

*Decadence and Literature* edited by Jane Desmarais and David Weir. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019. 430 pp. ISBN 9781108426244. £89.99.

As the new roaring '20s begin, the idea of the global village takes root, social media and digital literacy become increasingly relevant components of everyday society, and examples of cultural diversity are celebrated, the perceived dangers of the Millennium appear to be a distant memory. Yet, the Victorian fin de siècle, with its challenging perspectives on traditional values, art, sensuality, and sexual and political experimentation, continues to preoccupy the popular imagination. Like studies devoted to examining the fin de siècle, discussions focussed on exploring decadence and its legacy have witnessed a surge in interest during the last two decades. This is particularly notable as works like John S. Kloppenborg and Joseph Verheyden's *Decadent Catholicism and the Making of Modernism* (2020), Kate Hext and Alex Murray's *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (2019), and Alex Murray's *Decadence: A Literary History* (2020) have expanded the formal, geographical, and temporal paradigms for understanding decadence. The current volume under review, *Decadence and Literature*, not only adds to these expanding frameworks but also re-frames the concept of decadence itself.

Jane Desmarais and David Weir begin the volume by declaring that “the concept [of decadence] is no longer solely confined to the domain of nineteenth-century European cultural history,” explaining that

Nineteenth-century concerns about decadence did not occur in a cultural or historical vacuum, which means that earlier investigations of decadence need to be taken into account. At the same time, decadence has assumed a multi-disciplinary dimension, broadening the concept beyond the field of cultural history alone into such areas as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and more.

Desmarais and Weir provide a refreshingly direct statement concerning the purpose of this collection:

The essays in this book often investigate decadence as something more than a cultural moment or movement in an effort to establish its value as a critical concept...; the discussion of the concept of decadence in the context of such non-literary disciplines as philosophy, science, geography, sociology, and so on, should prove invaluable to students of literature because all those disciplines are variously represented in literature itself.

This perspective pervades the whole volume, as the essays are multi-disciplinary and chronological, gathered into three parts: Origins, Developments, and Applications.