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Poetic Revision in the Long Nineteenth Century



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Abstract

This thesis argues that the making of poems is entwined with their meaning. I suggest that revision offered poets in the long nineteenth century an imaginative resource that was far more than a process of verbal fine tuning. More specifically, I examine how the process of composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, Dickinson, and Hopkins is intimately tangled up with a broader set of questions each poet is working through, which range from philosophical enquiries into the continuity of the self to the practical matter of how poems work on the page. If revision is often characterised as a process of gradual improvement between drafts of a work, or a preparation for public consumption, this thesis suggests that revision can be a far more private dynamic that we should be alert to within drafts. Each writer studied in this thesis reflects something of Forster's conviction 'How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?', as they continue to discover new ways of working through uncertainties in their compositions. Throughout this thesis, I connect textual theories with a close study of finer textual details, in order to shed light on the writing of these particular poets and to show how revision offers a mode of thinking that is built into the composition of a poem, and also remains detectable in the 'finished' work.

My introductory section suggests that Romantic notions of organic form do not wholly account for the labour detectable in a poet's manuscripts, and that these theories are in fact at odds with the cognitive importance of revision. Chapter One then examines Wordsworth's revisions as a process of self-division, arguing that a more fragmentary form of revision might vouch for the self's amplitudes. My second chapter explores how revision in Tennyson is capable of effecting the continuity-through-change his poetry is often drawn to. Paying attention to his manuscript drafts, I suggest, helps us to see how this ongoing process of change registers at the level of his technique. In Chapter Three, I turn to the shorter forms of Dickinson, whose compositional process investigates various kinds of in-betweenness. My final chapter considers Hopkins's revisions as a form of forward thinking, revealing an in-the-moment futurity and waywardness that runs parallel to the role of telos in his writing.

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[1] See Jack L. Hart, 'Wordsworth's Self-Composure', *English* lxx (2021), pp. 294-316; 'Hopkins's Clouded Judgment', *Literary Imagination* (accepted); 'Hopkins Unselved', *Victorian Re-Encounters*, special issue of *Victorian Poetry* lxi, eds. D. Gracia and F. McGhee (forthcoming 2023), pp. 205-224.

List of Abbreviations

Except where otherwise stated, quotations from frequently cited works are from the following editions. Each item is introduced in full on its first mention in each chapter.

DQWorks	*The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, eds. G. Lindop, B. Symonds *et al*., 21 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000-3).
Memoir	*Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1981).
PED	*The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, ed. R. W. Franklin, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).
PrW	*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. B. Owen and J. Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).
PW	*The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. N. H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
TA	*The Tennyson Archive*, eds. A. Day and C. Ricks, 31 vols. (New York: Garland Pub, 1987-1993).
TP	*The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. C. Ricks, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Harlow: Longman, 1979).
Works	*The Works of Walter Pater*, 8 vols. (1900-1; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Further details of all other works referred to are listed in the Bibliography.

Contents

Abstract i

Acknowledgements ii

Texts and Abbreviations iii

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1 – Wordsworth's Self-Composure 17

Self Origins
Endlessly Distracted
Catching Fancy
Seeing by Glimpses

CHAPTER 2 – Tennyson's Changeability 67

Still and at Present in Progress
In Memoriam

CHAPTER 3 – Dickinson's Betweenity 101

Resisting the End
Pause for Thought
My Business is Circumference

CHAPTER 4 – Hopkins's Forward Thinking 150

Clouded Judgement
In Excess
Aftering

AFTERWORD 206

Bibliography 210

Introduction

Wordsworth was an avid reviser. As he composed the sixth book of what would come to be known as the thirteen-book *Prelude*, his thoughts turned to matters of composition that had 'misled' his own development as a poet during his youth. In one manuscript, revised twenty years after he first began work on the poem, we find him reflecting on derivative habits of composition:

> *I was a better judge of thoughts than words,*
> *Misle* ⌈*d*
> ⌊*a as to these latter, not alone*
> *By common experience of youth*
> *But by the trade in classic niceties,*
> ~~*Delusion to young Scholars incident,*~~
> ~~*And old ones also, by that overpriz'd*~~
> ~~*And dangerous craft of picking phrases out*~~
> The dangerous craft of culling term & phrase
> *From languages that want the living voice*
> *To make of them a nature to the heart,*
> *To tell us what is passion, what is truth,*
> *What reason, what simplicity and sense.*[1]

Whatever these lines have to say about the practice of borrowing lines from classical authors in Latin composition, they have much to tell us about Wordsworth's revisionary sensibilities.[2] In the context of those deletions, his description of the 'dangerous craft of culling term & phrase' takes on a different resonance, reflecting not so much a desirable selection but a form of self-eradication in his own writing. We might notice how the opening distinction between 'thoughts' and 'words' is strengthened in a future revision to this sequence years later, as the poet reworks 'To make of them a nature to the heart' as 'To ^carry meanings to the natural heart;^ ~~make of them a nature to the heart;~~'.[3] In the earlier draft, the revisioning of lines of

[1] MS. A (DC MS. 52), *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. M. L. Reed, 2 vols. (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1991), ii. 643.

[2] Near the start of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge alludes to Wordsworth's criticism of this educational practice: 'I was, at that early period, let to a conjecture, which, many years afterwards was recalled to me from the same thought having been started in conversation, but far more ably, and developed more fully by Mr. Wordsworth; namely, that this style of poetry, which I have characterized above, as translations of prose thoughts into poetic language, had been kept up by, if it did not wholly arise from, the custom of writing Latin verses, and the great importance attached to these exercises, in our public school'; see, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge VII: Biographia Literaria*, eds. J. Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), i. 20-21.

[3] MS. D, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 657.

verse is granted a greater degree of creative agency, implying that the 'nature' of thought might be revitalised via the revision of words, whereas in the later version language is a mere vessel to 'carry' thought and sentiment. The 'craft of culling term & phrase' in this respect happens to enhance 'simplicity and sense'.[4] This is the way revision is often seen: a way to remove excrescences and sharpen sense. But this is only part of the story in which revision, in the hands of a writer like Wordsworth, has a major role in shaping 'an independent world | Created out of pure Intelligence.'[5] The relationship between 'thoughts' and 'words' is not so clear cut, and it's through processes of textual revision that writers discover new ways of thinking about their own experience.

This thesis examines how poems come about and argues that the process can be intimately involved with what they are about. My intention is not to develop a unifying theory of revision, but by focusing on several writers from the Romantic and Victorian periods, to consider how 'revisionism' provides an apt label to describe the bundle of ideas each writer is working through. I suggest that as they conceived, developed, and returned to their work, the processes of composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, Dickinson, and Hopkins concentrated inquiries that ranged from broader questions of selfhood and embodiment to more formal concerns with how poems work on the page. These poets share a critical concern with the life of their poems as they exist outside the world of print. Wordsworth, most famously, started writing his epic poem of the self in 1798 and put it aside forty-one years later without a title. Tennyson composed *In Memoriam* for seventeen years before its publication in 1850, then proceeded to revise it until its final appearance in print during his lifetime in 1884.[6] Neither Dickinson nor Hopkins went to great lengths to see their work enter the public arena. For this reason, this study suggests that poets' manuscript drafts are critical to the way their poems exist in the world. Unlike theories which prize different 'final' versions of a text, I suggest that manuscripts allow us to eavesdrop on the core of these writers' creative processes. Secondly, by knowing this side of them, we are able to shed new critical light on their published writing,

[4] Robert Browning cavilled at an aesthetic obligation of this sort in response to his own critics, pointedly asking 'You, – pacing in even that paddock | Of language allotted you ad hoc, | With a clog at your fetlocks, – you – scorners | Of me free of all its four corners? | Was it "clearness of words which convey thought?"; 'Of Pacchiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper', in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 17 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1889), xiv. 29.

[5] Wordsworth, *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ii. 96.

[6] Hallam Tennyson points out in the *Memoir* that the poet 'carefully revised' his poems for a one-volume edition of his work; *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols. (1897; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ii. 310. For more on the editorial history of *In Memoriam* in print and in manuscripts, see Susan Shatto, 'Tennyson's Revisions of "In Memoriam"', *Victorian Poetry* xvi (1978), pp. 341-356.

which might have been influenced by hidden forces, including theories of the self, editorial commitments, and textual debates over first thoughts and final intentions.

While the 1980s and 1990s saw a proliferation of debates over textual theory, these discussions have rarely been pulled into more creative and literary critical arenas. Seminal works such as Jerome McGann's *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983) and Jack Stillinger's *Coleridge and Textual Instability* (1994) contested, respectively, that textual criticism allows us to 'isolate and remove accumulated error' when we account for a text's development; or to confirm the absence of 'a single or best or most authoritative text'.[7] But what precisely do we stand to gain by arguing for one 'version' of a text over another? What are we to do with this surplus of editorial information? My research unites textual theories, such as genetic criticism, with a close scrutiny of small textual details. By joining up these previously distinct approaches, my intention is to offer a fuller literary appreciation of Romantic and Victorian poets, and to demonstrate how revision is a more complex phenomenon than critics have so far suggested.

Earlier approaches to textual states, such as Stillinger's, take broadly teleological approaches to drafting processes, concerned with either the first or the final published form of a work. In each case, their critical horizons continue to be bounded by something in print. We might contrast with this McGann's interest in each textual form as a distinct 'cultural event'. If a poem 'arrives to our view as a unique order of unique appearances,' he says, 'then a grid of the poem's social and historical filiations, both intra- and extra-textual, should help to elucidate the poem's orders of uniqueness.'[8] In practice, this interpretation of a poem's critical identity means ceding its imaginative history to the contingencies of its historical circumstances. In so doing, it excludes potential inquiries into what might be preserved between different states of a poem: a question more urgent for the poet than critics, perhaps, because it would interrupt the continuous formation of the same poem from manuscript to print. Where this thesis differs, then, is in my argument that the private dynamics of revision are

[7] Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983; repr. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), p. 37; Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. vi. These debates can also be traced in Hershel Parker's *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons* (1984), which sees revision as a injurious process, taking original intentions as sovereign. 'If writers fail to achieve their full intentions during composition,' he claims, 'they are even more likely to damage parts of what they had achieved when they belatedly alter a text'; *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1984), pp. 3-4.

[8] Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (1985; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 5.

equally as important as the more public reworkings of texts. This fine-grained textual revisionism is more in tune with how poets conceive of their relationship with language, with their past, and with the powers of poetry more broadly.

When Wordsworth described the relationship between 'languages' and the 'living voice' they continually seek, he might also have been outlining the way he continued to return to his own language across the stately gestation period of *The Prelude*: his textual revisions show how his voice, though fixed, was far from inert. Indeed, if his ambition was for the poem to embody 'my earlier life or the growth of my own mind', as one of his letters has it, then the text's imaginative history becomes inextricably woven into its compositional history.[9] In other words, *The Prelude* offers up the most extended example of the model of revision Yeats has in mind when he writes, 'When ever I remake a song [. . .] It is myself that I remake.'[10] How the growth of a poem might 'resemble the growth of the self', Daniel Tyler has noted, is one of the 'most persistent recognitions of the way that composition and revision are brought to thematic pertinence'.[11] There are, of course, ways other than selfhood to imagine the development of a poem. That persistence, however, has not only shaped literary critical responses to the poem but also its editing. The rest of this introductory section examines the cluster of debates around editing Wordsworth as a bridge into questions surrounding revision that stretch chronologically and imaginatively into the later nineteenth century.

Editorial theories of *The Prelude* have usually tried to reconcile Wordsworth's extensive revisions with the notion of composing a single poem. Geoffrey Hartman's evolutionary model of the text sees its development as reflecting the poet's 'vision of Creation or of the *continuous* act of Creation.'[12] Accordingly, Hartman sees revision as confirming, rather than corrupting, Wordsworth's original intentions for the poem. That 'or' betrays Hartman's argument, because one 'vision of Creation' could be very different from the 'continuous act' he stresses. Although Stephen Parrish similarly sees each version as 'a vertical slice cut through the continuum of text for a given poem', he also claims that the poet's 'creative powers began slowly to fade', leading to increased anxieties over his poems,

[9] To George Beaumont, 25 Dec. 1804, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 2nd rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 518.
[10] W. B. Yeats, '[The friends that have it I do wrong]', in *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, eds. P. Allt and K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 778.
[11] Daniel Tyler, 'Introduction', in *Poetry in the Making: Creativity and Composition in Victorian Poetic Drafts*, ed. D. Tyler (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2021), pp. 1-32: 17–18.
[12] Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 254 (Hartman's emphasis).

'compulsively putting in and taking out'.[13] His description conceives revision as a string of variations on a theme, where incessant additions and subtractions do little to reshape the poem into something new. These assessments of Wordsworth's compositional decisions make it seem as if they serve a directionless process, or that there's a limit to what revision can achieve before its effects become surplus to requirements. To what extent can a text undergo successive iterations before its future versions become etiolated imitations of what it once was? Might revision offer instead a form of repair, signifying not the half-life of a writer's powers but their resurgence? These questions find new creative life in writers like Tennyson, whose *In Memoriam* entwines what he missed in his past experience with what he missed at first in his writing and sets out to make both amends and emends through revision.

Talk of compulsion brings to mind how Ernest de Selincourt once called Wordsworth's revisions 'an obsession'.[14] Descriptions of 'compulsion' and 'obsession' envisage the poet in the grip of something uncontrollable, immeasurable even. As a response to the poet's changes to *The Prelude*, de Selincourt outlines his 'ideal' version of the text in his 1926 edition:

> The ideal text of *The Prelude*, which the lover of Wordsworth may construct for himself from the material here presented to him, would follow no single manuscript. It would retain from the earliest version such familiar details as have any autobiographical significance. Of purely stylistic changes from that text, it would accept those only which Wordsworth might have made (and some he would certainly have made), had he prepared the poem for the press in his greatest period, changes designed to remove crudities of expression, and to develop or clarify his original meaning: but it would reject those later excrescences of a manner less pure, at times even meretricious, which are out of key with the spirit in which the poem was first conceived and executed. Most firmly would it reject all modifications of his original thought and attitude to his theme.[15]

Before de Selincourt published his edition, only the 1850 version of the poem had been available. The first edition noted that *The Prelude* 'was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805', glossing over the following thirty-four years

[13] Stephen Parrish, 'The Whig Interpretation of Literature', *Text* ix (1988), pp. 343–51: 346; Parrish, 'Editor as Archeologist', *Kentucky Review* iv (1983), pp. 3-14: 7. See also Ernest de Selincourt's judgement on the 'less inspired writings of his later years', which subdue the more innovative qualities of Wordsworth's earlier work when he was at 'the fullness of his powers'; *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind*, eds. E. de Selincourt and H. Darbishire, 2nd rev. ed. (1959; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. ix, p. xix.

[14] Ernest de Selincourt, 'Preface', *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. E. de Selincourt and H. Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940-1949), I. v-xii: vi.

[15] Ernest de Selincourt, 'Introduction', *The Prelude, or, Growth of a Poet's Mind*, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), pp. i-lxii: l-li.

of alterations.[16] For de Selincourt, these later revisions corrupt the original 'spirit' of the text, and in order to rescue that original 'spirit' he published the 1805 text on pages facing the 1850 version, presenting the earlier poem as the superior text. Praise is due, in de Selincourt's eyes, where revisions lead to concision and clarification. Part of *The Prelude*'s triumph, he argues, is that it had 'a unity *springing directly from the poet's own mind* and personality'.[17] We might note, however, the recourse to a language of organic inspiration, as de Selincourt credits this kind of composition with creating a unity – an effect that the editor's own tidying up of the poem has artificially enhanced. His account of the poem's creation also suppresses the extensive revisions that went into the creation of the 1805 text – revisions which, as I will go on to suggest in Chapter 1, are more closely allied with expansion and discontinuity than they are with refinement and uniformity. For now, it suffices to say that the impression of a 'poet's own mind' can be shaped as much by an editor's own assumptions as by the vision of creation presented in the work itself.

Efforts to present *The Prelude* as a product of undisturbed creation have persisted. The Norton Critical Edition (1979) would feature the 1799 *Prelude* as a form of the poem in its own right. Like de Selincourt, the Norton editors treat the texts as a 'sequence'. Each of the 'three poems', they write, 'has its distinctive character and poetic qualities': 'to read them in sequence provides an incomparable opportunity to observe a great poet composing and recomposing, throughout a long life, his major work'.[18] Accordingly, the Norton editors present the poem as the work of a continuous poetic mind, even if that mind has changed significantly over time. 'Three poems', 'three complete versions', 'entirely [. . .] self-sufficient': it is as if each version of *The Prelude* could be plotted as points on a timeline of the 'major work'.[19] What matters in these crucial editions, it seems, is the latest 'version' of the poem. The model of textual revision that these editions support, and those like them for other poets, is a phenomenon that occurs between these versions of a text.

This is not the whole truth. Whereas de Selincourt's and the Norton editions focus our attention on the outcome of revision, the Cornell edition of Wordsworth's writing reveals to full effect how the early poet resisted letting his process of composition settle into neat grooves

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[16] 'Preface', *The Prelude, or, Growth of a Poet's Mind: An Autobiographical Poem* (London: Edward Moxon, 1850), pp. v-viii: v.
[17] de Selincourt, 'Introduction', *The Prelude*, p. xxvii. Emphasis added.
[18] Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill, 'Preface', *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, eds. J. Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, S. Gill (New York & London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1979), pp. ix-xiii: ix.
[19] Ibid.

of thought. The editors state that their twofold aim is to 'bring the early Wordsworth into view' and to provide the first 'complete and accurate record of variant readings' of his earliest drafts to their final publication. To achieve this ambition, they offer 'clean, continuous "reading texts"', which strip away 'all layers' of subsequent revision, followed by facsimiles and transcriptions of the most significant manuscripts.[20] If de Selincourt and the Norton editors are keen to present the different versions as a record of Wordsworth's 'changing intentions' across time, the Cornell edition shows how the event of composition itself was central to how he worked towards, without necessarily arriving at, a sense of self.[21] Starting with Wordsworth, what I want to demonstrate more broadly is that manuscripts do not offer necessarily accretive versions of a text. They can reveal instead a vital process of experimentation, which might include the testing out of possible selves without committing to any one of them, as well as a writer's imaginative sympathy with other forms of process.

A key pattern that can be traced is how a poet's critical lot follows the fortunes of his editing. In Wordsworth's case, reductive views of his revisions as fostering continuity between selves persist as a result of the debates over his editing. In Keith Hanley's eyes, the poet's 'denial and concealment of change' is carried out through the very 'alterations' he makes to his work.[22] As *The Excursion* might have it, 'changes slowly wrought' are 'in their process imperceptible'.[23] Stephen Gill, meanwhile, has defended the poet's revisions in *Wordsworth's Revisitings*, arguing that 'there is scarcely a Wordsworth poem of any weight that does not tap into the limitless imaginative resource' of retrospection. 'Revisiting', however, is not 'about the poet's continual return [. . .] to his own past but to his past in his past writing'. These returns, he argues, underpin the poet's belief that 'affinities had been preserved between all stages of the life of man'.[24] It should not be taken for granted, however, that continual acts of retrospection are a bid for continuity with the past. Indeed, Wordsworth is frequently drawn back to the enticements of that which *cannot* be remembered.

It's worth noting that when the poet first drafted the opening to *The Prelude* he spoke of 'The time of unrememberable being', which precedes the *OED*'s first recorded instance of

[20] Stephen M. Parrish, 'The Cornell Wordsworth', *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, I. v.
[21] The Norton editors use this phrase in their preface; see Wordsworth, Abrams, Gill, 'Preface', *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, p. xiii.
[22] Keith Hanley, 'Crossings Out: The Problem of Textual Passage in *The Prelude*', *Romantic Revisions*, eds. R. Brinkley and K. Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 103–35: 103.
[23] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, eds. S. Bushell, J. A. Butler, and M. C. Jaye (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 120.
[24] Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 10, p, 1.

'unrememberable' by five years.[25] Here, not to be able to remember, which is usually characterised as a cognitive defect, is attributed a positive valence. In one of the most recent appraisals of Wordsworth's revisionism, Jane Stabler reaches a similar conclusion to Gill: while revision 'can indicate the radical denial of an earlier intellectual phase, it can yield a counter-awareness of imaginative coherence and integrity.' As we pore over a poet's manuscripts, she continues, 'we can begin to recognize the ways in which a particular mind works and reworks the same ground' in an 'organic process' or 'continuing labour.'[26] My study suggests otherwise. It examines how paying attention to a poet's manuscripts can in fact reveal his or her resistance to tilling the same ground. These textual issues, moreover, are bound up with larger questions of how poets valued different forms of identity and different modes of experience.[27]

A few studies of revision have started to challenge the assumption that Romantic and Victorian writers aspired to spontaneity and organic inspiration. Zachary Leader's *Revision and Romantic Authorship* contests the image of an 'extemporizing, otherworldly, autonomous author' through his close attention to how writers revise their first thoughts.[28] His evident hostility to the textual primitivism of the Cornell Wordsworth leads him to see the poet's emphasis on re-visitation as a way of arguing for the integrity of his later self. 'Literary revision proper and return or re-vision', he argues, 'are connected to poetry-making, both are restorative, establishing unity and continuity in the face of loss and change'.[29] But this presumes that loss and change, in Wordsworth's eyes, are irrevocably bad, a premise this study disputes. Hannah Sullivan briefly questions 'the romantic creed of antirevisionism' and the

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[25] Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, ed. S. Parrish (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 115.
[26] Jane Stabler, 'Revision and Self-Citation', *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. D. Duff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 388–40: 392. See David Fairer, 'Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Creative Fancy', *The Coleridge Bulletin* xxxvii (2011), pp. 1–20: 20.
[27] My study aims to complement and complicate work that has begun to show the value of incompletion gleaned by a study of a text's manuscripts and pre-publication states. What implications might there be for a poet's self if effects of process and momentariness are not only key to his compositional practice but qualities sought from the poetry itself? As Finn Fordham has pointed out, if a 'work of art is supposed to express something with a certain finality and precision, might an unfinished work be a sign of incoherence in the maker, a self not yet formed, not yet in possession of itself, not yet "achieved"?' In this respect, an 'unfinished work' would be 'truer to the way that the self exists in process, never itself fully formed'; *I do I undo I redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 80. This thesis argues that not only the self but other forms of composition and process might benefit from a treatment that's not 'fully formed'. Moreover, while Sally Bushell has argued that we need to have a 'clear sense of both intentional *and* unintentional kinds of meaning' before we can 'articulate any kind of compositional or "genetic" method for the study of text as process', I contend that the waywardness of composition was something investigated and harnessed by post-Romantic poets through revision; see Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 39.
[28] Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authority* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 315.
[29] Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authority*, pp. 53–4.

period's 'disdain for second thoughts'. She goes on to reinforce this boundary between modernist and pre-modernist attitudes to revision by stating that this creed persisted 'for most of the nineteenth century', which she sees as an 'inhospitable' environment for revision, as implied by its numerous 'metaphors of organic form'.[30] Wordsworth's own admission that he often finds his 'first expressions' detestable is a check on this lingering misconception.[31] Moreover, by attending to a poet's manuscripts, we are able to cast new light on their particular compositional practices and also on textual revision as a more complex phenomenon than mere aspiration toward 'organic form'.

The Romantics themselves are partly responsible for this wariness among critics of pre-modernist revision. How their influence infiltrates even modern critical accounts of their work has been identified by Jerome McGann, who has influentially written of their 'uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations'.[32] And yet, we should note how the Romantics' theories of their own writing are at odds with how they actually composed. Take Keats's insistence that 'if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all', which situates the writing of good poetry firmly in a discourse of organicism.[33] The composition of a poem like 'The Eve of St Agnes' discloses a different side to Keats, as Jack Stillinger has observed, in subjecting its 'extempore effusions' to layers of correction and emendation.[34] At the climactic moment of Madeleine's undressing, Keats lapses into a moment of compositional hesitancy at odds with the poem's climactic moment:

> She knew too pure a thing, too free from mo[r?]tal
> taint
>
> But soon his heart revives – her prayers said
> She lays aside her necl[?]
> ^pearled
> strips her hair of all its wreathed^{s}} ~~pearl~~
> Unclasps her bosom jewels
> And twist it in one knot upon her head

[30] Hannah Sullivan, *The Work of Revision* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 31. Stabler takes issue with this assertion in 'Revision and Self-Citation', p. 388.
[31] To R. P. Gillies, 22 Dec. 1814, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 8 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), iii. 179.
[32] Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 1.
[33] To John Taylor, 27 Feb. 1818, in *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats*, ed. H. Buxton Forman, 8 vols. (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1938-9), vi. 155.
[34] Jack Stillinger, 'Keats's Extempore Effusions and the Question of Intentionality', *Romantic Revisions*, pp. 307-320: 309.

But soon his heart revives – her prayers[ing]} ^~~soon~~ done
Of all her[its]} wreathed pearl she strips her hair
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one
~~her bursting~~
Loosens ~~the ^boddice from her~~
~~her Boddice lace string~~
~~her Boddice; and her bosom bar[e]~~
her [35]

Overwriting 'prayers' with 'praying' and shifting the focus from '*her* wreathed pearl' to all of '*its* wreathed pearl', Keats inscribes postponement into the narrative of the poem. This is not so much the poet gearing up to the sensational arrival of stanza twenty-six, but prolonging the unfolding events in the midst of composition, as if buying himself time to work out what to write next. Then, as he attempts this sequence for a second time, the loosening 'boddice' unravels into a series of tentative glimpses, which ends in an isolated 'her' laid bare at the bottom of the MS page. Over the page, '~~But soon~~[Anon] his heart revives' signals a renewed spontaneity gained not as a result of returning to the original moment of inspiration, but by Keats's returns to his own words on the page. This cognitive facility of revision, traced throughout this thesis, contests John Bryant's claim in *The Fluid Text* that writers 'ritualize in ceaseless, revisionary, creative acts the inadequacy of words to approximate thought'.[36] Rather, it is through 'revisionary, creative acts' that writers rediscover the potency of language to rekindle thought-making.

Keats was not alone in fostering misrepresentation over organic composition. There is also Shelley's comparison in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), as he likens 'the mind in creation' to a 'fading coal'. Original inspiration wanes over time, 'which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to a transitory brightness'.[37] Second thoughts betray a kind of belatedness, and revision can only exacerbate this period of imaginative recession. We should note, however, how Shelley's composition of 'Mont Blanc', for instance, or Wordsworth's earlier compositional habits, unveil an awareness of revision's cognitive and imaginative advantages. 'Mont Blanc' is a response both to Wordsworth and to Coleridge's 'Hymn Before Sunrise'. Shelley refutes Coleridge's insistent answer of 'GOD!' as the origin of nature's

[35] Keats, 'The Eve of St. Agnes', A. MS. early draft, MS Keats 2.21, Houghton Library, Harvard University, seq. 14: <https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:12051059$14i> (accessed 31/04/2023).
[36] John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 9-10.
[37] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations, and Fragments*, ed. M. Shelley (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1840), p. 56.

'invulnerable life'.[38] Prizing, instead, the human imagination, Shelley draws attention to the shaping intelligence of the poet's efforts in the earliest draft:

> Mighty ~~**Ravine of Arve. – [ ] Thy**~~ & when I gaze on thee
> Thine ~~earthly~~ earthly rainbows ~~hung [above] the~~
> stretched across the ~~arched steep~~ steep & sweep
> Of ~~some~~ the ~~white~~ [ ] torrent which with its ~~strange~~
> laced viel
> Robes some unsculptured image – ~~It the [path]~~ even the sleep
> The ~~momentary death~~ sudden ~~death~~ pause ~~of things~~. . .[39]

That last phrase undergoes two layers of emendation from 'Momentary death' to 'sudden death' then, finally, to 'sudden pause of things'. These changes could correspond to the writer's stages in composition: from the 'momentary death' of the writer's lapses in inspiration, as in the case of the blanks that precede this line, to his being at a complete loss – the 'sudden death' – before he works to overcome this issue, so that the compositional hiatus turns out to be merely a 'pause of things'. Robert Brinkley suggests there is an 'association in the Bodleian notebook between the poet's mind and the ravine *which the unsculptured image inhabits* – for which the "waterfall" is only a veil.'[40] The evolving images in the draft, therefore, come to form part of the cognitive process of revision for Shelley. They help to navigate the blanks in composition and realise – in the dual sense of coming to a realisation and creating – the imaginative history of the poem as it comes to apprehend the as yet 'unsculptured image' of Mont Blanc. Like Keats's draft above, what we see is poets being able to find 'a way forward in their poems from the sounds and raw materials of their initial drafts, even from the abandoned possibilities'.[41] Revision, then, is not simply something that tracks altered thoughts; it can also be something to be thought with.

To attend to revisions at this point in a writer's compositional process would be to eavesdrop on the most exposed moments of creation. Something of this vulnerability is implied when Wordsworth himself felt that to 'write fragments of verse is an embarrassing practice':

> [I]n Poetry it is apt to betray a writer into awkwardness, and to turn him out of his course for the purpose of lugging on these ready-made pieces by the head and shoulders. Or do

[38] Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge XVI: Poetical Works, Part 1,* ed. J. C. C. Mays, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), ii. 721.
[39] MS Shelley adds. e. 16, transcribed in Robert Brinkley, 'Spaces Between Words: Writing *Mont Blanc*', *Romantic Revisions,* pp. 243-267: 249.
[40] Brinkley, 'Spaces between words', *Romantic Revisions,* p. 250.
[41] Tyler, 'Introduction', *Poetry in the Making,* p. 13.

> you simply mean, that such thoughts as arise in the progress of composition should be expressed in the first words that offer themselves, as being likely to be most energetic and natural? If so, this is not a rule to be followed without cautious exceptions. My first expressions I often find detestable; and it is frequently true of second words as of second thoughts, that they are the best.[42]

Following this logic, Wordsworth sees the 'progress of composition' as an upward curve, where 'first expressions' are pre-emptively dismissed. But what about third or fourth thoughts? Is this to say that all previous thoughts are made redundant as new ones come to light? Even if the writer's 'first thoughts' are, at times, provisional, they still play a significant part in the generation of later developments. Wordsworth's final remark, that it is 'frequently true' that 'second words' like 'second thoughts are the best', chimes with other aspects of his poetic theories, such as his suggestion that poetry 'takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity'.[43] Yet, his actual revisions – to *Lyrical Ballads* or *The Prelude* – tend not to corroborate such poetic theories. In the passage above, 'likely', 'often', and 'frequently' suggest that this teleological model of composition is hardly doctrine. Returning to the site of composition allows us to unpick Wordsworth's and later theories of composition that frame the creation of a text in similarly teleological terms.[44] As the imaginative drifts across distinct poems in Tennyson's drafts or coexistent variants in Dickinson reveal, often the making of a poem turns out to be anything but a matter of concentration and retrospection.

Wordsworth, of course, lived until 1850, and as I have been suggesting many questions surrounding revision and composition live on into the rest of the nineteenth century. *In Memoriam* was published in the same year as *The Prelude*, similarly as the culmination of many years of revision and refinement, and likewise concerned with ideas of going back to the writer's past and to his past writing. Scholarly work on this period, however, invites further reflection. Judith Kennedy's *Victorian Authors and Their Works* (1991) has addressed the 'broad spectrum of influences or conditions' that may 'affect the creation and subsequent revision of a text'.[45] But its primary focus on the circumstantial 'motivations' behind revision

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[42] To R. P. Gillies, 22 Dec. 1814, *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, iii. 179.
[43] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems: 1797-1800*, eds. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 756.
[44] For example, Stephen Spender's 'sharp distinction' between a poet's 'two types of concentration': the 'immediate and complete' and that shown in poets who 'write their poems by stages, feeling their way from rough draft to rough draft, until finally, after many revisions, they have produced a result which may seem to have very little connection with their early sketches'; *The Making of a Poem* (1955), repr. in *Poems in the Making*, ed. W. Gibson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), pp. 74-89: 76-77.
[45] Judith Kennedy (ed.), *Victorian Authors and their Works: Revision Motivations and Modes* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), p. vii.

leaves more to be said about the more literary-critical properties of revision. A recent edited volume, *Poetry in the Making*, tells us that we do not need to 'subscribe to a poet's self-mythologizing or to Romantic conceptions of inspired genius to recognize that a writer's drafts may yet reveal to us a considerable imagination at work'.[46] Poets themselves did not need to see things that way either. To invest in the ongoing composition of a text is not only advantageous for scholars; in many cases it was a way of composing and thinking about poetry for the writers themselves. By looking closely at the manuscript and published versions of a writer's work, I demonstrate how revision is an ongoing process that generates a sustained period of thought-making and self-composition.

Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we see an emergence of words pertaining to revision: 'revisional' (1793), 'revision' as a fresh or new vision (1796), 'revisioning' as an adjective (1828), 'revision' as a verb (1838), 'revisionist' (1850), and 'revisionism' (1856). Its development in language reveals something of the way in which revision changed from being an improvement of a fixed text to something more conceptual. How revision came to shape a poet's writing does not follow a neat historical trajectory, from something at odds with Romantic theories of composition to the collaborative editing of *The Waste Land*, for instance. Its current of thought was very much live during the Victorian period. Revisionism, I argue, was a way of thinking that was built into composition from the start. While poets in this period started to reflect more self-consciously on poetry as a kind of process and not only a fixed pattern on the page, revision – as compositional technique and concept – offered up a way to accommodate each writer's particular sense of process.

A remark made by an anecdotal figure in Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, "How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?", gets to the heart of the form of revision put forward in this thesis.[47] The writers under consideration share a common recognition that what they are thinking about can only be understood, or can begin to be understood, once it is written down. Throughout this thesis, I seek to extend the definition of textual revision to see how its effects are worked into small textual patterns across a writer's work. This methodology shows what we would miss were we to agree with Stillinger that stylistic revisions that take place within drafts 'are of interest mainly negatively: they have so *little* to do with the creative process'.[48] Poetry is an especially revisionary form: many of its foundational elements reveal patterns of

[46] Tyler, 'Introduction', *Poetry in the Making,* p. 4.
[47] E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954), p. 101.
[48] Stillinger, 'Keats's Extempore Effusions', *Romantic Revisions,* p. 312. Emphasis in original.

return and reiteration, including rhyme, repetition, refrain, self-revising syntax, and thematic transitions that reimagine what has come before. For this reason, there is more at stake in poetic revision than in prose. Poets often work in forms that shape what they say as their thoughts are shaped and reshaped by the form's predetermined patterns. Taken together with a close attention to a writer's revisions as he or she composes, textual details can show how revision is not just something that happens, and might be analysed, *between* drafts: it is something a writer stages *within* them.

My decision to structure chapters around individual poets, as opposed to broader thematic categories, is informed by the importance of the close relationship between revision and poetic technique, as well as by my wish to offer new insight into the critical reception of each writer. Moreover, this study builds on work that looks across literary traditions such as Michael O'Neill's *The All-Sustaining Air*, which sees Romantic poets as '"sustaining" a supply of imaginative oxygen to later poems'.[49] By bringing together poets from across the long nineteenth century, I seek to resist periodisation and build on a rethinking of post-Romantic values that do not conform neatly to period boundaries. This broader theoretical discussion can also be traced more locally to the poets as individuals. Tennyson's writing, as Robert Douglas-Fairhurst has observed, is 'not merely post-Romantic in the sense of being belated or unachieved'. It is also engaged in 'continuing a strand of self-doubt that is at the heart of some of the greatest Romantic poems.'[50] Looking at a writer's process of composition is a way of making some of these doubts tangible, and demonstrates the innovative ways that poets in the nineteenth century sought to overcome them.

My first chapter examines Wordsworth's attraction to particularly fractious and perplexing forms of selfhood. The Cornell Wordsworth has offered invaluable insights into the poet's compositional processes, but it has also raised questions over treating his poems as neat, distinct versions. These are not simply questions of editing; they also complicate literary-critical inquiries into Wordsworth's conception of selfhood. Indeed, the details of the Cornell edition reveal how the early Wordsworth's sense of the self is more than a straightforward aspiration towards organic creation. In this chapter, I examine how self-division, as a kind of

[49] Michael O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air: Romantic Legacies and Renewals in British, American, and Irish Poetry since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 22.
[50] Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Tennyson', *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. M. O'Neill, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 596-616: 604. Seamus Perry also notes that Romanticism 'bequeathed to Tennyson's generation an immensely lofty idea of Art, empowering the aesthetic with a wonderful autonomy and grandeur', which was for Tennyson both 'irresistible' and 'unsustainable'; *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote, 2005), p. 17.

self-revision, is a defining strength of Wordsworth's compositional and poetic practice. My inquiry goes against the grain of readings by Geoffrey Hartman and Stephen Gill, who contend that Wordsworth's later revisions and aspirations in *The Prelude* are working towards a continuity between past and present. I argue instead that Wordsworth is exploring how the fragmentary effects of revision might vouch for the self's amplitudes.[51] Teleological views of selfhood, in Wordsworth's eyes, are insufficient to account for the contingencies and happenstance that are natural and attractive aspects of experience. His practice of revision often thrives on the unpredictable elements of composition, drawn on by an attraction to the unknown.

Like Wordsworth, Tennyson never seemed finished with revising his poetry. The Longman edition of his work – still the most comprehensive collection of Tennyson's poetry – is based on the original Eversley version, adopting the text of the poet's final revisions. Unlike the Cornell Wordsworth, the Longman *Poems* largely excludes a sense of how Tennyson's poems come about on the manuscript page, and so conceals the extent to which his relationship with constancy and change is not simply spelled out through revision but also shaped in it. My second chapter argues that Tennyson's compositional process cannot be disentangled from his thematic and formal commitments to continuity-through-change. This chapter draws throughout on several notebooks at Trinity College library (including O.15.13 and O.15.17) and items from Tennyson's library at the Lincolnshire archives (TRC/M/1). It is divided into two sections: the first sketches a range of moments of embattled change across the poet's early and later writing, highlighting the poet's wariness of teleological forms of change and progress. The second section focuses on *In Memoriam*, and argues that revision carries out a kind of imaginative repair. Here, I want to query Christopher Ricks's influential thesis of 'self-borrowing', which equates the poet's imaginative life with a unified and unifying signature of creation, suggesting instead that, for Tennyson, the continual erosion and absorption of past forms of selfhood is a necessary part of progress.[52]

My third chapter considers the enduringly evasive writing of Emily Dickinson. Her dashes, inconsistent punctuation, and lack of titles, among other editorial hurdles, continue to baffle those who have tried to accommodate her writing to print. The most recent edition of her

[51] Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 254; Gill, *Wordsworth's Revisitings*, p. 10.
[52] Christopher Ricks, 'Tennyson's Methods of Composition', *Proceedings of the British Academy* lii (1966), pp. 209-230: 228.

writing, Cristanne Miller's *Poems: As She Preserved Them* has sought to reflect those poems which were 'left in an entirely fluid or unfinished state', in contrast with the 'hypothesized clean or finished' versions of other editions.[53] In other words, it tries to find a middle ground between a tidied-up, typographical edition of her poetry and retrieving an essential, unfinished quality of her poetry. This chapter argues that Dickinson's writing is often interested in states of in-betweenness for which textual revision offered an investigative tool. I draw not only on the possible variants of her poems made accessible through Franklin's *Variorum* edition of her work, but also on the manuscripts of her poems in Amherst College Digital Collections in order to suggest how the ongoing eventfulness of composition is an effect of her poems themselves. Looking at her writing in this way, I suggest that the creative possibilities of revision take place not only with competing variants, but between poems brought into dialogue within fascicles, and in her patterns of syntax.

In the final chapter, I turn to Gerard Manley Hopkins and suggest that his drafting process concentrates a proactive and forward-looking side of revision. Editors since Robert Bridges have tried to refine Hopkins's work, from his diacritical markings to the unclear chronology of his revisions, and 'to convey all the author's serious mature poems'.[54] 'Serious' and 'mature' betray a sustained presumption that what matters in (and for) the poet is his religious verse. Attending to the resources of the Oxford *Collected Works*, which reveal the poet's more varied and lively textual life, as well as the Bodleian Library's Hopkins material (in particular, MS. B, MS. A, MS. H), this chapter argues that the poet's process of composition strengthens an experiential strain in his work that is designed to retrieve the changeable and perplexing nature of his personal life. For Hopkins, revision is not about clarifying past uncertainties and ambiguities, but restoring their place in the texture of his verse. While much has been made of the poet's relationship with his religious belief, this chapter puts him in dialogue with Walter Pater, whose theories of sensuousness capture the pattern of expansion and surplus created in his process of composition. While this waywardness is most clearly shown in Hopkins's manuscripts, I suggest they help us to see it in his 'final' poems too.

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[53] Cristanne Miller, 'Preface', *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them*, ed. C. Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. vii-x: vii. This is by no means a perfect edition, given that Miller's heavy-handed approach to transcribing dashes, for example, in instances where the poet's punctuation is more than likely conventional, has the effect of making the poet seem more 'unworldly and ethereal' than she is in reality; see Michael J. Sullivan's review for a deft critique of this edition; 'Dickinson's Voice', *Essays in Criticism* lxix (2019), pp. 103-109: 106.

[54] Robert Bridges, 'Preface to Notes', *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. R. Bridges (London: Humphrey Milford, 1918), pp. 94-101: 95.

Wordsworth's Self-Composure

Memory can be a slippery faculty. Wordsworth was well aware that the distortions of recollection are far reaching. In *The Prelude*, the 'quiet stream of self-forgetfulness' is more than mere absence of mind. Welding 'self' to forgetting, the phrase more revealingly suggests that lapses in memory involve not only forgetting what we have done but also the kind of person we once were.[1] Descriptions of rivers and streams, for instance, aren't simply Wordsworth's latest updating of the Heraclitean credo that 'you cannot step twice into the same stream'.[2] They have a more refined employment in his poetry as models of the changing self. In another moment of pointed self-reflection, the poet recalls, 'I saunter'd, like a river murmuring | And talking to itself'.[3] If the image of the river suggests a mind of unending process, subject to the pressures of change but fortified by constancy, then that 'like' reveals a mind still unsure about its own identification, as if this is but one model of the self that is being tested out.

Evidence of the self fragmenting can be found in the smallest details of Wordsworth's writing. Take that murmuring sound above, one to which Wordsworth is often drawn. He hears 'Perchance, a roar or murmur' in *The Excursion*, remembers 'the murmur and the murmuring sound' in 'Nutting', and speaks of the 'sweet inland murmur' in 'Tintern Abbey'.[4] The very word is a compact echo of self-communion and self-confrontation. Its changed stress as the word repeats itself alerts us to the rift between what the eye and ear would each ask our mind to believe. While Matthew Arnold would later see a debilitating facet of modern poetry in its 'dialogue of the mind with itself', Wordsworth is instead attracted to the creative possibilities of a mind not quite at one with itself.[5]

This chapter argues that self-division as a method of self-revision is a defining strength of Wordsworth's compositional and poetic practice. Although critics have discussed revisionary processes in Wordsworth, the riches of the Cornell edition of his work have yet to be fully explored. These detailed records are especially revealing about the poet's self-making.

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[1] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. M. L Reed, 2 vols. (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1991), ii. 69. References to the *Thirteen-Book Prelude* are to this edition by volume and page number.
[2] Plato, *Cratylus*, in *Cratylus; Parmenides; Greater Hippias; Lesser Hippias*, ed. and trans. H. N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), §402a: δὶς ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν ἂν ἐμβαίης.
[3] Wordsworth, *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ii. 65.
[4] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, eds. S. Bushell, J. A. Butler, and M. C. Jaye (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 129; *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, eds. J. Butler and K. Green (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 220; *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 116.
[5] Matthew Arnold, *Poems*, new ed. (London: Longman, 1853), p. vi.

Moreover, the few scholars who have combined editorial approaches to the compositional phases of the poet's work with literary-critical approaches have tended to limit their discussions to particular poems.[6] In this chapter, I seek to use the draft stages of Wordsworth's work to make a wider claim about how the poet's self-making is tangled up with questions of art-making. The structure of a poem, chopped up into lines but worked into larger units of sense, is an especially good resource for exploring these questions of continuity, rupture, and self-division. What I want to contend is that Wordsworth's fixation on the fractious nature of textual revision in his poems articulates his sense of selfhood as discontinuous, as he revels in fractures and rifts between now and then.

My argument pursues this relationship in four sections: the first considers the beginnings of self-making, suggesting that the foundations of self-making through revision are not as stable as they might seem. Section two examines Wordsworth's distraction and open-endedness, which lead the self onto new forms. Then I consider how Fancy, as Wordsworth conceives it, offers a more fruitful model of the effects of revision than the galvanising force of Imagination. This section also demonstrates how the fragmentary effects Wordsworth sought from Fancy are discernible in his use of repetition as a kind of revision. My final section then closes on one of Wordsworth's most important concepts, the 'spots of time'. These moments, which are the poet's sources of 'renovating Virtue', are underpinned by his sense of discontinuity through revision as they equally ensure that self-revision is episodic in its nature.[7] Looking closely at his textual revisions in this way, together with other kinds of self-revision, I offer a more complex picture of Wordsworth's self-making and poetic technique than previous accounts, while interrogating long-standing claims about Romantic revision.

Textual revision is much like autobiography. It is intrinsically retrospective, as a writer looks back on past impulses and intuitions. Like autobiography, it usually seems to carry out a tidying up of the past. But this line of thought presupposes only one perspective on self-making. A recent theorist of selfhood, Galen Strawson, has contested the longstanding claim, as summarised by Alasdair MacIntyre, that 'the only criteria for success or failure in a human life

[6] See, for instance, Ruth Abbott in 'Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the "strain of words | That shall be life": "Home at Grasmere" on "Religious Musings" in Dove Cottage Manuscript 28', *Textual Practice* xxviii (2014), pp. 901–28. Sally Bushell has argued that the study of the compositional phases of Wordsworth's writing 'illustrates the value of interpreting revision and self-revision as a meaning vitally alive within the text at every level' in 'Composition and Revision', in *William Wordsworth in Context*, ed. A. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 27-37: 35; William Empson tracks the changing placement of the word 'sense' at line-endings in *The Prelude* in *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951; repr. London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 291-294.

[7] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 209.

as a whole are the criteria of success or failure in a narrated or to-be-narrated quest'.[8] Strawson rejects the claim that creating personal narratives of this kind are the only way to find meaning. Instead, he finds value in the notion of 'thin subjects', short bursts of selves that are composed of experience rather than simply possessing it:

> an isolated one-second-long experientially unitary episode of experience occurring in a brain, followed and preceded by periods of complete experiencelessness. This experience-existence necessarily involves subjectivity-existence, and this subjectivity-existence necessarily involves subject-of-experience-existence, on the present terms. This subject-of-experience-existence is an undeniably actual concrete feature of reality, and it's what is picked out by the term 'thin subject'.[9]

Since nothing is more 'actual' than experience, it is not to the detriment of these discrete moments, which Strawson calls selves, that they are durations of experience. Selfhood is an experience we possess and undergo, a predicament that writers encounter head-on in the act of composition as they strive to make good on a set of designs and discover they've been led astray by recalcitrant influences in the act of composition. Moreover, if a self is identical to experience, then it is unable to be sustained through 'periods' of unconsciousness, and so it becomes singular and distinct. To complete some kind of narrative 'quest', and the shaping narrative that a selfhood might gain from its completion, is not presumed to be a defining factor in Strawson's account of the self.

We can see something of the episodic self in some of Wordsworth's draft lines from 1800, which cast life as a 'trail' of moments:

> I look into past times as prophets look
> Into futurity a [?thread ?trail] of life runs back
> Into dead years, the [?faculty ?fantasy] of thought
> The lyric spirit of philosophy
> Leads me through moods of sadness to [?and] delight.[10]

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[8] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp. 203–4. This idea has its roots in Aristotle's idea of *eudaimonia* ('happiness'), where the highest end of life is to be *eudaimon*, a state of being that unites all subsidiary goals such as good health and prosperity: τέλειον δή τι φαίνεται καὶ αὔταρκες ἡ εὐδαιμονία, τῶν πρακτῶν οὖσα τέλος ('Happiness, therefore, being found to be something final and self-sufficient, is the End at which all actions aim'); *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. H. Rackham, rev. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), §1097b.

[9] Galen Strawson, *Selves: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 325.

[10] DCP, MS Verse 42 (interleaved copy of Coleridge's *Poems*, 1796), *Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802*, ed. J. R. Curtis (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 42. These lines were used by Wordsworth in an early stage of the composition of 'Michael'. The Cornell editions adopt the following symbols in their reading texts and transcriptions:

[ ] Gap or blank in the manuscript.

Even as the poet describes how this 'trail' runs into 'dead years', his syntax naturally urges us on to fragmentary, but more vital, 'moods' as successive enjambments and anaphoric *into*s draw us deeper into the buried layers of the mind. Fabric (his 'thread of life') then leads onto self-fabrication, as a possible revision from 'sadness to delight' to mixed feelings of 'sadness *and* delight' also swerves off a teleological path of self-making. Whatever else they are, moods are temporary; we might be fully aware when we are in one, but we also know it will pass. In these lines, a quest for 'delight' is no longer the final step in achieving a sense of self. Instead, the splintering of the self takes centre stage.

Wordsworth's take on autobiography aspires to be less a redemption of life than a reflection of it – more finely attuned to the granular surface of experience. In revision he finds various ways of accommodating in the shaping rhythms of his verse the inconsistencies he comes up against in his personal life. Matthew Bevis notes that '*The Prelude* is a study in its maker's fabrication of the past as a means of holding himself together'. And yet, the self must also 'hesitate over its need to turn emotional chaos into story' and acknowledge how the 'unnatural self is part of the natural one'.[11] Straining to hold himself together might be the very thing that causes the poet to fall apart. Part of *The Prelude*'s technical and compositional achievement is to be found in its form of self-composure that embraces the division of the poet's identity, not its continuity. This lack of cohesion can, in fact, provide a critical, imaginative resource at the start of composition.

[? Peace] Conjectural reading.
[Peace] Words written over an erasure.
[?] Illegible word.
~~[?]~~ Illegible word deleted.
have[d]} An overwriting: 'd' is written on top of 've' in this example.

[11] Matthew Bevis, *Wordsworth's Fun* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), p. 234.

Self Origins

One of Wordsworth's most recurrent concerns is the question of how – and where – the self might start. In his early manuscripts, he often grapples with the prospect of presenting a view of selfhood that has no discernible beginning:

> Hard task to analyse a soul in which
> Not only general habits and desires
> But each most obvious and particular thought
> Not in a mystical & idle sense
> But in the words of reason deeply weigh'd
> Ha
> [?]th no beginning. – [12]

'Soul' would later become 'mind' in 1850, as Wordsworth turns his attention to more cerebral than supernal conceptions of the self. The closer he gets to the origins of selfhood, here, the more elusive they appear. That dash meanwhile suggests that the 'mind' has not only no beginning, but also no end. It's felicitous, perhaps, that 'Hath no beginning' coincidentally begins with a slip of the pen, and so prevents the start of the poet's thoughts on this subject from having a stable origin of their own. Even when he casts his mind back to the origins of his living self and textual self, Wordsworth finds himself in the middle of a process of revision that is already in motion.

The poet's first jottings of *The Prelude* come into view toward the end of a co-authored bricolage of prose fragments, German declensions, and an essay on morals. (We can see both the poet's own writing and his sister's in these pages). Three pages in from the back of the notebook we find an offset 'was it for this' at the top of the page. While later versions of the poem would delay the poet's critical question ('was it for this…?') until line 272 in 1805, the Wordsworth of the 1798 draft confronts his past self head-on:

> was it for this
> That one, the fairest of all rivers,
> loved
> To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song
> And from his alder shades and rocky falls
> t
> And from his fords and shallows send]

[12] MS. RV, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, ed. S. Parrish (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 187.

a voice
To intertwine my dreams, for this
didst thou
O Derwent – travelling over the green plains
didst thou beateus str
~~Giving ceaseless music to the~~
Near my sweet birth-~~place to the night~~
and day
To more than infant softness. . .[13]

What 'this' is cannot be pinned down either grammatically or semantically. Even if the Cornell editors offer 'trances of thought' as the 'original antecedent' to this word, the order of composition cannot be finally determined.[14] Or, perhaps, 'this' is a self-referential remark, gesturing to the act of writing itself. 'It' is just as suspect, if not more so. These ambiguities are never wholly resolved, and the indeterminacy at the moment Wordsworth chooses to start writing goes to the heart of the poem as a compositional process. His conscious decision to begin midline registers not only the spontaneity of the poet's first efforts but an acknowledgement of the elusive origins of his textual self.

The Norton Critical Edition cites 'correspondence' in the *Times Literary Supplement* between April and September 1975 which claimed that these opening lines revise a rhetorical pattern going back to Pope, Milton, and Virgil among others.[15] Echoes of Milton's 'For this did the angel twice descend? For this | Ordained thy nature holy. . .?' and Virgil's *hoc erat, alma parens, quod me per tela, per ignis | eripis* are telling.[16] In 1843, Wordsworth described how 'Classical literature affected me by its own beauty', and is reported to have seen Virgil as 'the most consummate master of language, that, perhaps, ever existed.'[17] In conjuring the presence of poets whose language was so consummate in his mind, as well as wrestling with a poetic course set out by them, Wordsworth shows how revising the earlier scenes of his life replaces a purpose imposed on him through political or divine obligations.

'Narrativity always carries with it some sort of tendency to revision,' writes Strawson, 'where revision essentially involves merely more than changing one's view of the facts of one's

[13] MS. JJ (DC MS. 19), *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 115.
[14] Stephen Parrish, 'Introduction: The Growth of the Two-Part *Prelude*', *The Prelude 1798–1799*, pp. 3-36: 6.
[15] Wordsworth, Abrams, Gill, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, p. 1n.
[16] Milton, *The Major Works*, eds. S. Orgel and J. Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 681; Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. and rev. G. P. Goold, new ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), ii. 664-5: "Was it for this, nurturing parent, that you rescued me going amid fire and sword?" Translation is my own.
[17] Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, 2 vols. (1851; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), ii. 492-3.

life.' He argues, however, this doesn't necessarily need to be a conscious action and we can change our view of the facts of our lives simply by coming to 'see things more clearly'.[18] Wordsworth's later clarity of vision, and the articulacy of his perceptions, do not necessarily work to his advantage. His retrospection is further muddied by the reference to his 'sweet birthplace', which is betrayed by its own allusion; this is not the poet's own but Coleridge's.[19] Earlier Wordsworth displays an easier relationship with the instability of the poet's voice, and a greater willingness to allow his own innovation to encounter tradition. Later on, he would exchange the 'green plains' for 'grassy holms | Where I was looking on, a babe in arms' in the 1850 text, expressing an open-endedness that is given closure by the understanding of the more developed mind.[20] His first thoughts, however, are more ready to accept that the disparate origins of his self, as well as the contemplations that were *The Prelude*'s impetus, are split up among different sources.

'Each man is a memory to himself', Wordsworth notes in *The Prelude*'s third book: *to* himself, not *of* himself?[21] There's a kind of self-examination implicit within his phrasing as well as a hint of self-distancing. What we are witnessing is closer to an unfolding event of selfhood, far from the more straightforward hindsight we might expect autobiography to involve. If we take a phrase like 'Once again I see | These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows' from 'Tintern Abbey', we might notice how syntax comes to stage this emergence of selfhood on the page. That's because the line's sudden doubletake, in that self-revision from 'hedge-rows' to 'hardly hedge-rows', is a heightened moment of the broader encounter in syntax between the moment-by-moment events of experience and patterns of organized thought.[22] So when Wordsworth describes elsewhere how 'My own voice chear'd me, and, far more, the mind's | Internal echo of the imperfect sound', his poem is not so much working with a sense of self-recognition as one of persistent self-estrangement.[23] Past voices and selves might be the poem's subject at hand, but there's a feeling that the poet encounters even his own past second-hand, as when he returns to an earlier draft of a poem about his past.

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[18] Galen Strawson, 'Against Narrativity', *Ratio* xvii (2004), pp. 248–452: 443.
[19] This quotation is a borrowing from Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, 28. Inverted commas around 'sweet birthplace' were added in pencil at an undetermined stage; see *The Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 499.
[20] Wordsworth, *1850 Prelude*, in *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, eds. J. Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and S. Gill (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1979), p. 43.
[21] Wordsworth, *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ii. 49.
[22] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 116.
[23] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 15.

This self-consciousness spills into a pun in *The Prelude*'s opening, as the speaker's phrase 'Composed my thought' discloses a knowing awareness of the poem's own composition. It's interesting that 'thought' is singular before it is pluralised later. Here, it is something distinct and composed of discrete particles like a line of his blank verse. But even as this seems to be the case, the scaffolding effects of form shudder:

> ~~Give ceaseless music didst thou beauteous~~
> stream
> Give ceaseless music to the night & day
> Which with its steady cadence tempering
> Our human waywardness compose
> my thought

A 'steady cadence' does not bring harmony to disparate thoughts but instead gives form to one strand of thought. 'Tem*per*ing' plays a variation on the iambic pattern: are we to hear three syllables or truncate the word to two ("tem*p'ring*")? The line enacts a tussle between metrical rule and wayward spoken syllables as if straining to contain the unruly events of life. Wordsworth's revisions and rhythm collude here to allow us to imagine how the composition of the self works by fragmentary means, in which small moments of patterned, more unified experience jostle with the contingencies of real life.[24] A writer's sense of his own development doesn't necessarily follow a simple trajectory: an upward curve from probation to proficiency.

When Wordsworth theorises more broadly about how his own writing takes shape, he describes a meticulous form of contemplation in which an original emotion is recreated in his mind:

> The emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on.[25]

[24] A similar disagreement troubled theories of the sublime, as Jonathan Lamb has observed, which could not be pinned down as 'the coincidence of a loose circumstance with the rule that authorizes its appearance' or the result of 'the excessive accumulation of contingent particulars that evade all regulation'. See 'The Sublime', *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism IV: The Eighteenth Century*, eds. H. B. Nisbet and C. Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 394–416: 413.

[25] Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), i. 148 (*PrW*).

'Similar' and 'generally' introduce covert but vital admissions that the poet isn't quite able to describe how composition really happens. Even as the poet seems as if he's working up to deliver a set of psychological principles, small concessions such as this hold back from establishing a rule for what recollection does. In fact, we see him moving away from, rather than towards, conclusive thoughts at moments of revision such as: 'when it chanced | That pauses of deep silence mockd my | skill | Then, often, ^sometimes in that silence'.[26] These subtle qualifications continue to sneak doubt in through the back doors of his writing. What Wordsworth's practice of composition reveals is that successful composition lies in the fact that it cannot be whittled down to a set of rules.

So far I have been arguing that the splintered origins of Wordsworth's textual self provide him with a way of confronting the similarly confounding beginnings of his living memory. This section now considers how an unstable starting line for selfhood is worked into other patterns of revision across his work. His deft employment of images of fragmentation, together with his handling of tenses, begin to suggest that even when experiences have passed into memory they are not made less perplexing by a later, supposedly more mature, self.

As Wordsworth comes to terms with the fact that he has turned into a different person, it comes with a twin realisation that his language is also not a reliable anchor for selfhood. Language too is always on the move. This is true of the meanings of his words across time. He starts 'Intimations of Immortality' by marvelling at 'every common sight', sights which would later 'fade into the light of common day'.[27] As he discovers that 'things which *I have seen* I now can see no more', he also finds his own language becoming strange to him.[28] 'Common' sights now take on shades of difference, as the changing sense of 'common' reduces the glistening totality of his vision to quotidian normalcy. Even when the poet feels a sense of accord with his former self, continuing to feel that the words he once used still speak for him now, unpredictable shifts in the tectonics of a poem's language restrain him from bridging the divide between past and present.

Halfway through 'Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth notes, 'I cannot paint | What then I was', which seems to confirm the strangeness of and estrangement from composing his current self as he borrows words that belong to someone else.[29] His phrase elides the Roman poet

[26] Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 87.
[27] Wordsworth, *Lyric Poems*, pp. 164, 166.
[28] Wordsworth, *Lyric Poems*, p. 164.
[29] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 118.

Horace's idea of *ut pictura poesis* ('as is painting so is poetry') with his ode *non sum qualis eram*, 'I'm not as I was'.[30] To come closer to self-understanding, it seems, does not then lead to a kind of resolution, as if joining the dots between past and present. Instead, it might come as a jolt of recognition at the impenetrability of selfhood. And yet, for Wordsworth this inscrutability becomes a source of imaginative strength. It's appropriate that he might well have known one of his most significant rivers, the Wye, by its other name, *Vaga*: 'wandering' is certainly an appropriate name for a locus that is so central to his ruminations on the 'winding course' of memory in 'Tintern Abbey'.[31]

For the poet to analyse the 'mind that hath no beginning' is not only to allow himself to play amateur psychologist. It is also a question of style. What we can glean of selfhood in Wordsworth's draft writing brings into focus similar perplexities in the final versions of his poems. In 'Tintern Abbey', verbal tenses become part of the poet's broader investigation into the permeable membrane between past and present selves:

> How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
> O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,
> How often has my spirit turned to thee!
>
> And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
> With many recognitions dim and faint,
> And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
> The picture of the mind revives again:[32]

As James Chandler has written of the poet's recollections, a 'past experience is interpreted in terms of a present experience which is itself informed by what has preceded it.'[33] Selves feed into each other, like a bewildering figure of eight. Each 'have' in these lines converts past tenses into moments of recollection that continue to cast their shadows over the present. In other words, what Wordsworth really means here is 'How often have I turned to thee *and still turn*', even if that 'I' is not quite the same 'I' who turned last time. 'Unremembered pleasure'

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[30] Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. N. Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 218. Translation is my own.
[31] Richard L. Edgeworth and Maria Edgeworth, *Readings on Poetry*, 2nd ed. (London: R. Hunter, 1816), p. 3.
[32] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 117–8.
[33] James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 212.

might fuel a sense of expectation throughout this poem, but it is characteristic of Wordsworth to take pleasure in a self that remains finally unknowable.[34]

Movements of the mind across time in this way not only move with psychological models of Wordsworth's age; they provide a poetic reimagining of them. These contemporary discussions are sometimes quick to reform separateness into a more positive state of unity. To begin with, John Locke's influential theory of the mind as a *tabula rasa* offered a picture of the mind as a singular and passive entity:

> All ideas come from sensation or reflection. Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: – How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from Experience. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself.[35]

Over the course of the eighteenth century, Locke's theory came increasingly under fire. The growth of the mind was no longer seen as a blank canvas becoming a finished picture. James Harris remarked in *Hermes* (1751) that the product of our senses can have 'nothing more than *a sort of dead capacity*'. Something else, another faculty, is needed to carry out a kind of mental landscaping, a 'lopping and pruning', as he puts it, so that its 'dormant Powers' can be activated.[36] Thomas Reid would identify this faculty as memory, which allows us to discern motion and conceive of time.[37] Our ability to make connections is underwritten by processes of revision, even if these connections do not finally cohere.

Metaphors of dormancy proved to be a sustainable currency in further discussions of the unconscious. Thomas De Quincey, one of Wordsworth's earliest and most incisive readers, observed that the poet 'brought many a truth into life both for the eye and for the understanding, which previously had slumbered indistinctly for all men'.[38] Slumbering truths as a motif resonate across De Quincey's writing, but they are especially significant for the image of the palimpsest. 'What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain?', the writer

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[34] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 117.
[35] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689; repr. Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001), p. 73.
[36] James Harris, *Hermes: Or a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (London: H. Woodfall, 1751), p. 392. Harris's italics.
[37] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 325-6. See also the chapter 'Of Memory' more broadly.
[38] Thomas De Quincey, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, eds. G. Lindop, B. Symonds *et al.*, 21 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000-3), xv. 238 (*DQWorks*).

asks.[39] If the kind of effacement characteristic of the palimpsest is only partial, then it permits former states to be recalled, and so presents a version of memory in which dissolution underpins the malleability of self-composition.

While De Quincey established a lasting interest in the palimpsest as a deft and adaptable model of psychological, social, and historical connections, he was preceded in this by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, another of Wordsworth's primary influences. 'I have in vain', he says, 'tried to recover the lines from the palimpsest tablet of my memory.'[40] For Coleridge, then, the palimpsest offers a model of failed recovery; for De Quincey, the image is rehabilitated to show how the 'mysterious hand writings' of past experiences 'are not dead, but sleeping'.[41] In respect of a writer's self, Josephine McDonagh argues, the palimpsest model 'brings about the dissolution of the writer's construction of himself as a subject'. It 'problematizes and undermines the wider notion of the subject', she continues, 'as it is constructed at a particular historical moment.'[42] McDonagh's description picks up on a predictable wariness over the way in which the palimpsest is able to both raze and retain the past goes against the grain of more longstanding models of a subject's continuity over time. For Wordsworth, however, the palimpsest refashions the textual 'trail' of his life into an innovative form of divided selfhood.

If poets and psychologists of the period were similarly interested in the traces of former thought, then the palimpsest is a neat instance of psychological and poetic worlds colliding:

> The trace of successive handwriting, regularly effaced, as had been imagined, have, in the inverse order, been regularly called back: the footsteps of the game pursued, wolf or stag, in each several chase, have been unlinked, and hunted back through all their doubles.[43]

While these inscriptions might develop successively, their final existence is far from sequential. The same is true for the former, or submerged, meanings of individual words, which don't quite drop away but rather take a back seat as new ones step into the foreground. In manuscripts, new ideas, like the latest sense of a word, seem to bury all that's gone before. Ideas that are

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[39] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xv. 175. Sarah Dillon sees this instance as establishing the 'substantive concept of the palimpsest' in 'Reinscribing De Quincey's palimpsest: The significance of the palimpsest in contemporary literature and cultural studies', *Textual Studies* xix (2005), pp. 243–263: 243.
[40] Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Major Works*, ed. H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 41. Thomas Reisner notes the common interest of the image in Coleridge and De Quincey in 'De Quincey's Palimpsest Reconsidered', *Modern Language Studies* 7 (1982), pp. 93–5: 94.
[41] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xv. 176.
[42] Josephine McDonagh, 'Writings on the mind: Thomas De Quincey and the Importance of the Palimpsest in Nineteenth Century Thought', *Prose Studies* x (1987), pp. 207–224: 210.
[43] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xv. 174.

only half-deleted, however, snag against this continual erosion, as the page retains traces of a text's earlier form. Take a phrase in Wordsworth like '~~Even there where sorrow is not time brings on | Its own composing weight~~'.[44] These lines are not exactly 'disowned'; they are options kept in play. Wordsworth's manuscripts do not simply record a sequence of versions of a text. They are more like the latent impressions of the palimpsest, and so are closer to a halfway oscillation between selves in the making.

An early version of one of *The Prelude*'s most suggestive passages of self-making envisages a multiple existence of selves that resemble a disjointed palimpsest:

> *A tranquillizing spirit presses now*
> *On my corporeal frame: so wide appears*
> *The vacancy between me and those days,*
> *Which yet have such self-presence in my mind*
> them
> *That, sometimes, when I think of ~~it~~, I seem*
> *Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself,*
> *And of some other Being.*[45]

'When I think of it' in the former version is emended to thoughts of 'them': a subtle revision of grammar, but a substantial change of emphasis. The separateness of his selves is less a by-product, or an after-thought, of his meditation than it is his central concern as he trains our focus on the 'vacancy' that divides them.[46] Vacant space is often a concept and a technique that Wordsworth finds attractive for analysing the development of both his textual self and personal recollections. The commas inserted in this draft magnify the medial caesura which sunders the cluster of consciousness ('Two consciousnesses') assembled in this moment of thought, from the distinct consciousness that the vacancy between moments of recollection goes on to create. Here, the poet might then disagree with what Charles Taylor has described as 'the supposition that I could be two temporally succeeding selves'.[47] For Wordsworth, these selves are not consecutive but coexistent. As De Quincey's portrayal of the palimpsest shows,

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[44] MS. RV, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 169.
[45] MS. A (DC MS. 52), *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 516. Italicised text is Dorothy Wordsworth's transcription, while the roman font is William Wordsworth's revision.
[46] For David Bromwich, this passage shows how 'for Wordsworth the moments of a life may have as much distance separating them as the moments of different lives', meaning that the 'work of memory is to associate virtually separate selves and not to recollect the shadows of a self already unified'; *Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 149.
[47] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 51.

'every design' of one's past life can array themselves 'not as a succession, but as parts of a coexistence'.[48]

[48] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xv. 176. For a more sceptical view of this kind of self-making, see Stephen J. Spector's claim that the 'inscription of memory within a tropological construction of language leads De Quincey inexorably to undermine the activity to which he, as an autobiographer seems committed – the construction of himself' in 'Thomas De Quincey: Self-effacing Autobiographer', *Studies in Romanticism* xviii (1979), pp. 501–520: 501.

Endlessly Distracted

To hold multiple selves in mind might be a sign of a divided attention. Lapses in attention are usually synonymous with distraction, a phenomenon that was met with suspicion in Wordsworth's period as it generally is now. The *OED* records an accumulation of instances in the eighteenth century where 'distraction' is associated with, or symptomatic of, 'mental derangement'.[49] 'Attention', meanwhile, was seen as a desirable quality. Dugald Stewart, philosopher and Wordsworth's contemporary, claimed that 'attention' was foremost a 'voluntary act'. Without it, 'the ideas and perceptions which pass through the mind, seem to leave no trace behind them'.[50] They *seem* not to, but that doesn't mean that they don't. Writing about distraction, Matthew Bevis has observed that the state might not simply be 'another name for attention *shifted* ('I was looking at this, then I looked at that')'.[51] It's helpful to remember here that distraction originates in the Latin *distrahare*, 'to draw in different directions'. Distraction, then, can allow for the mind's accommodation of multiple perceptions at the same time. Even if prior thoughts allow others to take centre stage, they are not wholly dismissed. Like distraction, Wordsworth's revision is an outward movement of the mind, not a return to its origin.

Distraction offers a model of self-revision which is enhanced, not sabotaged, because of self-division. The word 'distraction' appears only once in Wordsworth's published corpus. When it arrives, however, it is used to striking effect, as the poet notes that *The Prelude* itself began in 'distraction, and intense desire'.[52] The poem itself was a distraction from *The Recluse*, the great philosophical work Coleridge was urging him to write. 'Distraction' and 'intensity' do not normally go hand-in-hand, but their juxtaposition reveals that 'distraction' is not always a cognitive blunder to be overcome. It can be a sign that the mind is letting something else in: a stimulant to thought and feeling.

Dorothy Wordsworth's description of her brother at work sheds further light on the importance of distraction to his compositional process: 'after a certain time the progress is by no means proportioned to the labour in composition, and if he is called from it by other

[49] 'distraction *n.*', §5, *OED Online*.
[50] Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (London: A. Straham and T. Cadell, 1792), pp. 120–1.
[51] Matthew Bevis, 'In Search of Distraction', *Poetry* (2017), https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/144656/in-search-of-distraction [accessed 05/06/2020].
[52] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, i. 322. Another reference to 'Distraction' as a hindrance 'Among mankind, and concord's golden chain' was revised out of the poem; *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, i. 86.

thoughts, he returns to it with ten times the pleasure, and his work goes on proportionally more rapidly.'[53] Her account recalls the poet's own description of 'distraction', and similarly emphasises the restorative effects of divided attention. Distraction mid composition is not so much an inevitable hurdle in the writing process as it is a way of inducing self-division that enables the poet's work to quicken its pace.

Wordsworth went in search of distraction as a way of confronting the difficulties of composition. Adam Nicolson explores how 'the sense of difficulty overcome' was a theme of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's retreat in 1797: their poetry, he argues, 'was not a culmination or a summation, but had its life at the beginning of things [. . .] emergent, unsummoned, encountered in the midst of difficulty'.[54] As Wordsworth felt his way toward a new kind of poetry, he was also searching for a new kind of selfhood, a search which is more easily and more effectively discernible in his manuscripts. Difficulties and doubts encountered in his compositional process, he once observed, could induce creative ways of approaching other questions because 'in struggling with words' we are 'led to give birth to and dwell on thoughts'.[55] Parallel revision and experimental composition while at the manuscript stage was how Wordsworth created a self (or selves) in the process of writing. Pondering over the smallest details of his writing was not ornamental; it was the origin of further thought.

Distraction might also be a good way of rethinking the periods of unconsciousness that Strawson discerns in our experience of selfhood. These periods, during which we lack a firm grasp on our experience, echo the divisive 'vacancy' Wordsworth discerns in his *locus classicus* of self-making. Only after he has regained consciousness of the experience of his own self-making, following the void of experience between now and 'those days', does he become aware of his multiple selves. Strawson's concept of 'thin subjects', refers to the idea that a subject cannot exist if it is not the subject of experience: 'there can't actually be a *subject* of experience, unless some experience exists for it to be a subject *of* at that time'.[56] This isn't the most helpful proposition when a subject sees moments of vacancy as part of self-making. According to Strawson, if a subject is not fully in charge of its experience, then it cannot be a

[53] Dorothy Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, 15 Feb. 1807, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 2nd ed., rev. M. Moorman and A. G. Hill, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969-70), i. 135.
[54] See Adam Nicolson, *The Making of Poetry: Coleridge, the Wordsworths and their Year of Marvels* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 2.
[55] Quoted in *The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth*, ed. M. L. Peacock (New York, Octagon, 1969), p. 169.
[56] Strawson, *Selves*, p. 329. Strawson's italics.

true subject. Manuscripts embody periods where a writer is also not wholly in charge of his or her experience. These ongoing compositional states afford a kind of textual unconsciousness, and so might be able to accommodate subjects in the making during these periods of experiencelessness. They are not invested in where the self has been nor where it ends up.

The poet's endless process of composing the self is sustained by the discontinuities that arrive in moments of distraction. In allowing for the possibility of distraction, manuscripts also lay the foundations for disjointed composition. Stephen Gill, in the most recent assessment of Wordsworth's editors, maintains that the poet had a very clear sense of his own textual identity as he 'exercised authority' over his work 'and controlled the creation of his poetic identity, his version of the canon, so to speak, not only by publishing some poems [. . .] but also by refusing to republish some'. The Cornell edition, he writes, 'destroys the identity of the version of the poems to which the poet gave his final authority' and 'effaces the order in which he wanted them presented'.[57] And yet, as I have been arguing, earlier Wordsworth is often more interested in a self he could not wholly control. If he did exercise some kind of authority then this might be discerned in his awareness that retaining the self in a desired form isn't always feasible. Some forms of his revision reflect how self-making might be achieved because of – not at the cost of – self-forgetfulness.

If *The Prelude*'s language is capable of tracking the movement of thought, then Wordsworth's revisions also embody how discontinuity not only hinders thought but is capable of reviving it. Whereas Shelley, for instance, is keen to go back to the original sight of Mont Blanc that he recorded in his notebook, Wordsworth's personal experience of crossing the Alps isn't so inspiring. After setting out with his friend Robert Jones on 14th August, 1790 from Martigny to the Italian border, they had already arrived in Italy by the 17th. Their disbelief at this predicament was only allayed when they turned to other travellers to confirm their crossing.[58] The very experience of the walk had distracted Wordsworth and Jones from the idealised glory of their joint venture; but the poet's retrospective composition of the scene shows him investigating his own distractedness.

The 1804 draft of this scene is dense with its own inaudible – though not invisible – crossings in the movements from line to line that allow the voice to pass over potential gaps without breaking stride. Crossings-out, however, show how critical these fault lines were to the

[57] Stephen Gill, 'Wordsworth and His Editors', *Essays in Criticism* lxix (2019), pp. 1–15: 6, 11.
[58] John Worthen, *The Life of William Wordsworth* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), p. 56.

passage's composition, as Wordsworth traversed his own textual path and realised that he hadn't ended up where he expected:

~~length~~
~~At [?] a Peasn~~ pas
[?underneath]
Underneath the [?cope] of a rude outhouse
~~At length we [?waitin here]~~
Had [?waited] there a Peasant
chanced to
pass
From who we learnd that we had
missed our [?road]
within
Which lay ~~along~~ the rivers [?bed] [?]
a few steps &
For ~~a short way~~ [?] then along [?its]
course
In short that all ~~the road~~ b **efore**
us [?hence]
Was downward, or to ~~give the~~

[26r]

brief
give ~~at once~~
The substance of this was
A
alps wer [?crossd]
After a little scruple & short pause
Of
[?] a rude [?shed] befor we [?in] this
spot
Had waited long a peasan [?chancd][59]

A 'little scruple & short pause' might equally be describing the poet in the act of penning these fragments. Immediate revisions and compositional lacunae are profuse, while the hesitant trail of relative clauses, conjunctives, and summative phrases ('In short') stage the writer's strains to manage contested moments of self-making – and therefore multiple possibilities of articulation – as his mind is drawn away from any particular moment of original inspiration. Wordsworth's later elaborations, in Keith Hanley's eyes, intimate the '"sudden blank of Soul, that shock" of having previously seen the famous Mont Blanc': 'the shock of his alienation in

[59] MS. WW (DC MS. 34), *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 254–55.

language'.[60] That's an interesting way of putting it – his 'alienation *in* language' not '*from* his language'? It's a subtle difference, but one that radically shifts the emphasis from the way in which the expectations of his living self don't exactly match up with the experience articulated in the poem, to a sense that it is through the process of writing that Wordsworth discovers a new sense of self. These revisions aren't simply a visual record of the poet trying to figure out the movements of his own mind. They are an ongoing process of multiple selves working at cross purposes.

'Without the ego,' Jonathan Glover writes, 'the episodes of life can seem like a heap of stones'. While an extra stone or two make little difference to a humble pile, Glover says that 'if I see the stones as part of a building I am creating, being cut off with too few stones can ruin everything'.[61] Architectural analogues in Wordsworth's poetry and prose also translate highly metaphysical problems of the self into material terms, as the poet measures up the value of the unity of his work against the possibility that it might amount to a looser body of relations. He saw the 'relation' of *The Prelude* to *The Recluse* as that 'the ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church'.[62] But the central 'church' does not exist nor would it ever materialise. Yet, as his commitment to *The Recluse* diminished, distracted by side-projects and smaller poetic avenues, his awareness of a more loosely unified textual self became increasingly pressing. Whereas Glover presses the need to have a coherent project, Wordsworth's earlier experimentations in his manuscripts display an openness to the permutations of a self shorn of such a focus.

Uncertainty is central to Wordsworth's high hopes for the task of an author: to 'creat[e] the taste by which he is to be enjoyed' and to employ his genius 'in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown.'[63] Revision is not solely a way of diagnosing the 'effects hitherto unknown' that frustrate the intentions of the author; it is also a way of preserving them. As I have been arguing, the palimpsest and distraction models of self-fabrication allow only a partial erasure of the past. In this respect, the effect of Wordsworth's revision isn't so much *a* to *b*, as *a* plus *b*. Competing forces at work within the poet's revisionism draw on the past but with an eye to the future, making the division of the self across time inevitable. It is one way the poet prevents the self from being reducible to an identifiable series of events and influences.

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[60] Keith Hanley, 'Crossings Out: The Problem of Textual Passage in *The Prelude*', *Romantic Revisions*, eds. R. Brinkley and K. Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 103–35: 118.
[61] Jonathan Glover, *I: The Philosophy and Psychology of Personal Identity* (London: Allen Lane, 1988), p. 106.
[62] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, p. 38.
[63] Wordsworth, *PrW*, iii. 80, 82.

Wordsworth reengineers what he cannot know about his self into his very technique of self composition.

'Scarcely has there been a poet with what could be called a learned eye, or an eye *extensively* learned, before Wordsworth', De Quincey thought.[64] A playful revision of phrasing, an 'eye *extensively* learned' also acknowledges a critical shift in emphasis that goes to the heart of Romantic revision. Poetic talent is not figured as an innate instinct – a gift the poet is born with – but a carefully honed craft. Wordsworth's revisions are not simply the product of 'considerate and laborious work'. They self-consciously reflect upon the writing process:

> rd
> Meanings at which I hadl ly hinted thoughts
> And forms of which I scarcely had produced
> A monument and arbitrary sign
>
> that considerate and laborious work
> In That patience which admitting no neglect
> By doth
> That slow creation which imparts to speach
> Outline & substance even till it has give
> A function kindred to organic power
> The vital spirit of a perfect form
> resting not till
> it has
> givn [65]

This work is far from over. As the last six words seem to peter out on the page, they echo the abiding perseverance they describe. 'Perfect form' isn't finally reached, and Wallace Stevens' illustration of the 'edgings and inchings of final form' captures perfectly the sense and presentation of the inching forward of this draft's ending.[66] It's this kind of self-postponement, in which the speaker acknowledges that he doesn't know what kind of self he is in the midst of creating, that generates new 'meanings' at which he has 'hardly hinted'.

As he continues to find that 'words of reason deeply weighed | Hath no beginning' and also no end, Wordsworth assimilates his fissured selfhood to a protean compositional style. In the previous sections, I have been arguing that Wordsworth discovers that the origins of his

[64] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xv. 240. De Quincey's emphasis.
[65] MS. 33, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 163.
[66] Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose*, eds. F. Kermode and J. Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1966), p. 417.

self are not only disparate; they are imperceptible. During those periods where the poet comes to revise his work and finds traces of his former selves in his own writing, he becomes aware of their coexistence before being drawn onto new possibilities of 'selving'. This endless reinvention is not just the result but the source of his self-making, a kind of excitement that one of the poet's lines from *Lyrical Ballads* identifies: 'His fancy play'd with endless play'.[67] In the next section, I will suggest that Fancy acts as a suitably flexible template for Wordsworth's idea and practice of revision.

[67] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 298.

Catching Fancy

Wordsworth was expected to be a certain kind of poet. When, in chapter 17 of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge berates his friend for concerning himself too much with the 'language of *real* life', he claims that 'a style fitted to excite only the low and changeable pleasure of wonder by means of groundless novelty, substitutes a language of *folly* and *vanity*, not for that of the *rustic*, but for that of *good sense* and *natural feeling*.'[68] Groundless novelty presupposes that there should be a kind of sound base on which to write, which for Coleridge would be to carry out the transformative work of Imagination. The excitable and the changeable belong more to Fancy, an alternative power of conception and representation. Interestingly, Wordsworth stresses that his poetry represents the 'primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement'.[69] Such a 'state of excitement' is not enough to justify this way of writing for Coleridge, who declares that it is not 'rendered at all more tenable by the addition of the words, "*in a state of excitement*".'[70] Just as he treats Wordsworth's descriptive cluster as an unnecessary supplement to his prose, he implies that composing in such a state is surplus to an already groundless way of writing.

So while Stephen Prickett sees Coleridge's *Biographia* as 'the story of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's interdependence during their creative years', Seamus Perry rightly denies that it is 'a statement of joint policy: it is born from division'.[71] My contention in this section is that Fancy, a key area of disagreement, is central to Wordsworth's more radical and innovative understanding of selfhood. When Coleridge rebukes the substitution of the language of 'vanity', part of his point is that it leads to a self-absorbed view of the world, one which precludes true understanding. As I will suggest, however, the reality for Wordsworth is in fact closer to the opposite. Fancy is able to accommodate the more unstable versions of selfhood Wordsworth has in mind, more so than Coleridge's model of the unifying Imagination allows. Indeed, Fancy is not just a poetic theory. It's also detectable in a writer's technique and, as this section will go onto argue, in his modes of composition. I begin by assessing the scepticism surrounding fancy in the eighteenth century, looking at broader assessments of its alleged superficiality, before focusing on the lasting influence of Coleridge's subordination of Fancy

[68] Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge VII: Biographia Literaria*, eds. J. Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), ii. 40, 55. Coleridge's typography.
[69] Wordsworth, *PrW*, i. 123–4.
[70] Coleridge, *Biographia*, ii. 56.
[71] Stephen Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 173. Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 247.

to Imagination. Then I discuss Wordsworth's quarrel with Coleridge in his prose, before moving onto the role of Fancy in his poetry. The end of this section looks at repetition as one formal embodiment of Fancy in Wordsworth. I argue that repetition, as a stylistic and compositional technique, fosters in his writing a 'healthful state of association'.[72]

Fancy was clearly important for Wordsworth. Crabb Robinson's recollection of the poet is suggestive, explaining that he had 'heard Wordsworth speak of his poems of fancy as if he deemed them not inferior to his poems of imagination'.[73] Indeed, it's worth noting how Wordsworth organised many of his poems under the heading of 'Fancy' when he revised his 1807 volume of poems for republication in 1815. An association between Fancy and composition persists as the subject of several of these poems, as the poet observes, for example, that it's the 'very sweetest words that fancy frames' (141). He returns again to these lines while revising them for his *Poetical Works* (1836), positing now that 'Fancy culls or frames'.[74] Even as it is elevated through capitalisation, Fancy's effects are simultaneously made more unpredictable in that it might give shape to words or it could simply highlight select words and experiences.

A few scholars have started to foreground the rôle of Fancy in Wordsworth's writing. Craig Cairns argues that Wordsworth is drawn to 'the *elaboration* rather than the overturning of associationism', countering suggestions that Wordsworth thought along similar lines to Coleridge.[75] So far so sound, but Cairns sees in the poet's attraction to Fancy a bid for forms of continuity gained by associative forms of writing and thinking. In addition, Jeffrey Robinson's study of Fancy in British Romanticism considers some stylistic embodiments of Fancy, such as syntax and repetition, but does not extend to its influence on composition.[76] I would add that Fancy is detectable not only in the 'finished' version of a poem but in the process of revision that led to it. This section, therefore, attends to the attitude to Fancy implied in Wordsworth's prose and verse, together with the draft stages of his poetry, to build a fuller

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[72] Wordsworth, *PrW*, i. 126.
[73] Crab Robinson, quoted in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, ed. R. Woof (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2001), p. 308.
[74] Wordsworth, *Poems in Two Volumes and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. J. Curtis (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 141.
[75] Craig Cairns, *Associationism and the Literary Imagination: From the Phantasmal Chaos* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 86. Emphasis is in original. Adam White, for example, proposes a different view, placing Wordsworth in the same camp as Coleridge when it comes to Fancy, attributing a more distinctive and radical handling of Fancy to John Clare; *John Clare's Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 68.
[76] Jeffrey C. Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry: The Fancy in British Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

account of his resistance to Coleridgean aspirations to Imagination and unity, in favour of a more associative poetic practice and view of selfhood.

According to the *OED*, 'fancy' is a contraction of 'fantasy' from the Greek φαντασία (*fantasia*), meaning 'appearance'. Its secondary meaning, however, 'imagination' or the mental 'representation of images', has come to overshadow its primary sense. Because of its association with the origins of fantasy in appearances, Fancy gathered a bad reputation for being a superficial means of looking at the world. 'Fanciphobia', as Robinson describes it, was widespread in the eighteenth century.[77] For example, Isaac Watts situated the work of Fancy among the 'vulgar rank of mankind'. To surpass this 'vulgar rank' and learn 'to pass a just sentence on persons and things', we must '*take heed of a fanciful temper of mind, and a humorous conduct in his affairs*'.[78] Fancy equals folly, a lower and less developed state of mind. 'Temper', in this description, indicates a kind of provisional nature to this state of mind, which will come to pass. Part of Watts's point is that this sort of thinking should remain a preliminary stage in our maturity.

If Fancy deals with 'illusions' and 'apparitions', Dugald Stewart singles out analogy as a prominent model of Fancy in poetry. For him, this is 'a power of associating ideas according to relations of resemblance and analogy'. Stewart is quick to add that such associations might degenerate into unhelpful correspondences:

> no allusion can, with propriety, have a place in serious poetry, unless it either illustrate or adorn the principal subject. If it has both these recommendations, the allusion is perfect. If it has neither, as is often the case with the allusions of Cowley and of Young, the Fancy of the Poet degenerates into Wit.[79]

Harnessed properly, Fancy should cast light on a principal subject. As it turns out, that 'or' in the first sentence turns out not entirely to be a case of one or the other (Fancy either illustrates or adorns) but has a twin function to carry out '*both* these recommendations'. This definition amounts to a restrictive teleology, where Fancy afflicts us with a kind of tunnel vision that

[77] Robinson identifies several, prominent reasons for the dismissal of Fancy in this period. First, it was associated with 'escape and unreality', and so was subordinated to Imagination as a more mature, poetic faculty. Theorists and poets also associated with the 'carefree nature of childhood' or an 'apparently simpler historical past'. Last, Fancy was merely the 'gatherer of "raw materials"' yet to be shaped into something more beautiful and permanent; *Unfettering Poetry*, pp. 25–6.

[78] Isaac Watts, *The Improvement of the Mind* (London: Printed for James Brackstone, 1741), p. 22. Watts's emphasis.

[79] Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (London: Printed for A. Straham and T. Cadell, 1792), p. 305.

maintains our focus on one image. One wonders what the implications are for a subject that is not itself singular? If, like Wordsworth's pluralist and divided sense of self, a subject is not a unified entity, then is trying to make it conform with a pre-conceived style of unity not a dishonest representation of it? When he begins to pin down 'The work of Fancy' in an MS of Book VII of *The Prelude*, his own definition is expressed in terms subject to his own changeable moods: 'shall ~~I as the mood~~ | ~~Inclines me, here describe, for pastimes sake~~.'[80]

As a result of Coleridge's influential thoughts on this issue, Fancy has been made distinct from Imagination as one faculty that enables the mind to make connections.[81] For Coleridge, Imagination harbours an 'esemplastic' power. It 'modifies images', as he puts it while table-talking, and 'gives unity to variety.'[82] While the Imagination synthesises, Fancy is simply 'the aggregating Faculty of the mind':

> Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.[83]

No more than a 'mode of Memory', Coleridge's idea of Fancy turns out to be a mirrored reflection of past experience. Similar to the next stage of composition after a rough first draft, revision needs to be carried out after Fancy has collected some initial perceptions or first thoughts. A blend of an 'empirical phenomenon' with a matter of 'Choice', Fancy works like a preliminary sorting exercise ahead of the proper stage of composition. It's not an end in itself. For Wordsworth, however, the playfulness of Fancy could be a form of composition. Take one of the poems from his 1807 volume that he grouped under the heading 'Fancy', which envisages a deliberately fanciful way of composing: 'Oft do I sit by thee at ease, | And weave a web of similies, | Loose types of Things through all degrees'.[84] An alternate reading in a manuscript draft of the poem finds Wordsworth also 'Beguild by sportive similies', which both

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[80] MS. A (DC MS. 52), *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ii. 685.
[81] Samuel Johnson, for example, used the terms interchangeably when he defined 'Imagination' as 'Fancy; the power of forming ideal pictures'; *A Dictionary of the English Language*, repr. in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M. H. Abrams, 9th ed., 2 vols. (London: Norton, 2012), pp. 2929-2936: 2934.
[82] Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge XIV: Table Talk*, eds. K. Coburn and B. Winer, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), i. 490.
[83] Coleridge, *Biographia*, i. 305.
[84] Wordsworth, *Poems in Two Volumes*, p. 238.

describes the poet's beguilement in composition and enacts it in the divergent thoughts on the manuscript page.[85]

Coleridge's charge of a 'language of *folly* and *vanity*' allows us to glean something of the way more associative writing is connected in his mind with how the self can have an unwarranted dominion over experience. 'Vanity' implies a kind of self-absorption, where the self unwittingly asserts its superiority against a unity that Coleridge sees it as possessing with 'the whole':

> A sordid solitary thing,
> Mid countless brethren with a lonely heart
> Through courts and cities the smooth savage roams
> Feeling himself; his own low self the whole;
> When he by sacred sympathy might make
> The whole one Self! Self, that no alien knows!
> Self, far diffused as Fancy's wing can travel!
> Self, spreading still! Oblivious of its own,
> Yet all of all possessing![86]

As dispersive as Fancy might be, it also inflicts on experience a oneness of its own through force: 'The fancy brings together images which have no connection natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by some accidental coincidence'.[87] On the other hand, Imagination creates a more positive state of unity, in Coleridge's eyes, one which 'reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities'.[88] So Imagination is both the cause of harmonisation and its signature too. It brings about what Perry has called the 'unified totality of "comprehensibility"'.[89] At the same time, it's emblematic of a certain kind of understanding that Coleridge believes is necessary to reveal the self's continuity with nature. What I want to suggest is that Wordsworth's aspirations for his self were against such a unified totality. That description of 'Self, far diffused as Fancy's wing can travel' strikes at the fertile and prolific sort of selfhood traced in the first two sections of this chapter. Fancy, understood as a creative faculty, is therefore helpful for examining the unstable forms of self-revision in Wordsworth's prose and poetry.

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[85] MS. 1807/15, *Poems in Two Volumes*, p. 238.
[86] Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge XVI: Poetical Works, Part 1*, ed. J. C. C. Mays, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), i. 181.
[87] Coleridge, *Table Talk*, i. 489–90.
[88] Coleridge, *Biographia*, ii. 16.
[89] Perry, *The Uses of Division*, p. 34. See Coleridge's remark in *Lay Sermons*; *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge VI*, ed. R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 69.

Certainly, the passive and arbitrary character of Fancy in Coleridge's account jostles with an emerging sense of the phenomenon in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as something more than an inert faculty. It's true that views of Fancy persisted that emphasised its 'decorative and ornamental elements in art', as Robinson notes.[90] Despite this, Reid claimed towards the end of the eighteenth century that 'Fancy may combine things that never were combined in reality.' It may 'enlarge or diminish, multiply or divide, compound and fashion the objects which Nature presents', and so allows a new understanding of reality through Fancy's combinations.[91] As Robinson also observes, the emergence of compound terms involving 'fancy' demonstrates how it assumes a 'role in the mind's interaction with the world'.[92]

What is also suggestive is that the sense of these compounds leans increasingly towards creation and fabrication: from 'Fancy-framed' (1646), 'Fancy-formed' (1654), 'Fancy-born' (1657), to 'Fancy-built' (1759), 'Fancy-woven' (1785), 'Fancy-wrought' (1801). These compounds, in their infancy, suggest Fancy's formative, but temporary, influence. In framing or giving birth to ideas, Fancy retains a lingering sense of being but a stage in a broader design. Later coinages, however, get at a view of Fancy that's more involved, more integral to its own compositions. No longer are its subjects simply framed, in a distant and associative way; Fancy is woven into their constitution. It's amid this increasingly sensitive and nuanced examination of the mental faculty that Wordsworth began to experiment with Fancy's possibilities as a model of selfhood.

Wordsworth sees Coleridge as doing Fancy a disservice. Indeed, this disagreement was more than simply a personal sticking point. Grouping Fancy with Imagination as one of the 'powers requisite for the production of poetry', which serve to 'modify, to create, and to associate', Wordsworth takes issue with Coleridge's definition of Fancy in his 1815 'Preface'.[93] To view Fancy as 'the aggregative and associative power', as Coleridge does, is 'too general', in Wordsworth's eyes, since these characteristics are also true of Imagination. As Barbara Hardy notes, as much as Coleridge tried to shut the door on Fancy so it could not intrude on the good work of the Imagination, 'once we recognize the similarity of the identity

[90] Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry*, p. 10.
[91] Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, p. 374.
[92] Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry*, p. 10.
[93] Wordsworth, *PrW*, iii. 26, 36.

of the successes of Fancy and the failures of Imagination, we begin to wonder whether the door between *can* be slammed.'[94]

Where Fancy modifies, Wordsworth explains, 'it is enough for her purpose if it be slight, limited, and evanescent', qualities which are '[d]irectly the reverse' of those of the Imagination.[95] 'Evanescent' is an enticing way of putting it, as he explains the chief distinction between Fancy and Imagination is a lack of clear purpose. It's this directionless creation he's drawn to in 'To the Daisy', another of his poems of Fancy, where he seeks 'Some chime of fancy wrong or right; | Or stray invention'.[96] This wandering invention is true of his words in the process of composition. Momentarily, he writes 'stray' not 'chime of fancy', making the workings of invention analogous to those of Fancy. Just as this diminished sense of purpose is reimagined as a benefit of Fancy, the effect of this in practice gains favourable attention too. Limited and slight differences are often a feature of Wordsworth's revisions:

I was not wholly free
From disappointment to behold the same
trace
Appearance, ~~the same body,~~ not to find som obvious
Of transformaction wrought upon his frame
~~Some change, some beams of glory brought away~~
Or countenance some beams of glory fetched
From that new region. . . .
Marvellous things
Had Vanity, fond Spirit that appears
My fancy had shap'd forth of sights and shows,
Almost as deeply seated and as a strong
~~Processions, Equipages, Lords and Dukes,~~
In a childs heart as fear itself conceived
The King and the King's Palace, and not last
*Or **I** east, **he** aven bless him!* [97]

Textual revisions come to resemble the subject of these lines, as crossings-out and reiterations show a reluctance to fashion some change of their own. Alterations in the poet's hand break up Dorothy Wordsworth's transcriptions, which remain mostly undeleted, preserving the frustration with '~~the same body~~' and '~~Some change, some beams of glory~~'. These revisions, which set their sights on 'some change', might equally reveal the vagueness born of sublimity:

[94] Barbara Hardy, 'Distinction without Difference: Coleridge's Fancy and Imagination', *Essays in Criticism* i (1951), pp. 336–344: 340.
[95] Wordsworth, *PrW*, iii. 36.
[96] Wordsworth, *Poems in Two Volumes*, p. 67.
[97] MS. B (DC MS. 53), *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 1013. These lines have been struck through in the MS draft.

a recognition of what frustrates language rather than a single expression of this frustration in language. Visions originally born of Fancy are a corrective to the potential disillusionment that precedes them. Their associative shaping forth in the earlier lines, most of which remain in the revised script, are married to equally associative syntax that erupts into 'bless him!' Even if 'som obvious ^trace | Of transformaction wrought upon his frame' is originally absent, such as Coleridge might insist on, Wordsworth takes pleasure in the multiplying associations over the following lines. 'Transformaction' is a felicitous misspelling. Its portmanteau of 'transformation' and 'action' is an apt description of what the poet hopes to achieve as he engages in the revision his work.

Dorothy never uses the term 'revising' in her descriptions of her brother's composition, opting instead, as Sally Bushell notes, for 'altering'. For Bushell, the term 'suggests an activity of almost equal creative status to original composition' whereas revision is a 'clearly subsidiary action'.[98] Actually, the *OED*'s first definition of 'alter' is 'To make (a person or thing) otherwise or different *in some respect*; to modify, to change the appearance of'.[99] On the other hand, to 'revise' involves a more comprehensive process: the 'action or act of revising something [. . .] with a view to making corrections, amendments, or improvements.' It can also be a 'single amendment or correction to a piece of work'.[100] In each case, that 'or' is doing a considerable amount of work. An alteration can simply alter; it makes something other to what it was before in some way, but it is not what we conventionally think of as a revisioning. But, in the passage above, it constitutes the essence of the poet's way of revising. The limited and slight tweaks of fanciful composition are not a subsidiary to processes of revision; they are its cornerstone.

Whereas Coleridge sees 'Fancy' as distinct from 'imagination', inferior and 'associative' in contrast to the imagination's capacity to shape and unify, Wordsworth's judgement isn't so final. Speaking elsewhere of the 'long calenture of fancy', he envisages a disorienting blend of 'inward existences' and the 'visible and familiar occurrences of daily life':

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[98] Bushell, 'Composition and Revision', p. 28-9. Andrew Bennett has also looked at Dorothy's account of her brother's composition, observing that 'it suggests that the process of composition is made up of two separate parts, in which walking/composing is followed by writing'; *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 23.
[99] See 'alter, *v.*' §1a, *OED Online*. Emphasis is my own.
[100] See 'revise, *v.*' §2a and c, *OED Online.*

> [T]hese demonstrate incontestably that the passions of men (I mean, the soul of sensibility in the heart of man) – in all quarrels, in all contests, in all quests, in all delights, in all employments which are either sought by men or thrust upon them – do immeasurably transcend their objects. The true sorrow of humanity consists in this; - not that the mind of man fails; but that the course and demands of action and of life so rarely correspond with the dignity and intensity of human desires.[101]

For a second-rate faculty, Fancy seems strangely attractive. Wordsworth's syntax, shot through with breathless fragmentation, generates an air of exhilaration. In projecting the effects of Fancy to a universal register, he enhances the private inquiries these images serve to disguise. 'Fancy localises Powers we love', observes the speaker of 'Fancy and Tradition'.[102] If it isn't the failure of the 'mind of man', then part of its success might lie in its ability to create a looser form of connectedness, as illustrated by his attraction to 'Loose types of Things'. Even if the mind's attempts to impose a finitude upon life are thwarted by the intrusion of Fancy, this passage casts life as improved by the open-ended inclinations of the mind. One of his poems of the Fancy expands on this issue, as its speaker 'Hath that same fancy', which leads to 'renovation without end.'[103] The first line hovers between 'that same fancy' and 'this [?apprehension]' in the *1804* draft, allowing for the possibility that Fancy might be a form of apprehension that could achieve a correspondence with the 'intensity of human desires' in endless reinvention.[104]

Wordsworth's contemporaries might have put this description another way, so as to make out that Fancy simply glosses over things: 'the mind, hurried with precipitancy from one theme to another, though it may catch a glimpse, yet rarely obtains a full view of the object it desires to contemplate. Conceptions born of the fanciful mind might be 'QUICK and LIVELY', writes William Duff, but they are 'frequently SUPERFICIAL'.[105] Duff's 'frequently' gives Fancy some breathing room, allowing for the possibility that 'quick' and 'lively' conceptions aren't necessarily superficial. These animated qualities are reminiscent of Wordsworth's description of how we associate ideas in 'a state of excitement'. He goes on to explain, however, that 'excitement is an unusual and irregular state of mind; ideas and feelings do not in that state exceed each other in accustomed order', instead forming a 'co-presence of

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[101] Wordsworth, *PrW*, i. 338–9.
[102] Wordsworth, *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820–1845*, ed. G. Jackson (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 600.
[103] Wordsworth, *Poems in Two Volumes*, p. 601.
[104] See DC MS. 24, *Poems in Two Volumes*, p. 601.
[105] William Duff, *An Essay in Original Genius and its Various Modes of Exertion in Philosophy and the Fine Arts, Particularly in Poetry* (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1767), p. 59.

something regular'.[106] Written texts embody both a 'regular' order of thoughts and an unusual 'co-presence', because they reflect a set of thoughts at one particular moment frozen in print, but they simultaneously embody the process of thinking during our experience of reading them.

Wordsworth's revisions to a print copy of 'The Green Linnet' put Fancy at the centre of this tension between transient thoughts and a hope that his experiences might be moored in writing:

My thoughts they all by turns employ;
~~glancing~~ ~~fluttering Bird is~~
A ~~whispering Leaf~~ is now my joy,
flower is fancys { toy / t[?] }
~~And then a Bird will be the toy~~
~~That doth my fancy tether.~~

~~A Bird will then be fancy's toy~~
~~Or the memory's pleasing~~ tether
Here memory wakes to sober joy
There fancy finds a shortliv'd joy
Then
~~Aspiring~~ hope a lasting tether [107]

Wordsworth's focus on Fancy's ludic 'toy' produces a deliberately playful series of revisions in which he takes the original stanza and plays a set of variations on it. At first, the poem's 'joy' is the 'whispering Leaf' belonging to the poet, but it then becomes an unspecified 'sober' or 'shortliv'd' joy alighted on by 'memory' or Fancy. Those deleted participles 'whispering', 'glancing', and 'fluttering' reinforce the 'quick' and 'lively' characteristics Duff associated with Fancy, which initially supply the poet's joy as he perceives them. If 'Fancy localises Powers we love', as the poet says, here the word 'tether' fulfils a cognitive role in the process of revision, surviving the initial wave of deletions in the rewritten lines, and so preserves their train of thought. Fancy thus shapes a collision of continuity and a playful resistance to synthesising thoughts in a poem that's especially self-conscious of its own process of creation.

These lines are a practical demonstration of the 'law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on', as Wordsworth explains in the 'Preface' to his *Poems* (1815): a law that is 'as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing,

[106] Wordsworth, *PrW*, i. 146–7.
[107] MS. 1807/15, *Poems in Two Volumes*, p. 349. The bold font denotes the print lines whereas the roman text shows the poet's emendations in pen.

tender, or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortunately combined'.[108] It's worth emphasising how the passive phrase 'are carried on' implies these processes keep working but not to a known end. In later versions of 'The Green Linnet', the references to Fancy that were vital to the process of composition above, are revised out of the text. Yet, the poem continues to be categorised as belonging to the category of Fancy. Accordingly, the 'processes of Fancy' are 'carried on', working their way into the poet's experience as if by a kind of subterfuge.

Across the published versions of *The Prelude*, we can see Wordsworth's attraction to Fancy's capacity to capture fleeting experiences. Book VII, for instance, finds him admitting that 'fond imaginations, of themselves, | Had long before given way', before he teases the possibility that he himself may 'give way' to the 'work of Fancy' as he recalls 'the quick dance | Of colours, lights and forms'.[109] These lines run on in MS. A: '^in ~~The~~ endless stream of men, and moving things; | From hour to hour~~,~~ the illimitable walk'[110] Before Wordsworth made the small revision at the start of the line, the 'lights and forms' of Fancy were not assimilated to that 'endless stream'; they were equal to it. In this way, Wordsworth's lines themselves play out how these 'forms' are fragmentary and yet part of an unfinished process. Elsewhere in the following book, the 'first poetic Faculty | Of plain imagination and severe' is overtaken by a 'wilfulness of fancy and conceit' which gave 'shapes of human life [. . .] new importance to the mind'.[111] 'New importance' not 'renewed importance': Fancy devises independent forms of relevance that allow Wordsworth's perceptions to keep up with the inconstant demands of his mind. Even if the poet acknowledges that Fancy distorts recollection – '(Though things remember'd idly do half seem | The work of Fancy)' – its reordering allows his experience to be repatterned without erasing its prior states.[112] Fancy brings the poet closer to 'that marvellous world', which is 'modified | By the infinite varieties and shades | Of individual character'.[113]

Fancy vouches for the mind's amplitude, not its inferiority. Like the poet's 'struggling with words' that gives birth to new thoughts, Wordsworth's focus on variation at the smallest scale is more than a polishing up of thought.[114] It allows him to 'throw over' even the most

[108] Wordsworth, *PrW*, iii. 36.
[109] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 118–9.
[110] MS. A (DC MS. 52), *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 695.
[111] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 144–5.
[112] Ibid., ii. 118.
[113] MS. A (DC MS. 52), *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 984.
[114] Wordsworth, quoted in *Critical Opinions*, p. 169.

ordinary of objects 'a certain colouring of the imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way'.[115] Here, the word 'imagination' is meant in its broader sense, not in the specific, Coleridgean one. Its effects are not wholly transformative. Although Wordsworth is sometimes concerned that he 'may have written upon unworthy subjects', his associative way of viewing the world circumvents this anxiety.[116] Even as Fancy does not carry out a conscious modification of the poet's perceptions, it exerts a pressure on them that leads him on to further perplexing discoveries:

> As one who hangs down-bending from the side
> Of a slow-moving Boat, upon the breast
> Of a still water, solacing himself
> With such discoveries as his eye can make,
> Beneath him, in the bottom of the deeps,
> Sees how many beauteous sights, weeds, fishes, flowers,
> Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more;
> Yet often is perplex'd, and cannot part
> The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
> Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth
> Of the clear flood from things which there abide
> In their true dwelling; now is cross'd by gleam
> Of his own image. . .[117]

Distinct images refracted through the surface of the water multiply asyndetically, as one image is layered upon another free from any intruding conjunctions that would otherwise direct us to arrange them in a certain way. Paratactic syntax, as Robinson notes, is one way that free associations prosper within Romantic verse, but here the technique is amplified as Wordsworth finds a grammatical structure capable of sustaining his idea of revision as a more associative process that is intrinsic, not supplemental, to composition.[118] Even the most quotidian sights may be supplied with 'renewed importance' as they are 'cross'd by gleam' of a writer's and reader's associations.

Fancy provides Wordsworth a model of the combinations of unpredictable effects during revision, as well as the tussle between discovery and design as a writer comes to reflect

[115] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 743.
[116] Ibid., p. 757.
[117] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 68.
[118] Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry*, p. 13.

upon his former intuitions. This is shown more clearly in the manuscript of this episode, where the puzzlement over the inseparable sights is enhanced:

azure
~~Shadow from substance cannot separ~~ate
~~The~~ shadow from the substance, rocks and ^ sky,
depths
The ~~inverted images of rocks~~ reflected in the ~~abyss~~
Mountains and clouds, ~~from that which is indeed~~
Of the [?clar] flood from
~~The region, and the~~ things which there abide[119]

In the revised and neatened print version of these images, Wordsworth's syntax is used to distinguish 'The shadow from the substance' even as he insists on their very inseparability. His earlier draft, however, is laden with the beguilement of 'fancies more' in this memory. Here, the deleted line 'Shadow from substance cannot separate' juxtaposes these elements in an archaic syntactical structure. We might also note how his late description of the scenery 'reflected in the depth | Of the clear flood' attributes to the memory a lucidity that does not hold true to the apposite combination of images in his manuscript: 'The ~~inverted images of rocks~~ reflected in the ~~abyss~~ ^depths'. 'Inverted images', not the actual natural formations, are reflected. What interests the poet in his earlier composition isn't the 'true dwelling' of things perceived, as is the case in later version of the poem. At this point, it is rather the play of unfamiliar sights that matters. If Duff's description of Fancy as 'frequently superficial' was intended as censure, it's this surface level, where the commingling and distortion of images occurs, which is not only the start of Wordsworth's composition but how he means to go on. Fancy, then, is truer to the original, unfiltered experience of this moment, as well as the experience of composition.

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Toward the end of the 1815 'Preface', Wordsworth writes that the 'Imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion; – the Soul may fall away from it, not being able to sustain its grandeur'.[120] Fancy is instead 'given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature'; 'Yet is it not the less true that Fancy, as she is an active, is also, under her own laws and in her own spirit, a creative faculty?'[121] When the poet talks about the 'Soul' it might

[119] MS. A (DC MS. 52), *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ii. 586.
[120] Wordsworth, *PrW*, iii. 36–7.
[121] Wordsworth, *Poems*, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

not simply be in a spiritual sense, given that crucial references to the soul in his verse are later changed to 'mind'.[122] His mention of the soul falling away from the Imagination might in fact be trying to get at the accommodation of Imagination or Fancy to the self. To this end, a fragmentary or fanciful self might be a kind of self-defence. Fancy is an emblem of and a means to resist what Wordsworth referred to as 'that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision.' It's his refusal to make himself up according to a blueprint for a self that's been drawn up on his behalf.[123] One way the effects I have been discussing appears on the page might be in the form of repetition. In the rest of this section, I look at how repetition does not equal reduplication in the poet's mind. Rather, it signals residual feelings that have gone unresolved for Wordsworth, and leads him back to poetry as a medium to externalise them.

For eighteenth-century theorists, our mental faculties benefited from repetition because it served to reinforce pre-existing ideas and capacities. Without reinforcement through repetition, these capacities fade away: 'That trains of thinking, which by frequent repetition have become familiar, should spontaneously offer themselves to our fancy, seems to require no other original quality but the power of habit'.[124] Here, habituation meets Fancy, as Reid attributes to repetition a kind of cognitive regulation that irons out any creases of contingency. Similarly, David Hartley – who made a significant influence on Wordsworth's view of association – saw repetition as compressing strands of thought into more manageable compounds: 'Let the sensation *A* be often associated with each of the Sensations *B, C, D,* &c. [. . .] *A,* impressed alone, will, at last, raise *B, C, D,* &c. all together, i.e. associate them with one another. [. . .] All compound Impressions *A*+*B*+*C*+*D,* &c. after sufficient Repetition leave compound Miniatures *a*+*b*+*c*+*d*, which recur every now and then from slight Causes.'[125] For Hartley, repetition enforces a teleological model of cognitive development where a disarray of

[122] When the poet remarks how it is a 'Hard task to analyse a soul', this phrase is emended to 'Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind' in the *1850* text; *Fourteen-Book Prelude,* ed. W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 53. Accordingly, Wordsworth elevates psychology as a suitable theme for a poem to epic dimensions as he echoes Raphael's comment in *Paradise Lost* that the war in heaven is a 'Sad task and hard'. This is, for James Maxwell, 'one of Wordsworth's implied claims for epic, or more than epic, status for his poem' in his edition of *The Prelude*; *The Prelude*; *A Parallel Text,* ed. J. Maxwell (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 543.
[123] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads,* p. 739.
[124] Reid, *Intellectual Powers,* p. 426.
[125] David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations: In Two Parts,* 2 vols. (1749; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), i. 73-74. On Hartley's influence on Wordsworth, see Jonathan Lamb, 'Hartley and Wordsworth: Philosophical Language and Figures of the Sublime', *Comparative Literature* xcvii (1982), pp. 1064–1085; R. B. Pearsall, 'Wordsworth Reworks his Hartley', *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* xxiv (1970), pp. 75–83; John Hayden, 'Wordsworth, Hartley, and the Revisionists', *Studies in Philology* lxxxi (1984), pp. 94–118.

associative thoughts eventually falls into more settled grooves. Put another way, repetition has a kind of centrifugal effect, which stands in stark contrast to the expansiveness of Fancy, but also Wordsworth's employment of repetition as an instrument of proliferation.

In a note that is intended 'to add a few words closely connected with "The Thorn"', the poet glosses a rhetorical technique that we find in the poem 'and many other Poems in these volumes':

> There is a numerous class of Readers who imagine that the same words cannot be repeated without tautology: this is a great error: virtual tautology is much oftener produced by using different words when the meaning is exactly the same. Words, a Poet's words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling, and not measured by the space which they occupy upon paper. For the Reader cannot be too often reminded that Poetry is passion: it is the history or science of feeling; now every man must know that an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequacies of our own powers of the deficiencies of language. During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character.[126]

This note identifies two kinds of repetition. One involves the mind getting stuck and language failing as different words reach the same end; the other, which is distinct from tautology, is something closer to incantation and generates a plenitude of meaning. 'Apparent tautology', Wordsworth continues, is significant for 'the interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient'. Far from hammering out the same tune, repetition is something like the verbal trace of various, unresolved feelings. It's not only the case that these are sensations he feels a need to go over again. These are feelings that occur in the act of revision.

Wordsworth makes fractious repetition an especially poetic issue: 'Words, *a Poet's words more particularly*,' he says, 'ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling'. Reiteration may well seem at odds with creativity; but repetition is a technique poetry often relies on. Its small textual details – including rhyme, mirrored rhythms, and verbal echoes – are themselves reiterative and so raise the stakes of revision. The very medium complicates a writer's efforts to establish a backbone for a continuous textual self. As Wordsworth is drawn to this plenitude of repetition in verse, he is led on, almost inevitably, toward verse's discontinuity. One draft

[126] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 351.

passage of *The Prelude* is critical to how Wordsworth sees that repetition can be a model of difference in likeness:

> Hence a countless store
> With which my memory daily was impressed
> Of modes and temporary qualities
> Else undiscover'd hence a register of permanent relations else unknown
>
> Hence life & change and beauty, knowledge [hence [?]]
> And gentle agitations of the mind
>
> distinctions
> From manifold ~~impressions~~ difference
> Perceived in things where to the common eye
> No difference is: and hence from the same source
> Sublimer joy [127]

Hence modes & qualities
difference & [?distinct –]
endless [?combinations]

Next to these lines, 'modes' and 'qualities' are transposed into new circumstances in a perpendicular block of text, as if to offer up a parallel reality of how things might have turned out differently the first time: 'Hence modes & qualities | difference & [?distinct] | endless [?combinations]'. Repetition for Wordsworth, then, is not the last resort of a defeated poet, drumming his fingers on the table, circling the same thoughts over and over. Even identical repetition across manuscripts can itself be a kind of generative revision: the key to unlocking potentially 'distinct' and 'endless combinations'.

Combinations of revisions in Wordsworth's drafts see him working his way towards a kind of composition that is founded upon the associative and disparate style of self-making that he has allied himself with. A 'countless store [. . .] of temporary qualities' could be a fitting description of the uncertainty and experimentation intrinsic to the manuscript page. Whereas Hartley's theory of compound miniatures is a way of moving forward with an increasing ease of understanding, repetitive combinations across the poet's drafts display a very different trend:

> I left my bark
> And through the meadows homeward went with grave
> And serious thoughts: and after I had seen
> That spectacle, for many days my brain
> Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
> Of unknown modes of being.[128]

[127] MS. RV, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 193.
[128] Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 46.

Empson has observed of this passage that the pause at the end of the line leads us to think that Wordsworth 'had not merely "a feeling of" these unknown modes but something like a new "sense" which was partly able to apprehend them – a new *kind* of sensing had appeared in his mind'.[129] But the fact that Wordsworth returns to this description in later contexts also suggests that the unknowability of these modes, not their intelligibility, is the driving force behind them.

Indeed, these 'unknown modes' reappear several pages later in a draft of the *1798* poem, as the poet considers 'A working with an undetermined sense | Of unknown modes of being'.[130] If we might expect to encounter the unknown on the threshold of new experiences, here it succeeds them. Jeffrey C. Robinson has suggested this unknowability is fostered by the condition of Wordsworth's drafts as a 'continuous compositional space', where poetic fragments are self-contained moments of artistry that are especially conscious of the process of their own making.[131] Like the plenitude that attaches to verbal repetition, in Wordsworth's mind, duplication across manuscripts does not effect a broader uniformity within a manuscript. Later modes of sensing remain inscrutable to the earlier poet. But this predicament works both ways, since earlier forms of selfhood also cannot be pinned down from the perspective of the future. Orders of priority between past and present break down as the poet discovers the inexhaustibility of the associative combinations upon which a writer might build both his texts and his selfhood.

Association is not the enemy of creation for Wordsworth. Despite the best efforts of Coleridge to convince him otherwise, Wordsworth takes up the associative patterns of Fancy as a suitable and generative model for his poetry and its composition. In so doing, he puts to the test sceptical responses to Fancy in the eighteenth century, rehabilitating it as a more malleable and complex model of selfhood and the workings of verse than the more revered idea of Imagination could offer. Fancy allows for the creation and preservation of 'endless combinations', which sustain the growth of the writer's self without allowing it to crystallise into something entirely settled, something recognisable. These perplexing combinations sound a lot like *The Prelude*'s 'spots of time', foundational moments in the poet's life. While these spots might appear to be the starting points of a self, rich seams of 'renovating virtue' to be tapped into, this chapter's final section argues that Wordsworth comes back to them because of their very unknowability.

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[129] William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 290.
[130] MS. JJ (DC MS. 19), *The Prelude 1798–1799,* p. 91.
[131] Jeffrey C. Robinson, *Poetic Innovation in Wordsworth 1825–1833: Fibres of These Thoughts* (London: Anthem, 2019), p. 23, p. 26.

Seeing by Glimpses

> *There are in our existence spots of time*
> *Which with distinct pre-eminence retain*
> *A fructifying virtue, whence, depressed*
> *By trivial occupations and the round*
> *Of ordinary intercourse, our minds,*
> But more than all
> ~~*(Especially the imaginative power)*~~
> *Are nourished, and invisibly repaired.*[132]

When Wordsworth comes to revise his original introduction to the 'spots of time', he deletes this reference to 'imaginative power', a line that was already in a precarious state, cocooned in parenthesis. If the 'spots' were previously connected in his mind with the synthesising and unifying power of Imagination, as Coleridge might have wanted, then he decides here that this connection isn't quite right. Invisible repair does not work by the wholly transformative means by which Coleridge might suggest the disorder of experience is redeemed. Wordsworth does not dispose the 'spots of time' in a linear fashion, as if they were key points on a timeline that lead up to the present day. In other words, they are not a metaphor for cause and effect. They are more like shifting coordinates on a map of selfhood. 'Points have we all of us within our souls', as he would later say, 'Where all stand single', which sounds increasingly less like a series of events that lead to a final self.[133] Indeed, the coiled syntax makes it seem as if these points control our sense of ourselves. These moments have something over all of us as much as we possess them.

In this final section, I focus on these 'spots of time', one of the most remarkable structuring techniques of *The Prelude*. While these episodes are foundational events in Wordsworth's life and poem, I suggest that they are not simply preliminary material to be reshaped into something that resembles a stable self. As David Simpson notices, the phrase is a curious oxymoron.[134] Unlike the phrase 'spots *in* time', which would resolve any competing paradoxes as it presents the spots as frozen moments in time, 'spots of time' implies a more

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[132] MS. V (DC MS. 23), *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 259. Italicised text is Dorothy Wordsworth's transcription, while the roman font and strikethrough are the poet's revisions in pencil.
[133] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 549.
[134] David Simpson, *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), p. 60. Alan Richardson has emphasised the strangeness of the phrase in 'Wordsworth at the Crossroads: "Spots of Time" in the "Two-Part Prelude"', *The Wordsworth Circle* xix (1988), pp. 15–20: 15.

subtle relation between these self-contained moments and a broader feeling of selfhood.[135] The 'spots' have a more complex role than simply pressing pause on experience. Instead, I argue that they are both an emblem of and a means to concentrate the inexhaustibility of selfhood and an attraction to association.

As Hugh Sykes Davies has observed, Wordsworth's 'spots of time' are intriguing for the 'process by which they have been isolated from the apparent continuum of experience'.[136] His phrase '*apparent* continuum' is right; it's this disruption of seeming continuity that continues to frustrate analyses of the 'spots'. Several scholars persist in treating the way in which the 'spots of time' challenge rather than channel continuity as a dilemma that needs to be resolved: Zachary Leader reads them as working 'against chronology [. . .] reiterating the same ineffable insight'; for Herbert Lindenberger, there is 'no real progression in *The Prelude*, but only restatements of the poet's efforts to transcend the confines of the temporal order.'[137] Jonathan Wordsworth sees the 'spots of time' as the key to solving the problem of original inspiration and the older, more mature writer. The poet, he says, ascends to 'the high places of adult imagination, then descends to learn in the "spots" how it is that vision has been preserved.'[138] In light of this chapter's earlier considerations of Wordsworth's attraction to more fragmentary forms of selfhood, this section argues that the 'spots of time' are not a means to ensure continuity. Rather, they take on a vital significance as a model of what selfhood signifies in the poet's mind, not just how it might start out.

Although the spots offer up a 'fructifying virtue' in earlier drafts of *The Prelude*, they come to harbour a 'renovating virtue'.[139] 'Renovating' now implies a process of continuation, a return to a previous state of affairs so that the poet can go on as before. Shelley would go on to use the verb in his description of 'the imperishable change | That renovates' the world in 'Queen Mab' (1813), where 'the generations of the earth' are lost in a continuing process of

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[135] Robert Langbaum, for instance, offers this view in his study of Wordsworthian 'epiphany' in terms such as 'lyrical stasis' and 'spatial form'; 'The Epiphanic Mode in Wordsworth and Modern Literature', *NLH* xiv (1983), pp. 335–58. More recently, Michael Wiley has focused on their 'complex placedness', suggesting that the phrase might not have been so jarring amid eighteenth–century discussions of spatio-temporal relations; 'Wordsworth's Spots of Time in Space and Time', *The Wordsworth Circle* xlvi (2015), pp. 52–8: 52–3.
Michael Wiley, 'Wordsworth's Spots of Time in Space and Time' (2015)

[136] Hugh Sykes Davies, *Wordsworth and the Worth of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 121.

[137] Zachary Leader, 'Wordsworth, Revision, and Personal Identity', *ELH* lx (1993), pp. 651–683: 666. Herbert Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's Prelude* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 188.

[138] Jonathan Wordsworth, 'Revision as Making: *The Prelude* and its Peers', in *Romantic Revisions*, pp. 18-42: 29. Leader puts forward a similar argument that Wordsworth's revisions and 'spots of time' work to the same end: 'asserting continuity, denying time'; 'Wordsworth, Revision, and Personal Identity', p. 666.

[139] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 209.

growth and decay.[140] But Wordsworth's description comes to resist this cyclical sense. If he often speaks of moments like the 'spots of time' as a kind of trance, then one fragment which finds what 'impressions' are 'left behind' after such moments, discovers that lastingness and continuity aren't one and the same:

> Nor in those hours
> Did we destroy [ ]
> Th' original impression of delight,
> But by such retrospect it was recalled
> To yet a second and a second life. . .[141]

To be recalled to 'yet a second and a second life' uproots the 'renovation' of his self from a sequential process, because the reiteration alerts us to the fragmentation and coexistence that occurs as the poet recalls an 'original impression'. If, as the last section argued, repetition is involved in the making of thought for Wordsworth, here it not only leaves the renovating effect of the 'spots' open-ended but allows these new impressions to coexist. Although the 'spots of time' do not seem to be driving the poet towards a single and continuous understanding of his self, he nevertheless writes that they enable us to look inward and learn 'perhaps | Something of what we are'.[142]

Lasting but disparate impressions are reminiscent of De Quincey's image of the palimpsest discussed in the first section of this chapter, where 'traces of successive handwriting, regularly effaced, as had been imagined, have, in the inverse order, been regularly called back.'[143] De Quincey himself offered an alternative name for the sort of experience Wordsworth attributes to the 'spots of time', which he called 'involutes'. The similarity between Wordsworth's 'spots' and De Quincey's 'involutes' has been pointed out by Davies.[144] Later Frederick Burwick observed that both phenomena embody 'undying impressions which connected themselves with the circumstances' of their origin, as De Quincey has it.[145] This similarity is as much of a case of causation as it is coincidence, with De Quincey writing that

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[140] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, eds. D. Reiman and N. Fraistat, 3 vols. (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), ii. 197.
[141] 'Fragments Written at Grasmere' (DC MS. 15), in *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 324.
[142] Ibid.
[143] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xv. 174.
[144] Davies, *Wordsworth and the Worth of Words*, pp. 121–185.
[145] Frederick Burwick, 'De Quincey's Shakespearean Involutes', *The Wordsworth Circle* xxix (1998), pp. 41–5: 42. See also De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xix. 23.

Wordsworth was the first to note the 'profound experience of the relations subsisting between ourselves and nature', which 'in childhood above all, we are sought'.[146]

Our apparent passivity stands in contrast to the sway of 'involutes' over our memory, but this dynamic is not straightforward. Wordsworth's first description of the 'spots of time', for example, describes 'Another scene which left a kindred power | Implanted *in* my mind'.[147] It's a small revision of the Lockean image of impressions being imprinted *on* the surface of the mind, but it signals a subtle complication of the way that residual impressions from the 'spots' become buried within a more active mind. Unlike De Quincey's sense that we are called upon by 'involutes', Wordsworth often goes in search of them. As I will go on to show, both the 'spots of time' and 'involutes' are part of the writer's ability to generate new combinations of thought and selfhood.

Involutes first appear in *Suspiria de Profundis*, where De Quincey summarises their chief characteristics of 'perplexed combinations':

> Let me pause for one instant in approaching a remembrance so affecting and revolutionary for my own mind, and one which (if any earthly remembrance) will survive for me in the hour of death [. . .] And, recollecting it, often I have been struck with the important truth, that far more of our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of *concrete* objects, pass to us as *involutes* (if I may coin that word) in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled, than ever reach us *directly*, and in their own abstract shapes.[148]

Specific references to 'thoughts and feelings' and '*concrete* objects' credit involutes with a more complex quality than the *OED*'s plainer definition of something 'entangled' or resembling a 'spiral' does.[149] De Quincey's prose takes on its own abstracted shape, as multiple qualifications interrupt the final clause away from its subject of 'deepest thoughts and feelings'. 'Their' becomes entangled with preceding, intermediary subjects. 'Perplexed combinations' also echoes the way Fancy tends to be described, as the last section observed, and so both 'involutes' and 'spots of time' might offer the most concentrated examples of a fanciful structuring of experience. We might ask, however, how exactly these compounds come to exist in practice? 'Pass to us' invites further reflection.

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[146] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xix. 68-9.
[147] Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 51. Emphasis added.
[148] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xv. 142. Emphasis is De Quincey's.
[149] See 'involute, *n.*' §1 and §2, *OED Online*.

Involutes, like the 'spots of time', become moments where the texture of a writer's life and memory thickens, separating them from life's ongoing activities. At times, Wordsworth seems keen to induce separation from the linear flow of time, as in the first spot of time that he composed:

> There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs,
> And Islands of Winander! Many a time
> At evening, when the earliest stars began
> To move along the edges of the hills,
> Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
> Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering Lake,
> And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
> Press'd closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth
> Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
> Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
> That they might answer him. – [150]

Several lines later, an unexpected change in tense from 'while he hung | Listening' to 'a gentle shock of mild surprize | Has carried' suggests that something of him survives in the 'solemn imagery' that has renewed life in Wordsworth's continual revisions of this spot of time. In a later revision of the text, the elegiac distance of the opening words is increasingly matched on the page with a distancing of another kind, as the poet introduces a typographical dash: '*There was a Boy; – ye knew him well Ye Cliffs*'.[151] This pattern is written into several other 'spots of time', including the skating scene, the poet's time at Lake Esthwaite, and his ascent of Snowdon.[152] These pauses on the brink of significant moments of recollection resemble the 'vacancy' between selves in Wordsworth's 'Two Consciousnesses' passage, or the 'pause for an instant' that interrupts De Quincey's recollections. Dashes, at these points, are closer to barriers than they are bridges to the past.

'Involutes' occupy a similarly uncertain position in time. When De Quincey makes a distinction between 'lower' and 'higher' forms of memory, more ordinary recollection, he says, involves 'moving through a succession of scenes sufficiently varied, that are not suffered to remain too long upon the eye'. Occasionally, narrative 'rises into a far higher key' where 'a

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[150] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 85.
[151] MS. D, *The Fourteen–Book Prelude*, p. 623.
[152] See '– And in that frosty season, when the sun | Was set [. . .] – All shod with steel | We hiss'd along the polish'd ice' in *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 26; '– Of that external scene which round me lay | Little, in this abstraction, did I see, | Remembered less' in *Fourteen–Book Prelude*, p. 83; and '– It was a closer, warm, breezeless summer night' in *Fourteen–Book Prelude*, p. 257.

severe abstraction takes place from all that could invest him with any alien interest'.[153] It's the latter category that 'involutes' seem to fit into, where they take on an atemporal quality, deracinated from the 'and then . . . and then' of narrative. Autobiographical narratives aren't the only place De Quincey discerns processes of involution; he also sees them in 'special passages scattered up and down literature'.[154] Accordingly, involutes provide a curious description of the 'spots of time', which are as crucial to Wordsworth's composition of his textual self as they are to recollections of his living self.

One manuscript draft of *The Prelude* shows the poet working out how to articulate the relationship between his self and these scattered events:

> not
> I single out [?] satisfied
> With general feelings ~~not con~~tent
> here & there have culled
> [~~?here~~]
> Some incidents to show from ~~whence~~
> ~~proceed~~
> My restorations[155]

Deleted pointers to '[?here]' and 'whence', and then to 'proceed' conceal an underlying emphasis on the poet's separation from the 'spots of time' as a question of distance not time. The 'spots', in Peter Larkin's words, are not necessarily 'failed sources of imaginative transformation' but could be read as 'inveterate sources of *non*-transformation in their refusal to be absorbed into any self-transcendence'.[156] As I have already argued, Wordsworth finds a way of describing the less transformative workings of perception in his poetry through Fancy. His treatment of this faculty rehabilitates the kind of disconnectedness that Fancy starts with but also preserves. Likewise, part of the point of the 'spots of time' is that they remain spots.

Separation is worked into even smaller patterns in each episode. Take these discrete images within one instance:

> forthwith I left the spot
> And, reascending the bare Common, saw

[153] Frederick W. Shilstone uses these categories in 'Autobiography as "Involute": De Quincey on the Therapies of Memory"', *South Atlantic Review* xlviii (1983), pp. 20–34: 21. See De Quincey's 1853 preface in *DQWorks*, xx. 12.
[154] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xix. 70.
[155] MS. W (DC. MS. 38), *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 303.
[156] Peter Larkin, 'Wordsworth's Maculate Exception: Achieving the "Spots of Time"', *The Wordsworth Circle* xli (2010), pp. 30–35: 32.

> A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
> The Beacon on the summit, and more near
> A Girl who bore a Pitcher on her head
> And seem'd with difficult steps to force her way
> Against the blowing wind.[157]

For a moment, the paratactic style that the poet was cultivating alongside *The Prelude* (in his *1802 Lyrics*) bleeds into one of the most significant passages about his past.[158] So even within this episode, the poet closes in on specific glimpses from his past that reach out for a kind of connection but never find themselves united. Even as these images unfold one by one on the page, Wordsworth's syntax allows them to compose a singular experience. Each image is grafted onto that which precedes it, as his 'more near' works like a camera lens adjusting its focus. Like the 'inventions' of Fancy, the association of images within the 'spots of time' becomes a balancing act of creation and discovery. In the same way, the writing of a poem is a coalition of design and dumb luck, as the writer revises patterns already present in language to fit his or her devices; or, indeed, working with no clear sense of his devices. So the 'spots of time' act as sources of non-transformation that the writer experiences, but they are also turned into models of how fissured memory might work.

As he dwells further on the subject, De Quincey concedes our partial agency in involutes, as he likens them to a book 'left casually open without design or consciousness' that arrests the attention of a passer-by: an encounter with the 'sudden angular deflexions of words, uttered or written, that had not been originally addressed to himself.' [159] When Wordsworth revises his work, he is returning to the words he wrote for a different self – they're not meant for him *now*. Past drafts of a text may not have a final design or a consciousness, but they can be 'recalled | To yet a second and second life' in the mind of the reader.

Later in the 'Beacon' spot, Wordsworth twice repeats the same images as before, each time with a variation as if to enact the process of involution De Quincey describes:

> the naked Pool,
> The Beacon on the lonely Eminence,

[157] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude*, ii. 210.
[158] See, for example, a sequence of lines from 'Written while resting on the bridge near the foot of Brother's Water': 'The cock is crowing, | The stream is flowing, | The small birds twitter, | The Lake doth glitter, | The green field sleeps in the sun'; *The Lyric Poems of 1802*, p. 172. Oliver Clarkson has seen in this technique Wordsworth 'bowing wilfully to things outside themselves: where Wordsworth's deliberate act of "failing to write convincingly about reality" becomes an authentic tribute to the reality of the beauty being perceived'; 'Wordsworth's Lyric Moments', *Essays in Criticism* lxv (2015), pp. 125-143: 126.
[159] De Quincey, *DQWorks*, xix. 69.

> The Woman, and her garments vex'd and toss'd
> By the strong wind. When in the blessed hours
> Of early love, alone, or with the Maid
> To whom were breathed my first fond vows, I roamed
> In daily presence of this very scene;
> Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
> And on the melancholy Beacon, fell
> The spirit, of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam[160]

Shifting from 'A naked pool' to 'the naked pool', Wordsworth makes his minor change in grammar account for a major shift in imaginative association, as the tactile images become increasingly entangled in the emotional recollection of the scene. Wordsworth's account of his own introspection, according to Sykes Davies, is a 'picture of an ebb and flow, of activity sinking to a passive trance-like state, which opens the way for a still more vivid perception'.[161] But this isn't exactly passivity. It's something closer to a receptivity that's become second nature to such an extent that the poet is no longer wholly aware of the mind's active role in generating these associations.

The 'spots of time' are a distorted reflection of traumatic experience. Aftershocks of trauma are a more recognisable way that incidents confined to the past still manage to breach the present, even as more recent experiences try to put them to rest. While De Quincey's term 'involute' demonstrates the blend of concrete and abstract experience during these periods, Davies notes that it doesn't entirely capture the 'quality of surprise and awe which often accompanies them'.[162] True, this aspect is absent from the original description of 'involutes' in *Confessions*. It is, however, a central feature in De Quincey's later essay 'The Vision of Sudden Death'. 'The situation here contemplated', he says, 'exposes a dreadful ulcer, lurking far down in the depth of human nature'.[163] In the MS of the following description, we are afforded a greater sense of how that 'situation' is implanted in the writer's mind by its unique blend of traumatic features:

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[160] Wordsworth, *Thirteen–Book Prelude,* ii. 210–11.
[161] Davies, *Wordsworth and the Worth of Words*, p. 129. Sybil S. Eakin takes this further, asserting that the 'spots of time' have an active agency which serve to reinforce the mind's passivity, and Wordsworth's repetition betrays the 'insufficiency of language to convey the haunting colours he remembers'; 'The Spots of Time in Early Versions of "The Prelude"', *Studies in Romanticism* xii (1973), pp. 389–405: 396–7.
[162] Davies, *Wordsworth and the Worth of Words,* pp. 134–5: 'It seems likely that the perception, of formation of an involute is never achieved by conscious choice, but that it comes of itself, at its own time, and often in the relaxed temper of mind and feeling which Wordsworth so often described as a kind of trance.' Peter Larkin has also suggested that the 'spots of time' constitute a 'a fault-line between trauma and aspiration'; 'Wordsworth's Maculate Exception: Achieving the Spots of Time', *The Wordsworth Circle* xli (2010), pp. 30-35: 30.
[163] De Quincey, *DQWorks,* xvi. 433.

> The ~~memorable~~ incident so memorable ^in itself by ~~?????~~ its features of horror,^ ~~to myself, and to myself and~~ ^and^ so scenical ^by its grouping^ for the eye, ~~and so in its circumstances so impassioned ^in its composition with other ongoing scenery,~~^ which furnished the test for this ~~almo~~ reverie upon *Sudden Death*, occurred ~~on~~ to myself ^in the dead of night^ ~~in the~~ as a solitary spectator, when ^seated^ ~~sitting~~ on the box of the ~~outside particular mail which took the name of~~ Manchester [. . .] ~~The circumstances~~ I find it necessary to relate the circumstances because they are ~~by accident~~ such as could not have occurred ^unless^ under a ~~????~~ singular combination~~s~~ of accidents. – [164]

Over the paragraph break, 'situation' has become a more remote 'incident', and it gains its memorability from its features of 'horror' and 'a singular combination of accidents'. Cathy Caruth has written incisively about this 'peculiar, temporal structure, of historical experience' that characterises trauma, something which is 'fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time.'[165] What's surprising about Wordsworth's attitude to the 'spots of time' as a kind of trauma is that the traumatic, and sometimes thrilling, nature of these moments seems to enhance his sense of self.

While Lisa Starks-Estes notes that 'the term trauma has ancient roots, deriving from the Greek word for both a wound and its cure', no evidence in fact exists for it being a 'cure'.[166] Indeed, Adam Phillips pays careful attention to the condition of composure after traumatic or unsettling experience, as something that is always 'after the fact': it is 'a paradoxical form of self-cure for the experience of traumatic excitement.'[167] This paradoxical 'self-cure' gets closer to the way that the 'spots of time' work. Instead of changing past selves for the better by establishing a continuity with a more learned self, Wordsworth's spots preserve this state of detachment. Take, for example, how he responds to his childhood trauma of seeing the drowned man in *The Prelude*'s fifth book:

> Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross
> One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears,
> Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake.
> Twilight was coming on; yet through the gloom,

[164] MS. VSD F, transcribed in *DQWorks*, xvi. 740-1. I have recreated the deletion signified by the editor's angle brackets, used caret marks (rather than arrows) to show insertions, and question marks to denote illegible characters.
[165] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 8.
[166] Lisa Starks-Estes, *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 18.
[167] Adam Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored: Psychoanalytic Essays on the Unexamined Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 42.

> Appeared distinctly on the opposite Shore
> A heap of garments; left, as I suppos'd,
> By one who there was bathing: long I watch'd. . .
> At length, the dead Man, 'mid that beauteous scene
> Of trees, and hills, and water, bolt upright
> Rose with his ghastly face; a spectre-shape
> Of terror even! and yet no vulgar fear,
> Young as I was, a Child not nine years old,
> Possess'd me; for my inner eye had seen
> Such sights before. . .[168]

Geography puts the young writer at a remove from the 'terror' he perceives 'on the opposite Shore'. But his surroundings also reflect the detachment of his psychological topography from his current experience. Wordsworth had originally written 'I saw distinctly on the opposite Shore', before replacing the first-person verb with 'Appeared', preserving the non-volitional characteristic central to the 'spots of time'. They are not subsumed into a rationalised order of the self's experiences across time. There is a sense, furthermore, that this is far from a straightforwardly relived experience, as the speaker notes toward the end of the passage 'my inner eye had seen | Such sights before'. Indeed, the poet of *this Prelude* had seen these sights before in his two-book version of the poem just before he notes the existence of the spots of time. This incident, he recalls, 'impressed my mind | With images, to which in following years | Far other feelings were attached', and like 'their archetypes, know no decay.'[169] Returning to this experience through textual revision, the poet is able to prepare himself to return to these distinct moments in his past and use them to position his present experience.

Revision, then, here takes on a therapeutic function. Freud writes of his 'hysterical patients' that their 'symptoms are residues and mnemic symbols of particular (traumatic) experiences. [. . .] Not only do they remember painful experiences of the remote past, but they still cling to them emotionally; they cannot get free of the past and for its sake they neglect what is real and immediate.'[170] Are those parentheses a way of mimetically registering how certain events are bracketed off from the rest of experience? Or do they instead embody a kind of repression in language? Indeed, 'residues' and 'mnemic symbols' sound a lot like Wordsworth's own description of repetition. Trauma is not the same as a tautology of certain

[168] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ii. 87.
[169] Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 50.
[170] Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. in *The Standard Edition of the Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), xi. 16-17.

experiences; it depicts certain moments as '*things*, active and efficient', as the poet has it in his note to 'The Thorn'.[171]

Wordsworth's ascent of Mount Snowdon is often recognised as the climax of *The Prelude*: the endpoint of the poem's imaginative vision, when the poet declares that he has recognised 'the Imagination of the whole!'[172] And yet the manuscript version of these lines tells a different story. Paste-overs in the manuscript cover up the last, full draft of the fourteen-book text, as if to turn the manuscript into a self-conscious example of the palimpsest model I discussed earlier, where the poet's mind pulls in different directions:

> *. . . when the Marvel*
> *And three chance human Wanderers, ~~it appeared~~,*
> *~~While~~ ~~Had passed away to my thoughts it shewed~~*
> *~~Upon the lonely mountain top reviewed~~*
> *Was seen no more it offered to my thoughts*
> *~~To silent thought, the image of a mind~~*
> *The perfect image of a mighty mind*
>
> (MS. D, *Fourteen-Book Prelude*, p. 1123)

> *. . . when the marvel*
> *Was seen no more, it offered to my thoughts*
> *The type of image of a mighty mind,*
> *upo*
> *T*
> *~~A mind~~ that feeds upon infinity, that broods*
> Over
> *~~Broods oer~~ the dark abyss intent to hear*
> *Its voices issuing forth to silent light*
> In one continuous stream a mind
> *~~A mind instinct with faculties~~ sustained*
> *By recognitions of a transcendant power*
> conducting to
> *In sense ~~exalted by~~ ideal form*
>
> (MS. D, Paste-overs)

Even as the creation of the 'mind' starts to feel parabolic, it does not, like the parallel creation of the poem itself, finally embody the 'Imagination of the whole'. The earlier draft shows how Wordsworth encounters 'the image of a mind', which is supplanted by 'The perfect image of a

[171] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 351.
[172] Wordsworth, *Fourteen–Book Prelude*, p. 1123.

mighty mind', and interestingly then by 'The type of image of a mighty mind'. Each 'image' of the mind, like each revision of the poem, becomes an individual expression of a kind of image or perhaps an 'anticipation *of*' the mind.[173] The same is true of the drafts of the poem, which like the poet's returns to the 'spots of time', enact revisions of a type of experience rather than revisitings of the same experience. That sense of 'anticipation', not resolution, is carried forward in the revision of the last lines above, where 'sense' is not 'exalted by' ideal form: it stays 'conducting to' it'.

If these spots feel as if they're channelling, or being channelled towards, a certain sense of selfhood, they never quite get there. Two lines that never made it into any developed version of *The Prelude*, which envisage 'islands in the unnavigable depth | Of our departed time –', might as well be describing these episodes.[174] The point is that the 'spots of time' remain spots, 'islands' in the 'unnavigable depth' of experience. They make Wordsworth confront, and remind him of, the self-sabotage intrinsic to experience and poetry; each pushes the narrative of his life towards the alienable whenever he comes to revise it. They are aspirational as much as inspirational, and so confirm Wordsworth's unshakeable attraction to a self that he can never quite get to the bottom of.

[173] See 'type, *n.*', §1b, *OED Online*.
[174] Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1798–1799*, p. 81.

Tennyson's Changeability

A word like 'still' is anything but immobile in Tennyson's hands. In 'The Two Voices' alone, the poet uses the word eleven times to register a range of senses from being frozen in time ('in her still place') to unfulfilled ambitions ('seem to find, but still to seek'). When the speaker's attention turns to what endures after his own life has ended, he uses the word pointedly to illustrate how 'men, through novel spheres of thought | Still moving after truth long sought, | Will learn new things when I am not.'[1] These lines might offer a consolation to a poet whose own 'moving after truth long sought', cut short in his personal life, could be prolonged by the continued interactions of 'spheres of thought' in his imaginative life. Across his writing, Tennyson's continual returns to the word 'still' concentrate a latent pattern of uncertainty over questions such as this. When he insisted after Arthur Hallam's death that 'still life must be fought out to the end', the word is carefully poised between a sense of resilience and quiet resignation about the possibility that his loss might be like the 'anguish' of 'The Two Voices' speaker: 'fixed and frozen to permanence'.[2]

One impulse behind revision is to keep a living relationship with one's work. In other words, a poet can revise in order to investigate that peculiar kind of stillness in his own writing in the hope that his voice, while fixed in text, is far from lifeless. The second manuscript of 'The Two Voices' at Trinity College shows Tennyson returning to the poem during its later stages of composition in order to check whether his voice has those qualities of enduring stillness described in the poem and has not succumbed to *Maud*'s 'stiller world of the dead':[3]

> thro'
> I murmured '~~on~~ the space between
> shooting beams
> New knowledge, ~~dropping dew~~ serene
> curve new boughs
> Might ~~feed fresh shoots~~ of haler green.
>
> The highest-mounted mind' he said
> Still views the sacred morning spread
> The silent summit overhead.[4]

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[1] Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. C. Ricks, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1987), i. 584, 576, 574 (*TP* hereafter).
[2] Tennyson, quoted in James Knowles, 'Aspects of Tennyson', *The Nineteenth Century* xxxiii (1893), pp. 164-188: 182; *TP*, i. 582.
[3] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 580.
[4] Tennyson, 'Notebook XXX', Cambridge, Trinity College O.15.22, fol. 10v.

Here, 'still' has a force of both lastingness and fragility, as it injects temporality into the act of viewing and so counterbalances an eternality that might be too easily won. The idea of novel proliferation is curbed, too, because Tennyson's emendation 'curve new boughs' no longer envisages disparate and distinct 'fresh shoots' but a sustained, if slightly altered, trajectory. Like Wordsworth's architectural analogue of *The Prelude* as an 'ante-chapel' to the 'body of a gothic Church', the original tree of Tennyson's poem might be altered through revision, but not so much as to be transformed into something wholly different.[5] This model of revision, which enables a writer to consolidate pieces of his textual self across time, is highly Wordsworthian in this respect. We might note, however, that the first stanza above was excised from future versions of the poem, after surviving the Heath and Trinity manuscripts. Its promises of continuity are confounded by its own compositional history.

Tennyson's discussion of nature's patterns of renewal also has a silent debt to Lucretius. Two lines he marked in his copy of *De Rerum Natura* reveal his careful study of existing explorations in poetry of how assumptions over death might be resisted through natural models of continuation: *unde neque avelli quidquam, nec diminui iam, | concedit natura, reservans semina rebus*.[6] For Lucretius, it's the 'everlasting singleness' (*æterna . . . simplicitate*) of nature's elements, not their 'combined synthesis' (*conventu conciliate*), that enables rejuvenation.[7] Here, promises of continued life do not result from drawing things together but scattering them. Tennyson's revisions to 'The Two Voices' find common ground with this dynamic, and bring into focus how textual renewal can be an ambiguous process of doing things again or doing things differently. How these demands of constancy and change might be reconciled through revision is pursued in this chapter. Textual revision not only offers Tennyson a way of calibrating different kinds of change and development in his writing: it is a mode of thinking intimately tied to his formal and imaginative sympathy with continuity-through-change.

My discussion is crucially informed by Tennyson's manuscripts and notebooks held at Trinity College, Cambridge, in particular the drafts of *In Memoriam* (O.15.13 and O.15.17) as well as the holdings of the Lincolnshire Archives (TRC/M/1). These resources, which put us

[5] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, eds. S. Bushell, J. A. Butler, and M. C. Jaye (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 38.
[6] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ed. G. Wakefield (London: Rodwell and Martin, 1821), i. ll. 614-615 (Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, TRC/AT/1437): 'From these [distinct elements] nature does not allow anything anymore to be torn away nor broken down, retaining them as the seeds for things.' Translation is my own.
[7] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, i. ll. 612-613.

directly in contact with Tennyson's creative process, allow us to see a more fraught and complex relationship with change in his writing that's buried or finessed in the published editions of his work. I seek to build, therefore, on scholarship that has seen revisionism as central to both the poet's thinking and critical accounts of his work. Michael J. Sullivan has pointed out that his 'annotations of his books confirm that this active process of reading and revision was a natural part of the way the poet scanned.'[8] In counter to Jerome McGann's insistence that a study of Tennyson must be grounded in the 'field of historical particulars', Robert Douglas-Fairhurst has argued that these 'particulars' have a more active life in the poet's 'private histories of composition', as his poems 'emerge from the scattered patchwork of his notebook drafts in a process of creative self-interpretation'.[9]

The rest of this introductory section outlines how Tennyson's editing and scholarly accounts of his revisions have been overshadowed by an emphasis on orderly continuity. Then in the first section of this chapter, I consider a range of moments of embattled change in Tennyson's earlier poems, which reveal the poet's vigilance against teleological kinds of progress and change. Following this, I focus on *In Memoriam*, arguing that the poem's revisions are tangled up with the process of mourning the poet is working through. Throughout this poem, I suggest that revision takes on a vital role of imaginative repair that binds together what Tennyson misses in his personal experience with what he has missed in his imaginative life.

Questions of renewal often shape inquiries into textual revision. In her study *The Work of Revision*, Hannah Sullivan argues that modernist writers turned to revision as a way to '*make it new* through large-scale transformations'. To see revision as a 'major method of composition', she continues, was for modernists to 'overcome the nineteenth-century preference for writing that was, or at least seemed to be, spontaneous'.[10] I have already examined how this alleged preference for the 'spontaneous' is a misrepresentation. We might also query what it means to 'make it new', which has tended to be read as a form of complete

[8] Michael J. Sullivan, 'Tennyson and *The Golden Treasury*', *Essays in Criticism* lxvi (2016), pp. 431-443: 432.
[9] Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (1985; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 183; Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 190. In the same vein, Herbert F. Tucker has written that 'the notebooks repeatedly show Tennyson zeroing in, not upon objective preferment within the corridors of power, but upon subjective preference within the mind. [. . .] [A]s he shapes speech patterns into finer-tuned drafts [he] seeks out occasions for a character's critical self-editing'; 'Better Yet: Tennyson's Poetic Revisionism in the Harvard Manuscripts', *Poetry in the Making: Creativity and Composition in Victorian Poetic Drafts*, ed. D. Tyler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 55-80: 67.
[10] Hannah Sullivan, *The Work of Revision* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 3.

reinvention, as Sullivan's description of 'large-scale transformations' implies. What about small-scale transformations, which equally focus our attention on a poet's careful adjustments and evolving patterns on thought? This form of revisionism recalibrates what it means to 'make it new' as a process of burnishing what is already there – a kind of textual reupholstering. This model of revision, furthermore, speaks more convincingly to Tennyson's attraction to 'patient progress', as Hallam Tennyson recalled, a quality he valued in nature's 'steadfastness, patient progress and hopefulness'.[11] Yet, he was also 'occasionally much troubled with the intellectual problem of apparent profusion and waste of life' in the natural world.[12] Not fixed in print, his writing might similarly be a symptom of this world of change. It's through revision, I want to suggest, that the poet is able to take his wariness of changeability and turn it into a capability.

How Tennyson talked about his own process of composition has steered the subsequent editing of his poems. He felt satisfaction at the fact that 'very often what is published as the latest edition has been the original version in his first manuscript' and was dismayed by the 'modern habit' in certain editions 'of giving every various reading along with texts'.[13] Thinking about his own treatment, his son remembers him asking, '"Why do they treasure the rubbish I shot from my full-finish'd cantos? || νήπιοι οὐδὲ ἴσασιν ὅσῳ πλέον ἥμισυ παντός."'[14] The Greek tag comes from Hesiod's *Works and Days*, meaning 'Fools, they do not know how much more the half is than the whole'.[15] The allusion is telling, and hints at the growth of a poem not in a Romantic sense but as an uneven process of abandonment and expansion. 'Half-' compounds recur across *In Memoriam*, showing this idea on a broader scale in the poems themselves: his words 'half reveal | And half conceal'; 'half my life I leave behind', he says at one point; and, the poet remains 'the divided half of such | A friendship as had mastered Time'.[16] These compounds return as a grammatical model for his hopes and fears of retaining not only certain ideas but also certain poems across time.

Yet, Tennyson's insistence on a direct line of transmission between his drafts and the published version of his poems has had a lasting effect. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, John Walters claimed the poet had an 'intuitive perception of his destiny' as he 'chose

[11] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols. (1897; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), i. 312.
[12] Ibid., i. 313.
[13] Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, i. 118.
[14] Tennyson, quoted in *Memoir*, i. 118.
[15] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, in *Hesiod*, ed. G. W. Most, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 89. Translation is from this edition.
[16] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 374, 400.

and lived his poet-life, never swerving from his course, never diverting his glance from the goal, far-off, towards which he journeyed'. 'As his work had been conceived,' Walters says, 'so had it been wrought', and the 'end and purpose he was designed to serve were fully recognised'.[17] The proposed symmetry between an idealised conception and formation of Tennyson's poems is supported by the idealised editing of them. The most authoritative edition of Tennyson's work remains the Longman *Poems of Tennyson*, originally published in 1969 and later revised in light of the lifted interdiction on the Trinity manuscripts. It is primarily modelled on the *Eversley* (1907-8) edition of his writing, edited by Hallam Tennyson, referring to the one-volume *Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (1894) to include the poet's late revisions.

The general editor states that the Longman series aims to refocus editorial emphasis from 'textual refinements' to the '*meaning* of the various texts in their separate contexts.'[18] This is a useful methodology in that it allows us to see the more literary effects of revisions as they pertain to Tennyson's individual poems. That said, the edition prints a reading text of Tennyson's final revisions, and only a selection of variants for the majority of the poems (some, like *In Memoriam* or 'Ulysses', receive a fuller treatment). In contrast to the Cornell edition of Wordsworth, the printing of Tennyson's 'final' texts obscures the more fraught imaginative development of his poems. Indeed, their imaginative history does not necessarily mirror the linear movement of chronological time. Part of the 'meaning' of Tennyson's revisions, furthermore, is not the different contexts his words settle into, but the ongoing process of their creation. As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, revision can be something that takes place within drafts, not only between each 'separate' version of a text, and it's here that Tennyson's investigation of change is most at stake.

Tennyson's poems are often fascinated by what it means to change and toward what end change may or may not move us. The speaker of 'Mariana' describes how 'From the dark fen the oxen's low | Came to her: without hope of change', making transformation a thwarted aspiration, while in 'Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind', the poet notes, 'If so be that from doubt at length, | Truth may stand forth unmoved of change | An image with profulgent brows'.[19] Here, truth is a constant set against the fluctuations of doubt which might unsettle it. Tennyson would adapt the third line to 'A perfect Idol with profulgent brows' for 'A Fragment', and so shows how the compositional progress of his poems might be out of step

[17] John Cuming Walters, *Tennyson: Poet, Philosopher, Idealist; Studies of the Life, Work, and Teaching of the Poet Laureate* (England: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & co., 1893), p. 3.
[18] F. W. Bateson, 'Note by the General Editor', *TP*, I. xi. Emphasis in original.
[19] Tennyson, *TP*, i. 207-8, 221.

with the 'perfect' fixity they can aspire to.[20] These moments contribute to a wider anxiety in Tennyson's poetry over change as a cause of revitalisation or decline – an anxiety which he also works through at the level of his style. His attachment to *abba* arrangements, especially in stanzas of this kind, features in his early political poems and would later sustain his famous elegy *In Memoriam*.[21] The shape of the stanza itself provides a template for the continuity-through-change he also seeks through revision. This chapter aims, therefore, to demonstrate how the self-revisions of Tennyson's verse are imaginatively attuned to other kinds of progress that might not always be moving at the same pace.

The compositional phases of the poet's work have drawn close scrutiny from critics. Earlier approaches tended to linger on the side of textual criticism, refraining from more expansive literary interpretations. Joseph Sendrey, for example, charts the composition of *In Memoriam* in Tennyson's 'butcher books', as he pieced together individual sections of the poem. This helpfully exposes, however, how Tennyson's compositional process, far from resembling Romantic processes of organic inspiration, was subject to careful labour and experimentation.[22] Christopher Ricks has put forward the influential thesis that Tennyson's 'habit of self-borrowing' helped him to '"stabilize his mind"', offering him reassurance of the 'surviving, and still living, evidences of his powers'. 'To revise a published poem', he continues, 'was to show that the past was not done with, irrevocable, immutable.' In recontextualising his own words and phrases, Tennyson 'releases all the energies of the lines' that are held in reserve.[23] His poems, in this respect, comprise an ever-expanding signature of creation. This model of Tennyson's revisions, I suggest, is not sufficient to account for the more unpredictable kinds of textual change in his work, where a letting go of past forms is a necessary part of his process.

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[20] Tennyson, *TP*, i. 314.

[21] Michael Mason has pointed out that 'Tennyson's decision, whenever it occurred, to reserve the special ABBA stanza for all poems on Hallam's death, and only those poems, must have followed on some kind of plan to assemble these as a group'; 'The Timing of *In Memoriam*', *Studies in Tennyson*, ed. H. Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 155-168: 160.

[22] Joseph Sendry. 'Tennyson's "Butcher's Books" as Aids to Composition', *Victorian Poetry* xi (1973), pp. 55-59. See also Ralph W. Rader's analysis of the historical pressures on the development of *Maud*; 'The Composition of Tennyson's "Maud"', *Modern Philology* lix (1962), pp. 265-269.

[23] Christopher Ricks, 'Tennyson's Methods of Composition', *Proceedings of the British Academy* lii (1966), pp. 209-230: 228, 218. The lasting influence of this analysis is identifiable in Sally Bushell's suggestion that Tennyson's 'going out from the self and a return to it [is] mediated by different forms of self-translation'. This notion is particularly important for *Idylls of the King*, in which 'Enid's wheel [. . .] is capable of turning in ever wider circles of understanding and meaning in a way that binds together compositional and literary-critical interpretation'; Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 117, p. 167.

A focus on the continuity of the self characterises later assessments of Tennyson's revisions. Zachary Leader questions whether revision is for Tennyson 'an expression of a new self' or an ineffectual form of change that leaves the speaker of 'Tithonus' in the same state of grief, almost thirty years after the poem's original composition.[24] Regardless of the answer, Leader asserts that 'Tennyson's valuing of a unified and continuous self is clear.' Yet, a self might be continuous but not coherent. 'In days far-off,' the speaker of 'Tithonus' asks, 'and with what other eyes | I used to watch – if I be he that watched – | The lucid outline forming round thee.'[25] 'If I be he that watched' could work as an apt summary of *The Prelude*, and concentrates similar doubts about what might be retained, or released, of a former self or intuition across time.

The poem's association with Wordsworth is compounded in its later alterations as Tennyson expanded 'Tithon' into 'Tithonus'. Its opening, 'Ay me! ay me! the woods decay and fall' undergoes a revision to 'The woods decay, the woods decay and fall' in 'Tithonus', and so alludes more clearly to *The Prelude*'s 'immeasurable height | Of woods decaying, never to be decayed'.[26] 'Decay' becomes woven more firmly into the hesitant progress of the line, as if corrosion's processes are not perfectly balanced by a redemptive renewal. Tennyson's line-ending that severs 'other eyes' from 'I' amounts to a local testing of the possibility that revision, like a poem's line-endings, might be charged with recognising such fissures and losing our way. At the same time, revision offers a way of exposing the granular surface of both textual composition and the various patterns of imaginative development in Tennyson's writing.

[24] Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 6.
[25] Tennyson, *TP*, i. 611.
[26] Tennyson, *TP*, i. 620; ii. 607. For the allusion to Wordsworth, see *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 131.

Still and at Present in Progress

Tennyson's early poems often feature moments of embattled development. Commonly taken as a commentary on contemporary scientific progress, 'Locksley Hall' (1842) declares, 'Forward, forward let us range, | Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change'.[27] Trochaic rhythms in the first line underpin a precipitant momentum, one which is checked by the rhyme between 'range' and 'change'. 'Forward, forward' stutters in its repetition, producing a curiously retarding movement in the verse, but finds enough tread to sustain its exhortation. 'Range' comes to sound both like a spectrum of possibilities but also a tether to a course of action. The broader metaphor of inevitability implied by the 'ringing grooves' reverberates against the revolutions of the earth.

The image of the train, erroneously described, also serves as a handy metaphor for the movement of verse; and a later speaker in 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After' would describe how the 'course of Time will swerve, | Crook and *turn* upon itself in many a backward streaming curve'.[28] The latter draws out the sense of turning implicit in his earlier work, playing upon the etymology of verse in the Latin *vertere*: "to turn", "change", or "alter". Revision, he suggests, might find a correlative in his line-endings which carry a line of thought up to the point it teeters on the point of transformation, before turning back into itself, incorporating and flattening out internal discontinuities. Tennyson displays a remarkable self-consciousness not only of how this self-revising capacity is characteristic of his own verse, but a quality of poetry more generally.

'Range' and 'change' also occur as a rhyming pair in the early poem 'To –'. This poem was published in the *1832* poems, introducing 'The Palace of Art', and was reissued in 1842 with relatively few changes – one of the few short poems that wasn't suppressed. In this poem, the speaker notes, 'When from change to change [. . .] Thy thought did scale a purer range'. Tennyson was fond of such locutions: a former line of Section XXX in *In Memoriam* ran 'Burning up from change to change',[29] and in a cut stanza from 'The Palace of Art' we find the pattern brought into contact with a process of improvement through development:

> 'From change to change four times within the womb
> The brain is moulded,' she began,

[27] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 130.
[28] Tennyson, *TP*, iii. 158 (my emphasis).
[29] Tennyson, 'Notebook X', Cambridge, Trinity College O.15.17, fol. 6v.

> ‘So through all phases of all thought I come
> Into the perfect man.’ (*TP*, i. 446)

Prepositions are more important than verbs for the distribution of images here. Although the first line lacks a verb, ‘change to change’ gains an active motion as a result of the temporal description that immediately follows it. Listening closely to the two lines, ‘From’ exerts a causal force as much as a deictic one; in other words, ‘*Because of* change to change the brain is moulded’. That prepositional phrase becomes a momentous focus in its own right and not simply a series of passing stages that leads to a state of completion. The duration between *from* and *to* further gestures to what happens in between each settled change – the event of the moulding taking place. ‘The Palace of Art’ invests in the midst of change as much as, if not more than, each change itself.

Tennyson often returned to ‘from x to y’ fragments of grammar when trying to work through gradualist ideas. Such grammatical patterns are one of the ways he is able to ‘set descriptions of change against reassuring evidence of his own constancy’.[30] As I suggested in the introduction, the changing seasons afforded the poet one model of a natural pattern revising itself in their patterns of ‘patient progress’. Not only do they carry out the work of ‘patient progress’ but capture something of the way that progress for Tennyson does not conform with a conventional progress narrative. Rather, he reimagines it as something closer to the original sense of ‘progress’ in *progredere*: a “going forth”.

‘All things are evolved’, Tennyson once remarked.[31] Even in his early poems, he sought a language that might accommodate such a pronouncement. ‘Nothing will Die’ was twinned with ‘All Things will Die’. Both were published in 1830, at which time a review in *The Spectator* (21 Aug.) highlighted their companionship as ‘a pair of little metaphysical pieces’.[32] ‘Nothing will Die’ presents a world whose vitality remains despite its continual fluctuation:

> The world was never made;
> It will change, but it will not fade.
> So let the wind range;
> For even and morn

[30] Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, ‘Tennyson’, *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. M. O’Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 596-616: 601.
[31] Quoted in *TP*, i. 247.
[32] Quoted in in E. F. Shannon, *Tennyson and the Reviewers: A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon his Poetry* (1952; repr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 4.

Ever will be
Thro' eternity.
Nothing was born;
Nothing will die;
All things will change. (*TP*, i. 248)

The second poem ends not in a sense that nothing will fade, but in entropy: 'All things were born. Ye will come never more, | For all things must die'.[33] And yet, it is the lengthier counter-part: a forty-nine line response to the thirty-eight lines of 'Nothing will Die'. It reveals not a will in decline but one which is reinvigorated in the face of adversity. Is the wavering lineation in the first poem a sign of a wavering mind, or does it confirm the return from a depleted 'eternity' to a replenished present? This journey back is intricately arranged around a chiastic, *abccba* rhyme scheme – an extended version of the stanza Tennyson would come to adopt for *In Memoriam*. Poetry, like the poem's internal echoes, seems stretched to its limits in negotiating between the antithetical demands of mutability and constancy.

'Fade' and 'change' echo Ariel's song from *The Tempest*, a passage wherein 'sea-change' concerns metamorphosis as well as Ferdinand's father's death at sea: 'Nothing of him that doth fade | But doth suffer a sea-change | Into something rich, and strange'.[34] Tennyson's poem both draws out and drowns out this echo, just as it answers back to 'All Things will Die'. This blend of continuity and change with which he invests allusion as a form of revision exposes a worry that a poem might fade or drown out another in over-extending itself; it might lose its integrity in reaching out from one text to the next.

Tennyson's curiosity in the nature of change was especially prompted by and spoke back to contemporary theories of geological evolution. He had read Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* toward the end of 1836.[35] Though Lyell's preferred term in the *Principles* is 'revolutions', it is in his work that the *OED* records the first appearance of the word 'evolution' as the 'accumulation of changes over successive generations'.[36] Later, in 1844, Tennyson became aware of Robert Chambers, remarking that his *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* contained 'many speculations with which I have been familiar for years, and on which

[33] Tennyson, *TP*, i. 250.
[34] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, eds. H. Bloom and B. Raffel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), I. ii. 401-3.
[35] To Richard Milnes, 1 Nov. 1836, *Letters*, i. 145: 'Truly we are getting deep into the great Geological winter and inasmuch as a round belly is better than a white head it were wished that we might wear down at the pole and grow up at the equator, that is, I would that our waste were greater at the pole and that we had an eye to it at the equator – (See Lyell Pr. Geol.)'
[36] See 'evolution, *n.*', §8a, *OED*.

I have written more than one poem'.[37] Accordingly, despite the lack of a direct influence on Tennyson's writing, the poet discerns a conceptual affinity between his poetry and the discussion it anticipated. Chambers sees the 'first idea which all this impresses upon us' when observing the development from a more unified into a more developed body is that 'the formation of bodies in space is *still and at present in progress*.'[38] 'Still' entertains a double sense here, suggesting both steadfastness as well as an act of progressing. To be *still and at present* in progress is an apt description of the poet's reimagining of how revision might work in experience and in poetry.

To a 'mind unconscious' of the 'intermediate links' in the chain of mutation, Lyell writes, 'the passage from one state of things to another must appear so violent': 'The imagination is as much perplexed by such errors as to time'.[39] Tennyson's poetry is shot through with considerations of 'intermediate links'. For such a condensed cluster of lines, the use of the semi-colon in 'Nothing will Die' is remarkably prolific. It is not only an in-between form of punctuation in the way that all punctuation works by steering between one clause or sentence and the next, but also because it stands halfway between a full-stop and a comma – halfway between drawing a breath and offering a pause for thought. It provides a connective tool that alerts us to the permeation of lines across their endings. These lines, end-stopped though they are, extend their strands of thought with a pendent expectation that they will be supplemented and reconsidered by a future addition.

Tennyson's habit of extending poems beyond their own remit in his earlier work is not isolated to these two examples. Given how 'Locksley Hall', for instance, ends with a 'a long farewell to Locksley Hall!', it's curious that the poet feels the need to return to the scene in 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After'.[40] Farewell is not the same as a goodbye; and the 'long' which qualifies it implies a distant, but anticipated, finiteness of this departure. Even at the time of writing the first 'Locksley Hall', there is a covert expectation that this is a site to which another poem will return. In relation to 'Tithonus', Philip Horne writes that the poet's doubt over the integrity of his authorial self over time, which 'threatens both the success and the legitimacy of all attempts at revision' is 'turned to artistic advantage in the revision of a

[37] To Edward Moxon, 15 Nov. 1844, in *Letters*, i. 230.
[38] Robert Chambers, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (New York: Wily and Putnam, 1845), p. 21 (Chambers's italics).
[39] Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, ed. J. A. Secord (1830-33; repr. London: Penguin, 1997), p. 97.
[40] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 130.

memory of uncannily distant days'.[41] Indeed, a 'long farewell' might be one way of describing Tennyson's characteristic way of going about things, as he navigates between different texts in both literary and compositional terms.

Elsewhere we find the poet picking up where his own voice left off: the two poems at the start of this section, 'Nothing Will Die' and 'All Things will Die', are an obvious example; and his later collection *Maud and Other Poems* (1855) begins with the eponymous poem, which ends 'I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned', and closes with another model of designated fate – a reprint of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'.[42] Just as 'Locksley Hall' sets its earlier invocations of myth and history (the 'great Orion sloping slowly to the West') against split-second views of 'lightnings', 'blast', and 'thunderbolt', so Tennyson's examination of how poems might supplement each other illustrates how permanence might break down into disparate moments.[43] His doubts over revision are absorbed into his poems' content, turning them into a mark of integrity where compositional and thematic concerns are mutually informing.

In Memoriam alone wasn't capable of dealing with the poet's grief. A month after Hallam's death, in September 1833, Tennyson started writing both 'Ulysses' and *In Memoriam*. Indeed, the two poems were closely connected in the poet's mind:

> There is more about myself in *Ulysses*, which was written under the sense of loss and all that had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end. It was more written with the feeling of his loss upon me than many poems in *In Memoriam*.[44]

His insistence on overcoming 'to the end', a haunting sense of 'all that had gone by', and 'feelings of loss' supply the uncanny power of both poems. His account opens and closes with comparisons between the two poems and the personal grief from which they arose. Matthew Bevis sees 'still life' as an 'apt ambiguity for a comment on a poem like "Ulysses", for it unwittingly voices a need for stillness even as it speaks of a desire for movement'.[45] A kind of 'still life' is found in the original compositional states of 'Ulysses' and *In Memoriam*. The two

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[41] Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 34.
[42] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 584.
[43] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 120, 130.
[44] Tennyson, quoted in Knowles, 'Aspects of Tennyson', p. 182. Qualifying Tennyson's claim, E. J. Chiasson cautions against seeing Ulysses as the poet's surrogate and that the poet 'has given us his views on the general question of what an adequate pursuit of life means'; 'Tennyson's "Ulysses" – A Re-Interpretation', *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*, ed. J. Killham (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 164-174: 166.
[45] Matthew Bevis, *The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 172.

poems are not only conceptually intertwined; they are genetically conjoined. For they share a material origin. Harvard's 'Notebook 16' contains the earliest draft of 'Ulysses', and just a few pages later one finds the earliest composed lines of *In Memoriam*.[46] Just as these first lines would later form section IX of *In Memoriam*, the passage concerning Telemachus – written after the initial version of the poem's ending – would later be integrated into the centre of 'Ulysses'. As each poem starts to take shape on the page, their textual condition offers up a mobility between each text where rearrangement and recombination provide Tennyson with opportunities to repattern his textual life.

Poems frequently drift in and out of each other across Tennyson's notebooks. During the process of revision, allowing textual fragments to slip between poems and become part of another pattern creates a sense that poetic form is not only compositionally porous, but imaginatively so too. Dissolving the margins between one poem and the next turns individual poems from isolated moments of embodiment, born from the poet's labour, into pauses in the poet's extending body of work. The poet once described 'every human being' as a 'vanful of human beings, of those who have gone before him, and of those who form part of his life.'[47] In light of this view of unified identity, Tennyson's notebooks reflect something of family resemblances. Not only do poems inherit particular characteristics from their forebears, they are also involved in a striking out of their own. While the individual jottings of notebooks may affirm the spontaneity of thought-making, these thoughts trigger grander strands of contemplation that do not necessarily conform with a single ancestry of cognitive processes. They illustrate a mind divided in its attention and concentration.

Tennyson's 'Ulysses' harks back to heroic models of the divided self. The 'classics possess intrinsic qualities that endure,' as Frank Kermode writes, 'but possess also an openness to accommodation which keeps them alive under endlessly varying dispositions'.[48] In this respect, the poet's return to his classical forebears makes them a vital resource for expressing ideas of continuity-through-change, and none more than Odysseus. The opening of the *Odyssey* describes its eponymous protagonist, the character upon whom Ulysses is based, as πολύτροπον: the man 'of many turns'.[49] 'Ulysses' portrays a similar sense of being at a loss as

[46] Harvard MS. Eng 952, repr. in *The Tennyson Archive*, eds. A. Day and C. Ricks, 31 vols. (New York: Garland Pub., 1987-1993), iii (*TA*). In 'Notebook 16', 'Ulysses' occupies fols. 11r, 11v, and 12r, and *In Memoriam* fols. 19r and 19v.
[47] Tennyson, *Memoir*, i. 323.
[48] Frank Kermode, *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 44.
[49] Homer, *Odyssey: Books 1-12*, with a translation by A. T. Murray, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Loeb, 1995), i. l.1.

well as suffering loss. Despite Tennyson's comment that it 'was more written with the feeling of his [Hallam's] loss upon' him than many sections of *In Memoriam*, just as, if not more, important to each poem is the sense that imaginative and textual change are inextricably connected to recovery in the wake of Hallam's death. From the poem's opening, the speaker criticises the making an end of things that *In Memoriam* so ardently combats:

> It little profits that an idle king,
> still
> By this ~~dull~~ hearth, among these barren crags,
> Matched with an aged wife I mete & dole
> Unequal laws unto a savage race
> That hoard & sleep & feed & know not me.[50]

That Tennyson should begin 'Ulysses' after the events of the Homeric account is certainly suggestive. Odysseus has completed his homecoming at the end of the *Odyssey* and fulfilled his desire for *nostos* – a return home, validating his heroic status in the process. Tennyson's Ulysses may remain the man 'of many turns', but this wiliness has no way of being put to use. Odysseus' divided self is crucial to his success; Tennyson's 'Ulysses' isn't so sure about his own. Displacing 'I' from 'king', its appositional noun, the poet engenders a division of the speaker's self. In the Homeric account, Odysseus' different revisions of his identity are brought into alignment by achieving his homecoming and restoring stability to his self. This redemption is not on offer to Tennyson's fractured subject – the poem not only starts *in medias res*, it also finds its subject stuck *in mediis rebus*: in the midst of affairs.

In the earliest draft, Tennyson modifies the second line to 'still hearth', preserving the drag of the lateral consonant, but suppressing even the suggestion of dormant energy that might attend the adjective 'dull'. Idleness has significance elsewhere for Tennyson with his 'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean', or in *In Memoriam*'s 'the songs I made | As echoes out of weaker times, | As half but idle brawling rhymes'.[51] Idleness becomes, in part, a submission to mourning; yielding to the grief of loss. Revision is halted in its tracks under the pressure of experience, and becomes a cursory procedure that remains incapable of effecting any change over time. This compositional and cognitive stasis finds a parallel in Ulysses' entrapment between a present state of immobility and a lack of an orientation towards an end. In the absence of development, idleness also involves a loss of meaning. 'Idle' forms part of a

[50] Harvard MS. fol. 11r, repr. in *TA*, iii.
[51] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 232, 453.

constellation of significant words for Tennyson together with ‘idyl’, ‘ideal’, and ‘idyll’. These consonant terms bring into alignment the problems encountered by the poet when he saw his poetry as forward-looking to an ideal unity but also backward-facing to the granular variants that might make up a single text of ‘idylls’.

‘Ulysses’ is a type of Odysseus in the sense he is both a symbol of the Homeric persona and a sub-division. Even as the following lines from the poem appear to offer a favourable response to the endurance of human experience, there is a haunting sense that to be a type is to keep one grounded in the past:

> I am a part of all that I have met;
> Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
> Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
> For ever and ever when I move.
> How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
> To rust unbur**nishe**d, not to **shine** in use! (*TP*, i. 616-7)

The first line picks up on the poem’s preceding concerns on entrapment in the past, offering an immediate rejoinder. It’s unclear whether to make ‘an end’ is a supplement or an alternative to ‘pause’; but the syntactical uncertainty shows Tennyson’s revisionary process of thought being followed through, as he offers us not necessarily two different ideas but two versions of the same idea. In the Trinity Notebook version of the poem, a tension emerges between the material form of the text and the thematic frustration over ‘How dull it is to pause, to make an end’. The enjambed line ‘whose margin fades | For ever and ever when I move’ is one of the draft’s most impacted lines at the page’s end. Whereas in prose, text must adhere arbitrarily to the margin’s edge, the lineated form of verse turns line-endings into moments of agency; not only to extend strands of thought, the line-ending allow moments of reflection before swerving away from a train of thought or sustaining it. While the start of this section noted the capacity of verse for ‘turning’, here the poet casts this as a literal form of mobility on the page ‘whose margin fades | For ever and ever when I move’. Tennyson’s ambition to consolidate steadfastness and change through revision extends to the small-scale level of the letter. In the last line quoted, anagrammatical alliteration reshuffles the letters from previous material, allowing ‘shine’ to be recovered from a revised ‘unburnished’. This revision informs a kind of stasis and productivity at its molecular level.

The motif of things being unused to depict the speaker in the act of moving on dominates the compositional and stylistic features of the poem's centre. Lines 24-32 circulate phrases that extend the struggle to go on in the face of adversity:

> Life piled on life
> Were all too little, and of one to me
> Little remains: but every hour is saved
> From that eternal silence, something more,
> A bringer of new things; and vile it were
> For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
> And this gray spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought. (*TP*, i. 617-8)

'Life piled on life', a characteristically Tennysonian phrase, realises the poem's layering of line upon line through multiplying 'life' at its start and end, allowing Ulysses' spirit to persist. From 'life' comes 'little', though this only leads to 'little remains'. As much as the gain of a steady, yet accumulative, process seems to dissipate across the heavy caesura engendered by the colon, the line backtracks with the exhaustive implications of 'every hour' answering to the 'little' that remains. The 'eternal silence' is conjoined with 'something more, | A bringer of new things' without an explicative conjunction; the poet makes readers construct for themselves the syntactical tissue between the two. Accordingly, the reader too participates in overcoming the 'eternal silence', creating and revising the syntactic and interpretative connexions in the text. These lexical modulations, which are characteristic of Tennyson's verse, register a torn effort to establish continuation from the past, the persistence of the speaker's condition, and a transformative push onward.

The climactic lines at the end of 'Ulysses' magnify the particulars of the speaker's experience to more impersonal and symbolic dimensions. They reaffirm a trust in the potential of his imaginative life to continue after it has been reworked into a shared pattern of strength and continuity:

> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (*TP*, i. 620)

These are not the lines Tennyson originally wrote. In the first draft of 'Ulysses', we find: 'We are not now the men that in one night | Swathed Troy with flame'.[52] A more universal register displaces this specific historical reference. What began as a focus on the constraints of age and location is now abstracted to 'that strength' – a final assimilation of the poem's subject to a wider type. The poem tracks a transformation of the subject from the particular figure at the poem's start to the consolation of his enduring presence in the symbolic qualities of his 'strength' and perseverance. This revision of *the* 'Ulysses' to a *type* of 'Ulysses' lays the foundations for a process of endurance.

Tennyson is deft at rewriting his anxieties into assertions. Although the poem's final line seems to reinvest back into the midst of experience, where change through striving supports a steadfastness in refusing to yield, recall Ulysses' earlier observation: 'Death closes all: but *some*thing ere the end, | *Some* work of noble note, *may* yet be done'.[53] The cautious *some,* which infiltrates the speaker's descriptions of taking action in the midst of experience, is paired with a suspect conditional verb. Accordingly, the poet's language has the effect of backing up a bleakness, where hesitancy is to be found in Ulysses' very formulations of optimism. This same might be true of the effects of revision, which turn statements that had reflected a writer's convictions at one point into something closer to a set of questions that later confront him. In section LXXIII of *In Memoriam,* Tennyson returns to the same hesitancy above, as he envisages 'So many worlds, so much to do, | So little done, such things to be'.[54] In the next section, I explore how *In Memoriam*'s processes of mourning are enacted and shaped by the poet's sense of incompletion on a compositional level.

[52] Houghton Library MS, in *TP*, i. 620n.
[53] Tennyson, *TP*, i. 618-9. Emphasis added.
[54] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 387.

In Memoriam

Tennyson still felt an impulse to revise *In Memoriam* twenty-two years after its original publication. Not until the 1872 edition did he arrive at the final version of the poem's most critical revelation:

> So word by word, and line by line,
> The dead man touch'd me from the past,
> And all at once it seem'd at last
> The living soul was flash'd on mine,
>
> And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
> About empyreal heights of thought. . .[55]

The Lincoln MS, which effectively serves as a fair copy of the poem, reads 'his living soul' and 'mine in his', and both these variants were retained until the 1872 edition.[56] Personal pronouns, nevertheless, cede to the demonstrative pronoun and indefinite article. These may seem minor emendations, but they conform to a discernible pattern of revision that began in the first drafts of *In Memoriam*: an incremental depersonalising of words and phrases.[57] Although the 'dead man' refers to the late Arthur Hallam, the final changes free the 'living soul' from being tied to a recapturing of the Hallam that Tennyson knew. This is not necessarily Hallam's soul; the text, instead, comes to embody not the way of *the* soul, but the way of *a* soul.[58] The poet's changes amplify the division between the individual and the 'type' in the poem: constantly torn between his grief for Hallam as one of a kind, in the sense of unique, or as a model for grief, as emblematic of a kind. Tennyson's impersonalising of his experience is one way his revisions put into practice his sense of the poem itself as a 'type', as he endeavours to fit his personal grief into broader patterns of mourning.[59]

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[55] Alfred Tennyson, *The Works of Alfred Tennyson: Poet Laureate*, 6 vols. (London: Strahan & Co., 1872), iv. 146-7 (Oxford, Bodleian Weston Library, Blackwell e.237).
[56] Tennyson, 'In Memoriam A.H.H. Notebook', Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, TRC/M/1, fol. 62v.
[57] For a summary see Susan Shatto, 'Tennyson's Revisions of *In Memoriam*', *Victorian Poetry* xvi (1978) pp. 344-345.
[58] Regarding an alternative title Tennyson had considered for the poem, *The Way of the Soul*, Ricks notes that it would 'direct attention differently' from the specific focus of *A.H.H.* Though it would provide 'a graph' of the poem's development, 'a graph is not the same as artistic unity'; *Tennyson* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 201, p. 203.
[59] On Tennyson's position in an ongoing discourse concerning impersonality and the self, see Jack L. Hart, 'Wallace Stevens, Plato, and the Question of Poetic Truth', *Modernism/modernity* xxx (2023), pp. 129-148: 140-141.

The textual state of *In Memoriam* is central to the poet's exploration of this dynamic. Is it a series of poems – each section being an independent meditation on grief that looks for a unifying principle in processing grief – or is it one sub-divided work that, when one part is altered, becomes transformed in its entirety as a single, unified poem? Word by word, line by line, Tennyson's overall sense of the 'dead man' becomes an aggregation of the localised perceptions throughout *In Memoriam*. As Hallam's imaginative life is prolonged in Tennyson's verse, it is also altered through textual adjustments, revealing the closely bound work of the poet's compositional revisions and imaginative revision of his friend. Indeed, the elegy continually interweaves how Tennyson is currently missing his friend in his personal experience with what he has belatedly missed in his writing. Revision thus becomes a kind of imaginative repair as Tennyson rewrites the poem, and so charges revision with effecting a form of continuity-through-change that is similarly central to elegy.

In Memoriam thus continues to turn over Tennyson's earlier preoccupation with 'typing' highlighted in this chapter's previous section. Elaine Jordan notes that the nineteenth-century association of 'type' with fixity was important for Tennyson. In natural philosophy, 'type' meant the 'fixed general structure of a group', while in Protestant thought it took on a symbolic significance by which Old Testament characters and events prefigured those in the New Testament. Such types reflected 'fixed patterns within a total scheme', Jordan writes, 'rather than the changes and difference of evolutionary biology.'[60] Tennyson was, however, in tune with the evolutionary implications too. Images of 'The hills are shadows, and they flow | From form to form, and nothing stands' and '"A thousand types are gone"' are clear examples of the way in which the poet examined the instability of type in *In Memoriam*. It's felicitous that 'form' and 'from' are anagrams of each other. One word flows into another, a model of how Tennyson uses the changes in the natural world as a way of calibrating how revision might create different types of the same poem rather a different poem entirely.

The poet's 'matter-moulded forms of speech' entwine a creative agency with the inevitability of material decay.[61] But, as the passage at the start of this section shows, the material form of the poem is crucial for Tennyson's understanding of the continuity of the self beyond death: 'So word by word, and line by line, | The dead man touch'd me from the past'. Tennyson's language in *In Memoriam* suggests a rethinking of material kinds of 'type' as one model of the continuity-through-change he finds in this poem a strength of revision. Two

[60] Elaine Jordan, *Alfred Tennyson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 11-12.
[61] Tennyson, *TP*. ii. 413.

sections which are wholly preoccupied with the nature of type are matched with a syntax that is carefully attuned to patterns of looping back and readjustment:

> Are God and Nature then at strife,
> That Nature lends such evil dreams?
> So careful of the type she seems,
> So careless of the single life. (*TP*, ii. 371)
>
> 'So careful of the type?' but no.
> From scarpèd cliff and quarried stone
> She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:
> I care for nothing, all shall go.' (*TP*, ii. 372)

In the first example, the final line immediately reworks the phraseology of the preceding one: this post-scriptum reconsideration is encoded into both the line and its particular words 'careful' and 'careless' with their altered suffixes. That accented 'è' is rather arch and archaic, registering geological erosion together with the eradication of a bygone language. Section LVI elaborates on this, deferring to direct speech the claim of concern for the type before the speaker's own voice cuts in, asserting 'but no'. This adversative turn of thought started out as 'not so', which would have sounded less like a self-correction than a complete reversal of the previous thought. This kind of structure might have been what Classical orators referred to as *correctio*, a means of gaining *bona fides* from one's audience by displaying a live working-out of a problem. Working through doubts as he goes, Tennyson shows himself in the process of thinking – local instances of self-revision such as this contribute to a broader air of the poet at work. Undoing a teleological approach to revision, Tennyson anticipates second thoughts being taken for granted.

Section XXX brings together a moment of heightened self-consciousness about textual change as a chance for preservation and renewal. The revision of a crucial line registers the accommodation Tennyson reaches with change and renewed form:

> Our voices took a higher range;
> Once more we sang: "They do not die
> Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
> Nor change to us, although they change;
>
> "Rapt from the fickle and the frail
> With gathered power, yet the same . . . (*TP*, ii. 348)

The last line of the first stanza was, however, changed to its current form in Notebook 'X' at Trinity:

> Nor change to us altho['] they change
> ~~Tho' burning up from change to change~~. . . [62]

Revival surpasses rebirth: the original imagery of the subject 'burning up', as they undergo transfiguration, illustrates both the subject's etiolation through change and also rebirth through almost unavoidable parallels with the life cycle of a phoenix. Quite differently, the final version affirms a confidence in this transformation as continuation. Sullivan refutes the idea that the 'early and late stages' of a text's development are 'necessarily connected in a teleological or even causational way'.[63] Following Tennyson's self-correction in LVI, his repositioned concessive conjunction, here, from the start of the line to the middle qualifies the changing as a secondary occurrence. It softens the previously disorienting instances of 'change to change'. These endless, yet isolated, moments of revision become subsumed into the intransitive and self-determined 'they change' without prioritising either one.

Fixity of type does not necessarily guarantee permanence, as LXXVII makes clear in its cadence between 'rhyme' which returns in a truncated state by 'time': 'What hope is here for modern rhyme [. . .] Foreshortened in the tract of time?'[64] Lyell writes that 'species cannot be immortal, but must perish, one after the other [. . .] And even when they have been included in rocky strata [. . .] they must nevertheless eventually perish.'[65] Locked into certain arrangements, smaller constituents are still not guaranteed a greater permanence. In an evolutionary sense, only adaptation ensures survival. A later phrase in *In Memoriam*, 'If so he type this work of time', more explicitly puns on the words in its typographical sense.[66] According to his son, Tennyson said that '"Poetry looks better, more convincing, in print".'[67] '[L]ooks better, more convincing': it is, as Ricks says of another of Tennyson's expressions, 'an equivocal comma'.[68] Is Tennyson implying here that 'convincing' and 'better' have an equivalence: Poetry 'looks better', that is to say 'more convincing'? Or are they different

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[62] Tennyson, 'Notebook X', Cambridge, Trinity College O.15.17, fol. 6v.
[63] Sullivan, *The Work of Revision*, p. 57.
[64] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 390.
[65] Lyell, *Principles*, p. 286, p. 333.
[66] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 439.
[67] Tennyson, *Memoir*, i. 189-90n.
[68] Christopher Ricks, 'Tennyson Inheriting the Earth', *Studies in Tennyson*, ed. H. Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 66-104: 91.

things, with ‘convincing’ being an improvement, a more ‘convincing’ description as it were, than ‘better’? Doubt is both ironed in and out through this self-revision.

My observations about the poet’s theorising of printed type extend to the poet’s treatment of his handwritten manuscripts. Consider, for example, these lines from an unpublished stanza of *In Memoriam* [FIGURE 1]:

> Another whispers, sick with loss:
> ‘O let the simple slab remain
> The MERCY JESU in the rain
> The MISERERE in the moss.’

While in some editions the two phrases in the third and fourth lines are simply capitalised, this is not the case in the original draft; here they have a different graphological style entirely, as if to recreate both the lettering on a grave ‘slab’ – an embodied, if morbid, type of someone’s enduring presence post mortem. In this image, the poet demonstrates an overlap between his approach to textual type and his fixation with kinds of continuation. Not only does transferring his poem from writing into print become another method of abstracting and depersonalising his text to advance his compositional process; it becomes emblematic of the unsteady line between individual and type that Tennyson treads and puns on in *In Memoriam*. Putting his draft into print, his ideal subject becomes embodied in physical form; simultaneously, the physical embodiment is elevated from an individual draft to its ideal form as a printed text. Although this parallel suggests that the idealised, print text, remains subject to the ‘tract of time’, like the grave ‘slab’ or geological types, the compositional revision implies that this changeability is critical to a less teleological afterlife.

In Memoriam’s title alerts us to its typological nature. Tennyson’s first title was *Fragments of an Elegy*. Is this a kind of premeditated defence of his own work: that a series of poems, whether in draft or published form, which revise the grief of Tennyson’s experience may only amount to a jumble of fragments? The title change to *In Memoriam* implies a revision to the idea that a poem might begin in mere fragments. As Ricks notes, ‘The title *In Memoriam A.H.H.* directs attention firmly to one focus, despite Tennyson’s injunction: “It must be remembered that this is a poem, *not* an actual biography.”’[69] Moreover, the grammar of the Latinate phrase denotes a movement *into* memory: an ongoing memorialising, rather than

[69] Ricks, *Tennyson*, p. 201.

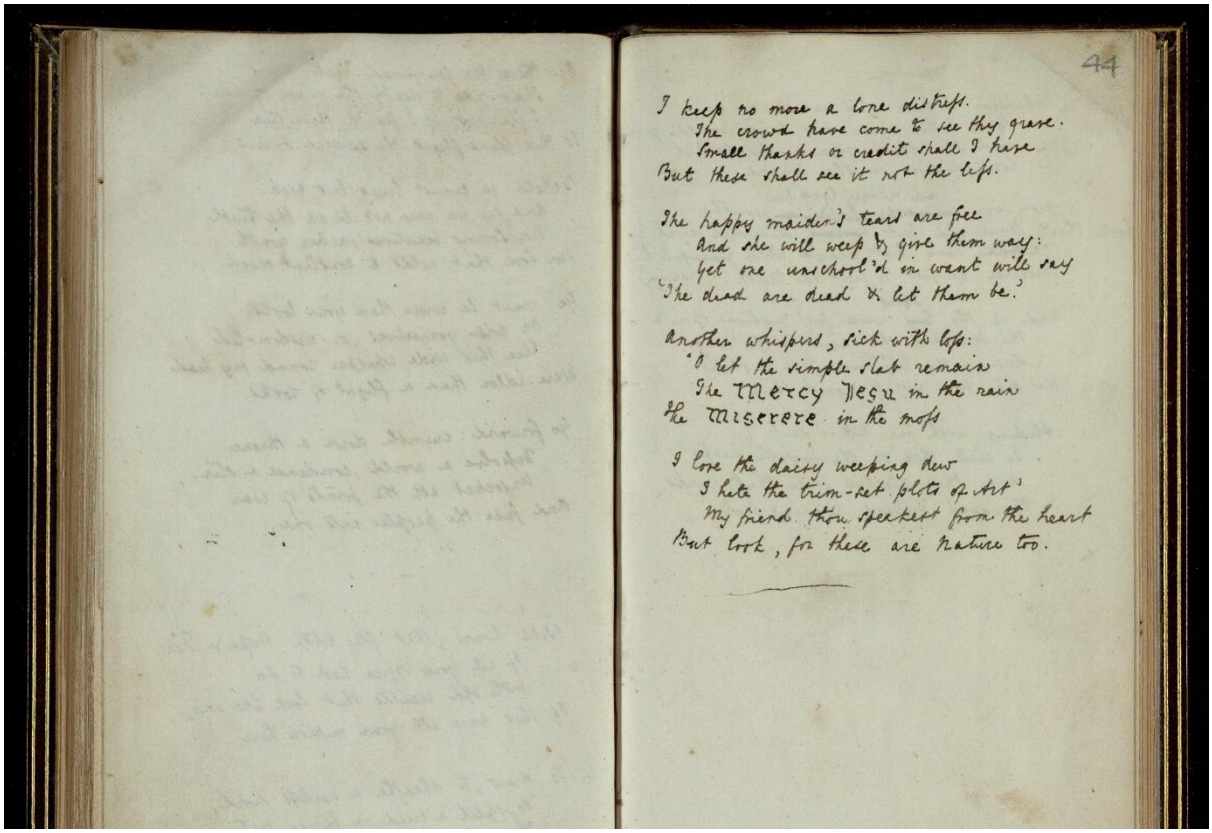


Figure 1: 'In Memoriam Notebook' in Trinity College O.15.13, fols 43v and 44r. (Reproduced with permission of the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge)

Tennyson's late friend being already fixed in memory. Indeed, Tennyson's poem negotiates the shift in the apprehension of an individual from a physical to a transfigured form; a negotiation which underpins the thematic and compositional cruces of the poem.

'Evolution' has its etymological origins in the Latin *evolutio*: 'the action of reading through'.[70] The verb *evoluere* can also mean to 'unroll' or 'unwind (a succession or series of events)' and to 'unfold by mental processes'.[71] Its literary genesis is appropriate, and considered in comparison with Darwin's description of the 'changed forms of life' offers a particularly helpful way of evaluating revision in Tennyson:

> Of this volume, only here and there a short chapter has been preserved; and of each page, only here and there a few lines. Each word of the slowly-changing language, in which the history is supposed to be written, being more or less different in the interrupted succession of chapters, may represent the apparently abruptly changed forms of life, entombed in our consecutive, but widely separated formations.[72]

[70] See 'evolutio, n.', §1, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. Glare et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).
[71] 'evoluere, v.', §8 and §4, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.
[72] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species and The Voyage of the Beagle* (London: Vintage, 2009) p. 777.

Evolution, in this sense, doesn't involve a progression towards a particular point, but one that relies on continual adaption and adaptation. '[M]y father for one thought that, although evolution in a modified form was partially true, some of Darwin's disciples had drawn unwarranted inferences from the theory'.[73] In other words, the theory of adaptation had itself been adapted. Even if the poet was using these ideas to calibrate other subjects, he revised such ideas not only on their own terms but in their very terms too. Tennyson's conceiving of revision as transfiguration is closer to Darwin's model than a kind of teleological course of improvement towards a finite aim.

Early on in *In Memoriam*, the poet suggests how revision is similarly resistant to pre-determined aims:

> I sometimes hold it half a sin
> To put in words the grief I feel;
> For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the Soul within.
>
> But, for the unquiet heart and brain
> A use in measured language lies;
> The sad mechanic exercise,
> Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.
>
> In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
> Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
> But that large grief which these enfold
> Is given in outline and no more. (*TP*, ii. 322)

From the Lincoln MS, one can see that Tennyson made the revision '~~set~~ sad mechanic exercise'.[74] Cancelling 'set', Tennyson affirms that to reduce poetry to a determined social utility that eases mourning, or to fulfilling a set of predetermined commitments, is objectionable. His reversion to a more abstract modifier, along with other forms of revision in the stanzas, question such treatments of poetry.

Counterpoint drifts against the primary rhythm also register a review of these lines' sense. Matthew Bevis detects how '"But for" emerges from "But, for": that is, "*If it wasn't for* the unquiet heart and brain, there would be a use in measured language." The secondary

[73] Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, ii. 167.
[74] Lincoln MS. Lincolnshire Archives, TRC/M/1, fol. 5r.

meaning shadows the primary one', he continues, 'the unquiet heart and brain ward off as well as acknowledge the consolations of the melody.'[75] Revision, as a form of re-hearing here, demonstrates that the poem is anything other than a 'mechanic exercise', and acts as an implicit defence that it provides anything only in 'outline and no more'. In *The End of the Poem,* Paul Muldoon sees the 'only decent end' at which a poem may arrive is a solution to a problem that the poem itself has created.[76] Something like this is at the heart of Tennyson's subterranean pronouncement: that the 'unquiet heart and brain' generate problems and inquiries that revision acknowledges and confronts.

The contingencies of experience complicate poetic and natural processes of change. In his chapter on the 'Reality of Species', Lyell acknowledges how the random influence in evolution disrupts patterns of progressive development:

> this regular order is greatly interfered with, and an approximation only to such a state of things is exhibited by the animate creation [. . .] all kinds of anomalies interrupt the continuity of the plan, and chasms, into which whole genera or families might be inserted, are seen to separate the nearest existing portions of the series [. . .] that *force of external circumstance,* which causes such wide chasms in the regular series of animated beings.[77]

Evolution cannot be reduced to logical sequence of events; contingency is also unavoidable in the act of creation. Although Lyell talks about 'that *force of external circumstance*', both evolutionary change and poetic revision do not necessarily require an external shaping agency; they generate anomalies of their own accord. Poetry's 'anomalies' wrench open the gulf of 'approximation' between a writer's thoughts and his work. And yet, literary and poetic elements also fulfil a cognitive function in supporting Tennyson's compositional efforts. He rethinks the energies of contingency as a force that might be productive rather than a sabotage to the improvement of an evolving poem. Take the earliest jottings of section CXXXI, which embody Tennyson's song that sometimes comes 'by fits' as Section XXIII has it:

> O living will that shalt endure
> When mountains [ ] shock
> Rise in spiritual rock
> Flow thro' our deeds & make them pure
>
> That we may speak from out the dust

[75] Bevis, *The Art of Eloquence,* p. 145. Italics in original.
[76] Paul Muldoon, *The End of the Poem: Oxford Lectures in Poetry* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), p. 374.
[77] Lyell, *Principles,* p. 193, p. 195.

As unto one that hears & see
Some little of the vast to be
[ ] & [ ] trust

More of
With ever~~growing~~ strength and grace
The truths that never can be proved
And come to look on those we loved
And That which made us, face to face.[78]

Rhyme fulfils a crucial function here. Before Tennyson had finalised the stanza design of enveloping outer lines and protruding internal lines, and the words within this section, he sought ways to start structuring his thoughts – a partial resolution is found in the rhymes that establish a thematic, acoustic, and formal sequence. As Robert Douglas-Fairhurst has argued, 'shock' and 'rock' register 'poetic, political, and geological change', becoming 'footholds for the poet' to 'generate seismic upheavals of thought' before settling them 'into organized patterns of belief'.[79] These upheavals acknowledge the contingencies of form as they simultaneously put these contingencies to work.

Arthur Hallam writes in one essay that 'Rhyme has been said to contain in itself a constant appeal to Memory and Hope'.[80] 'Contain' is a fitting description for how Tennyson's stanzas usually aspire to be self-contained. 'Hope', on the other hand, implies a desire for a present state to be changed by an uncertain future, an effect which the poet's *abba* stanza gains as a result of the internal rhymes which postpone the transformation of the first *a* rhyme. Each arrival of the *b* rhymes makes the in-between state of the pendent, first rhyme all the more felt. This provisional nature of Tennyson's rhymes registers the 'phases of thought' that they track and revise across their compact stanzas. While the overarching imperative phrase in the CXXXI draft, which commands the 'living will' to 'Flow thro' our deeds', provides a binding framework for the stanza, only the rhyme – a phenomenon that occurs between words – is able to mitigate the gap between 'mountains' and 'shock'. These natural images – the 'mountains' that are later replaced by 'all that seems' – provide impressionistic canvases that are able to take on new significance while grounding the centre of the passage. The line 'see | Some little of the vast to be', in the draft, which eventually becomes 'A cry above the conquered years', reveals a recognition of the 'vast' that needs to be filled in composition.

[78] Harvard MS. 'Notebook 18', MS Eng 952, fol. 3v, repr. in *TA*, iii.
[79] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, p. 257.
[80] Arthur Hallam, *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. V. Motter (New York: Modern Language Association, 1943), p. 222.

A curiously suspended ampersand in the nascent fourth line hangs distant from the line's only other word, as if to bridge the gap between 'trust' and the rest of the stanza rather than predictively operating within the confines of that line. As a result of its visual presence on the page and in its grammatical function as a conjunction, the sign affords the poet a humble start to piece together the final links between speaking out from the 'dust' and across the 'vast'. Tennyson's use of the conjunction in its non-lexical form renders it less intrusive; it inhabits a space between the poem's verbal texture and a standalone indexical mark, permitting it a greater flexibility in its ability to conjoin disparate words and phrases.

In *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, William Empson observes that 'and' is 'perhaps the flattest, most general, and least coloured in the English language.'[81] Yet, its meaning can have more complex implications than a flat connective sense. Rather than indicating that a latter element must be taken together with the former – side by side, in other words – it may also have an additive force. Consider this in its compositional context: as elements become changed or exchanged over the course of revision, it becomes a process of either choosing between one element and another – making no progress, in reality – or one in which each element extends what has come before. Indeed, poetic speaker and composing poet speak 'from out the dust', leading on to a 'trust' that compositional and imaginative worries will be settled. And the final change in the Harvard Notebook from 'evergrowing' to 'More of' implies that there is a process of compositional labour punctuated by fits of productivity. Lyell writes that it would be better to 'imagine the successive creation of species to constitute, like their gradual extinction, a regular part of the economy of nature'.[82] Here, Tennyson reimagines each convulsion of his song that 'comes by fits' as moments of productivity.

Typology is not the only thing left hanging; the draft is also kept in suspense. Tennyson seemed happy to leave drafts half-finished and he was similarly keen not to let the published version of his poems be their final state. Instead, such moments become suspensions from the drift of a continuing process of creation – this might be the process of the poet revising a poem or indeed the way a text continues to live in the revaluation and reception of its readers. The first way in which the poet illustrates this conception is through his exploration of the retrospective aspect of revision. Sullivan notes that in the case of Joyce and Woolf, whose autobiographical writings 'begin retrospectively', they turn their texts into 'evolving,

[81] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 2nd ed. (1930; repr. London: Chatto and Windus, 1949), p. 101.
[82] Lyell, *Principles*, p. 295.

prospective diaries'. This was a form which supported the work of revision as an 'unfolding, permanent present'.[83] Section XXIII in *In Memoriam* casts artistic inspiration as spasmodic, but the emendations in the Trinity MS frame the fits of creation in a 'unfolding, permanent present':

> And sometimes in my sorrow shut
> Or breaking into song by fits
> I move alone to where he sits
> The Shadow cloakt from head to foot,
>
> Who keeps the keys of all the creeds, –
> I wander, often falling lame,
> ~~The secret. Oft I falter lame,~~
> And
> ~~In~~ lookings~~s~~ back to whence I came,
> Or on to where the pathway leads [84]

Moments of retrospection are subsumed into an ongoing process by the participial phrase, committing the reader and writer to an unresolved present tense. This idea of 'looking back' at the end of several immediate revisions intimates the poet's subsequent recognition of missing the mark. It becomes a failure not of language, but of the poet. This fall from language increasingly becomes less of a question of a fall from grace than a wrestling with questions of descent with modification. The alteration of 'lookings back' to 'looking back' has crucial implications for the conjunction in the following line. Beforehand, 'or' could easily have negotiated between different instances; in other words, one moment of sight involved looking forward, and another looking back. Now, however, it requires of the poet a kind of double vision: a perspective that inhabits a space between both. Tennyson revises the force of 'or' from an agent of propositional thought, to one that causes the two visions to be co-dependent while they remain independent; he gestures to the betweenity of looking forward and backward that is not only typical of his own treatment of memory, but also of the way verse form embodies a process of thinking, not a set of final thoughts and convictions.

The ways in which things 'fall' throughout *In Memoriam* are not only numerous but various: from images drawn from the natural world such as 'These leaves that redden to the fall' later redeemed as 'those fallen leaves which kept their green', to the speaker's personal

[83] Sullivan, *The Work of Revision*, p. 199.
[84] Tennyson, 'In Memoriam Manuscript Notebook', Cambridge, Trinity College O.15.13, fol. 9r.

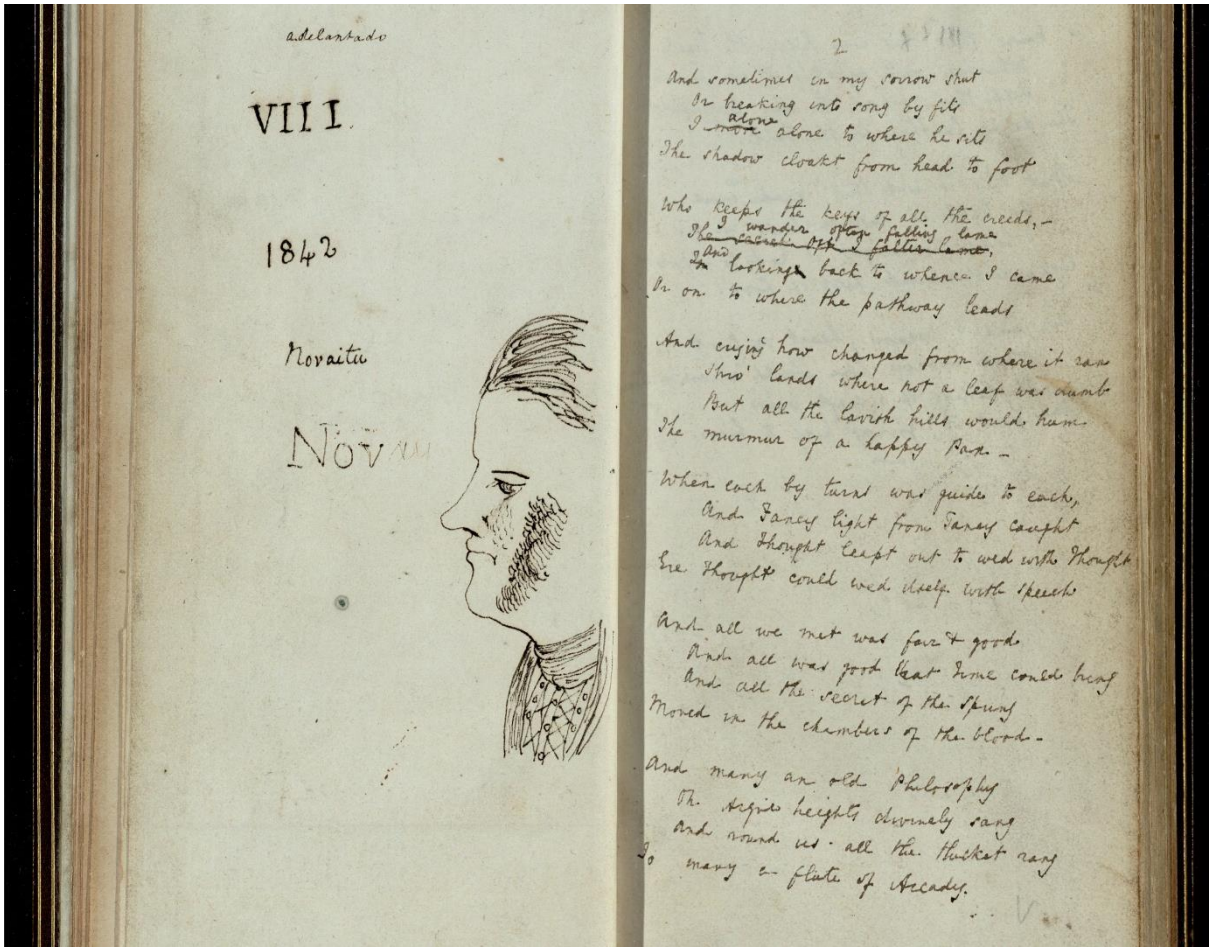


Figure 2: 'In Memoriam Notebook' in Trinity College O.15.13, fols 8v and 9r. (Reproduced with permission of the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge)

'falling on his faithful heart', and 'filled with tears that cannot fall'.[85] Quotidian sights of falling become connected to the fall of poetry. Tennyson creates a link between the things he missed in experience – how he currently misses Hallam – and the belated recognition of what he missed at first in writing. In section XXIII, the line that initially read 'The secret. Oft I falter lame' becomes 'I wander, often falling lame'. This revision also precedes another emendation from 'In lookings back to whence I came' to 'And looking back to whence I came'. Just as 'falter' easily becomes 'fall' through minor syllabic slippage, faltering quickly turns into graver falling. Static instances of retrospection are generalised into a recurring procedure by the participial phrase, committing the reader and writer to an unresolved present tense. This idea of 'looking back' at the end of several immediate revisions intimates the poet's subsequent recognition of missing the mark.

[85] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 330, 412, 337, 338. See also sections VI, XIII, XXVI, XLIV, XLVII, LI, LIV, LVIII, LXVII, LXXXV, LXXXIX, CV, CXXIV, and the EPILOGUE.

Opposite the draft of Section XXIII, Tennyson drew a caricature portrait of a male face with a mien of despond [FIGURE 2]. Its signs of grief are manifest: effusive tears, downcast eyes, doleful expression, and unkempt facial hair. Starting at the page's gutter, the image aligns almost perfectly with the cluster of draft stanzas to which it corresponds on the recto page, which begin 'And crying how changed from where it ran | Thro' lands where not a leaf was dumb'. Bushell argues that Tennyson engages in a process of 'self-translation', continually stepping back from his own work through doodles that form an integral part of his composition:

> These now become more of a 'visual commentary' on the text on the opposite page than a directly integrated part of the compositional process. [. . .] [T]he pictorial element is contributing directly and helping to release imaginative and creative thought in some way. [. . .] In the double translation of source material into the writer's "own words" and then of those words from one form into another, are both acts of the same order?[86]

These analyses are brought into the service only of considering Tennyson's textual practice, and do not acknowledge their greater significance of this method of composition. Given the correspondence of the image's and text's subjects, the drawing is a literal self-image of the poet: facing away from the text on the recto page, it illustrates the poet's estrangement from his own work. And yet, it also signals one way of resolving the poet's doubts. Accepting the alienated majesty of his own work, Tennyson comes back to see it anew. In the very testing of his own interpretative response to his work, translating it through different mediums of expression, and creating his own imaginative stimuli, a positive sense of confronting the linguistic, poetic, and compositional difficulties emerges.[87] While a great deal of post-Romantic poetry is characteristically self-reflective, Tennyson takes this further through such suspensions, moments of self-conscious betweenity in his compositional practice. The embodiment of his text in different states becomes a way of integrating and confronting the discontinuities of the artist's own intuitions.

'Moody' might be an apt way of re-describing Tennyson's 'fits'. "I can always write when I see my subject whole"', Hallam Tennyson remembers the poet saying: Tennyson 'was fastidious in his choice of subjects, which were selected according to his mood.'[88] On another occasion, he remarked "No, I can't read to-night, and I must be in a proper mood for that and

[86] Bushell, *Text as Process*, p. 134, p. 136.
[87] The same may be said for the prose material Tennyson sometimes integrated into his drafts of poetry. See Bushell, *Text as Process*, pp. 124-141.
[88] Tennyson, *Memoir*, ii. 7.

I am not'.[89] Ralph Waldo Emerson writes of our moods that they 'do not believe in one another', suggesting that to be in a mood is to be in a state of mind that is not quite yourself.[90] It is also to be self-conscious about this splitting of one's self, and to be aware that this alternative sense of self will come to pass. Tennyson's comments on his own compositional and literary moods suggest that these alternative states of mind are necessary to accomplish the work we set out to do – as one kind of necessary fictions that also resonate with the suspensions from the drift of experience and process the poet envisages. Indeed, when he finds himself in the 'proper mood' for the occasion, he is wholly committed. Whereas Wordsworth appeared to strive towards effecting a continuity between his original imaginative view, where revision becomes a method of reinvesting back into the first moment of inspiration, for Tennyson revision becomes a form of transfiguration anew.

The views of revisionism explored so far are highly experiential. *In Memoriam* XXXVI undergoes several alterations in the Trinity MS, which emphasise Tennyson's value of experience '*in* closest words' and '*In* loveliness of perfect deeds':

Tho' truths in nature darkly join
Deep-seated in her mystic frame
We yield all blessing to the name
Of him that made them current coin;

For dealt with mortal powers
~~Oh~~ wisdom ~~of Eternal Powers~~!
Where Truth, ~~chased~~ in closest words, shall fail
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors

Word had
And so the ~~Logos~~ breath~~ed~~ & wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In
~~Pure~~ loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought. . .[91]

An emended version of these stanzas reads:

Though truths in manhood darkly join

[89] Tennyson, *Memoir*, ii. 36.
[90] Ralph W. Emerson, *The Complete Essays*, ed. B. Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. 282.
[91] Trinity MS. Trinity College O.15.13, fol. 15v. Bold font denotes later revisions in pencil.

Deep-seated in our mystic frame
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him that made them current coin; (*TP*, ii. 353)

The chronology of revisions demonstrates an increasing confidence in the poet's creative agency. His insights are forged through the textual refinement of poetry, not through deference to divinity. From a search akin to the 'truths in nature' that 'darkly join | Deep-seated in her mystic frame', the focus turns to 'truths in manhood', with the pronoun changed accordingly to 'our'. The alteration of imagery indicates a more introspective approach to the kind of knowledge to be 'embodied in a tale': subjective truths in man's 'mystic frame' as opposed to some external ideal in nature. With this more introspective outlook, the task of the poet gains a greater urgency. It is also interesting that Tennyson initially was concerned with the idea of λόγος ("logos") as opposed to the more recognisably biblical 'Word'. He dispenses with the Ancient Greek philosophical principle of implicit reason in the cosmos, investing it with meaning and form, in favour of translations of St. John's Gospel: where the divine language returns to mankind in a form tractable to his cognitive and interpretative capabilities.

The poet writes of divine providence in a letter from 1865 with regard to man's descent from apes: 'Huxley says we may have come from monkeys. That makes no difference to me. If it is God's way of creation, He sees the whole, past, present and future, as one.'[92] To be able to see each plane of time had only been possible through transcendent oversight, but now, the poet suggests, it is within the grasp of earthbound insight. In *In Memoriam,* Tennyson changes his anguished apostrophe invoking 'Oh wisdom of Eternal Powers!' to the more tempered 'For wisdom dealt with mortal powers'. It is an arresting emendation: and its implications for the wider conceptual schema of *In Memoriam* are important. A discernible change in tone occurs whereby the line gathers a more rational inflection through the causal links. The retention of 'powers' indicates a preservation of the possibility of embodying and imparting insights, but this is transferred to the creative capabilities of the poet. Indeed, 'wisdom' has experiential connotations, which are drawn out by the verb 'dealt', providing a new connexion between the object 'wisdom' and those who are in possession of it. The verb is employed both in the sense of wisdom being dealt out, as well as handled or processed through mortal powers. Rather than 'wisdom' being the remote preserve of divine powers, it suggests instead those distant but still possible consolations toward which the poet is inexorably drawn. Divine inspiration becomes

[92] To James Addington Symonds, 8 Dec. 1865, in *Letters*, ii. 418.

subordinated to the toil of the poet. Not only is revision a sign of being 'still and at present in progress', in Tennyson's view, revision is to be at work.

Section XII questions whether the poem may be working towards an end. It contrasts two kinds of revision through its rhyme scheme and repetition to set circular patterns of mobility against images of linear progression:

> And saying; "Comes he thus, my friend?
> Is this the end of all my care?"
> And circle moaning in the air:
> "Is this the end? Is this the end?" (*TP*, ii. 331)

The speaker's '"Is this the end? Is this the end?"' sounds out a fraught "is this all there is" as much as an exhausted "is it over yet?"[93] As the chiastic rhyme scheme returns 'friend' to us as 'end', these lines capture something of the poem's purpose to embody Tennyson's deceased friend. It is, in effect, an elegy in miniature. Accordingly, these local self-revisions have the effect of recalibrating elegiac form as one for which revision is both an impetus and sustenance. The uncertainty over when or if an end might be reached is enacted in the last stanza of *In Memoriam*:

> That God, which ever lives and loves,
> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves. (*TP*, ii. 459)

A half rhyme between 'loves' and 'moves' imparts a sense of wavering indecision, while the final line keeps things unresolved; in form and sense it reaches for the 'one element' that is never attained. Tennyson's syntax, which brings the poem to a close, replicates the formation of the poem 'still and at present in progress', because his preposition 'To' lessens the focus on a concrete image of movement and places it instead on the purpose of the 'whole creation'. And the terminal intransitive verb enacts Tennyson's belief in poetry to dwell in the gap between the 'far-off divine event'. In the first edition of *In Memoriam*, the words 'THE END' can be found after the last stanza. These, however, were omitted in all future published

[93] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 331.

versions.[94] In removing those words from the end of his poem, Tennyson allows *In Memoriam*'s close to embody the tenor of his revisionary thinking, leaving the motion of 'the whole creation moves' suspended. The ending remains half-open, coming closer to the promise of a colon than to the finality of a full-stop. Excising the trope of bringing a completed narrative to the end, Tennyson recommits even the published versions of *In Memoriam* to that process of renewal concentrated in his manuscript drafts. For Tennyson, revision means 'something ere the end, | Some work of noble note, may yet be done'.

[94] Vincent A. Lankewish, 'Blank Spaces, Full of Mourning: Against Compressing, Excerpting, and Anthologizing *In Memoriam* for Classroom Use', *Pedagogy* xvii (2017) pp. 343-350: 347.

Dickinson's Betweenity

Dickinson was wary of coming to an end. In one of her letters from 1862, we find the poet experiencing a familiar sensation: 'I wish the visit had just begun instead of ending now'.[1] But things had not ended just yet, and her comment unfolds in real time her desire to revivify experience, even as its end hoves into view. For Dickinson, resisting the end was not a matter of dissolving ends into unending eternities. She was more than aware of the potential bleakness of that predicament: 'Does not eternity appear dreadful to you', she writes, 'I often get thinking of it and it seems so dark to me that I almost wish there was no Eternity. To think that we must forever live and never cease to be.' To 'forever live' sounds less ennobling than enervating. 'It seems as if Death', she adds, 'which all so dread because it launches us upon an unknown world would be a relief to so endless a state of existence.'[2]

It's worth noticing that Dickinson qualifies that unknown world with an indefinite article, avoiding a distinctively Christian soteriology here. The religious promise of salvation is one model of telos that gives life a sense of purpose, without which life might only amount to transience without end. Redemption thus allows problems of continual loss to be palliated with glimpses of what might be gained.[3] Dickinson's uncertainty over that 'unknown world' calls into question such notions of a redeeming destination. Indeed, her conditional 'would' is restrictive as much as it is wishful; death restores the endlessness of life *only if* it leads to an unknown world. This predicament has received extensive treatment in Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*. Speaking of 'our deep need for intelligible Ends', he says that we 'project ourselves – a small, humble elect, perhaps – past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle.'[4]

One of Dickinson's loose poems from 1880, not collated among her fascicles nor copied systematically, anticipates this connection between the redemption of experience and the inability to 'know' beyond our own remit:

> I watched the fluttering spirit
> That would not intercede

[1] To Louise and Frances Norcross, Jul. 1862, in *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. T. H. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 411. All quotations of Dickinson's letters and prose fragments are from this volume.
[2] To Abiah Root, 31 Jan. 1846, *Letters*, p. 28. Dickinson's spelling has been silently corrected.
[3] See Adam Phillips, *Darwin's Worms* (London: Faber, 1999), p. 15.
[4] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 8.

Gibralter could surrender
But not this little maid –
Precisely how it ended –
Redemption is the one
Of whom the explanation
Is hitherto unknown –

The saved have no remembrance
In our competing Days
'Tis still an assistance
But theirs forget in praise [5]

The correspondences between telos and intelligibility are strengthened in the poem's revisions, as the variants 'exposition' and 'prudently unknown' envisage ways of projecting ourselves beyond our current situation (*ex-position*), out of the midst of experience, in order to procure the kind of knowledge Kermode identifies as necessary for seeing the 'structure whole'.[6] After the line 'Precisely how it ended' Dickinson wrote 'Precisely it is known'. Even though she cancelled this supplement, the poet discloses her association of endings with cognition; or, perhaps, in deleting that alternative, suggests that there may be other avenues to an end than redemptions and explanations. A writer might test his or her own prudence through revision, by projecting a fixed version of their voice at a certain point of time to see whether it holds up when re-encountered at a later stage of composition. And yet, revision might also be used to confirm a poem's resilience to have sense made out of it by foreknowledge.

Dickinson's revisions above deny a rhyme between 'known' and 'unknown', stopping an all too easy coincidence in sound and sense, as if the acoustic structure of the poem might redeem the dissonance it describes. The same is true of the rhythmic alterations in the final stanza where the steady iambic pulse of 'The saved have no remembrance' acquires a new time signature in the dactylic 'Nór have the sáved – remémbránce'. Dactyls have been used notably to shape patterns of return, such as Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' ('Half a league, half a league, | Half a league onward') or Longfellow's 'Evangeline' ('List to the mournful tradition still sung by the pines of the forest; | List to a Tale of Love in Acadie').[7]

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[5] Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, ed. R. W. Franklin, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), iii. 1139-40 (*PED*). Franklin uses the following editorial symbols:
< > Angle brackets cocoon deleted readings
- Bullet marks separate alternative readings

over This word indicates that one reading was superimposed upon another

[6] Dickinson, 'I watched the precious beggar', Amherst, Amherst College Digital Collections, Amherst MS #243a. <https://acdc.amherst.edu/view/asc:6028/asc:6033> (accessed 03/02/2023).

[7] Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. C. Ricks, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1987), ii. 511; Henry W. Longfellow, *The Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (London: George Routledge, 1867), p. 117.

Here they stage a return to the uncertainties of the unfinished experience of 'competing Days'. What might be a 'timid Bulwark' or an 'assistance' for those stuck in the midst of 'competing Days' is no longer relevant to those who have gone 'past the End', in Kermode's terms. So theirs is neither a fall into experience nor one into knowledge. Meaning works like this for some poets; it comes after experience. Dickinson's concern, however, is with the way arrival might be to miss out on experience. It's this conception of meaning that Derek Attridge has in mind when he says the 'mode of existence of a literary work is as an *event*'. Meaning is not what we take from an experience: it is something we encounter as 'an experience of forming' or the 'unfolding of language through time'.[8]

As I have argued in the previous two chapters, revisionism might not only be an ongoing process itself but, as in the cases of Wordsworth and Tennyson, it can signal a writer's imaginative sympathy with other kinds of process. This chapter argues that strains of non-closure in Dickinson's methods of composition are attuned to her preoccupation with resisting teleology. What implications, for example, does revision have not only for the relationship between a reader and a writer's work, but between a writer and her *own* work; to what extent is one version of a text separate from its previous incarnation; how can one conceive of meaningful patterns that lack a stable end toward which our experience of texts may be oriented? These are questions this chapter will approach, as it explores how Dickinson's revisionism is not so much interested in where her writing is coming from or going. Rather, it revels in the ongoing event of the poem.

Several scholars have started to cast Dickinson as a betwixt and between poet. Richard Brantley has reconsidered her reputation in scholarship as a pre-modernist, arguing instead for her 'Late-Romantic imagination'.[9] Glenn Hughes claims that the poet dwells in an 'irresolvable tension of existence in-between world and transcendence' and 'ignorance and knowledge'. So far so staid: but Hughes goes on to say that 'existence is essentially a desire, a longing' on

[8] Derek Attridge, 'The Event of a Poem: Denise Riley's "Lone Star Clattering"', *English* lxxi (2022), pp. 195-203: 195. See also Attridge's *The Singularity of Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 58-62.

[9] Richard Brantley, *Experience and Faith: The Late-Romantic Imagination of Emily Dickinson* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2004), p. 2. Cf. Margaret Dickie's contention that Dickinson belongs to a later period because 'she does not fit into her own' but is 'typical of many women writers who look forward to the next literary period': 'Reperiodization: The Example of Emily Dickinson', *College English*, lii (1990), 397-409, p. 397; Mary E. Galvin who positions Dickinson as a precursor to female modernist poets Amy Lowell, Gertrude Stein, Mina Loy, and Djuna Barnes in *Queer Poetics: Five Modernist Women Writers* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999); John Wargacki has examined the similarities between Dickinson and Stevens in 'Reduction and Negation in Emily Dickinson's "There's a Certain Slant of Light" and Wallace Stevens's "The Snow Man"', *The Explicator* lxix (2011), pp. 90-99.

Dickinson's part to move beyond this middleness. Even if this reading is alert to the broader tensions of telos and endlessness in Dickinson, Hughes's Platonic framework commits the poet to a stance that still positions itself 'in conscious relation' to an 'unfathomable Mystery'.[10] My study suggests instead that forms of revisionism in Dickinson's poetry are not a means to escape its state of in-betweenness; rather they provide a resource of investigating what's *in* betweenness at the levels of composition, theme, and form. In so doing, this chapter seeks to complement and complicate David Porter's analysis of her 'unrevised poems', which 'participate in an incomplete universe, exploiting the virtues of nonclosure'.[11]

The *OED* notes that the first of several variations of 'in-betweenness' entered the language in 1760 as 'betweenity', followed by 'in-between' in 1815, and 'betwixt and between' in 1832. These coinages tend to have less than positive valences, denoting an intermediateness of quality or a disorienting sense of what is neither here nor there. 'Betweenness' can easily be recruited back to teleological tropes; it lends itself to tripartite structures that tend to conceive of the value of betweenness as something on the way to another destination – such as the occurrence of life between Fall and redemption. In-betweenness, however, does not so easily cede to such structures. The birth of the term reflects how this version of the incomplete was taking on new ways of thinking. How the notion of being 'between' can itself be a deeply ambiguous idea is evident in Dickinson's own handling of the word.[12] At one point, she describes, 'Between the form of Life and Life | The difference is as big | As Liquor at the Lip between | And liquor in the Jug'.[13] These lines offer something like a circular definition, and the oppositional positions of the word at the start and end of lines make it increasingly difficult to pinpoint its sense. Elsewhere, she observes: 'A Night – there lay the Days between – | The Day that was Before – | And Day that was behind – were One –'.[14] Is 'between' designed to separate here or join things up? Like a poet's textual revisions between drafts, the word can imagine both connections and blockages.

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[10] Glenn Hughes, *A More Beautiful Question: The Spiritual in Poetry and Art* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2011), p. 63, p. 65, p. 85. Hughes bases this 'in-between world' on readings of Plato, employing the term 'metaxy' to depict 'human consciousness as an "in-between" of worldly and transcendent realities [. . .] a mode of creaturely existence co-constituted by immanent (spatiotemporal) and transcendent formative sources' (5).

[11] David Porter, 'Dickinson's Unrevised Poems', *Dickinson and Audience*, eds. M. Orzeck and R. Weisbuch (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 11-29: 27.

[12] She employs the word 'between' fifty-eight times across her poems. It occurs on thirty-one occasions (53%) at line-endings and twenty (34%) at the start of lines – from a search of a digitised version of *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. T. H. Johnson (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1997).

[13] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 976.

[14] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 605.

The remainder of this section provides the editorial frame for this chapter's discussion of Dickinson's revisionism, examining the implications that result from the contrasting ways she has been presented to us on the page. This chapter then turns to the poet's resistance to telos. Focusing on her scepticism of redemption in death, it asks what these inquiries might tell us about the end of a poem. This leads into a discussion of the rhythmic revisions in Dickinson's prose, which show how she was occupied with patterns of non-ending in her reworking not only of her own words but also forms of writing. In the next section, I look at how Dickinson's references to 'pause' and its formal equivalents are designed to structure life in the midst. The last section begins by looking at the poet's famous image of 'Circumference'. I suggest that this symbol might be re-evaluated to reflect her attraction to non-closure in composition, before examining how this figure informs other aspects of Dickinson's textual changes and stylistic patterns of revisionism in her 'final' poems.

When Dickinson's poems were officially published in 1890, her editors were upfront about the strangeness of her style.[15] Thomas Wentworth Higginson describes in the 'Preface' to the first edition how she was 'curiously indifferent to all conventional rules' and yet displayed a 'rigorous literary standard of her own, and often altered a word many times to suit an ear which had its own tenacious fastidiousness'. When Higginson says that we read Dickinson's poems 'with rain and dew and earth still clinging to them', he allows that tenacity to change into an organic metaphor for the rugged impression left by her poems: 'these verses will seem to the reader like poetry torn up by the roots [. . .] giving a freshness and a fragrance not otherwise to be conveyed.'[16] Elsewhere, however, Higginson notes that even if Dickinson's thought retains its 'full strength', conveying 'wonderful strokes and felicities', it remains an 'incomplete and unsatisfactory whole' without the 'proper control and chastening of literary expression'.[17]

As a result, the first editing of Dickinson's poetry complied with, rather than resisted, what Higginson called the 'enforced conformity of accepted ways'.[18] The regularisation of her

[15] The lasting influence of Todd's and Higginson's editing of Dickinson is traceable in twentieth-century editions of her poetry, including *Poems by Emily Dickinson* (1927) and The Modern Library's *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1996); see Gabrielle Dean, 'Emily Dickinson's "Poetry of the Portfolio"', *Text* xiv (2002), pp. 241-276: 262-3.
[16] T. W. Higginson, 'Preface', *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, eds. M. L. Todd and T. W. Higginson (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1890), pp. iv-vi.
[17] Thomas W. Higginson, 'An Open Portfolio' (1890), repr. in *The Recognition of Emily Dickinson: Selected Criticism*, eds. C. R. Blake and C. F. Wells (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), pp. 3-10: 3
[18] Higginson, 'Preface', p. iii.

capitalisation, lineation, and punctuation is well-documented. What's most striking, perhaps, is the removal of the vast majority of the poet's signature dashes, transforming the visual texture of her verse. Take this poem as it compares with its first fair copy as presented in Franklin's *Variorum*:

> A DEATH-BLOW is a life-blow to some
> Who, till they died, did not alive become;
> Who, had they lived, had died, but when
> They died, vitality begun. (*Poems 1890*, p. 187)

> A Death blow – is a Life blow – to Some –
> Who, till they died,
> Did not alive – become –
> Who had they lived
> Had died, but when
> They died, Vitality begun – (*PED*, ii. 879)

In Higginson's and Todd's editing, the series of paradoxes which structure the poem is made more intelligible. Sense is guided more clearly by punctuation and lineation, which delineate the relative clauses, whereas in Dickinson's draft these aspects of form work a bit like the jarring 'blows' dealt to the poem's apathetic target. Here, they arrest the reader in the process of reading the text, rather than assisting them to a moment of clarity at its end. Harold Bloom has suggested how the circumstances of this poem might apply to poets who 'subvert the immortality of their precursors, as though any one poet's afterlife could be metaphorically prolonged at the expense of another's'.[19] His point is that the living poet is able to gather impetus safe in the knowledge of his survival, but this way of living is not wholly endorsed in Dickinson's poem because its syntactical returns twist experiences together like a mobius strip. This type of life after death becomes an increasingly knotty issue.

When Thomas Johnson published his three-volume *Poems of Emily Dickinson* in 1955, he presented a different, more unstable, version of the poetry. This edition, Johnson explained, was to free Dickinson from the 'incubus of good intentions' that had plagued her afterlife through 'textual emendations in the direction of conformity'.[20] Unlike previous editions, his was shorn of the thematic groupings of earlier editions in favour of a 'chronological

[19] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 151.
[20] Thomas H. Johnson, 'Introduction', *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Including Variant Readings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts*, ed. T. H. Johnson, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), I. xliv-xlv.

arrangement', even if, as Johnson grants, it was approximate 'at best'.[21] Added to this, Johnson preserved the poet's errant spellings and grammatical 'accidentals'. At the same time, he began to make a case for some of the perplexing aspects of Dickinson's style, proposing that those medial dashes which served 'no grammatical function' were often 'visual representations of a musical beat' and observed her 'predilection for what seemed to be a subjunctive mood' and 'for an indefinite or continuing present'.[22] It's fitting that Johnson hones in on these elements not simply as mistakes, because in the context of his variable Dickinson these verbal moods contribute to an air somewhere between presentism and yearning.[23]

If part of the strength of Dickinson's writing is its lack of finish, then editing her work for publication risks eradicating its 'freshness and fragrance'. Set into neat lines of print, her thoughts acquire an orderliness that belies the more flexible and mobile qualities that characterise her experiences. We might note that on one of the two occasions 'fragrant' appears in her poetry, as the poet sets her sights on 'the transient, fragrant Snow', it is this ephemeral aspect she picks up on.[24] Her commitment to non-committal revision hasn't gone unnoticed in critical accounts of her poetry. Sharon Cameron's theory of the poet's 'choosing not choosing' has showed how important revisionism is both to Dickinson's compositions and to her poetic thinking. It is a 'phenomenon complexly *integral* to the poem,' Cameron argues, 'rather than anterior or exterior to it.'[25] Thinking along these lines, Joanne O'Leary has called Dickinson a 'poet of second thoughts', suggesting that her margins of work reveal a 'sub-stream of second lives'.[26] Revision, then, does not have to be a sign that a poet has discovered ambiguity in their work; it might itself be a kind of ambiguity, supplementing the surface level sense of a poem.

Observations such as these disclose a pattern in which literary-critical appraisals of Dickinson follow questions of editing. Most notably, Virginia Jackson has claimed that it would be a 'mistake' to understand her poetry as a 'set of lyrics'. It's her 'posthumous transmission and reception of her writing', idealising lyric poetry as a 'temporally self-present

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[21] Johnson, 'Introduction', p. lxi.
[22] Ibid., p. lxiii, p. xlvi.
[23] Erica McAlpine, for example, has suggested that verbs of this sort are 'uninflected'; *The Poet's Mistake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 91.
[24] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 1004.
[25] Sharon Cameron, *Choosing not Choosing: Dickinson's Fascicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 71. Elsewhere, Cameron has suggested that to 'see a poem contextualized by a fascicle is sometimes to see that it has an altogether different, rather than only a relationally more complex, meaning when it is read in sequence rather than as an isolated lyric'; 'Fascicles', *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, eds. G. Grabher, R. Hagenbüchle, and C. Miller (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), pp. 138-160: 149.
[26] Joanne O'Leary, 'Emily Dickinson's Second Thoughts', *The Cambridge Quarterly* xlvi (2017), pp. 65-72: 65.

or unmediated' genre, that is to blame for this conception of Dickinson.[27] To some extent, Jackson's is an argument from silence, taking note of the fact that the poet herself never referred to her poems as lyrics. And yet, we might note how the start of one of Dickinson's letters prizes the possibility of 'unmediated' thoughts: 'A Letter always feels to me like immortality because it is the mind alone without corporeal friend. Indebted in our talk to attitude and accent, there seems a spectral power in thought that walks alone'.[28] Moreover, Scott Brewster has pointed out broader limitations in Jackson's claim. The 'oral convention, or necessary fiction, of the speaking lyric "I"', he writes, allows us to bring together poems termed 'lyric' from different periods and 'some of the assumptions underpinning the modern idea of lyric are already visible well before Romanticism.'[29] In many ways, the revisionism intrinsic to Dickinson's work is not a stamping out of lyrical tendencies. Quite the opposite, it often resembles the 'mind alone without corporeal friend'.

R. W. Franklin's 'variorum' edition of Dickinson's poetry, which remains the most faithful rendering of her work, is sympathetic to this idea. After facsimile editions of her work had tried to present a different side of Dickinson, and in so doing to consolidate a different conception of her writing not as a living work but as textual artifact, Franklin sought to redress the balance:

> Like every previous appearance of Dickinson's poems [. . .] this edition is based on the assumption that a literary work is separable from its artifact, as Dickinson herself demonstrated as she moved her poems from one piece of paper to another. [. . .] There can be many manifestations of a literary work. Hers was manuscript, this one is typographical.[30]

This is a very different reading of the relations between composition and the attitude to verse form implied in Dickinson's poetry from those editors and critics who subordinate her writing to its historical circumstances. A year later, Franklin would elaborate on these statements, suggesting that the 'entry into her poetry is through her idiom', which implies that the way she uses language might not only resemble the way she sees the world but might provide a shape

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[27] Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 235, p. 212, p. 9. This way of looking at Dickinson is sustained by Alexandra Socarides in *Dickinson Unbound: Paper, Process, Poetics* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[28] To T.W. Higginson, Jun. 1869, *Letters*, p. 460.
[29] Scott Brewster, *Lyric* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 12, p. 71. Stephanie Burt notes that Jackson must have been aware of discussions of the 'lyric' had an ongoing and rich history before the 20th century; 'What is this Thing Called Lyric?', *Modern Philology* cxiii (2016), pp. 422-440: 426.
[30] R. W. Franklin, 'Introduction', *PED*, i. 1-48: 27.

for her compositional processes.[31] The fact that Dickinson's language is often shot through with an allegiance to the here-and-now, for instance, might allow us to see her poems as radiant instants that relate beyond themselves, while not being necessarily tied to a whole. They fall somewhere between the contingency of manuscript form and the patterned experience of typography. Over the next several sections, this chapter explores how, through revision, the poet finds 'How much the present moment means'.[32]

[31] Franklin, 'Introduction', *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 1-14: 11.
[32] Dickinson, *PED*, iii. 1239.

Resisting the End

When Dickinson wrote to Otis Lord in 1882, she closed in on the possibility that pleasure might not only be an ongoing sensation but that irresolution might be a source of it. 'To write you, not knowing where you are, is an unfinished pleasure –', she says, 'Sweeter of course than not writing, because it has a wandering Aim, of which you are the goal –'.[33] 'A wandering Aim' is at heart a contradiction. A precursor of 'wandering' can be traced to the Old English *wandrian*, to "move about aimlessly", and wandering was also closely connected to "making a mistake" or "vacillation" in the Latin verb *error*. In Dickinson's process of revision, we see how the chance to wander overtakes the need to achieve her aims. After starting one poem by observing that 'Each Life converges to some Centre –' or 'A Goal –', she ends up increasingly drawn to the process of endeavour, rather than towards any moment of attainment:

> Yet persevered toward – surer – for the Distance –
> How high –
> Unto the Saints' slow diligence –
> The Sky –
>
> Ungained – it may be – by a Life's low Venture –
> But then –
> Eternity enable the endeavouring
> Again. (*PED*, ii. 688-9)
>
> surer –] stricter – diligence] industry by] in –

When the poet first shared this poem in 1863, only the last four lines were sent to Susan Dickinson, as if getting this uncertain ending right were the best place to begin. In that draft, the lines contained fewer dashes and were lineated like this:

> Ungained – it may be
> By a Life's low Venture –
> But then
> Eternity enable the endeavouring
> Again –

Her final change is slight but significant, as a small cross directs us to 'in –' as an alternative for 'by', which implies that life's 'Venture' is more of an event than a means to an end. Swapping out the terminal dash for one of her rarer full-stops and delaying 'Again' to a line of

[33] To Otis P. Lord, 30 Apr. 1882, *Letters*, p. 727.

its own, Dickinson draws out that moment of re-endeavour at the same time that she makes it sound more discrete. Here, stasis in eternity is not prized; she desires the opportunity to try again. In this section, I want to pursue Dickinson's wariness of a particular teleology: redemption in death. The restructuring of experience that takes place through revision, I suggest, is not a way to bring about total coherence but channels the same sense of non-closure we find in the poems themselves.

Further down the line she preserved her poems in fascicles, a term used by her first editor to describe short bundles or pamphlets of poems that were designed and put together by the poet herself. In effect, these fascicles were the closest she came to a broader project of publication. And yet, this method of revising and collating otherwise isolated poems itself offered an important imaginative resource. It provided Dickinson with a way of keeping her verses in a state of compositional in-betweenness, neither polished (for conventional publication) nor fragmentary (in a rough draft). Take this poem from Fascicle 34:

`	No start in Apprehension's Ear,	[No] click
	No Bankruptcy – no Doom –	[No] Sepulchre – · Wilderness
	But Certainties of Sun –	[of] Noon
	Midsummer – in the Mind –	Meridian [in]
	A steadfast South – upon the Soul –	
	Her polar time – behind –	
	The Vision – pondered long –	
	So plausible becomes	[So] tangible – · positive ~~appears~~
	That I esteem the fiction – real –	[fiction –] true
	The Real – fictious seems –	[The] Truth
	How bountiful the Dream –	
	What Plenty – it would be	
	Had all my Life but been Mistake	[Life] been one · [been] bleak
	Just rectified – in Thee	[Just] qualified – [34]

The hope that meaning might be found in the here and now is embodied in the way that textual revision comes as the solution to the poem's own problem with 'fiction' hardening up into immoveable 'Truth'. As Jonathan Culler writes, 'Fiction is what happened next; lyric is about what happens now', and the composition of Dickinson's poem reveals the extent to which it

[34] Dickinson, *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them*, ed. C. Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 351.

isn't interested in what might be made of the 'Vision' after it's been 'pondered long'.[35] Rather, she seeks a way of preventing experience from being 'rectified' according to our position at a certain moment in time. 'Rectified' or 'qualified': the possible alternative shows up how the desire to sort out life after all's said and done, in reality, does little to offset a life that is 'bleak' in the moment. If she asks elsewhere, 'are not all Facts Dreams as soon as we put them behind us?', then her revisionism seeks to bring that dreamy, uncertain quality into the midst of her work.[36]

Though we often find Dickinson dealing with ideas of telos in religious terms, her writing does not always welcome theological ends. Scholars have repeatedly noted the dominance of religious thought in her writing: Helen Vendler argues that '[r]eligious texts – the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, Christian liturgical ritual – offered Dickinson her only metaphysical vocabulary', and that 'she never found a congenial substitute for religion as a system of order.'[37] One take on textual revision might be that it reveals a writer's system of order reflected in and fortified through compositional choices. Throughout this chapter, I want to query whether a 'system of order' is in fact what Dickinson was ever after. Her sense that plotting might conspire with telos and lock experience into patterns that are too neat or fixed is captured in her poem that begins 'How Human Nature dotes | On what it cant detect', in which she observes that 'The moment that a Plot is plumbed | It's meaning is extinct –'.[38] If a recurring habit of Dickinson's revisions is to leave unresolved variants until the end of the poem, here they are thrust into the middle of the text:

> The moment that a
> plot is plumbed
> It's meaning is extinct –
> import –
> <u>Prospective</u> <u>is</u> <u>extinct –</u>
> Prospective is the
> friend
> Reserved for us
> to know
> When Constancy is
> clarified[39]

[35] Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 226.
[36] Dickinson, 'Prose Fragment 22', *Letters*, p. 915.
[37] Helen Vendler, *Dickinson: Selected Poems and Commentaries* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 14.
[38] Dickinson, *PED*, iii. 1260.
[39] Dickinson, 'How human nature dotes', Amherst, Amherst College Manuscript #223. <https://acdc.amherst.edu/view/asc:9494> (accessed 05/02/2023).

Revising as she goes, Dickinson is able to insert diversions into the composition of her poem on the page. That alternative 'import –' is also suggestive. In the *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, the entry for 'import' classifies it only as a verb meaning to 'transplant from another location' or to 'mean', 'signify', and 'suggest'. In borrowing across grammatical fields, the poet's revision carries out a semantic transference, revising forms of process into a static noun, as if the process of this poem's revision concentrates the story about how the poem came to be more broadly. Meaning is part of a continuous process of forming relations which the poet has momentarily brought to a standstill.

Thinking along different lines from Vendler, Linda Freedman argues that religion is 'more than a context in which to read Dickinson', as she demonstrates 'a deep investment in the poetic thinking through of theological problems and [proves that] she is fascinated by the structures of faith', leading to a 'reciprocally informing relationship' between the two disciplines of poetry and religion.[40] This chapter extends what might be meant by a 'poetic thinking through', and suggests how these strands of thought, though reciprocal, are not on an equal footing in Dickinson's verse. In revising religious ideas in her writing, the poet was also attempting to distance her poetry from certain ideas of telos to which her theological vocabulary risks commitment. Redemption can wear many guises. The term itself is elusive and reaches beyond its religious context at the end of the draft version of one of Dickinson's lyrics from 1874:

> Go slow, my soul,
> to feed thyself
> Opon his rare
> Approach –
> Go rapid, lest
> Competing Death
> Prevail opon the
> Coach –
> should
> Go timid, lest his
> testing
> final eye – blazing
> lofty
> Determine thee amiss –
> But
> Go boldly – for thou

[40] Linda Freedman, *Emily Dickinson and the Religious Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 4, 2.

paid'st his price

Redemption – for a Kiss –
Thy Total –
Being – [41]

Redemption is warranted in the judgement of that 'final eye –' which could also be the 'testing', 'blazing', and 'lofty' eye, and so turns out to be anything but final. On the back of the sheet, redemption itself winds up as a set of variables, potentially as a substitute for a state of self-completion ('Thy Total') or as a more unrefined 'Being'. This isn't redemption in the conventional sense, as a 'deliverance from sin and damnation' or 'deliverance or restoration' (*OED*). Instead, we start to see how reviewing a life in retrospect does not necessarily mean that the sum of its experiences will suddenly become coherent or redeemed. Likewise, the revision of a writer's work might involve making emendations after the main act of composition which do not turn out to draw a text together.

This outlook is articulated in especially bleak terms in Dickinson's poems that explore the point of death. An initial glance at these lyrics reveals how looking to ends beyond the limits of our comprehension is not able to deliver us to a sense of fulfilment or deliver us from mere 'Being –' to a redeemed totality. One poem that starts ''Twas just this time, last year, I died' finds its speaker reminiscing fondly about sights and scenes of her former life from its 'Red – Apples' to the 'Christmas glee'. Yielding to increasing grief at what's been left behind, she notes, 'And so, I thought the other way, | How just this time, some perfect year – | Themself, should come to me –'.[42] This can only occur if personal immortality is true, and we might note how it remains just a 'thought' here. This sort of immortality starts to become twisted into something closer to a wager than a consolation. Dickinson would return to this anxiety with heightened morbidity at the close of her poem that famously begins 'I died for Beauty – but was scarce | Adjusted in the Tomb':

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night –
We talked between the Rooms –
Until the Moss had reached our lips –
And covered up – Our names – (*PED*, i. 470)

[41] Dickinson, 'Go slow, my soul, to feed thyself', Amherst, Amherst College MS #195.
[42] Dickinson, *PED*, i. 369.

The lyric ends with a possible double-death, but the speaker lives on to tell the tale. And yet, this does not feel like heaven. The reader has taken the place of one of the interlocutors. Like many of her lyrics with submerged addressees, this one is especially open to the possibility of its talk being overheard 'between the Rooms'. When John Stuart Mill sought to define what poetry 'is', he saw it as distinct from 'eloquence' which 'is *heard*': poetry 'is *over*heard' and conceived as 'feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude.'[43] This might not be true of all poems, but Mill's idea of solitary confessions is an apt description of Dickinson's compositional habits during her own prolonged seclusion, and it strikes at a form of in-betweenness that is sought after in her poems.

Textual variants left unresolved throughout her work are one way Dickinson situates her poems between writer and reader, not only because in the private composition of her poetry she is able to become her own interlocutor, but also because these co-existent alternatives on the page relinquish control of the compositional process to the reader. They are what Fordham has called in a different context 'settled indecision', not only shaping the internal relations of a poem through textual revision but offering a shape via which future readers might approach them.[44] Culler notes that the 'bold wager of poetic apostrophe is that the lyric can displace a time of narrative, of past events reported, and place us in the continuing present of apostrophic address, the "now" in which, for readers, a poetic event can repeatedly occur.'[45] If this is a wager, then Dickinson stacks the odds in her favour by committing a reader to recompose the poem. In this respect, her poems are not only betwixt and between because they occur between writer and reader but because they do not happen post-composition. They happen in its midst.

Of course, how a poem might fare in an afterlife of this kind is unpredictable. Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1927) restates the possible fading into obscurity at the end of 'I died for Beauty', when his narrator observes how 'a book is a huge cemetery in which on the majority of the tombs the names are effaced and can no longer be read.' This form of posthumous communion detracts from the vision of literary survival, extending the same anxiety Tennyson had probed in *In Memoriam* that 'each, who seems a separate whole' might

[43] J. S. Mill, 'What is Poetry?' (1833), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J. M. Robson, 33 vols. (1963-91; repr. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1996), ii. 348.
[44] Finn Fordham, *I do, I undo, I redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 104. Sara Berrey has noted that the result of variants is the 'reader's complicity – a forced engagement without a forced decision'; *Generations in Print: Revision in American Literature 1850-1900,* University of Minnesota (2008), PhD Thesis, p. 57.
[45] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 226.

remerge 'in the general Soul'.[46] On the other hand, Proust remarks, it's possible that 'we remember a name well enough but do not know whether anything of the individual who bore it survives in our pages'.[47] Part of this anxiety is concentrated in Dickinson's indirect addressees because, like theological redemption, literary address involves projecting a voice beyond any knowable end without a guarantee that it will be picked up at all. If Mill's 'eloquence' supposes a listener to begin with, then part of what makes poetic apostrophe a 'bold wager', as Culler puts it, is that one of its eventualities is that the poem could end up resembling an unanswered prayer.[48]

The anxiety that we are unable to inhabit the absence of cognitive and bodily sensation after our death, one which Dickinson's posthumous re-imaginings of the self cannot shake, is given further psychological depth by Freud. 'We cannot, indeed, imagine our own death', he writes in *Reflections on War and Death*: 'whenever we try to do so we find that we survive ourselves as spectators [. . .] at bottom no one believes in his own death, which amounts to saying: in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his immortality.' Imagining our life after death is, therefore, a kind of false transcendence. It is also guided by a deep-seated need to ignore that 'necessary termination of life' which Freud says each one of us 'owes nature' and should therefore 'be prepared to pay his debt'.[49] His transactional metaphors investigate the problem of irretrievable loss softened by promises of religious salvation. What kind of survival is it if we survive ourselves 'as spectators'? Dickinson's poem that begins 'I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –' allows us to imagine how this plays out:

> I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –
> The Stillness in the Room
> Was like the Stillness in the Air –
> Between the Heaves of Storm –
>
> The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –
> And Breaths were gathering firm
> For that last Onset – when the King
> Be witnessed – in the Room –
>
> I willed my Keepsakes – Signed away

[46] Tennyson, *TP*, ii. 364.
[47] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Vol. VI: Time Regained*, trans. A. Mayor and T. Kilmartin, rev. ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), p. 310.
[48] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 226.
[49] Sigmund Freud, *Reflections on War and Death*, trans. A. A. Brill and A. B. Kuttner (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918), p. 41, p. 40.

> What portion of me be
> Assignable – and then it was
> There interposed a Fly –
>
> With Blue – uncertain – stumbling Buzz –
> Between the light – and me –
> And then the Windows failed – and then
> I could not see to see – (*PED*, ii. 587-8)
>
> *Title* Dying 2 in the Room] round my form 5 around] beside 6 firm] sure 8 the Room] his power 10 be] I 11] Could make assignable, – and then

It's one of the few poems Dickinson herself titled, and we might note how 'Dying' as an entry point to the text goes against the grain of the opening line's 'when I died', as if its posthumous ambitions would always have to cede to the inevitable process of the title. Indeed, Freud's account of spectatorship becomes increasingly recognisable in the poet's revisions. The first-person ('when I died') slips into a more detached vision of 'The Stillness round my form'. It's because of that sustained focus on the speaker's physical form that we feel the rift opening up between her attempt to inhabit her own mind after the point of death and the third-person spectating perspective where she ends up. The more the poet reviews the details of her self, the stranger she becomes.

Returning again at its close to the moment of death, the poem's local and broader patterns of repetition enact how the speaker's spectating of death falls short of the rapture she expects. The syntax of the second stanza charges the arrival of Christ with a sense of unresolved anticipation: the pluperfect tense ('had wrung') gives away to a continuous imperfect ('were gathering') before the present 'Be witnessed', which gathers a Biblical resonance through the subjunctive mood.[50] Helen Vendler has argued that *and then*s in Dickinson are a sign of how her 'accretive work of thinking "fills up" with serial incidents'. They embody a desirable 'chromatic *advance*' contrasted with the 'faux-chromatic *repetition* of aftermath'.[51] Here, however, Dickinson's *and then*s lie somewhere between the two. We might hear in them the exhilarating anticipation of a more naïve voice as well as the older resigned poet. The poem exists as the interposition.

[50] The opening verses of Genesis, for instance, are dominated by the subjunctive: 'Let there be light' (1:3); 'Let there be a firmament' (1:6); 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered' (1:9).
[51] Helen Vendler, 'Emily Dickinson Thinking: Rearranging Seriality', *Poets Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), p. 66, p. 75.

'Interposed' is a curiously formal version of the kinds of coming between the poem reaches for, drawing our attention to the different model of life after death the poem proposes. As the poem's speaker moves from being 'Between the Heaves of Storm –', a period of uneventfulness, to something coming 'Between the light – and me', the 'Fly' works as a form of brokerage between questions of connection and severance. Initially, the second 'between' seems to have a separative force, as the reality of death severs the speaker from the 'light'. And yet, the medial 'Buzz' contains the possibility of a connection at the expense of being severed from the telos of the 'light'. As the word undergoes a transformation from its previously capitalised form, sound is transmuted into a more tangible entity. When readers subvocalise the onomatopoeic word, it reignites the event of sound that is embodied in the poem. The fact that the fly's 'Buzz' carries forward the quality of 'Blue' from the fly itself envisages not a redemption in death but a renewal in the middle of experience.

It's possible that the poem continues to prove its own point by sounding out its forebears. Dickinson's association of 'blue' with 'Fly' brings to mind Tennyson's own 'blue fly' from 'Mariana': 'All day within the dreamy house, | The doors upon their hinges creaked | The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse | Behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked, | Or from the crevice peered about.'[52] There were at least eight different volumes of Tennyson's work in her family's library, and her letters reveal that she had read his work.[53] It's a suggestive image to find revisited in Dickinson's work because of its importance in the context of 'Mariana' as a 'concentrated image of the writer's ability to carve out a private space within a public language as he transforms suffering into art', as Robert Douglas-Fairhurst observes; in Tennyson's hands it projects a 'frail counter-voice to the general drive doomwards'.[54] For Dickinson's poetic speakers, that 'general drive doomwards' is the trajectory that experience might take in a world shorn of telos. As I have been suggesting, however, part of Dickinson's poetic project is to find way of sustaining itself in a world of this sort.

The emergence of poetry in unlikely places is evidence of this survival. Sarah Wilder has suggested that poems embedded in her letters are inextricable from their 'prose surroundings' and we 'turn them into fragments only by our own act of misreading'. These poems 'respond to the prose, enacting and embodying it. What the prose implies, the poetry

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[52] Tennyson, *TP*, i. 209.
[53] See Jack L. Capps, *Emily Dickinson's Reading: 1836-1886* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 92.
[54] Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Tennyson', *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. M. O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 596-616: 606.

explores'.[55] There are, however, more hazy and suggestive overlaps between the two forms, as Aliki Barnstone has discerned: 'many of the letters *are* poems' and a great deal of what have been called her letters are 'indistinguishable from her poetry in subject, structure, meter and rhyme patterns'.[56] Part of the point, I would add, is that the distinction needs to stay intact because Dickinson consciously plays on this boundary rather than letting one form wholly assert itself over the other.

A letter Dickinson sent to Higginson reflects on ideas of self-control, but its rhythmical patternings offer a metaphorical analogue of her revisionism and similarly reflect on questions of order and disorder. A paragraph at the start scans almost perfectly when divided according to her punctuation: 'I **had** no **Mon**arch **in** my **life**, and **can**not rule my**self**, and **when** I **try** to **org**an**ize** – my **litt**le **Force** ex**plodes** – and **leaves** me **bare** and **charred** –'.[57] Stresses do not just fall on significant words. The first four clauses assimilate themselves to alternating tetrameters and trimeters while the final line again has three feet. It is unclear whether the verbs 'rule' and 'organize' are intransitive or active – is it that the poet cannot maintain control over *herself*, or that she herself is unable to take the place of a ruling power? In the revisioning of the natural rhythms of speech into these rhythmical units, the poet starts on the backfoot because the two *I*s find themselves in unstressed positions, as she, like the cadences of her prose, is subject to forces beyond herself. Although this sentence represents the destructive 'little Force' as leaving in ruins any attempt to 'organise', the rhythmical patterns themselves become a kind of organising principle. These sentences become a tussle between prose and poetry, between pattern making and contingency.

Metre in English is not contextually, or contractually, bound to the subject matter it conveys. Its capacity to accommodate contrasting tones and subjects within the same acoustic shape is picked up on in Richard Parker's *Aids to English Composition* (1844), a textbook with which Dickinson was certainly familiar.[58] Parker notes that iambic pentameter was 'the principal metre of our language, and it is happily adapted to every kind of subject, from the

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[55] Sarah Wilder, 'Corresponding Worlds: The Art of Emily Dickinson's Letters', *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 1 (1992), pp. 19-38: 19-20; 35.
[56] Aliki Barnstone, *Changing Rapture: Emily Dickinson's Poetic Development* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006), p. 113. Her argument can be traced back to Jack Spicer's idea that in seeing the poet's letters as 'experiments in heightened prose combined with poetry, a new approach to her letters opens up'; Jack Spicer (1956), quoted in Susan Howe, *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), p. 152n.
[57] To T. W. Higginson, Aug. 1862, in *Letters*, p. 414.
[58] See Erika Scheurer, '"[S]o of course there was Speaking and Composition –": Dickinson's Early Schooling as a Writer', *The Emily Dickinson Journal* xviii (2009), pp. 1-12.

most exalted to the most humble and familiar'.[59] In Dickinson's letter above, those borrowings of the rhythmical phrases of common metre hymns might test how far the poet's own ideas of order are out of touch, for instance, with the model of controlling monarchy in Isaac Watt's hymns: 'There the great Monarch of the skies | His saving power displays' or 'the following page he turns, | And treads the monarch down.'[60] In this way, even if the same rhythms recur across time, they are able to illuminate the junctures and disparities between 'the time *of* the composition and the time *in* the composition', as Gertrude Stein has suggested.[61] Accordingly, revisionism might not only help to weave a text but be woven into it.

In his essay, 'Redeeming the Time', Geoffrey Hill posits that if 'language is more than a vehicle for the transmission of axioms and concepts, rhythm is correspondingly more than a psychological motor. It is capable of registering, mimetically, deep shocks of recognition'.[62] Echo and allusion can include forms of writing as well as the words themselves, and in borrowing rhythms across time and literary disciplines, Dickinson concentrates the deep shocks of recognition that revision can evoke when new ways of thinking unexpectedly encounter in writing old grooves of thought. Indeed, the letter above is not an isolated incident. She writes again to Higginson in the same year, describing the changeability of her feelings in prose that is similarly rhythmically wayward:

> Death was much of Mob as **I** could **mast**er – **then** – And **when** far **aft**er**ward** – a **sud**den **light** on **Orch**ards, or a new fashion in the wind troubled my attention – I **felt** a **pal**sy, **here** – the **Vers**es **just** rel**ieve** – [63]

The laxer prose rhythms of 'or a new fashion in the wind troubled my attention' suggest the speaker's pliancy to the spontaneity of experience, as if the regular pulse of verse is incapable of pinning down the highly irregular pulses of real life, before the subsequent rhythmic patterns reflect a renewed diligence of thought that wrenches the writer back out of the disorder. 'As *I* could *mast*er – *then* –' remains in earshot as the trimetre re-emerges in 'I *felt* a *pal*sy, *here* –'. 'Then' and 'here' do not sound too sure of themselves, concentrating the rupture Stein identifies between the time of composition and the temporality in the writing. In these rhythmic

[59] Richard Parker, *Aids to English Composition: Prepared for Students of All Grades* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1847), p. 240.
[60] Isaac Watts, *An Arrangement of the Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of Isaac Watts* (Massachusetts: Loring, Lincoln & Edmands, 1832).
[61] Gertrude Stein, 'Composition as Explanation', repr. *A Stein Reader*, ed. U. E. Dydo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp. 493-503: 502.
[62] Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. K. Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 91.
[63] To Higginson, 8 Jun. 1862, *Letters*, p. 255.

revisions, Dickinson comes to the shock of recognition that she is not alone in confronting the dilemmas her letters describe and is thereby able to reinvest into an ongoing pattern of response across kindred forms of writing.

Written on the back of a flier around 1867, the draft of one of Dickinson's lyrics illustrates the ways in which revisionary influences might not be determined, or deterministic. They could be a creative resource rather than a blockage:

None who say it ever told it	they [who]
'Tis as his as Death	
Had for that specific treasure	
A departing breath –	
Surfaces may be invested	[Surfaces] can [be] related
Did the Diamond grow	
General as the Dandelion	~~Gentle~~ [as]
Would you serve it so?	[you] seek[64]

One question that seems to linger behind Dickinson's image of a 'specific treasure' bequeathed in death is what might be made of her poems once they end up in a reader's hands. Seen in the context of Dickinson's revisions, that 'departing breath' resembles the 'all-sustaining air' of Romantic poets mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. In the 'dialogue that takes place between Romantic and post-Romantic poems,' Michael O'Neill goes on to observe, 'each can find in the other both "counter-love, original response" and an "embodiment" that challenges preconceptions.'[65] Here, Dickinson's textual changes imagine what possible shapes the dialogue between poems might take, because her emendations to the fifth line tell two different stories of revisionism: 'surfaces *may* be *invested*' and they '*can* be *related*'. The latter echoes Wordsworth's Fancy as a fitting rubric for revision, not needing the 'surfaces' of texts to become wholly coherent: it enables connections to be made without committing them to direct lines of influence. The fact that these relations *may* or *can* be drawn suggests how a text offers itself to future revisions like an open invitation in a spirit of both beneficence and restraint.

I have been suggesting in this section that a resistance to telos bridges forms of thought and forms of verse in Dickinson's writing. It's through her process of revision that the poet strengthens a claim she would make for verse form in a late fragment: 'To see the Summer Sky

[64] Dickinson, *Poems: As She Preserved Them*, p. 539.
[65] Michael O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air: Romantic Legacies and Renewals in British, American, and Irish Poetry since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 22, p. 5.

| Is Poetry, though never in a Book it lie – | True Poems flee –'.[66] If coming to a dead stop remains an insufficient model of closure in poetry, then what might suffice? In the next section, I discuss Dickinson's response to various different kinds of cessation in her verse, focusing in particular on versions of 'pause'. I argue that 'pausing' offers a helpful way of conceiving of the momentariness of Dickinson's texts and their existence as an ongoing process.

[66] Dickinson, *PED*, iii. 1309.

Pause for Thought

Moments of silent reflection suffuse Dickinson's verse. Formal embodiments and images of the inaudible go pointedly hand-in-hand; for example, as Dierdre Fagan has noted, the 'coincidence of dashes' with 'words such as "pause" and the rarer full-stop with "period" can be no accident'.[67] We might further note that not only do various verbal and substantive forms of 'pause' occur (at my count) on twenty-two occasions across her oeuvre, they typically enjoy positive associations. In one lyric, the speaker observes that 'Without Debate – or Pause – | No different Our Years would be | From Anno Dominies –':

> Forever – is composed of Nows –
> 'Tis not a different time –
> Except for Infiniteness –
> And Latitude of Home –
>
> From this – experienced Here –
> Remove the Dates – to These –
> Let Months dissolve in further Months –
> And Years – exhale in Years –
>
> Without Debate – or Pause –
> Or Celebrated Days –
> No different Our Years would be
> From Anno Dominies – (*PED*, ii. 662-663)
>
> 7 further] other – 9 Debate –] Certificate – 11 No different] As infinite –

Revising from 'Different' to 'As infinite –', the poet casts the chief problem she identifies with a life without 'pause' as an unorganised boundlessness. Dickinson's poetry might be characterised by a sense of the 'now' shot through with the possibilities of 'forever', but here she worries that the momentary might be swallowed up in 'Infiniteness'. So, in one of her later poems, she insists, 'But nature and mankind must pause | To pay you scrutiny'.[68] Pause occasions consideration and rethinking. Whatever else they might be up to, her internal dashes form tiny textual movements in Dickinson's writing that fall somewhere between stopping things and extending them further.

[67] Deirdre Fagan, 'Emily Dickinson's Unutterable Word', *The Emily Dickinson Journal* xxiv (2005), 70-75, p. 70.
[68] Dickinson, *PED*, iii. 1495.

The strangeness of Dickinson's precluded expectations in the midst of her verse is shown in the patterns of self-revisions like the opening stanza of a poem from fascicle 10. Here the speaker describes 'That Stop-sensation – on my Soul':

> I got so I could hear his name –
> Without – Tremendous gain –
> That Stop-sensation – on my Soul –
> And Thunder – in the Room –
>
> I got so I could walk across
> That Angle in the floor,
> Where he turned so, and I turned – how –
> And all our Sinew tore – (*PED*, i. 314-5)
>
> 1 hear] think – · <u>take –</u> 7 turned – how –] let go –

The medial caesura in line three, compounded by the dash, resists the stop that is semantically implied. Even as the speaker directs us to a halt, we quickly move on. Although the caesura creates a 'stop-sensation' of its own, the aural energies of the verse assimilate it to a wider pattern of sound, making it just a pause. In her textual revisions from 'turned – how –' to 'let go –', Dickinson is alive to the link between the Latin *vertere* ("to turn") and verse, and so inflects poetic turnings with a sense that they too might involve letting go of former thoughts.[69] Note also how 'hear' becomes tangled up in a nexus of variants with 'think' and 'take', strengthening the sense that this moment of temporary stasis is also a pause for thought. After the end of 'sensation', '*on*' demands a retuned pitch, which registers how the sensation is changed during the pause. Sound dissents from sense in these lines to suggest that the pauses of the kind we encounter in poetry are far from mere inertia.

This imaginative pattern, which entwines cessation with momentum, impresses itself on various levels of Dickinson's writing, from her syntax to her modes of revision. For Marianne Moore, the cognitive capacity of a pause is not merely one of poetry's formal effects. It is part of its very fabric: 'Poetry is a magic of pauses', she says, 'not a thing of tunes, but of heightened consciousness'.[70] If pausing is the sort of consciousness Moore identifies *as* poetry, then in Dickinson's verse pauses comprise the contours of style over which the contingencies of thought might momentarily settle and take shape. What I want to suggest in this section is that

[69] A note in Dickinson's grammar book spells out this link, as Parker says, 'The word verse is derived from the Latin language, and signifies *a turning*. The propriety of the name will be seen in the fact that when we have finished a line we *turn* to the other side of the page to commence another'; *Aids to English Composition*, p. 230.
[70] Marianne Moore, quoted in *American Peoples Encyclopedia* (New York: Grolier, 1965).

this provisional version of coming to an end offers an appropriately flexible and amenable form for the revisionary dynamic of her writing.

Dickinson's style of tentative stopping has been associated with 'hesitation' by Susan Howe, who claims that Dickinson 'audaciously invented a new grammar grounded in humility and hesitation. HESITATE from the Latin, meaning to stick. Stammer. To hold back in doubt, have difficulty speaking'.[71] And yet, we might contrast hesitation with pausing as a cause for missing out on experience. Speaking of the foibles we might detect in an artist's 'vices of execution', Ruskin conceded that 'He may pause, but he must not hesitate – and tremble, but must not vacillate', and the possible consequences of such vacillation are hinted at in Dickinson's poems on cessation.[72] In one poem, she insists 'if He hesitate – | My Message – must be told –'; elsewhere, she describes the transience of how 'Bumblebees come – | Hover – hesitate – | Drink, and are gone –', while in the second stanza of that poem in fascicle 5 the speaker self-consciously says, 'Butterflies pause | On their passage Cashmere – | I – softly plucking, | Present them here!'[73] Further revisions were made to another copy that the poet herself retained:

> South winds jostle them.
> Bumblebees come –
> Hover – hesitate – drink – and are gone –
> Butterflies pause – on their passage Cashmere –
> I – softly plucking –
> Present them here – (*PED*, i. 136)

Dashes proliferate in the poem's revisions, concentrating a latent sense of fragility as those inner lines are threaded out like a skein of the 'Cashmere' pictured in the text. Whereas forms of stopping such as ceasing, hesitations, and delays may be lapses in thought and inattentiveness, pausing, on the other hand, offers a form of capacity.

The textual changes above fit into a broader pattern of revision in which Dickinson changed the punctuation of numerous line-endings from exclamation marks to dashes when she returned to her poems to copy them into the fascicles. Initially, 'Ambition cannot find him!' had its first line punctuated in this way when its pencil copy was written around the summer of 1859. Later, the poet changed the exclamation point to a dash. In another lyric, she had

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[71] Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1985), p. 21. The capitalisation is Howe's.
[72] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin, Vol. 4: Modern Painters II,* eds. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (1903; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 284n, p. 286n.
[73] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 652; i. 136.

described how 'The falling of a word | Was needless – as at Sacrament – | The *Wardrobe* – of Our Lord!' but altered that last line to 'The Wardrobe – of Our Lord –' in fascicle 13.[74] Malcolm Parkes notes that the original term for the exclamation point was *punctus admirativus*: the 'mark of wonder'.[75] Indeed, the Latin *admiratio* denotes a state of "astonishment" or "veneration", a condition suited to the certainty of telos. Fixed in lines of print, however, those beliefs are afforded another hearing. Dickinson was well aware that when put under the spotlight, even the deepest held convictions can start to waver. '[A] pen has so many inflections and a Voice but one', she once pointed out, and the possible tones that might attach to her punctuation allow it to galvanise uncertainty as it simultaneously ironizes how easily some people's emotions can get the better of them.[76] The revised dashes make us dwell on the propositions they flank, and so draw out that tension between the unwavering adherence to principles of telos and the contingencies of the form in which they are described.

If pausing can create these effects at the end of the line, it's suggestive that Dickinson wanted to take these pauses and drag them into the midst of her writing. One of her earliest letters from January 1850 to Joel Norcross affords a glimpse at the poet's use of the dash before it had been used in any of her extant poems:

> I call upon all nature to lay hold of you – let fire burn – and water drown – and light put out – and tempests tear – and hungry wolves eat up – and lightning strike – and thunder stun – let friends desert – and enemies draw night and gibbets *shake* but never *hang* the house you walk about in![77]

Most of these clauses require us to supply an object and so complete their sense, as if the typographical pauses hold the passage's process of sense-making in a state of suspension. Each phrase is also paratactically aligned, and so they gather not only an accretive momentum through those dashes but also a force of concurrence. In contrast, many of Dickinson's early poems employ dashes primarily in final positions.[78] Her first ten poems, starting with 'Awake ye muses nine, sing me a strain divine' in March 1850 have a total of 54 dashes. Starting in

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[74] Dickinson, *PED*, i. 148-9; i. 344-5.
[75] Malcolm Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), p. 49.
[76] To T.W. Higginson, Aug. 1876, *Letters*, p. 559.
[77] To Joel Warren Norcross, 11 Jan. 1850, *Letters*, p. 78.
[78] In Poem 1 (in the *Variorum* edition), Kamilla Denman 'cannot stress sufficiently how completely conventional she [Dickinson] was in her earliest poetic punctation'. This poem, in particular, contains 'only two of the dashes for which she was to become (in)famous' while it has 'five semi-colons and one colon [. . .] and fifty-nine commas'; 'Emily Dickinson's Volcanic Punctuation', *The Emily Dickinson Journal* ii (1993), pp. 22-46: 45.

April 1814, Dickinson's first ten letters have approximately 128 dashes in total, and her lengthy second letter alone accounts for around a third of them. Looking at her first ten letters from January 1850, however, there is already a total of 548 dashes. It would seem that her fondness for the dash was a facility nurtured in her letters before bringing it across into her poetry. She was not just dashing into poetry after writing her letters and bringing the dashes along with her.

These points where the poet finds herself betwixt-and-between concentrate her ongoing arbitrations between the successive churn of life and her need to capture the meaning of particular events before they vanish. Writing to her friend Abiah Root in 1851, the poet is drawn to pauses as a way of valuing life in the middle of experience:

> It would seem my dear Abiah that out of all the moments crowding this little world a *few* might be vouchsafed to spend with those we love – a *separated* hour – an hour more pure and true than *ordinary* hours, when we could *pause* a moment before we journey on – we had a *pleasant* time talking the other morning – had I known it was *all my portion*, mayhap I'd *improved* it more – but it never'll come back again to try whether or no.[79]

Stressing '*pause*', Dickinson encourages us to listen more attentively to both its intransitive and transitive senses; we should take a moment ourselves before moving on, but should also actively pause a moment. Pausing releases a perplexing effect in this passage. It's worth pointing out that Dickinson is not claiming a transcendence of experience. These hours are 'more pure and true' and not wholly abstracted from the 'moments crowding this little world'. Her terminal dash supplements that sense of moving on, just as the word 'pause' itself has built into it implications of what might happen next. Like the various incarnations of her poems that Dickinson sent to various recipients, or the possible poems that might be made out of a single manuscript, pauses allow the poet to imagine possible outcomes without committing to any one of them.

If pauses exist as distinct and discriminating moments in Dickinson's writing, they can reflect the multiplication of thought that Shelley had valued in *Prometheus Unbound* when he wrote, 'As you speak, your words | Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep | With shapes'.[80] In this respect, to pause does not mean to step back from experience, like time out from thinking or a blockage. It lays the foundations for further thought, and this approach is echoed in Dickinson's poetry:

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[79] To Abiah Root, 19 Aug. 1851, *Letters*, p. 130 (Dickinson's emphases).
[80] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound: A Variorum Edition*, ed. L. Zillman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), II. i. 68.

> Great Streets of Silence led away
> To Neighborhoods of Pause –
> Here was no Notice – no Dissent –
> No Universe – no Laws –
>
> By Clocks – 'Twas Morning
> And for Night
> The Bells at distance called –
> But Epoch had no basis – here –
> For Period exhaled – (*PED*, ii. 1011)

These lapses in action offer something like forks in the road: a splitting not a petering out. Revision offers similar moments of pause in the compositional process, where meandering routes that were previously unapparent can reveal themselves. We might wonder where to draw a line under these fractal-like connections? Dickinson's wrestling with this dilemma has much in common with Henry James, whose preface to *Roderick Hudson* proposes that it is art's responsibility to intervene in a world of ever-expanding contingencies and relations:

> Where, for the complete expression of one's subject, does a particular relation stop – giving way to some other not concerned in that expression?
>
> Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so. He is in the perpetual predicament that the continuity of things is the whole matter, for him, of comedy and tragedy; that this continuity is never, by the space of an instant or an inch, broken, and that, to do anything at all, he has at once intensely to consult and intensely to ignore it.[81]

As I suggested at the end of the previous section, Dickinson's revisioning of rhythmic forms reveals the extent to which her writing is alert to the expansive relations it is able to revise and revive in its own small-scale aspects of style. James's preface casts this stopping as a broader tension in art between knowing what to include and what to leave out, but confines these negotiations to the 'geometry' of his own writing. Its collocation of 'Really, univ*ersally, relat*ions' offers a practical demonstration of happenstance relations between words that have no intrinsic connection but have been selected by the writer so that they 'happily *appear*' to. Across Dickinson's writing, the Jamesian 'stopping' she introduces into her writing conveys

[81] Henry James, *Roderick Hudson* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921), p. x.

something of the experience captured in a later fragment: ‘Meeting by Accident, | We hovered by design –’.[82]

A conflict between design and happenstance becomes the focus of her poem that begins ‘I meant to find Her when I Came’, in which pausing seems an increasingly untenable option when confronted with the finality of death. Looking at the manuscript of this lyric, we might see how the time passed between Dickinson’s experience and this ‘single time’ does not resolve her regrets. Returning to the poem, she starts to associate pausing with ways of dwelling on the past:

I meant to find Her
when I Came –
Death – had the same
design –
But the Success – was
His – it seems –
And the ~~Surrender~~
Mine – Discomfit –

I meant to tell Her how
I longed
this only peculiar
For just single time –
specific
But Death had told
told enamored
Her so the first –
And she had past, with Him –
fled hearkened
trusted

abode
To wander – now – is my Repose –
pause pause – dwell
To rest – To rest would be
dwell – stay misery
A privilege of Hurricane
To Memory – and Me – [83]

[82] Dickinson, *PED*, iii. 1384.
[83] Dickinson, ‘I meant to find Her’, Amherst, Amherst College Manuscript #fascicle 81. <https://acdc.amherst.edu/view/asc:9951/asc:9961> (accessed 15/02/2023).

A continual postponement, or deferral, of experience leads to the speaker's deprivation and separation here. The final resting place of her late friend leaves Dickinson with no resting place of her own; instead she is left to 'wander'. Whereas the original lines of the poem saw 'rest' as a condition that lies beyond the poet's grasp, the later variants reach for the chance to 'pause' and 'dwell'. To dwell might be more a state of being than the padding of thought. In St John's Gospel, for example, 'to dwell' is the way life is experienced in a mortal state, as 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us'.[84] As Dickinson equates 'pause' with 'dwell' in her textual variants, both become the actual temporality of her thinking and not a place of reprieve before moving on. The more she dwells in thought on this 'single time' through revision, the more unfamiliar it becomes in its successive amendments to this 'only' time, this 'specific' time, and this 'peculiar' time. F.O. Matthiessen's suggestion that Ransom 'felt his way back into the meaning' of a poem in the act of revision echoes Dickinson's process here, feeling her way back into the meaningfulness of an event without the closure previously sought.[85]

Part of what attracts Dickinson to these in-between moments, which see her peering over the precipice of a fall into unknown experience, is a joint sensation of risk and excitement. It's precisely this dynamic that Subha Mukherji has detected in the 'moments of transition' limned in paintings like Hammershøi's *Interior with a Woman Standing*:

> [T]he risk, even unease, underlying moments of transition, and the excitement of not knowing where one might end up [. . .] is defined by a sense of contingency, and it shapes narrative into a structure of desire. The thrill and the risk, meanwhile, are counterbalanced by the curious harmony of this tentative in-between space as, nevertheless, a cherished dwelling place. . .[86]

The pauses we encounter in Dickinson's writing are not especially interested in that transitional element but they are certainly drawn to the blend of 'excitement' and 'unease', and we might see them as a 'dwelling place'. She is certainly alert to the riskier side of this relationship. Sometimes, pausing comes too late. One of Dickinson's poems had called 'Death, but our rapt attention | To immortality' and the consequence of this fixed attention is shown in her poem which famously begins 'Because I could not stop for Death –'.[87] Here, we find the 'stop-

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[84] John 1: 14 (*KJV*).
[85] F. O. Matthiessen, 'Primarily Language', *John Crowe Ransom: Critical Essays and a Bibliography*, ed. T. D. Young (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), pp. 80-88: 85.
[86] Subha Mukherji, 'Introduction', *Thinking on Thresholds: The Poetics of Transitive Spaces*, ed. S. Mukherji (London: Anthem Press, 2011), pp. xvii-xxviii: xvii.
[87] Dickinson, *PED*, i. 75.

sensation' reversed, as the speaker's unremitting reliance on an end beyond comprehension misses the fact that 'Death' has already brought about one:

> Because I could not stop for Death –
> He kindly stopped for me –
> The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
> And Immortality.
>
> We slowly drove – He knew no haste
> And I had put away
> My labor and my leisure too,
> For His Civility –
>
> We passed the School, where Children strove
> At Recess – in the Ring –
> We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
> We passed the Setting Sun –
>
> Or rather – He passed Us –
> The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
> For only Gossamer, my Gown –
> My Tippet – only Tulle –
>
> We paused before a House that seemed
> A Swelling of the Ground –
> The Roof was scarcely visible –
> The Cornice – in the Ground –
>
> Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
> Feels shorter than the Day
> I first surmised the Horses' Heads
> Were toward Eternity – (i. 492-3)

The second stanza unveils a distilled model of human experience from the formative years of life ('where Children strove'), to adult labour and fertility ('Fields of Gazing Grain'), and finally death ('the Setting Sun'). These scenes are met with casual indifference, and the speaker merely awaits the redemption with which she credits death. The fourth stanza thus arrives as a jolt of recognition, where the iambic rhythm is suddenly brought up short in its truncation to three feet, and the staggering triplet 'Or rather' flattens out into the stresses of 'He passed Us', lingering on the poet's belated recognition that she is not in fact moving in the way she first thought. We might notice that this stanza was excised from the first edition of Dickinson's poetry, possibly as a heresy too far. As 'passed' then modulates into 'paused', the speaker

finally recognises her only known resting place: ‘A Swelling of the Ground’. A recognition, however, that’s come too late.

Taking another look at that description ‘where Children strove | At Recess – in the Ring –’, we might expect ‘play’ instead of ‘strove’. It may be that Dickinson is hinting that something about the nature of the children’s play is something she herself wishes to strive after, and to recover something of the presentism and unknowability of what they are up to. Play is directly associated with the possibility of going over things again by Walter Benjamin. ‘We know that for a child repetition is the soul of play’, he writes: ‘nothing gives him greater pleasure than to “Do it again!” [. . .] And in fact, every profound experience longs to be insatiable, longs for return and repetition until the end of time, and for the reinstatement of an original condition from which it sprang.’[88] Playing, then, involves the possibility of dwelling in unplumbable desire, which is one reason it offers a helpful description of the kind of non-closure in lyrics, or the ‘structure of desire’ that Mukherji mentions. Seen in this way, the repetitive rewritings of a text, as well as the self-revisions present in Dickinson’s final poems, assimilate themselves to a kind of play. Before she is able to “do it again”, be *it* recollecting an experience in memory or in writing, pausing offers the poet a way of playing around with the temporality of her compositional process and also of conceiving her revisionary processes as a kind of play, returning her to a renewed state of desire.

Desire might be reinstated not through its elaboration through syntax, but more convincingly through the typographical dissonance that pauses can bring about. A poet might harness the pause at the end or in the midst of lines to ‘represent the interval which must be left by the reader between the impact of one image and the impact of another’.[89] These impacts might be more than representative; they can be mimetic. As Christopher Ricks notes in Wordsworth’s case, line-endings can be a ‘type or symbol or emblem of what the poet values, as well as the instrument by which is values are expressed’.[90] This is because, unlike in prose, poetic line-endings are a question of choice rather than necessity, and so these pauses, and divisions of images, can offer more personalised accounts of a poet’s thinking and structuring of experience. A description of ‘pause’ in one of Dickinson’s lyrics is reason to think that her pauses might work to similar ends:

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[88] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2: Part 1, 1927-1930*, eds. M. W. Jennings, H. Eiland, and G. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) p. 120.
[89] Donald Davie, *Articulate Energy: An Inquiry into the Syntax of English Poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1992), p. 125.
[90] Christopher Ricks, *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 91.

What Twigs We held by –
Oh the View
When Life's swift River striven through
We pause before a further plunge –
To take Momentum –
As the Fringe

Opon a former Garment shows
The Garment cast,
Our Props disclose
So scant, so eminently small
Of Might to help, so pitiful
To sink. . . (*PED*, ii. 923)

Each line in the first stanza is a clear unit of sense, and the speaker's observation that 'We pause before a further plunge – | To take Momentum –' sounds like a reflection on the poem's own successive plunges from line to line so as to recover the unpredictable immediacy of experience. Indeed, 'pause' has both a spatial and a temporal force here, registering the tensions that are generated as one nears the end of a line on the page because the turning over of a line of verse is also a form of temporal and spatial mobility, but one that does not conform to a strictly linear movement. What direction it might take is never clear in the moment, as line-endings stop possibly on the brink of a new thought or turn in on themselves only to sustain the same line of inquiry. It's the kind of 'uncertain certainty' that Dickinson's pauses rely on.[91] They charge the reader with the responsibility of recreating and revising the thematic and structural contours of her poems.

The link between poetic experience and a form of *felix culpa* is further alluded to in one of Dickinson's prose fragments, where she asks an unnamed recipient, 'Did you ever read one of her Poems backward, because the plunge for the front overturned you? I sometimes (often have, many times) have – A something overtakes the Mind –'.[92] Sense does not take a recognisable shape once experience is over, as if meaning were to unfold, for example, in the period after 'Life's swift River striven through'. Rather, there is a sense that a poem is somehow uncontrollable. Even as she reflects on this perplexity in her prose, confessing 'I sometimes (often, have, many times) have', the poet's thoughts produce a suitably hesitant syntax that

[91] Dickinson, *PED*, iii. 1240.
[92] Dickinson, 'Prose Fragment 30', *Letters*, p. 916.

seems to run away from her. New revelations emerge as a result of the reduplicated 'have', the repressed form of the parenthesis, and the pausing provided by her punctuation.

One of Dickinson's speakers broaches the possibility that pauses work to similar ends as the cadences of her verse: 'Nor difference it knows | Of Cadence, or of Pause – | But simultaneous as Same'.[93] It were well to remember that cadence started out in life as *cadere*: 'to fall'. And in being able to 'know the Sound', we might wonder what else might be known in the process of listening. Accounting for rhythm, Angela Leighton writes, 'means accounting for that strange act of "listening" which accompanies it, and which, in the case of poetry read silently on the page, is a constant, and constantly varying, interpretative achievement.'[94] Dickinson's manipulation of pause in these poems illustrates how sounding out these rhythms is as much a case of interpretative creation as it is of reaction. It provides a model of how pausing can be a way of bringing imaginative stress into the middle of poetry – here rethinking the contingencies of sound into structured rhythms – on both the reader's and the writer's part.

Pauses, rhythmic and verbal, in the middle of Dickinson's verse become ruptures in her lines that make it unclear how we might hear them. It's this variability which turns the poem into 'a real-time event', as Attridge puts it, as opposed to a blueprint sketch of set temporal sequences.[95] These wayward moments in Dickinson's poems are alert to the way in which the reader has to act out and recreate this 'real-time event'. In one lyric, the speaker describes 'the Door | Thou paused at, for a passing bounty –'.[96] The enjambement might encourage us to stress the 'Thou' at the start of the line, but the iambic patterns demand otherwise, creating a division between our instincts for voicing the syntax and the metre. Subsequently, the somewhat awkward caesura after 'at' causes a stumble out of the stressed pause. Similarly, in the line 'The Maimed may pause, and breathe, | And glance securely round –', the pause which feels as if it's come to a definite stop with the comma is overridden by the last foot.[97] The timing of the line is itself given room to breathe because a plangent spondee flickers in 'and breathe' in an otherwise regimented organisation of sound.

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[93] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 832. Christina Rossetti's 'Maiden's Song' makes a similar connection when the poet describes 'a labyrinth of throbs, | Pauses, cadences'; *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. R. W. Crump, 3 vols. (London: Baton Rouge, 1979-1990), i. 113.
[94] Angela Leighton, *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 231.
[95] Derek Attridge, *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.
[96] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 777.
[97] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 783.

Instinctive methods of sounding out lines such as these are confounded rather than confirmed by pauses. Consider the poem that begins 'I felt my life with both my hands' in which patterns of repetition hint at the possibility that self-revisions in the patterns of sound might be a case of listening more and knowing less:

> I turned my Being round and round
> And paused at every pound
> To ask the Owner's name –
> For doubt, that I should know the Sound – (*PED*, i. 381)

Acoustic ripples are felt with 'Being' and 'every', both of which need to be articulated as disyllables to preserve the tetrameter and trimeter. Setting up a connection between 'knowing', 'doubt', and 'Sound', these lines suggest how pausing is an opportunity to listen more attentively to how preconceived patterns of metre reshape and stabilise the contingent speech rhythms of words. Listening again to these lines, we might hear how they are not an invocation to eradicate doubt. Rather, 'for doubt' is purposive: it's the reason James Longenbach suggests that we 'want to feel poetry turning against itself again and again – not only because we need to interrogate our best ideas but because we want to experience the sensation, the sound, of words leaping just beyond our capacity to know them certainly.'[98]

In the last section of this chapter, I want to suggest that this irresolution is most concentrated in Dickinson's image of 'circumference', a shape that aestheticizes non-ending across her writing. Attending to this emblem in the context of the poet's revisionism allows us to revaluate this image as a symbol of the unfinished experience that is central to her poetic process.

[98] James Longenbach, *The Resistance to Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 107-8.

My Business is Circumference

'Permanence is a word of degrees. Everything is medial'.[99] Emerson's declaration in 'Circles' initially sounds like a fitting characterisation of Dickinson's poetics. In the essayist's hands, however, the guiding figure of the circle is allied with a form of perception that is only a prelude to the truth. 'Our life is an apprenticeship to truth,' he says, 'that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning': '[t]here is no outside, no enclosing wall, no circumference to us.'[100] Dickinson parts ways with Emerson here, not only because of her recognition of the Jamesian need for 'stopping' in art, but also because her own investigations of experience along the lines of circles leads to her most famous symbol of life in the midst as 'Circumference'. She notes in one letter that 'The Bible dealt with the Centre, not with the Circumference –', which does not exactly equate the Bible with the 'Centre' – it stands for one particular way of looking at the world. It's this other way of 'dealing' with experience that this chapter has been examining in Dickinson's writing, and its anti-teleological inclination is solidified in 'Circumference'. As the poet insists, 'My Business is Circumference'.[101]

It's not only a key word in these letters. One of her poetic speakers describes how she 'Went out upon Circumference' and in another lyric she observes, ''Twixt Firmament above | And Firmament below | The billows of Circumference | Were sweeping him away'. Elsewhere, she depicts birdsong at night, envisaging how 'Place was where the Presence was | Circumference between', while the bird itself cannot be seen.[102] Positioning 'Circumference' in close proximity to formulations of betweenity, the poet defines it in relation to this in-between spot as a space of comprehension. It's worth noting too that she says that she goes out *upon* it. To attend to the idea of 'Circumference' sequentially or teleologically is not how she seems to see it: in other words, it is not a boundary that she goes out *towards* and then hits.[103] The sense of the word involves moving *around* an issue rather than *at* it. As this chapter has shown, this is one crucial effect of Dickinson's process of revision in the constellation of

[99] Ralph W. Emerson, 'Circles' (1847), repr. in *The Major Prose*, eds. R. Bosco and J. Myerson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 153.
[100] Emerson, *The Major Prose*, p. 152, 154.
[101] To J. G. Holland, Autumn 1884, *Letters*, p. 850; To T. W. Higginson, 1862, *Letters*, p. 412.
[102] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 623; iii. 1124; ii. 957.
[103] Richard B. Sewall distils this sequential approach as the poet's journey toward discovery: 'Every word was an experiment in meaning, a route toward the discovery of new meanings in the perceptions and thoughts that entered her teeming consciousness. This was her career, her journey toward Circumference'; *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (1974; repr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 243.

variants imprinted on her manuscript drafts, enabling individual words and lines to exist as a cluster of possibilities. Accordingly, 'Circumference' helpfully captures an important facet of Dickinson's in-betweenness, which involves not quite landing on the subject itself but continually finding new ways of thinking about it in her experience of revision.

As an image for the ends she might be pursuing or evading in writing, it has attracted a range of scholarly attention. For Charles Anderson, 'Circumference' hones in on a 'boundlessness radiating out from a center, opposite to the normal sense of a limiting circle'.[104] In Laura Gribbin's eyes, however, it's a limiting force, equipping the poet with a 'foothold' to 'replace the Romantic impulse toward transcendence with an alternative concept of knowledge gained within the limits of experience.'[105] These approaches are primarily teleological, reading circumference as a hardened boundary or, much like Emerson's take, as a sign of an attempt to break through to boundlessness. Viewed in the context of the poet's resistance to telos, her continual reinvesting in experience, and strains of non-closure in her revision I have discussed so far, I want to suggest that these approaches are misleading. For Dickinson, 'Circumference' is a figure of process.

This shape without technical beginnings and ends is appropriate, in the first place, for the openings of many of Dickinson's poems. Her aversion to titling her poems shows a sustained resistance to being led by a guiding imaginative plan – a set of expectations to be realised in the process of writing. Scholars in textual genetics have explored the implications of the title as a point of entry to a text. Jean-Pierre Goldenstein argues that as the title is 'charged with foretelling the narrative to come, a promise of a gap to be filled, this initial declaration deserves to be given due consideration'.[106] Titles bring with them a form of telos; by contrast, a poet's stringent avoidance of them releases their poem from needing to live up to a promise made at the start – from creating meaning in the shadow of an idealised subject. Dickinson did not care too much for these initial promises of what is to come. While she elides the concrete border that mediates the reader's entrance to the poem, the progress of her verse does not often

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[104] Charles Anderson, *Emily Dickinson's Poetry of Surprise* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960), p. 55.

[105] Laura Gribbin, 'Emily Dickinson's Circumference: Figuring a Blind Spot in the Romantic Tradition', *The Emily Dickinson Journal* ii (1993), pp. 1-21: 1, 6. Michael Bird also poses the question that if the 'power of the creativity has boundaries, a "circumference" [. . .] at what point is it reached?' in 'Dickinson's at Half Past Three, a Single Bird', *The Explicator* lxii (2004), pp. 204-6: 206.

[106] Jean-Pierre Goldenstein, 'Lires les titres', *Entrées en Littérature* (Paris: Hachette, 1990), p. 68: 'chargé de prédire le récit à venir, promesse d'un manque à combler, cet énoncé initial mérite d'être considéré avec attention' (translation is my own).

bring decisive closure. In her eyes, then, a poem's title works a bit like the 'spectre of solidities | Whose substances are sand –', as one of her speakers has it.[107]

Sometimes, 'Circumference' is the product of the second thoughts it serves to embody because it arrives during the process of revision. Consider this example from fascicle 25, where we find a version of a poem in which this characteristic idea is initially absent:

> Two Butterflies went out at Noon –
> And waltzed opon a Farm –
> Then stepped straight through the Firmament
> And rested, on a Beam – (*PED*, ii. 568)

That notion of 'Firmament' is inflected elsewhere in Dickinson's writing with questions of composition. When pressed by Higginson on her reluctance to publish her work, she had the following to say: 'I smile when you suggest that I delay "to publish" – that being foreign to my thought, as Firmament to Fin'.[108] The closing metaphor could be a punning shorthand for 'finished' or 'final', and so suggests how not coming to an end was similarly estranged from the ambitions of her writing, rather than a state they fall short of. If 'Firmament' encapsulates one outcome, where her writing reaches a fixed state, then its eventual replacement by 'Circumference' in one of her most heavily revised poems offers up an alternative model of composition:

> Till gravitation humbled – ejected them
> Two Butterflies went
> out at Noon
> And waltzed opon
> a Farm
> And then ⁺espied
> Circumference
> And ⁺caught a ride
> with him –
> Then lost themselves
> and found themselves
> In ⁺eddies of the sun
> Fathoms in
> Till Rapture missed them
> Peninsula ~~Fa~~ – Gravitation
> chased
> And Both were ⁺wrecked
> in Noon –
> from noon –

[107] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 990.
[108] To T. W. Higginson, 8 Jun. 1862, *Letters*, p. 255.

To all surviving Butterflies
Be this [+]Fatuity
Example – and monition
To entomology –

+ then overtook – and
Took a Bout with him –
+ In Rapids of the Sun
+ missed her footing –
+ Drowned – quenched –
Whelmed – in Noon –
+ this Biography –

Until a Zephyr pushed them chased – Until a Zephyr scourged them And they were hurled from noon Then chased themselves and caught themselves

Till Gravitation grumbled foundered

flung – spurned then staked themselves and lost themselves in Gambols with the sun – Frenzy zies for Frenzy of the sun gambols antics in the with sun [109]

She had outlined a similar idea in an earlier poem on the life of butterflies: 'Cruising round the purple line – | Have a system of aesthetics – Far superior to mine'.[110] So in this later lyric, the 'purple line' they follow could be the 'espied Circumference'. It's as if the poet gets 'lost' amid the 'eddies' of her own thought process in those vertical emendations on the verso, which embody the manipulations and rotations of her own thought. Whereas the first draft of the poem envisaged the butterflies' flight sequentially – they 'stepped straight through the Firmament | And rested' – the draft penned fifteen years later sees 'Circumference' not as a barrier to be overcome but as a means of mobility and proliferation. Her revisions *within* the draft strengthen this new conception, as the poet alters 'And then espied | Circumference | And caught a ride |

[109] Dickinson, 'Two butterflies went out at noon', Amherst, Amherst College Digital Collections, MS #498-498a. <https://acdc.amherst.edu/view/asc:3857> (accessed 25/02/2023).
[110] Dickinson, *PED*, i. 133.

with him –' to 'And then overtook – | Circumference and | Took a Bout with him –'. The temporal dynamics of this moment are blurred by the fact that the overtaking happens first, and while 'ride' implies that a destination might come into view, its orbital replacement 'bout' evades that sense of arrival beyond where they started out. Circumference is not so much a transcendence as it is a transposition of perception. It is fitting in this respect that the *OED* should trace the first instance of the verb 'resituate' to Dickinson.[111]

Patterns of circularity are equally sunk into the imagery and rhythmic responses in her prose writing, which reinforce the poet's conviction that life in the midst involves continually reorienting what we make of it. Among Dickinson's prose fragments we find this observation: 'Emerging from an Abyss and entering it again – that is Life, is it not?'[112] A primary definition of 'Abyss' is 'hell', which the *OED* traces back to around 1460 and finds notable mentions in Spenser's *Teares of Muses* and *Paradise Lost*. It also gives a range of meanings from the 'primal formless chaos out of which the earth and the heavens were created' to an 'extremity of some condition or quality (usually a negative one)' from which 'recovery is impossible or unlikely'. Dickinson's 'Abyss' is qualified by an indefinite article, casting life not as a struggle within one 'primal formless chaos', but as isolated moments to recover oneself set apart from the backdrop of 'Eternity'. Rather than looking to the end for meaning, she turns her attention to the present moment. 'Emerging' and 'entering': these gerunds enact a cyclical view of life, not a linear succession of events. While the call-and-response of the final question – '**that** is Life, is it **not?**' – seems to render her definition of life uncertain, as the descending and rising cadences subtly reinforce the pattern of seeing sense and then questioning that experience.

In this way, Dickinson's writing reflects what Matthew Bevis has seen as a fundamental structure of lyric experience in which 'one revisits experience, seeks a shape in which to know it, but the shape that is created brings with it wonder at the fact that no experience can ever quite be known. Lyrical abstraction reconnects us to, and re-alienates us from, our experience in a single moment.'[113] When Dickinson says that she goes after the chance 'To have the joy of feeling it – again –', what form that 'again' might take remains inscrutable, unexpected, and continually changing, pincered between her two dashes.[114] Part of the point of 'Circumference' is that it is not a shape *in* which we seek to know an experience. To come to an accord with

[111] 'resituate, *v.*', §1, *OED Online*.
[112] Dickinson, 'Prose Fragment 32', *Letters*, p. 916.
[113] Matthew Bevis, 'Unknowing Lyric', *Poetry* (2017): https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/92372/unknowing-lyric (accessed 02/03/2023).
[114] Dickinson, *PED*, i. 411.

what we have experienced is to take away something from the mystery of that experience. It's a sentiment that stretches across the span of Dickinson's writing. 'It's finer – not to know –' she writes in an early poem, for example.[115] She finds common ground with Emerson, here, who writes, 'I cast away in this new moment all my once hoarded knowledge, as vacant and vain. Now, for the first time, seem I to know any thing rightly'.[116] Even after knowledge has been cast away and Emerson comes to a new understanding, we might note how he is only *seeming* to know. As I suggested at the end of the last section, Dickinson is similarly drawn to 'finish knowing', and the successive versions of a poem started in 1883 show how 'knowing' a subject diminishes what might be gained by approaching it in other ways:

> To see her is a picture
> To hear her is a Tune
> To know her is an intemperance (*PED*, iii. 1398)
>
> To see her is a Picture –
> To hear her is a Tune
> To know her an intemperance as innocent as June – (*PED*, iii. 1399)
>
> To see her is a Picture –
> To hear her is a Tune –
> To know her, a disparagement of every other Boon – (*PED*, iii. 1400)

What Dickinson's poetry might be doing through revision is finding other ways of 'seeing' or 'hearing' what a subject is, in order to escape 'knowing' it.

This resistance to knowing embodied in an anti-teleological reading of 'Circumference' is taken up in other medial images in Dickinson's work. The following lyric contrasts symbolic cognates of enlightenment and scepticism with the possibility of occupying a medial position between the two:

> What need of Day –
> To Those whose Dark – hath so – surpassing Sun –
> It deem it be – Continually –
> At the Meridian? (*PED*, i. 466)

These lines invoke and deny multiple kinds of ending. 'What need of' suggests an instrumentality that is now defunct, while 'surpassing' and 'continually' denote a crossing and an ensuing erasure of boundaries. Among those metaphors of light and dark, the poet hovers in

[115] Dickinson, *PED*, i. 242.
[116] Emerson, *The Major Prose*, p. 161 (emphasis added).

a betweenity of complete scepticism and pure knowing. Even so, that interrogative turn in the last line calls into question whether to be 'Continually – At the Meridian' is a plausible conviction. This fictive 'Meridian' is turned over in the speaker's mind only as a possibility to live into. What Dickinson's poems on the 'Meridian – in the Mind' speak to is how all meanings are transient, not immanent; they are positional because later words make you revise the meanings of what has come before. Taking a look at Dickinson's revisions to these lines shows how her syntax is especially attuned to resisting a postponement of meaning.

A lost copy of the poem was published in *The Single Hound* (1914), which reveals a different choice of lineation, balancing the first two lines more equally, and substituting 'seem' for 'deem':

> What need of day to those whose dark
> Hath so surpassing Sun,
> It seem it be continually
> At the Meridian? (*PED*, i. 465)

In the revised manuscript, the syntax of the second line swerves into the impersonal construction 'It deem it be', leaving the antecedent of the first 'It' unclear. Refraining from treating this betweenity with the certainty of a stable truth or knowledge, Dickinson consciously differentiates it from a substitute kind of telos. Instead, an effect of continually revolving thought is gained as a result of the unfolding event of the stanza: the elongated second line, which reaches out before collapsing in on itself, is swept up along with the isolated adverb ('Continually') in the overarching rhetorical question as it glides over the fissures in lineation and sense. Thus Dickinson's revisions preserve a sense of wonder and bewilderment, as she assimilates incongruent propositions to the prism of this single-sentence stanza.

Each dash in this stanza is a crucial revision. This typographical tic has drawn a large degree of critical debate: Dickinson's dashes have been theorised as everything from an 'attempt to create a new system of musical notation for reading her verse' to 'a threat between the sayable and the unsayable, a caesura between life and death'.[117] Geoffrey Hartman has rightly pointed out that their 'force' derives from their capacity simultaneously to 'join' and 'divide'.[118] Unlike other forms of punctuation, such as full-stops or question marks, a dash can

[117] Charles Anderson, *Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960), p. 306; Deidre Fagan, 'Emily Dickinson's Unutterable Word', *The Emily Dickinson Journal* xiv (2005), pp. 70-75: 70.
[118] Geoffrey Hartman, 'Purification and Danger 1: American Poetry', *Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 115-32: 126. Ena Jung has extended this

fulfil a purely grammatical function or it can work in ways that are mimetic or metaphorical. Here, they come to signify the endless horizon the poet describes at the same time as they open up rifts in the surface of the text. Indeed, these dashes are not simply structural; they introduce the spontaneity of thought-making back into the poet's writing. Seen in this light, Dickinson's dashes function less like internal stitching, than like Wittgenstein's arrow, taking us in different directions:

> How does it come about that this arrow → *points*? Doesn't it seem to carry within it something extraneous to itself? – "No, not the dead line on paper; only a mental thing, the meaning, can do that." – That is both true and false. The arrow points only in the application that a living creature makes of it.[119]

Similarly, lines of verse are far from 'dead line[s] on paper' because they show not only what readers have made of them but continue to put our own experiences and presumptions to the test. Dickinson's dashes embody this process in miniature. They return us to the moment-by-momentariness of experience, clustering groups of words together into new images which are then juxtaposed. If, as Dickinson writes in one poem, 'pattern is the mind bestowed', these dashes dramatize the mind at work as it simultaneously harrows old grooves of thought before and open up new channels of possibility. They gesture to and mimetically register everything that happens between words.

The structure of the fascicles is well suited to investigating what happens not only between words but between poems. The fascicles prevent the poems contained within them from becoming too knowing about their own subject matter, because the collections usher in a betweenness that brings the poems into a more intimate dialogue with one another. For example, two poems that begin 'They shut me up in Prose' and 'This was a Poet' are copied into fascicle 21, facing each other like pages in a book. In Eleanor Heginbotham's eyes, the fascicle enables us to encounter 'the two poems speak[ing] to each other across the page, each opening up interpretive possibilities for the other'. These lyrics 'concatenate against each other,' she continues, 'as they echo and speak to each other'.[120] The combination of

argument by suggesting that they embody a tension *between* poetry resulting from 'inspiration or technique' and they depict Dickinson's 'state iconically and mimetically'; 'The Breath of Emily Dickinson's Dashes', *The Emily Dickinson Journal* xxiv (2015), pp. 1-23: 8.

[119] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and J. Schulte, eds. Hacker and Schulte, rev. ed. (1953; repr. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), §454.

[120] Eleanor Heginbotham, *Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson: Dwelling in Possibilities* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), p. 5.

'concatenate' and 'against' is right, revealing a series that seems to work against its own sequence of utterances. Setting poetry against prose on opposing pages, and through complementary representations of entrapment and liberation, Dickinson creates an impression of poems that are simultaneously forward-facing and backwards-looking:

> They shut me up in Prose –
> As when a little Girl
> They put me in the Closet –
> Because they liked me 'still' –
>
> Still! Could themselves have peeped –
> And seen my Brain – go round –
> They might as wise have lodged a Bird
> For Treason – in the Pound –
>
> Himself has but to will
> And easy as a Star
> Look down opon Captivity –
> And laugh – No more have I – (*PED*, i. 467-8)
>
> 11 Look down opon] Abolish his –

Lyric poems, Sharon Cameron has argued, attempt to bring about a kind of 'stasis, as they slow temporal advance to the difficult still point of meaning'.[121] And yet, Dickinson's self-revisions within the poem and across the fascicle intimate that stasis can be both a threat and a stimulus to poetic composition, as her monosyllabic diction registers the frustration of a speaker whose voice has been oppressed. Prose may be paralytic, then, but verse affords a way out. Over the stanza break, the 'still' that's held at arm's-length in its inverted commas transforms into the exclamatory 'Still!', and so re-engineers the repressive adjective into something more tonally uncertain. Is that second 'still' a cry of indignation, a declaration of freedom, or an affirmation of an enduring condition? A further self-revision branches outside this fascicle in that rhyme between 'round' and 'Pound', which recapitulates the same connection made in the poem discussed at the end of the previous section: 'I turned my Being round and round | And paused at every pound'. The poet's 'Being' is turned again, as the Circumference of this poem is able to intersect with another, suggesting that her body of writing is more adaptable than the speaker lets on.

[121] Sharon Cameron, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 25.

On the next page in fascicle 21, Dickinson offers a response to the restrictions of prose. Here, evasive syntax and images of distillation dispel the previous stillness:

> This was a Poet –
> It is That
> Distills amazing sense
> From Ordinary Meanings –
> And Attar so immense
>
> From the familiar species
> That perished by the Door –
> We wonder it was not Ourselves
> Arrested it – before –
>
> Of Pictures, the Discloser –
> The Poet – it is He –
> Entitles Us – by Contrast –
> To ceaseless Poverty –
>
> Of Portion – so unconscious –
> The Robbing – could not harm –
> Himself – to Him – a Fortune –
> Exterior – to Time – (*PED*, i. 468)

Dickinson's pleasure in the poet's distilling capabilities is revealed to full effect in the patterns of her own language, as 'still' from the former lyric is converted into 'distill' here. The jarring effect of the tenses in the first two lines evokes an immediate challenge to the conclusive verbs that prevail in 'They shut me up in Prose'. Defining what *was* a poet in terms of an impersonal *it is*, the speaker refuses to reduce a poet's refining of 'amazing sense' as a finite action because the strangeness of the syntax turns this moment of recollection into an event, or a continuously shocking realisation. A poet's craft, Dickinson implies, is a continuous process, not something that can be reduced to a quantifiable output. At the same time, however, this isn't to say that the textual dimension of composition is not crucial to this process. Rhymes in these lines realise the turning of the abstract to the more concrete: 'immense' has 'sense' as its rhyming partner but it also keeps 'Meanings' within earshot, as the abilities of the poet are brought into the realm of the tangible. Our attention is increasingly trained on the pains of textual composition and, implicitly, on the role of the manuscript page as the site of distillation.

The poem's 'amazing sense' is characteristic of Dickinson's verse, and critical responses have tried to unravel it into a version of good sense that more closely fits the idea of

'centre' rather than 'circumference'. For Miller, the poem above is shot through with what she has called 'recoverable deletion'.[122] In an attempt to rescue the poem from its apparent suppression of meaning, she recasts the first stanza of the lyric as: 'This was a Poet – It is [the fact] That [this was a poet which] | Distills amazing sense | From ordinary Meanings – | And [distils an] Attar [that is] so immense'. The poem becomes a puzzle to be solved, where the reader inherits the task of restoring a condition of integrity and coherence to the text – or to put it another way, redeeming a fallen language to a prelapsarian past. This approach is laden with assumptions over what a text should look like, which run counter to the suggestions found in Dickinson's handbook to composition: 'Prose is the language of reason, – poetry of feeling or passion. Prose is characterized by fulness and precision. Poetry deals largely in elliptical expressions, exclamations, exaggerations, apostrophes, and other peculiarities not usually found in prose.[123] The 'amazing sense' the poem invokes might then be not the 'language of reason' Richard Parker associates with prose, but a structure that 'reconnects' and 're-alienates' us from it.

This style of writing might not have been so radical in Dickinson's mind. Her classical education, for instance, exposed the young poet to the fact that such verbal compression was not just a natural part of classical verse but also of Latin more broadly as an inflected language. Her Latin textbook, *Stoddard and Andrews Latin Grammar*, which she mentions in her early letters, puts ellipsis as the first figure of syntax mentioned in its appendix. On the next page, under the grouping '*Enallage*', we find *anacoluthon* as 'a disagreement in construction between the latter and former part of a sentence'.[124] Each technique listed here exemplifies those syntactical evasions present in the first stanza above.[125] On a broader scale, Dickinson's habitual upheaval of the subject-verb-object structure of English in favour of terminal verbs contributes to a survival of classical syntactical structures in her poetry. We even see her revising out the more natural ordering of English in a poem that begins 'Two – were immortal twice –'. Its line 'Eternity – obtained – in Time – | Reversed Divinity –' is marked with a cross

[122] Cristanne Miller, *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 28-9.
[123] Parker, *Aids to English Composition*, p. 78.
[124] E. A. Andrews and S. Stoddard, *A Grammar of the Latin Language* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1847), pp. 298ff.
[125] Lois A. Cuddy is the only scholar to have paid detailed attention to the relationship between Dickinson's technique and classical rhythm and form. She proposes that 'if we [. . .] approach her work with Latin rules in mind [. . .] apparent technical errors in her poems no longer "shriek" but assume a new dimension of aesthetic integrity and creativity; 'The Latin Imprint on Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Theory and Practice', *American Literature* l (1978), pp. 74-84: 75. See also 'The Influence of Latin Poetics on Emily Dickinson's Style', *Comparative Literature Studies* xiii (1976), pp. 214-229.

directing us to 'Eternity – in Time obtained' at the bottom of the text.[126] Is it that 'Eternity' is gained within the bounds of time, or it is gained just in time? Syntax no longer serves to create intelligible order. What Dickinson's revisionism continues to suggest, in her textual emendations and in the revisionary style they leave behind, is that poetry exceeds the limitations of strictly logical, propositional thinking, and so narrows the gulf between articulation and ineffability.

Archaic syntactical structures of this sort linger in Dickinson's verse like philological ghosts. Revising these textual imprints of thought across the centuries, Dickinson embodies her own ambitions for what might be made of her poetry in her absence. 'The Poets light but Lamps – | Themselves – go out –', she once observed, 'Each Age a Lens | Disseminating their | Circumference –'.[127] Here, 'Circumference' captures the fine line between verbal structures that are a hangover from dead forms but ones that continue to have life in the inventive re-writings of poets like Dickinson. A more local, but not altogether different, process takes place in the revision of texts from one "version" to another, where more recent revisions preserve within them a suppressed ancestry of their forebears. If Romantic writers like Shelley theorised the translation of thought into words as a process of imaginative decline, Dickinson expressed precisely the opposite view: 'A word is dead when it is said, | some say. | I say it just begins to live | that day'.[128] Dickinson's speaker might well be summing up an imaginative pattern that stretches across her writing. That 'just' is significant: it registers both incipience and incompletion. To put it another way, a 'word' teeters on the point of existence even at the point of utterance. Her observation sounds like a precursor to Wallace Stevens's suggestion in his final collection that 'The Life of the poem in the mind has not yet begun'.[129]

Even at the end of her poems, Dickinson is able to sustain this sense that there might be more left to happen. One poem self-consciously confounds its own conclusion: 'And there, the Matter ends –'.[130] Even as the semantic content of the poem falls into silence, the typographical 'Matter' continues with that final dash, and so throws the ending of both this line and the poem itself into a state of indeterminacy. Sound and sight diverge in order to question finalised states of knowing, or periods of thought that have seemingly been drawn to a close.

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[126] Dickinson, *PED*, ii. 803.
[127] Ibid., ii. 855.
[128] Ibid., i. 297.
[129] Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose*, eds. F. Kermode and J. Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1966), p. 443.
[130] Dickinson, *PED*, i. 456.

In his exploration of 'the end of the poem', Giorgio Agamben argues that enjambement is the critical feature that makes poetry distinct from prose, being the 'opposition of a metrical limit to a syntactical limit'. The fact that the final line cannot be enjambed, therefore, poses a problem. If the last line of the poem permits a coincidence of sound and sense, a moment of 'final comprehension', then not only does the poem come to an end but it ceases to be poetry.[131] Dickinson is alert to this problem; exploiting the rupture upon which the status of verse relies at the end of her poem above, she questions whether a poem should or even could end. What remains inaudible is not a sign that a thought is over or that there is nothing left to say. It's quite the opposite: like her final dashes, Dickinson's moments of inaudibility are something like symbols of residual thinking.

This verbal sleight-of-hand is used to pointed effect at the end of one of the poet's most famous compositions, which begins 'I felt a funeral in my brain'. As it comes to a close, the poet seems to commune with 'Silence' in a way that dramatizes her position in a moment between encroaching sense and taking leave of her senses:

> And Being, but an Ear,
> And I, and Silence, some
> Strange Race
> Wrecked, solitary, here –
>
> And then a Plank in
> Reason, broke,
> And I dropped down, and
> down –
> And hit a World, at every
> ⁺plunge,
> And ⁺Finished knowing – then –
> Crash – ⁺Got through – [132]

We might ask when exactly *then* is. Does this mean that the speaker finished in a state of knowing there and then, that they were no longer knowing then, or that they finished the plunge knowing but then something else happened? Note Dickinson's use of the indefinite article: she hits *a* world not *the* world, just as life is an emergence and submergence into *an* abyss. William Empson says of one point in *The Prelude* that 'the pause at the end of the line' intimates not just '"a feeling of" these unknown modes but something like a new "sense" [. . .] a new *kind*

[131] Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 109, p. 113.
[132] Dickinson, 'Poems: Packet XI, Mixed Fascicles', Harvard, Houghton Library, MS am 1118.3, f. 53c. <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl.hough:4319311> (accessed 23/3/23).

of sensing had appeared in his mind.'[133] The speaker's plunge here turns out to be more a fall into renewed experiences. A textual variant for 'Plunge' is 'Crash' but plunge is primarily retained, fitting the pattern of the speaker's regaining of control. Whereas, at first, they are thrust headlong into this descent through the 'Plank in Reason' breaking, plunge introduces a self-determined element.

'Finished' also replaces 'Got through', which invites us to read the verb with a more active force: 'I finished' rather than 'I ended up'. But then the closing rhythm of the final line wavers: 'And **Fin**ished **know**ing – then –'. Is the last word stressed or unstressed, the cadence ascending or descending? It may not be possible to say for certain how we should hear this line, but the play of potential in stress registers a new kind of sensing, not fully formed, at the end of the poem. If line-endings may be seen as a 'type' or 'symbol' of what a poet values, as discussed earlier, then Dickinson's dashed endings are committed to the need to recalibrate one's perspective after moving on. Her line endings create pauses on the brink of revelation, where lines of thought are held in suspension before the line turns in on itself, sometimes supplementing, sometimes revising that line of thought. Many of Dickinson's dashed final lines – inaudible but visible ruptures in her poems – arrive less like ends than intimations of renewed endeavour.

[133] William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), p. 290 (emphasis in original).

Hopkins's Forward Thinking

In a well-known note, Hopkins identifies a characteristic he terms 'Parnassian'. This 'language of verse', he says, 'can only be ~~written~~ spoken by poets'; it is '~~wr~~spoken on and from the level of a poet's mind'. Resisting the fickleness of 'inspiration', this 'Parnassian' way of composing relies on a kind of certainty:

> Great men, poets I mean, have each their own dialect as it were of Parnassian, formed generally as they go on writing, and at last, ^–^ this point is to be marked, – they can see things ~~and describe them~~ in this Parnassian way and describe them in this Parnassian tongue, without further effort of inspiration. In a poet's particular kind of Parnassian lies most of his style, of his manner, of his mannerism if you like. [. . .] Now it is a mark of Parnassian that one could conceive oneself writing it if one were the poet.[1]

That 'most of his style' invites further reflection: as the deleted 'written' almost splutters out again as 'wr-', we see the poet continually drawn back to something about poetry he cannot quite pin down – or a temporality managed on the page which he cannot escape, as the deletions seem to suggest. Even as he begins to draw up a distinction between 'inspired' poetry and 'Parnassian', his qualification ('generally') puts him on the defensive. A further self-revision from 'manner' to 'mannerism' shows Hopkins reaching towards ideas rather than simply re-treading them, both syntactically and in his revisionary processes. If describing the more traditional notion of inspiration comes easily, turning his attention to how poetry works on the 'level of a poet's mind' is a sticking point. There's a subterranean anxiety for the poet concealed within his description of conceiving 'oneself writing it if one were the poet'. Fluency in one's own style arrives not as an aspiration but as a caution; to write as if you were yourself, then, might be a kind of self-assuredness to be avoided.

A tension between Hopkins's desire both to generalise and to specify, between generating a set of rules and breaking them down, is shown in the self-revisions of his own prose, as 'of his manner' immediately becomes 'of his mannerism'. This side of Hopkins, one more wary of the allure of certainty and of a more secure sense of how we should perceive and act, is the side this chapter explores. I consider, in particular, how the poet's instinct for experience runs parallel to the surety gained through the telos of his religious life. This

[1] G. M. H. to Alexander William Mowbray Baillie, 10-11 Sept. 1864, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins I: Correspondence 1852-1881*, eds. R. K. R Thornton and C. Phillips, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 68-71. The ongoing *Collected Works* of Hopkins's writing is complete with his deletions, interlineations, and diacritical markings.

waywardness, I argue, is most apparent in his drafts and notebooks, and attention to these draft stages also help us to see it in the more 'final' versions of his writing.

Revision is often associated with looking back, but Hopkins is conscious of revision as a proactive force. One view of Wordsworth's practice of revision, as my first chapter observed, is that time filters and shapes raw experience into something meaningful and expressible. Take that cognitive self-revision in 'Tintern Abbey' where the poet observes, 'These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows'. Here, the gap between the initial sight of these 'hedges' brings with it an adjusted aperture, bringing into focus that original vision.[2] What we see in Hopkins, quite differently, is how he puts pressure on this idea that the significance of an event is retrieved belatedly. Instead, he exemplifies something closer to an anti-Wordsworthian model of revision, one which endeavours to achieve the original raw edges of experience rather than trying to think about the gap and intellectual distance he has travelled. For Hopkins, it creates the unpredictable effects that prevent the poet from falling into the trap of 'Parnassian'.

Much has been made of the editorial concerns surrounding the creation and transmission of Hopkins's manuscripts. These questions of the poet's methods of composition, together with how subsequent editors have shaped a certain textual afterlife, continue to condition our reception of his writing as a religious poet first and foremost. Using the Bodleian material on Hopkins – in particular, MS. B, MS. A, MS. H – together with the detailed accounts of drafts and notebooks in the recent *Collected Works* edition, I intend to show how revision often focuses Hopkins's attention on the experiential nature of his poetry, equal to the mutable and often bewildering experience he finds in his personal life. What I want to demonstrate is that revision does not work to remove ambiguity in Hopkins but is doing quite the opposite. Despite his religious convictions, I explore how Hopkins is alert to the fact that the energies of poetry exist in a tension with telos and revelation.

We can have more than one kind of experience. Like Blake in his 'Songs of Experience', we might think of it as a state of knowing that comes after innocence. Along the same lines, 'experience' could be the accretion of events that leads up to this more capable vantage point, when we believe we have things figured out. This is the teleological version Hopkins encounters as he probes the term in his study of Cartesian thought. One of his undergraduate essays claims that 'man is born with certain beliefs, or ideas which become

[2] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, eds. J. Butler and K. Green (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 116.

beliefs at the first moment ~~when verified by experience~~ of ~~being~~ experience'.[3] We might notice how even the word 'certain' there comes with a degree of uncertainty, because it could mean beliefs that are either particular or unwavering. Hopkins's revised grammar leaves open the possibility that experience is something that has to live up to expectation (it measures up to what we already think), or that experience could be a check on our ideas. Sometimes, acts of revision can work along these lines. The actual experience of a work does not match up with what you expected, or you now know what you should have been doing all along.

A different, and characteristically Hopkinsian, take on experience is one that does not view it as a grand destination. Instead, it resembles a peculiar momentariness. A later essay on 'Causation' shows the young poet defending Positivism against the Kantian critique of 'Mere [. . .] sequence'.[4] He takes his lead from George Henry Lewes, who argued that 'belief in particular laws of causation is no more than belief in our experience' and that 'our beliefs cannot transcend the experience which made them.'[5] But Hopkins notes that the Positivist theory 'properly stated wd. allow effects to coexist as well as to follow causes'. An effect, he says, 'is nothing but the way in which the mind ties together, not the sequences, but all the conditions it sees. A cause therefore is a condition of a thing considered as contrasted with the whole thing, an effect a whole as contrasted with its conditions, elements, or parts'.[6] Experience, in this light, might be shorn off from futurity, but the way in which effects can be anticipatory allows them to be invested with the unpredictability of the future. Hopkins recalibrates the dynamics of experience as a kind of perceptual present-ness. This mode of experience offers a more enabling redescription of how Hopkins's conceives of revisionism, and also the experiential effects he seeks from it.

The following introductory section outlines the editorial context of Hopkins's poetry, examining how these approaches have sought to present a particular view of the poet. Following recent strides in scholarship that recharacterize Hopkins not as a religious poet, but as a poet writing about religion, this chapter's next section explores his divided allegiances. It focuses on Hopkins's treatment of clouds as an image of contingency within experience, and asks what cloud formation in his writing might have to say about textual formation. The next section builds on revision as a roughing up rather than smoothing out of experience. While

[3] Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins IV: Oxford Essays and Notes*, ed. L. Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 198.
[4] Hopkins, *Essays and Notes*, p. 200.
[5] George Henry Lewes, *A Biographical History of Philosophy*, 4 vols. (London, 1845-6), iv. 128-9.
[6] Hopkins, *Essays and Notes*, pp. 202-3.

much has been made of the poet's relationship with his religious belief, I will attend to the influence of Walter Pater. Paterian sensuousness, I suggest, sheds light on the continuity between the process of expansion in Hopkins's drafts and the thematic concerns of his more "finished" poems. My final section explores Hopkins's conception of 'aftering', a term he uses in his lectures notes on poetry, which I consider emblematic of his practice of revision as well as its result. I argue that revision reflects Hopkins's sense of poetry as a form of thinking rather than a set of finished thoughts.

Hopkins is notoriously tricky to edit. He never saw the publication of his poems, as his friend and editor, Robert Bridges, published Hopkins's first collection in 1918, almost thirty years after the poet's death. Hopkins himself was remarkably quiet on the question of what should be done with his poems and 'gave no instructions about preserving or destroying them', as Thomas Wheeler informed Bridges, noting 'I cannot fancy what he would have wished to be done with them.'[7] Hopkins's lack of publication was not despite his efforts, as he attempted to publish 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' in a Jesuit journal and a collection of sonnets in 1881. Each rejection was accompanied by Hopkins's own anxiety that publication meant going 'against his stated edict not to seek, or at least force, notoriety'.[8] Given that many poems were left in states of incompletion, editors have made various attempts to claim precedence for certain drafts over others, or, in more recent editions, printing poems with their variants.

A great deal of scholarly attention has been paid to the editorial questions surrounding Hopkins's manuscripts: how does one establish a chronological sequencing of the revisions; what do these revisions specifically entail; what practical issues frustrated Robert Bridges's initial editing of Hopkins; and which of those issues do contemporary editors now confront? William Dumbleton, for instance, traces the course of Bridges's reluctance to publish Hopkins's poems due to his 'artistic beliefs and personal prejudices', before remarking that 'possible poetic enrichment of ambiguity eluded' Bridges, and 'his critical judgments are built on his own limited base'.[9] The most extensive assessment of Hopkins's revisions is offered by

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[7] Letter cited by Claude Abbott in *Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, 2nd ed. (1935; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. vi.

[8] Jude V. Nixon, '"Goldengrove unleaving": Hopkins' "Spring and Fall", Christina Rossetti's "Mirrors of Life and Death", and the Politics of Inclusion', *Victorian Poetry* xliii (2005), pp. 473-84: 477.

[9] William Dumbleton, 'Bridges and the Hopkins MSS: 1889-1930', *Thought: Fordham University Quarterly* xlvii (1972), p. 435 and p. 444. See also Edward Cohen's 'Hopkins, Bridges, and the Editing of "Ashboughs"' (1989), which examines how Bridges dealt with the editorial challenges posed by 'two different versions of the same poem', including whether he 'could regard either text as a completed work' or 'establish an order of composition for them' (356). Cohen also provides an account of the problematic sequencing of Hopkins's 'Sonnets of

Norman MacKenzie, who collates reproductions of the poet's manuscripts together with detailed exegeses of the changes at each stage of composition and the changes between the manuscripts.[10] My study builds on the scholarly ventures that have offered glimpses of the potential that this wealth of editorial information might offer.

More recent interpretations have started to bring together textual critiques of Hopkins's revisions with more literary-critical analyses. Glossing revisions made to 'The Windhover', MacKenzie briefly suggests how these inform the bird's 'flight pattern', which we might 'misunderstand' if we are not sufficiently attentive to the subtle changes in form and lexis.[11] Finn Fordham makes a broader claim that we must look to Hopkins's drafts 'to see the fraught relation between textuality and [. . .] self-compression.' Revisions to several poems, he notes, demonstrate how 'the movement from ideal to terrifying compression can be traced genetically through the compressed forms of Hopkins's manuscripts', and relates these revisions to the poet's construction of his self.[12] In contrast, Catherine Phillips has noted that Hopkins's manuscript changes involve 'expanding and dramatizing key issues of relevance to himself.'[13] This observation offers up a different model of revision from Fordham's: one trims out excrescences and leaves a more mature version, whereas the other is more effusive with a less clear sense of direction or telos. The second form of revisioning, as articulated by Phillips, seems more at one with the proliferation we see in Hopkins.

There is another kind of forward thinking we find staged by the poet's revision. This one is a line-to-line, in-the-moment futurity, which runs counter to the other versions of posterity we find in Hopkins, such as his preoccupation with the afterlife and religious redemption that is steered by a guiding teleology. Looking to the small-scale details of

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Desolation' in 'The Chronology of Hopkins's "Terrible Sonnets"', *Victorians Institute Journal* xxi (1993), pp. 191-200.

[10] Norman H. MacKenzie, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts of Gerard Manley Hopkins in Facsimile* (London: Garland, 1991). See also MacKenzie, 'From Manuscript to Printed Text: The Hazardous Transmission of the Hopkins Canon' (1989) which covers the transmission of Hopkins's texts from Bridges' collation to Mackenzie's own Oxford English Texts edition. Anthony Bischoff takes a similar approach, outlining how manuscripts came into the possession of Bridges before providing brief but comprehensive notes of the contents and locations of manuscript material at the time of the article's publication; 'The Manuscripts of Gerard Manley Hopkins', *Thought: Fordham University Quarterly* xxvi (1951), pp. 551-580.

[11] MacKenzie, *Later Manuscripts*, p. 124. See also Eugene August who describes the problems that revisions of 'The Windhover' create for its grammar; 'The Growth of the Windhover', *PMLA* lxxxii (1967), pp. 465-468: 466-7.

[12] Finn Fordham, *I do I undo I redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 82, p. 110.

[13] Catherine Phillips, 'Hopkins and the Lost Beloved: The Making of "A Voice from the World" and "Binsey Poplars"', *Poetry in the Making: Creativity and Composition in Victorian Poetic Drafts*, ed. D. Tyler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 167-186: 176.

Hopkins's writing, a different version of progressiveness unfolds. This aspect is not 'progressive' in the more contemporary, ameliorative sense, but something more neutral and forward-looking. Martin Dubois has noted that part of the 'danger' of seeing in Hopkins's poems a deliberate mastery over language and experience is that it leads us to 'expect the faith of his poems to be somehow perfect, regularising what may be strange or contingent in their meaning. To see only poise and exactness in Hopkins is to mirror the doubts some have held about his importance as a poet'.[14] It's a helpful caution, and it has something in common with Michael Hurley's sense of an experimental shift in Hopkins where 'expression gives way to exploration. Poetry becomes a mode for rationalization, even reparating, his religious faith – through his faith in poetry'.[15] There's a tension between Dubois's idea of anti-regulation and Hurley's 'rationalization', but each alerts us to the fact that form is no mere mould to sculpt thought in the 'final' versions of his texts. That Hopkins values form in this way sets him apart from those who, in Geoffrey Hill's words, 'associate creativity with random spontaneity and who regard form and structure as instruments of repression and constraint'.[16] I suggest that the same could be said for revision. Its effects in Hopkins do not involve a trimming down and constraining thought. They reintroduce waning spontaneity into his writing. Moreover, this joint examination might help us to understand Hopkins's innovations in form too.

Correspondence between Hopkins and Bridges reveals how seriously the poet took his craft, but it also adds to the debate over another editing problem. Idiosyncratic markings across Hopkins's poetry continue to perplex his critics and editors, just as they were a subject of debate between the poet and Bridges. Great colons, rhythmic markings, among other curious symbols are the most striking features of Hopkins's drafts, but since the beginning of his publication career they have been routinely deleted. Although Bridges describes the 'slurs', 'loops', 'pauses', and 'twirls' in his preface to the first edition of Hopkins's poems, they are noticeably absent from the text besides a few metrical stresses.[17] 'It was at one time the author's practice to use a very elaborate system of marks,' Bridges says, 'all indicating the speech-movement'.[18]

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[14] Martin Dubois, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 16.
[15] Michael D. Hurley *Faith in Poetry: Verse Style as a Mode of Religious Belief* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 107. Elsewhere, Hurley writes how Hopkins was 'tracking and trialling patterns of rhythmic sound' after he had taken his vows, 'such that when it came for him to write again, he was by no means starting from scratch' (103).
[16] Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. K. Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 4.
[17] See Robert Bridges, 'Author's Preface', *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. R. Bridges (London: Humphrey Milford, 1918), pp. 1-6: 5.
[18] Bridges, 'Preface to Notes', *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 94-101: 96.

'At one time' makes the notation seem like a passing and isolated fancy, as Bridges seeks to redeem Hopkins as a palatable writer.

At times, Bridges's editorial notes read almost like an *apologia*, as he notes Hopkins's 'perversion of human feeling', the occasional 'unpoetic line', confusing 'grammatical liberty', and the poet's inability to 'understand why his friends found his sentences so difficult'.[19] The 'latest autographs and autographic corrections' formed the basis of Bridges's selection of Hopkins's poems, partly due to their more finalised states of completion but also because the edition was intended 'to convey all the author's serious mature poems'.[20] That collocation of 'serious' and 'mature' is telling about the governing rationale behind his (and subsequent) editing of Hopkins.

Serious, here, is tantamount to the religious. We might pause before applying these terms to Hopkins's verse, given his comment on Parnassianism and the predictabilities of style. Nevertheless, Bridges's editorial practice has had a lasting influence. Catherine Phillips's *The Major Works* (1986) – the first major publication of Hopkins's works that was not a revised version of the 1918 *Poems* – employed similar editorial principles to Bridges.[21] Only metrical stresses remain of Hopkins's diacritical marks and the poems are presented according to the latest state of their manuscripts. Polishing up and trimming down Hopkins has the effect of picturing him as a focused writer with determined intentions for his poetry, leading to the kind of unified theories surrounding and *read into* his work that Dubois warns us about.

Norman MacKenzie's *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (1990) was by no means intended to be a definitive edition of the poet's work. It is, however, meant to 'provoke a more general awareness and explorations of Hopkins's metrical experiments'.[22] Moving chronologically through Hopkins's career, MacKenzie's edition tracks his unfolding body of work. Whereas previous editions were more concerned with his poetry as a posthumous record of his life's work, the focus of this edition, preserving diacritical markings where possible, and offering variants alongside the poems, depicts the poet's 'basic desire as creator: to catch and express an object's uniqueness through "inscape" and "instress".'[23] More often

[19] Ibid., pp. 96-8.
[20] Ibid., p. 95.
[21] Walford Davies also published an edition *The Major Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* in 1979.
[22] Norman MacKenzie, 'Introduction', *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. N. MacKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. xxv-lxxv: liii. *PW* in future references.
[23] Joseph J. Feeney, 'The Gerard Manley Hopkins Archive of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center', *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas* xlvi-xlvii (1989), pp. 11-40: 17.

than not, 'inscape' is the poet's way of referring to the inimitable particularity of an object and, on occasion, the 'act of perception'.[24] We might notice, then, how Hopkins's revisionism is invested in the reworking of his subjects and the process of apprehending those subjects.

The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins extends this ambition. In the introduction to *Volume III: Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks* (2015), the editors state their intention to show the 'different aspects of his textual life but, in effect, tell a slightly different story about Hopkins'.[25] Accordingly, the *Collected Works* has started to accrue editions of Hopkins's writing that might help subsequent literary-critical appraisals of his writing to shed light on the diverse thinking and ingenuity of his work. The introduction to this volume goes on to say that Hopkins was 'part Wordsworth, part Pater, and wholly himself while he works "To match and more than match" words to the play of ideas, and feelings'.[26] To be 'wholly himself', I suggest, is a condition Hopkins endeavoured to resist. As his remarks on 'Parnassian' imply, part of the point of writing is *not* to be sure of himself.

[24] Dubois, *Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*, p. 12. For a survey of inscape's various meanings, see Dennis Sobolev, 'Inscape Revisited', *English* li (2002): 219–234.
[25] Lesley Higgins, 'Introduction', *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins III*: *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, ed. L. Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 1-46: 1.
[26] Higgins, 'Introduction', *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 8.

Clouded Judgement

Many of Hopkins's speakers find themselves under a cloud. One of his earliest poems describes how 'clouds come, like ill-balanced crags, / Shouldering', and the dramatic persona of his fragmentary play, *Floris in Italy*, envisages the 'fine morsels of a dwindling cloud / That piece themselves into a race of drops'.[27] Like his Alchemist, who watches the 'travelling clouds [. . .] The making and the melting crowds', Hopkins is frequently drawn back to this meteorological phenomenon which drifts in and out of his verse. Often attached to intransitive verbs like those in these examples, Hopkins's clouds have an unspecified and indeterminate movement, frustrating our inquiries into time and place. More suggestively, his Arcadian shepherd forges a link between clouds and fleeting kinds of composition when he's found 'Shaping his outlines on a field of cloud'. Several lines later, he 'sat and wrought his outline on a cloud'.[28] This connection between clouds and other changeable forms would prove a lasting one in Hopkins's imagination. To have a clouded judgement, then, might not necessarily mean to be misguided. For Hopkins, it could also be a source and a means of creativity.

One vision of a clouded horizon, in particular, held Hopkins's gaze, as his diary entries from 1865 show:

> A noise of falls I am possessèd by
>
> of ~~water~~ streams; and clouds like mesh'd and parted moss
> of water. Clouds like parted moss
>
> Attain the windy levels of the sky
> Wh. between ash-tops suffers loss
> Of its concavity.[29]

Whereas Wordsworth's ear might have stayed pinned to that sound of the stream, Hopkins's eye is drawn onwards to the interwoven clouds. Textual revisions likewise part and mesh, as those two images are left to co-exist, offset from the main body of the poem, and momentarily create an enjambement of their own in 'parted moss / of water'. In its process of revision, it's as if the poem makes good on an ambition to become more cloud-like. A series of visual sketches [FIGURE 3] and impressionist descriptions lead to these draft lines of verse. According to them, the clouds made 'spokes' of light on the horizon and formed 'a wonderfully

[27] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 20, p. 39.
[28] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 75, p. 60.
[29] Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 319.

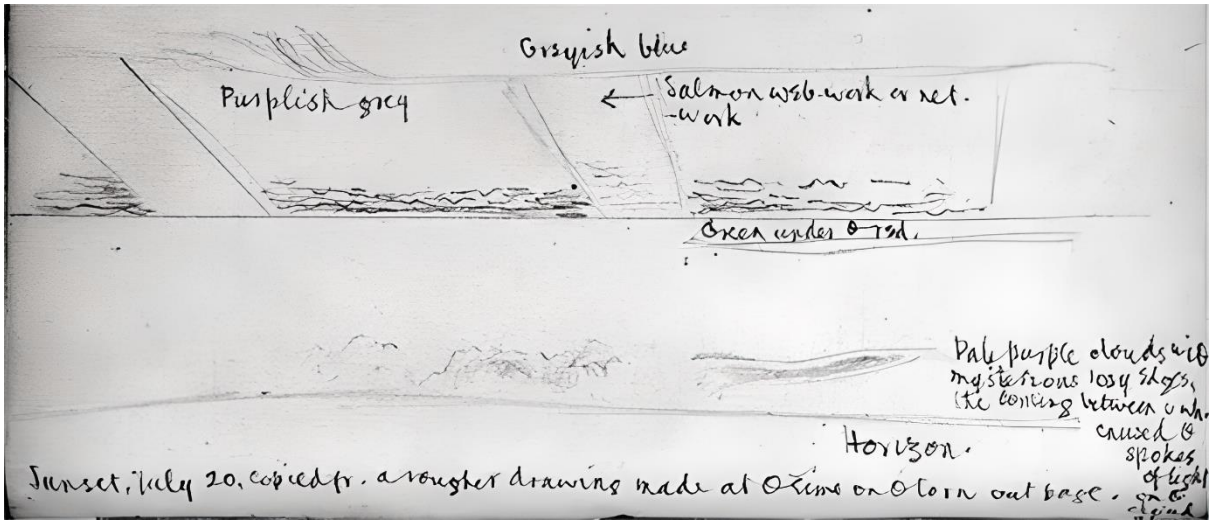


Figure 3: 'Diary for 1865', Campion Hall, Oxford, C.II.88

symmetrical band or skein of cloud on which they fell'.[30] The result, as these illustrations note, is that the clouds are left with 'mysterious rosy edges', blending a Homeric formula of 'rosy-fingered dawn' with a more modern perplexity with hazy perceptions. By their nature, clouds are intellectually fixed but they are also variable in our experience of them, and Hopkins's return to poetry reveals an inadequacy of the static image to account for these elusive states.

Commentary on Hopkins has insufficiently attended to the wayward aspects of his nature writing. One of the chief characteristics of his early poems, in Catherine Phillips's eyes, is 'the note of authenticity that the precision of Hopkins's observations of nature give his work. In the mature poetry this is made significant through its application to Christian ideas.'[31] This is not the whole picture of Hopkins's 'mature' poetry. Because of the presumption that 'mature' was synonymous with 'religious' for Hopkins, poems that did not fall in line with this caricature of his writing were excluded from earlier editions of his work, and this view of the poet has persisted. More recently, Seán Hewitt has argued that the poet 'asserted close scientific study as an idiosyncratic method of divine apprehension', leading to his study of atmospheric phenomena, including clouds, being recruited into a joint scientific-theological mission.[32] My intention is to query this implicit hierarchy, where the questions of aesthetics raised by clouds come second to this mission. For instance, Hewitt proposes that one crucial poem sees Hopkins trying to untangle a 'lock of clouds', something that is a 'real and physical presence'. It's worth

[30] Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks,* p. 318.
[31] Catherine Phillips, 'Hopkins and the Lost Beloved: The Making of "A Voice from the World" and "Binsey Poplars"', *Poetry in the Making: Creativity and Composition in Victorian Poetic Drafts*, ed. D. Tyler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 167-186: 174.
[32] Seán Hewitt, 'Gerard Manley Hopkins's "Skies of Couple-Colour"', *Victorian Poetry* lviii (2020), pp. 291-314: 292.

remembering, however, that the original version of this fragmentary text read '*look* of clouds', an equally, if not more, suggestive image that highlights how apprehension itself was placed front and centre.[33] In this respect, Hopkins isn't, as Bragg has claimed, a writer of 'nature poetry', nor is nature the 'supreme site' wherein God 'reveals Himself to the poet'.[34] 'Reveal' makes that experience sound too direct, revelatory, or known. What this section will focus on is how clouds become a recurrent site of contingency in Hopkins's writing. Specifically, it asks what these unstable, evasive formations might have to say about unstable or unresolved textual formations in his notebooks, poems, and poetic drafts.

How to go about describing clouds was not only a point of confusion for Hopkins. It also posed a challenge to scientific commentators in the nineteenth century. It wasn't until 1803 that the Latinate terms to classify clouds emerged when Luke Howard published his *Essay on the Modification of Clouds*. Meteorology comes under fire from Howard, who points out certain limitations in the discipline. In attending 'only to his instruments', Howard remarks, the meteorologist 'may be said to examine only the *pulse* of the atmosphere'.[35] Like the still life of a photograph, to have only the snapshot of a cloud formation would be to miss out on those essential qualities of clouds that caused the problems of definition to begin with. Howard attempted to correct for this issue in his nomenclature by coining terms that focused on that modifying period, the in-between states, of cloud formation. Hence, we find not only 'cirrus' and 'cumulus' clouds but also 'cirro-cumulus' and 'cirro-stratus' for 'intermediate Modifications'.[36] The *Essay*'s refrain 'Clouds in this Modification' reminds us how Howard's interest in clouds lies in their unfixed and changeable properties. For the last 'compound Modification', 'Cumulo-cirro-stratus', Howard puts forward the more concise 'nimbus' as an alternative.[37] 'Nimbus' and 'nebulous' are cut from the same etymological fabric, and where Howard's definitions like 'well defined' are juxtaposed with the more guarded 'roundish', we see how the elusiveness of this aerial phenomenon runs over into the scientific language attempting to pin it down.

One meteorologist later in the century would still note that 'the want of sufficiently exact language to designate the protean forms in which cloud masses present themselves', and

[33] Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 275.
[34] Quoted in Adrian Grafe, 'Gerard Manley Hopkins', *Victorian Poetry* lviii (2020), pp. 350-361: 351.
[35] Luke Howard, *Essay on the Modifications of Clouds* (1803; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 2.
[36] Howard, *Modifications of Clouds*, pp. 3-4.
[37] Howard, *Modifications of Clouds*, pp. 5-6, p. 4.

that a secondary problem arises in 'identifying the particular kind of cloud' from purely verbal descriptions.[38] But to describe a cloud is to be paradoxically uncloud-like. Among the other systems that came before, Howard's Latinate terms offer a pre-conceived idea of fixed kinds of clouds and predetermined characteristics. Hopkins's 'Platonic Dialogue' from his undergraduate compositions is suggestive in this respect because it pushes back against the kind of language Blanford sees as ideal for defining clouds. Not far into a Socratic back and forth, Hopkins's Professor laments, 'when one sets out with – a priori notions – I am afraid I have lost the only chance of a disciple I ever had'.[39] What Hopkins's Oxonian avatar might have to say about *a priori* descriptions works well with this criticism of naming cloud formations, given their intrinsic variability. In other words, it would be a category error to be overly categorical about clouds. Moreover, a glance at John Ruskin's lectures on 'The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century' (1884) reveals how the study of clouds was no longer an innocent fancy. Cumulative references to 'plague-wind and plague-cloud' contribute to an overbearing sense of degradation and decay, and his descriptions of 'terrific streams of reddish-violet fire, not forked or zigzag, but rippled rivulets' are as messy as the context of cloud studies.[40]

It is amid these redescriptions of clouds that the poet penned his letters to *Nature*, responding specifically to a letter by Marc Dechevrens. Several of the images found in Hopkins's letters can be traced to Dechevrens's '*bands* of a tint varying from the faintest to the deepest *blue* [. . .] seemingly radiating from a common centre [. . .] from the very position of the sun, or from both points at once' or the 'atmosphere over-charged with aqueous vapour'.[41] 'Charged' is a richly suggestive word for Hopkins, a term which can stretch from electrical, to moral, aesthetic, and other implications. He reuses the term from Dechevrens in his own letter when he observes that it might not be the case that 'the sky of England is not heavily charged

[38] H. F. Blanford, *A Practical Guide to the Climate and Weather of India, Ceylon and Burmah and the Storms of the Indian Seas* (London, 1889), 56. For more on the linguistic problem of clouds in the nineteenth century, see Katharine Anderson, 'Looking at the sky: the visual context of Victorian meteorology', *The British Journal for the History of Science* xxxvi (2003), pp. 301-332: 330-332.
[39] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 146. Emphasis in original.
[40] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin, Vol. 34: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, eds. E. D. Cook and A. Wedderburn (1908; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 38. See the particularly troubling portrayal: 'the air one loathsome mass of sultry and foul fog, like smoke; scarcely raining at all, but increasing to heavier rollings, with flashes quivering vaguely through all the air, and at last terrific streams of reddish-violet fire, not forked or zigzag, but rippled rivulets – two at the same instant some twenty to thirty degrees apart, and lasting on the eye at least half a second, with grand artillery-peals following; not rattling crashes, or irregular cracklings, but delivered volleys' (p. 37).
[41] Marc Dechevrens, 'A Curious Halo', *Nature* xxvii (1881), pp. 30-31: 30. Italics are Dechevrens's own.

enough with vapour to carry shadow. Rather it is too much charged'.[42] More than a decade before, however, he had put it in close proximity to his description of clouds and 'instress': 'The blue was ~~marked~~ ^charged^ with simple instress, the higher, zenith sky earnest and frowning, lower more light and sweet. High up again, breathing through woolly coats of cloud or on the quains and branches of the flying pieces it was the true exchange of crimson'.[43] 'Instress' is central to Hopkins's conception of an object's individuality because it is the force that keeps an object 'charged' with its complex and defining characteristics.[44] But this individuality can become obscured.

Each *Nature* contributor's language of 'bars', 'bands', and 'texture' closes in on the modifying effect of clouds that Howard was keen to press, as they manipulate sunlight into discernible structures and patterns.[45] These 'accidental shapes', as Hopkins calls them, reframe what the eye perceives in new and perplexing ways.[46] Accordingly, he sees in the challenge of clouds a chance to understand what Kumiko Tanabe has called a 'new Realism', in which physical forms, although they are on the move, stay fixed mathematically in the metaphysical realm.[47] Hopkins's final letter to *Nature* refers to clouds as 'phases' and insists that it is 'right and important to distinguish phenomena really new from old ones first observed under new circumstances'.[48] This investigation into 'new circumstances', novelty, and changing phenomena that Hopkins carries out in his personal life, I suggest, is equally revealing about the incompletion he harnesses in his textual life.

Rounding off one of his letters, the poet notes that our impressions of clouds are 'merely an effect of perspective, but a strange and beautiful one'.[49] Here, Hopkins is continuing a pre-existing interest in the extent to which clouds complicate ideas of perception, which is shown in Dechevren's recurring verbs of sight and seeming: 'It does not seem', 'are seen', 'are first seen', 'greatly different from anything else to be seen'.[50] What's more intriguing is that

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[42] 15 Nov. 1883, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins II: Correspondence 1882-1889,* eds. R. K. R. Thornton and C. Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 549.
[43] 22 Apr. 1871, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 508.
[44] It can also be the 'stem of stress between us and things to bear us out and carry the mind over', as Hopkins puts it in his 'Notes on Greek Philosophy'; *Oxford Essays and Notes,* p. 313.
[45] See 15 Nov. 1883, *Correspondence 1882-1889,* p. 637 and 3 Jan. 1884, *Correspondence 1882-1889,* pp. 651-654.
[46] 3 Jan. 1884, *Correspondence 1882-1889,* p. 649.
[47] Kumiko Tanabe, *Hopkins and the Poetics of Fancy* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp. 19-20.
[48] 30 Oct. 1884, *Correspondence 1882-1889,* p. 687.
[49] 15 Nov. 1883, *Correspondence 1882-1889,* p. 637. Hopkins published four letters to *Nature* on this subject from 1882 to 1884.
[50] Dechevrens, 'A Curious Halo', pp. 30-31.

Hopkins thought of his own poetry as strange or odd. The association between ‘strange’ and ‘beautiful’ echoes George Grote, whom Hopkins had read during his time at Highgate School and who once described ‘gorgeous clouds of fancy and feeling’, which can be felt in the poet’s study of these phenomena.[51] These letters, then, encapsulate how Hopkins was tapping into an ongoing and lively discussion about the way in which clouds were a centrepiece in broader debates over perception, change, and contingency. As I will now go on to suggest, these effects might similarly refer to the experience of verse, form, and the changes made through textual revision.

Hopkins wasn’t alone in making clouds a metaphor for unresolved states of mind. Mary Jacobus’s study, *Romantic Things*, has observed how clouds, among other aerial phenomena, offered writers like John Clare ‘a relief from seeing and being seen, as well as a language for undirected states of thought and feeling’.[52] It’s not so much ‘relief’ that clouds offer Hopkins; they’re more like an imaginative through-line for questions surrounding how ‘acts of apprehension apparently simple are largely influenced by the imagination’.[53] Looking to the poet’s compositional practice, we see how this equally applies to indeterminate states of composition. One of his most fragmentary poems complicates precision the more closely Hopkins looks back at his vision of a cloud:

> ~~With~~ ^In^ more precision now of light and dark
> The heightening dawn with milky orience
> Rounds its still-purpling centreings of |cloud.
> —
> Now more precisely touch'd ~~with~~ ^in^ light and ~~dark~~ ^gloom^,
> The place of the East with ~~heighten'd~~ ^earliest^ milky morn
> Rounds its still-purpling centre darks of cloud.
> Dawn that the pebbly low-down East
> Covers with shallow s~~h~~ilver, that unsets
> The look of clouds betimes and hangs the day.
> —
> ~~Dawn~~ Dawn that the low-down pebbly East
> Covers with shallow s~~h~~ilver, the look of clouds
> That early 'sperses, and high hangs the day.[54]

If one view of Hopkins is that he aspired to a ‘trained vision’ and ‘knowing’ God, clouds draw our attention to the insufficiency of knowledge to account for particular experiences. Revision,

[51] George Grote, *A History of Greece*, 12 vols. (London: 1846), i. 576. See Hopkins’s remark to Bridges that ‘No doubt my poetry errs on the side of oddness’; 15 Feb. 1879, *Correspondence 1852-1881*, p. 334.
[52] Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 18.
[53] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 231.
[54] Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 275.

correspondingly, for him is not a form of training in order to access knowledge of a subject. Those 'still-purpling centreings of cloud' above see grammatical categories disintegrate, by which the poem's language is preserved in a state of instability. Unstable grammatical forms come to describe forms in nature that cannot be wholly pinned down. Nature simultaneously becomes deliquesced and dispersed as the 'Look of clouds', which "'sperses" in the reworked text, gains a force of expansion. Like the cloud in motion, the poet's thoughts become multi-directional. In setting that continuous, 'still-purpling centre' against the 'darks of cloud', Hopkins's revisions come to make the abstract more concrete, as he tests out the limits of his writing's own trajectory on the page.

Recall his remark in one of his letters to *Nature*, that what he could see was 'merely an effect of perspective'.[55] This observation finds more than a poetic rendering in this poem, because the changes in this manuscript see the poet trying to retain something of the arresting effect such a perspective might provide. His re-rendering of 'light and dark' as 'light and gloom' tracks a movement back into the murkiness of what he saw, rather than tidying it up into the idealised oppositions of darkness and light. And when he twice reworks 'With' to 'In', these references to 'precision' and 'light' no longer fulfil strictly instrumental functions. These small, and yet pointed changes, provoke larger questions. If Hopkins is saying that clouds are not something that can be captured *with* precision, then what might it mean for them to be somehow captured *in* it?

As I have been arguing, Hopkins's engagement with clouds is part of a larger nineteenth-century investigation into problems of perception, categorisation, and definition. Restoring Hopkins's multivalent thinking about clouds to the larger frame of his writing, I have suggested, demonstrates how seriously he took these questions outside his religious preoccupations. The next part of this section brings the fluctuation of cloud states into dialogue with the poet's writings on aesthetics in order to show how a seemingly uncharacteristic pull towards the indistinct was a cornerstone of Hopkins's poetic thinking. I start by examining the ways in which clouds become an imaginative shorthand for questions about the relationship between order and disorder in composition, before turning to what the 'drift' of clouds reveals about other kinds of imaginative and compositional drift in his verse.

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[55] 15 Nov. 1883, *Correspondence 1882-1889*, p. 637.

The potential of Hopkins's clouds to illuminate unstable modes of thought and composition began decades before his *Nature* letters. Looking to his undergraduate investigations, the poet's 'Platonic Dialogue' is a prime instance of this connection where the sight of 'rows of level cloud' provoke a philosophical discussion of irregularity and beauty. These rows, one of Hopkins's interlocutors points out, 'are pretty symmetrical. They are straight and parallel with sky-line and each other, and of a uniform colour'. We might note that this row of clouds is only '*pretty* symmetrical', not wholly regular.[56] The ensuing observations over the composition of leaves lead the Professor to conclude:

> Of course everyone wd. allow as a truism that in making beautiful shapes (and the same will hold for the other kinds of abstract beauty) we must not have things too symmetrical; and most wd. allow we must not have them too unsymmetrical and rugged.[57]

Cloud formations offer up a secular way of attending to the relationship between order and disorder. Across this dialogue, we see the young poet justifying beauty in nature without reference to the divine and, here, the description of 'making beautiful shapes' points to the compositions of beauty in life as Hopkins witnesses it. But the poet then goes one step further in that parenthesis to note the same of 'other kinds of *abstract* beauty', elevating his observations to a compositional principle. To blend the 'symmetrical' with the 'rugged' might not only be a feature of experience, then, but a rubric for beauty.

If there's a slight dig in Hopkins's 'Platonic Dialogue' at how 'slight inequalities or imperfections as are always to be found in nature' are 'not to be expressed at all in an idealized' version in art, then his compositional process shows him in the process of correcting this.[58] His conception of beauty, as a blend of likeness and difference, is also worked into the formal aspects of his poetry. A practical demonstration of this form of revisionism, textual and rhythmic, is offered by the compositional history of 'Hurrahing in Harvest', a poem which deals with the 'lovely behaviour' of clouds in increasingly uncertain terms:

> Summer énds now; now, bárbarous in béauty, the stóoks ríse
> Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
> Of sílk-sack clóuds! Has wilder, wilful-wávier
> Méal-drift moulded ever and melted acróss skies?

[56] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes,* p. 139. Italics are my own.
[57] Ibid., p. 142.
[58] Ibid.

I wálk, I lift up, I lift úp heart, éyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, éyes, heárt, what looks, what lips yet gáve you á
Rápturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies? (*PW*, pp. 148-9)

Multiple changes to these lines across its manuscript drafts disclose an allegiance between Hopkins's process of revision and the ways these lines become shaped by patterns of rhythm and stress. Had he retained the original text of the first line, we would have been thrust into a more immediate present hammered out into the flat stresses of 'It is harvest: nów'. In their revised version, 'Summer *ends* now; now, *bar*barous' smudges the edges between the ending of summer and the beginning of autumn. It's not entirely clear whether that second *now* should be stressed, which intimately connects with the way in which we are left wondering whether each 'now' is referring to the same moment in the present or whether the poet is more concerned with endings or new beginnings. Meanwhile, shimmering extensions of lines check the acoustic outline of the poem as extrametrical 'behaviour' and 'wávier' themselves waver between three or four (and two or three) syllables, and so become a particularly deft model of the struggle between design and disorder.

English metre, as Hopkins would have been well aware, can be as slippery as the movements of clouds this poem describes. Unlike the more regimented quantitative metre of Classical verse, the accentual-syllabic metre of English can be uncertain and 'sprung rhythm' is an especially heightened version of this flexibility. Writing about this poem to Bridges in 1878, the poet took his time in pointing out that 'the outriding feet are not to be confused with dactyls or paeons, though sometimes the line might be scanned in either way.'[59] This note might be more confounding than clarifying, but this is part of the point of the rhythmic figure in question, as Hopkins's gloss in his lecture notes suggests: the 'paeon is recommended by the complexity of its ratio, which is hard to catch, and by its length, which makes the longs and beats wide apart and so also hard to catch the particular rhythm of, though rhythmical.'[60] Some of his most famous poems, from 'The Windhover' to 'Pied Beauty' and 'The Caged Skylark', return to the elusive potential of the paeon. In other words, this particular foot is not just a possible rhythm in that poem above; it is an emblem of what is 'hard to catch'.

[59] Hopkins to Bridges, 16 Jul. 1878, *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. C. Abbott, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 56.
[60] Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins VI: Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, ed. R. K. R Thornton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 325.

Being 'hard to catch' does not come without its drawbacks. One noticeable absence from future versions of 'Hurrahing in Harvest' is what Eric Griffiths has called 'the prime, calling word of poetry' – that 'O' which had heralded 'O eyes, O heart, and eyes' in a previous draft. Its very shape was perhaps too perfect a reminder of the ideal it embodies. As Griffiths notes in another context, the invocation of an 'O' is associated with the 'aim of the ascetic discipline, its aim at something beyond itself, its possible fertility'.[61] Naturally, in Hopkins's case, there is the religious dynamic, but there's more than one way poetry can be an 'ascetic discipline'. In becoming more nebulous, for instance, a poem risks being misunderstood or misapprehended, but this can mask a more urgent anxiety that it might not reach *any* reader. As the poet had noted, if the beauty and effect of clouds was wholly a result of apprehension, then the poem likewise might suffer the same silence that meets its rhetorical questions. Hopkins's original line, however, did not run on to speak of 'lips' giving 'rounder replies' but to 'Print or pen such overwhelming replies', as if the poet was attempting to exorcise the anxieties of his current predicament as he composed. Indeed, the revisionary relationship between lines, or between the poet and his work, might be one solution to these anxieties. By converting his voice into a textual form of process, the poet projects his voice into the future but makes a gamble that it will be picked up in future periodicities of rhythm and form on the page or in the continued voicings and rewritings of his text.

In its most striking example, the tussle between the ordered design that Hopkins would take from his religious life and this more wayward view of composition comes in 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection'. That 'and' turns the 'Comfort of the Resurrection' into something bordering on an afterthought. Put another way, a religious telos is allowed to co-exist alongside a worldview with which it is mostly incompatible. This dynamic plays out in the two modes of experience that the poem not only imagines but stages in corresponding kinds of revisionism. The original vision 'Cloud-puffballs' yields a proliferation of images which are only loosely associated in their sequencing, but reveal layers of variation that take place over underlying patterns:

> Cloud-puffballs, torn tufts, tossed pillows | flaunt forth, then chevy on
> an air-
> Built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs | they throng;
> they glitter in marches.
> Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, | wherever an elm

[61] Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice in Victorian Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 250.

arches,
Shivelights and shadowtackle ín long | lashes lace, lance, and pair.
Delightfully the bright wind boisterous | ropes, wrestles, beats earth
bare
Of yestertempest's creases; in pool and rutpeel parches
Squandering ooze to squeezed | dough, crúst, dust; stánches, stárches
Squadroned masks and manmarks | treadmire toil there
Fóotfretted in it. Million-fuelèd, | nature's bonfire burns on. (*PW*, pp. 197-8)

The poem starts *in medias res* and it seems happy to stay there. Hopkins's attraction to nature and 'dappled things' (to borrow his phrase from 'Pied Beauty') in the moment makes his sense of wonder seem less dependent on his religious convictions. The poem's underlying design culminates in the decisive repetition of 'Immortal Diamond', but within this structure, phonetic transitions mimic energetic thought, as Hopkins tries to find a verbal shape for things that are inherently shapeless. Take a line like 'Shivelights and shadowtackle ín long | lashes lace, lance, and pair'. There's something more conceptually ambitious going on here than the poet revelling in musicality. The mobility of the cloudscape produces an equally mobile syntax, as alliteration stages the broader patterns of revision at the smallest level of individual letters, and so lends the poet a suitable model for the processes of thought.

At the poem's close, however, a marked change in direction leads him to assert, 'I am all at once what Christ is [. . .] immortal diamond, / Is immortal diamond.' It's a sudden shift into a teleological organisation of experience, which allows the poet to figure Christ as both an individual and a type across history. What we are left with is the poem's dual commitment to a mode of experience that depends on the permanence of underlying relations, be they the structures of belief or the sonnet form, and the sort of experience that is mobile and contingent. Michael Hurley is right to observe that 'The Windhover' is 'to some extent dependent (as his agonistic sonnets are) on working itself out *as* poetry', and the same is certainly true of this poem.[62] The provisional workings out, processes of self-confrontation and self-effacement, that we might expect from the draft stages of a poem fuel the imaginative struggle in its more completed version. What poetry turns out to be for Hopkins is something like an extension of the mechanics at work in his 'sprung rhythm', whereby processes of revision or the 'recasting'

[62] Michael D. Hurley, *Faith in Poetry: Verse Style as a Mode of Religious Belief* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 123.

of speech keep the negotiations going between teleological and contingent handlings of experience.

It's revealing that one of Hopkins's essays talks about the added irregular element being something particular to poetry:

> In art it is essential to recognise and strive to realise on a more or less wide basis this unity in some shape or other. [. . .] There is an important difference to be noted here. In art we strive to realise not only unity, permanence of law, likeness, but also, with it, difference, variety, contrast.[63]

What makes art distinct from other kinds of efforts to make sense of experience is its ability to reconcile permanence and dissonance, and so it's perhaps appropriate that Hopkins's practice of revision strives towards 'realising' these elements – both in the sense of acknowledging and creating them. Revision for Hopkins works like form in his final poems, preserving and generating irregularity, and so keeps poetry as poetry.

When Hopkins thinks of clouds, he does not only think of their settled patterns; he was also entranced by their movement. Images of 'drift' suggestively arrive hand-in-hand with Hopkins's visions of clouds, and so contribute to their air of flux and changeability in his work. Unlike Ruskin, who felt an anxiety to eliminate the compositional problems he encountered when drawing clouds, Hopkins strove to preserve the peculiarities of 'drift' not only as he revised but also in forms of revisioning.[64] So while his contemporary would try to get us to see clouds as something more definite and defined – 'they are not more *drifted* into form than they are *carved* into form' – Hopkins saw the imaginative potential offered up by this process.[65] Just after those lines on 'still-purpling centreings' I discussed earlier, we find the fragmentary line 'Whorlèd wave, whelkèd wave, – and drift.'[66] Elsewhere, the poet likens the mystical sight of approaching mermaids to a '– a crowd / Of filmy globes and rosy floating cloud: – / So those Mermaidens crowded to my rock, / And thicken'd, like that drifted bloom'.[67] Matched with an impressionist soundscape and grammar, the drift of these clouds keeps them one step ahead of the poet. The intense specificity of 'that drifted bloom' might point us back to Wordsworth's

[63] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 221.
[64] See Ruskin's remark in *The Elements of Drawing*: 'Because they move so quickly, one 'must try therefore to help what memory you have, by sketching at the utmost possible speed the whole range of the clouds; marking, by any shorthand or symbolic work you can hit upon, the peculiar character of each, as transparent, or fleecy, or linear, or undulatory; giving afterwards such completion to the parts as your recollection will enable you to do'; *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903-12), xv. 128–9.
[65] Ruskin, *Works*, xv. 130.
[66] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 54.
[67] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 13.

most famous instant of cloud-watching: 'I wandered lonely as a Cloud / That floats on high o'er Vales and Hills, / When all at once I saw a crowd / A host of golden Daffodils'.[68] As Wordsworth's golden 'bloom' drifts into his own poem, we see Hopkins revisioning the language of someone who had formerly used the religious terms for secular purposes. In this context, composition itself might helpfully be understood as a type of drift, because the transitions between where Hopkins's work on one poem finishes and the next begins are not so much invisible as absent on the manuscript page. New poems come about not as a staged development; they are closer to snapshots of an ongoing process of thought.

While the process of 'drift' can be enticing, it can start off by giving the poet pause. Consider, for instance, the concession in 'The Bugler's First Communion': 'Though this child's drift // *Seems* by a divine doom channelled, nor do I cry / Disaster there'.[69] Following the stanza break, the stress falls squarely on the fact that the 'child's drift' only *seems* to end in disaster. In the end, this 'drift' manages to escape a deterministic hand on the scales. It's not surprising that Hopkins gravitates towards the movement of a cloud's drift, because it neatly captures his theory of motion more broadly as the 'the synthesis of a number of impressions of the same thing perceived in a number of different spots continuously'.[70] At the same time, this phrase could just as well be describing critical features we encounter in a poem. Devices such as rhyme, rhythm, and verbal motifs can work like optical and aural allusions in that they can return to us the same thing in different spots on the page. If the visual sketch mentioned at the start of this section was somehow inadequate to do justice to the phenomenon of 'drift', then what Hopkins's forms of revision in the context of modelling clouds show is how he increasingly comes to rely on the double life of a poem instead. A poem is a fixed pattern on the page, but we make sense of it bit by bit in the process of reading.

On this question of the experiential process of verse, Hopkins's notes towards lectures on poetry are again helpful. These were composed at a time when the poet denied himself the opportunity to write poetry due to his commitments as a Jesuit. As the editors of his *Sketches and Scholarly Studies* point out, his research into '"rhetoric" allowed him to follow his irresistible commitment to poetry without yet betraying his resolution to "write no more".'[71] Poetry enters his imaginative activity by a kind of subterfuge, taking advantage of the

[68] Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. J. Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 207-8. 'Golden' is from the *1815* edition of the poem.
[69] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 162 (my emphasis).
[70] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 232.
[71] Hopkins, *Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, p. 5.

permeable boundary between the discipline of writing poetry and that of theorising about it. Moreover, the draft state of his lecture notes continues to speak to his creative process more broadly, leaving blank spaces to return to, and sidenotes which seem to crystallise what Hopkins later realised he was thinking about coexisting with the collection of thought that led to them. One such sidenote remarks, 'Breaking the monotony does not take away unity', and accompanies the following:

> All ~~of~~ intermittent elements of verse, as alliteration, rhyme
>
> It shd. be understood that these various means of breaking the sameness of rhythm and especially caesura do not break the unity of the verse but on the contrary; they make it organic and what is organic is one.[72]

These intermittent aspects in Hopkins's verse, I suggest, are also revealing about the intermittent nature *of* his verse. Rhyme, especially, equips Hopkins with an imaginative resource for investigating the ways in which forms of revisioning are both backwards and forwards looking in his poetry.

Consider this sequence from one of his earliest poems 'Il Mystico', where rhyming couplets are put to work enabling a series of images to fuse into one another in a particularly lucid scene of drift:

> Or, like a lark to glide aloof
> Under the cloud-festoonèd roof,
> That with a turning of the wings
> Light and darkness from him flings;
> To drift in air, the circled earth
> Spreading still in its sunned girth;
> To hear the sheep-bells dimly die
> Till the lifted clouds were nigh,
> In breezy belts of upper air
> Melted into aether rare. (*PW*, p. 8)

Over the short course of these lines, the homogenous singular of the 'cloud-festoonèd roof' modulates into the plural 'lifted clouds' – a transformation from synthesis to fragmentation that is enhanced by the poem's acoustic structure. Rhyme's twin allegiance can reflect the compositional development of a poem, as Peter McDonald has suggested. Its 'forked tongue', he says, 'is akin to that of verse's "slow cumulative growth", for it answers to the two-way function of rhyme in poetic composition itself: a rhyme-word casts itself forwards into the next

[72] Hopkins, *Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, p. 336.

lines of a poem, but it also a mode of listening backwards within the poem, so that every rhymed utterance is also an echo of itself.'[73] I would add that the aural loops and self-revisioning of rhyme can also be a way of resisting 'cumulative growth'. As often happens in Hopkins, the cumulative has a habit of turning cumulous. Bridges once chastised Hopkins's handling of rhyme, citing his 'intention in such places is that the verses should be recited as running on without pause, and the rhyme occurring in their midst should be like a phonetic accident, merely satisfying the prescribed form'.[74] Viewed in the context of Hopkins's research into poetics, rhymes are not used to bring structure and cohesion. They are used to break up 'monotony' like the roughing-up of his process of revision.

'Intermittent' devices in Hopkins's verse play out a revisionary pattern one of Hopkins's undergraduate experiments in the Socratic form referred to as 'the drift of [. . .] context'.[75] However, his references to 'drift', 'Melted', and 'Spreading still' could be getting at a broader revisionary history underpinning the poem. As he composed the poem, Hopkins wrote to Ernest Coleridge, inquiring 'Now is that or is it not a plagiarism from Tennyson's *Eagle*, "Close to the sun in lonely lands"'.[76] He had already admitted that of the 'good many poetical snatches' he had recently composed, the 'best thing I have done lately is *Il Mystico* in imitation of *Il Penseroso*, of which I send you some extracts. It is not finished yet'.[77] We might also note the precursor of Shelley's 'To a Skylark' whose 'profuse strains of unpremeditated art' now find mediation in Hopkins's own poem. As Harold Bloom argues in *The Anatomy of Influence*, 'influence anxiety [. . .] exists between poems and not between persons'. 'All that matters for interpretation is the revisionary relationship between poems, as manifested in tropes, images, diction, syntax, grammar, metric, poetic stance.'[78] So in a poem that is composed with a heightened degree of self-consciousness over its literary inheritance, Hopkins's clouds concentrate these issues because they too involve subjecting recognisable types, or tropes, to the 'drift of context' the young poet mentions. Like the skylark-poet

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[73] Peter McDonald, *Sound Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 12. McDonald is supplementing Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's observations about Alexander Pope's use of rhyme; 'Alexander Pope: "renown'd in Rhyme"', *Literary Milieux: Essays in Text and Context Presented to Howard Erskine-Hill*, eds. D. Womersley and R. McCabe (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2008), pp. 230-257: 239.
[74] Bridges, 'Preface to Notes', *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 99-100.
[75] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 148.
[76] Hopkins to E. H. Coleridge, 3 Sep. 1862, *Correspondence 1852-1881*, p. 23.
[77] Ibid., p. 18.
[78] Harold Bloom, *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 6.

surrogate within the text, the compositional state of the poem captures Hopkins in the ongoing 'drift' of literary tradition.

Of course, this is not the only way of thinking that a study of clouds has underpinned. How they have been recruited into forms of idealism by philosophers such as Plato provides a helpful contrast to the ways in which clouds can work against this ideal mode of thought. Looking to one of Hopkins's notes on Plato's theory of art, for example, we see how his own writing on clouds reworks the philosopher's hierarchy that privileges clouds as a metaphor for idealism: 'In the clouds is the Idea, on the earth is its phenomenal copy, thirdly its art-copy, fourthly the dialectical copy, wh. is nearest the Idea.' 'As God is unchangeable He is good and as good unchangeable. Now as matter is concrete it is bad and as bad concrete.'[79] But clouds as Hopkins actually witnesses them take him away from such theories of transcendent or unchangeable forms – unilinear theories which Hopkins seems to find ironically grounding. If Plato's idea of dialectic represents multiplicity in unity, at least until one achieves the supreme form, then Hopkins is more interested in the possibilities of those provisional and wayward stages.

Measured up against Plato's framework, Hopkins's process of composition would not fare well, given its efforts to provide anything but an idealised version of its subject. But his engagement with Plato's ideas of change and process proved to be a lasting one as he sought to calibrate his own responses to these questions to the provisional. Not only is the philosopher's *Timaeus* Hopkins's source for the image of 'Heraclitean Fire', it is also the central preoccupation of 'The earth and heaven, so little known' – one of Hopkins's earlier, incomplete poems from 1866. *Timaeus* describes the divine Form 'consummated from fire (ἐκ πυρὸς ἀπειργάζετο)' at the centre of the universe, surrounded by a world of 'becoming'. 'For the present, then,' Plato argues, 'we must conceive of three kinds, – the Becoming [τὸ μὲν γιγνόμενον], that "Wherein" it becomes, and the source "Wherefrom" the Becoming is copied and produced'.[80] Plato's notion of the 'becoming' world is woven into his participial verbs, as we find 'that which we now call "water" becoming (γιγνόμενον) by condensation, as we believe, stones and earth; and again, this same substance, by dissolving and dilating (τηκόμενον δὲ καὶ διακρινόμενον), becoming breath and air; and air through combustion becoming fire'.[81] His language comes to stage the unfolding it describes.

[79] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 243.
[80] Plato, *Timaeus*, ed. and trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), §50d.
[81] Plato, *Timaeus*, §49c.

'The earth and heaven, so little known' illustrates a recognisable version of this Heraclitean cycle. Whereas Plato's theory of 'becoming' envisages one kind of revisioning whereby an original idea deteriorates through replication and duplication, Hopkins's poem takes the various forms clouds might change into and out of and uses them to imagine a world rejuvenated by our experience of its 'becoming':

> The earth and heaven, so little known,
> Are measured outwards from my breast.
> I am the midst of every zone
> And justify the East and West;
>
> The unchanging register of change
> My all-accepting fixèd eye,
> While all things else may stir and range,
> All else may whirl or dive or fly.
> ***
> There is a vapour stands in the wind;
> It shapes itself in taper skeins;
> You look again and cannot find,
> Save in the body of the rains.
>
> And these are spent and ended quite;
> The sky is blue, and the winds pull
> Their clouds with breathing edges white
> Beyond the world; the streams are full
>
> And millbrook-slips with pretty pace
> Gallop along the meadow grass. –
> O lovely ease in change of place!
> I have desired, desired to pass
> [. . . . .] (*PW*, pp. 85-86)

The sequence of verbs that track the movement of 'vapour' reflects the different kinds of movement Plato discerns in the 'becoming' aspect of experience, but the poet's 'all-accepting fixed eye' revises the permanent substrate in Plato's universe: 'if we describe her as a Kind invisible and unshaped, all-receptive, and in some most perplexing and most baffling way partaking of the intelligible, we shall describe her truly.'[82] 'Becoming' is not simply the condition of an imitative and indeterminate world in Hopkins's poem; it is also the means by which he structures his approach. As the poet says in the first stanza, he *is* the 'midst of every zone' and not simply in it. We might also notice that he exchanged 'Down the world' to

[82] Plato, *Timaeus*, §51a-b.

'Beyond the world', implicating the 'cloud with breathing edges white' in his contemplation of what is 'so little known'. This is an invitation to consider what else is 'beyond' us, and in positioning that exploration in the static and simultaneously mobile realm of clouds, Hopkins suggests that such investigations rely on that 'becoming' quality of experience where even the most transcendent inquiries begin and end.

That the process of a poem can be used to think through responses to these broader questions of experience and apprehension is a further testament to that idea. 'It is rhyme we like, not echo, and not unison but harmony', Hopkins once mused, and the two critical rhymes in this poem are 'change' and 'range', a pairing Hopkins most likely inherited from Tennyson.[83] Whereas in *In Memoriam*, we tend to find 'range' modulating into 'change', as if to test out the limits of something's 'range' before it transforms into something else entirely, the reversed trajectory of these rhymes here suggests a will to retrieve something of 'change' in more organised design.[84] Just as the speaker observes of the clouds 'You look again and cannot find', he is similarly unable to retrieve his original desire, trailing off with 'I have desired, desired to pass'. That caesura, another of Hopkins's 'intermittent' devices, is used to disrupt the glimmer of a teleological path and the text lapses into incompletion at the very moment he reaches towards a kind of explanation.

The experience of revision is embedded in Hopkins's models and modelling of clouds. In this section, I have been arguing that the multi-faceted appearances of these aerial phenomena throughout his writing direct his focus on the wayward nature of experience. But the intellectual problems posed by clouds also provoke a striking collision of teleology with contingency both in Hopkins's compositional experiments with unstable forms and in the imaginative revisionings of forms in his completed poems. From Hopkins's interest in expansive motions of drift to patterns of disorder, a close relationship between his practice of revision and forms of surplus has started to emerge. My next section looks more closely at this dynamic and brings Pater's influence to the frame of Hopkins's revisions.

[83] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 221.
[84] For a further discussion of the effects of this rhyming duo in the poem, see Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, pp. 251-252.

Writing in Excess

'[A]ll first-rate poetry', Pater once insisted, has 'such qualities generally as depend upon second thoughts.'[85] His phrase 'as depend upon' might make us think twice – this kind of poetry is nurtured by the second thoughts of reflection (in the writer) but it also has characteristics (within the poetry) that remind us of the nature of second thoughts. Not only do 'second thoughts' assume centre stage in Pater's writing, they also turn out to be closely allied with the unrefined. Take his description of 'the mystery of so-called *white* things' (fictitiously attributed to a 'quaint German mystic') in *Marius the Epicurean*: 'the white queen, the white witch, the white mass' which are, in comparison to their originals, 'ever an afterthought – the doubles, or seconds, of real things, and themselves but half-real, half-material'.[86] These images are associated in Pater's mind with 'thought or reverie' rather than mere blankness – they are not etiolated sequels but charged with mystery and promise. Hopkins clearly took something from his tutor, as his meticulous process of revision shows. What's more, Pater's 'second thoughts' have much in common with Hopkins's, whose poetry does not only depend on the refinement with which any self-conscious artist might treat his work as it reaches a more 'finished' state. What I want to suggest in this section is that the contingency Hopkins seeks to reinvest his writing might be thought of as a kind of excess. Hopkins finds a Paterian sensuousness in his personal and textual experience that cannot be finessed nor confined.

Pater is helpful in this respect not least because Hopkins's own intellectual life is indebted to Pater's ideas of sensuousness, as shown in his essays from his time as his student that demonstrate his effort to 'again catch the Idea in its freshness' and to blend the concrete and the intangible in ways that no longer found favour among 'those who are quite grimed with the concrete.'[87] We might notice how his description speaks to Pater's 'afterthought' above in its aspirations to 'catch' *again* and in the collision of the physical and the ideal ('half-real, half material'). He is also helpful because of how he ties his conception of secondariness to questions of composition. Leonardo da Vinci, he writes, did not paint The Last Supper in 'fresco, where all must be *impromptu*, but in oils, the new method which he had been one of

[85] Pater, 'English Literature', *Essays from 'The Guardian'* (1901; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 7.

[86] Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, in *The Works of Walter Pater*, 8 vols. (1900-1; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ii. 17 (*Works*).

[87] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, pp. 304-5. These 'Notes on Gk. Philosophy' begin with a reference to Pater, as the poet observes a 'Great feature of the old Gk. philosophy, Pater said, its holding certain truths, chiefly logical, out of proportion to the rest of its knowledge' (304).

the first to welcome, because it allowed of so many afterthoughts, so refined a working out of perfection. It turned out that on a plastered wall no process could have been less durable'.[88] Like da Vinci's employment of oils, which 'allowed of so many afterthoughts', manuscript states are not merely a record of the forms of excess Hopkins is interested in; they underpin his process of creating them. In each case, revisionism is a question of provision as much as it is retrospective.

What might 'perfection' mean? It would be easy to mistakenly substitute 'working towards perfection' for Pater's actual words 'so refined a *working out* of perfection', which imply a refinement of experimentation not refinement through experimentation, letting 'perfection' pick up on its etymology to mean 'finished' (from the Latin *perfectum*). To be finished, or to have finish, is not necessarily to be 'refined'. Given that Pater once quibbled that Coleridge's search for 'one mode of life [. . .] cries out against every formula less living and less flexible than life itself', adding 'finish' might involve a roughing-up to make things more life-like.[89] Before looking in the second half of this section at the use of revision as a way of roughing up a poem's subject, I consider how Pater's investigation of the self might be brought to bear on Hopkins's, in order to demonstrate how the self is not an anchor to ground the origins and perceptions of a poem.

That Hopkins's interest in a compositional style proved on the pulse might reflect his conception of selfhood is suggested in 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire'. 'Each mortal thing', he writes, 'does one thing and the same: Deals out that being indoors each one dwells; / Selves – goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells'.[90] That dash is not necessarily the self enervating, but suspends the process of selving before it transforms into something more discrete. It's worth noting that in an earlier draft the poet wrote, 'Itself in every stroke it speaks and spells'. These lines sound increasingly like an echo of Keats's description of his own creative process, which insists that poetry 'cannot be matured by law & precept, but by watchfulness in itself – That which is creative must create itself', helpfully reminding us that the fascination with self-formation *in* Hopkins's poetry cannot be wholly disengaged from the creative development *of* these poems.[91]

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[88] Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, in *Works*, i. 120.
[89] Pater, *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style*, in *Works*, v. 103-4. We find the same anxiety at the end of Hopkins's 'Inversnaid', where the poet laments, 'Let them be left, / O let them be left, wildness and wet; / Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet'; *PW*, p. 168.
[90] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 115.
[91] John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats, 1814–1821*, ed. H. E. Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), i. 374.

My approach to Hopkins and the self goes against the grain of existing criticism.[92] That said, it does complement and complicate several existing views: Andrew Hodgson, for example, has written that 'Hopkins's finest poetry is always on the move, urgent and personal for its very resistance to being trapped by any static conception of personality. It has a wrought peculiarity, but it embraces casual quirkiness; its idiosyncrasy ricochets between the determined and the spontaneous'.[93] Finn Fordham also insists that we must turn to Hopkins's manuscripts 'to realize the extent of [. . .] the fraught relation between textuality' and what he calls 'self-compression.'[94] I would add that attending to his manuscripts also helps us to see a more undetermined form of selfhood in the printed poems. What remains from that 'most' of a poet's style in his description of Parnassian is perhaps tied up with that less finalised and uncontainable vision of the self.

On numerous occasions, Hopkins returns to the idea that the dissolution of the self might be a form of liberation. 'Moonless Darkness Stands Between' (1865) conceives of the loss of selfhood in terms of religious transcendence, where its speaker hopes that 'the Bethlehem-star may lead me / To the sight of Him. Who freed me / From the self that I have been'.[95] But there are also more wayward, even fraught, examples. For instance, 'St. Winefred's Well' (1884), where Caradoc's soliloquy finds him in a moment of conflict and unchanging selfhood that leads to a dead end:

> […] one part,
> Reason, selfdisposal, choice | choice of better or worse way,
> Is corpse now, cannot change; | my other self, this soul,
> Life's quick, this kind, this keen self-feeling.
>
> (*PW*, p. 179)

Similarly, in 'Henry Purcell' (1879), a more provisional imagining of selfhood comes as a moment of triumph: 'It is the rehearsal / Of own, of abrupt sélf there so thrusts on'.[96] This does

[92] Critics have tended to read Hopkins's engagement with the self as something absolute, final, and complete. J. Hillis Miller's argument has had lasting critical currency, which insists the poet's self 'is already fully existent as soon as one is aware of oneself at all'; 'The Creation of the Self in Gerard Manley Hopkins', *ELH* xxii (1955), pp. 293-319: 294. His suggestion that the poet composes 'an eternally subsisting taste of oneself which prolongs itself from moment to moment as long as one endures' is echoed by Walter J. Ong, who describes the poet's self as 'unavoidably there', 'even when I am attending directly to something else or someone else, asserting its presence to itself and thereby its differentiations from all else'; *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 4.

[93] Andrew Hodgson, *The Poetry of Clare, Hopkins, Thomas, and Gurney: Lyric Individualism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 118.

[94] Fordham, *I do, I undo, I redo*, p. 82.

[95] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 86.

[96] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 157.

not, however, need to lead anywhere, and like Caradoc's 'self-feeling', the drama of the rehearsal is what fuels the creation of the poem.

Stable selfhood can sometimes be like a cell that isolates us from a multifaceted experience of life. Take the predicament a speaker from one of the 'terrible sonnets' finds himself in:

> My own heart let me more have pity on; let
> Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,
> Charitable; not live this tormented mind
> With this tormented mind tormenting yet.
> I cast for comfort I can no more get
> By groping round my comfortless than blind
> Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
> Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.
> Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise
> You, jaded, lét be; call off thoughts awhile
> Elsewhere. . . (*PW*, p. 186)

It's worth noting that the address to the poet's 'Soul' was a later addition, as the original draft remained fixed on Hopkins's preoccupation with the 'self'.[97] The overwhelming sense of psychological entrapment is embodied in the verbal returns of the chiastic rhyme scheme, as well as the cycling of grammatical forms, that characterise his 'tormented mind tormenting yet'. If 'inscape' can represent both the object and perception, what we find here is that the fixity of Hopkins's mind has come to shape this circular relationship between himself and his subject. Condemned to wander a desolate internal landscape, the speaker increasingly comes to resemble Walter Pater's 'solitary prisoner' in the 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance*:

> when reflexion begins to play upon these objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions – colour, odour, texture – in the mind of the observer. [. . .] Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.[98]

An overly controlling self leads to isolation and entrapment: it straightens lucid impressions and what we are left with is a sort of claustrophobic introspection. The mind is mirrored back

[97] Hopkins, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts*, p. 287.
[98] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. 234–235.

to itself. Its own 'dream of *a* world' – not *the* world – is the final barbed hook, as it simultaneously reminds us what more is out there and how that has been fenced off. Like Hopkins's instruction to his self to 'call off thought awhile / Elsewhere', Pater's description of 'reflexion' suggests how 'reflexion' can be a question of knowing when not to overthink things, imparting an attraction to regain the surplus of experiences and impressions before thought arrives on the scene. That the 'cohesive force', which binds impressions of 'colour, odour, texture' is 'suspended', not stamped out, leaves open the possibility that they might return.

The closing lines of 'I wake and feel the fell of dark' continue to throw into relief Hopkins's unresolved arbitrations over the need for the self to change versus the need for it to cohere under an external telos:

> Selfyeast of spirit { a dull dough / my selfstuff } sours. I see
> The lost are like this, and their { scourge / loss } to be
> { As I am mine, their sweating selves; / Their sweating selves as I am mine, but worse. } (*PW*, p. 182)

Images of 'selfstuff' and 'selfyeast' conceive of selfhood as the beginning, not the end, of the poet's contemplation. What the poet discovers as he re-encounters his self through revision is that the self 'recognizes itself not as a lack, but as a plenitude', as J. Hillis Miller has put it.[99] Although anxieties arise over the possibility that these supplies of selfhood might go to waste, 'loss' itself avoids being tarnished with the same associations as 'scourge' in Hopkins's reworking of the draft because he commits to what Caradoc called 'selfdisposal, choice | choice of better or worse way', a choice carried out through his process of revision. An earlier draft of the last line left open the possibility that the poet might find himself in the same situation as those who are 'lost': 'Their sweating selves, as I am mine, but worse'.[100] At the same time as removing the comma after 'selves', Hopkins brackets 'As I am mine, their sweating selves' to be placed below the last line above, avoiding a damning eventuality that he might turn out more tormented than those in hell. It's the revisionism built into the poem (its openness to change), strengthened in the process of composition, which stages the poet's fulfilment of transformation and saves him from a determined fate that is 'but worse'.

[99] Hillis Miller, 'The Creation of the Self', p. 294.
[100] MS. H, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts*, p. 270.

Across the 'terrible sonnets', we see the poet tapping into the plenitude of the self via the 'selfyeast' of particular words and phrases being repeated in other lyrics, as they return to the enduring problem of consolation: 'Comforter, where, where is your comforting?'; 'No I'll not, carrion comfort'; 'Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind'; 'I cast for comfort I can no more get'.[101] His poems start to resemble the individual selves they describe, an assortment of varied responses to changing circumstances, not a protracted fixation with the same problem. What's more, Hopkins even seems to be in dialogue with himself between poems, when he envisages 'these last strands of man / In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can; / Can something, hope'. A poem written shortly after this cluster revises the final problem of 'I wake and feel': 'the departed day no morning brings / Saying "This was yours" with her, *but* new one, *worse*, / And then that last and shortest . . .'.[102] This time round, 'but worse' is ruptured by the qualification 'new one', revealing a nugatory consolation in living day to day. It's the 'shortest' day, of course, because the poet's predictions for the remainder for his mortal self are stopped short by the morbid but inevitable fact of his death. And yet, the terminal ellipsis hints at a different sort of futurity, as a reminder that these 'last strands of man', fixed in the material form of the poem, are thereby likely to outlive their writer.

How far these 'last strands of man' might reach hasn't only drawn Hopkins's attention. George Eliot's narrator in *Middlemarch* observes that 'belated historians' have 'so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe'.[103] Hopkins's analysis of human lots takes on a different role. It does not lead to a final, compressed explanation of experience. He has more in common with what Pater envisaged as 'that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves'.[104] For Pater, Kostas Boyiopoulos writes, 'the self is constantly recalibrated and rechannelled in its self-analysis, in its reflection on a wave-line of refined and fragile impressions with the work in continuous fracture.'[105] I would add that for something to 'seem the stranger', it must be measured up against the known and familiar, meaning that 'continuous fracture' risks overlooking what else is going on in Pater's '*passage* and dissolution of impressions'.[106] In revision as in self-analysis, we might follow up

[101] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 157, p. 159, p. 182, p. 186.
[102] Ibid., p. 183, p. 186 (emphasis added in second quotation).
[103] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. D. Carroll, new rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 132.
[104] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. 236.
[105] Kostas Boyiopoulos, *The Decadent Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 12.
[106] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 181.

on former lines of thought only to discover that the re-encounter with a former self plays out as an alienating experience. Such moments of estrangement between current and former selves are further evidence of the self's survival, because they reveal how we can be held accountable to our past. Or, in Hopkins's words, 'What you look hard at seems to look hard ~~and~~ at you'.[107]

We find the poet's most extended practical demonstration of such a 'perpetual weaving and unweaving' in 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves', where a decimation of the self leads to its overwhelming excess:

> For éarth | her béing has unbóund; her dápple
> is at énd, as –
> Tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs; | self ín self stéepèd and
> páshed – quite
> Disremembering, dísmémbering | áll now. Heart, you round me right
> With: Óur evening is óver us; óur night | whélms, whélms, ánd will
> énd us. (*PW*, p. 191)

'Throughther' is more or less a coinage, meaning 'intermingled', as if the poet's efforts to pin down unstable selfhood are matched by a wariness that pre-existing language might be unable to account for it. That said, Hopkins might have come across a similar phrase in James Durham's religious tract *Heaven upon Earth*, in which 'Conscience is disquieted, troubled, and as it were through other, or confused'.[108] Ruskin would later repurpose the term as the end result of revisions to his botanical book, as he sought to devise 'a system of my own': '[I] unbound my botanical book, and rebound it [. . .] with all the pages through-other and backside foremost – so as to cut off all the old paging numerals'.[109] Hopkins's 'throughther' is poised between Durham's mental disquiet and Ruskin's compositional innovation, making it a suitable negotiation of the challenging demands placed on the poet undergoing the dissolution of self.

One of the early drafts of the poem contained in the notebook Hopkins kept during his time in Dublin allows two bracketed lines to exist alongside each other: 'For earth {her being has unpenned; unpenned her being'.[110] The pun in 'unpenning' offers something close to a subtle commentary on the compositional development of 'Sibyl's Leaves', since we see

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[107] Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 504.
[108] James Durham, *Heaven upon Earth* (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1732), p. 54.
[109] Ruskin to Carlyle, Oct. 1855, *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin*, ed. G. A. Cate (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), p. 68.
[110] Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins VII: The Dublin Notebook*, eds. M. F. Suarez and L. Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 134.

several pages earlier how revisions made to the poem figure undoing and disparateness as a necessary part of textual expansion:

~~Now~~ ~~he~~ her
~~For~~ earth | her being unbinds; the dapple
has unbound
is at an end, a –

~~lies~~ is
Stray, aswarm, throughther, in throng**s**; ~~she is~~ self ~~in~~
Stray and aswarm
with her or in her,
~~self~~ steepèd in self ^, ~~quite~~ quite
Dismembering, disremembering all.
---
now
Swarms, swarms, throughther, in throng; ^ self she has in self steeped
~~of her~~
in her; quite (or right)
Dismembering, disremembering all.

Swarms, swarms, all throughter, in throng; self ín self steepèd

and flush; [quite
right
Dismembering, disremembering all.[111]

'Self in self steeped' envisages a surplus of selfhood that turns into the disparate 'Dismembering' then 'disremembering all'. Unlike the printed editions of Hopkins's verse, which often swap the order of 'dismembering, disremembering', its refrain-like nature in the draft presents the dynamics between division and cognition somewhat differently. An absence of mind does not lead to the 'dismembering' of the text, as if the poet were severed from his sources of inspiration. Hopkins's connection of surplus with 'disremembering' steers it away from its implication of 'failure' to reach something more in tune with the original sense of the prefix *dis-* as 'apart', 'asunder', or 'opposite of'. It thus captures how the poet's revisions work on the page: each revision is both a reversion to a previous state and a splintering. Lesley Higgins therefore misrepresents the poet's handling of language when she asserts that '[h]owever inelegant [his] hybrid verbs may appear, Hopkins's texts reveal an insistent pressure to *scientificize* and *historicize* what can and should be known; they participate in that

[111] Hopkins, *Dublin Notebook*, p. 113.

"revival, so marked in the nineteenth century, of all the techniques of exegesis"'.[112] We might note the effect of that added 'now' in the midst of these revisions ('*now* self she has in self steeped'), which both flags the consequences of revision which has led to this burst of selfhood, and recommits to the process of self-analysis.

It's worth remembering that 'weaving' and 'text' share an etymological lineage in the Latin *texere*, a link which highlights how a writer's drafts are particularly amenable to mediating the tweaks made to a tapestry of selfhood.[113] To delete is not always to erase, and at the end of his 'Platonic Dialogue', Hopkins himself notes how poetry's negative ways might uphold a certain kind of undoing:

> And for the darksome locks being undone, you know how much use poetry makes of negative words and just for the reason that they express an antithesis. –
>
> Unhouseled, disappointed, unannealed.[114]

It's a curious place to bring things to a close, as Hamlet's father (whom Hopkins is quoting) is once again 'cut off', this time in the midst of ghostly speech and not the 'blossoms of [his] sin'.[115] These negatives, like *Hamlet*'s Ghost, express a desire to revert to a former state, giving rise to a contradiction by which the present state could not exist to voice this desire, as if to engage in a process of self-cancelling. And yet, as Kenneth Burke has observed, negation has its origins in a positive. Our language of negation would not have had the 'force of a negative at all, but of some *deterrent* positive state.' It's the difference, he says, between an '"it is not"' and '"thou shalt not"'.[116] In this light, negatives are not simply a state of absence or emptiness; they are a revisioning of a positive state, a complication of former uses. If poetry thrives on antitheses brought about by negatives, it's because its contrasts are not simply prescribed; they are probed and reworked. That a process of negation might be resolved into a single word might also suggest that a single text can be a 'throng' of competing selves and antithetical pressures.

It's not only in 'Sibyls' Leaves' that Hopkins conceives of the self as a 'throng'. 'I find myself both as man and as myself something ~~to me~~ most determined and distinctive', he writes in a commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises*. After a subtle shift in grammar, he sees himself

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[112] Higgins, 'Introduction', *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 22 (Higgins's italics). Her reference is to Michel Foucault's overly generalising claim from *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 262.
[113] See 'text, *n.*', *OED Online*.
[114] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 168. Here, Hopkins is quoting *Hamlet*, I. v. 77.
[115] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 189.
[116] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945), p. 296. Burke's emphasis.

instead ‘at pitch, more distinctive and higher pitched than anything else I see’: ‘I find myself with my pleasures and pains, my ~~faculties~~ ^powers^ and ^my^ experiences [. . .] this throng and stack of being’. His original phrasing ‘something *to me*’ shares an affinity with Pater’s vital question from the ‘Preface’ to *The Renaissance* that he claims underpins any aesthetic engagement: ‘What is this [. . .] to *me*?’.[117] And there are further resemblances between the poet’s ‘stack of being’ and the essayist’s description of ‘one’s whole nature’ as ‘one complex medium of reception’ from *Marius the Epicurean*.[118] If Pater is not solely interested in new ways of re-encountering the world but, as Fergus McGhee suggests, ‘values new ways in which he might differ from himself’, then Hopkins too wondered what was made of the self in such moments.[119]

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It's not only his self that Hopkins puts to the test. ‘Binsey Poplars’ closes in on the consequences of ‘unselving’ as it pertains to the world around him. Taking another look at one of Hopkins’s re-encounters with a familiar sight in Oxford, we see how his treatment of a subject courts a form of Paterian secondariness:

> even where we mean
> To mend her we end her,
> Whén we hew or delve:
> Áfter-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
> Tén or twélve, ónly ten or twelve
> Strókes of havoc únsélve
> The sweet especial rural scene,
> Rúral scene, a rural scene,
> Swéet especial rural scene. (*PW*, p. 157)

Pater’s ‘vanishing’ act of the self finds a new lease of life in Hopkins’s suggestive collocation of ‘mend’ and ‘end’, which entails not so much a retrieval of a previous state as a moving on. In the earliest draft of ‘Binsey Poplars’, the poet’s anxiety that he might be forever deprived of experiencing this place again is more urgently felt, and the tussle between first- and second-person pronouns distances the poet from having a hand in this injustice:

> We wd. mend her but end her

[117] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. viii. Emphasis in original.
[118] Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, in *Works*, ii. 147.
[119] See Fergus McGhee, ‘Pater’s Montaigne and the Selfish Reader’, *Walter Pater and the Beginnings of English Studies*, eds. C. Martindale, E. Prettejohn, and L. Østermark-Johansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2023).

You who
~~When~~ ~~we~~ mean
To ~~e~~ mend her we [*overwritten* you] end her,
you and you
When ~~we~~ lop ~~or~~ when ~~we~~ delve
After comers cannot guess ⁚ what has been;
So little will
~~Li~~Trifles un ~~:~~ selve
The sweet especial rural scene.
Such trifles un ⁚ selve
The sweet especial rural ~~green~~ scene![120]

'You and you' hang over these original lines like a spectre or an accusation, while the idiosyncratic great colons, which throw the weight of stress squarely onto both syllables of 'unselve', lend the act an abrupt cadence.[121] As Hopkins re-encounters this scene in further drafts, the added incantatory closing lines ('The sweet especial rural scene, / Rúral scene, a rural scene') compose a self-revising pattern that delineates a movement away from a pure representation of 'what has been'. This movement is bolstered by the substitution of *a* for *the*, as the poem dramatizes a second 'unselving' within the poem, a re-encounter in language that returns the 'sweet especial rural scene' not as its original self but one that's 'half-real' and 'half-material'. James Wimsatt is right, therefore, when he observes that the '"reverberations of language"' work as an 'instrument for detaching inscape, not the inscape itself'.[122] To put it another way, it's the process of 'aftering' within language that allows the sight to return to him not as a husk of its former self, but as an ongoing experience pregnant with mystery.

That stylistic uncertainty might hold a valuable place in poetry is reaffirmed in *The Renaissance*. The 'very perfection' of verse, Pater says, 'often appears to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding'.[123] Here, 'mere' retains something of its etymological root, meaning 'pure' or 'undiluted' (from the Latin *merus*).[124] The quality which Pater identifies is one that Hopkins praises in Plato's style, in which '[a]spects of thought and

[120] MS. H, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts*, p. 157. Following deletions at the level of the letter or the word (as transcribed here), each line and then the whole draft is struck through.
[121] Norman MacKenzie glosses this typographical sign as a 'spring' in the Sprung Rhythm, where it leaps from one full stress to another over an omitted slack'; 'Introduction'. *PW*, p. liv.
[122] James I. Wimsatt, *Hopkins's Poetics of Speech Sound: Sprung Rhythm, Lettering, Inscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 6–7.
[123] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. 137.
[124] See 'mere, *adj.*', *OED Online*.

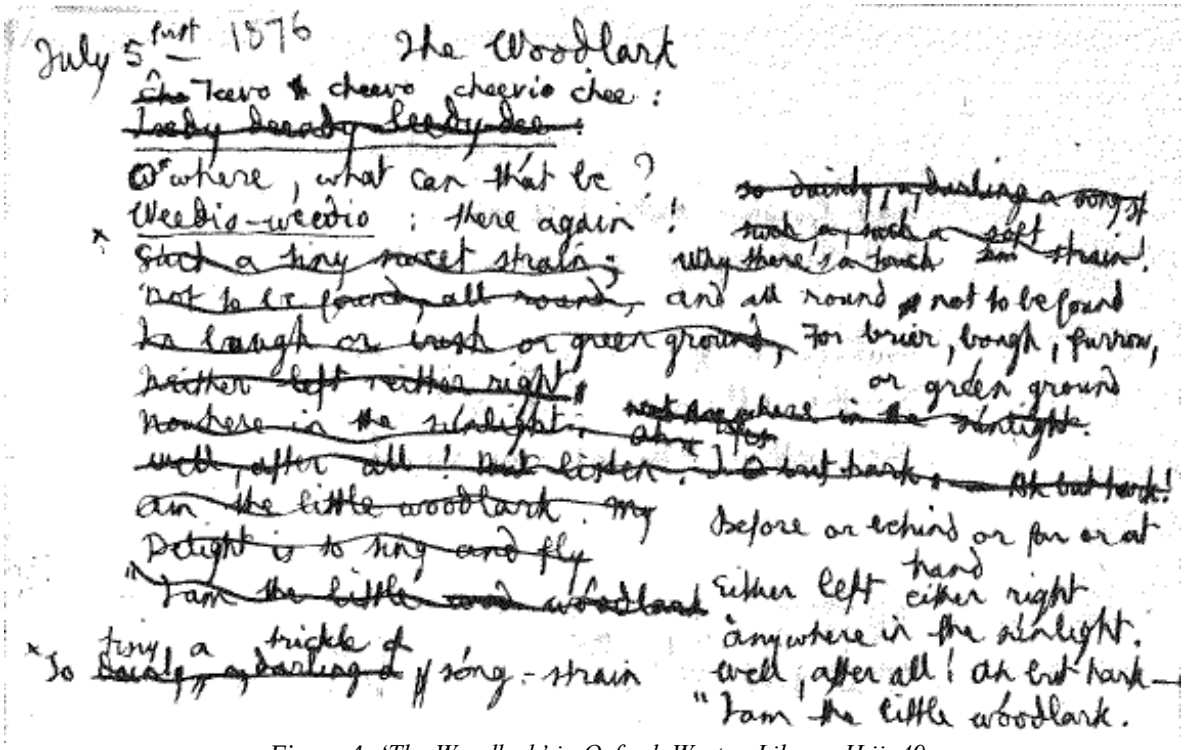


Figure 4: 'The Woodlark' in Oxford, Weston Library H.ii. 49v.

meaning, subtle effects, growing on us gradually, belong to it. The truth always remains unexpectedhausted in prose like his.'[125] It's an apt slip, because out of unpredictability comes inexhaustibility. What each writer is getting at is a movement away from a more finessed, purified treatment of a subject, transforming it into something both more and less than finite. Some experiences cannot be contained, but it's that very excess for which we value them.

The effects of this attraction to the indeterminate are detectable even in Hopkins's lesser-known poems like 'The Woodlark', where the changes made to its manuscript draft increasingly blur the line between the abstract and the concrete:

> To-day the sky is two and two
> With white strokes and strains of the blue
> [The blue wheat-acre is underneath] (*PW*, p. 132)

> Today the sky ~~was~~[is] two and two
> **With strokes of white and strains of [bol] blue**
> With white strokes~~,~~[^and] strains of [^the] blue (MS H.ii. fol. 49v)

'White', 'blue', and 'streaks' compose a variety of visions that evade definition as colours become a more hazy or abstract property of the shapes they make (we read of '*the* blue' rather than simply 'blue'). Playfulness is blended with the sensuous and the conceptual with the

[125] Hopkins, *Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, p. 169.

impressionistic. The sensuous excess of the sky's appearance being 'two and two' bleeds into the poem's composition, which starts out as two columns on the manuscript page [FIGURE 4], juxtaposing lines like 'Not to be found, all round' with its alternative 'And all round~~,~~ not to be found', and 'Neither left neither right~~,~~ / Nowhere in the súnlight' with 'Either left either right / Anywhere in the súnlight.'[126] These emendations shift from a simple description of the bird's absence in space to an organisation of space in terms of absence and obscurity.

'Strain' is a decidedly musical term to use, and its employment in such a sensuous context might remind us of Pater's well-known dictum that 'All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music', given that it is equated several pages later in 'The School of Giorgione' by his comments on 'vagueness of mere subject'.[127] That in coming closer to the condition of music other forms of art are drawn towards indirection is a connection Hopkins makes when he praises that element in Richard Dixon of the 'necessary and yet unforeseen': 'And there ^is, as in music a ~~remarkable~~ sequence, ~~of feelin~~ seeming~~ly~~ necessary and yet unforeseen, of ~~this~~ feeling, acting often with magical strokes'.[128] Again, we encounter that intriguing word 'strokes', which had been the source of 'havoc' in 'Binsey Poplars'. According to the *OED*, a 'stroke' can be a 'a tune, strain', so the fact that we might more conventionally associate one with the movements of a pen or a painter's brush conjures a mixed metaphor in the musical context.[129]

The association between music and sketchy qualities is elaborated in 'The School of Giorgione', where Pater conceives of music as something that can play a role *within* thought, releasing or loosening its constraints:

> In sketch or finished picture, in various collections, we may follow it through many intricate variations – men fainting at music; music at the pool-side while people fish, or mingled with the sound of the pitcher in the well, or heard across running water, or among the flocks; the tuning of instruments, people with intent faces, as if listening, like those described by Plato in an ingenious passage of the Republic, to detect the smallest interval of musical sound, the smallest undulation in the air, or feeling for music in thought on a stringless instrument . . .[130]

Pater's opening elision between 'sketch or finished' picture might be more capacious than it first appears, because it allows for the possibility that the latter might retain something of the

[126] MS. H, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts*, pp. 76–77.
[127] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. 135.
[128] Hopkins, *The Dublin Notebook*, p. 117.
[129] See 'stroke, *n.*,' *OED Online*, §8.
[130] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works* i. 151.

sketchiness of 'second thoughts'. Within such pictures, those 'intricate variations' might be a harbinger of the rest of the writer's own passage: variations play out in the development of this prose, as '*fin*ger' leads to 're*fin*ing' and lastly to 'in*fin*it*e*ly'. It is no longer music at all, but 'the smallest internal of musical sound' Pater closes in on. It is the 'interval' of something that has the quality of music, which Pater then spells out in his description of 'feeling for music in thought'. Sensation is thus organised along the lines of the musical. According to Adam Phillips, Pater 'made vagueness, informed vagueness, intellectually respectable'.[131] 'Informed' is the key word. For Pater, stringency of thought is not the end of thinking but a bedrock on which the modifying effects of music might take place.

'Informed vagueness' might be a description of 'sprung rhythm'. Its technical achievement is to bring the organized rhythms of verse more in touch with the cadences of natural speech, but it does so by pulling against the pre-established metrical frames of a poem. The preface Hopkins adds to *The Wreck of the Deutschland* describes 'sprung rhythm' as

> the superinducing or *mounting* of a new rhythm upon the old; and since the new or unmounted rhythm is actually heard and at the same time the mind naturally supplies the natural or standard foregoing rhythm, for we do not forget what the rhythm is that by rights we should be hearing. . .

What's critical, Hopkins says, is that 'two rhythms are in some manner running at once'.[132] In essence, 'sprung rhythm' allows two modes of experience to overlap: a patterned, ordered, tidied version and a more unpredictable moment-by-moment conception of it. Without the ghost of a regular rhythm, it does not work, and so sprung rhythm depends on that encounter with pre-existing structures, which are not so much replaced as repressed. What's interesting about this technique of 'aftering' speech is that 'sprung rhythm' supposes a concrete architecture to start with, and then reworks it into something more contingent.[133]

Ways of composing the 'necessary and yet unforeseen' might also be something more than the way Hopkins approaches his poetic subjects. These twin qualities could also serve as a summary of the compositional scenarios he has a habit of putting himself in. During the lead-up to one of his studies on the Classics, he describes his endeavour to 'write at it', as if to hold

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[131] Adam Phillips, 'Introduction', in *The Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), p. xv.
[132] Hopkins, *PW*, p. 116.
[133] Summer Star, accordingly, misses the mark in putting forward a notion of 'sake' as Hopkins's representation of the 'intimacy he conceived between meter [. . .] and the affirmation of a human self's purposiveness'; '"For the Inscape's Sake": Sounding the Self in the Meters of Gerard Manley Hopkins', *Meter Matters: Verse Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. J. Hall (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), pp. 154-177: 154.

his subject at arm's length or meander his way towards whatever *it* is.[134] In his poetic practice, this might look like the compositional origin of 'God's Grandeur', which started out under the title of 'Sonnet' for several drafts. Pierre-Marc de Biasi has written incisively about titles that are composed simultaneously with their work: 'Suddenly, the shape taken by the artefact inspires the artist with an idea, a formulation, or a preliminary outline of a title, which reveals to him what he was really creating without realising it.'[135] Imprecision in composition starts off a process of emergence, and Pater's suggestion that 'the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding' is consonant with the act of Hopkins himself in the process of composition.

And yet, the emergence of the poem through indirection does not end there. The 'Postscript' to Pater's volume *Appreciations* (1889) outlines one trajectory along which a work of art might develop in the hands of 'born romanticists, who start with an original, untried *matter*, still in fusion; who conceive this vividly, and hold by it as the essence of their work; who, by the very vividness and heat of their conception, purge away, sooner or later, all that is not organically appropriate to it'. This passage prioritises a language of expurgation, and claims that, as a result, an artwork 'adjusts itself in clear, orderly, proportionate form' and so becomes 'classical in its turn'.[136] But the development of a poem like 'God's Grandeur' contradicts this trajectory, because it increasingly dramatizes a view of the world 'still in fusion':

> The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
> It will fla~~sh~~^me^ out, like shining from shook foil;
> Goes ∧the ooze of
> ~~It~~ gather~~s~~^ing^ to a greatness, like ~~an~~ oil
> Crushed: Why do men then now not reck this rod? –
> hard trod,
> Generations have ~~passed and~~ have hard trod;
> And all is seared ~~with~~ by trade [~~;~~], bleared, smeared by
> toil. . .[137]

Images of expansion are consonant with the revisions made to the text, which move towards a more open-ended, continuous grammar. In line three, 'It gathers to a greatness' is put at a

[134] Hopkins to Bridges, 17–18 Feb. 1887, *Correspondence 1882-1889*, p. 854.
[135] Pierre-Marc de Biasi, 'Fonctions et genèse du titre en histoire de l'art', *La fabrique du titre: Nommer les Oeuvres d'Art*, eds. P. de Biasi, M. Jakobi, and S. Le Man (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012), p. 88: 'Tout à coup la forme prise par l'artefact suggère à l'artiste une idée, une formulation ou l'esquisse préliminaire d'un intitulé qui lui révèle ce qu'il était en train jusqu'ici de créer à son insu.' Translation is my own.
[136] Pater, *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style*, in *Works*, v. 257–8.
[137] Hopkins, 'God's Grandeur', Oxford, Weston Library, MS. Eng. Poet. c. 48, f. 29r.

remove from its subject ('the grandeur of God'), as Hopkins emends it to 'Goes gathering to a greatness'. Revisions to the second line subdue the more arresting depiction of God's immanence into a curiously physical revelation, from 'flash[ing] out to 'flam[ing] out'. The clipped vowel sound is exchanged for the sonic elongation of 'flame', suggesting a gradually heightened awareness of God's presence. Moreover, we might observe the slight transformation in the following line from 'like an oil' to 'like the ooze of oil', which defers the recognition of God's grandeur from a tangible object of knowledge to something inseparable from its process of emergence, as if to model Pater's suppression of 'mere subject'.

It's interesting to note the overlap in imagery between Hopkins's 'shining from shook foil' and the opening stanza of Pater's poem 'The Acorn', which is similarly engaged in tracking a process of expansion, focusing on a 'tough sapling with enlarging foil: –'.[138] Moreover, as Hopkins emends 'flash out' to 'flame out', the description resembles more closely other Paterian imagery of our 'flamelike' lives:

> That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them – a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.[139]

Ideas of expansion multiply, from Pater's 'threads' of design which 'pass out beyond it' and those 'forces' which operate beyond their 'concurrence'. His reference to renewal from 'moment to moment' is a resonant one, because at the end of *The Renaissance* he claims 'art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass'.[140] To end on a point of proposition has led David Russell to conclude that the study is 'a curious work of history because it is not about what has happened, but what *might* happen.'[141] This could also work as a good description of Hopkins's revisionism, which hankers after the possibility of momentary renewal.

Consider, finally, Pater's following description: 'A sudden light transfigures a trivial thing, a weather-vane, a windmill, a winnowing flail, the dust in the barn door: a moment – and the thing has vanished, because it was pure effect but it leaves a relish behind it, a longing that

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[138] Pater, 'The Acorn', Brasenose College, Oxford, PP 1 D2/1.
[139] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. 234.
[140] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. 239.
[141] David Russell, *Tact: Aesthetic Liberalism and the Essay Form in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 111.

the accident may happen again'.[142] Experience is what counts, if we observe how Pater's syntax allows the spectacle of the transfiguration to be interchangeable with 'a moment', and how it turns the accidental into his central point. It's precisely this momentary experience, leading to a lasting bewilderment, that fuels Hopkins's most famous poem, where the poet's re-encounter comes as a solution to his own 'longing that the accident may happen again':

> I caught this morning morning's mínion, king-
> dom of daylight's dauphin , dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his
> riding
> Of the rólling level úndernéath him steady aír, and stríding
> Hígh there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
> In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
> As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and
> gliding
> Rebuffed the bíg wínd. My heart in hiding
> Stírred for a bird, - the achieve of, the mastery of the thing! (*PW*, p. 144)

These lines are not just about a bird in flight, but the flightiness of perception. Several critical emendations from the original draft strengthen Hopkins's achieved bewilderment. Lines two and three read 'he was riding / Rolling level underneath him steady here, and striding' (MS. Res. d. 488), but the added prepositional phrases ('in his', 'of the') distort and dismantle grammatical categories. 'Riding' loses its verbal force, becoming something closer to a verbal noun. Unable to capture the bird's flight through language's definitive means of denoting movement, Hopkins alters the word to one that treads an unresolved line between verb and noun. These devices do not simply underpin the poem's evocations of space and movement in the poem's octave; they obfuscate them. This is revisionism being used not to finesse experience into something recognisable and contained, but to restore the kind of irrepressible experience that provoked Hopkins to re-encounter what this experience meant to him in the first place.

'The Windhover's' process of composition reveals the extent to which the poem is self-reflexive, invested as much in the making of poetry as it is in a poem's 'representational' purpose.[143] How the poet alters 'the mastery of the thing', I suggest, gets to the heart of Hopkins's poetic and revisionary practices:

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[142] Pater, *The Renaissance*, in *Works*, i. 176.
[143] Hurley, *Faith in Poetry*, p. 123.

My heart in hiding
>
: Stirred for a bird - ~~for~~ the mastery of the thing!
^the achieve of [144]

Here, the direct 'mastery' of vision is no longer Hopkins's concern. It becomes, instead, 'the achieve of', the endeavour to attain a certain 'level of performance'.[145] His curious use of the verbal form, rather than the conventional noun 'achievement', implies an ongoing act or a yearning rather than an attainable, finished vision.[146] Like Pater, Hopkins is repeatedly drawn on to explore what is beyond the self, to push the boundaries of what it means to come to an end, relieved of the constraints of selfhood by which the static might turn stagnant. It is through the process of re-encounter staged in his poems, as well as re-encountering them through revision, that Hopkins continues to re-discover the thrill of the unrealisable in realisation. What I intend to show in this chapter's final section is how his term 'aftering' encompasses the range of ideas I have discussed so far, from imprecision to excess and form, and how revision is not only a process undergone by poetry – it is something poetry does.

[144] MS. A, in *The Later Poetic Manuscripts*, p. 120.
[145] 'achieve, *v.*', *OED Online*, §1.
[146] Adrian Grafe expresses this idea well when he says that Hopkins's word choice signals 'the coming into being of achievement at the moment of achieving'; 'Gerard Manley Hopkins', *Victorian Poetry* lviii (2020), pp. 350-361: 355.

Aftering

Among Hopkins's 'Lecture Notes on Poetry' is a revealing paragraph on the connection between poetry and a revisionary process he calls 'aftering':

> Poetry is in fact speech ^only^ employed to carry the inscape of speech [*sidenote*: for the inscape's sake – and therefore the inscape must be dwelt on. Now if this can be done without repeating it once of the inscape will be enough for art and beauty and poetry but then at least the inscape must be understood as so standing by itself that it cd. be copied and repeated. If not / repetition, oftening, over-and-overing, aftering of the inscape must take place in order to detach it to the mind and in this light poetry is speech which afters or oftens in its inscape, speech couched in a repeating figure and verse is spoken sound having a repeating figure].[147]

The insertion of 'only' is suggestive because it not only makes Hopkins's idea of 'inscape' central to the work of poetry but also conceives of 'aftering', a kind of revisioning, as essential to preserving that inscape. Poetry *is* speech which 'afters': not a theoretical concern but a property of verse itself, as if we might speak of 'aftering' verse as an adjective and not a verb to describe what a writer might do to his poetry. Hopkins's disarmingly succinct explanation is belied by the expansive sidenote in which 'over-and-overing' captures the sense of surplus discussed in this chapter's previous section, and 'oftening' illustrates the notion of revision as a momentary, discontinuous process but also alludes to the momentariness of Hopkin's verse. These characteristics cast 'aftering' as a process of provision as much as revision.

As was suggested in the previous section *pace* James Wimsatt's observations, the work of language in Hopkins is not commensurate with an inscape but operates to 'detach it to' the mind. Detaching *to* not *from* the mind, we might note, implies not so much a severance of mind from subject as something closer to a recalibration of the relations between them. In this way, poetry is not a record of finalised thought nor the reconciliation of ideas but the mind's figuring out of where it stands in relation to its subject. If, as Geoffrey Hill has put it, Hopkins's poetry contains 'potshots at the truth', then 'aftering' is how the poet arrives at a poetry of this kind.[148] I want to suggest that textual revision leads to a kind of verse that 'afters' in its style, and that 'aftering' encompasses a thinking that remains unfinished and founded on 'the return of the mind upon itself'.[149]

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[147] Hopkins, *Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, p. 307.
[148] Geoffrey Hill, *'How Meet Beauty': An Enquiry into the Current Reputation of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, arranged by C. Ricks and H. Tennyson, BBC, broadcast 23 Jun. 1977.
[149] Arthur Hallam, *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. G. Vail Motter (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1943), p. 190.

'Aftering' his work, Hopkins firmly remains among the poets, whom Wallace Stevens once referred to as 'Thinkers without final thoughts'.[150] Angela Leighton is helpful in this respect when she borrows Stevens's phrase to propose that poetry 'may give us nothing very much to take away as final thoughts, as final meaning, but which sets us constantly re-hearing, re-discovering, re-making the sense.'[151] Thinking along similar lines, Elizabeth Bishop had something resonant in mind when she referred to Hopkins as a 'baroque poet'.[152] This is a phrase she quotes from Morris Croll, who argued that the purpose of Anti-Ciceronian writers like Montaigne or Burton was 'to portray, not a thought, but a mind thinking'. For Croll, 'revision' was a dirty word. Speaking about the sixteenth-century rhetoricians, he notes that 'successive processes of revision to which these periods had been submitted removed them from reality by just so many steps'.[153] In light of Bishop's suggestions, Hopkins's process might be characterised as a movement of avoiding conscious thought, in order to retrieve or restore the place of reality's contingencies in the design of his writing. In this final section, I propose that Hopkins's account of 'aftering' is emblematic and captures the desired effect of his practice of revision. It ties together different strands of the poet's revisionism, from his attraction to being unfinished, to repetition and its twin forces of retrospection and prolepsis.

These unsettled questions persisted until the end of Hopkins's life. 'To R.B.', one of his final poems, and the last he sent to Bridges, is heavily invested in the link between poetry, revision, and posterity:

> The fine delight that fathers thought; the strong
> Spur, live and lancing like the blowpipe flame,
> Breathes once and, quenched faster than it came,
>
> Leaves yet the mind a mother of immortal song.
> Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long
> Within her wears, bears, cares and combs the same:
>
> The widow of an insight lost she lives, with aim
> Now known and hand at work now never wrong.
> Sweet fire the sire of muse, my soul needs this;

[150] Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose*, eds. F. Kermode and J. Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1997), p. 476.
[151] Angela Leighton, 'About About: On Poetry and Paraphrase', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* xxxiii (2009), pp. 167-176: 175.
[152] Elizabeth Bishop, *Poems, Prose, and Letters*, eds. R. Giroux and L. Schwartz (New York: Library of America, 2008), pp. 660ff.
[153] Morris Croll, *Studies in English Philology: A Miscellany in Honor of Frederick Klaeber*, eds. K. Malone and M. B. Ruud (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929); repr. *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm*, eds. J. M. Patrick and R. O. Evans (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 210.

> I want the one rapture of an inspiration.
> O then if in my lagging lines you miss
> The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
> My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
> Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation. (*PW*, p. 204)

It's a bold move to place so much emphasis on the unbridgeable gap between the poet's writing and his original vision – the 'insight lost' – but the poem's focus remains on the event of creation and not what it might yield. Those images of the 'roll, the rise, the carol, the creation' started out life as 'The flame, the flow, the courage, the creation' – what remains consistent is the 'creation' even as the preceding concerns become less abstract and more particular. In addition, 'Nine years long [. . .] combs the same' brings to mind the Horatian exhortation to keep a poem for nine years before publication, as Michael Hurley has pointed out. It is a moment of self-positioning, where Hopkins places himself in a tradition in which the importance of revision and reworking is premeditated, not simply retrospective, and closely connected with the future of both composition and a writer's textual life.[154] His 'aftering' of his own voice enables a probing of his own mind.

'To R.B.' reminds us how in projecting a personal voice the 'Victorian poet is often obliged to incorporate a sceptical counter-voice'.[155] Poems like this, which have an expressed addressee, raise the stakes for the antiphonal voice, mainly because a salutatory 'To' raises the same expectations as a letter opening or the directness of a telegram only to confront the fact that the poem may never find its mark. Line-endings, which plunge us into the recognitions of 'Now known' and 'scarcely breathes that bliss / Now', stage how the effects of revision can come as a jolt of apprehension as opposed to coming to a place of accord with the past. Moreover, the poet's interest in revisioning prior states of apprehension is shown in the self-revisions of Hopkins's words: 'Now' becomes part of the 'k**now**n', but this formulation is designed to sever the imagined mother's present conviction from the moment of original 'insight'; and the enjambed, second 'Now' undercuts 'scarcely breathes that bliss', turning that original aimless bliss, formally and conceptually, into an exhausted present. Sound and syntax mediate this uneasy relationship between past and present, where the vantage point of the present is not the guarantor of creative direction it first seems.

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[154] Michael Hurley, *Faith in Poetry*, p. 109. For the allusion, see Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ed. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 482-3.
[155] Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Address', *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. M. Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 56-73: 61.

Measuring up to a sceptical counter-voice is one way a writer might go about detaching his work 'to his mind', but another is through allusion. There's a possible echo in these lines of Shakespeare's *Henry V* that puts Hopkins's own voice under pressure: 'O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend | The brightest heaven of invention'.[156] In borrowing and revising the words of another, Hopkins tests the longevity of his own hand against his forebear's afterlife. Whereas the Shakespearean invocation is first and foremost in the play, here it comes two thirds of the way through the poem, resisting the notion that a writer might be consigned to glancing back over his shoulder to a singular moment of 'inspiration'. These complications of voice in 'To R.B.' extend questions raised by Hopkins's description of 'aftering', as an unfinished and self-estranging process, capable of facilitating inward contemplation and scrutiny.

Manuscripts present an exposed site of a writer's contemplation far more so than a fixed page of print, but sometimes they seem to portray a dialogue that has broken down. Daniel Ferrer claims that the 'correlations between states of the text' are elusive because there is a 'potential discontinuity between each state of the text in the course of its elaboration'. This, he claims, is 'a limitation of genetic criticism – but it is also a condition of draft writing. The author also finds himself in the position of an interpreter of his own graphic signs, and interprets them from the point of view of the development of his invention, which is not always an accurate historical interpretation, for the author often becomes so obsessed by the retrospective obviousness of the new context that he no longer has access to the original meaning of those signs.'[157] 'Potential' has a connotation of 'hazardous' here, because there are suppositions over a certain type of composition or way of thinking about literature built into phrases like 'access to the original meaning of those signs' and the idea that textual development should be coterminous with 'historical' development. Indeed, as I have been arguing, the imaginative development of a poem does not always mimic patterns of historical progress. That the draft page might find alternative paths of development from linear chronology means that the isolating process of revision can also be a form of self-communion.

In this way, the isolation of composition starts to resemble prayer, taking stock, and petitioning for answers from the other side of silence. Consider George Eliot's description of 'private prayer' in *Middlemarch*, for example:

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[156] Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. G. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 91.
[157] Daniel Ferrer, 'The Open Space of the Draft Page', *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*, eds. G. Bornstein and T. Tinkle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 249-268: 256-7.

> Early in the morning—about six—Mr Bulstrode rose and spent some time in prayer. Does any one suppose that private prayer is necessarily candid—necessarily goes to the roots of action? Private prayer is inaudible speech, and speech is representative: who can represent himself just as he is, even in his own reflections?[158]

'Inaudible speech' might serve equally well as a description of written verse, and Eliot's scepticism that self-representation is wholly symmetrical with one's actual self might be one way of thinking about how Hopkins's textual revisionism is not about getting back to the origins of experience or the 'roots of action' – self seeing eye to eye with self, in other words. Prayer, writes Merold Westphal, is 'the deepest decentering of the self, deep enough to begin dismantling or, if you like, deconstructing that burning preoccupation with myself.'[159] It's a reminder, then, that the self isn't sovereign. The same is true of Hopkins's dwelling on his verse. 'Speech' of this particular sort, as Hopkins implies in his 'Lecture Notes', is not meant to be 'representative' or work towards a reduplication of a particular idea. If we recall the second half of his definition of poetry at the start of this section, as 'speech couched in a repeating figure' that so 'afters in its inscape', then part of its point is to get away from mirrored recreation.

Recitation, either on the page or in prayer, enacts an ongoing search for answers, not reaffirming what's already known. And the poet's habit of leaving conflicting variants unresolved preserves his poems in a state of 'over-and-overing' their own content:

> not solely
> The unquestion'd readings of a blotless book.
> And so my trust confusedly is shook
> ---------- confusèd, struck, and shook (*PW*, p. 77)

These lines exemplify a 'double aspect' that is characteristic of Hopkins's repetitions, an aspect 'at once of baffled and of heightened fluency', as Griffiths notes.[160] Originally, the poem read, 'And so my confidence is struck and shook', leaving a line's space before the additions and changes shown above, as if the poet's shaken confidence leads to a more critical unravelling of trust in that stretch of time. Then the comprehensible sequence of 'confused, struck, and shook' is distorted in the adverbial revision 'confusedly is shook' – is the poet's 'trust' shaken to the point of confusion, or has the shaking itself an air of bewilderment? The language of the

[158] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 667.
[159] Merold Westphal, 'Prayer as the Posture of the Decentered Self', *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, eds. B. Benson and N. Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 13-31: 15.
[160] Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, p. 261.

poem increasingly takes on the uncertainty generated in the process of revision. Far from the 'unquestion'd readings of a blotless book', the poem's revisions ask questions of itself and enact the emergence of eloquence. Those conjoined revisions we encounter across Hopkins's writing, which largely resemble Dickinson's 'choosing not choosing' of her textual variants, rely upon their condition as 'inaudible speech' – because they are incapable of being integrated into a spoken performance of the poem and so are able to register things that cannot be put into speech. They present the poet in a state of baffled and heightened fluency, able to speak with multiple voices at once.

At his most isolated, the poet turns to verse as a way to 'after' his anxieties. In 'No Worst, there is none', Hopkins's dread at feeling abandoned by God leads to an extended meditation on the nature of grief:

No worst, there is none: { Pitched past pitch of grief / Grief past pitch of grief,

fore
More pangs at ~~pan[gs]~~ pangs schooled will wilder wring

At fore pangs more pangs schooled will wilder wring

O there tops grief
Worst! No worst~~;~~, ~~no there~~ is none. Grief past grief

And more pangs, schooled at fore pangs, wilder wring.

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.[161]

Debilitation breeds deliberation: as I suggested in the previous section, Hopkins's writing often appears in excess of itself, and here it's the process of revision that transforms his surplus of grief into an exercise in confronting private feelings that exceed articulation. Revisions to these lines register a movement away from a certainty in his private emotions and towards finding a more general frame of reference for his grief. At first, there is a more propositional observation that 'Grief tops grief', which subsequently becomes 'Grief past grief'. The poem's psychological entanglements turn into questions of aesthetics in the last iteration: 'Pitched past pitch of grief'. Here the subject itself becomes elusive, and the poet instead sets his sights on

[161] MS. Eng. Poet. d. 150, Oxford, Bodleian Weston Library, fol. 31r.

the sort of 'speech' that might embody it. Moreover, one of Hopkins's favourite prefixes ('fore'), multiplies in these lines, which makes the past carry a charge of their future states, something which the poem also reflects in its echo-chamber of internal rhymes.[162] Through revision, Hopkins develops a style which investigates the same proleptic revisionism we see in his textual composition.

Hopkins's poems commit us to a particular kind of thinking or, rather, return us to the process of thinking itself. Links between poetry and the thinking mind are elaborated in his theoretical writing. His Professor in the 'Platonic Dialogue' outlines a connection between the 'advantageous' structure of verse and the cognitive processes which not only shape it but are shaped by it: 'the advantage of ~~prose ov~~ poetry over prose may be expressed by the intrinsic value of that structure, that is, of verse.' In response to his student counterpart, Hopkins's Professor responds, 'genius ~~rises~~ works more powerfully under the constraints of metre and rhyme and so on than without, that is ~~stronger~~ more effective when conditioned than when unconditioned.'[163] As 'genius rises' is tweaked to 'genius works', and 'stronger' to 'more effective', Hopkins distances the influence of form from enabling a transcendence of thought. Despite the attraction to telos fostered by his religious convictions, the effectiveness of language does not involve a kind of thinking that is oriented toward the transcendent. In I.A. Richards's eyes, Hopkins is a poet who 'can compel slow reading'. On the other hand, Richards criticises the kind of modern verse which 'passes through the mind (or the mind passes through it) with too little friction and too swiftly for the development of the response'.[164] Whatever else they do, Hopkins's revisions usually demand a slower kind of reading. They add friction to and magnify the uneven contours of thought:

> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –
> In God's eye acts what in God's eye he is – (*PW*, p. 141)

– where the postponement of the verb to the middle of the line arrives like a stumbling block and shifts focus onto the beholding not what is beheld; or:

> Honour should flower from exploit, so we say (*PW*, p. 199)

[162] To name a few examples in his poetry, he describes of the 'fore-motions of the mind' (*PW*, p. 101), 'fore-foundering' (155), 'forestalling' (159), 'foreknew and foreloved' (73), 'forethought' (165).
[163] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 161.
[164] I. A. Richards, 'Gerard Hopkins', *The Dial* lxxxi (1926), pp. 195-203: 195. William H. Gass echoes this sentiment when he remarks, 'Language without rhythm, without physicality [. . .] levelless language in short, voiceless type, [. . .] can never be artistically complete. [. . .] They will be felt, however conceptually well-connected, however well-designed by the higher bureaus of the mind, to go through our understanding like the sharp cold blade of a skate over ice'; 'The Soul Inside the Sentence', *Salmagundi* lvi (1982), pp. 65-86: 70.

Glory should ^Glory is a^ flame off exploit, so we say (*PW*, p. 200)

– where the different drafts of 'St. Alphonsus Rodriquez' complicate the original metaphor for consequence and effect by substituting an approximate prepositional phrase for the former verb. Compelling the mind to pass more slowly through the textures of his writing, Hopkins's verse continues to 'after' its speech even once the process of textual revision has ended.

Taking another look at one of Hopkins's notes towards a possible book on Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, we see him revising his own analysis: '~~Anae~~syndeton 571, and 588. And see whether it does not arise there from ^an^ apposition, ~~completed~~ carried off into an indepden-'.[165] What he most likely began to write here was *anacoluthon*, a rhetorical device that classifies two moments in the play as involving unexpected and disjointed shifts in grammar. Emending this jotting mid-word to 'asyndeton', Hopkins registers an equally sudden change in the trajectory of his own thought. Together with his editing of 'completed' to 'carried off into an independence[?]', the poet comes to reads these moments as unfolding thoughts, as opposed to a finalised set of disjointed musings. We might normally think of grammar and syntax as a way of presenting our thoughts on the page, but they can also recreate the process of understanding. One of Hopkins's instructive sidenotes elevates those observations surrounding grammar above to a compositional principle: 'Kinds of verse follow the kinds of likeness between syllables'.[166] Grammar and syntax offer up models of the processes of composition that take place on a broader scale. Questions over the nature of composition, then, are not so much settled by the shape of individual phrases and lines as they are settled into it.

If the architecture of a sentence offers Hopkins an imaginative correlative for different forms of composition, then the final line of 'Carrion Comfort' is an especially revealing self-revision:

> The héro whose héaven-handling flúng me,
> fóot tród
> Me? or mé that fóught him? O whích one? is it éach one? That night,
> that yéar
> Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God. (*PW*, p. 183)

A former draft told a slightly different story: 'I know this night, this year | Of darkness done, that I wretch wrestled, I wrung with God.' In his own way, Hopkins becomes Jacob, wrestling

[165] Hopkins, *Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, p. 447.
[166] Ibid., p. 313.

with the angel/God just as his Old Testament forebear had in The Book of Genesis. As Roland Barthes has argued, the Biblical Jacob can slot into certain types of narrative, as a shape might fit a cut-out of its own silhouette, but Hopkins's later entanglement is doing something else.[167] Accordingly, Hopkins's poem is a resistance to type and teleology. That syntactic self-revision in '(my god!) my God' enacts in miniature the momentary aspect of experience, then the more settled take on experience afterwards. How to reconcile sudden thought and what to think about that thought are questions that collide against each other in one line. This creative *agon* is not an ancillary process that leads to the creation of a poem: Hopkins stages it *as* poetry.

The line also embodies two different modes of apprehension: the first instinctive and exclamatory; the second recognising a metaphysical truth underlying the initial shock of recognition. It's as if Hopkins resolves into one line Stephen Connor's account of cultural development. 'Culture is neither raw experience on the one hand, nor finished explanation on the other'. It is, he argues, 'experience becoming explanation, experiencing experienced as a way of explaining, in something of the way posited by William James in his account of the ways in which "pure experience" gets sifted and knitted into categories like world and self, me and you, now and then.'[168] If poetry is defined by its potential to 'after', as Hopkins understands it, then it is not the explanation, but that process of 'becoming' that Connor associates with culture. It is everything that happens before the poet 'yields you, with some sighs' an explanation.

Poetic achievement does not mean arriving at a point of understanding that is encompassed in the poet's references to 'knowing'. These lines unearth Hopkins's playfulness with a form of understanding that does not fall short of knowledge, but disregards it as an aspiration:

> So it is with my friends, I note, to hear
> News from Belleisle, even such a sweetness blows
> (I know it, knowing not) across from those
> Meadows to them inexplicably dear. (*PW*, p. 72)

His metacognitive aside is held in a precarious state. How is 'I know it, knowing not' meant to be read? Brackets can have a slippery effect on the information they envelope – here they could be confessional, unearthing Hopkins's underlying anxieties, or they could register the surplus

[167] In Barthes's eyes, Genesis 32 mirrors 'narratives relating an act of blackmail' or 'fulfils perfectly a section of the functional schema' being 'a true fairytale'; *Image, Music, Text,* ed. and trans. S. Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 138-140.
[168] Steven Connor, 'Making an Issue of Cultural Phenomenology', *Critical Quarterly* xlii (2000), pp. 1-6: 4.

information of second thoughts, as the writer finds he can clarify what he once thought. Either way, brackets deal with what happens after the fact, and here they register that inaudible emergence of thought Hopkins's revisions serve to embody. His alloy of 'I know it, knowing not' is welded to the relationship between verse and prose in Hopkins's more theoretical considerations:

> We must not insist on knowing ~~how much~~ ^where^ verse ends and prose (or verseless composition) begins, for they pass into one another [. . .] Beyond verse as thus defined there is ~~a possible kind~~ ^a shape^ of speech ^possible^ in which there is a marked figure and order not in the sounds but in the grammar and this might be shifted to other words with a change of specific meaning but keeping ~~th~~ some ~~the~~ general agreement, as of noun over against noun, ~~or~~ verb agst. verb, ~~and~~ assertion agst. assertion etc.[169]

An overriding insistence on *not knowing* is warmly endorsed by Hopkins, not taken as a state of ignorance to be ashamed of; perhaps poetry for Hopkins is a case of I'll-know-it-when-I-see-it. It echoes that blurred line in Dickinson between her prose writing and the moments of poetry concealed therein, where the sequential progress of verse tussles with the patternmaking of versification. Deleting the conjunctions in his first draft above, Hopkins allows the grammar of his sentence to carry the drift of his argument. No longer is the reader guided through the additive shifts in thought conveyed by *and*s, or the side-steps set-up by an *or*. These vectors are now inferred not supplied, and so the contours of thinking brought about by Hopkins's revisions model 'a shape of speech possible' that his account describes.

If 'thinking' has a possible shape, it is neatly captured in James Longenbach's reading of the word 'or', which he calls 'the sign of a mind more interested in displaying a multiplicity of possible interpretations than in discerning something we could comfortably call the facts.' It's hard to think about the potency of this word and not remember, as Longenbach suggests, Hamlet's speech, where 'or' is designed to render his choices 'simultaneously more urgent and more difficult to make. The sound of this kind of "or" is the sound of thinking in poetry.'[170] When Hopkins himself talks of parallelism as an especially poetic characteristic, he anticipates this link between an intrinsic characteristic of poetry in its ability to mediate between irreconcilable alternatives: 'there we see why we use or and or and nor and nor in that way in poetry only and not in prose; for prose has need sometimes to express alternatives fully as strongly as poetry, but when it does it says either and or and neither and nor, wh. put the

[169] Hopkins, *Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, p. 312.
[170] James Longenbach, *The Resistance to Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 76, p. 73.

parallelism of sense strongly, but not so strongly the parallelism of expression.'[171]Another potential effect, however, is to make different contingencies seem roughly commensurable, when in reality they may be anything but. By refusing to let the reader in on which is the case, the aftering effect of an 'or' keeps the current of thought live.

In 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', this small word plays a sizeable role in the poet's attempts to reconcile the contrasting dimensions Hopkins discerns in God's powers of influence:

> With an anvil-ding
> And with fire in him forge thy will
> Or rather, rather then, stealing as Spring
> Through him, melt him but master him still:
> Whether át ónce, as ónce at a crásh Pául,
> Or as Áustin, a lingering-óut swéet skíll,
> Make mercy in all of us, out of us all
> Mástery, bút be adóred, bút be adóred King. (*PW*, p. 121)

Conjunctions conspire with repetitions to dramatize a mind working out what it wants to say or what it might say, as Hopkins's *or*s not only structure the lines of his verse but his experience of thinking. 'Or rather, rather then' combines those potential effects outlined above, signifying at first a range of possible interpretations and a leniency towards one in particular. Then 'or' comes to mediate between the momentary simultaneity of 'át ónce, as ónce' and drawn-out process, 'a lingering-óut swéet skill'. Note that this is not a lingering-out of 'skill', but a kind of artistry that lingers. We might remember that the more common sense of 'art' and 'skill' were equally possible meanings of the Latin *ars,* so it is suggestive how images of composition dominate this stanza from 'forge' to 'skill' and finally to God's ability to 'Make mercy in all of us, out of us all / Mástery'. In the end, 'Mástery' is not the capacity to exercise control, but something closer to its conception in 'The Windhover': 'the achieve of, the mastery of the thing'. This more provisional conception of creative ownership is identifiable in another of Hopkins's vague definitions of poetry. So long as 'it has a meaning and is meant to be heard for its own sake', he writes, 'it will be poetry, if you take poetry to be a kind of composition, and not the virtue or success of that kind'.[172]

As I have been arguing, Hopkins's understanding of poetic revision is closely connected to his notion of 'aftering' thought. He ushers into his writing the 'sound of thinking' because

[171] Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, p. 167.
[172] Hopkins, *Sketches and Scholarly Studies*, p. 308.

poetry for him is a contingent way of thinking and organising experience. It is a way of ensuring returns in his work for his readers and committing himself to return to his own work. Indeed, it sometimes recurs as a way of organising his process of revision, fixing on the page a particular compositional shape:

> It fáncies; ít deems; dĕars the ártist áfter his árt;
> So feigns it finds as sterling | all as all is smart
> And scárlet wĕar the spírit of wár thĕre expréss.
>
> ***
>
> It fáncies, féigns, déems, dĕars the ártist áfter his árt; (?)
> Is fain to find (*or* And's fain to find *or* And fain will find)

(*PW*, p. 184)

Whatever this poem has to say about national pride, it is equally telling about the dynamics that exist between a writer and his work, not as a form of creative control but something more wayward. The revised first line – 'It fáncies; ít deems; dĕars the ártist áfter his árt' – paints a picture of how writing itself stays one step ahead of its writer, as if he's still to realise what is already there in his own composition. As my first chapter suggested, Fancy was a stimulating and unpredictable faculty in which Wordsworth found a way of articulating his compositional process. While Hopkins might often be characterised as a proto-modernist, as this chapter has demonstrated, if we examine his writing in conjunction with his process of revision, we see him continuing the work of his Romantic and Victorian forebears. In this thesis, I have argued that poets across the long nineteenth century are drawn to revision as an important imaginative resource to think through and generate ideas. It's the double life of realisation, as creation and possible apprehension, that shaped the revisionary dynamic of these writers. I have also suggested that a poet's revisions continue to be closely connected with their way of thinking, never satisfied with leaving things be nor letting the cogs of their imaginative life stop turning. As another of Hopkins's poems reminds us, perfection is a habit not a destination. The search goes on.

Afterword

Style is the perfection of a point of view,
No wise absolute, but held in a balance of opposites

So that for a moment the passage of time is stopped
And man is enhanced in a height of harmony.[1]

– Richard Eberhart

'"Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colours"', Tennyson once observed. '"Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet."'[2] His suggestion that poetic meaning might take the form of a rich iridescence has implications both for future readers, as Tennyson points out, and for the poets themselves. As this thesis has suggested, a writer's process of revision can focus his or her mind on the divergent and fractal strands of thought produced in continual returns to the site of composition. Revision can provide a critical imaginative resource not necessarily for bringing things to a close but for enlarging the ends a poem might entertain. It's capable of modelling not only the interactions between forms of verse and forms of thought, but also different kinds of process that exist outside the world of the poem. In this respect, there's a limit to Yeats's claim that the 'correction of prose, because it has no fixed laws, is endless, a poem comes right with a click like a closing box'.[3] As a number of examples in this thesis show, 'coming right' in poetry can be a process that is potentially as endless as any other form of writing.

The ends of style might follow the ends of composition. One crucial aspect of revision I have tried to demonstrate is how often its effects, which can range from instilling forms of ambiguity in writing to conscripting the reader into negotiating between unresolved alternatives, are also detectable in a writer's style. Wordsworth's search for a poetry of Fancy finds his non-cohesive approach to the self often matched with a fragmentary and associative verse form; Tennyson's valuing of continuity-through-change is mirrored in the accretive development of *In Memoriam* and his preference for self-revising syntax; forms of in-betweenness in Dickinson's elliptical style retain something of the rugged incompletion of her

[1] Richard Eberhart, *Collected Poems, 1930-1976: Including 43 New Poems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 268.
[2] Tennyson, quoted in Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols. (1897; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ii. 127.
[3] W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley, 8 Sept. 1935, *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 22.

manuscripts; and Hopkins's formal innovations are invested in the same endeavour to embody the exhilarating contingency of his private experiences. The ability to revise, then, to retrieve and enact forms of generative and unsettled thinking, can be a quality that is central to the workings of verse, rather than merely a prelude to its perfection.

These inquiries have raised questions which extend beyond the nineteenth century: the relationship between a writer and his or her own work; the connection between literary and other kinds of reading; and the different types of revision. For instance, textual amendations made toward the start of composition might be conceived of differently from those changes made at a later stage, with the former more closely resembling Pater's 'untried *matter*, still in fusion'.[4] As I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, the compositional practice of modernist writers has drawn a greater degree of critical attention than that of many nineteenth-century poets. But it would be worth returning to these discussions in light of the complexities surrounding revision raised in the preceding chapters. Wallace Stevens would go on to claim that 'a short poem is more difficult to write than a long one because a long poem acquires an impetus of its own. With each short poem one is making a fresh start and is experiencing a new subject.'[5] That non-volitional aspect of Stevens's phrase, in which the writer 'experiences' a subject, continues to extend post-Romantic conceptions of revision. It echoes, for instance, the sensuous strain in Hopkins's poetry or those inescapable involutions of Wordsworth's textual past.

We might also note that the 'impetus' Stevens picks up on in composing a longer poem merits further consideration, because it implies that the development of a poem of this sort is carried forward by a teleological momentum – whereas in fact local revisions and extensions made to a longer poem need not be seriatim. Rather, they could draw a writer back into the entanglements of a poem's 'parabolic drift', as Tennyson put it, or what George Steiner has called 'teased approximation, certain main currents of meaning'.[6] Much like Hopkins's 'aftering', revision allows this approximation to remain teased and these drifts of meaning to slip between the drafts of a poem, between different poems, and between the poem and its reader. The dividing line Stevens draws in theory between the composition of shorter and

[4] Walter Pater, *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style*, in *The Works of Walter Pater*, 8 vols. (1900-1; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), v. 257–8.
[5] Wallace Stevens to Thomas McGreevy, 13 Jul. 1949, *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, ed. H. Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 640.
[6] Tennyson, quoted in *Memoir*, ii. 127; George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 162.

longer poems might, then, be less clear in practice. A poem's revisions might instead work more like T. S. Eliot's description in *Four Quartets* of 'the use of memory': 'To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.'[7] A poem's subject can thus be approached as a form of movement, never fully known, and continually at drift. Revision, as it works compositionally and stylistically, is how writers and readers can keep track of that experience, and perhaps lose track of themselves.

Arbitrations such as this, between novelty and originality, redoing and doing anew, have traditionally been associated with other modernists like Ezra Pound. As I have suggested, however, they were also crucial concerns of many poets of the long nineteenth century. Take James Henry's description in *Poems Chiefly Philosophical* of 'Another and another and another | And still another sunset and sunrise, | The same yet different, different yet the same.'[8] Speaking in very similar terms, Tennyson's 'Lucretius' envisages:

> The flaring atom-streams
> And torrents of her myriad universe,
> Ruining along the illimitable inane,
> Fly on to clash together again, and make
> Another and another frame of things
> For ever: [9]

A poem's reformulations and rewritings might work like Tennyson's 'another frame of things', offering new perspectives as opposed to mere variations on a theme. The poet's curious description 'Ruining along', here, registers a latent fragility (it reads like a typographically damaged version of 'Running along') as it simultaneously allows the world's inevitable changeability to become an ability to change. Dickinson expressed this predicament similarly when she imagines 'Wastes of Lives – resown | with Colours'.[10] Questions of repetition have surfaced throughout this thesis, and if moments of return, recurrence, and reiteration are elemental to the structure of verse, then revision allows us to glean something of the extent to which poetry continually challenges rather than merely channels our understanding. Revision is only one way this story may be told – but it is an especially revealing one, showing us both how this relationship is negotiated on the page and across broader vistas of influence and

[7] T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, eds. C. Ricks and J. McCue, 2 vols. (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), i. 206.
[8] James Henry, *Selected Poems*, ed. C. Ricks (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2002), p. 87.
[9] Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. C. Ricks, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1987), ii. 710.
[10] Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, ed. R. W. Franklin, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), ii. 743.

inheritance. A phrase from Stevens's final collection might be a fitting description of the ends of poetry and the ends of revision, as a 'a constant secondariness, | A turning down toward finality –'.[11] The dash which follows 'finality' treats the end as something closer to an asymptote than a finishing line. A good poem reminds us that there is always more to say.

[11] Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose*, eds. F. Kermode and J. Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1997), p. 431.

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