

It's my impression that the only worthwhile thing I can do for you is extrapolate, or maybe prescribe, a pragmatic dimension to "The Pleasure of the Text." I'll try to explain how the text we read is relevant to our skills as conversationalists. If Barthes prefers to work in the language of desire and erotics and pleasure and intercourse, I'll work in the unblushingly teleological language of phone sex. What does it mean to us that there is a pleasure and a bliss of the text? Moreover, why is it important?

Barthes is talking around or about authorial intention for the better part of this text. He distinguishes between the pleasure and the bliss of the text most clearly on page 14, where he describes the text of pleasure as that which "contents, fills, or grants euphoria." He calls it linked with a "comfortable practice of reading." Bliss is reared of "the text that discomforts, unsettles the reader's cultural assumptions, and challenges the consistency of his tastes."

The pleasure of the text happens in the moment of self projection. Barthes describes this as "The moment when my body pursues its own ideas—for my body does not have the same ideas that I do." Pleasure happens when we allow our interpretations to be led by our visceral impulses. By those inextricable things that govern our intellectualism while maintaining from it the healthy distance of an animal from the zoo glass. Pleasure is personal for this reason, as Barthes takes great pains to point out. There is no way for readers to share a pleasure of the text with one and other for the simple reason that no two readers are the same people, and so they have different things to project in those blank places that invite themselves to be projected upon. Insofar as pleasure acts, in a kind of self-affirming way, as an extension of the reader through the text, it cannot be generalizable. Even if we, in our conversations, are to move towards similar themes and motifs that we all, by fact of coincidence or shared circumstance, think are present in the text, our pleasures will still be distinct, for the significance of these ascriptions for the reader and for the text will have different stakes for different lives.

The bliss of the text, however, is perhaps more accessible to the writer's instrumentalization. The bliss of the text lies in the transgression of the cultural assumptions that the pleasure-having reader projects. This is where the question of authorial intention arises. There are moments where the writer's pains cannot amount to anything other than he imagined they would. The reader cannot, in good faith, ascribe any meaning or

heightened significance, achieve any intimacy with the text, other than the one they feel they were meant to. This is, is Barthes world, bliss.

I promised at the beginning a practical application of this text to our conversations. My claim, pulled from Barthes as I have explained myself to have read him, is that one can say more to the room about bliss than they should about pleasure. Pleasure is that without common ground. It is useful to seminar insofar as it communicates a personal feeling in a public space. It cannot be more than that, though, because we cannot reasonably ask the room to be sufficiently similar to ourselves to feel the exigency to project what we project. We can, however, lean on the delicate consistency of our collective tastes such that we can be transgressed by the text in unison. From the standpoint of a staunchly academic seminarian, the moral of "The Pleasure of the Text" is a beautiful one: That while the personal culture that the text transgresses may be felt by the whole, the particularity of a text's pleasure to each reader precludes any generalizable form. We can sit together in bliss, as transgression of our individual personal cultures may be familiar in different degrees. We cannot sit here in shared pleasure, though, as projection requires a specificity that transgression never will. The pleasure of the text is exclusive, as most pious people say most pleasure is. The bliss of the text is that thing that may happen together, be that as it may.