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Courting the Bourgeois: Stevenson, Baudelaire, and Writing as a Profession

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This article is the first entry in a debate on "Courting the Bourgeois: Stevenson, Baudelaire, and Writing as a Profession" (http://www.connotations.de/debate/courting-the-bourgeois-stevenson-baudelaire-and-writing-as-a-profession). If you feel inspired to write a response, please send it to editors@connotations.de.

Abstract

Stevenson's sedulous aping of Charles Baudelaire, the painter of modern life and godfather of French style, is most evident in the prose poems that he wrote in 1875 after reading Baudelaire's posthumously published *Petits poèmes en prose* (1869). This is not the only connection between Stevenson and Baudelaire, however: their common approach to writing as a career is less studied but no less revealing of intertextual connections. Whereas their prose poems are illustrative of stylistic and aesthetic refinement and experimentation, Stevenson's and Baudelaire's writings on art as a profession grapple with the changes underway in the nineteenth-century publishing world, where aesthetics and economics sat uneasily side by side, and authors attempted to maintain artistic integrity while contending with pressure to sell books and earn a living. This paper compares Stevenson's "Letter to a Young Gentleman Who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art" (1888), "On the Choice of a Profession" (1915) and "The Profession of Letters" (1881) with Baudelaire's earlier "Comment on paie ses dettes quand on a du génie" (1845) and "Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" (1846). These essays on writing as a career are informed by a practical understanding of the complex relationship between art, money and work in the capitalist marketplace, where financial independence was seen as a prerequisite for publishing texts that had artistic value, and where appealing to bourgeois tastes was often associated with forsaking artistic integrity.

Robert Louis Stevenson once confessed to suffering attacks of "morbid melancholy," during which he would find himself "in a state of intellectual prostration, fit for nothing but smoking, and reading Charles Baudelaire" (*Letters* 1: 193-94). By Stevenson's own admission, this reading resulted in imitation: his "sedulous ap[ing]" ("A College Magazine" 29) of Baudelaire, the godfather of French style, is most evident in the prose poems that he wrote in 1875 after reading Baudelaire's posthumously published *Petits poèmes en prose* (1869). Baudelaire's stylistic influence can also be discerned beyond these experiments in works such as *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* (1878), *New Arabian Nights* (1878), *Prince Otto* (1885) and *The Black Arrow* (1888). Stylistic affinities, however, are not the only connection between Stevenson and Baudelaire: another common point that reveals aesthetic and temperamental kinship is their conceptualisation of writing as a profession. Moreover, as will be shown, their respective comments on this subject have broader relevance insofar as they reflect the changes that were underway in the nineteenth-century literary and publishing worlds, where aesthetics and economics sat uneasily side by side, and authors attempted to maintain artistic integrity while contending with pressure to sell books and earn a living.

In a century where the patronage system died out and novelists like Honoré de Balzac and Charles Dickens worked to excess, perhaps to the point of death, Stevenson and Baudelaire, participants in an aesthetic realignment that prioritized stylistic accomplishment, were conscious of the connection between work and leisure, financial independence and the ability to create works of artistic value. Several of Stevenson's essays, notably "The Morality of the Profession of Letters" (1881), "Letter to a Young Gentleman Who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art" (1888) and "On the Choice of a Profession" (1915), deal with writing as a career. These can be profitably studied alongside Baudelaire's "Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs [Advice to Young Men of Letters]"[1] first published in *L'Esprit public* on 15 April 1846. There is no direct evidence that Stevenson read this particular piece—he did not comment

on it in his letters or essays; there is, however, ample circumstantial evidence that he read *L'Art romantique*, where "Conseils" was collected in Baudelaire's complete works in 1868-69.[2] The timeframe of Baudelaire's influence on Stevenson is illustrative of a generational delay in the transfer of mid-century French "art for art's sake" to fin de siècle British aestheticism. Starting with Thomas Carlyle and his "Gospel of Work," there was an established line of nineteenth-century British authors agonising over the concept of writerly "work," which is unsurprising given the pace of industrial, economic and social change in Britain. Art for art's sake found its full theoretical expression in Britain towards the end of the century in Walter Pater's "Style" (1889), which is heavily influenced by Flaubert. Stevenson's interpretation of Baudelairian concepts of work participates in this Franco-British cultural transfer and is important as a reflection on how to prioritize the artist's craft and innovate while remaining aware of market dynamics and appealing to the public.

Baudelaire's and Stevenson's advice to writers on how to navigate these challenges can be summarized in three broad lessons. First, to be lazy is to sacrifice artistic honour; as a result, writing should be a daily routine, which will encourage artistic inspiration. This anti-Muse stance rejects Romantic notions of inspiration, repositioning creativity as part of the daily tasks of the modern author. For Baudelaire, "l'inspiration est décidément la soeur du travail journalier [inspiration is truly the sister of daily work]" ("Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" 82); for Stevenson, "habit and practice sharpen gifts" ("Letter to a Young Gentleman" 5).

Second, public success hides countless hours of private toil. Writers have long commented on this topic. Baudelaire tells young authors that

> Tout début a toujours été précédé et qu'il est l'effet de vingt autres débuts qu'ils [les jeunes littérateurs] n'ont pas connus […] Je crois plutôt qu'un succès est […] le résultat des succès antérieurs, souvent invisibles à l'œil nu. Il y a une lente agrégation de succès moléculaires; mais de générations miraculeuses et spontanées, jamais. ("Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" 76)

> Every successful début is preceded by prior efforts and results from twenty other beginnings that you are unaware of […] I tend to think that success […] is the result of past successes, often invisible to the naked eye. There is a slow consolidation of tiny successes; but spontaneous and miraculous successes: never.

Stevenson's comments likewise draw attention to the invisibility of the writer's toil: "to those more exquisite refinements of proficiency and finish, which the artist so ardently desires and so keenly feels, […] for which, day after day, he recasts and revises and rejects—the gross mass of the public must be ever blind" ("Letter to a Young Gentleman" 6-7). In other words, the work of the writer is largely hidden from the public, who sees the product of the work, but may be oblivious to the work's artistic value. This is a call to arms, but one that assigns value to hidden labour and acknowledges the time taken to create a satisfactory work of art, regardless of whether the public recognizes either the effort or its aesthetic effect.

Third, do not be afraid of appealing to the public. This lesson will not come as a surprise to scholars and readers of Stevenson, given his predilection for working within popular genres. As Fielding notes, "Stevenson threw himself into these newer, shorter and more flexible literary forms to answer the demands of a rapidly-changing reading public" (1). Baudelaire, too, saw the necessity of appealing to the public and getting paid work: "L'homme raisonnable est celui qui dit: 'Je crois que cela vaut tant, parce que j'ai du génie; mais s'il faut faire quelques concessions, je les ferai, pour avoir l'honneur d'être des vôtres' ["The reasonable man is he who says: 'I think this is worth this much, because I have talent; but if I must make some concessions, I shall make them in order to have the honour of being published by you'"] ("Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs 78). This, of course, is not to say that for either man the value of literature stems from how profitable it is. Stevenson is unequivocal in stating that the morality of the profession of letters should not be "debated solely on the ground of money" ("The Morality of the Profession of Letters" 51). There is a distinction between an author's duty to be self-sufficient and the author's duty to art.

These three lessons are informed by a practical understanding of the complex relationship between art, money and work in a capitalist marketplace, where financial independence was seen as a prerequisite for publishing texts that had artistic value, and where appealing to bourgeois tastes was often associated with forsaking artistic integrity—in this respect, the notion of "selling out" seems as old as the literary marketplace. Yet, at first glance, the advice that Baudelaire and Stevenson give on how to pursue writing as a profession seems to conflict with their well-known views on flânerie and idleness. As we will see, their emphasis on the work that goes into writing simultaneously positions writing as a legitimate occupation within bourgeois social structures and focuses attention on the intellectual labour involved in the writing process—the artist's craft—rather than commercial success.

Baudelaire and Stevenson: Idleness and Leisure

After the publication of *Les Fleurs du mal* in 1857, Baudelaire had a cult-like status among authors in both France and Britain who considered themselves artists and stylists, rather than hack writers, and his ennui and resolute focus on the "modern" made him the representative *par excellence* of decadence. His influence has lasted well into the twenty-first century. Poet and art historian Yves Bonnefoy has called the nineteenth century "Baudelaire's century" because Baudelaire's vision of achieving transcendence through words—metre, sonority, rhythm—rather than religion connected the ordinary to the eternal in a materialist society increasingly focused on production and consumption. Baudelaire was a prolific art critic whose writings helped theorize the "modern"; as a poet, he was charged with outrages against religion and public morals for finding beauty in evil, the base, and subjects hitherto unworthy of literature. In addition, Baudelaire often lived beyond his means. His poor money management, coupled with syphilis and alcohol, contributed to his destitution and despair, but these very things

also helped codify the archetype of the struggling artist. Despite his canonical status today, Baudelaire struggled financially throughout his life, relying on the support of his mother and a few benefactors; he never achieved financial independence. Stevenson was also fascinated with the nature of evil—novels as different as *Treasure Island* (1883), *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) attest to this. That said, he is primarily associated with romance, adventure and gothic shilling shockers rather than poetry, and he demonstrated an innate talent for adapting popular genre conventions to his artistic ends. Like Baudelaire, Stevenson grappled with financial instability for a large part of his life, relying on his father, who disapproved of his unorthodox career choices and would have preferred his son to have pursued the family engineering profession or, alternatively, a socially respectable profession like law.

Both Baudelaire and Stevenson had reputations as artists' artists, but neither was a reclusive ivory tower dweller. Baudelaire cultivated a reputation as a dandy, an observant flâneur who wandered the streets of Paris, immersing himself in the Parisian crowd while maintaining observational distance. The definition of dandyism in *Mon cœur mis à nu* [*My Heart Laid Bare*] captures the ideal to strive for: to be rich enough to work because you want to, not because you have to; to be rich enough to work outside the parameters and constraints imposed by bourgeois economic structures. The definition contains an apparent connection between idleness and work that seems to justify the description of Baudelaire's as having a "dilettante work ethic" (Hibbett 143):

> Dandysme.
> Qu'est-ce que l'homme supérieur ?
> Ce n'est pas le spécialiste.
> C'est l'homme de Loisir et d'Éducation générale.
> Être riche et aimer le travail.
>
> Dandyism.
> What is a great man?
> It's not the specialist.
> It's the man of leisure and general culture.
> To be rich and to love work.

Walter Benjamin has described Baudelaire as "unwilling to forego the life of a gentleman of leisure" (123), which is not to say that Baudelaire belonged to the leisured classes. Flânerie implies having the financial means to pass the time strolling the city rather than working. A life of leisure stands in opposition to the life of labour but was an essential ingredient in the work of artistic creation for Baudelaire. Ironically, while the dilettantism that is implicit in having no speciality implies a flightiness or lack of commitment, Baudelaire's flânerie functions as a mark of commitment to an artistic project. It is also worth noting that flânerie requires movement, which brings a physicality to the work of writing—exertion of the body as well as of the mind. In this way, hidden behind a façade of leisure lies serious intellectual labour that takes the writer outside the sheltered interior spaces associated with writing and into the exterior spaces within which people go about their daily business.

Stevenson's peripatetic globetrotting in search of both adventure and improved health is similarly suggestive of an aesthetic of movement that seems at odds with work. Stevenson often travelled in order to write, as with *An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879) and "An Autumn Effect" (1875). In "A College Magazine," he is perceived as an idle walker-flâneur by others but is busy apprenticing himself to the craft of writing. Travelling to Menton in 1873 on doctor's orders to maintain his health is another example of this: travel for health reasons was a prescription available only to the few. Further, Stevenson's rootlessness points to a quest for novelty and a need for detachment. What is this other than flânerie on a geographically enlarged scale? The sheer amount of geographical displacement that occurs in Stevenson's novels also exemplifies this. Baudelaire's aimless movement through the city and Stevenson's constant movement across landscapes and borders do two things: they are indicative of financial ease—illusory in the case of Stevenson and Baudelaire—insofar as the movement defies the typical workweek restrictions of office jobs or the toil of the labouring classes, who were tied to the land

or the factory; at the same time, the movement is a necessary part of the intellectual work of the writer, part of the writer's "job."

Stevenson's "An Apology for Idlers" provides a framework for understanding this apparent contradiction, situating the question in terms of a rejection of convention: "Idleness so called […] does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognised in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class" (51). The work of the writer needs to be understood outside the strictures of capitalist timekeeping. Stevenson also criticizes "dead-alive, hackneyed people, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation" ("An Apology for Idlers" 56). The same criticism is at the heart of "On the Choice of a Profession," where he examines how education and convention are oppressive, trapping people in given paths from which they seldom deviate and of which they are rarely conscious (14). As Pierre Bourdieu notes, "there is no doubt whatsoever that *moral indignation* against all forms of submission to the forces of power or to the market" (60) feeds into the increasing autonomy of the artist and the elaboration of an autonomous literary field in the mid-to late-nineteenth century. It is thus all the more curious that Baudelaire and Stevenson should offer advice to young writers that encourages them to "court the bourgeois" (Stevenson, "Letter to a Young Gentleman" 8).

Intertextual connection: "Le Vieux saltimbanque"

Near the end of his "Letter to a Young Gentleman Who Proposes to Embrace a Career of Art," Stevenson refers to Baudelaire's "Le Vieux saltimbanque," one of the more famous of the *Petits poèmes en prose*. Stevenson mentions it in the context of a discussion of art as a trade and the necessity for writers to be frugal to guard against artistic dishonesty and the temptation to "sell a slovenly piece of work" ("Letter to a Young Gentleman" 10). "Le Vieux saltimbanque" is cited as a cautionary tale. The prose poem ends on words that highlight the isolation of

the old acrobat, who is misunderstood and ignored by the crowd of spectators, and in whom the narrator sees himself:

> Et, m'en retournant, obsédé par cette vision, je cherchai à analyser ma soudaine douleur, et je me dis : Je viens de voir l'image du vieil homme de lettres qui a survécu à la génération dont il fut le brillant amuseur ; du vieux poète sans amis, sans famille, sans enfants, dégradé par sa misère et par l'ingratitude publique, et dans la baraque de qui le monde oublieux ne veut plus entrer! (101)

> And, turning around, obsessed by this vision, I tried to analyse my sudden pain, and said to myself: I have seen, just now, the image of the old man of letters who has outlived the generation which he once entertained so brilliantly; the old poet devoid of friends, family, or children; degraded by poverty and public ingratitude; into whose booth the neglectful world no longer desires to enter!

The scene begs the question of the value of artistic creation in a system where public tastes are constantly shifting. What are the risks of professionalization for the saltimbanque or "literary fellow" who, according to Stevenson, needs to "gain his livelihood by pleasing others" ("Letter to a Young Gentleman " 8)? Calling back to Baudelaire's artist alone in the booth, Stevenson warns that:

> We all profess to be able to delight. […] And the day will come to each, and even to the most admired, when the ardour shall have declined and the cunning shall be lost, and he shall sit by his deserted booth ashamed. Then shall he see himself condemned to do work for which he blushes to take payment. ("Letter to a Young Gentleman" 9)

Baudelaire famously spent half of the fortune he was left by his father in less than two years, only to pass the rest of his life preoccupied by debt—not unlike Balzac before him. His life, in the end, was shaped by debt. He only reaped the rewards of his writing late in life, and then mostly in terms of reputation. In this respect, he is the embodiment of a metaphor that he uses to describe poetry, whereby poetry is "un des arts qui rapportent le plus; mais c'est une espèce de placement dont on ne touche que tard les intérêts,—en revanche très gros [one of the arts

that yields the highest profits; but it is the sort of investment that pays deferred, though very high, dividends]" ("Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" 82). While the reputational rewards for the poet are considerable in the long term—literary canonization—they do not allow the poet to earn a living. The long-term investment that the writer puts into the work of art accrues symbolic capital, but there is little economic capital to be earned in the short term. In much the same vein as Baudelaire, Stevenson also addresses the lack of immediate return on investment for writers when he comments that "the direct returns—the wages of the trade—are small, but the indirect—the wages of life—are incalculably great" ("Letter to a Young Gentleman " 6). For this reason, Stevenson advises that the writer "must look to be ill-paid" (9).

Framing impecuniousness as the natural expectation of a writer is a means of drawing attention to different types of value and to how people invest their time. This framing is part of a larger comparison between the work of artists and other types of work. Comparing the painter and the banker in "On the Choice of a Profession," Stevenson argues that

> The banker has to sit all day in his bank, a serious privation; can you not conceive that the landscape painter, whom I take to be the meanest and most lost among contemporary men, truly and deliberately *prefers* the privations on his side—to wear no gloves, to drink beer, to live on chops or even on potatoes, and lastly, not to be 'One of us'—truly and deliberately prefers his privations to those of the banker? I can. […] There is nothing so hard to get people to understand as this: That they *pay for their money*; and nothing so difficult to make them understand as this: That money, when they have it, is for most of them, at least, only a cheque to purchase pleasure. How then if a man gets pleasure in following an art? (18)

Although Stevenson's professional choices were not guided by the pursuit of money, one of his strongest desires was to be financially independent from his father. There is also a moral element to his approach to work that is missing from Baudelaire's. This undoubtedly contributed to Stevenson's belief that "the first duty in this world is for a man to pay his way; when that is quite accomplished, he may plunge into what eccentricity he likes; but emphatically not till then" ("Letter to a

Young Gentleman" 7).[3] For Stevenson, the means of fulfilling this duty was to "pay assiduous court to the bourgeois who carries the purse" (8), even though he acknowledges that "it is doubtless tempting to exclaim against the ignorant bourgeois" (7). In Stevenson's case, courting the bourgeois meant looking beyond the serial novel and the triple decker, and experimenting with different literary forms. This is much easier to do as a novelist than a poet, given the artistic hierarchies that existed at the time: novels appealed to an ever-widening public, whereas poetry appealed principally to artists.

Similarly, there is no question for Baudelaire of the artistic inferiority of popular literature; nevertheless, he urges young writers to stop railing against "logogriphes en action [logogriphs in action]" ("Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" 76-77)—serial novelists like Paul Feval and Eugène Sue. Instead, in language that evokes Newton's laws of motion, Baudelaire recommends that young writers put as much energy, talent and force into their own work as those successful novelists do, but in an equal and opposite direction:

> Allumez autant d'intérêt avec des moyens nouveaux; possédez une force égale et supérieure dans un sens contraire; doublez, triplez, quadruplez la dose jusqu'à une égale concentration, et vous n'aurez plus le droit de médire du *bourgeois*, car le *bourgeois* sera avec vous. (77)

> Arouse the same amount of interest through new means; possess an equal but superior power that is aimed in an opposite direction; double, triple, quadruple the dose until it reaches the same concentration, and you will no longer have the right to malign the *bourgeois*, for the *bourgeois* will be with you.

In the absence of independent wealth or a profession to support them, authors had to rely on book sales or journalism. The leisurely pose belies a burden to produce, sometimes quickly. As Bourdieu explains, the 1848 artistic bohemia "constitutes a veritable intellectual reserve army, directly subject to the laws of the market and often obliged to live off a second skill (sometimes with no direct relation to literature) in order to live an art that cannot make a living" (57). Abstract conceptions of dandyism and flânerie eventually confront reality. As Andrea Gogröf-

Voorhees pithily remarks, whatever his theories of art, Baudelaire "had to dirty his hands on a daily basis in the business of finding work that pays" (128). Writing for money is a reality, and Baudelaire advises young writers that "aujourd'hui il faut produire beaucoup" and "il faut vendre à tous prix" ("Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" 77); "Today you have to produce a great deal"; "you have to sell at any price"). Furthermore, writing can be laborious. Baudelaire explains that "pour écrire vite, il faut avoir beaucoup pensé,—avoir trimballé un sujet avec soi, à la promenade, au bain, au restaurant, et presque chez sa maîtresse" [to write quickly, one must have thought a great deal, have mulled a subject over while walking, bathing, eating, or even visiting your mistress]" (80). The verb "trimballer" suggests that there is physical labour involved. Idiomatically, "trimballer" can be translated as "to mull over." However, "trimballer" also suggests struggle, dragging or lugging a weight around. The work of the poet involves intellectual heft.

Professionalization made producers of artists, who were beholden to the economic laws of the marketplace, rather than visionaries inspired by the muses and supported by patrons. Indeed, Franco Moretti considers the "labour" of writing to be a defining feature of "bourgeois prose":

> It has been a great achievement, bourgeois prose—and a very *laborious* one. The absence from its universe of any concept of 'inspiration'—this gift from the gods, where ideas and results merge magically in a single instant of creation—suggests how impossible it is to imagine the medium of prose without immediately thinking of work. Linguistic work, to be sure, but of such a kind that it embodies some of the most typical features of bourgeois activity. (18)

The imperative to produce is vividly conveyed in Baudelaire's "Comment on paie ses dettes quand on a du génie,"which describes a frantic Balzac trying to put off his creditors by contracting to write anonymous newspaper columns, and then paying a hack writer to come up with the goods by the deadline the following morning (31-35). Toil, cunning, and business acumen, not luck, are the norm, but there is no guarantee that hard work will pay off—in the end, Baudelaire's saltimbanque is ignored by the public, whose tastes have changed. The value of the

work of art therefore lies elsewhere, namely in the artistic labour itself, as is suggested by Stevenson's distinction between the "wages of life" and the "wages of trade." In this sense, there is a shift from what Roland Barthes calls the "valeur-usage" to the "valeur-travail"—a shift away from the product of the labour (*works* of art: books, poems, paintings) to the act of production. Barthes frames this as literature facing "a problem of self-justification": "Writing is now to be saved not by virtue of what it exists for, but thanks to the work it cost" (62-63).

In this respect, Baudelaire and Stevenson participate in what has been called a "Flaubertization" (Barthes 66) of literature, wherein "there is a kind of ostentation in claiming to labour long and lovingly over the form of one's work" (63). Flaubert's ostentation verged on a fetishization of work, which is not the case for Baudelaire and Stevenson, for whom leisure and idleness are key. Nonetheless, as Stevenson points out, most of the effort that goes into achieving a literary end is for the benefit of the writer rather than the reader: "The public knows little or nothing of those merits in the quest of which you are condemned to spend the bulk of your endeavours" ("Letter to a Young Gentleman" 6), and this is something that Flaubert was more than aware of.

Baudelaire and Stevenson both assign value to the intellectual labour of the artist, insofar as it justifies an emphasis on form and style—art for art's sake. This approach validates the artist's labour over the artistic output and reception in a system built on production and exchange. It also makes of writing a legitimate occupation and dignifies the labour by aligning writers with other labourers, which is reflected in Stevenson's advice:

> What you may decently expect, if you have some talent and much industry, is such an income as a clerk will earn with a tenth or perhaps a twentieth of your nervous output. Nor have you the right to look for more; in the wages of the life, not in the wages of the trade, lies your reward; the work is here the wages. It will be seen I have little sympathy with the common lamentations of the artist class. Perhaps they do not remember the hire of the field labourer; or do they think no parallel will lie? Perhaps they have never observed what is the retiring allowance of a field officer; or do they suppose their contributions to the arts of pleasing more important than the services of a colonel? Perhaps they forget on how little Millet was content to live; or do they think,

> because they have less genius, they stand excused from the display of equal virtues? ("Letter to a Young Gentleman" 10)

Frugality is presented as a virtue, although not necessarily one that either man practiced. The work ethic described here is conscious of market forces, but neither Baudelaire-the-flâneur nor Stevenson-the-bohemian adventurer can be accused of "selling out" to the public as they "court the bourgeois." Indeed, the accusation would be totally misplaced for Baudelaire. Stevenson's work in highly readable short forms opens him up to accusations of selling out, but the emphasis he places on style and literary technique as well as the labour that goes into aesthetic creation enable him to maintain artistic integrity.

In their advice, Baudelaire and Stevenson both directly address the value of intellectual labour when the financial rewards of this intellectual labour are minimal. Baudelaire remarks: "Il y a des jeunes gens qui disent: 'Puisque cela ne vaut que si peu, pourquoi se donner tant de mal?' [There are young men who say: 'Since it pays so little, why give oneself so much trouble?']". To this, Baudelaire answers:

> Ils auraient pu livrer de *la meilleure ouvrage*; et dans ce cas, ils n'eussent été volés que par la nécessité actuelle, par la loi de la nature; ils se sont volés eux-mêmes; —mal payés, ils eussent put y trouver de l'honneur; mal payés ils se sont déshonorés. ("Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" 77-78)

> They could have produced *better work*; and had they done so, they would have been robbed only by their present needs, by the law of nature; instead, they have robbed themselves; poorly paid, they could still have found honour therein; instead, poorly paid, they have dishonoured themselves.[4]

The literary work ethic presented by Baudelaire and Stevenson is anchored in the honour of the artist. Indeed, Stevenson echoes Baudelaire's sentiments when he advises aspiring authors that "the artist works entirely upon honour," and that

> if you are to continue to be a law to yourself [labouring for the pleasure you take from the labour], you must beware of the first signs of laziness. This idealism in honesty can only be supported by perpetual effort; the standard is

> easily lowered, the artist who says, "It will do," is on the downward path. ("Letter to a Young Gentleman" 6)

Baudelaire's approach to writerly work has been called a "dilettante work ethic: working for the reward and profit of the work alone" (Hibbett 143). This interpretation captures the gratification of authors who are able to "take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake" (Stevenson, "An Apology for Idlers" 56), but it understates the extent to which writers like Baudelaire and Stevenson positioned creative artists as productive participants in the literary marketplace. Although the advice to "court the bourgeois" appears to condone sacrificing artistic integrity at the altar of bourgeois tastes, Baudelaire and Stevenson satisfy both elements, managing to maintain that much sought-after middle ground. This is an odd position for two men who were models for fin de siècle aesthetes, and whether they followed their own advice is another matter altogether. Literary history has paid Baudelaire his dividends, but while Stevenson started to earn towards the end of his career, his literary-historical position has been much more ambiguous than Baudelaire's, which may be due at least in part to his attempts to work the crowd while writing for the pleasure of writing.

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NOTES

[1]Translations are my own.

[2]Stevenson owned volumes 1 and 4 of Baudelaire's *Œuvres complètes*: see EdRLS: Stevenson's Library Database: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1rc3AAewcQcFenSx-TUztpnzVKYugiuF5iWp7oDgTGzvo/edit?gid=0#gid=0. "Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs" was published in volume 3: *L'Art romantique*. It seems likely that Stevenson read *L'Art romantique* based on his comments about Pierre Dupont (Ashley 7).

[3]Also: "there is much in this question of money; and for my part, I believe no young man ought to be at peace till he is self-supporting, and has an open, clear life of it on his own foundation" (Stevenson, "On the Choice of a Profession" 17).

[4]It is notable that Baudelaire's formulation uses the language of craft—"ouvrage"—foreshadowing the connections between aestheticism and the Arts and Craft movement in late nineteenth-century Britain.

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