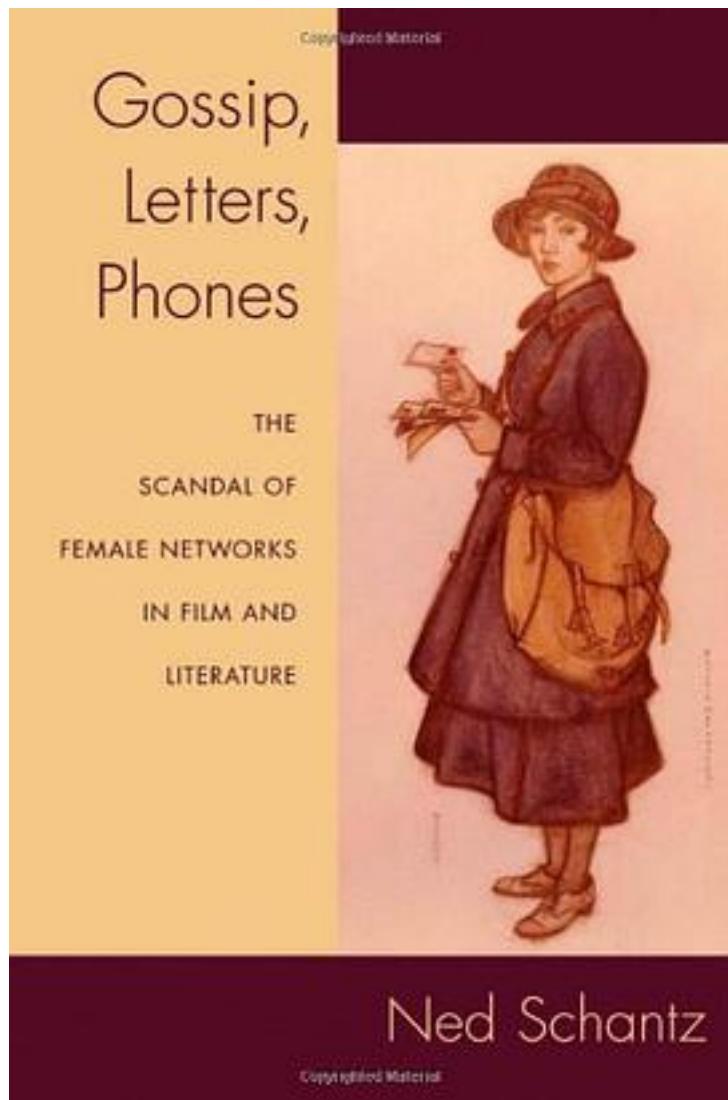


Gossip, Letters, Phones



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For over two hundred years of narrative culture, when female characters try to get together, crazy things happen. Indeed, the greater the means at women's disposal, the more severe and twisted is the anxious reaction. Behind this broad anxiety lurks the powerful ideal of sympathetic and strategic female networks, an ideal that takes its intimate shape from the expectations of communications media, and that underwrites the very culture that would deny it. Ned Schantz examines novelistic culture from the British novel to Hollywood film as a series of responses to the threat and promise of female networks. Reading texts from Clarissa; Emma; and The Portrait of a Lady, to Sorry, Wrong Number; Vertigo; and You've Got Mail, Schantz argues that a recurring gothic nightmare haunts plots of courtship, marriage, and female advancement even as the female networks themselves illuminate the path to clarity. And while this study must of necessity visit an uncanny realm of lost messages and false suitors, telepathy and artificial intelligence, locked rooms and time-traveling stalkers, these occult concerns only confirm the tangible, material power at stake in the most basic modes of female communication, in gossip, letters, and phones.

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目录:

[Gossip, Letters, Phones 下载链接1](#)

标签

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