
Colette Colligan’s *A Publisher’s Paradise: Expatriate Literary Culture in Paris, 1890–1960* is an ambitious, wide-ranging examination of the cultural significance of the Paris edition. A Paris edition is the publication, from Paris, of English language pornography and other works of literature that would have faced censorship in England or America. The ability of well-executed book history to trace the insistently transnational currents of literature is a primary strength of Colligan’s work. She channels this attention through interdependent networks of publishing, distribution, and reception. The bookseller-publisher is the natural hinge for all three in the seven decades charted in the study. It is exciting to read scholarship that treats the bookseller as a serious cultural agent, as a contributor to and collaborator in the production of literary and cultural meaning.

Colligan establishes her primary argument immediately: “From 1890 to 1960 some of Anglo-America’s most heated cultural contests over books, sex, and censorship were staged not at home, but abroad in the City of Light” (1). Paris provided access to the margins of sexual and literary expression in these years, fermenting a thriving expatriate community of writers, publishers, and readers. Colligan focuses on the political, legal, and social history of well-known and obscure producers of Paris editions, and how this activity “gave voice to a significant, if only latent, extranational cultural formation” (5). The expatriate character of this work speaks to how books and ideas traverse national and ideological borders. Bookseller-publishers Charles Carrington and Sylvia Beach receive the most attention, while Charles Hirsch, Jack Kahane, and Maurice Girodias are also investigated. Colligan’s time frame, 1890–1960, encompasses “Wilde’s sensational trials in 1895, the First World War, Americans in Paris, the Nazi occupation of France, and Penguin’s battle in 1960 to publish *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” (3). This timeline is enormous. There are clear limitations to attempting to document seventy years in a single book, but Colligan’s intention is not to document all activity comprehensively. Rather, her timeline allows her to move away from producing a study focused closely on a single community or moment towards a broader examination of a series of iterations of this type of publishing in Paris. She successfully relocates the emergence of “sexually dissident literary production in Paris” (5) to the 1890s, fundamentally changing how we must view...
what followed, and sustains her attention through 1960 when Paris no longer filled this role internationally.

Colligan’s study moves from national cultural policy, to specific publishers and purveyors of Paris editions, to individual books. This effective strategy provides a focus that gradually narrows and brings the reader through these seven decades a number of times, illuminating different dimensions with each pass. Her structure is broken into three parts: “Politics,” “Publishing,” and “Pornography.” Part 1, “Politics,” examines British cultural policy as a catalyst for the rise of the Paris edition. Colligan lucidly maps the influence of codified cultural policy in Britain on publishing and the resultant movement toward international outlets. A central question within this chapter concerns the difficulty of differentiating between degrees of obscenity in art, a difficulty central to the relationship between literature and pornography within the culture of the Paris edition. Indeed, under the category of Paris editions, one finds *Ulysses* and *Lolita* alongside works such as *Padlocks & Girdles of Chastity* and *The Spirit of Flagellation*.

Part 2, “Publishing,” is the heart of Colligan’s study. Two chapters are devoted to Charles Carrington, a Paris-based publisher and bookseller who published nearly three hundred books over a thirty-year period. Colligan offers a convincing reading of Carrington’s multifarious movement through the communications circuit as writer, editor, publisher, and bookseller. She offers substantial new biographical information that remediates previous scholarly work marginalizing Carrington’s roles, noting that such research was made possible only recently by new databases and online tools. Part 2 also includes a third chapter that forges previously unseen connections between overlapping groups who dealt in Paris editions between 1890 and 1960 but who did not explicitly declare (or perhaps even recognize) their own affinities, including flagellantia dealers, Charles Hirsch, Sylvia Beach, and others.

Part 3, “Pornography,” studies three books: *Suburban Souls: The Erotic Psychology of a Man and a Maid* (1901), *Teleny or the Reverse of the Medal, a Psychological Romance of To-Day* (1893), and *Lolita* (1955). In her reading of *Suburban Souls*, Colligan attempts to locate nascent expressions of literary modernism that were shortly to appear. She reads the novel as one marked by “intertextuality, self-referentiality, experimentation, and [a] blending of high and low forms” (195). Colligan reads *Teleny* as a work of “restorative historiography” (214) that charts the rise of Paris editions. Finally,
*Lolita* offers Colligan an opportunity to study the cultural capital of Paris editions abroad in the 1950s. Colligan uses this publishing history to delimit the moment when “the English sex book was increasingly being tolerated in America and Britain while Paris was becoming redundant as a publishing haven for ‘dirty books’” (272).

Colligan’s theoretical framework links numerous scholars. She draws on the paranational from Raymond Williams, the overlapping cultural domains of exile from Edward Said, theories of group behaviour from Bruno Latour, the destabilizing and disruptive force of translation from Theodor Adorno, and historical materialism from Walter Benjamin. She also offers captivating bibliographical readings, such as her consideration of Charles Carrington’s use of Grasset type in his books. This section in particular illuminates the range of transgressions enacted within the Paris edition: “Carrington gave a foreign face to his English books that was as expressive and alienating as any foreign word or syntax. What is more he created a visual link between his secret and open publications, putting them on equal footing and introducing a material challenge to the uncertain cultural distinctions between what could and could not be openly published, what was literature and what was pornography, and what was English and what was foreign” (121). The material challenge Colligan locates in bibliographical codes encapsulates the danger posed by Paris editions to the exercise of state power.

Colligan’s book is remarkably far-ranging, examining publishing and distribution on two continents across seven decades, encompassing high literary modernism and pornography, well-known cultural agents, and those previously relegated to footnotes. It is a carefully researched and well-written contribution to the field. *A Publisher’s Paradise* is a welcome and necessary volume and will be of interest to scholars studying modernism, transgressive art communities, censorship and freedom of expression, and international cultural movements.

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