

longer period (although the early period has to a certain extent already been catered for with substantial anthologies of the work of eighteenth-century and Romantic women poets), and has an exceptionally fine introduction to recommend it.

**Barbara Garlick**

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***Victorian Love Stories: An Oxford Anthology*, edited by Kate Flint. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1997.**

The cover of the paperback edition of *Victorian Love Stories: An Anthology* features William Holyoake's celebrated portrayal of a lovers' tryst. In the foreground of the painting a young woman sits on a wooden bench under a tree. Her feet are demurely crossed and her hands are clasped lightly in her lap. Her gaze moves away from the viewer toward a point that lies beyond the physical and imaginative scope of the painting. Who would hazard a guess as to her thoughts? Is she dreaming of her lover or ruminating upon the vagaries of romantic love? Will she, like the young starry-eyed heroine of Walter Besant's short story "The Shrinking Shoe," discover to her chagrin that her "Prince" in real life is merely a figment of her imagination and desire? Or is she, like the restless maiden figure in Christina Rossetti's fable "Hero," on the threshold of a love that "glitters with diamonds and opals as with ten thousand fire-flies"? Whatever this woman's thoughts and desires, she is destined to remain in the moment—awaiting the advent of her lover. The painting thus captures an instant of stasis and of limitless possibilities, and as such provides an illuminating metaphor for the convergence of theme and genre in this anthology.

To write of romantic, heterosexual love in the nineteenth century, Kate Flint observes in her introduction to the volume, "almost always meant offering some kind of reflection on the position of women within society." The short stories in this anthology amply support this proposition. From Christiana Fraser-Tyler's story "Margaret," which explores and ultimately upholds the unattainability of a love shared by an impoverished but genteel governess and the son of an aristocratic household, to Thomas Hardy's depiction of a middle-class son's proud refusal to sanction a marriage between his working-class mother and a successful greengrocer in "The Son's Veto," many of the stories included in this anthology simultaneously challenge and consolidate the prevailing rigid class and gender hierarchies.

With Flint's emphasis upon the value of the Victorian love story to articulate and interrogate conventional configurations of women in love and in marriage, it is somewhat surprising then to discover that she fails to note the significance of narrative form in her introduction. Irrespective of the writer's gender, it would appear from these selected stories that the woman "in love" is precluded from directly addressing the reader. Her emotions and desires are either mediated through a third-person narration, through the first-person narrative voice of the male protagonist, or through the perceptions of a fictive audience. While Ella Darcy's "The Pleasure-Pilgrim" uses a

third-person narrative to recount the tragic love of a young, flirtatious American for a prim, correct English gentleman, this story arguably comes closest to acknowledging and asserting female sexual desire and need. For the male protagonist, Lulie Thayer's open expression of desire is at once refreshingly innocent and deceptively dangerous; he views her as an object of fascination and of repulsion. Such unwomanly and ambiguous conduct does not remain unpunished and so Campbell writes Lulie Thayer out of her own story:

Why, if you really loved me, really loved any man—if you had any conception of what the passion of love is, how beautiful, how fine, how sacred—the mere idea that you could not come to your lover fresh, pure, untouched, as a young girl should—that you had been handled, fondled, and God knows what besides, by this man and the other—would fill you with such horror for yourself, with such supreme disgust—you would feel yourself so unworthy, so polluted . . . that . . . that . . . by God! you would take up that pistol there, and blow your brains out!

Similarly, in “An Ugly Little Woman,” Nora Vynne's short story also dating back to the 1890s, a woman rails against her emotional, social and sexual redundancy in a society which privileges the attractive over the plain woman. Yet even here female utterance and protest are transmuted through the imagination and narrative voice of the male protagonist.

Flint's introduction also explores the particular success of the short story medium in handling the subject of romantic love. According to Flint, the short story held the “capacity to exploit an expanded moment,” thereby providing a space in which both men and women could endeavour to define and articulate their feelings and attitudes. The events recorded in Henry James's exquisitely crafted story “A Day of Days,” for example, take place over one sleepy September afternoon in rural England. A sense of the female protagonist's physical and emotional isolation and of the arbitrary nature of her encounter with a stranger enables James to capture the possibilities and limitations of mutual attraction and desire as well as to explore the role of art in the location and articulation of such contradictions. Flint suggests that the growing public scrutiny of accepted social and literary configurations of love and marriage crystallised in the short story of the 1890s, where writers attempted to “free themselves from certain expectations and conventions surrounding their subject-matter.” The anthology reflects Flint's privileging of the late Victorian short story, with all but nine of the thirty-two selected stories dating from the 1880s and 1890s.

To the student or enthusiast of nineteenth-century fiction, Flint's volume provides a useful overview of contemporary attitudes towards romantic love. Other forms of love, ranging from the love experienced by a parent for a child to the “powerful emotions felt by an individual for a place,” are deliberately and expressly omitted from the anthology. It is worth noting, however, that maternal love sometimes acts as a

substitute for unrequited sexual love in these stories and that it often provides the catalyst for a happy resolution to a love affair. Thus the accident which befalls the male protagonist in "Malachi's Cove" and his dramatic rescue by the wild and unearthly Mally Trenglos, enables Anthony Trollope to insist upon the latent maternal instincts of his female protagonist, and thus to effect an acceptable closure (that is, marriage) to the story.

With the inclusion of several short stories by lesser-known writers such as Lucy Clifford, Ernest Dowson and Charlotte Mew, the biographical notes appended to the volume are indispensable. However, some clarification in the notes as to whether the publication dates roughly coincided with the actual conception of the stories might have been more helpful. Publication dates are useful parameters for our understanding of the various literary and intellectual trends of the day, but they can be quite misleading if, for example, a story was written two decades before it was published. A quick glance over the biographical entries, arranged as they are in accordance with the order of the stories in the anthology, also underlines what could be seen as the major weakness of this otherwise illuminating and entertaining volume: the failure on the part of the editor to justify the arrangement of the stories. With Flint's emphasis upon the interplay of genre and subject-matter, either a chronological or thematic arrangement, for example, might have better enabled the reader to chart the evolution of the short story genre and to map the shifting status of romantic love and marriage as the century progressed.

### Amanda Collins

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#### ***Christina Rossetti Revisited*, by Sharon Smulders. Twayne's English Author Series No. 517. New York: Twayne; London: Prentice Hall, 1996.**

In the Preface to *Christina Rossetti Revisited*, Smulders presents her project in terms which suggest both the work's strengths and weaknesses, writing that "this study, in accordance with the objectives of the series, provides a critical introduction to the life and works of Christina Rossetti." Situating itself as an introductory text, one of the advantages of the series' prescriptions is that Smulders's analysis takes Rossetti's complete *oeuvre* into account. Smulders is correct in asserting that "a better understanding of Rossetti's achievement depends on a familiarity with the entire scope of her writing." Given that Rossetti's prose has not yet been accorded the same editorial attention as her poetry (most of it remains unpublished since the nineteenth century) Smulders's analyses of *Commonplace and Other Short Stories* (1870) and *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) provide useful introductions to these works, especially for the Australasian scholar whose access to such texts is likely to be especially limited. Thus we learn that in the tales which make up *Commonplace* Rossetti experiments "with a range of realistic, fantastic, and didactic forms," returning "time and again to the same motifs—birth and death, loss and gain—that distinguish her verse." However, if this itself sounds commonplace, Smulders's readings of the prose fictions predominantly