How To Suppress Women's Writing

She didn’t write it. She wrote it, but she shouldn’t have. (It’s political, sexual. Masculine, feminine.) She wrote it, but look what she wrote about. She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it. (“Your love, your dear. That’s all she ever . . .”) She wrote it, but she isn’t really an artist, and it isn’t really art. (It’s a thriller, a romance, a children’s book, it’s not art.) She wrote it, but she had help. (Robert Browning. Bronte in a trance. Her own “masculine side.”) She wrote it, but she’s an anomaly. (Woof! With Leonard’s help . . .) She wrote it BUT . . .

How to Suppress Women’s Writing by Joanna Russ

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Synopsis

By the author of The Female Man "a provocative survey of the forces that work against women who dare to write.

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Customer Reviews

For reasons both good and bad, HOW TO SUPPRESS WOMEN'S WRITING by Joanna Russ reads like it could have been written yesterday. Actually, the book is older than me "published in 1983" but Russâ€™ smirking, clear-eyed perspective is still relevant. HOW TO SUPPRESS WOMEN'S WRITING investigates historical and social reasons that may have kept whole generations of women from writing in the first place (things like differential rates of literacy, disparate access to education, womenâ€™s historical lack of leisure time and position as wife as a second work shift). She also interrogates how it is that when women somehow do manage to write that womenâ€™s writing is ignored, slandered or undercut. The book was published by the University of Texas Press, which puts it squarely in the realm of academic works, but the writing is colloquial and accessible throughout. You do not need to be steeped in literary criticism or feminist theory to read and understand Russâ€™ arguments here, which is a great strength. She argues that what is considered â€œgoodâ€ or â€œworthyâ€ literature (and by extension, that which is taught and thus survives across generations) is designated as such by privileged groups who have a vested interest in keeping themselves privileged. The ways in which they limit entrance or access to literature are
by mental acrobatics such as assuming women writers didn’t really write their works, or that it doesn’t matter if they wrote it because it’s the wrong kind of work, or that maybe they wrote it and maybe it’s good but it’s the only good thing she ever wrote. Some of this is deliberate, but just as much is unconscious bias.