The Golden Scapegoat: Portrait of the Jew in the Novels of Balzac

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Abstract
"Unlike other novelists of the early nineteenth century, Honoré de Balzac created important literary characters who were Jewish. Although his Jews display the common stereotypic traits of evil and avarice, Balzac was not a facile anti-Semite. Because of his own eccentric endowments, both as a man and as an artist, he saw more in the Jew than did most of his literary and social contemporaries. The Jews he portrayed were not the unidimensional minor characters commonly found in earlier literature. Rather, they were complex men and women who played major roles in his novels"--From the introduction.

Comments

Recommended Citation

The purpose of this list is to give interested individuals a sense of some of the primary texts available in English or in English translation for the teaching and study of world literature. (A very few anthologies consisting of translations into other languages are also included.) Wherever possible, I have listed the authors and/or works included in an anthology, so one can search for particular authors or works by name to check their availability in English. (Click on the "Edit" button on your web browser and then on "Find (on this page)," or its equivalent, to
search for Balzac begins with a portrait of the Parisians of his day as peoples of different classes who yet are all enslaved to the twin idols of Gold and Pleasure. I remember that, the first time I read this story, I would quote passages from the opening to my friends as an example of what constitutes great description. Now, while I still like it, it no longer sends me to the stratosphere. Henri asks his friend Paul de Manerville if he knows who she is. Paul not only knows of her, calling her “The Girl with the Golden Eyes,” but claims that the woman with her was a hundred times more beautiful. Henri discounts this, but resolves to get to know her. The next time they meet in the garden, he follows her carriage to her home and then sends his man Laurent to spy on her.