



Fathers in Victorian Fiction

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This book examines the changing roles of fathers in the nineteenth century as seen in the lives and fiction of Victorian authors. Fatherhood underwent unprecedented change during this period. The Industrial Revolution moved work out of the home for many men, diminishing contact between fathers and their children. Yet fatherhood continued to be seen as the ultimate expression of masculinity, and being involved with the lives of one's children was essential to being a good father. Conflicting and frustrating expectations of fathers and the growing disillusionment with other paternal authorities such as church and state yielded memorable portrayals of fathers from the best novelists of the age. The essays in this volume explore how Victorian authors (the Brontës, Dickens, Gaskell, Trollope, Eliot, Hardy, and Elizabeth Sewall and Mary Augusta Ward) responded to these tensions in their lives and in their fiction. The stern Victorian father cliché persisted, but it was countered by imaginative, involved, albeit faulty fathers and surrogate fathers. This volume poses fathering questions that are still relevant today: What does it mean to be a good father? And, with distrust in patriarchal authorities continuing to increase, are there any sources of authority left that one can trust?

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