

REVIEWS

Poetry in the Making: Creativity and Composition in Victorian Poetic Drafts edited by Daniel Tyler. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2021. xi, 242 pp. + 25 illus. ISBN: 978-0198784562. \$80.00.

Comprising ten chapters, including editor Daniel Tyler's own robust introductory essay, *Poetry in the Making: Creativity and Composition in Victorian Poetic Drafts* examines manuscript drafts of both well-known and little-studied poems to illuminate the compositional practices of nine poets working in the Victorian period: William Wordsworth, Alfred Tennyson, the Brownings, Arthur Hugh Clough, Christina Rossetti, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and William Butler Yeats. This absorbing collection starts from the premise that studying revisions, particularly in poems whose manuscripts bear traces of painstaking attention to word choices and other formal features, permits both a deepened understanding of the works themselves and an expanded appreciation of poetry as a dynamic process rather than as fixed and finished artifacts. By undertaking textual criticism for literary-critical rather than editorial ends, this approach sets out to recover the diachronic textures of poetry that the more traditional method of textual criticism – geared towards the production of an authoritative final version, perhaps with a list of variants appended – tends to “flatten out.”

This project might be contextualized in part as both a response to and an extension of Hannah Sullivan's argument, in *The Work of Revision* (2013), that Modernist writers cultivated extreme practices of rewriting as a rejection of the nineteenth-century's fixation on spontaneity and its consequent aversion to revision. In this volume, a similar focus on the iterative nature of poetic composition and revision helps us to see that Victorians, and even the mature Wordsworth, were similarly inclined to “make it new” (to borrow that infamous catchphrase of Pound's, translated imprecisely from a French expression that is more likely to have meant “renovate” than “innovate”). Like Sullivan's book, and following on Jane Gallop's 2011 positing of a “friendly return of the author,” the approach adopted and advocated for in this collection sets aside anti-intentionalism in an attempt to form a clearer picture of the poets' methodologies by combing through manuscripts for clues that will help fill “the gap between conception and execution,” speculating on and sketching out possible narratives of production for the poems under discussion.

Beyond establishing the rationale for the volume, Tyler's introduction performs some remarkable close readings of passages in works by the Brownings, Christina Rossetti, Tennyson, Hopkins, and others that powerfully exemplify the kind of nuanced interpretations this method enables. Indeed, the