Sudden changes, opportunities, or revelations have always carried a special significance in Western culture, from the Greek and later the Christian *kairos* to Evangelical experiences of conversion. This fascinating book explores the ways in which England, under the influence of industrializing forces and increased precision in assessing the passing of time, attached importance to moments, events that compress great significance into small units of time. Sue Zemka questions the importance that modernity invests in momentary events, from religion to aesthetics and philosophy. She argues for a strain in Victorian and early modern novels critical of the values the age invested in moments of time, and suggests that such novels also offer a correction to contemporary culture and criticism, with its emphasis on the momentary event as an agency of change.

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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 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.

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TIME AND THE
MOMENT IN VICTORIAN
LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

SUE ZEMKA
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