Living Mirror: The Representation of Doubling Identities in the British and Polish Women’s Literature (1846 – 1938)

Download
Naszkowska2012.pdf (1.051Mb)

Date
2012

Author
Naszkowska, Klara

Abstract
The present thesis offers a comparative analysis of the theme of feminine doubling, which has not yet been taken into academic consideration. It examines the strategies of construction of relationships bonding mother-figures, daughter-figures, and father-figures in the various texts selected for inclusion in this dissertation from British and Polish literature. The key argument is that the tie between feminine doubles can be positive. A mother-figure (or the first wife) is capable of sharing her experiences with her daughter-figure (or the second wife). The second pivot of this exploration is the figure of a sexual mother. The dissertation comprises three parts. The aim of the first section of the thesis is to provide an introduction to the broad cultural context of the mid-nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Polish literature. The second, pivotal part is an exploration of the themes of feminine doubling and feminine sexuality as manifested in the Polish texts, including Narcyza Żmichowska’s The Heathen, Maria Konopnicka’s “Miss Florentine”, Maria Komornicka’s “On Father and his Daughter” and Zofia Nałkowska’s “Green Shore”. It also consists of an interrogation of the shifts occurring in the plot of Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre and Daphne du Maurier’s Rebecca: these shifts concern the protagonists and the nature of their relationships with the sexual mother-figures. The present analysis stems from the conviction that a comparative reinterpretation of the two novels has been largely overlooked so far. The aim of the thesis is to apply various theoretical approaches that enable the reader to bring together the Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis and écriture féminine. The broad psychoanalytical context, including the works of the forgotten Freudian scholar Sabina Spielrein, provides a basis for the comparison. It also enables a profound, intertextual, and inspiring analysis. The thesis is meant to provide a much-needed new reading of Polish women's literature in a comparative structure, so that these texts may be afforded their appropriate position within the British and Polish critique. The innovative features of the research include its comparative character, and the implementation of various psychoanalytical approaches to the Polish works. Additionally, the thesis focuses on literary analysis. It incorporates the findings of various scholars interested in issues associated with “femininity”: it emphasises the importance of gender and feminist issues to the literary (re)interpretation of women’s texts. The present investigation is not conclusive and should be viewed as a stepping stone for further comparative exploration of Polish novels penned by women.

URI
http://hdl.handle.net/1842/9821

Collections
Literatures, Languages, and Cultures PhD thesis collection

Related items
Showing items related by title, author, creator and subject.

Can't get no satisfaction : commodity culture in fiction
Lindner, Christoph Perrin (The University of Edinburgh, 2002-05-29)
Drawing on recent thinking in critical and cultural theory, this thesis examines the representation of commodity culture in a selected body of nineteenth and twentieth century fiction. In so doing, it explains how the ...

Inheritance and insanity: transatlantic depictions of property and criminal law in nineteenth century Scottish and American fiction
Wall, Brian Robert (The University of Edinburgh, 2015-11-25)
Participants in the critical enterprise of “Law and Literature” tend to center their arguments on the question of literature’s utility to the study and practice of law. I focus instead on the reciprocal corollary: how ...
Identity in Literature. The word identity is defined as the set of personal and behavioral characteristics which define an individual as a member of a certain group. Based on race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture people distinguish themselves from other groups and form their understanding and pride in who they are. The most common topics in migrant literature are the lives of immigrants and the difficulties which they encounter abroad such as hostility, racism and nostalgia. Migrants discuss the problems in their native countries and the reasons behind their emigration. In the American literature there are literary works of ethnic groups such as Native American, African American, Chicano/Latino and Asian American in which their individual ethnic identity is emphasized. Social identity relates to the links that exist between people and places, the ideas and practices that align individuals to one social group as opposed to another and the feeling of acceptance and belonging which comes from such allegiance. Great Britain consists of a group of individual countries: England, Wales and Scotland, each of which joined the union at different points in a turbulent history. Northern Ireland, whilst part of the United Kingdom, is not part of Great Britain despite its population being included in the British political process. In spite of these confusing, apparently a