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Francesco Spandri, ed., *La Littérature au prisme de l'économie: argent et roman en France au XIXe siècle*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014. 399 pp. Bibliography, index, and abstracts. 49€ (pb). ISBN 978-2-8124-2981-1.

Review by Aleksandar Stević, University of Cambridge.

Francesco Spandri has assembled an intellectually ambitious and wide-ranging collection of essays focusing primarily on the status of money in the nineteenth-century French novel. The reader should not be seduced by the collection's main title whose reference to economy seems imprecise—the book has little to say about non-monetary matters like production or labor. Both the subtitle (*Argent et roman en France au XIXe siècle*) and the title of the editor's introduction ("Le statut Romanesque de l'argent au XIXe siècle") do more justice to the collection's actual scope. The eighteen essays that follow by and large explore the role of money as a key novelistic theme and, more broadly, the impact of financial capitalism, its institutions, and characteristic modes of operation on the evolution of the French nineteenth-century novel.

Spandri's introduction sets up three main paths of investigation which correspond to the three subsections of the volume. The first section ("Forme") looks beyond thematic analysis and explores the role of money as a structuring principle, focusing in particular on Balzac, but also on Zola and Verne. The second ("Thème") examines the transformations of the theme of money across the nineteenth century, with separate contributions on Balzac, Stendhal, Dumas, Sand, Flaubert, Leon Bloy, Dostoevsky, and Barrès. Finally, essays in the third section ("Enjeux transversaux") branch into broader investigations of the status of money within French intellectual and social history.

The first of the three sections seems particularly ambitious in its attempt to bridge the gap between thematic and formal considerations. As Pierluigi Pellini suggests in what reads as a programmatic statement, "il faut bien étudier non pas *un* thème...mais bien *le* thème décisif, capable d'éclairer en profondeur non seulement le sens idéologique d'un texte mais aussi sa construction formelle" (p. 32; emphasis original). In Pellini's reading, the development of the French novel corresponds to the movement from traditional capitalism of bourgeois accumulation towards modern capitalism of financial speculation: while in Balzac money is a palpable material object to be acquired, in Zola wealth is dematerialized. Moreover, this "dematerialization" can be traced at the level of imagery: in Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* everything seems to float as the novel is being saturated with aquatic metaphors, including "fleuves des clients," "torrents de marchandises," and "pluie d'argent" (p. 46).

Among the contributors interested in the formal implications of monetary transactions, Jean-Joseph Goux is perhaps the boldest. In a gesture which recalls the work of D.A. Miller, he casts the omnipresence of money in the realist novel as the very condition of realist representation and of the strategies of narratorial omniscience. "L'argent," he writes, "est un phénomène ou un principe de société, qui en devenant dominant, omniprésent, en structurant peu à peu tous les rapports sociaux, appelle et impose une forme de représentation de la réalité" (55–56). Consequently, the realist novel emerges as "le genre, la forme, la vision des choses, le mode de représentation de la réalité qui est produite *par l'argent*..." (p. 56; emphasis original). In Goux's reading, this homology between finance and narrative also explains the further transformations of the genre. The early twentieth-century novels of Mauriac and Gide simultaneously abandon the Balzacian dreams of wealth and the narrative strategies of the realist novel: "ces sorties de l'univers social où l'argent est hégémonique... s'accompagnent aussi d'une rupture avec le narrateur omniscient" (70). Of course,

the attempts to see modernist formal interventions as a sign of an underlying rejection of bourgeois ideology have a long and problematic history, but Goux is as successful as any critic I have read in establishing the homology between ideological and formal shifts.

The theoretical and historical interest in money not simply as a theme but also as a force which shapes the form of the novel and as an index of novelistic ideology extends into the second section of the volume. This seems particularly true of Fabrice Wilhelm's contribution on Balzac and Luca Pietromarchi's on Flaubert. In Wilhelm's reading the rise of money in Balzac is productively envisioned as corresponding to the fall of the father-figure: "chez Balzac, la montée en puissance de l'argent est parallèle au déclin de la puissance symbolique de la paternité" (p. 141). In Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*, Pietromarchi argues, the fluidity of desires and interpersonal relations corresponds to the fluidity of financial capitalism: "tout amour, amitié, opinion semble en effet pris dans un vortex en tout point semblable à celui créé par la rapidité des transactions boursières, où toute valeur est relative au moment, c'est-à-dire toujours possible d'être annulée" (p. 219). In the final instance, the vicissitudes of the novelistic plot and the structure of the social relations which the novel describes are homologous to the logic of financial operations.

The final section of Spandri's volume offers an interdisciplinary excursion, with the history of the novel ceding significant ground to social and intellectual history. Each of the four contributions in this section focuses on the various discursive constructions of the monetary sphere in nineteenth-century France, from the controversies surrounding *caisses d'épargne* which were indicative of a larger ideological conflict about the appropriate methods of alleviating poverty (contribution by Carole Christen-Lecuyer) to the social and economic thought of Eugène Buret in an essay by François Vatin. In this section, Maria Luisa Maniscalco's essay on the sociology of money seems particularly pertinent to the collection's larger claims. While she focuses primarily on Alexis de Tocqueville, Maniscalco also traces the history of the discursive construction of money, identifying the nineteenth century as the moment when economy and finance became hegemonic social powers, suppressing religious and moralist discourses about money and normalizing the desire for the acquisition of wealth as an indispensable part of the social order (pp. 293–296).

The image of French realism which emerges from the pages of this collection is somewhat conventional but nonetheless largely persuasive: from Stendhal who, as Yves Ansel argues, still seems more interested in ethics than in financial operations, we move on to Balzac whose fictions, as both Goux and Paolo Tortonese point out, perform an investigation of economic interest as a key principle of social organization, and, finally, to Flaubert who, according to Pietromarchi, displaces the relatively stable Balzacian universe with a state of constant flux (pp. 221–222). However, some notable differences in the way in which various authors in this volume connect the key stages in the development of French realism to the development of capitalist economy demand more scrutiny.

For instance, three essays perform some very similar interpretative moves, each of them showing how the sense of financial fluidity shapes the logic of particular novels. As I already pointed out, Pellini suggests that Zola's work is drenched in fluid, aquatic imagery, while Christophe Reffait makes a similar suggestion about Jules Verne: "il est dès lors tentant de mettre en rapport la physique vernienne de l'argent, laquelle semble favoriser la liquidité, la fongibilité, l'immédiété de la transaction, avec cette thématique de la mer diaphane et précieuse qui semble aussi privilégier l'idée de circulation du regard et des flux vitaux" (p. 107). Finally, Pietromarchi locates another conjunction of novelistic and financial fluidity in Flaubert. Significantly, both Pellini and Pietromarchi offer a contrast with Balzac as a cornerstone of their argument. As Pellini suggests, what divides Zola from Balzac is the distinction between modern speculative capitalism and more traditional acquisitive capitalism (p. 47).

The stability of Balzacian realism in opposition to the fluidity of late nineteenth-century developments therefore constitutes something of a running theme in a number of essays, and it would have been helpful if these claims were fleshed out a bit more clearly in the editor's introduction. It would also have been helpful if the authors had in some way engaged each other's complementary claims. This seems all the more necessary given that Goux's essay offers a contrasting view of the same issue, pointing out that Balzac is already heavily invested in the logic

of speculation. I share Goux's skepticism, but above all I think it is a pity that this interesting debate about the role that the opposition between traditional and financial capitalism played in the evolution of the French novel wasn't made more explicit and hence more productive.

While a better rapport between some of the contributions would have been helpful, it is also worth mentioning that a handful of essays seem only tangentially related to the book's overall concerns, most notably an otherwise perfectly fine piece on Dostoevsky which seems misplaced in a book with an unambiguously French focus. However, even with these reservations in mind, there is much to be praised in this collection which simultaneously tackles difficult methodological questions and offers a series of engaging readings. The reflections on money as a structuring principle which were in various forms developed by a number of contributors offer important methodological signposts for scholars thinking about the relationship between literary form and social history, while the contributions on individual novelists are likely to serve as a natural starting point for future thinking about the way in which financial operations are conceptualized in the major texts of the French nineteenth century.

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