

# **Protean Images**

**A Study of Womanhood in  
Victorian Society and Literature**

*Edited by*  
**Dr Oindrila Ghosh**



**Netaji Subhas Open University**



**Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors**  
**New Delhi (INDIA)**

*Published by*

**ADHYAYAN PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS**

4378/4B, 105, J.M.D. House, Murari Lal Street  
Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002

Ph.: 011-23263018, 011-23277156

Email : adhyayanpublishers@yahoo.com

Website : www.adhyayanbooks.com

© The School of Humanities, Netaji Subhas Open University

Editorial Copyright : Oindrila Ghosh

Ist Edition 2017

Published with partial assistance from UGC-DEB, New Delhi

## **Protean Images**

**A Study of Womanhood in Victorian Society and Literature**

All rights reserved : No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy without permission in writing from the School of Humanities, Netaji Subhas Open University.

ISBN 978-81-8435-586-4

The responsibility for facts stated, opinion expressed or conclusions reached and plagiarism, if any, in this book is entirely that of the author/editor. The publisher bears no responsibility for them whatsoever.

**Printed in India**

Published by Rakesh Kumar Yadav for Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors Delhi.

6. Dressing the Body: Reading *Lady Audley's Secret* and *The Woman in White* in the Light of Victorian Dress Reform Movements  
—*Indrani Das Gupta* 88
- IV. Motherhood: Myth and Reality** 105
7. Confronting the Choice of Motherhood: A Study of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*  
—*Pallabee Dasgupta* 107
8. 'Before all else you are a wife and a mother': Thomas Hardy and the Dearth of Children in his Fictional Universe  
—*Oindrila Ghosh* 126
- V. Children's Literature: Challenges to Victorian Womanhood** 155
9. Carroll's *Alice* Books and the Ideals of Victorian Womanhood: An Alternative Portrayal  
—*Oindrila Mitra* 157
10. Weaving a New Mantle for the "Angel in the House": A Reading of Naubert's Fairy Tales in English  
—*Suparna Bhattacharya* 171
- VI. The Ambivalent Feminine** 191
11. Transgressive Woman or 'Eternal Feminine'? : A Study of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*  
—*Anwasha Sengupta* 193
12. The Triad of Rossetti's Women: a Study of Victorian Conformity in His Works  
—*Konika Mukherjee* 213

**Transgressive Woman or 'Eternal Feminine'? : A Study of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh***

*Anweshha Sengupta*

[F]or a woman to accomplish her femininity she is required to be object and prey; that is, she must renounce her claims as a sovereign subject. This is the conflict that singularly characterizes the situation of an emancipated woman. She refuses to confine herself to her role as female because she does not want to mutilate herself, but it would also be a mutilation to repudiate her sex. Man is a sexed human being; woman is a complete individual, and equal to the male, only if she too is a sexed human being. Renouncing her femininity means renouncing part of her humanity (Beauvoir 815-16).

Aurora, the aspiring poet protagonist of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *künstlerroman* *Aurora Leigh* (1856) claiming herself as a sovereign subject, rejects the proposal of her cousin and the Utilitarian social reformer Romney Leigh because she deems it to be a way that would trap her into a life of wifhood, the sole vocation for the Victorian women and that which she abhors. Completely unaware of her womanhood that seeks for the fulfillment of heterosexual love,