



Literary Liaisons: Auto/biographical Appropriations in Modernist Women's Fiction

Lynette Felber

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Unhappy relationships are the stuff of fiction—or so Lynette Felber observes as she examines the lives and fiction of five modernist women writers whose lovers were also literary figures. Focusing on Anaïs Nin, Rebecca West, Zelda Fitzgerald, Radclyffe Hall, and H.D., she investigates the ways these female authors made use of their relationships in their fiction. Whether heterosexual or lesbian, these women struggled to assert the authority of their own literary voices and to achieve professional recognition distinct from their partners.

The modernist period, when British and American women first began to exercise their newly granted political rights, provides a particularly interesting backdrop for this study of literary appropriation. Using feminist and psychoanalytical theory, Felber views these emerging authors' fictionalized struggles as reenactments of the process by which the self differentiates itself from the Other. The literary liaison is the site where the female writer's professional identity is enacted, contested, and finally empowered or suppressed. As she examines the impact of literary relationships on modernist women writers, Felber reveals their preoccupation with attaining the status of "subject."

The writers discussed in *Literary Liaisons* are well known for their various work—Rebecca West for her journalism, Anaïs Nin for her erotica, H.D. for her imagist poetry—as well as for their associations with such celebrated partners as H. G. Wells, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Henry Miller. The conflicts reflected in the five modernist women's writings stir a voyeuristic curiosity about the autobiographical truths that may lurk behind every fiction.

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