

Seminar: Irish Women's Writing
College of the Holy Cross, Fall 2002
M 3:00-5:00 pm, O'Kane 370

Instructor: Paige Reynolds
Office Hours: Fenwick 230, W 1:00 –2:00 or by appointment
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Texts: Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent* (1800)
Lady Sydney Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806)
Somerville and Ross, *The Real Charlotte* (1894)
Lady Augusta Gregory, *Selected Writings*
Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (1929)
Kate O'Brien, *The Land of Spices* (1942)
Edna O'Brien, *Down by the River* (1997)
Marina Carr, *Plays: One*
Emma Donoghue, *Hood* (1995)
Eilís ní Dhuibhne, *The Dancers Dancing* (1999)
Wake Forest Book of Irish Women's Poetry, 1967-2000, ed. Peggy O'Brien

Course Objectives: The place of women in the tradition of Irish literature - both as the subjects and producers of novels, poems, plays, and non-fiction prose – is a perplexing one. Maria Edgeworth published *Castle Rackrent*, the first regional novel in English; women like Maud Gonne and Augusta Gregory spearheaded the Irish Literary Revival and produced important dramatic work; and Nuala ní Dhomhnaill and Eavan Boland are central figures in contemporary poetry. And yet remarkably few women writers appeared in the comprehensive *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* published in 1991. We'll explore contradictions like these by reading work produced by Irish women writers from Ireland and Northern Ireland from the eighteenth century to the present. As we read these women's writing along with recent literary and cultural criticism, we'll ponder how these works engage with personal and political themes such as motherhood and family, the Irish language, death, the borders between North and South, sexuality, emigration, and hyphenated identities (Irish-American, Anglo-Irish, etc.).

Coursework:

Class participation (15%): Come to class having read the material closely and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. Unexcused absences jeopardize your grade; more than two absences mean you likely will not pass the course.

Group Papers (40%): In these two papers, I will ask group members to write a short (3-5 pg) essay that integrates a reading of the novel with the assigned secondary critical and contextual material. In a nutshell, this paper asks that you explain how the secondary sources shed further light on your reading of the novel. In class, we will discuss further the details of this paper, which should be typed and in MLA format (with bibliography).

Bibliography and Abstract (5%): After midterm, I will expect you to provide a brief abstract of your final paper along with an early (and therefore truncated) bibliography of at least 7 related works.

Final Paper (40%): This 15- to 20-page paper will be a significant critical analysis of work by an Irish woman writer. You will amass a significant bibliography of at least 10 works ranging from reviews and news articles to books (when you can find them!) and provide in this paper your own original contribution to the discussion about this author and her writing.

IMPORTANT NOTE: For these written assignments, I will expect your paper to be in proper MLA format. These papers will be typed, double-spaced, stylistically and grammatically correct.

Reading and Assignment Schedule:

- M 9/9 Introduction: Tropes of Irish Womanhood
James Clarence Mangan, "Dark Rosaleen"; Anon, "The Shan Van Vocht"; Patrick Pearse, "The Mother"; W. B. Yeats, "Adam's Curse"; Eavan Boland, "Mise Eire"
- M 9/16 Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent* (1800)
Declan Kiberd, "Native Informants: Maria Edgeworth and *Castle Rackrent*" from *Irish Classics* (Harvard, 2002)
Ann Owens Weekes, "Maria Edgeworth: Domestic Saga" from *Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* (Kentucky, 1990)
Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" from *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994)
- M 9/23 Lady Sydney Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806)
Claire Connolly, "'I accuse Miss Owenson': *The Wild Irish Girl* as Media Event" (*Colby Quarterly*, June 2000)
Jaqueline Belanger, "The Construction of Audience: Lady Morgan's Irish Fiction and Its British Critical Reception" from *New Voices in Irish Criticism* (Four Courts, 2000)
Nancy Curtin, "'A Nation of Abortive Men': Gendered Citizenship and Early Irish Republicanism" from *Reclaiming Gender: Transgressive Identities in Modern Ireland* (St. Martin's, 1999)
- Group One Paper Due**
- M 9/30 Somerville and Ross, *The Real Charlotte* (1894)
Vera Kreilkamp, "Fiction and History" from *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House* (Syracuse, 1998)
Holly Laird, "Uncanny Couplings: Anglo-Irish Big House Gothic in Somerville and Ross" from *Women Coauthors* (U of Illinois, 2000)
David Cairns and Shaun Richards, "An Essentially Feminine Race" from *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture* (St. Martin's, 1988)
- Group Two Paper Due**
- M 10/7 Lady Augusta Gregory, *Selected Writings*
Colm Toibin, "Lady Gregory's Toothbrush" from *The New York Review of Books* (2001)
Anne Fogarty, "'A Woman of the House': Gender and Nationalism in the Writings of Augusta Gregory" from *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities* (U Alabama Press, 2000)
Christopher Murray, "Lady Gregory: Coming to Terms" from *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror Up To Nation* (St. Martin's, 1997)
- Group Three Paper Due**
- M 10/14 Columbus Day Break
- M 10/21 Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (1929)
Heather Ingman, "Elizabeth Bowen: The Mother Betrayed" from *Women's Fiction Between the Wars: Mothers, Daughters and Writing* (St. Martin's, 1998)
C. L. Innes, "Mother Country: The Feminine Idiosyncrasy" and "Mother Culture and Mother Church" from *Women and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* (U Georgia, 1993)
Marianne Hirsch, from *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Indiana, 1989)
- M 10/28 Kate O'Brien, *The Land of Spices* (1942)
Adele Dalsimer, "The Land of Spices" from *Kate O'Brien* (Twayne, 1990)

Mary Breen, "Something Understood?: Kate O'Brien and *The Land of Spices*" from *Ordinary People Dancing* (Cork, 1993)

Yvonne Scannell, "The Constitution and the Role of Women" from *De Valera's Constitution and Ours*, ed. Brian Farrell (Dublin, 1988)

Group One Paper Due

- M 11/4 Anne Devlin, "Naming the Names"; "Ourselves Alone"; Fiona Barr, "The Wall Reader"; Bernadette Devlin, from *The Price of My Soul* (1969)
Bill Rolston, "Mothers, Whores, and Villains: Images of Women in Novels of the Northern Ireland Conflict" from *Race and Class* 31:1 (1989)
Edna Longley, "From Kathleen to Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands" from *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Bloodaxe, 1994)
Catherine B. Shannon, "The Woman Writer as Historical Witness: Northern Ireland, 1968-1994" from *Women and Irish History* (Wolfhound, 1997)

Group Two Paper Due

- M 11/11 *The Wake Forest Book of Irish Women's Poetry*
Eavan Boland, "A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition" (Attic Press, 1989)
Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, "Why I Choose to Write in Irish, the Corpse That Sits Up and Talks Back" from *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality* (Florida, 1997)
Clair Wills, "Women Poets: The Privatization of Myth" from *Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry* (Oxford, 1993)

Group Three Paper Due

- M 11/18 Edna O'Brien, *Down by the River* (1997)
Christine St. Peter, "Petrifying Time: Incest Narratives from Contemporary Ireland" from *Contemporary Irish Fiction: Themes, Tropes, Theories* (St. Martin's, 2000)
A. Smythe, "The Women's Movement in the Republic of Ireland, 1970-1990" from *Irish Women's Studies Reader* (Attic Press, 1993)

Abstract and Bibliography Due

- M 11/25 Marina Carr, *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlin*; Paula Meehan, *Cell*
Mary Trotter, "Translating Women into Irish Theatre History" from *A Century of Irish Drama: Widening the Stage*, ed. Stephen Watt, Eileen Morgan, Shakir Mustafa (Indiana, 2000)
Rebecca Pelan, "In a Class of Their Own: Women in Theatre in Contemporary Ireland," *Post-Colonial Stages: Critical and Creative Views on Drama, Theatre, and Performance* (Dangaroo, 1999)

- M 12/2 Emma Donoghue, *Hood* (1995)
Emma Donoghue, "Noises from the Woodsheds: Tales of Irish Lesbians, 1886-1989" from *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Ide O'Carroll and Eion Collins (Cassell, 1995)
Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1915) from *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (Norton, 1989)

- M 12/9 Eilis ni Dhuibhne, *The Dancers Dancing* (1999)

Final Paper Presentations

T 12/10 Study Period

W 12/18 Final Paper Due