



DESCENT FROM THE CROSS: JAMES ENSOR'S PORTRAIT OF THE SYMBOLIST ARTIST

Kaylee P. Alexander

In the middle of Oscar Wilde's (1854–1900) *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), the eponymous protagonist finds himself fascinated by “a poisonous book” that has been sent to him by his mentor, Lord Henry Wotton.¹ In the story, the book is described as:

a novel without a plot, and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian, who spent his life trying to realize in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own, and to sum up, as it were, in himself the various moods through which the world-spirit had ever passed, loving for their mere artificiality those renunciations that men have unwisely called virtue as much as those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin. The style in which it was written was that curious jeweled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of *argot* and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases, that characterizes the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of *Symbolistes*.²

Although the title of this book is never mentioned, it is clear from the description that it is Joris-Karl Huysmans's (1848–1907) *À Rebours* that Dorian is unable to “free himself from the influence of.”³ *À Rebours*, which was originally published in 1884, six years before *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, tells the story of a young Parisian *Décadent*, Jean des Esseintes, who, in realizing “that the world was, for the most part, composed of scoundrels and imbeciles,”⁴ retreats from bourgeois Parisian society to live as a recluse surrounded by the objects that allow him to experience all the exoticisms of the world—through color, scent, and sound—without ever having to be a part of it physically. By the end, Des Esseintes, weak and having become dependent on enema treatments, begins to look back towards the Christian piety of the past, suggesting that the life he will lead beyond the novel's close will be a presumably purer, Catholic existence.

After reading the novel, Dorian is transformed: he begins to embrace decoration and sensation, host lavish dinners with performances by the most famous musicians of the day, and collect luxurious and exotic objects; he begins to worship beauty. The allusions to *À Rebours* are abundant, and Wilde employs many of Huysmans's motifs, especially after Dorian reads the unnamed book. Though Dorian's life closely mirrors that of Des Esseintes—the obsession and disillusionment with the beauty of the female performer, the quest for sensory

aesthetic experience, the collection of exotic objects, and the descent into bodily decay—it is important to point out that it is not Dorian the man, but rather the image of Dorian in the painting, that functions as Wilde’s decadent antihero. Hidden away from the outside world, gradually bearing the marks of decay as society (and Dorian) continues to descend into immorality, and reemerging pure and restored, the portrait of Dorian functions as a more appropriate parallel to Des Esseintes and the *Décadents* of the fin de siècle than the “real” Dorian.

The character of Des Esseintes was based partially on Huysmans himself, but was also inspired by many of the writer’s contemporaries, including Anatole Baju (1861–1903) and Paul Verlaine (1844–1896). In the years following the publication of *À Rebours*, decadence as an artistic and literary form began to take shape. While the term decadent had often been used negatively to describe a perceived moral decline—as well as the literary and artistic avant-garde who were both responsible for an indicative of this decadence—the *Décadents* were participants in a cultural movement tasked with a civic obligation to reveal social decay.⁵ In 1886, Baju founded an anti-bourgeois magazine, *Le Décadent littéraire et artistique*, and in 1887 published a manifesto entitled “L’École décadente.”⁶ In this latter work, Baju proclaimed that the role of *littérature décadente* (Decadent literature) was to reflect the image of the *monde spleenétique* of the fin de siècle.⁷ By *monde spleenétique*, or splenetic world, he was referring to a melancholic view of contemporary culture that considered the period as tired and disgusted.⁸ The work of the *Décadent* writer or artist, then, was to reveal this image of the world through the “sensation of things” rather than depictions of objects: “Do not depict, but rather make feel,” Baju instructs, “give the heart the sensation of things, either by new constructions, or by symbols evoking the idea with more intensity by comparison. Synthesize the material, but analyze the heart.”⁹ Inspired by Charles Baudelaire’s view of the modern world as fallen and corrupt, which was epitomized in works such as *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) and the posthumously published *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869), the *Décadents* of the 1880s and 1890s understood their world as one of defined decay.¹⁰ *Décadence* had been seen as somewhat of a retreat from bourgeois society to a solitary existence defined by an exploration of sensory experience. However, it was a retreat that had gone too far: in its desire to produce a “real” sensory experience, it had become rather artificial. Decadence was, as in the case of Dorian Gray and Des Esseintes, ultimately responsible for the death of the decadent. But with the death of the decadent came, too, the anticipation of a rebirth.

Huysmans’s title, *À Rebours*, implies a backwards motion, a retreat, which is both definitive of decadence and necessary for rebirth. Taken in the context of the book, we can see this backwards motion as having a threefold implication. First, it is the process of retreating from society and aesthetic exploration. Second, it is the moral and physical decay that results from over-indulgence and luxury: death through decadence. Third, it implies the retreat to come and the embrace of a past beyond that of decadence, something so primitive and pure that it would become the cure to decadent artifice. Although *À Rebours* did not end with a definitive turn towards Catholicism, the final line of the text is indicative of a theme that was to prevail in the ensuing decade:

Ah! I lack courage and my heart breaks! Lord, take pity on the Christian who doubts, on the non-believer who would like to believe, on the

convict of life who embarks alone in the night, under a sky that is no longer illuminated by the consoling beacons of ancient hope!¹¹

Here, Huysmans alludes to the Catholic future that awaited the fallen Des Esseintes, the cure for the disease of decadence that had caused the demise of the decadent. Huysmans further illuminates the cycle of decadence, decay, rebirth, and resurrection in a series of four novels he completed nearly twenty years after *À Rebours*. As if picking up where *À Rebours* left off, Huysmans explores the satanic exploits (*Là-Bas*, 1891), conversion to Catholicism (*En Route*, 1895), retreat to Chartres (*La Cathédrale*, 1898), and entry into religious life (*l'Oblat*, 1903) of Durtal, a character who, like Des Esseintes, was heavily based on the experiences of the author himself.¹²

Following the publication of *À Rebours*, a number of artists and writers became associated with Des Esseintes and the *Décadent* movement. Among these artists, I argue, was the Belgian painter and printmaker James Ensor (1860–1949).¹³ Born in Ostend, Belgium, where he remained for most of his life, Ensor was drawn to Realist painting in the 1870s as a student at the Académie Royal des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. He began his studies at the Royal Academy in 1877 under the direction of Jean-François Portaels (1818–1895), and received prizes both for his paintings executed from nature and after the antique. In 1880, however, he left the academy to explore other interests that had been stimulated by his attendance at weekly salons in Brussels beginning in 1879. It was during this time that Ensor befriended the radical author and lawyer Eugène Demolder (1862–1919) and *Décadent* artist Félicien Rops (1833–1898); both profoundly influenced Ensor's artistic development in the ensuing decades.¹⁴ In 1882, Ensor joined L'Essor, an association of artists that was active in Brussels from 1876 to 1891 and comprised primarily of former students of the academy. Following the group's rejection of *The Oyster Eater* (1882) in 1883, however, Ensor broke with the group. Alongside other dissenting members, Ensor joined Octave Maus's new group, Les Vingt (Les XX), with whom he eventually broke ties in 1893.

A year after leaving Les XX, in a letter to the Flemish writer Pol de Mont (1857–1931), Ensor recalled how “after a thousand indecisions,” his “research into light prevailed and [he] abandoned the weighty and stale work of the Academy to follow his fantasy.”¹⁵ This suggests that, at least retrospectively, Ensor's decision to leave the academy was motivated by a desire to pursue an internal ideal: to divorce himself from the requirements and expectations of an institution in order to focus on the creation of works that captured his individual vision of reality. Although Ensor names the academy in his letter, it seems to additionally speak to his more recent break with Les XX, which marked Ensor's official retreat from the center of the artistic community and the apotheosis of his artistic individuality.

Over the course of the 1880s and 1890s, Ensor's work underwent a shift from representations of objective to subjective experiences. This transformation has often been cited as underpinning Ensor's turn from Realism to Symbolism in the 1880s.¹⁶ However, if we look more closely, what we find is less of a turn towards Symbolism and more of a movement towards *Décadence*. The line between Symbolism and *Décadence* is a fine one. Symbolist movement artists, like those in its *Décadent* subsection, were engaged with materialism, artifice, and an aesthetic exploration of internal experience. Yet, the leap from mere *symbolisme*

to *décadentisme* occurred when the expression of these themes transcended into disgust either by producing “disgusting” images or by attempting to induce disgust with a given social issue. Ensor’s transition into *décadence* is most clearly perceived through an examination of his self-portraits, wherein, like Ensor’s larger body of work, a noticeable transformation begins to occur around 1883. Whereas the self-portraits produced prior to his break with the Realists present the artist as the stylistic heir of Peter Paul Rubens (see for example, *Self-Portrait with a Flowered Hat*, 1883), those painted after 1884 converted the artist into the dead Christ who could not be resurrected (see for example, *Calvary*, 1886). Like the picture of Dorian Gray, the self-portrait of James Ensor seemingly decayed on behalf of its corporeal subject, becoming a proxy for the material world it was intended to reflect. It is perhaps better to associate Ensor, and his contemporaries, with Dorian Gray than with Des Esseintes. Whereas Huysmans’s Des Esseintes underwent a physical decay over the course of the novel, the portrait of Dorian Gray, as opposed to Dorian himself, deteriorated with time.

For many artists of the era—Maurice Denis, Paul Gauguin, Emile Bernard, Paul Sérusier—the decay of the canvas, which is to say the metaphorical reduction of forms and color, was captured through their rejection of naturalism and a return to the “primitive.”¹⁷ Conversely, Ensor’s decay was rather literal. Indeed, his self-portraits after 1885 frequently show him as a skeleton or corpse; however, it was not only the depiction of decay that came to characterize what I argue to be Ensor’s *décadentisme* during this period. The objects themselves were produced by processes of deterioration, or themselves seemed to rot like flesh. The surface of Ensor’s paintings seemed, too, to undergo a sort of putrefaction. E. M. Benson writes that “[Ensor] deliberately avoided sumptuous harmonies and color freshness. His surfaces grew crusty, hard, and cold. If by chance he used warm, rich colors he would attempt to negate their vibrancy by introducing gruesome objects or patches of raucous color.”¹⁸ It was also during this period that, as Julius Kaplan has noted, in 1886 Ensor first explored etching.¹⁹ Although lithography was the most popular print medium during the second half of the nineteenth century, it is perhaps no coincidence that Ensor turned to etching instead, given the medium’s particularly degenerative material properties. With this, he also dismissed engraving, which, like etching, requires that material be removed from the plate (or block) in order to produce the image; etching, however, closely mimics decaying flesh as acid eats away at the exposed metal surface.

Since *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was not published until 1890—well after Ensor’s stylistic shift—I do not wish to suggest that the publication of Wilde’s novel had any specific impact on Ensor’s artistic production or that his self-portraits directly influenced Wilde. Fittingly, in the words of Sir Henry in the novel:

You and I are what we are, and will be what we will be. As for being poisoned by a book, there is no such thing as that. Art has no influence upon action. It annihilates the desire to act. It is superbly sterile. The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame.²⁰

I would like to propose, however, the existence of what may be called a “Dorian Gray Effect” in Ensor’s works, particularly those produced in the years leading up to and immediately following his departure from Les XX. That is to say that the

canvas, as the reflection of reality, came to bear the scars of decadence while the world around him remained unmarred, naïve, and hedonistic. While the symbolic death of decadence ushered forth a period of intense reflection, spirituality and religiosity—an escape towards a purer life—for Huysmans, the physical death of the decadent in Wilde’s novel allowed the ideal beauty of the painting to be restored—resurrected—to its ideal, pure form. And, like Dorian, who needed to be destroyed in order to restore the ideal beauty of the canvas, the disease of decadence, too, needed to be eradicated in order to restore a sense of order to the world.

For James Ensor, the mystical quest was a futile one: in his opinion, the hope that one might attain a higher truth through this retreat from decadence was utterly ridiculous. This critique of the artist-martyr and artist-savior appears most palpably in the self-portraits Ensor produced during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Exhibiting himself as a beetle (*Peculiar Insects*, 1888), a madman relieving himself in the street (*The Pisser*, 1887), a skeleton (*The Skeleton Painter*, 1896), or a mask among masks (*Self-Portrait with Masks*, 1899), Ensor frequently engaged with and complicated the myth of the tortured artist.²¹ Although he did this seemingly to align himself with his mistreated and betrayed contemporaries, an examination of the dead and decaying Ensor-Christ demonstrates, rather, his “dernière bouffonerie” (last jest).²² A number of scholars, including Walther Vanbeselaere, Stephen C. McGough, Patricia Berman, and Susan M. Canning, have widely addressed issues of the living Ensor-Christ that appears triumphantly in the famed *The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889* (1888, J. Paul Getty Museum), while apparition of the heavenly Ensor-Christ that appears in *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (1887, Art Institute of Chicago) has been addressed extensively in the Art Institute of Chicago’s e-catalog, *James Ensor: The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (2015).²³ These publications, while critical to our understanding of Ensor’s oeuvre, only represent a fraction of his self-portraits as Christ. In focusing solely on the living or resurrected Ensor, they exclude a discussion of the more dominant theme of the dead and decaying artist. Over the course of this article, I will discuss the legacy of the Symbolist self-portrait as *imago Christi* and Ensor’s subsequent dismantling of the would-be cure for decadence through the manipulation of his own image as a satirical portrait of his contemporaries. Through this investigation into Ensor’s *décadentisme* and self-portraits as the dead Christ, I propose the existence of a Dorian Gray effect that allowed Ensor to demonstrate materially, as well as representationally, the folly of self-indulgence.

In his 1964 analysis of decadence in nineteenth-century France, Koenraad Swart noted that Paul Verlaine and his contemporaries “took a delight in mystifying the bourgeois public, and their ‘decadence’ was often no more than a literary pose. They called themselves ‘décadents’ largely to defy hostile critics who had branded their literary productions with that term.”²⁴ Likewise, others became tied to a decadent vision and adopted Huysmans’s myth of the decadent. This was particularly the case of Gustave Moreau (1826–1898), who had featured prominently in Huysmans’s novel as the pure artist “derived from no one,”²⁵ and whose works were quickly transformed, according to Peter Cooke, into “prisoners of Decadent literature.”²⁶ Though Moreau did not consider himself to be one of the

Décadents, he had become a mythic figure, and perhaps also a contemporary model, for what became the myth of the artist-monk.²⁷ Further, as Douglas W. Druick has shown, Moreau's "disenchantment" with reality after the collapse of the Second Empire led him towards "a contemplation of higher, more spiritual realities through the creation of visual situations that are more evocative than descriptive."²⁸ This turn towards mysticism and contemplation through the act of painting was an ideal that was likewise espoused by Josephin Péladan and the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose+Croix, as artists began to push back against decadence and look backwards, or à rebours, towards a Catholic model of being.

The idea that Catholicism was a solution to decadence and that the artist was the shepherd of a new era that would clear away the artifice of the modern world manifested itself in the work of Emile Bernard, Paul Gauguin, Maurice Denis, and other contemporary artists, particularly those associated with Péladan and the Rosicrucians. According to Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, "many Symbolist strategies may be understood as an attempt to resist the 'pagan' decadence of art, to renounce the material world, in a manner somewhat akin to the ascetic artist of the Middle Ages," and this manifested in the artist's emulation of the medieval painter-monk.²⁹ But more prominent than the painter-monk, however, was the painter-savior and his performance of martyrdom through portraiture.³⁰ Just as the early Christian martyr or medieval ascetic performed the suffering of Christ such that he would become an *imitatio Christi*, the artist performed the role of a social ascetic and martyr to a modern industrial, democratic, and materialistic society, while his portrait, the imitation of the artist, became the martyr to the artist as *alter Christus*. Although *Décadence* spurred the tendency towards mysticism in the art of the fin de siècle, not all Décadents became practicing Catholics, nor were all mystical artists former Décadents. Rather, mysticism and Catholicism existed as two sides of the same coin: both invested in unearthing a higher, natural and universal truth, one through self-indulgent luxury and sensory experience, the other through self-reflective meditation and spiritual transcendence through an aesthetic exegesis. Both the aesthete and the ascetic, however, propagated the myth of the artist in a self-elected exile.

In the introductory essay to the 2006 exhibition *Rebels and Martyrs: The Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century*, Michael Wilson describes the rise of the myth of the rebellious artist antihero, isolated and suffering in his own artistic genius, that began to gain ground in the Romantic era. Whereas artists prior to the nineteenth century often aspired to be seen as great gentleman (such as Velázquez, Rubens, Van Dyck, Sir Joshua Reynolds, etc.), the nineteenth-century artist was frequently tormented and exiled. In the Romantic era, the artist was "solitary not only by virtue of the focus on his inner life, but because he is neglected and rejected by the world."³¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, a number of artists began to reject the requirements of the artistic community (the academy, artist groups, critics, etc.), and their self-portraits became images of self-exile and sacrifice for their art rather than of banishment from society. Although certainly not an invention of the nineteenth century, the image of the artist as an oblate, a martyr, and Christ became a particularly ubiquitous leitmotif during the fin de siècle period as anarchist principles gained traction among Symbolist artists and writers for whom the individual—and his vision—came to occupy an increasingly central role.³²



Figure 1. Émile Bernard, *Autoportrait symbolique*, 1891. Oil on canvas; 81 x 60 cm (31.89 x 23.62 inches). Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Inv. [RF 2008 53](#). Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Emile Bernard (1868–1941) prefaced his “Les Primitifs et la Renaissance” with an epigraph taken from the Gospel of John. It reads: “Celui qui est Dieu entend les paroles de Dieu,” though the verse is most commonly translated into French as “Celui qui est de Dieu, écoute les paroles de Dieu.” Additionally, Bernard’s quotation has been removed from its original context; he includes only the first half of a longer verse that reads, in its entirety: “Celui qui est de Dieu, écoute les paroles de Dieu ; vous n’écoutez pas, parce que vous n’êtes pas de Dieu.”³³ Indeed, the original Latin text, “Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit,” makes it clear that the verse is meant to denote that which comes *from* God, rather than that which *is* God. Calmet’s 1729 translation and commentary on the Gospel of John, like Bernard’s epigraph, does not include the “de,” but is accompanied by the Latin.³⁴ Bernard’s citation, taken out of context, implies that *being* begets understanding, or that the one who attempts to *be* also attempts to understand. Bernard’s self-portrait, *Vision, Symbolic Portrait of Emile Bernard* (1891), shows the artist in the lower right corner, gazing over his shoulder and out of the picture, presumably where he envisions the scene that appears behind him (**Error! Reference source not found.**). His vision is an anonymous mass of nude figures that surrounds an apparition of Christ, who gazes out of the picture in the same direction as Bernard. Effectively, the composition suggests that the vision of Christ is the image of Bernard, just as the vision of Bernard is of the image of Christ. While to some extent Bernard conflates the image of himself with the image of Christ here, the act of “becoming Christ” is perhaps more obvious in Gauguin’s *Agony in the Garden* (1889) or Vincent van Gogh’s *Pietà after Delacroix* (1889), in which the artist becomes a part of the biblical narrative by masking his face onto the face of Christ, becoming, quite literally, the image of God.³⁵ It is important to note also that by the end of the nineteenth century the figure of Christ had become associated with a progressive socialist discourse. That is to say that Christ’s importance came to be seen in light of his ability to effect collective action rather than his divine power.³⁶

Among the artists to equate their own image with that of Christ, however, James Ensor emerges as one of the most prolific and yet most complex examples. Ensor had become Christ as early as 1884 when he produced a portrait mimicking Albrecht Dürer's *Self-Portrait* (1500) in which the artist depicted himself as the *salvator mundi*.³⁷ Two years later, in 1886, he produced *Calvary* in which he showed the crucified Christ pierced by the holy lance. Unlike traditional images of Christ, however, this Christ is pierced on the left side near the heart, and what we find is rather a mirror image of the biblical narrative. Further, if the physical resemblance of this Christ to Ensor is not immediately obvious, all doubts are removed by the artist's use of his own name—"ENSOR"—in capital letters over the cross in place of the expected "INRI." Finally, a banner around the lance, inscribed with "Fétis," identifies the art critic Edouard Fétis as the metaphorical spear that pierces the heart of the artist. Similarly, in *Ecce Homo (or Christ and his Critics)* of 1891, the artist is shown barechested, wearing the crown of thorns and a rope around his neck, the loose ends of which are held by the critic Max Sulzberger. On the left, Fétis appears again, this time with one hand on Ensor's shoulder and the other pointing menacingly towards the artist-Christ. Fétis and Sulzberger appear yet again in *The Dangerous Cooks* (1896), seated among other critics, some of whom vomit, at a table behind a red curtain. In the foreground, the Belgian writer and lawyer Edmond Picard (1836–1924) plays the role of the chef while Octave Maus (1856–1919) prepares to serve the critics their anticipated meal. Referring to the struggles within Les XX that ultimately led to Ensor's departure from the group, Maus and Picard serve the defenseless and decapitated artists to their critics. Ensor, whose head has been mounted on the body of a fish, appears to be the first course in this perverted last supper. Although the prominent position of Ensor's head on a platter has led some scholars to describe this work as a satirical twist on the beheading of John the Baptist, an allusion to the last supper seems more likely given the act of betrayal that governs the scene, and the Eucharistic connotations of the fish that would transform Ensor, yet again, into the dead Christ.³⁸

A year earlier, in 1895, Ensor had painted himself as the "Veronica." Whereas his contemporaries, notably Giovanni Segantini (1858–1899) in 1895 and Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918) in 1900,³⁹ had also adopted this visual language for their self-portraits, Ensor's *The Man of Sorrows* (1891, Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp) does not simply suffer; he rots away at the surface. Here, Christ's mouth is sliced at the corners into a grotesque and perpetual grin that turns the Savior more into *l'homme qui rit* than *l'homme des douleurs*. The blood that drips from his head and face seem almost to have been drawn directly from the once-solid red backdrop of this distorted icon, which dried in thick drips as it trickled down the painting's surface. Whereas *Calvary* and *Ecce Homo* make direct references to Ensor and his critics, *The Man of Sorrows* requires that the viewer come to understand the painting as a self-portrait for him or herself, rather than be told how to understand the work.

In fact, it would appear that Ensor knew that he no longer needed to make these clear statements. Instead, the association between the artist and suffering Christ had become so understandable that the image of the artist had itself become a symbol of the tormented Savior, and that the image of Christ had likewise become a proxy for Ensor himself. Two prints produced in 1895, *Christ Tormented by Demons* and *Demons Tormenting Me* (examples in the collection of the Art

Institute of Chicago), demonstrate Ensor's playful reaction to this idea. Compositionally dissimilar, the first shows the crucified Christ, again with the face of Ensor, surrounded by horned creatures and skeletons. One of these figures holds up his head while another climbs up the cross, grabbing at the Savior's waist. In the lower left corner, what appears to be a gravestone has been inscribed "JAMES / ENSOR / 1895." Similarly, *Demons Tormenting Me* shows the artist standing before a tomb monument upon which he has signed and dated the print "J Ensor / 1895." Aside from the theme and repeated epitaph, the mirrored syntax of titles leaves little doubt that the two works are intended as pendants.⁴⁰



Figure 2. James Ensor, *Hop-Frog's Revenge*, 1898. Etching with drypoint on copper in black with hand-coloring on cream wove (simili-Japan) paper; 350 x 242 mm (image), 359 x 250 mm (plate), 401 x 285 mm (sheet). John H. Wrenn Memorial Collection, 1947.683. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Photo courtesy The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SABAM, Brussels.

But, more importantly than continuing to propagate the idea of the Ensor-Christ, this pair is indicative of the fact that the image of Ensor was not only the image of Christ, but rather specifically the image of the failed Savior. In this inverted narrative, Jesus does not rise, but instead descends into hell, where he decays continuously alongside mankind. In a discussion of three Ensor self-portraits as skeletons, Susan J. Navarette argues against past penchants for seeing the skeleton-artist as an anticipation of future events and as figuring into the *memento mori* tradition. She proposes that—since some of these works were made after photographs—the self-portraits were not intended to predict the future, but rather display the present state of the artist. In her words, Ensor was thus “an undead but ever-dying character.”⁴¹ If we consider the portrait of Ensor as having become the portrait of Christ, then the contemporaneity of the undead but ever-dying Christ is likewise present in Ensor's self-portraits. Bearing all of this in mind, I would like to move on to a discussion of Ensor's two versions *Hop-Frog's Revenge*: the first, a

painting from 1896 (currently in the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands), and the second, an etching from 1898 ([**Error! Reference source not found.**]). Although *Hop-Frog's Revenge* is not explicitly religious, an analysis of Ensor's narrative and compositional choices in each of these works reveals yet another of his inverted testaments.

Edgar Allan Poe's (1809–1849) short story "Hop-Frog" (originally "Hop-Frog; Or, the Eight Chained Ourangoutangs") was initially published in the Boston-based weekly literary journal *The Flag of Our Union* in 1849. It tells the story of two dwarfs, Hop-Frog and Trippetta, who are taken away from their homeland to be made a jester and dancer, respectively, in the king's court. One evening, the king and his seven "large, corpulent, oily" advisors force Hop-Frog to become intoxicated.⁴² When Trippetta tries to defend him, the king shoves her and throws a goblet of wine at her face, angering Hop-Frog. Seeking revenge, Hop-Frog convinces the king and his counselors to enact a game that he calls "the Eight Chained Ourang-Outangs" for the coming masquerade:

"I will equip you as ourang-outangs," proceeded the dwarf; "leave all that to me. The resemblance shall be so striking, that the company of masqueraders will take you for real beasts—and of course, they will be as much terrified as astonished."⁴³

Hop-Frog explains that the object of the game is to pretend that they have escaped their master while still chained together. He instructs that the doors be locked, and the keys be left with him so that the masqueraders could not escape the "ferocious-looking creatures."⁴⁴ When their chain catches on the chandelier hook and the eight are lofted towards the ceiling (all, of course, according to Hop-Frog's plan), they foolishly continue to take the situation in jest. Bringing a torch close to the faces of the eight "ourang-outangs," Hop-Frog examines his victims before taking the flame to their flaxen coats and setting them ablaze. As he climbs up the chain, he pauses to address the masqueraders below:

"I now see *distinctly*," he said, "what manner of people these maskers are. They are a great king and his seven privy-councillors,—a king who does not scruple to strike a defenseless girl and his seven councillors who abet him in the outrage. As for myself, I am simply Hop-Frog, the jester—and *this is my last jest*."⁴⁵

Hop-Frog continues to climb up the chain to the ceiling, eventually disappearing through the skylight, but not before hurling his torch at the eight corpses, "a fetid, blackened, hideous, and indistinguishable mass," and assumedly also setting fire to the masqueraders below.⁴⁶

Poe's "Hop-Frog" was translated into French by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) and published in *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires* in 1884; twelve years later, in 1896, Ensor completed his translation of the story into painted form, though he was thinking about the scene as early as 1891. In April of that year, he wrote to the writer Valère Gille (1867–1950) contemplating which lines from Baudelaire's translation might be the best to illustrate:

Unfortunately there is nothing beautiful to quote in this part of Poe's tale. Perhaps this: "La foule retomba, pour un instant encore, dans le silence" or "L'œuvre de vengeance était accomplie. Les huit cadavres se balançaient sur leurs chaînes, – masse confuse, fétide, fuligineuse, hideuse." Or better: "Ceci est ma dernière bouffonnerie."⁴⁷

The climatic end of the story has been reproduced in both versions of Ensor's *Hop-Frog's Revenge*, the painting and the etching. The title character, hanging from the chain by one arm and holding his torch above the crowd with the other, hovers over the burning mass of corpses as the shocked masqueraders look on in silence. The second version, however, differs slightly from the first. One of the figures in the crowd, back turned on the viewer, now wears a sash inscribed "ENSOR," and one of the corpses seems to have slipped from the burning mass and begun to cool on the floor of the ballroom. While both versions illustrate the first two lines that Ensor referred to his letter to Gille, the second more clearly integrates the "better" line: "this is my final jest." And in the same way that Ensor perverted the last supper in *The Dangerous Cooks*, he seems to have turned the *dernière jugement* (last judgement) into his own *dernière bouffonnerie*. But who is the judge in this scene? Is it Hop-Frog, who, in holding his torch to the faces of the "ourang-outangs," sees their true characters? Is it the artist, who, like Basil Hallward in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, holds the light to the canvas to examine the "foulness and horror" of the portrait that seems to have come from within?⁴⁸ The man in the top hat who masquerades as Ensor in this second version serves to distract the viewer, at least momentarily, from identifying the "real" Ensor, who can be found hanging off of the burning mass and addressing the spectators below. Compositionally analogous to archetypal representations of the last judgment—namely, the obvious example of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (1536–1541) as well as Jean Cousin the Younger's *Last Judgment* of 1585—the redeemer hovers in judgment over the crowds of reprobates that occupy the lower registers of the scene (**Error! Reference source not found.**). In Ensor's last judgment, Hop-Frog, surrounded by smoke billowing from the flaming mass rather than heavenly clouds and illuminated by the light that streams in from the ceiling on the left, becomes yet another Ensor, yet another Christ.

The difference, however, between Ensor and other artists who also consciously used their likeness with Christ or inserted themselves into scenes recalling biblical narratives, often casting themselves as the "rejected savior,"⁴⁹ is that Ensor gave the viewer a satirical twist. Rather than choosing to sit idly by as the public continued to consume his image as that of Christ, Ensor drew specific attention to the fact that his face had become the face of the Christ—that he had become an *alter Christus*. This may be seen in the relationship that Ensor established in 1895 between *Demons Tormenting Me* with *Christ Tormented by Demons*, but it also appeared earlier.



Figure 3. Jean the Younger Cousin, *Last Judgment*, 1585. Oil on canvas; 145 x 142 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Inv. 3445. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

In 1888, Ensor produced a comical etching entitled *My Portrait in 1960* (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Rather than immortalizing the artist, in this work Ensor has been completely decomposed. Laid out on a bed and propped up on a cushion, Ensor's flesh has completely rotted away, leaving behind only his dry skeleton, partially concealed by a sheet, and the brittle, lifeless hair that has yet to fall away from his skull. *My Portrait in 1960* recalls the *doodsbedportret* tradition that had been popular since the seventeenth century, and that Ensor himself had utilized in portraits of his father in 1887 and mother in 1915. In contrast to these commemorative deathbed scenes that implied a temporary state of death, however, *My Portrait in 1960* presents a harsh material reality of death without the possibility of resurrection. Moreover, this scene undoubtedly also harkens back to images of Christ's entombment. To name just one example, Brabançon-born painter Philippe de Champaigne's *Dead Christ* (ca. 1654), now in the collection of the Musée du Louvre, shows the body of the Savior laid out in the tomb with the crown of thorns resting at his side (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Compositionally identical to the Ensor self-portrait—although the crown of thorns has been replaced by a spider in Ensor's entombment—the juxtaposition between the dead Christ who will rise that we find in the Champaigne example and the remains of the Christ who cannot and will not rise that appears in Ensor's prophetic self-portrait makes a satirical statement on the inevitable decay and failure of the

nineteenth-century artist-Christ. A comparable use of this composition in Ensor's oeuvre can be found in his *Christ Watched Over by Angels* (1886), a small drawing currently held in a Belgian private collection, where Ensor's signature in the lower right corner seems almost to flow into the crown of thorns at the side of Christ. *My Portrait in 1960*, produced two years after *Christ Watched Over by Angels*, can be seen as the sequel to this work, showing that even the body of the artist-Christ decomposes with time.



Figure 4 James Ensor, *My Portrait in 1960*, 1888. Etching on copper in black with plate tone on cream wove paper; 63 x 113 mm (image), 70 x 119 mm (plate), 160 x 251 mm (sheet). Charles Deering Collection Fund, 1968.181. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Photo courtesy The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SABAM, Brussels.



Figure 5. Philippe de Champaigne, *The Dead Christ*, Before 1654. Oil on canvas; 68 x 197 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Inv. 1128. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Robert Hoozee writes in an essay for the 2001 exhibition *Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor* that satire dominates the artist's oeuvre to the extent that "only a minor shift of accent is required to transform the restrained satirical aspect of, for example, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* or *Satan and His Fantastic Legions Torment the Crucified* into brutal mockery."⁵⁰ So to what extent might we consider that Ensor, in continually revisiting the Ensor-Christ in the 1880s and 1890s, was mocking his fellow artists, the so-called "peintres de l'âme," who

sought out mystical expression as the cure to the era of decadence and who resurrected the image of the artist, like the picture of Dorian Gray, through the symbolic death of the *décadent*? In depicting themselves as martyrs and Christs, the Symbolists created an image of self-sacrifice over self-indulgence. Ensor's brand of *décadent* self-portraiture, however, poked fun at this tendency by sardonically being a part of it.

In "Réflexions sur l'art" (1882) Ensor writes that there are three levels, three visions, that are present in the work of art:

The first vision, the vulgar, is the simple, dry line, without research of color. In the second period, the more practiced eye discerns the values of tone and their delicacies; that one is already less understood by that which is vulgar. In the last, the artist sees the subtleties and the multiple plays of light, its reliefs, and its gravitations.⁵¹

Likewise, Ensor's self-portraits reflect three distinct visions. The first, the vulgar, is what the eye immediately sees: the unprocessed and unsynthesized organization of line and color. The second is that in which the trained viewer comes to see these images as both self-portraits and images of Christ. During this second vision, we also begin to discern the artist's satirical tone. We see the references to his critics, and come to see Ensor critiquing those who, in their rejection of his art, transform him into a martyr. The self-portraits begin to reflect the same sensibilities of Ensor's contemporaries, and advance the myth of the rejected artist-Christ. It is in the third vision, however, that we find Ensor observing the true character of the Symbolist artist, holding his torch to the portrait and illuminating the true character of his contemporaries and his era.

Ensor's self-portraits present him as the artist-Christ, rejected and martyred by critics as well as society. But they were also mordant portraits of his contemporaries who, in seeking a higher truth by raising themselves to the level of Christ, would inevitably fall. This was Ensor's last jest, his last judgment. While the Symbolists had painted themselves as a cure to the disease of decadence, Ensor showed us that the "cure" was just as flawed as the disease. His evaluation of his contemporaries, through what I have termed the Dorian Gray effect, was not merely critical. Rather, Ensor's disgust with the artistic community of the 1880s and 1890s revealed itself through the use of his own decayed image as a didactic tool with which to shed light on the artifice that surrounded the myth of the artist martyr.

Author's acknowledgements

I would like to thank those in the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University for their support in developing this article, in particular Neil McWilliam for his invaluable guidance throughout the research and writing process, Fiene Leunissen for her thoughtful comments on numerous drafts of the present work, and Patricia Bray for her suggestions on this subject. Comments by an anonymous reviewer also greatly helped to improve an earlier version of this manuscript.

Kaylee P. Alexander received a B.A. in Art History from New York University in 2013, and an M.A. in the History of Art and Architecture from the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU in 2015. She is currently a Ph.D. student in the Department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies at Duke University, where her research focuses primarily on nineteenth-century French visual and material culture. Under the supervision of Professor Neil McWilliam, Kaylee is currently conducting research for her dissertation, tentatively titled “Sépultures (non)remarquables: The Production of Parisian Funerary Monuments, 1804–1870.”

NOTES

¹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003), 129.

² Wilde, 128–29. Other editions of the text use the word “Décadents” instead of “Symbolistes.”

³ Wilde, 130.

⁴ Karl-Joris Huysmans, *À Rebours* (1884), 7, <http://www.feedbooks.com/book/1239/rebours>. The quote continues: “que le monde est, en majeure partie, composé de sacripants et d'imbéciles.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

⁵ For the purposes of this article, the author has chosen to distinguish ‘decadence’ as moral decline from ‘decadence’ as an artistic and literary characteristic by using the English (decadent, decadence) and the French (décadent, décadence, décadentisme), respectively.

⁶ For more on Baju, Verlaine and the establishment of the Décadent Movement, see, for example, Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987); Philip Stephan, *Paul Verlaine and the Decadence, 1882–90* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1974); and David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

⁷ “La littérature décadente se propose de refléter l’image de ce monde spleenétique.” Anatole Baju, *L’École décadente* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1887), 10.

⁸ Baju writes: “Notre époque n’est point malade ; elle est fatiguée, elle est écoeurée surtout” (Our era is not sick; it is tired, it is especially disgusted). Baju, *L’École décadente*, 7.

⁹ “Ne pas dépeindre, faire sentir ; donner au cœur la sensation des choses, soit par des constructions neuves, soit par des symboles évoquant l’idée avec plus d’intensité par la comparaison. Synthétiser la matière, mais analyser le cœur.” Baju, *L’École décadente*, 10.

¹⁰ The origin of the word “decadence,” from the French “décadence,” dates to the mid-sixteenth century, from medieval Latin *decadentia*, and is related to the word “decay” in modern English. The word “decay” appears in Late Middle English and originates from the Old French “decair,” based on the Latin *decidere*, meaning to “fall down or off,” from de- “from” + cadere – “to fall.” See “decadence, n.,” OED Online, June 2017, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/47973?redirectedFrom=decadence> (accessed October 27, 2017); “decay, v.,” OED Online, June 2017, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/48068?rskey=bTay8N&result=2> (accessed October 27, 2017).

¹¹ “Ah ! le courage me fait défaut et le cœur me lève ! - Seigneur, prenez pitié du chrétien qui doute, de l’incrédule qui voudrait croire, du forçat de la vie qui s’embarque seul, dans la nuit, sous un firmament que n’éclairent plus les consolants fanaux du vieil espoir !” Huysmans, 187.

¹² See Wojciech Bałus, “La Cathédral of Joris-Karl Huysmans and the Symbolical Interpretation of the Gothic Cathedral in the 19th Century,” *Artibus et Historiae* 29, no. 57 (2008): 165–182.

¹³ Previously published literature on Ensor has not widely recognized him as a Decadent painter. However, some scholars have likened his life experiences to those of Des Esseintes and J.K. Huysmans. For more on this, see Stephen F. Eisenman, “Allegory and Anarchism in James Ensor’s Apparition: Vision Preceding Futurism,” *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 46, no. 1 (1987): 2–7; E. M. Benson, “James Ensor,” *Parnassus* 6, no. 2 (1934): 1–3; and Diane Lesko, “James Ensor and Symbolist Literature,” *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (1985): 99–104.

¹⁴ A number of scholars have alluded to the impact of Félicien Rops's career on the work of James Ensor after 1879. Most notably Diane Lesko pointed to the influence Rops's journal, *Uylenspiegel* (1856–1863), which published Léo Lespès's story "Ce qui dissent les meubles" in 1863 and may have inspired Ensor's 1885 painting, *Haunted Furniture*. Most recently, the exhibition *Des Vices et vertus en art: Rops/Ensor* at the Musée Félicien Rops in Namur, Belgium, which ran from February to May 2017, addressed the professional networks and artistic developments of both artists.

¹⁵ "Après mille indécisions ... mes recherches vers la lumière l'emportèrent et j'abandonnai le travail pondéré et rassis de l'Académie pour suivre ma fantaisie." James Ensor, letter to Pol de Mont, 1894/95, published in *James Ensor: Lettres*, ed. Xavier Tricot (Brussels: Editions Labor et Archives et Musée de la Littérature, 1999), 123.

¹⁶ According to Susan Canning, for example, "Ensor discovered in the material world of things and the private spaces of the interior both an expressive agency and a social role for his subjectivity.... Eventually light becomes the means for Ensor to describe both the physical world as the embodiment of feeling and emotion, and the inner world of private experience, paralleling what contemporary scientists were discovering in their investigations into perception and vision." Susan M. Canning, "James Ensor: Carnival of the Modern" in *James Ensor* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 33–34.

¹⁷ By the term "primitive," I am referring to the distortion of space through flattening and planes of unmodulated color, or a looking back towards the art of the Medieval and early Renaissance periods as a model.

¹⁸ Benson, 3.

¹⁹ Julius Kaplan, "The Religious Subjects of James Ensor, 1877–1900," *Revue Belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Oudheidkunde en Kunstgeschiedenis* 35, no. 3 (1966): 186.

²⁰ Wilde, 224.

²¹ For more on Ensor as tortured artist, see Benson, 1–3; Susan M. Canning, "The Ordure of Anarchy: Scatological Signs of Self and Society in the Art of James Ensor," *Art Journal* 52, no. 3 (1993): 47–53; and Laurence Madeline, "Ensor Is Eternal: The Painter and His Image" in *James Ensor* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 114–117.

²² This terminology is drawn from Charles Baudelaire's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "Hop-Frog," which Ensor quotes in a letter to Valère Gille on April 27, 1891. See James Ensor, letter to Valère-Gille, April 27, 1891, published in *James Ensor: Lettres*, ed. Xavier Tricot (Brussels: Editions Labor et Archives et Musée de la Littérature, 1999), 427.

²³ For more on Ensor's *Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889* (1888), see Walther Vanbeselaere, *L'Entrée du Christ à Bruxelles* (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1957); Stephen C. McGough, *James Ensor's "The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889"* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985); Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2002); and Susan M. Canning, "James Ensor: Carnival of the Modern," 28–43. For more on Ensor's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (1887), see *James Ensor: The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2014). For additional discussions of Ensor's religious subjects, see Stefan Jonsson, "Society Degree Zero: Christ, Communism, and the Madness of Crowds in the Art of James Ensor," *Representations* 75, no. 1 (2001): 1–32; Julius Kaplan, "The Religious Subjects of James Ensor, 1877–1900," *Revue Belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Oudheidkunde en Kunstgeschiedenis* 35, no. 3 (1966): 175–207; Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "Les Auréoles du Christ ou les sensibilités de la lumière de James Ensor," *Bulletin des Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 17 (1968): 191–202; and Susan M. Canning, "Visionary Politics: The Social Subtext of James Ensor's Religious Imagery," in *James Ensor, 1860–1949, Theatre of Masks*, ed. Carol Brown (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1997), 58–69.

²⁴ Koenraad Swart, "Fin de Siècle, 1877–1905" in *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 165.

²⁵ The original reads: "ne dérivait de personne." Huysmans, 51.

²⁶ Peter Cooke, "Symbolism, Decadence and Gustave Moreau," *Burlington Magazine* 151, no. 1274 (2009): 314.

²⁷ Peter Cooke cites Huysmans's 1880 review of the Salon where he characterizes Moreau as "a mystic locked away, in the middle of Paris, in a cell which the noise of contemporary life no longer penetrates." Cooke, 313.

²⁸ Douglas W. Druick, "Moreau's Symbolist Ideal" in *Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), 35.

²⁹ Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, "Packaging the Primitifs" in *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate: 2003), 42.

³⁰ For more on the myth of the artist-martyr and its position in the art market at the end of the nineteenth century, see Robert Jensen, "Selling Martyrdom," *Art in America* 4, no. 80 (1992): 139–144.

³¹ Michael Wilson, "Rebels and Martyrs" in *Rebels and Martyrs: The Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century* (London: National Gallery Company Limited, 2006), 15.

³² For more on anarchism and the Symbolist Movement, see Stephen F. Eisenman, "Allegory and Anarchism in James Ensor's Apparition: Vision Preceding Futurism," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 46, no. 1 (1987): 2–7; Canning, "The Ordure of Anarchy," 47–53; Erin M. Williams, "Signs of Anarchy: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Symbolist Critic at the Mercure de France, 1890–95," *French Forum* 29, no. 1 (2004): 45–68; Richard Shryock, "Anarchism at the Dawn of the Symbolist Movement," *French Forum* 25, no. 3 (2000): 291–307; and *Doctrinal Nourishment: Art and Anarchism in the Time of James Ensor* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009).

³³ John 8:47 (Louis Segond translation originally published in 1880).

³⁴ R. P. D. Augustin Calmet, *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'ancien et du nouveau testament. L'évangile de S. Jean* (Paris: Quai des Augustins, 1729), 270.

³⁵ Bernard discusses this painting, along with other projections of himself, as Christ in a letter to his mother dated June 1894. See *Émile Bernard: les lettres d'un artiste (1884–1941)*, ed. Neil McWilliam (Dijon, France: Les Presses du réel, 2012), 308.

³⁶ This change was due in part to what Susan M. Canning has referred to as scientific studies of the Bible that were conducted during this period, namely those of David Friedrichs Strauss (*Vie de Jésus, ou examen critique de son histoire*, translated by Emile Littré from the German in 1853) and Ernest Renon (*Vie de Jésus*, 1863). For more on the social role of Christ and Ensor's social engagement, see Susan M. Canning, "Visionary Politics," 58–69.

³⁷ Madeline, 114.

³⁸ For discussions of *Dangerous Cooks* as relating to the John the Baptist narrative, see Claire Moran, *Staging the Artist: Performance and the Self-Portrait from Realism to Expressionism* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Leslie Curtis, "From Appearance to Apparition and Reflection: Symbolist Constructions of Salome, John the Baptist, and the Spectator's Severed Head," in *Symbolism, Its Origins and Its Consequences*, ed. Rosina Neginsky (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 209–250; and Susan M. Canning, "James Ensor: Carnival of the Modern," 28–43.

³⁹ See *Rebels and Martyrs: The Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century* (London: National Gallery Company Limited, 2006), 157–159.

⁴⁰ In French, "Le Christ tourmenté par les démons" and "Démons me turlupinant," respectively.

⁴¹ Susan J. Navarette, *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 18–19.

⁴² Edgar Allan Poe, "Hop-Frog" (1850) in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2015), 772.

⁴³ Poe, 776.

⁴⁴ Poe, 777.

⁴⁵ Poe, 779. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁶ Poe, 779.

⁴⁷ "Malheureusement rien n'est beau à citer dans cette partie du conte de Poe. Peut-être ceci : 'La foule retomba, pour un instant encore, dans le silence' ou 'L'œuvre de vengeance était accomplie."

Les huit cadavres se balançaient sur leurs chaînes, – masse confuse, fétide, fuligineuse, hideuse.’
Ou mieux : ‘Ceci est ma dernière bouffonnerie.’” James Ensor, letter to Valère-Gille, April 27, 1891,
published in *James Ensor: Lettres*, ed. Xavier Tricot (Brussels: Editions Labor et Archives et Musée
de la Littérature, 1999), 427.

⁴⁸ Wilde, 161.

⁴⁹ Wilson, 24.

⁵⁰ Robert Hoozee, “Drawings and Etchings” in *Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (New York: Drawing Center, 2001), 27.

⁵¹ “La première vision, celle du vulgaire, c’est la ligne simple, sèche, sans recherche de couleur. La seconde période, c’est celle où l’œil plus exercé discerne les valeurs des tons et leurs délicatesses ; celle-ci est déjà moins comprise du vulgaire. La dernière est celle où l’artiste voit les subtilités et les jeux multiples de la lumière, ses plans, ses gravitations.” James Ensor, “Reflexion sur l’art” in *Mes Ecrits* (Liège, Belgium: Editions Nationales, 1974), 50.