

For a Literature of “Déracinement”

- 1 When asking what “French” fiction is or might be in the 21st century, what it means for literature to be profoundly French, we might ask what a literature of “la France profonde” looks like in the 21st century. This is not only a question of what contemporary novels portraying rural France tell us, but of how we can frame rural literature overall from a contemporary globalist perspective. What can we learn about both the “Frenchness” and the “literariness” of rural literature when we consider this category as a whole? This means works set outside of Paris or other major metropolitan centers in which the rural location plays a fundamental role in the narrative. Can these works be said to be representative of a specifically French identity, and what does that mean in the contemporary world? It is worth asking whether there is any ethical way to talk about a national identity or consciousness, even a literary one, and this is especially true regarding so-called regional literature. This category has a historically problematic relationship to nationalism and conservative politics and aesthetics, particularly in Western Europe. This relationship has created both a very real basis for caution when addressing the topic, as well as a stigma that has for this reason attached itself to the genre. For this reason, the category of “regional” literature after World War II has largely been restricted to those who voluntarily associate themselves with what is considered to be genre literature and published almost exclusively now in collections devoted to that genre (Éditions Baudelaire, Trois Colonnes, Calmann-Lévy, etc.). While there are other writers who recount experiences (their own or others) outside of the city, they would resist that qualification of “regional”, as would many of their readers and critics, should they wish to valorize such literary productions, either ideologically or in terms of literary quality.
- 2 There is a new more accepted literature “de province” whose most famous members are the trio (often cited together)¹ of Pierre Michon, Pierre Bergounioux, and Richard Millet. Mauricette Fournier, in her 2019 edited volume *Rural Writing : Geographical Imaginary and Expression of a New Regionality*², tries to reidentify this category as “regionality” or “provinciality” to avoid the unsavory associations of regionalism. Fournier adds a few more names to the list of what she calls “neorural” authors. These categories have begun to add some respectability to such books, but they still tend to divide a corpus that could productively be studied as a whole. There are many other works and authors who address the same situations and themes but who have rejected this categorization in order to take a place in the mainstream literary establishment, and whom it would be worth considering along with those who voluntarily claim the label. We may also reevaluate the thematic and aesthetic worth of authors previously dismissed as regional. Considering literature dealing with the rural broadly as a category allows us to see a complexity of this experience including the relationship to the environment, to community, and to language. This essay aims to read this literature with new eyes, disentangling it from its national(ist) roots, allowing it to be “déraciné” from the unsavory associations it has courted, responding to the history of controversial associations with this literature, and showing how it takes its place as part of a larger national and global literature.

Why Regional Literature has Problematic “Roots”

- 3 Regionalism as a literary movement is particularly troubled in a French context, for historical reasons that render any literature that claims this label both ideologically and aesthetically suspect. As such, it is associated with the Third Republic and Vichy, under which the regional or provincial novel gained a large public and the approbation of the right-wing authorities, who saw in the portrayal of local customs and an agrarian way of life the artistic manifestation of the “*retour à la terre*” they preached and a model for their slogan of “*travail, famille, patrie*”. The regional was not, in their eyes, opposed to the idea of nationalism, but rather reinforced it, opposing the cosmopolitanism and moral degeneracy of the city and showing a somehow purer notion of the country’s identity. It was a kind of literary isolationism. Anne-Marie Thiesse qualifies this in *Ecrire la France* : “Le régionalisme de la Troisième République est un nationalisme qui a renoncé à l’expansionnisme (en Europe du moins)”³. This attitude is reflected in the use of the expression “*petite patrie*” to refer to the provinces. Some writers who voluntarily identified as “regionalist” were indeed complicit in this identification, the most notable of these being Maurice Barrès. His novel *Les déracinés* was a crystallization of the toxic elements of the “regionalist” novel, describing the material and moral dissolution of a group of young men who become separated from their roots in the provinces, tempted originally by a republican universalism that asked for service to the republic. As Thiesse explains :

Reprenant le discours sur le déterminisme par la terre, Barrès donne valeur sociale à ce sol qui est source de toute énergie. La terre où l’individu s’enracine, la race qui lui donne sa force [...]. Son sens présent est donné par sa tradition. La transmission, à travers les âges des principes et de la volonté agissante est source d’énergie pour la jeunesse. Au sol géologique des théoriciens précédents, Barrès substitue le terreau familial. La sédimentation des roches est remplacée par la succession cumulative des générations, laquelle définit progressivement ce qu’est l’individu, ce qu’il peut vouloir et espérer.⁴

The title indicates that these young men, in leaving their home and becoming involved with national and European politics are separated not only from their *roots* but from their *race*, in contrast with the stereotypically “oriental” or Jewish cosmopolites. The teacher who originally enticed the boys to the capital is, notably, an orphan, with no roots or race. The regions or the provinces are where Barrès’s racialized idea of Frenchness existed, for him, in its most uncontaminated form.

- 4 Environmental theorist Ursula K. Heise has been a vocal critic of regionalism for these associations and additionally insists that :

[M]any of the specifics of [regionalism] draw their strength from cultural and rhetorical traditions particular to the United States, where rootedness in place has long been valued as an ideal counterweight to the mobility, restlessness, rootlessness, and nomadism that Americans themselves as well as observers from outside have often construed as paradigmatic of American national character.⁵

She suggests that regional literature is inappropriate to the European context, and with this idea of rootedness comes a more general critique of the idea of regionalism, beyond its European instantiation — that focus on the local is at the expense of an understanding of interconnection of all ecological phenomena, the global nature of risk, and the necessary global nature of response. Heise’s point about a correlation between ‘Americans’ and regionalism is borne out by the history of the body of critical work. In a North American context, works set in a rural context could uncontroversially

be called “regionalist”, in that they speak from a peripheral geographic location and portray the specificity of life in that location. Unquestionably regional authors such as Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Sherwood Anderson are accepted as part of the American literary canon, and writers such as Flannery O’Connor, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, or Zora Neale Hurston can be called regionalist without raising objections. It is unclear, however, why literature that carries this label would necessarily be opposed to rootlessness and nomadism, or why someone like Steinbeck, whose work took into account specific regional features and cultures, could be seen as ignoring the larger global context in which his narratives are embedded, as his most well-known works address the drive for westward expansion and the ways in which this enterprise failed the most vulnerable populations within the global financial collapse of the 1930s.

- 5 A literature that takes place into account need not be one of rootedness, where the land is seen as belonging to the inhabitants or the inhabitants to the land. In fact, this idea of belonging is one that is exclusive to a variety of regional literature popular at the turn of the twentieth century, and the one that has colored the perception of the entire genre :

Le mouvement régionaliste est donc l’affaire de la classe moyenne rurale (Mistral) et d’une noblesse terrienne (Folco de Baroncelli-Javon) qui refusent et la centralisation politique parce qu’elle les prive de leur puissance politique et l’industrialisation qui les prive de leur pouvoir économique.⁶

Regional literature need not necessarily represent the interests of the upper classes, nor resist change and progress, even if it portrays a world that experiences the pace of “progress” at a much different speed. When portraying the life of the working classes, it need not romanticize or folklorize their existence. Jean-Baptiste del Amo’s *Règne animal*⁷ portrays in great detail the hardship of agricultural labor, disease and malnutrition, and intergenerational abuse and trauma. Rootedness in this case is a trap, despite the harsh beauty of the setting and a strong connection between the characters and the titular animal kingdom with which they are constantly in contact. The same is true for Pierre Bergounioux’s *Miette*, where the central family, while better off economically than that of *Règne animal*, is still trapped by its relationship to the land even as the environment literally shapes their bodies⁸. And the severance of these ties is seen as a liberation and a freedom to personal development. Even Jean Giono, whose work is often associated with a sentimental, nostalgic pastoralism in the popular imagination (reinforced by the film adaptations by Marcel Pagnol), regularly portrays the toll that a rural environment and associated labor takes on the bodies and psyches of its inhabitants, and the potentially toxic tension within villages and even families. The emptiness of the landscape can drive his characters to madness and/or violence in their search for human connection, and he treats his female characters particularly with great compassion as they try to negotiate the restrictions that rural society and labor place on them and their choices.

- 6 In addition to the reasons given above, writing about rurality may have received less attention from the literary establishment after World War II due to *who* was writing some of it. To cite Anne-Marie Thiesse again :

Les notations de type ethnographique sont nombreuses et la prose régionaliste fournit un riche florilège des grands moments de la vie rurale : mise à mort du cochon, battages, moissons, charivaris, etc. Les auteurs sont en général proches des ethnographes proprement dit. Beaucoup même publient des travaux folkloristes en sus de leur œuvre

littéraire.⁹

And indeed, the social sciences took up the relay of respectable writing about the regions for a long time. While not devalued as knowledge, it is devalued as art, or as material for art. Memoirs of women from this time are studied not as literature but as ethnography¹⁰. It should also be noted that the divisions between respectable literature that happens to be about rural areas and non-respectable literature is not unique to France, and that the distinction is often drawn along gender lines. This divide has been noted in the North American context as the distinction between valorized naturalism (which came about later than French naturalism) and "local color writing": "[T]he fit ones to write about real life were men (naturalists), not women (local color writers). It suggests that naturalism grew in part as a gender-based countertradition not only to realism but to female-dominated local color writing"¹¹. This division is apparent even now with the portrayal of local color provincial writers in Richard Millet's *Province*, where the prodigal son writer returns to his hometown from a somewhat successful career in the capital¹². The regionalist writers he encounters are women described in uniformly unpleasant terms (somewhat ironically given his own classification as a "neorural" writer), including one young woman whose writing provokes intense revulsion and a diatribe about the degeneration of literature in France.

Rootless Inhabitation

- 7 So how are we to talk about rural or regional literature, taking into consideration the specifics of the surroundings, while avoiding the temptation of determinism and filiation, possession of the land? An apt term that focuses on the regional and the nonurban, the rural, most exclusively, is what is known as "bioregionalism", in which the relationship with the climate and ecosystem (including human population) in one's immediate proximity is depicted. While bioregionalism can also be applied to cities, urban centers both tend to insulate the inhabitants from the characteristics of their bioregion and to homogenize them with inhabitants of other urban centers in ways that happen more slowly in the more isolated rural settings. Urban centers are more likely to see the proliferation of the nearly indistinguishable so-called *non-lieux* such as airports and shopping malls identified by Marc Augé¹³, which have nothing to identify them as belonging to a specific place or region. Bioregionalism is a useful framework when thinking about the rural insofar as it relates to a personal, physical, affective, and ethical relationship to the specific place in which one lives, with all of the geological, climatological, biological, and social specificities of that region. In the introduction of a volume dedicated to the subject, it is noted that "In the discourse of bioregionalism, several key terms recur, most notably *dwelling*, *sustainability*, and *reinhabitation*"¹⁴. In addition to a political or life practice though, bioregionalism is considered a literary practice, which goes beyond a mere descriptive function or the addition of local color and representation of a way of life. In the previously mentioned introduction to *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*, one function of such literature within the world is identified as the ability to "Enable residents of a place to recognize their bioregions as culturally and ecologically distinct and value them as such. In fact, it is the imagination that transforms mere space into place"¹⁵. Bart Welling, later in the same volume, speaks not only to the effect that such literature might have on the outside world, but on the structure of the writing itself:

The study of poetics has taught us about the deep interrelatedness of structure and meaning in literature [...]. And as a growing body of work on environmental poetics attests, this vision can have a bearing on ecological matters as well as literary questions. A bioregional poetics would not just involve writing *about* a place but would be concerned from the start with questions relating to what we might think of as the coimbrication of literature and bioregion. [...] a bioregional poetics would define the text as a thoroughly *emplaced* phenomenon. Such a theory would help us see more clearly how all texts are embedded in various physical, economic and intellectual networks of production, distribution, and readerly consumption.¹⁶

8 Notably, this idea of dwelling goes well beyond the historical or folkloric content that might be associated with the regional or the rural, to a question of what it means to physically and affectively occupy such a space under the current conditions. It does not require that the writer of such a text be a native of the region, but rather that he or she have established such an *emplaced* relationship. It is about inhabiting and not about being native to an area, being *in* rather than *of* that country. This opens up the idea that a regional French literature might include writers as Julien Gracq, René Char, Francis Ponge, or, more recently, Jean Rouaud, Jacques Réda, Maryline Desbiolles, or filmmakers such as Agnès Varda. While not environmental in the *ecological* sense and not necessarily invested in conservation as such, the local environment intervenes in the story. This literature is “French” fiction in that it is geographically and environmentally situated in the French land, but not determined by possession. The relationship is one of nurture, not nature. It places itself in the French literary tradition in that it is heir to all of the connotations previously discussed. It exists in response to that tradition. Nor can it escape the political history of terrain, and the physical and emotional scars that it has left, particularly those of two world wars¹⁷.

9 As already mentioned, there exists a widespread aversion to anything that smells uncomfortably of the *retour à la terre* of the Vichy régime, an association that does not obtain in the same way in the Western hemisphere, and this aversion extends beyond the rural culture to the natural environment surrounding it. This aversion was articulated by, among others, Luc Ferry, in his liberal democratic criticism of ecology and environmentalism. Andermatt Conley objects that ecologists’ :

attempts to think relationally are complemented by spiritual components [...]. They aim at undoing dualisms [...]. The opposition is drawn between materiality and spirituality and less, as Ferry sees it, between a republican universalism *à la française* and nationalism with its conservative and fascistic resonances privileging the local and the ethnic.¹⁸

In an article titled “Vers une écocritique française”, Stéphanie Posthumus makes an effective case for Michel Serres as the figure whose thought offers the greatest opportunity for an intellectual consideration of the relationship to the environment, in his concept of the *contrat naturel*¹⁹. In the formation of this contract Serres privileges the figure of the *paysan*, but strictly in a forward-looking sense. There is no *return* to the earth that he suggests, but a *new* turn, a new attention. Posthumus also cites Luc Ferry as criticizing this position, to which she opposes Serres’s identification of his country not as one defined by its ethnicity or heritage, but “par longitude et altitude, plaques profondes, mer et terres, l’atmosphère et la végétation”²⁰.

10 So how can we resolve these accumulated criticisms of the rural and regional, bio or otherwise, to show that they go beyond the provincial both in recognition of the importance of the global and in avoidance of the ethnocentrism associated with these

terms in the early 20th century (i.e. 3rd republic and Vichy, for the most part) ? A focus on the rural, on the local, does not exclude contact with global influences and globally recognized concerns. The rural is not closed within the boundaries of its region, but connected to communities with a similar set of experiences around the globe. The double tension between the inhabitants of the region and the environment from which they try to extract their livelihood and the center to which they remain peripheral if not invisible is not unique to France even as its instantiation is shaped by history and geography. Jean Rouaud recognized this in his 2007 collection *Pour une littérature-monde* :

Cette découverte était d’abord, à travers le temps, l’espace et le passage d’une langue à une autre, une rencontre. Dans *L’enfant élu*, qui raconte l’histoire d’un enfant sans père prénommé Jean, vivant dans cette partie de la Prusse-Orientale, marécageuse et boisé, où la religion envahissante pèse de tout le poids du Ciel sur la conscience et le comportement de ses habitants, quelqu’un pour la première fois me parlait à l’oreille d’un presque moi. Mais de ce qui me crève les yeux aujourd’hui, ces similitudes, je n’étais pas conscient alors. Simplement, cet univers m’était familier, pour lequel je n’avais pas besoin de faire un grand effort d’imagination. Un pays humide, une société rurale qui ne peut plus faire semblant de vivre en autarcie, d’ignorer les lumières de la ville et de rester sourd aux rumeurs du monde.²¹

- 11 There is a global resonance to the themes and settings of this literature. In the same volume, Alain Mabanckou recognizes a political valence of this kinship from the opposite direction, affecting not just the content of these works, but their reception :

On le constate aussi à l’intérieur même de la France. En effet l’écrivain ‘provincial’ français n’est pas mieux loti que le ‘francophone’ : il est aussi vu par la place parisienne comme un ‘local’, comme un auteur du ‘terroir’, avec ce que cela comporte de ricanements sous cape.²²

Mabanckou expresses his frustration with the assumption that anything that only the “center” of the French-speaking establishment is considered to be of universal appeal and application, while one peripheral location is not seen as being relevant either to the center or to other parts of the periphery, or that something that resonates from periphery to periphery is not of interest to the center.

- 12 The themes of this regional literature reflect the ethnographic and sociological observations of rural France summed up by Roger Bétaille in *La crise rurale*, and all show how the rural can no longer be isolated. In addition to an aging and feminizing population, Bétaille identifies five disrupting factors in rural society :

- Fractures de la famille rurale et alignement sur certains comportements urbains, malthusiens par exemples.
- Atteintes à la sociabilité villageoise ancienne.
- Dépassement de plus en plus fréquent de l’espace local pour le travail, les achats, les loisirs et adoption des valeurs de la grande consommation.
- Altération ou disparition de la particularité Culturelle rurale.
- Impacte des contacts de plus en plus nombreux et habituels avec les citadins.²³

- 13 All of these factors find their place in the literature of these regions. While not pretending to universality, these themes have a planetary scope and are driven by the forces of global social, economic, and technological change. Witnessing the changes in or disappearance of the “sociabilité villageoise” or the “particularité Culturelle rurale” need not be seen as nostalgic in whole or even in part for the world in which these thrive. We can see the confluence of a number of these factors in Maryline Desbiolles’s

Anchise, which was awarded the Prix Fémina in 1999, but which has received little attention from the scholarly community. This is not a universal story of an aging man reaching the end of his life, but of a man aging in a particular context. The title character’s experience has been shaped by the history and the physical environment of the place in which he lived, with the transformation of what was once purely rural space into the périurbain, occupied primarily by elderly people, squatters, and seasonal campers. Anchise’s nostalgia, in that it can be considered such, is not for the old way of life, but for his long-dead wife, and for their relationship which was triangulated through her relationship to nature but violently circumscribed by the rules of the family and social group in which they lived. His inner experience, his ability to process these emotions, are strictly defined as well by the limited education and socialization he received. The whole book is bathed in the harsh sun of the midi summer, in a vegetal abundance that is no longer useful to its inhabitants. This story is not isolated within its province but plays out in the long aftermath of World War II and in the recent spread of global capitalism that has transformed Anchise’s village into the outer circle of urban sprawl.

- 14 There is a precedent for the notion that attention to emplacement is compatible with globalism. As a political ideology or practice, there is a movement that has, in fact, a long and diverse history in France. Altermondialism promotes a more sustainable and locally-based way of life with connections around the world. This ideology and lifestyle enjoy an indulgence from progressive politics not extended to the literary portrayal of the rural. Is it possible to consider rural literary production in the same way that one considers other rural productions — as creating a different kind of global community through its attention to the local ?

“Relation” and *déracinement*

- 15 A new consideration of rural or regional literature as both French and Literature worthy of that designation is : emplaced but not rooted, globally embedded but not universal. I return to where Verena Andermatt Conley argued for the *relational* nature of ecological thought. It is necessary to think of the rural and regional as a literature of relation and relationality, and, more precisely, of Relation with a capital R as it was theorized by Édouard Glissant. In his *Poétique de la Relation*, Glissant distinguishes between what he calls *terre* and *territoire* :

L’identité-relation

- est liée, non pas à une création du monde, mais au vécu conscient et contradictoire des contacts de cultures ;
- est donnée dans la trame chaotique de la Relation et non pas dans la violence cachée de la filiation ;
- ne conçoit aucune légitimité´ comme garante de son droit, mais circule dans une étendue nouvelle ;
- ne se représente pas une terre comme un territoire, d’où on projette vers d’autres territoires.²⁴

- 16 What I propose in this article is a vision of literature of emplacement in a *terre* and not “enracinement” in a *territoire*. But for Glissant, the Americas, the Antilles and more particularly the plantation are the crucible of this deterritorialized and, as he puts it, *rhizomatic Relation*, having severed the previous *enracinement* of their inhabitants. Is

it anathema then to promote a Relational reading of metropolitan French writing? This is not to suggest that all French rural literature is a perfect expression of Relational thought — a concept developed from the Caribbean context—but rather that the poetics of Relation allow us a new lens with which to read this body of literature, and also to consider even how some of the more reactionary tendencies that have associated themselves with rural literature trace the movement of the trauma of *déracinement* and the shock of being put in Relation that were experienced long ago by other cultures who were much more violently uprooted. Millet’s protagonists, for example, express not blind nostalgia for the regional (as shown earlier with his ambivalent-to-disdainful attitudes towards provincial society) but reactionary tendencies in response to the situation of rural life within a network of global change, suspicious of the changing demographics of his province and resentful of the ways women take up space. While it may be helpful to hold such positions at arm’s length, it is worthwhile to ask how representative they are of more widely-held opinions, as well as how such points of view are influenced by or influence the experience of the physical environment : the physical and social stratification of the small town, the difficulty of access on public transit, the dilapidation of the paternal home, and the ways in which one’s social circle becomes defined by the lack of mobility, particularly amongst an aging population.

17 Glissant also worries that an attention to place “ecology” might tip into the antihumanism predicted by Ferry and Heise, or worse :

L’écologie nous apparaît comme la pulsion par laquelle les hommes étendent à la planète Terre l’ancienne pensée sacrée du territoire. Elle est ainsi à double orientation : ou bien on la concevra comme une dérivée de ce sacré, auquel cas on la vivra comme une mystique ; ou bien cette extension portera en germe la critique de cette pensée du territoire (de son sacré, de son exclusive) et l’écologie alors s’agira en politique.²⁵

It is in this second option that the rural or (bio)regional in the sense that I intend it resides. Rereading with a critical eye, with one’s mind on the “poétique de la Relation”, we must ask of French hexagonal as well as of American or Caribbean literature what is this experience of occupying a particular space in contact with the natural environment, while at the same time cultivating connections with the outside world, with other cultures. This experience is created in a world that is often bemoaned as being “deterritorialized” — hardly an insult for Glissant. From this original cradle of the deterritorializing plantation has evolved an “esthétique de la terre, déagée des naïvetés folkloriques, mais rhizomant dans la connaissance de nos cultures”²⁶. This aesthetic is a traumatic one, one that Glissant admits is made of disruption and intrusion, and it is being experienced on a different timeline and with different reactions by inhabitants of different regions. Reading the rural as a global phenomenon of an aesthetics of the earth and deterritorialization provides us with a new framework for reading globally and goes beyond some theoretical common ground that might emerge :

Ne nous arrêtons pas à ce lieu commun, qu’une poétique ne nous garantit aucun moyen concret d’agir. Elle nous permet peut-être de mieux comprendre notre action dans le monde. Nous considérons par exemple comment notre exigence de la responsabilité culturelle, inséparable de l’indépendance politique, est à mettre en rapport avec cette violence prophylactique des déculturations. Mettre en Relation, c’est ce qui s’appelle défolkloriser. La réduction folklorique (la croyance que les seules vivacités ataviques sont porteuses d’existence) guette toutes les cultures, technologiques ou non. Le sentiment de la modernité nous en écarte, en nous présentant l’image des relations, des similitudes de situations ou des divergences d’orientation, du nous à l’autre.²⁷

- 18 We separate the rural or regional from the folklore, acknowledging that difference and seeing beyond the images of folklore and “local color” to what is behind it. The *mise en Relation* is not always smooth, and one of the consequences of this can be anger and resentment that express something less than a harmonious existence in the global community, both literary and social. Rather than reject such literature as closed and provincial, it is valuable to read it as part of this process of *mise en Relation* that respects the distinctiveness of local culture but places it within the global network or, as Glissant might envision it, a node in the global rhizome.

Gina Stamm
The University of Alabama

NOTES

- 1 Sylvain Coyault-Dublanchet, *La province en héritage : Pierre Michon, Pierre Bergounioux, Richard Millet*, Genève, Droz, 2002 ; Pierre Ouellet, “Le Roman de la terre : Millet, Michon, Bergounioux”, *Liberté*, vol. 38, n° 3, 1996, p. 165–177.
- 2 Mauricette Fournier (ed.), *Rural Writing : Geographical Imaginary and Expression of a New Regionality*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.
- 3 Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Écrire la France : Le mouvement littéraire régionaliste de langue française entre la Belle-Époque et la Libération*, Paris, PUF, 1991, p. 289.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 5 Ursula K. Heise, “Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies”, *American Literary History*, vol. 20, n° 1/2, Spring-Summer, 2008, <Twenty Years of American Literary History : The Anniversary Volume>, p. 381-404, p. 8-9
- 6 Christian Gras, “Le mouvement régionaliste français et l’histoire sociale : éléments de problématique et de bibliographie”, *Le Mouvement social*, N° 92, July-September 1975, p. 110.
- 7 Jean-Baptiste Del Amo, *Règne animal*, Paris, Gallimard, 2018.
- 8 “Les rapides accès d’humeur, la sauvagerie qui lui venaient dès qu’il se détournait des hommes, je ne peux me les expliquer autrement que par la tension chronique de ses rapports avec les choses. Toute l’énergie dont il était capable lui permettait à peine de les contenir dans les limites et sous la forme prescrites. Il n’avait quelque chance de les conserver qu’avec leur relative complaisance, celle des milliers d’arbres et de leurs millions de branches et des milliards de particules du sol, celle des outils pesants, traditionnels qui absorbaient chaque parcelle de ses forces, lesquelles étaient en nombre fini. Et sans doute que la lande, les rocs, les cohortes de résineux y avaient mis du leur sous leur grain tenace, leurs dehors revêches, leur hérissément de piquants et d’aiguilles” (Pierre Bergounioux, *Miette*, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 16-17).
- 9 Christian Gras, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 10 Deborah Reed-Danahay, “Sites of Memory : Women’s Autoethnographies from Rural France”, *Biography*, vol. 25, n° 1, <Biography & Geography>, Winter 2002, p. 95-109.
- 11 Donna M. Campbell, *Resisting Regionalism : Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 5.
- 12 Richard Millet, *Province*, Paris, Léo Scheer, 2016.
- 13 Marc Augé, *Non-lieux : Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris, Seuil, 1992.
- 14 Tom Lynch *et al.*, *The Bioregional Imagination : Literature, Ecology, and Place*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2012, p. 4.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 16 Bart Welling, “This is What Matters : Reinhabitory Discourse and the ‘Poetics of Responsibility’ in the Work of Janisse Ray”, *in* Tom Lynch *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 119-120.
- 17 The destruction of the title character’s hopes for a family in Desbiolles’s *Anchise*, the long echoes of a collaborationist ancestor’s activities in a small village in Rouaud’s *La femme promise*, as well as the more obvious presence of the First World War in Rouaud’s *Champs d’honneur* or Philippe Claudel’s *Les âmes grises*.
- 18 Verena Andermatt Conley, *Ecopolitics : The Environment Poststructuralist Thought*, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 21.
- 19 Stéphanie Posthumus, “Vers une écocritique française : le contrat naturel de Michel Serres”, *Mosaic : An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 44, n° 2, June 2011, p. 85-100.
- 20 Michel Serres, *Éloge de la philosophie en langue française*, Paris, Flammarion, 1992, p. 39.
- 21 Jean Rouaud, « Mort d’une certaine idée », *in* Michel Le Bris, Jean Rouaud (dirs), *Pour une littérature-monde*, Paris : Gallimard, 2007, p. 7-22, p. 9.

²² Alain Mabanckou, "Le chant de l'oiseau migrateur", in Michel Le Bris et Jean Rouaud (eds), *Pour une littérature-monde*, Paris, Gallimard, 2007, p. 55-76, p. 56-57.

²³ Roger Bétaïlle, *La crise rurale*, Paris, PUF, 1994, p. 24-25.

²⁴ Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation : Poétique III*, Paris, Gallimard, 1990, p. 158-159.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 160-161.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 215.