

Alterity and Regionalism

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“My Aunt’s House: Regionalism in Zénaïde Fleuriot’s Novels for Children”

Zénaïde Fleuriot (1829-90) became a popular author for children following the death of the Comtesse de Ségur. Many of Fleuriot’s novels take place in Brittany, where the author was born, raised, and as a writer, spent her summers in a cottage named Kermöareb, “My Aunt’s House”.

Regionalism plays an essential role in Fleuriot’s novels in which she depicts local Breton color, including enchanted forests, romantic seascapes, festivals, sea captains, and eccentrics. Fleuriot meticulously documents social events like weddings and funerals. While she does not incorporate the Breton language in her dialogue, the locales are decidedly Breton, and would certainly seem exotic to non-Breton readers. Landscape descriptions are often lyrical and characters who recognize and appreciate the beauty around them, are privileged. Brittany is associated with a purity of spirit that restores.

In stark contrast to Brittany, in a decidedly decadent Paris, Fleuriot’s characters are constrained rather than liberated. In the capital social events have degraded into consumerism and the pursuit of tawdry entertainment. Because characters lose contact with nature, they blindly succumb to the temptations of Parisian culture. However, the promise of redemption in Brittany is available to Parisians, some of whom save themselves by leaving the capital.

This study addresses, therefore, the dichotomy of Paris and the province, and how Zénaïde Fleuriot plumbed it as a source of creative inspiration and instruction.

Thibault Gardereau

Le Nouveau Monde à travers la littérature de 1865 à 1914 : un espace imaginaire entre mythe et réalité

Le Nouveau Monde est toujours apparu en littérature comme un lieu d’évasion¹, un espace imaginaire entre mythe et réalité. Avant l’ère de l’industrialisation, ce continent est perçu par les écrivains français² comme une région lointaine et mystérieuse, peuplée d’Indiens³. C’est le mythe de l’Ouest sauvage, aux paysages majestueux sur lequel souffle le vent de la liberté, qui perdure jusqu’au milieu du XIX^e siècle.

Dès la fin de la Guerre de Sécession en 1865 et les débuts chancelants de la Troisième République en France en 1871, les écrivains français réactualisent cet espace imaginaire sublimé. Hormis Chateaubriand, qui trente ans après *Atala*, reprend la rédaction de son voyage, à l’occasion de la publication de ses *Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe*, et décrit un tout autre pays que celui qu’il a connu : « Là où j’ai laissé des forêts... champs cultivés ; là où étaient des halliers...

¹ Dans le *Timée* et le *Critias*, Platon évoque déjà un continent mystérieux qu’il nomme l’Atlantide. Par sa découverte en 1492, le mythe rejoint la réalité.

² Bougainville, Diderot, Voltaire, Tocqueville, Hugo, Ampère.

³ Fenimore Cooper est l’un des chantres de cette vision romanesque.

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grandes routes ; où le Mississippi, dans sa solitude... plus de deux cents bateaux à vapeur...⁴ », les écrivains français⁵ qui lui succèdent n'ont presque aucune dette littéraire pour décrire ce nouveau Nouveau Monde. Ils n'auront qu'à faire table rase de la première représentation et à réinventer cet espace imaginaire.

Ce phénomène pose la question suivante : comment les écrivains français en tentant de saisir et de transcrire une nouvelle réalité entre 1865 et 1914, renouvellent l'imaginaire du Nouveau Monde en créant un nouvel exotisme, réinventent un espace fascinant et repoussant qu'il féminise, et ce, à partir du langage ?

Vladimir Kapor
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Local colour between exoticism and regionalism

Local colo(u)r/*couleur locale* is an expression so domesticated in everyday speech, in both English and French, that its terminological origins, and the conceptual baggage associated with it have long been forgotten. Originally a pictorial term used during the 17th-century rift between *Poussinistes* and *Rubénistes*, this collocation came to be employed in French literary criticism of the late 18th century, before becoming one of the shibboleths of the emerging French Romanticism at the 19th century. Throughout this period, *couleur locale* is associated with genres such as historical drama and novel, but also seen as a desirable quality of all the avatars of literary exoticism and travel writing.

This usage may come as a surprise in the English-speaking context, specifically in its North American variant, wherein the term is more readily associated with regionalist prose, presumably through the influence of the *Local color movement* – a group of American regionalist writers, commonly situated between 1865 and 1930. In this paper I purport to briefly sketch a few phases through which the Gallicism *couleur locale* was appropriated and accommodated in the English-speaking usage, and to discuss the resulting conceptual divergences which underpin contemporary English and French usage of this literary term.

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The Place of the Popular

The exoticizing gaze which famously marked the rise of the French colonial empire was mirrored within France's borders by an unprecedented scholarly and literary interest in folkloric and popular traditions, perceived by many to be on the verge of extinction. The historical and literary studies on popular culture published over the course of the nineteenth century in France reveal what Michel de Certeau, Dominique Julia, and Jacques Revel have aptly called an "exotisme de l'intérieur." Through the idealizing of the popular as a lost or foreign (thus exotic)

⁴ Chateaubriand, René de. 1948. *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Paris : « Édition du Centenaire », établie et annotée par M. Levailant, Flammarion, 4 v.

⁵ Duvergier de Hauranne, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Bourget, Claudel, Huret, Adam, Rachilde...

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object to be recovered, described, and preserved, nineteenth-century writers simultaneously sought to conceal or contain the political potential of a popular identity.

My paper examines the emergence of this exoticized *populaire* through some of the more significant discourses on popular culture produced during the July Monarchy and through the Second Empire. Jules Michelet's *Le Peuple* and *La Sorcière*, Charles Nisard's *Histoire des livres populaires*, and Champfleury's *Histoire de l'imagerie populaire* along with his *Recherches sur les origines et variations de la légende du bonhomme Misère*, serve as points of departure for exploring the paradoxical positioning of the *populaire* as both familiar and foreign. My focus here is on how these texts articulated popularity in terms of an ambiguously-defined authenticity against which new forms of popular practices, most notably the novel, were measured.