

Research Seminar**Invisible Damage: The Grotesque Fictions of
Teddy Wayne's *Apartment*** **ILP : 1 UNIT (AES)** **2 April 2025 (Wednesday)** **4:30pm to 5:30pm** **LKK304****Prof. Peter D. Mathews**

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Peter D. Mathews is Professor of English at the University of Macau. A specialist in British and Australian fiction, he is the author of three books and numerous scholarly articles.

Abstract

Teddy Wayne's *Apartment* (2020) is a novel about the "invisible damage" that arises from the secret of its unnamed narrator. To depict this secret without revealing it, Wayne adopts a strategy from Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*: just as Jake Barnes's suppressed impotence is central to Hemingway's story, so too the attraction of Wayne's male narrator to his roommate Billy barely pokes through the surface of the text like the tip of Hemingway's proverbial iceberg. The other key literary influence on *Apartment* is Sherwood Anderson's collection of linked short stories *Winesburg, Ohio*. Wayne adopts Anderson's stated theme in the opening tale, "The Book of the Grotesque," which examines how human beings betray their ideals and dreams in ways that render them unhappy and "grotesque." After tracing how Wayne deploys these two important influences in *Apartment*, the essay concludes by examining how the book provides a genealogy of the neoliberal conditions that define contemporary American society, with a particular focus on Wayne's decision to conclude with the 2016 election of Donald Trump and the rise of a new politics of hatred.

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