

1968: A Global Perspective

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Constructing Whiteness in *La Lettre à la France Negre*

PANEL: Decolonizing Yambo Ouologuem

Recovering the work and name of Yambo Ouologuem, West African novelist and winner of the Prix Théophraste-Renaudot, from the colonization of Western literary conventions, our panel responds to accusations of plagiarism against Ouologuem as well as criticism that subordinates Ouologuem's politics to Marxism and feminism. While an instructor and student in Paris through the 1960s, Ouologuem produced his major novel, *Le Devoir de Violence*, and his neglected satirical pamphlet, *La Lettre a la France negre*, positioning him as a critical, if critically forgotten, figure for re-examining decolonization in 1968. This panel seeks to uncover how Ouologuem's work, while operating within its own anti-colonialist project, participates in the broader socio-political upheaval occurring in France during the late 1960s. Each speaker relies on the psychoanalytic perspectives of Franz Fanon to resituate Ouologuem today as an important figure in resisting neocolonial paradigms. Particularly, the panel examines Ouologuem's critique of *négritude* to not only explain the neocolonial situation in West Africa, but also expand the lens through which contemporary global neocolonial projects ought to be examined. This study becomes all the more timely in light of the forthcoming publication of the English translation of *La Lettre à la France negre* and *Le Devoir de Violence*.

Anthony Warnke, Speaker 1, follows Ouologuem's critique of racist politics in *La Lettre a la France Negre*, investigating the construction of "Whiteness" as it occurs in the political pamphlet genre.