

Allegory and Parody

Under the star of Franz Kafka, our readings emphasize the role of figurative language in allegorical narratives, quasi-allegorical texts, hasidic tales, and parodies. Short stories by Kafka, S. Y. Agnon, and Aharon Appelfeld raise questions surrounding symbols, tropes, allegory, and representation. Study of stories told by Nahman of Bratslav prepares us for reading anti-hasidic satires and neo-hasidic parodies by Joseph Perl, I. B. Levinsohn, Yehuda Leib Levin, Mordechai David Brandstadter, and I. L. Peretz. Pertinent literary criticism includes Walter Benjamin's and Robert Alter's essays on Kafka, and especially Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody, which defines the term in a broad, post-modern sense.

Introduction: Post-modern Parody and the Return to Allegory. Alternate or virtual realities. Intertextuality and world reference. Textual universe or *hors-texte*?

Linda Hutcheon: *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, chapters 1-2 ([Hutcheon.pdf](#))

Week 2

Franz Kafka, A. *Published in his Lifetime:* "Before the Law," together with a longer excerpt from chapter 9 of *The Trial* ([Kafka.pdf](#)), and "An Imperial Message"; "A Country Doctor" (220), "An Old Manuscript" (415), "Jackals and Arabs" (407), "The Next Village" (404), "The Cares of a Family Man" (427); "A Report to an Academy" (250) and "A Report to an Academy: Two Fragments" (259); "A Hunger Artist" (268) and "Josephine the Singer" (360).

Robert Alter: "Kafka as Kabbalist," in *Salmagundi* ([Alter.pdf](#))

Week 3

Franz Kafka, B. *Posthumously Published:* "On Parables" (457) and "The Problem of Our Laws" (437); "The Great Wall of China" (235) and "The News of the Building of the Wall: A Fragment" (248); "The Hunter Gracchus" (226) and "The Hunter Gracchus: A Fragment" (231); "The City Coat of Arms" (433) and "Give It Up!" (456). Also: "The Tower/Pit of Babel," "Abraham," "Mount Sinai," "The Building of the Temple," and "The Animal in the Synagogue" ([Kafka1.pdf](#))

Walter Benjamin: "Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death" and "Some Reflections on Kafka" ([Benjamin.pdf](#))

Week 4

S. Y. Agnon: From *A Book That Was Lost:* "Fable of the Goat," "To Father's House," "Friendship," "The Tale of the Scribe," "Agunot," "Two Pairs," and "The Lady and the Peddler"; also "Forevermore" ([Agnon.pdf](#))

Week 5

Aharon Appelfeld, "Badenheim 1939," the short story in *The B. G. Rudolph Lecture Series*

Start **Aharon Appelfeld,** *Badenheim 1939*, the novel

Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie" ([Nietzsche.pdf](#))

Week 6

Aharon Appelfeld, *Badenheim 1939*, the novel

Jacques Derrida, “White Mythology” ([Derrida.pdf](#))

Week 7

Hasidic Stories: Nahman, *The Tales*, esp. I-VI, XII, XIII;
 “The ‘Dream-Talks’ of Nahman of Bratslav ([Stern2.pdf](#))
 Selections from *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*

Week 8

Joseph Perl: *Revealer of Secrets*, trans. Ken Frieden
 Introduction and Letters 1, 20, 21, 45, 80, 151, and Conclusion
 Look for irony, satire, parody, and the ways in which they are interwoven.
Sefer Bohem Tzadik: Letters 3, 4, and 5, trans. Ken Frieden

Week 9

I. B. Levinsohn: “Words of the Righteous” and “Valley of Ghosts,” trans. Ken Frieden

Week 10

Yehuda Leib Levin, “The Revelation of the Yanuka in Stolin,” trans. Ken Frieden
Mordechai David Brandstadter, “The Wonders in the City of Zhiditshuvka,” trans. Ken Frieden

Week 11

I. L. Peretz: From *Classic Yiddish Stories*: “The Shtrayml,” “Kabbalists,” “Teachings of the Hasidim,” “The Rebbe’s Pipe,” “If Not Higher,” and “Between Two Mountains”
 Peretz was an influential neo-Romantic in his appropriation of quasi-Hasidic narrative.
 Directly influenced by him, Martin Buber retold Hasidic tales in 1906, 1908, and later.

Weeks 12-14

Your Turn: Each student will select one additional text—such as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* or a twentieth-century short story—for independent, in-depth research. Toward the end of the semester, you will assign your selection as class reading and give an oral presentation on it.

Texts:

- Agnon, S. Y. *A Book That Was Lost and Other Stories*. Ed. Alan Mintz and Anne Golomb Hoffman. Expanded edition. New Milford: Toby Press, 2008.
- Appelfeld, Aharon. “Badenheim 1939.” Trans. Betsy Rosenberg. Ed. Ken Frieden
The B. G. Rudolph Lectures in Judaic Studies. New Series, Lecture 3.
 Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001.
- Appelfeld, Aharon. *Badenheim 1939*. Boston: Godine, 1980.
- Classic Yiddish Stories of Stories of S. Y. Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, and I. L. Peretz*. Ed. Ken Frieden. Trans. Ken Frieden, Ted Gorelick, and Michael Wex. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Complete Stories*. Ed. Nahum N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken Books, 1983.
 [For a clearer picture of the stories and volumes published by Kafka during his lifetime, compare *The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Pieces*. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken, 1948.]
- Nahman of Bratslav. *The Tales*. Trans. Arnold Band. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*. New York: Pantheon, 1986. (Paperback)

As indicated, some PDFs are available on Blackboard.

Recommended for Further Reading and Research

(some of these are out of print and/or excerpted in the PDFs indicated above):

- Alter, Robert. *Necessary Angels: Tradition and Modernity in Kafka, Benjamin, and Scholem*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Babel, Isaac. *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel*. Ed. Nathalie Babel. Trans. Peter Constantine. New York: Norton, 2002.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969. (PDF of two essays on Kafka)
- Brod, Max. *Franz Kafka: A Biography*. Trans. G. Humphreys Roberts and Richard Winston. New York: Schocken, 1960.
- Canetti, Elias. *Kafka's Other Trial: The Letters to Felice*. Trans. Christopher Middleton. New York: Schocken, 1974.
- De Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology." In *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. (PDF of the first part)
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. New York: Methuen, 1985. (PDF of chapters 1-2)
- Pawel, Ernst. *The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka*. New York, FSG, 1984.
- Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*. Ed. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990. (PDF of Nahman's "Dream-Talks")

Requirements:

Eight double-spaced short essays (about 2 pages), including examples from and analysis of the course readings; a longer paper (about 10 pages) on a broader topic, arrived at in consultation with the instructor; oral presentation on a short parable, allegory, parody, or other text; regular attendance.

Plagiarism:

Acknowledge your sources! Don't even think of taking anything off the web (or from a book or another student's paper) without using quotation marks and a reference to the site or source. It's unethical, as easy for professors to catch as it is for students to steal, and the consequence is always a failing grade. Use quotation marks and notes or a bibliography page. In official words:

"The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>."

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