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UCLA FRENCH DEPARTMENT 1991 DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Evelyne Charvier-Berman. *Les Personnages féminins et l'amour dans les contes et les nouvelles de Guy de Maupassant*. (Ph.D. Dissertation: Hassan el Nouty, Chair, UCLA 1990).

This dissertation studies female characters in Guy de Maupassant's short stories. The impressive number of stories and female characters created by the writer imposed a brief statistical analysis of Maupassant's narratives and the selection of a representative sample of short stories bound both by thematic and structural criteria. All stories present one female character who springs from numerous semantic traits and is involved in an amorous relationship.

Part I of the study focuses on the female character as a creation of the literary text and centers upon its make-up and actions within the narrative. Chapter one deals with a close textual analysis of the being of the female character. It argues that the first name, last name and description of the character carry its constitutive semes which often encapsulate its narrative program. Chapter two centers on the actions the female character performs. Marriage, maternity, adultery, work, suicide or death are the often intertwined roads she travels but none of them leads her to happiness.

The malaise of Maupassant's female characters furnished the material for Part II of this study which focuses on the relationships between the literary text and the historical realities of the 1880's. Chapter one examines them and presents the feminist movements of the 1880-1890's as an element of response to the social uneasiness

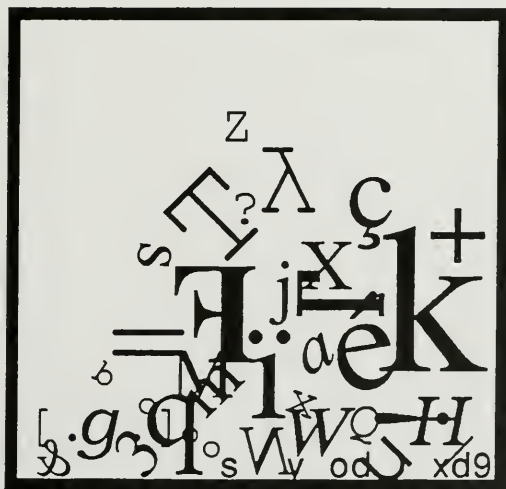
French women were experiencing. Chapter two first draws close parallels between fictional characters and realities and proceeds to argue that Maupassant's protagonists sketch a complex analysis of female oppression and develop the tools to fight it.


Quietly, Maupassant's heroines corrode the patriarchal order they seem to bow to and, in so doing, become the subversive agents leading it to its destruction.

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Volume 9  1991

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Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouverait
ici l'endroit où de telles paroles dégèlent.

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

Volume 9  1991

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Medievalism: Testing Ground for Historicism(s)? 1
*Round table discussion with Peter Haidu,
Alexandre Leupin, and Eugene Vance*

Between *fantasque* and *fantasmagorique*: a fantastic
reading of Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin* 33
Nicoletta Pireddu

Une lecture des *Larmes d'Eros*, ou une autre
"nécessité de l'impossible" 49
Jean Mainil

Grammatologie or *Gramma Au Logis*: *Gramma's* Drama 67
James Arlandson

REVIEW 85

William VanderWolk, *Flaubert Remembers. Memory and
the Creative Experience*
[Piers Armstrong]

UCLA FRENCH DEPARTMENT
DISSERTATION ABSTRACT 89

