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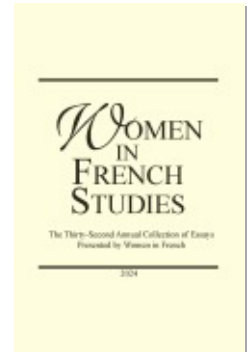
The Stoics: A Bilingual Critical Edition by Louisa Siefert
(review)

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variety of periodicals; the first half of the volume is occupied principally by articles from *La Dépêche africaine*, *Le Soir*, and *La Revue du monde noir*, the paper Nardal co-founded and from which this book takes its name. The second half comprises articles written for a variety of publications and on a wide range of topics.

As the editors point out in their concise but effective introduction, Nardal's education was primarily literary, and it was as a writer herself that she began to venture into social and political issues. While the first few essays focus on her native Antilles, Nardal's interventions soon speak to larger colonial and diasporic issues. Her point of view remained resolutely assimilationist and pro-French, and some of the ways in which she refers to France's colonial subjects can be difficult for a contemporary reader to accept uncritically, but these writings provide a real-time reaction to the events of the late 1920s and 1930s, including, as time passed, the rise of fascism and its expansion into Africa, which challenges even Nardal's pro-Western stance. Another point of interest in this volume, and especially for those whose research or teaching has a transatlantic focus, is that Nardal was anxious to bring Black American writing and culture to the attention of a wider Metropolitan French audience. Reproduced here are her reports on the comings and goings of African American celebrities in her orbit, including the sculptor Augusta Savage and the orator Grace Walker, who Nardal claims was the first Black woman to speak at Cambridge (and who herself is scarcely remembered by history).

In addition to the immediacy of her descriptions of current events affecting the African diaspora in France and its colonies, Nardal's writing has the unusual characteristic (for the time) of foregrounding the experience of women. She focuses especially on Antillean women at home or living in the metropole, though her sympathies and experiences clearly lie with the expanding and increasingly educated middle class. Despite this point of view, however, in essays such as "La situation économique et sociale aux Antilles," we can see a sophisticated understanding of how systemic racism was already influencing generational wealth and social outcomes in the 1930s.

The only thing that could be said to be lacking in this volume is actually a demand that the writing itself creates: a robust critical apparatus and footnotes throughout giving comprehensive historical context. Fortunately, the work of the editors of this volume has made it more likely that other scholars will be able to enter the breach. Éditions Rôt-bo-krik is a young publishing house, but one already making waves in its production of well-made volumes of lesser-known Francophone authors of Afro/Diasporic heritage, as well as French translations of cutting-edge postcolonial theory, and this is a welcome addition to their catalogue.

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Siefert, Louisa. *The Stoics: A Bilingual Critical Edition*. Edited by Adrianna M. Paliyenko. Translated by Norman R. Shapiro. The Pennsylvania State UP, 2023. Pp. 248. ISBN 978-0-271-09553-0. \$99.95 (hardcover).

Published for the first time in 1870, Louisa Siefert's *Les Stoïques* fell into obscurity not long after it first appeared. This new, bilingual critical edition brings

Seifert's masterwork to the attention of students and scholars of poetry as it continues and extends the efforts to recuperate French women long excluded from the poetic canon of the nineteenth century and makes their contributions more visible. It thus builds upon Adrianna M. Paliyenko's seminal 2016 study, *Genius Envy: Women Shaping French Poetic History 1801-1900*.

Paliyenko's introduction, "Reading *Les Stoïques* Anew," first attributes the neglect the work has suffered to its appearance just before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, but also more broadly to its reception by critics who, because Siefert was a woman, privileged the sensibility they perceived in her works, and not their analytical and philosophical dimensions. Despite her renown in her own day (she was a best-selling author) and deep appreciation of Seifert's strengths as a poet by contemporaries, her work was by and large forgotten. The ambivalence about women's poetry that originated in the nineteenth century's construction of genius as innately male and a strong conservative backlash against women's creative work late in the century meant that Siefert was esteemed for her subjective lyricism and her place in what was construed as *la poésie féminine* while her conscious embrace of philosophical principles and practice as an approach to desire and pain was obscured well into the twentieth century.

The introduction, notes and bibliography of this edition are grounded in Paliyenko's meticulous archival research. When the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University first made the Siefert papers (acquired in 2005) searchable via Google in 2016, Paliyenko embarked upon what is a labor of scholarly love. Siefert's manuscripts, letters, notebooks, and a press book of reviews copied out by the poet's mother complement previously available sources such as the manuscript version of *Les Stoïques* at Lyon's municipal library or the poet's "Causeries poétiques," published in the *Journal de Lyon*. Paliyenko is able to illuminate the ways in which the poet herself strived to place the personal within a wider philosophical context. She expertly situates the work in its biographical, historical, and literary contexts, with particular attention to the ways in which Romantics and Parnassian tendencies underpin Siefert's unique dualism. An extensive presentation of the critical reception of this work within the poet's own lifetime and shortly thereafter reveals a clear perception of the poet's transdisciplinary mind and aesthetic richness. Her critics foreground the diversity of themes in individual poems, including heroism, religious faith, and human suffering throughout history, and also living in harmony with Nature. The introduction also attends to the critical role played by later criticism that led to the eclipse of *Les Stoïques* by the earlier *Rayons perdus*, a volume more easily read in terms of *la poésie féminine*. Paliyenko makes a strong case that the later volume is Siefert's most significant work, revealing the poet at the height of her power.

This critical edition is made all the more valuable because it gives readers of French or English access to Siefert's poetry. Norman R. Shapiro has translated Siefert's poems almost always at the level of the stanza, seizing essential images and rendering their tone, principal effects, intertextual relations, and transcendental meaning while at the same time remaining faithful to Siefert's "prosodic richness," (xi) especially her use of rhyme scheme and sometimes her use of internal rhymes and alliteration; he also reproduces *enjambements* and full

stops within a verse that disrupts classic metrical forms. While French alexandrines often become decasyllables, the resultant translations are faithful to the original in precision. However, he does not replicate the poet's use of non-poetic language in the form of ampersands. In *Les Stoïques* and elsewhere, Siefert's preferred form was the sonnet, but the volume also includes quintils and longer poems in quatrains whose forms Shapiro respects. Despite his attention to Siefert's technical strengths, or perhaps because of their spirit, Shapiro creates his own full stop on occasion where there is none. In "A Note About the Translator," Paliyenko quotes the late Shapiro, who sought vocabulary and style "not anachronistic to the poet's corresponding French" (xii) and succeeded. In short, adherence to the original and infusing translation with the translator's own originality is often a necessary choice; in this case, the balance between the two in Shapiro's translations is nothing short of a *tour de force*.

The critical edition includes an appendix of photos of selected pages from the Siefert papers at the Beinecke. The capacious notes on the introduction and on individual poems further enhance our knowledge of the genesis of Siefert's poetry, variants of the manuscript and published versions, background on the epigraphs to individual poems, notes on Paliyenko's research, and other key points. They include material useful to general readers unfamiliar with the period as well as scholars. The volume contains a bibliography, an index of poems, and a general index.

This edition of *Les Stoïques* makes an important literary work accessible to audiences of varying levels of French and English and advances our knowledge of nineteenth-century poetry in important ways. In particular, it reconstitutes the original context in which Siefert wrote and the response her work received within poetic circles and within her world. It will be of value to anyone interested in the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century or in the rediscovery and reconsideration of women's creativity, as well as to readers who appreciate fine poetry.

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Thomson, Clive. *Quand c'est possible, c'est faisable ! : Entretiens mémoriels avec Colette Becker*. Atlande, 2023. Pp. 208. ISBN 978-2-35030-871-5. €23 (paper).

In four interviews conducted in August 2021, eminent Zola scholar Colette Becker looks back just before her ninetieth birthday at the events and diverse academic formations that shaped her long career as a teacher and a researcher who was instrumental in introducing the method of genetic criticism. Clive Thomson, who initiated these *entretiens mémoriels*, met Becker in 1973 as a young graduate student and ultimately worked with her on the ten-volume, annotated edition of Zola's correspondence that occupied a considerable portion of her career. His longtime conversance with her life and work enriches Becker's remembrance. As signaled by the adage chosen for the book's title, their exchange pivots on her determination to overcome hurdles posed by the French education system in order to pursue a distinguished university career which was particularly difficult for a woman of Becker's generation. Thomson has divided the work into two parts. The