CONVALESCENCE IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

Victorian Britain witnessed a resurgence of traditional convalescent caregiving. In the face of a hectic modern existence, nineteenth-century thinkers argued that all medical patients desperately required a lengthy, meandering period of recovery. Various reformers worked to extend the benefits of holistic recuperative care to seemingly unlikely groups: working-class hospital patients, insane asylum inmates, even low-ranking soldiers across the British Empire. Hosanna Krienke offers the first sustained scholarly assessment of nineteenth-century convalescent culture, revealing how interpersonal post-acute care was touted as a critical supplement to modern scientific medicine. As a method of caregiving intended to alleviate both physical and social ills, convalescence united patients of disparate social classes, disease categories, and degrees of impairment. Ultimately, this study demonstrates how novels from *Bleak House* to *The Secret Garden* draw on the unhurried timescale of convalescence as an ethical paradigm, training readers to value unfolding narratives apart from their ultimate resolutions.

Hosanna Krienke teaches at the University of Wyoming. She authored this text during her time as a postdoctoral researcher for the European Research Council-funded project “Diseases of Modern Life: Nineteenth-Century Perspectives” at the University of Oxford. Her work has appeared in *Victorian Review*, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, and the medical humanities blog *Nursing Clio*. 
Nineteenth-century literature and culture have proved a rich field for interdisciplinary studies. Since 1994, books in this series have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, gender and sexuality, race, social organisation, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. Many of our books are now classics in a field which since the series’ inception has seen powerful engagements with Marxism, feminism, visual studies, post-colonialism, critical race studies, new historicism, new formalism, transnationalism, queer studies, human rights and liberalism, disability studies, and global studies. Theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts continue to unsettle scholarship on the nineteenth century in productive ways. New work on the body and the senses, the environment and climate, race and the decolonisation of literary studies, biopolitics and materiality, the animal and the human, the local and the global, politics and form, queerness and gender identities, and intersectional theory is re-animating the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of nineteenth-century literary studies, connecting the field with the urgent critical questions that are being asked today. We seek to publish work from a diverse range of authors, and stand for anti-racism, anti-colonialism and against discrimination in all forms.

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CONVALESCENCE IN THE
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NOVEL

The Afterlife of Victorian Illness

HOSANNA KRIENKE

University of Wyoming
For Mary and Paul, my parents
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I have always imagined the writing of this book as a convalescence of its own, particularly as it helped me process and understand my own medical history. Yet, the image of writing-as-convalescence is even more fitting when I think about all the people who have kindly contributed to this work along the way. In writing a book about aimless time, incremental progress, and interpersonal care, I am keenly aware of how the slow growth of this project was fostered – and indeed made possible – by so many generous individuals and communities.

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