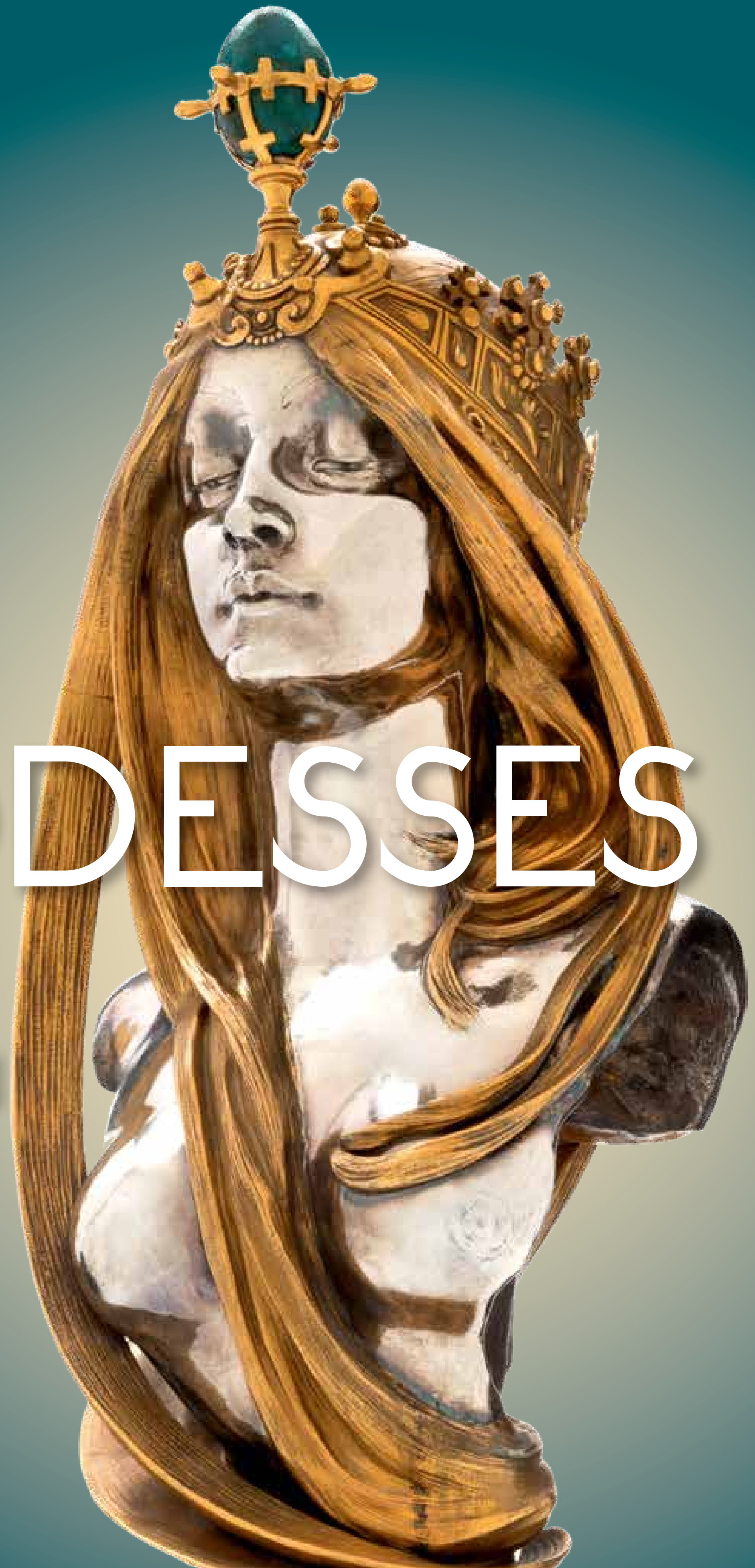
GODDESSES

OF ART NOUVEAU



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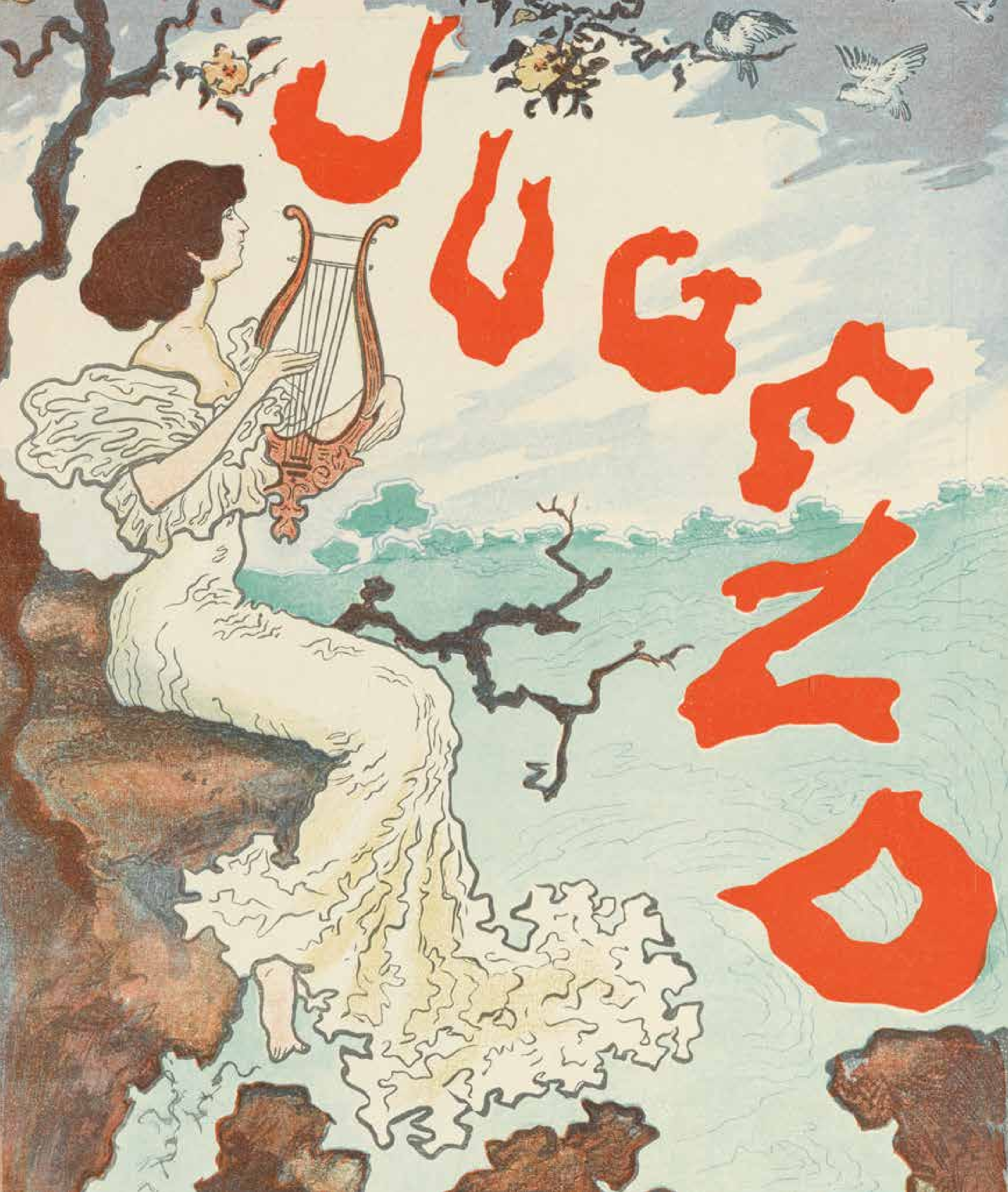

JUGEND

LAURENCE DANGUY

THE GRAPHIC REVOLUTION

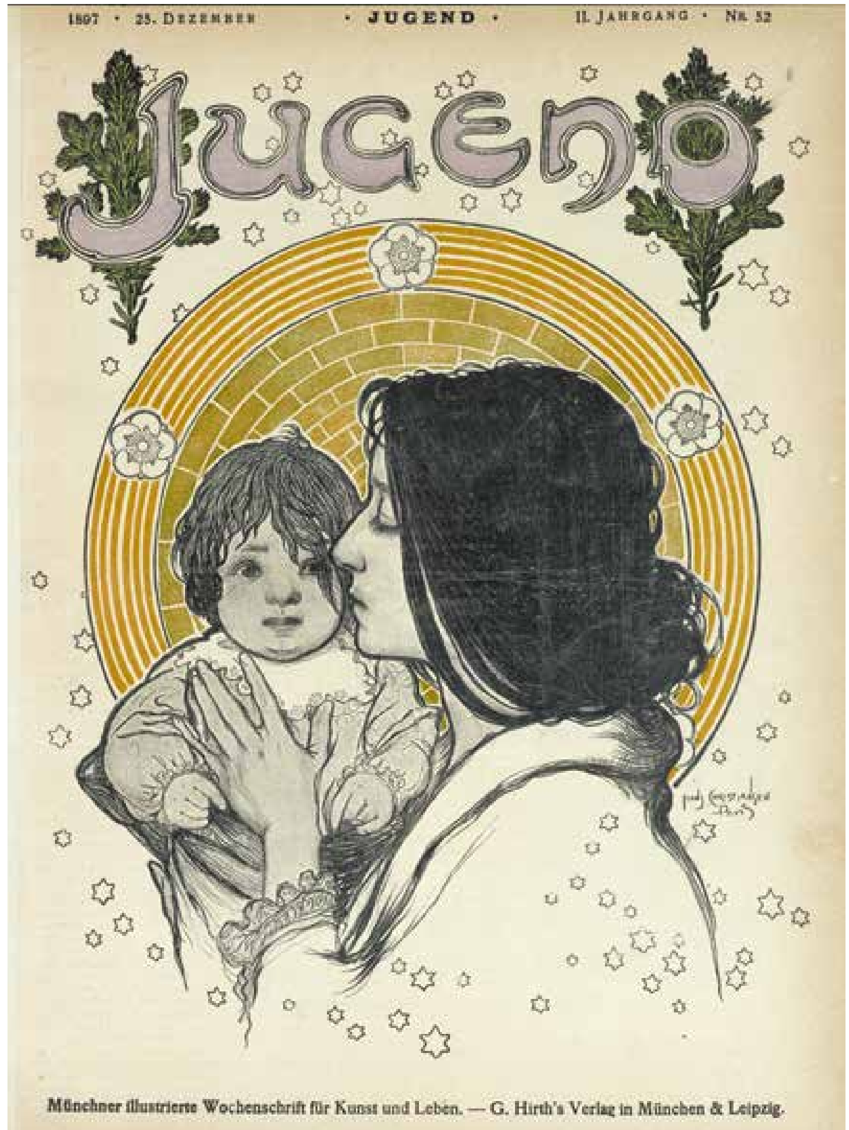
Images of the Jugendstil Woman

Around 1900, Europe's illustrated press was stormed by a revolution whose origins lay in the Pre-Raphaelite movement, fifty years earlier (see also p. 157). This brotherhood of painters, poets, sculptors and art critics, founded in deepest secrecy in Victorian England in 1848, constituted the first British avant-garde. Its members—the most renowned nowadays are Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), John Everett Millais (1829–1896), and William Holman Hunt (1827–1910)—spurned the Victorian canon in favour of a more authentic art, as in their opinion had existed before the Renaissance painter Raphael (1483–1520). Their quest for authenticity and idealisation of the Middle Ages led them to reject the distinction between minor and major arts, practice ancient techniques on all kinds of materials, and revise dominant iconographic codes. They aimed to change the way of representing, the way a work of art was created, and the way it was positioned in the hierarchy of the arts. Although their aspirations varied and their theoretical positions were sometimes fluid, their break with aesthetic and artistic conventions was the beginning of a series of conflicts with academic art in Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe. And so, from the 1860s but even more from the 1880s, Pre-Raphaelitism enabled laying a new foundation for the graphic arts in Britain with the Arts and Crafts movement led by the art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) and the designer William Morris (1834–1896). These developments were followed by a renewal of pictorial language in France and Belgium starting in the 1880s with the Symbolist movement and the more or less parallel emergence of art nouveau. The latter was to spread throughout Europe, reshaping architecture, decorative objects, monumental painting, and the graphic arts. Whether they favoured painting as Symbolism did, or the graphic arts as the Arts and Crafts movement and art nouveau did, what these different movements had in common was a new concept of the book and its illustration, revision of the common codes of imagery, and rejection of historical painting and the genre pieces that dominated nineteenth-century art. Around 1900, the illustrated press was next in line for the graphic revolution.

Japonising picture of a muse, one of the traditional types of women that play an important part in Jugendstil iconography. Maurice Radiguet, cover for the magazine *Jugend, Münchner illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben*, 12 June 1897.

NEW IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

The vigorous fresh approach in the arts had its consequences for the depiction of women as the new movements presented the female figure in an unedited way, either by associating it with modernised and often eroticised genre scenes or by using it as a decorative figure, or combining those two approaches. These depictions build on various traditions: manuscript illumination, religious iconography, allegory, emblems and genre scenes, but non-European art as well, particularly through Japonism. These traditions are adapted to the cultural context in the process: in fact the image of woman is always linked to societal schemes of depiction. This link is especially strong in art-nouveau aestheticism, which is subject to strong acculturation processes that translate into the specific name that each country gives to its own brand of 'new art': art nouveau in France, Jugendstil in Germany, Sezessionsstil in Austria, Nieuwe Kunst in the Netherlands, Modern Style in Great Britain, Liberty in Italy. Accordingly, the illustrations appearing in magazines show the varying depictions of women that were customary in a given cultural area. The spectrum of these images is furthermore determined by the magazine's editorial position, where it is published, its readership, and the editor's and illustrators' personalities. Thus during the same period we find different images of woman in a German family magazine such as *Die Gartenlaube*, a Paris periodical with a male readership such as *Le Courrier français*, and artistic magazines connected to a certain movement, such as *Ver sacrum* (Vienna Secession) or *Pan* (Berlin Secession). The differences manifest on an aesthetic level, through the style, and on a representational level, through the types of women that are represented. Some illustrated magazines, because of their positioning, offer a particularly broad panorama of female imagery, both in aesthetic and in representational terms.

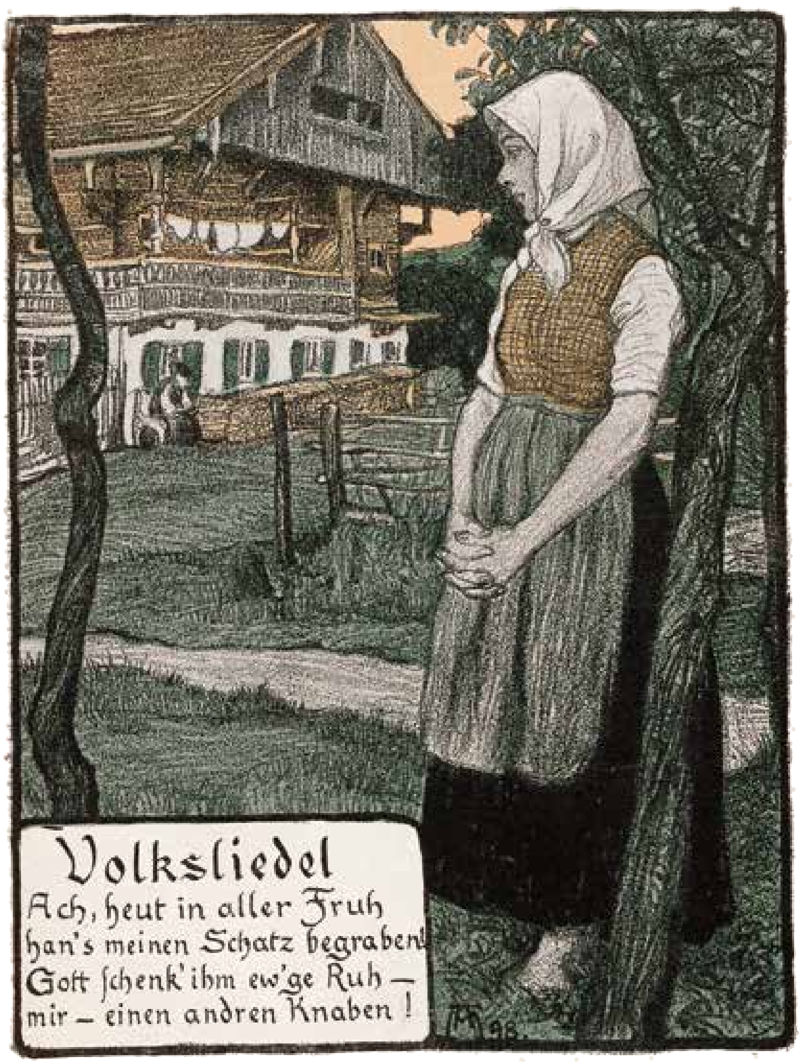


The Madonna iconography is crystal clear on the cover of the Christmas issue of 1897, including the halo. Hans Christiansen, cover for *Jugend*, 25 December 1897.

This is the case with the Munich magazine *Jugend*, which covers different editorial, aesthetic, political and societal segments, targets a broad readership, and has international influence.

MUNICH'S ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY FOR ART AND LIFE

Jugend, Münchner illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben (*Youth: Munich Illustrated Weekly for Art and Life*) had considerable influence at the turn of the twentieth century. It was first published in 1896, four months earlier than the equally famous Munich periodical *Simplicissimus*; the latter, however, specialised in caricature and does not offer the same panorama of representations of women. Under the reign of Luitpold, prince regent of the Kingdom of Bavaria (r. 1886–1912), its capital Munich was an important artistic and publishing centre that competed with Berlin and Paris. This creative activity met the expectations of a cultivated bourgeoisie that saw culture and art as part of its social identity. *Jugend*, printed in a format much like our A4 (30 × 23 cm, to be precise), presented a mix of text and images ranging from illustrated fable to caricature. Its aim was to be open to all the artistic novelties without accepting a hierarchy of genres, and to celebrate freedom of expression at all times. The magazine had anti-Kaiser, liberal and patriotic tendencies that are seen in other German journals of this period as well. Every week a new, satirical cover in colour set the tone: an innovation that symbolised *Jugend*'s ambition to keep fresh. An impressive number of German and foreign writers and illustrators worked for the magazine, often based in Munich but also elsewhere in Europe. Widely distributed in German-speaking countries and elsewhere (Italy and France, most notably), it was an instant success with a minority group of the bourgeoisie that had doubts about the values of Wilhelm II's Germany and its claim to an official art congruent with the conservative teaching programme of the art academies. *Jugend*'s modernist position was seductive; its extraordinary longevity—it appeared until 1940—amid the host of periodicals existing in Germany at the time was due to a combination of audacity, willingness to compromise, and aggressive commercial policies.



A mourning mother in a rural setting, an example of *Heimatkunst*: regional art celebrating the 'homeland'. Adolf Münzer, *Volksliedel (Folk Song)*, illustration in *Jugend*, 17 December 1889.

In 1910 the magazine reached its peak, numerically speaking, with 80,000 copies. Its importance can also be measured by the influence it had on other European and even American periodicals. *Jugend* was closely linked to Jugendstil (the German art nouveau) and promoted its aesthetics, but it was more than that. In fact the weekly connected with several editorial traditions: caricature, satirical and

humorist journals, literary reviews, art magazines, and family periodicals. Not only did it represent various forms of expression, some of which presented a rather conventional image of women, but the Jugendstil seen on its pages was a Munich version, a continuation of the Munich Secession of 1892. The first *Jugend* editor, Georg Hirth (1841–1916), incidentally played an active part in positioning Jugendstil as a dissident aesthetic opposed to academic art: he hosted a forum championing a free art in his newspaper, *Münchner neueste Nachrichten*.

FEMINIST VIEWS—AND THE PICTURES?

Jugend is particularly interesting as an observatory of images of women, because the editor uses its pages to promote women's emancipation—a rarity in the press at the time, even if some commercial opportunism cannot be ruled out. This stance in Wilhelm II's Germany indeed implied incisive criticism of the highly conservative values that shackled women to their role as keepers of the home with the well-known formula of the triple K: *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church). Opposition to these values meant taking the line of the militant feminists preaching full citizenship for women, access to higher education, and equal rights; Georg Hirth in fact chimed in with these demands. From the first year *Jugend* was printed, 1896, several editorials appeared in which he vigorously defended equal rights for both sexes, including recognition and valorisation of women's intellectual capacities and therefore their access to a university education, while denouncing as ridiculous the theories on the inferiority of the female brain. In a 1901 editorial Hirth went so far as to declare that he considered it quite possible that the new century on a global level would see the solution to the 'women's question', no less. A year earlier, in an editorial titled 'The German Women's Question', he had linked the struggle to the negative influence of religion. In the same text he stated that to him it was not just a matter of principle, because there were many women who worked for *Jugend*. One might well ask, of course, whether it was a real job for these women or rather an occupation with a societal value but hardly any remuneration, unable to guarantee any kind of financial independence.

In several of his editorials, Hirth expressed the view that the nude was part of women's emancipation: a view that, although perhaps

A female angel representing autumn, symbolised by a rural landscape with apple trees. Bernhard Pankok, *Herbst* (*Autumn*), illustration in *Jugend*, 14 November 1896.

The image of women in *Jugend* was created by men for a readership consisting of men. This figure on the cover, holding two theatre masks, plays the role of a product meant to attract customers. Fritz Erler, cover of *Jugend*, 16 July 1898.

>> Sandro Botticelli, *La nascita di Venere* (*The Birth of Venus*), c.1484–1486. Tempera on canvas, 172.5 × 278.9 cm. Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence.

sincere, was bound to seduce many men. If we look at the images of women in *Jugend*, we can only conclude that the spectrum of representation is far from coinciding with Hirth's editorials, which were quite emancipatory for his time (except the comments on the nude). In reality, the image of women in the magazine is essentially a male product, created by men for a readership consisting of men, who alone were able to afford a subscription.

MADONNAS AND MUSES

One of the principal types of women that are depicted is the 'Madonna', which was broadly propagated and reinforced by contemporary German family periodicals that turned it into a role model for housewives, the 'triple-K' women. In *Jugend*, this type is found in pictures of a traditional design as well as in those with purely Jugendstil aesthetics. It can be discovered everywhere in the magazine: in vignettes, illustrations, and numerous covers. In most cases the young woman is presented with little or no context and merges into a motherhood ideal without further social indication. The pictures are full of visual pointers associating the woman with a Madonna: only her upper body is depicted, a small child is placed at face level, she has a halo or lilies to symbolise Mary's virginity. Hans Christiansen's (1866–1945) cover for Christmas 1897 is a good example. In a minority of these pictures the type is contextualised, e.g., as a peasant wearing traditional mourning for her deceased child, as the poem at the bottom tells us. This picture in *Jugend* heralds the first populist excesses of the *Heimatkunst*, a regional art celebrating the 'homeland'. This variation on the Madonna type, still marginal around 1900, became dominant toward the beginning of the First World War, replacing the Jugendstil women and becoming part of a conservative propaganda that was to be the norm during the Third Reich. In the elegant style of Fidus (Hugo Hoppenheimer (1868–1948), who, incidentally, would become a standard-bearer of Nazi aesthetics) this Madonna takes the shape of a nude, androgynous virgin with hair like fire, walking on a ball. The illustration, based on the iconography of the Holy Virgin standing on a globe, firmly anchors *Jugend* in the cult of youth and nature.

Another traditional type is that of the muse, based on the nine goddesses of arts and scien-

< A naked femme fatale taming a monstrous snake that is coiling around her. Hans Christiansen, cover of *Jugend*, 26 November 1898.

^ Medallion portrait reminiscent of portrait art from the early 19th century. Angelo Jank, cover of *Jugend*, 19 March 1898.

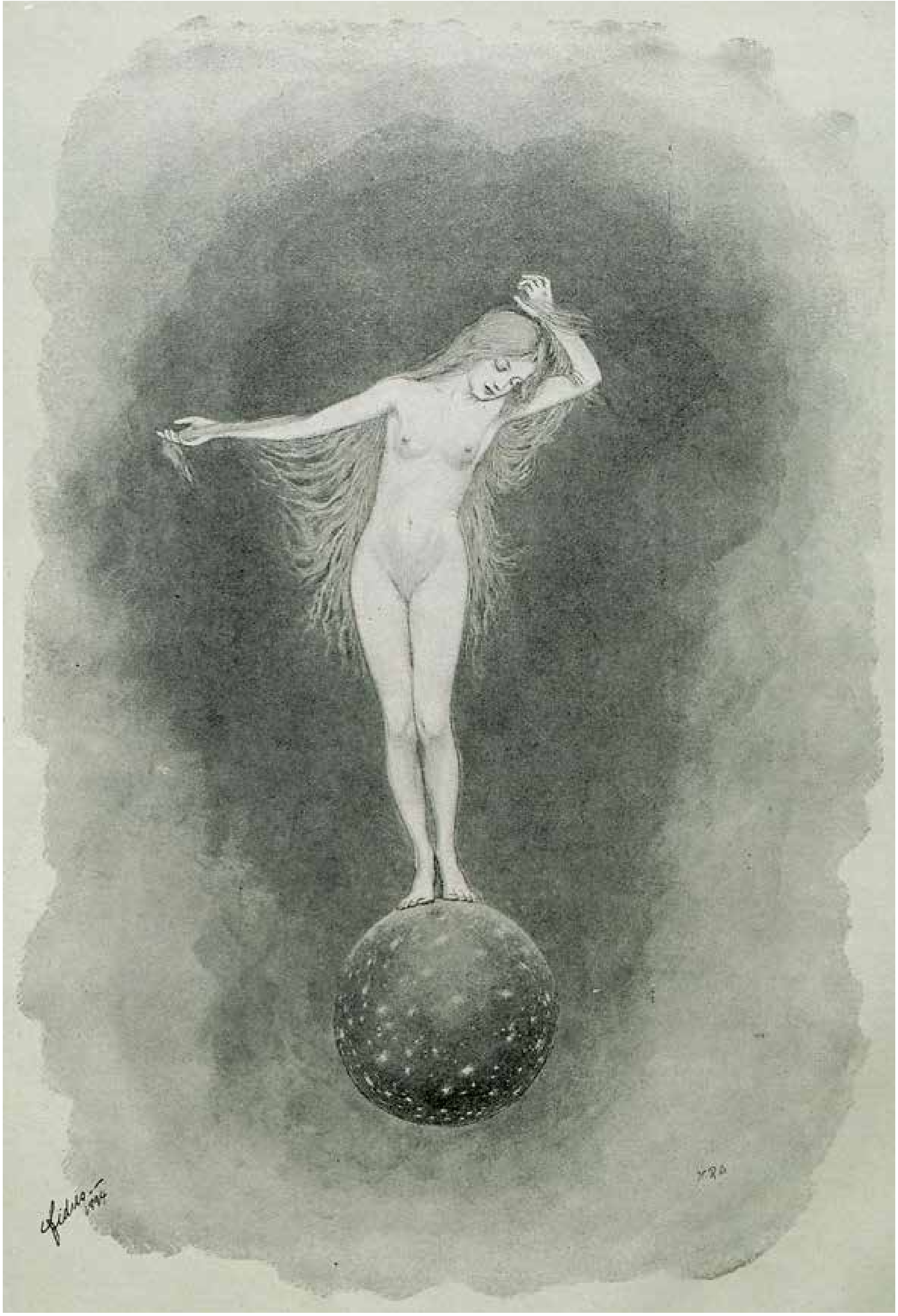
ces in Greek mythology. This type is ideologically close to that of the Madonna but by contrast is seen only in Jugendstil illustrations, and mostly on covers. Maurice Radiguet (1866–1941), a French artist who worked for several Paris periodicals, provided a Japonising version in which a bare-footed young woman in an immaculate frilly dress leans against a tree strewn with pink blossoms as little birds flock in. From her lyre come the letters of *Jugend*, floating over a green landscape (see p. 58). Her role is to inspire the magazine's artists. The cover testifies to the connection between Jugendstil and the French art nouveau, which abounds with Japonising muses dressed in white, not nude as those in *Jugend* often are. Sometimes this muse gets wings, transforming her into an angel. Then her function is to symbolise a natural element in the *Jugend* universe: rain or autumn, as in an illustration by Bernhard Pankok (1872–1943) titled *Herbst* (*Autumn*, p. 54). The surrounding apple trees and the figures in the background suggest a garden of Eden as well as a medieval world, both elements of the Jugendstil world of ideas.

A MODERN NYMPH, OR THE TAMING OF THE FEMME FATALE

Even if it does not cover the whole spectrum of representations, one type of woman draws a clear mean line through *Jugend* that signifies a clean break with the codes of academy art. In fact the Jugendstil woman inevitably differs from the bourgeois or aristocratic type in official portraits and family scenes as well as from the goddesses and voluptuous allegorical figures of traditionalist painting. A cover by Angelo Jank (1868–1940) that rejuvenates portrait art illustrates this beautifully. This young woman has no need for finery or frills. She is a modern nymph who evolves together with the elves, butterflies, water plants and other natural motifs of the Jugendstil universe. This type is ubiquitous in the magazine, albeit with varying degrees of valorisation: full-size on the cover, which functions as a display; in the vignettes that constitute a visual punctuation in the text; in independent illustrations; in some caricatures, even. Its contextualisation is strictly limited to the Jugendstil universe: a mineral and aquatic world of mythical and dreamlike images, a golden age. In accordance with Georg Hirth's defence of the nude, this figure on the cover plays the role of a product meant to attract customers. In an allusion to Sandro Botticelli's widely known *Birth of Venus* (1484–85), she rises from the water, dressed only in her flowing hair; she holds two theatre masks with red ribbons in the same colour as the garland she is wearing. The mask is a recurring motif in *Jugend*, functioning as a mark of Socratic irony and an allusion to the popular phrase 'take off the mask' (*die Maske abnehmen*), referring to a desire for truth. This woman doesn't have a value of her own, she is a mouthpiece transmitting the message of her attributes. In a caricature on the Dreyfus affair by Josef Witzel (1867–1924) that is the epitome of the capricious lines of Jugendstil, she becomes an entranced oracle in a sombre flowing *peplos* and sandals, sitting on a tripod. The tripod (*Dreifuß*) is a play on the name of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the central character in a scandal that shook France and Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, and it is the tripod that gives the woman her reason to exist: through it, she indicates that no one knows what the outcome of the affair will be. The title, 'Another Dreyfus Affair' (*Auch eine Dreifuß-Affäre*), is nonetheless ambiguous, since the word *Affäre* can also mean a sexual affair and gives this seductive young woman a sexual connotation.

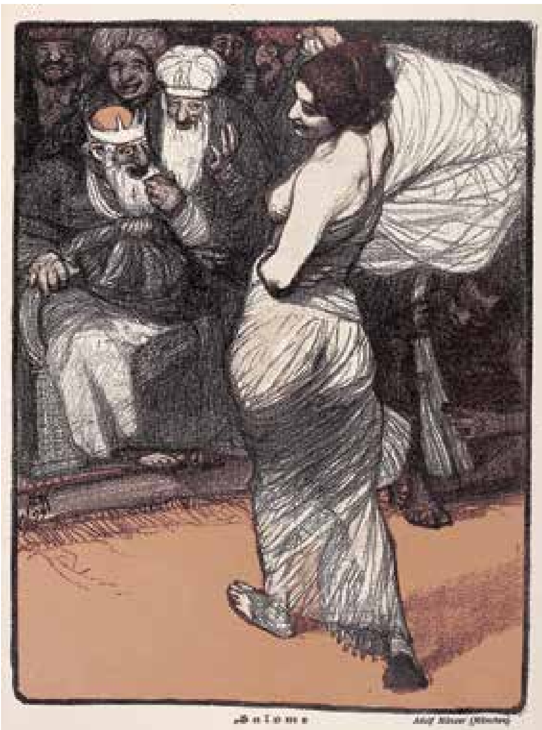
>> John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851–52. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 111.8 cm. Tate Britain, London.

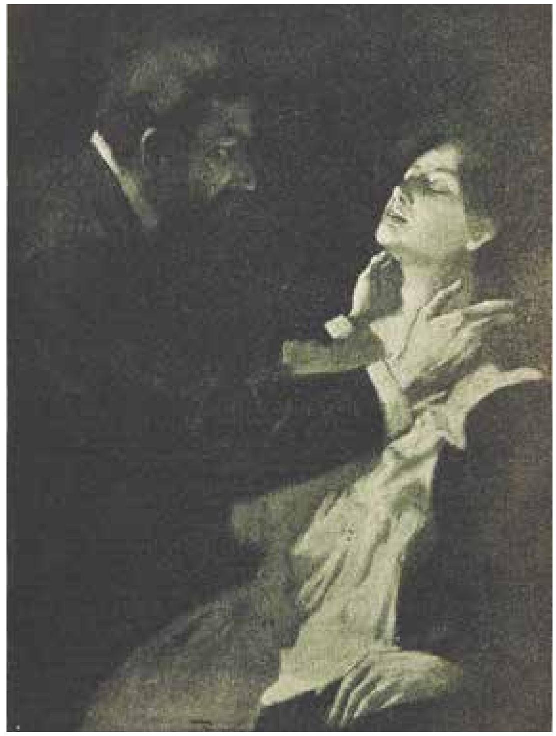
The tree of life with its many branches is merged with a naked woman standing in a marsh. Bernhard Pankok, illustration in *Jugend*, 24 October 1896.



A surprising combination of traditional Madonna imagery and a nude, androgynous acrobat typical of art nouveau's idealisation of youth. Fidus (aka Hugo Hoppenheimer), *Die Kugelläuferin (Acrobat on Ball)*, illustration in *Jugend*, 9 May 1896.

>The Dreyfus Affair was a political and anti-Semitic scandal that shocked France and Europe. When reports of an army cover-up and Dreyfus's possible innocence were leaked to the press in 1896, this caricature was published in *Jugend*. Josef Witzel, *Auch eine Dreifuß-Affäre (Another Tripod/Dreyfus Affair)*, illustration in *Jugend*, 12 December 1896.





<< Salome dancing for King Herod was a popular theme among fin-de-siècle artists. This illustration however focuses both on the spectators and the dancer. Adolf Münzer, *Salome*, illustration in *Jugend*,4 November 1899.

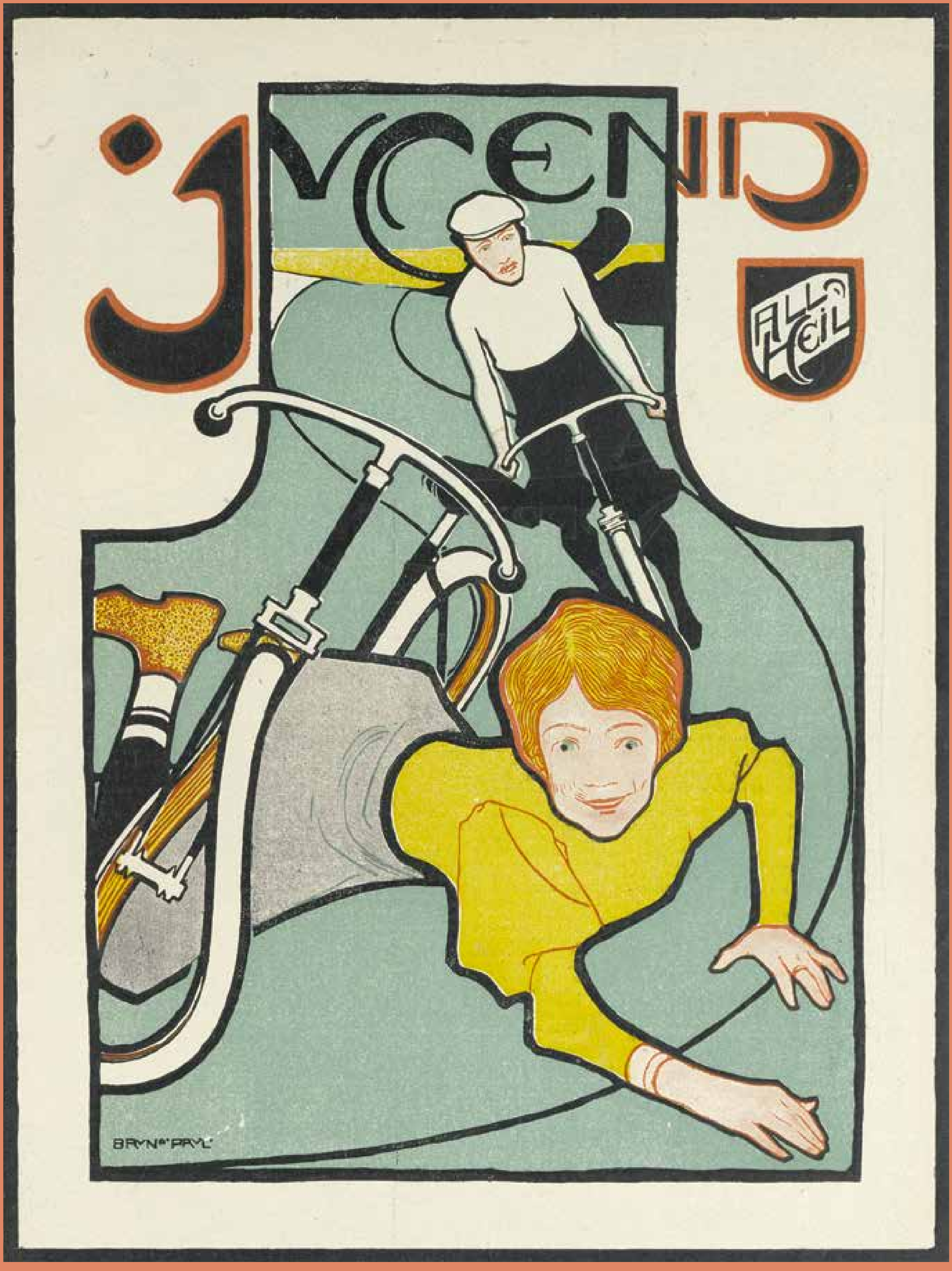
Since ancient times women were diagnosed with 'hysteria', and in the 19th century hypnosis was used as treatment. The theme is used as a pretext for an eroticised representation. During the 20th century, as psychiatry advanced in the West, anxiety and depression diagnoses began to replace hysteria diagnoses. Ferdinand Freiherr von Reznicek, *Hypnose*, illustration in *Jugend*, 5 December 1896.

The nymph-like type in fact goes back to that of the femme-fatale which was so popular in Pre-Raphaelitism, Symbolism and the Viennese Secession, especially with Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). In the Jugendstil the femme-fatale type occurs less often, but her presence is notable nonetheless. In *Jugend*, the woman taming a giant snake or monster does not convey any unrest: it is her serene control, connected with water and sometimes taking the shape of a Siren, which takes centre-stage. Some representations, on the other hand, such as a vignette by Bernhard Pankok (p. 57), do preserve the type's troubling nature. The illustration is indebted to the English artist Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898, see Bink's contribution) for the black-and-white as well as for a terse yet capricious style, and of course to Millais's famous *Ophelia*. Although the numerous Salomes hark back to the femme-fatale type, they are above all a pretext for a graphical rephrasing of a theme from religious iconography taken up by the Symbolists. They also serve an unsavoury political purpose by exaggerating the Semite traits of the men drooling over Salome. By contrast, another femme-fatale type is firmly anchored in modernity: a 'hysterical' woman being treated by a hypnotist. Hypnosis was quite the thing in bourgeois city circles at the time.

MODERN, UNNATURAL, AND DISREPUTABLE WOMEN

Jugend's modern woman is a cyclist more than anything, shown on the cover as an echo of the emancipation that was starting in society. Wearing the rational dress (*Reformkleidung*) that signals emancipation, this young woman — practically all women in *Jugend* are young — keeps smiling, even when she falls off her bicycle. Admittedly she was ahead of her male companion in the background, but he keeps his balance, and there are two negative messages underlying this apparent praise of modern women. The first is conveyed by the scene's dynamics: it's dangerous for women to try to

> *Jugend*'s modern woman is a cyclist more than anything, shown on this ambiguous cover as a comment on the emancipation that was starting in society. Bruno Paul, cover of *Jugend*, 29 August 1896.


JUGEND
ALL HEIL
BRUN PAUL

<< A highly fashionable young woman she gazes at a poster for *Jugend* featuring a woman who is her mirror image. The illustration alludes to the world of prostitution. Oskar Graf, cover of *Jugend*, 3 December 1898.

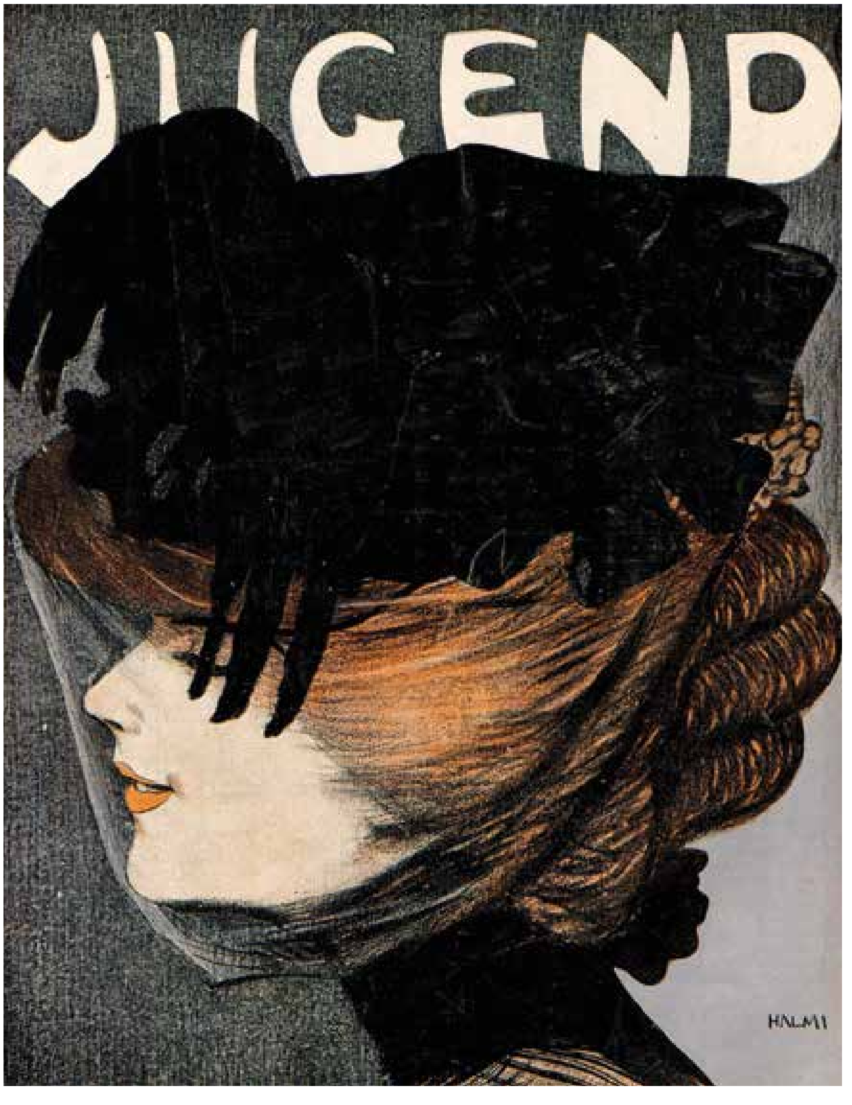
^ Édouard Manet, *Un bar aux Folies Bergère*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 96 x 130 cm. Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

take the lead and overtake the men. The second message can be gleaned from the composition: the woman is spread out over the width of the picture and becomes a visual double for the title, *Jugend*. She is an allegory for the magazine, representing it in the flesh, and is of no consequence herself. *Jugend* has many such aesthetically accomplished images containing a similar message.

One of these pictures, an 1898 cover, deserves a closer look. In the middle of a busy public space a highly fashionable young woman is looking at an advertising column or *Litfaßsäule*. We see her in profile as she gazes at a poster for *Jugend* featuring a woman who is her mirror image and whose body is crossed by a band inscribed '*Jugend*': the *mise en abyme* (copying an image within itself) that the magazine's artists loved so much. In the background we see a well-dressed man to the right of her, just like there is in the poster. The woman's extravagant hat cuts the title band in two. Like many others, the woman acquires an allegorical dimension. Contemporary readers will have recognised the reference to a famous painting by Édouard Manet, *Un bar aux Folies Bergère* (1881–82), which shows an exchange between a waitress and a client in a Paris variety bar that was a well-known meeting place. The woman's outfit, her hat in particular, certainly are too ostentatious for a 'respectable woman'. So the illustration alludes to the world of prostitution; the fact that it is on the cover, associated with the title, and the lightness of the presentation all suggest a favourable view of commercial sex. This is confirmed by a series of covers playing with the iconographical similarities between the prostitute and the widow, although the former can be recognised by her all too elegant hat, uncovered shoulders, and painted lips.

Caricature is even more savage against women, e.g. in Julius Diez's (1870–1957) *Die gelehrte Frau (frei nach Holbeins Erasmus)* (*The Learned Woman (adapted from Holbein's Erasmus)*). Referring to Molière's *Les Femmes savantes* (*The Learned Women*, 1672), Diez builds on the

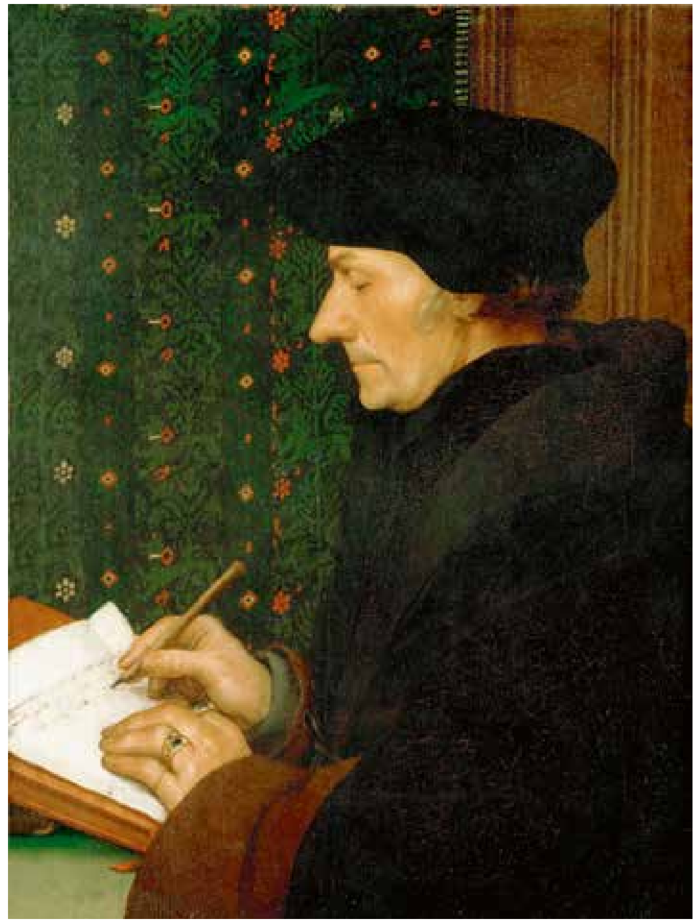
One of a series of covers playing with the visual similarities between widows and prostitutes. This woman's all too elegant hat, uncovered shoulders, and painted lips suggests that she is 'in the business'. Artur Halmi, cover of *Jugend*, 29 April 1899.



famous portrait of Erasmus that Hans Holbein the Younger painted in 1523. The portrait is surrounded by motifs and little scenes mingling references to Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times. They constitute a narrative structure in which every motif and scene has its counterpart in a game of visual symmetry. In the upper frieze, a female teacher is addressing her pupils in a scene modelled on those in medieval manuscripts depicting a class in the liberal arts or theology. The frieze at the bottom corresponds to it: the same teacher has cooked so badly that Death itself flees before her. Between the pillars flanking the portrait, decorated with little devils, there runs a clothesline and a broom is propped against the right one. Top left, a baby is pulling a rope while Pan, god of nature, pulls at the other end of a cradle holding Eros, god of love, his genitals exposed as the cradle is almost overturned. This scene is mirrored at the bottom of the picture, where a female and a male satyr are in a fistfight. These narrative motifs revolve around three subjects: learning, femininity, and the home. The visual programme leaves no doubt about the message that woman's learning is unnatural and a menace to femininity, the home, and harmony between the sexes. The conclusion is crystal clear: learning must be the domain of men. The numerous pictures of reading women engrossed in a novel or a letter—or in this case, the contemplation of their own image—do not contradict this.

CONCLUSION

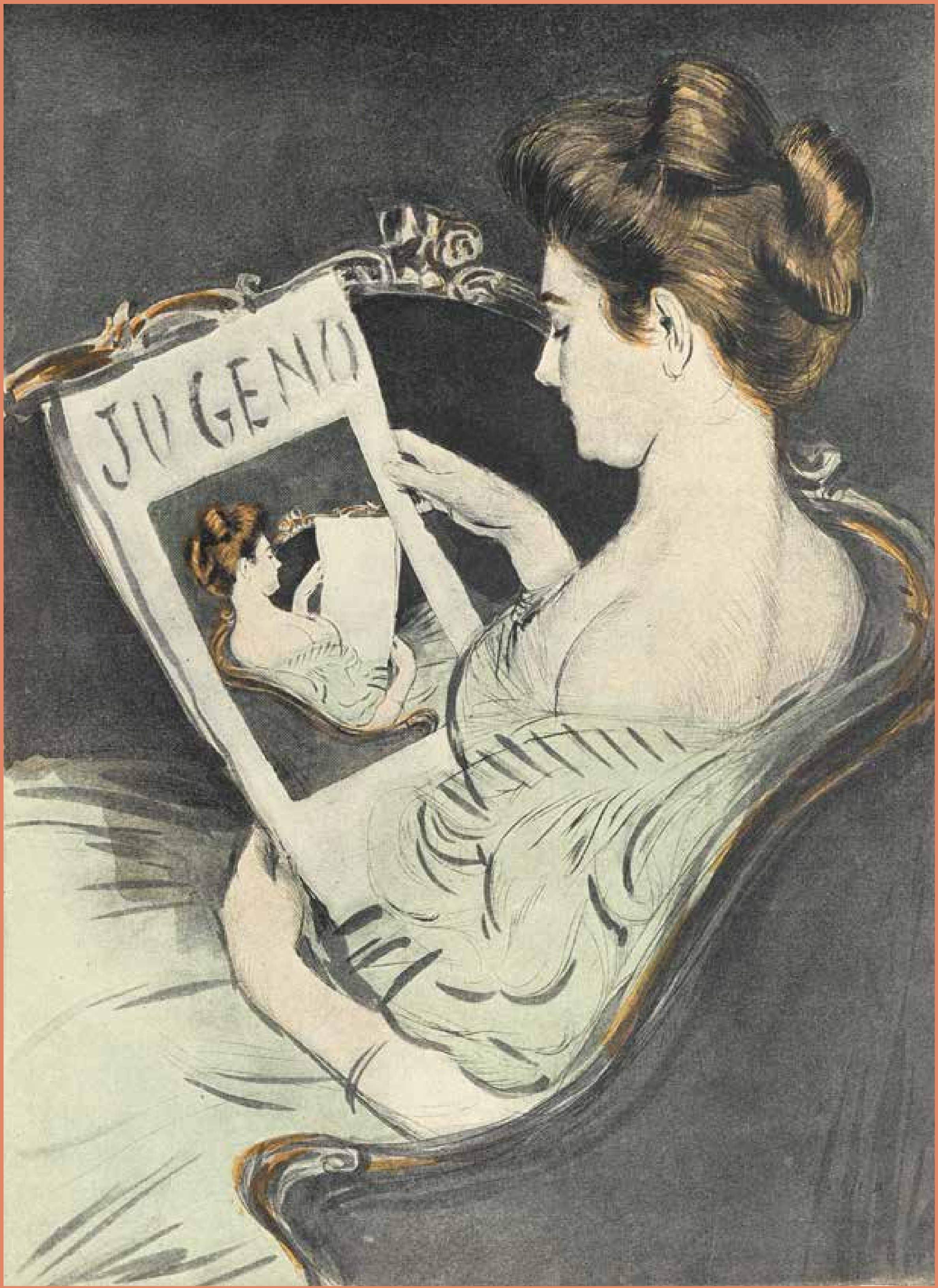
At the turn of the twentieth century the image of women in *Jugend* springs from three archetypes that haunted the nineteenth century: the Madonna, the muse, and the seductress. The Madonna type, associated with the home, enters into a competition with the femme-fatale, proving the dominance of the domestic model in German society. Despite the publisher's feminist views, the emancipated woman dissolves into an allegory



associated with reactionary content. This allegory is most often linked to the concept of youth in which the Jugendstil is founded. A seductive but harmless creature, this woman is fresh, young, happy, and eventually void. If she strays from her traditional role by engaging in sports, work or intellectual pursuits, she risks her femininity. In fact this modern woman conveys the views of feminism's opponents. So this woman will not enjoy any real education nor have a profession, as these are stubbornly denied her by images that ignore these subjects, while the female proletariat is a social reality and real women are gaining access to the professions of lawyer, doctor and teacher, albeit still in merely symbolic numbers. Prostitution, a massive reality in the big cities, likewise hardly gets any attention—something which distinguishes *Jugend* from other European periodicals, especially the French ones. Possibly the representation of commercial sex ran into censorship in Wilhelm II's Germany. In the end, *Jugend* stuck to representing the traditional female types, although they are often veiled by Jugendstil aesthetics. The main driving forces behind these pictures that were made for the section of German society that was supposedly the most enlightened, still were those of fantasy, domination, and idealisation.

<< This caricature leaves no doubt about the message that woman's learning is unnatural and a menace to femininity, the home, and harmony between the sexes. Julius Diez, *Die gelehrte Frau (frei nach Holbeins Erasmus)* (*The Learned Woman (adapted from Holbein's Erasmus)*), illustration in *Jugend*, 4 July 1896.

Hans Holbein the Younger, *Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus Writing*, 1523. Oil on panel, 43 x 33 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Women could be engrossed in novels, magazines, or their own portrait, but in the *Jugend* universe learning must be the domain of men. Paul Helleu, cover of *Jugend*, 21 November 1896.