Dirty Talk
THE FORMS AND LANGUAGE OF PLEASURE

FEBRUARY 26-28, 2015

THE 11TH ANNUAL GRADUATE CONFERENCE
ON LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
The 11th Annual Graduate Conference
On Language and Literature
At the University of Wisconsin-Madison
February 26-28, 2015

The Graduate Student Association of the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s English Department is pleased to welcome you to the 11th annual MadLit conference. This year’s theme, “Dirty Talk,” explores the notion of pleasure and its discontents through a variety of theoretical, historical and disciplinary lenses. From erotic enjoyment to sexual disappointment, sublime mathematics to readerly suspense, promiscuous plants to queer experience, disavowed desires to pornography as philosophy, this conference traces the manifold life of pleasure in literature and in language.

GSA would like to thank Professor Kathleen Lubey; the UW-Madison English Department, the Middle Modernity Group; the Graduate Association for Medieval Studies; the Modernisms/Modernities Colloquium; the Felix Series of New Writing; the Renaissance Colloquium and Early Modern English Reading Group; D.I.R.T.: The Environmentalist Reading Group; and the conference panelists, moderators, and attendees for their support and participation. Additional funding was generously provided by the Associated Students of Madison and the Wisconsin Experience Grant.

MadLit Planning Committee:
Devin Garofalo, Katie Lanning, Leah Pope, Aaron Vieth

GSA Members:
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GSA Co-Chairs:
Maggie Hamper & Sharon Yam
KEYNOTE SPEAKER: KATHLEEN LUBEY
“Pornography without Sex: A Philosophical History of the Genre”
Thursday, February 26 at 5:30 p.m.
Tripp Commons, Memorial Union

This year’s keynote address will be delivered by Kathleen Lubey, from St. John’s University. Her talk asks: Is there a content within the pornographic text other than sex? Has it been outshone by the genital events that we believe define the genre? This talk restores to view the hybrid origins of early prose pornography--its abstractions and philosophical speculations, its feminist and scientific claims--then asks if a textually rich, discursively untidy history of pornography can tell us anything about the genre’s later forms. By re-animating eighteenth-century pornography’s philosophical claims, Lubey speculates--cautiously--that abstraction, self-consciousness, and intellectual agility might underwrite the encounter with any pornographic text, including contemporary digital images. If textual history can reveal a discursively hybrid origin point for the genre, in other words, perhaps it can serve as a contemporary critical hermeneutic. Is there a philosophy in the pornographic image that we learned to forget to see?

Kathleen Lubey is Associate Professor at St. John’s University, where she works on the literature, philosophy, and culture of eighteenth-century Britain, sexuality and gender studies, feminist theory, the history of pornography, and theories of the novel and literary form. Her book, Excitable Imaginations: Eroticism and Reading in Britain, 1660-1760 (Bucknell University Press, 2012) offers a new history of pornography that looks to unexpected texts, such as moral fiction, nationalist poetry, and empirical philosophy, in order to explore the relationship between sexual representation and discourses on morality, aesthetics, and reading. Professor Lubey is currently at work on a new project that explores the unpublished record of early English feminism in marginalia, journals, and letters.
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Registration is located on the second floor of Memorial Union and will be open from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

5:30 p.m.

Keynote Address
“Pornography without Sex: A Philosophical History of the Genre”
Professor Kathleen Lubey, St. John’s University
Tripp Commons
A reception with light refreshments immediately to follow.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Registration is located on the second floor of Memorial Union and will be open from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

8:30–9:30 a.m.

Breakfast and Coffee
Inn Wisconsin

9:30–10:45 a.m.

Panel 1A: Visceral Discourses
Old Madison

Moderator: Jessica Cooley, University of Wisconsin–Madison

- Bill Hutchison, University of Chicago: “Laying Bare: Anti-Vivisection Literature and Pornography in the Late Nineteenth Century”
- Justin A. Linds, York University (Toronto): “The Pleasure of Microbes: the queer fermentation of Sandor Katz”
Panel 1B: Dis/Pleasurable Bodies
(sponsored by the Middle Modernity Group)
Inn Wisconsin

Moderators: Devin Garofalo and Katie Lanning, University of Wisconsin–Madison

- Julia Dauer, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “The Pleasure of Biography”
- Heather Hannaford, University of Nebraska–Omaha: “Haywood’s ‘Spy’ in the Bedroom: Empiricism and Pleasure in Fantomina”
- Aaron Vieth, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “The Fiery Pains and Pleasures of Hoarding in Bleak House”

11:00 a.m–12:15 p.m.

Panel 2A: The Sensual Middle Ages
(sponsored by the Graduate Association for Medieval Studies)
Old Madison

Moderator: Professor Martin Foys, University of Wisconsin–Madison

- Sara Butterfass, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “Spectacular Belief and the Oseberg Viking Ship Burial”
- Ashley Cook, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “Tempering the Senses: Monsters, Vision, and the Fuller Brooch”
- Matt Westerby, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “Leprosy in the Romanesque Portal of Santa Maria de Ripoll”

Panel 2B: Reclaiming Folklore
Inn Wisconsin

Moderator: Otto Marxhausen, University of Wisconsin–Madison

- Yingxin “Cathy” Gao, University of Wisconsin–Madison: “Princesses in Grimms’ Folktales and Andersen's Literary Fairy-Tales: A Corpus Study”

12:15–1:30 p.m.

Lunch: Consult your welcome packet for restaurant suggestions!

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Panel 3A: Erotic Exchanges
Old Madison

Moderator: Lauren Hawley, University of Wisconsin–Madison

- Amy Groshek, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “‘That Mock our Scant Manuring’: The Vegetative Affront to Heteronormative Reproduction in Milton’s Paradise Lost”
- Robin Kaufmann, Winona State University: “To Reason for Freedom”
- Sarah O’Connell, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee: “See How She Looks: Disability, Parallax, and Desire in Ulysses”

3:30–2:45 p.m.

Plenary Address: “Pleasure, Nineteenth-Century Poetry, and the Case for a New Hedonism”

PhD Candidate Andrew Kay, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Old Madison, Memorial Union

The last several decades of literary scholarship have been dominated by a set of “suspicious” critical paradigms that have tended to reject aesthetic pleasure as an insidious means of rendering subjects passive. “To be pleased,” wrote Adorno and Horkheimer famously, “is to say yes.” This talk argues against such a model by turning to nineteenth-century poets—first a set of neglected laboring-class poets, then Christina Rossetti—who conceived of pleasurable experience as an inherently radical gesture, even a source of alternative kinds of knowledge that could run dangerously counter to the status quo. Building on the insights of Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant and Schiller, as well as a poetics of sensibility epitomized by Charlotte Smith, these writers present pleasure—especially embodied pleasure—as a phenomenon at once educative and liberatory. On the one hand, pleasurable sensation qualified as a mode of cognition, a means of discerning redemptive truths inaccessible to reason; on the other, it acted as an affective glue capable of binding people together into vast networks of shared feeling. Together these poets—along with the twentieth-century poet Richard Wilbur, whom I’ll examine in a coda—point the way toward a New Hedonism in literary studies now, helping us to see how we might resuscitate pleasure as a disciplinary ideal.

Andrew Kay, a recently minted Ph.D. in Literary Studies at UW-Madison, just defended a dissertation entitled “Embodied Pleasure and Radical Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Poetry,” supervised by Caroline Levine. He has written an article on Swinburne and Blake that appeared in Victorian Poetry, and another on Keats forthcoming in European Romantic Review. He’s also the celebrated co-creator, with Nathan Jandl, of “Game of Tomes,” the official video of the UW-Madison English department.
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Registration is located on the second floor of Memorial Union and will be open from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

8:30–9:30 a.m.

Breakfast and Coffee
Inn Wisconsin

9:30–10:45 a.m.

Panel 4A: Vulgar Language, Taboo Bodies
Old Madison

Moderator: Jen Plants, University of Wisconsin–Madison
• Jomil Ebro, University of Iowa: “A State of Otonomy: Henry Miller’s Obscene Autobiography as Listening”
• Dane Howard, Grantham University: “The Chronicles of Onania: Violent Rhetoric and Masochistic Pornography”
• Nick Sturm, Florida State University: “The Textual and Political Pleasures of Bernadette Mayer’s Utopia”

Panel 4B: Animal Magnetism
(sponsored by the Modernisms/Modernities Colloquium)
Inn Wisconsin

Moderator: Professor Mario Ortiz-Robles, University of Wisconsin–Madison
• Phil Bandy, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “Desire’s Intractable Temporality in Djuna Barnes’ Nightwood”
• Laura Perry, University of Wisconsin–Madison: “Animals, Zoning, and Domestic Pleasures in Shirley Jackson”
• Jared Seymour, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “‘Dogs and Other Philosophers’: Animality and Animal Capital in Far from the Madding Crowd”
Panel 5A: *Pluralizing Pleasure*  
*(sponsored by the Middle Modernity Group)*  
Old Wisconsin

Moderator: Professor Caroline Levine, University of Wisconsin–Madison

- **Devin Garofalo**, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “Celestial Cartography and Self-Touch in Barbauld’s ‘A Summer Evening’s Meditation’”

Panel 5B: *Memory and Desire: Modernist Erotics*  
*(sponsored by the Modernisms/Modernities Colloquium)*  
Inn Wisconsin

Moderator: Cyrena Pondrom, Professor Emeritus at University of Wisconsin–Madison

- **Rohan Ghatak**, St John’s College: “The Maimed and the Constructions of Traumatic History”
- **Lauren Hawley**, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “A Little Bit on the Sea Side: Sham Loves and Difficult Loves in *Ulysses*”
- **Vasu Venkata**, University of Southern California: “‘My hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate’: Unfulfilled Desire, Language Politics, and Irish Nationalism in Yeats’s Drama”

12:15–1:30 p.m.

**Lunch**
Consult your welcome packet for restaurant suggestions!
1:30–2:45 p.m.

Panel 6A: Wordplay
Old Madison

Moderator: Professor Christa J. Olson, University of Wisconsin–Madison
- Rohan Ghatak, St John’s College: “A Void and the Appearance of Abjection in Oulipo”

Panel 6B: Dirty Pop
Inn Wisconsin

Moderator: Professor Ramzi Fawaz, University of Wisconsin–Madison
- Kristen Carol Breitenbach, School of the Art Institute of Chicago: “Talking Shit: Comparing the Heterosexual Snark of Joan Rivers to Betches Love This”
- Tabatha Hanly, Winona State University: “Buying and Loving”
- Maureen Rogers, University of Wisconsin–Madison: “Experimental Pleasures: Andy Warhol’s Lonesome Cowboys (1968) and the 1960s Sexploitation Film”
This talk examines the mathematical turn in recent continentally-inflected philosophy alongside the dialectical cartwheels of “axiomatic modernism,” outlined through brief examples of the complicated ontological commitment and mathematical engagement in the work of Stein, Pound, and Beckett. Attending to criticism’s struggle with the recalcitrant realisms of experimental modernism, we might consider the real as critique’s guilty pleasure, particularly when approached through forms which flirt with absolutes and overstep epistemological decorum by asserting something “beyond” linguistic access. Post-postmodernism, bloodless equations and monotonous proofs seem about as sexy as a paper gown, but they present real pleasures and possibilities, for literature and for critique.

Megan Massino is in the final stages of her Ph.D. work in the Literary Studies program at University of Wisconsin–Madison and a Kohler Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery. She works on early twentieth-century philosophy, literature, and mathematics, with broader interests in critical theory, the literary avant-garde, and the history of science. Her dissertation project is called “Axiomatic Modernism: Poetics, Logic, and Mathematics in the Early 20th Century.” If she could do it over, she’d write her dissertation on Mars. (But how would she get there?)
Map of Second and Third Floors of Memorial Union

Third Floor

Second Floor

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