

# translation

ninth annual thematic option research conference

April 10-11, 2006

*Translation is the other side of a tapestry.*

- Cervantes

*Translation is entirely mysterious. Increasingly I have felt that the art of writing is itself translating, or more like translating than it is like anything else. What is the other text, the original? I have no answer. I suppose it is the source, the deep sea where ideas swim, and one catches them in nets of words and swings them shining into the boat... where in this metaphor they die and get canned and eaten in sandwiches.*

- Ursula K. Le Guin

*Translation is the art of failure.*

- Umberto Eco

Thematic Option Honors Program  
USC College of Letters, Arts & Sciences  
University of Southern California

Translation seeks to establish an equivalence of intent between source and target. This contract is implicit in every act of communication, in the issue and reception of every mode of meaning, be it in the widest semiotic sense or in more specifically verbal exchanges. To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate. Success in translation is measured by fidelity and transparency, the areas where we can also uncover the fatal flaw in the structure of translation. For this movement, metamorphosis, bridging, has a transitional space, a gap. And within this profound abyss between source and target, what is lost and what can be found?

This Conference invites you to explore translation as a process or idea and investigate its problems and potentials through research into a topic or theme of your choosing.

## **Background and Purpose**

The Thematic Option Honors Program, part of the USC College of Letters, Arts & 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.

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

## **Student Conference Coordinators:**

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Kelsey Dixon  
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Sarah Schuessler  
Myung Shin  
Clive Stanger  
Kristen Stolt  
Elissa Stooker  
Matias Sueldo  
Brian Wells

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

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# Missed Connections

Moderated by Professor Nick Strimple, Thornton School of Music

Monday, April 10

6:00 – 7:15 p.m.

Room A

**Jesse Lee**

## **Family Lies:**

### **Narration and Deception in *Lolita*, *White Noise*, and *American Beauty***

Over the last half century, lying has become a dominant characteristic of both filmic and literary first person narratives about American family life. In novels such as Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, for instance, the truth threatens to destabilize families while deception holds them together. Likewise, in Sam Mendes' film *American Beauty*, lying helps preserve an outward image of a happy home amidst threats of deviance and unhappiness. This trend of deception in mid to late twentieth-century family-related narratives reveals the role lying plays in preserving the fiction of normalcy among husbands and wives, sons and daughters. The works examined in this paper demonstrate how the lie has become not only helpful, but essential, in translating dysfunctional families into at least outwardly normal ones.

**Olivia Miller**

## **Miss-communication in *Thelma and Louise*:**

### **A Case for Coupling Instead of Community**

Much of the criticism of *Thelma and Louise* focuses on the film as a feminist commentary. However, reducing the lens of analysis in such a way means that other issues are ignored. One such issue is the statement the film makes about communication and community. Two patterns of communication arise for Thelma and Louise: external communication and internal communication, and each has different consequences for the women. External communication, which hurts the women, refers to communication with people outside of the pair of women while internal communication, which helps the women, refers to communication between Thelma and Louise. The film advocates internal communication over external communication and suggests a superiority of coupling over community interaction. I argue that the prioritization of internal communication and coupling is misleading because in the end the women's larger problems go unresolved.

**Amy Rutherford**

## **Disease and Dysfunction:**

### **Alcoholism and the Family in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night***

In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Eugene O'Neill offers a literary case study on the effects of alcoholism on an American family. The Tyrones reveal how alcohol diminishes inhibitions and removes the obstacles of compassion and respect. In the play, as in real life, alcoholism allows family members to repeatedly uncover the issues at the core of the family's problems with a kind of cutting honesty sobriety would never allow. But the Tyrones' family dynamic becomes so entrenched in illness that they begin to rely on it as a way of relating to one another. While alcoholism is slowly killing them physically and harming their relationships, it also seems to be the thing keeping them together. Illness becomes a sort of perverse paradoxical glue that is holding this family together while also tearing it apart.

**Roxanne Scher**

**Until Death Do Us Part:  
The Hazards of Marital Communication in Non-Linear Time**

Communication between a husband and wife is often akin to translating two different languages. *The Time Traveler's Wife*, by Audrey Niffenegger, centers around the marriage of Clare and time traveler Henry, and Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* focuses on that of Kevin and time traveler Dana. Involuntary time travel makes life difficult enough - the added element of marriage makes it even more difficult. Gender plays a remarkable role in both novels, whereas the woman is left alone and without control in one, and the man is without control in the other. The alteration of the linearity of time makes apparent the stark differences in the dynamics of the relationship between the man and the woman, causing strain, miscommunication, and grave misunderstandings.

**Stephanie Taylor**

**Eating Their Words:  
Food, Fear and Reality in *The Glass Menagerie***

Aspects of Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie* reflect the universal bond formed between people through food and eating, regardless of their relationship away from the dining table. The three members of the Wingfield family live in separate worlds and are unequipped to communicate, in the verbal sense, between their separate realities. For Amanda, food serves as a translator and a universal connection, a means to communicate without breaching the boundaries of her independent existence, a breach that would surely drive her to the brink of insanity. However, Amanda's desperate attempts to show caring towards her children are not enough to keep her worst fears from being realized - at the end of the play, John abandons the family, and Laura becomes lost in her self-pity.

# Impossible Possibilities

Moderated by Professor Thomas Habinek, Department of Classics

Monday, April 10

6:00 – 7:15 p.m.

Room B

**Hans Bernhard**

## **The Plight of a Writer With Good Taste**

Why do so many things “taste like chicken”? Do rattlesnake, frog legs, and alligator actually taste like chicken, or is there simply a lack of vocabulary to describe each dish’s unique flavor? When an object is consumed, the body physically absorbs it, translating chemical signals into mental perceptions. Since our perception is governed by a finite lexicon, it is often limited by our ability to describe it. For the lack of a better word, what goes in the mouth as a delectable rattlesnake meal is translated into nothing more than a chicken dinner. This presentation will not offer a solution to this problem, but will instead explore the variability of flavor perception to explain why taste is the most difficult sense to describe.

**Nathan Carter**

## **Traumatic Violence and Other Household and Nursery Tales**

The persistence of fairy tales throughout different cultures and eras defies attempts to interpret them allegorically or symbolically; some strand of meaning seems to persist even when these functions are no longer culturally understood. Their lasting meaning is somehow empathetic; by the abstraction of fantasy, they invite a multiplicity of interpretative frameworks. This receptiveness allows, in many ways, traumatic experiences and other sorts of physical and emotional violence to be translated into their narrative terms and ultimately resolved. A sample of three Grimms’ tales, “The Partnership of the Cat and the Mouse,” “The Golden Bird,” and “The Six Swans,” offer three very different empathetic relationships to its characters and readers undergoing violence: assuring that violence is transformative, or violence is inevitable, or one can indeed be rescued from violence.

**Becca Dorman**

## **Not In My Wildest Dreams: Wish Fulfillment in *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Primer***

Dreams are the fulfillment of unattainable wishes, says Freud. They are fantasies without consequences. From an employee’s daydream of telling the boss to take this job and shove it to Billy Pilgrim’s “unstuck in time” trips to Tralfamadore in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, fantasy provides a certain safety because it is just that: fantasy. In reality, however, there exists a clear line between dreams that can be made real, and those forever relegated to the realm of fantasy. But what happens when that line is blurred, even crossed? The wish fulfillment method of the time traveling protagonists in Shane Carruth’s film *Primer* is decidedly more real than Billy Pilgrim’s space travel, and highlights the concrete consequences that follow when man’s deepest desires translate from mere wishful thinking to the very attainable.

**Jennifer Garstang**

**Artistic Medium or Commercial Mundane?:  
The Position of Games in the Academic Community**

They're violent, juvenile, and rot your brain—at least that is the general consensus—but computer games have the potential to become a powerful art form. The *Myst* series explores complex issues and evokes strong emotions in much the same way that literature does. Computers could possibly become a medium that artists use to translate subjective portions of reality. Indeed, computer games have several advantages over other art forms, which primarily stem from their ability to directly involve the player. However, computer games also have several disadvantages, such as their dependence on the mass-market, that may keep them from reaching their potential. These games now stand in a precarious position. Will they develop into a respected art form, or will they continue to remain slaves to the market?

**Nicholas Haskell**

**Boys Will Be Girls:  
Gender and Power in MMORPGs**

Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games are not just the time sink of the young and unacademic. Digital anonymity translates fundamental human interaction into entirely different paradigms. Those who hold little respect in “the real world” can be revered figures in-game. One of the more interesting of these interactions is the inversion of traditional gender and power structure in the game. Though many more males play the game for longer than most females, social skills primarily attributed to females (such as the role of mediator, increased emphasis on personal relationships) are mandatory for success and advancement within the game. This unique power structure serves to blur the gender divide and grants women the advantage in this digital environment.

# America, the Beautiful?

Moderated by Dr. Michael Blackie, Thematic Option

Monday, April 10

6:00 – 7:15 p.m.

Banquet Room

**Anuj Aggarwal**

## **Walt Disney: Translating a National Need into a Culture**

After World War II, America saw the rise of a middle class society attempting to define itself through culture and art. A distinct quandary for society was the reconciliation between “high” art and “low” art; was it possible for there to be a genre which would be appreciated by the “nuclear” family? Walt Disney, using the medium of animation defied culture’s traditional definition. He incorporated American ideals making it accessible to the common man yet appreciable by art critics, something seen in works such as *Fantasia* to Disneyland itself. In doing so, Walt Disney began the phenomenon that continues to this day- that of a culture geared for a global middle class.

**Matt Brennan**

## *America Beauty or Far From Heaven?:* **Possibilities for Communication in the American Suburb**

In his 1956 book *The Organization Man*, William H. Whyte, Jr., claims that conflicts within suburban American society are primarily “misunderstandings, breakdowns in communication.” Sam Mendes’ *American Beauty* and Todd Haynes’ *Far From Heaven* incisively portray and examine those misunderstandings, which are bred by what Mike Davis calls “the barbed-wire social fencing” of suburban planning. In representing the pinnacle of the American Dream, the suburbs it seems have also become exclusionary bastions of homophobia and racism. By depicting families undone by their own prejudicial relationships with the “abnormal”, *American Beauty* and *Far From Heaven* suggest that the conformism and elitism built into the fabric of suburban life leads ultimately to breakdown from within, and, more broadly, a mistranslation of American ideals.

**Nicole Hummel**

## **Raoul Duke’s Green Light: Gatsby’s American Dream in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas***

A road trip to Las Vegas for business becomes a twisted search for the elusive “American Dream” in Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, when a news reporter and his attorney bring along “two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half-full of cocaine and a whole galaxy of multicolored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers.” In a eulogistic article published shortly after Thompson’s suicide in 2005, *The New Yorker* writer Louis Menand notes the author’s efforts to mimic the style of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Accordingly, I argue that Thompson’s piece becomes a translation of Fitzgerald’s criticism of American values in the Jazz Age into a more contemporary interpretation of those values. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is a twist on a classic that reinforces the reality of the nightmare Fitzgerald characterizes as “the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock... the orgasmic future that year by year recedes before us.”



**Lauren Scanlon**

### **Fast Food Universe**

With fast food chains on every corner and the popularity of generic take-out, a home-cooked meal has become less of a priority to the “American” family. A young child sees this food as specifically American and desires that connection to our culture, regardless of their own cultural background. They see their native food as evidence of their abnormality and may not be inclined to prepare it as frequently. Food can be a gateway to a child’s learning about his heritage or an immigrant holding on to a piece of their homeland. The attitude in this country and increasingly around the world, especially among its youth is apathetic to their heritage and increasingly desiring more and more Americanization. *Fast Food Nation* tells the tales of the fast food industry from the very beginning and its severe impact upon society. Through this presentation I will prove that as an American it is difficult to relate to one’s heritage not only because of our discouragement of cultural cliques and desire to be a part of our own unique cultural background, but because of the underlying effect that food has on our subconscious and the difficulty in translating cultural foods to young people around the world who are immersed in this world of convenient, inexpensive fast food.

**Matthew Tako**

### **To Live and Die in L.A.**

It is arguable that the center of American popular culture is the city of Los Angeles. As the second largest city in the United States and the center of the American film industry, a great deal of attention is paid to Los Angeles through popular media. However, what does this saturation of L.A. do to the image of the city? Through the analysis of media such as *Boyz N the Hood* this research points towards the ever-growing trend of depicting Los Angeles through a series of stereotypes. However, the reality is that the disparities in the city are typically economic based and misinterpreted as racial issues. The perception presented of Los Angeles through the media, though, has given rise to misperception becoming “reality.”

# Break On Through

Moderated by Professor Eugene Cooper, Department of Anthropology

Monday, April 10

6:00 – 7:15 p.m.

Pub

**Aakriti Garg**

## **Time Traveling Through the Unconscious: A Freudian Analysis of Dreams**

“Unless the content of the dream rightly understood is inspired by alien spirits, it is part of my own being.”  
- Sigmund Freud

Freud claims that dreams are the “royal roads to the unconscious.” Dreams have the ability to transport their dreamers to places they unconsciously find most meaningful, however far in distance and time these locations may be. In a sense, dreams serve as real-life mental time machines. Octavia Butler’s socially analytical fantastical book, *Kindred*, implements such a concept quite literally; its main characters travel through time to experience their ancestors’ traumatic lives in the antebellum South. This paper translates the novel’s conceptions of time travel using a Freudian psychological perspective in order to study the way in which modern African-Americans unconsciously view their heritage.

**Erin Hern**

## **Reality on the Road: Prerequisite to Freedom**

Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* follows the philosophical journey of a motorcycle aficionado who practices what he preaches: that movement is necessary to facilitate great thought. He teaches that physical “stuckness” causes mental “stuckness,” and the nature of reality is such that being on the road is more conducive to thinking. James Joyce’s short stories “Eveline” and “Araby” deal with the potential for movement, and the unavoidable disappointment of destinations. Analysis of the revelations provided by the three texts lends itself to the conclusion that roads are far more than just asphalt: roads are the only salvation for human thought, individuality, and freedom. Without roads, tyranny would be obsolete, because humanity would oppress itself.

**Amy Sellmyer**

## **Soccer and Society: The Translation of Games into Culture**

In order to properly understand any society, it is fundamental to understand the dynamics of the production and consumption of cultural elements within that society. The role of soccer, one cultural element, varies greatly between societies, and often becomes a reflection of the political, social, and economic condition within their society. From hooligans associated with the professional football league in Europe to soccer-playing members of developing countries, as the role of soccer varies in society, so do the stakes of the participants of the game. By examining the various ways in which soccer is translated into different societies’ cultures, I hope to uncover what role sports, like soccer, play in shaping society, and how society is in turn reflected through the execution of such games.

**Jack Kerouac:  
Cultural Indecision**

The selection of *On the Road* as a primary text for a seminar paper was originally based on my enjoyment of reading the book. However, after discovering more about the author, Jack Kerouac, and ascertaining the truly autobiographical nature of his novel, my interest has turned to an exploration of the author himself, through both his personal life and the depictions of himself through his character Sal Paradise. More specifically, the material I have written focuses on Kerouac's interaction and relation to other cultures, primarily Mexico and the black Jazz culture, but including his connections with Buddhism, both in his personal life and in the themes present in his writing. The paper discusses the split Kerouac seems to experience between wanting to momentarily experience these cultures and truly becoming a part of them.

# Obfuscation Revelation

Moderated by Brooke Carlson, Department of English

Monday, April 10

6:00 – 7:15 p.m.

Room C

**Sonya Hanson**

## **The Necessary Paradox of Broken Expression: The Brain's Limitations Represented Through Traumatic Experience**

Do you think about every word you say? Do you plan out the grammatical structure, diction, and intonation you need to adequately communicate what you want? The subconscious is a powerful tool at work every day, doing the things the conscious brain doesn't have time to worry about. Since the capacity of the subconscious brain surpasses that of the conscious mind, the very act of conscious expression can place limits on any unconscious thoughts that are being expressed, leading to broken expression. As a means of survival, the efficiency in the break between subconscious and conscious thought is exploited under stressful conditions. Stress in its extreme becomes trauma, and in traumatic experience the broken nature of communication becomes most evident. This failure to translate subconscious thought appears in both normalcy and traumatic neurosis, which are two labels that David Markson ambiguously projects onto the narrator of *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, leaving the ultimate decision up to the reader.

**Clive Stanger**

## **Cut Back Copyright**

US and international copyright laws have grown ridiculous. Copyright today would be unrecognizable to the framers of America's constitution; the notion of intellectual property has transformed a long way from its 1709 beginnings with the British Statute of Anne. America, now the purveyor of a very strong copyright through its power over WIPO and in bilateral trade agreements, was not itself always so recognizant of the so-called sanctity of intellectual property it now professes. In the nineteenth century we flagrantly disregarded foreign copyrights, such that Charles Dickens, among other foreign authors, received nothing for their works printed and sold in America. Our copyright laws less and less reflect our society. Clearly this has to change.

**Melissa Valus**

## **Sour Grapes: The Disheartening of Ma Joad**

Ma Joad is the Joad family's uniting force throughout the majority of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, and critics of the book highlight her central, strong character as the reason for the story's flicker of hope at the end. However, these critics ignore that Ma Joad undergoes a character transition in which her passionate and powerful character is diminished. This vast change destroys the conventional perception of the story's optimistic ending; her disintegration creates an implication of defeat. This paper will present a different interpretation of Steinbeck's widely discussed novel that attends to the relationship between gender, family structure, Ma's personality and the importance of her negative transformation. In losing concern for togetherness, the message of hope she instilled through the former part of the book deteriorates; translation not only signifies the change in Ma Joad's character but also the text's shift in mood that parallels her defeat.

**Alzheimer's:  
The Ultimate Test of Love**

Millions of people - mostly women - turn to chick flicks when they need to reaffirm their faith in love. When we lose sight of what it is we are searching for in life, chick flicks remind us that all our suffering will not go unnoticed. Maybe the greatest test of the undying love we are all searching for is an illness that threatens it all: Alzheimer's. With this disease there is more to fear than just the end of life, Alzheimer's is a death in life. This tragic story of true love, tested by the strains of illness, is told in the 2004 film *The Notebook*. This film goes beyond the picture perfect happy ending and explores the ending after the ending.

**Jason Zeldes**

**Death and Resurrection:  
Censorship and The Auteur Policy in Film Adaptation**

The opening line of The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 states: "If motion pictures present stories that will affect lives for the better, they can become the most powerful force for the improvement of mankind." However, in many cases of adaptation from novel to film, the censorship guided by these codes has adverse affects upon the final product. The adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* into film is translated by these codes, thus altering or deleting the social commentary so elegantly crafted in the novel in order to conform her message to American ideals. This paper examines the alterations made in adaptation to discover what message American cinema delivered to its viewers, analyzing as well as the director's efforts to re-nuance film from its censored form back into art.

# Do It Yourself

Moderated by Daniel Richter, Department of Classics

Monday, April 10

7:30 – 8:45 p.m.

Room A

**Janet Epperson**

## **Norma Jeane or Marilyn?**

Though we know Marilyn Monroe as a sex icon, she was not always the platinum blonde we recognize. She was born the simple Norma Jeane—a little girl no one wanted, raised in various foster homes. In spite of those obstacles Norma Jeane somehow became the star Marilyn Monroe, of whom no one could get enough. Her unfinished biography, *My Story* and other biographies will serve as a guide in the exploration of how Marilyn Monroe remained Norma Jean at heart and how the problems that plagued the orphan girl worked their way into Monroe's life.

**Annemarie Gill**

## **Checking Outside the Box: Culture's Impact on Identity Formation in America's Growing Mixed-Race Population**

Check the box that best describes you. These typical directions for answering a question asking for your racial and/or ethnic identification succinctly capture America's embedded concept of race, even in the post-civil rights era, as an either-or issue: you only get to be one thing. This societal attitude toward race significantly impacts the identity development of mixed-race individuals as the pressures of the "check one box" mentality cause many mixed-race them to internally fracture their identities in a variety of ways, all leading to incomplete and inconsistent concepts of self.

**Bailey Harris**

## **Shopping for Men: The Construction of Self Through Romance**

The Romance heroine has been a role model for women since the witty Elizabeth Bennet defied society and married Mr. Darcy. Recently, a new genre of romance has emerged for women. These novels are the stories of financially independent, single women in their thirties finding their male matches. The novels run rampant with talk of brand names and prices, and the heroines are on a never-ending shopping spree for the designer clothing that they think defines their success. These fashionably modern women, though, do not possess the strength of character of their historical counterparts. This decline in self-confidence presents a striking contrast to the ideals set forth for women in recent society of establishing a firm sense of self before entering into a relationship. The women of these modern romances build their idea of success around the success of the men that they succeed in snagging. And since these women try to define themselves by shopping, they are, in effect, shopping for the ultimate consumer good – the perfect man. By comparing the heroines of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, I will explore the reasons that the strong female characters have been lost in translation.

**In the Hands of Mortals:  
Literary Analysis and Ownership in *The Elder Scrolls***

The world of *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* or “TES” video game spans literal volumes. The designers of *TES* have included modification software with their games, and players have created game “mods” that alter the rules, lore, and landscape of the game. Players have become god-like designers in the video game world. In addition, *TES* has spawned a vast library of textual analysis that similarly appears to create the game anew; the additions arguably extend the vitality of the game. I investigate whether these player-created modifications are translations into a new medium - literature as collected by “The Imperial Library” and *TES* forums - and whether ownership limits this realm of work. Why search for literary meaning in a fictional, sometimes self-designed, and copyrighted world?

Aminah Mae Safi

**Dora Maar and The Translation of Feminine Ideals**

Dora Maar is widely considered Pablo Picasso’s most famous model. Serving as a muse for over sixty of his paintings, she is usually found crying or with a single tear in her eye. Maar was, however, a surrealist photographer in her own right and she therefore possessed the unique position of both the muse *and* the artist. While she photographed artists, authors, and men she, most importantly to this study, took photographs of herself and other women. Through her self-portraits, Maar explores the world of artist and sitter simultaneously. While her relationship with Picasso conforms to cultural precedents concerning female roles, Maar’s art confronts these standards which causes art critics and the public alike to omit her as an artist and obsess over the ideal of her as a muse.

# Coping Mechanisms

Moderated by Judy Haw, Director, Supplemental Instruction

Monday, April 10

7:30 – 8:45 p.m.

Room B

**Gillian Haemer**

## **The Mysteries of Language: Alleviating Mental Illness through Art Therapy**

Since the 1940s art therapy has been used in mental hospitals and in therapy sessions in addition to “talk therapy” and other psychoanalytic methods, because of its ability to help conquer the mind-language barrier. In Pat Barker’s novel *Regeneration*, real life poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen use poetry as a form of art therapy in their individual journeys to curing their neurasthenia. When these poets meet, and begin to work together on their poetry, their physical symptoms, predominantly Owen’s difficulty with speech, seem to quickly dissolve. Through their story, the reader is able to witness the alleviation of shell-shock symptoms and question the possibility of emotion becoming lost in the translation from thought to human language, written on paper or spoken.

**Jennifer Lazo**

## **The Perfect Girl: An Exploration of the Hidden and Dynamic World of Fan Fiction**

Did you know that Aragorn, King of Gondor, had a sister named Aragonina? Or that Legolas was hopelessly in love with this beautiful woman who knew the exact song that would melt his heart? Welcome to the world of fan fiction, where such a circumstance is not only incredibly possible, but also probable. Tales such as this one, where a female original character falls in love with a (usually handsome) male character from a book, are known as “Mary Sues”. Stories written by fans about a book, TV show, or movie have recently become incredibly popular, especially with the birth of the internet. The community of writers on one major website has written 38,345 stories about Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* novels alone. However, not all stories are viewed in equal esteem, and the politics contained in the fan fiction universe, especially relating to the character type “Mary Sue”, give a fascinating look into the norms and standards of a large but relatively unknown group of writers. In this paper, I will explore this hidden world and shed light onto the motivations and purposes of those who participate in it.

**Sarah Lorenzen**

## **Hysteria and Repression: Working Together in Ways Beyond Freud**

According to Freudian theory, two of the primary mechanisms for dealing with trauma are hysteria, the physical manifestation of psychological pain, and repression, the forced forgetting of painful facts. Whereas Freud looks at each of these two mechanisms individually, in D. M. Thomas’s novel, *The White Hotel*, the protagonist Lisa Erdman uses the two to compliment each other to help her cope with traumatic experiences in her life. Repression allows her to mature and distance herself from the trauma, and hysteria prevents her from forgetting



the events ever occurred, forcing her to confront them. However, the one trauma the clairvoyant Lisa is not capable of confronting does not occur in the past, but the future. This is because repression is not able to properly operate since over time she is not being distanced from the event but moving toward it.

**Meggie O'Dell**

**Melodic Malaise:  
Music and the Holocaust**

Aaron Copland once said, "The whole problem can be stated... by asking, 'Is there a meaning to music?' My answer would be, 'Yes.' And, 'Can you state in so many words what the meaning is?' ... 'No.'" It has been said that where words fail, music speaks. Though reading the biographical accounts of composers Herbert Zipper and David Beygelman can sketch the outline of the horrors these men suffered while interred in Nazi death camps, the full weight of their stories can only be appreciated when one listens to the music they produced in that darkest of times and the texts they wrote or chose to accompany their notes. This paper studies the ways in which these composers' traumatic experiences are revealed and the insight brought to Holocaust studies by the study of this translation to vocal music.

**Jason Schukraft**

**Trapped in the Amber:  
A Philosophic Examination of Tralfamadorian Time**

"Why you? Why us for that matter? Why anything? Because this moment simply is. Have you ever seen bugs trapped in amber? ... Well, here we are, trapped in the amber of this moment."

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

In the 1969 antiwar novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut introduces an alien race from the planet Tralfamadore. The Tralfamadorians promote an unorthodox conception of time: "All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist". Today many philosophers have come to accept the same interpretation of temporal simultaneity. By demonstrating the self-referentially incoherent nature of the traditional moving present and nonexistent past/future, this study argues that the Tralfamadorian worldview is the only logically congruent method of comprehending time.

# Sexy Beast

Moderated by Professor Jim Kincaid, Department of English

Monday, April 10

7:30 – 8:45 p.m.

Banquet Room

**Timothy J. Florence**

## **From Piledriver to the Page: A Re-evaluation of the Professional Wrestling Memoir**

Professional wrestling is a performance art replete with its own conventions and symbols. We can think of pro-wrestling as the modern precipitate of vaudeville or *commedia dell'arte*. As in these forms, immediately-recognizable archetypes clash by means of exaggerated gestures. Symbols instantly transmit the nature of these archetypes to the audience. Though the wrestler's body replaces the stylized mask, the unique nature of audience—actor interaction remains almost perfectly preserved. If we accept professional wrestling as such, then the professional wrestling memoir transforms from a tendril of the World Wrestling Entertainment merchandising machine to a unique literary form, something resembling a masculine romance novel. By tracing the translation of the visual symbols and conventions of the performance of professional wrestling to the page, I aim to establish the pro-wrestling memoir as a distinct literary form.

**Max Hurwitz**

## **Killing Time: A Study of Violence in American Games**

Parental and family interest groups have been critiquing the violent themes and images in video games for as long as technology has been sophisticated enough to depict anything more gruesome than *Pong*. These games are gobbled up by consumers; *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* is one of the top selling games of all time. I intend to argue that in the middle-class American society, games are necessary to *protect* the values of restraint and consideration on which this community thrives. The virtual nature of games allows players to act without affecting others. Without this virtual world to destroy, would members of this heavily self-censored society translate their violent behavior from the digital realm to the real one?

**Kimberly Silka**

## **Bloodlust: The Horror of Sexuality in *Rebecca* and “The Bloody Chamber”**

Sex is related to pleasure and the creation of life, but in some cases, represents these ideas' opposites: pain and death. The two selected interpretations of the classic Bluebeard tale portray their horrific antagonists as violently sexual characters. *Rebecca* exposes the terror of a sexually dominant female, while “The Bloody Chamber” shows what results when a man is sexually perverse. The horror that results from their actions is a direct result of their sexuality, no matter the nature of their deviance. Each story's innocent narrator cannot have a peaceful life until the sexual characters are removed; thus, the exposure to sexual knowledge translates to terror rather than pleasure for the naïve, and a safe life is a sexless life.

Alexandra Smith

**Women Warriors, the Amazons:  
Rampaging Lesbians or Heroic Defenders?**

Contemporary students might incorrectly infer from the existence of such powerful Greek goddesses such as Athena and Hera that women were highly regarded in Greek society. In reality, this was far from the case as the development of democracy and the advancement of philosophy in Classical Athens effectively promoted patriarchy and restricted women's freedoms. Why was it necessary for the Athenians to make such a distinction between the culture of men and that of women? The Greek version of the Amazon myth is the classic story of a clash between the patriarchal hero and the mother goddess. The Greeks portrayed Amazons as single breasted, barbaric women incapable of settling down to be civilized, and for a long time scholars believed that the Amazon myth was created as a compensatory mechanism for the Greek patriarchs that had no real basis in reality. Instead, recent excavations suggest that not only did real Amazon warriors exist but also seemed to coexist peacefully with men and even had families. The negative portrayal of the Amazons by the Greeks was meant either to assuage the male ego in condemning the arena of the female warrior or provide an example of the kind of disaster that would ensue if women were granted greater freedom.

Angela Stirm

**A Life in Preparation for Death:  
A Novel Combination of Traditional Defense Mechanisms**

This paper looks at the subtle interplay between sublimation and repression as exhibited in D.M. Thomas' *The White Hotel*. Lisa Erdman represses knowledge of her brutal murder at the hand of Nazi soldiers, which she clairvoyantly experiences before it happens, and then translates that experience into sexual fantasy that she presents as a creative poem. It is through this interaction of Freudian defense mechanisms that Lisa prepares for the moment of her death throughout her life.

# Tale Spin

Moderated by Professor Lawrence Green, Department of English

Monday, April 10

7:30 – 8:45 p.m.

Pub

**Dan Greenberg**

## **Human Depravity: Translation Of Historical Experience For Social Commentary**

Typically history is a removed subject often devoid of personal meaning and accordingly its lessons are easy to forget. However, by depicting the violent imagery and human depravity surrounding the same historical event, World War II, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Phillip Roth's *The Plot Against America* both seek to change that fact. Through the eyes of a broken man and an average New Jersey family, these authors create powerful social commentary on the human being and its proclivity for violence, war, and hatred. Through a reflection of the authors' own lives, the creation of very human characters, and radical notions of time, Roth and Vonnegut tell stories that come close to having their readers experience history's lessons for themselves.

**Maggie Hsu**

## **A Matter of Love and Death: Love's Deadly Hold on Life in Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

To many, death is simply the cessation of the heart's steady beat, the fading of precious breaths. Love, on the other hand, is a thing of pleasure and wonderment. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the slaughter of an innocent baby brings about the issue of death's vague definition. What is the meaning of death as translated from Morrison's *Beloved*? Perhaps we're not alive because our hearts beat, but because our hearts love. Is love then something that provides us with a reason for living, or is it something that brings us to our graves? In a way, Morrison suggests that it is both. Love can kill us, but it can also resurrect us.

**Erin Philips**

## **"Khattam-Shud": Rushdie's Closed Narrative in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories***

Critics of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* praise its intertextuality and its engagement with both fantasy and reality, while Salman Rushdie himself emphasizes the openness and interactivity of storytelling. However, the concept of "khattam-shud" that arises within the novel, translated to mean 'completely finished' or 'over and done with' is a more accurate understanding of the text. This issue has received little attention, as a closed narrative would essentially contradict everything Haroun discovers about storytelling along his journey. As a whole, analyses of the work to date unknowingly reveal the text as a closed narrative through discussion of its self-analytical and autobiographical nature, an argument yet to be made by any singular critique. The circularity of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* renders it a closed text, accessible only to the brilliance of its author. There is nothing left to do but expose and protest the reader's inability to engage with the work and penetrate Rushdie's secluded story world.

**Christopher Roessner**

**Theory vs. Practice:  
“Liberty” and “Freedom” as Social Constructs**

“Liberty” and “Freedom” are the words upon which our country is built. However, these words are not stagnant. As political climate changes, it becomes evident that these words are, in fact, very much alive. Citing as examples The Alien Registration Act (Smith Act) of 1940, which limited Freedom of Press, and the more recent and invasive Patriot Act, I expose how such abstract notions create a gap between de jure/de facto (theory vs. practice). Ultimately, I conclude that the power of the nation lies, not with the people, but with those who manufacture definitions.

**Kathleen Spillane**

**Writing the Feast:  
The True Fiction of *A Moveable Feast***

“A writer’s job is to tell the truth,” Ernest Hemingway said about writing fiction. What does he say about writing fact? The critics spend a lot of time interrogating the historical facts in Hemingway’s works, but Hemingway’s truth is not the historical truth of the critics. His nonfictional book *A Moveable Feast*, composed of twenty short pieces about his life in Paris in the years from 1921–1926, is a showcase of Hemingway’s selective, literary truth. Hemingway makes his memoirs true in the same deliberate way he makes his fiction true: through a highly personal, perceptual, and selective translation of life—as only he can see it.

# Kismet and Its Discontents

Moderated by Dr. Mary Beth Tegan, Thematic Option

Monday, April 10

7:30 – 8:45 p.m.

Room C

**Renée Carmel**

## **Star Trek's Trills in Love: Do Past Lives Overpower Current Ones?**

In the *Star Trek* TV series *The Next Generation* and *Deep Space Nine*, the Trill species is foremost in intergalactic gender politics. The symbolically defining feature of the Trill is a symbiotic worm, which stores personalities of past hosts and is kept in the abdominal cavity of the current host. The past hosts of a Trill may be male or female, and their lives and personalities often translate into thoughts and actions that are uncharacteristic of the current host. These past hosts are a strong force in the current one's life, and threaten to easily overwhelm the current host—but an especially strong-spirited host can have the willpower to split the decision-making process with its symbiont.

**Leilani Dimond**

## **Time Travel and Its Challenge to Free Will**

Translation of a body across time is mathematically possible yet physically improbable; however, literary and science fiction authors exploit the concept in order to argue a position on the existence of free will. A key problem with time travel is the supposed paradox it will create if the traveler changes an already-fated event occurring in the past or the future, but writers circumvent this problem in varying ways. Audrey Niffenegger, author of *The Time Traveler's Wife*, prevents the time travel paradox entirely by limiting her characters' capacity for free will. Henry, the time traveler, cannot change anything about his past, present, or future, suggesting that destiny, and not free will, determines the course of life's events.

**Katrina Johnson**

## **Trapped by Rationality: Limitations of Free Will Within and Outside *The Matrix***

Artificial Intelligence keeps humans docile by immersing them in predictable, logical dreams of life in 1999. Humans in the matrix may think that they have free will but it is an illusion in a program limited by rational laws and behavior patterns. Outside the matrix, humans may have free will, but some of the Oracle's prophecies from within the matrix are fulfilled. If artificial intelligence can determine predictable human behavior, is free will even possible? Perhaps, by having the knowledge of the Oracle's prophecies, the characters make them real. The real world itself may also be a matrix controlled by the artificial intelligence. If so, freedom may not exist.

**Innate “Nature”:  
The Aesthetics of a Fish Story**

Are we fated to have the particular tastes that we do? Pierre Bourdieu says that by holding aesthetics to be created and possessed by the dominant classes, social forces make class backgrounds constitute the “innate” qualities necessary for taste. However, in his novel *The River Why*, David James Duncan depicts a classless hermit fisherman finding a true appreciation of the art of fishing and nature by realizing his own “innate” preferences through self-examination. Duncan therefore presents an essentialist view of taste; it differs from Bourdieu’s by implying that rather than a disadvantageous class, a lack of self-knowledge of one’s “innate” preferences is all that prevents a possession of taste. Hence we are fated to have our particular tastes, but not doomed to lack taste completely.

# Divided We Stand

Moderated by Dan Walkup, School of Cinema-Television, Critical Studies

Tuesday, April 11

5:00 – 6:15 p.m.

Room A

**Meaghan Devereaux**

## **The Real Double-bulb Nightlight: Science and Religion in *The Amityville Horror* and “The Shunned House”**

When faced with terror, people may turn to their faith in God for rescue or to the scientific method to give them an understanding over the situation. Though these two avenues have been viewed as opposites requiring a translation to flow between them, they hold a common motivation for control, which leads them to an inextricable intertwining that cannot be individually separated into faith and reason. Instead, the science and religion rely on one another to combat the evil. Characters in Rosenberg’s 1979 *The Amityville Horror* and H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Shunned House” discover a religious foundation, whether in the past or present, to their hauntings as they scientifically analyze their problems. The polar opposites of faith and reason used in conjunction unite the realm of the natural with the supernatural, expanding the ability of the person to understand, combat, and control the terror.

**Kate Enzenauer**

## **The Limits of Time: An Investigation into the Treatment of Time Travel**

The universe sets forth restrictions on time-travel to protect its own integrity, and at times these include predestination. Destiny liberates Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. If nothing can be changed, then no one is responsible for anything, not even events like the bombing at Dresden. In *The Time Traveler’s Wife*, Henry struggles against destiny. He tries to keep his free will by knowing as little as possible of the future, and even when he knows the future, he tries to change it. Vonnegut highlights the indifference that time-travel creates in Billy to prevent indifference in his readers while Niffenegger uses the passion it creates in Henry to emphasize the human struggle for meaning in a predestined world.

**Pavitra Krishnaswamy**

## **Less than a Passage**

In *A Passage to India*, E. M. Forster uses liminal spaces in the narrative to articulate gaps between the English and the Indian communities in colonial India. Because it illustrates the prejudices that can hinder cross-cultural communication, the novel has the potential to alleviate the ignorance at the root of these cross-cultural barriers and bridge the gaps between its Indian and Western readers. This aspect of the book – its potential to function as a communication medium i.e. a medium of passage between East and West – is generally ignored since most literary criticism presents only the Western or the Indian responses to the book. A comparative study of the cross-cultural critical responses to the liminal spaces in the book reveals that the book does not successfully accomplish its promise of passage. Postcolonial and reception theories can help understand why a book that is set up to serve as a passage fails to function as one. Exploring this failure may help us gain insights into problems faced by other translational media.



**Beijing 2008:  
The Politics of Merging Chinese Culture with the Olympic Games**

The Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games intentionally develops the urban culture of Beijing. This urban culture values a connection to nature as well as the differentiation of public and private space; this involves thoughtful embellishment of the city with parks and sculptures as well as the improvement of the transportation system. Although these improvements are made in the context of the Olympic Games, they also correspond to the long-term economic goals of the city. Furthermore, I develop economist Holger Preuss's, author of *The Economics of Staging the Olympics*, argument that the process of the Olympic Games not only provokes the development of Beijing's "local cultural identity" but China's assertion of its "regional political autonomy."

**Samuel Park**

**When Rosie Becomes a Man:  
Crossing Gender Boundaries in the World of Female Bodybuilding**

Norman Rockwell's 1943 painting of "Rosie the Riveter" provides the starting point for an intriguing clash of sociocultural values. The painting vividly juxtaposes bulging biceps with lipstick and massive thighs with curly, red hair. More than half a century later, female bodybuilders aspire to a still undiscovered ideal between masculine muscularity and feminine beauty. While many hold tight to their femininity through traditional and unmistakable feminine cues, some women bodybuilders choose to cross normative gender boundaries in their appearances. These women seek control over their bodies in response to life experiences that take their precious security away from them. Paradoxically, the mastery they possess over their bodies does not transfer to their bodybuilding careers, for the ever-changing standards of professional competitions elude their control.

# You've Got Issues

Moderated by Professor Elaine Andersen, Department of Linguistics

Tuesday, April 11

5:00 – 6:15 p.m.

Room C

**Max Bittman**

## **Witness to Horror**

Literature is often a vehicle for translating horror in which authors present scenes of undeniable inhumanity with powerfully moving language—but to what purpose? D.M. Thomas' *The White Hotel* shows us a particularly disturbing moment within the holocaust. At the novel's climax, after the reader has explored and become familiar with the protagonist, Lisa, she is indiscriminately killed by a shooting squad, her body dumped into a mass grave. Our closeness to Lisa makes this scene particularly harrowing. This paper is an investigation of the visceral literary techniques that makes us terrified, uncomfortable, and angry as we are forced to experience extreme violence. Thomas translates the pure horror of the holocaust to suggest the universality of human depravity.

**Thomas Burke**

## **How Comics Can Prevent You from Going Insane: Writing as Therapy in American Splendor**

In the semi-biographical film *American Splendor*, Harvey Pekar, a regular guy from Cleveland who just happens to publish a critically acclaimed autobiographical comic series is diagnosed with cancer in the early 1990's. This, of course, would be a stressful event for anyone, but it was exceptionally hard-hitting for Pekar, who was prone to anxiety and psychosomatic illness beforehand. His wife, Joyce Braber, suggests that he detail the entire process in a comic book as a means of therapy. For this presentation, I will thoroughly examine the role of writing a form of therapy in Harvey Pekar's illness and eventual recovery in conjunction with a number of scientific articles and studies pertaining to the same subject. I hope to discover how the use of writing as therapy can be applied generally.

**Allison Roy**

## **Between You (Everyone) and Me (Anyone): The PostSecret Phenomenon**

"Western man has become a confessing animal."

- Michel Foucault

Frank Warren, founder of PostSecret, has witnessed the almost insatiable need to confess firsthand. In 2004, he began distributing blank postcards in his community, inviting people to write anything on the card—as long as it was both true and something that had never been shared with anyone else before. To date, he has received an estimated 30,000 anonymous secrets. The element of anonymity proves tricky when trying to determine the ultimate goals of the confessions that have surfaced through PostSecret and whether or not these goals have been reached. In cases where the confession reveals a need for reconciliation with a specific individual, the reader may judge an anonymous confession as grossly inadequate. However, there are other times when

anonymity allows the reader to simultaneously imagine both him or herself and any other human being as the creator of the postcard, leaving the exceedingly hopeful possibility that the individual is only one member of a large group of people sharing the same secret. This paper will try to illuminate why in some cases anonymity causes repulsion while serving other times as a source of comfort.

**Emily Shearer**

**Multiple Problems:  
The Translation of Original Inspiration in Madden's *Proof***

Originality has only become valued in the last half of the nineteenth century with, the development of modernity. The “otherness” of the creator which originality requires is a polarizing quality; those who are seen as “talented” are often part of the dominated faction of dominant society. Often, this socially stratified society is often thought only to apply to the fine arts. However, the non-creative hard sciences seem to utilize the same developmental ideas in the processing of idea to reality. Using the film *Proof*, where art, science, and culture conflicts collide, I will show that the translation of pure inspiration to an original product is easily manipulated by societal norms, and it is only the unoriginal, piecemeal work that truly is a reflection of inspiration.

**Michael Stapleton**

**Translation the Female Murderer:  
Representations and Realities of the Female Serial Killer**

Americans are consistently shocked when they learn that women too can be serial killers, because there exists an inherent disparity in the way much of society perceives the aggressive power of men versus that of women. While male serial killers are conveyed as calculating, brutal beasts, female serial killers are often romanticized. The false representation of the female murderer occurs because conventional wisdom dictates that murder is such a horrifyingly gruesome act, that only members of the more aggressive sex could ever really be capable of it. These conceptions are so strong that the myths surrounding female serial killers dominate more than just popular culture, and have in fact led to huge disparities in the punishment of female murderers. Despite popular misunderstanding, female serial killers are not effectively “masculine” women, but actually appeal to their feminine side. Women are more methodical in their approach to murder, delicate in the way they carry it out, cautious of being caught, and productive in their killing careers. By turning female serial killers into romanticized, Hollywood-like characters, society consistently denies the reality, and brutality of female serial killing.

# Unconventional Wisdom

Moderated by Ed Finegan, Department of Linguistics

Tuesday, April 11

5:00 – 6:15 p.m.

Banquet Room

## Megan Bookhout

### **A Non-Feminist Interpretation of *Thelma's Transformation***

*Thelma and Louise* is often referred to as a feminist film. A feminist film, in my view, is one that depicts women in a positive light, and sends the message that women are equal to men and capable of doing all that men do. Furthermore, if society has not yet affirmed that, then the film provides hope and an idea that it should and will. *Thelma and Louise*, however, is not entirely complimentary of women, and thus is not feminist in nature. The film reaffirms the position of gender roles in society. Through *Thelma* in particular, I set out to question whether the film really can be seen as feminist, arguing that through her naiveté and dependence on others, she is depicted not as a fully liberated woman, but rather she only acts the way she does because she is forced into it. She continues to depend on others, and through her constant bumbling, the film depicts her negatively. She must assume a position which is stereotypically held by men to even stand a chance at liberation, and still she ultimately fails. Many texts have been written discussing whether this film is feminist in nature, and this argument will engage with those ideas.

## Jacob Karesh

### **Perverts or Puritans? : The Sexual Aesthetics of the Turn of the Century**

Alan Parker's *The Road to Wellville* gives the audience two completely opposing views of sex in turn of the century America. From Doctor Kellogg's claim that an erection is a flagpole on the grave to the electric, masturbatory stimulation belt Will Lightbody receives as a gift, we see the opposing views of sex as they come together in Doctor Kellogg's health spa. Doctor Kellogg attempts to repress notions of sexuality by turning it into a sickness to be cured, something which is based off of his real beliefs (such as burning the clitoris to prevent any want for "self abuse" as he puts it). Despite his best efforts, his sanatorium ultimately becomes a haven and sexual bacchanal. By looking at the prostitution laws of the time, analyses of the New Woman, and Kellogg's writing on masturbation, I will determine the sexual environment that produces the two opposing views of sexual repression and sexual fascination. I also intend to discern how Doctor Kellogg's sexual repression ultimately translates into a kind of sexual enlightenment in his patients.

## Jonathan Lo

### **A Return to Babel**

The rate of people turning to Christianity is increasing dramatically, yet, one's image of it may largely depend on which translation of the Bible they pick up, which in turn varies by the church they select. By comparing contending translations of the Bible, such as the King James Version (KJV), New International Version (NIV), and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), as well as examining the versions that different Christian sects prefer, I posit that theological beliefs are imposed upon translations—sometimes to the point of stretching the original truth and intention. I will finally explore the possibility that two different churches may preach contradicting, yet valid messages and the holistic impact this disparity has on modern Christianity.

**Sean Nelson**

**Introducing Virginia Woolf:  
Avoiding Intentional Fallacy in *To the Lighthouse***

One critic of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, echoing the sentiments of many others, has noted "Lily's story reveals that the journey of the novel is also Woolf's journey toward...the silent world of painting," or that Woolf and Lily's concepts of art—and in other quotes, of gender—are mirrored in one another. The problem with a statement such as this one is that it falls prey to intentional fallacy; these critics assume that Woolf's own views are necessarily reflected in her novel. My paper provides a link between *To the Lighthouse* and its author so that intentional fallacy can be avoided and these connections between Woolf's fictional and real worlds can be explored, making valid these critics' comparisons. I will thus show how Lily Briscoe and Mr. Ramsay, through their representations and interactions as the "female painter" and the "male writer," respectively, in effect create the character of Virginia Woolf, becoming a compromise as the "female writer."

**Scott Palmer**

**How to Translate the Ambiguous**

Historical trauma is a paradoxical phenomenon because it is a collection of many individual traumas that is witnessed by the public. The paradox creates a precarious position for the public because the historical trauma can easily be mishandled such as Holocaust deniers or subjugation to facts and figures. The expression of trauma has most often been the responsibility of the arts which are most capable of expressing emotion, but historical trauma allows for a plethora ways to understand and remember historical trauma such as the Holocaust. Society is responsible for understanding how to remember public trauma so it can be kept from repeating by keeping the pain of the sufferers close to heart.

# Who's Your Daddy

Moderated by Professor David Eggenschwiler, Department of English

Tuesday, April 11

5:00 – 6:15 p.m.

Pub

**Robin Achen**

## **Pederasty in Slash Fanfiction, or Did Someone Really Write That?**

If you've read the *Harry Potter* books, it's probably not hard for you to remember that Harry and Professor Severus Snape seem to hate each other. But while that's true in the original work, it's not true in every story. Through fanfiction, in which fans take characters from popular media and write them into new stories, Harry and Snape have been cast in every possible relationship, including sexual and/or romantic ones. This particular scenario is known as *slash*. Most of Rowling's characters have been written into slash fics, but one of the most contentious pairings is that of Harry and Snape. This becomes even more controversial when their relationship is formed while Harry is still a student at Hogwarts. I will focus on one particular story in which their relationship is presented as a translation of the ancient Greek practice of pederasty. By including the themes of pederasty, authors are writing stories that seem both more and less deviant as they connect the relatively new phenomenon of slash fanfiction to a custom that was once widely accepted.

**Lily Aung**

## **Self Help:**

### **Transforming the Doctor Within Pat Barker's *Regeneration***

Stethoscopes, white coats, and completely illegible writing: such stereotypes constantly plague and typecast doctors of all fields. The doctor is a prominent figure in society, never failing to remind us of unhealthy lifestyles and incurable diseases. Yet until the modern age of scientific marvel and medicine, the doctor was perceived as isolated and unstable, different from the esteemed, well paid role today as the all-powerful healer. Using Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, I will unmask the doctor and humanize one of society's most visible yet distant figures. Through the interaction with the patient, the doctor's humanity ultimately reveals a solitary, unsure character capable of change. The nature of disease is felt by all, and for the misunderstood doctor, his medicine may transform him into his own patient.

**Paul Harold**

## **More Mother than Lover: Female Power in the Harem as Familial**

Was the harem just a whorehouse, and its women just power-hungry prostitutes? Harems are by definition sacred places; they're sanctuaries. They housed one of Islam's most sacred institutions: the family. The most powerful family in the Ottoman Empire was the Imperial Family. The Imperial Harem of the Ottoman Empire was home to the most influential women in Ottoman society. These women derived their power primarily from their positions within the family; not from their sexuality, as the prevailing myths purport. The most influential women in the harem, and the Ottoman Empire, were those who had fulfilled their reproductive roles and taken up the mantle of motherhood.

**Stephanie Moon**

**Beneath the Sea of Stories:  
Censorship in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories***

In Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Haroun's narrative sets up two distinct universes that seem to reflect Rushdie's views regarding censorship and free speech. The Kahani, divided into two separate sides, is occupied by the Guppees on one, those who proliferate stories, and the Chupwalas on the other, those who are attempting to destroy all stories. Thus, on the surface, it appears as if Rushdie is offering a completely black and white portrayal of good, represented through free speech, versus bad, represented through censorship. However, Rushdie in fact does not adopt such a polarized view regarding free speech and censorship, but rather acknowledges the uniqueness of each and the limits of free speech.

**Caterina Paun**

**Rated "A" for All:  
Translating the Gaming Experience to Women**

The stereotypical computer gamers are young men, isolated, clicking away in dark basements or cluttered dorm rooms. Yet, women are becoming more and more interested in the gaming industry. While, they're unlikely to play the revenue-generating and "hard-core" games, such as *Tomb Raider*, they do enjoy playing more casual games, nicknamed "pink" games in the industry. In addition, women are consistently more present on poker websites. So while computer and console games are becoming more diverse, is the industry ready to translate itself into a more female-friendly format? Not only would revenue increase, but in making itself appealing to any audience, the gaming industry would finally be making its mainstream debut.



# Untrue to Form

Moderated by Professor Margaret Rosenthal, Department of French and Italian

Tuesday, April 11

5:00 – 6:15 p.m.

Room D

**Steven Gaughan**

## **All-American Überfairy: From Counterculture to a Culture of Conformity**

The unprecedented success of shows such as NBC's *Will & Grace* and Bravo's *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* suggest that gay men have found acceptance in mainstream culture. These programs popularize the modern gay male: effete, sophisticated, and trendy. Yet these "contemporary" images have a history that extends back to the late 19th century. With the trial of Oscar Wilde in the 1890's and the subsequent exposure of the upper class homosexual community the stereotype of the effeminate leisure-class aesthete was established. Capitalism has resurrected and marketed this image, of what I am calling the "überfairy," effectively breaking the masculine counterculture of the 1980's gay male. By retailing this image to mainstream culture, gay men too have been effectively sold.

**Samantha Kacos**

## **Strange but True: The Reality of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas***

Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* has been criticized as being an exaggerated tall tale labeled as non-fiction. Thompson's reliance on drugs and his unwillingness to censor his inner thoughts have led critics to accuse him of straying from the truth. They claim that his work is too random. My paper argues that this sense of randomness proves Thompson's story to be unique, but true. By writing his story on paper, Thompson is acting out his consciousness and performing a function of self-observation and self-criticism which Freud says is intrinsic to the human mind. Critical condemnation of this story as a falsity represents Foucault's admission that society is divided between the normal and abnormal. My argument suggests that, by speaking out against Thompson's work, critics are reinforcing its validity within a highly structured society.

**Allen Ku**

## **Deceptive Marketing: False Translation As a Means of Easing Acceptance**

While stereotyping is often seen as a tool larger society uses to marginalize subgroups, I believe that those wishing to assimilate often perpetuate existing stereotypes to ease their acceptance. This is evident in Frank Chin's 1991 novel, *Donald Duk*, as the title character's father perpetuates Chinese stereotypes through naming dishes at his restaurant to achieve financial success. King Duk devises monikers such as "Jade Tree Golden Smoke Ham and Chicken" to represent his food, while this dish is merely composed of sliced broccoli, Virginia ham, and chicken. He falsely translates his dishes, as doing so allows him to give society what it wants, false confirmation of existing beliefs of the Chinese as exotic. Like Duk, many immigrants undertake a similar strategy of deceptive marketing to prosper and ease their transition without realizing that they are only reinforcing society's predetermined and often wrong notions of them.



**Men Don't Cry:**

**The Effects of Society's Conception of Masculinity on the Male Psyche in Pat Barker's *Regeneration***

What does it take to be a real man? Pat Barker's *Regeneration* offers the disturbing effects of answering this question. In *Regeneration*, Dr. William Rivers treats World War I soldiers sent home from the battlefield due to nervous breakdowns. These soldiers, like all men, live with society's "rules" of how a real man should act. They follow the idea that, "Men who broke down, or cried, or admitted to feeling fear, were sissies, weaklings, failures. Not men." By being treated for war neuroses, the soldiers' masculinity is in question since it does not comply with society's standards. In effect, they resist treatment because it requires them to get in touch with their emotions, an act that is viewed as feminine. This idea of complying with society can further be applied to the larger public, since everyone feels the need to conform, or rather, the need to obey his or her own translation of what society deems "normal."

**Chenfang Zheng**

**Little Girl Grown Up:**

**Female Protagonists in Hayao Miyazaki's Films**

In a Japanese society that values refinement, modesty, and conformity in their little girls, award-winning Japanese animator and director Hayao Miyazaki creates films about little girls who completely contradict the ideals of his society. His girls are strong, adventurous, and individualistic. Fascinated by the Westernized idea of strong, independent girls, he creates animated coming-of-age stories about a little girl forced to separate from their parents and thrust into a situation where she must learn to be self-sufficient. Though how influential Miyazaki is to the social change in young Japanese women is arguable, it is undeniable that little girls are choosing to become independent women who do not feel the need to be dependent on men in order to live their lives.

# Something to that Effect

Moderated by Rick Jewell, School of Cinema-Television, Critical Studies

Tuesday, April 11

7:15 – 8:30 p.m.

Room A

**Paul Giuliano**

## **Lost in Translation**

This essay will explore the way in which the search for precise units and perfect conversions has in fact deterred from this exactness we want; as science and technology increases the amount of significant figures that we can measure natural phenomena, we find that these so-called “exact” units are still changing and evolving. For example, in 1960 the meter was defined and determined to be impossible to realize with an accuracy better than 4 parts in  $10^9$ , an idea that was soon shattered when the speed of light was discovered. Furthermore, a definition including the speed of light includes the units of seconds as well as length and does not take into account strength of the gravitational field. The idea that this drive to redefine units is fueled by a sort of unruly desire and emotion for precision will also be explored, exposing the illogicality of such a logic-driven entity.

**Andrew Goodman**

## **The Terrible Language of H. P. Lovecraft**

“N’-gai, n’gha’ghaa, bugg-shoggog, y’hah; Yog-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth...”

-H.P. Lovecraft, “The Dunwich Horror”

Though perhaps not as well known as Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft stands alongside him as one of the two greatest writers of American horror fiction ever. Much of his most famous and influential work, such as “The Dunwich Horror,” “The Rats in the Walls,” and any number of the works which make up his “Cthulhu Mythos,” use strange, foreign or garbled languages which, unlike in the writing of many other authors, he never translates for his readers’ benefit. Through an examination of his literary works, critical studies by himself and others, and even a touch of linguistics, I attempt to uncover the power behind his alien languages which often have no clear meaning at all. How does H. P. Lovecraft use language which is unintelligible to enhance and, in some cases, entirely create a deep and overwhelming sense of horror that has given him a faithful and ever growing following for close to one hundred years?

**Catherine Lyons**

## **The Role of the Reader:**

### **Constructing Emotion in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time***

Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* successfully takes readers into the mind of an autistic child and shows them a world of perverse logic and little emotion. The mind of Christopher, the novel’s main character and narrator, is ruled by logic and, consequently, displays little outward emotion typical of a child living with autism. In order to better understand the role of the trinity of mind, brain, and behavior, all three which are clearly and complexly at work in Christopher’s narration, I will turn to Antonio Damasio’s work, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. Through my own reading of the work, I found one of the most curious aspects of the novel is that despite its emotional barrenness, it induces in readers an overwhelming sense of empathy.

**Counter-Strike:  
The Language of the Online Gaming Subculture**

The style of language employed by Internet gamers is regarded by most as incomprehensible, ungrammatical babble. In my examination of the popular online shooter *Counter-Strike*, I argue that this form of communication is a legitimate dialect of English, demonstrating complex morphological and syntactical systems as well as an evolving lexicon. Like all unique dialects, the language of online gamers is mutually comprehensible within a community, while often unintelligible to those outside it. This self-imposed linguistic isolation allows the subculture of Internet gamers to further escape mainstream society. Moreover, gamers utilize their language to emphasize the particular values of their subculture, inventing words and semantic systems that stress competition, fair play, intelligence, experience, and cooperation. Ultimately, this emphasis of values is part of a social critique of mainstream society that is characteristic of subculture.

Rex New

**Narrative Structure and Character Construction in *The White Hotel***

For the reader, *The White Hotel* is a narrative challenge. Its first part alone, a dreamlike yet fiercely erotic work of poetry, immediately immerses the reader into the mind of Lisa, the novel's protagonist. It is presented as a fantasy to her psychoanalyst, the esteemed Sigmund Freud. Halfway through the novel, though, Lisa confesses in a letter to Freud that the poem is an elaborate lie and explains the motivations behind her ruse. This deception, though, has implications regarding the novel's construction of character. By writing the poem, Lisa becomes an artist, a fully-fledged human being with her own desires, fears, and fantasies. This construction of character through narrative reminds the reader of Lisa's humanity, deepening the wound created by her death at Babi Yar.

# Death Be Not Proud

Moderated by Andy Hakim, Department of English

Tuesday, April 11

7:15 – 8:30 p.m.

Room C

**Patrick Chilelli**

## **“So It Goes...”:**

### **A Literary Examination of the Relationship between Death and Time**

“Removal from earth to heaven, orig. without death...but in later use also said fig. of the death of the righteous...”

- definition of “time,” Oxford English Dictionary

In both *Donnie Darko* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the two main characters travel through time in an attempt to cope with their anxiety over death. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy Pilgrim moves through time in order to cope with the death he has seen and to come to terms with his own death. In *Donnie Darko*, the time shifts are a way for Darko to save the people he loves, and more importantly, to come to terms with his own mortality, find peace with God, and create a sense of self-worth. Although the subject matter, methods, and mediums of the two works are different, both characters deal with the inherent human need to cope with a fear of death through time-travel, examining and eventually rectifying this anxiety through the bending of time.

**Carolyn French**

## **Dangerous Reporting:**

### **Female Correspondents in Iraq**

Although war correspondents have historically been male, female correspondents are becoming more numerous. As females in the field become more common, they face different, and possibly more extreme, dangers due to both physiological and social factors. First-hand accounts from women who have been to Iraq, as well as recent coverage of Jill Carroll, a journalist currently being held captive in Iraq, offer examples of the particular experience of a female correspondent. Why do these women embrace the stereotypically “male” notion of adventure and travel to a place that they know to be particularly dangerous to women?

**Jeffrey Gurrola**

## **Undoing the Damage:**

### **A Critical View of the Final Chapter of *The White Hotel***

The sixth and final chapter of D. M. Thomas’ *The White Hotel* finds Elisabeth Erdman at a camp in the Promised Land; however, the reader quickly realizes that this is no ordinary refugee camp—all the people Lisa meets are dead. Though the character of Sigmund Freud drives the novel as a catalyst for Lisa’s revelation of her psychoses, and the events in her life that contributed to their formation, the culmination of the entire journey in the afterlife starkly contradicts Freud’s idea that death is truly the ultimate end. In fact, the final chapter of *The White Hotel* serves an invaluable purpose: undermining the Freudian ideas set forth in the bulk of the novel and, thus, reinforcing the novel’s critique of Freudian ideology.

**Preeti Rao**

**The Ultimate Triage:  
Physician's Dilemmas and the Effects of War on Medical Neutrality**

The political intrigues surrounding the survival of the Srebrenica enclave during the Bosnian war in the early 1990s are wrought with moral and medical predicaments. In Sheri Fink's reconstructed narrative, *War Hospital*, the chronic stressors of war trigger feelings of helplessness as inexperienced - and untrained - physicians attempt to heal not only the wounds of patients, but the wounds of society and humanity. These frustrations often create a frightening duplicity between the responsibility to serve one's patients and the necessity to save oneself. My research seeks to explore the boundaries of conventional definitions of doctoring and the impact war has on idealism and humanitarianism. What is a doctor? What could make a physician sacrifice their sacred oath *primum non nocere*, throw down a scalpel, and shoulder a gun?

**Alexis W. Turzan**

**From the Emergency Room to Your Television Set:  
Now that's Entertainment**

There is something irresistible in the nature of trauma that draws people to poke and prod at wounds – be it rubber-necking at car accidents or forgoing sleep to watch the latest episode of *C.S.I.: Miami*. Entertainment takes advantage of our natural voyeuristic tendencies and draws viewers, be they fans of shows like *E.R.* or the traumatically disrupted plays of Sarah Kane, into fictional dramas through instances of traumatic violence that, when placed in the real world, make us sick to our stomachs. Popular television shows like the *C.S.I.* franchise and *E.R.* bring clinical and cyclical injuries to the forefront of our consciousness, creating and perpetuating a kind of “wound culture” that seeks witnesses and cries victim at every turn.

# The Class Ceiling

Moderated by Catherine Crowley, Occupational Therapy

Tuesday, April 11

7:15 – 8:30 p.m.

Banquet Room

**Janna Brancolini**

## **Freeloaders on the Dole: Media-Induced Myths About Welfare Recipients**

Two misconceptions are the leading cause of anti-welfare sentiment in America: the idea that welfare simply consists of handing out money to the unemployed and the impression that most welfare recipients are minorities. Welfare actually includes Aid to Families with Dependent Children, General Assistance such as disability aid, Food Stamps, and the means - tested transfer program that gives money to the unemployed. Americans also associate the welfare system with minorities, especially black people, despite the fact that more than half of welfare recipients are white. Although other factors such as individualism play into the equation, racial impressions are the main source of animosity towards welfare because white Americans perceive black Americans as lazy. This paper argues that the media is largely at fault for Americans' opposition to welfare because it is responsible for both the misconceptions about the color of welfare recipients and the work ethics of minorities.

**Michael Chan**

## **A Colorful Work of Hate**

The oft-used phrase "lost in translation" has come to resound with new meaning in today's postmodern world. This paper will explore not how translation applies to concerns with languages and actions, but instead with more abstract ideas involving cultural constructs that unconsciously dictate the manner in which different races interact among other races and among themselves. The application of this paper to society demonstrates how mistranslating racial interaction may ultimately explain reasons for violence, hatred, and conflict amongst such racist individuals. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu serves as a reference to explaining how cultural constructs may lead to a mistranslation amongst races, with specific examples taken from the movie *American History X* and the novel *Erasure*.

**Doug Hollins**

## **Online Marxism: The New Arena of the *Communist Manifesto***

The Internet has become the new mode of expression for Marx's disenfranchised proletariat. In the past, society prohibited the working class from many opportunities in life that their inherently disproportionate share of labor secured for society as a whole. One had to possess great wealth or many connections to elite America to publish a work or become famous through broadcast. To even have a voice in academia, one had to have an academic degree, an often expensive prospect. The Internet, however, has become the Great Equalizer. Anyone, regardless of money or power, can see their ideas published online and quoted on CNN if he or she has the technical skills to navigate a website and the ideas find an audience with enough people. This amounts to a new expression of the ideas presented by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* and a vindication of the Communist

dialectic progression.

**Paul Jansson**

**Whores and Mistresses:  
Power Struggles in Victorian Erotica**

“Men know not in general how much they destroy of their own pleasure, when they break through the respect and tenderness due to our sex, and even to those of it who live only by pleasing them.”

- *Fanny Hill*

In the Victorian Era, the males were supposed to be strong and virile, providing for their families. Marriages, however, were made almost as a matter of convenience, leading to sexless, passionless, domestic agreements. Despite the repressive sexuality of the day, there were more prostitutes than ever before, and society expected the men to use them. The underground market in sex was filled with flagellation and masochism, “reusable” virginity, and multiple partner orgies. The world of prostitution, as depicted in John Cleland’s classic novel *Fanny Hill*, was filled with complex structures of power. While the “strong males” appears to have the sexual power, the reins can be traced directly to the prostitutes.

**Jessica Jensen**

**The Plight of Property:  
Locke’s Social Contract in *The Plot Against America***

“Government has no other end, but the preservation of property.”

- John Locke

*The Plot Against America* shocked audiences with its unprecedented premise: in 1940, America elected isolationist Charles Lindbergh as president instead of Franklin Roosevelt. This alteration of a single real-world event ushers in a new World War II America, in which anti-Semitism runs rampant and a policy of ethnic assimilation consumes the Jewish population. These policies decimated the property rights of the Jewish people, a fact which would have distressed philosophers such as John Locke, who in his social contract sets forth the intrinsic importance of property rights in preserving a legitimate government. By not upholding the Lockean value of property (a defining feature of the U.S. government), Lindbergh’s America shows the destructive destabilization brought to a government when it exchanges the rights of its citizens for a policy which homogenizes and degrades its population.



# Re-Visionary

Moderated by David Tomkins, Department of English

Tuesday, April 11

7:15 – 8:30 p.m.

Pub

**Jessica Byron**

## **Obsession: Catullus's Poetry with Regard to Lesbia**

The poet Catullus had an unhealthy obsession with his subject Lesbia. Rather than being the type of person who would just leave personal moments alone and let her be, Catullus used Lesbia's sexuality to turn her into something less than a person on paper. Catullus' obsession with Lesbia is motivated less by her abilities and more by his need to control her. Through his writings about Lesbia as near goddess and one who will not be loved, Catullus does his best to take control of Lesbia's life by making her fodder for his pen. Why the obsession with a woman who many historians doubt was even real? Why would Catullus take Lesbia to the extremes of love and hatred through his poetry?

**Amanda Custer**

## **Whore or Feminist: How Hitchcock Changed the Essence of *Rebecca***

"Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality."

- Michel Foucault

Rebecca, the ghostly antagonist in the novel and movie *Rebecca* embodies a kind of feminine sexuality, but whether it empowers her or marginalizes her as an oversexed woman is the author's perspective. Alfred Hitchcock presents Rebecca as merely a lustful oddity in early 20th century England, but Daphne du Maurier creates a character whose very existence is a constant challenge to the patriarchy. How can two such different versions of one woman exist? The act of translation allows a recasting of Rebecca from a dominating, all-consuming woman, to a whore.

**Veronica Renov**

## **Down the Rabbit Hole: The Effect of *Alice in Wonderland***

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* has become the model for many popular-culture adaptations. I will direct my research towards the work's contribution to games, focusing in particular on the Queen of Heart's card game and the role of the Rabbit Hole from Carroll's novel. I plan to ascertain the impact the work has had on games, as well as examine the game imagery in the book itself. I will also observe the changes that occur as a result of genre transitions: what happens when a novel is adapted into a game? It is important that this particular adaptation from novel to game is analyzed because *Alice in Wonderland* has had such a strong affect on American society.



**Romance and the Road:  
Kerouac's Peripatetic Search for Oblivion**

The 18th century British Romantics had a major influence on Jack Kerouac's Beat Generation and their notion of freedom on the road. Specifically, Kerouac creates a new translation of their archaic Romantic ideals through the character Dean Moriarty in his seminal work *On the Road*. My argument proposes that Kerouac's notion of a Romantic oblivion is directly tied to Emily Brontë's concept of an enlightened state put forth in her poem "The Prisoner" despite the fact that her character is shackled in a prison cell and Kerouac's is a wandering traveler. This paper examines this translation of Romanticism and the paradox of the immorally enlightened individual's struggle for clarity through travel in *On the Road* and through the shackles placed upon Emily Brontë's prisoner.

Thia Schuessler

**Translating the Classic Novel into the Modern "Chick Lit"**

"Wise people will say [he] should like me just as I am, but I am a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture, have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices."

- *Bridget Jones's Diary*

Immense expectations have always been laid upon women. They can't escape them. Finding a man to spend their lives with is inherently the greatest expectation. A lady is so judged on her performance in the dating/mating world that failure to marry and start a family is almost failure as a woman. This universal objective is the overriding concept in both Jane Austen's beloved *Pride and Prejudice* and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. It is understood that Fielding's 1996 bestseller was heavily based on Austen's 1813 romantic-comedy novel. My research serves to distinguish the changes in the ideas of personal attainment and self-improvement as a woman between the 19th and 20th centuries, as according to Austen and Fielding. Do women audiences feel liberated by Bridget's "20th century feminine values," or has she lost Austen's reverence for virtue and goodness?

# Mixed Media

Moderated by Jennifer Conary, Department of English

Tuesday, April 11

7:15 – 8:30 p.m.

Room D

**Michael Alfera**

## **“You’ll Easily Judge”: Sexual Morality in James’ and Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw***

Henry James’ novella *The Turn of the Screw* is famous for its treatments of the issues of narrator reliability, epistemology, and textual ambiguity. Composer Benjamin Britten faced no easy task, then, when he decided to set James’ tale as an opera. How do the key features of James’ text translate from the reading experience to the fundamentally different experience of viewing an opera? A close reading of the libretto and James’ text together shows that the opera clarifies and thus intensifies the ambiguities of James’ story in a way that brings the issue of sexual morality to the forefront. By examining the overall structure of the opera along with the interaction between the musical material and the characters, I show how Britten systematically deconstructs the idea that sexual morality can be defined in absolute terms. Instead, sexual morality, just like James’ tale itself, is approachable only through the ever-shifting lens of point of view.

**Natasha Azad**

## **A Journey in the Dark: The Evolution of Role Playing Games**

Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* sparked not just a following but an entire movement. He created a world so fanciful yet relatable that millions of people across the globe were fascinated by his new mythology for Great Britain. In the 1970s, the British company TSR released a new kind of game to the world based off the mythology of *The Lord of the Rings*. It was called *Dungeons and Dragons*, the very first tabletop role-playing game. Antisocial, geeky, acne ridden teenagers the world over were given an opportunity to live out their most passionate of desires: to become like the characters from their favorite fantasy series and create their very own adventures. Therein lied the appeal. Gamers were now able to shape the game however they liked to form a story, a narrative if you will, of their own adventures. However, role playing games demonstrate fundamental differences from the literature they attempt to emulate. They create interactive stories in which the gamer does not act as a detached reader but rather as an integral character of the plot. From *Dungeons and Dragons* spurred all kinds of new tabletop role playing games such as the H.P. Lovecraft inspired *Call of Cthulhu*. As technology advanced along with the gaming movement, role-playing games began to perforate video game systems and computers as well. This process is not simply a linear progression, however, from books to tabletop games to video and computer games but a cyclical process. Within the last couple decades several books have been written based on role-playing games such as the *Dragonlance Chronicles* which are based on a series of *Dungeons and Dragons* games. Thus fantasy literature has had an enormous impact on gaming culture for the two are fascinatingly intertwined.

**Scarlett Does Vermeer:  
The Narratives Inherent in Paintings**

When visiting a museum, people can often be found standing in front of certain paintings for long periods of time, even though these paintings never change. Why are paintings so intriguing? How can people identify with a completely static medium? By studying the novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, written by Tracy Chevalier, along with the film adaptation of this novel, the world hinted at by Vermeer in his painting of the same title is illuminated. By translating well-known paintings to a narrative-based medium, the translators have created identities for their characters by putting into words what were once purely visual cues in the paintings, suggesting that paintings are powerful not because they leave themselves open to interpretation, but because the paintings showcase fully-formed identities.

Renee Saito

**Jonathan Gold's Los Angeles:  
City of Flavors**

“When an artist takes on an unfamiliar culture, something vital is invariably lost in the translation...but something important is gained, too.”

- Jonathan Gold, *Counter Intelligence*

New York may have its bagels, Boston its baked beans, and Philadelphia its infamous cheese steak. But what does Los Angeles cherish as its signature dish? The burrito? The California Roll? The In-N-Out burger? The answer is: all of the above and more. It is impossible to define “Los Angeles cuisine” with just one meal, let alone with just one dish. The food reviews of Jonathan Gold, LA’s world-renowned food critic, are definitive of the city in their diversity, extravagance, and wit. As a whole, they represent what Los Angeles is and always has been: a mélange of cultures connected by the translation of food traditions.

