



Pronoun Envy: Literary Uses of Linguistic Gender (Studies in Language, Gender, and Sexuality)

Anna Livia

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Controversy over gendered pronouns, for example using the generic "he," has been a staple of feminist arguments about patriarchal language over the last 30 years, and is certainly the most contested political issue in Western feminist linguistics. Most accounts do not extend beyond policy issues like the official institution of non-sexist language. In this volume, Anna Livia reveals continuities both before and after the sexist language reform movement and shows how the creative practices of pronoun use on the part of feminist writers had both aesthetic and political ends. Livia uses the term "pronoun envy" ironically to show that rather than being a case of misguided envy, battles over gendered language are central to feminist concerns.

Livia examines a broad corpus of written texts in English and French, concentrating on those texts which problematize the traditional functioning of the linguistic gender system. They range from novels and prose poems to film scripts and personal testimonies, and in time from the 19th century to the present. Some withhold any indication of gender; others have non-gendered characters. Livia's goal is two-fold; to help bridge the divide between linguistic and literary analysis, and to show how careful study of the manipulation of linguistic gender in these texts informs larger concerns. This fresh and highly interdisciplinary work lies at the intersection of several vital areas, including language and gender, sociolinguistics, and feminist literary analysis.

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