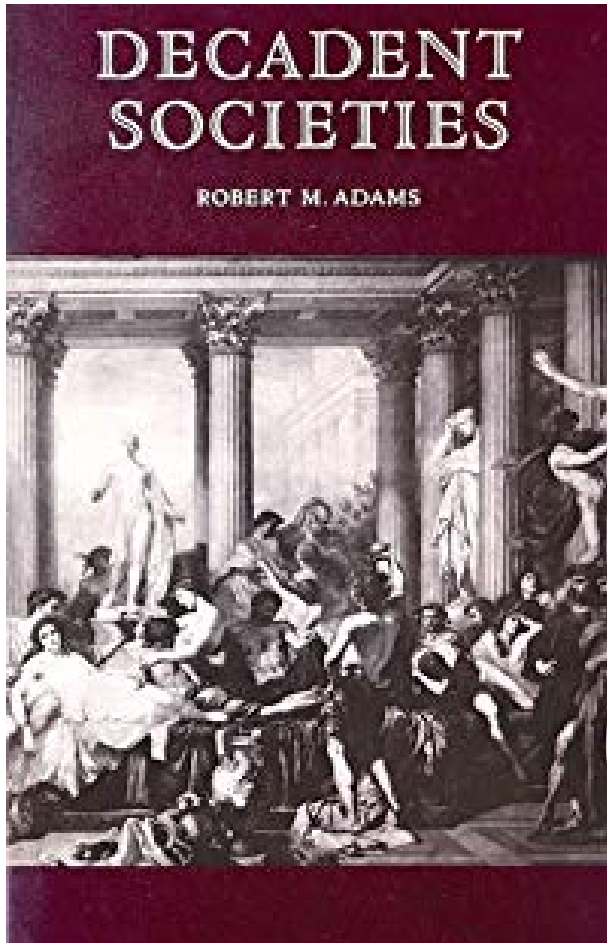


Decadent Societies



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Decadent: this word, deceptively simple to define, has been the subject of serious controversy and intense debate from the beginning of time. What is truly decadent? Are we decadent? Do we live in a society doomed to decadence and decline? Has the U.

S.

entered a period "in which no Ideal either grows or blossoms"? To explore this question, distinguished critic and scholar Robert M. Adams examines the demise of five once-powerful cultures: the Eastern and Western Roman empires; the ancien régime of 18th-century France; the Romanovs of pre-Communist Russia; and the British empire. He observes that "from such a direct overview one might learn what some of the symptoms of decadence have been in the past, and so estimate what analogies can be drawn with our own contemporary society." Adams shows that certain internal forces--such as indecisive leadership, tax exhaustion, social inequity, excessive legal regulations, and complacency--are found in each of the societies examined. He then examines the role these forces might play in our contemporary society. His conclusions cannot be easily summarized. Many people will disagree with them, and others will applaud his insight, but all will find this

book immensely informative and thought-provoking.