

PALA 2009 PROCEEDINGS PLEASURE, 1719-1997, IN 100 NOVELS

The question of Pleasure addressed here came to mind at last year's PALA at Larry Stewart's witty and sharp presentation as it focused on Fanny Hill. I decided to look at the lexical item PLEASURE in the corpus of 100 Novels that I have investigated for the related issue of the Presentation of the Body. Two angles of vision: 1) PLEASURE is viewed in one hundred novels, 1719-1997 (chart #1); a narrative of decline emerges, and raises questions. 2) PLEASURE is mapped out in four novels so one can see how the redundancy functions to define character and conflict in different contexts.

The particular focus here is on Pleasure, but the more general focus is on making meaning, and making the process more accessible and the results more adequate. In this work I am exploring how the writer's brain lays out meaning for the reader's brain to pick up on—the novel is a brain print. It presents itself as a word-by-word series, but its organization demands memory, and memory depends on repetition, or redundancy as information thinkers say; memory builds a semantic web. The redundancy forms patterns and relationships, and that is where meaning making begins.

Pleasure seems to begin with our earliest biological organization as a tropism away from the aversive toward the “good enough”. Pleasure is in the first place experienced as bodily, in our biological organization, an incentive to do what is necessary. Naturally, Pleasure for human beings has become quite complex as it spread from the necessary to the aesthetic where it can be organized, cultivated, militarized, capitalized, and/or neuroticized or fetishized. In this work, today, however, I'm interested in the local level with “Pleasure” as it shows up, as a lexical item, in a hundred novels, and looking at “Pleasure” from a psychological starting point in a group of individual novels. We find, as we look at individual texts, that Pleasure reveals a source of tension, and thus perhaps of character. Pleasure is a good touchstone—what the writer marks as PLEASURE constitutes the range of The Good in the face of The Problematic.

For Freud, thinking as a biologist as well as a psychoanalyst, Pleasure is a cessation of tension. He tells us that “an unpleasurable tension” will be processed by the mind in “a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension—that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure.” Freud also noted that “the factor that determines the feeling is probably the amount of increase or diminution in the quantity of excitation *in a given period of time*” (p.8). [SE, V 18, p.7]. Decades later a psychologist working in a research intensive mode, and thinking biologically/neurologically, Silvan Tomkins, whose powerful work focuses on affects (Shame & Its Sisters 1963, 1964), also sees a reduction of tension at the core of pleasure which he calls “enjoyment/joy”: “The smile of joy is innately activated...by any relatively steep reduction of the density of stimulation and neural firing” (Shame & Its Sisters, 81). Tomkins notes that the reduction may be in relation to negative (e.g., anxiety, fear) or positive (e.g., seeing a friend, orgasm) experiences, and that “it is the steepness of the gradient of stimulation reduction which is critical” (81).

I want to suggest that in addition to the built in biological mechanisms, for human beings (and others) there is a necessary precondition for the experience of pleasure—the Other. As D.W. Winnicott says, there is no infant. That is, an infant is not a stand-alone item. So, with pleasure, it is useful to see the pleasure of one with the presence (including imaginatively) of the Other. At birth and for some time thereafter, that Other is the one Winnicott calls “the good enough mother.” The first tension might be the “too muchness” of the change (from in to out), the first diminution might be of being swaddled and snuggled; the next tension might be hunger, and the diminution might be one’s first meal. For some time we are regulated by an Other, generally responsive to our needs and vulnerabilities.

If Pleasure is a diminution of tension, Pleasure offers a window into what tension is strong enough to be called Pleasure when it stops. Pleasure is felt by a person, but pleasure is first sustained, cultivated and mediated by an Other person—there would be no pleasure without the Other. Next, Pleasure is of necessity addictive, and sets up a model of gratification, which can be magnified and distorted, offering deep neurological rewards with no real world connection (a death drive). Though, equally, it can be cultivated or domesticated. For Freud there is a kind of depressive logic to the reduction of tension—it is also what death is, the ultimate reduction. For Tomkins, however, the narrative of enjoyment/joy is potential growth—via increasing bands of interest and thus concern. For Tomkins pleasure is not a zero sum game, but more of what James Carse would characterize as an infinite game, played to continue to play (as opposed to finite games which are played to be won. Tomkins imagines that we can construct our pleasures (though he is as well aware of the dark side as Freud).

With these general thoughts in mind, we will look at a group of 100 classic, modern and contemporary Anglophone novels (1719-1997) to explore PLEASURE--i.e., the word “pleasure” and its conceptual texture. In addition to a chronological chart of PLEASURE, there are maps of what constitutes PLEASURE in a few individual novels—Robinson Crusoe (1719), Fanny Hill, Jane Eyre, and Beloved—to see the range of possibilities.

When we look at the corpus as a whole, the zoomed-out view shows that the use of PLEASURE changes radically over time, markedly declining in use in mid-19th century. Several avenues might be explored to contextualize this striking shift. I’d like to know what else shifts in the semantic realm, particularly what might “take the place” of PLEASURE. The decline may signify a change in the way tension and release are present in a novel—this would require mining for affects as named (sad) or as enacted/embodied (cry) to see if it’s Pleasure alone among affects to shift? Interestingly, the representation of the HEART is also at its high point in the 18th Century and then declines precipitously, though lingering a bit longer than PLEASURE (Chart #2). This change may signify a change in the way the novel, as a form of social consciousness, has learned to convey affect in writing without necessarily naming the feeling as such. And/or maybe there is a great depression in response to the tumultuousness of 1848. A century later, in Catcher in the Rye there are only two uses of Pleasure—one refers to the response of a teacher to his deceased brother (it was a pleasure to teach him), and the other is an expression of increased tension: “Oh,’ I said. I let

it drop. I was afraid he was going to crack the damn taxi up or something. Besides, he was such a touchy guy, it wasn't any pleasure discussing anything with him" (108-109). Pleasure has not left us—certainly not in Amsterdam—but it has transformed into a different way to mark what is important. If we pull the thread of Pleasure from any given novel, as with other such threads, we end up in a web of meaning. The diachronic course of PLEASURE is striking, and it will be interesting to see it in the fuller context of AFFECTS in general. Is it replaced with DISTRESS, what Freud might call Anxiety? I can't answer any large historic questions, but I can see there is one. So, let's turn to some concrete material, from which some ideas will germinate. So, zooming in on Beloved:

The first web is from Toni Morrison's Beloved (1987) (Map #1), chosen partly because its formulation of Pleasure is, like so much else in the novel, exquisitely and precisely formed. Pleasure is distributed among all the characters, in some proportion to their centrality. What constitutes PLEASURE is largely in the form of familial connection--domestic love contains all pleasures. Working like a good redundancy, PLEASURE, is used (generally) to mark something important to the emotional well-being one has as a person in a family and a family in a community. When examined ensemble, they are consistently about local love, nurturing relationships, inclusive of sexuality and of the "selfish pleasure" of being able to make something for one's child. The PLEASURES here are tender, and sorely needed in a novel enveloping so much pain. The tension behind the pleasure is the anxiety of living in a world of people who are at once blind to one and abusive to one; and in a world in which one's own mother could be seized by her demons.

Next I want to look at "the first" English novel, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) (Map #2). This novel's use of Pleasure is telling, most pronounced in its aggressive acquisitiveness; and interestingly in its negative descriptions. It unfolds narratively with several paternal promises of life's "pleasure" if he will follow the path the father has laid out; Crusoe is not interested in that, he rejects it. Pursuing his own path leads him to being enslaved where he facilitates the Pleasures his master enjoys: "he had appointed to go out in this boat, either for pleasure or for fish." This is a kind of pleasure that Crusoe also seems to reject in that any actions he reports are purposeful—there is virtually no play. The next instance of pleasure is animal pleasure—bodily enjoyment—and here, too, Crusoe's writer is tagging this moment—it will never be seen again—no bodily pleasure (between his marriage and his widowerhood is one sentence, whose hint at pleasure was that he was "not...dissatisfied" to have been married). The next instance is Crusoe's first pleasure—not abstractly talking about it in the future or characterizing the behavior but actually experiencing it—and, it is the killing of an animal. The tension behind the pleasure is not about being relieved for one's life, because the lion was not threatening, but about one's power to get what one wants (in this case, water, near where the animal is). This matter of control is where I'd pin Crusoe: most of his PLEASURE comes from successful domestications, the desire for home, and colonial desires. There is only one instance of interpersonal pleasure—the opposite of Morrison. The tension behind Crusoe's pleasure is an anxiety of not having enough. There is no doubt some irony in Crusoe's seeing himself as King, but none in the pleasure he takes at

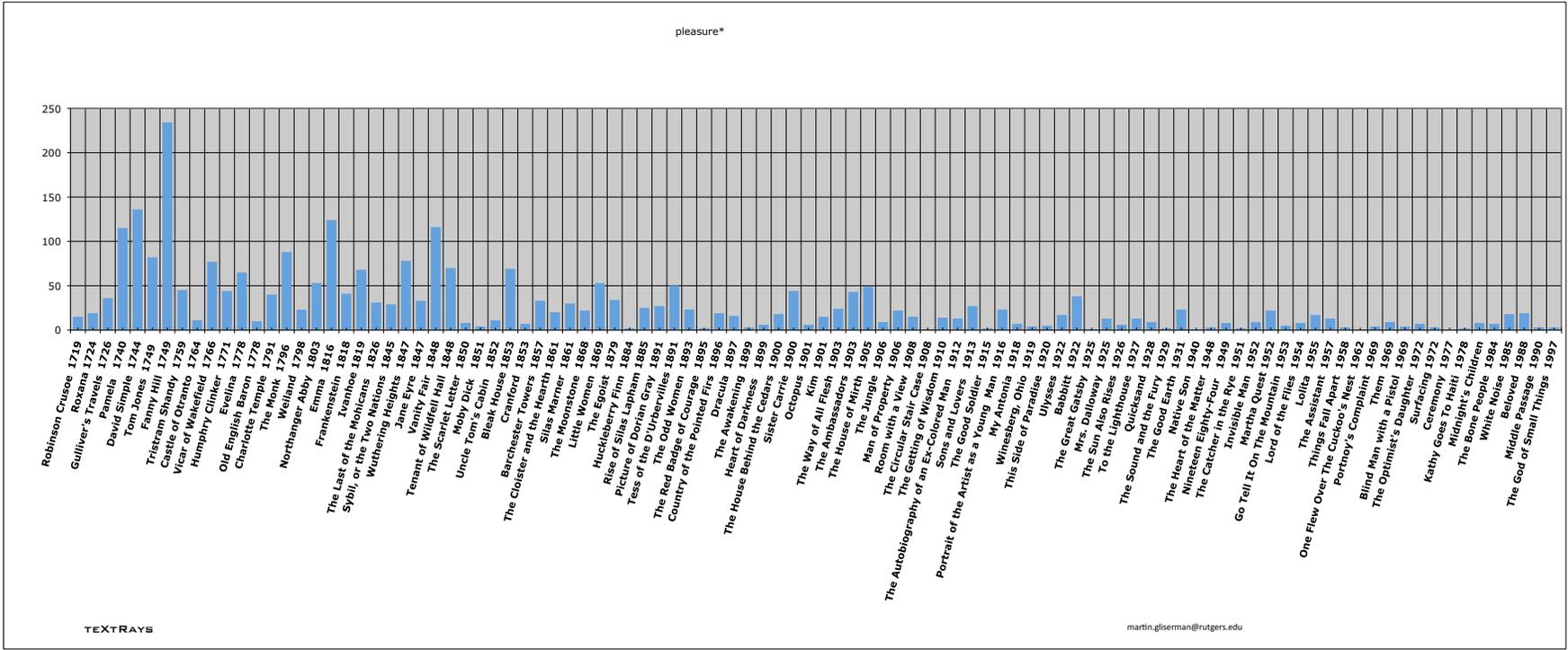
surveying the fruitful valley in front of him—“This was all my own; and I was king and lord....”

On one level, there is sexual pleasure in Fanny Hill—her very names suggest the pleasures that the novel will teach us, and in case one doesn't get it, the full title of the novel includes: Memoir of a Woman of Pleasure (map #3). *With about two hundred forty mentions of Pleasure, Cleland novel is an outlier.* Notwithstanding, PLEASURE as developed is complex, and I think that Cleland's placing of sexual Pleasure in the print culture leaves the word with an erotic coloration where ever it travels—including Emma, a novel that very much lives in the MIND, and nonetheless expresses a range and depth of PLEASURES. One of the complexities of Fanny Hill is as the novel plays itself out in a series of episodes, she appeals to us separate her pleasures from those parties she provides pleasure to; we learn of her alienation virtually through it all. So, while there is a lot of Pleasure for some, Fanny as narrator lets us know at virtually every turn that her pleasure is often null and always secondary, and that it is only on being reunited with Charles that her pleasure is full.

Jane Eyre (map #4) gives us a biography of PLEASURE—as she goes from Gateshead to Lowood and then to Thornfield, Marsh End and Ferndean, the nature and quality of her pleasure shifts. The first instance of pleasure is meager, a doll, a transitional object, but she brings the narrative to an end with her child. As we follow Jane from one place to the next, we see her maturational needs being met or addressed or threatened. Her pleasure is generally in connection with a human being for whom she shares some passion. One bit to look at is the seduction scene in Jane Eyre, which begins with Jane being grilled about her paintings and (19) and saying that they constituted her “keenest pleasures”. Rochester picks up on the word and directly notes that her “pleasures” have been few—by marking this absence, he is bringing up sexuality—a tension from which he seeks release. In the group of iterations of pleasure that follow, one sees Rochester's aggressive drive for PLEASURE.

CONCLUSION: While the PLEASURE of each novel will have different flavors, the bulk of the ingredients are same. Pleasure serves different purposes, though it maintains a similar dynamic. In Beloved Pleasure is focused on local relationships—it marks family, domesticity, the ordinary as the place of tenderness and protection. The naming of the family as a key source of pleasure defends against and seeks to amend the long history of separations. Going back in time to the beginning of the novel, Defoe's work is much more diffuse than Morrison's, but the aggressive/acquisitive side shows up as dominant; and opposite Morrison, there is no familial pleasure. The anxiety the PLEASURE releases would seem to be deprivation. Cleland's Fanny Hill emphasizes physical, sexual pleasure; there is a narrative deconstruction of Pleasure as male is separated and alienated from female (at many times). Sexual pleasure is a great defense against alienation even as it may create it for the other. In Jane Eyre Pleasure is used to shadow developmental shifts—Jane goes from a child to a girl, to a woman several times over (e.g., we see her after she has sex with Rochester). Jane begins with a pleasure deficit, a pleasure deprivation (others are marked as having it), and then collects enough over time.

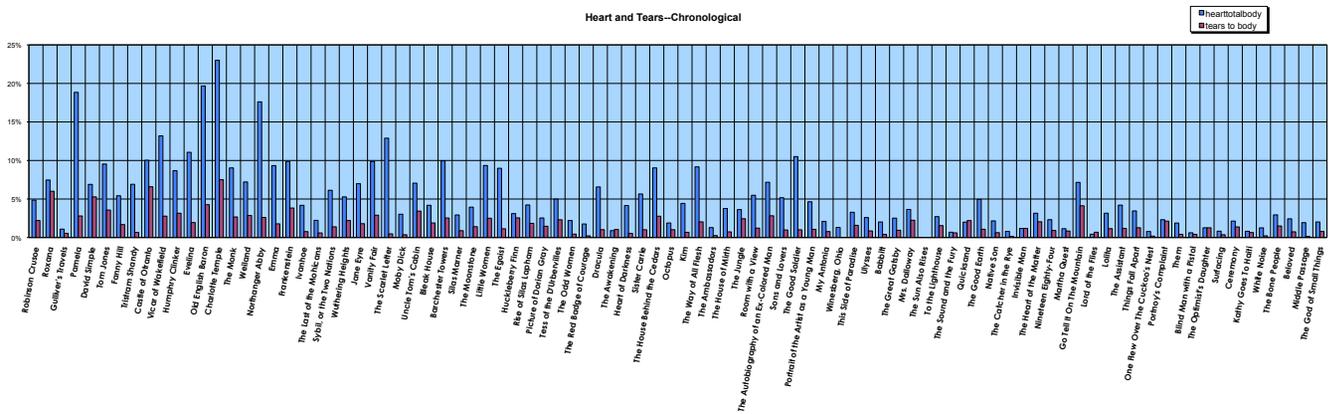
I look forward to extending these ideas, zoomed in and out.

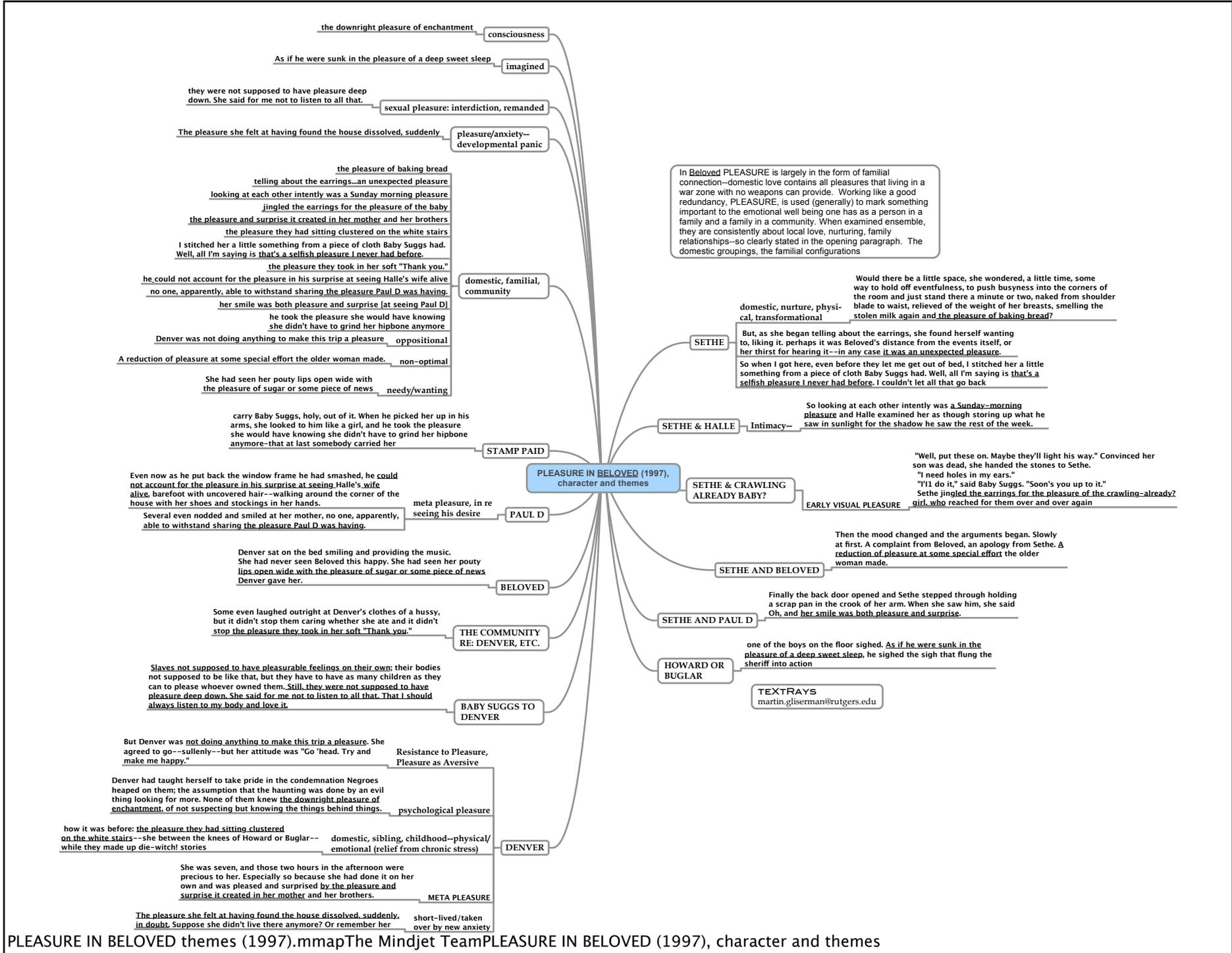


TEXTTRAYS

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Heart and Tears--Chronological





PLEASURE IN BELOVED themes (1997).mmapThe Mindjet TeamPLEASURE IN BELOVED (1997), character and themes

PLEASURE in ROBINSON CRUSOE

In Robinson Crusoe pleasure is offered to him, promised to him, but he rejects it to explore his desire; he is witness to some of the pleasure of others, but he never seeks it; and he watches the sensual pleasures of animals, but also never seeks such. He generally takes pleasure in having power or some times imagining it. There is one instance of interpersonal pleasure.

Home Imagined

I observed an extraordinary sense of pleasure appeared in his face, and his eyes sparkled, and his countenance discovered a strange eagerness, as if he had a mind to be in his own country again

The Reader

continually poring upon the means and possibility of my escape from this place. And that I may, with the greater pleasure to the reader, bring on the remaining part of my story, it may not be improper to give some account of my first conceptions on the subject of this foolish scheme for my escape, and how and upon what foundation I acted.

Colonial

I descended a little on the side of that delicious vale, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure, though mixed with my other afflicting thoughts, to think that this was all my own

When I came home from this journey, I contemplated with great pleasure the fruitfulness of that valley, and the pleasantness of the situation

it was the governor's pleasure they should not stir anywhere but by my direction

Domestic--aesthetic, economic

I could not write or eat, or do several things with so much pleasure without a table.

it looked like a general magazine of all necessary things; and I had everything so ready at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great.

Spiritual

I gave humble and hearty thanks that God had been pleased to discover to me even that it was possible I might be more happy in this solitary condition, than I should have been in a liberty of society, and in all the pleasures of the world

He listened with great attention, and received with pleasure the notion of Jesus Christ being sent to redeem us, and of the manner of making our prayers to God, and His being able to hear us, even into heaven

The Other

Besides the pleasure of talking to him, I had a singular satisfaction in the fellow himself...began to love....

Promised Life Pleasure

prospect of raising my fortunes by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure.

that temperance, moderation, quietness, health, society, all agreeable diversions, and all desirable pleasures, were the blessings attending the middle station of life

Leisure Activity

It happened that he had appointed to go out in this boat, either for pleasure or for fish, with two or three Moors of some distinction in that place, and for whom he had provided extraordinarily

Animal

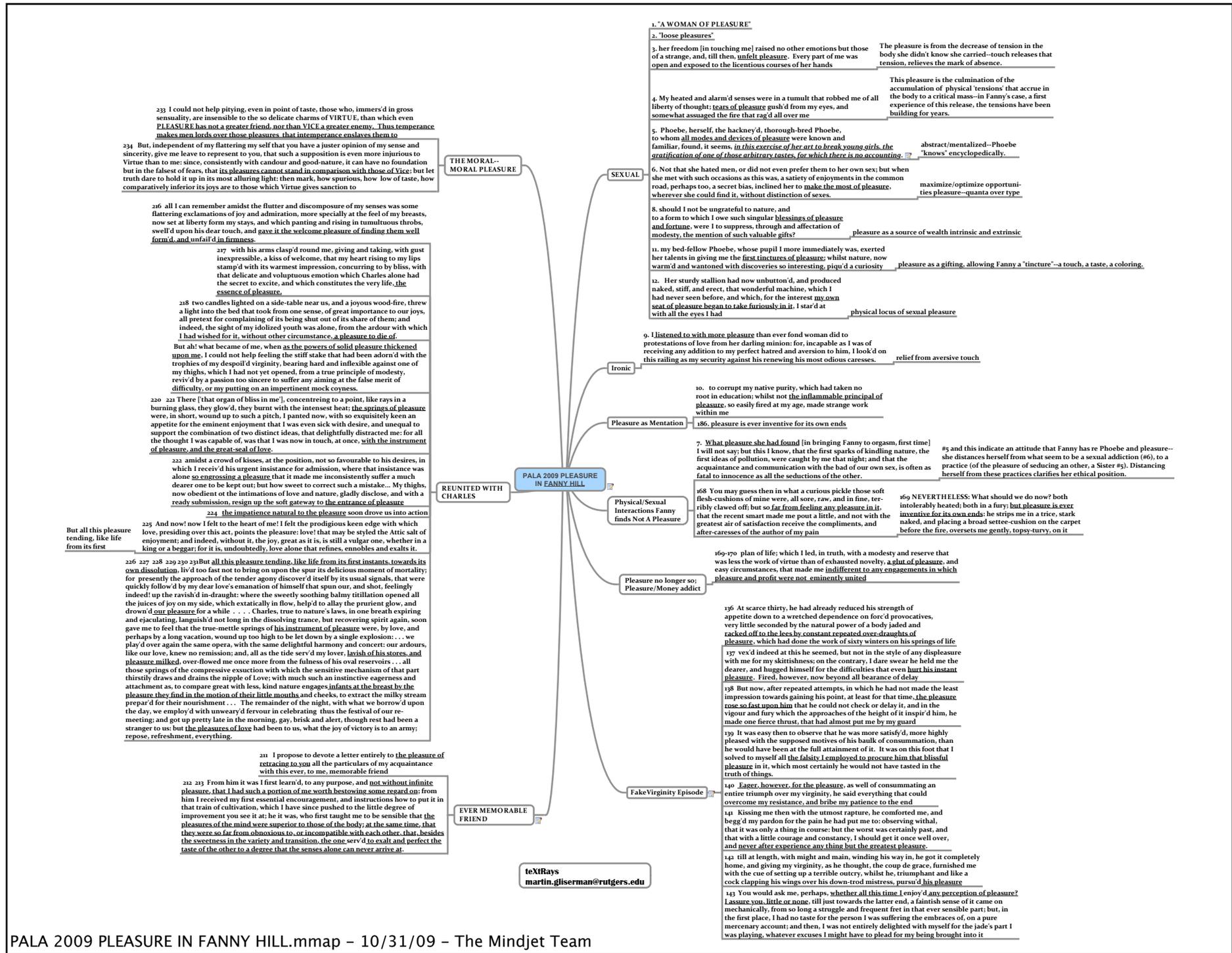
we saw vast great creatures (we knew not what to call them) of many sorts come down to the sea-shore and run into the water, wallowing and washing themselves for the pleasure of cooling themselves

Weapon Power

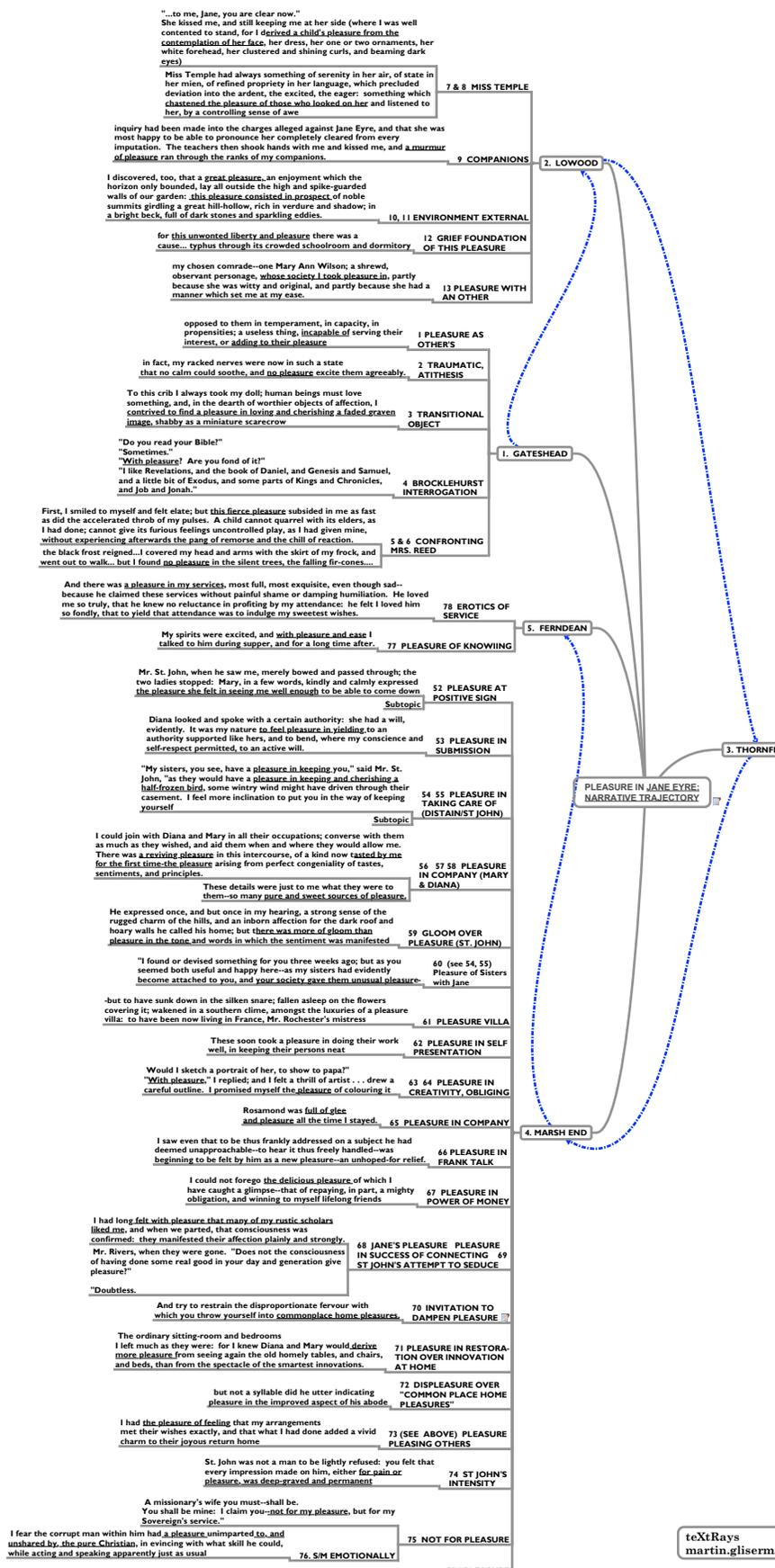
I took up the second piece immediately, and, though he began to move off, fired again, and shot him into the head, and had the pleasure to see him drop

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Pleasure in this map of *Jane Eyre* follows the narrative line. At each age bracket Jane's pleasure emerges in relation to the interpersonal environment—she begins with a transitional object (D.W. Winnicott) and culminates with a child; and the range of Pleasure is wide and deep. The map is worth a paper, but here I'll point to #17-28. One point is that the lexical item, Pleasure, seems to be a mark needed to define an ever shifting tension. Second point is that beginning with #17 there is a micro-narrative—Jane leaves to run an errand on a moonlit evening and here she decreases her pace so she can enjoy thinking about "the species of pleasure brooding for me in the hour and situation." The pleasure will show up in the form of Rochester. And, again, some days or weeks later, Rochester begins his seduction fairly directly. In #19 Jane talks about her "keenest pleasure". Rochester reminds her that her "pleasures...have been few—to say, not sexual.



14 socially polite phrasing	"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Fairfax to-night?" I asked
15 EXPECTATION	I thought that a fairer era of life was beginning for me, one that was to have its flowers and pleasures, as well as its thorns and toils.
16 PLEASURE WITH THE OTHER (Mrs. Fairfax)	I cherished towards Mrs. Fairfax a thankfulness for her kindness, and a pleasure in her society proportionate to the tranquil regard she had for me, and the moderation of her mind and character.
17 CONTEMPLATING PLEASURE / ADVENTURE	I walked fast till I got warm, and then I walked slowly to enjoy and analyse the species of pleasure brooding for me in the hour and situation.
18 ENCOUNTERING AN OTHER—OBLIGING	I am not at all afraid of being out late when it is moonlight: I will run over to Hay for you with pleasure, if you wish it: indeed, I am going there to post a letter.
19 CREATIVE PLEASURE	To paint them, in short, was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known."
20 THE FIRST SEDUCTION (Rochester brings sexuality into the conversation—the comparative (few with many))	"That is not saying much. Your pleasures, by your own account, have been few; but I dare say you did exist in a kind of artist's dreamland while you bent and arranged these strange tints.
21 22 23 PLEASURE/ POWER/MALE ASSERTION (and response)	"Now I have performed the part of a good host," pursued Mr. Rochester, "put my guests into the way of amusing each other, I ought to be at liberty to attend to my own pleasure. Miss Eyre, draw your chair still a little farther forward; you are yet too far back; I cannot see you without disturbing my position in this comfortable chair, which I have no mind to do." I did as I was bid. "since happiness is irrevocably denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life: and I WILL get it, cost what it may." "Then you will degenerate still more, sir." "Possibly: yet why should I, if I can get sweet, fresh pleasures? And I may get it as sweet and fresh as the wild honey the bee gathers on the moor."
24 PLEASURE AS MEMORY OF STAINLESS LIVING	if from this day you began with resolution to correct your thoughts and actions, you would in a few years have laid up a new and stainless store of recollections, to which you might gaze with pleasure."
25 MALE PLEASURE—AGGRESSION	Next morning I had the pleasure of encountering him; left a bullet in one of his poor etiolated arms, feeble as the wing of a chicken in the pip, and then I had done with the whole crew
26 DOMESTIC PLEASURE/ SLICED WITH ANGUISH (observed by Jane)	there was something decidedly strange in the paroxysm of emotion which had suddenly seized him when he was in the act of expressing the present contentment of his mood, and his newly revived pleasure in the old hall and its environs.
27 OBJECT OF PLEASURE	when summoned by formal invitation to his presence, I was honoured by a cordiality of reception that made me feel I really possessed the power to amuse him, and that these evening conferences were sought as much for his pleasure as for my benefit.
28 PLEASURE OF DEBT	"You have saved my life: I have a pleasure in owing you so immense a debt. I cannot say more. Nothing else has been would have been tolerable to me in the character of creditor for such an obligation: but you: it is different—I feel your benefits no burden, Jane.
29 PLEASURE OF TEASING/SEDUCING	...I knew the pleasure of seeing and soothing him by turns: it was one I chiefly delighted in, and a sure instinct always prevented me from going too far, beyond the verge of provocation I never ventured on the extreme brink I liked well to try my skill!
30 SELF CHASTISING	YOU of importance to him in any way? Go! your folly sickens me. And you have doted pleasure from occasional tokens of preference: equivalent tokens shown by a gentleman of family and a man of the world to a dependent and a novice. How dared you!
31-32 PLEASURE OF SEEING THE BELOVED	I could not keep their lids under control: they would rise, and the lids would fix on him. I looked, and had an acute pleasure in looking—a precious yet poignant pleasure: pure gold, with a steely point of agony: a pleasure like what the thirst-perishing man might feel who knows the well to which he has crept is poisoned, yet stoops and drinks divine draughts nevertheless.
34 INCIDENTAL PLEASURES OF SOCIETY	—the rest of the party were occupied with their own separate interests and pleasures.
35 ALLEGIANCE TO ROCHESTER	"I rather think not, sir: I should have more pleasure in staying with you."
36 37 LESS NOBLE PLEASURES—DEFINED	you wander here and there, seeking rest in exile: happiness in pleasure—mean in heartless, sensual pleasure—such as dulls intellect and blights feeling. Heart-weary and soul-withered, you come home after years of voluntary banishment
38 PLEASURE/PAIN WITH ROCHESTER & THE REED SISTERS	The fact was, I had other things to think about; within the last few months feelings had been stirred in me so much more potent than any they could raise—pains and pleasures so acute, my acute agonies so bitter, that I was excited than any it was in their power to inflict or bestow—that their airs gave me no concern either for good or bad.
39 40 RETURN TO GATEHEAD—PLEASURE AS RECONCILIATION (not happening)	My fingers had fastened on her hand which lay outside the sheet: had she pressed mine kindly, I should at that moment have experienced true pleasure. But unimpressible natures are not so soon softened, nor are natural antipathies so readily eradicated I knew by her stony eye—opaque to tenderness, indissoluble to tears, that she was resolved to consider me dead to the last; because to believe me good would give her no generous pleasure: only a sense of mortification.
41 PLEASURE IN ICON	One morning I fell to sketching a face: what sort of a face it was to be, I did not care or know. I took a soft black pencil, gave it a broad point, and worked away. Soon I had traced on the paper a broad and prominent forehead and a square lower outline of visage: that contour gave me pleasure: my fingers proceeded actively to fill it with features.
42 PLEASURE IN HIS PRESENCE HEIGHTENED BY POSSIBLE SEPARATION	that it was pleasure enough to have the privilege of again looking on Mr. Rochester, whether he looked on me or not; and they added—"Hasten! hasten! be with him while you may; but a few more days or weeks, at most, and you are parted from him for ever!"
43 44 PLEASURE OF RETURN	I knew there would be pleasure in meeting my master again, even though broken by the fear that he was so soon to cease to be my master.
45 PLEASURE/ PEROGATIVE	as we thus sat, Mr. Rochester entered unannounced, and looking at us, seemed to take pleasure in the spectacle of a group so amicable—when he said he supposed the old lady was all right now that she had got her adopted daughter back again
46 PLEASURE OF BODILY PRESENCE IN THE WIND IN A TIME OF HIGH ANXIETY	I wonder how you will answer me a year hence, should I ask a favour: it does not suit your convenience or pleasure to grant.
47 PLEASURE IS OVER (TREE) PLEASURE HAS TIME CONSTRAINTS	It was not without a certain wild pleasure I ran before the wind, delivering my trouble of mind to the measureless air-torrent thundering through space. [awaiting Rochester prior to wedding]
48 SEDUCTION OF YOUNG ROCHESTER—TITILLATING	you will never have green leaves move—never more see birds making nests and singing idly in your boughs; the time of pleasure and love is over with you!
49 PLEASURE CONSTRAINED BY AN OTHER'S BEHAVIOR	I seldom saw her alone, and had very little private conversation with her. She flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments
50 NO PLEASURE EXPECTED	I tried dissipation—never debauchery: that I hated, and hate. That was my Indian Messalina's attribute: rooted disgust at it and her restrained me much, even in pleasure. Any enjoyment that bordered on riot seemed to approach me to her and her vices, and I eschewed it.
51 NO PLEASURE SEEN	"On a frosty winter afternoon, I rode in sight of Thornfield Hall. Abhorred spot! I expected no peace—no pleasure there. On a stile in Hay Lane I saw a quiet little figure sitting by itself.
	Your habitual expression in those days, Jane, was a thoughtful look; not despondent, for you were not sickly; but not buoyant, for you had little hope, and no actual pleasure.

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