

### Pseuds Corner



*Elizabeth Gaskell*

A minority of female Victorian authors adopted male pseudonyms, the most famous being 'Curer Bell' (Charlotte Bronte) and 'George Eliot' (Mary Anne Evans). Because women were privileged and could expect protection in just about every circumstance—including an apparent endorsement of low morals—most women writers stuck with their own names. These included Mrs Gaskell, who was unafraid to publish daring social novels like *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, who wrote of illicit affairs in so-called 'sensation novels' like *Lady Audleys' Secret*.



*Mary Elizabeth Braddon*

Many women authors, just as famous in their day, were so slight as now to be entirely forgotten, even by historians, but few of them bothered with the cover of a male alias—and though some did write anonymously, their sex was the one thing they *did* reveal. That Gaskell's and Braddon's books were almost exactly contemporaneous with those of 'Curer Bell' and 'George Eliot' dispatches the argument that novelists were somehow prevented from making their mark simply on account of being women.

parody of half understood male literature...still pleasing daddy'. Most women's poetry she dismisses on the grounds that you have to take yourself seriously to do poetry, and women either couldn't manage that at all or assumed a levity that became mere self-importance. She continued: 'Second-rate, dishonest, fake poetry is worse than no poetry at all.'

Plath has long been championed as a great figure held back through her betrayal by her partner, the much more substantial poet, Ted Hughes. The record has now been set straight. Hughes did much to help Plath in her writing, but she was very much in the shadow of a far greater artist. A classic instance of an artist who in the end failed to connect the inner and the outer, Plath imploded. Perhaps Graves was right that males and not