

Literary Research Review

Edited by

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Contents

Introduction	1
1. Boundaries Of The Self: Vignettes Of the Female Gothic In Wuthering Heights And Villette <i>Dr Malini Mukherjee</i>	11
2. Call of the Unknown: Journey of The Post Office at Home and Beyond <i>Dr Gautam Sengupta</i>	19
3. Sir Francis Bacon's Prescription for Meaningful Education <i>Dr Santanu Ganguly</i>	27
4. Sense/Nonsense: Reading Sukumar Ray's Abol Tabol <i>Debolina Guha Thakurta</i>	33
5. Privacy and Theatre: In Search of a New Intersection <i>Dr Angshuman Mukhopadhyay</i>	48
6. Floating Signification: Language Maintenance in the Diaspora(s) <i>Indrani Ray</i>	59
7. Nawal El Saadawi and Feminism in the Arab World and its Global Significance <i>Dr Kalapi Sen</i>	75
8. Postcolonial Deconstruction: A Critique of the Gender Dynamics in the Novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie <i>Suchetana Sarkar</i>	83
9. A Brief History of Transition: From Print Comics to Webcomics <i>Divyani Sharma</i>	99
10. Alienation effects in Mother Courage and Her Children <i>Aliah Zafar</i>	114
11. The Representation of the Queer in the Field of Literature <i>Rhea Chatterjee</i>	117
12. Ibsen and Euripides: The classical Greek dimension in Modernist Theatre <i>Sneha Singh</i>	124
Contributors	133

Postcolonial Deconstruction: A Critique of the Gender Dynamics in the Novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Suchetana Sarkar

Chimamanda Adichie is the fresh voice from Nigeria, carrying forward the legacy of her literary predecessors, Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta. Her debut novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) takes us through the impact of orthodox Catholicism on a Nigerian family and it ends with the disruption of the domestic space. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), Adichie gives us the womanist war perspective while recounting the Biafran War which left the Igbo people in absolute ruins. In her third novel *Americanah* (2013), Adichie's focus shifts from religion and politics to culture, more precisely on race. However, in this essay, our focus would be on the question of gender and how each of the three institutions, namely religion, politics and culture, reacts to and problematizes its relationship with gender and gendered spaces. We would analyze how Adichie has retraced the gendered spaces by reconsidering the colonial and the neo-colonial patriarchal discourse and in doing so, has interlaced the public and the private binary. In short, the work would be guided by the propositions of postcolonial feminism and we would take into account "the collusion of patriarchy and colonialism" to better understand the novels of Adichie (Bahri 199).

According to Obioma Nnaemeka, the tools for reading African literature must recognize that instead of always relying on the "oppositional" forces at play, it is vital to allow the "complementary" elements to coexist as that is how one can rightly capture the very essence of "mutuality" and "heterogeneity" in African cultures ("Imag(in)ing"³). The predisposition of existing feminist scholarship to place undue emphasis on an immutable binary practice while reading African texts often marginalizes the African women by paying very little attention to the underlying feminist ideal that the texts implicitly try to convey. That is why a revisionist scholarship on African women and their literature should seek to "disrupt the oppressor/victim dichotomy to demonstrate that agency and victimhood are not mutually exclusive. . . victims are also agents who can change their lives and affect other lives in radical ways" (3). To acknowledge the latent

The PG Section of the Department of English, Shri Shikshayatan College, publishes an academic journal every session. In its tenth year, a compilation of essays was planned as the first ISBN publication of the department. Twelve essays were chosen for the volume, with contributions from both teachers and students as has been the practice with the journals. Between them, they map the landscape of English literary studies with remarkable diversity and distinction. Spanning several centuries of artistic output, the essays offer new readings of both canonical and alternative works, bringing together the classical and the contemporary in interesting comparisons and contrasts. Demonstrating a wide range of theoretical standpoints, the essays in this volume bear testimony to the richness of the discipline both as it is structured in classrooms and in its more unconfined avatars outside. Read individually or as a collection, the volume will provide stimulating and thought-provoking approaches to and interpretations of texts both familiar and novel to all students of the discipline.

This volume hopes to be the first of many to grace the research efforts of the postgraduate section of the Department of English, Shri Shikshayatan College. The effusive response to the call for papers and the stellar quality of the contributions have been heartening, and have provided hope for taking this publication initiative forward in the years to come.

Published by



Levant Books
India

ISBN: 978-93-91741-22-8



9 789391 741228

₹ 995.00

Exclusively distributed by



Sarat Book Distributors
orders@saratbookhouse.com
www.saratbookhouse.com