



Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body

(Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture)

Anna Krugovoy Silver

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Anna Krugovoy Silver examines the ways nineteenth-century British writers used physical states of the female body - hunger, appetite, fat and slenderness - in the creation of female characters. Silver argues that anorexia nervosa, first diagnosed in 1873, serves as a paradigm for the cultural ideal of middle-class womanhood in Victorian Britain. In addition, Silver relates these literary expressions to the representation of women's bodies in the conduct books, beauty manuals and other non-fiction prose of the period, contending that women 'performed' their gender and class alliances through the slender body. Silver discusses a wide range of writers including Charlotte Brontë, Christina Rossetti, Charles Dickens, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Bram Stoker and Lewis Carroll to show that mainstream models of middle-class Victorian womanhood share important qualities with the beliefs or behaviours of the anorexic girl or woman.



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