

Victorian Verse: The Poetics of Everyday Life edited by Lee Behlman and Olivia Loksing Moy. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. xvii, 289 pp. ISBN 978-3-031-29695-6. \$160.00.

“The fact is that most of the poems composed in the Victorian era were works of verse,” write Lee Behlman and Olivia Loksing Moy, the editors of *Victorian Verse: The Poetics of Everyday Life*. What is to be gained by distinguishing between these two terms, poetry and verse? Quite a lot, as it turns out: this excellent and useful collection – with an equally excellent and useful introduction – demonstrates the value of attending to verse. As Behlman and Moy write in their introduction, which grounds itself firmly in lyric theory and historical poetics, “verse has long been understood to be the dimmer, lesser sibling to the imaginative incandescence of poetry.” But in centring verse as a “mass cultural phenomenon,” this volume “offers a way to counter critical tendencies that have long narrowed our curricula and our scholarly practices.” Victorian verse, as this collection of essays attests, was diverse, accessible, and omnipresent – and well worth our attention.

The essays in *Victorian Verse* encompass a remarkable array of materials which, taken together, reveal a richly diverse landscape that includes not only print publications but also spoken (and sung!) verse that circulated everywhere from the nursery to the factory floor. Most of the volume’s chapters focus on noncanonical verse, often circulating in extremely ephemeral forms and mediums; yet a few contributors take a different approach, offering instead ruminations on the usefulness of the verse/poetry distinction in works by canonical poets. Thus, the chapters in *Victorian Verse* model two different methods for approaching verse.

Verse’s diversity is on full display in the chapters that take the first approach, introducing readers to poetry that circulated in decidedly non-elite spaces: Alison Chapman’s chapter on filler poems in periodicals, Linda Hughes’s on French fixed-form verse in *Punch* and *Fun*, Alisa Clapp-Itnyre’s on Victorian hymnody, and Kirstie Blair’s on verse in the industrial workplace. Other contributors aim to expand our attention to verse forms employed by established writers at the margins of canonicity: Anna Johnston uses Irish-Australian poet Eliza Hamilton Dunlop to explore politics of colonial verse-making; Annmarie Drury focuses on the “dual vocation” of Anglican minister and poet William Barnes in an exploration of both his celebrated dialect poetry (in Dorset English) and his sermons; Kiera Allison uncovers Thomas Carlyle’s “quiet repurposing of verse” in his historical prose; and Justin Sider examines anachronistic genre performance in the works of Andrew Lang and the English Parnassians. At a moment when scholars of the Victorian period are, as Behlman and Moy write, “seeking more capacious understandings of