

10-2016

Sur les pas de Flaubert: Approches sensibles du paysage (book review)

Juliana Starr

University of New Orleans, jstarr1@uno.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.uno.edu/fl_facpubs



Part of the [French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Starr, Juliana. "Sur les pas de Flaubert: Approches sensibles du paysage." (book review) *The French Review* 90, no. 1 (2016): 190-191.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Foreign Languages at ScholarWorks@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Foreign Languages Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

the lack of a clearly articulated focal point, this volume should interest a wide range of scholars. Regrettably, formatting inconsistencies (for example, only some chapters have bibliographies) and numerous typographical errors might prove distracting.

University of Mary Washington

Brooke D. Di Lauro

ANTOINE, PHILIPPE, éd. *Sur les pas de Flaubert: approches sensibles du paysage*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014. ISBN 978-90-420-3897-4. Pp. 216. 54 €.

This motley collection of twelve essays examines the travel writings of Flaubert and a number of other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French authors like Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Dumas, Mérimée, Sand, Gautier, the Goncourt brothers, and J.H. Rosny the Elder. Using a variety of stylistic, sociological, historical, thematic, psychoanalytic, and comparative approaches, the book pays attention to the authors' sensory perceptions of landscape, thus affirming the role of the body and the totality of the senses (not just sight) in the experience of travel. The essays share the common belief in the special authenticity, sincerity, and transparency of the travel narrative, as opposed to the more staged and deliberate fictional account. Indeed, often travel writings are not expected to be read as literature per se and, as such offer a unique and intimate perspective on the writer as a person. In her essay on nineteenth-century scientific writings about Tenerife Island, Anne-Gaëlle Weber shows how the senses of taste, touch, and smell served the needs of practical experimentation and were used to mark the difference between seekers of empirical truth versus armchair travelers. In his reading of texts of French explorers of Tibet, Samuel Thévoz analyses the complex sensory-motor processes entering into play when the voyager-writer confronts a totally unfamiliar, unmapped environment. Frédéric Calas studies the vast corpus of literary "voyages en Orient" from Chateaubriand to Loti, concluding that sight is far from the predominant sense, especially in Flaubert, whose travel writings, part of his correspondence that he did not expect to be read as literature, are peppered with examples of synesthesia. Thierry Poyet further develops these insights by showing how Flaubert's youthful travels awakened his sexuality and opened him, if only briefly, to new sensory experience. The next two contributors, Sarga Moussa and Alain Guyot, examine sonic landscapes. Moussa explores constructions of Oriental nighttime (when the voyager is figuratively blind thus more reliant on the other senses) in the works of Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Flaubert, while Guyot demonstrates how Chateaubriand enlarged the scope of sensory possibilities in the travel narrative compared to his predecessors, Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Nathalie Solomon shows how seemingly trivial sensory perceptions, in Dumas and Gautier, are in fact an essential tool in understanding their special brand of irony and the Romantic voyage in general. Odile Gannier examines the Romantic traveler's culinary adventures with local cuisine, while Sophie Lécole, Philippe Antoine, and Pierre Dufief study Gautier in Spain, Flaubert in

Brittany, and the Goncourt Brothers in Algeria, respectively. Laurie Guillaud, in the final essay of the volume, opens new vistas on sensory studies with her interesting look at the marvelous creatures, hybrid fauna, and neo-primitive landscapes peopling the works of the science fiction visionary J.H. Rosny the Elder. The collection is a highly diverse and stimulating addition to the body of scholarship devoted to exoticism, landscapes, and travel narratives during the major century of French colonialism.

University of New Orleans

Juliana Starr

BAUDRY, MARIE. *Lectrices romanesques: représentations et théorie de la lecture aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles*. Paris: Garnier, 2014. ISBN 978-2-8124-2542-4. Pp. 471. 49 €.

This book examines how mid-nineteenth century novels systematically represent flawed readers as female, and argues that this gendering pervades the ways reading has been theorized in the late twentieth century. Why, Baudry asks, did the emblematic figure of the reader shift from Don Quixote to Emma Bovary? And how has the long shadow of Flaubert's heroine structured various theories of reading? Until the nineteenth century, in a pan-European tradition that dates back to Cervantes, novels depicted characters of both genders falling prey to naïve or excessive reading; yet as the genre gained popularity and sought legitimacy, notably in France between the 1820s and the 1850s, male novelists increasingly cast such problem readers as female. The opening chapter surveys the representation of both male and female characters who read in novels of the period, observing that even descriptions of fictional male readers bear a taint of the genre's association with the "feminine" (122). Baudry then considers how a link between novels and women's "morality" comes to be posited in numerous fictions, in the context of nineteenth-century anxieties about a potential "confusion of the sexes" (98). Representing female characters who engage in "bad," overly identificatory reading (169) becomes a device for imagining a more proper, critical (and implicitly male) mode of reading. In the third chapter, analyses of complex "mise[s] en abyme" (219) of reading in Balzac and Flaubert show how these novelists stage female readers in order to distance their own output (and their own readers) from what they deride as lesser or outdated literary aesthetics. The final chapter leaps to the twentieth century and argues that many theories of reading supposedly unconcerned with gender (Eco, Barthes, Picard) are actually structured around a division between critical and naïve reading that "reactivates the antimony of male and female reader-characters" (332). Feminist attempts at revaluing fictional female readers or a "feminine" mode of reading (Naomi Schor, Carla L. Peterson) are likewise found to paradoxically "reiterate [...] the usual stereotypes of sexual difference" (397). Baudry's lucid and original engagement with theories of reading and with American feminist scholarship is one of the book's strengths; more debatable aspects include the near-elision of the second half of the nineteenth century, and a number of short comparative excursions (it is unclear