

IFA Scholarly Meeting
June 6th 2008, 18:00, room 601

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Title: Weird Fishes, or the Poetics of *Jouissance* in Printed and Digital poetry

Examining the conditions of textual *jouissance* in his work *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes desires to “loosen up” the principles of interpretational theories and to restore the pure pleasure of being *in* the text without a necessity of reaching the final truth and of closing the text within some fixed formula of critical discourse. Barthes perceives the text of bliss as “tissue”, arguing that it is not “a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth)”, but rather something that “is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving.” “Lost in this tissue – this texture,” observes Barthes, “the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web” (Barthes, *Pleasure of the Text*, 64). The goal of this presentation is to delve into the “secretions of the textual webs” of the selected modernist and digital poems and to discuss them as instances of Roland Barthes’ “text-as-tissue” – a *writerly* text, to borrow another of Barthes’ terms, which turns our reading experience into a complex space of contact, with multiple points of participation and play. As noted by Barthes, writerly text actively desires the reader, pulling him or her into an erotic game of “invisible screens and selective baffles” (Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 65). I would like to confront digital poetic practice and the most innovative modernist poetry as such texts of desire and bliss and to show how the boldest experimenters in American poetry of the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries have shaped, influenced and changed our perception and experience of textuality. The elements of the poetics of *jouissance* will be discussed on the basis of the experimental poetry of two printed-page poets - Marianne Moore and Gertrude Stein, and juxtaposed with the electronic work of a renown practitioner of digital poetry, Los Pequeño Glazier. As will be shown, the modernist poets tested the boundaries and possibilities of language and form, paving the way for the innovative experiments and textual and interpretational challenges of digital poets.

