

# **UCLA**

## **Paroles gelées**

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UCLA French Studies

*Ce serait le moment de philosopher  
et de rechercher si, par hasard,  
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*Rabelais, Le Quart Livre*

V o l u m e 2 2  
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**Editors-in-Chief:** Amy Marczewski, Julie Nack Ngue

**Assistant Editors:** Elizabeth Vitanza, Jennifer Westmoreland

**Sponsors:** UCLA Department of French & Francophone Studies, UCLA Graduate Students Association, Albert and Elaine Borchard Foundation, UCLA Campus Programs Committee, UCLA Center for Modern & Contemporary Studies, Eugen Weber Chair of Modern European History, UCLA James S. Coleman African Studies Center, UCLA Department of Art History, UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Consulate General of France of Los Angeles, Patricia Blake

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## Acknowledgements

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Amy Marczewski and Julie Nack Ngue,  
Conference Co-Chairs and Editors of *Paroles Gelées*



## **Exil: mode(s) d'emploi: New readings, new endings**

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*Amy Marczewski and Julie Nack Ngue,  
Conference Co-Chairs and Editors of Paroles Gelées*

*L'exil, c'est marcher sans cesse sur du charbon ardent. L'exil, c'est une épine plantée dans sa chair et dont on ne peut jamais se débarrasser. L'exil, c'est le supplice de Tantale, l'aigle de Prométhée, le rocher de Sisyphe! L'exil, pour tout dire, c'est un calvaire qui n'a pas de trêve.<sup>1</sup>*

*Un Rwandais sur les routes de l'Exil  
Jean-Marie V. Rurangwa*

Selecting and developing a theme for our tenth annual conference was no small task, given the significance of the occasion: our tenth anniversary. Since we are both scholars of Francophone African literature, certain themes automatically came to mind, but of course we wanted to choose a topic of historical and contemporary significance that would resonate in our contemporary socio-cultural and intellectual climate. This climate includes political turmoil, economic imbalances and other forms of oppression continue to encourage the movement of peoples to new geographies, physical or psychic. Those who are displaced or who shift spaces are faced with the challenge of forging new idioms by which to understand their world. It is for these reasons that the emergence of exile as an experience—its function in artistic production as well as its place in discourses across disciplines—merits our attention.

As the topic of exile emerged, we began to consider it in terms of its “success” in the field of Francophone African literature: examples of prolific authors living in exile range from Tierno Monémbo and Véronique Tadjo to our distinguished keynote speaker Emmanuel Dongala.<sup>2</sup> However, as Rwandan author Jean-Marie Vianney Rurangwa indicates in our epigraph, this painful subject can lead down a road of violence, rejection, and expulsion, evoking images of defeat and loss. Our challenge was to consider exile in a new light while also respecting the painful and problematic experience that it can represent.



We therefore decided to re-evaluate exile as an experience as well as a state of being; a means of movement and a state of latency; a means to an end and an end in itself; a pathway to creativity and an agent of artistic censorship. But how could we reconsider the stakes of exile without automatically resorting to negative connotations? Our title references this reconsideration in the expression “mode(s) d’emploi,” which encourages, through the pluralization of “mode,” a reinvestigation of the very nature of exile itself, be it positive, negative or something in between. The “user’s guide” that you will find in these pages considers exile in multifarious ways: through the lens of literary texts and via examples of historical figures, through figurative and literal exile, all from scholars hailing from diverse backgrounds and locations across the globe.

Our conference explored the intersecting and overlapping meanings and practices that arise out of the exilic experience. Over the course of two days, we heard stories and histories of exile and investigated the ways in which language is implicated in the exilic encounter. Considering exile as an experience, we learned about its effects and affects: what are the social ramifications of exile either in a welcoming or a hostile environment? Finally, we tried to understand how exile is “performed” by the subject and how the performance can itself become a means of exile.

In the pages that follow, we offer snapshots of our foray into the exilic experience, through a variety of perspectives, most notably literary. While certain papers explore exile from a more “classical” perspective, such as Claire Nodot’s analysis of Amélie Nothomb’s *Stupeurs et Tremblements*, others choose to re-consider exile in domains which have been taken for granted. This is the case of Zara Bennett’s analysis of the reception of the African-American pilgrim to different “sites” of slavery’s memory. Her consideration of diasporic discourse in the context of recent African American literature is a reminder of an originary scene of exile: that of slavery.

Other panelists considered exile in conjunction with culture, religion, and language. Carla Calargé's analysis of Fouad Laroui lays bare the ways in which language can allow for a voluntary exile that allows the subject to escape an involuntary exile: that of *la folie*. While psychic health may be abandoned in the name of physical liberty, Anne-Sophie Morel demonstrates the ways in which this liberty can also be challenged in the exilic experience. Morel's analysis of Chateaubriand's œuvre does not dwell on his physical exile, however, since she offers a redemptive reading of his work by introducing the importance of religious conversion in his exilic trajectory.

While exile can inspire religious fervor, it can also spark creative success. Léo-Pol Morin's story of exile defies all notions of exile as the experience of loss and longing, and Claudine Caron's study of his Parisian concerts thoroughly investigates the ways in which certain artists can transform exile by performing it.

Our reconsideration of exile took us on a journey that spanned time periods and geo-cultural spaces. Other panelists' topics varied from the ways in which the subject is exiled from his/her own body to multiple levels of exile within individual texts. Examples of the exilic experience ranged from Romanian author Emile Cioran's choice of the French language to Belgian poet Henri Michaux's exile from language itself by means of drug experimentation. Scholars from film studies and history joined musicologists in offering historical case studies of artists in exile, and Professor Dongala traced the evolution of the Francophone African novel through the lens of exile. In short, our investigation of exile proved that we could consider the stakes of this experience and state of being while also remaining vigilant to its potential for creative production. We hope that our "user's guide" will help you to discover these new spaces of exile.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Marie V. Rurangwa, *Un Rwandais sur les routes de l'Exil* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005) 10.

<sup>2</sup> Dongala, whose address was entitled "From Négritude to Migritude: The African Writer in Exile," was one of two keynote speakers at our two-day conference. Christopher L. Miller, professor of French and African American Studies at Yale University, was our other guest, and his address (a selection from his upcoming work, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*), was entitled "Glissant, the Slave Trade, and the 'Privilege' of Exile."

*Amy Marczewski and Julie Nack Ngue are doctoral candidates in the Department of French and Francophone Studies at UCLA.*

**Exil: mode(s) d'emploi**  
**Experiencing Exile**  
**in Literature and the Arts**

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