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Autore	Swenson Kristine <1966->
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Nota di contenuto	Medical women old and new -- Angels of mercy -- Nightmare figures : backlash against the new nurse -- Sex and fair play : establishing the woman doctor -- The new woman doctor novel -- Medical women and imperial fiction.
Sommario/riassunto	In <i>Medical Women and Victorian Fiction</i> , Kristine Swenson explores the cultural intersections of fiction, feminism, and medicine during the second half of the nineteenth century in Britain and her colonies by looking at the complex and reciprocal relationship between women and medicine in Victorian culture. Her examination centers around two distinct though related figures: the Nightingale nurse and the New Woman doctor. The medical women in the fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell (<i>Ruth</i>), Wilkie Collins (<i>The Woman in White</i>), Dr. Margaret Todd (<i>Mona McLean, Medical Student</i>), Hilda Gregg (<i>Peace with Honour</i>), and others are analyzed in relation to nonfictional discussions of nurses and women doctors in medical publications, nursing tracts, feminist histories, and newspapers. Victorian anxieties over sexuality, disease, and moral corruption came together most persistently around the figure of a prostitute. However, Swenson takes as her focus for this volume an opposing figure, the medical woman, whom Victorians

deployed to combat these social ills. As symbols of traditional female morality informed and transformed by the new social and medical sciences, representations of medical women influenced public debate surrounding women's education and employment, the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the health of the empire. At the same time, the presence of these educated, independent women, who received payment for performing tasks traditionally assigned to domestic women or servants, inevitably altered the meaning of womanhood and the positions of other women in Victorian culture. Swenson challenges more conventional histories of the rise of the actual nurse and the woman doctor by treating as equally important the development of cultural representations of these figures.
