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Special Issue: Revisiting Women's and Gender Studies across Interdisciplinary Research

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Revisiting Women's and Gender Studies across Interdisciplinary Research

By Dr. Monia Chouari¹

I am pleased and honoured to write the preface to the pioneering publication of the Special Issue entitled “Revisiting Women's and Gender Studies across Interdisciplinary Research” at the *Journal of International Women's Studies* that contains peer-reviewed papers presented at the Berlin Conference of 2021. What makes this special issue original is the interdisciplinary fields of research in international universities of different countries such as the USA, Tunisia, India, Croatia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Iraq, and Indonesia. What smoothly combined these universities in diverse countries is the shared issue of women's struggle for empowerment along with the sublime aim of establishing femininity as an agency.

In this pioneering issue, the shared concern about women's struggle to reposition themselves is purposefully interwoven in every paper to highlight the strategies of one's quest for identity in diverse genres and modes of writing and staging or performances. This perpetual journey of the gendered quest for identity is endorsed by Judith Butler's iconoclastic theory of performativity which has reoriented women's and gender studies. What makes this issue authentic is its selection of thought-provoking and insightful articles that are the outcome of worldwide subtle academic research. The “*Revisiting Women's and Gender Studies across Interdisciplinary Research*” falls into three interconnected and complementary sections dealing with the social status of women in literature, movies, and online games, which have become an industry.

The first section presents studies deconstructing Elizabeth Gaskell's women's angelic, de-humanized, and even mythical status in Victorian times as a sample of western culture in the mid-nineteenth century before it moves to explore women's individual experiences in the modern novel in the Eastern culture. By applying literary theories of gender as performativity, feminism, existentialist feminism, psychological feminism, and sociolinguistics to the literary fiction, the findings of the different papers illustrate the multifaceted strategies of investigating women's experiences while struggling (openly and/ or latently) in the fictional stories as in the real-life societies.

In line with this assumption, the amalgamation of East and West is better illustrated in the second section, which includes papers examining women's radical attempts at subverting the patriarchal discourse. Through the case study of the art of painting in Amrita Sher-Gil's eternal ‘canvases’ and the “Final Girl” trope horror Movie, the Eastern and Western cultures are juxtaposed to enhance the need to reformulate the complicated question of establishing the feminine agency across the barriers of history and historicity of language that has so far been used as a weapon of self-defense and gender-biased authority.

The third section of this issue underlines the vitality of the strategies for women's empowerment in resistance to *cyberbullying* by citing papers highlighting the substantial importance of the rising online games whose impact transcends the apparent level of entertainment to reach a deep level of sexual harassment along with gender inequality. While both papers aim to foreground the substantial importance of women's authority face to men's dominance, each one of them presents its specific analytical toolkit to come to terms with the set forth objective. However, variations in the findings should be mentioned. What “Title IX” performance represents for women to blur the borderlines of sex-based distinctions and become leaders is unattainable in “The Bullying Game” due to the sexist ‘toxic’ language in online games.

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Upon reading the contents of this issue, some questions remain open-ended: first, how can the act of raising awareness about the sexual harassment of women be compelling for all genders? Second, do women support women to attain decision-making positions and become able to “move the needle” toward gender equality? Then, if most people in transnational cultures believe in the inclusiveness of the gender movement, can the political legislation be enough to attain gender equality in practice?