

BOOK REVIEW

Colette, réinventer le métier d'écrire. Sous la direction de GUY DUCREY, avec la collaboration de FLAVIE FOUCHARD et CORENTIN ZURLO-TRUCHE. (Colette, 1.) Paris: Lettres modernes Minard, 2023. 277 pp., ill.

This inaugural volume of a new series is not of humble ambition. In a preface lamenting the absence of a Colette series amidst the thirty or so published by *La Revue des lettres modernes* and devoted to other writers, the editorial team points to the 2023 sesquicentennial of Colette's birth as an opportune moment to redress this omission. The title, however, provides only a meek hint at the volume's prodigious aim, for, as editor Guy Ducrey puts it in his Introduction, Colette's reinvention of 'le métier d'écrire' roamed vastly beyond writing itself to pluralize it. Beginning with a tantalizing glimpse of these different realms as they are touched upon in the course of Colette's typical workday, with added nuance and detail provided by her letters to close friends, the volume's sections — 'Dossier', 'Variétés', 'Mémoire de la critique', and 'Compte rendu' — announce a panoply of approaches and topics. An exploration of illustrations from early editions of *La Vagabonde* reveals a feminist Colette deploring music-hall working conditions for women. In subsequent chapters, we move from Colette's manipulation of prefaces, written for friends' works, as self-promotion, to her engaging and expressive lecture style, using confidences and anecdotes to connect with her audiences. An earlier 'Collection Colette', directed by the writer herself while an editor for Ferenczi & fils, published twenty novels whose authors Colette sought energetically to promote; meanwhile, well aware of the commercial value of her work, Colette maintained assertive business relationships — reminding us of *La Vagabonde's* Renée having become, with her own various editors, 'une petite commerçante honnête et dure' (Colette, *La Vagabonde* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1910), p. 35). She inscribed no fewer than thirteen original editions to the young journalist she mentored whose pseudonym, Claude Tilly, was perhaps inspired by the charm and independence of Colette's Claudine. The section 'Variétés', with its music-hall resonance, is reserved for material falling beyond the thematic purview of each 'Dossier'. This volume includes an analysis of photographs accompanying an early publication of the first chapter of *Sido*, arguing for their diminishing importance as the chapter's writing itself took on their function; a fascinating study of consumerism, materiality, and femininity in the *Claudine* novels, demonstrating that the texts provide the portrait of an era; and a correction and new information for the Pléiade edition of *Le Pur et l'impur*. In the 'Mémoire de la critique' section, effusive press releases ('chez elle, chaque mot est soufflé d'or', p. 257) translated from German and Romanian, with the originals provided in facing columns, announce Colette lectures in Vienna and Romania. With something for everyone, from the most erudite Colette scholar to the most fervent 'Gigi' fan, this interdisciplinary collection provides a trove of discursive costumes for the many Colette selves awaiting us in a series conceived as a *carrefour* of discourses and exchange. As a final gift to Colette readers and scholars, the volume includes a thorough index as

well as abstracts in both French and English, along with a review of Paola Palma's recent book, *Colette et le cinéma* (Meudon: Quidam, 2023).

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MARGARET E. GRAY
INDIANA UNIVERSITY,
BLOOMINGTON, IN, UNITED STATES