

Approaching French Language Literature in Canadian Studies

québécois, ~e /kebekwa, az/
1. *adj* of Quebec, 2. *nm* Ling. Canadian French
Québécois, ~e /kebekwa, az/ *nm, f* (du Québec)
(natif) native of (the province of) Quebec

CHARLIE MANSFIELD

**University of Edinburgh
September 2005**

Approaching French Language Literature in Canadian Studies

This book forms a self-study pack and teaching guide to help English speakers start using computers and the web to support their studies of French Canadian Literature, song, film and multimedia. Readers will need access to the Internet so that they can experience ‘Electronic Encounters’ with Canadian media in French and English. The approach is underpinned with ideas drawn from the analysis of travel writing.

Charlie Mansfield

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1 – Mapping the Page: From Topography to Typography	4
Chapter 2 – Planning the Journey and the Episteme.....	7
Chapter 3 – En Route, the Traveller’s Body, the Everyday, Appropriation of Space....	9
Chapter 4 – The Exotic, the Exote and Encounters with the Other.	12
Chapter 5 – Unreadable Signs in the Desert	14
Appendices.....	20
Appendix A.....	20
Anatomy of the Twentieth-Century French Travel Text	20
Bibliography.....	21

ISBN 0905244117

1st Edition published in Edinburgh, 28th September 2005

Centre of Canadian Studies

www.cst.ed.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Denny Colledge for her careful review of this work and for all the help and advice on aspects of world music. Thank you, too, to Bastien Beauchamp for his extremely useful transcription of the words of Loco Locass and to Kevin E Anderson for his continued advice on aspects of contemporary music and hip-hop. Finally, my thanks go to Dr Annis May Timpson and the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh for providing the opportunities to develop this work through my teaching on the undergraduate programme.

Introduction

This book forms a self-study pack and teaching guide to help English speakers start using computers and the web to support their studies of French Canadian literature, song, film and multimedia. It also encourages the development of personal strategies for handling foreign language texts. It uses travel writing as a theme since the experience of travel writers when they encounter a new culture has useful parallels with learners' first encounters with texts and media not in their own language.

Each chapter commences with a brief introduction to a theme from travel writing theory then seeks to make practical use of this by applying it to your own encounters with the new, foreign space.

Most of the work will require access to the web and other computer software that is readily available, usually at no cost. You will also need easy access to the two key travel texts by Montreal writers, Nicole Brossard and Jean-Paul Daoust (which is in the Penguin anthology edited by Richard Coward). Full references are given in the bibliography at the end of the book

Chapter 1 – Mapping the Page: From Topography to Typography

In this first chapter we will see how travel writing practices often use typographical layout to map-out the blank space of the printed page. We will also meet a second theme from travel writing, that of veracity; travel writers often feel compelled to recount the truth of their voyages whilst we, as readers, often approach their travel stories as real accounts.

The analysis of French travel writing, the quest to define the elements of the genre has an early precedent in the critical approach taken by Denis Diderot (1713-1784) to the 1771 travel text of Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811) called *Voyage autour du monde*. Diderot presents his 1796 study as a dialogue between two speakers, A and B. They discuss Bougainville's work which the character, B. has been reading, providing Diderot with the opportunity to draw out three principal points which travel writing gives us, thus establishing it as a genre for examining the outside world both topographically as well as socially. Here is a short citation from the text to show this layout. The quotation also offers an opportunity to encounter literature in the French language:

B.

[...] trois points principaux. Une meilleure connaissance de notre vieux domicile et de ses habitans [*sic*] ; plus de sûreté sur des mers qu'il parcourues la sonde à la main ; et plus de correction dans nos Cartes géographiques.

(Diderot 1796, 103)

Furthermore, Diderot, begins to give us a list of features that travel texts could or should have, paving the way for this type of analytical or anatomical approach:

B.

[...] les qualités propres [...] : de la philosophie [...] de la véracité, un coup d'œil prompt qui saisit les choses et abrège le temps des observations ; de la circonspection ; de la patience ; le désir de voir, de s'éclairer et d'instruire [...]

(Diderot 1796 , 103)

We shall see through the course of this study that the idea of veracity, coupled with the importance that Diderot attached to observation, has remained a key feature in the practices of travel writers for over two hundred years. Taken as a model for critical approaches to travel writing Diderot's early example uses typographical layout to give the appearance of two people in conversation. This choice of how Diderot's text appears on the page is in itself an analytical conceit. It provides greater mapping of the area of the page allowing readers a degree of movement across the white space between the two characters A and B. This study itself will use text layout as an analytical tool as well as examining how travel writers deploy their printed texts on the page to create impressions of elapsed time or distance traversed.

One of the key questions of the study is to ask whether travel writing is an identifiable practice with its own discourse. The assertion is that we can see that a text is a travel story, even when it is a contemporary, fragmentary text such as the one presented by Nicole Brossard, *Mauve Desert*, which we study here. This assertion needs to be argued using a methodology which uncovers and shows common themes in travel

texts. The methodology will be to anatomise travel texts to determine how they deal with the key elements of travel including movement across space, elapsed time and the presence, survival and mutation of the observing subject in the travel narrative.

Finally, this introductory guide is called ‘Electronic Encounters’ since it seeks to use French language web-sites, particularly Canadian sites, to simulate encounters with a new space and language group, as if these encounters were a voyage. This parallel experience of using web-sites that are not in your first language tries to illustrate the theoretical themes introduced here so that you have almost first-hand experiences of the feelings that an English-speaking traveller and travel writer would have on a journey to French-speaking Canada.

A table listing some key theoretical themes in travel writing is given at the end of this book in the Appendix. It is a useful reference aid for approaching your own analyses of travel texts. The fact that it is in table format is again a reminder of the way the white space of the page or screen may be ‘mapped’ to give the appearance of comprehensibility.

The web-site for this section, the introduction, is the online equivalent of the dictionary or the phrase-book. The phrase-book is as indispensable as the guide-book when you start planning and packing for your voyage to a foreign land. A useful translation site I have found is Reverso at

http://www.reverso.com/text_translation.asp

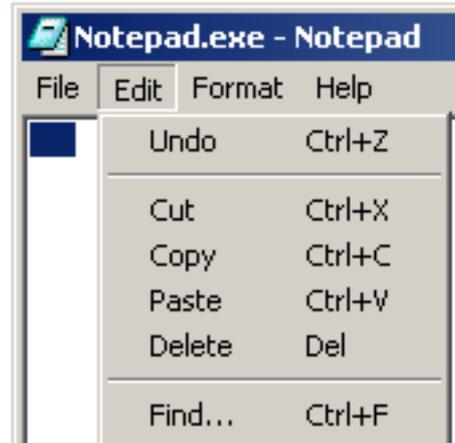
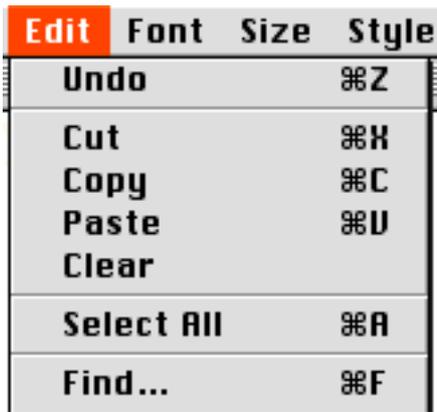
And, of course, you have already encountered a strange language in the first few paragraphs of this document, which may already have given rise to feelings of alienation, making you want to reach for the dictionary. So try Reverso now to see what it gives you. Highlight, copy and then paste the French into the white box for Source Text on Reverso’s page, then ask for translation by clicking FR->EN, or re-type the phrase if you are working from a printed version of this book.



trois points principaux = Three principal points.

You may also be experiencing a further feeling of alienation if you are a PC-user and are sitting at an Apple-Mac keyboard for the first time. It is a strange and foreign space! The Control Key, which you would use for Ctrl C (copy) and Ctrl V (paste) on a PC is disguised here as the Apple Button or the command key:





Apple Mac Copy and Paste compared with Windows PC Copy and Paste Controls

Some final questions to help you prepare for your seminar groups:

- This section very deliberately included French-language text ‘unannounced’ in the first few paragraphs. Could you please jot down your thoughts on whether this felt like an alienating experience.
- Did you have any ready-made ways of approaching French quotations within an English text?
- If you have time, look at how French quotations are dealt with in: David Scott (2004) *Semiotics of Travel from Gautier to Baudrillard* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 2 – Planning the Journey and the Episteme

The practice of travel writing is rooted in making known the discoveries of spatial explorations in contrast to, say, the work of the novelist or biographer. Travel writing seeks to render the writer's spatial movement through a landscape into a comprehensible text. This process of constraining multi-dimensional movement creates tensions in the text, because text, by its nature, is a one dimensional string. Travel writers strive to make sense of what is previously unknown to them, bringing back knowledge from their journey to express this knowledge as a text. Furthermore, the idea of planning, is also implied in the practice of travel writing, since the writers, to a greater or lesser extent, prepare themselves both for the journey and for the recording of what they plan to regard as worth recording for their purposes. For this reason travel writing practice is closely bound up with the writers' knowledge and their quest for meaning in what they will encounter in the journey ahead.

Epistemological research to determine the spirit of an age or *l'esprit de temps* reached a high level with the work of Michel Foucault (Foucault 1966 & 1969) in the decade immediately preceding the publication of the travel texts in this study. With Foucault's publications and his predictions so much in currency by the early 1980s it is worth using his idea of the episteme as a starting point for our exploration. The travel writer preparing for a voyage knows a certain body of knowledge, has preconceptions of their journey but does not know what lies out there in the life outside the home. This has parallels with Foucault's episteme.

The episteme of an era is the arrangement of the knowledge during that era. Both social imagination and available technology have their effects on the episteme of an age. The episteme is *what* can be known, *how* something is known and the total sum of what is known. An example of an episteme changing that Foucault describes (Foucault 1966 *passim*) is the shift from classifying plant species according to form, five petals for example, towards classification according to function. This shift is associated with increased use of the microscope followed by improvements in bio-chemistry. Very early examples from the sixteenth-century episteme show that knowledge depended heavily on how closely a thing was the same as something else. Thus the limits of what it is *to know* are part of the episteme. *We know* now that the study of human activity today is highly complex, with its sub-sciences of psychology, anthropology and ethnology. So, not only has the content, the total sum of what is knowable increased but also the early twenty-first century episteme has much wider limits on what it is to know something about human society.

The English translation of Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* first appeared in 1970 as *The Order of Things*. Use Reverso or French-to-English dictionary to translate Foucault's title more literally. What is the literal translation?

To sum up, Foucault's theory of the episteme has three main layers:

1. everything that a society knows,
2. everything that their technology gives them access to knowing,
3. the accepted rules from that society's dominant discourse of how people in that society know that they know.

Embarking on a journey to discover the episteme of a society is prefixed by the texts of planning, for example, lists of clothing and equipment for the voyage, timetables, plans, itineraries, maps. These are all carefully formatted texts which, by their typography and layout on the page, strive to give order to, and to simplify the external world into a knowable construct. Furthermore, these lists reveal the gaps in what is known of the world out there, the destination.

Travel writers often acknowledge, as part of the discourse of reporting their findings, that they have taken stock of what is known already so that any new knowledge they discover achieves the necessary prominence in their finished presentation. Their descriptions of any planning may be embedded deep within their texts rather than being brought to the fore as a list.

A typographical presentation common to many travel texts is continuous prose arranged under date headings. In *Mauve Desert*, Brossard uses particular typographical layout to suggest that you, as readers, are encountering not a single discrete novel but several texts which are laying-out the ‘truth’ by building an episteme or body of knowledge about the characters and places in her story.

To iterate the planning aspect of travel writing, the journey may be regarded as a set of steps in a working practice. Again, to emphasise the part played by typographical layout, these steps are presented below as a list. The items of this list could become headings for the travel writer and the area beneath these headings provide the space for the travel text:

- Take stock of what you know before you go.
- Predict what you may find or want to find.
- Prepare the equipment or practices for gathering the new.
- Set-aside what may slow you (encumbrances, prejudices).
- Travel, encounter and acquire.
- Return.
- Have souvenirs.
- Report new knowledge.

Chapter 3 – En Route, the Traveller’s Body, the Everyday, Appropriation of Space.

In this chapter we shall see how travel writing always has to deal with the mundane aspect of daily existence because the writer’s bodily presence on the voyage is implied in the travel writing practice. Hence it will examine how travel texts both come to terms with the everyday passage of time for the traveller whilst also implying that the writer is actually there, experiencing the banal. At various points in their practice travel writers seek to assert the historical significance of the age they are living through and it is this practice that we shall draw out here to demonstrate the similarity of this approach to journaling, which records dates, times and duration. This chapter will continue to address the key question, which is to ask whether travel writing is an identifiable practice with its own discourse. To this end, the uses of the travel story in defining and appropriating space will be examined.

Michel de Certeau speaks of the relationship between travel writing and the map which sheds light on travel writing practices. De Certeau distinguishes between marking boundaries in travel writing (*bornage*) and indicating or showing where the body is in a discourse practice, his term here being:

- « focalisations énonciatives » (c’est-à-dire l’index du corps dans le discours)
(Certeau 1990, 172)
‘enunciative focalizations’ (that is, the indication of the body within discourse)
(Certeau 1984, 116)

The English translations are cited from Steven Rendall’s translation referenced as (Certeau 1984) called *The Practice of Everyday Life*. If you do have time, the whole of chapter 9 in Rendall’s translation is worth reading, pp.115 to 130.

De Certeau explains at the start of chapter 9 how the story-teller organises the places in their account and displaces them into described spaces. The urban zones mapped-out on paper by planners, then built upon by the urban authorities are transformed by the ordinary people walking through them or connecting them by their journeys or, more particularly by their stories. De Certeau states ‘l’espace est un lieu pratiqué’ (Certeau 1990, 173), ‘In short, *space is a practiced place*’ (Certeau 1984, 117). Rendall’s use of ‘practiced’ I would translate again into British English as a practised. Worn or used place becomes space which de Certeau suggests is analogous to reading a text where the printed page is the planned place whilst your reading of it uses it, displaces it and creates your own space with it and within it. Thus, from the dead places laid out by the urban planners the inhabitants, by movement, produce space. When a reader, who only knows English, encounters a French text for the very first time the page appears as a planned, well-organised place but it will not yield any space until the reader has practised it with annotations, dictionary references and re-ordering of the adjectives and nouns. We have already seen examples of how the adjective often follows the noun in French.

This idea that a movement through places produces a known space but further, that it associates space with a story or history serves travel writers' aims. As we move through a strange page or screen of text we begin to make our own sense of it. As we practise it, that is to say, as we read it, glance at the images, determine its limits we begin to know it, we add it to our own personal episteme, We incorporate it – with the idea of *le corps*, the French word for 'body' embedded in our English word. It shifts from strange to familiar.

De Certeau claims that the recounting of travel stories makes the places of imposed order into his practised spaces because they are read by local people. The story has a primary role in founding a space for practical activity, authorising new social actions as opposed to official historiography drawn from, say, national newspapers and television channels. This official discourse serves only to fix a national place or, at least, a macro place which attempts to determine the permitted activities and identities of local people, for example, 'being Quebecois'. De Certeau states that the primary role of the story is as an appropriation of the place by the storyteller.

De Certeau recounts a three-part story of how the Romans encountered and came to terms with boundaries and hence, new spaces (Certeau 1984, 124). He links it to how occidental cultures can approach unexplored places. I want to use this as an approach to the new, foreign space of a French Canadian language site on the web. The Romans, according to de Certeau, performed three rituals when they arrived at the border of a new place:

The first ritual exercise they performed on their own ground, the familiar space.
The second exactly on the border itself, and then,
They crossed over and conducted a ritual exercise in the new space.

These three steps make the strange place into a familiar site and even enable the performers to create a new space of their own. According to which way you view this process, it may be regarded as rehearsing transgression or colonial appropriation.

Our space-practising exercise will look at a Montreal jazz pianist and composer by using the Radio Canada web-site.

First, please take a look at the English version of the web pages devoted to the Radio Canada archive on Oscar Peterson. You will be 'on your own ground, in your own Anglophone (English-speaking) space':

http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-74-391/people/oscar_peterson/

Here you will find a travel story called '**Growing Up in Montreal's Place St. Henri**'. The monologue has lots of embedded travel tales, migration by sea, railways, and the evocation of distant cities, all recounted in English by Oscar Peterson.

After that, take a look at the 'borders' of the English web page, scroll to the very edge of the bottom of the page to the notice: Copyright, All Rights Reserved by Radio Canada. Notice, too, the screen furniture, their colourful logo 'For Teachers'. Fix

them in your mind, then paste this url (web address) into the Address Box at the top of your browser. It will present you with the French version:

http://archives.radio-canada.ca/IDD-0-72-403/arts_culture/oscar_peterson/

It is alienating if you do not have any French at all, n'est-ce pas ? (isn't it?). But go to the borders again, first there is the logo for teachers, this time in French 'Pour les profs', that should begin to give you some point of reference. Then perform that ritual of scrolling down to the very bottom border of the space or web-page. The copyright symbol is identical and the statement 'Tous droits réservés' is the French version of the 'All Rights Reserved' notice you know from before.

As a treat now for all this 'anxiety of the foreign', let's listen to some jazz. Click on the clip called '**Oscar Peterson présente...**' Click on the Play button below the clip screen window to hear Peterson say 'Bonsoir' (Good evening), and introduce his number 'Canadian Suite', homage to the place of his birth, which is already in your episteme; you know from the English page it is Place St Henri in Montreal (French pronounce it Monn-ray-al without the English 't' sound)

Make a few notes on how Radio Canada has made this jazz musician and composer accessible to both language groups (Francophone and Anglophone) via their web pages in preparation for your seminar activities. Why do you think Radio Canada does not show the clip 'Growing Up in Place St Henri' on their Francophone page? Why can jazz cross the boundary between the two languages?

The mundane aspects of everyday commuting both for the writer *en voyage* and the subjects under observation can seem without point or meaning. De Certeau and Giard seek to rescue the everyday by valorising the existences of ordinary people. Travel writers incorporate this valorisation, seeking both to give meaning to their own working practices by recording the passage of time in their travel journals and by setting in print a history of the people they encounter.

Finally, we have seen how a key aspect of travel writing practice inscribes the body of the author in the spaces that are described in the text and in the lived time of the journey. Often the presence of the author is implied or assumed, and it is this subtlety of implication that serves to add a kind of truthfulness to the writer's or narrator's account even if the only truth that the text offers up is that the narrator's body was there in that place and in that time. Travel writers use their implied presence to write their history of the people they include in the text with them thus giving an existence to the characters in their travel account. We see this very clearly at work in the set text, Brossard's *Mauve Desert*.

Chapter 4 – The Exotic, the Exote and Encounters with the Other.

The role of the exote, one who travels to deliberately seek out the strange and new, is a construct of Victor Segalen described by Charles Forsdick (Forsdick 2000, *passim*). Travel writers often deliberately set out on their journeys to seek out something new about the foreign city or land. One of the key moments for the exote is their encounter with the Other. This chapter attempts to determine who or what constitutes the Other and, from that, to determine the travel writers' own conceptions of their identity vis-à-vis this constructed other. David Scott theorizes around the self of the travel writer in contact with the Other (Scott 2004, 59-72). Meeting the Other can result in the return of the uncanny, the previously known or the repressed; the self can thus be recovered, a lost aspect of identity can be restored in these encounters (Scott 2004, 58).

As our exercise for this section let us plunge directly into a strange, new environment to meet the Other, like exotes, relishing the thought of the new with its challenges to our existing body of knowledge.

<http://www.audiogram.com/groovegrave/>

The previously known or repressed parts of our own language and the conventions of rap (now called hip-hop in US and UK) can be recovered in this. The action of 'scratching', with the mouse in this case rather than on vinyl, is a haptic, physical connection with a known discourse in hip-hop music reproduced in the visual on this web-site designed by new media artists and developers for Audiogram in Montreal.

The rap group, Loco Locass also write and sing about Montreal, like Oscar Peterson. Please visit their distributors' web-site and navigate to the Loco Locass album *Amour Oral*.

<http://www.audiogram.com/index.php>

On the Audiogram web-site please also view their videograms (clips) particularly Bonzaion, which was released in March 2005. It gives you the opportunity to encounter the three rap-artistes in Loco Locass. Notice their use of the familiar uniform of the urban rapper, the hooded anorak.

The company, Freeset Multimedia in Montreal produced new media add-ins for the Loco Locass album *In Vivo*. Bastien Beauchamp of Freeset very kindly transcribed some of the lyrics and provided some commentary and explanation of the context of Loco Locass' political rap-song, 'Super Mario' for students of Canadian Studies here at the University of Edinburgh. Here are a few notes abstracted and translated into English from his longer commentary:

The title expects the audience to be familiar with both the computer game character 'Super Mario' and M. Mario Dumont, Deputy to l'Assemblée nationale du Québec (equivalent to an MP or MSP). Mario Dumont is also President of the political party l'Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ). This context makes us see how language translation is not enough to understand a cultural artefact such as this song. The

words or signs of the French language may be easy to change into English using the computer or a dictionary but allusions and metaphors present a greater challenge.

The chorus or refrain provides a good example of this, whilst also providing you with material to help with your bi-lingual web-page or music review:

REFRAIN (2X)

Changement ! Changement ! On veut du changement !
Quitte à confier au lévrier les leviers du clapier
N'importe quoi pour les Québécois pourvu qu'on soit dans l'champ
(Thanks to Bastien Beauchamp for this transcription)

CHORUS (Twice)

Change! Change! We want change!
Even if it means entrusting to the greyhound the control levers of the rabbit-hutch
Anything for the Quebeckers if we can be in the running.

Even when we translate the chorus, as above, it still seems obscure. The key metaphor used at the start of the song is that the political party, the ADQ, is like a shaky vehicle quickly thrown together for its journey to the polls. Thus the idea of travelling a course is established. In this chorus the course become a greyhound race. The slogan also draws on, and so satirises, the slogan used by the ADQ in the elections just before this song in the early 2000s. Bastien Beauchamp, working in Montreal through this period, feels the chorus suggests that the party will appear to change anything just as long as it makes them appear different in the eyes of the voting public, re-imaging themselves to suit whatever image the voters will vote for.

Some final questions to prepare for your seminar groups:

- Does the Audiogram web-site make the music and songs of Loco Locass accessible to English speakers?
- What could you do to improve the experience?
- Is their web-site simply a red desert with no readable signs for the English-speaking visitor?

Chapter 5 – Unreadable Signs in the Desert

This chapter examines key elements of the travel text, comparing travel writing with the travel guide-book which operates as a separate, if parallel, discourse. It goes on to analyse in detail these key, common themes, which may be called anatomical elements of the travel text, notably the role of food-taking. The chapter then looks again at veracity as a further element detectable in travel writing which lends the practice a scientific aspect. From this point the argument seeks to show how the sciences of anthropology and then ethnology have been incorporated into the genre over the latter half of the twentieth century, with clearly visible influences on travel writing at the end of the twentieth century.

The aim of the guide-book from a publisher is to authorise a new place of leisure; it is interesting to note that guide-books are sold more on the name of the publisher than on an individual author's name, for example, Lonely Planet, The Rough Guide.

The idea of authorising in travel writing has a long history in French-speaking culture, for example the written word already underpinned French courtly society when François I (1494 - 1547) sent out or rather, authorised, Jacques Cartier (1491 – 1557) to travel from France and document discoveries across the Atlantic. It was France's first real effort towards exploration in North America for the purposes of colonisation when Cartier arrived in what is now Canada in 1534.

Jacques Cartier's log-book, referred to in French critical works as his '*relation de voyage*' has become a founding text in the literature of the French-speaking Canadian province of Quebec. The *relation de voyage* can be called a genre or writing practice since it displays a clear discourse which includes notions of inauguration by a plenipotentiary, land-founding in the name of a remote authority, naming places in the visitor's language and re-casting the roles of indigenous peoples in new terms. The travelling writer organising the newly-visited space with full powers, that is, plenipotentiary authority from a home sovereign, casts the first seeds of self-authorisation. The anxiety of the envoy's royal court is that their plenipotentiaries will feel released from the bonds of loyalty which tie them to the home state and begin to act independently. It is a fear echoed in international business organisations today when local representatives are said to have 'gone native' if they start conducting business on their own terms. As travel writers voyage far from the constraints and rules of home their self-authorisation increases along with their liberty to act outside home conventions.

Two forces are at work here. The first is that the resultant text of a mission of discovery, for example, a guide-book, re-writes the place it has explored which may sanitise it or, at least, inscribe the new space within the rules and authority of the home court, in this case perhaps the commissioning publishers. The second is the potential risk that the authors begin to act independently, that they self-authorise, feeling liberated by their remoteness from control. This taking of authority has become an important component of French culture since the French Revolution when authority was ceded to the people by the crown. Once authority was seized by the new *parlement* it was quickly realised that the other bastions of power could be

challenged, ignored or re-written, one example was the French calendar which re-named the months. The paradoxical nature of carrying with you the social rules of home whilst feeling liberated by self-authorisation when travelling abroad may account for much of the pleasure of tourism.

The resultant texts from travel writing, be they non-literary guide-books, travel novels or travel poems, carry with them the role of Cartier's *relation de voyage*, that is, they 'make safe' the place which the reader is about to enter while authorising the reader to use the space they offer up as if on a restaurant menu. However, the two extremes of travel text (guide-book to travel poem) work in different ways on the reader. The guide-book selects sights or sites that are worth seeing, often reproducing photographs and maps to ensure the traveller finds these culturalised points readily. The literary work, meanwhile, only inadvertently draws attention to a site or sign whilst still operating on the reader's desire, stimulating the need to visit the site.

On the whole literary travel writing, at the other end of the spectrum from guide-books, avoids the direct invitation to travel perhaps by describing perils or mundane events that do not seem directly to stimulate the tourist's desires. Yet, the powerful signifying value of the printed word and language itself acts on the reader to create desire for the beautiful images that the text promises. So much so, that even a reference to a road sign could, in some cult-like way, stimulate a pilgrimage to the place to see where the famous author works on her writing. This function of writing about place draws on notions of celebrity and publicity after Jürgen Habermas, and mythologizing after Roland Barthes. The writing creates desire in the reader who has not yet seen the site that is described, setting up a craving for travel, whilst creating the conditions for what Scott terms the uncanny in the reader who sees the site that connects with their previous literary reading. Stéphane Gerson discusses this phenomenon, which could be called 'celebrity of place', with respect to Théophile Gautier in the middle years of the nineteenth century. Gerson puts forward figures on how many domestic travel accounts, that is, French travel texts, were published in the nineteenth-century, somewhere between 650 and 1050 titles (Gerson 1996, 149-150) and links this to Gautier's despair at 'the swarm of lowly tourists' which plague him as he moves around France.

If a travel text evokes something normally unreadable from nature, such as the rolling clouds, the azure sky, the mauve desert, this may be seen as a hermeneutic practice according the analysis of Jean Baudrillard's *L'Amérique* by David Scott (Scott 2004, 154-160). Scott looks at poetic language in his approach to the travel book by Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1986, 70-71). Scott's work provides a valuable entry point into reading and understanding author's digressions on natural phenomena in travel literature.

In a modern, rational society concerned with being able to read signs, poets often exploit the idea that nature presents signs and that these signs may be unreadable to humans. Consider this line of verse from the contemporary French poet Yves Bonnefoy (Bonnefoy 1991). In the opening poem for the collection 'La Grande Neige' (Bonnefoy 1991, 111) Bonnefoy attributes mystical, other-worldly writing properties to the liquid crystals of snow and nature in the form of the breeze dancing at a tree root:

Un peu de vent
Écrit du bout du pied un mot hors du monde.

(Bonnefoy 1991, 111)

A slight breeze
Writes an unworldly word beneath the trees.

[Mansfield's translation 2005]

Writing in 1986 on his experience of America's Death Valley, Baudrillard finds expression for his feelings by calling up the other-worldliness of this natural place which he calls 'pure sign' (*le signe pur*) (Baudrillard 1986, 67) quoted in (Scott 2004, 158), Scott shows how Baudrillard's travel writing recalls the mythic and the sign which is outside of all signs when the writer is confronted with pure nature, unmediated by humans. The nature of the desert is initially a blank which cannot be read. The travel writer is offered, therefore, a pure space in which to inscribe their version of the world. Scott calls this a hermeneutic writing practice (Scott 2004, 160).

The travel writer seeing the desert for the first time and the learner of a new language have a similar process to go through. The desert, like a page of foreign literature, may appear both empty of meaning and yet full of sand or unreadable signs at the same time. A reader's own language is a key component of their own identity. Your language or total vocabulary could be seen as what you know and in what words you know it. If you meet a new, unknown language you do not 'know' anything in that language, and thus, French, say, is not your identity. The philosophical study of self and identity often starts with an idea from psychoanalysis.

Self narration makes a comprehensible history of the past ... If [someone] recognises their self in a proffered narrative they can continue their interrupted self-formative process and gain emancipation.

(Mansfield 2001, 182)

If you have time, read the whole of this section on Narrative in the Edinburgh University Library Research Archive (full url given in Bibliography below). The idea of self-narrative or re-appropriation of the story space is important for the exploration of identity-formation in the novel we are going to look at in detail, Nicole Brossard *Mauve Desert* which is available in both its original French and in an English translation by Susanne Lotbinière-Hardwood. Here we see a New Media artist, Adriene Jenik remarking on that same psychological phenomenon, that is, the emancipatory importance of self-identification with a novel's narrative project:

What drove me to this obsession? The beauty of language, the character of Mélanie, the images flying about in my head as I was reading? The all-encompassing nature of Brossard's project and its confluence with my own cultural practice of revealing the process of production?

Adriene Jenik in (Curran 1998, 97)

Jenik has 'identified' with Mélanie, in the colloquial sense of the word which we use about a film or book character.

Reading and Writing in French

<p>En fait, la conception d'un voyage sans objectif, donc sans fin, ne se développe que progressivement.</p> <p>(Baudrillard 1986, 18)</p>	<p>In fact the conception of a trip without any objective and which is, as a result, endless, only develops gradually for me.</p> <p>(Baudrillard [transl. Turner] 1988, 9)</p>
--	---

Like the traveller's first sight of the desert the foreign text looks alien and unreadable. The apparent emptiness of the desert landscape or even the sense that it is too full of grains of sand makes the desert both forbidding and challenging. Can the readable signs even be seen? How can we make the new signs legible?

Learning a new set of signs is the same task as acquiring a new language. Language teaching splits language skills into the same divisions and hierarchies that informatics specialists use to describe data handling in computer systems:

<u>Receptive</u>		<u>Productive</u>
Read & Listen	Edit	Write & Speak

Language learners are told to practise all 4 skills everyday to ensure they are being productive as well as receptive. Receiving and then producing language builds self-identity. Identity theory shows us how self-narration can make 'sense' of our experiences and our past allowing us to take on-board the new and constantly renewed or liberated self.

We will now look at a strategy for reading French texts. I have called the strategy 'LOUPS', an acronym from 'Least-Often Understood Phrases'. The word, *loups*, means 'wolves' in French and spelt with an extra 'e' *loupes* means 'magnifying glasses' (lenses). I have used the LOUPS method successfully for novel reading and for understanding longer reports. It has some similarities to de Certeau's Romans temporarily crossing the border to perform some exercise that will make their eventual crossing easier.

First find your particular 'wolves' in the French text, these are the phrases or individual words that prevent you from understanding the text. I underline them in pencil. Roughly speaking if you cannot understand one word in six then the text will defy comprehension. Using the dictionary for each word as you meet it eventually detracts too much from your reading. With the LOUPS exercise, though, you scan through a few pages of the novel first and underline all the problem phrases (your wolves). Then return to the start of the text and consult the French-to-English dictionary noting down all the translations for your wolves. Then set aside the book for a few hours or overnight. When you return to the book have your LOUPS phrases beside you and you will then easily maintain the flow of your reading, a simple glance to your LOUPS notes will give you the translation.

Here is an example of LOUPS annotation based on the commentary on *Loco Locass* by Bastien Beauchamp:

<p>Mario Dumont <u>impliqué</u> depuis son tout jeune âge <u>dans</u> la politique québécoise <u>n'a révélé que tout dernièrement</u> ses réelles positions politiques. Dans le cadre de la dernière élection provinciale, Mario <u>Dumont a dû exposer les visions</u> de son parti. <u>Ces dernières se sont avérées être</u> extrêmement conservatrices, <u>voire très à 'droite'</u> pour une province traditionnellement 'socialiste' comme le Québec.</p>	<p>L.O.U.P.S impliqué ... dans = involved in n'a révélé que tout dernièrement = has only very recently Dumont a dû exposer les visions = Dumont had to set out the views Ces dernières = These latest (these last views) Ils se sont avérées être = They proved to be (turned out to be) voire très à 'droite' = even very much to the right (right of centre)</p>
<p><u>En effet</u>, le Québec s'est distingué depuis les années soixante <u>par</u> la gratuité de ses frais de santé et d'éducation, par les efforts qu'<u>il voue à</u> la défense de la langue française sur son territoire, et l'attachement qu'il porte à la culture et à l'aide sociale. Dans ce contexte, Mario Dumont a proposé une vision de privatisation des services de santé, un taux de taxation unique, et <u>diverses coupures</u> dans les services gouvernementaux à la population. Une telle approche permet de faire des références idéologiques au <i>Reform Party</i>, sur le plan canadien, et au <i>Republican Party</i> aux Etats-Unis.</p>	<p>En effet = Actually le Québec s'est distingué ... par = Quebec has (or had) set itself apart ... by il voue à = it nurses a feeling for (it devotes itself to) diverses coupures = various cuts (<i>fem.</i> la coupure)</p>
<p><u>Afin de dénoncer une telle vision</u> et d'influencer le cours des élections, le groupe engagé Loco Locass a composé et diffusé la chanson 'Super Mario' sur Internet puis sur l'album <i>In Vivo</i>.</p>	<p>Afin de dénoncer = In order to denounce une telle vision = such a view (such a vision)</p>

Notice how we met the French word for 'view' (as in political view) *la vision*, twice in those paragraphs. In practice, I have found that learners need to process a new word 6 to 8 times before it begins to form part of their French vocabulary, part of their French identity. By 'process' I mean using the new word in all four skills:

Read & Listen

Write & Speak

You can store your new vocabulary in table form in a word-processed document or in a spreadsheet package. If you keep your new words and phrases in a spreadsheet or table they can be easily sorted into alphabetic order to become a traveller's phrase-book. Remember, too, that Control F, lets you look for words in an electronic document.

The final exercise is to make a table of your own vocabulary that you can develop as you encounter new French words.

First make a list of your own personal episteme or vocabulary in English. This could be seen as your identity since it is the words in which you express yourself. Then add

columns whenever you do a major revision or personal test of your French vocabulary. This will show how you are changing.

ENGLISH VOCABULARY	FRENCH 23-Sep-05	FRENCH 30-Sep-05
a	Un, une	Un, une
the	La, le	La, le
view		une vision

A good method for preparing the list of English words that you know and use is to run concordancing software on your essays and your Sent Emails. TextSTAT, available free from the Free University of Berlin, is a useful concordancing tool, please visit the url

<http://www.niederlandistik.fu-berlin.de/textstat/software-en.html>

because it provides an alphabetical listing of all your vocabulary in a list form that can be read into a spreadsheet.

Appendices

Appendix A.

Anatomy of the Twentieth-Century French Travel Text

	THEME	ANALYSIS	SOURCE
A	Anticipation	Mounting excitement at the prospect of the journey.	
C	Clothing	Identity shifts possible in new clothing at the destination.	Thomas 2003
D	Displacement	Displacement and time are components of travel movement so verb tenses will provide inroad to textual practice.	
E	Episteme	The travel text will add to the stock of knowledge.	Foucault 1966 & 1970 in English
F	Food & Drink, meal-taking	Strange new foods. Meals prepared by someone else. A pause in the journey is invested with more.	Kostova 2003
I	Images, sights,	The travel writer will see new and beautiful things, like views of Paris as a picture postcard.	
L	Language	The strange language may not appear connected to the world. Writer may choose to incorporate found texts, spoken or written.	Baudrillard via Scott 2004
M	Map	Printed page will use white space as part of the structure of the travel text to make the emptiness comprehensible, reminiscent of the map.	Diderot 1796
R	Responsibility shift	Traveller is at ease, responsibility seems removed allowing traveller to behave outside home conventions.	
S	Self	Self-identity inscribed in the text as exote but entropy may be at work	Forsdick 2000 after Segalen
T	Transport	Mode of transport contributes to literariness of text.	Giard and Certeau 1990 after Verne
U	Uncanny	Sights and new people will recall previous literary or artistic readings.	Scott 2004
V	Veracity	The travel writer will report the 'truth'	Diderot 1796
W	Weather and Natural Phenomena	Used to render simultaneously truthfulness and literariness whilst often sighting the body in the space.	Bonnefoy 1991, Baudrillard 1989, Scott 2004.

Bibliography

PLEASE NOTE

*The three starred books are the three English translations which would be useful if you have enough time to read further. Use the index or contents pages to pinpoint the chapters most relevant to your studies, for example Chapter IX in Michel de Certeau. The starred article gives an introduction to how identity and cultural production are closely related and is available as a PDF from Edinburgh's own Research Archive : ERA, as well as being on the library shelves.

† The two books in bold are set books. The Penguin anthology contains the short story 'The Objet d'Art' by Jean-Paul Daoust, pp.82-103, which is required reading for the course.

*Baudrillard, Jean (1989) *America USA*, Verso
[English version translated by Chris Turner].

Baudrillard, Jean (1986) *L'Amérique* Paris, Grasset.

Bonnefoy, Yves (1991) *Ce qui fut sans lumière suivi de Début et fin de la neige* Paris, Poesie Gallimard NRF.

Brossard, Nicole (1987) *Le Désert mauve – roman* Montreal, L'Hexagone.

† **Brossard, Nicole (1990) *Mauve Desert – a novel* Toronto, Coach House Press.**
[English translation by Susanne de Lotbiniere-Harwood]

Certeau, Michel de (1990) *L'invention du quotidien – 1. arts de faire* Paris, Gallimard Folio Essais [new edition introduced and edited by Luce Giard]

*Certeau, Michel de (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life* Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.

[English translation by Steven Rendall]

† **Coward, Richard [ed & trans] (1999) *New Penguin Parallel texts – Short Stories in French* Harmondsworth, Penguin.**

Curran, Beverley (1998) 'Obsessed by her reading: an interview with Adriene Jenik about her CD-ROM translation of Nicole Brossard's *Le desert mauve*.' in *Links & Letters* 6 1998: 97-109, Barcelona, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Direct Link to Article in PDF format

<http://www.bib.uab.es/pub/linksandletters/11337397n6p97.pdf>

Diderot, Denis (1796) *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, Paris, abbé Bourdet de Vauxcelles [Edition used and cited here is: Chinard, Gilbert (1935) *Diderot – Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* Oxford, Oaris, London & Baltimore, John Hopkins Press and OUP.]

Forsdick, Charles (2000) *Victor Segalen and the Aesthetics of Diversity – Journeys between Cultures*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. Shelfmark: PQ2637.E33 For.

Foucault, Michel (1966) *Les mots et les choses – Une archéologie des sciences humaines* Paris, Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel (1970) *The Order of Things* London, Routledge.

[English translation of *Les mots et les choses* with new Foreword]

Gerson, Stephane (1996) 'Parisian Litterateurs, Provincial Journeys and the Construction of National Unity in Post-Revolutionary France' in *Past and Present*, Number 151 (May, 1996), pp.141-173, Chicago, University of Chicago.

Kostova, Ludmilla (2003) 'Meals in Foreign Parts: Food in Writing by Nineteenth-Century British Travellers to the Balkans' in *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing* Volume 4, Number 1, 2003, pp.21-44, Oxford and New York, Berghahn Books.

Mansfield, Charlie (2004) 'Lire *L'empire des signes* de Barthes comme écriture de voyage' in Yoichi Kaniike, Shunsuke Kadowaki, Yasuo Kobayashi (eds) *Bulletin: BARTHES – Résonances des sens* Tokyo, University of Tokyo Centre for Philosophy.
Library shelfmark: P85.B33 Bar. Direct Link to Article in ERA
<http://hdl.handle.net/1842/651>

* Mansfield, Charlie (2001) Identity and Narration in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and the Appearance of the Internet as a Symptom of Cold-War Anxiety in *Time, Narrative and the Fixed Image / Temps, Narration et Image Fixé* Mireille Ribiere & Jan Baetens (eds) Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam ISBN 9042013664
Library Shelfmark: Pamph. PN56.V54 Man.
Direct Link to Article in ERA <http://hdl.handle.net/1842/659>

Mansfield, Charlie (1989) 'Poetics Today' in *Language and Literature* (formerly *PARLANCE*), Volume 2, Issue 1, pp.111-114, London, Sage.
Direct Link to Article in ERA <http://hdl.handle.net/1842/796>

Nash, Dennison (1981) 'Tourism as an Anthropological Subject' in *Current Anthropology* Volume 22, Number 5 (October 1981), pp. 461-481, Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Price, Sally (2004) 'Michel Leiris, French Anthropology, and a Side Trip to the Antilles' in *French Politics, Culture and Society* Volume 22, Number 1, Spring 2004, pp.23-35, Oxford and New York, Berghahn Books.

*Scott, David (2004) *Semiotics of Travel from Gautier to Baudrillard* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Shelfmark: PQ283 Sco.
See particularly pp.156-160 in Chapter 5 Signs in the Desert for a close reading of Baudrillard's *America*. Scott presents citations in both French original and English translation in his book. This is a good example of how to show both languages in a continuous text.

Filmography, Discography & New Media

Loco Locass (2004) *Amour Oral* Montreal, Les Disques Audiogramme Inc

Loco Locass (2003) *In Vivo [Enhanced]* Montreal, Les Disques Audiogramme Inc & Freeset Multimedia.

Freeset Multimedia offer a web-site devoted to their work with the band Loco Locass at <http://www.freeset.ca/invivo/demo/>

Video Film: Bonzaïon

Direction: Danny Gilmore & Clermont Jolicoeur

20 May 2005 1h 27m Montreal, Studio: Qui Filme Qui

This film is referred to in one of the music tracks by Loco Locass but may be difficult to find.

Additional Webography – Links to Sites which should remain stable and up-to-date

Take a tour around this site to gain ideas on how to present French & English information in the same electronic space. Try searching for our studied author : Nicole Brossard on this site.

<http://www.culture.ca/canada/>

This Quebec site discusses the position of post-modernism in Quebec literature, which will have relevance to the Mauve Desert novel by Nicole Brossard which dates from this period 1980 to 2000. Provides a list of other important authors from this period.

<http://www.cegep-baie-comeau.qc.ca/francais/QUEBEC/p-modern.htm>

Provided by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States, this portal provides numerous links in both French and English to resources and other web-sites. This is the portal where I discovered the Quebec site on literature for example.

http://www.frenchresources.info/module_ressources/en/htm/frameset/ressources/themes/ressources_litterature_fr.htm

TextSTAT – The Text Statistics and Concordancing Tool, free to download from The Free University of Berlin. Useful for listing all the words in an electronic text such as your essays or emails.

<http://www.niederlandistik.fu-berlin.de/textstat/software-en.html>

A Note on long urls

If the web address (the url) wraps onto the next line and loses its last few characters simply copy the last few again and paste them into the address box of your browser after the linked characters.

Charlie Mansfield, University of Edinburgh, Ecosse

Email charlie.mansfield@ed.ac.uk