



# Foucault and Fiction: The Experience Book (Continuum Literary Studies)

By Timothy O'Leary

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## **Foucault and Fiction: The Experience Book (Continuum Literary Studies)**

By Timothy O'Leary

*Foucault and Fiction* develops a unique approach to thinking about the power of literature by drawing upon the often neglected concept of experience in Foucault's work.

For Foucault, an 'experience book' is a book which transforms our experience by acting on us in a direct and unsettling way. Timothy O'Leary develops and applies this concept to literary texts. Starting from the premise that works of literature are capable of having a profound effect on their audiences, he suggests a way of understanding how these effects are produced. Offering extended analyses of Irish writers such as Swift, Joyce, Beckett, Friel and Heaney, O'Leary draws on Foucault's concept of experience as well as the work of Dewey, Gadamer, and Deleuze and Guattari. Combining these resources, he proposes a new approach to the ethics of literature. Of interest to readers in both philosophy and literary studies, this book offers new insights into Foucault's mature philosophy and an improved understanding of what it is to read and be affected by a work of fiction.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"An insightful exegesis of an ethics of fiction, an art that transforms readers' experience of the world by daring them to think differently... Foucault and Fiction demonstrates from the outset that O'Leary is deeply familiar with Foucault's work on literature, experience and ethics, and perceptively links the transformative effects of literature with ethical practices of the self... I highly recommend this book for readers interested in the work of Michel Foucault, literature theory and/or Irish literature. But I also endorse this book for those fascinated with how reading catalyses a transformative experience, an experience that can change your world in one, shocking or arresting moment or gradually, through the passing of time. Foucault and Fiction is pleasurable to read and astute in its use of philosophy, literature theory and reception studies. It is an integral text for anyone struggling to reconcile how art, ethics and politics merge in the transformative potential of literature" (Foucault Studies, February 2010) "Looking at literature in relation to experience and ethics, O'Leary ponders whether a novel, a poem, or a play can really make someone think differently about things, and if so, how it does. He takes a model of ethics from French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-84). Among his topics are literature, experience, and ethics; the ungoverned tongue in Seamus Heaney; Foucault's turn from literature; language, culture, and confusion in Brian Friel; Foucault's concept of experience; James Joyce remaking experience; the experimental subjects of Swift and Beckett; and ethics and fiction." (Eithne O'Leyne, BOOK NEWS, Inc.)"

#### About the Author

Timothy O'Leary is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hong Kong. He has spent several years working in the Foucault Archives and has published on Foucault, aesthetics and literature. He is the author of Foucault and the Art of Ethics (Continuum 2006).

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