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Pivot

A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies & Thought



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About Pivot

Pivot is an annual multidisciplinary journal dedicated to publishing innovative critical writing from emerging and established academics. Each issue encourages scholars from a wide-range of fields to engage with a focused but multifaceted central topic, bringing into conversation their various disciplinary perspectives. By juxtaposing viewpoints and theoretical approaches that may otherwise remain disparate, Pivot creates a space in which readers can explore the intersections between various fields and modes of thought. Our mandate is to showcase scholarly work by graduate students and working academics, and to foster communication and cooperation between students and faculty across disciplinary boundaries. The topic of one issue per year corresponds with the theme of the York University English Graduate Program's annual interdisciplinary conference. The journal invites contributions of scholarly articles relevant to the upcoming issue's topic, in both English and French, from authors in all scholarly disciplines. ©

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A late scene in *Arden of Faversham* features a bawdy wife gazing in repentance at the bleeding body of her husband, whom she has just murdered. Performed on the newly secular Elizabethan stage, *Arden* here employs what I call the Corpus Christi affect, a theatrical mode with roots in the medieval theatre that can offer an emotional and salvific experience to its spectators. The Corpus Christi affect depends for its efficacy on props that, by acquiring what Andrew Sofer calls a "semiotic subjectivity," play tricks on character and audience alike. A prayerbook, a corpse, and blood on the floor work by sleight of an actor's hand to construct a dénouement that offers simultaneously a didactic sermon and an act of grace, whereby an apparently irredeemably fallen Mistress Arden, condemned to death for her actions, unaccountably achieves salvation. I argue that *Arden* thereby affords a receptive spectator a catharsis by wonder, so reclaiming for the early modern reformed stage a drama of miracle and salvation.

"if buizy Love intrenches": Adorno and Rochester on Pleasure and Love by Lacey Ann Conley 31

For Theodor Adorno, critical theory is only valuable when it considers individual difference. This perspective makes his theory an ideal method of approach to consider the writing of an individual as unique as the Restoration poet John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. Reading Adorno's collection of aphorisms, *Minima Moralia*, alongside a selection of Rochester's poems, I examine intersections in the authors' beliefs—specifically as they are expressed in ideas about pleasure and love—and explore the implications of these shared viewpoints as they manifest themselves in Rochester's life and writing. The result is to retrieve Rochester's work from its often overhasty placement within the confines of the Libertine tradition, a categorization of his writing that deserves consideration, but is also limiting insofar as it hinders the exploration of moments of deep philosophical contemplation by the poet on his own personal despair and the fallen, corrupt society in which he lived.

Snickers and Sex: Bawdy Humour in Three of Martial's Epigrams by Brandon Moores 51

Marcus Valerius Martialis (c.40-104 CE) was one of the wittiest and dirtiest of the Latin poets. Through eleven of his fourteen books of epigrams wit, poetic invention, and suggestive or explicit sexual situations come together in virtually every imaginable combination. There are excruciatingly elaborate comparisons of anatomy to various daily and not-so-daily objects, comic exaggerations, and calumnies of every description. All of this makes Martial an ideal place to start when trying to work out the links between humour and sexuality. What is it precisely about sexuality that is necessary to his jokes? How have various translators understood his use of humour and sex when bringing Martial into English? This paper explores these questions through a careful examination of three of Martial's poems. In order of ascending bawdiness, they are: Book II, 52 (*Novit loturos Dasius...*), Book III, 26 (*Prædia solus habes...*), and Book XI, 21 (*Lydia tam laxa est...*). I argue first for an understanding of humour as the satisfaction of a pattern or expectation in an unusual or surprising manner. Going through each poem in turn, I then discuss the patterns or expectations Martial evokes in each and how they are satisfied, as well as how translators have picked up on or modified these patterns. Finally, I argue that bawdiness is often a source of humour because we have a large and vivid set of expectations when it comes to sexual matters—expectations which can be satisfied in all manner of unexpected ways.

The Carnavalesque Practice of Language Writing in the Grotesque Body of *I Don't Have Any Paper* by David Milman 67

There is a similarity between the rhetorical strategies of Language Writing and the rhetorical strategies attributed to carnivalesque texts by Mikhail Bakhtin. Bruce Andrew's *I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up (or, Social Romanticism)* exemplifies this similarity. That is not to say that Language Writing makes use of the depiction of grotesque bodies and carnivalesque spectacles. It is not through signification of meaning that this similarity is produced. Rather, a compilation of poems such as *I Don't Have Any Paper* creates a ritual spectacle by forcing its audience to interactively engage with a poem during the process of producing meaning. *I Don't Have Any Paper* parodies normative language, transforming text into a grotesque

body by using abnormal syntactic arrangements. *I Don't Have Any Paper* is an example of a linguistic carnivalesque spectacle filled with grotesque syntax.

She's Such a Tease: The Feminine as Burlesque Performance in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* by Katherine Owens 85

While Margaret Atwood has been reluctant to identify her first novel, *The Edible Woman*, as a feminist text, this essay suggests that the novel's dominant image of the female as prey parallels the dynamics of a striptease in a way that anticipates Judith Butler's description of femininity as performative. I outline the evolution of Marian's performed, sexualized identity as she adjusts her femininity to suit the desires of the various male characters in the novel, including her fiancé, Peter. In keeping with Butler's insistence that the reiterative, normalizing processes of the performance of femininity must inevitably reveal this performance's instabilities, I argue that Marian's striptease emerges as burlesque parody, critically highlighting its own artifice. Marian, however, remains unaware of the satirical potential of her own performance; while Atwood does destabilize the heterosexual gender binary in *The Edible Woman*, ultimately she is not able to offer her heroine an alternative to this heteronormative, objectified understanding of her feminine self.

Pushing Boundaries and Exploring Limits: Ami McKay's *The Birth House* as (Hys)torical Fiction by Judith Mintz 107

This article examines turn-of-the-twentieth-century notions of embodiment, midwifery, the medicalization of childbirth, and hysteria as represented in Ami McKay's *The Birth House* and Susan Swan's *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World*. How do painful memories and abjected connections both haunt and legitimate the contemporary project of midwifery? This article examines the use of the grotesque and humorous fiction about childbirth as counter-historical practice to answer this question. *The Birth House* operates as a form of historical fiction to draw attention to early twentieth-century Euro-Canadian notions of morality and supposed infallibility of science through representations of the grotesque. The inscription of a woman into turn-of-the-twentieth-century medicalization narrative disrupts national myths of medical and scientific progress. This chapter argues that McKay demonstrates how some women resisted

medicalization in a social climate that favoured the hegemony of male-dominated science.

The Antisocial Fantasies of *Jude the Obscure* by Matthew Risling 133

In his 1895 preface to *Jude the Obscure*, Thomas Hardy claims the novel is to deal with “the tragedy of unfulfilled aims”—Jude’s inability to gain entry into Christminster University. In the preface to the 1912 edition, Hardy instead claims that the novel is about “a deadly war waged between the flesh and spirit.” The reason for this revision has claimed significant scholarly attention. Some argue that, with the revision, Hardy is finally owning up to the sexual basis of the novel’s conflict; others that Hardy is distancing himself from the novel’s sexuality. I suggest it is not an either-or proposition, but rather that the novel’s central conflict arises from Jude’s fundamental antisociality, which alternately manifests itself in his impossible fantasies of becoming a Christminster scholar, and of maintaining a sexual relationship with his cousin Sue Bridehead.

“Can We Get a Cleanup On Aisle 2?”: How Film Critics Mopped Up the Transgressions of Jenny McCarthy’s *Dirty Love* by Sara Swain 153

Dirty Love (John Asher, 2005) is a gross-out comedy written and produced by its star, *Playboy* model turned comedian Jenny McCarthy. While such comedies rarely steal the hearts of critics, the reviews of *Dirty Love* were particularly vitriolic. A close reading of these reviews suggests that McCarthy is unwelcome in the gross-out comedy, which is more comfortably a realm for men. Critics agonized excessively over the precarious proximity McCarthy creates between her erotically charged centerfold body and her comically charged grotesque one. This paper argues that the hostile reception of *Dirty Love* discloses a perennial unease about women in comedy, and betrays a hidden limit on what women are permitted to joke about. This in turn reveals underlying cultural anxieties about female corporeality more generally. Finally, the paper attempts to reinstate the film’s saucy, salutary power that critics tried so hard to diminish.