

A Little Literature Reading Writing Argument

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reprint of the original first published in 1877

talk of repair has become ubiquitous in recent years in the age of trauma culture art and literature have a new purpose to do justice to console comfort and heal drawing on works of twenty first century french language literature this monograph shows how literature can not only serve as a means of personal development but expand our capacity for empathy help repair the brokenness implied in victimhood and redress individual and collective traumas centered on a critical reflection on discourses of repair and reparations it questions the canonical theories on the functions of literature and proposes a new way of writing and reading literary history praise repair the world is an invigorating and essential call to arms the modern category of the literary it declares is being outpaced by the contemporary uses of literature as a medium of exorcism empathy reparation testimony commemoration existential renewal and ethical or political connectivity neither celebrating nor condemning such uses gefen models a much needed style of criticism interdisciplinary pragmatic relational that comes to grips with their importance rita felski the john stewart bryan professor and professor of english at the university of virginia usa in an era where self help memoir and autobiography command more than their fair share of publisher s lists in france it s tempting some fifty years after post structuralism s heyday to ascribe an impending death of literature to a taste for narcissistic exhibitionism in french literary culture but why bemoan the waning relevance of the question what is literature asks alexandre gefen when evidence abounds in the new century that literary writing increasingly posits itself as a restorative reparative act in the best instances authors who give form to embodied experience imaginatively forge with their readers empathetic bonds of the sort that secular and religious institutions long sustained repair the world is not only a capacious study of writers who hail from surprisingly broad sectors of french society from health and social workers to skilled laborers journalists and educators it s a situated call for a pragmatics of reading that makes of each book an intervention into the fabric of the real harnessing sources in affect theory trauma studies ethics and cognitive science alexandre gefen performs a critically reparative act all his own reminding us that the notion of literature as autonomous object was itself a historical construct in short an ideology reading and writing have always conjoined care for the self and care for others and it s upon that reciprocity that the communities of sense of tomorrow can flourish in a spirit of reparative humanism derek schilling professor of french director of the centre louis marin department of modern languages and literatures johns hopkins university usa alexandre gefen s wide ranging thought provoking study

takes stock of a paradigm shift in contemporary french literature away from a model of autonomy and intransitivity to ways of writing and reading that seek to repair restore reassure and rebuild from the varied forms of expressivity found in self narratives to the empathetic projections of fiction repair the world maps out an expanding literary territory that seeks not critical negativity but rather the power to intervene for good in individual and collective life while reserving judgment on the actual extent of literature s effects gefen demonstrates that contemporary projects and discourses undeniably center the therapeutic and remediative uses of literature with its nuanced readings and keen insights repair the world has been rightly influential in france its powerful diagnosis of contemporary sensibilities resonates far beyond revealing both the promises and predicaments of literature in the twenty first century alison james professor of french and chair of the department of romance languages and literatures at the university of chicago usa what would it mean to ask sartre s post war question what is literature in the 21st century in this wonderful essay alexandre gefen argues convincingly that the main purpose of literature today is to repair a broken world and memorialise forgotten lives taking examples from predominantly contemporary french literature he proposes that literature as therapy has replaced religions of salvation a politics of emancipation and formal experimentation today literature s mission is to heal traumatised individuals and communities resurrect the lives of the vulnerable and commemorate their deeds in the face of the forces of oblivion for gefen patrick modiano s dora bruder 1997 is the contemporary literary archetype of these lost identities to be rehabilitated and reinhabited gefen describes this new role for literature without taking sides the writing is lucid compelling and non partisan in an age of victimhood testimony empathy self expression and identity gefen s reparative paradigm is as persuasive as sartre s political version in the age of ideology max silverman professor of modern french studies university of leeds uk

first published in 1992 acts of literature compiled in close association with derrida brings together for the first time a number of derrida s writings on literary texts on the question of literature the essays discuss literary figures such as rousseau mallarme joyce shakespeare and kafka comprising pieces spanning derrida s career the collection includes a substantial new interview with him on questions of literature deconstruction politics feminism and history derek attridge provides an introductory essay on deconstruction and the question of literature and offers suggestions for further reading these essays examine the place and function of literature in western culture they highlight derrida s interest in literature as a significant cultural institution and as a peculiarly challenging form of writing with inescapable consequences for our thinking about philosophy politics and ethics this book should be of interest to undergraduates and academics in the field of literary theory and criticism and continental philosophy

frank kermode is one of the pre eminent practitioners of the art of criticism in the english speaking world it has been his distinction to make a virtue as all the best critics have done of the necessarily occasional nature of his profession that virtue is evident on every page of this collection of essays in one group of essays he asks the reader to share his pleasure in a number of major writers milton t s eliot wallace stevens in another he discusses ideas about problems in biblical criticism and their implications for the study of narrative in particular and the interpretation of secular literary texts in general in them he gives clear accounts of questions relating to interpretation and the debate about canons a key essay looks at the career of william empson a career lived between literature and criticism between the pleasure of the text and the delight in conceptual issues which is characteristic of so much of the contemporary taste for theory it is empson s career perhaps which is the foundation for the polemical prologue to the book where kermode challenges those who doubt the possibility and the necessity of the cross over between literature and criticism and who argue that criticism is mere appreciation mere connoisseurship that theory has displaced criticism and has left literature in the dust that theory is the avant garde of critical thought this piece defines the author s position in the debate about literature and value

norman l lofland and betty j lofland share the lessons they learned traveling teaching and living abroad in their memoir how not to travel the couple started their teaching careers at bethel college

a mennonite liberal arts college in north newton kansas in 1963 interesting adventures developed after a travel agent friend inspired them to apply for jobs in beirut lebanon the loflands never imagined that they would end up teaching four decades abroad their adventures included meeting the shah of iran having an audience with colonel muamar khaddafi interacting with yasser arafat before the israelis bombed the palestinian headquarters driving a karmann ghia from beirut to london and back as well as from beirut to tehran and back designing a theatre in tehran with frank lloyd wright s taliesin west architects and perhaps most important exchanging ideas with students in lebanon iran tunisia china macau and north cyprus join the loflands as they recall the highs the lows and the life lessons they learned amid the reality of war revolution and exotic living

an anthology of three premiere novellas by marcia lynn mcclure novella 1 the unobtainable one the child was strawberry sweet and loving but the man was forbidden fruit annette jordan had accepted the unavoidable reality that she must toil as a governess to provide for herself annette jordan had accepted the unavoidable reality that she must toil as a governess to provide for herself thankfully her charge was a joy a vision of youthful beauty owning a spirit of delight but it was annette s employer lord gareth barrett who proved to be the trial for she soon found herself living in the all too cliche governess dream of having fallen desperately in love with the man who provided her wages the child loved her but could she endure watching hopelessly as the beautiful woman from a neighboring property won lord barrett s affections novella 2 the general s ambitions she had been selected to marry and bear the progeny of the son seemingly over night renee millings found herself orphaned and married to the indescribably handsome but ever frowning roque montan his father the general was obsessively determined that his lineage would continue posthaste with or without consent of his son s new bride but when roque reveals the existence of a sworn oath that will obstruct his father s ambition will the villainous general conspire to insure the future of his coveted progeny to be borne by renee himself will renee find the only means of escape from the odious general to be that of his late wife death or will the son find no tolerance for his father s diabolic plotting concerning the woman roque legally terms his wife novella 3 indebted deliverance snowbound and isolated she had no alternative but to endure the winter in the companionship of the brutal race trevelian chalyce lasalle had been grateful to the handsome recluse race trevelian when he had delivered her from certain tragedy one frigid winter day he was addictively attractive powerful and intriguing and there was something else about him an air of secreted internal torture yet as the brutal character of her emancipator began to manifest chalyce commenced in wondering whether the fate she now faced would be any less insufferable than the one from which he had delivered her still his very essence beckoned hers she was drawn to him and her soul whispered that his mind needed deliverance as desperately as she had needed rescue that cold winter s noon

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