



Sex, Crime and Literature in Victorian England

Ian Ward

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The Victorians worried about many things, prominent among their worries being the 'condition' of England and the 'question' of its women. *Sex, Crime and Literature in Victorian England* revisits these particular anxieties, concentrating more closely upon four 'crimes' which generated special concern amongst contemporaries: adultery, bigamy, infanticide, and prostitution. Each engaged with questions of sexuality and its regulation - as well as the legal, moral, and cultural concerns - which attracted the considerable interest, not just of lawyers and parliamentarians, but also novelists and poets, and perhaps most importantly, those who, in ever-larger numbers, liked to pass their leisure hours reading about sex and crime. Alongside statutes such as the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act and the 1864 Contagious Diseases Act, the book contemplates those texts which shaped Victorian attitudes towards England's 'condition' and the 'question' of its women - the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, and Eliot; the works of sensationalists, such as Ellen Wood and Mary Braddon; and the poetry of Gabriel and Christina Rossetti. *Sex, Crime and Literature in Victorian England* is a richly contextual commentary on a critical period in the evolution of modern legal and cultural attitudes to the relation of crime, sexuality, and the family. It is an important study for all those interested in law and literature, legal history, and criminology. [Subject: Law and Humanities, Gender and the Law, Legal History, Socio-Legal Studies, Criminology, Literary Criticism]

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