

McIlvanney, Siobhán and Gillian Ni Cheallaigh (eds). *Women and the City in French Literature and Culture* (2019)

Hope Christiansen

Number 118, Spring 2021

Infox, Fake News et « Nouvelles fauses » : perspectives historiques
(XVe – XXe siècles)

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081106ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081106ar>

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Publisher(s)

Department of French, Dalhousie University

ISSN

0711-8813 (print)

2562-8704 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Christiansen, H. (2021). Review of [McIlvanney, Siobhán and Gillian Ni Cheallaigh (eds). *Women and the City in French Literature and Culture* (2019)]. *Dalhousie French Studies*, (118), 228–229. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081106ar>

eventually attained recognition as a poet in her own right—and an avant-garde one at that—distinct from her husband Pierre, even if “la part de chacun demeure marquée de l’empreinte de l’autre” in their *poèmes à quatre mains* (248). Studies of Therese Huber, Mary Shelley, and Silvina Ocampo (by Sylvie Marchenot, Olivier Larizza, and Mónica Zapata, respectively) round out the final section of this first-rate collection that shines a light on women whose time in the shadows is officially over.

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McIlvanney, Siobhán and Gillian Ni Cheallaigh (eds). *Women and the City in French Literature and Culture*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019. 302 p.

This fine collection sets out to challenge the prevailing binaristic, gendered approach to representations of the urban, namely, that the city is a fundamentally masculine space, “an ordered, rational, man-made expression, a projection, both material and symbolic, of men’s intellectual projects and spiritual ideals,” and that the rural is a feminine, natural, and non-rational one (1). Rather than focus on the more obvious sociological issues (such as the economic disparities to which working women were subjected), the contributors prioritize women’s perceptions of the urban environment and the ways they “live out their relationship with it,” whether that relationship be real, imaginary, or a combination of the two (3).

Part I asks us to broaden our definition of the *flâneuse*, long limited to stereotypes (prostitutes, widows, murder victims). Lucie Roussel-Richard explains that nineteenth-century women became would-be *flâneuses* by reading journals such as Jeanne-Justine Fouqueau de Pussy’s *Journal des demoiselles* which gave them access to descriptions of Paris and portrayals of professional women. Similarly, in her analysis of pictorial representations (by Mary Cassatt, James Tissot, and Édouard Vuillard) of women reading newspapers, Kathryn Brown posits women as “active consumers of the city” (7). As Brown sees it, depictions of newspaper reading were potentially subversive since they revealed women’s interest in things “that could be perceived as antithetical to the smooth running of the household” (53). In the first of two essays on cinema in this section, Jennifer Wallace delves into the ways in which Agnès Varda brings a female perspective to urban spaces in three short films (*L’Opéra-Mouffe*, *Les Dites Cariatides*, *Le Lion volatil*). By engaging with female subjectivity, Wallace submits, Varda “uncovers, exposes, and transforms the city” (75). For her part, Sarah Cooper argues that the “non-hierarchical relationship between the act of perceiving and the act of imagining” and between those of different political persuasions in Marguerite Duras’s film, *Le Camion*, reflects a “‘feminine’ ‘horizontal’ way of seeing” (9).

The four essays in Part II scrutinize the relationship of centre and periphery with respect to urban, geographic, and cultural centers, shining a light on the marginalisation of women in postcolonial contexts (9). The *flâneuse* makes an appearance here as well, beginning with a fascinating study of Émile Zola’s *Thérèse Raquin* by Marina Starik who encourages us to view the eponymous heroine as a “transgressive predator” whose actions, insofar as they question certain patriarchal institutions, transform her into a “becoming-dandy” (10) (Starik’s twist on Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s concept of *le devenir-animal* [118]). Nathalie Ségeral brings together novels by Nathacha Appanah and Ananda Devi and a film by Karin Albou in order to better understand the role played by Western literary models in oppressing or liberating teenage characters in the *banlieues* of Paris (11). Ségeral concludes that the very existence of these narratives “re-inscribe[s] ultraperipheral *banlieue* narratives into the geographical, literary and linguistic centre,” thereby creating “new female cultural models of identification” (157). Sonja Stojanovic then looks at Marie

Darrieussecq's feminocentric portrayal in her autofictional novel, *Le Pays*, of the relationship between a pregnant woman and her urban environment. Finally, in their co-written essay, the volume editors explore how Algerian urban space affords Nina Bouraoui's heroine, in *La Voyeuse interdite*, a certain creative freedom, just as the balcony in Leïla Sebbar's *La Jeune Fille au balcon* represents "a trope of porosity, exposing small but hopeful apertures of resistance to the suffocating oppression of urban life" for the women portrayed (13).

Part III centers on the feminisation of the urban environment. Julie Pilorget's compelling piece, which analyses women's role in the workforce in Amiens in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, makes a case for reconsidering the overly simplistic notion that public and private spaces were separate domains. In fact, women were so involved in the city's social and economic life—they even did physical labor—that Pilorget deems the medieval period "one of the most important moments in the history of women's work" (219). Imogen Long discusses *Journal à quatre mains*, a re-working of the diaries kept during the Occupation by sisters Benoîte and Flora Groult, for whom wartime Paris proved to be an ambivalent space, at once a "threatening site of repression, danger and peril" and one of "joy, opportunity and liberation" (225). Studies by Julia Waters and Kate Averis bring the volume to a satisfying close. Waters examines the interrelations among place, gender and belonging in Appanah's *Blue Bay Palace* and Devi's *Ève de ses décombres* (247), while Averis draws our attention to the (non)representation of ageing women and the urban environment in Annie Ernaux's *Les Années* and Nancy Huston's *Passions d'Annie Leclerc*, affirming that although ageing women appear more frequently in literary works from the twentieth century on, "their literary location in the city remain[s] rare" (16).

The broad scope of the territory covered by these essays—from novels to journals to films; from medieval Amiens to present-day Algeria—itself bolsters the volume's overarching message that women's self-development is inextricably linked to their ability to grapple with the forces that get in the way of their relationship with the city (16). This is one of those rare conference-based collections that is truly cohesive—thoughtfully organized and skillfully written across the board—, one best appreciated by a cover-to-cover reading.

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Orlando, K. and Valérie and Pamela A. Pears (eds). *Paris and the Marginalized Author. Treachery, Alienation, Queerness, and Exile*. Lanham. Boulder. New York. London: Lexington Books, 2019. 234 p.

Everett, Julin. *Le Queer Impérial. Male Homoerotic Desire in Francophone Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Francopolyphonies. Leiden. Boston : Brill-Rodopi. 2018. vii + 212 p.

Ces deux études remarquables marquent un tournant dans l'approche universitaire des littératures écrites en français, non seulement par la diversité des auteur.e.s abordé.e.s, mais par la grande richesse critique et théorique qui ne vient jamais entraver la lecture, les rendant aussi accessibles à un plus grand public et aux étudiant.e.s des premiers cycles universitaires. Ce qui frappe immédiatement, c'est le paysage radicalement nouveau qui émerge de Paris, mais aussi de l'ensemble des zones francophones, traversé par la (post-) colonialité et résolument transnational. *Paris and the Marginalised Author* brosse un portrait de l'artiste souvent exilé.e, en situation de précarité vis-à-vis de sa culture d'origine et d'accueil, précarité qui ouvre aussi tout un réseau de solidarité relationnelle avec les autres groupes marginalisés ou surveillés, permettant de dessiner de nouvelles