

Women's Right to Write: Since the beginning of the written word, literary works by women often were devalued or ignored and destined to obscurity. Many works by women went unsigned as a way to preserve them. Virginia Woolf wrote: "For most of history, Anonymous was a woman."

In the early nineteenth century, when it was not considered "lady like" for a lady to write, publish, and market books, three sisters wrote under pseudonyms to hide their improprieties from their father, an Anglican preacher, and to hide their gender from male publishers who might not print women's writings. Originally published under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, became known as the works of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Bronte.

As one of the late nineteenth century literary elite in New York, Emma Lazarus wrote poetry, novels, and translated German poems of Heinrich Heine. During the 1870's, over fifty of her poems and translations were published in trendy magazines. She translated classic Hebrew poems, many included in prayer books. But, as a woman and a Jew, she encountered bias in two worlds. At nineteen, she sent a copy of her first novel to Ralph Waldo Emerson. He encouraged her to write and mentored her for a several years. In his anthology entitled *Parnassus*, however, he included neither her name nor her poems, not even anonymously.

In 1883 funds were needed for the huge pedestal on which the Statue of Liberty, a gift from France sans pedestal, would rest as it stood in New York Harbor to welcome immigrants to the United States. Constance Harrison organized a fund-raising competition to sell poetry and sketches submitted by famous authors. Entrees included Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Walt Whitman, and Mark Twain. She invited Lazarus to enter but Lazarus declined stating, "I cannot write verse on order." Harrison, however challenged her to: "Think of the Russian refugee," a theme that pervaded her works.

Consumed with her vision of the new world as a haven for refugees of the old world, Lazarus wrote perhaps the greatest testimonial to the American ideal of freedom, "The New Colossus." It sold for \$21,500, an inconceivable amount at that time for a short poem. In part it reads:

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!"
Cries, she
With silent lips,
"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Poet, James Russell Lowell wrote, "I liked your sonnet about the statue better than I liked the statue itself. But your sonnet gives its subject a *raison d'etre* which it needed as much as it needed a pedestal,"

Lazarus died at age thirty-eight. Memorial services were held for her in all New York synagogues. Sixteen years hence, in 1903, the landmark with her poem was in place.

(Women's) History Repeats Itself-1998: Concerned whether boys would buy a book written by a woman, Bloomsbury Press suggested this author not use "her" name but her initials that would be gender neutral and/or could be assumed to be a "his" name. Void of a middle name or initial, she used Kathleen, her grandmother's name, and positioned "K." between J. and Rowling, as the anonymous women author of THE "Harry Potter" books for boys...and girls.

Sources: *Great Jewish Women* by Elinor Slater & Robert Slater, "JWAEmma LazarusDefiningEmmaLazarus," <http://www.jwa.org/exhibits/wov/lazarus/el15.html>