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Writing for Immortality

Anne E. Boyd

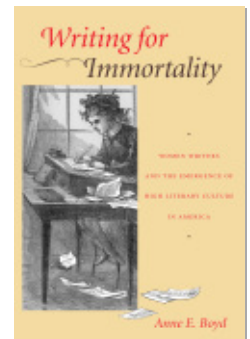
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Chronology

This chronology is not exhaustive but highlights events discussed in this book on a timeline that allows for a comparison of the four authors' biographies.

- 1823 Elizabeth Barstow [Stoddard] is born on May 6 in Mattapoissett, MA.
- 1832 Louisa May Alcott is born on November 29 in Germantown, PA.
- 1840 Abby May Alcott is born on July 26 in Concord, MA. (She will later go by May.)
Constance Fenimore Woolson is born on March 5, in Claremont, NH.
- 1843 The Alcotts undertake their Fruitlands experiment in June, and it will last until January 1844.
- 1844 Mary Gray Phelps [Elizabeth Stuart Phelps] is born on August 31.
- 1849 Stoddard's mother, Betsy Barstow, dies.
- 1851 Alcott's first publication, the poem "Sunlight," by "Flora Fairfield," appears in *Peterson's Magazine*.
Stoddard begins her friendship with Margaret Sweat, which will last until 1854. Stoddard attends literary gatherings in New York City and meets Richard Henry Stoddard and his circle of poet friends.
- 1852 Phelps's mother dies, after which the daughter adopts her mother's name, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps.
Stoddard's first publication, the sketch "Phases," appears in the *Literary World* in October. Her father goes bankrupt in the same month, breaking up her family in Mattapoissett. She marries Richard Henry Stoddard in December.
- 1853 Phelps's mother's story, "The Husband of a Blue," is published posthumously.
- 1854 Alcott's first book, *Flower Fables*, is published in December.
Stoddard begins to publish her column in the *Daily Alta California* in October; the column will run until February 1858.
- 1855 Stoddard gives birth to a son, Wilson (Willy).

- 1857 Elizabeth Gaskell's biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* is published. Stoddard and Alcott are inspired by the book and write about it, Stoddard in her *Daily Alta* column and Alcott in her journal. The *Atlantic Monthly* is founded.
- 1860 Alcott's first publication in the *Atlantic*, the story "Love and Self-Love," appears in March. A second story, "A Modern Cinderella," is published in the *Atlantic* in October. Her antislavery story "M.L." is rejected. Alcott writes the first draft of *Moods* in four weeks in August. Phelps reads *Aurora Leigh* and decides to commit herself to authorship. Stoddard's first short story, "My Own Story," is published in the *Atlantic* in May.
- 1861 Alcott revises *Moods*. Stoddard's son Willy dies.
- 1862 In January, James T. Fields, publisher of the *Atlantic*, tells Alcott to give up writing and gives her money to run a kindergarten, which she does from January to April while living with the Fieldses in Boston. In December, Alcott begins her secret life as a writer of sensation stories, winning a hundred-dollar prize from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. She also begins her stint as a Civil War nurse in Washington, D.C., which will end in January 1863. Stoddard's first novel, *The Morgesons*, is published.
- 1863 Alcott's *Hospital Sketches* are published in the *Boston Commonwealth* in May and June and then in book form. She has three works published in the *Atlantic*: the story "Debby's Début" in August (almost three years after it was accepted), the poem "Thoreau's Flute" in September, and the story "The Brothers" (later retitled "My Contraband") in November. In December, Alcott publishes a collection of her Civil War stories, *On Picket Duty, and Other Tales*. Stoddard's second son, Lorimer (Lorry), is born.
- 1864 Alcott's novel *Moods* is published in December. Fields rejects her story "An Hour" for the *Atlantic*, and the assistant editor accepts "Nelly's Hospital" for *Our Young Folks*. Her relationship with the publishing firm Ticknor and Fields and their magazines terminates.
- 1865 Alcott travels to Europe in July and returns in July 1866. Stoddard's second novel, *Two Men*, is published.
- 1866 Stoddard keeps her writer's journal during the summer in Mattapoisett.
- 1867 Stoddard publishes her final novel, *Temple House*.
- 1868 Alcott's sensation *Little Women* is published, part 1 in October, and part 2 in April 1869.

Alcott publishes “Psyche’s Art” in book form.

Phelps’s first novel, *The Gates Ajar*, is published to much popular acclaim. Her first story in the *Atlantic*, “The Tenth of January,” appears and gains her the recognition of the literary elite.

1869 Woolson’s father, Charles Jarvis Woolson, Sr., dies.

1870 In April, Alcott travels to Europe with her sister May and May’s friend Alice Bartlett; she will return in June 1871.

Phelps publishes *Hedged In*.

Stoddard publishes her only story about a woman writer, “Collected by a Valetudinarian,” in *Harper’s*.

Woolson’s first publications appear in July, “The Happy Valley” in *Harper’s* and “Fairy Island” in *Putnam’s*.

1871 Phelps publishes *The Silent Partner*. She also publishes her essays “Unhappy Girls” and “The True Woman” in the *Independent*.

Stoddard publishes “A Literary Whim” in *Appletons’ Journal*. Over the next two years, with her husband as editor, she publishes many pieces (some under pseudonyms) in the *Aldine Press*.

1872 Alcott publishes *Aunt Jo’s Scrap-Bag: Shawl Straps*. In December, serialization of her novel *Work* begins.

Woolson’s first publication in the *Atlantic*, the poem “Ideal. (The Artist Speaks.)” appears in October.

1873 Woolson begins her extensive travels through the South with her mother, continuing through 1879. Her first book, *The Old Stone House*, a book for children, is published under the pseudonym “Anne March.”

1874 Stoddard publishes her children’s book, *Lolly Dink’s Doings*.

1875 Woolson’s first collection, *Castle Nowhere: Lake Country Sketches*, is published.

1876 May Alcott returns to Europe, where she will live until her death.

Phelps gives her lectures on George Eliot at Boston University and builds her house, which she called her “old maid’s paradise,” in Gloucester.

Woolson publishes her poem “To George Eliot” in the *New Century for Woman*.

1877 Alcott publishes *A Modern Mephistopheles* in Roberts Brothers’ No Name series. Her mother, Abigail Alcott, dies in November.

Phelps publishes *The Story of Avis*.

1878 May Alcott marries Ernest Nieriker in March. Alcott begins to write *Diana and Persis*.

- 1879 May Alcott gives birth to a daughter, Lulu, and dies seven weeks later, December 29, in Paris.
Alcott stops writing *Diana and Persis*.
Phelps publishes *An Old Maid's Paradise* about her residence in Gloucester.
In January and February, Woolson publishes two reviews of James's *Europeans* in the *Atlantic's* "Contributors' Club." Her mother, Hannah Cooper Pomeroy Woolson, dies on February 13. In November, Woolson travels to Europe. She will not return to the United States.
- 1880 Lulu Nieriker arrives from Europe to be cared for by Alcott.
Phelps publishes "A Plea for Immortality" in the *Atlantic*.
Woolson meets Henry James in late April in Florence. In May, her story "Miss Grief" is published in *Lippincott's*. In December, her first novel, *Anne*, begins serialization in *Harper's*. It will be published in book form in 1882.
- 1882 Phelps publishes *Dr. Zay*.
Woolson publishes her story "The Street of the Hyacinth" in *Century* magazine in May and June.
Alcott publishes a revised *Moods* to little critical notice.
- 1883 Woolson publishes her second novel, *For the Major*.
- 1886 Alcott publishes *Jo's Boys*, the final book in the *Little Women* trilogy.
Phelps's close friend, Dr. Mary Briggs Harris, with whom she sometimes lived, dies.
Woolson lives in Aurora Leigh's villa at Bellosguardo in Florence with artist friends and publishes her novel *East Angels*.
- 1887 Woolson publishes "At the Château of Corinne" in *Harper's* in October.
- 1888 Bronson Alcott dies on March 4; Louisa May Alcott dies on March 6.
Phelps marries Herbert Dickinson Ward.
With the help of Edmund Clarence Stedman, Stoddard's novels *Two Men* and *Temple House* are republished, the former with a laudatory introduction by Stedman.
- 1889 Ednah D. Cheney publishes *Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters, and Journals*.
Stoddard's novel *The Morgesons* is republished.
- 1893 Phelps publishes the story "The Rejected Manuscript" in *Harper's*.
- 1894 Shortly after finishing her final novel, *Horace Chase*, and suffering from influenza, Woolson commits suicide in Venice on January 24.

- 1895 Stoddard's selected *Poems*, spanning her entire career, are published by Houghton, Mifflin.
Phelps publishes her autobiography, *Chapters from a Life*.
- 1897 The Authors' Club honors Richard Henry Stoddard with a public dinner to commemorate his career, and Elizabeth Stoddard, although she must sit in the balcony with the other women, is also honored.
- 1901 All three of Stoddard's novels are again republished. *The Morgesons* contains a new preface by the author, including recollections of how she developed as a writer and an excerpt from a letter by Hawthorne.
- 1902 Stoddard dies on August 1.
Phelps publishes the novel *Confessions of a Wife*.
- 1911 Phelps dies on January 28.

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