



# American Women Authors and Literary Property, 1822-1869

*Melissa J. Homestead*

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Through an exploration of women authors' engagements with copyright and married women's property laws, *American Women Authors and Literary Property, 1822–1869*, revises nineteenth-century American literary history, making women's authorship and copyright law central. Using case studies of five popular fiction writers - Catharine Sedgwick, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Fanny Fern, Augusta Evans, and Mary Virginia Terhune - Homestead shows how the convergence of copyright and coverture both fostered and constrained white women's agency as authors. Women authors exploited their status as nonproprietary subjects to advantage by adapting themselves to a copyright law that privileged readers' access to literature over authors' property rights. Homestead's inclusion of the Confederacy in this work sheds light on the centrality of copyright to nineteenth-century American nationalisms and on the strikingly different construction of author reader relations under U.S. and Confederate copyright laws.

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