



# Tristan Corbière and the Poetics of Irony (Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs)

*Katherine Lunn-Rockliffe*

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Tristan Corbière is often viewed as the archetypal *poète maudit*, a misunderstood rebel and bohemian prankster. This is a study of the poet's innovative use of language. It uses the critical tool of irony to analyze his idiosyncratic verse, showing how he contributed to the general revolution in poetic language that marked the 1870s in France. Corbière's poetry pushed the ironic element in Baudelaire to its limit and exerted an important influence on Laforgue, Pound, and Eliot. It played a key role in the ironic tradition of Symbolism which is often overshadowed by the "pure" poetry of contemporaries like Mallarmé.

Using close textual readings of poems from *Les Amours jaunes* (1873), the only collection published in Corbière's lifetime, this book outlines a method of reading his self-contradictory verse. It tackles the difficulty of interpreting ironic discourse and demonstrates how irony operates in *Les Amours jaunes* at all levels from verbal device to world-view, showing how the doubts of modern man and the spiritual void of commodity culture shape the very language of his poetry. Synthesizing critical approaches from continental and Anglo-American traditions, it analyzes his use of puns, oral diction, dialogue, quotation, and intertextuality. It shows how he systematically undercuts habitual strategies of reading, by importing novelistic techniques into verse to deride it from within, and by ironizing irony itself. This is an introduction to the work of a challenging poet and a study of the practice of reading French verse.

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