



# Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels

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Laurence Talairach-Vielmas explores Victorian representations of femininity in narratives that depart from mainstream realism, from fairy tales by George MacDonald, Lewis Carroll, Christina Rossetti, Juliana Horatia Ewing, and Jean Ingelow, to sensation novels by Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, and Charles Dickens. Feminine representation, Talairach-Vielmas argues, is actually presented in a hyper-realistic way in such anti-realistic genres as children's literature and sensation fiction. In fact, it is precisely the clash between fantasy and reality that enables the narratives to interrogate the real and re-create a new type of realism that exposes the normative constraints imposed to contain the female body. In her exploration of the female body and its representations, Talairach-Vielmas examines how Victorian fantasies and sensation novels deconstruct and reconstruct femininity; she focuses in particular on the links between the female characters and consumerism, and shows how these serve to illuminate the tensions underlying the representation of the Victorian ideal.

## Contents

Introduction: femininity through the looking-glass; 'That that is, is': the bondage of stories in Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa The Fairy* (1869); MacDonald's fallen angel in *The Light Princess* (1864); Drawing 'muchnesses' in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865); Taming the female body in Juliana Horatia Ewing's *Amelia and the Dwarfs* (1870) and Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* (1874); A journey through the Crystal Palace: Rhoda Broughton's politics of plate glass in *Not Wisely But Too Well* (1867); Investigating books of beauties in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) and M.E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862); Shaping the female consumer in Wilkie Collins's *No Name* (1862); Rachel Levenson and the London beauty salon: female aestheticism and criminality in Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* (1864); Wilkie Collins's modern Snow White: arsenic consumption and ghastly complexions in *The Law and The Lady* (1875); Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.

## About the Author

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