The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women’s Writing brings together chapters by leading scholars to provide innovative and comprehensive coverage of Victorian women writers’ careers and literary achievements. While incorporating the scholarly insights of modern feminist criticism, it also reflects new approaches to women authors that have emerged with the rise of book history; periodical studies; performance studies; postcolonial studies; and scholarship on authorship, readership, and publishing. It traces the Victorian woman writer’s career – from making her debut to working with publishers and editors to achieving literary fame – and challenges previous thinking about genres in which women contributed with success. Chapters on poetry, including a discussion of poetry in colonial and imperial contexts, reveal women’s engagements with each other and with male writers. Discussions on drama, life-writing, reviewing, history, travel writing, and children’s literature uncover the remarkable achievement of women in fields relatively unknown.


A complete list of books in the series is at the back of the book.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
VICTORIAN WOMEN’S WRITING

EDITED BY
LINDA H. PETERSON
Yale University
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks belong, first and foremost, to the contributors to this volume, whose knowledge, insight, and enthusiastic collaboration have guided me throughout the process of thinking and writing about Victorian women authors and their work. Thanks also belong to Linda Bree, Senior Commissioning Editor at Cambridge University Press, for inviting me to take on this editorial project and giving crucial advice along the way, and to Anna Bond, Assistant Editor, for guiding me through the many details of production. Assistance from Alexis Chema, Sarah Mahurin, and Andrew Willson, at Yale, proved invaluable in late stages. All of us who wrote chapters owe thanks to our home libraries and librarians for supplying the scholarly materials we needed to complete our work. Special thanks to three libraries for permission to reproduce images from their book collections: The James Smith Noel Collection of Louisiana State University for the cover inset image of Harriet Martineau, the University of Michigan Library for the title page of *The White Wampum* (1895) by E. Pauline Johnson, and Yale University Library for the frontispiece to Sarojini Naidu’s *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death & the Spring* (1912) and two illustrations from *Fraser’s Magazine*, “The Frasersians” (January 1835) and “Regina’s Maids of Honour” (January 1836).
This chronology features important “firsts” and major achievements in the careers of Victorian women writers. It highlights significant publications and events discussed in the chapters that follow. Birth and death dates are given at the woman writer’s first entry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Mary Russell Mitford (1787–1855) launches her popular prose sketches, Our Village, in the Lady’s Magazine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Elizabeth Barrett (later Browning, 1806–61) receives fifty privately printed copies of The Battle of Marathon: A Poem from her father on her fourteenth birthday. Laetitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–38) places her first poems in the Literary Gazette, signed “L” (later “L.E.L.”).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Mary Howitt (1799–1888) co-publishes her first volume of poetry, The Forest Minstrel and Other Poems, with her husband William. Julian, the first of several plays by Mary Russell Mitford, is performed at Covent Garden Theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>The Improvisatrice by Laetitia Elizabeth Landon (L.E.L.) appears in print.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Felicia Hemans (1793–1835) publishes The Forest Sanctuary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Felicia Hemans publishes Records of Woman, her most popular volume of poetry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Anna Maria Hall (1800–81) publishes Sketches of Irish Character, followed by a second volume in 1831.</td>
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</table>
1832 First Reform Bill passes. Harriet Martineau launches *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832–34), a best-selling monthly series that establishes her reputation as professional writer. Frances Trollope (1779–1863) publishes *Domestic Manners of the Americans*.

1834 Marguerite Gardiner, the Countess of Blessington (1789–1849), assumes the editorship of *The Book of Beauty*. Christian Johnstone (1781–1857) becomes editor of *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*.

1835 Eliza Cook (1818–89) publishes *Lays of a Wild Harp*. Emma Roberts (1794–1840) publishes *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindustan*.

1836 Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–65) and her husband William co-publish *Sketches among the Poor*, a poetry cycle, in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. Catherine Parr Traill (1802–99) publishes *The Backwoods of Canada*.


1838 Harriet Martineau publishes *Deerbrook*, a domestic novel. Anna Jameson publishes *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*.

1839 Custody of Infants Act passes. Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (1790–1846) serializes her industrial novel *Helen Fleetwood*, in the *Christian Lady’s Magazine*. Rosana Bulwer (1802–82) publishes *Cheveley; or, the Man of Honour*, with an antihero based on her husband Edward. *The Zenana and Other Poems* by L.E.L. is edited by Emma Roberts and posthumously published after Landon’s mysterious death in Africa. Four women authors (Joanna Baillie, Harriet Martineau, Mary Russell Mitford, and the Countess of Blessington) sign the “Authors’ Petition” on behalf of a new domestic copyright law.

1840 Agnes (1796–1874) and Elizabeth (1794–1875) Strickland begin their multivolume *Lives of the Queens of England*. 
Frances Trollope publishes *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* in support of the Ten Hours Bill.

Australian poet Fidelia Hill (1794–1854) publishes *Poems and Recollections of the Past*.

**1841**

Catherine Gore (1798–1861) publishes *Cecil, or the Adventures of a Coxcomb*, her most popular silver-fork novel. The Countess of Blessington becomes editor of the popular annual *The Keepsake*.

Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna publishes *Personal Recollections* (1841).


**1842**

Copyright Act extends term to forty-two years from publication or seven after author’s death.

**1843**

Eliza Meteyard (1816–79) serializes her first novel, *Scenes in the Life of an Authoress*, in Tait’s *Edinburgh Magazine*.

Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna begins *The Wrongs of Woman*, four tales in support of the Factory Act that limited the working hours of women and children.

Elizabeth Barrett publishes “The Cry of the Children” in *Blackwood’s Magazine*.

Factory Act passes, limiting women and children under eighteen to a twelve-hour working day.

**1844**

Catherine Gore wins a prize competition set by the Royal Theatre, Haymarket, for the best modern comedy.

**1845**

Eliza Lynn (later Linton, 1822–98) moves to London to start a literary career, publishing *Azeth, the Egyptian* two years later.

Anna Jameson (1794–1860) publishes *Sacred and Legendary Art* in 1848.

Elizabeth Barrett begins writing *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, given to Robert Browning after their marriage.

**1846**

Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot, 1819–80) publishes an English translation of David Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu as The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*.

The Brontë sisters publish *Poems*, using the pseudonyms Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë, 1816–55), Ellis Bell (Emily Brontë, 1818–48), and Acton Bell (Anne Brontë, 1820–49).

**1847**

The Brontë sisters publish *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte), *Wuthering Heights* (Emily), and *Agnes Grey* (Anne).
Mary Howitt and her husband William launch and edit *Howitt’s Journal*.

*Verses: Dedicated to Her Mother* by Christina Rossetti (1830–94) is privately printed by her grandfather.

1848

Elizabeth Gaskell publishes her first novel, *Mary Barton*.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning publishes “Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” in the American periodical *The Liberty Bell*.

Elizabeth Rigby (later Eastlake, 1809–93) anonymously places a negative review of *Jane Eyre* in the *Quarterly Review*.

Eliza Lynn Linton joins the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*, becoming the first paid woman journalist.

1849

Margaret Oliphant (1828–97) publishes her first novel, *Passages in the Life of Margaret Maitland*.

Eliza Cook founds *Eliza Cook’s Journal*, writing most of the material herself but also soliciting contributions from working-class women writers.

Harriet Martineau begins publishing her multivolume *History of the Thirty Years’ Peace 1816–46*.

1850

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood launches *The Germ*, with lyrics by Christina Rossetti as “Ellen Allyne.”

Fanny Parkes (1794–1875) publishes *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*.

1851

Elizabeth Barrett Browning publishes *Casa Guidi Windows*.

Gaskell’s *Cranford* begins serialization in *Household Words*.


1852

Margaret Oliphant serializes *Katie Stewart* in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, the beginning of a forty-five-year engagement that includes contributing fiction, biography, essays, and reviews.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–96) publishes *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Susannah Moodie (1803–85) publishes *Roughing It in the Bush*.

Samuel Beeton launches the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, with columns on fashion, food, and household management written by his wife Isabella.

1853

Charlotte Brontë publishes her last novel, *Villette*.

1854

Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* begins serialization in *Household Words*.
Caroline Leakey (1827–81) publishes *Lyra Australis: or Attempts to Sing in a Strange Land*.

1855
Harriet Martineau writes and prints her *Autobiography*, although it is not released until 1877 after her death.
Elizabeth Gaskell publishes *North and South*, her second industrial novel.

1856
Elizabeth Barrett Browning publishes *Aurora Leigh* (1856, date stamped 1857).
Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) publishes "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" in the *Westminster Review*.
Charlotte Yonge publishes her best-selling novel *The Daisy Chain*.

1857
George Eliot places her first piece of fiction, “The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton,” in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, collected the next year in *Scenes of Clerical Life*.
Elizabeth Gaskell publishes *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.
Harriet Martineau publishes *A History of British Rule in India*, followed by *Suggestions for the Future Rule of India* the next year.

The *Englishwoman’s Review* begins publication.

1858
Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829–1925) and Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827–91) found the *English Woman’s Journal*.
Adelaide Procter (1825–64) publishes *Legends and Lyrics*, first series.

1859
George Eliot publishes her first novel, *Adam Bede*.
Isa Craig (1831–1903) wins the Burns Centenary Prize for the best poem submitted to the competition.

1860
Harriet Grote (1792–1878) publishes *Memoir of the Life of Ary Scheffer*, a painter, the first of several biographies.

1861
Margaret Oliphant launches *The Chronicles of Carlingford in Blackwood’s Magazine* with “The Executor.”

1862
Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Last Poems* is posthumously published.
Christina Rossetti publishes *Goblin Market and Other Poems*.
Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835–1915) publishes *Lady Audley’s Secret*, a popular sensation novel later adapted for the stage.
George Eliot’s *Romola* is serialized in the *Cornhill*. 
1863
Emily Faithfull founds and edits *Victoria Magazine*.

Julia Kavanagh (1824–77) publishes *English Women of Letters*, using the title phrase to designate professional women authors.

1864
First Contagious Diseases Act passes, allowing arrest and compulsory medical examination of prostitutes.

1865
Ellen Wood purchases and edits the *Argosy* magazine.

Elizabeth Gaskell’s novel *Wives and Daughters* is partially serialized in the *Cornhill Magazine*, when the author dies suddenly.

1866
Mary Elizabeth Braddon founds and edits *Belgravia* magazine.

Jessie Boucherett (1866–1910) founds and edits the *Englishwoman’s Review*, a feminist periodical.

Margaret Gatty founds *Aunt Judy’s Tales*, a children’s magazine, using the title of her popular 1859 collection of juvenile fiction.

Augusta Webster (1837–94) publishes *Dramatic Studies*.

1867
Second Reform Act passed.

Working-class writer Ellen Johnston (1835–73) publishes *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*.

1868
Frances Power Cobbe (1822–1904) begins writing leaders (editorials) for the London halfpenny paper, the *Echo*.

Eliza Lynn Linton publishes “The Girl of the Period” in the *Saturday Review*, considered an attack on the women’s rights movement.

1869

1870
Married Women’s Property Act is passed, allowing women to own the money they earned and to inherit property.

Lydia Becker (1827–90) founds the *Women’s Suffrage Journal*.

1871
George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* begins serial publication.

1872
Christina Rossetti publishes *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme-Book*.

1874

1875
Alice Thompson (later Meynell, 1847–1922) publishes her first volume of poetry, *Preludes*.

1876
*Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot’s last novel, is issued by William Blackwood and Sons.
Margaret Oliphant publishes the first of her urban histories, *The Makers of Florence*, followed by *Makers of Venice* (1887), *Jerusalem* (1891), and *Makers of Modern Rome* (1895).

1877

Anna Sewell (1820–78) publishes *Black Beauty*.

Edith Nesbit (1858–1924) publishes her first juvenile tale in the *Sunday Magazine*.

1878


1880

*The Lady’s Pictorial* begins, featuring interviews with women writers by the journalist Helen C. Black (1838–1906). Isabella Bird Bishop (1831–1904) publishes *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*.

1881

Christina Rossetti’s “Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets” appears in *A Pageant and Other Poems*.

1882

Married Women’s Property Act grants women’s right to own and control property after marriage.

*Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* by Toru Dutt (1856–77) is released in London by John Lane of the Bodley Head Press.

1883

Charlotte Riddell publishes *A Struggle for Fame*, a fictional account of the challenges she faced in the literary marketplace. Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) publishes *The Story of an African Farm*.

1884

Third Reform Act passes.

Society of Women Journalists is founded.

Annie Wood Besant (1847–1933) founds *Our Corner*, a literary magazine with socialist leanings.

Amy Levy (1861–89) publishes *A Minor Poet and Other Verse*.

Augusta Webster (1837–94) begins reviewing books of poetry for *The Athenaeum*.

1885

xx  Chronology of publications and events

1886  Margaret Oliphant publishes a two-volume *Literary History of England*.

1887  Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee.

1887  “Sarah Grand” (Frances Elizabeth McFall, 1854–1943) publishes *The Beth Book*.

1888  L. T. Meade (1844–1914) founds *Atalanta*, a magazine for young middle-class women.

1888  *The Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women* is founded.

1889  Literary Ladies dining club holds its first dinner.

1889  “Michael Field” (pen name of Katherine Bradley, 1846–1914, and Edith Cooper, 1862–1913) publishes *Long, Long Ago*, a rewriting of Sappho.

1889  Alice Meynell begins contributing reviews and short essays to *the Scots Observer*.

1890  The penny weekly *Woman* is launched.

1891  Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) publishes *Dreams*.

1892  “Michael Field” publishes *Sight and Song*.

1893  Alice Meynell publishes *The Rhythm of Life*, an essay collection, and *Poems*, a reissue of poems from her 1875 *Preludes*, with John Lane of the Bodley Head Press.

1893  “George Egerton” (Mary Chavelita Dunne, 1859–1945) publishes *Keynotes*, a collection of experimental short stories, with John Lane of the Bodley Head Press.

1893  Sarah Grand publishes *The Heavenly Twins*.

1894  Frances Power Cobbe publishes *Life of Frances Power Cobbe, by Herself*.

1894  Mona Caird publishes the New Woman novel *The Daughters of Danaus*.

1895  Coventry Patmore “nominates” Alice Meynell for the poet laureateship in the *Saturday Review*.

1895  E. Pauline Johnson (1861–1913) publishes *The White Wampum*.

1896  Margaret Oliphant writes “The Anti-Marriage League,” a review of Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* and Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did*, for *Blackwood’s Magazine*.

1896  Christina Rossetti’s *New Poems*, edited by W. M. Rossetti, is posthumously published by Macmillan.

1897  Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee.

1897  Prominent women writers, including Margaret Oliphant, Eliza Lynn Linton, and Charlotte Yonge, contribute to *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria’s Reign*. 
National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies is founded.

Mary Kingsley (1862–1900) publishes *Travels in West Africa*.

1898

Henry Mackenzie Bell publishes *Christina Rossetti: A Biographical and Critical Study*.

1899


Isabella Bird Bishop publishes *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond*.

1901

Queen Victoria dies on January 22.
