

The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890 (Longman Literature in English)

Robin Gilmour

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This provides students of literature with a critical introduction to the major genres in their historical and cultural context. The Victorian years were a time of unprecedented and profound social, cultural and intellectual change. This is a synthesis of the period, focusing on the themes of science, religion, politics and art. It examines the developments that radically changed the intellectual climate and illustrates for the modern reader how their manifestations permeated Victorian literature. The book establishes the social and institutional framework in which intellectual and cultural life operated, assessing Victorian historiography, religion and science and politics both in their own terms and in relation to the larger, cultural politics of the middle-class challenge. It discusses aspects of the period which have only recently received sympathetic study - the ethical societies, as well as the Oxford movement, the politics of gender and "Englishness", as well as politics of reform, photography as well as Pre-Raphaelitism. Prominence is given to the contemporary preoccupation with time. From the remote time of geology and evolution, to the discovery of pre-history in anthropology, the Victorians' time-hauntedness emerges as the defining feature of their civilisation and this is the central theme of this book.

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