

*"Toni Morrison and The Circuits of Imagination," /*  
*"Toni Morrison et les circuits de l'imaginaire"*

The Sixth Biennial Conference of the Toni Morrison  
Society

November 4-7, 2010

Paris and the *banlieue*, France  
Université Paris 8 (Vincennes - Saint-Denis)

Conference Co-Chairs - Professors: Janis A. Mayes, Syracuse University, Andrée-Anne Kekeh, Université Paris 8, Anne Wicke, Université de Rouen, Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas

The Sixth Biennial Conference will be held in Paris and the *banlieue* (Saint-Denis), France, a geographic move that marks the first biennial held outside the U.S., in keeping with the extensive reach and import of Morrison's oeuvre and her role as artist, editor, teacher, and intellectual. A goal of the conference is to promote the broad exchange of ideas among the larger international community of Morrison scholars, including translators, artists, publishers, teachers, students and everyday readers. This choice of Paris, its historical and cultural significance for people of the African Diaspora and its history as an expatriate destination for artists and intellectuals, encourages an examination of the reception, translations, and transformations that Morrison's work inspires within and across borders. The city and the surrounding region, which Morrison has called "le chez soi de l'étranger" (the stranger's home), serves as a point of departure for exploring the deeper meaning of circuits of imagination / *Les circuits de l'imaginaire*: those dynamic itineraries, movements, and agency that Morrison's imagination engenders. She requires us to look at what occurs within the boundaries of the book as well as what extends beyond. Facing the limitations of a real world, Morrison's imagination is key to accomplishing what she sees as her task as a writer: "to alter language, to free it up, to open it up" so that we encounter new relationships between written, oral, and aural texts; between the physical landscapes and the interior spaces within the novels; between different ways of knowing and comprehending knowledge; between the power that is real and power that is evoked through the senses.

The search for these circuitous routes into Morrison's oeuvre is our way of opening up new conversations-- critical and aesthetic--and providing new points of departure from and re-entry into all of Morrison's texts. The search takes us to a central question to be addressed at the conference. How does the imagination fashion new geographies of knowledge, and how do new geographies-- dynamic, diasporic spaces-- in turn, resonate in Morrison's work? The Sixth Biennial will enhance

participants' appreciation for Morrison's literary and intellectual practice: her refusal to disengage with the reader, her insistence on an artistic gaze that focuses on the silenced and discredited, her need to write as if it were indeed a "dance of an open mind." We encourage an approach to Morrison that explores "the face behind the face ... the words hiding behind talk," and considers hidden energies and "vehicles" of style, intricate paths, and the coded messages that appear in her entire corpus -- fiction, non fiction, essays, librettos, children's books, and plays.

10-minute presentations culled from longer formal papers should focus on the newness of Toni Morrison's work and a wide range of critical reader responses. A special international "Language Matters" workshop will be available for teachers and other educators interested in bringing Morrison into the classroom. Topics for panels and papers include the following:

- Morrison and the Black expatriate legacy in Paris and beyond
- Morrison in translation: reception and challenges
- Reading Morrison through contemporary critical, visual and performance theories and practices
- Morrison in French literary and cultural spheres
- Nature, the natural and other worlds in Morrison
- Comparative readings and constructions of Morrison and other writers in France and the African Diasporas
- Morrison and multiple reading communities
- Morrison and new geographies of knowledge

Abstracts should be sent to the conference co-chairs at [paris.tms@gmail.com](mailto:paris.tms@gmail.com) .

You must be a member of the Toni Morrison Society to present at the conference