

# **From Allusion to Intertext: Reading Wordsworth in Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins**

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## Summary

Critics have long acknowledged the allusive effect of William Wordsworth's language in the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning and Gerard Manley Hopkins. This thesis abjures allusive influence to focus on the intertextual presence of Wordsworth in poems by each of these authors. Its methodology hinges on a separation between an intentional authorial allusivity and an involuntary, or unbidden, intertextuality. As a result of this heuristic, the poets are seen to be caught within a Wordsworthian web, which complicates the way in which their poetry functions. The authorial entrapment that results is anxiety-generating, but the thesis does not place this anxiety within a Bloomian paradigm. Its concentration on male, canonical authors is Bloomian, however, as is its acceptance that the meaning of the texts by Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins discussed is a Wordsworthian poem.

Chapter One investigates the intertextual strategies of Tennyson's 'Ulysses' (1842), which work to expose the loss attendant upon the Wordsworthian transcendent moment. The poem's recasting of Arthur Henry Hallam's own unconscious Wordsworthian allegiance in 'Timbuctoo' (1829) leads into the analysis, in Chapter Two, of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850) and its implicit reliance on the language of Wordsworthian transcendence as a means by which both to assuage the poet's grief at the death of Hallam and his dissatisfaction with contemporary scientific and theological discourse. Chapter Three develops the previous chapters' findings by tracing how Tennyson's 'Tithonus' (1860) rewrites Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' (1798). Chapter Four examines Wordsworth's presence in two Browning monologues, 'Saul' (1855) and 'A Death in the Desert' (1864), demonstrating how the poems find a new use for the language of lyrical interiority. Chapter Five considers Hopkins' unconscious inscription of Wordsworth's poetry and the threat it poses to his Incarnationalism and linguistic practice alike. The thesis finds its conclusion in the literary-

historical effects that the after-presence of Wordsworth's language engenders, which become an embodiment of legacy. The depth of each poet's literary dependency on Wordsworth is also brought into focus, allowing the thesis to claim the earlier poet as a primary influence upon the trinity of later figures it addresses.

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## Introduction

### **From Allusion to Intertext: Reading Wordsworth in Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins**

The poetry of William Wordsworth is much concerned with the nature of poetic language, as the ‘Preface’ to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* attests, with its invocation for poetry to be in the ‘real language of men’.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth’s poetry is absorbed, too, with the nature of that which comes ‘after’, where ‘compounds like “after-joy”, “after-meditation”, or even “after-vacancy” appeal to a principle of consequence and continuation’.<sup>2</sup> This thesis engages with both of these concerns – language and the implications of what it means to come ‘after’ – by examining the presence of Wordsworth’s language in the poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning and Gerard Manley Hopkins, the involuntarily inscribed but pervasive intertextual language that finds a home within the texts and exerts an influence beyond the immediate control of the poet. In so doing, it necessarily engages with the concept of legacy, especially in relation to Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence,<sup>3</sup> thereby extending the concern with ‘a principle of consequence and continuation’ beyond the confines of Wordsworth’s own poetry.

The interface between Romantic and Victorian literature has been the subject of sustained scholarly attention in recent years, as critics systematically dismantle the artificial boundary created by the coronation in 1837 of the Queen who subsequently lends her name to the latter era, by exploring the nature of literary continuity and the connections and affiliations between literary texts from both periods.<sup>4</sup> The thesis contributes to, but distinguishes itself from, this critical work by focusing predominantly on the intertextual, or unconscious, presence of Wordsworth’s language in a range of selected poems,<sup>5</sup> which allows for a significant contribution to be made to the analysis of Romantic and Victorian literary and poetic continuities, and the place of Wordsworth’s poetic language therein.

Moreover, Wordsworth is not generally regarded as the principal poetic influence on any of the poets studied here: Percy Bysshe Shelley is unquestionably viewed as Browning's main precursor,<sup>6</sup> but also acts as the foremost influence on Tennyson, as is John Keats; Keats, Tennyson and John Milton are long established as the major influences on Hopkins. The thesis, therefore, provides a unique understanding of the selected poets' indebtedness to a writer largely overlooked by critics in terms of primary influence.<sup>7</sup>

The poems in which these poetic continuities and consequences are explored – Tennyson's 'Ulysses' (1842), *In Memoriam* (1850) and 'Tithonus' (1860), Browning's 'Saul' (1855) and 'A Death in the Desert' (1864), and Hopkins' 'Winter with the Gulf Stream' (1863 and 1871 versions), 'God's Grandeur' (1877), 'The Windhover: To Christ Our Lord' (1877) and 'Hurrahing in Harvest' (1877) – are affiliated with Wordsworth's poetry, either through the way in which they attempt ostensibly to break free from his poetic lyricism in the case of the Tennyson and Browning monologues, for instance, or in that they often simply allude to the poetry in a self-conscious and deliberate way. The thesis teases out, through closely read analyses, how each of the poems unconsciously inscribes Wordsworth's language, and the far-reaching implications of this unsanctioned presence. It does not run to an exact chronology, but favours a thematic approach, beginning with three of Tennyson's poems, and ending with Hopkins' poems of the 1870s: the Tennyson poems are linked by personal loss, and are arranged by publication date, although the 1833 'Tithon' on which the later 'Tithonus' is based, was originally written as a 'pendant' to the 1833 'Ulysses', a dependency that is not reflected in the arrangement of chapters in the thesis;<sup>8</sup> both of Browning's poems engage with the Incarnation of the risen Christ, and both are monologues, published within a fourteen-year span; Hopkins' poems are united by the poet's Catholic vision of the Incarnate Christ and, except for 'Winter with the Gulf Stream' and 'God's Grandeur', his experimental prosodic and linguistic techniques.



Throughout the thesis a separation is maintained between the intertextual and the allusive, descriptors that have been used without proper explanation in this Introduction thus far, on the basis that such a separation can be sustained, and that a study of the intertextual, or unconscious, language in each of the texts illuminates hitherto unexplored and vital aspects of the poetry. The division between the intertextual and allusive is notoriously fluid and imprecise, although the reader's role is instrumental in deciphering the 'code'. Allusion is defined by the level of authorial control at work in it, separating it from unconscious inscription, which operates outside of the author's direct control: Stephen Hinds describes a process 'whereby alluding poets exert themselves to draw attention to the fact that they are alluding, and to reflect upon the nature of their allusive activity'.<sup>9</sup> He also suggests that: 'Certain allusions are so constructed as to carry a kind of built-in commentary, a kind of reflexive annotation, which underlines or intensifies their demand to be interpreted *as* allusions'.<sup>10</sup> Intentionality, for Hinds, is a useful tool by which to separate the allusive from the intertextual, although he acknowledges that allusivity is essentially constructed by the reader:

Therefore, while conceding the fact that, for us as critics, the alluding poet is ultimately and necessarily a figure whom we ourselves read out from the text, let us continue to employ our enlarged version of "allusion", along with its intention-bearing author, as a discourse which is good to think with – which enables us to conceptualize and to handle certain kinds of intertextual transaction more economically and effectively than does any alternative.<sup>11</sup>

Sarah Annes Brown, building her argument from Hinds', goes on to point out that allusion 'strongly implies agency; it suggests that a later writer has deliberately referenced an earlier

work, inviting the reader to notice and reflect on the connection. Sometimes the echo is so unmistakable, so distinctive, that we experience no doubt in identifying a deliberate allusion'.<sup>12</sup> Brown uses the word echo here to imply intentionality, but later confirms that 'An echo is a more neutral word which doesn't rule out the possibility of conscious borrowing but implies that the connection isn't strong enough to prove deliberate agency or to ensure recognition in the majority of attentive readers'.<sup>13</sup> This is a division which John Hollander also maintains, suggesting that 'one cannot [...] allude unintentionally – an inadvertent allusion is a kind of solecism'.<sup>14</sup> Hollander, while recognising how echo functions in literary terms as conscious allusion, also uses echo as 'a metaphor of, and for, alluding, [that] does not depend on conscious intention. The referential nature of poetic echo, as of dreaming (or Coleridgean "symbol" as opposed to conscious "allegory"), may be unconscious or inadvertent, but is no less qualified thereby'.<sup>15</sup> Hollander insists, however, that 'The reader of texts, in order to overhear echoes, must have some kind of access to an earlier voice, and to its cave of resonant signification, analogous to that of the author of the later text'.<sup>16</sup>

Intertextuality can be classified more concretely in terms of the unconscious or involuntary, however, and has a comprehensive theoretical background. Brown says that intertextuality:

usually implies a complex and weblike relationship between texts which goes beyond direct influence [...] Within the context of a book about allusion the word intertextuality is usually used to connote an absence of clear allusion, as a way of acknowledging that texts can have elements in common, that one may even seem to allude to another, while recognising that these similarities may be entirely involuntary and indeed be produced by a writer who has never read the work he or she seems to reference.<sup>17</sup>

The 'weblike relationship' to which Brown refers derives from Roland Barthes' account of how the text, and intertextuality, is dependent on the figure of the web or weave, a concept born out of the word 'text' itself, whose etymological base is 'a tissue or woven fabric'.<sup>18</sup> In Barthes' terms, the text is 'woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not?) antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony',<sup>19</sup> but where 'the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas'.<sup>20</sup>

The term intertextuality itself derives from Julia Kristeva's concept, based on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Mikhail Bakhtin, of the dialogic text, where, 'any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*'.<sup>21</sup> Bakhtin's notion of the social nature of language is defined by Kristeva in terms of the horizontal and vertical: in the former, 'the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee',<sup>22</sup> in the latter 'the text is oriented toward an anterior or synchronic literary corpus'.<sup>23</sup> In Kristeva's terms, these axes 'coincide' in any given text,<sup>24</sup> resulting in a 'mosaic of quotations'.<sup>25</sup>

According to Barthes, however, the relationality of texts displaces the author in favour of the reader, as 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author'.<sup>26</sup> Yet the 'death of the Author' does not preclude all forms of authorial influence, and 'Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text* even writes of a certain desire *for* the author'.<sup>27</sup> The reader's influence remains crucial from Barthes' perspective, nonetheless, as 'literary meaning can never be fully stabilized by the reader, since the literary work's intertextual nature always leads readers on to new textual relations'.<sup>28</sup>

Jacques Derrida, too, acknowledges the way in which writing (*écriture*), devoid of 'the referent or the transcendental signified',<sup>29</sup> is always in need of interpretation:

the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or of force, but a signifying structure that critical reading should *produce*.<sup>30</sup>

Interpretation cannot thus be fixed by any reading, or, indeed, by the author, as no text is ever closed. On this basis, each of the readings in the thesis cannot be seen to fix meaning, but are simply one of many possible interpretations to which the texts give rise.

The terms intertextual and echo are used interchangeably throughout what follows, however, in a loose amalgamation of literary relationality, unconscious author influence, reader interpretation, and intertextual poetic echo. The thesis does not make claims as to whether the ‘centre of intertextuality [resides] in the author, the reader or the text itself?’,<sup>31</sup> but works on the basis that a study of unconscious influence is a pivot of all three, although it acknowledges that the reader in a sense also creates,<sup>32</sup> as well as perceives, meaning, and that the reading of poetry is itself an imaginative and aesthetic experience. It plays with the notion of the intertextual web, of how each author and text is caught in a Wordsworthian web of inscribed language, which generates an alternative telos within the poems, a process often in conflict with the ‘allusive’ elements within them. Well-known poems, and well-known poets, are revealed to challenge and rework the language of the past as much as they perpetuate or mediate it: the shadow-side of the Wordsworthian imagination, loss, is exposed, wrestled with, as is the darker, subversive side of Wordsworthian nature.<sup>33</sup> New meanings arise from

what are generally familiar texts, which reveal compelling aspects of each author's literary relationship with his predecessor, and, in turn, pressing things about the Wordsworthian imaginative process itself and its place in Victorian poetry.

Harold Bloom's presence hovers over the readings, but the processes they locate fall outside the Oedipal relationships that Bloom maintains exist between texts, where 'poetic history [...] is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves'.<sup>34</sup> The thesis does not suggest that Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins misread Wordsworth in order to carve out imaginative space for themselves, but does suggest that there is a level of poetic anxiety at work within the texts, as each text is trapped within the skein of Wordsworthian language in which it is situated.

The thesis can be described as Bloomian, however, in its study of canonical authors and, to an extent, largely canonical poetry. The readings are a manifestation of Bloom's 'assertion that the meaning of a poem can only be a poem, but *another poem – a poem not itself*':<sup>35</sup> Wordsworth's poems, in this sense, are the 'meaning' of the poems of Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins included in the thesis. Bloom's studies also maintain that 'literary texts can only have other specific literary texts as inter-texts',<sup>36</sup> and that 'social and cultural contexts' are irrelevant intertextual 'fields of meaning',<sup>37</sup> and this is borne out in the study, too. Detailed historical accounts of each poet's literary relationship with Wordsworth are given in Chapters Three, Four and Five, but they are provided alongside an acknowledgement that historical and cultural context cannot fully account for the author's poetic and literary associations, as 'literature itself has a history [...] and manifests authors' own histories of reading and writing'.<sup>38</sup>

Bloom also suggests that all lyrics that come after Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' (1798) cannot 'surmount' their poetic debt to it.<sup>39</sup> The poem has been called 'the most

influential descriptive lyric in English',<sup>40</sup> and this is a contention the thesis supports, as 'Tintern Abbey' is repeatedly inscribed in the poems discussed; it is the lyric which none of the poems can escape, in this sense. The effects that 'Tintern Abbey' create, however, lie outside of Bloom's agonistic paradigm, although a level of anxiety is nevertheless generated in the poets by its inscription. This is not to claim that 'Tintern Abbey' is the only Wordsworth poem to be woven intertextually through the works included here, because the 'Intimations' Ode (1807),<sup>41</sup> as well as other less emblematic Wordsworthian texts, are threaded into the later poems, too, and they contribute to the anxiety that is generated: the 'mythos of human immortality' that the 'Intimations' Ode bequeaths to Victorian literary texts is revealed as less than beneficent, for instance.<sup>42</sup>

But why Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins? And why, indeed, Romantic and Victorian poetry at all? Romantic poetry has 'to some extent been decentered as *the* Romantic genre: the prose fiction of the period, particularly the work of women writers like Charlotte Smith, Mary Hays, Lady Morgan and Maria Edgeworth, is receiving more recognition',<sup>43</sup> while Victorian poetry has been frequently overlooked 'by the major critical and theoretical movements of the twentieth century'.<sup>44</sup> Yet, 'Victorian poetry is the most sophisticated poetic form [...] to arise in the past two hundred years',<sup>45</sup> and is written belatedly, not in Bloom's Oedipal terms, but in the sense that it is unavoidably written in the literary slipstream of Romantic poets like Wordsworth.<sup>46</sup> Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins each form a response to Wordsworth's poetry in their work; each is indebted to Wordsworth, even if the debt is one that the poet in part wants lifted. The unconscious poetic presence of Wordsworth in the poems complicates, and sometimes contradicts, the public and poetic manifestation of indebtedness, as well as complicating the poems themselves. Of course, other important literary influences course through the veins of the selected poets, as Bloom and assorted critics make clear. But Wordsworth's poetic influence is profound, nonetheless:

the 'Preface' to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*'s injunction for poetry to be in 'the real language of men' has a stimulating effect on both Browning and Hopkins' prosody, for instance.<sup>47</sup> And Wordsworth is a facilitator; crucially, it is Wordsworth's discoveries about metre in the same 'Preface:

where the rhythm of the poem might not be "strictly connected with the passion", [which allows] for ambiguities to develop between printed form and spoken performance. This develops throughout the nineteenth century from Wordsworthian blank verse or ballad into the dramatic monologues of Tennyson and Browning, and the extraordinary metrical innovations of Gerard Manley Hopkins.<sup>48</sup>

The authors come together in the thesis therefore because Wordsworth connects them; he is the thread that sews them together.

A survey of recent critical writing on Wordsworth focuses on both the role of the imagination in his poetry and the allusive effects of his language in other writers' work. But what each of these studies does not do is look at the unconscious influences within each text, and the effects these have in relation to Victorian poetry, an omission addressed in this thesis. Graham Davidson, in an interesting reading, writes of the primacy of the imaginative experience in Wordsworth's poetry and in *The Ruined Cottage* (1804) in particular, where he traces the way in which Wordsworth is 'divided between a general contempt for those who have no vision, who will not discipline themselves to wed their intellect to the visible world, and a wish to respect the suffering of apparently visionless individuals who make up society':<sup>49</sup> 'What Wordsworth knew is that unless each and every one of us tries to, indeed succeeds in, bringing alive the power of imagination, of meditation, of prayer, human life is sad, and meaningless, "Distracted by distraction from distraction"'.<sup>50</sup> The present study

moves on from Davidson's to show how Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins unconsciously test the value of the Wordsworthian imagination in the Victorian period, while simultaneously asserting its power by continuing unintentionally to inscribe it. James Castell writes convincingly on Wordsworth's poem, 'Yes, it was the mountain Echo' (1807), claiming that rhyme in the poem:

is one of many analogous and yet inassimilable echoes. In fact, echo – as a repetition of sound that communicates redundantly, even solipsistically, with itself – would already have to be seen as troubling anything like uncomplicated mimesis. “Yes! full surely 'twas the Echo” presents a series of supposedly balanced communicatory exchanges (between bird and bird, bird and man, man and God) which turn out to be nothing more than repetitions where, in fact, nothing is exchanged at all.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, 'Yes, it was the mountain Echo' is one of a brace of Wordsworth poems that echo intertextually through Tennyson's *In Memoriam*; in the latter poem, intertextual echoes are heard from Wordsworth's precursor poem, but these also turn into 'nothings'. Similarly, Peter Swaab writes of how Wordsworth's elegies entailed for the poet 'an implicit reconsideration of his own life and work and its insecure foundations, prompted by the way that elegy gives poets an occasion to think about the span of their careers'.<sup>52</sup> Yet, Wordsworth's 'Elegiac Stanza', 'Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont' (1807), and other of Wordsworth elegies, are cited in *In Memoriam*, in an unconscious attempt by the poet to reach out to Wordsworth's language in search of emotional recompense. Lucy Newlyn, in her excellent 'Wordsworth Among the Glow-Worms', shows how Wordsworth's glow-worm from *An Evening Walk* (1793) echoes through Coleridge's 'Lines Written at Shurton Bars' (1795), where at the end of the poem it



is ‘transfigured into a symbol of marital consummation’:<sup>53</sup> ‘Embedded within a love-poem, Coleridge’s tribute to Wordsworth initiated their poetic dialogue, which proceeded along the lines of a gift-exchange of echoes and allusions over a period of at least ten years’.<sup>54</sup> But *An Evening Walk*, like the other Wordsworth poems featured in the thesis, shares its gifts intertextually with the poets and poetry of the Victorian period, although the latter are under no obligation to exchange their own gifts in return.

The study begins, in Chapter One, by looking at Tennyson’s canonical poem, ‘Ulysses’ and Arthur Henry Hallam’s 1829 Cambridge Chancellor’s medal attempt, ‘Timbuctoo’. ‘Ulysses’ was written in 1833 in the midst of Tennyson’s grief at the sudden death of Hallam, but reworked for publication in 1842. A monologue, it functions via a historical speaker, Ulysses, and self-consciously alludes to Wordsworth’s ‘Intimations’ Ode and ‘Tintern Abbey’. But the poem also contains intertextual echoes of ‘Tintern Abbey’, the ‘Intimations’ Ode and *An Evening Walk*, which mediate the language of Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence and its penumbra, loss, while simultaneously questioning both the nature of the monologue and the validity of the Wordsworthian autonomous self on which the experience of transcendence is built. The poem’s central metaphor of the ‘arch’ of experience contains resonances of the earlier poet that locate Ulysses’ transcendence in a Wordsworthian imaginative paradigm that reworks the loss within it.<sup>55</sup> As a result of the poem’s intertextual inscription, Ulysses’ journey into the sunset is revealed as one in search of the lost Wordsworthian imagination rather than immortality.

The chapter moves on to show how in the poem Tennyson, via an unconscious assimilation of Hallam’s ‘Timbuctoo’, which is itself concerned with the nature of Romantic imaginative transcendence, continues to rework Wordsworth’s notion of a loss-inscribed imaginative experience. It acknowledges, too, how the unconscious intertextual echoes Tennyson hears in ‘Ulysses’ complement his own ability with poetic sound by creating

alternative sonic arrangements within the poem,<sup>56</sup> an effect created in all of the Tennyson poems discussed in the thesis, in fact.

Chapter Two focuses on Tennyson's great elegy, *In Memoriam*, again written in response to the unexpected death of Hallam, and examines the way in which the poem continuously and compulsively returns to the language of Wordsworthian transcendence. Moreover, the presence of this intertextual language is woven around the many allusive Wordsworthian citations the poem contains, evading the control Tennyson has over the latter and the poetic uses to which they are put. Through an analysis of three major sections, the chapter traces how the poem focuses on the loss at the heart of the Wordsworthian imaginative process, but reveals how poem (and poet) cleave to this loss as a subliminal alternative to a weak faith and a science stricken through with doubt, as well as to the loss of Hallam himself. The poem is repeatedly and involuntarily drawn to the language of Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence, despite the loss at its core, and this is reflected in the circular movement of the poem, which ends as it begins, with a text unconsciously inveigled by Wordsworth's language. As a result of the intertextual inscription at work, the poem's primary focus is revealed as not the lost object, Hallam, but, as in 'Ulysses', the 'lost' Wordsworthian imagination.

Wordsworth has been called Tennyson's 'poetic father-figure',<sup>57</sup> and the reading reveals how Tennyson is involuntarily complicit in the subjugation to Wordsworth's poetic language in which he and his poem are caught. The inscription of Wordsworth's language expresses a sense of anxiety, of the poet not wanting, through paternal attachment, to 'clear imaginative space' for himself,<sup>58</sup> but of wanting subconsciously to remain with his poetic father.

Chapter Three consolidates the findings of Chapters One and Two by focusing on Tennyson's 'Tithonus' and the way in which the poem unconsciously engages with

Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'. A close reading of the poem reveals how, through the intertextual inscription of Wordsworth's poetic language, it rewrites Wordsworth's iconic poem. The reading acknowledges the poem's well-rehearsed allusiveness to Wordsworth's poetry, while nevertheless tracing the ways in which the Wordsworthian language woven within it escapes the poet's conscious control and the implications of this for both poet and poem. It examines, in part, 'Tithonus's' earlier incarnation, 'Tithon', to confirm how the later poem's rhetorical and performative status is more fully compromised by the Wordsworthian inscription at work in the text. It also traces how the poem obliquely appraises the imaginative sustenance to be found in Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* and 'Resolution and Independence' (1807) as part of its reconfiguration of 'Tintern Abbey'.

At the start, the chapter gives an historical account of Tennyson's poetic indebtedness to Wordsworth, as a means by which both to contextualise the poem and to emphasise how the reading of the intertextual language of the poem that follows reveals hidden aspects of the poet's relationship with his predecessor, aspects that would otherwise not have emerged.

Chapter Four looks at the way in which two Browning poems, 'Saul' and 'A Death in the Desert', also return repeatedly to the language of Wordsworth's poetry, including 'Tintern Abbey' and the poetic and thematic implications therein. Neither of Browning's poems is overtly associated with Wordsworth's poetry or influence, and indeed both are dramatic monologues, a form predicated on the rejection of lyrical interiority in favour of rhetorical speech. Browning openly engages with Wordsworth's poetics in *Pauline: A Fragment of A Confession* (1833) and the 'Essay on Shelley' (1851), in which he outlines a new poetic objectivity, derived from the subjectivity of the past. A historical account of Browning's poetic indebtedness to Wordsworth is included at the start of the chapter, primarily to reveal, again, how the historical does not provide a full picture of the poet's literary relations. Tennyson's contribution in developing the dramatic monologue is also touched on here,

framing the readings of 'Ulysses' and 'Tithonus' that have taken place in Chapters One and Three.

The chapter moves on from the historical excursus to look at the intertextual language of the poems, revealing how the poet is helplessly drawn to the language of Wordsworthian transcendence in these poems, the result of which is irretrievably to compromise the form and course of the poems themselves. Browning's Incarnationalism is ineradicably assailed, but, at the same time, augmented by the involuntary diffusion of Wordsworth's language, while his strange and complex poems are rendered stranger and more complex still. Like Tennyson, Browning is revealed as unable to escape from the poetic 'father', Wordsworth, who displaces Shelley, in these poems at least, from the role of primary precursor.

Chapter Five moves away from Tennyson and Browning to look at the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, another poet in thrall to, yet seemingly anxious to eschew, Wordsworth's poetics. While acknowledging Hopkins' Wordsworthian allusiveness, the chapter reveals, through a study of four Hopkins poems, starting with the early 'Winter with the Gulf Stream' and ending with 'Hurrahing in Harvest', how the texts unconsciously revert to Wordsworth's language of transcendence, revealing the effects of this on Hopkins' well-documented Incarnationalism and linguistic experimentation. Whereas Browning's Incarnationalism is, in part, shored up by the inclusion of Wordsworth's language, Hopkins' faith and poetic practice are vitiated from within by that same presence: theological and poetic fissures are revealed that are only fully exposed in the 'Terrible' or Dark Sonnets of the following decade. As with the 'Tithonus' and Browning chapters, a brief account of Hopkins' established views on Wordsworth's poetic practice is given at the outset to emphasise how a historicist account of Hopkins' poetic relationship with Wordsworth cannot, and does not, incorporate the whole of the poet's literary relationship with his poetic predecessor.

Ultimately, what each chapter reveals is the way in which author and poem alike are caught within a Wordsworthian web of poetic and linguistic association. The sense of entrapment that this occasions affects both form and content, but also ensures the continuity of the language of Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence in Victorian poetry, as it moves effortlessly through some of the era's most canonical poetry. Victorian writers want to:

possess, master and discipline the *zeitgeist* of Romanticism, so that what they conceived of as Romantic bears the stamp of a supposedly more civilised and rational Victorian age. Yet all the time there is a neurotic fear that the potentially subversive, ungovernable essence of Romanticism will begin to work independently and possess the Victorian possessor.<sup>59</sup>

The Wordsworthian imagination, hardly subversive, becomes ungovernable in the Victorian age as a result of its intertextual inscription within the texts, an entity that the selected poets can neither possess nor tame. It becomes the possessor, as the interpoetic transference of language ensures that it is embedded within the poems, creating effects the poets neither seek nor endorse, while simultaneously exposing complications and inconsistencies contained within itself. Such findings, facilitated by the intertextualist readings carried out in the thesis, open up a new flank in the current critical evaluation of Romantic and Victorian literary periodisation by revealing the literary-historical legacy of Wordsworth's language of transcendence in Victorian poetry. At the same time, the readings disclose the depth of each author's dependency on Wordsworth, allowing the thesis to claim the earlier poet as a primary influence.

## Notes

1. William Wordsworth, 'Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems published, with an additional volume, under the title of "Lyrical Ballads"', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, edited and with introductions and notes by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 734-41 (p. 734).
2. See Peter Larkin, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Promising Losses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 13. Larkin goes on to say that 'a principle of consequence and continuation [...] both burdens and provokes any speaking moment as it tries to regulate, not so much a perplexing absence, as a displacement too purely illuminated to be farther displaced – structurable, that is to say, as the past of a future present'. See *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, p. 13.
3. The faculty of the imagination in Wordsworth is acclaimed 'as the primary, creative faculty of mind' and is fed by a cooperative and supportive Nature; Geoffrey H. Hartman writes of how 'Wordsworth writes in the faith that Nature will suffice the energies of consciousness'. See Aidan Day, *Romanticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 60 and Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 18. Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence has a long critical history, however, which the thesis readily acknowledges. Classic accounts of the Romantic imaginative process, like that of M. H. Abrams and Northrop Frye, foreground the importance of the imagination as a force that stands outside of time and history. See M. H. Abrams, 'English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age', in *Romanticism Reconsidered*, ed. Northrop Frye (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 26-72; M. H.

Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1971); Northrop Frye, 'The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism', in *Romanticism Reconsidered*, pp. 1-25. Albert O. Wlecke also provides an interesting phenomenological account of Wordsworth's 'act of imagination'. See Albert O. Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1973), vii. Since Abrams *et al* the Romantic imagination has been subject to ideological attrition through the work of Jerome J. McGann and others, who attempt to release the imagination from the 'bastille' of consciousness to which it is seemingly subject by locating it within the historical and the social. See Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 91. See also Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Similarly, Tilottama Rajan charges the Wordsworthian imagination as complicit in suppressions of the real and in creating a 'fiction'. See Tilottama Rajan, *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 13-14. Jonathan Bate, on the other hand, relocates Wordsworth's nature within an ecological tradition. See Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991). Paul de Man, in his analysis of the Romantic use of symbol and allegory, displaces the centrality given to the dialectical relationship between subject and object in Romantic thought by locating it 'entirely in the temporal relationships that exist within a system of allegorical signs'. See Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd

edn (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 207-08. More recently, the ‘digital revolution has led to an increased awareness of the materiality of the text, countering Romanticism’s traditional emphasis on the immaterial, the ideal, the transcendent’. See Gillian Russell, “‘Who’s afraid for William Wordsworth?’: Some Thoughts on ‘Romanticism’ in 2012’, *Australian Humanities Review*, 54 (May 2013): 66-80 (p. 74). The thesis also acknowledges, however, that ‘From 1798 onward, Wordsworth’s principal endeavour was to become the poet of *The Recluse*, or to move beyond an imagination relevant only to a personal case history to demonstrate the imagination’s workings in human life more generally’. See Larkin, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, p. 33.

4. See, for instance, *Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era*, ed. Andrew Radford and Mark Sandy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature 1824-1840* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Clyde de L. Ryals, *A World of Possibilities: Romantic Irony in Victorian Literature* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1990); Joel Faflak and Julia M. Wright, *Nervous Reactions: Victorian Recollections of Romanticism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004); Christopher Decker, ‘Tennyson’s Limitations’, in *Tennyson Among the Poets: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst and Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 57-75. See also Michael O Neill, ‘The Wheels of Being: Tennyson and Shelley’, in the same volume, pp. 181-98.
5. Other studies look at deliberate, or conscious, poetic allusion, or a mixture of conscious and unconscious citation. *Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era*, for example, focuses on ‘precise verbal allusions and other accidental repetitions’, the accidental repetitions being the poetic echoes that John Hollander describes as



occurring alongside deliberate allusion in literary works. See John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1981). Christopher Ricks, in his seminal study, *Allusion to the Poets*, which includes studies on both Romantic and Victorian poets, attends to ‘allusion, as the calling into play – by poets – of the words and phrases of previous writers’. See Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1. Anthony H. Harrison, in *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*, demonstrates how ‘self-consciously intertextual uses of precursors by Victorian poets serve to reveal ideology’. See Anthony H. Harrison, *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems: Intertextuality and Ideology* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p. 1. A fuller explication of the differences between allusion and poetic echo, and indeed intertextuality, differences which underpin the thesis, is given further on in the Introduction.

6. Famously, Harold Bloom, in *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), claims that the high point of Shelley’s poetic influence on Browning comes in “‘Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came’” (1855). See *A Map of Misreading*, pp. 687-708.
7. John Haydn Baker attempts to address this imbalance in his book, *Browning and Wordsworth*, where he claims Browning is involved in a struggle with his predecessor over Wordsworth’s rejection of humanism in favour of idealism; Browning, in contrast to Wordsworth, sees Romanticism as needing to ‘be molded into a movement that united the vision of the idealist with the realism of the humanist’. See *Browning and Wordsworth* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), p. 33. Baker’s argument differs from mine, in that Wordsworth’s humanism is not a focus. Equally, the chapters in the thesis contain a brief overview of the perceived

Wordsworthian influence in each poet's work, but in none of these accounts is Wordsworth claimed as the principal poetic influence.

8. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1989), pp. 138 and 583 for more detail on the writing of the two poems, which are usually viewed as a pair as a result of Tennyson's comments.
9. Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1.
10. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, p. 1.
11. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, p. 50.
12. Sarah Annes Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost: Allusion and the Uncanny* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 7-8.
13. Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 8.
14. John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), p. 64.
15. Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 64.
16. Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 65.
17. Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 9.
18. Roland Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 159.
19. Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, p. 160.
20. Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, p. 160.
21. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 66.
22. Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 66.
23. Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 66.

24. Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 66.
25. Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 66.
26. Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, p. 148.
27. Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 75,  
quoting from Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New  
York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 27.
28. Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 3.
29. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak  
(Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 158.
30. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 158.
31. Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 59.
32. Wolfgang Iser confirms that ‘the literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us  
to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might  
call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality. This virtual  
dimension is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming  
together of text and imagination’. See Wolfgang Iser, ‘The reading process: a  
phenomenological approach’, in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David  
Lodge (London and New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 212-28 (p. 215).
33. For more on how epiphany and loss combine in the Romantic, including  
Wordsworthian, moment of vision, see Michael O’Neill, “‘The All-Sustaining Air’:  
Yeats, Stevens, Rich, Bishop – Responses to Romantic Poetry’, in *The Monstrous  
Debt: Modalities of Romantic Influence in Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. Damian  
Walford Davies and Richard Marggraf Turley, with a Foreword by Lucy Newlyn  
(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), pp. 143-62 (p. 147) and Hartman,  
*Wordsworth’s Poetry 1787-1814*, p. 18.

34. See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 5.
35. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 70. The thesis can also be seen as Bloomian in that it privileges male rather than female authors. Gender is not a priority in the study, although the thesis engages with issues concerning the 'female' where appropriate. This is not to suggest that Wordsworth could not have influenced, consciously or otherwise, female poets of the Victorian period, or that the Wordsworthian imagination is of no concern to female writers of the time, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as it undoubtedly is. For more detail on how Elizabeth Barrett Browning identifies with Wordsworth's poetics, for instance, see Katherine Lesch, 'Aurora Leigh and Fictional Autobiography (IV): Inadequacies of the Form'. Available at <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ebb/lesch9.html> [accessed 24 July 2014].
- Similarly, the thesis resists the idea of seeing gender as integral to a study of Wordsworth's poetry, or indeed the poetry of the Victorian period, and therefore does not attempt to attach gender-specific ties to either. Feminist critics like Anne K. Mellor do see gender as fundamental to a study of Romanticism and focus on what they see as the domination of male power in the period. Mellor claims, for instance, that 'By usurping the mother's womb, life-giving power, and feminine sensibilities, the male poet could claim to be God, the sole ruler of the world'. See Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 23. Equally, Isobel Armstrong points out how 'Gender becomes a primary focus of anxiety and investigation in Victorian poetry which is unparalleled in its preoccupation with sexuality and what it is to love'. See Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 7. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claims that Wordsworth's imaginative man is essentially

maternal and that Wordsworth appropriates ‘an androgynous plenitude which would include within the self an indeterminate role of mother as well as lover’. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Sex and History in *The Prelude* (1805): Books Nine to Thirteen’, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 23 (1981): 324-60 (p. 334). However, irrespective of the imaginative self, nature is undoubtedly gendered as female in Wordsworth, although this is not true of all the Romantics, as Michael O’Neill points out: ‘it is by no means apparent that “nature” is always “gendered as female” in Romantic poetry – one thinks, for instance, of Shelley’s “Mont Blanc”’. See Michael O’Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), xxv. The imagination is often represented as female in Tennyson, but, again, this is not a consideration in the thesis, as its focus is purely on Wordsworth’s language. See Carol T. Christ, ‘Introduction: Victorian Poetics’, in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, pp. 1-21 (p. 10) for more on Tennyson’s ‘female’ imagination, however.

36. Allen, *Intertextuality*, pp. 140-41.

37. Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 140.

38. See Douglas Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 3. The thesis acknowledges ‘recent developments in new historicism [that] have taken onboard a post-structuralist historiography, which sees events, times, circumstances, and places as themselves textually mediated. In other words, intertextuality has come to be recognized as a function of historical consciousness [...] The worlds “behind” poems can be observed in a more complex, layered fashion by investigating the connections they make (consciously and unconsciously) with each other’. See Lucy Newlyn, ‘Foreword’, in *The Monstrous Debt*, vii-xiii (ix). It also acknowledges, without endorsing, Harrison’s

claim ‘that intertextuality as the study of interrelated signs and sign systems, whether synchronic or diachronic, can only artificially and arbitrarily extricate itself from the historically particular situations of the systems that are its objects of analysis’, a position, he avers, that Barthes, Kristeva, and Bakhtin ‘clearly support [...] in ways that subvert the premises of their own intertextual projects’. See Harrison, *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*, p. 9 and p. 207, n. 10.

39. See Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 17.
40. Matthew Rowlinson, ‘Lyric’, in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Anthony H. Harrison (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 59-79 (p. 65).
41. Bloom describes how no modern lyric can surmount its debt to Wordsworth’s ‘Resolution and Independence’ and ‘Intimations’ Ode, as well as to ‘Tintern Abbey’. See Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower*, p. 17.
42. See Harrison, *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*, p. 177. Harrison suggests, in terms of the ‘Intimations’ Ode, that the ‘mythos of human immortality [...] constitutes a thematic foundation and a body of transcendental assumptions in Victorian texts [in which] nature beneficently helps man to perceive the certainty of spiritual immortality’. See *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*, pp. 177-78. The thesis will reveal how the ‘Intimation’ Ode’s influence in Victorian texts generates more anxiety, and is less benevolent, than Harrison suggests.
43. Russell, “‘Who’s Afraid for William Wordsworth?’”, p. 71.
44. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 1. Armstrong points out how ‘New criticism, encouraged by T. S. Eliot, who said that Tennyson and Browning merely “ruminated”, considered Victorian poetry to lie outside its categories. When Raymond

Williams began to theorise the cultural criticism which has been so fruitful in *Culture and Society*, he concentrated on the nineteenth-century novel. Feminism likewise made its claims through a critique primarily of the novel'. See Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 1-2.

45. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 21. One of the ways in which Victorian poetry displays its sophistication, according to Armstrong, is through the 'double poem', which comments on its own operation. See Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 13-17.
46. This statement is made in the full awareness that Romanticism was not defined as a literary movement until well after the period by which it has become known.
47. Wordsworth, 'Preface to the second edition', p. 734.
48. See Matthew Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 48-49. Campbell's comments about metre are taken from Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 75.
49. Graham Davidson, 'Wordsworth's Wasteland or The Speargrass Redemption', in *Romanticism*, 20.1 (2014): 73-83 (p. 79).
50. Davidson, 'Wordsworth's Wasteland', pp. 81-82.
51. James Castell, 'Wordsworth, Silence and the Nonhuman', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 45.1 (Winter 2014): pp. 58-61 (p. 58).
52. Peter Swaab, 'Wordsworth's Elegies for John Wordsworth', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 45.1 (Winter 2014): pp. 30-38 (p. 30).
53. Lucy Newlyn, 'Wordsworth Among the Glow-Worms', *Essays in Criticism*, 61.3 (2011): 249-74 (p. 264).
54. Newlyn, 'Wordsworth Among the Glow-Worms', p. 268.
55. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, l. 19 (p. 142).

56. T. S. Eliot praises Tennyson's poetic facility with sound, describing him as 'having the finest ear of any English poet since Milton'. See T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), p. 239.
57. Ruth Padel, 'Tennyson: Echo and Harmony, Music and Thought', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 323-36 (p. 327).
58. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 5.
59. Radford and Sandy, 'Introduction', in *Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era*, pp. 1-14 (p. 3)



## Chapter One

### **‘All experience is an arch’:<sup>1</sup> Tennyson’s ‘Ulysses’ and the Revision of Wordsworthian Transcendent Loss**

‘Ulysses’ was written on 20 October 1833, soon after Tennyson heard the news of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam’s unexpected death,<sup>2</sup> and subsequently reworked for publication in 1842. Tennyson notably declares, in a comment that post-dates the poem’s publication, that ‘There is more about myself in *Ulysses*, which was written under the sense of loss and that all 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*’.<sup>3</sup> ‘Tithonus’ was written in the same year, as a companion piece or ‘pendant’, to ‘Ulysses’,<sup>4</sup> as Tennyson tries to find a way of assuaging his grief, resulting in the two poems subsequently being viewed as a pair.<sup>5</sup> The poem takes the form of a dramatic monologue and is based on two sources – Homer’s *Odyssey* xi 100-37 and Dante’s *Inferno* xxxvi 90ff – with Dante regarded as the more important of the two,<sup>6</sup> and recounts Ulysses’ last, fatal voyage. Christopher Decker points out, however, that the poem takes place ‘at some indefinite point in time between the end of the events recounted in the *Odyssey* and the final voyage described, in another analepsis, by Ulysses in Canto 26 of the *Inferno*’.<sup>7</sup>

‘Ulysses’ attracted much critical attention at the time of its publication and has continued to do so since, although its speaker, and its primary message about the ‘need of going forward’, have not been viewed without irony in recent years: Christopher Ricks, in a much quoted reading, points out how Ulysses’ sense of steely determination is undermined by his lack of use of the future tense.<sup>8</sup> The poem has also been viewed as articulating a ‘Romantic religion, a structure of transcendence without a grounding dogma [which] secularizes the patterns of earlier Christian psychology’,<sup>9</sup> and as propounding a proto-imperialist agenda: according to Alan Sinfield, ‘Ulysses, like Tennyson and Columbus, takes

with him the dominant language of the world and imposes its cultural requirements wherever he goes'.<sup>10</sup>

The poem self-consciously alludes to several prior texts that help to make up its composition. Allusion refers to a form of citation which is within the control of the author or poet,<sup>11</sup> although the division between the consciously allusive and the unconsciously intertextual or echoic can sometimes seem like a desert of shifting sand, ready to absorb the unwary. The 'desert' can be negotiated by the reader, however, in whose hands interpretation of the work ultimately rests:<sup>12</sup> Ricks, in his edition of Tennyson's poems, favours an allusive reading of the poem, citing possible allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the 'sleep and feed' of line 5,<sup>13</sup> *The Tempest* in the 'vext sea' of line 11,<sup>14</sup> *Troilus and Cressida* in the 'rust unburnished' of line 23,<sup>15</sup> as well as to Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* (1818) in the 'dim sea' of lines 11-12.<sup>16</sup> Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., also points to how 'Ulysses' shares its 'something more' (l. 27) with Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey',<sup>17</sup> as it does the 'eternal silence' of line 24 with the 'Intimations' Ode's own 'eternal Silence' (IX. l. 160),<sup>18</sup> the latter of which is 'especially germane to Tennyson's purpose in "Ulysses", since there for once Wordsworth explicitly forswears the "simple creed" of unmediated participation in experience';<sup>19</sup> similarly, 'Tennyson's "feeling about the need of going forward" [...] answers very closely to Wordsworth's "We will grieve not, rather find / Strength in what remains behind"' from the 'Intimations' Ode.<sup>20</sup> As Tucker concludes, 'the verbal echo urges the comparison upon us, and I suspect it does so with Tennyson's blessing'.<sup>21</sup>

Tucker mentions, too, how the rhythm and syntax of lines 55-56 of the poem, with their 'long day' that wanes, echo to Shelley's *Adonais* (1821) and 'The soft sky [that] smiles, – the low wind [that] whispers near'.<sup>22</sup> Michael O'Neill, expanding on the Shelleyan allusions Tucker 'sensitively hears' in the text,<sup>23</sup> advocates that 'The Victorian poet both chastens Romantic longing and suggests that his own temperament's and era's would-be stoic

awareness that “that which we are, we are” (l. 67) lurked in the poetry of a precursor whose sight seemed forever set on what was “yet to be” (*Prometheus Unbound*, III. iii. 56).<sup>24</sup>

Decker, meanwhile, foregrounds the Shakespearean allusions in the poem, seeing them as enabling Tennyson to express ‘his desire to believe in spiritual survival by invoking and blessing the consubstantial presence of an absent precursor within the pale of a new poem’.<sup>25</sup>

But the poem also contains a superfluity of intertextual, or unconscious echoes, of Wordsworth’s poetry, an area of investigation generally eschewed by previous critics in favour of what can be claimed as conscious borrowings. Despite the allusions to ‘Tintern Abbey’ and the ‘Intimations’ Ode, the poem is not regarded as overtly Wordsworthian, unlike its companion piece, ‘Tithonus’, which shares some of the themes of Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’ (1798), with its sense of a self functioning in time, the very sense of self that Tennyson explores in his earlier ‘Tears, Idle Tears’ (1847). ‘Ulysses’ contains many more ‘borrowings’ from Wordsworth’s poetry than those listed above, nonetheless, including from ‘Tintern Abbey’ and the ‘Intimations’ Ode, but these are unconscious or unacknowledged borrowings, as they do not function under the direct control of the poet and are not used to effect the movement or development of the poem; rather, the unconscious inscriptions the poem contains are woven into a skein within the text without the poet’s knowledge or conscious agreement. Intertextual citations from ‘Tintern Abbey’, *An Evening Walk* (1793) and the ‘Intimations’ Ode (1807), as well as other Wordsworth poems, transect the poem, providing an alternative commentary to the one the poem ostensibly supports, as well as pushing the poem in directions of which the poet is unaware. They compromise the poem’s meaning, or at least give it a meaning different from the one the poet might have intended, or readers ‘read’ from it. This makes ‘Ulysses’ unconsciously, as well as consciously, Wordsworthian, with the unconscious elements revising Wordsworth as much as they inscribe him.

Interestingly, the poem is also revising Hallam's own unconscious inscription of Wordsworth in his 1829 poem, 'Timbuctoo'. Both Tennyson and Hallam competed for the 1829 University of Cambridge Chancellor's Prize Poem prize, based on the famed Saharan city of Timbuktu, with Tennyson's poem securing the coveted medal.<sup>26</sup> Each of these poems engages with the 'city of the imagination',<sup>27</sup> although Tennyson's poem concludes with an acknowledgement that the city will 'lose its power in the world'.<sup>28</sup> Hallam's 'Timbuctoo' alludes to Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' and 'Intimations' Ode in its exploration of imaginative transcendence, but, like 'Ulysses', involuntarily cites Wordsworth, too. Hearing a double intertextual echo, 'Ulysses' picks up Hallam's poem's Wordsworthian inscriptions and reworks them, exposing a little explored line of connection that exists between the two poems.

### **'Ulysses': Weaving a Rainbow**

The 'Intimations' Ode describes a process of imaginative loss and recovery, a loss precipitated in the poem by the speaker's alienation from nature through the growth of self-consciousness. The speaker describes how:

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore; –  
Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
By night or day,

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

(I. ll. 1-9)

Recompense for the speaker's visionary loss comes through 'the soothing thoughts that spring / Out of human suffering' (X. ll. 187-88), and 'In the faith that looks through death, / In years that bring the philosophic mind' (X. ll. 189-90). But there is also imaginative recompense to be found in 'the meanest flower that blows' (XI. l. 206) and the 'Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears' (XI. l. 207). Restitution is found in a return to nature, as the loss of imaginative power is assuaged through the very 'nature' from which it has felt itself estranged,<sup>29</sup> although there is also a suggestion that the restitution is qualified, as 'deep' embodies a sense that these compensatory thoughts are too profound fully to be recovered. In Wordsworth, however, growth nevertheless comes through a 'narrative' of loss,<sup>30</sup> 'Loss and grief serve as providential catalysts of his imagination'.<sup>31</sup>

The 'Intimations' Ode reverberates throughout 'Ulysses', bringing with it its account of imaginative loss and recovery, made evident through the intertextual references that make up the poem's principal moment of imaginative transcendence, namely, Ulysses' claim that 'all experience is an arch wherethrough / Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades / For ever and for ever when I move' (ll. 19-21). J. Pettigrew cites an allusion to 'the unpeopled world of Dante's *Inferno*' as a possible source for these lines,<sup>32</sup> while M. Alexander cites Hamlet's 'The undiscovered country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns' as an alternative source.<sup>33</sup> Ricks, in his gloss on the poem, concedes that, according to E. H. Duncan, the arch itself is 'not apparently indebted to Dante'.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, the arch complies with a familiar Romantic trope, the window casement, which Robert Douglas-Fairhurst describes as a 'textual frame that opens on to a parallel world of the imagination'.<sup>35</sup>

But there is also an involuntary use of ‘arch’ inscribed here, which is evocative of the ‘Intimations’ Ode and other, related Wordsworth poems. Rather than an architectural metaphor (Richard Cronin reveals how Edward Lear reincarnates Tennyson’s metaphor in solid Roman brick, for instance, in his watercolour, *The Campagna as seen through an Arch on the Appian Way*),<sup>36</sup> the arch corresponds to Wordsworth’s use of the rainbow as a Romantic trope for the imagination. Significantly, the Latin origin of ‘arch’ is *arcus* or bow (*OED*). Both the Romantics and the Victorians use the metaphor of the rainbow as means by which to draw attention to the imagination’s role in creating moments of personal, or even theological, transcendence: John Keble in ‘The Third Sunday After the Epiphany’, which appears in *The Christian Year* of 1826, uses the motif of the rainbow to emphasise the objective truth of the sacrament, but also to show how the act of ‘marking’ a rainbow in the sky reveals how theology itself is inseparable from the act of individual perception; Gerard Manley Hopkins, in an untitled poem of 1864, uses the rainbow to reveal how the mind finds inscapes of Christ in nature, of how ‘The rainbow shines, but only in the thought / Of him that looks’.<sup>37</sup>

The rainbow itself has a long history as a religious trope, but its ‘symbolic impact’ is rejected by the first generation of Romantic poets for whom its ‘sense of wonder’ evaporates:<sup>38</sup> Shelley sees the rainbow as an emblem of transience in ‘When the Lamp is Shattered’ and ‘Hymn to Intellectual Beauty’;<sup>39</sup> Byron mocks the notions of rainbow and covenant in ‘a blasphemous parody of *Queen Mab*’.<sup>40</sup> A second-generation Romantic poet like John Keats laments the way in which the discoveries of Newton ‘destroyed the poetry of the rainbow’ by ‘reducing it to the prismatic colours’.<sup>41</sup> ‘Few Victorian poets [however] were likely to take such pleasure in directly mocking the religious tradition upon which this symbolism had been based’.<sup>42</sup> Rather, poets like Tennyson and Robert Browning ‘simply employ the rainbow at times as a beautiful optical phenomenon’,<sup>43</sup> or ‘find some literary

device to insulate it from questions of belief’;<sup>44</sup> often, they simply ‘make use of the rainbow precisely because it is problematic’.<sup>45</sup> For example, Tennyson’s “The Two Voices” typifies a poem that draws upon the rainbow as emblem of hope and grace without having to admit literal belief in it’.<sup>46</sup>

In the ‘Intimations’ Ode, the rainbow is an object in nature which stimulates imaginative awareness in the speaker, yet is also a reminder of the fragility of the creative, imaginative act, which, like the rainbow itself, comes and goes. George P. Landow points to how Wordsworth ‘takes the fact that the rainbow comes and goes as a sign of our earthly state’,<sup>47</sup> but the rainbow bears an imaginative load also, which counteracts, yet at the same time supports, any religious symbolism it may have, as in the ‘Intimations’ Ode:

The Rainbow comes and goes,  
And lovely is the Rose,  
The Moon doth with delight  
Look round her when the heavens are bare,  
Waters on a starry night  
Are beautiful and fair;  
The sunshine is a glorious birth;  
But yet I know, where’er I go,  
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

(II. ll. 10-18)

The dead-beat, perfunctory rhythm of the opening lines here reflects the speaker’s acknowledgement that imaginative glory is mostly spent. In ‘MY heart leaps up’ (1807), Wordsworth writes of how ‘MY heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in the sky: / So

was it when my life began; / So is it now I am a man; / So be it when I shall grow old, / Or let me die!’ (ll. 1-6). The rainbow becomes a trope for the speaker’s imaginative power, a power with which the speaker was invested as child, and with which he hopes he will continue to be invested as an old man, as ‘The Child is father of the Man’ (l. 7). Associatively, imaginative power is linked to a heart that can leap with the ‘overflow of powerful feelings’,<sup>48</sup> the mainstay of Wordsworth’s poetics. Significantly, the last two lines of ‘MY heart leaps up’ – ‘And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety’ (ll. 8-9) – form an epigraph to the ‘Intimations’ Ode, emphasising the linkage between the two texts.

The arch of the rainbow is a somewhat submerged presence in both the ‘Intimations’ Ode and ‘MY heart leaps up’: Wordsworth writes of the ‘Rainbow’ in his own texts, but not their arch; Tennyson writes of the ‘arch’ in ‘Ulysses’, but not its bow. Wordsworth and Tennyson’s poems thus become two halves of a whole, with the ‘rainbow arch’ an emblematic trope transmitted between them. ‘Arch’, and its submerged (rain) bow, both permeate ‘Ulysses’, signifying the fragility of the transcendental imagination, and qualifying Ulysses’ search for imaginative immortality through his ‘arch’ of experience as a result of the intertextual arch of influence created between the two poems. Tennyson unconsciously ‘weaves’ a rainbow – in an intertextual sense – from the poetic works that precede his.<sup>49</sup>

Crucially, the rainbow in Wordsworth’s ‘TIS said that some have died for love’ (1800) is associated with ‘arch’ as imaginative projection, as it is in ‘FAIR Prime of life!’ (1827), making the connection drawn above between arch and rainbow in ‘Ulysses’ explicit. In ‘FAIR Prime of life!’ the ‘rainbow arch’ (l. 4) is supplementary to ‘Fancy’s errands’ (l. 5), and thereby directly connected to the creative imaginative, as ‘Fancy’, in the Wordsworthian sense, is an inferior faculty, working in support of the superior faculty, ‘imagination’:<sup>50</sup>

FAIR Prime of life! were it enough to gild



With ready sunbeams every straggling shower;  
And, if an unexpected cloud should lower,  
Swiftly thereon a rainbow arch to build  
For Fancy's errands, – then, from fields half-tilled  
Gathering green weeds to mix with poppy flower,  
Thee might thy Minions crown, and chant thy power,  
Unpitied by the wise, all censure stilled.

(ll. 1-8)

In 'TIS said that some have died for love', both 'arch' and 'rainbow' are related to death and imaginative loss, and to the loss of nature as an imaginative source. Wordsworth writes of a 'wretched man' (l. 4), who having slain his love opines:

Thou Eglantine, so bright with sunny showers,  
Proud as a rainbow spanning half the vale,  
Thou one fair shrub, oh! shed thy flowers,  
And stir not in the gale.  
For thus to see thee nodding in the air,  
To see thy arch thus stretch and bend,  
Thus rise and thus descend, –  
Disturbs me till the sight is more than I can bear.

(ll. 36-44)

The wretched man draws equivalence between the arch of the eglantine and the rainbow, projecting an image of the eglantine as standing proud as a rainbow spanning half the vale.

But the projection is also one of loss, as the eglantine as rainbow is an imaginative projection of his lost love: the lost love was once as alive and vital as the eglantine. He wishes preemptively to destroy the eglantine, to negate it before its own death, so that he does not have to be reminded of his loss. But by wishing to destroy the eglantine, he is, by association, also wishing to destroy his imaginative projection.

The projections of loss, death, and pre-emptive imaginative death, are unconsciously inscribed within the poem's use of 'arch' as rainbow in 'Ulysses', and serve to threaten Ulysses' imaginative project, which is already perturbed by potential imaginative loss, and the search for its recovery, through its intertextual linkage to the 'Intimations' Ode and 'MY heart leaps up'. Significantly, in Wordsworth's text, it is the wretched man for whom the rainbow's arch signifies death and imaginative loss: the speaker steps away from such loss to celebrate the 'happiness' he has 'known to-day' (l. 52). Imaginative and literal loss are contained or compartmentalised, with the speaker's own imaginative power remaining seemingly intact.

Other intertextual references to the 'Intimations' Ode also appear in 'Ulysses', working centrifugally around the sense of imaginative loss that has been introduced into the text through the intertextualisation of the 'rainbow arch': 'for ever' (X. l. 180) and the setting 'sun' (XI. l. 200) find their way into the poem, sitting alongside the 'eternal silence' of line 60. The intertextual use of 'for ever', where, in the 'Intimations' Ode, the speaker states, 'What though the radiance which was once so bright / Be now for ever taken from my sight' (X. ll. 179-80), colours Ulysses' imaginative projection through the arch of experience with loss: the 'margin' (l. 20) of the 'untravelling world' (l. 20) 'fades' (l. 20) 'For ever and for ever' (ll. 20-21). Wordsworth's speaker accepts that the radiance that was once so bright has been lost, but settles for a compensatory 'Strength in what remains behind' (X. l. 184). In 'Ulysses', the powerful finality of Wordsworth's 'for ever' is given added urgency by the

twin presence of another iambic ‘for ever’, making Ulysses’ untravelled imaginative world doubly out of reach. His desire ‘To sail beyond the sunset’ (l. 60) in search of imaginative immortality is thwarted by the inscription from the earlier poem of ‘the setting sun’ (l. 200) that takes ‘a sober colouring from an eye / That hath kept watch o’er man’s mortality’ (XI. ll. 201-02); by default, immortality inscribes mortality, but without the inscription of the ‘Intimations’ Ode’s replacement for imaginative loss to accompany it, the ‘faith that looks through death’ (X. l. 189) and ‘the human heart by which we live’ (XI. l. 204). Ulysses expresses a wish to move beyond the Wordsworthian setting sun, to move beyond the sunset, yet the Wordsworthian presences within the poem pull him back to the losses the poem of the past contains, but without a means by which to navigate them.

The lack of reparation for the Wordsworthian loss inscribed in the text is exemplified by Ulysses’ account of his previous ‘transcendental’ experience; the experience he recounts inhibits the ‘experience’ (l. 19) which is an arch through which ‘Gleams that untravelled world’ (l. 20). The text itemises Ulysses’ achievements in life, how he has ‘suffered greatly, both with those / That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when / Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades / Vext the dim sea’ (ll. 8-11). This is an inventory of the mind’s transfiguration of the objects around it, an epiphanic moment stored in memory,<sup>51</sup> just as the gleams that shimmer alluringly through the arch of experience are a projection of possible future transcendence. But the sense of the mind’s power of projection is undermined by Ulysses’ own telling: ‘dim’, in its *OED* sense of ‘not shining brightly’, weakens both Ulysses’ epiphanic moment of transcendence – imaginative transcendence is ‘dim’ rather than ‘luminous’ – and acts as a predicate for his projection of possible future transcendence through the arch of experience. ‘Dim’ also carries a sense of indistinct or limited perception and this sense of indistinctness and limitation both defines Ulysses’ past transcendental experience and inflects his projection of the transcendence he hopes to gain through his ‘arch’

of experience, as perception is a necessary marriage partner in the process of conception. The ‘untravelling world’ that gleams so becomingly through Ulysses’ ‘arch’ of experience is thus inscribed, and prescribed, with a sense of limitation and faded transcendence from Ulysses’ past, reinforced by the famously delayed rhythm of the lines.<sup>52</sup>

The limitations of the past also include the Wordsworthian past, as ‘dim’ also has a resonance in ‘Tintern Abbey’, where it is employed to evoke the mind’s power to reinvigorate the ‘dim and faint’ into a revived and consoling image: ‘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’ (ll. 58-60). But, whereas the picture the mind produced in ‘Tintern Abbey’ allows that dimness to revivify, the reader is aware that this is a process with finite possibilities for the speaker: Dorothy may well ‘forget / That on the banks of this delightful stream’ (l. 150) she and the speaker stood together. The inscription of ‘dim’ from ‘Tintern Abbey’, with its sense of potential loss, feeds into ‘Ulysses’ and forfeits Ulysses’ claim to past and future imaginative transcendence, overwriting the allusively Shelleyan ‘dim sea’.<sup>53</sup> Ulysses is made up of these past projected images – he is ‘a part of all that [he] has met’ (l. 18) – but his past epiphanic experience does not provide him with the capacity with which to recover from the visionary loss that has been introduced into the text through the intertextual process: the self has been fractured and the sublime ego with it. He will not be able ‘to store and hoard’ (l. 29) himself in the hope of producing future imaginative transcendence, to ‘sail beyond the sunset’ (l. 60) in a search of imaginative immortality, as he has no suitable store of transcendent experience on which to draw to furnish his journey.

Moreover, by repeating the use of ‘hoard’, the text is also equating Ulysses with the ‘savage race, / That hoard, and sleep, and feed’ (l. 5), a race, one would assume, whose savagery precludes them from achieving transcendental awareness.<sup>54</sup> In a continuation of the

same agricultural imagery, Ulysses' voyage of discovery will not 'yield' (l. 70) the imaginative immortality he seeks. There can be no recovery from visionary failure, as there is in the 'Intimations' Ode, as there is no cohesive self on which to base this recovery: the past revives only broken images, which cannot sustain the self in the present or the future. This is the same disjunction between self and other that Wordsworth describes in 'Tintern Abbey'; yet, in 'Tintern Abbey', there is a synergy between these past and present selves, a stable identity or unity of self that can accommodate the shift in register.

And it is only on the self that Ulysses can rely: Wordsworth's texts, the 'Intimations' Ode included, are based on an extreme individualism, where it is the self that 'creates' transcendence, and the self, by association, that recovers from transcendental loss. In 'Ulysses', the reliance on the priority of the self is seen to fail, and when the self fails, all fails. Through Ulysses' fractured epiphany, then, the text is exposing the Wordsworthian over-reliance on the self on which visionary transcendence is premised. There can be no imaginative recompense in nature – in the equivalent 'meanest flower that blows' (XI. l. 206), or in the tender 'human heart' (XI. l. 204) – as the self is incapable of assuaging its loss. As a result of the unconscious inscription in the text, Ulysses' journey is not one of personal growth through loss, but one inhibited by the self and essentially over before it has begun.

'Dim' also intertextualises *An Evening Walk*, where it forms part of the mind's descent into visionary darkness: the men whom the speaker sees at work in the quarry are 'dim between the lofty cliffs' (l. 164). But if *An Evening Walk*'s visionary loss is intertextualised in the text, as with the 'Intimations' Ode, the imaginative recovery attached to this loss in Wordsworth's poem is not. The language of *An Evening Walk* is woven into the text on several levels: the swan's 'arch' (l. 219) underpins Ulysses' arch of transcendence, and inscribes it with death, making Ulysses' arch not a portal to transcendence, but a portal to death itself. The temporary loss of the imagination in the poem is emblematised in the image

of the swan, an image ordinarily associated with longevity,<sup>55</sup> but whose associations with long life are subverted in the text by its associations with death. The swan's sense of graceful pride is destabilised in the poem by the envisioned death of the swan's offspring. The speaker foresees a time when, as part of the natural cycle, the female swan and her brood will meet their fate: 'when the sleety showers her path assail, / And like a torrent roars the headstrong gale; / No more her breath can thaw their fingers cold; / Their frozen arms her neck no more can fold, / Weak roof a cowering form two babes to shield, / And faint the fire a dying heart can yield!' (ll. 269-74). The swans' imagined decline precedes, and contributes to, the speaker's descent into imaginative gloom. Similarly, the lake that like a 'burnished mirror glows' (l. 125) also inscribes loss into Ulysses' desire not to 'rust unburnished' (l. 23) on the shore, unconsciously dislocating the 'rusty mail' of *Troilus and Cressida* that is the suggested allusive source for the lines.<sup>56</sup>

Ulysses' 'Gleams' (l. 20) through his arch of experience also unconsciously inscribe both the imaginary 'gleams' (l. 294) of the imagination's descent into darkness in *An Evening Walk* and, seemingly, its recovery from that darkness (l. 360). The use of gleams in 'Ulysses' suggests the pattern of recovery in *An Evening Walk* is to be replicated, with the imagination redeemed from its precipitous decline, as 'Gleams' is used as a verb in the text, disseminating a sense of 'shining brightly with reflected light' (*OED*). In Wordsworth, 'gleam' is often used as a noun, where it encapsulates a sense of loss, as it can only ever be a 'faint and brief light' (*OED*): the very gleams of 'Tintern Abbey's' 'gleams of half-extinguished thought' (l. 58) and the 'Intimations' Ode's 'visionary gleam' (l. 56) contain an incipient loss, therefore, a loss which Wordsworth attempts to deflect through sublimation or displacement. Similarly, the imagination's loss of power in *An Evening Walk* is described as a 'gleam' that is 'sullen' (l. 204). In 'Ulysses', however, the inscription of 'gleam' as a verb proposes that the loss at the heart of the Wordsworthian gleam has been overridden, with 'faintness' being replaced

with a sense of ‘shining brightly’. The use of the present tense in ‘gleams’ in the text also implies a sense of continuity, of an unbroken trajectory of imaginative transcendence running from past, to present, to future. Significantly, Wordsworth switches back from using gleam as a noun in *An Evening Walk*, when describing the imagination’s descent into darkness, to using it as a verb at the close of the poem, where its sense of ‘shining brightly’ underpins the sense of recovery the speaker has undergone after his momentary loss of imaginative power: the ‘azure tide’ (l. 360) ‘gleams’ (l. 360) in the speaker’s imagination.

However, the use of ‘gleams’, in its sense of ‘shining brightly’, is destabilised in ‘Ulysses’. Confirmation of this comes with Ulysses’ account of the start of his journey in search of imaginative immortality. Confidently, he says: ‘There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail: / There gloom the dark broad seas’ (ll. 44-45). The phrase ‘There gloom the dark broad seas’, with its demonstrative (and deictic) ‘There’, indicates that this is an imaginative projection from Ulysses’ own mind, but the phrase also carries intimations of darkness, of the ‘dark passages’ Keats observes in Wordsworth’s poetry,<sup>57</sup> which implies that the projection is replete with the darkness to which the Wordsworthian imagination can be subject. Similarly, ‘gloom’ links the text to *An Evening Walk*’s darkness and temporary loss of imaginative power. In line 318, as has been made clear, the speaker refers to ‘The soft gloom deepening on the tranquil mind’. This sense of ‘gloom’ feeds into Ulysses’ imaginative projection, disrupting his projection of future imaginative transcendence with a sense of failing imaginative power.

However, in *An Evening Walk* there is a sense that the loss of power is temporary only or can be mitigated, emphasised here through the use of the adjective ‘soft’, but there is no such sense of redemption in ‘Ulysses’, underlined by the repetition of hard consonants in ‘gloom’, ‘dark’, and ‘broad’. Equally, the use of assonance, and the substitution of spondaic for iambic feet in the line – as in ‘dark broad’ (l. 45) – creates a sense of slowness, which,

rather than creating a beguiling, ‘hypnotic rhythm’,<sup>58</sup> helps to accentuate Ulysses’ imaginative torpor and failing imaginative power. The use of ‘gloom’ as a verb in the text is also unsettled, as any sense of energy contained in the verb itself is inhibited by this sense of developing imaginative fatigue. The text, in effect, rewrites *An Evening Walk*, as the use of ‘gleams’ and ‘gloom’ is transposed: in *An Evening Walk* imaginative gloom is replaced by active gleams of thought, which signal the recovery of the imagination, and its primacy over nature; in ‘Ulysses’, the process is reversed, as Ulysses’ expectant gleams are supplanted by imaginative ‘gloom’. The recovery of the imagination’s power over nature that takes place in *An Evening Walk* is superseded by an imagination that is losing its power: imaginative recovery is replaced with the loss of the transcendental imagination. Moreover, any hope of the self-growth that develops through Wordsworthian darkness is truncated.<sup>59</sup>

Significantly, in ‘Ulysses’ the ‘eye’ is suppressed, serving to underline the loss of imaginative power taking place in the text, as the eye is integral to the transcendental process: in ‘Tintern Abbey’, it is the eye and ear that produce thoughts that revive, and it is Dorothy’s eyes in which Wordsworth hopes to see his moments of transcendence sustained: the speaker describes ‘the mighty world / Of eye, and ear’ (ll. 105-6), and the ‘gleams’ he hopes to catch from Dorothy’s ‘wild eyes’ (l. 148). In *An Evening Walk* and the ‘Intimations’ Ode, the eye is integral to the visionary process: the eye ‘reposes’ (l. 70) in *An Evening Walk*, for instance, and in the ‘Intimations’ Ode, the speaker describes ‘every common sight’ (I. l. 2), lamenting ‘The things which I have seen I now can see no more’ (I. l. 9).

In ‘Ulysses’, the ear is acoustically manifest: the ‘plains’ of ‘windy Troy’ are ringing (l. 17); there are ‘many voices’ (l. 56) moaning in the deep. The emphasis on sound replicates the pattern in *An Evening Walk*, where sound comes to compensate for the temporary loss of sight.<sup>60</sup> It is the ‘eye’ which is significant by its absence in ‘Ulysses’, an absence which prevents the imaginative process from fully functioning. The ear’s loss of its partner in



conception underpins the failing power of the transcendental imagination, and the transcendental self on which that transcendence is based, effected in the text through the revisions of the 'Intimations' Ode and *An Evening Walk*. At the same time, the ear is a reminder of the intertextual echo at work in the poem, which through its inscription of words like 'gleams' (l. 20) and 'gloom' (l. 45), creates its own patterning of assonantal and alliterative sound, complementing, or even subverting, Tennyson's own celebrated poetic 'ear'.<sup>61</sup>

Interestingly, Ulysses' loss of visionary power equates to Freud's notion of the lost 'love-object':<sup>62</sup> Ulysses can be seen to refuse the loss of the imagination and to absorb the lost love-object – the imagination – in the ego in defiance of its death or disappearance. According to Freud, the love-object is eaten in order to imprison it within the self: 'It may assimilate this object, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libido development, may do so by eating it'.<sup>63</sup> Yet 'the object, once incorporated, preys upon the subject in return until the latter is "totally impoverished"'. Thus the ego, like a healthy savage, gobbles up the object in one gulp, but the object behaves like the stealthy vampires of the *fin de siècle*, substituting nightly sucking for the cannibal's almighty bolt'.<sup>64</sup> The lost object takes over the ego, in an 'internal struggle', in 'which the ego attacks itself as a stand-in for the beloved object'.<sup>65</sup> However, 'in order to be lost the object must be looked for; it is the seeking that establishes its absence'.<sup>66</sup> Ulysses, from this perspective, goes in search, not of immortality, but of the lost object, which is the Wordsworthian imagination. He has eaten the object, as it were, emphasised by the text's copious food imagery, and symbolised by his 'hungry heart' (l. 12). He is the consumed rather than the consumer, however, setting off in search of that which can never be found.

Nevertheless, if 'Ulysses' rewrites Wordsworthian imaginative sublimation as loss, then it also confirms Wordsworthian imaginative plenitude as loss by confirming the loss in

the poem, 'I WANDERED lonely as a cloud' (1807). In Wordsworth, as with the other Romantics, 'epiphany and loss [are glimpsed] in the same moment of vision',<sup>67</sup> although this loss is often not foregrounded in Wordsworth. In 'I WANDERED lonely as a cloud', the speaker is able to revive memories of the past to sustain him in the present: the daffodils he sees standing beside the lake are 'Continuous as the stars that shine / And twinkle on the milky way' (ll. 7-8) and 'For oft, when on my couch I lie / In vacant or in pensive mood, / They flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude; / And then my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the daffodils' (ll. 19-24). 'Twinkle' has a place in 'Ulysses', which would suggest a similar level of imaginative renewal: 'The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks: / The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep / Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends, / 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world' (ll. 54-57). Lights 'twinkle', the slow moon 'climbs', the deep 'moans' round. The lines pulsate with a buoyant (Wordsworthian) imaginative energy, rather than with the Shelleyan rhythms of 'ardent impatience'.<sup>68</sup>

The possibility of imaginative renewal in 'Ulysses' is thwarted by Ulysses' 'dim sea' epiphany, however, which suggests that Ulysses is not able to muster images from the past to sustain him in the future in the way that Wordsworth's speaker can: the sparkling 'twinkle' is 'dimmed' by its own nexus of Wordsworthian inscription. The use of assonance and spondaic feet in the lines quoted confirms this, as 'long day' and 'slow moon' drag the rhythm of the speech, tangling any imaginative vitality they contain in belatedness. By contrast, the jaunty iambic tetrameter of Wordsworth's poem complements the joyous 'wealth' (l. 18) of the imaginary process. The focus on 'eye' in Wordsworth's poem – 'Ten thousand' daffodils at a 'glance' (l. 11) 'flash upon that inward eye' (l. 21) – places a spotlight on the importance of perception to the process of conception, contrasting sharply with the eye's absence in 'Ulysses'.

The failure of the imagination to shine and to renew itself is confirmed in the text by the intertextualisation of ‘margin’. ‘Margin’ has a primary role in ‘I WANDERED lonely as a cloud’, where it is associated with the ‘golden daffodils’ (l. 4), which ‘stretched in never-ending line / Along the margin of a bay’ (ll. 9-10); the speaker’s faith in imaginative renewal and continuity is attendant upon the daffodils’ power over him, although ‘margin’ suggests limit, as if there were a limit to the imaginative sustenance the speaker can expect. In ‘Ulysses’, the sense of limit is foregrounded by the application of ‘fades’ to the margin; ‘fades’ is freighted with an actual sense of fading, but also bears the implications of imaginative loss from its linguistic imprints from the ‘Intimations’ Ode: ‘The Youth, who daily farther from the east / Must travel, still is Nature’s Priest, / And by the vision splendid / Is on his way attended; / At length the Man perceives it die away, / And fade into the light of common day’ (V. ll. 71-76). The ‘vision splendid’ may ‘fade into the light of common day’ once the Youth becomes a Man, of course, as compensation can be found in the poem through the process of personal maturation through loss. The transcription of ‘fade’ into ‘fades’ (l. 20) in ‘Ulysses’ – the ‘margin’ of Ulysses’ ‘untravelling world’ ‘fades’ the more he moves – immerses Ulysses’ hopes of imaginative transcendence in, paradoxically, an active sense of fading, of dying away, compromising both any hope of growth and his quest to ‘sail beyond the sunset’ (l. 60).

Interestingly, the pun on the use of ‘margin’ – as in the margin of a text – emphasises that the revisionary project with which the text is involved is also a textual one, echoing the way in which *The Prelude*’s ‘spots of time’ (XII. l. 208) and ‘renovating virtue’ (XII. l. 210) abide among certain ‘*passages of life*’ (emphasis added).<sup>69</sup>

Significantly, the poem inscribes notions of death from Wordsworth in order to underwrite the sense of imaginative loss being established in the text, which, in turn, confirm the suggested imaginative losses in Wordsworth’s poems themselves. Ulysses describes

himself as ‘this gray spirit yearning in desire / To follow knowledge like a sinking star, / Beyond the utmost bound of human thought’ (ll. 39-41). The adjective ‘sinking’ has been coupled with ‘star’ in one of Wordsworth’s untitled sonnets from the *Miscellaneous Sonnets* (1827), which begins ‘I WATCH, and long have watched, with calm regret’ (1819), as it has with other planetary objects like ‘moon’ in the untitled ballad, ‘STRANGE fits of passion have I known’ (1800), and ‘sun’ in the again untitled ‘IT is a beauteous evening, calm and free’ (1807). In each example, sinking is associated with death, and in ‘STRANGE fits of passion have I known’, specifically with the speaker’s inability imaginatively to transcend the boundary between life and death. In ‘I WATCH, and long have watched, with calm regret’, for example, the speaker draws a direct analogy between the ‘slowly-sinking star’ (l. 2) and human fate, where ‘We struggle with our fate, / While health, power, glory, from their height decline, / Depressed; and then extinguished: and our state, / In this, how different, lost Star, from thine, / That no to-morrow shall our beams re-store!’ (ll. 10-14). Wordsworth’s sinking star here is able to restore its power, whereas it is the fate of human power and authority to be extinguished, and not to have its ‘beams’ restored. In ‘STRANGE fits of passion have I known’, the ‘sinking moon’ (l. 15) is a symbol of death, acting as a luminous barrier between the mortal and immortal worlds,<sup>70</sup> and blocking the speaker’s ability imaginatively to access the immortal:

And now we reached the orchard-plot;  
And, as we climbed the hill,  
The sinking moon to Lucy’s cot  
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,

Kind Nature's gentlest boon!  
And all the while my eyes I kept  
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof  
He raised, and never stopped:  
When down behind the cottage roof,  
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide  
Into a Lover's head!  
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,  
"If Lucy should be dead!"

(ll. 13-28)

The association with death is intimately linked with Ulysses' project of imaginative transcendence, as the 'As though to breathe' section of the poem, which contains the adjectival 'sinking', comes immediately after its principal moment of putative transcendence: 'sinking star' is thus wedded to Ulysses' 'arch' of imaginative transcendence. The 'untravelling world' that gleams through the 'arch' of experience is compromised by the mind's inability imaginatively to transcend death, making Ulysses' desire to follow the promise of transcendental knowledge like a 'sinking star' a projection of death itself. His 'sinking star' is really a 'sinking moon', blocking his journey in search of imaginative transcendence. He describes himself as 'like a sinking star', and thus performs the same function in the text as the sinking moon of Wordsworth's poem (as well, of course, as a

fading celebrity, unable to recapture the status of the past), acting as a barrier between life and death rather than journeyman setting out imaginatively to conquer mortality. Like Ulysses, the speaker of Wordsworth's poem is himself a wayfarer, underlining the intertextual connections between the poems.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, Ulysses' description of the scene around him as he starts on his journey in search of imaginative immortality is delimited by the continuing presence of 'STRANGE fits of passion have I known', with the text making an implicit play upon the latter's 'moon': the 'dropped' moon' (l. 24) of Wordsworth's poem transforms into 'the slow moon [that] climbs' (l. 54), signifying that Tennyson's poem is forming a response to Wordsworth's; Ulysses' journey is predicated on a 'STRANGE fit of passion', in this sense. Both moons, whether dropping or climbing, act as barriers to the imagination. Any possibility of the barrier being partially withdrawn or halted – the moon is 'climbing' and so not yet fully in position – is negated by 'climbing's' pact with 'sinking' (l. 15), however: the speaker of the poem climbs the hill only to be confronted with the sinking moon which 'Came near, and nearer still' (l. 16). 'Ulysses', in effect, provides an answer to the question posed at the end of 'STRANGE fits of passion have I known': the speaker of Wordsworth's poem describes his premonitory fear of Lucy's death, stimulated by the sudden dropping of the moon, but ends the poem asking what "If Lucy should be dead!" (l. 28). The line can obviously be read as a statement of fact: is Lucy dead? But its conditional 'If' can also be interpreted as a questioning of whether, if Lucy should indeed be dead, will she survive death in the speaker's imagination? Wordsworth's poem does not provide an answer to this question; rather, it displaces the question, suggesting that the issue raised does not need to be answered, as the speaker's fear occurred only 'once' (l. 4) and was one of his passing 'fits of passion' (l. 1), although the presence of the barrier moon can be said to provide its own answer.<sup>72</sup> By confirming the

centrality of the sinking star and sinking moon, however, 'Ulysses' confirms that the imaginative barrier between life and death is more than a passing fit of passion.

A similar process is at work in Ulysses' description of himself as 'this gray spirit yearning in desire' (ll. 30-31), which reactivates the 'spirit' of 'A SLUMBER did my spirit seal'. In Wordsworth's poem, the speaker projects an unnamed 'She' (l. 3) as part of his imagination, as she becomes sealed within it as 'a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years' (ll. 3-4). By the second stanza, the speaker comes to accept that the beloved 'She' is lost to his imagination, as she is 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees' (ll. 7-8), although she retains a vitality through the daily actions of the earth, nonetheless. 'Ulysses' cements the 'spirit' of 'A SLUMBER's loss of imaginative power: the application of the adjective 'gray' to spirit, a carry-over from Ulysses' 'dim sea' epiphany, accentuates the fact that Ulysses is himself an attenuated imaginative essence, whose imaginative powers are enervated. This sense of imaginative depletion, in turn, is emphasised by the use of the third person in Ulysses' description of himself as 'this gray spirit', which serves to distance him from his already reduced imaginative capability.

### **Hallam's 'vision' of His Own**

If 'Ulysses' is intertextualising Wordsworthian imaginative loss, then it is also intertextualising Hallam intertextualising Wordsworthian imaginative loss; the continuum of losses finds a resting place in Tennyson's poem, however. Tennyson openly alludes to Hallam's prose and verse in *In Memoriam* and to Hallam's poem, *To J. M. G.* (1830), in 'Ulysses', according to Ricks,<sup>73</sup> but 'Ulysses' reveals how he is also unconsciously inscribing his friend's Cambridge medal submission, 'Timbuctoo', and its own unconscious inscriptions from Wordsworth.

Hallam's 'Timbuctoo' is heavily indebted to Wordsworth, although it carries Shelleyan influences, too.<sup>74</sup> The poem is prefaced by four lines from Wordsworth's 'Yarrow Unvisited' (1807), which sets the tone for the poem as a whole, with its notion of 'a vision of our own', and explicitly foregrounds the poem's allusive dependency on Wordsworth: 'Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown / It must, or we shall rue it; / We have a vision of our own: / Ah! why should we undo it?'.<sup>75</sup> Line 88 of the poem also alludes to the 'Intimations' Ode, where 'Lo! there hath passed away a glory of Youth / From this our world' (ll. 88-89) is constructed from line 18 of the 'Intimations' Ode and 'glory' (ll. 1. 18) that hath passed away from 'the earth' (ll. 1. 18); similarly, line 194, "'In which the affections gently lead us on'", is lifted *verbatim* from Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', line 42. But the poem also makes unconscious use of Wordsworth's poetry, which affects the direction its meaning takes.

While in Tennyson's 'Timbuctoo', 'the future of the imaginative life appears doomed',<sup>76</sup> Hallam adopts 'an unproblematised Romantic position concerning the redemptive role of the imagination' in his own poem',<sup>77</sup> enacting 'a typically Romantic programme of spiritual decline and recovery'.<sup>78</sup> The speaker in Hallam's poem nevertheless toys with the propensity of the transcendent imagination to fail. Describing the lost city of 'Timbuctoo', the speaker states: 'Imagination decked those unknown caves, / And vacant forests, and clear peaks of ice / With a transcendent beauty' (ll. 4-6). He then goes on to describe how:

In the last days a man arose, who knew  
 That ancient legend from his infancy.  
 Yea, visions on that child's emmarvailed view  
 Had flashed intuitive science; and his glee  
 Was lofty as his pensiveness, for both  
 Wore the bright colours of the thing to be!



But when his prime of life was come, the wrath  
     Of the cold world fell on him; it did thrill  
     His inmost self, but never quenched his faith.  
 Still to that faith he added search, and still,  
     As fevering with fond love of th' unknown shore,  
     From learning's fount he strove his thirst to fill.  
 But always Nature seemed to meet the power  
     Of his high mind, to aid, and to reward  
     His reverent hope with her sublimest lore.  
 Each sentiment that burned; each falsehood warred  
     Against and slain; each novel truth inwrought –  
     What were they but the living lamps that starred  
 His transit o'er the tremulous gloom of Thought?  
     More, and now more, their gathered brilliancy  
     On the one master notion sending out,  
 Which brooded ever o'er the passionate sea  
     Of his deep soul; but ah! too dimly seen,  
     And formless in its own immensity!

(ll. 40-63)

The sense of failing imaginative power achieved in the poem is underwritten by intertextual echoes of a number of Wordsworthian poems, which serve to underpin the loss of imaginative power taking place: 'tremulous' (l. 4, l. 109), and 'gloom' (l. 75, l. 177, l. 204, l. 318) have a parallel in *An Evening Walk*, where they are transmitters of the temporarily failing imagination, for instance. In line 318 of *An Evening Walk*, as has been made clear, the

speaker's failing visionary power is emblematised through 'gloom' of the forest, where the 'soft gloom' (l. 318) deepens on the 'tranquil mind' (l. 318); but the adjective 'soft' implies that the gloom can dissipate, or can be overcome, as indeed occurs. Of course, 'gloom' carries its own associations of darkness and diminishing power, which is accentuated by the definition of it as 'fading light' (*OED*). The poem also unconsciously cites 'dimly', with its sense of being dimly, or faintly, seen: Nature's 'living lamps' that starred the speaker's transit over the tremulous gloom of thought are 'too dimly seen'. 'Dim', as has been established, has a particular resonance in Tennyson's own poem where it destabilises Ulysses' store of epiphanic memory, but beyond that it also has a resonance in 'Tintern Abbey', where 'recognitions dim and faint' are revived by the 'picture of the mind' (l. 61) if only for a finite time. The mediation of imaginative loss, or potential loss, is unconsciously implanted in Hallam's poem through the web of citations, underpinning the speaker's account of a stalling imaginative power.

However, Hallam attempts to overwrite the sense of failing transcendent power that he himself establishes in the text: the speaker refers to how 'Last came the joy, when that phantasmal scene / Lay in full glory round his outward sense; / And who had scorned before in hatred keen / Refuged their baseness now: for no pretence / Could wean their souls from awe; they dared not doubt / That with them walked on earth a spirit intense' (ll. 64-69). He goes on to describe:

Thou fairy City, which the desert mound  
Encompasseth, thou alien from the mass  
Of human guilt, I would not wish thee found!  
Perchance thou art too pure, and dost surpass  
Too far amid th' Ideas ranged high

In the Eternal Reason's perfectness,  
To our deject and most imbased eye,  
To look unharmed on thy integrity,  
Symbol of Love, and Truth, and all that cannot die.

(ll. 112-20)

This sense of a City of the imagination, created out of the 'fairy', or fanciful, imagination is displaced by the unconscious echoes in the text, however, which continue the theme of failing power. 'Full glory', 'spirit intense', and the pureness of the City of the imagination are reminders of Wordsworth's imaginative losses in the threatened glory of the 'Intimations' Ode, the spirit of 'A SLUMBER did my spirit seal', and the 'purer mind' (l. 29) and 'purest thoughts' (l. 109) of 'Tintern Abbey'. Each in turn chips away at the imaginative City Hallam's speaker so lovingly constructs.

The poem ends with an exhortation for visionary imagination to continue to flourish: 'So be it ever! Ever may the mood / "In which the affections gently lead us on" / Be as thy sphere of visible life. The crowd, / The turmoil, and the countenance wan / Of slaves, the Power-inchanted, thou shalt flee, / And by the gentle heart be seen, and loved alone' (ll. 193-98). Hallam's quotation of 'Tintern Abbey's' 'affections [that] gently lead us on' is intended to support the corralling of the imagination with which the poem concludes, but the speaker (and the poet) are unconscious of the alternative meanings the quotation contains: the affections may not gently lead us on, and if they do, then they may simply lead into a void, a nothingness. They may simply 'lead us' on.

It is this encrypted doubt that 'Ulysses' borrows from Hallam's poem, as it confirms the loss at the heart of the Wordsworthian imaginative moment. Hallam's unconscious inscriptions – like 'tremulous', 'gloom' – are unconsciously picked up by Tennyson and

reworked. 'Ulysses' is intertextualising Hallam intertextualising Wordsworth and rewriting both, as Hallam's City of the imagination collapses. A prominent example of this is 'Ulysses's' use of 'gloom', which has a Wordsworthian provenance, as has been made clear, but which plays out unconsciously in Hallam's text, too, in the 'tremulous gloom of Thought' (l. 58). 'Ulysses' makes 'gloom' an active verb in the text – 'There gloom the dark broad seas' (l. 45) – which, paradoxically, gives its meaning of fading light and darkness a sense of agency that is missing in Hallam's poem, where it is used as a noun. In this sense, 'Ulysses' is reactivating the imaginative failure which Hallam's poem has subsequently overwritten as imaginative recovery. The fact that this sense of agency is itself immured in imaginative torpor through the use of assonance and prosodic experimentation, serves only to underline the imaginative failure that 'Ulysses' is writing into itself.

Another significant example of such rewriting is Hallam's metaphor of the 'passionate sea' (l. 61), which is reworked in 'Ulysses', where it becomes 'dim sea' (l. 11), replacing the earlier poem's use of it to evoke a sense of passionate energy with a film of dimness and failing power. Both uses of 'sea' – in 'Ulysses' and Hallam's 'Timbuctoo' – have a common denominator in the 'Intimations' Ode's 'immortal sea / Which brought us hither' (IX. ll. 167-68), where it is linked with the recompense the speaker finds in the 'truths that wake, / To perish never' (IX. l. 160). The imaginative recovery found in both Hallam and Wordsworth's poems is overridden in 'Ulysses', however, through a sea that remains resolutely 'dim'.

## **Conclusion**

'Ulysses' thus rewrites Hallam's reading of Wordsworthian imaginative loss as it does Wordsworth's, breaking the pattern of loss and recovery found in the earlier poet's work. The

poem does not follow Wordsworth in writing a narrative of imaginative loss as growth; rather, it is as if the poem were unconsciously acknowledging that loss is too high a price to pay for the growth that customarily accompanies Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence. Moreover, the transcendent self is disassembled in the text, making the growth of which Wordsworth writes unattainable. The distance routinely created between author and speaker within the monologue cannot shield Tennyson from the implications which arise from the poem's intertextual entrapment within the language of Wordsworthian transcendence, as the protection afforded by a fictive speaker is eroded by the very presence of the language thus inscribed: the universalist speaker Ulysses is stripped away to reveal the individualist poet, Tennyson, as the poem establishes itself as committed to preoccupations with the poet's concerns with the Wordsworthian imagination and its inability to redeem its own loss and, by association, the loss of Hallam through sustained imaginative connection and an imaginative transcendence of death. Such preoccupations compromise the performative nature of the monologue, although the intertextualisation of 'SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways' simultaneously strengthens its dramatic status and foregrounds its dependency on Wordsworth.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, the monologue contains more of the Tennysonian self than the poet could have anticipated; rather than the self-betrayal of the speaker, it is the author, and his personal fixation with the Wordsworthian transcendent imagination, who is betrayed.

Tennyson continues unconsciously to test the Wordsworthian imagination and its ability to allow him imaginatively to connect with Hallam, in *In Memoriam* (1850), a poem begun in 1833, and which he compares unfavourably with 'Ulysses' in terms of how much of himself it contains.<sup>80</sup> *In Memoriam* returns compulsively and nostalgically to Wordsworth through repeated verbal inscriptions in the text, which result in Tennyson revealing more of himself than his comments on the later poem would suggest. And, like 'Ulysses', *In Memoriam* is caught within a tangled web of Wordsworthian poetic language, attempting to

move forwards, but forever pulled back, revealing the cavernous depth of Tennyson's dependency on his poetic predecessor, Wordsworth.

## Notes

1. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1989), l. 19 (p. 142). All further references to the poem are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text.
2. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 138. Hallam died on 15 September 1833; on 1 October Tennyson was sent the news. As Ricks emphasises, no event in Tennyson's life 'was of greater importance'. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 331.
3. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 138. Ricks cites the comment as being made to James Knowles, *Nineteenth Century* xxxiii (1893): 182.
4. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 138.
5. The poems are linked in other ways, too: both are classical monologues; Ulysses can be seen as refusing to die, while Tithonus yearns for death; and both 'poems take their occasion from the movement of the sun and might be read as heavily ironized blank verse Pindaric odes to Evening and to Morning, respectively'. See Matthew Rowlinson, *Tennyson's Fixations: Psychoanalysis and the Topics of the Early Poetry* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994), p. 182, n. 2.
6. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 139.
7. Christopher Decker, 'Tennyson's Limitations', in *Tennyson Among the Poets: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst and Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 57-75 (p. 61).
8. Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 125.
9. Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 228.
10. Alan Sinfield, *Alfred Tennyson* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 53.

11. John Hollander confirms that allusion depends on ‘conscious intention’. See John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), p. 64.
12. Derrida maintains that language is a system of signs without ‘the referent or the transcendental signified: *There is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; *il n’y a pas de hors-texte*]’. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 158. See also ‘Introduction’, n. 24 and Chapter Three, n. 19.
13. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 141, n. 5.
14. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 141, n. 11.
15. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 142, n. 23.
16. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 141, n. 10-11.
17. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 225. The Wordsworth quotation, absorbed from ‘Tintern Abbey’'s ‘something far more deeply interfused’ is taken from *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, edited and with introductions and notes by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), l. 76 (p. 164). All subsequent references to Wordsworth’s poems are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text.
18. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 223.
19. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 223.
20. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 225.
21. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 225.
22. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 237.
23. Michael O’Neill, ‘The Wheels of Being: Tennyson and Shelley’, in *Tennyson Among the Poets*, pp. 181-98 (p. 193).



24. O'Neill, 'The Wheels of Being', p. 194.
25. Decker, 'Tennyson's Limitations', p. 75. Decker includes all of the poem's allusions in this, including the echo of Shelley's Count Cenci in line 43, where Ulysses says of his son, Telemachus, 'He works his work, I mine'. See Decker, 'Tennyson's Limitations', p. 70 and n. 17.
26. Aidan Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 8.
27. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 15.
28. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 15.
29. Stanley Cavell describes the ending of the 'Intimations' Ode as finding fulfilment in 'an ordinariness which a new ordinariness must replace'. See Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 71.
30. 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. 21.
31. O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air*, p. 108.
32. Quoted in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 142, n. 20-22.
33. Quoted in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 142, n. 20-22.
34. Quoted in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 142, n. 19.
35. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Tennyson', in *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. Michael O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 596-616 (p. 604).
36. Richard Cronin, 'Edward Lear and Tennyson's Nonsense', in *Tennyson Among the Poets*, pp. 259-75 (p. 269).

37. See *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. Mackenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), ll. 2-3 (p. 31). More detail is provided on Hopkins' ideas on inscape and the nature of perception in Chapter Five of the thesis.
38. George P. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images of Problematic Nature'. Available at <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/crisis/crisis3c.htm> [accessed 16 April 2013].
39. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
40. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
41. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
42. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
43. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
44. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
45. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
46. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
47. Landow, 'Rainbows: Problematic Images'.
48. 'Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems published, with an additional volume, under the title of "Lyrical Ballads"', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 734-41 (p. 735).
49. See Roland Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 159 and Chapter Two, n. 4, for the way in which the text is a woven fabric.
50. Wordsworth writes: '– Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal. – 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. In what manner Fancy ambitiously aims at a rivalry with Imagination, and Imagination stoops to work with the materials of Fancy, might be

illustrated from the compositions of all eloquent writers, whether in prose or verse; and chiefly from those of our own Country'. See 'Preface to the Edition of 1815', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 752-56 (p. 755).

51. Tucker also views this as an epiphany, claiming 'the prosody and syntax of this passage at length slide together, so the dramatic speaker Ulysses merges in lyric epiphany with the poet, imagining an empowered scene that mingles vexation with remoteness, menace with allure'. See *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 216.
52. The delayed rhythm of these lines caused Matthew Arnold to declare that the three lines themselves took up nearly as much time as a whole book of the *Iliad*. See Matthew Arnold, *On Translating Homer* (London: Routledge, 1905), p. 79.
53. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 141, n. 10-11 and n. 15 above.
54. Wordsworth sees the transcendental experience as unique to the artistic or literary classes, and not something in which the artisanal classes have the capacity to share. Paul Maltby has some valid things to say about how Wordsworth's 'spot of time' is the most 'eloquent testimony' to the artistic sensibility. See Paul Maltby, *The Visionary Moment: A Postmodern Critique* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 41.
55. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 585, n. 4. Ricks makes this observation in his gloss on 'Tithonus', where, of course, 'after many a summer dies the swan' (l. 4).
56. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 142, n. 23 and n. 14 above.
57. *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-21*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, p. 280.
58. W. David Shaw, *Tennyson's Style* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 87.

59. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, Foreword by Donald G. Marshall (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 139.
60. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 97.
61. T. S. Eliot legendarily compliments Tennyson on his fine poetic 'ear'. See T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), p. 239.
62. Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, with an Introduction by Maud Ellmann (1917; London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 203-18 (p. 205).
63. Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', pp. 209-10.
64. Maud Ellmann, 'Introduction', in *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, vii-xxvii (xxi).
65. Ellmann, 'Introduction', xxii.
66. Ellmann, 'Introduction', xxii.
67. Michael O'Neill, 'Yeats, Stevens, Rich, Bishop: Responses to Romantic Poetry', in *The Monstrous Debt: Modalities of Romantic Influence in Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. Damian Walford Davies and Richard Marggraf Turley, with a Foreword by Lucy Newlyn (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), pp. 143-62 (p. 147).
68. O'Neill, 'The Wheels of Being', p. 193.
69. See Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., 'Epiphany and Browning: Character Made Manifest', *PMLA*, 107 (October 1992): 1208-21 (p. 1210). Tucker sees in these lines from Wordsworth 'a gentle pun on "passages" (as pathways and as texts) [which] implies that writing is the medium where otherwise volatile spirits stay put for contemplation' (p. 1210). He claims that Wordsworth reads an 'epiphanic experience as a passage of

life' (p. 1210). Thomas Weiskel also draws attention to how Wordsworth's 'passages of life' are texts, suggesting that 'one reads these texts or signifiers by passing into and through them'. See Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 169.

70. Hartman, 'Retrospect 1971', in *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, xix.

71. Hartman, 'Retrospect 1971', in *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, xix.

72. O'Neill reminds us that Wordsworth's poems present 'both a question and an answer, but the answer is given in such a way that troubling aspects of the question are never wholly banished or repressed'. See Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 47.

73. See Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 181 and *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 145, n. 66-9.

74. Richard Cronin suggests that Hallam 'owns two masters' in the poem, Wordsworth and Shelley. 'Whenever he represents his ideal country "decked in the bright colours of the thing to be"', Hallam is Shelley's disciple. But the discovery of the lost city also figures for Hallam the contradictory and characteristically Wordsworthian truth that disillusion inevitably terminates all dreams of an ideal world, which is why he chose as its epigraph lines in which Wordsworth wryly acknowledges that Yarrow can remain a type of ideal beauty only for so long as he neglects to visit it'. See Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 150-51. Aidan Day also suggests Samuel Taylor Coleridge as an influence in the poem. See Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 12.

75. *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 37. All subsequent references to the poem will appear parenthetically

in the text. Note that in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, the first quoted line here ends with an exclamation mark. See l. 49 (p. 50).

76. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 20.

77. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, pp. 14-15.

78. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 14.

79. Michael O'Neill reminds us of this in relation to *Lyrical Ballads*. See Michael O'Neill, 'The Romantic Bequest: Arnold and Others', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 217-34 (p. 228).

80. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 138 and n. 3 above.

## Chapter Two

### **An Old Familiar Loss: Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and the Return to Wordsworth**

*In Memoriam*,<sup>1</sup> written in lament for Arthur Henry Hallam, dead from a brain haemorrhage at twenty-two, is concerned with absence, or rather with making an absence present. The poem, published anonymously in 1850, the year that saw both William Wordsworth's death and the posthumous publication of *The Prelude*, explores faith, God, and contemporary science in its attempt to come to terms with Hallam's unexpected death, and ends with the speaker's ostensible accommodation with all three. Yet, the text returns repeatedly and nostalgically to Wordsworth's language and poetry, as if it were returning to a familiar place as a form of stability or as a bulwark against the complicated issues raised by faith and science in the nineteenth century. These returns position imaginative transcendence through nature as an alternative to a doubtful faith – as T. S. Eliot notably says, the poem's faith is a 'poor thing', but 'its doubt is a very intense experience'<sup>2</sup> – and as a means by which restitution of the dead can be achieved; but the returns also serve as an antidote to the pressures of a scientific age that is eroding the individual and overwriting the sympathy that exists between mind and nature, and as a way of questioning the grounds on which Christian faith is built. The stanzaic form employed in the poem, a synecdoche of the movement of the poem itself, continually looks back on itself, lacking the commitment fully to move on and embrace the future, and the intertextual returns the text is conducting mirror this. But the poetic language to which the text returns does not bring stability or imaginative redemption, but rather confusion, uncertainty, and further doubt, producing instability in an already unstable text; the text maps Wordsworth's own insecurity and changing understanding of the role of nature and the imagination and their capacity to mitigate loss, locating losses both real and 'imagined' in the earlier poet's work.

The lyrical sections of the poem were written incrementally over a seventeen-year period, beginning immediately after the death of Hallam in 1833. Tennyson describes the process of writing the poem thus: 'The sections were written at many different places, and as the phases of our intercourse came to my memory and suggested them. I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole, or for publication, until I found that I had written so many'.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Tennyson's use of 'weaving' draws attention to the process of unconscious intertextual inscription taking place in the text, a process which functions beyond the poet's conscious manipulation of lyric for the purposes of narrative clarification. Roland Barthes reminds us that 'etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric',<sup>4</sup> an arrangement of words that are '*already read*';<sup>5</sup> this arrangement, Barthes makes clear, gives rise to a '*stereographic plurality*' of meanings,<sup>6</sup> none of which is managed by the author. The countless references to weaving in the poem are therefore a reminder of the poem's construction, of how it employs the traditional tropes of elegy – 'crucial images of weaving, of creating a fabric in the place of a void',<sup>7</sup> as Peter M. Sacks puts it – and of how it unconsciously weaves intertexts, words that are '*already read*', into its fabric. The already read embraces the already written, too, as weaving functions as an unconscious reminder of Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832) and the Lady's 'magic web'.<sup>8</sup>

In 1849, after, as he says, he found he had 'written so many', Tennyson drew the disparate parts of the poem together, creating an intratextual arrangement of 'Christmas lyrics' (XXVIII, LXXVIII, CIV, CV), which confer a sense of 'narrative movement', while simultaneously alerting the reader to 'the passing of time'.<sup>9</sup> But the intertextual weaving gives the poem another sense of unity, as the inter- and intratextual Wordsworthian presences produce a sense of cohesion, albeit one that functions beyond the purview of the poet. A weave creates a fabric full of empty spaces, however,<sup>10</sup> absences as well as presences, and



this creates an opposition that is tested in the poem; presence, to a large extent, can locate only an absence.

Hallam is buried near to Tintern Abbey in the Wye Valley, and Wordsworth's famous lyric of the same name, published in 1798, with its emphasis on past and present states, repetition and return, holds a particular fascination for Tennyson, standing as a template for some of his own work, such as 'Tears, Idle Tears' (1847) and 'Tithonus' (1860), relationships that are explored in more depth in Chapter Three, on 'Tithonus'. *In Memoriam*, not surprisingly, contains numerous allusions to 'Tintern Abbey', although it also alludes often and liberally to other writers and poets, including William Shakespeare, on whose sonnet sequence the poem is claimed to be in part based.<sup>11</sup> Allusion is recognisable by the level of authorial control at work in it, separating it from unconscious inscription, which operates outside of the author's control: Stephen Hinds, for instance, describes the process 'whereby alluding poets exert themselves to draw attention to the fact that they are alluding, and to reflect upon the nature of their allusive activity';<sup>12</sup> John Hollander suggests meanwhile that 'one cannot [...] allude unintentionally – an inadvertent allusion is a kind of solecism'.<sup>13</sup>

Christopher Ricks writes persuasively of the way in which the highly allusive echoes of previous poets in *In Memoriam* perpetuate 'an intimate world of private allusion',<sup>14</sup> citing Tennyson's allusion in 'On the bald street breaks the blank day' in section VII as an example, which he regards as furnished with a 'shield against misgivings' from the 'blank' of the 'Blank misgivings of a Creature' from the 'Intimations' Ode.<sup>15</sup> This reflective and exclusive allusiveness is distinct from the unconscious intertextual inscription at work in the poem, which also forms its own private world, a world of unrestricted unconscious association and affiliation. Moreover, elegy, alongside monologue, one of the major forms of Victorian poetry, behoves Tennyson to make public his thoughts on the death of Hallam, although the public, communal voice and the private experience did not cohere, a fact Tennyson openly

acknowledges, saying to James Knowles, friend and co-founder of the Metaphysical Society, ‘It’s too hopeful, this poem, more than I am myself’.<sup>16</sup> The intertextual inscriptions in the poem complicate the opposition between the private and the public, in their exposure of the unconscious, or private, determination of the text, and the layers of meaning they produce that lie beyond the intentionality of the poet. Nonetheless, the division between the allusive and intertextual is fluid and changeable, although the intertextual, ‘like any other aspect of poetic meaning, is always, in practice, something (re)constructed by the reader at the point of reception’.<sup>17</sup>

The ‘Tintern Abbey’-inspired allusions in the poem include the description of the Wye in section XIX;<sup>18</sup> the Arcadian walks in XXII and XXIII, which recall Wordsworth and Dorothy’s walks together in ‘Tintern Abbey’;<sup>19</sup> and the ‘living soul’ from ‘Tintern Abbey’ in section XCV, line 36. The allusive usage in the poem widens out to include other Wordsworthian poems, however, like the ‘Intimations’ Ode (1807), which is found in the ‘forgetting’ of XLIV, line 3,<sup>20</sup> as well as in the ‘blank’ of VII, as Ricks suggests, while yet other allusions pick up the ‘iron’ of Wordsworth’s *Guilt and Sorrow or Incidents Upon Salisbury Plain* (1842) in CVII, line 12,<sup>21</sup> or ‘they shape themselves’ in CXXIII, line 8 from *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815).<sup>22</sup> All of these allusions work in tandem with the trajectory of the poem, aligning themselves with the current of the poet’s thought and poetic practice. The latter allusion to the ‘clouds [that] shape themselves and go’ (CXXIII, l. 8), for instance, describes hills that shimmer into insubstantiality like that of Wordsworth’s dark pool in *The White Doe of Rylstone*, where ‘night insects in their play’ disturb the garden pool’s dark surface, causing it to break into ‘A thousand, thousand rings of light / That shape themselves and disappear / Almost as soon as seen’. The section of the poem from which these lines are taken is prefaced by ‘Ah! who could think that sadness here / Hath any sway? or pain, or fear?’ (ll. 962-63). The inclusion of the allusion suggests that Tennyson consciously cites

these lines in order to import a sense of how an imaginative connection to the earth can mitigate emotional loss, although the paralepsis of the lines hints at the opposite, of course. Tennyson is clearly aware of the potential imaginative mutability contained within Wordsworth's lines – 'The hills are shadows, and they flow / From form to form, and nothing stands; / They melt like mist, the solid lands, / Like clouds they shape themselves and go' (ll. 5-8) – as he deliberately overwrites their effects in lines 9-10 of CXXIII, with the speaker asserting, 'But in my spirit will I dwell, / And dream my dream, and hold it true'; in his spirit will he dwell rather than the hills, which are but shadows that melt like mist. The unconscious intertextual inscription which the poem contains allows no such overwriting, however, weaving the poem with a linguistic patterning that is ineffaceable and unalterable.

The poems contained within this unconscious matrix include 'Tintern Abbey' and the 'Intimations' Ode, whose presence in the text is thus both allusive and intertextual, but also include poems from the Wordsworthian canon, poems which are themselves elegies, concerned directly with the loss of a loved one or with the capacity of the mind imaginatively to recover from loss with the support of nature. In an echo of Tennyson's division of the poem into separate sections, this chapter is divided broadly into four parts, beginning with a discussion of section XCV, before moving on to analyses of sections XIX, CXXIX and CXXX, and sections LIV, LV, and LVI, before finally concluding with a discussion of the Epilogue and section I. This division, structured around the religious, pantheistic, and scientific aspects of the poem, is not prescriptive, as each part draws on intertextual references from other parts of the poem in support of its argument, and the conclusions drawn from each analysis apply to the poem as a whole rather than simply to the section under discussion.

In keeping with the methodology of the previous chapter, the chapter focuses on the unconscious, or involuntary, intertextual presences in the poem, presences that are distinct

from the allusive citations of the author. It acknowledges that the division between the intertextual and the allusive is indistinct, but maintains a separation between the two in favour of the former, based on the recognition that the readings it affords give rise to meanings that the poet does not sanction and effects he cannot direct. The terms ‘intertextual’ and ‘echo’ are used interchangeably throughout the chapter to suggest the unconscious, or inadvertent, use of language within the poem.<sup>23</sup>

The readings are contiguous with an existing critical body of study, but differentiate themselves from these prior readings by their exclusive focus on the unacknowledged language inscribed within the texts; those already-read words, as Barthes would have it, and an area of study largely ignored by critics in relation to the poem. This allows meanings to arise that would otherwise have remained hidden or suppressed, and for readings which amplify aspects of the poem, including the poet’s relationship to Wordsworth, which, hitherto, have been only partially explored.

### **‘The living soul was flashed on mine’**

Section XCV of *In Memoriam*, often regarded by critics as the climactic moment of the poem, describes the speaker’s momentary communion both with the past and with the dead Hallam. The section can be read by as embodying a numinously transcendent moment, although the moment’s psychological provenance has been noted,<sup>24</sup> as has its exploration of male same-sex love and friendship.<sup>25</sup> Isobel Armstrong claims, for instance, that the poet ‘achieves a visionary, longed-for union with the dead’,<sup>26</sup> Seamus Perry suggests that ‘the poem comes nearest to the *peripeteia* of classical elegy in section XCV, which describes a numinous communion while Tennyson is reading Hallam’s letters’.<sup>27</sup> Both Armstrong and Perry are aware, however, that the faith in this section is as tenuous as the flash of

‘numinous’ transcendence itself: Armstrong describes how the ‘intrinsic scepticism’ of *In Memoriam* ‘qualifies’ such an event;<sup>28</sup> Perry acknowledges how ‘the whole event is held within the tentative rule of a “seemed”’.<sup>29</sup> The speaker is himself uncertain of the experience, claiming ‘At length my trance / Was cancelled, stricken through with doubt’ (ll. 43-44), a cancellation which Matthew Rowlinson reads as textual, with the trance a passage struck through or ‘crossed out to be marked for deletion’,<sup>30</sup> a reading echoed by Sacks, who regards the trance erased as if ‘it were no more than a canceled page of script’.<sup>31</sup> Texts are not cancelled or deleted in this section, however, or indeed in the poem as a whole; rather, section XCV repeatedly inscribes the texts and language of Wordsworth’s poetry as it attempts to find an alternative to a feeble and flickering faith.

Joanna E. Rapf, like Perry, claims ‘that it is language’, the speaker’s reading of Hallam’s letters, and ‘not nature’ that ‘leads to the perception of another level of reality’ in section XCV.<sup>32</sup> Another level of reality is reached through the written word, but this is from the words brought unconsciously into the text, which position nature and the imagination at the centre of the transcendent experience. For example, in lines 37-40 the speaker describes the process of ‘numinous’ communion taking place: ‘And mine in this was wound, and whirled / About empyreal heights of thought, / And came on that which is, and caught / The deep pulsations of the world’. The idea of being ‘caught’ has a particular resonance here, as does ‘wound’: the speaker comes on that which is and catches the deep pulsations of the world, but the text and the speaker-poet are caught by a precursor text and a precursor poet, Wordsworth. ‘Caught’ inscribes the language of Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’; and the use of ‘wound’, with its suggestions of weaving, rehearses the intertextual inscription at work in the section and the poem at large. In ‘Tintern Abbey’, the speaker describes how ‘in thy voice I catch / The language of my former heart, and read / My former pleasures in the shooting lights / Of thy wild eyes’ (ll. 116-19), and goes on to claim that ‘If I should be where I no

more can hear / Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams / Of past existence – wilt thou then forget / That on the banks of his delightful stream / We stood together’ (ll. 146-51). Rather than the language of the written word, the language of ‘those fallen leaves which kept their green, / The noble letters of the dead’ (ll. 23-24), which ‘line by line’ (l. 33) and ‘word by word’ (l. 33) touch the speaker from the past, it is the language of the speaker’s ‘former heart’, a language that derives from the communion of eye and ear with nature, which catches hold in the poem, displacing the numinous with a momentary imaginative connection. Dorothy is a symbol of this process, as Wordsworth reads the language of nature in her eyes as she herself becomes a text.

But the words caught unconsciously in the text transmit hesitation and potential imaginative loss as much as imaginative certainty, destabilising the momentary imaginative communion achieved: the language is of the speaker’s *former* heart; Dorothy may well forget the speaker’s gleams of past existence that have been entrusted to her. The fallen leaves, in this sense, do not keep their green. ‘Tintern Abbey’, in its concern with imaginative survival after death, has ‘a distinctly elegiac and memorialising strain’, still carrying ‘some marks of the genre’ it transcends;<sup>33</sup> the text looks back to Wordsworth’s poem therefore as a poem much concerned with death and loss, but also with consolation, of finding recompense for that which has been lost.<sup>34</sup> The rhyme of ‘thought’ with ‘caught’ in lines 38-39 emphasises the connection to ‘Tintern Abbey’ and foregrounds this potentiality, as ‘thought’ in Wordsworth’s poem is simultaneously associated both with imaginative communion and its possible forfeiture: the speaker has ‘pleasing thoughts / That in this moment there is life and food / For future years’ (ll. 63-65), yet this ‘food’ for future years may not sustain the years that extend beyond the speaker’s death. Perry confirms how *In Memoriam*’s ‘verse entwines a moment of confirmation (in its middle couplet) with a lingering return (in its outer rhyme), so that each verse, whatever the sense of purpose with which it sets out, ends acoustically

haunted by the thought with which it began'.<sup>35</sup> Here, that confirmatory couplet endorses the rhyme of 'thought' and 'caught', locking them into cycles of imaginative loss and gain, which are themselves trapped within a whirling world of repetition from which there is no escape. Equally, the language of nature is an 'inarticulate' one, as Wordsworth admits in Book IV of *The Excursion* (1814), line 1207, with the capacity, like all language, 'to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the 'language of [the] former heart' inscribed into the poem can express only the metaphoricity of imaginative experience. As Rowlinson makes clear, 'Although metaphor is a trope, a swerve of the signifier away from the literal, it has the daunting effect of making the literal inconceivable except as the signifier's consumption or wearing away'.<sup>37</sup>

This sense of imaginative loss and dissolution is underpinned by the intertextualisation of the word 'deep' in line 40 of the section. 'Deep' is a deeply reverberative word in Wordsworth; 'deep' has important resonances in 'Tintern Abbey' and the 'Intimations' Ode, where it is associated with imaginative plenitude but also with imaginative vacancy; in the 'Intimations' Ode, for instance, the deep is 'eternal' (VII. l. 112), which the child, the 'best philosopher' (VII. l. 110), can 'read'st' (VII. l. 112), while the adult speaker finds recompense for his loss – of imagination and the childhood connection with nature – in 'the meanest flower that blows [which] can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears' (XI. ll. 206-7). 'Meanest' suggests a lack of generosity, a deliberate unwillingness to give; the imaginative redemption found in the meanest flower is partial, inhibited, withheld, too deep fully to be redeemed.<sup>38</sup> 'Deep' is most closely aligned with 'Tintern Abbey' in Tennyson's poem, however, through its syntactical connection to 'world'. The 'deep pulsations of the world' (l. 40) vibrate with the rhythm of 'Tintern Abbey's' 'sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused' (ll. 95-96), which induces in the speaker a love 'of all the mighty world' (l. 105). *In Memoriam's* 'deep pulsations of the world'

therefore embody ‘A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things’ (ll. 100-01) in Wordsworth’s world of mind and nature. Pulsation feeds into this sustaining rhythm, as it links to the sensations in ‘Tintern Abbey’ that are ‘Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart’ (l. 28), replicating the arterial beat of sensation of the former poem. Pulsations, too, create an echoing beat and this acts as a reminder of how ‘echo’ is a metaphor for the unconscious intertextual transmission of poetic influence taking place in the text.<sup>39</sup> This echoing pulse is again of the speaker’s former heart, however, and projects a defeat as well as a gain: the speaker urges Dorothy not to forget how they both stood together on the banks of the delightful stream (l. 151), and how he ‘so long / A worshipper of Nature, hither came / Unwearied in that service: rather say / With warmer love – oh! with far deeper zeal / Of holier love’ (ll. 151-55). The ‘far deeper zeal / Of holier love’ to which the speaker comes to nature reaches out to God, implicitly acknowledging that its imaginative faith is weaker than the holy love to which it draws comparison, although the lines can, of course, be read as revealing how the mind’s transcendence of nature can itself engender a sense of the divine. The former has a dual knock-on effect in Tennyson’s poem, as it suggests that the pantheism to which the text is constantly returning cannot act as a substitute for the holy love with which the speaker is struggling, while simultaneously strengthening or shoring up that same denuded faith. The ‘deep pulsations of the world’ are intrinsically unstable therefore, made more so by the poetic form through which they are expressed: a deep, pulsating, echoing metaphor, subject to the same swerve of the signifier away from the literal as in the ‘language of [the] former heart’.

‘Seeming’ and ‘seemed’ play into this sense of imaginative loss and dissolution in the section. Lines 34-36 read: ‘The dead man touched me from the past, / And all at once it seemed at last / The living soul was flashed on mine’. The ‘living soul’ to which the speaker refers is regarded by critics (Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., Rapf *et al*) as a direct allusion to ‘Tintern



Abbey’, where through ‘that serene and blessed mood’ (l. 41) we ‘are laid asleep / In body, and become a living soul’ (ll. 45-46). The allusive ‘living soul’ is incorporated into the poem by the poet as an expression of the ostensibly transcendent union that is taking place, and is given a sense of universality through Tennyson’s replacement of the original ‘his’ living soul with ‘the’ living soul.<sup>40</sup> But there is a dual process at work here – the allusive and the unconsciously intertextual. The intertextual inscriptions work insidiously, inflecting the poem with intimations of mortality rather than immortality. The movement from the allusive to the intertextual, imaginative hope to imaginative loss, is emblematised in the use of ‘seemed’, which is a characteristic Wordsworthian word. The Wordsworthian sense that things seem what they are inflects ‘the living soul’, which only seemed at last ‘flashed on mine’ (l. 36). But the use of ‘seemed’ is unambiguously Wordsworthian, as Wordsworth insists that ‘the appropriate business of poetry [is] to treat of things [...] not as they exist in themselves, but as they *seem* to exist to the senses, and to the passions’.<sup>41</sup> The use of ‘seemed’ therefore buttresses the doubt brought into the poem through the use of ‘caught’, ‘thought’ and the ‘deep pulsations of the world’, although this is in turn counterpointed by the use of ‘flashed’ which links to ‘I WANDERED lonely as a cloud’ (1807) and its flashes of remembered transcendence on the inward eye. The latter inscribes an alternative concept of imaginative continuity and renewal into the text, and suggests that the imaginative flash of ‘the living soul’ has sparked, and will continue to spark, on the speaker’s memory. However, Wordsworth’s poem is based on imaginative impression rather than imaginative projection, a fact Wordsworth himself openly acknowledges, saying: “‘the subject of these Stanzas is rather an elementary feeling and simple impression (approaching to the nature of an ocular spectrum) upon the imaginative faculty, than an *exertion* of it’”.<sup>42</sup> Paradoxically, then, the flash of ‘the living soul’ in section XCV is encrypted with the notion of a ‘casual’ impression upon the speaker’s soul,<sup>43</sup> introducing a sense of imaginative arbitrariness into the text: the

current, and any future, flash will occur only if the imagination receives a chance impression during a moment of ‘vacant or [...] pensive mood’ as in ‘I WANDERED lonely as a cloud’ (l. 20). Moreover, this randomness dilutes the universal applicability the poet introduces into the poem through the syntactical shift from the possessive adjective ‘his’ to the definite article in ‘the living soul’ itself. Such randomness can, of course, result in moments of imaginative power, ‘awful Power’, that is, that rise from ‘the mind’s abyss’, revealing, through a vivid ‘flash’, the ‘invisible world’ beyond (*The Prelude*, VI. ll. 594-602). *The Prelude* and *In Memoriam* share a publication year, with *In Memoriam* appearing in May 1850, two months before *The Prelude*; Tennyson’s poem nevertheless resonates with *The Prelude*’s moment of imaginative power through what John Hollander calls the ‘bidirectional quality’ of echo.<sup>44</sup> There is a sense that the flash of power *In Memoriam* anticipates is ‘awful’ as well as ‘awe–full’, however.

‘Touched’ is crucial in the lexis of loss, as it not only continues the inscription of imaginative loss and uncertainty into the poem, but replicates Wordsworth’s use of classical sources in his poetry.<sup>45</sup> Duncan Wu writes of how the thrice-waved hand in ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’ – ‘Now as we wander’d through the gloom / In black Helvellyn’s inmost womb / The spectre made a solemn stand, / Slow round my head thrice wav’d his hand, / And [ ? ] mine ear then swept his [?lyre] / That shriek’d terrific shrill and [?dire]’<sup>46</sup> – carries ‘the same inscrutable logic as Aeneas’ three attempts to embrace his dead father, Anchises, when he descends into the underworld in the *Aeneid* Book VI’.<sup>47</sup> ‘Hand’ here signals a departure but also acts as a metonym for the embrace that is to follow. More concretely, in the blank verse draft passage of *The Solitary*’s ‘impassioned apostrophe to his dead daughter’, ‘The Tuft of Primroses’, in *The Excursion*,<sup>48</sup> touching and embracing are directly associated, and both offer, ‘for a moment, the possibility of reclaiming the dead’:<sup>49</sup> the departing Child ‘That never never more shall be displaced / By the returning Substance, seen or touchd, / Seen by

mine eyes or clasped in my embrace'.<sup>50</sup> As Wu makes clear in his comments on the poem, 'it can be no accident that clasping in his arms is precisely what Orpheus had wanted to do with Eurydice, a desire painfully faithful to bereavement as it oscillates between incredulity at loss and the vain hope that the dead are not gone forever'.<sup>51</sup> Wordsworth's use of classical models, such as Orpheus' wish to return Eurydice to life, speaks 'powerfully of the desire to resuscitate the dead through the power of primitive, elemental forces in nature',<sup>52</sup> Virgil's tale itself is embedded within the tale of Aristaeus and his attempt to bring his bees back to life, an effect 'intensified by the pantheism that pervades his view of the natural world'.<sup>53</sup> In section XCV 'touch' carries a sense of touching as in being touched by something (the speaker is reached as in touched by the letters, word by word), and a sense of touching, as in something being touching or poignant. But it also implies touch in a tactile sense, as in by hand through an embrace. Hands feature frequently in the poem: in section 1, the speaker asks, 'But who shall so forecast the years / And find in loss a gain to match? / Or reach a hand through time to catch / The far-off interest of tears?' (ll. 6-8). For Perry, hands signal Hallam's bodily presence;<sup>54</sup> for Sacks, they are 'similar to the demand for empirical knowledge'.<sup>55</sup> The stress of the iambic tetrameter in line 34 of section XCV, however – 'dead', 'touched', 'from', 'past' – underlines the act of touching the dead through time that is taking place: 'dead touched from past'. The speaker and the dead Hallam in section XCV 'touch' in the underworld, achieving the contact Aeneas can attempt only in his triple *wave* of the hand; they touch hands through time. The 'living soul' (l. 36) also bears resemblance to the 'living man' of 'The Tuft of Primroses': 'Her cheek to change its colour was conveyed / From us to regions inaccessible / Where height or depth admits not the approach / Of living man though longing to pursue' (ll. 24-27). As Wu again makes clear, 'The living man who longs to pursue the dead is familiar from Wordsworth's classical education at Hawkshead, an echo of Aeneas and Orpheus'.<sup>56</sup> The positions of the living and the dead are reversed in

Tennyson's text, though, as the pursued becomes the pursuer: the dead, or rather 'living', man, Hallam, touches the speaker from the past, actively seeking out a connection with the present.

The classical connections here mirror that of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, where in 'Little Gidding II' the speaker 'caught the sudden look of some dead master',<sup>57</sup> as if he, the dead master, were alive, which, of course, he is if we accept that he is in the underworld. Sarah Annes Brown, for instance, suggests that Eliot's use of allusion in the poem is itself classical and is derived from the 'ancient epic motif of *katabasis* [whereby] a hero visits the dead and recognises former comrades, unearthing buried memories',<sup>58</sup> the '*locus classicus*' for which is Homer's account of Odysseus' descent to the underworld, where Odysseus meets a succession of 'shades', starting with 'Elpenor'.<sup>59</sup> The time of day – night, before the doubtful dawn (l. 49) breaks – in which the touching takes place in section XCV encapsulates the way in which *katabasis* is a 'Night Journey':<sup>60</sup> the reaching of hands through time takes place in the dark, lit only by the flash of 'the living soul'. However, as Wu points out, Wordsworth's classical models are 'tragic',<sup>61</sup> as the dead may be 'revisited' but not necessarily reclaimed:<sup>62</sup> 'Aeneas and Orpheus descend into the underworld as to re-experience *loss*' (emphasis added).<sup>63</sup> Significantly, in 'The Tuft of Primroses' restoration of the dead is 'impossible', and the 'consolation of an afterlife' denied:<sup>64</sup> all we have is 'the finality of death'.<sup>65</sup> In *In Memoriam*, too, the dead man touched the speaker from the past, but he can remain only lost in time, revisited but not reclaimed.

This sense of re-experiencing and revisiting loss contains echoes of Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper' (1807), which is predicated on the speaker's observation of the Reaper's perpetual revisiting of a sorrow that seemingly has no ending: 'Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain, / That has been, and may be again? / Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang / As if her song could have no ending' (ll. 23-26). The song of the Reaper herself can be

classified as textual as well as vocal,<sup>66</sup> which amplifies the intertextual transfer taking place in *In Memoriam*. Ian H. C. Kennedy sees section XCV as inverting classical elegy by separating Hallam from the speaker: he is a 'dead' man.<sup>67</sup> But the speaker is not separated as such from the dead man, but trapped in a continuous process of revisiting a loss or absence, emblematised by the cyclical return of the stanza itself.

'Touch' also features in the first stanza of Wordsworth's 'A SLUMBER did my spirit seal' (1800), where the loved one 'could not feel the touch of earthly years' (l. 4), and where there remains the prospect of imaginative communion with the dead before the movement toward death begins.<sup>68</sup> In 'Nutting' (1800), too, 'touch' is concerned both with the return of nature and the return of the dead: 'Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades / In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand / Touch – for there is a spirit in the woods' (ll. 54-56). This suggests that there is a spirit, a shade or ghost, in the woods of section XCV, glimmering amongst the white kine, quietly hinting at the return of the dead. This spirit is sacred, a *Numen in est*,<sup>69</sup> but it is also the spirit that is Hallam through his association with the language of the heart, awaiting his return. Lines 15-16 and lines 51-52 are repetitions of each other in the section and confirm this sense of return and reclamation, or at least suggest its possibility: 'The white kine glimmered, and the trees / Laid their dark arms about the field'. 'Glimmering' appears in *An Evening Walk* (1793), where it is associated with the grief of loss but also with the possible loss of the imaginative affiliation with nature: music steals round 'the glimmering deeps' (l. 303) and 'Lost in the thickened darkness glimmers hoar' (l. 312). The use of 'glimmers' in *An Evening Walk* occurs in a section of the poem when the imagination is lost to darkness. The imagination recovers in the poem, nonetheless; the speaker assuages his guilt, and is imaginatively reunited with his lost loved one. 'Glimmering' also refers back to 'There was a Boy' (1800), where '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' (ll. 2-6), which continues to immerse the moment in loss, providing parallels of the loss of Tennyson's own 'boy', Hallam.<sup>70</sup> This poem, too, is concerned with loss and grief, but, like *An Evening Walk*, finds mitigation for it in the imagination, this time in the 'silent memorial of the nameless protagonist',<sup>71</sup> grief here is not 'destructive', but evidence of 'creativity and imagination' and a symbol of the continuing life of the dead as an inspirational force,<sup>72</sup> an 'articulation' found in the first of the *Essays upon Epitaphs* in 1810, but also in an unfinished epitaph of 1798.<sup>73</sup>

The lines also encrypt another poem concerned with grief, 'Written in very early youth', which was published two years after 'There was a Boy', in 1802. This poem is again concerned with the imagination and its capacity, in its relationship with nature, to alleviate loss. 'Glimmering and kine' in section XCV relate directly to the poem intertextually: 'On the [ ] village Silence sets her seal, / And in the glimmering vale the last lights die; / The kine, obscurely seen, before me lie / Round the dim horse that crops his later meal / Scarce heard' (ll. 1-5).<sup>74</sup> This scene produces a 'timely slumber' (l. 5) which in turn produces 'a strange harmony, / Home-felt and home-created' (ll. 7-8) that 'seems to heal / That grief for which my senses still supply / Fresh food' (ll. 8-10). Grief is healed through the imagination, through that 'strange harmony' where the speaker is temporarily 'at peace' (l. 11), but the poem also implicitly restores 'what has been lost'.<sup>75</sup> Section XCV, interestingly, inscribes Wordsworth's poem linguistically and syntactically: the kine are obscurely seen in Wordsworth's poem; Tennyson's glimmer in and out of view; the 'i' from Wordsworth's 'glimmering', 'light', 'die' and 'lie' are transcribed into 'white kine glimmered', encapsulating a sense of trembling imaginative possibility. The repetition of 'i' also produces a slowing effect, replicating the sense of silence and stasis in Wordsworth's poem. These effects occur in the lines that act as a frame to the moment of communion in section XCV – lines 15-16 and 52-53 – thereby reinforcing the idea that nature holds the key to the

restoration of the dead. The play of light and dark in the luminously glimmering kine and the ‘dark arms about the field’ (l. 52) unsettle this idea, however, as the ‘dark arms’ contain echoes of the hands that reach through time, placing the text back in the position of revisiting a *katabatic* loss.

The intertextual inscription of Wordsworth’s language in section XCV therefore has an ambiguous effect, suggesting, yet denying, the possibility of imaginative immortality through nature. The lights of the dawn to which the text implacably moves after its night journey are ‘dim’ (l. 63), dim with the refulgent early morning light, but dim also with the ‘many recognitions dim and faint’ of ‘Tintern Abbey’ (l. 59). The intertextual inscriptions destabilise and stabilise the text – destabilise an inherently weak faith by their very presence, and stabilise the text in the familiar transcendentalism of the past. But the latter provides a loose foothold, as its presence signals loss and dissolution as much as imaginative connection. The poem does not sanction growth through loss, or endorse the recompense that ‘Tintern Abbey’ ostensibly finds; rather, it amplifies the loss which Wordsworth’s text contains. Wordsworth’s language brings section XCV back to nature, if it ever left it, but does not provide a stable resting place for a faith stricken through with doubt.

The ambiguities of Wordsworthian pantheism tug away at the text’s surface commitment to theistic or Christian faith at various points in the poem, nevertheless, as the text attempts to find the succour it so desperately needs. In section XXXVI, the speaker writes of the wonder and durability of faith: ‘And so the Word had breath, and wrought / With human hands the creed of creeds / In loveliness of perfect deeds, / More strong than all poetic thought; / Which he may read that binds the sheaf, / Or builds the house, or digs the grave, / And those wild eyes that watch the wave / In roarings round the coral reef’ (ll. 9-12). And yet those eyes are ‘wild’ with a Dorothean wildness and a Dorothean forgetfulness. As

in section XCV, an image of weaving – binding – foregrounds the unconscious intertextual process at work in the lines.

The intertextuality tugs away, too, at the speaker's projection of Hallam as a Christ-like figure in section CIII. The speaker, in his dream, envisions 'A statue veiled' (l. 12) – an image of weaving again – that 'though veiled, was known to me, / The shape of him I loved, and love / For ever: then flew in a dove / And brought a summons from the sea' (ll. 13-16). That 'For ever' resonates with 'the radiance which was once so bright / Be now for ever taken from my sight' (X. ll. 179-80) of the 'Intimations' Ode. It resonates, too, with 'A SLUMBER did my spirit seal's' 'rolled' in 'still as vaster grew the shore / And rolled the floods in grander space' (ll. 25-26), and with the pulsating sensations of 'Tintern Abbey' felt in the blood, where the speaker 'felt the thews of Anakim, / The pulses of a Titan's heart' (ll. 31-32). Each return confirms a vacancy at the heart of Wordsworthian pantheism, and provides little in the way of succour, although they give the text and its disparate parts a continuity with the language of the past, nonetheless.

The same ambiguities pull at the sections where the speaker ponders the survival of Hallam's soul in the afterlife. Sarah Rose Cole sees these sections of the poem – XXVIII-LXXVII – as allowing Tennyson to explore 'the unpredictable potentialities of male development'.<sup>76</sup> At first the speaker is concerned at the 'incomprehensible development of Hallam in the afterlife', an incomprehensibility expressed by 'imagining and then explicitly rejecting' an 'analogy of female domestic experience',<sup>77</sup> the maiden in 'her orange flower' (XL. l. 40). The speaker rejects this analogy, according to Cole, by emphasising 'the "difference" between the bride's trajectory and that of Hallam's soul, who [...] journeys forever in "undiscover'd lands"' (XL. l. 32),<sup>78</sup> unlike the narrative of prescribed female development.



But rather than locating a paradigm of male friendship, these sections exemplify the way in which the text repeatedly returns to a Wordsworthian imaginative past in order to find stability or recompense in the face of an uncertain or alienating faith, a patterning that prefigures that of section XCV. The speaker acknowledges that he is alienated from the deceased Hallam by his Christian faith, which places them in separate spheres: ‘My paths are in the fields I know, / And thine in undiscovered lands’ (XL. l. 32); Hallam has ‘turned to something strange’ (XLI. l. 5), and the speaker has ‘lost the links that bound / Thy changes; here, upon the ground, / No more partaker of thy change’ (ll. 6-8). He wishes that this separation could be healed, ‘That I could wing my will with might / To leap the grades of life and light, / And flash at once, my friend, to thee’ (XLI. ll. 10-13). The ‘something strange’ and ‘flash’ return the text to the ‘strange harmony’ (l. 7) of ‘Written in very early youth’ and the ‘something far more deeply interfused’ (l. 96) of ‘Tintern Abbey’, as well as the casual ‘flash’ (l. 21) of ‘I WANDERED lonely as a cloud’, at once inscribing the exertion of the imagination into the text as a means by which the gulf between life and ‘after life’ death can be bridged, and the arbitrary nature of imaginative transcendence. The language with which the speaker summarises the separation between Hallam and himself serves only to widen the gulf further by closing down the possibility of the imaginative communion it seeks: ‘Ay me, the difference I discern’ (XL. l. 21), with its echoes of ‘SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways’ (1800) and the speaker’s acknowledgement that Lucy is ‘in her grave, and, oh, / The difference to me!’ (ll. 11-12), exposes how the divide between life and death is imaginatively unbridgeable. The speaker of Tennyson’s poem avers that the dead are ‘happy’ (XLIV. l. 1), but this is conditional on whether ‘Sleep and Death be truly one’ (XLIII. l. 1), that the dead ‘sleep in Jesus’.<sup>79</sup> The intertextual inscription in the section from which these lines are taken suggests that the two are not as indivisible as the speaker would like: if ‘every spirit’s folded bloom / Through all its intervital gloom / In some long trance should slumber on’ (XLIII. ll.

2-4), then this 'slumber', with its echo of 'A SLUMBER did my spirit seal', unsettles the speaker's faith still further by its presence in the text, yet offers no real cure for the separation anxiety created by it.

The anxiety continues into section XLIV, where the speaker laments Hallam's forgetfulness of his past life:

How fares it with the happy dead?

For here the man is more and more;

But he forgets the days before

God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanished, tone and tint,

And yet perhaps the hoarding sense

Gives out at times (he knows not whence)

A little flash, a mystic hint;

And in the long harmonious years

(If Death so taste Lethean springs),

May some dim touch of earthly things

Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,

O turn thee round, resolve the doubt;

My guardian angel will speak out

In that high place, and tell thee all.

(XLIV. ll. 1-16)

For the Victorians, the afterlife was ‘seen as a place of individual spiritual progress and unceasing activity, rather than static worship of God’.<sup>80</sup> The speaker voices his doubts over this theology, fearing that spiritual progress for Hallam in the afterlife means a forgetting of the past in general and him in particular. The language of Wordsworth’s ‘Intimations’ Ode is allusively employed to suggest that ‘Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting’ (V. l. 58), that there is ‘yet perhaps the hoarding sense’ (l. 6) of the ‘days that have vanished’ (l. 5). The text itself returns unconsciously to the language of Wordsworth’s poetry, however, in an attempt to assuage these anxieties and fears by positing an imaginative communion that closes the separation created by faith; but the language the text inscribes shuts down, rather than opens up, such a possibility. Like the flash of soul on soul in section XCV, the ‘little flash’ or ‘mystic hint’ is ‘littler’ still through its association with Wordsworth’s ‘I WANDERED lonely as a cloud’, whilst the ‘dim touch of earthly things’ rings to the sound of ‘A SLUMBER did my spirit seal’ and the ‘She’ that ‘seemed a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years’ (l. 3). The ‘touch of earthly years’ is transfigured into the ‘touch of earthly things’ in Tennyson’s poem, reworking the suggestion of imaginative reconnection contained in the earlier poem. The hint of imaginative possibility raised in the text is completely foreclosed, however, by the lines that follow these: ‘If such a dreamy touch should fall, / O turn thee round, resolve the doubt’ (ll. 13-14) confirms that Hallam, like the ‘She’ of Wordsworth’s poem, is ‘Rolled *round* in earth’s diurnal course’ (l. 7; emphasis added), well beyond a dreamy touch, and imaginatively lost to the speaker.

Tennyson claims in his comments on the poem that “‘I” is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him’.<sup>81</sup> The Wordsworthian inscriptions from *An Evening Walk*, ‘Tintern Abbey’, and ‘Written in very early youth’ paradoxically underpin yet undermine this sense of universality by placing the singular Wordsworthian voice behind the Tennysonian ‘I’: it is Wordsworth’s ‘disembodied

voice' which echoes, unheard by the poet, throughout the poem,<sup>82</sup> although this voice is also the voice of the human race, as the Wordsworthian 'I' is universally subjective, claiming to represent the universal race as well as the subjective self. However, it is Wordsworth's subjectivity, rather than Tennyson's, on which this universality depends as a result of the Wordsworthian presence in the poem. Tennyson, and indeed Browning, battled with the issue of the solipsistic yet universal Wordsworthian voice, and it is only with the development of the dramatic monologue that both are able to move toward rhetorical yet individual speech, although this is itself compromised by Wordsworthian intertexts at play in a monologue like 'Ulysses' (1842), which work insidiously to reposition Wordsworthian self-expressiveness.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, Wordsworth is claimed as more than a purely subjectivist poet, a poet who is 'never contemptuous of community', and for whom 'One's place within society [is] always important'.<sup>84</sup> *In Memoriam* consciously places itself in relation to the ballad tradition, a tradition in which Wordsworth actively shared, and which is centred upon 'a sense of community across time [...] bearing witness to a shared cultural identity';<sup>85</sup> the poem's stanzaic metre and pattern deliberately imitate that of the ballad, allowing Tennyson to speak with the 'cultural voice of the British people'.<sup>86</sup> The poem inscribes Wordsworth's balladic rhyme and metre into its word pattern, involuntarily supporting the allusive use of ballad: 'A SLUMBER did my spirit seal' echoes in the text's end rhyme of 'trees' in section XCV, l. 51, as in 'A SLUMBER's' 'rocks, and stones, and trees' (l. 8), for instance; 'The Solitary Reaper', too, is formed out of Scottish Erse ballad.<sup>87</sup> The Wordsworthian inscriptions in the poem therefore claim ownership of the Tennysonian 'I', inflecting it with a pervasive Wordsworthian subjectivity, yet simultaneously augment this subjectivity with a balladic communality. This dual intertextual effect emphasises that Tennyson has no control over the effects of the language in the poem: the language makes the poem both one of subjective and

communal Wordsworthian speech. Both forms of speech deny the poet's claim to be speaking either for himself or the human race, though, as Wordsworth does the speaking for him.<sup>88</sup>

### **The 'babbling Wye'**

If the poem explores Christian faith via a return to the Wordsworthian pantheistic past, then it also explores pantheism directly, an exploration that reaches its apotheosis in section CXXX, which sees Hallam's voice become part of the 'rolling air' (l. 1). This pantheism can be understood as part of *In Memoriam's* pastoral mode as elegy,<sup>89</sup> although it can also be viewed as the text's own 'answer' to its tenuous commitment to faith, as it offers the speaker a stable and continuing relationship with Hallam via 'nature'. Seamus Perry writes of how the hushed Wye is in sympathy with the speaker's grief in section XIX, which he regards as part of the poem's recasting of the pastoral mode in Milton's 'Lycidas'.<sup>90</sup> But he also maintains that the early sections of the poem, like XIX, portray Hallam's reabsorption into nature as a 'Wordsworthian homecoming', citing as an example some lines from section XVIII: 'And from his ashes may be made / The violet of his native land' (ll. 2-4).<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Lawrence Kramer shows how the Arcadian Walks of sections XXII and XXIII, with 'their dulcet music' and 'ripeness of a golden age',<sup>92</sup> are a reminder of 'Tintern Abbey' and of 'the unfettered Romantic subjectivity that Wordsworth, in Tennyson's reading, remembers from his childhood on revisiting the Wye'.<sup>93</sup> Tennyson certainly alludes to 'Tintern Abbey' in this positively associative way: the shore in section XIX is 'pleasant' (l. 3), for instance, the wave is 'vocal' (l. 14) in its 'wooded walls' (l. 14).

But the sympathy with nature to which Perry, Kramer, and indeed Tennyson himself allude, is undermined by the suggestions of imaginative loss and uncertainty that are inscribed into the poem through the unbidden presence of Wordsworth's poetic language,

which, unexpectedly, unsettles the notion of a Wordsworthian homecoming; rather than consolidating the poem's 'alternative' to a weak faith, the intertextual inscriptions destabilise the relationship the speaker has constructed with Hallam via nature. In XXII and XXIII, for instance, the Arcadian inflections from 'Tintern Abbey' rest on top of a textual bed of associations that strip nature and the mind that views it of their comfortable partnership. The inscriptions confirm the connections with 'Tintern Abbey', but again bring loss, the loss of the mind's sympathy with nature that is implicit in 'Tintern Abbey' itself, into the poem. In XXIII, 'caught' and 'thought' are again paired as interlocking rhymes (in lines 14-15), infusing the poem with the language of the former heart that is 'caught' in 'Tintern Abbey'. Similarly, the 'violet' to which Perry refers in his suggestion of a Wordsworthian homecoming connects both to 'SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways', where it is supplementary to a vibrant Lucy with whom the speaker is subsequently unable imaginatively to connect, and to 'Nutting', where it is allied with a nature that is on the verge of being despoiled or temporarily lost.

These losses are particularly evident in section XIX, where lines 1-8 read:

The Danube to the Severn gave  
The darkened heart that beat no more;  
They laid him by the pleasant shore,  
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;  
The salt sea-water passes by,  
And hushes half the babbling Wye,  
And makes a silence in the hills.

The 'darkened heart' beats with the pulse of 'Tintern Abbey's' 'sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart' (ll. 27-28) and the encrypted loss contained within them.

'Shore' is a resonant word in Wordsworth that echoes through his poems and is associated with loss, either of the imagination or directly of a loved one, as in the 'Elegiac Stanza', 'To the Daisy' (1815), written for his brother John, lost in a drowning accident, who 'Sleeps by his native shore' (l. 7) in his 'senseless grave' (l. 70). England's 'shore' (l. 6) is also part of the 1807 'I TRAVELLED among unknown men' (l. 6), where it symbolises the speaker's nostalgic connection to the lost Lucy, and of the 'Intimations' Ode, with its wistful admiration of 'the Children [that] sport upon the shore' (X. l. 170) and their ability to connect with eternal truths. These verbal echoes in the poem suggest that the sympathy the speaker has with nature in XIX is not as harmonious as Kramer claims, and is in fact harried by death, loss and anxiety.

Section XIX also aligns itself intertextually with Wordsworth's poem of grief and estrangement from nature, the 'Elegiac Stanza', 'Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont' (1807), hereafter cited as 'Peele Castle', which, like 'To the Daisy', is written in response to the death of Wordsworth's brother. Wordsworth's speaker in the poem cannot find imaginative recompense in nature for his loss, and this inability is transported directly into section XIX of the poem. 'Peele Castle' is a progression from Wordsworth's early poetry, confirming the loss implicitly contained within the prior works through the speaker's imaginative separation from nature: the imaginative hope that is the projected aim of the earlier poems is eroded. The poem repeats much of the vocabulary of the earlier poems, as it pushes toward severing the sustaining link between mind and nature.<sup>94</sup> 'Shore' is important amongst this vocabulary, as is 'deep'. 'Deep', so resonant in 'Tintern Abbey' and the 'Intimations' Ode, renews itself in the poem, like grief itself, and encapsulates the speaker's movement from imaginative connection to disconnection, and is

intimately linked to 'shore' through its association with the sea. At the start of the poem, the speaker fulsomely describes his imaginative affiliation or communion with nature:

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!  
So like, so very like, was day to day!  
Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there;  
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;  
No mood, which season takes away, or brings:  
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep  
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

(ll. 5-12)

The Deep is mighty, as is the speaker's imaginative ability to connect with, and subdue, nature: he 'could have fancied', with the play here, in the Wordsworthian sense, on fancy as a supportive faculty to imagination,<sup>95</sup> that 'the mighty Deep / Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things'. As the poem progresses, the speaker describes the disintegration of this imaginative ability, where 'deep' is again central to the process, developing its connections with the 'mighty Deep' into an expression of imaginative failure: 'I have submitted to a new control: / A power is gone, which nothing can restore; / A deep distress hath humanised my Soul' (ll. 35-36). 'Peele Castle's' 'deep distress' is woven conspicuously into section XIX, intensifying in its transmission into the later text through the use of superlative and comparative adjectival forms, into 'deepest grief' (l. 10) and 'deeper anguish' (l. 15). In Wordsworth's poem, this 'deep distress' feeds back into 'shore', continuing 'deep's



affiliation with the sea in the poem.<sup>96</sup> After admitting that he has submitted to a new control, the speaker confirms:

Not for a moment could I now behold  
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:  
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;  
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been the Friend,  
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,  
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;  
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

(ll. 34-44)

Deep distress turns to anger; the shore becomes dismal. Through the intertextual inscription at work in the poem, section XIX's 'pleasant shore' inescapably contains 'Peele Castle's' 'dismal shore' and 'deep distress' within its midst, which themselves store the cumulative losses of 'shore' and 'deep' from Wordsworth's earlier poems.

'Peele Castle' recommends forbearance rather than imaginative communion with nature, however, acknowledging that the nature-led imaginative survival of death is well-nigh impossible. The 'eye, and ear' (l. 106) of 'Tintern Abbey' are now 'blind' (l. 56) and the 'heart' of the 1798 poem becomes 'the heart that lives alone, / Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!' (ll. 53-54); the 'gleams / Of past existence' (ll. 148-49) become 'the light that never was' (l. 15); the 'glassy deep' (l. 117) of *An Evening Walk*, with its imaginative recovery from grief, is supplanted by the 'glassy sea' (l. 4) that breaks into 'trampling waves'

(l. 52), one of which Hallam can hear by the ‘pleasant’ shore. In ‘The Character of the Happy Warrior’ (1807), which like ‘Peele Castle’ is concerned with the drowning of John Wordsworth (rather than the death of Nelson),<sup>97</sup> the mind is able to exercise an imaginative power in the face of grief,<sup>98</sup> but this imaginative power is lost in ‘Peele Castle’. ‘Peele Castle’ suggests, rather, that there is no imaginative transcendence over death and that loss must be ‘borne’ (l. 58). It moves toward an acceptance of faith in a divine power; God is not named in the poem, but there is a sense that the speaker ‘as in the elegies composed the previous year [...] strives to inculcate a proper humility towards a divine order he cannot understand, but which has demonstrated the centrality of pain in human life’.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, the ‘poem concludes [...] with an acknowledgement of art’s consolations’,<sup>100</sup> the very medium through which ‘Peele Castle’ has been achieved as poem, and formerly, painting.

Ironically, though, the intertextual inscriptions in XIX, like ‘shore’ and ‘deep’, are pushing the text in a direction (toward God, or at least an acceptance in something that cannot be understood) which the speaker is resisting through his allusive affiliation with an overt Wordsworthian pantheism, and with which he is struggling in section XCV and elsewhere. This is confirmed by the way in which the ebb and flow of the Wye in the poem captures the rhythm of another ‘Elegiac Stanza’, Wordsworth’s ‘Composed at Grasmere’ (1807), where ‘A Power is passing from the earth / To breathless Nature’s dark abyss; / But when the great and good depart / What is it more than this – / That Man, who is from God sent forth, / Doth yet again to God return? – / Such ebb and flow must ever be, / Then wherefore should we mourn?’ (ll. 17-24). This poem, too, acknowledges that the ebb and flow of life and death must ever be, and that a submission to God’s will has to be made.

Significantly, Hallam is directly associated with the ‘babbling’ Wye in LXXXIV, where the speaker says: ‘For now the day was drawing on, / When thou shouldst link thy life with one / Of mine own house, and boys of thine / Had babbled “Uncle” on my knee; / But

that remorseless iron hour / Made cypress of her orange flower, / Despair of Hope, and earth of thee' (ll. 10-16). The sense of 'babbling' in XIX captures the gentle murmur of water over stones. But babble also carries here a sense of support, or buoyancy, that aligns with the speaker's sense of identification with the Wye; as the Wye is hushed by the incoming sea, so the speaker is hushed and filled with a tide of tears that 'cannot fall' (l. 11); as the tide flows down, so the speaker's grief abates. But the 'talk and chatter' of babble (*OED*) conveys a sense of the multi-voicedness at work in Tennyson's poem, as well as figuratively representing intertextual or poetic echo: figurative representations of poetic echo from the mid-seventeenth century onwards include that of 'babbling', for instance.<sup>101</sup> Tennyson plays with the same commotion of voices, or confusion of tongues, in other works: in *The Princess* (1847), 'a clamour grew / As of a new-world Babel, woman-built' (ll. 465-66), while in 'Guinevere' (1859), published as part of *Idylls of the King* (1859-85), the inconsequentiality, yet harmfulness, of unregulated chatter is stressed: the 'little maid' (l. 148) 'pleased' the Queen with a 'babbling heedlessness' (l. 149), but the maid's chatter soon 'hurt[s] / Whom she would soothe, and harmed where she would heal' (ll. 352-53).

Aidan Day points to how 'Hearing, seeing and feeling Hallam as some diffusive power in nature is to hear, see and feel the divine. It is also the poet apprehending, through the capacity to identify, that part of himself which shares in the nature of the divine'.<sup>102</sup> This sense of natural divinity is confirmed by the use of 'babbling', which is inscribed straight into the poem from Wordsworth's own poetry. In an untitled poem of 1807, Wordsworth writes of how, in answer to 'the shouting Cuckoo' (l. 3), 'the mountain Echo, / Solitary, clear, profound' (ll. 1-2), offers an 'Unsolicited reply / To a babbling wanderer sent' (ll. 5-6). The mountain Echo's 'Answers' (l. 14), in turn, prompt the speaker to acknowledge his, and our, affinity with the mountain Echo in our ability to hear the 'Echoes from beyond the grave' (l. 15) which we receive 'we know not whence' (l. 14): 'Such rebounds our inward ear / Catches

sometimes from afar – Listen, ponder, hold them dear; / For of God, – they are’ (ll. 17-20). The text unconsciously catches the echo of Wordsworth’s poem and its echo of God, while Wordsworth’s poem itself plays with the effects of ‘mountain’, ‘Echo’, and ‘babbling’, confirming the centrality of echo as figure of representation in his poetic practice.<sup>103</sup> Echo has an important function in Tennyson’s poetry, too: ‘Echo’ famously answers death to ‘whatever is asked her’ in *Maud* (1855), line 4, for instance. Interestingly, in *The Princess* Tennyson ‘transumes’ the Wordsworthian ‘imagery of reverberation’ in the famous song about echoes that appears in the poem,<sup>104</sup> indirectly confirming the significance of Wordsworth’s use of poetic echo in his practice. It is the reverberatively ‘profound’ mountain Echo in Wordsworth’s poem which stimulates in the speaker an awareness of the echoes from beyond the grave that we receive on our inward ear, and not the ‘babbling wanderer’: the mountain Echo and the Cuckoo are ‘Voices of two different natures’ (l. 12). The mountain’s Echo is like the ‘ordinary cry’ of the Cuckoo, but ‘oh, how different’ (ll. 7-8). Hallam’s divine status within nature is diminished by Wordsworth’s separation of nature into two spheres: like the Cuckoo, he is a mere babbler.

A similar erosion of Hallam’s divine natural power occurs in sections CXXIX and CXXX of the poem. Section CXXX sees the culmination of Hallam as the divine, diffusive power in nature of which Day speaks, ‘mixed with God and Nature’ (ll. 10-11). But the pantheistic nature with which Hallam is divinely mixed is inevitably carved with loss and uncertainty through the continuing play of Wordsworthian intertexts in the poem. If Hallam is mixed with God and Nature here, then God is compromised as Nature does not fully play her part, as she is unable to sustain the imaginative continuity the speaker seeks. Kramer has pointed out how ‘star and flower’ in CXXX, l. 6 is an allusion to ‘SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways’ (1800) and how the citation ‘belong[s] to the mourning poet’s state of mind before death has intruded on it’.<sup>105</sup> But sections CXXIX and CXXX intertextualise ‘Tintern

Abbey' and another Wordsworth poem, 'STRANGE fits of passion have I known' (1800), and do so in a pervasive way, which counteracts the 'pantheistic' movement of both sections. CXXIX starts off by addressing a 'Dear Friend' (l. 1) and goes on to address the 'Dear heavenly friend' (l. 7) that is Hallam. This immerses the text in 'Tintern Abbey' again, with the 'dear, dear Friend' that is Dorothy (l. 116) echoing through the text's 'Dear heavenly friend that canst not die' (l. 7). Any pantheistic hope is lost here, as the inclusion of Dorothy in the text suggests mortality rather than immortality. The 'rolling air' (l. 1) of CXXX corroborates this loss through 'Tintern Abbey's' sense sublime that 'rolls through all things' (l. 102), including the 'living air' (l. 98). The loss is confirmed in the use of 'voice' in the section (l. 1. and l. 15), which links back to Dorothy's 'voice' (l. 148) in 'Tintern Abbey'. The speaker says in CXXX that he is 'circled' (l. 15) with Hallam's voice, which he is, but it is Dorothy's voice which echoes around him, as her voice transmutes into text. Moreover, 'dear friend' becomes 'STRANGE friend' in CXXIX, line 9, which plunges the text back into 'STRANGE fits of passion' (1807), with its moon-filled sky reinforcing the imaginative separation between life and death. Voice is integral to this poem, too: the speaker has known strange fits of passion, which he 'will dare to tell, / But in the lover's ear alone' (ll. 2-3). As Geoffrey H. Hartman confirms, the word passion 'joins emotion and motion of voice'.<sup>106</sup> The 'vaster passion' of CXXX (l. 10), complements this, as it evokes the 'emotion and motion of voice' of Wordsworth's speaker. Equally, this Wordsworthian voice projects 'STRANGE fits' of passion, convulsions or aberrant spasms rather than grand or profound emotions, puncturing the cosmic depth of Tennyson's 'vaster passion'.

Another intertext is also at work here, however, as 'Far-off' (CXXIX. l. 13) intertextualises 'The Solitary Reaper' and the Reaper's cyclical pattern of loss: 'Will no one tell me what she sings? – / Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow / For old, unhappy, far-off things, / And battles long ago' (ll. 17-20). Equally, 'passion' (l. 10) connects to the

‘passionate Work!’ of ‘Peele Castle’, where the sea is in anger and the shore dismal. Rather than having a commitment to a divine pantheism as Day suggests, therefore, sections CXXIX and CXXX share an encrypted Wordsworthian loss of imaginative power and an acknowledgement that a submission must be made to an unknowable God. The speaker closes the section by saying, ‘I shall not lose thee though I die’ (l. 16), confirming the speaker’s commitment to a Hallam who is a part of the ‘rolling air’, but the intertextual inscriptions suggest that Hallam’s divine place in nature is already lost. The opposition created between ‘divine’ pantheism and theism remains unresolved in the text, however, although the intertextual returns which the text makes indirectly strengthen the faith with which it is struggling.

### **‘Nature, red in tooth and claw’**

Wordsworthian intertexts are also at play in sections LIV, LV and LVI of the poem, where the new scientific discourses on nature are addressed, and where they cause a similar amount of confusion and instability. The new scientific findings on nature explicitly erode the sympathy between mind and nature and the possibility they hold for the speaker to be at one with Hallam. Science supersedes imaginative nature in the text: the sensations felt in the blood in ‘Tintern Abbey’ become a ‘Nature, red in tooth and claw’ (LVI, l. 15). Or they seemingly do, as the section holds together a complex and persistent tension: pantheistic nature is subordinated to a ‘Nature, red in tooth and claw’, but pantheistic nature refuses to be bowed, despite her losses elsewhere in the text. These sections resort to a Wordsworthian pantheism almost as a form of nostalgia, as if they know that their invocation of it will fail as it has already been superseded; but they return nonetheless to Wordsworth’s texts in the hope

of finding some kind of imaginative redress in nature, or at least to feel the comfort of what is becoming a familiar loss.

Wordsworth moves toward acknowledging that nature is terroristic, and that the sympathetic link between mind and nature that is being tested in both his juvenile and mature work is finally breaking, an acknowledgement made manifestly clear in the descriptions of nature in 'Peele Castle'. Correspondences abound between 'Peele Castle' and *In Memoriam* in terms of a nature that is violent and unfeeling. Tennyson's 'Nature, red in tooth and claw' is red with anger and rage, as well as blood, and this is adumbrated in 'Peele Castle', with its sea in 'anger' (l. 44), which is a '*passionate* Work' (l. 45; emphasis added); similarly, the swell of the sea in the poem is 'deadly' (l. 47), the sky 'rueful' (l. 48), making for 'a pageantry of fear!' (l. 48); 'the lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves' (l. 52) are an 'unfeeling armour' (l. 51). Correspondingly, the evil dreams of Nature in section LV of the poem (l. 6), with their suggestion of madness, echo to the sound of the 'raving stream' (l. 633) and the 'Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside / As if a voice *were in them*' (ll. 631-32; emphasis added) of the 'The Simplon Pass' episode of *The Prelude*, published in 1845. Wordsworth's nature is a female nature, and this is replicated in the sections, too. Rowlinson points out how a deadly female nature in sections LV and LVI fits into the elegiac tradition of 'blaming women for a young man's death',<sup>107</sup> while Sacks sees the 'great denunciation of Nature' in these sections as deriving from the 'mourner's loss of a mother figure' in the likes of elegies from Theocritus' 'First Idyll' to 'Lycidas' and 'Adonais'.<sup>108</sup> In *In Memoriam* nature is an indifferent mother, 'careless of the single life' (LV. l. 8), an indifference and inconstancy that is adumbrated in Wordsworth, however: Dorothy in 'Tintern Abbey', who is an embodiment of nature, has a wild forgetfulness, and in the 'Elegiac Stanza', 'Invocation to the Earth' (1816), the 'spirit' decries a nature that is the

‘False Parent of Mankind! / Obdurate, proud, and blind’ (l. 19), and over which he sprinkles ‘soft celestial dews’ (l. 21) in order to reinfuse her ‘lost, maternal heart’ (l. 22).

Regardless of its descent into ‘unfeeling’, the intertextual inscription allows Wordsworthian pantheism to become a refuge from science’s disregard of the individual, that ‘single life’ to which nature has become so indifferent: ‘So careful of the type she seems, / So careless of the single life’ (LV. ll. 7-8). Armstrong suggests that man has always known of nature’s indifference ‘ever since he set up the loving God whose creed contradicts the evidence of the natural world’.<sup>109</sup> Tennyson’s use of type and life suggests the influence of Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), which ‘Tennyson read at the end of 1836’.<sup>110</sup> Lyell claims that ‘Species cannot be immortal, but must perish, one after the other, like the individuals which compose them’.<sup>111</sup> The lines also synchronise with the findings of Robert Chambers’ *Vestiges of Creation*, which was written after Tennyson’s lyrics,<sup>112</sup> but which confirm the same findings: ‘the individual, as far as the present sphere of being is concerned, is to the Author of Nature a consideration of inferior moment’.<sup>113</sup> But as Armstrong again points out, LVI challenges the argument of LV and posits the possible extinction of man as a species, which follows upon the ‘collapse of the idea of the Type which has sustained the notion of man as a distinct species’.<sup>114</sup> “‘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”” (ll. 1-4). Wordsworthian intertextual inscription at play in the poem, by contrast, offers a reinstatement of the individual, of the single life and individual self-expression, as well as the idea of man as a distinct species.

The reintroduction of the individual cannot mitigate an ‘unfeeling’ Wordsworthian nature, however, as the text continues to inscribe the Wordsworthian loss of synergy between mind and nature into the poem; better a familiar loss almost than the loss of the individual and the Type created by Lyellian science. The speaker in LIV describes how he is ‘An infant



crying in the night: / An infant crying for the light: / And with no language but a cry' (ll. 18-20). The speaker's lack of language comes from science's erosion in LV of 'The likest God within the soul?' (l. 24), a belief in whom ensures that 'No life may fail beyond the grave' (l. 22). To have no language is a 'shameful confession' in Trenchian terms, as it is a sign of 'debasement and degeneration'.<sup>115</sup> It also, in a reversal of Lyell's insistence on the permanence of the type, points to the 'final collapse of language and the "artificial signs" which designate the human species and which are used by the human species to designate itself'.<sup>116</sup> But language here also carries the sense of Wordsworth's metaphoric language of the former heart. The fact that the speaker has 'no language but a cry' implies that he has no language of the former heart: in terms of metaphor, the literal has become 'inconceivable' as the signifier has been consumed.<sup>117</sup> Little wonder that the speaker has but a 'cry'.<sup>118</sup>

The pattern of loss is adumbrated in section XXXV of the poem, where the speaker engages with the issue of water-erosion and deposition in forming land masses,<sup>119</sup> 'The sound of streams that swift or slow / Draw down AEonian hills, and sow / The dust of continents to be' (ll. 10-12). The speaker acknowledges that his is an 'idle case' (l. 18), that 'Love would answer with a sigh, / "The sound of that forgetful shore / Will change my sweetness more and more, / Half-dead to know that I shall die"' (ll. 13-16). Individual life and death are absorbed and negated by the implacable movement of geological time, although geological time also becomes a form of consolation, as human loss is absorbed within the natural processes of time; the 'constant flux of displacement [...] is both undermining and reassuring'.<sup>120</sup> Yet the text reverts back to a Wordsworthian pantheism as a form of assistance, a redress to the indifference of geological process, but also in opposition to its purported reliance on the geological accretion of time. Sacks raises the question of how the poem, with its opposition to the forward movement of time, symbolised by a stanzaic structure that repeatedly turns back on itself, can 'allow for the consoling belief in evolution'.<sup>121</sup> The intertextual inscription

in the text opens up this inconsistency by suggesting that it does not: the sound of the forgetful shore echoes to the sound of the ‘Intimations’ Ode and the birth which is ‘but a sleep and a forgetting’ (V. l. 58). It echoes, too, with the dismal shore of ‘Peele Castle’, and the possibly forgetful Dorothy of ‘Tintern Abbey’, with its ‘sweetness’ (l. 14) as of the sensations felt in the blood. The speaker confirms that it does not profit him to put an idle case, which in itself echoes with the ‘fretful stir / Unprofitable’ of the world (ll. 52-53) of ‘Tintern Abbey’, where the speaker’s communion with nature is a refuge from the world’s din and noise. All inscribe imaginative loss into the lines, an anticipated or partially mitigated loss in the case of ‘Tintern Abbey’ and the ‘Intimations’ Ode, and a confirmed loss in the case of ‘Peele Castle’. Section LVI continues to probe this lost Wordsworthian relationship. Lines 9-12 run: ‘Man, her last work, who seemed so fair, / Such splendid purpose in his eyes, / Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies, / Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer’. The inscription of ‘splendid’ from the ‘Intimations’ Ode (l. 73) and ‘rolled’ from ‘A SLUMBER did my spirit seal’ (l. 7) inscribe the poem with a failing imagination. Wordsworth’s pantheistic nature betrays the heart that loves her here, as much as it does in sections LIV and LV and the ‘pantheistic’ sections of the poem.

Curiously, the famous closing lines of LVI – ‘Behind the veil, behind the veil’ – resonate with another level of Wordsworthian meaning. Wordsworth acknowledges that the interaction between mind and nature has broken down in ‘Peele Castle’ and elsewhere, as has been made clear, but in a late poem of 1833, one of his ‘Itinerary Poems’, he writes the following lines:

DESIRE we past illusions to recall?  
 To reinstate wild Fancy, would we hide  
 Truths whose thick veil Science has drawn aside?

No, – let this Age, high as she may, instal [*sic*]  
In her esteem the thirst that wrought man's fall,  
The universe is infinitely wide;  
And conquering Reason, if self-glorified,  
Can nowhere move uncrossed by some new wall  
Or gulf of mystery, which thou alone,  
Imaginative Faith! canst overleap,  
In progress toward the fount of Love, – the throne  
Of power whose ministers the records keep  
Of periods fixed, and laws established, less  
Flesh to exalt than prove its nothingness.

Tennyson's 'veil' has provoked much comment from critics: Armstrong, for instance, points to its orthodox urge for 'transcendental existence and revelation',<sup>122</sup> while James Eli Adams sees the veil as 'a seductive yet disturbing emblem' of a feminised Nature's 'mystery'.<sup>123</sup> But Wordsworth's poem has a direct impact on Tennyson's text, in its urge for those truths which the 'thick veil' of Science has revealed to be exposed to 'Imaginative Faith', which is capable of leaping over the 'gulf of mystery'. The consonantal repetition in 'thick veil' and 'Science' emphasises the thickness of the veil, a thickness sufficiently deep to protect truth, but which science has nevertheless drawn aside (emphasised in the open 'a' of 'has drawn aside'). LVI replicates this consonantal pattern in its use of veil, which is seemingly equally as thick, but turns this into a tautology. Wordsworth often used tautology as a means by which to embody 'impassioned feelings': Wu gives the example of 'for she dies she dies she dies' from one of Wordsworth's early poems.<sup>124</sup> Hartman points out how the use of tautology in Wordsworth has a psychological function, allowing the poet to express the 'clinging or craving mind of the

speaker'.<sup>125</sup> The text's use of tautology here therefore not only replicates Wordsworth's poetic practice, but underpins the line with a Wordsworthian sense of clinging (to the past, in this instance) and a craving or desperate need to reinstate the status of 'Imaginative Faith' in the face of encroaching scientific theory. Section LVI's urge 'Behind the veil, behind the veil' is thus inscribed with a sense that the speaker needs urgently to gain access to what is behind the veil – that is, those very truths which Wordsworthian 'Imaginative Faith' can access by its ability to conquer every wall of Reason, and which science has exposed. The text provides the answer – intertextually – to the question the speaker asks, 'What hope of answer or redress?' The answer or redress lies behind the 'thick veil' of Science, in an 'Imaginative Faith' which the 'high' Victorian age must (re)install. Sacks rationalises that 'As the word *redress* suggests, the veil will be a necessary part of any answer. It is there, not to be torn aside, but to be used precisely as a medium',<sup>126</sup> confirming how 'any consolation must depend upon the texture of language'.<sup>127</sup> But the line 'Behind the veil, behind the veil', as well as the word 'Behind' itself, act as vocatives here, imploring the addressee to look behind the veil rather than through it, with the repetition itself intensifying the invocation to rediscover the truths behind the veil, while simultaneously mimicking the return to the past that the text itself is undertaking. There is even a sense of comic humour in this, which punctures the seriousness of the section's preoccupations, lightening the losses Wordsworthian pantheism has borne in the text thus far. At the same time, the 'empty spaces' of the woven intertextual veil facilitate the vision of the imaginative truths stored behind the veil, acting as vectors to that which exists 'behind'. Freud, however, 'represents the woven fabric as the material form of shame, a characteristic that is itself ambiguously natural to women',<sup>128</sup> which suggests that the Wordsworthian feminised nature that works in tandem with 'Imaginative Faith' in producing truth does not want to be discovered or that she has something to hide.

This hidden something is revealed at the close of Wordsworth's poem itself, where the speaker concludes that 'Imaginative Faith' can prove only the flesh's 'nothingness' (l. 14). If *In Memoriam*'s speaker looks behind the veil, then the moment of imaginative redress can confirm only that the flesh is weak, and that death cannot be imaginatively transcended. Feminised nature is suppressed in Wordsworth's poem, confirming that her role in imaginatively transcending death has been eroded. Looking behind the veil in section LVI can provide no real support or redress in this sense, a failure that is acknowledged in the section by the use of 'frail' in line 25, to which 'veil' in line 28 returns in the stanza's continuous movement of returning on itself. The text is trapped in a cyclical state, inscribing a Wordsworthianism that has acknowledged its own imaginative limitations, perpetually looking behind the veil in the hope of finding a redress from a science 'Red, in tooth and claw', but finding only a frail nothingness.

### **'That friend of mine who lives in God': Endings and Beginnings**

The Epilogue confirms many of the findings of the poem's sections and yet recapitulates them. Day suggests that Tennyson makes a leap into faith within 'a broadly scientific frame of reference' at the end of the poem.<sup>129</sup> As he says: 'Chambers helped Tennyson finish his poem in a way that, if not Christian, at least managed to combine an evolutionary perspective with something like a spiritual teleology'.<sup>130</sup> Alan Sinfield sees the Epilogue as moving toward 'an eventual satisfaction with time and existence in general'.<sup>131</sup> Despite its apparent accommodation with faith and science, the text continues to default to Wordsworth's language in an unending cycle of repetition, trying desperately to find an alternative position in which to secure itself and the speaker. The leap into faith has been prepared for by the inscription of a Wordsworthian pantheism that pushes the text toward an acceptance of a

God that cannot be understood, and an acknowledgement that the extremes of contemporary science cannot be mitigated, but this acceptance is undermined by an obsessive return to a Wordsworthian past that continues to bring loss, confusion, and complication into the text.

The speaker professes a belief in love, which can be ‘both the name and attribute of God as well as encompassing the human participation in that principle’:<sup>132</sup> ‘Regret is dead, but love is more’ (l. 17). Yet, the belief in love is undermined by the same Wordsworthian imaginative precariousness that is at work throughout the poem. The Epilogue ends with the marriage of a ‘daughter of our house’ (l. 7), sealing the accommodations the text is making with God and science into an emblem of domesticity and fraternity. The speaker gives a description of the bride: ‘O when her life was yet in bud, / He too foretold the perfect rose. / For thee she grew, for thee she grows / For ever, and as fair as good’ (ll. 35-36), and again ‘Now waiting to be made a wife, / Her feet, my darling, on the dead; / Their pensive tablets round her head, / And the most living words of life / Breathed in her ear’ (ll. 49-52). Love itself is undermined by the ‘For ever’ from the ‘Intimations’ Ode, with its intimations of loss, undermining the notion of love as salvational by suggesting that the imagination needs to be brought into play as a form of support. This imaginative presence is inchoate, but the text still resorts to it for sustenance. Similarly, the ‘pensive tablets’ and the ‘living’ words suggest imaginative mutability or even foolishness, with their echoes of the random thoughtfulness of ‘I WANDERED lonely as a cloud’ and ‘Yarrow Revisited’ (1835), where the ‘Yarrow Stream’ (l. 105) is invoked by the speaker to fulfil her ‘pensive duty’ (l. 106) so that she may become dear to ‘memory’s shadowy moonshine’ (l. 112); the ‘living words’, too, contain the ‘living man’, trapped within his cyclical, and ultimately fruitless, journey to the underworld. Similarly, the speaker addresses the moon:

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,

Till over down and over dale  
All night the shining vapour sail  
And pass the silent-lighted town,  
  
The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,  
And catch at every mountain head,  
And o'er the friths that branch and spread  
Their sleeping silver through the hills;  
  
And touch with shade the bridal doors,  
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;  
And breaking let the splendour fall  
To spangle all the happy shores  
  
By which they rest, and ocean sounds,  
And, star and system rolling past,  
A soul shall draw from out the vast  
And strike his being into bounds,  
  
And, moved through life of lower phase,  
Result in man, be born and think,  
And act and love, a closer link  
Betwixt us and the crowning race.

(ll. 109-28)

'Catch', 'touch', 'shores', 'rolling' embody the loss and confusion that has been present throughout the poem, but also undermine the speaker's faith in the future by bringing the text back to its concern with nature and the imagination and by suggesting that the love he professes is an insufficient recourse against grief. The shore is anything but happy in this sense. This inscribed past inflects the future as well as the present, as the infinitive verb 'To spangle' (l. 120) is used in the invocation to the moon to spangle all the happy shores by which the happy couple will rest. Similarly, 'A soul *shall* draw from out the vast / And strike his being into bounds' (ll. 123-24; emphasis added).

The poem ends with the speaker explicitly acknowledging his commitment to both Christian faith and contemporary science:

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look  
    On knowledge; under whose command  
    Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand  
Is Nature like an open book;  
  
No longer half-akin to brute,  
    For all we thought and loved and did,  
    And hoped, and suffered, is but seed  
Of what in them is flower and fruit;  
  
Whereof the man, that with me trod  
    This planet, was a noble type  
    Appearing ere the times were ripe,  
That friend of mine who lives in God,



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.

(ll. 129-44)

The open book is in the hand of those who look to scientific knowledge; as Ricks points out, the metaphor of the open book ‘was invigorated by its geological aptness’.<sup>133</sup> Likewise, ‘That God, which ever lives and loves / One God, one law, one element, / And one far-off divine event’ evoke the Book of Revelation and Hallam’s *On the Picture of the Three Fates*.<sup>134</sup> However, the idea of forward movement – of those that ‘*shall* look / On knowledge’, the divine event is one ‘*To* which the whole creation moves’ (emphases added) – is undermined by the return to the language of the past, a return that undermines both the text’s commitment to scientific progress and divine process. The text returns to the language of Wordsworthian imaginative process, inscribing, as ever, its incipient dissolution as well as its capacity for renewal: the hand that holds Nature like an open book bears an imprint of the hand that reaches into the underworld looking for the lost loved one; ‘the far-off divine event’ echoes to the song of ‘The Solitary Reaper’ and her entrapment within a cycle of loss. Like the Reaper, the text itself is caught within this cycle of loss, as the Epilogue invokes the ‘far-off interest of tears’ of section I, both sealing the poem with loss and mimicking the cyclical return of the stanzas of each of its sections.

The return to ‘The Solitary Reaper’ also compromises the recuperation of the ‘past entire’, the only ‘consolatory future’ that the text can envisage:<sup>135</sup> the ‘allusive matching of phrases’ in the Epilogue and section I – ‘one far-off divine event’ and ‘far-off interest of

tears’ – signals a ‘re-assimilation of endings into beginnings’,<sup>136</sup> the idea ‘that present loss offers future gain only to the extent that the latter take the form of an “again”, an absolute repetition’.<sup>137</sup> This ‘absolute repetition’ is a repetition of past loss, however, a loss that cannot be assuaged, made evident in the use of ‘far-off’ from ‘The Solitary Reaper’, with its suggestion that any ‘again’ is one of a sorrow, disillusion, or pain that has no ending.

Rather than ending in a *Divine Comedy*,<sup>138</sup> then, as Tennyson claimed, the poem ends trapped in a cycle of perpetual return, compulsively revisiting the language and losses of the past. It cannot engage with the future, as it cannot let go of Wordsworth’s language. The loss which the language of the past encrypts into the poem compromises the form of elegy itself, as it does not allow the poem to move toward a consolatory conclusion or a denial of death,<sup>139</sup> although Cole sees the poem as having a developmental progression, in keeping with her reading of the poem as exemplifying ‘male friendship as both the means and the goal of the poet’s development’.<sup>140</sup> Or, rather, the encryption of the language of the past continues the consolatory movement at work throughout the poem, drawing the text back to an old familiar loss as a buttress against the pressures of the age. This constant return to the past, moreover, prevents the speaker from fully embracing the consolation he has found in an approximate Christian faith and in the accretive movements of geological time. Wordsworth himself acknowledged the diminished capacity of the imagination both to sustain the relationship with nature and to mitigate grief, finally coming to replace the lost connection between mind and nature with a submission to a God that cannot be understood. *In Memoriam*, unlike Wordsworth, absorbs its loss of the Wordsworthian imagination, and continues tirelessly in search of it, a search that finally establishes its absence; the act of mourning in the poem is revealed as really one of melancholia.<sup>141</sup> As Freud affirms, however, the drive repeatedly to return to the past is also a death drive, with death itself in the gift of the mother.<sup>142</sup> The search for the lost Wordsworthian imagination therefore is a movement toward death, a death gifted

by Wordsworthian Mother Nature herself. This death will provide its own means of consolation: the moon that is invoked to 'catch at every mountain head' (l. 114) and 'To spangle all the happy shores' (l. 120) evokes Wordsworth's 'Elegiac Verse', 'In Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth' (1842), where the speaker finds the consolation he seeks in the 'Meek Flower' (VI. l. 52) 'Spangling a cushion green like moss' (VI. l. 57), which he finds once he has crossed the 'mountain' (VI. l. 60). As Sacks makes clear, the consolation in Wordsworth's poem is found once the speaker has crossed the mountain, crossed over into death, and is derived from a 'scarcely transformed sexual impulse toward the mother earth'.<sup>143</sup> The full effect of the unconscious Wordsworthian presence in the text, therefore, will be clear once the search for the lost Wordsworthian imagination is over and the mountain has been crossed; only then will nature provide the recompense for which text and poet are searching.

## **Conclusion**

The poem's repeated and habitual return to the Wordsworthian language of the past overturns some of the standard readings of Tennyson, which see the poet as attempting to escape the long shadow of Romantic transcendentalism. Indeed, the poet himself was explicit about his need to escape the shadow cast by imaginative illumination in poems like the 1829 'Timbuctoo' or 'The Palace of Art' (1832). But the cyclical return to the Wordsworthian imagination in *In Memoriam* is based on needy compulsion in the face of catastrophe. The fact that this needy compulsion treads a pathway to death means that the poem ends in a state of complete nihilism, with its commitment to faith, science, love and the imagination rescinded. Such nihilism, of course, points to *In Memoriam*'s successor, *Maud*, where 'The hoofs of the horses beat, / Beat' (ll. 247-48) to the sound of death and despair, although

inevitably that way madness lies. But the text also points to death as a homecoming: with Wordsworth as his 'poetic father-figure',<sup>144</sup> Tennyson can be seen as involuntarily complicit in the linguistic and poetic entrapment in which he and his poem are caught, as both are returned 'home'. Moreover, the solace that is promised beyond the mountain ensures that both text and poet will remain forever with their Wordsworthian 'father', but also the 'Father' towards whom Wordsworth is himself reaching.

The next chapter will examine the implications of remaining with this Wordsworthian 'father' in Tennyson's 'Tithonus' (1860), another poem directly linked with the death of Hallam.

## Notes

1. The full title of *In Memoriam* is *In Memoriam A. H. H. OBIT MDCCCXXXIII*, although the shorter version will continue to be cited in the chapter.
2. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, ed. Frank Kermode, 3<sup>rd</sup> enlarged edn (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 336.
3. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1989), p. 338.
4. See Roland Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 159.
5. Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, p. 160.
6. Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, p. 159.
7. Peter M. Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 18.
8. See ‘The Lady of Shalott’, in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, II. 1. 38 (p. 22). All other references to Tennyson’s poetry, including *In Memoriam*, are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text.
9. Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 203.
10. Irene Hsiao, ‘Calculating Loss in Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*’, *Victorian Poetry*, 47.1 (Spring 2009): 173-196 (p. 178).
11. Ricks cites Shakespeare’s sonnet sequence as ‘an important source for *In Memoriam*’. See Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 214.
12. Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1. Sacks sees this intentionality as

having a very particular function in elegy, as ‘the echoing language of dead poets is used by the mourner to help him hear the sound of his loss, and thus to be convinced of it’. See *The English Elegy*, p. 25.

13. John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), p. 64.
14. Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 181.
15. Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets*, p. 148. The ‘Intimations’ Ode quotation is taken from *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, edited and with introductions and notes by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), l. 148 (p. 461). All subsequent references to this, and other, Wordsworth poems are to Selincourt’s edition and appear parenthetically in the text unless otherwise stated.
16. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 339.
17. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, p. 10. Hinds has allusion in mind here, but the issue he raises applies to all aspects of poetic meaning, including that of intertextual transmission.
18. See Ricks’ note to lyric XIX, in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 364.
19. Lawrence Kramer, ‘Victorian Sexuality and “Tintern Abbey”’, *Victorian Poetry*, 24.4 (Winter 1986): 399-410 (p. 406).
20. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, pp. 387-88, xlv 4. Anthony H. Harrison points out how the ‘mythos of human immortality [of the ‘Intimations’ Ode] constitutes a thematic foundation and a body of transcendental assumptions’ in Victorian literature, including *In Memoriam*, where it ‘generated a mode of perceiving experience that became something of a cultural compulsion [...] for all Victorian readers [...] instructing its audience that nature beneficently helps man to perceive the certainty of

spiritual immortality'. See Anthony H. Harrison, *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems: Intertextuality and Ideology* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), pp. 177, 177-78. This chapter will suggest that, rather than beneficent certainty, the presence of the 'Intimations' Ode in *In Memoriam* introduces an anxious uncertainty with regard to imaginative immortality, predicated on the loss contained within the Wordsworthian imaginative moment itself.

21. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 455, cvii 11.

22. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 469, cxxiii 8.

23. Hollander draws a distinction between allusion and echo, confirming 'In contrast with literary allusion, echo is a metaphor of, and for, alluding, and does not depend on conscious intention'. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 64. Sarah Annes Brown maintains the same distinction between allusion and echo as Hinds, defining echo as 'a more neutral word [than allusion] which doesn't rule out the possibility of conscious borrowing but implies that the connection isn't strong enough to prove deliberate agency'. See Sarah Annes Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost: Allusion and the Uncanny* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 8.

24. Ashton Nichols argues that moment of transcendence in section XCV falls within the category of the 'modern literary epiphany', whereby 'the new epiphany, a strictly human escape from the ordinary bounds of thought, derives its usefulness as a critical term from its psychological origins and its formal literary properties. Seen in this light, section 95 of *In Memoriam* reveals a more complex aspect of Tennyson's own revelatory states than is ordinarily observed'. See Ashton Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Modern Literary Moment* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p. 157.

25. Sarah Rose Cole, 'The Recovery of Friendship: Male Love and Developmental Narrative in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*', *Victorian Poetry*, 50.1 (Spring 2012): 43-66.
26. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 268.
27. Seamus Perry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005), p. 141.
28. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 268.
29. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 141.
30. Matthew Rowlinson, *An Introduction to In Memoriam*. Available at [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) [accessed 3 March 2014].
31. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 192.
32. Joanna E. Rapf, "'Visionaries of Dereliction': Wordsworth and Tennyson", *Victorian Poetry*, 24.4 (Winter 1986): 373-85 (p. 378).
33. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 13.
34. Stephen Gill, for instance, sees 'Tintern Abbey' as endorsing the 'providential economy of loss and gain, for whatever the poet has lost he has been granted "Abundant recompence"'. See Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 203. I suggest that this gain is far less assured than Gill claims.
35. Seamus Perry, 'Elegy', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Anthony H. Harrison (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 115-133 (p. 119).
36. Michael O'Neill explores Wordsworth's analysis of the vitiating capacity of language in *The Excursion*, in *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 25-61, from which the quotation from *The Excursion* is taken, as is



the quotation from Wordsworth's third *Essay upon Epitaphs*. The latter can be found in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, pp. 84-85.

37. Matthew Rowlinson, *Tennyson's Fixations: Psychoanalysis and the Topics of the Early Poetry* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994), pp. 144-45. Helen Vendler provides an alternative reading, seeing the 'Intimations' Ode as representing 'the acquisition of the power of metaphor'. See Helen Vendler, 'Lionel Trilling and the Immortality Ode', *The Music of What Happens: Poems, Poets, Critics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 112, quoted in O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, p. 50.
38. Harrison, on the contrary, suggests that the poem 'memorialises the permanent recovery of joy', which is 'permanent, precisely because it is inscribed in an always accessible work of art that can, in future, preempt the agonized process of realizing loss and recovering joy that the poem delineates'. See *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*, p. 63. Additionally, 'meanest' here may have a source in eighteenth-century poetry, where it carries a sense of 'humbleness' or 'modesty', as in Thomas Gray's unfinished Ode of 1754 or 1755, published 1775, '[Ode on the Pleasure Arising From Vicissitude]': 'The meanest flowret of the vale' (l. 45), for instance. For more on the possible eighteenth-century derivation of Wordsworth's 'meanest' in the 'Intimations' Ode, see Michael O'Neill and Paige Tovey, 'Shelley and the English Tradition: Spenser and Pope', in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Michael O'Neill and Anthony Howe, with the Assistance of Madeleine Callaghan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 494-512 (p. 505).
39. Hollander looks at the way in which poems seem unconsciously 'to echo prior ones for the personal aural benefit of the poet, and [...] whichever poetic followers can

overhear the reverberations'. See 'Preface', in *The Figure of Echo*, ix. He also reveals how 'fragmentations and breakings-off of intertextual echo can result in pieces of voice as small as single words, and as elusive as particular cadences'. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 88.

40. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 439, xcv 36.

41. *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, III, p. 63. O'Neill points out how the word "seems" [is the] catalyst of many Romantic epiphanies'. See 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. 50.

42. Quoted in Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, 'Retrospect 1971', xiv.

43. Hartman describes Wordsworth's encounter with the daffodils in 'I WANDERED lonely as a cloud', as 'casual' and a 'mild seizure or ecstasy'. See Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, Foreword by Donald G. Marshall (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 23.

44. See Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 101-02. Hollander writes of how earlier texts 'anticipate' later ones, and, while, *In Memoriam* anticipates *The Prelude* in terms of publication by a mere two months (published May, as opposed to, July 1850), its 'flash' nevertheless anticipates that of *The Prelude*.

45. Hartman sees Wordsworth as having a 'touching compulsion', a 'kind of reality testing' derived from two related sources – the lost mother and the need for artistic representation. See *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 22.

46. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited from the manuscripts, with textual and critical notes by E. de Selincourt, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 'The Vale of Esthwaite', I, ll. 350-55 (p. 278).

47. Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 22.
48. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 306.
49. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 309.
50. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 307. The lines from 'The Tuft of Primroses' are quoted from Wu's book, as Wordsworth's draft never made it into print. See ll. 42-44 (pp. 306-07). Subsequent quotations from this edition are given in the chapter.
51. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, pp. 307-08.
52. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 24.
53. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 25.
54. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 33.
55. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 172.
56. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 306.
57. T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding II', in *Collected Poems: 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), l. 39 (p. 204).
58. Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 180.
59. Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 180.
60. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, p. 123.
61. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 199.
62. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 24.
63. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 199.
64. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 308.
65. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 308.
66. Rowlinson, *Tennyson's Fixations*, p. 95.

67. Ian H. C. Kennedy, in 'In Memoriam and the Tradition of Pastoral Elegy', *Victorian Poetry*, 15 (1977): 351-66 (p. 362).
68. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, p. 159. Hartman suggests that 'Lucy's death or the thought of her death [...] occurs in the blank between the stanzas'.
69. 'The Romantic Poets: Nutting by William Wordsworth'. Available at [www.guardian.com/books/booksblog2010](http://www.guardian.com/books/booksblog2010) [accessed 5 March 2014].
70. As with the use of 'flashed', the past tense 'glimmered' confirms the 'referential value' of the language used in the text: as Sharon Cameron maintains that 'Past-tense verbs are more frequently a marker of a given utterance's referential value (of what, in the world, it is concerned with) than of its temporal cast'. See Sharon Cameron, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 166.
71. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 32.
72. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 32.
73. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 32.
74. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, I, 'Written in very early youth', ll. 1-5 (p. 3).
75. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 61.
76. Cole, 'The Recovery of Friendship', p. 56.
77. Cole, 'The Recovery of Friendship', p. 55.
78. Cole, 'The Recovery of Friendship', p. 55.
79. Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 23-25, qtd. in Cole, 'The Recovery of Friendship', p. 54.
80. Cole, 'The Recovery of Friendship', p. 54.
81. Ricks, *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 338.

82. As Hollander makes clear, ‘the natural fact of disembodied voice vanishes, in a later stage of things, into text’. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 22. If Hollander is correct, the movement of the Reaper’s song in ‘The Solitary Reaper’ is reversed here, as the universally subjective voice becomes text. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 22.
83. It is an oversimplification to regard the Romantics as purely self-expressive. Michael O’Neill points out: ‘the degree of simplification involved in viewing the Romantic mode as “predominantly self-expressive” is considerable (it ignores, for instance, the fact that the Romantic self is often performed as much as expressed)’. See Michael O’Neill, ‘The Romantic Bequest: Arnold and Others’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 217-34 (p. 229).
84. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 37.
85. Anna Barton, *Alfred Lord Tennyson’s In Memoriam: A Reading Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 15.
86. Barton, *Alfred Lord Tennyson’s In Memoriam*, p. 15.
87. Hartman, *Wordsworth’s Poetry 1787-1814*, p. 13.
88. The Wordsworthian presence in the text also confirms *In Memoriam* as a poem of Wordsworthian reflection, as opposed to a poem of sensation, based on Hallam’s two-fold division of poetry in ‘On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, And on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson’ (1831). See Arthur Hallam, ‘On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, And on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson’, in *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter (1831; London: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 182-98. Tennyson’s role as a ‘poet of sensation’ is dealt with in more depth in Chapter Three, on ‘Tithonus’ (1860), a self-consciously emblematic ‘poem of sensation’.

89. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 122.
90. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 122.
91. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 122.
92. Kramer, 'Victorian Sexuality and "Tintern Abbey"', p. 406.
93. Kramer, 'Victorian Sexuality and "Tintern Abbey"', p. 406.
94. O'Neill describes how 'self-quotation is a practice common among the Romantics'.  
See *The All-Sustaining Air*, p. 48.
95. See 'Preface to the Edition of 1815', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 752-56 (p. 755).
96. 'Deep' is often synonymous with the sea in Tennyson's poetry. In 'Crossing the Bar' (1889), for instance, the sea is a 'boundless deep'. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, l. 7 (p. 665) and n. 7. In 'The Kraken' (1830), the Kraken sleeps 'Below the thunders of the upper deep'. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, l. 1 (p. 17).
97. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 14.
98. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 14.
99. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 249.
100. O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, p. 56.
101. Hollander is referring here to Joshua Poole's *The English Parnassus*, which, in 1657, lists 'babbling' as one of its epithets for echo. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 18. Hollander also points to how, in *Metamorphoses III*, the nymph Echo, from whom the current usage stems, is originally 'a mere chatterbox', while also pointing out how 'romantic images of echo [include] even the babbling, chiding nymph of Narcissus'. See *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 8, 20.
102. Aidan Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 128.

103. Hollander confirms how echoing is for Wordsworth a central ‘figure of representation’ which plays ‘an important part in the dialogue of nature and consciousness’. He notes how Wordsworth ‘seems almost to sum up the mythological history of echo’ in his late poem, ‘The Power of Sound’, whilst ‘the complex relationships of light and sound, and of the originality of repetition’, move ‘far beyond the imaginative consequences of the traditional mythology’ in episodes of *The Prelude* and ‘There was a Boy’. See *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 18-19.
- Hollander also points to how mountains feature heavily in the figure of echo, in that they provide ‘sufficiently distant reflecting surfaces [...] so that echoes seem, as disembodied voices, to inhabit such regions’. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 1.
104. See Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 129-30. Tennyson’s lyric appears on p. 265 of *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*. Hollander glosses ‘the classical rhetoricians’ trope of *transumption* (or *metalepsis*, in its Greek form) [...] as a movement from one trope to another’. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 144.
105. Lawrence Kramer, ‘Victorian Poetry / Oedipal Politics: *In Memoriam* and Other Instances’, *Victorian Poetry*, 29.4 (Winter 1991): 351-63 (p. 359).
106. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 99.
107. Rowlinson, *An Introduction to In Memoriam*, p. 28.
108. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 172.
109. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 263.
110. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 337, p. 343, P 22-4, and pp. 396-97, lv.
111. As quoted by Ricks in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 398, lvi.
112. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 396, lv.
113. As quoted by Ricks in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 397, lv.
114. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 263.

115. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 257.
116. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 257.
117. Rowlinson, *Tennyson's Fixations*, pp. 144-45.
118. By contrast, Cameron suggests that 'to live without language, without the mediacy of language, is to live without death, to exist still in the infancy of a time where the self feels no discrepancy between being and desire, moving around the very otherness that, as yet, it has no need to seek to overcome'. See *Lyric Time*, p. 195.
119. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 117.
120. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 254.
121. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 169.
122. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 265.
123. James Eli Adams, 'Woman Red in Tooth and Claw: Nature and the Feminine in Tennyson and Darwin', *Victorian Studies*, 33.1 (Autumn 1989): 7-27 (p. 16). See also Ricks, *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 400, lvi 28 for other derivations of 'veil' in the poem, including from Percy Bysshe Shelley. Michael O'Neill reminds that 'veil' is the 'central image in Shelley's poetry'. See Michael O'Neill, 'The Wheels of Being: Tennyson and Shelley', in *Tennyson Among the Poets: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst and Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 181-98 (p. 197).
124. Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, p. 39.
125. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, p. 150.
126. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 186.
127. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 186.
128. Rowlinson, *Tennyson's Fixations*, p.75.
129. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 138.



130. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 138.
131. Alan Sinfield, *The Language of Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p. 148.
132. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 115.
133. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 484, E132.
134. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 484, E141-4.
135. Carl Plasa, 'Tennyson Revised: Influence and Doubling in *Four Quartets*', in *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations*, 2.1 (April 1998): 56-74 (p. 65).
136. Plasa, 'Tennyson Revised', p. 64.
137. Plasa, 'Tennyson Revised', p. 64.
138. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, pp. 338-39. Tennyson said, when reading the poem to James Knowles: 'The poem concludes with the marriage of my youngest sister Cecilia. It was meant to be a kind of *Divina Commedia*, ending with happiness [...] It is rather the cry of the whole human race than mine. In the poem altogether private grief swells out into thought of, and hope for, the whole world. It begins with a funeral and ends with a marriage – begins with death and ends in promise of new life – a sort of Divine Comedy, cheerful at the close'.
139. Perry, for instance, describes the form of the elegy thus: 'So then, an elegy is not, traditionally, merely a lament; nor yet is it an unchecked yowl of outrage at the wrongness of the universe; but rather a dealing with despair, spoken from the other side of grief; and the feeling that it moves towards, or around, is consolatory, though (in the best elegies) not simply consolatory. This often involves an immense effort of mind to think well of death – often by denying that it is, strictly, death at all'. See 'Elegy', p. 116. Sacks sees the ending of *In Memoriam* as a 'postponement' of

consolation, as ‘The final lines not only stave off consummation but seem to fall into a self-involved trance in which motion of any kind is laid to sleep or drugged. The syntactic advance is so exhausting that one tends to collapse upon the final word rather than advance according to its meaning’. See *The English Elegy*, p. 201.

140. Cole, ‘The Recovery of Friendship’, p. 44.

141. See Sigmund Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, in *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, with an Introduction by Maud Ellmann (1917; London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 203-18.

142. Rowlinson provides a useful gloss on how Freud, in a series of essays including ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, ‘proposes the existence in all human subjects, and in indeed in all organic life, of a drive to death. The drive expresses itself in various forms of repetition-compulsion, which Freud understands as a manifestation of a compulsion to return to a prior – ultimately inorganic – state’. See *Tennyson’s Fixations*, p. 150. He also points out how Freud rehearses this question in ‘Theme of the Three Caskets’, where ‘the subject so conceived must also be conceived as driven to choose its own death, which Freud represents as also the mother’s gift’. See *Tennyson’s Fixations*, p. 150.

143. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 33.

144. Ruth Padel, ‘Tennyson: Echo and Harmony, Music and Thought’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 323-36 (p. 327).

## Chapter Three

### Tennyson's 'Tithonus' and the Reconfiguration of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'

Tennyson is often described, in the light of Arthur Hallam's influential essay, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, And on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson' (1831), as a 'Poet of Sensation',<sup>1</sup> for whom the mind has passive sympathy with the sensible objects around it. In the same essay, Hallam describes William Wordsworth as a poet of 'reflection',<sup>2</sup> thereby immediately setting up a dichotomy between what he sees as two types of poetry and two types of poet. 'Tithonus' (1860), written as a companion piece to 'Ulysses' soon after Hallam's death,<sup>3</sup> has been described as 'one of the most intense descriptions of sensation ever',<sup>4</sup> with its lush poetic effects and beguiling syntax, justifying Hallam's classification of Tennyson as a poet of the sensational kind. The poem, a monologue, recounts an episode from the marriage of the Trojan prince, Tithon, and the goddess of the dawn, Aurora or Eos, based on the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, which itself recounts Aphrodite's seduction of Anchises;<sup>5</sup> it traces the effects of eternal life without eternal youth, as Tithonus is doomed to grow old, and yet cannot die.<sup>6</sup> The form of the monologue ostensibly allows Tennyson to explore an aspect of himself – in the case of 'Tithonus', grief – while simultaneously distancing himself from it; almost a fifth of his poems are in written in this way,<sup>7</sup> including, of course, 'Ulysses' (1842).

The poem alludes directly, and famously, to Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850): 'The Simplon Pass' section from *The Prelude* reverberates in 'Tithonus's' opening lines, with its woods that 'decay and fall',<sup>8</sup> prompting Christopher Ricks to claim that the replacement of the opening lines of the 1833 'Tithon' – 'Ay me! Ay me!' – with 'The woods decay, the woods decay and fall' in the 1860 'Tithonus' 'suggests the influence of one of [Tennyson's] favourite passages of Wordsworth'.<sup>9</sup> Eric Griffiths, in another essay – 'Tennyson's Breath' –

draws attention to how ‘Tennyson retunes the cadence of “immortality / Broods” into “immortality / Consumes” as he revalues “darkness . . . darkness”, from which in Wordsworth’s ode “we” long to escape’;<sup>10</sup> as he says, the poem shows how ““Tithonus” and its writer live in time as Tithonus the speaker does not [...] through the poem’s re-setting of Wordsworth’s “Ode...” to new and dissentient harmonies’.<sup>11</sup>

The allusive links between ‘Tithonus’ and ‘Tintern Abbey’ (1798) have been explored, too: Daniel A. Harris, for instance, claims that the closing lines of ‘Tithonus’, where monologue moves to soliloquy, are a ‘careful inversion’ of the pattern of ‘Tintern Abbey’, which shows the ‘loss of community that accompanies his [Tithonus’s] linguistic inadequacy’;<sup>12</sup> ‘careful inversion’, the language of authorial intention at work in the poem, as Harris sees it. Similarly, Henry Weinfield, describing the poem’s Wordsworthesque opening lines, avers that its ‘burthen’ (l. 38) derives from ‘Tintern Abbey’’s vapours that ‘weep their burthen to the ground’ (l. 2) and its ‘still, sad music of humanity’ (l. 91).<sup>13</sup> However, Weinfield uses the terms ‘echo’ and ‘resonate’ loosely, and does not explicitly claim the derivation to be an allusive one, preferring instead to see the ‘underlying presence of Ecclesiastes’ as the poem’s ‘ground bass, or burden’.<sup>14</sup>

The poem also alludes to other authors, especially John Keats: Harris looks at the poem’s Keatsian connections, suggesting that Tennyson’s rendering of the mutable Dawn develops Keats’ methods in ‘To Autumn’;<sup>15</sup> and Richard Cronin points out that Keats has long been recognised as an important precursor in Tennyson’s poetry generally, as has Shelley, although he suggests that Tennyson ‘reads Shelley through poems written by the women poets who succeeded him’,<sup>16</sup> like Felicia Hemans and Letitia Landon.

But the conscious allusion to Wordsworth’s poetry in the poem obscures associations of which the poet is unaware, and which send the poem in directions over which he has no control. The poem involuntarily inscribes the language of Wordsworth’s poetry, and ‘Tintern

Abbey' in particular, and thus contains both allusive and unconscious, or intertextual, citations of the 1798 poem. The distance created between author and speaker by the monologue form is eroded by the unconscious language of the poem, as it reveals aspects of the poet, and the poem, that would otherwise have remained concealed; as Michael O'Neill says, 'a poem has a mind (and an unconscious) of its own'.<sup>17</sup>

The division between the allusive and the intertextual or unconscious, as ever, is imprecise, but maintained throughout the chapter on the basis that such a division exists and that the intertextual can be defined against the allusive by the way in which it allows accidental meanings to arise from the text. The allusive, by contrast, suggests that the poet is in control of both his or her material and the direction of the poem, as no allusion is 'unintentional'.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the role of the reader is crucial in terms of the allusive and the intertextual, as, from a Derridean perspective, a poem is a field of unstable signs,<sup>19</sup> and open to an infinite number of reader-interpretations, thus negating whatever control the poet thinks he or she has over the poem; reading cannot ever fix meaning, however.

An analysis of the unconscious intertextual inscriptions and echoes in the poem is an area of study that has been largely ignored or overlooked in critical approaches to the poem thus far, and forms the basis of the reading that follows. The reading of the poem's intertextual language opens up hitherto unexplored aspects of the text, revealing 'Tithonus', and, in part the earlier 'Tithon' on which it is based, as a rewriting of 'Tintern Abbey', effects achieved through the intertextualisation of 'Tintern Abbey' itself, but also through the assimilation of *An Evening Walk* (1793) and 'Resolution and Independence' (1807). These findings could not have been established simply by adhering to a purely allusive analysis of the poem's language.

Before looking at the unconscious effects within the poem, however, the chapter swerves into an analysis of Tennyson's poetic relations with Wordsworth, in order to open

out the rigid dichotomy set up by Hallam, and to contextualise the writing of the poem itself, as well as to demonstrate how historicist accounts cannot provide a definitive overview of the literary and poetic influences in the poem.<sup>20</sup>

### **Wordsworth and Tennyson**

Hallam's essay appeared in Moxon's *Englishman's Magazine* in 1831 as a review of Tennyson's first independent book of poems, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830),<sup>21</sup> and contains what seems like a definitive account of Tennyson's early poetics. In the essay, Hallam differentiates the poems of Shelley and Keats from those of Wordsworth, whom he describes as writing a 'poetry of reflection', where:

there is undoubtedly no reason why he may not find beauty in those moods of emotion, which arise from the combinations of reflective thought; and it is possible that he may delineate these with fidelity, and not be led astray by any suggestions of an unpoetical mood. But though possible, it is hardly probable; for a man whose reveries take a reasoning turn, and who is accustomed to measure his ideas by their logical relations rather than the congruity of the sentiments to which they refer, will be apt to mistake the pleasure he has in knowing a thing to be true, for the pleasure he would have in knowing it to be beautiful, and so will pile his thoughts in a rhetorical battery, that they may convince, instead of letting them flow in a natural course of contemplation, that they may enrapture.<sup>22</sup>

He contrasts this with those poets whom he describes as 'poets of sensation rather than reflection',<sup>23</sup> like Shelley and Keats, for whom:

Susceptible of the slightest impulse from external nature, their fine organs trembled into emotion at colours, and sounds, and movements, unperceived or unregarded by duller temperaments. Rich and clear were their perceptions of visible forms; full and deep their feelings of music. So vivid was the delight attending the simple exertions of eye and ear, that it became mingled more and more with their trains of active thought, and tended to absorb their whole being into the energy of sense. Other poets *seek* for images to illustrate their conceptions; these men had no need to seek; they lived in a world of images; for the most important and extensive portion of their life consisted in those emotions which are immediately conversant with the sensation.<sup>24</sup>

For Hallam, in the poet of sensation the ‘simple exertions of eye and ear’ are mingled with ‘trains of active thought’, so that the ‘whole being’ of the poet is absorbed in sense, whereas in the poet of reflection the pleasure lies in ‘knowing a thing to be true’ rather than ‘knowing it to be beautiful’. Carol T. Christ points out that ‘Hallam’s description of the poetry of sensation resembles what John Ruskin would later criticize in *Modern Painters* as the pathetic fallacy, the attribution of human emotion to our impressions of external things’.<sup>25</sup> Significantly, Hallam, in the essay, aligns Tennyson with:

the class we have already described as Poets of Sensation. He sees all the forms of nature with the “eruditus oculus”, and his ear has a fairy fineness. There is a strange earnestness in his worship of beauty which throws a charm over his impassioned song, more easily felt than described, and not to be escaped by those who have once felt it.<sup>26</sup>

He goes on to describe *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* as having:

five distinctive excellencies of his own manner. First, his luxuriance of imagination, and at the same time his control over it. Secondly his power of embodying himself in ideal characters, or rather moods of character, with such extreme accuracy of adjustment, that the circumstances of the narration seem to have a natural correspondence with the predominant feeling, and, as it were, to be evolved from it by assimilative force. Thirdly his vivid, picturesque delineation of objects, and the peculiar skill with which he holds all of them *fused*, to borrow a metaphor from science, in a medium of strong emotion. Fourthly, the variety of his lyrical measures, and exquisite modulation of harmonious words and cadences to the swell and fall of the feelings expressed. Fifthly, the elevated habits of thought, implied in these compositions, and imparting a mellow soberness of tone, more impressive, to our minds, than if the author had drawn up a set of opinions in verse, and sought to instruct the understanding rather than to communicate the love of beauty to the heart.<sup>27</sup>

Griffiths stresses how Hallam's distinction between sensation and reflection is based on the Kantian notions of intuition and concept, and more 'generally from [the] Kantianism diffused in England principally by Coleridge'.<sup>28</sup> Kant distinguishes between intuition and concept, sensation and thought, claiming that 'reason cannot operate outside the sphere of what is perceptible to man through his senses but that man's senses inevitably operate under the sway of certain concepts inherent to the human mind. Hence, the Kantian maxim, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind"<sup>29</sup> However, as Griffiths goes on to point out:



though Kant argued that no experience is possible without both intuition and concept, allegorical contests begin to be waged between a life of sensations and one of thoughts. What were supposed to be two sides of a coin become two sides of a battle. It is in this sense that Kant is also the father of the “dissociation of sensibility”.<sup>30</sup>

Isobel Armstrong also makes clear that in:

making an intransigent distinction between sensation and reflection Hallam never fully defined what he meant by these terms. Emotion, feeling, sensuous experience, sense data, intuition, are all rather different but all possible significations of “sensation”. Unlike Kant, for whom “reflection” might be glossed as epistemological ideas (in the third critique at least) and “sensation” as the unique representations of the data of experience by consciousness, Hallam was not exact and left unquestioned a dichotomy between thought and sensation which was filtered through Schiller into categories which actually construct the division they describe.<sup>31</sup>

Armstrong sees this as a result of Hallam’s failure to give adequate definition to the terms ‘sensation’ and ‘reflection’, which ‘proved fatal as poetry was theorised antithetically either in terms of the discourse of moral statement or as a much weaker picturesque poetry of empathy rather than “sensation”, an empathy Ruskin was later to term the pathetic fallacy’.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Matthew Campbell views Hallam’s literary criticism as ‘not completely passive’<sup>33</sup> and sees ‘On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry’ as a mediation between active and passive thought, where ‘Perception is pictured as an energetic principle, a mingling in habit of “active thought” and sensation’,<sup>34</sup> and where ‘The “energy of sense” becomes

progressively developed until the finely tuned perceiving machine of the body responds with seeming passivity, but actual agency, to “the slightest impulse from external nature”<sup>35</sup>

Christ perceives Tennyson’s early poetry as using sense impressions in the way in which Hallam describes, citing the first stanza of ‘Mariana’ as an example, in which she sees Tennyson as using a ‘language of sense impressions, predominantly visual impressions of landscape, to convey these moods. Any philosophical statement is motivated by character or mood’.<sup>36</sup> Campbell also reads ‘Mariana’ as a poem of sensation, although he sees the poem as employing both active thought and passive sensation, thus highlighting Hallam’s ‘mingling in habit’ of the two forms. He writes of the poem:

We are in a mental landscape, which if not phantasmagoria, is the product of a mind (Tennyson’s and Mariana’s) aware of the effects of perception acting upon the phenomena perceived, as well as the effects of the phenomena acting upon the perceiver. This is Hallam’s absorption in the energy of sense, the transference and adoption of feeling.<sup>37</sup>

He goes on:

In a poem like “Mariana”, the operations of the heroine’s imagination upon the manifold take it as given, and then make of it understanding. We come to understand the objects which surround her as she understands them, as they are modified and given feeling according to her mood. The mind acts upon the world as it is acted upon in return in these operations of the imagination. Through imagination, a volitional power here, both are modified.<sup>38</sup>

Mariana's projections of thought over objects of sense thus become increasingly disturbed, as her mood darkens: 'Old faces glimmered through the doors' (l. 66).

Hallam's definition of poetry finds an analogue in John Stuart Mill's early conception of poetry. In 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties' (1867), a conflation of 'What is Poetry?' and 'The Two Kinds of Poetry', both published in 1833, Mill distinguishes between the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley: Wordsworth's poetry, he claims, is almost always 'the mere setting of a thought. The thought may be more valuable than the setting, or it may be less valuable, but there can be no question as to which was first in his mind',<sup>39</sup> whereas poetry ought to represent 'feeling, confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude',<sup>40</sup> although, of course, the concept of feeling can be said to derive from Wordsworth, and the 'Preface' to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, where Wordsworth maintains that 'all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'.<sup>41</sup> Mill's review of Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* and *1832 Poems* (published 1833) 'shows him modifying the concept of the poetry of sensibility that his earlier essays had held up as an ideal. Now [he] argues that poets must apply the faculty of cultivated reason to their nervous susceptibility and to their sensitivity to the laws of association'.<sup>42</sup> Mill begins to see poems like Tennyson's 'The Palace of Art' (1832), with its criticism of aesthetic isolation, as evidence of such 'cultivated reason'.<sup>43</sup>

Christ perceives Tennyson as sensitive to 'the conflict that Mill's early essays on poetry reveal', claiming that he 'feels a tension between an imaginative allegiance to the poetry of sensation and a troubled aspiration to a higher level of generalization that would enable him to address a society from which the poet has been alienated'.<sup>44</sup> She sees this aspiration as taking Tennyson in the direction of the dramatic monologue, which enables 'the poet to move beyond the dilemmas that Romantic assumptions about poetic subjectivity had seemed increasingly to pose'.<sup>45</sup> As she says:

Modern poetry as Hallam defined it represented the individual sensibility, a sensibility that had become alienated from society. Browning makes this a dramatic situation; he frees the poet from the burden of alienated subjectivity by attributing to it a specific character and thereby extends poetry's representational range. Tennyson also moves increasingly towards a poetry of dramatic mask, as he provides mythological identities for his lyric speakers. Using sensation to depict mood and character, his poetry is closer to the dramatized subjectivity of Browning's monologues than the contrast between their poetics would seem to suggest [...] Each transforms the universal subjectivity of Romanticism, in which the "I" of the poet claims to represent each of us, to a dramatic representation of individual psychology that treats any such claim with irony.<sup>46</sup>

Out of Hallam's criticism of the early Tennyson, then, would stem dramatic monologues like 'Ulysses' and 'Tithonus'.

'The Palace of Art' was not the only early Tennyson poem in which he attempted to 'offer a critique of Hallam's position', however:<sup>47</sup> 'The Lotos Eaters' (1832) and 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832), in conjunction with 'The Palace of Art' itself, 'presage the destruction or decadence of the poetry of sensation and search both for another politics and a new aesthetic';<sup>48</sup> 'The Lotos Eaters' is 'at once the culminating expression of the poetry of sensation and its greatest critique', as Armstrong makes clear.<sup>49</sup> Equally, 'towards the 1840s Tennyson's work [is] pulling in two directions. One [takes] him towards the common-sense Wordsworthianism which assumed that simplicity of diction, permanent and universal moral truths which "transcend" the immediately political and exemplary tales, are a way of gaining

access to the sympathies of a wide audience’,<sup>50</sup> while ‘the other pull [is] towards lyric sensuousness such as is to be found in the work of Monckton Milnes’.<sup>51</sup>

If Tennyson was drawn to ‘common-sense Wordsworthianism’, then he was also drawn to the Wordsworthian lyric, with its emphasis on individual transcendence and the ‘narrative of recurrence’.<sup>52</sup> Tennyson himself refers to Wordsworth as ‘the greatest English poet since Milton’,<sup>53</sup> even though he enjoyed ribbing the older poet on occasion, and once held a competition with Edward Fitzgerald to invent the ‘weakest Wordsworthian line imaginable’, with both claiming authorship of the winning entry, ‘A Mr Wilkinson, a clergyman’.<sup>54</sup> J. M. Robertson perceives in Tennyson ‘a reaching towards modern naturalness of speech, a preference for simple constructions, similar to that shown and argued for by Wordsworth’.<sup>55</sup> Seamus Perry agrees that ‘some such Wordsworthian counter-aesthetic was certainly moving in a lot of Tennyson’s verse’,<sup>56</sup> and cites the ‘English Idylls’ as ‘deliberated exercises’ in naturalness of speech,<sup>57</sup> which, alongside Tennyson’s Lincolnshire dialect poems, ‘are manifestly an attempt to follow a Wordsworthian path’.<sup>58</sup>

Tennyson’s concern with Wordsworthian naturalness of speech, however, is matched by his interest in recurrence and personal transcendence, which Perry claims is symptomatic of the Wordsworthian lyric. The prevalence of the ‘narrative of recurrence’ in Tennyson’s work – the ‘situation of someone returning to a familiar scene to find it (and perhaps himself) still the same and yet altered utterly’<sup>59</sup> – is, Perry claims, ‘a dramatic circumstance for lyric that Tennyson inherited from Wordsworth’.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, he claims that much of Tennyson’s poetry might be seen to be under the ‘simultaneous sway of those rival justifications, the “poetical” and the psychologically revelatory (self-revelatory, or revelatory of a dramatic character)’,<sup>61</sup> and sees the tension between the two as gaining in intensity in ‘writing after the great Romantics (like Coleridge), who had created “poetry as poetry” as a vocation it had not been before – but whose creative interest in realistically representing the diverse life of the

human consciousness was quite as great as their commitment to the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the artwork'.<sup>62</sup> Perry foregrounds how the 'musical and the dramatic [meet] in the notion of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the hybrid genre invented by Wordsworth and Coleridge',<sup>63</sup> and how this in turn inspired Hallam to observe something similarly innovative in Tennyson's verse, where there was 'a new species of poetry, a graft of the lyric on the dramatic'.<sup>64</sup>

The 'narrative of recurrence', individual transcendence, and the 'graft of the lyric on the dramatic' meet in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', and the poem itself seems to hold a particular fascination for Tennyson. Tennyson criticises the poem for its seemingly unnecessary repetitions – the word "again" occurs four times in the first fourteen lines'<sup>65</sup> – but Frederick Locker-Lampson records him as saying (in 1869): 'You must not think because I speak plainly of Wordsworth's defects as a poet that I have not a very high admiration of him. I shall never forget my deep emotion the first time I had speech with him. I have a profound admiration for "Tintern Abbey"'.<sup>66</sup> Wordsworth's recurrent use of 'again' is linked to the poem's theme, however, which is itself predicated on recurrence, a pattern Tennyson himself replicates in the lyric, 'Tears, Idle Tears', from *The Princess* (1847), his 'greatest single response to Wordsworth's example'.<sup>67</sup> Tennyson unashamedly acknowledges 'Tintern Abbey's possible influence in the writing of 'Tears, Idle Tears', saying: 'This song came to me on the yellowing autumn-tide at Tintern Abbey, full for me of its bygone memories. It is the sense of the abiding in the transient'.<sup>68</sup>

'Tears, Idle Tears' is also linked to Arthur Hallam's essay 'On Sympathy', in which Hallam describes a self that exists both in the present and the past.<sup>69</sup> This sense of self is based on Hallam's belief in the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, the continuity of the self through experiences.<sup>70</sup> Hallam expresses the sense of the continuity of the self thus: 'It is an ultimate fact of consciousness, that the soul exists as one subject in various

successive states. Our belief in this is the foundation of all reasoning'.<sup>71</sup> Succession is necessarily linked to time, as Hallam expresses it:

To know a thing as past, and to know it as similar to something present, is a source of mingled emotions. There is pleasure, in so far as it is a revelation of self; but there is pain, in so far that it is a divided self, a being at once our own and not our own, a portion cut away from what we feel, nevertheless, to be single and indivisible.<sup>72</sup>

He goes on, picking up a reference to 'Tintern Abbey', and its concern with changeable states:

I fear these expressions will be thought to border on mysticism. Yet I must believe that if any one, in the least accustomed to analyse his feelings, will take the pains to reflect on it, he may remember moments in which the burden of this mystery has lain heavy on him; in which he has felt it miserable to exist, as it were, piece-meal, and in the continual flux of a stream; in which he has wondered, as at a new thing, how we can be, and have been, and not be that which we have been. But the yearnings of the human soul for the irrecoverable past are checked by a stern knowledge of impossibility.<sup>73</sup>

Campbell views 'On Sympathy', like Hallam's 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', as charting a course between passive and active states', where 'we can be all, or know all, through sympathy, yet still retain our identity',<sup>74</sup> and where there is a 'continuing identity of a unified subjective consciousness in time and place, both with reference to past and future states of mind, and out to the inference through sympathy of external objects or

other conscious subjects'.<sup>75</sup> Griffiths, however, regards Tennyson's 'Tears, Idle Tears' as simultaneously exploring the concept of a unified self and a self that changes with time. The poem:

simultaneously speaks of the soul's existence-as-one-subject (in various successive states) and of the soul's existence as one-subject-in-various-successive states. It thinks rhythmically of what it is to exist piecemeal in the flux of a stream, as each line at once preserves its own integrity and is shaded and absorbed into the whole. A similar double being, at once its own and not its own, affects the individual stanzas and their relations one to another.<sup>76</sup>

He also sees the poem as questioning 'those shaky lines between sensation and reflection, between the poetic and the philosophic character which Kantians such as Hallam illicitly developed from what they misunderstood of Kant's theses',<sup>77</sup> and claims that the poem 'has the force of an antimony which requires us to think things out again'.<sup>78</sup> Tennyson, as Perry points out, however, deplores the idea that the self was just an accumulation of transient experiences, preferring to think that 'something, an "I myself", stayed unchanged' through experience.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, Perry highlights how 'Tears, Idle Tears' cannot sustain the continuity between the past and present as in 'Tintern Abbey', despite the 'permanence of a subdued kind that does accompany the otherwise overpowering sense of transience' in the poem, as evidenced, for example, in the repeated refrain, 'the days that are no more' (l. 5).<sup>80</sup> Other Tennyson poems follow in the footsteps of 'Tintern Abbey' in their concern with the self in time: 'Tithonus', for example, 'works a remarkable variation on the theme',<sup>81</sup> with Tithonus always the same 'yet dreadfully mutable',<sup>82</sup> continually reminded of his 'changefulness' by the goddess of the dawn's own returning on her silver wheels;<sup>83</sup> and 'In



the Valley of Caunteretz' (1864) Tennyson develops the 'paradox that the self, like a stream, remains a single thing while forever changing, abiding in the transient'.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, despite Hallam's binary definition of Tennyson as a 'Poet of Sensation' and Wordsworth as a poet of 'reflection', a definition which artificially separates thought from sensation, Tennyson wrote some of his poetry in the light of, rather than in opposition to, Wordsworth's poetics, as his texts negotiate notions of the permanent yet changeful self; 'Tears, Idle Tears' is built around such a self, as is perhaps 'Tithonus'. But he also dissolves the divide between thought and feeling that Hallam establishes by producing poems like 'Mariana' where the speaker's mind projects thought over moments of sense to create visionary moments out of time. At the same time, Tennyson can be seen to be openly attempting to break free from the Romantic past while continuing to work within it: as early as 'Timbuctoo', prize-winning entry for the 1829 Cambridge University Best Poem Competition, he questions the durability of the imaginative life,<sup>85</sup> and in 'The Palace of Art' he exposes the 'narcissistic dimension of the cult of the self-authorising imagination'.<sup>86</sup> In 'Tithonus', this attempt to escape the past has a particularly Wordsworthian focus, as the analysis of the unconscious language inscribed in the poem reveals the extent to which Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' is obliquely reworked by Tennyson through its poetic manifestation of what is implicit in the earlier poem, and the implications of such a manifestation, including for the poet.

### **'Tithonus': 'In days far-off'**

As 'Tintern Abbey' is overlaid by the 'quiet of the sky' (l. 8), so 'Tithonus' is overlaid intertextually by 'Tintern Abbey'. 'Tithonus' works its poetic magic under 'Tintern Abbey's' 'quiet' sky, in that 'quiet limit of the world' (l. 7), where spaces are 'ever-silent' (l. 9). In

Wordsworth's poem, the speaker is nourished by nature under this quiet sky, with its 'green earth' (l. 105), and its 'waters, rolling from their mountain-springs' (l. 3). Nature provides a way for the speaker to 'see into the life of things' (l. 49), to gain 'a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused' (ll. 95-96), whatever that 'something' is. Nature's 'beauteous forms' (l. 22), and the memory of those forms, when 'the picture of the mind revives again' (l. 61), evoke 'that blessed mood, / In which the burthen of the mystery, / In which the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world, / Is lightened' (ll. 37-41). This process is, in turn, a product 'Of eye, and ear, – both what they half create, / And what perceive' (ll. 106-7), is random, although the gleams of transcendence are always in danger of being 'half-extinguished' (l. 58). Dorothy, the speaker's auditrix, becomes the person to whom the experiences of the eye and ear are entrusted, the guardian of those memories that have the capacity to sustain the self: the speaker hopes to read his 'former pleasures' (l. 118) in the 'shooting lights' (l. 118) of her 'wild eyes' (l. 118).

The adjective 'wild' here has a particular significance, as 'wild' in Wordsworth's poem is overtly associated both with nature and the transcendent process to which it gives rise: nature in 'Tintern Abbey' is described as a 'wild secluded scene' (l. 6), which engenders 'wild ecstasies' (l. 138). Dorothy is linked to this 'wild' landscape, and its capacity to induce sublimity in the speaker, through her 'wild' eyes. As a result of her 'wildness', Dorothy becomes 'nature', as well as a future custodian of the sublime moments it precipitates, although her 'wildness' suggests that her role as protector is not a secure one.

In 'Tithonus', Aurora is unconsciously assigned a similar role to Dorothy, in that she is the speaker's auditrix but also 'nature', though not in the sense of a pathetic fallacy as W. David Shaw suggests.<sup>87</sup> Intertextual links between 'Tithonus' and 'Tintern Abbey' underline the connections between both Aurora and nature and Aurora and Dorothy in the latter's capacity as 'nature'. Aurora's beauty is emphasised in 'Tithonus', evoked through the

‘beauteous forms’ (l. 22) of nature inscribed from ‘Tintern Abbey’: the speaker confirms that she ‘ever thus growest beautiful’ (l. 43); her ‘beauty’ will be renewed ‘morn by morn’ (l. 74). Likewise, nature can impress with her ‘silence’ (l. 18) in ‘Tintern Abbey’; Aurora lives in a realm of beautiful ‘silence’ (l. 44). Moreover, ‘nature and the language of the sense’ (l. 108) anchor the speaker’s ‘purest thoughts’ (l. 109) in ‘Tintern Abbey’; Aurora is described as having ‘pure brows’ (l. 35) and ‘shoulders pure’ (l. 35), which directly associates her with ‘nature and the language of the sense’ of the earlier poem. It is from these ‘pure’ brows and ‘pure’ shoulders that the ‘old mysterious glimmer’ (l. 34) of imaginative transcendence steals for Tithonus, confirming Aurora in her role as Wordsworth’s ‘nature’ in the poem.

Interestingly, these connections are shared with the poem’s earlier incarnation, ‘Tithon’, where Aurora’s eyes are ‘sweet’ (l. 34), and her brows and shoulders ‘pure’ (l. 32). Much is made of Aurora’s beauty in the earlier poem, too: at line 16, the speaker asks imploringly whether ‘thy love, / Thy beauty [can] make amends, though even now, / Close over us, the silver star’ (ll. 15-17), linking it, like the later version, specifically with ‘Tintern Abbey’; similarly, at line 38 Tithon concludes that Aurora’s sweetness and wildness ensure that she grows more ‘more beautiful’ (l. 38). Thus, the similarities between Tennyson’s two poems imply that the subliminal connections with ‘Tintern Abbey’ start immediately after Hallam’s death, and come to fruition in the later poem, rather than beginning with the connections that occur in ‘Tithonus’.

Darkness exposes another intertextual link between ‘Tintern Abbey’, Aurora and nature. ‘Tintern Abbey’, like much of Wordsworth’s poetry, contains darkness as well as light, as Keats notably recognises, writing of how Wordsworth’s imagination in the poem is ‘explorative of [...] dark passages’.<sup>88</sup> Nature is associated with darkness in ‘Tintern Abbey’, despite her power of being able to produce the light of transcendence in the speaker. She is Wordsworth’s loving ‘nurse’ (l. 109), although her nurturing capability is underpinned by an

incipient malevolence: the sycamore under which the speaker sits to contemplate his beloved nature's beauty is 'dark' (l. 10); the music he hears when looking on nature is 'still' and 'sad' (l. 91), and has the power to 'chasten and subdue' (l. 93). In 'Tithonus', nature's implicit malevolence in 'Tintern Abbey' is projected directly onto Aurora as 'nature' through the language inscribed in the poem. She is associated with light and lucidity (l. 53), but this is offset by a corresponding sense of darkness: she moves in a 'dark' world; her wild team shake the 'darkness' (l. 41) from their loosened manes; she is a 'rosy *shadow*' (l. 66; emphasis added). Moreover, she has the power to 'scare' (l. 46) Tithonus with her tears, to make him 'tremble' (l. 47) with the thought that the Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts; her team 'beat' (l. 42) the twilight into flakes of fire, with the echoing beat here a self-conscious reminder of the intertextual transference taking place in the poem.<sup>89</sup> These effects are intensified from the earlier 'Tithon', where Aurora's 'team' (l. 35) spread a 'rapid glow with loosened manes [and] / Fly, trampling twilight into flakes of fire' (ll. 36-37). Trampling implies wantonness, but beat denotes an inscribed violence.

But if Aurora is linked intertextually to nature – as dark and potentially dangerous – in 'Tintern Abbey', then she is also linked to Dorothy in her role as nature; Dorothy, too, contains 'dark passages', although these remain, like nature's malevolence in general, implicit in Wordsworth's poem. Nature produces 'sensations sweet' (l. 27) in 'Tintern Abbey', and Dorothy's memory is 'as a dwelling-place / For all sweet sounds and harmonies' (ll. 141-42) that nature produces, linking Dorothy directly to nature; Aurora's 'sweet eyes brighten' (l. 38) close to Tithonus' eyes. But the association has 'darker' overtones through the specific use of the adjective 'wild' in both texts; just as Dorothy is described as having 'wild eyes', which link her to the 'wild secluded scene' (l. 6) of 'Tintern Abbey' and the 'wild ecstasies' (l. 138) it generates, so Aurora is associated with wildness: she has a 'wild team' (l. 39), as she does in the earlier 'Tithon' (l. 35). She is nature here, with the same

capacity for sweetness and wildness as Dorothy, a duality neatly emblematised in whisperings that are not only 'sweet' but 'wild' (l. 61), and 'wild and airy' (l. 51) and 'more sweet' (l. 51) in the earlier version of the poem.

Significantly, malevolence is related to the way in which nature is eroticised in 'Tintern Abbey', as is Dorothy as 'nature' through her 'wildness', and this is a pattern replicated intertextually in 'Tithonus': the speaker in 'Tintern Abbey' describes nature as 'a feeling and a love' (l. 80), which produces 'aching joys' (l. 84) and 'dizzy raptures' (l. 85) in him; it is 'the thing he loved' (l. 72). Nature's eroticism signals another potential inconstancy, to complement the potential wildness she encompasses in 'Tintern Abbey', although it is a submerged effect, like that of wildness: she is a lover who loves and then leaves, the thing he '*loved*' (emphasis added). In 'Tithonus', Aurora is objectified as erotic 'nature': it is her 'shoulders' (l. 35) which are pure, her 'eyes' which are sweet (l. 38), her 'cheek' which is reddened (l. 37). The erotic implications of Dorothy's 'wildness' are made manifest, as what is implicit in 'Tintern Abbey' is accentuated in 'Tithonus': the 'wild' team 'love' (l. 40) Aurora, and are 'yearning' (l. 40) for her 'yoke' (l. 41); they shake their 'manes' (l. 41) like loosened hair.<sup>90</sup> As with Aurora's malevolence, the effects gain in intensity from the earlier 'Tithon', where Aurora's 'bosom' (l. 32) is 'throbbing' (l. 32), but where the 'wild team' do not 'love' her, as they do in 'Tithonus' (l. 40), simply 'Spreading a rapid glow' (l. 36).

Moreover, Aurora's eroticism in 'Tithonus' is streaked with the artificial, a disingenuousness suppressed or denied in Wordsworth's poem. If Dorothy is 'wild' nature, then she is nature with its social inscription denied. Wordsworth is often criticised for 'greening' nature,<sup>91</sup> for portraying her as a purely benign force, and for failing to acknowledge that she is a 'construct' as much as she is an expression of natural forces. As Saree Makdisi makes clear, in *An Evening Walk*, 'the straight lines of the enclosure hedges are softened, and they are transformed into graceful "*willowy hedgerows*", anticipating

*Tintern Abbey*'s "hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines / Of sportive wood run wild"<sup>92</sup>.

Aurora's erotic seduction of 'Tithonus' makes this level of artifice and manipulation unambiguous, as she is a fully sexualised and constructed 'nature'. It is the 'wild' Aurora of 'Tithonus', with her synthetic and malign wiles, who fulfils what is implicit in 'Tintern Abbey', in the unconscious reworking of the poem that is taking place.

Interestingly, the intertextual processing at work in 'Tithonus' reworks the poem itself, as the Tinternesque inscriptions in the poem undermine Aurora's claims to immortality: the immortal goddess becomes the mortal Dorothy, the super- or supranatural seductress, the quotidian friend and sister of nature. As a result of the two-way intertextual effects of the poem, Aurora is trapped within her newly diminished status, endlessly moving round on her silver wheels.

Moreover, Tithonus takes on the role of Wordsworth's speaker in 'Tintern Abbey', with Aurora as his 'nature', which foregrounds the intertextual reworking taking place in the poem, as 'Tithonus' continues to expose what is inherent, but submerged, in 'Tintern Abbey'. Tithonus speaks of a self that is able to reach moments of sublimity, but that self is a previous self in time. It is in 'days far-off' (l. 51) and 'with [...] other eyes' (l. 51) that Tithonus 'felt [his] blood / Glow with the glow' (ll. 55-56) of transcendence that Aurora as nature produces in him. This is a self at once itself and not itself, as Perry makes clear, but it is also a moment of Tinternesque sublimity, as the poem transcribes the exact language of Wordsworth's poem to describe Tithonus' experience. 'Felt in my blood' (l. 55), for instance, transcribes 'the sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart' (ll. 27-28) of 'Tintern Abbey', and the speaker's memories of, when 'in lonely rooms' (l. 25) he pulsates with the memory of nature's sensations that pass into the 'purer mind' (l. 29). Wordsworth's definite article is replaced with a personal pronoun in the line, directly attributing the feeling to Tithonus himself, but the repetition of the preposition 'in' roots the feeling in Wordsworth's poem's

self-expressiveness, as well as viscerally ‘in’ the blood. The text’s replacement of an iamb with a trochee in the first foot of the line – ‘Glow with the glow’ – also captures the rhythm of Wordsworth’s speaker’s pulsating sensations, while the slow pull of alliteration and assonance in the ‘Glow with the glow that slowly crimsoned all’ (l. 56) establishes the sense of Tithonus’ moment of sublimity as being out of ordinary time.

Tithonus’ acknowledgement of an imaginative self that exists prior in time is less potent in the earlier ‘Tithon’. Tithon bemoans how he was once ‘wooed’ (l. 47) by Aurora’s charms: ‘Ay me! ay me! with what another heart, / By thy divine embraces circumfused, / [...] With thy change changed, I felt this wondrous glow’ (ll. 41-44). He recognises that Aurora’s ‘change’ is ‘changed’, her blackness dissipated, unlike in the later version, where it continues to depress and subdue. The ‘wondrous glow’ that ends line 44, however, while extended in its intensity via the enjambment of the line into the next, nevertheless lacks the connective beat to Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’ of ‘Tithonus’, suspended in splendid isolation as it is at the end of line. This suggests that the connections to ‘Tintern Abbey’ gain in intensity in the later poem, where they also create a more pervasive effect. ‘Tithon’, for instance, is linked more closely to self-expressive lyricism than ‘Tithonus’, where lines 11-15 assert a ‘personal emotional state [that] is couched as a definitive statement of a universal condition, outside language’,<sup>93</sup> although ‘after the initial self-pitying lament, the passage seeks, through rhythmic regularity and repeated infinitives, to transcend the individual predicament, depicting an ahistorical condition of mythic suffering’.<sup>94</sup> The poem nevertheless remains an ‘idealist [one] of nomination and abstraction’.<sup>95</sup> ‘Tithonus’ supplants the strategies of the earlier poem, as it becomes the ‘poetry of enactment’,<sup>96</sup> replacing the lyrical and self-expressive with the performative and dramatic. The Wordsworthian inscriptions and associations in the poem complicate its performative and rhetorical status, however, pulling it inexorably back to the Wordsworthian lyricism and universalism it is formulated to supplant.

Nonetheless, Tithonus himself does not, or cannot, continue to transcend time in the way in which the moment of sublimity offers; nor can he continue to feel ‘in’ his blood, as he once did. Rather, he wants to exist inside time and outside of feeling, which parallels in turn his desire to relinquish his immortality for a return to the mortal world. Tithonus views his former self, a self that was able to feel and to glow, just as Wordsworth’s speaker in ‘Tintern Abbey’ views his former self and his previous moments of transcendence, but Tithonus is tired of the ‘gift’ of transcendence now, and wants to lose it and return it, and himself, to the ground. Wordsworth’s speaker in ‘Tintern Abbey’, by contrast, wants to continue to look back at his former self, to continue to draw from those moments of remembered imaginative transcendence, although he is aware that his opportunity to remember and to experience in this way is finite. Tithonus, on the other hand, wants Aurora to ‘Take back [her] gift’ (l. 27), the gift of imaginative transcendence, which is part of his ‘gift’ of immortality. Tellingly, the ‘other eyes’ to which Tithonus refers reveal that the moment of sublimity to which he looks back is vitiated from within, and thus not worthy of being ‘remembered’. The phrase is inscribed *verbatim* from *An Evening Walk*. The first of the two 1793 editions of the poem includes a speaker ‘with other eyes’,<sup>97</sup> the same speaker in both versions, who looks back at his former ability to invest nature with significance, an ability he subsequently loses but recaptures. Unlike Wordsworth’s speaker in the poem, however, Tithonus is unable to recover his lost imaginative experience, and remains trapped within the process of looking back ‘with other eyes’. He is unable to sublimate, and thus recover, his loss in the way that Wordsworth’s speaker does, as the intertextual inscriptions in the poem will not let him. The double-set of ‘days far-off’ (l. 48 and l. 51) of which he speaks, are reminders of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (1850) and its own inscriptions of loss from Wordsworth’s ‘The Solitary Reaper’ (1807). ‘Tithonus’, like section XCV of *In Memoriam*, devises a framing device of repeated and inscribed phrases that trap the speaker within his own imaginative loss,



suggesting that Tennyson is unconsciously reworking the same idea from his earlier poem. Like the Reaper, Tithonus and the poet are caught in a perpetual cycle of revisiting an imaginative loss, from which they want to escape, but which binds them in; they are bound by the past and by the language of the past. The 'dark earth' augments the sense of entrapment, evoking *An Evening Walk* and its 'dark earth [on which] the wearied vision fails' (l. 308), deepening the sense of linguistic ensnarement and the part this particular poem plays in 'Tithonus's' reworking of 'Tintern Abbey's' significant moments of remembered transcendence.

The 'inversion' of 'Tintern Abbey' taking place in the poem is exemplified by Tithonus' desire to return to the prosaic 'steam' (l. 68) of 'those dim fields about the homes / Of happy men that have the power to die' (ll. 69-70). The lines conjure up the 'wreaths of / smoke' (l. 17) around the prosaic pastoral homes of 'Tintern Abbey', although the positions are reversed, in that the wreaths of smoke precede the sublimity that is to come in 'Tintern Abbey' rather than follow it as here. Wordsworth's speaker finds moments of sublimity that allow him to escape the 'din / Of towns and cities' (ll. 25-26), while Tithonus wants to return to the world's chaos and noise. 'Dim' is a word of which Wordsworth makes much use, as in *An Evening Walk* (l. 164), and supplants the adjective 'still' (l. 59) used to describe the fields in 'Tithon', thereby further securing the Wordsworthian connections in the later poem. But Tithonus is trapped with his own failing imagination, and with his own synthetic 'nature', Aurora. The 'warmer love' (l. 154) nature induces in Wordsworth's speaker in 'Tintern Abbey' becomes 'cold' in 'Tithonus': in contrast to the 'shooting lights' (l. 118) of Dorothy's eyes, 'cold are all [Aurora's] lights' (l. 67), and 'cold' are Tithonus' 'wrinkled feet / Upon [her] glimmering thresholds' (ll. 67-68). 'Cold' Aurora is also a reminder of *An Evening Walk*, with its echoes of the 'tears' (l. 45) that evoke the 'cold cheek' (l. 322) and the 'shuddering tear [it] retains' (l. 322) of Wordsworth's poem after the speaker realises that his

imaginative powers are momentarily lost to darkness. Similarly, 'glimmering', as either a verb or adjective, suggests a 'faint or wavering light' (*OED*); Aurora's power to produce sublimity in Tithonus is thus weak and inconstant, although she retains the power still to enslave him with it.

'Glimmering' also evokes *An Evening Walk*, and its precarious hold on the imagination, emphasising that Aurora's imaginative power over him is a fading allure. In *An Evening Walk*, the speaker experiences a moment of transcendence, where 'music, stealing round the glimmering deeps / Charmed the tall circle of the enchanted steeps' (ll. 303-4). The mind's imaginative power is subverted in Wordsworth's poem, although the loss remains couched rather than explicit, or is associated with another source other than the failing power of the mind itself. For instance, with the coming of night comes the loss of imagination, and 'Lost in the thickened darkness, glimmers hoar' (l. 312), prompting the speaker to exhort: 'Stay! pensive, sadly-pleasing visions, stay! / Ah no! as fades the vale, they fade away' (ll. 119-20). While the speaker acknowledges that the 'glimmers' are lost and the visions fading, he attributes this loss to the darkness, rather than to the failing power of the mind to transcend nature. The use of the present tense in 'glimmering' emphasises that Tithonus is unable to break free from this cycle of yearning and fading; and nor can he attribute his failing power to the 'darkness' that is Aurora. It suggests, too, that Tennyson is himself unable to break free from the same rotation of yearning and fading, as 'glimmering' is a reinscription from his earlier 'Tithon' (l. 58). The 'gleaming halls of morn' (l. 10) offer no imaginative escape, as these, too, are eroded from within: 'gleaming' evokes 'Tintern Abbey' and the doubts the poem contains over the imagination's 'gleams' and the mind's capacity to sustain the moments of power it produces.

Furthermore, both Tithon and Tithonus refer to 'the old mysterious glimmer' ('Tithon', l. 30; 'Tithonus', l. 34) that steals from Aurora's 'pure' brows and 'shoulders'

('Tithon', l. 31; 'Tithonus', ll. 36-37). In both cases, the adjective 'mysterious' educes the 'burthen of the mystery' (l. 38) from 'Tintern Abbey', although with quite different effects in each of the Tennyson poems: whereas for the speaker of 'Tintern Abbey' the transcendence that nature provides is a powerful mystery, a pulse of warm sensational blood that feeds the purer mind, for both Tithon and Tithonus it is an enervated glimmer resulting in cold, wrinkled feet. Both speakers literally have cold feet over the post-'Tintern' position in which they find themselves, with their cold 'nature' that is Aurora. They are both versions of Wordsworth's speaker, just as Aurora is a post-'Tintern Abbey', and in the later 'Tithonus', a fully eroticised, yet cold, Dorothy.

Of course, Tennyson's own unconscious references to 'glimmering' in section XCV of *In Memoriam* play into the unconscious effects being created in 'Tithonus', suggesting a continuum of interpoetic influence that runs from 'Tintern Abbey' through 'Tithon', *In Memoriam*, and on to 'Tithonus'. 'Glimmering' forms part of the framing of loss that occurs in section XCV of *In Memoriam*, reconfirming the entrapment in which Tithonus is placed and the loss to which he is subject, as well as the entrapment to which Tennyson himself is subject, as he unconsciously returns to the preoccupations and concerns of his own past. But, there is no hope of escape from this post-'Tintern' world for either Tithonus or the author; there are no projections into or onto the future, but simply a perpetual present of loss and fading power, as the poem continues unconsciously to weave the language of the past. Whereas the speaker of 'Tintern Abbey' finds the mind's transcendence of nature rewarding, as there will always be seemingly 'food for future years' (l. 64), Tithonus is 'consumed' by the process of 'transcending'. The 'gloomy wood' (l. 78) sustains the speaker in 'Tintern Abbey'; it is literally an 'appetite' (l. 80), a provision of spiritual nourishment, whereas the 'gloom' (l. 37) of the dark world has an obverse effect in 'Tithonus': Aurora's 'cheek begins to redden through the gloom' (l. 37), but gloom carries the sense of a loss of hope as well as a

sense of darkness (*OED*), counterpointing the ‘life and food / For future years’ (ll. 64-65) with which Wordsworth’s speaker dares ‘to hope’ (l. 65). In Wordsworth, ‘to deny imagination its darker food, to seek and make it a “Shape all light,” is to wish imagination away’,<sup>98</sup> but in ‘Tithonus’, the food with which the imagination is fed depletes more than it nourishes. Aurora’s blush – itself transient – cannot feed this loss of hope for Tithonus, as she is its cause, the heart of its darkness. She is Wordsworth’s speaker’s repository of hope writ large, but can offer Tithonus only an etiolated present, offering not the growth of the mind through darkness,<sup>99</sup> but perpetual and enervating stasis. The blackness occasioned by Aurora in ‘Tithon’ is burned away, as her ‘black curls’ (l. 43) are scorched into ‘sunny rings’ (l. 43). Not so in ‘Tithonus’, where the blackness Aurora engenders perpetuates itself, disabling Tithonus within it.

Further, the speaker’s circular return to his moments of sublimity in ‘Tintern Abbey’, those moments that nourish him in his loneliness, but which are nevertheless inscribed with loss, are hyperbolised in Tithonus’ circular return to his faded nature, Aurora. With Wordsworth, ‘his mind circles and haunts a particular place until released into an emancipatory idea of Nature’.<sup>100</sup> Tithonus’ mind circles, but cannot be released, as his ‘nature’ is suffocatingly dark rather than emancipatory. Nature as woman becomes the destroyer rather than the creator, as Wordsworth’s ‘covenant between mind and nature’ is torn apart.<sup>101</sup> In ‘Tithonus’, nature does not remain supine, a passive partner over which the mind can continue to have an ongoing and superior control, but a wilful seductress and destroyer, with the power to tease and to depress as well as to feed the mind. The ‘nostalgic’, benign and cooperative nature for which the speaker of *In Memoriam* continually reaches, and which sustains the speaker in ‘Tintern Abbey’, no longer exists, as she is transmuted into a recalcitrant partner. Equally, Mother Nature is no longer a replacement for the lost mother in Wordsworth, as has been claimed.<sup>102</sup> Of course, Wordsworth himself posits a non-

cooperative nature in the 'Elegiac Stanza', 'Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont' (1807), but 'Tithonus' specifically disassembles the imaginative optimism or promise of 'Tintern Abbey', confirming the implicit loss at its core.

### **'Tithonus' and 'Resolution and Independence'**

But if nature is etiolated in 'Tithonus', then so is its speaker. Tithonus has been granted immortality without immortal youth, but intertextual links with Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence' draw attention to how immortal age has not only wearied him, but deprived him of imaginative power. In 'Resolution and Independence', the speaker has the power to invest the Leech-Gatherer with imaginative significance, even if this is via a 'troubled imagination'.<sup>103</sup> Wordsworth writes on the nature of the imaginative process taking place in the poem in explanation of the image of the Gatherer as a 'huge stone' (l. 57) that lies 'top of an eminence' (l. 58) and as a 'sea-beast' (l. 62) sunning itself on rock or sand:

In these images, the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying powers of the Imagination, immediately and mediately acting, are all brought into conjunction. The stone is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the sea-beast; and the sea-beast stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone; which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged Man; who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison [...] Thus far of an endowing or modifying power: but the Imagination also shapes and *creates*; and how? By innumerable processes; and in none does it more delight

than in that of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number, – alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers.<sup>104</sup>

The Leech-Gatherer has no imaginative power, however; he is one of the unimaginative souls of which Wordsworth writes in *The Ruined Cottage* (1804), who are ineluctably separated from those invested with the power to transfigure their lives through imagination.<sup>105</sup> He is, instead, a conduit to imaginative power, curing the speaker of the descent into the ‘de-sublimated’ madness into which he has sunk.<sup>106</sup> Intertextual connections abound between Tithonus and the Leech-Gatherer, which emphasise that Tithonus, like the Gatherer, is devoid of imaginative power. Both ‘roam’: Tithonus, a ‘white-haired shadow’ (l. 8), roams ‘like a dream / The ever-silent spaces of the East’ (ll. 8-9); the Gatherer ‘roamed’ (l. 103), and paces ‘About the weary moors continually, / Wandering about alone and silently’ (ll. 129-31). The Leech-Gatherer is ‘grey’ (l. 56); Tithonus is a ‘gray shadow’ (l. 11).

But the Gatherer is one of the ‘ordinary men’ (l. 96), one of those men, like the speaker of ‘Tintern Abbey’ and the speaker of ‘Resolution and Independence’, in fact, who has ‘the power to die’ (‘Tithonus’, l. 70). His ‘measured phrase’ (l. 95) may place him ‘above the reach / Of ordinary men’ (ll. 95-96), and he may be invested with mystical status by the speaker, but he remains a mortal man, nonetheless. Tithonus lacks the capacity to die, and has the power only to roam. He is doubly doomed: doomed to roam without the ability to die, and doomed to live without imaginative power. Intertextual links draw attention to the reverse positions here of Tithonus and the Leech-Gatherer in this sense. In ‘Tithonus’, it is ‘happy men’ who have the power to die, like the ‘ordinary men’ (l. 96) of ‘Resolution and Independence’; Tithonus is excluded from this happy, ordinary race by the gift of unwanted immortality. The speaker of ‘Resolution and Independence’ is ‘a happy Child of earth’ (l.

31), as, ultimately, is the Gatherer, and was once 'as happy as a boy' (l. 18) before his state of despondency. All are 'happy men' in this way, except for Tithonus.

Moreover, the Gatherer is 'dying into the life of nature',<sup>107</sup> the very nature in which Tithonus craves to be immersed, but to which he is denied access. Tithonus cannot die into the life of Aurora as nature, as she does not provide the safe and comforting resting-place of Wordsworth's nature in 'Tintern Abbey'. 'Resolution and Independence' exemplifies a Wordsworthian 'faith in nature'<sup>108</sup> that 'Tithonus' denies, although echoes of Wordsworth's 'nature' reverberate through Tennyson's poem: in 'Resolution and Independence' the air after the storm is filled with the 'pleasant noise of waters' (l. 7) and the hare 'from the plashy earth / Raises a mist (l. 11); in 'Tithonus', the 'mists are far-folded' (l. 10) and the air is 'soft' (l. 32). The liminality of the Leech-Gatherer, a natural, yet seemingly supernatural being, 'not all alive nor dead' (l. 64), is also evoked in Tithonus' liminal state, on the edge of the world where he was born, but consigned to an after-life from which he wants to escape. The Leech-Gatherer is a part of nature, no more so than in the description of him in the lines Wordsworth picks out to illustrate the powers of the imagination, although he is thus in this sense also 'imagined' as a part of nature: 'As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie / Couched on the bald top of an eminence; / Wonder to all who do the same espy, / By what means it could thither come, and whence; / So that it seems a thing endued with sense: / Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf / Of rock or sand repositeth, there to sun itself; / Such seemed this Man' (ll. 57-63). Tithonus, too, was once part of nature, a part of 'that dark world' (l. 33), and is longing to be 'earth in earth' (l. 75), but is confined to a state beyond nature. Tithonus, as speaker, is also denied an act of imaginative revivification, such as the speaker of Wordsworth's poem experiences through the Leech-Gatherer as a part of nature; Aurora as nature does not inspire his imaginative powers, but depletes them.

The latter is emphasised by the time change in both poems. Tithonus looks back to a time when he could ‘Glow with the glow’ (l. 56), be full of transcendent power, but that transcendent power belongs to his past, a past he is doomed perpetually to revisit. In ‘Resolution and Independence’, the speaker acknowledges the differences between past and present selves: he ‘was a Traveller *then* upon the moor’ (l. 15; emphasis added), when he ‘heard the distant waters roar’ (l. 17). The time difference replicates itself in ‘Tithonus’ in the way in which Tithonus looks back on his former self, although Wordsworth’s speaker’s subsequent move into sublimity is exhausted for him. Similarly, ‘Resolution and Independence’ is a ‘dialogic’ poem, albeit an implicit one,<sup>109</sup> as Wordsworth ‘confronts and seeks to overcome the self that experiences chilling “thoughts”’;<sup>110</sup> he also steps “outside himself” while examining his imagination at work’.<sup>111</sup> Tennyson’s speaker is also bifurcated in this way, as he seeks to absorb ‘chilling “thoughts”’ of his former imaginative self, as he is by the very dialogic nature of the monologue itself. This, combined with the sharing of linguistic phrases between the poems, confirms that if Tennyson is unconsciously reworking ‘Tintern Abbey’ in ‘Tithonus’, then he does so, in part, via ‘Resolution and Independence’. At the same time, the revisions in ‘Tithonus’ rework Wordsworth’s own imaginative rewriting in ‘Resolution and Independence’, which, itself, acts as a corrective or ‘answer’ to ‘Tintern Abbey’’s doubts over the power of the imagination to continue to sustain itself.

### **Eye and Ear: Conduits to Sublimity**

Crucially, the eye is a conduit for the ‘exhausted’ sublimity that takes place in ‘Tithonus’, however, as it is in ‘Tintern Abbey’, although it is dependent on conception, a fact emphasised by the enjambment of ‘eyes / I’ in lines 51-52 of the poem. William H. Galperin maintains that conception – ‘I’ – supplants perception – ‘eye’ – in Romantic poems such as



‘Tintern Abbey’, but that the eye is a repressed term which always threatens to return at any moment ‘on account of having never left’;<sup>112</sup> the gaze ‘is always likely to be frustrated by the intrusion of an insubordinate glance, which restores to the natural world its haphazard, uncontrollable contingency’.<sup>113</sup> The enjambment highlights the co-dependency of perception and conception in Tennyson’s poem: the effects of what Tithonus sees are foregrounded, from Aurora’s ‘glimmering thresholds’ (l. 68), to his acknowledgement of the ‘dark world’ (l. 33) from which he came. But ‘I’ is also given prominence in the poem, supplanting ‘eye’ via the priority rendered it, augmented by a stress, at the start of the enjambed line, for instance. Without Tithonus’ ‘I’, Aurora’s thresholds would not glimmer. Despite the priority given to it, however, Tithonus’ conceiving ‘I’ has lost its power, as has the ‘nature’ on which this conceiving depends.

The ear, too, is a conduit for sublimity in ‘Tithonus’, although this also signals a loss of imaginative power. For instance, the sounds of nature in ‘Tintern Abbey’ are replicated in ‘Tithonus’.<sup>114</sup> Sight and sound combine in ‘an eye made *quiet* by the power / Of harmony, and the deep power of joy’ (ll. 47-48; emphasis added), a pointed contrast to the ‘fretful stir / Unprofitable’ (ll. 52-53) of the world, which has the power to ‘disturb’ the quietness of nature. Nature’s own sounds are foregrounded in ‘Tintern Abbey’, especially musical ones, which are associated with the transcendence they produce in the mind of the speaker: the mountain-springs create a ‘soft inland murmur’ (l. 4); the ‘sounding cataract’ (l. 76) haunts Wordsworth like a passion; Wordsworth hears the ‘still, sad music of humanity’ (l. 91). Dorothy is also associated with the sounds of transcendence in her role as nature; Wordsworth’s speaker hears in her ‘voice’ the language of his former heart (l. 119), as she will become his ‘voice’ (l. 148) as well as his eyes. Aurora, like Dorothy, is allied with the sounds as well as the sights of nature. Her eyes are ‘tremulous’ (l. 26),<sup>115</sup> and carry a sense of creating musically repeated notes, combining the senses of sight and sound as in ‘Tintern

Abbey'; her wild team 'beat' (l.42) alongside her, which has rhythmic as well as menacing overtones. However, where Dorothy's association with nature's 'sweet sounds and harmonies' will ostensibly secure Wordsworth's future 'immortality', Aurora's association is linked to the 'strange song [Tithonus] heard Apollo sing / While Ilion like a mist rose into towers' (ll. 62-63).<sup>116</sup> Sweet sounds become a strange harmony in Aurora's immortal world, as the musical harmony that nature produces in the mind of the speaker in 'Tintern Abbey' becomes 'strange' and disconnected. Dorothy is implicitly associated with disharmony in 'Tintern Abbey'. If Wordsworth hopes to hear the voice of nature in Dorothy's 'voice' (l. 148), then it is a voice of nature that nevertheless sings the sad music of humanity. It is left to 'Tithonus' to make this disconnection explicit through its intertextualisation of Wordsworth's language: Ilion rises like a 'mist' into towers while Wordsworth's speaker talks of how he hopes the 'misty mountain-winds' (l. 136) will continue to blow against his beloved Dorothy.

The inversion of 'Tintern Abbey' that takes place via sound is exemplified in the 'soft air [that] fans the cloud apart' (l. 32) in 'Tithonus', where 'fan' creates a disturbance of both air and sound. The 'living air' (l. 98) of 'Tintern Abbey', as with much Romantic poetry, is a "sustaining" one, bequeathing a supportive atmosphere to subsequent writers:<sup>117</sup> the "all-sustaining-air" of such poems 'gives promise of origins [...] by retaining a capacity to house the sublime, the limitless, to hint [...] at traces of dispelled presence'.<sup>118</sup> In 'Tithonus', however, the dispelled air the poem breathes is dark and potentially stifling, the 'fan' of air leading only to a revelation of the 'dark world' (l. 33) and the old, worn out, 'mysterious glimmer' (l. 34) that is the poem's version of the sublime.

The focus on the unconscious effects of sound nevertheless confirms the poem as a poem of sensation, with luxuriant effects of both eye and ear, where sensation mingles with 'active trains of thought' that immerse the whole being of the poet in 'sense'. But it also confirms the poem as one of Wordsworthian thought, where 'knowing a thing' to be true is

more important than knowing it to be 'beautiful', as it unconsciously replicates, yet subverts, the sonic effects of 'Tintern Abbey'.<sup>119</sup> The disconnection to which the unconscious transference of sound gives rise is 'true' in a Wordsworthian sense, however, as well as strangely 'beautiful'.

The sense of the diminishing power of transcendence – a theme Wordsworth himself returns to in his 'Intimations' Ode – openly preoccupies the Victorians, who begin to voice concerns that Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence has lost its power: Matthew Arnold's 'fading gleam' in 'Dover Beach' (1867), for instance, signals 'the extinction of Wordsworth's visionary project'.<sup>120</sup> 'Tithonus' takes this preoccupation to extremes, as both the mind and nature lose their power in the post-'Tintern' world that is unconsciously created in the poem. The mask of the dramatic monologue should allow Tennyson to shield himself from the implications of the poem's critique, but the nature of the inscription renders him unable to do so, as his unconscious rewriting of the earlier poem is laid bare. Geoffrey H. Hartman, musing on 'nature-loss' in Wordsworth suggests that:

though Wordsworth engages in "Tintern Abbey" and elsewhere with the theme of loss and gain, he will not take an ultimate decision upon himself. On this issue there is vacillation rather than an authoritative resolution by means of visionary or poetic voice. "Milton! England hath need of thee," yet Wordsworth refused to be Milton on the matter of nature's ultimate importance to the life of the mind. He delays, in fact, rather than hastens a decision.<sup>121</sup>

'Tithonus' neither vacillates nor delays, laying bare the ruptured relationship between mind and nature, and the mind and itself, in the post-'Tintern' world 'accidentally' imagined by Tennyson.

## Conclusion

The Wordsworthian inscriptions in 'Ulysses' and *In Memoriam* ensure that both poems explore the question of whether the imagination can survive death, with *In Memoriam* positing that the answer can be found, paradoxically, only after death itself, when a Wordsworthian immortality is promised via nature: death, in this way, becomes a conduit to immortality rather than a negation of it. 'Tithonus' suggests that this imaginative immortality does not provide the answer for which *In Memoriam* seeks, as the synergy between mind and nature, and the mind and itself, is overturned. Nature in this world is hollow and untrustworthy: nature gives birth to the imagination in Wordsworth, but nature signals its demise in what has become the post-Wordsworthian world of 'Tithonus'. The return to the 'poetic father',<sup>122</sup> Wordsworth, does not achieve the promise offered in *In Memoriam*, where crossing the 'mountain' ('Elegiac Verse', 'In Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth', VI. l. 60) signals the consolation to be found in a Wordsworthian-inspired immortality and a final return both to Wordsworth and the 'Father' to whom Wordsworth is himself gravitating. In this way, 'Tithonus' can be seen as a rewriting of *In Memoriam* as well as 'Tintern Abbey'. And, as in 'Ulysses', the inscription of the language of Wordsworthian transcendence ensures that Tennyson reveals more of himself in the poem than the form of the monologue would normally allow. Here, Tennyson delivers the death-knell to Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence as a means by which imaginative communion with Hallam can be achieved, or indeed imaginative immortality itself can be realised. In this way, 'Tithonus' rewrites 'Ulysses', too. However, like Tithonus himself, poet and text are trapped by the language of Wordsworthian transcendence, confirming the power of the language, and the Wordsworthian imagination, to survive, even if the latter is in vitiated form. Wordsworth's presence in the poem is therefore one of discontinuity and continuity, revision and renewal. Moreover, the

Wordsworthian inscriptions in the poem both undermine the form of the monologue by bringing it back to the language of lyrical interiority and shore it up by expanding upon the dialogism at work in 'Resolution and Independence' and 'Tintern Abbey' itself, with its semi-monologue form and auditrix, Dorothy.

Chapter Four moves away from Tennyson's poetry to look at Wordsworth's poetic influence in the poems of Robert Browning. Like 'Tithonus' and 'Ulysses' before it, 'Saul' (1855) and 'A Death in the Desert' (1864) are monologues, forms predicated on a breaking away from Wordsworthian lyrical speech. Tennyson and Browning both attempt to move away from lyrical self-expression in their separate developments of the monologue, but as in 'Ulysses' and 'Tithonus', 'Saul' and 'A Death in the Desert' are threaded indelibly with a Wordsworthian poeticism that transfigures form and content alike.

## Notes

1. Arthur Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, And on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson', in *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 182-198 (p. 191).
2. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', pp. 184-86.
3. It is the 1833 'Tithon' that was written as a pendant to 'Ulysses' (1833); Tennyson re-worked the poem as 'Tithonus' for the 1860 *Cornhill* magazine. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1989), p. 583.
4. Cornelia Pearsall, *Tennyson's Rapture: Transformation in the Victorian Dramatic Monologue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 252.
5. Pearsall, *Tennyson's Rapture*, p. 225.
6. Tennyson himself says of Tithonus that he 'was beloved by Aurora [goddess of the dawn], who gave him eternal life but not eternal youth. He grew old and infirm, and as he could not die, according to the legend, was turned into a grasshopper'. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 584.
7. Linda K. Hughes, *The Manyfacèd Glass: Tennyson's Monologues* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987), p. 13.
8. See Ricks, *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, l. 1 (p. 584). All further references to the poem are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text, as do all other references to Tennyson's poems in the chapter.
9. See Ricks, *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 584, n. 324. 1.
10. Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 139. The 'Intimations' Ode quotation is taken from *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, edited and with introductions and notes by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by

Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), VIII. 1. 148 (p. 461).

All subsequent references to Wordsworth's poems, including 'Tintern Abbey', are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text unless otherwise stated.

11. Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, p. 140.
12. Daniel A. Harris, 'Personification in "Tithonus"', in *Critical Essays on Alfred Lord Tennyson*, ed. Herbert F. Tucker, Jr. (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1983), pp. 100-24 (p. 106).
13. Henry Weinfield, "'Of happy men that have the power to die': Tennyson's 'Tithonus'", *Victorian Poetry*, 47.2 (2009): 355-78 (p. 360). Available at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/victorian\\_poetry/v047/472.weinfield.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/victorian_poetry/v047/472.weinfield.html) [accessed 18 February 2013].
14. Weinfield, "'Of happy men that have the power to die'", p. 367.
15. Harris, 'Personification in "Tithonus"', p. 106.
16. Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 106.
17. Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), xv.
18. John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press), p. 64.
19. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 158 and 'Introduction', n. 30.
20. See Douglas Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 3 for more on how historicism cannot fully account for an author's prior and current literary influences.

21. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', p. 182.
22. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', pp. 184-85.
23. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', p. 186.
24. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', p. 186.
25. Carol T. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Antony H. Harrison (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 1-21 (p. 3).
26. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', p. 191.
27. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', pp. 191-92.
28. Eric Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', in *Tennyson: Seven Essays*, ed. Philip Collins (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 43.
29. Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', p. 43. Griffiths takes the quotation from Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 65.
30. Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', p. 43.
31. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 66.
32. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 95.
33. Matthew Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 70.
34. Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, p. 70.
35. Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, pp. 70-71.
36. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', p. 3.
37. Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, pp. 74-75.
38. Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, pp. 75-76.



39. See 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, 33 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963-91), I, pp. 343-65 (p. 358).
40. 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', p. 348.
41. William Wordsworth, 'Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems published, with an additional volume, under the title of "Lyrical Ballads"', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 734-41 (p. 735).
42. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', p. 5.
43. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', p. 5.
44. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', p. 5.
45. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', p. 6.
46. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', p. 5.
47. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 77.
48. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 77.
49. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 87.
50. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 96-97.
51. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 97.
52. Seamus Perry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005), p. 21.
53. Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1897), II, p. 288, as quoted in Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 155.
54. Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, I, p. 153, as quoted in Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 155.
55. *Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 421, as quoted in Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 156.
56. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 156.

57. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 156.
58. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 156.
59. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 21.
60. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 21.
61. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 24.
62. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 24.
63. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 24.
64. Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry', p. 197.
65. Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, II, p. 70, as quoted in Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 45.
66. *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. Norman Page (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 176, as quoted in Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 45.
67. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 49.
68. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 266, n. iv 21-40.
69. Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', pp. 36-60.
70. Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', p. 45.
71. Hallam, 'On Sympathy', in *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, pp. 133-42 (p. 137).
72. Hallam, 'On Sympathy', p. 138.
73. Hallam, 'On Sympathy', p. 138.
74. Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, p. 67.
75. Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, p. 67.
76. Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', p. 55.
77. Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', pp. 57-58.
78. Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', p. 58.

79. Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, I, p. 317, as quoted in Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 45.
80. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 51.
81. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 52.
82. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 52.
83. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 52.
84. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 53.
85. Aidan Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 6-23.
86. Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 22.
87. W. David Shaw, *Tennyson's Style* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 89.
88. *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-21*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, p. 280. See also Chapter One, n. 57.
89. Hollander maintains that 'echo is a metaphor of, and, for alluding, and does not depend on conscious intention'. See *The Figure of Echo*, p. 64.
90. Lawrence Kramer comments on the way in which Victorian poets rewrite the close of 'Tintern Abbey', and how these rewritings tend to be 'erotic ones', as 'Tintern Abbey' is read 'as a model of human desire'. See Lawrence Kramer, 'Victorian Sexuality and "Tintern Abbey"', *Victorian Poetry*, 24.4 (Winter 1986): 399-410 (p. 400). Among the Victorian poems in which these rewritings take place, according to Kramer, are Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', Robert Browning's 'Love Among the Ruins' and 'By the Fireside', and Tennyson's 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights'. See 'Victorian Sexuality and "Tintern Abbey"', pp. 403-06.

91. See Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 24-39.
92. Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 54.
93. E. Warwick Slinn, 'Dramatic Monologue', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, pp. 80-98 (p. 86).
94. Slinn, 'Dramatic Monologue', p. 86.
95. Slinn, 'Dramatic Monologue', p. 86.
96. Slinn, 'Dramatic Monologue', p. 86.
97. See 'An Evening Walk, Reprinted from the Quarto of 1793', in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth: Poems Written in Youth, Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood*, edited from the manuscripts, with textual and critical notes by E. de Selincourt, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), I, l. 17 (p. 4).
98. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, Foreword by Donald G. Marshall (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 141.
99. See Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 139 for more on the role of darkness in 'the growth of the mind – especially the poet's mind'.
100. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 137.
101. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 267.
102. Hartman maintains that Wordsworth's sense of nature as the lost mother is linked to his 'touching compulsion'. See Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 22 and Chapter Two, n. 43.
103. Michael O'Neill, "'A Kind of an Excuse": Shelley and Wordsworth Revisited', in *Literature and Authenticity, 1780-1900: Essays in Honour of Vincent Newey*, ed.

- Ashley Chantler, Michael Davies and Philip Shaw (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 51-65 (p. 58).
104. See 'Preface to the Edition of 1815', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 752-56 (p. 754).
105. See Graham Davidson's comments on *The Ruined Cottage*, in 'Wordsworth's Wasteland or The Speargrass Redemption', in *Romanticism*, 20.1 (2014): 73-83 (p. 79). See also 'Introduction', n. 43.
106. Thomas Weiskel suggests that Wordsworth is fully committed to de-sublimation in 'Resolution and Independence'. See Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 58.
107. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, p. 202.
108. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, p. 203.
109. O'Neill, "'A Kind of an Excuse'", p. 57.
110. O'Neill, "'A Kind of an Excuse'", p. 57.
111. O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, p. 42.
112. William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 3.
113. Cronin expands on Galperin's point in *Romantic Victorians*, p. 194.
114. Campbell maintains that the sounds and echoes of nature are unrepresentable in Wordsworth, in that they remain the 'ghostly language of the ancient earth', but emphasises how Wordsworth's poetics have a rhythm of their own, which allows the poet to sound the echoes of his experience: 'Poetic metre, and rhythmic effect, assist in allowing us to hear this poetry written against the temptations of silence'. See *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, p. 36.

115. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 586, n. 26, for the editor's gloss on derivations of 'tremulous'.
116. Drawing on Elaine Jordan's *Alfred Tennyson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Day compares Aurora here to Shelley's Witch of Atlas – the spirit of poetry and daughter of Apollo – in the 1824 poem of the same name, and suggests that Tithonus discovers the gulf between himself and the goddess, thereby signalling the failure of the Romantic poetic imagination. See *Tennyson's Scepticism*, p. 45.
117. 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.
118. O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air*, pp. 16, 19.
119. Tennyson is known for his sonic effects. T. S. Eliot defines him as 'having the finest ear of any English poet since Milton'. See T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), p. 239. The effects outlined here are the result of unconscious inscription, of course.
120. Matthew Rowlinson, 'Lyric', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, pp. 59-79 (p. 68).
121. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 150.
122. Wordsworth has been described as Tennyson's 'poetic father-figure'. See Ruth Padel, 'Tennyson: Echo and Harmony, Music and Thought', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 323-36 (p. 327). See also 'Introduction', n. 53 and Chapter Two, n. 144.

## Chapter Four

### 'Saul' and 'A Death in the Desert': Half-Creating the Risen Christ

Two of Robert Browning's poems form the basis of this chapter, 'Saul' (1855) and 'A Death in the Desert' (1864); both are based around the Incarnation of the divine Christ. 'Saul', first published in 1845, reappears in the 1855 *Men and Women*, where it is given its new, exhortatory, ending, 'See the Christ stand!'.<sup>1</sup> Derived from Samuel Smart's 'Song to David', which is itself drawn from *I Samuel* xvi 14-23, where David's harp playing and singing save King Saul from the evil spirit,<sup>2</sup> 'Saul' arises out of 'a new consciousness of the significance of the divine Incarnation'.<sup>3</sup> 'A Death in the Desert' appeared in the 1864 collection, *Dramatis Personae*, which is centred on two distinct themes, death and religious doubt, the latter explicitly in relation to the Biblical criticism of David Friedrich Strauss and Ernest Renan.<sup>4</sup> Like 'Saul', it, too, focuses on the divine Incarnation, with St John as the historical witness of God in Christ.

Percy Bysshe Shelley is usually regarded as Browning's primary poetic precursor, a figure with whom he openly engages in *Pauline: A Fragment of A Confession* (1833) and in the 'Essay on Shelley' (1851). Browning's poetic relationship with William Wordsworth has been explored by critics, nonetheless. John Haydn Baker suggests, in an overtly Bloomian reading of the texts, that Browning engages in a struggle with Wordsworth, which is at its most profound 'in the lesser-known poems written before 1840 and after 1869'.<sup>5</sup> This struggle manifests itself in what the later poet regards as Wordsworth's rejection of humanism in favour of idealism. Browning, according to Baker, charts the trajectory of this 'aesthetic conflict' through poems like *Pauline* and *Paracelsus* (1835),<sup>6</sup> with Baker claiming that 'Browning's early poems fight against and finally subdue the romantic desire to strive toward the sublime at the expense of dealing with the "real" world'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in *Paracelsus*, his

‘most “Wordsworthian” poem’,<sup>8</sup> Browning forges a ‘newly humanistic romanticism’,<sup>9</sup> in which he acknowledges Wordsworth’s ‘own humanist program’,<sup>10</sup> in *Sordello*, by contrast, ‘Browning was determined to rid himself of Wordsworth and redefine himself as a strong poet, and was willing to do almost anything to discredit Wordsworth’s achievement’;<sup>11</sup> he deliberately misrepresents Wordsworth, so that he ‘could then step forward himself to assume the crown Wordsworth had worn unworthily’.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, as Baker makes clear as he traces his argument through Browning’s later poetry, ‘Wordsworth’s ghost, “chilling and awful”, could not be dismissed so easily. The struggle would be renewed, and would never be resolved’.<sup>13</sup>

Other critics have noted Browning’s poetic ‘struggle’ with Wordsworth. Joseph Bristow maintains that Browning reworks the Wordsworthian lyric in ““Transcendentalism: A Poem in Twelve Books”” from *Men and Women*, for instance. The poem draws from Wordsworth’s ‘Intimations’ Ode (1807), and adapts its theme of an older speaker attempting to tell a younger poet how to ‘write poetry properly’.<sup>14</sup> The poem has strong allusive links to the ‘Ode’ – Bristow foregrounds Browning’s repeated use of the word ‘glory’<sup>15</sup> – but is also evidence of the poet’s attempt to distance himself from Wordsworth’s poetics. As Bristow confirms, ‘Browning in “Transcendentalism” is alluding to, and perhaps more importantly, *transfiguring*, one of his Romantic forebears’;<sup>16</sup> the poem, with its title ostentatiously placed in ‘quotation marks, mocks the pretensions of the young poet’s epic’;<sup>17</sup> Browning employs Romantic, Wordsworthian vision in the poem ‘whilst simultaneously providing a critique of it’.<sup>18</sup> In the opening and closing lines of the poem, he promotes ‘an ideal of the poet which corresponds to the Romantic visionary child’.<sup>19</sup> However, by the poem’s close, he ‘does not accept Wordsworth’s compromise solutions of a stoical acceptance that youthful vision has been replaced by a sober appreciation of the “still sad music of humanity” [...] and the vicarious experience of visionary moments through younger *alter egos*’.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, ‘the



recovery of the reader's and not of the poet's perception of meaning is the key purpose of the poem'.<sup>21</sup>

A comparable pattern is at work in a much later poem, the 'Prologue' to *Asolando: Fancies and Facts* (1889), which like "'Transcendentalism'", alludes both to 'Tintern Abbey' (1798) and the 'Intimations' Ode. Here, Browning seemingly rejects visionary poetry, and suggests that visual perception is nothing more than 'optical illusion'.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding its critique of Wordsworthian lyricism, however, the 'Prologue' to *Asolando* nevertheless suggests 'an insuperable nostalgia for the Romantic vision'.<sup>23</sup> This 'insuperable nostalgia', curiously enough, encompasses Browning's nostalgia for the Romantic visionary moment, which, it is claimed, he subsequently reworks as the 'infinite moment'.<sup>24</sup> Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., for instance, suggests that 'By putting the infinite within the finite through the use of a style that acknowledges its own insufficiency, Browning styles himself a romantic poet in full pursuit of the sublime'.<sup>25</sup>

'Saul' and 'A Death in the Desert' are included here precisely because they are poems not normally traced with regard to their Wordsworthian influence, either in terms of a rejection of Wordsworth or an extended use of the egotistical sublime or visionary moment.<sup>26</sup> Baker, in his analysis of Browning's struggle against Wordsworth's supposed anti-humanism, claims that Wordsworth is entirely absent from Browning's *Men and Women*, other than for a 'possible allusion' to Wordsworth in "'Transcendentalism'",<sup>27</sup> although he concurs with several critics (Ashton Nichols, Lawrence Kramer, Lawrence Poston) that Browning 'may indeed have been thinking of [...] Wordsworthian topoi' while writing 'By the Fireside', 'Love Among the Ruins', and 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came'.<sup>28</sup> None of these critics suggests that by using such topoi Browning 'was *struggling* with the influence of his predecessor',<sup>29</sup> a position with which Baker agrees, as it allows him conveniently to exclude the poems from his argument. Similarly, he claims *Dramatis Personae* 'shows little more

indication of Wordsworth's influence than *Men and Women*,<sup>30</sup> although he concedes that 'Browning's ongoing "dispute" with the "Immortality" Ode still rumbled on':<sup>31</sup> in stanza three of 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', for instance, 'Browning repeats "not only the argument but [also the] sentence structure and meter" of the second sentence of the Ode's ninth stanza'.<sup>32</sup>

'Saul' and 'A Death in the Desert' are Wordsworthian poems, but unconsciously so, poems which are inscribed with an intertextual field of Wordsworthian language of which the poet is seemingly unaware and over which he has no direct control; unlike in "Transcendentalism" and the 'Prologue' to *Asolando*, the Wordsworthian 'dialogue' that takes place in the text is an involuntary one and not openly acknowledged by the author. An analysis of this unconscious, intertextual dialogue in the chapter allows new and fresh critical perspectives on the poems to be opened up, allowing meanings to come to light that would otherwise have remained unexplored or suppressed. The division that is sustained throughout this thesis between the allusive – the intentional quotation of another text by an author – and the intertextual – the unconscious citation of a literary work – allows,<sup>33</sup> in its privileging of the latter, readings of the poems that keenly differentiate themselves from, while acknowledging, previous critical interpretations. These prior interpretations, such as the ones listed above, largely ignore the unconscious Wordsworthian aspects of the texts (or, indeed, ignore the texts altogether), but the readings here, with their specific focus on the involuntary linguistic appropriations of the poet, shed new light on Browning's relationship with the Incarnation, as well as on his relationship with his poetic predecessor.

As monologues, the poems suggest that they are intrinsically un-Wordsworthian: the monologue, as developed by Browning, is predicated on a rejection of lyrical interiority in favour of rhetorical speech, 'spoken with specific persuasive or apologetic intent',<sup>34</sup> although its indebtedness to the lyric is a constant, a debt that Browning (and the next section of the chapter) foregrounds. The poet whom Browning is attempting poetically to escape has an

uncontrollable and indelible presence within the poem, however, complicating the relationship between monologue and lyric. As Saul is ‘caught in his pangs’ (l. 30), so poet and text are ‘caught’ inexorably by the Wordsworthian language of the past.

Before addressing each poem, the contextual and historical background to the writing of ‘Saul’ and ‘A Death in the Desert’ is given. This involves the description of a number of issues, including an account of Browning’s ‘invention’ of the monologue; his indebtedness to Wordsworth’s poetics; his first attempt at producing a dramatic monologue, *Pauline*, and its relation to Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’ (1798); the role of subjectivity and objectivity in poetry, particularly with regard to visionary lyricism and the formation of the dramatic monologue, and as set out in the ‘Essay on Shelley’; his interest in, and poetic involvement with, the Incarnation; and the appropriation of the Wordsworthian imaginative moment for theological purposes. As with the other studies in the thesis, the analysis of the unconscious presence of Wordsworth’s language in the texts is not based on an anxiety-based Bloomian model, but on a loose association of unconscious author-bias, reader-interpretation, and intertextual citation. The historical accounts which precede the readings, however, are given not only to provide contextualisation to the poems themselves, but also to emphasise that historical accounts cannot provide a total summary of an author’s literary relations; to recall Douglas Bruster, ‘literature itself has a history [...] speaks with others’ words, talks back to them, and manifests authors’ own histories of reading and writing’.<sup>35</sup>

### **Browning and the Invention of the Monologue**

Browning, alongside Alfred, Lord Tennyson, is credited with ‘inventing’ the dramatic monologue, despite dramatic poems by female poets like Felicia Hemans and Letitia Landon predating the early monologues of both men.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, Wordsworth is himself also

‘hovering on the edge of the form’,<sup>37</sup> with ‘Tintern Abbey’ a ‘subtle’ precursor to the monologue.<sup>38</sup> It is generally agreed, however, that Browning chooses to develop the ‘dramatic monologue’<sup>39</sup> as a reaction to what John Keats in a letter to Richard Woodhouse in October 1818 terms the ‘wordsworthian or egotistical sublime’,<sup>40</sup> the deliberate privileging of the poet’s interior experience that occurs in the lyric. Keats in the same letter, by contrast, claims that ‘the poetical Character, (I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a member’ [...] is not itself – it has no self – it is every thing and nothing – It has no character – [...] it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair [...] the camelion Poet. [...] has no Identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body’.<sup>41</sup>

Despite being developed almost contemporaneously, dramatic works by Tennyson and Browning show marked differences, nonetheless: Tennyson’s display a ‘more emphatically lyrical voice’,<sup>42</sup> for instance, whilst ‘Browning’s characters are more discrete, more naturalistically rendered’;<sup>43</sup> Tennyson renders ‘the *consciousness* of his speakers’, whereas Browning ‘renders the *personality* of his’;<sup>44</sup> Tennyson makes ‘greater use of literary artifice’, whereas ‘Browning more fully exploits the conventions of an auditor’.<sup>45</sup> Despite their differences, however, monologues from Tennyson and Browning share ‘a superfluity of detail and expressive formulation’.<sup>46</sup>

*Pauline* is Browning’s first attempt at producing a work distinct from the ‘egotistical’ self, and focuses on the speaker’s difficulty in achieving Romantic sublime transcendence. Other early monologues, like ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ and ‘Johannes Agricola in Meditation’, collectively known as ‘Madhouse Cells’ (1842), deal with issues of psychological disturbance, and form parodies of ‘the Romantic sublime’,<sup>47</sup> with their depiction of the extremes of Romantic introspection, while ‘historical characters like Cleon or Karshish [...] allow us to explore the limitations that one’s place in history imposes on consciousness, to imaginary figures like Childe Roland, whose perceptions of the world we have a much

smaller basis for judging'.<sup>48</sup> The poems, in their portrayal of delusional and manic states, also parody the poetic theories of John Stuart Mill, who claims that 'Poetry is feeling, confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols, which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind [...] All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy'.<sup>49</sup> Browning, in fact, as E. Warwick Slinn points out, constructs his theory of the monologue in opposition to Mill's poetics, drawing on William James Fox's dramatic, and Jeremy Bentham's fictive, theories for support.<sup>50</sup> Fox shows how psychological conditions are 'grounded in history',<sup>51</sup> while Bentham emphasises how fictional constructs are 'potentially iniquitous, but culturally indispensable'.<sup>52</sup>

By incorporating the theories of Fox and Bentham into the poetics of the dramatic monologue, Browning thus challenges the assumptions on which Romantic visionary lyricism is based,<sup>53</sup> as the monologue becomes 'thoroughly immersed in the cultural conditions of its time'.<sup>54</sup> A lyrical, essentialist self that is universalist, atemporal, ideologically homogenised, and transhistorical is replaced by a fictional or imaginary self, separate from the poet, that is post-Cartesian and tied to 'linear history and an open cultural system'.<sup>55</sup> A silent addressee directly 'reverses the Romantic ideal of the poet's private, lyrical self-expression',<sup>56</sup> while the dialogic language of the speakers 'challenges idealist notions of an idealist self'.<sup>57</sup> An ironic distance is also created between poet and speaker, a distance that both enables the poet to mediate personal opinions through a fictional character, and to distance himself from those opinions if required.

However, the monologue remains a hybridisation of both lyric and drama, something Browning himself acknowledges in his own definition of the 'dramatic lyric', which appeared in an 'Advertisement' to the 1842 *Dramatic Lyrics*: 'Such Poems as the following come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces"; being, though for the most

part Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine'.<sup>58</sup>

### **Browning and Wordsworthian Poetics**

Browning owes a large part of his poetics to Wordsworth, despite his seeming opposition to the older poet,<sup>59</sup> and his attempts poetically to break free from his influence. His desire for the reader imaginatively to co-operate with the poet, for instance, as well as his desire to write accessible poetry that mediates his ideas and values to a wider audience, stem directly from Wordsworth.<sup>60</sup> John Woolford draws attention to the similarities between Wordsworth's 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' to the *Poems* of 1815, where Wordsworth writes of the need to open the poem to the reader's contribution, and of how the 'appreciation of the "profound and exquisite in feeling, the lofty and universal in thought and imagination" cannot be brought under any metaphor implying passivity, "[b]ecause without the exercise of a cooperating *power* in the mind of the Reader, there can be no adequate sympathy with either of these emotions"'.<sup>61</sup> This co-operation, by association, compels the reader to 'supply some element of the text's meaning'.<sup>62</sup> Browning, likewise, drawing on Wordsworth's theories, appeals directly for reader participation in the preface to *Paracelsus*, explicitly calling for the reader's 'co-operating fancy' in making the poem a success.<sup>63</sup>

Browning also embraces the egalitarianism of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) in his own version of 'the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation'.<sup>64</sup> Wordsworth's antipathy to a specialised poetic language stems from his refusal to consider the poet as a 'privileged, exceptional being'.<sup>65</sup> In the 'Preface' to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth writes of how the poet is simply a 'man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater

knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind'.<sup>66</sup> As Britta Martens makes clear, the 'same characterisation of the poet and his relationship with his audience can be found in the definition of the objective poet in Browning's "Essay on Shelley"'.<sup>67</sup> Here, the 'objective poet is the "man speaking to men" who is more perceptive than the average individual but adapts his expression to the abilities of his audience'.<sup>68</sup> The objective poet has 'the double faculty of seeing external objects more clearly, widely, and deeply, than is possible to the average mind, at the same time that he is so acquainted and in sympathy with its narrower comprehension as to be careful to supply it with no other materials than it can combine into an intelligible whole'.<sup>69</sup> Browning, however, is unable to live up to Wordsworth's theoretical ideal in his poetic practice, where his use of language is often 'abstruse and difficult'.<sup>70</sup> His self-definition as a poet is thus a 'complex, deliberate process of adaptation and distancing'.<sup>71</sup> Such distancing can clearly be seen in Browning's *Christmas-Eve* (1850), where, according to Richard Cronin, the poet eschews the regular and uniform metre as set out in Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in favour of 'metres at once capricious and mechanical',<sup>72</sup> which voice 'his contempt for his fellow-Christians'.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Pauline: A Fragment of A Confession and an Early Monologue***

Browning explores the role of the Romantic poet, and indeed the difficulty of achieving Romantic transcendence, in *Pauline*. The poem is a transitional work between a Romantic confession and a dramatic performance, and 'thus an illustration of how Browning developed, rather than fully rejected, elements of Romanticism'.<sup>74</sup> The dramatic monologue itself can be seen as a development rather than a rejection of Romanticism, as Robert Langbaum suggests in his influential account of the origins of the monologue.<sup>75</sup> Yet, the poem goes beyond 'mere

imitation',<sup>76</sup> despite being derived from 'two Romantic genres: the poetic fragment and the confessional lyric'.<sup>77</sup> The formal presentation of *Pauline* – a 'long Latin epigraph from the alchemist and occultist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa [...] and a note in French by Pauline',<sup>78</sup> herself – emphasises that 'despite the poem's strong fascination with egotism, Browning [is] already making an attempt to distance himself from his earlier self as represented by the speaker'.<sup>79</sup> In an 1888 addition to the preface to the 1868 *Poetical Works*, Browning calls *Pauline* the 'first of my performances',<sup>80</sup> and recalling the 'Advertisement' to the 1842 *Dramatic Lyrics*, the 1868 edition itself refers to it as 'my earliest attempt at "poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many persons, not mine"'.<sup>81</sup> A 'critique of Romantic love', a 'critique of the confessional lyric', and a 'critique of Romantic egotism', the poem is one of several works, including Tennyson's 'The Palace of Art' (1832), that 'explore the decadent extremes of Romantic introspection'.<sup>82</sup>

Browning's attempt to distance himself from the speaker was not appreciated by his reviewers, however, most notably Mill, who charged the poem with 'morbid self-consciousness',<sup>83</sup> a criticism that ran so deep with Browning that he did not publicly acknowledge the poem for thirty-five years.<sup>84</sup> Mill, it seems, was not able to appreciate Browning's efforts to distance himself from the speaker through the notes and epigraphs the poem contained, a lack of appreciation seemingly shared by many of Mill's contemporaries.<sup>85</sup> As has been made clear, Browning develops the monologue in opposition to Mill's poetic theories, where poetry lies within the nature of 'soliloquy', with 'feeling, confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude', but where 'no trace of consciousness that any eyes are upon us must be visible in the work itself'.<sup>86</sup> Mill publicly levels such a charge of 'consciousness' at the author of *Pauline*, conspicuously failing to acknowledge Browning's attempts to create a fictional persona. Stung by such criticism, Browning, in subsequent work, 'chose historical



characters [that] were less likely to be identified with their creator (Paracelsus, Sordello) and a more clearly dramatic presentation (drama, closet drama, the dramatic monologue)'.<sup>87</sup>

However, at the time of writing *Pauline* Browning is 'considering ways of creating different characters, but [...] he was not yet ready to move on to characters other than the confessional poet and [...] he was aware of his inability to free himself completely from the influence of Romantic models'.<sup>88</sup> Thus, 'even his insistence that *Pauline* was an innovative dramatic work ultimately seeks to conceal how close he still was to Romanticism'.<sup>89</sup> This closeness is evidenced directly in the poem: Browning venerates Shelley as the exemplary self-expressive poet, for example, referring to him explicitly as the 'Sun-treader' (l. 151), although the relationship to Shelley in the poem is a complex one, with Shelley simultaneously 'gently objectified and distanced'.<sup>90</sup>

The poem also relates directly to Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', which is itself predicated on the speaker's fear of losing his visionary powers. In the poem, however, Browning parodies 'Shelleyan narcissism and Wordsworthian self-transcendence'.<sup>91</sup> Isobel Armstrong points out how, 'The *Pauline* poet reverses the movement of "Tintern Abbey" by refusing the "sleep" of the body (812) in a pastiche of Wordsworth's "laid asleep in body". To suspend sense in order to become a "living soul" is too high a price to pay'.<sup>92</sup> She goes on to say that:

There is an attempt to reconstruct new values out of "Tintern Abbey" through the act of transmission. When the *Pauline* poet moves *back* from transcendent experience to the populated smoking cots and cottages which he sees around him, he is returning to the human landscape from which Wordsworth escapes. But the cottages begin the movement *towards* pure consciousness and release in "Tintern Abbey". The *Pauline*

poet reverses Wordsworth's movement and seeks to be enclosed in "living hedgerows" (806).<sup>93</sup>

But Browning recognises that *Pauline*'s own claims, its own attempts at parody, are fictions: 'The poem arrives at an impasse. If the strategy of transmission reconceptualises the beliefs of Shelley and Wordsworth as ideological forms of thought appropriating the world, then its own postulates are ideological fictions too'.<sup>94</sup> The '*Pauline* poet fictionalises beliefs and constructs them as representations',<sup>95</sup> the natural corollary of which is a 'commensurate fictionalising of the self'.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, *Pauline* 'swings between violent extremes of exultant power and despair, conditions which belong to one another as the self is progressively fictionalised and experienced as alone and private'.<sup>97</sup> Armstrong concludes that:

All these possibilities are inherent in the Romantic texts which Browning so knowingly deconstructs, but in *Pauline* he took them a stage further and created a seminal, experimental Victorian poem by recourse to the strategy of the "corrupt" text which is both deviant and inauthentic.<sup>98</sup>

*Pauline* came to be regarded as a failure, by both Mill and Browning himself, but Browning was, in subsequent monologues, to reorganise the textual strategies of *Pauline*, discovering how 'to create the lyric as drama and to make the subjective lyric become the opposite of itself'.<sup>99</sup>

## The 'Essay on Shelley'

Browning goes on to address the issues of subjectivity and objectivity, which had underpinned the writing of *Pauline*, in his 'Essay on Shelley'. Here, he aspires to achieve the status of objectivity, despite citing Shelley as the ideal subjective poet. The 'Essay', however, can be seen as Browning's attempt to carve out his own kind of poetic model, distinct from both the subjective and objective modes.<sup>100</sup> In the 'Essay', Browning suggests that the subjective poet and the objective poet are diametrically opposed, and sees the history of poetry as a progression which alternates between the subjective and objective.<sup>101</sup> The objective poet is the 'fashioner',<sup>102</sup> and 'the thing fashioned, his poetry, will of necessity be substantive, projected from himself and distinct'.<sup>103</sup> The subjective poet, by contrast, is more the 'seer' than the fashioner,<sup>104</sup> and what he produces is 'less a work than an effluence'.<sup>105</sup> That 'effluence cannot easily be considered in abstraction from his personality, – being indeed the very radiance and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated'.<sup>106</sup> As Browning opines, in our approach to the poetry of the subjective poet, 'we necessarily approach the personality of the poet; in apprehending it we apprehend him, and certainly we cannot love it without loving him'.<sup>107</sup> Moreover:

If the subjective might seem to be the ultimate requirement of every age, the objective, in the strictest state, must still retain its original value. For it is with this world, as starting point and basis alike, that we shall always have to concern ourselves: the world is not to be learned and thrown aside, but reverted to and relearned.<sup>108</sup>

The objective poet writes ‘with an immediate reference, in every case, to the common eye and apprehension of his fellow men, assumed capable of receiving and profiting by this reproduction’.<sup>109</sup> This, as Woolford confirms, means that the objective poet is ‘conscious of an audience, and this consciousness parallels and extends the devotion to “men and women” which is the mainspring of his poetry’s content’.<sup>110</sup> The ‘subjective poet has, in a sense, no audience’.<sup>111</sup>

*Pauline*, alongside *Paracelsus* and *Sordello*, are early examples of Browning’s attempt to achieve such objectivity in his poetry, as he attempts to make the transition from ‘obliquely autobiographical introspection towards dramatic representation’.<sup>112</sup> Browning’s poetry often reveals a contiguity between the two forms, nonetheless: ‘it is Romantic self-expression that forms the very basis for Browning’s mature, dramatic poetry’.<sup>113</sup> Michael O’Neill points out how ‘Browning’s mode in his dramatic monologues owes much to Wordsworth’s practice in his *Lyrical Ballads*: Wordsworth’s speakers are often not identifiable with Wordsworth’.<sup>114</sup> Browning, nonetheless, favours a ‘mixed’ poetic ideal, as evidenced by his next publication after the ‘Essay’, *Men and Women*,<sup>115</sup> producing poems in both subjective and objective modes as outlined in the ‘Essay on Shelley’,<sup>116</sup> such as *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day* (subjective) and ‘Saul’ (objective), and several poems such as ““Transcendentalism”” and the ‘Prologue’ to *Asolando*, in which both modes combine, as he contemplates the ‘possibilities of combining aspects of his own objective poetry with the visionary quality this poetry lacks’.<sup>117</sup> Both latter poems, as has been pointed out, have a complex relationship to Wordsworth’s own visionary poetry.

## Browning and the Incarnation

Browning explores both the presence and absence of God in his work. The Incarnation, however, is one of ‘the constants of his poetry’;<sup>118</sup> for Browning, as J. Hillis Miller says, ‘if it were not for the Incarnation, man would be doomed [...] to a life of eternal striving short of God’.<sup>119</sup> Miller locates Browning’s Incarnationalism in man as opposed to ‘divine’ man. He writes:

Ultimately the doctrine of Incarnation in Browning is the idea that each imperfect and limited man through whom the power of God swirls is a temporary incarnation of God, one of the infinitely varied ways in which God makes himself real in the world. Each individual life is a center around which the totality of the universe organises itself and fulfills one of its infinite possibilities. Every life contains a unique element, something which is never repeated, but all lives contain the same invariant: the divine presence.<sup>120</sup>

However, William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, believes that the Incarnation of the risen Christ is the ‘consummation of Browning’s poetry’.<sup>121</sup>

Browning’s background was ‘fostered in [a] rejection of Church and sacraments by his inheritance of an independent Congregationalism from his mother and Unitarianism from the Flowers, and their guardian, W. J. Fox’,<sup>122</sup> but, by the time of *Paracelsus* and *Sordello*, he ‘becomes aware of the inadequacy of a Unitarian Christology which makes Christ simply an ethical exemplar. He slowly came to realise that the human soul could not rise of its own to grasp the fire of heavenly love; love somehow must be brought to earth as a gift’.<sup>123</sup> In 1850, he flees the ‘deserts of Shelleyan deism’,<sup>124</sup> fully to explore the Incarnation in *Christmas-Eve*

*and Easter-Day*, his attempt at ‘direct vision and personal statement’ as opposed to objective poetry,<sup>125</sup> an experiment which as ‘far as popular success was concerned, had failed completely’,<sup>126</sup> and after which he ‘turned back to dramatic lyric and dramatic monologue’ in *Men and Women*.<sup>127</sup> The poem traces the speaker’s theological journey from a provincial chapel, to St Peter’s, to a Göttingen lecture-hall, and sees Browning making his ‘personal choice for Christ in the present time’.<sup>128</sup> Then in 1855, in ‘An Epistle to Karshish’, which appeared in *Men and Women*, Browning begins to explore ‘the place that an honest but unprejudiced doubt would play’ in the apprehension of the Incarnation through the perspective of Karshish, the Arab physician.<sup>129</sup> At the end of the poem, Karshish is ‘reaching forward [...] to the idea of a loving God who expresses his love in giving himself in human form’.<sup>130</sup> As William Whitla says, ‘the Incarnation has led to the critical moment of choice. From this point on, all of Karshish’s life will be lived in the light of this experience, the moment, for him, made eternity’.<sup>131</sup>

Prompted by Arnold’s ‘Empedocles on Etna’ (1852), Browning again explores the theme of the Incarnation, this time upon the heathen world, in ‘Cleon’, which also appeared in *Men and Women*. Cleon, like Karshish, contemplates the significance of the Incarnation, but, in many ways, the poem is ‘a judgement against Hellenism that it could not accept the Incarnation’.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, at the close of ‘Bishop Blougram’s Apology’, which also appeared in the same collection, Blougram invites the defeated Gigadibs to study ‘his last chapter of St John’.<sup>133</sup> In the last chapter, ‘Gigadibs would have found St John’s forecast of Christ’s *second coming*’.<sup>134</sup> Woolford emphasises that the entire structure of the revised *Men and Women* of 1863 is ‘made to revolve around the axis of the Incarnation’,<sup>135</sup> with ‘Karshish’ opening the main collection and ‘Bishop Blougram’s Apology’ and ‘Cleon’ closing it.

The Incarnation is also implicit in Browning’s earlier poetry if Heather Patricia Ward’s assertion is correct that:

Far from being affirmations of individualism, *Pauline*, *Paracelsus* and *Sordello* are expressions of the struggle of the infinite self to apprehend the reality of relatedness. The need for Incarnation is implicit in these poems, for in them the man aspiring to isolated divinity learns of the true divine manhood which enables him to stand with and for, but never above, his fellows. Browning's later acceptance of a full doctrine of Incarnation completes, rather than replaces, this early vision.<sup>136</sup>

Whitla maintains that 'Saul' 'remains the tangible testimony to Browning's faith in the Incarnation',<sup>137</sup> while Martens echoes Whitla in claiming that the Incarnation provides 'throughout Browning's poetry an ideal concept of creativity'.<sup>138</sup> It is a concept of creativity that Browning is so shy of expressing, however, that he omits 'Saul' from the 1863 edition of *Men and Women*.<sup>139</sup>

### **Theophany and Wordsworthian Imaginative Transcendence: A Background History**

Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence is self-reflexive, and based on an essentialist self that presupposes congruence between subject and object in the moment of transcendence. Wordsworth explicitly based his method on Immanuel Kant's epistemology, in which the mind, during its moment of perception, plays a creative role in the act of perception itself. Kant sees the mind as actively imposing its own forms on the objects of perception, in that we can 'know *a priori* of things only what we ourselves put into them',<sup>140</sup> and which he intimately links to imagination.<sup>141</sup> In 'Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth gives such ideas a poetic idiom, writing of how the eye and ear 'half create' what they perceive: 'Therefore am I still / A lover of the meadows and the woods, / And mountains; and of all that we behold / From

this green earth; of all the mighty world / Of eye, and ear, – both what they half create, / And what perceive’ (ll. 102-7). Such ‘half creation’ has already led, in the poem, to ‘a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused’ (ll. 96-97). Predicated on this Kantian belief in the mind’s creative role in sense perception – its ability to ‘half create’ what it perceives – works like *The Prelude* see the mind gain domination over the world of sense, which results in moments of transcendental awareness and temporal suspension, or ‘spots of time’ (XII. l. 208). These suspended moments are ‘scattered everywhere’ (XII. l. 224), and are based on ‘ordinary sight’ (XII. l. 254), like that of the ‘visionary dreariness’ (XII. l. 256) of a ‘girl, who bore a pitcher on her head’ (XII. l. 251), but can equally be experienced amongst the grandeur of the ‘Simplon Pass’ (VI. ll. 621-40) or on the top of ‘Mount Snowdon’ (XIV. ll. 28-62). For Wordsworth, these spots of time delineate how ‘the mind / Is lord and master, and that outward sense / Is but the obedient servant of her will’.<sup>142</sup> However, for Tilottama Rajan, the Romantic mind, in half creating what it sees in the moment of imaginative awareness, is potentially creating a ‘fiction’, or projecting an image of desire.<sup>143</sup>

The Tractarian, or Oxford Movement, which began in the early 1830s, moves away from orthodox revelations of the divine, appropriating Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence for theological purposes. Both John Keble, Professor of Poetry at Oxford and author of *The Christian Year* (1826), and John Henry Newman, England’s most famous Anglican convert to Catholicism, begin to use the Wordsworthian imaginative moment, albeit in different ways, to confirm and deepen their faith. There are strong links between the Romantics and the Tractarians, as ‘the Oxford Movement was, in some important respects, a late theological flowering of Romanticism’.<sup>144</sup> But, where Wordsworth privileges the mind in his moments of transcendental awareness, the Tractarians appropriate the Wordsworthian imagination to valorise God. Keble, for instance, believes that ‘a poetic epiphany lifts one out of one’s normal state of insensitivity and leads one “to shape even trivial actions by reference



to an archetype beyond the reach of man””.<sup>145</sup> Both Keble and Newman acknowledge that ‘their poetic predecessors had paved the way for a Christian revival by opening men’s hearts and making them more receptive to faith’,<sup>146</sup> but both:

may also be perceived as reacting against the personalising and secularising tendencies of Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s works [...] and judged his and Wordsworth’s claims for the poetic imagination and their shared concept of symbolism to be worthless without the sanctions of Christian Revelation, dogmatic formulation, and the historical Church.<sup>147</sup>

Keble, however, extends the ‘original dogmatic definition of sacramentalism [...] beyond the realms of the Church to include the world of nature, though always keeping God as the end and object of the mystical analogy’.<sup>148</sup> Further, Keble ‘pinned down Wordsworth’s natural sacramentalism to a strict definition of the sacrament as a material object created for the purpose of revealing God’s presence. Hence the sacrament in nature was taken to perform a function analogous to the Holy Sacraments of the Church’,<sup>149</sup> and ‘anything in the world that brought man into communion with God by symbolising one of His attributes was a Sacrament’,<sup>150</sup> including nature. Equally, he asserts the ‘*objective* truth of natural sacramentalism’,<sup>151</sup> where the ‘mind does not “half-create” what it perceives, and the mystical message that nature gives is not a mere “poet’s dream”’.<sup>152</sup>

The epiphanic natural object, therefore, exists independently of the mind of the poet, and, in this, Keble’s use of Wordsworthian imaginative transcendentalism departs significantly from its use by his Romantic predecessors for whom the mind did indeed ‘half create’ what it perceives in nature. In ‘The Third Sunday After the Epiphany’, for example, which appeared in *The Christian Year*, Keble writes:

I MARKED a rainbow in the north,  
What time the wild autumnal sun  
From his dark veil at noon looked forth,  
As glorifying in his course half done,  
Flinging soft radiance far and wide  
Over the dusky heaven and bleak hill-side.  
It was a gleam to Memory dear,  
And as I walk and muse apart,  
When all seems faithless round and drear,  
I would revive it in my heart,  
And watch how light can find its way  
To regions farthest from the fount of day.<sup>153</sup>

For Keble, the rainbow exists independently of the poet's mind, and is evidence of the objective truth of the sacrament; it is not 'half created' in Wordsworth's sense. Nevertheless, in Keble's use of Wordsworthian transcendence the issue of perceiving, of how the mind 'sees' and converts an object of sense, becomes linked to theophany: the speaker 'sees', as in marks, the rainbow in the sky, and this act of perception is inseparable from the theology with which it is bound.<sup>154</sup> Theophany, which is based on the direct revelation of the divine,<sup>155</sup> is replaced by a perceptual process based on 'seeing' and 'perceiving', as opposed to 'receiving' in the traditional sense. The mind of the poet might not have been Keble's primary concern, but it is the mind of the poet that enables a deepening of faith, as 'direct revelation' is replaced with the perception of a 'sacrament' in nature.

Sacramental awareness is important in Newman's 'view of the world',<sup>156</sup> but it is an awareness 'different [...] from Wordsworth's, and even from Keble's',<sup>157</sup> as natural theology 'can tell us only of laws, not of miracles, the essence of the idea of Revelation. Natural religion had to await its completion and fulfilment in Christianity'.<sup>158</sup> Newman, thus, 'in a sense reverses the Wordsworthian procedure of divine comprehension'.<sup>159</sup> However, Newman emphasises the importance of poetry and imagination in his discussions of the nature of religion, for he is 'convinced of the poetic nature of Revelation itself, how it shaped our imaginations into a new awareness of the world and its beauty, and its history'.<sup>160</sup> This imaginative use extended to the use of the Wordsworthian moment of imaginative awareness, where an early Newman experiences visions which 'grow from and remain grounded within an ongoing dialogue between self and God, a dialogue in which the identities of both parties are continually renegotiated'.<sup>161</sup> Crucially, 'Newman's efforts to ground his own subjectivity rest upon and often parallel the progress of German Idealism from Kant through Hegel'.<sup>162</sup> Subjective, and therefore Romantic, consciousness becomes central to Newman's theophanic experience, as it did for others, for after Coleridge 'it was impossible to omit the subjective consciousness from any serious discussion of the basic issues of religious belief'.<sup>163</sup> As David Goslee emphasises, 'In his practice, however, he [Newman] follows the poets by vesting his subjectivity in privileged moments of imaginative awareness',<sup>164</sup> but, while his 'visions embodied his most radical efforts to escape a Romantic subjectivity, they also embody his most radical participation in it'.<sup>165</sup> Newman seems deliberately to reject 'Romantic self-exaltation in favor of an orthodox self-transcendence'.<sup>166</sup> Yet, in Newman's visionary moments, transcendence and self-exaltation coalesce:

As befits an implicit Romantic, Newman's "trial", his moral, imaginative, doctrinal encounter between self and God, expands to encompass the larger epistemological

encounter between subject and object. Within these visionary moments, I would argue, Newman could envision self and God as engaged in a dialectical process of mutual and ongoing redefinition. And within this new paradigm, in turn, self-transcendence and self-assertion coalesce into two perspectives on the same gesture.<sup>167</sup>

Self-exaltation, subjectivity and the blending of subject and object through a moment of perception, the defining characteristics of the Wordsworthian sublime moment, therefore define Newman's early epiphanies. Theophany itself participates in the Romantic, Wordsworthian paradigm, as it does for Keble, as it moves away from its dependence on objective, external forms of revelation to a focus on subjective insight.

Interestingly, Newman also openly experiments with the Wordsworthian epiphany, as he 'probes the Romantic implications of childhood'.<sup>168</sup> By analysing his own childhood, he is thus able to 'reshape his own adult identity',<sup>169</sup> although ultimately his 'opportunistic reliance on happy coincidence [...] tells him less about his joyful participation within a harmonious, mutually creative universe than about his relation to an aggressively unpredictable God'.<sup>170</sup>

If Newman and Keble utilise aspects of the Wordsworthian epiphany to find God, either through nature or through dialogue, then Gerard Manley Hopkins works both within and without the same tradition to find Christ in the 'inscapes' of nature.<sup>171</sup> A product of the Oxford Movement, in Hopkins' 'daring paradoxes, Tractarianism seems "forged anew in a Heraclitean fire"'.<sup>172</sup> As Ashton Nichols says, 'Every object in the world becomes [for Hopkins], like an Emersonian fact, a potential source of spiritual illumination in the mind'.<sup>173</sup> Hopkins' relation to Wordsworth's epistemology and poetics is complicated and attenuated, however, and is thus given a much more detailed examination in the next chapter of this

study, prior to an analysis of the effects of Wordsworth's linguistic 'presence' in Hopkins' poetry.

Browning's role in the movement toward a theological appropriation of the Wordsworthian imaginative moment is arbitrary, although the placing of the 'infinite within the finite' can itself be seen as expression of the Incarnation. Like the Tractarians, Unitarians such as Fox appropriated Romanticism, but this was for the denial of ego, or selfhood, they observed in Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley rather than the assertion of the self or ego in Wordsworth.<sup>174</sup> It is through the unconscious linguistic associations of 'Saul' and 'A Death in the Desert' that the relationship between the Wordsworthian imaginative moment and the theological in Browning's work is made directly manifest.

### **'Saul': 'I but open my eyes'**

Critics acknowledge that David's vision of the risen Christ has imaginative overtones: Joseph A. Dupras suggests that David is a 'sublime fumbler',<sup>175</sup> for instance, and that Browning's 'faith in humanity's spiritual evolution [is] greatly complicated by how the divine is (self)-realized in the text'.<sup>176</sup> Dupras also acknowledges that 'what David sees [...] is a version of what he imagines. Sight, insight, and foresight coincide: what is beforehand to a seer blest is already at hand empirically for a future mighty prophet-poet'.<sup>177</sup> The unconscious Wordsworthian inscriptions in the text reveal just how '(self)-realized' Browning's spiritual evolution is; rather than replacing Romantic vision with a 'better-than-visionary religious experience',<sup>178</sup> Wordsworthian vision 'becomes' religious vision as a result of the intertextual inscriptions at work in the poem.

Revelation of the Incarnate Christ is mediated through David's consciousness, and comes through David's personal perception, of what he 'saw', and what he encourages Saul

to 'see' (XVII. ll. 237-50). But this perceptual act is compromised by the intertextual inscription at work in the poem, which links the perceptual moment to imaginative conception. Whereas Wordsworth 'perceives' the 'sylvan Wye' at Tintern Abbey, and is furnished with a moment that will feed his future years, here David 'perceives' Christ in creation. David's perception of Christ is not a simple question of 'seeing': perception in the poem is linked to conception, to the conversion of objects of sense, and to the 'creation' of those objects by the mind, which links directly back to Wordsworth's poetics. As in 'Tintern Abbey', 'eye' and 'I', perception and conception, are intimately linked, as the eye and ear 'half create' what they 'perceive' (ll. 105-6).

The poem mediates David's account of his attempt to disinvest the possessed Saul of evil spirits through his harp playing. At the start of the poem, Saul is described by David as 'blind' (IV. l. 33); throughout the poem it is his task to make the blind King of Israel 'see' what he sees. In the poem, the speaker explicitly acknowledges that knowledge of God is a question of personal perception:

I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:  
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain  
And pronounced on the rest of his handiwork – returned him again  
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:  
I report, as a man may of God's work – all's love, yet all's law.  
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked  
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop was asked.  
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.  
Have I forethought? How purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!  
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?

I but open my eyes, – and perfection, no more and no less,  
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God  
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.

(XVII. ll. 238-50)

The speaker ‘sees’ or ‘perceives’ God in creation, and this perception is reinforced by the perception of God in ‘the star’, ‘the stone’, ‘the flesh’, ‘the soul’, and ‘the clod’. Perceptions, or mental projections, of Christ in nature will culminate in the poem in a perception of Christ himself; here they are focused on perceptions of God in nature in an almost Hopkinsian fashion. This sense of seeing, or perceiving, is emphasised by the anapaestic rhythm of the poetry, which itself lays an emphasis on the act of seeing, or perceiving. In line 238, for instance, the fourth anapaestic foot lays an emphatic stress on ‘saw’, as does the fifth anapaestic foot in line 241, which culminates in another emphatic stress on ‘saw’. Equally, the objects of perception in line 250 are given extra emphasis through the anapaestic rhythm. Each anapaestic foot stresses the object being perceived: the star in the first foot, the stone and the flesh in the second and third feet, and so on. The comma divisions in line 250 after the first three feet also emphasise this fact. The similar anapaestic stress on God in the fourth and fifth feet of the previous line – ‘God is seen God’ – emphasises that these objects of perception are in fact perceptions of God, and the rhythmic stress on ‘eyes’ in line 248 reinforces the sense that it is the eyes that are the conduits of this perception. And the end rhymes of lines 249 and 250 – ‘God’ and ‘clod’ – again foreground the link between God and both the act, and object, of perception. The rhymes also underline the fact that this act of perception extends from the highest – God – to the lowest – the clod in the earth. It is this perception that is valorised here, rather than any ‘faculty highest’ (l. 242). In fact, each ‘faculty highest’ tasked with perceiving the Incarnate Christ fails: it is a simple question of

opening his eyes that leads David to see Christ, not an intellectual reasoning process. The enjambment at the end of line 242, with its emphasis on ‘faculty tasked’, links into ‘perceive’ in line 243, which itself has an anapaestic stress on its second syllable, thereby emphasising how mental reasoning has failed to result in a perception of the risen Christ.

However, the intertextualisation of the word ‘image’ in l. 247 emphasises that David is ‘creating’ images of Christ in nature rather than simply perceiving them. The fact that the word is used as a verb also emphasises that this is an active process: images are received but then ‘imaged’, or created, into meaning. Significantly, ‘image’ has a synonym in ‘picture’, which reveals the word’s associations to Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’, where the speaker talks of how the ‘picture’ of the mind continually renews itself via gleams of half-extinguished thought:

And now, with gleams of half-extinguish'd thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again.

(ll. 59-61)

Wordsworth writes here of how the mind is indeed a ‘picture’ made up of images, which themselves are made up of ‘gleams’ of half-extinguished thought. The use of the compound adjective in ‘gleams of half-extinguish’d thought’ mirrors Wordsworth’s ‘half created’ perceptions earlier in the poem, emphasising that it is the creative processes of the mind that produce the ‘picture’. By the placing of a caesura in line 247 between ‘faculty highest’ and ‘to image success’, the text is privileging the act of imaging or (half) creating over and above



the intellectual act, thereby explicitly linking the vision of the risen Christ to the Wordsworthian creative, perceptual, yet conceptual, act. The conceptual process is emphasised in lines 248 to 249, where David finds that what he has produced in his mind in terms of imaginative constructs is replicated in what he sees before him when he but 'opens' his eyes, as 'perfection' in 'the kind I imagined' full fronts him. This suggests that his imaginative processes help construct what he sees before him; he has 'half created' them. Browning is not regarded as an intertextualist,<sup>179</sup> but the intertextual linkage here reinforces the Wordsworthian, and thus imaginative, aspects of David's transcendence of the world around him, simultaneously compromising the notion of God as love in the world. God is not love seen in the world, but the 'half' creation of the Wordsworthian imagination, an imagination fed by the natural world around it. Lyric, as Matthew Rowlinson emphasises, mediates the visual image through consciousness, a pattern set in the nineteenth century by Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'.<sup>180</sup> 'Tintern Abbey' is itself an iconic poem, and one whose influence poets in the nineteenth century and beyond cannot escape. The text here is mediating images, 'half created' images, as it turns out, from Wordsworth's poem, turning 'Tintern Abbey's' 'living air' (l. 98) to 'living water' (l. 72).<sup>181</sup> These images act as conduits to the speaker's interior spaces, something which the rhetoric of the monologue is ostensibly designed to deny. Rhetorical speech is undermined by the Wordsworthian lyrical image and Wordsworthian lyrical speech, in fact, both of which privilege interior life. The speaker's acknowledgement of his 'blankness to the Infinite Care' accentuates the priority of the Wordsworthian imagination in the text, with its unconscious acceptance of the child's enviable imaginative connection to nature in the 'Intimations' Ode's 'Blank misgivings of a Creature / Moving about in worlds not realised' (IX. ll. 148-49).<sup>182</sup> But the latter connection also suggests that this imaginative capacity is something that can be lost, and has to be recovered or replaced.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on how what David ‘saw’ in ‘creation’ is ‘received in my brain’ (XVII. ll. 238-39) highlights how images are received in the brain in a Kantian sense, but then half-created by the mind also. The Wordsworthian inscriptions in the text accentuate this. David receives images in the brain of the ‘star’, the ‘stone’, the ‘clod’, but there is a sense that he ‘half creates’ these images into perceptions of God. This is again emphasised by the lyrical, anapaestic rhythm of the poem, whereby there is a stress in the fourth foot of line 238 on ‘saw’, followed by a stress on the second syllable of ‘received’ in line 239 and on ‘brain’ in line 239, thereby linking seeing, or half-creating, and the brain. The use of the possessive ‘my’ in line 239 emphasises that the process of half-creating or perceiving God in nature is a personal one to David, as does the repeated use of the pronoun ‘I’ in the passage. Christ, from the evidence of this passage, does not appear to all, but only to those who are able to perceive or half-create Him. It is in this personal, creative process in which David urges Saul to participate. Interestingly, the collection of nouns in line 250 – the ‘star’, the ‘stone’, the ‘flesh’, the ‘soul’ and the ‘clod’ – links intertextually to another Wordsworthian lyric, ‘A SLUMBER did my spirit seal’ (1800), as does ‘slumbers’ itself in line 225. Here, Lucy rolls around in ‘rocks, and stones, and trees’ (l. 8), separated from the speaker’s imagination; the imaginative communion sought in the first half of the poem is denied in the second, as the speaker realises he cannot connect imaginatively with Lucy after her death. Similarly, David’s exhortation of love to Saul, ‘And oh, all my heart how it loved him!’ (XV. l. 232), contains traces of another Wordsworthian poem of disconnection, ‘SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways’ (1800), with its acknowledgement of the imaginative separation that comes with death: ‘and, oh, / The difference to me!’ (ll. 11-12). No sooner has the text introduced imaginative connection as a means by which death is survived, than it negates it. Christ does not stand as a God of love, or as an imaginative construct – or at least not for long.

The sense of imaginative half-creation continues to be written into the text with the climactic epiphany of the poem, however, when David urges the suffering Saul, to ‘See the Christ stand!’ (XVIII. l. 312). Seeing the Christ stand for David is a question of perception, a perception of which, he thinks, Saul is also capable:

He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.  
'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek  
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be  
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

(XVIII. ll. 307-12)

The speaker, David, urges Saul to perceive the new Christ. It is a question of ‘seeing’, perceiving an ‘object’ – on this occasion, Christ – and of the mind’s conversion of that object in a Kantian sense. David specifically states that it is his ‘flesh’ (l. 308) that he seeks in the Godhead; after finding God in the ‘star’, the ‘stone’, and the ‘clod’, he is now keen to find Him in the ‘flesh’, a desire emphasised here by the anapaestic stress on the word ‘flesh’ itself in the line. And this seeing, or perceiving of an object, is again given emphasis through the anapaestic rhythm of the poem: ‘See’ and ‘stand’ are both given a stress in the final line of the stanza, as well as alliterative and assonantal emphasis, reinforcing the notion that it is the perceptual act that facilitates the epiphany of Christ, and linking ‘seeing’ with the object being seen ‘standing’. Similarly, the poetic stress on ‘Hand’ in line 311 and ‘Man’ in line 310 emphasises that it is concrete objects in the physical world that will facilitate this perceptual process – the body of Christ, in other words. Again the poetic stress on ‘flesh’ and ‘God’ in

lines 308 and 309 underlines the physical nature of God as an object to be perceived. Equally, the caesura in this line, which places an emphasis on the last anapaestic foot and a half of a 'Hand like this hand', underlines the physicality of the Christly hand, linking it to David's very 'human' hand. This emphasis again underlines the concrete nature of the object which David perceives.

However, the stress on the concrete physical object as perceived is destabilised by the continuing Wordsworthian intertextualisation, which posits conception, or half-creation, behind the perceptual act. David urges 'Saul' to participate in the creative perceptual act, a process which has been prefigured in the creative mental processes that have produced for David images of Christ in the 'star', the 'stone', and the 'flesh', and so forth in line 250, but this perception cannot be separated from Wordsworth's conception. The repetition of the word 'flesh' here in line 308 explicitly mirrors the use of the word in line 250, whereby David has half-created images of Christ in the flesh as well as in the star and the clod. The text is suggesting, therefore, that David is half-creating the image of the risen Christ for Saul, or, rather, suggesting that Saul half-creates the image for himself, in the way that 'Tintern Abbey's' speaker half-creates what he perceives. This is emphasised by the use of the future tense in the use of 'shall': David is promising Saul a vision in the future of what he 'shall' see: 'it shall be / A Face like my face that receives thee' (XVIII. ll. 309-10). There is a sense here that Saul shall see 'a Face like my face' because he will create an image in the flesh just as David has done. The text evidences this, as in the preceding line, David says that it is, 'my flesh, that I seek / In the Godhead! I seek and I find it' (XVIII. l. 309). David, in other words, is creating what he 'finds'. He seeks an image of flesh in the Godhead, by finding or creating what he seeks. The use of enjambment in 'seek / In the Godhead' accentuates this, as it emphasises the act of creation taking place. The word 'find' has a synonym here in 'imagination', underlining that David is imagining or half-creating what he seeks. The

anapaestic stress both on 'seek' and 'find' in line 309, as well as the bracketing of the phrase itself, acknowledges this. Interestingly, the emphasis on 'Hand' and 'Face' corresponds to the Victorian use of Romantic vision via synecdoche.<sup>183</sup>

The overuse of the personal pronoun 'I' underscores the solipsistic Wordsworthianism being inscribed into the poem: 'I have gone the whole round of creation', 'I saw and I spoke', 'I spoke as I saw'. David egotistically suggests that he has 'gone the whole round of creation', encompassing the whole of creation in his perceptual gaze, entrusted with the task as a 'work of God's hand'. Significantly, he uses the lower-case 'h' when describing God's handiwork, thereby elevating himself above The Almighty. Romantic vision involves the dangerous illusion that the speaker occupies the same level as God;<sup>184</sup> David's hubris here allows him to do exactly that. The Wordsworthian inscriptions furnish this hubris. They again overturn the emphasis on rhetorical speech, however, and refocus it on lyrical interiority, the very thing the monologue aims to supplant. At the same time, the Wordsworthian 'I' is a universal as well as a subjective 'I', inviting the reader to share in the speaker's common experience, which means that David's experience of the Incarnate Christ is one in which ostensibly all can share.

David's climactic epiphany occurs at the close of stanza XVIII, with the close of the stanza imposing a form of break or fracture in the text. The break that occurs in the text after David's exhortation, however, not only underlines the sense of breakthrough that has been achieved as a result of the visionary moment, but hints at the self-fracture that the speaker has undergone.<sup>185</sup> This is emphasised at the start of stanza XIX, where David states explicitly that 'I know not too well how I found my way home in the night' (l. 313). He struggles to find his way through the 'witnesses', 'cohorts', 'angels', 'powers', the 'unuttered', 'unseen', the 'alive', the 'aware' (XIX. ll. 313-15). However, physical objects, including people, are 'unseen': David's perceptual and transformative powers have deserted him. The speaker's

choice of word here is significant: ‘unseen’ emphasises how the speaker’s powers to ‘see’ and perceive have dissolved. The line in which David urges Saul to ‘See the Christ stand!’ not only ends with a break in the text, but is itself fractured: it is made up of two exhortations, with the first providing a caesura in the line at its close. This highlights David’s own fracture at this moment. The anapaestic emphases in the line, as well as the rhyme scheme of which it is a part, help underpin this sense of fracture or self-division.

However, there is a counter-movement which overwrites the fracture established in the text by promoting a holistic self. This is achieved through the Wordsworthian intertextualism at work in the poem, which heals fracture. The Wordsworthian imaginative moment seemingly involves the speaker in fracture through its movement through blockage and release. This pattern is inherent in David’s experience as outlined above. In the Kantian mathematical sublime (as opposed to the dynamical sublime where man and nature are set in ‘desperate opposition’),<sup>186</sup> the mind experiences a moment of blockage, where it is in danger of being subsumed by the sheer number of its cognitive experiences. Kant describes this as ‘a momentary checking of the vital powers’,<sup>187</sup> which is nevertheless followed by a compensatory movement, where the mind exults ‘in its own rational faculties, in its ability to think a totality that cannot be taken in through the senses’.<sup>188</sup> Neil Hertz describes the moment of blockage as:

a familiar one to readers of Wordsworth, who repeatedly represents himself as, in his phrasing, “thwarted, baffled and rescued in his own despite”, checked in some activity – sometimes clearly perverse, sometimes apparently innocuous – then released into another order of experience or of discourse: the Simplon Pass episode and the encounter with the Blind Beggar are but two of the most memorable of such passages in *The Prelude*.<sup>189</sup>

The movement from blockage or ‘rapture’ (XIX. l. 323) to the rational is replicated in Browning’s text, where David moves from the blockage or overload of the mathematical sublime, which culminates in the exclamatory ‘See the Christ stand!’ (XVIII. l. 312), to his acknowledgement that he knew ‘not too well how [he] found his way home in the night’ (XIX. l. 313), to his recovery: the rapture is ‘shut in itself’ (XIX. l. 323) and by association in himself. Significantly, the text repeats the language of ‘The Simplon Pass’ from *The Prelude*: after the climactic epiphany, the eyes of the beasts are ‘averted with wonder and dread’ (XIX. l. 329), while the birds are ‘made stupid with awe’ (XIX. l. 330). The poem is threaded with the language of *The Prelude*, in fact; ‘prelude’ itself makes an appearance in line 281 (*The Prelude* was published just five years before the poem itself was published), as does the ‘light’ and ‘harmony’ of line 282, as well as the ‘faculty highest’ (XVI. l. 247), ‘faculty pleasant’ (XVI. l. 257) and ‘abyss’ (XVI. l. 244) of the earlier section of the poem where David recounts his ‘perception’ of Christ, thereby directly connecting the visioning of the risen Christ with the power of the individual mind. In Book XIV of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth writes of:

The power, which all  
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus  
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express  
Resemblance of that glorious faculty  
That higher minds bear with them as their own.  
This is the very spirit in which they deal  
With the whole compass of the universe:  
They from their native selves can send abroad  
Kindred mutations; for themselves create

A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns  
Created for them, catch it, or are caught  
By its inevitable mastery,  
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound  
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.

(ll. 86-99)

The use of 'abyss', which presages David's climactic epiphany and which he uses in his account of his projections of Christ in the stone and the clod in line 245 evokes one of Wordsworth's, and indeed Romanticism's, primary motifs. Thomas Weiskel links the abyss with 'the death by plenitude' that comes with 'an excess of the signified'.<sup>190</sup> In the same passage from Book XIV of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth concentrates on the image of the 'abyss':

There I beheld the emblem of a mind  
That feeds upon infinity, that broods  
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear  
Its voices issuing forth to silent light  
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained  
By recognitions of transcendent power,  
In sense conducting to ideal form,  
In soul of more than mortal privilege.

(ll. 70-77)



The abyss carries not only suggestions of fictional half-creation, but of the precipitous disorientation to which the mind can be subject in moments of imaginative projection; Weiskel draws attention to how ‘verticality’ is the appropriate dimension for the ‘death by plenitude’ he describes.<sup>191</sup> Geoffrey H. Hartman, too, draws attention to how the abyss signifies the role of darkness in the growth of the mind.<sup>192</sup> Darkness is thus the counter-side of the ‘light’ of the imagination, a manifestation of the ‘dark passages’ in Wordsworth to which Keats refers in his description of Wordsworth’s imaginative processes.<sup>193</sup>

Interestingly, eighteenth-century accounts of the sublime emphasise that the metaphor of blockage ‘draws much of its power from the literature of religious conversion; that is, from a literature that describes major experiential transformation, the mind not merely challenged and thereby invigorated but thoroughly “turned round”’.<sup>194</sup> The religious provenance adds a layer of complexity here, as it embeds David’s imaginative moment self-reflexively in a narrative of religious, indeed Pauline, conversion. The movement from blockage to release compromises the mind’s unity, however, as it moves from collapse to recovery, to being ‘shut in itself’. Rather than resulting in the fracture of the self, the movement from self-loss to recuperation via release confirms the ‘unitary status of the self’.<sup>195</sup> In fact, the cohesiveness of the self is confirmed even before the movement toward the rational occurs: ‘for although the moment of blockage might have been rendered as one of utter self-loss, it was, even before its recuperation as sublime exaltation, a confirmation of the unitary status of the self’.<sup>196</sup> Moreover, the assertion of the rational self in the two-fold movement of the mathematical sublime accords with the privileging of the superego, where ‘Kant’s reason [takes] the role of the superego, that agency generated by an act of sublimation, “an identification with the father taken as a model”’.<sup>197</sup> This reassertion of the superego, with its return to the father, indubitably emphasises the return to the ‘father’, Wordsworth, that is taking place in the text.

However, on another level the blockage and release model as played out in the poem overturns the positioning of the ego. The movement from shock to reason involves a move to the ethical, of the recognition of something ‘apart from the self’.<sup>198</sup> David thus moves from the register of the self, as delineated by the speech marks surrounding his account, to another register or discourse without speech marks, which emphasises his move away from the self. The re-establishment of the ego in the text is thus tempered by the move toward the ethical. However, this movement can itself be seen as a replication of the Wordsworthian model, where in works like *The Prelude*, the mind moves from self-absorption to a position of rationality. Either way, then, the text is reinstating the Wordsworthian egotistical sublime model through its intertextual inscription, in a reaffirmation of Wordsworthian poetic practice. Rather than being supplanted, the Wordsworthian sublime experience is given a new accommodation and prominence through the text’s housing of the language of the past; rather than moving toward community feeling as happens in *Christmas-Eve*, as Cronin avers,<sup>199</sup> the poem pulls back from shared experience to a re-establishment of the egotistical self, the very self both the poem and Browning are attempting to eschew. The presence of Wordsworth’s language in the text, therefore, compromises both Browning’s Incarnational faith and his attempts to develop a new poetic form free from the effects of ego. And, importantly, as the inscriptions in the text are unconscious, and therefore unacknowledged, Browning is unable to distance himself from the implications of either effect through the ironic distance habitually created between poet and speaker in the monologue. At the same time, the involuntary inscription of the language of Wordsworthian transcendence in the text supports the notion of David as a ‘subjective’ poet in terms of the ‘Essay on Shelley’, as his is an oxymoronic ‘self-expressive’ monologue.<sup>200</sup> The poem becomes a form of lyrical self-expression for Browning himself, as the Wordsworthian inscriptions confirm his preoccupation with selfhood; the wish to

‘objectify [...] to exorcize a troubling Romantic concern with the self’ fails, as ‘what is expelled returns with all the energy of the repressed’.<sup>201</sup> The nuanced Wordsworthian origins of the monologue are also articulated, as Browning’s speaker unconsciously pays his debts to the ‘dramatic’ speakers of the *Lyrical Ballads* through poems like ‘SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways’, confirming the power of Wordsworth’s poetic influence in his poetry.

### **Saul and the Biblical Critics**

The Biblical Critics, whose work gained increasing currency in the nineteenth century, posit that the work of the Bible cannot be treated as historical fact: the liberal theologian David Friedrich Strauss argues that parts of the Bible are ‘unconscious fictions or myths’, for instance.<sup>202</sup> His *Life of Jesus* appeared in 1846, in a translation by George Eliot, which Browning is known to have read.<sup>203</sup> Browning’s most overt connection to Strauss occurs in *Christmas-Eve*, as W. David Shaw points out, where ‘a German professor’s lecture on “This Myth of Christ” (l. 859) distinguishes between the Jesus of history, a matter of indifference to the true believer, and the Christ of myth, whose “real God-function” (l. 1040) is to use Jesus’ life and death as a paradigm for the placing and timing of an eternal mystery’.<sup>204</sup> However, ‘Saul’ steers a path between a historical or fictional Christ, the latter of which is strengthened by Browning’s fictionalisation of aspects of the Biblical tale of Saul taken from the Book of Samuel: if Browning creates fictional characters in David and Saul, then he moves on to create imagined scenes for them, underscoring the notion of the story of David and Saul as a fictional construct.<sup>205</sup> The work of the Biblical Critics has a significant part to play in the 1864 ‘A Death in the Desert’, too, as Browning’s notion of God as love continues to be challenged by the Wordsworthian inscription in the text.

## **‘A Death in the Desert’: Seeing is Imagining**

The text maintains a dialogue with the past using Wordsworth’s language in ‘A Death in the Desert’ in the same way as occurs in ‘Saul’: the monologue exists in a form designed to override Wordsworthian influence, or at least to parody it, but the text is nevertheless unable completely to break free from that influence, and repeatedly and unconsciously inscribes Wordsworth’s poetic language. The effect of this, as in ‘Saul’, is to compromise the speaker’s faith in the Incarnation, but also, curiously, to strengthen it.

The poem has been the subject of renewed interest in recent years, with critics augmenting existing work done on the intellectual content of the poem. Jonathan Loesberg points out how, ‘Upon release, the poem was quickly taken as a “ghostly” voice answering the attacks of the Higher Critics and specifically Ernst Renan’s *Life of Jesus*’,<sup>206</sup> a position maintained by a succession of subsequent critics and deftly summarised by Loesberg in a note to his article.<sup>207</sup> Loesberg is also keen to point out, however, that:

In the last few years, most articles on the poem have recognized or explicitly argued for the poem’s form of nested statements and texts as indicating a recognition of the complexity of textual transmission that more nearly aligns with than attacks the Higher Criticism, while all manage to make this recognition accord with a more or less orthodox Christian reading of John telling us why we should believe.<sup>208</sup>

Loesberg’s own reading falls loosely within this category and proposes that the poem is replicating the position of the Biblical Critics through St John’s idiosyncratic notion of ‘willed belief in the face of doubt’,<sup>209</sup> a position ‘so anomalous as to be one that virtually only he could have, and certainly one unavailable to any one who has not had his particular

experience of Christ's life and death'.<sup>210</sup> Loesberg concludes, however, that Browning's St John 'confronts directly both the issues of epistemology and the analyses of the Higher Criticism, accepts them in all their difficulty rather than evades them, and finally offers more a position about the way beliefs allow us to live lives than a position about why one should accept Christianity'.<sup>211</sup>

The unconscious intertextual inscriptions in the poem complicate, yet ironically cement, Browning's relationship with the Higher Critics, destabilising his positioning of an Incarnate God, while simultaneously pushing the text more firmly toward a Higher Critical position which revivifies the risen God in new and personal terms. 'Seeing is believing' in terms of Loesberg's argument, as indeed it is for Dupras,<sup>212</sup> but seeing is transfigured into imagining through the intertextual inscriptions in the text, acting as a conduit for the effects described.

The blank-verse poem mediates the last testament of the dying St John, in which he describes his 'revelation' of Christ, and is presented as the contents of an ancient Greek parchment manuscript, framed by parenthetical interpolations. St John uses the language of perception, as he speaks of the vision he has 'seen' (l. 125), and whether others will be able to continue to see what he has 'seen'. St John recounts, like David, what he 'saw', asking 'How will it be when none more saith "I saw"?' (l. 133), just as David in the 1855 'Saul' focuses on what he 'saw' or what could be 'seen'. By focusing on 'seeing' and therefore perceiving, Browning positions St John's vision of Christ as a perceptual moment, as he does with David's Incarnational vision in 'Saul': both David and St John see the risen Christ in the flesh. As in 'Saul', however, these moments are conceptual as well as perceptual and 'half created' in a Wordsworthian sense.

Thus, as in 'Saul', St John's perception of the risen Christ is an overtly personal one, emphasised by an emphatic use of the personal pronoun 'I' throughout the speech where

he describes having seen the risen Christ. John speaks of the Christ with his ‘head wool-white, eyes flame, and feet like brass, / The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen – / I who now shudder only and surmise, / “How did your brother bear that sight and live?”’ (ll. 122-25). The emphasis on the personal pronoun ‘I’ in ‘I have seen’, which precedes the line break in line 123, reiterates that it is John who has personally ‘seen’ the Christ of the wool-white hair with the sword and the seven stars. The fact that St John has to ask how he could bear such a sight and live – again emphasised by the line break – refocuses attention on how the sight is unique to him. The iambic stress on ‘I’ and ‘seen’ in line 123 accentuates this, as does a similar iambic stress on ‘sight’ and ‘live’ in line 125. The personal nature of St John’s vision is emphasised by his subsequent focus on how a ‘crafty’ smith (l. 229) could reduce his vision by making an ‘optic’ (l. 227) glass that would result in ‘what truth / I see, reduced to plain historic fact, / Diminished into clearness, proved a point / And far away’ (ll. 235-38). The line break at ‘truth / I see’ foregrounds that this is indeed truth that only John sees, and that it is one that he has created for himself rather than one he observes, which is emphasised by the iambic stress on ‘truth’ and ‘see’. St John goes on to state that ‘ye would withdraw your sense’ (l. 238) till it ‘dispart, dispread, / As though a star should open out, all sides, / Grow the world on you, as it is my world’ (ll. 241-43). Withdrawing sense, he urges, can result in a world of one’s own creation – ‘my world’ – at the centre of which is a self-made Christ. The use of the verb ‘grow’ here is also important, as it suggests cultivation or creation: John has literally ‘grown’ his own image of Christ.<sup>213</sup> St John’s vision of Christ, like David’s, is not only a perceptual one, but one that St John has conceived, or created, for himself. This is emphasised by St John continually asking throughout his speech whether others might see what he has seen: “Was John at all, and did he say he saw? / Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!” occurs twice, at lines 196-97 and 335-36, for instance. These speeches are imagined constructions in themselves, as they are speeches ascribed to an

interpolated speaker: St John imagines this is what he is being asked. The interpolations foreground the imaginative nature of St John's vision, and hint at his concern that others will be able to imagine a similar vision for themselves.

This sense of a created Incarnational moment is underpinned by the text's use of the language of Wordsworthian transcendence in the poem, which automatically links the created moment to Wordsworth's 'half created' or fictional moments. St John says at one point, after asking whether others might see what he has seen:

Is this indeed a burthen for late days,  
And may I help to bear it with you all,  
Using my weakness which becomes your strength?  
For if a babe were born inside this grot,  
Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,  
Ye had but yon sole glimmer in light's place, –  
One loving him and wishful he should learn,  
Would much rejoice himself was blinded first  
Month by month here, so made to understand  
How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss:  
I think I could explain to such a child  
There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,  
Ay, nor need urge "I saw it, so believe!"  
It is a heavy burthen you shall bear  
In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,  
Left without me, which must be very soon.

(ll. 337-52)

The text's use of 'gleams' here links the poem directly to 'Tintern Abbey' (l. 148) and other Wordsworth poems, for instance, where Wordsworth directly links perception to the act of half-creation. Wordsworth in 'Tintern Abbey' catches from Dorothy's 'wild eyes these gleams / Of past existence' (ll. 148-49). St John's use of 'gleams' confirms that he is unconsciously using the language of Wordsworthian transcendence, as does 'glow' and 'glimmering' to which it is related. 'Glow' and 'gleams' play alliteratively and assonantly in the line, with glow giving rise to the putative gleams of the child, suggesting that the glow 'outside' St John urges the child to experience is half-created in the same way that Wordsworth has half-created what he 'perceives' at Tintern Abbey. As in Wordsworth, priority is given to the child, the 'best Philosopher' ('Intimations' Ode, VII. l. 110), and its ability to capture 'the visionary gleam' ('Intimations' Ode, IV. l. 56). The 'grot', too, contains echoes of Wordsworth's own secluded spaces, as in *An Evening Walk* (1793) and 'Nutting' (1800), as well as echoes of the intertextual process itself,<sup>214</sup> further securing the text into Wordsworth's language and the intertextual transmission of it. The text stresses that St John does not need to urge others to believe what he has seen, as he or she will be able 'half create' such a glow for themselves.

The sense of the half-creation of the visionary moment is emphasised by additional intertextual links between the two poems: 'burthen' (l. 337 and l. 350) also links directly to 'Tintern Abbey' (l. 38), where the 'burthen of the mystery, / In which the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world, / Is lightened' (ll. 38-41) by the mind's creation of an 'aspect more sublime' (l. 37). Similarly, earlier in the same passage, the spirit of man that 'unblinds / His eye and bids him look' (ll. 221-25) evokes the 'blind man's eye' of 'Tintern Abbey' (l. 24). The 'beauteous forms' (l. 23) of the Wye 'unblind' the speaker's eye in Wordsworth's poem, just as what St John has 'seen' has unblinded his eye; both unblindings are predicated on the imaginative power to half-create. Such an intertextual link



again emphasises that St John's perceptual moment is not only linked to 'seeing', but is linked to the process of 'conceiving' in 'Tintern Abbey' that occurs in moments of rapturous sublimity.

Curiously, the text counterpoints the notion of visionary seeing or conceiving through its use of 'eyes born darkling', which have a Miltonic as well as a Keatsian source, emphasising the intertextual 'blindness', as well as intertextual illumination, at work in the section.<sup>215</sup> The Miltonic and Keatsian intertextual blindness is nonetheless countermanded by a diffusive Wordsworthian intertextual transmission of conceptual light.

The use of the language of Wordsworthian transcendence is augmented by the intertextualisation of other Wordsworthian texts in the poem, which locate St John's imaginative account of the risen Christ in a benign Wordsworthian nature. St John continues:

What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick with it!

I see you stand conversing, each new face,

Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,

On islets yet unnamed amid the sea;

Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico

Out of the crowd in some enormous town

Where now the larks sing in a solitude.

(ll. 353-59)

The process of creating one's own Christ stems from the world of Wordsworthian nature, a nature of 'fields' and 'yellow summer eves', where 'larks sing in solitude'. 'Larks' has a direct correspondence in Wordsworth's 'To a Sky-Lark' (1807), where the speaker praises the Lark's ability to pour 'out praise to the almighty Giver' (l. 24), and where he urges the

Lark to 'Lift me, guide me, till I find / That spot which seems so to thy mind!' (ll. 6-7).

However, Wordsworth's poem, like the group of Romantic bird poems of which it forms a part, 'ironizes the drive towards transcendence', as Cronin acutely points out.<sup>216</sup> The speaker-poet acknowledges that he cannot become the bird whose song he celebrates;<sup>217</sup> he can hope only 'for higher raptures, when life's day is done' (l. 30). Like, 'Saul', then, 'A Death in the Desert' both promotes and qualifies the imaginative transcendence it brings into the text.

Crucially, however, St John's speech is concluded with a re-emphasis on the language of Wordsworthian transcendence and a revivification of the lyrical image in contradistinction to rhetorical speech. St John says:

Such is the burthen of the latest time.  
I have survived to hear it with my ears,  
Answer it with my lips: does this suffice?  
For if there be a further woe than such,  
Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,  
So long as any pulse is left in mine,  
May I be absent even longer yet,  
Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,  
Though I should tarry a new hundred years!

(ll. 634-42)

St John summarises his account of the doubts occasioned by the work of the Biblical Critics (via Feuerbach, Strauss, Renan) as the 'burthen of the latest time'. The text has engaged with the critical debate via the interpolated speech of the imaginary sceptic (ll. 370-421), the miracle debate (ll. 443-73),<sup>218</sup> the speech of the representative man (ll. 514-39), and the

account of progressive revelation (ll. 571-633). The intertextualisation of 'burthen' from Wordsworth associates the Higher Criticism with Wordsworth's 'burthen of the mystery' which is linked to the mind's creation of an 'aspect more sublime' (l. 38). This implies that the 'antidote' to the Biblical Criticism is to be found in the mind's imaginative powers, in its ability to 'half create' imaginative moments. St John's reference to 'Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss' (l. 641) underpins this, where the intertextualised 'blind' links to 'seeing', but also, again, to Wordsworth's 'blind man's eye' (l. 24). Here, the 'beauteous forms' (l. 23) of nature have not been like a landscape to a blind man's eye, but are invigorated by the mind to produce the 'aspect more sublime' (l. 37). The text implies that the 'blind ones' will also be able imaginatively to produce sublime pictures of the risen Christ to sustain them. Similarly, the intertextualisation of 'abyss' in the text emphasises the priority of the imaginative mind. Ironically, then, St John's antidote to the assault of the Biblical Critics is to embrace a form of imaginative projection that in itself creates a fictional Christ. This mirrors the work of Strauss and Feuerbach especially, as Strauss predicated his findings on a mythical or created Christ and Feuerbach on the projected image of Christ as love. The Wordsworthian intertextualisation therefore undermines the poem's, and poet's, commitment to a God of love, but pushes the text toward an acceptance of a critical position with which it is struggling or even opposing.

However, as in 'Saul', the intertextualisation of 'abyss' in the text associates the imagination with the power to 'create' the Incarnate Christ, but also with the disorientation and blockage that arises in the first stage of the mathematical sublime. The blockage St John experiences can be read in two ways. For St John, the Incarnation as Wordsworthian imaginative projection is recounted as a past event: it is 'that sight' (l. 125), an experience from the past recounted in the present. St John's whole account is effectively the rational stage of Kant's two-fold model, therefore. This implies that there is a return of reason, or the

superego, and with it a return to the 'Father' (Wordsworth), as in Weiskel's model. The text is therefore firmly replicating a Wordsworthian paradigm. Or rather it is subverting it, as the sublime is recounted simultaneously in the rational as opposed to succeeding the rational. The use of 'abyss' in St John's final speech specifically associates the sublime moment with the confusion inherent in the first stage of Kant's model, however. It also implies that the text wants to rescue the imaginative moment from such confusion and for it to move into the second-stage of Kant's model where the superego is asserted: St John wants to pluck the imagination back from its destructive phase, thereby allowing reason to be reasserted. The use of the present tense in 'plucking' implies that this is a present concern, as does 'is' in 'Such is the burthen of the latest time' (l. 634), while 'blind ones' confirms that St John's concern is a communal one. St John has not moved on to the rational stage of the model himself in some senses, though, as 'that sight' is part of his own discourse, delineated by his own speech marks as a separate discourse, unique to him. This implies that he has not reached the rational stage of the process where reason or the superego is reasserted, but remains in a continuous state of imaginative blockage and near-collapse. The only release St John can personally find is through death. He returns to the Father, but not to the 'Father', Wordsworth. But St John's wish is for others to return to this stage, those 'blind ones' who cannot as yet 'see'. The text concludes, therefore, with a return to the Father, but also with desire for a return to the 'Father', Wordsworth. The inscription of the subjective, yet universal, Wordsworthian self confirms that this desire is a universal one rather than a whim of a fictional construct like St John.

## Conclusion

The presence of Wordsworth's language in 'A Death in the Desert', then, has a complex and lasting effect, confirming that St John's vision of Christ is an imaginative one, thereby undermining Browning's commitment to an Incarnational theology, while simultaneously strengthening that Incarnationalism by pushing the text toward a Biblical Critical acceptance of the creative aspects of Christ's presence in the world. The language, as in 'Saul', compromises the monologue's attempts to function as rhetorical speech by positioning Wordsworthian lyrical interiority and the visual image in its place. It also concludes, again like 'Saul', with an acknowledgement that a return to the 'Father', Wordsworth, must be made if Christ is to return to the world. Neither of these conclusions could have been drawn without an analysis of the unconsciously inscribed Wordsworthian language in the texts; each would have remained hidden, unexposed, uncharted. And both conclusions confirm the vitality of the Wordsworthian imaginative legacy in the Victorian era, as it is unconsciously renewed and given a new applicability, an applicability Wordsworth could not have anticipated or himself pursued. His natural transcendentalism, concentrated purely on the self, supports a Christian faith to which he himself never fully committed. The conclusions reveal how Browning's poetry unconsciously 'fulfils Wordsworth', as much as T. S. Eliot's does in *Four Quartets*, in that it suggests that the imagination can produce a life beyond death.<sup>219</sup>

The next chapter moves away from the poetry of Tennyson and Browning to look at the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and to how Wordsworth's imaginative legacy compromises, rather than supports, orthodox faith, another effect Wordsworth could not have foreseen, but which nevertheless confirms the continued applicability of the Wordsworthian imaginative process in Victorian poetry as a result of the unconscious inscription of Wordsworth's poetic language.

## Notes

1. See John Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 128.  
The quotation from 'Saul' comes from *Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864*, ed. Ian Jack (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), XVIII. 1. 312 (p. 730). All subsequent references to Browning's poems are to this volume and appear parenthetically in the text.
2. Britta Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics and the Romantic Legacy: Challenging the Personal Voice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 156.
3. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 128.
4. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 133.
5. John Haydn Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), p. 21.
6. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 31.
7. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 33.
8. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 37.
9. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 44.
10. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 42.
11. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 83.
12. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 88.
13. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 91. As Baker makes clear, Browning's reading of *The Prelude* (1850) caused him to realise that 'Wordsworth was a realist as well as a romantic, a poet whose struggles and doubts had led to a thoroughly humanistic perspective'. The concluding lines of *Fifine at the Fair* (1872) thus allude directly to *The Prelude*, and show Browning attempting 'to fuse visionary idealism with

realism', a practice he had abandoned with the 1840 *Sordello*: 'By concluding his poem with such an evident debt to Wordsworth, Browning could finally return to the bosom of his mentor and ask for forgiveness, while confessing that he had been wrong to conclude that humanism was no part of Wordsworth's – or, indeed, romanticism's – program'. See *Browning and Wordsworth*, pp. 150, 164, 171.

14. Joseph Bristow, *Robert Browning 1812-1889: Harvester New Readings* (Harlow: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 13.
15. Bristow, *Robert Browning*, p. 15.
16. Bristow, *Robert Browning*, pp. 13-14.
17. Bristow, *Robert Browning*, p. 17.
18. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 165.
19. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 153.
20. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 153. The 'Tintern Abbey' quotation is taken from *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, edited and with introductions and notes by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), l. 91 (p. 164). Note that in this edition, Wordsworth's line reads 'The still, sad music of humanity'. All subsequent references to Wordsworth's poetry refer to this edition unless otherwise stated.
21. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 154.
22. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 163.
23. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 165.
24. Browning describes the infinite moment thus, in response to a critical letter from John Ruskin in 1855 on the recently published *Men and Women*: 'I know that I don't make out my conception by my language, all poetry being a putting the infinite within the finite. You would have me paint it all plain out, which can't be; but by various

- artifices I try to make shift with touches and bits of outlines which *succeed* if they bear the conception from me to you'. See *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, vol. XXXVI (London: Allen, 1909), xxxiv.
25. Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., *Browning's Beginnings: The Art of Disclosure* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), p. 15.
26. John Woolford, Daniel Karlin and Joseph Phelan in the third and fourth volumes of *The Poems of Browning* gloss a handful of what they regard as references to Wordsworth's poetry in 'Saul' and 'A Death in the Desert'. See 'Saul', in *The Poems of Browning: Volume III, 1847-1861*, ed. John Woolford, Daniel Karlin and Joseph Phelan, 4 vols (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), pp. 491-521 and 'A Death in the Desert', in *The Poems of Browning: Volume IV, 1861-1871*, ed. John Woolford, Daniel Karlin and Joseph Phelan, with additional notes on *Balaustion's Adventure* by Jennifer Wallace, 4 vols (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2012), pp. 139-83.
27. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 104.
28. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 106.
29. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 106.
30. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 108.
31. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 108.
32. Baker, *Browning and Wordsworth*, p. 104. Baker quotes Anya Taylor's argument here. See Anya Taylor, 'Religious Readings of the Immortality Ode', *Studies in English Literature*, 26 (1986): 633-54 (pp. 645-48).
33. John Hollander stresses that allusion cannot be unintentional, and uses the term echo to describe a form of allusion that does not depend on conscious intention. Sarah Annes Brown upholds the same separation, claiming that echo is a neutral word 'which doesn't rule out the possibility of conscious borrowing but implies that the



connection isn't strong enough to prove deliberate agency', while 'intertextuality' goes beyond direct influence. See John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), p. 64 and Sarah Annes Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost: Allusion and the Uncanny* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 8, 9.

34. Matthew Rowlinson, 'Lyric', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Anthony H. Harrison (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 59-79 (p. 61). Rowlinson emphasises how Browning 'wrote his dramatic monologues in the context of a widespread assumption that in poetry, and *a fortiori* in lyric, the instrumental use of language is excluded; it is this context that determines the significance of his poems of the 1840s, which collectively mount a formal experiment aimed at undoing this exclusion and foregrounding the operation of rhetoric in poetry'.
35. Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 16. Brown makes her comments on literary influence in relation to Douglas Bruster's acknowledgement that 'New Historicism has left us less conscious of the fact that literature itself has a history'. See *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 16 and Douglas Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 3.
36. E. Warwick Slinn, 'Poetry', in *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., Blackwell Publishing, 1999. Available at <http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?> [accessed 21 June 2011].
37. Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 66.

38. E. Warwick Slinn, 'Dramatic Monologue', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, pp. 80-98 (p. 87). As Slinn confirms: 'While these poems do not separate speaker from poet, they move toward a form of self-enactment, incorporating a distinctive location, a silent interlocutor, elements of narrative, the speaker's responses to changing circumstances, and a covert appropriation of the interlocutor'.
39. Browning never used the term dramatic monologue, favouring the term dramatic lyric or dramatic utterance. William Stigand actually introduced the term 'dramatic monologue' in his review of *Dramatis Personae* for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1864. See Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 100.
40. *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-21*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, pp. 386-87, p. 157.
41. *The Letters of John Keats*, p. 157.
42. Linda K. Hughes, *The Manyfacèd Glass: Tennyson's Dramatic Monologues* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987), p. 13.
43. Hughes, *The Manyfacèd Glass*, p. 13.
44. Hughes, *The Manyfacèd Glass*, p. 14.
45. Hughes, *The Manyfacèd Glass*, p. 17.
46. Carol T. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, pp. 1-21 (p. 9). Browning was an 'early admirer' of Tennyson's 'experiments in dramatic writing that ran parallel with his own innovations in the field'. See Dinah Birch, 'Tennyson's Retrospective View', in *Tennyson Among the Poets: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst and Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 39-56 (p. 53).
47. Christ, 'Introduction', p. 5.
48. Christ, 'Introduction', p. 5.

49. Mill's famous definition of poetry first appeared in 'What is poetry?', in *Monthly Repository*, N. S., VII (1833), 60-70 (p. 65), but is here quoted from a combined version of the essay, which with 'Two Kinds of Poetry' (1833), appeared in the 1867 essay, 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties'. See 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, 33 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963-91), I, pp. 343-65 (pp. 348-49). Mill's concept of feeling can be said to derive from Wordsworth, where in the 'Preface' to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth maintains that 'all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. See 'Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems published, with an additional volume, under the title of "Lyrical Ballads"', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 734-41 (p. 735).
50. Slinn, 'Poetry'.
51. Slinn, 'Poetry'.
52. Slinn, 'Poetry'.
53. Slinn, 'Poetry'.
54. Slinn, 'Dramatic Monologue', p. 80.
55. Slinn, 'Poetry'.
56. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 9.
57. Slinn, 'Poetry'.
58. Robert Browning, 'Advertisement' to *Dramatic Lyrics*, in *Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864*, p. 365. Rowlinson points out, however, that 'Browning's monologues are designed as antithetical to lyric', as does Tucker on whom Rowlinson bases his assertion. See 'Lyric', p. 62 and Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., 'Dramatic Monologue and the

- Overhearing of Lyric', in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond the New Criticism*, ed. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 226-43.
59. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 134. Browning objected to the fact that Wordsworth 'deserted the cause of political radicalism' by accepting the Laureateship in 1843.
60. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 133.
61. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 30. The Wordsworth quotations are taken from 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 743-51 (p. 750).
62. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 36.
63. See *Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864*, p. 38.
64. William Wordsworth, 'Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems published, with an additional volume, under the title of "Lyrical Ballads"', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 734-41 (p. 750).
65. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 29.
66. Wordsworth, 'Preface to the second edition', p. 734.
67. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 137.
68. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 137.
69. Robert Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', in *The Four Ages of Poetry*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), pp. 63-83 (p. 63).
70. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 138.
71. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 257.
72. Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 234.
73. Cronin, *Romantic Victorians*, p. 234.

74. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 23.
75. Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience*, vii.
76. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 25.
77. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 25.
78. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 26.
79. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 26.
80. Quoted in Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 32.
81. Quoted in Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 32.
82. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 25.
83. The criticism appears in the summarising commentary to Mill's two essays, 'What is Poetry?' and 'The Two Kinds of Poetry', which were both published in the January and October 1833 editions of *Monthly Repository*. See *The Poems of Browning: Volume I, 1826-1840*, ed. John Woolford and Daniel Karlin, 4 vols (London and New York: Longman, 1991), p. 17.
84. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 27.
85. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 28.
86. 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', p. 349.
87. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 30.
88. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, pp. 32-33.
89. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 33.
90. Tucker, *Browning's Beginnings*, p. 36.
91. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 123.
92. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 123.
93. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 123.

94. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 124.
95. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 125.
96. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 125.
97. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 125.
98. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 125.
99. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 126.
100. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 10.
101. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 67.
102. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 64.
103. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 64.
104. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 66.
105. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 66.
106. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 66.
107. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 66.
108. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 67.
109. Browning, 'An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley', p. 63.
110. Woolford, 'Preface' to *Browning the Revisionary*, ix.
111. Woolford, 'Preface' to *Browning the Revisionary*, ix.
112. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 1.
113. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 48.
114. See Michael O'Neill, 'The Romantic Bequest: Arnold and Others', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 217-34 (p. 228). O'Neill also points out that 'the degree of simplification involved in viewing the Romantic mode as "predominantly self-expressive" is considerable [...] But it comes close to explaining the pressure to find

objective modes of presentation in Victorian poetry, one that results in fertile forms of experimentation'. See 'The Romantic Bequest', p. 229.

115. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 133.
116. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 77.
117. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 133.
118. J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 155.
119. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God*, p. 155.
120. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God*, p. 155.
121. William Temple, *Religious Experience and Other Essays*, edited and with an introduction by A. E. Baker (London: Clarke, 1958), pp. 51-52.
122. William Whitla, *The Central Truth: The Incarnation in Robert Browning's Poetry* (Michigan: University of Toronto Press, 1963), pp. 12-13.
123. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 13.
124. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 15.
125. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 76.
126. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 76.
127. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 76.
128. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 15.
129. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 19.
130. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 20.
131. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 20.
132. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 22.
133. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 122.

134. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 122.
135. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 122.
136. Heather Patricia Ward, 'Immortal Diamond: Versions of Selfhood in Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, Robert Browning and George Macdonald', PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1981, pp. 1-436 (pp. 288-89). Available at [etheses.nottingham.ac.uk/1383/1/291330.pdf](http://etheses.nottingham.ac.uk/1383/1/291330.pdf) [accessed 03/05/14].
137. Whitla, *The Central Truth*, p. 16.
138. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 159.
139. Woolford, *Browning the Revisionary*, p. 128.
140. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933), p. 23. The question as to whether the mind actively creates in a Kantian sense, or passively receives in a Lockean sense, in Wordsworth is a matter of some critical dispute, but is answered by Thomas Weiskel, who claims that 'What is astonishing is Wordsworth's indifference to priority: creating, catching what is created, or being "caught / By its inevitable mastery": these are in the end – in perception – equivalent, and one need not worry the difference between what the mind confers and what it receives'. See Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 50-51. M. H. Abrams also sees Edward Young's influence in 'Tintern Abbey' as bringing 'to the fore an interesting aspect of the Lockean tradition. For though Locke had said that in acquiring the simple ideas of sense the mind, like a mirror, is passively receptive, he had gone on to make a further distinction. Some simple ideas are "resemblances" of primary qualities which "are in the things themselves"; but the simple ideas of secondary qualities, such as colors, sounds, smells, tastes, have no counterpart in any external body. In



Locke's dualism, then, we have the view that our perception of the sensible world consists partly of elements reflecting things as they are, and partly of elements which are merely "ideas in the mind" without "likeness of something existing without". Locke, therefore, implicitly gave the mind a partnership in sense-perception; what Young did was to convert this into an active partnership of "giving", "making", and "creation". In this simple metaphoric substitution, we find Locke's sensationalism in the process of converting itself into what is often considered its epistemological opposite'. See M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 62-63.

141. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 144.
142. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind: (text of 1805)*, *William Wordsworth 1770-1850*, edited from the manuscripts with introduction and notes by Ernest De Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), XI. II. 271-73 (p. 213). Michael O'Neill describes the Snowdon passage as a 'philosophical "vacancy"', in which 'arises the possibility of imaginative life', and where 'a blank verse that is attuned to process, discovery, and surprise [...] shapes a poetic articulation that resists philosophical translation'. See Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), xvii, xviii.
143. Tilottama Rajan, *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 13-14.
144. Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 11.
145. John Keble, *Occasional Papers and Reviews* (Oxford and London: James Parker & Co., 1877), p. 12, as quoted in Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 16. Fraser goes on to

point out how ‘the emotionalism of Keble’s poetic theory clearly owed a great deal to Wordsworth’s poetics and to the renewed emphasis on powerful religious feelings encouraged by the Evangelical Revival’. See *Beauty and Belief*, p. 17.

146. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 12.

147. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 15.

148. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 39.

149. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 41.

150. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, pp. 41-42.

151. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 41 (emphasis added).

152. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 41.

153. Keble, ‘The Third Sunday After Epiphany’, in *The Christian Year: Thoughts in Verse for the Sundays and Holydays Throughout the Year* (New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), pp. 38-41.

154. Keble’s use of ‘MARKED’ contrasts sharply with the way in which William Blake uses ‘mark’ in his poem, ‘London’, from *Songs of Experience*, where it evokes ‘a whole cluster of powerful, far from detached and far from polite resonances – resonances which question the value and perhaps even the possibility of such detachment’. These resonances include an artisanal ‘prophetic millenarianism’, the ‘essential mode of relationship’ between the city’s institutions and its people – ‘blackening, daubing with blood, blighting with plague’ – and the printer’s production of reversible protruding stereotype marks. See Heather Glen, *Vision & Disenchantment: Blake’s Songs & Wordsworth’s Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 211, 214, 215.

155. Ashton Nichols has some interesting things to say about the nature of direct revelation. See *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Modern Literary Moment* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p. 13.
156. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 44.
157. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 44.
158. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 45.
159. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 45.
160. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 62.
161. David Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1996), p. 81.
162. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 81.
163. Bernard Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore: A Century of Religious Thought in Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 1971), p. 72.
164. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 89.
165. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 90.
166. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 91.
167. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 92.
168. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 99.
169. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 99.
170. Goslee, *Romanticism and the Anglican Newman*, p. 106.
171. Hopkins' theory of inscape is closely related to that of instress, as 'inscape draws together Hopkins's respective principles of form and matter, of instress and the scapes in which it is manifest and visible'. See Daniel Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), p. 44. A fuller explication of Hopkins' theory of both inscape and instress is given in Chapter Five.

172. G. B. Tennyson, *Victorian Devotional Poetry: The Tractarian Mode* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 208, quoted in W. David Shaw, 'Poetry and Religion', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, pp. 457-74 (p. 458).
173. Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany*, p. 168.
174. Ward, 'Immortal Diamond', pp. 37-38.
175. Joseph A. Dupras, 'Robert Browning's "Saul": Strains through the Array', in *Victorian Poetry*, 49.1 (2011): 1-25 (p. 2).
176. Dupras, 'Robert Browning's "Saul"', p. 2. Whitla also writes of 'David's poetic vision of the imagination' in the poem, and how this is linked to his role as 'the type of the lyric poet'. See Whitla, *The Central Truth*, pp. 27-28.
177. Dupras, 'Robert Browning's "Saul"', p. 8.
178. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 164. Martens derives her argument from Lawrence Kramer's 'The "Intimations" Ode and Victorian Romanticism', *Victorian Poetry*, 18 (1980): 315-35.
179. Dinah Birch refers to how Browning's 'direct and vigorous language [is] formed by the rhythms of the spoken voice rather than the textual inheritance of literature', for example. Dinah Birch, 'Tennyson's Retrospective View', p. 53.
180. Rowlinson, 'Lyric', p. 67.
181. The use of 'air' in the text suggests a connection with O'Neill's claim that there is a 'cultural and literary persistence of the Romantic [which] allows for and celebrates the multiple, even fractured nature of that notion', but which 'above all [...] is meant to intimate the possibility of an autonomy of voice drawn from a sustaining air'. Rather than autonomy of voice, however, the text here confirms Browning's

inability to separate himself from Wordsworth's voice. See O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air*, p. 12.

182. Interestingly, echoes of other poets' language emphasise the swirl of inscribed language at play in the poem. The text's use of 'insphering' (l. 274) attests to the general intertextual or allusive processes at work in the poem, with its evocation both of the 'bright aerial spirits [that] live insphered / In regions of calm and serene air' of Milton's *Comus* (1637) and the 'silk seats insphered' of Keats' *Lamia* (1820). See 'A Masque presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634 [*Comus*]', in *The Poems of John Milton*, edited by John Carey and Alistair Fowler (London and Harlow: Longman, Green and Co Ltd., 1968), ll. 179-80 (pp. 177-78); and *Selected Poems and Letters of John Keats*, edited with an Introduction and commentary by Robert Gittings (London: Heinemann, 1966), l. 183 (p. 147).
183. See Catherine Maxwell, *Second Sight: The Visionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Literature* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008). Here, Maxwell claims that the 'suggestive fragment or part-for-whole which prompts a fuller because imaginative vision is a staple of a visionary trend in nineteenth-century literature'; in Hardy and other nineteenth-century writers such as Browning, 'synecdoche is the figure that leads sight to vision, that tutors perception and not just to register or document, but to make visible that which is normally unseen', pp. 219, 220. Maxwell explores this idea in more depth in her 2001 *The Female Sublime from Milton to Swinburne: Bearing Blindness*, where she maintains that 'Victorian poetry does not lose the sublime, although it may go underground to reveal itself only in a sudden outbreak of power', p. 3. She goes on: 'the language of Browning's texts, while often apparently dramatic, is shot through with small hesitations, lacunae, divergences, disturbances which run counter to the overt dramatic intention and

- allow something else to happen. These moments have the capacity to function as lyric epiphanies allowing access to what he called the infinite'. See Catherine Maxwell, *The Female Sublime from Milton to Swinburne: Bearing Blindness* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 150.
184. Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics*, p. 165.
185. It is also related to the double form of the monologue, of course, which produces a 'double' speaker who is by nature fractured.
186. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 5.
187. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1966), p. 83, as quoted in Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 41.
188. Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 40.
189. Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 40.
190. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, pp. 26, 27.
191. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 27.
192. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, Foreword by Donald G. Marshall (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 139.
193. *The Letters of John Keats*, I, p. 280. See also Chapters One and Three, ns, 57, 88.
194. Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 47.
195. Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 53.
196. Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 53.
197. Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 51. Hertz paraphrases Weiskel's argument here. See Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 92. Weiskel takes the Freud quotation from Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1945), p. 214.

198. Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 91.
199. Cronin, *Romantic Victorians*, pp. 235-36.
200. See 'Form and metre' and 'Parallels in B', in *The Poems of Browning: Volume III, 1847-1861*, p. 494 for editors' gloss on Browning's classification of 'Saul' as lyric.
201. O'Neill, 'The Romantic Bequest', p. 229. O'Neill writes of how this is true of the Victorian attempt to objectify in general, but is particularly apposite to Browning here.
202. Shaw, 'Poetry and Religion', p. 460.
203. Shaw, 'Poetry and Religion', p. 466.
204. Shaw, 'Poetry and Religion', pp. 460-61.
205. Charles La Porte claims, for instance, that 'In a twist upon the Gospel of John, which records the author's presence at Christ's crucifixion ("And he that saw *it* bare record, and his record is true" [19:35 AV]), Browning's St. John concedes that he was not present at the crucifixion, while insisting upon the fundamental truth of that biblical account in which he claimed to be there'. See Charles La Porte, *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 174.
206. Jonathan Loesberg, 'Browning Believing: "A Death in the Desert" and the Status of Belief', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 38 (2010): 209-38 (p. 233, n. 1.).
207. Loesberg summarises, for instance, how William O. Raymond 'takes the poem as a direct riposte certainly to Strauss and probably to Renan', while Philip Drew sees the poem as 'more nearly directed at Feuerbach and sees Browning's near acceptance of much of what Feuerbach has to say, but insists on the poem's ultimate refutation of that Higher Critic as well'. See 'Browning Believing', p. 233, n. 1. Loesberg goes on to suggest that this view was 'first called strongly into question by

Elinor Shaffer (191-225), who argues compellingly for the poem as consciously incorporating Renan's critique, but Shaffer still sees the poem as using myth to replace history as upholding Christianity, without questioning the epistemological problems such a transference of basis raises'. See 'Browning Believing', p. 233, n. 1.

208. Loesberg, 'Browning Believing', p. 233, n. 1.

209. Loesberg, 'Browning Believing', p. 212.

210. Loesberg, 'Browning Believing', p. 231.

211. Loesberg, 'Browning Believing', p. 210.

212. Dupras, 'Robert Browning's "Saul"', p. 8.

213. Elsewhere in the text, 'grow' (l. 424), for instance, is related to the idea of collective human growth and the progressive historical revelation of truth. See Robert Inglesfield, 'Two Interpolated Speeches in Robert Browning's *A Death in the Desert*', *Victorian Poetry*, 41 (Fall 2003): 333-47 (pp. 345-46).

214. 'Grot' falls within the category of the complex 'reflecting surfaces – in rocks, caves, forests, and spacious, intricate interiors of stone and masonry', which can 'produce serial [intertextual] echoes – echoes themselves re-echoed – as well as divers direct reflections from various distances'. See John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 1.

215. Hollander focuses on how 'Darkling' from the Miltonic invocation to Book III of *Paradise Lost* is echoed in Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale', where it is 'transformed in the echo [...] by including in its sound somehow an acknowledgement of the source', only to transmute into 'hollow allusion' in Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' (1867) and the embodiment of the 'intimate vocation' of Thomas Hardy as poet in 'The Darkling Thrush' (1900). See *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 90-91.

Wordsworth's own 'DARKLING' Wren makes an appearance in 'THE



- CONTRAST: *The Parrot and the Wren* (1827), l. 46. Maxwell, on the other hand, conflates 'Darkling' directly with the nightingale tradition, whereby 'Male poets after Milton struggle with an uncompromising legacy which tells them that in order to be strong poets they must undergo a form of disfiguration, that authentic poetic identity is achieved only through a sacrifice which is like a symbolic castration'. See Maxwell, *The Female Sublime*, p. 1.
216. Cronin, *Romantic Victorians*, p. 208. The group of 'bird' poems includes Shelley's 'To a Skylark' (1820), where 'the skylark which sings its song as it mounts ever higher into the sky underwrites the drive towards transcendence that impels so much of Shelley's verse'. See Cronin, *Romantic Victorians*, p. 209.
217. Cronin, *Romantic Victorians*, p. 208. Cronin concludes that these poems nevertheless 'locate the lyric impulse in the ambition to escape a merely "corporeal existence", and may even suggest that such an attempt might be "half" successful'. See *Romantic Victorians*, p. 208.
218. Inglesfield points out that 'St John's speech of miracles and the question of the cessation of miracles during the apostolic period [...] needs to be seen clearly in relation to the vigorous contemporary debate on miracles, given new urgency by Baden Powell's essay "On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity" in *Essays and Reviews*'. See 'Two Interpolated Speeches', p. 334.
219. O'Neill suggests that 'Eliot fulfils Wordsworth as much as he revises him when in "East Coker" he asserts: "Not the intense moment / Isolated, with no before and after, / But a lifetime burning in every moment". Wordsworth's practice may sometimes suggest that there is only an "after", merely a recollection and re-creation of extraordinary experience'. See O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air*, p. 81.

## Chapter Five

### Gerard Manley Hopkins: Caught in a Wordsworthian Web

Previous chapters looked at the unconscious inscription of Wordsworth's poetry in the work of Tennyson and Browning. A separation was maintained in each of the chapters between the allusive – the author's deliberate use of language and imagery – and the intertextual – the unconscious transmission of linguistic phrases as part of the texts' inclusion in an intertextual web of literature, although the terms intertextual and echo are used interchangeably in each chapter to imply unconscious citation. The distinction between allusion and intertextual echo in each is made on the basis that the word allusion 'strongly implies agency; it suggests that a later writer has deliberately referenced an earlier work, inviting the reader to notice and reflect on the connection',<sup>1</sup> although it also recognises that the intentionality ascribed to an author in this sense is not an 'exact science' and that the division between the consciously allusive and the unconsciously intertextual is fluid and imprecise.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the chapters on Tennyson and Browning sustain the separation between the allusive and the intertextual on the basis, first, that such a separation exists in the texts under discussion and, secondly, that the application of such a division in favour of the latter produces readings of the texts that are new and interesting, and which open up a different critical seam.

In Tennyson's 'Ulysses' (1842), *In Memoriam* (1850), and 'Tithonus' (1860), the unconscious inscription of Wordsworth's poetic language is woven within an established Wordsworthian allusive pattern. In 'Ulysses', the text's involuntary inscription of the language of poems like 'Tintern Abbey' (1798), *An Evening Walk* (1793) and the 'Intimations' Ode (1807) resounds within a well-recognised allusive 'eternal silence';<sup>3</sup> the patterning, which is not outwardly acknowledged by the author, specifically locates the losses attendant upon the Wordsworthian transcendent moment, which the intertextual strategies of

the poem associatively work to rewrite. Ulysses' journey in search of immortality is transfigured into one in search of the lost Wordsworthian imagination.

In *In Memoriam*, a weave of intertextual inscriptions, including those from 'Tintern Abbey', 'A SLUMBER did my spirit seal' (1800), and the 'Elegiac Stanza', 'Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont' (1807), pull the text back to Wordsworth's poetry, and to the language of Wordsworthian imaginative transcendence in particular, as a means by which both to assuage the loss of Arthur Henry Hallam and to mitigate the effects of a faith assailed by doubt and a science that is overwriting the sympathy that exists between mind and nature. These effects occur without the poet's approval or sanction, and are woven around the multiplicity of allusions in the poem. The poem is caught in a perpetual cycle of return to a Wordsworthian past from which it is unwilling to escape, and 'fends off endings' in a manner typical of the Victorian poem.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, 'Tithonus' has an explicit allusive indebtedness to Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850), where the text's first line – 'The woods decay, the woods decay and fall' – reverberate with the sound of 'woods decaying, never to be decayed, / The stationary blasts of waterfalls' of 'The Simplon Pass' episode of Book VI,<sup>5</sup> which was published in 1845, in what Tennyson admits is a Wordsworthian-inspired revision of his earlier lines, 'Ay me, ay me! the woods decay and fall'.<sup>6</sup> Equally, the vapours that 'weep their burthen to the ground' (l. 2) swirl with echoes of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey',<sup>7</sup> while the 'cruel immortality' (l. 5) that 'Consumes' (l. 6) pulsates to the sounds of the 'Intimations' Ode.<sup>8</sup> Tennyson also reworks the Wordsworthian dissonance between past and present selves in the poem, a practice which follows that of Wordsworth in 'Tintern Abbey', and is itself a continuation of Tennyson's previous practice in 'Tears, Idle Tears' (1847). But, more interestingly, the text also cites 'Tintern Abbey' in a less direct, more oblique way. Tennyson had begun to question the value of Romantic transcendence in poems as early as his 1829 Cambridge

Chancellor's medal prize-winner, 'Timbuctoo', but here that questioning takes on a radically Wordsworthian emphasis, as the poem's intertextual inscriptions effectively rewrite Wordsworth's particular brand of transcendence as it appears in 'Tintern Abbey', confirming the disjunction between mind and nature that Wordsworth later came to accept. The unbidden inscription into the text of the linguistic phrasing of 'Tintern Abbey' complicates the sense of Tennyson as a 'poet of sensation': in 'Tithonus', he is both a 'poet of sensation' and a 'poet of reflection' as a result of the Wordsworthian poetic language unconsciously woven into the text. Hallam's binary opposition in 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, And on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson' between 'poets of sensation', like John Keats and Tennyson, and 'poets of reflection', like Wordsworth, is effaced.<sup>9</sup>

Browning, in 'Saul' (1855) and 'A Death in the Desert' (1864) attempts to break free from Wordsworth's poetic influence in the creation of a monologue form that parodies the extremes of Romantic introspection and subjectivism. But the texts are inescapably bound to Wordsworth's poetic language as part of their inclusion in an intertextual body of literature, the effect of which is to destabilise Browning's claims to be supplanting Wordsworth's literary influence; Browning, the putative anti-intertextualist,<sup>10</sup> cannot be separated from Wordsworth's language and epistemology, as the texts draw him back repeatedly to the language of lyrical interiority within a form deliberately predicated on rhetorical speech. The language of the texts locks them within the very paradigm Browning is attempting to evade, while simultaneously both compromising and strengthening his Incarnational faith.

A similar patterning of unconscious Wordsworthian intertextual inscription is found in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Again, the unconscious inscription is woven around a conscious, and well-documented, allusiveness on the part of the author. Hopkins' early poems are generally regarded as having a prominent Keatsian and Tennysonian allusiveness,<sup>11</sup> although Milton also 'represents for Hopkins an antithetical self [...] the

strong precursor in whose shadow' he stands,<sup>12</sup> and has a strong presence in Hopkins' poetry from 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' (1875) onward.<sup>13</sup> In some of the later poetry, however, Hopkins makes it clear that he is deliberately alluding to Wordsworth's poetry in his own work, often with a view to revising it. In 'God's Grandeur' (1877), for instance, the poem's marked allusiveness to Wordsworth's 'The world is too much with us' (1807) leads Hopkins into rewriting the poem by overlaying Wordsworth's besmirched and degraded earth with the patina of Christ's redemptive power. The poem's opening lines transcribe the opening lines of Wordsworth's poem, where 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God' (l. 1) and act as a conduit for the rewriting that follows.

But Hopkins' poetry also engages in an unconscious dialogue with several Wordsworthian poems, a dialogue which compromises their ostensive meaning, and which often undermines Hopkins' practised Wordsworthian revisionism and provocative allusiveness. This unconscious dialogue starts as early as 'Winter with the Gulf Stream' (1863) and continues through the experimental poems of the 1870s, including 'God's Grandeur', as well as 'The Windhover: to Christ our Lord' and 'Hurrahing in Harvest'. Like 'Winter with the Gulf Stream', each of these later poems involuntarily weaves the language of Wordsworth's poetry into its linguistic fabric, complicating further the tensions created by the intertextual patterning already set up in the earlier work.

By focusing on the unconscious Wordsworthian presences in Hopkins' poems, this chapter allows meanings to arise that would otherwise have remained sealed or perpetually submerged. Moreover, the methodology used affords readings that differentiate themselves from prior critical analyses of Hopkins' work that focus on the effects of the language of the past in the poetry, as these tend to concentrate only on Hopkins' allusive manipulation of other poets' work. These analyses, however, sidestep the intertextual aspects of the poems, leaving the unconscious territory of the poet's literary relationship with the past unmapped.

For instance, Eynel Wardi sees ‘Spring and Fall’ (1880) as marking its temporal and ideological distance from Wordsworth’s ‘Intimations’ Ode and ‘Tintern Abbey’, while simultaneously making a case for the reinstatement of Romantic empathy and metaphor;<sup>14</sup> Christopher Ricks looks at the ‘inspired allusiveness’ to Hölderlin’s ‘Mnemosyne’ in Hopkins’ ‘Pied Beauty’ (1878).<sup>15</sup> Neither particularly sets out a case for the effects of unconscious influence in Hopkins.

An analysis of the diffuse involuntary inscription of Wordsworth’s language in the poems, on the contrary, gives rise to readings that have divergent implications from those emerging from the allusive analyses, by the way in which they both expand critical understanding of the extent to which Hopkins remains trapped within a Wordsworthian poetic and epistemological paradigm and the way in which they expose the fault lines within Hopkins’ Incarnational faith in the poems that precede the ‘Terrible’ or Dark Sonnets of the 1880s.<sup>16</sup> Neither of these lines of argument can be opened up by simply focusing on the allusive use of language in the poems.

Before looking at the unconscious language of the poems in question, however, the chapter provides an account of Hopkins’ documented thoughts on Wordsworth and his poetics, including the thoughts on Wordsworth Hopkins sets out in his letters to friends and acquaintances, which, while by their very nature informal, afford a useful insight into his appraisal of Wordsworth’s poetics.

### **Words and Things: Hopkins and Wordsworth**

Wordsworth’s poetic practice is the subject of much heated comment in Hopkins’ many letters and correspondences. Hopkins was an intense and prolific letter-writer, and his letters and journals are a private, but also eventually public, manifestation of his views on both poets

and poetry, as he debates with his addressees the poetic merits and demerits of his predecessors, Wordsworth and Keats, his contemporaries, Browning and Tennyson, and hammers out his expanding views on poetic theory and practice. Keats and Tennyson absorb much of Hopkins' attention in the letters, as does Milton, but Wordsworth and his lyrical practice nevertheless provoke an, at times, impassioned response, as the older poet begins to take on what Isobel Armstrong describes as the role of the 'anti-poet'.<sup>17</sup> In his letters, Hopkins' comments on Wordsworth suggest a curious conflict, however, as he criticises Wordsworth's poetic style, while simultaneously balancing his criticism with a grudging acknowledgement of the writer's achievements. For example, in a letter to Richard Watson Dixon, written in 1886, he says of Wordsworth:

He had a "divine philosophy" and a lovely gift of verse; but in this work there is nevertheless *beaucoup à redire* [much that needs rewriting]: is due to the universal fault of our literature, its weakness is rhetoric. The strictly poetical insight and inspiration of our poetry seems to me to be the very finest, finer perhaps than the Greek; but its rhetoric is inadequate – seldom first-rate, mostly only just sufficient, sometimes even below par. By rhetoric I mean all the common and teachable element in literature, what grammar is to speech, what thoroughbass is to music, what theatrical experience gives to playwrights. If you leave out the embroidery (to be sure the principal thing) of for instance the *Excursion* and look only at the groundwork and stuff of the web is it not fairly true to say "This will never do"? There does seem to be a great deal of dulness, superfluity, aimlessness, poverty of plan. I remember noticing as a boy, it was the discovery of a trade secret, how our poets treat *spirit* and its compounds as one syllable: it is, though founded really on a mistake, the mere change of pronunciation, a beautiful tradition of the poets. Wordsworth had told himself or

been told this trifle: why did he not learn or someone tell him that sonnets have a natural *charpente* and structure never, or at least seldom, to be broken through? For want of knowing this his inspired sonnets, *εὔμορφοι κολοσσοί*°[beautiful statues], suffer from “hernia”, and combine the tiro’s blunder with the master’s perfection.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, of Wordsworth’s sonnets he writes, in a letter of 1877 to Robert Bridges when responding to Bridges’ own attempts at sonnet-writing: ‘Yours are not at all like Wordsworth’s, and a good thing too, for beautiful as those are they have an odious goodness and neckcloth about them which half throttles their beauty’.<sup>19</sup>

It is in a letter to Alexander Baillie of 1864 that Hopkins produces his most trenchant criticism of Wordsworth, however, describing his poetry as containing too much of what he terms ‘Parnassian’ language, ‘that language which genius speaks as fitted to its exaltation, and place among other genius, but does not sing (I have been betrayed into the whole hog of a metaphor) in its flights’.<sup>20</sup> Citing the example of Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden* as evidence of Parnassian – ‘Now it is the mark of Parnassian that one could conceive oneself writing it if one were the poet. Do not say that *if* you were Shakespear you can imagine yourself writing Hamlet, because that is just what I think you *cannot* conceive’<sup>21</sup> – he goes on to claim that:

I believe that when a poet palls on us it is because of his Parnassian. We seem to have found out his secret. Now in fact we have not found out more than this, that when he is not inspired and in his flights, his poetry does run in an intelligibly laid down path. Well, it is notorious that Shakespear does not pall, and this is because he uses, I believe, so little Parnassian. He does use some, but little. Now judging from my own experience I should say no author palls so much as Wordsworth; this is because he writes such an “intolerable deal of” Parnassian.<sup>22</sup>



Only four years later, conversely, Hopkins, writing to Dixon, sees fit to praise Wordsworth's style as it appeared in the 'Intimations' Ode: 'The rhymes are so musically interlaced, the rhythms so happily succeed (surely it is a magical change "O joy that in our embers"), the diction throughout is so charged and steeped in beauty and yearning (what a stroke "The moon doth with delight"!)'.<sup>23</sup> Yet, he cannot refrain simultaneously from qualifying his praise, pointing out what he sees as the inconsistencies in Wordsworth's poetic practice:

The ode itself seems to me better than anything else I know of Wordsworth's, so much as to equal or outweigh everything else he wrote: to me it appears so. For Wordsworth was an imperfect artist, as you say: as his matter varied in importance and as he varied in insight (for he had a profound insight of some things and little of others) so does the value of his work vary. Now the interest and importance of the matter were here of the highest, his insight was at its very deepest, and hence to my mind the extreme value of the poem.<sup>24</sup>

Despite Hopkins' inconsistent comments on both Wordsworth and his poetic practice in his letters, his own linguistic and prosodic experimentation are based directly on Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and its injunction for poetry to be in the 'real language of men'.<sup>25</sup> In his 'Author's Preface on Rhythm', Hopkins refers to sprung rhythm, the system of one stress in a unit of one to four syllables, which gives rise to 'four sorts of feet, a monosyllable and the so-called Trochee, Dactyl, and the First Paeon',<sup>26</sup> as 'the rhythm of common speech and of written prose, when rhythm is perceived in them',<sup>27</sup> and in a letter to Bridges dated 1877, he asks himself:

Why do I employ sprung rhythm at all? Because it is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, that is the native and natural rhythm of speech, the least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms, combining, as it seems to me, opposite and, one wd. have thought, incompatible excellences, markedness of rhythm – that is rhythm’s self – and naturalness of expression ...<sup>28</sup>

Contemporary poetry, as he declares to Bridges in 1879 in yet another letter, should:

arise from, or be the elevation of, ordinary modern speech. For it seems to me that the poetical language of any age shd. be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself, but not (I mean normally: passing freaks and graces are another thing) an obsolete one.<sup>29</sup>

Poetic language as ‘current language heightened, to any degree and unlike itself’, however, involves for Hopkins a process of radicalisation and defamiliarisation, a moving away from the language of the Romantics in general and Wordsworth’s ‘Preface’ especially; as Isobel Armstrong points out Hopkins ‘loved the poems of Keats and Shelley, and Wordsworth in particular, but the form of Romantic language caused him pain and he rejected it for a complex of reasons which were certainly personal and psychological, but mainly religious and cultural and as a corollary aesthetic’.<sup>30</sup> He, in effect, shifts ‘Romantic conceptions of poetry by deriving it now from the fixed and intrinsic nature of language and its activity and not from an unstable theory of consciousness’.<sup>31</sup>

Hopkins’ linguistic experimentation, based on the language of ‘real men’ heightened to a degree to which it is unlike itself, thus ‘effectively radicalizes Wordsworth’s tenets about the use of common language and prose rhythms in poetry. It removes this discourse from

Wordsworth's empiricist and social approach to language into the Parmenidean sphere of ontology'.<sup>32</sup> This removal, as Daniel Brown makes clear, is 'based upon a critique of Wordsworth, which he makes in the undergraduate essay on "Poetic Diction"'.<sup>33</sup> In the essay, Hopkins draws upon his reading of G. E. Lessing's *Laocoön* and, according to Brown, argues that:

Wordsworth fails to acknowledge the importance that the formal structures of poetry have in shaping their distinctive language and thought. Lessing is accordingly used by Hopkins to "modify what Wordsworth says [:] An emphasis of structure stronger than the common construction of sentences gives asks for an emphasis of expression stronger than that of common speech or writing, and that for an emphasis of thought stronger than that of common thought." Even though it may, as Wordsworth says, be possible to trace the words of "the best poems" to ordinary prose and common speech, Hopkins maintains that the form of poetry acts upon such matter to draw from it a greater "emphasis of expression" and "emphasis of thought".<sup>34</sup>

Hopkins, then, tries to disentangle himself from Wordsworth's empiricist and social approach to language as outlined in the 'Preface' and to focus on the form of poetry itself: 'the poem becomes a thing and not, as for so much Romantic poetry, a model of the structure of consciousness'.<sup>35</sup> In the case of language, this involves Hopkins in attempting to build a new alliance between word and thing, where 'the word is the expression, *uttering* of the idea in the mind', as he suggests in the 1868 'Notes'.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes described as the 'precursor of Saussurean linguistics',<sup>37</sup> Hopkins:

was the first poet to develop a poetics out of a theory of the structure of language, and strangely, this rigorously modernist procedure – structuralism before its time – came about because he was the last poet to hold a strictly theological account of the logos, the authority of the Word made flesh through the incarnation of Christ. The strain of holding these two things together, and of making them compatible, marks the passionate torsions and desperate ecstasies of his work.<sup>38</sup>

Armstrong claims that:

Hopkins seems to yearn for a primitive condition which he knows to be fallacious – that words might be so individuated and concrete that they will be closely related to the things they represent in almost unmediated unity with them. If they cannot do this they will possess the quality of the things themselves, having a physicality, substantiveness and materiality which almost turns them into solids.<sup>39</sup>

As she goes on to make clear, however, Hopkins ‘abandons this idea, though with regret, because “all names but proper names are general while the soul is individual”. Language deals in categories and universals, which means that it would be impossible – and mad – to have a unique word for every thing or concept in the world’.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Hopkins’ ‘desire to individuate words (to dispense with synonym in Müller’s terms) and to form the exact, the “proper” meaning, so that the word is as close as possible to the thing it represents, actually has the consequence of dislodging the referent’.<sup>41</sup> She adds, ‘Not only does Hopkins’s language come to the verge of collapsing into discrete entities: it also risks nonsense by inventing metaphorical forms so tenuously related to an originary meaning that they push comprehension to the limit’.<sup>42</sup>

Michael Sprinker emphasises how Hopkins' attempts to recapture spoken language mirror the privileging of speech over writing to be found in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, but how this, too, simply ends in failure, with the bond between speech and writing eroded:

Attempting to recapture the presence of spoken language, Hopkins is compelled to proliferate systems of writing. What he achieves is not the representation of spoken language, but the production of a text in the rigorous though radically unstable conception given that term by Derrida. Hopkins's search for a natural signifying structure to represent speech discloses the painful truth that the presence of speech eludes the poet, leaving him only the dead letter of his writing.<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly, Browning, like Hopkins, is responding to Wordsworth's 'Preface' in his poetic practice, in his attempt to speak in the 'language of real men', but this experimentation, too, ended in charges of abstruseness and difficulty, and of the poet pushing comprehension to the limit. Similarly, the 'Preface's' injunction for metre to be 'regular and uniform' is transgressed by Browning in his choice of 'metres at once capricious and mechanical' in a tacit adumbration of Hopkins' own experimentation with prosody.<sup>44</sup> Walter Bagehot in his 1864 review of Browning's *Dramatis Personae* and Tennyson's *Enoch Arden and Other Poems*, 'Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or, Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry', characterises Browning's poetry as the third of his poetic arts, the grotesque, on the basis that it makes too much of 'a demand upon the reader's zeal and sense of duty':<sup>45</sup> 'Whoever will work hard at such poems will find much mind in them: they are a sort of quarry of ideas, but whoever goes there will find these ideas in such a jagged, ugly, useless shape that he can hardly bear them'.<sup>46</sup> By contrast, Tennyson's poetry is characterised

as ornate by Bagehot, as there is ‘a want of simplicity. Nothing is described as it is, everything has about it an atmosphere of *something else*’.<sup>47</sup> Neither the grotesque nor the ornate has for Bagehot what he calls a ‘*pure style*’,<sup>48</sup> a style exemplified by Wordsworth, who ‘comes as near to choice purity of style in sentiment as is possible’.<sup>49</sup>

Hopkins makes much of questioning Wordsworth’s linguistic and poetic ‘purity of style’, nonetheless, and also questions the epistemology underpinning the style. An early fragment of a poem from 1862, ‘It was a hard thing to undo this knot’, explicitly engages with Wordsworth’s idealist thinking, questioning whether the rainbow, for instance, is purely in the mind of the beholder, and whether the object itself has a participative function to perform in perception:

It was a hard thing to undo this knot.  
The rainbow shines, but only in the thought  
Of him that looks. Yet not in that alone,  
For who makes rainbows by invention?  
And many standing round a waterfall  
See one bow each, yet not the same to all,  
But each a hand’s breath further than the next.  
The sun on falling waters writes the text  
Which yet is in the eye or in the thought.  
It was a hard thing to undo this knot.<sup>50</sup>

(Maentwrog)

Hopkins finds a resolution for this dilemma in the work of the Presocratic philosopher, Parmenides, on whose work he subsequently bases his concepts of ‘inscape’ and ‘instress’.

An instress is the ‘pattern of “stress or energy” that upholds an instance of being’, while an inscape is the ‘rationale behind instress’,<sup>51</sup> a ‘composite of the “flushness” of both stress *and* resistant matter’.<sup>52</sup> An ‘instress is given by the object and experienced by the subject. Perception effectively depends for Hopkins upon the active participation of both the subject and its object’.<sup>53</sup> As Wardi confirms: ‘In this relational perspective, an interactive dynamics takes place in which the object as it were asserts itself under the perceiver’s gaze’.<sup>54</sup> For example:

The octave of “The Windhover” shows that the apprehension of form in nature does not simply depend upon the mind, as Hopkins worries it might do in such early poems as “It was a hard thing to undo this knot”, but rather is inherent to the event itself. Form is sunk in the objective relations of the world, here as a physical tension, an instress comprising the dynamically poised relations of the bird and the air.<sup>55</sup>

Inscape, in fact, ‘aims to recognise distinctiveness, not only of the species but of the individual and the group’,<sup>56</sup> and is aligned to John Duns Scotus’ concept of *haecceitas*, or the ‘thisness’ of a thing.<sup>57</sup> Words are integral to this sense of thisness, in that they demonstrate that ‘things are’ and how they are;<sup>58</sup> moreover, ‘words bring about an incarnation’,<sup>59</sup> and derive from ‘the identity of Christ with the Word’.<sup>60</sup> Inscape has itself a Christocentric focus:

Through the medium of inscape, Hopkins perceives the transcendental self not only as the bridge between selves in the act of perception, but as a distinct noumenal thing, in the form of a universal spirit of being, in which the objects of the phenomenal world participate. And, again through the experience of inscape, Hopkins identifies the

transcendental self, or the inscape of each created thing in nature, with Christ, the supreme self, who determines the principle of individuation in the world.<sup>61</sup>

Words and things both find their natural resting place in God. And as Ashton Nichols points out, for Hopkins such theophanic interpretation was necessary in order to shore up the perceptual experience against any charge of Paterian solipsism: ‘The mental manifestation, in Hopkins’ case, always needs a theophanic buttress, lest it become only the flickering instability feared by Arnold and embraced by Hopkins’ Oxford tutor, Walter Pater’.<sup>62</sup>

Patricia M. Ball sees Hopkins’ concept of inscape as indebted to the Romantics, however; she suggests that ‘Hopkins draws on the highly developed Romantic awareness of identity, with its emotional force and sense of relationship, and infuses this into his Ruskinian scrutiny of the object. Moved equally by the “taste of self” and the conviction that “things are”, he brings the two together in his vision of inscape’.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, she sees Hopkins’ concept of instress as continuing the Romantic tradition, whereby ‘Intimacy and detachment, subjective and objective, are again in balance, neither despoiling the other’.<sup>64</sup> She places Hopkins’ Incarnational theology as ‘compatible with his Romantic instinct for prizing the individual and honouring personality’.<sup>65</sup> Hopkins, from this perspective, is as interested in the experience of the self as he is the object: ‘However, devoted as he is to a Ruskinian scrutiny of the object, Hopkins is equally, Romantically, interested in the notion and the experience of the subject and in the constitutive expression of the self, or “selving”’.<sup>66</sup> Hopkins, it seems, is always working inside a Romantic tradition: Hopkins ‘for the sake of his own growth, tries[s] desperately to come out from under that condition, tries[s] to radically alter or “soften” his own ego’,<sup>67</sup> as Paul Mariani makes clear, but this is always an ‘inside job’.<sup>68</sup> Armstrong agrees:



Hopkins' solution to the Hegelian flux of mind-constituted universe is so extreme that it falls into one-sidedness. It leads to that very isolation within the self which he tried so hard to avoid. It refutes idealism by splitting the autonomous external world away from the feeling, perceiving, suffering self so inexorably that the two fall apart as disjunct entities. It reintroduces the solipsism of which Marx accused Hegel. He, the poet, is "the *only* being".<sup>69</sup>

Hopkins is thus inevitably pushed back toward the solipsism by which the Romantics – and Wordsworth in particular – are defined, and from which he is so keen to escape.

This sense of working inside a Romantic, indeed Wordsworthian tradition is evident in the confirmed and well-established linguistic and epistemological relationship between Hopkins and Wordsworth to be found in Hopkins' work, starting with the early poetry; Hopkins may have abjured both Wordsworth's language of real men and his poetic style, but his poetry bears unconcealed witness to Wordsworth's linguistic influence. Ball perceives Hopkins as 'in spirit with his Romantic predecessors', for instance.<sup>70</sup> She goes on: 'Some of his poems stand in direct line of descent from the self-articulating Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats. 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' and the late sonnets alike set out to expose the inner life of emotional conflict and the pressures of a tense relationship',<sup>71</sup> although she acknowledges 'the migration of centre from the subjective consciousness to the world of objects is clear' in poems like 'Binsey Poplars' as a result of what she terms 'the science of aspects',<sup>72</sup> 'that science [which] opened up poetic opportunities for which the earlier nineteenth century was not prepared, in its preoccupation with the subjective implications of identity, rather than the proposition that self speaks from each mortal thing'.<sup>73</sup> She nevertheless regards poems like 'The Windhover' as locating the 'nub of their meaning [...] at the point where the natural fact meets the human reading of it',<sup>74</sup> thereby embedding

Hopkins in a Romantic tradition, although she also claims that Hopkins' 'use of nature in the poems at times seems closer to Ruskin's taste for taking lessons for human life from the natural scene than to the Romantic transmuting of object into subjective experience';<sup>75</sup> Hopkins, for Ball, has an 'ability to make his poetic voice out of Romanticism and Ruskin brought together'.<sup>76</sup>

As with the other historical excursions in this study, the above account is given not only to contextualise Hopkins' poetic relationship to Wordsworth prior to an analysis of the effects of the unconscious inscription of Wordsworth's language in Hopkins' poetry, but to re-emphasise that such historicist accounts ignore the way in which authors' own histories of reading and writing are embedded in the language of the texts themselves,<sup>77</sup> and how this history of reading and writing can be excavated by an analysis of the 'embedded' language of the texts. Such an analysis of Hopkins' poems augments the complexities of Hopkins' relationship to Wordsworth as it appears in the published letters, and undermines Hopkins' uncomplicated allusiveness as it appears in the poetry itself. If Hopkins discovers that poetry can only ever be writing and not speech, then the poetry reveals the extent to which this writing can only ever be Wordsworth's.

### **'Winter with the Gulf Stream' (1863 and 1871 versions)**

'Winter with the Gulf Stream', published while Hopkins was still at school and before he left for Oxford,<sup>78</sup> describes the speaker's experience of nature and the setting of the sun in a winter warmed by the waters of the Gulf Stream. Nichols draws attention to what he claims is the Wordsworthian nature of the epiphany with which the poem ends, which he asserts is founded on the 'ordinary' and quotidian nature of the experience itself.<sup>79</sup> This open allusiveness to the Wordsworthian sense of the ordinary is counterpointed by the intertextual

inscription of Wordsworth's poetic language in the text that enmeshes it in a Wordsworthian lexicography and pantheistic epistemology over which Hopkins can exert little or no control. Lines 15-24 inscribe the language of Wordsworth's own early poetry, for instance:

The moon, half-orb'd, ere sunset floats

So glassy-white about the sky,

So like a berg of hyaline,

Pencill'd with blue so daintily –

I never saw her so divine.

But thro' black branches – rarely drest

In streaming scarfs that smoothly shine,

Shot o'er with lights – the emblazon'd west,

Where yonder crimson fire-ball sets,

Trails forth a purfled-silken vest.

The 'black branches' contain tints of the 'black arch'd boughs' of Wordsworth's own piece of juvenilia, 'The Vale of Esthwaite': 'But he, the stream's loud genius, seen / The black-arch'd boughs and rocks between / That brood o'er one eternal night, / Shoots from the cliff in robe of white'.<sup>80</sup> In Wordsworth's poem, nature, like the stream in its robe of white, is frequently described as 'drest' (l. 145): 'Twilight' is 'wrapped in dusky s[hroud]' (l. 77); Pity is described as 'late in Summer colours drest' (l. 145); the 'dark grey cloud' (l. 202) folds the moon in 'robes of azure white and gold' (l. 203). Wordsworth's 'drest' nature directly informs Hopkins' 'black branches', wrapping them both in 'streaming scarfs' and a

hyperbolic gothic gloom. But they are also dressed by a mind that in Wordsworth's poem is anticipating that the imagination can be 'married' to nature,<sup>81</sup> that nature can be idealised by the mind that perceives it – in this case, Wordsworth's. Wordsworth would go on to consolidate his conceptual thinking in his later work, but the anticipation of such a union between mind and nature here is sufficient to disorient the suggestion in the poem that nature is 'divine' (l. 19) in an Incarnational sense; rather, it is the mind that shares 'in the nature of the divine' here.<sup>82</sup> Hopkins is yet fully to conflate nature with the risen Christ or the Virgin Mary, as he does in the later poetry, but an inchoately Incarnate nature as 'she' appears here is nonetheless infused with an emergent pantheism that stems from a mind other than Hopkins' own.

Nature here, wearing 'streaming scarfs', is both 'female' and 'feminine', and this echoes Wordsworth's configuration in both 'The Vale of Esthwaite' and the later poetry of nature in this way.<sup>83</sup> In Wordsworth's invocation to the daisy, 'To the Same Flower', 'Poems of the Fancy' (1807), for instance, nature is transformed by the perceiving mind into a dressed female: 'A nun demure of lowly port; / Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court, / In thy simplicity the sport / Of all temptations; / A queen in crown of rubies drest; / A starveling in a scanty vest; / Are all, as seems to suit thee best, / Thy appellations' (VIII. ll. 17-24). The daisy, for all its simplicity, is compared both to a queen in crown of 'rubies drest' and a starveling in a 'scanty vest'. In each example, the daisy is described as dressed or covered, albeit scantily and indigently in the case of the latter. 'Drest' is transcribed directly into Hopkins' text and 'vest' is reinscribed as 'purpled-silken vest', developing the sense of nature both as beautifully adorned, regal, and bejewelled female and abject starveling.

The feminisation of nature in Wordsworth implies both that nature is beautiful and pure, but also that she is artificial and duplicitous, in that she is 'covered' or 'disguised', whether this be extravagantly or scantily so as in 'To the Same Flower'. This sense of

deception is often offset by a sense both that pantheistic nature represents the ‘mother’ in Wordsworth’s texts,<sup>84</sup> and that the mind’s marriage to nature stems from ‘a moral act’ of fidelity to nature on the poet’s part.<sup>85</sup> ‘Tintern Abbey’ pivots this moral act in a nature that is ‘The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being’ (ll. 110-11).

Wordsworth openly acknowledges the deceitfulness of a glamorised nature, however, in a late poem, ‘Inscriptions Supposed to be Found in and Near a Hermit’s Cell’ (1820), where he writes: ‘Not seldom, clad in radiant vest, / Deceitfully goes forth the Morn; / Not seldom Evening in the west / Sinks smilingly forsworn’ (XIV. ll. 1-4). But nature’s deceitfulness as symbolised by the wearing of clothes is at work in other texts in a less open, more nuanced way: the speaker in the ‘Intimations’ Ode (1807), for example, refers to how ‘There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream, / The earth, and every common sight, / To me did seem / *Apparelled* in celestial light, / The glory and the freshness of a dream’ (I. ll. 1-5; emphasis added). The sense of duplicity at play in ‘apparelled’ underwrites the speaker’s sense of nature as failing him, a failure which is explored in the remainder of the poem. There is, of course, a sense that it is the mind of the speaker that is failing here, but the attribution of untrustworthiness to nature implies that nature is complicit in this failure, too. In *An Evening Walk* (1793), ‘insects *clothe*, like dust, the glassy deep’ (l. 116; emphasis added); again, these lines occur in a section of the poem where the speaker temporarily loses his power subjectively to transcend nature, so nature as ‘clothed’ validates the sense of duplicity and abandonment he feels, while simultaneously making nature partly culpable for the failure. The repetition of ‘Glassy’, which is braided into Hopkins’ ‘half-orb’d’ moon, ‘glassy-white about the sky’, reinforces this sense of duplicity, as it appears both in *An Evening Walk* as in line 116 above and ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’. In *An Evening Walk* ‘glassy’ is associated with the temporary loss of transcendental power, and in ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’ with the poet’s

incipient pantheism; Hopkins' text bears witness both to Wordsworth's developing sense of the mind's transcendental power, therefore, and the ephemerality of that power.

Equally, the intertextualisation of the language of Wordsworthian pantheism in 'Winter with the Gulf Stream' brings death directly into the poem. The text's use of 'violets' in 'Long beds I see of violets / In beryl lakes which they reef o'er' (ll. 25-26) has a source in Wordsworth's 'SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways' (1800), where it is associated with death and imaginative failure, or at least the speaker's inability imaginatively to connect with the Lucy who was once so fair: 'A violet by a mossy stone / Half hidden from the eye! / – Fair as a star, when only one / Is shining in the sky' (ll. 5-8). 'Violet' is the colour of the Virgin Mary, but the inscription of death into the text via the language of Wordsworthian textual inscription prejudices the potential of nature imaginatively to embody the 'divine' (l. 19) and therefore to offer a transcendence of death. The speaker of Wordsworth's poem is unable to bridge the imaginative divide between life and death, as Lucy remains steadfastly 'in her grave' (l. 11), and Hopkins' 'violet' is drained of its Marian hue as a result.

Interestingly, the Wordsworthian linguistic patterning in the text is repeated in Hopkins' 1871 revision of the poem, which comes after his dramatic and contentious criticism of Wordsworth's 'Parnassian' language in his letter to Baillie. The 1871 text retains a moon that 'by daylight floats / So glassy white about the sky' (ll. 15-16) and 'black branches, rarely drest' (l. 20), although this time they are in 'scarves of silky shot and shine' (l. 21); similarly, the speaker of the 1871 poem still sees 'long reefs of violets' (l. 25). Further, the revised version of the text removes an element of Wordsworthian linguistic phrasing while simultaneously incorporating additional examples of it. In the 1863 version the lines read:

A Pactolean river frets

Against its tawny-golden shore:

All ways the molten colours run:

Till, sinking ever more and more

Into an azure mist, the sun

Drops down engulf'd, his journey done.

(ll. 27-32)

In 1871 this is replaced with 'In beryl-covered fens so dim, / A gold-water Pactolus frets / Its brindled wharves and yellow brim, / The waxen colours weep and run, / And slendering to his burning rim / Into the flat blue mist the sun / Drops out and all our day is done' (ll. 26-32).

The 'azure' mist of Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk*, which is found in the 1863 text, is replaced in 1871 with 'the flat blue mist', but this is counterpointed by the text's use of 'dim', 'yellow', 'slendering', and 'burning', all of which are found in Wordsworth's description of the setting sun in *An Evening Walk*, where 'Deep yellow beams the scattered stems illumine' (l. 180), and the 'beacon's spiry head' (l. 210) is 'Tipt with eve's latest gleam of burning red' (l. 211), and where men 'Toil, small as pygmies in the gulf profound; Some, dim between the lofty cliffs descried, / O'erwalk the slender plank from side to side' (ll. 163-65) as they work the quarry. Hopkins transmutes Wordsworth's adjective 'slender' into the verb 'slendering', which suggests he may or may not himself be unconsciously using Wordsworth's poetic language, which complicates the division set up in this chapter. Either way, the language of 'Parnassian' is inscribed into the text, fastening both author and text in a linguistic practice from which the author is anxious to escape.

## **‘God’s Grandeur’**

Hopkins’ ‘Author’s Preface on Rhythm’, with its injunction for poetic rhythm to be sprung and to be in the language ‘of common speech and of written prose’, inflected the 1875 ‘The Wreck of The Deutschland’. However, not all of Hopkins’ poems produced after the ‘Author’s Preface’ are written in sprung rhythm, and this includes the 1877 ‘God’s Grandeur’, which is instead composed in variable iambic pentameter. The poem, a sonnet, celebrates the rising of the dawn, and concludes with a salvational and immanent Holy Ghost bringing new hope and sustenance to a world bent out of shape by toil and degradation. Its flagrant allusivity to Wordsworth’s ‘The world is too much with us’ implies that it is a deliberate overwriting of the earlier text, and is often read by critics and editors as such,<sup>86</sup> although Hopkins, in a letter to his mother, described this and ‘The Starlight Night’ (1877) as also having a ‘few metrical effects, mostly after Milton’.<sup>87</sup> Wordsworth’s text berates a world which is ‘too much with us; late and soon’ (l. 1), where there is too much ‘Getting and spending’ (l. 2), and where ‘Little we see in Nature [...] is ours; / We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon’ (ll. 3-4). Hopkins’ overwriting of the earlier sonnet – ‘Generations have trod, have trod, have trod, / And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared, with toil; / And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil / Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod’ (ll. 5-8) – however, is complicated by the interplay of other Wordsworthian texts unconsciously inscribed into the poem, which challenge the text’s Christocentric climax, and permeate the poem with a feminised nature and notions of loss and death. The textual insubordination that begins with ‘Winter with the Gulf Stream’ has a more problematic effect here, in that the Wordsworthian pantheism introduced into the text through its Wordsworthian inscription is placed in binary opposition to a fully Incarnational nature.



This is evident from the first line of Hopkins' text, where 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God', bears direct linguistic and syntactical analogy to Wordsworth's 'The world is too much with us'; 'grandeur' also has a linguistic origin in Book I of *The Prelude*. For instance, here the speaker says:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,  
That givest to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion, not in vain  
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul;  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
But with high objects, with enduring things –  
With life and nature – purifying thus  
The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
Both pain and fear, until we recognise  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

(ll. 401-14)

The 'grandeur' to which the speaker refers is one that is based on the 'Soul that art the eternity of thought' that permeates life and nature, and which transcends the vulgar works of man. This sharply destabilises Hopkins' speaker's sense of how the world is charged with the 'grandeur of *God*' (emphasis added), a grandeur that transcends a world smeared with

toil, and which culminates in a Holy Ghost brooding over the bent world, as it is inflected irremediably with the 'grandeur' of the 'Wisdom and Spirit of the universe'. Wordsworth's 'grandeur in' is replaced in Hopkins with 'grandeur of', while 'A grandeur' is replaced with 'the grandeur', which suggests that, despite Hopkins' prepositional re-phrasing and replacement of the indefinite, with the definite, article, the text is drawing from a Wordsworthian linguistic word-bank. The effect of this verbal transference is to 'smudge' and befuddle the movement of the text and to compromise its overt Incarnationalism with the very Wordsworthian pantheistic idealism which the poem purports to be supplanting. This disorientation is emphasised by the very use of 'grandeur' itself. Hopkins wishes to find a way of bringing words closer to the 'things' they represent, but here 'grandeur' has a meaning rooted in a Wordsworthian epistemology which Hopkins cannot control: 'grandeur' is not the 'thing' it represents for Hopkins, but the 'thing' it meant for Wordsworth by its inclusion in an intertextual web of literature and linguistic association, or even a combination of the two in a linguistic re-birthing.

The Wordsworthian resonances 'beat' their way through the text, in fact. A 'grandeur in the beatings of the heart', for instance, suggests beating wings (as well as beating heart), which inflects Hopkins' bird imagery of the Holy Ghost with his 'bright wings' (l. 14), staining it with the 'Spirit of the universe'. The metrical variation in the line, where there is a stress on the first syllable of 'grandeur', which, given the line's iambics, should rightly fall on the second syllable, emphasises the word's Wordsworthian lineage, where the stress falls naturally on the first syllable in the line. The metrical variation is a deliberately allusive one on Hopkins' part, emphasised by the diacritical marking placed over the first syllable in the text,<sup>88</sup> which reinforces the overwriting of 'The world is too much with us' that is ostensibly taking place. But the strata of meaning introduced into the text through the unconscious inscription of words that do not necessarily mean what Hopkins wants them to mean erode

the opposition created between the world as 'charged' with the loss of God's power and the mitigation to be found in the 'grandeur' of God himself.

The intertextual inscription of other Wordsworthian texts in 'God's Grandeur' continues the practice of compromising Hopkins' sense of nature as Incarnate with the Holy Spirit, thereby compromising Hopkins' purport in the poem to be overwriting Wordsworth's earlier text and Christianising 'the romantic cult of nature'.<sup>89</sup> The sense of nature that results from this inscription is distinctly feminine, either in a maternal, or erotically charged, sense. Hopkins' speaker refers to how 'There lives the dearest freshness deep down things' (l. 10), for instance. 'Dearest' weds the poem to Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', where the speaker addresses Dorothy, his 'nature repository', as 'my dearest Friend' (l. 115); here, in Hopkins' text, 'my dearest Friend' is inscribed as 'dearest freshness'. The appellation associates Hopkins' poem with Wordsworth's pantheistic, transcendent nature as it appears in 'Tintern Abbey', but also with nature as erotic manifestation: 'dear' Dorothy is associated with nature, but Wordsworth's speaker is seduced by this very same nature and sent into 'dizzy raptures' (l. 85) by its beauty and power, describing himself as 'A lover of the meadows and the woods' (l. 103). Nature is also represented as mother or 'nurse' (l. 109) in 'Tintern Abbey', which complicates the notion of nature as erotic muse; both 'natures' find a place in Hopkins' text, with both fighting against Hopkins' sense of the Holy Ghost in a Biblical sense as a bird shielding her brood under her wing.<sup>90</sup>

Interestingly, the inscription of nature as mother attracts attention to the way in which cultural stereotypes come to dominate as a result of the intertextual process:

Intertextuality is an important term for describing the radically plural text, and is a crucial technique in the work of those writers who eschew notions of the unified work, yet it is also potentially what creates a sense of repetition, cultural saturation, a

dominance of cultural stereotypes and thus of *doxa* over that which would resist and disturb the beliefs and forms and codes of that culture, the *para-doxa*.<sup>91</sup>

The effect of this cultural dominance here, as evidenced in the repetition of nature as maternal, is to weaken the text's sense of a masculinised immanent nature with a nature that is maternal and transcendent. Equally, the inscription of nature as mother and as sexualised erotic female perpetuates a gendered intertextuality, in which social, cultural, and ideological constructions of femininity, such as the way in which 'woman is associated with nature' while 'man is associated with culture',<sup>92</sup> or woman as sexualised object, are reinforced.

'Freshness', to which 'dearest' is applied as an adjective, also bonds the text to Wordsworth's 'Intimations' Ode, as does the sense of 'deepness': 'every common sight' (I. l. 2) has for the speaker at the start of the 'Intimations' Ode, 'The glory and the freshness of a dream' (I. l. 5); the 'best Philosopher' (VIII. l. 110) 'read'st the eternal deep' (VIII. l. 112); when faced with unmanageable imaginative loss, 'the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears' (XI. ll. 206-07). The 'Intimations' Ode is predicated on this recompense to be found in the meanest flower and 'the human heart by which we live' (XI. l. 204). Hopkins' 'dearest freshness deep down things' is therefore inscribed with a sense of Wordsworthian imaginative transcendent loss and measures for its recovery, rather than with the immanence of the Holy Ghost.

'There lives the dearest freshness deep down things' – continues to have a significant parallel with 'Tintern Abbey', however. 'Things' in itself has particular relevance with Wordsworth's poem, as does 'deep'. In 'Tintern Abbey' the speaker refers to how 'with an eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony, and the *deep* power of joy, / We see into the life of *things*' (ll. 47-49; emphases added), and how there is 'A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking *things*, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all *things*' (ll. 100-02;

emphases added). There is also a ‘sense sublime / Of something far more *deeply* interfused’ (l. 96; emphasis added). Wordsworth’s sense of immanence, a ‘motion and spirit’ in ‘things’, which is feminised in the text with nature as both mother and erotic lover, weakens Hopkins’ sense of a Christly, or indeed Marian, immanence living deep down in ‘things’. Hartman has highlighted the Marian focus in Hopkins’ poetry generally, drawing attention to how the ‘blue-bleak embers’ (l. 13) of the ‘The Windhover’, for instance, suggest the presence, and possibly the absence, of the Virgin Mary.<sup>93</sup> But in Book XIV of *The Prelude*, ‘things’ also have a relevance and are ‘enduring’ (l. 109), a mixture of both feeling and thought that combine to produce the ‘grandeur in the beatings of the heart’. Similarly, ‘Things’ has a particular resonance in Hopkins’ lexicography, including in his writings, such as the 1868 ‘Notes’, where he explores the relationship between the word and the uttering of the idea in the mind. Here, ‘things’ resonates with a Wordsworthian meaning which evades Hopkins’ attempts to pin meaning down; ‘things’ does not mean ‘things’ in the way in which Hopkins would like.

Hopkins’ prosodic practice emphasises this inability to capture and control meaning, especially with regard to lines 47-49 of ‘Tintern Abbey’, as Hopkins’ line ten is an echo of these lines in prosodic terms. For instance, there is a stress on ‘lives’ and a sprung stress on ‘things’, which echoes Wordsworth’s iambic stress on the ‘life of things’ (he also places a sprung stress on ‘deep down’, with a similar effect, with Wordsworth’s preposition ‘into’ elided in ‘deep down things’). Wordsworth’s repetition of ‘i’ in ‘life’ and ‘things’ is itself repeated in Hopkins’ ‘lives’ and ‘things’, emphasising the linguistic transference from one text to another. Similarly, Wordsworth’s ‘deep power of joy’ is repeated in Hopkins’ ‘deep down’, for instance, with the ‘ow’ of power repeated in the ‘ow’ of down (with both preceded by ‘deep’, of course). The textual inscription perpetuates Wordsworth’s sense of an immanent nature, emphasised by the assonantal effects of ‘deep’; ‘deep down’ also has sexual

overtones, which relate to the Tintern-imported sense of nature as lover, and ‘Deep’ and ‘down’ carry a sense of death and burial, which chime with the speaker’s fears of mortality in ‘Tintern Abbey’. ‘Lives’ is also in the present tense, complementing ‘Tintern Abbey’’s ‘living soul’ (l. 46) and ‘living air’ (l. 98). But Wordsworth’s ‘living’ is freighted both with the serene blessedness that comes with the mind’s observance of nature’s ‘beauteous forms’ (l. 23) and its contrary, the sense of an unblessed soul and a speaker who one day will be unable to feel the presence of the ‘something far more deeply interfused’ (l. 96) that dwells in the living air.<sup>94</sup> It is this duality that is inscribed into Hopkins’ poem. Significantly, ‘Dearest’ also has its own echo, its own play on sound and hearing, with its internal pun on ‘ear’ – ‘D-ear-est’ (emphasis added) – emphasising how the line is itself an unconscious echo of the precursor text and the ambiguity contained within it.

The sense of death and loss, as well as the sense of a feminised nature, is augmented by the speaker’s invocation to morning in the text – ‘Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs’ (l. 12) – which echoes the speaker’s address to the morning in another Wordsworthian sonnet, ‘Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802’ (1807). In this poem, London wears the ‘beauty of the morning’ (l. 5). The City is by implication also like a sleeping woman ‘who now, doth like a garment, wear / The beauty of the morning’ (ll. 4-5). The use of *paralepsis* – ‘Never did sun more beautifully steep / In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill’ (ll. 9-10) – also associates this sleeping woman with nature. It subtly introduces a notion of nature as both sexualised and duplicitous, as she is disguised with a ‘garment’ or covering rather than appearing unadorned. But the inclusion of Wordsworth’s ‘Composed Upon Westminster Bridge’ in Hopkins’ text also inscribes death into the poem. In Wordsworth’s text ‘all that mighty heart is lying still!’ (l. 14) and the river glides through death itself, with the very houses ‘asleep’ (l. 13); it is clear that the invocation to morning transmutes into one of mourning in the silence of the early dawn. The sense of death and loss

dislocates Hopkins' claim for a resurrectional Christ in nature, an antidote to death: the 'bright wings' of the Holy Ghost are dipped in the river of death, not life. This is accentuated by the syntactic connections between 'mighty' and 'bright', which unite the 'mighty heart' lying still with the 'bright' wings of the Holy Ghost.

By contrast, in opposition to its Biblical derivation, 'broods' (l. 14) implicates the Holy Ghost in a sense of imaginative power, as it draws on Wordsworth's multi-layered use of the word in his own texts. In Book XIV of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's speaker, after ascending Snowdon, refers to 'the emblem of a mind / That feeds upon infinity, that broods / Over the dark abyss, intent to hear / Its voices issuing forth to silent light / In one continuous stream; a mind sustained / By recognitions of transcendent power, / In sense conducting to ideal form, / In soul of more than mortal privilege' (ll. 70-77). The lines indicate the power of a mind that broods over the dark abyss, but this is a power that is at odds with that of an immanent and Incarnational Christ, come to save the world from the excesses of individualism and industrialism. Its presence in the text asserts the transcendent power of the individual mind rather than the power of an immanent Christ.<sup>95</sup>

'Broods' also unites with Wordsworth's 'It is a beautiful evening, calm and free' (1807), which underscores these connections with the power of the individual transcendent mind. The poem itself broods on the child's affinity with nature, an affinity lost on the speaker's young daughter as she is, unbeknown to her, already part of nature. The speaker refers to how 'The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea: / Listen! the mighty Being is awake' (ll. 5-6). The lines refer to the power of nature here, but also to the power of the mind in imaginatively apprehending that nature. The iambic experimentation in 'the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings' (ll. 13-14), where there is an unexpected stress on both 'broods' and 'breast', mirrors Wordsworth's own iambic emphasis on these words in the poems mentioned above, strengthening the inscriptive

interplay between the texts. In the 'Intimations' Ode, Wordsworth again returns to 'broods' in connection with the power of the child both to embody the imaginative connection to nature which he fears he has lost and the pre-existent knowledge of the divine: 'Mighty Prophet! Seer blest! / On whom those truths do rest, / Which we are toiling all our lives to find, / In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave; / Thou, over whom thy Immortality / Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave, / A Presence which is not to be put by' (VII. ll. 114-20). This again compromises Hopkins' text's claim to be celebrating the power of the Incarnate Christ to save the world from destruction by suggesting that salvation comes with the power of the individual transcendent mind to transform the world around it. Moreover, the effect of such 'heightened consciousness' is to 'intensify' the individual mind's sense of isolation rather than to 'assuage' it.<sup>96</sup> The Wordsworthian inscriptions in the text increase the speaker's sense of isolation, therefore, undoing the bonds of communality he is attempting to draw between himself and his fellow men and the immanent Christ. Sprinker claims that the nun's ecstatic vision of Christ in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' is an example of the Wordsworthian sublime, and the poem as a whole Hopkins' 'first and only poem in this mode',<sup>97</sup> where 'transcendence becomes the property of the poetic imagination'.<sup>98</sup> 'God's Grandeur' reveals, on the contrary, that Hopkins continues unconsciously to use the Wordsworthian poetic imagination, but how this reverses the effects found in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' by denying the risen Christ rather than affirming Him. Any grandeur God has in this poem is disabled by a Wordsworthian poetic imagination that valorises nature and the individual self rather than He who represents all.



### **‘The Windhover: to Christ our Lord’**

‘The Windhover: to Christ our Lord’, written in 1877, is another sonnet allegedly in praise of an immanent Christ, this time as found in the ‘dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon’ (l. 2) or windhover of the poem’s title. As with ‘God’s Grandeur’, Hopkins’ equation of Christ with nature is unsettled by the many Wordsworthian inscriptions in the text, which dilute the notion of Christ as immanent in nature with a sense of nature as pantheistic and the mind as transcendently idealist. The Mackenzie edition of Hopkins’ poems suggests that the windhover is ‘drawn from his rest by the “dappled dawn” of Milton’s “L’Allegro”’,<sup>99</sup> but, as with ‘God’s Grandeur’, the Miltonic allusions in the poem overlay a tessellation of Wordsworthian intertextual inscription. For instance, the speaker’s claim to have ‘caught this morning morning’s minion’ (l. 1) captures the sense of catching a bird of prey; and catching also holds the sense of ‘catching’ an inscape.<sup>100</sup> But ‘caught’ also resonates with the sense of ‘caught’ as it appears in Wordsworth’s texts. ‘Caught’ contains echoes of Book XIV of *The Prelude*, for instance, where the speaker, after the Snowdon vision, emphasises the power of the mighty mind that broods over nature:

The power, which all  
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus  
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express  
Resemblance of that glorious faculty  
That higher minds bear with them as their own.  
This is the very spirit in which they deal  
With the whole compass of the universe:  
They from their native selves can send abroad

Kindred mutations; for themselves create  
A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns  
Created for them, catch it, or are *caught*  
By its inevitable mastery,  
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound  
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.

(ll. 86-99; emphasis added)

This sense of catching, or being caught, by the mastery of the mind's powers over nature inflects the speaker's sense in 'The Windhover' of being caught by 'this morning's minion'; that is, of being caught by the sight of Christ immanent in nature. Wordsworth's sense of being passively 'caught', as well as actively 'catching', introduces an ambiguity into the speaker's sense of 'I caught', which implies that Hopkins' speaker is caught unawares by the mastery of nature's power, a power which has little to do with the immanent Christ, and which mirrors Hopkins' own sense of being 'caught' in his texts in the gossamer web of Wordsworth's language and epistemology. Hopkins is 'buckled', or caught, just as the windhover is 'Buckle![d]' (l. 10), or caught, by the air in his 'brute beauty' (l. 9), as Wordsworth's influence hovers immovably over the text. Interestingly, the sense of Hopkins being buckled by the air suggests an element of support – the windhover is caught, but also supported, by the air – which implies that Hopkins, too, is supported by Wordsworth. Wordsworth's poetry is an air, an ether, on which Hopkins draws unconsciously for support: it is the oxygen which he involuntarily breathes, and a reminder of what Michael O'Neill calls the 'imaginative oxygen' Romantic poems bequeath to later poems.<sup>101</sup>

The sense of capture, of both poet and speaker alike, is complemented by the speaker's double-strength reference to 'morning morning's minion' (l. 1). 'Morning' subtly

draws in associations from Wordsworth's 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge', where the speaker's invocations to London and to nature are allied with womanhood and death.

Hopkins' speaker refers to the 'morning', with the deictic 'this' giving the sonnet the same specificity as Wordsworth's, which takes place on a particular morning – September 3 – in London. Both the City and nature as a sleeping woman and the river as a river of death feed into Hopkins' sense of the Falcon as an emblem of a masculine Christ. The Falcon, from this reading, is feminised and death-like, as opposed to resurrectional and male. The connection between these two particular texts continues in the lines 'the hurl and gliding / Rebuffed the big wind' (ll. 6-7): in Wordsworth's text, 'The river glideth at his own sweet will' (l. 12).

Hopkins' bird glides with rivers of death in its veins, as it were.

'Minion' also forms a link between the text and some of Wordsworth's poems, and feeds into the sense of nature as pantheistic and feminine, and locks the text further into Wordsworth's poetic vision. The Mackenzie edition of the text annotates 'minion' (*OED*) as "'dearest friend, favourite child, servant", e.g. in Donne, "John the minion of Christ" (*Serm. cxv*)',<sup>102</sup> and suggests that the 'old usage suits the image of a medieval French court ("dauphin") and a Crusading knight in combat (ll. 7, 11)'.<sup>103</sup> But 'minion' also connects intertextually to Wordsworth's poetry. 'Minion', for instance, features in Wordsworth's 'Upon Seeing a Coloured Drawing of the Bird of Paradise in an Album' (1837), where the bird of paradise is described as 'Thou buoyant minion of the tropic air' (l. 2); the bird is also described as 'the Bird of Heaven!' (l. 28) and 'The Bird of God' (l. 30), though it remains a mortal bird, nonetheless. Hopkins' sense of Christ as a Falcon on the wing is counterpointed, as Christ is shadowed by mortality. Correspondingly, 'minion' in the archaic sense of 'dearest' evokes Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'. Dorothy, who becomes the speaker's nature substitute in the text, is addressed as 'my dearest Friend' (l. 115), which, as with 'God's Grandeur', links Hopkins' immanent nature with nature as pantheism and nature as both

maternal and eroticised female. The ‘morning morning’s minion’ therefore is not a synonym of Christ but of a maternal and erotically feminised nature.

This reading is supported by the speaker’s reference to ‘my dear’ (l. 13), which echoes the speaker’s ‘My dear, dear Friend’ (l. 116) in ‘Tintern Abbey’, with the repetition of the possessive pronoun ‘my’ inscribing the speaker’s personal pantheistic eroticisation of nature as it appears in Wordsworth’s poem. Edward A. Stephenson suggests that ‘ah my dear’ has its origin in George Herbert’s ‘Love III’, where it refers to the Redeemer, and infers from this that ‘By quoting Herbert, Hopkins reminds his readers that God is love’.<sup>104</sup> The Mackenzie edition also suggests that ‘ah my dear’ also refers to Herbert’s ‘Love III’, and is ‘variously held to be addressed to Christ, the poet’s heart, or the reader’ in the poem.<sup>105</sup> These readings are evidence of what Sarah Annes Brown terms a ‘shifting, intertextual continuum’, whereby texts betray ‘the sum of several previous moments of charged recognition’.<sup>106</sup> Stephenson’s suggestion that Hopkins ‘quotes’ Herbert implies a level of intentionality on Hopkins’ part, of course, an intentionality missing from the inscription of ‘Tintern Abbey’’s ‘my dear’ into Hopkins’ text; the repetition of ‘my dear’ in ‘Tintern Abbey’, too, may well be simply part of the text’s intertextual connectedness to Herbert’s poem. The effect of the citation from Herbert in ‘Tintern Abbey’, however, is to invest Dorothy with a divine status at odds with her role as pantheistic nature in the text. In turn, in Hopkins’ text, the inclusion of the words ‘my dear’ from ‘Tintern Abbey’ corrupts the divine status of the Falcon as immanent Christ by affiliating it with Dorothy both as pantheistic nature and as a newly established embodiment of the divine. Dorothy’s divine status means that she now embodies the mother, the lover, and the Virgin Mother in the text, which has a curious effect on the intertextual inscription in Hopkins’ text thus far: what started out as the subversion of Christly immanence by a feminine and erotically charged pantheism turns back on itself and

re-establishes Marian immanence in its place. Hartman's suggestion that Mary is present, but possibly absent, in the text is validated in favour of the former.

The sense in which Christ in Hopkins' text is destabilised by Wordsworth's nature as transcendent pantheistic projection, however, continues to be corroborated by the text's connections to another of Wordsworth's invocations to a bird, 'The Green Linnet' (1807). Nichols has already pointed out how the lines 'My heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing' (ll. 7-8) in 'The Windhover' move toward a Romantic identification with the source of power,<sup>107</sup> although he doesn't say why this is so. In fact, the speaker's sense of how his heart 'stirred' for a bird, for 'the mastery of the thing' brings the text directly back to Wordsworth's pantheism as it appeared in 'Tintern Abbey'. 'Thing', again, seems to have a particular relevance in Hopkins' text and lexicography which aligns it with Wordsworth's sense of seeing into 'the life of things' ('Tintern Abbey', l. 49). Hopkins' sense of the bird as a 'thing', a manifestation of Christ, where word means 'thing', that is, Christ, is qualified by this sense of 'thing' as manifestation of a motion and a rolling spirit. Hopkins' speaker wants to achieve mastery of this 'thing', but as the lines in Book XIV of *The Prelude* state, he is 'caught / By its inevitable mastery' (ll. 96-97; emphases added): rather than being the 'master' of a Christly nature, his speaker is subjugated by a Wordsworthian pantheism to which he is unconsciously impelled.

The text contains several verbal references to 'The Green Linnet', which link to Hopkins' sense of bird as 'thing', and which compromise its own sense of nature as inscaped with the risen Christ. Wordsworth writes:

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,  
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,  
Behold him perched in ecstasies,

Yet seeming still to hover;  
There! where the flutter of his wings  
Upon his back and body flings  
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,  
That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,  
A Brother of the dancing leaves;  
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves  
Pours forth his song in gushes;  
As if by that exulting strain  
He mocked and treated with disdain  
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,  
While fluttering in the bushes.

(ll. 25-40)

Hopkins' Falcon in 'his riding / Of the rolling level underneath him steady air' (ll. 2-3) and his 'ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing' (l. 5) echoes Wordsworth's finch perched in ecstasies yet still seeming to hover motionless in the air; the text directly imports Wordsworth's language in the use of 'ecstasies' and 'hover', but also imports Wordsworth's text's sense of movement and stasis. The sense of stasis is complemented by a sense of the bird's energy in flight in Wordsworth's text, with the speaker's deictic and declarative 'There!' emphasising the bird's speed of movement, and this is echoed in Hopkins' text: 'High there' (l. 4), for instance, with its sprung rhythm, reverses the stress on 'there' and places it on 'high', with 'there' as an 'outride', with the stress on 'High' forcing an emphasis

on the windhover's sense of soaring flight. Peter L. Groves suggests that Hopkins breaks the rules of iambic pentameter apart in the first half of the 'The Windhover' by 'violently' opening the pentameter in order to capture the sense of the Falcon's flight.<sup>108</sup> This would suggest that Hopkins is moving away from a metrical patterning like Wordsworth's, but the text's inscription of 'The Green Linnet' ensures that Hopkins cannot so easily break away from his Wordsworthian template. This is confirmed in other examples of how Wordsworth's sense of the bird's energetic flight is echoed in Hopkins' text; for example, 'dancing leaves', 'flits' and 'flings' in Wordsworth's text give a sense of energy to the bird that is counterpointed in Hopkins' text. Here, 'underneath him steady air' (l. 3) and 'ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing' (l. 5), with the sprung stress on the first and third syllables of 'underneath' and the first syllable of 'steady', complement the assonantal facilitation of the sense of stasis, and the sprung stress on 'off', 'off', 'forth', 'on' complements the sense of soaring flight achieved through the quadruple use of 'o'. The effect of this intertextual inscription is to align the text with a lyric in which 'the song or flight of the bird becomes an emblem of the poet's own voice, of his vocation, in the original sense of a "calling or summons", as a poet'.<sup>109</sup> This alignment inevitably sabotages Hopkins' claim to be producing poems as 'things' as opposed to poems as 'model[s] of the poet's consciousness'.<sup>110</sup>

The pattern of inscription continues with the use of alliteration and assonance, which echoes a similar patterning to be found in Wordsworth's texts. In Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk*, for instance, the speaker describes a kite in flight: 'While, near the midway cliff, the silvered kite / In many a whistling circle wheels her flight' (ll. 90-91). Wordsworth's use of the onomatopoeic and alliterative 'whistling' and 'wheels' reinforces the sense of the bird's circular flight, and this adumbrates the sense of circularity Hopkins creates in his own text in the 'skate's heel' that 'sweeps smooth on a bow-bend' (l. 6). The use of assonance – 'sweeps', 'smooth', 'bow-bend' – and the use of alliteration contain echoes of Wordsworth's

prosodic technique, and confirm that Hopkins' text, and Hopkins himself, remain trapped within 'many a whistling' Wordsworthian 'circle' themselves.

### **'Hurrahing in Harvest'**

'Hurrahing in Harvest', another sonnet, written, like 'The Windhover', in 1877, describes the speaker's ecstatically energised perception of his Saviour inscaped in the natural world. The sonnet begins with a sense of the speaker's excitement at the inscaped energy of nature as conveyed through the sense of stooks rising: 'Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks rise / Around; up above, what wind walks! what lovely behaviour / Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier / Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?' (ll. 1-4). 'Around; up above', with its iambic stresses on the second syllables of 'Around' 'up' and 'above', help to create the sense of upward movement, with the iambic and alliterative 'wilder, wilful-wavier' replicating the feel of the unrestricted energy of the stooks' rise itself. The heavily alliterative 'barbarous in beauty', 'what wind-walks! what', 'silk-sack clouds!', and 'Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?', help to reinforce the sense of the speaker's excitement at perceiving the inscapes of nature.

In the octave of the sonnet, the speaker associates this energised perception of nature directly with an inscaped Christ: 'I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes, / Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour; / And, eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a / Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?' (ll. 5-8). The repetition of linguistic and syntactical patterns from the first half of the octave – 'up', 'up', 'what looks', 'what lips' – helps to support this linkage.

But, as with the other texts under discussion in this chapter, the speaker's perception of an immanent Christ is qualified by a sense of nature as transcendent Wordsworthian



projection as a result of the interweaving and interplay of several Wordsworthian texts within the linguistic fabric of the poem itself. The text makes reference to Wordsworth's Book XIV of *The Prelude*, for instance. The speaker in the sestet of Hopkins' sonnet says:

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder  
Majestic – as a stallion stalwart, very violet-sweet! –  
These things, these things were here and but the beholder  
Wanting; which two when they once meet,  
The heart rears wings bold and bolder  
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

(ll. 9-14)

When the beholder and Christ's majesty meet then the heart rears wings. 'Wings' conjures the Holy Ghost of 'God's Grandeur'.<sup>111</sup> But the 'azurous hung hills', masculinised in the text as his 'world-wielding shoulder / Majestic – as a stallion stalwart', relate directly to Book XIV, and perplex the text's sense of an Incarnate and salvational Christ. In Book XIV, the speaker says: 'For instantly a light upon the turf / Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up, / The Moon hung naked in a firmament / Of azure without cloud, and at my feet / Rested a silent sea of hoary mist. / A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved / All over this still ocean' (ll. 38-44). The moon is feminised here, which contradicts the sense of Hopkins' masculinised 'azurous hung hills' with their 'world-wielding shoulder'. Hopkins' sprung rhythm places a stress on the first syllable of 'azurous', with the second and third syllables as outrides or slack syllables. This replicates Wordsworth's iambic stress on the first syllable of 'azure' in Book XIV. 'Hills' also receives a stress, which replicates Wordsworth's iambic stress, with 'A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved' rewritten as 'azurous hung hills'.

As with 'The Windhover', the text replicates both Wordsworth's language and prosody. Similarly, 'Majestic' is masculine in Wordsworth's text – the text refers to the ocean's 'majesty' (l. 47), but it is also associated in Book XIV with a 'majestic intellect' (l. 67), a 'mind / That feeds upon infinity, that broods / Over the dark abyss' (ll. 70-73). Hopkins' text is associated both with a transcendent mind as opposed to an immanent deity and with the feminine ('broods'). Again, the sprung rhythm places a stress on the second syllable of 'Majestic', replicating the iambic stress to be found in Wordsworth's lines.

'World-wielding shoulder / Majestic' also acts as a 'feminine' rhyme. 'Shoulder / Majestic' therefore reflects a feminised, transcendent nature, as opposed to a masculine immanent Christ, and this is linked to the 'beholder' with which it rhymes: the 'things' (l. 11) the beholder will join together are the mind and nature rather than nature and Christ. 'Things' as a noun resonates through this text, as it does in 'God's Grandeur' and 'The Windhover'. The Wordsworthian sense of a transcendent, pantheistic, feminised, sense of 'things' rolls through Hopkins' sense of 'These things, these things were here and but the beholder wanting' (l. 11). Wordsworth's 'all' things is replaced with 'These things', giving them specificity in time and place. These things – that is, 'the azurous hung hills' and 'the world-wielding shoulder / Majestic' – are but waiting for the beholder to invest them with salvific power. The epistemological foundations behind this perceptual process are fissured, however: the poem is apparently one in which objects take an active part in perception, but these 'things' come into the text already drenched in Wordsworthian idealism and take no part in the perceptual process as such; it is the speaker who invests 'things' with meaning in Wordsworth, and this sense of idealist projection over things inheres here. The text is complicit in this process, with its charge for 'but the beholder wanting'; a Wordsworthian idealism and sense of 'things' comes to dominate, overriding Hopkins' attempts both to

supplant this idealism with a relational interaction between subject and object and to invest ‘things’ with a Christ-centred immanence.

And, as with the other texts discussed in this chapter, the Wordsworthian language sewn into the text consolidates its erosion of Hopkins’ Christocentrism by bringing the language of death into play. The inscription of ‘violet’ in the text from ‘SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways’, replacing Wordsworth’s ‘dusky’, yet using another word from the Wordsworthian lexicon in its place, reshapes the sense of an immanent, resurrected Christ by casting the shadow of death and human loss across its surface. The inscription of ‘violet’ into the 1863 and 1871 versions of ‘Winter with the Gulf Stream’ inflects the speaker’s sense of nature with imaginative failure, and emphasises his inability to bridge the divide between life and death. The Wordsworthian inflection has a more troubled applicability here, however, in that it implies that the speaker cannot rely on finding a transcendence of death in an imaginatively immanent Christ. If Hopkins uses aspects of the Wordsworthian imaginative moment to find his inscapes of Christ in nature, then that imaginative appropriation is self-reflexively undermined.

But besides associating ‘violet’ with death, the intertextualisation of ‘SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways’ also associates it with the feminine: death and the Maid. Hopkins’ sense of a masculinised, possibly homoerotic, Christ – ‘world-wielding shoulder / Majestic’ – is thus compromised by pantheistic nature, loss, and the feminine. This reading sits against that of Armstrong, who suggests that the Incarnation is a release for Hopkins’ ‘troubled homosexual passions’.<sup>112</sup> The Mackenzie edition of the text invites a comparison between ‘world-wielding shoulder’ and John Ruskin’s *Works*, iii. 427, with its “‘internal spirit” in every mountain, “flinging and forcing the mighty mass towards the heaven” with “violent muscular action” and “convulsive energy””.<sup>113</sup> If nature in the poem is imbued with the ‘violent muscular action’ that is ‘flinging and forcing the mighty mass towards the

heaven' of Ruskin, then such excited muscularity is built upon a bedrock of Wordsworthian intertextual inscription that undermines both inflections and tilts the poem toward a Wordsworthian, feminised pantheism that it is powerless to resist. The inscription of the word 'Sweet' reinforces this, as it unites the poem with the 'sweet dreams' (l. 17) of the speaker of the companion-piece to 'SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways', 'STRANGE fits of passion have I known' (1800), reinforcing the connection between the text and the speaker of that poem's inability imaginatively to span the invisible boundary between life and death. Hopkins' sprung rhythm places a stress on both 'violet' and 'sweet', linking them with 'meet' (l. 12), which itself is stressed, which emphasises that the two things that meet – the 'azurous hung hills' and the beholder's vision of them – are displaced by the Wordsworthian inscription and its connections to death and loss. This, in turn, feeds into the final word of the poem, 'feet'. The ground under the feet of the immanent Christ is made unsteady by the mosaic of unconscious textual inscription in this poem, as it is in the three other poems that precede it in this chapter.

## **Conclusion**

In the poems that follow the sonnets of the 1870s Hopkins wrestles both with his God and his poetic vocation. Crucially, the unconscious inscription of Wordsworth's poetic language and epistemology into Hopkins' texts foreshadows his debilitating spiritual crisis, revealing how uncommitted he is to the Incarnationalism the poems of this period so fervently espouse, and presaging the loss of faith that comes in the 'Terrible' or Dark Sonnets that follow. Equally, his entrapment within a Wordsworthian linguistic web in these poems adumbrates the 'poet's titanic struggle with his vocation' that occurs in the final poems,<sup>114</sup> a struggle that ends with Hopkins accepting defeat and acknowledging the evisceration of his poetic powers. As a

result of their interpoetic effects, poems such as 'God's Grandeur', 'The Windhover', 'Hurrahing in Harvest', and even the early 'Winter with the Gulf Stream', thus unconsciously presage Hopkins' vertiginous theological and poetic fall: in his beginning is his end.

## Notes

1. Sarah Annes Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost: Allusion and the Uncanny* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 7.
2. Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 8.
3. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'Ulysses', in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1989), l. 27 (p. 143). All subsequent references to Tennyson's poems refer to this edition, and appear parenthetically in the text.
4. Michael O'Neill, 'The Romantic Bequest: Arnold and Others', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 217-35 (p. 219).
5. See *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, edited and with introductions and notes by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), VI. ll. 625-26 (p. 536). All subsequent references to Wordsworth's poems are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text unless otherwise stated.
6. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, p. 584, n. 1.
7. See Henry Weinfield, "'Of Happy Men That Have the Power to Die": Tennyson's "Tithonus"', *Victorian Poetry*, 47.2 (2009): 355-78. Available at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/victorian\\_poetry/v047/472.weinfield.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/victorian_poetry/v047/472.weinfield.html) [accessed 18 February 2013].
8. Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 139.
9. See Arthur Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, And on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson', in *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 182-98.

10. Dinah Birch refers to how Browning's 'direct and vigorous language [is] formed by the rhythms of the spoken voice rather than the textual inheritance of literature', for example. See Dinah Birch, 'Tennyson's Retrospective View', in *Tennyson Among the Poets: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst and Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 53.
11. See, for instance, John Bayley, 'Overcoming Kitsch: Thoughts on Linguistic and Class Resource from Keats to Betjeman', in *The Monstrous Debt: Modalities of Romantic Influence in Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. Damian Walford Davies and Richard Marggraf Turley, with a Foreword by Lucy Newlyn (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), pp. 225-31 (p. 227), and Michael Sprinker "A Counterpoint of Dissonance": *The Aesthetics and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 139.
12. Sprinker, "A Counterpoint of Dissonance", p. 139.
13. Sprinker, "A Counterpoint of Dissonance", p. 139.
14. Eynel Wardi, 'Hopkins the Romantic: The Question of Empathy in "Spring and Fall"', *Victorian Poetry*, 44.3 (2006): 237-50. Available at <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx> [accessed December 2013]. For other readings of Wordsworthian influence in Hopkins' 'Spring and Fall', see Jude Nixon, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and His Contemporaries, Liddon, Neuttum, Darwin, and Pater* (New York: Garland, 1994); John A. Myers, Jr., 'Intimations of Mortality: An Analysis of Hopkins' "Spring and Fall"', *English Journal*, 51 (1962): 285-87; Gerard Pilecki, 'Hopkins' "Spring and Fall" and Modes of Knowing', *Victorian Poetry*, 24.1 (Spring 1986): 88-91. Ashton Nichols looks at Wordsworthian correspondences in some of Hopkins' early poetry, in *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Modern Literary Moment* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press,

- 1987), pp. 166-80. Geoffrey H. Hartman also discusses the Wordsworthian parallels to be found in Hopkins' 'The Windhover: To Christ Our Lord' (1877). See *The Unmediated Vision: An Interpretation of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke, and Valéry* (1954), revised and retitled by the author, in *Hopkins: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 117-50.
15. Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 324.
16. My argument, based on a sense of Hopkins as trapped within Wordsworth's language, is at odds with that of J. R. Watson, who claims that the poet is 'benignly haunted and inspired by Wordsworth throughout his life', and that Hopkins lived 'in Wordsworth's shadow', where 'his every perception was coloured by a conscious remembrance or a perception [of Wordsworth] that was almost unconscious because it came so naturally to him'. See J. R. Watson, 'Wordsworth, Hopkins and the Intercession of Angels', in *Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era*, ed. Andrew Radford and Mark Sandy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 143-54 (pp. 154, 147).
17. Isobel Armstrong, *Language as Living Form in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Brighton and Totowa, NJ: Harvester, 1982), p. 19.
18. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 235-36.
19. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 87.
20. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 24.
21. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 24.
22. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 25. Interestingly, Hopkins also criticises Tennyson for his use of 'Parnassian'. He writes: 'I think one had got into the way of



thinking, or had not got out of the way of thinking, that Tennyson was always new, *touching*, beyond other poets, not pressed with human ailments, never using Parnassian. So at least I used to think. Now one sees he uses Parnassian; he is, one must see it, what we used to call Tennysonian'. See *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 26.

23. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 240.
24. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 240.
25. 'Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems published, with an additional volume, under the title of "Lyrical Ballads"', in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, p. 734.
26. 'Author's Preface on Rhythm', in *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. Mackenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 115-17 (p. 116).
27. 'Author's Preface on Rhythm', p. 91.
28. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 91.
29. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, p. 129.
30. Armstrong, *Language as Living Form*, p. 4.
31. Armstrong, *Language as Living Form*, p. 5.
32. Daniel Brown, *Hopkins' Idealism: Philosophy, Physics, Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 317.
33. Daniel Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), p. 112.
34. Brown, *Hopkins' Idealism*, pp. 316-17.
35. Armstrong, *Language as Living Form*, p. 15.
36. See 'Notes: FEB. 9, 1868 [From note-book headed "Notes on the history of Greek Philosophy etc. "]', in *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed.

- Humphry House, completed by Graham Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 125-26 (p. 125).
37. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 430.
  38. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 420.
  39. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 427.
  40. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 427.
  41. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 430.
  42. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 429-30.
  43. Sprinker, “*A Counterpoint of Dissonance*”, p. 76.
  44. Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 234. Tennyson, of course, also drew on the ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* in the ‘English Idylls’ and the Lincolnshire dialect poems. See Seamus Perry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005), p. 156 and Chapter Three, n. 57.
  45. See ‘Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or, Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry’, in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, ed. Norman St John-Stevas, 8 vols (London: The Economist, 1965), II, pp. 321-66 (p. 356). The essay first appeared in the *National Review*, 1 (November 1864): pp. 27-66.
  46. ‘Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning’, p. 356.
  47. ‘Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning’, p. 343.
  48. ‘Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning’, p. 340.
  49. ‘Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning’, p. 334.
  50. *The Poetical Works*, p. 31. All subsequent references to Hopkins’ poetry refer to this edition, and appear parenthetically in the text. The poem, like the others that appear in

the chapter, is dated according to its date of composition as opposed to its date of publication, a practice which follows that of Mackenzie in *The Poetical Works*, which itself follows that of Catherine Phillips' Oxford Authors *Hopkins*. See *The Poetical Works*, xxv and Catherine L. Phillips, ed. *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986).

51. Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 44.
52. Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 44.
53. Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 49.
54. Wardi, 'Hopkins the Romantic'.
55. Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 53-54.
56. Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 46.
57. Brown, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 47.
58. Patricia M. Ball, *The Science of Aspects: The Changing Role of Fact in the Work of Coleridge, Ruskin and Hopkins* (London and New York: The Athlone Press, 1971), p. 112.
59. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, p. 112.
60. Carol T. Christ, 'Introduction: Victorian Poetics', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Anthony H. Harrison (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 1-21 (p. 15).
61. Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 100.
62. Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany*, p. 173.
63. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, pp. 108-9.
64. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, p. 109.
65. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, p. 110.

66. Wardi, 'Hopkins the Romantic'.
67. Paul L. Mariani, 'Hopkins: Towards a Poetics of Unselfconsciousness', *Renascence*, 29.1 (Fall 1976): 43-49 (p. 44). Available at <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1290902532?accountid=9883> [accessed December 2013].
68. Mariani, 'Hopkins: Towards a Poetics of Unselfconsciousness', p. 45.
69. Armstrong, *Language as Living Form*, p. 53.
70. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, p. 132.
71. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, pp. 132-33.
72. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, pp. 133, 138.
73. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, p. 138.
74. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, p. 140.
75. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, pp. 140-41.
76. Ball, *The Science of Aspects*, p. 144.
77. Douglas Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 3.
78. *The Poetical Works*, p. 226, n. 1.
79. Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany*, p. 176.
80. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth: Poems Written in Youth, Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood*, edited from the manuscripts, with textual and critical notes by E. de Selincourt, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 'The Vale of Esthwaite', I, ll. 35-38 (p. 270). Subsequent references are to this edition and appear in the text.
81. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 78.

82. Aidan Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 10.
83. Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 147.
- Allen glosses the feminist critic, Toril Moi, in making a distinction between 'female' – a biological state – and 'feminine' – a cultural ideology of womanhood. 'Feminine' carries the latter sense when and where appropriate in the chapter.
84. For an account of how in 'The Vale of Esthwaite' 'Wordsworth's journey into the womb of Helvellyn symbolically attempts to trace his way back along the chain of thought and feeling to restore that initiating relationship between himself and his mother', see Duncan Wu, 'Wordsworth and Helvellyn's Womb'. Available at <http://ic.oxfordjournals.org/> [accessed 29 December 2013]. For a fuller version of Wu's article, see Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002). For a psychoanalytic reading of Wordsworth and 'mother' nature, see Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, Foreword by Donald G. Marshall (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 18-30. Interestingly, Hartman suggests that the imagination in Wordsworth is a 'fathering power'. See *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 125.
85. See Hartman, 'Retrospect 1971', in *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, xv.
86. See Mackenzie's comments in *The Poetical Works*, p. 361, MSS., n. 5, for instance.
87. See *The Poetical Works*, p. 361, MSS., n. 5.
88. See *The Poetical Works*, p. 139.
89. H. N. Fairchild, *Religious Trends in English Poetry, Volume 5:1880-1920, Gods of a Changing Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 92.
90. The Mackenzie edition compares 'broods...breast' both to Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 20-21, based on *Genesis* 1:2 (Hebrew), where the Spirit of God broods over the waters, and to the *Douay Bible's* Luke 13:34: 'how often would I have gathered thy

children as the bird doth her brood under her wings'. See *The Poetical Works*, p. 363, n. 14.

91. Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 90. Allen is paraphrasing Roland Barthes here.

92. Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 152.

93. Hartman, 'The Dialectic of Sense-Perception', p. 121.

94. Armstrong claims, on the contrary, that the present tense is 'about *being* here and now', and cites as an example Tennyson's 'Tears, Idle Tears' (1847), where 'the intensity of the "now", the poem's clinging to the present tense, places it just this side of life rather than death'. See Isobel Armstrong, 'Syntax', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, pp. 112-29 (pp. 113, 118).

95. The lines also compromise Hopkins' Catholic faith; Michael O'Neill reminds us, for instance, that 'Romantic epiphanies often reveal to the poet an inner imaginative power, states in which, in Wordsworth's phrase, "We have had deepest feeling that the mind / Is lord and master, and that outward sense / Is but the obedient servant of her will" (*The Prelude*, 1805, ll. 271-73). Behind this assertion is the weight of Protestant insistence on the inner light and the rights of the individual conscience'. See Michael O'Neill, "'Infinite Passion": Variations on a Romantic Topic in Robert Browning, Emily Brontë, Swinburne, Hopkins, Wilde and Dowson', in *Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era*, pp. 174-89 (p. 185).

96. Hartman, 'Retrospect 1971', xxvii.

97. Sprinker, "*A Counterpoint of Dissonance*", p. 119.

98. Sprinker, "*A Counterpoint of Dissonance*", p. 118.

99. *The Poetical Works*, p. 380, n. 2.

100. *The Poetical Works*, p. 380, n. 1.

101. 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. O'Neill writes of the way 'in which Romantic poetry both renews itself and is creatively used, contested, and reworked in a range of twentieth-century, and some twenty-first-century, poetry'. The focus in this chapter is on the unconscious effects of the imaginative oxygen breathed into the post-Romantic poem rather than conscious reworking, of course, although the involuntary inscription of Wordsworth can also result in his 'renewal'. See *The-All-Sustaining Air*, p. 9.
102. *The Poetical Works*, p. 380, n. 1.
103. *The Poetical Works*, p. 380, n. 1.
104. Edward A. Stephenson, *What Sprung Rhythm Really Is*, with the assistance of Carolyn Hudgins (Alma, ON: The International Hopkins Association, Monograph No. 4, 1987), p. 78.
105. *The Poetical Works*, p. 384, n. 13.
106. Brown, *A Familiar Compound Ghost*, p. 183.
107. Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany*, p. 175.
108. Peter L. Groves, "'Opening" the Pentameter: Hopkins's Metrical Experimentation', *The Hopkins Quarterly*, 38.1-2 (Winter-Spring 2011): 93-110 (p. 108).
109. Sprinker, *"A Counterpoint of Dissonance"*, p. 6.
110. Armstrong, *Language as Living Form*, p. 15.
111. By contrast, Armstrong sees the sonnet as achieving the 'metaphor of Pegasus in the sestet', with the parallelism 'completed as the heart "rears wings" like Pegasus and "meets" in one identity with the Saviour and His attributes', *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 432-33. See also *The Poetical Works*, p. 390, n. 10 for the editor's gloss on John G.

Robinson's suggestion that 'there is the image of a powerful winged Pegasus underlying the whole sestet'.

112. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 433.

113. *The Poetical Works*, p. 390, n. 9.

114. Sprinker, "*A Counterpoint of Dissonance*", p. 126. Not all critics agree that the 'Terrible' Sonnets signal a religious or poetic decline, however. Martin Dubois points out that 'Critics disagree over whether the "terrible" sonnets were a means to purgation or, alternatively, whether they in fact reveal collapsing belief. It is perhaps too easy to interpret them as the unhappy climax of Hopkins's poetry. What comes after – for Hopkins continued to write poetry until his death in 1889 – is no less effortful in expression, but it is better able to make sense of personal struggle within the divine plan'. See Martin Dubois, 'Hopkins's Beauty', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, pp. 549-62 (p. 559).



## Conclusion

### After-effects: Wordsworth's Presence in Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins

The after-presence of Wordsworth's poetic language in the poems of Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins has a complex and insidious effect. Each poet and poem is caught within a web of intertextual language that places Wordsworth at the heart of Victorian poetry in a more complicated and centralised way than the allusive Wordsworthian language employed in the texts would suggest, justifying the division that has been maintained in the thesis between the allusive and the intertextual. Wordsworth's language has the power to question and to subvert, to expose and to challenge, while simultaneously retaining the ability to perpetuate itself and to consolidate its presence. A vivid tapestry of intertextual language is woven from each of the texts, which creates an indelible record of authorial dependency, as well as defining the effects of that dependency in poems '*not itself*'.<sup>1</sup>

In 'Ulysses' (1842), the presence of Wordsworth's language compromises the rhetorical form of the monologue, but also alters the telos of the poem. Ulysses' desire indefatigably to strive forward is countermanded, as his journey into the sunset is one in search of that which the text itself defines as lost. Pressure points within the Wordsworthian imaginative moment are tested, as the cohesive self on which the moment is based is exposed as fractured. Loss, the concomitant of imaginative gain, is revealed as too high a price to pay for personal growth. The intertextual strategies of the poem disassemble the Wordsworthian imagination, but also ensure its survival through its continued inscription. Wordsworth is both absent and present in this way, lost but also found.

Moreover, the exploration of Wordsworthian transcendent loss is directly attributable to Tennyson himself, as the unconscious, and uncontrollable, nature of the language inscribed in the poem subverts the rhetorical and performative nature of the monologue and the unreliable nature of its speaker. As a result, Tennyson reveals more of himself in 'Ulysses'

than he claims even to have done in his comments on the poem.<sup>2</sup> But, then, associatively so too is Wordsworth revealed. It is Ulysses' voice that is heard in the poem, but its inscribed language reveals that it is Tennyson, and through him the earlier poet, who are also speaking. Like the Lady of Shalott, both poets are revealed as 'half-sick of shadows',<sup>3</sup> of creating the real from the unreal. Wordsworth is sustained by an imaginative power that transforms moments of sheer ordinariness into significance, but in his poetry constantly acknowledges, and desperately attempts to assuage, the shadow of loss that falls across them. Tennyson's poem allows Wordsworth to step away from the pressure of finding recompense for this loss, as it establishes the imagination itself as absent. The fact that Ulysses sets out in search of that which is lost suggests that potentially imaginative transcendence is recoverable, however, initiating a pattern that will be taken up in *In Memoriam* (1850); the shadow, in this sense, continues to follow both Wordsworth and Tennyson. At the same time, Wordsworth himself experiments with dramatic character in *Lyrical Ballads*,<sup>4</sup> but finds his most complex dramatic experiment to be in a monologue by Tennyson. The after-presence of Wordsworth's language in the poem is therefore equivocal, in that it both supports and denies the monologic form, underpinning the creation of character through the inscription of poems like 'SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways' (1800), but simultaneously thwarting it through the repeated inscription of the language of transcendence. Wordsworth's unbidden presence in Tennyson's poem is thus one of continuity and discontinuity, revision and consolidation.

The poem's intertextualisation of Arthur Henry Hallam's 1829 'Timbuctoo' and its inscription of Wordsworth's language of transcendence augment the revision and renewal of Wordsworth that is taking place. 'Ulysses' recasts 'Timbuctoo's' imaginative optimism by reworking the poem's own Wordsworthian intertextualisation: Hallam's City of the imagination is disavowed, as imaginative recovery is restructured as imaginative absence.

Moreover, the process of inscribing Wordsworth becomes something of a poetic struggle, with Tennyson gaining intertextual ascendancy over his younger rival.

The intertextual presence of Wordsworth in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* confirms the duality of continuity and discontinuity that 'Ulysses' expresses: the presence of Wordsworth's language continues both to suggest that the Wordsworthian imagination is lost, but, at the same time, endorses Wordsworth as found, as continuing to exert a linguistic and cultural influence in the nineteenth century. Both 'Ulysses' and *In Memoriam* are revealed as in search of the lost Wordsworthian imagination, which draws the two poems together in a conspiracy of unconscious Wordsworthian linguistic association. In *In Memoriam*, this conspiracy is coloured with a tangible anxiety, as the poem returns compulsively to Wordsworth's language of transcendence in search of a salve to the problems and difficulties raised by contemporary science and faith, as well as to the grief occasioned by the death of Hallam, even though the earlier 'Ulysses' has established the Wordsworthian imagination as absent. The presence of Wordsworth's language is potentially liberatory, but the potentiality it harbours dissolves amidst an acknowledgement that it can offer only more loss and complication. The Wordsworthian validation for which both the text and poet are searching is revealed as available only after death, suggesting that the search for imaginative sustenance that begins in 'Ulysses' finds a resting-point in *In Memoriam*. It suggests, too, that the concern that Tennyson feels for Hallam is itself alleviated, as it implies that Hallam, after death, has found the comfort for which Tennyson hopes: he has crossed the bar, and found a Wordsworthian resting-place in nature, a promise also offered, by association, to Tennyson himself.

However, the Wordsworthian inscriptions compromise the form of the elegy, as they inhibit the poem from moving toward a consolatory denial of death, as it is caught within a perpetual cycle of return, of searching for something that the intertextual practices of the

poem are themselves defining as lost. Likewise, the inscribed language of the poem does offer consolation, not through a denial of death, but rather as an acceptance of it, by way of the promise that comes after the Wordsworthian 'mountain' has been crossed.<sup>5</sup> Wordsworth's presence therefore both shackles the poem to a language of transcendence that offers little in the way of imaginative sustenance and to a language which offers a denial of death, but only after the invisible boundary between life and death has been crossed. Both poet and text, in this way, can be seen as moving toward a return to their 'poetic father-figure',<sup>6</sup> Wordsworth, and the 'Father' to whom Wordsworth himself is moving in his own poetry, overcoming the resistance Tennyson's poem has been making toward Wordsworth's semi-acceptance of a Christian God. In so doing, the after-presence of Wordsworth's language provides an alternative way for Tennyson to find an accommodation with the Christian faith with which he has been struggling in the poem.

Repeated intertextual inscription continues the preoccupation with the Wordsworthian imagination in 'Tithonus' (1860), which takes place in a Wordsworthian imaginative space, as if in response to the conclusions the text draws in *In Memoriam*. An analysis of the poem's unconsciously inscribed language reveals how 'Tithonus' seeks to subvert the pattern of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' (1798) and its exploration of the limits of imaginative reach: the synergy between mind and nature, and the mind and itself, breaks down, as Aurora becomes an attenuated version of nature / Dorothean nature and Tithonus a version of Wordsworth's speaker. These effects are woven into the 1833 version of the poem, 'Tithon', but come to fruition in the restyled 'Tithonus'.

The poem also assimilates Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* (1793) and 'Resolution and Independence' (1807), which contribute to the reworking of 'Tintern Abbey' that is taking place. In terms of the latter, Tithonus evokes the Leech-Gatherer in his inability to imagine, but is simultaneously contrasted with the Leech-Gatherer through his inability to

die. The subtle mediation of these intertexts helps to ensure that the final return to the Wordsworthian poetic father that the text achieves in *In Memoriam* is sundered in the poem: the promise of imaginative renewal that lies on the other side of the ‘mountain’ (‘Elegiac Verse’, ‘In Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth’, VI. l. 60) in the 1850 poem remains unfulfilled, as ‘Tithonus’'s version of Wordsworthian imaginative immortality proves a suffocating void. Unlike in *In Memoriam*, the hint of a return to the ‘Father’ initiated by the inscription from Wordsworth’s verse is denied, as the language of ‘Tintern Abbey’'s ‘holier love’ (l. 155) remains resolutely uninscribed in the poem. ‘Tithonus’ can thus be seen as an intertextual revision not only of ‘Tintern Abbey’, but of *In Memoriam* as well. Moreover, the intertextual analysis of Wordsworth that takes place in ‘Ulysses’ is consolidated, as the text confirms the earlier poem’s finding that the Wordsworthian imagination cannot produce immortality.

On the other hand, like Tithonus himself, text and poet are trapped within the language of Wordsworthian transcendence, even if that language can point only to what is absent. This entrapment necessarily ensures Wordsworth’s survival. Correspondingly, the inscriptions from ‘Resolution and Independence’ strengthen the poem’s dialogism, which in turn strengthens the monologic base of the poem and Wordsworth’s role in developing it.

Wordsworth’s language is an intertextual presence in Browning’s ‘Saul’ (1855) and ‘A Death in the Desert’ (1864), too, where its effects are equally as far-reaching. Both poems are monologues, predicated on rhetorical speech, but both return repeatedly to the language of Wordsworthian interiority, the result of which is to position David and St John’s vision of the risen Christ as a half-created, imaginative act. ‘Saul’ readmits the ego, so the poem also becomes a vehicle for Browning’s, and Wordsworth’s, own self-expression, thereby challenging the poetic foundations on which the monologue is built. As in ‘Ulysses’ and ‘Tithonus’, however, the presence of poems with speakers not automatically identifiable with

Wordsworth simultaneously supports the performative nature of the monologue, resulting in a two-fold interpoetic effect.

Moreover, if the intertextual presence of Wordsworth's language compromises Browning's Incarnational faith in 'Saul', in 'A Death in the Desert', it comes, circuitously, to support it. As in the earlier poem, 'seeing' in 'A Death in the Desert' is transfigured into 'imagining', becoming a half-created act of quotidian, yet Christly, illumination. A revivification of the lyrical image takes place via inscriptions from poems like 'Tintern Abbey' and the 'Intimations' Ode, undermining the procedures and practices of rhetorical speech within the monologue. But the text's dependency on the half-created moment comes to replicate the ideology of the Biblical Critics, where imaginative representations replace historical accounts of Christ's presence. It establishes, and articulates, a desire for a return to Wordsworth as poetic father, the source of this imaginative outpouring and the conduit to the return of Christ to the world. As in *In Memoriam*, Wordsworth's intertextual presence in Browning's poetry therefore supports a Christian faith to which Wordsworth is himself attracted, but to which he is never fully committed. Importantly, in Browning's poems, the intertextual presence allows this Christian faith to find a new accommodation with the critical claims of the nineteenth century, to renew itself and to be revitalised and reconfigured for an increasingly modern age. As a result, Wordsworth is established as an unassailable poetic presence in the two Browning poems, displacing Percy Bysshe Shelley in terms of primary influence.

Wordsworth's language continues to create powerful after-effects in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the last author to feature in the thesis. As with the other texts, Hopkins' poems contain an intertextual nexus of citations of which the author is unaware, and which redirect the telos of the poems. These citations exist alongside a well-established Hopkinsian allusiveness to Wordsworth's poetry, which the poet employs, at times, to

challenge Wordsworth, as in his anti-industrial sonnet, 'God's Grandeur' (1877). The linguistic patterning begins as early as the 1863 'Winter with the Gulf Stream', where Hopkins' proto-Incarnationalism is tempered by an inscribed Wordsworthian pantheism. Hopkins' mature Incarnationalism is thwarted in 'God's Grandeur', however, where his allusive overwriting of Wordsworth's sonnet 'The world is too much with us' (1807) is counterpointed by a Wordsworthian pantheism that challenges the poem's positioning of the Holy Spirit with a Wordsworthian 'mother' nature; the Wordsworthian inscriptions in the poem also valorise individualism rather than the bonds of communality the speaker is attempting to establish through an immanent Christ. The citations thwart Hopkins' attempts to capture and control verbal meaning, as his linguistic experimentation combines with Wordsworth's inscribed language to create a new, unsought, hybrid: a strange linguistic beauty is born.

Similarly, in 'The Windhover: To Christ our Lord' (1877), poem and poet are caught in Wordsworth's intertextual web. Hopkins' Incarnated Christ is again deposed by a feminised Wordsworthian nature, but the poem is also, through its alignment with Wordsworth's lyric, 'The Green Linnet' (1807), hampered in its attempts to create poems as 'things' rather than as models of 'the structure of consciousness'.<sup>7</sup>

In the third of the 1877 poems, 'Hurrahing in Harvest', Hopkins' immanent Christ continues to be displaced by an involuntarily inscribed Wordsworthian pantheism. Here, Wordsworth's female nature undermines Hopkins' masculinised, homoeroticised, Christ, but, as with the other Hopkins' poems, also overwhelms his attempts to establish a relational interaction between subject and object by pulling the interaction back to a Wordsworthian prioritisation of subject over object. Hopkins' poems, therefore, by unconsciously inscribing Wordsworth's language, expose the inconsistencies and weaknesses within the poet's Incarnational and poetic practice, weaknesses which Hopkins was not fully to reveal until his

later, 'Terrible', sonnets. Unlike in Browning, however, the inscription of Wordsworth's language results in Christ's light being dimmed in the world. Wordsworth is established as a primary influence in the poetry, nonetheless, whether Hopkins wishes him to be or not.

Wordsworth is established as a primary poetic influence for each of the poets in the poems studied, in fact, predominantly as a result of their subliminal use of his language, much of it traceable directly to a handful of poems, including 'Tintern Abbey'. The unintentional, unconscious use of Wordsworth's language has bound each of the three authors closer together, but also exposed their differences: Tennyson challenges Wordsworth, testing his claim to imaginative transcendence in the midst of his own personal grief; Browning involuntarily inscribes Wordsworth's language, testing the validity of his own commitment to dramatic representation and his own power to move away from concerns with self, as well as testing the means by which to clarify his position on the new Biblical Criticism; Hopkins tests his commitment to a Catholic Incarnationalism and his ability to make language speak anew. Equally, inconsistencies in Wordsworth's own practice and own use of the language of lyrical transcendence are themselves worked through: the over-dependency on loss as a conduit to personal growth; the inability of the moment of lyrical transcendence to connect with time and history; death, and what comes after. Wordsworth's language, meanwhile, continues to survive as well as to create definable and lasting change, threading and rethreading itself, and lying in wait for whatever else it can catch in its capacious web.



## Notes

1. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 70.
2. Tennyson writes: 'There is more about myself in *Ulysses*, which was written under the sense of loss and that all 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*'. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1989), p. 138 and Chapter One, n. 3.
3. See *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, l. 70 (p. 23).
4. Not all of the speakers in *Lyrical Ballads* can be identified with Wordsworth. See Michael O'Neill, 'The Romantic Bequest: Arnold and Others', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 217-34 (p. 228). See also Chapter One, n. 79 and Chapter Four, n. 114.
5. See 'Elegiac Verses', 'In Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth' (1842), in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, edited and with introductions and notes by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), VI. l. 60 (p. 454). All subsequent references to Wordsworth's poems appear parenthetically in the text.
6. See Ruth Padel, 'Tennyson: Echo and Harmony, Music and Thought', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, pp. 323-36 (p. 327) and 'Introduction', p. 57, Chapter Two, n. 144 and Chapter Three, n. 122.
7. See Isobel Armstrong, *Language as Living Form in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Brighton and Totowa, NJ: Harvester, 1982), p. 15 and Chapter Five, n. 108.

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