

# *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*

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RECKONING WITH APPETITE

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## Introduction

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# Introduction: Reckoning with Appetite

**Makayla C. Steiner, Senior Editor**

The intricacies of appetite drive everything from the items in our grocery baskets and the size of our homes to our sociopolitical advocacies and the people with whom we share our most intimate selves. Appetite has numerous synonyms—hunger, craving, lust, thirst, passion, relish, yearning—the most powerful of which is *desire*. Desire is the strong and natural impulse to meet bodily, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual needs. It is an energy so intense that, as Friedrich Nietzsche once quipped, “Ultimately, it is the desire, not the desired, that we love.” Regardless of its origin or capacity for satisfaction, appetite is a force to be reckoned with. Thus, with this iteration of *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* we have compiled a selection of scholarship dedicated to doing just that. The volume’s theme, “Reckoning with Appetite,” features refereed articles, book reviews, and essay highlights from the 2018 graduate student organized Craft, Critique, Culture Conference sponsored by the University of Iowa English Department.

The first section begins—as does any mouth-watering feast—in the kitchen, where Molly Mann gathers three writers who provide a glimpse into contemporary view of Black women, food, and professionalized labor. Through the genre trifecta of the novel, the cookbook, and the blog, Mann’s article invites readers to consider the value of black domestic labor and the bodies who perform it. In the second article we move from the kitchen to the dining room at Pemberley, where Randi Pahau considers the potential impact of clerical teachings regarding hospitality on the appetites represented by the characters in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. While Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy represent an ideal appetite based on the standards of Christian stewardship, argues Pahau, the appetites demonstrated by such characters as Mr. Hurst, Mrs. Bennet, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh represent a flawed appetite insofar as they fail to demonstrate appropriate hospitality. With the final article we leave the physical feast for an otherworldly experience with desire as Jonathan Hay imagines the genre of science fiction as a “utopian dream” of poshumanism. Taken together,

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these texts illuminate the scope of possibility appetite inspires, and seek to reckon with its often-violent effects.

The second section is a buffet of shorter pieces that reckon with appetite from the Renaissance to the twenty-first century, and aims to whet the intellectual, commercial, religious and intercultural appetite through careful reviews of texts that cover everything from the punitive measures of the Black church on female sexuality and fundamentalist efforts to shape and prevent a certain kind of female education to the horrors of unregulated greed combined with industrial disaster and the complications of interracial desire within the value system of white heteronormativity. The two peer-nominated essays from the CCC conference look respectively at the impulse to pornographic possession in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* and the impact of aurality when considering Sylvia Plath's "obscene" poem "Daddy." Each of these essays demonstrate the scholarly urgency surrounding the diversity of desire in contemporary human experience.

Without further adieu, we would like to express our gratitude and offer congratulations to the authors and conference participants included in this volume of *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*. We would also like to thank the staff and faculty who help make this graduate student journal function, in particular Mark Anderson and David Wittenberg. It has been a pleasure to work with each of you, and we desire nothing but the best for your future scholarship and intellectual endeavors.