

Lesbian decadence: Representation in art and literature of late-century France

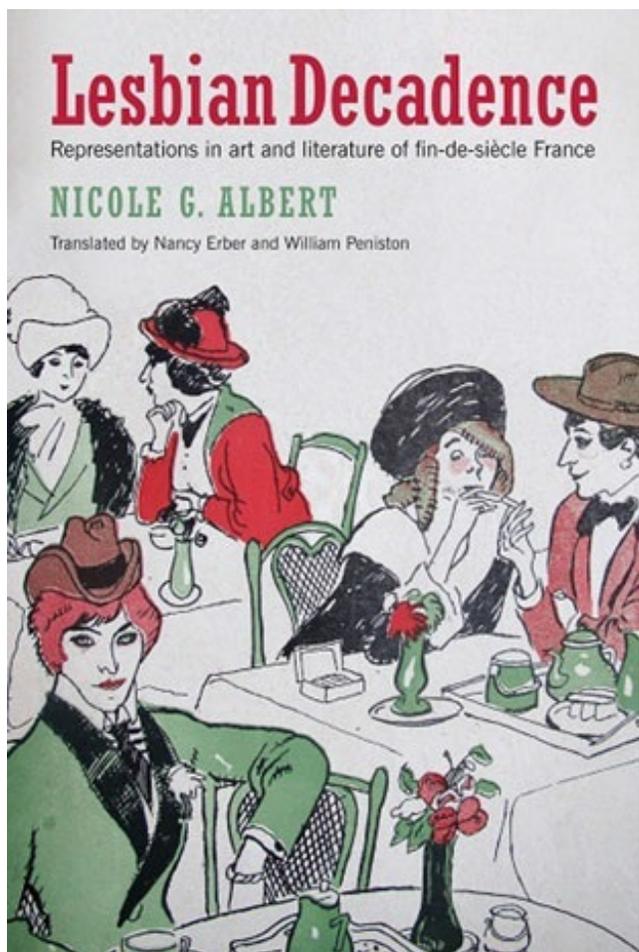
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Posted on August 23, 2016 at 2:50 pm [Benoit Migneault](#)

The famous *Saphism and decadence in late-century Paris*, originally published in 2005, is finally available to readers who are more skilled in the language of Shakespeare in a beautiful translation of Nancy Erber and William Peniston.

As the title suggests, the author (Nicole G. Albert) focuses on lesbian representation in the arts and literature: novels, poems, newspaper articles, paintings, drawings and cartoons are therefore honored. Contrary to what the title might suggest, Sapphic decadence should not be read here in the sense of a decline, but in the sense of an artistic and literary movement. Indeed, the decadent movement (decadentism) celebrated what went against the norm established with the intention of provoking and shocking the bourgeois class. A very strong lesbian culture emerges in France in the last quarter of the 19th century and is quickly embodied in various works of art and literature. Not content to inspire several women (Natalie Barney, Renee Vivien, Colette, Gertrude Stein), the current inspires many heterosexual authors who write the "first" pulp novels featuring the archetype of the predatory lesbian with insatiable sexual appetite. For their part, alerted by these representations, the first psychiatrists try to explain this "new" vice in order to understand and eradicate it. The archetypes born in this crucial period of the emergence of the lesbian culture or the perception of this culture, by the men and women who observed it from the outside, have marked the society and it is with fascination that Nicole G Albert invites us to observe the birth and deployment.⁶ Benoit Migneault the current inspires many heterosexual authors who write the "first" pulp novels featuring the archetype of the predatory lesbian to the insatiable sexual appetite. For their part, alerted by these representations, the first psychiatrists try to



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