CfP: "Naming, Renaming: the Power of the Name in English-Speaking Cultures and Literature".

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Naming is an act that first echoes Saussure's question of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign (does a sign have meaning in itself or does it only designate a referent?), but also questions the performative power of language. If one can do things with words (Austin, 1962), then naming a place, a person, a community, an accent, an ethnic, political or social group contributes to granting it a linguistic reality and recognizing its extralinguistic existence. Paradoxically, naming or renaming shapes and orders the way we perceive the world, but it also entails exclusionary mechanisms (Bourdieu, 1980). Thus, the original act of naming constitutes a form of violence that imposes boundaries and attempts to define identities that are by nature fluid and multilayered (Derrida, 1987-1993; Bhatia, 2005), and the act of renaming can lessen or heighten this violence. These observations will lead us to consider several approaches.

Papers related to **onomastics** will be welcome; studies on the subject (Hough, 2016) examine the meaning and motive behind proper names, whether in toponomastics (place names), anthroponymy (personal names) or socio-onomastics (studies of proper names in social context). Sociology and history are also interested in the meanings and evolution of names of places, particularly in public spaces (Mask, 2020a). For instance, the Black Lives Matter movement has revived debates around these names, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States (Mask, 2020b).

From an **applied linguistics** perspective, attention could be paid to the coexistence of several signs for the same referent, such as a human referent in a sociocultural and interactional approach (coexistence of first and/or last names, nicknames, or even insults). We could also consider the creation, evolution, integration mechanisms and role of lexical or semantic euphemistic neologisms in language, as related to the concept of euphemism treadmill (Allan and Burridge, 2006).

Submissions in the field of **English for Specific Purposes** could focus on the terminology used to name objects, concepts and notions in a specific field, as well as the translation of these new terminological units. Moreover, researchers label and name certain concepts, behaviours or sociological and historical phenomena, which some political movements appropriate, hijack and distort in order to demonize them (critical race theory, intersectionality...) (May, 2014; Ray, 2022). This relationship between academia and political discourse is worth studying.

Sociologists analyse the evolution of identity markers (racial and gender categories, etc.). These names or labels (Becker, 1966) can be assigned, adopted, claimed and/or undergo a semantic shift: these changes reveal transformations in power dynamics and the acceptability of "deviant" behavior (Goffman, 1963). Naming can also reflect the agency of dominated people and groups; it can constitute a choice and a statement about the way they want to present themselves and be perceived. A choice as personal as identity markers (first and last name) can

be a political act (Almack, 2005; Boxer, 2005; Benson, 2006; Edwards and Caballero, 2008; Patterson and Farr, 2017). It can also be a matter of reclaiming a term historically used as an insult in a perspective of self-affirmation and empowerment (Rand, 2014). In healthcare studies, presentations could examine the way "pathologies" and "disordered" are named and considered over time— those labels may be questioned or not by those they refer to, as is the case for addiction and trans identities among others (Stroumsa, 2014; Castro-Peraza et al., 2019).

Naming practices are also examined in **literature**, as authors have often explored the subtleties of identity and questioned the role of names in its construction. While names reflect character traits, histories and symbolic meanings, the process of (re)naming often implies the transformation or rejection of identities, as a result of personal or cultural struggles. The way characters grapple with their names reflects their journey of self-discovery, resistance or acceptance in the text. Literature thus reveals the act of naming as a complex, unstable process that resists definitive closure, between the desire for a fixed meaning and the reality of inherent fluidity or multiplicity. Through naming, we can open a debate on how readers are invited to explore the complex layers of meaning in a text, questioning and redefining notions of self, identity, society and reality. This exploration also raises the question of what is not named, of what is at stake in silence, or even silencing. This can be unveiled through stylistic and narratological choices, thus the choice to refuse or deny a name becomes central in the interpretative process.

Among the possible avenues of inquiry, we will consider papers that fall under the following themes:

> **Naming, renaming people, characters and places**: naming practices in immigrant communities and by transgender people; choice of family names, in particular in LGBTQ+ families; naming in the context of slavery; influence of religion on naming practices (parents, conversion...); (mis)pronunciation of foreign names; naming of communities; activism around names in public space: cities, schools, streets; onomastic and narrative analysis.
> **Reclaiming names**: reclaiming "insults" as a way of asserting an identity (queer, N-word, tranny…); political use or exploitation of scientific terms or concepts (freedom, critical race theory, intersectionality, etc.).
> **Power dynamics at work in naming processes:** who has the power to (re)name? What are the political, symbolic consequences of naming people and groups? Which factors influence the choice of a name? Renaming in order to politically demonize?
> **Naming as classification:** (re)defining literary and cinematographic genres; evolution of names for "medical disorder" between pathologization or empowerment; classifying acts and practices in order to forbid or punish them more or less severely (war on terror, war on drugs, "obscenity"…)

Proposals of around 500 words in English or in French accompanied by a short biography should be sent to namingconference@gmail.com **before March 25th, 2025**. We will consider proposals analysing any English-speaking country, or adopting a comparative approach. All approaches to the subject are welcome: historical, judicial, sociological, political, cultural (literary, artistic, cinematographic…), economic. We welcome proposals from experienced researchers, doctoral and other graduate students.

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