

Title: The Symbolist, the Decadent, the Critic, and His Journal: Cross-cultural Importation in Early Russian Modernism

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While Russian literature may have had no Symbolists or Decadents until the 1890s, the west produced no small number of them in the preceding decades. One book, transported from western literary debates into the Russian press, proved invaluable in establishing a conception of Symbolism and Decadence in Russia. In 1891, Jules Huret published his *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* providing a moment of summation for the French speaking literary world. This interview-based questionnaire collected first hand accounts of the artistic beliefs of the many practitioners of French literature's many groupings. Both Zinaida Vengerova and Nikolai Mikhailovskii incorporated Huret's *Enquête* into their attempts to introduce and polemicize with Symbolism and Decadence in Russia. In doing so, they transformed a western gesture of culmination into a Russian act of genesis.

Vengerova and Mikhailovskii perform the significant roles of introducing western notions of Symbolism and Decadence to Russia. They do so through the particular medium of the thick journal review. Thus, the general Russian reader's first exposure to these literary imports was highly mediated. They arrived from the west couched in translations, temporal shifts, and condensation. As I will show, Huret's *Enquête* was instrumental in all three of these processes that indelibly marked Russian Symbolism and Decadence. The jumble of native and foreign, original and imitative that accompanied the introduction of the very ideas and words for Symbolism and Decadence into Russia would persist throughout their use in Russian literary discussions and definitions of the turn of the century. This talk will argue that the thick journal critics who facilitated the recontextualization of western Symbolism and Decadence into Russia are as fundamental to the establishment of turn of the century Russian literature as are the poets who, seemingly ex nihilo, declared themselves to be Russian Symbolists.