



Distractions

it's something else

BOOKS

Book explores relationship between woman, power and cyberspace.

Nattering on the Net
Dale Spender
Garamond Press

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THE BRUNSWICKAN

"Dale Spender promises to change the way we think about computers," reads the back cover of her book, *Nattering on the Net*. Well, it didn't. It made me think, but mainly just to form an argument against what she had written. By the third page of the introduction,

I knew I'd have trouble with the book. This is the page where Spender first uses the word "his" used to denote something belonging to "a person." This, and many other examples, infuriated me; how could Spender be so arrogant to mark as *wrong* any perspective that doesn't encompass everyone? Apparently writing from one's own point of view is politically incorrect.

This is also the page that contains Spender's assertion: "We are the last generation to be reared within a culture in which print is the primary information medium." Even as someone who spends incredible amounts of time in modern-related activities (and, arguable, as someone of a later generation than Spender's), I don't believe it. Even for our society (a First World democratic one), I don't believe it. Assuming that computers could even be made available to everyone, all the time, print would still have the primary role. Some things are not well-represented by images, and images (at the moment) still take too long to load to replace print. Some institutions are still too powerful and ingrained in society to make such radical changes. (Imagine and Internet-based university, without textbooks, exams, classrooms or tuition. Can you see this happening in this lifetime?)

"This is not a book about computers. It is a book about people. It's about the impact that computers are having on human society. The reason for this focus is that who we are, what we know, and how we think, are all being changed as we move from a print-based society to a computer-based world. We are becoming different people; we are creating a new community."

- *Nattering on the Net*

Following this, she draws a parallel between the printing press and the Internet, referring to both as facilitators of "the democratisation of knowledge." She assures us that the flourishing of the Internet will not cause a drop in standards, since the advent of mass-produced books didn't. This is limited, though: the transition from a few people to the masses reading is not the same as that from the masses reading to the masses pointing and clicking. She argues that a shorter attention span brought about by socialization into a multimedia world is, in fact, an advancement, since it requires more and varied skills. I would argue that patience and the ability to concentrate are, in fact, important enough to be worried about.

Perhaps what irritated me most about *Nattering on the Net* was Spender's feminist bias. Certainly there are instances (and more than I'd realized) of sexism and sexual harassment that must be dealt with before the Internet gains more importance, but I was insulted by some of what Spender puts forth as sexist against women. I'm disgusted at the thought that women would need special encouragement and attention to be interested in the Internet. The way that Spender excludes herself (and women in general) from anything that isn't specifically directed at women is really upsetting. Her argument that software and hardware is built for men supports stereotypes about women that don't apply to many (like me). I agree that there are men who are doing their best to exclude women from the Internet as a way of keeping them from gaining power, but bemoaning the "lack of programs" for women is not going to fix this. Speaking out and including ourselves, forcing others to recognize us, is.

Spender's vision of the future (and of history), while disputable (and biased), has certainly got me preoccupied with *Women, Power and Cyberspace* (the subtitle of the book). Even though I disagree with much of her feminist theory and her belief in the imminent prevalence of the Internet, *Nattering on the Net* is still a thought-provoking read.

I met this girl from Utah

What I love in nature
the seasons fall and spring
sunrise in the morning
a lonely solemn tree
I see them back when she is smiling
When she smiles to me.

What I feel for nature
the beauty of the whole
intense as a volcanic eruption
soft as fallen snow
But what does the nature feel
What does she feel for me.

I hardly know the nature
as I don't know this girl
for long I loved the nature
how about this girl
Nature gives me a chance
I hope the girl does too.

B.

Fleeting Dreams

Lights and colour
dazzling bright
Windline paths
lead out of sight
Intriguing shadows
lure me on
Not too sure
I play my pawn.
Luscious taste
sensations wild!
Grab the forte
shun the mild.

Looking back
the lights all fade.
Flickering sights
of pearl and jade.
Mystery, darkness
pulls me still.
Hopine if my
heart will fill.

Blackness, chains
with which I loved.
Cover me,
but leave me void.
Glittery treasures
once divine
At my feet
now feed the swine.
This is what I'm
living for?
Will these fancies
make me soar?

Scared To Dream

Thoughts come shaken,
derived,
conceived
and denied.
Making it almost impossible
for dreams to survive.
Don't let them rule you,
don't let things die.
We rule our thoughts,
so pretend you're alive

Drew Gilbert

Where is One
who calls my name.
Calls me from
a life of shame
Beckons me to
turn around
Listen to a
different sound.
He will make
the foolish wise
Offers poor
His paradise.
If I seek Him
I will find.
"Self,
Leave fleeting
dreams behind!
He is waiting
arms held wide.
Run to Him
and in Him hide.
He will fill you
with a peace
That no man
can understand.
He will give
meaning to life
Give Him yours
and take His
Hand."

Shiloh Peterson

Peter J. Cullen Photo

Sex and Friendship: nowadays they are virtual not physical.

Online Friendship, Chat-room Romance and Cybersex:

Your Guide to Affairs of the Net

by Michael Adamse, Ph.D. & Sheree Motta, Psy. D.
Health Communications Inc.

JETHELO CABILETE

THE BRUNSWICKAN

This is the age of global communication through technology. Becoming obsolete, it seems, are the face-to-face interactions that we all know and love. The constant background noise, the physical nature of communication, the sexual encounters that arose from social exchanges of phone numbers, astrological signs and pizza...ahh memories. Now there is a different venue for interacting with humanity. No longer do you have to communicate with someone else's physical body or be constrained by geographic distances. The age of computers heralded an equal age in global contact with the advent of Internet and online registration. The ability to cross time and space regardless of where you are, who you are and why you are even on the computer network has facilitated human relationships in terms of meeting people.

Online Friendship, Chat-room Romance and Cybersex is a literary guide to the affairs of the net. The phenomenon of emotional intimacy through the Internet is a relatively recent occurrence. Emotional intimacy through friendships, more intimate relationships and sexual intimacy is normally a face-to-face encounter. However, with such events as the AIDS crisis, violence in society and obsessive stalkings, the computer has gained a major following in the relationship scene. Adamse and Motta navigate the cyber-realm to bring

Online Friendship, Chat-Room Romance and Cybersex

Your Guide to Affairs of the Net

MICHAEL ADAMSE, PH.D.
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up-to-date information regarding various ways that men and women use the net. Personalities are created, relationships formed and an endless barrage of cyber-language. The authors carefully proceed through several sections pertaining to online relationships. From the merry "Welcome to CyberCheers" to the possibility of becoming addicted to web relationships in "Caught in the Web" each chapter examines a detailed section of Internet use and abuse.

The book itself is very well done, with personal anecdotes and interviews with people who cruise the net to find relationships in one form or another. The sections are further explained using social scientific techniques and observations. Interspersed throughout the book are the languages and idioms that cybermembers use during online conversations. What was interesting to note is the degree to which people equate cyber-relationships and conversations with actual relationships and conversations. People have had affairs, met each other personally, had sex and terminated their relationships all on the computer. The mirroring of real life relationships is a socially interesting phenomenon, in light of the growing application of computers in daily life. The applications in *Online Friendship* can be taken as a guide to what different forms of cyber-relations mean, how to avoid becoming addicted to the net, and ways to enjoy ones use of the net. This book would be recommended for anyone who uses the net; whether a newbie or a dihard cybernaut.