



'TUMMY TROUBLE'

The Gut in French and Francophone Literature, Theory and Culture

Abstracts and bios

Françoise Campbell - **Houellebecq's grotesque bodies: An analysis of the body as a figure of rhetorical ambivalence in Michel Houellebecq's *Les Particules élémentaires***

ABSTRACT

In Michel Houellebecq's novels, images of sex, consumption, bodily decay and excretions make frequent appearances, as the author nonchalantly recounts the sordid nature of our contemporary society. While such descriptions remind us of the fleeting nature of our own material existence, they also reveal the rhetorical instability of Houellebecq's writing. This paper engages with the notions of the grotesque and bathos to explore how the depictions of physical decay and pleasure in Houellebecq's writing may provide insight into the very language of his texts, and the ambivalence of its function.

BIO

Françoise Campbell is a PhD candidate in cotutelle at the University of Melbourne and at l'Université Paris 7 Diderot. Her research interests are focussed on rhetorical and ideology ambivalence in contemporary fiction, with her doctoral thesis studying the ambivalence of utopian representation in the novels of Michel Houellebecq. She has co-organised the symposium *Houellebecq's cultural transgressions*, which took place at Senate House, and will be co-editing a special edition of *French Cultural Studies* on the same topic. Françoise has also published the article "Houellebecq à l'encontre ou au centre de l'utopie?" in the French-language Science Fiction journal *Res Futurae*.

Jean-Francois Poisson-Gueffier - **"Écrite, la merde ne sent pas" ? Écriture de la défécation et expérience des limites dans l'épopée d'Audigier (XII^e siècle)**

ABSTRACT

Audigier demeure un hapax dans le domaine des lettres médiévales. L'écriture de la scatologie, en ce pays de Cocuce ou les genz sont en merde jusques au cou, devient expérience des limites. Limites de la représentation comme de l'interprétation d'un texte irréductiblement pluriel. Le réinvestissement du domaine épique prolonge cet écart, le poème accordant à la scatologie une absolue prééminence dont procèdent les limites de la réception, quand « l'épopée pour rire » fait « crier grâce ».

BIO

Jean-François Poisson-Gueffier, agrégé de lettres modernes, a étudié en khâgne au Lycée Fénelon puis à la Sorbonne. Docteur en Littérature Française et Comparée de l'Université SorbonneNouvelle Paris 3, sa thèse porte sur l'écriture de la mort dans le Haut Livre du Graal. Ses recherches portent principalement sur le roman arthurien (Lancelot-Graal, Perlesvaus, Perceforest) et le médiévalisme (Caudel, Apollinaire, Roubaud), par le prisme de la rhétorique et de la stylistique.

Aureo Neto - **Shit happens: the (mis)representation of Cholera symptoms in French Literature in the 1800s**

ABSTRACT

Cholera was a major epidemic disease throughout the 19th century and its reoccurrence has affected French society in many ways, inflaming scientific debate, causing riots, motivating the re-urbanization of Paris. Cholera kills by severe dehydration caused by massive diarrhoea and vomiting. Thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, literary texts in which the disease is present use many strategies to avoid directly mentioning symptoms: ranging from silence and euphemism to irony and grotesque. This work discusses the nature of and the causes for such misrepresentation of cholera's symptoms by combining tools of comparative literature and cultural history.

BIO

Aureo Lustosa Guerios is a PhD student at the University of Padua interested in comparative literature, cultural history and history of science. His research is focused on the literary representations of epidemic cholera in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Aureo has obtained his master's degree in European Literary Cultures at the University of Bologna.

Colton Valentine - **Gastronomie À Rebours: A More Dialectical Decadence**

ABSTRACT

Prior scholarship on Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À rebours* tends to render decadent food a locus of sin, an object inspiring Des Esseintes to total, life-threatening abnegation. In this paper, I argue that Huysmans' novel plays out a more complex dialectic. First, I reread key gastronomical passages in which Des Esseintes plays the roles of both tempter and tempted, bestowing on food an aesthetic significance, then growing aghast by his own curated attraction. Next, I offer a potential source for those poles: the emergent nineteenth-century discourse on French gastronomy. Filtered through Des Esseintes' social misanthropy, that discourse generates both his mimetic attraction and his anti-mimetic repulsion toward food. In closing, I hypothesize that anachronistic and gendered readings of *À rebours* may be responsible for the tendency to collapse this decadent dialectic.

BIO

Colton Valentine is an Ertegun Scholar in English Literature at the University of Oxford. He graduated from Harvard's Comparative Literature department in 2016, after which he pursued a master's in Theory of Literature at the École Normale Supérieure on the William-Lodge Fellowship. His primary research is on nineteenth-century European cosmopolitanisms, with secondary interests in comparative modernisms and the hermeneutic and philological traditions. Beyond his academic work, Colton has served as an executive member for The Harvard Club of France and written for *The Harvard Advocate* and *Crimson*, *The Huffington Post*, and the *LA Review of Books*.

Kate Foster - **The Gutless Wonder and the Bloodsuckers: Powering the Body in Gaston Leroux's 'La Poupée Sanglante'**

ABSTRACT

Gaston Leroux's cyborg Gabriel has no guts and does not eat. Instead, his energy comes from the clockwork mechanism in his chest. More than a metaphorical inner lack, I suggest that Gabriel's soul is missing precisely because he has no sensing innards. The novel's vampires also have a particular relationship to eating: they eat – or rather, bite – people, and drink their blood, sapping their energy. In this text eating differently, or not at all, is a marker of difference. To eat is to live and to die, not to eat is to be divorced from the realm of the living.

BIO

Kate Foster is a third-year PhD student at King's College, London. Her research focuses on mannequins, androids and cyborgs in visual art and literature from the 1870s to the late 1930s. Kate's thesis suggests that the idea of the machine-man took on renewed significance in late modernity, surfacing in fictionalized depictions of mannequins, androids, and cyborgs which asked what the existence of these humanoid bodies might mean for humanity. Her work examines the inherent ambiguity of such artificial copies of the human body, whose unstable identities (and fictional status) make them an ideal locus for questions of gender, technology, and fetishism.

Pierre-Elie Pichot - **La métaphore du « ventre de la terre » dans la poésie française de la Renaissance**

ABSTRACT

La poésie française de la Renaissance a bien souvent décrit les mines de pierres précieuses et de métaux à travers la métaphore ovidienne du « ventre de la terre » (viscera terrae). Ce ventre, selon un large corpus de poètes majeurs comme mineurs, engendre les métaux suivant un processus alchimique comparable à l'engendrement animal ou humain. Creuser la terre s'apparente alors à une éviscération ou à un viol. Certains critiques ont donné un sens psychanalytique ou psychologique à cette métaphore. En commentant le détail des textes, nous nous demanderons quelles nouvelles directions nous pouvons donner à ces interprétations.

BIO

Pierre-Élie Pichot a 26 ans. Il a été élève à l'École Normale Supérieure de Lyon de 2011 à 2016 et suit depuis 2016 un doctorat à l'université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III. Il prépare une thèse intitulée « Vulcain et les Muses. Les arts du feu dans la poésie française et néo-latine de la Renaissance ». Outre ses activités scientifiques, il donne des conférences et tient un blog au sujet de la place des femmes de lettres dans la littérature française moderne.

Beatrice Fagan - **The Expansion and Consumption of the Pregnant Stomach in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Medicine**

ABSTRACT

Within many of Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart* novels, there is a pervasive sense of anxiety surrounding expansion, be it physical, economical, industrial or political. In these same texts, representations of the pregnant stomach are frequently accompanied by feelings of distrust and suspicion. Examining the conflicting imagery of the pregnant body as threatening both in its corporal expansion and its ability to internalise and digest its physical and emotional surroundings, this paper will draw upon literary and medical texts to argue that representations of the pregnant stomach can also be situated within larger discourses of anxiety surrounding expansion and consumption in nineteenth century France.

BIO

Beatrice Fagan is a second year PhD Student at the University of Kent where she is funded by a CHASE AHRC PhD studentship award. Her thesis topic is 'Literary and Medical Representations of Maternity in Nineteenth Century France' and the paper that she will be presenting is adapted from a section of her thesis which examines pregnancy in medical and literary texts.

Anne-Lucile Gerardot - **Boisson et désir dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Duras**

ABSTRACT

When the heroine of *Moderato cantabile* drinks wine, it is stated that "le feu nourrit son ventre de sorcière". Stemming from this discrete reference to *La Sorcière* by Jules Michelet, this study analyses the relationship between drinking and desire in the texts of Marguerite Duras. Following an approach inspired by psychocriticism, it focuses on the obsessive metaphors ("fire", "blood", "milk"), the mythical figures ("witch", "vampire", "ogress") and the dramatic situations ("erotic combustion", "cannibalistic consumption", "maternal swallowing") that suggest that the belly is not only a meeting point between drinking and desire, but also a lost paradise for the Durassian characters haunted by the reminiscence of intrauterine life.

BIO

Anne-Lucile Gérardot has completed a PhD in French Literature at the University of Reims. Her thesis entitled "Alcohol in the works of Marguerite Duras" explores the way drunkenness permeates both story and writing, and plays a fundamental role in the text-reader relationship. She has produced several papers on Marguerite Duras and on the topics of wine, cafés and transgression in French literature. She teaches French at Dulwich College London.