SPRING 2022

SIBLING RIVALRIES:

From Cain and Abel to “What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?”

GERMAN 298A (SLN: 15130)
C LIT 251A (SLN: 11831)

MWF 10:30-11:20
5.0 CREDITS, VLPA
PROF. RICHARD BLOCK

From the brother whose birthright the younger one wants to steal to the sister who longs to disfigure the face of a fairer sibling, rivalry, intrigue and revenge have determined the dynamics of the family structure as much as any demonstrations of affection and care. Across the globe and the centuries the love between siblings often devolves into hate, adoration, into rage and jealousy. The mark of Cain, given him by God for slaying his brother, both marks him as a criminal but also protects him. Many explanations have been offered for this ambiguity but most certainly it complicates the question, Am I my Brother’s Keeper? What responsibilities do I have toward blood relatives or adopted siblings? Is rivalry inevitable, always destructive and only an expression of animus and not love? These are some of the questions to pursue in this course. Other readings include Sophocles, Antigone; Edgar Allen Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher;” Toni Morrison, Beloved, and Robert Aldrich: Whatever Happened to Baby Jane.