



# **Excavating Victorians (Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century) (SUNY Series, Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century)**

*Virginia Zimmerman*

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Excavating Victorians examines nineteenth-century Britain's reaction to the revelations about time and natural history provided by the new sciences of geology and archaeology. The Victorians faced one of the greatest paradigm shifts in history: the bottom dropped out of time, and they had to reinvent their relationship to the earth and to time and history. These new sciences took the Victorians by storm, inundating them with fossils, skeletal remains, and potsherds artifacts, or traces, that served at once as relics from the past, objects in the present, and markers of time's passage. Virginia Zimmerman explores how the Victorians utilized a nexus of literature, excavation, and reflections on time to ease anxieties about the individual's fate in the face of time's overwhelming expanse. The function of artifacts is also considered through careful readings of Tennyson's *The Princess* and Dickens's *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*. Zimmerman shows how these literary works make use of the language, tropes, and even generic conventions of excavation, and how they participate in the effort to rescue the individual from temporal insignificance."

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