

# VALUES IN LITERATURE AND THE VALUE OF LITERATURE

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## POETICS OF PAUCITY, OR, RHETORICS OF REPLENISHMENT GEORGES PEREC'S *LA DISPARITION*

Liisa Ahlava

*La Disparition* is known for its use of constraint: the entire novel is written without the letter *e*, the most common letter in French. On the surface level, the reader of the novel is lead to believe that the significance of the work lies solely within the textual realm. It is, however, my intention to show that the significance of *La disparition* extends far beyond the linguistic and the textual. The absence made manifest by the constraint, the missing *e*, extends to all levels of the work, and is reflected in the use of various textual, intertextual, and narrative strategies throughout the novel.

Understanding the value of literature may lie within the core of literature itself, in what separates literature from other linguistic and symbolic phenomena. When questioning the value of literature, it is therefore fruitful to approach literature on its own terms. Through this, we can try to understand what the value of literature is, as an inextricable part of the broader cultural, historical, social and political realm. Literature constantly comments on this realm, inciting readers to understand and affect change within it.

I claim that the constraint used in *La disparition* is only the tip of the iceberg. It attracts the reader's attention to the issues dealt with at each level of the text: the themes of lack, negation, absence, the uncanny, and the quest for the unknown. These are in counterpoint to abundance, replacement, and, finally, the acknowledgement of permanent loss. The themes are made apparent mainly through the use of literary techniques and strategies. The inherent value of the text therefore lies within its very literary nature. Perec's novel is thus able to reveal something of extra-literary value of the post-WWII European dilemma: the problem of coming to terms with the incompleteness of our existence.

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# **THE CONFLICT OF VALUES IN MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE: RELIGION, TRADITION, AND RITUAL IN NADEEM ASLAM'S *MAPS FOR LOST LOVERS* (2004)**

**Corinna Assmann**

Multicultural literature has often been claimed to promote intercultural competencies. This claim is supported mainly by the value of literature in inducing an empathic understanding of 'the other', which may also, for individual readers, broaden the scope of their knowledge of different cultural values and norms. However, literature can also produce an experience of the limits of understanding by emphasizing difference instead of similarity, thereby creating barriers to identification.

The present paper wants to explore the meaning and function of values in multicultural literature. For immigrants faced with the uncertainties of a different and potentially threatening environment, rituals and traditions gain an increasing importance as a means of creating order and providing a firm structure of meaning. The immigrant situation is thus often a catalyst for the clash of values, when the conflicting codes and norms of different ethnic or religious groups take on a crucial role in establishing boundaries and furthering powerful mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) illustrates the importance of values for expressing and reinforcing collective identity and cultural belonging: Drawing a strong line of separation between self and 'other' helps to preserve a sense of identity in a situation of uncertainty and instability. In the novel, values find their most tangible form in religious laws, which are shown to support a religious fundamentalism that is obsessed with purity in the face of contagion and contamination. Thus, the novel highlights the destructive power of, to put it in the words of one character, "the laws and codes, the so-called traditions that you have dragged into this country with you like shit on your shoes". The paper will look into the values behind these traditions and explore the clash of values in a multicultural society.

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## **RECLAIMING GENRE**

**Sune Auken**

The central critical concept "genre" has proven immensely useful – outside of literary studies. Though developed almost exclusively within criticism up to the nineteen eighties it was the embedding of genre theory into rhetorical, linguistic and didactic fields that brought the concept to its current prominence – and made it useful in a wide range of contexts. Today

literary scholarship at best holds a grandfather's spot in the heart of genre theorist: revered, but without significant influence.

The paper suggests that we as literary scholars should reclaim our share in genre studies. Not only do we still have significant insights to add to the field, we also have much to gain from studying genre. In a burst of unfashionable optimism I will propose the possibility of actual progress. The concept of genre we receive back from the other areas of scholarship is vastly different from the one, we sent out into the world some decades back, but it is ideally suited for making the value of literary studies apparent - to the student of literature as well as to the outsider. It is also a much better tool for literary scholarship carrying with it an impressive array of heuristic possibilities.

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## THE VALUES OF VONNEGUT'S FICTIONS: A METAFICTIONAL READING OF *SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE*

Abdolrazagh Babaei, Wan Roselezam Yahya

Among well-known novelists of the postmodern age Kurt Vonnegut is a rare instance who sincerely confesses about his social commitment. Vonnegut attempts to alter the world through the stories he tells, in words of Todd Davis, by answering the central question of the postmodern age: What does one do to bring about change in a decentered world? The answer to this question has footsteps in the strategies he has used in storytelling. His method has many affinities with the term metafiction coined by William Gass in 1970. Metafiction is a fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.

Vonnegut's metafiction in *Slaughterhouse Five* does have a social side as it explicitly establishes links with reality. By questioning the notion of the novelist as God, through the flaunting of the author's role in creating the novel, Vonnegut also interrogates the authority of consciousness and of the world's established realities. In this novel he steps in his story to accompany his readers in making a fiction about a forgotten massacre conducted by allied forces in World War II which he himself witnessed as an American POW. *Slaughterhouse Five* is a postmodern novel, a humanistic tribune, a historical report, an autobiography, and to sum up in one a metafiction that gives novel a new spirit. Vonnegut makes use of the novel to clarify the hidden aspects of his experience and his awareness of grand narratives of the world in a new language. Metarealities, as a new term in this study, is the answer metafictional reading of the novel presents to the central question of the postmodern age.

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## **BHAGVAD GITA: TRANSCENDING TIME AND SPACE**

**Gurpyari Batnagar**

It is very sad that Bhagvad Gita, one of the most ancient and extensive literatures in the world and revered by noted global writers in the past, has recently been labeled as an extremist literature by a few. The paper is an attempt to analyze the epic in the light of Northrop Frye's principles of criticism with a view to establish its theme as universal with eternal relevance.

The first segment of the paper evaluates the work analogically using Frye's Ethical Criticism which he achieves through his theory of symbols in his pivotal work, 'Anatomy of Criticism'. The Hindu Scripture is evaluated using this theory for two reasons. One, Northrop Frye is a critic who appreciates the essence of Eastern Religions and has talked about them with reverence in his works. Two, the Gita is replete with symbols containing deeper philosophical truths and values and the study of varied symbols that are spread through the work help in the liberation of the imaginative mind and take the reader's spiritual voyage beyond bigotry.

While the first segment of the paper sees Holy Gita as a piece of literature that contributes to self reflection, the second segment of the paper explores its principles and values that not only apply on self management but organization management too. And therefore it can be very helpful in the postmodern society, for people in all walks of life, around the world.

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## **THE VALUE OF CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIAN NOVEL AS A STRUGGLE IN THE LITERARY FIELD**

**Nerijus Brazauskas**

The main aim of this research paper is to analyse the value of contemporary Lithuanian novel of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The hypothesis proposing that the issue of value(s) is a complex question of field, *situs*, capital(s), *habitus* etc. is raised. All these phenomena are closely linked with the construction of identities. The methodological background – both theory of the field of Pierre Bourdieu and Manuel Castells' conception of three different forms of identity – help to analyse a structure of the literary field and a struggle between "players", who implicitly can have legitimizing, resistance or project identities. The Lithuanian case shows how different types of capitals, various authors and institutions positions, writers (self-) representations construct cultural values. The novelists who have had

the “cultural capital” (R. Granauskas, S. Parulskis, G. Grajauskas) created and published novels for their well-known readers. The mentioned capital, features of their texts and marketing strategies could be called as construction of the “legitimizing identity”. Other novelists who were debutants (U. Barauskaitė, U. Radzevičiūtė, A. Urbonaitė) had to fight in the literary field, however, these authors wanted to save up the “economic capital”. Their identities which have been created in the literary field were “resistance identities”. The third group of novelists (J. Kunčinas, L. Gutauskas, R. Gavelis, J. Ivanauskaitė), first of all, employed the “symbolic capital”, and so their new novels and positions could be read as a “project identity”. It is very important to emphasize that capital, position and identity are not a stable discourse. The value of literature is a process, not a result.

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## **TO WHOM LITERATURE SHOULD SERVE AND WHY? THE CASE OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY LATVIA**

**Pauls Daija**

The paper draws attention to the beginnings of Latvian secular literature in the late 18th and early 19th century. It has been recently proposed in scholarly discussions to re-read the Latvian literature of this period as part of the *Volksaufklärung* (peasants' or popular enlightenment) project. The literature of *Volksaufklärung* established itself following the need for school and education for lower social classes. Without Gottsched's short lived authority in German poetics, perhaps, the question of secular literature as an educating device would not be in debate at all. From this point of view the school could not be separated from the book; because of historical conditions, the book however became a kind of substitute for the school in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Latvia, and the secular printed word gained those functions that in social reform debates had been attributed to education, i.e., serfs' preparation for freedom. It is both possible and necessary to conceptualize the question: what becomes of literature's "aesthetic" value when literature itself is regarded as a mere device in educating and civilizing lower social classes? The question of literary value of *Volksaufklärung*'s literature has been always present in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Latvian national literary histories. It has been never solved and has been left gravitating between "aesthetic value" and "historical value". This paper will attempt to analyze the experience of historical debates about Latvian literature of *Volksaufklärung* as a case study in order to show the complicated framework in which the question of the value of literature can be theorised.

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# ETHICS, STORIES AND READING

Colin Davis

One of the ways in which literature might embody and promote values is if it helps refine our ethical reflections and inform our moral choices. This paper begins by summarising debates in ‘ethical criticism’ over whether and how literature and ethics may be related. It then examines in detail two examples – small-scale narratives – discussed by philosophers as part of their ethical enquiry: the case of the ‘benevolent lie’ in Kant (is it right to lie to a murderer if it will save a life?), and Bernard Williams’s story about a man who has the opportunity to save lives if he agrees to kill one person. Finally, I examine a longer narrative, Albert Camus’s story ‘L’Hôte’, in which a white teacher in pre-independence Algeria has to decide what to do about an Arab who has committed murder. The question in each case is whether these narratives clarify or confuse ethical considerations. I suggest that the longer the story continues, the more ethically obscure it may become. This does not mean, though, that literature loses value as it loses ethical clarity. On the contrary, our bewilderment in the face of the stories we tell each other may be precisely why literature matters.

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## BETWEEN REPRESENTATION AND PERFORMANCE: A BAKHTINIAN PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE AND VALUE

Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan

The paper sets out from one of Bakhtin’s earliest surviving texts, titled by the editors *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (ca. 1919-1922). In this fragment, Bakhtin takes issue with Kantian, formal ethics, suggesting that the singularity of any ethical event is absolute and irreducible, and axiological questions cannot be abstracted from the particularity of concrete life-contexts or formalized as universals. While a “strong interpretation” of this position may lead us towards the Scylla of relativism, a “weak interpretation” may well point to what I would call the Charybdis of thematics, inviting us to theorize the question of literature and value as predicated on the reader’s potential identification with the characters. This rather traditional approach remains deeply entrenched in the realm of representation, where the ethical choices made by characters are at least potentially translatable into thematic terms.

The paper would argue that Bakhtin’s subsequent celebration of Dostoevsky’s work (1929; 1961) along with his apparent indifference to the actual positions and choices of Dostoevsky’s

characters suggests an entirely different approach to the question of literature and value. The “small-scale Dostoevskian revolution”, celebrated by Bakhtin, is not about the representation of value through the choices or expressions of fictional characters, but constitutes a performative engagement with ethical events. For Bakhtin, the very difficulty of synthesizing and subsuming an ultimate axiological position in Dostoevsky’s work is a heroic abdication of the authorial “transgredient” vantage point, a move away from aesthetic representation and containment towards the performative mode of the ethical event. In conclusion, I would suggest that Bakhtin’s critique of Kantian ethics and his subsequent reading of the Dostoevskian revolution may set up the foundations for a relational (but *not* relativistic) approach, not only to literature and value, but to the very question of ethical subjectivity.

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## **LITERATURE: VALUE-ADDED GOODS**

**Inês Espada Vieira**

Crisis, markets, rankings, asymmetries, globalization... Where have we lost ourselves in the path of leaving a better world to our children? In this *absurd hour* (Pessoa, 1913) can we find value-added in Literature or is it just an old discipline from a distant world? Is it fair to look at Literature as *goods*? Is it not a de-virtualization of its value in the history of Mankind? Or is it just a way to re-invent a place to fit Literature into contemporary societies and, without changing its own essence, remembering and validating its capacity as motor for self and common improvement?

This paper is an approach to the power of Literature in today’s context based on the bridges that can be built between literary theory and common knowledge (Felski, 2008). It might be the right time to bring Literature from the sacred cultural sphere into the profane world of day-to-day societies and see why it matters (Farrell, 2004), reconsidering its strength on three levels that can add value to the process of overcoming the crisis: the economic activity of publishing, and the aesthetical and reflective experiences of reading and writing.

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# THE EMPATHIC VALUE OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION

**Stephanie Frink**

Since the discovery of ‘mirror neurons’, various disciplines have devoted themselves to empathy, stressing its social relevance. Debates on the value of literature, however, often overlook the fact that works of fiction also (re)construct emotions through story and discourse and trigger affective responses. Indeed, empathy is inseparable from narrative; to understand others’ feelings, we need to know the particular ‘micro-narratives’ in which these are embedded. Thus, stories not only give insights into human emotions, but exercise and enhance our affective and cognitive abilities.

Although novel-reading is claimed to stimulate our ‘emotional intelligence’, the narrative means of evoking empathy have not yet received sufficient attention. The present paper tackles this deficit by exemplarily exploring empathic narrative techniques in contemporary fiction. Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003), both detective story and fictional autobiography, presents an experiment in empathy: Christopher Boone’s attempt to uncover the murder of his neighbors’ poodle offers not only the solution to several mysteries, but also a fascinating portrayal of autistic experience. Using a teenager with Asperger syndrome as autodiegetic narrator, the novel provides unique access to a mind we would usually not be able to ‘read’. Even though Christopher’s own empathic abilities are impaired, the story allows us to adopt his perspective and share his experiences.

The paper addresses several related issues: first, it will investigate the construction of an autistic character. How does Christopher make sense of his own and others’ emotions? Second, the representation of autistic phenomenology will be examined on the discourse level. How can someone with difficulties processing the mental states and intentions of others report emotional complexities? Which techniques are used to make the protagonist’s mind transparent? Since following Christopher’s thoughts proves difficult for non-autistic readers, his role as narrator and focalizer is crucial for any possible understanding.

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## MODERN-DAY VALUES IN *DON QUIXOTE*

**Santiago García-Castañón**

Nobody would doubt that *Don Quixote* is a classic (from Lat. *classicus*, “belonging to the highest class”). First released in 1605 and followed by a sequel in 1615, the book soon became a popular reader in Spain and its colonies and translations followed almost immediately. If there is a “classic”, then *Don Quixote* is “it”. But for a book (actually two



books) published about four hundred years ago, *Don Quixote* is also a very “modern” text. In times of self-centeredness, greed, corruption, political scandals and materialism, the protagonist’s values stand as a cornerstone of fairness, honesty and justice, values that are closely associated to – but not always found in – our society.

The present paper will focus on various passages where Don Quixote’s sense of ethics is more evident. Of particular interest are the episodes of the flogging of little Andrés (I, 4), the chain gang (I, 22) and Don Quixote’s advice to Sancho (II, 42-43), with occasional references to other pertinent chapters. In my paper I will try to prove that Don Quixote’s values and ethics are well ahead of his time and – one might argue – even ahead of ours.

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## ALTERITY AND SELF IN HENRY JAMES’S FICTION

Urszula Golebiowska

In his seminal, often-quoted essay “The Art of Fiction” (1884), Henry James opposes nineteenth-century Anglo-American conception of literature as a vehicle for moral instruction and edification, arguing that “questions of art are questions ... of execution; questions of morality are quite another affair”.<sup>1</sup> The writer’s distrust of conventional morality understood as a reliance on a set of fixed rules and his rejection of explicit moralizing do not imply, however, an absence or redundancy of ethical values in his fiction.

In this paper I will argue that the ethical insights articulated in Henry James’s works demonstrate the writer’s valuation of alterity, plurality, and the non-objectifying, non-dominating relation with the other. Particularly evident in his late novel, *The Ambassadors* (1903), James’s conception of the ethical relation – founded on responsibility for the other, rather than a desire to know, judge, and appropriate – as well as the writer’s refusal to offer simplistic solutions to complex moral dilemmas align his vision with Emmanuel Levinas’s non-prescriptive, experiential ethics. Thus, Levinas’s concepts, like the ‘epiphany of the face’, ‘revelation’, ‘disclosure’, will be employed to illuminate relevant aspects of the encounters with the other, rendered in James’s tales and novels. The attitudes towards the other represented in James’s fiction and examined in this paper range from objectifying and manipulative to truly ethical, allowing to observe a connection between the characters’ relation to alterity and the constitution of their subjectivity. The ethical relation, both in Levinas’s philosophy and in James’s prose, has a transformative power, allowing the self to transcend its egoism and the will to dominate. James’s fiction implicitly rejects the masterful,

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<sup>1</sup>Henry James, *The Art of Criticism*, William Veeder and Susan M. Griffin, eds. (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 181.

self-sufficient subject, privileging the ethical subjectivity, decentered, founded on otherness and divested of the desire for knowledge and power.

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## THE VALUES OF POTENTIAL LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF DEVALORIZATION

Teemu Ikonen

In recent years, the value of literature in contemporary Western society has been an object of a lively debate. The present paper focuses on three analyses presented in the French discussion. According to William Marx (2005), after the centuries of expansion and autonomization of literature, we are living in the age of its devalorization. According to Antoine Compagnon (2007), literature has lost considerable ground in schools, in business as well as in media in the last decades. Tzvetan Todorov (2007) sees the concept of literature reduced *ad absurdum* in the literary institution itself, in class, in criticism as well as in creative practices in contemporary France.

The three scholars agree in their view of the (lamentable) state of the art, but differ in their analyses of the reasons for the devalorization and in their proposals for countering the trend. The present paper begins by comparing their analyses and proposals. Then, by focusing on the case of OuLiPo, it moves on to critically delimit the French diagnoses.

OuLiPo, the international group established in 1960 in France, has devoted itself to defining the constraints for “potential literature.” With this aim, OuLiPo has bypassed many traditional values of literature associated with authorship and creativity. Though sophisticated in its use of mathematical methods in the context of art, it has gained international popularity. The response to the popularity has been divided: it has been seen harmfully questioning the value of seriousness in literature. More formalist than any group accused of formalism, its practice of sharing the means of literary production has been celebrated by politically oriented critics as well.

Because of the divided response, OuLiPo serves well as a test case in determining of values of the critics of the devalorization of literature. In the end of the paper, after these values have been determined, the results of the critical comparison are framed in the larger international discussion on the uses of literature.

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## VALUE IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERATURE: LITERATURE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Onyebuchi James Ile

If literature reflects social realities, then, apparently, it will embody human values. If it embodies human values, then, naturally, its study will eventually leave impressions on its students. In other words, in imbibing its values, which it emphasises by showing the debasement of those values, we become better persons; and that state of being a better person needs to be transformed into something concrete and practical (see Eagleton, 1983: 208), for example conflict resolution.

It is not enough, though, to assume that literature has values: the values that it has have to be understood by its readers. Obviously, one cannot understand the values inherent in literature without, first of all, understanding what values are. According to Gary Furlong, values include terminal or life-defining beliefs as in religion, ethics, and morals [...] (2005: 31). For Weeks, a value is something one considers very important to one (1994: 52). Ochinya Odaba Ojiji for his part believes that values are enduring prescriptive and proscriptive beliefs, which could be instrumental or terminal and preferable to other modes of conduct or end-states of existence (1998:11).

Evidently, values cannot exist in isolation from literature; and value differences among the Nigerian ethnic groups seem to be some of the causes of conflict in Nigerian society. The writer captures these in writing; and the reader experiences it in reading. The text becomes the basis for an actual conflict story begging to be resolved as typified in Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *No Longer at Ease*. Will the scholar then be able to mediate in conflict through textual experience?

**Keywords: social reality; value, conflict**

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# **CHILD SOLDIERS IN LITERATURE: DISPLACEMENT, MIGRATION AND TRAUMA**

**Respol John**

The study examines the extent to which *Long Way Gone* and *The Bite of the Mango* by Ishmael Beah and Mariatu Kamara respectively, both ex-child soldiers, reveal traumatic experiences the child soldiers go through and the extent to which displacement and migration contribute to trauma to child soldiers and eventually, difficulty post-war civil life. The study seeks to establish through the use of the memoirs by the ex-child soldiers that, involvement of children in the war is detrimental to not only the children social-cultural life but also their future life as they attempt to negotiate their way back to normal civilian life. Through the memoirs, the study will examine the rhetorical and thematic agenda of the two narratives. The study will closely examine the extent to which, the memoirs' revelation is a true representation of the experiences of the child soldiers, and, hence, important witnesses in the world wide campaign against the use of child soldiers during civil or political conflicts. The study, therefore, will attempt to establish that *Long Way Gone* and *The Bite of the Mango*'s interrogation of the seemingly intractable and unbridgeable impacts of war on children are deliberately ploys by Beah and Kamara to directly suggest a safety and a more promising future to Africa's children and the world at large by engaging on the on-going world-wide agenda against child labour and the 1949 Geneva Convention Article 77 (2) which makes a crime to use children aged less than 15 years as soldiers

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## **GESTURES AGAINST CENSORSHIP: CIA RINNE'S *1, 2, 3 SOLEIL* AND THE VALUE OF ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE**

**Matti Kangaskoski**

I propose to present a case study which addresses both the question of values in literature and the value of literature in more general terms.

Cia Rinne's digital poem *1,2,3 soleil* included in the *archives zaroum* takes a stand against censorship. This view is presented through small gestures which slightly alter the poem's elements. I argue that these gestures force the reader to see the given element from another perspective. The poem also promotes play and playfulness, which are essential actions against one-mindedness and censorship.

I will argue that presenting another perspective is a value in itself and essential to literature. Especially poetry presents alternative ways of seeing and experiencing language. Another

essential value in literature is the element of play and imagination. In *1, 2, 3 soleil* these different aspects –presenting alternatives, changing focus, and playfulness – are curiously intertwined. The poem’s digital nature gives way to a further discussion about the emergence and value of digital literature in contemporary culture.

Cia Rinne, archives zaroum 2008: <http://www.afsnitp.dk/galleri/archiveszaroum/>

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## **LITERATURE AS ARTIFACT: HOW TO AVOID MISTAKING FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS FOR VALUES**

**Laura Karttunen**

One of the most fascinating issues in contemporary narrative theory concerns the tension between literature as simulated communication and literature as artifact. The various narrative agents resemble actual human beings with values and worldviews, but they are necessarily constructed and bound to their material existence as letters on a page in a way that human beings are not. I will argue that an inquiry into the values of a given work will be incomplete and will produce a distorted image of the work unless it takes into account the “hardware,” on top of which the simulated communication runs.

I will list several features associated with that hardware such as paragraph and chapter breaks, beginnings and endings, overly detailed descriptions, and implicit conventions of conversation. Such features are present in the narrative, but they are not *functionally relevant*, to borrow a term Meir Sternberg uses in “Proteus in Quotation-Land” (1982). To utilize an analogy from linguistics, they are like phonetic features rather than phonemic ones.

Narrative theory traditionally deals with values through the concept of unreliable narration. I will argue that we need to bracket functionally irrelevant details when examining the reliability of the narrator as a possible person. On the other hand, if an ideologically suspect structural or stylistic element is functionally irrelevant in this sense and therefore cannot be attributed to a fictional character, it must be laid at the author’s door. In order to assess the norms of the work, we then need to make a distinction between the author as a child of his time and the author as a conscious designer of her work. My test cases may include novels by Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro.

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# **DECONSTRUCTING COLONIALISTIC VALUES THROUGH REPRESENTATION OF AN EURASIAN WOMAN'S IDENTITY IN HAN SUYIN'S A MANY-SPLENDURED THING – A CONTEMPORARY VIEW**

**Kati Keto**

My paper explores the relevance of Greenblatt's (1997) argument according to which literary works of fiction reflect real life occurrences and in this case can romantic fiction aim to present a politically charged agenda to readers?

Han Suyin's fictional biography *A Many-Splendoured Thing* was published in 1952 and then seen mainly as a piece of romantic fiction. Can *A Many-Splendoured Thing*, although a classical romance in the surface and often seen as purely popular literature, give a relevant inside view to the social hierarchies of the colonial Hong Kong at the early 50's, deconstruct the rhetoric of colonialism and even challenge readers own views and perceptions of other cultures? Can it also deconstruct the ways in which multicultural identities were born and chosen in that environment?

I aim to analyze how pen name and the implied writer-narrator of *A Many-Splendoured Thing* Han Suyin tells the reader of "her life" in colonial setting and how the circumstances around the colonial hierarchy are described. This voice of narration is not a voice of an outsider having a position of power, but the voice of an insider in this cultural sphere and narrative voices of *A Many-Splendoured Thing* express multiple, sometimes ambiguous, views of their own and their family members' identity. I aim to show how the problem of values supporting the colonial system are transmitted to the reader in a critical manner, yet in a way that the reader does not find it so insulting to his/her set of values that it would inhibit the actual joy of reading.

Greenblatt, Stephen. "The Touch of the Real." *Representations*.59 (1997): 14–29.

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## **The Gendered Author and How it Matters for the Conception of Scandinavian Crime Fiction**

**Sara Kärholm**

Does the gender of the author matter in the valuation of a specific brand of literature, and in that case, in what way? If this question is directed at the field of Scandinavian crime fiction, the answer is that it *does* matter; but *how* does it matter and what consequences can be drawn from this? Concepts such as "crime queen" and "Femi-krimi" have been used both as ways to define a specific brand of crime fiction, written by women authors and supposedly directed at a mainly female readership, and as ways to write these author's fiction off as bad literature deserving little attention by the critics. In my paper, I will discuss these concepts and other

ways that gendered readings have influenced the Scandinavian crime genre. I will also address the issue of feminism and how the gender of the author seems to limit or profit the chances of getting a feminist agenda across to a wide readership within the Scandinavian crime genre.

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## **FICTIONS OF TIME IN AN EXPANDED PRESENT**

**Nina Lange**

In his work from 2010 Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht postulates the existence of an “extended present” in today’s western industrialised societies. Thus, the present does no longer mean a short moment of transition between the past and the future, but rather a “sphere of simultaneity” (Gumbrecht 2010: 105). Moreover, it is characterised by a complex relation between acceleration, caused by developments in technology, transport and economics, and the longing for deceleration, which can be observed in various guidebooks, feuilleton articles and websites (cf. Grabes (2010), Rosa (2005), Klein (2007) et al.). However, in everyday life most people still see time as an absolute parameter proceeding in a linear way. This is even more striking as such an attitude was already refuted by the natural sciences as early as at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

My paper will investigate the role of literature in such ambivalent temporal surroundings. By using examples from novels such as Ian McEwan’s *The Child in Time* (1987), Martin Amis’ *Times Arrow* (1991) and William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition* (2003), it will be analysed in how far innovative time conceptions are dealt with and conventional notions contested. Which means are used to represent the changed temporal structures? Which time experiences do the novels convey? Finally, these analyses shall be used to reflect, if literature is able to diversify the conventional conception of time, and if, in this context, it could also contribute to the progress of the natural sciences, thus bringing together two academic fields, which are normally thought apart.

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**SELF-DECEIT AND VICE:  
THE SHARED MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF JANE AUSTEN AND  
BISHOP BUTLER**

**Becka LaPlant**

Jane Austen has been accused of prudery regarding her implicit disapproval of staging the play “*Lover’s Vows*” in *Mansfield Park*. It appears that she endorses the disapproval that her heroine and hero express, and since their objections seem trifling, Austen is interpreted as being stubbornly moralistic by taking their side. However, I believe that Austen has good reasons for disapproving of staging the play. Illustrating how Austen shared Bishop Joseph Butler’s views on conscience and self-deceit, I will argue that the plot surrounding Edmund Bertram, Mary Crawford, and “*Lover’s Vows*” is Austen’s study of the relationship between self-deceit and moral vice. To defend these claims I will first present Butler’s thought regarding the practical moral significance of the faculty of conscience, the means by which people can suppress conscience, and the effect of doing so on one’s moral life. I will then examine the relationship between Edmund’s feelings about Mary and his general moral judgment, paying particular attention to how and when Edmund deceives himself about Mary’s qualities and character, and to the role of those mistaken views in his deliberations about whether to participate in the production of “*Lover’s Vows*” by his siblings and the Crawfords. Edmund Bertram’s experiences over the course of the novel constitute Austen’s exploration and affirmation of themes that are central to Butler’s thought: the means of the practice of self-deceit, its effects on one’s conscience, and the serious nature of those consequences for one’s moral life.

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**AESTHETIC VERSUS ETHICAL VALUES?: OR, CRACKS IN THE  
GOLDEN BOWL OF THE NOVEL**

**Markku Lehtimäki**

In his last completed novel, *The Golden Bowl* (1904), Henry James writes about a crack in a crystal, gilded object. The crack in the golden bowl casts its disturbing shadow not only on the fates of fictional characters but also on the art of the novel itself. In addition, these cracks symbolize the dark, disturbed, and perverse sides of the human mind and behavior, also revealing the mysterious depths of the Jamesian ethics and aesthetics. It is well known that



James's theory and practice of the art of the novel has had its continuing influence on rhetorical and ethical theories of narrative. Wayne C. Booth, in his classic book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), discusses how the author's aesthetic values are closely linked to his or her moral values. More recently, James Phelan, in his book *Experiencing Fiction* (2007), has argued that aesthetic values are sometimes inseparable from ethical values. Even more tellingly, Martha Nussbaum, in her book *Love's Knowledge* (1990), aims to combine philosophy with literary and narrative studies. Using James's *The Golden Bowl* as her main example, Nussbaum works toward a notion that moral "beauty" of the work of art is reflected in the aesthetic beauty of its form. Accordingly, fictional narratives can "teach" us values through their form (including complex characters, dialogic voices, many-layered viewpoints, and difficult human situations). What I aim to show in my paper is that the rhetorical and ethical theory of narrative often downplays the difficult, mystic, disturbing, and "undecidable" effects in James's novelistic aesthetics. It also simplifies his extremely complex novelistic art into clear values and virtues or into narrative progression with mimetic characters and tragic plots.

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## **VALUABLE ART=IDEAL AUTHOR. CRITICS AND VALUES IN FINLAND-SWEDISH LITERATURE IN THE 1920S**

**Kristina Malmio**

In 1920s many hard struggles were fought within the Finland-Swedish literary field. A major change in aesthetic values takes places by the time, and makes the period of great interest for a discussion of the value of literature. Which were the values promoted by the literary critics in the 1920s, then? And how did literary critics identify and explain the value of literature?

Many literary scholars have argued that the struggle between the Finland-Swedish traditionalist and the modernist authors was purely about aesthetic issues. But a careful scrutiny of the language and practices used by the contemporary critics, using a "hermeneutics of suspicion", show that aesthetic issues were highly intertwined not only with questions of politics and morals expressed in the works of art, but also with evaluations of what was apprehended as the proper behavior, upbringing and outlooks of an admirable Finland-Swedish author of the time. Critics used language connected to class, masculinity, and also race, to emphasize the value and importance of the traditional literature. The value of literature was surely connected to the values in literature, but also to how the authors were valued as persons, and to how well their bodily appearances corresponded to a dominant picture of an ideal author, apprehended by the time as a masculine blonde athlete, with

“German blood in his wanes”. Parallels are frequently drawn between authors and works of art, and both idealization and demonization of the artist and their works take place.

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## **DON JUAN: A MYTH OF VALUES**

**Maria do Carmo Mendes**

Since its first literary appearance, the myth of Don Juan shows the very different values of changing times. Tirso de Molina (*The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest* -1630) draws on the figure of the seducer to insist, in a strictly theological period, on the tragic error of disobedience and defiance of the principles that rule the social community; to Romantic writers, Don Juan symbolizes individualism; on contemporary approaches (e.g. Torrente Ballester's *Don Juan* - 1963; Douglas Carlton Adams' *The Lost Diary of Don Juan* - 2007), the mythic character becomes a commonplace.

The paper purposes are: 1) to identify the values of the literary myth since the Spanish background to the first twelve years of this century; 2) to explain the change in values of Don Juan as an effect of social, political and aesthetic transformations; 3) to describe that, at the present time, the myth of Don Juan continues to support values, despite the announcement of his "death" by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, Don Juan's continued existence is guaranteed by its resilient capacity of adjustment to new social and cultural values; 4) to analyse the value of a literary myth focusing on particular texts.

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## **RESHAPING OUR SPACES OF EXPERIENCE: ON THE ETHICAL POTENTIAL OF “HISTORIOGRAPHICAL” LITERATURE**

**Hanna Meretoja**

This paper explores the capacity of literature to expand and reshape our spaces of experience, the spaces in which it is possible to think and experience certain things and difficult or impossible to think and experience other things. It draws attention to the process in which our

space of experience in the present historical world takes shape in relation to how we understand the past: cultural world-making in the present depends on processes of imagining past worlds. In particular, this paper analyses the ethical potential of literature that functions as a form of “alternative historiography”, providing us experiential access to the past and dealing with the narrative processes in which cultural memory takes shape. It takes part in the current debates, in narrative studies, on the historicity of experience and the historiographical dimension of literature by exploring the ethical contribution and challenges presented by twenty-first century “historiographical novels”, such as Günter Grass’s *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006, *Peeling the Onion*) and Julia Franck’s *Die Mittagsfrau* (2007, *Blindness of the Heart*), that deal with the legacy of the Second World War in ways that unsettle dichotomous approaches between victims and perpetrators. The paper discusses the ethical insights these novels provide to the processes of recounting, remembering and imagining the past. It argues, in the light of these novels, that we have not only an obligation to remember “Auschwitz” in the sense of remembering what happened but also in the sense of trying to understand, from the horizon of the present, how it was possible that what happened could actually happen, and that the value of literature that promotes such understanding resides, among other things, in its power to reshape our present spaces of possible experience that structure our being in the world with others.

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## ON THE DISTINCTIVE COGNITIVE VALUE OF LITERATURE

**Jukka Mikkonen**

In contemporary philosophy of literature in the analytic tradition, it is a widely held belief that literary works of imaginative kind may have cognitive value, that is, that they may expand and clarify readers’ knowledge of reality. Although it is admitted that certain kinds of literary works may provide new *propositional* knowledge by stating or implying truths about reality, it has been noted that such functions are not distinctive of the works *qua* literary works.

In turn, several philosophers have proposed that the knowledge which literature affords is to a large part non-propositional. They have proposed that literary works may educate emotionally, train one’s ethical understanding, call into question moral views, cultivate or stimulate imaginative skills and/or cognitive skills, give significance to things, provide the reader knowledge of what it is like to be in a certain situation, or illustrate ways how people understand the world.

Moreover, during the last decade, a new ‘cognitivist’ line of thought has begun to emerge. A novel variant of the *learning what it is like* view maintains that the cognitive value of literature lies in its ‘enhancing’ or ‘enriching’ readers’ knowledge, ‘clarifying’ or ‘deepening’

their understanding of things they already know. There is, however, no exhaustive and systematic study of these notions. Rather, it has been argued that in explaining ‘cognition’, for instance, in terms of ‘enhancing understanding’, one moves far from the traditional notions of truth and knowledge and resorts to metaphors.

In my presentation, I shall examine the cognitive value of literary narrative fiction. My aim is to scrutinise, how the cognitive value of literature, understood as its ability to ‘enrich’ readers’ knowledge of reality, could be explained by referring to its distinctively literary features: literary use of language, fictionality and narrativity.

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## **Rebuilding Mother Tongue in One’s Fatherland.**

### **Minority Literature As A Necessary Surplus**

**Enikő Molnár Bodrogi**

In the context of a Europe under globalisation process the hierarchical differences between minority and majority cultures and literatures are still persisting, although it is quite uncomfortable to admit it. The aim of my study is to point out the values of minority literature, in general, and of the Meänkieli literature, in particular, from a researcher’s perspective who speaks a Meänkieli-related language (Hungarian) and belongs to an ethnic and linguistic minority (the Hungarians in Romania).

It is a challenging hermeneutical situation when the mother tongues of both the researcher and the writer she deals with is different from the majority language of their respective fatherlands. For a writer who belongs to an ethnic and/or linguistic minority creating literature means more than an aesthetic act. And this is exactly what I intend to highlight in my study.

To understand literature may be a bridge leading to understand existence itself. There is a strong relationship between them: the effort towards understanding existence is at the same time the condition of understanding literature.

In this study, my intention is to draw attention upon the verbal skilfulness and art of Sweden’s trilingual and amazingly prolific author, Bengt Pohjanen, who has written prose, poetry, drama, opera librettos, radio plays, sketches and other genres in Swedish, Meänkieli and Finnish.

I will focus on his works written in Meänkieli, which have had a major role in the ethnic and linguistic revival of Meänkieli traditions. Pohjanen’s role is very much like the role of the writers in the period of Romanticism – to build up a linguistic and cultural identity for their

own ethnic group. His writings are eloquent examples of the strong connection between cultural heritage and collective identity.

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## **The Richness of Human Mind and the Complexity of Layered Consciousnesses**

### **On the Value of Literature**

**Elise Nykänen**

My paper explores the issues of *intersubjectivity* and *mind-reading* established and widely discussed within the recent approaches of cognitive narratology. The possibility to portray consciousness, another consciousness in particular, has been reckoned as an essential feature of narrative fiction. The esthetic appeal of the plot, on the other hand, has been considered to be tied to the richness and variety of private “embedded narratives” provided within fictional storyworlds.

In my paper I will discuss the function and value of literature by examining the intersubjective ability of fictional minds as one aspect that contributes to the richness of narrative universes. I will explore the narrative fiction of Finnish modernist author, Marja-Liisa Vartio, in order to demonstrate how the virtuality of mind-reading generates layered structures of consciousnesses which, as purely virtual creations of fictional minds, resemble the literary representation of those minds. I will show how the “experiential” mechanisms of mental webbing simultaneously enhance and question the ability of Vartio’s texts to portray human mentality, which as such, invites readers to engage themselves with complex and multiperspective density of virtual, story-like worlds constituting the basic condition for tellability.

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**Representations of the African Political Elite and the Un-(Making) of the ‘Modern’ State through Three African Novels: a Postcolonial Reading of Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah**

## **Rogers Tabe Egbe Orock**

What would it mean to do an anthropology of postcolonial politics in Africa with the early African novel as informant(s)? This paper attempts to make a postcolonial reading of the representations of the African political elite in a specific genre of popular culture, the African novel. The paper begins by outlining analytical insights from Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* wherein a specific critique of the regime of power ("the potentate") is outlined. In this critique, Mbembe (2006: 160) contends that both ruler and ruled, as subjects "inscribed in a largely shared symbolic order", indulge in an "orgiastic enjoyment of power" or *jouissance*, which combines both pain and pleasure and this is expressed, on the one hand, by "the unlimited desire to acquire goods and wealth (chrematistics), and, on the other, the stupefaction experienced in pleasure (pleonexia)". The paper then applies such an analytical prism to the understanding of power in the African postcolonial novel, through Chinua Achebe's two novels, *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People* as well as Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, all engaging the socio-political transformations in the immediate years of Nigeria and Ghana, respectively, as a new nation-states. It explores how all three works seek to characterize the earlier generation of African political elite in terms of their responsibility in the making or unmaking of the much hoped 'modern' states in Africa. The paper then debates for their significance as sources within an ethnographic imagination of a certain *zeitgeist* or spirit of the times in an earlier period of social change in Africa when Africanist anthropology at the time was rather more concerned with long-standing 'social structures' rather than with ongoing social practices.

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## **WRITING AS A SUBVERSIVE PRACTICE: READING AESTHETICS, ETHICS, AND POLITICS IN CHINESE AMERICAN WOMEN'S FICTION**

**Anna Pehkoranta**

This paper sets out to investigate the complex relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and politics in the context of Asian American literature and, more specifically, in Chinese American women's fiction. There is a general consensus among Asian Americanist scholars today that Asian American cultural and literary studies have undergone three partly overlapping phases: the cultural nationalist phase of the 1960s and 1970s, the feminist phase from the late 1970s onward, and the transnational or diasporic phase roughly from 1990 onward. Along with this trajectory, there has been a shift from identity politics toward an emphasis on heterogeneity, diaspora, and global concerns. Most recently, a subtle shift toward aesthetics has made itself visible in Asian American literary studies. While aesthetics, ethics,

and politics are all quintessentially questions of values, my paper asks the following: what is the relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and politics in literary analysis, and to what extent can literary criticism be motivated by an emancipatory cognitive interest? These questions are particularly acute in a time when “symptomatic reading” and the attendant “hermeneutics of suspicion” have been called into crisis, all the while continuing to function as the driving force for many scholars in cultural and literary studies. This paper argues that in Chinese American women’s fiction, writing often appears as a subversive practice marked by what could be termed *an ethics of melancholia*. In this socioracial context, melancholia is not understood as psychological damage or a necessarily pathological condition as defined by Freud, but rather as a form of refusing to let go of the past that has been neglected by the dominant historical narrative, and as a form of inner conflict that may even entail psychic and emotional healing, as some scholars have suggested.

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## THE LITERATURE MYTH

Magnus Persson

It is no longer obvious why one should read and study literature. If this had been the case there would be no need for reading campaigns à la World Book Day. The increasing number of books defending the art of reading would have been superfluous. The post-war boom within literary theory coincides with a weakening of literature’s importance in and for society. It is only in times when literature is questioned that we really have to ask ourselves why we should read it.

Despite this uncertainty about the value of literature there is still a widespread and almost religious belief that good literature creates good individuals. In 1979 Harvey J. Graff coined the phrase “literacy myth” in order to criticize the strong notion that literacy in itself, regardless of historical context and social circumstances, leads to a long list of good things – from rational thinking to democracy. In analogy with Graff’s term I wish to introduce the concept “Literature Myth” in order to show how our ideas about the positive values and effects of literature often rely on taken for granted assumptions rather than critical reasoning.

In my presentation I will highlight a couple of core elements in this myth, which are scrutinized more thoroughly in my latest book, entitled *Den goda boken. Samtida föreställningar om litteratur och läsning* (2012) [The Good Book. Contemporary Notions of Literature and Reading]. Examples are taken from a wide range of sources: educational policy documents, reading campaigns, books on the art of reading, and bibliotherapeutical texts.

The purpose of the presentation is to make a plea for a deeper and more creative commitment to the question why one should continue to read literature in a culture which German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (1999) has called both post-humanistic and post-literary.

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## **THE VALUE OF LITERARY INTERPRETATION: NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S AND E. L. DOCTOROW'S "WAKEFIELD" STORIES**

**Bo Pettersson**

The fact that the word *interpret* includes evaluation is seldom recognized; in other words, *-pret* has the same root as *price*. My paper studies how evaluation is part and parcel of interpreting literature. I analyse two stories titled "Wakefield", the one by Nathaniel Hawthorne from 1835 and the other, a contemporary version of the former, by E. L. Doctorow from 2008, both of which thematize a middle-aged man called Wakefield who by a mere whim leaves his wife and suddenly returns after a long absence. In an insightful discussion of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Herbert Grabes (2009: 43, 49 quote) reminds us that *ethos* in fact means 'habit' and reflects on "Aristotle's most important demand for practical ethics: a full perception of the particular, *aisthesis*". Taking my cue from Grabes, I examine how the *ethos* or life-time habit of the respective Wakefield is changed by what seems to be a wilful and uncharacteristic act. I go into the formal and thematic particulars of the two stories in order to demonstrate how the evaluation of the stories and their protagonists presupposes a detailed reading. I hope to show how readers when interpreting fiction also implicitly evaluate plots and characters by comparing them to their own experience of fiction and real life or to that of others (the *inter-* in *interpretation*) and thus how ethical judgement can be related to or even based on aesthetic features.

*Reference:* Herbert Grabes, "What Exactly Is the Case? Ethics, Aesthetics, and Aisthesis". In Sibylle Baumbach, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning (eds), *Literature and Values*. Trier, Germany: WVT, 2009. 43–53.

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# ESSAY, CULTURE AND RECURRENT CRISIS

Veli-Matti Pynttari

The current economical crisis in Europe and US bears a distinct resemblance to the situation in Europe 80 years ago. In the aftermath of the previous severe economical crisis in the 1930s Europe was confronted with the rise of populism, extreme nationalism and a growing distrust of democratic institutions. Similar concerns are becoming more and more evident in our time. Even though both of these crises are economical in nature they are also culturally overdetermined as concerning a wide range of cultural phenomena.

The hypothesis I am putting forward is that the essay as a distinct literary genre has a particular significance as a representation of this overdetermined crises of culture and society. As a genre the essay experienced a similar resurgence of popularity in Finnish literary scene both in 1930s and 2010s. In both instances the essay became the privileged form of cultural criticism. As such the value of the literary essay can be regarded as being the textual place for representing, interpreting and negotiating the overdetermined nature of crises and laying out the ethical response to them.

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## TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY: VALUING THE FUTURE THROUGH FICTION

Juha Raipola

The collective imagination of our contemporary Western culture is increasingly preoccupied with the future. This tendency has been observed by such sociologists as Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, for whom the notion of *risk* is one of the defining characteristics of our contemporary societies. As the desired site of human control is being extended towards possible future events, anticipation of threatening scenarios becomes an integral part of our cultural atmosphere. According to Beck, risk comprises the management of destruction that has not yet happened but is threatening, and as such it is both 'real and unreal'. This double nature of risk brings out the most problematic aspects of our contemporary relationship with the future: narratives of threatening problems such as environmental issues can not be approached as entirely imaginary – they are both cautionary tales and fearful fantasies, both alarmist reactions and truthful predictions. While the ubiquitous presence of risk can help us to better prepare for the contingent future events, it can also manifest itself as a constant, even irrational, fear for the unknown.

The global media environment is abundant with threats and uncertainty, present in both fictional and non-fictional accounts of the future. In this cultural context, it is increasingly important to reflect on the complex relationship between future scenarios and fictional literature. Futuristic or science fictional elements are becoming more and more common in the literary mainstream, yet the common approach to such elements is to see them as mere thematic devices, as symbols or allegories. The main question of this paper is: what is the value of fictional literature in assessing the future? Could fictional representations of possible future events offer us something that remains unattainable through other means?

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## **THE ROLE OF PRIZES IN ASCRIBING VALUE TO LITERATURE – ESTONIAN LITERARY AWARDS IN CHANGING TIMES**

**Kristi Raudmäe**

The system of literary awards is an evaluative and value-generating mechanism, which can be viewed as one of the first stages after literary criticism in systemising and classifying literary works. Handing out literary prizes is an institutional evaluation process and the question is always focused on the value(s) – literary, economic or symbolic. Examining the awarding process and the participants can show how the institution of literary prizes has influenced the evaluation of literature, also whether and how it has taken part in literary canon formation.

The purpose of the literary awards in Estonia has been to highlight, respect or appreciate the respective authors or their works, the specific genre or in general the promotion of (excellent) (Estonian) literature. Due to the specifics of Estonian political and literary history it is possible to analyze the awarding system and values expressed with and evaluated in literary works in different frame of reference. Investigating the prizes, award juries, the principles of distribution and different aspects of the award system during four main periods in Estonian history (while being part of Russian Empire before the year 1918, during the first Estonian independence period from 1918 until 1944, during Soviet times from 1944 until 1991 and after regaining the independence) we can see how the process of literary evaluation has changed. Different political background has strongly influenced the literary field, it has affected the awarding process, the authority of the juries and most certainly the distinguished values.

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## “... PICTURING IN ME A HERO OF ROMANCE ...”: THE ETHOS OF WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Pajari Räsänen

Critical essays and articles on *Wuthering Heights* often see its reception history governed by misreadings, ever since Charlotte Brontë’s “Editor’s Preface” for the second edition of her sister’s novel; “Currer Bell’s” preface is, of course, a response to early readers to whom the book “must appear a rude and strange production”, but it has also been judged as one of the various misreadings itself. At least an important section of the various “mistakes” could be grouped under one common denominator: a failure to observe the incompatibility between the *ethos* and the *pathos* involved. The “pathos” could be misunderstood in at least two opposite ways: either the reader gets carried away by the violently “romantic” demons so forcefully portrayed in the novel, thus carried far from the actual “ethos” of the novel, or then the “pathos” is judged repellent, immoral and perversely “gothic”. A third “error” might be to reduce the “pathos” to the “temperamental opposite” of an indulgence in gothic extravaganza, and to recognize in the “romance” *only* its conclusion in the “sunlit world of sanity”, or *only* the “exorcism of the old demons of childhood”; yet, Joyce Carol Oates’s impressive reading in “The Magnanimity of *Wuthering Heights*” is not “erroneous”. As she herself states: “As much as any Modernist work, *Wuthering Heights* demands to be reread.” Not just once: the singular *insistence* of this demand should perhaps be taken absolutely, as an *endless* demand that preserves the undecidable ambiguity of the literary text, as its essential secret. No reading can be conclusive. There should be no need for excessive mystification, though: the structure that preserves the essentially ambiguous *ethos* (a term deliberately misused here, since we are not dealing with a classical rhetoric of persuasion) of the novel must be carefully, if not exhaustively, layed out.

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## VALUES OF LITERATURE IN LITERATURE: THE METAFICTIONAL DRAMATIZATION OF TEACHING LITERATURE IN A.S. BYATT’S *BABEL TOWER*

Beatrice Seligardi

The purpose of my paper is to investigate the power of literature through the analysis of the representation of literature lessons in A.S. Byatt’s novel *Babel Tower*. The protagonist, Frederica Potter, teaches two courses on the British and European novel: one is addressed to the students of an Art School, the other to adult workers.

I will focus on two aspects concerning the discussion of the values of literature and values in literature:

- a) the representation of literature lessons provides a meta-comment on literature itself and offers a reflection on the value of literary complexity;
- b) the value of literature is conveyed through the representation of the processes of interpretation and worldmaking performed by the characters of the novel.

I will argue that the representation of both the preparation and the very moment of the lesson involves reflecting on literature through the dramatization of the literary analysis of real novels. These two events can also be presented as a kind of *mise en abyme* of the process of interpretation of the 'real' reader. Moreover, metafictional devices contribute to form an idea of literary complexity which, as Locatelli (2009) has shown, is one of the most important ethical values of literature.

Secondly, I will focus on the contents of the literature lessons represented in the novel and, more specifically, on the characters' different attitudes towards literary texts. Using Felski's (2008) cognitive categories of *Recognition* and *Knowledge*, I will show how Byatt's novel reflects on the complex relation between literature and life: if Frederica's students (who are non-specialist readers) project their personal experiences on the interpretation of the characters analyzed in the classroom, Frederica, as a literary critic, is conscious of the fact that her literary studies have shaped her life.

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## **VALUES IN AND THE VALUE OF ITALOPHONE MIGRANT LITERATURE: TAHAR LAMRI AND HIS *SIXTY WAYS TO SAY LOVE***

**Polina Shvanyukova**

In the panorama of recent Italoophone Migrant Literature a number of texts engage in the discussion of values shared by representatives of different communities, with the intent of creating spaces for meaningful cross-cultural communication that can tear down the walls of xenophobia and indifference.

One novel, *I sessanta nomi dell'amore (Sixty Ways to Say Love)* by Italo-Algerian Tahar Lamri (2006), particularly stands out in this regard. The original structure of the book can be presented as an immediate acknowledgement of the value of alterity and respect for the other's diversity. The decision to narrate the love story between an Italian woman and an immigrant from Algeria in the form of an email exchange is in itself an expression of Lamri's commitment to safeguard the perspective of individual characters. The two I-narrations, in their continuous interaction and exchange, give equal voice to the two protagonists who share reflections on values such as, for example, friendship and love.

Thus email correspondence functions as a framework for a collection of short stories, that build on and support the reflections of Elena and Tayeb. Here the concept of alterity, of "stranger fetishism", in Sara Ahmed's terms, is challenged by highlighting the heterogeneity

at the core of Italian-ness. As such, the African *griot* meets the *cantastorie*, the singer-storyteller from the Padana plain, who speaks his local language, the Mantua dialect. The value of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of Italy in its indigenous forms comes to life alongside the presence of new multicultural elements, all of which are expressed by the linguistic complexity of the text that combines Italian, local dialects and Arabic.

In this light, Lamri's novel seems to be a perfect starting point to investigate the contribution of new Italoophone authors to the discussion on values in the new multicultural Italy.

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## WHY TEACH LITERATURE?

**Svend Skriver**

How do we value literature today? Do we still hold it so important that pupils should actually read it and discuss it as a part of their school education? And what do we expect their learning outcome to be?

This paper raises the question of literary value from an educational point of view and claims that it is absolutely vital to answer the question of why we teach literature.

In compliance with the conference theme it will be conveyed how "the new ways of reading literature within the academia" might affect our thoughts of why and how we teach literature and our valuation of the pupils' learning outcome.

Furthermore the paper will discuss the possibility of rethinking the way we teach literature on the basis of the four modes of textual engagement that Rita Felski has uncovered hence recognition, enchantment, knowledge and shock. What are the consequences of risking "alternate forms of aesthetic engagement" in the classroom? The answer to this question will hopefully give us new insights on the problem of why we teach literature.

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# Negotiating Literary Value on the Swedish Book Market

Ann Steiner

In modern society, literature is credited with great social, cultural, and existential value. Together, this has helped form what Escarpit terms ‘the cultured circuit’.<sup>2</sup> ‘High’ literature is associated with values such as creativity, aesthetics, taste, and personal development; ‘popular’ literature with mass-production, genres, clichés, consumption, and profit. Like Herrnstein Smith, I believe literature is governed by ‘a double discourse of value’: the one a personal economy, in which such use-oriented variables as aesthetic pleasure, excitement, information value, and existential guidance are decisive in readers’ value-making processes; the other a money economy, finance- and market-oriented.<sup>3</sup>

The paper will discuss the general formation of literary value in the contemporary book trade in Sweden and particularly analyse different agents on the field: authors, publishers, booksellers, critics, academics etc. The literary field has undergone substantial changes in the last few decades. In bookshops, high literature sits beside popular literature, and both are widely available in supermarkets and online. We presently live in what Collins terms a ‘popular literary culture’,<sup>4</sup> characterized by increasing accessibility and inclusion.

New reading authorities have emerged in the mass media: literary value is discussed, on equal terms, on the Internet, radio, and television as well as in the newspapers; the blogs, book-lists, and various rating systems that offer guidance to readers now coexist with established literary criticism. High-minded literary debate – Collin’s ‘sacred conversation about books’ – has been replaced by a wide-ranging and many-voiced ‘secularized’ debate on literature, where the relations of power between author, critic, and reader have clearly been shifted in favour of the reader. The paper will hence also address issues of high and low and different kinds of value circulating in the trade and among readers.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Escarpit, *Sociology of literature* (1971, 2nd edn., [London]: Cass).

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of value: alternative perspectives for critical theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Jim Collins, *Bring on the books for everybody: how literary culture became popular culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

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**A MATTER OF STYLE:  
TOWARDS A NEW THEORY OF LITERARY VALUE**

**Damian Stocking**

**Sydney Whitten**

In this paper we propose to offer a theoretical solution to the critical impasse between what Rita Felski has termed “secular theological” readings of literature (an interpretive strategy whose insistence on the text’s alterity tends ironically to homogenize the reading of all texts into an experience of ahistoric singularity), and “ideological” readings (a hermeneutic whose stance of critical detachment depends upon, and paradoxically bolsters, the very same ideological apparatus of autonomous subjectivity it originally understood itself to be dismantling). One way to navigate this modern-day Scylla and Charybdis, and at the same time to preserve the link between theoretical discourse and those “ordinary intuitions” of everyday readers that Felski finds so valuable, is to reflect upon the importance, and nature, of literary style. In literature, as in all the arts, it is after all the *style* of writing (or painting or singing) that ultimately appeals to us; it is, finally, the style of any given piece that gives literary art its value. The difficulty, however, in making style the focal point of a critical discourse, is that style in itself would seem to have no obvious referent—and thus not lend itself to any intelligible construction of meaning. The guiding premise of this paper, though, is that style does in fact have a significant referent, something to which it “points”. Yet it does not point to anything “in” the world; style refers rather, in our view, to the principles that give shape to the world as such. Style’s referent, in other words, is not “ontic,” but “ontological.” Rethinking literature in this way, as a stylistic gesture, but an ontologically suggestive one, allows for the rigorous articulation of what readers have always intuited: that literature’s value lies in the possibility of our understanding the world anew, and of committing ourselves to it anew, in a fully historical and yet fully engaged manner.

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**“OH, MARGE, CARTOONS DON’T HAVE ANY DEEP MEANING”:  
VALUING THE SIMPSONS AS LITERATURE**

**Karma Waltonen**

Teachers in the Humanities must often defend the value of what they teach. Many challenge the inherent value of humanities subjects, usually based on subjective evaluations of the

subjects' utilitarian purpose. These challenges are compounded when the subject or literature in question is a new or popular form. That is, a Shakespeare scholar will have to do less defensive work than a Simpsonologist. There have certainly been negative reactions to my scholarship and to my classes on *The Simpsons*. However, given that the critically-acclaimed show is now older than most of my students, it has undeniably affected their world. In this presentation, we will examine the value of *The Simpsons*, focusing on influence and literary merit.

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## CAN WE DO WRONG WITH FICTION?

**Tero Eljas Vanhanen**

The argument for the inherent value of literature is often based on the theory that reading literature makes readers more empathic and thus more likely to understand people whose circumstances differ from theirs. In short, literature can change us for the better. However, if literature has the ability to make us better, that is, to beneficially affect our behavior, it stands to reason that it can make us worse as well.

I argue that there are works of fiction that have an adverse effect on readers and the world through an analysis of Andrew Macdonald's *The Turner Diaries* (1978). The novel is an explicitly racist "utopian" narrative describing how a white supremacist group manages to exterminate all other races from planet Earth. It might sound like a bad science fiction book, but unfortunately it turned out to be much more than that.

Macdonald is in fact the pseudonym of William Pierce, founder and former leader of an American militant white-separatist movement, the National Alliance. Moreover, the book has gained notoriety by being very popular in white extremist circles and connected to several crimes, most infamously to the Oklahoma City bombing as Timothy McVeigh was carrying the book when arrested.

I argue that *The Turner Diaries* played a role in the atrocities it inspired through garnering sympathy for militant white separatism particularly by encouraging empathic identification with the white supremacist characters in the novel. While the book is hardly a sufficient or necessary cause for the actions of McVeigh and others, it did play some part in inspiring those actions.

Through providing identifiable characters for violently disposed individuals to emulate, *The Turner Diaries* offers an especially enlightening example of how our empathic reactions to novels can be abused. In effect, it shows us how we truly can do wrong with fiction.



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**THE AURA OF LITERATURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY  
TELEVISION DRAMA: THE CASES OF CALIFORNICATION (2007–)  
AND SONS OF ANARCHY (2008–)**

**Anders Wilhelm Åberg**

The author Salman Rushdie recently claimed: “TV drama is the new literature”. Shows like *The Sopranos*, *The Wire* and *Mad Men* have been greeted as the most powerful contemporary creative outlet of authors, thereby superseding, especially, the cinema, but also, perhaps, literature itself as the prime medium of storytelling. In so called “single vision” TV shows a strong emphasis is put on the creative control and vision of the original script-writer(s) and creator(s), a kind of auteurism transposed to the traditionally more factory-like conditions of TV production, where teams of script writers have often been used merely as providers of dramatic raw material for the producer and directors to work with. In some of these shows literature is thematized in a highly idealized fashion, as the locus of truth, authenticity and (traditional) values. In this paper, I will explore the treatment of literature in Tom Kapinos’ *Californication* (2007–) and Kurt Sutter’s *Sons of Anarchy* (2008–). *Californication* takes a satirical stance on film production, specifically the issue of adaptation vs. literary original. Truth and authenticity is ascribed to literature, as opposed to the shallow and mendacious medium of film. The protagonist Hank Moody’s traditional, male prowess as a lover and a fighter is continually linked to his honesty and sincerity as a writer. *Sons of Anarchy* is loosely based on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and the protagonist is the eponymous motorcycle club’s “prince”, Jackson Teller. He learns about his dead father – former president of the club – and the club’s history through a recovered, unpublished manuscript by his father’s hand. This text is highlighted as a source of truth and tradition. In the discussion I will take my cue from Walter Benjamin’s use of the concept of aura in “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit”.