

A photograph of a wooden table with various legs and a tilted top, overlaid with text. The table has a light-colored wooden top and a dark brown wooden base. The legs are made of dark wood and are intricately carved, featuring various designs such as fluted columns, curved legs, and claw-like feet. The table is set against a plain white background.

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Cover image: Sonia E. Barrett, Table No. 6, 2013, wood and metal.. Digital image courtesy of Bruno Weiss.

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Aubrey Beardsley in the Russian “World of Art”

Sasha Dovzhyk

Abstract

Examining the afterlife of Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898) in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, this article focuses on the coterie of his primary admirers, the St Petersburg aesthetes of the World of Art group led by Sergei Diaghilev, and the circulation of Beardsley’s images through the World of Art’s journal *Mir iskusstva*. After tracing how this network acquired their initial knowledge of Beardsley, the article unpacks selective strategies and ideological choices which underpinned his representation to Russian audiences. Entrenched in the topical debates of Russian *fin de siècle* about national identity and cosmopolitanism, Beardsley’s circulation was fashioned into a signifier of the latter. The article finds that it was the neo-rococo phase of Beardsley’s work that tapped into the World of Art’s vision of modernity and the group’s promotion of the international Rococo Revival, which was, in its turn, tied to their reinvention of the eighteenth-century Russian cultural tradition. By examining how the group’s designers, in particular, Leon Bakst, adopted Beardsley’s technique, the article also shows that his stylised graphic language was uniquely suited to facilitate the traversal of boundaries between art forms.

Authors

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Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898) has long been regarded as “peculiarly of his period”.¹ Mainly remembered as the notorious illustrator of Oscar Wilde’s play *Salome* (1894) and the art editor of the emblematic 1890s journal *Yellow Book*, he was also a man of letters, dandy, and wit. Beardsley died of tuberculosis in 1898, leaving behind design commissions, poems, aphorisms, and an unfinished erotic novella *Under the Hill* (1896), based on Richard Wagner’s opera *Tannhäuser* (1845). It is no surprise that he has come to represent the decadent *fin-de-siècle* artist par excellence. In the 1890s, the memoirist Holbrook Jackson even declared Beardsley “a prisoner for ever in those Eighteen Nineties of which he had been so inevitable an expression”.² Although his extraordinary black-and-white designs have indeed provided a visual key for contemporary preoccupations with eroticism, decadence, and the grotesque, the period’s “prisoner” he was not. Beardsley’s remarkable international fame was both the product and the producer of a number of cosmopolitan coteries that spread his works across Europe while shaping, at the same time, avant-garde movements that adopted Beardsley as their flagship artist. Today, we are living through another “Beardsley Craze”, with the publication of Linda Gertner Zatlín’s monumental *Aubrey Beardsley: A Catalogue Raisonné*, followed by major Beardsley exhibitions at Tate Britain (March–September 2020) and at the Musée d’Orsay (October 2020–January 2021).³ Of the many histories of the artist’s international reception, one crucial story remains untold: the one of Beardsley’s afterlife in Russia.

While many scholars have acknowledged in passing Beardsley’s influence on specific Russian figures and movements, no systematised account of this subject has been produced in English.⁴ Rosamund Bartlett’s most recent essay, “Beardsley and Russia” in the catalogue of Tate Britain’s exhibition, only starts to open up avenues for future research.⁵ In Russia, on the other hand, the impact of Beardsley’s art and persona on early twentieth-century culture has become more widely recognised in recent years. As a testament to this legacy, a large-scale exhibition, *Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley: A View from Russia*, took place at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow) in 2014. The catalogue contains Sof’ia Chapkina-Ruga’s survey of the ways Beardsley’s technique was adopted by Russian graphic artists and Ekaterina Viazova’s insightful essay with a broader view of the artist’s role in the formation of Russian Aestheticism.⁶ And yet, there is more to be said about the scope of the Russian “Beardsley Craze” than one exhibition can cover. This article redresses this gap by outlining the scope of Russian Beardsleyism, mapping the primary network of Russian Beardsleyites associated with the St Petersburg group World of Art, and exploring the dissemination of Beardsley’s work through their pioneering modernist journal of the same name, *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*, 1899–1904).⁷ The article also

examines the adoption of Beardsley's visual language by the journal's designers, which constituted another channel for the transmission of his aesthetics in Russia.

Discovered in the mid-1890s by the World of Art coterie's aesthetes, Beardsley was soon fashioned into a cultural icon. The Russian circulation of his work began with the opening volume of the group's periodical *Mir iskusstva* and soon included a thematic "Beardsley issue" of the Moscow Symbolist review *Vesy (Libra)*, translations of verses and prose, elegant albums of drawings, entries in popular encyclopaedias, scholarly monographs, and more (Fig. 1).⁸ The fascination with the artist extended far beyond the small circle of critics and publishers. A hairstyle *à la* Beardsley was in fashion among the dandies of Moscow and St Petersburg (Figs 2 and 3). The literary evocations of "the cigar ladies of Art Nouveau" were peppered with references to Beardsley's designs.⁹ In literature, Beardsley's name was integrated into the vast body of modernist poetry and prose, with homages from authors as different as Andrei Bely, Anatolii Mariengof, and Aleksei Lozina-Lozinskii, to name but a few (Fig. 4).¹⁰ In visual art, Beardsley's imagery and style became so common during the 1910s that its wide dissemination threatened to undermine the artist's elite status.



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 1.

Nikolai Feofilaktov, A Tribute to Aubrey Beardsley, cover design for the thematic issue of *Vesy* 11 (1905), in Nikolai Feofilaktov, *66 risunkov* (Moscow: Skorpion, 1909), plate 13. Collection of Cambridge University Library (Rare Books, Lib.5.90.405, N. Feofilaktov, Plate 13). Digital image courtesy of The Syndics of Cambridge University Library (all rights reserved).

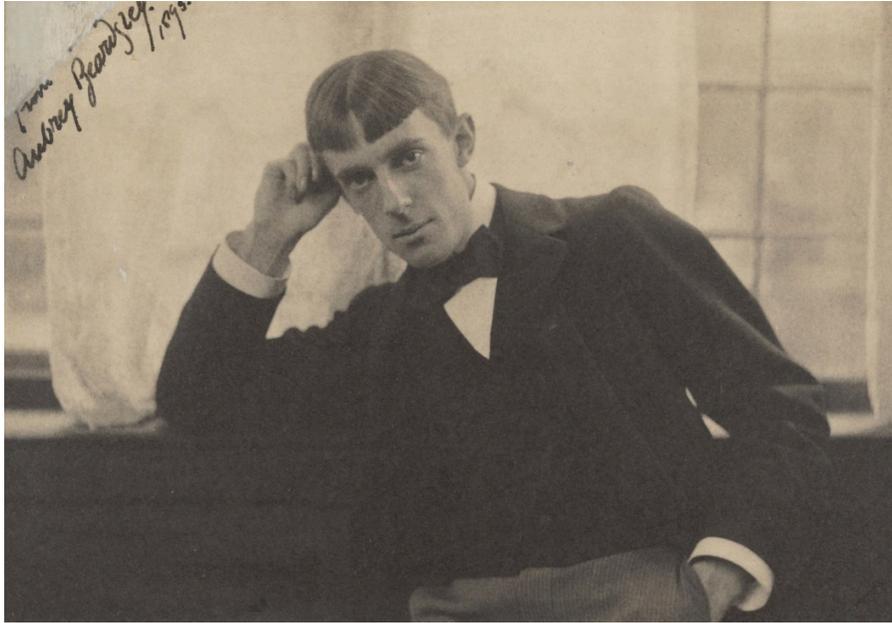


Figure 2.

Frederick Hollyer, Aubrey Beardsley, circa 1890, platinum print, 10.1 × 14.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG P1828). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London (all rights reserved).



Figure 3.

Nikolai Gumilev, 1911, photograph. Digital image courtesy of <http://gumilev.ru> (all rights reserved).

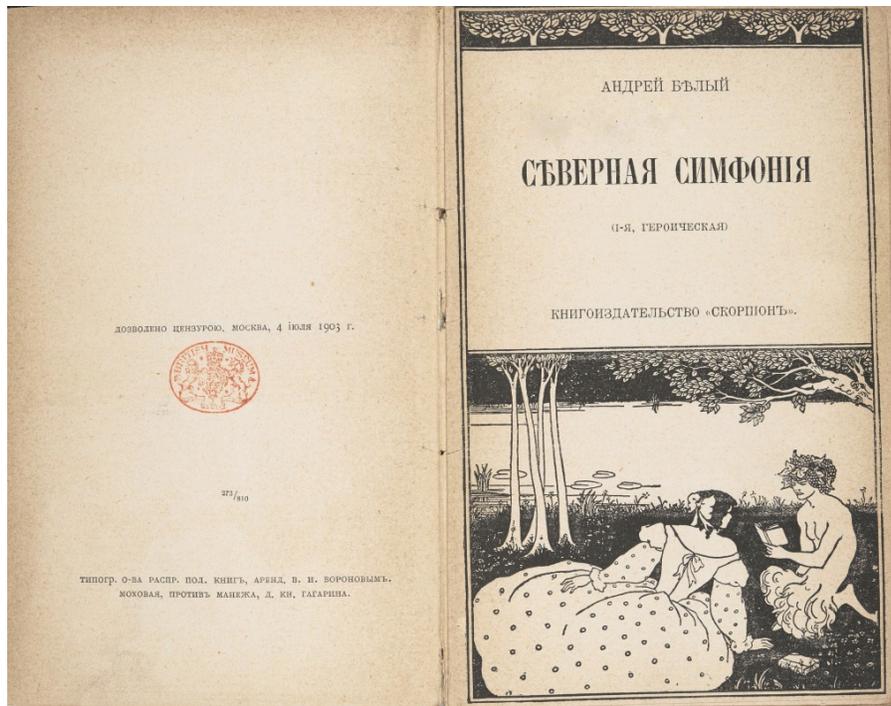


Figure 4.

Aubrey Beardsley, Yellow Book, Vol. V, 1895, intended cover design, reproduced as the frontispiece in Andrei Belyi, *Severnaia simfoniia* (Moscow: Skorpion, 1904). Collection of The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

A vivid illustration of the spread of the “Beardsley craze” in Russia occurs in the memoirs of the artist Nikolai Kuz’min, in his account of a study day at the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts (St Petersburg) in 1913.¹¹ Kuz’min describes some typical drawings brought in by an aspiring student from the provinces: the pictures were filled with “goat-hoofed satyrs, harlequins and columbines, ladies in hoop skirts and ostrich feathers and ladies with no costumes at all, but with high coiffures and wearing masks, pierrots in cloaks with pompons and sultaneses in turbans and salwars”. Halfway through the novice’s portfolio, the master of the studio, artist Ivan Bilibin declared: “Beardsley keeps [you] up at night”. As Kuz’min clarifies, when “a legion of petty imitators had adjusted the whimsical style of the refined English boy for the tastes of the readership of the journals of ‘beautiful life’, imitating Beardsley became *‘mauvais ton’*”.¹² The name of the late Victorian artist grew into a set epithet. The “Beardsleyesque” now characterised an aesthetic, a style, and a quality, which could be discovered in people and things. This article will look at the dawn of the Russian “Beardsley craze” and examine how the initial fashioning of the artist’s reputation reflected the tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism as well as the conflicting perceptions of modernity in the turn-of-the-century Russian art circles.

The World of Art and Beardsley as a “Masters of Thoughts”

The study of Beardsley’s circulation in Russia begins with World of Art’s journal *Mir iskusstva*. As John Bowlt clarifies, the name “World of Art” was adopted by several groups during the first decades of the twentieth century: an informal “club” founded by St Petersburg aesthetes in 1889 and the eponymous periodical they launched a decade later; and a series of three exhibitions (in 1899–1906 and 1910–1924 in St Petersburg; and in 1921 and 1927 in Paris) as well as the three separate societies which organised them.

¹³ While the title remained unchanged, the individuals and activities associated with it shifted. This essay concentrates on the first group, the World of Art’s founders. The key members included the coterie’s charismatic leader Sergei Diaghilev, the would-be secretary of the Ballets Russes company Val’ter Nuvel’, the future religious and political writer Dmitrii Filosofov, and the artists Aleksandr Benois, Konstantin Somov, and Leon Bakst. From the very outset of their careers, the World of Art members considered Beardsley one of their “masters of thoughts”. ¹⁴ According to Benois’ recollections, the circle heard of the late Victorian *enfant terrible* through their associate Al’fred Nurok. A “typical Decadent”, several years older than the rest of the group, he posed among his friends as an aesthete and a man of the world. He worshipped Oscar Wilde, one of his great “authorities”, and though not devoted to fine arts in general, consistently championed Beardsley’s work within the milieu of the World of Art. ¹⁵

From as early as 1894, the group kept up to date with Beardsley’s career. Thus, in his monograph of 1918, the art historian Sergei Ernst maintains that Somov was one of the first subscribers of *The Savoy*, the journal in which Beardsley served in 1896 as the artist in chief. ¹⁶ Moreover, the World of Art’s knowledge of Beardsley’s works stretched beyond the well-known and widely available, and into the domain of the arcane. As Anna Zav’ialova discovered in 2008, Somov produced a copy of Beardsley’s sexually explicit drawing *A Snare of Vintage* and presented it as a birthday gift to the Moscow hostess Vera Firsanova. ¹⁷ The original was meant to illustrate *Lucian’s True History*, privately printed by Lawrence and Bullen in London in 1894. ¹⁸ The publisher, however, considered the design indecent. A platinotype made from Beardsley’s design was inserted loose only in fifty-four large paper copies of the edition. ¹⁹ According to Zav’ialova, Somov’s replica of this restricted illustration is dated 1894, that is, the same year *Lucian’s True History* appeared in print. Somov’s lasting personal interest in the artist was confirmed in 1906, when he compiled an album of Beardsley’s drawings, and in 1924, when he recorded consulting Beardsley’s originals from Albert Gallatin’s collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. ²⁰

Benois notes in his memoirs that Diaghilev met Beardsley personally at the house of the painter Jacques-Émile Blanche in Dieppe in 1897.²¹ The subject of their conversation remains undocumented. Nevertheless, corresponding with the Scottish critic and artist D.S. MacColl in the following year, Diaghilev stated that he had known “Beardsley at Dieppe” and declared himself one of the artist’s “greatest admirers”.²² The meeting with Beardsley closely followed the visit Diaghilev paid to Benois in Brittany, during which the two shared ideas about the World of Art’s future periodical, *Mir iskusstva*.²³ Doubtless, Beardsley must have interested Diaghilev as the designer of the two avant-garde English journals of the 1890s, the *Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*. Moreover, there is some evidence that Diaghilev may have conceived *Mir iskusstva* as a Russian version of another English periodical closely linked with Beardsley. Benois recalls that, while discussing the future publication of *Mir iskusstva* with Vladimir Argutinskii in 1896, Diaghilev gave the English *Studio* as an example.²⁴ In 1893, the inaugural issue of the *Studio* was published with Beardsley’s cover design, featuring eight reproductions of his drawings and a laudatory article about the artist by Joseph Pennell.²⁵

At the time of the meeting with the would-be impresario in Dieppe, Beardsley would have been working on the illustrations for Théophile Gautier’s novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835).²⁶ As recalled by the translator and poet Douglas Ainslie, who also came across Beardsley in the summer of 1897, the artist was “living at a small hotel at Dieppe, [...] immersed at that time in the reading of Gautier, and in the illustrative work of Watteau, Fragonard and other French masters of his century”.²⁷ Having met Beardsley at that particular stage in the artist’s work, Ainslie consequently reckoned him an eighteenth-century man, who “belonged to that period in France, though with his genius he reached out into the future and has influenced black and white work more than any other artist of our time”.²⁸ Likewise, Diaghilev’s encountering Beardsley during the *Mademoiselle de Maupin* phase, when the artist’s interest in his favourite eighteenth-century was at its peak, had a considerable effect on the representation of his work in *Mir iskusstva*, as this article will demonstrate.

***Mir iskusstva* and Beardsley’s Rococo Revival**

Through their periodical, the World of Art group aspired to educate the public about the latest European trends and intensify transnational cultural exchange. In its visual presentation, *Mir iskusstva* followed the examples of European art nouveau periodicals: the German *Pan* and *Jugend*, the French *La Revue Blanche*, and the English journals, *Yellow Book*, *Savoy*, and *Studio*, all mentioned above. The World of Art coterie fashioned *Mir iskusstva* as a “book beautiful” paying special attention to typography and fine paper, as

well as ordering high-quality art reproductions from abroad during the first years of publication.²⁹ Thus, the visual appearance asserted the place of the Russian journal within the burgeoning network of periodicals which transmitted New Art internationally. At the same time, critical essays made the readership acquainted with the foreign representatives of these art trends and foregrounded the nexus between Russia and the West. How then did Beardsley fit into this modern and cosmopolitan agenda, fostered by the periodical's editorial collective?

After the launch of *Mir iskusstva* in 1899, it started championing Beardsley's work in Russia. The designs *Faun Reading to a Woman* and *Lady on a Sofa* (both 1896) were used to illustrate Diaghilev's aesthetic manifesto "Complicated Questions" (Fig. 5).³⁰ Nurok's short introductory article on Beardsley was published in the same issue of the journal. Drawing attention to the playful eroticism of Beardsley's work, Nurok marvelled at the artist's "powerful artistic individuality", "particularly charming" in the representations of "excessively-sensuous and mysteriously seductive phenomena of soul's life".³¹ Acknowledging the distinct styles absorbed by Beardsley, he singled out "japonisme with its refined simplification" and "the compositions of the *Régence* epoch filled with subjectivity".³²



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 5.

Aubrey Beardsley, Faun Reading to a Woman and Lady on a Sofa, 1896, in *Mir iskusstva* 1, nos 3-4 (1899), 54. Collection of The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (All rights reserved).

The “*Régence* epoch” and neo-rococo style became the focal point in the representation of Beardsley in *Mir iskusstva* in 1900, when D.S. MacColl’s essay on the artist was published in the double issues 7-8 and 9-10 and supplied with twelve designs by Beardsley (Fig. 6).³³ Commissioned by Diaghilev in 1898, the essay was meant to familiarise the Russian “public with that refined and exquisite artist’s meaning, with the causes of the apparition of his art and with a general aspect of his personality”, while pointing out “the influence that this, as yet not fully appreciated painter [sic!], has had”.³⁴ MacColl’s extensive account was translated into Russian, most likely, by the Beardsleyite and Anglophile Nurok. The original version became available in English only five decades later when it was printed by R.A. Walker.³⁵



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 6.

Aubrey Beardsley, Cover for Grey Roses, 1895, in *Mir iskusstva* 3, nos 7-8 (1900), 73. Collection of The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

The selection of reproductions shows the editors' preference for those pictures which spoke of Beardsley's fascination with the eighteenth century.³⁶ In around 1896, the year which Robert Ross called Beardsley's "annus mirabilis", the artist adopted a wistful neo-rococo style for his designs and literary experiments.³⁷ As Ken Ireland shows in his book on the rococo revival, the resurgence of taste for things of the *ancien régime* was a widespread European trend in the second half of the nineteenth century. From Paul Verlaine's set of poems *Fêtes galantes* (1869) to Walter Pater's fictional evocation of Jean-Antoine Watteau in "A Prince of Court Painters" (1885), from Édouard Manet's pastoral themes to the early drawings by Alphonse Mucha, neo-rococo was an omnipresent influence.³⁸ Beardsley's *ajouré* technique quickly turned him into one of the emblems of this vogue.

Thus, the Symbolist author Alfred Jarry alluded to Beardsley as “the king of Lace” in a Beardsley-dedicated chapter of the novel *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician* (1898).³⁹ Although not unprecedented, Beardsley’s expertise in literature and art of the gallant age was considered outstanding among his contemporaries. His letters were interlarded with mentions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French engravers, painters, and writers.⁴⁰

Exemplary of this phase, four of Beardsley’s illustrations for Alexander Pope’s “heroi-comical poem” *The Rape of the Lock* (1896) embellished MacColl’s article in *Mir iskusstva* (Figs 7–9).⁴¹ The exuberance of wigs and opulent garments, rococo furniture, and artificial landscapes summoned the era of Louis XV, while linear clarity evoked engravings by Jean-Antoine Watteau and his circle. “Never”, according to Beardsley’s lifetime critics, had “his peculiar gifts been exposed with more perfect felicity” than in those intricate “embroideries”.⁴² Close in style to *The Rape of the Lock* designs were three drawings from *The Savoy* (1896), reproduced in *Mir iskusstva*: an ornate *Under the Hill* illustration *Fruit Bearers*, a fanciful *The Death of Pierrot* (Fig. 10) featuring *commedia dell’arte* characters, and the cover for the first issue of *The Savoy* depicting a lady and a putto-like page in an Arcadian garden.⁴³

О. Бердслей,
Иллюстрация
к роману А. Дюма
„Легенда о любви“.



„Тогда, Беллида, если брить с ухами, ты, про-
снувшись, впервые прочитала любовную записку“.

Редакторъ „Мира Искусства“ попросилъ меня написать статью, которая, какъ добавленіе къ снимкамъ съ рисунковъ покойнаго Обри бердслей, могла-бы познакомить русскихъ читателей съ этимъ художникомъ, указать на причины появленія его творчества и на свойства его индивидуальности. Редакторъ обратился ко мнѣ потому, что я лично былъ знакомъ съ этимъ необыкновеннымъ юношею и наблюдалъ съ большимъ интересомъ, какъ другъ и какъ критикъ, его кратковременную дѣятельность, которая такъ внезапно началась и столь преждевременно кончилась.

Задача моя, однако, затрудняется тѣмъ обстоятельствомъ, что мнѣ приходится обращаться къ незнакомой и отдаленной публикѣ, и я совершенно не знаю, насколько ей известна наша современная исторія искусства и что въ этой области не дошло до ея свѣдѣнія. Въ наше время быстро международнаго общенія, частыхъ выставокъ и широкаго распространенія журналовъ бывають случаи, когда выдающийся человѣкъ скорѣе становится известнымъ въ чужихъ краяхъ, чѣмъ дома. Я могъ-бы назвать нѣсколько англійскихъ живописцевъ, которые за-границей пользуются славой, но у себя сравнительно мало известны.



Figure 7.

Aubrey Beardsley, *The Billet Doux*, 1895–1896, in *Mir iskusstva* 3, nos 7–8 (1900), 74. The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

Говоря о Бердслей, я долженъ сказать, что небывалая быстрота, съ которою распространилась его слава, останется безпримѣрной въ моей памяти. Послѣ выпуска перваго номера „Studio“, (въ которомъ были воспроизведены нѣкоторые изъ его рисунковъ), юноша, который былъ до тѣхъ поръ извѣстенъ нѣсколькимъ десяткамъ лицъ, сталъ вдругъ знаменитъ въ обихъ частяхъ свѣта, и очень возможно, что любители изящныхъ искусствъ въ Россіи, въ поискахъ за новыми талантами, обратили на него внимание одновременно съ началомъ его извѣстности на родинѣ. Для тѣхъ-же изъ читателей



О. Бердслей.
Иллюстрація къ поэма А. Пова „Позиміе любви“.

„Вотъ туалетъ. На немъ въ мистическомъ ло-
рядкѣ стоитъ рядъ серебряныхъ сосудовъ. Жрица
алтара тщеславія трелеца приступаетъ къ своему
дѣлу“.

„Мира Искусства“, которые не только знакомы съ положеніемъ англійскаго современнаго искусства, а постараюсь описать, какое впечатлѣніе произвело появленіе Бердслея въ Лондонѣ въ 1893 г., и какую часть общества (я говорю о небольшой части общества, которая особенно интересуется искусствомъ) его дарованіе поразило. Въ теченіе 8 или 9 послѣднихъ лѣтъ, мнѣ, какъ критику, близко приходилось наблюдать различныя художественныя теченія, увлекавшія за собою этотъ любопытный мірокъ, быструю смѣну подъема и упадка интереса къ нимъ и внезапныя перемены въ художественныхъ направленіяхъ. Ничто такъ не странно для такого наблюдателя, какъ неожиданность, съ которою какое-нибудь движеніе внезапно прекращается, исчезаетъ изъ круга пылкихъ стремленій молодежи, или, скрываясь на время во мракъ, поздѣе опять появляется. Школа, въ которой ожидали-бы увидѣть появленіе блестя-

Figure 8.

Aubrey Beardsley, The Toilet, 1895–1896, in *Mir iskusstva* 3, nos 7–8 (1900), 75. The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

ставителей другого направления. Возмездие скоро явилось, и любопытство всёх обратилось к изучению поэтических замыслов Чарльза Шаннона и Чарльза Кондера, а также к странным фантастическим образам Обри бердслей.

Послѣ вышеизложеннаго становится понятнымъ, съ какимъ горячимъ энтузіазмомъ должно было быть привѣтствовано всякое новое воззваніе къ „воображенію“, а тѣмъ болѣе такая острая, смѣлая и неожиданная пропаганда въ пользу могущества фантазіи, какую мы находимъ въ произведеніяхъ бердслея. Этотъ юноша далъ намъ въ своихъ рисункахъ образцы искусства, которое не было плодомъ мучительной подготовки, искусства, чуждаго слѣпому поклоненію природѣ, изученію модели, законнамъ перспективы и лишеннаго могущества красокъ. Онъ говорилъ перомъ и чернилами такъ-же, какъ другіе словами. Изображая особый міръ своихъ человѣчковъ, онъ былъ въренъ природѣ лишь настолько, чтобы понятно выразить идею и придать созданиямъ своей фантазіи, помощью своеобразной извилистости линій и необычайно умѣлаго примѣненія пятенъ и пунктира, ту скульпурную, но выразительную гримасу, которая ему нравилась и соответствовала его намѣреніямъ.



О. Бердслей.
Иллюстрація къ повѣсти А. Пова „Познченіе локма“.

„Ей снится блестящій юноша. Склонясь къ ней, онъ шепчетъ, ей грезится, сто онъ шепчетъ ей“.

II.

Мое первое знакомство съ этимъ удивительнымъ художникомъ произошло черезъ профессора броуна, который тогда былъ въ Вестминстерской школѣ искусствъ.

Figure 9.

Aubrey Beardsley, The Dream, 1896, in *Mir iskusstva* 3, nos 7-8 (1900), 79. The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

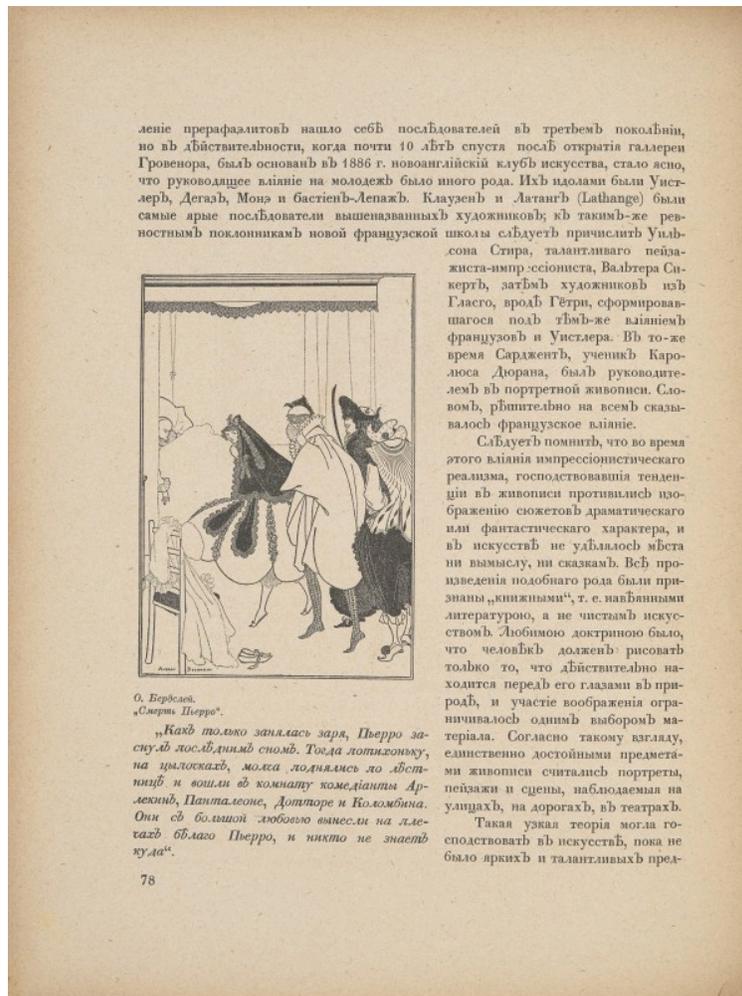


Figure 10.

Aubrey Beardsley, *The Death of Pierrot*, 1896, in *Mir iskusstva* 3, nos 7-8 (1900), 79. The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

The lace-like recreations of the eighteenth century were also typical of the work of many members of the World of Art coterie at *fin de siècle*. In the case of Somov, immersion in eighteenth-century art coincided with his interest in Beardsley. Thus, Ernst remarks that, “talking about the sources of Somov’s art”, one should consider “the influence of the ‘morbid’ Beardsleyan grotesque as well as the eighteenth-century engravings, for which he developed a passion alongside his love for Beardsley”.⁴⁴ As Benois notes in an article on Somov, “we were all astonished when, after he got to know [...] the just published drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, he suddenly found his own form of expression”.⁴⁵ In addition to the countless depictions of masques and fests, gallants and marquises, Somov’s homage to the French eighteenth

century is famously exemplified by his piquant illustrations for the anthology of the period's erotic literature *Das Lesebuch der Marquise: Ein Rokokobuch* (1908), edited by Franz Blei (Fig. 11).⁴⁶

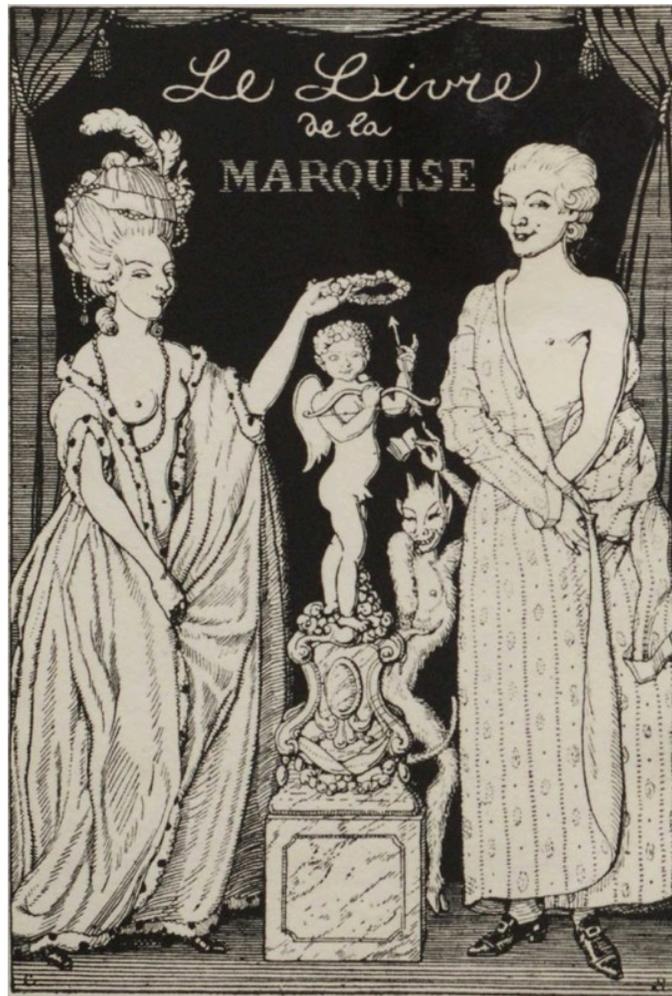


Figure 11.

Konstantin Somov, Title page, *Le Livre de la Marquise*, 3rd edn (St Petersburg: Golike and Wilborg, 1918). Russian State Library. Digital image courtesy of Russian State Library (all rights reserved).

The World of Art's penchant for the frivolous *dix-huitième* world was ideological as well as aesthetic. The group's promotion of the eighteenth-century style related to the ambition of reconstituting Russian art as an integral part of the European cultural tradition. The members' preoccupation with the rococo revival was not limited to the adoption of the current European vogue but also encompassed a recovery of the Russian artistic heritage of the pro-Western, post-Petrine period. By promoting this strain of Russian culture, the World of Art provided an alternative to the populist "Russian style" which, according to Karen Kettering, indicated various

attempts to create “an ethnically or nationally ‘true’ form of decoration, usually described as a design or ornament that had appeared or been in use before any sort of outside or foreign influence could be detected”.⁴⁷ As Kettering explains, the proponents of the “Russian style”, such as the art patrons Savva Mamontov and Mariia Tenisheva, looked upon the peasantry as a “repository” for national authenticity which had been, supposedly, “eradicated” among the gentry and bourgeoisie by the “modernization” of Peter the Great at the end of the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ By contrast, the World of Art group evoked the aristocratic rococo style which was shared among the courts of Europe. As the critic and Beardsley enthusiast Sergei Makovskii put it, the World of Art rediscovered the “works of powdered ancestors”—and with them, “the life of the bygone Russia of the country gentry and the court”.⁴⁹ To describe this “aesthetic renaissance”, Polonsky has suggested the concept of “double receptivity”—“a renewed receptivity to foreign literatures [and cultures] which led to a receptivity towards a variety of rediscovered pasts, with Russia’s own past among them”.⁵⁰

The reconstruction of the “Westernised” national tradition by the World of Art included, for instance, Benois’ and Diaghilev’s rehabilitation of a taste for “Empire” architecture that had previously been seen as formal and cold, as well as a rediscovery and exhibition of eighteenth-century Russian paintings that had been mistreated as derivative. As a result of Benois’ archival work in Moscow and St Petersburg, and Diaghilev’s research trips to secluded country houses, a nostalgic exhibition of historical portraits from more than 500 owners was staged in 1905 in the Tauride Palace.⁵¹ In this way, the World of Art members were shaping their identity as modern Europeans and, simultaneously, as keepers of the “forgotten” national past. Their work of invention was premised on the act of forgetting that Russia was not a nation but an empire which, by the end of the eighteenth century, had colonised new territories from Poland to Alaska; and that the genteel country of rococo fancies was dependant on the feudal institution of serfdom.⁵²

The St Petersburg aesthetes picked Beardsley’s rocaille stylisations, which corresponded with their own version of modernism—the one which relied on the reinvention of the eighteenth-century Russia. Stylistic innovations which accounted for the “wild-fire” spread of Beardsley’s notoriety in the 1890s—his bold use of black and white blots—were less visible in the illustration for MacColl’s article in 1900.⁵³ It was the next major publication of a set of Beardsley’s designs by *Mir iskusstva* that focused on the previously understated features of his art: the radically stylised visual language and its Japanese roots as well as the poignant eroticism of his work.

“Inappropriate Reproductions of Acutely Erotic Designs”

Beardsley became the highlight of *Mir iskusstva* for the third time in 1902, when a remarkable set of his nine designs was inserted in the philosophical essay “Lev Tolstoi and Dostoevskii: Conclusion” by the Symbolist writer Dmitrii Merezhkovskii.⁵⁴ The essay contained the final part of a study of two major national writers from a religious perspective, which Merezhkovskii was developing and publishing in *Mir iskusstva* from 1900 to 1902. The selection of Beardsley’s drawings opened with the border design for the List of Pictures for *Salome* (1894) and included notorious works of the *Yellow Book* period such as *Lady Gold’s Escort* (1894) and *Messalina and Her Companion* (1895).⁵⁵ The blatant incongruity between Merezhkovskii’s text and Beardsley’s images ignited a fierce debate.

As Petr Pertsov, a writer introduced to the World of Art’s circle by Merezhkovskii, recalls, “suddenly, in the most solemn places, extremely inappropriate reproductions of acutely erotic designs by Beardsley began to appear”.⁵⁶ Whether Nurok was responsible or Diaghilev himself, Merezhkovskii did not appreciate such an “ironic accompaniment”.⁵⁷ Writing under her masculine pen-name “Anton Krainii”, Merezhkovskii’s wife, the poet Zinaida Gippius specified what was considered so “inappropriate” about the illustrations:

When the conclusion to Merezhkovskii’s article “L. Tolstoi and Dostoevskii” appeared, it somehow happened that on the same pages where the author talks about the matters which for him were evidently the most sacred and awesome—about Christ, about the end of the world—Beardsley’s ominous figures were strolling ... A woman-whore in the form of a modern English Messalina makes her way to the lupanar ... The monstrous half-human half-devils are grimacing.⁵⁸

As both Pertsov’s and Gippius’ commentaries stress, the overt eroticism of the reproductions subverts the “solemn” spiritual subject of the article. While the text discusses the love of Christ, the Church, and the religious ideal of the Russian people, Beardsley’s figures are united by the demonic worship of sexuality.

Gippius singles out the drawing of the notorious Roman empress Messalina, who features in the *Sixth Satire* by Juvenal as an epitome of insatiable lust. In this first of Beardsley’s two designs dedicated to her, the bare-breasted empress is escorted by a single maid to the brothel where she would

fornicate voluntarily with all comers for cash (Fig. 12).⁵⁹ The modernity of Beardsley's menacing femme fatale in the nineteenth-century gown is recognised by Gippius. This image echoes, as Simon Wilson notes, the artist's depictions of contemporary London night life such as *Lady Gold's Escort*, also reproduced in the discussed issue of *Mir iskusstva*.⁶⁰ The figures of Messalina and her younger companion resemble two characters from the drawing *L'Éducation Sentimentale* described by Max Beerbohm as "a fat elderly whore [...] reading [...] to the sweetest imaginable young girl".⁶¹ MacColl labels the recurring image of "the wicked old-woman of the many-pouched face" Beardsley's "most terrible invention".⁶² While the part of MacColl's essay exploring the unabashed sexuality of Beardsley's designs was published in 1900 with tamer samples of the artist's work, the "ironic accompaniment" for Merezhkovskii's treatise in 1902 provided the previously omitted visual key.

отцу своему и съ любовью принуть
отъ него всякую поправку всякой оши-
бки и всякаго заблужденія ихъ.—Итакъ,
этакому-ли народу отказать въ

глядимъ на него, какъ онъ будетъ го-
ворить, и послушаемъ, какъ ясно и
толково сумбуръ народъ свою правду
сказать, совсѣмъ безъ нашей помощи,



О. Бёрдслей (A. Beardsley).
Мессалина.

довѣрїи? Пусть скажетъ онъ самъ о
нуждахъ своихъ и полную объ нихъ
правду. Мы-же пусть станемъ пока сми-
ренно въ сторонкѣ и сперва только по-

и объ дѣлѣ, именно о
заправскомъ дѣлѣ, въ
самую точку попадетъ,
да и насъ не обидитъ,
коли объ насъ рѣчь зай-
детъ. Пусть постоимъ
и поучимся у народа,
какъ надо правду гово-
рить.—Вы скажете: „са-
ми-же вы говорили, какъ
податливъ народъ на не-
любые слухи,—какой-же
мудрости ожидать отъ
него?“ Такъ, но одно
дѣло слухи, а другое—
единице въ обществѣ.
Явится дѣло, а дѣло и
повлечетъ само на себя и
вызоветъ разумъ“ (1888,
XI, 503).

Матъ скорбе, чѣмъ
кто-либо, примиритъ дѣ-
тей съ отцомъ; если-бы
мы признали церковъ на-
шею матерью, то не от-
казалась-бы она пред-
стательствовать, какъ
матъ, за насъ, за русское
общество, за весь народъ
передъ Верховной Вла-
стью. И ей-ли, Церкви
Христовой, не желать
свободы, когда Хри-
стосъ — сама свобода? Ей-

ли требовать вышнихъ степеней мы-
сли и слова, гасильниковъ духа, когда
своими-же устами говорятъ она: Духа
не угашайте?

Кажется, все это близко, „при дѣв-
рахъ“. Положеніе Россїи въ Европѣ
становится слишкомъ отвѣтственными.

Figure 12.

Aubrey Beardsley, *Messalina and Her Companion*, in *Mir iskusstva*, 7.2 (1902), p. 129. The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

валъ, что Достоевскій—„самый близкій, самый нужный ему человекъ“. И чувство это оправдалось. Никогда не встречаясь въ жизни, они все-таки вмѣстѣ жили, вмѣстѣ творили, черная противо-

совѣсть безъ критики, кажется, не обойдется. Тутъ для послѣдняго суда нужно послѣднее знаніе, которое можетъ дать только любовь. Критика и есть это послѣднее знаніе любви.

Безъ критики тутъ слишкомъ легко промахнуться и попасть не въ того, въ кого дѣлать: дѣлать „двойника“, въ христіанскаго „оборотня“, „старца Акима“ — мыслителя А. Толстого, а попасть въ настоящаго и ни въ чемъ неповиннаго „дядю Ершкю“, художника А. Толстого. Неуклюжій, слѣпой великанъ попадется, а зоркій, маленький оборотень ускользаетъ, какъ онъ всегда ускользаетъ.

Главное, слѣдуетъ помнить, что со стороны А. Толстого въ его отпаденіи отъ христіанства не было злого умысла, злой воли: кажется, онъ сдѣлалъ все, что могъ, — боролся, мучился, искалъ. У него было дѣло, на землѣ, великое алканіе Бога; просто не вѣрится, чтобы это ему и тамъ не зачлось. У кого изъ насъ было большее алканіе? Странно за него, что онъ все-таки не насытился; но вѣдь и за насъ тоже страшно, пожалуй, даже страшно, чѣмъ за него: если и такой, какъ онъ — „солзъ земли“ —

оказался „не соленою солзью“, то чѣмъ же окажется мы? Мы вѣдь вѣривъ его ужасною вѣрою, которая „шире вселенной“; какъ-бы и намъ не отвѣрилось этою же самою вѣрою, и чѣмъ-то мы окажемся по ней? Да, говоривъ иногда о А. Толстомъ (потому что нельзя, повторяю, молчать—камин



О. Бурдслей (А. Beardsley).
Завоеватель миста.

положная струя изъ одного источника. Будемъ же надѣяться, что они встрѣтятся тамъ, вмѣстѣ предстанутъ и вмѣстѣ оправдаются передъ Высшимъ Судомъ: языкчество А. Толстого оправдается христіанствомъ Достоевскаго.

Нельзя требовать отъ русской церкви художественной критики. Но тутъ и

Figure 13.

Aubrey Beardsley, *Volpone Adoring His Treasures*, in *Mir iskusstva*, 7.2 (1902), p. 123. The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

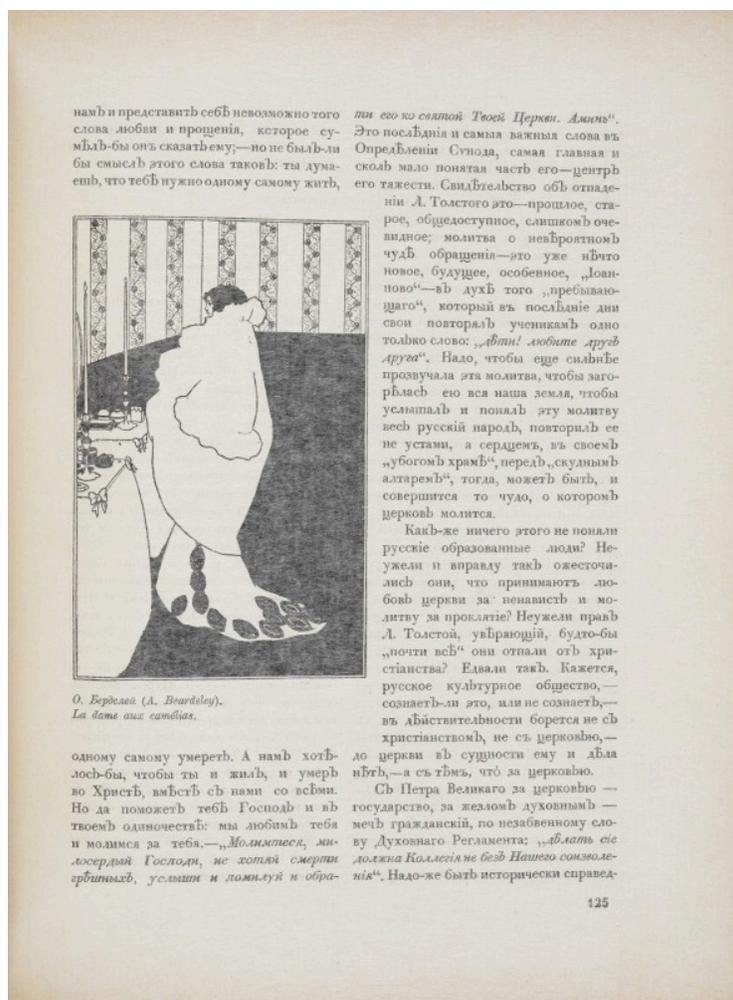


Figure 14.

Aubrey Beardsley, *La Dame aux Camélias*, in *Mir iskusstva*, 7.2 (1902), p. 125. The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

Another instance of correspondence between MacColl’s text and Beardsley’s reproductions across the issues of *Mir iskusstva* can be seen in two figures of worshippers, *Volpone Adoring His Treasures* (Fig. 13) and *La Dame aux Camélias* (Fig. 14). The hero of Ben Jonson’s play *Volpone* (1606) is depicted with his hands held as if for prayer and his lustful gaze fixed on the riches piled in front of him. As Beardsley observes in “*Volpone Prospectus*”, the hero “is a splendid sinner and compels our admiration by [...] the very excess of his wickedness. We are scarcely shocked by his lust, so magnificent is his passion”.⁶³ While Volpone is posed in sacrilegious admiration of his treasures, the heroine of Alexandre Dumas’ novel *La Dame aux Camélias* (1852), Marguerite Gautier, is depicted at her dressing table. It is adorned with two tall candles; all the powder boxes and beauty articles are depicted with painstaking detail. The portrayal of the courtesan contemplating her reflection is permeated with connotations of voyeurism and fetishism. This

illustration resonates especially with MacColl's suggestion that Beardsley's sensibility was that of a fetishist for whom "the toilette became a kind of sacred ritual, with toilette-table set out like an altar".⁶⁴ Reproduced subsequently on pages 123 and 125 in *Mir iskusstva*, the designs for *Volpone* and *La Dame aux Camélias* show the mirror images of two worshippers reversed horizontally. They may, therefore, be seen as two leaves of a pictorial diptych framing Merezhkovskii's reflections on the "most sacred and awesome".⁶⁵

What Pertsov and Gippius do not mention in their comments is that Merezhkovskii's article was illustrated, apart from Beardsley's "inappropriate" designs, with thirteen reproductions of Japanese woodblock prints, including the works of Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige. By placing Beardsley's drawings after the Japanese designs, the editors of *Mir iskusstva* foregrounded this source of Beardsley's stylistic innovation. In early 1893, the artist reported that he "struck" for himself "an entirely new method of drawing and composition, something suggestive of Japan".⁶⁶ As Zatlin has revealed in her seminal monograph *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*, learning from lucid, elegant, and easily reproducible *ukiyo-e* designs was crucial for the development of Beardsley's radical stylistic economy which blossomed during his *Yellow Book* phase and was later replaced by the *ajouré* neo-rococo technique.⁶⁷ Beardsley's link to the *ukiyo-e* tradition is particularly conspicuous in such drawings as *Lady Gold's Escort*, inspired, as Zatlin observes, by the *shironuku* "technique of picking out a design in white", as well as *Two Women Golfers and Pierrot as a Caddie* and *La Dame aux Camélias*.⁶⁸

Beardsley's images in Merezhkovskii's article highlight the distinguishing stylistic devices of the artist: simplification, flattening of the surface, and, as Brian Reade puts it, "the use of black areas to dramatise the designs after the manner of Japanese printmakers".⁶⁹ The combination of these methods, showcased in the 1902 volume of *Mir iskusstva*, informed the new approach to graphic design in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Adoption of Beardsley by Bakst: "New Paths for Graphic Art"

As Nikolai Radlov claims in his book *Contemporary Russian Graphic Design* (1917), "the dawn, which began to shine in the East, lit up with its rays the distant West, and in England, first, under the influence of the Japanese woodblock prints, the book revived and became the book". In Radlov's opinion, modern graphic art was founded by William Morris and Beardsley, who adapted Japanese woodblock techniques for book design.⁷⁰ Radlov's argument stems from his earlier critical reflections (1913), which elucidate

the impact of Beardsley's technique on Russian artists: "the Japanese and Beardsley opened new paths for graphic art. [...] The admiration of line, black and white blot, the pattern of dots, in short, the cult of graphic technique became the foundation of modern graphic art". It was not the idiosyncratic "content" of Beardsley's drawings, as Radlov maintains, but the "form" which "found followers in almost all nations"; as a result, "to this day, graphic art [in general] and, in the first place, Russian graphic art remains 'japonised'".⁷¹ The perspective offered by the art critic shifts the focus from Beardsley's "acutely erotic" subject matter to the formal qualities of his designs.

The accounts of the *Mir iskusstva* artists show that this circle associated the principles of laconic line and conventionalised form with Beardsley. Thus, Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, a member of the World of Art group and a student of another famous proponent of Japonisme, James McNeill Whistler, writes of her professional training during the 1890s: "I was especially interested in the line as such. [...] Simplification and style, this was what I thought about most". She asserts that, "graphic design as an art form did not exist in Russia at that time" and illustrates this point by adding: "I got to know Beardsley later on, when he was reproduced in the *Mir iskusstva* journal".⁷² Like many of her peers, Ostroumova-Lebedeva considered that modern graphic design emerged in Russia simultaneously with *Mir iskusstva* and that Beardsley's individual style was among the utmost manifestations of this new "art form".

The work of Leon Bakst offers an opportunity to explore how designers responded stylistically to Beardsley's art. As Natal'ia Lapshina notes, although there was no official division of roles in relation to *Mir iskusstva* between the members of the World of Art coterie, Bakst often functioned as the periodical's unofficial art editor, overseeing the choice of illustrations and the quality of reproductions.⁷³ He, therefore, had a major role in determining the visual appearance of the publication. In particular, he designed the cover for the 1902 run of the journal in which Merezhkovskii's controversial essay appeared with Beardsley's illustrations (Fig. 15). Bakst also produced the colophon of *Mir iskusstva*, which was printed on the title-page (Fig. 16). This highly stylised colophon shapes the figure of an eagle with unmodulated masses of black and white; the austerity of the design contrasts with the richly detailed neo-rococo cover, which is composed of complicated patterns and dotted lines. These two distinct images show Bakst's absorption of Beardsley's "japanesque" manner, typical of the *Yellow Book* period, as well as his eighteenth-century style, most prominent in *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Savoy* illustrations.

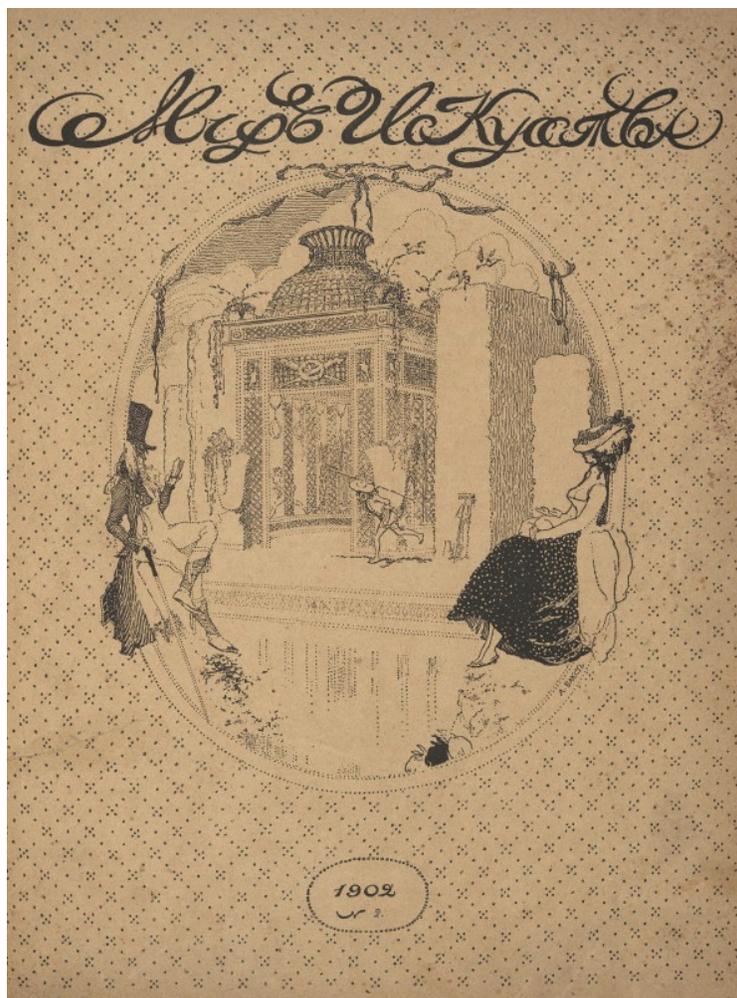


Figure 15. Leon Bakst, Cover design, *Mir iskusstva*, 7.2 (1902). The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).



Figure 16.

Leon Bakst, Colophon design, *Mir iskusstva*, 1, nos 1-2 (1899). The British Library, London. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

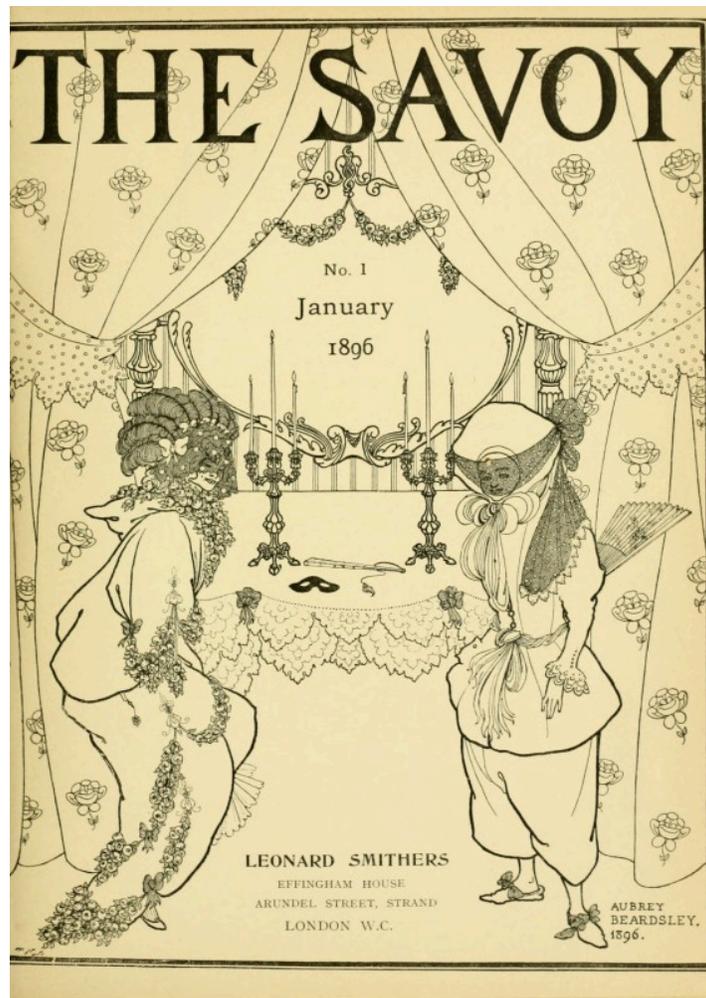


Figure 17.

Aubrey Beardsley, *The Savoy* (title page), No. 1 (Leonard Smithers: London, January 1896). Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library. Digital image courtesy of Internet Archive, digitised by Philadelphia Museum of Art (Public domain).

Bakst's cover also reflects the "acutely erotic" aspect of Beardsley's work. As Janet Kennedy notes, the design is reminiscent of the title page for the first issue of *The Savoy* (Fig. 17).⁷⁴ In Beardsley's drawing, two masked characters stand at drawn curtains and invite the reader to enter their rococo boudoir. Their veiled faces and theatrical costumes, as well as the mask and fan placed on the table between candelabra, suggest uninhibited sexual play, which can be performed under the cover of false identity. Beardsley reinforces erotic connotations by incorporating half-disguised sexual details, such as the breast-shaped cape on the woman on the left and her hand's position hinting at masturbation. Likewise, Bakst's cover is full of suggestive details that engage the viewers in sexual decoding and expose their voyeuristic desire. An oval medallion in the centre resembles a peephole in what could be a wallpaper of a nineteenth-century middle-class living room.

On the opposite sides of the oval's frame, two figures in eighteenth-century attire are seated: a gallant gentleman with a book and a lady with a pair of rabbits on her lap which repeat the form of her breasts. The ribbons embellishing the medallion as well as the placement of the gallant couple evoke the composition of Beardsley's curtained title-page. Either masks or deep shadows conceal the faces of Bakst's characters, again reminiscent of the veiled figures from *The Savoy*. The eighteenth-century pair guards the entrance into a garden inside the oval where one can discern, behind a temple-pavilion, a nymph fleeing from a shepherd. The design opens an enfilade of playful scenes leading the gaze through a series of revivals: the eighteenth-century masquerade, the idyllic Arcadian garden, and the shadow of antiquity shimmering in its depths. What fashions this eclectic image into the pictorial manifestation of modernity is the use of the technique then seen in Russia as characteristically Beardsleyesque.

Furthermore, Bakst's cover alludes to the first of Beardsley's images reproduced in *Mir iskusstva* in 1899.⁷⁵ The details of eighteenth-century dress and Romantic garden architecture, the reading scene and playful artificiality of the design refer to and form an amalgam of *Faun Reading to a Woman* and *Lady on a Sofa*. Beardsley's works borrowed from the visual vocabulary of the rococo revival, which was adopted transnationally at the turn of the century. The same vocabulary was used by the World of Art designers to affirm their modernity. Thus, the subjects of Beardsley's drawings correlated with the interests of the World of Art members, while his style was absorbed as the guiding principle of modern Russian design. The combination of elegant eighteenth-century linearity and black blot technique, which resulted in the uniquely stylised representation, was circulated via reproductions of Beardsley's drawings as well as the designs of his Russian followers such as Bakst.

Finally, the case of Bakst—the artist more famous for his paintings, and stage and costume designs—can demonstrate how the adoption of Beardsley's style facilitated the traversal of boundaries between art forms. In 1902, the same year as Beardsley's pictures illustrated Merezhkovskii's article in *Mir iskusstva*, Bakst painted his *Supper*, a portrait of a femme fatale in a low-cut black dress and massive hat, seated alone at a table (Fig. 18). Despite stylisation, the model is recognisable as Anna Benois, the wife of World of Art's ideologue Aleksandr Benois. The woman smiles alluringly and looks straight at the viewer with the cat eyes of Beardsley's Salome. The closed fan in the woman's hand, stylised, almost geometrical hair and headpiece, the black oval of the gown's tail present some of the details linking *Supper* and Beardsley's illustration for *Salome* titled *The Black Cape* (Fig. 19). Although Bakst would introduce audacious colour in his works for the Ballet Russes, this painting produces an effect of a monochrome graphic design.

The contrast of the woman's white skin and the black blot of her dress is unmistakably Beardsleyesque, with the sinuous curve of her body intensifying the association with Beardsley's line.



Figure 18.

Leon Bakst, Supper , 1902, oil on canvas, 150 × 100 cm. The State Russian Museum, St Petersburg. Digital image courtesy of The State Russian Museum, St Petersburg / Bridgeman Images (all rights reserved).



Figure 19.

Aubrey Beardsley, *The Black Cape*, 1893, indian ink on white wove paper, 23 × 16.3 cm. Princeton University Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, Aubrey Beardsley Collection (RS227). Digital image courtesy of Princeton University Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, Aubrey Beardsley Collection (CC BY 3.0).

It is interesting to note that contemporary audiences also saw Beardsley's ghost looming behind Bakst's *Supper*. When the painting was displayed at the fifth exhibition of the World of Art in 1903, it caused a scandal. The allusion to the notorious "Beardsley Woman" was picked by the reviewers.⁷⁶ For example, the conservative critic Vladimir Stasov wrote in an article titled "Two Decadent Exhibitions":

A cat in woman's dress is sitting at the table; her muzzle is in the form of a round plate, in some sort of a horned headwear; [...] her waist, the whole constitution and figure—[are] those of a cat, just as revolting as those of the English poser and freak Beardsley. An unbearable thing! ⁷⁷

Stasov described the woman as an impostor, a decadent monster, while infusing her image with diabolic details such as “horned headwear”. Far from being a complimentary note on Beardsley's legacy, Stasov's remark nonetheless sheds light on the popularity of the artist's imagery and style in Russia: by 1902, they became instantly recognisable by enamoured aesthetes as well as hostile critics from the opposing camp.

Conclusion: A New Watteau for “Our Age”

The World of Art group introduced Beardsley to the wider public through *Mir iskusstva*, the journal which epitomised modern art in Russia at the turn of the century. The foundation for Beardsley's reputation was laid by D.S. MacColl's extensive critical survey and by the continuous circulation of Beardsley's designs in the periodical. With respect to Beardsley's styles, *Mir iskusstva* illuminated the diversity of his techniques, including such extremes as the simplified “japanesques” and the overblown neo-rococo compositions. This combination of the artist's methods represented in *Mir iskusstva* resonates with the modernist writer Andrei Bely's observation (1908): “in the Japanese, Aubrey Beardsley created an image of our age in order to then bring it closer to Watteau”. ⁷⁸ Bely's remark foregrounds the relevance of Beardsley's work for the World of Art as the amalgam of eclectic revivalism, openness to foreign cultures, and a paradoxical vision of modernity. At the turn of the century, Beardsley's art suggested the arrival of a new Watteau: his eroticism and novel graphic language provided a means for fabricating the *ajouré* image of the past as well as bringing it up to date. Influential as it was, the World of Art's engagement with Beardsley's work is but the opening chapter in the broader and richer history of Russian Beardsleyism.

Footnotes

- 1 Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd edn (London: Grant Richards, 1922), 91.
- 2 Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties*, 91.
- 3 Linda Gertner Zatlín, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols (New Haven, CT: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2016).

- 4 The works of a pioneering scholar of Russian modernist art, John E. Bowlt, contain many references to Beardsley: John E. Bowlt, *The Silver Age: Russian Art of the Early Twentieth Century and the "World of Art" Group* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1979), 50, 63, and 178; John E. Bowlt, *Moscow and St Petersburg in Russia's Silver Age: 1900-1920* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008); John E. Bowlt and Iuliia Balybina, *Nikolai Kalmakov i labirint dekadentstva, 1873-1955* (Moscow: Iskusstvo-XXI vek, 2008), 11, 26-27, 90, and 188; and John E. Bowlt, "Through the Glass Darkly: Images of Decadence in Early Twentieth-Century Russian Art", *Journal of Contemporary History* 117, no. 1 (1982): 99, 100, and 102-103. For the impact of Beardsley's illustrations for Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* on Sergei Diaghilev, see Annabel Rutherford, "The Triumph of the Veiled Dance: The Influence of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley on Serge Diaghilev's Creation of the Ballets Russes", *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 27, no. 1 (2009): 93-107. Rachel Polonsky explores Russian Anglomania at the turn of the century and, focusing on literary figures such as Edgar Allan Poe, Walter Pater, and Wilde, pays cursory attention to Beardsley in Rachel Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 7, 155, 172-173, and 181-183.
- 5 Rosamund Bartlett, "Beardsley and Russia", in . Stephen Calloway and Caroline Corbeau-Parsons (eds), *Aubrey Beardsley* (London: Tate Publishing, 2020), 60-65.
- 6 Sof'ia Chapkina-Ruga, "Russkie berdsleisty", in *Oskar Uail'd, Obri Berdslei: vzgliad iz Rossii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi muzei izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv imeni A.S. Pushkina, 2014), 142-149; and Ekaterina Viazova, "'Moskovskii Berdslei', 'russkii Oskar Uail'd': angliiskii estetizm v russkoi kul'ture rubezha vekov", in *Oskar Uail'd, Obri Berdslei: vzgliad iz Rossii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi muzei izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv imeni A.S. Pushkina, 2014), 35-51.
- 7 Further in the article, the transliterated name *Mir iskusstva* stands for the journal and the translated World of Art, for the group.
- 8 See the first Russian translation of Beardsley's novella *Under the Hill*: Obri Berdslei, "Pod Kholmom", *Vesy* 11 (1905): 30-49. See also a miscellany of Beardsley's writing and drawings: M. Likiardopulo (ed.), *Obri Berdslei: Risunki, povesti, stikhi, aforizmy, pis'ma, monografii i stat'i o Berdslee*, translated by M. Likiardopulo and M. Kuzmin (Moscow: Skorpion, 1912).
- 9 V.A. Milashevskii, *Vchera, pozavchera: vospominaniia khudozhnika*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Kniga, 1989), 90.
- 10 Beardsley's cover design intended for the fifth volume of the *Yellow Book* was used as the title page in Andrei Belyi, *Severnaia simfoniia* (Moscow: Skorpion, 1903). For a discussion of the compelling adoption of Beardsley in Mariengof's novel *Cynics* (1928), see Tomi Khutunen, *Imazhinist Mariengof: Dendi. Montazh. Tsiniki* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007), 10, 47, 167-169, and 179. See also the poem "To Beardsley's Drawings" ("K risunkam Berdsli") in Aleksei Lozina-Lozinskii, *Trottuar* (St Petersburg: Tipografia M. Pivovarskogo, 1916), 18.
- 11 The phrase "Beardsley craze" was often used by Victorian reviewers to describe the period of the artist's utmost popularity in the mid-1890s; see Aubrey Beardsley, *The Early Work of Aubrey Beardsley* (London: John Lane, 1899), 1. Nikolai Kuz'min uses the phrase in his account (1960), see N.V. Kuz'min, *Stranitsy bylogo* (Moscow: Kniga, 1984), 135. This article uses the Library of Congress system of transliteration (without diacritics) for Slavonic names. There are three exceptions: more common Westernised forms are used for Bely, Benois, and Diaghilev in the main text, while the bibliographical information preserves the Library of Congress transliteration (thus, Belyi, Benua, and Diagilev). The translations from Russian into English are my own.
- 12 Kuz'min, *Stranitsy bylogo*, 134.
- 13 Bowlt, *The Silver Age*, 47.
- 14 Aleksandr Benua, *Moi vospominaniia: v piati knigakh*, edited by D.S. Likhachev, 2nd edn, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 683.
- 15 Benua, *Moi vospominaniia*, Vol. 1, 682 and 683.
- 16 Sergei Ernst, *K.A. Somov* (St Petersburg: Izdanie Obshchiny Sv. Evgenii, 1918), 20.
- 17 A.E. Zav'ialova, "Somov i Berdsli: Liubopytnye sovpadeniia. Novye fakty", *Russkoe iskusstvo* 4 (2008): 94-98. For the reproduction of Somov's copy, see A.E. Zav'ialova, *Khudozhestvennyi mir Konstantina Somova* (Moscow: BuksMArt, 2017), 91.
- 18 Francis Hickes (trans.), *Lucian's True History* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1894).
- 19 Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley*, Vol. 1, 171.
- 20 *Berdslei* (St Petersburg: Shipovnik, 1906); and Konstantin Somov, *Dnevnik: 1923-1925* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Dmitrii Sechin, 2018), 299.
- 21 Benua, *Moi vospominaniia*, Vol. 2, 169. An account of probable routes and meetings of Diaghilev, Wilde, and Beardsley is provided in Rutherford, "The Triumph of the Veiled Dance", 93-95.
- 22 Sergei Diaghilev, "Autograph Letter from Serge de Diaghilev to D.S. MacColl" (Letter, 20 September 1898), MS MacColl D83, University of Glasgow Library (UoG).
- 23 Benua, *Moi vospominaniia*, Vol. 2, 169 and 192.
- 24 Benua, *Moi vospominaniia*, Vol. 2, 192.
- 25 Joseph Pennell, "A New Illustrator: Aubrey Beardsley", *The Studio* 1 (1893): 14-19.

- 26 After Beardsley's death, it was the photogravure print of Beardsley's portrait of Maupin that Diaghilev tried to purchase through Oscar Wilde, whom he met in Paris in 1898. See Wilde's letter to Smithers on 4 May 1898 in Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (eds), *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 1060. Smithers issued an ordinary edition of 100 copies of Maupin's portrait priced at £1—a price which Wilde also refers to. Mark Samuels Lasner, *A Selective Checklist of the Published Work of Aubrey Beardsley* (Boston, MA: Thomas G. Boss Fine Books, 1995), 73.
- 27 Douglas Ainslie, *Adventures Social and Literary* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1922), 258-259, <http://archive.org/details/adventuressocial01ains>.
- 28 Ainslie, *Adventures Social and Literary*, 256.
- 29 Dmitrii Filosofov, "Iunosheskie gody Aleksandra Benua", *Nashe nasledie* 6, no. 24 (1991), 88.
- 30 Sergei Diaghilev, "Slozhnye voprosy: Osnovy khudozhestvennoi otsenki", *Mir iskusstva* 1, nos 3-4 (1899), 54. Diaghilev's manifesto was printed in four instalments in the opening issues of the journal. For the first three parts of the manifesto, see Sergei Diaghilev, "Slozhnye voprosy: Nash mnimyi upadok", *Mir iskusstva* 1, nos 1-2 (1899): 1-11; Sergei Diaghilev, "Slozhnye voprosy: Vechnaia bor'ba", *Mir iskusstva* 1, nos 1-2 (1899): 12-16; and Sergei Diaghilev, "Slozhnye voprosy: Poiski krasoty", *Mir iskusstva* 1, nos 3-4 (1899): 37-49.
- 31 A[Ifred] N[urok], "Obri Berdslei", *Mir iskusstva* 1, nos 3-4 (1899), 16.
- 32 N[urok], "Obri Berdslei", 16 and 17.
- 33 O. Mek Koll', "Obri Berdslei", *Mir iskusstva* 3, nos 7-8 (1900): 74-84; and O. Mek Koll', "Obri Berdslei", *Mir iskusstva* 3, nos 9-10 (1900): 97-120, both at <https://archive.org/details/miriskusstva1190unse/page/n104/mode/2up>.
- 34 Diaghilev, "Autograph Letter from Serge de Diaghilev to D.S. MacColl".
- 35 D.S. MacColl, "Aubrey Beardsley", in R.A. Walker (ed.), *A Beardsley Miscellany* by Aubrey Beardsley (London: Bodley Head, 1949), 15-32.
- 36 The following designs are reproduced in the issue: cover design for *Grey Roses*, *The Bille-Doux*, *The Toilet*, and *The Battle of the Beaux and the Belles*; cover design intended for the *Yellow Book*, Vol. V, *The Death of Pierrot*, and *The Dream*; cover design for *The Savoy* No. 1 and *White Peacock in Front of a Fountain and a Tree* (chapter heading for *Le Morte Darthur*); and title-page for *Yellow Book*, *Portrait of Himself*, and *The Fruit Bearers*.
- 37 Robert Ross, "The Eulogy of Aubrey Beardsley", in *Volpone: Or, The Fox* by Ben Jonson (London: [Smithers], 1898), xlii.
- 38 For an overview, see Ken Ireland, *Cythera Regained? The Rococo Revival in European Literature and the Arts, 1830-1910* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University, 2006).
- 39 Alfred Jarry, *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*, edited by Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor (London: Methuen, 1965), 201-202.
- 40 See Aubrey Beardsley, *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, edited by Henry Maas, J.L. Duncan, and W.G. Good (London: Cassell, 1970), 54, and 397-308.
- 41 Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock: Embroidered with Nine Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley* (London: Smithers, 1896).
- 42 "The Rape of the Lock", *Saturday Review*, 17 April 1897, 426.
- 43 The designs were first published in Aubrey Beardsley, "Under the Hill", *The Savoy*, January 1896, 167; and Aubrey Beardsley, "The Death of Pierrot", *The Savoy*, June 1896, 33.
- 44 Ernst, K.A. *Somov*, 20.
- 45 Aleksandr Benua, "K. Somov", *Mir iskusstva* 2, no. 20 (1899), 128.
- 46 Franz Blei (ed.), *Das Lesebuch der Marquise: ein Rokokobuch. Bildschmuck von Constantin Somoff* (Munich: Hans von Weber, 1908). The enlarged edition of the book in French was published by Somov in St Petersburg in 1918. For context, see Konstantin Somov, *Kniga Markizy Konstantina Somova: Kurtuaznost', pretsioznost', galantnost'*, edited by Anatolii Naiman (Moscow: Polden' v Moskve, 1996). Franz Blei, the publisher of *Das Lesebuch der Marquise*, also disseminated Beardsley's designs in his almanacs *Der Amethyst* (1905-1906) and *Die Opale* (1907).
- 47 Karen Kettering, "Decoration and Disconnection: The 'Russkii Stil' and Russian Decorative Arts at Nineteenth-Century American World's Fairs", in Rosalind P. Blakesley and Susan Emily Reid (eds), *Russian Art and the West: A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative Arts* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University, 2007), 62.
- 48 Kettering, "Decoration and Disconnection", 63.
- 49 Sergei Makovskii, *Silueti russkikh khudozhnikov* (Moscow: Respublika, 1999), 188. Makovskii was an aesthete, a Beardsleyite, and the editor of *Mir iskusstva's* disciple, the modernist journal *Apollon* (1910-1918). His fascination with Beardsley found an outlet in two principal texts: the essay "Aubrey Beardsley", in Makovskii's book *Pages of Art Criticism* (Sergei Makovskii, "Obri Berdslei", in *Stranitsy khudozhestvennoi kritiki. Kniga pervaiia: Khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo sovremennogo Zapada* [St Petersburg: Sodruchestvo, 1906], 156-177); and the piece "On Beardsley's Illustrations" in the Russian edition of Wilde's *Salome* (Sergei Makovskii, "Ob illiustratsiakh Berdsleia", in *Salomeia* by Oskar Uail'd, translated by Konstantin Bal'mont and Ekaterina Andreeva [St Petersburg: Panteon, 1908], 125-131).
- 50 Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance*, 5.
- 51 See John E. Bowlt, "Sergei Diaghilev's 'Exhibition of Historic Russian Portraits'", *Experiment* 17, no. 1 (1 January 2011): 76-93.

- 52 Russian serfs were only freed by the Emancipation reform of 1861.
- 53 MacColl, "Aubrey Beardsley", 30.
- 54 Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, "Lev Tolstoi i Dostoevskii: zakliuchenie", *Mir iskusstva* 7, no. 2 (1902): 89-132.
- 55 Other Beardsley's designs reproduced in the issue are: *Two Women Golfers and Pierrot as a Caddie, Autumn, At a Distance*, the frontispiece for *An Evil Motherhood, Volpone Adoring His Treasures*, and *La Dame aux Camélias*.
- 56 Petr Pertsov, *Literaturnye vospominaniia, 1890-1902 gg.: predislovie B.F. Porshneva* (Moscow: Academia, 1933), 280.
- 57 Pertsov, *Literaturnye vospominaniia, 1890-1902 gg.*, 281.
- 58 Anton Krainii, "O Silene iz 'Mira iskusstva'", *Novyi put' 2* (1903), 198.
- 59 On the two drawings of Messalina, see Simon Wilson, "Aubrey Beardsley's Messalina: Going or Coming?", *AB 2020* (blog), 15 June 2020, <https://ab2020.org/aubrey-beardsleys-messalina-going-or-coming/>.
- 60 Simon Wilson, *Beardsley*, rev. edn (Oxford: Phaidon, 1983), 41.
- 61 Max Beerbohm, *Letters to Reggie Turner*, edited by Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Hart-Davis, 1964), 92.
- 62 Mek Koll', "Obri Berdslei", 114. For the English, see MacColl, "Aubrey Beardsley", 29.
- 63 Aubrey Beardsley, "Volpone Prospectus", in R.A. Walker (ed.), *A Beardsley Miscellany* (London: Bodley Head, 1949), 87.
- 64 Mek Koll', "Obri Berdslei", 115.
- 65 Krainii, "O Silene iz 'Mira iskusstva'", 198.
- 66 Beardsley, *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, 43.
- 67 See Linda Gertner Zatlín, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997).
- 68 Zatlín, *Aubrey Beardsley*, Vol. 2, 105.
- 69 Brian Reade, *Aubrey Beardsley* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), 6-7.
- 70 Nikolai Radlov, *Sovremennaia russkaia grafika [Contemporary Russian Graphic Design]*, edited by Sergei Makovskii (St Petersburg: T-vo Svobodnoe iskusstvo, 1917), 14.
- 71 Nikolai Radlov, "Po povodu vystavki 'risunkov i estampov'", *Apollon* 1 (1913), 54.
- 72 Anna P. Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski*, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1974), 185.
- 73 Natal'ia P. Lapshina, "*Mir iskusstva*": *ocherki istorii i tvorcheskoi praktiki* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), 46.
- 74 Janet Kennedy, "The World of Art and Other Turn-of-the-Century Russian Art Journals, 1898-1910", in Alla Rosenfeld (ed.), *Defining Russian Graphic Arts: From Diaghilev to Stalin, 1898-1934* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 70.
- 75 Diaghilev, "Slozhnye voprosy: Osnovy khudozhestvennoi otsenki", 54.
- 76 On the "Beardsley Woman", see Bridget Elliott, "New and Not So 'New Women' on the London Stage: Aubrey Beardsley's 'Yellow Book' Images of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Réjane", *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1987): 33-57.
- 77 V.V. Stasov, "Dve dekadentskie vystavki", in P.T. Shchipunov (ed.), *Izbrannye sochineniia: Zhivopis', skul'ptura, muzyka*, Vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), 292.
- 78 Andrei Belyi, "Pesn' zhizni", in L.A. Sugai (ed.), *Sobranie sochinenii. Arabeski: Kniga statei. Lug zelenyi: Kniga statei*, Vol. 8 (Moscow: Respublika, 2012), 51.

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