

Preface

As this merciless and traumatizing year draws to a close, I am pleased to welcome *Volupté* readers, new and old, to this bi-lingual issue on translation. I leave it to our Guest Editors, Matthew Creasy and Stefano Evangelista, to introduce the contributions and affirm the importance of decadence for translation studies, but I would like to acknowledge the work of their Decadence and Translation Network and the series of events in Oxford, London, Strasbourg, Glasgow, and Paris from 2018 to 2020 that brought translators, publishers, poets, curators, and academics together in convivial surroundings to share ideas about the way in which the concept and the practice of translation sit at the heart of British and French decadent literature. The Network events had so many highlights it is difficult to choose one that stands out, but the gathering of scholars in Strasbourg in June 2019 under the hospitable wing of Guy Ducrey is surely one of them. The Network has had considerable impact, inspiring new projects, partnerships, collaborations, and friendships, and it has provided a fruitful space for new thinking about the translational, transnational, and transcultural nature of decadence. It is my fervent hope that despite the petty-minded and destructive Brexit impulse international collaboration at individual and institutional levels continues to flourish and grow.

We travel back and forth across the Channel in this issue, but our BADS Essay Prizewinners take us to new places, including the watery byways of Bruges and Venice at the fin de siècle and to the glittery disco dancefloors of New York in the 1970s. We received a good number of high-calibre essay submissions this year and we loved them all, but our published winners are Joanna Cresswell for her essay on ‘The Ecology of Suffering: Thinking with the Elements in Decadent Literature’ and William Rees for “‘Le Freak, c’est Chic’: Decadence and Disco’. Joanna’s essay was praised for the way its ecocritical methodology applied to Rodenbach’s and Mann’s novellas ‘offers fresh ways of considering how decadence operates within them, while at the same time demonstrating their relevance to our contemporary moment’, and William’s comparative cultural study was described as ‘assured’ and ‘impressive’, ‘put[ting] into conversation decadence studies and popular musicology’. Our warm congratulations to them both, and our thanks to our wonderful judge who provided such full and thoughtful feedback on all the submissions.

We are proud and delighted to include the work of creative practitioners in our journal and this issue is particularly rich for its new translations and artwork by Matthew Creasy, but it is with tremendous personal sadness that we acknowledge the passing of the great poet, Derek Mahon, who died on 20 October 2020 and whose last work, seven translations of Verlaine’s poems from *Romances sans paroles*, we publish here. He was characteristically tentative about the task of translating Verlaine, and in a jotted note he raised the issue of untranslatability. ‘I’ve always thought much of Verlaine untranslatable, like trying to rewrite music as language; but by (re-)writing language as “music”, perhaps it can be done. The results can have a fey quality in English, but that’s not inappropriate. I’m unsure if these versions work, but I hope they’re on the right track.’ They are, and we treasure them.

Thank you to our Guest Editors, and to Caroline Crépiat for her editorial assistance. Undecadent it may be, but best wishes from the *Volupté* team for a peaceful and healthful 2021.

Jane Desmarais
Editor-in-Chief
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