

POSTMODERNISM: IDENTITY - SPACE - TRUTH

APRIL 17-18, 1998

**University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA**



**FIRST ANNUAL
UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE**

sponsored by
THEMATIC OPTION

POSTMODERNISM: IDENTITY - SPACE - TRUTH

Join us for the first annual **Undergraduate Conference**, sponsored by the Thematic Option Program at the University of Southern California. This conference will explore the idea of the *postmodern* in areas ranging from academic disciplines and politics to popular culture.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this event is to give undergraduate students an opportunity to experience a conference setting and to emphasize the importance of public presentation of scholarly ideas and academic work.

In response to a general *call for papers*, Thematic Option students developed one-page proposals summarizing the topic and argument of a paper to be presented on a panel. Students submitted proposals under the following topic areas: 1) Identity, 2) Space, and 3) Truth. Each panel will be made up of four students with a faculty member or a Thematic Option writing instructor serving as the chair and/or discussant.

Student participation in the conference can fulfill part of the CORE 112 requirements. Opportunities for publication of exceptional papers will be announced. Panels and participants will be announced by April 3, 1998.

The term **postmodernism** has different meanings depending on the context in which it is used (i.e., visual art, politics, literary criticism, popular culture, etc.). Postmodernism calls into question some of our basic assumptions about *truth, knowledge, reality, and identity*, and explodes certain beliefs and ideas which form the core of the Enlightenment tradition: for example, the belief that reason and science can provide universal truths that form the basis for political and ethical systems; and the belief that the movement of history corresponds to particular laws or tendencies and that progress is inevitable.

Postmodernism is of particular relevance in Thematic Option because, while CORE 102 and 104m focus on broad ethical questions and foundational values of the western tradition, CORE 101 and 103 consider questions of epistemology and the basis upon which those values rest.

Conference Highlights

- **Keynote Address**
- **Panel Discussions**
- **Roundtable Discussions**
- **Surprise Wrap-up**
- **Friday Reception**
- **Saturday breakfast and lunch included**

Conference Schedule

Friday, April 17

- 4:00 pm Keynote Address
 Taper Hall of Humanities 202
- 5:00 pm Reception
 Taper Hall Courtyard

Saturday, April 18

Annenberg School of Communications 220-225

- 8:45 am Check-in and Breakfast
- 9:30 am Panel Discussions
- 11:00 am Panel Discussions
- 12:30 pm Lunch at EVK Dining Room
- 2:00 pm Panel Discussions
- 3:30 pm Roundtable Discussions
- 5:00 pm Surprise Wrap-up

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Reality: Ideas of God, Death and Hell

GOD AND HUMANITY

Casey Zak

The purpose of this short presentation is to uncover the nature of God as an unfathomable abstract, an unknowable entity, so that even if it does exist, efforts to uncover its nature are futility incarnate. The approach will move through the religious approaches of both Eastern and Western religions, with particular focus on the Upanisads, the Bible, the Tao Te Ching, and Plato's *Republic* as religious and quasi-religious texts. I will also discuss the modern era, using the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud to analyze changing conceptions of God. Then, why not make the leap to the postmodern era, and explore the conceptions of God expressed by the work of C. G. Jung, Trent Reznor, the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Throughout this course of exploration, I intend to uncover a trend of changing perspectives of the view on God, from communal to individual. In fact, the main purpose of the presentation should be well proven by the individualization of the God concept, which supports to the utmost degree the unavoidable subjectivity involved in trying to define God. After completing this religious journey, I will evoke scientific theories (citing Stephen Hawking) contemplating the origins of the universe with the intent of showing that science is just as futile as religion in its attempts to uncover God. If there's no way to actually know God, why try?

DEATH DREAMS: A POSTMODERN READING OF POE'S "LIGEIA" AND FUENTE'S "AURA"

Robin Engberg

Death themes in dreams and psychedelic drug experiences create fascinating hints about afterlife possibilities. Death dreams create the ideas of shifting ego or soul-identity and resurrection. Psychedelic drugs inaugurate an encounter with death and decay that cannot be perceived in the drug-free state. These experiences question the truth and reality of death. In my presentation, I will discuss the importance of death dreams in Poe's "Ligeia" and Fuente's "Aura." My hypothesis is that the postmodern world can accept that dreams are an alternative way of viewing reality. I hope to prove that by moving beyond the "universal truth" that ghosts do not exist, the postmodern thinker can find truth in all experiences, even the most marvelous ones.

SPIRITUALITY AS HOME: AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY THROUGH A YOUNG BOY'S GROWTH

Morgan Taylor

"To invoke them today is to stretch one's hand back to that time and to gather up all history into a solid, contemporary ground beneath one's feet."

– Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Voodoo Gods of Haiti*

Despite the persistent pressures of the dominant white culture, the African-American identity has not only survived, but thrived in America. This identity has numerous facets, coming from many different areas of influence, but its survival is due large in part to individual spirits who refuse to be conquered. In John Edgar Wideman's "Damballah", Orion has that spirit, but he realizes that he can no longer continue,

and he must pass his knowledge onward. He chooses a young boy as his successor. As the young boy grows towards taking Orion's place, Damballah becomes a home for the young boy, and it envelops him into the world of ancient African traditions and cultural identity not available to him in the white man's world.

AND THE ASS SAW THE ANGEL: ISOLATION AND IGNORANCE AS VALIDATIONS OF MEANING IN SUPERNATURAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

Amber Otto

Singer, songwriter Nick Cave's first and only novel takes a somewhat postmodernist approach to religious experience. The main character Euchrid Eucrow experiences instructional guidance from God as well as intimate visits with an angel. The validation for the reader of Euchrid's sincerity comes largely from his intense isolation and ignorance of traditional Christian beliefs. The truth in Euchrid's experiences comes not from a social acceptance of a particular belief, but from his utterly self-invented beliefs in pure supernatural experiences with God. His consequent actions are, therefore, not clearly defined as good or evil. The reader, because she or he is placed in Euchrid's shoes experiences a disturbing realization of the extent to which good vs. evil is relative and somewhat arbitrary.

DUELING BANJOS: GOD AND SATAN IN *FAUST* AND *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

George Holman

The critically acclaimed writer, George Holman, discusses the role of God in the terrestrial worlds of *Faust* and *The Brother Karamazov*. Holman skillfully carries out the discussion by

using textual analysis of God's interaction with man, and also by contrasting the role of God with that of the devil, as seen in the two aforementioned books. After discovering that the two authors have different ideas about the nature of God, Holman decided it would be best to look at their arguments from three different perspectives: their religious view, the world view, and the narrative. His proposal will mainly consist of discourse on these three paradigms that link together the God of Goethe and Dostoevsky.

Body Culture and Personal Identity

REFLECTIONS IN THE MIRROR: POSTMODERN FEMALE POETS ADDRESS THE FEMALE BODY

Roanne Juliano

“Is this the body the one I know as me?”

– Jorie Graham

In the post-modern era, the majority of women in America are allowed a completely new range of opportunities and possibilities. A greater sense of equality between men and women has finally been obtained. The poetry written at this time reflects this change in society. Instead of staying within the boundaries of love, nature, equality, etc. as subjects, female poets begin to address issues of identity and the self. I mean to discuss the causes of this change by comparing the works of early modern and postmodern female poets. Using various postmodern poetry, I will also examine the female poet's view of the female body and her definition of the self.

VIRTUAL BODIES: “CREATION” THROUGH EATING DISORDERS AND MUSCLE DYSMORPHIA

Sarah Mast

We live in a society obsessed with the latest technology and have the ability to create nearly anything we imagine; it is only natural for us to believe that anything is attainable. To some people, this may even include the “perfect” body. Hollywood and the media bombard us with images of thin women and muscular men; it is understandable to be envious and want desirable, supermodel bodies, but what happens when one takes this yearning too far? Sufferers of eating disorders and muscle dysmorphia are in search of their idea

of the perfect body, which they create through manipulation of normal bodily functions. But, some of them discover that this search for perfection can result in serious health complications — even death.

BEAUTY, AS ADVERTISED

Lauren McArdle

This presentation investigates the negative effects that the advertising media have upon the minds of young females in today's Western culture. Magazines with young, female readerships are replete with ads featuring models of atypically small size and figure whose faces, thanks to airbrushing, favorable lighting, and professional makeup artists, reflect society's image of perfection. Television ads are no different. Remarkably common for girls making up this audience are low self-image and self-esteem, as well as more dangerous disorders like anorexia and bulimia. Quite simply, when a girl compares herself with the pictures of perfection advertising provides for her, it becomes easy for her to find and concentrate on her own faults and inadequacies. How much blame can be cast upon advertising's impossible standards?

SPORTS WRITING AND THE ROLE OF ATHLETICS IN 20TH CENTURY LEISURE

Tim Crockett

In my paper, I intend to analyze several examples of modern sports journalism, and use them to draw several conclusions about the role played by sports in society. My texts will be sports articles and editorials from the *Daily Trojan*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Sports Illustrated* and the World Wide Web pages of CNN/*Sports Illustrated* and ESPN. I intend to use

close textual analysis of these articles to ask and answer some fundamental questions such as:

- Why do we watch sports?
- Why do we read about sports in the newspaper?
- What differentiates sports from other kinds of news?
- How do professional sports change us as a society?
- What role do sports play in our moral and ethical lives?
- Who is the “professional athlete?” Where does he/she fit in?
- How do we use sports as an escape mechanism?

My paper will explore the relationship between the public’s view of pro and collegiate athletes and the public’s view of other public figures. It will scrutinize the niche filled by sports in the postmodernist society. I intend to show that sports provide us a unique way of letting loose our instincts that give us our adversarial side. They give us a socially acceptable mechanism for release of competitive instincts, even to the point of sublimating those instincts into watching other compete. I will conclude with an analysis of what it means to be a “fan” in modern society. I humbly submit this proposal for your consideration.

Breaking the Mold: Roles, Lifestyles and Personal Identity

"I AM...": THE STRUGGLE OF MYTH VS. REALITY IN POSTMODERN CULTURAL FICTION

Jennie Yen

Frederic Jameson defines romance as "a transitional moment (in which) its contemporaries must feel their society torn between past and future in some way that the alternatives are grasped as hostile but somehow unrelated worlds." My paper takes this definition one step further to define romance as the essence behind modernity's inability to fulfill the individual's search for identity, particularly in immigrant children, compelling them to turn towards the old world of romance and superstition for an alternative answer. In analyzing this idea in terms of postmodern Chinese fiction by authors such as Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston, I will present the idea that this genre of literature pits these two polarized worlds against each other in a struggle to find a balance point. Superstition provides a primitive truth that the world of modernity is unable to ignite. It is an acceptance of the coexistence of these two worlds that a resolution is approached.

THE GENDER ROLE BOOMERANG: MTV BRINGING US BACK TO PRE- MODERN GENDER ROLES

Timothy Mechlinski

Contemporary gender roles are reverting back, gradually, to their original forms, which have been described by Emile Durkheim as less formal and more equitable than modern gender roles. In addition, aesthetics have traditionally been more liberated and liberal in regards to sexuality than other social institutions and are leading the way in challenging

social constructions and norms. Popular culture, in particular music and film, over the past twenty years has initiated the reversion and deconstruction of the binary of gender roles, which were created by modernism. Individuals living in this post-modern culture, represented by Kate Borenstein, have gone as far as to propose the possibility of a third gender like those maintained in Greco-Roman and Native American cultures.

URBAN SOCIETY

Amy Stauf

There is a separate, isolated society hiding inside the larger mainstream American society. This other society is the urban African-American society, a society that lives by its own rules, morality, and ideals, and is portrayed in the film *Boyz N the Hood*. The people of this society do not trust outsiders and as a result they have effectively cut themselves off from mainstream America. They would rather live in a society that is dangerous and poverty-ridden than live in the mainstream society. This is because the only place African-Americans feel accepted and emotionally safe is in this society. The people of this society look at mainstream America with both envy and contempt. While they want to be on the same economic level as the upper class, they feel that to become a part of the upper class is to forget where they came from.

A DOUBLE EXISTENCE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE MULTIPLE REALITIES ENVELOPING THE LATIN AMERICAN IN BORGES

Alexis Lyon

Jorge Luis Borges, an Argentine writer, challenges the epistemological foundation that mankind generally relates to, suggesting that there is not one, absolute reality. He

embraces both a metaphysical and physical reality as separate but equal truths, taking the neofantastic stance that each reality is capable of evoking surreal or fantastic feelings. Each reality can become a way of life, but by engaging both he suggests through such short stories as “The Anthropologist,” “The South,” and “The Circular Ruins” that human existence and identity is broadened and enriched. An integral component in creating a neofantastic identity is learning to create, interpret, and invent oneself with an open-mindedness of accepting such things as dreams as reality of Self.

Composition and Music: Modern and Postmodern Technique

I SAT UPON THE SHORE: THE QUESTIONING FIGURE IN T.S. ELIOT'S "THE WASTE LAND"

Justin S. Kline

This paper will present a reading of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" as a poem which ranges all over the spiritual landscape to find meaning. The poem, it will be argued, communicates the spiritual sterility of modern man, yet the theme of the possibility, but not certainty of spiritual vitality to be regained, of the salvation of the waste land, runs throughout the work. This possibility is embodied in the figure of the stranger in The Fisher King Myth and the questioning figure in the Grail Myth. The theme of potential restoration is also contained in the images of the cycle of the seasons — the fundamental rhythm of nature, a common source of religious myth from vegetation myths to the Resurrection. The issue of the Grail Legend's introduction as a scaffolding for disparate materials composed in the past will be discussed in relation to the above concerns.

DE CAPO AL FINE: ISSUES OF TIME AND MUSICAL STRUCTURE IN T. S. ELIOT'S "EAST COKER" OR "BACK TO THE FUTURE" Linda Carpenter

In his work "East Coker," T.S. Eliot explores the idea of the "still point," a point where all times collide and all things exist simultaneously. The "still point" is a concept best represented in musical terms by the form of the Fugue. This presentation will explore Eliot's concepts of space and time in the terms of Fugal structure.

LAMONTE YOUNG: WALKING THE LINE BETWEEN COMPOSER AND ARTIST

Kim-Minh Huberwald

LaMonte Young is one of the fathers of the minimalist music movement. In addition to that he is a performance artist associated with the Fluxus art movement of the late fifties and sixties. Many of his works are considered to be both part of the art and music worlds, yet, his contributions to both of these disciplines were revolutions within their respective fields. LaMonte Young is just one of the many “composers” to challenge and add to the definitions of what is considered both art and music. Along with his colleagues, Young revolutionized the constructs of aesthetic performances and showings and tacked on whole other plains to artistic and musical realms.

In my paper, I will use the actual compositions of LaMonte Young as well as sources on Minimalist music and Fluxus art to explain Young’s expansion of both art and music theory and thinking. In addition to that I will discuss the word “composition” and how it relates to both art and music and how Young employed this word in his melding together of the two aesthetic forms.

This topic intrigues me because I see Fluxus and Minimalism as concepts that were seen, at first, as outside the space occupied by the definitions of art and music. These concepts were true innovations that defied most former thinking and baffled those within and outside the worlds of art and music. LaMonte Young was one of the men involved with each of these circles and movements. His thinking was truly new and different, and his compositions stand out, even today, as ingenious creations that really defy definition.

Freedom and Guilt

THE POSTMODERN POPULARIZATION OF GUILT-FREE SATISFACTION

Brandon Paradise

“[The gods vanishing], leaving a barren man in a barren land, is the basis of all Stevens’ thought and poetry,” writes J. Hillis Miller in his essay, “Wallace Stevens.” Stevens believed that man lost his accustomed permanent reality when the god vanished, and thus unity with the loss of this objective, independent realm. “Since at[one time men] shared an interpretation of the world they did not think it as one perspective among many possible ones” (Miller, “Wallace Stevens”); this shared interpretation was the true reality, in accordance with the gods. Being central to Stevens’ thoughts, these concepts form the foundation of many of Stevens’ poems, notably in “The Idea of Order at Key West.” My purpose today will be to examine the implications of such a philosophy. Specifically, I will show how the Postmodern abolition of guilt leads to guilt-free satisfaction.

QUINTESSENCE OF QUIDDITY

Scott Gillies

How do we define ourselves? How do we gain the concept of us versus them? Jean-Paul Sartre once said, “Man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does.” “Man is condemned to invent man.” People are constantly reinventing themselves to better understand themselves in the meta-narrative. Sartre also believed that if man sees an omen he will interpret it to suit

and orient himself. In this sense we will always find meaning in abstract and arbitrary things. We try to find who we are through our relationship between them and us. Like language, we try to find what the signifier signifies but, in the end, we only find out the value of the word by its relationship to the words surrounding it. People are like the language that they have created for themselves. Sartre also said, "A writer must refuse himself to be transformed into an institution." In this sense, people's sense of self also comes from the populace, as words' meanings come from the pre-made language. There is a great relationship between language and self. How much does language effect who we are? And how are we like the very language we created? It may become impossible to find the self because it is "impossible for man to transcend human subjectivity." (Sartre) Nevertheless, it seems that everyone has some sort of definition of who they are but how did they get to this definition?

LIVING WITH OPPRESSION: EXPLORING THE LIMITATIONS OF MODERN LIBERTIES

Caroline Hennen

The twentieth century has brought with it a brand-new set of social roles for its inhabitants; the popular themes of diversity, self-discovery, and individualism supposedly guarantee everyone opportunities for happiness, freedom, and pride. We tend to view civilized history, the Victorian period in particular, in a self-congratulatory way, assuming we have made progress in the field of personal liberties. But do these great liberties actually succeed in lessening oppression? Using Caryl Churchill's play, *Cloud Nine* as a point of reference, this paper argues that modern society is no less oppressive than the morally regulated Victorian Era. Focusing on the play's stories of Victorian and contemporary

homosexuality, the paper questions the slightly smug, knowing version of history in order to explore the limitations of today's identities, practices and understandings of "liberation."

THE KAFKAN IRONY: ISOLATION TO WORLD IMITATION

Timothy Woodward

Like something out of the *X-Files*, the world of Franz Kafka contains no answers. His characters live in absurd worlds ruled by unknown and unapproachable powers. He creates isolated lives with no room for escape. This, the Kafka style, is a strong influence in the work of many authors, especially those of Central America, notably Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. By comparing and contrasting the work of these two authors with that of Kafka, one can see how the Kafka style appears in their writing and how they both take a postmodernist stance to transform the isolated world of Kafka into a medium that connects them to the rest of the world, both literary and physical.

Perception: “To be is to be perceived”

TO *FAUST* OR NOT TO *FAUST*

Hunter Vaughan

In the poetic drama, *Faust*, Goethe solidified a philosophical bridge over the stormy sea of the industrial revolution, connecting the Enlightenment to Romanticism in a system of thought that would re-route the evolution of philosophy and literature in subsequent centuries; in the plight of his protagonist, Goethe created the modern hero, refined the demonic, and laid the groundwork for Twentieth Century philosophy. Faust's initial situation is one of extreme procrastination, in which he merely thinks of what he wants to do and to become — in terms of Goethe's autonomy, Faust is nothing; in terms of Martin Heidegger's (early 1900's) existentialism, Faust leads an inauthentic existence. His desperate desire for a meaningful life of experience — an authentic existence — leads to a contract with the Devil, solidifying a world first popularized in Goethe's writings: a world without God. Along with this denial of divine influence on Earth, Goethe's literature played a fundamental role in the evolution of philosophy which still today finds its fundamental roots displayed in Goethe's lyrical tragedy. Through a careful analysis of *Faust*, in relation to the existential beliefs of Martin Heidegger, I plan to trace the line of influence from Goethe to modern thought.

HARMONY OF ORIGINS IN FOUR QUARTETS: A PROPOSAL

Amy Boyle

Discrepancies between philosophies that do not converge in even an explanation of human beings pose an obstacle to harmonious philosophical understanding, perhaps

particularly so for T. S. Eliot, a student of both Christianity and Hinduism. Emphasizing human origin, my argument explores the reconciliation of dichotomous philosophies of Eastern and Western religious philosophies in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. After making separate references to the Jedeo-Christian Bible and the Hindu Bhagavad-gita, the fourth quartet concludes with ambiguous references that comfortably accommodate both Eastern and Western interpretation. Thus, both philosophies exist harmoniously while retaining separate truths. First, I establish the understanding of human origins as an essential goal of mankind according to *Four Quartets*. Remaining completely within the words of the text, my argument establishes this through contextual commutative relationships and dual meaning within the text. Next, I discuss the polarity of Eastern Western religious philosophy early in *Four Quartets*. Using the Bhagavad-gita and the Bible to represent Eastern and Western philosophy, my argument cites separate references to each, emphasizing the interpretive rigidity of these allusions. Thus a polarity and a discordance are evident in the separateness and incompatibility of the philosophies. The apex of my argument lies in the ambiguous allusions to both the Bible and the Bhagavad-gita in "Little Gidding." By explicating the ambiguity in references that are no longer separate and dichotomous, but that can be attributed to either Christianity or Hinduism, my argument proposes that seemingly discordant philosophies can unite, and that this momentary unity brings the reader closer to harmonious enlightenment.

POSTMODERNISM: A DELIGHT IN THE HUMAN MIRACLE

Thomas DeMartini

Postmodernism and modernism are not absolute extremes. The only great difference between the two is that postmodernism accepts diverse ideas whereas modernism only tolerates one, scientific truth. Instead of looking at postmodernism as a rejection of modernist ideals, I will interpret postmodernism as a way to add religion to modernism while remaining within the bounds of our recent advances in scientific knowledge. This postmodern religion will be shown to redefine the notion of progress instead of rejecting the enlightenment's ideas of inevitable progress. Discussion will include Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics*, Wallace Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, and George Gamow's *Mr. Tompkins in Paperback*. I will examine the postmodern delight, its potential coexistence with both science and religion, and its alternative notion of progress.

T.S. ELIOT'S "THE WASTE LAND": "IN THE FACE OF COLLAPSE..."

Hank Shteamer

My argument considers T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" as a model of interpretive conditioning. Specifically, I examine Eliot's technique of excerpting from outside texts so as to invoke specific literary or dramatic paradigms and their built-in narrative connotations. I plan to discuss how, through calculated placement of these excerpts, Eliot subliminally prompts us towards an attempt to impose our generic background knowledge upon the baffling incoherence of his poem. As this stock knowledge of ours quickly proves inapplicable with respect to Eliot's text, Eliot effectively collapses our conventional paradigms of representation,

exposing them as mere interpretive contrivances, irrelevant within the context of "The Waste Land," or any other modernist text.

CRUEL TYRANT: THE TELEPHONE IN *CITY OF GLASS*

Elise Dicharry

Paul Auster's novel, *City of Glass*, revolves around Quinn, a writer turned detective who is thrust into another identity and multiple consequences by a phone call made to a wrong number. Throughout the novel, the telephone remains his primary source of communication with most of the other characters, and it distorts and eventually destroys his identity. Because the telephone severs words from their speakers, and therefore their meanings, it is easy for Quinn to take on new identities. Through the use of the telephone, Quinn becomes separated further and further from his own true self and from the people with whom he communicates. By first severing him from his own life and reinventing him as another person, the telephone allows Quinn to see a new truth about himself; that he does not need words of identity. The telephone symbolizes modern depersonalization through distance and lack of communication. Quinn's journey, guided by the telephone, leads him beyond traditional existence.

Exploring/Exploding Gender Identities

NEAL CASSADY: THE IDEAL BEAT WOMAN

Kerrie Kvashay-Boyle

Women influenced the Beat movement. Why didn't the Beats influence the Women's Movement? Quite simply because they didn't want to. They liked things the way they were. After all, somebody has to do the laundry. (Did I mention pay the bills, cook the meals, and type the manuscripts?) The Beats were wild. They rebelled. They revolutionized America; and yet as far as women are concerned the constrictive social and artistic confines of the fifties, so un-Beat, not only remained unchanged, they were not challenged.

It is obvious and indisputable. Women influenced infamous Beatnik authors such as Kerouac, Burroughs, Ginsberg and Jones/Baraka. This paper will explore how the male beats, regardless of sexual orientation, defined themselves in relation to women. Yet even though women clearly play a large role in the identity of the Beat Generation, only the influence of other, equally prolific poets such as Neal Cassady are taken seriously. Neal Cassady wrote an autobiographical account of himself, he wrote letters to Kerouac, he is featured in many novels, he is himself an influential Beatnik. But then so are Diane DiPrima, Hettie Jones and Carolyn Cassidy. When the homosexual elements of the Beat Movement are taken into account, Neal Cassady's role becomes blurred. He passively participated in the movement. He was sexually idealized and sought after. He, though, is somehow deemed legitimate.

The Beats wanted to rebel against patriarchal attitudes concerning gender roles and family values. and they do —

except when it came to women. Ironically, the sexual progress concerning homosexuality that allowed an illusion of total rebellion concerning gender roles. The prevalence of homosexuality amongst the Beatnik poets contributes to the movement's marginalization of women, which is exactly what this paper will explore.

FINDING FREEDOM: THE FEMINIST STRUGGLE IN MODERN AND POST-MODERN SHORT FICTION

Karen Jacobs

In literature, the struggle of women to discover their own power in an artistic genre dominated by patriarchal ideology is not limited to the female authors' search for liberation; often, their female characters are on a similar quest. This study will examine the different manifestations of the feminist struggle in both a modern short story, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," a semi-autobiographical tale of isolation and madness, and in a post-modern short story, "The Lady of the House of Love," Angela Carter's tragic fable of a fierce yet reluctant female predator. Perkins Gilman's and Carter's divergent internalizations of the feminist movement will also be discussed.

THE HOMOSEXUAL MALE IN MODERN AND POSTMODERN AMERICAN FILM

Brian MacDonald

I wish to analyze the fault of postmodernist theory to provide a new conceptualization of self after deconstructing icons of culture and modes of understanding. After deconstructing concepts of self and items of culture, the multiplicity of perspectives and of cultures are realized, but no new

conception is left. Thus, we are left with no new modes of conceptualization and fall back upon existing concepts within modernity. Specifically, I wish to concentrate upon the way in which the homosexual male is partitioned into certain avenues of accessing (the “post”-ish and classic) culture and theory. Through an analysis of the ideas and functions of classic masculinity, the assumptions and exclusions of feminist theory, and the new conceptions of the gay male in “postmodern” and modern cinema (specifically the modern remake of *Romeo and Juliet*, plus other recent releases), I hope to propose some ways that ideological concepts have alienated homosexual men from conceptions of themselves. How does the “cult of masculinity” effect homosexual men and their expressions of sexuality; how does the theoretical structures within the feminist movement, which concentrated heavily upon the importance of lesbian feminism, exclude homosexual men from avenues of progressive change; how does the imagery of the homosexual man in modern culture exclude and partition him into certain roles that limit his conception of self; and how does postmodern theory alienate the homosexual man from an image based upon the rejection of dominate values? As a friend of mine said about postmodernism, “I’m a little wary of it because it discounts the power of sexual radicalism.” In the course of the paper, I hope to offer some way of reconciling the effects of postmodern analysis with the actualized effects upon people’s identities.

Madness & Addiction: Expanding Reality in the Postmodern

CHRONICLES OF ADDICTION: FROM *NAKED LUNCH* TO *TRAINSPOTTING*

Aimee Gillette

For the majority of the public who will never experience heroin directly, the chronicle of addiction provides a vicarious look into the life and mind of the user. These accounts vary greatly in emphases and intents, but all furnish a momentary foray into a reality controlled solely by heroin. Two such works are *Naked Lunch* and *Trainspotting*. *Naked Lunch* attacks the problem of addiction as a model for structures of control and dominance. *Trainspotting*, on the other hand, approaches heroin use as a means to withdraw from a society rejected by the user. By exploring these different methods, I will outline the fictional junkie's world and how, despite their various strategies, both works arrive at a similar conclusion concerning hope for change and the future.

INTELLECTUALITY AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

Thanh Nguyen

Schizophrenia affects those parts of the mind that are fundamental to a person's self of self. It changes a person's perception of reality, through hallucinations and delusions. A person with schizophrenia often thinks that he (or she) has special psychic powers. After the patient found out that he is ill, he lives in a world where he is no longer sure of what is real and what is not.

But when we talk about reality, do we really know the truth about what's happening, much less what happened in the

past? In *The Castle*, Kafka writes: “The Castle hill was hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show that a castle was there.” If we had never seen the castle before, and it is hidden, how do we know that it is there? Indeed, the whole novel revolves around the question of how to trace something to its origin, to ascertain its truth and reality.

In Don DeLillo (*The Power of History*) we learn that there are two types of experience: *erlebnis* and *erfahrung*. *Erlebnis* is the experience of the moment which retains no trace as time moves on while *erfahrung* is the experience that is retained and is eternal. According to Benjamin, this latter type of experience is gained through storytelling. Thus, can we really expect a writer to be able to write anything else other than stories because he is an unfolded piece of story himself?

We learn from Saussure (*A Course in General Linguistics*) that the exact meaning of a word doesn't matter, what matters is the contrast between different words. Thus, it's no wonder that it's impossible to exact the author's intention (Annabel Patterson) and that languages is the cause of the death of the author (?). Jacques Lacan (“*Ecrit: A Selection*”) illustrates the situation as a string of rolling beads: words continually take on different meanings.

Thus, in such a world of rolling beads where stories are within stories and we can't seem to trace anything back to its origin, how can we claim to know the truth/the reality? Aren't we, who try to find meaning in or to get to the bottom of things, the schizophrenics who try to distinguish between what is real and what is not?

BRAIN CANDY: ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS OF THE ALTERING

Lovina Chahal

“I suddenly became strangely inebriated. The external world became changed as in a dream. Objects appeared in relief; they assumed unusual dimensions; and colors became more glowing. Even self-perception and the sense of time were changed. When the eyes were closed, colored pictures flashed past in a quickly changing kaleidoscope. After a few hours, the not unpleasant inebriation, which had been experienced whilst I was fully conscious, disappeared. What had caused this condition?”

— Albert Hofmann, Laboratory Notes (1943)

It is illegal.

It is unnatural.

It can hurt you.

Discovered just a little over fifty years ago, LSD has been accused of being a dangerous drug more damaging than heroin. Yet, it has also been called enlightening and mind expanding. Could it be that our conventional understanding is erroneous? A search for alternative explanations of how the drug works as well as a consideration of alternative realities and perceptions will strive to re-examine our current conception of reality.

NAKED LUNCH TO NINE INCH NAILS: WILLIAM BURROUGHS' INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

Jamieson Fry

Published in 1959, William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* was both revered and ridiculed for its obscene language and its jarring “cut-up” form. This paper considers the effects of both the

style and content of Burroughs' method in print and film on modern music's identity. His unique manipulations through the cut-up method have specifically influenced the Industrial music genre.

Through a close reading and analysis of Burroughs' work as well as the work of several modern Industrial bands including Trent Reznor's Nine Inch Nails, Skinny Puppy and The Revolting Cocks, I will discuss the influence of Burrough's work in Industrial music's seemingly chaotic form, graphic content, and nihilistic message. From the influence of Burrough's *Towers Open Fire* and "The Cut-Ups" films on Nine Inch Nails' "Closer" video, to Burrough's novel *Naked Lunch* and Nine Inch Nails' album "The Downward Spiral," I will show how Burrough's "cut-up" style and form has left a permanent scar on today's culture. Parallels can also be seen in the reception of these works, as evident in the fight to censor *Naked Lunch*, and the censoring of the "Closer" video. I will conclude by discussing the reasons for Burroughs' and Industrial's influence and its significance to the identity of the youth which embraces it.

Sexuality: Elements in Power Relations

TRUTH IN INTERPRETATION: AN EXAMINATION OF MODERN AND POSTMODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF *THE TURN OF THE SCREW*

Keenan Kmiec

Henry James wrote *The Turn of the Screw* in 1898, well before the postmodern era. For the first 50 years after the story was written, people debated whether it was one of the most frightening ghost stories of all time, or tale of a woman who goes insane. Over fifty years after the story was written, some critics insisted that the story could not be interpreted — that no interpretation is worthwhile, and the only thing that really matters is the act of reading it. I plan to defend modern critics of the story over postmodern ones, and I intend to show that in this particular case, one interpretation (that it is a ghost story) is more accurate than other proposed readings.

DESTROY NORMALITY OR BE DESTROYED

Sylvia Anjargolian

Normality is learned. The experiences people have throughout their lives create within each individual the lines drawn between normality and aberrance. If these lines are the same as, or at least close to, those drawn by society, the individual is in luck. If, however, the lines of normality drawn by an individual conflict with the unwritten laws of normality by which society runs, the individual is prone to mistreatment and even persecution. One example that will demonstrate the latter is the case of Jack, a character in *The Cement Garden*, written by Ian McEwan. In essence, the confines of normality support those who conform and suffocate those who rebel.

POST MODERN SEXUALITY

Melissa Hahn

I plan to concentrate on the construction of sexual deviance and the politics governing sexual behavior by examining the power structures governing the body and sexual activity, and how sexual deviancy is a social construct stemming from a desire to label and objectify the other. Utilizing Foucault's and other authors' scholarship, I will discuss how laws governing sexual behavior represent the dissemination of power throughout society. Furthermore, I will discuss the "so-called" proper relation between the body and sexual desires, and how laws governing sexual behavior rectify political structures. Essentially, I want to unpack the meaning and hidden power that exists in sexuality and the politics governing out bodies.

NOT FUNNY WEIRD, FUNNY HA-HA

Linsey Andrews

Historically, comedic literature has often been called a "lower" form of literature than serious works. In my paper, I dispute this notion, pointing out why humor is certainly not a lower form of literature, and moreover, how absolutely invaluable it is. This paper addresses the issue of how comedy functions in literature, and how that relates to identity. Most importantly, I point out how jokes offer the possibility of saying things that are unthinkable in "serious" literature. The paper discusses comedy as a means of opening up taboo topics and also as a source of liberation for most characters. Humor, or attempts at humor (not always effective), tend to be deemed as inappropriate or somewhat shocking at many times, either by other characters or even the reader. This is often because they make fun of what are

generally considered very serious topics or problems. In my paper, I show how humor, while making fun of serious problems, often works as a means of coping with, or even just talking about painful or difficult topics, when otherwise this would be impossible, and also how these jokes sometimes work to further power struggles, or even change power positions, as a source of liberation for many characters. Ultimately, jokes, parody and satire work to free us from conventions in interesting, if sometimes dangerous, ways. As evidence of these ideas, I've chosen several works which illustrate my points. I shall examine *Cloud Nine*, by Caryl Churchill, *The Cement Garden*, by Ian McEwan, and *Beach Music*, by Pat Conroy. I also plan to incorporate the ideas of scholars in the field, such as Professor Jim Kincaid and Sigmund Freud.

Cloud Nine plays with both gender and racial roles, switching them around as twisting out notions of these roles until they begin to seem almost arbitrary, and not as set as we generally deem them to be. I've chosen to use it to point out the effectiveness of comedy and satire in this case as social commentary.

In *The Cement Garden* by Ian McEwan, the narrator uses a "joke," though ineffective, to liberate himself from his father's position of power. I use this novel to point out how jokes and humor contribute to the development of identity, especially in relation to power — i.e., the one who controls the jokes is the most powerful.

The final of the three fictional works I'm looking at is *Beach Music* by Pat Conroy. In it, the jokes often address the most cruel and taboo of topics (death, child abuse, and a plethora of other family problems). While the comedy is painful, it is

also a means of dealing with topics that seemingly can't be discussed otherwise.

I plan to use these works in accordance with the works of scholars in the field of humor and literature, and attempt to identify why exactly we use humor, and what its function is in literature. Also, I plan to prove just how important comedy is in opening up typically taboo subjects for conversation and how that helps in the development of identity, the changes in power positions, and as a source of liberation.

SCIENCE EMBODYING THE EXTRAORDINARY

Adria Simmons

This presentation will examine how the relationship between the supernatural and science differs in the modern and postmodern tales, specifically Poe's *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* and Calvino's *Cosmicomics*. While Poe uses science to limit the supernatural events in his story, Calvino uses science as a base for his extraordinary and mythical tales. The attitude shift from science as a limit to science as a gateway to extraordinary events came with postmodern thought. This shift can be identified in critical interpretations of the stories and books such as *The Third Culture* which examine the relationship between art and science.

Race Matters: Ethnicity, Difference, Identity

THE “SCIENTIFIC” AND RELIGIOUS DEFENSE OF BLACK INFERIORITY AND ITS CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

Mary Ann Park

The emancipation of black slaves in 1865 prompted a resurgence of discussion and debate regarding the unequal status of blacks. This paper surveys the “scientific” and religious reasoning used to assert the inferiority of blacks, - biological, spiritually and intellectually, and draws a pertinent relationship between 19th century discussion and issues of race today. Is the Negro a descendant of Adam and Eve? Has he a soul? Is intelligence determined by genetic heritage or environmental factors? This paper examines the contemporary debate in our society, and traces the roots of this unequal treatment of race to the initial stages of anti-black thought in the history of the United States.

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: SOCIAL CONDITIONING AND RACIAL PERCEPTION IN AMERICA

Ashlyn Nelson

The ideology imposed upon the child reader of the children’s book is a significant determinant of the child’s view of reality and society. The children’s book has often been used as a tool to propagate certain views pertaining to race in America in accordance with the values of the time. Over time, the general portrayal of ethnic minorities within children’s literature has changed from nonexistent or overtly racist depictions of different races to an abundance of multiculturalism in literature. However, despite this seeming social progression, racism has actually become more subtle, and therefore more pernicious. There still remains a great

need for sensitive, ethnically-conscious, and culturally accurate children's books to be published.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF RACIAL GEOGRAPHY AS PERTAINING TO INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY IN OUR "MODERN SOCIETY"

Reema El-Amamy

Despite the general perception that we, as a modern civilization, are able to overlook ethnicity in providing a societal classification of an individual's identity, the sad reality is that identity, to a large extent, is still sociologically defined by race, class, and cultural distinctions. In a comparative analysis of Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and my own personal experiences in the University of Southern California's Neighborhood Academic Initiative Program, a program designed to stimulate interaction between the faculty and students of this campus and local inner-city youth, it becomes painfully clear that, for generations past, and seemingly for several to come, individual identity in conjunction to the larger societal sphere is determined solely by these definitive and immutable characteristics. The "barrios" or the previous generation have transformed into the "ghettos" of today as each individual struggles to establish an identity that extends beyond the confines of their own, seemingly inescapable *Mango Street*.

SEGREGATION IN THE NINETIES: A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Emily Rudenick

In 1954 *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* outlawed segregation in schools on the basis of race. However, segregation is by no means a thing of the past. Though often masked by "tracking" and honors programs, segregation

continues to separate students from each other, and in doing so perpetuates tension and anger between different ethnicities. This is my story of segregation. In this paper I explore the consequences of having been separated from those not like me and examine the long-term effects of segregation on students from the fifties to the present. On a broader scale, this paper investigates issues of gender, race and identity in today's world and analyzes the importance of working together to overcome our differences.

Old/New Black Magic: The Paranormal World of Identity Politics

WICCA: SALEM WITCHES REINCARNATED OR THE NEW AGE RELIGION OF THE CENTURY

Loren Micalizio

In this era, on the brink of the 21st century, mankind is constantly searching for who they are and what they believe in. One of the general institutions that has come into question is that of religion. Today, alternative religions are springing up all over the world, and one of the most prominent is an all-women religious organization known as “Wicca.” Members of this institution call themselves “witches,” but I intend to question whether or not these “witches” are descendants of those from the days of the Salem witch trials. I will explore the power structure within the system, their basic beliefs and practices, and their methods for spiritual awareness. From this information, I will find Wicca’s place in post-modern society, and question whether it is feasible as a lasting New Age religion.

HIERARCHIES IN DRAG: REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER ON *THE X-FILES*

Lindsay Harrison

The X-Files is commonly referred to in the media as the preeminent postmodern television show. The show’s theme, “The Truth Is Out There,” is only one example of the way *The X-Files* calls into question some of our basic assumptions about knowledge, reality, and identity. This paper is specifically interested in the relationship between knowledge and power on *The X-Files* as manifested in the struggle between the two main characters, Agents Scully and Mulder.

Fox Mulder, in his epic search for the Truth, can be seen as a profoundly faithful individual, relying more on intuition than rationality. Dana Scully, on the other hand, is bent on finding the scientific cause of every unexplained phenomenon, and her devotion to rational, scientific principles such as method, proof, and truth places her in a historically masculinized scientific tradition. Using psychoanalytic theory to contextualize the gendering of these two epistemologies, this discussion will focus on the feminist implications of the program's disruption of the traditional male/female and science/nature dualisms.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND A NEW MODE OF EXPRESSION Ty FitzGerald

John Edgar Wideman offers a new mode of discourse for the African American in his short story "Damballah." Doreatha Mbalia criticizes Wideman's earlier works by saying he used, "the words of a European author" to "assure his audience of the validity of the African's need to accept himself and his past." She goes on to suggest that all black writing that contains influence of western thought is "Eurocentric" and must be "detoxified" of this. However, in "Damballah," Wideman suggests that African American expression should embrace the past, which includes European influence. While this form of expression is not distinctly African, it is not distinctly European either. It is something new. It is a "new language," and it is this that Wideman offers as a new mode of expression for Afro-Americans.

THE PROGRESSION OF ANIMAL IMAGERY IN SUPERNATURAL LITERATURE

Melissa Rea

In many supernatural works of literature, animal images are used to represent emotions and human qualities in a way that allows the reader to be more objective in the evaluation of otherwise unpleasant truths regarding human nature. As these works of fiction have progressed from the premodern to postmodern consciousness, the interpretation of the animal imagery becomes more ambiguous and the explanation itself loses importance while the process of arriving at that explanation is emphasized. This process reveals a lot about the values and mindset of the communities in the stories as they try to make sense of supernatural phenomena.

This paper will use works by the Brothers Grimm, Mark Twain, Franz Kafka, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez to explore the evolution of animal imagery in supernatural short stories and compare and contrast the effects of this evolution on the actions and reactions of the communities involved in the different works. *The Mysterious Stranger*, by Twain is a modern work that is a transition between the premodern works of Grimm and the postmodern works of Kafka and Marquez. As the stories progress from Grimm to Marquez, the reader and the viewer take a more active role in interpretation of animal symbolism and it becomes apparent that reaching a definitive conclusion is not the main objective for the postmodern author. Often the community that is affected by animal imagery searches for meaning in something that does not have specific interpretation.

The “Location” of Mind and Body

YOGA: THE MIND/BODY CONNECTION

Nada El Sawy

In my presentation, I am asking the question of how the mind and the body function together in yoga. The practice of yoga has been revived because we view the body as a threat to our attempts at control. Yoga serves as a means to train the mind to control the body. During meditation, one becomes suddenly more aware of how cluttered the mind is with confused and unstable thoughts. Yoga allows us to remove the external and physical aspects of our lives that cloud inner perfection and purity. However, the objectives of yoga have changed since the ancient practice. Instead of a detachment that allows us to reach spiritual enlightenment, yoga has become a way to gain control over societal pressures.

THE INTERNET AS A FALLEN UTOPIA

Zachary Baker

Created specifically for a few government-funded research projects, the Internet has developed from a rather gender-centric edifice into a network not of machines, but of people. In theory this network has the potential to be the perfect communal, gender equal, completely free community. However, during its development in the American capitalist systems, the vision was perverted into the reality we see today. No longer is gender irrelevant in one's dealings on the network. For instance, in chat rooms, participants can be subjected to material few would seriously consider presenting in real life. This paper will discuss the ideas behind the electrical wires, the causes of the perversion of those ideas, and why this is important to the average man.

THE SUBURBAN IDENTITY

Kevin Obsatz

A discussion of the manifestation of the ideas of space and death in the suburbs, in the works of Douglas Coupland and in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*.

MUSEUMS, SPACES, AND THE SUBWAY PAINTINGS OF KEITH HARING

Laura Snider

In the early 1980s, graffiti artist Keith Haring took to the New York subways. Anyone who's ever ridden a New York subway knows this: all over the city's subway stations, there are frames mounted on the walls. The city sells the space inside these frames mounted on the walls. The city sells the space inside these frames to advertisers, so usually the frames are filled with posters hawking toothpaste, movies, and breakfast cereals.

But when the city hasn't sold the space inside a particular frame, they cover that space up with sheets of black tissue. These panels of black became Haring's canvas. Haring rode the subways all over New York City, drawing pictures on the black tissue in white chalk. There Haring created many of the "icons" for which he is widely famous today — the Radiant Baby, the Dancing Dog, and the X-Villain. More importantly, he drew pictures in subway stations all across the New York City, and he drew a lot of them. There are some weird, weird things at work here.

In many senses, Haring made the subway space into museum space. After all, there are a lot of graffiti artists out there, but most of them just scrawl on walls or repaint billboards. To my

knowledge, only Haring has ever put his work in a place so like a museum — a place where there are already frames for his work, a place where his work in a place so like a museum — a place where there are already frames for his work, a place where his work already has a captive audience. Indeed, in his last days of subway station art (just before he achieved great fame and turned toward more conventional galleries), Haring made specific efforts to transmute the spaces of subway stations into those of museums, denoting the artist, medium, and the date of each of his works. In this sense, Haring created museums in the last place that anyone had ever thought of putting them: subway stations.

Haring's art and his "museums" elicited all sorts of interesting reactions. Some people cut his art out of its frames and took it to SoHo galleries, asking curators to put it on display (suggesting that some people were so upset by Haring's attempts to merge subway space with museum space that they set out to "unmerge" the spaces). Some people cut the art out of the frames and took it home with them (as if somehow the fact that the art was in a public space gave them personal ownership of it). Some people drew overtop of Haring's own drawings (as if Haring had a great idea, but they thought they could do it even better). Many people just stood and looked at Haring's art (as if museums belong in subways, after all).

I propose a paper which will explore the way that Haring's subway painting redefined different types of space — specifically, museum space and "subway space." My paper will examine what these two different types of spaces mean and what it meant for Haring to try and merge them. My paper will also deal in people's reactions to Haring's subway museums and examine whether Haring's attempt to bring the

museum into the subway was ultimately successful. And finally, my paper will examine what it meant for Haring to finally leave the subways and move on to “real” galleries.

KNOWN BUT TO GOD

Natalie Ross

Arlington National Cemetery is the last resting place of thousands of soldiers, its rolling green hills covered with headstones engraved with names of the dead. Yet one of the most commonly visited graves has no name engraved on it; it is the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Four unknown soldiers lie beneath this 80 ton marble monument, one from each of the 20th Century wars in which the US has been involved: WWI, WWII, the Korean and the Vietnam Wars. The Tomb is guarded by Sentinels, members of the 3rd US Infantry, who keep their vigil 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The monumental tomb itself, as well as the elaborate and precise ceremony surrounding the Tomb, reveals the American value of heroic sacrifice for one's country and a need to remember and honor this sacrifice through memorialization. Yet too often, we erect memorials like these which serve their purpose only in the most superficial ways. It is as if once we fulfill our need to memorialize an event or person in some lasting monument, once we are insured that something is there to remind us, to prevent us from forgetting, we are allowed to forget. Knowing that the memorial exists retains our peace of mind, which prevents the memorial from serving its true purpose, to make us remember the sacrifice it represents. Nonetheless the need to memorialize, or perhaps the need to be allowed to forget, is so great that we go to great lengths to create memorials, such as the Tomb of the Unknowns. Recent inquiry raises the possibility that the Vietnam unknown, the only candidate for the Tomb, is not

unknown after all, and that his identity may have been known from the time of interment. Is America so desperate to memorialize that it will create an “unknown” soldier where none exists to preserve the ideal of a monument? Is the need to forget so great as to go to such lengths for a memorial? And is this logic justified? This is a question that merits further examination.

Uncertainty

GUILTY OR NOT?

Kelly McManis

This paper analyzes the short story “Clay” from James Joyce’s *Dubliners*. The main character strives for glorification, but the text reveals the reality behind her “candy-coated” portrayal. However, with this reality check, the text passes judgment on the reader for viewing this character in certain lights. Does the reader read the text? Or does the text read the reader?

THE SPECTRUM OF SUPERNATURAL LITERATURE: FROM
FANTASTIC TO NEOFANTASTIC AND MODERN TO
POSTMODERN

Priyneha Vahali

Postmodernism often brings the concept of truth into question, consequently creating an altered sense of right and wrong, true and false, reality and fantasy. In the sphere of written literature, these concepts are visible as part of the literary subject of the supernatural. Yet, supernatural literature wasn’t always judged in this light. It has journeyed from the modern era of fantastic literature to the postmodern era of neofantastic. Many critics have attempted to separate these time periods and writing styles; yet this paper argues, with the help of various works by Twain, Calvino, and others, that postmodern, modern, fantastic, and neofantastic aren’t categories, but points on a spectrum. There are many shades of gray, which contain writing not clearly defined within any of the categories mentioned.

WHERE DID WE COME FROM? AN EXAMINATION OF HISTORY AND POSTMODERNISM

Linda Leu

George Washington admitted to cutting down his father's favorite cherry tree. Ancient Chinese archer Hou-Yi shot down eight of the nine suns and saved the world from drought. Contemporary thinkers consider themselves liberated from the brainwashing of historized mythology and the euhemerization and de-euhemerization of ancient heroes by refusing to equate historic with true; recognizing that history is never recorded without a specific purpose. Postmodern thinkers attack history and tradition as the perverted products of scientific rationalization and social construction. Though valid, these contentions are neither unique and unprecedented, nor are they themselves free of structuralist influence. Jean-Francois Lyotard terms the Postmodern movement as that which "came after modernity." However, epistemological thinking consistent with deconstructive "Postmodern" ideas, can be traced back to Confucian China in the writings of philosopher Mo Tzu and Taoist thinker Lao Tzu.

WHAT FILM AT 11? INQUIRING ABOUT TRUTH IN TV NEWS

Shashank Bengali

"Don't believe everything you see on TV." Few would have thought that this warning — originally referring to entertainment programming — would ever be directed at television news. The once-proud institution has degenerated into a nightly jumble of "infotainment" non-events, and polls now indicate that viewing audiences have come to uniformly question the credibility of newscasts. But, examining the problematics of TV news, this is hardly surprising.

How can we rely on newscasts to construct a coherent narrative about the day's affairs — “the news” — from a series of fragmented and unrelated individual “events”? What “news” don't we see because it was edited for time constraints or visual considerations — arbitrary elements that are independent of the item's news value? As early as the mid-19th century, Walter Benjamin warned of the disturbing trend toward describing life in terms of fragmented experiences; 100 years later, Frederic Jameson ascribed that same idea to what has come to be called the era of the “postmodern.” As *The Medium*, television epitomizes this era; an inquiry into the growing question of truth in TV news is central to an understanding of what the ‘postmodern’ actually is.

TO GIVE THE LIE: HISTORY IN PERSPECTIVE AS SEEN IN
ROBERT HAYDEN'S “MIDDLE PASSAGE”
Alice C. Lieu

Multiple voices speak out in Robert Hayden's “Middle Passage;” most of which are white. Hayden uses white historical documents and juxtaposes them within a collage inclusive of hymns, prayers, to create a poem that speaks of the suffering of the slaves of *Amistad*, and of the “deep immortal human wish” for survival and freedom. I will delve into the workings of the poem to examine how the placement of these elements work together to create the exquisite irony that pervades the poem. Utilizing the false sense of objectivity stemming from the documentary feel of the poem, due to the inclusion of the historical accounts of the sailors, slave traders, Hayden distinctly demonstrates that the nature of history is far from being subjective.

America and the Self-Made Man/Woman

A PEACE OF HER OWN MIND

Jesse Hill

Sula Peace is not Sula Peace. Her name is Sula. She fights her way ferociously toward self-creation through the usual attempts at crushing and slanting her into impossible molds. By detaching herself from the forces that influence her in her social environment, she is able to finally escape their grasp. But, can she ever get there? Is the creation of one's own individuality possible if identity itself is not an idea that one originated? It seems in the novel *Sula* by Toni Morrison, that Sula comes as close to choosing her own identity as any human being can get, but on some level, she is always held to the fact that she did come from somewhere, that even the notion of creating herself did not originate with her. Or did it? The fact that the situations which arose around her as they did may have been beyond her control, but was the way that she reacted to them something that she could, indeed, claim as her own decision? To what degree does she need to escape the influences she has had in her life, before we can bestow upon her the title of "self-created?" Though many have tried, it seems that no one has ever truly escaped their roots in the end, including the indomitable Sula Peace. She lives her life either in service of, or direct opposition to the things she has been learning since birth. The thing about Sula's quest for self-creation that separates it from any others is the fact that she is able to step outside of the boundaries of outside influence through her apathy, and in this step, she takes all of herself that she did not create, and transforms it into something entirely of her own making. It is because Sula is able to recognize the forces which influence her, and decide that she doesn't care if they do or not, that

she is finally able to escape them. The recognition as well as the indifference are essential to her eventual escape.

Sula's one major stroke of individuality is this pervasive detachment from everything in her life except herself. She is also one of the few characters, or people, even, who seems to actually achieve self-creation. It would seem that the one thing that separates her from the rest of the world in personality, would be the one thing that separated her from the rest of the world in accomplishment. Sula's fierce commitment to serving her own ends and exploring her own desires catches all of her mind up in herself and her own needs. The fact that her mind is so completely consumed with only herself makes her the perfect breeding ground for the birth of a "true individual" — identity grown from a world composed entirely of herself, though perhaps with the seeds she received from someone else. The question then becomes, not a matter of whether or not Sula is her own species of plant, but whether it is the seed or the cultivation of it that deserves the name "creation."

THE ILLUSIONS OF IDENTITY

Stephen Sohn

First impressions of people can certainly be misleading as Nick Caraway discovers in *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Nick, the narrator of the novel, meets Jay Gatsby, Jordan Baker, Tom and Daisy Buchanan, all well to do people who seem to epitomize the American dream. They are all successful and well-off with seemingly idyllic lives. Myrtle and Wilson, the working class aspect of society in this novel, seem to be striving for the same life. The dark and destructive undercurrents of the novel are exposed once Nick realizes the true natures of these characters. Their lives are unfulfilling

and empty. *The Great Gatsby* represents a world in which identities are merely fictional aspects of each person guided by societal expectations. Their identities are illusions — elaborate constructs that they feel society expects of them in order to obtain a certain goal or maintain a certain image.

THE INDIVIDUAL'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE COLLECTIVE: A SELF-PRESERVING SELF-DESTRUCTION

Derek Johnson

Classic tropes that seem so cliché in science fiction stories emerge not primarily from fantasy, but from the author's observations of the human condition. The futuristic societies presented in George Orwell's *1984* as well as in the film *Star Trek: First Contact* reflect this special function of science fiction; each creates a type of humanity where individuality becomes prey to the collective mind of society. In their unwavering refusal to submit to the collective, individuals often choose to self-destruct, to destroy themselves, that which the enemy seeks to possess. By doing so, however, individuals strike a most powerful blow to the collectives they seek to thwart. Because the existence of collectivism depends upon the assimilation of all individual sense of identity, one who chooses to escape through self destruction not only preserves their own individuality, but also acts to destroy the collective itself.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN? THE SEARCH FOR BEAT AND ASIAN-AMERICAN

Ann Lo

Renee Tajima-Pena's road trip documentary, *My America: Or Honk If You Love Buddha*, attempts to define what is Asian-American. Throughout history, many groups lack a cohesive

identity. This paper examines the identity problems of the 1950's Beat Generation and Asian-Americans. I will discuss how both groups, the beatniks and Asian-Americans, had to either reject or succumb to the white mainstream. While I can only examine the Beats in a historical context, many of the questions that the Beats had to resolve face Asian Americans today. What is Asian-American? These questions are important as this group faces demographic, cultural changes and economic fluctuations that threaten the fragile racial identity that took decades to cultivate. Forty year ago, the Beats believed in the necessity to destroy the existing social order and to replace it with a "New Vision." Asian-Americans did not destroy their national identity voluntarily, but nevertheless, they cannot ignore the calling for a "New Vision" that needs to replace one that is outdated. This task is attempted in Tajima-Pena's documentary of her road trip to find Asian-America. Other current and miscellaneous Beat literature, such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and the poetry of Gregory Corso, and texts on Asian-Americans will be used to prove my conclusions. While a jumbled collage of iconography and symbols were eventually associated with the Beat agenda as their time came to an end, Asian-Americans are still thriving and evolving. There is no doubt that all questions have not been answered yet.

Reading and Writing the Textual Self

VOICE AND IDENTITY IN THE POSTMODERN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Monika Roy

The recurrence of telephone communication at crucial points in several postmodernist novels brings into question the relationship between voice and identity. One could argue that voice is paradoxically linked to identity in that it both implies the presence of identity and simultaneously requires a separation of the voice from the rest of one's identity. Voice has the potential to create identity through the verbal communication it allows. When we hear a voice on the other end of a telephone line, we generally assume that a person, an "identity," exists at the other end. However, it is equally safe to claim that the telephone conversation destroys identity by reducing identity to a voice, separating it from its other physical and mental aspects. If only a voice is present, it is quite possible that no identity in fact exists, that the "voice" heard on the other end of the line is no more than a machine, an empty voice devoid of identity. By closely examining the use of telephone communication in several postmodernist novels, this discussion attempts to connect the distortion of identity, through the use of voice, with the quest to re-question and reform the very concept of identity.

IDENTIFYING THE ENIGMA: NABOKOV'S USE OF NAMES IN *LOLITA*

Christine Frey

"She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school.

She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita."

– Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*

In the opening lines of *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov emphasizes the variability of his heroine's name thereby denoting the many facets of her character: she is both child and lover, school-girl and adult. Subject to numerous interpretations, Lolita is an enigma for the reader. Focusing on Nabokov's use of names as a means of creating confusion around the character, I will establish the process by which Lolita's identity becomes fragmented and ask to what extent is her character intelligible. Nabokov's system of appellation is intended to direct the reader's interpretation of his character; by examining it, I hope to shed light on Lolita's integral self.

WHAT CAME FIRST, THE THEME OR THE FORMAT?

Marisa Zanfini

In Langston Hughes's poem, "The Weary Blues," the theme of social oppression and protest create the format. The vaudeville presenting style with two "inverted" blues stanzas are used to support the emotions that are "The Weary Blues." Langston Hughes adopted the vaudeville style, created by W. C. Handy. The repeating lines further engrave the singer's message while the vaudeville singer evokes strong emotions. The symbolism that the piano plays in "The Weary Blues" is one of white society.

"With his ebony hands on each ivory key, he made that poor piano moan with melody." The blues was black society's "vehicle for the expression of discontent and protest." Langston Hughes created this theme, he created this "vehicle" in his poetry, through "The Weary Blues."

IRONY AND IDENTITY

Daniel Johnson

Who are you? Are you an amorphous soul on the spiritual plane, tied to this earth only by the thread that connects you to your material self? Or are you just a big, dumb robot made out of meat? Marvel as Daniel Johnson solves these ancient mysteries in under five minutes by describing human identity as a text, citing the novel *City of Glass* by Paul Auster as an illustration of the conflict between amorphous soul vs. meat robot that exists within all of us. Then “ooh” and “ahh” as he probes the dissolution of identity in the wake of the infinite ironies which threaten to follow from Roland Barthes’ essay, “The Death of the Author,” all the while citing examples from popular culture.

Materialism and the Construction of “Home”

MATERIALISM IN AMERICA: THE NEW FABRIC OF DEMOCRACY

Jason H. Kupper

The sociological implications of economic and political systems are scrutinized intensely. With “Materialism in America: The New Fabric of Democracy,” I will attempt to disclose the 20th century concerning the “underpinnings” of the best-known democratic country in the world, the United States of America.

This thought initially occurred to me as I was delving into the prophetic speech given by former Joint-Chief of Staff, Colin Powell. In his mastered didactic manner, he explained that America must regain its prominence as the “leader of the free world,” guiding the developing democratic third-world nations of the Latin Americas towards an enlightened millennium of prosperity, but, most importantly, convincing ourselves that we still uphold the values and virtues that we often pride ourselves upon. In effect, General Powell desires that we, as a united nation, reassert social systems as “the closest thing to Utopia.”

Within this paper, I will argue that the American dream is still alive internationally, but that domestically, the materialist regime of capitalism has compromised many of the ethics and ideals that once made America the Utopian frontier. I will conduct several interviews and personal surveys of diverse populations within the Southern California area. I will target immigrant populations, permanent, naturalized citizens and international students for responses to questions such as “Is the American Dream still alive?” and “How does capitalism threaten or facilitate democratic endeavors?” Using these

responses in correlation to Peter O'Toole's *The Executive Compass*, and Adous Huxey's visions of the futuristic Utopia in *Brave New World*, I intend to hypothesize that upon admission into the United States, foreigners still believe in the Utopian dream, and still actively pursue the achievement of those dreams. Conversely, I hypothesize that domestic Americans believe that they are losing that standing, as Colin Powell reiterates, we must reaffirm our endorsement of the utopian vision. Therefore, this paper will focus on this discrepancy, the reasons for its existence, and how it serves to detriment the progress of the United States into the next millennium. Apparently, it seems as though the integrity and feasibility of ideals and trends in social setting evolve through a dynamic, cyclical style.

Theoretically, when the United States was initially founded, the ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness were of paramount importance. As the country entered the Industrial Revolution, the fabric of these ideals were sacrificed for the fabric of the clothes that adorned aristocrats that came from sewing machines manned by sweat-shop laborers. This trend continues through Postmodernity. And now, we desire to relinquish some of that materialism for the reaffirmation of our maternal ideals. The question is, however, is this desire only "skin-deep?" Internationals, naive to the underpinnings of today's society, are at the early stages of the "American Evolution," still emblazoned by these utopian ideals. Unfortunately, it appears as though classes are no longer just divided economic lines. As an entrant into the conference entitled "Postmodernism: Identity-Space-Truth," this paper could potentially answer the epochal question of today's era: Why can't we all just get along (in a supposed Utopian setting)?

FRONTIERS FIRST AND FINAL: THE GHOST TOWN AND PRESERVATION

Kara Kalenius

The American West is dotted with vestiges of pioneer life, remnants of discovery and travail, of triumph and conquest. Today, most of these “ghost towns” lie in ruins. Some are memorialized through state or national park systems, while others lie vacant and free for exploring on rural roadsides. Even so, the majority of ghost towns are fragments of the civilization from which they originated. Perhaps the disorienting effect of such disintegration has prompted attempts for re-creation — preserving not only the form, but the substance of frontier life, for example, Disney’s Frontierland. All of these representations of the past vie for prominence in the minds of the public, the more commercial reinterpretations often succeeding. However, it is the fragmented ghost town that most accurately and enjoyably communicates the past to the present — its harshness, intimacy with nature, and sense of discovery.

HOME FOR THE SOUL: ETERNITY IN “THE DEAD”

Rachel Bajema

In Ms. Eddy’s 112 section, we have spent much of the semester examining how authors present the meaning of “home” in their works. This in itself is a postmodernist approach of studying literature, as it leaves room for many different interpretations and does not lead to the revelation of a single absolute answer as to what this definition is. I would like to argue that in James Joyce’s short story, “The Dead” from his collection *Dubliners* defines the concept of home as a final resting place for the soul.

The last story in this collection, “The Dead” follows the

pattern Joyce has established for this work — representing the people and cultures of early twentieth century Ireland. One very important part of these people's lives was their devotion to their faith, whether they followed the Protestant or the Catholic teachings. The characters in this story are staunch members of the latter, and during dinner and other conversational settings throughout the story, issues such as the existence of heaven, hell, and purgatory, and the changes that the Pope had newly instituted in the church. There is a section in which the guests are discussing a certain order of monks who sleep in coffins instead of beds, and Mary Jane explains to the group that, "The coffin. . . is to remind them of their last end." (p. 201) And at the end of the story, Gabriel, the character who begins to feel sorry for himself after his wife tells him a story about a past lover, begins to turn his thought toward his own end. "His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. . . the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling." (p.223) Based on these sections of text as well as the quality in postmodernism that invites the reader to provide multiple interpretations of concepts, I would like to argue that one reading of the theme of home in Joyce's story "The Dead" is the final resting place for the soul.

ISSUES OF PROPAGANDA AND TRUTH IN *STARSHIP TROOPERS*

Eric Boyd

At first glance, Paul Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers* might seem to be a simple movie about a heroic soldier defending the Earth against a fleet of giant bugs. However, taking a postmodern perspective on the film, *Starship Troopers* presents a form of duality: the film encourages

loyalty to a fascist state while simultaneously cursing the government the film portrays, in this way questioning the truth as presented in propaganda movies. By stealing scenes from both *Triumph of the Will* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* and through allusions to World War II throughout the film's visual design, *Starship Troopers* presents itself both as a propaganda movie and an antiwar film and questions the truth presented by any government as fact.