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Women and Literary History

Dale Spender

I have no reason to suspect that my own university education was peculiarly biased or limited. On the contrary, it appears to have been fairly representative. Yet in the guise of presenting me with an overview of the literary heritage of the English-speaking world, my education provided me with a grossly inaccurate and distorted view of the history of letters. For my introduction to the 'greats' was (with the exception of the famous five women novelists) an introduction to the great men. Even in the study of the novel where women were conceded to have a place, I was led to believe that all the initial formative writing had been the province of men. So along with other graduates of 'Eng. Lit.' departments I left university with the well-cultivated impression that men had created the novel and that there were no women novelists (or none of note) before Jane Austen.¹

There was no reason for me to be suspicious about what I was being taught. I was a student in a reputable university being tutored by experts who referred me to the literary scholars who, without qualification, asserted the ascendancy of men. For example, the authoritative treatise on the early novel was by Ian Watt and was entitled *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957) and it opened with the bald statement that the novel was begun by Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, and that it was the genius of these three men that had created the new form. Had it even occurred to me to be dubious about the frequency with which I was asked to accept men's good opinion of men, by what right could I have questioned the scholarship and authority of such established and sanctioned critics?

Besides, what contrary evidence was available? No matter where I looked around me, I encountered almost exclusively the publications of men. Like Virginia Woolf in the British Museum (*A Room of One's Own*, 1928) I too found that the library catalogue and shelves were filled with books predominantly authored by men. And in the bookshops a steady stream of new and attractively packaged editions of early male novelists helped to reinforce the belief that it was only men who had participated in the initial production of this genre. I neither stumbled across fascinating 'old' editions of women's novels on the library shelves nor

found interesting republications when browsing through bookshops. As far as I knew both the old and the new were representative of the books that had been published, and as there were virtually no women among them, it had to be because women had not written books.

So I had no difficulty accepting the statements of Ian Watt: men were to be congratulated for the birth of the novel. Women – or more precisely, one woman – entered only *after* men had ushered the novel into the world: Jane Austen, writes Ian Watt in 'A Note' at the end of *The Rise of the Novel*, provided a steady and guiding influence for this new form but neither she, nor any other woman, had helped to bring it into existence. In this book in which Fanny Burney is mentioned on only three occasions (and in less than three lines) he does say that 'Jane Austen was the heir of Fanny Burney',² but as this is the only cursory reference, the impression remains that when it comes to women novelists there was no one to speak of, before Jane Austen.

It does not, of course, strain the limits of credibility to believe that for women, Jane Austen started it all. Her novels reveal such a great talent that it is possible to accept that she was capable of bringing forth – in fully fledged form and without benefit of female 'models' – those superb novels which to my mind still stand as one of the high points of achievement in English fiction. But if it is possible to accept this version of women's literary history, I have discovered since that it is exceedingly unwise. For to see Jane Austen as a starting point is to be dreadfully deceived. Any portrayal of her which represents her as an originator and not as an inheritor of women's literary traditions is one which has strayed far from the facts of women's fiction writing. And when Jane Austen is seen to *inherit* a literary tradition this has ramifications not just for the history of women novelists but for the history of novelists in general.

For more than a century before Jane Austen surreptitiously took up her pen, women, in ever increasing numbers and with spectacular success, had been trying their hand at fiction. And not just the few women already referred to either, although obviously the Duchess of Newcastle, Aphra Behn and Delarivière Manley had played an important part, and Eliza Haywood, 'a woman of genius', had helped to conceive the possibilities and realities of fiction. And not just the 'refreshing' Fanny Burney or the 'worthy' Maria Edgeworth who are sometimes briefly acknowledged in passing for their 'historic interest'. (Maria Edgeworth is not mentioned in Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*.) But a whole gallery of women: women from different backgrounds, different regions, and with different concerns, who all published well-acclaimed novels by the end of the 1700s.

That such women and their writing exist raises numerous questions about the traditions of women: this also raises questions about the traditions of men!

Without doubt the novel came into its own during the eighteenth century; the publication figures in themselves tell a story of sure and steady growth: 'The annual production of works of fiction, which had averaged only about seven in the years between 1700 to 1740, rose to an average of about twenty in the three decades following 1740 and this output was doubled in the period from 1770 to 1800', writes Ian Watt.³ About two thousand novels in all, by the end of the century. And the distinct impression that they were written mainly by men.

Now, it's not possible to make definitive statements about how many of these two thousand novels were written by women, and how many by men. In quite a few cases, the sex of the author remains unknown – particularly because of the penchant for anonymous publications, a practice, it must be noted, which was more likely to tempt (particularly modest) women rather than men. But even if the 'sex unknown' authors are subtracted from the list of novelists of the 1700s, the number of women novelists and their works which remain is little short of astonishing, given that we have been led to believe that women played no part in these productions. As a result of a little detective work and a great deal of perseverance, I have been able to find one hundred good women novelists of the eighteenth century and together they were responsible for almost six hundred novels.

This means that even by the most conservative standards women would have to be granted a half-share in the production of fiction in the 1700s. And yet they have *all* 'disappeared'. It must be noted that this is not a reference to the occasional obscure woman writer who has slipped through the net of literary standards, not the 'one-off' achievement that has unfortunately been lost, not the eclipsing of one woman of genius like Eliza Haywood. This is at least half the literary output in fiction over a century; it is six hundred novels which in their own time were accorded merit.

And if since the eighteenth century it has become a well-established fact that women did not write novels during the 1700s, or that women did not write good novels, this was a fact which was *not* known at the time. For it was then widely appreciated that women wrote novels, and wrote them well. So firmly entrenched was this belief that it affords a most unusual and interesting chapter in the history of letters. While ever since it has been men who have been seen as the more significant and better novelists – to the extent that on occasion women have tried to increase their chances of publication by pretending to be men – it was not unknown during the eighteenth century for men to masquerade as female authors in the attempt to obtain some of the higher status (and greater chances of publication) which went with being a woman writer.

So frequent had this practice become that as early as June 1770 the *Gentleman's Magazine* thought it proper to conduct its own investigations

as to the sex of authors, in the interest of being able to provide its readers with information on whether the latest production from a supposedly female pen was indeed genuine. For as the reviewer commented, 'among other literary frauds it has long been common for authors to affect the stile and character of ladies' (page 273). Which means that eighteenth-century readers knew something that twentieth-century ones do not: namely that in the beginning, and for quite a long time thereafter, the novel was seen as the female forte.

In 1773 the *Monthly Review* stated that when it came to fiction the field was filled by ladies, and well into the nineteenth century it was conceded that not only were women novelists plentiful, but that they were good.

Yet by the twentieth century when Ian Watt comes to outline the rise of the novel, women are no longer held in high esteem. He does – in passing – acknowledge that *the majority of eighteenth-century novels were written by women*, but how very damning is this faint and only praise.

How is it that we have come to lose this knowledge about many good women novelists? How have we come to lose it so completely that its one-time existence does not even register, so we are blissfully unaware of what has been lost? So that we do not even appreciate the significance of the single sentence that once women wrote (and published) reams? For so thoroughly have early women novelists been edited out of the literary records and removed from consciousness, their absence does not even ordinarily prompt comment, let alone concern.

And it is not because they were all no good that these hundred women novelists and their six hundred novels have been consigned to oblivion. For when the pronouncements of the literary establishment are perused for the case against the worth of these women writers, a curious omission comes to light. *There is no case against them*. If these many novels have been evaluated, the findings are not contained in the official literary records. And when the worth of women writers is not being based on any consideration of their writing, the only conclusion which can be drawn is that their worth is being determined by their sex.

That the writing of women does not count because it is written by women is the distinct impression given by Ian Watt. While his assertions about the quality of male novelists are based on a detailed examination of their writing, it is clear that he thinks the stand he takes on the absence of quality in women's writing does not even call for substantiation. He devotes three hundred pages to his assessment of male novelists and restricts his assessment of females to a single sentence: 'The majority of eighteenth-century novels were actually written by women.'⁴ With no further discussion of the women, no entry to them in the index, and no explanation for his failure to discuss 'the majority' of novels of the eighteenth century, Ian Watt indicates that it is not necessary to examine the writing of women to know it is of no account.

Perhaps Ian Watt offers no evidence for the simple reason that it does not support his beliefs.

In the eighteenth century it was not known that women writers did not count. Quite the reverse. Charlotte Lennox, Mary Wollstonecraft, Fanny Burney, Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Hays, Amelia Opie and Maria Edgeworth were not just 'actually' the majority, they were the *esteemed* majority. They were highly praised by readers and reviewers alike. They were valued by some of the best educated and most distinguished persons – of both sexes. And if today they do not count among the scholars and critics this was not how it was in their own day, when their writing was read and studied, when their efforts were consistently applauded, when they enjoyed extensive and positive reviews, when they were congratulated on their contribution to literature. (One way of rediscovering these women novelists is to go through the review sections of the literary periodicals of the day.)

Strange that those who read the novels then should have found them so good when today the verdict is that they are so bad they do not warrant examination. This is a most interesting additional insight. Now when we are presented with an exclusively male literary tradition – and this is how the early novel is presented – we must bear in mind that this is not because women did not write, could not get published, or went unacclaimed. Women qualified on all these counts. It was only later that they were disqualified.

How do we explain this transition from prominence to negation? What does it mean when women who were esteemed in their own lifetime are later denied and dismissed? It could be the rationale of an 'individual case' when earlier this century attempts were made to prove that Aphra Behn did not even exist, but such an explanation will not suffice when we are confronted with one hundred women whose work appears to have been systematically denied. Could it be that there is pattern and purpose in this treatment of women?

Germaine Greer certainly thinks so. She has referred to the 'phenomenon of the transience of female literary fame', and not just in relation to the novel. It is her contention that there have always been good women writers, in every area and every era, and that they always disappear. Since the days of Aphra Behn, she states, there have been 'women who have enjoyed dazzling literary prestige during their own lifetimes, only to vanish without trace from the records of posterity'.⁵

Once acclaimed, but now denied. This is the problem of women writers and it is one which almost every woman critic of the past few decades has addressed. Although in some circles it may be in order to 'accept' the disappearance of women writers as just a strange and random quirk of literary history, such an explanation has no place among women critics who have noted that the same fate does not await men. Of course many

male writers have fallen by the wayside with the passage of time – but not *all* of them, not one hundred of them over a century. And not those who were widely acclaimed in their own day. Enough men are retained to allow for an uninterrupted tradition of men writers. The same is not true for women.

In the eighteenth century women wrote in much the same (if not greater) numbers than men, with much the same (if not more) success than men, and attained much the same (if not more) status than men. Yet not only has this achievement of women been edited out of literary history, but a false version has been substituted in its place. A distorted version which makes no mention of women's former greatness, but which presents the birth of the novel solely in terms of men. So Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1720) is transformed into the first novel; Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) becomes a turning point in the development of the novel and is celebrated; Henry Fielding, Lawrence Sterne and Tobias Smollett are accorded the status of proud parents of this new form. And all this with little or no regard for 'the facts of life'.

How is such a falsified version of events to be explained? And is it a practice of the past or one that persists in the present? For if the denial of women's literary achievement continues to this day, what fate awaits some of the current women writers who enjoy considerable literary acclaim? They too could be consigned to oblivion so that future generations would neither know nor suspect that there has been an 'explosion' in women's writing over the last few years. To those who are yet to come could be bequeathed the legacy of Norman Mailer, Anthony Burgess, Graham Greene and it could be as though Fay Weldon, Alison Lurie, Edna O'Brien, Erica Jong, Marilyn French, Anita Brookner, Mary Gordon, Margaret Drabble and so many more – never existed.

A range of explanations has been offered for the transience of female literary fame. At one end of the spectrum are rationalisations that as literature became increasingly institutionalised during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the decision-making powers were concentrated in the hands of men who not surprisingly found the good and the great among their fellow men. While the novel was in a state of flux – as it was in the earlier part of the eighteenth century – while there was much new activity and little form to follow, women had been able to find a place in literature – as had Aphra Behn in the ferment which accompanied an earlier literary upheaval during the Restoration; but once things settled down, once patterns and experts and credentials were established, the traditional relationship of the sexes reasserted itself, and the dominance of men as critics and writers soon became the reality of the literary world.

Such an account is plausible. It posits a male-dominated society and presumes a male-dominated literary tradition as a result. It is based on the

premise that when women and men are equal, they will have literary traditions in which women and men are equally represented.

But there are women critics, past and present, who have gone further than this explanation of men finding in favour of their own sex; further even than arguing that men find fault with women. They have introduced the argument that in a male-dominated society, women are denied the right to their own creative resources and that these resources are taken by men to augment their own. And such a conceptualisation provides a very different framework for interpretations of the treatment of women writers.

It suggests that the men of letters are not blind to the achievements of women but instead of according them validity in their own right, men take from women what they want and leave the rest – which they determine to be of no value – to fade from view. So men writers and critics can deny women's creativity and appropriate women's efforts, claiming women's achievement as their own. So Eliza Haywood can be reduced in stature to a mere copier, her contributions appropriated by her male colleagues, and in the eyes of the critics her achievement is denied and becomes the property of the men.

This explanation is plausible when applied not just to Eliza Haywood, but to all the women novelists of the eighteenth century. It is not just that Walter Allen or Ian Watt neglect to include the women writers, but that they deny the way the men profited from the women's work. The end result is that the reputation of men is built at the expense of women and, in the words of Matilda Joslyn Gage, this is nothing other than the *theft* of women's creativity.

Men 'steal the fruits of women's creative labour,' declared Matilda Joslyn Gage,⁶ and according to some contemporary women critics men continue to engage in such illicit literary practice. Hilary Simpson has pointed to the extent to which D. H. Lawrence, for example, appropriated the creative resources of women and passed them off as his own: and she has also noted that within the literary establishment there has been no accusation of foul play.

Without acknowledgement of his sources, D. H. Lawrence 'solicited notes and reminiscences from Jessie (Burrows), from his wife Frieda, from Mabel Dodge Luhan and others . . . he also took over women's manuscripts and rewrote them, as in the cases of Helen Corke and Mollie Skinner . . .'.⁷ If one such distinguished man of letters could feel that it was in order to take these creative contributions to enhance his own achievement, then the possibility can be admitted that a collective of men of letters could act in the same way, and take the contributions of the early women novelists to enhance their own claims.

If F. Scott Fitzgerald could take the creative resources of Zelda Fitzgerald's diaries as his own property and build his novels upon them,

if he could see *her* creativity as the raw material for *his* work – and if the law upheld his right to do this and prevented Zelda from publishing her own work (which it did) – then the practice of men stealing women's creativity is hardly outrageous or unknown. It is accepted practice and as such its widespread presence should be expected.⁸

Were these but isolated examples, the evidence in support of Matilda Joslyn Gage's thesis of theft would not be so strong: but Samuel Richardson, Thomas Hardy and William Wordsworth are among other great writers known to have similar propensities for taking the writing of women and using it for their own ends. Further investigations in this area might even yield more examples of men at this work. Perhaps behind the dedications or ritual brief acknowledgements to 'the skills of the wife' there lie more examples of women's intellectual and creative resources being appropriated by men to lend substance to their own claims to fame. Marion Glestonbury certainly thinks so.⁹ With these examples in mind – and more to follow – it seems reasonable to suggest that it could have become routine for literary men to perceive women's work as available for their own use. And unless challenged why should they not continue with this arrangement?

However, whether the men of letters have overlooked women's writing, or whether they have exploited it, what can be stated unequivocally is that they have in effect suppressed the traditions of writing women. And the question that arises is – does this matter? Does it really matter to past, present, future generations of women – and men – that the early women writers have been removed from the literary heritage so it is as if they never existed? Is it not a little short of fanatical to dig up all these lost women and to confront the seemingly benign men of letters with an accusation which borders on being a charge of malign conspiracy? What possible difference can it make to writers, readers, or the world in general to know that contrary to what we've been led to believe, women as well as men (and even more significantly than men) participated in the conception and development of the new genre, the novel?

The answer depends on the role and importance that is attached to tradition. On the one hand it won't make an immediate and tangible difference to insist on the acknowledgement of women's literary contributions – or to challenge the massive censoring exercise that has been undertaken by men. It won't lead to direct improvements in women's poverty or bring a dramatic end to world wars. But on the other hand, the reinstatement of women's meanings and achievements within the culture could make a very big difference: Virginia Woolf thought that in the long run it would even make a difference to women's poverty and to the prospects of war.

No one can quantify but few would want to totally repudiate the

influence that the cultural heritage of the past has on the attitudes and values of the present. And when that heritage of the past blatantly mistreats and devalues half of humanity why should it not be assumed that this predisposes the society which possesses such a heritage to mistreat and devalue human beings?

When, for example, the literary traditions represent the views and values of one small select group of men who agree that those who are not in their own image are not worthy of recognition – or that they are available for exploitation – then the divisions of good and bad, rich and poor, dominant and subordinate, are readily constructed. And the implications of such divisions extend far beyond the confines of the woman writer; they affect women, men, the whole society. This was the stand taken by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1928) where she made the connections between women's cultural poverty and women's material poverty; it was the stand she took in *Three Guineas* (1938) where she linked the male domination of the cultural heritage with exploitation, violence and war.

She associated the injustice of the suppression of women's meanings with social injustice on a grand scale and she insisted that it was imperative – for the sake of society and the survival of the species – that women's *different* meanings should be reinstated in literary (and other cultural) traditions. Part of Virginia Woolf's argument was based on the premise that *one* world view – the view of men who exercised power – was simply not enough to provide full understanding about the way the world worked. It was too limited: too much was left out. It was the very perspective of those who did *not* exercise power, over whom power was exercised, and who were defined as alien, other, and unworthy of recognition, that was needed for a full view of the world, she insisted. It was her fundamentally simple assertion that women could see much that men – because of their position – could not; that women could see in men precisely what men could not see in themselves; it was this that led her to argue that the meanings forged by women, and represented in their writing, should be included in the cultural heritage. Only then would it provide a fair and reliable basis for making sense of the world.

This is the argument of many women: that in the broadest possible sense, the knowledge of women's contribution could make a significant difference to the judgments and practices of the whole society. Women, whose philosophies are as far apart as Dora Russell's, Elizabeth Robins's, Kate Millett's and Adrienne Rich's have nonetheless agreed on the central point that male dominance means women's silence and that society can no longer afford to neither hear nor heed the voice of half of humanity.¹⁰ These women – and many others as well – have insisted that while women are kept out of the cultural traditions we have a heritage which is comprised of nothing other than political propaganda, in which the

powerful decree their world view as the *only* world view, and in which those who differ from the powerful are censored, suppressed, outlawed. To reclaim and revalue the women writers men have removed is, in this framework, to do more than challenge a biased version of literary history: it is to take a political stand and to challenge the propaganda of a dictatorship.

Whether or not one subscribes to the theory that women should seize and control their own creative resources, or concedes the sweeping claim that the reinstatement of women in the literary traditions will lead to a better society, it seems safe to assert that the establishment of the existence and extent of the cultural heritage of women could make a big difference to women. A big difference to the image of women and to the reality of female achievements. While the catalogues, the library shelves, the bookshops, the reviews, the courses of study, all help to suggest that women are without a literary tradition, the belief in female inferiority is surely sustained. And it erodes women's confidence; it undermines the woman writer; it produces doubts. If women were indeed without a great literary tradition, much could be said for the advisability of inventing one, for the positive influence it could provide for women and women's literary endeavours. Such is the power of a tradition.

or left, unnamed, forgotten without even having been identified, 'i' – who? – will remain uncapitalised. Let's say:

'Alice' underground

Summaries and Notes

1. CATHERINE BELSEY AND JANE MOORE, INTRODUCTION: THE STORY SO FAR

1. She was long believed to have been the editor, but see Margaret Maison, 'Mary Wollstonecraft and Mr Cresswick', *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 34 (1987), pp. 467–8.
2. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (London, 1971), p. xii.
3. Eva Figes, *Patriarchal Attitudes: Women in Society* (London, 1986), p. 15.
4. Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London, 1980), p. 101.
5. Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London, 1986), p. 91.
6. Elaine Showalter, 'Toward a Feminist Poetics', in Mary Jacobus (ed.), *Women Writing and Writing About Women* (London, 1979), pp. 22–41; reprinted in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York, 1985 and London, 1986), pp. 125–43.
7. Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London, 1977). See especially pp. 119, 170–2, 126.
8. Moers, *Literary Women*, p. 44.
9. Rosalind Coward, *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today* (London, 1984), p. 13.
10. Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays', p. 92.
11. Mary Jacobus, 'The Difference of View', p. 72.
12. Jacobus, *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (London, 1986), p. 109.
13. Bonnie Zimmerman, 'What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism', in Gayle Green and Coppélia Kahn (eds.), *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (London, 1985), pp. 177–210, p. 198; also in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York, 1985 and London, 1986), pp. 200–24, p. 215.
14. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London, 1987), p. 150.

2. DALE SPENDER, 'WOMEN AND LITERARY HISTORY' (From *Mothers of the Novel* (London, 1986), pp. 115–18 and 138–44.)

Summary

'Women and Literary History' raises questions concerning the disappearance of so much writing by women from the literary canon and literary history. How and why has woman's writing been excluded? Does it matter? The extract (from a book on eighteenth-century women writers) suggests that the suppression of women's writing entails the corresponding suppression not only of women's achievements but of women's meanings and values.

Notes

- 1 I have since checked the current course offerings of the English Department of Sydney University; in 1985, of twenty-five courses only one is devoted to a woman writer, and only three include women writers! What is more, the course entitled 'The Place of Women' gives pride of place to men, with three out of the four texts used being by male authors. I am indebted to Debra Adelaide for her assistance in gaining these figures and I deplore the fact that in twenty-five years and with the pressure of the contemporary women's movement, no progress has been made to give women recognition in this reputable university establishment.
- 2 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London, 1957), p. 296.
- 3 Ibid., p. 290.
- 4 Ibid., p. 298.
- 5 Germaine Greer, 'Flying Pigs and Double Standards', *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 July 1974, p. 784.
- 6 Matilda Joslyn Gage, *Woman, Church and State: the Original Exposé of Male Collaboration Against the Female Sex* (Chicago, 1873; reprinted Watertown, MA, 1980).
- 7 Hilary Simpson, 'A Literary Trespasser: D. H. Lawrence's Use of Women's Writing', *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 2 (1979), pp. 155-79.
- 8 Nancy Milford, *Zelda Fitzgerald* (London, 1975).
- 9 Marion Glastonbury, 'Holding the Pens', in Sarah Elbert and Marion Glastonbury, *Inspiration and Drudgery: Notes on Literature and Domestic Labour in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1978), pp. 27-47.
- 10 Dora Russell, *The Religion of the Machine Age* (London, 1984); Elizabeth Robins, *Ancilla's Share: an Indictment of Sex Antagonism* (London, 1924); Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (London, 1971); Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence* (London, 1980).

3. ROSALIND COWARD, 'THE TRUE STORY OF HOW I BECAME MY OWN PERSON'

(From *Female Desire* (London, 1984), pp. 175-86.)

Summary

Focusing on women's novels, the essay traces a shift from the centrality of marriage in the narrative structure of nineteenth-century fiction, towards the prominence of sexual confession in novels of the late 1960s and early 1970s - a period marked by the increasing influence of feminism and the so-called sexual revolution. In this context questions are raised concerning the relation of women's novels about sexuality to feminism. Are they automatically feminist novels? Do they contribute to a more progressive understanding of female sexuality? The essay suggests that fictional inscriptions of female sexuality construct historically-specific subject positions for women which correspond to the structures of power in society at large.

Notes

1. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, 1740-1; *Clarissa Harlowe*, 1746-7.

2. See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London, 1957).
3. Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (London, 1981).
4. See, for example, 'Walter', *My Secret Life*, in Phyllis and Eberhard Kronhausen (eds), *Walter the English Casanova* (London, 1967).

4. TONI MORRISON, 'DISTURBING NURSES AND THE KINDNESS OF SHARKS'

(From *Playing in the Dark* (Cambridge, MA, 1992 and London, 1993), pp. 61-91.)

Summary

Morrison's essay examines the place of the white male hero in American literature. A reading of Ernest Hemingway's fiction brings out the degree to which the assumed autonomy of white masculinity is defined against and simultaneously threatened by the otherness of women and black men. By extension, it is argued that the white literary imagination is similarly constructed out of the marginalised African presence. The essay concludes that it is precisely the problem of how to respond to that presence which complicates fictional narratives, giving rise to a series of repetitions, disruptions, polarities, paradoxes and ambiguities, and resulting, finally, in literature itself.

Notes

1. James A. Snead, *Figures of Division: William Faulkner's Major Novels* (New York, 1986), pp. x-xi.
2. Ernest Hemingway, *To Have and Have Not* (London, 1970), p. 16.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 19.
5. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
6. Ibid., pp. 72-3.
7. Ibid., p. 73.
8. Ibid., p. 78.
9. Ibid., p. 88.
10. Ibid., p. 73.
11. Ibid., p. 74.
12. Ibid., p. 73.
13. Ibid., p. 88.
14. Ibid., pp. 251-2.
15. Ibid., p. 252.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 253.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ernest Hemingway, 'The Killers', *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (New York, 1953), pp. 279-89, p. 286.
23. Hemingway, *To Have and Have Not*, p. 73.
24. Ernest Hemingway, 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber', *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, pp. 3-37.