

**CFP: Knots**

Knots simultaneously are sources of friction and unity, existing concurrently to intertwine and imprison, to pull in and pull away. As both a literal and metaphorical concept, knots are sites of close contact and the tension that comes with such binds. Inspired by Maggie Nelson's interpretation of knots in *The Art of Cruelty* (2011) based on Scottish anti-psychiatrist R.D. Laing's poetic book, *Knots* (1970), that maps out "the various looping, self-imprisoning patterns of thought observed in his patients' psyches," this virtual conference will explore the tensions, frictions, unities, and entanglements connected to human imaginaries and realities (Nelson 11-12).

This understanding of knots reaches beyond the metaphorical with the definition of knottedness as a topological property: a knot will always stay knotted regardless of how you stretch, pull or twist; the only way to undo the knot is to break it. However, even this topological property gestures back to the abstract in consideration of the famous concept of *noeuds de mémoire* suggested by Michael Rothberg as a criticism of Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* in memory studies.<sup>1</sup> Rothberg's connection of knots to memory pushes the concept beyond the *lieux* to suggest that knots are not only physical but philosophical networks of cultural and temporal performativity. Therefore regardless of how you stretch, pull or twist these *noeuds* they endure and can be found in artistic expression.

How then can we understand such a relation between knots and the various fields of literature and cinema? What do we gain by drawing these binds tighter? What happens when we seek to undo effective knots? How are identities and genres complicated by the inherent dualities of knots? We invite papers that examine interpretations of the concept of knots in literature, film, and visual art.

Possible approaches include, but are not limited to:

- Affect Theory
- Gender and Sexuality
- Race and Ethnic Studies
- Imprisonment and Freedom
- Translation
- Memory Studies
- Interdisciplinary Intersections
- Trauma and Disability Theory
- Transnational Studies
- Revolution and Resistance
- Political Movements

Please submit abstracts of 200-250 words for individual presentation or panel proposal to Beth Woods at [ejwoods@bu.edu](mailto:ejwoods@bu.edu). Submissions are welcome in English, Spanish, or French. The deadline for submission is February 5, 2022 at 5pm. Submission decisions will be sent out no later than March 5, 2022 at 5pm. The conference will be held virtually on April 9, 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Rothberg, "Introduction: Between Memory and Memory: From Lieux de Mémoire to Noeuds de Mémoire." *Yale French Studies*, no. 118/119 (2010): 3–12. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41337077>.