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La-Bas (Decadence From Dedalus)



Synopsis

This new translation by Brendan King vividly recalls the allusive, proto-expressionist vigour of the original. A fine introduction shows where Huysman's mystical quest ended, and the notes prove vital.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's unfortunate that the 1924 Keene Wallace translation is still so popular. Here is an example of why this new translation by Brendan King is better: Keene Wallis: "Asphalt from the street, leaves of henbane, datura, dried nightshade, and myrrh. These are perfumes delightful to Satan, our master." Brendan King: "Rue, leaves of henbane and thorn-apple, dried nightshade and myrtle, all fragrances pleasing to Satan, our master." One can only wonder how many generations of unfortunate satanists, not knowing French, suffered serious trauma from inhalation of asphalt from the streets, instead of rue, due to Keene Wallis' erroneous translation...

I found this book more than engrossing, both with the protagonist as well as his research. However, more interesting to me was the general social outlook portrayed in this piece... we see a man discontent with the mass produced and the mediocre, a view on consumerism before it was called that. The book was written in 1891 during the Industrial Revolution, and even though the factories do not even play a role in this book, you can clearly see their influence. This book, although somewhat

more introspective and more annoyingly sensationalized that is absolutely necessary, makes it abundantly clear how little we have progressed in thought in the last 100 years.

an excellent book, if abit 'wordy' by today's standards... some may be put off by the commentary on 19th century artistic circles by the author, but knowledge about the setting of its writing will explain the seemingly unrelated detours. While not that lurid by our modern de-sensitized tastes, its depiction of supposed Satanic Black Mass rituals were a HUGE shock to the general public upon its release in 1891, and in fact, in many areas the book was banned.

Dedalus publishers has outdone itself: this brilliant translation of JK Huysman's darkest and most controversial work arrives housed in a gorgeous softcover edition with cover art by fin-de-sicle artist Aubrey Beardsley. Huysmans was an unapologetic royalist whose simultaneous lives in bohemia and the Church led to some rather perverse artistic output. "A Rebours", an earlier work, was heavily influenced by the poetry of Baudelaire and served as a strong influence on Oscar Wilde. "La Bas" is far beyond that worthy text -- it embraces depravity with a slow, sure stranglehold that you don't notice until it leaves you gasping for breath. If you are interesting in reading and collecting historic decadent or transgressive literature, this edition will serve your needs well. As always with material from this era, it is very helpful to have a cursory knoweldge of fin-de-siecle' art and culture if you wish to reach a full understanding of the text.

I re-read this book once a year and with each passage I find new moments to be enchanted, bewildered and mystified by. This book inspired me so much that I tattooed it's title on my upper right arm when I was 16.

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