

Photographing *la Parisienne*: Some Motifs in Baudouin

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“Qui pourrait bien peindre la Parisienne? Son grand art est de ne jamais se ressembler à elle-même. Aujourd’hui, ce n’est plus la même femme; demain, nouvelle métamorphose. Elle surprend par l’imprévu”

– Arsène Houssaye, *Les Parisiennes*¹

In 2006 French photographer Baudouin embarked on an exploration of the “icon of elegance and *savoir-vivre*,”² *la Parisienne*. His book, *75 Parisiennes*, published in October 2013 and accompanied by an exhibition at the Clémentine de la Féronnière gallery in Paris, consists of 75 portraits of Parisian women selected from 8750 photographs taken over 250 shoots.³ Baudouin’s book is interesting in terms of the treatment of the Parisienne type because it puts into play various pre-existing themes or motifs, revealing the vitality and currency of *la Parisienne*, a type or figure ubiquitous in the art and letters of nineteenth century France. In his book, Baudouin sets out to depict modern-day Parisiennes in contemporary interior settings. In doing so, he both reinvents and reinforces the Parisienne type, which has undergone several transformations since it came to prominence in nineteenth-century French culture. The depth of Baudouin’s work is found, in part, in this cultural history.

This article looks at the type *la Parisienne* in a selection of Baudouin’s

portraits. It examines how Baudouin draws on an already existing iconography of la Parisienne, both intentionally and unintentionally, in composing his photographs, focusing on the repetition of familiar or recognisable motifs such as the Eiffel Tower, the little black dress, the feather boa, the *chevelure*, the fashion journal and the cat. The iconography of *la Parisienne* Baudouin draws on is largely informed by nineteenth century visual and literary representations of the type.

The term “type” is taken from Erwin Panofsky, who first developed his theory of iconography in relation to Renaissance art and later applied it to silent cinema.⁴ Panofsky proposed a model for the analysis of Renaissance painting based firstly on the identification and description of motifs, the “world of pure *forms* thus recognized as carriers of *primary* or *natural meanings* may be called the world of artistic motifs,”⁵ and secondly on the identification and description of the images: motifs “thus recognized as carriers of a *secondary* or *conventional* meaning may be called *images*.”⁶ In theory, iconography can be applied to any visual medium, and one main aspect photography shares with both painting and cinema is the idea of composition or *mise en scène*. I am interested primarily in the way Baudouin composes his photographs and the visual signifiers he selects to construct his Parisienne iconography, an iconography which is both fixed and fluid. As Sarah Berry-Flint remarks, an iconography consists of “a palette of familiar motifs that can be recombined creatively (or ironically) in ways that provide both familiarity and variety.”⁷ A further feature of iconography is that it can work both consciously and unconsciously. As Jean-Loup Bourget has remarked, iconographical analysis endeavours to locate the images and allegories which frequently come straight from the history of painting; however, for Bourget, nothing assures that the reference to a particular painting is “complètement intentionnelle” [completely intentional];⁸ elsewhere, however, “la référence est manifestement voulue” [the reference is manifestly intentional].⁹ Baudouin himself has admitted in an interview that his visual references are often unintentional:

Toutes mes photos sont complètement improvisées. Je m’inspire inconsciemment de toute la culture visuelle que je connais: des références cinématographiques, photographiques et aussi l’univers iconographique de la musique. Je n’ai pas de références précises. . . . C’est un pêle-mêle!

[All of my photos are completely improvised. I am unconsciously inspired by all visual culture that I know: cinematographic, photographic references and also the iconographic universe of music. I do not have precise references. . . . It is pell-mell!].¹⁰

What matters, then, for Baudouin, is not the intention, but rather the fulfilment of the Parisienne iconography in his work, and the way certain motifs and allegories developed in the nineteenth century continue to assert themselves on present-day representations. This does not mean that Baudouin's photographs capture Parisiennes in their apartments in fly-on-the-wall-styled documentary. Clearly these photographs demonstrate a high level of conscious construction. What is of note in their construction, however, is that Baudouin uses as his props only what is available in the space he is photographing.¹¹ He brings nothing to the scene but his latent knowledge of what constitutes the Parisienne type which, interestingly enough, is already established in the women and spaces his works depict. Everything there is to hand, however Baudouin arranges the objects and the space more deliberately than the women themselves, bringing the type rather than the individual into the foreground. This gesture links these women and their spaces to that greater cultural history, revealing the subtle dialectic at work in the ongoing representations of *la Parisienne*, between individual and type, and between pre-established and the new.

Before discussing Baudouin's work further, and before moving on to focus on some motifs in particular photographs, it is necessary to offer a preliminary definition of *la Parisienne* and briefly outline how she became a type in painting, literature, and later photography and cinema.¹² The term *la Parisienne* denotes far more than simply a female inhabitant of Paris. I define *la Parisienne* as a figure of French modernity, and this can be taken in two senses. First, in terms of the technical process of the modernisation of Paris and its transformation into the capital of the modern world: this includes the reconstruction of Paris by Georges-Eugène Haussmann and the widening of the boulevards, the extensive use of iron and glass in the construction of the arcades, the expansion of the railway system, the revolution in printing technology which saw the proliferation of illustrated journals, the rise of the department store, the new system of capitalism and consumer culture, and increased leisure activity amongst the city's inhabitants.¹³ These technical considerations culminated in an increased visibility and mobility in the modern city. As Debra Mancoff remarks: "The newly revitalized city gave rise to a new culture. Life became more public."¹⁴

Secondly, *la Parisienne* is a figure of French modernity in that she became a feature of the visual arts, literature, physiognomies and popular culture of nineteenth-century France. She appears in the novels of Honoré de Balzac and Emile Zola, in the short stories of Guy de Maupassant, in Henri Becque's 1885 play *La Parisienne* and in the poems of Charles Baudelaire. She has been the subject of many studies and physiologies, including Taxile Delord's *Physiologie de la Parisienne* (1851), Théodore de Banville's

Les parisiennes de Paris (1866), Paul Perret's *Physiognimies parisiennes* (1868), Arsène Houssaye's *Les Parisiennes* (1869), Georges Montorgueil's *La Parisienne* (1897), and Octave Uzanne's *The Modern Parisienne* (1912). Perhaps more importantly in regards to Baudouin's work there have been numerous paintings, lithographs, etchings and pastels of Parisienne women.¹⁵ James Tissot, Berthe Morisot, Alfred Stevens, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul-Cesar Helleu, Mary Cassat, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, amongst others, all sought to capture the type in their work. Marie Simon remarks how during the mid to late nineteenth century painters, "[a]s if spellbound by the idealization of the contemporary woman . . . sought to capture the essence of this ideal in portraits of the *Parisienne*."¹⁶ Some artists explicitly titled their studies *la Parisienne* or included the descriptor "Parisienne" in the title: Felicien Rops' *Type Parisien* (1867); Alfred Stevens' *La Parisienne Japonaise* (1872) and *La Parisienne* (1880); Albert Besnard's *La Parisienne* (1885); Rodolphe Piquet's *La Parisienne* (1885); Henri Boutet's *Parisienne* (c.1885); Jean Béraud's *Parisienne, place de la Concorde* (c.1890); and Paul-César Helleu's *La Parisienne* (c.1900). As Simon remarks: "These portraits of parisiennes show the individual being replaced by the abstract. Artists no longer painted a woman but a human type, a quality."¹⁷

The concept of devoting an entire body of work to *la Parisienne* is by no means a new one, and Baudouin's project has its precursors in art and literature. The most interesting of these in terms of Baudouin's work is perhaps James Tissot's series of paintings known as *La Femme à Paris*. Comprising of fifteen large canvases, Tissot's *La Femme à Paris* was first exhibited in Paris in 1885 and then in London the following year under the title *Pictures of Parisian Life*. Tissot considered that each of the paintings contained a short story and planned to have fifteen prominent French authors each pen a short story based on a painting from the series. Zola, having established himself as an authority on women and department stores following the publication of *Au Bonheur des dames* was to write the story accompanying the painting entitled *The Shop Girl*. The stories were to be published alongside a series of etchings based on the paintings; however the project never came to fruition.¹⁸ Jean-Baptiste Gendarme sees Baudouin's Parisienne portraits in a similar way: "Each portrait is a short story."¹⁹ Indeed, Tamar Garb has remarked that the Parisienne was herself "so suggestive a spur to narrative and so much the product of narrative structures that her figure alone could function as a distilled story."²⁰

In each of Tissot's paintings *la Parisienne* is depicted in a public space, whether a formal gathering, a shop or a circus. These public settings link the type with the modern city and the nineteenth century penchant

for *exposition* and confirm her intimate connection to Paris and the urbanity of the type.²¹ Tissot's *L'Ambitieuse*, a painting described by Tamar Garb as "representative of the type Parisienne"²² shows a fashionable lady adorned in a resplendent rose-coloured froth of frills, flounces and ostrich feathers, attending a public function on the arm of a diplomat. The figure of the Parisienne, occupying the centre of the canvas, is surrounded by a sea of people, each person inclining their head in the hope of glimpsing the couple. This crowd is the audience for the Parisienne before which she exhibits herself.²³ These paintings capture something of the spectacle of modern life and the public spaces created in Paris which provided a stage for *la Parisienne* to display the art of her toilette.

Tissot sought to capture women in the public sphere because, according to Nancy Rose Marshall, it was in "the new urban spaces in which the concept of the *Parisienne* was formed."²⁴ These new urban spaces were made possible as aforementioned, in part, by Haussmann's redevelopment of Paris:

Taking Parisian women as his topic was like taking Paris itself, since they personified the city—its variety, spectacle, entertainment, allure and beauty. To endow his pictures with still more authenticity, the artist located his *Parisiennes* in various recognizable spaces, including the Bois de Boulogne, the Louvre, Versailles, and the Hippodrome.²⁵

A notable difference between Tissot and Baudouin is that whereas Tissot's Parisiennes appear in the public sphere, Baudouin shoots his subjects exclusively in the privacy of their own apartments. While *la Parisienne* is closely linked to the city of Paris and its public spaces, she is also intimately connected to her interior, spaces in which she appears as *sui generis* or self-fashioning. However, the depiction of a Parisienne inside her apartment was also a popular subject in late nineteenth-century art; and indeed, the interior spaces of the Parisienne were considered a vital component of her art and beauty and an extension of her toilette. In *The Modern Parisienne* Louis Octave Uzanne remarks:

It must be added that they [Parisiennes] are very clever and that their success in the art of dressing themselves requires something akin to the art of a painter in choosing a colour, or a writer in the mysterious harmony of a phrase. Even when they remain shut up in their homes, they decorate the walls with attractive colours, and their rooms are filled with all kinds of charming objects.²⁶

There are several paintings which depict Parisiennes amidst the opulent

furnishings of their interiors. Auguste Toulmouche's *Young Woman in an Interior* (1881) features an elegant woman inside her apartment. In this painting the figure is depicted against a decorative screen, a large vase of flowers occupies the bottom left of the canvas, and in the background we see a small table dressed with red velvet upon which sits a smaller vase of flowers and an open jewellery box. Here the furnishings and trimmings are just as much an accoutrement to the figure's style and grace as are her white satin dress and gold-trimmed blue satin bolero jacket. Similarly, Henri Gervex's *La Toilette* (1878) and Pierre Bonnard's portrait of Misia Godebska (1908) both depict a woman amidst her fashionable furnishings which are shown to be an extension of her persona. In photography, too, there is a penchant for showing Parisiennes in their interiors. A press photograph from 1900 shows the courtesan La Belle Otero seated at her piano surrounded by vases of flowers, wall hangings and tapestry-covered armchairs. Catherine Guigon remarks: "Pénétrer dans l'intimité des cocottes est une nouveauté pour la presse 1900, qui invite ses lecteurs à découvrir Caroline Otero chez elle, jouant du piano en peignoir!" [To enter into the private life of the cocottes is a novelty for the 1900 press, which invites its readers to discover Caroline Otero at her home, playing the piano in a peignoir!].²⁷ Similarly, for the 1898 revue *Les Reines de Paris chez elles* [Queens of Paris at Home] music-hall chanteuse Renee d'Antin was photographed in her home amongst her elegant furnishings. Representations of these meticulously constructed interiors contributed to the myth of *la Parisienne* as the embodiment of taste, style and refinement.

When asked why he chose Parisiennes as his project, Baudouin remarked: "Les Parisiennes m'ont toujours intrigué. Et bizarrement, il n'y avait jamais eu de travail photo abouti sur elles. J'ai voulu lever le mystère!" [Parisiennes have always intrigued me. And bizarrely, there has never been a successfully completed photo work about them. I wanted to reveal the mystery!].²⁸ Despite this claim, however, Baudouin's *75 Parisiennes* is prefigured by two photographic monographs: André Maurois's 1958 book *Women of Paris* which features photographs by Nico Jesse, and the 2007 book *Parisiennes: A Celebration of French Women*, a collection of photographs of Parisian women taken by celebrated as well as anonymous photographers. In the opening lines of his book Maurois makes the following claim: "Women of Paris: not *la Parisienne*. The two things are by no means the same. The Parisienne was a myth, an idea, an essence."²⁹ Baudouin reaches the same conclusion: "La Parisienne n'existe pas, les Parisiennes existent!" [*La Parisienne* does not exist, Parisiennes exist!].³⁰ Nevertheless, Baudouin does draw on a pre-existing iconography of *la Parisienne* when photographing his Parisiennes.

Maurois' *Women of Paris* is part photographic book, part sociological portrait. The images of Maurois' women are categorised according to profession or location, and the book includes sections entitled "Women Students," "Artists and Models," "Bouquitières and Flower Girls," "The Ladies of Les Halles," and "Saint-Germain-Des-Près." Baudouin does not provide any sociological analysis of his subjects, and the images are allowed to stand alone without accompanying text. He does, however, provide each sitter's profession and metro station, which serves to indicate the meta-sociological aspect of the Parisienne type, a type not restricted by economics, class or status, but rather transcending these limits. Ruth Iskin remarks:

Central to the efficacy of the stereotype of the chic Parisienne was its appeal across class lines. The seemingly class-transcendent myth of *la Parisienne* appealed to a wide range of social levels, from upper-class moneyed women to middle-class women and working-class women of modest means.³¹

Capturing his subjects inside their apartments and studios, Baudouin cannot rely explicitly on the usual visual signifiers of an iconic Paris, such as the monuments and locations. Thus he uses the names of metro stations not only to construct a mental map of Paris but also to establish the necessary relationship between Parisiennes and the city. The connection between the Parisienne and the geography of Paris is similarly established in a feature in fashion magazine *Vogue* in which the faces of the Parisiennes are effaced and replaced by a number corresponding to a particular *arrondissement*. Here the city stands in for the woman and the woman's identity is subsumed into the city. Agnès Rocamora remarks:

The idea that it is Paris that gives Parisian women their identity is best illustrated in a *Vogue* feature from October 1998, where models walking down the catwalk are shown with their faces covered by a blank oval matching the *arrondissements* on a Paris map reproduced next to them. The women's individuality is "a pure product" of the *arrondissement* they live in.³²

The second photographic book which prefigures Baudouin's is the 2007 publication *Parisiennes: A Celebration of French Women*, a collection of 130 duotone photographs of Parisian women. The book is divided thematically and each section is accompanied by a short text by a contributing author. Themes covered include "Motherhood," "Love," "Elegance" and "Work and Play." Quotations from Maupassant, Colette and Baudelaire are interspersed throughout the collection, reinforcing the narrative or fictional

aspect of *la Parisienne*. The women represented here are students, mothers, resistance fighters and elegant, fashionable women. Photographs of famous French women such as Maguerite Duras and Simone de Beauvoir feature alongside otherwise mostly anonymous women captured in the Parisian streets. This book is retrospectively reorganised to create a visual mythology, whereas Baudouin's work was conceived as an attempt to reconstruct this mythology from its various fragments: clothing, monuments, fashion plates, and cats, among others.

Having established the type *la Parisienne* and the general context of Baudouin's work, I would now like to discuss three photographs and indicate how Baudouin draws on the iconography of *la Parisienne* through the use of certain motifs in his work. Iconography is a descriptive method less concerned with formal considerations than with the "intelligibility of the content of the images."³³ This content can be shown to reflect a history of what Ed Buscombe calls the "visual conventions"³⁴ present in any constructed image; however it also reveals deeper and more literary tropes concerning narrative and character. In this article I will show the iconography of *la Parisienne* at work in Baudouin's photographs. The object of this article is not to provide interpretations or readings of these images, something which is generally considered outside the scope of iconography as such. Rather, by introducing the mythology of *la Parisienne* with its various motifs—the Eiffel Tower, the little black dress, the feather boa, the *chevelure*, the fashion plate, and the cat—I seek to provide what might be called the preconditions for possible interpretations by laying the foundations of the allegories latent in these photographs.

**Clémence Krzentowski, Trocadéro, 16^e arrondissement,
2010, Gallery Owner**

The photograph of Clémence draws on two typical Parisienne motifs: the Eiffel Tower and the *petite robe noire*, or little black dress. Using the accentuated line of the dress, Baudouin creates a deliberate visual parallel between the figure of the woman and the Eiffel Tower, the "quintessentially modern symbol of *fin-de-siècle* Paris,"³⁵ visible in the background from the window. Like the tower, Clémence stands tall and erect; her black skirt fans out from her waist to create an a-line which mirrors the a-shaped frame of the mid-section of the tower. Her long legs accentuated by the high-spiked heel of her black shoes parallel the legs of the tower. In this photograph, Baudouin makes an explicit connection between two archetypal figures of French modernity. Such connections were, however, already evident in late nineteenth-century visual culture:

Modern-life painters like Jean Béraud caught the flavour of the moment by setting up visual parallels between the corseted and erect figure of the “Parisienne” and the newly proclaimed emblem of France’s technological and aesthetic prowess in paintings such as *In Front of the Eiffel Tower* of 1892. Paris was proud of both its tower and its women and the conjunction of the two conferred grace and elegance on the steel structure while confirming the fashionability and metropolitan chic of its female subjects.³⁶

Garb’s comments regarding Beraud’s painting equally apply to Baudouin’s photograph: Clémence bestows grace upon the tower which reciprocally confirms the urbanity of the Parisienne. As Andrew Hussey remarks: “The metaphors used to describe Paris in the nineteenth century—such as ‘queen of the world’—emphasized the opulent and sensual nature of the city, feminizing it and making it the passive object of pleasure.”³⁷

Another example of the conjunction of the tower and the Parisienne appears in a late nineteenth-century advertisement for face cream, which features an Eiffel Tower “composed of the smiling heads of ‘Parisiennes’ mounted one on top of the other.”³⁸ This conflation of *la Parisienne* and the Eiffel Tower for the purposes of selling women’s luxury goods continued in the twentieth, and into the twenty-first, centuries. An advertisement for Christian Dior’s “New Look,” which appeared in *Vogue* in November 1954, features a model in front of the Eiffel Tower. The rigid structure of her suit, with its deep pleats and voluminous skirt, a hand-span waistline and gently sloping shoulders, mirrors the Tower’s form. More recently, in 2009, an advertisement for the Yves Saint Laurent perfume “Parisienne” shows model Kate Moss in a black leather bodice, the vertical ribbing of which mimics the Tower’s ironwork. In *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media* Agnès Rocamora examines the appropriation of the Eiffel Tower in French fashion discourse to untangle its relation to fashion.³⁹ Rocamora remarks that the Eiffel Tower is a “recurring feature of both fashion spreads and fashion advertisements” and cites Erwin Blumenfeld’s famous 1939 picture for *Vogue* as an early example of the use of the tower in fashion imagery.⁴⁰ Rocamora argues that the

Eiffel Tower is not simply an index of Paris; it is an index of a certain Paris and a certain discourse on Paris fashion. Bringing the monument into fashion visuals means bringing in its symbolic and material dimensions and consequently lending the brands and products for which it is a backdrop the values that have been attached to it.⁴¹

Although Baudouin’s photograph of Clémence is not an advertisement or a fashion photograph, his use of the tower has a similar effect. The attributes

of the Eiffel Tower (modernity, an association with fashion) are bestowed upon Clémence through not only its presence but the deliberate visual parallel Baudouin draws between Clémence's pose and the monument.

The second Parisienne motif in Baudouin's photograph of Clémence is her little black dress. Just as the Eiffel Tower immediately evokes Paris, so too the little black dress, considered the epitome of Parisian chic, evokes the timeless elegance of the Parisienne. Ines de la Fressange, in her style guide *Parisian Chic*, includes the little black dress in the list of the basic items which constitute the "made in Paris" look." De la Fressange writes: "The little black dress is not simply an item of clothing, it's a concept. It's abstract, it's universal."⁴² Isabelle Thomas and Frédérique Veysset claim that the little black dress became "the ultimate symbol of refinement in 1926, thanks to Coco Chanel,"⁴³ and cite famous couturier Alexandre Vauthier's remark that the little black dress is "part of the established code of elegance" and is representative of Paris.⁴⁴ Although not invented by Chanel, she ultimately made the little black dress her signature item.⁴⁵ As a symbol of progressive modernity, the little black dress is often compared to the Model T Ford. Peter Wollen writes:

Here is a Ford signed "Chanel." Coco Chanel's black crêpe-de-chine sheath of 1926 was seen by *Vogue* as analogous to Henry Ford's Model T—functional, impersonal, with design and ornamentation reduced to an absolute minimum. Every Model T was identical. They were available only in black. Chanel was seen as implementing the modernist program, the elimination of waste and excess, the demand for reason and simplicity, within the world of fashion itself, apparently the most privileged realm of fantastic opulence and decorative display.⁴⁶

These two motifs, the Eiffel Tower and the *petite robe noire* combine in Baudouin's photograph to evoke the relationship between Paris, women, and modernity.

Louise, Arts et Métiers, 3e arrondissement, 2009, Student in Art History and Blogger

In Baudouin's photograph of Louise, there are three immediately discernable Parisienne motifs: the feather boa, her long, cascading hair, and the illustrated fashion journal (here shown framed on the wall of the apartment).

The feather boa has been used in representations of *la Parisienne* to indicate a relationship between woman and the serpent, a relationship which helped establish the myth of *la Parisienne* as *fille d'Eve* or *femme fa-*

tale. It is found in such works as Toulouse-Lautrec's *Femme au boa noir* (1892) in which a woman's ashen face gazes out from a mass of dark feathers high up about her neck; Jean Béraud's *Parisienne, place de la Concorde* (c.1890), in which a black feather boa encircles the neck of the Parisienne crossing the Place de la Concorde; and in two drypoint etchings by Edgar Chahine. In the first of these etchings, entitled *Elvira* (1906), the Parisienne figure is languidly draped in a black feather boa. In the second, *Le Boa de Plumes, Ada Visentini* (1902), so prominent is the accessory that it gives the work its title, foregrounding not the woman but rather the motif.

The feather boa was a fashion accessory closely linked to what Elizabeth Menon calls the "Eve revival" in *fin-de-siècle* Paris: "For it was her contemporary dress that identified her [the Parisienne] as the modern descendant of Eve. A range of snake-inspired accoutrements, including jewellery and the feather boa, became popular at century's end."⁴⁷ Valerie Steele notes a connection between the *femme fatale* and *la Parisienne* in the fashion and visual culture of the late nineteenth century: "Behind the image of the *femme fatale*, the irresistibly attractive woman who leads men to destruction, lurked the specter of the fashionable Parisienne."⁴⁸ The sinuous lines of art nouveau reinforced this imagery: "In modern French society, depictions of snakes with contemporary women conjured up the fille d'Eve. Fashionable Parisiennes came to be depicted as part-snake."⁴⁹ Many popular illustrators, painters and sculptors coupled fashionable women with snakes. Toulouse-Lautrec's 1899 poster *Jane Avril*, which features a snake wrapped around the performer's dress, is a famous example.⁵⁰ Baudelaire's poetry too helped to establish the mythology of the woman-snake, particularly the poems "Le Serpent qui Danse" and "Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés" of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

Another of the visual tropes which helped establish *la Parisienne* as *femme fatale*, and which Baudouin draws on in his photograph of Louise, is hair. Typically it is long and thick, and shown falling mane-like around the woman's face and shoulders. Patrick Bade remarks that during the nineteenth century the "femme fatale's hair was her most effective and lethal weapon."⁵¹ Commenting on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's fatal women, Bade notices the "abundance of their hair." This is particularly the case in Rossetti's oil painting *Lady Lilith*. Rossetti painted a replica in watercolour of this work, to which he attached a quatrain from Goethe's *Faust*, translated by Shelley:

Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
 All women in the magic of her locks,
 And when she twines them round a young man's neck

She will not ever set him free again.⁵²

Baudelaire makes frequent reference to the abundant head of hair of the heroines of his poems. In “La Chevelure,” the poet is intoxicated by the perfumed tresses which transport him to exotic locales.⁵³

Taken as an ensemble, Louise’s chestnut brown hair, black hat and feather boa recalls the palette and composition of Georges de Feures’ belle époque poster *Le Journal des Ventes* which hangs above the bed on which she reclines. A second picture, also harking back to the Belle Époque, visually connects Louise to the burgeoning nineteenth-century print culture which helped crystallise *la Parisienne* as a type. Fashion plates appeared in illustrated fashion journals such as *La Mode Illustré*, *La Gazette des Dames*, *Le Bon ton* and *Journal des Modes*. The revolution in printing technology in the nineteenth century both lowered the cost and significantly increased the amount of available visual material. This saw not only the proliferation of illustrated journals, particularly fashion journals, but their dissemination across a wider readership, now including the working class and lower-middle class.⁵⁴ For the first time women across a much broader social spectrum were exposed to a single homogenising image of the fashionable woman. Due to this proliferation fashion became increasingly democratised as women gained access to the same widely disseminated newspapers, journals and periodicals which featured clothing and couturier advertisements as well as depictions of fashionable women.

**Laura Camille, Place de Clichy, 18^e arrondissement, 2006,
Journalist**

In this photograph Laura, dressed in skinny black jeans, black singlet, and cardigan, is depicted standing on an armchair, one foot on each chair arm, bending forward with her hands on her knees. She looks directly into the camera with an expression suggestive of having been caught in the act. Her clothing, pose, and wide-eyed expression suggest a black cat. In order to dispel any doubt, a black cat sits statue-like on a desk, while two other cats lounge placidly on the seat of the armchair.

The association of women and cats is found frequently in imagery from *fin-de-siècle* Paris. For example, Henri Dumont-Courselles’ lithograph *Tous les Soirs aux Ambassadeurs Yvette Guilbert* [Every Night at the Ambassadeurs] (c.1890) depicts music-hall performer Guilbert materialising from the tail of a black cat, like a genie from a bottle. By the late nineteenth century the black cat had, mainly through the cabaret Le Chat Noir, become symbolic of sexual pleasure generally as well as the pleasures and vices

associated with Montmartre and *fin-de-siècle* Paris.⁵⁵ Kathleen Kete remarks that the “cat was sexually charged, independent, dangerous, egotistical, and cruel. By the end of the [nineteenth] century, however, it had become a family pet.”⁵⁶

In the popular illustrated weekly *La Vie Parisienne* the typical Parisienne was often depicted in the company of cats, with a strong visual parallel created between the two. In *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories: The City and Its Mystique* Charles Rearick remarks how “the sexy, fun-loving Parisienne” appears in “countless drawings in the light-hearted men’s magazine *La Vie parisienne*.”⁵⁷ One such illustration by René Préjelan, for a 1915 edition of the magazine bearing the title “Polissez-vous, sans cesse, et vous repolissez!” [Polish yourself, ceaselessly, and you repolish yourself!], depicts a woman seated on an armchair preening herself while on the floor beside her a cat does the same. The angle of the woman’s legs which are crossed with the left leg poised in the air and her tilted head mirrors the pose of the cat. Adolphe Willette’s 1881 gouache pastel *La vierge au chat* also features a Parisienne with a black cat with erotic overtones. It depicts a coquettish young woman in a state of undress with a black cat perched upon her shoulder, its front paw pushing suggestively on her bosom which spills out over her corset. An illustration for Balzac’s short story “Peines de cœur d’une chatte anglaise” which appeared in his *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1840–42) shows a white cat, Minette, standing upright on her hind legs, wearing a fashionable crinoline dress accessorised with a cape, a bonnet and a muff. A slipper peeps coquettishly out from under the voluminous skirt. The character of Minette is half-human, half-animal, an anthropomorphisation of the cat and an animalisation of the woman.

Impressionist painters also drew frequently on the motif of the cat when depicting Parisiennes. This was on the one hand part of a general theme of Impressionist works which sought to capture middle-class life and used domestic pets to emphasise leisure, comfort, and prosperity.⁵⁸ The woman with a cat also found its way into intimate portraits in the late nineteenth century such as Pierre Bonnard’s *Le corsage à carreaux* (1892). In this painting Bonnard provides a less sinister and more benign treatment of the woman-cat motif. The painting shows the artist’s sister Andree, Madame Claude Terrasse, seated at a laid table holding a cat. Katherine Rogers writes: “The association between cats and women cannot, of course, be reduced to a mere vehicle for expressing misogyny through ailurophobia; it has a more general application and more complex, often positive, connotations.”⁵⁹ One of the more positive connotations that the presence of a cat can bring to a representation of the Parisienne is that of intimacy. Com-

menting on Bonnard's *Le chat blanc* [The White Cat] (1894), Jane Kinsman remarks:

Aside from any literary or artistic traditions, cats had a new role to play within the private confines of family homes. And with a burgeoning interest in anthropomorphism . . . and a fear of germs instilled by discoveries in medical science, the catcher of vermin reigned supreme. Once the preserve of the wealthier classes, by the end of the nineteenth century the cat had become an important part of the household, rivalling only the poodle as the preferred companion. Its presence in art is a clear pictorial symbol of the invention of intimacy.⁶⁰

Perhaps the work most significant for Baudouin's portrait of Laura, in terms of the employment of the cat motif as both a symbol of domestic intimacy and playful sexuality, is Édouard Manet's *Olympia* of 1863. This painting shows the courtesan Olympia reclining nude on a daybed, attended by a Negro woman servant. At the foot of the daybed is a black cat which fixed the gaze of the viewer in same way as Olympia:

The cat's gaze parallels Olympia's, brazenly meeting the eyes of the viewer/client. In the skilfully foreshortened pose that Manet gave it—back arched and stiff tail hooked—the cat faces the viewer with even more full frontal boldness than Olympia herself.⁶¹

This doubling of the gaze is evident too in Baudouin's portrait, and places the viewer in the position of one who has disturbed a domestic scene rather than one who is privileged to it.

While Baudouin's collection of Parisiennes may be intended as a celebration of difference and multiplicity, it also affirms the identity of these many women with the type *la Parisienne*. The three photographs discussed here demonstrate the way in which even contemporary representations of Parisiennes contain a pre-existing iconography of familiar motifs established in the nineteenth century.⁶² In conceiving his book of portraits, Baudouin set out to depict multiplicity in the Parisienne type through the various women who embody it. However, his portraits also reveal an identity at the heart of this difference, primarily through the recurrence of established motifs (the Eiffel Tower, the cat, the feather boa, the *chevelure*, the little black dress).

Indeed, *la Parisienne* is a type of which atypicality is the dominant feature; whose identity is continuously displaced or deferred, simultaneously reaching back to her earliest manifestations in the nineteenth century and forward to future manifestations which will both affirm and rework the ico-

nography of the type. This apparent contradiction is accounted for within iconography itself as a methodology, the two aspects of which are stability and mutability. Since a type is only a type because of recognisable motifs, certain motifs must be established which have both universal, and particular or historical validity. Thus the universality of the type usually appears through an accumulation of its particulars. As Stanley Cavell remarks, a specific iconography will change with the times, but the iconography itself remains specific, operating according to a “fixed attitude and attribute” principle.⁶³ What sets the Parisienne type apart, however, is that while variations on a type or genre are permitted and even welcomed within iconography—types may evolve historically, incidentally, or even deliberately without ceasing to be types—variability and elusiveness form an integral part of the Parisienne iconography and are not things external to it. In other words, a type in the usual sense is at all times self-identical, and this forms the basis of the recognition necessary for iconography. *La Parisienne*, on the other hand, is that type which, in Houssaye’s words, “never resembles herself,”⁶⁴ whose typology and thus iconography is always subject to revision.

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NOTES

¹ English translation: Who could accurately render *la Parisienne*? Her great art is to never resemble herself. Today, she is no longer the same woman; tomorrow, new metamorphosis. She surprises with the unexpected. Arsène Houssaye, *Les Parisiennes: IV Les Femmes Déchues* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1869), 275. Unless indicated, all English translations are my own.

² Jean-Baptiste Gendarme, “Foreword,” in *75 Parisiennes* (Paris: CF + Snoeck, 2012), iv.

³ *Ibid.*, iv.

⁴ See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1972); and Erwin Panofsky, “Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures,” in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 243–63. (1934, revised 1947).

⁵ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷ Sarah Berry-Flint, “Genre,” in *A Companion to Film Studies*, ed. Toby Miller and Robert Stam (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 32–33.

- ⁸ Jean-Loup Bourget, "En relisant Panofsky," in *Positif* 259 (1982): 40.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ¹⁰ "Les 75 Parisiennes de Baudoin [sic] : An interview with Badouin," *La Rapporteuse*, November 7, 2012, <http://www.larapporteuse.fr/post/Baudoin-75-Parisiennes>.
- ¹¹ Jean-Baptiste Gendarme, *75 Parisiennes*, iii-iv.
- ¹² There is significant scholarship on *la Parisienne* in the fields of art history, such as Elizabeth K. Menon, *Evil by Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), Ruth E. Iskin, *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture in Impressionist Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), Marie Simon, *Fashion in Art: The Second Empire and Impressionism* (London: Zwemmer, 1995), Sidsel Maria Søndergaard et al., *Women in Impressionism: From Mythical Feminine to Modern Woman* (Milano: Skira, 2006), Gloria Groom, ed., *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity* (London: Distributed by Yale University Press, 2012) and Debra N. Mancoff, *Fashion in Impressionist Paris* (London: Merrell, 2012); in the fields of fashion theory and culture, such as Valerie Steele *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Agnès Rocamora *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009); and cultural histories of Paris, such as Andrew Hussey, *Paris: A Secret History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2002) and Ellen R. Welch, *A Taste for the Foreign: Worldly Knowledge and Literary Pleasure in Early Modern French Fiction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011).
- ¹³ For more on the transformation of Paris in the nineteenth century see David Harvey *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999) and "Paris, The Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. and trans. Michael Jennings et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Menon, *Evil by Design*; Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Philippe Hamon, *Expositions: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- ¹⁴ Mancoff, *Fashion in Impressionist Paris*, 8.
- ¹⁵ There have been numerous academic studies on the representation of *la Parisienne* in nineteenth-century visual arts, including Marie Simon's *Fashion in Art: The Second Empire and Impressionism* with a section, within chapter five ("Fashion and Modernity") entitled "In Search of the Parisienne"; Ruth E. Iskin's chapter "The Chic Parisienne: A National Brand of French Fashion and Femininity," in *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture in Impressionist Painting*; Tamar Garb's "Painting the 'Parisienne': James Tissot and the Making of the Modern Woman," in *Seductive Surfaces: The Art of Tissot*, ed. Katharine Lochnan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

- ¹⁶ Simon, *Fashion in Art*, 188.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.
- ¹⁸ Nancy Rose Marshall, "Parisiennes," in *James Tissot: Victorian Life/ Modern Love*, ed. Malcolm Warner (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999), 147.
- ¹⁹ Gendarme, *75 Parisiennes*, iii.
- ²⁰ Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, 83.
- ²¹ Michael Garval argues that in late nineteenth-century France the "central trope was *exposition*, meaning exposure and exhibition." Michael D. Garval, *Cléo de Mérode and the Rise of Modern Celebrity Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate 2012), 54.
- ²² Garb, "Painting the 'Parisienne,'" 95.
- ²³ The crowd is another motif which connects the type *la Parisienne* to the modern city. For more on the crowd as a modern motif, see Walter Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (Great Britain: Jonathon Cape, 1970), 157–202.
- ²⁴ Marshall, "Parisiennes," 154.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.
- ²⁶ Octave Uzanne, *The Modern Parisienne* (London: Heinemann, 1912), 172.
- ²⁷ Catherine Guigon, *Les Cocottes, reines du Paris 1900* (Paris: Parigramme, 2012), 90.
- ²⁸ "An interview with Baudouin."
- ²⁹ André Maurois, *Women of Paris*, trans. Norman Denny. (London: André Deutsch, 1958), 5.
- ³⁰ "An interview with Baudouin."
- ³¹ Iskin, *Modern Women*, 193.
- ³² Agnes Rocamora, "Paris Capitale de la mode: Representing the Fashion City in the Media," in *Fashion's World Cities*, ed. Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 50.
- ³³ Thomas Y. Levin, "Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky's Film Theory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9, no.1 (1996): 33.
- ³⁴ Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), 15.
- ³⁵ Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, 117.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.
- ³⁷ Hussey, *Paris*, xvii.
- ³⁸ Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, 118.
- ³⁹ Rocamora, *Fashioning the City*, 156.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 156.
- ⁴² Inès de la Fressange, *Parisian Chic*, trans. Louise Rogers Lalaurie (Paris: Flammarion, 2011), 32.

- ⁴³ Isabelle Thomas and Frédérique Veysset, *Paris Street Style: A Guide to Effortless Chic* (New York: Abrams Image, 2013), 118.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.
- ⁴⁵ Mairi Mackenzie, *Isms: Understanding Fashion* (New York: Rizzoli, 2010), 75.
- ⁴⁶ Peter Wollen, "Black & White in Fashion," in *Black and White: Dress from the 1920s to Today*, ed. Peter Wollen et al. (Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, 1992), 25.
- ⁴⁷ Menon, *Evil By Design*, 227.
- ⁴⁸ Valerie Steele, "Femme Fatale: Fashion and Visual Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," *Fashion Theory* 8, no.3 (2004): 316.
- ⁴⁹ Menon, *Evil by Design*, 227.
- ⁵⁰ Baudelaire's poetry too helped to establish the mythology of the woman-snake in his poems "Le Serpent qui Danse" and XXVII of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.
- ⁵¹ Patrick Bade, *Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women* (London: Ash and Grant, 1979), 13.
- ⁵² Virginia M. Allen, "One Strangling Golden Hair: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Lady Lilith," *The Art Bulletin* 66, no.2 (1984): 292.
- ⁵³ Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Poems*, trans. Carol Clark (London: Penguin, 1995), 20–21.
- ⁵⁴ Menon, *Evil By Design*, 7.
- ⁵⁵ See Menon, *Evil by Design*, 100; and Menon, "Images of Pleasure and Vice: Women of the Fringe," in *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture*, ed. Gabriel P. Weisberg (Piscataway: Rutgers, 2001), 46.
- ⁵⁶ Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 116.
- ⁵⁷ Charles Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories: The City and Its Mystique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 35.
- ⁵⁸ James Henry Rubin, *Impressionist Cats & Dogs: Pets in the Painting of Modern Life* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), 1.
- ⁵⁹ Katherine Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination: Feline Images from Bast to Garfield* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 165.
- ⁶⁰ Jane Kinsmen, "Inventing Intimacy: The Nabis," in *Paris in the Late 19th Century*, ed. Jane Kinsman et al. (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1997), 102.
- ⁶¹ Rubin, *Impressionist Cats & Dogs*, 18.
- ⁶² Not all of Baudouin's photographs in this collection employ so overtly these motifs. I have chosen those which best exemplify the Parisienne type in terms of a recognisable iconography.
- ⁶³ Stanley Cavell, "Types; Cycles as Genres," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 314.
- ⁶⁴ Arsène Houssaye, "Quelques opinions avancées sur la Parisienne," 275.