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Valérie K. Orlando and Pamela A. Pears, eds., *Paris and the Marginalized Author: Treachery, Alienation, Queerness, and Exile*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019. xix + 214 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$95.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781498567039; \$ 90.00 U.S. (eb). 9781498567046.

Review by Alistair Rolls, Emma Hamilton, and Marguerite Johnson, University of Newcastle, Australia.

Early in their introduction, the editors quote James Baldwin in a line that serves well to sum up this volume: “Life in Paris aided Baldwin in coming to terms with a constant nagging feeling that he ‘had no place in the world’” (p. ix). The essays that Orlando and Pears bring together in *Paris and the Marginalized Author* do not seek to explain Paris (and especially not to explain it away); instead of analysing what it is about Paris, or what Paris may be said to be, the volume documents the various, and varied, ways in which authors who find themselves there (albeit not exactly by pure contingency) come to terms with their respective nagging feelings. For, while a “place in the world” appeals to an idea (and an ideal even) of permanency, “coming to terms” and “nagging feeling[s]” suggest lived experiences, alienation localized in Paris and presented in real time. Paris is not therefore for these scholars, or for the writers whose works they critique here, a home away from home, or even a home in lieu of a home; rather, it is a place of non-permanency, a place to live homelessness (to be present to it, if not actually quite to be able to represent it). What objectivity, what representation, Paris provides is of the Other, the home from which writers are exiled. This mirroring of the Other inside the lived experience of the one that Paris is shown to be here is how coping occurs. For this reason, the book is quite candid about the questions that it will pose, but to which answers will necessarily remain elusive: “How,” for example, “do [the exiled authors’] representations and understanding of transgression and marginalization transcend national, linguistic and ethnic boundaries, leading ultimately to revolution, both literary and literal? How does their writing help us to trace the history of Paris as a literary and artistic capital that has been useful for authors’ exploration of the Self, race and home country?” (pp. xi-xii). In the framework of this collection, Paris is, unashamedly, a collective space of questioning the Other, and it is for this reason, no doubt, that the book, while privileging more contemporary critical lenses, like queer theory, is existentialist rather than essentialist, about presentation and not representation. So, while some readers with an interest in Paris will not find what they are looking for here (the book will not seek to ground its contemporary permutations of Paris and its authors’ “place in the world” in the Baudelairean “Any where out of the world” of the mid-nineteenth century, which saw in Paris an opposition between lived experiences of Paris present and essential representations of it), the editors are quite explicit as

to their intentions and deliver on them. The approach that they dub “inherently intersectional” precludes any essentializing notions, or “reified identities” (p. xii).

While this decision to privilege lived experiences lends itself to a more contemporary survey that is often interesting because of the variety of topics free-ranging though the volume, some readers might wish for a more detailed discussion in the introductory chapter. For example, the argument that “old and new Paris Noir fiction translates practices of othering on the other side of the Atlantic” (p. xiv) is left teasingly opposed to the Paris in which Baldwin found “refuge from the racism and homophobia of twentieth-century America” (p. ix). Paris is throughout the book, revealed to be a site of marginalization, as well as a refuge for the marginalized; and yet, an explicit argument made in the introduction that Paris is so important to black American writers because it is simultaneously so unlike America *and* so much like America (the rhetoric of “liberty, equality, fraternity” collides painfully with a history of colonization, slavery and exploitation of people of colour on both sides of the Atlantic, a point made in chapter five) might have enabled readers to gain a stronger critical purchase on the chapters that followed.

T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting’s opening short and largely descriptive account of writer Gwendolyn Bennett’s formative engagement with and exile to Paris, and her artistic development there, is premised on the notion that Paris was considered a culturally superior counterpoint to New York City. It portrays a developed artistic community in Paris which was fed by and fed back into the Black artistic and activist community in New York in the interwar years.

In the second chapter, Pamela A. Pears examines the evolution of Jean Genet’s work over time, suggesting that the connections he would forge with the Black Panther Party can be considered part of the ongoing development of his radical consciousness from his early works, such as *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*. This is conceptualized as part of a larger legacy, with Genet calling upon his connections to, and the influence of, Richard Wright’s work in order to legitimize his own activism and textual stance, in the same way that the Panthers would call upon the likes of Genet, Angela Davis and others. However, the connection between this argument and Paris, metaphorically or literally, is somewhat tenuous. Pears discusses Paris in terms of the various waves of black migration centring around the World Wars, and obviously both Genet and Wright are centred in Paris; in terms of Paris’s role in forming these texts or relationships, however, the reader is left wanting more.

Sandra Messinger Cypess’s chapter is ostensibly an analysis of three stories by Elena Garro about women located in Paris, which “show how oppressive the patriarchal system is to women, how so many end alone, possibly dead, and only a few are strong enough to find freedom and enjoy it” (p. 38). Ultimately however, it offers a far more complex and rewarding interweaving of Garro’s personal experiences of Paris with her creative works, which demonstrates the function of Paris as both reality and “almost an abstraction” (p. 31) and shows how the city is both a site of congregation and support for Latin Americans in Europe, as well as a site of discomfort and displacement experienced subjectively and variously along the lines of gender, class and sexuality. Her personal experiences and emotional subjectivities are translated into works located in Paris, but in her work *Little Women*, the intersections with French history are also symbolic of national histories of Mexican-French political relationships. This is a rewarding chapter to read because of this complex reading of Paris as place, metaphor and metonym.

Equally rewarding is Valérie K. Orlando's chapter charting the intersections between the work of James Baldwin and Nabile Fares. It fulfils the mission of the introduction, considering the position of the exile and its role in creating a conflicted insider/outsider subjectivity that allows these writers to assert that their homelands must accept their history of cultural plurality in order to fully advance and live up to their promise.

Laila Amine's chapter argues "that African diasporic encounters continue to shape African American travelers' ideas of their host city and their home from the civil rights era to the age of terror" (p. 64). Amine examines Paris noir in order to recognize the ways in which African American writers "mapp[ed] the French color line" (p. 65) and, in so doing, contributes to literature that renders complex the notion that black writers accepted Paris as an Eden in contrast to their experiences of racism in America. For Baldwin, for example, Europe's history of colonization goes hand in hand with slavery and renders complex his subjectivity as a black American of dispossessed African ancestry. This chapter is an important one, which adds to a burgeoning body of literature refuting the notion of Paris as a colour-blind city, romanticized and removed from the realities of its own racist legacies of systemic dispossession, marginalization and oppression of peoples of colour throughout the world.

Chapters by Aparna Nayak, Alison Rice, and Leslie Barnes, respectively, constitute part three, "1980s-1990s: Intersectional Feminism, Capitalist Globalization, and la Francophonie, Writ Large?" Each chapter explores the overarching theme of decolonization and the increase in immigration from former colonies. This is an important theme for literary critique and very much at the forefront of current queering of the canon--and non-canon--and the trending of intersectionality. As such, these chapters are necessary and important.

Nayak, in "*De rive en rive: Exile, Space, and Memory in Nancy Huston's L'Empreinte de l'ange*," examines one of the novels in a growing collection of fiction based on World War II, and the Algerian War. Here space and spatiality take centre stage for Nayak as she navigates 1957 Paris amid the geography of that ever-present landscape of anxiety, Algeria. Rice, in "Packing an Epistolary Punch: Nancy Huston's and Leïla Sebbar's Parisian Proximities in *Lettres parisiennes: Autopsie de l'exil*," looks at another type of gendered writing altogether: the product of the feminist and literary coupling of Huston and Sebbar and the conjoined birth that was *Lettres parisiennes*. This is fascinating stuff, as Rice takes us into the literary and spatial lives of two living, breathing "Saffies," who, like Huston's literary creation in *L'Empreinte de l'ange*, occupy scenes of strangeness and isolation. Barnes's "Sur les pas de Linda Lê: Paris, Exilic Heterotopia" is at home in a collection on alienation, with her spotlight on Lê's *flâneurs* successfully achieving nothing as they wander the city. For Barnes, the city is an intertext, and rightly so. Think, Pont Neuf, Hôpital Sainte Anne, and Barnes's favourite, Rue de Vaugirard. So important are the chapters of this section that one is left wishing that they could have gone further, exposing treachery on a grander scale! While alienation and exile are covered, the door is left open for so much more queer.

Norrell Edwards's chapter, "The Right to Paris," examines migrants' narratives in Shay Youngblood's *Black Girl in Paris* and Évelyne Trouillot's *La Mémoire aux abois*. By drawing on Henri Lefebvre's theory of the right to the city, Edwards adopts a 1960s lens for discussion of the imaginary in the real that is metonymic of much of the volume's mid- to late-twentieth-century focus. The metonym of city space of, say, a "homeless man" (p. 127) implicitly translates the examples of African American and Haitian immigrants onto the prose-poetic Parisian

landscape familiar to scholars of Parisian modernity of the nineteenth century. In this way, the “double-edged alienation” of the characters described by Edwards recalls the nostalgia for the past that becomes melancholy when one realizes that the representations of the past are also illusions (p. 130). The trauma for those seeking refuge in Paris from political violence, who find themselves living once more alongside those dictators responsible for their departure, is a fascinating case of the way that Paris can alienate those who encounter it from their present and their past at the same time. The theory of post-memory on which Edwards draws (p. 133) has an uncanny echo of, and pertinence for re-reading, such poems as Baudelaire’s “Le Cygne” (“The Swan”). The questions of Paris’s role in these novels is raised by Edwards, but the answers are left in these echoes. Being present to Paris was always already off-set by exclusion in Baudelairean poetics, and post-memory can be considered as something Parisian, in and of itself, rather than something that needs to be applied. Edwards privileges the real over the theoretical, the prosaic over the poetic, throughout her analysis of the right to the city, which ultimately sees her chapter function metonymically in the volume as a sourcebook for contemporary examples of Parisian self-alterity.

Karl Ashoka Britto’s chapter on the place of Paris in Vietnamese diasporic fiction focuses explicitly on “a Paris forever lost somewhere between [these] poles of fantasy and lived experience” (p. 139). Paris, as such, is not only a place represented from another place (in this case, a colonial Other), but also, and more positively perhaps, as a place from which to reconsider that other place—a place from which to represent the Other. Britto’s chapter rather beautifully considers the way in which, in Monique Truong’s *The Book of Salt*, Parisian street names “give way to Asian bodies” as something magical, which in turn makes protagonist Binh, with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the city, feared by locals as a conjurer (p. 143). In a reminder that nostalgia is predicated on a kind of amnesia, this calling of the Other into the Parisian present is coupled by a forgetting of the Paris that was previously represented from that other place. Readers are led to question whether Paris’s power as source of magic is not itself a form of sleight of hand, and whether this does not explain why we may prefer to represent Paris rather than to experience it directly. Perhaps this is part of Paris’s translatability.

Denis M. Provencher, in “Je suis terroriste, pédé et le fils de Marilyn Monroe,” analyzes the recent works of Abdellah Taïa, with a particular focus on what he calls transfiliation, or “the transmission of heritage across texts and time” (p. 155). The result is a fascinating queering, in the case of Taïa’s *Infidèles*, of imagological approaches to allegory. Rather than, for example, seeing Brigitte Bardot as a transmedial Marianne, and thus as an allegory of France, here we have Marilyn Monroe taking on an absent mother-figure role in the life of a young man growing up in Morocco, thanks to the tale of the return of the (unknown) father in the film, *River of No Return*, which he sees over and over again on the television. Provencher maps this case of transfiliation onto Taïa’s own fluid and transnational sense of “*being-in-the-world*” (Provencher’s italics, p. 157) and, from there, back on to the failure of Paris to live up to the promises that it held for the author as a child. This wilful confusion and translation of typical national allegories is ultimately considered a positive story of giving to one’s life the identity that one wishes. Paris’s role, again, is to provide that opportunity for re-evaluating the (self as) Other.

Félix Germain’s chapter, “Louis-Philippe Dalember and the Haitian Intellectual Tradition in Paris,” deals, as Orlando and Pears note (p. xviii), with Dalember’s thoughts about and memories of Haiti from the perspective of the transnational writer based in Paris. It also, however, traces the reactions of a Haitian writer to France’s failure to live up to representations of itself. The

violence lived by racial minorities on its streets, for example, causes Dalember to draw the following lessons: “One, the notion that France is le pays des droits de l’homme [...] is preposterous, or, at best, paradoxical; and two, in French society, racialized minorities must stay ‘in their place,’ otherwise they are punished” (p. 171). Paris’s failure to coincide with the images of itself that it seeks to export, and through which the Other so often represents it, is something that the exiled writer is well-placed to define. Indeed, this is one way that exiled writers can stay in their place, while also using that place to look back on their homeland. Works like Dalember’s *Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis* speak to the critical distance that being present to place can produce in representation of place when the writer is self-consciously foreign. This is a perverse grounding in the local that allows the exiled writer in Paris to “transcend his local identity to become a transnational writer” (p. 172).

Finally, Laura Reeck’s chapter on Bernardo Toro, “Beyond *Lieux Communs*,” hones in on some of the big questions at the heart of this volume (what it means to be a writer-in-exile, what it means to write in French when it is not one’s mother tongue). The chapter is, in large part, an interview with the Chilean-born writer and this direct access to the author results in a refreshing and stimulating experience for the reader. Toro’s reflections on writing are, on the one hand, founded in Parisian thought (notably the ideas of intellectuals like Sartre and Barthes) but, on the other hand, transcend national borders. He notes, for example, that writing is always a foreign language (p. 185), but that this does not negate the experience of the exiled writer adopting a foreign language. Instead, the writing experience is intensified, made doubly foreign. Despite the particularity of his own exile, Toro remains objective in his assessment of exiled writing, explaining that the longing for other places is a universal condition (p. 186). Perhaps most interestingly of all, Toro does not give into facile oppositions of exiled perspectives and Franco-French self-representations. Readers whose love of French literature sets up a belief in certain key representations of France have, he considers, “misread” its classics, including the works of Balzac, Flaubert and Baudelaire (p. 188). Here, then, the exiled foreign voice recalls that self-alterity and critical resistance to essentializing representations are an integral part of the French canon. To be Parisian, or at least to write Paris, is, in other words, to record Paris’s history of non-self-coincidence. This is, at least in part, what he means when he argues that to find Paris is not to find oneself but to lose oneself. This is a satisfying and appropriate conclusion to this volume, since Reeck’s presentation of Toro’s vision of writing in exile exposes the foreignness at the heart of the Parisian, which it often takes the objectivity of distance to apprehend.

In summary, *Paris and the Marginalized Author* delivers what it sets out to achieve, which is to testify to the many and various meanings that Paris conjures for people from all around the world and to the ways in which it eschews coincidence with those meanings. It also examines Paris as a prism through which to see the world and to reflect back on it. Certain chapters, such as Reeck’s interview with Bernardo Toro, capture this rupture in signification, this meaningful failure to mean, but no one chapter can stand as a metonym for a metaphysically meaningful Paris. This is perhaps the book’s most important message. An edited collection cannot, by its nature, produce an entirely coherent thesis; its variety, on the other hand, can emulate its subject’s plurality. In this light, the book’s subtitle, *Treachery, Alienation, Queerness, and Exile*, can be considered wilfully overcrowded, clunky even. By going one step further than the traditional French triadic structure, which arguably leaves “exile” dangling outside the group, reflecting back on and capturing the other three terms, Orlando and Pears reject attempts to explain Paris, effectively marginalizing it and the various meanings that it undoubtedly has for so many of us around the world. This book will be of interest to a broad range of scholars in French and Francophone

studies, for all of us will find points of attachment within its covers, as we will always find a favourite quartier, park or bistrot in which to find refuge, if perhaps never feeling quite at home, in Paris.

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