



When Paris Sizzled: The 1920s Paris of Hemingway, Chanel, Cocteau, Cole Porter, Josephine Baker, and Their Friends

Mary McAuliffe

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When Paris Sizzled vividly portrays the City of Light during the fabulous 1920s, les Annees folles, when Parisians emerged from the horrors of war to find that a new world greeted them--one that reverberated with the hard metallic clang of the assembly line, the roar of automobiles, and the beat of jazz. Mary McAuliffe traces a decade that saw seismic change on almost every front, from art and architecture to music, literature, fashion, entertainment, transportation, and, most notably, behavior. The epicenter of all this creativity, as well as of the era's good times, was Montparnasse, where impoverished artists and writers found colleagues and cafes, and tourists discovered the Paris of their dreams. Major figures on the Paris scene--such as Gertrude Stein, Jean Cocteau, Picasso, Stravinsky, Diaghilev, and Proust--continued to hold sway, while others now came to prominence--including Ernest Hemingway, Coco Chanel, Cole Porter, and Josephine Baker, as well as Andre Citroen, Le Corbusier, Man Ray, Sylvia Beach, James Joyce, and the irrepressible Kiki of Montparnasse. Paris of the 1920s unquestionably sizzled. Yet rather than being a decade of unmitigated bliss, les Annees folles also saw an undercurrent of despair as well as the rise of ruthless organizations of the extreme right, aimed at annihilating whatever threatened tradition and order--a struggle that would escalate in the years ahead. Through rich illustrations and evocative narrative, Mary McAuliffe brings this vibrant era to life.

When Paris Sizzled: The 1920s Paris of Hemingway, Chanel, Cocteau, Cole Porter, Josephine Baker, and Their Friends Details

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From Reader Review When Paris Sizzled: The 1920s Paris of Hemingway, Chanel, Cocteau, Cole Porter, Josephine Baker, and Their Friends for online ebook

Andy Oram says

This book is sheer pleasure for anyone interested in the arts. After you have been to the museums, heard the music, read the poems, etc. you will consume this book greedily. Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Cole Porter, Jean Cocteau, Stravinsky...a list of artists and other historical figures represented in this book could take up a whole computer screen. These people's outrageous artistic, sexual, and social behavior furnish endless amusing anecdotes (as well as some tragic ones). Furthermore, McAuliffe illuminates the artists' work--not by describing exact stages through which a Picasso or Stravinsky passed (hundreds of other books do that) but by showing what was happening as major artistic works were being produced, and the reactions of the viewers or readers. She handles the politics and economics of the era, too, showing how widespread suffering and violent ideologies threatened the freedom of the culture. She also works hard to get stories right and distinguish lurid legend from what really happened.

Rob Atkinson says

A wonderful episodic account of the 'années folles' in Paris, following the activities, rivalries, and accomplishments of the chief players in that remarkable time and place year by year from 1919-1929. The focus is heavily weighted towards the creative arts -- literature, painting, music, architecture, fashion -- but also encompasses less well known figures like Andre Citroën, France's Henry Ford, and also covers the ominous rise of a fascistic, nationalist movement over that decade, backed by multimillionaire perfume magnate René Coty through his purpose-driven media empire. The latter movement apparently rose in parallel with Mussolini and Hitler's ascendancy in that decade, and helps to explain why the Nazis found so many willing collaborators after invading France in 1940. This aspect of the era was new to me, though I've read much on the 1920s in Paris -- and unexpectedly, I also found much fresh material in the author's account of the artistic scene. Rich in anecdote and full of fascinating characters and epochal cultural events, this history is sure to please and edify anyone interested in 1920s Paris, even those who are already well read on the subject.

Herman Plasmans says

A very interesting book , about artists in Paris

cansu m says

loved this but it was hard to keep track of all the names mentioned throughout the book. also some of them (matisse, hemingway, proust, kiki de montparnasse etc) were more interesting than the others so i skipped a

fair amount to get to the good stuff. looking forward to read the author's belle epoque series tho.

Faith says

Maybe if this book were organized differently, possibly based on events or grouping artists, writers, scientists, etc., I might have liked it more. Instead the organization was chronological. The author did a lot of research, but the result is a dry recitation of facts, many of them trivial, about a group of accomplished and interesting people. This book wasn't what I was expecting and it just wasn't for me. I received a free copy of the ebook from the publisher but I listened to the audiobook borrowed from the library.

Charles says

An interesting time and place, superficially examined

There wasn't a People Magazine Paris in the 1920s, but Mary McAuliff has written an anthology as though this were her primary source document.

A chapter is devoted to each year of the decade 1919-1929 and the book chronicles the arc of celebrity of many well-known personalities and many more who will be unfamiliar names to most readers. Sadly, much of this comes off as a laundry list of names, sexual affairs, and events both large and inconsequential.

There are the occasional entertaining quotes, and one wishes that McAuliff had provided more of these. Elsa Maxwell establishes herself as a party host, observing, "Most rich people are the poorest people I know. I brought to them a capacity for friendship and gaiety that offered escape from plush-lined boredom."

And there is the occasional insight about the origin of a trend we now take for granted. In 1924, for example, tennis player Suzanne Lenglen became a celebrity by wearing a sleeveless tennis dress cut to above the calf and thus inaugurated the design of practical women's sportswear.

McAuliff does have the advantage of hindsight so, for example, there is a brief reference to how in 1925 Charles de Gaulle was rescued from obscurity by then revered General Petain — an irony given Petain's later collaboration with the Nazis and de Gaulle's emergence as a leader of the Free French. However, this incident would hardly have attracted notice at the time.

Certainly many of the personalities described had more intellectual or artistic talent than the average "celebrity" of our day, and the cocktail mix of individuals such as Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Ernst Hemingway and Ezra Pound rubbing elbows and egos could have been developed to make this a more interesting book.

But we are also reminded that not everyone hanging out in the Paris cafes was talented. Many stand out for displaying a capacity for drink or outrageous behavior in a way that today would merit a cover on a supermarket tabloid. One such rather shallow celebrity referenced throughout the book is Kiki, the "Queen of Montparnasse", who had durability of fame over the decade but who left little to commend our interest today.

One wishes that McAuliff had chosen to profile fewer individuals and to provide more character development, insight, and humor in this chronicle of a decade that attracted many fascinating personalities to Paris. Instead what we have is the superficial examination of an interesting time and place.

Kim Erskine says

It seemed well researched but was a bit too academic and dry for me.

Sherwood Smith says

My first thought when I saw the title was that Paris has pretty much *always* sizzled. It certainly did during the Revolution, in a terrible way—then in the years immediately following the Terror, Paris came alive creatively; anyone could write and mount a play, which meant women, for the first time ever.

Then there was George Sand's long lifetime, which covered a couple political ructions—Paris sizzled right along, replete with amazing personalities doing fascinating things in art, music, the sciences, architecture, etc.

McAuliffe gives a slight nod in this direction:

This was not a phenomenon that suddenly occurred in 1920. Many of the most colorful features of the Parisian twenties had roots going back to the war or even before . . . The frivolity and excesses of “les années folles” followed as a natural response to death and destruction, whether as a kind of doom-infused escapism or simply as a desire to have fun.

But this book focuses on the twenties, beginning with the end of World War I, and ending in 1929, when Wall Street crashed in the USA, and in Paris, a number of key people either died or moved away, after ten years of what sometimes seemed like one long mad party.

After introducing the majority of her cast, McAuliffe structures her epic tale year by year, building a vivid picture of the cultural cauldron that centered around Montparnasse because it was cheap and unfashionable. So many musicians, artists, writers, dancers, architects, poets, choreographers, photographers and sculptors came there determined to make names for themselves. People fell in and out of love, allied, fought, broke up, gathering at Le Bouef sur la Toit or the Jockey Club, or at the glittering parties given by famous hostesses.

Life was not easy for most of them. We're furnished vivid details about those hopefuls: for example, Soutine (a Russian-born painter) and Modigliani (Italian) shared a studio where, an acquaintance once reported on visiting late one night, “I saw them lying on the floor surrounded by a water-filled trench to ward off bedbugs. Each held a candle, by which Modigliani was reading Dante.”

Cole Porter—who married money—Charles De Gaulle—a military man with ambitions—Marie Curie—Coco Chanel—Ernest Hemingway—Gertrude Stein—Cocteau and Renoir and Kiki the model scrabbling for a living and the Duke of Westminster, richest man on the planet, all get their stories woven in year by year, among anecdotes of the Dadaists, whose adherents tended toward destructive exhibitions a bit more than experimental art. Some of that was supposed to *be* art (what came to be known as guerrilla

theater): at a concert called *Ballet Mecanique*, by George Antheil, which seems to have been mostly composed of whistles, coffee grinders, hammers, and a plane propeller (that blew the wig off one audience member), a riot broke out.

As his sponsor said philosophically, “At least George Antheil had a hearing, and an uproarious one at that. From a Dada point of view, one couldn’t have anything better.”

We learn who inspired whom, who helped and hurt whom (some did both, like the complex siren Misia Sert), who succeeded and who failed. Some died very young, others went on to write longingly about those vanished years, in the decades to come.

It’s an absorbing book, full of detail and personality, bolstered by a formidable bibliography that is almost worth the price of the book in itself, and replete with footnotes that unfortunately, are maddening in e-book form, as one has to slide back and forth to find them and then find your place again. But worth it—immensely worth it. This is a keeper.

Copy provided by NetGalley

Gill says

'When Paris Sizzles' by Mary McAuliffe

4 stars/ 8 out of 10

This is the third book in Mary McAuliffe's series of books, looking at life in Paris from 1870 onwards. This book covers the period from 1918 to 1929. The books all have a similar style, following through year by year, and detailing the cultural and social events, large and small, occurring in each year. McAuliffe especially looks at those individuals she regards as culturally significant, the musicians, artists, writers etc.

For the first couple of chapters of 'When Paris Sizzled', there were so many people being introduced, that I found it hard to keep track of them. However, after these introductory sections, it became easier. I enjoyed following through the years, chapter by chapter, and coming across the same people again and again. I was also pleased that, within each chapter, McAuliffe placed the events within the context of the political developments of the year. I was surprised by how many of the protagonists in this book involved themselves in various political movements. I was unaware of so many who were involved in movements of the 'right'.

I found the sections relating to Charles de Gaulle, and to Sylvia Beach (of Shakespeare and Co) especially interesting, and also those relating to the differing approaches of the automotive innovators Renault and Citroen. There was a lot of information about Ernest Hemingway, which did nothing to make me feel any more favourable towards him than I had previously! My favourite sections were those about Jean Renoir, the film director.

Mary McAuliffe has developed a successful format for her books about Paris, and 'When Paris Sizzles' is no exception.

Thank you to Rowman and Littlefield, and to NetGalley for an ARC.

Andrea Stoeckel says

I received this book free from the publisher through NetGalley. I thank them for their generosity. In exchange, I was simply asked to write an honest review, and post it. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising]

"The Twenties, or the Roaring Twenties, as they are known in America, had a distinctive name in Paris—les Années folles, or, roughly translated, the Crazy Years. This era began after the war's end, in late 1918, and continued through the decade, until brought to a halt by the Wall Street crash of 1929 and subsequent worldwide depression." - from the Introduction

Let's face it, Europe was hit and hit hard by "the war to end all wars". Paris wasn't seen as a "tourist city" until after Prohibition was implemented in the States. A lot of artistic Americans came over to Paris because of word of mouth. The exchange rate was in the Americans favor, and the French were more accepting of most who landed on their doorsteps.

What McAuliffe has done has written a book celebrating the synchronicity of artistry in all its forms. This is a non-fiction tome that reads like a cross between a dime store novel and the contemporary "Page Six". We hear, in snippets, stories of fashion icons, architects, artists, dancers, authors and their compatriots. Would these people have become the icons of history if the war hadn't happened? That is a question this book leaves me with. It would be a great fact checking book for anyone studying or writing about this era of world history. Brava!

Lee 🦆 says

4 stars for me! :)

I really REALLY liked this book! I usually don't read nonfiction, but this one was an easy exception. I also appreciated how the author integrated the lives and progress of other areas rather than just the artists (like political leaders, engineers, etc).

My only negatives were that sometimes it became very difficult to keep track of who was who, especially as the author would sometimes just throw names in without any background information even though the focus had shifted onto a different person. Also, sometimes I think she stretched too thin and covered way too many topics when it would've been better to hone in a little bit more on the artistry aspect. (Which, I believe is the whole premise of the book anyways, I mean, look at the title)

(Also, this is a PERSONAL point, just relevant to my interests, but--- I was so excited to read about my ultimate faves Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and the author only had a couple lines about them in the whole book about how they were drunk a lot. Like, okay, thanks... but please tell me more about tire manufacturers. :/)

Teri Reck says

A fascinating look at Paris between the world wars. It starts with the end of WWI, with Paris trying to climb

back from substantial losses with an outpouring of creativity and inquiry and re-definition. Many Americans and other expats as well as the French figure into all this fresh new art, music, and culture. Very interesting to read about so many familiar names--Hemingway, Chanel, James Joyce, Picasso, the Fitzgeralds, and on and on and their rise to fame, or occasionally their self destruction. I also learned about many important figures that were unfamiliar to me. It ends a little abruptly with the crash of '29, but acknowledges that the end of an era had been a long time coming. My favorite quote was by Picasso in response to notions that "the influence of Cubism on Art Deco is undeniable" in which he says, "What would Michelangelo have said if they held him responsible for a Renaissance chest of drawers?" A worthy read. Especially fascinating was reading about the influence of a bookstore called Shakespeare and Company which Sophie and I had the good fortune to visit while we were in Paris.

Bonnye Reed says

GNAB I received a free electronic copy of this book from Netgalley, Rowman & Littlefield, and Mary McAuliffe in exchange for an honest review. Thanks, folks, for sharing your work with me!

Reading Mary McAuliffe is always a joy. She opens doors to worlds you never dreamed of, and awakens the need to learn more. Thank you, Ms. McAuliffe, for shining your spotlight onto this particular point of time and place.

Paris between the World Wars was a magnet for artistic souls from around the world. Authors, painters, designers of all sorts, musicians, architects, actors, dancers - Paris was the perfect environment to nurture the hearts of those so blessed. Mary McAuliffe shares with us the excitement and growth of the arts from that period, the personalities and quirks that those talented people brought to their environment and their work. I learned much here through this work, and it brought back to me tales from my father, who adored the talents of that time. I recommend highly to anyone interested in history or the arts.

Alan says

"When legend becomes fact, print the legend."

- newspaper editor Maxwell Scott in the film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962)*

I was reminded of the above quote while reading one of McAuliffe's concluding vignettes to her terrific summary of 1920's Paris. While the 1929 stock market crash was the main economic reason for the end of "Les Années Folles" (The Crazy Years), the deaths of various personalities such as impresario Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929) and dancer Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) seemed to act as era-ending signals as well.

McAuliffe gives only the reputed last words of Duncan as "Adieu, mes amis. Je vais à la gloire!" (Farewell, my friends, I go to glory!) moments before her horrifying death by having her neck broken by the end of her shawl being caught and twisted in the turning wheel-spokes of her getaway car. That her final words may have actually been "Je vais à l'amour" ("I go to love") and were deemed too salacious by her friends who substituted the better legend version is not mentioned.

That is a good example to portray what McAuliffe does here, and don't get me wrong she does it very well. This is a best bits version of the Roaring 20's of Paris that touches on most of the highlights, but that may not

always go into subjects in depth. But it serves its function very well and may leave you intrigued about some personalities that you otherwise may have known little about. From my point of interest in writers and literary personalities there wasn't anything new here about Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Sylvia Beach et al that I hadn't read about previously but there was plenty about Josephine Baker and Coco Chanel that I had known nothing about, e.g. did you know that Baker was actually known as more of a stage comic or clown before her emergence as the exotic glamorous star she became?

So this is highly recommended if you are looking for a 1920s Paris "101" and it will hopefully keep you reading further along whatever subjects and personalities interest you the most. For me, I think I want to find an un-bowdlerized version of Kiki de Montparnasse's Kiki souvenirs (English version: Kiki's Memoirs) or a copy of Jimmie Charters's This Must be the Place for an on-the-ground view of the times.

* I think this is only in the film version, but if anyone has read Dorothy M. Johnson's The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance and knows that the quote is from the original short story, please let me know.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

Paris in the 20's. You know some of these folks---Picasso, Hemingway, Fitzgerald---but did you know that Paris was also, for a time, the home of Man Ray, Cole Porter, Josephine Baker, and many, many others?

I read this book in one window of my computer, and, as I read along, I opened up other windows to look up photos and paintings and additional information about all the amazing people of this book. It's a fascinating read.

I guarantee you will learn many amazing things about the people of 1920's Paris.
