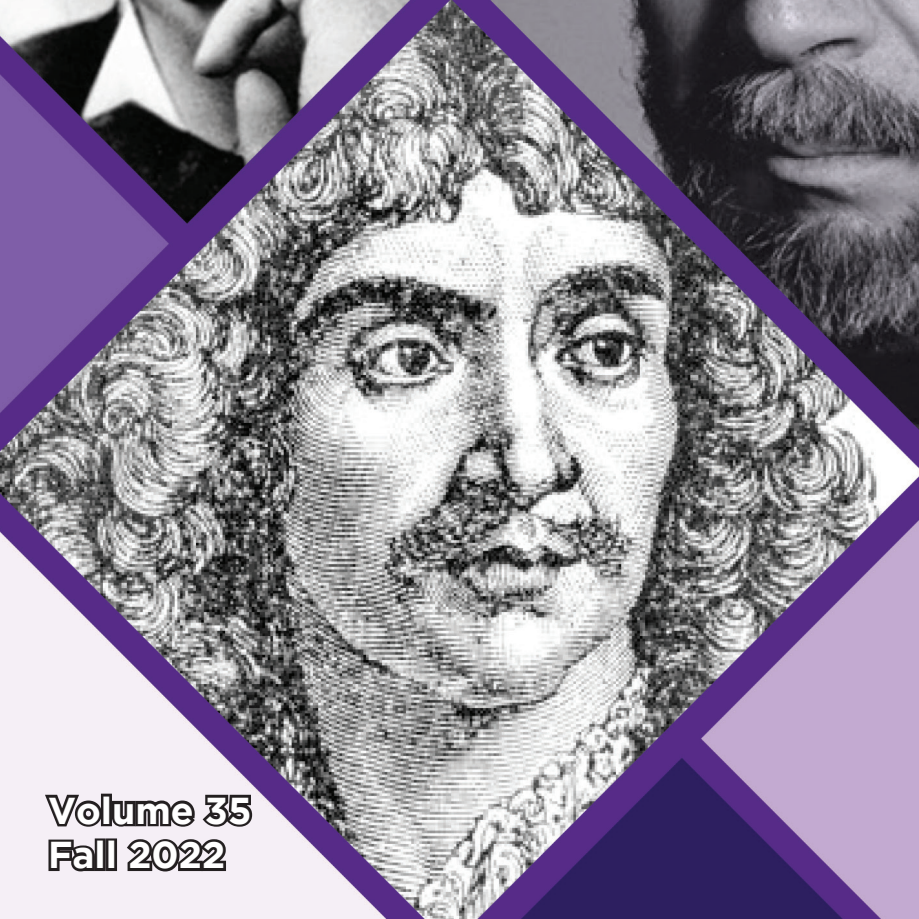


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Photo by Katherine Miller



The full return to in-person presence in fall 2022 went a long way to restoring a sense of community and intellectual engagement in the Department of French Literature, Thought and Culture. I begin with a note of personal thanks to students, staff and faculty for their *bonne volonté* in giving time and energy to revitalizing our curriculum and events programming; to François Noudelmann, Director of the Maison Française, for a superb cycle of academic and cultural events, and to my IFS colleagues for their renewed collaborative commitment as we plan future visits by distinguished faculty and organize a joint French/IFS conference at NYU Paris on Pierre Bourdieu. Scheduled to take place in June, it will double as an occasion to highlight the recently published *Dictionnaire Bourdieu* (under the direction of one of our regular VPs Gisèle Sapiro). We

were especially pleased this past semester to have philosopher Catherine Malabou as our Distinguished Visiting Professor and look forward to welcoming back Sorbonne Professor Romuald Fonkoua as our distinguished VP in spring 2023.

During the past semester the Graduate Studies Committee, expertly helmed by Hannah Freed-Thall, worked closely with the graduate students on ways to improve communication, mentoring, and revisions to the curriculum. We are especially grateful to graduate representative Catherine Behm who continues to serve on the committee and has been a constructive contributor to our discussions.

Additional thanks are due to John Moran for his invaluable work in organizing our highly-enrolled undergraduate language teaching program and for his role this year as Director of Undergraduate Studies, as well as to Jamie Root and Johann Voulot for representing Clinical Faculty concerns university-wide.

Our website continues to become a more active site of postings, department news and exchange. Please check it regularly for added features, including interviews with colleagues, visiting faculty and lecturers and commemorative tributes to great writers and critics, some of whom achieved special honors (as in the case of Annie Ernaux) and others whose passing we mourn (Bruno Latour).

The department is pleased to announce that two important searches in Francophone and Black Diaspora Studies are well-underway. We will be bringing candidates to campus for lectures and meetings throughout the spring term.

Events highlights in the fall included an “Emerging Scholars/Black Studies Lecture series that hosted speakers Axelle Karera on « The Secret Lives and Sacred Worlds of Anthropos » and Bénédicte Boisseron on “Black Ecology in a French Caribbean Context.”

The graduate students were especially active: kicking off with the conference “Bachelard Today: Toward a Post-Scientific Mind?” organized by Jeanne Etelain and Pierre Schwarzer. Another conference organized by Samuel Holmertz marked the centennial of Alain Robbe-Grillet. There was also a wonderful event honoring our colleague Denis Hollier (who retired in Spring 2022) organized by Simon Leser (we will publish the remarks offered by the speakers on our website later in the semester).

We were also very much inspired by an international colloquium titled “Fugitive Proust” organized by colleagues Hannah Freed-Thall and Zakir Paul. Its planning and topics were linked to their highly successful team-taught seminar on Proust.

The spring term promises to be equally busy. A highlight will be a performance of Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* in honor of the late Tom Bishop, who dedicated his professional life to putting NYU on the map as a Center of Excellence for French literature, thought and culture.

In other news, Emmanuelle Hernandez, our wise and much appreciated office administrator since 2012, decided to retire, acting on her wish to spend more time with family in France and to undertake “other adventures.” Her last day in the office (following a joyful toast crowded with well-wishers), was Feb. 3, 2023. Emmanuelle worked at NYU for fifteen years, the first five as an administrator at La Maison Française (2007-2012), and from July 2012, as supervisory administrator and budget specialist in our department. She left big shoes to fill but we have been lucky. Loreley Shortte, who like Emmanuelle is administratively talented and a native speaker of French, was offered and happily accepted the position. Congratulations and best wishes to both Emmanuelle and Loreley.

As we kick off the spring term in 2023, engaged in graduate recruitment and the hiring process in Francophone/Black Diaspora fields, I would be remiss if I did not mention that we continue to confront serious budget challenges. In addition to support for events that will keep the department’s intellectual programming and Visiting Faculty tradition alive and well, our major priority remains securing graduate summer funding as well as small grants for research and conference travel. If anyone reading this newsletter is inspired to help realize these goals, or would like to endow a graduate fellowship and/or dedicated research fund, please contact me directly and asap! Despite a difficult job market, our graduate students have done remarkably well in landing professional opportunities that include prestigious lectureship, post-docs and tenure-track teaching positions along with jobs in creative writing, publishing and translation. Keeping our department strong, diverse, and competitive in its graduate recruitment is crucial to maintaining its historic place in French studies in the US and worldwide.

As I write, we’re experiencing a ferocious arctic chill in New York City, but longer hours of afternoon light provide a steady lift, complementing an especially warm spirit of collegiality this term.

all my best,

Emily

Emily Apter

**Julius Silver Professor of French Literature, Thought and Culture
and of Comparative Literature**

Chair, Department of French Literature, Thought and Culture

It's a pleasure to report on the achievements of our brilliant graduate students, who are excelling in all sorts of ways, all across the globe. Here's a sampling:

Whitney Martin is spending ENS as a *pensionnaire étranger*;

Vitalie Cannone will do the same in the spring.

Sharif Mosaad and **Andrew Nsirim** are both currently GRI Fellows at NYU Paris.

Eirann Cohen is researching the figure of the *Jardin créole* in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and will be in Paris as a GRI fellow in the spring;

Anaïs Bouzou will be a GRI Fellow in Berlin this spring.



Chayma Drira was selected for a research residency at Villa Albertine in Chicago, was invited to participate in the “night of ideas” in Chicago and New York, and presented a paper at a graduate conference in Princeton last spring.

Samuel Holmertz received a conference grant last spring to present a paper (on the economy of risk in André Gide) at a colloquium in Turin, Italy. His article on Robbe-Grillet is forthcoming in a collection titled *Littératures du faux* (Peter Lang), and on November 17, he is organizing a colloquium for the centennial of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s birth at NYU’s Maison Française.

Anna Filipiak is writing her dissertation in Paris and now has only one remaining chapter to complete.

Last May **Emelyn Lih** presented on Claude Simon’s early novel *Le Palace* at a conference in Geneva, and then spent six weeks as a member of the GRI Summer Dissertation Workshop in London. She is now preparing an article to be published in the *Cahiers Claude Simon* and beginning the final chapter of her dissertation, on Annie Ernaux.

Arthur Ségard co-organized an online symposium, *Teratophilia: Transmedial Representations of Hybrid Sexualities*, completed a book chapter entitled “Circus Freaks and Pretty Monsters: Fighting and Reclaiming a Transphobic Stigma” in *Trans Identities in the French Media: Representation, Visibility, Recognition* (dir. Romain Chareyron), and presented papers at various events, including, most recently, at the NCFS and PAMLA conferences. Artur has also started a podcast on literature called *Intertexte*.

Laëtitia Deleuze, who is currently writing her dissertation with the support of the Beaujour Fellowship, has recently presented her research on Mauvignier, woundedness, and relationality at a number of conferences, including at the 2022 International Comparative Literature Association conference, the American Comparative Literature Association annual meeting, and the 20th/21st-century French & Francophone Studies International Colloquium. She has two essays on Mauvignier forthcoming in collected volumes: one in *L'Image incertaine: Pluralité de l'image dans l'oeuvre de Laurent Mauvignier* (Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2022), and one in *Forgetfulness* (Gdańsk University Press, 2022).

Camille Readman Prud'homme is receiving a good deal of recognition for her 2021 collection of poetry, *Quand je ne dis rien je pense encore*, which has now reached its eighth printing. The book was a finalist for the Prix Émile-Nelligan 2022, was shortlisted for the Grand Prix du Livre de Montréal 2022, won the Prix des libraires Poésie 2022 and received the Prix Alain-Granbois 2022, given by l'Académie des lettres du Québec. Currently *Quand je ne dis rien je pense encore* is being performed for the Festival international de littérature, and it will be adapted for the stage at the Quat'sous theater in Montreal in 2023. Following the success of this book, Camille will soon begin a collaboration with the literary radio show *Il restera toujours la culture*, broadcast on Radio-Canada première, and hosted by Émilie Perreault. As these news items demonstrate, our students are able to travel quite a bit during their time at NYU—indeed, this is one of the distinguishing marks of our program. In support of graduate student travel, the Graduate Studies Committee awards grants throughout the year; so far in 2022–23, awards have gone to Arthur Ségard, Camille Readman Prud'homme, Chayma Drira, Eirann Cohen, and Pierre Schwarzer to defray the costs of conference engagements, research trips, and travel to accept a literary prize.

Congratulations, finally, to the five stellar PhDs who recently defended their dissertations. **Emilie Alice Anceau** defended her dissertation on the question of poetic thought; **Terrence Cullen** defended his dissertation on musical notation and literary meaning in the long 13th century (and has accepted a postdoctoral lectureship in our department); **Jeff Fuller** defended his dissertation on “committed literature” (*littérature engagée*); **Emily O'Brock** defended her dissertation on the figure of the honeybee in medieval France (and has been appointed to a postdoctoral lectureship in our department); and **Emily Shuman** defended her dissertation on the aesthetics of French rap (and has accepted a job as Assistant Professor of Francophone Culture at Radboud University in the Netherlands). **Rachel Watson**, who defended her dissertation in 2021, began an appointment in fall 2022 as a visiting assistant professorship at Sarah Lawrence College.

We were fortunate to welcome two outstanding new students to the program in the fall of 2022: **Pierre-Louis Philipponnat** and **Étienne Miqueue**. I extend an enthusiastic welcome to them, and warm wishes to everyone in our graduate community.

Hannah Freed-Thall

I find it hard to express how happy I am to be able to sit without a mask in my office typing up this letter. I don't need to tell any of you about what a rough ride it has been over the past year; however, not only has our undergraduate program continued to succeed during these unpredictable times, attracting students and cultivating majors and minors from across our campus, but it has also continued to propose exciting new course offerings as well as a variety of engaging events for all levels of our student population. We currently have 151 minors (1 minor in Literature and Translation and 150 in French Studies) and 65 majors (7 in French & Linguistics, 8 in Romance Languages, and 49 in French), and despite the challenges of teaching and studying during the lingering pandemic, our numbers have remained healthy, with almost 900 students enrolled in our classes each semester, with the vast majority enrolled in our Language Programs courses.



Over the course of the current calendar year, we have offered a wide array of new courses, both topics courses and new permanent additions to our catalog. In spring of this year, NYU Ph.D. recipient and Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow María Sánchez-Reyes offered her course *Before and Beyond the Gender Binary*, an exploration of depictions of gender diversity in multiple medieval literary genres. That same semester, Clinical Faculty member Jennifer Gordon once again taught her topics course entitled *L'Apprenti gourmand*. The prerequisite for this popular class? In Jennifer's words, "votre meilleur français et votre appétit... pour le savoir." Adjunct Laurence Marie was once again at the helm of *Machines à écrire*, welcoming Simone Schwartz-Bart, Laurent Mauvignier and Patrick Chamoiseau, all in conversation with journalist and writer Laure Adler. Laurence is teaching the course again this semester, most recently welcoming Laure Adler in conversation with Jakuta Alikavazovic. Thanks to the concerted efforts of our Clinical Faculty, our Language Program offerings continued to grow and diversify, targeting additional student populations, as seen by Jonathan Cayer's teaching an advanced language course of his own design, *French for International Relations*, a course he will be teaching again this coming spring.

Over this past summer, then Graduate Student Adjunct and now Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow Terry Cullen taught his topics course entitled *Hearing France: Soundscapes of French Literature, Music and History*. This course was chosen among several courses proposed during our yearly competition to find a graduate-student-designed course. In his course, Terry focused on the sounds that have shaped French culture, delving into related questions of technology, politics, and perception. Terry will be teaching this course for us again this coming spring.

Currently this fall, Adjunct Martin Mégevand is teaching a course on Francophone Literature, exploring the contents of and the relationships between plays from Aimé Césaire, Kateb Yacine, and Edouard Glissant. In addition, Jonathan Cayer has developed and is now teaching a new topics course for us, *Littératures de voyage*, a course that explores all types of voyages, from the literary to the spiritual.

Along with having the chance to take advantage of these exciting new course offerings and our additional regularly popular courses, our undergraduate students continue to have many opportunities to get and to remain involved with members of the department. I am happy to say that some of our most dedicated undergraduates have been a driving force in creating some of those opportunities. The French Club is up and running, this year (AY 22-23) under the direction of co-presidents Aminata Dioume and Benjamin Blumen. They now run the Café et Conversation events at

la Maison Française, several of which took place in the spring and which they kicked off for this semester early in October with a very successful gathering. Be sure to follow them on Instagram at @frenchclub.nyu to keep up-to-date on their activities. We also held our regular semesterly and annual events – our Trivia Nights to publicize our upcoming classes as well as our spring Spotlight Event (the French Major Carnival) to get the word out about our majors and minors.

Thanks to the hard work of our Clinical Faculty member Anna-Caroline Prost, the Cinema Coordinator at the Maison Française, our students (and faculty!) were able to enjoy several cinema-focused events, including a masterclass with Arnaud Desplechin at the Maison Française and a screening of *l'Événement* at the IFC Theatre. In addition, our students were able to enjoy a screening and a Q&A at the Maison Française of Clinical Faculty member Jessamine Irwin's and her colleague Daniel Quintanilla's award-winning documentary *Le Carrefour*, a riveting exploration of past and present Maine immigrant communities who share a common bond: the French language. This fall, Anna-Caroline has been working with her students to organize and put on the annual Voices of Francophone Cinema festival this November.

It should come as no surprise that a rich, engaging, exciting program such as ours attracts some of NYU's very best and most accomplished students. Last spring we were able to meet at the Maison Française in person to induct 30 new members into our chapter of Pi Delta Phi, the National French Honor Society. In addition, at our annual French awards, which we were also able to bring back in an in-person format this past spring, we were proud to award the following eight departmental awards:

- The *Jindrich Zezula Prize*, recognizing the best honors thesis in French, was awarded to Abaigeal Heneghan, a double major in French and Politics, for her thesis "The Legality of Molière's *Tartuffe* from Louis XIV to the French Revolution."
- The *Prix d'Excellence*, given to the student with the highest level of achievement in French literature or culture, was awarded to Angela Ding, a French and Linguistics major.
- Jenny Choi, a double major in French and Comparative Literature, was awarded the *Prix Germaine Brée* for her significant contribution to French cultural life at NYU as a co president of the French Club.
- The *Prix Bernard Garniez*, which recognizes excellence in the study of French literature or culture, was awarded to Grace Symes, a double major in French and Journalism.
- Emma Svitil, a double major in French and Theatre, was awarded the *Prix France-Amérique* in recognition of her commitment to furthering and elucidating Franco-American relations.
- Matigan King, a double major in French and Journalism, was awarded the *Prix Paris* for her significant contribution as a student in the NYU-in-Paris program.
- Celia Pardillo-Lopez, a double major in French and Art History, was awarded the *Prix Michele Lapautre*, which recognizes the most promising sophomore or junior majoring in French. Celia is planning to spend the Spring 2023 semester at NYU Paris.
- Yujing Zhang was awarded the *Prix Spécial du Département* for exceptional contribution to the intellectual and social life of the department. In addition to serving as a co president of the French Club, Yujing placed in the Top 20 of the American Journal of French Studies 2020 national writing competition.

It has been inspiring to witness the resiliency of the members of our undergraduate program as we have made our way through such a difficult period, a period that continues to throw obstacles in our way and from which we are still emerging. However, our creative, dedicated instructors and our motivated, engaged students make for a powerful combination that will continue to allow our program to thrive as we face whatever challenges the new year has in store.

John Moran

UNE MORT A CONTRE-TEMP, UNE OEUVRE POUR L'AVENIR

PAR PATRICE MANIGLIER

PHILOSOPHE, MEMBRE DU COMITÉ DE RÉDACTION DES TEMPS MODERNES

(EXTRAITS)

Nous sommes et nous restons dans un *moment latourien*.

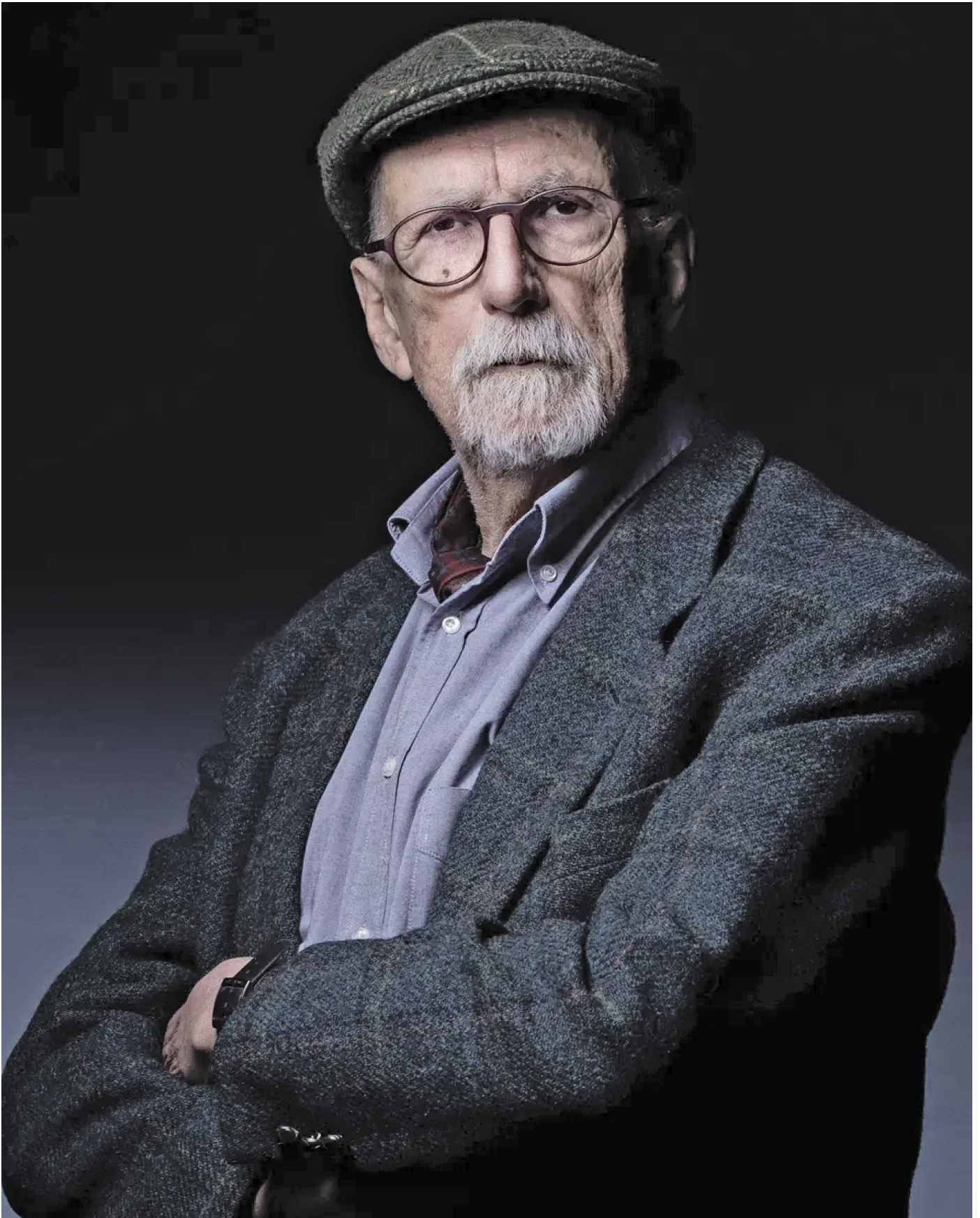
Je crois qu'il ne saurait y avoir de meilleure manière de rendre hommage à Bruno Latour, qu'en étant fidèle à son esprit, qui n'était pas de déploration sur notre sort ou de critique du monde tel qu'il va, mais bien de mobilisation collective dans le traitement de problèmes réels, qu'il s'agit de mieux déterminer afin de mieux les prendre en charge, non parce qu'on a quelque devoir abstrait envers ces problèmes, mais parce que la seule vraie joie vient de ce qu'on agit ses problèmes au lieu de les subir. Latour ne voulait pas qu'on chante des louanges de sa personne ou de son œuvre. Il voulait qu'on contribue, en parlant de lui, à traiter le problème qui littéralement le faisait vivre. Si nous sommes en deuil aujourd'hui collectivement, si nous devons ressentir la cruauté singulière de cette mort à contre-temps, c'est qu'elle nous prive d'un des alliés les plus précieux que nous ayons eus ces derniers temps pour faire face au grand défi civilisationnel qui est le nôtre aujourd'hui, et auquel il avait donné un nom précis : *faire atterrir la Modernité*.

(...)

L'originalité de Latour dans le champ intellectuel contemporain tient à ce qu'il n'a jamais cédé sur la conviction profonde que quelque chose avait bien eu lieu, mais qu'on ne savait pas le décrire. Le mot « modernité » est au fond pour lui plutôt le nom d'une question que d'une réponse. S'il est préférable à d'autres termes (capitalisme, anthropocène, industrialisme, technoscience, etc.), c'est qu'il est plus obscur, plus discutable, plus controversé, et nous oblige de ce fait à ne pas croire trop vite que nous avons compris la question. C'est aussi, que ce terme a tendance à bloquer de l'intérieur les descriptions correctes qu'on pourrait en donner. Pour une raison simple : « modernité » veut dire « qui s'impose si on veut être contemporain de sa propre histoire ».

C'est cette évidence du moderne que Latour n'a jamais cessé d'interroger. Qu'il y ait modernisation, cela est sans doute un fait, encore énigmatique. Mais qu'elle soit nécessaire, qu'elle soit une simple réponse à des besoins intrinsèques du cœur humain ou à des nécessités inévitables du « développement », voilà qui est une propagande, discutable d'un point de vue normatif, mais surtout inacceptable d'un point de vue descriptif, parce qu'elle nous empêche de décrire correctement cet événement en le rapportant à sa *contingence*. Nous n'avons jamais été modernes veut dire : il n'a jamais été nécessaire que nous le devenions.

Tel est le sens de l'expression que j'ai utilisée (bien qu'elle ne se trouve peut-être pas comme telle dans le texte de Latour) : *relativiser les modernes*. C'est-à-dire : décrire quel choix précis caractérise la modernité, en le contrastant avec d'autres, possibles aussi, consistants dans leur ordre, susceptibles, peut-être, de coexister avec celui-là. C'est ainsi qu'il faut comprendre son travail inaugural sur les sciences. La grande légende sur l'invention des sciences modernes consiste simplement à dire que des gens très intelligents et très libres intellectuellement (comme Galilée ou Newton) auraient trouvé les moyens de décrire la réalité telle qu'elle est sans nous laisser parasiter par nos préjugés ou nos superstitions.



Faire une anthropologie des sciences, comme Latour l'a proposé dans son premier livre, avec Steve Woolgar, *La vie de laboratoire*, publié pour la première fois en anglais en 1979, c'est mettre de côté cette légende pour décrire ce que font les scientifiques au travail. Et, surprise, on ne voit pas tant des gens qui tentent de se débarrasser de leurs préjugés pour faire face à la réalité nue, mais au contraire des gens qui dépensent beaucoup d'ingéniosité et d'énergie à produire des réalités d'un genre très spécifique, très particulier : des objets et des faits scientifiques. La formule moléculaire de l'hormone que cherchait à identifier le professeur Guillemin dans le laboratoire où Latour a fait son premier terrain d'ethnographie des modernes est une entité d'un genre tout à fait différent des esprits d'abeilles qui est « instauré » par les pratiques du shaman amazonien Davi Kopenawa. Il n'est pas plus réel, mais autrement réel. Cette différence lui donne certainement une prise sur le monde que nulle autre ne peut donner, lui permet éventuellement de faire alliance avec plus d'intérêts de toutes sortes et donc d'acquérir puissance et autorité, mais pas avec tous les intérêts cependant, et donc au prix d'un choix, d'une sélection, parfois, souvent même, d'une destruction : toute la question de Latour aura été, jusqu'à la fin de sa vie je crois, de savoir si on pouvait faire coexister ces réalités différentes. Et au-delà de cette question de savoir si cette pluralité de réalités ne permettait pas d'avoir un rapport plus juste à la réalité en général, en renonçant à croire qu'elle puisse être autre chose que la matrice de cette pluralité. C'est là l'horizon proprement *métaphysique* de son œuvre, au sens où elle répond à une bien vieille question philosophique : en quoi consiste donc être ?

Le grand malentendu sur l'expression « relativiser » consiste à croire qu'en relativisant quelque chose on cherche à lui enlever une partie de sa dignité, alors qu'on cherche simplement à le décrire plus précisément, à spécifier avec plus de rigueur précisément cette dignité même, en la caractérisant par *contraste* avec d'autres manières alternatives de faire. C'est par amour des sciences et d'une certaine manière par amour des modernes que Latour a cherché à les relativiser : montrer ce qui en elles étaient si singulier, si original, si irremplaçable, sans qu'il soit nécessaire pour cela de penser que tous les savoirs devraient devenir scientifiques ou que toutes les formes de vie devaient devenir « modernes ».

(...)

...l'expression *relativiser les modernes* change de sens : il ne s'agit plus de savoir quelles sortes de réalités particulières ou d'agencement d'humains et de non-humains les modernes fabriquent par contraste avec les autres, et comment les définir de manière plus réaliste par ce biais, mais quelle sorte de *terrestres* ils sont, comment ils s'insèrent dans les chaînes terrestres pour construire leur mode de vie et ce que cela fait à cette Terre même qui est à la fois la condition et l'effet de toute habitation terrestre. Il faudra encore plusieurs décennies pour que Latour aboutisse à une formulation claire de ce problème, et on ne peut pas dire que le dernier état de sa réflexion sur le sujet soit celui auquel il se serait arrêté s'il lui avait été donné de continuer son travail, ses enquêtes, sa réflexion. Mais il ne fait guère de doute qu'il aura consacré son intense énergie intellectuelle lors des 15 dernières années à élaborer aussi rigoureusement que possible ce problème, en alliance avec un nombre considérable d'autres personnes autour de lui, comme il savait toujours le faire. Il aura fini par élaborer une formule de ce genre : l'enjeu du présent est de réencastrer les modes de vie modernes dans les limites terrestres. Pour employer une expression de mon cru, les Modernes sont les terrestres déterrestrialisés, qui habitent la Terre en ne cessant d'impenser, de négliger, leur propre condition terrestre, et l'enjeu du présent est de les *reterrestrialiser*.

Mais il faut bien être attentif à ne pas interpréter cette formule comme si elle impliquait que la Terre était une réalité finie, aux frontières fixes comme les murs d'une maison, qu'on ne pourrait pas déplacer. La Terre, ce qu'il a appelé Gaïa, est une entité active, dynamique, historique, qui réagit aux actions des terrestres qui y vivent et en vivent. La question n'est donc pas de se résigner à l'existence de limites externes, mais plutôt de devenir plus intensément et précisément sensibles à notre propre condition terrestre, c'est-à-dire à la manière dont nous infléchissons les dynamiques planétaires par la manière même dont nous occupons la Terre, dont nous nous faisons un séjour terrestre. Car la situation présente est certes angoissante et pleine de deuils présents et à venir : les espèces se meurent, les paysages se modifient plus vite que les vivants ne peuvent le supporter, les forêts brûlent, la guerre revient tambouriner à nos portes... Mais elle a aussi quelque chose d'une chance – et cette ambivalence est typiquement *moderne*.

Pour la première fois peut-être dans l'histoire de l'humanité nous avons la possibilité de vivre dans un rapport plus étroit, plus intime, avec cette condition planétaire qui est de fait la nôtre, qui l'a toujours été, qui l'a été depuis qu'il y a de la vie sur Terre (car Latour n'a jamais raté une occasion de rappeler que ce sont les vivants qui ont climatisé la Terre, que ce sont les bactéries qui ont modifié l'atmosphère terrestre de telle sorte que d'autres vivants puissent y proliférer, et c'est la leçon qu'il a tirée de James Lovelock et de Lynn Margulis à qui il a repris le mot de « Gaïa », pour désigner précisément cette interaction circulaire entre le tout et ses parties, la Terre et les terrestres). Nous savons désormais qu'en choisissant un séjour terrestre pour nous, nous choisissons une Terre. Quelle Terre ? Telle est la question.



Photo by Katherine Miller

ON THE ENDURING ROLE OF THE FRENCH PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

In 2018, via Twitter, Bloomberg's Noah Smith asked "Who would you list as the five most important intellectuals in America today?" Then, Daniel W. Drezner, professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and the author of "The Ideas Industry" wrote about the responses in The Washington Post. The answers ranged from Ta-Nehisi Coates to Francis Fukuyama to Ron Chernow. But the larger discussion became, as intelligent and accomplished as the above writers and economist are – are they in fact—in the United States "Public Intellectuals." And does such a role even exist today? To the extent that in American history, one could argue (whether you ever agreed with them or not) the likes of Gore Vidal and William F. Buckley could be viewed in their time as public intellectuals –the answer is probably not. As far back as 2011, The Chronicle, in an article entitled "The Last Public Intellectual," lamented the death of Christopher Hitchens stating that a singular voice had been silenced. "Unbuttoned and unacademic," Russell Jacoby wrote, "Hitchens weighed in on almost every subject with panache and passion." Hitchens was and he did. And an incredibly strong argument could be made that he was the last public intellectual – native to the English-speaking language. But in France, they persist. In fact, one is so famous he is known only by his initials. BHL. And Bernard Henri Levy's take on modern culture is so important and unique, the American network CNN regularly has him on to opine in English for American viewers.



So why does the role of the public intellectual endure and in some cases flourish in France while there seems to be no equivalent in the United States or even, now, Great Britain?

Who better to ask than visiting professor Catherine Malabou.

Valerie Deorio: From Peter Abelard in the 11th Century, to Michel Montaigne, Descartes, Comte, Voltaire, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir to Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Eric Fassin, Bernard Henri Levy and yourself, French thinkers have been examining and developing ideas on "how best to live."

What is it about France, French history, education and culture that has produced some of humanity's most important philosophers and public intellectuals, asking the most important questions and proffering answers for almost one-thousand years? Philosophers in France are frequently sought, interviewed and quoted on topics of politics, sociology, anthropology, art, music, literature and more. Why do you think the role and significance of public intellectual seems to endure in France?

Catherine Malabou: There are surely many reasons for this. To limit myself to one of them, I will speak of a more recent past, which is that of the post-Revolution of 1789. In France, the teaching

of philosophy has been compulsory in the final classes since Napoleon. “The teaching of philosophy in our country is not limited to the university,” declares an inspector general. Philosophy has been since the First Empire (inspired by the tradition of the Jesuit colleges), and with the exception of an eclipse from 1852 to 1863, a compulsory subject in secondary education, limited to the last year of high school. This means that in France, the teaching of philosophy is not reserved for students who wish to specialize at university in this discipline or plan to make it their future professional activity. In the French tradition, the teaching of philosophy therefore has a general vocation: it aims to address all students in the final year, and it goes beyond the strictly university framework at the level of higher education. In our tradition, the teaching of philosophy is thus recognized as having an eminent educational value.

There is therefore a universalist vocation of French philosophical education, inspired by the Enlightenment and which has become an essential element of what is called in France the “republican spirit”. The philosophy programs for the final classes are the same nationally, for all students, with the aim of developing a common culture. This element is very important. The programs are based on very general notions: language, politics, the unconscious, art... and on fundamental texts, from Plato to the present day. This education is supposed to prepare young people to engage in public debate. I think this is what explains, for many, the constant interventions of French intellectuals on a wide range of topics.

VD: In a press release from earlier this year (2022) Rice University wrote a headline that said “Leading French Intellectual to speak at Rice” referring to a talk to be given by Eric Fassin. The release went on to describe him as “one of the most prominent public intellectuals in France, an outsized public intellectual...regularly featured on popular late-night television shows and in daily newspapers.” The same description could be applied to a cadre of intellectuals in France – and some would argue BHL is in a class of his own in terms of prominence.

There is no shortage of articles on the dearth of public intellectuals in the United States

(Noam Chomsky who is now in his 90s and rarely seen or heard from aside) and as a result, a genuine lack in the exchange of ideas, analysis of policy or quality of life discussions in widespread public discourse. One journalist stated that it is because America cannot fathom public intellectualism – writers and billionaire entrepreneurs who acquired significant wealth with one business or technology idea – are asked to comment on larger public issues as if they were intellectuals – but they are not. And therefore, real thinking and ideas are absent, lacking or completely absent in our mass media. With all of the colleges and universities here – it is not for lack of people who could contribute and enhance public conversation. What do we lose when this is the case? Is it a reflection on the media or them pandering to tribal audiences that have no attention span and do not want to think? Literally the public intellectual’s and philosopher’s job description. What are your thoughts on public intellectualism/philosophy in the United States, and the fact there seems to be no real appetite for it?

CM: I know that this view is obvious to many. France is seen as the country of intellectual debates while the United States is considered the country of the death penalty of thought and public discussion. I do not share this view at all. On the one hand, I will come back to it, the intellectual debate in France has lost much of its quality and level. It is most often reduced to vulgar and uninteresting media interventions, with the sole aim of selling bad books and occupying the airwaves. On the other hand, you will have noticed that for almost a century now, some of the most important

French philosophers have come to teach in the United States, where they find a space for much more open discussion. The most important recent ideas (gender fluidity, post-colonial, decolonial thinking, the problem of anti-blackness...) come from the United States, not from France.

VD: In the 21st century, do you think “philosopher” is synonymous with “public intellectual”? What effect do you think the proliferation of social media has had on the philosophical and intellectual wellness of society?

CM: We are touching a central point here. Not all contemporary significant and important philosophers profess to be “public intellectuals”. Let me explain. In the second half of the twentieth century, a deep gap opened between “school-university” philosophy and the philosophy which was not yet called “popular” but was soon to be. It was with Sartre that this breach opened up, with the passage that he analyzes as a necessary passage from the “philosopher to the intellectual”, in particular in *Plaidoyer pour les Intellectuels*, published in 1972. Intellectuals, he declares elsewhere, are “persons who, having acquired some notoriety through work that is intelligent, abuse this notoriety to leave their domain and meddle in what does not concern them”. He pursues: “Was the condemnation of Dreyfus Zola’s affair? Was the administration of the Congo Gide’s affair? Each of these authors, in a particular circumstance of his life, measured his responsibility as a writer”. If philosophy as a political affair is addressed to everyone, if we are all philosophers in this sense, it is therefore not entirely in the name of knowledge, of the mind or of enlightenment, but in the name of responsibility in the commitment. All philosophers because all responsible. It is essential to understand commitment in the Sartrean sense as a state of fact, linked to the human condition as such.

Sartre is rightly considered the first «media» philosopher. The “new philosophers” (BHL, André Glucksmann, Jean-Marie Benoît...), who claimed to be Sartre’s heirs, appeared at the turn of the 1970s. The great adventure of mediated intellectuals and “consumer product” philosophy then began. It is striking to see that this movement was resisted by a small number of “irreducible” – Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, to name a few –, who also experienced a form of media coverage, also claimed to speak for everyone, even if their public is less numerous, but who clearly stood out from TV stars and newspaper stars because they didn’t have the same idea of the public debate precisely. Philosophy has never been more split, paradoxically, than with the appearance of the media philosophers, the fashion for “cafés philo”, and the idea that there was no need to have studied philosophy to be a philosopher. Indeed, everything significant in philosophy from the 1980s onwards happened outside the media and “popular” scene.

We then have to be cautious to distinguish between media intellectuals and philosophers who refuse to be considered public intellectuals in that sense.

VD: Having said all this, one can find articles on the alleged demise of the French intellectual –but then just as many claiming the French intellectual is alive and well. Have you seen significant changes since you began your work with Jacques Derrida?

CM: I’m going to answer this question by first talking about what I call the important philosophers, and I will then answer the next question by talking about what I call the media intellectuals. In both cases, strangely, the significant changes that occurred since Jacques Derrida’s passing all revolve around the demise of deconstruction.

Several trends emerged in the late 20th century. First, there was Alain Badiou's return to the confrontation between philosophy and science (mathematics in particular), that was too quickly and brutally dismissed in his view by the Heideggerian and deconstructivist tradition. Such a return to science was sustained by a strong communist political orientation. Mathematical equality, for Badiou, is the ontological expression of political equality. This trend has found many echoes in Žižek's own thinking. Second, there was the emergence of a very famous movement, "speculative realism", that directly followed from the Badiouian dogma. Quentin Meillassoux's book, *After Finitude* (2004, and 2006 for the English translation), was extremely successful. Meillassoux affirms the reality of the "arche-past" of the earth and demands a new theoretical approach grounded in the mathematical concept of the "transfinite". By "arche-past", or "ancestral past", Meillassoux means a past devoid of any human presence, an extremely ancient past, that is totally indifferent to all of our subjective, "corelationist" (subject/object) modes of thinking.

Another important movement is the ecologism of Bruno Latour. "We have too little of an idea of what ecology means," Latour used to constantly declare. In his view, ecology is not well integrated into society, its conceptualization is at once too global but also too narrow, including only those things which have been labeled "green" to the exclusion of processes related to organizing life and to do with social justice, paradoxically severing the social from the ecological.

There are certainly other works that should be mentioned. Particularly around race studies or feminism. I will come back to that. I just wanted to insist here on the fact that deconstruction has disappeared from the most recent discussions concerning equality, science, ecology or realism. Even here, in the United States, Derrida's thinking is not well received or studied any longer. It is so surprising when you realize that Derrida was such a global star ...

VD: You have been –and are –in such a unique position to comment on the public intellectual in France and the U.S. With the well-documented tribalism in the U.S. that reached critical mass with the advent of Donald Trump for President – and Emmanuel Macron lamenting the importing of that tribalism –to some degree to France and blaming it for a decline in intellectualism – What do you think the future holds for the relevancy and significance of philosophy and public intellectualism?

CM: Paradoxically, there is a sort of return of Derrida, but in one of the worst ways. A conference took place in Paris last January (8-9/2022) whose title was : "After deconstruction: reconstructing science and culture". This conference, organized by the College of Philosophy, the Observatory of Decolonialism [in fact a censorship apparatus], and the Committee Laïcité République brought together figures known for their positions against what is called, in France, "the woke" (what you call "tribalism" I guess). On the website of the Observatory of Decolonialism, you even find the word "wokistan". The conference's announcement immediately assimilated "the woke" with deconstruction.

The philosopher Pierre-Henri Tavoillot, president of the College of Philosophy and co-organizer of the colloquium declared: "Deconstruction is a technical theme in the history of philosophy. This thought led to the belief that only the dominant/dominated, oppressor/oppressed reading grid would make it possible to understand the world. In this current of thought, the West represents the height of oppression. If decolonial research really offers interesting contributions to research, is it their role to want to destroy this world?", he asks. The French minister of education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, gave his support to the conference, and gave a brief talk in which he insisted upon "the urgent need to deconstruct deconstruction".

“Woke”, or “wokism” have clearly become enemies for a great number of French intellectuals (the media philosophers precisely). This phenomenon is undoubtedly the mark of a dangerous «right-wing drift», but not only. It is also shared by many leftists, who judge that the central values of French Republicanism are threatened by the woke culture. Hence the pluralism of the conference, which gathered academics from various political stands.

“The woke» is the pejorative and contemptuous version of “stay woke”, the hashtag of Black Lives Matter, that repeats and echoes the warning cry of African Americans against new and insidious forms of exploitation and oppression occurring after slavery. The “woke” has become an umbrella term that includes gender studies, transfeminism, race studies, radical ecologist movements, eco-feminism, the culture of cancellation (or «cancel culture»), post-colonial studies, decolonial studies, intersectionality, and all discourses seemingly perpetrating “attacks” against the universal and also against whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, a certain form of traditional feminism, Christianity, non-vegetarianism, etc. The anti-wokism, in France, is also a reaction against American academic culture and the reign of cultural theory.

Equally at stake is the so-called neutrality of “French laity”, a tradition that has been central to the building of Republican education at the end of the 19th century, according to which education must be independent from any religious authority. The woke is supposedly threatening laity, as it supports the idea of an autonomy of minorities. It is accused, in particular, of defending a certain muslim anti-Frenchness, of encouraging radical islamism even— hence the term “islamo-gauchisme”, leftist-islamism. I won’t waste time trying to counter-argue all those accusations. I just want to signal the fact that if the equation of wokism and deconstruction allows its defenders to include diverse thinkers in it, like Foucault, Deleuze, Butler, and many others post-structuralist or post-post-structuralist thinkers, the main enemy remains Derrida.

The French hatred of Derrida has always been and still is very violent and aggressive. Such hatred has a long history, and the Paris conference is of course the most recent symptom of it. It started around the seventies, with the publication of *Glas*, and has never ceased since.

A last blow has recently been given by Emmanuel Faye, the philosopher who wrote substantially about Heidegger’s nazism and stated that Heidegger’s books should be removed from the academic library. In a recent article published in *Le Monde*, 30/01/2022: « Cessons de prendre pour une pensée critique la “déconstruction” dérivée de Heidegger », «Let’s stop taking Heidegger-derived ‘deconstruction’ as critical thinking”, he reminds that deconstruction is a translation of Heidegger’s concepts of *Abbau* and *Destruktion*. And because Heidegger was a nazi, there is necessarily a nazi heritage in Derrida’s thinking.

As if deconstruction, a word that Derrida himself was so reluctant to make use of, meant purely and simply destruction. Deconstruction would be responsible for the reign of post-truth and the supposed current dismissal of reason, rationality, objectivity and scientificity. This situation of the philosophical debate is definitely catastrophic.

Valerie Deorio is a freelance writer and shameless Francophile. She says she could not resist using her personal connections to NYU French Literature, Thought and Culture staff to get the opportunity to interview Catherine Malabou and discuss the topics in this article.

MARCH 22, 2022

LE CARREFOUR

Winner of the Audience Award for Best Short at the Camden International Film Festival, the 2021 documentary film, *The Intersection* (Le Carrefour), co-directed by filmmakers Jessamine Irwin and Daniel Quintanilla were joined by NYU Professor of French Literature, Thought, and Culture and coordinator of Voices of Francophone Cinema, Anna-Caroline Prost to focus on past and present Maine immigrant communities who share a common bond: The French language.

Cecile reconnects with the French of her childhood thanks to recently arrived Franco-African immigrants, like Tresor, seeking asylum in Cecile's hometown of Lewiston, Maine. Cecile's Franco roots tie her to the thousands of French-Canadians who came before her to power the local mills, and who suffered from decades of discrimination and oppression. As history repeats itself, Cecile and Trésor develop a close friendship that helps Cecile finally find her pride in being Franco-American.

Inaugural recipient of the Maine Heritage Film Grant by TV5 Monde and Points North Institute. Recipient of a "Major Grant" from the Maine Humanities Council.



APRIL 14 to 16 at Yale and NYU.

DECENTERING MOLIÈRE

The year 2022 has marked the 400th anniversary of Molière, the star actor, famous author, and icon of French and Western culture. Organized by Christophe Schuway (Yale), Sylvaine Guyot (NYU) and Benoît Bolduc (NYU), the Decentering Molière conference brought new perspectives on the French Shakespeare. Instead of focusing only on Molière, what story can we tell if we adopt the perspective of his



contemporaries—publishers, authors, actors, choreographers, composers, and visual artists, or journalists? What might we understand if we broaden our geographical and cultural scope—Molière in the Francophone, or in the Arab World? What can we discover if we study him through non-literary perspectives such as economics, religion, women's rights, propaganda, historiography, theater business, or stage design? How do musicology, art history, history of the book, performance studies, or sociology challenge our understanding of Molière and his work? Decentering Molière brought together new critical points of view and fostered an interdisciplinary conversation between world-class specialists to challenge assumptions, deconstructed the myth and better understood a crucial figure and what he means for French and Western culture.

The event was made possible through the generous support of The Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund, The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale, the Yale Department of French, the French Embassy Center of Excellence, the Yale Department of French, the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, the Faculty of Arts and Science at NYU and the NYU Department of French Literature, Thought, and Culture.



Photo by Katherine Miller



Photo by Katherine Miller



Photo by Katherine Miller

SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

“ANTI-BERGSON: BACHELARD’S ‘SURREATIONALIST’ MOMENT AND THE POETICS OF TIME”

A public talk featuring Elie During as part of French philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s 60th death anniversary.

On the face of it, *The Dialectic of Duration*, Gaston Bachelard’s 1936 essay, is a pungent—if often unfair—criticism of the Bergsonian doctrine of time and creative evolution. The constructive side of this *Anti-Bergson* has received less attention: it implies a genuine *poetics of time* based on the intuition of the sporadic and oscillatory nature of becoming. Bachelard’s rhythmic theme is consistent with the idea of “surreationalism” introduced that same year as a formal counterpart to the surrealist experiments carried out on the fringes of conscious experience. Inspired by the explosive potential of scientific revolutions already celebrated in *Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique*, the surreationalist project can be interpreted as that of a *poetics of reason*. André Breton believed it would “act simultaneously as a stimulant and restraining influence” (“Crisis of the Object”). Insights from the scientific investigation of time as well as poetic and musical experience will help us see how this double action is in keeping with the eruptive dynamics of imagination and reason, as much as with Bachelard’s ideal of “self-surveillance”.

Organized by

Julie Beauté, Aix-Marseille Université, ADES (France)

Alexander Campolo, Durham University (UK)

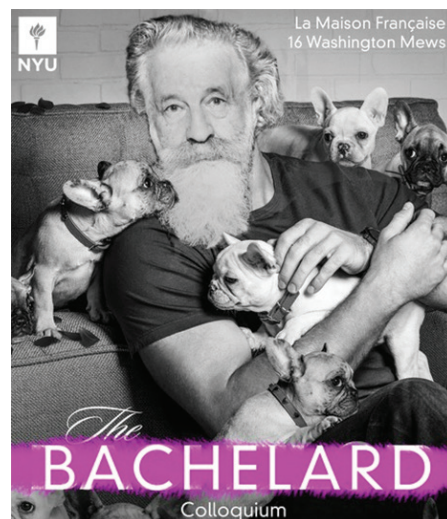
Jeanne Etelain, New York University (USA)

Sam Kellogg, New York University (USA)

Alexander Miller, Ghent University (Belgium)

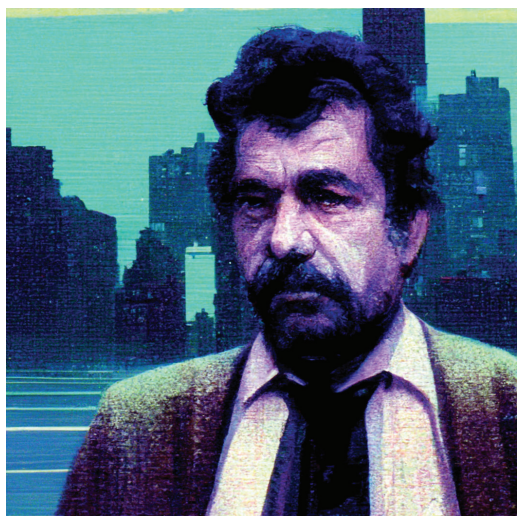
Pierre Schwarzer, New York University (USA)

Meg Wiessner, New York University (USA)



SEPTEMBER 17, 2002

Alain Robbe-Grillet: a colloquium organized by doctoral student, samuel holmertz



Widely considered to be the figurehead of the Nouveau Roman, Alain Robbe-Grillet was above all a writer who embodied the spirit of postmodern renewal in literature. NYU welcomed this lover of literature to its ranks as a professor in the French Department between 1971 and 1995. The Maison Française celebrates the author of *La Jalousie* and *Les Gommages*, who would have turned 100 in 2022.

A moment to revisit his career, novels, criticism, as well as his cinematographic work—he directed avant-garde films such as *Trans-Europ-Express* and *L'homme qui ment*, and who wrote the screenplay for cult film *Last Year in Marienbad*.

October 14-15, 2022

Fugitive Proust Conference

Proust is never quite forgotten—yet we still may not know him as well as we think we do. This international conference marked the centenary of Proust's death by considering elements of *In Search of Lost Time* that remain fugitive, or unrecognized: counterplots or points of resistance within the logic of the *Künstlerroman*; variations in the music of the text that never develop into a dominant theme; “beings-in-flight” who, like Albertine, pass through the novel in a blur; volumes or sections of text or manuscript that have been overlooked; fleeting visions or vantage points that break with the redemptive logic of *Time Regained*.

Beyond its reference to one of the lesser read volumes in the novel, fugitive resonates on multiple levels. It suggests flight from enslavement or imprisonment, and the precarity of subsequent escape, banishment, desertion, or exile. It also signifies transience and ephemerality: “poésie fugitive” is a poetic genre (epigram, song, madrigal) inspired by circumstances. More broadly, the fugitive is what cannot be contained, what eludes the law. A feeling for the fugitive informs Proust's penchant for pastiche, translation, and other practices of vocal heterogeneity and dislocation. To read for fugitivity in Proust is to engage the novel's aesthetics of contingency and incompleteness, and to consider how an ethos of outsidership shapes *In Search of Lost Time* in visible and invisible ways.

Participants

Emily Apter, NYU

Christopher Bush, Northwestern University

Rebecca Comay, University of Toronto

Antoine Compagnon, Columbia University

Hannah Freed-Thall, NYU

Anne Garréta, Duke University

Elisabeth Ladenson, Columbia University

Michael Lucey, UC-Berkeley

Zakir Paul, NYU

François Proulx, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Jacqueline Rose, Birkbeck Institute of the Humanities, Birkbeck University of London

Michael Wood, Princeton University

Co-sponsored by the Department of French Literature, Thought and Culture; the Department of Comparative Literature; the Advanced Certificate Program in Poetics & Theory; the Provost's Global Initiatives; the Maison Française at NYU; the Institute for French Studies; the Center for the Humanities; XE: Experimental Humanities & Social Engagement; the Department of Spanish & Portuguese; and the Department of German.

Made possible with the support of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States



ARIANE BOTTEX-FERRAGNE

The Department of French Literature, Thought, and Culture is thrilled to welcome a new medievalist: Assistant Professor Ariane Bottex-Ferragne. A Montréal born Canadian of Haitian and French descent, she holds an MA and a Ph.D. in Medieval French literature from McGill and Université de Montréal. She has worked on various topics related to her field, using a manuscript-informed interdisciplinary approach. Her work focuses on forms, objects and genres that may challenge our modern definition of “littérature” (didactic poetry, economic literature, historiographical fiction, moralizing lyric, etc.), and help re-think the production and reception of beauty and meaning.



Terrence Cullin, an NYU doctor in Medieval French Literature, has interviewed her about her new book, *Essai de poétique hélénandienne*, an embodiment of her research interests and methods.

Terry Cullen (TC): Could you tell us a little about the trajectory, personal or academic, that brought you to NYU?

Ariane Bottex-Ferragne (ABF): I was trained as a classical trombonist from my teenage years until my early 20s. I studied at the *Conservatoire de musique de Montréal* and was set for a career in that field. But I always had questions that my professors didn't seem to care about, especially about early music, and history. In my classical music training, everything was about the *how* – *how* you play Romantic music, for instance, or *how* you perform such and such baroque cadence. Yet I was interested in the *why*; I felt like I was missing something. I was already doing history on the side and felt that this field did a better job at answering the questions I had. Even though I felt that I may have been better at music performance, history was ultimately the way I wanted to go to answer my questions. So I did a liberal arts degree in the Great Books Program at Concordia University. One of my professors there encouraged me to become a medievalist. Although my reaction at the time was, “a what?”, I looked into what it entailed, and it checked all of my boxes: literature, philosophy, history, linguistics, everything. So I enrolled in a graduate literature program at McGill, where I met Francis Gingras, who became my Ph.D. director.

TC: Was your Ph.D. a basis for your forthcoming book, *Essai de poétique hélénandienne: lire autour du Reclus de Molliens (XIII^e - XV^e siècles)*? Could you talk a little more about this project and how you arrived at it?

ABF: For the anecdote, the idea stemmed from a discussion with my thesis advisor, Francis Gingras, who asked what type of medieval text I was interested in. I answered him half-jokingly that I liked “the boring stuff,” to which he replied that he had something for me! He said that the Reclus de Molliens was the most boring material he had ever read, so I said “OK, that's my man!”. My intuition was that “boring stuff” – or in other words the artistic objects escaping our modern criteria of appreciation – may be precisely the ones that reveal the most about the fundamental otherness of this cultural landscape. In the case of the Reclus, this intuition proved quite fruitful. While digging into the manuscript and textual reception of the Reclus' works, I was stunned by just how massive and central it was: this now-forgotten poet proved to be one of the most significant

and widely known authors of his days! That paradox between medieval and modern reception was fascinating to me.

TC: How do you go about resolving this paradox in your book? What was your research method?

ABF: This great distance between medieval and modern pushed me to start with a fact-based and empirical approach, using material and textual from the actual manuscripts to re-construct medieval modes of approaching the Reclus' work. In the spirit of "new philology", I mapped out the whole manuscript tradition in the hope of finding patterns and recurring motives in modes of reading that may explain why medieval audiences enjoyed the Reclus so much. Yet, for a long time, the 55 manuscripts I was working on led me nowhere: I kept finding clues leading in lots of different, conflicting directions. But I finally realized that, as many medievalists, I had been overlooking a key factor in my analyses: the actual verse form of these texts, a factor often discarded as ornamental if not superficial. Yet as soon as I started taking form into account, everything started to make sense: it helped me explain otherwise puzzling aspects of his manuscript tradition while, at the same time, shedding some light on the uniqueness of his poetic approach.

TC: What was this form? And what was its significance?

ABF: The Reclus de Molliens uses the "strophe hélindienne", a stanzaic formula used in a wealth of religious and didactic poems from the 12th to the 15th centuries. Upon reading some of the other text using this form, it started becoming clear to me that this stanza was more than a mere ornament, or a decorative form. Rather, it worked like a fully functioning sound structure, engaging a set of poetic rules regulating the treatment of themes, style, sound, and performance practices. The "strophe hélindienne" itself then seemed to be, if not a literary genre, at least a *forme-sens*, a formal system whose mere presence can generate a distinct, consistent, and specific horizon of expectation.

TC: What were these rules?

ABF: There are a lot, but I'll give you an example. One of the hypotheses I put forward in my book is that this form has to do with death: the "strophe hélindienne" functions a lot like the minor mode functions in music for us. Whether or not you're knowledgeable about music, when you hear something in a minor mode, you think that it sounds sad. What's interesting is that even when the texts don't talk overtly about death, you sometimes see medieval readers adding comments that put it in the context of other macabre texts or even drawing marginalia related to death.

TC: Do we have a sense of who these readers were? Were they from one particular milieu?

ABF: One of the fascinating things I found about the Reclus de Molliens is that everyone seems to have read him: aristocrats, of course, some of them owning display manuscripts of his texts; men and women in religious orders; and even La Sorbonne, which at the time had only four books in French, one of which was the Reclus de Molliens. Their copy was a chained book so no one would steal it, which shows how popular it was. Last but not least, there were also bourgeois readers as early as the 14th century, at a time when bourgeois readership is still relatively scarce.

TC: If the Reclus was so popular in the Middle Ages, what do you think led to his waning fortunes after this period?

ABF: The Reclus' fortune started to fade around the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century. I think one of the most immediate reasons for this is simply linguistic changes: the Reclus' 13th century work may have become too difficult and archaic for readers over time. Another reason is that the "strophe hélinandienne" itself went out of fashion and eventually disappeared, while the Reclus' texts relied on this form for their full literary effect. To jump towards our own era, didactic and religious texts like the Reclus' don't fall neatly into modern disciplines like literature or philosophy. They're difficult to classify. When teaching, medievalists often turn to texts that fit modern assumptions of what literature is like (such as Marie de France or Chrétien de Troyes), so texts like the Reclus's are often overlooked in classrooms.

TC: What do you think medieval studies stand to gain from your rehabilitation of the Reclus and this poetic form?

ABF: The fact that the Reclus was so widely read – and therefore constituted a model and a poetic benchmark for such a broad audience – makes him an ideal case study to re-think the vitality and codes of moralizing poetry based on the actual and reading practices of medieval readers and audiences. Since everyone in the Middle Ages was reading him, including the authors of more familiar texts from the period like Adam de la Halle or Rutebeuf, the Reclus may help us better understand those texts. It gives us a better sense of the literary field at that time and the dynamics of influence at play. Personally, I find the process of studying an author that does *not* resemble me almost a spiritual exercise in understanding the other. I think the world needs more of that!

TC: The research for this book involved a lot of time spent in the archives. Where does your interest in manuscript culture come from? Did the topic itself dictate that or do you have your own interest in the history of books or reading?

ABF: Actually, my grandfather was an amateur bookbinder and taught me some of his craft as a kid! But beyond that, I didn't have much personal interest in the field. When I was first studying medieval literature, though, it was only when I started working with physical books that I became really interested in the field. It became almost like a detective story! It was no longer just the encounter between the researcher and the book but became a conversation with multiple voices. You could even see the handwriting and the notes of past readers in these books, which I found quite touching.

TC: Does this project or other academic interests intersect with your former musical training?

ABF: Given the well-known sonic, oral, and aural aspects of medieval literature, music was a constant preoccupation in my project. However, with varying stages of my academic life came different ways of understanding the interpenetration of manuscript culture – which is all that is left to us to decipher as literary critics – and the forgotten sounds and melodies of the medieval era. For instance, a meaningful shift in perspective occurred when I put my musical training into practice by teaching a history of music class at Concordia and started performing music again during the pandemic. This intensified my interest in the sonic aspect of medieval literature. For my next project, I hope to bring music and literature more closely together by working more on medieval poems and songs, perhaps in the context of Marian prayer.

FROM SEINE-SAINT-DENIS TO CHICAGO, THE VALUE OF ENGAGING ON A TRANSATLANTIC RESEARCH ON URBAN ISSUES.



Chayma Drira is a doctoral student in French and French Studies at NYU. She graduated from Sciences Po Paris, where she studied political theory. At the intersection of sociology, literature, and philosophy, her doctoral research explores the memory of postcolonial immigration in France. She has worked as a journalist for French magazines Bondy Blog, Jeune Afrique, Libération, Politis, OpenDemocracy and Orient XXI. She has published several articles comparing racial and social inequalities in the low-income neighborhoods of Chicago and Greater Paris.

For several years now, I have been specializing in city policies and the notion of gentrification from an interdisciplinary perspective, combining urban sociology, critical geography and political theory. This research theme came to me through immersive journalism, inspired by collaborations with the City Lab of the Atlantic and the magazine *The Funambulist*, founded by Léopold Lambert, before turning it into a scientific research project.

I see research as a space of passage marked by back and forth with civil society. Throughout the past three years, my American colleague Henry Shah and I have co-written a series of articles comparing urban inequalities between France and the United States as part of a chronicle in various national, local and international medias - *Bondy Blog*, *Libération*, *Politis*, *Open Democracy*. Our subject of comparison was precisely two territories that were at first sight different and opposed: the Seine-Saint-Denis on the one hand, and the South Side of Chicago on the other.

The goal of these publications has never been to make easy comparisons, or to just show the dysfunctions of our two countries, but to engage in a true transatlantic conversation within our generation, curious about the social innovations carried by civil societies on both continents in urban contexts. There was undeniably something that crossed borders and made our gaze converge on: the environmental disaster - accelerating and significantly degrading our cities due to gentrification -; the police violence - which in recent years has traumatized both our countries -, and the growing economic inequality - significantly observed during the pandemic in these poor places.

These are embodied observations, inspired by our fieldwork, in the cité des 4000 in La Courneuve, in the Roma camps of St Denis on the outskirts of Paris; or in the black and hipster neighborhoods of Woodlawn and El Barrio, in Chicago. Our investigations are attached to the history of social and anti-racist struggles of the two territories, to which we constantly pay homage, making dialogue between several generations, and their contributions to the improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants.

This generational and transatlantic exchange caught the attention of Chicago Consular Services as part of the Villa Albertine program in the summer of 2020. The goal was to travel to Chicago,

observe the engaged actors of civil society and make a series of podcasts. I have since been to the city, recording a dozen people - entrepreneurs, curators, journalists, museum directors : and these exchanges have been stimulating about the future these citizens wanted for their cities. From Connie Spreen, CEO of a social economy enterprise in Chicago called the experimental station that helps black and poor residents of Woodlawn find work, to Jamie Kalven, Pulitzer Prize winner with his independent, local media outlet the invisible institute, which specializes in covering police violence, to Rachel Havrelock, Fresh Water Lab activist working to clean up Lake Michigan. All have one thing in common: the desire to build community regardless of race, even if these divisions remain deeply rooted territorially and historically in Chicago.

Chicago is undeniably a destabilizing city, because of its segregationist history that still marks its geography like scars. The specter of the red line is still present, still delineating the North from the South, where Black, Hispanic and Asian minorities do not mix with White groups. But it was useful to leave my position as an observer to talk with committed residents, often from a new radical left, to realize that despite everything that could divide Chicago, there are living forces that try everyday to repair the territory, to (re)connect the North to the South, to make the communities dialogue.

It is this search for the common - and therefore for a form of universality - which is also part of the city's history since Saul Alinsky and the American radical left, that has made a deep impression on me. There is a serious questioning of these territorial fragmentations, which perhaps changes our apprehension of the American social and political body that we tend to caricature in France without understanding the evolution of civil society, new questions that a different left is asking itself than in the past - in any case more visible and audible than it was before - and perhaps more open to a dialogue with European activists and intellectuals.

This reflection on the common in Chicago will soon be the subject of a publication to initiate this collective discussion, between Americans and French, on the modalities of better living together, in a more respectful and inclusive way in these times of identity-based populism and the rise of fanaticism. The goal is not to defend a naive universalism, but to recognize particularities, and not to be afraid of the intersectionality of social struggles that do not fragment society, but on the contrary, solidarizes weakened and isolated groups.

Finally, my research, conducted jointly in the French department and at IFS, seeks to continue these Franco-American exchanges via a more in-depth reflection on urban space. I focus precisely on this lack of spatial anchoring of the postcolonial presence in French working-class cities, those commonly referred to as "*les banlieues*", based on a monograph of the "*cit  des 4000*" in La Courneuve, which is in the process of disappearing because of the gentrification initiated by the Grand Paris. The spatial memory of Algerian immigration, whose traces I am looking for in France, functions as a hole, a blank, an absence - a concrete impossibility, difficult to locate spatially, or localized simply in an ephemeral and periodic way.



I question the sensitive part which connects us to the places: to live a place is also ontological. In other words, it goes beyond the functionalist apprehension that predominates the language of urban planning actors. I thought it would be useful to renew our understanding of urban issues through an interdisciplinary approach combining political theory and social sciences. Methodologically, influenced by the black geography, I remain fundamentally attached to a certain French sociological tradition, notably Bourdieusian. I would like to promote the vitality of the French social sciences, which have a lot to contribute to world research. I would also like, in this international space of exchange that NYU offers, to pay tribute to the major scientific contribution of the Franco-Algerian sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad in the study of migration, and whose work deserves a better update in the Francophone space, since his insights on postcolonial immigration would enrich our transatlantic conversation on the racial question.



This research is still in a state of flux, still living its hypotheses, which I have not yet defended at NYU, but which I have tried - with great humility - to present recently in my contribution to the latest conferences at Princeton University, Buffalo University, and at the Night of Ideas at the Chicago History Museum last spring. These exchanges have helped me to welcome useful critiques to improve my ethnography. I am finally looking forward to collaborating in this mythical intellectual space of Francophone thought, over the coming months and years with colleagues and professors, on the theme of urban space.

CAMILLE READMAN PRUD'HOMME

After obtaining a BA in literary studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal, Camille Readman Prud'homme joined the MA program in creative writing at the same institution, for which she received the FARE, the FRQSC and the SSHRC scholarships. She pursued her master's thesis under the supervision of poet and essayist Pr. René Lapierre. Her thesis was entitled *Pendant se taire suivi de Ce que je suis dans le noir*, and focused on the relationships between corporality, writing and speaking, and the experience and expression of discrepancies. The completion of this project opened the desire for another one, and Camille therefore realized she had the impulse to pursue doctoral studies, to engage with longer research that would dwell on the relationships with writing and expressions of failure and vulnerability.

My arrival at NYU's Department of French Literature, Thought and Culture in 2021 marked the beginning of a year filled with enriching encounters and marvelous discoveries. The year 2022-2023 promises several exciting professional opportunities: I am very pleased to begin teaching French to undergraduate students this fall, and to collaborate as an author on various cultural projects.

In October, the collection of poetry I published at L'Oie de Cravan in June 2021, *Quand je ne dis rien je pense encore*, reached its eighth printing. It was a finalist for the Prix Émile-Nelligan 2022, was shortlisted for the Grand Prix du Livre de Montréal 2022, it won the Prix des libraires Poésie 2022 and received the Prix Alain-Granbois 2022, given by l'Académie des lettres du Québec. With ever renewing joy, this book allowed me to meet its readers in various educational institutions (Université du Québec à Montréal, Cégep du Vieux-Montréal, Cégep Bois-de-Boulogne, Cégep de Gaspé, Cégep Garneau) and bookstores (Pantoute in Quebec City; EXC and Monte-en-l'air in Paris). It has also enabled me to participate in various events, such as "La Journée du poème à porter", and "Ville Éveillée", the public reading that opened the Festival de Poésie de Montréal 2022.

New projects are on the horizon this fall: *Quand je ne dis rien je pense encore* is part of the Festival international de littérature programming. It is recited by actress Larissa Corriveau. The recording and an interview are broadcast on the event's web portal. The book will also be adapted for the stage at the Quat'sous theater in Montreal in 2023. Additionally, I will have the chance to participate in musician Luis Clavis' next album, *Échos d'une vie distante*, volume 2, which will be released later this year. Finally, it is with great happiness and excitement that I begin a collaboration with the literary radio show *Il restera toujours la culture*, broadcast on Radio-Canada première, and hosted by Émilie Perreault.

Long live literature, long live creation!



Camille Readman Prud'homme

Quand je ne dis rien je pense encore



chez L'Oie de Cravan
éditeur à Montréal

Après une première année au sein du département riche en rencontres et en découvertes, l'année 2022-2023 s'ouvre sur d'exaltantes perspectives professionnelles. Je suis très heureuse d'occuper dès cet automne un poste d'institutrice de français auprès des étudiant e s de premier cycle et de collaborer à titre de poète à divers projets culturels.

Le livre que j'ai fait paraître à L'Oie de Cravan en juin 2021, *Quand je ne dis rien je pense encore*, en était à sa huitième impression en octobre dernier. Il aura été finaliste pour le Prix Émile-Nelligan 2022, aura fait partie de la sélection du Grand Prix du Livre de Montréal 2022, aura été lauréat du Prix des libraires Poésie 2022 et aura remporté le Prix Alain-Granbois 2022, décerné par l'Académie des lettres du Québec. Dans une joie chaque fois renouvelée, il m'aura permis d'aller à la rencontre de ses lecteur ice s, dans divers établissements scolaires (Université du Québec à Montréal, Cégep du Vieux-Montréal, Cégep Bois-de-Boulogne, Cégep de Gaspé, Cégep Garneau) et librairies (la librairie Pantoute à Québec; les librairies EXC et Librairie Monte-en-l'air à Paris). Il m'aura également amenée à participer à des événements tels que le Festival de Poésie de Montréal 2022 et La Journée du poème à porter.

Avec l'automne qui s'ouvre, de nouveaux projets s'annoncent : *Quand je ne dis rien je pense encore* fait l'objet d'une mise en lecture par la comédienne Larissa Corriveau dans le cadre du Festival international de littérature. La captation accompagnée d'un entretien sont diffusés sur le portail web de l'événement. Par ailleurs, le livre sera aussi adapté au théâtre Quat'sous, à Montréal, en 2023. J'aurai également la chance de participer au prochain album du musicien Luis Clavis, *Échos d'une vie distante volume 2*, qui paraîtra plus tard cette année. Finalement, c'est avec grand bonheur et fébrilité que j'amorce une collaboration à l'émission littéraire *Il restera toujours la culture*, diffusée sur les ondes de Radio-Canada première, et animée par Émilie Perreault.

Vive la littérature, vive la création!

FRANÇOIS NOUDELMANN

As director of La Maison Française, I have maintained an intense program of about 2-3 events per week, despite the restrictions due to COVID. Among the highlights, le Festival des cinq continents, dedicated in 2022 to Haitian cultures, was a great success, with music concert, plays, art exhibit, and discussions between writers. Another festival, Philo/Piano, brought together contemporary composers and writers around the historic piano of La Maison, inaugurating a new monthly program of recitals/lectures dedicated to the relationships between music, literature, science and society. I have also continued our major conversations with intellectuals and writers, including the Goncourt Prize winner Mohamed Mbougar Sarr.

As a researcher, I have presented some of my work at lectures at MIT, la Sorbonne, and the Musée d'art et d'histoire du judaïsme. I co-edited a volume on *Figures, Pensées, Voix* (Septentrion 2022) in which I wrote an article entitled "La voix verticale". In the context of the debates on the universal and differences, I published "Mediations of Universalism" (Cahiers de République Universelle). Otherwise, the translations of my books continue, with *Le Toucher des philosophes* into Turkish and *Un Tout autre Sartre* into Spanish

As an editor, I continue to publish, with three other scholars, an edition of Sartre's *Situations* in a chronological and annotated presentation: *Situations VIII* (Gallimard 2022). This new edition allows readers of Sartre to rediscover all his articles in their historical context. In my collection *Voix Libres* (Max Milo), I have published a book by Aliocha Wald Lasowski, *Les Cinq Secrets de James Bond*, and in my other book series *Intempestives* (PUV), I welcome the translation of Phillip Usher's book, *Exterranean*

My novel, *Les Enfants de Cadillac* (Gallimard 2021) will be published in paperback (Folio). I have presented it in many bookstores, universities and hospitals, in NYC at the Albertine bookstore. Shortlisted for the Goncourt, Femina and Malraux prizes, it has been reviewed in some forty newspapers and magazines, and has been the subject of several radio and television programs.

CLAUDIE BERNARD

Claudie Bernard co-directed two collective volumes published in 2022: one in collaboration with Chantal Massol, *Romans et fictions brèves dans la littérature française du XIX^e siècle, Interférences, tensions, dialogues* (Grenoble, UGA Éditions), which includes her article on Rosny aîné; a second one in collaboration with Corinne Saminadayar-Perrin, *L'Histoire feuilletée, dispositifs intertextuels dans la fiction historique du XIX^e siècle* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes), for which she wrote the introduction.

She delivered five talks : "Contre le 'préjugé de couleur,' les dilemmes du sang-mêlé dans *Georges*" at a colloquium on Alexandre Dumas at Johns Hopkins University in April 2022 ; "La fiction épistolaire au XIX^e siècle, déclin et expérimentations" at a colloquium on the French epistolary novel at Kyoto University in August ; "Le roman historique, roman palimpseste" at Waseda University in Tokyo in September ; "Transfuges sous la Révolution française" at a colloquium on Migrations at Dunarea de Jos University in Galati, Romania, in October ; and "La transaction épistolaire en temps de Révolution : *L'Emigré* de Sénac de Meilhan" at the Colloquium on Nineteenth-Century French Studies in New York in November.

She was an invited scholar at the University of Kyoto for two weeks in August 2022.

JOHN MORAN

This past summer John oversaw the first fully hybrid College Board Advanced Placement (AP) French Language and Culture Exam Reading in his role as Chief Reader for that exam. He has also been busy with the AP French Language and Culture Exam Development Committee working on the creation of future exams. In March, John organized and presented at a one-day online conference with a focus on inclusive writing and inclusive teaching entitled “Écriture inclusive/société exclusive: l’avenir des questions de genres” (with support from the AATF). John continues to serve the university community as both a Faculty Fellow in Residence at Lipton Residence Hall and as the Faculty Affiliate for the French Themed Explorations Community. In the department, John continues to serve as the Chapter Moderator for NYU’s chapter of Pi Delta Phi, the French National Honor society, which inducted thirty new members this past spring. Finally, John was chosen for the Residential Life and Housing Service Office’s Faculty Member of the Year award for 2021-2022 for his work as a Faculty Fellow in Residence. This is the second time John has won this award.

KATHRINA LAPORTA

It has been a busy and productive period. My book *Performative Polemic: Anti-Absolutist Pamphlets and their Readers in Late 17th-Century France* was published by the University of Delaware Press in June 2021. The following AY allowed me to enjoy the paper and conference circuit with the book’s publication in the rear-view mirror. In January 2022, I gave a talk at the MLA conference on a panel organized by the 17th-century French Forum on the theme of «Restarts.» In March 2022, I was invited to speak about the politics of truth-telling in pamphleteering for a colleague’s seminar at Yale on «Fake News and True Stories.» In April 2022, I gave a talk in a session on «The Long History of the French Early Modern Pamphlet» panel at the RSA conference in Dublin, Ireland. Sponsored by the Newberry Center for Renaissance Studies to draw attention to their fabulously rich collection of political pamphlets, the panel was stimulating and an exciting forum to meet scholars with other disciplinary approaches to the pamphlet. A chapter to be published in a forthcoming volume of *Littérature classiques on Libelles et pratiques littéraires (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* will offer an analytical summary of my book.

STÉPHANE GERSON

Stéphane Gerson’s sabbatical year in France enabled him to make vast strides toward his next book, *Les gestes de notre guerre*, for which he signed a contract with La Découverte. He conducted research in numerous French, Belgian, Swiss, Austrian, and English archives, and gave talks at the EHESS (séminaire *Histoire et historiographie de la Shoah*), Paris 1 Sorbonne-Panthéon (séminaire *Transgressions, normes et imaginaire social, XIX-XXe siècles*), the Université de Montpellier, the Université de Rennes (journée d’études *Des vies mémorables. Archives familiales ordinaires et sciences sociales*), and the University of Chicago history department. He published a first article from this research, “Tentatives de cambriolage, troubles d’historien,” in *L’Histoire en jeu: Vies déviantes et faits divers*, ed. Marie-Ève Thérenty (CNRS, 2022), as well as a long review article, “A History from Within: When Historians Write About Their Own Kin,” in the *Journal of Modern History*. Gerson also gave a talk “Writing a Global History of France” at UVA’s seminar “Thinking France in the World,” and participated in a roundtable around Elayne Oliphant’s *The Privilege of Being Banal. Art, Secularism, and Catholicism in Paris* (2021) at the University of Chicago Center in Paris. Finally, he was invited to join the advisory board of NYU’s Center for the Humanities.

PHILLIP JOHN USHER

I published several articles over the course of the year, notably one – in a volume titled *Narrations fabuleuses* – that puts into dialogue two versions of the story of Medea, one theatrical and early modern (Jean de la Pérouse), and the other cinematic (Pasolini), and another – in a volume titled *Storytelling in Renaissance France* – about “fossil stories” and the boundaries of early modern literature at the dawn of geological science. Sabbatical allowed for the writing of a number of other articles, due out next year in *Albion* and elsewhere. Another chapter of the year was shaped by overseeing the French translation of my recent book, *Extraterrestrial*, which will come out next year at the Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, with a new preface by Frédérique Aït-Touati and a new postface that I am in the process of writing, but which will be finalized only after the curtain falls on COP27. I gave a number of talks on the topics that sustain me, most recently at the Folger Shakespeare Library (about extraction and subterranean spaces) and at Oxford University (on the invention of botany in early modern France).

I saw several books to completion in the translation series that I direct for the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, namely JoAnn DellaNeve's translation of a poem by Lancelot de Carles about the death of Anne Boleyn, Robert Hudson's translations of Clément Marot's *Epistles*, and Charles-Louis Morand-Métivier's English version of a play about a massacre of Waldensians in 1542, the *Tragédie du Sac de Cabrière*—each volume is a translation and a critical edition in its own right, and each will, I think, help open up early modern France to Anglophone audiences in new and exciting ways.

Other collective projects have been further sources of joy and excitement this past year. I've been collaborating with scholars from the US, the UK, France, and beyond, on a series of conferences and gatherings, and a forthcoming edited volume, on the life and works of Agrippa d'Aubigné. With another group of scholars, I've been reflecting upon the issues of chronology and disciplinarily in literary studies, which will result in a special issue of *H-France* in 2023.

As I look back at 2022, I see that most of my sabbatical has been spent reading and gathering materials for several new projects, about which it is too early to say much, except perhaps that there will be continuity and difference in what I'm writing about and how I go about it. As I look back at 2022 I also feel a great loss: Bruno Latour, whose work has been incredibly important to my own thinking and whom I had the pleasure of inviting to NYU in 2018, passed away on October 9, at a moment in geo-history when we need his thought the most. He has left us an important set of theoretical tools for facing up to the challenges of our present moment. As I look forward to 2023 and to the end of my sabbatical, I'm excited in particular about a new online series I shall be curating at the Maison Française, “Montaigne In and Out of Context.” In each episode, I will be talking with a specialist of Montaigne and the *Essais*, in modes both relaxed and academic, with the eventual goal of building up an online anthology of critical perspectives on this major author. This first Spring season will see me talking with Valérie Dionne, Ali Benmakhlouf, and Tom Conley, on the last Friday of February, March, and April.

ANNA-CAROLINE PROST

TEACHING WITH CINEMA –

Many recent essays have established that experiencing a movie with an audience is a quiet collective action. A togetherness experienced calmly with one's own thoughts and emotions. Therefore, an imperious human need. After the upheaval of the last three years, or are we in an after? The questions of platforms' dictatorship and how theaters are places beyond the maps of our cities, but places for our intuitive retreat from stress and routines, are more complex than we think. To me, there is the additional question of positioning this matter of the collective experience of cinema within the classroom, within the walls of the university in an effective way.

I've been working with films for many years to recreate the collective experience of the language, the collective and plural questions of cultures. As time goes by, I have a better sense of what to offer, what to suggest. Yet, I was not prepared for so many difficulties on the way.

It is a given that students like films. To me, the question is more how can I successfully include this given in our day-to-day college life? What is behind this seemingly easy access that cinema gives us? Is it the apparent passive act of watching something or is it that emotional complex journey between the individual and the group that gives it a unique dimension?

This little story that I share with you here is not an attempt to answer all these questions, though fascinating, but more to invite you to an open question. How can we create a sense of togetherness in a department that went through such a lonely time?

Recently, I took on with much honor and joy the task to create cinema events for La Maison française. A true honor because the road is bumpy to obtain this sort of title and creative freedom. For this, I will forever be grateful to both John Moran François Noudelmann.

I was incredibly lucky to meet with two directors during the 60th edition of the New York Film Festival, Mr Balufu Bakupa-Kanyinda and Mr Albert Serra. Introducing filmmakers to our audience of students is one of my goals. It is likely that my students will forget some grammar lessons, but I have big hopes they won't forget these discussions. Both artists came with a true desire to share and challenge. Cinema as a political act, cinema to give a voice after decades of silence. Cinema to fight the loss of innocence and human complexity in nowadays' Netflix sponsored films era. Cinema in a language that is not your own native language. So many thoughts for our students.

As I'm preparing the next edition of our own NYU francophone of Voices cinema with too much discretion and during my free moments, I wonder if we will truly, as a department, investigate our need for shared collective experiences and work together at recreating this very fragile space of quiet togetherness.

The festival will be held (if all goes well!) from November 7th till November 14th. I wish to thank my students of Acting French and every single person who took time to work towards this. I believe it is only through a collective effort that we can get there. I also believe it is worth it.



PIERRE-LOUIS PHILIPPONNAT

Prior to coming to NYU, I earned my masters degree in Literature, philology and linguistics at the Sorbonne University. By focusing on contemporary African and diasporic authors, under the supervision of professor Romuald Fonkoua, my thesis regarded Western categorization as a “prêt-à-porter”, a “prêt-à-penser”, a heuristical fixation that infiltrates common knowledge.



I explained how such representations of both Africa and the African are archives – “commandement” and “commencement” as Derrida puts it – that are to be set in motion, from a place of authorship and of authority.

As a graduate student at NYU I expect to be working on knowledge productions, categorizations, and grammatology. All the while, I aim to discover new possibilities in digital humanities, to think about new ways of writing and to explore research as an act of creation. I am currently writing and designing a hybrid anthology that reflects upon the concepts of absence, disparition and relation. Inspired by new formats of publishing, I work to escape the restrictive and striated space of the text through the multiplication of systems of representation.

ETIENNE MIQUEU

Etienne Miqueu is a PhD Student in the Department of French Literature, Thought and Culture at NYU. After three years of “classes préparatoires” at Lycée Henri IV in Paris, he graduated from Sciences Po Paris and from the EHESS (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales) with highest honors. Under the supervision of Frédérique Aït-Touati, he wrote his master’s thesis on American biologist Lynn Margulis, analyzing her style of scientific research regarding symbiosis, bacteria, and the Gaia hypothesis. At NYU, he intends to focus on the history of biology, microbial ecology, and Francophone thinking about ecology and life on Earth. He is particularly interested in studying the theories of symbiosis both from a history of science and a literary point of view, in order to observe how they travel from biology to philosophy, anthropology, literature, and visual arts.



Par Alfred Galichon, Directeur de NYU Paris.

Paris est une ville qui ne ressemble à aucune autre. De ses monuments emblématiques à ses charmants quartiers, la Ville Lumière a quelque chose à offrir à chacun. Vous retrouverez dans ses musées toute l'histoire de France, dont nombre de pages marquantes ont été écrites à Paris ; vous verrez dans ses restaurants briller la gastronomie Française, un patrimoine immatériel de l'Humanité bien vivant ; vous découvrirez en flânant le je-ne-sais quoi qui fait de Paris une capitale mondiale de la mode, et vous assisterez à sa scène artistique mondialement renommées qui en fait une destination incontournable pour les visiteurs éclairés des quatre coins du monde. Loin de découvrir la ville comme des touristes, les étudiants qui choisissent d'étudier à NYU Paris peuvent ainsi faire l'expérience d'une immersion totale, tout en bénéficiant d'un soutien constant de la part de l'équipe de NYU Paris.

Ce semestre de printemps 2023, NYU Paris accueille près de 300 étudiants, l'un des plus grands nombres d'étudiants accueillis sur place jusqu'à présent. Ils étudieront un large choix de disciplines offertes à NYU Paris, et l'enseignement qu'ils recevront en classe seront complétés par des activités proposées par conjointement les professeurs et l'équipe de vie étudiante, comme des promenades de découverte de la ville, des visites de musées, et des événements culturels. Des excursions dans de nombreuses villes de France, notamment Nantes, le Mont-Saint-Michel, Avignon, et Lyon, permettant aux étudiants de mieux comprendre l'histoire et la culture de la France au-delà des frontières parisiennes.

Par ailleurs, nos universités partenaires, notamment l'Université de Paris et PSL, offrent à nos étudiants une expérience inédite de la vie universitaire française et leur permettent de rencontrer des étudiants français et internationaux en dehors de NYU.

En veillant particulièrement au bien-être et à la santé mentale des étudiants, NYU Paris s'assure d'accompagner les étudiants au mieux dans le stress qui peut accompagner la vie étudiante et quotidienne à l'étranger en offrant une gamme de réponse complète aux problèmes que peuvent rencontrer les étudiants : séances de psychothérapie régulière yoga, partenariats avec des professionnels de santé, ligne d'urgence 24/7.

On ne peut pas parler de la France sans parler de la langue française. Les cours de français à NYU Paris de tous les niveaux, de débutant à avancé, garantissent que chaque étudiant ait la possibilité d'améliorer ses compétences linguistiques en français, langue importante dans la diplomatie et les relations internationales et langue largement parlée dans plus de 29 pays. Apprendre et connaître le français ouvre de nombreuses possibilités de voyage, de travail et de communication avec des personnes de cultures diverses et donne accès aux œuvres de célèbres écrivains français tels que Victor Hugo, Marcel Proust et Simone de Beauvoir.

Que vous étudiez le français, les sciences humaines, l'art ou les sciences, Paris est l'endroit idéal pour vous immerger dans de nouvelles cultures et créer des souvenirs inoubliables.

FACULTY BOOKSHELF

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

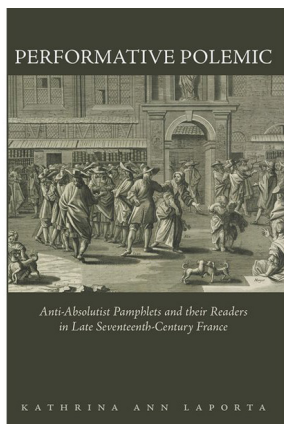




ESSAI DE POÉTIQUE HÉLINANDIENNE

ARIANE BOTTEX-FERRAGNE

Le Reclus de Molliens est un poète didactique du début du xiii^e siècle qui, bien que délaissé par la critique moderne, s'imposait au Moyen Âge comme un véritable bestseller. Tout en explorant son œuvre, il s'agira de jeter une lumière sur un corpus plus large, celui des poèmes en strophe héliandienne.



PERFORMATIVE POLEMIC: ANTI-ABSOLUTIST PAMPHLETS AND THEIR READERS IN LATE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

KATHRINA LAPORTA

Performative Polemic is the first literary historical study to analyze the “war of words” unleashed in the pamphlets denouncing Louis XIV’s absolute monarchy between 1667 and 1715. As conflict erupted between the French ruler and his political enemies, pamphlet writers across Europe penned scathing assaults on the Sun King’s bellicose impulses and expansionist policies. This book investigates how, at a crucial moment in which politics was enacted through praise literature and the spectacle of

court ceremony, pamphlet writers challenged the monarchy’s monopoly over the performance of sovereignty by contesting the very mechanisms through which the Crown legitimized its authority at home and abroad.

In this volume, Kathrina Ann LaPorta offers a new conceptual framework for reading pamphlets as political interventions. Rather than viewing these polemical works as windows into the past, LaPorta asserts that an analysis of the pamphlet’s form is crucial to understanding how pamphleteers actively dialogued with the literary field to invest readers in political dissent. Even as pamphlets spread sedition, their authors seduced readers by capitalizing on existing markets in literature, legal writing, and journalism. Pamphlet writers appealed to the theatergoing public that would have been attending plays by Molière and Racine, as well as to readers of historical novels and periodicals. Whether they appropriated juridical language to indict absolutism, or usurped Louis XIV’s voice in fictive narratives mocking his impotence, pamphleteers entertained readers as they revealed the fault lines in the absolutist enterprise. In examining the endlessly creative ways in which pamphlets attacked the performative circuitry behind the curtain of monarchy, LaPorta offers a richer picture of the intersections between seventeenth-century literary culture and the clandestine world of pamphleteering.

Roman et fictions brèves
dans la littérature française
du XIX^e siècle
Interférences, tensions, dialogues

Texte remis par
Chantal Massol
et
Claudie Bernard



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ROMAN ET FICTIONS BRÈVES DANS LA LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE DU XIXE SIÈCLE

CLAUDIE BERNARD

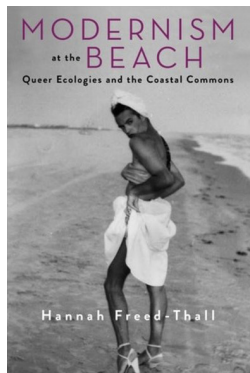
Si la question des interactions entre le roman et les fictions brèves n'est pas propre au XIX^e siècle, elles se pose toutefois avec une particulière acuité à cette époque.

C'est en effet le moment où s'affirme à la fois le statut générique du roman et celui de la nouvelle, à la faveur du mouvement de reconfiguration du système des genres qui se produit au cours de ce siècle.

Cette séparation n'empêche toutefois pas des liens étroits, nombreux et divers, dus notamment à l'entrée de la littérature dans l'ère médiatique, puis

dans la « civilisation du journal », règne de la circulation et du recyclage des écrits, de la porosité des frontières génériques, des entrelacs de formes, de leur hybridation.

Ce volume est d'une grande richesse sur tous les plans : théorie du roman et théorie de la nouvelle en tant que forme brève ; méthodologies variées (approches comparées de l'usage des deux formes chez un même auteur, par exemple) ; histoire littéraire et réflexions sur les supports médiatiques ; choix d'un large corpus, bien équilibré (auteurs canonisés, tels Staël, Stendhal, Balzac, Sand, Flaubert et Maupassant, et auteurs moins lus de nos jours, comme Féval, Erckmann-Chatrion, Daudet ou Rosny ; et ceux que la recomposition des champs universitaires au XXI^e siècle a minorisés, comme Lamartine, Musset ou Nodier) ; réflexions sur les genres esthétiques et sur la poétique des oeuvres.



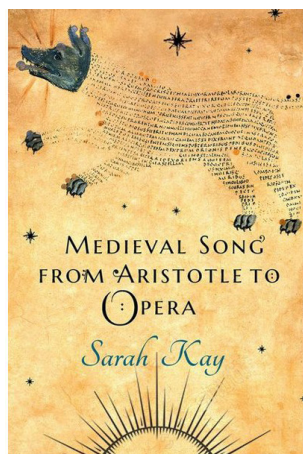
MODERNISM AT THE BEACH: QUEER ECOLOGIES AND THE COASTAL COMMONS

HANNAH FREED-THALL

At the beach, bodies converge with the elements and strange treasures come to light. Departing from the conventional association of modernism with the city, this book makes a case for the coastal zone as a surprisingly generative setting for twentieth-century literature and art. An unruly and elusive confluence of human and more-than-human forces, the seashore is also a space of performance—a stage for loosely scripted, improvisatory forms of embodiment and togetherness.

The beach, Hannah Freed-Thall argues, was to the modernist imagination what mountains were to Romanticism: a space not merely of anthropogenic conquest but of vital elemental and creaturely connection. With an eye to the peripheries of capitalist leisure, Freed-Thall recasts familiar seaside practices—including tide-pooling, beachcombing, gambling, and sunbathing—as radical experiments in perception and sociability. Close readings of works by Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, Claude McKay, Samuel Beckett, Rachel Carson, and Gordon Matta-Clark, among others, explore the modernist beach as a queer refuge, a precarious commons, a scene of collective exhaustion and endurance, and a visionary threshold at the end of the world.

Interweaving environmental humanities, queer and feminist theory, and cultural history, *Modernism at the Beach* offers new ways of understanding twentieth-century literature and its relation to ecological thought.



MEDIEVAL SONG FROM ARISTOTLE TO OPERA

SARAH KAY

Focusing on songs by the troubadours and trouvères from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera* contends that song is not best analyzed as “words plus music” but rather as a distinctive way of sounding words. Rather than situating them in their immediate period, Sarah Kay fruitfully listens for and traces crosscurrents between medieval French and Occitan songs and both earlier poetry and much later opera. Reflecting on a song’s songlike quality—as, for example, the sound of light in the dawn sky, as breathed by beasts, as sirenlike in its perils—Kay reimagines the diversity of songs from this period, which

include inset lyrics in medieval French narratives and the works of Guillaume de Machaut, as works that are as much desired and imagined as they are actually sung and heard.

Kay understands song in terms of breath, the constellations, the animal soul, and life itself. Her method also draws inspiration from opera, especially those that inventively recreate medieval song, arguing for a perspective on the manuscripts that transmit medieval song as instances of multimedia, quasi-operatic performances.

Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera features a companion website hosting twenty-four audio or video recordings, realized by professional musicians specializing in early music, of pieces discussed in the book, together with performance scores, performance reflections, and translations of all recorded texts. These audiovisual materials represent an extension in practice of the research aims of the book—to better understand the sung dimension of medieval song.



LES ENFANTS DE CADILLAC

FRANÇOIS NOUDEMANN

En 1911, fuyant les persécutions contre les Juifs en Lituanie, Chaïm, le grand-père du narrateur, arrive en France. Afin d’obtenir la nationalité française, il s’engage dans l’armée et prend part à la Grande Guerre. Il est grièvement blessé par une bombe chimique. Il passe vingt ans interné, avant de mourir dans l’anonymat à l’hôpital psychiatrique de Cadillac, en Gironde. En 1940, Albert, le père du narrateur, est fait prisonnier et dénoncé comme Juif. Lors de la libération des camps, il met plusieurs semaines à rejoindre la France à pied depuis la Pologne. Il risque plusieurs fois d’être exécuté par des soldats nazis en déroute ou des militaires russes avides.

Dans ce premier roman époustouflant, François Noudelmann emporte le lecteur dans les tumultes des deux conflits mondiaux. Les destins de son grand-père et de son père sont de véritables épopées, à travers lesquelles l’auteur questionne son identité française.

SPRING HIGHLIGHTS

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