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Organized by:

Jane Desmarais
Alice Condé
Jessica Gossling
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Programme

9.30 Registration

10.00 Keynote (Chair: Jane Desmarais)

Marion Thain (New York University), ‘Decadent Epistemologies: Arthur Symons’s Cognitive Somatics’

11.00 Intermezzo: Coffee

11.20 Panel I: Moods and Memories (Chair: Jessica Gossling)

Alex Murray (Queen’s University, Belfast), ‘Symons and Elizabethan Decadence’

Catherine Maxwell (Queen Mary, University of London), ‘Arthur Symons: Perfumed Thoughts and Fragrant Memories’

Kostas Boyiopoulos (Durham University), ‘The Shore-line of Infinity: Symons’s Infinite Self and the Misuses of Symbolism’

12.40 Lunch

1.40 Panel II: Continental Influences (Chair: Katharina Herold)

Leire Barrera-Medrano (Birkbeck, University of London), ‘A first step towards modern harmony’: Arthur Symons and the Primitivist Modernity of Flamenco’

Sarah Green (Oxford University), ‘Insincere Obscenities’: Lionel Johnson’s Assessment of Arthur Symons’s Work’

Bénédicte Coste (University of Burgundy), ‘Arthur Symons at the Fin de Siècle: The French Experience’

3.00 Intermezzo: Tea

3.30 Panel III: Symons and Friends (Chair: Chris Baldick)

Laurel Brake (Birkbeck, University of London), ‘The Painting of the Nineteenth Century’: Symons, Simeon Solomon and Walter Pater at the Fin de Siècle’

Rita Dirks (Ambrose University), ‘A Literary Friendship: Arthur Symons and Bliss Carman, Mediators of Decadence’

John Stokes (King’s College London), ‘For Api: Arthur Symons’s canine elegy’

4.50 Interlude

5.00 Plenary (Chair: Alice Condé)

Nick Freeman (Loughborough University), ‘Never Say No: Arthur Symons and the Profession of Authorship’

6.15 Jewelled Tortoise: Drinks and Books Launch
Abstracts

**Keynote** (Chair: Jane Desmarais)

Marion Thain (New York University), ‘Decadent Epistemologies: Arthur Symons’s Cognitive Somatics’

In ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’ Symons designated Impressionism and symbolism as two central modes of Decadence, but how do they operate in his own poetry as methods of perception and/or ways of knowing the world? This talk will suggest that recent work in psychology and the philosophy of mind might give us the tools to better articulate the significance of impressionism and symbolism as cognitive modes.

I will suggest we situate Symons’s work at a crucial point in the history of aesthetics in order to recognize the cognitive work that decadent sensuality performs in his poetry. This analysis not only offers new insight into the operation and significance of Decadent somatics, but also identifies Symons’s participation in a key moment in the formation of concepts that are currently revolutionizing our understanding of how we know.

In reading Symons’s somatic epistemologies, I bring poetry into dialogue with the history of art criticism, and English poetry into a cosmopolitan intellectual arena. Nowhere are these disciplinary and geographical boundaries more necessarily crossed than in our study of a writer who was so engaged with the visual arts and with transnational currents in literature.

**Bio**

Professor Marion Thain works on literature, culture and the visual arts at New York University (Liberal Studies), and is Associate Director of Digital Humanities for the university. Book publications include: *The Lyric Poem and Aestheticism: Forms of Modernity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016); *The Lyric Poem: Formations and Transformations* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); *Michael Field: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
Alex Murray (Queen’s University, Belfast), ‘Symons and Elizabethan Decadence’

Arthur Symons’s literary tastes were diverse, but his reputation as a critic of French literature has arguably over-determined how we read his literary oeuvre. Symons wrote far more on British and Irish literature than he did on French, and while he is well-known as the spokesperson for a French-influenced ‘Decadent’ style, it is striking how often he identified the antecedents of that style as English in origin. This paper will map Symons’s interest in, and indebtedness to, the literature of the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Carolean periods. Like many writers we now associate with Decadence, Symons saw in the movement from Marlowe, through Shakespeare and onwards to Beaumont, Fletcher and the lesser of the playwrights of the English renaissance a parallel for the development of literature in his own time.

Symons edited ten works by relatively marginal playwright Philip Massinger (1583-1640) in two volumes, the first published in 1887, the second in 1889 for the influential ‘Mermaid Series’ of Elizabethan plays under the general editorship of Havelock Ellis. Symons’s introduction to the first volume offers a fascinating insight into the genesis of his understanding of Decadence. Pre-dating his interest in French Decadence by a couple of years, Symons’s essay on Massinger, I argue, prefigures Symons’s famous formulation of decline in ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’ some six years later. In Massinger, Symons claimed, we witness ‘The indications of lessening vitality and strength, of departing simplicity, of growing extravagance and affectation which mark the period of transition’. Massinger becomes ‘the late twilight of the long and splendid day of which Marlowe was the dawn’.

Symons’s introduction and its intimation of Decadence has been wholly neglected in secondary criticism, but in this paper I will suggest that it offers us a vehicle through which to grasp shifts and continuities in literary value from the 1870s through to the 1920s. Symons’s positioning of Massinger as a Renaissance Decadent was not his alone: Leslie Stephens had first articulated a similar position in his article in The Cornhill Magazine (1877), yet Symons removed the overtly moralizing tone of Stephens. Algernon Charles Swinburne was so troubled by Symons’s 1887 introduction he used it as a catalyst for his own radical reassessment of Massinger in the Fortnightly Review in 1889 in which, while recognizing his limitations, praised the playwright’s ‘purity and lucidity of dignified eloquence’. Swinburne’s bravest attempts to renovate Massinger’s reputation came to little when, in 1921, T. S. Eliot placed the decisive nail in Massinger’s critical coffin, when he declared that ‘What may be considered corrupt or decadent in the morals of Massinger is not an alteration or diminution in morals; it is simply the disappearance of all the personal and real emotions which this morality supported and into which it introduced a kind of order’. For Eliot Massinger suffered from artifice and an absence of emotion, criticisms that offer a strange counterpoint to his reflections on emotion in Symons’s work in ‘The Perfect Critic’, which was first published as a review of Symons’s Studies in Elizabethan Drama (1919), a collection of essays that contained a republication of the original 1887 essay on Massinger. As this paper will demonstrate, Decadence as a literary concept was applied by Symons and many others to British literature, and it is essential that we recover those debates around national concepts of literary periodisation and value.

Bio

Alex Murray is Lecturer in Modern Literature at the Queen’s University, Belfast. His most recent monograph is Landscapes of Decadence: Literature and Place at the Fin de Siècle (Cambridge University Press, 2016) and he co-edited Decadent Poetics (Palgrave, 2013). He is currently editing two books: Decadence: A Literary History for CUP, and with Kate Hext Decadence in the Age of Modernism (JHUP). Recent articles on Decadence in the twentieth century have appeared in Modernism/modernity and MFS Modern Fiction Studies.
Catherine Maxwell (Queen Mary, University of London), ‘Arthur Symons: Perfumed Thoughts and Fragrant Memories’

In Arthur Symons’s poetry and prose strong or recognizable perfumes of the period are evoked for scrutiny or contemplation or permeate the memory, calling attention to themselves as markers of decadent modernity. Perfume is usually associated with ephemerality, but for Symons, perfume identified with a significant memory does not fade; indeed such a memory is itself like a perfume that clings to the fabric it has impregnated. After considering how a few tenacious perfumes identified by Symons with decadence permeate various of his poems from the 90s, this paper explores how he imaginatively transfers the time-defying effects of fragrance to his critical appreciation of particular writers and literary texts as an analogue for the perfumed ‘essence’ of a writer, ‘the magic which seems to make poetry its finer self, the perfume of the flower, that by which the flower is remembered, after its petals have dropped or withered’ (‘Byron’, 1900) This paper then surveys how Symons’s conception of the imperishability of perfume informs his idea of lyric poetry, as seen in many of his critical essays from the 1890s and early 1900s. It concludes with an analysis of his late poem ‘Song’ (1915), from Lesbia and Other Poems (1920), suggesting that this lyric encapsulates key ideas about the ancestral scent of poetic memory.

Bio

Catherine Maxwell is Professor of Victorian Literature at Queen Mary, University of London, and author of The Female Sublime from Milton to Swinburne: Bearing Blindness (Manchester University Press, 2001), Swinburne (Northcote House, 2006), Second Sight: The Visionary Imagination in Late Victorian Literature (Manchester University Press, 2008), and numerous articles on Victorian literature. She was a Leverhulme Major Research Fellow for 2014–2016, during which time she completed a monograph on perfume in Victorian literary culture, forthcoming from Oxford University Press in October 2017.

Kostas Boyiopoulos (Durham University), ‘The Shore-line of Infinity: Symons’s Infinite Self and the Misuses of Symbolism’

The aim of this paper is to highlight the idea of infinity and the multifarious ways by which it informs Symons’s writings, with a focus on his 1890s output. In accordance with this theme, the paper will also introduce a poem that remains unpublished. Infinity is a sporadic yet unmistakable idea in Symons’s poetry and is present in spatial, temporal, and experiential forms. Its presence is peculiar, considering the definite, fragmented, urban moods and vignettes that dominate his early verse. Yet boundlessness and eternity, notions associated with French Symbolism, colour Symons’s poetic idiolect. In 1890 Symons got acquainted with Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé, as he was spellbound by their Symbolist experiments. His enthusiasm is evident in his critical writings and chiefly in The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899/1919), a work whose making was encouraged by Mallarmé himself. Symons’s poetry in the 1890s contains Symbolist gestures of the infinite in the motif of seascapes and vanishing horizons (apart from dance). In ‘On the Beach’ from Silhouettes the self is liminally defined against the ‘shore-line of infinity’. The idea of infinity arises from the effort to express and chase the ineffable through finite symbols in a perpetual process of unlocking. But as I will argue in this paper, Symons reverses the Symbolist process and frames it within a Decadent universe of self-mirroring.

I will pay special attention to the notorious ‘Stella Maris’ (1894), the poem that caused a furore when appeared in the first number of The Yellow Book; the discussion will be enriched by references to and continuities with other poems. The sea in ‘Stella Maris’ is a multiform symbol that dramatizes the interminable flux of experience against a background of a boundless space-time. The sea, moreover, is a counterpart to the vast urban landscape, an endless sea of city experiences – a Baudelairean trope. The paper will reveal Symons’s metaphorical, subjective cosmology which pivots on infinite dream textures, desire, and passion. Symons had already marked out the phrase ‘infinite passion’ in his study of Browning (1886). Recollecting the finite instant in which an erotic experience is intensified to the point of infinity leads to the question of striving to experience the absolute (God). This key aspect of Symonsian infinity will be illuminated by his remarks on the limitation and quantification of love in The Symbolist Movement and Metaphysical thinking that characterises the poetry of John Donne.
Aside from revisiting familiar poems, for the first time in the course of Symons scholarship I will bring to light an unknown sonnet entitled ‘The Universe’ (from the Arthur Symons Papers in Firestone Library, Princeton University). This sonnet vitally confirms his interest in infinity and the self by touching upon such notions as world-making and the tension between fantasy and reality. By tracing Symons’s forays into infinity and its Symbolist misuses within a circumscribed poetics of Decadence, this paper hopes to offer a more complex understanding of his poetic obsession with erotic encounters than previously thought.

Bio

Kostas Boyiopoulos is a Teaching Associate in the Department of English Studies at Durham University. He is the author of *The Decadent Image: The Poetry of Wilde, Symons, and Dowson* (EUP, 2015) and co-editor of published and forthcoming volumes on Decadent, fin-de-siècle and Modernist themes. He is the co-organiser, together with Joseph Thorne, of a conference on Neo-Victorian Decadences which will take place on 8–9 September 2017 at St John’s College, Durham University.
Panel II: Continental Influences (Chair: Katharina Herold)

Leire Barrera-Medrano (Birkbeck, University of London), “‘A first step towards modern harmony’: Arthur Symons and the Primitivist Modernity of Flamenco”

Abstract: In the essay ‘Moorish Secrets in Spain’ (1899), Arthur Symons described the Spanish flamenco cante, or singing, as ‘no other passion; fierce, immoderate, sustained, it is like the crying of a wild beast in suffering, and it thrills one precisely because it seems to be so far from humanity, so inexplicable, so deeply rooted in the animal of which we are but one species.’ Spanish flamenco music as Symons interprets it is the expression of initial creative forces, nonetheless connected to modernity: ‘it is music before rhythm, music which comes down to us untouched by the invention of the modern scale, from an antiquity out of which plain-chant is a first step towards modern harmony.’ As the visionary critic he was, Symons reveals flamenco as an art form caught in transition, wavering between Romantic Volkgeist, Orientalist eroticism, and a dawning Primitivist Modernism.

Indeed, for Symons flamenco was constituent part, on one hand, of a decadent discourse of sensuousness and pleasure, and, on the other, of a symbolist and proto-modernist discourse of primitivism. Symons often failed in revaluing the stereotype of the savage and primitive as mysterious and unknowable, or in overcoming the objectifying view that ‘primitives’ were fundamentally all the same. Yet, unlike other Romantic and Victorian tourists and writers, this paper will show how Symons actively tried to elevate Spanish flamenco to high art. By doing so, Symons was foreshadowing practices of the leading figures of Spanish Modernism, most famously Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). His treatment of gypsies in the renowned Romancero Gitano (Gypsy Ballads, 1928) is tinged with an equally problematic orientalism, but it responds, like in Symons’s, to an effort to modernize and dignify flamenco.

This paper will thus explore Symons’s hitherto unexplored, yet crucial, relationship to Spanish flamenco, in his 1890s critical writing and poetry. For Symons, the new expressive ideal he found in the language of music, and especially of dance, was perfected in Spanish flamenco: ‘(Spanish dancing) is the most elaborate dancing in the world and, like the music, it has an abstract quality which saves it from ever, for a moment, becoming vulgar. As I have watched a Gitana dancing in Seville, I have thought of the sacred dances which in most religions have given a perfectly solemn and collected symbolism to the creative forces of the world.’ As this paper will argue, Symons found in the primitiveness of Spanish flamenco the quintessence of art.

Bio

Leire Barrera-Medrano is completing a PhD at Birkbeck College, University of London entitled ‘Spain and British Decadence, 1880-1920.’ She has published “‘Dolls in Agony’: Vernon Lee in Southern Spain” in Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens (83 Printemps | 2016) and has an upcoming chapter in a new volume on Michael Field (Ohio University Press, 2018). She has catalogued the ‘Fernández Giménez Collection’ (Colorado, USA), with 2,200 items belonging to the Spanish art critic and diplomat José Fernández Giménez (1832-1903), an intimate friend of Vernon Lee. In 2016 she co-organised the BAVS-funded Forgotten Geographies in the Fin de Siècle conference and in 2015 was invited to organise a series of seminars on Anglo-Spanish artistic relations at Colorado State University as a visiting scholar. She also co-edits Girasol Press, an Anglo-Spanish publishing endeavour.

Sarah Green (Oxford University), ‘Insincere Obscenities’: Lionel Johnson’s Assessment of Arthur Symons’s Work

Lionel Johnson once wrote of Arthur Symons that, ‘if he would wash and be clean, he might be of the elect’. Though acknowledging Symons’s power and skill as both poet and critic, Johnson charged him with being ‘a slave to impressionism’, and attributed to this stylistic preference a supposed tendency to waste his talent ‘upon insincere obscenities’. This paper argues that Johnson’s distaste for Symons’s work was not superficial, but rather can provide insight into the fundamental differences between their artistic outlooks. It focuses on the different
manners in which they associated sensuousness with sexuality, and both of these with art. While Symons greatly valued sexuality, and found poetic inspiration in various interactions between the sexual and the sensuous, Johnson sought in his poetry to distinguish sensuous pleasure from sexual by using the old category of the sensual.

He also, in his critical writing, persistently associated sensuality with worldly impermanence, and valued permanence and tradition as essential literary traits. The sexualized impressionism of Symons was especially calculated to offend Johnson’s artistic sensibility, and vice versa.

However, I contend that Johnson was, at least to a certain extent, unfair to Symons. The above judgement objects less to Symons’s sexuality than to what Johnson saw as his inability to discriminate, a skill that he [Johnson] associated with tradition and learning rather than the impressionist’s reliance upon his personal experience alone. In this manner, I argue, the case of Symons betrays Johnson’s critical limitations in the assumption that a principle of selection would necessarily include the exclusion of the certain things. That the critical practice of Johnson and Symons was more similar than their philosophical differences would suggest is, I show, to be found in their remarkably similar assessments of the work of their joint mentor, Walter Pater.

Bio

Sarah Green has recently completed her DPhil, entitled 'Sexual Continence and the late Nineteenth-Century Aesthetic Tradition', at the University of Oxford. She has published on the work of J. M. Barrie and Lionel Johnson.

Bénédicte Coste (University of Burgundy), ‘Arthur Symons at the Fin de Siècle: The French Experience’

This presentation discusses the early reception in France of Arthur Symons both as a critic and poet so as to situate his writings within the larger context of the French reception of Victorian poetry.

The name of Arthur Symons is often associated to the names of both Remy de Gourmont and Paul Verlaine. Gourmont reviewed all publications by Symons in the Mercure de France from June 1890, and Verlaine approvingly reviewed London Nights in the July issue of La revue encyclopédique. Both writers were personally acquainted with Symons and they embody a well-known albeit limited number of French critics who primarily saw him as a modern British poet. For his part, the French critic Gabriel Sarrazin, who favourably discussed A Study of Browning in La renaissance de la poésie anglaise: 1798-1889: Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tennyson, Robert Browning, Walt Whitman (1890), tended to see Symons as a heir to both Dante Gabriel Rossetti and A. C. Swinburne. I shall therefore pay attention to the early reception of Symons’s criticism and poetry in some avant-garde periodicals to assess how it illustrates the negotiation between late-Victorian and proto-modernist poetry for some French critics.

Bio

Bénédicte Coste teaches Victorian literature and culture at the University of Burgundy, France. She mainly works on Walter Pater and late-nineteenth-century writers. Her publications include: Walter Pater, esthétique (2011); Walter Pater, critique littéraire. « The Excitement of the Literary Sense » (2010). With Professor Catherine Delyfer, she co-edited Aesthetic Lives (Rivendale, 2013). With Professor Delyfer and Professor Christine Reynier, she co-edited the collection of essays Reconnecting Aestheticism and Modernism (Routledge, 2016).
Panel III: Symons and Friends (Chair: Chris Baldick)

Laurel Brake (Birkbeck, University of London), “‘The Painting of the Nineteenth Century’: Symons, Simeon Solomon and Walter Pater at the Fin de Siècle”

This is a paper with stylistic, critical, media history, and biographical strands. Its focus is Symons’s article ‘The Painting of the Nineteenth Century’ in its several forms and functions in 1902, 1905 and 1906, as a periodical book review, an obituary tribute and an essay that appeared eventually in Studies in Seven Arts. My interest lies in the article’s evidence of Symons’s continued support for Simeon Solomon, who died in 1905, and the notable links of the article and the book with the work of another Solomon supporter and collector Walter Pater. If the tributes to Solomon and Pater are noteworthy in 1906, they are characteristic of Symons’s sharp and brave vision of the arts of Europe in his book. Notable for its breadth and acuity of cultural reading, it includes studies of nineteenth century work by Rodin, Beethoven, Wagner, Richard Strauss, Eleanora Duse, the actress; Gordon Craig and Jarry’s Ubu Roi.

Even in its final form, ‘The Painting of the Nineteenth Century’ makes clear its origins in a response to a specific book at its time of publication, D. S MacColl’s Nineteenth Century Art, which appeared as a review article in the Fortnightly Review. The significance of Symons’s lengthy appreciation of Solomon’s paintings in the piece is clarified by this review function, as MacColl excludes Solomon entirely. Symons’s inclusion of Solomon is an intervention in a climate of general critical reticence to mention Solomon, in the throes of alcoholism and public exposure until his death. In 1906, Pater’s biographer, A C Benson doesn’t mention Solomon at all, although the two men were close friends in the 1860s and early 70s, and in contact until Pater’s death. Symons himself and Lionel Johnson appear once in Benson, among a terse list of Pater’s friends. Such was the climate a decade after the Wilde trials. At the same time, the circumspect language used by Symons and Benson around gender issues, with respect to Solomon and Pater respectively, is comparable.

In his piece Symons inscribes links among himself, Pater and Solomon in his tribute to Solomon. Taking its lead from Pater, it is in places a prose poem closely related to the style of various passages in Pater’s writing. Nevertheless, its specificity makes Symons’s mark, as does its slightly tongue in cheek tribute to Pater. The location of the essay in 1906, in the envelope of a book the title of which echoes Pater’s Studies in the History of the Renaissance, which opens with epigraphs from Pater, confirms the covert biographical links of Solomon with Symons and Pater that Symons inscribes in this piece.

Bio

Laurel Brake is Professor Emerita of Literature and Print Culture at Birkbeck, University of London; she habitually works on the nineteenth-century press and print culture, and Walter and Clara Pater. Author of Walter Pater, Print in Transition and Subjugated Knowledges, and editor of many works on the press, including ncse (Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition) www.ncse.ac.uk, and DNCJ (Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism), co-edited with Marysa Demoor, she co-edited WT Stead, Newspaper Revolutionary in 2012, a special issue on Stead in 19, www.19.bbk.ac.uk, and a book on the News of the World in 2015, in which year several pieces on the press also appeared in Victorian Periodicals Review. She was the co-founder and co-editor of the Pater Newsletter, now Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism (SWPA). ‘Pater. Symons, and the Culture of the Fin de Siècle in Britain ’ appeared in Print in Transition in 2001, and she regularly publishes on other 19C authors, including Matthew Arnold, Dickens, George Eliot, Vernon Lee, Ruskin, Strachey, Swinburne, and Wilde. Recent articles on WHP and his circle include pieces on British Decadence and American reprints (2012), WHP’s Guardian essays (2013); the lives of men: Eminent Victorians and early 20C biographies of WHP (2016); ‘Better Together’ on the advantages of a dual biography (2017); and ‘Walter, Clara and Hester Pater’ for an issue of SWPA on WHP and women (2017). She is now writing Ink Work on Walter and Clara Pater, and editing an edition of Walter Pater’s journalism for the new collected works, both with OUP.
Rita Dirks (Ambrose University), ‘A Literary Friendship: Arthur Symons and Bliss Carman, Mediators of Decadence’

Bliss Carman (1861-1929), a Canadian poet living in New York and working as editor of the Independent (1890-1892), received two letters from Arthur Symons, one posted July 4, 1890, and the next, December 5, 1890, who requested publication of his poems in the American magazine. After this initial epistolary acquaintance, the two poets met in person in London in 1896, where discussions about directions of modern poetry also included W.B. Yeats. Symons’s connection to and promotion of Decadent sensibilities across the Atlantic had already begun in 1893 when his “The Decadent Movement in Literature” was published in the American Harper’s Monthly Magazine.

Carman belonged to the group of poets known as the Confederation Poets in Canada whom Louis Dudek named as “the best of our deft fin-de-siecle romanticism” (Ross, cover page). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, “there was a ‘strange aesthetic ferment’ in Fredericton [New Brunswick, eastern Canada, where most Confederation Poets lived] in the last two decades of the nineteenth century,” in line with Decadent, Symbolist, and Aesthetic stirrings in France and England (Whalen (160). At the same time, “Carman was dubbed the ‘American High Priest of Symbolism’ by and New York newspaper in the 1890s” (Brown & Bennett 206). It is noteworthy that the Symons-Carman connection between English and Canadian Decadents is not the first one: Another member of the Confederation group, the poet Charles G.D. Roberts, had also spent a few days with Oscar Wilde, during the English Aesthete’s lecture tour in the US and Canada in 1882.

In my paper I argue that both Symons and Carman, in their early days of writing poetry and essays, embarked on a comparable mission: As Symons brought French Symbolist or Decadent writers to the English reading public by way of his publications, first through his “The Decadent Movement in Literature” and later The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899), in much the same way Carman’s movements and publications between Eastern Canada and New York partly reflect his desire to introduce and publish Canadian and European Decadent writers in the US. Tracy Ware writes of “an affinity between two young men of letters who would have considerable influence on English literature in Britain and North America during the next two or three decades” (42). I examine this short, only slightly documented literary friendship with the purpose of establishing the role that the two writers played in furthering Decadence on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the 1890s, Canada was much more receptive French and English Decadence than the US, partly due to the bilingual nature (English and French) of the northern country; perhaps one need only invoke the more favourable reception of Wilde in Canada in 1882. Carman not only introduced Canadian poets to American readers but was also an admirer and publisher of Verlaine and Mallamé (as editor in his subsequent Chap-Book). Much like Wilde before him, Carman also embarked a lecture tour in 1920 in America and Canada. Both Symons and

Carman inspired the next generations of writers; their work shares the dedication to things Decadent and promotion of Decadence in England and America, respectively. In many ways these contemporaneous mediators of Decadence ushered in the new era of poetry.

Bio

Rita Dirks is associate professor and chair of English Literature at Ambrose University. Her research and recent publications focus on Women’s and Gender issues, popular literature and Feminism, Sexuality and Spirituality. She lives in Calgary, Alberta.
John Stokes (King’s College London), ‘For Api: Arthur Symons’s canine elegy’

In February 1906 Arthur Symons and his wife Rhoda took possession of a small black puppy named Api. They had him for less than a year and when he died on Christmas Day their grief was extreme. Seven years later Symons published a limited edition pamphlet entitled For Api which brought together a number of memorial verses and a sequence of prose poems. Karl Beckson’s biography passes these by rather hastily as evidence that the dog had been a ‘child substitute’, although he does acknowledge the part that the death of Api continued to play in the lives of the Symonses: ‘the fantasy of a lost child, ritualised in their imaginations, an emotionally charged symbol uniting them’.

Clearly For Api can be something of an embarrassment and it has been almost entirely ignored by critics. Yet the canine elegy has a history and this paper initially traces its origins. It relates the Api poems to an ancient tradition beginning with Homer but incorporating Wordsworth, Byron and, of particular relevance to Symons, the Whyn Chow poems of his fin de siècle contemporary(ies), ‘Michael Field’, and the writing on dogs by one his favourite authors: Maurice Maeterlinck. The paper also considers Symons’s awareness of turn-of-the-century debates about animal/human relations. Finally, it suggests that the Api elegies draw on Symons’s long-established preoccupation with death, physicality and his Nietzschean awareness of the cruelty of existence, of ‘tragic beauty’. Api may have been anthropomorphised into a symbolic lost child but on entering poetic tradition he regained his canine identity.

Bio

John Stokes is Emeritus Professor of Modern British Literature at King’s College London. He has written widely on the culture of the fin-de-siècle and is the co-author, with Karl Beckson, Ian Fletcher, and Wayne Markert, of Arthur Symons: A Bibliography, 1990, and co-editor, with Mark W. Turner, of The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, vols. vi and vii, Journalism Parts I and II, 2013.
Plenary (Chair: Alice Condé)

Nick Freeman (Loughborough University), ‘Never Say No: Arthur Symons and the Profession of Authorship

We review and report and invent:
In drivel our virtue is spent.
John Davidson, ‘New Year’s Day’ from Fleet Street Eclogues (1893)

In July 1892, Arthur Symons complained to his friend and fellow poet, Ernest Rhys, that he was ‘frivolously busy’ reviewing music hall acts for the Star. As ‘Silhouette’ he visited a wide range of theatres and music halls, the position providing him with plentiful entertainment and, if his memoirs are to be believed, sexual encounters. It also paid him £4 a week, allowing him to rent his rooms in The Temple and subsidising the incidental expenses of his bachelor lifestyle: books, hansoms, tickets for recitals, dinners at Gatti’s or the oyster bars of Aldwych and Coventry Street. In the early 1890s, the young Symons was perfectly happy to lead a largely nocturnal existence, but as the decade progressed, his willingness to accept journalistic commissions began to have serious consequences for his artistic reputation and ultimately, his health.

This paper explores some of the ways in which Symons attempted to balance his salaried commitments with his artistic ambitions during the fin de siècle. It looks at his various literary roles (journalist, editor, freelance writer) and at the professional relationships that underpinned these activities. It also examines Symons’s attempts to rebuild such relationships after his breakdown, and to develop new ones.

Symons’s role as editor of the Savoy has undergone significant critical investigation, but his other journalistic activities remain under-examined, and his role in what we might now call the late-Victorian ‘culture industry’ remains less widely acknowledged than it ought to be. Symons reviewed contortionists and comedians for the Star, but his contributions to the Athenaeum, the Academy, the Saturday Review and similar journals were altogether more ambitious, suggesting that while the late-Victorian periodical press may not have been a friend to decadence, it was prepared to overlook or indulge Symons’s more subversive artistic affiliations in return for punctually-filed copy.

Bio

Dr Nick Freeman is Reader in Late-Victorian Literature at Loughborough University. He has published widely on the literature and culture of the fin de siècle, and has recently edited Symons’s Spiritual Adventures for the MHRA’s ‘Jewelled Tortoise’ series.