The 1890s were once seen as marginal within the larger field of Victorian studies, which tended to privilege the realist novel and the authors of the mid-century. In recent decades, the fin de siècle has come to be regarded as one of the most dynamic decades of the Victorian era. Viewed by writers and artists of the period as a moment of opportunity, transition, and urgency, the 1890s are pivotal for understanding the parameters of the field of Victorian studies itself. This volume makes a case for why the decade continues to be an area of perennial fascination, focusing on transnational connections, gender and sexuality, ecological concerns, technological innovations, and other current critical trends. This collection both calls attention to the diverse range of literature and art being produced during this period and foregrounds the relevance of the Victorian era’s final years to issues and crises that face us today.

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This series aims to move beyond existing preconceptions of the British literature of each decade of the nineteenth century (‘the reforming thirties’, the ‘hungry forties’, and the ‘naughty nineties’) in favour of a mode of characterization that considers each ten-year period as a dynamic field of synchronic and diachronic forces, and as sites of energetic tension between what came before and what followed. Viewing the decade as a vivid and relational concept will reinvigorate critical understanding of British literary production and consumption in a century in which unprecedented historical self-reflexivity ensured concepts of a ‘century’ and a ‘decade’ became important structures for lived experience.

As literacy increased to near-ubiquity and modern print media emerged, British literature evolved as a set of social practices and expressive modalities. The volumes in this series produce fresh characterizations enabled by attention to recent (particularly digital) methodologies, as well as by examination of nineteenth-century concerns that continue to shape our contemporary world, such as globalization, the refugee crisis, and the changing nature of war. Each volume places British literary history within transnational and global contexts, and, although rooted in the study of literary texts, works within an explicitly interdisciplinary frame of reference.

This series represents a unique and innovative approach to the nineteenth century. It acknowledges the enormity of the changes witnessed by that period, and investigates the ways in which literature colludes with and contests the century’s shifting contours.
NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE IN TRANSITION: THE 1890s

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