

Timothy Verhoeven, *Sexual crime, religion and masculinity in fin-de-siècle France : the Flamidien Affair*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. xii+122 incl. 7 ills.

The body of Gaston Foveaux, a twelve-year-old boy, was discovered in a waiting room at the entrance to his school on 8 February 1899. Next to the corpse was a note apologising to Gaston's father for the strangulation of his son because of the murderer's 'impure passion'. In the weeks that followed the crime, police and legal experts probed deeply into the school establishment in Lille, Notre-Dame de la Treille, run by a Catholic teaching congregation the Lasallian Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes. A suspect, Frère Flamidien, was rapidly identified by investigators and charged with sexual assault and murder. French newspapers latched on to the story and elaborated it for readers in the France of the Third Republic, at a time when the clerical versus anti-clerical struggle over education was reaching its peak across the nation. Timothy Verhoeven's excellent monograph on the so-called Flamidien Affair is a study of masculinity that will interest historians of the Church as well as a wider academic audience. This book speaks to a growing body of scholarship in which the analytical tool of gender is applied to the study of religious faiths and sexualities. Its strengths lie in the astute use of archival documentation, from public and private collections in Lille, Lyon, Paris, and Rome, and the author's interpretative skills in combining these sources with the printed press to explore the undercurrents of social anxiety about 'manliness' in fin-de-siècle France.