Eavesdropping in the Novel from Austen to Proust investigates human curiosity and its representation in eavesdropping scenes in nineteenth-century English and French novels. Ann Gaylin argues that eavesdropping dramatizes a primal human urge to know and offers a paradigm of narrative transmission and reception of information among characters, narrators, and readers. Gaylin sheds light on the social and psychological effects of the nineteenth-century rise of information technology and accelerated flow of information, as manifested in the anxieties about—and delight in—displays of private life and its secrets. Analyzing eavesdropping in Austen, Balzac, Dickens, Collins, and Proust, she demonstrates the flexibility of the scene to produce narrative complication or resolution, to foreground questions of gender and narrative agency, and to place the debates of privacy and publicity within the literal and metaphoric spaces of the nineteenth-century novel. This innovative study will be of interest to scholars of nineteenth-century English and European literature.

Ann Gaylin is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Yale University. She has published articles on Wilkie Collins and Marcel Proust. Her articles have appeared in Texas Studies in Literature and Language and the Cincinnati Romance Review.
Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organisation, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought — in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as “background,” feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field.

This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work that intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.
EAVESDROPPING IN THE NOVEL FROM AUSTEN TO PROUST

ANN GAYLIN
For my parents
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