

Modern French Research Seminar (Oxford): Andrew Counter, 'George Sand and the Sex Wars' (Thurs 5 Nov, 5pm)

Modern French Research Seminar, University of Oxford

Andrew Counter (University of Oxford) will give a talk entitled 'George Sand and the Sex Wars' Thursday 5 November, 5pm (online)

Can we teach ourselves to desire better—to desire better objects (meaning: better for us), and to desire those objects in a way that is better (meaning: better for them)? These are questions that are central to any sexual ethics, but they have been particularly important—and have caused particular controversy—in the history of twentieth-century feminism. My paper will consider how George Sand's novels *Indiana* (1832) and *Mauprat* (1837), in attempting to critique sexual injustice, find in the educability or, conversely, the intractability of desire a problem at once compelling and unresolvable. Both novels present instances of desiring, men's and women's, that is wrong, harmful, unconsciously structured by the worst oppression and social inequality; yet they appear to reach opposite conclusions about whether there is any hope of 'reforming' desire to be more politically and ethically palatable. In staging the war of the sexes, I shall argue, Sand's fiction already stages the 'sex wars,' and reveals the power of desire to trouble any claim that we can straightforwardly know where the 'good' lies in sex.

Topic: Oxford's Modern French Research Seminar: Andrew Counter, 'George Sand and the Sex Wars'
Time: Nov 5, 2020 17:00 London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81010560254?pwd=RDF1NFBBckt0OXpJZUtYQWpzRTRIZz09>

Meeting ID: 810 1056 0254
Passcode: 336703