Hennessy, Susan S. *Consumption, Domesticity and the Female Body in Emile Zola's Fiction.* Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2015. Pp. 185. ISBN-13: 978-4955-0361-0

Susan Hennessy has written a very engaging and original study analyzing female characters and feminine domesticity in numerous works of Emile Zola in tandem with women's interior decorating magazines, cookbooks and department store advertising. With concise analyses and easy-to-read prose, Hennessy's book is a pleasure to read, and it informs the reader as much about cultural discourses of domesticity as it does Zola's novels. The study of feminine characters, the female body and the feminine spaces of the department store, the home and the kitchen offers rich parallels between the metaphors of the body, sexuality and desire in Zola's texts and her archival materials. Hennessy states that "from a stylistic standpoint the metaphor provides us with an appreciation of how Zola contends with the domestic ideal in relation to determinism" (7).

"Consumption and Desire in *Au Bonheur des dames*," a four-part development, beautifully integrates previous scholarship on Zola's tenth novel, and builds on those studies to analyze consumer culture as it relates to identity and the establishment of an ever shifting female social status. An evolution in shopping habits is wonderfully contextualized: shopping out of need within limited frameworks and mentalities metamorphoses into shopping out of desire that becomes nearly limitless. For Hennessy, "this erasure of restrictions on consumption produced another change, the movement of women to the epicenter of consumer society and a spotlight on them as the primary consumers" (12). Lastly, consumption is tied to promiscuity. Hennessy asks whether woman's desire to shop in the era of mass consumerism renders her vulnerable, singular or undifferentiated. Certainly her analyses of women as both object (of their desires) and subject (consumers purchasing commodities) pinpoint an identity that is in flux and thus unstable.

"The Language of Domesticity" is a three-part discussion in which Hennessy analyzes "the desired and desiring women" through the lens of domesticity in Zola's *La Curé, Nana, La Conquête de Plassans* and *Pot-Bouille.* Its critical apparatus and dialog with literary criticism are rich, important and varied. The chapter also wonderfully sets up the symbolic metaphors that idealize the home and the housewife found in seven, late-19c- and early-20c-interior decorating or advice manuals. Hennessy argues that "Zola derides the discourse of domestic know-how by depicting the pitfalls that come with idealizing women. The novels under consideration subvert the conventions of domesticity by sexualizing the interior of the home in tandem with the female body" (54). Hennessy's readings of fictional feminine interiors through the language of domesticity found in 19th-c women's magazines and design manuals offer refreshingly new and insightful analyses of Zola's symbolic decors and female characters' fates. My only critique of this discussion is more than two public spaces—the department store and the bicycle—could have been mentioned to show women's greater presence outside of the home in actual society, provided she was accompanied by another woman or her husband.

"Overindulging: Hunger and Desire in the Kitchen" looks at "the centrality of women in relationship with eating […]. When food so readily becomes symbolic, multiple meanings resonate in the appeals to master the art of cooking" (117-18). The cultural framework of 5 treatises/cooking manuals contextualize how eating and food is linked semantically and metaphorically to procreation, sexuality and the female body. Her close readings reveal that discourses on food in Zola's narratives "frequently include[e] references to sexual fulfillment and female subjugation to male desire" (128). Hennessy's main development in this chapter,

entitled *Le Ventre de Paris*, argues that the novel "creates tension in the domestic model, disrupting traditional gender-based hierarchies and threatening to displace male control" (129). I particularly liked how Hennessy draws a parallel between Zola's *Halles* and the central tenet of naturalism: "man's powerless to dominate the natural world" (134); I resisted somewhat her analysis of tropes wherein Florent's extreme state and food "take[s] a mythical turn," establishing a connection to women, though I agree that they represent excess and the market (135). Equally fascinating is her analysis of Florent's hunger as it relates to themes of fetish, food and eroticism; Hennessy adeptly shows the play between the affirmation and negation of that character's desire. She also offers a very satisfying interpretation of Lisa as an "exemplar of the formidable combination of food and the female body" (151) and of that of the belly of Paris, *les Halles*.

"Good enough to eat" concludes Hennessy's book and opens up her discussion of Zolien women by analyzing a selection of Zola's critiques on academic painting which provide a sense of "his artistic ideal for women" (154). Alimentary imagery is used in art, according to Hennessy, to make Zola's views more understandable to the general public. Moreover, "the motif of appetite as desire or desire as appetite materializes in tandem with women as substance" (159).

In sum, Susan Hennessy has written a marvelously interesting and readable book about Zola and the cultural discourses of domesticity and food. This book is accessible enough for undergraduates and graduates and sophisticated and engaging enough for specialists and non-specialists of nineteenth-century French cultural studies. Readers will derive delight from this book's valuable contribution to Zolian Studies.

Sharon P. Johnson, Virginia Tech