

## Mamoon on Biasi, Herschberg Pierrot, and Vinken, eds. (2014)

Biasi, Pierre-Marc de, Anne Herschberg Pierrot, and Barbara Vinken, editors. *Flaubert: les pouvoirs du mythe*. Vol. 1, Éditions des Archives contemporaines, 2014, pp. iv + 182, ISBN 978-2-813000-55-2

Sayeeda H. Mamoon, Edgewood College

This fine collection of essays by some of France's leading scholars explores Gustave Flaubert's rewriting of ancient myths and his transmission of new knowledge and linguistic discoveries of the era. Divided into three main parts under the subheadings of "Symboles," "Idoles," and "Mythes," the compilation includes eleven articles as well as Barbara Vinken's compelling foreword along with a succinct introduction by Anne Herschberg Pierrot. The first section, entitled "Symboles: l'intertexte franco-allemand," groups together essays by Michel Espagne, Agnès Bouvier, Bertrand Marchal, and Ildikó Lörinsky; they examine nineteenth-century German philology and mythography, and illustrate their impact on Flaubert's works. Espagne's "La philologie en Allemagne: mythes et symboles, construction des dieux" focuses on Christian Heyne, Friedrich Creuzer, and the contributions of Ernest Renan among others; Marchal's investigation concentrates on Max Müller; Lörinsky's inquiry surveys the history of mythography from Bernard Fontenelle to Charles Dupuis. These studies connect the different sources and research to Flaubert's appropriation of new findings and his reworking of ancient myths. In the same vein, Bouvier's insightful article "Au rendez-vous allemand: la *Revue Germanique*, ou la philologie allemande au service de la libre pensée française" credits Auguste Neffzer's journal for keeping Flaubert informed about German philological discoveries. Bouvier explains that "par l'intermédiaire de la *Revue germanique*, Flaubert a donc pu avoir accès à une histoire qui intègre les découvertes les plus récentes et s'inscrit explicitement dans le nouveau courant d'idées où les faits de la langue, de religion et d'histoire sont pensés ensemble autour de la notion de race" (35).

Contributions by Claude Mouchard, Jacques Neefs, Sylvie Triaire, and Barbara Vinken form the section entitled "Idoles: l'empire de l'hagiographie." The three articles appearing in this middle part all engage in the discussion of religion in *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* and *Trois Contes*. Mouchard and Neefs's collaborative work entitled "Flaubert et l'histoire des religions: *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*" articulates its intent to consider the hagiography less as a work "qui exposerait une conception des religions, des mythes, des croyances, pris dans leur succession," and devotes more attention instead to ascertaining the text's position on different beliefs and faith traditions—"ce que veut cette œuvre, ce qu'elle représente comme question sur la pluralité des croyances et sur l'injonction des figures qui ordonnent celles-ci" (76). Triaire, on the other hand, reveals, in her "Le défilé des dieux, de l'idole primitive à Loulou," how Flaubert engages the representation of Christianity not only in *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, a text which according to the critic seems to shy away from Christ, but also in *Trois Contes*, which Triaire views as proposing a more historicized "configuration" (92). Vinken's "*Hérodiade*. L'église catholique romaine: fille de Babel" reads the final *Trois Contes* as a deconstruction of Christianity. In her study, Vinken convincingly interprets Aulus's gluttony at Herod's feast and Salomé's lubricious dance as inversions of the Eucharist and the festival of Pentecost.

The last section of the volume, entitled "Mythes: la réécriture symbolique," features essays by Henri Mitterand, Edi Zollinger, Gisèle Séginger, and Pierre-Marc de Biasi. Mitterand's "Zola: le jeu du mythe" offers a typography of myths while deviating slightly from the primary focus of this volume devoted to Flaubert by presenting insights into Émile Zola's application of different kinds of myths in the composition of *Les Rougon-Macquart*. The remaining articles appearing in this final segment return to the compilation's concentration on Flaubert, delving into the author's reformulation of ancient myths, and the processes of symbolization and desymbolization in his works. In "Hippolyte: réinterprétation flaubertienne d'un mythe antique," Zollinger highlights two artworks—an *Esmeralda* by Steuben that appears in *Madame Bovary*, and Heim's representation of the martyrdom of Saint Hippolyte that hung in the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris until 1862—to shed light on Flaubert's creation of his club-footed character Hippolyte. The essays by Séginger and Biasi close the volume through perceptive analyses of the systems of symbolization, desymbolization, and resymbolization in Flaubert's œuvre. This illuminating compilation offers a valuable source of reference for Flaubert studies.

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