

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

Irene Koronas

Women writers men should read

Most of the books I read are books written by men and I wonder why so many people read men more than women. Of course it depends on the book and I'm not talking about the racing form or romance novels or even mystery. Those who want to read mystery or romance have many women to choose from. The racing form is for gamblers and I'm more interested in novels or philosophical approaches to writing. My thoughts lean more toward Chekhov, or the Bible stories. The old and new testaments are mainly written by men. We can justify this time line but I can not justify the historical references that seem to have male historians pushing their views. It became obvious to me during the 60's, how much was lacking, how we needed more female historians.

For me, the 1960's opened a door for female historians to study and show the populace, that there were indeed classical female artists and literary figures. I began to see more and more books written about people like Artemisia Gentileschi 1593-1652, Italian baroque painter. Romaine Brooks, 1874 – 1970, American painter living in France. Susan Valadon 1865 – 1938 French painter.

There are so many books now, about creative women. Gentileschi was raped by her painter father's apprentice. The trial stripped Artemisia of her dignity and her chance to marry. The rapist accused her of being sexually with all his friends. She succeeded in winning her case, but at a great cost to her reputation. In her painting 'Judith cutting off the head of Holofernes' one can feel the power in Judith's arm as she swings the knife over his head. Susan Valadon paints her mother, a laundress, and she paints her son. She posed nude for Degas, Renoir and Lautrec and was the first woman painter to be admitted into Societe Nationale des Beaux-arts. Romaine Brookes led a bohemian life and lived as a free woman wearing men's clothing. I can only give the reader a brief glimpse into these women's lives.

The title to this small essay implies a list of women writers men need to read and I agree women need to be taken as seriously as men writers. And perhaps they are. But in my experience they are not and there are way too few women like Susan Sontag, Emma Goldman, Susan Howe, Anne Tardos, Louise Bourgeois, Rebecca Seiferle, Elaine Terranova, Gwendolyn Brookes, being read and appreciated for their writings. For me the point is, we need to make a concerted effort, to come to an understanding about differences, male or female. Good writing is good writing, whatever the subject matter.

Stereotypes abound. I've read more than once that women write about intimate situations and men write about wider notions, bigger thoughts, men being more profound more worldly. Now how ridiculous is that. We need to read the differences as simply differences not because of gender. There are differences in writing, no matter the gender or because of the gender. It is necessary to embrace and bring the woman writer into the same light we embrace all the classical men writers and it is necessary to the classical women writers from all countries, and languages to be

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brought forward into history in a more profound way, in the same way we think about who wrote the 'classics'.

I can't make you the reader understand the need to read anyone, let alone women. All I can do is support the women around me and hope that they in return will support other women even at the expense of male writers. I say that simple because there is a need to break apart the good ole boy system of thought. There is no need for me to explain what that thought is. You the reader know. There is not enough of the good ole female system. My list of women writers is miniscule. The larger list is for the reader to find and then to read. Please accept that I am talking to myself as well as to you dear reader.

Even in the poetry and literary groups I am involved with, I notice the men seem to gravitate toward male writers and discuss, almost totally, male literary figures. Women often have to fight to enter the male dominated ring of voices.

When the object of beauty is a woman, getting un-objectified is difficult. There are indefinable differences in all those who write, but the writing does not have to rely on gendered expressions. Men need to set aside their preconceived notions on how books need to be written and what subject needs to be expressed. We need an "aesthetic education." That education would serve us well. We do not need women as a separate study. We would be better served by a study which is inclusive.

But this essay is about listing female authors men "should" read. I will confine the list to English speaking women or at least mostly English. "Philosophy departments are disproportionately male."

Christine de Pisan, "The book of the City of Ladies", 1405

Mary Hays, 1803

The Nobel prize has been awarded 807 times to men and 44 times to women. Marie Curie was the first to win. 12 women have won the Nobel prize in literature.

Science fiction women writers:

Margaret Cavendish, "the blazing world" 17c

Connie Willis 2012

intense, novels (wider notions):

Sharon Doubiago

Lady Mary Wroth

Mary Tighe

I have not mentioned the women who are being read, but offer a list of women who lend to the list of women who have not been read and that

list is so extensive that I left only a few for your approval and then one can investigate for themselves, other writers that might be of interest.

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- Anna Akhmatova (1899–1966), Russian/Soviet poet. *Requiem*
- Anna Åkerhjelm (1647–1693), Swedish writer and traveller.
- Anne-Marie Albiach (born 1937), French poet and translator.
- Jordie Albiston (born 1961), Australian poet and academic.
- Claribel Alegría (born 1924), Nicaraguan-born author and poet.
- Álfrún Gunnlaugsdóttir (born 1938), Icelandic novelist.
- a (7th c.), Arab poet.
- Isabel Allende (born 1942), Chilean/American novelist. *Eva Luna, Daughter of Fortune*
- Phyllis Shand Allfrey (1908–1996), West Indian writer. *The Orchid House*
- Margery Allingham (1904–1966), English crime writer. *Mystery Mile, Sweet Danger*
- Dorothy Allison (born 1949), American writer and speaker. *Trash: Short Stories, Cavedweller*
- Almuçs de Castelnau (c. 1140–pre-1184), French poet writing in Occitan.
- Julia Álvarez (born 1950), Dominican-American poet, novelist and essayist. *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*
- Valerie Anand (born 1937), British author of historical fiction.
- Laurie Halse Anderson (born 1961), American author, writes for children and young adults. *Speak, Twisted*
- Jessica Anderson (1916–2010), Australian novelist and short story writer. *The Impersonators*
- Isabella Andreini (1562–1604), Italian playwright, poet and actress.
- Eliza Frances Andrews (1840–1931), American novelist and Civil War writer.
- Maya Angelou (born 1928), American autobiographer and poet. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
- Jane Anger (late 16th c.), English writer.
- Christine Angot (born 1959), French novelist and playwright.
- Marion Angus (1865–1946), Scottish poet writing in Braid Scots and English.
- Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1942–2004), American author, poet and activist. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
- Núria Añó (born 1973), Catalan writer and novelist.
- Anyte of Tegea (fl. early 3rd c. BC), Greek poet.
- Maria Arbatova (born 1957), Russian novelist, playwright and poet.
- Elvia Ardalani, Mexican writer, poet, and storyteller.

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- Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), German Jewish political theorist. *The Human Condition*
- Karen Armstrong (born 1944), British author of numerous works on comparative religion. *A History of God*
- Kelley Armstrong (born 1968), Canadian writer, author of the *Women of the Otherworld* series.
- Louise Armstrong (1937–2008), American author and feminist.
- Bettina von Arnim (1785–1859), German writer and novelist.
- Elizabeth von Arnim (1866–1941), Australian-born British novelist. *Mr. Skeffington*
- Elizabeth Arnold (born 1944), English children's writer
- Joanne Arnott (born 1960), Canadian Métis writer.
- Harriette Arnow (1908–1986), American novelist.
- Daisy Ashford (1881–1972), English writer. *The Young Visitors*
- Anastasia Ashman (born 1964), American author and cultural producer. *Tales from the Expat Harem*
- Anne Askew (1520/21–1546), English poet and Protestant martyr.
- Francis Leslie Ashton (1904–1994), English novelist.
- Cynthia Asquith (1887–1960), English novelist and diarist.
- Margot Asquith (1864–1945), English author.
- Mary Astell (1666–1731), English feminist writer.
- Gertrude Atherton (1857–1948), American writer.
- Eleanor Stackhouse Atkinson (1863–1942), American author, journalist and teacher.
- Kate Atkinson (born 1951), English novelists. *Human Croquet*, *Emotionally Weird*
- Amelia Atwater-Rhodes (born 1984), American novelist.
- Margaret Atwood (born 1939), Canadian novelist, poet and critic. *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Penelope Aubin (c. 1679–c. 1731), English novelist and translator.
- Jean M. Auel (born 1936), American novelist. *Earth's Children* series.
- Rose Ausländer (1901–1988), Bucovina-born poet writing in German and English.
- Jane Austen (1775–1817), English novelist. *Pride and Prejudice*
- Mary Austin (1868–1934), American