Bureaucracy:

Discussion:

12. March 31. How does a text mean? Or does it? And why do we enjoy literature?

Discussion:

How does literature "mean"?

Reading: Holland, "How Does Literature Mean?" Online, 30 pp.

What do we mean by literary meaning?
Gist: We need to make it part of our ongoing, foraging selves. To integrate it into the rest of life. We give it meaning.
Meaning as consummation.

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Re: Why Ellen Laughed.
Identity theory: make sure you understand it.
1) seen from outside vs. sense of identity seen from within.
2) theme and variations.
3) identity theme established in infancy.
4) ontological status of identity theme
   a) identity in brain (Panksepp -- next week "Style")
   b) identity as something I perceive through my identity
      i. interpretation as dialogue, not final product. Mode of inquiry.
      ii. Possibly replicable. Delphi seminar.

Feedback: make sure you understand it.
   Dustin's question: how can culture limit biology?

What is Panksepp's rationale for analogizing between human and animal emotions?
DO YOU AGREE?
What is the alternative method? Typified by the much more popular Damasio.

Now apply to literary or joke situation:
   Who makes meaning? We do.

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Panksepp and Burgdorf, "'Laughing' Rats." Handout, 26 pp.
Why do we laugh? "Laughing Rats and Human Humor"

3 situations in which we laugh--
   a. physical causality
      1. laughing gas, pseudobulbar palsy. This is physiological.
      2. tickling. This is psychological. Cannot tickle self. Who is tickling?
   c. social laughter (Provine). 80%.

__All elicit same physical reaction. Why? Very disparate causes.__

Common dimension - threat to identity suddenly removed.
   Tickler is a non-threat.
   Social - mutual reassurance of primates.
   Joke - puzzle to identity which is then resolved.
This last is the case for literature generally. Why do we enjoy literature? This is why.

Hard to hear what she is saying, doing in terms of identity.

Case study. N=1? or N=the number of phrasings you consider?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Older Model (DEFT)</th>
<th>Brain-Book Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>Expectation</td>
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<td>Defense</td>
<td>Form</td>
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<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>Content</td>
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Which leads into: Why do we enjoy literature?

Why do we enjoy literature?

What makes language pleasurable or "literary"?

Holland, "Laughers Laughing" (the cartoons); "Why Ellen Laughed," "Why the Rest of Us Laugh."
Handout. Laughing.

What situations lead to laughter?
   Joke, etc.
   Social!

A pre-programed body act.
   Cp. crying.
   Cp. emotional expresions on face.

Reading:
Solms and Turnbull, Brain and Inner World, pp. 120-122. 3 pp.
The generation of pleasure for its own sake serves no purpose.
Literature as a recreational drug.


Ch. 8. Literature is a SELF-STIMULATION SYSTEM. Self-stimulating animals look excited, even crazed (151a2).
144a7, 145a7, 145b8, 149a6, 150b6: feelings of engagement and excitement; invigorated feeling of anticipation when we seek thrills and rewards; feelings of interest, curiosity, sensation seeking, and, in the presence of a sufficiently complex cortex the search for higher meaning. "intense interest, engaged curiosity and eager anticipation." "psychic power and engagement with the world."

Stable emotional traits rather than momentary states. But those too.

Mesolimbic/cortical DA circuits. 151b8: "Forethoughts (e.g., positive expectancies/anticipatory states) do in fact emerge from the interactions of the SEEKING system with higher brain mechanisms, such as the frontal cortex and hippocampus." 152b4: system attuned to stimuli that predict rewards rather than to rewards themselves.

153a2: Self-stimulation sites evoke a single type of internal experience. Useful to have one SEEKING system for a variety of body needs. (Unlikely then that there is a specific SEEKING system for literature.)

Division between appetitive and consummatory behaviors: what does this imply for literature? Alternation between the two (148a9). The pleasure comes when the pleasurable stimulation goes off. The whore's wisdom.

Delusional behaviors!! "Confirmation bias." Becomes consensual, shared delusion.

Ch. 9. I should not have assigned whole chapter--I'm really concerned with the opening and closing pages:
164b6: "Sensations generate pleasure or displeasure in direct relation to their influence on the homeostatic equilibrium of the body."
167a3 SEEKING is under control of detectors of bodily imbalances.
182a1: "Stimuli that promote a return to homeostasis are routinely experienced as pleasurable, while those that would impair homeostasis are unpleasant or even distressing."
182a4: "Pleasure indicates something that is biologically useful." But Pinker says that literature is biologically frivolous. What is the use of literature? Our last week.
182a5 "Useful stimuli are those that inform the brain of their potential to resore the body toward homeostatic equilibrium when it has deviated from its biologically dictated "set-point" level."
182b5: "Pleasure is nature's way of telling the brain that it is experiencing stimuli that are useful--events that support the organism's survival by helping to rectify biological imbalances." But literature is a psychological, not a biological imbalance.
183b9: Sensory pleasure is an ancient brain coding system for some of the most crucial biological values that all mammals share." Not unique to humans.
184. Tentatively attributes pleasurable experiences to opioids in brain.

Measures of imbalance set the SEEKING system in motion.

Read ahead!!

13. April 7. Why do people enjoy literature? What do we mean by "style"? Or "a style"?
Discussion:

**Why do we enjoy poems, plays, stories, or movies?**
What do we mean by creativity?
To what extent does "creativity" presuppose a value judgment?
What Is style? We each have personal styles of writing and reading--what does that tell us about us?
Reading:

Holland, Identity theory from The I, pp. 23-37 and 51-82, Part I, ch. 2 (up to Rat Man) and ch. 3. 32 + 15 pp. Go to my home page, click on The I and print out the appropriate pages or read them online.
Allan Schore, "Commentary." 3 pp.
Freud, "Creative writers and day-dreaming." Handout, 11 pp.
Holland, "An Extension" -- Online. 5 pp.