

that is reviewed is sometimes savaged because it was written by a woman, so that the author feels sexually harassed. One prominent newspaper reviewer noted in his review, "From the photograph supplied of Mss. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, I should judge that neither was sexually attractive...." (p. 68).

It is an anomaly that, although women are said to be inferior to men in their writing skills, school girls are, on average, better writers than school boys throughout the educational system. What's happening? Spender notes that boys are given more attention than girls, and more encouragement.<sup>6</sup> When trainee teachers were asked to comment on the ambiguous remarks on a fictitious report card, they concluded, if they thought the student was female, that she should work harder and might be suitable for secretarial work. If they thought the student was male, they decided, from the same remarks, that he had a great future, perhaps in the Civil Service (p. 103). Many teachers are aware of the double standard, but argue that even if girls and boys do the same work, boys deserve higher marks because the work is harder for them. They teach far fewer poems and stories by women than men, but rationalize this by saying the men's work is better known. Anyway, they say, boys rebel if they have to study more than one or two works by women.

The second part of *The Writing or the Sex?* focusses on talented women authors in the past who either subordinated their writing talents to support a male writer, or who tried to refuse to do this because they valued their own creativity. The writing careers of a number of women such as Jane Carlyle, Emma Hardy and Katherine Mansfield were prevented or diluted because they married demanding men, while the husbands' careers flourished with their wives' support and input to their work. Katherine Mansfield had to encourage her husband even when she was dying; for her own writing, she gained support from a woman friend, Ida Baker, whom she called her "wife" (p. 138).

Spender discusses some men who have stolen women's material and used it in their own work. These include Colette's husband Willy, D.H. Lawrence, Leo Tolstoy and Scott Fitzgerald. Zelda Fitzgerald's creative life is considered in detail. She felt the need to establish her own identity but, when she wrote and had her work published, her husband either expropriated it for his own use or belittled it. These two reactions would seem incompatible, but Scott Fitzgerald was not

rational in his treatment of his wife. When she turned her creativity to ballet, where she would not be competing with her husband, he was able to discourage her in this artform, too. During her nervous breakdown which followed these events, and was likely caused by them, Zelda Fitzgerald wrote a novel about her psychiatric experiences, which her husband wanted to use in his book *Tender is the Night*. He managed to have her novel suppressed, while his became a best seller.

Spender's book is a splendid critique of sexual discrimination in English literature. I hope it will be widely read and stimulate women writers and readers to make changes.

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#### NOTES

1. Dale Spender. *Man Made Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.
2. Sally Cline and Dale Spender. *Reflecting Men at Twice their Natural Size*. London: André Deutsch, 1987.
3. Dale Spender. *Mothers of the Novel*. London: Pandora Press, 1986; *Writing a New World*. London: Pandora Press, 1988; *The Penguin Anthology of Australian Women's Writing*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1988; *The Anthology of British Women Writers*. London: Pandora Press, 1989.
4. Lynne Spender. *Intruders on the Rights of Men*. London: Pandora Press, 1983.
5. Dale Spender and Lynne Spender. *Scribbling Sisters*. London: Camden Press, 1986.
6. Dale Spender and Elizabeth Sarah (eds.). *Learning to Lose*. London: Women's Press, 1980.

**Good-Bye Heathcliff: Changing Heroes, Heroines, Roles, and Values in Women's Category Romances.** Mariam Darce Frenier, *Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988, Pp. 122.*

*Good-Bye Heathcliff* is published as a book in a series entitled *Contributions in Women Studies*. Certainly there is no question that there is still much more work to be done in the study of category romances and the ways in which they help shape or form women's consciousness, as well as reaffirm

certain ideological positions for men and women in contemporary society. While Frenier's slim volume does not devote much time to what seems to me the most crucial aspect of category romances, that is, the psychological and sociological impact they have on their women readers, overall, I would still assert that her book is a "contribution" in Women's Studies, as well as in popular culture.

Frenier's book serves best as a supplement to other studies of romances that have been published in the last decade. By far the most theoretical of these is Tania Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (Archon, 1982), which applies psychoanalytic and feminist theories of desire and pleasure not only to Harlequin romances, but to gothic novels and soap operas as well. The most recent and also the most thorough examination of romances published thus far is Carol Thurston's *The Romance Revolution: Erotic Novels for Women and the Quest for a New Sexual Identity* (University of Illinois Press, 1987). Thurston has done a great deal of first-hand research which Frenier has not. For instance, Frenier's account of the romance industry and women readers relies mainly on already published sources by Thurston and others, such as Kay Mussel's *Fantasy and Reconciliation: Contemporary Formulas of Women's Romance Fiction* (Greenwood Press, 1984) and Margaret Ann Jensen's *Love's Sweet Return: The Harlequin Story* (Women's Educational Press, 1984).

A statement such as "American readers have manipulated American publishers of romances at least as much as those publishers have manipulated their readers" is tantalizing and exciting, but it needs stronger proofs than what Frenier has given. Frenier points to changes in Harlequin romances from 1970 through 1982, which she believes is indicative of reader manipulation. These changes are mostly of character and plot: in the seventies, the romances involved low-status, virginal young heroines who attracted considerably older high-status heroes. Their "liaisons were not sexually consummated until after marriage." However, by the early eighties, the age gap between the two narrowed, and "almost half of the heroines had sexual intercourse with the heroes before marriage." In addition, heroes have evolved from the punitive, brutal, devilish, rapist-types of Harlequin romances written mainly by British authors, to the still strong, but more understanding, tender and kinder types created primarily by American authors. Perhaps one of the

most amusing sections of the book is Frenier's observation that "the whole attitude toward cooking and food was different" between British-authored Harlequins and American Silhouettes. American heroines "got hungry much more often," and some were "gourmet cooks," while British heroines "constantly lost their appetites." Many American heroes "could cook" and do other types of "women's work," while the British heroes would or could not. Do these changes necessarily imply reader manipulation or power, or are they merely indicative of modifications of domestic arrangements and social customs?

Without reader surveys, interviews, or any theoretical models, Frenier nevertheless asserts that "Harlequin Romances and Presents showed wives how to get along with those unknowns, their husbands." Frenier believes that Harlequins give women lessons in being "loving and patient," and "traditional." While I would probably have to agree with the assumption that romances ultimately help shape ideologies and affirm patriarchal power, I question Frenier's methods of arriving at these conclusions. It is not enough to speculate on the effect of the Harlequins based on their plots because many romance readers, in fact, are very aware of the fantasy and the fantastic element of these stories, while paradoxically still enjoying them. I suspect that many may unconsciously adopt the attitude of what Judith Fetterley has termed the "resisting reader."

Another example of the dubious kind of evidence Frenier gives for her statements occurs when she cites a visit to Toronto "in the spring of 1984" as proof that Silhouettes, with their gentle, communicative heroes and career-minded women, were becoming more appealing to women than Harlequins, with their stereotyped characters. She says, "a look at the shelves of Toronto bookstores" showed "multitudes of Silhouette Books; the local product [Harlequins] was almost nowhere to be found." No footnote follows this line to indicate how many bookstores she had visited, where exactly in Toronto did she go, how many "shelves" did she examine, etc. Perhaps the Harlequins were so popular they were sold out. Again, I must stress that I am not disagreeing with Frenier's conclusions, but with the methods she uses to arrive at these conclusions.

Finally, perhaps in studying category romances, it is impossible to read everything and be up to date.

Even after the "slump" of the romance market after 1984, there are still between fifty to seventy romances published monthly in North America, ranging from the tame Harlequin *Romances* to the more erotic and modern *Silhouette Desire*, *Silhouette Intimate Moments*, or Bantam's *Loveswept*. How many romances ought one read before one can generalize about them? Frenier seems to feel that reading a "crop" of them, which, according to the bibliography is a little more than one hundred published between 1979 and 1984, is enough for her to be an expert. In comparison to what is available on the market, which is approximately 3,600 to 4,000 in that same period, one hundred romances is only three percent of the books. To be able to believe with confidence a statement such as "generally, 1987 heroines were less independent than those of 1984 and 1985 ... their sexuality was confined to marriage and their careers were less important to them," I would certainly expect my source to have read more than a small percentage of them.

Methodology aside, the book makes some worthwhile and interesting observations about the "changing heroes, heroines, roles, and values" in category romances, as its subtitle suggests. It is a relief to find out that the "power relationship between protagonists has shifted in recent category romances," where "the hero has become not only more nurturant but also less macho, and the heroine has turned sexually lusty and less passive in general." While the changes have been positive for women, there are dangers associated with them. Frenier hints at these in her conclusion, where she notes that "these newly sensitive heroes who were obsessed by thoughts of love for their heroines were not like real American men who remained job and ego-oriented, rather than relationship-oriented." In fact, what contemporary romances have done is to have substituted one form of escape for another. The romances of the late 1980s, as Frenier points out, are still "escapist fantasies pushing unrealizable relationships involving men the likes of whom are rare in real life."

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**The Corrigan Women.** M.T. Dohaney, *Charlottetown, PEI: Ragweed Press, 1988, Pp. 192.*

*The Corrigan Women*, M.T. Dohaney's first novel, not only foregrounds the survival of three generations of Newfoundland women, thus capturing the essence of their language and lifestyle, but also demonstrates how the past is contained in the present and constantly plays upon it. By beginning and ending the stories of these women at the same time and place, Carmel's funeral, Dohaney creates the feeling that we have not left the grave site. But we have. We have travelled through the humorous and painful lives of a matriarchal lineage, from grandmother to granddaughter, over an historical palimpsest of world wars and Confederation debates. Like the inescapability of the character Carmel's annulled marriage (*void abinitio* — from the beginning it never was), we learn that the past can be annulled, but never forgotten.

After the initial scene at Carmel's grave site, Dohaney splits her novel into three sections: Bertha's Story, Carmel's Story and Tessie's Story. Bertha Ryan (Birth-a?) of Bertha's Story is the quintessential matriarch as she is the female head of her father's household due to her mother's untimely death, and, by going into service with the Corrigan's in the Cove, she ultimately becomes the head of that household, "if she was so only because the real heads were fools" (72). Mrs. Selena, aging head of the Corrigan household, has trouble staying in the present, "time having worn smooth the sharp corners of her memories" (188); therefore, sixteen-year-old Bertha moves in and develops an affection for Mrs. Selena's responsible youngest son, Ned. Unfortunately, the older son, Vince, who has "an intellect problem" (12), sexually pesters Bertha, as he has all the servant girls in the past. He constantly attempts to grab at her breasts and buttocks, culminating in his rape of her.

Bertha had never heard the word *rape* but she knew there had to be a special word for such a horrible act. ... She called Vince's foul deed an *outrage* and although the word never once left her lips, it was as familiar to her as if she recited it every day.

Her outrage gave her a reference point from which all other events could be calculated. From that day onwards, every occurrence was pinpointed in time as having taken place either before, after or around the time of her outrage. (42)