

# Nineteenth-Century French Studies

A scholarly journal devoted to the study of French literature and related fields

For articles: [ncfsarticles@gmail.com](mailto:ncfsarticles@gmail.com)

For reviews: [ncfsreviews@gmail.com](mailto:ncfsreviews@gmail.com)

[www.ncfs-journal.org](http://www.ncfs-journal.org)

Maira, Daniel and Jean-Marie Roulin, eds. *Masculinités en révolution de Rousseau à Balzac*. Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2013. Pp. 396. ISBN: 978-2-86272-636-6

Brian Martin, *Williams College*

In its broad examination of both the evolution and revolution of masculine representations in France from 1760 to 1850, Daniel Maira and Jean-Marie Roulin's *Masculinités en révolution de Rousseau à Balzac* is an important new contribution to masculinity studies, gender studies, and queer studies, and to our understanding of sexuality and gender in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French literature and culture. Published in 2013, this collection of essays marks the twentieth anniversary since the publication of Margaret Waller's groundbreaking book *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel* (1993), a foundational text in French masculinity studies that has taken its place among other landmark works in queer and gender studies during the past twenty-five years, notably Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian* (1993), and Judith Jack Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998). *Masculinités en révolution* also follows in the wake of two other milestones in French masculinity, gender, and queer studies in 2011: the publication of Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, and Georges Vigarello's magisterial three-volume *Histoire de la virilité* (2011); and the much-regretted death of Lawrence Schehr (who, as so many NCFS readers and friends know so well, was a prolific scholar of queer sexualities in France and a tireless champion of both nineteenth- and twentieth-century French studies) in whose memory this volume of essays is so appropriately and elegantly dedicated.

In their introduction to *Masculinités en révolution*, Maira and Roulin outline their project on the “[c]onstructions littéraires de la masculinité entre Lumières et Romantisme” (9) as an exploration of “la manière dont la littérature de Rousseau à Balzac a exploré les territoires possibles de la masculinité” (10), in what they call “ce formidable laboratoire des genres qu’ont été les années 1760-1850” (25). As Maira and Roulin explain in greater detail, “Ce volume a pour objet non l’histoire d’un modèle, mais les constructions discursives qui, dans le texte littéraire, font d’un personnage, pris dans une intrigue et dans une socialité fictive, un être masculin—ou non—en (r)évolution” (17-18). This collection of twenty essays by scholars from Europe and North America is organized in three parts: discourses, figures, and intrigues on masculinity; or what its editors explain as “trois grandes perspectives: les discours sur le genre, les figures, au sens des différentes incarnations littéraires de positions genrées, et les intrigues en ce qu’elles mettent en scène des conflits de pouvoir, où le genre joue un rôle primordial” (25).

The essays in this volume examine a wide variety of masculine contexts (vulnerability, vitality, virility, power, fashion, fraternity, criminality) and discourses (trans/gender, queer, feminist, scientific, military), as well as political figures (Louis XVI to Napoleon), visual artists (David to Delacroix), intellectual movements (Enlightenment, Romanticism, Realism), and historical periods (Revolution, Consulate, Empire, Restoration, July Monarchy). These essays also analyze a broad range of texts and authors, from Rousseau, Balzac, and Stendhal (whose collective work inspired nine, or almost half, of the volume's essays), to Germaine de Staël, George Sand, Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, Alexandre Dumas (père), and Alfred de Vigny, as well as Pierre-Simon Ballanche, Isabelle de Charrière, and Jean-Baptiste Picquenard.

Among the most compelling of the many engaging essays in *Masculinités en révolution* are the following thematic pairs: Charles Stivale's and Catherine Nesci's essays on vitality, virility, initiation, and decline in works by Balzac, Stendhal, and Delacroix; Nigel Harkness's and John O'Neal's articles on queer fraternity and transgender representation in novels by Sand and Rousseau; François Kerlouégan's and Jean-Marie Roulin's chapters on military masculinity in texts by Balzac and Vigny; and Lydie Moudileno's and Xavier Bourdenet's essays on buccaneers and bandits in works by Picquenard and Stendhal. But the most compelling essay in this collection is Margaret Waller's "Quand le style fait l'homme: le rose, le noir et le clair-obscur" in which she traces a history of masculine fashion, style, and color in novels by Stendhal, and thus offers a glimpse into the pages of her much-anticipated forthcoming book *Napoleon's Closet: The Emperor, the Clergy, and the Fashion Press*.

Inspired by the decades leading to 1789, when "La Révolution française invite le masculin à se moderniser" (27), Maira and Roulin conclude their study of *Masculinités en révolution* by considering how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century masculine (r)evolutions are reflected in twentieth- and twenty-first century incarnations, where "les *butches*, les *tomboys*, les *bears*, les *female-to-male*, les métrosexuels aujourd'hui enrichissent la panoplie d[es] masculinité[s]" (28). To use the revolutionary terms examined in this engaging book on French masculinities: this vital volume deserves our virile consideration.