Numerophobia

Perhaps this is not the place to be talking about my talent at self-diagnosis, but I think I am developing an illness. I should note that my past self-diagnoses have been about as accurate as recent economic forecasting, which is to say about as accurate as predicting your next blood test results based on your astrological sign. I mention it here because I suspect that, despite exhibiting some of the symptoms, many of my fellow sufferers have yet to be diagnosed. In fact, I expect this affliction to reach epidemic proportions very soon. Like any epidemic, this condition will attack people from all walks of life. The rich perhaps not so much (unless the federal tax rate goes up), but the poor and everyone in between could experience the symptoms to varying degrees. If my prognosis is correct, I can imagine myself, just as in the movies, walking into a crowded church basement wearing a little sticky tag with my name on it and standing up saying, “Hi, my name is Jian and I have numerophobia.” This would be followed by stories of the past week’s successes and failures at dealing with my problem, cups full of weak coffee, the sugar-rush of stale doughnuts, and the uncertain comfort of group hugs.

Numerophobia is fear of numbers. I do not mean to make light of phobias. A phobia is an irrational, excessive fear of a specific object or situation. The symptoms are real and can interfere with working, socializing, and other daily routines. These symptoms include anxiety, distress, nausea, breathlessness, and panic attacks. The symptoms of those who are beginning to fear all the numbers they must confront daily are somewhat similar to those produced by phobias. Some people might not associate these symptoms with numerophobia, but think back a few months to when you first tried to visualize the difference between a million-, a billion-, and a trillion-dollar deficit. (Hint, if you stack $1,000 bills, a million is a manageable 4 inches high, a billion is an imposing 358 feet high, and a trillion reaches an unimaginable 67.9 miles high.) Many people reported symptoms of extreme distress when a trillion-dollar national deficit became the new-billion-dollar national deficit. The majority of us simply allowed our eyes to glaze over and our reasoning faculties to go limp. After all, numbers with so many zeroes do not seem real. But even those who found the budget numbers too abstract to cause an impact experienced the classic symptoms of nausea and breathlessness when they opened the envelopes revealing very abstract to cause an impact experienced the classic symptoms of nausea and breathlessness when they opened the envelopes revealing very.

So, if it takes a numerophobia support group to deal with all these numbers and spare our grandchildren the bills for their boomer ancestors’ afflictions, then I’m ready to bite the stale doughnut and initiate the group hug that insures everyone raises our life expectancy, and lowers mortality rates among our children.

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and the monthly bills would have surely brought on some combination of nearly all the symptoms.

Although the symptoms of my particular version of numerophobia can and do interfere with the ability to follow daily routines, the majority of us are still able to function in our normal day-to-day lives. We are fortunate, but we are about to be inundated by even scarier numbers, numbers that relate how our health care is delivered and financed. Even worse, these new numbers will be coming at us from a number of contending interests and will be misleading, incomplete, and obscured by fine print that we are unlikely to read even if it is available. It will be offered by charismatic politicians, lobbyists, industry and business representatives, unions, and well-paid shills like “Harry and Louise” in the $30 million campaign designed to kill the Clinton administration’s attempt at health care reform. So, if we want to replace the expensive health care mess we now have with an overhaul of the system rather than merely creating a compromise built on escalating costs and diminishing coverage that our grandchildren will have to pay for, we must confront our collective numerophobia and focus upon some large and extremely abstract numbers. How large? The baseline of this health care debate ought to be the amount of money the nation currently spends on health care, and that begins in the oxygen-deprived thermosphere of $2.5 trillion (a stack of $1,000 bills reaching almost 170 miles high, so high that cosmonauts in the International Space Station could almost reach out and grab a few).

What do we get for this number other than a wheelbarrow full of zeroes? Not much. Some 46 to 50 million of our fellow citizens are currently priced out of health care coverage. Worse yet, the escalating costs are forcing employers to reduce and/or drop coverage for more people every day. And, as noted in the April 2009 AARP Bulletin, “We spend nearly twice as much per capita as the rest of the industrialized world, yet have a lower life expectancy and higher mortality rates among children” (p.3).

As J. Lester Feder notes in “Fighting for Our Health” in The Nation (April 27, 2009, p.11), the truth is that the only way we are going to be able to understand the political battle surrounding health care reform is to “follow the money.” Although it is tempting to go after the insurers’ profits on health care, we should resist repeating our recent role as enraged villagers, pitchforks and torches in hand, converging on Doctor Frankenstein’s A.I.G. headquarters. The insurance companies are greedy, but Feder finds that “the profits of the top seven for-profit insurance companies are equal to less than 1 percent of annual healthcare spending.” Simply seizing or replacing these companies would not accomplish reform. Feder finds that the biggest savings, perhaps $700 billion a year, can be achieved by changing the way medicine is practiced. This includes eliminating treatments that have been shown to offer little benefit, reducing surgeries where risks far outweigh benefits, and insuring that all treatment is the most appropriate available by investing in health information technology that tracks the most effective treatments. The stimulus package provided funding to begin this effort, but drug and medical device manufacturers will resist because it would require them to prove that newer, more expensive products outperform older, less expensive ones already in use. Providers, who account for more than 50 percent of our health care expenditures, will resist because rather than being reimbursed for the volume of services provided, they will be paid only for services that heal their patients. The pharmaceutical industry and medical device manufacturers and health care providers will throw numbers at us threatening us with the prospect of “government rationing.” So will the wealthier taxpayers, who will be asked to absorb some of the cost through increased taxes.

The fact is, however, we do have a national illness, and it is the way we deliver and finance health care. If we fail to come together and reform this situation then no support group will make us competitive and no spin on the condition will make it look fair or equitable. So, if it takes a numerophobia support group to deal with all these numbers and spare our grandchildren the bills for their boomer ancestors’ afflictions, then I’m ready to bite the stale doughnut and initiate the group hug that insures everyone, raises our life expectancy, and lowers mortality rates among our children.

Your friendly neighborhood humanists here at the Center wish you a safe and pleasant summer.

Jian Leng
Associate Director
Center for the Humanities
Guy Fawkes Day, but here is an example of chilling anti-Catholicism that occurred at the 1928 Democratic National Convention that nominated Al Smith, as described by Thomas J. Carty in his *A Catholic in the White House? Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy’s Presidential Campaign* (2004): “After Smith received the party’s presidential nomination, several Klansmen [the Ku Klux Klan, in addition to being Anti-African American, was a powerful and rabidly anti-Catholic organization that was in the heyday of its influence in the 1920s] dragged a life-size representation of the Catholic candidate into the convention hall, slit the effigy’s throat, and splashed false blood on its chest. As the mob chanted ‘Lynch him!’ others fired bullets into the tattered figure.”

For those who think that, in this age of diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism, this anti-Catholic bias is a thing of an unenlightened past, two recent books with similar titles beg to disagree: Philip Jenkins’s *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice and Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* by the eminent Catholic commentator Mark S. Massa, SJ. Both were published in 2003 and both argue that widespread anti-Catholic bias permeates American popular culture, American politics, and American news coverage. (In Hollywood films, at least in the past, from *Going My Way* [1944] and *Boys Town* [1938] to *The Exorcist* [1973], Catholicism was shown in a positive light. But for a considerable period the Catholic Church had a strong censorship organization—the National Legion of Decency—that exercised influence over the content of Hollywood films.) One can express anti-Catholic feelings in public with no fear of rebuke or disapproval; one can criticize Catholicism in ways that no one would dare, publicly at least, criticize either Judaism or Islam, as either political ideologies or theologies. In the United States, it is cool to be anti-Catholic, for who would defend that cackling, cranky leviathan, the brazen, power-mad whore of Babylon called the Church in its benighted, misguided, and quixotic fight against liberalism and modernity, particularly in its stands against legalized abortion, birth control and contraception, homosexual marriage, and its opposition to divorce, sexual relations for its priests and nuns, and woman ordination? Why can’t one make fun of and openly disdain a medieval, politically incorrect relic that seems flummoxed by its stubbornness and its hypocrisy?

For American Protestants, the Church is an authoritarian institution that has always, at best, had a condescending attitude toward other forms of Christianity or, at worst, has been overtly hostile to them. Protestants were and are distinctly uncomfortable with the Church’s Mariolatry, the claims of papal infallibility, and the insistence that the Catholic Church is the only true Christian church. (What Catholics see when they look at Protestantism is simply sectarian chaos fatuously disguised as institutional rigor.) Protestants have particularly feared what they consider the Catholic Church’s disregard of the traditional American understanding of the separation of church and state. For instance, Protestants always disliked the Catholic Church’s interest in trying to gain taxpayer support for its schools. Indeed, it was this issue of state support for Catholic schools that led to the formation of Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU) in 1947, after the Supreme Court ruled that it
was constitutional for the State of New Jersey to pay transportation expenses for children going to Catholic schools. (As a congressman in 1950, Kennedy supported federal aid to Catholic schools; as a presidential candidate in 1960, he opposed it.)

Liberal Protestants were suspicious of post–World War II Catholic anti-communism, which led the Church to back the repressive Franco regime in Spain. The fact that the manically anti-Communist Joe McCarthy was Catholic only infuriated liberal Protestants all the more. Conservative Protestants (before the federal legalization of abortion in the United States in 1973, which changed the political dynamics in American Christianity) disliked Catholic "idolatry," its European odor, and the authority of the pope. In short, a long, cold war existed between Catholics and Protestants in the United States: neither liked the other much, and neither knew much about the other except whatever fit their preconceived notions of the other's "otherness."

But the Catholic Church was becoming more liberal in the 1950s as it, too, was shaken by political and social changes sweeping the world. Pope John XXIII, who ascended to the papacy in 1958, in the midst of Kennedy's preparations for his presidential run, announced the convening of the Second Vatican Council in 1959, which would result, although John would not live to see them, in dramatic changes in the Catholic Church. Protestant churches were in a state of change as well, rattled by race, the civil rights movement, and their own widespread segregation; and challenged by the existence of nuclear weapons, the rising tide of liberalism that increasingly made religious belief irrelevant or irrational, and the growing secularization of the nation (prayer in public schools, for instance, was ended by a Supreme Court decision in 1962).

It was in this historical moment, against this historical backdrop, that John Kennedy and Richard Nixon opposed each other for the presidency in 1960.

2. The More Things Change

Shaun S. Casey’s *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon* 1960 is a highly informative, well-researched study of the role of religion in that particular presidential campaign, which featured the second Catholic politician in U.S. history running for the presidency. The book is particularly effective in providing a close-up look at how both the Kennedy and Nixon operatives strategized over the issue of Kennedy’s religion, how each candidate approached it, and how their approaches changed over the course of the hotly contested campaign. Also, the book is very strong in describing how Catholic and Protestant churchmen and intellectuals in various religious and secular organs wrote about Kennedy the man and the politician, how they felt about a Catholic running for the presidency, what they felt were the chances of a Catholic being elected, and whether the election of a Catholic president would be good for the country. Details about this and the interaction of religious figures with the actual campaign organizations of the two candidates are quite rich.

There are very good accounts of both Kennedy and Nixon speaking in front of Catholic and Protestant groups, of how they dealt with the religion issue with the press.

Nixon was aware, as Casey makes clear, from very early in the primary season that Kennedy would be a formidable opponent. (He was convinced that Kennedy would be the Democratic nominee from at least 1959.) As Casey writes, “[Nixon] thought Kennedy had intelligence, energy, and an effective television personality... While Nixon’s pollster, Claude Robinson, saw potential liabilities in Kennedy’s youth, inexperience, wealth, and religion, Nixon felt that a skilled politician could turn each of those into an asset.” Indeed, Nixon was convinced he lost the election because he misplayed the religion issue and that he should have retained his silence on it instead of breaking it in the final two weeks. Nixon felt that Kennedy won because he was Catholic, not in spite of it. Nixon lost Republican Catholics, excited by the idea of voting for one of their own, and also some Republican Protestants, who wanted to show they were not biased against Catholics. In other words, electing a Catholic president became the new sign by which Americans could demonstrate their exceptionalism. There are moments in politics when people, hypnotized by the idea and importance of “history,” feel by their choice they are “making” history. This, in essence, is what Nixon thinks happened in 1960. Nixon felt he needed conservative, white, southern Protestant voters to make up for his Catholic defection, the beginning of the so-called southern strategy that Nixon and John Mitchell would perfect in 1968 when Nixon would win the presidency. Nixon rejected the strategy of trying to outflank the Democrats to win the black vote because he thought it would cost the white conservative Protestants he desperately needed. He also knew that his chances of unseating blacks from the charismatic Kennedy were slight. (Al Smith, the first Catholic to run for the presidency, was hugely popular with blacks.) Nixon won only 22 percent of the Catholic vote in 1960, the lowest for any Republican in American history.

Kennedy had a number of obstacles to overcome. He strongly asserted in speeches and articles that his first duty as president was to the Constitution and nothing else. Many Catholics disliked this, as he seemed to be apologizing for his religion or pretending that it had no role or purpose in his understanding of himself or in his vision of the world. For many Catholics, there was uncertainty whether he was Catholic enough. He made sure that he was not photographed during the campaign with Catholic clergy or with any Catholic groups, correcting a mistake Al Smith made. Kennedy stopped his campaign on April 21, 1960, to give a long speech on the issue of religion, of his Catholicism, before the American Society of Newspaper Editors in advance of the West Virginia primary, which he needed to win to show the public that he could win a state with virtually no Catholic voters. In the speech, he made clear that he would not be taking orders from the Vatican. He put the press on the spot by asking why it felt that religion was a valid issue for
this campaign rather than his record as a public servant. He also asked why his religion was an issue in running for the presidency when it had not been when he joined the military, ran for Congress, or ran for the Senate. The speech seemed to have helped, as Kennedy won West Virginia handily.

All of this should bring to mind the recently concluded presidential campaign that resulted in our first African American president. Barack Obama, like Kennedy, has the gifts of being young, smart, a good turner of a phrase, and energetic. Like Kennedy, he made sure during the campaign not to be seen very much in the company of blacks or surrounded by black leaders—and, like Kennedy with the Catholics, many blacks, early on, asked if Obama was black enough. Obama, as the religion issue upset Kennedy, was thrown off course by the race issue (mixed with religion) in the form of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, pastor of Obama’s Chicago church. Like Kennedy, Obama gave the speech that clarified issues of race and the campaign propelled his candidacy. His Republican opponent, John McCain, found it difficult to attack his opponent effectively for fear of being called racist and tried to sidestep race entirely, denouncing Republicans who made a point of saying Obama’s middle name, Hussein. McCain almost certainly feels he lost because nearly all liberal and moderate whites—and even some prominent conservatives in large measure to demonstrate that they were ready to have a black serve as president—voted for Obama. It was another of those self-consciously historical moments when a significant group of people wanted to go down as being on the right side of something that signified change; the triumph of American exceptionalism again in some fresh form.

I am not arguing that the 2008 campaign was a repeat of 1960. Things do change, and the world of 2008 is very different from the world of 1960. But it is frequently the case that the past blows back against us like a tide reminding us that we are never as far from the shore of our predecessors, never so removed from our atavistic habits, longings, and insecurities, as we may think.
The Tuesday Night Writers’ Critique group will meet to read and critique one another’s work. Writers of all levels of experience are invited to join us. For more info contact Susan at ch2b-rrku@dea.spamcon.org. 7pm, B&N Crestwood, 9618 Watson Rd.

The Tuesday Afternoon Book Club will discuss Homeland Security by Alexa Hunt. 2pm, SLCL–Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant Rd., 921-7200.

The Bridgeton Trails Book Discussion Group will be hosting a Mystery Night. Mystery and suspense lovers are invited. Bring a copy of your favorite mystery or suspense book and tell us all about it. Registration required. 7pm, SLCL–Bridgeton Trails Branch, 3455 McKelvey Rd., 291-7570.

Jon Ginoli recounts his journey with Pansy Division, the first out and proud queercore punk rock band to hit the semi-big time in his book, Delflowered. 7pm, LBB, 399 N. Euclid, 367-6731.

Machacek Book Discussion Group welcomes new members. 10am, SLPL–Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave., 781-2948.

Join the Kingshighway’s Book Discussion Group as we discuss A Fraction of a Whole by Steve Toltz. 6:45pm, SLPL–Kingshighway Branch, 2260 S. Vandeventer Ave., 771-5450. The Prairie Commons’ Book Club Meeting will be discussing Murder on the Ildtral Road by Sue Henry. 7pm, SLCL–Prairie Commons Branch, 915 Utz Ln., 895-1023.

St. Louis Writers Guild will host a lecture. Registration required via www.stlwritersguild.org. 7pm, B&N Ladue, 8871 Ladue Rd.

St. Louis Writers Guild presents Loud Mouth Open Mic Night, a live performance reading event for writers and guests 21 and older. Registration required to read via www.stlwritersguild.org. No charge, but please patronize our venue host, 8pm, The Mack, 4615 Macklind Ave.

Wednesday, May 20
Urban Lit Discussion Group will meet to discuss Ulterior Motives by Roy Glenn. 7pm, SLPL–Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand Blvd., 772-6586.

Oak Bend’s Evening Book Discussion Group will discuss Sister of My Heart by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. 7:30pm, SLCL–Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 822-0051.

Pageturners Book Club meets to discuss Girl with a Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier. 2pm, SLCL–Tesson Ferry Branch, 9920 Lin-Ferry Dr., 843-0560.

Bosnian-born author and National Book Award finalist Aleksandar Hemon presents a new collection of short stories, Love and Obstacles. 7pm, LBB Downtown, 321 N. 10th St., 436-3049.

Cliff Cave’s Wednesday Book Discussion Group will discuss Bridge of Sighs by Richard Russo. 2pm and 7pm, SLCL–Cliff Cave Branch,
It is our pleasure to announce Dr. Maya C. Gibson has been appointed the Postdoctoral Fellow of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar in Arts & Sciences at Washington University in the Center for the Humanities for 2009–10. Gibson received bachelor’s degrees in Vocal Performance, English Literature, and Black Studies from Oberlin Conservatory and College. She earned master’s degrees in Afro-American Studies and Musicology and a Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her research interests include jazz history and historiography, popular music in American culture, and sonic representations of race and gender difference in western music. We are very excited about having her here during the 2009-2010 academic year and fully expect her presence to add a great deal to the endeavors of the seminar.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar at Washington University in St. Louis is entitled “How Deep Is the Ocean: The Rise and Fall of Jazz as Popular Music.” This seminar will gather Washington University faculty and students and teachers, writers, and musicians from across the country and around the world to examine the validity of several basic contentions about the “life” and “death” of jazz in its transformation from “popular” music to “art” music. The seminar hopes to set forth new ways of thinking about the trajectory of popular music and the complicated blend of elements that come together to make some unique form of popular music appear. The seminar also hopes to offer fresh ways for scholars of different disciplines to incorporate more sophisticated and rigorous ways of analyzing popular music in their scholarship and their teaching to more fully illuminate and enrich their subjects. More information about the seminar schedule will be made available in the coming weeks. All members of the Washington University community are welcome to attend any sessions of the seminar.

Thursday, May 21
Join Book Journeys as they discuss Maya Angelou’s Letter to My Daughter. SLCL—Indian Trails Branch, 2pm, 8400 Deport Dr., 428-5424.
Adèle Hagnée and Jean Gosebrink, authors of Historic Photos of St. Louis, present Picture This. Take this opportunity to test your knowledge and learn about St. Louis history. 5pm, SLPL—Kingshighway Branch, 6800 Michigan Ave., 771-5450.

Friday, May 22
Let’s Chat Book Discussion Group will discuss Rabbit in the Moon by Deborah and Joel Shlian. Registration required. 2pm, SLCL—Daniel Boone Branch Asian Center, 300 Clarkson Rd., 636-227-9630.

Saturday, May 23
You are invited to the Writer’s Workshop to meet with your peers and the St. Louis Writers & Performing Guild to learn how to enhance your writing skills. 10am, SLPL—Baden Branch, 8448 Church Rd., 388-2400.

Tuesday, May 26
As the Page Turns Book Discussion Group will discuss Bad Blood by Linda Fairstein. 7pm, SLCL—Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 638-2210.

Wednesday, May 27
Bookies Book Discussion Group will discuss The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield. 2pm, SLCL—Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 822-0051.

The Central Book Discussion Group will discuss A Lesson before Dying by Ernest Gaines. Call Popular Library at 539-0396 for details. 4pm, SLPL—Central Branch, Meeting Room 1, 1301 Olive St.

Thursday, May 28
St. Louis artist Robert Fishbone, tells how he made a business selling art-related gift items in

Deane Wagner Poetry Contest. Submissions accepted April 15–June 13. For contest guidelines or information, visit stlwritersguild.org or call 821-3823 weekdays 8am–5pm.

The 2009 River Styx International Poetry Contest is under way. A prize of $1,500 and publication in River Styx is given annually for a single poem. Stephen Dunn will judge. All entries will be considered for publication. Submit up to three poems totaling no more than 14 pages with a $20 entry fee, which includes a one-year subscription to River Styx, postmarked by May 31. River Styx, International Poetry Contest, 3547 Olive St., Ste. 107, St. Louis, MO 63103.

Abbreviations
STL: Saint Louis; B&N: Barnes & Noble; LBB: Left Bank Books; SLCL: St. Louis County Library; SLPL: St. Louis Public Library; SCCCL: St. Charles City County Library; UCPL: University City Public Library, WU: Washington University, WGPL: Webster Groves Public Library.
Check the online calendar at cenhum.arts.wustl.edu for more events and additional details. To advertise, send event details to ltc@arts.wustl.edu, or call 935-5576.
This conference, the second in a series of jointly sponsored humanities-oriented conferences organized by the Center for the Humanities at Washington University and one of the McDonnell International Academy University partners, will be held at Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea, from Monday, June 1 through Saturday, June 6. Co-sponsoring the conference with the WU Center for the Humanities are Yonsei University’s College of Liberal Arts, Department of English, and Center for Gender Studies. The themes of the conference are war, memory, and the political and cultural significance of representations about war. Faculty members from both Washington and Yonsei universities will be presenters. The keynote speakers are:

Carol Gluck, George Sansom Professor of History and Director of Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, will speak on “Deficits of Memory/Worlds of War.” Professor Gluck will consider the reasons why, more than sixty years after it ended, the Second World War remains a contested issue in history and memory. She will discuss examples from Europe, Asia, and North America to help us to understand both how public memory works and also the challenges that present preoccupations with memory pose for knowledge and for action. She is author of Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period (1987) and Past Obsessions: World War Two in History and Memory (forthcoming).

James Dawes, Associate Professor of English, Director of the Program in Human Rights and Humanitarianism, Department of English, Macalester College, will speak on “War Crimes and Representation.” Professor Dawes will employ the figure of the perpetrator to present the ethical quandaries of representation. In his recent work he has taken the confessions of war criminals. He sees the collection of these confessions as an urgently needed moral archive of the twentieth century that will provide an accurate account of our time for future generations. He is author of The Language of War: Literature and Culture in the U.S. from the Civil War through World War I (2005), and That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity (2007).

Heonik Kwon, Reader of Social Anthropology, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, will speak on “The Decomposition of the Cold War.” Dr. Kwon considers the Cold War as a global conflict but argues that it was not a globally identical phenomenon. Whereas the paradigm of “cold war” or “imaginary war” may largely represent the European experience of the second half of the twentieth century, it contradicts how the wider nonwestern postcolonial world experienced the same epoch: with a series of vicious civil wars, often with heavy foreign interventions, and other exceptional forms of organized political violence. Careful consideration of this variation in collective memory is crucial both for international studies and for discourses of historical transition today. Dr. Kwon is author of the prize-winning After the Massacre: Commemoration and Consolation in Hà My and My Lai (2006) and Ghosts of War in Vietnam (2008).

This conference on the subject of war and memory is meant, to borrow the words of Shakespeare’s Richard II, “to open the purple testament of bleeding war.” What do we think war is? This conference will be an interdisciplinary examination of war and the meaning of its remembrance: how memory and the formal construction of history narrative have shaped the cultural and political typology of war, its artistic representations, its commemoration through public and political institutions, and our concept of the idea of justice in providing restitution to the victims of war.

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