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VICTORIAN LITERATURE AND THE ANOREXIC BODY

Anna Krugovoy Silver examines the ways nineteenth-century British writers used physical states of the female body – hunger, appetite, fat, and slenderness – in the creation of female characters. Silver argues that anorexia nervosa, first diagnosed in 1873, serves as a paradigm for the cultural ideal of middle-class womanhood in Victorian Britain. In addition, Silver relates these literary expressions to the representation of women's bodies in the conduct books, beauty manuals, and other non-fiction prose of the period, contending that women “performed” their gender and class alliances through the slender body. Silver discusses a wide range of writers including Charlotte Brontë, Christina Rossetti, Charles Dickens, Bram Stoker, and Lewis Carroll to show that mainstream models of middle-class Victorian womanhood share important qualities with the beliefs or behaviors of the anorexic girl or woman.

ANNA KRUGOVOY SILVER is Assistant Professor of English and Director of Women's and Gender Studies at Mercer University. She has published essays on Victorian literature, children's literature, and film in *Studies in English Literature*, *Arizona Quarterly*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, and *Victorians Institute Journal*.

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*For George and Christel Krugovoy
and
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