

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-49525-7 - Women's Writing in English: Lorna Sage
 Edited by Germaine Greer and Elaine Showalter
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

A

Abbess of Crewe, The (1974) MURIEL SPARK'S fourteenth novel is a characteristically elegant and economical satire on politics, and, in particular, surveillance, inspired largely by the Watergate affair. In the Benedictine Abbey at Crewe, the sinister and manipulative Sister Alexandra has recently triumphed in the elections for Abbess, aided by a secret inner circle of loyal nuns, and by her extensive and closely monitored network of listening and viewing devices. Her supremacy is threatened, however, by her defeated rival, Sister Felicity, who has fled the Abbey following the bungled robbery of her silver thimble by representatives from a nearby Jesuit Order, and who is now engaged in unmasking Alexandra's misdemeanours to the press and television. The Abbess's struggle for control of the Order, in the course of which she continually asserts that she and her cohorts are operating in the realm of mythology, and are therefore not subject to everyday laws, echoes Spark's perennial interest in the nature of charisma, the conflict between personal will and the larger forces of history, and the battle between good and evil, particularly within a religious setting. AC

Abdullah, Mena 1930– Australian poet and short-story writer who explores the overt tensions and hidden delights of an Indian upbringing in rural Australia. Born in Bundarra, New South Wales, to sheep-farming immigrant parents, she was among the first in the country to write of ethnic difference at a time when the White Australia Policy was still active. 'The Red Koran' (1954), her first published poem, draws on the disparity between location and inheritance to inform the bush ballad with Indian folklore. Appearing in the *Bulletin* in 1954, it was anthologized in *Australian Poetry* (1955) as was her poem 'The Prison' (1957).

Her elliptical short stories are vivid with landscape and tradition and tell of the quest for identity and enchantment in an unfamiliar land. 'What was to be done with a dark-faced Indian child who was a second-generation Australian?' asks 'Grandfather Tiger' (1956). Although all but three of her stories – collected in *The Time of the Peacock* (1965) – were 'in collaboration with' the poet, Ray Mathew, it is generally thought that he was more an influence than a co-author. JAH

Abra (1978) JOAN BARFOOT'S first book, later reissued in Britain as *Gaining Ground* (1980), won the Books in Canada First Novel Award. Dealing with the betrayals of domesticity, it shows the female protagonist searching for an identity separate from that of her husband and family. Although conditioned to be dependent, and even though nothing is more frightening than freedom and uncertainty, Abra nevertheless flees a world in which her sole function seems to be circumscribed by a socially constructed role of wife and mother. Leaving the suburban security of husband and children, she goes to live in an isolated cabin, free from human contact, clocks and mirrors. Through a chosen life of self-sufficiency and the immediacy of living in close contact with nature, Abra gains physical strength and sharpened senses. Once deeply in touch with herself, she is ready and able to re-evaluate her life and account for her actions when her daughter tracks her down. In this women-centred fiction, Barfoot, in REALISTIC and intense detail, shows the protagonist's achievement of the inner peace and strength that formerly eluded her. SM/PRH

Acker, Kathy 1948–97 Avant-garde American novelist, *enfant terrible* of the subcultural POSTMODERN scene. Acker grew up in the midst of the counter-culture: in New York, mixing with the FLUXUS group and underground film-makers and studying Classics at Brandeis University, then on the West Coast, where she continued her studies at the University of California at San Diego and was married to Peter Gordon (actually her second marriage) in the seventies. During this period she had various jobs, ranging from secretary to sex show performer.

Often dubbed a 'punk' novelist, her early trilogy, comprising *The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula* (1973), *Idreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac: Imagining* (1974) and *The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec* (1975), constructs an aggressive, vulnerable, abject persona out of disparate materials: fiction, poetry, pornography, film, true lives and childhood memories. William Burroughs is a strong influence, along with Sade, Bataille, the surrealists and the *nouveau romanciers*. In the 1980s Acker divided her time between London and Paris. *Great Expectations* (1982), a schizophrenically cracked BILDUNGSROMAN, and *BLOOD AND GUTS IN HIGH*

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-49525-7 - Women's Writing in English: Lorna Sage
 Edited by Germaine Greer and Elaine Showalter
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

Ackland, Valentine [Mary Kathleen Macrory Ackland: 'Molly Turpin']

THE
 ENGLISH BREAD-BOOK.



"In no way, perhaps, is the progress of a nation in civilisation more unequivocally shown, than in the improvement which it realises in the food of the community."

Eliza Acton: title-page of *English Bread Book* ('In no way, perhaps, is the progress of a nation in civilisation more unequivocally shown, than in the improvement it realises in the food of the community'), 1857.

SCHOOL (1984), the picaresque confessions of a whore who meets up with Jean Genet, attracted mainstream attention, including charges of plagiarism and pornography. At this time she also diversified into other media, writing the screenplay for the film *Variety* (1983) and the libretto for an opera, *The Birth of the Poet* (1985). Her work isn't always hostile to narrative; *EMPIRE OF THE SENSELESS* (1988) and the earlier *Kathy Goes to Haiti* (1978) are shaped by relatively accessible plots. Stories and fragments from her career are collected in *Hannibal Lecter, My Father* (1991). Acker may be viewed as a formalist exploiting the death of the author or a frighteningly compulsive seeker-after-identity within the patriarchal symbolic. She died of cancer at the age of forty-nine. MO'D

Ackland, Valentine [Mary Kathleen Macrory Ackland; 'Molly Turpin'] 1906–68 British poet who strode about her Dorset home in breeches with a rifle. Her trade-mark Eton crop was the result of an act of defiance on the morning of her disastrous brief marriage to Richard Turpin. Ackland's confident personality hid insecurity about her work: her verse was

loose-formed and slight, and her output was small. She became convinced that she could only write 'properly' when experiencing emotional despair, a conviction that conflicted with the happiness she found after 1930 in her 'marriage' to novelist and poet SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER. Together they produced *Whether a Dove or a Seagull*, dedicated to Valentine's hero, Robert Frost, who was embarrassed by it. The individual poems were left anonymous, but this failed to deflect critical attention from their authorship, with unfortunate consequences for the lesser writer. Valentine's later life was characterized by restless searching after meaning, in human rights issues, religion and love-affairs. JLB

Acton, Eliza 1799–1859 Considered Britain's first modern cookery writer because of the exactness of her recipes, which remain eminently practical today. She was both educator and food reformer, ahead of her time in advocating healthy eating and simple cooking. Her work remained in print until 1918 when ousted by that of MRS ISABELLA BEETON.

Eliza grew up in Ipswich in East Anglia where her father was a partner in a brewery and wine business. Aged 18, Eliza and a friend founded a boarding school in Suffolk, offering 'a course of education combining elegance and utility with economy'. She left after four years, though she may have begun writing poetry at this time for some was published during the 1820s. Ill health led to her living in France where she developed a lifelong admiration for French cooking. It's thought she became engaged to a French officer whose infidelity caused her to return home, possibly with an illegitimate daughter who was brought up by her sister.

During the 1830s Eliza approached her publisher with 'further fugitive verses' but Mr Longman suggested she write a COOKERY BOOK instead. *Modern Cookery, in all its Branches* (1845) was the result. In 1855 an expanded edition appeared, *Modern Cookery for Private Families*, described by ELIZABETH DAVID as 'the greatest cookery book in our language'; in its preface the author complains of being much plagiarized. Eliza's only other work, *The English Bread Book* (1857), was published just two years before her death in London due to premature old age. GH

Adam[s], Jane [Jean] 1710–65 British poet and teacher born in Renfrewshire, Scotland. Being orphaned at an early age she went into domestic service for a local minister, using his library to educate herself. Her religious poems, often deeply pious and didactic, were collected and published in Glasgow in 1734 as *Miscellany Poems, by Mrs Jane Adams, in Crawfordsdyke*. Her enthusiasm for ameliorating the social position of women was evinced by her founding of a girls' school in Scotland. She was reported to have

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-49525-7 - Women's Writing in English: Lorna Sage
 Edited by Germaine Greer and Elaine Showalter
 Excerpt

[More information](#)

Adams, Anna

closed this for six weeks in order to walk to London to meet Samuel Richardson, whose *Clarissa* had so moved her. She died in Glasgow's poorhouse, having been admitted as an impoverished vagrant. Much of her work has been ignored since her death, and she remains best known for being the supposed author of the song, much admired by Burns, 'There's nae luck about the house'.

ELER

Adam Bede (1859) Extraordinarily popular when it first appeared, this novel by GEORGE ELIOT is set in the Midlands at the beginning of the 19th century. Its scenes of rural life and detailed characterization have often led it to be described as a quintessentially 'REALIST' novel, along with Eliot's other works.

The plot is based around four main characters: Adam Bede, the village carpenter, Hetty Sorrel, the woman he loves, Arthur Donnithorne, the local squire, and Dinah, the methodist preacher. The relationship of Hetty, who is seduced by flattery and attention, with Arthur reaches a tragic conclusion when she is imprisoned for infanticide, and 'some fatal influence seems to have shut up her heart against her fellow-creatures'. Like other novels by Eliot, *Adam Bede* was conceived as a moral book in which all the main characters learn through suffering, so that Adam becomes worthy enough to marry the caring Dinah, Arthur comprehends the consequences of his actions, and Hetty's confessional to Dinah allows her to both give and receive forgiveness.

RDM

Adam-Smith, Patsy (Patricia Jean) 1924– Australian author best known for her popular historical and autobiographical works. Established her name with *Hear the Train Blow* (1964), an account of her childhood in rural Victoria, where her father worked as a railway fettler and her mother as a station-mistress. Two subsequent books, *There was a Ship* (1967) and *Goodbye Girlie* (1994), have extended her life story, covering her time with the Voluntary Aid Detachment during World War II, her six years as the first woman articulated as an able seaman on an Australian coastal trader, and her later experiences living in the outback. Her time working in adult education in Hobart and as a manuscripts field officer for the State Library of Victoria led to an interest in writing the life stories of others, especially of people working in extreme conditions. These include *Moonbird People* (1965), *Outback Heroes* (1981) and *The Shearers* (1982). She has also produced several works relating to Australian war-time experiences, including *The Anzacs* (1978), *Australian Women at War* (1984) and *Prisoners of War: From Gallipoli to Korea* (1992). In addition, she has written or edited several histories and other studies of the railways of Australia as well as works based on Tasmanian history, such as *Heart of*

Exile (1986), on the Irish political prisoners sent there in the early 19th century. Adam-Smith describes her life and her writing as being driven by a need for independence and freedom, which is 'the sweetest thing and I ran headlong into it'.

EW

Adams, Abigail Smith 1744–1818 Wife of John Adams, second president of the United States from 1797 to 1801. Married in 1764, she bore four children who survived to adulthood: Abigail (b. 1765), John Quincy (b. 1767, US president 1825–9), Charles (b. 1770) and Thomas (b. 1772). Consistent with the cultural norms of her era, Adams regarded writing for a public audience as inappropriate for a woman; her considerable private correspondence, however, much of which was addressed to her husband during the long separations occasioned by his responsibilities as a statesman, offers a unique insider's view of the events that led to the establishment of the new nation and is commonly regarded by historians as the most thorough accounting of the Revolutionary period available from a woman's perspective.

Her most celebrated letter was written to her husband in 1776 after she learned he would take part in crafting the Declaration of Independence. She points out the problematic paradox of the Southern congressional delegates' simultaneous advocacy of liberty and defence of slavery and then writes, '[I]n the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies . . . Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If . . . attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.' The letter's humorous tone and sophisticated consideration of political issues suggest the egalitarian nature of the couple's relationship. Adams's letters to her husband, along with her voluminous correspondence with friends and family, provide an early look at an American women's literary tradition that links gender equity with the national political morality.

VC

Adams, Anna 1926– British poet born in West London who celebrates the force of nature and writes with a remarkable empathy for the natural and human worlds. Adams trained as an artist and ceramicist at Harrow Art School and Hornsey College of Art. She worked as an art teacher, casual farm labourer and pottery designer, and divides her time between Horton-in-Ribblesdale and London. Her work distrusts both biography and the personal pronoun – a calculated and impassioned aesthetic which draws strength from the examples of the poets ELIZABETH BISHOP and Charles Tomlinson. She published *A*

Adams, Glenda

Journey Through Winter in 1969 and has pursued a prolific career since. Her rate of productivity is driven by a high-pressured awareness of mortality. In the very moving *A Reply to Intercepted Mail (A Verse Letter to W.H. Auden)* (1979), she tells how, following a sudden life-threatening illness in 1960, she 'begged for time', the medicine partly being 'poetry'. The qualities inherent in the prose of *Island Chapters* (1991) and *Life on Limestone* (1994) are her ear for the cadences of speech, precise observation, wit and compassion. These skills become even more concentrated in her poetry. She published *Green Resistance: New and Selected Poems*, in 1996. DM

Adams, Glenda 1940– Australian novelist and short-story writer, born and educated in Sydney. She studied languages at the University of Sydney, before travelling first to Indonesia and then settling in New York in 1964, where she studied creative writing at Columbia University. Adams taught fiction-writing in New York and travelled in Europe, remaining an expatriate until her return to Sydney in 1990. Adams has written several novels, including *The Tempest of Clemenza* (1996), *Longleg* (1990), *Dancing on Coral* (1987) and *Games of the Strong* (1982), in addition to two collections of short stories, *The Hottest Night of the Century* (1979) and *Lies and Stories* (1976). She has won several major Australian literary prizes, including the 1987 Miles Franklin and New South Wales Premier's awards for *Dancing on Coral*, and the 1991 Banjo Award and 1990 Age Book of the Year Award for *Longleg*. Adams has written in both NATURALISTIC and highly stylized modes, with *Games of the Strong* and some stories from *The Hottest Night of the Century* using experimental and allegorical forms. These elements are uncomfortably combined in her novel, *The Tempest of Clemenza*, which follows the emotional relationship of a mother and her dying adolescent daughter as they pursue their lives in the USA, while at the same time telling a GOTHIC and highly layered tale of the mother's own upbringing in Australia. MLA

Adams, Hannah 1755–1831 American writer, historian. Considered the first professional American writer, Hannah grew up in Medfield, Massachusetts, and came to her scholarship through economic necessity and intense curiosity. Educated at home because of poor health and her father's financial difficulties, Adams read every book in her father's library and even learned Greek and Latin from the occasional boarders her father took in. During the Revolutionary War she helped support her family by making lace and tutoring, but also began laboriously researching theology and history. For a long time the only woman allowed in the Boston Athenaeum, she was so intense in her studies that the librarian claimed he often could not induce her to leave during his lunch hour. Adams's

first book, *A Compendium of the Various Sects Which Have Appeared From the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Present Day* (1784), was her answer to Broughton's terribly biased *Dictionary of Religions*. Adams's book sold out its subscription list, but her contract returned most of the money to her publisher. Subsequent editions, printed under shrewder contracts, increased her income and allowed her to compile several expanded editions. Research for her *Summary History of New England* (1799) was so demanding that it caused her temporary blindness. The volume was a comprehensive history from the Mayflower to the Constitution, which she was in the process of abridging as a textbook for sale to schools when Jedidiah Morse published his own textbook version. The result was a ten-year litigation, with heated theological and philosophical battles, which ended in 1814 in Adams's favour. Following *The Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion* (1804), a series of portraits of exemplary Christian laymen, she published the sympathetic *History of the Jews* (1812). Her final work, *Memoir* (1832), was written to support her ailing younger sister. SP

Adams, Sarah Flower 1805–48 Poet and hymn-writer, born at Great Harlow, Essex. When her father died in 1829 she lived with the family of W.J. Fox, and contributed articles to his literary journal, the *Monthly Repository*. In 1834 she married William Bridges Adams. Her principal work, *Vivia Perpetua, a Dramatic Poem*, a play about its heroine's conversion to Christianity, was published in 1841 and a long poem in ballad metre, entitled 'The Royal Progress', appeared in the *Illuminated Magazine* for 1845.

She wrote numerous unpublished poems on social and political subjects and composed several hymns which were set to music by her sister, and used in the services at Finsbury Chapel. She was drawn to dramatic writing and even considered acting as a profession, but much of her work was devotional and lyrical rather than dramatic in form. She is best known for her hymn 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'. RS

Adcock, Fleur 1934– New Zealand poet, editor, translator. She gained an MA in Classics from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Having had an English childhood, Adcock made Britain her permanent home in 1963, and worked as a professional librarian for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in England until 1979. In 1996 she was awarded the OBE for her contribution to New Zealand literature.

Although frequently cited for its cool restraint, Adcock's detached voice is distilled from an underlying emotional intensity. Her subject matter spans personal relationships and ecological, political, historical and gender concerns. She uses an assured lyrical voice and biting wit:

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-49525-7 - Women's Writing in English: Lorna Sage
 Edited by Germaine Greer and Elaine Showalter
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

Adeline Mowbray

Donio hardly smokes in the ward
 and hardly eats more than ^{during sporadic} ~~the~~ ^{meals} -

she puts on ~~the same~~ ^{he} skirt again

but she considers all bathroom
 work of her Pleymo cigarettes rather 10,
 and the ^{condemning} - ^{hilly} ^{steps} ^{pauses}
 for ~~seconds~~ ^{minutes} by her bed.

Each week she ~~she~~ puts a clothes basket
 to ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~ward~~ ^{ward} - ^{why}
 and she ~~has~~ ^{has} to ~~pick~~ ^{pick} ~~up~~ ^{up} ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~baggy~~ ^{baggy} ~~skirt~~ ^{skirt}
 more lightly ~~than~~ ^{than} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~skirt~~ ^{skirt} ~~she~~ ^{she} ~~wears~~ ^{wears}.

Her face, a white shadow through smoked glass,
 lets Soho display itself unregarded.

Fleur Adcock: extract from manuscript of 'The Soho
 Hospital for Women', 1975.

I write in praise of the solitary act:
 of not feeling a trespassing tongue
 forced into one's mouth, one's breath
 smothered, nipples crushed against the
 ribcage, and that metallic tingling
 in the chin set off by a certain odd nerve ...

There is much to be said for abandoning
 this no longer novel exercise -
 for not 'participating in
 a total experience' - when
 one feels like the lady in Leeds who
 had seen *The Sound of Music* eighty-six times ...
 ('Against Coupling')

More recently, Adcock has focused on women's experience through an array of fictional voices, as in 'Mary Magdalene and the Birds': 'Tricks and tumbles are my trade, I'm / all birds to all men. / I switch voices, adapt my features, / do whatever turn you fancy. / All that is constant is my hair: // plumage, darlings, beware of it'. Her diction, accessible and declarative, derives from the anti-academicism and irony of Movement aesthetics, and she is at ease with traditional principles - her work fuses casual speech and various stanzaic forms for its rhythmic energies.

An early interest in FAIRY TALE and allegory (*The Eye of the Hurricane* (1964) and *Tigers* (1967)) shifted to realistic documentations of urban and domestic scenes,

although Adcock still explores poetry as narrative fiction in futuristic works such as 'Gas' (*HIGH TIDE IN THE GARDEN* 1971).

Much of Adcock's work uses the perspective of the ambivalent outsider - a position overtly aligned to issues of immigration and national identity, from *High Tide in the Garden* (1971) to *Time Zones* (1991), a title that refers both to geographical regions and to the hauntings of memory.

Her editorial and translation work intensified in the 1980s and 1990s, and included *The Oxford Book of Contemporary New Zealand Poetry* (1982), *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Women's Poetry* (1987), Grete Tartler's *Oriental Express* (1989), Daniela Crăsnura's *Letters From Darkness* (1991), and (with Jacqueline Simms) *The Oxford Book of Creatures* (1995). The Eighties also saw the appearance of her *Selected Poems* (1983) and *The Incident Book* (1986), which retrospectively traces Adcock's role as outsider to its origins in her English childhood. *Looking Back* (1997) extends her fascination with personal and ancestral history.

EJN

Adeline Mowbray (1804) This was the third novel by AMELIA OPIE and tells the story of a girl brought up in a free-thinking environment by a philosophical mother. Unaware that her parent's opinions are strictly theoretical, Adeline defies convention by attempting to live by the principles she has been taught. She lives openly with her handsome young lover, Glenmurray,

Adventures of David Simple, The

in accordance with the free-thinking rejection of marriage. Adeline boldly and nobly defies the public odium until, after the death of Glenmurray, she is finally brought to see the error of her ways by the intervention of a Quaker. By the end of the novel she is able to die, reconciled to God and social convention.

The characters of Adeline Mowbray and Glenmurray have been widely identified with MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT and William Godwin, with whom Amelia Opie was intimate in the 1790s. While Adeline is sympathetically portrayed as moral but misguided, the novel can be seen as an attack on the Godwinian attitude to marriage. It has thus been allied to the reaction against radical, 'jacobin' ideas, despite its criticism of intolerance, bigotry and slavery. LBE

Adventures of David Simple, The (1744) SARAH FIELDING's first and most famous novel was praised for its 'vast Penetration into human Nature'. Acclaimed by Richardson, Johnson and the BLUE-STOCKINGS, it was included with other classics in the *Novelists Magazine* (1782) and commended in CLARA REEVE's *THE PROGRESS OF ROMANCE* (1785). However its sentimental philosophy, its emphasis on tender feelings and moral predicaments, and its pessimistic conclusion that selflessness is inevitably defeated by worldly ambition, delayed modern recognition. The guileless hero's quest to found an ideal community 'without any selfish and separate Interest' encounters self-seeking cynics and tragic set-backs. The only real survivor is Cynthia, whose spirited complaints that the intellectual aspirations of clever girls are thwarted, and that a wife is no more than an 'upper Servant', possibly echoed her author's own frustrations. Sarah's brother Henry wrote a complimentary preface and edited the second edition, which she followed with two sequels. LMT

African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe (1991) In this political TRAVEL NARRATIVE DORIS LESSING's ambivalence about her exile from Africa prompts a rethinking of time. Her desire to belong in Africa appears doomed to collide with the violence of the COLONIAL past and an eternal POST-COLONIAL present. Fracturing the linear colonial/post-colonial framework imposed on Africa's history enables an imaginative means of belonging.

African Laughter appears to be a straightforward REALIST excursion into four visits to Zimbabwe (1982–92). Although chapter divisions reflect the time periods of each visit, the simple device of merging time frames through retrospection and anticipation, of informed comment on events which occurred in her absence, creates a pervasive presence for the exiled self which enables a kind of belonging. Lessing's fascina-

tion with Zimbabwe's rock formations offers a more complex questioning of time. The rupturing of 'historical time' through the medium of 'ageless' geographical features alludes to an elusive relationship with landscape beyond the dynamics of ownership and appropriation. It hints at an ambivalent aesthetics of desire encompassing the yearning, both for time as a referent in the making of identities, and for its opposite, the negation of time to free the self. C-AM

Age of Innocence, The (1920) EDITH WHARTON's Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel describes the disillusionment of its thoughtful, conformist hero with the stifling manners and mores of 19th-century New York society. The significantly named Newland Archer marries the charming but conventional May and, believing that 'Women should be free . . . as free as we are', he unsuccessfully attempts to raise her out of their trivial and confined sphere only to discover instead his increasing attraction to her disgraced cousin, Countess Ellen Olenska. Vibrant with thwarted passions and necessary renunciations, prompted by a refusal to 'behave like people in novels', the relationship between Newland and Ellen nevertheless owes something to Henry James's microcosmic representations of the stormy FIN DE SIÈCLE affair between the civilizations of Puritan, young America and of ancient, decadent Europe, although the 'innocence' of the younger culture is shown throughout the novel to be only mythical. By the end of the novel an older, widowed Newland reflects on the liberating potential of rapid technological and cultural change, but, crippled by the values of the old society, he ultimately renounces Ellen. MM

Agnes Grey (1847) ANNE BRONTË's first novel, published under the pseudonym 'Acton Bell', depicts the life of a clergyman's daughter whose circumstances force her to become a governess. The first-person narrative presents an uncompromising satire on middle-class social behaviour, exemplified by two families, the Bloomfields and the Murrays. Their moral vacuity, self-indulgence and habitual failure to support their governesses in matters of discipline are contrasted with Agnes's own strict and unyielding ethical attitudes. The protagonist finally finds happiness through marriage with Mr Weston, the curate, who has always stood by her through her years of servitude. The book was partly inspired by Brontë's own experience as a governess to the Ingham family at Blake Hall, Mirfield, in 1839, where she was unfairly dismissed after only one year, and to the Robinson family at Thorpe Green Hall between 1841 and 1845. In the Preface of the second edition of her later book *THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL*, Brontë vigorously defends this outspoken portrayal of the deprivations of the governess class. NBP

Aguilar, Grace 1816–47 British novelist. Aguilar was the first woman to write in English about Judaism. Enormously popular, many of her works were translated into foreign languages. Educated at home by her Spanish immigrant parents, Aguilar was ill and, by some accounts, dominated by her mother for most of her short life. Seven of Aguilar's novels were published posthumously by Sarah Dias Fernandes Aguilar. By looking at composition rather than publication dates, Aguilar's writing career can be divided into three phases. The first one is of Historical ROMANCE. This includes *Vale of Cedars*, a romance set during the Inquisition. The central characters are practising Jews who must hide their faith behind both a metaphorical veil and a literal vale (a valley of cedars). Her second phase is translation, theology and BIOGRAPHY. It is this phase that has garnered the most critical attention. These works include *Israel Defended* (1838), a translation from the French on the emancipation question; *The Spirit of Judaism* (1842) which explores the humanistic spirit anchoring Jewish rituals; and *Women of Israel* (1844), a collective biography of women who appear in the Bible and the Talmud. This last work was still being given as a Sunday School prize as late as the 1950s. Her final phase is one of moral and DOMESTIC FICTION. Her two most popular works come from this time: *Home Influence* (1847) and *A Mother's Recompense* (1851). In these works, Aguilar seems to be advocating both the Victorian ideal of motherhood and the restricted freedom of women. RB-S

Aidoo, Ama Ata [Christina] 1942– Ghanaian playwright, novelist, short-story writer and poet, born in the Fanti-speaking region of Central Ghana. She studied and later taught at the University of Ghana, was Minister for Education in the Ghanaian government in the 1980s, and has also lived and taught in Zimbabwe and the United States. While at the University of Ghana in 1964 she produced her first play, *Dilemma of a Ghost*, which dramatizes a young African-American woman's search for a homeland and the conflict between her western individualism and an African emphasis on community and family. Aidoo's second play, *Anowa* (1969), takes up similar issues in a 19th-century Ghanaian setting and in terms of the conflict between a young African woman's desire for romance and equality and her husband's quest for status and wealth. Both plays focus on women who desire to be sisters and comrades, and both set that female desire for equality and comradeship in the context of slavery and inequalities of wealth and class. Aidoo's drama and fictions draw on an innovative mixture of African and European (especially Brechtian) techniques in their use of dialogue, chorus, music and oral story-telling.

Aidoo is now better known in Europe and North

America for her fiction. Her collection of short stories, *No Sweetness Here* (1970), is remarkable for the variety of its styles, techniques and narrative voices, frequently of rural men and women whose lives have been disrupted by colonization, war and racism. Her experimental novel, *OUR SISTER KILLJOY: Confessions of a Black-Eyed Squint* (1977), explores the ways in which language, western education and the glamour of material goods from the West seduce the younger generation of Ghanaians. Aidoo's fiction engages with issues which are crucially important to the health and identity of the emerging Ghanaian nation, but they do so with a lively humour, compassion and subtlety unusual in writing from Ghana.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Aidoo published two collections of poems, *Someone Talking to Sometime* (1985) and *An Angry Letter in January* (1992), and a number of children's books. Yet another change in style and direction was signalled by a ROMANCE, *Changes* (1991), awarded the 1992 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book (Africa), which explores the dilemmas of contemporary urban professional women in Ghana. CLI

Aiken, Joan (Delano) 1924– British writer of historical ROMANCES, thrillers and imaginative adventure-fiction for children (see CHILDREN'S BOOKS). Born in Sussex, the daughter of American poet Conrad Aiken, she was educated at home and read widely (especially AUSTEN, Scott, the BRONTËS, Dickens and Poe, whose influences are apparent). She supported her children as a copy-writer after her first husband died in 1955, before winning acclaim for several juvenile mysteries including *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (1962), a FAIRY TALE set in a Britain ruled by descendants of Bonnie Prince Charlie and haunted by ravening wolves. Many stories rely on fantasy and magic: *A Necklace of Raindrops and Other Stories* (1968) features egg-laying houses and flying pies baked with sky. Her adult novels of intrigue (*A Cluster of Separate Sparks*, 1972) and regency romances (*The Five-Minute Marriage*, 1977) indulge the romance of place. She has written four companion books to the novels of Jane Austen. (*Eliza's Daughter* (1994) invents a story for Willoughby's misguided victim from *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*; *Emma Watson* (1996) rewrites Austen's fragment, *The Watsons*.) Recent children's fiction (*Cold Shoulder Road*, 1995) continues familiar themes of mysterious disappearances, child abduction and miraculous rescue. Aiken remarried and lives in Sussex and New York. LDo

Albatross Muff, The (1977) BARBARA HANRAHAN's 'fantastic' novel troubles Dickensian England with a lost dreamscape of Australia. Mama, daughter Stella and ex-convict maid Moak travel from Australia, after Stella's father falls from his horse and becomes a bloodied corpse, to the oppressively gendered and

Alcott, Louisa May

class-ridden world of Victorian England. Here Mama's friend Pensa languishes on a couch, giving birth to a series of babies that disappoint if they are girls and die if they are boys. Albatross, shot on the voyage, cast a malign shadow over events: girls lapse into madness, there are numerous deaths, and Stella, antipodean and therefore vulnerable, becomes the victim of a predatory patriarch in her quest to recover the perfect body of the father. Throughout, deformed and diseased bodies resist the Victorian ideal, and slums lurk around the corner from 'well-groomed' London, though an idyllic female space in Wales offers refuge. Edith, a Mariner figure, writes to 'soothe the past': through her and references to Coleridge, Dickens and CHARLOTTE BRONTË, Hanrahan plays with literariness, confusing the distinctions between real and imaginary, magical and rational. CM

Alcott, Louisa May 1832–88 American novelist and short-story writer. Nothing in her early life could have prepared Alcott for the success she eventually achieved with the publication of *LITTLE WOMEN*. As the daughter of the Transcendentalist philosopher Amos Bronson Alcott she was brought up within the formidably high-minded milieu of the 19th-century Massachusetts intelligentsia, and was principally taught at home by her father in preference to an orthodox schooling. She herself began a career in teaching in order to shield her family from the effects of Bronson Alcott's eccentric improvidence. When their circumstances worsened she took in sewing and worked as a general maid, before volunteering as a Union Army nurse at the outbreak of the Civil War.

During this period she began to write a series of violently SENSATIONAL magazine stories – 'I think my natural ambition', she declared, 'is for the lurid style. I indulge in gorgeous fancies and wish that I dared set them before the public.' Employing various pseudonyms, Alcott continued to produce such adult fare, with its murderous, drug-addicted heroines, long after she had made her reputation as a children's writer. The nature of this dual identity was only exposed during the 1940s, when Madeleine Stern and Leona Rostenberg successfully penetrated her various literary disguises.

After the Civil War, Alcott made the first of several visits to Europe, where she tried unsuccessfully to interest a London publisher in the manuscript which eventually became *Little Women*. Published in 1868, the novel, set against a background of a Yankee household managed by the mother while the father is absent fighting for the Union, was instantly popular, providing the author with the affluence and security earlier denied her. Just as Marmee, wise, benign matriarch of the March family, is based on Alcott's mother, so her four daughters – socially adventurous Meg, artistic

Amy, angelic Beth, and Jo, whose literary hankerings are buoyed up by irrepressible high spirits – are all in some sense autobiographical refractions, or else based on Alcott family originals. To Jo, most plainly her creator's *alter ego*, three more books – *GOOD WIVES*, *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys* – were devoted, and though Alcott claimed to be tiring of 'providing moral pap for the young', her fame continues to rest securely on her achievements in this genre.

Despite obvious concessions to mid 19th-century sentimentality, her stories are firmly grounded in contemporary American life, never demanding that we view their heroines as anything more than ordinary girls of their period. Identification and republication of Alcott's adult potboilers, including a recently discovered novel, *The Chase*, have created a fresh context for feminist criticism of her writings for the young. JK

Alden, Isabella (Macdonald) [Pansy] 1841–1930 American CHILDREN'S author and popular religious novelist. She was born in Rochester, New York, and educated by her father and at boarding schools. After publishing her first story in a local paper at the age of 10, she set out as a schoolgirl to explain Christianity to children in *Helen Lester*, which won a prize from the Christian Tract Society and was published under her penname 'Pansy' in 1865. In 1866 she married Presbyterian minister Gustavus R. Alden. They had a son whose ill health prompted them to move first to Winter Park, Florida, and later to Palo Alto, California. Alden was active in the Sunday School movement, the Young People's Society for Christian Endeavour, the Chautauqua movement, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In addition to writing for and editing several religious magazines, she wrote or edited nearly 150 books, most of them for children. Her Chautauqua novels, beginning with *Four Girls at Chautauqua* (1876), helped to establish Christian summer camps. Her most popular novels were a series based on her own experiences *Ester Ried: Asleep and Awake* (1870), *Ester Ried Yet Speaking* (1883), and *Ester Ried's Namesake* (1906), but the works considered her most important were a life of Christ, *The Prince of Peace* (1890), and a retelling of Christ's life in a modern setting, *Yesterday, Framed in To-Day* (1898). By 1900 her books were selling worldwide, translated into many languages, at the rate of 100,000 per year. Alden left an unfinished autobiography, *Memories of Yesterday*, completed by her niece Grace Livingston Hill. JSG

Aldrich, Bess (Streeter) [Margaret Dean Stevens] 1881–1954 American novelist and short-story writer. Daughter of pioneer settlers, she was born in Cedar Falls, Iowa, attended local schools and the Iowa state teachers' college, and taught for six years in Iowa and Utah. In 1907 she married Charles S. Aldrich, a

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-49525-7 - Women's Writing in English: Lorna Sage
 Edited by Germaine Greer and Elaine Showalter
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

Aleramo, Sibilla



ST. ROBRIDGE & CO. LITH. CINCINNATI, O.

O LORD DON'T LET TODE EVER TOUCH A DROP OF RUM! Page 20.

Isabella Alden: 'O Lord don't let Tode ever touch a drop of rum!', illustration from *Three People*, 1873.

banker and lawyer, with whom she settled in Elmwood, Nebraska, and had four children. She began publishing short stories in 1911 and after her husband died, in 1925, she wrote to support the family. Her ten novels, beginning with *The Rim of the Prairie* (1925), concentrate on the settlement of the Mississippi Valley region. In her bestselling *A Lantern in Her Hand* (1928), Aldrich pays tribute to her pioneer mother. The heroine of *Miss Bishop* (1933; filmed 1941) dedicates her life to teaching after being disappointed in love. *Song of Years* (1939) chronicles the growth of Cedar Falls into an industrial city. The title character of *The Lieutenant's Lady* (1942) is a 19th-century army wife living on the frontier. Aldrich wrote over 150 short stories concentrating on small-town family life, collected in *The Man Who Caught the Weather* (1936), *Journey into Christmas* (1949), *The Bess Streeeter Aldrich Reader* (1950) and *A Bess Streeeter Aldrich Treasury* (1959).

JSG

Aldrich, Mildred [H. Quinn] 1853–1928 American journalist born in Providence, Rhode Island, and raised in Boston. After graduating from high school in 1872, she taught in an elementary school in Boston. She wrote for the *Boston Home Journal*, *Arena*, the *Boston Journal* and the *Boston Herald*, and founded and edited

The Mahogany Tree, a weekly journal of ideas. By 1904 she had moved to France and was supporting herself as a foreign correspondent for American magazines. She also translated French plays into English and negotiated rights for US productions of French plays. In 1914 she moved to a cottage in Huiry outside Paris, from which she wrote eyewitness accounts of the Battle of the Marne. These are collected in *A Hilltop on the Marne* (1915), a bestseller considered her most important work. Other writing about World War I appears in *On the Edge of the War Zone* (1917), *The Peak of the Load* (1918), *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* (1919) and her Foreword to *The Letters of Thomasine Atkins (WAAC) On Active Service* (1918). *Told in a French Garden* (1914) is a collection of stories told in imitation of Boccaccio. Aldrich received the French Légion d'Honneur in 1922 for influencing the US to enter the war. A close friend of GERTRUDE STEIN and ALICE B. TOKLAS, she appears in Stein's *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS* (1932).

JSG

Aleramo, Sibilla 1876–1960 Pseudonym of Rina Faccio, Italian writer, poet, political and social activist, who became known throughout Europe with her novel, *Una Donna* (1906; *A Woman at Bay*, 1908) the semi-autobiographical account of her marriage to an abusive husband and her eventual decision to leave, which meant the loss of her son. A controversial and

Alexander, Cecil Frances

shocking novel for its time, it was compared to Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Aleramo had been seduced by a worker, Ulderico Pierangeli, at Porto Civitanova Marche where she was employed as a book-keeper, and forced into marriage in 1893. Aleramo did not write another novel until 1919, *Il Passaggio*, which was a revision of *Una Donna*, and included details of her affair with the writer Giovanni Cena. She then published a collection of her poetry, *Momenti* (1920), and two volumes from her JOURNALS, *Diario di una donna: Inediti 1945-60* and *Un amore insolito: Inediti 1940-44*, were published posthumously in 1979 and 1978 respectively, as well as essays concerned with female subjectivity and autonomy. Although she was known in the Italian press chiefly for her love-affairs with other writers, Aleramo became an activist for political and social change, travelling to Eastern-bloc countries at the behest of the Italian Communist party. SD

Alexander, Cecil Frances 1818–95 Religious poet and hymn-writer, the author of 'There is a green hill far away . . .', the carol 'Once in Royal David's City', and 'All things Bright and Beautiful'. Her family owned large estates in County Wicklow and County Tyrone in Ireland. Her brothers went to Oxford and she and her sisters were educated at home. As a young woman, she wrote a book of stories with Harriet Howard, the daughter of Lord Wicklow. She was committed to the High Anglican views of the Oxford Movement and wrote pamphlets for Newman and Keble as well as books of verse and prose for children. In 1850 she married William Alexander, rector of Termonamongan in County Tyrone (later Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland), and later bore four children. When her husband was created Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Frances set up a home for fallen women there. RS

Alexander, Meena 1951– Indian poet, novelist, essayist and critic. Born in Allahabad, into a Christian family, the author moved to Sudan with her family at the age of 5. She began writing poetry and publishing at a very early age. When she was 17, she went to the English Midlands, to Nottingham, where she completed a Ph.D. on *Women in Romanticism*, published in 1989. Later she returned to India to teach in Delhi and Hyderabad. In 1979 she married an American and moved to New York, to teach creative writing at Columbia University, and Women's Studies at Hunter College.

She has published many volumes of poetry including *The Bird's Bright Ring* (1976), *I Root My Name* (1977), *Stone Roots* (1980), *House of a Thousand Doors* (1988) and *River and Bridge* (1995). Much of her poetry deals with the issues of origins, displacement and female identity. She is highly praised for the intense lyrical quality of

her writing. She has also written several novels. The first one, *Nampally Road* (1991), is a short novel set entirely in India. *FAULT LINES* (1994), her best book so far, is a memoir in which Alexander creates her leading figuration of the 'fault lines'. These are areas of fraction created by multiple uprootings through countries, languages and time.

In *The Shock of Arrival. Reflections on Postcolonial Experience* (1996), Alexander further explores the condition of migration and cultural displacement, fusing poetry, prose and critical thinking. Her novel *Manhattan Music* (1997) has an autobiographical content, and it narrates her life as a diasporic Indian writer, a married woman and a mother, a professor and a poet in the multicultural New York of the 1990s. SPo

Alexander, Mrs [Annie French Hector] 1825–1902 Originally from Ireland, this well-travelled author wrote over forty novels, many dealing unadornedly with matters of kinship, inheritance and obsession with money. *The Snare of the Fowler* (1892) details both the disappointment of someone who narrowly misses a large legacy and the predicament of a supposed heir dispossessed when he discovers that a woman, initially thought to be illegitimate, is entitled to inherit. Similarly, *Her Dearest Foe* (1876) is about a property dispute, though the dispute is resolved when the two combatants marry.

The young Annie French travelled extensively with her parents before they finally settled in London. However, it seems that, on marrying the explorer, merchant and archaeologist Alexander Hector in 1858, her nomadic life continued. She claimed to have written nothing between marriage and her husband's death in 1875. However, her best-known novel, *The Wooing o't*, was published in 1873.

As a widow, she wrote to support her four children and once again travel was on the agenda. The family lived in France and Germany in 1876–82 and in St Andrews in 1882–5, the former locations providing material for novels such as *The Frères* (1882). Her final novel, *Kitty Costello* (1904), is semi-autobiographical. EMH

Alford, Edna 1947– Canadian short-story writer, editor and teacher whose conventional REALIST stories scrutinize their characters' apparently mundane lives. Alford grew up in a working-class neighbourhood of Saskatoon where she went to school, before marrying and having a son. Her literary career began around the time she won a scholarship at 15 to attend a summer writing programme in Saskatchewan, and includes short-story collections: *A Sleep Full of Dreams* (1981), for which she was named co-winner of the Gerald Lampert Award, and *The Garden of*