Richard J. Gray II
Ashland University

Sexual Politics: Mapping the Body in Marguerite Duras's *L'Amant*

Abstract: In *L'Amant* (1984), through the juxtaposition of traditional male/female sexual roles, Marguerite Duras painted a gynocentric portrait of sexual politics. By depicting a series of encounters in diverse parts of the Indochinese (Vietnam) landscape, Duras's novel described the sexual "coming of age" story of her female protagonist's. Each Vietnamese setting became a visual and sensory metaphor for the various developmental stages of the protagonist. In this essay, I contend that Duras's use of contrasting settings serves to "flesh out" the sexual politics conveyed in the novel. Herein, I examine the geographic locations illustrating the sexual politics of the novel, including the Mekong River signifying the female protagonist's rite of passage, Cholon, the city where the girl experiences sexual liberation and a struggle with the established authority, the lover's apartment where the couple consummates their relationship, and finally, France representing the land of wealth to which the protagonist will eventually return.

Key words: autobiography, Judith Butler, Cholen (Cholon), colonisation, crossing, gender, juxtaposition, Marguerite Duras, Julia Kristeva, liberation, liminal space, mapping the body, Mekong, Kate Millett, Other, post-colonial, prostitution, sexploitation, sexuality, sexual politics.

In her classic feminist text entitled *Sexual Politics* (2000), Kate Millett stated that "one is forced to conclude that sexual politics, while connected to economics and other tangibles of social organization, is, like racism, or certain aspects of caste, primarily an ideology, a way of life, with influence over every other psychological and emotional facet of existence" (168). Millet underscored the role that patriarchy plays in sexual relations, particularly the dialectic created between the dominant male and the subjugated female. By examining several important authors including D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer, she argued that these writers' perspectives were completely male-centred, marginalising to women, and often misogynistic. In her semi-autobiographic novel *L'Amant* (1984), in contrast, through the juxtaposi-

tion of traditional male/female sexual roles, Marguerite Duras painted a gynocentric portrait of the sexual politics of Indochina inspired by an authentic romantic liaison that she had from 1928—1932 with Huynh Thuy Le, a rich Vietnamese merchant. In the novel, Duras describes various Vietnamese settings through which she travelled as girl in her journey from adolescence to womanhood. Each setting creates both a visual and a sensory metaphor for the developmental stages of the female protagonist. The main goal of this essay is to illustrate the impact of geographic locations upon the development of the female protagonist in Duras's *L'Amant* by showing how these diverse settings "map the body" to reveal Duras's sexual politics. In "mapping" the female protagonist's body, this essay explores the imagery of the crossing of the Mekong River as a preliminary step from child to adult, the symbolism of Cholon (Cholen) as a city of sexual liberation and experimentation, and finally, the importance of France as an emblem of wealth and opportunity to which the female protagonist will ultimately return.

Marguerite Duras (1914—1996) was born in Indochina, present-day Vietnam, in 1914 and moved to Paris in the early 1930s. Duras is best known for her novels *Moderato cantabile* (1958), the screenplay for Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1960), and her novel *L'Amant* (1984) for which she won the Prix Goncourt. French literary scholars have debated classifying her novel as a historical text from the time of its publication and there is disagreement over whether or not *L'Amant* is truly autobiographical. Among other constitutive elements, the lack of a chronological narration combined with the narrator referring to the female protagonist as "la fille" in lieu of "moi" create a narrative in which the author exhibits a greater separation from the narration than in traditional autobiography. Asserting the notion that *L'Amant* is not, in fact, autobiography, in "*L'Amant* de Marguerite Duras: une autobiographie?," Franciska Skutta writes:

> Il va de soi qu'on n'a pas affaire ici à la manière habituelle dont on écrit une autobiographie. Il arrive d'une part que des périodes entières soient laissées dans l'ombre, en faveur d'autres périodes qui reviennent avec insistance dans la narration; d'autre part, même ces passages-là témoignent souvent des flottements de la mémoire, par ailleurs reconnus… Dans ces conditions, il serait vain et même erroné d'exiger une précision documentaire, car la force du récit n'est pas là ; elle réside plutôt dans une évocation subjective.
>
> 83—84

Duras wrote *L'Amant* when she had reached nearly 70 years of age. Thus, the passage of time naturally brings the reader to question the reliability of the events that Duras recounted. In her book entitled *Marguerite Duras*, Christiane Blot-Labarrère suggests that Duras's childhood as described in *L'Amant* is a mythology (31—39). Nevertheless, in her novel, Duras attempts to reconstruct her

experience growing up in Indochina nearly 50 years after the event.[1] Written in a disjunctive third-person narration, the author draws a map of Indochina highlighting the main geographic locales that were paramount in her journey from childhood to adolescence, and finally, to adulthood: the Mekong River, the city of Cholen (Cholon), and her homeland of France.

To cross the Mekong River is to cross a threshold linking France to Indochina. The crossing forms a rite of passage, an initiation through which the female protagonist leaves behind her former self and develops a new identity. In her geographic descriptions, Duras employs a rich water metaphor. Initially, the crossing of the Mekong is the event setting into motion her turbulent adolescence: "C'est le passage d'un bac sur le Mékong" (11)/"Quinze ans et demi. C'est la traversée du fleuve" (16). During the crossing, Duras leaves her childhood and enters into adulthood, as she explains: "Je crois que ma vie a commencé à se montrer à moi…je ne suis plus seule depuis que j'ai quitté l'enfance" (126). This crossing symbolizes not only her imminent initiation into adulthood in the physical sense, but also the instant during which she becomes aware of the changes occurring in her life. Duras's commentary vis-à-vis the natural beauty and power of the Mekong suggests that she recognises the beauty and danger of the pending sexual and psychological transformation. Her mother tells the female protagonist that in all her life she will never see "des fleuves aussi beaux que ceux-là, aussi grands, aussi sauvages, le Mékong et ses bras qui descendent vers les océans, ces territoires d'eau qui vont aller disparaître dans les cavités des océans" (17). The Mekong's beauty is purely illusory, for crossing the river terrifies the girl:

> Je descends toujours du car quand on arrive sur le bac, la nuit aussi, parce que toujours j'ai peur que les câbles cèdent, que nous soyons emportés vers la mer. Dans le courant terrible je regarde le dernier moment de ma vie. Le courant est si fort, il emporterait tout, aussi bien que des pierres, une cathédrale, une ville. Il y a une tempête qui souffle à l'intérieur des eaux du fleuve. Du vent qui se débat.
>
> 18

Like objects falling into a river that are at the mercy of the current, the girl does not control the course that her life will take following the crossing. After her initial physical encounter with the Chinese lover, she yields to the power of her own sexuality. The Mekong forms a visual metaphor of the doubt standing in

[1] The notion of autobiographic narratives is unquestionably problematic. As Judith Butler states, "the constitutive identifications of the autobiographical narrative are always partially fabricated in the telling. [Jacques] Lacan claims that we can never tell the story of our origins, precisely because language bars the speaking subject from the repressed libidinal origins of its speech" (91).

the protagonist's own path. Staring at the river, Duras describes "la lumière sur le fleuve qui se ternissait, mais à peine. Une surdité très légère aussi, un brouillard, partout" (44). The hanging fog exemplifies the anxiety of the girl vis-à-vis her new sexual experiences and the unknown world into which she has entered. In Duras's personified descriptions of the Mekong, the river becomes a monster that the traveller must respect lest the river devour the girl:

> Il emmène tout ce qui vient, des paillotes, des forêts, des incendies éteints, des oiseaux morts, des chiens morts, des tigres, des buffles, noyés, des hommes noyés, des leurres, des îles de jacinthes d'eau agglutinées, tout va vers le Pacifique, rien n'a le temps de couler, tout est emporté par la tempête profonde et vertigineuse du courant intérieur, tout reste en suspens à la surface de la force du fleuve.
>
> 30—31

More precisely, crossing the Mekong denotes the girl's physical initiation into womanhood. The current of the river foreshadows the stormy relationship with the Chinese man for "tout va dans le torrent, dans la force du désir" (55). The world of prostitution into which she has entered becomes inescapable, and her own mother notes how this sexploitation has changed her daughter, mocking her own daughter by commenting that "la prostitution éclatante et elle rit, du scandale, de cette pitrerie, de ce chapeau déplacé, de cette élégance sublime de l'enfant de la traversée du fleuve" (113). Like the Mekong's waves that break against the hull of the ferry, her childhood innocence is broken, as she enters into a life in which sex is both a commodity and a struggle for power.[2] In the first volume of *The History of Sex*, Michel Foucault argues that the construct of "sex" itself must be understood, firstly, in terms of this power struggle that manifests itself in the form of a dialectic conceived of repression and domination. Thus, "sex" can either be used to obtain power or it can be the power itself that it drains from its subject:

> The notion of sex brought about a fundamental reversal; it made it possible to invert the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality, causing the latter to appear, *not in its essential and positive relation to power*, but as being rooted in a specific and irreducible urgency which power tries as best it can to dominate.
>
> Foucault 154, italics in original text

The fact that the female protagonist's mother notices that every man now wants to physically possess her daughter not only makes the mother insanely jealous, but it also evidences both the daughter's transition from innocent girl

[2] The image of the waves shattering against the hull of the boat symbolises the future loss of the female protagonist's virginity.

to sexual creature and the latter's understanding of the relationship between sex and power, that of acceptance and of abjection.

The relationship between the female protagonist and the mother remains tenuous throughout the narrative. At first blush, their rapport might appear to be a typical one reflecting a mother's struggles with understanding her adolescent daughter. Upon closer examination, however, the gap separating mother and daughter in the novel has deeper roots than those created after the onset of puberty. Is the mother manic depressive? Do her troubles stem from the death of her husband who left behind a wife and three children? In *L'Amant*, it is clear that the way in which the mother perceives the female protagonist had a profound effect on the latter's subject formation. In the Lacanian sense, the female protagonist's subject formation is a process. The "mirror stage" to which Jacques Lacan referred functions as a dialectic in which the "I" is identified by an understanding of the "Not I" (Homer 24—25). Lacan's mirror stage is typically fulfilled by the "mother's gaze." In discussing the "mother's gaze," psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott writes: "We can include in all this the actual mirrors that exist in the house and the opportunities the child gets for seeing the parents and others for looking at themselves" (158—159). The "mother's gaze" is largely absent from Duras's novel. The female protagonist's self-image is formed largely through the "Not I" of her existence. Thus, as Judith Butler states, the construction of the "Not I" of the abject "establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject" (181). It is in this way that the narrator "maps" Duras's body.

The Chinese lover is the chief "cartographer" throughout the novel. In the same way in which the daughter becomes a physical substitution for the mother within the prostitution scenario, the Chinese lover also becomes a substitution for the mother as the lover's gaze replaces that of the mother. Consequently, through the lover's gaze the female protagonist develops a notion of the Self, no matter how distorted it might be. And like the relationship that exists between the protagonist and her mother, the relationship of the protagonist and her lover is equally problematic. He is — at once — mother, father, and sexual partner. This tripartite role bordering on incestuous is unhealthy. The reader must remember that the female protagonist lost her father when she was rather young — seven years of age. It is worth noting that the father's death had a direct effect on the development of the female protagonist.[3] In an interview for *The New York Times*, Duras described her adolescence as follows: "There was a sexual fear, fear of men, because I didn't have a father. I wasn't raped, but I sensed rape, like all little girls. And then afterwards I had a Chinese lover.

[3] Other scholars have written extensively on the "absence du père" theme in Duras's work. See Fan Rong's "The Father as a Metaphor: The Signifier of 'the Name of the Father' in Marguerite Duras' Works" (*Foreign Literature Studies*, 2006: 97—104).

That was love" (Garis). Sexuality was most assuredly a subject of interest to the adolescent Duras.

In addition to examining the role that sexuality plays in the construction of the female protagonist's subject (identity) formation, the novel deconstructs the historic and ethnographic stereotypes of colonised peoples created within Western society from a post-colonial perspective. According to Edward Said, father of the seminal post-colonial theoretical text entitled *Orientalism*, "modern thought and experience have taught us to be sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the Other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas" (327). Said defines the "Orient" as a fictional construct fashioned and forged under an external Occidental optic that continued to perpetuate itself in the neo-colonial period and that continues to flourish in the New Millennium (Ashcroft 193—200).[4] Once the girl has crossed the Mekong, the "Other" objectifies her: "cette jeune enfant qui était jusque-là cachée dans les postes de brousse et qui tout à coup arrive au grand jour et se commet au su et à la vue de tous…" (Duras 13). As Julia Kristeva suggests in her discussion of how the operation of so-called repulsion can create identities based upon the notion of the "Other" or a combination of "Others" through exclusion and domination (65), Duras's novel underscores a double juxtaposition as she inverts both sexual roles and the traditional dialectic of coloniser/colonised.

In "L'Évolution du discours (anti-)colonialiste dans *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, *L'Amant* et *L'Amant de la Chine du nord* de Marguerite Duras," Yvonne Hsieh supports a post-colonial reading of Duras's novel that complements well the present study, concluding that "la séduction du Chinois de vingt-sept ans par la jeune Blanche de quinze ans et demi pourrait s'inscrire tout aussi bien dans la lignée des romans exotiques et coloniaux de Pierre Loti, dans lesquels un Européen entreprend une liaison amoureuse très inégale avec une jeune indigène, ce qui lui permet de mieux s'intégrer dans la vie locale" (58—59). Here, Duras inverts traditional masculine and feminine roles in *L'Amant* as the female protagonist uses her sexuality both to assimilate into the community on the other side of the Mekong (Cholon) as well to obtain power from her Chinese lover. As Kristeva explains, "the loss of gender norms would have the effect of proliferating gender configurations, destabilizing substantive identity, and depriving the naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: 'man' and 'woman'" (200). The implication here is that gender is a "performance" open to ruptures, deviations, and marked contrasts. Gender refers to psychological and cultural constructs, rather than to biology.

[4] Said intended the term "Orient" to represent countries located in the Middle East and North Africa, but since during the same historical period the French colonial enterprise also included Indochina, it is appropriate to also use this term within the present context.

Further, as Kate Millett states, "Indeed, so arbitrary is gender, that it may even be contrary to physiology" (30). Consequently, in Duras's novel, the sexual politics often also display themselves in contrasting geographic locations representing the equally contrasting male/female bodies. Among the most distinct geographic location described in *L'Amant* is the city of Cholon (Cholen) in which the female protagonist forays into prostitution. In this Chinese community, the girl has repeated sexual encounters with the Chinese man. Like sex, the city of Cholon itself is foreign to her. Both the darkness and the silence of her lover's apartment form a stark contrast to the noisy city. Within the silence of the apartment, she trades her body for money. Nevertheless, financial gain does not constitute the only reason for her self-compromising. In his biography of Marguerite Duras, Alain Vircondelet writes that "le corps de désir du Chinois, L'Amant mythique, devenait le moyen de passer, de transgresser, de dire non pêle-mêle à la mère, à toutes les autorités, à toutes les forces du pouvoir" (63). Metaphorically speaking, the Chinese lover is like the ferry that brought the girl across the Mekong. Though he uses his sexual "savoir faire" to help her to cross over into adulthood, quickly she begins to steal that sexual power from him. In *L'Amant*, the female protagonist's sexual appetite parallels her desire for money and power.

Kate Millett contends that "while the male's sexual potential is limited, the female's appears to be biologically nearly inexhaustible" (117—118). Millett is not the only feminist scholar to deconstruct the complexities of sexual politics from a structuralist perspective. In her groundbreaking book entitled *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler claims that "the pro-sexuality movement within feminist theory and practice has effectively argued that sexuality is always constructed within the terms of discourse and power, where power is understood in terms of heterosexual and phallic cultural conventions" (41). Further, Butler highlights the complexities of the sexual dialectic, stating that:

> If sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is 'before,' 'outside,' or 'beyond' power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impractical dream, one that postpones the concrete and contemporary task of rethinking subversive power possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself.
>
> 42

An application of the ideas of Kristeva, Millett, and Butler to Duras's novel shows that by engaging in sexual relations with the Chinese man, the female protagonist transcends pre-established societal norms. Through her sexuality, she gains independence from her mother. In "Family Reflections and the Absence of the Father in Duras's *L'Amant*," Nina Hellerstein states that "by discovering the 'jouissance' that her mother never knew, the narrator matures beyond the mother's own childish state, and this enables her to conquer independence in other

areas as well" (102). The female protagonist and her Chinese lover are outcasts attempting to adapt to a forbidden social milieu as "both are in exile from social and familial space, finding a place in a bachelor apartment appropriate for sex from the father's real-estate holdings. This is the liminal space outside society and, at the same time, opening onto the streets of Saigon and penetrated by the city's sounds" (Thormann 30—31). Liminal spaces typically appear as places of birth, re-birth and renewal, and a loss of liminality leads to a loss of strength in the female protagonist. While in a liminal state, the girl maintains her greatest strength. Her conduct creates a rupture from traditional French customs of the period. By assuming the mantle of a "would be" prostitute within this liminal space, the role play creates a transformation of the female protagonist that ultimately drains power from her male companion. Generically, the scenes in the liminal space express a key feature of Duras's novel. The lover's apartment creates a space between ordinary and extraordinary in which the adolescent girl lives out her sexual fantasies. The fact that the female protagonist occupies both the "normal" world and the "hidden" world creates a common source of tension within the narrative underscoring both the clash between these two worlds and the complexities of the French colonial system.

Despite their intense physical pleasure, the lovers realize that a future together is impossible, for their respective societies have forged separate destinies for each of them from which neither one will ever escape. Their clandestine sexual liaison entraps them. For this reason, there is a marked contrast between her family's traditional home and the bachelor apartment of her Chinese lover. As the girl explains:

> Je suis encore dans cette famille, c'est là que j'habite à l'exclusion de tout autre lieu […] Les heures que je passe dans la garçonnière de Cholen font apparaître ce lieu-là dans une lumière fraîche, nouvelle. C'est un lieu irrespirable, il côtoie la mort, un lieu de violence, de douleur, de désespoir, de déshonneur. *Et tel est le lieu de Cholen*. De l'autre côté du fleuve. Une fois le fleuve traversé.
>
> Duras 93, italics mine

Through this juxtaposition, these two contrasting locations produce the same effect of bringing pain and desperation to the girl. Both settings create a trap for her, for no matter the location, she continues to think that "ce n'est pas qu'il faut arriver à quelque chose, c'est qu'il faut sortir de là où l'on est" (32). Her flight remains an endless retreat into the land of the colonised, a view that Suzanne Chester underscores in her article entitled "Writing the Subject: Exoticism/Eroticism in Marguerite Duras's *The Lover* and *The Sea Wall*," in which she posits both that "the wealth of 'the man from Cholon' is tarnished through his association with the colonial history of the Chinese in Indochina and their continuing financial exploitation of the French colony" (449) and that

"moreover, the lover's economic status… enables him to 'colonize' the young white girl…"[5] (450). Nonetheless, through her prostitution, the female protagonist inverts pre-established roles by playing that of the colonised, thus separating herself from France's colonial past.

Geographically displaced as well, the way in which she prostitutes herself scarcely resembles the nurturing figure of a maternal France perpetuated during the interwar period. Interestingly, her Chinese lover tells her that though he often thinks about Paris where he had once attended business school, he finds that she is "très différente des Parisiennes, beaucoup moins gentille" (Duras 62). She has lost both her own individual identity and her national identity, and her lover has assigned her a new identity that could be described as follows: "Blanche, elle appartient à la classe des exploiteurs ; mais la misère dans laquelle elle a grandi et surtout la victimisation de la famille par l'administration coloniale la rangent plutôt du côté des opprimés" (Hsieh 60). Her poverty is explained by the fact that her mother was widowed within the colony underscoring the irony that Duras comes from the land of the coloniser where wealth abounds. The girl enjoys hearing her lover tell of his experiences there, and she surmises that he, too, must be wealthy to have spent so much time in the Métropole. She is envious of "cette existence 'épatante' qu'il avait menée pendant deux ans" (45) and she waits to see if her lover will tell her about the money that he will inherit after his father's death. The girl explains to her mother that she engages in sexual relations with the Chinese man simply because of the money that he gives to her. With this money, she might return to France, thereby escaping the life of a poor colonist.

> L'enfant dira : je lui ai demandé cinq cent piastres pour le retour en France. La mère dira que c'est bien, que c'est ce qu'il faut pour s'installer à Paris, elle dira: ça ira avec cinq cent piastres. L'enfant sait ce qu'elle fait, elle, c'est ce que la mère aurait choisi que fasse son enfant….
>
> 34

Hence, the girl's mother does not stop her from prostituting herself before the Chinese man. The paradox of prostitution that both imprisons the girl and also holds the key to her release is clearly underscored in the novel. Thus, if by crossing the Mekong the girl has not only symbolically crossed from childhood to adulthood but has also colonised herself through sexploitation, then the Mekong might also represent both her release from this situation and her link to Mother France. Like prostitution, water itself constitutes a paradoxical metaphor, for although water is necessary to sustain human life, it also holds the power to

[5] By drawing attention to the colonialist activities of the father and his son's similar attitude, the narrator transforms the superior economic power of her lover into a position of moral inferiority.

take life from the individual. At the end of the novel, the sea represents yet another threshold to cross for the girl, for it is on the Saigon River, a branch of the Mekong, that she boards an ocean liner and "Du moment que les bateaux étaient à quai, la France était là. On pouvait aller dîner en France, y danser…" (131). As the novel draws to a close, we wonder if the female protagonist can ever truly cross back over. How can she erase the sexploitation of her past and undo the potential self-inflicted damage?

Chronicling her experience in France as an adolescent girl during the French colonisation of Indochina in the 1920s and 1930s, Duras portrayed a unique perspective on the sexual politics of the region through a description of the reversal of gender roles and the inversion of the traditional coloniser/colonised dialectic. Though occasionally considered an autobiographical novel, to suggest that *L'Amant* is true autobiography is a proposition that is difficult to support. As Aliette Armel states, "seule Marguerite Duras est capable de corroborer l'exactitude des pistes autobiographiques lancées dans ses textes, tout commentateur extérieur étant voué à des hypothèses presque impossibles à vérifier" (128). In this essay, I sought to provide evidence of how Duras's written descriptions of contrasting geographic locations underscore the different domains that fracture and form the identity of the novel's female protagonist. Leaving the traditional French sphere, Duras's female protagonist enters into a liminal space in which the latter explores aspects of both her physical being and her psychological being that are forbidden within her society. The distinct locations form steppingstones along her path of self-discovery. While this essay does not purport to make any direct comment on the veracity of Duras's adolescent experiences, when understood solely as a literary text, *L'Amant* provides examples showing that female sexuality, indeed, can move from a traditional submissive position to one of real power. Turning the colonial story on its head, the female protagonist in Duras's novel becomes both master of the dialectic of coloniser/colonised and of the struggle of man vs. woman. By "mapping the body" in Duras's *L'Amant*, Foucault's assertion that "the body is the inscribed surface of events" (148) is evident.

Bibliography

Armel, Aliette, 1990: *Marguerite Duras et l'autobiographie*. Paris: Le Castor Astral.

Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth, and Tiffin, Helen, 2002: *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Psychology Press.

Blot-Labarrère, Christiane, 1992: *Marguerite Duras*. Paris: Seuil.

Butler, Judith, 1990: *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.

Chester, Suzanne, 1992: "Writing the Subject: Exoticism/Eroticism in Marguerite Duras's *The Lover* and *The Sea Wall*." In: *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*. Eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Duras, Marguerite, 1984 : *L'Amant*. Paris : Minuit.

Foucault, Michel, 1980: *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1: *An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage.

Garis, Leslie, 1991: "The Life and Loves of Marguerite Duras." *NewYorkTimes.com*. New York Times Company, 20 October. Accessed 27 August 2013.

Hellerstein, Nina S., 1989: "Family Reflections and the Absence of the Father in Duras's *L'Amant*." *Essays in French Literature*, 26: 98—109.

Homer, Sean, 2005: *Jacques Lacan*. New York: Routledge.

Hsieh, Yvonne Y, 1996: "L'Evolution du discours (anti-)colonialiste dans *Un barrage contre le Pacifique, L'Amant* et *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* de Marguerite Duras." *Dalhousie French Studies*, 33: 55—65.

Kristeva, Julia, 1982: *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Millett, Kate, 2000: *Sexual Politics*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

Said, Edward, 1979: *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Skutta, Franciska, 1987 : "*L'Amant* de Marguerite Duras : une autobiographie ?" *Cahiers du Cerf*, XX/3.

Thormann, Janet, 1994: "Feminine Masquerade in *L'Amant:* Duras with Lacan." *Literature and Psychology*, 40: 28—39.

Vircondelet, Alain, 1991 : *Duras : Biographie*. Saint-Laurent: Lacombe.

Winnicott, Donald, 2005: *Playing and Reality*. New York: Psychology Press.

Bio-bibliographical note

Richard J. Gray II is assistant professor of French at Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio, USA. His fields of study include interdisciplinary approaches to French literary studies, post-colonial studies, and francophone studies. He is the author of the forthcoming book entitled *Francophone African Poetic Literature* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2014). He is also editor of *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga: Critical Essays* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2012) and co-editor (with Betty Kaklamanidou) of *Film and Television Superheroes in the New Millennium: Politics, Gender and Genre* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2011). His articles include "Writing from the Left Bank: Reading Richard Wright's *Native Son* and *The Outsider* against the Backdrop of Communism and French Existentialism" in *Black Writers and the Left*, Ed. Kristin Moriah, Cambridge Scholars (2013), "Moving Beyond the Margins: Identity Fragmentation in Visual Representation in Michel Tournier's La Goutte d'or," *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture* 2 (2012), "A Matter of Fundamentals: Sound and Silence in the Radio Drama of Samuel Beckett," *Babilónia — Revista Lusófona de Línguas, Culturas e Tradução* 10/11 (2011), and "Performing War: Vichyite Ideology from Across the Sea in Camille Morel's poetic radio dramatic work *France!.. Présent!.. Poème épique Radiophonique et Théâtral en un acte et deux tableaux*'," *InterCulture* 5: 3 (2008).