

Arthur Symons the translator: Translation, remediation, recognition

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Abstract

This article investigates Arthur Symons's translations of French poets Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Baudelaire as they appeared in press and magazine articles before being reprinted in his collections of poems, and, in the case of Baudelaire, as full-length-volumes. This constant process of remediation has been understudied and may have led to the lack of recognition of the achievements of Symons as a translator. This article therefore retraces the various formats under which those substantial translations appeared and reappeared as well as their coexistence with Symons's criticism through magazine articles and collections of essays. Symons exemplifies translational practices bridging the gap between Decadence and early Modernism that were woven in his critical production, but which have remained unexplored. An approach of translation in quantitative and material terms may help literary and translation historians achieve a different, more complete understanding of both early-twentieth-century poetic translation and criticism.

Keywords

Arthur Symons, translation, remediation, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Baudelaire

1. Introduction

When Yeats chose some poems by Arthur Symons for his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935* in 1936 (Yeats, 1936), he picked three translations: 'Mandoline', 'Fantoche' from Verlaine, and 'The Obscure Night of the Soul' from St John of the Cross, therefore paying homage more to Symons the translator of modern European poetry, than to Symons the poet with a record of 17 published volumes of poetry. Yeats, who praised Symons's translations in his *Autobiographies* (Yeats, 1961), was right: almost since the beginning of his publishing career, Symons had been both¹. In 1889, *Day & Nights* (1889), his first volume of poetry included verse translations of Leconte de Lisle, Gautier, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Du Bellay, and Heine. Embedding translations in his poetry volumes would characterize his publishing output, arguably with a lasting impact on his recognition both as a poet and as a translator. Contending to 'have always tried to put some of [his] life-blood into [his] Translations' (Symons, 1925, p. 1), Symons translated both prose and poetry from different languages including Romani (Baugh, 1966), Italian, Spanish, Latin, German, and French. Arguing that translating prose required less skill than poetry as it focused on 'cadence' in his only article devoted to translation (Symons, 1922, p. 109), he considered that translation of poetry required fidelity to the form of the poem and that all translations had to be faithful to the style of the original author, 'the drawing after the life', a metaphor he borrowed from Dryden, 'even to those defects without which the original author could not realize himself as he was.' (Symons, 1922, p. 112) Not a professional translator, and not famous for his many full-length prose translations²—the modern test for literary recognition—Symons's engaged in fragmentary translations of modern French poetry which have long attracted attention. Those poetic translations have elicited both praise and opprobrium, from 1898 when an unknown reviewer lambasted his translation from Verhaeren's *Les Aubes* as 'one of the most careless translations it has ever been our lot to encounter' (unsigned, 1898, p. 370) to Pound's praising the mastery of 'cadence' in his poetic translations (Pound, 1920, pp. 663-664). J. Roache praised the 'precise accuracy and considerable appeal' of Symons's translations of Baudelaire's *Prose Poems* and 'Châtiment de l'orgueil', but noted that his other contestable translations stem out from his misunderstanding of Baudelaire's spirit (Roache, 1967, p. 365). Gervase G. Hittle (1971) remains unconvinced. Judging 'La Cloche fêlée' 'utterly lacking in grace' (Odom, 1984, p. 11), B. J. Odom argues that Symons's translation follows the original rhyme scheme but fails to convey the message of the poem omitting or misunderstanding important contrasts and juxtapositions and proceeding to some unnecessary inclusions. However, the fact that those translations were first inserted within periodical articles before being embedded in Symons's volumes of poetry has remained largely undiscussed. Focusing on his poetic translations from the French³ and most especially from the French poetry of Verlaine, Mallarmé and Baudelaire, what follows concentrates on Symons's poetic translations as they appeared in successive publications and partly on his journalistic pieces which also contain fragments of translation⁴.

¹ See his first translation of Gautier's 'The Flower-Pot' (Symons, 1884, p. 267). Symons later commented upon Gautier (Symons 1897). French poetry is quoted in the original, French prose is translated.

² Symons translated Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Claire Lenoir* (1925), D'Annunzio's *The Child of Pleasure* (1898), von Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* (1908), Emile Zola's *L'Assommoir* (1894, 1928); Emile Verhaeren's *The Dawn* (1915); Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Francesca Da Rimini* (1902); Gabriele D'Annunzio *Gioconda* (1901); *From Catullus, Chiefly Concerning Lesbia* (1924).

³ Symons translated French poetry from Laforgue, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Verhaeren, Baudelaire, Gautier.

⁴ Symons introduced Maupassant's *Boule de suif* and *Stories*, Flaubert's *Salammbô*, Mérimée's *Colomba* and *Carmen*, Casanova's *Memoirs*, Lesage's *The Devil on Two Sticks*, Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*.

That a poet would embed French poetry within his own poetic production was not surprising. At the end of the nineteenth century Andrew Lang (Lang, 1880) and Algernon Charles Swinburne are notable examples of the practice: Lang translated Du Bellay and, among other poets, Swinburne is famous for his translations of some of Villon's poems (Swinburne, 1878), which, like Symons's, were first published in magazines (Swinburne, 1877, pp. 214-217) before being reprinted in his volumes of poetry (Swinburne, 1878, p. 224). But as opposed to Swinburne, an Oxford-educated poet coming from wealth, engaging in long essays in criticism or book-length studies mostly on Shakespearean and Jacobean drama, Symons was a journalist who earned his living by publishing literary and drama criticism in an astonishingly wide array of periodicals, the first venue for his poetic translations, before they appeared in volumes. His socio-economic circumstances and publishing constraints must be acknowledged as they played a role firstly in the texts Symons published and in his manner of publishing them, and secondly, in the lack of recognition of a man of letters whose publishing career spans some five decades.

The practice of embedding translations within individual volumes of poetry continued by the turn of the century: John Gray's collection of poems *Silverpoints* (Gray, 1893) includes one translation from Baudelaire, one from Mallarmé, two from Rimbaud, and no less than seven from Verlaine, but in English-speaking countries such as Britain and the US where translators have largely been 'invisible' as Venuti (1992) pointed out, such strategy proved almost fatal in terms of recognition. As early as 1907, W. G. Blaikie Murdoch was able to eulogise Symons's poetry and criticism without mentioning a single translation (Murdoch, 1907). By contrast, French poet Paul Fort did not hesitate to print Symons's translations of Verlaine, Mallarmé and Laforgue in *Vers et Prose*, the magazine he edited, and republished them in a stand-alone anthology (Fort, 1905). Other English critics proved more attuned to Symons's translations such as Earle Welby (1925) and R. Temple (Temple, 1951, pp. 151-181) while C. Scott appraised the influence of the English translators of French Symbolism on English versification by including Symons (Scott in Balakian, 1982, pp. 127-143). Most critics, regardless of their conclusions, have focused on the quality of Symons's translations of specific poets: Verlaine, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé, with Clements (1985) and Higgins (2011) for instance discussing their archaizing turns, but no study has been devoted to the course of Symons's poetic translations from their first appearance in periodicals to their final (?) embedding within his own volumes; no study of fragments of translations in his criticism traces their vicissitudes and examines how that specific mode of publication impinged on the recognition of a long-neglected figure. My primary concern is not the quality of Symons's poetic translations over decades, which has been extensively discussed (Lhombreaud, 1959; Scott, 1982; Clements, 1985; Higgins, 2011), but their complex, sometimes confusing mode of publication, *i.e.* their remediations. I want to complicate the common narrative of straightforward road from periodical to book publication as Symons's remediations are enmeshed both with his translational practice and with his status as a proponent of Decadence in Britain—admittedly a movement feeding itself on translations (Higgins, 2011)—in a time when the movement faced opprobrium. My approach is therefore mostly quantitative as I want to trace a specific mode of publication that allows Symons to capitalize on a substantial amount of translation work, on the one hand, but one that may have prevented his full recognition as a translator, on the other hand. How did his uses of translation and their multiple venues and formats impinge on his reception as one of the foremost turn of the century's British cultural mediator? How can we situate Symons's translations and publishing strategies in the complex and shifting literary and journalistic landscape of five decades? How to approach them in their interplay with his literary criticism? K. Beckson's approaching Symons's life as divided by his 1908 psychotic episode which left him unable to regain both his literary excellence and position in the cultural landscape remains

unconvincing⁵. On a more idiosyncratic level, Symons's publication strategy for his translations is also part of his persistent habit of rehashing earlier material into new publications, which, once again, has been perceived as one of the sad consequences of his deteriorated mental state. But Symons had adopted such a habit *before* 1908, presumably for financial reasons (journalism did not pay well), as well as for giving his writings more visibility, and he simply retained it with unfortunate consequences on his later recognition. Therefore, Symons's persistent politics of translation should be approached firstly in relation to the prevailing norms of literary criticism, secondly within the journalistic context of literary magazines with their specific content, format and intended readership, and thirdly in the context of the poetics of fragments and fragmentary translations characterizing the turn of the century's poetry: a great number of modern poems in translation appeared first as stand-alone pieces in various periodicals.

Symons always envisaged translation seriously, taking his cue from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Preface' to *Early Italian Poets*: 'The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, if possible, with one more possession of beauty' (Symons, 1925, p. 1), which he quoted in his translation of Baudelaire prose and poetry. Translation obeyed both aesthetic and linguistic purposes. His translational practice also relied on a staunch conception of the difference between prose and poetry. Comparing English and French modern poetry in 1916 after some four decades of activity, he noted that French poets could rely on a tradition set up by both Baudelaire and Mallarmé, and further contended that prose enabled more freedom to its practitioners,

It has not yet been proved—in spite of the many interesting experiments which have been made, chiefly in France, in spite of *Gaspard de la Nuit*, Baudelaire's *Petits Poèmes en prose*, and Mallarmé's jewelled fragments—that prose can, quite legitimately, be written in this detached, poetic way, as if one were writing sonnets. It seems to me that prose, just because it is prose, and not poetry—an art of vaguer, more indeterminate form, of more wandering cadences—can never restrict itself within those limits which give the precisions of its charm to verse, without losing charm, precision, and all the finer quality of its own freedom. (Symons, 1916, pp. 39, 84-86)

Symons seems contradictorily to have privileged poetry's stricter norms and shapes over the looser and freer structure of prose, although his output as a prose translator is not negligible. Among his favourite poets, and for the sake of brevity and comparison, I concentrate on his translations of Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Baudelaire in order to show how Symons accumulated translational capital with his fragmentary but persistently remediated translations while conforming to translational practices straddling journalism and literature in a highly competitive transatlantic market.

2. Verlaine

Symons was first a Francophile. In 1890, after his second stay in Paris with H. Ellis (Ellis, 1935) where he first met Verlaine, Huysmans, and Mallarmé, he published 'Tears in my heart that weeps' ('Il pleure dans mon cœur' or 'Ariettes oubliées'), in *The Academy* (Symons, 1890, p. 31), soon to be republished along a larger article on Verlaine in *The National Review* (Symons, 1892, pp. 501-515). The poem was translated 'in the measure of the original' (502) so as to show that 'Verlaine has made something new of French verse [...] has invented this

⁵ 'The year 1908, therefore, marks the symbolic division of his life: the years leading up to that "fatal initiation of madness" reveal a gifted man of letters who had earned his living by his pen. After that year, he was the wreck of a man, isolated from the mainstream of the literary world, struggling to resume a shattered career, and fearful of recurring madness' (Beckson, 1987, p. 3).

new kind of impressionist poetry' (p. 515), that Symons was concomitantly exploring in his own production. 'Tears in my heart that weeps' was later reprinted in *Silhouettes* (Symons, 1892), his second volume of poetry which unsurprisingly contains translations. Soon facing competition from no other than fellow poet and francophile Ernest Dowson who translated 'Ariettes oubliées' as 'Tears fall within mine heart' along with three other poems in *Decorations* (Dowson, 1896), Symons competed with George Moore, John Gray and others (Creasy, 2019) to vindicate Verlaine before British constituencies. He did so in different magazines either with single pieces of criticism or in discussing the poet as representative of 'la nuance, that last fine shade' (Symons 1893, p. 860) in 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', his groundbreaking article, illustrated with a reproduction of 'Verlaine at the Café' (Symons, 1893, p. 863) published in the US version of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Verlaine was Symons's first poet elect, one he corresponded with (Beckson & Munro, eds. 1989, pp. 104-105), one to whom he dedicated his controversial *London Nights* in 1895, and one he would progressively translate over three decades.

In 1896, the second much enlarged edition of *Silhouettes* included eight further translations⁶, 'after Verlaine's early collections of *Fêtes galantes*, and *Romances sans paroles*' (Symons, 1896), 'Verlaine's masterpiece, as I think, of sheer poetry' (Symons, *National Review*, 1892, p. 502). Symons thus continued a practice which gives his volumes of poetry a mosaic-like quality, in keeping with Decadent cosmopolitan politics and translational poetics illustrated by his peers. Translation appears in and as poetry.

Those translated poems were later published in US monthly *The Bibelot* (Symons, 1898, pp. 64-72, 76) an 'aesthetic little magazine' launched by the American Thomas Mosher in 1895, and catering for a middle-class readership interested in fine printing and literature including contemporary poets. Each issue 'focused on a particular author or text [...] [and] presented itself [...] as an anthology' (Mc Leod, 2018, p. 127) ranging from antiquity to modernity, which contributed to the canonization of budding poets such as Wilde, Carman, Dowson and Symons. In this annual beautifully printed collectible (Mc Leod, 2018, pp. 127-134), Symons's translations competed with those by John Gray, Bernard Miall, Michael Field, W. J. Robertson, and Gertrude Hall⁷, all translators of Verlaine (Hall, 1895). His own translations of Verlaine finally appeared in *Collected Poems* (1901 dated 1902)⁸ to which he further added 'The Last Sleep' (from *Epigrammes*), and 'Three Songs from Verlaine', published for their part in the *Saturday Review* (Symons, 1905, p. 270; Symons, 1906, p. 108). Book publication appears as a temporary step in his interest in Verlaine and translational activity.

While publishing two collections of essays, *Studies in Prose and Verse* (Symons, 1904) and *Studies in Seven Arts* (Symons, 1906), Symons continued to discuss Verlaine, this time in the literary US magazine *The Smart Set* in January 1906 (Symons, 1906, p. 79-83), translating 'The Faun', 'On the Grass', and three poems from *Sagesse*⁹. Carefully mentioning his previous translations (Symons, 1906, p. 81), he added that 'False Impression' had been published in

⁶ 'Dans l'Allée', 'Cythère', 'Les Indolents', 'Fantoques', 'Pantomime', 'L'amour par terre', 'À Clymène', 'From Romances sans paroles'.

⁷ Poetess Gertrude Hall Brownell had translated Verlaine as early as 1895: Paul Verlaine, *Poems of Paul Verlaine*, Chicago: Stone & Kimball, 1895. The volume was part of the Green Tree Library along with volumes by Sharpe, Moore, Ibsen and Maeterlinck.

⁸ Poems from *Days and Nights* were almost slashed out, some *Silhouettes* and *London Nights* were kept including 'Requies' while other translations appeared: *Antigone*, *Phèdre* by Racine, *La vida es un sueño*, San Juan de la Cruz, Santa Teresa, *From an Old French Song-Book*, Du Bellay, Salvatore di Giacomo, Heine's 'Pilgrimage', Gautier.

⁹ 'Promenade', 'On Muted Strings', 'Colloque sentimental'.

Harper's Magazine, therefore asserting his presence to American readers. As Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker note, *The Smart Set* was seen by Pound as an attempt to create an American equivalent to Ford's *English Review* (Brooker & Thacker eds., 2012, p. 16) partly through its introduction of James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence to American readers. The magazine 'worked on the middle-ground of periodical publishing, between mass-circulation magazines and the avant-garde little review, combining modernism and the culturally modern with a distinctively American sense of taste and "sophistication"' (p. 16). By such a choice, Symons was somehow showing his intent to disseminate Verlaine in a magazine that was heir to some of the 1890s British magazines he had edited or contributed to and which had far more potential readers. His next translations include three poems from *Sagesse*¹⁰ and one from *Épigrammes*¹¹. Progressively translating the whole of *Romances sans paroles*, and carefully selecting pieces from Verlaine's later volumes, Symons appeared determined to establish his credentials as a qualified translator of all of Verlaine's poetry along his credentials as a poet, both activities being envisaged as inseparable.

In the 1899 edition of his most famous collection of essays, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, Symons had mentioned the forthcoming publication of a complete translation of Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes*, which never materialized as a stand-alone book but finally appeared embedded within *Knave of Hearts, 1894-1908* (1913). As B. Morris showed (1984, p. 509), Symons let Yeats read and correct the proofs, although he did not always heed his friend's advice. For this collection of earlier pieces, mostly translations from Villon, Chénier, and Verlaine, Symons chose and picked in nearly all of Verlaine's collections of poems (*Fêtes galantes*, *Poèmes saturniens*, *La Bonne chanson*, *Romances sans paroles*, *Jadis et naguère*, *Parallèlement*, *Sagesse*, *Chansons pour Elle*) to offer thirty-five pieces. More importantly *Knave of Hearts* provides the first complete translation of *Fêtes galantes*, a fact that may be overlooked as Symons embeds it along other poems by Verlaine into his own poetry, therefore presenting his poetry as composed both and in equal parts of original pieces and translations. By its inclusion of a series of translations from various authors, epochs, and genres, including Verlaine whose *Fêtes galantes* nests besides other translations from Verlaine, *Knave of Hearts* emphasizes Symons's conception of poetry not so much as translation but as polyphony, and generic hybridity. Among other linguistic polyphonies, poetry becomes that 'immediate proximity [...] suggested between the French and English poetry, and a dialogue between the two' (Higgins 2011, p. 21). It becomes one dialogic voice questioning poetic authorship and turning it into a medley of source texts. Such a vision is not contradictory with Symons's professed attachment to fidelity to the poet's voice as he later argued in his only article on translation: 'Should Translations Improve Their Authors?' (Symons, 1922, p. 111): rendering with great accuracy another's voice should not be mistaken for literal rendering, but designates one's own understanding or reading of the poet one translates, and explains many of Symons's departures from the original poetic text, for instance in the case of Baudelaire (see Higgins, 2011, p. 51)

Admittedly, Symons's criticism of Verlaine, most of the time peppered with a few translations, be they poems or lines, appears as a solid complement to his translations *stricto sensu*. From 1890 onwards, he regularly commented upon Verlaine, first in the prestigious *Academy*, and in the serious *Saturday Review* (Symons, 1891, pp. 362-363; Symons, 1894, pp. 684-686 on *Dédicaces*; Symons, 1895, pp. 731-732; Symons, 1896, pp. 338-339; Symons, 1896, p. 34;

¹⁰ 'La tristesse, la langueur du corps humain' (X) 'The body's sadness and the languor thereof'; 'Les chères mains qui furent les miennes' (XVII) 'La mer est plus belle' (XV) 'The Little hands that once were mine', 'Fairer is the sea'.

¹¹ 'Quand nous irons, si je dois encore la voir' (XIII) ('When we go together, if I may see her again').

Symons, 1897, p. 479; Symons, 1898, p. 319-320). The short-lived *New Review* (Symons, 1893, pp. 609-617) also published an article of his in its British edition. His obituary of the deceased poet appeared in the cultural weekly *The Athenaeum* (Symons, 1896, p. 54). In those pieces, and in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* heavily indebted to them (Symons, 1899), Symons kept to the traditional usage (France, 2006, p. 230) and gave poetic quotations in French, using English for prose translation. Such a practice is manifest in his discussion of Verlaine's *Invectives* (Symons, 1896, pp. 88-89) and in his tribute to the recently deceased poet Symons printed in *The Savoy* (Verlaine, 1896, pp. 119-135). In the short-lived avant-garde/Decadent illustrated magazine he edited throughout 1896, his tribute with its original Verlaine's quotes¹² is part of a series of three pieces by Edmund Gosse and W. B. Yeats, themselves self-confessed verlainites.

Such usage persisted in Symons's later pieces, which are rehashings of those initial articles, this time published in American periodicals such as two *North American Review's* articles (1915), where Symons provided personal memories of his acquaintanceship with Verlaine. Assessing Verlaine's works in the US's oldest literary magazine, he gave quotations in French (Symons, 1915, pp. 743-788; Symons, 1915, pp. 748-756). The Great War did not deter Symons from further comments on Verlaine when he unexpectedly discussed Pétrus Borel as a precursor of *Ariettes oubliées* in *The Forum* (Symons, 1915, p. 735). Again, and in keeping with current usage, Symons used a mix of French for poetry and snippets of translations in English thereby defeating scholars looking for 'complete' translations labelled as such in single volumes.

His short articles in *Vanity Fair* where he recycled an account of his first visit to Verlaine with some paragraphs on the recently deceased Charles Morice (Symons, 1916, p. 61; Symons, 1919, pp. 43, 106) and parts from 'Some Unpublished Letters of Verlaine' were later included in 'Spiritual Adventures in Paris' in the US edition of *The Bookman* (Symons, 1921, pp. 481-485), where Symons describes meeting Verlaine in 1890 by including portions taken from previous articles. Admittedly, critics have unfavourably considered such recycling, or have explained its publication by financial or psychological reasons (Beckson, 1987). More importantly, those articles function as a means for Symons to reassert his credentials both as a personal acquaintance of Verlaine in a time when they were becoming scarce, and as a critic of his poetry supported by translations. That they appeared in *Vanity Fair*, described as 'combin[ing]—in varying proportion—literary material with reviews, current affairs, humour and (in some of the magazines) fashion stories, visual art, and photography' and standing 'in a middle space between the author-centered production model of the avant-garde magazines and the market-driven arena of the daily papers and mass-circulation weeklies' (Faye Hammill & Karen Lieck, 2012, p. 176) once again shows Symons willing to address a larger, transatlantic readership, one that he could adapt to and to whom he could market his personal reminiscences. His contribution also points out to the linguistically hybrid quality of Symons's writing, be it poetry or criticism along with a closer relationship between translation and personal knowledge.

In 1924, the abruptly terminated edition of his collected works (Symons, 1924) retained translations from Verlaine in the *Knave of Hearts* part of the volume, therefore sustaining Symons's position as one of the most comprehensive, if hidden, translators of Verlaine. Even if he had ceased to translate him by 1913, Symons would evoke the French both as a personal acquaintance and a poet by observing the rule that poetry should be given in the original until his final publications including *Mes Souvenirs*. The chapter on Verlaine (Symons, 1930, pp. 61-66), Symons's final article on the French poet, is devoted to *Parallèlement* (Symons,

¹² 'Mon rêve familial, 'Chanson d'automne, 'Crépuscule du soir', 'Le Faune', 'Sérénade', 'Spleen', 'Green', 'Un grand sommeil noir/Tombe sur ma vie', 'Beauté des femmes, leurs faiblesses, et ces mains pâles', 'Écoutez la chanson bien douce', 'O mon dieu, vous m'avez blessé d'amour (Stickney, 1875)', 'Impression de printemps'.

1926, pp. 281-302) and may appear as a belated contribution displaying Symons's incapacity to embrace the poetic ruptures of the twentieth century; it can also be seen as his response to the reception of the Decadence by the younger generation (see Hext & Murray, 2019) who adopted a more ambivalent attitude to the Nineties. It was also as a response to those rediscoveries of the Decadence that Symons responded.

Symons's two-pronged approach, both as a critic and as a translator-poet, his choice of magazines, admittedly in keeping with the need to compete with translators on both sides of the Atlantic, his emphasis on personal acquaintanceship, and his aggregated publications show a careful, attentive author, bent on furthering his career both as a poet and a critic by tactful accumulation of poetic translations and by transatlantic dissemination in selected magazines. As opposed to the second half of the twentieth century, in the 1910s and 1920s, his strategy was successful as Symons found himself reviewing his competitors' works: as early as 1909, he reviewed Edmond Lepelletier's monograph on the poet (Symons, 1907, pp. 629-630) later translated into English (Lepelletier, 1909), Wilfrid Thorley's biography of the poet (Thorley, 1914), and Harold Nicolson's (1921). Unfortunately, his own translations, the most complete of Verlaine by 1913, did not appear as such, with serious consequences for his later recognition when personal friendship with Verlaine came to be seen as his main asset. Moreover, Symons had never been the only translator of Verlaine into English: he had continuously faced competition from different individuals with almost the same strategies as his, partly induced by publishing formats. Gertrude Hall's first translation of some of Verlaine's poems appeared as early as 1895 in a publishing house set up by Herbert Stuart Stone and Hannibal Ingalls Kimball, two Harvard graduates, to publish American and foreign avant-garde/Decadent writing between 1892 and 1905, a venture similar to Smithers's publishing house which had published Symons's 1890s controversial volumes of poetry along with *The Savoy*. Hall's second translations significantly appeared next to Symons's in *The Bibelot* in 1903. In the US, as early as in 1896, Verlaine appeared both in a US anthology (Charles Dudley Warner, ed., 1896) and in the study of Trumbull Stickney, also a Harvard graduate and the first US PhD recipient in France (Stickney, 1896)¹³. Such a competitive publishing context may account for Symons's energetic transatlantic publishing in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is also a useful reminder that the reception of Verlaine in English-speaking countries was conducted along transatlantic lines. Indeed, from 1904 to 1916, Symons faced competition from no less than eight translators both in Britain and in the US¹⁴. Like Symons, Ashmore Wingate offered a selection of Verlaine (Wingate, 1904). Commissioned by Walter Scott and Co, F.P. Sturm translated three poems embedded within a volume of poetry of his (F.P. Sturm, 1905, pp. 21-24); John Blackwood McEwen, Ashmore Kyle, Paterson Wingate also translated three poems (John Blackwood McEwen, Ashmore Kyle, Paterson Wingate, 1906); O.F. Theis did a partial translation (Theis, 1913), and Bergen Applegate (1916) engaged in partial translations of selected poems and a study. In a time when Symons was still engaged in translating a great portion of Verlaine's poetry, Arthur Clark Kennedy published his translation *Fêtes galantes* (Kennedy, 1908) and stands as his most prominent rival. As the preceding names show, most of Verlaine's early translators published fragmentary pieces, firstly in collections of their own, secondly and increasingly in private editions catering for niche readerships (Kennedy, 1921; Kennedy, 1926; Creston, 1928; Norton, 1929), some of whom at the time when Symons was publishing his souvenirs in short-lived cosmopolitan magazines such as *Two Worlds* (Symons,

¹³ On Stickney, see Doreen Bolger Burke, Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rizzoli, 1986.

¹⁴ A first-year student in French, William Faulkner (Faulkner, 1920) translated four poems by Verlaine clearly indebted to Symons (see Kreiswirth, 1977).

1925-1926). His practice therefore appears in keeping with Verlaine's contemporary translators: providing partial translations, embedding them within his own volumes of poetry with the result that Symons the translator became buried in Symons the poet. Thanks to his multiple remediations, remodelling of former texts to transatlantic readerships, he ranks as the earliest most productive disseminator of Verlaine for larger non-francophone constituencies before the French poet was anthologized along with Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, and Leconte de Lisle in 1930 (Henry Edwards Berthon, 1930), this time in a translation-free anthology meant to teach French poetry to English-speaking readers. In the meantime, Symons's translations of Verlaine had disappeared from view and his legacy consists mainly in irrelevant memories whereas a quantitative approach shows his important output blurring the distinction between poetry and translation.

3. Mallarmé

Another poet who fascinated Symons was Stéphane Mallarmé, discussed as early as 1893 as 'the supreme poet' (Symons, 1893, p. 862), and devoted a whole chapter to in the first edition of *The Symbolist Movement* along with Verlaine (Symons, 1899, pp. 115-138). Critics seem to have remained mostly indifferent to Symons's published translations of the French poet with the exception of A. Pym comparing his 'Hérodiade' with that of the Australian poet Christopher Brennan to note the 'relative freshness' of Symons's piece (Pym, 1996, p. 29). Admittedly Mallarmé's complex elaborate language is a translator's stumbling block, which Symons addresses with a 'skilful consonance, assonance, alliteration, and interlocking rhymes, many of these play[ing] on the possible variations of the traditional Italian sonnet rhyme scheme' (Morris, ed., 1986, p. 3). Facing short-lived competition from Decadent poet John Gray in *Silverpoints* ('Les Fleurs', 1893), Louis Dyer (Dyer, 1894), and later John Payne ('Les Fleurs', *Latter Days*, 1913), Symons first translated the final part of 'Hérodiade', which appeared in the last issue of *The Savoy*, he single-handedly completed (Symons, 1896, pp. 67-68). The following year, he discussed the poet first in *The Saturday Review* (Symons, 1897, pp. 109-110) and more extensively in the cultural monthly *The Fortnightly Review* (Symons, 1898, pp. 677-685). Mallarmé was treated like Verlaine: in *The Symbolist Movement*, Symons included his translation of 'Sigh', 'Sea-Wind', and 'Autumn Lament', which Mallarmé himself praised; in May 1900, he added the translation of 'Hérodiade' to his volume of poetry *Images of Good and Evil* (Symons, 1900) along with translations from Sophocles, St John of the Cross, and St Theresa. 'Anguish' appeared in *The X*, an Oxford undergraduate magazine in October 1900 (Symons, 1900, p. 595). The following year, those five poems were reprinted in his first edition of the *Collected Poems* (1901 dated 1902, reprinted in 1906, 1907, 1909, 1919, 1921). Possibly to widen his readership to US readers thanks to Mosher's publishing politics, Symons republished 'Stéphane Mallarmé' in *The Biblot* in 1903 (Symons, 1903, pp. 87-110). In 1922 he reprinted 'Sea-Wind' in the *Literary Digest* (Symons, 1922, p. 48), and he later tried to publish *Stéphane Mallarmé's conversation: from an essay in The symbolist movement in literature* (Pittsburgh Laboratory Press, 1931, 4 unnumbered pages), but the project never materialized. However, in his 1924's *Collected Works* (Symons, 1924), translations from Mallarmé were omitted from volume 2, leaving British Librarian Arthur Ellis (Ellis, 1927) publish the first almost complete translation of Mallarmé before the poet was anthologized (Lecompte & Searles, 1931). Once again Symons's translation have disappeared from history, which is all the more regretful since those fragmentary translations are but the tip of a larger project. R. Lhombreaud was the first to mention his complete translation of twenty-three *Poésies* (Lhombreaud, 1959, pp. 89-102) archived at the Firestone Library at Princeton, which he ranks higher than those of Roger

Fry's *Poems* (Fry, 1936)¹⁵, or Arthur Ellis¹⁶, two volumes that obscured the work of previous translators. The reasons why Symons never completed or published his translation remain unclear, and it was only in 1986 that the Tragara Press published a selection of Symons's further translations of Mallarmé, this time with notes (Morris, ed., 1986)¹⁷. As Morris notes, Symons's project of a more complete edition relies on the 1913 edition of *Poésies* (Mallarmé, 1913), which is more attuned to the earlier Mallarmé, and therefore possibly easier to translate (Morris, ed., 1986, p. 4). That edition has re-established a more accurate genealogy in the translation of Mallarmé. Once again, the same pattern of embedding therefore hiding his translations in his volumes of poetry or omitting them for the sake of a larger edition that remained unpublished characterizes Symons's approach to a French poet. Once again, this has consequences on his recognition as one of the earliest translators of Mallarmé. To retrace a more accurate genealogy of Mallarmé's translations into English, this time archival material is needed along with periodical publication.

4. Baudelaire

Baudelaire represents a somewhat different case, as he was already a well-established, albeit controversial poet in the British and American literary landscape in the 1890s (Clements, 1985). John Gray would be but one fin de siècle poet to translate some of his poems in *Silverpoints*, with J. Hull Mc Cormack contending that Symons might even have gone as far as pillaging the closing lines of Gray's translation of 'Un Voyage à Cythère' (Mc Cormack, 1991, p. 137). First celebrated in a resounding review by Swinburne (1862), Baudelaire's poetry had been partly translated since 1869 (Shepherd, 1869; Curwen, 1870, with fourteen poems), and featured in two fin de siècle anthologies of French poetry by William John Robertson (1895) and Henry Carrington (1894, rev. ed. 1900). However, Baudelaire's prose writings including the *Petits poèmes en prose* remained largely untranslated, except for Stuart Merrill's translation of eight of them in 1890 in an American edition. For his part, Symons translated both Baudelaire's prose and poetry with the result that he became the dedicatee of philosopher and translator Cyril Scott's *The Flowers of Evil* as early as 1909. The same year, James Huneker, the editor of the short-lived Decadent magazine *M'lle New York*, one of the main conduits of French Decadent writing in the US published an essay on 'The Baudelaire Legend' in *Scribner's Magazine* for February 1909, reprinted the same year with some additions and changes in his *Egoists: A Book of Supermen*. James Huneker was an avid reader of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Huysmans, and Maupassant (Mc Leod, 2003, p. 327), as well an admirer of Symons.

This time and possibly because of the existence of those first translations, Symons published few poetic translations in magazines: 'Blind Men' appeared in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* (Symons, 1903, p. 749); 'The Eyes of the Poor' (prose poem) much later (Symons, 1926, p. 433), and 'Le Flacon' in the *World Review* (Symons, 1927, p. 123). His interest in Baudelaire also materialized in the revised and enlarged edition of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (Symons, 1919, pp. 113-118), the origin of which is a short article on his letters in *The Saturday Review* mentioning J. Crépet's *Oeuvres posthumes* (Symons, 1907, p. 107-108). More importantly Symons published no less than a study, an almost complete translation of

¹⁵ Fry's translation of 'Hérodiade' was the first translation to refuse the archaistic language used in the 19th century for translations from the French.

¹⁶ Gladys Turquet-Milnes introduced the volume thus: 'the translations in this volume serve to show that once [Mallarmé's] verse is rendered into English it becomes crystal clear, clear as lines of Voltaire though infinitely more poetic' (Mallarmé, 1927, p. 13).

¹⁷ B. Morris further explored how those translations were influential on Yeats's 'The Autumn of the Body' and 'The Symbolism of Poetry' (Morris, 1986).

Baudelaire's prose and poetry and an edition of Baudelaire letters to his mother in the 1920s. However, Baudelaire presents a different case when investigating Symons's translational activity.

Symons always considered Baudelaire as the quintessential poet of modernity which may explain why he was the first, as early as 1905, to publish a translation of twelve of Baudelaire's *Petits poèmes en prose* as a single volume with Elkin Matthews (Symons, 1905, rpt 1913)¹⁸. With Verhaeren's *The Dawn*, this is the only book-length translation of poetry by Symons and the first translation of Baudelaire's prose poems. Symons commented upon both poems and translation: 'In translating into English a few of these little masterpieces, which have given me so much delight for so many years, I have tried to be absolutely faithful to the sense, the words, and the rhythm of the original.' (Symons, 1913, p. 5) Possibly because they were poems in prose, and therefore devoid of rhyme schemes, Symons seems to have adopted a flexible attitude responding more closely to the meaning, rather than to his idea of Baudelaire. The 1905 edition was reprinted in *The Bibelot* (Symons, 1909, pp. 100-136) at the express wish of Symons and reissued by Thomas Mosher in his Ideal Series of Little Masterpieces, n° XI, in 1919 and in 1922 by other publishers. Those poems were then republished in 1919 in an edition by T. R. Smith and F. Pearce (T. R. Smith and F. Pearce 1919) concomitantly to Huneker's translation both of poems and prose poems (Huneker, 1919). Because they were first published in a book-format and dealt with the relatively novel genre of prose poetry, Symons's translations of Baudelaire's prose poems stand at odds with his translations of Verlaine's and Mallarmé's poetry. Faced with a substantial number of translations of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Symons was only left the option of concentrating on Baudelaire's prose poems first and engage in limited translation of his poetry which may have fuelled his interest in Baudelaire.

In 1925 his '*Les Fleurs du mal*', '*Petits poèmes en prose*, *Les paradis artificiels*' translated by Arthur Symons (Symons, 1925), appeared, first in Britain, then in the US in 1926 as *Baudelaire: Prose and Poetry* (Symons, 1925b). In spite of Baudelaire's infamous recognition in English-speaking countries, this was, once again, 'the first translation of *Les Paradis artificiels* and the most complete translation of *Les Fleurs du mal* published hitherto' (Higgins, 2011, p. 98). If those full-length translations partly account for Symons's scant translations of single poems in magazines, they ensured that his 'position in the canon of the most significant translators' of Baudelaire remained unchanged until the 1940s (Higgins, 2011).

As he did for Verlaine, this time with more material success as publication ensued, Symons also discussed Baudelaire in a series of articles published in British and American magazines later to be collected in book-format: in *Vanity Fair*, he published two articles, one in 1915, 'Charles Baudelaire' (Symons, 1915, p. 45), the next in August 1916 (Symons, 1916, pp. 39, 84-86) where he gives Aleister Crowley's translation of 'The Cemetery and the Shooting Gallery' (p. 86). In part II, Symons compares the 1857 edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* (insisting on his possession of the volume) to the 1861 edition. He continued in two articles in *The English Review* in January 1918 (Symons, 1918, pp. 49-55), including a translation of Gautier's famous definition of the Decadence (p. 88), reprinted in the same month as 'The Genius of Charles Baudelaire' (Symons, 1918b, pp. 49, 88) in *The Lotus Magazine* (Symons, 1918c, pp. 346-347, 349-352) and later incorporated in *Charles Baudelaire. A Study*. The same operation was performed with his 'Baudelaire and His Letters' which first appeared in *The English Review* in May 1919 (Symons, 1919, pp. 376-386) with snippets of translation from the *Petits poèmes en prose*, 'Epilogue', *Mon cœur mis à nu*, and 'The Genius of Baudelaire. The Satanical Vision of the Great Student of Sin' in January 1918 (Symons, 1918, pp. 49, 88). Published in the *North*

¹⁸ 'The Favours of the Moon', 'Which is True?', 'L'invitation au voyage', 'The Eyes of the poor', 'Windows', 'Crowds', 'The Cake', 'Evening Twilight', 'Anywhere out of the world', 'A Heroic Death', 'Be drunken', 'Epilogue'.

American Review, 'Baudelaire and his letters' (Symons, 1919, pp. 379-387) was a reprint of his May 1918 article, while 'A Study of Charles Baudelaire' had first appeared in the *London Quarterly Review* (Symons, 1918, pp. 178-188), and was included in the fourth chapter of *Charles Baudelaire. A Study*. Symons was continuing his established practice of publishing first in magazines, ranging from all the major weeklies and monthlies of the 1890s to their early-20th-century counterparts on both sides of the Atlantic (*The English Review*, *Vanity Fair*) before collecting and remodelling several essays in a book-length study: *Charles Baudelaire. A Study* is an assemblage of previously published short journalistic texts and translations. Possibly better than the canonical *Symbolist Movement*, *Charles Baudelaire* illustrates the hybrid, carefully arranged character of Symons's writing where translation is embedded in, and feeds criticism. Arguably Symons's translations in *Charles Baudelaire. A Study* are inaccurate by contemporary standards (linguistic archaism being not their only defect) and should be approached rather as creative adaptations engaging readers to revise their assumptions about what a translation can be as well as illustrating Symons's understanding of fidelity. Quite memorably the translation and status of Baudelaire proved a wedge issue between Symons and major Modernists. *Charles Baudelaire* had been favourably reviewed by E. Masson (Masson, 1921, pp. 21-23) but Eliot blamed Symons for turning Baudelaire into a ninetyish poet: 'it is what Baudelaire means to Mr. Symons's generation; it is not what Baudelaire means to us' (Eliot, 1927, p. 428). In 1928, reviewing *Baudelaire's Prose and Poetry*, Eliot further argued that Symons's translations exaggerate Baudelaire's Satanism and make him too much a man of the Nineties (Eliot, 1928, p. 86-99). Symons's translations were fully historicized—'the present volume should perhaps, even in fairness, be read as a document explicatory of the "nineties", rather than as a current interpretation' (Eliot, 1928, p. 98)—, to the dismay of Eliot. That Symons had responded to Eliot in advance in 1922 defending historicized translation: the poet's 'own manner, or the manner of his age, cannot properly be corrected at any other time or by any other person.' (Symons, 1922, pp. 111-112), did not prevent John Middleton Murry from objecting to the 'decadent' label applied to Baudelaire as 'the first and greatest' of the many poets branded as such in the nineteenth century. For the author of *Countries of the Mind* (1922), Baudelaire was a classic, *i.e.* a poet severed from historicity. Conversely A. Schintz was more tolerant to what he considered a labour of love (Schintz, 1928), but the vision of Baudelaire as Decadent was no longer acceptable in the modernistic 1920s. However, Symons was not alone in being consigned to oblivion: forgotten translators of Baudelaire include American poetess Imogen Guiney, Joseph T. Shipley (who translated 'Poems in prose' not translated by Symons, and 'Intimate papers from the unpublished works'), F. P. Sturm, (*Little poems in prose; The Flowers of Evil*), W. J. Robertson (*The Flowers of Evil*), Richard Herne Shepherd (three poems), all appearing in T. R. Smith's *Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry* in 1919 (T.R. Smith, 1919) and Huneker (1919). Those now forgotten translators were also competing with younger essayists such as Peter Quennell (1929), and Edna St. Vincent Millay (1936). As late as 1940, *Flowers of Evil, Translated into Verse by Many Hands* included translations of Baudelaire by Edna St Vincent Millay, Huneker, and Symons among others (Laver, 1940) with an introduction discussing translational issues (Higgins 2011, p. 119). In fact, that publication marks the end of the fin de siècle-early modernism reception of Baudelaire embodied by Symons and others and as instanced by their limited, archaizing translations, usually embedded in their own publications. Symons was in fact one of the few of those to have come up with substantial, book-length translations of Baudelaire. A new era of his reception in Britain opened as early as 1930 when Christopher Isherwood published his translation of Baudelaire's *Intimate Journals* with an introduction by Eliot reclaiming Baudelaire as a 'Christian Saint', in stark opposition to

Symons's vision of the satanist in Baudelaire (Baudelaire, 1930). As non-archaizing translations of Baudelaire were published, the name of Symons disappeared even from contemporary memory.

An undeterred Symons published *The Letters of Charles Baudelaire To His Mother 1833-1866* (Symons, 1928), partly in a deluxe edition in 1928. That edition is but one in a series of ventures with small publishing houses such as the Beaumont Press, William Edwin Rudge (US), Charles J. Sawyer in London, Nancy Cunard's the Hours Press (where his souvenirs on Paul Verlaine appeared), Symons engaged in, and a practice which lasted until 1940 when the (US) Fountain Press published *Amoris Victima* (Symons, 1940). Such a choice also applied to his earlier prose translations which surfaced in the 1920s, including his erstwhile privately printed translation of Zola's *L'Assommoir* done for Smithers's Lutetian Society in 1894 (Symons, 1894), which was republished by T. Werner Laurie Ltd (Symons, 1928), as were his translation of *Claire Lenoir* (Villiers, 1925), and of Louÿs's *La femme et le pantin* (Louÿs, 1935). Those translations also belong to an era when Decadence became again marketed as deluxe commodities. By choosing formats with a necessarily limited print-run for his prose works and prose translations, Symons followed a well-known and well-documented Decadent and arguably Modernist practice but one, however, which led him to relative obscurity. The case of Baudelaire testifies to the oblivion of his achievements and name¹⁹.

5. Conclusion

Symons's translations of poems and prose poems do not exactly follow the pattern of his prose translations in full-length volumes. His poetic translations adopt a fragmentary, heavily remediated mode of publication that tends to mask their extensiveness as far as Verlaine, Mallarmé and Baudelaire are concerned. Historically, Symons's practice appears similar to that of other translators operating between the 1890s and the 1930s: partial and first published in magazines before they are published in their own volumes of poetry. However, he adopts a specific strategy of publication for poets: translating the whole of Verlaine's *Romances sans paroles* for instance, he does not, possibly for copyright reasons, publish it as such, burying his translation in his own succeeding volumes of poetry. The Mallarmé's project is uncompleted, and despite their novelty, the Baudelaire translations were criticized by the influential Modernists with devastating consequences. When Symons disseminates most of his poetic translations in various articles, one at the time, playing on astonishingly varied series of remediations, admittedly for financial reasons, but also for strategic and aesthetic concerns, he fares no better. Such a persistent choice has prevented his lasting recognition as a translator of French modern poetry as it has had the unintended effect of disseminating his achievement to the point where it ceased to be viewed as the output as a single gifted translator. Both embedding or remediation cost him dear in terms of recognition. Even though critics agree that none of his translations has been hailed as epoch-making, they should be seen as part of a whole conception of translation, which, *pace* Eliot and his followers, deserves interest. Symonsian translation finally appears as woven into his poetry and criticism to the point it has become indissociable and constitutive of Symons's generic and linguistic hybridity, translation being equated to poetry. Moreover, such mode of partial translations still exists. Mallarmé, for one, still attracts limited, fragmentary editions, in limited print-run²⁰. Does John Ashbery's *Collected*

¹⁹ See for instance <https://fleursdumal.org>, a website devoted to translations of *Les Fleurs du mal*, quoting from many twentieth-century translators except Symons.

²⁰ *Translations* (accompanying the exhibition 'Delirium: the art of the Symbolist book', held at the Morgan Library & Museum, January 20-May 14, 2017), *Brise marine* (2016); *A roll of the dice will never abolish chance* (2015); *Azure: poems and selections from the "Livre"* (2015); *Afternoon of a faun* (2015, 50 copies), *L'azur* (2015).

French translations: poetry by John Ashbery include his translations of Mallarmé (2014) in a subtle reminiscence of Symons's manner? Such practice relies on a genealogy harking back to Decadent poets and critics that needs to be more fully explored and discussed.

To understand Symons the translator both of prose and poetry, one has to think outside of Eliot's modernistic box or contemporary definitions of literary translation, and one needs to go 'à rebours'. To read a collection of Symons's poetry is more often than not to discover his translations, especially of French poets, uncovering the progressive accretions of his translations, following their infinite dissemination, their meanders from magazines to volumes, possibly losing one's bearings but finding as a reward 'jewelled' translations inwoven in his writing.

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