



Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature

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Carolyn Oulton recovers the strategies nineteenth-century authors used to justify the ideal of same-sex romantic friendship and the anxieties these strategies reveal. Informed by recent insights into the erotic potential of such relationships, but focused on romantic friendship as an independent and fully formulated ideal, Oulton departs from other critics who view romantic friendship as either nebulous and culturally naive or an invocation of homoerotic responsiveness.

By considering both male and female friendships, Oulton uncovers surprising parallels between them in novels and poetry by authors such as Dickens, Tennyson, Disraeli, Charlotte Brontë, and Braddon. Oulton also examines conduct manuals, periodicals, and religious treatises, tracing developments from mid-century to the fin de siècle, when romantic friendship first came under serious attack. Her book is a persuasive challenge to those who view mid-Victorian England, existing in a state of blissful pre-Freudian innocence, as unproblematically accommodating of passionate same-sex relationships.

Contents

Introduction; A kind of enchantment; Ennobling genius: writing Victorian romantic friendship; Extraordinary reserve: the problem of male friendship; A right to your intimacy: the ends of female friendship; Tenderest caresses: romantic friendship and the satirists; Sinister meaning: crises at the fin de siècle; Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author

Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton is Senior Lecturer in English at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK. She writes on Victorian literature and culture and is also the author of several volumes of poetry, including *The Rain* (2000), *Left Past the Moon* (2001), and *Warned Against Unnecessary Journeys*.

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