



Poisoned Pens: Literary Invective from Amis to Zola

Gary Dexter

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Mark Twain once said of Jane Austen, "Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice* I want to dig her up and hit her over the skull with her own shin-bone." And then there's George Bernard Shaw on the Bard: "With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Sir Walter Scott, whom I can despise so entirely as I despise Shakespeare." Twain and Shaw were both known for their coruscating wit, but they were far from the exception in terms of charity toward their peers. Literary one-upmanship is the subject of this hilariously evil book. Those who delight in literary malice can enjoy Cocteau's damnation of Victor Hugo, and Edith Sitwell's denunciation of D. H. Lawrence. Drawn from the popular "Writers on Writers" column in the *The Guardian*, *Poisoned Pens* captures those moments when major authors' talents are turned toward the petulant, abusive, mocking, and downright mean.

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