Women writers dominated the vast novel market in Victorian England, yet twentieth-century criticism has, until now, been chiefly concerned with a small number of canonical novelists. This collection of essays by leading scholars from Britain, the USA, and Canada opens up the limited landscape of Victorian novels by focusing attention on some of the women writers popular in their own time but forgotten or neglected by literary history. Spanning the entire Victorian period, this study investigates particularly the role and treatment of “the woman question” in the second half of the century. There are discussions of marriage, matriarchy, and divorce, satire, suffragette writing, writing for children, and links between literature and art. Moving from Margaret Oliphant and Charlotte Mary Yonge to Mary Ward, Marie Corelli, “Ouida,” and E. Nesbit, this book illuminates the complex cultural and literary roles, and the engaging contributions, of Victorian women writers.

Nicola Diane Thompson is Senior Lecturer in English at Kingston University, England. She is the author of Reviewing Sex: Gender and the Reception of Victorian Novels (1996) and a number of articles on Victorian literature and culture.
CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE AND CULTURE

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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 syntheses 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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