

Heroines (Semiotext(e) / Active Agents)

HEROINES

Kate Zambreno



By Kate Zambreno

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I am beginning to realize that taking the self out of our essays is a form of repression. Taking the self out feels like obeying a gag order--pretending an objectivity where there is nothing objective about the experience of confronting and engaging with and swooning over literature." -- from *Heroines*

On the last day of December, 2009 Kate Zambreno began a blog called *Frances Farmer Is My Sister*, arising from her obsession with the female modernists and her recent transplantation to Akron, Ohio, where her husband held a university job. Widely reposted, Zambreno's blog became an outlet for her highly informed and passionate rants about the fates of the modernist "wives and mistresses." In her blog entries, Zambreno reclaimed the traditionally pathologized biographies of Vivienne Eliot, Jane Bowles, Jean Rhys, and Zelda Fitzgerald: writers and artists themselves who served as male writers' muses only to end their lives silenced, erased, and institutionalized. Over the course of two years, *Frances Farmer Is My Sister* helped create a community where today's "toxic girls" could devise a new feminist discourse, writing in the margins and developing an alternative canon.

In *Heroines*, Zambreno extends the polemic begun on her blog into a dazzling, original work of literary scholarship. Combing theories that have dictated what literature should be and who is allowed to write it--from T. S. Eliot's New Criticism to the writings of such mid-century intellectuals as Elizabeth Hardwick and Mary McCarthy to the occasional "girl-on-girl crime" of the Second Wave of feminism--she traces the genesis of a cultural template that consistently exiles female experience to the realm of the "minor," and diagnoses women for transgressing social bounds. "ANXIETY: When she experiences it, it's pathological," writes Zambreno. "When he does, it's existential." By advancing the Girl-As-Philosopher, Zambreno reinvents feminism for her generation while providing a model for a newly subjectivized criticism.



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Editorial Review

Review

"A brave, enlightening, and brutally honest historical inquiry that will leave readers with an urgent desire to tell their own stories." - *Bitch* magazine

"Heroines reads with an almost physical urgency, as though written in a hot, hot heat, as Zambreno tangles and untangles historic and fictional literary ladies (Emma Bovary, Nicole Diver), all while chronicling her own creative frustration as she trails her husband from one backwater academic post to the next, trying to dig herself out of her own alienated funk. It's totally smart, provocative, and oddly sexy." --Martha Bayne, *Chicago Reader*

"The book is startlingly insightful." -- **Jezebel.com, Books You Should Read**

"Issues a powerful clarion call for a supportive community of female writers who will fixate on their own experiences without shame and reject the "measuring rod" of the "Great American (Male) Novelist." -- **Publishers Weekly**

"I was reading your book intensely for days and people started asking, "Ok ok, what is this book?" What is this book you are so enraptured by? And I said, "Well, it's a book I've been waiting for for a long time." I am very excited it exists." -- **Mary Borkowski, The New Inquiry**

"It should come as no surprise that her provocative new work, *Heroines*, published by Semiotext(e)'s Active Agents imprint next month, challenges easy categorization, this time by poetically swerving in and out of memoir, diary, fiction, literary history, criticism, and theory. With equal parts unabashed pathos and exceptional intelligence, *Heroines* foregrounds female subjectivity to produce an impressive and original work that examines the suppression of various female modernists in relation to Zambreno's own complicated position as a writer and a wife." -- **Christopher Higgs, The Paris Review** online

"Intensity and intelligence forge the baseline current that runs through and characterizes most of Kate Zambreno's written work." -- *The Millions*, where *Heroines* was named one of the "Most Anticipated" Books of 2012.

"If you thought you knew a lot about the 'wives' of modernism and the various forms of silencing they suffered, Kate Zambreno's *Heroines* will teach you more; if you didn't know much, your mouth will fall open in enraged amazement. Zambreno admirably transforms copious research and personal experience into vernacular knowledge, then heats up the brew into a justified rant about dynamics that may have shape-shifted over the past 100 years but have (sadly) not disappeared. Bravo." -- **Maggie Nelson**, author of *Bluets* and *The Art of Cruelty*

About the Author

Kate Zambreno is the author of *Green Girl*, *Heroines*, and *O Fallen Angel*. She is at work on a triptych of books about time, memory, and the persistence of art. The first, *Drifts*, is forthcoming from Harper Perennial in 2017.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bill Underhill:

The book Heroines (Semiotext(e) / Active Agents) make you feel enjoy for your spare time. You need to use to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can being your best friend when you getting strain or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make reading a book Heroines (Semiotext(e) / Active Agents) to get your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your current capable, increase your knowledge about a number of or all subjects. You could know everything if you like open and read a publication Heroines (Semiotext(e) / Active Agents). Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science publication or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this publication?

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Frank Wimmer:

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Clara Radtke:

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