

The Moxon Tennyson: A Landmark in Victorian Illustration by Simon Cooke. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2021. 254 pp. + 81 illus. ISBN: 978-0-8214-2426-1. \$80.00.

Some years ago (it must have been before the arrival of email), I got a phone call from the archivist of Cardiff University's Special Collections: "I think I've found a book you'll like," she said enigmatically. What followed was a trek to a nameless facility on the outskirts of Cardiff where uncatalogued material was housed before taking residence on the shelves of the library. The book was laid out on a pillow for my arrival. As soon as I glimpsed it, I knew exactly what it was. I am almost certain that there was a divine light shining through an aperture somewhere, which illuminated the embossed gilt urn on the cover as I walked towards it. Perhaps I am over-embellishing (like the second binder of the book, but more on that later). What I distinctly recall, though, is that my hands were shaking as I turned the pages and sought out the original Pre-Raphaelite illustrations that had become so familiar through their reproduction in critical works. There they were and looking smaller and more intricate than I had imagined: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's image of St. Cecilia distracted by an angel, William Holman Hunt's *Lady of Shalott* with her hair flying wildly about, and John Everett Millais's young girl at an open window, her breath hovering on the cold night air. Beneath my trembling hands was the holy grail (or grain) of Victorian illustration studies: the Moxon Tennyson.

The illustrated edition of Tennyson's poetry published by Edward Moxon in 1857 was not a commercial, or even a critical, success when it was first published. The remainders of the book were sold on to George Routledge, who repackaged it and made it more appealing to the Victorian market. Yet this book is now recognized, as Simon Cooke's subtitle claims, as a "land-mark" in Victorian illustration, its fame emanating primarily from the Pre-Raphaelite contributors who secured its interest and iconic status amongst scholars and book collectors. For critics in illustration studies, the Moxon Tennyson is renowned for the complex relation between the poems and the pictures that it puts into play, but, again, these complexities have been regard-ed mainly as the preserve of the Pre-Raphaelite illustrations.

The starting point for Cooke's assessment of the Moxon Tennyson is to recalibrate the critical dominance of the Pre-Raphaelite artists and to suggest that all the illustrators deserve to be re-viewed as integral to the meanings of the book. Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt were accompanied by a well-known cast of artists, that, according to Cooke, would have appealed to more traditional tastes: William Mulready, John Callcott Horsley, Thomas Creswick, Frederick Clarkson Stanfield, and Daniel Maclise. Between them, the illustrators designed fifty-four illustrations that were cut on wood by the finest