

21L707 Essay 2

This second essay, again a short, comparative paper of 4-5 pp., should focus on the reading from Rowlandson through Jacobs. I propose three broad topics emerging from the reading: ownership (what is mine), belonging (what are my relationships), and literacy.

Literacy engages issues having to do both the self and with relations to a larger community.

1. Telling my story; being the author of texts; owning physical mss., plates, or legal rights to a text; controlling how a story is to be understood; reading or interpreting against the grain of convention or law.
2. Being able to read and/or produce legally binding documents such as wills, contracts, deeds of sale; exchanging, selling or buying books; using literary genres or conventions; teaching or being taught to read; reading what many others are reading or have read (the newspaper, the Bible, Homer).
3. You might also consider simply what role written documents or reading play in the text or texts.

Ownership may be of self, work, texts, children, or land. *Work* is an important subtopic here: what work do these women do (can they do), for what returns, and what does their work mean to them (or to others)? What are the limits to self-determination, and what do the narrators do to contest these limits? What are the constraints on their ability to own land, children, work, their own narratives or voices?

Belonging may to be another person, a family, a tribe, a race, a nation, a confession or religion. How do these identifications manifest themselves for the narrators? How are group identities assigned to the narrators by others? What are their consequences? Are they stable, or do they vary over the course of the text? Does belonging come voluntarily, from affection or nature, or is it involuntary or coerced?

The essay is due 11/14; we'll talk about it as your work progresses.