

The Full Last Line of *A Rebours* by J.K. Huysmans

Des Esseintes dropped into a chair, in despair. "In two days more I shall be in Paris," he exclaimed; "well, all is over; like a flowing tide, the waves of human mediocrity rise to the heavens and they will engulf my last refuge; I am opening the sluice-gates, I then spite of myself. Ah; but my courage fails me, and my heart is sick within me!--Lord, take pity on the Christian who doubts, on the sceptic who would fain believe, on the galley-slave of life who puts out to sea alone, in the darkness of night, beneath a firmament illumined no longer by the consoling beacon-fires of the ancient hope."

Ed. Note: The underlined section of the line is used in the choral epigraph

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**Against the Grain**  
(*A Rebours*)

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by  
**Joris-Karl Huysmans**

**1884**

The best-known example of *fin-de-siècle* decadence, this novel has been banned and expurgated for years. **(We suggest that readers not undertake this book until they have attained the age of 65!)** A translation by Robert Baldick ("Against Nature") in the Penguin series is convenient to read and widely available, but we now present a public domain English translation on the World Wide Web, as part of our project to prepare for the coming millennium. A [version in the original French](#) is now online at ABU: la Bibliothèque Universelle. (Look for Huysmans under "auteurs".)

Scanned in 1997 from the Dover Publications, Inc., edition, New York. (22190-3 paperbound) Published in Canada by General Publishing Company, Ltd., 30 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Toronto, Ontario. Published in the United Kingdom by Constable and Company, Ltd., 10 Orange Street, London WC 2.

The Dover edition, first published in 1969, is an unabridged republication of the English translation published by Three Sirens Press, New York, in 1951. [*This translation was published much earlier and is no longer under copyright.*] The introduction by Havelock Ellis, also from the Three Sirens Press edition, has been slightly abridged for this edition. A photograph of J. K. Huysmans has been added to the Dover edition as a frontispiece.

Standard Book Number: 436-22190-3

(ref: <http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/jkh/rebours.html>)

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A curious story that we came across as we were following the path of Oscar Wilde when he was creating *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

[A Successful Literary Dinner- Lippincott's Magazine, Arthur Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde](#)

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Many major literary works have had their genesis in magazines. Among the most important occurred by virtue of a literary dinner at the Langham Hotel in London in late Summer 1889 [ed. Note: August 30, 1889] between a literary agent, J.M. Stoddart, representing the editors of *Lippincott's Magazine*, and the esteemed authors, Arthur Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde.

The young writers engaged in mutual flattery. They also discussed such topics as future wars and what Doyle later called "the cynical maxim that the good fortune of our friends made us discontented." By the end of the meal Stoddart had accomplished what he had traveled all the way from Philadelphia for: commitments from Doyle and Wilde that each would write a short novel for *Lippincott's*. As a result, Wilde produced "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and Doyle the second appearance of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson, in "The Sign of Four."

These appearances are probably the true first editions and since they were published in their entirety are quite valuable and highly sought. One dealer currently lists the Wilde issue for sale at \$12,500. The Doyle issue is even more highly sought.

(ref: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Sign\\_of\\_the\\_Four](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sign_of_the_Four))

[ed. Note: Lippincott's original price for the magazine was 25¢. However, it is difficult to imagine the dinner conversation between these three gentlemen. If no one had commissioned these works, would we have *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or would the Sherlock Holmes stories have ended with *A Study in Scarlet*?


There is a New and Uncensored edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde which is currently available from Amazon.com for \$21.30

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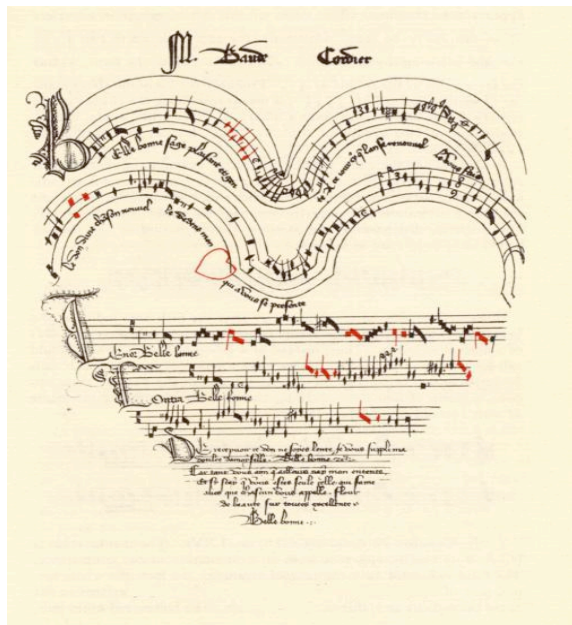
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Additional Supplemental (Fun) Information	
Augenmusik	<p>(German). Literally "eye music", in this instance is used to define a thematic musical sequence that is associated with a particular character or object on stage; the "character's theme" is modified according to the action of the opera. The music may not entirely be comprehended by just listening to it; is designed to present the composer's vision of the characters, action and story on stage.</p> <p><b>The Evolution of the Term and its Concept:</b>  The original definition of Augenmusik is quite different from the modern concept, but no less valid. Between 1400 and 1625, Augenmusik referred to a method of notating musical scores which were created in a particular shape. Please, see the fanciful example of: Baude Cordier's (ca 1380-ca 1440) Lovesong, a Rondeau- <i>Belle, bonne, sage</i> with a red notated of musical scoring notation which created heart shape. Completely impractical for use, but a wondrous example of whimsy. Please take a look at the image below  (ref: <a href="http://www.danielmneitsui.com/hieronimus/index.blog?entry_id=1973889">http://www.danielmneitsui.com/hieronimus/index.blog?entry_id=1973889</a>)</p> <p>With the invention of moveable type, one was then able to set down a musical score using traditional symbols in a modern format. Josquin des Pres was probably one of the last practitioners of the original Augenmusik methods and one of the first to adopt the new printed style of music. Josquin began evolving his musical compositions to use the new thought of the time: that with extensive contemplation on the expressive power of words with suitable music, one could make a word-painting set to music. This thought movement was known as Musica-Reservata. One could create a textual passage to illustrate a musical gesture. By 1729 J. S. Bach in <i>St. Matthew's Passion</i> the thought pattern had reversed itself. A particular musical phrase was beginning to be used just like word-painting, to represent a specific idea and would be repeated whenever the subject reappeared in the progression of the musical piece.</p> <p>With the growth of more musical sophistication, Augenmusik has now generally become known as polyphonic music of such a complex nature that it is impossible for even the most trained ear to be able to pick out the constituent parts. Fine examples of this can be heard, or actually- not heard, in the music of Richard Strauss with his great fondness for polyphonic music. In some of his music, one must look at the score to get a full sense of what is occurring musically. Wagner elevated this revitalized Augenmusik to a higher level with what he described as his Leitmotif technique in which the musical theme is allowed to grow or shrink allowing for the audience to experience a sort of spacial, painterly, quality to the music; sort of a three dimensional representation of a thought expressed as music. Wagner was painting a picture with his music. For example, the Valhalla leitmotif as it first appears in <i>Das Rheingold</i> has the listener creating a picture of the great Valhalla castle on stage with the music creating the structure itself. The concept of Augenmusik has come full circle.</p> <p>It began as a physical score being presented as a picture and therefore simply performing the music would not allow the listener to see the artistic representative shape of the music. For this Augenmusik, the score itself, needed to be seen to be appreciated. The current Augenmusik is now music that cannot fully be comprehended, or fully heard, by the listener. Current Augenmusik is also creates a vision of the composer's intentions. Therefore, Augenmusik music once again becomes "eye-music" because it invokes the vision of the composer, or because the music is just too complex to be fully heard and comprehended by merely listening.</p> <p>(ref: <a href="http://www.complexarray.org/essays/Augenmusik.html">http://www.complexarray.org/essays/Augenmusik.html</a>)  (ref: <i>Richard Strauss, the man and his works</i> By Henry Theophilus Finck)  (ref: <i>Wagner's Ring Cycle and the Greeks</i> By Daniel H. Foster )</p>
Chorale Epigraph	<p>A chorale piece that is used a thematic introduction for the rest of the work. In this case a choral work based on the words of the last line of J.K.Huysmans: <i>A Rebours</i> (see first page) which sets the theme for Oscar Wilde's only novel <i>A Picture of Dorian Grey</i>. It sets up the character development and the characters destruction of Dorian Gray. Unlike many introductory overtures, the Composer and Lyricist</p>

	<p>chose to introduce the essence of the Dorian Gray character and the denouement of his character as he has deliberating stepped from moral path, because there were no consequences to his actions, only to discover that his chosen path has left him empty of feelings, and equally in despair.</p> <p>Most Overtures and choral epigraphs are used to introduce the musical themes that apply the characters in the opera. In this opera, however, most musical character themes are introduced with the character's appearance on stage.</p> <p>Perhaps, the most well-know use of a choral epigraph in an opera is the introductory piece used in that massive opera <i>War and Peace</i> by Sergei Prokofiev.</p>
<p>Greek Chorus</p>	<p>The Greek Chorus was used in ancient Greek plays to move the action forward or to provide the moral interpretation of what was taking place on stage. It is described as a homogenous, non-individualised group of performers ... who provide a variety of background and summary information to help the audience follow the performance.</p> <p>(ref: <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_chorus">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_chorus</a>).</p> <p>The text of the Huysmans Chorale Epigraph as used here is like a Greek Chorus, both warning Dorian Gray to follow a cautious moral path, and warning him of the consequences.</p>
<p>Klang</p>	<p>Shortened from the musical term 'Klangfarbenmelodie' coined by German composer Arnold Schoenberg which means literally: 'Sound-color-melody'</p> <p>It is defined as: a sound; a composite musical sound (a musical tone with its harmonics); a progression of chords viewed from the standpoint of their tonality.</p>
<p>Lydian</p>	<p>The Lydian musical scale is a rising pattern of pitches comprising three whole tones, a semitone, two more whole tones, and a final semitone. The name Lydian refers to the ancient kingdom of Lydia in Anatolia (Ancient Greece.) It is not the sounds of the modern major scale (C D E F   G A B C); it is more equivalent to C D# E F   G A# B C and C E E# F   G B B# C. This scale was used in Gregorian chant. Gregorian chant uses eight tonal progressions (modes) of this scale. The first of these tonal modes is called "Dorian" (D E F G A B C D); even our illustrious composer could not resist a little musical humor. Please, see score below just below.</p> <p>The Eight Gregorian Modes:</p>  <p>(ref: <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydian_mode">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydian_mode</a>)</p> <p>The composer has used this diatonic and upward progression as a theme for the Basil Halliward character. Halliward is a man who does not exist without character Dorian, and a man who has taken his love for Dorian and captured the soul of the object of his desire on canvas (as the story indicates, Basil "really" succeeds). Painters, through their art, seek to put their own heart and soul into their paintings; sometimes expending themselves in the process and then not being able to give up the subject, or the painting. The process of painting is so personal for the artist that to part with the painting is to give away a part of them. Seeing the path that Dorian has taken, distresses Basil because he has idealized the character that he painted and not the real person, Dorian Gray.</p>
<p>Passacaglia</p>	<p>Is a series of thematic variations that is over a regular and rhythmic bass line</p>

### Renaissance-style Augenmusik:



Baude Cordier's *Belle, Bonne, Sage*

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Another quote from JK Huymans - *A Rebour*s

This one prophetically sums up the lonely creative process which has brought a new great new Opera into this world. To me, this sums up the creative effort that is required to make an entirely new opera. Thank you, Jeffrey and Jim.

*“The main thing is to know how to set about it, to be able to concentrate your attention on a single detail (like the fall of dim evening light on the faded golden threads of ecclesiastical fabric), to forget yourself sufficiently to bring about the desired hallucination, and so substitute the vision of reality for the vulgar reality of actual experience.” J.K. Huymans, **Against Nature***

(ref: <http://www.motherstankstation.com/pages-exhibitions-2011/0411faloflight02.htm>)

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If you like the work of the Librettist (Jim Saslow), you might checkout some of his other books and articles. Here is a link to his Amazon.com page:

[http://www.amazon.com/James-M.-Saslow/e/B001HCXCAK/ref=ntt\\_athr\\_dp\\_pel\\_1](http://www.amazon.com/James-M.-Saslow/e/B001HCXCAK/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_1)

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