

114-16). More recently, Angela Carter welcomes the frank portrayal of misogyny and, well, sadism in the novels of the Marquis de Sade. In each case, the critic uses analytical reasoning to illustrate how a text turns (or can be turned) against itself and the biases of its author. (The contemporary term for this is "deconstruction" but the gambit is as old as Zeno.) There is nothing inherently postmodern about Balzac or Sade or, for that matter, about the sort of interpretive move made by Engels or Carter. Nor is there anything inherently postmodern about either George Eliot's depiction of gender relations or Elam's interpretation of it.

While we find excellence in *Romancing the Postmodern*, it is an excellence of the parts rather than of the whole. The book reads like two monographs rather than one. The first, comprised of the introduction and chapters 1 and 5, contends with postmodern works from an overtly feminist position while the other, chapters 2 through 4 examines the privileged themes of postmodern liberalism, gender, class, and empire—though not race—as rendered in certain nineteenth-century English fictions. In her 1988 dissertation, Elam examines these same themes in novels by Scott, Eliot, George Meredith, and Conrad. *Romancing the Postmodern* seems to be a not entirely successful attempt to yoke together her dissertation and other research. One final thing needs to be noted. This book deals with traditional polarities like essentialism-relativism, modernity-postmodernity, realism-romance, and male-female but does a kind of binary "flip," privileging what it construes as the historically-rejected Other. The danger of endorsing traditional dichotomies—whatever the politics of our valorizations—is that we may simply repeat structurally inscribed reductions, rather than contest them, that we may write yet another "realist" melodrama and not a true "postmodern romance." Of this danger, we must be wary.

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Cheryl Turner. *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*. New York & London: Routledge, 1992. pp. ix, 261. \$16.95.

True to its capacious title (shared in part by Dale Spender in her 1992 edition of articles on early British women writers), Cheryl Turner's *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* traverses a wide literary, cultural, and economic landscape in its exploration of the

eighteenth-century professional woman writer. Turner draws on such works as Dale Spender's *Mothers of the Novel* (1986), Jane Spencer's *Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986), and Janet Todd's *The Sign of Angellica* (1989) to reveal women's significant historical contribution to the rise of the novel. But Turner also stakes out new critical ground. This study departs from previous "literary critical" investigations by seeking to understand "the rise of women's prose fiction and the emergence of female literary professionalism . . . within an extra-literary context" (2). Focusing expansively on women novelists as a group, Turner examines the social, cultural, and economic forces that affected not only what these predominantly middle-class women wrote but also how and why they wrote.

While alert to the epistemological problems of determining historical origins, Turner traces the emergence of the novel and of the professional woman writer to the seventeenth century. She acknowledges, along with most historians, the strong link between the rise of women's literary professionalism and the achievements of such early women dramatists as Aphra Behn, Catharine Trotter, and Susanna Centlivre. Turner nicely balances this now received historical connection, however, with an overview of professional non-fiction prose writers (Sarah Jinner and Hannah Wolley, for example). Elements of drama, prose fiction, and professionalism eventually coalesce in a discussion of the dramatist/novelist Aphra Behn, whose literary career marks a watershed in women's literary history. For Turner, Behn anticipated the great generic shift from drama to prose fiction in the 1700s and "helped to confirm a commercial as well as literary role for women in the development of prose fiction" (30).

Turner attributes the expansion in women's fiction, however, not to the morally dubious tradition of Behn but to such moral exemplars as Elizabeth Rowe and Penelope Aubin, who legitimized women's voices by incorporating in their novels didacticism and images of virtuous womanhood. Eminent professionals themselves, Rowe and Aubin helped the woman writer to gain the respectability she needed in order to write commercially. Unfortunately, in tracing the literary and ideological roots of such "Fair Authoresses" (127) as Lennox, Burney, and Radcliffe, Turner adopts an overly schematic, divisive model of women's literary heritage. While it is true that many women writers (including Aubin) not only aligned themselves with Rowe but did so by "distinguish[ing] between her works and those of other, less 'respectable' female authors" (48), the tidy moral camps into which sentimental culture divided the respectable and the lewd were more chaotic than Turner suggests. To accept at face value such stark dualities is to ignore—among even the most decorous of novelists (Lennox and Burney are particularly noteworthy)—important subtextual and intertextual strains of resistance to this polarized cultural paradigm.

Turner largely shines, however, in the remaining information-packed chapters, in which she discusses various issues, including women's economic vulnerability, the role of prominent publishers ("the Trade") in the expansion of women's prose fiction, systems of preference and the importance of literary connections, the price of novels and what individual women writers earned, and other occupations and genres to which women novelists turned for additional income. Particularly engaging is her discussion of the economic backgrounds and plights of numerous women writers, as well as the resourcefulness upon which their livelihood depended. Mary "Perdita" Robinson, for one, turned to acting because of financial difficulties, and after a year as the Prince of Wales's mistress, and persistent demands, eventually became the begrudged recipient of 500 pounds per annum. A more quotidian example of economic resourcefulness, Susanna Rowson turned to writing after a stint as a governess but remained occupationally diverse, supplementing her literary income with proceeds from singing, acting, and teaching. As Turner points out, although economic need helped to motivate many eighteenth-century women to write fiction, writing was lucrative for only a few (Inchbald, Burney, Smith, and Radcliffe number among this financially successful minority).

Also among the book's highlights is Turner's discussion of both "the Trade" as a replacement of sorts for the dwindling aristocrat-based patronage system and of influential literary circles that assisted women in publishing their fiction or in producing their plays. Turner's scrupulous research yields numerous insights into the publishing industry's double-edged power. William Lane of Minerva Press, for example, did much to bolster the market demand for women's fiction by seeking out new writers and by advertising the names of laudable women novelists. But members of "the Trade" were not always paternalistic nurturers. Apparently, Edmund Curll "effectively coerced" (96) the famous Delariviere [sic] Manley into producing the autobiographical *Rivella*, and Charlotte Smith encountered such resistance to her poems from Robert Dodsley and the Dilly brothers that she eventually published them on her own. Like the good opinion of the Garricks and Colmans of the theatre world, critical to aspiring playwrights, the support of publishers could facilitate a writer's entrance into the literary marketplace, ease the arduous demands of a literary career, or even make the difference between hapless obscurity and literary success.

It is this power of "the Trade" and, more generally, of "the patriarchal power structures of eighteenth-century society" (3), that needs even greater emphasis in *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*. For example, did the market pressure that women write novels of sentiment intensify gender-based power structures by providing female-impersonating male writers with a creative outlet that stymied women? And if, as the century progressed, the woman writer

took on "the mantle of censor," what power resided in the former (male) "guardians of public morality" (52)? Sometimes, Turner's primarily descriptive *modus operandi* begs important theoretical questions. Indeed, the book's bibliography is sparse on secondary sources after 1989 and could perhaps benefit from more recent eighteenth-century feminist scholarship. More locally, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* suffers from distracting spelling inconsistencies: Lowndes (114, 161, 172) becomes Lownds (210); the correctly titled *History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (183) is elsewhere titled *History of Jenny and Jemmy Jessamy* (52 and 255); and Jane Barker's 1713 novel, which appears in the Pandora reprint (1973) and in the *Feminist Companion to Literature in English* (1990) as *Love Intrigues*, in Turner's book is both *Love's Intrigues* (50) and *Loves Intrigues* (157). Such flaws, however, have little negative impact on the book as a whole. Turner deals proficiently with a broad range of topics, and even includes two valuable appendices (one lists women's fiction published in book form from 1696-1796, its publishers and places of publication; the other chronologically lists women novelists who published in the years 1696-1796). Informative, gracefully written, timely, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* earns a place of its own in this growing field of feminist/historical enquiry.

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