

Preface

This is our fourth pandemical issue, and Omicron (the disease not the trouble-shooting doctor in Trollope unfortunately) moves about the world causing misery and uncertainty. It's difficult to be upbeat about the state of things at the moment, but we hope that this special issue of *Volupté* reassures our readers that even in periods of cultural and political decline there is a pleasure to reading and constant invention. It was the original ambition of this journal to expand the field of decadence studies and to be a space for new voices, material, and interpretations. While it is true, as Adam Alston reminds us, that 'the field's interdisciplinary ambitions are yet to reach their full potential', this issue consolidates the 'diffusionist model' of decadence studies that was celebrated in the summer issue of 2021 and marks another exciting moment. The discussion of plays in this issue sits alongside considerations of choreography, scenography, aesthetics, and live art, proving as our Guest Editors state, that 'decadence is a practice that can be performed and embodied, that this practice is of significant cultural, aesthetic, and political interest'. Not only do the contributions push at the traditional literary boundaries of decadent studies to embrace internationalist and contemporary perspectives on decadent live art and performance but they reflect new research initiatives and look forward to what we can only hope will be an in-person scholar-fest at Goldsmiths, University of London, in the summer of 2022: an international conference on the theme of *Decadent Bodies*.

This issue is littered with bodies that parade, pose, and protest. All the world's a decadent stage it would seem. From the cabarets of Weimar Berlin to the dive bars of downtown New York to modern Ottoman theatre to the prosceniums of Paris and Tokyo to the staged paediatric hospital ward, we encounter a range of performances and embodiments that are informed by decadent tropes of decay, sickness, and decline, performances that involve ecclesiastical dressing-up, ornamental excess, doll dancing, and choreographed coughing. *Volupté* is nothing if not topical.

Our seasonal congratulations to our BADS Essay Prize winners. We publish three this year. Postgraduate Scholar Essay Prize winner Cherrie Kwok continues the dance theme with an essay entitled 'Symbolism, Empire, and the Dance: On Sarojini Naidu's "Eastern Dancers" and Arthur Symons's "Javanese Dancers"', which was praised for its 'welcome contribution to what has become an increasingly widening understanding of the many revisions decadent and symbolist literary strategies have undergone in the hands of non-European authors from colonized regions'. David Melville wins the Established Scholar Essay Prize and brings a little-known cinematic performance to light: Beni Montresor's *La Messe dorée* [*The Golden Mass*] (1975). Our judges declared it a 'thought-provoking, eloquent, and engrossing essay on [...] an obscure queer film that deserves attention. [...] contribut[ing] productively to the burgeoning niche field of decadent cinema within decadence studies'. And – drum roll – we announce with enormous pleasure a new BADS Translation Prize, supported by the Decadence and Translation Network, and inaugurated with Céline Brossillon's new French-to-English translation of Isabelle Eberhardt's 'Infernal: Sepulchral Pleasure' (1895). Alongside the BADS Essay Prizes, the winners of the BADS Translation Prize can expect their work to be published in winter issues of *Volupté*. An official announcement will be made in the New Year.

Thank you to our Guest Editors Adam Alston and Alexandra Bickley Trott, our BADS Essay Prize judges, and to Saya Sugawara and Frank Krause for their assistance with translation matters. The *Volupté* team wish you peace and health and a smooth transition to 2022.

Jane Desmarais
Editor-in-Chief
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