

Romance's rival : familiar marriage in Victorian fiction

[Schaffer, Talia](#). Oxford, 2016

- 334p bibl index, 9780190465094 \$65.00, 9780190465100
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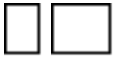
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In this groundbreaking book, Schaffer (Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY) provides an alternative view of the marriage plots in 19th-century novels, building a case for the familiar marriage as a rival to the romantic marriage. Although the newer romance plot was dominant by the end of the century, the familiar marriage in its various forms—neighbor, cousin, disability, vocational—provided women with an attractive alternative. The familiar marriage afforded a woman benefits not usually available in romance plots. In the neighbor or cousin marriage, she is able to stay among her established community of family and friends. In the disability or vocational marriage, she gains some useful occupation in addition to being wife and mother. Schaffer also clarifies many choices the female characters make, e.g., why Marianne in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* would ultimately be happy in her marriage to Col. Brandon. In addition, the author looks at why the romance plot took precedence by the end of the century. The subject matter of this impeccably researched, clearly written work is so compelling that the book will interest readers outside as well as inside the academy. The book will definitely influence how this reviewer teaches some of her favorite novels in the future.

Summing Up: Essential. Lower-division undergraduates and above; general readers.

- Reviewer: [L. J. Larson](#), Our Lady of the Lake University
- Recommendation: Essential
- Readership Level: General Readers, Lower-division Undergraduates, Upper-division Undergraduates, Graduate Students, Researchers/Faculty, Two-Year Technical Program Students
- Interdisciplinary Subjects: [Women's & Gender Studies](#)
- Subject: [Humanities - Language & Literature - English & American](#)
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