

Second Person Singular: Late Victorian Women Poets and the Bonds of Verse by Emily Harrington. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2014. 248 pp. ISBN 978-0-81393612-3. \$39.00.

It is apt that the title of Emily Harrington's book focuses readers on a pronoun's proper name, since her admirably clear monograph asks us to consider how the formal arrangement of words not only describes but also constructs intimate human relationships. The invitation to think about the rhetorical shaping of the encounter between speaker and addressee in the work of six Victorian women poets sets up this book's thoughtful parsing of the way their lyrics imagine and lay claim to intimacy – or disavow such claims. The project of finding “new ways of thinking about intimacy with distance” is both precisely defined and wide-ranging. Harrington borrows Coventry Patmore's phrase the “bonds of verse” to signify two things at once: the enabling restraints of prosody, and an understanding of the dynamics of intimacy in these women's lyrics in which *bonds* are both links that connect and fetters that bind. The book's approach is notable for its evenhanded reliance on strong close-readings of individual poems and overarching claims about the ways the “compact lyrics” that she focuses on are related to these new notions of intimacy.

Harrington charts the different concerns six poets – Christina Rossetti, Augusta Webster, A. Mary F. Robinson, Alice Meynell, Dollie Radford, and (in a briefer conclusion) Mary Coleridge – raise about the nature and power of intimacy. The opening chapter on Rossetti presents her as a key influence on each of the late Victorian women poets who are the book's central focus, not least in the ways she sets the terms for the discussion of what counts as and constitutes intimacy. Harrington shows Rossetti asking whether an intimate relationship can exist without hierarchy and, while she finds the answer to be “no,” Harrington also reads Rossetti as strategically unfixing the relative positions within such hierarchies. One must dominate, but which one can vary, making the power dynamic in Rossetti's poems fluid and not fixed. Both Rossetti's attention to questions of power in intimate relationships and the fluidity of its constitution are themes Harrington finds being taken up and borrowed or revised in the work of each of the poets she goes on to discuss.

In her reading of the dynamic of mother and child in Webster's sonnets, Harrington shows the poet both seeking to banish the measurement of love and obsessively returning to it, ultimately (and iconoclastically) arguing that love is finite. The chapter on Robinson has a double focus; first, it assesses the intimacy of the poet and her friend Vernon Lee as the fertile context within which both writers elaborated their theories of aesthetics and morality. Then, it shows how this dialogic process helped shape Robinson's (anti-)aesthetic