

NEW WOMEN'S WRITING

Contextualising Fiction,
Poetry and Philosophy

EDITED BY
**Subashish Bhattacharjee
and Girindra Narayan Ray**

New Women's Writing: Contextualising Fiction, Poetry and Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

SUBASHISH BHATTACHARJEE
AND GIRINDRA NARAYAN RAY

I

Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy and Patricia Clements argued that “[most] of our women are not represented in the ‘standard’ reference books in the field” (Blain et al viii-ix). This statement has been echoed as recently as 2014 when Joanne Harris claimed that “[w]omen’s fiction’ is still a sub-category” (quoted in *The Guardian*). It has become progressively more difficult, with contemporary genre-bending, to identify sub-categories that have gradually become defunct within the category of women’s writing. The above statement by Joanne Harris, among many others similarly poised, constitutes a part of a generous amount of vitriolic directed towards women’s writing. Commentators have been divided on their positions concerning the deletion of the sub-category of ‘women’s writing’. While critics of the sub-category such as Joanne Harris argue against the obsolete status of the nomenclature, others have argued in favour of such an appellation as necessary to distinguish the broad genre of women’s writing from works by their male counterparts.

Dale Spender had stated quite accurately in his 1980 book *Man Made Language*:

The English language has been literally man made and... it is still primarily under male control.... This monopoly over language is one of the means by which males have ensured their own primacy, and consequently, have ensured the invisibility or ‘other’ nature of females, and this primacy is perpetuated while women continue to use, unchanged, the language which we have inherited. (12)

The statement may still be said to hold currency when we look at the contemporary scenario despite apparent changes in the social and cultural outlook that have given precedence to women and their personalised mode of writing. The patriarchal bias in writing has been a mainstay not merely in