



The Dedalus Book of Russian Decadence: Perversity, Despair and Collapse

Kirsten Lodge, Margo Rosen

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The sensationalism and morbid pessimism that characterized French decadence in the late nineteenth century quickly attracted converts throughout Europe, including Russia. The Dedalus Book of Russian Decadence: Perversity, Despair and Collapse brings together horrifying, dramatic and erotic short stories and poetry, most of which have never before been translated into English, by the most decadent Russian writers. It includes scandalous writings by the well-known authors Valery Briusov, Leonid Andreyev, Fedor Sologub and Zinaida Gippius and acquaints English-speaking readers with the forgotten writer Aleksandr Kondratiev. These writers explore the darkest depths of the unconscious, as their characters experience sadism, masochism, rape, murder, suicide, and, in a story by Gippius, even passionate love for the dead. Briusov, the self-proclaimed leader of the Russian decadent movement, describes revolution or the spread of madness leading to the collapse of highly advanced but decadent civilizations that indulge in refined pleasures and ritualized orgies as they await the final hour. Andreyev portrays the collapse of all moral values on a personal level in his famous story "The Abyss," which caused an uproar when it was first published. Femmes fatales lure men to destruction, but the most seductive enchantress in the anthology is death itself, particularly in the work of Sologub, who is Russia's most decadent writer of all. This collection will certainly provide a reprieve from everyday life, with page after page of cruelty, corruption, sensuality, desperation and death.

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