

Pasco on Palacios and Méndez, editors (2016)

Palacios, Concepción, and Pedro Méndez, editors. *La Représentation de l'histoire dans la nouvelle française du XIXe siècle*. Classiques Garnier, "Études dix-neuviémistes," 2016, pp. 362, ISBN 978-2-8124-3623-9

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The twenty studies collected in this volume represent a contribution to our understanding of the French short story of the nineteenth century. In one way or another, they all focus on short fiction, though without clearly distinguishing it from the novel, and they all consider the importance of history to the genre. Although the two threads of history and short fiction are common to each contribution, there is otherwise little in the way of a unified argument tying each contribution to its contiguous studies.

The editors clearly identify their intention to consider those nineteenth-century short stories that use history for the creation of fiction and their way of doing so. René Godenne opens the first portion of this collection by referring to a number of historical short stories that refer particularly to the revolutions that cross the nineteenth century, reminding us of his efforts to repertory short stories of the period. Certainly, as Elena Meseguer points out, history and Realism create a *carrefour* within Gide's imagination. Yvon Houssais describes those tales that focus on a limited historical event as intensified in emblematic references to a greater reality. Carmen Pujante is drawn particularly to those stories written by French and Spanish authors and translated into each others' languages that briefly circumscribe history and carry their respective cultures across their borders. Barbey d'Aurevilly's verisimilitude and many allusions to nobility and nobles of the past attract Carmen Camero. Carme Figuerola understands that history can be a tool dedicated to many different missions, as in Jules Sandeau's work, where it serves on the one hand to bridge aging Romanticism to Realism and on the other to offer a more positive view of contemporary turmoil. Alfred de Vigny's mythological bourgeois and Prosper Mérimée's ironic visions separate societal attitudes toward war and heroism for Thierry Ozwald. Noting that Erckmann-Chatrian used short fiction to correct historical errors, Noëlle Benhamou also underlines the texts' emotions caused by France's recent, tragic defeat of 1870–71. Thuanh-Vân Ton-That's argument compares the short story, "Jacques Damour," with *La Débâcle*. She recognizes Émile Zola's seemingly uncomfortable lack of space in the former, though with more control over the rhythm, and, while persisting in his opposition to the Commune, she believes that Zola's novel slowly builds to a glorious conclusion. Ederne Jorge continues the focus on the Franco-Prussian war, this time as Alphonse Daudet presented it behind the actual events in the lives of individual French people. Guy de Maupassant's reconstruction of the period creates a continuing allegory of the inhumanity of war in the seven stories María Teresa Lozano studies.

The last, most substantial portion of the volume turns to French portrayals of foreign lands, whether fantastic or real, beginning with Théophile Gautier's masterpiece, "Arria Marcella." María Victoria Rodríguez believes that this tale successfully leaves the reader between two worlds, never quite sure whether s/he is reading a true account or fiction. Pedro Pardo's study of Jean Richepin's necromantic vision of the Roman decadence insists on the mixture of the truth of the past and a gradually increasing recreation of the contemporary period. María del Rosario Alvarez surveys the stories in the *Revue de Paris* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes* that were inspired by Spanish history, concluding that they generally reflect the themes of Romanticism with a realistic orientation, while Ana Alonso limits her study to two of Stendhal's tales that turn on accurate renditions of Spanish politics. Most interestingly, she suggests that the compression required of the short story seems appropriate for Stendhal's style and treatment of contemporary history. Stendhal's "Le Coffre et le revenant" refuses the facile Romanticism of many French works dealing with Spain, Béatrice Didier convincingly argues, in order to concentrate on political power. Stendhal attracts Angeles Sirvent as well, first to find the source of the incomplete "Chevalier de Saint-Ismier," then to show how Stendhal adapts and adopts Tirso de Molina's early text. Sirvent goes on to suggest that fragmentary works like this one are perhaps less important as literature than as indications of Stendhal's biography as a creator. Immaculada Illanes uses three short stories to show how Alexandre Dumas *père* exploits both novels and the briefer genre. While regularly citing his sources for the historical personages he develops, he freely adapts the events in order to draw out lessons that are suitable for his own period. Mme d'Abrantès's "L'Espagnole" provides an exemplary case that allows Francisco Lafarga to consider the relationship between an adventure mentioned in her memoirs and her much expanded, dramatized story that she composed and which another writer later re-adapted in a 145-line poem. The volume concludes with an analysis of several of Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's works through a translation into Spanish that leads Marta Giné to insist on the moral and spiritual qualities as expressed in the French author's richly rhythmical prose.

This is not a volume that one would normally read from first to last, though each study has something to do with both history and the short story. Several studies mention the concision required by the genre, but I repeatedly hungered for clear definitions

distinguishing the short story from the novel. Nonetheless, *La Représentation de l'histoire* is a useful volume by accomplished scholars. The editors are to be congratulated.

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