

Works-in-Progress Symposium for Research Students in French and Francophone Studies

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

10:00 am Welcome (Representatives from DRAFT and ASFS committees)

10:15 am 18th and 19th Centuries

Hannah Doyle, University of Adelaide

→ Hannah Doyle is an MPhil candidate in French Studies at the University of Adelaide. Her research focuses on the notion of *mis-en-scène* and performativity in the poetry of the French Romantic poetess Marceline Desbordes-Valmore.

'Performance through Dialogue: Explicit and Implicit Dialogue in the Poetry of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore'

→ Although well-known and well-respected by her contemporaries, the works of 19th-century French poetess Marceline Desbordes-Valmore have been accorded little attention in recent scholarship. The few modern-day scholars who have examined her poetry tend to limit Desbordes-Valmore to a woman poet with a strong focus on the maternal, overlooking her innovative manipulation of form. It is for this reason that I have chosen to examine her work from the angle of performance, a notion which has been to-date neglected in Valmorian scholarship. The dialogic form constitutes an important characteristic of performativity in Desbordes-Valmore's works, as it encourages us to replace the restrictive, gender-centric analysis traditionally applied her poetry with a more methodical, linguistically-driven approach. Desbordes-Valmore's treatment of the dialogic works raises two key questions. Firstly, who is in dialogue with whom? The poetic works of Desbordes-Valmore give us extensive examples: mother and child, subject and queen, bird and tree, two dogs. Secondly, is the dialogue real or implicit? Are the roles clearly defined between the characters identified in the poem or is the dialogue already taking place between the poet and the reader? These two scenarios are not, of course, mutually exclusive. Drawing on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Ralph Rader, and Elena Thuault, I propose to closely analyse the explicit and implicit dialogue in Desbordes-Valmore's poetry in order to highlight its performative function, as well as emphasise the need for further critical inquiry into her works.

Susan Mary Purdy, University of New England

→ Sue Purdy is in the process of completing her Confirmation of Candidature in a Master of Philosophy at University of New England. Her thesis will geocritically analyse 19th Century French texts to identify the authors' sense of place for their regions of France. She is interested in French authors whose lived experience in their regions can be identified through narrative and characters to express their relationship with place.

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'Writing Place as a Lived Experience in Central France'

→ The focus of my project is the examination of French texts, « Le Lys dans la vallée » and other short works by Honoré de Balzac, « La Vallée Noire » and other short works by George Sand and « L'école Buissonniere » by Nicolas Vanier, through a geocritical perspective. The main research questions will be « how can a sense of place be identified in the chosen examples of French literature ? How do the texts express this through their narrative and through the perspectives of their characters? How do these texts compare through a geocritical lens? What does this tell us about the authors' relationship with place?

Suzanne Griffiths, University of Birmingham

→ Suzanne Griffiths is currently a PhD student, studying as a part time, distance learner, with the University of Birmingham. The aim of her research is to encourage a re-evaluation of Zola's humanitarianism in his final works,

Les Quatres Évangiles.

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'A Testimony of Conscience': A Study of Zola's Contribution to Humanitarianism by Creating a Democratic Exemplar'

→ To highlight how my thesis will take an interdisciplinary approach to investigating the impact of Zola's *Les Évangiles* analysing how far one can argue that this tetralogy establishes Zola's increasingly socio-moral, humanitarian purpose. I argue that a revisiting of these texts should invite a reorienting of our reading of *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

Through an increasingly sociohistorical approach I aim to present my research on my draft first chapter dealing with narrating femininity in *Fécondité* and progress on chapter two highlighting the progressive nature of *Travail* through a socialist lens in terms of the role of the female and education.

11:15am On the Power of Art and Literature

Chair: Bertrand Bourgeois

Justine Scarlaken, University Complutense and Paris Sorbonne University

→ Justine Scarlaken is an associate teacher in the English, French and German philology department at the University of Oviedo in Spain. She is finishing her PhD titled: *La critique littéraire est-elle devenue une littérature comme les autres ? A propos du renouveau de la théorie littéraire*, at the Complutense University in Madrid. Her research focuses on theoretical fiction, speeches of violence in contemporary literature and ecopoetics. In 2022, based on the writings of Behrouz Boochani, she published with Antonio Viselli : *Le système kyriarkal à l'épreuve de l'abjection chez Tahar Ben Jelloun et Assia Djebar. Dhalousie French Studies, n°121* (<https://doi.org/10.7202/1097950ar>).

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'From theoretical fiction to research-creation'

→ Theoretical fiction is becoming increasingly important in the field of contemporary literature, and many representatives of this movement, particularly under the tutelary figure of Borges, are now making their mark. The works of theoretical fiction are characterized

above all by the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and reality, fiction and theory, but also fiction and literary criticism. The question arises as to how to approach these works of high creative potential. One of the approaches put forward could be the use of research-creation. A practice that aims to take more account of the artist's posture.

Mathieu Farizier, University of Oxford

→ Mathieu Farizier is a third-year PhD student on the resurgence of "revolutionary poetry" - in quotation marks - in France, since the 1990's. He has published only a little bit and done other things.

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"Quels sont les moyens de rendre plus politique un texte qui ne l'est pas assez ?" Quintane, efficient politics and affective coercion'

→ Nathalie Quintane interrogates the tone that political literature should adopt in order to carry political effects. Mindful of the "vertus émollientes" (2003) of immersive, cushy and catchy texts, she interrogates the amount of affective consideration that a writer should give to her readers. "Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, *agréable*, pour un livre ?" (2014) Quintane argues that, by falling into expected forms of the cultural production, the political valence of "agreeable" texts will be lost. In the Marxian tradition, she hints that they risk becoming either commodities or harmless restoratives that strengthen prevailing hierarchies of class, race and taste. Instead, as opposed to "ménager le lecteur", she assumes a non-conciliatory tone and attitude. Considering that "ce n'est pas parce que [le texte] n'est pas pépère qu'on ne peut pas le lire", she resists discarding the violence of the real by producing "violen[t]" forms (2012). To that end, her poetics baffles all sense of reader's expectations and undoes editorial categories. Yet, since publishing *Tomates* in 2010, she admits having realised that in the cultural context of contemporary France, political literature will fail to achieve political effects outside of recognisably political themes and forms ("le texte, pour être politique, doit parler de politique" - 2010). This realisation exacerbated a tension that was already present in her previous works: she combines indeterminately anarchistic and anti-authoritarian forms with political resolve, showcasing the class struggle as well as with the coercive management of the reader's affects. My talk will focus on her experimental book *Formage* to show that to "rendre plus politique un texte qui ne l'est pas assez", i.e. to carry political force in a de-politicised world, she works against her readers and against her own writing. I argue that Quintane revives and blends two incompatible poles of radical politics: the anarchistic and the Stalinist. She situates political effectiveness in their non-existent middle ground.

Emily Wieder, University of Iowa

→ Emily Wieder is a second-year Ph.D. student at the University of Iowa. Her dissertation focuses on women surrealists who resisted the Nazis, and her research more broadly examines the interplay between text and context in 20th-century French and Francophone literature.

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'The Abject as Resistance in Cahun's and Artaud's Anti-nazi Works, 1940-1945'

→ This paper applies Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and her semiotic theories to Antonin Artaud's drawings and Claude Cahun's tracts created during the Occupation. Both Artaud and Cahun participated in Surrealism before the war while maintaining their affiliations with the movement during the 1940s. Cahun and Artaud likewise infused their Surrealist practices with theatricality, yet no study has drawn the two artists in parallel. To begin filling this gap, this paper focuses on their independent Resistance activities, which evoke the abject in contrast to Hitler's "racial purification" discourse and simultaneously straddle the Semiotic and Symbolic Orders.

12:00 pm Short break

12:15 pm Politics and Policy in Contemporary France
Chair: Joe Hardwick

Edoardo Brunetti, RMIT University

→ Edoardo Brunetti is a PhD candidate at the Social and Global Studies Centre, RMIT University, writing a thesis on language policy and the regional languages of France. He is interested in language policy and planning, regional languages and regionalist and nationalist political movements.

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'Regional language communities and language policy and planning in contemporary France'

→ Historically marginalised by the state, the regional languages of France have lost many of their speakers over the past two centuries. Most are classified as endangered by UNESCO, but in recent years efforts to preserve them have strengthened. In this context, the perspectives of regional language communities—those who must be engaged if efforts to save the languages are to be successful—are crucial. What future do they envisage for their languages? What role do they see governments playing in language revitalisation and maintenance efforts? In this presentation, I will present my research investigating the relationship between regional language communities and the language policy and planning process in France. The research seeks to centre the voices of regional language speakers and communities, sharing their perspectives on language policy and the future of regional languages in France.

12:30 pm Lunch

1:30 pm **New Caledonia: Identities and Society**

Chair: Amy Hubbell

Anne Roberts, James Cook University

→ Anne Roberts is a 2nd-year Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at James Cook University, Townsville. She is researching the construction of the identity of the Kanak people and how Kanak people are represented within New Caledonia's common destiny framework.

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'Symbolism and Meaning Making in Nouméa's City Centre'

→ Place and street names are useful for navigating our way around towns and cities, but they are also historical and symbolic representations that tell the people who inhabit or traverse that town or city, stories about that space and the people who are worthy of remembrance in that community.

The names of places and streets, as well as the language used for naming, are discourses through which people construct meaning. They are every-day, mundane symbols that act pervasively to impact our sense of belonging as well as our identity.

What stories do the place and street names in New Caledonia's capital city, Nouméa, tell us about the French settler colony?

In this presentation, I look through a settler colonial and decolonising theoretical lens, at the names of places and streets present in the city centre of Nouméa and discuss what meanings might be constructed from these unobtrusive symbolic representations.

Maria Elena Rosa Ortega de Ohara, James Cook University

→ Maria Elena Rosa Ortega de Ohara is a PhD candidate at James Cook University. Her research focuses on exploring the extent to which New Caledonian picturebooks represent New Caledonian youth and examining the representational alignments and misalignments between the picturebooks and school curriculum. She is particularly interested in the use of picturebooks as pedagogical resources and their potential benefits for children studying in multicultural and diverse classrooms.

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'New Caledonian picturebooks as instruments for understanding New Caledonian identities and diversity'

→ According to Gay (2013), learners' academic achievements and well-being increase when they see themselves reflected in the learning materials they interact with. Picturebooks as teaching resources contribute to the learner's own identity formation (Wilson & Rennie, 2018) and an understanding of the identities of those around them (Malins & Whitty, 2022). Picturebooks allow children to make social connections between the book's representations and themselves, including their world (Madalena & Ramos, 2021). However, the challenge is that picturebooks used as learning resources may not reflect the self-expressed identities of all New Caledonian children. This research aims to examine the alignments and misalignments between New Caledonian youth's representation in contemporary picturebooks and New Caledonian primary school learners' perspectives on their contemporary lives.

2:15 pm **Afternoon break**

2:30 pm

Ocean, Water, and Tides in Contemporary Francophone Literature

Chair: Léa Vuong

Josephine Goldman, University of Sydney

→ Josephine Goldman is a final year PhD student at the University of Sydney, writing a thesis on the representation of the relationship between water, gender and cultural identity in contemporary writing and art by francophone Caribbean and Oceanian women. She is interested in many fields of research including ecocriticism, transnationalism, and postcolonialism.

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'Diving into heavy waters: Water and identity in contemporary art and writing of francophone Caribbean and Oceanian women'

→ In this presentation, I will give an overview of my PhD thesis. My project investigates representations of water in relation to gender and cultural identity in works by six francophone Caribbean and Oceanian women. It explores how these contemporary artists and writers carve out ambivalent representations of the relationship between themselves, their characters and water which both work within and challenge dominant frameworks of Caribbean and Oceanian archipelagic and oceanic identity. The thesis explores oceanic and watery spatiality in Déwé Gorodé's *L'Epave* and Titaua Peu's *Pina*; memory, trauma and the sea in Marie-Hélène Villierme's *Témoins de la bombe* and *Visages de Polynésie* and Fabienne Kanor's *Humus*; and (non)maternity and climate change in Guy Gabon's *La montée des eaux* and Maryse Condé's *En attendant la montée des eaux*.

Roodmerlynn Pierre, University of Wisconsin-Madison

→ Roodmerlynn Pierre is a third-year PhD student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her work focuses on contemporary Antillean women writers. She is interested in the interrogation of Antillean identity as well as the representation of mothers and daughters in Caribbean texts.

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'Navigating Our History: A Tidalectic reading of Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*'

→ Some geologists have argued that thinking of the ocean as a force rather than a place is more valuable. The ocean, unlike other sites, poses challenges to representation and memorialization. The ocean is not an *aqua nullius* or a blank space but an agentive and ontological place. Thinking about the ocean as an agentive entity helps us to understand how Caribbean authors and scholars use the ocean and bodies of water to generate alternative ways of knowing. Barbadian poet and scholar Kamau Brathwaite uses the elusive property of water to expand our understanding of Caribbean origin, history, and identity through his theory of tidalectics. Tidalectics is an analytical method based on the forward and backward movement of the tides in water; it foregrounds an understanding of the origins and histories of the Caribbean as cyclical rather than linear. The fluidity and malleability of water provides a valuable framework for understanding the entanglements of history, memory, and representability in the Caribbean.

I seek to explore the presence of water in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik. Krak!* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. With Kamau Brathwaite's theory as a framework, I argue that Danticat uses water (in components and structures) to destabilize the linearity of time and distinctions of place. Using water as a distinctly feminine agent, I seek to demonstrate how Danticat uses bodies of water to convey the challenges of representing the histories and relationships of Haitian women and their (fore)mothers and how these women navigate their relationships "in the wake" of slavery and state regimes of terror.

3:15 pm **Gender in Film and Literature**

Chair: Michelle Royer

Sarah Djos-Raph, University of Louisiana Lafayette

→ Sarah Djos-Raph (née Denslow) (she/her) is an ABD Ph.D. candidate at the University of Louisiana Lafayette. She holds a B.A. in International Affairs with a concentration in Women's Studies and a B.A. in French from The University of Maine. Additionally, she holds a M.A. in French from The University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Sarah has previously served as a Rotary Youth Exchange Student, Fulbright Canada Killam Fellow, and Peace Corps Volunteer. She is a current Rotarian and runs a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of youth in Benin, West Africa.

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'Popular Culture and Fémicriture: Women Beninese Writers of La Francophonie'

→ This paper explores the multidimensional waves of publishing in Benin briefly from pre-independence to today. African women are part of a new proliferation of literary writings, named fémicriture, and they publish in local languages and French outside of France because they argue for a new conception of 'la Francophonie'. Their impact on cultural literacy from blogs, children's literature, and collective anthologies, to poetry, national school curriculum, competitions and beyond, play a vital role in defining Beninese literature. Beninese literature falls into a vaster contemporary literary genre of World literature, and critiques the unequal hierarchies that exist between the center and periphery, which are fueled by endemic forms of violence. This paper examines Popular Culture in Africa and the Diaspora through a literary lens revealing the present situation in Benin. Rooted in feminist and pan-Africanist theoretical thought, Beninese women writers divulge their life experiences to illuminate the complex situation for women. Rather than use feminine images to describe women as victimized objects, they denounce injustices, and women are depicted for their strengths despite being exploited and abused by the patriarchy.

Katia Tulyakova, University of Melbourne

→ Katia Tulyakova is a Philosophy Honours student at the University of Melbourne, starting her thesis on personal autonomy and agency. Her areas of interest lie in European, political, feminist philosophy, and the history of philosophy.

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'Le regard féminin dans le cinéma: un compte rendu fonctionnel au prisme ranciérien'

→ La notion du regard féminin dans le cinéma est comprise de plusieurs manières. Dans cette présentation je proposerai ma propre lecture. Mon approche sera celle de compte rendu fonctionnel. Je demanderai ce qu'un film doit faire pour que l'on considère comme le regard féminin.

Dans la première partie, j'identifierai le trait déterminant du regard féminin dans son mécanisme d'établissement du rapport avec les spectateur.trice.s qui consiste en distanciation, en me basant sur le travail d'Iris Brey. En maintenant de la distance avec les spectateur.trice.s le regard féminin les traite avec l'égalité qui permet, à son tour, la liberté d'interprétation impossible sous la domination qui effectue le regard masculin à travers son mécanisme d'identification.

Dans la deuxième partie, je recourrai à la pensée politique et esthétique de Rancière pour développer davantage ma définition fonctionnelle du regard féminin et pour mieux comprendre comment l'égalité et la liberté mentionnées ci-dessus peuvent se produire. Je le ferai en utilisant la distinction police-politique introduite par Rancière pour démontrer que le regard féminin est caractérisé par son introduction du principe d'égalité. Ensuite j'inscrirai le regard féminin dans la catégorie du régime esthétique de l'art, en l'opposant ainsi au regard masculin comme appartenant au régime représentatif.

Dans la partie finale, je présenterai le brouillage des frontières exécuté par le regard féminin entre les genres du documentaire et de la fiction effectué notamment par un « documentaire subjectif » de Varda et un « documentaire fictif » d'Akerman pour exemplifier la théorie présentée ci-dessus.

Tamzin Elliott, Durham University

→ Tamzin Elliott is an incoming MA (Research) student at Durham University in the UK looking at representations of abortion in French life writing and documentary. Her previous research examined intersectionality and intermediality in French language podcasts.

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'Abortion in the I of the beholder: the 'aborto-socio-biographical' turn in 21st century French life writing and documentary'

→ My research examines representations of abortion in 21st century French life writing and documentary, using a range of texts, graphic novels, and film. It focuses on the unique manifestation of Philippe Lejeune's autobiographical pact (1975) in examples of what I refer to as 'aborto-socio-biography'; what form does the pact take when an individual experience is inherently collective? This work also interrogates what these aborto-socio-biographical representations say about the place of abortion in contemporary French society, as well as how other(ed) social identities, such as race and social class, impact recalling and/or retelling one's abortion.

4:30 pm

Close