

Schur's *Victorian Pastoral*, in which the richness of the readings comes from the books persistently comparative nature. Some of the strongest moments in Clark's book, too, put Hardy into direct conversation with classical and Romantic authors.

By the end of this book, a reader may hope for more than a reminder that "Hardy both acknowledges and adapts classical pastoral." And, indeed, there is much richness in this book's attention to detail that is not reflected in its overall claim. There are hints throughout of what else Clark has to offer in future work on Hardy, poetry, and landscape. Clark's preface mentions a possible future project on the poems of 1912–1913. Such a tight and focused intervention into a specific poetic "movement" within Hardy's later career would be most welcome. Perhaps future projects can offer more direct engagement with specific conventions of classical pastoral, with which Clark seems intimately acquainted but must paint with a relatively broad brush here. To make room for broad engagement with a number of Hardy's poems, as well as gestures towards the fiction, the book must assume familiarity with classical pastoral's major tropes: representation of the country/city divide, nostalgia for the past, and the presence of a shepherd figure. Finally, future studies by this author may take a tighter and more sustained look at the economic underpinnings of a return to pastoral, thinking more about social mobility and profession, including Hardy's ambivalence about his own positioning within economic circles and his own acts of self-invention. Overall, however, *Thomas Hardy's Pastoral* is a readable and engaging reminder that Hardy's poetry has as much to offer as his prose, if one looks closely enough.

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"Familiar Marriage" & Victorian Fiction

Talia Schaffer. *Romance's Rival: Familiar Marriage in Victorian Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xvi + 334 pp. \$65.00

IN GEORGE MEREDITH'S *The Egoist*, Clara Middleton is caught in the middle of two men's plans for her future happiness: her father, a clueless, well-meaning clergyman, and her suitor, the ridiculous Sir Willoughby Patterne, whose worship of her is like something out of a horror story. She contemplates her situation with accumulating desperation:

[S]he had mused upon liberty as a virgin Goddess—men were out of her thoughts; even the figure of a rescuer, if one dawned in her mind, was more angel than hero. That fair childish maidenliness had ceased. With her body straining in her dragon's grasp, with the savour of loathing, unable to contend, unable to speak aloud, she began to speak to herself, and all the health of her nature made her outcry womanly: "If I were loved!"—not for the sake of love, but for free breathing; and her utterance of it was to insure life and enduringness to the wish, as the yearning of a mother on a drowning ship is to get her infant to shore. "If some noble gentleman could see me as I am and not disdain to aid me! Oh! to be caught up out of this prison of thorns and brambles. I cannot tear my own way out. I am a coward. My cry for help confesses that. A beckoning of a finger would change me, I believe. I could fly bleeding and through hootings to a comrade. Oh! a comrade! I do not want a lover. I should find another Egoist, not so bad, but enough to make me take a breath like death."

Meredith's novel was published in 1879, a few years outside the decades bracketing Talia Schaffer's engaging study of the nonromantic marriage plot in Victorian fiction. But Clara Middleton's heartfelt cry for a comrade instead of a lover could have been the motto for many midcentury heroines who craved intellectual and emotional fulfillment and an active communal life far more than erotic passion, sexual adoration, or a soul mate. Schaffer's book richly validates what many feminist readers have long suspected: that there is another plot and an alternative view of love that both parallels and rivals the Victorian romance plot. Schaffer calls it "familiar marriage," a form of the eighteenth-century ideal of companionate marriage, in which a woman marries from rational esteem rather than romantic rapture. Once you begin to notice the contours of the familiar marriage plot—easily recognizable in Jane Austen, but also emergent in the Brontës, George Eliot, Dickens, Trollope, and Charlotte Yonge—it begins to seem ubiquitous. Familiar marriage is standing in the wings of Victorian fiction, away from the limelight. In Schaffer's metaphor, familiar marriage is "the dark side of the disk whose brightly lit romantic side" is what we usually see when we read the Victorian novel. It is the story that "shines a spotlight onto romantic marriage, revealing its shadows and dark spaces, the gaps that familiar marriage stretched to fill."

Schaffer offers compelling historical explanations for the emergence of familiar marriage in Victorian fiction—as well as reasons for its demise. Social conditions during the reign of Victoria had changed enough so that neither the marriage of rational esteem nor the marriage of emotional passion offered completely satisfactory models for women who desired a wider scope for self-development and for par-

ticipation in public affairs. The two-suitor plot developed, she suggests, as a means of testing these incompatible cultural values. According to Schaffer, this was “a long negotiation,” and it was not at all clear that romantic marriage would dominate the fictional landscape, for the values of familiar marriage had a strong pull for a generation of women (and men, presumably) who were adapting to radical changes in the organization of modern society. In *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (1977), Lawrence Stone asserted that the movement from the extended clan system—where marriage merged familial and group interests—to the small, devoted nuclear family ushered in the modern individual subject and the emergence of voluntary, private relationships. Stone’s sweeping, progressive narrative about the triumph of the individual and democracy dominated social history for thirty years. Literary critics, notably Ian Watt and Nancy Armstrong, more or less followed Stone’s teleological thesis in their influential accounts of the rise of the bourgeois novel.

Schaffer, though, departs from this trajectory in pursuing recent scholarship that attempts to avoid overgeneralizations and instead plays off variations. These critics detect a parallel story that has unique implications for women, whose political and economic individuality was, after all, nonexistent. Instead of individualism, perhaps women sought community, family association, and caring for others. Instead of the active and sexually alluring stranger, perhaps women required familiarity, stability, and mutual support. Thus novels that deploy familiar marriage prioritize sociality over sexuality, companionable trust over romantic passion. Schaffer asks: “Might the marriage plot have worked, not just to propel us toward modernity, but also as a reservoir holding older ideas? What would happen . . . if we read the history of the novel not as the inevitable triumph of individualism, but as a messy and imperfect, yet heartfelt attempt to retain sociality?”

Schaffer locates four types of familiar marriage: marriage to a neighbor, endogamous or cousin marriage, marriage to a disabled person, and marriage as a means to useful work or as access to a vocation. She sets up her discussion of these types skillfully, with wonderful originality and concision, moving securely from economic theory to Victorian anthropology to contemporary disability theory and an ethics of care. The final chapter uses the vocational rhetoric of the Langham Place feminists to show how failure, disappointment, and wasted lives became central to the discourse of women’s rights. Add Freud, and by

the early twentieth century women's social needs were pathologized as repressed libido, hysteria, incestuous desire, or self-loathing.

If familiar marriage was everywhere in the Victorian novel, why have so many scholars missed it? In his poem, "Introduction to Poetry," Billy Collins describes a method of exegesis that should sound familiar to critics who came of age in the 1980s and 1990s: "But all they want to do / is tie the poem to a chair with rope / and torture a confession out of it. // They begin beating it with a hose / to find out what it really means." In *Romance's Rival*, Schaffer challenges the routine of reading Victorian fiction interrogatively, as hidden stories of crime or repressed sexual desire. "To read desire not as central, not as repressed, not as perverse, but simply as relatively unimportant is extraordinarily difficult for modern literary critics," Schaffer writes. "Our post-Freudian, post-Foucaultian working assumption is that all fictional characters feel a powerful, propulsive, erotic drive that must be kept secret if it does not fit heterosexual reproductive norms, but whose intensity makes it seep out into clues that the astute reader can follow." The backlash in some quarters against symptomatic reading suggests that we are more willing to read Victorian fiction without our habitual suspicion and condescension. Schaffer's book is a welcome move in this direction. She invites us to be a little more open to the idea that for many middle-class Victorian women, agency, proximity to family, community, and some degree of control over their own lives were more important than sex. As she puts it, "sometimes love is the cover story" for something else—a woman's need for work or care or belonging.

Schaffer performs buoyant and insightful readings of the primary texts she singles out, and her erudition as a Victorianist is manifest throughout the book (together, the notes and bibliography are over seventy pages long). This book offers a perspective on mid-Victorian fiction that is focused, intelligent, always interesting, and uncluttered with irrelevancies. It is also thought provoking as a piece of feminist scholarship. Schaffer's elegant and wistful conclusion had me wondering about iterations of the familiar marriage plot in American pop culture. In her preface, she briefly addresses the relationship between the Victorian novels she analyzes and contemporary rom-com fantasies. "Some of the most popular films of the last few decades, from *Bridget Jones's Diary* to *Clueless* to *Frozen*," Schaffer observes, "position a rakish, handsome, dangerous man against the klutzy, decent, kind man at home, the family favorite, whom the heroine overlooks until it is almost too late." In the new comedy, *Maggie's Plan*, directed and written by the actress

Rebecca Miller, the heroine forms a romantic marriage to a seductive egotist—basically Sir Willoughby Patterne as a handsome, older college professor. The marriage disintegrates, but Maggie gets another shot. As the true Mr. Right, the clunky math guy she used to know in school, walks towards her at a Manhattan ice rink, we get a long close-up of Maggie’s glowing, hopeful face. She has had an epiphany about sensible, stable familiar love.

After reading *Romance’s Rivals*, I could not help thinking of another Maggie, whose story had a very different ending. Maggie Tulliver was also caught in the middle of different men’s plans for her. Her own vague plan for love and personal fulfillment barely had a chance. There was too much going against her. But her sacrifice and her effort, as Schaffer writes, attest “both to the difficulty of moving against the romantic tide and the need so many Victorian women felt to find a safe harbor.”

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The New Woman Gothic

Patricia Murphy. *The New Woman Gothic: Reconfigurations of Distress*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2016. ix + 327 pp. \$50.00

IN *DRACULA*, there is a moment in Mina Murray’s journal in which she briefly alludes to the late-nineteenth-century figure of the New Woman. Embedded in this novel of Gothic horror, Mina makes joking allusions to this stereotype. As she describes a delicious afternoon tea taken with Lucy Westenra, she remarks “I believe we should have shocked the ‘New Woman’ with our appetites.” Going on to mention a recent proposal of marriage made to Lucy, she contemplates how the New Woman of the future might conduct her relationships: “But I suppose the New Woman won’t condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it, too!” These brief allusions have led to much academic discussion of Mina and Lucy as potential New Woman figures, but what is particularly significant is how two supposedly distinct genres of Gothic and New Woman meet in this moment in *Dracula*.

In Patricia Murphy’s informative and thought-provoking study, the term “New Woman Gothic” is coined as a way of exploring such meetings between the New Woman texts and the Gothic novel. In particular Murphy investigates how Gothic tropes are deployed in New Woman

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