The Lies We Tell

When my love swears that she is made of truth, I do believe her, though I know she lies.
– William Shakespeare, Sonnet 138

Lying is done with words and also with silence.
– Adrienne Rich

A truth that's told with bad intent beats all the lies you can invent.
– William Blake

A lie, sometimes, can be truer than the truth, which is why fiction gets written.
– Tim O'Brien

I have a theory that the truth is never told during the nine-to-five hours.
– Hunter S. Thompson

A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.
– Winston Churchill

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.
– Jane Austen

People never lie so much as before an election, during a war, or after a hunt.
– Otto von Bismarck

Lies that build are better than truths that destroy.
– Senegalese Proverb

A little inaccuracy sometimes saves tons of explanation.
– Saki

We need falsifications to make the past inhabitable.
– Frans Kellendonk

History is a set of lies agreed upon.
– Napoleon Bonaparte

A lie told often enough becomes the truth.
– Vladimir Lenin

While photographs may not lie, liars may photograph.
– Lewis Hine

The truth is rarely pure and never simple.
– Oscar Wilde

All people know the same truth; our lives consist of how we choose to distort them.
– Woody Allen

Anyone who tells a lie has not a pure heart, and cannot make a good soup.
– Ludwig van Beethoven

Background and Purpose

The Thematic Option Honors Program, part of the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, is the University of Southern California's 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.

The Thematic Option 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 "The Lies We Tell" 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. Possible themes include truth, fiction, narrative, religion, science, white lies, news media, politics/politicians/political campaigns, war, family, love and romance, betrayal/treason, propaganda, advertising, acting/performance, interrogation, confession, witness, perjury, myth, the American Dream, hyperreality, childhood, adulthood, education, common sense, crime, con artists . . . anything . . . for as Nietzsche reminds us, "The lie is a condition of life." Each panel is composed of five students, with a faculty member 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

Michelle Banh
Rachel Cummings
William Hagberg
Emily Hou
Christopher Hrvoj
Madison Hunter
Ella Kidron
Stephen Lamb
Morgan Leighton
Ruth Madievsky
Lauren Perez
Evan Snyder
Cassandra Stover
Tiffany Tsai
Elise Welch
Sue Anna Yeh

Many thanks to the faculty and staff
who have played an integral role in the success
of the Thematic Option Research Conference.

schedule *and* table of contents

Tuesday, April 12 - University Club

4:00 p.m. **"Pants on Fire"**
Keynote Address by Professor Margaret Russett, Department of English, USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences
Banquet Room

5:00 p.m. **Dinner**

7:15 p.m. **Break**

Wednesday, April 13 - University Club

6:15 p.m. **Dinner**

Separation Anxiety

Tuesday, April 12
6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Room A

Moderated by Professor Emily Anderson, Department of English

Sydney Goldman

What Makes a Human?:
A Roundabout Look at Clones in *Blade Runner* and *Never Let Me Go*

Both Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* and Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* portray races of near-human entities, so close in aspect and ability that the line between human and machine-not being a metallic robot, but humans created for a specific purpose—is dramatically blurred. Scott's film features replicants with every capability of humans, some of whom know they are replicants and others who are made to believe they are human. Ishiguro's clones come even closer to humanity, as they may as well be a separate class of humans made to donate. They are scientifically human but not considered fully human by society. The two works definitely beg the reader to consider where the distinction is between human and machine, which may be loosely defined, not necessarily meaning metallic robot, but rather made to serve a purpose. The texts seem to suggest that there is great importance in conception, and whether a being was created to live their own life and define themselves as human, or made to serve others, and defined in such a way. The worlds created in these texts beg the reader to consider many things. If something looks, acts, and can think like a human, do they deserve to be given the rights of one? Would their passing themselves off as humans be a lie, or merely a redefinition? I plan to argue that clones are the future's marginalized culture, as parallels can be drawn between them and the non-white races of the past, or even loosely to the rights of homosexuals in today's society. In my paper I will look into the minute details that separate human from clone, explore their validity, and highlight the stances taken by Ishiguro and Scott on the rights of creators to control their creations.

Ryan Lee Kindel

Perchance to Dream:
***Brazil* and the Escapist Fantasy**

Now, when twilight dims the sky above, recalling thrills of our love,
there's one thing I'm certain of: return, I will, to old Brazil.
- Bob Russell, "Aquarela do Brasil"

Sam Lowry, the protagonist of Terry Gilliam's dystopian opus *Brazil*, routinely escapes from his monotonous life into his dreams—into that imagined romantic paradise which the film's eponymous theme song signifies. Sam is a cog trapped in a bureaucratic machine, and he copes with his constrained existence by fantasizing about blissful freedom, as well as courting the rebellious woman Jill who for him symbolizes that freedom. However, as Sam becomes more and more embedded in his fantasy world, reality necessarily slips away from him. Ultimately his idyllic ideal is so deeply disparate from the totalitarian truth that he goes entirely insane. I shall evaluate Sam's crescendoing binge of self-deception by using Nietzschean notions of truth. I will show that, despite its tragic ending, *Brazil* does advocate the escapist fantasy; the film is finally an endorsement of (as well as a testament to) the liberating powers of the human imagination.

Yulu Luo

Becoming My Own Cartographer:
Breaking Boundaries in *Tropic of Orange*

Karen Yamashita's 1997 *Tropic of Orange* presents a fictional, late twentieth century Los Angeles not unlike the one of reality, replete with the traffic jams on Harbor Freeway, the homeless and the gangs out on the streets, and the migrant Asian and Mexican workers which characterize the vibrant city. Yet, the Los Angeles in the novel presents a seemingly impossible world in which fantastical elements overcome the artificial boundaries of time and space

imposed on reality. Endless days near the Summer Solstice warp time and undermine the tradition of linear plot development. A Japanese man who conducts symphonies of hurtling cars atop freeway overpasses sees beyond surface realities to myriad layers of invisible maps. Street reporter and Angel of Mercy, Buzzworm, who collects out of sync watches, questions the idea of a universal time. Asian American immigrant Bobby Ngu literally slices in half the Tropic of Cancer that divides the North and South. In a world in which borderlines restrict immigrants while promoting trade—rejecting the poor while protecting the rich—these magical, boundary-breaking acts represent the characters' desire to explore alternate realities in order to challenge the authority of artificially imposed lines of division and to promote a harmonious world which welcomes each individual's personal map.

Rosalie Murphy

Losing My Religion: Falsehood and Imitative Faith in Jean Genet's Prison

The sacred surrounds us and enslaves us. It is the submission of flesh to flesh.
- Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*

Enlightenment luminary Cesare Beccaria was one of the first to identify the personal perils of penitentiary life: he conceived in *On Crimes and Punishments* that imprisonment might actually be more repulsive to criminals than execution. Prison's extensiveness worsens pain, he argued, so inmate must uncover unique "resources and consolations" in order to cope. In his novel *Our Lady of the Flowers*, perpetual prisoner Jean Genet explores these unsettling "consolations" in fantasies that obfuscate the boundary between sacred objects and earthly ones. God, combat, and manslaughter become pure illusions when Genet's protagonists replace them with tangible imitations—sacraments, toy soldiers, and dummy murders—and I will show that he uses these petty objects to reveal the hollowness of the abstractions they represent. By replacing the harrowing mysticism of religion and justice with crude corporeal metonyms, Genet validates Beccaria's classical conception of prison as a hub for "the abuse of religion," where faith assists the penitentiary in abusing rather than rehabilitating its adherents.

Noah Pisner

The Ceremony of Innocence: Innocence as Devaluation in *The Sound and the Fury*

Innocence is corrupted with two contradictory ideas, namely: (a) Innocence is a "State of Freedom" unbound to any external morality; it is a state of childlike naïveté and artlessness. And (b) Innocence is a "State of Purity" defined by some external morality; it is an elusive state of prelapsarian paradisiacal bliss, virginity, virtue, and general no-evilness. A person in a State of Freedom has nearly unlimited individual agency, whereas a person in a State of Purity is harshly limited by moral bounds and scorned if they transgress those bounds. In William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, the Compson brothers—Benjy, Quentin, and Jason—obsess over returning themselves and their promiscuous sister, Caddy, to an archaic and seemingly contrived State of Purity. By attempting to do so, however, they completely subvert their own agency and entrench themselves into what the novel suggests is a guilt-ridden and artificial conception of innocence. On the other hand, Dilsey, Faulkner's "enduring" heroine pursues innocence in the former sense, as a State of Freedom. She returns to what Friedrich Nietzsche refers in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as the "stage of childhood" or a state of nihilism and from there she consciously creates her own morality and retains complete autonomy and sense of purpose in the Compson's otherwise imploding household.

Don't Be Confrontin'

Tuesday, April 12
6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Room B

Moderated by Professor Lawrence Green, Department of English

Elizabeth Colwell

Unobtainable Truth in John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*:
Incentives to Lie, How Far We Will Go, and Dubiety's Consequences

"What do you do when you're not sure?" asks Father Flynn in John Patrick Shanley's screenplay *Doubt*. What, indeed? Set in a time of great upheaval and uncertainty in a Catholic school and church in 1964, *Doubt* tells the story of a priest accused by an austere nun of inappropriate relations with a young altar boy. This nun, Sister Aloysius, is not armed with fact, but rather with her certainty. In the quest to unravel the truth about Father Flynn, his intentions, and his actions, the characters of *Doubt* must make choices. Often the choice is to lie—to lie to protect, to lie to uncover the truth—which raises the question whether, in a world of foregone tragedy, it is better to lie. Amidst the thickening strata of characters' seeming proof and steadfast conviction, our own beliefs become muddled, and this is only heightened by Shanley's utilization of the "Rashomon Effect" in the creation of the film. Ultimately, the audience is left not with the truth, but with the lingering sense of the power of lies—and of doubt—to destroy.

Sarah Cueva

Socially Distorted Sexual Borders:
Incest as an Acceptable Practice in *Lone Star*

Freud's classic work *Totem and Taboo* outlines the reason behind the existence of an age-old stigma attached to incest. John Sayles probes the solidity of Freud's incest taboo and suggests that the prohibition of incest is merely a social construction in his film *Lone Star*. Protagonist Sam Deeds's position as an authority figure himself negates Freud's assertion that a fear of authority prevents incest, as one of the most influential and revered members of Sayles's modern society engages in the act; this marks a significant contrast with Freud's father figure, whose authority renders him an object of hatred among his sons. Whereas Freudian theory holds that incest is taboo because of the original primal horde's guilt over the murder of their authoritative and sexually covetous father, the constant violation of laws and the porousness of borders in the film build a critique of Freud's theory and propose the idea that no convention or law is legitimate in restricting the practice of incest. This indicates that the taboo is a mere social construct that imposes unnecessary restrictions on the members of society that do not have to be obeyed.

Haran Sivakumar

Fight the Powers That Be:
How *Do the Right Thing* and *Blood Meridian* Strip Violence of Its Primitive Allure

Whether it manifests itself in schoolyard fistfights or in news footage of Middle Eastern bombings, violence demands our attention as a horrifying, yet repulsively irresistible spectacle. If we are to believe Carl Jung's ideas regarding a "collective unconscious," then our strange affinity for violence arises from a primordial desire that finds us momentarily abandoning our rationality and morality. This certainly seems to be the case in Cormac McCarthy's novel, *Blood Meridian*, and Spike Lee's film, *Do the Right Thing*. In both works, we see characters consumed by a primitive need to proclaim the relevance of their existence in the most barbaric yet instantly gratifying ways possible. However, later on in these works, we see a redeeming side of humanity, an empathetic and repentant side that enables violence to be its own antidote. Thus while *Blood Meridian* and *Do the Right Thing* acknowledge certain primitive proclivities towards violence, both ultimately reject the Jungian concept of a collective unconscious and its insistence that a penchant for violence is immutable. This paper will explore the specific ways in which these works confront us with the consequences of primitive avarice, reveal the false excuse that is the collective unconscious, and ultimately release us from violence's instinctual stranglehold.

Joe Weil

"These Walls Are Funny": Shawshank Prison as a Dynamic Character

The Shawshank Redemption, directed by Frank Darabont, is one of those rare and interesting movies so hinged upon a single place, the ageless stone fortress of Shawshank Prison, that the environment in a sense becomes an essential and physical character in the film's plot. The setting of the prison becomes dynamic, evolutionary, and malleable, both influencing and being influenced by its inhabitants. Through both filmic devices, such as score and cinematography, as well as the literary structure of the adapted script, the prison takes on many characteristics often associated with character. I will show how Frank Darabont's acceleration of Shawshank prison into a key figure in the plot reinforces the idea that the world of prison is captivated by secrecy, unexpected dynamism and the idea that things are seldom what they seem. Just as Andy is innocent and the Warden a crook, just as Brookes tragically felt more imprisoned in the outside world than in his incarceration, and just as Red's angered tirade is the one thing that gains him his freedom, *The Shawshank Redemption*, through its exposition of the prison setting itself, reminds us of the backwards nature of the isolated world of imprisonment.

This Panel Will Self-Destruct

Tuesday, April 12
6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Banquet Room

Moderated by Professor Rebecca Lemon, Department of English

Skylar Evans

Love the Way You Lie:
Men's Attraction to Megalomaniacal Leaders

Mao Zedong brutally ruled the People's Republic of China for nearly thirty years, and the people loved him. Hitler, Hussein, Khan. Tyrants have the ability to entrance a people and lead them to accomplish their own wills. Why is it that men allow megalomaniacal tyrants to rule, and, more than that, why do they follow them with such support? Men perhaps are drawn to megalomaniacs because of their persuasive rhetoric and confidence in all situations; in other words, their capability to tell lies effectively. In *The Last King of Scotland,* Idi Amin is able to kill a man then walk out and assure the press he is a benevolent ruler. In *Fight Club*, men will wait for days outside Tyler Durden's house to be in service to him, and they submit themselves entirely to his command. History seems to repeat itself many times over, as megalomaniacs continue to possess the hearts of "ordinary men," which leads to the question addressed in my paper: Do men follow narcissists because they admire them or because they fear them, and if they do indeed admire them, why is this the case?

Cameron Lucitt

From Absinthe to Brandy:
Reconciling Ernest Hemingway with the Culture of Alcohol

Americans have made great sport of finding fault in their legends and heroes. Ernest Hemingway is well known for his heavy drinking: a glaring moral peccancy to some and to others a mere peccadillo imbuing him with character and flavor. But when we take a moment to gently and carefully deconstruct the representation of liquor in Hemingway's memoirs and stories, a shocking dichotomy emerges in which alcohol is the angel that staves off fear and a muse that facilitates literary discourse, but also the succubus that robs innocence and the deluded dream that covers up the tatters of a broken generation. In Hemingway's own life, alcohol is a highly social phenomenon to which such academic weight is placed liquor begins to constitute a scale against which academia itself is judged. In Hemingway's short stories, however, alcohol is a much more nuanced affair, filled with façades and vulnerability, anesthesia and exploitation, and even when it seems to constitute a flame of courage the intoxication is never joy or true worth. Texts such as "Hills Like White Elephants," "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," and *Islands in the Stream* cast doubt upon the memoirs of *A Moveable Feast* as feasible portraits of the relationship between liquor, art and inspiration upon which so much of Hemingway's work hinges.

Karissa Masciel

Suicidal Self-Deceit:
***La Jetée* and the Tragedy of Time Travel**

He knew there was no way out of time, and he knew that this haunted moment
he had been granted to see as a child was the moment of his own death.
- La Jetée

In Chris Marker's post-nuclear war photo-roman *La Jetée*, a nameless man travels through time to save the human race. While his captors propel him towards progress to save a world unworthy of salvation, he struggles to return to the wreckage of the past to make his own narrative whole by salvaging his love. Though he knows doing so heralds his inevitable death, he deceives himself into believing he can take refuge in the happiness of the past and the arms of a woman. With Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, I use *La Jetée* to prove that the human compulsion to fool ourselves into believing we can break free of time is self-destructive.

Clara Purk

Lies, Layers, and Language in *Long Day's Journey into Night*

The family in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* keeps secrets both from the outside world and from each other, as people lie to other family members and the family itself wears a mask for the outside world in order to appear normal. Throughout the play, the family cycles through so many different lies and masks that the truth remains hidden and unrecognizable. As the lies become more and more elaborate, the family's backstory and even the narrative of the play becomes so convoluted that it is no longer possible to tell truth from reality. As Friedrich Nietzsche discusses in "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-moral Sense," people constantly practice deception to hide the truth: "here deception, flattery, lying and cheating… acting a role before others and before oneself…almost nothing is more incomprehensible than how an honest and pure urge for truth could make its appearance among men." By examining this family's perpetuation of deception I plan to show how lies and secrets twist reality into something unrecognizable, and how families maintain the façades they create to hide not only from the outside world but also from each other.

Taylor Wolfson

The Message Hidden in the Beauty of Words: The Effect of War on Septimus Smith in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*

The predominant feeling about World War I in *Mrs. Dalloway*'s post-war London society can be summarized in six words: "Thank Heaven [the war is] over." However, as much as society wants to believe this is true, the horrendous effects of war have hardly subsided. This reality is epitomized in war veteran Septimus Smith who has been inflicted by trauma, which theorist Cathy Caruth defines as a "wound of the mind" that changes one's understanding and sense of connection to the world around him/her. By focusing on Caruth's theory, I analyze the effects of Septimus' new negative outlook on society due to his trauma—that all people are evil and there is no hope in humankind. Further, I assert that his new belief allows him to see the truths—that the war is not over and that England is not the glorious country everyone wants to believe it is—that the rest of society is trying to hide from itself. By underlining the harmful effects this outlook has on his connection to British society, I argue that Septimus' experience acts as a social criticism by exposing the flaws of a society that is unwilling to help anyone who thinks differently and illustrating the length to which society will go to maintain the status quo.

You Can't Handle the Truth

Tuesday, April 12
6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Pub

Moderated by Professor Brett Sheehan, Department of History

Nicholas Cimarusti

Born to be Captive:
An Alternative Perspective to the American Ideal of Freedom

Modern American readers often perceive rebellion as romantic or heroic, due to our history of successful uprisings. Thus, when modern American readers study the characters of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*, some readers might be unsatisfied with the characters' overwhelming lack of willpower. Ishiguro's novel depicts human clones who are engineered to donate vital organs until death, yet never exhibit any desire to escape from their oppression. Influenced by Adams' American Dream concept, American readers might view this submissive behavior as failure. However, if the postcolonial treatment of the clones is considered, along with their inferior "subaltern" social status, it is easier to understand how the clones willingly accept the repressive lies they are fed; their upbringing conditions them to accept rather than question. As a result, the clones find vindication in private emotional rebellions, instead of the bloody revolutions an American would recognize as successful. A different perspective on personal freedom is presented to modern American readers, who often believe freedom is only achieved through grand gestures rather than the small moments of the clones. An alternative means of closure is equally as effective in dealing with an existence based upon lies and forfeited autonomy.

Kristyn Ikeda

Will to Power, Will to Lie, Will to Dream

It's the depths of the psyche. It's the unconscious uglies.
It's the things you run away from; it's the things you don't want to see.
- Kim Greist on *Brazil*

1984 meets Monty Python in Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, in which a dystopic society features a government that uses lies and deception to create a nightmare for its citizens. Despite the horrible reality of life in *Brazil*, protagonist Sam Lowry, through a twisted version of Nietzsche's will to power, is able to escape the oppressive totalitarian regime. He does this not by changing the system, which would be nearly impossible, but by lying to himself, and, through his lies, empowering himself to create a fantastical dream. Although Sam's lies to himself prove effective enough to provide an escape, it becomes clear that the effectiveness and power associated with lying differ based on both who is lying and who is being lied to: while the government is able to gain control both by deceiving itself and others, Sam's attempts to deceive others fail, and self-delusion emerges as the only way he can regain "control" of his life, or perhaps more accurately, his perception of his life. Thus, *Brazil* implies that, although lying to others can increase power, deceiving oneself is the only guarantee to living in a dream and escaping a nightmare.

Maya Raman

"Lies, it's all Lies":
The Enigma of Truth in Texts by Alice Munro

In Alice Munro's short stories "The Children Stay" and "The Love of a Good Woman," a strong female character must choose whether to live a lie peaceably or embrace the truth and the harsh reality it entails. In the first text, by tracing the progression of Pauline's life after she chooses her lover over her family, I will show that it is the truth that traps Pauline in a life without the two people she loves the most – her daughters. On the other hand, whether Enid chooses to divulge a horrifying truth or hide it for the sake of love in "The Love of a Good Woman," she must continue to lie to herself. Through analysis of the situations that these women find themselves in, I will reveal that as Enid suspects and Pauline discovers, it is the silence, the inescapable lies of omission that "keep the world habitable," and keep life tolerable.

Celia Rettenmaier

All I Have to Do is Dream

You're getting older, soon you'll see that life isn't like your fairy tales.
The world is a cruel place. And you'll learn that, even if it hurts.
- Ofelia's mother, *Pan's Labyrinth*

In *Pan's Labyrinth*, director Guillermo del Toro presents a little girl, Ofelia, caught between two worlds: the grim reality of the Spanish Civil War where she is overwhelmed by her stepfather's brutality and a vivid fantasy realm where she reigns as princess alongside a majestic faun. Though the film neither confirms nor denies the reality of this second world, I will expose it as Ofelia's wish fulfillment. Ofelia suffers from patriarchal intimidation, and she copes with the fear of her vile stepfather by creating the parallel character of an encouraging faun. The faun is a compensatory fantasy of the stepfather, and the film portrays these characters as parallel through costume design, camera angles, and proxemic patterns. Combining Carl Jung's dream theories with film studies, I will illuminate Ofelia's fantasy world as a response to her patriarchal fears. Through the fantasy world, she compensates for what she lacks in reality, and through the faun, she compensates for her lack of a loving father figure. To anyone else, her dream world may be false; however, for Ofelia, the fantasy is her truth. It comforts her, giving her courage to persevere through her stepfather's haunting torments.

Audrey Rosenberg

Stalin, Shostakovich, and a Symphony of Revolution

In a period of Stalinist terror, Dmitri Shostakovich risked his life to preserve his artistic integrity and express his revolutionary voice through music. His *Fifth Symphony*, finished and performed in 1937, poses as a military march but contains a slew of hidden rebellious voices. Shostakovich hid his message in a tempo change at the end of the fourth movement, solidifying the power of artistic expression in a time when any expression alone was condemned. Although the piece was played at a fast tempo across the Soviet Union, Shostakovich himself specified a much slower tempo for the finale that causes the repetitive high notes of the winds to sound like screaming voices under an oppressive brass melody. Constantly forced to flee from the purges of a ruthless butcher in Stalinist Soviet Union, Shostakovich still managed to hide his dissident ideas in the folds of his composition. He even dared subversion through music, something that, if done more obviously, could have gotten him killed. But does this secret subversion make his symphony a lie? And can we even consider his revolt through music a true revolt, since its subtle rebellion is so deeply hidden in the piece?

Walk This Way

Moderated by Professor Diana Blaine, The Writing Program

Tuesday, April 12
6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Room C

Connor DeSha

We May Never "Forget It":
The Reality of Narrative Redemption in Raymond Chandler's *The Lady in the Lake*
and Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*

Raymond Chandler's *The Lady in the Lake* and Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* both use characteristics of *noir* to pit a hard-boiled hero, Phillip Marlowe and Jake Gittes, respectively, in a search for truth against the corrupt city of Los Angeles. While Polanski certainly owes everything to Chandler, Chinatown marks a distinct rejection of the redemptive qualities we find in classical noir. Polanski takes established archetypes—the crooked cops, the femmes fatale, the detective hero—and slowly deconstructs them until the film's tragic and hopeless ending. Whereas Marlowe's slow uncovering of reality ultimately leads to redemption, Gittes' revelation of the truth only leads to loss, rape, incest, and abduction—a Los Angeles trapped in a cycle of its own decay. However, in "The Dark Sublimity of *Chinatown*," film critic Richard Gilmore invokes Aristotle, arguing that only when we are confronted with these "radical ambiguities" can we discover meaning through narrative, suggesting that *Chinatown*'s rejection of the redemption expected in its private investigator is necessary. While redemption may be satisfying or rewarding, does it stop us from confronting the harsh reality of a corrupt world? Could Phillip Marlowe, as likeable as he is, ever actually exist? Or is he merely an archetype—that is, just another lie we tell?

Brandon E. Martinez, Jr.

The Calculus of Crime and Punishment:
***Yesterday Will Make You Cry* and the Fraud of the Penitentiary System**

Chester Himes's *Yesterday Will Make You Cry* provides a gritty presentation of the reality of prison life and highlights the failure of the penitentiary system to reform the convicts it imprisons. As the semi-autobiographically recounts the horrors of "life inside"—unbridled violence, sexual perversion, emotional trauma—through the eyes of *Yesterday*'s anti-hero Jimmy Monroe, Himes coaxes his reader to examine the ethics of incarceration and the philosophy of desert, illuminating the fraud of the legal system's arbitration and exposing the painful capriciousness in its calculus for punishment. *Yesterday* makes powerful statements regarding the relationship between crime and its penalty, that is, the precise means used by the justice system to determine the methods by which a criminal offender is to be punished and, supposedly, corrected. Beyond this, Himes's story shows us that, without a proper philosophical calculus of desert to determine the means and extent of the criminal offender's punishment in proportion to his crime, the present US penal system, as illustrated by Himes, is a fraudulent one that fails in its purported mission to rehabilitate the convict.

Megan Murray

The Long and Winding Road

Little Red Cap thought to herself: "Never again will you stray from the path and go into the woods,
when your mother has forbidden it . . . .
– "Little Red Cap," Brothers Grimm

"Little Red Cap," the Grimm Brothers' permutation of the enduring fable "Little Red Riding Hood," is a classic fairy tale that establishes a cultural fiction with the metaphor of a "right" path. In the tale, the brothers intentionally craft a parallel between the road from which Red strays, and the moral road we must choose to walk if we are to live worthy lives – a moral interjection that has permeated our cultural fiber and defined the lives of generations of readers. More than a century after the tale, Angela Carter sought to destroy this fiction of the "straight and narrow" and the conformity it engendered in its audience. In her short story "In Company of Wolves," Carter exposes this

false caution of straying from the road, revealing the freedom that comes when we explore life off the beaten path, and proving that what lies off the road is far from what we fear.

Reetika Rastogi

Cruelty in and to the Clones: Class Comparison in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Most people never know their purpose in life, but in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, societies of clones are informed of their role in the world at a young age: to be vital organ donors. These clones represent an underclass in Ishiguro's depiction of a British society. The guardians, or teachers, at Hailsham, an elite boarding school for clone children, try to create a quasi-utopia so their students can live an ideal childhood. Ishiguro juxtaposes their setting to their place in society: growing up in an idyllic boarding school, they must live with the knowledge that they will die a young, painful death and are powerless to alter their circumstances. The institution of raising children for the sole purpose of organ donation is a cruel one, raising them to believe themselves human, yet refusing to treat them as such. Cruelty, in fact, exists in all levels of Ishiguro's society: humankind's fear and distrust of the clones; the guardians' immorality in raising students to know, but not fully understand, their purpose in life; even the children's moments of outright meanness towards each other. My paper explores the inter- and intra-class cruelties that abound in Ishiguro's novel and his extrapolation of fictional clone society to very real class differentiations.

Haley Winters

Once Completed: Reproductive Injustice in *Never Let Me Go*

Societal norms dictate that our ability to reproduce must be intrinsic to what makes us human. Our "humanity," as a society, is handed down from one generation to the next, parents to children, over and over again. In a sense, passing on our identity is what gives us identity. In Kazuo Ishiguro's speculative novel *Never Let Me Go*, a "sub-species" of clones, created to extend human longevity, are bred without the ability to reproduce. Without reproductive function, these "donors" exist outside the human generational narrative. This alienation is a primary reason that society is able to write off these clones as "sub-human." By eliminating their reproductive ability, the donors become terminal creatures, like disposable products, manufactured for one-time use. The donors' estrangement from the human generational cycle is the immovable barrier that society has placed to keep the clones separate from, and lower than, the rest of "humanity." In this paper, I will explore how this reproductive oppression, above all else, is the donors' most severe form of dehumanization.

Erasure

Tuesday, April 12
7:30 p.m. - 8:45 p.m.
Room A

Moderated by Professor Anthony Kemp, Department of English

Juan Luis Bravo

Broken Mirrors:
The Skewing and Obscuring of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*

Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage" describes the critical point in child development when a toddler can recognize him or herself in a mirror as an individual, an entity separate from others. Thus, it is no surprise that director Anthony Minghella frequently frames the title character of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*—a lower-class musician whose self-proclaimed talents include forgery, lying, and impersonation—within mirrors or obscuring compositions. Initially, the stylized framing reveals Tom's individual aspirations and anxieties. However, after an intoxicating taste of upper-class life and the accidental murder of the wealthy Dickie Greenleaf, the pauper takes on the vacated identity of the prince. After this, the framing reflects Tom in broken mirrors and squeezes him into distorting compositions as he drifts further away from his original self and toward a poor imitation of Dickie. Through these obscuring compositions, the audience is allowed to filter through Tom's deception and discover that he cannot draw identity from himself, but rather must extract it from others—sometimes, self-destructively. He becomes not only a pale reflection of Dickie Greenleaf, but also of the Tom Ripley he used to be, now a man willing to destroy what he loves to maintain an illusion.

Melina Charis

Escaping and Evading:
The Art of Transcending Fate

Our free will is something that we continually take for granted, but the unique characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's dystopian novel *Never Let Me Go* have never known it. As clones raised to someday donate their vital organs, the characters' lives have been decided for them and are "told" their fate at a young age. Imagine being told as a child the exact day you were going to die. Imagine being told you had one purpose in life and you had no way to escape it—no choice or free will. Would you run? Would you quietly accept it? Or would you try to forget what you'd been told and live your live as though nothing had been said at all? Free will is a defining characteristic of humanity, but even without it, Ishiguro's very relatable characters blur the lines between the human and the post-human. Raised at the protective Hailsham boarding school almost as normal children, they attempt early on to evade their fate through several different psychological defense mechanisms such as repression and escapism. But as they mature into wiser adults, they accept their circumstances and follow the plans laid out for them. Their strange resignation stems from their beliefs that they are shameful creatures who are undeserving of human rights, but this could not be farther from the truth—their poignantly human reactions, emotions, and characteristics render them our equals in the post-human age. Ultimately, the novel suggests the moral perils of forcing them into a fate they have not chosen, and most importantly forces us to redefine and expand our definition of humanity.

Paige Garrett

The Human Iceberg:
The Consequences of Exposing What's Beneath the Surface

It was not so much that he lied as much as there was no truth to tell.
- Ernest Hemingway

What differentiates between silence and lie, omission and betrayal? As Ernest Hemingway expresses in his quote, an intentional lapse of truth is forgivable. Such forgiveness is the foundation of society, for no individual member can thrive without some form of self-omission. But what would society look like if everyone were brutally honest, living without any social regulations or restraints? Would chaos ensue, the result of clashing ideals and perspectives,

resulting in a world void of any sense of belonging? In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud argues that humans leave parts of themselves behind in order to acquire and preserve their social communal roles, sacrificing individuality for security. But does filtering these individual assets mean that they disappear? Or are they ever present beneath the surface, the suppression of which catalyzes neuroses, unhappiness and social discontent? This paper will explore the concept of self-omission through the short story and general writing style of Jhumpa Lahiri, honing in on the gaps in narration as well as the gaps in specific character relations. In Lahiri's story "Interpreter of Maladies," are Mrs. Das' personal omissions beneficial or detrimental to her overall happiness as both a mother and an individual human? I will navigate the intentional absences in her work, revealing their larger meaning in terms of Freud's argument.

Priya Gupta

Jack and Julie: Ian McEwan's Very Own "Totem and Taboo"

The parallels between McEwan's *The Cement Garden* and Freud's explanation of the origins of society in *Totem and Taboo* cannot be ignored. While McEwan makes clear revisions to Freud's story of the band of brothers who kill their father to end his tyrannical rule over the family, the story unfolds to also parallel Freud's plotline. Jack, the protagonist, has a domineering father, and when he dies, Jack is perceived as having a part in his death. At some points, McEwan seems to question Freud when he makes his revisions, such as bringing incest into the picture in a manner that suggests Jack on the same level of authority as his sister Julie. However, McEwan's overall story proves to support rather than undermine Freud's belief that certain authorities are necessary to prevent incest, most strongly due to the consequences of Jack's incest at the end of the novel.

Devon William Meyer

Eugenics and the Muted Epsilons: How *Brave New World*'s Message Becomes a Lie

Brave New World is typically read as the satirical portrayal of a dystopia. It emerges as a critique of the madness of eugenics: the idea that those who are genetically predisposed to stupidity, anger, and other character flaws should be considered less as "people," and should therefore be kept in a lower caste. One message that emerges given this satirical reading seems to be that it is a terrible abuse of power to predestine eight-ninths of the population to a lesser intellect, going so far as to earn one race, the Epsilons, the title of "semi-moron." But if one peers a bit deeper, past the assumption of satire, a reader wonders why there isn't a single pivotal character who actually is an Epsilon who can speak on their collective behalf. It seems that Huxley is subjugating and humiliating the semi-moron race of Epsilons even further by omitting their voice. In fact, one ponders if he doesn't actually support such a dystopia as portrayed in *Brave New World*. My pivotal question, and the focus of my paper, is this: if *Brave New World* has such flaws, and Huxley is, as many in his time were, actually an advocate of eugenics, does this fact affect the relevance of the apparent messages in the novel, and if so, what messages remain relevant despite?

Justified

Tuesday, April 12
7:30 p.m. - 8:45 p.m.
Room B

Moderated by Professor Jim Kincaid, Department of English

Ellen Feldman

Dreams that Spur Violence:
Dangerous Hyperrealism in *The Day of the Locust*

In Nathanael West's Depression-era novel *The Day of the Locust*, disillusioned proletarians morph into a dangerous mob at the premier of a film, desperate to glimpse Hollywood stars. These swarming, locust-like individuals have become victims of Hollywood, an establishment that epitomizes Umberto Eco's theory of hyperreality by aiming "to establish itself [the fake] as a substitute for reality, as something even more real." Indeed, the glamour of cinema teaches people to crave false realities characterized by action-packed drama and idealized endings, blurring the distinctions between the real and artificial. In particular, West explores cultural corruption through the eyes of Tod Hackett, a moralizing Hollywood artist who views himself as superior to the mob members. Tod, however, hypocritically embodies the fallacies of entertainment culture, ignoring its influence upon his own flawed value system. Like the locusts of the mob, Tod absorbs a diet of dangerous illusions that degrades dreams and dissolves morals. While Eco merely laments a collapse of authenticity and beauty in American culture, West's hyperreal universe undergoes a much darker transformation as frenzied individuals come to perceive Hollywood dreams as reality, treating life as a game where romance and violence become forms of amusement and traditional values vaporize.

Rebecca W. Gao

Gaming the System:
Rationality and Game Theory in *Watchmen*

The megalomaniac, the man with infinite appeal and overwhelming ambition, deludes himself into visions of grandeur and control. The intellectual megalomaniac believes in games that can be won by making the most strategic and rational moves. In *Watchmen*, the coldly logical superhero Ozymandias views the world as a giant chessboard to be played for the betterment of humanity—with him as God. But this faith in his notion of pure rationality may actually create the megalomaniac's overinflated and ultimately damning sense of confidence and egoism towards altering destiny. Ozymandias succumbs to the very modern lie of rationality, a crutch often used by megalomaniacs to justify their obsessions and one of the pitfalls of game theory. Using Immanuel Kant's critiques of pure reason and rationality, this paper explores the implications of understanding the world from a solely rational perspective and the core danger of game theory—belief that theory translates perfectly to practice.

Victoria Kasar

Humans, Clones, and Robots, Oh My!:
The Essential Assumptions of Human Exploitation in *Battlestar Galactica* and *Never Let Me Go*

How does the idea of progress color the way we view the innovations of our world? How does it allow us to treat other humans? In both *Battlestar Galactica* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, humans create beings—robots and clones respectively—that are intended to aid society. The fundamentally inhuman nature of these creations, however, comes into question as they begin to take on remarkably human traits. They are nonetheless stuck in cycles of exploitation, due to the crucial assumption that they are inhuman, and thus undeserving of humane treatment. My paper discusses the issue of human exploitation as a means that is justified by an end of "progress." Using critical theorists' analyses of the concept of posthumanism in conjunction with *Battlestar Galactica* and *Never Let Me Go*, I expand upon the qualities that make people "human" and the necessity of the dehumanization of those we exploit in order to achieve such ends.

Evelyne Kim

Caddy's Sacrifice:
The Lies that Bind in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

Candace Compson is the understated heroine of William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*. By rejecting the norms of patriarchal society as described by Luce Irigaray's "Women on the Market," Caddy exercises her independence and is in turn ostracized by the declining Compson family. By blaming Caddy for its degradation due to her failure to adhere to the proper role as described in "Women on the Market," the remaining Compsons can deny their own shortcomings, thus stalling the inevitable fall of the old Southern family. Therefore, by taking on the role of the black sheep of the family, Caddy preserves the shadow of the Compson family. This action by which Caddy perpetuates such a lie allows the Compsons to continue for another generation; she becomes the enemy against whom they must unite.

Meaghan Sullivan

It's Better Not To Try:
On the Absence of Meaning in "Waiting for Godot" and Life

But that is not the question. What are we doing here, that is the question.
And we are blessed with this, that we happen to know the answer.
Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come.
- Vladimir

In Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot", Vladimir and Estragon seem to have constructed a very convincing lie. After all, they have fooled themselves into believing that they will somehow find meaning by waiting, in comical and seemingly moronic fashion, for Godot,. And while Beckett appears, at least on the surface, to mock both this idea and his pair of friends for their devotion to a pointless life, he shows the reader the lie within their own lives. In much the same way that Vladimir and Estragon perform their exercises by the tree, average Americans desperately overload their schedules in their own desperate attempts to find meaning. But through the bleakness of these contrasting, though equally futile, efforts, Beckett offers a glimmer of hope. Through the lack of plot development, Beckett illustrates that it is not important that our lives ever take on any meaning, but simply that we make the attempt to find it. For through our own individual struggles that fail to find meaning, we make for ourselves if not a life of meaning, the only possible life that could make sense in a meaningless world.

Revelation and Its Discontents

Tuesday, April 12
7:30 p.m. - 8:45 p.m.
Banquet Room

Moderated by Professor Vanessa Schwartz, Department of History

Sarah Hsu

Once Upon A Time Things Were Not So Happily Ever

The fairy tale is a form of narrative that often challenges societal norms of behavior,
such as the Beauty falling in love with a Beast. Within a bizarre, fantastic, or magical framework,
the impossible and the improbable often are accomplished.
- Geraldine Perriam, "Sex, Sweet Danger, and the Fairy Tale"

In Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, a modernized collection of traditional fairy tale retellings, passive damsels in distress transform into strong heroines as they face beasts beyond their imagination. In her exploration of the darker undertones and themes of gender roles through the fairy tale framework, she develops fascinating imagery and metaphors in order to emphasize the beast behind the deceitful beauty of marriage. Using Mary Kaiser's and Becky McLaughlin's criticisms of Carter's intertextuality, I wish to examine the fairy tale as a picturesque stain-glassed window through which ugly truths are revealed; in this particular case, I expect to reach the conclusion that Carter's retellings lift the deceivingly "perfect" curtain of "once-upon-a-times" and "happily-ever-afters", unmasking the horrors of marriage and victimization. Through an in-depth analysis of the repeated symbolism of meat and the color red in relation to gender roles, I intend to uncover the fairy tales' social commentary on womanhood. Through the analysis of the color red, the dynamic between prey and predator, beauty and beast, forces us to question the stereotypes to which our modern everyday fairy tales fall victim.

Carl Hudson

War Stories:
The Importance of Lies in Establishing Truth

Lies, and more importantly their role in war stories, have become a hot topic in our country's recent military engagements. The stories of Pat Tillman and Jessica Lynch prove that we, as a nation, do not report all accounts of battle with complete accuracy. Many Americans, perhaps rightfully so, are quick to condemn such fallacies, but do these lies represent a lack of judgement, or the opposite? When these stories determine recruitment, public support, troop morale, and the very perception of victory and defeat, is honesty not always the best policy? Tim O'Brien, in his novel *The Things They Carried*, asserts that the truth still plays a pivotal role in the war stories that define our nation. However, O'Brien's truth is not a simple one. Specifically, the stories "How To Tell a True War Story," "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," "Speaking of Courage," and "Good Form" reveal that truth does not necessarily depend on factuality. Details do not define war story truth"—rather, it is a feeling that strikes one to the core, giving ordinary citizens the closest possible insight into a dark world they can never fully understand. If modifications are necessary to achieve this feeling, then perhaps they have worth. Perhaps the greatest war stories find their truth among lies.

Elisabeth Raff

Piecing Together the Puzzle:
Reconciling Points of View in *Tropic of Orange*

Consider, for example, a group of people standing in a circle around a statue.
Each person sees part of the statue and can describe what he or she sees, but nobody sees the complete statue. . . .
If we could add up everyone's partial view, we'd get a description of the "real" statue.
– Arthur Asa Berger, *The Portable Postmodernist*

In a city with dozens of diverse neighborhoods and an expansive freeway system that allows us to skip over these

neighborhoods and the stories they contain, how can one story capture all that is Los Angeles? By giving each race, each class and each level of humanity a voice, the truth emerges from the juxtaposition of the multiple points of view. The polyvocality in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* swells to tell the story of tainted oranges and an accident on the Harbor Freeway that turns one of LA's busiest freeways into a homeless colony. This essay is interested in the way four fragmented narratives succeed in creating what Michel Foucault termed a "heterotopia"—the coexistence of multiple fragmentary worlds in one space. From the distinct vantage points offered by Buzzworm, an African American man-of-the-streets; Manzanar, a homeless man who "conducts" LA from freeway overpasses; Gabriel, a Latino print journalist and Emi, a Japanese American TV producer obsessed with being in control, a kaleidoscope of stories emerge that together reveal the bias that determines which stories ultimately survive and which stories perish.

G. Sandelski

To Speak The Truth:
An Illusive Goal

But do you have expectation as to the form the truth is to take?
Are you prepared if it comes in another shape, unexpected?
- King Dahfu, *Henderson the Rain King*

In Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* the reader notices gaps and contradictions early on in Henderson's narration. On the surface, the less than reliable retelling begs the question of Henderson's credibility, but what if Bellow uses these inconsistencies to make a greater, more universal statement? When Henderson says, "Truth comes in blows," he suggests that reality reveals itself only in intervals, but this quote can also mean truth manifests itself in physical action. The 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant believed that people should not lie because it compromises the integrity of language, according to his categorical imperative. However, since the person recalling an event is always immersed in it, is true objectivity, and thus the truth, obtainable? Bellow struggles with the inability of language to accurately and objectively portray reality and searches for a solution. This project will explore what it means to tell the truth and how reality can be accurately recalled through a deeper look into Henderson as a character.

Gorbachev Mu Fan Shih

Scary Sporks:
Liminal Identities in a Futuristic World

The human is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.
- Sartre

In his lecture, "Existentialism Is a Humanism," Sartre presents the theory that the human creates his own identity for himself; there is nothing essential or within that decides who he is or what he will become—he is not the human being but the human "becoming." Similarly, but focused on the concept of gender, theorist Judith Butler presents the theory that (gender) identity is performative. That is to say, our identities are created through our performance of an identity (i.e. I am male because I act like a male). In the film *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott in 1982, we view a futuristic world in which rebellious Replicants (near-human androids) are hunted and destroyed by Bladerunners. One Replicant, Rachael, implanted with false memories, believes herself to be human when she is in essence inhuman. Because of this, she is plagued by her identity in a world that defines itself as black and white, as human and inhuman. What do we make of liminal identities and the societies that spurn them? Through the analysis of Rachel's character and the future to which she belongs, I hope to shed light on the hidden fears of her world and ultimately, reflected in that, the fears of our own society.

Spinning Yarns

Tuesday, April 12
7:30 p.m. - 8:45 p.m.
Pub

Moderated by Professor Alison Renteln, Department of Political Science

Nichole DeLaura

Countercultural Noir

The dream was teaching the dreamers how to live.
- Joan Didion, "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream"

Just after midnight on October 7, 1964, Lucille Miller—a thirty-four-year-old California housewife with three kids and a fourth on the way—killed the engine of her parked Volkswagen Beetle, doused the seats in gasoline, and let it burn . . . with her husband asleep inside. Four years later, essayist Joan Didion would open her nonfiction collection, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, with Miller's story—setting the stage for twenty essays about the counterculture, the American Dream, and the "general breakup" of society in 1960s California. Intriguingly, Didion situates Miller's experience within a framework of film noir structures and techniques. Through this cinematic context, the essay suggests that both Miller and her generation unwittingly exchanged traditional social values for a film noir narrative that dictated their pursuit of relationships, prosperity, and status. For Didion's Miller, fiction transformed the blueprint for reality. And *noir* appropriated the last remnants of the American Dream. Caught in this exchange, however, California's middle class society—stripped of the values that once protected it—failed, creating a social vacuum from which "a handful of pathetically unequipped children" shaped the 1960s counterculture.

Robert Fletcher

Silence of the Fiction:
The Hidden Reality of Fictional Literature as seen in *The Silence of the Lambs*

Even in fiction, science stands as a beacon of truth. The reader won't tolerate fabricated science, and a poorly-conceived scientific premise trumps any of a work's other positive qualities. Thomas Harris took this to heart when he wrote his magnum opus *The Silence of the Lambs*, a grisly murder mystery revolving around behavioral science. To guarantee the validity of the psychology, Harris labored over his research. Consequently, we believe whole-heartedly in the science he proposes. So fully, in fact, that the literature behind the science suffers. The result is an awkward balance between reality and imagination with no definable division. Lies can be told under the guise of psychological science, and the author can excuse them as "fictional elements." Worse yet, the scientific ideal of objectivity he promotes overwhelms the more subjective issues the text delves into: the reader misunderstands philosophical and social issues as single-solution problems that misrepresent the subject. An unwary reader, ignorant of the blurred lines, will certainly pay the price. As a victim (or ignorant reader depending on how you look at it), I examine the "science" behind the work and expose just how wary we as readers need to be of both Harris and the larger world of fiction.

Adeel Mohammadi

The Invented Conception of Time
in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Stories are often portrayed as linear chronologies—one event, followed by another, and then another, each with its specific date and time. But there are ways to defy time—by presenting ideas that surpass time, that transcend it, and demonstrate the flexibility of this supposedly "rigid" entity. This is what J.M. Coetzee does in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a novel written as an allegory, without specificities of location or time. Though our protagonist, the Magistrate, struggles to understand his place in the history of his empire, readers can conclude that history, and essentially time, are irrelevant factors in this narrative, that Coetzee's warning—to protect civil rights against a political machine—is not subject to the limitations of chronology under which all of history is critically analyzed. Time, then, becomes a created entity, a sort of lie we tell ourselves to organize experiences and isolate ideas, but which can also be overcome with ideas.

Zoey Smith

The Way It Seems to Be:
The Definition of Truth in Modern War Stories

Absolute occurrence is irrelevant. A thing may happen and be a total lie;
another thing may not happen and be truer than the truth.
- Tim O'Brien, "How to Tell a True War Story"

Tim O'Brien, a veteran of the Vietnam War, never tells his readers exactly how much his war stories are based on real life. He blurs the line between fact and fiction, drawing liberally from his own experiences with war while also inventing parts of his work. In his "How to Tell a True War Story" O'Brien grapples with a question faced by generations of writers: What exactly constitutes "the truth?" O'Brien defines a true war story as one that conveys the experience of war rather than the facts. However, in admitting that "almost everything is true. Almost nothing is true," he shows that the truth is far too nebulous, contradictory, and complex to articulate in full. He sets for himself the seemingly impossible task of communicating his own version of the truth to an audience lacking his experiences with war. Drawing on O'Brien's short story and Yuval Noah Harari's analysis of modern war narratives, I contend that the truth of a war story does not depend upon its adherence to the events of real life, but on its ability to convey the emotions and impressions of war as experienced by the author.

Nathalie Sun

Truth's Damnation:
An "Escapist Holiday" of Animated Memory in *Waltz with Bashir*

I think you have it backwards. Our minds don't take us to the places where we really don't want to go.
They have a way of preventing us from entering into dark and totally dangerous recollections.
Our memories will take us only as far as we are capable of going.
- Ori Sivan, *Waltz with Bashir*

Damn the man! Save the memories! The trauma narrative, repeated over generations, through numerous languages and in countless modes, attempts, seemingly unsuccessfully, to simultaneously access and convey disjointed memory in its extremity. On the surface, Ari Folman's animated *Waltz with Bashir* is simply a haunting mystery—one man's journey to regain memories of his involvement with the Sabra and Shatila massacres. The film subverts the classic approach, however, by juxtaposing freedom in manipulating animation with the snare of faulty or incomplete memories; this reflects the art form's meta-reading of sifting through trauma. Witnessing Folman's literal and figurative journey through the lens of animation, the film's dialectic of reality and lies explores the distinctions between perpetrator and victim, collective and individual trauma and the relegation of blame in war. Achieved through an amalgamation of objective truth and controversial "heart truth" in memory, the film invites a stunning exposition of the potential for post-war salvation. While animation is the only mode through which this war story can be "accurately" conveyed, it ultimately reinforces the "heart truth," or feeling, of an event. In answering the tradition of historic uncertainties that revolve around trauma, *Waltz with Bashir* illuminates the abiding legacy of combat: that nightmares are real. The truth cannot save—only through lies can one live, learn and accept the treacheries of war.

Thinking Inside the Box

Tuesday, April 12
7:30 p.m. - 8:45 p.m.
Room C

Moderated by Professor Cynthia Herrup, Department of History

Alexis Chan

Finding Solace in Anonymity

In Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club*, the narrator's overall dissatisfaction with life compels him to fight the mundane society, which he finds to be devaluing. Although he is trying to escape the anonymity his culture forces, he actually seeks and creates the desire for complete anonymity, to the point where one has abandoned his life, personality, ambition, and desires. Alex Tuss's "Masculine Identity and Success: A Critical Analysis of Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*" examines the role of masculinity in the narrators' push for anonymity, focusing on their methods and the reversion back to the primal nature of man. The narrator of *Fight Club* cannot escape societal constraints and expectations and therefore aims to alter them. Through the breaking down of himself and other members of Fight Club, which later evolves into Project Mayhem, the narrator strives for anonymity, achieving it through pure destruction, often times while relying on the primal nature of man and masculinity to achieve this.

Michelle Khazaryan

Shoot 'Em Up:
The Intersecting Roles of Violence, Rebellion, and Identity in *The Stranger*

What is a rebel? A man who says no.
- Albert Camus

Popular culture romanticizes certain violent rebels, like Dirty Harry, Bonnie and Clyde, and Jesse James, painting them as heroes. This isn't the case when society meets a rebel that challenges the ideal of the troubadour outlaw. In Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, we meet Meursault, who commits a violent act that is an affront to his society. Meursault kills a man because he obeys his momentary physical needs. Yet Meursault isn't convicted because of the purposeless murder of another man, but because he cannot act insincerely—he cannot cry at his mother's funeral. Emotion is considered an identity marker of being human, and a character like Meursault who seems to lack that capacity is considered a "monster" instead of simply a "rebel." Meursault isn't romanticized because he lacks morals and obvious emotional displays, romantic qualities that many violent revolutionaries do possess. The society within the text is unable to cope with the thought of a person like Meursault and takes measures to eradicate him. However, Meursault is an equally troubling figure for the reader, as Camus refuses to make Meursault match readers' expectations regarding literary rebels. Meursault isn't just rebelling against his society—he is also rebelling against the traditional protagonist.

Nithya Kubendran

"Nobody's Business But Ours": Homosexuality and the Problem of Masculinity in Annie Proulx's "Brokeback Mountain" and Nagisa Oshima's *Gohatto*

"I'm not no queer," declares Ennis Del Mar to Jack Twist in "Brokeback Mountain." Jack and Ennis, as sheep-herding, coyote-shooting cowboys, exemplify American masculinity. Conversely, *Gohatto*'s Sozaburo Kano, a talented young samurai, displays the Japanese masculine ideal through his skill with a katana and his ability to kill indiscriminately. Yet despite originating from two different cultures during two different historical periods, cowboys and samurais are similar: they are cultural archetypes of masculinity, the noble heroes of their time. Nevertheless, Jack, Ennis, and Kano deviate from the standard archetype of masculinity in one problematic way: despite Ennis' assertion, in the language of gender and sexuality studies, all three characters are "queer," they cast assumptions about normative heterosexuality into question. This juxtaposition of typically masculine roles with homosexuality demonstrates Judith Butler's "performativity": despite the characters' homosexuality, all act in accordance with societal norms of masculinity. This struggle to abide by heteronormativity forces the characters to lie to themselves about their desires. Jack and Ennis marry women and struggle to conform, while Kano attempts to rid himself of his homosexuality by murdering his lovers. Though ultimately destroyed by their lies, Jack, Ennis, and Kano highlight the uncertainty of what it means to be a man.

Surabhi Srivastava

Knock Knock, Who's There?: Paul's Hyperreality in *Six Degrees of Separation*

"The imagination is not our escape. On the contrary, the imagination is the place we are all trying to get to." This is how Paul, a young Black con-artist in John Guare's play *Six Degrees of Separation*, justifies his criminal behavior; as a means to an end. He assumes fake identities and tries to assimilate with upper-middle class New Yorkers, Flan and Ouisa Kittredge, in hopes of forging a new identity and matching what's "in here" (the mind) with what's "out there" (the world). Though he knowingly and deliberately enters the lives of the Kittredges and cons them, I argue that he does this because he believes he belongs in their society. Through the parallels drawn between him and Sidney Poitier as well as *The Catcher in the Rye*, I show that his desire to reinvent himself is greater than his role as a con artist. The reason that he assimilates into the lives of the Kittredges so well is because they also live a life of lies. He sees their phony façade and blends in with his manipulative ways. I use Umberto Eco's theory of hyperreality—a constructed fake reality in which the completely real is associated with the completely fake—to support how the lies they tell prevent them from facing their true identities, and create a hyperreal world.

Jessica Stauffer

Unconventional Spaces for Free Communication in *A Passage to India*

As social beings desiring connection, we think private settings—a club, a bedroom, or a tea party—facilitate personal dialogue. Ironically, the notion that private spaces produce intimacy is deceiving. In exclusive settings individuals often feel the most pressure to perform according to social roles as behavior expectations exist between like individuals. In E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, the interactions between the various social groups capture this very dilemma. While the British and the Indians remain separated from each other, divisions also permeate these two camps. Forster's characters experience frustration within the strict social roles impressed upon them by the very cultural groups who claim to accept them. Only when individuals meet beyond the defined social expectations of their specific cultural group do they experience genuine connection. Through topography and spatial arrangement, Forster captures the intimate moments of cross-cultural communication.

Higher Yearning

Wednesday, April 13
5:00 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
Room A

Moderated by Professor Natania Meeker, Departments of French and Italian and Comparative Literature

Tiffany Banh

Violence and Sanctity, All in One:
A Reexamination of Violence in *Blood Meridian*

In Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, the Glanton Gang seemingly believes that violence translates into religion to justify the scalp hunting of Apaches after the Mexican American War. Their leader, Judge Holden, equates violence with religion when he claims that "[w]ar is the ultimate game because war is at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god . . . ." Most readers only see mindless, rampant violence in *Blood Meridian*. However, the novel compels us to reassess violence in a contemporary context. McCarthy scholar Barcley Owens firmly believes that these frontier men seek "redemption through violence." Thus, as Owens contends, McCarthy's novel is written as a wake-up call to the collective and historical hypnosis caused by the Vietnam War. *Blood Meridian* puts into perspective the lies that the gang tell themselves in order to justify their barbarism. When such violence is further explored, could it potentially lead to something positive, if not conducive?

Aimee Chang

"Homoseckshual":
An Exploration of Identity in Jean Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers*

In *Our Lady of the Flowers*, Jean Genet creates a complex world of contrast, juxtaposing light and darkness, good and evil, reality and fantasy. As Genet introduces these stark opposites into his novel, however, the lines between them become irreversibly blurred—darkness and evil are embraced while good and lightness are shunned, as Genet's novel demonstrates a reappraisal of society's values. Genet's Culafroy-Divine character, in particular, embodies the ambiguity conveyed in the novel and plunges the truth of identity into a realm of total confusion. Within Culafroy-Divine's two contrasting identities as the dirty, low-life boy, Louis Culafroy, and the saintly, pure woman, Divine, are striking conflicts between values, further complicated by Genet's portrayal of homosexuality as simultaneously virtuous and revolting. Genet's character ultimately appears to establish the perspective that life is absurd, absolutely meaningless. However, I argue that Genet introduces this existential nihilist concept not to propagate despair or negativity—rather, Genet ironically creates universal meaning through Culafroy-Divine's life of apparent futility. Overall, Genet's message is this: in a world of inextricable complexity and uncertainty, people must establish their own identities and principles to find meaning in their lives. Stressing optimism rather than pessimism, Genet empowers people to define their own truths.

Joshua Faskowitz

Divine Acid

In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, author Tom Wolfe brings to light an aspect of the sixties' counterculture movement commonly overlooked. All too often we encounter the polarizing images of the sixties: mind-bending LSD, experimental music, and dancing hippies. But beyond these seemingly immature trivialities, the countercultural movement sparked a deep interest in spirituality and religion. Central to *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* are the Merry Pranksters, a drug-dropping rebel group led by Ken Kesey. The Merry Pranksters appear ambivalent about seemingly everything, but the one idea that unites the Pranksters is an ambition to reach a higher spiritual understanding through drugs. Religion is the largest unconfirmed truth that society perpetuates, but the Pranksters find their own, more tangible, truth through spirituality-inducing psychedelics. Although the experiences of the drugs are short-lived, the spiritual effects of the drugs are long-lasting. The brief psychedelics fulfill a deep psychoanalytic yearning for religion. In this regard, for Kesey and the Pranksters it is not the actual experience but the idea of acid that replaces religion.

Eddie Gao

God Smack:
Cormac McCarthy's Private Excommunication in *The Road*

Where you've nothing else construct ceremonies out of the air and breathe upon them.
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Why can a tale be repeated through the ages without any loss of oomph? The art of storytelling suffers from a bad case of déjà vu; indeed, it seems that every story ever written is a timber in the larger framework of a universal human chronicle. In the Western literary tradition, Judeo-Christian religious narrative is a ubiquitous presence. This is clear in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, which invokes elements of style and plot straight out of Scripture as the unnamed Man attempts to create a meaningful narrative for his son from the hallowed ghosts of the old world. Using Carl Jung's catalogue of the archetypes of literature, I will give an old college try at explaining the theology and sacred motifs of *The Road*. Spirituality provides solace and substance for Man and Boy in *The Road* in the same manner as it did for Peter and Paul in the Bible. The catch is that by using Biblical archetypes, McCarthy presents us with questions that are almost more difficult to ask than they are to answer. The Man's supposed meaningful narrative is little more than a lie constructed to maintain his son's and his own sanity; if we accept that McCarthy's style is a nod to Scripture, what does that mean for his stance on the legitimacy of the religious tradition? Is McCarthy trying to tell us that the theological framework upon which our society is built is as precarious as that which the Man prescribes for the Boy?

Zoe Osherow

The Truth in Ignorance:
Challenging a Person's Core Beliefs

When we ask for advice, we are usually looking for an accomplice.
- Saul Bellow

In *Henderson the Rain King*, Saul Bellow creates a protagonist whose struggle to find the purpose in life, and thus to subdue his feelings of unfulfillment and restlessness, leads him to Africa, where he embarks on a quest for existential enlightenment. Though he seeks advice from figures that Bellow terms "reality instructors," Henderson soon finds his core beliefs being challenged. Drawing upon critiques from William Freedman and Astrid Holm, who includes Jean-Paul Sartre in her examination of Henderson, my paper will explore the themes of self-exile despite the need for societal interaction, self-deception, and the conflict between truth and a person's self-imposed reality. I will argue that despite a person's conscious search for wisdom, he will not accept the truth he uncovers if it conflicts with his own version of reality. In doing so, we see that perhaps a person never pursues the truth in its pure form; in only stringing together the fragments that support his previously conceived notions, he may forever remain ignorant.

Ladies and Gentlemen...

Wednesday, April 13
5:00 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
Room B

Moderated by Lisa Locascio, Department of English

Yuliana Baskina

Femme Fatale in a Technological Apocalypse:
The Portrayal of Cylon Model Six in *Battlestar Galactica*

Do we create a false image of defenseless women because powerful women threaten our patriarchal society? Is letting a woman unleash the raw power behind her intelligence and sexuality such a frightening thought, that it is often equated with technological apocalypses? Technological narratives seem to always focus on objects, like robots, gaining intelligence and sentience. *Battlestar Galactica* centers on a world where humanoid robots, called Cylons, attack the human race as revenge for their enslavement. Cylon Model Six is a textbook femme fatale: cunning and oozing sexuality. She seduces key characters to propagate the Cylons' goals. Six shows how clever women can use objectification as a weapon of manipulation. Cylons are often represented by these female models, supporting the idea that society fears homicidal robots as much as the liberated women it objectifies. The Cylons reproduce our image of women via artificial production to appeal to human men both inside and outside the show. My paper will explore the relationship between the femme fatale, represented by Six, and the technological apocalypse in *Battlestar Galactica*, by analyzing the theory behind the representation of women on screen and critical discussions exploring the female role in the series.

Claire Bazley

Bend It 'til It Breaks:
Manipulative Masculinity in *The Silence of the Lambs*

By the time we meet them, Hannibal Lecter and Jame Gumb, the two antagonists of Thomas Harris's novel *The Silence of the Lambs*, are both fully-fledged, psychopathic serial killers. However, Harris shreds the comforting notion that these men can be classified as their own unique type of human by stretching each character's masculine identity in opposite directions. On one hand, Lecter gets very close to Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* (the "Overman" or "Superman"); on the other hand, Gumb fights to obscure every last hint of physical or emotional maleness. By allowing two contradictory men—one a highly cultured, Renaissance-like man, the other an empty, insecure shell of a person with no true gender identity—to both represent the unmistakable, violent, and unforgiving figure of the serial killer, Harris prevents us from reacting to Gumb and Lecter in the same way. Because their conflicting relationships with masculinity preclude them from being grouped into one tidy symbol of evil, the responses that these men elicit reveal the inconsistencies within the very definition of masculinity.

Morgan Furlong

Caught in a Landslide, No Escape from Reality:
The Act in Activist

I'm only beginning to see this now—how much I've been living through him. I mean, f**k!
I want to be up there speaking at the microphone.
- Susie in Sara Davidson's *Loose Change*

As the Second Wave feminist movement crashed onto the shore of an unwelcoming society, women continued to internalize the pervasive sexism that forced them to censor their truest selves. Despite their escape from the prison of being a 1950s housewife, many women activists continued to suffer silently from a demoralizing sense of inferiority. In Sara Davidson's *Loose Change: Three Women of the Sixties*, the seemingly confident character Susie is enslaved by her insecurities revolving around others' perception of her and by her doubts in her own beliefs. Using the writings of Betty Friedan and Joan Didion to further my own analysis, I will dissect Sara Davidson's portrayal of blunt, straightforward Susie and assess to what extent she is performing a false identity, and to what extent she simply represents women wrestling with the conflicts inherent of the period.

Amy Gebert

Män Som Hatar Kvinnor
(Men Who Hate Women)

As a girl she was legal prey . . .
-Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

In both Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and Raymond Chandler's *Lady in the Lake*, Lisbeth Salander and Phillip Marlowe the investigators bent on meting out justice and finding truth through vigilantism and detection. Both Marlowe and Lisbeth must submit to constant physical pain, which reinforces the ideas in Greg Forter's *Murdering Masculinities* of a gender system in crisis in these crime novels. While Marlowe uses this masochism to reaffirm his masculinity, Lisbeth's sufferings reveal a world of systematic and brutal misogyny that she combats by defying heteronormative gender roles. Forter argues that the pleasure the reader derives from these classic crime novels is in seeing, "a man . . . overcome a feminine 'outside' that threatens to pierce and dissolve him". Marlowe demonstrates this argument while Lisbeth turns this principal on its head because she shows her intention and ability to overcome a *masculine* "outside" that threatens to pierce and dissolve *her*. As Lisbeth continues her investigations, her gender flexibility allows her not only to unmask the villain but also to unmask the lies of heteronormativity and gender as a means of sexual control.

Katharine Soper

The Pugilist Mystique:
Gender Roles in Chuck Palahnuik's *Fight Club*

What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women.
- Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*

There is almost nothing more essentially "masculine" than boxing, pitting as it does two antagonists in a small ring who want nothing less than to physically pummel their opponent. *Fight Club* chronicles the story of a man, the narrator, who finds that fight club is the only place where he can assert his masculinity, release testosterone, and feel something. But the world of the fight club is a distorted one that creates warped views of gender. The absence of a father figure in the narrator's life, along with his inability to find appropriate male peers leads to his skewed perceptions of masculinity and gender roles. It is only through Tyler Durden, the second piece of his dual personality, that he is ultimately able to assert his masculinity.

Reality Check

Wednesday, April 13
5:00 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
Banquet Room

Moderated by Professor Antonia Szabari, Departments of French and Italian and Comparative Literature

Aaron Liu

Mind Against Matter:
Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and the Deception of Consciousness

Thoughts like these, completely useless in his present state,
went through his head as he stood glued to the door, listening.
- Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

In Franz Kafka's 1915 novella *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor amounts to a lie. He exists as a "monstrous vermin," but his hopeless belief that he can still maintain his obligations towards work and family in his metamorphosed state shields him from fully grasping the bizarre, irreversible transformation that has abducted and ravaged his material form. This denial pervades on multiple levels—his assertion of a sense of humanity lost in the transformation corresponds to a Freudian denial of the Id-like monstrosity, while his perception of the material realm as concrete amounts to an application of superficial order to disorder. Nevertheless, Kafka's use of Gregor's perspective to tell the story exposes Gregor's denial as an inescapable and inevitably human drive to pick out the truth through unreliable eyes. Ultimately, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* amounts to a multifaceted attack on the reliability of human consciousness. For Kafka, our route to knowing our world inevitably perverts, as consciousness and thought thwart us from seeing our own, chaotic form.

Lily Min

Two Sides, One Coin:
Media Versus Reality in *Tropic of Orange*

"You think news is entertainment." "It isn't?" This exchange, from Karen Tei Yamashita's novel *Tropic of Orange*, lays out the underlying purpose of this paper: to explore the use of factual information in the creation of news stories. The role of media outlets is ostensibly to be a source of accurate information, drawn from hard facts gathered through careful reporting, yet modern media often inflates or selectively edits stories for a maximum emotional impact; these news stories are superficially representative of the real stories, which stem from the streets of L.A. My paper illustrates the distortion of media by drawing from *Tropic of Orange*'s multiple perspective construction, which deftly weaves many characters of different backgrounds together. In particular, the characters of Buzzworm, a Vietnam vet who patrols the streets as an "Angel of Mercy" and sees the effects of unbridled greed and exploitation on the lower classes of L.A., and Emi, a technology-savvy TV exec, provide insight into how information travels, from street to station to screen.

Eliza Scofield

The Happiest Place on Earth:
Aesthetic Mis-Remembrances of the Past

The difference between false memories and true ones is the same as for jewels:
it is always the false ones that look the most real, the most brilliant.
- Salvador Dali

Individual recollections of past events are commonly fraught with unconscious half-truths and exaggeration. Both Andrei Tarkovsky's semi-autobiographical film *The Mirror* and Walt Disney's Disneyland are full of an intermingling of emotion and intellect resulting in an indistinguishable form of memory and reality. In order to recreate the tonality of what used to be, both men use a series of skewed aesthetically based accounts to remember their childhoods and manipulate their art as a means of physicalizing the past. The iconicity of Disneyland and the

controversy of Tarkovsky's film at the time of its release also imply that although the stories told and the mediums used by Tarkovsky and Disney are entirely individualistic and specific; they both are able to relate to a mass audience. Is there an innate human quality to prioritize the visual perhaps as a reflection of the instability of language? Or does a familiar nature of memory exist within all of us exposing its potential to transcend logic?

Whitney Tolar

Reality Without Boundaries:
A Discussion of Transcendence and Escapism in *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly by Jean-Dominique Bauby is an autobiographical account of Bauby's life as a victim of locked-in syndrome, documenting his experience as a prisoner of his own body. The line between fantasy and reality loses its distinction as Bauby begins to live more within his memories and daydreams than in the present, and his daydreams eventually become his reality as his physical situation limits him in a way that his mind does not. Bauby's escapist tactics eventually lead him to a form of transcendence, allowing him to overcome his physical limitations as well as the communication barrier that separates him from the rest of the world. By defeating the communication obstacle Bauby is able to compose *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* using a series of blinks with his left eye, thereby sharing his unique reality with hundreds of thousands of readers. My paper argues that reality does, in fact, lack physical boundaries and asserts the power of the human mind, as is evidenced by Bauby's memoir. Throughout my paper, I explore the Butterfly's (Bauby's mind) struggle to break free of the Diving Bell (Bauby's body), and how that triumph redefines what is traditionally thought of as "reality."

Jennie Zhang

Manipulating Identity Through Forgetting:
The Morality of Memory Removal

Blessed are the forgetful: for they get the better even of their blunders.
- Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche's quote in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* raises one of many questions: even if those who choose to forget their mistakes or traumatic memories are indeed happier, how moral are their methods in attaining such contentment? In the film, Joel and Clementine are ex-lovers who suffer so much from the thoughts of each other that they turn to a memory removal procedure to get over their traumatic break up. However, Joel realizes how valuable his memories with Clementine are only when they are taken away from him, and his helpless struggle against the procedure becomes the main crisis within the film. Although Joel and Clementine seem to be ridding themselves of their current pain, their relationship is no blunder, as shown by Joel's dedication to saving his memories, and the procedure leaves both neither blessed nor relieved. Nietzsche's quote may be correct in that Joel and Clementine are able to transcend their pain and move on, but it also means that they remorselessly lock away their mistakes and any possible lessons that they would have learned from them. In the end, Joel and Clementine leave their post-procedure identities with a sense of inexplicable loss, confusion, and anger. Through the act of forgetting and pretending their relationship never happened, Joel and Clementine succeed in lying and manipulating their future selves.

Stay Classy

Wednesday, April 13
5:00 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
Pub

Moderated by Professor Richard Fox, Department of History

Janet M. Edbrooke

The Hidden Homeless Emerge:
Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*

In its depiction of Los Angeles, *Tropic of Orange* makes visible the inhabitants of the city that often go unseen. After a cataclysmic freeway disaster, the city's homeless emerge and form a community amongst the rubble, compelling the rest of the city to pay attention to their plight. The novel's many characters, such as Emi, a news reporter who covers this event, initially convey a typical view of homelessness characterized by fear and distrust. The novel depicts the way in which these characters subconsciously create self-protective shields in order to grant themselves the luxury of ignoring the homeless situation. When the city's destitute population is thrust into the limelight as a result of the disaster, however, their true identities become clear and the other characters are forced to acknowledge their place in the multi-faceted city of Los Angeles.

Andrew Ju

Cinderella Stories:
A Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Folktale's Message of Social Mobilization

These tales are wrapped in fantasy and unreality . . . but they also serve the stories' greater purpose, to reveal possibilities . . . [and] advocate a means of escaping imposed limits and prescribed destiny.
- Marina Warner, "The Old Wives' Tale"

Folktales are fictional, imagined, or more simply: lies. Though this fantasy aspect is what makes the stories entertaining, literary critic Marina Warner argues in her essay "The Old Wives' Tale" that folktales use this unreality to inspire hope in the poor and underprivileged. "Cinderella," perhaps the most famous fairy tale of all, seems to prove this theory—but does this idea hold true not just with the Disney version, but with the older, cultural variants of the classic story? Eberhard and Parsons' translation of the Chinese story "Lin Lan" and Calvino's Italian folktale "Rosina in the Oven" reveal that while the Italian variant does adhere to Warner's theory, the Chinese version differs. However, both folktales reveal much about their culture's attitudes towards social mobility in how they adhere to Warner's theory. Specifically, Calvino's "Rosina in the Oven" has several references towards medieval Italian history and biblical allusions, while "Lin Lan" contains themes that encourage Confucian and Buddhist values. By conducting this cross-cultural comparison through the lens of a classic folktale, I intend to shed light on the different world views of two distinct cultures.

Katrina M. Kaiser

Passive *Passing*:
A Class-Focused Analysis of Nella Larsen's Novel

A successful performance of a racial identity is a two-way exchange that depends not only on how a person presents him or herself, but also on how the society that a person interacts with reads a racial meaning into certain symbols. In *Passing*, by Nella Larsen, the "mulatta" women Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry both have the ability to pass as white bodies. Given the backdrop of upper-middle class bourgeois society in 1920s Harlem, I will analyze how their socioeconomic statuses and individual experiences of class mobility affect both their respective modes of and motives for passing. Working from the framing assumption that identity comprises multiple performances of class and race, this paper then juxtaposes their different experiences with how class status actually creates material similarities between their performances of whiteness. My argument builds upon Judith Butler's concept of performativity and Homi Bhabha's explanation of community identity in order to identify the positive markers of whiteness through class, and to break with other definitions of whiteness as the neutral absence of oppression.

Jay Schrader

American Psychos:
Patrick Bateman is Not Alone

And as things fell apart / nobody paid much attention
- Talking Heads

Patrick Bateman is as much a chameleon as he is a cold-blooded killer. He flourishes in one of New York's highest social circles, hobnobbing with Wall Street executives and fashion models. Patrick's penchant for Brooks Brothers and Oliver Peoples nonprescription glasses along with his ambition to score a reservation at the ultra-chic Dorsia do little to distinguish him from his colleagues. But his penchant for murder and disembowelment falls outside the social norm. Or at least one would hope as much. In the novel, even Patrick himself acknowledges, "I am simply not there." What type of society, then, could harbor such an individual and generally consider him the "boy next door?" Sociopath is a broad term, leaving room for not only Patrick, but also his callous associates, who lead apathetic and selfish lives. In this paper I delve into the characteristics that connect Patrick Bateman and the people around him, as well as the fine line that separates their morals. *American Psycho* has an undeniable yuppie flair, but our society is not far removed from the shallow materialism that infects the culture of the book. How much of Patrick Bateman's inhumanity is reflected in the people around him, or even ourselves?

Anupama Tadanki

Art Labels:
Establishing the Roots For Society's Hierarchy Through Art

It appears as if art unites people, but this may be an untruth. In reality, art does exactly the opposite; it serves the role of an abstract social differentiator in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. With the inevitable power struggle and resulting class stratification that occurs soon after the colonization of India by the British, one way to determine a person's social position is to analyze indirect products of their community involvement. If the output of human creativity and intellect defines a society, then a society's art must shape the opinions and biases of the people. According to the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, different classes designate themselves by the different kinds of art that they consume. Using Bourdieu's idea, Forster attests to the power of artistic production because he is able to prove that it can manipulate people's perceptions of others in terms of social recognition and classification.

The Lies That Bind

Wednesday, April 13
5:00 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
Room C

Moderated by Heather Dundas, Department of English

Kelsey Harrison

What is a Family if not a Lie?

Bonnie Parker: I don't have no Momma. No family either.
Clyde Barrow: Hey, I'm your family!

Throughout Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*, we witness the creation of the "Barrow Gang," a group that grows to embody the ideas of a family but rejects the traditional values of America during the Great Depression. However, it is clear from the beginning that this family has been constructed around lies and deception. Bonnie and Clyde create the gang after Clyde tries to steal her mother's car and fabricates a story about her life, and C.W. Moss is convinced to join after they con him into robbing his own store. The only member of the Barrow Gang who seems to understand the truth about them is Blanche, and she never achieves the status of gang membership—she doesn't even receive a cut of their stolen earnings! In this departure from the normal depiction of the family, viewers are forced to confront the question: What is it that makes a family authentic? In our culture, the family unit is considered to be the cornerstone of our society, but in the case of Bonnie and Clyde, the family unit is built upon fictive necessities. The characters find themselves living out a version of Freud's "Family Romance" that he describes as, "day-dreams [which when] carefully examined . . . are found to serve as the fulfillment of wishes and as a correction of actual life." In *Bonnie and Clyde*, both they and we are forced to consider the possibility: What is a family if not a lie?

Olivia Mitchell

The Hyperreal Journey of a Hollywood Seductress in *The Day of the Locust*

I always thought it would be better to be a fake somebody than a real nobody.
- Tom Ripley, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*

Faye Greener cannot draw the line between reality and dreams in *The Day of the Locust*. She intensely desires to become an acclaimed Hollywood actress, but she fails to book any role throughout the story aside from that of an extra. As the harsh truth that she has little talent looms overhead, Faye resorts to blocking out reality and sustaining her acting fantasy by creating Eco's notion of a hyperreality, or an "Almost Real" substitute for her unreachable dream. In simpler terms, when Faye fails to become an actress on the silver screen, she becomes an actress in her own life. Taking on the role of a seductress, Faye enacts the screen's siren as she flaunts her attractive appearance and substitutes the praise she receives from men for the praise she would be receiving if she were a successful actress. As Faye uses men's compliments to fulfill her need for attention, Faye simultaneously creates a life for herself that is void of sincerity and real emotional relationships. In my seminar paper, I describe Faye's replacement of Hollywood acclaim with suitors' acclaim and analyze the lack of depth in Faye's life. I show that Faye's hyperreality is not an adequate replacement for reality and that her act as a seductress does not ultimately satisfy her emotionally.

Jessica Moxley

Family and Reproduction:
Alternatives in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Is a family more than mom, dad, and the kids? Is reproduction more than sperm, egg, and a baby? Is there a necessary relationship between reproduction and family? Marge Piercy's novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* explores a future in which new life is created artificially, and families are made up of three "co-mothers," many of which are men and bear no biological relation to the children they raise. Piercy's novel suggests that these alternatives are in fact healthier and more intuitive modes of reproduction and familial/societal organization. These alternative ideas

about reproduction and family are, while science fiction in the present, achievable goals for the future. Though these goals for society are lofty, Piercy's proposed separation of biological and social reproduction is something that we can now strive toward. I will look to gender theory and contemporary LGBT families to assess whether our current ideas about the nuclear family and biological reproduction are correct, or whether they are simply a few of the many lies we tell.

Allegra Tepper

Blood Relations:
Paternity and Puerilism in *Helter Skelter*

I have stayed in jail and I have stayed stupid, and I have stayed a child . . . . My father is your system . . . .
I am only what you made me. I am only a reflection of you.
- Charles Manson, Los Angeles Hall of Justice, November 19, 1970

In his sensational true crime novel *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders*, Vincent Bugliosi juxtaposes two antithetical pictures of one of the most notorious and inscrutable minds of the 20th century. To the press and public that feared him, Charles Manson was unshackled, satanic, macabre. He preached virulent polemics about apocalyptic race wars that spurred an onslaught of ruthless murders performed by the abundantly youthful members of his Family. However, Bugliosi also unveils that underneath Manson's hypnotic and barbarous exterior lies a troubled child that is desperate for attention and belonging. The noir narrative is wrought with language associated with youth and domesticity, somehow playing out both as a terrifying thriller and a juvenile playground game. Manson's fanatic followers maintain a childlike naïveté; the members of the "hippie kill cult" travel by school bus, bargain for depositions with candy, and guzzle chocolate milk after they've made a kill. Rebellious products of middle-class morality, they were escaping the classic American nuclear family. Bugliosi reveals, however, that that stability and cohesion is what Manson desired more than anything. He illuminates Manson's hunger for love, devotion, and some semblance of the fatherhood he himself never had. In doing so, he exposes Manson's delusions, and the tragic motives that fueled his chilling dynasty.

Lucy Tew

But It's Just a Summer Cold:
Lies and the Happy Ending in Comedy and Tragedy

There is a thin line that separates laughter and pain, comedy and tragedy, humor and hurt.
- Erma Bombeck

Philip Barry's comedic play *The Philadelphia Story* is set into motion by the lies of the Lord family as they survive a family wedding. Family secrets and lies also motivate the action of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Eugene O'Neill's posthumous tragic play. The difference between these two plays is in the consequences, or lack thereof, of the lies the characters tell. *The Philadelphia Story* has a happy ending because there are no repercussions for the characters, despite the fact that they spend the better part of the play being dishonest. As a result, the play takes on a cartoonish, unreal quality, as the audience acknowledges that no lie comes without a consequence. In a tragedy, however, every action has a consequence, especially when characters are dishonest. As Friedrich Nietzsche says, "Only by means of forgetfulness can man ever arrive at imagining that he possesses 'truth.'" Nietzsche's idea applies to the happy ending; if we as an audience forget that there is no such thing as a happy ending, we lose sight of the truth. This paper seeks to prove that tragedy is the genre of truth; it shows us what really happens when we lie to each other, and ourselves, especially when we lie about happy endings.

Gender's Game

Wednesday, April 13
7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Room A

Moderated by Robert Rabiee, Department of English

Annie Chung

Ballin':
Sexual Freedom in the 1960s

How free was "free love?" On the surface, the concept of free love appeared to flourish during the 1960s countercultural movement. However, beneath the illusion of utter sexual liberation, many were, in fact, intimidated by the transformation in relationship dynamics. This disparity in perspective is highlighted in texts written by male and female authors of the period. Ken Kesey's exploits, featured in Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, portray the sexual freedom men experienced during the height of the hippie era. On the other hand, Sara Davidson's *Loose Change* utilizes the feminist perspective to expose how women dealt with the distortion of the nuclear family form. By examining the language in both texts, I explore the dichotomy between male and female attitudes on sex and sexuality during the "Swinging Sixties" and create a more rounded understanding on the idea of free love.

Jocelyn Dicker

The Dangers of Cross-Dressing:
Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them;
we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts,
our brains, our tongues to their liking.
- Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

In *Orlando*, Orlando lives his first thirty years as a man and then one day he suddenly turns into a woman for no apparent reason. As a woman, Orlando uses cross-dressing as a way to manipulate her projected gender identity. In our society, many of us are threatened by gender inconsistencies, such as cross-dressing, because it threatens our understanding of gender in binary terms, but Orlando's world is much more accepting of gender fluidity. Although gender inconsistencies are perceived as dangerous to our society, I demonstrate how Orlando finds empowerment and freedom through her understanding and ability to use clothing as a gateway to a less restrictive sense of identity. Not only is Orlando able to project a different gender by cross-dressing but also the clothing she wears changes her own perceptions of her experiences and herself.

Shaina Eng

Happiness in Objectification:
Conformity as a Form of Rebellion in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Mrs. Dalloway. Even when taken by itself, the title of Virginia Woolf's novel suggests that the protagonist is subject to objectification, defined not by the idea that she is Clarissa, but that she is the wife of Mr. Dalloway. Living as an upper-middle class woman in London during the 1920s, Clarissa seems, at first glance, to be living up to societal expectations; she is married to a prominent member of society, she has raised a daughter, and she immerses herself in a life of parties, wealth, and propriety. Furthermore, she has turned her back on the "manly"activities she once enjoyed as a teenage girl, such as engaging in politics and reading Shakespeare plays and philosophical theories. However, the reader catches glimpses into her perspective, which lead us to believe that all is not as it seems. By looking at Judith Butler's theory of performativity, in which she argues that the ideas of gender are largely constructed and upheld by society, I argue that Clarissa initially assumes the role of the ideal female in order to hide her internal search for self. However, as time goes on, not only does Clarissa slowly begin to accept this socially constructed female identity but also she comes to defend it. What brings about this change in Clarissa, and why does she settle into the role that her society expects from her, the very role that she once questioned?

Fan Fan

Madame or Monsieur?: Gender Performativity as a Way of Fulfilling Desire in *M. Butterfly*

In David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, Renee Gallimard feels pressure from society to be a man. While he is a man biologically, Gallimard feels emasculated in his lack of power and inability to dominate a woman. An affair with beautiful Beijing opera singer Song Liling seems the answer to his problems—until he discovers that "she" is a man! In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that there is no real gender; a "stylized repetition of acts" (body motions, mannerisms), rather, creates the illusion of gender. This idea elucidates Gallimard and Song who create their gender roles through performance. Despite having faint knowledge that Song is a man, Gallimard chooses to believe that he/she is still his Butterfly and so acts the part of a man. Song "stylizes" his/her actions to meet Gallimard's expectations of the "Perfect Woman" even while effortlessly slipping between male and female forms. Furthermore, throughout the play, Gallimard likens himself to Pinkerton, the unattractive, unintelligent navy officer of Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*. Like Gallimard, Pinkerton lacks masculine qualities: he is not "handsome, nor powerful, nor brave," yet he miraculously wins the love of a beautiful (and submissive) woman just as Gallimard wins over Song. In comparing himself to a fictional character, Gallimard emphasizes his readiness to turn towards fantasy, or performance, to fulfill his desire for manhood. For Gallimard, gender performativity is the only way to transcend the reality of his emasculation. By convincing himself and those around him that he has finally won over a woman, Gallimard strives to achieve the "power of a man."

Keely Weiss

Pretty Women: *Sweeney Todd* and the Fallacy of the Madonna-Whore Complex

How they make a man sing! Proof of heaven as you're living: pretty women! Sir, pretty women!
- Todd and Turpin, *Sweeney Todd*

Female presence in Tim Burton's film adaptation of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* is limited, the character of Johanna, though central to the plot, functioning as little more than a prop. In fact, she and the character of Mrs. Lovett fit so neatly into the Madonna and whore archetypes that they belie their more feminist origins as characters with active agendas that clash against the social norms of their setting. In this paper, looking to the historical trends elucidated by Molly Haskell of female portrayal in cinema, I follow the derailment of *Sweeney Todd* from Stephen Sondheim's original stealth-feminist stage musical to Burton's filmic enforcement of societal norms. Drawing on bell hooks' theories about the gender dynamics of manipulation, as well as Jessica Valenti's clarification of the "purity myth" to which our society has long adhered, I will illustrate how Burton has defanged his heroines—and, thus, his film.

Grand Delusion

Wednesday, April 13
7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Room B

Moderated by Michelle Wilson, Department of English

Remington Dewan

Playing with Parables:
The Construction and Consequence of Alternative Meaning in Hal Ashby's *Being There*

In Hal Ashby's film adaptation of *Being There*, society has a hearing problem that cannot be solved with hearing aids. In the film, Chance, a developmentally disabled gardener, is elevated by the surrounding characters to the rank of Chauncey Gardiner, businessman, diplomat, and lover. In doing so, the satire clearly shows that while the well- and politically-connected society of *Being There* hears Chauncey Gardiner's words—in fact, they repeat them to others throughout the film—they do not listen to the literal meaning of his words, but instead construct a metaphorical meaning. This paper proposes that the metaphorical meaning is not the result of miscommunication, but rather, Ben and Eve Rand impose their own metaphorical meaning on Chauncey's words in order to voice or satisfy their existential problems of meaninglessness and loneliness. The paper identifies the existential problem of Ben Rand—his worry about his meaninglessness and legacy due to his imminent death—and examines how Ben's interpretation of Chauncey's words is able to voice and satisfy this problem. Similarly, the paper identifies Eve's existential problem—her loneliness and alienation—and examines how the metaphorical meanings she attaches to Chauncey's words address her need for companionship. Lastly, the paper argues that as needs are met, Chauncey's status is continuously raised in order to meet those needs, ultimately becoming a Christ-like figure, who can meet the needs of all with his parables.

Andrina Dominguez

"Facts, Hercule, Facts! Nothing Matters but the Facts":
Absurdity and Reality in the Detective Story

According to Camus, the absurd man persists incessantly with a can-do attitude to unearth the meaning of life. In Blake Edward's *A Shot in the Dark*, bumbling detective Jacques Clouseau comically sets about to solve a whodunit murder mystery. In Raymond Chandler's *The Lady in the Lake*, Marlowe embarks on a similar venture to uncover the truth at the scene of a violent murder. Marlowe operates systematically, following lead after lead to obtain truthful testimonies. Clouseau takes on the same task, yet his absurdity creates comedy gold. Everyone except the foolish detective can clearly see who committed the crime. Whereas Marlowe steps out of his role as serious detective during brief moments of self-awareness, commenting on the absurd nature of the detective story, Clouseau's absurdity lies in the fact that he never once recognizes his own ridiculousness. He fervently believes that he is, as the public imagines, "the greatest detective in all of France." Camus argues that Sisyphus only reaches contentment after realizing the absurd futility of his life. Yet perhaps such a character as Clouseau, a man who truly believes in his noble cause, lives happily in his false reality. Marlowe deals with the filth of Los Angeles while clueless Clouseau fumbles about the streets of Paris, content in his absurd existence. Could living a lie be the only true road to happiness?

Olivia Gardner

The Reluctant Villain

Villains! Italo Calvino's anthology of folklore *Italian Folktales* would not enchant its readers without them. Indeed, while structuralist Vladimir Propp's theories, which categorize all villains as one group, lay a firm foundation for understanding Calvino's work, Propp failed to perceive an important phenomenon: The villain directs the tale. Because the villain sets the tone of the story, it is necessary to differentiate the types of villains into subcategories that exemplify its thematic elements. I have identified one strain of villain, the reluctant villain, who defies the stereotype and is compelled by external forces into villainy. For example, in "The Girl Sold with the Pears," the father must sell his own daughter to pay a tax. In doing so, these reluctant villains subtly criticize the darker aspects of inevitable social, economic, and political pressures. Through the structural lens of the reluctant villain's function

in folktale, the underlying struggle of the narrative bursts into the light and suggests an unsettling question: Do we condemn reluctant villains in folktales because circumstances never excuse villainy, or do we fear facing the reluctant villain in ourselves?

Madelyne Heyman

Fleeing Down the Rabbit Hole: How the Human Mind Handles Trauma

There can hardly be anything on earth as traumatizing as experiencing the battlefield, watching as your comrades are struck down beside you in bloody chaos, every step you take threatening to be your last. While not every person can say they have lived through such conditions, Sigmund Freud will be quick to tell us that each and every one of us carries within the memory of trauma. For John Berlin in Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato*, his stress at the hands of the Vietnam War drives him on a fantastic journey down the rabbit hole and far from the battlefield, a journey that takes place entirely in his head. O'Brien's allusion to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that is manifested in Berlin's journey gives us a glimpse into the mind of a severely traumatized soldier. In my paper I will explore this allusion and its relation to the way the mind handles severe trauma. When there is absolutely no other means of escape, we must escape into our own minds and construct an alternate reality in which we erase that which has traumatized us. However, as Freud and many other psychiatrists that specialize in trauma have agreed, one cannot run forever, and the dream that has been created as an escape may become a nightmare.

Jason Wei

Protective Delusions: The Megalomaniac's Guide to Creating Revolutionary Ideas

An idea that is not dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all.
- Oscar Wilde

Schizophrenia—a condition to be feared of or desired? Schizophrenia in *Fight Club* is a major aspect of the book's plot and is a pervasive influence in the novel's development. Although one may initially regard schizophrenia as a factor to be overcome in the narrator's experiences, Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that schizophrenia is categorized into protective delusions, making it a key influence in megalomania. As a result, a closer look into the characterization of *Fight Club* shows Tyler Durden as the decision making process, the little voice inside everyone's head that is so crucial in the development of groundbreaking ideas. Without Tyler Durden as the outlet for the narrator to explore the solutions to his problems, there would be no "fight club" or "Project Mayhem." The use of Tyler Durden as the sole protective delusion in *Fight Club* is an alternative, revolutionary concept that sheds a new light on the condition of schizophrenia, especially in megalomania. Therefore, revolutionary ideas such as *Fight Club* must come from a perversion of our original minds and personalities, resulting in schizophrenia as a factor that is beneficial, rather than detrimental, in megalomaniacal processes.

Not So Great Expectations

Moderated by Professor Elinor Accampo, Department of History

Wednesday, April 13
7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Banquet Room

Maggie Altergott

"Poor Creatures":
Maintained Dehumanization in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Skinjobs, organ factories, internees, people: how and why do we draw the line between "us" and "them" when the boundaries between human and object blur with the advent of new technology? In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, the human "guardians" and the organ donor clones they raise at Hailsham School present the exploitation of living, breathing, feeling creatures for the sake of the greater good. Why is life, itself so hard to classify in light of cloning, so readily and repeatedly restricted? Why do the donors remain so complicit in their own demise? I explore this two-sided justification of dehumanization by relating Ishiguro's alternative future to historical societies that deemed certain humans inferior. Ishiguro suggests parallels between Hailsham and concentration camps. I assess conditioning methods and dehumanization of "poor creatures" in both clones and prisoners with help from critical scholarship, including writings by Shameem Black and Martin Puchner. Ishiguro's work provides insight into the restrictive ways we define humanity and the "lies" we create to justify such treatment.

Alexandra Corley

***Faces in the Water* and the Myth of the Mad Prophet**

Precious is the passing moment.
- Anonymous

Tiresias, Cassandra—these are the prophets people have come to know in classical literature. Their stories are the same: deemed insane for their ability to reveal undesirable truths, cast apart from society, sneered at. Yet, these stories possess, although not a happy ending for all of the characters, at least a kind of triumph for those we like to call, the "mad prophets," for eventually they receive proper recognition for their foresight. Janet Frame's *Faces in the Water*, a semi-autobiographical account of a woman's false imprisonment in two different mental institutions, attempts to debunk the destructive literary tradition that is the romanticization of the association between madness and prophecy. The perpetuation of this tradition is, therefore, the perpetuation of the constant distraction from the true issues of mental illness and the lack of authority possessed by those who are deemed insane. Frame's creation of the character Istina, who takes pride in her seemingly telling perspective on her surroundings in a mental institution, illustrates that the only way to gain authority in a place that is so twisted and corrupt is to be an author of not a prophetic truth, but a retrospective one.

Sean Drake

"Getting All Umbrella":
Reproductive Futurism in *Never Let Me Go*

Since its emergence on the scholarly scene within the last quarter-century, queer theory has centered itself around the distinction between the sexually queer and the heteronormative. For queer theorist Lee Edelman, societal structure lies strictly on the heteronormative side of the divide. According to Edelman in his scathing polemic *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, society judges the sexual behavior of queer individuals as narcissistic and societally threatening on the basis that it does not focus on producing the future in the form of children, a theory he coins as "reproductive futurism." Turning to Kazuo Ishiguro's science-fiction novel *Never Let Me Go*, I question Edelman's own conceptions of who qualifies as sexually queer by exploring the sexuality of a group of human clones considered queer for their sterility. In the process, the sexual binary foundational to Edelman's theory betrays its own artificiality, revealing a problematic fluidity of sexuality for proponents of reproductive futurism.

Alicia Guo

Love Thy Brother:
An Examination of the Use of Incest in *The Cement Garden*

In *The Cement Garden*, Ian McEwan utilizes the incest committed between the narrator Jack and his sister Julie as a rhetorical tool to reveal that societal norms and taboos can be broken down. These orphan children, isolated from neighbors, rules, and regulations live in their own private universe, free to do whatever they please. Set in the late twentieth century, McEwan's novel invokes Freud's *Totem and Taboo* by creating a family that resembles the primal hoard in Freud's theory. Similar to the incestuous clan proposed in Freud's theory, Jack and Julie also commit incest in their private domain. However, unlike Freud's theory where incest is prohibited in order to protect the primal father and sustain the family, Jack and Julie's incestuous relationship frees the family from its burdens, reunites the family, and is altogether described as a beautiful moment. Therefore, though at first it appears that it is the police bearing down upon the children that finally breaks the narrator's solipsism, in reality it is the incestuous moment before they arrive that brings Jack and his family all together. While McEwan is not advocating that incest is the key to thriving families, he is stating that perhaps sometimes in order to grow one must first break the seemingly truthful taboos and laws of society in order to obtain this growth.

Lara E. Nichols

A Taste of Honey:
The Deceptive Sweetness of Words and Appearance in *The Silence of the Lambs*

There is an undeniable charm about Hannibal Lecter. His delicacy of manner, his exemplary conversational skills, and his obvious intelligence give him an aura that is both refined and cultivated. Yet this same man who attracts us so with worldliness and urbanity is also in a mental institution for killing, maiming, and devouring multiple victims. Many scholars have noted the disconcerting dichotomy in Lecter's character, generally coming to the conclusion that his murders constitute violent outbursts of passionate emotion which are the result of childhood trauma and remain fundamentally distinct from his suave exterior. However, I would challenge the established literature and argue that Lecter's murders, rather than being departures from his general conduct, are extensions of his own personal system of morality, which, rather than following societal norms, is answerable to him alone. In the style of Nietzsche's *übermensch*, Lecter has created his own aesthetic moral code to live by, in which chivalry, politesse, and culture can easily coexist with serial murder and cannibalism.

Super Duped

Wednesday, April 13
7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Pub

Moderated by Professor William Handley, Department of English

Katherine Armstrong

The Truths We Hide:
Exploring Social Control in *Mrs. Dalloway*

The romanticized England that Septimus envisions and voluntarily defends is illusory. His idealized empire, based almost solely on "Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square," crumbles as he witnesses the arbitrariness and pointlessness of war, and, with his return from World War I, he brings a disillusioned idea of the British Empire. The England that Septimus once loyally protected, seemingly full of possibility, enchantment, and power, dissolves into a culmination of patriotic symbols. In this paper, I argue that these emblems representative of the empire, including Big Ben, Shakespeare, and Buckingham Palace, mask the malevolence in English society in *Mrs. Dalloway*. I strive to show that as these symbols of British nationalism become more universal and powerful, they transform into elements of social control by tricking English subjects, like Septimus, into believing their substantiality. I use Marx's concept of "mystification," which essentially claims that exploitation is intentionally misrepresented as appearances of power and benevolence, and then explain that the symbols that seem benign actually disguise oppression in Woolf's British society.

Jaime Castrellon

Mutual Manipulation:
The Perpetuation of Follower Support and False Charisma

They cheered just like that for Obote . . . until they realized that he turned
their economy into a personal bank account.
- Sarah Merrit, *The Last King of Scotland*

In Kevin Macdonald's 2006 film *The Last King of Scotland*, Forest Whitaker's role as Ugandan dictator Idi Amin highlights the complexities of leadership psychology. More importantly, the film provides an example of the degree of influential power that supporters and journalists have on the charisma of a leader. Whereas in the presence of large applauding audiences and supportive guests Amin is amiable, he reveals his dark insecurities when tabloids tarnish his public image. Although psychologists and political scholars often recognize leaders for their seemingly genuine charm, many neglect to acknowledge the strong effect of positive reinforcement and popular support by followers and journalists on the confidence and charm of these leaders in power. In fact, this individual "charm" may be a result of a leader's dependence on positive support, causing a desire to sustain a favorable image. With citations from modern social psychology, this paper seeks to identify a relationship between positive reinforcement from followers and the extent to which a leader will lie in order to maintain and increase their own positive public image. From Adolf Hitler to Mu'ammar Al-Qadhafi, political leaders have demonstrated the significant value of supportive followers on the false charismatic images that leaders display.

Ryan Hauck

Immortality in Batches:
How Tarkovsky's Take on Memory Threatened the Soviet Union

On its surface, Andrei Tarkovsky's film *The Mirror* is a story about the heroic sacrifices of a mother, the role of military experience in building character, and the virtue of perfection. All of these themes are straight out of the Soviet propaganda playbook. Why then was Tarkovsky hounded by Soviet censors every step of his career, including *The Mirror*, to the point that his death is sometimes attributed to the KGB? Beneath its reflective fascia, *The Mirror* is fundamentally concerned with memory. It is based on Tarkovsky's own recollections and tells its story through fragments of episodes and dreams. By examining Tarkovsky's musings on memory and its implications from his book

Sculpting Through Time, as well as Peter Kenez's writings on the history and purpose of propaganda, this paper will explore the ways in which Tarkovsky's portrayal of memory suggests the dual possibilities of decay and divergence, thus threatening to subvert the teachings and goals of the Soviet state.

Jennifer Lapp

Ken Kesey the Kool-Aid Prophet:
Freedom and Self-Deception in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*

All of them forever waiting for Kesey, circling around him.
- Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*

In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, author Tom Wolfe paints a portrait of writer Ken Kesey and Kesey's unspoken control over his disciples, the Merry Pranksters, as they travel across the country and throughout California proclaiming the life-enhancing benefits of hallucinogenic drugs. The way that Wolfe constructs his narrative highlights a dilemma woven into the thread of Kesey's world of counterculture. On the one hand, cultural critic Ken Goffman contends that counterculture is the yearning for freedom and a rejection of authority; however, the counterculturalists of Wolfe's novel are presented as disciples blindly following their leader. The pages of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* are saturated with control, that is to say the subtle yet potent power that flows directly from the charismatic Ken Kesey. The sociological construct of charisma contends that charisma is born out of the careful infiltration of the sacred into the secular, and, in his construction of Kesey, Wolfe combines the reality of a priest-like figure with the mysticism of a prophet to create the religiously based system of control that Kesey has over his followers. Instead of achieving the freedom that they so desperately seek, Wolfe's counterculturalists are, in effect, lying to themselves: They may think that they have liberated themselves from the boundaries of control, but they have only done so to fall under the magnetic pull of the charismatic quagmire that is Ken Kesey.

Zoë Warganz

The American Dream is Humanity's Nightmare:
Heroism and Social Class in *The Silence of the Lambs*

Clarice Starling is the obvious heroine of *The Silence of the Lambs*, but she is not the readers' only champion. We think we love Clarice because she is hunting Evil; but really, we love Clarice because her pursuit signifies her ascension from the lower class to where she really belongs—the high society of Dr. Hannibal Lecter. And we really love Hannibal Lecter. Starling and "Buffalo Bill" come from fundamentally the same social background, and both aspire to be "better" than the status they are born into. But while we identify with Clarice, Jame Gumb repulses us. Clarice's defeat of Gumb symbolizes what we all aspire to. She is a representation of the true American Dream: she is special. She can escape the lower levels of society, not because she works hard, but because she doesn't really belong there. She is chosen by the upper tiers of society; a status personified by "Hannibal the Cannibal." Dr. Lecter speaks to Clarice when he will cooperate with no one else: he acts as mentor, nourishing her ambition. *The Silence of the Lambs* makes us question the implications of social aspiration and the fundamental foundations of the American value system. We can forgive a cannibal, as long he's well-mannered and has a refined taste in clothes and Chianti.

The Human Conditioned

Wednesday, April 13
7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Room C

Moderated by Edward Kozaczka, Department of English

Alexandra Babiarz

What Really Makes a Man:
Performative Acts and Gender Constitution in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*

In Héctor Babenco's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, inmates Luis Molina and Valentín Arregui debate what constitutes a "real man"—being "marvelous-looking" and "strong" or "not taking any crap from anybody" and "not letting the people around you feel degraded." Their arbitrary answers introduce the radical contention of anthropologist Gayle Rubin and feminist theorist Judith Butler into the film: gender is a social construct. "Gender reality" in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* is, according to Butler, "performative, which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed." Luis, a "queen," self-consciously performs the "local version of 'feminine' traits," while Valentín aggressively performs the "'masculine' traits." The film suggests that gender is a culturally constructed lie, constituted by performative acts that are not rooted in the biological distinctions between sexes. This analysis exposes the political implications of performative acts and gender constitution in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. The juxtaposition of Luis and Valentín within the confines of a prison cell equates their "crimes": Luis's homosexuality and gender bending are as subversive to 1980s Argentinian society as Valentín's leftist revolutionary activities.

Sarah Chang

Who am I?:
The Many Identities of Clarissa Dalloway

What is identity? For some people, their social status constitutes their identity. For others, occupations are key. Although the descriptions people use to identify themselves are many and varied, most of these descriptions have a common denominator: they involve relationships. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, eponymous character Clarissa Dalloway dons many (metaphorical) hats, contingent on her relationships to others. Depending on the situation, Clarissa can be described as a woman, wife, hostess, or all of the above. Clarissa's identity is not about who she is, but rather what she is in relation to others. And yet, this interpretation of identity still seems incomplete. After all, Clarissa Dalloway is more than just a woman, wife, hostess, or all of the above. As the text delves into Clarissa's thoughts and feelings, it reveals aspects of her private personality that also contribute to her identity. This paper explores the intersection between outside perceptions and inner convictions in an attempt to answer the question: Who or what is Clarissa Dalloway? Is she what others see her as? Or is she what she thinks she is? The answer, as this paper argues, is: Yes.

Cailin Lowry

The Evolution of *Passing*:
Clare Kendry as a Third Culture Kid

Race is often perceived—both literally and metaphorically—as a black and white determinate of identity. This dichotomous definition of race began to be undermined with the early twentieth century act of "passing"—when an individual lives as a member of a race other than his or her own. This act is the focus of Nella Larsen's 1929 novel *Passing*, which features biracial Clare Kendry living as a white woman. *Passing* seems to have evolved in the latter half of the past century when a new social phenomenon was defined with the theory of Third Culture Kids, a label for individuals who are born into one society, raised in another, and create their own identity as a result. Using both the notion of third culture and Judith Butler's theory of performative identity, I will explore Clare Kendry's character as a Third Culture Kid. Through understanding Clare in this context, I hope to reveal that racial binaries are a fundamental lie of society and that through embracing a dynamic identity, the social construct of race can be left behind. Beyond this, I will analyze the negative reactions characters have towards Clare and question what they suggest about society's fear of transcending identity.

Natalie Morin

A Fascinating Violation:
Exploring the Limits of Familial Love in *The Cement Garden*

"I am in love with my brother." Did you flinch? Let's explore the idea of what one does when nobody is looking. Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden* explores the concept of incest, and how the absence of society erodes its taboo nature. We tell ourselves that violating such a taboo is immoral and contradicts our nature, but does it? Are we simply lying to ourselves? The theories and ideas of Sigmund Freud (namely in *Totem and Taboo*), and McEwan's social experiment force us to reconsider what is natural or instinctual, and what is not—how when one's environment is devoid of judgment and "watchful eyes," one does not so easily internalize the difference between virtue and vice.

Marissa Roy

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall:
The Ubiquity of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Fairy Tales

Aren't you ashamed to show yourself after becoming so ugly?
- The Prince, "The Thieving Dove"

Once upon a time, there was a princess whose success was defined by her physical beauty. In Italo Calvino's "The Thieving Dove," as in countless fairy tales, the heroine cannot escape the superficiality of her world, just as many contemporary women cannot escape it in theirs. As the main arbiter of morality for children, fairy tales—with their constant emphasis on beauty—have inculcated female objectification in generations of children, teaching them that intelligence, integrity, and kindness rank second after beauty. While some feminist writers, such as Angela Carter, have sought to rewrite fairy tales to give the heroine more control and power, they have not been able to overcome the idea that beauty is a fundamental aspect of being a "good" woman. One of the last strongholds of sexism, superficiality still lives happily ever after.


UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
1880
PALMAM QUI MERUIT FERAT