

Female Victorian Fiction: Shaping the Reader's Mind

Petra Schenke

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Paradoxically the 21st century has made it a lot easier to access some of the copies of the original Victorian documents needed for an in-depth study of Female Fiction during Queen Victoria's Reign. The Internet Archive of American Libraries as well as the resources of individual educational institutes and universities such as the Mount Royal College in Canada have contributed rich materials from across the Atlantic. Moreover, the particular academic interest in Victorian Studies in North America has been reflected in precious Online-Magazines available on the Internet. Therefore a big thank-you to all the academics and librarians that helped to provide such a service, which is here highly recommended also to the readers of this book.

This is not to forget that there has been a friendly response from the administrative staff of the Public Lending Libraries in Britain who let me access the loans data archive (LEWIS) for public loans statistics. This is to say thanks to James Parker, the Registrar of PLR (Public Lending Right).

As always, a historical study on literature should never start "ab ovo" as the Latin poet Horace had already pointed out but relies on the talent and hard work of previous centuries. Thus we should acknowledge among many others the groundbreaking work of the British academic Kate Flint on *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, first published in New York in 1993 and then reprinted (unchanged) in 2002, because it had begun to explain the differences between female and male 'reader response'. The American Jane Eldridge Miller had complemented Flint's results with *Rebel Women* (1997) by explaining that the *Realism and Feminization of Fiction* at the end of the 19th century was in fact either challenged or catalyzed by influential men in the domain of literature.

This is also the place to acknowledge Sean Purchase's impressively clear-cut *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature* (2006), which show a simplified connection between Britain's social history and the literature of the Victorian Age.

Last but not least a warm thank-you to my partner Chris, whose critical remarks on my manuscript made me think again.

Dr. Petra Schenke, Brighton, Chinese New Year 2013

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