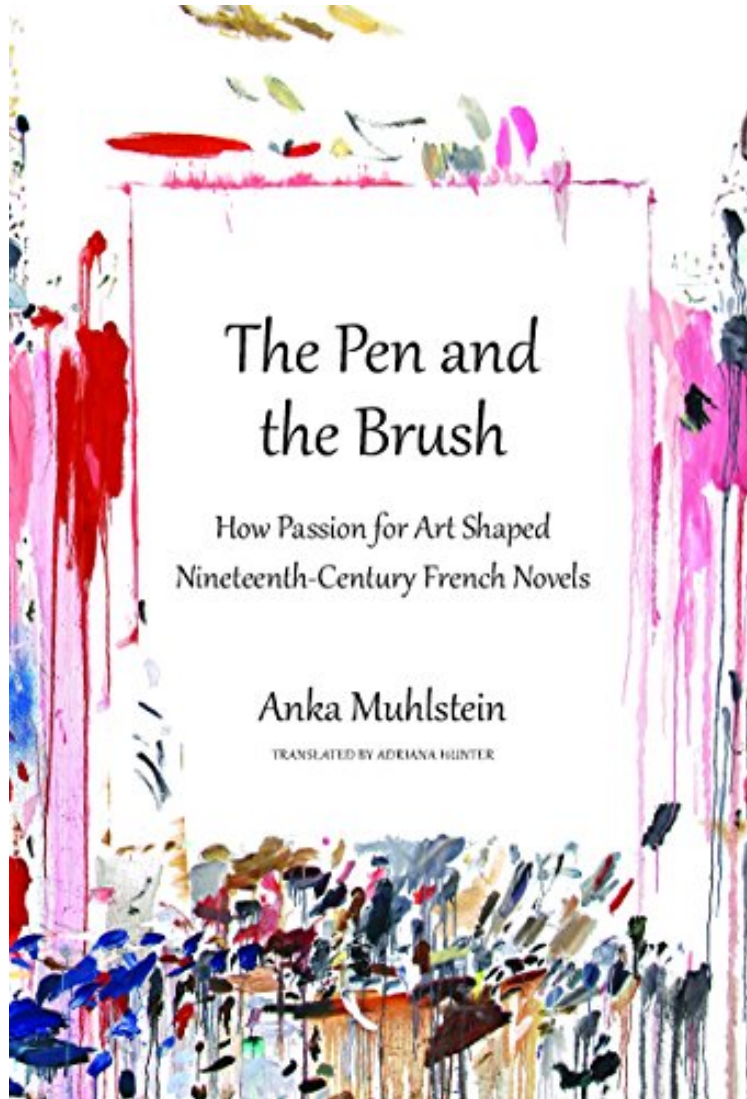


[Download] The Pen and the Brush: How Passion for Art Shaped Nineteenth-Century French Novels

## The Pen and the Brush: How Passion for Art Shaped Nineteenth-Century French Novels

Anka Muhlstein

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**Anka Muhlstein : The Pen and the Brush: How Passion for Art Shaped Nineteenth-Century French Novels** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Pen and the Brush: How Passion for Art Shaped Nineteenth-Century French Novels:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Art for Artist's Sake By CharlusA wonderful idea for a book, the influence of art on 19th Century French literature, is only partially successful in execution. Muhlstein concentrates mainly on 3 authors: Balzac, Zola and Proust (Huysman and Maupassant have cameo appearances). About the first two she has little to write except plot summaries of stories dealing with artists and that their scenic descriptions have a

painterly effect, which can be said of most novelists who spend time to describe the scene at hand (think Dickens, Hardy et al). It is only when she gets to Proust, a novelist she has previously written on, that more complex arguments are made. Proust used paintings to comment on his characters and used a character, Elstir, to comment on the nature of art and on artists. (Much of this argument can be found in the introduction to his invaluable "Paintings in Proust" by Eric Karpeles). Muhlstein, given a more subtle writer, has more subtle insights to make. It is only in the last 50 pages of this short book that she approaches fulfilling the potential of her subject. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful blend of art, literature, and history! By David and Suzanne McClendon We were provided a copy of *The Pen and the Brush* in order to review it. Wow! This book is a wonderful blend of art and literary appreciation. Often, I felt like I was in way over my head, but it was exciting and invigorating. I have always enjoyed history, literature, and art, and this book is a perfect blend of all three. The focus of the book is how art inspired literature, but we also learn how literature also inspire art. There are some very funny moments in this educational book, as well as information that I never knew about a well-known American inventor. Maybe I'm the only person on the planet that didn't know this about him, but just in case I'm not, I won't spoil the surprise for you. This book is inspiring and has made me want to explore art even further. It has also been the cause of a big increase in my to-be-read stack. *The Pen and the Brush* was better than any art or literature appreciation class that I have ever had. If you love art and history, you will not be disappointed or bored with this book. Quite the opposite; you will be enlivened! 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Susanartgreat book

A scintillating glimpse into the lives of acclaimed writers and artists and their inspiring, often surprising convergences, from the author of *Monsieur Proust's Library* With the wit and penetration well known to readers of *Balzac's Omelette* and *Monsieur Proust's Library*, Anka Muhlstein's *PEN AND BRUSH* revisits the delights of the French novel. This time she focuses on late 19th- and 20th-century writers--Balzac, Zola, Proust, Huysmans, and Maupassant--through the lens of their passionate involvement with the fine arts. She delves into the crucial role that painters play as characters in their novels, which she pairs with an exploration of the profound influence that painting exercised on the novelists' techniques, offering an intimate view of the intertwined worlds of painters and writers at the time. Muhlstein's deftly chosen vignettes bring to life a portrait of the nineteenth century's tight-knit artistic community, where Cezanne and Zola befriended each other as boys and Balzac yearned for the approval of Delacroix. She leads the reader on a journey of spontaneous discovery as she explores how a great painting can open a mind and spark creative fire.

"The close friendship, interaction, and parallelism between writers and artists in nineteenth-century France are the subject of Anka Muhlstein's *The Pen and the Brush*. . . The subject is enormous, and might threaten to go off in every direction. What about photography? And book illustration? And sculpture? What about poets and pictures, both real and imaginary? Anka Muhlstein wisely limits herself to prose writers, and to five who speak to her most clearly: Balzac, Zola, Huysmans, Maupassant, and--a slight chronological cheat--Proust. The result is a personal, compact, intense book that provokes both much warm nodding and occasional friendly disagreement." --Julian Barnes, *NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*

Anka Muhlstein reminds us in *The Pen and the Brush*, her new study of the importance of art in the works of nineteenth-century French novelists, that for centuries the flow of inspiration ran in the opposite direction: Artists were more likely to find inspiration in literature -- including the Bible and mythology -- than the other way around." --BARNES AND NOBLE REVIEW

*The Pen and the Brush: How Passion for Art Shaped Nineteenth-Century French Novels*, Goncourt-winning biographer Anka Muhlstein continues her intelligent literature/culture crossovers, looking this time at how a wellspring of publicly displayed art and the contemporary art scene and its ideals influenced the French literary masters' works, making art and artists the subject of books but also allowing them to inject new literary techniques into their work. These books may sound erudite and perhaps too specialized to interest even devoted fans of Balzac or Proust, but Muhlstein treats these explorations more as pleasant and intelligent conversation over tea. A kind of cozy scholarship. It's clear that Muhlstein loves these works of art, and she's devoted a lot of time to looking at their details. She's found fascinating and comfortable ways to share this gift with her readers." --THE MOOKS AND GRIPES

Art, like drink and romance, has preoccupied novelists for a long time. And *The Pen and the Brush: How Passion for Art Shaped Nineteenth-Century French Novels* (Other Press) Anka Muhlstein looks at a period when the art and literary worlds mixed their ink to great effect. . . This expertly researched volume ably illustrates the fruitfulness of such shared visions." --Christian House, *ART AGENCY PARTNERS, SOTHEBY'S SUBSIDIARY*

Endlessly enjoyable. . . It may take a certain courage to offer the 21st-century reading public a compact cultural history of 19th-century France, seen through its major writers and painters and the currents which washed and swirled between them. This is not mainstream. Muhlstein, however, is a confident guide." --GUARDIAN

At the end of her literary history book, *The Pen and The Brush: How Passion for Art Shaped Nineteenth-Century French Novels*, Anka Muhlstein quotes Virginia Woolf:

Were all modern paintings to be destroyed, a critic of the 25th century would be able to deduce from the works of Marcel Proust alone the existence of Matisse, Cezanne, Derain and Picasso. Muhlstein's book explores the points of convergence between 19th- and early 20th-century French novels and Impressionist paintings, among others, along with the surprising links between the communities of artists who created these works. She uncovers layers of painterly erudition beneath Proust's hyper-sensory prose, leading us expertly to Woolf's staggering claim; Muhlstein's book is a potent study of how a common set of observational skills rest at the foundation of art and literature.

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN: Essayist, biographer, historian, cultural commentator, Anka Muhlstein stands at the juncture of French culture and the Anglo-Saxon world. There is about her French an unfussy directness that is unusual for erudite and engaging prose. She knows how to tell a story; her passion for her subject, along with a redoubtable mastery of the historical particulars, move things along in this short, pithy book.

NEWSDAY: In The Pen and the Brush, the versatile biographer Anka Muhlstein explores some of the complex and fascinating relationships that have existed between painters and novelists. . . A riveting tale. She provides closeups of writers who rubbed shoulders with painters, and she also pulls back, looks at the big historical picture, and traces the shifts from naturalism to impressionism and cubism, and from the French Revolution to the start of the 20th century. . . The Pen and the Brush should appeal to devotees of 19th century French fiction and art. . . museum lovers. The illustrations from works by Cezanne, Delacroix, Manet, and Whistler provide The Pen and the Brush with added pizzazz that's hard to resist.

NEW YORK JOURNAL OF BOOKS: Anka Muhlstein's book charts the curious intersection of cultures that would ultimately result in both the modern novel and modern art. . . Informed and intelligent. . . Muhlstein's book is an elegant and probing look at this concatenation of reciprocal exchange and creative osmosis.

CATHOLIC HERALD (UK): Scholarly but highly readable. . . An insightful examination of a reciprocal dynamic that occurred between writers and artists in 19th-century Paris that very likely is responsible for the visual images you get in the best of today's fiction. Thoroughly researched, richly written and fascinating.

NJ.COM: With personable prose and erudition, Muhlstein (Monsieur Proust's Library) reveals seemingly all there is to know about the relationship between 19th-century French novels and painting. . . Muhlstein's extensive knowledge of art and literature make for a fascinating, instructive, and absorbing read.

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY: An enlightening exploration of the symbiotic relationship between art and literature.

KIRKUS REVIEWS: It's no secret that some of the prominent 19th-century French writers were fanatical about art and artists. Muhlstein probes the connection between author and artist by focusing on five writers: Honore de Balzac, Emile Zola, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Guy de Maupassant, and Marcel Proust, to consider the roles of painters and paintings in each of their stories. . . Readers interested in the history of art and literature will enjoy this crossover. Examining how these authors interpreted the art world provides new insight into 19th-century French culture.

LIBRARY JOURNAL, \*STARRED REVIEW: In the culminating chapter of The Pen and the Brush, Anka Muhlstein cites the painter Turner's credo to "draw what I see and not what I know is there." Her book is itself a demonstration of dazzlingly original critical insight. The freshness of her readings of Balzac, Zola, Huysmans, Maupassant, and Proust in relation to nineteenth-century painting is only heightened by the erudition she brings to the project and the clear, jargon-free language of her writing.

Janet Malcolm, author of Forty-one False Starts: Essays on Artists and Writers: In a brilliant examination of the work of Balzac, Zola, Huysmans, Maupassant, and Proust, Anka Muhlstein brings to light the many forms of reciprocal exchange among them and their painter friends, both thematic and stylistic, that resulted in a highly original form of pictorial writing—a phenomenon intrinsically tied to its time and place. Her illuminating analysis and deft weaving together of literature and art in The Pen and the Brush are sure to change the way we read the nineteenth-century French novel.

Susan Grace Galassi, senior curator of the Frick Collection: In nine admirably concise and evocative chapters, Anka Muhlstein surveys a major theme in nineteenth-century cultural history: the relationship between modern novelists and modern painters. Her heroes are Balzac, Zola, and Proust, and she offers insights into the different ways in which each writer engaged with the art and artists of his time. One of the chief pleasures of this book is the diversity and precision of Muhlstein's literary selections and visual references: she spurs the reader to return to familiar texts as well as to discover new ones.

Colin B. Bailey, director of the Morgan Library Museum: A well-crafted reminder of how in the nineteenth century writing and painting coalesced, like sea and sky. So Balzac and Delacroix, Zola and Manet, Maupassant and Courbet, and especially Proust with his writer Bergotte and painter Elstir: for French writers, artists were "essential to the plot." For a writer the task was ultimately how to see, and to see not just one world but many.

Anthony Bailey, author of Vermeer: A View of Delft: Anka Muhlstein knows and loves nineteenth-century French painting with a passion, and this she pours into her study of writers who made painting a principal optic for viewing the world. The Pen and the Brush is both lively and enlivening.

Peter Brooks, author of Henry James Goes to Paris: About the Author: Anka Muhlstein was born in Paris in 1935. Muhlstein has published biographies of Queen Victoria, James de Rothschild, Cavalier de La Salle, and Astolphe de Custine; studies on Catherine de Medici, Marie de Medici, and

Anne of Austria; a double biography, Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart; and most recently, Balzac's Omelette and Monsieur Proust's Library (Other Press). She has won two prizes from the Académie française and the Goncourt Prize for Biography. She and her husband, Louis Begley, have written a book on Venice, Venice for Lovers. They live in New York City. Adriana Hunter studied French and Drama at the University of London. She has translated more than fifty books including Couple Mechanics, The Travels of Daniel Ascher, Balzac's Omelette, and Electrico W (winner of the French-American Foundation's 2013 Translation Prize in Fiction). She won the 2011 Scott Moncrieff Prize, and her work has been shortlisted twice for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. She lives in Norfolk, England.