

 **DEPAUL HUMANITIES CENTER**

ANNUAL REPORT

2008-2009

**1968:
Art and
Politics
in
Chicago**

DePaul University Art Museum

On the cover:
Exhibition Catalogue, "1968: Art and Politics in Chicago"
DePaul University Art Museum, September 18-November 23, 2008
Guest Curator: Patricia Kelly, Assistant Professor, History of Art and
Architecture, and 2008-2009 Humanities Center Faculty Fellow
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DEPAUL HUMANITIES CENTER

The DePaul Humanities Center, founded in 1999, serves as a site for discussion and research in the arts and humanities at DePaul University. Bringing together faculty, staff, students, scholars, community leaders, and artists, the Center engages our communities in the most recent and impressive scholarship in the humanities. Central to the Center's community engagement is the exchange of ideas across disciplines, the communication of interests through active outreach, and the chance to learn from those outside of the academy.

Our goals are to:

- Support and nourish humanities scholarship and teaching throughout the university;
- Support interdisciplinary work in the humanities;
- Increase public visibility of work in the humanities conducted by university faculty, staff, and students;
- Initiate and encourage the consideration of contemporary problems and solutions from the vantage point of humanistic thinking;
- Build and strengthen links with other institutions, community groups, and educators.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



This year's major speaker series addressed "The Rise of the Novel," a term made popular by Ian Watt's book of that title. Three speakers addressed this topic from a variety of modern vantage points, noting how the nature of professional re-reading, the rise of new historicism, and the relationship between literature and science affected modern approaches. Another series, on happiness, engaged writers who have written important work on the topic. *Against Happiness* and *Against Joie de Vivre* have attracted the attention of such humorists as Garrison Keillor.

The response to all five lectures was rewarding, but even more so was faculty involvement in proposing panels of their own. In this annual report, we feature an essay by Mike Mezey, who, with Anne Bartlett and Ted Anton, helped organize a panel on John Updike, who has not always received the kind of sustained academic attention he deserves. The DePaul Poetry institute celebrated Barack Obama's inauguration with a volume edited by Chris Green and designed by Anna Clissold. Laura Washington organized a roundtable entitled "The Obama Factor: Covering Politicians of Color, Then and Now." An advanced screening of *The Duchess*, a film that treats Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, attracted students and faculty alike to Kerasotes Webster Place Theatre.

Our fellows program continues to be vibrant. June Chung, David Gitomer, Paula Kagan, Yuki Miyamoto, and Patricia Kelly formed an excellent cohort of faculty engaged in inter-disciplinary dialogue. Whether the topic was the story of the Cassandra nurses or atomic moms who worked at Palo Alto, the book of Bhisma or American orientalism, fellows found ways to consider the relationship between history, art, and representation. It was a real pleasure seeing faculty support one another and attend events, as well as offering ideas and suggestions for future collaborative work. So successful was the series—and Patricia Kelly's monumental "1968: Art and Politics in Chicago" stands out in this respect—that we have hosted another event at the Art Museum at DePaul, inaugurating a new program on "Visual Studies" inspired by the superb outreach and intellectual work of DePaul's faculty. My thanks to the many DePaul faculty members who attended and supported this year's events.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Gross, Director

2008-2009 SPEAKERS

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL



Patricia Meyer Spacks
University of Virginia
The Pleasures of Re-reading
Early English Novels

“The purpose of this lecture is twofold: to speculate about the nature of what I’m calling ‘professional re-reading,’ and to ponder the possible relation of such re-reading to canon formation and to what we call ‘the rise of the novel.’

By professional re-reading, I mean the kind of re-reading that people who teach literature engage in, in order to teach and to write literary criticism or literary history. Such re-reading, by virtue of its repetitions, can come to seem an index of quality, as some texts retain their freshness year after year, while others begin to seem tedious. Still, professional re-reading depends on more than repetition. It involves focus, purpose, and the establishment of context. It can also generate new insight. I propose to speculate about how collective re-reading might generate changes in ways of thinking about the canon and changes in the canon itself by way of two recent re-readings of my own, of *Tom Jones* and of a late-eighteenth-century novel by Elizabeth Inchbald, *A Simple Story*—both works I know well and have written about before.”

Patricia Meyer Spacks, Edgar Shannon Professor of English Emerita at the University of Virginia, taught at Wellesley College and at Yale University. She has written on many aspects of literature and culture, including books on gossip, boredom, and privacy. Her most recent book is *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. A study called *Reading Eighteenth-Century Poetry* will be issued by Blackwell's next spring, and Professor Spacks is currently working on a book on re-reading. A past president of the Modern Language Association and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, she is vice-chair of the board of the National Humanities Center.



Terry Castle
Stanford University
*Brunette and Philip: Reading Philip
Larkin's Lesbian Fiction of the 1940s*

"This lecture is about the English poet Philip Larkin's early 'lesbian stories', 'The Trouble at Willow Gables' and 'Michelmas Term At St. Bride's', written when he was a student at Oxford and never published until five or six years ago.

Written under the pseudonym 'Brunette Coleman', they are parodies of the popular English 'girls' school' story, notably those of Angela Brazil. The 'Brunette' writings (he did some poems and essays too) are by turns hilarious and fascinating and sad, and come at a key moment in the development of Larkin's poetic persona. They are essential to the evolution of the 'Larkinesque'—the mood of melancholy, squalor, and sexual inhibition so insistent in his verse. The broader topic here is how male writers use lesbian literary texts and conventions. I conclude with some thoughts about the novel *Jill* (1946) as Larkin's version of *The Well of Loneliness*."

Terry Castle is the Walter A. Haas Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University. She has taught at Stanford since 1983. Her many scholarly interests include the early history of the novel, Gothic fiction, women's writing, psychoanalytic theory, opera, the literature of the First World War, British modernism, and the lesbian theme in literature. She has written seven books, including: *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*; *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*; *Boss Ladies, Watch Out! Essays on Women, Sex, and Writing*; and *Courage, Mon Amie*. She is the editor of *The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology from Ariosto to Stonewall*. She writes regularly for the *London Review of Books*, the *New Republic*, and other magazines and journals. A collection of her autobiographical writings—*The Professor and Other Essays*—will be published at the end of the year.



Michael McKeon
Rutgers University
*Scientific Experiment, Drama,
and the Origins of the Novel*

"We think of literature and science as antithetical modes of knowledge and experience. But the modern, 'aesthetic' understanding of literature developed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England under

the influence of the scientific revolution and in explicit emulation of the new scientific method. This happened first in discourse about drama—how it works and why it elicits the kind of response it does—and then played a major role in the emergence of the new genre of the novel."

Michael McKeon is the Board of Governors Professor of English at Rutgers University. He is the author of *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), which won a Professional and Scholarly Publishing Award given by the Association of American Publishers. He is also the author of the groundbreaking *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, 2002), which won the James Russell Lowell Prize, as well as *Politics and Poetry in Restoration England* (Harvard University Press, 1975). He also edited the anthology *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). In addition, he has published numerous articles on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature and culture and on literary theory and methodology.

AGAINST HAPPINESS



Eric G. Wilson
Wake Forest University
Against Happiness

“In discussing the generative powers of melancholy, I establish key differences between depression and melancholy. While depression often leads to lethargy and apathy, melancholy frequently results in self-revelation and creativity. To demonstrate the ways that

melancholy encourages self-knowledge and original action, I focus on the key elements of the mood—a feeling of incompleteness, a tendency toward irony, and an embrace of finitude. In the course of describing these different aspects of positive melancholy, I draw on my own experiences as well as on the lives of significant men and women who possessed melancholy dispositions. I pay special attention to the work of Marsilio Ficino, Emily Dickinson, John Keats, and Carl Jung.”

Eric G. Wilson is the Thomas H. Pritchard Professor of English at Wake Forest University, where he teaches British and American Romanticism. He has published several books and articles on a variety of subjects, including the phenomenology of ice, the psychology of android-building, Gnosticism and contemporary film, and the cinema of David Lynch. His most recent book, *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*—an L.A Times bestseller—questions America’s addiction to happiness and explores the power of melancholy.



Phillip Lopate
Hofstra University
Against Joie de Vivre

“Against Happiness? No, I am not really against happiness. I’m not even against *joie de vivre*, which means the joy of life. I should explain how that essay came about. There is a certain pleasure in writing a piece against something that is unassailable. You take something which

is an undoubted good and you try to write against it, and it produces a kind of tension—partly because you know you are taking a cockamamie position. But you want to see how far you can go with it, where it will take you. What I was trying to get at is a certain consumerism or packaging of pleasure, pleasure-taking, and happiness. I do think that the essay has a root in the feeling that I have sinned against American optimism. Of course, we have the pursuit of pleasure written into our original document, and it is a profound idea. I always think of American novels as being about a character who is in pursuit of happiness, and then he either finds it or he does not. If it is a serious novel, he probably does not find it. But it is about the pursuit of happiness. Whereas if you read Japanese novels or a lot of European novels, they know from page one that they are not going to be happy. And then they go from there. It is not about the pursuit of happiness, but something else.”

Philip Lopate is the author of two novels, two poetry collections, movie criticism, and a biographical monograph. His essay collections, *Bachelorhood* and *Portrait of my Body*, have received sustained critical attention and established him as a major practitioner of the genre. *Getting Personal: Selected Writings* (Basic Books, 2003) gathers together some of his most ground-breaking work.



Stacey Robertson
Bradley University
Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest

Stacey Robertson is chair of the History Department and director of the Women's Studies Program at Bradley University. She is the author of *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist,*

Male Feminist, published in 2000 by Cornell University Press. Robertson's current book manuscript, "Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest," is under review. She is the co-author with Carol Lasser of *Antebellum Women: Private, Public, Political*, which will be published by Roman & Littlefield.



Pre-Release Screening
The Duchess

The Byron Society and Jane Austen Society, in conjunction with the Film Writer's Guild in New York City, hosted a preview of *The Duchess*, a film directed by Saul Dibbs, and based on Amanda Foreman's biography, *Georgiana*. Students from several classes at DePaul attended, among them Lucy Rinehart's, to hear a talk-back about the historical accuracy of

the film's depiction of Charles Grey, lady Georgiana's lover, and her ménage à trois with the Duke of Devonshire and Elizabeth Foster. Marsha Mann organized the advanced screening and Jeff Nigro of the Austen Society of America attended, as did several members of the Byron society. Jonathan Gross spoke about his edition of *The Sylph* (Northwestern University Press, 2007), an epistolary novel that Lady Georgiana published in 1779 based on her unhappy marriage to the Duke of Devonshire.



Payton Humanities Festival
*Gender Drama: The Shrewth
 About the Sexes*

This year the Humanities Center participated in the inaugural Humanities Festival at Walter Payton High School, at the invitation of Department Chair and DePaul Alumna Kerry Catlin. Paula McQuade, a former

DePaul Humanities Center fellow, offered an historical interpretation of Catlin's students' production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, which drew on the film version by Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, as well as renaissance notions of companionate marriage. McQuade has recently edited *Catechisms Written for Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Children, 1575-1750* (Early Modern Englishwoman: a Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Ashgate, 2008), a work that illustrates gender roles during the English Renaissance. Coming at the play from another angle, Visiting Fellow Chris Green led students in a writing workshop inspired by the verbal fun and physical play in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Green's most recent collection of poetry, *Epiphany School*, appeared in September from Mayapple Press.

A third panel, entitled "Vampires: What Girls Want", included 6th graders from Bell Elementary school. Shiri Nicole Gross, Adina Cohen, and Kay Alecia explained the appeal of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, which has taken the publishing world by storm. They exchanged insights with 11th graders from Walter Payton high school. This was followed by an illustrated lecture by Piya Pal Lapinski, of Bowling Green State University, on the history of representing vampires, from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to "vampire chic" in Jean Paul Gaultier's line of haute couture. Lapinski is the author of *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth Century British Fiction and Culture: A Reconsideration* (University of New Hampshire Press, 2005).



FACULTY FELLOWS

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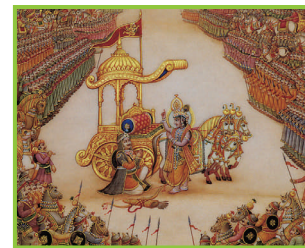
June Chung
English
*American Orientalism and the
Harlem Renaissance in
Nella Larsen's Quicksand*



“DePaul’s Humanities Center Fellowship helped me to complete research for two projects. First, I was able to write a chapter for a book titled *American Orientalism, Material Culture, and Literary Modernism in the Early-Twentieth Century*. The essay, “American Orientalism and the Harlem Renaissance,” explores links between American Orientalism at the start of the twentieth century and fiction by two African American writers from the Harlem Renaissance era, Nella Larsen and George Schuyler. The chapter is intended to be submitted as a stand-alone essay for publication in a journal this year. A second project that I completed under the auspices of the fellowship was an essay on the topic of ‘Money and Class’ in Henry James’s fiction for an edited collection, *Henry James in Context*, published by Cambridge University Press.”



David Gitomer
Religious Studies
*An Introduction to The Book of
Bhisma in the Mahabharata*



“During my fellowship year I had the opportunity to advance my translation of the Book of Bhisma, which contains the Mahabharata’s most famous discourse, The Bhagavad Gita. Although the Gita is known in the west primarily as an icon of Hindu spirituality, within the epic it functions as an exploration of the nature of violent action. In a public event sponsored by DePaul’s Religious Studies Department, I looked at the ambiguities of the epic’s war as sacrifice and its relevance to contemporary views of the individual’s ‘religious’ obligations to the state’s war-making. For my presentation to this year’s Fellows, I integrated these ideas into a larger framework. It was extremely valuable to hear their responses, and for the first time I was able to develop a comprehensive theory of the nature of the text. It is this view that I will present in my introduction to the translation, to be published as part of the University of Chicago Mahabharata Translation Project.”



Paula Kagan
Nursing
*Voices in the Wilderness:
Cassandra Radical Feminists
Nurses Network 1979-2009*



“The most remarkable aspect of the Fellowship was being part of an intimate community of scholars. The opportunity to present my research was highlighted by the interdisciplinary richness of the other fellows’ responses. In addition to providing time to think and write, the Fellowship enabled me to edit rough cuts of my footage, while my research assistants provided transcripts of interviews central to creating the story of the Cassandra nurses. I was pleased to present a paper on my project, along with edited clips, at professional conferences in Dublin and Boston. As a Fellow, I was able to further my outreach and engagement by gathering a large group of prominent nurse scholars and theorists from the US and UK for a filmed round-table discussion on what the public needs to know about nursing, a theme emerging directly from the Cassandra interviews.”



Patricia Kelly
History of Art and Architecture
1968: Art and Politics in Chicago



“As a faculty fellow at the DePaul Humanities Center, I curated the exhibition *1968: Art and Politics in Chicago*, edited the exhibition catalogue, and wrote its historical-critical introductory essay. The exhibition considered the artistic response by Chicago artists and galleries to the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Over forty artists were represented in the show, including Claes Oldenburg, Barnett Newman, Ed Paschke, Ray Johnson, and Leon Golub, and the wide-ranging programming included a film series and a major art historical symposium. Stemming from these endeavors, I have been working on a major historical essay on the Chicago art scene during the late 1960s, a largely uncharted terrain in art historical scholarship. The Humanities Center Fellowship has provided me with the time needed to conduct integral research, while discussion with other faculty fellows has been crucial in shaping the continued growth of this project.”



Yuki Miyamoto
 Religious Studies
*Beyond the Mushroom Cloud:
 The Ethics of Remembering,
 Responsibility, and Reconciliation
 in Atomic Bomb Discourse*



“Being a Humanities Center Fellow this past year enabled me to write a significant part of my book manuscript, *Beyond the Mushroom Cloud: Remembering, Reconciliation, and Responsibility in Atomic Bomb Experiences*. In addition to this book project, I was able to complete an article for a new project exploring the ethics of commemoration, as well as the translation of an article on the philosopher Merleau-Ponty and Shinran (founder of True Pure Land Buddhism). The course reduction made it possible for me to present three scholarly papers domestically and abroad; deliver nine public talks outside of DePaul on the subject of nuclear weaponry; arrange for a lecture by Professor Toshiyuki Tanaka on Japanese atrocities during the second World War; and organize a screening at DePaul of M. T. Silvia’s documentary *Atomic Mom*, for which the filmmaker was also present.”



Chris Green
 Visiting Fellow
Epiphany School



“During my visiting fellowship at the Humanities Center for 2008-2009, I edited the anthology, *A Writers’ Congress: Chicago Poets on the Inauguration of Barack Obama*. The anthology was published by the Humanities Center’s Poetry Institute and includes fifty of the most acclaimed poets in Chicago, including Reginald Gibbons, Haki Madhubuti, Christina Pugh, Richard Jones, David Trinidad, Allison Joseph, and Susan Hahn. The book received blurbs by two of the most prominent writers in the country: Yusef Komunyakaa and Stuart Dybek. An inauguration-night reading featured twenty-five of the anthology’s poets and was filmed by CAN TV. The anthology and reading received media attention, including a feature on WBEZ. I was also able to find a publisher for a book of poems that I completed while a fellow. *Epiphany School* will be published by Mayapple Press in September 2009.”

EVENTS 2008-2009



Students speak with Eric Wilson

John Shanahan introduces Michael McKeon



Yuki Miyamoto with *Atomic Mom* filmmaker M.T. Silvia



Laura S. Washington with Donald Duster, grandson of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and his wife Maxine, at the Friend of the Center Reception



Laura Washington with participants in her media roundtable, "The Obama Factor: Covering Politicians of Color, Then and Now" (l-r): Charles Thomas (ABC-7); Dorothy Tucker (CBS-2); Tom McNamee (Chicago Sun-Times); Esther Cepeda ("600 Words"); and Craig Dellimore (WBBM)



Participants in Eric Selinger's 2009 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar, "Say Something Wonderful: Teaching the Pleasures of Poetry"



Rosalind Hinton poses a question to Phillip Lopate



Darrell Moore leads a Chicago Humanities Festival Classics in Context session on *Invisible Man*



Participants in "Updike: An Appreciation and Appraisal" (l-r): Mark Pohlad; Ted Anton; Hugh Ingrasci; Anne Clark Bartlett; Mike Mezey; Dan Stolar



Mike Mezey and Sally Chappell at the Friend of the Center Reception

FEATURE COMMENTARY

“Rabbit Angstom and American Angst”

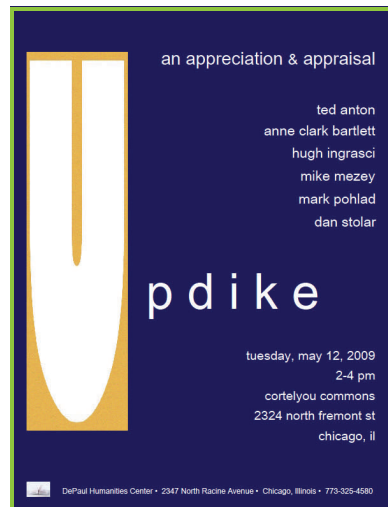
by

Michael L. Mezey

Professor of Political Science, DePaul University

from remarks prepared for:

Updike: An Appreciation and Appraisal



From my first encounter with John Updike, I was struck, as everyone is, with the beauty of his writing. Most of us in academia are writers or at least aspire to be writers. I don't know what it's like for the rest of you, but for me, writing is a slow, difficult process. As Emily Dickinson said, I hate to write, but love having written. And so I both envied and admired Updike—for the seemingly effortless way in which he created perfect prose, for the breadth of his writing—novels, short stories, criticism, and even poetry—and for how incredibly prolific he was. Although I sometimes tired of the things that he was writing about, I never tired of his way with words.

For me, Updike's most memorable character is Harry "Rabbit" Angstom, introduced to the world in 1960 in *Rabbit, Run*, and then re-appearing every ten years or so in *Rabbit Redux* at the end of the '60s, *Rabbit is Rich* at the end of the '70s, and finally, *Rabbit at Rest* as the Reagan era came to a close. Actually, I first met Harry in the

second of the series, *Rabbit Redux*, at a time when so many of us were trying to make sense of the '60s. I then went back to *Rabbit Run* to catch up on the back story, re-read *Redux*, and then, as they came out, the next two installments.

Rabbit, Run is set in the waning years of the Eisenhower administration. Once a high school basketball star, Harry is now 26 years old, living in a crummy apartment in the same small town in eastern Pennsylvania where he grew up, married for three years, with one child, a second on the way, and a dead-end job. He's trapped, and like Huck, lights out for the country, first on an ill-fated drive that gets him only as far as West Virginia and back, and then a much shorter trip across town to another woman with whom he lives until returning to his wife for the birth of his second child. But he runs again, leading his wife to drunken despair, culminating in the accidental death of his infant daughter.

Rabbit, Run is a reflection of the Eisenhower years: it is populated entirely by white people, by un-emancipated women, by the Mouseketeers and black and white television, and it is suffused with the repressed sexuality and expressed-but-only-seldom-practiced religiosity of the era, as experienced by an unsophisticated lower middle class white man. We know, of course, why Harry runs and what he's running from, but it's not clear what he is running to—some elusive place of freedom, peace, happiness and love. But his quest is plagued by well-deserved guilt, and the name of his town, Mt. Judge, stands as a constant reminder to him of his place on that desperately American razor's edge between freedom and responsibility.

When next we meet Harry, it is the end of the 1960s. He is back with his wife, living in a subdivision, and now working at the same printing plant as his father. His wife, Janice, has a job at her father's car dealership and she is having an affair. This time, it is she who runs, from Harry and from her now pre-teen son, Nelson. Harry, now a single father, encounters an angry black man named Skeeter and a young spaced-out flower child, Jill. Through them he comes face to face with his own racism ("the bus stinks of Negroes," he says), all against the backdrop of urban riots, the Vietnam War (Harry has an American flag decal on his car), Chappaquiddick, the drug culture, and the landing on the moon. He tries his best, but doesn't do well with all of this; as he says, a bit disingenuously, he "put his life into rules he feels melting away." Again, things end in disaster. While he is away getting it on with an old friend, his racist neighbors burn down his house because he is harboring a black man. Jill, who has moved in, dies in the fire (yet another dead young girl) and his son, before whose adolescent eyes all of this has played out, fixes the blame for everything on his father.

Redux is the most explicitly political of the four novels. Black people, who are virtually invisible in *Rabbit Run* (as they were to white America in the 1950s), are at the center of *Redux*. And Skeeter is by turns a revolutionary, a preacher, a drug user and pusher, and, for Harry, a seminar leader on the fraught history of black America. And although Updike treats Janice badly (as he seems to do most women), we still see in her the beginning of the women's movement as she changes from a helpless, pitiful person entirely dependent upon her parents and her ne'er-do-well husband, to a somewhat more fully developed person, trying to figure out who she is and where in the world she belongs.

Ten years later, *Rabbit is Rich*, or at least well off. It is the late 1970s, he now runs his dead father-in-law's Toyota car dealership, and he and his wife are back together, living in his mother-in-law's large house; they have joined a country club, taken up golf and tennis, and Harry declares himself happy for the first time in his life. But his happiness, based, it would seem, entirely on material well-being (there is an extraordinary scene involving Krugerrands and sex) is of course illusory. The opening line of the book is "America is out of gas." More than a commentary on the oil crisis of the late 1970s, we see through Harry's eyes the decay of towns like his, the closing of the factories and downtown businesses, the rise of strip malls and fast food joints, double digit inflation, and, despite his personal comfort, the "squeezed and cut down shape of his life." If the chaotic '60s suggested at least some hope in Harry's excitement about the landing on the moon, at the end of the '70s, there is no hope; Skylab is falling, Americans are held hostage in Iran, and Harry himself at the age of 46 is also a hostage, waiting to find out the meaning of his life. "You'd think," he says, "that it would have shown up by now."

But the only thing that shows up is his son Nelson, now in his early 20s, a college dropout with a pregnant girlfriend whom he is willing, reluctantly, to marry. Harry sees Nelson walking into the same trap that he walked into twenty years earlier, and tries to offer him a way out, but Nelson, who blames his father for all that has gone wrong in his life, refuses. Not even the birth of his granddaughter makes Harry happy. He's still trapped. In *Rabbit, Run*, he says that "you get the feeling you're in your coffin before they've taken your blood out" and his granddaughter, he says at the end of *Rabbit is Rich*, is just another nail in his coffin.

Rabbit at Rest finds Harry and Janice in semi-retirement in Florida. It is the late 1980s. Harry has had a heart attack and heads back to Pennsylvania, where he undergoes an angioplasty. There he finds that

his son has looted the car dealership to support his cocaine habit. Harry's way of coping with his physical and financial crises is to eat everything in sight, finding escape this time in gluttony. When he has sex with his daughter-in-law while his son is away at drug rehab ("the worst thing you've ever done," says his wife, Janice, and she would know) Harry runs again. Rather than—as his now straight and thoroughly analyzed son says—"process this" with his family, he hops in the car and completes the trip that he started thirty years earlier. He heads to Florida, discovering on the way that sadly, in the words of the poet Kris Kristofferson, freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose. There, alone, he suffers his last heart attack and, as the book closes, he says "enough."

Harry is plagued throughout the book by death—the tragedy of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie is a recurring theme. Two women with whom he had affairs die; his mother-in-law and his mother and father are long gone, but still linger in his mind, and there is still his responsibility for his dead daughter and for Jill, who died in the burning house. Gays appear for the first time in this book, in the character of Lyle, who has abetted Nelson's scheme to embezzle the dealership's money, but who is also dying of AIDs. And of course, Harry himself is dying and he knows this. His heart, his doctor says, is a typical American heart: "tired and stiff and full of crud"—a description not just of Harry but of post-Reagan America, besotted on junk food, shopping malls, rampant consumerism, and greed. Harry even misses the Cold War; at least then you knew exactly who your enemies were, he says.

Readers of these books are of two minds about Harry; we can empathize with his futile and ultimately fruitless search for freedom and happiness, with his frequent, always desperate and ill-considered attempts to break away, with his vulnerability, with the way he is manipulated by others, and with his frustration and even fury at a son who is giving him back much more than he deserves. But we also are revolted by his crudeness, his philandering, his insecurities, his shallowness, and his irresponsibility. In truth, he is not a particularly loveable character. He doesn't treat other people well, especially those who are closest to him—not his wife, his kid, his parents, his in-laws, the women with whom he sleeps, and, at times, not even his grandchildren. His first and occasionally his only assessment, both mental and verbal, of every woman that he encounters is sexual, and his interior monologues border on the misogynistic. And he's none too pleased with African-Americans, Latinos, and gays, or even with the Jews with whom he plays golf in Florida.

On the other hand, almost inexplicably one comes to care about this troubled, terribly flawed, sometimes reprehensible character. In a way, he is Everyman, attempting, but usually failing, to cope with the pressures and contradictions of life in capitalist America as the 20th century unwinds. We come to care about Harry and his fate in much the same way as during the first part of this century many came to care about Tony Soprano, a similarly loathsome character, but also an Everyman with whom we were able to empathize and in whom we occasionally saw ourselves.

Reading these four books in sequence over a short period of time is a different and much more satisfying experience than reading one installment every ten years, and I am grateful that this colloquium provided me with the opportunity to do so. The whole—which is much greater than the sum of its parts—constitutes a faultlessly observed, perfectly integrated commentary on four decades of American society and culture. Updike’s “ear” and “eye” for the texture, the tone and the sound of each decade, is unerring. The word pictures that he draws for us are vivid, dead-on. And all of this is told from the Babbitt-like perspective of the white middle class man in a medium sized town. It is easy, as one critic has said, for an author to have as his hero an introspective deep thinker rooted in cosmopolitan surroundings, someone who has experienced what the author has experienced, thinks as he thinks, and upon whom he can project his own experiences and anxieties—the types of heroes, for example, that Bellow favors. But Harry’s life is nothing like Updike’s. Yet Updike doesn’t patronize, condescend to, or stereotype Harry. He serves him up to us as he is in all his human complexity.

Finally, I believe that the Rabbit books are read differently by people who have lived through the entire time span that they cover—people like me, in other words—than by more contemporary readers, people like some of you, or our students. Few of us senior citizens will find in the life of Harry Angstrom a replica of all we saw and felt during those decades. But I believe that most of us knew someone whom we thought was a lot like Harry. I believe as well that each of us recognize—sometimes with pain, or horror, or laughter, or nostalgia, or embarrassment—his anxieties, his failings, his aspirations, his trials, and his unshakeable belief that there was something more out there if only he could break away and find it: in other words, his humanity. And we also recognize and come to a deeper understanding of the America that we and Harry experienced as together we lived through the last half of the 20th century.

FRIEND OF THE CENTER



On May 14, 2009, the Humanities Center named **LAURA S. WASHINGTON** our latest Friend of the Center.

In an interview following her acceptance of the Ida B. Wells-Barnett University Professorship in June of 2003, Washington said that she wanted to expand both DePaul's and her own horizons: "After all," she noted, "this professorship offers a bully pulpit to talk about race and social justice, and to stimulate solution-oriented public debate on these issues." A few months later, as she delivered her first lecture from her bully pulpit, she called on her media colleagues to join her in these debates, saying: "The media has a responsibility and an opportunity to take a leadership role in reporting on our 'race secrets' in ways that enlighten and encourage solutions."

In the years following that inaugural lecture, Laura Washington has put her bully pulpit to good use, bringing to DePaul an impressive group of media and political professionals to participate in challenging and sometimes difficult discussions. She has regularly invited these and other noted professionals into her classroom, to the direct benefit of scores of students. She has also continued her work as a columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, a senior editor for *In These Times*, and a commentator for radio and television.

And although the topics she has engaged through her teaching, journalism, and Media Roundtable Series are richly varied, they have nonetheless reflected the concern for social justice and pragmatic solutions that drives all of Washington's work, and that allows her to bring distinction to the Ida B. Wells-Barnett professorship in a way that truly honors its namesake.

We are pleased that we could support Laura Washington in staging her Media Roundtable Series, and are proud to have presented her with our Friend of the Center award, in thanks for her service to our Center, the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Professorship, and to DePaul University.

DEPAUL POETRY INSTITUTE

This year, the DePaul Poetry Institute published an anthology of poems by fifty-one Chicago poets in celebration of Barack Obama's inauguration as President. "A Writers' Congress: Chicago Poets on Barack Obama's Inauguration" was conceived and edited by Humanities Center visiting fellow Chris Green, and was released on inauguration day with a reading featuring twenty of the contributors.

"I was at home watching the election returns and wishing that I was downtown in Grant Park," recalls Green. "I felt I needed to do something more." The idea to create an anthology of poems marking Obama's election crystallized the next day while he toured "1968: Art and Politics in Chicago," a DePaul Art Museum exhibition, curated by Humanities Center Fellow Patricia Kelly, which focused on the civil unrest surrounding events that unfolded during the 1968 Democratic National Convention.



"I was struck by images of Grant Park during that time—the bullying of the National Guard—and the contrast of the peaceful, powerful images from the night before when some 250,000 people from all walks of life gathered in Grant Park to witness the election of Barack Obama. I thought of bringing different writers together."

Among the poets included in "A Writers' Congress" are Kevin Coval, Reginald Gibbons, Susan Hahn, Haki Madhubuti, Richard Jones, Martha Modena Vertreace-Doody, Liam Heneghan, Parneshia Jones, Quraysh Ali Lansana, Allan Johnston, Elise Pashcen, David Trinidad, and Judith Valente.

Of the collection, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Yusef Komunyakaa wrote, "These wonderful poems not only convey the complexity of Chi-town, but they also unmask the nation's soul, without being nostalgic or overly whimsical. We can all embrace this Obama-inspired anthology of timely praise."



Allison Joseph



Quraysh Ali Lansana



Chris Green



Richard Jones



Haki R. Madhubuti

A Writers' Congress

Chicago Poets on Barack Obama's Inauguration



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