Heartsick: The Language of French Disgust

Hannah Freed-Thall

Abstract The rhetoric of revulsion has shaped French cultural modernity. This essay examines salient forms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century French literary disgust, then turns to *écœurement* (heartsickness) as a contemporary case study. *Écœurement* is key to the work of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy and the novelist and playwright Marie NDiaye. These thinkers embrace heartsickness as a state of exposure that unsettles discourses of philosophical mastery and practices of social refinement. The essay thus shows that the language of disgust is not necessarily reactionary and nostalgic—as has often been argued—but can enable new forms of collective resistance and attachment.

Keywords disgust, feeling, French literature, Jean-Luc Nancy, Marie NDiaye

The rhetoric of revulsion has shaped French cultural modernity. A rich lexicon of disgust has been central to French thought for at least two centuries: consider the force of concepts such as "spleen," "nausea," "formless" (*informe*), and "abjection," to name but the most familiar. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century French literary disgust is polymorphous, its privileged objects ranging from a toddler's tears to a colonial diamond and from a rotting carcass to an aesthete's enthusiastic slobber. In this essay I examine some of the affect's most salient forms and then turn to *écœurement* (heartsickness) as a case study. My argument is that this particular modality of disgust challenges the universalist logic of cultural assimilation, inviting reflection on how, as Jean-Luc Nancy (2002: 9) puts it, "strangeness and strangerness become ordinary, everyday occurrences" in a global age. *Écœurement* is not a gatekeeper or a

I am grateful to Annabel L. Kim and Sarah Ann Wells for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

Modern Language Quarterly 79:4 (December 2018)
DOI 10.1215/00267929-7103422 © 2018 by University of Washington

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

border-policing feeling. Instead, it registers the shared vulnerability and exposure—the sense of unremitting finitude—that characterize life in the present.

Theorists have described disgust as a "defense reaction": an exceptionally strong sensation that unambiguously says "no!"—or even indicates "an inability *not* to say no" (Kolnai 2004: 30; Menninghaus 2003: 2).[1] Yet French disgust compels not simply aversion but strange new forms of attachment. Disgust poses the problem of how to read a problematic object—a thing that cannot be assimilated or appropriated. It draws our attention to margins, leftovers, and outliers in systems of value production. As a feature of literary texts, disgust has performative force: it pulls us close, demands our attention, intensifies our sense of mortal, embodied being.

In her compelling study of "ugly feelings" in American literature and film, Sianne Ngai (2005: 332) suggests that disgust is surprisingly undertheorized, lacking even associated keywords. In France, however, this is not the case. Any culture that emphasizes the cultivation of taste, with its practiced control of speech and body, is bound to give special weight to disgust.[2] This idea is implicit in the work of Norbert Elias, whose 1939 book, *The Civilizing Process*, explores the intimate relation between refinement and revulsion. Drawing on Freud's theory of civilization as a process of repressing human animality, Elias (1997) notes that the early modern invention of the fork and the handkerchief—instruments of "civilité"—indicates a general lowering of disgust's sensitivity threshold, a desire for a more distanced relation to bodies. Pushing this argument farther, Pierre Bourdieu (1984: 56; 1979: 60) argues that taste is a negative phenomenon, based more on aversion than on attraction. The true content of bourgeois "distinction," according to Bourdieu, is disgust for the bad taste of everyone else. As he puts it, "Tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick-making' [*c'est à vomir*]) of the tastes of others." Disgust, for Elias and Bourdieu, is not an innate sensation but a cultivated force of social classification.

[1] See also Ngai 2005: 335 on disgust's "strong and unmistakable signal" in contrast to desire's noisiness and amorphousness.

[2] For an account of how France became a global arbiter in matters of taste and style, see DeJean 2005. On modern French literature's preoccupation with taste—especially bad taste—see Freed-Thall 2015.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

The *dégoût* inherent in cultural distinction is in fact only one of various French disgusts, albeit a particularly formative one. Indeed, it is difficult to find a modern French thinker for whom disgust is *not* a key structure of feeling. Compare, for example, the carefully managed "disgust at vulgarity" (Bourdieu 1984: 499) implicit in the performance of distinction to the more violent revulsion formalized by the historical avant-garde, which repudiates precisely such bourgeois respectability. And if avant-garde works flaunt their bad taste—think of Marcel Duchamp's upside-down urinal, Georges Bataille's formless gob of spit, Piero Manzoni's cans of "artist's shit"—many French-language authors and artists explore more ambiguous and subtle forms of repugnance.

A list of key nineteenth- and twentieth-century French disgust scenes might include the following: the "pension smell" that opens Honoré de Balzac's *Père Goriot* (1835), a nauseating atmosphere produced by the effluvia of innumerable nostrils; the bats, spiders, and worms of Baudelairean "spleen," as well as this poet's luxurious depiction of roadside carrion in "A Carcass" ("Une charogne," 1857), a poem that figuratively hazes its readers, daring us to enjoy the aestheticization and eroticization of rot; the scandal, in Gustave Flaubert, of Emma Bovary's multichapter agony, capped by her inky postmortem vomit (1857); the revolting refinement of Des Esseintes's beef broth enema in Joris-Karl Huysmans's *Against the Grain* (*À rebours*, 1884); Madame de Cambremer's Chopin-induced ecstasy, which causes her to salivate like an animal in heat in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*, 1913–27), her abject body grotesquely mirroring the narrator's own exaggerated aestheticism; the sliced eyeball that opens Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel's film *Un chien andalou* (1929), never failing to make my students cringe and gasp; the perception of irreducible contingency that Jean-Paul Sartre calls "nausea" (1938); and the *jouissance*-provoking process of self-production as other-expulsion that Julia Kristeva terms "abjection" (1980), to name only some of the most striking instances.

Twentieth-century French disgust pivots on the *crachat* (gob of spit), which flashes up in literature and philosophy like a Rorschach test. Although the word dates to the seventeenth century, the *crachat* took on philosophical weight only in 1929, when Bataille (1970: 382) named it the emblem of formlessness, or the *informe*.[3] A few years later, in

[3] On the entropic force of the *informe* in modernism, see Bois and Krauss 1997.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Louis-Ferdinand Céline's spittle-streaked lyrical rant novel, *Journey to the End of the Night* (*Voyage au bout de la nuit*, 1932), Bardamu fears being tossed off the *Admiral Bragueton* "like a gob of spit" (Céline 2006: 97). In Jean Genet's memoir, *The Thief's Journal* (*Journal du voleur*, 1949), the *crachat* becomes a figure of deviant beauty and erotic defilement: the narrator's lust is aroused by the "unctuousness" of Stilitano's spittle, "thick as a white worm" (Genet 1964: 17, 40). The *crachat* has resurfaced recently in the work of Édouard Louis, whose best-selling 2014 novel, *The End of Eddy* (*En finir avec Eddy Bellegueule*), contains many disgusting episodes, none more stomach-turning than the one in which the gay protagonist is spat on by bullies and then forced to lick their "greenish" loogies off his collar (Louis 2017: 138). Elaine Scarry (1999: 44) argues that the flower, with its small, diaphanous forms, is the most effortlessly imaginable of aesthetic objects. Flowers simply "come forward" in the mind's eye, Scarry suggests. But perhaps one could make this case for the *crachat*, whose slimy phenomenality has haunted me since I read Louis's novel. (The particular horror of the *crachat*, however, is that one does not so much envision as taste it.)

As these examples demonstrate, disgusting texts tend to bring us back to the body—with its orifices, its odors, its cycles of transformation and decay. Base corporeality is nothing new in French literature—consider François Rabelais's hilarious list of potential "ass-wipes" in *Gargantua* or Michel de Montaigne's philosophical discussion of his kidney stones—but in the post-Cartesian, postrevolutionary age, the porous, mortal body is neither bawdy and carnivalesque nor the object of an edifying humanism. Its decay—now described in the utmost detail—is irreversible, unredeemable. The universe of modern disgust is one in which afterbirth has replaced afterlife, uncontainable corporeal effusions have supplanted body-soul dichotomies, and rubbish—"the molecular crush of already mingled matter" (Yaeger 2008: 323)—has eclipsed nature.[4]

This rising tide of revulsion marked ordinary speech as well as literature. The *Dictionnaire vivant de la langue française* shows that the word *dégoût* attained its height of (written) popularity in 1850, as did

[4] On the intimacy between rubbish and art in the nineteenth century, see Rovee 2008. On the nineteenth-century preoccupation with "effluvia" and "miasma," see Lacqueur 2015: 230, 237; and Corbin 1982. On the omnipresent, invisible force of toxicity in contemporary life, see Alaimo 2016; Buell 1998; Chen 2012; and Nixon 2011.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

infect (foul) and *nauséabond* (putrid). The related terms *écœurer/écœurant* (sicken, sickening), *pourri* (rotten), *répugnant*, *nausée*, and *dégueulasse* (an adjective derived from the slang term for "vomit," *dégueuler*) also began to circulate in force at this time, peaking in usage by the twentieth century.[5] By comparison, *colère* and *tristesse* (anger and sadness) both peaked in 1800; *honte* (shame) has steadily declined since 1600. Disgust—in all its variety—took hold of the French language in the nineteenth century, becoming a pervasive aspect of everyday life and a force generative of aesthetic forms.

Such lexicographic and literary evidence presents disgust as a historically shifting, socially contoured, polysemous set of discourses. This view can be contrasted to a strain of contemporary social science that understands disgust as innate and immutable, a universal response to a predictable set of objects and situations. For instance, a widely referenced "Disgust Scale" (Haidt, McCauley, and Rozin 1994: 701) frames the feeling in psychobiologizing terms, as a physiological, evolutionary response to dangerous objects, a "defense against the recognition of human animality" without historical or cultural variance.[6] The Disgust Scale asks test subjects to respond to a set of thirty-two statements (or twenty-five in the revised version), for example: "It bothers me to see someone in a restaurant eating messy food with his fingers"; "It would bother me to see a rat run across my path in a park"; "I think homosexual activities are immoral"; and "A friend offers you a piece of chocolate shaped like dog-doo." For each scenario, the test subject selects either true/false or one of three responses: "not disgusting," "slightly disgusting," or "very disgusting" (706–7). Martha C. Nussbaum (2004: 13) contends that one particularity of disgust is its propensity to be "normatively

[5] The popularity of *écœurer* and its variants, along with *pourri*, peaked in 1900; that of *nausée* and *répugnant*, by the mid-twentieth century. *Dégueulasse* has risen in popularity since 1950 (dvlf.uchicago.edu, accessed February 20, 2018). The *Dictionnaire vivant de la langue française*, an ARTFL project, compiles definitions from Jean Nicot's *Thresor de la langue françoyse*, Jean-François Féraud's *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française*, the various editions of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, Émile Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, the *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, and *Bob, dictionnaire d'argot*.

[6] The Disgust Scale or its revised version (the DS-R) has been translated into many languages, including Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Persian, Spanish, and Swedish (people.stern.nyu.edu/jhaidt/disgustscale.html, accessed March 8, 2018).

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

distorted." The Disgust Scale, with its cultural bias, its attempt to eliminate all ambivalence and ambiguity, and its unconcern for how the discourses of disgust shape the feeling itself, is complicit with such distortion.[7] As historians of emotion have argued, feelings register uneven distributions of power; they cannot be thought outside the dynamic social frameworks that make them legible (and that they shape).[8]

One conclusion that the Disgust Scale authors draw is that pathogen avoidance is closely linked to moral disgust, such that a heightened sensitivity to perceived contamination correlates to a conservative political orientation.[9] This claim cannot account for the subtleties of French literary disgust, but it would be difficult to deny this feeling's centrality to everyday moral discourse (Miller 1997: xi). Because disgust calls our attention to borders and limits, to problems of inclusion and exclusion, various thinkers have allied it with questions of power and authority. If dirt, as Mary Douglas (2003: 36) puts it, is "matter out of place," disgust, as the sensory-cognitive perception of the dirty, becomes prominent in situations with "ambiguous hierarchies" (Menninghaus 2003: 4). In the absence of fixed social borders, disgust can pull individuals into a community, enabling a "strange kind of sociability" (Ngai 2005: 336).[10]

[7] Nussbaum's account of disgust as a politically irrational, antiliberal feeling might be considered another example of "normative distortion." In her critique of the importance of disgust to conservative legal thought, Nussbaum (2004: 14), like the Disgust Scale authors, reduces this polymorphous feeling to a simple "no," an expression of "loathing" for human animality and mortality. She also implicitly presents liberal tolerance as disgust's ethical alternative. For a critical take on the politics of "tolerance," see Brown 2006: 7. Brown argues that tolerance masquerades as a "universal value" and an "impartial practice" but is in fact a discourse of power, functioning both as a "domestic discourse of ethnic, racial, and sexual regulation" and as an "international discourse of Western supremacy and imperialism." Ngai (2005: 339) also offers a critique of tolerance, which she sees as a veil for contempt. While disgust views its object as dangerous, contempt understands it as "safely ignorable."

[8] On the notion that emotion is historically shaped and determined by discourse, see Reddy 2001. Reddy argues that emotional utterances, or "emotives," do not simply describe affective states but bring them into being. Drawing on this theory, Joanna Bourke (2003: 113) proposes that the history of emotion be approached as "a language-game that follows generic and narrative conventions." "Emotion-rules," Bourke contends, are "encoded in grammars of representation."

[9] See Haidt, McCauley, and Rozin 2018: 826–27 for an overview of research correlating disgust sensitivity to political conservatism.

[10] On disgust-bound community as a "corrective to the solipsizing allures of contemporary life," see Hauser 2016: 159. On the "mutuality" of moral disgust, or contempt, as a hallmark of pluralistic democracy, see Miller 1997: 234.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Such sociability has a noxious side, familiar to readers of modern French literature, in which disgust is often indissociable from misogyny and fear of the feminine. Thus Baudelaire's lyricized roadside carcass—stiff and stinky with its legs in the air, erotically feminized yet figured as too revolting for the poet's female companion to contemplate—indicates the tenor of much nineteenth-century literary disgust. In his early phenomenological account of the feeling, Aurel Kolnai (2004: 100) places "some disgusting insects" and "a dressed-up harlot" on the same level, as objects that provoke disgust even though they are only "moderately" ugly. Sartrean nausea is similarly organized around the feminine, although now allied with the very opposite of facticity and masquerade (Kolnai's "dressed-up harlot"): what nauseates in Sartre's (1964: 127) novel is the unbearable, implicitly feminized materiality of things, the world stripped bare of meaning and exposed in all its "frightful, obscene nakedness."[11] In a variation on this misogynist tradition, Winfried Menninghaus (2003: 7–8) asserts that in both French and German thought the quintessential object of literary and philosophical disgust is the *vetula*—the "disgusting old woman." For her part, Kristeva (1982: 3; 1980: 11) also underscores the gendered implications of *abjection*, but she complicates the picture by making childbirth central to her theory of subject formation. Taking the laboring woman's point of view, Kristeva figures abjection as a primary scene of expulsion that turns the subject inside out: "I give birth to myself [*j'accouche du moi*] amid the violence of sobs, of vomit."

As Kristeva shows, the French rhetoric of revulsion is not necessarily complicit with the repudiation of (feminine) alterity but can be mobilized to other ends. In modern French thought, disgust can never be reduced to a particular ideology or set of predetermined objects and reactions. It is a complex critical affect, and its aesthetic and political resonances can be unpredictable. Eugenie Brinkema (2014: 132) notes that disgust is a "structure in progress": it *moves*, staging the spectacle of form's slide into formlessness.[12] In its dynamism it has the capacity to

[11] On Sartre's feminization of the horror of nature, see Kritzman 2008.

[12] In approaching affect in the plural—in relation to a complex history of concepts rather than as a single, structure-defying force or intensity—I share Brinkema's (2014: xiv) insistence on the formal dimensions of feeling. As she puts it, "Affect is not the place where something immediate and automatic and resistant takes place outside of language." Rather, affect must be *read* in all its specificities.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

shake up congealed concepts. Drying her tears, the disgusted subject grimaces, recoils, groans, even erupts into laughter. What the Disgust Scale cannot capture is precisely this feeling's multifarious, slippery quality, its tendency to destabilize defensive borders as effectively as it erects them. Irony, after all, is a relative of disgust. As Roland Barthes (1970: 206) argues, irony functions as an emetic substance, a critical "vomitif" enabling a revolt against the "imperialism" of stereotypes, including those affirmed by the Disgust Scale.

If disgust can be described as a "structure in progress," this is because it is a present-focused emotion that registers the perception of an extremely *proximate* object. Although Immanuel Kant declared disgust the most unaesthetic of feelings—since the perceived closeness of the disgusting object ruins the distance necessary for mimesis—other thinkers have recognized disgust's orientation to sensory detail as "eminently aesthetic" (Kolnai 2004: 100).[13] Indeed, according to this view, disgust sensitizes the subject to the phenomenological qualities of things: caught in the throes of disgust, one becomes hyperconscious of an object's look, smell, taste, and "palpability" (78). This amplification of sensory phenomenality is a primary effect of the disgust that animates French aesthetic modernity. The major writers of this period activate the affect's captivating proximity effect, its capacity to jolt the reader into a state of high alert.

By virtue of its somatic intensity and the exaggerated nearness of its objects, disgust sometimes works as an affective circuit breaker, interrupting and rerouting sentimentalist idealism, exoticism, and nostalgia. Flaubert's disgust-laden representation of the act of weeping exemplifies this phenomenon. According to Anne Vincent-Buffault's (1986) persuasive account, late eighteenth-century works like Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia* represent tears as signs in a refined and highly pleasurable language of sentiment. Extrapolating from Vincent-Buffault's study, one notes that in mid-nineteenth-century literature the tear not only ceases to signify or invoke sympathy but appears as disgusting as any other bodily secretion. So in *Madame Bovary*, when little Berthe sheds "fat tears" (de grosses

[13] On disgust as a constitutive limit for Kantian aesthetic thought, see Derrida 1981.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

larmes), Emma contemplates her "ugly" daughter with distaste (Flaubert 2001: 178). Flaubert's antisentimentalist disgust rubs the reader's nose in the here and now, dilating the historical present and dispelling fantasies of an idealized, otherworldly then and there.

Just as realist disgust ruins sentimental idealization by collapsing the distance it depends on, some versions of this feeling in the twentieth century trouble revisionist attempts to forget the stains of past violence, to wash them away and begin again. We see this especially in the wave of literary and cinematic disgust that emerged at midcentury, during the era of decolonization and postwar reckoning. The rhetoric of revulsion is ambiguously oriented toward acts of collaboration and denunciation at the end of Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1960): Michel, denounced by his American lover to the police, dies after declaring either "It's really disgusting" (C'est vraiment dégueulasse) or "You're really disgusting" (Tu es vraiment dégueulasse). We cannot be certain who or what is the object of Michel's revulsion, and the last line of the film—the young American's query, "What is 'dégueulasse'?" (Qu'est-ce que c'est "dégueulasse"?)—underscores the viewer's own perplexity. Similarly, in Nathalie Sarraute's novel *The Planetarium* (1959), a conventional Balzacian inheritance plot is sullied by images of "a repugnant complicity" (une répugnante complicité): historically specific references to occupation and collaboration appear, unclaimed by anyone, with nauseating insistence.[14] In both Godard and Sarraute, the viewer or reader is left to search for a source that cannot be identified. We cannot escape the atmosphere of historical nausea that saturates the diegetic world, seeping out to sicken us as well.

The language of disgust facilitates more overt anticolonial critique in other twentieth-century works. Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (*Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, 1939), for example, depicts postslavery Martinique as an uninhabitable, ruined land, a place where even the sun "hacks and spits up its lungs" (toussote et crache ses poumons) (Césaire 2001: 19; 1987: 28). Marguerite Duras's *Sea Wall* (*Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, 1950) centers on an unlikely object of repugnance: a flawed diamond that the heroine cannot get rid of. Part of an undesirable suitor's colonial fortune, the diamond's imperfection

[14] For an expanded reading of historical disgust in Sarraute, see Freed-Thall 2006.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

("crapaud," also the word for "toad") registers the ugliness of colonial exploitation itself (Duras 1950: 159, 190, 201). And in Michael Haneke's film *Caché* (2005), the postcolonial repudiation of historical responsibility registers in tropes of contagion, with the global threat of avian flu the film's disconcerting backdrop. Each of these works presents the colonial system itself as the source of sickness or rot. In each case we cannot remain impartial or impassive but instead find ourselves drawn in close.[15]

Twentieth-century literary and cinematic disgust thus tends to appear historically anchored yet enigmatic, often unattached to any identifiable object. The second half of this essay explores one modality of objectless French disgust: *écœurement*, or heartsickness. The verb *écœurer* means both to disgust or make sick and to dishearten or discourage. Closely linked to the physiological phenomenon of indigestion, *écœurement* signifies a condition of bodily mixed-upness, ungroundedness, and exposure. A sort of late modern uncanny, milder and more diffuse than Sartrean nausea or Kristevan abjection, *écœurement* might be characterized as the most everyday kind of disgust. It is not horror in the face of the world's excessiveness but simply the unshakable feeling that one is oneself "matter out of place." Ngai (2005: 335) contends that, unlike other feelings, disgust does not confuse subject and object but "strengthens and polices this boundary." Yet *écœurement* indicates a vague, untethered state of revulsion. Indeed, it may qualify as a mood rather than an emotion: an ambient, "interpersonal and transpersonal" feeling state, an "openness or receptivity to the world . . . that is particularly hard to pinpoint" (Felski and Fraiman 2012: vii; Hemming 2012: 528).

The heart—central organ of the body, motor of circulation—bears an unusually heavy load of emotional connotations. It is the seat of interiority and affect—a figurative container for desire, will, moral sentiment, intuitive knowledge, even memory (as one can know something "by heart" [*par cœur*]). The heart, understood in this metaphorical sense,

[15] For a compelling account of the anticolonial aesthetics of "incommensurability" in Césaire, see Melas 2007. On Haneke's demand that spectators become aware of their own part in "multidirectional" historical responsibility, see Rothberg 2009. On complicity as a central problematic of postwar and postcolonial French literature, see Sanyal 2015. On the Algerian War as an unacknowledged "mutilation" that persists like "gangrene" in the French collective psyche, see Stora 1998.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

is the receptacle of deep inner life. But in French the heart is also weirdly enmeshed in the digestive system: a synonym of "stomach," it connotes the entire epigastric region. To express nausea in French, you say that you have a heartache (*avoir mal au cœur*), that you are disheartened (*écœuré*), or that you "have your heart in your throat" (literally, "have your heart at the edge of your lips": *avoir le cœur au bord des lèvres*). Something that nauseates is said to make the heart rise (*lever le cœur*), and to retch, gag, or dry-heave is to have a "lifted or raised heart" (*haut-le-cœur*).[16] If the *cœur* is the secret center of the person, what does it mean that it is so often and easily on one's lips—expropriated, exposed?

The verb *écœurer* dates to the seventeenth century, but it became a keyword in literature and in the press only in the mid-nineteenth century. A periodical devoted to the French language, *Le courrier de Vaugelas*, published a discussion of this word as a new slang term in 1874. *Écœurer* had saturated the lexicon, yet it apparently struck at least one reader as suspiciously working-class and foreign: "Forty years ago, the verb ÉCŒURER didn't yet exist in the vocabulary of the rabble; has this verb risen up from the kitchen and the vestibule to become French?" The editors responded to this letter by assuring the writer that *écœurer* was in fact "perfectly French" (français et bien français) (*Le courrier de Vaugelas* 1874: 106–7). By the end of the century the term was so familiar that the pedagogical newspaper *L'enseignement pratique* (1898: 224) included it on a list of verbs appropriate for a middle- or high-school *dictée*.

Écœurer was inaugurated aesthetically by Stéphane Mallarmé, whose 1863 poem "Les fenêtres" depicts a sick man gazing longingly out of a hospital window. "Les fenêtres" is rife with the language of disgust, which merges, in Baudelairean fashion, into the rhetoric of tedium, so that the "fetid incense" of the opening stanza wafts into an atmosphere that is "tired," "banal," and "bored." The poem lets us glimpse the ideal (figured here and elsewhere in Mallarmé as the "azure") only through a thick fog of "rot," "grime," "trash," and "vomit." The verb *écœurer* appears in the penultimate stanza: "But alas! This world is master: its haunting / comes to make me sick" (Mais, hélas! Ici-bas est maître: sa hantise / Vient m'écœurer) (Mallarmé 2012: 28–29; translation modified). *Hantise*

[16] Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, www.cnrtl.fr/definition/cœur (accessed February 26, 2018).

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

(haunting) might be understood, following Peter Manson's translation, as "obsessive fear." But in an older sense this word signifies the much more banal phenomenon of everyday frequentation: "commerce familier chez quelqu'un."[17] Heartsickness in Mallarmé thus names the subject's sense of untranscendable immanence, his capture by "this world"—the "ici-bas."

In 1874, the same year that the complaint about this foreign-sounding word appeared in *Le courrier de Vaugelas*, Paul Verlaine revised "Like City's Rain, My Heart" ("Il pleure dans mon cœur") and published it from his Belgian prison cell. This poem, which opens with an epigraph by Arthur Rimbaud, figures Verlaine's love for the younger poet in terms of heartsickness: "ce cœur qui s'écœure."[18] *Écœurement* thus appears in the nineteenth century as a condition of irremediable immanence (in Mallarmé) and as a queer state of objectless, endless mourning, a "deuil . . . sans raison" (in Verlaine). In both cases it indicates a dissent from the status quo—but a gentle dissent, scarcely distinguishable from fatigue.[19] The mode of queer resistance suggested by Verlaine's use of this term finds new resonance in Simone Weil's (1951) *La condition ouvrière*, in which *écœurement* is closely linked to the physical and mental fatigue of industrial labor. Weil's *écœurement* is a response not to earthboundedness per se (Mallarmé's "ici-bas") but to the experience of capitalist subordination. For Weil, heartsickness indicates a paradoxical state: it is at once the result of monotonous factory labor and the condition of immobility that prevents the subject from working, obstructing her instrumentalization, suspending her subsumption into the smooth flow of production.

[17] Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, www.cnrtl.fr/definition/hantise (accessed February 26, 2018).

[18] On the love affair between Verlaine and Rimbaud (and its unhappy aftermath), see Robb 2001. "Like City's Rain, My Heart" is Norman Shapiro's (1998) somewhat free translation of Verlaine's title. It is likely that Verlaine is also playing on a heart-centered poem by Rimbaud, "The Stolen Heart" ("Le cœur volé," 1871), which presents the heart as the object of mutilation and rape, a violent figuration that Tzvetan Todorov calls "sabotaged synecdoche" (quoted in Boym 1991: 102).

[19] Exemplifying this link between the heart's disturbance and the impossibility of taking action, Rimbaud's "Stolen Heart" concludes with the line "How should I act, o stolen heart?" (Comment agir, ô cœur volé?) (quoted in Boym 1991: 101–2).

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

The multilayered discourse of *écœurement*—a state of being disheartened, discouraged, heartsick, of having one's heart in one's throat or at the edge of one's lips—also emerges in significant ways in contemporary French thought. The remainder of this essay examines how this rhetoric shapes two important twenty-first-century works: Jean-Luc Nancy's essay *L'intrus* (2000) and Marie NDiaye's novel *My Cramped Heart* (*Mon cœur à l'étroit*, 2007).[20] This is, admittedly, an incongruous pairing. Nancy's philosophical essay, the object of much critical discussion, is an intimate rumination on the experience of undergoing a heart transplant, while NDiaye's novel, a Kafkaesque fairy tale about social stigma and failed assimilation, has received relatively little critical attention and has only very recently been translated into English.[21] And while Nancy's philosophical voice is unusually intimate, especially in this text, NDiaye, a virtuosic stylist who published her first novel at the age of seventeen, cultivates a certain distance from readers and audiences.[22] Yet both *L'intrus* and *My Cramped Heart* center on questions of community and belonging. Life in the present, according to Nancy and NDiaye, is characterized by a perpetual crisis of incorporation and expulsion. In Nancy, the heart itself—motor of the body, symbol of the soul, archetypal core of the self—becomes unassimilable and intolerable. In NDiaye, the protagonist and narrator—a distinguished middle-aged teacher named Nadia—finds that, like Gregor Samsa, Kafka's salesman turned insect, she herself is suddenly and inexplicably abject. Both works represent contemporary existence as saturated by a low-grade, unsublime form of disgust—a sensation of exposure and impropriety that has become the atmospheric condition of everyday life.

[20] Jordan Stump translates *Mon cœur à l'étroit* as *My Heart Hemmed In* (NDiaye 2017). In the present essay, however, all translations of NDiaye's novel are my own.

[21] This is not to say that NDiaye herself is unknown: she is a literary celebrity in France, thanks largely to having been awarded the nation's most prestigious literary prize, the Goncourt, in 2009. She has received many other prizes and honors, including that of being the only living woman to have a play in the repertoire of the Comédie-Française, and the English translation of her 2013 novel, *Ladivine*, was longlisted for the Booker Prize in 2016 (Asibong 2013: 12).

[22] As Andrew Asibong (2013: 3) puts it, NDiaye's works are powerful precisely insofar as they are replete with "zones of representational and affective impoverishment."

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Nancy's essay explores the strangeness that lurks within concepts of community and propriety: the philosopher's own heart transplant becomes an occasion to meditate on the Heideggerian problem—central to much of Nancy's oeuvre—of coexistence, or "being-with" (*Mitsein*). The essay opens with a plea to experience the intrusion of the strange:

> The intruder [*l'intrus*] enters by force, through surprise or ruse, in any case without the right and without having first been admitted. There must be something of the *intrus* in the stranger; otherwise, the stranger would lose its strangeness: if he already has the right to enter and remain, if he is awaited and received without any part of him being unexpected or unwelcome, he is no longer the *intrus*, nor is he any longer the stranger. (Nancy 2002: 1; brackets in translation)

Conceptualizing community as a being-with that never ceases to unsettle, Nancy affirms the improper and the intrusive. We are all strangers: instead of "naturalizing" ourselves, we endlessly break in. There is no escape from this condition of intrusion. To recognize this, we must abandon a certain liberal moral correctness, which would have us receive the other "by effacing his strangeness at the threshold" (Nancy 2002: 2). Holding fast to the nausea of incommensurability and displacement is difficult, Nancy admits: the *intrus* is "not easy to receive, nor, perhaps, to conceive" (2).

The figure of the stranger in Nancy is neither mystified nor romanticized. Instead, Nancy's intruder disturbs and vaguely disgusts. When he states that "the stranger insists, and breaks in," Nancy (2002: 2) echoes Kant's (2000: 155) depiction of disgust (*Ekel*) as a feeling distinguished by its special power to collapse distance: "In this singular sensation . . . the object is represented as [if] it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment while we strive against it with all our might." In their theories of disgust, Sartre and Kristeva similarly underscore the trope of intrusion.[23] Yet Nancy's version of disgust is unlike all previous accounts in the distance it takes from fantasies of purity and defilement. Liberated from the dialectic of desire and repulsion, it is not grounded in the pulsions of the erotic. Instead, it is closely linked to love.

[23] For Sartre (1964: 127), the subject of nausea perceives "soft, monstrous masses" that encroach scandalously on him. Likewise, Kristeva (1980: 9) highlights the way the abject "solicits" and "fascinates" our desire.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Love is not equivalent to desire in Nancy's thought. In "Shattered Love" ("L'amour en éclats") Nancy (1991: 90, 98) argues that desire has a dialectical structure and can be defined as a state of perpetual nonfulfillment or infinite unhappiness. But love—emblematized by the heart—is "a stranger to the dialectic." Nothing less than "finitude's dazzling presentation," love "fulfills nothing" and cannot be expressed in terms of contradiction, identity, or propriety. Love is what philosophy aims at but always misses, Nancy suggests: "The heart exposes the subject to everything that is not its dialectic and its mastery as a subject." In love, Nancy writes, something of the subject remains on the outside: it is "opened up, broken into."

Whereas love cuts and "dazzles" in this earlier text, *L'intrus* engages the heart's exposure via the language of disgust. The essay takes a sentence by Antonin Artaud as its epigraph: "There is nothing in fact more ignobly useless and superfluous than the organ called the heart, which is the vilest means that one could have invented for pumping life into me" (Nancy 2002: 1). Throughout the essay Nancy (2002: 3, translation modified; 2000: 16) plays with this rhetoric of heartsickness, as when he declares, "I had this heart in my throat, like an improper food . . . a sort of mild indigestion" (J'avais ce cœur au bord des lèvres, comme une nourriture impropre. Quelque chose d'un haut-le-cœur, mais en douceur) (ellipsis in translation). Susan Hanson's translation here does not quite capture Nancy's play on the rhyme linking the act of gagging or retching (*un haut-le-cœur*) with "sweetness" or "tenderness" (*en douceur*). Indeed, the entire essay seems to retch, tenderly. Nancy's wordplay weaves a web around the thing that the text never precisely addresses and cannot stop gaping at: the strangest of gifts, that uncanny specter of the living heart, cut from a body at the moment of death. Behind the syncope of this briefly stilled heart, we encounter another conceptual abyss: the image of the philosopher's own broken, useless heart, transformed from vital organ into waste matter. The original stranger or intruder in this text is not the other, still less the Other, but the *moi*.[24] For Nancy, then, disgust is not a reactionary feeling to be repressed. As a sense of unremitting strangeness, disorientation, and unmooring, it is the very core (*cœur*) of us.

[24] On Nancy's refusal to aggrandize otherness, see Palumbo-Liu 2002: 91.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

The problem of the heart is also central to NDiaye's novel. The protagonists of *My Cramped Heart* are two teachers named Nadia and Ange. Ascetically devoted to teaching, accustomed to the "esteem" of their students and colleagues, and attached to a life of "harmony" and "discretion," Nadia and Ange live in a tastefully furnished flat in a bourgeois neighborhood of Bordeaux. When the novel opens, however, something has already gone sour. The couple has become the object of an inexplicable revulsion: they have become intolerable to those who once respected them.

We never learn the reason for Nadia and Ange's sudden and dramatic abjection, but their stigma is literalized by a festering wound in Ange's side, a gash apparently inflicted by his own students. (One of the stranger scenes in this very strange novel occurs when Nadia finds strips of flesh—which may or may not be Ange's—pinned to the inside of her coat.) In a supernatural turn of events, Nadia's beloved city of Bordeaux becomes inhospitable to her: her house fills with hostile noises, the tram will not stop for her, she cannot use the hospital or the post office, and she gets lost trying to find her way home through thickly fogged streets that smell like the bad breath of the city itself.

My Cramped Heart is a novel about hospitality, about pedagogy, and about taste. Above all, it is an exploration of the symbolic violence—the revulsion—inherent in the construction of social distinction. Before she becomes abject, Nadia looks down her nose at everyone—from the poor students in her classroom to her electrician ex-husband and her humble immigrant parents (who she pretends have died). She is especially revolted by her neighbor, a certain stringy-bearded, dirty-fingernailed, lumpy, badly mannered Victor Noget, a famous writer whose last name sounds a lot like *nausée*. While Ange is agonizing in bed, Noget moves in with them and takes over the kitchen. The novel is obsessed with food and consumption, and things get really strange after Noget becomes head chef. He quickly fattens Nadia up with meaty, hyperbolically Gallic meals. Her sudden and extreme obesity is as mysterious as Ange's suppurating wound, and NDiaye leads us to suspect that the middle-aged Nadia may be demonically pregnant—through haute cuisine? Could she be literally possessed by butter and crème fraîche? With the nauseating odor of Ange's wound hanging over them, Noget tempts and enchants Nadia with *paupiettes aux champignons et à la crème*, osso bucco

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

made with specially raised veal, homemade marmelade and bread, and Bayonne ham. "La bonne chère," Noget calls it, using an old expression of hospitality, meaning a good meal or a welcoming face. But *chère* is also a homonym of *chair* (flesh), and it rhymes with the French word for "honey" or "sweetie": *cher* or *chéri* (which is what Nadia calls Ange). Just as she twists and reworks the language of heartsickness, NDiaye insists on the lexical intimacy between love and hunger, cherishing and devouring.

The descriptions of Ange's festering wound overlap with and infect descriptions of Noget's culinary concoctions. "Despite the handkerchief, the revolting odor makes me dizzy. I dip a compress in the disinfectant, then try to absorb the abundant pus that has spilled out over Ange's belly, over his trousers, soaking the mattress and the sheets. I have the impression that what I soak up is immediately replaced, gushing up slowly from the depths of the wound." When Nadia, discouraged, cries out, "But where is all that coming from," Noget exclaims, "His poor soul is festering! Dinner's served!" (C'est sa pauvre âme qui suppure! À table!) (NDiaye 2007: 108).

NDiaye's limpid and precise description of Ange's wound is unsettling. As Lydie Moudileno (1998: 449) notes, NDiaye writes in an "impeccable French," a French served up like a "masterfully executed dish." In her exhibition of linguistic virtuosity, her erudite dosing out of imperfect subjunctives, rare words, and syntactic complexities, it is as if, Moudileno suggests, NDiaye had assimilated the "dictionary of difficulties of the French language" (449). Clare Denis, who collaborated with NDiaye on the film *White Material*, has also spoken admiringly of the indigestible elegance that characterizes her style—a quality Denis describes as "an almost unbearable sweetness" (une douceur presque intenable) (Campion 2010). The reader of *My Cramped Heart* is thus a slightly uncomfortable dinner guest. As we masticate NDiaye's prose, we are not unlike Nadia after she moves in with her son, Ralph, and his probably cannibalistic gynecologist wife, Wilma, near the end of the novel. Hunting enthusiasts, they serve her meat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner: a complicated, chewy meat that just might be the flesh of Ralph's former wife, who is nowhere to be found.

Like Nancy, NDiaye plays on a variety of heart-based French expressions for nausea and bad feeling, and she spins out the language of *écœurement* to include other forms of affective rankness or rancidity, such

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

as *rancœur* (rancor) and its etymological cousin *rancune* (resentment). The heart crops up everywhere in this novel, frequently as a site of spoilage. Nadia must negotiate the "perversely changing heart" of her city (NDiaye 2007: 156). Fattened up on Noget's gourmet concoctions, she imagines her own heart encased in lard, and she feels the compassion of the local pharmacist to be "sticky," spreading like the "lacerated pocket of her pus-filled heart" (la poche percée de son cœur purulent) (28). Proximity to Ange's infected wound nauseates her, figuratively drawing her heart into her throat (au bord des lèvres) (171). NDiaye even presents the labor of refinement and bourgeoisification via the discourse of *écœurement*, as the work of "raising the heart" ([un] travail d'élévation du cœur) (201).

NDiaye, herself the daughter of a teacher, is interested in pedagogy—particularly bad pedagogy: awkward or violent classroom scenes, teachers who dislike their students, students who resent their teachers.[25] Pedagogy is also central to *My Cramped Heart*, and not only because its protagonists are teachers. The novel presents a narrative of *unlearning* in which Nadia must learn to relinquish her distinction. Distinction is above all the exhibited capacity to enjoy without hunger, to take pleasure in form but not function, to distance oneself from the contingencies of the body. Dirty teacher Noget compels Nadia to acknowledge her own appetite; he takes over her kitchen and cooks up such delectable meals that she is overcome with awareness of her own fleshy, animal being.

My Cramped Heart and *L'intrus* are both written in the present tense and in the first person. Both are about first-personhood—about the impropriety of the "I," its status not just as a linguistic shifter but as a sort of lump that cannot be swallowed. First-person utterance in NDiaye and

[25] NDiaye's novel *Un temps de saison* (1994) features an arrogant math teacher who mysteriously loses his family on summer vacation; *The Witch* (*La sorcière*, 1996) is an initiation narrative in which the initiates quickly surpass their mediocre teacher (who is also their mother). In the short story "All My Friends" ("Tous mes amis," 2004), a sadistic teacher hires his former student to clean his house and is outraged that she does not remember him (or pretends not to). In the novel *Rosie Carpe* (2001), academic failure launches Rosie into a job cleaning motel rooms, which leads to her making a pornographic film, during which she accidentally conceives a neglected and malnourished son who grows up to become—what else?—a resentful teacher. Michael Sheringham (2013: 97) argues that NDiaye, in her sinister representations of the schoolmaster, unsettles "one of the mythical edifices of the French Republic."

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Nancy seems to hover: like dirt, the "I" in these texts belongs nowhere. Gérard Genette (1972: 192; 1980: 172) proposes that free indirect discourse enables an author to speak the "disgusting and fascinating" (écœurant et fascinant) idiom of the other "without being wholly compromised or wholly innocent" (translation modified). Intensifying the oddness of the first-person point of view, peculiar chunks of italicized text are grafted into NDiaye's novel—a sort of free indirect discourse within first-person narration—as in the following imperative utterance, logically attached to Nadia but not explicitly attributed to her: "*My good heart, my good, faltering heart, keep beating bravely in the lard that imprisons you!*" (NDiaye 2007: 162). Like NDiaye, Nancy unsettles the "I," figuring it as a transplanted organ, a thing out of place. The "I" for him is "always foreign to the subject of its own utterance; necessarily intruding upon it, yet ineluctably its motor, shifter, or heart." In a state of *écœurement,* language itself becomes disoriented, the link shattered between subject and verb, the "empty identity" of the "I" laid bare (Nancy 2002: 2, 11).

To be here at all, both Nancy and NDiaye suggest, is to be *outside,* held open to one another. A heart transplant literalizes this phenomenon: in accepting the heart of a stranger, one is exposed in all senses: sliced open, stitched and scarred, then dosed with immunosuppressants to keep the body's defenses at bay. The act of heart transplantation exposes the limits of the imagination as well as of the body: it is simply unthinkable, Nancy tells us. In attempting to represent this act to himself, his mind encounters a sort of cavern. As soon as he is told that he needs a heart transplant, it is as if a void were already opening in his chest (Nancy 2002: 3).[26] Thinking about the transplant produces an "apnea" of the mind: all signs start to vacillate, all bearings and markers ("tous les signes," "tous les repères") begin to turn (Nancy 2000: 14).

In NDiaye, this facing up or exposure takes the form of Nadia's gradual renunciation of distinction. Early on she is incensed when Noget dares to sympathize with her. "Poor you, poor you," he croons, his eyes wet with tears of pity. Nadia is soon transformed into a sort of fairy-tale questing hero—but, like a patient on immunosuppressants, she is a hero with increasingly lowered defenses. She accepts one gift after another,

[26] On the importance for Nancy of the concept of *béance,* or gapingness, see Kamuf 2002: 41.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

each rendering her more dependent on the generosity of others: bandages from the pharmacist, meals from Noget, transportation from a stranger, lodging from her son, and hospitality from her parents, whose generosity she finally can accept with an open heart.

In Nancy and in NDiaye, disgust unsettles the performance of refinement, just as it troubles ideals of essence and origin. To be exposed in one's radical finitude, these authors show, is to affirm the shared *écœurement* of everyday life. NDiaye's novel is a study in inverse aesthetic pedagogy, a backward bildungsroman whose distinguished teacher-protagonist must grow down rather than up, unlearning the lessons of sophistication in order to recognize the vulnerability and hunger that good taste occludes. Nancy's essay, too, valorizes the relinquishing of mastery, revealing the philosopher's body (and being) in all its mortal susceptibility. Both texts invite concern for the condition of one who is hopelessly exposed and undone—but it is an odd and uneasy sympathy, never entirely distinguishable from disgust.

Modern French literature is patterned by a remarkable variety of nauseous and nauseating discourses. From Balzac to NDiaye, the French rhetoric of revulsion is allied with a diversity of objects (corpse, tear, *crachat*, diamond, heart) and with a spectrum of ideological positions, from misogynist loathing to subtle anti-imperialistic critique. Nussbaum (2004: 14) contends that the "thought-content" of disgust is always unreasonable and antidemocratic, "embodying magical ideas of contamination, and impossible aspirations to purity, immortality, and nonanimality."[27] Yet the disgust at the heart of modern French thought does not prop up such fantasies of transcendence. Instead, as the feeling tone of inescapable immanence, French disgust has a strange beauty, a disturbing appeal. It is the atmosphere proper to an irrecuperably impure world.

Hannah Freed-Thall is assistant professor of French literature, thought, and culture at New York University. She is author of *Spoiled Distinctions: Aesthetics and the Ordinary in French Modernism* (2015).

[27] Although Nussbaum (2004: 17) is unequivocably critical of disgust, her valorization of vulnerability and human animality, and her call for "discard[ing] . . . grandiose demands for omnipotence and completeness," resonates with the heartsick visions of NDiaye and Nancy.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

References

Alaimo, Stacy. 2016. *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Asibong, Andrew. 2013. *Marie NDiaye: Blankness and Recognition.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Barthes, Roland. 1970. *S/Z.* Paris: Seuil.

Bataille, Georges. 1970. *Oeuvres complètes.* Vol. 1. Paris: Gallimard.

Bois, Yves-Alain, and Rosalind Krauss. 1997. *Formless: A User's Guide.* New York: Zone.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement.* Paris: Minuit.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourke, Joanna. 2003. "Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History." *History Workshop Journal*, no. 55: 111–33.

Boym, Svetlana. 1991. *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brinkema, Eugenie. 2014. *The Forms of the Affects.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Brown, Wendy. 2006. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Buell, Lawrence. 1998. "Toxic Discourse." *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 3: 639–65.

Campion, Alexis. 2010. "La fièvre africaine d'Isabelle Huppert." *Journal du dimanche*, March 21, 2010; modified June 19, 2017. www.lejdd.fr/Culture/Cinema/La-fievre-africaine-d-Isabelle-Huppert-181006-3233273.

Céline, Louis-Ferdinand. 2006. *Journey to the End of the Night*, translated by Ralph Manheim. New York: New Directions.

Césaire, Aimé. 1987. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.* Paris: Présence Africaine.

Césaire, Aimé. 2001. *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, edited and translated by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Chen, Mel. 2012. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Corbin, Alain. 1982. *Le miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imagination sociale aux XVIIIè et XIXè siècles.* Paris: Aubier.

Le courrier de Vaugelas: Journal mi-mensuel consacré à la propagation de la langue Française. 1874. October 15. Gallica. gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5833733g.

DeJean, Joan. 2005. *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour.* New York: Free.

Derrida, Jacques. 1981. "Economimesis," translated by R. Kline. *diacritics* 11, no. 2: 3–25.

Douglas, Mary. 2003. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* Vol. 2 of *Collected Works.* London: Routledge.

Duras, Marguerite. 1950. *Un barrage contre le Pacifique.* Paris: Gallimard.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Elias, Norbert. 1997. *The Civilizing Process*, translated by Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Blackwell.

L'enseignement pratique: Journal pédagogique et scolaire. 1898. February 6. Gallica. gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5793322q?rk=21459;2.

Felski, Rita, and Susan Fraiman. 2012. "Introduction." *New Literary History* 43, no. 3: v–xii.

Flaubert, Gustave. 2001. *Madame Bovary*. Paris: Gallimard.

Freed-Thall, Hannah. 2006. "'Une Répugnante Complicité': Figuring History in *Le Planétarium*." *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 10, no. 2: 173–81.

Freed-Thall, Hannah. 2015. *Spoiled Distinctions: Aesthetics and the Ordinary in French Modernism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Genet, Jean. 1964. *The Thief's Journal*, translated by Bernard Frechtman. New York: Grove.

Genette, Gérard. 1972. *Figures III*. Paris: Seuil.

Genette, Gérard. 1980. *Narrative Discourse*, translated by Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Haidt, Jonathan, Clark McCauley, and Paul Rozin. 1994. "Individual Differences in Sensitivity to Disgust: A Scale Sampling Seven Domains of Disgust Elicitors." *Personality and Individual Differences* 16, no. 5: 701–13.

Haidt, Jonathan, Clark McCauley, and Paul Rozin. 2018. "Disgust." In *Handbook of Emotions*, 4th ed., edited by Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael Lewis, and Jeannette Haviland-Jones, 815–35. New York: Guilford.

Hauser, Heather. 2016. *Eco-sickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hemming, Clare. 2012. "In the Mood for Revolution." *New Literary History* 43, no. 3: 527–45.

Kamuf, Peggy. 2002. "Béance." *CR: New Centennial Review* 2, no. 3: 37–56.

Kant, Immanuel. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kolnai, Aurel. 2004. *On Disgust*, edited by Carolyn Korsmeyer and Barry Smith. Chicago: Open Court.

Kristeva, Julia. 1980. *Les pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection*. Paris: Seuil.

Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kritzman, Lawrence D. 2008. "Hauntological *Mater* and Sartre's Family Romance." In *Entre Hommes: French and Francophone Masculinities in Culture and Theory*, edited by Todd W. Reeser and Lewis C. Seifert, 179–206. Newark: University of Delaware Press.

Lacqueur, Thomas W. 2015. *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Louis, Édouard. 2017. *The End of Eddy*, translated by Michael Lucey. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Mallarmé, Stéphane. 2012. *The Poems in Verse*, translated by Peter Manson. Oxford, OH: Miami University Press.

Melas, Natalie. 2007. “The Gift of Belittling All Things: Catastrophic Miniaturization in Aimé Césaire and Simone Schwarz-Bart.” In *All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison*, 170–228. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Menninghaus, Winfried. 2003. *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, translated by Howard Eiland and Joel Golb. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Miller, William Ian. 1997. *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Moudileno, Lydie. 1998. “Délits, détours et affabulation: L’écriture de l’anathème dans *En famille* de Marie NDiaye.” *French Review* 71, no. 3: 442–53.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 1991. “Shattered Love.” In *The Inoperative Community*, translated by Peter Connor, 82–109. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2000. *L’intrus*. Paris: Galilée.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2002. *L’intrus*, translated by Susan Hanson. *CR: New Centennial Review* 2, no. 3: 1–14.

NDiaye, Marie. 2007. *Mon cœur à l’étroit*. Paris: Gallimard.

NDiaye, Marie. 2017. *My Heart Hemmed In*, translated by Jordan Stump. San Francisco: Two Lines.

Ngai, Sianne. 2005. *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha C. 2004. *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Palumbo-Liu, David. 2002. “The Operative Heart.” *CR: New Centennial Review* 2, no. 3: 87–108.

Reddy, William M. 2001. *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robb, Graham. 2001. *Rimbaud: A Biography*. New York: Norton.

Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Rovee, Christopher. 2008. “Trashing Keats.” *ELH* 75, no. 4: 993–1022.

Sanyal, Debarati. 2015. *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1964. *Nausea*, translated by Lloyd Alexander. New York: New Directions.

Scarry, Elaine. 1999. *Dreaming by the Book*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Shapiro, Norman. 1998. *One Hundred and One Poems by Paul Verlaine*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sheringham, Michael. 2013. “La figure de l’enseignant chez Marie NDiaye.” *L’esprit créateur* 53, no. 2: 97–110.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018

Stora, Benjamin. 1998. *La gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie*. Paris: Découverte.

Vincent-Buffault, Anne. 1986. *Histoire des larmes (XVIIIe–XIXe siècles)*. Marseille: Rivages.

Weil, Simone. 1951. *La condition ouvrière*. Paris: Gallimard.

Yaeger, Patricia. 2008. "Editor's Column: The Death of Nature and the Apotheosis of Trash; or, Rubbish Ecology." *PMLA* 123, no. 2: 321–39.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/modern-language-quarterly/article-pdf/546662/421freedthall.pdf
by NEW YORK UNIVERSITY user
on 05 November 2018