

# BARBARIANS

**ELEVENTH ANNUAL THEMATIC OPTION RESEARCH CONFERENCE  
APRIL 8 AND 9, 2008**

Good fences make good neighbors.

- Robert Frost

It was luxuries like air conditioning that brought down the Roman Empire. With air conditioning their windows were shut, they couldn't hear the barbarians coming.

- Garrison Keillor

Pardon him, Theodotus: he is a barbarian, and thinks that the customs of his tribe and island are the laws of nature.

- George Bernard Shaw, "Caesar and Cleopatra"

Savages we call them because their manners differ from ours.

- Benjamin Franklin

The true barbarian is he who thinks everything barbarous but his own tastes and prejudices.

- William Hazlitt

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering. I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable, I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

- Walt Whitman

From fanaticism to barbarism is only one step.

- Denis Diderot

Civilization is the progress toward a society of privacy. The savage's whole existence is public, ruled by the laws of his tribe. Civilization is the process of setting man free from men.

- Ayn Rand

The savage bows down to idols of wood and stone, the civilized man to idols of flesh and blood.

- George Bernard Shaw

First you destroy those who create values. Then you destroy those who know what the values are, and who also know that those destroyed before were in fact the creators of values. But real barbarism begins when no one can any longer judge or know that what he does is barbaric.

- Ryszard Kapuscinski

Each new generation is a fresh invasion of savages.

- Hervey Allen

Today's barbarian may wear a Brooks Brother suit and carry a ball-point pen. In fact, even beneath the academic gown there may lurk a child of the wilderness, untutored in the high tradition of civility, who goes busily and happily about his work, a domesticated and law-abiding man, engaged in the concoction of a philosophy to put an end to all philosophy.

- John Courtney Murray

The curtain rises on a vast primitive wasteland, not unlike certain parts of New Jersey.

- Woody Allen

**THEMATIC OPTION HONORS PROGRAM  
USC COLLEGE OF LETTERS, ARTS & SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**



## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Thematic Option Honors Program, part of USC College of Letters, Arts & Sciences, is the University of Southern California's honors general education alternative: an interdisciplinary program of academic rigor that encourages exciting and vibrant discussion among its community. Each year approximately 200 outstanding freshmen from all majors participate in a unique combination of core courses, supplemental theme courses, writing classes and tutorials.

This conference provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to enrich their academic experience by publicly presenting their ideas and research. In response to a general call for papers, Thematic Option students developed topics under the theme "Barbarians" to be presented as part of a panel. Topics are reflective of students' various disciplines and interests and focus on issues ranging from politics to popular culture. Each panel is composed of four to five students, with a USC faculty member or Thematic Option writing instructor serving as the panel's chair and respondent. A question and answer session follows the presentation of papers in each panel.

## STUDENT CONFERENCE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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MANY THANKS TO THE FACULTY  
AND STAFF WHO HAVE PLAYED AN  
INTEGRAL ROLE IN THE SUCCESS  
OF THE THEMATIC OPTION  
RESEARCH CONFERENCE.



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# GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Moderated by Professor Rebecca Lemon, Department of English

Tuesday, April 8

6:00 - 7:15 p.m.

Room B

**JULIA ALLYN**

## **THE CANNIBALISM OF SKIN: RACIAL REPUDIATION IN *PASSING***

In her novella *Passing*, Nella Larsen explores the complications of racial identity and the barbaric manipulation of the racial system through the character of Clare Kendry, a woman who alternates between racial identities. Clare's story raises questions about the significance of race and the motivation behind such manipulation of the social system. Her uncivilized behavior can both explain and justify the fact that she has no defined racial group. Clare's manners and treatment of society and the class system are the result of her barbaric nature and lack of civility caused by her racial repudiation. Is Clare in fact driven by barbaric, self-serving desires for power, wealth, and status? Furthermore, can Clare's destruction and barbaric mistreatment of the beliefs, importance, and worth of her own race be classified as somewhat cannibalistic? For, by treating racial borders in such a manipulative and careless fashion, Clare is going against the accepted systems of morality and truth and is in fact disregarding her race through unfair treatment. Her barbaric tendencies are rooted in her seemingly unnatural rejection of valued social classification and organized racial grouping. I argue that through her rejection of such norms, Clare obtains the status as a foreigner and outcast - a barbarian.

**MARGARET IVEY**

## **STRUGGLE, STEREOTYPES, AND SELF-DEFINITION: BLACK WOMANHOOD IN *A RAISIN IN THE SUN***

In her book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Patricia Hill Collins posits core themes of black feminist theory, two of which are the recognition of a "legacy of struggle" common to black women, and the need for self-definition to replace "negative images of black womanhood." This paper examines the ways that the women in *A Raisin in the Sun* prefigure this black feminist movement. Beneatha and Lena embrace these themes in ways that reflect the differences of their generations. Each woman establishes power in the family through their resistance to all forms of oppression and from their self-expression. At times, the Younger women's familiarity with struggle and their zeal for self-definition causes intergenerational conflict and familial oppression. However, this paper counters a reductive view of the women as matriarchs or "tyrants," in favor of a celebration of the complexities of Hansberry's characters. Ultimately, the women bolster their family and prove that institutionalized racism, and not the female influence, should be blamed for the Younger family's poverty and the deferral of their dreams.

**KOLLEEN KMIEC**

## **FASHIONABLY FASCIST**

A girl should be two things: classy and fabulous.

- Coco Chanel

*The Bluest Eye* presents the ideal beauty with blonde hair, tall, slender figure, light skin and blue eyes. Young Pecola Breedlove resents her dark skin and heritage as she is flooded with society's stereotypical

beauty through billboards, television, magazines, film and commodities. In America, fashion, the exterior representation of this beauty, becomes vindictive and barbaric. The desire to be in style, “in” fashion rather than “out,” has pervaded societies since the days of loincloths and continues till this day. This constant desire to conform, to please men, to fit into the size zero, results in plastic surgery and anorexia: in women losing their true identity. Shows such as *Sex and the City* have given us a false perception of what the typical woman should look like and how she should dress. However, although fashion can be fascist, it simultaneously allows for the equalization and even supremacy of women over men. From stilettos to couture, from Manolo Blahnik to Gucci, these items outwardly display women’s inner power. Coco Chanel, Audrey Hepburn and Heidi Klum each represent this empowerment of women. Is this vicious world of fashion so vicious?

**TIMOTHY R. LARSON**

**“WE FELT SUPERIOR TO THESE PEOPLE”:  
IMPERIALISTIC TOURISM AND CULTURAL DISCONTENT IN JAMAICA KINCAID’S *A SMALL PLACE***

In *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid presents the eerie similarities between her native Antigua as both an English colony and as a post-colonial tourist hot spot. Her depictions of the destructive power of foreigners - specifically tourists - reinforce the notion that the introduction of rapid transit, paired with the widespread commingling of people and cultures, has perpetuated the social hierarchy which existed in colonial times. In this paper, I will illustrate how Kincaid’s depictions of life on a post-colonial island designate tourism as a form of neo-imperialism - the native perpetually falling subject to the domination of an imposing foreigner - while illuminating the fluidity between the supposedly rigid classifications of native and foreigner.

**ANDREW MATSON**

**HETEROGENEOUS HARMONY: POSTMODERN RACE RELATIONS IN THE KING**

The issue of race is one of the most divisive and barbaric topics that a person can encounter today, as racism and racial conflict still lead to oppression and death around the world. Donald Barthelme attempts to face these problems in *The King*, which examines race relations through the lens of Barthelme’s personal postmodern ethics as it looks to the rise of racism, the problems related to racial conflict, and the harmony that can be achieved by moving towards a post-racial society. To explore these themes, I will utilize critical studies on postmodernism as a movement, literary criticism of *The King* and Barthelme’s work as a whole, and various historical sources. By studying *The King* and its postmodern view of race, one finds both a critical view of racial conflict and a realistic view of the benefits of eliminating it, and by looking deeper into Barthelme’s beliefs, one can find both a different side of traditional postmodernism and new ethical standards that lead to a future of peace.

# INSTITUTION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Moderated by Michelle Wilson, Department of English

Tuesday, April 8

6:00 - 7:15 p.m.

Room C

**ERINI BLAKEY**

## **DEALING WITH STRANGERS: NATIONALISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS***

This essay discusses the necessity of patience and open-mindedness in overcoming national differences. Ursula LeGuin exaggerates this necessity in *The Left Hand of Darkness* by placing the main characters, Estraven and Genly Ai, in a barren environment where these tools are essential for their physical survival. By using the science fiction genre, LeGuin creates a barren landscape that diminishes the characters' differences, allowing them to develop a mutual understanding and dependence on each other. By stripping their differences and their pride, they discover the basic humanity in each other which enables their understanding to grow.

**STEPHEN LAMB**

## **TRANSCENDENT INTERESTS: WORSHIP IN MISHIMA WITH A HOBBSIAN TWIST**

Sometimes, it is not our actions, but how seriously we take them, that determines whether we are judged barbarous or civilized. Yukio Mishima's *Patriotism* and *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* take small devotions and push them to the point of fanatical worship, and thereby, to the point of barbarity. In these works, Mishima focuses on the importance of civilization, represented by classical Japanese culture and government. This paper shows how devotion to (and worship of) these classical ideals inspires acts of superhuman indifference to humanizing and civilizing qualities, e.g. reason. I posit that what Sharon Lloyd, in her analysis of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, calls "transcendent interests" are responsible for this barbaric indifference. Transcendent interests, or interests which transcend the instinct of self-preservation, motivated Hobbes to advocate an absolutist state in *Leviathan* - a powerful state that could hopefully control transcendent interests. Mishima's protagonists demonstrate their transcendent interests by the act of fanatical worship. Mishima takes Hobbes a step further by showing the most dangerous transcendent interest to be, paradoxically, the interest of civilization, for by worshipping the trappings of Japanese civilization, Mishima's protagonists lose their hold on civility and fall into barbarity.

**TIERNEY MCBRIDE**

## **GUINEVERE AS CAMELOT: THE FAILED UNION OF PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY**

In her *Guinevere*, Sharan Newman depicts Guinevere as a symbol of the ideal Arthurian kingdom and her flaws reflect the flaws in Arthur's idyllic vision of Camelot. With Guinevere playing the double role of pagan goddess and Christian saint, the use of religion in the novel helps to uncover the basic flaw in Arthur's plan: the inability of one culture to be smoothly and peacefully subsumed by another. Religion serves as a symbol of the dividing line between the people of Britain: noble and peasant, civilized and barbaric. It is the very chaotic nature of this union that lies underneath Guinevere's calm exterior and of which she is afraid. She represents the fate of the kingdom and the true legacy of Arthur's kingdom. The question is, can Guinevere reconcile the two halves of her nature? Can the civilized Romans ever peacefully coexist with the pagan "barbarians?" I will try to prove



that, in fact, she is not able to reconcile her two natures, and that the attempt to peacefully absorb one culture into another is futile.

**TIFFANY TSAI**

**HARDER, FASTER, STRONGER, WORSE:  
THE NEED FOR REVISITING TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE**

“A house is a machine for living in,” wrote Modernist architect Le Corbusier. By the first few decades of the twentieth century, the model human habitat had become a white rectilinear box - sterile, bounded, and oblivious to all but the most extreme fluxes of natural phenomena. As this ideal invaded Western Europe and North America and left Levittowns in its wake, builders in the third world still struggled to meet the basic housing needs of its burgeoning population. Yet buried beneath the grime and poverty of cities like Cairo and Bombay were structures that embodied perseverance through time. Despite racing towards the sky in the name of progress, the so-called advanced nations have continued to experience problems with their natural resources, at times veering close to environmental suicide. Architects today are beginning to look towards the third world for building and planning concepts that may sustain, rather than consume, the earth they engage. Using critical essays, environmental reports, and architectural records, I seek to address the problems with erasing the vernacular from our architectural grammar and explore the possibilities that traditional building styles hold for sustainability.

**MARISSA A. WURMS**

**THE BARBARIAN WEARS PRADA:  
FEISTY FASHIONISTAS & CUTTHROAT CAREER WOMEN**

Everybody wants this. Everybody wants to be us.

- Miranda Priestly, in *The Devil Wears Prada*

What makes career women in the fashion industry so feisty and cutthroat? The women in *The Devil Wears Prada* will do or say just about anything to get to the top; they are even willing to put friendships and their integrity on the line. Is the main character Andy Sachs’ willingness to trade her soul to the “devil” in order to get ahead a result of the fashion industry, or is this just another casualty of our patriarchal corporate society? Interestingly, the women are particularly viscous toward one another. In fact, though Andy seems uncomfortable with her new maliciousness, Andy’s coworkers have come to terms with their self-serving attitudes and brutality toward others. Perhaps the heat of the competition is changing the rules of acceptable behavior. Delve into this fast-paced world of expensive shoes and expensive tastes, but beware! You might just pay with your soul.

# RELATIVELY SPEAKING

Moderated by Professor Jim Kincaid, Department of English

Tuesday, April 8

6:00 - 7:15 p.m.

Banquet Room

**KATIE BARBARO**

## **RENOVATING THE TWIG HUT OF GROWN-UP AWARENESS**

In my paper I will explore the issue of authority in parent-child relationships in the context of Katherine Dunn's novel, *Geek Love*. Dunn tells the story of a husband and wife who breed their children to be physically deformed circus freaks. Oly, their daughter and narrator of the novel, identifies the "warm adult stupidity" of parents. The central conflict in the parent-child relationship is between the child's newly emerging version of the world and the parent's established version of the world. It is the younger generation that sees through the façade of adult wisdom: as Oly remarks about her parents, "neither of them had a glimmer of what seemed to me the real world." I look at the parent-child relationships in *Geek Love* in the light of parenting manuals to explore the legitimacy of the "warm adult stupidity." In her parenting manual, Galinsky notes that parental action stems from a parent's "image" of what a parent should do. Even though children see their parents as an established authority, parental authority only gains legitimacy in its execution. While parents begin to take their own creation of authority as reality, children initially see the parent's authority as absolute truth and then learn to see it as a construction.

**CALLIE SCHWEITZER**

## **PREYED UPON: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DESTRUCTIVE BROTHERLY RELATIONSHIP IN *TOPDOG/UNDERDOG***

In a play about an arduous journey to find one's self, Suzan Lori-Parks's *Topdog/Underdog* provides a devastating example of two men who approach finding themselves by ripping apart the soul of another - in this case, one's brother. Parks's work is the story of two brothers, Lincoln and Booth, who struggle to survive in the everyday world but find themselves trapped by their own personal and cultural histories. The brothers bring out the worst in each other by reliving the stories of their past. The two men spend the entirety of the work trying to prove themselves to one another and reject the other's opinion. My paper will examine the mutually symbiotic and parasitic relationship of the brothers - they simultaneously build each other up and tear each other down. I will also explore Myka Tucker-Abramson's idea that "both characters are in crisis ...with respect to the[ir] masculinity." By acquiring different roles throughout the play as an attempt to find one's self - older brother/younger brother, father/mother, teacher/student, and topdog/underdog - each man searches for his identity but is ultimately unsuccessful. While only one of them actually dies at the play's conclusion, the effects of their predatory relationship eventually destroy them both.

**EVAN SNYDER**

## **DADDY'S EYES AND MOMMY'S EGO: PARENTALLY CONSTRUCTED REPRESSIONS IN SHIRLEY JACKSON'S *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE***

Between infancy and adulthood, one transforms from a hapless baby into a functioning member of society through the development of a conscience - the moral inner compass which guides the individual to socially permissible action. Pivotal to this process is a child's relationship with his parents, whose interactions with

the child internalize behavioral standards and develop independence. In Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, the consequences of inadequate parenting hound the central character, Eleanor, through the mysterious presences at Hill House. When parents fail to provide a supportive relationship, complexes plague their children into adulthood. Feminist psychoanalytic theory proposes that the conflicting desires for nurturance and independence, influenced by patriarchy and socioeconomic status, stimulate Eleanor's phantasmal encounters. Jackson illustrates that parents, as the first influence on a vulnerable child's budding conscience, and the first civilizing force encountered at the verge of sophistication and barbarism, are liable to become a source of repression and neurosis.

**KIMBERLY UYAMA**

**TRANSCENDING THE SHACKLES OF SOCIETY:  
THE TRIUMPH OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN *BELOVED***

According to Sigmund Freud, "The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization." Rather, he argues that civilized society inhibits personal growth by mandating compliance and sacrifice for the benefit of the majority, sometimes at expense of moral ethics. The institution of slavery that subjected millions to physical and emotional torment fostered deeper tensions that infiltrated the African American community and established divisions amongst them as well. When a community is subjugated to the devastation wrought by sheer inhumanity, it becomes unable to recognize and successfully address the needs of the other members. Plagued with and haunted by memories of slavery, the characters of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* struggle to reclaim control of their lives in the wake of such devastation. Through the character of Denver, the daughter of a former slave haunted by the traumas of the past, the power of the individual to successfully challenge the effects of slavery manifests itself. This paper argues that in the midst of an emotionally damaged familial and communal dynamic, individual initiative proves the most effective way of beginning the process of truly emancipating the African American community. It is only through an individual's role as the catalyst of this freedom that the community, and thus civilization itself, can begin to heal of wounds inflicted by slavery.

**HOLLY VILLAMAGNA**

**JACKSON'S STAR FRESHMAN:  
*THE SOUND AND THE FURY* AS A CRITICISM OF PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS**

This paper examines the social role and operating procedures of psychiatric institutions in Faulkner-era America. American psychiatric hospitals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were frequently applauded for their progressive focus on treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment. Despite these praises, I will demonstrate that these institutions and individual physicians in them frequently treated their patients as barbarians, second-class citizens unworthy of respect. It is an issue that William Faulkner addressed throughout *The Sound and the Fury* as the family debated whether to have the mentally challenged Benjy institutionalized. I will analyze Faulkner's portrayal of the Compson family - Jason as a symbol of the pervasive belief that people like Benjy are not even human, Caddy and Dilsey's unconditional love and acceptance, and Mrs. Compson's claim that Benjy was a reflection of her family's mistakes. Through this analysis, I will show that Faulkner structured *The Sound and the Fury* to make a statement against the institutionalized psychiatric treatment of his time.

# WICKED GOOD

Moderated by Natasha Alvandi, Department of English

Tuesday, April 8

6:00 - 7:15 p.m.

Pub

**CARA DICKASON**

## **THE PHILOSOPHY OF *FIGHT CLUB*: THE EXISTENTIAL BARBARIAN**

David Fincher's *Fight Club* depicts one man's search for identity in our cold, emasculating capitalist society. The film initially seems to promote a barbaric nihilism as the way to transcend the emptiness of the consumer lifestyle and reclaim one's manhood. Tyler Durden, the narrator's Übermensch alter ego, touts a "God is dead," "life is meaningless" ideology as the only way to be free, but the film's conclusion seems to reject this kind of nihilism as the solution to our postmodern identity crisis. The narrator experiences self-discovery through the rejection of Tyler's philosophy and by taking responsibility for his actions within the societal institutions that were so meaningless to him. However, instead of merely contradicting the film's initial message, the narrator's choices reflect a different, less barbaric approach to the same philosophies. He discovers meaningful human connection that allows him a genuine peace of mind within this absurd and chaotic existence. While Tyler's methods achieve personal identity through masculine aggression, the narrator ends the film in a state of transcendent calm.

**AJA L. HEISLER**

## **INHUMANITY AT ITS WORST**

Is there any defense for a seemingly inexcusable act? In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, we see that Sethe is a woman troubled from a life of brutality, struggling for her independence in a world where she will never truly be free. Thus, she murders her infant daughter to save her child from a similar life of suffering. Under any other circumstances, infanticide is an unforgivable sin. Slavery and murder are the ultimate instances of barbarianism; in this situation one eventually leads Sethe to commit the other. Sethe believes that murdering her Beloved will save the child from the cruelty of an inhuman life, as Sethe herself has experienced. This paper explores the motivations of her behavior, as well as the psychological aftermath of her situation. In Gabriele Schmitz's study examining the connection between infanticide and politics entwined within 20<sup>th</sup> century women's literature, I draw on various other literary instances of this situation, while in Steven Weisenberger's journal recounting the story of Margaret Garner, I examine the historical significance as the base of this fictional work and how history treated Garner's fate. Community ostracizes Sethe. Critics condemn her. But are they too quick to judge her? Sethe already blames herself enough for what she did.

**SOPHIE JACOBSON**

## **GONZO: HORATIO ALGER GONE MAD ON DRUGS**

The best fiction is far truer than any kind of journalism.

- William Faulkner

Hunter S. Thompson shattered all journalistic conventions with the advent of his "gonzo" journalism. Blending fact with fiction, forsaking accuracy for style, infusing the truth with sarcasm, profanity, exaggeration, and humor, Thompson's "gonzo" has been the easy target of cynics bent on tradition. However, such a radical

style of reporting was necessary to perpetuate Thompson's messages of dissatisfaction with the American status quo. Embracing Faulkner's notion that good fiction conveys more truth than journalism, Thompson used "gonzo" effectively to report on topics ranging from the presidential election to motorcycle races with authenticity; in the words of literary critic, David Halberstam, "Hunter's truths seem like laser beams cutting through the fog." Using *Sin City* in metaphorical representation of our entire country, Thompson spews pointed social criticism on the rampant materialism, absurdity, and barbarity of 1970's America in his work of gonzo, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Far more than merely entertaining, the highly subjective nature of "gonzo" affords this unique genre of journalism more legitimacy than traditional reporting; "gonzo" journalists' candid opinions which would cross the line of decency in conventional journalism are expressed under guise of fiction.

**MAUREEN LEE LENKER**

### **CRASS OVER CLASS: BARBARISM AS A MEANS OF DECEPTION IN *THE STING***

Today the hero takes the law into his own hands because the community is too civilized,  
the law too compassionate and understanding of the criminal.

- Joan Mellen

In the modern world, we constantly find ourselves witness to atrocious acts, and many of us ask why these acts of barbarism remain unchecked. However, the irony is that sometimes barbaric behavior can be helpful to reach a positive goal. As Mellen's quote above suggests, fighting barbarism with barbarism may be the only way to restore order to civilization. In a world without any rules, violence becomes an effective tool. In George Roy Hill's 1973 film, *The Sting*, violence, cheating, and lying are regular everyday occurrences. In fact, lying, cheating, and numerous acts of barbarism (often feigned) are necessary tactics for our con-men heroes to succeed. Therefore, the film suggests that although barbarism has an inevitable and often disturbing presence in our society, barbarism can serve as a helpful and occasionally positive force in one's life, particularly when used as a means to skillfully perpetrate necessary acts of deception.

**TIFFANY YANG**

### **THE ECSTASY OF DEATH: HONOR AND PURITY AS THE ANTITHESES OF BARBARITY IN *PATRIOTISM***

What is barbarity? Is it simple crudity, a brutality of inhuman conduct? Viewed through a dissenting cultural lens and with an unconventional perspective of beauty, Yukio Mishima's *Patriotism* presents the conflicted display of brutality and purity. With a heartbreaking and passionate prose, Mishima relates the tragic end of Lieutenant Shinji Takeyama and his young wife Reiko within his compelling short story. The newlyweds engage in *seppuku*, a ritual suicide by self-disembowelment by a blade, when forced to test their loyalties to camaraderie and the state. Although Mishima's words are evocatively graphic and aesthetically horrific, his prose gives justice to the ardor and rigor of his characters' convictions. Placed within the backdrops of both feudal and modern Japan, honor ultimately prevails as the resounding impetus for their passionate acts. Mishima's obsession with beauty and his struggle negotiating between language and action similarly accent the purity of his characters' seemingly grotesque suicides. In Mishima's *Patriotism*, barbarity and honor dance an intricate waltz around the pivots of Japanese culture, anachronism, and the ecstasy of death.

# DESIGNING WOMEN

Moderated by Professor Ann Marie Yasin, Departments of Art History and Classics

Tuesday, April 8

7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Room B

**JENNA FU**

## **BEAUTY, BARBARISM, AND BLUE EYES**

How has the subjugation of African-American culture impacted the self-image of these individuals and perpetuated barbaric behaviors both within the culture and outside of it as a result? This paper will examine common perceptions of beauty and the ways in which it is socialized through environmental forces, particularly for the African American race. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* examines the detrimental nature of regarding beauty and racial constraints through pre-established perceptions, challenging historical as well as modern conceptions about what it means to be free. Ultimately, what is truly barbaric is not the victim or the abuser, but the power of perception to impose a false reality on self-image.

**BEN HUDSON**

## **LOVE, GUNS, AND FEMINISM: VALERIE SOLANAS AND THE *SCUM MANIFESTO***

On June 8th, 1968, Valerie Solanas shot Andy Warhol and art critic Mario Amaya. In August of that same year, Solanas's magnum opus, the *SCUM Manifesto* was published. The timing of her manifesto's publication was both beneficial and negative. If not for the notoriety she gained gunning down a rising artistic icon, her manifesto may never have been published and, if it had, may never have been read. On the other hand, the vast majority of her readers were unable to separate her actions from her words, causing her true meaning to become hopelessly distorted. Solanas' legacy has been tainted by public perception; she shot Warhol not as a lunatic but as a woman who would do anything, anything to be heard. Heard she was, though not as she intended, not as she should have been. Valerie Solanas was not crazy. She was not a trigger-happy lesbian. She was not as radical as she seemed. In this paper, I will show how her environment and background brought about her feminine ideals, but her actions twisted public perception of her intentions in such a way that her desire for female empowerment became, mistakenly, a call for the violent mass elimination of men.

**EMILY KAMEN**

## **CITY AND TOWN, WEST AND EAST: WHY SEPARATE SOCIETIES PRODUCE SIMILAR INDIVIDUALS**

I think that in my case the two worlds exist side by side in a relatively harmonious fashion and express themselves freely, without complexes or exclusions.

- Nedjma on Western and Eastern writing

The contrast between Western and Middle Eastern countries is under constant analysis, driven by preconceived social stereotypes. However, how truly different are the individuals of each society? *The Almond*, written by Nedjma, an anonymous Arab woman, describes her "sexual awakening" in a loosely autobiographical book. This paper will discuss how the main character's shocking journey is actually an expression of Western and Middle Eastern cultures interacting. The paper's methodology consists of analyzing the reactions of different countries to the book's publication, interviews with Nedjma concerning the Western/

Eastern conflict, and insights from social theorists. Upon further inspection, it is clear that human nature, despite the lenses of society, urbanization, and religion, is not nearly as varied as these two societies perceive it. The main character's behavior does not belong to either culture entirely, reflected in the idea that she does not belong fully to her hometown or the city where her enlightenment occurs. The paper will examine how despite the physical differences of the city and the small town, the attitudes of individuals exist on a continuum, and each person is a combination of their environmental influences.

**GRACE LI**

### **SUCH THINGS AS GENES ARE MADE ON: EVOLUTION, SEX, AND SOCIETY IN *REBECCA***

Sex is as simple, natural, and inevitable as breathing--from a purely biological perspective. In a gene-centric theory of evolution, sexual reproduction is a vehicle for the units of replication - the "selfish" genes that make up every organism. In a social context, sex and the behaviors associated with it form an undeniably potent source of social complication. The characters in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* lie, cheat, oppress, collude, and even commit murder to preserve (or challenge) the sexual norms. How is it that something so integral to biological reproduction and survival takes on such a barbarous connotation when in *Rebecca*'s Edwardian setting? More broadly, why is sex so important in social relationships? The dual nature of sex as a dividing and uniting social force in *Rebecca* ultimately stems from the gene-driven biological need for reproduction, which can produce complex social behavior and sexual norms. Rebecca's adultery and promiscuity, Maxim's murderous instincts, the narrator's attitudes toward marriage, and the patriarchal culture in which they reside all have roots in the replication of "selfish" genes.

**EMMA MCDONNELL**

### **ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, EVERYMAN: AN UNLIKELY MARIA SHOWS WHY WE NEED GRACE NOW MORE THAN EVER**

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death.

- The Gospel of Luke

In the broadest sense, grace refers to God's gift of life and salvation. In the film *Maria Full of Grace*, Maria's grace is seen in the boldness and purity that surrounds her as well as her ability to retain a sense of self and integrity in a world of barbaric influences. These barbarians come in the form of drugs, pesticides, the systems they create, and the men they corrupt. Playing off the tagline "Based on 1,000 True Stories" I will explore the ways *Maria Full of Grace* is a commentary on real life and how the film calls on its viewers to take action against barbarism, striving towards a more cohesive and untainted society.



# THE FREAK MYSTIQUE

Moderated by Professor David Eggenschwiler, Department of English

Tuesday, April 8

7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Banquet Room

**SHANNON LUDINGTON**

## **YOU SAID I'M CRAZY?: EXPLORING CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFICULTIES THROUGH LANGUAGE**

This essay explores the cross-cultural interactions and responses to the 'other' in the films *The Cuckoo* and *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. *The Cuckoo* is the story of a Finnish and a Russian soldier who are thrown together with a Sami woman in the midst of WWII, while *The Gods Must Be Crazy* is a comical look at primitive society meeting various facets of modern society in South Africa. Each of these films deals with what could be an inflammatory meeting of cultures, either across racial or national lines. I use a combination of several semiotic theories, especially those of C.S. Peirce and Roland Barthes to analyze both the verbal and non-verbal communications of different people in different cross-cultural situations. I will then attempt to explain the outcome of each meeting through the cultural and historical context.

**TIMOTHY PARKER**

## **THE VIOLENCE IN OUR VOICES: PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF MUTILATION**

The modes with which people divide and categorize themselves function on their basest level as labels. The kid with a metal hoop through his nose is a "freak" and the obsessive compulsive lady with eighteen bolts on her front door is "crazy." But labels such as these serve to create distinction where there are really just degrees of the same. An individual's sense of self and the world around him is determined by his relationship to his environment. Because this relationship is varied and constantly changing the individual reacts by manipulating either himself or his perception of reality. Everyone does this on some level when confronted by environmental instability, but the most extreme cases are distinguished in order to create the illusion of what is "normal." So the most ostracized and outcast are unfairly labeled, and the ones we call barbarians may just be misunderstood.

**LAUREN PEREZ**

## **ACTS OF TERROR, ACTS OF MEANING: HEROISM AND BARBARISM IN *WATCHMEN***

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes  
- Juvenal

Three million New Yorkers are dead, and peace reigns on Earth. A decrepit band of superheroes are responsible for the attack on New York, using an act of violence and terror to ultimately restore peace. Alan Moore's *Watchmen* questions what a superhero is. This band of heroes have ceased to function in the way in which heroes are expected; they are tied up in violence and increasing brutality. Vigilantism and terrorism characterize Alan Moore's superheroes; it is their final, catastrophic act of attentat that finally releases them, and the rest of the world, from violence. For the Watchmen, the hero is a barbarian, or else is no longer a superhero. Alan Moore revolutionized the idea of "the hero" in comic books and changed what comic books,



especially “superhero” comic books, are and can do today. Through the lens of *Watchmen*, the superhero stands unmasked as barbarian, enmeshed in the politics of violence.

**CONSTANTINE SAVVIDES**

**WILD THING: CONNECTING WITH THE INNER BARBARIAN  
THROUGH MEANS OF DISPLACEMENT IN *DAISY MILLER***

When Henry James wrote *Daisy Miller* in the latter portion of England’s morally-bound Victorian era, his promiscuous traveler Daisy transgressed a myriad of contemporary European social regulations. This paper seeks to prove that Daisy is not only aware of the offensive audacity of her actions, but actually embraces their alienating and, in a sense, liberating effects. Drawing on the theories of Michel Foucault, I will demonstrate why her image as an unrepressed, sexually empowered youth along with her refusal to accept classification (taming the savage) “elicit anxieties of cultural difference” in this particular foreign society, causing “them” to label and treat her as a barbarian (in the outsider sense of the word). The fierce social death she suffers at the end begs the question, “Who is really the barbarian?”

**COURTNEY VAN COTT**

**THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN *THE SHELTERING SKY*:  
WHICH CULTURE IS ACTUALLY BARBARIC?**

Ayn Rand asserts that “civilization is the process of setting man free from men.” Yet, she fails to take into account that, regarding women, civilization often stifles personal growth and reduces women to a subservient status. In *The Sheltering Sky* by Paul Bowles, Kit Moresby, who is traveling with her husband Port in the Sahara, is driven to insanity by her confined and stifled life. Even though Kit remains safe and protected by Port, she can never live life fully and happily. Kit experiences a brief moment of freedom in the Sahara until she joins an Arab caravan traveling to Sudan. Although the Arab culture is viewed as radically different by the American characters in this novel, Kit undergoes the same confining, degrading treatment as she did with her American husband. In this paper, I will explore how thin the veneer actually is between these two cultures in regard to their treatment of women, and how inaccurate the term “barbarian” can be considering the identical, degrading practices between Port and the Arabs. Throughout this paper, I will also draw upon the works of Ayn Rand to determine why she asserts civilization is so liberating for humanity even though women are often and repeatedly subjugated.

# HELL 'N' DEGENERATES

Moderated by Marija Cetinic, Department of Comparative Literature

Tuesday, April 8

7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Room C

## SAMMY GOLDENBERG

### SUPERFICIAL SOCIALITES: FITZGERALD'S BARBARIAN HORDES

The "flawless" girl of a man's dreams runs over a helpless woman and only cares about not getting caught. A wealthy and violent man with a violent-sounding name facilitates a murder and does not think that he has done anything wrong. These two people represent the type of crowd that Jay Gatsby wants to join. The protagonist of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* wants to have the lifestyle of America's "old money" families and the glamour associated with it. He is even willing to carry out barbaric acts to live it. In fact, the social group he wishes to join is full of barbarians. Tom and Daisy Buchanan are "careless people" who cause great damage but are blissfully unaware of it. Gatsby desires this freedom of responsibility and the inherent barbarism that goes along with not caring about the consequences of actions. Do Gatsby's desires stem from his inherent barbarism or is the society he lives in itself barbaric? Is the glamour - the fashion and mythology that surrounds America's elite - a romanticized cover-up of the barbarism involved in that lifestyle?

## SEAN HOUGH

### MONSTERS IN THE DARK: THE VAMPIRE AS A PERSONIFICATION OF OUR FEARS

This paper will examine the origins of vampire myths in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with Bram Stoker's resurrection of the myth at the turn of the century and continuing on to the contemporary vampire myths of Anne Rice and others. I will examine the fears expressed through these vampire myths and how they link to older traditions of the peasantry's fear of disease as well as the Church's fears of an outside agency challenging their power. Despite the great sociological and technological advancements made during the past century, many of these fears are still present, albeit in different guises - though these fears may have become more refined and precise as humanity has come to conquer its environment, our primal fears remain. To support these claims, I shall be drawing on such sources as Jimmie E. Cain Jr.'s *Bram Stoker and Russophobia* and Brian J. Frost's *The Monster with a Thousand Faces: Guises of the Vampire in Myth and Literature*. Frost's text, in particular, tracks the evolution of the vampire from its original state as a primal demon to its current romantic incarnation, attributes that have changed due to the evolving aspects of primal fears in the prevalent culture.

## COLBY KENNEDY

### "IN VAIN I PURSUE THE RETREATING GOD": SINFULNESS AND MODERNISM IN CHARLES BAUDELAIRE'S "THE VOYAGE"

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.

- David Harvey, "Modernity and Modernism"

In his poem, "The Voyage," Charles Baudelaire examines the tension between progress and destruction by describing the literal and metaphorical meanderings of a group of seafarers. With appetites insatiable

and restlessness incurable, these vagabonds resemble barbarians: exiled vagrants, foreigners in every land, following no moral code other than their corporeal impulses. The poet-narrator depicts their disorientation as human sin, and attributes their ungodliness and moral decay to the rapid development of the modern period. This anguish about rootlessness and deterioration of humanity reflects the anxious reaction to the accelerated pace of change and expanded realm of movement in the 20th century. In my reading of "The Voyage" I will investigate the relationship between physical and moral disorientation, infer the consequences of radical change according to the poet-narrator, and analyze how the incessant movement and inconceivable opportunity of the modernist period result in the loss of faith and meaning.

**ELLIOTT SPELMAN**

### **THE BARBARIC MORAL DISTINCTION**

Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians? Those people were a kind of solution.  
- Constantine P. Cavafy

The primary theme running through the novels our CORE 112 section has covered this semester seems to be the American individual pitted against contrasting foreign space. This contrast, when closely examined, occurs on a variety of levels. Aesthetically, Americans differ in almost every respect from those they encounter in various primitive states. Culturally, customs and rituals of those whom Americans identify as foreigners both intimidate and invigorate the traveler. The most important contrast, though, is one of morality. As opposed to something as objective as dress style or language or even food, subjective differences in moral systems create the true dichotomies that separate Americans and foreigners. What ethical and moral distinctions identify someone as a barbarian? Are those barbaric perceptions just? What role does fear play in the characterization of a moral 'other?' I'll examine these questions using Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky*, Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*, and J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, drawing examples of the American in foreign space from Bowles and Bellow, and using Coetzee as a quasi-control element explaining generic relationships between native and foreigner.

**MATTHEW WHITED**

### **CIVILITY AND BARBARISM IN CITIES**

In my paper I will address the theme of barbarians by addressing the dually barbaric and civil nature of modern urban spaces. The paper will primarily focus on the films of Martin Scorsese as highlighting this duality through his portrayal of violence and crime in major American cities such as New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. Because of the technology and affluence present in these cities, we may think of them as pinnacles of civilization. High crime rates and poverty in urban areas, however, present a much different picture of city life that is often far from civilized. The fact that major cities often serve as bastions of crime and other non-normative behaviors reveals an interesting dynamic of humanity and its reaction to population density. Also, being centers of economy, the effect of cities on different economic classes shows the diverse effect of capitalism across the urban population- producing culture and civility in some and barbarism in others. My paper will explore the paradox of barbarism's (here: a departure from civil norms) prevalence in cities and what this suggests about human nature and capitalism.

# I KNOW YOU ARE, BUT WHAT AM I?

Moderated by Jennifer Malia, Department of English

Tuesday, April 8

7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Room E

**MEGHAN DOHERTY**

## **DEPARTED IDENTITY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF STRANGENESS IN *THE DEPARTED***

By erasing the line between good and evil, moral and immoral, director Martin Scorsese develops each character in *The Departed* as a kind of stranger. For characters Billy Costigan and Colin Sullivan, the maintenance of a false identity becomes integral to their own survival. Drawing on Dale S. McLemore's article "Simmel's 'Stranger': A Critique of the Concept," the "stranger" can embody three distinguishable sociological characters: the "newcomer," the "stranger," and the "marginal man." These three characters operate in *The Departed*: the "newcomer" in relation to the character of Costigan, the "stranger" in relation to Sullivan, and the "marginal man" in relation to Sergeant Dignam. In addition to this sociological approach, *The Departed's* "strangers" function within an interactionist theory, as established in Marc Riedel's article "Stranger Violence: Perspectives, Issues, and Problems," where stranger relationships include acquaintances and friends. This establishes a dichotomy within the Costello mob, where the intimacy of their actions only perpetuates their estrangement. There is a constant tension between inclusion and exclusion that Scorsese emphasizes through score, cinematography, and gangster iconography such as guns. Most importantly, *The Departed* presents this tension between strangers in an urban realist context, where raw and brutal violence is the one commonality between city opposites.

**COLIN DWYER**

## **A WHOLE NEW WORLD: LIMITATIONS OF LANGUAGE IN *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS***

The word "barbarian" has been passed down to us from the Ancient Greeks, who used their own version of the word to describe foreigners, or those who spoke a foreign tongue. Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* follows a similar line of thought, creating a foreign world characterized by the androgyny of its inhabitants. By presenting her narrator, Genly Ai, as the human ambassador who must describe the wholly unfamiliar events of the planet, Le Guin comments on the limitations of language as a form of expression. In describing the androgynous people of Gethen, Le Guin's narrator is cornered into the usage of gender-focused pronouns. Though he understands the shortcomings of human language, Genly must cope with them, describing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, however inaccurate. As a result, the first-person narrator is rendered unreliable, more by his inability of accurate expression than subjectivity. In a world defined at birth by one's gender, language is established on a series of binaries ("he" or "she," etc.), which cannot be reconciled with a world in which everyone lives with the singular wholeness of androgyny. Thus, Le Guin comments also on the implications of gender on language.

**CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON**

## **TRIANGLE OF BARBARITY**

During the late 19th Century, there was a surge of European exploration throughout the developing world. Many European explorers told their adventures through travel narratives. In these narratives, there was a clear divide between the explorer and the explored. There was the civilized, superior European traveling through a

foreign space filled with barbaric natives. American authors have continued the tradition of travel narratives but with a twist. Instead of having the simple divide of civilized traveler and uncivilized native, American authors will often blur those lines. In *The Sheltering Sky*, Paul Bowles writes of Americans traveling in Saharan Algeria. He does show that the Algerians have barbaric practices, but he also shows that the Americans have barbaric practices as well. To complicate the matter, he also incorporates Europeans, and their own unique barbaric practices. The descriptions and interactions of the three separate groups creates a triangle of barbarity.

## **MACKENZIE MEADOWS**

### **COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY: THE HYPOCRISY OF BARBARIZING THE STRANGER**

When the individual feels, the community reels.

- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

In *Brave New World*, the technologically advanced new world cannot comprehend the customs of the Savage. The two worlds have entirely different value systems; yet more importantly, the two societies have different hierarchical structures. This paper looks at *Brave New World* from the viewpoint of cultural and structural anthropology. Using the ideas of anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss, I seek to explore how the two societies' diametrically opposed ideas of rules shape meaning, and therefore cause the new world to barbarize the Savage through misunderstanding. Thus, this new world objectifies and makes a mockery of the Savage not because it is an industrial society devoid of emotion, but because it has a structural order vastly different than that of the Savage's world.

## **MAILE MILLER**

### **NATIVE=TOURIST: DISCOVERING A MIXED IDENTITY IN A SMALL PLACE**

In her home life, a person is an "insider, native, or local," but when that same person adventures elsewhere, she is considered an "outsider, barbarian, tourist". The aspects of a person's character shaped by family, friends, and the place where she came from serve as the foundation of her identity, while experiences outside of that familiar environment further develop personal identity. Since a person's identity draws from both experiencing life as a tourist and as a native, distinct definitions between the two cannot be made. As portrayed in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, tourists vacation as outsiders; however, the way in which tourists influence where they stay and the way in which that place influences them develops the identity of that place, in this case Antigua, and its people. Such influence does not limit itself to a one-way relationship from tourist to Antigua and Antiguan; for Antigua and the Antiguan in turn influence the tourist.

# REPRESS YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF

Moderated by Dr. Michael Blackie, Levan Institute for Humanities and Ethics

Tuesday, April 8

7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Pub

**ANIL MOTWANI**

## **HOLLYWOOD'S INVENTION OF THE GAY SERIAL KILLER**

Hollywood, that great maker of myths, taught straight people what to think about gay people  
... and gay people what to think about themselves.

- Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*

Going to the movies is a mostly passive act, and as such, we entrust filmmakers to tell their story, however provocative, with honesty. But what happens when beneath an honest telling is a brash and offensive subtext? Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* forwards that exact question when it suggests a link between repressed homosexuality and the homicidal urge. Is such a link plausible, as a body of available evidence might suggest - or does Minghella's treatment reflect more appropriately on the state and condition of society? Drawing on case studies and film portrayals of gay sociopaths as well as critical studies of Hollywood trends, I examine the psychological influences of homosexuality on Ripley's social outlook -- and the extent to which we might analyze Ripley without crossing a tenuous boundary into unscientific bigotry.

**ROXANA MOUSSAVIAN**

## **POINTLESS CONVICTIONS: WHY SUFFERING IS INHERENT TO HUMANITY**

In life, attitude is everything - or is it? Can fate really be altered by a simple change in perspective? By studying Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America* and Chris Ware's graphic novel *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*, I will use the centrality of the characters' suffering in both stories to answer this question. Though the two texts may at first glance seem drastically different, both explore the pain and loneliness that their characters must experience on a regular basis. While the characters in *Angels in America* are explicit about their anger and frustration with the trials that they must endure, Jimmy Corrigan is more passive, rarely displaying anything but apathy towards the problems that plague his life. Despite their differing attitudes towards life, neither Ware's protagonist nor Kushner's characters are able to successfully alter their suffering in any way. It is only by analyzing these two radically different works together that we realize how the existential suffering these characters endure is inevitable and possibly even inherent to humanity.

**PRITHVI MURTHY**

## **LIVING WITH THE DEVIL: REPRESSIONS, RELATIONSHIPS AND THE SEXUAL BARBARISM OF REBECCA**

My essay explores Freudian psychoanalytical theory and its applications to Daphne du Maurier's novel, *Rebecca*. According to Freud, repressions and the pleasure principle work together as human beings unconsciously exclude memories, fears and desires which bring them pain. By suppressing these painful impulses and memories, humans can attain a state of constancy that, as Freud says, helps them avoid displeasure. Freud's theories function as an excellent lens through which to examine Rebecca's sexual barbarism, and its effects on Maximilian de Winter's relationships with the narrator. My paper also uses Alfred

Hitchcock's film adaptation to enhance this study. Hitchcock's unique application of editing techniques and the script brings the psychological aspect of *Rebecca* to the forefront of the story, making it a useful tool for analysis. Through this essay, I will examine the complex relationships and connections in du Maurier's novel as well as Hitchcock's film to demonstrate the ways in which repressions can harm or even destroy relationships.

**AIMEE SIENKIEWICZ**

### ***BELOVED: THE DESTRUCTIVE BOND BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD***

The bond between mother and child is one of the most powerful and profound human relationships and is commonly portrayed as a positive, loving, and nurturing connection from which both the mother and child draw satisfaction and fulfillment. However, in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, this maternal bond is explored as much more ominous and destructive. Sethe, a mother eaten up by guilt for eighteen years after killing her infant child, is far from nourished when her daughter Beloved manifests once more. In line with Freud's theory of symptom formation, Sethe feels so much guilt as a result of the murder that she projects it outside of herself and onto a physical manifestation of her dead daughter. Though Beloved appears as a grown woman, her mind remains fixed in the pre-Oedipal stage she inhabited at the time of her death, which means, according to object relations theory, that she is unable to separate her own sense of self from that of her mother. As Sethe and Beloved's identities become so linked that their roles as mother and child begin to warp and fuse, it is Denver, the daughter with an identity separate from her mother's, who is able to step off the edge of the only world she knows to rescue Sethe from her all-consuming bond with Beloved. Once Sethe's projection of Beloved is finally gone, Sethe can begin to reconstruct her own, whole identity and live for herself as a woman, rather than for her dead daughter as a mother, and free herself from the dangerous pull of maternal bondage at last, a relationship and bond that is no longer nourishing, but rather dangerously destructive.

**MARY FRANCES WALSH**

### ***"YOU SAW NOTHING IN HIROSHIMA": TRANSLATING THE PAIN OF WAR***

"Whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language," asserts Elaine Scarry in her book *The Body in Pain*. If pain cannot be expressed through words, then how can the tragedies that occur during war translate into a medium that can be understood by others, so that the horrors that occur when civil countries become barbaric towards one another are not repeated? When language fails, other options, such as images, are left open to translate the human experience. Moving images, otherwise known as movies, can create a mood with the subtlest of gestures and the slightest hint of music, where language fails to express these meanings. *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, a love story about the pain of war, suggests the failure of language in communicating the barbarianism that is war. It also examines the effects of war on language and how pain debilitates many to the point of silence.



# ASSIMILATION: RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

Moderated by Professor Kyung Moon Hwang, Department of History

Wednesday, April 9

5:00 - 6:15 p.m.

Room A

**SARAH LECLAIRE**

## **ALWAYS REACHING HIGHER: GATSBY'S ASSIMILATION INTO A BARBARIC SOCIETY**

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby tries to assimilate into a wealthy, elite, and fashionable society. Nonetheless, all of his efforts to be accepted fail. The exclusive West Egg society rejects him due to his insufficiency. He does not qualify because his wealth is considered new money and he has no long-standing reputation. However, during his assimilation Gatsby compromises himself by buying into this fashionable society and becomes one of the barbarians himself. Therefore, Gatsby's quest to become part of West Egg society makes us question the real price of belonging.

**JOEY RICCI**

## **CABIN FEVER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WINESBURG AND ALIENATION**

This essay discusses how the rural setting in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* plays a crucial role in the feelings of alienation and loneliness that the characters of the novel grapple with. The geographic isolation of Winesburg coupled with the regimented lifestyle and lack of variety in the town provides a foundation for feelings of alienation, a foundation that would not have been established had the story been set in an urban community. Geographic isolation and lack of a comprehensive social network created an environment where unhappiness could flourish. The characters in the novel share no similarities other than feelings of unhappiness or unrest and the town that they live in, Winesburg. Their unhappiness was more than a result of their personalities; the small, intimate town setting that they lived in enhanced the alienation from which they suffered.

**MAX SCHWIMMER**

## **"YES, SAH" AND "AMIR AGHA": SAUL BELLOW, KHALED HOSSEINI, AND THE LANGUAGE BARRIER**

My paper will examine how two novels - Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* - treat the problems of the language barrier in their depiction of non-Westerners. Bellow is obviously conscious of the difficulties posed by the language barrier, as his first-person narrator is an embodiment of the constraints of Western subjectivity. Yet, instead of trying to offer a solution to the language conundrum, Bellow embraces misunderstanding as opportunity for introspection and self-realization. In contrast to Bellow's indisputably American perspective, Hosseini, as an American immigrant writer, more adeptly negotiates the cultural gap. In a fictionalized account of his own childhood in Afghanistan, Hosseini authentically relates the words of non-Americans - and their humanity - in rich and complex translation. Yet just as insightful as this perspective seems to its American readership, it is by no means free of language-barrier problems. A translation can never carry exactly the same meaning as the original words, and therefore Hosseini's prose is as limited in authenticity as Amir's beloved Iranian-overdubbed Hollywood films. And though Hosseini



succeeds in creating fully-fleshed, relatable characters, the very fact of their translated words prevents their full disassociation with the barbaric.

**LIN SHI**

### **THE REAL BARBARIAN: INTELLECT VERSUS INTUITION IN *PASSING***

In *Passing*'s Irene Redfield, Nella Larsen purposefully creates a character who constantly second-guesses her decisions and picks the wrong one, often incorrectly choosing societal intellect over her personal intuition. Her flawed judgment suggests that although intuition is the basest form of knowledge found in the most uncivilized of animals, it holds a higher level of truth than human beings' so-called intelligence and cognition. Drawing on Socrates' philosophy in Plato's *Trial and Death of Socrates* and Nietzsche's criticisms in *Truth & Lying in a Nonmoral Sense*, I will argue that societal emphasis on intellect is only a "confidence act" that pushes society away from truth. In that sense, intellect itself is what is truly barbarian.

**JOSEPH B. SMITH**

### **ERNEST, THE BARBARIAN: INVASION AND CULTURAL CONSUMPTION IN *A MOVEABLE FEAST***

Immersed in the free-spirited simplicity of expatriate life in 1920's Paris, Ernest Hemingway and his friends represent the American literary elite of the modernist period in *A Moveable Feast*. Traditional views of Hemingway's travels through the streets of Paris most often wax romantic, recognizing the cultural and intellectual wealth of this famous writer and his companions. However, given the colonial tendencies of western modernity, Hemingway's cultural explorations appear more to be a type of barbaric invasion. I examine the representation of the foreigner as barbaric in traditional European culture and, specifically, in the characterization of "barbarians" as "the other" during the modernist period. Hemingway and the other expatriates encounter Paris but fail to fully participate in the culture. They do not contribute either economically or otherwise. Instead, they use the city as a self-saturated means to benefit their own pleasure and work. I argue that, in this way, Hemingway attempts a type of cultural consumption and colonization of the city of Paris.

# CURB YOUR BARBARISM

Moderated by Bruce Zuckerman, School of Religion and Department of Linguistics

Wednesday, April 9

5:00 - 6:15 p.m.

Room B

## CHELSEA GROGAN

### **THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SUBLIME: FROM SHIRLEY JACKSON'S *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE* TO ITS MODERN AND POSTMODERN FILM ADAPTATIONS**

Robert Wise's 1963 version of *The Haunting* brings Jackson's Hill House to life with creative camerawork while Jan de Bont's 1999 remake relies on computer graphic special effects to literally animate the house. This marked change speaks to the evolution of Edmund Burke's sublime in postmodern horror audiences. No longer are the concepts of obscurity, sound, and suddenness paramount in blockbuster films; Burke's "feeling" of pain - the most intense source of the sublime - has come to the forefront. De Bont's *The Haunting* makes this clear through the treatment of the house's attacks on Eleanor's room. Where Wise takes a cue from Jackson's novel and leaves the source of the disturbance in obscurity, de Bont exploits the "feeling" of pain through CGI. Due to the desensitization against the subtler forms of the sublime, a barbarism has developed in postmodern horror audiences as they crave more and more instances of outright pain such as this.

## ANGELYNN HERMES

### **IN THE DARK WITH A SIX-INCH BLADE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE RADICAL FEMINIST RESISTANCE OF VALERIE SOLANAS**

Valerie Solanas' life itself is an experiment in radical feminist resistance. With acts ranging from the discursive, in writing the *SCUM Manifesto*, to the violent, in shooting Andy Warhol, Solanas' life is a representation of how the oppressed can gain, or attempt to gain, the upper hand. Representing her, whether in text or in film, is a complicated task in working out the intricacies and contradictions surrounding her ideas, words, and actions. Reactions to Solanas, whether they come from individuals who knew her, media that type-casted her, or theorists that wrote about her, demonstrate how successfully her critique was heard. Interestingly, it is the ways that she is misunderstood and recast into the very archetypical feminine roles which she sought to subvert that show the necessity of her critique. The responses of her defenders and attackers as well as her own response to the world around her insist that her message is one that cannot be ignored.

## DAN KLAYTON

### **CONFRONTATIONS WITH AESTHETICISM: *DRACULA* AND *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY***

Marking the fin de siècle movement that characterized English culture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, aesthetic philosophies took hold of art and literature. Aesthetic influence and commentary can be seen manifested in both *Dracula*, the gothic novel by Bram Stoker, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a novel by Oscar Wilde, one of aestheticism's progenitors. Both novels, published in the 1890's, express the same cultural wariness of and confrontation with aesthetic philosophy. Dorian, Wilde's protagonist, embraces aesthetic philosophy to the extreme - the pursuit of beauty consumes him, pushing aside all other considerations such as morality, love, or truth. In doing so, Dorian becomes vampiric himself, draining others of their vitality to feed his own hunger for beauty. Stoker's vampires, with haunting beauty and seductively evil sexuality, embody the same aesthetic celebration of beauty over other values that is seen in *Dorian Gray*; the struggle of Stoker's

protagonists to defeat the Count mirrors Dorian's internal struggle with aestheticism. That the same vein of aesthetic temptation runs through both a popular Gothic novel and the consummate Wilde novel reflects the pervasiveness of aestheticism in English culture at the turn of the century.

**JEREMY TANNER**

### **THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE BOOGA WOOGA BARBARIAN**

In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King Jr. clearly warns against the problems posed by "the chains of discrimination," indicating that those who stereotype are truly barbarians. But is that always the case? In my paper I plan to investigate the following question: Is there a way to stereotype barbarianism, or are those who stereotype barbarians themselves? It is undeniable that people form images in their minds upon hearing certain words, especially a word of such powerful connotations as barbarian. Widmayer points out that stereotyping is often used by the mind in the form of schemas to help future understanding. But when does stereotyping pass the point of being helpful and become barbarian in the form of racism and prejudice? In my discussion I will draw upon *Henderson the Rain King* by Saul Bellow and the stereotypes he presents of Africa and its "barbarian" culture. I plan to look at how Bellow intends for the local people to initially appear as barbarians to the readers, whether these initial stereotypes are proven true or false, and what Bellow is trying to show by conforming or not conforming to the perceived stereotype.

**ELISE WELCH**

### **SORCERER AND SWORD: UNITING BARBARISM AND CIVILIZATION IN THE FILM *EXCALIBUR***

Today, we think of magic as unnatural and sometimes unnerving, but in the days of King Arthur, sorcery was a major component of the ancient Pagan religions, which focused on an intimacy between man and nature. In the film *Excalibur*, nature and mankind are portrayed in opposition, with the age of war and chivalry overshadowing and displacing an ancient culture of earthly mysticism. However, Merlin and Excalibur counteract the disparity between nature and mankind, as each possesses magical qualities but is also crucially intertwined with humanity. These commonalities bridge the divide between barbarism and civilization by questioning whether Merlin's magic or Arthur's humanity is more "uncivilized," and by challenging the established negative connotation of barbarism. Analyzing the portrayal of Merlin and Excalibur in this film, and drawing from writings on the character Merlin and texts on the history of magic, I attempt to expound the theory that though a divergence exists between barbarism and civilization, they are not necessarily incongruous. I think the movie *Excalibur* suggests that we should recognize and embrace the presence of barbarism, not only in the story of King Arthur, but also as a universal component of history and life.

# HIGH SOCIETY, 'BYE MORALITY

Moderated by Professor Nick Strimple, Thornton School of Music

Wednesday, April 9

5:00 - 6:15 p.m.

Room C

**DYLAN T. CAMPBELL**

## **THE "SINISTER CONTRAST": WHEN NEW MONEY AND OLD MONEY COLLIDE**

Imagine two egg-shaped islands in the Long Island Sound. They are almost geographically identical but socially and culturally opposed to one another. How can a thing like money breed such distinctly different environments? The semi-fictional setting of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* sets the tone for the story that takes place there by establishing inherent differences between the island communities of East and West Egg that permeate the behavior of the novel's main characters. Gatsby, in his quest to conquer the heart of Daisy Buchanan (a resident of the more refined East Egg), opens his house to ruinous tides of partygoers and exhausts immense amounts of resources to entertain them in an attempt to emulate the barbaric extravagance of New York's wealthiest citizens. By examining the finer points of Gatsby's confidence game, I will uncover the novel's embedded critique of this "East Egg mentality" and its calamitous repercussions.

**RACHEL CUMMINGS**

## **FASHIONABLE CONSUMPTION AND BARBARIC WASTE IN *THE GREAT GATSBY***

In *The Great Gatsby*, fashionable displays of wealth abound, but leave behind abundant waste. The members of the socioeconomic upper class are the ones indulging in the extravaganzas, but lower class citizens are forced to clean up the mess left behind. Moreover, the "ash heap" where trash is taken is next to lower income neighborhoods, rather than by the mansions that create the garbage. The rich and fashionable members of society consider anyone who is not in the elite upper class to be barbaric because they are seen as uncultured and uncouth. I suggest that the people who take pride in their pedigree and "old money" in *The Great Gatsby* are actually the barbarians because they pour their filth on less fortunate people.

**GABRIELLE GERSH**

## **IT'S NOT DEAD YET!: MEDIEVAL CLASS AND CRUELTY IN MODERN SOCIETY AS REVEALED BY *MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL***

In their film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, the Python comedy troupe uses the strict social structure of Arthurian England to present a commentary on modern times. Medieval society consisted of three classes: the clergy, the warrior noblemen, and the laborers. Today's civilization revolves around the economy and is generally considered far superior and advanced than that of Arthur's time. The Pythons use exaggeration and satire to comment on medieval class and, in turn, on our modern world. The intelligent peasants in the film, such as the politically-conscious Dennis, comment on the inequality and violence inherent in the medieval class system. These barbaric traits still plague our society today. I will examine several scenes of political and social satire, including the conversation between Dennis and Arthur and Lancelot's storm of Swamp Castle, and analyze the Pythons' critique of modernity in their film. The classic movie, long honored as an entertaining piece of historical fiction, provides a caustic commentary on the modern world through the ridicule of medieval class.

**THE BARBARIC NATURE OF CHILD'S PLAY:  
HOW DRESS UP AND DOLLS FRAME CHILDREN INTO THE BEAUTY TRAP**

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.

- Pablo Picasso

Children may not be as “care-free” as we expect them to be. Childhood interests like candy and dolls serve to complicate rather than to entertain their seemingly innocent lives. This paper explores the ways in which children negotiate between social expectations and personal values, specifically within Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. Within this work, Claudia, Frieda, Pecola and Junior are of different genders and backgrounds, but they all suffer from the same self-hatred that divides them internally - whether to accept themselves for who they are or to yearn to be someone else that they cannot be. My paper will discuss the barbaric nature of these games which introduce the concept of beauty to children who are forced to contend with feelings of exclusiveness, jealousy, and envy. Inevitably, such beauty standards eventually cause children to retreat into the realm of imagination they create as a way to escape from the harsh realities for which they simply aren’t prepared.

# A HISTORY OF VILENESS

Moderated by Jeff Solomon, Department of English

Wednesday, April 9

5:00 - 6:15 p.m.

Banquet Room

**MAYA BABLA**

## **I CONFESS: ABSOLUTION, FICTION, & (SO-CALLED) TRUTH VIA STORYTELLING IN *ATONEMENT***

Briony Tallis is a control freak. She is also an author. Together, these two aspects of her identity make for a troubling situation; using Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a framework for a psychological interpretation, we see that Briony's childhood crime continues to haunt her, and that she is compelled to repeat her transgression in the form of narrative. This paper will argue that Briony's near-obsessive compulsion to write translates to the belief that she can write and rewrite the story of her life, replacing the reality of events with her own fiction; her process of creation is consistent with what Freud indicates is a "tendency" towards stability or pleasure. By rewriting her story, Briony becomes "master" over it, a dominance enjoyed by the pleasure principle. Yet fifty-nine years later, Briony is still feeling guilty. Drawing on D'Hoker's confession theory, Briony writes not to be pardoned, nor to achieve absolution, but for the process of confession itself; that process finally, and perhaps unwittingly, yields truth.

**MACKENZIE EDWARDS**

## **CHIVALROUS INCEST: SEXUALITY, WOMEN, AND THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND**

Sigmund Freud, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Michel Foucault contributed much to modern incest theory. Their insights into the human psyche revealed man's desire to return to his mother's womb and his sister's embrace - man's desire. Woman, however, they glaringly overlooked. In *The Mists of Avalon*, feminist novelist Marion Zimmer Bradley presents her insights into the effects of incest on females. While Arthur follows the pattern established by Freud and his contemporaries, Morgaine, his sister and lover, suffers shame, confusion, anger and pain. Through this contrast, Bradley portrays the previously overlooked effects of incest on women. The title of 'barbarism' so readily applied to incest applies instead to the exclusion of women from its definition. Referencing the writings of Freud/Lévi-Strauss/Foucault, Gayle Rubin, and Bradley, I explore the relationship between women and incest through accepted incest theory, feminist theory, and the Arthurian Legend.

**KATIE HICKEY**

## **"DID I CHOOSE THIS LIFE OF ILLUSION?": SELF-DECEPTION, AN EMOTIONAL BAND-AID OR BARBARIC POLITICS?**

While reading Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*, one must wonder which set of falsehoods that the protagonist, John Wade, perpetrates is the worst. Concealing the atrocities he saw and committed in the Vietnam War from his wife, Kathy, whom he loves to the point of obsession? Or, lying to the people of Minnesota and the entire United States by simultaneously serving in a public office and covering up the shameful actions of Charlie Company? In fact it is neither of these - the most barbaric act of deception committed by Wade is his self-deception, his attempt to forget Vietnam while failing to remember whether or not he killed his wife. John Wade lives in his own reality, one where he pretends his father didn't commit

suicide, where his tours in Vietnam were born out of belief in the mission, and not because uniforms win elections. Wade truly believes that he can unmake events that he wishes didn't happen. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, and that fantasies can supersede reality, I will analyze the origin of John Wade's barbarism as a derivation of his inability to differentiate between his delusions and reality.

**DEVIN PRESBURY**

### **THE ABSENT FATHER: SIRING DEGENERATION AND RENEWAL**

The Criterion Collection DVD cover for Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums* contains a significant choice of composition. Within the frame, Royal Tenenbaum stands surrounded by his wife and children. Yet, within the movie, Royal returns from a twenty-two year absence to a bitter wife and children whose reactions range from hostility to apathy. As Royal steadily works towards becoming the center of the family, he encounters the psychological damage his absence inflicted on his children. As Lacan suggested, the proper development of a child into a socially acceptable individual requires the presence of a father figure whose influence forces the child to develop. Royal's return compels the Tenenbaum children to shed their childhood clothing as they rediscover the Symbolic Order. By revisiting the stages of their childhood, the children reconstruct themselves. In my paper, I will explore why Royal's desertion stunted the development of his children and how his return helped them progress into mature individuals. Through an exploration of the Lacanian elements in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, I will examine the results of the father's influence on a child's perceptions of interaction and aspirations. This examination will prove how Royal is indeed the center of the psychological family portrait.

**KIRI STROMBERG**

### **"NOBODY'S HAPPY IN A POODLE SKIRT AND A SWEATER SET": NOSTALGIA IN GARY ROSS'S *PLEASANTVILLE***

Divorce. Vulgarity. Promiscuity. Disgusted by his classmates' barbaric crudeness, a young 1990's teenager escapes reality by watching *Pleasantville*, a 1950's comedy about an idyllic town, and longing to live in such a place. When he suddenly finds himself, along with his sister, actually living in the show, he starts to question everything he thinks about the world today compared to the world back then. I will be exploring the shift from 1950's culture to today's culture, as seen in the movie *Pleasantville*, questioning the popularized belief that the modern day world is somehow cruder and less civilized than the picture-perfect world of the 1950's. As the movie's present-day characters feel an unexplainable innate nostalgia for a past they did not personally experience, I will also be searching to define what aspects of the past can spark our nostalgic feelings.



# AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

Moderated by Stephen Park, Department of English

Wednesday, April 9

5:00 - 6:15 p.m.

Pub

**BARBARA LAGO**

## **BAD TO THE BARE BONES: EVIL AND PLAINNESS IN *DOGVILLE* AND *WINESBURG, OHIO***

In two particular works, Lars von Trier's *Dogville*, a film about a stranger subjected to torture by the residents of Dogville, and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, a collection of short stories depicting the inhabitants of the title town, the artists use the context of the small town as a way to explore how human evil manifests itself. Both share an isolated, rural setting that allows von Trier and Anderson to develop not only specific interpersonal relationships among the characters but also the general power struggle of a community. Looking at these inherent power struggles, I shall comment on how they enable the development of cruelty and deception. Only by escaping the confines of the small town are Anderson and von Trier's protagonists able to find individual salvation. The community, however, cannot be saved. Though they belong to different mediums, both the film and the novel share a simple, fantasy-like style that, nonetheless, is able to maintain a certain degree of realism. *Dogville* has a bare production design just as *Winesburg, Ohio* explores the mental states of its characters. The form, like the setting, facilitates the exploration of evil and salvation without the interference of reality.

**KEVIN MALONEY**

## **HIROSHIMA, MON FANTASIE: HOW EXPERIENCE SHAPES SUBJECTIVE REALITY**

How do you define reality? Do different people have greater or lesser access to some universal objective reality, or does each person create her own reality? In *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the heroine of the film exists in a reality of her own. Small events trigger strong memories of her past. She serves as evidence for the existence of individual, subjective realities which are so unique that it is impossible for others to penetrate them. In recent history, unprecedented events such as Hiroshima and the Holocaust have forced humans to reevaluate the concept of reality. For anyone who did not directly experience an event of this magnitude, the event is impossible to grasp, while for someone who did experience it, the event is impossible to escape. Using *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* as a guide, this paper explores the ambiguous nature of reality. Some think the nonexistence of an objective reality may lead the human race down an existential path towards a life which is, in the words of Thomas Hobbes, "nasty, brutish and short," but this paper demonstrates that a subjective reality can be just as absolute as an objective one, and the lack of an objective world is a good thing.

**SARTHI SHAH**

## **FAKING FRIENDSHIP: RELATIONSHIPS AS ILLUSIONS IN *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY***

Human society is a product of the fundamental human drive to be close to others, a need to form relationships with others. Yet, the desire for these intimate relationships does not bring them to fruition. In *Elephant*, director Gus Van Sant shows a universal lack of connection and friendship between characters. In the same way, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, shows a string of superficial relationships that develop among all major and minor characters. In both works, however, characters seem unaware of how little they know each other and



how little they care for each other. It can be shown that the reason these characters remain oblivious is that they are subject to the longing of these intimate connections. Ripley's outward demonstration of seeking these relationships displays the same internal deception that each character is guilty of. Further, Ripley shows that a lack of a sense of belonging creates a need for both treachery and deception, just as in *Elephant*. In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, deception becomes the means to create these relationships and offers a justification to what is perceived as his "barbarian" actions.

**TARA SOWLATY**

**THE PARASITIC NATURE OF CELEBRITY IN *THE GREAT GATSBY*:  
THE HOSTS AND EXPANSES TO THE VICIOUS PURSUIT**

While Jay Gatsby both collides and intersects with the fashion, glamour, and wastefulness of the 1920's jazz society in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, he embraces the role of "celebrity" in his New York society. Theorist Max Weber offers a lens to analyze this ideal, charismatic type; the allure comes from a perfect embodiment not possessed by others. Always the topic of the unrelenting rumor-mill, Gatsby's speculated life is enviable and subject to this parasitic nature of celebrity. Why is it that the nature of celebrity is so parasitic? Gatsby himself inherits the pressure of self-representation - the fashionable life via opulent artifacts and lifestyle - as evidence of the "ideal type" that he strives to be. A desire for proximity, contact, possession, and even ownership of Gatsby, reveals the barbaric, relentless pursuit onlookers succumb to in the face of his power. Why is it that people in this world barbarically want to "possess" Gatsby, even the image of Daisy, and their opulence? Why is Gatsby himself so brutishly drawn to Daisy? I seek to explore the causes of such parasitic nature. As well as the desired dialectical relationship and discourse with Gatsby, his allure stems from the fact he is not a traditional barbarian; his lavish desires contradict his simple identity.

**WILLIAM TEEBAY**

**IN THE MIRROR: THE PARADOX OF BARBARISM AND TRAVEL**

To define the "barbarian," cultures rely on contrasts, on separation from the core culture. However, when a traveler enters foreign space, who is the barbarian? Through the eyes of the native, the traveler becomes the barbarian. Through the eyes of the traveler, the native becomes the barbarian. Which viewpoint is correct? Both, for the other is always a barbarian, something fundamentally different, abhorrent even, to *our* culture. For words and ideas are defined by contrasts: to define "culture," we must define who is outside "culture", who are the barbarians. As we encounter new cultures, either through traveling or others traveling to us, we must cling to the idea of "barbarians" more fiercely than ever so no matter where we go or who we meet, we always know who *we* are.

# CRUEL INTENTIONS

Moderated by Professor Daniel Richter, Department of Classics

Wednesday, April 9

7:15 - 8:30 p.m.

Room A

**ERIN FOWLER**

## **THE SAVAGE SELF: THE RAIN KING DISSOLVES THE TRADITIONAL BARBARIAN CONSTRUCT**

In his 1959 postmodern novel *Henderson the Rain King*, Saul Bellow collapses the dichotomy of barbarism versus civilization by fusing the two historically antithetical elements together in the eponymous character. Guilty honesty pervades Henderson's first person narration as he tells intimate details about his past moral slips; he repeatedly communicates that he considers himself barbaric through a postmodern self-consciousness and almost metafictional representation of himself. The traditional definition of a barbarian is a foreigner or a savage; the term necessarily contrasts with the interpreter's self-perception. Henderson's guilty self-barbarism opposes this traditional construct of a "self" barbarizing an "other" so that the complexity of the individual can be examined, and the habitual barbarism of the foreign understated. Ironically, Henderson resolves his dissociative identity through travel in the foreign space of Africa. Bellow also deflates typical constructions of otherness by using animals as tropes of human behavior throughout the novel, highlighting in parallel the human dichotomy of barbaric and civilized and the bestial dichotomy of wild and domesticated. Bellow's attempts to deconstruct the idea of the barbarian both in humanity and in animal tropes reflect later postmodern concepts of deconstruction, ecocriticism, and orientalism in nature imagery.

**ERIC M. GOLDMAN**

## **DAYS OF FUTURE PAST: POLITICAL NOSTALGIA IN *GOOD BYE LENIN!***

Virgil once poetically concluded, "Optima dies...prima fugat," that the best days are always the first to flee. No matter how factual Virgil's claim may be, such a message remains incongruous to the wants of society. From the policies enacted by government, to the rhetoric of politicians, to the messages of art, society attempts to recapture these ever-escaping days of the past. In this plight, the possibilities of the future may be compromised. Through the new perception of political and social nostalgia presented in Wolfgang Becker's film, *Good Bye Lenin!*, I seek to explore the unrealistic and even barbaric nature of a "progressive policy" that attempts to solve recalcitrant issues by returning to the same, uncivilized and insolvent practices of an imperfect history.

**ELISABETH GUSTAFSON**

## **THE DISSEMINATION OF A PEOPLE AND THE DECIMATION OF A CULTURE**

They took the whole Indian nation  
Locked us on this reservation,  
Took away our native tongue  
And taught their English to our young.

- "Indian Reservation," John D. Loudermilk

Throughout American history, the policies and attitudes towards Native Americans have been founded in utter

disregard for their race and culture. Instead of trying to understand the differences between the American and Native American cultures, both the majority population and the government have misinterpreted the race as subhuman, barbaric, and in need of taming and civilization that could only be achieved if they adapted to the American conception of what is proper and dignified. This racist attitude has allowed the government to steal Indian land without encountering a public outcry. The government displaced the Native Americans and forced them into barren reservations, which is an especially egregious policy given the importance of land in Native American culture. Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* explores the effect of oppression and racism on Native Americans by recounting the tale of two sisters, one who is adopted by a white couple and forced to adapt to white culture, and one who is forced into prostitution and a renegade lifestyle in order to avoid confinement on a reservation. The ignorance of whites and the thievery of the government strip these two girls of their families, their culture, and their innocence.

**JACK PEACE**

### **TOM RIPLEY'S SPIRAL INTO MADNESS: A BARBARIC FIGHT TO PRESERVE THE SELF**

Who would you be if you weren't *you*? Would there be consequences? As viewers of the film *The Talented Mr. Ripley* discover, there are grave repercussions to Tom's lack of identity. Tom Ripley suffers from more than personality confusion; he is wrapped up in a constant battle to carve out an identity for himself. As his lies thicken, his desperation to preserve his imposture morphs into a barbaric war for his own survival. He proves himself willing to go to any length - even murder - to save the identity he is perpetrating. How can something as harmless as an innocent masquerade mutate into a compulsion to kill? Drawing on psychologist Jay Martin's conception of the fictive personality, I will explore the link between Tom's "identity void" and his merciless murdering spree and demonstrate how Tom Ripley's character ultimately reveals that barbarism can spring from a fight to preserve the self.

**TIFFANY SCALIA**

### **HOW HE CONVINCED THEM TO DRINK THE KOOL-AID**

What distinguishes a cult from a church of Christianity? The relationship between the head of the organization and his people is most often the distinctive feature. Through close readings of texts produced from speeches and letters from Charles Manson, David Koresh, and Jim Warren Jones, this paper examines what these infamous leaders actually said to their followers to affect them so profoundly. Basing itself around the aforementioned and other primary texts (namely, the Bible and sermons of eminent preachers), the paper identifies common rhetorical devices and, through research, examines the effect these devices have on those subjected to them. Ultimately, the paper defines and explores the extremely thin line that separates the world of organized, acceptable religious preaching from that of persuasive indoctrination.

# THE POWER OF THE DARK SIDE

Moderated by Amy Braden, Department of English

Wednesday, April 9

7:15 - 8:30 p.m.

Room B

## MARIE AGNELLO

### WHO IS THE BARBARIAN NOW?: THE SAVAGE AS A REFLECTION OF SELF

The argument of this essay begins with the theory of the American abroad and how he is portrayed. I present this theory, which I have dubbed "Omniscientism," a blend of Said's Orientalism and Pratt's study of the "master of all I survey" point of view. I then apply Omniscientism to Saul Bellow's novel, *Henderson the Rain King*, to show how the author refutes this theory with his two principle characters, Henderson and King Dahfu. Henderson admits he knows nothing about the foreign space he explores. This admission of ignorance enables him to become one of the "savages" he seeks, as he becomes their rain king. King Dahfu is a highly educated man who has much to teach Henderson, all the while conscious that his life could at any time be subjected to the brutal rituals of his own tribe. Through a juxtaposition of Henderson and King Dahfu, I demonstrate that Bellow portrays the two not as a civilized and savage duo, but a cohesive pair. Their relationship shows the reader that if one merely does away with his preconceived notions about tribal society, he will find that the barbarian lies not in the "other," but in every human being.

## RYAN BLAKEMORE

### DEATH THROUGH DESIRE: BARBARISM'S LETHAL EFFECT IN *LOLITA*

After killing three people and breaking numerous moral laws, Humbert Humbert is the victim in *Lolita*. Although it seems that Humbert should be at fault for his actions, the dizzying effect of American society's mixed messages about desires spur Humbert's barbaric acts of pedophilia and murder. While consumerism promotes indulgence of fashionable desires, American society encourages restraint regarding other vengeful and sexual urges, creating confusion and a viable excuse for barbarians such as Humbert. As a foreigner from Europe, Humbert is susceptible to the precepts of American society and falls into the trap of the fashionable life, as he becomes infatuated with vogue Lolita and her enticing nymphet movements and apparel. Humbert's misled belief concerning desire leads him to commit barbaric acts unacceptable by American society, which ultimately earn him a life in prison.

## MAY IOSOTALUNO

### THE FEAR AND FASCINATION OF CHILDREN IN GORE VERBINSKI'S *THE RING*

By turning children into haunting figures, *The Ring* takes the familiar and perverts it into Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny. Samara, the little girl ghost who haunts the film, perpetuates an uncomfortable fear and a box-office hit as she threatens the adult definition of untainted childhood; she is not innocent, vulnerable, nor young - she is dead. This childhood innocence must be preserved in order to maintain the parent-child hierarchy that justifies caretaking and consequently, restricts the child from complete freedom. In this struggle to define the ideal child, adults forcefully suppress the daunting notion of child liminality, an uncomfortable idea which states that young children are incomplete individuals and are therefore able to freely travel from one world to "the other." Samara, becoming an unnatural harbinger of death, punctures the adult objective of social repression. Through the juxtaposition of Samara to the heroine's uncorrupted yet supernaturally-gifted

son, Aiden, we see man's desperate attempt to preserve the contrived definition of childhood and its supposed taboo towards death.

**CAROLINE SUNDERMEYER**

**DISAPPOINTMENT, DISILLUSIONMENT, AND DEPRAVITY: BARBARISM IN NOIR**

...the people who came to California to die...all those poor devils who can only be stirred by the promise of miracles and then only to violence.

- Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust*

To many today, the city represents the pinnacle of civilized life, yet the denizens of *The Day of the Locust's* Depression-era Los Angeles engage in acts of extreme violence for no explicit reason, and these only escalate in brutality as the plot unfolds. In this presentation, I will demonstrate that the breakdown of urban civilization depicted in West's roman noir is rooted in the empty consumerist hype that brought tourists to Los Angeles only to have their hopes destroyed. In order to do so, I use the ideas Norman Klein proposes in his book *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* about violence in noir literature as a type of consumer erasure to support my close analysis. Recognizing the limitations of Klein's ideas in terms of explaining the protagonist's recurring fantasy about painting the razing of Los Angeles by the discontented masses, I propose that this image is not just another violent act by vengeful, disillusioned tourists. Instead, I employ philosopher Raoul Vaneigem's work on authentically lived time and space to inform an alternative reading of the fire and the protagonist's attachment to it: the fire represents the catharsis necessary to put an end to consumerism-induced barbarism and to allow the city to begin anew.

**SARAH ANNE THERMOND**

**"MY BROTHER, MY BABY, MY LOVE":  
INCEST AND COMPLEX IDENTITY IN *THE MISTS OF AVALON***

As evidenced by the above quotation, Marion Zimmer Bradley's Morgaine plays a wide variety of roles in the life of her brother, King Arthur. The incestuous liaison between the siblings invites us to examine the appropriateness of all the different places they hold in each other's lives. Incest itself, at a base level, is a mingling of social roles that society deems incompatible. The psychologist Foucault would have us believe that incest is inherently a part of every family and that we must struggle to separate these roles to live acceptable lives. Zimmer Bradley's novel instead embraces complexity in combining roles and complicating family structure. The television miniseries adaptation of the novel downplays and simplifies these relationships. Does the miniseries lose Zimmer Bradley's intent in re-telling the Arthurian legend? I will be exploring how Zimmer Bradley uses dynamic characters to expand the idea of identity and sociopolitical roles, and whether or not the film remains true to her vision of these multi-faceted individuals.

# STANDARDS DEVIATION

Moderated by Professor Meg Russett, Department of English

Wednesday, April 9

7:15 - 8:30 p.m.

Banquet Room

## MORGAN ELISE DAMERON

### PETITE PINK PRINCESSES: OBJECTIFIED GIRLS' BODIES IN AMERICAN POP CULTURE

An hourglass shaped sixteen-year-old girl, dressed only in a bathing suit top, must kiss a fully clad stranger and marry him in order to become a complete woman. Is this the image of womanhood that society wants to sell to children? According to some executives, the answer is yes. This is the story of the *Little Mermaid*, one of Disney's most successful films of all time. Analysts have proven that Disney films and Barbie dolls, two staples of American culture and especially young girls' lives, depict women in an objectified, hypersexual way. The female characters are "perfect," unrealistic, and unattainable, and yet these are the images that appeal most to little girls. Girl-gear companies sell millions of dollars in merchandise every year, as demonstrated by the prosperity of the Disney Princess line, Limited Too, and Mattel, Inc. I contend that although girls appear to choose these objectified models, in fact these choices are illusory because they are thrust upon them by society, by the media, and by the industry. In this paper I will examine the images themselves, the effects they have on developing young girls, who perpetuates these images, and why these unnatural forms appeal most to young girls.

## KELLY GIRSKIS

### SUGAR AND SPICE AND EVERYTHING NICE:

#### VALERIE SOLANAS'S RADICAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS RELATION TO THE EVOLUTION OF FEMINISM

What would our society be like if all men were simply diced cubes of once living human beings? This paper explores the revolutionary and controversial issues in Valerie Solanas's misandry work, *SCUM Manifesto*. Rather than working for equality, Solanas raised women above men. Can Solanas therefore be classified as a feminist or are her views so extreme that she should be viewed as an anti-masculinist? Valerie Solanas can be considered a barbarian to both feminists and anti-feminists, showing that clashes in values and methods of thinking can occur between and within defined groups. Although *SCUM* is a work of Second-wave Feminism, feminist beliefs have constantly evolved and expanded, including now the realm of gender studies. I consider Solanas's ideal candidate for her revolution of society and view this type of woman's subject position in relation to other feminist works, including Third-wave feminism and gender studies. Now, in retrospect of Third-wave feminism, could anti-masculinist Solanas's utopian society ruled by women actually include men?

## ZARA LUKENS

### UGLINESS OF SKIN, UNWORTHINESS OF SOUL: BEAUTY AS BARBARISM IN *THE BLUEST EYE*

In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the narrator calls physical beauty "the most [destructive] idea in the history of human thought." Beauty is barbaric because it assigns value to a set of standards achieved not through will, but through biology. If beauty is white and blue-eyed, it excludes those who are neither. Since our vocabulary for describing physical attributes does not provide for a spectrum, the alternative to beauty is ugliness. This notion of beauty drives Pauline Breedlove to barbarism. Once Pauline realizes she cannot be beautiful, in the silver screen/Jean Harlow sense of the word, she chooses ugliness for her husband and family as well as

for herself. Their ugliness prevents others from seeing them as they are; instead, the Breedloves are viewed through the lens they create. This force is barbaric because beauty, or a lack thereof, penetrates the skin and runs through the veins, assigning value to the soul based on that of the flesh. Beauty is not barbaric until equated with value. At this point it is all-consuming because the value of the skin overshadows all other merits and qualities, creating a universe in which physical beauty is not simply skin deep.

**CARRIE WILLIAMS**

### **THE FEMININE HORROR: DU MAURIER'S *REBECCA* AND THE HYSTERICAL WOMAN**

The horror genre is inextricably linked to a woman's scream. For some reason, women are thought to be the perfect victim, the more cowardly sex, or just more apt to hysterics. My paper looks at the overwhelming presence of the feminine in Gothic literature by focusing on du Maurier's *Rebecca*. I will argue that women are placed into their roles because of the hysterical stereotype given to women in the Gothic period. This hysterical nature is certainly illustrated in *Rebecca* as the two main female characters struggle to define themselves as women. The nameless main character battles against class stereotypes and in comparison to Rebecca, who has her own problems in finding her sexuality outside of the cultural norms. Both cases represent the barbaric exploration of the feminine gender and how it exploits women in Gothic literature.

**JENNIFER YEE**

### **A WORLD OF DRONES: THE BARBARISM OF THE MECHANIZED SOCIETY IN *COLD FEVER***

The speed and ease of life increases with every technological advance. With paved roads, heating and cooling systems, and luxury cars, no longer must we contend with Nature or interact with people we deem strange. Ironically, even though technology allows distance and time in the physical world to shrink and collapse, this same technology also allows people to become more and more isolated in response to their own comfort levels. Not having to contend with forces outside oneself, such as weather and strangers, allows the contemporary urban person to live a mechanized and routine life with nothing to startle or jar his or her senses. *Cold Fever*, a postmodern film, twists existing ideas of what is barbaric by suggesting that what is modern and urban is robotic, unfeeling, and unreflective - and savage. By traveling to an unfamiliar and unsettling new environment, Iceland, whose strange people, culture, and terrain cannot be avoided through technology, Hirata, a businessman from Kanagawa, Japan, realizes his relationship to the larger world and gets in touch with feelings that are necessary to truly be human. Embracing this other world, this slow "barbaric" world, actually contributes to his humanity.



# STRAIGHT TRIPPIN'

Moderated by Kathy Strong, Department of English

Wednesday, April 9

7:15 - 8:30 p.m.

Room C

**ELLEN FREEDMAN**

## **SEX, DRUGS, VIOLENCE: AN OASIS OF BARBARISM**

In *Less Than Zero*, Bret Easton Ellis paints the barbaric lifestyle of young, wealthy, sex-driven, drug addicted college students. This concentration on drugs and sex as modes of escape from reality and the problems of the characters' lives turns them into barbarians. Sexual arousal from violence, the viewing of snuff films, and the obsession with drugs to the point of prostitution constitute some of the ways which desperation from boredom drives the characters to a barbaric disfigurement of humanity. However, one must look further and examine the cause of this barbarism; society may have created values that promote numbed lives, therefore leading to barbaric actions that induce true feeling. Sex, drugs, and violence provoke sensations that stimulate the body and mind, providing an escape from a blank reality to passion.

**JOHN GRAFF**

## **INVISIBLE IMPERIALISM**

Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* presents tourists, of any race and cultural background, as barbarians. Its satirical depiction of culture in Antigua from the perspective of a stereotypical tourist displays the ends reached by means of colonialism, and white tourism only further objectifies a state already on the verge of non-identity. Tourists make free men into caged animals, and citizens become commodities and attractions to the barbaric West. Natives to any country become novelties to tourists; native culture ceases to be wild and organic and instead becomes a static thing to be enjoyed for a time, then left behind and never understood. In the effort to artificially inseminate themselves within varying cultures, barbarians in fact destroy globalization efforts by misrepresenting their native countries. Similarly, the visited countries are misinterpreted by tourists, who experience only a consciously-prepared fraction of the impossibly-complex foreign country. Tourism reduces visitor and visited to expendable ideas, and worse, ones with which neither agree.

**DAVID LAU**

## **THINKING OUTSIDE THE THOUGHT-BUBBLE: THE DREAM-REALITY COMPLEX OF JIMMY CORRIGAN**

This essay investigates the impact that the comics medium has on issues of identity, dream, and reality using Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*. While many novelists have explored the ability of text alone to represent dreams and reality, the combination of text and images creates unique opportunities in conceptual representation. Traditional comics motifs, like the thought-bubble and the lightbulb, signify a mental space distinct from reality - but what if the thought-bubble was shaped like a lightbulb, and the lightbulb was illuminating an entire page of panels? Chris Ware, being highly aware of the design and form of comics, manipulates these structural mores to go beyond a binary description of dream and reality, to a complexity that questions the very nature of our mental existence. The character Jimmy Corrigan expresses his suppressed emotions by indulging in barbaric sexual and violent mental fantasies; however, the spatial presence of these fantasies in his "real life" panels implies that his mental states have significant impact on his



actions and the actions of others. Chris Ware blurs the boundary of dream and reality in *Jimmy Corrigan* to suggest that mind and body are intricately linked and indeed interchangeable.

**JOSEPH LI**

**THE GREAT DESTRUCTION OF GATSBY:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE DECEPTION AND BARBARISM OF THE AMERICAN DREAM**

Everyone suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine:

I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.

- Nick Carraway, in *The Great Gatsby*

As the narrator of F. Scott Fitzgerald's 20<sup>th</sup> century masterpiece, Nick represents the audience's only perspective of the novel's reality. The accuracy of his narration is thus integral to the reader's understanding of Fitzgerald's literary work. However, a critical examination of his thoughts and actions, as well as the ways in which other characters perceive him, challenges his veracity and narrative reliability. In light of Nick's mendacity, his alleged admiration and support of Jay Gatsby, a determined and self-made man, are thrown into doubt. In fact, Nick joins with the fragile yet brutal Daisy Buchanan in barbarically suppressing Gatsby's pursuit of the American Dream. It is this dream that leads Gatsby to his destruction, blinding him to reality and instilling in him a vicious willingness to exploit others. Drawing upon Nietzsche's analysis of humanity's self-deception, I will illuminate the savage within these three protagonists and reveal the barbaric nature of the American Dream.

**DAPHNE QIN WU**

**BLURRING THE LINE: REALITY VERSUS IMAGINATION IN NARRATIVE FILM**

This paper addresses the use of imagination as related to people in crisis, and how the distinction between what is real and what is invented can become ambiguous. This ambiguity is particularly seen in children, whose innocence and ignorance cause them to seek reassurance in fantasy over reason. In Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* and Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*, young characters rely on their own, sometimes horrific, imaginations to endure the situations in which they find themselves. The context in which both stories take place is examined, and both Spanish and Japanese myths are explored in relation to the experiences of Ofelia and Chihiro. Children, and people in general, still embrace the fantastic in this modern age. Our imagination in the realm of folklore and fantasy often reveals frightening ideas and circumstances, but that fantasy is sometimes reflective of a real world that can be just as horrific.

# TWO STEPS FORWARD, THREE STEPS BACK

Moderated by Professor James Collins, Department of Classics

Wednesday, April 9

7:15 - 8:30 p.m.

Pub

**JONATHAN AHDOUT**

## **INTELLECTUAL SAVAGES: VALERIE SOLANAS AS A VICTIM TO BARBARIC RATIONALE IN *SCUM MANIFESTO***

As industrial humans, we are inherently deviant from nature. Society deems sexuality offensive; asphalt, brick and concrete suffocate dirt, roots and grass; metal guns and bullets infiltrate flesh and blood; wires and walls divide race from race, class from class, human from human. This is not “civilized.” In *SCUM Manifesto*, Valerie Solanas mocks man’s view of civilization. From an overtly rational standpoint, Solanas proposes that inherently, men are failed reflections of women. They miss a chromosome: Y instead of X. She thus concludes that it is woman’s duty to “destroy all men” and take control of the world. By relying on such a scientific foundation - that Y is less than X - Solanas exposes the fallacies of man’s value of logic and reason above all else. She breaks the gender system by becoming the barbarically rational man, and victimizes herself by embracing the dark side of intellect: the cold area within the brain that ignores the heart and animalistic instinct that defines us as the beings that we are - humans. Throughout this study I will question society’s assumption that progress in science is parallel to the advancement of the human species. I will discuss posthumanism and compare the scientific findings to Solanas’ proposed world where men do not exist. Solanas suggests that the breakdown of the gender system is the first step necessary to move humans forward - she martyrs herself and becomes the barbarian in order to prove it.

**AVA CASADOS**

## **FEMME FATALE AND POST-WAR PANIC: *PANDORA’S BOX, DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN***

During World Wars I and II, women began to play a more active role in the political atmosphere as they took on responsibilities never before designated to their sex. With their new power came a new image of femininity, film noir’s femme fatale, through which female strength was construed as a threat to traditional masculinity. I will investigate the correlation and fabrication that connects the real women of war time with the fictitious figures of women that began to haunt the movie screens as well as the minds of men. I will look at the notion of “white male panic” and how the femme fatale coincides with a fear of the different or unfamiliar in a changing society. In doing so I will explore the connotation of “femme fatale”, how it has developed over time, and will look specifically at how the social conventions of gender and sexuality have been both altered and solidified through these characters. I seek to find out who is victimized, and who is empowered by the presence of strong, albeit somewhat malicious, women onscreen, and how these images have affected the actions of male and female viewers alike.

**ELVIRA KRAS**

**THE PARADOX OF TECHNOLOGY: THE BARBARISM  
OF PROGRESS AND ITS EFFECT ON IDENTITY**

Generally technology is thought of as a product of intelligence and civilization that furthers the progress of our society, but in reality technology just tests the limits of our barbarism. However, rather than technology itself being the culprit it is merely an avenue for man's expression of his ultimate barbarity. I will examine in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Don DeLillo's *White Noise* the effect that technology has on the individual's identity and search for self. Using Fredric Jameson's definition of postmodernism and technology's role in experiencing the sublime, I ask is technology the final frontier or the ultimate barrier? Although technology spurs on a decline into chaos, barbarism, and erasure of identity, essentially the war is not man versus machine but man versus man - the victor is the one who can control technology once they can control the much more complicated computer of self.

**JENNY SOMMERFELD**

**TRAIN WRECK: CENDRARS AND THE NEED FOR SPEED**

Speed defines our society. The constant push for new technology only serves as an impetus to the human desire to perform tasks more swiftly, travel to destinations faster, and hustle, hustle, hustle. We move so fast that we have no time to realize the effect of this need for speed on human behavior. Focusing on the introduction of the locomotive in public transportation at the turn of the twentieth century, I will explore the psychological alterations caused by the advent of rapid transit. Blaise Cendrars will come to my aid as I elaborate on his *Prose of the Trans-Siberian* and of *Little Jeanne of France* and the fervor behind his statement: "We are the amputees of space/...And the trains are all the devil's toys."

**ERIC DRESSLER**

**IGNORANCE AS A FORM OF BARBARISM:  
DECEIVING THE HEEDLESS AUDIENCE IN *THE PRESTIGE***

The audience at a magic show is expected and expects to be tricked. They do not know what the secret of the trick is nor do they not want to know. Can this ignorance of the truth, of how the trick is performed, in essence be barbaric? Should both the perpetrators of an immoral act and the viewers be blamed? In the film *The Prestige*, Robert Angier and Alfred Borden vie for the role of the most popular magician in London, and each man makes very costly and dangerous sacrifices that perpetuate their rivalry. This rivalry so desensitizes Angier that he loses a piece of his humanity at every performance. At the same time, Borden's obsession with his performances translates into utter disregard for others who are close to him. Although both magicians' insensitive and downright brutal actions are inexcusable, the audience's craving to be tricked both by the magicians and by the film itself raises questions as to whether the audience is as barbaric as the magicians themselves. Shouldn't we care just as much for the person outside the box as we do for the person inside?

