

“Like Water for Paris : Lucien Biart’s *Autour de La Fontaine* (1890)”

Late in his life, Lucien Biart (1828-1897)—one of the notable nineteenth-century French writers of works destined for children and youth—published *Autour de La Fontaine*, an illustrated book meant for youth. Typical of the author’s varied oeuvre, this volume combines educational travel literature with cultural, literary, and natural history, all the while incorporating vivid, sometimes violent dramatic tales connecting the distant past to more recent events. Water is omnipresent throughout the book, as the author goes about linking France’s famous fabulist Jean de La Fontaine, i.e., “the fountain,” as a figurative source akin to the great nineteenth-century aqueducts built to supply the burgeoning population of Paris, waters arising in lands that suffered greatly during the devastation invasion of France by Prussian forces in 1878. Exploring these links and connecting *Autour de La Fontaine* with other works by Biart, this presentation will seek to revive interest in a forgotten, yet interesting text that seeks to provide its own refreshing waters.