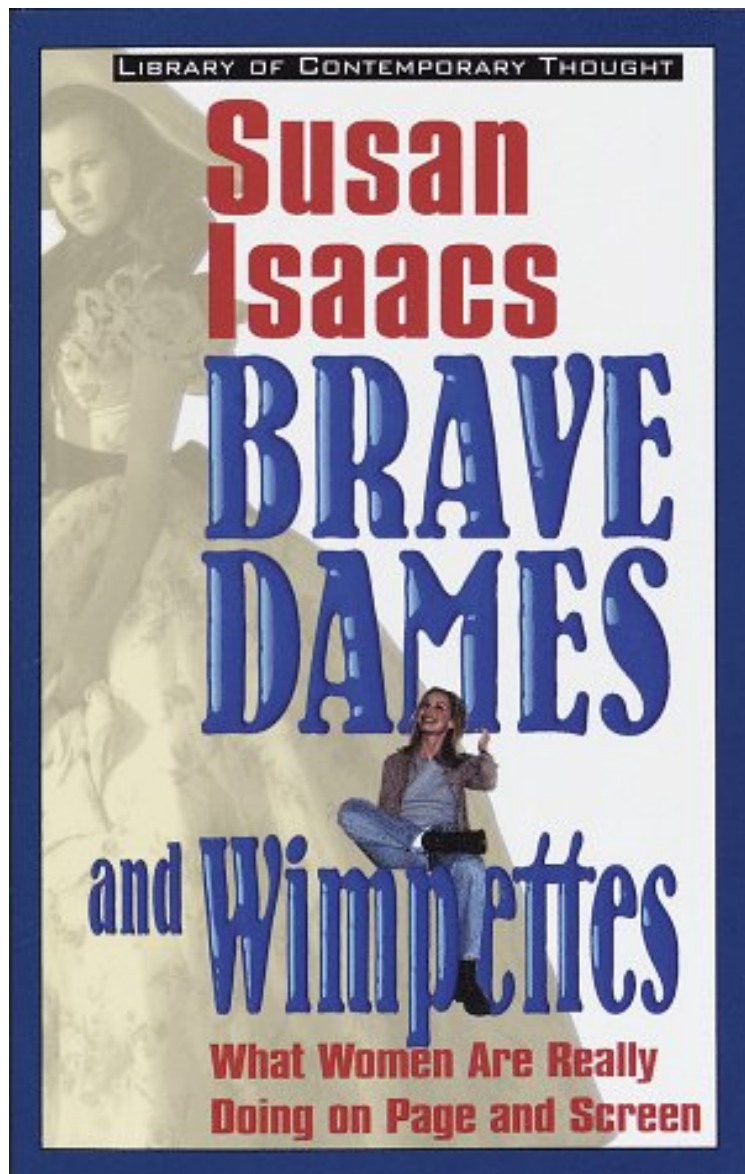


(Download ebook) Brave Dames and Wimpettes: What Women Are Really Doing on Page and Screen
(Library of Contemporary Thought)

Brave Dames and Wimpettes: What Women Are Really Doing on Page and Screen (Library of Contemporary Thought)

Susan Isaacs

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Susan Isaacs : Brave Dames and Wimpettes: What Women Are Really Doing on Page and Screen (Library of Contemporary Thought) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brave Dames and Wimpettes: What Women Are Really Doing on Page and Screen (Library of Contemporary

Thought):

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Instead of reading this book, read Molly Haskells *By A Customer* I work in publishing and so have the nasty habit of reading the acknowledgement section first. I was initially put off by the fact that Ms. Isaacs thanks another person for doing the research. Then I read that this book came out of an article that was written in 1990. That it does, shows. While there are some references to current shows like *I Am Ally McBeal*, there are also a lot of tired references to shows like *Hope Gloria* (anyone remember that one or it's impact?) And please, aren't we all a little tired of *Thelma Louise* references? Anyway, being a woman, and a woman who loves film, any kind of film and literature, I was very disappointed with this book. I thought it was on about the same level as a college essay, not something that belongs in the *Library of Contemporary Thought*. It's too "listy" and doesn't give enough argument or meat--breaking everyone down into wimpettes and near wimpettes or whatever. While I do agree that there aren't many good roles for women these days, I also disagree with many of Isaacs' assertions and feel that she missed a lot of good movies. For instance, *Joy Luck Club*, a fascinating movie about women, mothers and daughters, overcoming societies rules and roles, and self-worth is dismissed in one sentence because showing women cooking is supposed to be bad in movies because it shows us in traditional roles. Huh? 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *catchy title but lacks delivery. By A Customer* I really disliked this book. While it is an essay based on someone's opinion, the argument was not substantiated with any sort of academic knowledge as to the psychology of the female mind or to world of filmmaking past the writing process. The author's definition of what makes a "Great Dame" in contrast to a "Wimpette" is so narrowly construed that rather than feeling empowered by the "Great Dames" the reader is left outraged by who is considered a wimpette. Susan Isaacs argues that Anita Hill is a wimpette because she should either "(1) report him [Clarence Thomas] for sexual harassment through established procedures or (2) tell him to shut the hell up." Isaacs does not consider that sexual harassment, especially repeated sexual harassment is psychologically damaging to a person. Sexual harassment often preys on a person's inferior position and makes him or her afraid to come forward for fear of ridicule. Also, the author fails to point out that filmmaking remains a male-dominated field. No woman has ever won an Academy Award for Directing or Cinematography. Until women gain an equal voice in the media, the majority of films will continue to have characters that Isaacs deems "wimpettes." 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. *Interesting subject, but a disappointing read. By Sherry Kumar Simon (shermeela@compuserve.com)* I have to admit that it was the title of the book that caught my attention. I was excited to finally find a critique of modern women and the wimpy, unaccountable, excuse-making attitudes many television personalities inflict upon the viewers. My first disappointment was that the book focuses mainly on fictional TV characters, not real people. What is the point of criticising a fictional personality if it is the actress' job to portray her that way? The author missed out on the major wimpette of our time - Oprah Winfrey. While I don't mean to pick on Oprah, I want to point out that there are plenty of true cases the author could have used in her book.

Why are Jane Eyre, Marge Simpson, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer "brave dames"? What makes Ally McBeal, Madame Bovary, and the good wife Beth from *Fatal Attraction* "wimpettes"? In this thoroughly witty, incisive look at the role of women on screen and page, Susan Isaacs argues that assertive, ethical women characters are losing ground to wounded, shallow sisters who are driven by what she calls the articles of wimpette philosophy. (Article Eight: A wimpette looks to a man to give her an identity.) Although female roles today include lawyers like Ally McBeal and CEOs like Ronnie of *Veronica's Closet*, they are wimpettes nonetheless. A brave dame, on the other hand, is a dignified, three-dimensional hero who may care about men, home, and hearth, but also cares--and acts--passionately about something in the world beyond. Brave dames' stories range from mundane (Mary Richards in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*) to romantic (Francesca in *The Horse Whisperer*) to fantastic (*Xena: Warrior Princess*), but whatever they do, they care about justice and carry themselves with self-respect and decency. For a Really Brave Dame, think Frances McDormand as the tenacious, pregnant police chief in *Fargo*. Isaacs's unmistakable love of fiction and film shines through even her most scathing wimpette assessments. In the end, she urges us to become "more thoughtful critics." The artist, she says, has the right to create whatever he or she pleases--and we have the right "to applaud or to yell, 'Hey, this stinks!'" If we do so, not only will fiction be improved, but so too might real life.

.com Susan Isaacs's witty imagination has peopled the world with brave dames in films like *Compromising Positions* and full-bodied novels such as 1998's *Red, White, and Blue*. The slender and interestingly ornery essay *Brave Dames and Wimpettes* is part of the monthly *Library of Contemporary Thought* series, whose most fun title so far is Carl Hiaasen's Disney-bashing diatribe *Team Rodent* (now available on audiocassette). So, what's a "brave dame"? "They're passionate about something besides passion," Isaacs writes. Take Jo March, Elizabeth Bennet, Katharine Hepburn, and Roz Russell, who prove "women are as competent and brave as the next guy." Her fave dame, Jane Eyre, "had high moral standards, stood up to injustice, and was willing to leave civilization and face the wild, even death, rather than do wrong." Wimpettes, who outnumber dames in pop culture, believe in masochism, subterfuge,

betrayal of women, and deriving identity from their man. "The world stops at the white picket of their fences.... larger causes--racial equality, justice--are left to the guys." The book is a romp through books, movies, and TV, as Isaacs puts dozens of women in their place on the dame/wimpette spectrum. Anita Hill? Feh! "This ber-wimpette testified before Congress how she endured vile sex talk from a superior rather than (1) report him for harassment ... or (2) tell him to shut the hell up." Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Frances McDormand in Fargo are dames; Ally McBeal and Anne Archer in Fatal Attraction are wimpettes. (Note, however, that Ethan Coen told .com McDormand is the bad guy in Fargo and Steve Buscemi the good guy.) Julia Roberts is a wimpette in My Best Friend's Wedding but a dame in Mystic Pizza and The Pelican Brief. Ideally, Isaacs's book should start a lot of excellent arguments. Don't wimp out! -- Tim Appelo

From Publishers Weekly

After beginning with the reasonable claim that the media too often present women as one-dimensional victims, Isaacs's foray into cultural criticism quickly turns into an object lesson on oversimplification. Novelist Isaacs (Red, White and Blue, etc.) gives her analysis of female characters in books, movies and TV a facile framework by lumping all women characters into two categories. A wimpette (Madame Bovary is the archetype) is a passive-aggressive masochist whose identity depends on a man. Her opposite, the brave dame, is common in real life but elusive in pop culture. She is "passionate about something besides passion," resilient, competent, moral, a true friend (think Jane Eyre). The book is a series of litmus tests. Kathleen Turner's cheerful soccer mom/psychopath in Serial Mom comes out well (after all, she's a multidimensional character), while the wife played by Anne Archer in Fatal Attraction, who kills Glenn Close for sleeping with her husband and boiling the pet rabbit, is a mere wimpette, because she acts only to protect her home (the basis of her weak identity). Although Isaacs repeatedly describes herself as a feminist, her particular brand of feminism asks women to handle every aspect of their lives?relationships, motherhood, career?without any complaint or sign of weakness. Unsurprisingly, few brave dames are found, and many of them belong to the realm of fantasy (Xena: Warrior Princess and Buffy the Vampire Slayer). Occasionally thought-provoking, the many character studies here are fatally weakened by the absolute judgment at the end of each one, and, as every analysis can have only one of two endings, the book quickly becomes repetitive. (Jan.)

FYI: Brave Dames and Wimpettes is part of Ballantine's Library of Contemporary Thought series. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA lively look at the role models provided by women in film and fiction, with unexpected exegeses from a bestselling novelist (Red, White, and Blue, 1998, etc.). L. Frank Baum's Dorothy and Jane Austen's Emmain both original and modern interpretations are ``brave dames"; Sandra Bullock in Speed, although her character was the driver of the rampaging bus, and Anita Hill, testifying about long-past transgressions, are ``wimpettes." Even the feminist icons Thelma and Louise and biblical mother Eve get ambivalent reviews here. Think about it, says Isaacs: Thelma and Louise would rather drive off a cliff than take responsibility for their actions; Eve knuckled under to the serpent rather than take a stand in the cosmic battle between good and evil. Brave dames are ``passionate about something besides passion," are resilient, competent, moral, and ``a true friend." In literature, Jane Eyre is the bravest of dames, along with the spider Charlotte of E.B. White's Charlotte's Web. The author's TV heroines include Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Xena (although production values are seriously deficient, Isaacs admits); films offer Auntie Mame, G.I. Jane, and Clarice Starling of The Silence of the Lambs. Wimpettes, on the other hand, are invested in masochism, subterfuge, low ethical standards, and men who will give them identities. Holly Hunter's character in The Piano is a wimpette par excellenceshe betrays her husband (and daughter) because she ``just needs to get laid." Other mothers, sisters, and friends fare slightly better but fail the ``brave dames" test because their lives are defined by men. Isaacs falters on her own test when she sets males as the standard in comparing buddy films, e.g., Midnight Cowboy vs. Thelma and Louise. A lightweight overview of women in film, fiction, and video, but the author offers a challenge: Look closely. Is driving a bus over the speed limit really an example of the best a woman can be? (Author tour) -- Copyright 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.