

Reading Pleasure Pleasure Reading

medieval approaches to reading



Summer School

23–28 May
2016

Swedish Research
Institute in Istanbul

This summer school will explore discourses and strategies of reading and pleasure in the Middle Ages. From what appears to have been a primarily pious, learned, and/or legal use of reading in the early medieval period, books and texts came to be gradually and increasingly associated with notions of pleasure. On the one hand, different kinds of explicit or implicit pleasure made up literary motifs and became a literary theme; on the other, pleasure came to be thought of – at least by some – as fundamental to reading. This tendency concerns not just narrative fiction and poetry, traditionally associated with reading for pleasure, but also genres such as epistolography and historiography. And patterns turn out surprisingly similar in both Persian, Arabic, Byzantine and Western medieval environments.

In theory as in practice, pleasure is easily sought, but equally easily slips out of grasp. The aim of the summer school is to engage with and develop specific ap-

proaches that will enable us to discuss medieval developments – of great importance for later premodern and modern literary thinking – across the time gap, but also across the spatial gap between east and west. Aiming for conceptual clarity, we encourage participants to consider the pleasure of storytelling and narrative urges, but also the modern pleasure of reading medieval texts. We wish to open up for a wide range of genres – such as romance, drama, chronography, court poetry, and letters – and numerous perspectives, for instance performance, text/image recognition, book production, genre questions, author-narrator position, or gendered roles in and outside the text.

Some possible themes include Persian, Arabic, Byzantine and Western literature; Middle Ages; reading and storytelling; translations; romance; drama; poetry; letters; chronography; court culture; book history; illuminations; gender studies.

Programme

The summer school will be organized around lectures, discussion groups and time for informal talk. In the mornings, lectures, all of which will be followed by a seminar of the whole group, will address large themes. In the afternoon, smaller seminar groups, each led by a tutor, will work together over the course of the summer school on a series of case studies. These will be combined with smaller excursions by foot. There will be substantial reading in advance. Lunches and two dinners will be in common. On Wednesday there will be a longer excursion.

Tutors are Christian Høgel (University of Southern Denmark), Lars Boje Mortensen (University of Southern Denmark), Ingela Nilsson (Uppsala University), and Elizabeth Tyler (University of York).

Lectures will be delivered by Virginia Langum (Uppsala University), Pernilla Myrne (University of Gothenburg), Stratis Papaioannou (Brown University), and Bo Utas (Uppsala University).

Practical Information

Applications

Applications should be sent before 1st of December 2015 to hogel@sdu.dk.

The summer school is open to PhD students of medieval history, linguistics, literature and philology. In addition to working in their research with texts in at least two medieval languages, students will be expected to read English and either French or German. Lectures and seminars will be held in English. Your application should include an abstract of your current research (no more than one side of A4, single spaced) and a statement addressing the contributions you can make to the summer school and what you hope to gain from participating (no more than one side of A4, single spaced). You must also name one referee who will be willing to write in support of your application. Referees of short-listed applicants will be contacted directly by the organizers of the summer school.

There is no cost for attending the Summer School.

Bursaries

Five bursaries (cost of transportation to Istanbul) will be available. Please address your application to hogel@sdu.dk before 1st of December 2015, precising your costs and financial need.

Accommodation and transport

Accommodation will be provided for the participants at the Swedish institute or at hotels in the vicinity.

Meals

Lunches and two dinners will be provided by the organizers. The participants will take care of the other meals.

This project is organized by the section for Greek and Byzantine Studies (Uppsala University) and the Centre for Medieval Literature (University of Southern Denmark and the University of York).