

**Conscience and Consciousness  
in French and Francophone Literature (20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century)**

**M.St. Special Subject**

Hilary Term 2021

This special subject examines the manifestations and literary figuration of human interiority in French and Francophone literature, from the early twentieth century until today. Without aiming for exhaustiveness, we will focus on the ways in which the conscience and consciousness of writers and/or their characters have engaged with 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century realities and experiences at critical socio-historical junctures. The representation of the rational, moral, emotional, partisan, or metaphysical responses of contemporary subjects to events big and small, personal or/or political, will be our object of study, spanning perception, sensation, introspection, resistance, *engagement*, trauma, and critical judgment, among other modes of awareness. We will consider a wide array of genres and forms that shed light on this active inner life and its relation to an outside world shaped by major upheavals (such as the world wars, colonization and decolonization) but also by norms, customs, ideologies, and fields such as science, religion, and philosophy: the novel, automatic writing, epistolary fiction, poetry, testimonies, essays, the polyphonic novel, the nouveau roman and/or autobiography.

Students will meet for four sessions of two hours each. The reading list indicates a small number of 'set' texts to read for each of sessions, as well as recommended secondary sources. Students are advised to have made a good start on the primary reading before term begins.

Each student will give a short presentation on one of the set texts (10 to 15 minutes per student, in one session each, to be agreed by email ahead of Week 1). Please prepare a handout summarizing the structure and main points and citations of your presentation for your classmates. Students will also write essays for one other session (2500 words). The choice of topics for these are listed below. Essays should be submitted 48 hours before the seminar and include word count and bibliography, please.

**Tutors:** Simon Kemp, Somerville ([simon.kemp@some.ox.ac.uk](mailto:simon.kemp@some.ox.ac.uk))  
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**Location:** TBD

## **Week 1. Crisis of Consciousness: mind, world, and spirit in 1930s France**

[Dr Kemp]

### **Set texts:**

Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée*, Paris, Gallimard, 1938.

Georges Bernanos, *Journal d'un curé de campagne*, Paris, Plon, 1936

Sartre, *La Transcendance de l'Ego: esquisse d'une description phénoménologique* (1936) Paris, Vrin, 1965 (also available online via SOLO as *The Transcendence of the Ego*)

### **Selected further reading:**

#### On the set texts:

Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Concept of the Self', in *Sartre and Psychology*, ed. by Keith Hoeller, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press International, 1993, pp. 41-65.

Claire Daudin, *Dieu a-t-il besoin de l'écrivain? Péguy, Bernanos, Mauriac*, Paris, Cerf, 2006.

Matthew Eshleman, 'What is it like to be free?', in *Reading Sartre: On Phenomenology and Existentialism*, ed. by Jonathan Webber, London, Routledge, 2011, pp. 31-47.

Rhiannon Goldthorpe, *La Nausée*, London, HarperCollins, 1991.

Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Geneviève Idt, *La Nausée, Sartre: analyse critique*, Paris, Hatier, 1971.

Simon Kemp, 'Representing the Mind in the French Catholic Novel', *MLR*, 107 (2012), 408-21.

Jean-Marc Mouillie, *Sartre: conscience, ego et psychè*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2000.

Pierrette Renard, *Bernanos ou l'ombre lumineuse*, Grenoble, Publications de l'université Stendhal de Grenoble, 1990.

Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Une idée fondamentale de la philosophie de Husserl: l'Intentionnalité' (1939), in *Critiques littéraires (Situations I)*, pp. 27-32

Malcolm Scott, *The Struggle for the Soul of the French Novel*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989.

Michael R. Tobin, *George Bernanos: The Theological Source of his Art*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007.

*On consciousness and literature:*

Ian W. Alexander, *French Literature and the Philosophy of Consciousness: Phenomenological Essays*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1984.

William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991.

D. M. Armstrong, 'What is consciousness?', in *Philosophy of Mind*, ed. by John Heil, London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 607–16.

David Chalmers, *The Character of Consciousness*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Conscience et roman, I: la conscience au grand jour;*

*Conscience et roman, II: la conscience à mi-voix*, Paris: Minuit, 2009, 2011.

Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*, London: Routledge, 2008.

David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel*, London: Penguin, 2003.

Alan Palmer, *Fictional Minds* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 87-123, 170-204.

## **Week 2. Trouver la voie/voix: WWII and engagement**

[Dr Morisi]

### **Set texts:**

Albert Camus, *Lettres à un ami allemand*, 1943-1945/Paris, Gallimard, 1948.

Selected poems from the collection *L'Honneur des poètes*, 1943 (Aragon, Desnos, Éluard etc.)

Albert Camus, *La Peste*, Paris, Gallimard, 1947.

### **Selected critical reading:**

#### On context:

Sébastien Albertelli, Julien Blanc and Laurent Douzou, *La Lutte clandestine en France. Une histoire de la Résistance 1940-1944*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2019.

Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bedarida, *La France des années noires*, 2 vols, Paris, Le Seuil, 2000.

Peter Davies, *France and the Second World War: Occupation, Collaboration and Resistance*, London, Routledge, 2001.\*

Henri Michel, *Histoire de la Résistance en France 1940-1944*, 10ème édition, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1987.

Henri Rousso, *La Seconde Guerre mondiale expliquée à ma fille*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2013.\*

#### On the topic and set texts:

Hannah Arendt. "The concentration camps," *Partisan Review* 15:7 (1948): 743–763.

Roland Barthes. "Annales d'une épidémie ou roman de la solitude?" Club. Feb. 1955 (see Barthes's *Œuvres complètes 1942-1965*, ed. Éric Marty, vol. 1, Paris, Seuil, 1993, p. 479 *et sqq.*\*)

[NB : read Barthes's article alongside Camus's reply, letter to Roland Barthes from January 11, 1955, in Albert Camus, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. II, Paris, Gallimard, p. 285-7]\*

Pierre Bayard, *Écrire l'extrême : la littérature et l'art face aux crimes de masse*, revue *Europe*, n° 926-7, June-July 2006.

Rachel Bepaloff. "Le monde du condamné à mort." *Esprit* 163 (1950): 1-26.

Marie-Thérèse Blondeau. "La Peste, roman de la Résistance?" in *Albert Camus 22: Camus et l'Histoire*, Lettres Modernes Minard, 2009.\*

Emmanuel Bouju, ed., *L'Engagement littéraire*, Rennes, PU de Rennes, 2005.

Colin Davis, *Traces of War: Interpreting Ethics and Trauma in Twentieth-Century French Writing*, Liverpool, Liverpool UP, 2016. (see in particular chapters 4 and 5, available at [www.oapen.org](http://www.oapen.org))\*

- Soshana Felman, "Camus' The Plague or a Monument to Witnessing" in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 93-119.\*
- JeanYves Guérin. "Jalons pour une lecture politique de *La Peste*." *La Peste d'Albert Camus, Études réunies par Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi. Roman 20-50, Revue d'étude du roman du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle 2* (Dec. 1986): 7-25.
- Nicholas Hewitt, "Writing, Memory, and History" in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, p. 662-70.
- Edward Hughes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Camus*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2007.\*
- Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi. *Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi présente La Peste d'Albert Camus*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991.\*
- Ève Morisi, "Ad Nauseam: Camus's narrative roads to abolitionism" in *Capital Letters: Hugo, Baudelaire, Camus and the Death Penalty*, Evanston, Ill., Northwestern UP, 2020, p. 135-164.
- Jean-Marc Morjean. "Camus ou le poids des mots (juin 1940-août 1944)" in *La Littérature française sous l'Occupation*, Reims, Presses Universitaires de Reims, 1989, p. 27-41.
- Gisèle Sapiro, "Forces of Solidarity and Logics of Exclusion: The Role of Literary Institutions in Times of Crisis" in *Being Contemporary: French Literature, Culture, and Politics Today*, 2016.
- - -. *La Responsabilité de l'écrivain: littérature, droit et moral (XIXe-XXIe siècle)*. Paris: Seuil, 2011. [part IV]
- - -. *Les Écrivains en guerre 1940-1953*. Paris, Fayard, 1999.
- Jean-Paul Sartre. "Qu'est-ce qu'écrire?" in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1947)\*
- Pierre Seghers, *La Résistance et ses poètes (France 1940-1945)*, Paris, Seghers, 2004.\*
- Mary Shaw. *The Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2003. [chapter 4, "Poetry and Politics" - overview of the intersection of French poetry and political intervention that includes but isn't limited to the 20<sup>th</sup> c.]
- Philippe Vanney, "Ce long détour", *Études camusiennes*, n°2, 1996, p. 62-80.\*
- Maurice Weyembergh, "notice de *Lettres à un ami allemand*," in *Albert Camus, Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, Paris, Gallimard, 2006, p. 1129-1131.

### **Week 3. Anticolonial conscience: 1957 in Algeria, lived and remembered**

[Dr Morisi]

#### **Set texts:**

Henri Alleg, *La Question*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1958.

Frantz Fanon, extrait des *Damnés de la terre* (« De la violence » and « Série C »), Paris, Maspero, 1961.

Jérôme Ferrari, *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2010.

#### **Selected secondary reading:**

##### On context:

Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie, 1954-1962*, Paris, Gallimard, 2001.\*

- - - et Sylvie Thénault, "Justice et torture à Alger en 1957: Apports et limites d'un document" in *Apprendre et enseigner la guerre d'Algérie et le Maghreb contemporain*, eds. Dominique Borne, Jean-Louis Nembrini and Jean-Pierre Rioux, Buc, CNDP de Versailles, 2002, p. 44-57. [available online at <https://tinyurl.com/y3fwd64s>]\*

Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

James McDougall. *A History of Algeria*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2017. [chapters of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962)]

Benjamin Stora. *Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History*, Ithaca, Cornell UP, 2004. [chapters of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962)]\*

Sylvie Thénault. *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, Paris, Flammarion, 2012.

[See also the two-part documentary "La déchirure" based on archival images, codirected by Gabriel Le Bomin and Benjamin Stora, 2012:

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x10r1hq>]

##### On the topic and set texts:

Alexis Berchadski, *La Question, d'Henry Alleg : un livre-événement dans la France en guerre d'Algérie, juin 1957-juin 1958*, Paris : Larousse, 1994.\*

Homi Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the postcolonial prerogative" in *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 40-65.

- - -, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 112-123.\*

Catherine Brun, "Résurgences/oublis: L'exemple de la guerre d'Algérie," *French Forum*, 41:1/2 (Summer/Fall 2016): 63-74.\*

- Frantz Fanon, *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté, Œuvres II*, ed. by Jean Khalifa and Robert JC Young, Paris, La Découverte, 2016.
- Nigel C. Gibson, *Frantz Fanon: The Colonial Imagination*, Cambridge, Blackwell & Polity, 2003.\* [esp. 'Violent Concerns', p. 103-125]
- Rachel M. Grimm, "The remains of an empire in ruin: Remembering torture and the colonial state of exception in Jérôme Ferrari's *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*," *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 21:3&4 (October 2018): 279–300.
- Cécile Lavergne, "La violence comme *praxis* révolutionnaire chez Frantz Fanon. La fabrique subjective d'un homme nouveau ?" in *Violences: Anthropologie, politique, philosophie*, Toulouse, EuroPhilosophie Éditions, 2017, online. [<https://tinyurl.com/y4ypkjhf>]\*
- Sara Leulmi, "Histoire, mémoire, fiction et deuil dans *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* de Jérôme Ferrari," *Synergies Algérie*, 24 (avril 2017): 163-174.
- Rachel Mihuta Grimm, "The remains of an empire in ruin: Remembering torture and the colonial state of exception in Jérôme Ferrari's *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*," *International Journal Of Francophone Studies*, 21:3 (2018): 279-300.\*
- Didier Monciaud, "Les Éditions de Minuit et la guerre d'Algérie: publications et rééditions," *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique* 124 (2014): 225-231. [available online at <https://journals.openedition.org/chrhc/3836>]\*
- - -, "Une vie d'engagements communiste et anticolonialiste," *Cahiers d'histoire, Revue d'histoire critique* 122 (2014): 145-156. [on Henri Alleg's political life; available online at <https://journals.openedition.org/chrhc/3373>]\*
- Nick Nesbitt, "Revolutionary inhumanism: Fanon's *De la violence*," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 15:3-4 (2012): 395-413.\*
- Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15.2 (Winter, 1989): 205-225.
- Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. [on torture]\*
- Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Maria Vendetti, "Testimonial texts of torture during the Algerian War: Paratexts and the obscene," *French Cultural Studies*, 29:2 (2018): 177-189. [also the title of Vendetti's doctoral thesis, UC Berkeley, 2013, available on SOLO via ProQuest Dissertations Publishing]\*

## **Week 4. Brainstorms: new anxieties and insights of the twenty-first century**

[Dr Kemp]

### **Set Texts:**

Marie Darrieussecq, *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*, Paris, POL, 2001.

Michel Houellebecq, *Sérotonine*, Paris, Gallimard, 2019.

Catherine Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, Montrouge, Bayard, 2011 (also available online via SOLO as *What should we do with our brain?*).

### **Selected further reading:**

#### On the set texts:

Ruth Amar and Catherine Parayre, 'Sérotonine ou la quête du bonheur selon Michel Houellebecq', *Voix Plurielles* 17.1 (2020): 182-92.

Brenna Bhandar, and Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller, *Plastic Materialities: Politics, Legality, and Metamorphosis in the Work of Catherine Malabou*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2015.

Helena Chadderton *Marie Darrieussecq's Textual Worlds: Self, Society, Language* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012).

Alexander Hope, 'The future is plastic: refiguring Malabou's plasticity', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 18:4 (2015), 329-349

Shirley Jordan, "'Un grand coup de pied dans le château de cubes": Formal Experimentation in Marie Darrieussecq's *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*', *MLR*, 100 (2005), 51-67.

Simon Kemp, 'Marie Darrieussecq and the Voice of the Mind', in *French Fiction into the Twenty-First Century: The Return to the Story*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2010.

Douglas Morrey, *Michel Houellebecq: Humanity and Its Aftermath*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013.

Carole Sweeney, *Michel Houellebecq and the Literature of Despair*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013.

Colette Trout, *Marie Darrieussecq: ou voir le monde à neuf*, Boston, Brill, 2016.

#### On cognitive approaches to literature:

Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Terence Cave, *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Dylan Evans, 'From Lacan to Darwin', in *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, ed. by Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), p. 38-55.

Patrick Colm Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Isabel Jaén and Julien J. Simon, 'An Overview of Recent Developments in Cognitive Literary Studies', in *Cognitive Literary Studies: Current Themes and New Directions*, ed. by Isabel Jaén and Julien J. Simon, pp. 13–32.

Ian McEwan, 'Literature, Science and Human Nature' (2001), in *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, ed. by Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 5–19.

Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics* (Routledge: London, 2002).

Raymond Tallis, *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Durham: Acumen, 2011).

## **QUESTIONS FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE FOR YOUR ESSAYS:**

### **Crisis of Consciousness: mind, world and spirit in 1930s France**

EITHER: 'Le mieux serait d'écrire les événements au jour le jour. Tenir un journal pour y voir clair' (SARTRE, *LA NAUSÉE*). Discuss the role of literary form in the representation of the mind in ONE or MORE of the set texts.

OR: Discuss the relationship between the self and the outside world AND/OR the relationship between the self and other people in ONE or MORE of the set texts.

### **Trouver la voie/voix: WWII and engagement**

EITHER: 'Dans ses formes et son langage, la littérature de la Seconde Guerre mondiale montre la conscience à l'oeuvre alors qu'elle en appelle, avec plus ou moins de succès, à d'autres consciences.' Discuss in relation to ONE or MORE of the set texts.

OR: 'WWII literature is as much about exterior Résistance as it is about inner resistance.' Discuss in relation to ONE or MORE of the set texts.

### **Anticolonial conscience: 1957 in Algeria, lived and remembered**

EITHER: 'The writings produced on the Algerian War of Independence explore the limits of both conscience and consciousness.' Discuss in relation to ONE or MORE of the set texts.

OR: 'Pendant la guerre d'Algérie, le moi fait l'expérience de toutes les destructions.' Discuss in relation to ONE or MORE of the set texts.

### **Week 4. Brainstorms: new anxieties and insights of the twenty-first century**

EITHER: 'Scientific developments in the study of mind and brain not only offer us a new discourse with which to discuss human nature; they change our understanding of what that nature is.' Discuss in relation to ONE or MORE of the set texts.

OR: Discuss the representation of guilt and responsibility in ONE or MORE of the set texts.