



### Colette and the Incest Taboo

That Most Disturbing of Drives

By *Dr. Carol Mastrangelo Bove*

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**Informed by Julia Kristeva's work, this book approaches Colette's writing and its translation along with two films via close, psychoanalytic readings.**

This book makes an argument critical to literary theory and sexuality in 2022. It argues that Colette's fiction portrays a woman struggling to live in the throes of the incest taboo, understood in its psychological implications for power relations both private and public, then and now. Informed by Julia Kristeva's work, it approaches Colette's writing and its translation along with two films via close, psychoanalytic readings. That is, it demonstrates that this version of Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory, in an accessible form and with emphasis on the psychology of women and social transformation, helps to read Colette for the twenty-first century as well as to show how Kristeva's theory works. This volume examines especially writing from the second half of Colette's life, including the much misunderstood *La Maison de Claudine* (1922), where the incest taboo surfaces in the relationship of the narrator with the mother. The taboo had already appeared two years earlier in *Chéri* (1920), in the rapport between the maternal Léa, a woman of a certain age, and the young man, Chéri; finally, in *Gigi*, the incest taboo characterizes the relations between the young teenager of the eponymous title and her much older uncle figure Gaston.

### Contents

Chapter 1--An Overview of Colette's Life and Work: Incestuous Desire; Chapter 2--A Woman of a Certain Age : *Chéri* (1920); Chapter 3--*La Maison de Claudine* (1922) : Maman Not Claudine; Chapter 4--*Gigi* (1944) : The Importance of the Uncle; Chapter 5--More Than a Musical, Romantic Adaptation for the Screen: Vincent Minelli's *Gigi* (1958); Chapter 6--*Wash Westmoreland's Colette* (2018): Willy? Far From the Father of Individual Pre-History

### About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

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