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*Fair Copy: Relational Poetics and Antebellum American  
Women's Poetry* by Jennifer Putzi (review)

Erin Kappeler

Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers, Volume 39, Number 2,  
2022, pp. 134-136 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/leg.2022.a904365>



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titled “To My Dear Children” (1664), which can be read especially productively in context with her poem “On the Birth of One of Her Children.” The inclusion of Hannah Hill’s *A Legacy for Children* (1714) is a significant addition to the documented Hill literary family legacy. Hill is an ancestor of Milcah Martha Moore, who was born Milcah Martha Hill, and whose commonplace book preserved the poetry of several Quaker women, including Hannah Griffitts. *The Legacy Book* is useful to professional scholars and students, as it is part scholarly analysis and part anthology. One area of study that requires further inquiry is defining the characteristics that are essential for identifying the text as a legacy form. As they stand, the form’s identifying characteristics are so general that they undermine its uniqueness as a specific genre. Sharpening the definition would reduce the risk of encompassing disparate texts that might not qualify as legacy form. In honing the definition, scholars might also explore the significance of formal distinctions between legacy books—for example, the voice and address of a legacy book supposedly written by a dying woman versus those that adopt the authorizing editorial perspective of a minister or husband. Overall, *The Legacy Book* has also opened new pathways for consideration of popular early American genres.

***Fair Copy: Relational Poetics and Antebellum American Women’s Poetry.*** By Jennifer Putzi. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. xii + 272 pp. \$69.95 cloth/from \$52.49 e-book.

Erin Kappeler, *Tulane University*

Can we read nineteenth-century American women’s poetry on its own terms? This question has animated recovery projects for decades, but as Jennifer Putzi shows in *Fair Copy*, it remains hugely generative. Building on scholarship in book history, feminist studies, and historical poetics, Putzi argues that we have yet to grapple with what it would mean to *read* (and not just to acknowledge) the outpouring of unexceptional poetry written by women in the nineteenth century—that is, poetry that seems unexceptional when we apply contemporary critical standards to it. How do our literary-historical narratives change when we turn our attention from a handful of towering figures to networks of anonymous and pseudonymous authors? How can we read in ways that value imitation and convention? Over the course of five chapters and a conclusion, Putzi develops compelling answers to these questions as she demonstrates what she calls the “theory and methodology of relational poetics” (1).

Putzi’s concept of relational poetics helps to show how women poets navigated what Meredith McGill has named the culture of reprinting in the ante-

bellum United States. As Putzi notes, a relational poetics, which involved copying, reciting, and memorizing poems, as well as imitating other poems and responding to reader requests for poems on specific topics, “provided access to print that might have otherwise been denied the majority of women poets” (10). While such imitation and collaboration were not necessarily unique to women’s poetry, Putzi convincingly argues that “antebellum print culture combined with cultural perceptions of women’s nature to render women poets perfectly suited to certain kinds of publication and circulation” that made up a relational poetics (11). That is, writing conventional poems that imitated other poems, and writing collaboratively with and for specific communities, helped to cement a perceived connection between “the ‘fairness’ of copying itself in the antebellum United States” and “the ‘fairer sex’” (10).

One test of any scholarly intervention is what it allows us to see and read anew, and by this measure, *Fair Copy* is a rousing success. Putzi demonstrates, through careful close readings of poems and through an impressive marshaling of archival evidence, that our sense of literary history is fruitfully expanded when we attend to the vast body of generic poetry women published in the nineteenth century. Putzi is attentive to the imbrications of class, race, and authorial status throughout the book, but the chapters on the *Lowell Offering* and on the abolitionist poetry of the well-to-do Sarah Louisa Forten (chapters 2 and 3) make particularly clear Putzi’s argument that these lesser-known poems illuminate the distance between nineteenth-century practices of authorship and reading and our own.

In the case of poetry by working-class women, contemporary critics often struggle with poems that do not show signs of class consciousness or a radical politics. Putzi shows us how to read these poems not for the politics we may want them to have but as evidence of working-class women finding creative ways to engage in print culture. In the case of the Lowell textile factory operatives, Putzi demonstrates that imitating poems published by middle-class women did not necessarily entail political quietism. Instead, the poems published in the *Offering* show these factory workers “claim[ing] both the reading and the writing of poetry as a classless activity” and “mak[ing] their lives, texts, and talents legible to a wider, primarily middle-class, audience” (62). Indeed, in some ways the Lowell factory workers literalized relational poetics, making the factory into a kind of shared text as they hung poems on the walls of their workspaces, “creating a scrapbook of sorts out of the environment in which they worked” (72). In turning the factory floor into part of the literary world, these women made poetry a vital part of their working lives.

Putzi’s discussion of Sarah Louisa Forten’s *Liberator* poems, along with the conclusion, are some of the book’s most generative offerings when it comes to

imagining the future of recovery work on nineteenth-century women's poetry. Forten published only a small number of poems, and she often published pseudonymously. Putzi herself has authenticated some of Forten's poems, and she explains that though she remains interested in this kind of recovery work, "the difficulty in identifying Forten's publications should . . . lead us to question our desire to do so" (93). Putzi builds on Frances Smith Foster's call to attend to "a tradition of collaborative creative industry" in the history of African American literature (Foster qtd. in Putzi 95–96), and thinks with Saidiya Hartman's formulation of Black communities as "networks of affiliation enacted in performance" (Hartman qtd. in Putzi 100) in order to understand how Forten's poems differentially engaged enslaved, free Black, and white authors and readers as participants in the shared political project of abolition. Forten's identity as an individual is less illuminating, Putzi shows, than is the fact that her poems were "[e]nmeshed . . . in familial, communal, and activist networks" that understood authorship to be a category "rooted in collaboration, communal membership, and political advocacy" (96–97).

In the book's conclusion, Putzi takes the 2015 rediscovery of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Forest Leaves* as an occasion to "think critically about our enthusiasm for these 'new' poems" and to "turn to the work by other African American women that has been in front of our eyes (and in our databases) all along" (215). Putzi is clear that the goal of such a turn is not a new or an expanded canon but rather a new scholarly attention to the supposedly unremarkable—imitative, occasional, anonymous—poems available to us. Such poetry has indeed been in our databases all along, and new digital humanities work like the Colored Conventions Project and the Black Bibliography Project promise to make more legible than ever the networks and communities that enabled this poetry to be published. Of course, such data are only as good as the concepts we use to make sense of them. Relational poetics will be a key tool for scholars seeking to better understand nineteenth-century American women's poetry in all its imitative, collaborative, communal iterations.

***The Matrilineal Heritage of Louisa May Alcott and Christina Rossetti.*** By Azelina Flint. New York: Routledge, 2022. ix + 240 pp. \$124.00 cloth/\$39.16 e-book.

Marlowe Daly-Galeano, *Lewis-Clark State College*

The technical process of creating a spiritual icon is clearly outlined in Azelina Flint's *The Matrilineal Heritage of Louisa May Alcott and Christina Rossetti*. It consists of purifying and sanding the wood, preparing and applying the plaster