CONTEMPORARY WOMEN NOVELISTS: A SELECTED ANNOTATED LIST

This is, by no means, a comprehensive list. It is limited to outstanding first novelists or established novelists who have been undeservedly neglected. (* paperback edition available).

Author: Abraham, Pearl
Title(s) in Print:
THE ROMANCE READER*, 1995
First novel. A close and balanced look at life in an Hasidic family as a daughter attempts to define herself outside the confines of her religious tradition.

Author: Allison, Dorothy
Title(s) in Print:
CAVE DWELLER, 1997
TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW FOR SURE*, 1995
BASTARD OUT OF CAROLINA*, 1992
TRASH*, 1988

Author: Alvarez, Julia
Title(s) in Print:
IYO!, 1997
HOMECOMING: NEW AND COLLECTED POEMS, 1996
IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES*, 1995
THE OTHER SIDE*, 1995
HOW THE GARCIA GIRLS LOST THEIR ACCENT*, 1991
Evocative chronicling of the experience of Dominican Republicans as emigrants and residents of their home country.

Author: Astley, Thea
Title(s) in Print:
CODA, 1994
THE SLOW NATIVES, 1993
HUNTING THE WILD PINEAPPLE, 1991
A DESCANT FOR GOSSIP*, 1988
Australian. Witty and insightful looks at interpersonal relations.
Author: Atkinson, Kate
Title(s) in Print: 
BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM. 1995
First novel won the 1995 Whitbread Prize for fiction in Great Britain. Brilliant characterizations and unusual construction add depth to a family saga.

Author: Baker, Alison
Title(s) in Print: 
HOW I CAME WEST AND WHY I STAYED*, 1993
LOVING WANDA BEAVER*, 1995
Well-crafted short stories that range from slapstick humor to true pathos.

Author: Barker, Pat
Title(s) in Print: 
GHOST ROAD*, 1996
THE EYE IN THE DOOR*, 1994
REGENERATION*, 1993
UNION STREET*, 1988
THE GHOST ROAD was the winner of the 1995 Booker Prize for fiction in Great Britain. One of the best writers at work today. Her WWI trilogy (GHOST ROAD, EYE, REGENERATION) explores mighty themes of war and morality with compelling stories and characters.

Author: Blackburn, Julia
Title(s) in Print: 
The BOOK OF COLOR*, 1995
British. THE BOOK OF COLOR shortlisted for new Orange Award for fiction by women in Britain. A moody, sensual story of the clash of cultures on a tropical island in the Indian Ocean.

Author: Boyd, Blanche McCrary
Title(s) in Print: 
REDNECK WAY OF KNOWLEDGE*, 1995
THE REVOLUTION OF LITTLE GIRLS*, 1992
Lesbian novels with a Southern setting vividly evoked.

Author: Danticat, Edwidge
Title(s) in Print: 
KRIK? KRAK!* 1995
BREATH, EYES, MEMORY*, 1994
Haitian. KRIK? KRAK!, one of LIBRARY JOURNAL's Best Books for 1995 and a National Book Award Nominee, is a powerful set of interlocking stories about the lives of Haitian women.

Author: Donoghue, Emma
Title(s) in Print: 
STIR FRY*, 1994
HOOD, 1996
Poignant and unapologetic novels about Lesbians in modern Dublin.

Author: Dwyer, Kelly
Title(s) in Print:
THE TRACKS OF ANGELS*, 1994
First novelist who shows remarkable skill in evoking emotions and
plotting in this story of a young woman's coming to terms with
the deaths of her parents.

Author: Gardam, Jane
Title(s) in Print:
QUEEN OF THE TAMBOURINE*, 1995
QUEEN, winner of the 1991 Whitbread Prize for Fiction in Great
Britain, is an epistolary novel that evolves into deliciously
funny and touching flights of fancy as the writer grows more mad
or sane, depending on your perspective.

Author: Gibbons, Kaye
Title(s) in Print:
SIGHTS UNSEEN, 1995
CHARMS FOR THE EASY LIFE*, 1993
A CURE FOR DREAMS*, 1991
A VIRTUOUS WOMAN*, 1989
ELLEN FOSTER*, 1987
A storyteller in the best tradition of Southern gothic writers.
Insights into character add depth to the humor.

Author: Hegi, Ursula
Title(s) in Print:
INTRUSIONS*, 1995
SALT DANCERS, 1995
STONES FROM THE RIVER*, 1994
FLOATING IN MY MOTHER'S PALM*, 1991
German born. Stones is a richly textured chronicle of life in a
German small town under the Nazis.

Author: Jackson, Sheneska
Title(s) in Print:
CAUGHT UP IN THE RAPTURE, 1996
First novelist. Lively, funny, but no-holds-barred look at South
Central Los Angeles. Vivid voice.

Author: Landvik, Lorna
Titles in Print:
PATTY JANE’S HOUSE OF CURL, 1995
First novel. Funny, heartwarming, if over simplified, story of
the power of friendship between women. Set in Minneapolis in the
1940s-60s with a strong sense of place.
Author: McGrath, Kristina  
Titl(s) in Print:  
HOUSE WORK, 1994  
First novel. Poetic paean to a hard-working woman who creates dignity and stability out of the shambles of her life. Evocative portrait of working class Pittsburgh in the 1940s.

Author: Mackay, Shena  
Title(s) in Print:  
THE ORCHARD ON FIRE, 1996  
DREAMS OF DEAD WOMEN'S HANDBAGS, 1994.  
DUNEDIN*, 1993  
A BOWL OF CHERRIES*, 1992  
British. Her novels and short stories feature black humor, empathy for the characters, and dazzling skill in description.

Author: McKinney-Whetstone, Diane  
Title(s) in Print:  
TUMBLING, 1996  
First novel follows the trials and triumphs of a family in South Philadelphia in the 1940s and 1950s. Good look at life in a Black community before desegregation.

Author: Mendelsohn, Jane  
Title(s) in Print:  
I WAS AMELIA EARHART*, 1996  
First novel. Speculates on what happened to Earhart after her disappearance, but less an adventure story than a meditation on the nature of fame and identity.

Author: Mori, Kyoko  
Title(s) in Print:  
THE DREAM OF WATER*, 1995  

Author: Morris, Mary McGarry  
Title(s) in Print:  
SONGS IN ORDINARY TIME*, 1995  
A DANGEROUS WOMAN*, 1991  
VANISHED*, 1988  
Tough novels told with empathy and a great sense of plotting about people living on the edge.

Author: Nelson, Antonya  
Title(s) in Print:  
TALKING IN BED, 1996  
FAMILY TERRORISTS*, 1994  
IN THE LAND OF MEN*, 1994
THE EXPENDABLES*, 1990
Winner of Flannery O'Connor Award, Nelson Algren Award, and PEN
Syndicated Fiction Award. Meticulous examinations of
interpersonal relations and motivations.

Author: Power, Susan
Title(s) in Print:
    THE GRASS DANCER*, 1994
Native American. THE GRASS DANCER was a 1995 American Library
Association Notable Award winner. Lyrical looks at Dakota culture
and the straddling necessary between that culture and mainstream America.

Author: Read, Miss
Title(s) in Print:
    Several titles in both Thrush Green and Fairacre series.
British. Great escapism to English village life saved from
excessive sentimentality by witty writing.

Author: Schulman, Audrey
Title(s) in Print:
    THE CAGE*, 1994
First novel. Highly evocative adventure to the Arctic.

Author: Scofield, Sandra
Title(s) in Print:
    A CHANCE TO SEE EGYPT, 1996
    OPAL ON DRY GROUND*, 1995
    MORE THAN ALLIES*, 1993
    WALKING DUNES*, 1992
    BEYOND DESERVING*, 1991
Emotionally compelling novels about working class Texans,
primarily women, trying to hold their lives together.

Author: Thirkell, Angela
Title(s) in Print:
    Several paperback reprints.
British. For fans of Jane Austen and Barbara Pym.
Quintessentially British comic novels written in the 1930s and
40s set in the countryside featuring the gentry.

Author: Tremain, Rose
Title(s) in Print:
    EVANGELISTA'S FAN*, 1995
    SACRED COUNTRY*, 1993
    RESTORATION*, 1991
British. Multi-talented writer equally at home with a 17th century
historical novel, Restoration, or a 20th century novel featuring a
transsexual living unhappily in rural Suffolk.
Author: Verdelle, A.J.
Title(s) in Print:
   THE GOOD NEGRESS*, 1995
First novel a 1996 Honorable Mention for fiction from American Library Association Black Caucus. Remarkable first person account of a girl growing up in Virginia and Detroit in the 1950s.

Author: Viramontes, Helena Marie
Title(s) in Print:
   UNDER THE FEET OF JESUS*, 1995
   THE MOTHS AND OTHER STORIES*, 1990
Powerful writing about the Mexican-American migrant experience.

Author: Weber, Katharine
Title(s) in Print:
   OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR*, 1995
First novel. Poignant story set in Geneva and New York City about childhood trauma leavened by touches of humor.

Author: West, Dorothy
Title(s) in Print:
   THE WEDDING*, 1995
Now in her 80s, this veteran of the Harlem Renaissance is writing again. The Wedding provides a rare glimpse into the lives of upper class Negroes in the 1950s.

by Helene Androski
University of Wisconsin-Madison Memorial Library
October, 1996