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# Marie-Claire Blais's Transatlantic Literary Migrations in her Unpublished Notebooks, Short Story ("The Torment"), and Novel (*David Sterne*)

Julie Leblanc

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- <sup>1</sup> The focus of this study is to explore the relationships that exist between Marie-Claire Blais's different literary genres in the development and continuity of certain themes such as deterritorialization, American and European politics (the Vietnam War/World War II) and the transatlantic literary venture that she engages in through an intricate exploitation of intertexts from France, Italy and England. Through a close reading of Blais's unpublished *Notebooks* (1965-1967), her novel *David Sterne* (1967), and her short story "The Torment" (1988),<sup>1</sup> we will analyse the close genetic relationship which exists between these various unpublished and published texts. This study will attempt to document Blais's own experience of deterritorialization (the Québécois writer moving to the US) and her strong reactions to the political realities of two devastating wars: the Vietnam War which Blais experiences as a foreigner living and writing within this new territory (the United States in the 1960's), and the parallels she perceives between this war and the German Occupation throughout Europe in the 1940's. Her unpublished *Notebooks* provide us with valuable information regarding Blais's ideological and political convictions exploited in "The Torment." These *Notebooks* not only help us to understand the genesis of *David Sterne*, which is focused on a transatlantic tragedy (WW II and the Holocaust), but they also provide us with a clearer understanding of the socio-historical and cultural meaning of some of her short stories published many decades later: "Exile," "My Revolutionary Friend" and "The Torment."<sup>2</sup> Like many other novelists of the sixties, Blais's writing reflects the social context of the time, and her literary texts deal with anti-war, anti-racist and anti-clerical sentiments.

- 2 These three narratives (notebooks, novel and short story) vividly convey Blais's ideological convictions, more importantly her rejection of all war efforts and the emotional torment that she endured while writing these texts which deal with the violence of two distinct wars (World War II and the Vietnam War), the brutality of the political regimes in power (the Nazis and American military), and the tragic outcome for the victims of the socio-political conflicts that devastated these two countries. Blais's transatlantic voyages are literary and ideological in nature. Her many references to the Holocaust, the German Occupation and WW II allow Blais to engage in an historical transatlantic voyage: the many European intertexts which are alluded to within her *Notebooks* also give her the opportunity to journey across the ocean, embrace many literary and cultural influences and actively participate in an act of intellectual migration. In her short stories, her description of the perils encountered by young American soldiers who have deterritorialized themselves, crossing oceans (to South America), leaving the Western Hemisphere to escape conscription, offer Blais the opportunity to exploit from two different perspectives the trauma endured by the American soldiers who went to war and the devastating effects that escaping conscription had on many young Americans (pacifists) who were forced to exile themselves in foreign countries and renounce their American citizenships and family ties.
- 3 In her writing of these three texts, Blais has gone full-circle. First her unpublished *Notebooks* written during the Vietnam War (1965-1967) refer extensively to her anti-war sentiments. Secondly her novel *David Sterne* (1967), also written during the Vietnam War, focuses, through a process of transference, on the devastations of German Occupation which has taken place across the Atlantic in Europe. Thirdly, her short story "The Torment" (1988) allows her to return to the Vietnam War and its devastating effects on young American soldiers (who went to war) and on Americans who exiled themselves across oceans, in other countries to escape conscription. This short story is also filled with explicit historical references to the holocaust, concentration camps, incinerated bodies, imprisonments, massacres and the destruction of human life through fire.

## I. The Unpublished *Notebooks* of Marie-Claire Blais as a Pre-Text ("avant-texte"<sup>3</sup>) to her Short Story "The Torment"

- 4 It is in her unpublished *Notebooks* that we first encounter Blais's reactions to the traumatic events of the Vietnam War. Blais began to write in her *Notebooks* when she left her native Québec to live in the United States. This physical relocation to the United States gave rise to a linguistic and cultural deterritorialization: Blais as a French-language Québécois writer, living within an American and Anglo-Saxon context. The references that are made in her unpublished *Notebooks*, in a few of her novels, and in some of the short stories compiled in *The Exile* are associated with American culture. The Vietnam War, for example, appears as a *major* leitmotif in her unpublished *Notebooks* and in many of her short stories published in her collection.
- 5 The United States are often presented as a figure of alterity in Blais's autobiographical and fictional production. The country's politics, ideological determinism, class

conflicts, race relations, the Vietnam War, and the senseless killings of several political leaders (John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy) are topics that are frequently addressed in Blais's writing. American culture and politics are explicitly referred to in her *Notebooks* through allusions to numerous texts which readdress the underlying social, political, cultural, and historical issues which preoccupied Americans during the 1960's and accentuate the cultural bi-polarity that has characterized Blais's writing practices during this period.

- 6 Deterritorialization is described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as the first of three main characteristics of minor literature: "A minor literature is not the literature of a minor language, but the literature a minority makes in a major language," for which the primary characteristic involves "all the ways in which the language is affected by a strong co-efficient of deterritorialization" ("What Is a Minor Literature?" 16). Like many other writers, Blais leaves her territory of origin—where French is the language of expression—and adapts her native language to a new foreign context (the United States), where English is the language of the majority. It is in consideration of Blais's adoptive territory that we can speak of her writing in terms of a linguistic deterritorialization: a language is deterritorialized when it is "cut off from the masses" and becomes "a 'language of paper' or artifice," as stated by Deleuze and Guattari (16). The concept of deterritorialization always implies a certain degree of territoriality. The "linguistic territory" of a language refers to the context in which a language is commonly practiced, whereas the "deterritorialization of a language" refers to the removal of a certain language from its original context and its introduction within a new linguistic and cultural environment (18). Territory is the expression of one's personal commitment within one's spatial and temporal surroundings. Blais's unpublished *Notebooks* are filled with references to her own linguistic, political, and socio-cultural deterritorialization. It is within the framework of American culture that Blais's literary texts emerge and it is within this context that she expresses her political convictions concerning the imperialism of the American government, the gratuitous violence of the Vietnam War, and the severity of human suffering resulting from the violence of World War II.
- 7 All of Blais's texts written during the 1960's or referring back to this era display a great sense of social consciousness. The focus is always Blais's anti-war sentiments and her desire to expose the absurdity of violence. As a French Canadian, living and writing within a new linguistic, geographic and political territory, Blais experiences deterritorialization on several levels. As we will demonstrate, the concepts of reterritorialization and deterritorialization are interrelated for Blais. These concepts also influence the way in which she constructs her narrative and the weaknesses that she attributes to her fictional characters in *David Sterne*. David Sterne is a brutal victim of an oppressive German regime, while the protagonists in "The Torment" are former American soldiers and pacifists who are equally traumatized by what they have experienced in Vietnam and South America. The process that Blais has used to interrelate historical and cultural events is described by Deleuze and Guattari as "the event of memory" (23). The depictions of World War II and of the Holocaust in *David Sterne* and the description of Blais's political convictions concerning the Vietnam War in her unpublished *Notebooks* and the "The Torment" reveal to what extent these historical and political events have influenced her life as a writer and a citizen of the world. The memory of past wars allows Blais to unite different historical and political contexts, to engage in a transatlantic voyage where the American war efforts of the

1960's are meshed with the German Occupancy of the 1940's. In her unpublished *Notebooks* we find excerpts focused on Blais's anti-war sentiments along with fragments pertaining to the writing of *David Sterne* which allow her to venture into an historical journey across the ocean to European occupied territories:

le 20 juin 1966

C'est ce poids qu'il y a une guerre interminable, injuste, chaque jour plus injuste, plus horrible et que l'on est là impuissant, ne vivant que pour soi et ne vivant pas assez bien. Et cela est mal-et cela est insupportable. – mais c'est tout simplement le fait de vivre dans ce pays et d'avoir constamment sous les yeux, à la télévision, et dans les journaux, le comportement nazi, aveugle, se répétant sans même le savoir. (36 enfants tués – dans un village du Sud Viêt-nam)

le 23 janvier 1967

[...] le rêve des plages militaires

les jeunes gens qui dirigent le Comité des travailleurs

le laboratoire, les outils de destruction, venez je vais vous montrer la chimie de destruction, une usine immense [...].

- 8 Indeed, in *David Sterne*, Blais alludes to the imprisonment and extermination which characterized the Holocaust experience referred to by Blais in this last journal entry.<sup>4</sup> “The Torment” is also saturated with images referring back to the Holocaust and the deaths that plagued this transatlantic tragedy:

Gentry could see calcinated bodies [...] the hellish sunlight which always seemed like the fires of war and human destruction. Gentry wondered if there ever could be a just peace and order in such a bloody world. [...]. “One day, we’re gonna wipe out all these crimes,” but the crimes just went on covering the earth in ashes [...] The fiery holocaust was everywhere [people] disappearing in flames, noble foreheads inclined amid the sheaves of fire. [...] After all, what was the point in trying to live, when the world was on fire everywhere you went, and the battlefields, prisons churches offered no comfort, or respite, or peace? (86, 87)

- 9 What Deleuze and Guattari describe as the “deterritorialization of writing” is the set of conditions and the properties of writing that are “necessary for the birth of an ideogram” (18). It is somehow influenced by “the temporality of writing [...] since through time, writing evolves, it comes to us, in the present time, [and consequently] loses its original temporality” (20). The principle of loss of original temporality is highly relevant to the genesis of Blais's three texts that is the focus of this study. As I suggested at the very beginning of this article, although Blais does not undertake any transatlantic voyages during the writing of her notebooks, novel and short stories, by transferring the atrocities of the Vietnam War (as described in her *Notebooks*) onto the devastating context of the Holocaust (*David Sterne* and “The Torment”), she transports herself and her readers from the 1960's to the 1940's. In other words it is through this transposition (or transference) that our sense of the historical complexity of these wars grows and that Blais is able to cross the Atlantic, extend her spatio-temporal boundaries, allude to another country, era, culture, and ideological practices.

## II. A Literary Transatlantic Journey: the Meaning of Blais's Act of Literary Migration through European Intertexts and Historical References

- 10 The Vietnam War, the victims of segregation and the race riots that spurred on the civil wars, are all elicited through fictional, autobiographical, historical, and

psychoanalytical intertexts. The dialogue between Blais's writing and the works of other writers is a characteristic of her fictional writing from the very start: the great diversity, as well as the proliferation of references introduced in her books, serves to establish intertextual relationships with the texts of great English, French, German, Italian writers (Woolf, Balzac, Camus, Flaubert, Nin, Piovene, Levi). These various intertexts which originate from different European contexts allow Blais to travel throughout the literary world, to engage in an intellectual dialogue with many world-renowned European writers who share her passions and her ideological and philosophical convictions. As we notice in the list provided, many of these writers represent the canon, well recognized intellectuals who have served or have been imposed by the establishment as models to emulate. The numerous references to French, German and Italian writers give rise to a transatlantic relationship through which Blais, a foreigner residing in the Western Hemisphere, can transport herself into a multi-cultural imaginary, allowing her to experience an intellectual form of deterritorialization and establish social, cultural, historical and ideological relationships between herself and European writers.<sup>5</sup> When one researches the numerous transatlantic intertexts referenced throughout Blais's unpublished notebooks, one realizes the correlation that exists between these numerous European writers, "The Torment" and the genesis of *David Sterne*: these intertexts which deal with the Holocaust, revolts, violence, death, wars, regimes of oppression reappear in Blais's short stories and novel:

le 18 octobre, 66

Lecture : Survival in Auschwitz de Primo Levi,<sup>6</sup> Neurotic Distortion of the Creative Process de Laurence S. Kuher, M.D.

19 octobre 66

Fin du peuple juif, Friedman, L'histoire des treize de Balzac<sup>7</sup>

jeudi, 2 novembre

Tout est souffrance. Et pourtant On aime son courage intime comme on cultive l'orgueil. Lectures : Jung, Balzac, Moravia.

8 février 1967

"Le révolté n'a qu'une manière de se réconcilier avec son acte meurtrier s'il s'y est laissé porter : accepter sa propre mort et le sacrifice." L'homme révolté de Camus<sup>8</sup> (proche de cette pensée de Piovene).<sup>9</sup>

- 11 Through her references to Jung, Balzac, Moravia, Camus or Piovene, Blais creates a rhizomatic system of correspondences between distinct chronotopes which enlarges and deepens her own material because it makes room for an intercultural dialogue based upon sedimentation and cross fertilization.

### III. "The Torment" as a post-text ("après-texte") to Blais's Unpublished *Notebooks*

- 12 "The Torment" is a genuine display of Blais's political convictions concerning the Vietnam War and the relationship it entertains with the Holocaust. In this short story, Blais writes about the fate of a conscientious objector, named Gentry, and his friends, as well as that of a war veteran, named Freddy, who leaves the war badly wounded and ravaged. Both characters misuse drugs and alcohol to forget the devastating effects that the Vietnam War has had on them.<sup>10</sup> This short story vividly exploits the universal dimension of human suffering and the devastating effects of war on the victims and soldiers who are forced "to go to war." The references made to the Vietnam War, to

Blais's anti-war, anti-racist sentiments—which, as previously mentioned, are also found in her unpublished *Notebooks*—reappear in more than half of the short stories that are published in her collection *The Exile and the Sacred Travellers*, in which we find “The Torment.” The themes exploited in her texts, the ideological convictions communicated in her narratives, the types of marginalized, victimized, oppressed individuals which serve as protagonists in her short stories and the historical details exploited, all intersect in these three literary genres.<sup>11</sup> Blais's characters are constructed like three-dimensional figures that acquire their significance through their intertextual, intratextual and extratextual relationships. There is for example, in “Torment”, the description of an American soldier named Freddy, who is a veteran of the Vietnam War, and who is physically and psychologically scarred by the atrocities of the war:

Freddy was one of them, a wounded hippy vet who haunted Gentry, as his wheelchair squeaked its way up the wooden ramp [...]. Gentry studied those filthy feet in their army boots and [...] the crippled man's pained face [...] said every evening with rage, “If I had it to do over, I'd kill 'em all, just whip out my lighter and burn all them houses...”

“Shut up [Freddy] that's just the crack talkin”

“Geez if I only had my legs”. (*The Exile* 92)

- 13 Blais lays the stress on the anger that the veterans experience on account of the senselessness of what they have been drawn into. She also includes descriptions of conscientious objectors, namely Gentry, the protagonist of “The Torment,” and his friends, who fled the United States, who deterritorialize themselves, to escape the draft and the atrocities of the Vietnam War, but who are still profoundly traumatized by the events that follow their desertion and inscription within their newly adopted geographical space of Peru:

They all knew it when they talked about collective suicide from cell-to-cell in prison in Peru [...] that it was the first time in history, thought Gentry, that suicide could be considered a cure for all that ravaged humanity. The fiery holocaust was everywhere [...] sacrificing themselves, disappearing in flames, noble foreheads inclined amid the sheaves of fire.[...]. What were they supposed to do, wondered John and Gentry... follow their heroic example, start a hunger strike, jump from a fifteenth-storey window (as a friend had just done in New York) go up against the Pentagon to expose the violence by sacrificing themselves (as other pacifists were doing)? (*The Exile* 95-96)

- 14 The conscientious objectors, known as “draft dodgers,” who exiled themselves and abandoned their country, were severely judged and vilified by American society. They could not return to the United States where they risked imprisonment and were forced to maintain this constant state of deterritorialization from and rejection of the geographical and political borders of the United States. Blais poignantly describes the psychological alienation of those who will not forget and are haunted by the repetition of atrocities from one war to another:

These men and women [...] had already forgotten the massacres of the war years, massacres Gentry was still running from [...] who would really remember him from Harvard Medical School in the days when conscientious objectors went to jail? [...] they had killed him; he was not the one who consented to his country's crimes, who from his plane had burned straw huts and napalmed rice fields. Yet, at night he saw little girls on fire, running; he heard their shrieks and cries of pain in his dreams. They filled him with terror and shame, for he had never stopped seeing them, even when he had sunk into a drugged stupor to forget, by the side of the road... in South America... anywhere. [...]. Weren't they sure of an early death, these “flower



children," ardent pacifists and conscientious objectors in search of a just peace? Gentry wondered if there ever could be a just peace and order in such a bloody world. Hadn't they all been sacrificed, along with the other victims of the nasty war no one talked about any more? (*The Exile* 91-93)

#### IV. "The Torment" as a Conclusion to Blais's Historical and Cultural Transatlantic and Transpacific Journeys

- 15 Questions of wars (World War II, the Vietnam War), oppressive regimes (Nazis, Communists of North Vietnam, oppressive regime of the American military in Indonesia), span the boundaries of Blais's unpublished *Notebooks*, manuscripts, novel (*David Sterne*), and short story ("The Torment"). It is in this last narrative that the fictional characters directly affiliated with the tragedies of wars (Vietnam and the Holocaust) are presented for the last time. It is through their relationships with figures of alterity that Blais's fictional characters come to life and acquire their distinctive characteristics. In "The Torment," war veterans like Freddy, who have been mutilated and traumatized, are opposed to conscientious objectors (Gentry, John, etc.) who have exiled themselves from the United States to escape conscription. Nevertheless, these pacifists do not manage to flee the trauma of war, since their newly adopted country (Peru for Gentry, John, and their friends) continues to inspire feelings of abandonment, culpability, desperation and leads them to abuse of alcohol and drugs. Such is the case with Gentry, the veteran that is described in "The Torment" as a broken man. Blais's fictional characters are always invested with social and ideological consciences: they are never used as simple narrative constructs, but have distinctive discursive functions, acting as instruments to communicate Blais's convictions, her vision of the world and of human suffering. Characters are always constructed in Blais's *Notebooks*, novels and short stories as the products of internal and external interactions, as the interaction between text/meta-text/subject, to use Yves Reuter's terminology ("L'importance du personnage" 16).<sup>12</sup> Through the biographical details that she attributes to them, the actions that they carry out, and the types of interventions they make throughout her narratives, they are the primary narrative elements used by Blais to impose her auctorial presence, convey her intimate social and cultural convictions.
- 16 The narrative strategies used in their construction (opposing the victims of the Holocaust to the Nazi regime; the American soldiers involved in the Vietnam War, to the conscientious objectors/Pacifists), the socio-cultural messages they convey (anti-war, anti-racist, anti-clerical; the gratuitous and violent nature of warfare) the manner in which they allow Blais to journey into other countries (Vietnam) and embrace other transatlantic historical tragedies (the Holocaust, German Occupation, WW II) are all testimonials to Blais's talent to summon up vivid images of the violent and destructive nature of wars which cross oceans, cultures, military regimes and historical contexts. Her narratives generate a broad spectrum of themes, which confer a certain semantic continuity to the literary production analysed in this article. One can actually retrace the evolution of her narrative strands, the creation of themes and motifs and the diegetic organization of her literary production (*David Sterne* and "The Torment") in her *Notebooks*. It is within these unpublished texts that the immense isotopic network began and was exploited one last time in "The Torment" set during the Vietnam War but saturated with images of past transatlantic tragedies.



- 17 The writing of these narratives came with the deterritorialization of herself physically (living in the United-States), where she found herself painfully confronting her anti-war and anti-military sentiments. Blais's willingness to undertake in addition an historical and intellectual transatlantic voyage looking at the Holocaust as a means to speak about the human sacrifices and violence of the Vietnam War accentuates the fact that wars are an open-ended and potentially infinite process of transformations and expansions which crosses oceans and plagues continents. Finally, while she was writing *David Sterne* and decades later several of her short stories referred to in this article, Blais read novels, autobiographical narratives, philosophical and historical essays written by numerous European writers which she alludes to throughout her *Notebooks*. These intertexts gave Blais another opportunity to embark on a literary transatlantic journey, to undertake a form of literary migration which played a determining role in the genesis of her literary production. In his study of deterritorialization and theoretical existence, Lukas Hosford suggests that letting history "speak through us to escape the ego and liberate our desires, to let the work of every writer ever to flow through us" gives another meaning to the concept of deterritorialization which is often associated with negative forces. This is ultimately what Blais has done for decades while she wrote her *Notebooks*, *David Sterne* and "The Torment." She used past and present political events as a source of inspiration but also as a means to externalize the personal traumas of these wars.
- 18 Given the thematic content of these three texts, the historical context in which they were written, the ideological convictions which they communicate, the temporal juxtapositions that they introduce, it is my opinion that Blais's three texts form a cycle which came to an end with the publication of her short stories pertaining to the Vietnam War and distinct references to the Holocaust. In other words "The Torment" is the final text, the one which occurs at the end of a series, in which Blais intimately describes the devastating effects of the Vietnam War from a temporal distance as this short story was written decades after this war finally ended. The feelings of hopelessness and desperation experienced by Blais during the 1960's could not have been described when she was living through the intensity of this horrific war. This is why WW II was used as a context in the writing of *David Sterne*. The publication of this collection of short stories (*The Exile*) allowed Blais to finally complete a cycle devoted to her ideological convictions and more importantly to the severity of human suffering brought on by the senseless violence of wars.

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---. *David Sterne*. Montréal: Éditions du Jour, 1967.

---. *Cahiers inédits* (unpublished *Notebooks*). These hand-written documents whose entries are all dated, are conserved in the *Fonds Marie-Claire Blais* at the National Library of Canada. I have photographed, transcribed, and annotated the hundreds of pages that make up these *Notebooks* dated between 1964 and the late 1970's. They will be published by Les Éditions du Remue-ménage

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## NOTES

1. The *Carnets inédits* (unpublished *Notebooks*) referenced in this study were written between 1965 and 1967. They are mostly concerned with the Vietnam War and the conception of *David Sterne*, which was published in French with the Éditions du jour in 1967 and translated into English by David Lobdell in 1972. The short story that is the focus of my study is entitled "The Torment"; it was first published in French in 1988 (*L'Atelier imaginaire*, Lausanne: L'âge d'homme) and then reissued in 1992 in a collection of short stories entitled *L'Exilé: nouvelles suivi de Les voyageurs sacrés* (Montréal: Bibliothèque québécoise, 1992). Nigel Spencer's English translation of this collection of stories, upon which this study is based, was published as *The Exile and the Sacred Travellers* by Ronsdale Press in Vancouver in 2000.

2. These three short stories were published individually and then together in Blais's collection *The Exile and the Sacred Travellers*.

3. As Jean-Bellemin Noel explains, "avant-texte" refers to the whole set of relevant documents which help in understanding or tracing the genesis of a given text: "tout ce qui précède matériellement un ouvrage quand celui-ci est traité comme un texte, et qui peut faire système avec lui" (*Le Texte et l'avant-texte*, Paris: Minuit, 1972, p. 15). It should be noted that Bellemin-Noel created this concept which has been used for decades by scholars of genetic criticism.

4. See for example p. 37 of *David Sterne*: "Il faut exterminer jusqu'aux racines, dit le soldat, ne rien laisser. Ni végétation, ni âme. Ne pas fusiller, mais exterminer [...]. Une foule anémique était enfermée là. Femmes enfants hommes."

5. In her *Notebooks* Blais also refers to many socio-political texts pertaining to American history and culture, segregation and racism, colonization, rebellion, suicide and incarceration: Robert Boles, *The People One Knows*; Abram Kardiner (and Lionel Ovesey), *The Mark of Oppression: Psychosocial Study of the American Negro*; Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream*; Hugh Klare, *Anatomy of a Prison* and James Walston, *History and Memory of the Italian Concentration Camps*, etc. All these texts maintain a close relationship with the autobiographical sub-genre adopted by Blais herself (the diary, the notebook, the letter), with the topics approached in her works in progress (revolt, imprisonment, racism, segregation, oppression), and in particular with the socio-political context (The United-States) in which Blais is living during the 1960's.

6. Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo* (*Survival in Auschwitz*). London : Collier-Macmillan, 1969

7. Honoré de Balzac, *L'Histoire des treize*. Paris: Garnier, 1956.
  8. Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté*. Paris: Gallimard, 1951.
  9. Guido Piovene, *Lettere di una novizia (Letters of a novice)*. Milano: Tascabili Bompiani, 1945.
  10. In the introduction to *Exile and the Sacred Travellers*, Ronald Hatch provides us with this thematic description: "In this collection of nine short stories and the powerful novella "The Sacred Travellers," Marie-Claire Blais offers an exploration of the major themes of her work: the pain of desire, the fragility and vulnerability of the human spirit, the quest for purity and generosity, and the pitiless search for truth. The characters in this new collection are all exiles, all fighting to inhabit new beings. Yet the exile explored by Marie-Claire Blais is far more than a matter of circumstance; it is the metaphysical exile of humans wandering the face of the earth, looking for a place, a self, to call their own. Many of Blais's characters have passed through the 1960s, and are now refracting life in ways unexpected and unrecognizable, as increasing awareness compensates for diminishing powers. Neither nostalgic nor bitter, these travelers see their victories and defeats as something far more personal and intimate than they would have thought possible in the '60s of their youth, a youth that stands as a parallel to the paradise, real or imagined, that has been lost (iii).
  11. In her *American Notebooks*, Marie-Claire Blais explains that her friends Jack and Robert from Cambridge, whom she met during the Vietnam War while she was living in the United States, gave her the idea to write *David Sterne*: "Jack mon ami étudiant qui sera détruit par les drogues, Robert, le jeune écrivain noir meurtri à jamais par la cruauté du racisme [...]. Pendant que j'écris mon roman les visages de Jack et de Robert se confondent en une seule figure tragique, celle d'une génération vouée par les guerres, la guerre du Viêt-nam, à la ségrégation qui a déjà fait tant de victimes [...]." (15-16). For a detailed analysis of the genesis of *David Sterne*, see Julie LeBlanc, "Intertextualités génétiques."
  12. My translation of "l'interaction texte/hors texte/sujet."
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## ABSTRACTS

L'objectif de notre étude est d'examiner les relations qui existent entre, d'une part, certains textes inédits et publiés de Marie-Claire Blais dans lesquels elle développe les concepts de déterritorialisation et exploite des thèmes ayant trait à la politique (la guerre du Vietnam / la Seconde Guerre mondiale) et, d'autre part, les migrations transatlantiques qu'elle effectue par l'intermédiaire de nombreux intertextes français, italiens et britanniques évoqués au sein de ses Carnets inédits (1965-1967), sa nouvelle "Le tourment" (1988) et son roman *David Sterne* (1967). Il s'agira au cours de cette étude de mettre en évidence l'étroite relation génétique et politique qui existe entre ces différents espaces d'écriture et de saisir la mise en oeuvre de recoupements socio-culturels continus dans la constitution de ces trois œuvres.

## AUTHORS

### JULIE LEBLANC

Julie Leblanc is a Full Professor in the Department of French and the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on autobiographical narratives,

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