

Literary Cabinets and 'Who's in, Who's Out': Katharine Tynan (1902) and her Successors
Irish Women's Writing 1880-1910 Network and Symposium, Limerick, 26 November
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(A) On Anthologies

‘Our current ways of reading are so controlled by the anthology that we must rehistoricize the traditions of the anthology itselfThe mark of any culture’s literary sense of self lies in the way it makes anthologies’.

Seth Lerer, ‘Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology’, *PMLA* 118.5 (Oct 2003).

‘Anthologies are more than a referendum. They determine not simply who gets published or what gets read, but who reads, and how... In the process of recognizing commonplaces, ... readers learn to recognize themselves within a common culture.’

Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* (Cambridge UP, 2000), p.104.

Is the anthology a ‘backward look’ survey, or a foundational and forward-looking event: ‘at the beginning rather than the end of literary history making’?

Theodore O. Mason, Jr. ‘The African-American Anthology: Mapping the Territory, Taking the National Census, Building the Museum’, *American Literary History* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 185-198, 187.

‘What if the anthology enables the articulation of a *mood* rather than conducting a census, drawing a map, or founding a museum? Neither a “final thing” (a framing of the past) nor a “prophecy” (a prediction of the future), but a space of “new creation” in the performance of reading that takes place in the subjunctive, in a condition of probability.’

Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 44.

(B) Katharine Tynan, *Cabinet of Irish Literature* (1902)

‘The Cabinet of Irish Literature was first published in the early eighties, at a moment of storm and stress in Ireland, when there was little sign of the pleasant industry presently to be in the field of literature. So many have been the workers since then, and so considerable the work, that it is thought fitting that a new edition should now be issued, to include the newcomers.’

Author’s Preface

‘Perhaps, after all, our great need is of a Critic, a critic who would do immediately the sifting which is always going on behind the scenes, sifting the false from the true, the lasting from the merely perishable, in a judgment there is no gainsaying. But the Critic would be as a voice crying in the wilderness, unless he had the art to capture and to lead the opinion of the people – nay, to make an opinion in default of one ready-made.’ (introduction, xxiv)

C) Brokers and gatekeepers

‘It is not the wrong choices or the predominance of pressure groups over individual talents, or the sexism—all of which are so evident—but the turning away of attention from the ground where the action is happening to the figures of the international talent-spotters half-visible behind their glassed-in gallery.’

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Review of Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, volumes I-III. *Cyphers* 35 (1992): 52.

‘What little we do read is deeply nonrepresentative of the full field of literary and cultural production, as critics of our existing canons have rightly observed for decades.... We’re doing little better, frankly, than we were with the dead white male bunch fifty or a hundred years ago, and we’re just as smug in our false sense of intellectual scope. The problem, moreover, is getting worse as the store of unread books grows with each passing week.... We need to do less close reading and more of anything and everything else that might help us extract information from and about texts as indicators of largely cultural issues.’

Matthew Wilkens, ‘Canons, Close Reading and the Evolution of Method’ in Matthew Gold (ed.), *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. 251. Open access edition at <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/debates-in-the-digital-humanities>

D) Absences and Presences

It is, however, not generally recognised how much of verse of high intellectual and artistic quality has been written by women during the last two centuries. One or two names have a high place on the roll of fame; others are rewarded with honourable if somewhat patronising mention and approval; and many whose productions are of a quality exceptionally noteworthy are totally forgotten, or – as in the case of living authors – strangely, and one is inclined to say, ungenerously neglected.’

Elizabeth Sharp, *Women’s Voices: An Anthology of the Most Characteristic Poems by English, Scotch and Irish Women* (1887)

‘I came to love and value them, not just for their work, or for their approach to the stories they told and the worlds they depicted, but for what I came to know of their writing lives, how they were received, what happened to them later. My world and time are so different that we might as well inhabit separate planets, but what struck me was how much more we have in common than the artificial – and perceived – divisions that separate us. Here were the models and exemplars I’d been missing, without knowing enough to know I needed them. Now, when I write, I feel their solid presence at my back, the ground of a ghostly tradition underfoot. Collectively they have the bracing effect of *Get on with it, or get out of the way.*’

Lia Mills, foreword to *Irish Women’s Writing 1878-1922* eds Pilz and Standlee (2016)

‘These writers are finding readers, winning prizes and creating a new collective: 2015 already feels like a very strong year for emerging Irish female writers, some of whom feature in this book. There is a palpable energy in Irish writing...’

Sinéad Gleeson, *The Long Gaze Back* (2015) preface.

‘Each of the *Glass Shore* stories embodies a unique angle of vision; the range of styles and tones is very striking. At the same time, reading through the anthology, what you’re aware of is a unifying assurance and expertise. Moreover, as with all properly thought-out collections, each inclusion gains in impact from the presence of others...’

Patricia Craig, introduction to *The Glass Shore* (2016).