

## Understanding Gish Jen Understanding Contemporary

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*Understanding Gish Jen Understanding Contemporary* 2023-06-07  
**ANNA KALEB**

[The Interethnic Imagination](#) Oxford University Press

"A ... study of the different idea Asians and Westerners have of the self and how this plays out in our differing approaches to art, learning, politics, business, and almost everything else"--*The Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction, 2 Volumes* Univ of South Carolina Press  
 Understanding Jennifer Egan is the first book-length study of the novelist, short-story writer, and journalist best known for the Pulitzer Prize–winning novel, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. Alexander Moran examines each of Egan's varied published works, analyzes how her journalism informs her fiction, excavates her literary and intellectual influences, and considers her place in contemporary fiction. Moran argues that because Egan's fiction is not easily categorized many of her novels have been underappreciated. He proposes a framework for understanding her writing centered on what it means to have, and to write, an "authentic" experience. In *Emerald City*, Egan explores the authenticity of touristic experience; in *The Invisible Circus*, her focus shifts to the authenticity of historical memory; in *Look at Me*, *The Keep*, and *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, she explores the effects of digital technology on how we understand authentic experience. In the concluding chapter, Moran discusses Egan's 2017 novel *Manhattan Beach* as a text that explores the authenticity of history and genre while resonating with the instability of the present.

[The Resisters](#) Routledge

FINALIST FOR THE 2017 NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FOR FICTION Named a Best Book of 2017 by NPR, Entertainment Weekly, the Los Angeles Times, BuzzFeed, Bustle, and Electric Literature “There was a time I would have called Lisa Ko’s novel beautifully written, ambitious, and moving, and all of that is true, but it’s more than that now: if you want to understand a forgotten and essential part of the world we live in, *The Leavers* is required reading.” —Ann Patchett, author of *Commonwealth*  
 Lisa Ko’s powerful debut, *The Leavers*, is the winner of the 2016 PEN/Bellwether Prize for Fiction, awarded by Barbara Kingsolver for a novel that addresses issues of social justice. One morning, Deming Guo’s mother, Polly, an undocumented Chinese immigrant, goes to her job at a nail salon—and never comes home. No one can find any trace of her. With his mother gone, eleven-year-old Deming is left mystified and bereft. Eventually adopted by a pair of well-meaning white professors, Deming is moved from the Bronx to a small town upstate and renamed Daniel Wilkinson. But far from all he’s ever known, Daniel struggles to reconcile his adoptive parents’ desire that he assimilate with his memories of his mother and the community he left behind. Told from the perspective of both Daniel—as he grows into a directionless young man—and Polly, Ko’s novel gives us one of fiction’s most singular mothers. Loving and selfish, determined and frightened, Polly is forced to make one heartwrenching choice after another. Set in New York and China, *The Leavers* is a vivid examination of borders and belonging. It’s a moving story of how a boy comes into his own when everything he loves is taken away, and how a mother learns to live with the mistakes of the past.

[Who's Irish?](#) Harvard University Press

In *Understanding Louise Erdrich*, Seema Kurup offers a comprehensive analysis of this critically acclaimed Native American novelist whose work stands as a testament to the struggle of the Ojibwe people to survive colonization and contemporary reservation life. Kurup traces in Erdrich’s oeuvre the theme of colonization, both historical and cultural, and its lasting effects, starting with the various novels of the *Love Medicine* epic, the National Book Award–winning *The Round House*, *The Birchbark House* series of children’s literature, the memoirs *The Blue Jays Dance* and *Books and Island* in Ojibwe Country, and selected poetry. Kurup elucidates Erdrich’s historical context, thematic concerns, and literary strategies through close readings, offering an introductory approach to Erdrich and revealing several entry points for further investigation. Kurup asserts that Erdrich’s writing has emerged not out of a postcolonial identity but from the ongoing condition of colonization faced by Native Americans in the United States, which is manifested in the very real

and contemporary struggle for sovereignty and basic civil rights. Exploring the ways in which Erdrich moves effortlessly from trickster humor to searing pathos and from the personal to the political, Kurup takes up the complex issues of cultural identity, assimilation, and community in Erdrich’s writing. Kurup shows that Erdrich offers readers poignant and complex portraits of Native American lives in vibrant, three-dimensional, and poetic prose while simultaneously bearing witness to the abiding strength and grace of the Ojibwe people and their presence and participation in the history of the United States.

[Racial Ambiguity in Asian American Culture](#) Vintage

The moving story of one family struggling to maintain their humanity in circumstances that threaten their every value—from the highly acclaimed, award-winning author of *Thank You, Mr. Nixon*. • “Intricately imagined ... [It] grows directly out of the soil of our current political moment.” —*The New York Times Book Review*  
 The time: not so long from now. The place: AutoAmerica, a country surveilled by one “Aunt Nettie,” a Big Brother that is part artificial intelligence, part internet, and oddly human—even funny. The people: divided. The “angelfair” Netted have jobs and, what with the country half under water, literally occupy the high ground. The Surplus live on swampland if they’re lucky, on water if they’re not. The story: To a Surplus couple—he once a professor, she still a lawyer—is born a girl, Gwen, with a golden arm. Her teens find her happily playing in an underground baseball league, but when AutoAmerica faces ChinRussia in the Olympics, Gwen finds herself in dangerous territory, playing ball with the Netted even as her mother battles this apartheid-like society in court.

[Contemporary American Fiction](#) Gale, Cengage Learning

The experience of witnessing and undertaking border crossings has become a pillar of the contemporary human condition. In order to respond to our global, multidimensional social reality, writers need to generate innovative forms of narration that expand the confines of literary tradition. This study discusses four types of border crossing (migration, intercultural dialogue, multicultural identities, military invasion) and presents literary aesthetics that unfold in Algeria, China, France, Germany, Romania, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, the UK, and the USA. These analyses move from the fall of the Iron Curtain to the rise of the internet, and from the turn of the millennium to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Positioned in the field of comparative literature, this book draws upon an extensive background of theoretical thought (e.g. Adorno/Horkheimer, Arendt, Dawkins, Fanon, Freud, Kristeva, Žižek) and reaches into other academic disciplines (such as religious studies). Border crossings thus serve as both theme and methodology, which not only leads to a new definition of post-modern writing, but also underlines literature's relevance in a global society driven by public discourse.

[Consumption and Identity in Asian American Coming-of-Age Novels](#) Edinburgh University Press

For author Gish Jen, the daughter of Chinese immigrant parents, books were once an *Outsiders'* Guide to the Universe. But they were something more, too. Through her eclectic childhood reading, Jen stumbled onto a cultural phenomenon that would fuel her writing for decades to come: the profound difference in self-narration that underlies the gap often perceived between East and West. Drawing on a rich array of sources, from paintings to behavioral studies to her father's striking account of his childhood in China, this accessible book not only illuminates Jen's own development and celebrated work but also explores the aesthetic and psychic roots of the independent and interdependent self—each mode of selfhood yielding a distinct way of observing, remembering, and narrating the world. The novel, Jen writes, is fundamentally a Western form that values originality, authenticity, and the truth of individual experience. By contrast, Eastern narrative emphasizes morality, cultural continuity, the everyday, the recurrent. In its progress from a moving evocation of one writer's life to a convincing delineation of the forces that have shaped our experience for millennia, *Tiger Writing* radically shifts the way we understand ourselves and our art-making.

[Understanding Karen Tei Yamashita](#) Univ of South Carolina Press

Redefining self. Transnational Rio de Janeiro : (Re)visiting geographical experiences / Alan P.

Marcus ; When Russia came to stay / Lea Povozahev ; "Neither the end of the world nor the beginning" : transnational identity politics in Lisa Suhair Majaj's self-writing / Silvia Schullermandl ; Identity and belonging among second-generation Greek and Italian Canadian women / Noula Papayiannis ; Time and space in the life of Pierre S. Weiss : autoethnographic engagements with memory and trans/dis/location / Samuel Veissière -- Redefining nation. Contemporary Croatian film and the new social economy / Jelena Šesnić ; Identity, bodies, and second-generation returnees in West Africa / Erin Kenny ; What is an autobiographical author :becoming the other / Julian Vigo ; Transnational identity mappings in Andrea Levy's fiction / Şebnem Toplu -- Redefining family. The personal, the political, and the complexity of identity : some thoughts on mothering / May Friedman ; Mothers on the move : experiences of Indonesian women migrant workers / Theresa W. Devasahayam and Noor Abdul Rahman ; From Changowitz to Bailey Wong : mixed heritage and transnational families in Gish Jen's fiction / Lan Dong ; Tug of war : the gender dynamics of parenting in a bi/transnational family / Katrin Kríž and Uday Manandhar.

[Standing by Words](#) Stanford University Press

An urgent, visionary, and heartfelt collection of essays focused on recovering deeper, time-honored values against the ravages of modern society. . In six elegant, linked literary essays, Berry considers the degeneration of language that is manifest throughout our culture, from poetry to politics, from conversation to advertising, and he shows how the ever-widening cleft between the words and their referents mirrors the increasing isolation of individuals and their communities from the land. “This skillfully conceived book is one of the strongest contemporary arguments for literary tradition: a challenging credo, un-glib, calmly assured, clearly illuminating—and required reading for those seriously interested in the interplay between literature, ethics, and morality.” —*Kirkus Reviews* “[Berry’s] poems, novels and essays . . . are probably the most sustained contemporary articulation of America’s agrarian, Jeffersonian ideal.” —*Publishers Weekly*  
*Conversations with Gish Jen* Univ of South Carolina Press

A New York Times Notable Book In these pages, acclaimed author Gish Jen portrays the day-to-day of American multiculturalism with poignancy and wit, introducing us to teenaged Mona Chang, who in 1968 moves with her newly prosperous family to Scarshill, New York. Here, the Chinese are seen as "the new Jews." What could be more natural than for Mona to take this literally—even to the point of converting? As Mona attends temple "rap" sessions and falls in love (with a nice Jewish boy who lives in a tepee), Jen introduces us to one of the most charming and sweet-spirited heroines in recent fiction, a girl who can wisecrack with perfect aplomb even when she's organizing the help in her father's pancake house. On every page, Gish Jen sets our received notions spinning with a wit as dry as a latter-day Jane Austen's.

[A Study Guide for Gish Jen's "What Means Switch"](#) Univ. Press of Mississippi

This is an accessible, lucid and incisive study that will prove indispensable to students and scholars of contemporary American fiction. Featuring a wide range of authors - from canonical figures such as Philip Roth, Don DeLillo and Annie Proulx, to increasingly influential writers such as Jeffrey Eugenides, Gish Jen and Richard Powers - the book combines detailed readings of key texts with informative discussions of their historical, social and cultural contexts. There are chapters focusing on formal characteristics (the use of irony and paradox in novels by Don DeLillo, Paul Auster and Bret Easton Ellis, and the generic properties of the texts and films of *Cold Mountain*, *'Brokeback Mountain'* and *No Country for Old Men*) and on thematic concerns (the representation of gender and sexuality in novels by Jane Smiley, Carol Shields and Jeffrey Eugenides and of ethnicity, race and hybridity in fiction by Gish Jen, Philip Roth and Richard Powers). Running through all these chapters is an interrogation of all three elements making up the phrase 'contemporary American fiction'.  
 Key Features\* Identifies some of the main trends in contemporary American fiction and situates them in historical and cultural contexts\* Discusses a representative range of recent fiction, providing a sense of the rich diversity of the field and of its key themes and modes of writing\* Introduces students to a variety of critical approaches to, and debates concerning, contemporary American fiction\* Encourages reflection on the nature of national, gender, ethnic

and generic identities

*The Novel and the New Ethics* Vintage

Contemporary American Fiction provides an introduction to American fiction since 1970. Offering substantial and detailed interpretations of more than thirty texts by thirty different writers, Millard combines them in an innovative critical structure designed to promote debates on cultural politics and aesthetic value. The book is the first of its kind to offer a wide-ranging survey of recent developments in the fiction of the United States. Recent novels by established writers such as John Updike and Philip Roth are analysed alongside the fiction of younger writers such as Gish Jen and Sherman Alexie. The book's innovative structure encourages new ways of thinking about how American writers might be configured in relation to each other, while providing an analysis of how contemporary fiction has responded to changes in central areas of American life such as the family, the media, technology, and consumerism. Contemporary American Fiction is a substantial critical introduction to some of the most exciting fiction of the last thirty years, an eclectic and thorough advertisement for the extraordinary vitality of American fiction at the end of the twentieth century. This is an excellent introduction to the subject for undergraduate students of modern American literature.

**Understanding Louise Erdrich** Vintage

A thorough examination of the author's deeply personal and often-controversial poetry Understanding Sharon Olds explores this Pulitzer Prize-winning poet's major themes, characters, life, and career, including her often-controversial portrayals of family dysfunction, sexuality, and violence against women. In this first book dedicated entirely to the poetry of Sharon Olds, Russell Brickey examines how Olds approaches these difficult and complex topics with pathos and intimate, sometimes provocatively private, details through poetry that not all her critics appreciate. Olds has never shied away from difficult subject matter. Her first award-winning book, *Satan Says*, is a feminist exploration of gender politics and adolescent discovery. The Father comprises a book-length elegy about cancer. *Stag's Leap*, Olds's Pulitzer Prize-winning volume, is a surprisingly tender look at divorce in modern American culture. Extremely personal, her poems often deal with the victories and contradictions of being a woman in the United States during a time when the country is often involved in racial upheavals and military conflicts overseas. She investigates the victories and contradictions of being a wife and mother during the era of feminism, as one of our most honest, most overt poets of female sexuality and its relationship to family life and its place within the history of humanity. Brickey organizes each chapter around a theme or a persona within Olds's cast of characters. These include poems dedicated to mothers, fathers, children, and the arc of history. Through his close readings, Brickey shows how and where Olds has expanded the tradition of confessional poetry (literature that deals with psychology, family, love, and sexuality), a term Olds disdains but nevertheless expanded into commentary about the human condition in all its paradoxes.

**The Leavers (National Book Award Finalist)** Algonquin Books

The award-winning author of *Thank You, Mr. Nixon* and *The Resisters* delivers "[a] triumph of a novel.... Jen reflects America, at its best, its worst, its most vulnerable" (*The Miami Herald*), and asks deep questions about religion, love, home, and meaning. Hattie Kong, a retired teacher and a descendant of Confucius, has decided that it's time to start over. She moves to the peaceful New England town of Riverlake, a place that once represented the rock-solid base of American life. Instead of quietude, Hattie discovers a town challenged by cell-phone towers, chain stores, and struggling farms. Soon Hattie is joined by an immigrant Cambodian family on the run, and—quite unexpectedly—Carter Hatch, a love from her past.

*The Love Wife* Univ of South Carolina Press

The stories in *Who's Irish?* show us the children of immigrants looking wonderingly at their parents' efforts to assimilate, while the older generation asks how so much selfless hard work on their part

can have yielded them offspring who'd sooner drop out of life than succeed at it. With dazzling wit and compassion, Gish Jen—author of the acclaimed novels *Typical American* and *Mona in the Promised Land*—looks at ambition and compromise at century's end and finds that much of the action is as familiar—and as strange—as the things we know to be most deeply true about ourselves.

**Understanding Jennifer Egan** Rowman & Littlefield

A comprehensive account of the author's entire career through the lens of her recently published diaries With the publication of Susan Sontag's diaries, the development of her career can now be evaluated in a more genetic sense, so that the origins of her ideas and plans for publication are made plain in the context of her role as a public intellectual, who is increasingly aware of her impact on her culture. In *Understanding Susan Sontag*, Carl Rollyson not only provides an introduction to her essays, novels, plays, films, diaries, and uncollected work published in various periodicals, he now has a lens through which to reevaluate classic texts such as *Against Interpretation* and *On Photography*, providing both students and advanced scholars a renewed sense of her importance and impact. Rollyson devotes separate chapters to Sontag's biography; her early novels; her landmark essay collections *Against Interpretation* and *Styles of Radical Will*; her films; her major mid-career books, *On Photography* and its sequel, *Regarding the Pain of Others*; and *Illness as Metaphor* and its sequel, *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, together with her groundbreaking short story, "The Way We Live Now." Sontag's later essay collections and biographical profiles, collected in *Under the Sign of Saturn*, *Where the Stress Falls*, and *At The Same Time: Essays and Speeches*, also receive a fresh assessment, as does her later work in short fiction, the novel, and drama, with a chapter discussing *I*, etcetera; two historical novels, *The Volcano Lover* and *In America*; and her plays, *A Parsifal*, *Alice in Bed*, and her adaptation of Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*. Chapters on her diaries and uncollected prose, along with a primary and secondary bibliography, complete this comprehensive study.

*The Good Life and the Greater Good in a Global Context* Rutgers University Press

Don DeLillo, Paul Auster, Cormac McCarthy, Rolando Hinojosa, E. Annie Proulx, Bret Easton Ellis, Douglas Coupland, and Thomas Pynchon: An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction introduces the work of a range of key American authors, all of whom can be said to engage with postmodernism. Exploring the vitality and energy of contemporary writing in light of pessimistic proclamations on the state of postmodern American culture, Bilton highlights the tension between "realistic" description and linguistic self-consciousness in contemporary fiction. In addition, by addressing a central problem in literary theory—its neglect of literary discussion and the practice of reading—An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction is able to present a working model for reading a text theoretically. As an introductory text, it assumes no prior knowledge of the authors of the novels discussed. To encourage understanding and aid further study, the following features are included: \* GLOSSARY OF CRITICAL AND LITERARY TERMS \* BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EACH AUTHOR'S WORKS \* BIOGRAPHY OF EACH AUTHOR \* GUIDE TO FURTHER READING \* THEMATIC AND AUTHOR INDICES

*Tiger Writing* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Fresh perspectives and eye-opening discussions of contemporary American fiction In *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction: 1980-2020*, a team of distinguished scholars delivers a focused and in-depth collection of essays on some of the most significant and influential authors and literary subjects of the last four decades. Cutting-edge entries from established and new voices discuss subjects as varied as multiculturalism, contemporary regionalisms, realism after poststructuralism, indigenous narratives, globalism, and big data in the context of American fiction from the last 40 years. The Encyclopedia provides an overview of American fiction at the turn of the millennium as well as a vision of what may come. It perfectly balances analysis, summary, and critique for an illuminating treatment of the subject matter. This collection also

includes: An exciting mix of established and emerging contributors from around the world discussing central and cutting-edge topics in American fiction studies Focused, critical explorations of authors and subjects of critical importance to American fiction Topics that reflect the energies and tendencies of contemporary American fiction from the forty years between 1980 and 2020 *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction: 1980-2020* is a must-have resource for undergraduate and graduate students of American literature, English, creative writing, and fiction studies. It will also earn a place in the libraries of scholars seeking an authoritative array of contributions on both established and newer authors of contemporary fiction.

*Under Red Skies* Univ. Press of Mississippi

The study of the full career of an award-winning writer who evolved from traditional to radical Among the most celebrated American poets of the past half century, Adrienne Rich was the recipient of awards ranging from the Bollingen Prize, to the National Book Award, to the Lannan Lifetime Achievement Award. In *Understanding Adrienne Rich*, Jeannette E. Riley assesses the full scope of Rich's long career from 1957 to her death in 2012 through a chronological exploration of her poetry and prose. Beginning with Rich's first two formally traditional collections, published in the late 1950s, then moving to the increasingly radical collections of the 1960s and 1970s, Riley details the evolution of Rich's feminist poetics as she investigated issues of identity, sexuality, gender, the desire to reclaim women's history, the dream of a common language, and a separate community for women. Riley then tracks how Rich's writing shifted outward from the 1980s and 1990s to the end of her career as she evaluated her own life and place within her society. Rich examined her country's history as well, asking readers to consider what responsibility each person has—individually and communally—for changing the conditions under which we live. This book documents Rich's developing charge that poetry carries the ability to create social change and engage people in the democratic process. Throughout, *Understanding Adrienne Rich* interweaves explications of Rich's poetry with her prose, offering a close look at the development of the author's voice from formalist poet, to feminist visionary, to citizen poet. In doing so, this volume provides a survey of Rich's career and her impact on American literature and politics.

*Tripmaster Monkey* Univ of South Carolina Press

Jennifer Ann Ho introduces readers to a "typical American" writer, Gish Jen, the author of four novels, *Typical American*, *Mona in the Promised Land*, *The Love Wife*, and *World and Town*; a collection of short stories, *Who's Irish?*; and a collection of lectures, *Tiger Writing: Art, Culture, and the Interdependent Self*. Jen writes with an engaging, sardonic, and imaginative voice illuminating themes common to the American experience: immigration, assimilation, individualism, the freedom to choose one's path in life, and the complicated relationships that we have with our families and our communities. A second-generation Chinese American, Jen is widely recognized as an important American literary voice, at once accessible, philosophical, and thought-provoking. In addition to her novels, she has published widely in periodicals such as the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Yale Review*. Ho traces the evolution of Jen's career, her themes, and the development of her narrative voice. In the process she shows why Jen's observations about life in the United States, though revealed through the perspectives of her Asian American and Asian immigrant characters, resonate with a variety of audiences who find themselves reflected in Jen's accounts of love, grief, desire, disappointment, and the general domestic experiences that shape all our lives. Following a brief biographical sketch, Ho examines each of Jen's major works, showing how she traces the transformation of immigrant dreams into mundane life, explores the limits of self-identification, and characterizes problems of cross-national communication alongside the universal problems of aging and generational conflict. Looking beyond Jen's fiction work, a final chapter examines her essays and her concerns and stature as a public intellectual, and detailed primary and secondary bibliographies provide a valuable point of departure for both teaching and future scholarship.