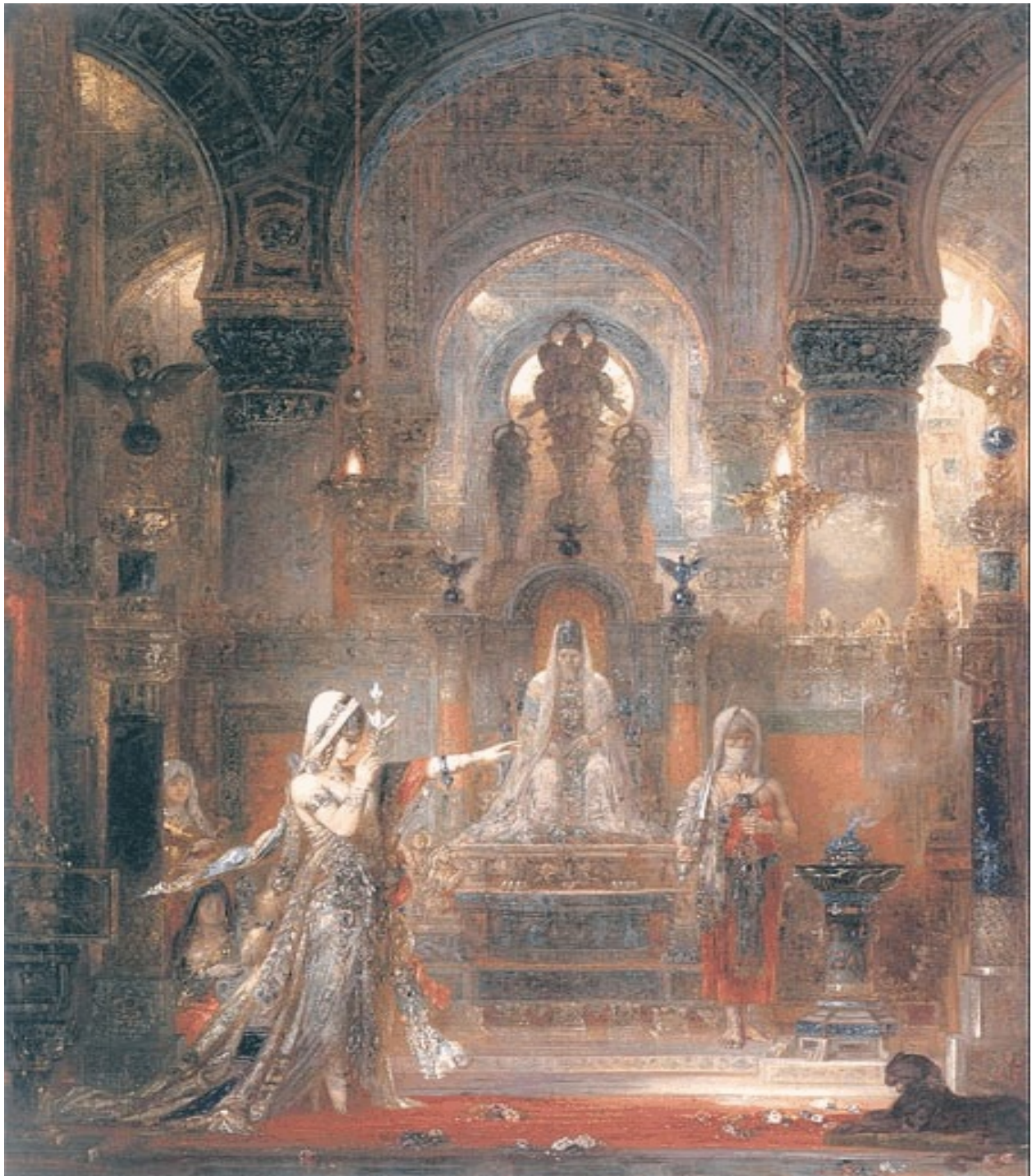


Summer 2009  
English 610: Theory and Criticism: Decadence  
Section 32795  
Session code: 054  
Tuesday, Thursday 1-4:35  
Begin: Thursday, May 21, 2009  
End: Tuesday, July 7, 2009  
A. M. Kemp



*Classicism is the subordination of the parts to the whole; decadence is the subordination of the whole to the parts.* —Oscar Wilde

Decadence is a falling, a sinking, a decline. As a literary movement, Decadence began in France in the late nineteenth century with Baudelaire's translations of Poe, and with his own invention of the urban poetry of the *flâneur*. It can be regarded as the second stage of Romanticism, defining the exhaustion of Romanticism's naturalism and optimism. Decadence proclaimed both the natural and the social to be worked-out mines; they may once have provided satisfaction and meaning, but not any more; the present generation has been born too late. The only hope now is through transgression and perversion, questing for meaning in new, negative directions, in search of unprecedented, dangerous experiences and sensations, hoping to "break on through to the other side." We will look at the theory and practice of Decadence, as it developed in France, and its adoption and transformation by German, English and American writers, and its relations to sexuality, intoxication, transgression and religion. What is the Decadent looking for: new possibilities of "alternative" vitality beyond a belated culture of sterility and fragments, or "my only friend, the end"?



Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), *Flowers of Evil*  
Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895), *Venus in Furs*  
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Genealogy of Morals*  
Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), *Against Nature*, *The Damned*  
Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), *Complete Works*  
Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), *Complete Works*  
Georges Rodenbach (1855-1898), *Bruges le mort*  
Radclyffe Hall (1880-1943), *The Well of Loneliness*  
Franz Kafka (1883-1924), *The Trial*  
T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), *The Waste Land*  
Djuna Barnes (1892-1982), *Nightwood*, *Collected Poems*  
Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966), *Vile Bodies*  
Christopher Isherwood (1904-1986), *The Berlin Stories*  
Guy Debord (1931-1994), *The Society of the Spectacle*  
Joyce Johnson, (1935-), *Minor Characters*  
Chuck Palahniuk (1962-) *Fight Club*

Schedule:

May

Th 21: Baudelaire

T 26: Sacher-Masoch

Th 28: Nietzsche

June

T 2: Huysmans

Th 4: Rimbaud

T 9: Wilde

Th 11: Rodenbach

T 16: Hall

Th 18: Kafka

T 23: Eliot

Th 25: Barnes

T 30: Waugh, Isherwood

July

Th 2: Debord

T 7: Johnson, Palahniuk