



historic date.

Now I know what you're thinking. What a stupid joke. Every jokester since Pat Paulsen has claimed he was running for President. The difference is that I have a plan and will tell you

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what I will do if I become President, and it's a plan so simple and brilliant that people will be beating down my door when they hear it.

What is the Number 1 problem this country faces today? What is the problem that ties our hands so that we can't fight problems 2 to 20? It is the National Debt. We so are somewhere in the range of 4 T R I L L I O N D O L L A R S in the red. Why is there no money for the inner cities? Why is there no money for conservation and the environment? Why is the infrastructure falling apart like confetti? Because for every dollar in tax money, more than 61 cents goes to pay off interest on the National Debt. Less than 39 cents goes to solving the other problems. We are in a hole and get deeper every day. Our children are getting debt so huge that they are bound to live in poverty. I am the man who can save us.

How do we get out of this mess? Future generations will blame all the presidents back to Roosevelt for not having thought of such a simple plan first. But it took our 42nd President, M. Richard Leeper, brilliant but humble, to think of the plan so simple nobody else thought of it--the man who realized the best thing to do with the National Debt is ... (are you ready for this?) ... we default.

That's right. We wipe out our National Debt with a stroke of a pen. That means for every dollar of taxes we can spend 100 cents improving the country. Now the first thing that happens when we default is the United States credit rating goes right down the porcelain receptacle. Nobody's going to want to lend Uncle Sammy as much as a plug of used chewing tobacco. Certainly not one red cent. Do you know what that will mean? No more National Debt ever! Nobody will lend to us. Any Congressperson who proposes a program is proposing to raise taxes. But that might not be so bad, since we will now have 68 cents more on every dollar we can spend. And with nobody willing to lend us money you can be darn sure the

budget is balanced.

I tell you, the day will come when "fiscal" will be a word and "sanity" will be word, but the phrase "fiscal sanity" will seem naked without the adjective "Leeperian" in front of it.

Contributions will be gratefully accepted. (The first fifty people to contribute over \$200 each I promise a ride on Air Force One when I am elected.) Thank you, my fellow Americans. And I do consider every one of you a fellow American.

Mark Leeper  
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...mtgzy!leeper

A man's ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear and punishment and hope of reward after death.

-- Albert Einstein

HOW TO SUPPRESS WOMEN'S WRITING by Joanna Russ  
University of Texas Press, 1983, ISBN 0-292-72445-4, \$7.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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Having followed the recent discussion on Usenet about this book, I did something apparently rare on the Net--I went out and read the book(s) being discussed.

First of all, H\_o\_w\_t\_o\_S\_u\_p\_p\_r\_e\_s\_s\_W\_o\_m\_e\_n'\_s\_W\_r\_i\_t\_i\_n\_g is in print--it had its fifth printing from the University of Texas Press this year--and is available from them if you can't find it locally. (I found it in Tower Books in New York.)

But before reading H\_o\_w\_t\_o\_S\_u\_p\_p\_r\_e\_s\_s\_W\_o\_m\_e\_n'\_s\_W\_r\_i\_t\_i\_n\_g, I read Virginia Woolf's A\_R\_o\_o\_m\_o\_f\_O\_n\_e'\_s\_O\_w\_n. The title A\_R\_o\_o\_m\_o\_f\_O\_n\_e'\_s\_O\_w\_n is misleading--Woolf says what a writer (any writer, man or woman) needs is f\_i\_v\_e\_h\_u\_n\_d\_r\_e\_d\_p\_o\_u\_n\_d\_s\_a\_y\_e\_a\_r and a room of one's own, with the emphasis clearly on the former. Her explanation of the dearth of women's writing is that women had no financial independence

(prior to 1882 and the Married Woman's Property Act in Britain, which is where Woolf was primarily writing about) rather than any lack of a separate room p\_e\_r\_s\_e. Clearly the masses of working-class men--coal miners in Wales, for example--were no better off.

I do find amusing Woolf's claim (on page 102) that Galsworthy and Kipling "celebrate male virtues, enforce male values and describe the world of men... the emotion with which [their] books are permeated is to a woman incomprehensible. ... The fact is that neither Mr. Galsworthy nor Mr. Kipling has a spark of the woman in him." True this may be, yet I was immediately reminded of Robert Silverberg's statement on page xii of the introduction to James Tiptree's W\_a\_r\_m\_W\_o\_r\_l\_d\_s\_a\_n\_d\_O\_t\_h\_e\_r\_w\_i\_s\_e: "It has been suggested that Tiptree is female, a theory that I find absurd, for there is to me something ineluctably masculine about Tiptree's writing. I don't think the novels of Jane Austen could have been written by a man nor the stories of Ernest Hemingway by a woman, and in the same way I believe the author of the James Tiptree stories is male." Well, James Tiptree, Jr., turned out to be Alice Racoonna Sheldon and Silverberg was only the best-known of the people who couldn't deduce this. Would Woolf have done any better? (This is important and I will return to this idea later.)

Proceeding to Russ's book, I have to say that she did manage to collect a lot of quotes from--and anecdotes about--some amazing dense people. But I believe that a collection of such anecdotal evidence could be made to "prove" the suppression of almost every group's writings or art. See Richard Wagner for a starter set on why Jews can't write music, for example. R\_o\_t\_t\_e\_n\_R\_e\_v\_i\_e\_w\_s and R\_o\_t\_t\_e\_n

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R\_e\_v\_i\_e\_w\_s\_I\_I edited by Bill Henderson will also be useful.

Russ then lists a variety of ways that women's writing is suppressed. Note that she is not claiming, as Woolf seems to have been, that women didn't write. Quite the opposite--Russ claims that m\_o\_s\_t of the books written in the period she is covering were written by women, though I find her evidence for that claim flimsy in the extreme. (Of the much-discussed claim that "women wrote one-half to two-thirds of the novels published in English in the eighteenth century," I will merely note that Russ cites as her source for this

datum a "personal interview with Dolores Palermo.") But Russ is examining why none of these books, or very few, made it into the accepted "canon" of literature.

Under "denial of agency," Russ lists the technique of saying "The man inside her wrote it." (I'm not sure how this supposedly keeps things out of the canon, so I suppose Russ is saying that this is a way of "explaining" the few women's works that are there. Still, it seems to be somewhat out of the purported scope of the book.) Yet the quotes she uses to illustrate this seem perfect examples of Woolf's claim "If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous" (page 98 of A\_R\_o\_o\_m\_o\_f\_O\_n\_e'\_s\_O\_w\_n). Woolf is cited in H\_o\_w\_t\_o\_S\_u\_p\_p\_r\_e\_s\_s\_W\_o\_m\_e\_n'\_s\_W\_r\_i\_t\_i\_n\_g more than anyone else except Charlotte Bronte, and while not always in support of Russ's thesis, this "non-mention" is of some importance, if only to indicate that Russ is picking and choosing her examples and quotes to support her thesis where the entirety of the data might not. This picking and choosing is even admitted at the end of the chapter "Pollution of Agency": "And let's discount the idiocies of the various forms of denial of agency and pollution thereof; most critics, male or female, will not declare a work bad i\_p\_s\_o\_f\_a\_c\_t\_o because its authorship is female, or indulge in the indecencies of pollution of agency by declaring the author p\_e\_r\_s\_e improper, ridiculous, abnormal, and so on." Then why spend so much time and space on these techniques if they are so anomalous? Surely the fact that she gives pages of evidence and then says, in effect, that they don't count makes us take the evidence to come with a lot of skepticism and a large grain of salt.

In the spirit of selecting what may or may not be isolated incidents to support a theory, I will provide a counter-example to Russ's "Double Standard of Content": Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs." Russ says this double standard is saying, "she wrote it but look what she wrote about." This is of course perfectly applicable to Charnas's story, but the story nevertheless did achieve a certain critical and popular success, even among men. And Connie Willis is likely to break even more "barriers" with "Even the Queen" (which you should all run out and read, by the way). Whether these stories will achieve "canonical" status remains to be seen, but certainly

they don't seem to be dismissed out of hand because of their content.

Russ's contention that only female poets are negatively categorized, while male poets when categorized are done so in terms flattering to the ego is arguable--I don't think "Self-Destructive Visionary" is notably more positive than "Madcap," and the categorizations of Poe and Coleridge one sees are hardly likely to arouse envy or emulation. Much is made of the negative characterization of Emily Dickinson, yet that has not prevented her from being ranked with Whitman as one of the two great American poets. (And Whitman also had his detractors when his work first appeared. They also said, "he wrote it but look what he wrote about.")

There has been some discussion of whether Russ's theory is scientific in the sense of being falsifiable--that is, can it be demonstrated to be wrong. And apparently it can't, since any statements which attempt to explain why there are so many more well-known male authors than female Russ can claim are merely rationalizations. No one can argue that there are n\_o\_t more men in the "canon" than women. What is at issue is why, and whether "canon" is a reasonable measure. After all, as has been pointed, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, and Edgar Rice Burroughs are certainly non-canon, yet have survived perfectly well--better in fact than many canonical authors. My personal feeling here (based on what I have read, though of course your mileage may vary) is that Woolf is closer to the truth than Russ: women never did the writing in the first place--as with Woolf's example of Shakespeare's (fictional) sister--or women wrote but never sent their work to be published--even Emily Dickinson was hesitant about showing her poetry to others, and how many others never even got that far. The old adage that a woman's name should appear in print only three times--when she was born, got married, and died--probably kept a lot of writing in the desk drawer. As I said before, I am skeptical of Russ's (actually Palermo's) claim of the large number of books by women being published in times gone by.

But even worse, any attempt to correct the situation is met with hostility. Nzotake Shange was "criticized by some blacks for being anti-male" for her play \_ f \_ o \_ r \_ c \_ o \_ l \_ o \_ r \_ e \_ d \_ g \_ i \_ r \_ l \_ s \_ w \_ h \_ o \_ h \_ a \_ v \_ e \_ c \_ o \_ n \_ s \_ i \_ d \_ e \_ r \_ e \_ d \_ s \_ u \_ i \_ c \_ i \_ d \_ e / \_ w \_ h \_ e \_ n \_ t \_ h \_ e \_ r \_ a \_ i \_ n \_ b \_ o \_ w \_ w \_ a \_ s \_ e \_ n \_ u \_ f. But when she "received praise from white male reviewers ... one friend of [Russ's] commented ... sourly, 'They don't think it's about them.'" If they don't like it, that's proof of the suppression; if they do, that's no good either, because it must mean they don't get it. (Russ of course feels entitled to criticize or praise men's writing--is there a double standard here?) So if male educators et al had admitted all this women's writing into the canon, it seems as if there would still be a problem--they would have admitted it because they didn't

get it.

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To be fair to Russ, she does then flail women (well, white heterosexual women) for using the same methods to suppress or at least disparage the writings of minority women or lesbians. Unfortunately this, coupled with her comments on Shange, seems to lead to a fracturing of literature--the implication that only black women can appreciate works by black women, only women can appreciate works by women, etc. This all gets to a very basic question: is literature, or indeed art in any form, universal, or is it specialized? Like many questions, this has a compromise answer (in my opinion). Someone once said, "Anyone who thinks that music is a universal language should try telling an Eskimo his igloo is on fire using only a kazoo." We need to learn to appreciate different musical styles. (Peking opera, Mozart's D\_o\_n\_G\_i\_o\_v\_a\_n\_n\_i, and Glass's E\_i\_n\_s\_t\_e\_i\_n\_o\_n\_t\_h\_e\_B\_e\_a\_c\_h are all operas--whatever that means--but have little in common besides that word.)

So maybe what Russ is trying to say in H\_o\_w\_t\_o\_S\_u\_p\_p\_r\_e\_s\_s  
W\_o\_m\_e\_n's  
W\_r\_i\_t\_i\_n\_g is that we are taught to appreciate too narrow a range of art. Certainly there are examples of men's art that was initially rejected (Whitman, Stravinsky, etc.) and then eventually "understood." But on the other hand we cannot say that everything in every style is valid as "great art." (I'm not sure what "great art" is, but if Russ is asking why women's writing is not in the "canon," she must have some concept that there i\_s a canon.) Woolf's answer was that the author needs to "be in touch" with both the anima and animus (to borrow the Jungian terms) of her or his personality. Russ seems to be saying that the author does not need this, and in fact should reject this. Women haven't been accepted because what they write isn't understood by men, but that's the fault of the men, who apparently should either work to understand it (though how can you ever tell if they do), or accept it on someone else's say-so. This is cultural relativism and when carried to its ultimate conclusion, ends up saying that every novel or poem is as valid as any other, so long as it has some set of people that it speaks to. But Woolf seems to feel that the great writers write so that both men and women can appreciate them, which is why she feels

that Galsworthy and Kipling are not great writers. On the whole, I have to say that I agree with Woolf. A great novel or poem transcends the barriers of sex, race, religion, or class to touch something universal. Yes, people should be exposed to a variety of styles. Ernest Hemingway is not James Joyce, and Alice Walker is not Jane Austen. (Though any discussion of books written in the last fifty years is questionable--only time will tell what the classics, or "canon" will be.)