

The Symbolist Movement: Its Origins and Its Consequences

Clément Dessy , Ph.D. Candidate (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)

Nabis and writers à l'Œuvre. Artists and dramatists for a symbolist theatre.

[Abstract]

The foundation of the « Théâtre de l'Œuvre » by Aurélien Lugné-Poe in 1893 is regarded as an important step in the constitution of avant-gardist theatre, with symbolist ideology and based on theatrical production. Camille Mauclair, great art critic and writer, and Édouard Vuillard, painter of the Nabi movement took part to this foundation. The friendship between Nabis, some writers and Lugné-Poe led them to experiment a symbolist theatre, rest on several concepts as puppet or shade theatre, theatre of “silence” (referring to the Maurice Maeterlinck’s work), etc. The Nabis made scenery, costume and program, mainly in the Lugné-Poe’s theatre, after the Paul Fort’s Theatre of Art or the Antoine’s Free Theatre. They were involved for example in preparation of the first performance of Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu King*, which can be analyzed as a critique of symbolism. In addition Nabi painters practised themselves the theatrical production with Jarry in the “Théâtre des Pantins” or wrote theatre plays, as *L’Abbé Prout* (?). Experiments of symbolist theatre gathered writers and painters around a common project between their arts. Related to my postgraduate work that I began in 2007 on the relationship between nabi painters and writers, I would suggest a communication which will expose an analysis of the theatrical project of the Nabis and their writer friends from literary, esthetical and sociological points of view. I would put the stress on the Jarry’s or Maeterlinck’s examples by comparing synthetic painting of the Nabis with the new literary and dramaturgical rules.

Patrick Thériault, Postdoctoral researcher (Université catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium)

Symbolism and Esoterism: the case of Mallarmé’s “Mardis”

[Abstract]

Mallarmé’s “Mardis” undoubtedly represent the most influential literary group associated with the Symbolist movement (see Millan). Not only did these weekly meetings with the “Prince of poets” span over twenty years, they were also an exceptionally rich breeding ground for those promising young writers, such as Valéry, Claudel and Gide, that would soon take the lead of the French literary institution, especially through *La Nouvelle Revue française*.

However important has been their role, Mallarmé’s “Mardis” remain largely shrouded in mystery. We only have a vague idea about the topics and the contents addressed by the poet on these occasions. But at the same time we are asked to believe that the weekly speeches he used to held before his tightly co-opted group of admirers and peers were significant enough to be regarded as the “essential part of his work” (Camille Mauclair, in Durand)... Strangely enough, none of the former “Mardistes” has deemed it relevant to provide a larger audience and posterity with a transcription of these allegedly invaluable pieces of art. Moreover, most of those former guests insist on the impossibility of passing on or reconstructing the meaning of their master’s speech,

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as if one could only access the ultimate “truth” or “beauty” of Mallarmé’s communication *in situ*, that is in accordance with the conditions of reception of an *esoteric discourse*.

Neither the well known Symbolist predilection for the orphic imaginary nor any personal interest suffices to explain this somewhat mystifying attitude on the part of the former “Mardistes”. As I will argue, this attitude has rather to be interpreted as a pragmatic effect of Mallarmé’s highly developed art of communication, as displayed in the collection of critical essays *Divagations*. One of the main pragmatic features of this art of communication is that, through a rhetoric of the “address” (see Kaufmann), it relates to the reader as to an “initiate”, by including him within the imaginary bounds of a select community, made up of those that Frank Kermode has called, in the context of an other type of esoteric communication, the “insiders” of the text (see Kermode). I intend to demonstrate that the Mallarmean *Divagations* not only exhibit stylistic features that are typically esoteric, as it has been recently reasserted (see Durand), but also, more fundamentally, deploy a rhetorical apparatus and cultivate an imaginary of reception that are reminiscent of those associated with esoteric discourses. It is worth noting, in this regard, that the word “divagations”, with its unequivocal reference to the ancient paradigm of the oracles and the religious mysteries, directly points at this esoterically-inspired imaginary and *modus operandi*.

My hypothesis is that the partly invisible community—as the most lasting types of society usually prove to be (see Simmel)—composed of the former “Mardistes” can be regarded as the exemplification of the imaginary community characteristically implied and created by Mallarmé’s text. Thus, my final purpose is to shed light on some aspects of the esoteric origin of Symbolism as well as on the consequences of this movement that appear to have been conditioned by the esoteric dimension of the Mallarmean rhetoric, namely the formation and the “virtual” survival of the Mardi’s group.

Serena Keshavjee., Professor (University of Winnipeg, Canada)

Picturing the Unconscious in French Symbolist Art

[Abstract]

In February of 1891 Paul Gauguin produced two drawings to illustrate the play *Madame la Mort* by Rachilde, which was performed at the Symbolist Théâtre d'art. In the play Paul Dartigny, the "nervous" protagonist smokes a cigar laced with a hallucinogen, and then envisions a struggle between the personifications of death and life. His hallucinations introduce a principal theme of the Théâtre d'art's productions: representing altered states of consciousness. The goal of the Symbolist theater was to create a space that transcended ordinary consciousness, making the theater into a dream space.

Similarly to the plays, the theater programs and stage sets created by the Nabis and Gauguin for the Théâtre d'art also set out to dislodge the rational mind by challenging visual perception. Although Gauguin's drawings for *Madame la Mort* stand out from his Synthetist oeuvre, they are consistent with the playbills created by Nabis for the theater in their evanescent, indistinct formal qualities. In this paper I will examine two of the

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dramas, Rachilde's *Madame la Mort* (Lady Death), and Maurice Maeterlinck's *L'intruse* (The Intruder) (1890), and the accompanying playbills by Gauguin, Paul Serusier and Maurice Denis, and in doing so I will outline the effort by Symbolist artists and authors to represent the notion of the unconscious mind.

It is no surprise that French Symbolist authors and artists were fully absorbed in trying to understand the new field of psychology, including the concepts of the dream, the unconscious, and the related notions of transcendence. From the 1880s onwards, Paris was one of the centers for studies into the unconscious, through both the scientific examination of "hysteria," and the pseudo-scientific testing of mediumship and Spiritualism. This paper will focus on how the institutionalization of psychology created a fascination with the unconscious in fin de siècle France, and how the Symbolists set out to pictorialize this state.

Andrius Valevicius, Professor (Université de Sherbrooke, Canada)

The Symbolism of Divine Love in Pavel Florensky

[Abstract]

Perhaps no one fits so naturally into the Symbolist movement as Pavel Florensky. His focus on intuitive knowledge, his interest in Russia's medieval culture, his mystical approach to the divine basis behind all knowledge, his perception of reality as an ensemble of symbols leading to the divine and, at the same time, unlocking the secrets of history, all of the above put him at the centre of Symbolism.

This paper will focus on Pavel Florensky's major work, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*. This work was written at the height of the Symbolist movement and represents in style, structure and worldview, 'the most elaborate work of Russian symbolist theology.' This book looks at philosophy as artistic creation, but of the sort that grows out of the metaphysical nature of love, as summed-up by the process of kenosis, the self-emptying, going-out of oneself. All of this is modeled on the self-emptying God in the mystery of the Incarnation. Here, the self becomes a self-transcending entity and a true mystical-metaphysical moment of consubstantiality in God.

Jana Dratvová, Ph.D. Candidate (Charles University of Prague (Karlova Univerzita v Praze) and Université Charles de Gaulle Lille 3, Czech Republic)

The Belgian symbolist novel and its specific features in the context of French-speaking literature.

[Abstract]

Even if Belgian literature is usually understood as a part of French literature, the position of Belgium at the crossing among Anglosaxon, German and French cultures gives it a lot of particularities. In the late 19th century, Belgian literature turns away from its regionalism

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and takes part in the leading stream in European art - symbolism. Belgium begins to produce works which can equal literary works from neighbouring countries.

According to the wagnerian philosophy of the fusion of arts, borders between them are less and less obvious. In literature, this phenomenon could mainly be seen in the proximity, or even in the mergence of poetry and prose, with a strong relation to music and painting. This is particularly important for the evolution of the novel, whose traditional mimetic and narrative structures are abolished and replaced with other functions, such as picturality or a deep relation between the text and the reader's mind - functions which, until then, belonged to poetry. With Mallarmé and his intellectual minimalist poetry on the French side and Georges Rodenbach on the Belgian side, we can realize important differences between these two sister literatures which, however, are not twins. The preference of prosaic expression, the relation to the painting and a strong attachment to the nordic country and its mysticism are characteristic not only of Rodenbach's work. The attention of my analysis will mainly be focused on the novel during this period and its most important particularities in both countries.

Brenden Cole, Professor (Eton College, England)

Jean Delville and the Belgian *avant-garde* . Art in search of the Absolute

[Abstract]

Jean Delville is little known in the canon, but he was undoubtedly one of the most important exponents of non-realist painting during the *fin-de-siècle*. He was also, uniquely, a highly productive writer and polemicist, authoring several volumes of poetry as well as books on aesthetics and hermetic theory. In addition, he contributed prolifically to contemporary journals and magazines where he fought an extended battle to establish his 'Idealist Aesthetic' as a recognised movement amongst the competing *avant-garde* tendencies at the time. But he fought, rather fatally, against the contemporary *avant-garde* mainstream dominated, and to an extent defined by, the progressive exhibition societies, *Les Vingt* and later *La Libre Esthétique*, which were controlled by the editors of the influential *avant-garde* art revue *l'Art Moderne*. As a result, Delville was isolated from this important *avant-garde* formation who rejected his artistic efforts and polemical writings published in the contemporary press. In the context of Delville's contribution to *fin-de-siècle* art, this paper examines the origins of this *avant-garde*, its influence on the formation of a Symbolist identity in Belgian art and the tensions that were created between its support of a socialist ideal in art and its close relation to bourgeois commodity culture at the time. Delville's professional and intellectual isolation from the mainstream *avant-garde* including contemporary Symbolists painters will be examined, which raises questions concerning the identity of Symbolism in *fin-de-siècle* Belgian culture and whether one can, in fact, talk of an actual 'Symbolist' movement in painting at the time.

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Peter Cooke, Senior Lecturer (University of Manchester, England)

Gustav Moreau's *Chimères*

[Abstract]

The motif of the chimera (or *chimère*) plays a significant role in nineteenth-century French literature, where it represents a dual perception of the imagination, conceived as both an inner realm superior to mundane reality and a dangerous territory of delusion and desire. It is Gustave Moreau who first introduced the motif into nineteenth-century visual culture, in two paintings of the 1860s which present interesting parallels with Théophile Gautier's poem 'La Chimère' (1838). In the large, unfinished canvas *Les Chimères* (1884), Moreau developed the motif into a decorative and symbolic composition swarming with female figures and chimeras. In commentaries written for himself, his deaf mother and posterity he interpreted the composition as a complex moral and religious allegory of human life, centred on Christian notions of sin and redemption. Yet *Les Chimères* is a fundamentally ambiguous creation, inspired by two antithetical pictorial paradigms, the quattrocento altarpiece (Carpaccio's *Ten Thousand Martyrs of Mount Ararat*) and the erotic paradigm of the harem or gynaeceum (Ingres' *Bain turc*). In its duality the painting reflects both the essential ambiguity of the motif of the chimera and of Moreau's œuvre as a whole. Finally, in the watercolour *Les Épreuves* (c. 1885-1890), Moreau depicted a figure of the Poet (an evident self-representation) assailed by chimeras symbolising temptations. The motif of the chimera thus allowed Moreau both to convey moralising, ideological messages, in keeping with the traditional ideals of history painting, and to explore the desires, ambiguities and contradictions of his own psyche, in keeping with the subjective and suggestive meditations of Romanticism and Symbolism.

Juliet Simpson, Professor (Buckinghamshire New University, England)

Building the Symbolist Republic: Mallarmé, Art, and the English Connection

[Abstract]

In his 1876 article on Manet and the Impressionists, Mallarmé links Impressionist and English Pre-Raphaelite art in their pursuit of a common, proto-Symbolist goal: that is, returning art to an exploration of its primary myth-making origins and gestures. But while Mallarmé's nascently Symbolist presentation of Manet's and the Impressionists' art has been the subject of extensive scholarly study, this paper explores the much less-trodden path of Mallarmé's suggestive, but neglected parallels drawn between French Impressionism and innovations in contemporary English visual art. The paper focuses on Mallarmé's cross-channel networks and short articles published between 1874 and 1876, particularly those developed within London Aesthetic literary and visual circles. Taking as its starting-point, Mallarmé's series of short 'Gossips' commissioned for *The Athenaeum* of 1875 and 1876, these are explored within a context of his developing London-based contacts and interests: a milieu that introduced him, via literary interests, to leading supporters of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic art, and brought together a set of related, intersecting discourses across literature, art criticism and aesthetics. Discussion analyzes the extent to which such discourses relate to key themes broached in the 'Gossips' (and related

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criticism/writings at this time) and provide frameworks for the central arguments of Mallarmé's 1876 article, exploring suggestive commonalities in aesthetic approaches around a nexus of interest in new forms of literary and visual 'myth', and Mallarmé's efforts to build a constituency of interests that would unite English estheticism and French Impressionism in a shared, new ideal for art. The paper concludes by considering the extent and import of Mallarmé's 'English connections' in creating new publics for French contemporary art, and as part of his broader, cultural elaboration of Impressionist aesthetics in his vision of a Symbolist republic.

Claire Barbillon, Professor and Director of Studies (Univesite de Nanterre; Ecole du Louvre, France)

L'influence du symbolisme sur l'évolution formelle du relief dans la sculpture entre 1900 et 1914

[Abstract]

Les reliefs, plus que les sculptures en ronde-bosse, se prêtent au récit, à la narrativité. Ils entretiennent, en particulier depuis l'émergence du romantisme en sculpture, des relations étroites avec la picturalité, ce qui conduit à les maintenir parfois dans une position indéfinie, entre le peint et le sculpté. Ce caractère spécifique les porte à être particulièrement adaptés aux expériences symbolistes, alors que la sculpture demeure, en général, plus fidèle aux diverses formes de classicisme.

Au début du XXe siècle, la jeune génération de sculpteurs qui travaillent en France réagit, parfois avec violence, au modèle fort et omniprésent que représente Rodin. *La Porte de l'Enfer*, élaborée pendant près de trente années, représente une magistrale application de l'esthétique symboliste dans le domaine du relief en sculpture. Mais Archipenko, Duchamp-Villon, Maillol, Bourdelle, Lemhbruck, Nadelman, Gonzalez, Manolo – tous présents à Paris avant la Guerre de 1914 s'affranchissent-ils, dans leurs reliefs, du symbolisme qu'incarnait leur célèbre aîné ? ou bien, dans ce domaine particulier, ne cherchent-ils pas à en reformuler les principes ?

Mireille Dottin-Orsini, Professor (Université de Toulouse-le Mirail, France)

Literary and critic receptions of the Pre-Raphaelite painters in the fin de siecle era

[Abstract]

At the end of the XIXth century, the discourse of the French-speaking world about the Pre-Raphaelites, either in art criticism or literature, stands out quite distinctively insofar as these painters were inspired by myth, legends or poetry. In France such painting has often been called rather pejoratively "peinture littéraire" (literary painting) as opposed to "pure" painting in which the subject hardly matters. These pictures were preceded and followed by literature. The Pre-Raphaelites were belatedly discovered at the time when the Symbolist painting was in full bloom and Gustave Moreau, to whom they were often compared, all the rage.

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French criticism, more attracted by imagination than by politics, has largely overlooked the social aspect of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Critics gave greater importance to their fascinating feminine faces and their strange erotic appeal. They were seen as painters of melancholy and nostalgia and yet of modernity since, though their subjects related to the past, their feminine figures expressed contemporary yearnings. They were established as painters of dreams. This fin de siècle analysis prepared the minds for that of the Surrealists like Salvador Dali who glorified the “Eternel féminin preraphaelite” (Pre-Raphaelite eternal Woman). Above all, their painting was looked upon as a rich ground for literary reveries in the shape of poetry, poetic prose and tales.

Joelle Joffe, Psychoanalyst and Lecturer (hospital of Montesson, France)

Woman, Symbolist Painting and Psychoanalysis

[Abstract]

Jusqu'à la fin du XIX^e siècle, la grande peinture jugée par l'Académie des Beaux Arts en France est la peinture d'Histoire, des puissants et des conquêtes. En rupture, le mouvement symboliste va s'orienter résolument vers la représentation imaginaire des Légendes, des Mythes, de la Bible et de la Religion. Son interprétation est insolite, fantastique, fantasmagorique, mystérieuse, énigmatique, mystique a-t-on pu dire. L'histoire est revisitée, revivifiée par l'artiste dans une approche idéalisée empreinte de rêverie qui refuse le « réalisme » de la nature, l'exactitude, pour représenter « l'idée » et non la réalité. C'est le triomphe de l'analogie, l'allégorie, la métaphore par l'image.

La femme occupe une grande place dans ces représentations, position habituelle dans l'art, mais « l'art de la peinture (qui) est un art tout nouveau » est ici rupture avec l'inflation romantique et annonce du surréalisme...

Le mouvement symboliste vide le corps de la femme de ce qui en faisait la « chair ». Son corps nu est souvent « flouté », marmoréen, androgyne, légèrement voilé, richement paré. Son visage sans émotion au regard lointain, absent, rappelle les vierges byzantines dans leur représentation de l'impassible, leur évocation du beau, du divin.

La femme a quitté la place qui lui était assignée. Elle n'est plus « l'objet » d'un portrait de commande ou d'histoire, elle n'est plus seulement la mère ou l'amante, corps rassurant ou désirable ni la Vierge mère du Christ ou la Sainte. Elle est devenue question angoissante, énigme de la sphinge, mystère, inquiétante étrangeté, sujet désirant et objet de désir menaçant ; elle accompagne l'homme et l'entraîne vers la mort. Amour, idéal, valeurs morales et mort s'affrontent sur la toile.

En 1898, Freud publie « L'interprétation des rêves », loin du standard de « La clef des songes » d'Artémidore. Gustave Moreau « L'assembleur de rêves » a réalisé une œuvre picturale abondante qu'il a commentée dans des notices écrites après coup (?) malgré « l'infériorité de

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l'art de la parole sur les arts muets ». Pour Odilon Redon le processus créateur repose sur « la soumission docile à la venue de l'inconscient ».

Freud invente la psychanalyse en découvrant les formations de l'inconscient, (lapsus, rêves, actes manqués) individualise la structure hystérique et se heurte à l'énigme du désir de la femme : Was woll das Weib ? Le psychanalyste français Jacques Lacan développera l'idée qu'une femme est un « partenaire symptôme » pour un homme.

Pour Freud « l'artiste précède toujours le psychanalyste ». Lacan aura la même position et insistera sur l'importance majeure du regard.

Nous regarderons ensemble trois tableaux de Gustave Moreau et lirons ses « Ecrits sur l'Art » pour croiser les interprétations du grand peintre symboliste avec les théories de la psychanalyse freudienne et lacanienne tout en resituant le mouvement symboliste dans les grandes découvertes et réalisations de l'époque.

[Abstract Translation]

Until the end of the 19th century, l'Académie des Beaux Arts considered the History painting to be the canon of art. Symbolists, however, move away from it and though interested in similar subjects, they reinterpret and represent them in an imaginary, dreamy, enigmatic ways. Woman occupies an important place in those representations. The symbolists empty the woman's body of what is called "flesh." Her naked body is often represented androgynous, lightly covered and richly decorated. Her emotionless face endowed with a removed gaze reminds the Byzantine virgines.

In the 19th century, a woman has left a social position, assigned to her. She is not anymore the object used for official or history portraits. She is not anymore either the mother or the lover, or Virgin Mary or the Saint. She became an object of anguish and ambiguity: she is often represented as a man's company leading him toward death. Love, ideal, moral values and death encounter each other in the symbolist works of art.

In 1898 Freud publishes The Interpretation of Dreams, a work very different from the convention. Gustave Moreau created a large body of work that he commented in the notes written to his deaf mother, and it is in spite of his conviction that "the verbal art is inferior of the pictorial." For Odilon Redon the creative process is based on "docile submission to the world of subconscious."

Freud invents the psychoanalysis, makes the idea of hysteria more individual and then stumbles at the enigma of woman's desire: Was woll das Weib? The French psychoanalyst Lacan will develop the idea that woman is the "partenaire symptôme" for a man.

For Freud "the artist precedes the psychoanalyst." Lacan will have the same position and will stress the importance of the gaze. We will analyze together three works by Gustave Moreau and his "Writings on Art" from the point of view of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories.

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Luba Jurgenson, Maitre de Conference [Associate Professor] (Université Paris-Sorbonne-Paris IV), France):

[Abstract]

Dans les cultures européennes, le symbolisme constitue un point de rupture radical à l'égard de l'esthétique réaliste du XIXe siècle. La dimension autoréférentielle du texte littéraire, instituée en principe de l'acte artistique, fonde différentes formes de démarches transgressives. Dans ce cadre, au sein de la prose du symbolisme tardif, notamment chez Andreï Biely, apparaît le procédé du skaz, c'est-à-dire, une posture énonciative qui vise à introduire une altérité radicale à l'intérieur de l'instance narrative dominante. Je voudrais analyser les implications politiques de ce procédé qui se généralisera dans les années 1920, ainsi que les autres formes de polyphonie, sur l'exemple de textes symbolistes et post-symbolistes. Le jeu de masques en œuvre dans la littérature du début du siècle, qui traduit une révolte pas toujours assumée, prépare l'intrusion massive de l'autre dans le discours du narrateur et initie une ambivalence fondamentale qui sera le lot des « compagnons de route », ces écrivains qui rallient la révolution sans être communistes. Je tenterai de cerner les mécanismes par lesquels le vacillement énonciatif propre à la période qui précède la mise au pas de la culture, trouve ses sources dans le mouvement symboliste.

Aivalioti Maria, Ph.D. candidate (University Paris X-Nanterre, France)

The Greek Symbolism: Correspondences and Differences via the angel's image

[Abstract]

The period of the Greek Symbolism extends from the end of XIX century till 1930. It is significant that, in the hellenic area, the Symbolism took the responsibility upon itself to express the mental depression and the intellectual concern of a whole generation. How are the subjects of the thematics, the style and the expression of Symbolism, as we find them in the European centres, traced in the paintings of the Greek symbolists? Through the angel's figure, a common pattern of the symbolistic thematography, how can we detect the perception of the Symbolism in the hellenic area ("correspondances") and the attempt of the Greek artists to configure the Greek Symbolism, assigning to it a very special particularity (differences)?

Christos Nikou, Ph.D. candidate (Paris-Sorbonne, France)

Le rayonnement du symbolisme français en Grèce

[Abstract]

Jean Moréas, Greek poet, declared, in the "Manifesto" which he published in the Figaro (September 18, 1886), that Symbolism was the only mode of expression "capable of logically conveying the contemporary tendencies of the creative spirit in art." We are going back to Greece in order to explore the correspondences between the Greek and the French Symbolism.

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The symbolists cultivated the impression of “surplus” of meaning by mastering the art of ambiguity, by sucking away at the roots of etymological meaning, by deconstructing congealed connotations. They sought also to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of highly symbolized language. The ambiguity of the literary denotation unleashes the memory of an infinite number of myths, motives and figures. Which are the influences of the French Symbolism on the Greek Symbolist poetry? Which is the place of the image, the symbol and the ideal/transcendental interpretation? The purpose of this paper is to answer these questions so as to demonstrate the obvious influences of the French Symbolism on the Greek poetry.

Lisebeth Maria Grotenhuis, Teacher and Curator (Minerva School of Arts and Design and Gasunie Art Collection, Holland)

Lovely lines or: what the Dutch Symbolists learnt from Egypt

[Abstract]

‘Most of all, I like Egyptian Art’ wrote the Dutch artist Johan Thorn Prikker. He was not the only one. In the Netherlands, like elsewhere, Symbolist painters looked at Pharaonic art. And they read early nineteenth-century theories as well, especially about the ornamental qualities. ‘Born from nature, stylized by the artist’ continued Thorn Prikker his explanation. Finally their study resulted -as a reaction on Academism- in a new style, characterized by the tight rhythm and the typical hand gestures. The distinguishing lovely lines developed now as well.

The oeuvre of Jan Toorop is in this context most essential. In my contribution I will focus on his work and argue that Egyptian elements changed Toorop’s work in three stages. Firstly Egyptian artifacts like the obelisk and sculptures appear as objects. In the second stage the Egyptian heritage affects Toorop’s style to become more ‘pure’, or in Thorn Prikkers words, ‘stylized’. In a third stage, Toorop uses Egyptian objects and language to add a deeper meaning to his content.

Toorop therefore not only joined the Belgian ‘*Société des Vingt*’ in his search to catch the essential Ideal for his work, he also became a member of the French Rosicrucians. But not for long: the Theosophists turned out to be far more appealing for Toorop in their embrace of ancient Egypt as keeper of the truth. In my contribution I will clarify how their program can be read in Toorop’s masterpiece ‘The Sphinx’.

Davide Lacagnina, Independent Researcher (University of Palermo, Italy)

European Symbolist Graphics through the pages of the Italian art critic Vittorio Pica

[Abstract]

Vittorio Pica (Naples, 1862-Milan, 1930), lawyer, literary and art critic, contributor and then director (1900) of the Italian art magazine *Emporium*, was vice-secretary (1912-1914) and then full-secretary of the Venice Biennale (1920-1926).Tough well-known since ever for his

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outstanding studies on French Symbolist Literature, Pica has been too much quickly censored – and forgotten, as a consequence – for ideological reasons. He was forced, by the Italian fascist party, to resign as director of the Venetian Exhibition in 1927 and eventually, on the other hand, he was ‘disclaimed’ by an art history that privileged the line Impressionism-Cézanne-Cubism – as paradigmatic of modernism.

My proposal aims to present a new appraisal of the activity of Pica as art critic, focusing especially on the interests he proved for symbolist drawing and graphics through a series of essays and articles then collected in four different volumes published in two editions (1901-1904/1904-1921): *Attraverso gli Albi e le Cartelle (Sensazioni d’arte)*. The selected artists not only will document Pica’s taste and collecting interests – most of the works published were of his own property, in many cases gifts received by the artists themselves – but also will be the chance to investigate his critical approach, the inner ‘reasons’ of his writings (of that special *fin-de siècle* art criticism quality of literary tradition), and then that concept of ‘socialism of beauty’ in which graphic was meant to be the most modern and democratic artistic form, available through wide-scale editorial distribution of magazines, posters, public advertisements and illustrated printed books.

Anna Mazzanti, Professor (University of Sienna, Italy)

Angelo Conti as the Ruskin and Pater of Italy: promoter and elucidator of symbolism

[Abstract]

Not less than in other countries, Italian Symbolism is based on a complex milieu, result of contaminations between ideas and art criticism, music, philosophy, literature, photographic experimentation and architecture. Angelo Conti – pen-name Doctor Mysticus as author of articles for the Roman art magazines at the end of XIX century beside the young Gabriele D’Annunzio, than writer of “La Beata Riva” (Milan, 1900) the pre-eminent treatise of symbolist theories in Italy – became the principle leading spirit of this movement in Italy. His writings spread among the artists French thoughts (Amiel, Gautier, Guyau, Huysmans), English and American thoughts (Ruskin, Carlyle, Pater, Berenson), such as Schopenhauer’s theories. This heritage encouraged in Italy special works of art characterized by symbolist iconographies and hybrid colour effects, emulous of a re-actual past or better of a present played to ‘la maniera antica’. Similar points of view and issues, similar developments are recognizable even in famous symbolists from Moreau to the English Pre-Raphaelites. Then besides the most notable Divisionistes such as Giovanni Segantini, rare and peculiar artists worked in Rome, Venice and Milan in the Symbolist surroundings. Their passion for music, their knowledge in art of the past (above all Giorgione, Bellini, Rembrandt and Leonardo) addressed as to the technique of colours as style invested with symbolic value, their interest in the IIIth book, centred on Art, of Arthur Schopenhauer’s main work, give us several ‘files rouge’ to interpret their art. Between the others Marius Pictor, Giulio Aristide Sartorio, Mariano Fortuny, Vittore Grubicy and the American Eugene Benson, George Fleming’s step-father.

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Francesca Ricci, (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Italy)

The iconography of Symbolist Movement in early 20th century Italian Literature

[Abstract]

In my study I will analyse - between hypothesis and documents - the influence that the iconography of Symbolist Movement (also through the knowledge of French Symbolist Poetry, Baudelaire's in primis) exerts on the most significant authors of the early 20th century Italian Literature, such as: D'Annunzio quotes from Rossetti's Dantesque paintings, revisits Waterhouse's myth, recreates Khnopff's solitudes; Pascoli celebrates death in accordance with Bocklin's rite; Tozzi finds out conscious reality through Redon and shows it by the gestural expressiveness of Rodin's sculpture; Campana proposes a pilgrimage across Klimt's, Denis' or Hodler's paths, in Le Sidaner's moonlights; and, finally, Palazzeschi describes Denis' woods, where young girls take a walk, who perform Osbert's rituals to the Sun, while old women look like Rodin's and Klimt's effigies.

Olga Skonechnaia, Researcher (Institute of World Literature, Russia)

Paranoiac discourse of the symbolism and the delusion of persecution:
F. Sologub, A. Belyj.

[Abstract]

The downfall of the world is one of the most typical topics of the persecution mania. The idea of finality also saturates the culture of Russian symbolism. The symbolist notion of the end of the world certainly does not equal the status of eschatological delusion of a clinical paranoiac. For the latter, according to Freud, the destruction of the universe is the reflection of an inner disaster, an unconscious obtruding of destroyed internal properties onto reality. The end of the world in symbolism is the real present and at the same time the oncoming future, and delirium is its individual or group experience, prediction, divination, verification. Still the motifs of the abolition or violation of the universal order of classical paranoiac delirium and in symbolist texts are rather close and comparable. The conspiracy concept as the hypertrophied causality of delirium is brought into correlation with the conspiracy motifs of Briusov's prose, Sologub's "Petty Demon" and Bely's " Petersburg ".

The Symbolist Movement: Its Origins and Its Consequences

Alain Faudemay, Professor (Université de Fribourg, Switzerland)

Speed and slowness between the symbolist and the futurist generations: a few texts, a few reflections (vitesse et lenteur entre la génération des symbolistes et celle des futuristes: quelques textes, quelques réflexions)

[Abstract]

"Quickness and slowness" are relative and (in literatures) subjective notions, positively or negatively valued. Always present in literatures, they are invested by a historical and especially ambivalent meaning during the time of the great technical "progress", between 1860 and 1930, approximately. But, precisely, the technical advancement is not always considered as a "progress". Now it delights and now it frightens or seems the sign of a disgraceful materialism. In their own textures, especially their rhythmic textures, some literary works, especially (but not exclusively) in poetry, suggest quickness or slowness, as related to their agreement with, or reluctance to, the "modernity" of speed.

Hüseyin Altındış, Lecturer (Selçuk Üniversitesi, Turkey)
Symbolist Movement in Turkish Literature and its Effects and Consequences on Turkish Language and Literature

[Abstract]

For many years Turkish literature was under French influence. Due to economic and political relations most Turkish writers, poets and artists studied French and most of them have been to France for education or professional experience. As the symbolist movement started in France, the Turkish writers followed their studies and literary works closely and fed by the French writers. These writers and poets even translated a lot of works from French. Via this Turkish literature and readers met symbolist movement. Though Cenap Şehabettin is the first poet to use symbolism, Ahmet Haşım is believed to be the most important and famous poet who used symbolism. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to trace how symbolism arrived in Turkish literature and what were the changes that the movement brought to Turkish literature. To do this a few of Ahmet Haşım's poems will be studied in detail.

Leah Boston, Doctoral Candidate (Northwestern University in Chicago, USA)

Symbolism and "Social Art:" The Unity of Beauty In Fernand Khnopff's *Après Flaubert*

[Abstract]

In February 1884, Fernand Khnopff exhibited *Après Flaubert* in the inaugural salon of Les XX, a group of some twenty, mostly Belgian, artists organizing international shows of contemporary art between 1884 and 1893 in Brussels. Contemporary critics recognized Khnopff's allusion to a

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scene from Gustave Flaubert's *Temptation of Saint Anthony*: Saint Anthony stares into the face of his temptation, embodied as the beautiful Queen of Sheba. Khnopff's work as a Symbolist artist was never so straightforwardly literary, yet such associations have continued to direct scholarship on the painting. My research departs from the more traditional methodologies of iconography and biography in Symbolist studies of visual art by considering *Après Flaubert* in relation to the goals of Les XX as an avant-garde salon. In 1884, *Après Flaubert* emphasized the experience of beauty and the free association of the imagination over the empirical accuracy associated with realism. This is significant in the context of the rejection of realism by *L'Art moderne*, the primary literary organ of Les XX, because it believed that such a style could no longer affect perception, and the complex commitment to "social art" maintained by Edmond Picard, one of the most politically active supporters of Les XX. *Après Flaubert* crystallizes a debate central to the early support for Symbolism among the avant-garde in Belgium: whether or not the stimulation of the imagination toward the freedom of dream and the universal desire for beauty could catalyze the collective consciousness toward solidarity and revolutionary social change.

Natasha Chang, Assistant Professor (Middlebury College, USA)

Mother / Nature: Representations of Deferred Maternity in the Symbolist Painting of Giovanni Segantini

[Abstract]

This paper presents a feminist reading of the visual and literary trope of deferred maternity in the symbolist painting of Giovanni Segantini. I shall focus primarily on two paintings in the artists' oeuvre: *Il castigo delle lussuose* (1891) and *Le cattive madri* (1894). Drawing on iconographic and literary subtexts that range from the work of Baroque painter Alessandro Magnasco to Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia*, I analyze Segantini's distinct naturalistic—as opposed to "decadent"—brand of symbolism. I propose that Segantini's representations of deferred maternity depict a variant of the figure of the *femme fatale*; Segantini's women are at first sight more intimately connected to the natural world but just as deadly. Finally, exploring in particular the tension between maternity and nature, I shall connect my discussion to a broader historical panorama of European concern with falling fertility rates, demographic decline, and the changing social roles of women at the end of the nineteenth-century.

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Liana Cheney, Professor (UMASS Lowell, USA)

Giovanni Segantini's Nirvana Series: Symbols of *Luxuria* and *Vanitas*

[Abstract]

"Art should find the secrets of nature and translate them through nature into pictures."

This paper will examine Giovanni Segantini's Nirvana series represents the last phase of his symbolism. This group of paintings consists of Alpine landscapes with mysterious flying women—*The Punishing of Luxury I* of 1891 (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool) *The Punishing of Luxury II* of 1896 (Kusthaus, Zurich), *The Evil Mothers I* of 1894 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), *The Evil Mothers II* of 1896-97 (Kusthaus, Zurich), *The Agony of Comala* of 1895 (Dragoni, Milan) *Vanity: The Source of Evil* of 1897 (Private Collection, Milan).

Giovanni Segantini (1858-1899) as an Italian Symbolist artist was concerned to depict beauty of nature in art. His symbolism consists in the harmony of topographical landscapes and archetypal figures, which together suggest the abstract idea of nature, in particular love or motherhood. He dramatized this aesthetic quest in his symbolic landscape where natural love is contrasted with unnatural love. Influenced by the writings of Zola, Nordua, and in particular, Nietzsche, Segantini viewed art as a by-product of lyricism, sensitivity, and imitation of nature. His philosophy of art is naturalism, a general doctrine that claims that the proper study of art is nature. Segantini's theory of art can be seen as the fusion of naturalism with symbolism because he does not deviate from the path of reality and of artistic development; therefore, he paints to understand and represent the complexity of nature. He depicts paradoxical symbols, adding a note of unreality to the absolute reality of life as well as alluding to the mystery of nature in his art.

Deborah Cibelli, Professor (Nicholls State University, USA)

Warburg's Botticelli: Symbolist Currents and Art History

[Abstract]

German art historian, Aby Warburg, who founded the Warburg Institute for the study of art history in England, addressed the survival of Renaissance forms and the "afterlife of the Antique" in his studies that commenced with his dissertation on Botticelli from 1891. For Warburg Renaissance artists expressed pathos using expressive forms including the figure of a girl with streaming hair and flowing drapery. As an expression of intense emotion this figure exemplified for him pathos formula and it became an iconic image he promoted in his scholarship. This study will consider the ways in which Warburg's research and theories were shaped by the Symbolist movement of the nineteenth century, including the work of the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It will be argued that the Victorian artist

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inspired the Edwardian historian to study Renaissance art in his search for motifs such as the elusive *Nympha*.

Alina Clej, Associate Professor (University of Michigan, USA)

Fabricated Visions: From the Opium-Eater to des Esseintes

[Abstract]

In this paper I propose to explore the influence of Thomas De Quincey's work on late 19th-century French writers, by focusing in particular on the connection between De Quincey's fabled Opium-Eater, and des Esseintes, the protagonist of Huysmans's novel *À rebours* (1884). I have already sketched out this filiation in the conclusion to my book, *A Genealogy of the Modern Self: Thomas De Quincey and the Intoxication of Writing* (Stanford University Press, 1995). Although, over the years, I had the occasion to return to De Quincey's writings, I never pursued the investigation I had announced at the time. My present paper is a fragment of this yet unwritten book that I still believe is worth writing, although I may not be the one to do it.

The history of De Quincey's narcotic legacy in France is in itself remarkable. De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* first published in *The London Magazine*, in 1821, were an instant success with the English audience, and soon came to enjoy the status of an international bestseller in both Europe and the United States. Before the publication of De Quincey's text the practice of opium eating was restricted, at least in Europe, to curative purposes or, barring some unusual cases, to the cheap enjoyment of the working-class. With De Quincey's *Confessions* opium consumption became fashionable with a middle-class public, for whom the idea of describing this "private" experience was itself intoxicating. Its appeal reached over the Channel, where a free translation of the Opium-Eater's confessions--Musset's *L'Anglais, mangeur d'opium*--appeared as early as 1828. The Opium-Eater's purported experiences prompted, at least in part, the experiments with hashish that took place at the *Hôtel Pimodan*, and were described by Gautier in his story, "*Le Club des Hachichins*" (1846). But it was Baudelaire's "free" translation of De Quincey's confessional writings in *Les Paradis artificiels* (1860) that played the most important role in disseminating the practice of "artificial" pleasures and "intoxicating" visions among Fin-de-Siècle writers, from Huysmans to Proust.

More importantly, the practice of intoxication introduced by De Quincey, and later developed by Baudelaire, provided the underlying structure that enabled the collapse of the natural and the artificial into a purely aesthetic experience, in which fantasy or simulation could substitute for actual enjoyment. In my paper, I will examine the many facets of des Esseintes's cloistered universe, which as a multi-sensory pleasure-dome strangely foreshadows our post-modern, atomized landscape, in which the digital revolution has brought the □□ practice of aesthetic enjoyment to everyone's reach. It may seem ironic that a 19th-century aesthete could have so much in common with today's consumer of simulacra, but as I hope to demonstrate through my examination of Huysmans's text and its cultural context, his aristocratic recluse was already touched by the bourgeois consumption practices of his day. The "ivory tower" was itself a mirage obsessively defended by the neurotic artist precisely because it was "contaminated" by

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the “vulgar” pleasures of the crowd. No wonder that to escape these fears Huysmans looked for protection in a catholic stronghold, and that Catholicism itself could serve as an aesthetic refuge to embattled Fin-de-siècle writers.

Shelley Cordulack, Associate Professor (Millikin University, USA)

Metabolism, Symbolism, and Munch

[Abstract]

The Norwegian artist Edvard Munch’s series of paintings through the 1890's, known collectively as the Frieze of Life, looks to the physiologically functioning (and malfunctioning) living organism for both its visual and organizational metaphors. Munch's use of physiological metaphor also leads to a fuller explanation of why he added the painting Metabolism (itself a key physiological process) to the Frieze of Life, and why he said it was the work that tied all the other works together. His representations of the physiology of metabolism, as well as the physiology of death, allowed him to mold and resolve his thoughts on the meaning of life and immortality, particularly in response to the general pessimism and absence of traditional religious spirituality otherwise found in his works. By exploring these vital functions, which also characterized life, Munch found a means to gain a deeper understanding of human destiny.

Leslie Curtis, Associate Professor (John Carroll University, USA)

From Appearance to Apparition and Reflection: Symbolist Constructions of Salome, John the Baptist, and the Spectator's Severed Head

[Abstract]

The very phrase “Symbolist movement” seems to conjure images of the many fatal dances undertaken between alluring female personages and severed heads -- from Salome and John the Baptist to the Maenads and Orpheus. Thus, at the origins of this “movement” an adolescent dancer enters stage left, tossing a severed head like a ball as in Heinrich Heine’s text or chasing an apparition as in Gustave Moreau’s watercolors or Odilon Redon’s charcoals. But this entrance to the dance floor initiates a troubled passage whereby the reader/spectator/listener beholds apparitions in a sort of never never land where a foothold in the material world is shaken: heads float with forms of flying saucers, the space between words become a typographical abyss as in Stéphane Mallarmé’s poetry, musical paradigms suggest a final ascent into the celestial realm.

This paper examines the transposition of these severed heads from the printed page and the musical score – by way of Heine, Flaubert, and Mallarmé and from Gluck and Wagner -- to the visual images of Puvis de Chavannes, Moreau, Redon, and Jeanne Jacquemin. Redon’s significant departures from artistic and literary sources are considered and parallels between his work and Mallarmé’s poetic creations are established. I will explore how Redon’s “suggestive

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art” set important precedents for twentieth-century artists such as Marcel Duchamp, who emphasizes the spectator’s active involvement in “completion” of the art work. This rupture with traditional narrative is analyzed, as are the provocative questions Redon’s and Jacquemin’s art raises about the gaze and how it is gendered.

Stephanie Ebersohl, M.A. candidate (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

Androgynous Aspirations in European Symbolist Thought

[Abstract]

Through the preference of art and artifice over nature, the Symbolists essentially rejected natural form and existence. This dissatisfaction with Nature led to an interest in the androgynous form—a mode of existence that allowed the individual to transcend distinctions of masculinity and femininity, physicality and spirituality, earthliness and divinity. Androgyny could, in theory, allow diametrically opposed yet ideal aspects of gender to reconcile, generating a balance in self-composition and making possible the ultimate goal of transcendence. Both medieval and Symbolist intentions share a distinct similarity in the pursuit of gender transcendence, but where the former sought autonomy, the latter desired sublimation. This concern with gender identities and the culturally constructed boundaries that govern them furthermore raises questions concerning a fundamental difference between the resulting implications of a physiologically literal rejection of sex and an internally symbolic revision of the concept of a gendered existence. As literal androgyny provokes a corporeal self-consciousness regarding identity, in both eras it disrupts social and natural order, and evolves as an inherently problematic issue in the Symbolist focus on other-worldliness. Androgyny and potentially subsequent transcendence are nonetheless still possible under precise circumstances, and the underlying reconciliatory concepts of an androgynous reality are indeed both essential and leading to transcendence. However, a close analysis of transgender aspirations in Symbolist and medieval texts will reveal that this goal can only be achieved through a psycho-spiritual reconfiguration of gender barriers.

Kristi Groberg, Assistant Professor (North Dakota State University, USA)

Sympathy with the Devil: Russian Symbolism

[Abstract]

The Devil was of great importance to Russia’s Symbolists. From 1895 to about 1915, this segment of educated society reacted to artistic stagnation, the bureaucratization of the Russian Orthodox Church, and political repression by turning away from unpleasant realities or reacting outrageously to them. They thus responded in a non-rational way to their rationalist society. As Aleksandr Blok claimed, all that artists could do in response was accept the Devil’s truth--the essential minus. Eager to remove artistic taboos and broaden their personal experiences, the Symbolists began to explore the dark recesses of human nature and of the world around them. They took a socio-cultural interest in evil, cultivated (or pretended to cultivate) the demonic, and

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encouraged others to believe that they were Black Magicians and symbols of societal decay. This intensified in the years immediately after the abortive revolution of 1905. The Devil as the embodiment of evil, and the Devil as the consummate rebel against authority, allowed the Symbolists to propagate their attraction to “the devilish beauty that attracts from below.” In Russia as elsewhere, the fascination with personifications of evil sometimes produced, of course, active sympathy with the Devil.

Receptivity to the Devil found expression primarily through multivalent imagery in art and secondarily through behavior. These reflected disaffection from, and rebellion against, established norms: socio-cultural mores, religion, politics, and artistic forms. The Devil was an expression of protest. The symbols comprised a wide assortment of demons and devils from the biblical to the folkloric; more sophisticated were images of Mephistopheles (the figure of embodied evil) and of Lucifer (the Romantically tragic fallen angel). The behavioral posture was, at its simplest, nothing more than a sensationalist response by a youthful group who saw the Devil as a daring innovation, a reflection of their times, the last word in modernism, and a necessary component of their intensity of feeling. This was often expressed through outré behavior—costumes, drugs, talk of suicide—through which adherents practiced escapism and removed themselves from the world they abhorred, yet at the same time mocked the world to which they ultimately belonged. Artists outdid themselves to upset predominant sensibilities and express unconscious desires, but they also wanted to shock the public as well as sell their work. Nothing sold better than sensationalism, especially if it included the Devil.

Kathryn Moore Heleniak, Associate Professor (Fordham University, USA)

The Symbolist Imagery of Burne-Jones: Behind Closed Eyes

[Abstract]

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) though often viewed as a second generation English Pre-Raphaelite artist has come to be seen more appropriately as an early and influential Symbolist artist, whose works were known and prized not only in England but in European Symbolist circles. A device that provided a rich source for his symbolist sensibility was the figure with closed eyes.

Burne-Jones found languid, dreamy figures unusually potent signs for a variety of human mental states or conditions. Using classical myth, medieval legend, characters of his own imagination, Burne-Jones employed closed-eyed figures, both male and female, to convey complex suggestive meaning.

Such enigmatic works as *Chant d'Amour* (1868-77), *The Depths of the Sea* (1886), *The Wheel of Fortune* (1883), *Laus Veneris* (1873-78), and subjects from the *Briar Rose* series and *The Quest for the Sangreal* (1885-6), assemble a selective catalog of Burne-Jones's pictorial investigations of the evocative themes of love, mortality, time, the dream state, fate, ambition, human anguish all suggested by closed-eyed figures in different scenarios.

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In line with the poetry of his friend, Algernon Swinburne, no rude reality interferes with Burne-Jones' effort to conjure up an aura of mystery for viewers who choose to contemplate the elusive meanings which lie behind the surface of his closed-eyed figures. A careful reading of the works reveals a trove of suggestive ideas embodied in them.

Tena Helton, Assistant Professor (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

The Symbolist Aesthetic in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

[Abstract]

The filmic version of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, which aggregates three of the novels in this children's series, relies upon the gothic atmosphere inspired by American artist/illustrator Edward Gorey to replicate the dismal setting of the books. Although his artistic genre has been called "literary nonsense," Gorey's work is often squarely gothic. In fact, he has said in a 1992 interview that "[i]f you're doing nonsense it has to be rather awful, because there'd be no point." In the gothic combination of his Edwardian and mid-twentieth century American styles, the film demonstrates its debt to symbolist aesthetics and philosophies. Despite the fast pace of the film, the bleak, dark cold that pervades it and the lives of the Baudelaire orphans shows that art may provide a temporary escape, but mortality will ever be inescapable. Moreover, the gothic style highlights the undercurrent of taboo sexuality, particularly Count Olaf's (untrue) incest with Violet, a minor female, thereby encouraging the audience to interrogate the absolutes upon which we define childhood and adulthood.

Warren Johnson, Associate Professor (Arkansas State University, USA)

Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Pater, and the Hard, Gemlike Flame

[Abstract]

In postulating concentrated yet unstable experience as the goal of modern existence through the metaphor of the "hard, gemlike flame" (Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, 1873), Walter Pater transforms the spiritual quest from a search for an ultimate truth to a development of a refined intellectualized sensation. Though contemporaneous with the flourishing of French symbolism, and linked indirectly with it through the figure of Arthur Symonds, Pater's notion of intensified feeling as the highest form of response to modernity cannot be termed an formative influence on symbolist thought. Rather, his sense of spirituality as intensity rather than belief allows us to understand the curious mixture of ironized distance and strong feeling that characterizes the work of Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Villiers's ambiguous reaction to technology and to modernity, his elusive relation to the spiritual (as exemplified by *Sowana of L'Eve future*), and what has been called his "illusionism" that depends on a duality of perspective can be seen as parallel to Pater's religious doubt and self-questioning about solipsism. Both Pater and Villiers approach the modern with a sense of intense hesitation, a deliberately oxymoronic formulation I

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use in an attempt to capture a concentrated spiritual emotion married to an uncertainty about the subject's attitudes toward the positivism and materialism that were dominant in the 1870s and 1880s. Reading Villiers through Pater helps us to see how Villiers's illusionism depends on maintaining in suspension disparate ideas in a heightened aesthetic experience that is central to symbolist poetics.

Brent Judd, (Griffin School; University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

William Faulkner and the Symbolist Movement: *Absalom, Absalom!* as a reflection of Stéphane Mallarmé's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*

[Abstract]

The influence of French Symbolism upon Faulkner's early poetry has long been recognized. What has been ignored, though, is the influence that Faulkner's poetry has had upon his later novels. In her seminal study *The Origins of Faulkner's Art* (1984), Judith Sensibar has traced how Faulkner's poetry shaped his early novels. Though Faulkner would later delight in his status as a failed poet, Sensibar demonstrates how Faulkner's poetic apprenticeship allowed him to find a unique voice for each of his diverse characters. Building on Sensibar's work, I demonstrate how Faulkner turned to prose fiction as a vehicle for his poetic craft. Faulkner's winding sentences and opaque style seem to have more in common with poetry than prose.

In this paper, I argue that Faulkner's prose reflects the influence of French Symbolism and that such an influence holds the key to understanding his often hermetic style. In particular, I demonstrate how *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) attempts to use language in the same way as Stéphane Mallarmé had used it within his *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1876). In a sense, Faulkner's novel seems to be a prose version of Mallarmé's poem. Both works are an attempt to question the nature of reality and the individual subject's state of consciousness.

John Klein, Associate Professor (Washington University in St. Louis, USA)

The Contribution of Symbolism to Matisse's Decorative Aesthetic

[Abstract]

Symbolist elements in the art of Henri Matisse (1869-1954) are usually traced to the impact of his influential teacher Gustave Moreau at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. Moreau's emphasis on brilliant, non-naturalistic color and on the importance of feeling over perception have long been understood as mainstays of Matisse's Fauvism, where the Symbolist character of his art was thought to be most firmly located. But this account is incomplete and does not do justice to the pervasiveness of Symbolist theory in another and more important aspect of Matisse's work—his efforts to create a modern form of decoration.

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Increasingly the affinity between traditional ideas of decoration and an emerging modernist aesthetic in the writing of such late 19th-century theorists as Walter Pater, Albert Aurier and T  odor de Wyzewa has been recognized. The modernist decoration that Matisse sought, beginning in 1906 with *Le Bonheur de vivre*, continuing in even grander decorations such as *Dance and Music* (1909-10) and the *Barnes Foundation Dance* (1931), and culminating late in his career in stained glass windows, ceramic tile murals, tapestries, carpets and other objects of institutional and domestic decoration, has roots in Symbolist theories of interiority, synesthesia, and the integration of the arts into a unified whole. Sensation, the oft-despised province of a pejorative idea of the decorative, must be understood as the backbone of a complex theoretical support for an art that expresses and appeals to the deep emotional and imaginative life of the viewer who becomes absorbed in its effects—Matisse’s foremost goal.

Ethan Lewis, Professor (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

The Music of Poetry as Symbolic Testament

[Abstract]

This essay will contend that the music of poetry is intrinsically symbolic. To the preternatural associations with the term (“a symbol entangles, in complex colours and forms, a part of the Divine Essence” [Yeats]) we shall attend. Indeed, a more precise comprehension of that mystic ambiguity may be garnered by applying a “mundane” definition—symbol as that which it literally is and suggestive of more—to poetic music.

The same relevance we can discern through ostensibly opposed formulations, *viz.* a.) If the music inheres in the sense, still it transcends that sense (“Words are the only melodeon”; “Every poem is a poem within a poem: the poem of the idea within the poem of the words” (Stevens); b.) If it be distinguished from sense—as a metrical pattern or freer series of cadenced, modulated tones—music yet contributes to meaning (“the auditory imagination... works through meanings, or not without meanings” (Eliot); “A sentence is a sound in itself on which sounds called other words may be strung” (Frost). Either construal evinces the coalescence of music and semantics. Stevens (broaching Mallarm  ) goes so far as to identify the music with the story such that “it becomes the story.” No sooner states he so than he refines, and to some degree retracts. “When it is over, we are aware that we have had an experience very much like the story just as if we had participated in what took place.”

The piece proceeds through close analyses of a troika by Wallace Stevens (“Anecdote of the Jar,” “The Pleasures of Merely Circulating,” “Of Modern Poetry”), and of Yeats’ “After Long Silence,” to instance how it may genuinely be said that *the music becomes the story*: 1.) via a morphological equivalence to the narration (—which pattern might exceed the import of the content such that the nominal story provides a “meter” for the music); 2.) Cases of music as the lyric topic, in ways surpassing (albeit conjunctive with) an ode celebrating song.

Both modes, by their distinctive *overreachings*, underscore the dialectic of identity (*at once, one and two*) that permeates Symbolism.

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Andrew Marvick, Associate Professor (Southern Utah University, USA)

Something Incomprehensible: Symbolism and the Real in the Landscapes of Fernand Khnopff

[Abstract]

For the conference Symbolism: Its Origins and Its Consequences I propose a new interdisciplinary paper, "Something Incomprehensible: Symbolism and the Real in the Landscapes of Fernand Khnopff." The paper traces threads of criticism in England and content (both thematic and formal) in the landscape compositions of the Belgian Symbolist painter and art critic Fernand Khnopff between the years 1893 and 1912.

It is not surprising that the small body of pure landscapes in Khnopff's oeuvre has received relatively little attention. An image of the artist's dramatically sexualized sister clenching a cigarette between exposed, predatory teeth is bound to draw more curious looks than a placid view of an unpopulated Belgian sward.

Indeed with the exception of one or two well-known but untypical compositions, Khnopff's landscape work remains virtually unknown.

The landscapes' Symbolist allusions to nostalgia and withdrawal are worth investigating; of equal interest are their formalist properties, which have not heretofore been recognized, and their relevance to Khnopff's views on realist art. In a brief look at the artist's own language about the art of his time and contemporaneous considerations of Khnopff's compositions by his fellow critics, this paper provides a starting place for a fuller investigation into the artist's relation to the tense interplay between traditional, Symbolist and mechanical modes of realist image-making on the one hand, and modern formalist abstraction on the other.

Andrea Meyertholen, Ph.D. candidate (Indiana University, USA)

The Sound of Silence: Arnold Böcklin and the (Non-) Presence of Reality

[Abstract]

Upon his death in January 1901, the Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin left this world as one of the most celebrated and influential artists of the 19th century. Uncompromising and stubbornly individualistic, Böcklin eschewed the academic painting of his contemporaries, establishing instead his own unique style. By most accounts, Böcklin was not a great technical painter. Nevertheless, with images emblematic for Symbolists and greater fin-de-siècle society alike, his work resonated deeply within the psyches of his audience. In an increasingly rational society reliant on empirical means of ascertaining truth, Böcklin stripped through the veneer of material reality to expose the elemental forces festering underneath: anxiety, fear, nostalgia, and, above all, death. Yet how could the painter deliver to the eye what vision itself cannot perceive?

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Operating within the realm of the pictorial arts required Böcklin to develop modes of presenting the presence of these physically “non-present” entities. I will explore the manner in which Böcklin portrays this presence of the non-present by examining his 1872 painting *Self-Portrait with Death Playing the Fiddle*. The course of my argumentation will focus on the immanence of Schopenhauer’s philosophy for portraying the presence of the non-present, as well as for informing Böcklin’s self-understanding as a modern artist. I will conclude by considering the implications of determining realism and reality within the oeuvre of a man widely-recognized as a prototype for the Symbolist movement.

Margaret Miner, Associate Professor (University of Chicago, USA)

With Interest: Mallarmé’s Economical Symbolism

[Abstract]

Famous for speculating on the links between letters and music, Mallarmé’s writing also scrutinizes the bonds between music and gold within the circulatory systems of value that sustain the fin-de-siècle social body. Mallarmean music thus shares the wealth of solar myths and alchemical mysteries, but also the debts of the Panama scandal and the Dreyfus affair. Since both the latter were bound up with the reputedly tarnished coin of Jewish influence, the song suffusing the blood-stained gold of sunset in Mallarmé’s unfinished *Hérodiade* succinctly inscribes the poet’s unresolved ambivalence toward music’s currency.

Occulted by *Hérodiade*’s notoriety as a beneficiary of Salomania, however, are the trials of Moses, another Jewish figure associated with various fin-de-siècle economies. As both the ascetic bearer and the startled breaker of sacred inscriptions, Moses offers an embodiment of Mallarmé’s celebrated struggle with the hazards of writing. Moses also suggestively subtends Lesseps’s desert-crossing triumph at Suez and his exclusion from the promised glory of Panama, symbolic events that concentrated Mallarmé’s attention on the fluctuating values of positivist enterprise, orientalist imagination, international finance, and legendary retribution.

The Mosaic subtext of this cultural environment provides an occasion for reexamining the foundational transaction Mallarmé envisions between music and letters. Like the biblical story of the Golden Calf, in which the breaking of tablets coincides with the sound of singing and the circulation of gold, Mallarmean symbolism would seem to involve a lucrative recycling economy that music and letters each maintain within the ongoing fall of the other.

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Rosina Neginsky, Associate Professor (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

“Mallarmé and Self-Portrait in Disguise”

[Abstract]

Mallarmé's unfinished poem, /Les Noces d'Hérodiade/, is a complex metaphor for Mallarmé's internal self-portrait. In this poem, Mallarmé achieved the idea that he expressed earlier in life: "Since the spirit is Absolute and since nothing can exist outside of the Absolute, the object thought can make only one with the being who thinks; that object is the shape of the thought itself; the action through which the thought is produced. It is it that is at the essence of thinking." That idea was Mallarmé's spiritual path throughout his entire life. That path he has chosen to fulfill using the characters of the story of the dance of Salome and the beheading of John the Baptist and he endowed them with his own very personal meaning, the meaning that reflects his inner being.

David O'Brien, Associate Professor (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA)

The Symbolists' Delacroix

[Abstract]

The art of Eugene Delacroix provided an important source for Symbolist painters, particularly in regard to their understanding of color. This paper examines the ways in which a wide variety of Symbolists understood Delacroix. More specifically, I explore two alternate approaches to his use of color, one of which attempted to explain it scientifically, and another which lay emphasis on color as a conduit to spiritual experience.

Sangeeta Parameshwar, Associate Professor (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

Divine inclinations: Transfigurations of gaze in life and art

[Abstract]

The paper attempts to broaden and enliven the Symbolist movement discourse through an exploration of its manifestations in life beyond the genres of art. In an era of globalization, the framework of *kundalini* yoga from the East is used to highlight the relationship between consciousness and art and widen the conceptual horizon of the western Symbolist movement. Symbolic imagery that transfigures the other, taken from the autobiographies of ten global transformational leaders, illustrates some consequences of invoking the transfiguring gaze in the world. *Lila* a concept within Hinduism, meaning God's creative play, is invoked to highlight spiritual awakenings enabled by some transfigurations in life and art.

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Jonathan Perkins, Associate Professor (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

Paul Klee, the Femme Fatale, and Symbolism

[Abstract]

My paper analyzes works by the Swiss art Paul Klee (1879-1940) that deal with a central subject in symbolism: The Femme Fatale. As Klee emerged as an artist in the first two decades of the twentieth century, he grew out of a culture steeped in the symbolist aesthetic. Fundamental to my paper is an examination of the ways in which Klee both embraces and rejects symbolist tenants in his images of the “evil” woman.

Frank von Stuck, an artist central to symbolism in Germany, was the most prominent teacher of Klee while he was a student in Munich in the first years of the twentieth century. Stuck’s paintings of simultaneously seductive and evil women form a fascinating comparison and contrast with Klee’s works with similar subject matter. An important sub-category within the femme fatale theme is the image of the woman associated with a snake, a favorite subject depicted numerous times by Stuck. Klee also creates artworks showing woman associated with snakes (and other animals) throughout his career.

The radical modernity of Klee’s style contrasts with the more traditional approach to three-dimensional modeling that Stuck’s works display. Klee thus assertively breaks from his teacher, while at the same time he treats similar subject matter. A knowledge of the symbolist precedents allows for a richer interpretation of Klee’s works.

William Perthes, Lecturer and Assistant Director of Education (The Violette de Mazia Foundation, USA)

Symbolist Aesthetics and Mallarméan Themes in the work of Robert Motherwell

[Abstract]

Perhaps no twentieth century American artist spoke more clearly, or as eloquently, about the influence of Symbolism and Symbolist aesthetic theory on the development of modern art than Robert Motherwell. Motherwell saw a direct connection between the writings of Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé and the artwork of his contemporaries in the School of New York. Throughout his long career Motherwell often found direction for his own artwork in the writings of these poets, using Mallarmé’s advice to “Describe not the object itself but the effect that it produces” as a guiding principle.

This paper will examine the relationship of Symbolist poetry and aesthetic theory to the artwork of Robert Motherwell. Motherwell’s own words will be used to support a fuller understanding of this relationship as it expressed itself in works such as *Voyage* (Museum of Modern Art, New York), 1944, and *Mallarmé’s Swan* (Cleveland), 1944. Particular attention will be paid to his work *A Throw of the Dice*, a suite of seven lithographs created in 1962-63, which drew its name

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from Stéphane Mallarmé's last poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, and which itself had a profound effect on the development of modern art.

Robert Motherwell possessed a rich understanding of Symbolism having first been exposed to it as an undergraduate at Stanford University in the early 1930s. He continued this interest when he entered Harvard in 1938, and Symbolism continued to play a motivating role throughout his artistic life.

Erika Schneider, Assistant Professor (Framingham State College, USA)

Gauguin's Watery Women: A Multivalent Symbolist Reading

[Abstract]

This paper will consider how the Symbolists conjoin women and water. By conflating the imagery of Venus, Eve, Ophelia, and water nymphs, artists complicated the established Salon depictions of watery women. As Jennifer Shaw has written regarding the figure of Venus in the Salon of 1863, male viewers subjugated women based upon their fluctuating bodily functions. In the hands of Symbolist artists over twenty years, this fluid connection made woman unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Typically, scholars have analyzed Paul Gauguin's biographical metaphor of the nude woman in the waves as a force of nature. None, however, have specifically traced the birth, development, and enshrinement of women in water in Gauguin's oeuvre. Furthermore, few have applied this reading to the theme by other artists influence by Gauguin such as Henri Fantin-Latour, Odilon Redon, Gustave Klimt, and Edvard Munch.

The theme appears at pivotal junctures in Gauguin's career, in reliefs to woodcuts, notably as the central image in *Woman in the Waves* in 1889. Later subtitled *Undine*, the work references the German fairy tale *Undine* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, mentioned by Richard Wagner in his interpretation of women as beings ruled by elemental forces. Shown at the Café Volpini exhibition in June 1889, *Woman in the Waves* represents the artist's rejection of societal norms as he sought a more primitive existence. By examining these works in relation to later Symbolists and Symbolist-inspired artists, I will demonstrate how artists use watery women as a means to express the dangerous forces of nature and the perils of innovative artistic expression.

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Cassandra Sciortino, Ph.D. candidate (University of California, Santa Barbara, USA)

Armand Point's Eternal Chimera: the Florentine Quattrocento and Symbolist Currents in Britain, France, and Italy

[Abstract]

Following a visit to Florence in 1894, French painter Armand Point abandoned an academic style enlivened by impressionism to turn to fifteenth-century Florentine painting. His exalted description of Botticelli's *Primavera* (1477-78) in the *Mercure de France* (1896) attests to his near religious reverence for the Florentine Quattrocento. Point's "conversion," as he called it, was influenced by the writing of Ruskin, the British Pre-Raphaelites, Moreau, the art theories of Péladan, and his own direct encounter with early Renaissance painting in Florence. A significant portion of the aesthetic discourses with which Point's work engages in the years following his conversion can be traced to ideas about early Renaissance Florence circulating in Britain, France, and Italy. These forces contributed to the formulation of a Quattrocento Symbolist aesthetic which, drawing especially on the work of Botticelli and Leonardo, stressed the associative power of imagery, the value of ambiguity, and the potential of painting to evoke a synaesthetic experience of music. The talk will analyze Point's *The Eternal Chimera* (1895), *Saint Cecilia* (1896), and other works in relation to his published writings and propose that his paintings provide an especially clear example of the way in which ideas about the Florentine Quattrocento moved from one European country to another and creatively coalesced in the Symbolist artist's hands. Though neglected today, Point was a formidable force in the European art world and study of his relationship to early Renaissance Florentine art will deepen understanding of both his oeuvre and the development of Symbolism at large.

Larry Shiner, Emeritus Professor (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

Symbolism and Crime? Architecture of the Vienna Secession

[Abstract]

Although "Symbolism" is well established as the name for a tendency in late 19th century painting, there is less agreement as to whether it makes sense to speak of a Symbolist architecture. General parallels are often suggested between Symbolism and Art Nouveau and Jugendstil. This paper will examine what some of those parallels might be in the case of the architects associated with the Vienna Secession, and in particular the architecture of the Secession Building by Joseph Maria Olbrich. At the same time, the paper will consider the parallels between Symbolism and Jugendstil in the light of the critique of ornament by that implacable enemy of Art Nouveau, Adolf Loos.

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Mary Traester, Ph.D. Candidate (University of Southern California, USA)

Space, Time, Mimesis: Idealist Origins of French Literary Symbolism
[Abstract]

Attempting to delimit Symbolism as either a movement or a style inevitably leads one to the coordinates of space and time, which are palpably used and stretched in the experimentations of this literature. Indeed, struggles with ruptures in time and space reverberate throughout much of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing, as it comes to terms with the limitations of such a duality to describe or chart modern experience. In this paper, I discuss J.-K. Huysmans's *A Rebours* (1884) in order to discern what representative possibilities exist as old forms are discarded, and mimesis is eagerly abandoned in favor of the innovations of artifice and dreams. I argue that the origins of French literary Symbolism can be found in German idealism, and that the desire to transcend space, time, and mimesis, so prevalent during fin de siècle experimentations, leads to what I call "the problem of the idealist." This problem involves replacing the fixity associated with the natural world with the fixity of an embodied subject, and thus represents a new interpretation of the function of the subject, as the human body comes to replace images, the imagination, and literature as the intermediary between nature and the understanding. Taking the time to savor the heady delights of the Symbolist imaginary, I suggest that the consequences of this interpretation of the subject are felt both in this period and in subsequent modernisms in the exile and homesickness that result from deploying the embodied subject as sole arbiter between sense and thought.
