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978-1-107-04422-7 - The Victorian Novel and the Space of Art: Fictional Form on Display

Dehn Gilmore

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THE VICTORIAN NOVEL AND THE SPACE OF ART

This interdisciplinary study argues for the vital importance of visual culture as a force shaping the Victorian novel's formal development and reading history. It shows how authors such as Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Wilkie Collins, and Thomas Hardy borrowed language and conceptual formations from art world spaces – the art market, the museum, the large-scale exhibition, and art critical discourse – not only when they chose certain subjects or refined certain aspects of realism, but also when they tried to adapt various genres of the novel for a new and newly vociferous mass audience. Quandaries specific to new forms of public display affected authors' sense of their relationship with their own public. Debates about how best to appreciate a new mass of visual information impacted authors' sense of how people read, and consequently the development of particular novel forms such as the multi-plot novel, the historical novel, the sensation novel, and *fin-de-siècle* fiction.

DEHN GILMORE is Assistant Professor of English at the California Institute of Technology.

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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 organization, 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 which 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.

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