

Relation(s)

Call for Papers

Princeton University Department of French & Italian

6th Annual Graduate Conference

April 29, 2022 (online)

Keynote speakers: Romuald Fonkoua (Sorbonne Univ.); Guillaume Robillard (film director)

This year, the Department of French and Italian at Princeton had the great honor of listening to Martiniquan writer Patrick Chamoiseau for a series of talks followed by discussions. Among the themes discussed, the need to (re)think a world in *relation* particularly drew the attention of graduate students.

The news of the last few years has revealed an increasing tendency toward isolation and self-absorption in a world that has never been more connected and interdependent. Rhetorics of roots and origins have spread through intensifying debates on cultural, economic, and diplomatic isolation culminating in a will to halt circulation and close borders. These visions conceive of a world fragmented into opposed and irreconcilable entities. The thought of relation, however, reflects on such complex configurations and considers the material and conceptual limits that undergird the possibility and highlight the necessity of relationality.

The etymology of the word “relation” bears out significant polysemy. The Latin *relatio* designates the fact of reporting, relating, or narrating a matter, as well as the links or relations among one or more things. Over the course of history, it has taken on many other nuances of all sorts, from social, to amorous, epistolary, economic, international, sexual, etc. In philosophy, the notion is evoked by Aristotle (*Categories*) and Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*) in the field of ontology, logic, and metaphysics. In the literary field, following the distinction made by Deleuze and Guattari (*Mille Plateaux*) between the root and the rhizome, Edouard Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* remains one of the most novel explorations of the subject. He teases out the ethical dimensions of relationality in light of history, time, space, landscape — from the book to all books, from language (*langue*) to speech (*parole*). In an interview, he affirmed that he “dreams of a new approach, a new appreciation of literature, of literature as discovery of the world, as discovery of the Whole-World. I think that all peoples today have an important presence to fulfill in *the non-system of relations in the Whole-World*, and that people that does

not have the means to reflect on this function is effectively an oppressed people, a people held in a state of infirmity” (*Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*). Such a statement leads one to wonder what a focus on relation allows us to reconsider about identity, culture, and world, and in turn, to rethink literatures and cultural productions.

We welcome propositions bearing on the theme of relation in any period of French and francophone literature and culture. Possible subjects include but are not limited to the following :

- Colonial and postcolonial relations
- Human and non-human relations (ecopoetics, zoopoetics, posthumanism, transhumanism)
- Relations and identity
- Relations between genres
- Archetypical figures of relations (go-betweens, messengers, interpreters, translators)
- Sexuality, norms and relation (Gender Studies, Queer Studies)
- Virtuality of relations (relation v. connection)
- Public relations, international and diplomatic relations
- Relatability
- Secrets, silence, and the unspoken in relation

Graduate students are invited to submit proposals for presentations not exceeding 15 minutes. Proposals should include a title, an abstract (200-250 words), a biography (100 words), institutional affiliation, and contact information. Presentations may be in French or English.

Please send your proposals to relationsconference2022@gmail.com before March 15th, 2022.