ Sensuality is linked directly to creativity and the intellect which is an assertion quite opposite from those proposed by the masters of Realism and Naturalism which had dominated French intellectual and artistic thought throughout much of the nineteenth century. At the opening of the preface, Louÿs associates lesbianism, or the plural feminine, to the eternal feminine. Two beautiful women confront Odysseus at the foot of a mountain, one named Arête and the other Tryhê. They ask Odysseus to choose between them, but he refuses, saying they are inseparable. He agrees, however, to follow them through the mountains. After a time, the two women become one. They are in fact the Goddess Aphrodite. Duplicity, or multiplicity, is singular in this sense because it

⁵²⁴ Cited in Goujon's preface to Louÿs, *L'œuvre érotique*.

⁵²⁵ Pierre Louÿs, "Préface d'Aphrodite" *La Revue Blanche* (Premier semestre 1896) 256.

represents the eternal feminine, an association that allows Louÿs to view lesbianism as an expression of nature and not as an aberration or deviation from heterosexual norms.

CONCLUSION

As has been argued throughout this study, Pierre Louÿs' literary esthetics as well as his self-representation through clothing and affected behavior, are directly informed by his social and historical context. Fine paper and limited editions are the material manifestations of the elitist and at times esoteric literature that was very much in vogue through the 1880s and 1890s. Similarly, fine clothing and the acquisition of rare objects are expressions of self-cultivation and refinement. Clearly, ideology, attitude, and behavior are as inextricably bound to their expressions in material literary production as they are to their expressions in clothing and fetishism. Pierre Bourdieu's theories on Habitus allow for a better understanding of the ways in which Louÿs manipulates objects and ideology to negotiate the labyrinth of his social context.

From an early age, Louÿs was keenly aware of acceptable forms of behavior and identity in an extremely codified social milieu. But from the very beginning, he tested these limits through his erotic writing, particularly in *Les Chansons de Bilitis* and *Aphrodite* which, because they were set in ancient and foreign lands, articulated moral codes different from late nineteenth century bourgeois society. The lesbianism and promiscuity of his central characters were accepted, even celebrated, not only because of this displacement, but because they fit within the phallogocentric power model of Parisian bourgeois society. That is to say, lesbianism did not threaten male superiority; it in fact titillated it. If Louÿs had represented male homosexual relations in a similar fashion, he surely would not have been

received so warmly. In fact, he would have been ostracized like his friend Oscar Wilde, or like Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen in 1903.⁵²⁶

Louÿs' relationships with Jean de Tinan and André Lebey were strengthened through their competition and mutual desire for women of "easy virtue." Although Lebey notes in his *mémoires Disques et Pellicules*⁵²⁷ that these relations sometimes caused rifts between the young men, resulting in bad feeling or provoking periods of silence, they still, arguably, served as an essential component of their friendships. Louÿs' relationship with Oscar Wilde, particularly from 1893 through the trials, provoked much gender insecurity on the part of the young poet. This was complicated by Louÿs' "joli," or "pretty," appearance and non-virile disposition, that is, he sometimes appeared sickly and weak. Conscious of the social face he had to present to remain respectable in his literary milieu, Louÿs kept the majority of his personal erotic writing "in the closet." While his social identity was maintained as unequivocally heterosexual, his personal writing, particularly in relation to desire, demonstrated much gender transgression. In his erotic writing women become men, men become passive, and the narrator transcends his body by entering the story as a young woman among lesbians, free to explore *her* own sexuality and that of her female friends. Although much of this writing is meant to be ironic, even

⁵²⁶ Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen (1880-1923) was a wealthy French novelist and poet of noble birth who was known to organize parties in which students of the Lycée Carnot would dress in antique garb to perform in his "tableaux vivants," usually in a very sexually provocative manner. Adelswärd-Fersen was arrested in July of 1903 and charged with indecent behavior with minors. For this he served six months in prison and paid a hefty fine. More than the legal punishment, Adelswärd-Fersen's reputation was ruined and he fled to the island of Capri. His most famous book, *Lord Lilian: Messes noires*, satirizes the scandal surrounding his trial. He is also known for founding *Akademos. Revue Mensuelle d'Art Libre et de Critique* in 1909, the first gay literary revue.

⁵²⁷ André Lebey, *Disques et Pellicules* (Paris: Valois, 1929).

comedic at times, it still demonstrates sexual malleability and instability. Behind closed doors, away from the social gaze, Louÿs' sexual agency need not be restrained by the homo/hetero dichotomy.

There are many biographical details concerning Louÿs' life that could have been included to further develop this study on masculinity. For example, Louÿs' best friend, Jean de Tinan, had a short love affair with Marie de Régnier, initiated by Marie herself, in 1898 while Louÿs was abroad. This event, though never acknowledged between the two friends due to Tinan's declining health, may have exasperated Tinan's respiratory issues, leading to his death in August of 1898. Like Louÿs, Tinan is cast as the desired object in relation to Marie who actively pursued him. Additionally, Louÿs' 1899 marriage to Marie's sister, Louise, complicates his relationship with his former lover, their child, and the father Heredia to whom Louÿs always maintained a close, even paternal relationship. Lastly, directly concerning masculinity, those close to Henri de Régnier through the 1890s, that is, Paul Valéry and Paul Léautaud, were aware of Louÿs' adulterous relationship with Marie which, in their eyes, made Henri appear weak, even as a dupe. However, the essentials of Louÿs life through the 1890s have been brought to light with the recognition that these other relationships and observations would have only served as examples to prove points already made: that the phallogocentric power model dominated late nineteenth century Paris, subsuming both male and female sexual desire, that women often serve as the bonding point of male homosocial relations, and that as a lover, Louÿs often remained outside the phallogocentric power structure. Of this last point, for example, it could be remarked that in many ways, Louÿs was

invited to marry Louise by Marie de Régnier and her father Heredia, a point which again demonstrates the ways in which Louÿs was a desired object often lacking in phallogocentric power.

In his “Préface d’Aphrodite,” Louÿs names himself as the inheritor of a long literary and esthetic tradition that leads from Catulle to Aristotle, to Sapho, Mirabeau, Chénier, Diderot, and Montesquieu.⁵²⁸ By placing his narratives in antique and foreign settings, ancient Alexandria for example, he is able to escape the moral judgments of his peers when he celebrates lesbianism and infidelity. Similarly, by not publishing his private erotic writing, he is able to explore themes and pleasures that would not have been socially accepted in late nineteenth century France. In these private writings, he is able to manipulate his own gender and sexuality, permitting women to become men, and, as a narrator, to become a woman himself in order to titillate his own erotic desires.

In the *Manuel de Civilité pour les petites filles*,⁵²⁹ which is written as a sort of hand book for young women, Louÿs suggests young women place honey on their thighs for a dog to lick (bestiality), describes various means of masturbation, including mutual masturbation and the masturbation of other young women, praises lesbianism and orgies, and encourages incest between fathers and daughters, as well as between siblings. In *Version Libre d’Aphrodite*,⁵³⁰ he describes

⁵²⁸ Pierre Louÿs, “Préface d’Aphrodite.”

⁵²⁹ Pierre Louÿs, *L’œuvre érotique*; édition établie et présentée par Jean-Paul Goujon (Paris: Sortilèges, 1994).

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

lovers urinating in one another's mouths and talks about young women being "en chaleur" like wild animals, which makes them lose all reason. In *Farizade ou les Vœux innocents*,⁵³¹ a young woman dresses like a boy to seduce other young women, an act which eroticizes gender manipulation. These stories are fantasies, erotic fantasies, often tinged with irony and comedy, and though Louÿs was well versed through first hand experience with perhaps hundreds of women throughout his life, they should not be interpreted as autobiographical. They are, rather, intellectual exercises whose goal is pleasure and amusement, which for Louÿs are part of the very process of writing. Jean-Paul Goujon notes in his preface to the erotic works, "L'écriture, au sens le plus matériel du mot, était pour [Louÿs] la forme privilégiée de rapport avec le monde, en même temps qu'une sorte d'absolu." He goes on to say that Louÿs' erotic obsession "n'est en fin de compte qu'une étonnante faculté de prendre ses désirs pour des réalités, grâce à l'écriture. Mieux encore : les désirs de l'écrivain sont effectivement devenus réalité." He concludes: "Louÿs est entré dans l'érotisme comme d'autres en politique ou en religion."⁵³²

Remarkably though, and this is an important point, throughout the vast majority of Louÿs' erotic poetry, drama, and short stories, women become men, men become passive, that is to say, the one being penetrated, and the narrative, rather than remaining in third person, often becomes first person so that the narrator, Louÿs, becomes a young woman himself. Although, as emphasized, Louÿs did not write about male homosexuality, it is still curious that there is so much gender and

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Goujon, Préface in Louÿs, *L'Oeuvre érotique* XII.

sex role reversal. For example, in *Toinon*,⁵³³ Louÿs writes in the first person as a young female virgin of fourteen years old who is initiated into the art of female sex by older girls in a boarding school. Upon arriving at the school, the young girl timidly witnesses individual and group masturbation, communal urination, and anal penetration between the young women with fingers and other objects. This is erotic, perhaps, on many levels, but what is striking is when the narrator observes her own vagina, which she shares with the other girls. Through such a perspective, literature allows Louÿs to take on not only the female form, but take pleasure in its very different anatomy. While at the boarding school, an older girl, Jeanne, who is the one who devirginizes Toinon, the narrator, says to her young lover, “Alors (et sa voix devint plus grave) je vais t’épouser. Tu vas être ma petite femme chérie, mon amoureuse, ma maîtresse. Ce que je vais te faire, mon cœur, c’est comme un mariage.”⁵³⁴ Their relationship is not a marriage, but *like* a marriage. As a same sex couple, they can only mimic the institutionalized form of romantic commitment. Sexually, this mimicry is expressed through both vaginal and anal penetration with a dildo. In another scene, for example, Jeanne straps on a dildo and penetrates the anus of a British female teacher named Maud, causing her at once great pleasure and pain. Maud shouts in English, “I’m pissing sperm” and when the dildo is removed, the lovers discover that it is “rouge de sang,”⁵³⁵ that is to say, covered in blood. Female blood, then, is the equivalent of male semen.

⁵³³ Pierre Louÿs, *L'œuvre érotique*

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid. 188-189.

Lastly, in the middle of the sex act, lovers are sometimes able to change their gender. In the play *Jeunes filles*,⁵³⁶ two female lovers have sex with a male. At the end of the play, one of the lovers puts on a dildo. She says to the other female: “Regarde un peu quel beau garçon je suis. (Elle branle son instrument).” She then says to her male partner: “Sens mes seins sur ton dos, je suis femme... et maintenant sens le bout de mon membre entre tes fesses, je suis homme...”⁵³⁷ What does this change mean to her male partner? Is he now a man having sex with a man? Or is he now a woman being penetrated by a man? As he does not answer, his status remains ambiguous. Perhaps he is both at the same time. Perhaps he is one and then the other. In either case, both partners manipulate their gender in the sex act. Further, in the presence of multiple partners, the necessity for such definitions as heterosexual or homosexual become utterly mute.

The discussion thus far has focused on the role of sexuality itself, and gender both in the bedroom and in the salon. While Louÿs played a masculine role in public, with a reputation affirmed by his writing and his known affairs, in the bedroom, particularly with a pen in hand, his sexuality and his desires become polymorphic and unstable. Multiple partners allow for multiple roles. Further, first person narratives which dramatizes lesbian relations where no males are present allow Louÿs to transcend his male body to become himself a woman in sexual relations with other women. For Louÿs, this transcendence is perhaps the ultimate erotic act. The physical aspect aside, Louÿs is also keenly aware of the emotional nature of two

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid. 610.

lovers coming together. Though sexual, this fusion transcends gender and desire, as lovers fuse into one. In a letter written to his brother in December of 1916, Louÿs speaks of his relationship with Marie de Régnier and the nature of love itself in a passage he calls *L'heure éternelle*. The title itself suggests transcendence to a place outside of time. "*L'heure éternelle... était devenue tout à coup entre deux amants qui en avaient connu tant d'autres... Je croyais vraiment tout savoir sur l'inaccessibilité du désir par son objet — Et tout à coup : la plénitude... J'ai remarqué ce soir que pas une seule ne dit : « je » ni « tu ». Invariablement : « nous ». — Donc, cette quadrature impossible—l'union—s'était faite.*" This fusion of "nous" comes as a wonderful surprise to Louÿs. He had thought that "Tu m'aimes" was superior to "Je t'aime" but he ultimately concludes "« Nous » est invraisemblable. C'est là que l'apogée, mais aussi c'est là qu'est la fin."⁵³⁸ This fusion and loss of self, loss of the other, is not carnal but emotional and spiritual. There is no more role switching, no more gender play. There is only the transcendental « nous ».

This study has sought to link Louÿs' literary production and material life to his social and historical context. Although much of his literature was touched upon in this study, there are still many avenues left to explore. The majority of recent scholarship on Louÿs appears to focus on three specific areas. The first is his fascination with and use of mythological and antique themes.⁵³⁹ The second

⁵³⁸ As cited in Fleury, *Pierre Louÿs et Gilbert de Voisins une curieuse amitié* 51-52.

⁵³⁹ See Jean-Paul Goujon, "Pierre Louÿs et l'Antiquité," *Présence de l'Antiquité grecque et romaine au XXe siècle*. Tours, France: Centre de Recherches André Piganiol, 2002. 34-35 ; Hans-Roland Johnsson, "Pierre Louÿs et l'idéal antique," *Moderna Sprak*, 88:2, 1994, 182-85. ; Atiyeh Showrai, "Ascension

concerns his writing in relation to Spain, largely in light of Luis Buñuel's 1977 film *Cet obscur objet de désir*.⁵⁴⁰ The third, and perhaps most studied area of Louÿs' work, treats eroticism, lesbianism, and the heritage of lesbian literature.⁵⁴¹ The first two areas of study deal mainly with the use of historical and cultural references and their relevance to modern representations in film. Taken together, however, the third area of study concerning lesbianism and eroticism clearly places Louÿs at the beginning of a new literary tradition. In many ways, Louÿs' use of mythological themes in his novel *Aphrodite* and in much of his poetry place him in the nineteenth-century tradition, a tradition that appears antiquated and even canonical from the contemporary point of view. However, much of his erotic writing still feels fresh and relevant to the modern reader, and much of it has only recently become available to the greater public. Apart from his influence on Nathalie Barney, which still looks at Louÿs' work from a historical perspective, his erotic writing opens up many doors of interpretation and analysis. Chapter Six of this study has taken a step in this direction, as it looks to Louÿs' erotic writing in nonphallogocentric terms, that is,

spirituelle et rêve dans *Aphrodite*" *Iris: Graduate Journal of French Critical Studies*, 4:2, 1991 Winter, 31-45.

⁵⁴⁰ See Hilaria Loyo, "A Carmenesque Dietrich in *The Devil Is a Woman*: Erotic Scenarios, Modern Desires and Cultural Differences Between the USA and Spain" *Carmen: From Silent Film to MTV*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2005, 75-89. ; Kathleen M Vernon.: "Remaking Spain: Trans/National Mythologies and Cultural Fetishism in *The Devil Is a Woman* (Sternberg, 1935) and *Cet obscur objet de désir* (Buñuel, 1977)" *Journal of Romance Studies*, 4:1, Spring, 2004, 13-27. ; Brian J. Dendle, "Pierre Louÿs et l'Espagne" *Estudios de Investigación Franco-española*, 9, 1993 83-97.

⁵⁴¹ See Peter Cogman, "L'Oeuvre érotique de Pierre Louÿs comme exercice de style" *Dousteyssier-Khoze, Poétiques de la parodie et du pastiche de 1850 à nos jours*. Modern French Identities 55 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2006) 95-106. ; Tama Lea Engelking, "Translating the Lesbian Writer: Pierre Louÿs, Natalie Barney, and 'Girls of the Future Society'" *South Central Review: The Journal of the South Central Modern Language Association*, 22:3, 2005, Fall, 62-77. ; Michel Jarrety, "La Femme et le pantin-Un Erotisme du défi" *The Journal of Twentieth Century Contemporary French Studies*, 6:1, 2002 Spring, 169-80. ; Gretchen Schultz, "Daughters of Bilitis: Literary Genealogy and Lesbian Authenticity" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 7:3, 2001, 377-89. ; John Phillips, "Excès sexuels, excès textuels: Pierre Louÿs et l'écriture du débordement" *Etudes Francophones*, 13:2, 1998 Autumn, 135-46.

outside of the hierarchal male power structure. Much work remains to be done in this area.

Many questions that were posed throughout this study concerning the relationships between literature, its social and historical context, and its relation to material life, can be broadened to Louÿs' generation as a whole. In fact, the study of "generations" remains a fecund area of research. Viorel-Dragos Moraru's thesis *Les Générations dans l'histoire littéraire* lays out an excellent framework from which to begin. A future study on the Second Generation Symbolists would be quite useful to scholars, and would introduce an important array of writers and artists that have often been overlooked by contemporary critics. No such work exists in either French or English. Of course, definitions of this generation, and its parameters, are open for debate, but could roughly begin with Paul Claudel, born in 1868, and end with Jean de Tinan, born in 1874. Like Louÿs, these novelists, poets, and journalists, reached the age of maturity in the late 1880s and early to mid-1890s when many of the polemics concerning Parnassian, Naturalist, Decadent, and Symbolist esthetics had already been deeply engaged. Louÿs' generation arrives after the literary masters—namely Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, and Arthur Rimbaud—had already been established. Further, it seeks to define itself after the literary and artistic anarchy of the 1880s had created many discordant ideological and esthetic strains. Louÿs' notion of "les renaissants" is one such response to this anarchy, reflecting a desire to move his generation forward.

It bears repeating that Pierre Louÿs is a distinguished member of a remarkable generation. Clearly, his life and work stand at the tide of two centuries

and two literary traditions. Thematically, Louÿs' writing is in line with Parnassian esthetics while the free verse form of his poetry breaks with this tradition. Further, his personal style of dress, his affectation, and his fetishism for objects, place him firmly in line with other late nineteenth-century dandies, a tradition carried on by twentieth-century figures like Jean Cocteau and exaggerated by others such as Salvador Dali. Louÿs' erotic writing, however, deeply impacted the emerging tradition of lesbian literature and erotic writing, a fact which means his life and literature will be relevant for some time to come.

ANNEX OF IMAGES



Pierre Louÿs by Jacques-Emile Blanche, 1893
(Figure 1)



Self-Portrait with Raphael de Ochoa by Jacques-Emile Blanche, 1890 (Figure 2)



Marcel Proust by Jacques-Emile Blanche, 1892
(Figure 3)



Maurice Barrès by Jacques-Emile Blanche, 1891
(Figure 4)



Pierre Louÿs, Beyreuth, 1893 (Figure 5)



Maurice Barrès, undated, likely early 1890s (Figure 6)



Marcel Proust (early 1890s) (Figure 7)



Jacques-Emile Blanche and Marie de Heredia, 1893 (Figure 8)



Maurice Barrès at the time of *Sous l'oeil des barbares* (Figure 9)



Maurice Barrès (Figure 10)



Maurice Barrès (Figure 11)



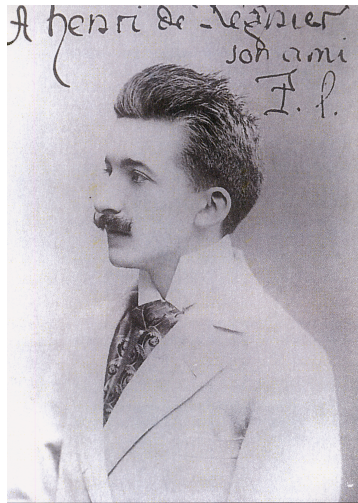
Paul Bourget (Figure 12)



Maurice Barrès and Paul Bourget (Figure 13)



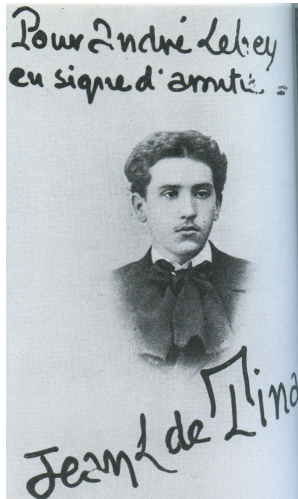
Mallarmé photographed by Paul Nadar, 1895 (Figure 14)



Pierre Louÿs, 1892 (Figure 15)



Jean de Tinan, 1894 (Figure 16)



Jean de Tinan, 1894 (Figure 17)



Gilbert de Voisins, 1899 (Figure 18)



Marcel Proust, date to be determined (Figure 19)



General Boulanger, 1889 (Figure 20)



Paul Valéry, 1894 (Figure 21)



Paul Valéry, 1894 (Figure 22)



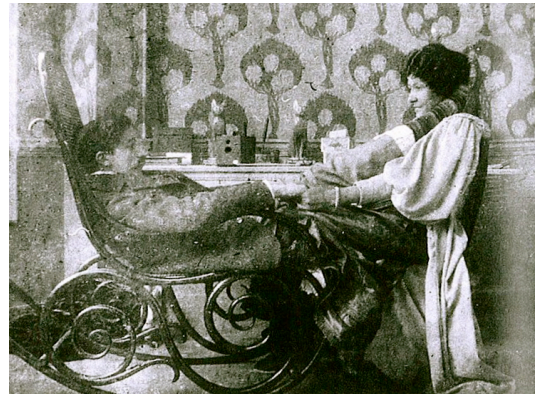
Claude Debussy by Pierre Louÿs, undated (Figure 23)



Pierre Louÿs, self-portrait, 1897 (Figure 24)



Pierre Louÿs and Zohra bent Brahim, 1897 (Figure 25)



Pierre Louÿs and Zohra bent Brahim, 1897 (Figure 26)



Marie de Regnier, 1897 (Figure 27)



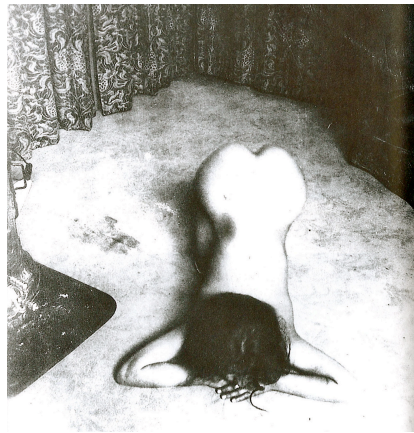
Marie de Regnier, 1897 (Figure 28)



Zohra bent Brahim, 1897 (Figure 29)



Zohra bent Brahim, 1897 (Figure 30)



Zohra bent Brahim, 1897 (Figure 30)

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