

Savage Words: Invective as a Literary Genre

Together with the insult and the verbal attack, invective inhabits the most antisocial sphere of language—a sphere one might expect to be ungoverned by any rules or conventions of genre, where scathing ridicule is unleashed with the same heated anarchy that animates its devoted practitioners.

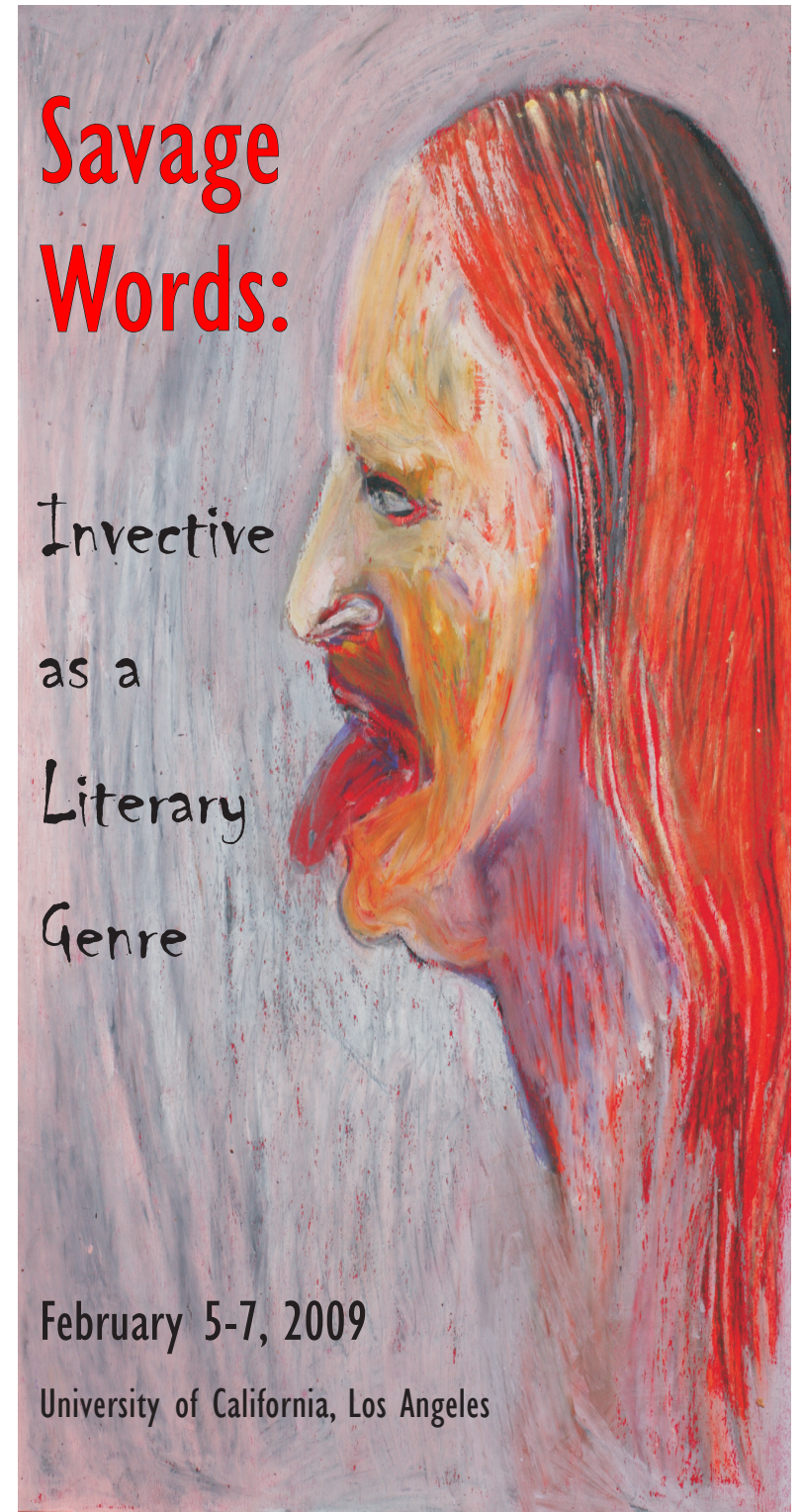
And yet, upon closer examination, invective reveals itself to be one of the most tightly regulated of the literary genres, in which genealogies and norms have been strictly codified since the time of Cicero and Sallust. In fact, manuals of rhetoric, meant for students at all levels, formalize its every aspect—even determining, with clinical precision, the kind of shortcomings to be excoriated in one's colleagues. Notwithstanding the ironclad regulations to which it is subjected, or possibly because of them, invective has enjoyed continuing favor throughout European circles, being always rediscovered, revisited, and rekindled.

This conference will bring together an international array of scholars to delineate the rules of the invective genre, showing its evolution and expressive ductility, analyzing that vast corpus of texts, which, over the centuries, individuals of every provenance (civil or ecclesiastic) have discharged in an effort to vilify either the ideas or the character of their colleagues, to demonstrate their superiority in the art of rhetoric, or, perhaps simply to vent their genuine loathing for those same colleagues.

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Savage Words: Invective as a Literary Genre
February 5-7, 2009



Thursday, February 5, 2009

UCLA, Royce Hall 314

- 2:30 Coffee, refreshments
- 3:00 Welcoming Remarks
Brian P. Copenhagen (UCLA), Director, Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies
Massimo Ciavolella (UCLA), Conference co-organizer
- 3:15 **Thomas Conley** (University of Illinois, Urbana)
“Toward a Rhetoric of Insult”
- 4:00 **Ennio Rao** (University of North Carolina)
“The Humanistic Invective: Mode, Genre, or Meta-Genre?”
- 4:45 Reception

Friday, February 6, 2009

UCLA, Royce Hall 314

- 9:30 Coffee, pastries

Session I - Luigi Ballerini (UCLA), Chair

- 10:00 **Kathryn Morgan** (UCLA)
“Domesticating Invective in Plato’s *Laws*”
- 10:45 **Alessandro Schiesaro** (Sapienza, University of Rome)
“Political Invective and its Roman Archetypes”
- 11:30 **Giuseppe Mazzotta** (Yale)
“Wit and Passion in the Public Square: The Play of Language from Dante to the Early Humanists”
- 12:15 Lunch

Session II - Massimo Ciavolella (UCLA), Chair

- 1:30 **David Marsh** (Rutgers)
“The Invectives of Petrarch and His Quattrocento Successors”
- 2:15 **Gianluca Rizzo** (UCLA)
“Issues of Language and Genre in Macaronic Invectives”

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A conference organized by Massimo Ciavolella and Gianluca Rizzo.

- 3:00 **Hélène Cazes** (University of Victoria, British Columbia)
“Invective for the Principle: Verbal Abuse and Humanism (Declarations, Replies, and Insults to the Sacred College of Theology in Paris, 1532-1551)”
- 3:45 Break
- 4:15 **Frédéric Gabriel** (CNRS Lyon; École Pratique Des Hautes Études, Paris)
“Doctrinal Authority, Linguistic Heterodoxy and Jesuit Orthodoxy in the Early Modern Period: Antinomies, from Confessional Dispute to Literary Violence”
- 5:00 **Donald Beecher** (Carleton University, Ottawa)
“The Art of Declining Invective in Ben Jonson’s *Poetaster*”

Saturday, February 7, 2009

UCLA, Royce Hall 314

- 9:30 Coffee, pastries

Session III - Gianluca Rizzo (UCLA), Chair

- 10:00 **Edward Tuttle** (UCLA)
“*Cretinòpoli, Motteggi* and *Topopaulisms*: Italian Traditions of Intergroup Invective”
- 10:45 **Paul Perron** (University of Toronto)
“Invectives: A Cross-Cultural Bilingual Example in Contemporary Quebec Society”
- 11:30 **Luigi Ballerini** (UCLA)
“‘The world is not a horse’: Pasolini’s Invectives and Pagliarini’s Epigrams”
- 12:15 Lunch

Session IV - Donald Beecher (Carleton University, Ottawa), Chair

- 1:30 **Paolo Fabbri** (University of Venice)
“Epigrams: When Poetry Hurts”
- 2:15 **Kirstie McClure** (UCLA)
“Democracy, Discipline, and the End of Invective”
- 3:00 **Remo Bodei** (Professor in Residence, UCLA)
“The Righteous Wrath”
- 3:45 Closing remarks
Gianluca Rizzo (UCLA), Conference co-organizer

Support for this conference is provided by:

The Ahmanson Foundation

The UCLA Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies

The UCLA Department of French & Francophone Studies

The UCLA Department of Italian

The Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles

General Information

Advance registration is not required. No admission fee. Seating is limited and seats will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Parking

UCLA campus parking permits may be purchased for \$9 each day from any UCLA Parking Services kiosk.

Need More Information?

Please contact the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies by email at cmrs@humnet.ucla.edu or phone at 310-825-1880.

Cover image: Grzegorz Bednarski, *Inferno XVIII, 127-133*, in Wojciechowski, Jerzy, et al. Grzegorz Bednarski: Piekło według Dantego: katalog wystawy = Hell inspired by Dante: catalogue of exhibition (Warsaw: Polish Modern Art Foundation, 2006).

Bednarski’s drawing is inspired by these lines from Dante’s *Inferno*:

Appresso ciò lo duca: “Fa che pinghe,”
mi disse, “il viso un poco più avante,
sì che la faccia ben con i’occhio attinghe
di quella sozza e scapigliata fante
che là si grafia con l’unghie merdose,
e or s’accoscia e ora è in piedi stante:
Taide è, la puttana che rispuose
al drudo suo quando disse, ‘Ho io grazie
grandi apo te?’: ‘Anzi maravigliose!’

After that, my leader told me: “See that you push
your eye a little further on, so that it attains the face
of that filthy baggage with disordered hair who
is scratching herself with her feculent nails, now
squatting, now standing on her feet:
that is Thais, the whore who, when he said, ‘Do I
find great favor with you?’ replied to her lover:
‘Marvelous favor indeed!’