

Gender and Literacy in India: Discrimination, Crimes
against Women
and Women's Movement

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Abstract

Literacy for women in the context of the Indian feminist movement started even before Independence (1947) and became a much stronger point on the feminist agenda when a series of rights provided for women were guaranteed by law. Ironically initiated by white male colonialists, the feminist movement in India did not focus on education. However, literacy and the improvement of women's social status were soon linked with women seeking opportunities for access to education. Feminist actions and theory were soon attacked by nationalists who were ready to support the women's cause only as long as it benefited the nationalist cause, thus falsely assuming and promoting feminism as a degrading component of the Western culture, completely un-Indian. Third World and Indian feminists such as Kumkum Sangari, K. Jayardena, C.T. Mohanty or Uma Narayan have fought back these assumptions while emphasising the fact that the category Third World feminists should approach is not "woman" but "women." This essay presents an overview of the status of women in India including their access to education, higher education, leadership positions, economic and political inequalities, crimes against women and the existing gender policies.

Keywords: education, female literacy, India, Third World feminism, social evils, oppression, education campaigns.

Crossing Cultures: Gendered Identities of
Contemporary American Immigrant Women

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Abstract

The stories of ethnic-American women add a unique layer to the collective history of American immigration. This essay examines the processes of adaptation and integration of two contemporary ethnic-American women (Ghanaian American and Haitian American), and the ways in which issues of gender, race, and class have impacted the ethnic and American physical, social, and cultural spaces they have navigated in search of their hyphenated identities.

Keywords: ethnic-American women, gender, race, adaptation, hyphenated identity

Reading Racial and Social Backgrounds
between the Lines in Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*

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Abstract

Roth has explored throughout his work the intricate relationship between appearance and essence, between social pressure and personal freedom. His characters constantly address the misconceptions regarding the Jewish heritage. Starting from the Foucauldian premise that Power is not something that can be owned but it is a "force relation" exercised through discourse and that the body is a site of power, I intend to analyze the complex interplay of misconceptions emerging from concocted, fake identities and the power relations that are hidden beneath the structures of racial, social and gender metanarratives.

Characters switch discursive practices in order to get assimilated into the American society or simply to question prescriptive notions of identity. By engaging in a close reading of the novel, I intend to show that in this novel Roth aims at destabilizing and ironically challenging our notions of reality and hegemonic ideas concerning the social status of Afro-Americans, Women, and even the behavior of the Upper Class or of the Academic Milieu. Thus, structural notions that are instrumental in reading people: White/Non-white, Upper/Middle Class, High Culture/Low Culture, Respectable/Non-respectable, the Public/The Private Sphere are constantly challenged in a novel where "the visible is never easily or simply a guarantor of truth" (Rottenberg 39).

Keywords: spooks, passing impersonation, the stain, political correctness, getting people wrong, illiteracy

A Coffin of Images:
Uncanny Doubles in the Stories of John McGahern

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Abstract

Like Stephen Daedalus, John McGahern's protagonists live in rural and urban backgrounds marked by dogmatism and inflexibility, as well as reverie and memory. Their existence is distanced or mirrored by close family members, linking complex events to personal discourses that often place characters on the edge of a dreaming state. This essay aims at exploring the Freudian uncanny in relation with the relatively quiet existence of characters in stories presenting their life journey and personal growth as a new reading of local Irish communities. How is the concept illustrated in novels and short stories? Does it entail ambivalence, splitting of ego, mainly in son-father relationships, the animate-inanimate opposition, or the phenomenon of the "double" which leads to both division as well as interchanging of the self? Looking at examples extracted from *The Dark*, *The Barracks* and various short stories, it appears that the narrative often appeals to silence, premonition and hope as means to trigger certain suggestions, inflict uneasiness, and connect characters to the otherworld in an ongoing attempt to (re)configure and decode one's identity.

Keywords: the uncanny, dream, reality, Irishness, identity, Otherworld.

Isolation, Class Difference and Spiritual Exile
in Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Marriage Plot*

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Abstract

Jeffrey Eugenides' third novel, *The Marriage Plot*, marks a sharp turn from the unpredictable, shocking, risqué prose of the *Virgin Suicides* and *Middlesex* to an apparently more toned down, subdued, conventional subject matter. This is, however, not quite the case with this thought-provoking novel. Far from being traditional in approach or style, *The Marriage Plot* is maybe Eugenides' most mature novel, where all the themes and concerns of his previous texts are interwoven into a stunningly complex pattern, voicing the author's discontent with modern society and the loss of innocence.

Keywords: Eugenides, *The Marriage Plot*, traditional, modern, society, love, Victorianism, postmodernity, satire, innocence, childhood, maturity

(Mis)reading Matters in Titus Andronicus: Ekphrastic
Displacements and the Aemulatio Game on the
Renaissance Stage

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Abstract

This essay studies Titus Andronicus's (mis)reading of the classics in order to tease out certain displacements which Shakespeare's play effects relative to its sources. Arguably, aemulatio in Titus can also suggest concerns with theatrical issues, such as the presencing onstage of characters and acts inspired by classical texts, as well as constituting an aemulatio of other Elizabethan playwrights, however problematic with respect to the object of emulation: escalating violence to (re)map gender hierarchy through multiple instantiations of the playwright persona. While, as Shakespeareans agree, the Philomela myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is central to shaping, even scripting, the plot of Titus, I find a particular detail in Ovid worth re-reading, namely the tapestries woven by female characters such as Philomela, which no longer make sense onstage and which Shakespeare therefore dispenses with, or rather transmutes. I argue that Shakespeare's multiple displacements of the Ovidian tapestry – and generally the repurposing of ekphrasis – render visible the silent assumptions of patriarchy as encoded by Ovid, through ekphrasis, in a male-authored text cross-voicing female plight: that women can/should be and have been objectified under patriarchy, and that their reified condition may at times recall an aesthetic artefact which arrests the gaze and may (or may not) move to pity, but cannot challenge the foundational violence of patriarchy. 90 East-West Cultural Passage

Keywords: Titus Andronicus (play); Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Philomela; reading (practice); imitatio; aemulatio; ekphrasis; anagnorisis; metadrama

Andrea Levy's Small Island:
Multiple Co-narrators in a Shared Discursive Context

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Abstract

Various human science disciplines have employed 'co-narration' as an empowering mode that enables one to explore group behaviour and dynamics, social psychology and identity, or as a mechanism of sense-making. In brief, co-narration can be defined as a collaborative, conversational narrative mode, which provides multiple storytellers with an opportunity to join the discourse level (in socio-communicative context) with a view to constructing a story together. Taking an interdisciplinary (socio-communicative and cognitive) approach to narrative, the present enquiry seeks to observe how the concepts of 'co-narration' may provide new insights into the fictional story and discourse. With this end in view I propose Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) as a case study meant to explore how the several narrators activating collaboratively on the discourse level contribute to the intersubjective (and conversational) achievement of narrative. I posit that the four conarrators contribute to the discourse, each in their own right, through the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs—in short, their entire ideological makeup and positioning. As a result, narrative works within discursive plurality but as a collective communicative project rather than as a solipsistic enterprise.

Keywords: co-narration, story and discourse, co-telling/- constructing, intersubjective communication, narrative problem.

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Lesley Saunders'
Poetry via Varied Cognitive Structures and Conceptual Metaphors

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Abstract

The essay expands upon Lesley Saunders' poetry, approached via varied cognitive structures/conceptual metaphors and how these enrich readers' dimensions of experience. Starting from the assumption that ontological metaphors - the most significant type of George Lakoff's conceptual metaphors - are grounded by virtue of systematic correlates with our experience, we will then focus on various experiential poems belonging to Lesley Saunders through various cognitive theoretical lenses in order to reveal how they fit and enrich perceptions of the world we live in.

Keywords: Lesley Saunders, conceptual metaphor, ontological metaphor, dimensions of experience

Virginia Woolf's Essays on Reading

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Abstract

A regular contributor to The Times Literary Supplement (TLS) and other renowned literary journals, Virginia Woolf became a masterful essay writer. Her success was partly due to her making use of her extensive readings in world literature, her fondness for the genre of literary biographies and last but not least, of her imaginative insight. With her essay entitled "How Should One Read a Book?" (1925) as a starting point for my analysis, the aim is to discuss key polarities in the text such as readers – critics, or reading as virtue – reading for pleasure. Since eighteenth and nineteenth century literary criticism emphasized the role of the common reader more than that of the critic, Virginia Woolf also focused on readers. The latter, she argues, also have responsibilities, since their very existence and critical attitude act as a catalyst for the public space shared by writers, readers and critics alike. I would also argue in favour of the fact that Virginia Woolf's essays primarily focus on her experience as a reader. Thus, the essay form becomes a locus for sharing her experience as a reader.

Keywords: Woolf, Johnson, Bacon, Lamb, reading, the common reader, the critic, the pleasure of reading

The Hermeneutics of Forgetting

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Abstract

In an article titled "An Ars Oblivionalis? Forget about It!" (PMLA 1988), Umberto Eco avers his skepticism towards the possibility of an ars oblivionalis, which could be translated, in light of his arguments, rather as a semiotics of forgetting, which is impossible, from the author's viewpoint, because of the involuntary and passive character of forgetting. At the same time, the notion of forgetting keeps emerging in the European cultural and literary history. As Harald Weinrich showed in a book published in 1997, *Lethe: The Art and Critique of Forgetting*, the history of European literature and history abounds in examples of authors who integrated forgetting in their poetics. We can therefore, speak at least of a cultural history of forgetting and even of a poetics and hermeneutics of this concept. This essay will define and analyze the hermeneutics of forgetting as presented in the works of Harald Weinrich and Paul Ricoeur.

Keywords: forgetting, hermeneutics, poetics, historicity, ethics

The Importance of Literature
in the Educational Process

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Abstract

Literature widens our frames of reference, increasing our cultural views and improving our perception of reality. Teaching literature means having the flexibility to move from one system of reference to another and making the student understand the benefits of the cultural values he/she will be familiarized with. Through literature, our “doors of perception” are opened because we adjust our conception of reality taking into account the fictional loops we are exposed to. This essay aims at portraying literature as a liminal space that allows the rethinking of the other, by encouraging awareness and empathy. By considering several literary texts, I shall try to give arguments that sustain the need for reading fictional texts, as an essential element in the educational process. This interdisciplinary analysis aims at portraying the utility of literature for future doctors.

Keywords: Literature, empathy, the other, reality, understanding, education

Haiku Contests in English on the Internet:
An Overview

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to present the case of haiku contests in English that take place on blogs and Internet groups, as well as by email. Haiku, a Japanese genre of poetry, has achieved world-wide popularity and has even acquired culture-specific traits belonging to the culture and language spoken by the poets writing it. There are online haiku communities gathering authors from Europe, Romania, Africa, the Caribbean, India, and so on. These haiku poems come to share specificities belonging to their authors due to their culture and due to their belonging to the respective groups. The essay will rely on issues discussed by Alain Kervin in his books *Pourquoi les non-japonais écrivent-ils des haïku?* and *Histoire du haïku contemporain*. Contemporary life can facilitate our preference for such short poems as haiku, which can be read very fast, just as we read the headlines and brief posts on social networks. Goodman (1967), cited in Paran (1996), sees reading as a “psycholinguistic guessing game,” as readers keep making hypotheses. His theory will be applied to explain haiku’s appeal worldwide.

Keywords: defamiliarization, psychology, cultures, multiculturalism, moments of revelation.