

FEMINISTS CENSOR MALE WRITERS

"Encouraged by initial successes and unfettered by any serious intellectual resistance, professional feminists are driven by their presuppositions toward ever more radical conceptualizations. At the end of their road stands the formulation of a distinctive *feminist standpoint*, which in essence is nothing less than an imperialism of feminist sentiments."

Brigitte Berger
"Academic Feminism and the 'Left'"
Academic Questions 1.2 (Spring 1988) 13

"Publishers have their own ways of choosing what they will publish, and for the most part there's a personal element in the final selection. A bias in favor of good writing is standard and proper, and no one calls it bookbanning if the manuscript doesn't measure up. Yet there are some biases that don't work this way, some biases that are simply unfair--or even illegal--and represent subtle bookbanning.

John Baker, Editor-in-Chief of *Publishers Weekly*, points to a peculiar bias that hangs over many an editorial desk. 'A lot of editors in publishing are women,' he says, 'and there are certain authors they regard as anti-women or misogynist. They will not accept work from these authors regardless of their actual status. They simply will not take them on.' It's certainly distasteful to read of a personal attack on one's gender, but don't these editors have a greater responsibility to readers than to censor because of personal distaste?

Baker points to Kingsley Amis, the British novelist, as one who is on the receiving end of this editorial-desk bias. 'He's enormously successful in England, but, believe it or not, his books are published in America very slowly, if at all, and I think that's largely because he is relentlessly misogynist. He thinks rather poorly of women, his men characters are invariably sexist, chauvinist, and I think a number of women editors have gotten together and said, 'no Amis around here!'... 'Bookbanning certainly comes into play with political things from the sex point of view.'...

The wise person...would remember that bookbanning only perpetuates the negative message, making it more persuasive, more solidly entrenched."

William Noble
Bookbanning in America
(Paul S. Eriksson 1990) 174-75, 281

"What has emerged as the single biggest challenge to the canon as traditionally conceived: radical feminism. As with the cult of theory, with which it is often in collusion, radical feminism does not undermine the canon only or even primarily by proposing an alternative canon--one, for example, in which female authors are read in place of male ones. Instead, it seeks to subordinate literature to ideology....In other words, *language itself* is held to be a repository of sexist attitudes....By pursuing the notion of 'gender as a fundamental category of literary analysis' [the radical feminist] hopes for nothing less than the triumph of feminist ideology over literature....feminism has provided a kind of blueprint for special interests that wish to appropriate the curriculum to achieve political goals....one result of the academic feminist agenda is a situation in which 'every course will be Oppression Studies'."

Roger Kimball
*Tenured Radicals:
How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education*
(Harper & Row 1990) 16-17, 19

"The most common response on American campuses in general, and Harvard University in particular, to those who would destroy academic freedom is, at best, apathy and avoidance, and, at worst, cowering appeasement."

Ian McNeil
Letter to *Commentary*
(March 1990) 10-11

"Lawrence Watson's actual title is assistant dean for academic administration in the Graduate School of Design. Because of his activist bent, however, Harvard considers him an authority on issues affecting the minority community....Watson said it was important that 'some great works be revised' because of their portrayal of women and minorities. 'We've got to take the, quote, great works, unquote, and rewrite them, although in some instances this would be impractical,' Watson said."

Dinesh D'Souza
*Illiberal Education:
The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*
(The Free Press/Macmillan, 1991) 218-19

"In universities at least...feminists do exercise power in the form of moral censorship, determining limits to what is and is not sayable....Feminist moral authority acts as a censoring super-ego."

Zoe Sofia
"Feminism and Position Envy"
Arena Magazine 4
(April/May 1993)

"Long before the term 'political correctness' gained currency in its present conservative/ironic sense, ideological policing was a common feature of Women's Studies programs....Whereas feminists originally argued for a loosening of gender roles, now there is great pressure from within for conformity....Today, separatism in Women's Studies is readily and graphically illustrated by the widespread exclusion of male authors from course syllabi, assigned reading lists, and citations in scholarly papers...a systematic refusal to read or respond to male authors..."

Daphne Patai & Noretta Koertge
(former instructors of Women's Studies)
*Professing Feminism:
Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women's Studies*
(Basic Books/HarperCollins, 1994) 2, 3, 5

"For twenty-five years, give or take a few, we have lived with this system of silent censorship. We have seen the refinement and perfection of this system, in which publishers have joined hands...Now that rules of censorship have been codified, editors, writers and illustrators know well in advance what is not acceptable. No one speaks of 'censoring' or 'banning' words or topics; they 'avoid' them. The effect is the same....By now, the rules and guidelines could be dismissed, and they would still function because they have been deeply internalized by the publishing industry. George Orwell and Franz Kafka would have understood this system perfectly; it works best when it permeates one's consciousness and no longer needs to be explained or defended. The goal of the language police is not just to stop us from using objectionable words but to stop us from having objectionable thoughts...."

Editors at the big publishing companies often agreed quietly with the feminists and civil rights groups that attacked their textbooks; by and large, the editors and the left-wing critics came from the same cosmopolitan worlds and held similar political views....Nor did they oppose feminist demands...which had the tacit or open support of their own female editors. In retrospect, this dynamic helps to explain why the major publishing companies swiftly accepted the sweeping...claims of feminist critics and willingly yielded to a code of censorship....Literary quality became secondary to representational issues....By the end of the 1980s, every publisher had complied with the demands of the critics..."

Diane Ravitch (a Democrat)
The Language Police
(Knopf 2003) 158, 87, 96

To avoid censorship by feminist editors, male writers should not portray any male characters as "strong" or "brave." They should not depict "men as capable leaders," as "larger and heavier than women," nor "in positions of greater authority than women."

Ravitch, 185-87

“The whole point of writing literature was that in exchange for not getting paid a lot of money, you could say what you wanted; now, you don’t get a lot of money and you don’t get to say what you want. All of which segues to why writing is f***ed.’ [Novelist Dale] Peck’s argument is that editing has been corrupted by the new...mandates of publishing – or, at least, is more prone to a precautionary principle that dictates that if there are any reasons why a reader might not like something in a book, say an unsympathetic character, then there is a case for demanding the author get rid of the unsympathetic character.’...

‘The list of things you can’t do grows longer and longer,’ adds Lisa Dierbeck....‘I was told that having a character in jail was a problem,’ she says. ‘Readers will not be able to identify with him. One editor even said that he wasn’t handsome enough’.”

Trevor Butterworth
“Readers of the World Unite”
Financial Times, FT.com
(18 March 2011)