



Keywords: Gender

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The Alliance of Independent Publishers, a literary organization "dedicated to a different kind of globalization" and the Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation have invited Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House (China), Arab Cultural Center (Morocco and Lebanon), Double Storey Books (South Africa), Sage India (India), Editions La Decouverte (France), and Other Press (United States) to participate in the creation of an unprecedented intercultural project.

Entitled *Keywords*, this original and international experiment is divided into four concise volumes. Each one refers specifically to a word that is key to the understanding of the human condition. Truth, Identity, Gender, and Experience are concepts that we presume universal; therefore we would be hard-pressed to think that they refer to different systems of thought in cultures distinct from our own. *Keywords* explores the cultural specificity of these terms, and links them to issues that are most relevant for the region under consideration.

Each volume of the series offers six different points of view on a given keyword. The authors, who have been carefully selected by their respective publishers for their mastery in their fields and for the clarity of their writing, have been given free rein to share their distinctive visions of the concept at hand and to emphasize particular examples that would best illustrate their unique perspectives.

In the volume entitled *Gender* for example, we find a highly contemporary American analysis of the tension between feminist studies and the concept of the "queer," while the Arab reading of the same word turns to the history of the Arab world to champion the cause of women and homosexuals.

For the African author, identity is bound up with questions of ethnicity, race, and colonial laws. The Chinese author shows how in his country identity has been informed in the 20th century by Western references, such as Marxism and the market economy, because at its roots Chinese thought does not directly include these notions. The American author selects Tiger Woods' debate with the media to reveal how in the United States the question of "identity politics" defeats the ideals of multiculturalism.

Experience in China may be understood classically as an actual event but also as revealing what cannot be spoken. The French reading emphasizes the contrast between the scientific experience, its psychoanalytic version, and the definition of the "judgment of experience" as formulated by Kant.

Truth, from the American perspective, appears to have shifted from a mathematical and universal model to a contemporary notion of truth so elusive and plural that it has almost disappeared as a concept. The Indian approach is deeply historical, as it surveys the meaning of truth from the Vedas to the Gandhian ideal. The African author in this instance has chosen to ignore the history of the concept in order to concentrate on a crucial contemporary question: How well has the South African Commission for Truth and Reconciliation worked and what are its realistic limitations?

The variety of the authors' backgrounds (anthropology, philosophy, sociology, epistemology) and their commitment to making *Keywords* relevant in the explosive "here and now" offer new parameters for envisioning the implications of the process of globalization. This project is required reading for anyone who aspires to become an informed citizen of the world.

Keywords will be published in its entirety in 2004 by Other Press. The series will be brought out

simultaneously by the other five participating publishers in the languages native to their territories. Each essay was written originally for this series and has never before been published.

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Alma Saunders:

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