PIERRE LOUŸS : THE LITERARY DANDY AS PERFORMER

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Abstract : This study offers a sociocritical reading of the early life of Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925), author of *Aphrodite* (1896) and *La femme et le pantin* (1898). It analyzes the ways in which Louÿs constructs an identity as a literary dandy through affectation and the body, the manipulation of clothing, and the fetishism of objects. Louÿs is contextualized as a member of the Second Generation Symbolists, and as a literary dandy in the tradition of Balzac, d'Aurevilly, and Baudelaire.

Cette étude présente une lecture sociocritique des débuts de Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925) dans le monde littéraire des années 1890. En tant qu'auteur d'*Aphrodite* (1895) et de *La femme et le pantin* (1898), Louÿs a connu la célébrité littéraire vers l'âge de vingt-cinq ans. Cette analyse examine la manière dont Louÿs construit son dandysme par la manipulation de sa tenue, l'exagération de son comportement, et le fétichisme d'objets choisis. Membre de la seconde génération symboliste, Louÿs renouvelle la tradition du dandysme de Balzac, d'Aurevilly, et Baudelaire.

Keywords : Louÿs – Dandy – Symbolism – Clothing – Fetishism – Objects

Dandyism "apparaît comme un système de signes: le dandy se révèle, se montre comme dandy" (Carassus 20). These "signs" appear as clothing, decor, etiquette and behavior, as well as in the identification to peers and intellectual forbearers. Carefully manipulated and arranged, these "signs" create the dandy. They allow him, and sometimes her, to consciously manifest a social identity within a specific space. "Le dandy," continues Émilien Carassus, "ne peut déployer ses talents que sur une scène convenable" (21). While Balzac, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Huysmans point to interior spaces as the essential habitat of the dandy, Baudelaire places him on the street in the form of a *flâneur*. Later in the nineteenth century, through his essays, articles, and novels, Paul Bourget would propose a cosmopolitan dandy skipping from one European capital to another. While the role of fetishism, clothing, performance, and social and intellectual relations are clearly emphasized in the canonical texts by those mentioned above, more recent studies by Anthony Gilmore, Janell Watson and Willa Z. Silverman, to name a few, have allowed for multidimensional readings of these same social and material elements. More

important than the elements themselves, however, is the intent of the individual to manipulate them in order to create a specific literary identity.

As a key member of what historians have named the Second Generation Symbolists (Bertrand 4), Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925) is a perfect example of the literary dandy. This type of dandy is specifically literary in that he produces copious amounts of literature and poetry while inhabiting a world of like-minded artists. The common dandy, according to Balzac, d'Aurevilly, Baudelaire, and Huysmans, is defined largely by his idleness and consumption of art rather than his production of it. Throughout his life, Louÿs produced thousands of pages of literature and poetry. Born in 1870, Louÿs came of age in the early 1890s after the cultural terms of the French Decadence and the esthetic terms of Symbolism had been well defined, and when Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, and José-Maria de Heredia were recognized as literary masters by the emerging generation. Among Louÿs's better-known peers are André Gide, Paul Valéry, Marcel Proust, Alfred Jarry, Marcel Schwob, Colette, and Jean de Tinan.

Louÿs first made a name for himself within literary circles in 1891 with the luxury literary journal *La Conque* that featured poetry by key members of the Parnassian School accompanied by unknown authors such as Louÿs himself and friends like Gide and Valéry. Louÿs's reputation as a poet was affirmed with his 1894 collection, *Les Chansons de Bilitis*, but his great fame did not come until the publication of the novel *Aphrodite* in 1896. This was followed by *La Femme et le pantin* in 1898, a book that has maintained relevance through cinematic interpretation by directors such as Josef von Sternberg (1935) and Luis Buñuel (1977). A literary celebrity through the 1890s, Louÿs at one time or another counted among his friends and acquaintances Oscar Wilde, Sarah Bernhardt, Jacques-Émile Blanche, Marcel Proust, and Colette. At what may have been the peek of his fame at age twenty-five in 1896, Pierre Louÿs was the toast of the town with a reputation for whit, humor, elegance, and erudition. A study of the way Louÿs constructed his dandyism through self-presentation and performance will reveal the key role clothing, objects, and décor played in creating an identity within a specific social and cultural milieu.

Clothing

The dandy first and foremost performs his dandyism through a careful selection of clothing. As Fred Davis notes in *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, there are essentially two ways of theoretically *reading* clothing. On the one hand, it can be said that clothing communicates through a "visible language, with its own distinctive grammar, syntax, and vocabulary" (3). On the other hand, one can argue that clothing communicates in a more elusive manner than language, along the lines of music that has the power to evoke "emotions, allusions and moods" (3), states that resist direct intellectual engagement. Both types of readings offer a specific way of interpreting clothing but, as

Davis suggests, the reality is most likely a blending of the two (3). Barbey d'Aurevilly argues this same point in his 1845 work *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell*.

Figure 1: Pierre Louÿs, portrait by Jacques-Emile Blanche, 1893. Private Collection.

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" (696). As a self-conscious socialite working within a specific literary *habitus*, to use Pierre Bourdieu's term, Louÿs communicates through his clothing and behavior as much as through language. Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* is useful for our purposes. According to the sociologist, a *habitus* is a specific social space within a given society constructed by economic, historical, and social norms, rules, and values that have been integrated into an individual's frame of reference (*Sens* 87-109). Specific clothing and etiquette help determine the particular social space one inhabits, or wishes to inhabit. Louÿs's manipulation of theses signs, or "déterminants," according to Bourdieu, allows him to function within the literary *habitus*.

Accordingly, one very important aspect of Louÿs's 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 XIX^{e} 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!" (8). Before the Revolution of 1789, as Rose Fortassier states, 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. As evinced in the 1893 painted portrait of Pierre Louÿs by Jacques-Émile Blanche (Fig. 1) as well in his studio portrait of 1892 (Fig. 2), by wearing a powder blue suit, a flower patterned tie, and a long pointed mustache, along with the accessories of a cane, a top hat, and a flower in his boutonnier, Louÿs visually conveys that he is part of an elite group of artists and intellectuals.[1] Louÿs's clothing then serves to articulate, as Davis puts it, "social differentiation and social integration" which places Louÿs in a "structured universe of status claims and life style attachments" (4). It also implies what Joanne Finkelstein describes as "the individual's intention to act in the same way as others who are similarly attired" (109).

Louÿs most clearly articulates his desire to separate himself from bourgeois norms when it comes to his literary identity. As with his choice of clothing and accouterments, he carefully chose the paper, engravings, and type print of his first editions. For Louÿs and his peers, including André Gide (Gide et al. 745), it was essential to cast their literary production in the decadent esthetic that was well

[1] I wish to thank Jean-Paul Goujon for giving his permission to publish the two photographic images of Louÿs.

established in the 1880s. This esthetic is essentially *recherchée*, anti-bourgeois, and anti-mass production (Praz).

As early as 1890 at age nineteen, Louÿs had voiced these anti-bourgeois feelings in his journal as can be observed in 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 aimé de vingt personnes et encore est-ce beaucoup" (qtd. in Clive 26). This small group, for Louÿs, specifically included established poets such as Mallarmé and Heredia.

Figure 2: Studio portrait of Pierre Louÿs, 1892. Private Collection.

In *Seeing Through Clothes*, Anne Hollander 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" (XV). Any social genre, or *habitus*, develops its style out of a previous *habitus* that is continually being modified by groups and individuals. 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" (XV). 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 of clothing, 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 …" (444). 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" (444). Hollander argues that Balzac "was one of the first to express this idea at length in 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" (444). 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 (444). The connection between an individual's moral qualities, as Ann Hollander describes it, 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 de la vie élégante* and by example throughout *La comédie humaine*, elegant qualities are not innate, they are taught and cultivated. That etiquette can be taught 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 that came to full realization under the Third Republic. Born to a middle class military family, Louÿs's ability to gain access to elite social groups by manipulating his clothing, behavior, and cultural knowledge shows to what extent his movement in a particular *habitus* is not limited to the social status of his family.

The Dandy in Portraiture

In the spring of 1893, at age twenty-two, Pierre Louÿs sat for his first painted portrait (Figure 1). 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 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. 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 photographic technology in the second half of the nineteenth century threatened the discriminative nature of this exclusive and expensive genre.

By the 1880s and 1890s the essential argument of the place of photography in the arts had not been resolved. The long standing polemic had been launched decades before on December 15, 1862 when a group of established artists, including Ingres, 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 declare that photographic images "ne peuvent, en aucun circonstance, être assimilée[s]

aux œuvres fruit de l'intelligence et de l'étude de l'art" (qtd. in Rouillé 399). According to many painters, photography was not an art, the photographer was not an artist, and photography could never equal the status of painting. However, after three decades of the ubiquitous "carte de visite," and the larger and cheaper paper portrait, both championed by the innovative techniques of Andre□-Adolphe-Euge□ne Disde□ri, convenience and accessibility won over tradition and elitism.

The photographic portrait of Louÿs (Figure 2) was taken in August of 1892 while he was attending the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth. Like so many of his generation, Louÿs was captivated by the genius of Wagner who by the late 1880s had acquired a cult following in France. As indicated on the reverse side of the print, the photograph is addressed to Louise de Heredia, whom Louÿs would marry seven years later. Daughter of José-Marie de Heredia, the venerated Parnassian, this young woman is, in a certain way, literary aristocracy. Louÿs, then, is using the image as a sort of currency that affirms his status as a cultivated intellectual.

Figure 3: Self-portrait of Pierre Louÿs, 1897. Private Collection.

The first commercial cameras available for widespread consumption in France were produced in the early 1890s, largely by George Eastman's Kodak. For the first time, the average consumer could take a camera into their home. Louys likely purchased his first camera before 1895 while in Algiers. In one remarkable self-portrait (Figure 3)

Louÿs breaks from his austere demeanor and offers a candid shot. Given the tilted angle of the camera, the un-centered placing of the subject to the right, it is possible that Louÿs is holding the camera with his left hand as he attempts to pour a glass of wine with the other. This positioning highlights Louÿs's comfort with the mechanized device and the manner in which he incorporated into his domestic life.

The similarities between the painted portrait and the photographic portrait are striking (Figures 1 and 2). 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's candid self-portrait is the first deviance from this formula and the birth of the norms our twenty-first century eyes no longer remark. With all of our technology, from television and film, to digital cameras and webcams, we must note that the moment Louÿs turned the camera on himself, he was stepping from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, perhaps paving the way for such twentieth-century dandies as Salvador Dali and Jean Cocteau who used both photography and film to express their art and dandyism.

Objects, Fetishism, and Identity

In many ways, for the literary dandy of the late nineteenth century, the objects that fill his salon and apartment – whether they be the ubiquitous "bibelots," otherwise known as knick-knacks, or fine pieces of art – are just as important to the construction of his identity as the clothes he wears and the accessories he carries on his person. Janell Watson writes in *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust* that the apartments described by Balzac "function like texts, like a story, a legal document, or a book written in secret code," making it possible "to decipher the dweller's profession, class, pleasures, and tastes" (150). However, she goes on to argue that such readings became more difficult later in the century, in high society in particular, because, although the occupants may have been wealthy, they did not necessarily have a distinctive taste or the education to choose objects that reflected their inner being. Quite simply, they likely hired decorators to choose for them, or followed the trends of the day. Watson thus clarifies this point in stating, "These historic, artistic, and literary interiors are inhabited by non-historians, by non-readers, and by non-art lovers. … The furnishings and bibelots of the 1890s have become what Baudrillard might call empty signifiers, signifying fashion itself" (152). The contrast between true signifiers and empty signifiers puts the "reader" of these signs on guard. Thus, more important than the object itself is the intention behind its placement by an individual who willfully chooses their home décor to shape their identity.

Because Pierre Louÿs was a historian, an avid reader, and art lover, he consciously chose the objects he surrounded himself with the same way he chose his clothing. In this way, he can be compared to the esthete Robert de Montesquiou who was also known for his collection of art and rare objects.

As Antoine Bertrand observes in relation to 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" (57). He goes on to note that this personal space is where the poet escapes contemporary society in order to 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'" (58).

Émilien 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" (85). 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 readily made available for interpretation. Carassus explains: "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" (85). Objects thus become part of the semiotic system along with clothing, language, and behavior.

The valorization of objects 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" that designates an object that is considered sacred or ritualized. As Christians explored Africa and the New World, they noted the way native peoples religiously or magically imbued certain objects with spiritual or social significance. The French version of the word "fétishe" is defined similarly in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* in reference to the people of Guinea: "Cette idole est un arbre, une tête de singe, un oiseau, ou quelque chose de semblable, suivant leur fantaisie" (Tome 6). Along these lines, more than a hundred years later in 1887, Alfred Binet writes: "Le fétichisme religieux consiste dans l'adoration d'un objet matériel auquel le fétichiste attribue un pouvoir mystérieux" (2). The writings of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud added a sexual dimension to the word, which is noted in most contemporary dictionaries. According to Larousse, for example, a "fétiche" is an "Objet inanimé ou partie du corps non sexuelle, capable de devenir à eux seuls objets de la sexualité" (411). Additionally, Karl Marx used the word fetishism in *Capital* to describe "the products of labor as soon as they are produced as commodities" meaning that "the value-relation of the products of labour … have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity" (165). In relation to the dandy's valorization of collected objects and carefully chosen clothing, the word "fetishism" can be applied in its simplest terms, that is, as an object imbued with meaning, not necessarily mystical or sexual. For the dandy, a thin moustache, a powder blue suit, and cane are imbued with meaning as signifiers meant to be read in terms of intellectual and esthetic cultivation.

These objects become crucial in defining Louÿs's literary and social milieu. Camille Mauclair, an acquaintance of Louÿs through the 1890s and a regular of many of

the same salons, describes this valorization of objects, clothing, and behavior as characteristic of his generation. In his memoirs he writes:

> 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 ! (Mauclair *Servitude* 46)

From the specific fashion of a folded tie, to the "moyenâgeuses" writing style typical of Pierre Louÿs, to the collection of quills, ink, and paper, then finally to the production of literature in fine editions, these elements come together to define the social milieu. Further, the members of Louÿs's generation articulate a strong distaste for industrialism, particularly in the domain of literary production with the use of automatic pens and typewriters. Of course, this distaste of industrialization in relation to the production of art was much noted before the 1890s, perhaps most famously by Leconte de Lisle who in his 1855 preface to *Poëmes et Poésie* declares: "je hais mon temps" (IV).

Gender and the Arts: the Feminized Male Body

Throughout his life, Louÿs had many female lovers, took thousands of nude photographs of women, and wrote thousands of pages of erotic poetry. Further, the themes in his literature are decidedly heterosexual in nature, except for acts of lesbianism that are portrayed to stimulate male viewers. Thus, his heterosexuality has never been in doubt. However, both Louÿs and his close friend Jean de Tinan, author of the *Penses-tu réussir!* in which Louÿs appears under the pseudonym Lionel de Silvande, are regularly described in memoirs of the period in feminine terms. In *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" (1225). He easily attracts young women, mostly prostitutes and lower class girls of the Latin Quarter. 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…" (124).

In 1894, in his private 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'" (qtd. in Goujon *Tinan* 63). 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 he is in fact a womanizer who describes his amorous adventures in *Penses-tu réussir!* and is called a "pute" by his friends, which, again, casts the young man in feminine terms.

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" (Fargue "Hommage"). 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 (Mauclair *Mallarmé* 25)." As a lover, Louÿs is often cast as the desired one, or the pursued, rather than as the pursuer. One of Louÿs's former lovers, the actress Polaire (1874-1939), tells Colette that even though her relationship with the young man is tumultuous and even violent, she cannot help 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 … (qtd. in Colette 1225)."

In her own memoires, Polaire describes Louÿs thusly: "Ah ! ces grands yeux bleus, froids, qui semblaient jeter des regards de faïence, cette nonchalance, comme efféminée, de la démarche, cette lenteur dans la conversation!" (78). Of course, just because a man is desired, this does not make him effeminate. However, it is poignant to note that such descriptions and role-play between lovers destabilize traditional definitions of masculinity. In the larger context of Louÿs's dandyism, just as with his choice of clothing, it is the intent that lies behind his desire to depict himself in feminine terms that is important. Rather than portray himself as a sporty athletic type like Alfred Jarry, for example, he portrays himself as delicate and perfumed. This is done in order to seduce and charm not only women, but also men.

Louÿs on the Stage

Pierre Louÿs frequented some of the most important literary and *mondain* salons of the 1890s, including those of José-Maria de Heredia and Stéphane Mallarmé, as well as others, including one hosted by Mme Bulteau on Sunday evenings, and another hosted by Robert de Bonnières whose wife, Henriette de Bonnières, attracted much attention for her character and strange beauty (Goujon *Louÿs* 226). These 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 period. Rachilde's salon in the offices of *Le Mercure de France* offered Jean de Tinan and Pierre Louÿs a

sophisticated outlet for their extravagant tastes and behavior. In essence, their 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 (Ghéon 141-142)." In many ways, the salon is a theater space where characters like Alfred Jarry, the actress Fanny Zaessinger, and Pierre Louÿs perform the most exaggerated and playful versions of themselves. Léon-Paul Fargue, a regular guest of Rachilde's salon, writes that Louÿs was always dressed "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. (Fargue "Hommage"). These young men are bohemians admittedly modeled on Maurice Barrès (Lebey *Luttes*) for whom canes, hats, and gloves reflect an interior refinement as much as an exterior one. Although Tinan and Louÿs are jokers and 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 that often serves as an improvisational actors troupe in which they perform as much for themselves as for others. Camille Mauclair 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 … tout à coup [a dit] : 'Adieu, je pars dans une heure pour l'Egypte'" (Mauclair *Servitude* 35). Mauclair notes Louÿs's 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 conveys in announcing exotic voyages almost off handedly, as if popping over to North Africa were a simple and casual affair.

In addition to these very public, though exclusive, salons, Louÿs used his apartments and those of his friends as stages particularly suited to perform as a literary dandy. Although Tinan's apartment at 75 Boulevard Saint Michel never served as a literary salon, the young man often entertained his male friends and hosted young women from the neighborhood. Although he never appeared to collect objects the way Louÿs did, Tinan's dress and attention to etiquette and affectation meant 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 literary alter-ego Roal de 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 petit air studieux… Vallonges mis son chapeau, ses gants, pris sa canne et sortit" (210). 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. Adorned with his hat, gloves and cane in hand, he steps off the "stage" he has set only to return to it and impress his companions by what will look to them as his true self, his innermost being: a literary

dandy. Further, Tinan who often worked laboriously feigned that he does not labor at all, giving the impression in his social milieu that he is a young man of leisure, although his vast body of work, produced over a few short years, and his lack of great monetary means contradict, or at least complicate, the social self he presents in salons and cafés (Goujon *Tinan*).

All of these elements – affectation, attitude, the manipulation of clothing and objects upon the stage of the salon – come together in a succinct description by one of Pierre Louÿs's 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, a few 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 de Bonnières will pay visit to Louÿs either at rue Rembrandt or rue Grétry where the young poet, then still in his early twenties, arranges a plenteous stage upon which he plays the literary dandy.

The account of André Lebey's first visit to Louÿs's rue Rembrandt apartment is 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" (49-50). Having himself been initiated into the literary world in the salons of Mallarmé and Heredia, Louÿs is conscious of the key elements that define this fashionable literary *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" (50). 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 city. Once the doors are closed, he is transported to another time and place, intoxicated by the literary tradition Louÿs consciously evokes.

Lebey describes the objects he encounters and the sensations they provoke: "Tout 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" (51). He then notes the effect on his other senses: "L'odeur du tabac blond épaississait l'atmosphère en la parfumant… 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" (51).

The words "fabuleux" and "recherchées" describe the rare objects which decorate the room such as the Japanese washbowl and the collection of colored ink for which Louÿs was known. A piece of art designed by Judith Gautier, daughter of Théophile Gautier, the poet and theorist of "l'art pour l'art," establishes a personal connection between the old "maître" and the young "disciple." These objects, carefully chosen and carefully placed, become a language that expresses a cultural tradition that become essentially constitutive of Louÿs's identity. As he looks around the room, Lebey is "reading" these objects.

To this literary stage and props 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. Subjugated, Lebey recalls the portrait of Louÿs as a fiery performer: "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… il lisait les vers sonores, la cigarette jetée,… la voix pleine de feu" (53). When the young man leaves the apartment, fully intoxicated by the experience, he thinks of his plans to be a writer: "Quand je le quittai, avec la peur d'être resté trop longtemps… je me sentais un autre. Mon pas léger volait sur l'asphalte… Je remontais vite m'enfermer dans ma chambre, puis je tirais, d'un tiroir fermé à clef, mon trésor – mes manuscrits" (52). Lebey, who observes, "je me sentais un autre," realizes that he has been inducted into a new order, a new reality, defined by the paraphernalia of the writer and the staged performance of Symbolist poetry: the literary *habitus* embodied by Louÿs.

Conclusion

When studying the dandy, avoiding clichés is a challenge, a point discussed by many twentieth-century, critics including Susan Sontag in her 1964 article "Notes on Camp." Louÿs's passion 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 clichés. Jean de Tinan cannot escape this trend either, particularly in one scene in *Penses-tu réussir !* where Raol de Vallonges takes a long bath and spends an excessive amount of time at his toilette preparing himself for the day. However, such behaviors and interests are essential elements in the dandy-as-type. Some of them are self-conscious nods to the socio-esthetic model of the 1890s, 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 (4)" which firmly place Pierre Louÿs and his esthete friends in a particular *habitus*, that of the turn-of-the-century literary dandy.

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