
In the introduction to this collection of 22 essays on gender and writing the editor confesses:

I was never interested in including articles which would attack the idea of whether gender and the writing process had anything in common. I wasn't interested in anyone who held an 'androgyne' view of the writing process or in anyone who had anti-feminist views. The people I asked were all people who had something positive to say about how they saw gender and the writing process coming together in their work. (p.9)

Consequently one finishes this book with the impression that almost all these writers know one another and share views on politics, literature and sex. The largest group of essays is from single mothers or gay women who write fiction, theater or poetry. Of the 22 writers almost all are British, all but 3 1/2 are female (the half because he "shares" a doubled personality with his wife), all but a few speak of being formed by the turbulent 1960's. There is much discussion of motherhood, the feminist movement, the writer's relationship with (always) his/her mother, and left-wing politics. The appalling English lack of support for working mothers is repeatedly mentioned. There are perceptive and sometimes touching descriptions: an ex-academic growing up in the shadow of a powerful intellectual father; a gay man coming out; an art historian adrift in the storm of sexual politics; a successful novelist (Margaret Drabble) writing on gender; a straight man has his consciousness raised; an older journalist tells of a lifetime in the feminist movement; a straight couple merging personalities, producing memorable lines like: "It is sometimes difficult to remember who has the penis and who is being penetrated during the excitement of the act" (p.143). The writing is sometimes chatty and brash, reminding us of the 1950's underground press that must have nourished it. Pamela Gems asks, "Is trying to write a... retreat into a world that you can manipulate, that does have order? If that is so writing is a fascist act" (p.148). The assumption is
that order in an artistic work is psychologically regressive, but, what is probably worse, non-feminine. If the views sometimes seem about two decades old (published in 1983), yet the writers grapple with Michelene Wandor's questionnaire honestly, usually confronting what is arguably the most important cluster of social issues of this generation.

Arnold Gordenstein (UFSC)