

## Humphreys on Glaudes and Melmoux-Montaubin, eds. (2016)

Glaudes, Pierre, and Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin, editors. *Barbey d'Aureville: Perspectives critiques*. Classiques Garnier, 2016, pp. 508, ISBN 978-2-406-05899-1

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This enlightening compilation attests to the rigorous and sustained interest of scholars and readers of Barbey d'Aureville's criticism. In the wake of numerous publications and re-editions that celebrated the multifaceted aspects of Barbey's *œuvre* in 2008, his bicentennial year, studies of Barbey's rich critical and fictional production continue to flourish. The twenty-one articles in *Perspectives critiques* are the conference proceedings of "Barbey d'Aureville, bilan critique" held at Cerisy-la-Salle in 2014. They offer keen and innovative studies on the diverse forms of Barbey's literature and criticism.

Editors Pierre Glaudes and Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin highlight four approaches to Barbey's work that differ from earlier methods (e.g. psychoanalytical and narratological), and that provide structure for the volume. Part one, "Formes de la critique et critique des formes," begins with an exploration by Reto Zöllner of the "architecture secrète" of *Les Œuvres et les hommes* (Barbey's twenty-five volumes of criticism). Barbey himself claimed in 1855 that this was not simply a string of essays published in serial fashion, but rather a "coherent" composition arranged in three sections: "les philosophes ou penseurs, les historiens et les homme du fait, [and] les hommes de la forme, les poètes, écrivains d'imagination" (15). He died, however, prior to completing the project and some of what was edited posthumously by Louise Read (such as the presentation of articles in chronological order) ran counter to his own designs.

The subsequent contributions in this section detail Barbey's exegetical approach to art, theater, and poetry. Mathilde Bertrand claims that "le critique et le créateur, l'artiste et le poète en prose" coexist throughout Barbey's work (56). Catherine Boschian-Campaner examines Barbey's impressions of the Salon of 1872 and maintains that Barbey's self-proclaimed position as "un ignorant au Salon" (81) validates a highly personal and intuitive approach to evaluating art. Melmoux-Montaubin revisits Barbey's theater criticism and points out that his reprobation of the genre is influenced by his suspicions of the institutional powers that shaped the world of the theater. Catherine Mayaux analyzes Barbey's appraisal of roughly seventy articles on poets and poetry over a fifty-year period and situates him as anti-modern within "une modernité poétique" (497). What emerges in these pages is Barbey's resistance to contemporary commercial and creative conventions—whether they be the appeal of scientific progress, journalism, or public opinion. In particular the authors cite his disapproval for "le jury du salon et 'les critiques d'art autorisés'" (83), "le jugement des foules" (108), and "la plasticité forcée" (138) of Hugo and the Parnassians.

Part two ("Histoire, politique, et religion") shows how Barbey's appraisals of specific artists and thinkers have the dual function of participating in contemporary conversations and critical debate, and informing his fiction. Julie Anselmini tackles the question of how to write history according to Barbey versus the historians he critiques. Pierre Glaudes re-examines a familiar relationship in "Barbey d'Aureville et le Jansénisme," but reveals a much more subtle and complex angle, particularly through Barbey's novel *Une histoire sans nom*. Hostile to Jansenism yet sensitive to Pascal's writings, Barbey reflects numerous ambiguities in his narrative. Laroche investigates Barbey's providential views of history after the fall of the Second Empire. Andrea Del Longo investigates the collection *Maximes et pensées de Balzac* and asserts that although the volume, published by Hetzel in 1856, does not bear the name of an author, evidence shows that Barbey most likely was behind the project. His judicious selection bears testimony to a deep, coherent understanding of Balzac's thought.

Since Barbey's analyses of historical, religious, and political texts influence his creative vision, the third part of *Perspectives critiques* focuses on six different fields of critical inquiry in Barbey's texts. He frequently evoked prostitution in the context of the publishing industry, and within that analogy, he saw himself more as a courtesan. Éléonore Reverzy's "Portrait de l'écrivain en Aspaspie" highlights the challenges of literary markets and self-promotion. Émilie Sermadiras juxtaposes Barbey's interest in narrative representations of malaise and maladies with his critique of positivism and Naturalism. Maud Schmidt contextualizes Barbey's work in relation to the "récit exemplaire," while Alice de Georges-Métral suggests that Barbey's realism is an intricate combination of the erotic and the sublime. Pascale Auraix-Jonchière's study centers on *Une histoire sans nom*, which discloses "une métaphysique de la poésie" (328). As a lover of language and style, Barbey coined many new words and phrases. Christophe Chaguinian explores such neologisms as *alliciant* (attractive, seductive), *ouragané* (stormy, tempestuous), *rienner* (*ne rien faire*) as conscious artistic choices, not just whimsical wordplay.

Finally, "Confrontations critiques et questions de réception" considers Barbey's critical production in relation to other critics

and writers of the period. Specifically, Fabienne Bercegol analyzes Barbey's polemical tactics in his reviews of women writers and poets. Frédérique Marro and Élise Sorel concentrate on the influences of Jules Janin and Hippolyte Taine, respectively. Alexandra Delattre traces Barbey's association with the Catholic journal *L'Univers* and critic Louis Veuillot. In "Préfaces et regards croisés," Marine Le Bail details Barbey's mentorship to Octave Uzanne. Katelijne De Vuyst, translator of *Les Diaboliques* into Dutch, illustrates the varied, worldwide interest in Barbey as it is shared through translation and inspiration.

There is no doubt that this collection of essays will interest scholars of Barbey—seasoned as well as fresh. At the same time, it encompasses a vast spectrum of topics and genres relevant to readers of nineteenth-century literature. Barbey once said of the power of the imagination, "Elle blesse avec mille traits divers ornés de banderoles de pourpre et d'or. Elle vous pare, mais elle vous déchire, et le sang coule sous tous ces rubans" (*OC II*, 1241). Perhaps Barbey's work has a similar effect precisely because he passionately embraced yet scrupulously studied the fine arts, theater, poetry, history, theology, fiction, philosophy, politics, religion, as well as his own nineteenth-century *bêtes noires*.

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