

French 900 : Le Pays et dépaysement de Proust et Valéry à Echenoz et Darrieussecq

Van Kelly, 3:00 MWF

We will explore the notions of rootedness (being in the Place) and its antonyms (being uprooted, exiled, nomadic, homesick, homeless, out of place, without a place, in the wrong place) in modern literature from Proust to extreme contemporary writers including Jean Echenoz and Marie Darrieussecq. Is the right place a state of mind the author creates with memory words (Proust's Combray, Paris, and Balbec) ? Is the good spot a country of the mind that a poet like Valéry visits from poem to poem and rhythm by rhythm in a collection of poetic commonplaces such as *Charmes*? Perhaps the Country is what poets Bonnefoy and Char call a mental backcountry or haven, an « arrière-pays » that exists in a time and language warp only, that we can only visit when we are blindly absorbed in the words. Or perhaps it is the illusion of a return to the native country (France or Cameroon) fabricated with light and shadow on celluloid by filmmakers Renoir, Claire, and Varda. Sometimes the Country is an unspeakable darkness within (Duras's vice-consul or the crime that pushes Echenoz's protagonist Victoire onto the road and on the run). Just as often, perhaps, the « Pays » is not a place of sadness but a site of utopian fulfillment and repose, as in the capstone work of the course, Marie Darrieussecq's *Pays*. But whatever the Country is, it is a place where the reader must seek identity as a function of time, space, nation, landscape, mindscape, traveling, sound track, image track, memory, aspiration, despair, society, solitude.....

Tentatively, we will study the following authors and filmmakers:

Marcel Proust, *Combray*, *Un amour de Swann*, *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*
(for Ph.D. candidates : very hard to understand *Le temps retrouvé* without a knowledge of events and characters in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*, hence the choice of this sequel to *Du côté de chez Swann*, instead of the jump cut into the final novel of *A la recherche du temps perdu*)

Paul Valéry, *Charmes*

Marguerite Duras, *Le vice-consul*

Jean Echenoz, *Un an*

Marie Darrieussecq, *Pays*

... the following filmmakers :

Jean Renoir, *La grande illusion*

Claire Denis, *Chocolat*

Agnès Varda, *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse*

...and a major poem each by Guillaume Apollinaire, Eugène Guillevic, René Char, Francis Ponge, Yves Bonnefoy, Jacques Dupin, and Marie Claire Bancquart

Course work :

Midterm

Exposé

Research paper