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Chloé Chaudet, Stefania Cubeddu-Proux and Jean-Marc Moura (eds.). *L'Atlantique littéraire au féminin: Approches comparatistes (xx^e-xxi^e siècles)*. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2020. 270 pp. €18.00. (pb). ISBN 978-2-84516-943-2; €12.00. (eb). ISBN 978-2-84516-945-6.

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L'Atlantique littéraire au féminin: Approches comparatistes (XX^e-XXI^e siècles), edited by Chloé Chaudet, Stefania Cubeddu-Proux and Jean-Marc Moura, is a compilation of texts originally proposed in the context of an international symposium organized in June 2018 at the Université Paris Nanterre and Sorbonne Université, France. This volume is an invitation, for us and its contributors, to reflect on what a “Literary Atlantic,” or “Atlantique littéraire,” inhabited and embodied by women voices, means, the many forms that it can take, and the possibilities it contains both for women’s expression in literature and for interpretive strategies for conducting literary analysis.

At a 2008 conference, Bajan novelist and essayist George Lamming contended that globalization started with the Middle Passage, the forced, transoceanic displacement of millions of people from Africa to the Americas (see Sylvie Brodziak’s contribution, “Léonora Miano et Nathalie Etoké: conversations au-dessus d’un océan”). The Atlantic Ocean irrevocably links these parts of the world, setting in tension as well as in dialogue human histories, individual and collective voices intersecting to shape various identities, memories, and imaginaries. As an area of study, the “Literary Atlantic” emerged amidst a reality of circulating voices, as a result of the meeting of cultures and literatures across that ocean. The volume thus seeks to go beyond national frameworks and comparative approaches so as to illuminate transcultural and translinguistic exchanges, transoceanic as well as transcontinental circulation. *L'Atlantique littéraire au féminin* is structured around five main sections moving transregionally: “Dialogues nord-atlantiques”; “Dialogues transaméricains”; “Interfaces caribéennes”; “Comment penser un ‘Atlantique noir’ au féminin?”; “Communautés de l’espace atlantique: entre affirmation et ouverture identitaire”; and concluding with a roundtable interview with Lise Gauvin and Véronique Tadjou moderated by the volume editors. In the spirit of a sustained transregional perspective, mentions of contributions in this review make connections across the diverse literatures and cultures addressed in the volume, as opposed to providing a linear discussion of each contribution.

Exchange and circulation in a wide and complex Atlantic world take on different meanings, some having to do with embodied, realized encounters: for example, in “Femmes françaises et théâtre cubain: ‘Y’a de la rumba dans l’air,’” Séverine Reyrolle addresses the active role played by Cuban

women in French artistic production, especially with regard to the emancipation of women and sexual liberation in the 1960s and 1970s. Agnès Varda's short film *Salut les Cubains* (1963) materializes productive transatlantic mobility: in the context of her visit to Cuba in 1963, Varda compiled a photomontage exploring the making of post-revolutionary Cuban culture, in particular the social empowerment of women in the domestic and public spheres, thus allowing visions of gender and sex equality to penetrate French society at the time. Another example is Juliette M. Rogers's piece, "Les débuts d'un Atlantique littéraire féminin: Thérèse Bentzon chez les Américaines," concerning French writer Thérèse Bentzon's travels to North America: Bentzon is described as a "transatlantic woman" (after Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson's term)—an identity marker closely linked to the idea that Bentzon's transatlantic voyage generates not only an understanding of the regions and women of North America, but also serves a performative function in the making of self and French women themselves. In a similar way, Élisabeth Russo, in "L'Atlantique beauvoirien et le genre après 1945," examines how Simone de Beauvoir greatly developed her feminist theory (both in her works of fiction and in her essays) during her time in the United States through interviews with American women, debunking the myth of North American women's independence, and through her exploration of domesticity and women's social alienation. Valérie Favre also reminds us of the materiality of texts in "De Virginia Woolf à Susan Gubar: réécrire *A Room of One's Own* au tournant du XXI^e siècle," looking at the critical reception of Woolf's essay, in particular among North American literary critics like Susan Gubar. The circulation of texts finds itself embodied in the reworking and adaptation of works of the past, producing decentered literary networks. An increased visibility of women's physical travels as well as circulation of texts over time reveal the richness and depth of cultural interpenetration processes in the making of complex identities that blur national, racial, and gender boundaries in the Atlantic world.

Another important aspect of exchange and circulation falls into the realm of the imaginary, the figurative. Contributors to *L'Atlantique littéraire au féminin* also seek to bring female writers of and from the Atlantic into conversation with each other, facilitating an intersection of women's voices and experiences to generate and amplify collective memory and historical consciousness. The original trauma of the Middle Passage marks the systemic and systematic exploitation of women's bodies, their sexual and reproductive activity becoming forced labor under slavery and the plantation system. Signposting the Atlantic Ocean as the catastrophic site of the Middle Passage, described by Monbeig as "the place where the mother figure succumbs, and where a feminine expression disconnected from the imperative to reproduce must be created" (p. 147), multiple contributors to the volume take this moment of radical rupture as the starting point for the (re)birth, (re)casting of women's voices and female protagonists transatlantically.

For example, in her study "Anarchives féminines trans~e~atlantiques et *tidalectics* chez Suzanne Césaire, Kamau Brathwaite et Lorna Goodison," Anny-Dominique Curtius explores anarchival performativity after Jacques Derrida's concept of the "anarchive,"[1] that is to confront the rigidity and immutability of the official archive with counternarratives to interrogate historical blind spots and complexities. "With Brathwaite, Césaire and Goodison," Curtius writes, "the female suffering and marginalized body is the primordial site of temporal and spatial anchoring" (p. 130)—women's traumatic memory of slavery is thus inscribed in a transgenerational black female body serving an archival function. Numerous contributions to the volume address the inscription of such forms of diasporic violence onto women's bodies and examine how their bodies are then written into fiction, either in an attempt to repair or rather to illuminate trauma and loss. For example, in "Migrations des identités féminines chez Alice Walker, Maryse Condé et

Marie Ndiaye,” Fanny Monbeig explores the return to the native land, that is the African continent. In her view, the figuration of the return is either salutary (Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*) or deemed to fail under the deceptive influence of a mythical past (Maryse Condé’s *En attendant le bonheur* (*Heremakhonon*) and Marie Ndiaye’s *Trois femmes puissantes*). Similarly, in “Fictions de *passing* transatlantiques: quelles lignes de couleur et de genre?,” Flavia Bujor explores the tension between racial and gender passing, the possibility of reinventing the self, and the materiality of forms of domination in structural and historical terms. The possibility for conceiving of an individual, as well as collective sense of selfhood therefore flickers in and out of legibility.

Despite the discontinuities of selfhood that many women writers address in fiction, the contributors are careful to acknowledge opportunities to recreate and build anew among these writers of and from the Atlantic. Looking at contemporary African writers (in particular Leonora Miano and Fatou Diome), Khady-Fall Diagne examines the remodeling of a literary geography wherein works of fiction transcend geographic, linguistic and literary boundaries, claiming filiation to the African continent but also prompting transnational circulation. Focusing more upon the act of writing itself, Carolina Cunha Carnier suggests, in “Corps, langue et mémoire. Éléments pour un étude genrée de l’espace poétique ouest-atlantique,” that the shared history of the Western Atlantic inaugurates an experimental space for the expression of personal and collective trauma, the opportunity to write in the feminine, that is to engage in “[une] écriture au féminin,” (p. 92) a women’s writing not limited to recounting the intimate, the private and the domestic. Also, with Marie-Pierre Harder’s contribution, “*I was a slave girl*. Le passage transatlantique comme pont poétique,” the intersection of exilic experiences, either autobiographical (Ruth Klüger’s memoir writing) or fictional (Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*), across the Atlantic is explored to illuminate the expression of women’s voices against the patriarchal structuring of urban social spaces. Benoit Doyon-Gosselin’s contribution, “L’Acadie littéraire au féminin: une paratopie transatlantique,” is more of a critical assessment of the place of Québécois literature, especially Acadian literature in the feminine or the place of *l’Acadie littéraire au féminin* within transatlantic studies. While calling out the peripheral situation of Acadian literature, Doyon-Gosselin also dwells on the potential of paratopia to construct through texts an in-depth relationship to the land and its history for indigenous peoples of Canada as well as Acadians.

Finally, the “Literary Atlantic” in the feminine also provides a productive framework for making connections across women writers’ individual biographies, as many of those have so far been left untold or invisibilized. Through their shared experiences, struggles and achievements, these women have the potency to weave together a collective historical consciousness in order to live in the present and open up the future. Some of the volume contributors develop an intersectional, transcultural and transmemorial approach to the diversity of women’s experiences while being careful to delineate the specific contexts of their respective life trajectories. Cae Joseph-Masséna, in “Circulations transatlantiques des insurrections littéraires: L’écriture ravagée du féminin dans *Amour* de Marie Vieux-Chauvet et *La Main dans le sac* de Violette Leduc,” brings together Haitian writer Marie Vieux-Chauvet and French writer Violette Leduc around their mutual strength and resourcefulness in a male-dominated literary culture. As marginal figures within a “neocolonial patriarchy” (p. 100), Joseph-Masséna highlights Vieux-Chauvet and Leduc’s distinct relationships to censorship and self-censorship, especially as expressed through their respective acts of literary rebellion against the “livre-impossible” (p. 101). In fact, quite a few essays in the collection look specifically at biographies, casting bridges across transatlantic migratory experiences and memories: with Assia Mohssine’s “L’Atlantique chicano et la pensée frontalière

de Gloria Anzaldúa,” we read about forms of political solidarity among Chicana feminist activists, but also among women of color more generally. These women’s voices fuel the critique of hegemonic feminism and create space for decolonial feminist thought.

In order to situate the critical intervention of this volume, it seems important to enter into transatlantic dialogue with Paul Gilroy’s seminal *The Black Atlantic*.^[2] For Gilroy, a Black Atlantic culture identifies a distinct consciousness that transcends historical boundaries of race, nation and class, that is not specifically African, British, Caribbean or North American, but rather defines a cultural and political space of existence for black voices that share histories of oppression and resistance. Gilroy therefore provides an important shift of perspective away from the self-serving Western notions of progress and modernity, as the “Black Atlantic” incorporates black cultural forms of expression to counteract a unified Western European and North American historical narrative. While Gilroy’s conception of a Black Atlantic culture clearly puts to the forefront the transatlantic lens necessary to inaugurate forms of shared historical consciousness and solidarity towards the future, it does not foreground women’s voices and experiences to anything like the same extent. In contrast, the “Literary Atlantic in the feminine” reclaims those invisibilized voices and experiences, incorporating them in a curatorial space in order to articulate women’s identities formed at the intersection of gender, class and race against the backdrop of transatlantic voyages. Interestingly enough, the prospect of a “Literary Atlantic in the feminine” remains somewhat unformulated at times—the last contribution to the volume, an interview with Quebec-born writer Lise Gauvin and Véronique Tadjó, a writer born in France and raised in Côte d’Ivoire, suggests a somewhat distant relationship to the notion. “Do you consider yourselves transatlantic writers?” (p. 232), the two writers are asked. To which Tadjó answers that she is first and foremost “un produit du voyage” (p. 232), and Gauvin, “why not?” (p. 233). The existence of a Literary Atlantic in the feminine might therefore lie in uncharted territory, meant to be celebrated for its potentiality, rather than actuality.

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NOTES

[1] Jacques Derrida, *Mal d’archive* (Paris: Galilée, 1995).

[2] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

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