

# Resumé

After decades of criticism of the English novel for being conservative, traditional and mimetic, lacking inventiveness and will to experiment, what has emerged at the end of the century and the millennium is a new, multi-faceted British novel which can no longer be dismissed with a few unflattering attributes. The literary scene of the 1980s and 1990s is populated by an unprecedented number of interesting authors whose works offer a plethora of forms, styles, themes and attitudes many of which have come to be associated with postmodern writing.

The aim of this study of twelve contemporary British women novelists is to show that women writers have greatly contributed to the admirable variety of the recent literary output. By stressing the variety the study also wants to contest attempts to view women writers as a homogeneous group predominantly concerned with women issues. While it is true that, particularly in recent decades, fiction by women has brought to the fore and into the open a great deal of women's experience in terms of inequality, the dreary everyday of the household and the tribulations of motherhood, as well as greater explicitness about female intimacy and sexuality than ever before, there is no denying that contemporary women's writing reaches far beyond that both in thematics and literary achievement.

The chosen novelists are discussed in separate essays which map out the trajectory of their writing against the cultural background of the period with a special focus on their 1980s and 90s novels. Although their work clearly reflects the multiplicity of the British novel in the last two decades, what seems to connect them is their passionate involvement with today's world on whose social and literary discourses they in their different ways comment.