

the academic monograph, like this one, capable of being a technology for expanding the inclusivity of the canon? Perhaps questions such as these could form the basis for a follow up work. Eliciting these kinds of questions should not count against *Cut/Copy/Paste*. Rather, it should be taken for what it is: a pleasure to read and a piece of exemplary bibliographic work.

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## Works Cited

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VAN HULLE, Dirk. 2022. *Genetic Criticism: Tracing Creativity in Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 272. ISBN 9780192846792, Hardback £60.00.

Dirk Van Hulle’s new book on genetic criticism is seemingly the first English-language monograph on the literary method, following special issues of *Romanic Review* (86.3, 1995) and *Yale French Studies* (89, 1996) in the 1990s and two essay collections: *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* (2004), edited by Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden; and William Kinderman and Joseph E. Jones’s *Genetic Criticism and the Creative Process: Essays from Music, Literature, and Theater* (2009).<sup>1</sup> Deppman, Ferrer, and Groden’s volume is more historically minded, publishing translations of key essays by the French scholars who shaped *la critique génétique* in its formative years, including (founding fathers) Louis Hay, Pierre-Marc de Biasi, and Jean Bellemin-Noël. Broadly speaking, the collection gives examples of how genetic inquiry could inform a number of existing approaches to literature, such as gender studies, psychoanalysis, sociocultural history, and biography. Kinderman and Jones, both musicologists, sought to introduce

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1. Hans Walter Gabler’s 2018 open-access collection, *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays*, which collects several of his previously published articles, deserves a mention here. Although Gabler presents a number of inventive close readings and hypothetical genetic editions, his book does not amount to a comprehensive survey of the method.

textual genetics to those working outside literature departments, with a number of essays on Beethoven's sketches alongside Nicolas Donin's study of contemporary composers' scores, notes, and use of applications like ProTools. Instead of collecting another set of loosely related critiques, Van Hulle's *Genetic Criticism* is an annotated handbook to the method, offering useful typologies of texts and variants, modes of classification, and a survey of interpretive strategies that can be used to engage manuscripts, drafts, and other traces of composition.

Despite the English-language collections listed above, and the inescapable "genetic turn" in Joyce and Beckett studies, the perceived status or reputation of genetic criticism — the study of process, tracing the movement between successive textual states — has shifted very little over the past decades, at least within Anglophone contexts. As Van Hulle notes here, the primary assumption or motivation behind genetic criticism is that how a text is made contributes to one's understanding of that text — an axiom many, if not most, critics and general readers would wholeheartedly accept. Accordingly, Van Hulle uses much of his first chapter to assess genetic criticism's (perhaps surprisingly) "lukewarm reception" in Anglo-American circles (19). He offers a number of factors that might explain why the method never caught on: the confusing (read: misguided) name, given the connotations of biology and genetic engineering; the early writings were too French, both in terms of critics and the authors surveyed; the method's privileging of process over product; the (mis)conception that textual genetics still ignores non-authorial texts; and genetic criticism's interest in authorial intention and corollary dismissal of the idea that texts can somehow "write themselves."<sup>2</sup> Absent from Van Hulle's list, and what seems to be the biggest hurdle that the method faces, at least in my mind, is the argument that genetic criticism is simply duplicative of existing and widely accepted approaches to literature: why do scholars need to start speaking about "genetics" when they have reception studies, the materiality of texts, and historicism at their disposal? While genetic criticism mirrors elements of those schools of thought, none of them, taken alone, provides the kind of systematic and coherent engagement with the traces and labor of composition, which, as Van Hulle's book attests, makes

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2. If a name change is ever in the cards, perhaps "composition studies" would suffice — particularly as the more elegant and intuitive term has been vacated by "writing studies" scholars.

the method different in kind from those other approaches to the study of literature, performance, and media.<sup>3</sup>

The first part of Van Hulle's book, "Genetic", includes, after the introduction, a very thorough chapter dedicated to compiling genetic dossiers — how to approach archives and documents, establish chronologies, transcribe texts, organize digital facsimiles, and ultimately catalogue intradocument and interdocument variants. Van Hulle's central exhibit in the chapter is his dossier of Beckett's one-man play *Krapp's Last Tape* (1959), drawn from manuscripts, typescripts, and corrected proofs held at the University of Reading, the Harry Ransom Center, and the University of California, San Diego. He ably demonstrates how programs such as Juxta, CollateX, or HyperCollate operate as a "collation engine" — akin to a search engine, but one attuned to delineating phases of composition (71). Van Hulle eventually isolates a sequence that reveals how the words "in the early autumn, after her long widowhood" found in Beckett's manuscript became "a-dying, after her long viduity" in proofs by way of a typescript that reads "a-dying in the ~~early~~ <sup>late</sup> autumn, after her long viduity" — a product of both conscious revision and error, as Beckett had mistakenly omitted "autumn" from a late typescript, which he subsequently added back to the play several editions down the line (70). These movements reveal how Beckett crafted Krapp's relationship not only to his mother's private suffering, but to his earlier persona or self that he is listening to on tape; in later versions, Krapp has to look up the meaning of "viduity" in order to understand how he had once felt. Van Hulle offers very little exegesis in this chapter on genetic dossiers and collation, and, unexpectedly, does not take up this sequence from Beckett's play in subsequent chapters. Along these lines, two of the most charming facsimiles in the book — Raymond Chandler's typescript of "Similes, etc." found in The Bodleian Library, a compendium of half-jokes and bad quips he would later mine for his detective novels, and Beckett's poem "mots survivants" (1977) that was scrawled on the back of a Johnnie Walker label — are an absolute joy to read, but Van Hulle does not point towards what greater significance they might have for scholarship. Accordingly, in the author's attempt to provide an exhaustive survey of the directions a genetic critique might take, this

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3. Or maybe some literature scholars still believe, in their heart of hearts, that there are stable "definitive" texts out there, given that one of Van Hulle's Beckett editions was recently excoriated in the *TLS* for its supposed insularity and the kind of process-focused pedantry that denies a work of literature from ever being a closed system for enjoyment or analysis (REVELY-CALDER 2021).

book lacks some of the coherence an overarching or recurring case study might have afforded.

The rest of the volume falls under “Criticism”, with a dense chapter on digital editing and computer-assisted genetic criticism preceded by ones on poetics (“Ecologies of Writing”) and hermeneutics (“Strategies of Reading”). Van Hulle gets these definitions from Jonathan Culler, for whom “Poetics starts with attested meanings or effects and asks how they are achieved. [ . . . ] Hermeneutics, on the other hand, starts with texts and asks what they mean, seeking to discover new and better interpretations” (75). As Culler notes elsewhere, a great deal of modern scholarship attempts, in vain, to do both, or perhaps confuses one for the other, “because those who write about the codes and conventions on which a work depends for its effects often end by concluding that the work is really about these codes and conventions” (CULLER 2017, 8). Genetic criticism, then, at least in Van Hulle’s formulation, is an attempt to keep these inquiries — that for Culler are always “working in opposite directions” — somewhat discrete (CULLER 2017, 8).

In his poetics chapter — setting aside the “ecologies” language, which does not add much except an additional sheen of scientism that “genetics” already has in spades — Van Hulle outlines a number of ways that poets and novelists have engaged with libraries, notebooks and exercise books, as well as their interactions with editors, publishers, translators, and other collaborators — a “sociology of writing” that is, admittedly, well-trodden territory in textual scholarship. For instance, Van Hulle walks the reader through a number of well-known instances of editorial collaboration (or overreach), including Percy Bysshe Shelley revising Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Ezra Pound shaping T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and *Esquire* editor Gordon Lish taking a machete to Raymond Carver’s prose.

What makes genetic criticism vital and dynamic is addressed especially in the hermeneutics chapter, in particular in his discussion of the interplay between “upstream” and “downstream” reading: identification of source texts in a composition (upstream) and how those materials have been processed or reframed in a subsequent phase of composition (downstream). Reading in both directions reveals a text’s “genetic code” and “intertextual condition,” as well as its linguistic and bibliographical codes. Van Hulle also presents an overview of what he calls “genetic narratology”, which profiles the different kinds of narratives a critic might tell once a genetic dossier has been compiled. By and large, what existing (non-genetic) strategies of reading can lack is the ability not only to move fluidly between traces of composition, but to tell compelling stories about a work across its

constituent texts. By contrast, Van Hulle's discussion of representations of consciousness in successive drafts of Joyce's *Ulysses* demonstrates "how [Leopold Bloom's] mind is extended and constantly scaffolded by elements in the environment", including plants, animals, and other objects (163). Should we treat traces of composition as presences, absences, or "present absences" (122)? Naturally, the answer is up to the individual reader or critic, but Van Hulle's discussion here provides one with a helpful blueprint.

Van Hulle's exhibits — from works by Samuel Beckett, Raymond Carver, Seamus Heaney, Thomas Hardy, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Mary Shelley, among others — are decidedly catholic in shape and form. As such, any given genetic project will draw upon a unique smattering of the lessons found in this ambulatory yet tautly structured book. So while the protracted discussion of logging keystrokes might be a monotonous read, and some of the charts and tables are not particularly reader-friendly, neither taints the surrounding insights. I do not find that Van Hulle's *Genetic Criticism* supplants the previously published volumes on the method, which contain articulate, fully realized critiques of genetic dossiers — those new to the textual genetics should not skip over earlier essays by de Biasi and Henri Mitterand — but this carefully constructed book provides the kind of up-to-date survey that has been missing from English scholarship.

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