Tennyson's Figures of Repetition

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PhD

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English and Related Literature

September 2023

Abstract

This thesis argues that Tennyson's uses of repetition can be seen not merely as a manifestation of his sometimes alleged 'stupidity' but as an embodiment of his continual self-questioning and self-criticism. To do this, I focus on five figures of repetition: memory/Memory (Chapter 1), mirror-images (Chapter 2), simile (Chapter 3), antithesis (Chapter 4), *fama*/*Fama* (Chapter 5). My first chapter begins by considering the way in which Tennyson's act of recollection is accompanied by the idealisation of the past and the denigration of the present. It then sees the reverse of a recollection within Tennyson's representation of Memory, and in his use of memory. My second chapter examines Tennyson's descriptions of mirror-image, showing how this shadowy existence is not simply presented as an inferior reproduction of the original, but comes to assume its own substantiality. My third chapter shows how *In Memoriam*'s conflicting processes of unity and division are encapsulated in the relationship between the words in the rhetorical figure of the simile. It shows how the poem's use of simile reveals the tension between the unitive and disjunctive tendencies of language itself, presenting the poem as a critique of the Romantic, metaphorical view of language. My fourth chapter shows how in *Maud* the speaker's doubts about his control over the action are communicated through the antithetical repetition of the same verb in the two grammatical voices. My fifth chapter examines how in *Idylls of the King* Arthur's authority, which is connected to Tennyson's authority, is dependent upon repetitive and diffusive speech. It argues that such a derivation of authority from the diffusion of speech is registered in the semantic duplexities of the Latin word *fama*/*Fama*. My conclusion considers Tennyson's posthumous fame as a kind of repetition in itself, examining the way T. S. Eliot remodels Tennyson's homes in 'East Coker'.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to undertake this thesis without the generous financial support I have received from the Japan Student Service Organization. I am grateful to the staff at the University of Tokyo for taking charge of all the administrative work for this scholarship, even after I moved to the UK. I am also happy to acknowledge the financial support from (in alphabetical order of surname) Shizuhiko Ito, Satoru Nagai, Chieko Takizawa, and Katsuhiko and Akiko Yasuhara.

I wish to convey my immeasurable gratitude to friends at York and elsewhere for their ongoing companionship and support, especially Josh D'Arcy and Yusuke Wakazawa.

I owe particular thanks and love to Alison Micklem and Katherine Buckland at St Columba's United Reformed Church, who nourished me with (much-missed) Friday Night Feasts and have supported and encouraged me through emails and messages since I moved back to Japan. I am grateful to the other people I met at the church (again in alphabetical order): Elizabeth Aitken, George Clarke, Mikaela Lee, Roberta Merli, David Miall, and Derek and Isobel Thompson. The Thompsons played the role of my English parents (they often jokingly said that they had adopted me). Without their care and support, I could not have pursued my study in the UK. I am thankful, too, to Anne Williamson at Friends International York, for taking me on walks at weekends.

I am gratefully indebted to the members of the English Department at the University of York, and especially to Matthew Campbell, who provided helpful feedback and

invaluable suggestions in the various stages of the project.

My warmest thanks go to James Williams, who throughout his supervision of this thesis has been a source of immense support and inspiration. His feedback was always filled with attentive and insightful remarks, sharp and funny observations, exact and exacting criticism. To be honest, I sometimes found this feedback a little overwhelming at the time, but looking back now, it was always to the point and helpful.

Finally, I would like to thank Isa, my grandmother, and Chieko, my younger sister. I had an extremely difficult time working on my PhD while carrying out family duties back in Japan after my mother passed away. I am terribly sorry for sometimes being impatient, but genuinely appreciate all the patience and love they gave me throughout this period. This thesis is dedicated with love to them, and to the memory of my mother, Mitsue (1950–2022).

Abbreviations

Critical Heritage	*Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by John D. Jump (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967)
Memoir	Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1897)
Poems	Alfred Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1987)
TRB	*Tennyson Research Bulletin*
VP	*Victorian Poetry*

Note on the Texts

All references to Tennyson's poetry are, unless otherwise stated, from Alfred Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1987). All dates of composition, spelling, and punctuation are quoted as they appear in this source.

All references to William Wordsworth's poetry are from William Wordsworth, *21st-Century Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). All dates of composition, spelling, and punctuation are quoted as they appear in this source.

All references to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) are from the online edition: www.oed.com.

Introduction

> Stupidity is not my strong point.
> —Paul Valéry, 'The Evening with Monsieur Teste'

This famous statement at the beginning of Paul Valéry's short story informs my attempt, in what follows, to show how Tennyson's use of repetition embodies a process of continual reflection and self-questioning, thereby providing a counter-narrative to stereotypes about his stupidity. Before proceeding directly to examine Tennyson's alleged stupidity, however, it may be helpful to pause at this point to ask what Valéry could possibly have meant by the term 'Stupidity' here. 'Stupidity' in this context is, perhaps, not really about a lack of mental power (how could this ever be a strong point?). Valéry's narrator recounts the story of his enlightenment through his friendship with Monsieur Teste. The narrator, who believes 'the most vigorous minds, the canniest inventors, the most precise connoisseurs of thought, must be unknown men, misers, or those who die without confessing', sees his friend, who lives unobtrusively 'by frugal weekly speculations on the stock market', as the embodiment of the power of the mind.[1] As his name implies, Monsieur Teste is a keen spectator of his own mind.[2] In the narrator's words, he is 'master of his thought'.[3]

One evening, the narrator sits with Monsieur Teste in a box at the theatre, from where he sees the audience overwhelmed by a special excitement: 'The stupor that held

[1] Paul Valéry, 'The Evening with Monsieur Teste', in *Monsieur Teste*, trans. by Jackson Mathews (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 8–21 (pp. 9, 10).
[2] As entries from Valéry's *Notebooks* suggest, 'Teste' is a composite of an old form of the modern *tête* ('head') and the Latin *testis* ('witness' or 'spectator') ('Snapshots of Monsieur Teste: From the Notebooks', in Valéry, *Monsieur Teste*, pp. 83–153 (pp. 90, 127)).
[3] Ibid., p. 12.

all the others told us that something or other sublime was going on.'[4] Almost surrendering himself to the excitement, the narrator asks Monsieur Teste if he can deny there is a certain fascination in anaesthesia, paralysis, and stupefaction: 'Will you deny that certain things are anaesthetic? Trees that make us drunk, men who give us strength, girls who paralyze us, skies that strike us dumb?'.[5] The narrator's opening remark about not being good at 'stupidity' needs to be understood in this sense: 'stupidity' here signifies a receptiveness to extraordinary things that make one incapable of speech, dumbstruck, or stupefied. Monsieur Teste denies that extraordinary things which seem to resist a rational understanding and leave one bereft of speech can be linked to the idea of individual talent, or genius: 'What does the talent of your trees – or anybody's – matter to me? I am at home in MYSELF, I speak my own language, I hate extraordinary things. Only weak minds need them. Believe me literally: genius is *easy.*'[6]

This reflects Valéry's own criticism of the long-standing connection between genius and mental illness, such as madness, melancholy, and idiocy, in his essay, 'Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci', published a year before 'The Evening with Monsieur Teste', in 1895.[7] In this essay, which forms a critical counterpart to the Monsieur Teste stories, Valéry proposes imagining a mind whose activities are so diverse that it is difficult to conceive of it as a unity ('Leonardo' is the name he gives to such a mind). Our judgement of the achievements of such an exceptional mind is distorted by a

[4] Ibid., p. 16.
[5] Ibid., p. 17.
[6] Ibid.
[7] The idea of a connection here can be traced back to Plato's concept of *furor poeticus* (or poetic madness). See Raphael Falco, 'Furor poeticus', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Roland Greene, 4th edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 531–33. It was during the nineteenth century, though, that this idea gained scientific support through the studies of early psychologists such as Jacques-Joseph Moreau and Cesare Lombroso.

disregard, or concealment, of their genesis. They are not spontaneous creations, but a product of the operations of the mind, which can be described in logical, or 'geometrical', terms. 'From this process', Valéry explains,

> arise those decisive acts that astound us; those perspectives, miraculous divinations, exact judgements; those illuminations, those incomprehensible anxieties, and stupid blunders as well. In certain extraordinary cases, invoking abstract gods – genius, inspiration, a thousand others – we ask with stupefaction how these marvels came to be. Once again we believe that something must have created itself, for we worship mystery and the marvelous as much as we love to ignore what goes on behind the scenes, […] although the inspired author had been preparing for a year. He was ripe. He had always thought of this work, perhaps unconsciously; and while others were still not ready to see, he had looked, combined, and now was merely reading what was written in his mind. […] [His] supreme achievement, the one that the world admires, had become a simple matter – almost like comparing two lengths.[8]

In a state of 'stupefaction' we classify what seems to be the achievement of genius as 'incomprehensible', or even 'stupid', which is in fact the reflection of our own stupidity. What strikes us as 'stupid blunders', on close examination, can prove to be a product of the reflective mind.

Critics have agreed that the 'supreme achievement' of Tennyson's lyric gift lies in the extraordinary and diverse use he makes of repetition. In his 1969 study of Tennyson's repetition, Martin Dodsworth remarks that Tennyson is 'an exceedingly repetitious poet. Phrases recur continually within poems and [...] they are frequently carried over from one poem to another in the course of years' – to such a degree, Dodsworth suggests, 'that no satisfactory view of Tennyson's achievement can afford not to take this characteristic

[8] Valéry, 'Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci', in *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, trans. by Malcolm Cowley and James R. Lawler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 3–63 (pp. 12–13).

repetitiousness into account'.[9] Likewise, Seamus Perry, in his more recent study, contends that 'no other great English poet seems drawn quite so powerfully, so repeatedly, to the poetic resource of repetitiveness'.[10] This striking feature of Tennyson's poetry has been widely seen as one particular indication of his stupidity – albeit not only in the sense of intellectual weakness, but also in the more positive sense of a receptivity to stupefying experiences. In this thesis, I try to show that Tennyson's repetition is actually the product of a reflective mind which willingly exposes itself to continual self-questioning and self-criticism.

It has long been a critical commonplace to open a discussion of Tennyson's poetry by commenting on W. H. Auden's 1944 remark that Tennyson 'had the finest ear, perhaps, of any English poet; he was also undoubtedly the stupidest'.[11] This critical judgement represents a longstanding view that Tennyson's poetry is full of sumptuous language and mellifluous music but void of serious thought. In one of the most influential criticisms of the poet, Walter Bagehot argued that Tennyson's style works 'by accumulation and aggregation. The idea is not […] presented with the least clothing which it will endure, but with the richest and most involved clothing that it will admit'.[12] As Dodsworth notes, Bagehot's examples suggest that these effects of 'accumulation and aggregation' are produced, among other things, by the repetition of words and phrases.[13] Through this

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[9] Martin Dodsworth, 'Patterns of Morbidity: Repetition in Tennyson's Poetry', in *The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 7–34 (p. 7).
[10] Seamus Perry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), p. 22.
[11] W. H. Auden, 'Tennyson', in *Forewords and Afterwords*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 221–32 (p. 222). See, for example, Paul Turner, 'The Stupidest English Poet', *English Studies*, 30 (1949), 1–12; James R. Kincaid, *Tennyson's Major Poems: The Comic and Ironic Pattern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 14; Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, pp. 3–4.
[12] *Critical Heritage*, p. 284. W. D. Shaw remarks: 'Tennyson's reputation in the twentieth century has never quite recovered from Bagehot's criticism' (*Tennyson's Style* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 39).
[13] Dodsworth, p. 11.

process of self-duplication, Tennyson's language develops into a rich and elaborate ornament that is almost disproportionate to the idea it conveys.

The critical focus on Tennyson's stylistic richness has often been coupled with a contrasting emphasis on his intellectual poverty. The contemporary poet Matthew Arnold had made a similar remark to that of Bagehot in 1862, emphasising the contrast between Homer's 'plainness of speech' and Tennyson's curious 'heightening and elaboration' of expression.[14] Elsewhere, Arnold wrote 'Tennyson, with all his temperament and artistic skill, is deficient in intellectual power'.[15] Tennyson himself explicitly acknowledged the significance of sound to the poetic communication of thought: the poet's friend W. F. Rawnsley recollects him saying of Robert Browning, 'I don't think that poetry should be all thought: there should be some melody'.[16] This is a deft piece of understatement for the ringing music of his own poetry. Turning Tennyson's partial negation into total negation, R. H. Horne tells us that Tennyson's poetry is preoccupied with sound to the exclusion of anything else: 'Nay, he will write you a poem with nothing in it except music, and as if its music were everything, it shall charm your soul.'[17]

Even Tennyson's admirers have warned against the charm of his sumptuous language. In what Christopher Ricks has described as the best criticism ever made on Tennyson,[18] Walt Whitman offered a panegyric to the poet's 'finest verbalism', but not without some wariness:

To me, Tennyson shows more than any poet I know (perhaps has been a warning

[14] *Critical Heritage*, pp. 267, 268.
[15] *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997–2000), II, 42.
[16] *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. by Norman Page (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 21.
[17] *Critical Heritage*, p. 155.
[18] Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 293.

> to me) how much there is in finest verbalism. There is such a latent charm in mere words, cunning collocutions, and in the voice ringing them, which he has caught and brought out, beyond all others – as in the line, 'And hollow, hollow, hollow, all delight', in 'The Passing of Arthur' […].[19]

Whitman's example shows how the 'accumulation and aggregation' of Tennyson's language, with all its concomitant emptying of contents, is primarily the result of his characteristic habit of repetition. The phrase 'hollow, hollow, hollow, all delight' is not just rich with characteristic Tennysonian linguistic and sonic recurrences at the purely verbal level; it also shows a self-referential awareness of the potential danger of falling into a sensual delight that is itself hollow, lacking any meaningful substance ('mere words, cunning collocutions'). This is what Whitman warns himself against ('perhaps has been a warning to me'), although, as Robert Douglas-Fairhurst nicely observes, he also nearly yields to the charm, as 'the self-affirming chime of "caught and brought out" attunes itself to the echo-chamber of Tennyson's verse'.[20]

When the reputation of Victoria's Laureate plunged into its steep descent towards its nadir in the 1910s, the disparity between his 'enriched' and 'elaborate' style and his impoverished intellectual life was the focus of criticism.[21] G. K. Chesterton, for example, condemned Tennyson in the following terms: 'He had a great deal to say; but he had much more power of expression than was wanted for anything he had to express. He could not think up to the height of his own towering style.'[22] In a similar vein, Ezra Pound wrote: 'the afflatus which has driven great artists to blurt out the facts of life with directness or with cold irony, or with passion, and with always precision […] leads Tennyson into pretty

[19] *Critical Heritage*, pp. 349–50.
[20] Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Tennyson', in *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. by Michael O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 596–616 (p. 597).
[21] A. C. Bradley, *The Reaction against Tennyson* (Oxford: [n. pub.], 1917), p. 15.
[22] G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), p. 165.

embroideries'.[23] In the wake of this reaction, there followed an attempt from critics to save the poet's reputation by making a clear distinction between Tennyson the poet and Tennyson the thinker. Thus Harold Nicolson claimed that 'the secret of Tennyson is to be sought […] in the conflict between the remarkable depth and originality of his poetic temperament and the shallowness and timidity of his practical intelligence'.[24] But, ironically, despite his intention of redeeming the poet's reputation, Nicolson's study actually helped establish the view of Tennyson as 'a morbid and unhappy mystic' incapable of serious thought.[25] Paul Turner reports in 1949: 'all who read Tennyson read Mr Nicolson, and nearly all who read Mr Nicolson consider it axiomatic that Tennyson was intellectually negligible.'[26] Auden was one of those readers (he refers to Nicolson's study as 'excellent').[27] However, it should be noted that Nicolson actually placed more emphasis on the dark depth of Tennyson's inner life than on the shallowness of his intelligence, and as T. S. Eliot suggested in his 1936 essay on *In Memoriam* (to which Auden makes a reference in one of his footnotes), 'Tennyson's surface, his technical accomplishment, is intimate with its depths'.[28]

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[23] Ezra Pound, 'The Rev. G. Crabbe, LL.B.', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 276–79 (pp. 276–77). For the Modernist depreciation of Tennyson, see John Morton, 'T. S. Eliot and Tennyson', in *Tennyson Among the Poets: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. by Douglas-Fairhurst and Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 375–89 (p. 378). I will look at T. S. Eliot's ambiguous relationship to Tennyson in my Conclusion.

[24] Harold Nicolson, *Tennyson: Aspects of his Life, Character and Poetry* (London: Constable, 1925), p. 9.

[25] Ibid., p. 27.

[26] Turner, 'The Stupidest English Poet', p. 2. The vestige of this view can be found in the modern criticism. Herbert Tucker, for instance, claims that Tennyson's readers need at least 'to tolerate a certain ethical and practical poverty' in order to appreciate 'his richest gifts: the sustained evocation of an emotional atmosphere, and the atmospheric and physical acoustics of one of the most fulfilling voices in English tradition' (*Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 19).

[27] Auden, p. 223.

[28] T. S. Eliot, '*In Memoriam*', in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 239–47 (p. 246).

Auden himself suggests how Tennyson's repetitive language communicates his deep concerns. He shows surprise at the sameness of Tennysonian situations and the way they repeatedly conjure up certain archetypal experiences, quoting the poet's self-portrait in *In Memoriam*, LIV, by way of illustration:[29]

> So runs my dream: but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry.
>
> (17–20)

Here, as Seamus Perry brilliantly points out, the repetition of sounds suggests a sense of stupor, as 'a pervasive "i" rhyme practically freezes the verse into the immobility of *AAAA*, and "I" finds itself additionally landlocked within the internal repetition of "crying"'.[30] The poet's own description of himself thus implies that a 'cry' was the formative experience of his early childhood. When Auden called Tennyson 'the great English poet of the Nursery',[31] he was probably imagining 'the Nursery' as a place where a sorrowful cry rings out. In fact, as the poet's grandson Sir Charles Tennyson first brought to light in his article of 1936, Tennyson's early years were overshadowed by the violence of his drunken father, who had been disinherited in favour of his younger brother, and eventually went mad.[32] Maybe Gerhard Joseph is not reading too much into Auden's remark on Tennyson's stupidity when he says, 'Tennyson may be called the stupidest of the English poets if we understand "stupid" in its root meaning of stunned, benumbed, or fixated by

[29] Auden, p. 227.
[30] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 32.
[31] Auden, p. 228.
[32] Charles Tennyson, 'Tennyson Papers: I. Alfred's Father', *Cornhill Magazine*, 153 (March 1936), 283–305.

obscure early sorrow'.[33] In this respect, Tennyson's thematic and stylistic repetitiousness can be seen as an expression of his sense of being stupefied, of being unable to find the right words to describe his experience ('with no language but a cry').[34]

Such a state of stupefaction can even be a kind of authentic philosophy. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre writes in his *War Diaries* that philosophy starts with a sense of bewilderment which is 'genuinely existential and authentic, though pretty silly for all that'.[35] He then explains how his partner Simone de Beauvoir ('The Beaver') was predisposed by her nature to this kind of experience:

> The Beaver, precisely, didn't escape this, because she's more naturally authentic than me. At the age of eighteen, she was sitting on an iron chair in the Luxembourg Gardens, leaning back against the Museum wall and thinking: 'I'm here, time is flowing by and this instant will never return', and this caused her to fall into a state of stupefaction resembling sleep. But this philosophical poverty is, in reality, very authentic philosophy: it's the moment at which the question transforms the questioner […]. She had metaphysicized herself wholeheartedly, she was throwing herself into time, she was living time, she *was* time. On waking, however, it was her words – those empty, highflown words – that betrayed the strange metamorphosis: 'This instant will never return'.[36]

The situation described here, as David Russell comments in a recent article entitled 'Stupid Like Tennyson', is a 'philosophical experience – a state of stupefaction – rather than a philosophical proposition, which gives us a sense of both metaphysics at work and

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[33] Gerhard Joseph, *Tennyson and the Text: The Weaver's Shuttle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 25.
[34] Similarly, as will be discussed in the next chapter, critics such as Dodsworth and Perry show how Tennyson's use of repetition conveys a sense of stasis and stupor which relates to his fixation with the past.
[35] Jean-Paul Sartre, *War Diaries: Notebooks from a Phoney War, 1939–40*, trans. by Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 2011), p. 85. It is worth noting that the original French word being translated (not literally) as 'silly' here is 'stupeur' (Sartre, *Les Mots et autres écrits autobiographiques*, ed. by Jean-François Louette (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), p. 224).
[36] Sartre, *War Diaries*, p. 85.

how metaphysics might work on us'.[37] This experience strikes its subject dumb, leaving him or her at a loss for words. Coming out of her momentary trance, de Beauvoir seeks to capture her 'strange metamorphosis' in words, but her 'empty, highflown words' fail to represent it properly, and as a result 'betray' its ineffable depth. It would be the task of a philosopher to diagnose and remedy such a stupefied condition; even so, Sartre accepts it as a condition of philosophy. For Sartre, Russell writes, 'philosophy is stupid, at least in part: somehow irremediably stupefied, and consistently inadequate to the task of capturing experience'.[38] Russell goes on to suggest that 'Tennyson's poetry is often stupefied in just this philosophical way'.[39] Tennyson's self-replicating words and their echoing sounds can thus be regarded not simply as irrelevant ornaments filling an intellectual emptiness, but more as a failed attempt to capture philosophical experience. Instead of arguing that Tennyson is not stupid, thus, Russell attempts to appreciate Tennyson's stupidity in and for itself.[40] That is, there is a sense in which stupidity is indeed Tennyson's strong point.

And yet, of course, stupidity is not the only strong point of Tennyson. As I hope to show in this thesis, Tennyson addressed deep philosophical questions not only by expressing his stupefaction at them, but also by presenting new and altered perspectives on them. Indeed, there are a number of critics who have attempted to defend Tennyson against reactionary criticisms about his intellectual vacuity by insisting instead precisely

[37] David Russell, 'Stupid Like Tennyson', *Raritan*, 35 (2015), 97–113 (p. 98). Similarly, Paul Turner in his 1949 article shows how Tennyson's subjective feelings are not incompatible with his metaphysics ('The Stupidest English Poet', pp. 3–6).
[38] Russell, p. 99.
[39] Ibid., p. 100.
[40] Gerhard Joseph, in his article 'In Praise of Stupidity', points to the way in which *In Memoriam* and *Middlemarch*, both written for grown-ups, tell us 'how largely ignorant we are and will always, essentially, be' ('In Praise of Stupidity: *In Memoriam* and *Middlemarch*', *TRB*, 10 (2012), 5–14 (p. 6)).

on his intellectual acuity.[41] But while these critics have tended to discuss Tennyson's intellectual capacities separately from his repetitiousness, this study attempts to see in Tennyson's very use of repetition the manifestation of his reflective and analytical mind. In her influential study, Isobel Armstrong has shown that what she called the Victorian 'double poem' enabled poets to express an utterance as a lyric subject and at the same time make that utterance the object of critique and analysis. She argues that this 'double poem is a deeply sceptical form' which is fully aware of the conditions under which an utterance is made.[42] Likewise, in his 2005 study, *Tennyson's Scepticism*, Aidan Day highlights Tennyson's sceptical vision (which he argues is informed by 'rational, scientific perspectives deriving from Enlightenment thought') through the close analysis of his 'lavish poetic language'.[43] He contends that in many of his poems, 'Tennyson's sensuous poetic manner is deployed in the interests of rationalist, sceptical critique'.[44] Drawing on these insights, this thesis rejects the idea that Tennyson's use of repetition is a superficial ornament lacking reflective substance, or even just an expression of a sense of stupefaction and the inadequacy of words. I argue rather, through sustained close readings, that this characteristic repetition is actually an embodiment of the poet's own continual self-questioning and self-criticism.

To do this, I focus on five figures of repetition: memory/Memory (Chapter 1), mirror-images (Chapter 2), simile (Chapter 3), antithesis (Chapter 4), and *fama*/*Fama*

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[41] See Turner, 'The Stupidest English Poet'; Henry Kozicki, *Tennyson and Clio: History in the Major Poems* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); George H. Ford, '"A Great Poetical Boa-Constrictor," Alfred Tennyson: An Educated Victorian Mind', in *Victorian Literature and Society: Essays Presented to Richard Altick*, ed. by Kincaid and Albert Kuhn (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), pp. 146–67.
[42] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 13.
[43] Aidan Day, *Tennyson's Scepticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1, 3.
[44] Ibid., p. 3.

(Chapter 5). Like John Hollander in his study, *The Figure of Echo*, to which this thesis is particularly indebted,[45] I use the word 'figure' both in the sense of 'an embodied (human) form' (*OED*, n. 1, 5. a) and in the sense of 'any of the various "forms" of expression' that deviate 'from the normal arrangement or use of words' (5, 21. a). While paying sustained attention to those rhetorical figures which are usually identified as Tennyson's representative formal features, such as anaphora and allusion, this study also brings into focus hitherto unattended-to aspects of Tennyson's repetitive language, namely, his use of the figures of simile and antithesis. In doing so, it offers a fresh reading of his poetry of repetition. Although these two figures are not typically regarded as figures of repetition, Tennyson's treatment of them self-performatively highlights their repetitive nature. However, his poems do not only speak *with* repetition; they also speak *of* repetition. His representations of such thematic phenomena as recollection, mirroring, and gossiping, which are often enacted through formal repetitions, can be read as self-referential commentaries on his own poetry of repetition.

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It is often observed that repetition is at the heart of poetry. As Seamus Perry has shown, poets and critics from George Puttenham through Gerard Manley Hopkins to Roman Jakobson and F. W. Bateson have suggested the importance of repetition to poetry.[46] More recently, Valentine Cunningham has identified 'the basic poetic equations' as 'poetry = repetition; repetition = rhyme; and rhyme = poetry'.[47] Indeed, the majority of the formal

[45] John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981).
[46] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, pp. 21–22.
[47] Valentine Cunningham, *Victorian Poetry Now: Poets, Poems, Poetics* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2011), p. 58. Cunningham, though, disagrees with Perry's suggestion that this equation is especially pertinent to Tennyson, commenting by way of a riposte: 'Tell that […] to Hopkins or Christina G Rossetti, or many another. They're all hard at it' (Ibid.).

features of poetry, not only the sonic and rhythmic ones (rhyme, alliteration, assonance) but also the structural and figurative ones (parallelism, antithesis, simile), consist of repetition; or rather, these devices are designed to form a repetitive pattern. This is probably why the origins of poetry were once attributed to Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory and the mother of the nine Muses.

In his classic study *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong shows how in an oral world, thoughts and ideas are preserved through the fragile medium of spoken language. But the spoken word can only enjoy a fleeting life; it vanishes as soon as it is uttered. As Ong puts it, 'When I pronounce the word "permanence", by the time I get to the "-nence", the "perma-" is gone, and has to be gone.'[48] How, then, could people preserve and protect their thoughts and ideas against the passage of time? To this Ong answers: 'to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence'.[49] He goes on to say: 'Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances'.[50] The fact that these repetitive patterns are characteristic of poetic language reveals the inherent connection between poetry and memory. As the poet Jane Hirshfield suggests, it was 'the requirements of memorability' that 'created poetry', and it is because of this that repetition lies 'at the heart of other linguistic devices we associate with poetry's beauty and sensual pleasure'.[51] Yet just because poetry was born out of the necessity for memory, it does not necessarily follow that it still single-mindedly fulfils a mnemonic demand. After all, there is no need

[48] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 32.
[49] Ibid., p. 34.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Jane Hirshfield, 'Poetry as a Vessel of Remembrance', in *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), pp. 176–96 (pp. 177, 179).

to form one's thought into a repetitive pattern for abiding remembrance after the arrival of literacy. If 'the fundamental sound of Mnemosyne's speech continued to permeate' the nature of poetry beyond this point, then it must have taken on a new purpose.[52] It was Arthur Hallam who remarked, 'Rhyme has been said to contain in itself a constant appeal to Memory and Hope.'[53]

Memory was Tennyson's personal muse. In one of his earliest poems, entitled 'Memory', Tennyson invokes the personification of memory: 'Memory! dear enchanter!' (1). His invocation to Memory in this poem, and in his other early poems dedicated to the figure of Memory, 'Memory [Ay me!]' and 'Ode to Memory', can be seen as the embryonic manifestation of Tennyson's 'retrospective cast of thought', which does not only define his style and subject matter but also his compositional habit throughout his poetic career.[54] And yet, I argue, Tennyson's Memory/memory not only works backwards, but also forwards. In my first chapter, I begin by considering the way in which Tennyson's act of recollection is accompanied by an idealisation of the past and a denigration of the present. His sense of the inadequacy of words compels him to keep on repeating words, but he also sees this process of repetition as a way of shadowing forth an idealised past. This position can be usefully understood in the light of Kierkegaardian 'recollection'. Kierkegaard distinguishes two types of repetition: 'recollection' and 'repetition'. While in 'recollection', one attempts to return to an idealised past through the present, only to find the latter to be just a shadow or faded copy of the former, in 'repetition', that which is repeated waits for its meaning to be actualised in a different context, where its full

[52] Ibid., p. 177.
[53] Arthur Hallam, 'The Influence of Italian upon English Literature', in *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. by T. H. Vail Motter (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1943), pp. 213–34 (p. 222n).
[54] Dinah Birch, 'Tennyson's Retrospective View', in *Tennyson Among the Poets*, pp. 39–56 (p. 41).

potentialities can be developed. Critics of Tennyson have tended to put more emphasis on retrogressive interpretation, which can be considered in connection with 'recollection'. Although recent criticism has revealed an unexpected variety in Tennyson, it tends to consider progress as something brought about from outside, or arising out of, repetition. What is characteristic of Tennyson, however, is his two-sidedness, or balancedness, which compels him to see contraries *within* things. The chapter seeks to investigate the possibility of 'repetition' within Tennyson's representation of Memory, and in his use of memory. It shows how Tennyson's shift in emphasis from the retrospective to the prospective dimension of memory is itself effected by the reworking of his own earlier conceptions, and Wordsworth's conception, of Memory/memory.

To repeat a truism about repetition and difference, however, is not the purpose of my argument. As long as a repetition occurs in a time and place, it cannot avoid change. It is in this sense that Gertrude Stein, who is herself 'infamously repetitive',[55] says, 'there is no such thing as repetition'.[56] The distinction between 'recollection' and 'repetition' is therefore chiefly a matter of emphasis. Krystyna Mazur, in her article in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, compares two paradigms of repetition ('repetition-as-unity' and 'repetition-as-difference') according to their differing emphases on its effects: 'The former [repetition-as-unity], sometimes referred to as "Platonic repetition" or "recollection," is based on the principle of identity or original similitude that is rediscovered by repetition (e.g., by mimesis)', while 'the latter [repetition-as-difference] is a disclosure and production of difference'.[57] While the first emphasises the sameness

[55] James Longenbach, *How Poems Get Made* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2018), p. 102.
[56] Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America* (London: Virago, 1988), p. 166.
[57] Krystyna Mazur, 'Repetition', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 1168–71 (p. 1170). See also Mazur, *Poetry and Repetition: Walt Whitman, Wallace Stevens, John Ashbury* (New

and self-identity of the archetypal model, which is unaffected by the effects of repetition, and sees repetition as a mere shadow, copy, or simulacrum of the original, the second emphasises difference and variance from the original, showing how repetition represents a reconsideration, and even a critique, of what is being repeated. The Kierkegaardian distinction of 'recollection' and 'repetition' is a variation of this dichotomy. Tennyson's habit of repetition has been viewed by most critics as 'Platonic repetition', or 'recollection', and Tennyson's execution of this theme is indeed a remarkable accomplishment in itself; but to counter-balance this, I emphasise the progress and difference involved in Tennysonian repetition, which opens up the possibility of 'repetition' in a more positive sense.

In his 'Intimations' Ode, to which Tennyson alludes in *In Memoriam*, XXIV (as my reading of this poem in the first chapter demonstrates more fully), Wordsworth refers to 'recollections' as 'shadowy' (152). Underlying such a characterisation of recollection is what John Hollander calls 'the whole Platonic agenda of reality and authenticity, and its trope of shadowing in the story of the cave'.[58] In Plato's allegory of the cave, 'mere shadows are unreal and deceiving insubstantial representations of substances'. [59] Hollander's study, *The Substance of Shadow*, is an attempt to deconstruct this dichotomy of shadow and substance. Drawing on Hollander's work, my second chapter examines Tennyson's descriptions of mirror-image in his overall poetic œuvre, showing how this shadowy, fleeting existence is not simply presented as an imperfect and inferior reproduction of the original, but comes to assume its own substantiality.

York and London: Routledge, 2005), pp. x–xii; J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 6.

[58] Hollander, *The Substance of Shadow: A Darkening Trope in Poetic History*, ed. by Kenneth Gross (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 14.

[59] Ibid.

In describing the reflection of images in a mirror, Tennyson plays out the process of transferring images onto mirrors in the detail of his language, specifically in his arrangement of words, rhyme schemes, and indentation. Then, as images shift from their objects to the mirrors, the speaker's focus changes from the images to the mirrors themselves. The speaker sees not so much the images reflected in the mirrors, as the mirrors themselves into which the images are being reflected. The mirrors thus come to have their own presence, and the images take on the essential attributes of the mirrors. The chapter goes on from here to read 'The Lady of Shalott' as a metapoem, acutely conscious of what Tennyson's poetry does with regard to mirrors. The Lady, who sees the realm of reality only through shadows, who is tormented in her confinement by the gap this involves, and who also weaves these shadows into a web, is a good analogy for the poet who lives in 'recollection'. But 'the mirror blue' of the poem undermines the opposition of shadows and realities. In this respect, therefore, 'the mirror blue' in 'The Lady of Shalott' may stand as an emblem of Tennyson's handling of mirrors as a whole.

The figure of the mirror-image in the poems I consider is almost invariably accompanied by the figure of echo. Tennyson's descriptions of mirror-images typically coincide with a description of echoing sounds, the repetition of sounds and words, self-borrowing, and allusion. In Tennyson's poetry, as I seek to argue, the figure of echo, like that of the mirror-image, acquires a new meaning which cannot be reduced to its source, claiming a different kind of authority. In Chapters 3 to 5, I discuss Tennyson's three major poems written in the wake of Arthur Hallam's death, *In Memoriam*, *Maud*, and *Idylls of the King*, focusing, respectively, on the figures of simile, antithesis, and *fama*/*Fama*, and showing how these figures form a major reconsideration of the Romantic principles of unity, human agency, and poetic authority.

In his recent article on the rhetorical figure of repetition in *In Memoriam*, Erik Gray has shown how the poem's use of polyptoton, the reiteration of a single root word in different grammatical forms, serves to reinforce its practice of dividing up a single theme among multiple voices. Gray argues that the 'constant imaginative speculation' that this practice prompts the mourner to 'reimagine and transfigure' his grief and move forward.[60] But while Tennyson's recourse to this figure enacts the process of division which is integral to the work of mourning that elegy undertakes,[61] it also reinforces a sense of unity and connection through the repetition of the same root word. As is often the case with great elegies, *In Memoriam* defies the generic expectation that an elegy will narrate a transition from loss to recuperation, and vacillates instead between recollection and progress, connection and separation, unity and division. My third chapter seeks to show how these conflicting processes within the poem are encapsulated in the relationship between the words in the rhetorical figure of the simile. A simile involves saying something in a different way, and as such can be seen as a figure of echo (the poem's repeated use of similes suggests the figure's echoing effect). The simile aspires to connect two items being compared but simultaneously to separate them. Simile is similar to, but distinguished from, metaphor. While metaphor signifies the identification of the two things compared, simile signifies the similarity and difference between them (saying simile is *like* metaphor is not the same as saying simile *is* metaphor).

These contradictory pulls of connection and separation characterise the poet's attitudes not only towards his friend, but also to the literary tradition his friend represents,

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[60] Erik Gray, 'Polyptoton in *In Memoriam*: Evolution, Speculation, Elegy', *SEL*, 55 (2015), 841–60 (p. 856).

[61] In his study of *The English Elegy*, Peter M. Sacks mentions as one convention of the genre, 'the use of division between or within mourning voices' (*The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spencer to Yeats* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 34–35).

that is, a Romantic poetics of unity. This chapter tries to show how the poem's use of simile reveals the tension between the unitive and disjunctive tendencies of language itself, presenting the poem as a critique of the Romantic, metaphorical view of language. While the contemporary philologist Richard Trench sought to reveal the metaphorical relationship between a word and its meaning through etymological exploration, thereby reducing the meaning of words to the intention of the author of the world – that is, God – the poem's repeated attempts at simile display the tendency of language both to establish unity and yet also at the same time produce division.

The chapter concludes by noting that the simile's logic of unity and division, connection and separation, is what underlies the poetic form of the dramatic monologue. Here, the 'monologue' element produces a first-person narration that signals an identification between the speaker and the poet; but against this, the 'dramatic' element points to their ultimate separation. In a dramatic monologue, the poet speaks like a character, but the character and the poet remain distinguished. This act of pretence betrays the poet's control, just as the tactful use of simile also evinces the strong control of the poet. In my fourth chapter, I show how in the monodrama, *Maud*, the speaker's doubts about his control over the action are communicated through the repetition of the same verb in the two grammatical voices (active and passive).

Critics have regarded the speaker of *Maud* who sees and hears the reflection of his mind in his surroundings – he hears in the cawing of rooks the name of his beloved: 'Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud' (I. 414)) – as an egotistical, almost solipsistic, narcissist. Seamus Perry argues how 'Maud eludes *Maud* entirely: her irreality in it is a mark of her absorption into the speaker's fantasy, as though Tennyson's original title "Maud or the

Madness" really was nominating a pair of synonyms'.[62] And yet, despite his apparent solipsism, the speaker, whom the poet called 'the *heir* of madness' as well as an 'egoist', is acutely aware of external influences over which he does not exert full control.[63] My chapter argues that this ambiguity surrounding the speaker's agency manifests itself most prominently in the juxtaposing of one grammatical voice with the other. The parallel use of the two voices can be identified as the rhetorical figure of antithesis, which the historian of rhetoric Arthur Quinn succinctly defines as 'repetition by negation'.[64] Although the antithetical juxtaposition of the two voices features in other works of Tennyson as well (e.g. 'Like truths of Science waiting to be caught – / Catch me who can, and make the catcher crowned –' ('The Golden Year', 17–18)), this poem uses this technique with arresting frequency, and to arresting effect. While this figure is usually employed to make an argument clear and concise, the poem's uses of it highlight its own contentious and quarrelling nature. The antithesis between the active and the passive voice in *Maud* enacts its speaker's own indecision or wavering between active will and passive suffering. As the poem unfolds, however, the speaker exploits the figure decidedly for asserting his achieved agency, or for renouncing his self-control and thereby evading his responsibility. The poem suggests in the end how the abandonment of thinking about the gray area between will and suffering, activity and passivity, leads to madness.

These chapters address the ideas of the author and authority. In Chapters 1 and 2, I show how the figures of memory and mirror-image, which are by nature secondary, could claim an originality and authority of their own. In Chapter 3, I argue that Trench's

[62] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 126.
[63] *Poems,* ii. 515n (my emphasis).
[64] Arthur Quinn, *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1982), p. 101.

attribution of the meaning of a word to the intention of the Author (God) is contradicted and contested in *In Memoriam* by the simile's interpolation of the unitive and disruptive tendencies of language. In Chapter 4, I show how in *Maud* the speaker's uncertainty about his autonomy as the author of his own life is enacted in the antithetical juxtaposition of the two grammatical voices. Chapter 5 pursues this idea further, showing that the very idea of authority rests unstably upon repetition, by examining how in *Idylls of the King* Arthur's authority is shaped by the process of his story being echoed from person to person. While Arthur's authority seems to be threatened by the diffusive types of speech rampant in his court, such as rumour, gossip, and slander, the establishment and maintenance of his authority, which is the main endeavour of the poem as an epic, is dependent upon these types of speech. Tennyson highlights the repetitiveness of these types of speech by accompanying their descriptions with verbal echoes.

The establishment of Arthur's authority in the poem could be read primarily as a fictional representation of the reinforcement of monarchical power at a time when the populace at large was gaining more and more power. Nevertheless, Arthur's authority is connected to Tennyson's authority as a poet too. As Valerie Purton suggests, Tennyson's poetry 'had from the beginning, in his own mind, a public dimension'.[65] But to be exposed to the public meant losing authorial control not only over his life but also over his work. Tennyson as a young poet had an acute sensitivity to unfavourable and unsympathetic reviews. Christopher North's review of *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* in *Blackwood's Magazine* famously provoked Tennyson's indignation, to the extent that the young poet wrote what he later called 'a silly squib', addressed 'To Christopher North', expressing his vexation

[65] Valerie Purton, 'Tennyson's *Balin and Balan* as the Reconciliation of the Divided Self: A New Reading of the Final *Idylls of the King*', *Philological Quarterly*, 84 (2005), 357–76 (p. 357).

with the condescending commingling of 'blame and praise' (3) in the review. This duplexity of criticism is encapsulated in the semantic ambiguity of the Latin word *fama*, which could mean both fame and a lack of fame, praise and blame, as Philip Hardie's study of the figure of *Fama*/*fama* in Western literature demonstrates.[66] Arthur Hallam appears to have been aware of this double meaning of fame when he told Tennyson: 'He means well I take it, and as he has extracted nearly your whole book, and has in more sober mood spoken in terms as high as I could have used myself of some of your best poems, I think the review will assist rather than hinder the march of your reputation.'[67] This remark brilliantly captures the contemporary ambivalence towards the mass media of periodicals. While the periodical promoted the circulation of poems by reprinting extracts from them as well as by providing critical appraisals and interpretations, this very process of reproduction deprived poets of their authorial control over their texts.

By representing Arthur's undermined authority through the reproduction and proliferation of unauthorised discourses, Tennyson prefigures twentieth-century concerns about 'the death of the author'. As if to exercise his authority at the very last moment, Arthur brings an end to his own life. Yet Arthur does not die, but passes in order to come again. His story will be passed on from person to person, by way of both creation and criticism, and in this act of retelling, Arthur's, and the author's, authority will be re-established and maintained, but only as a divided, fragmented authority. I argue that Tennyson's entire Arthurian corpus is a retelling of the previous Arthurian literature, and as such a reshaping of Arthur's authority.

My exploration, which starts with considering Tennyson's (dis)fame, thus circles

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[66] Philip Hardie, *Rumour and Renown: Representations of 'Fama' in Western Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[67] *Memoir*, I, 84.

back to the very idea of fame, following the Tennysonian trajectory in which moving forward ends up in circling back home. Tennyson repeatedly recounts a narrative of returning home, and he often imagines a home as a place to which one goes back and a place in which repetition occurs. The home can thus be seen as another figure of repetition. In this respect, like Tennyson's other figures of repetition, the figure of the home manifests his recurring self-questioning and criticism. Tennyson's representations of homes, which are continually threatened both from outside and within, can be regarded as a critique of the contemporary view of the home as a place offering a sense of security and stability. As the figure of home is often analogous to the poet, and the poem he produces, in Tennyson's imagination, the threatening of domestic privacy can be read as an expression of his own undermined authorial integrity. While Valéry's Monsieur Teste says 'I am at home in MYSELF, I speak my own language', Tennyson questions his authority over his own utterance.

My conclusion considers Tennyson's posthumous fame, examining the way T. S. Eliot, who is responsible for much of the depreciation of Tennyson in the twentieth century, and for the stereotypes about his stupidity, remodels Tennyson's homes in 'East Coker', first published in 1940. Eliot's relationship with Tennyson is ambiguous; his criticisms and the allusions in his poems are an incarnation of the double tongue of *Fama*/*fama*. For all the ostensible depreciation of his predecessor, Eliot's poems contain clear echoes of Tennyson's verse. In his description of the houses in the opening lines of 'East Coker', Eliot alludes to Tennyson's own reworking of the house of 'Mariana' in *Maud*. The allusion is particularly pertinent as an act of reworking is exactly what these lines are themselves engaged in. While Tennyson's descriptions focus on the houses themselves, Eliot's descriptions focus on the process of rebuilding houses. This shifted

focus demonstrates how a return to, or a repetition of, old material can herald a new start.

1. The Reverse of Recollection

> ‘It’s a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,’ the Queen remarked.
> —Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*

In his important study ‘Patterns of Morbidity: Repetition in Tennyson’s Poetry’, Martin Dodsworth shows that despite Walter Bagehot’s damaging criticism of Tennyson’s ornate style,[1] Tennyson’s repetitive language serves to communicate intensity of feeling. As a model for the stylistic effect of the characteristic Tennysonian repetition, Dodsworth cites the note William Wordsworth added to ‘The Thorn’ for the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, in vindication of the poem’s ‘tiresome loquacity’ (in Robert Southey’s critical description):[2]

> There is a numerous class of readers who imagine that the same words cannot be repeated without tautology: this is a great error: virtual tautology is much oftener produced by using different words when the meaning is exactly the same. […] Every man must know that an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of our own powers, or the deficiencies of language. During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the Speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character.[3]

Wordsworth sees the repetition of words as a sign of dissatisfaction with one’s own words, or with the ‘deficiencies of language’ in general, a reflection of the tantalising difficulty of communicating ‘impassioned feelings’. One attempts to convey one’s own intense feeling as fully as possible, only to find that one has failed to capture it; and then,

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[1] See above, Introduction.
[2] Cited in William Wordsworth, *21st-century Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 727.
[3] Ibid., pp. 727–28.

out of a sense of the inadequacy of words themselves, one repeats the same words. For Wordsworth, repetition is the mark of a fixation (a 'cling[ing] to'), or as Dodsworth puts it, 'of an inability to progress from one state of feeling to another'.[4] Dodsworth argues that 'Tennyson's repetition is nearly always tied in this way to strong emotion', and that it 'marks a reluctance or inability […] to progress from one subject to another. He is always circling back; he is not a man who can easily reason himself out of a state of mind.'[5] Dodsworth demonstrates how this Tennysonian repetition can evoke a sense of stasis by quoting from *Enoch Arden* the lines depicting the tropical island:

> The blaze upon the water to the east;
> The blaze upon his island overhead;
> The blaze upon the water to the west […].
>
> (590–92)

Walter Bagehot cited these lines as an example of Tennyson's ornate style, which he characterised in terms of 'accumulation and aggregation' (see above, Introduction). The repeated beginnings to these lines constitute the rhetorical figure of anaphora, the effect of which is, according to John Lennard, 'to induce a form of chanting'.[6] The poet seems to succumb to the charm of his own repetitive music. However, the monotonous chant is also a sign of Enoch's inability to move on. 'The blaze upon' of the first line is repeated in the second line, although with a change of object from 'the water to the east' to 'his island overhead'; but even the object of the first line recurs in the third line, so that what gets repeated is not just 'The blaze upon', but 'The blaze upon the water to the', contrary

[4] Dodsworth, p. 9.
[5] Ibid., pp. 9, 19.
[6] John Lennard, *The Poetry Handbook: A Guide to Reading Poetry for Pleasure and Practical Criticism,* 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 200.

to our expectation of further progress. In this stagnating act of repetition, the verse frustratedly circles back on itself to create a sense of desolation.

The sense of the inadequateness of words, which leaves one immobilised in repeating the same words, comes from one's seeing words as a defective and imperfect representation of the feeling experienced ('My words are *only* words' (*In Memoriam*, LII. 3, my emphasis)). This devaluation of words is connected with the romanticising of feelings about the past through retrospection. In the first half of this chapter, I examine Tennyson's recurrent focus on recollection, showing how the act of looking back on the past, 'the days that are no more' (which harks back to what he called 'the passion of the past'), is accompanied by the glorification of the past and the degradation of the present. In the second half, I explore the progressive dimension of the Tennysonian memory, showing how it serves not to glorify the past but 'To glorify the present' ('Ode to Memory', 3).

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Tennyson's characteristic act of recollection, in which the present and the words representing it appear as an inferior reproduction of the past, is often prompted by revisiting a place that holds fond memories for him. Tennyson probably gained his sense that repetition is a pale imitation of the original experience from Wordsworth's 'Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798', which, according to Seamus Perry, established the literary tradition in which a speaker revisits a place full of memories and tries to recapture their lost past.[7] Returning to the River Wye for the first time in five years, Wordsworth sees again its

[7] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 47.

'wild secluded scene' (6):

> 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 […].
>
> (59–62)

Seeing the scene again brings to mind thoughts about the abiding of the past, and yet the speaker perceives with 'somewhat of a sad perplexity' that much has changed in the intervening years. Perry finds in these 'recognitions dim and faint' what he refers to as 'a replication, yet a diminishment', and he draws an analogy here with the figure of the echo: 'it is the imaginative logic of the echo, of which Wordsworth was a laureate to rival even Tennyson'.[8] Tennyson, though, puts the focus on 'the permanent in the transitory' – the Tennysonian translation of 'Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns' (98), the famous line from 'Tintern Abbey' he is reported to have praised during his travels with Frederick Locker-Lampson.[9]

In his notes to his lyric, 'Tears, idle tears', Tennyson remarks: '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.'[10] Its title taken from its opening line, this poem gives the impression that it is about tears whose meaning the speaker himself does not understand. Cleanth Brooks examined in detail the psychological drama surrounding the real occasion of the speaker's tears in the first stanza of the poem:

> Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
> Tears from the depth of some divine despair

[8] Ibid.
[9] *Memoir*, II, 70.
[10] *Poems*, II, 232n.

> Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
> In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
> And thinking of the days that are no more.
>
> (*The Princess*, IV. 21–25)

In the first line the speaker calls the tears 'idle', but in the second and third lines he realises that they come from 'the depth of some divine despair' and 'Rise in the heart'. Then, at the end of the stanza, the poem finds the solution to the paradox in its thought about the past: the tears rise to the eyes 'in looking on the happy Autumn-fields / And thinking of the days that are no more'. Brooks insists that most readers will want to establish a causal link between the two actions, 'for, if we change "happy Autumn-fields", say, to "happy April-fields", the two terms tend to draw apart'.[11] It is not until the last line of the stanza that the real occasion is stated, and as it turns out, the poem is all about 'the days that are no more'.

But what is the cause of the inconsistency in the speaker's statements? In the later stanzas, he characterises 'the days that are no more' not only as 'sad' but as 'Fresh' (26), 'strange' (31), and 'wild' (39), with a gradual increase in intensity. Such is the vividness with which the memories are recalled that the speaker's utterance gets confused in the first stanza. Brooks says that 'the days that are no more must be more than the conventional "dear, dead days beyond recall". They must be beyond recall, yet alive – tantalizingly vivid and near.'[12] Although Brooks's point is that the poem seems confused and loose (idle?) at first, only to emerge in the end as very tightly organised – that is, it is a well-wrought urn – his reading also shows that the poem is structured around the idea of the immutable past, 'the permanent in the transitory'. Brooks's reading thus brilliantly

[11] Cleanth Brooks, 'The Motivation of Tennyson's Weeper', in *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947), pp. 167–77 (p. 168).
[12] Ibid., p. 171.

shows the way in which the poem dramatises its speaker's realisation of the permanence and sameness of the past, and how this is unaffected by the passage of time. The Tennysonian recollection almost always involves this kind of 'thinking of' the past as something that cannot be repeated ('no more'). The very repetition of the phrase 'the days that are no more' as a refrain can be seen as the speaker's failed attempt to represent, or repeat, the past through words.

A variant on those recursive narratives of revisiting in which one looks back on the past and cultivates a sense of its irrevocability can be found in stories about 'the return home' which discover it 'to be no home at all'.[13] In *Enoch Arden*, for example, when Enoch finally returns home after more than ten years, he discovers that his former home is indeed no longer his home:

> Now when the dead man come to life beheld
> His wife his wife no more, and saw the babe
> Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee […].
>
> (754–56)

The logic of the echo applies in this case as well: 'His wife' repeats itself, yet as 'his wife no more'. In 'The Lotos-Eaters', the mariners, living in the 'dear' memory of the past, have a feeling they will have been replaced in their household by their successors, even before they return home:

> Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
> And dear the last embraces of our wives
> And their warm tears: but all hath suffered change:
> For surely now our household hearths are cold:
> Our sons inherit us […].

[13] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 54.

(114–18)

Similarly, in *In Memoriam*, the speaker imagines the dead coming home to find their home inherited by 'The hard heir':

> But if they came who past away,
> Behold their brides in other hands;
> The hard heir strides about their lands,
> And will not yield them for a day.
>
> (XC. 13–16)

Towards the end of his chapter on Tennyson's 'Returns', Perry helpfully points out a parallel to these narratives in Søren Kierkegaard's *Repetition*.[14] In May 1843, Kierkegaard set off for Berlin for the first time in a year and a half, 'hoping to repeat the amazing productivity of his first visit to the city'.[15] One of the outcomes of this trip was *Repetition*. Written under the pseudonym of Constantin Constantius, the book's figure of the forlorn philosopher bears an apparent resemblance to Kierkegaard himself. Faced with the problem of 'whether a repetition is possible and what significance it has, whether a thing gains or loses by being repeated',[16] Constantin sets out on a visit to Berlin, where he has been before. As soon as he arrives in Berlin, he heads straight for his old lodging, led by his memories. But he finds that his host has now married, and he can only take one room. His desk is in the same place as before, and his velvet armchair is still there; but something does not feel right to him. Seeing the armchair, he is seized by an irresistible

[14] Ibid. For a comparison of Tennysonian and Kierkegaardian faith, see Joseph J. Collins, 'Tennyson and Kierkegaard', *VP*, 11 (1973), 345–350.
[15] Clare Carlisle, *Philosopher of the Heart: The Restless Life of Søren Kierkegaard* (London: Penguin, 2020), p. 150.
[16] Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, trans. by Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 33.

urge to smash it.

This episode rather reminds us of *In Memoriam*, LXXXVII, in which the speaker, revisiting his old college,

> paced the shores
> And many a bridge, and all about
>
> The same gray flats again, and felt
> The same, but not the same; and last
> Up that long walk of limes I past
> To see the rooms in which he dwelt.
>
> Another name was on the door […].
>
> (11–17)

'The same, but not the same': here again, we can see what Perry calls 'the imaginative logic of the echo' at work. The speaker has the same experience as before, but feels something is irrevocably lost in the repetition. He tests out his unchanging love of his lost friend through repetition, but the very act of repetition brings about changes. In a similar way, Constantin Constantius, whose name hints at both constancy and change at the same time,[17] tries to achieve a sense of identity through repetition, but fails. Clare Carlisle writes: 'repeating his previous experience in Berlin connected him to his former self, yet also made him conscious of the time that had passed, and how he had changed in the intervening months'.[18] Constantin thus convinces himself that:

> My home had become cheerless, precisely because it was the reverse of a repetition, my mind was unfruitful, my troubled imagination was engaged in transmuting into the delights of Tantalus the memory of how richly the thoughts presented themselves on the former occasion, and this rank weed of memory strangled every

[17] Edward F. Mooney notes: 'The name is a repetition, repeating eponymously the tension between something *constant* (an element to be repeated) and *motion* (something repeated)' (*On Søren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy, and Time* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 160).
[18] Carlisle, p. 152.

thought at birth. […] The only thing repeated was the impossibility of repetition.[19]

The 'reverse of a repetition' can be taken to mean that there was only 'recollection', not 'repetition' in the proper sense of the word. Kierkegaard argues that there are two directions of repetition: 'Recollection and repetition are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards.'[20]

Kierkegaard's concept of 'recollection' is modelled on the Platonic doctrine of recollection, according to which learning is the remembrance of truths which the soul forgets once it is embodied. While attempting to return to its earlier state, the soul is constrained by the world around it. But it reflects, 'the thing which I see aims at being like some other thing, but falls short of and cannot be like that other thing, and is inferior'.[21] What the soul sees in this world is no more than a shadow of the truths, and the soul is tormented by the disparity involved here. 'Therefore,' says Constantin, 'repetition, if it is possible, makes a man happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy'.[22]

Writing about Tennyson's 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights', Seamus Perry remarks that that which seems 'the source of Tennysonian passion is the gorgeous sameness of the poem's catalogue-stanzas'.[23] Considering the poem in connection with the idea of 'repetition', however, he admits there is something 'forlorn' about the nature of its catalogue ('the bookishness of this spicy orient gives its eroticism a slightly forlorn

[19] Kierkegaard, pp. 74–75.
[20] Ibid., p. 33.
[21] Plato, 'Phaedo', in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, 4th edn, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), I, 385–477 (p. 427).
[22] Kierkegaard, p 33.
[23] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 41.

air').[24] There is a degeneration occurring even within the luxurious palace hedged off from its surroundings. After all, the poem is no more than 'Recollections'. Although he quotes Kierkegaard on the 'impossibility of repetition', Perry himself never refers to the concept of 'recollection', but an idealistic view of the past in Tennyson's repetitions clearly emerges in the light of the Kierkegaardian 'recollection'.

In his personal reminiscences about the poet, James Knowles writes about Tennyson's inclination to 'idealism' ('he was disposed to doubt the real existence of a material world'), recording him as saying: 'Sometimes as I sit here alone in this great room I get carried away out of sense and body, and rapt into mere existence'.[25] For Tennyson, such a transition into 'mere existence' meant a return to the past. Emphasising Tennyson's lifelong desire to return to a primal and ethereal state of being, freed from earthly passion and coarse materiality, Knowles remarks:

> He told me that 'Tears, Idle Tears' was written as an expression of such longings. […] 'It was written at Tintern when the woods were all yellowing with autumn seen through the ruined windows. It is what I have always felt even from a boy, and what as a boy I called the "passion of the past." And it is so always with me now; it is the distance that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate to-day in which I move'.[26]

This account reveals how Tennyson's well-known 'passion of the past' derived from the

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[24] Ibid.

[25] *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*, p. 92. Hallam Tennyson remarks that 'in some phases of thought and feeling', Tennyson's 'idealism tended more decidedly to mysticism', quoting an account of a similar experience given by Tennyson himself: 'A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me thro' repeating my own name two or three times to myself, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life' (*Memoir*, I, 320). For Edgar Allan Poe's observation on Tennyson's idealism, see below, Chapter 2.

[26] *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*, p. 92.

very act of longing, and the sense of distance this produced (the verb 'long' originally meant 'to grow longer in duration; to lengthen' (*OED*, 1. 1. a)). It is not so much the past itself as its sheer distance that charms the poet, and this distance, or gap, between 'the past' and 'the immediate to-day' in turn makes him see the world in which he currently moves as in the process of decline ('the woods were all yellowing with autumn seen through the ruined windows').

In 'The Ancient Sage', written towards the end of his life, Tennyson has the speaker of the poem refer directly to his lifelong 'passion of the past':

> Today? but what of yesterday? for oft
> On me, when boy, there came what then I called,
> Who knew no books and no philosophies,
> In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the Past.'
>
> (216–19)

These lines themselves express the narrator's recollections of an innocent boyhood. Though the poem was written after his reading of Laozi's life and maxims, the passage about 'The Passion of the Past', according to Tennyson, conveys his own feelings.[27] Subsequent lines describe more accurately in Platonic terms what Tennyson as a boy knowing 'no philosophies' referred to as 'The Passion of the Past':

> And more, my son! for more than once when I
> Sat all alone, revolving in myself
> The word that is the symbol of myself,
> The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
> And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
> Melts into Heaven. I touched my limbs, the limbs
> Were strange not mine – and yet no shade of doubt,
> But utter clearness, and through loss of Self

[27] His comments on this are cited in *Poems*, III, 138.

> The gain of such large life as matched with ours
> Were Sun to spark – unshadowable in words,
> Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.
>
> (229–39)

Here, the silent repetition of his name seems to be a sign of his attempt to represent 'the Nameless'. Ruminating on his own name, Tennyson returns to a primal state of consciousness in which the boundary between the self and the other was not yet defined. Just as he translated the Wordsworthian 'light of setting suns' into 'the permanent in the transitory', so he draws a comparison here between this state and ordinary life as 'Sun to spark', being, in a passage reminiscent of the lessons of Plato's cave, 'unshadowable in words, / Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world'. Thus in 'The Ancient Sage', a formative experience of the speaker's early childhood is described as something unnameable ('the Nameless') and 'unshadowable', using the Platonic metaphor of the sun. Meanwhile, 'the immediate today' in which we move, and the words that represent it, are imagined as inhabiting the realm of shadow (with the repetition of 'shadow' enacting both the replication of, and the removal from, the original).

Even as a boy, Tennyson immersed himself in the act of recollection, in which he looked back on the past as something fading away into distance.[28] This distance gives the past its charm, but the gap between past and present, 'yesterday' and 'Today', tormented the young poet. One of his earliest poems, entitled 'Memory [Memory! dear enchanter]', is an incipient expression of his sense of distance from the past:

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[28] On the centrality of the subject of memory to Tennyson's imagination, see Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Working through Memory and Forgetting in Victorian Literature', *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 21 (2016), 1–13 (pp. 4–7). Douglas-Fairhurst suggests that the development of mnemonic systems and psychological investigations into the working of memory sparked the contemporary interest in memory as a poetic subject (pp. 1–3). For the contemporary discourses on memory, see *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830–1890*, ed. by Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 141–61.

Memory! dear enchanter!
  Why bring back to view
Dreams of youth, which banter
  All that e'er was true?

Why present before me
  Thoughts of years gone by,
Which, like shadows o'er me,
  Dim in distance fly?

Days of youth, now shaded
  By twilight of long years,
Flowers of youth, now faded,
  Though bathed in sorrow's tears:

Thoughts of youth, which waken
  Mournful feelings now,
Fruits which time hath shaken
  From off their parent bough:

Memory! why, oh why,
  This fond heart consuming,
Show me years gone by,
  When those hopes were blooming?

(1–20)

The poem invokes Addison as an epigraph: 'The Memory is perpetually looking back when we have nothing present to entertain us'. Far from entertaining the speaker, though, Memory torments him with 'Days of youth, now shaded'. The remembrance of happy days brings sorrow to the speaker ('Flowers of youth, now faded, / Though bathed in sorrow's tears').[29] As Dinah Birch remarks, this poem 'suggests how deeply the idea of memory as a necessary and disturbing source of poetry is embedded in his early ambitions'.[30]

[29] The speaker of 'Locksley Hall' says, 'a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things' (76).
[30] Birch, p. 39. See also 'Memory [Ay me!]'.

When he wrote this poem, Tennyson was in his mid-teens, but the speaker sounds as if he is well into old age. In Kierkegaard's *Repetition*, 'recollection' is defined as a faculty of old people who are always looking back on the past. This could explain why old narrators are dominant in Tennyson's dramatic monologues. As we have seen, in the poet's late work, 'The Ancient Sage', the characteristic Tennysonian old ('Ancient') narrator attempts to redeem his primal state of being. But even in the works written in his twenties, the poet speaks through the voices of old men. Herbert Tucker makes the point that the old narrators of 'Ulysses', 'Tithonus', and 'Tiresias' fill the present-tense narration 'with their longing to get back to an earlier state'.[31]

From his earliest youth Tennyson was preoccupied with the issue of aging.[32] His first original work, *The Devil and the Lady*, written at the age of fourteen, introduces an octogenarian necromancer, Magus. Called away on urgent affairs, he summons the Devil to keep his twenty-year-old wife, Amoret, from those lovers coming to seduce her while he is away from home. Amoret says she longs for her husband to come back, but Magus suspects that his wife does not mean what she says. He knows how difficult it is to 'bear the lamp of subtle scrutiny / Into the deep recesses of the heart' (I. iv. 60–61). Trying to impress on Amoret the complexity of human character, he slips into recollections:

> I have lived long and shall live longer, I
> Have mixed with life in all its variations,
> I have visited the camp, the court, the mob,
> The riotous tavern, the unruly Hell,
> The penetrated hovel, the high palace,
> I have had friends and they were steadfast – enemies
> And they were bitter – I have wandered far

[31] Tucker, 'Tennyson and the Measure of Doom', *PMLA*, 98 (1983), 8–20 (pp. 8–9).
[32] For Tennyson's preoccupation with ageing and decay in such poems as 'Tithonus', 'Ulysses', and 'The Lotos-Eaters', see Jacob Jewusiak, 'Tennyson's Wrinkled Feet: Ageing and the Poetics of Decay', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 32 (2021), 1–21.

> From the utmost Arctic to its opposite,
> I have seen the thievish Russ, the crusty Spaniard,
> The bold brave Switzer, the freehearted Scot,
> The musical Italian, the proud Angle,
> The volatile, light-heeled Frank, the sleepy Turk,
> The money-loving and broad-based Mynheer –
>
> (69–81)

Here, as in *Enoch Arden*, the repetition of the same phrase at the start of successive clauses ('I have') constitutes, though unobtrusively, an anaphora, and conveys a sense that Magus is trying to hold on to his earlier life.

In *The Devil and the Lady*, it is not only the aged narrator who brings back his memories, but also the poet himself. As Robert Douglas-Fairhurst says, 'memory was more than just a theme for Tennyson; it was also an important compositional method'.[33] In the play, Magus is variously described as 'frowzy', 'fusty', and 'stale' (I. iv. 136, 144, 145; I. v. 163). These epithets can also be applied to the play's old-fashioned style, for the themes and language of the play clearly reveal Elizabethan influence. Having been shown fragments of the play by Hallam Tennyson, Benjamin Jowett commented, 'it is wonderful how the whelp could have known such things'.[34] According to A. Dwight Culler, there are over four thousand different words used in the three acts of *The Devil and the Lady*, a figure that is more than half as many as in Milton's entire poetical works.[35] Even at the young age of fourteen, Tennyson had an immense store of literary resources. J. B. Steane once said of the poet's earliest works, 'how unlikely that we should ascribe them to the young Tennyson if we were not told the identity of their author!'.[36] Both thematically and stylistically, Tennyson had an old head on young shoulders. As Constantin Constantius

[33] Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Working through Memory and Forgetting in Victorian Literature', p. 4.
[34] *Memoir*, I, 23.
[35] A. Dwight Culler, *The Poetry of Tennyson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 9.
[36] J. B. Steane, *Tennyson* (New York: Arco, 1969), p. 19.

says of his friend, a young man reminiscent of Kierkegaard, 'at the very first instant he has become an old man'.[37]

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As we have seen, Tennyson's characteristic repetitiousness, in his style, subject-matter, and compositional method, can be interpreted as an act of 'recollection'. Tennyson's poems seem more content with looking back than looking forward. Hardly does he reach a decision to take action and move forward than he flinchingly yields to retrospect: 'Forward then, but still remember how the course of Time will swerve, / Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming curve' ('Locksley Hall Sixty Years After', 235–36). Here 'will' expresses less a future intervention than a habitual recurrence, and the very recognition of the recursiveness of Time comes as a remembrance ('still' seems to be a disjunction ('but still'), and yet it also underscores the tenacity of the memory ('still remember')). However, recollection brings not only charm to Tennyson, but also torment, for it shows the immediate today in which he moves is a mere shadow of the past. Tennyson was himself well aware of the dangers of recollection ('Lest life should fail in looking back' (*In Memoriam*, XLVI. 4)).

It is true that there is much in Tennyson which encourages retrogressive interpretation. In *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, Herbert Tucker writes about Tennyson's 'retrograde approach' to poetic composition.[38] Tucker identifies this Tennysonian attitude in Aubrey de Vere's report of Tennyson's account of the way he had written *Maud*:

Its origin and composition were, as he described them, singular. He had

[37] Kierkegaard, p. 39.
[38] Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 13.

> accidentally lighted upon a poem of his own which begins, 'O that 'twere possible,' and which had long before been published in a selected volume got up by Lord Northampton for the aid of a sick clergyman. It had struck him, in consequence, I think, of a suggestion made by Sir John Simeon, that, to render the poem fully intelligible, a preceding one was necessary. He wrote it; the second poem too required a predecessor; and thus the whole work was written, as it were, *backwards*.[39]

In other words, *Maud* is the product of a continual process of tracing the origin of one given poem back to another. *Maud* is not the only instance in Tennyson of what Tucker memorably refers to as 'backward genesis'.[40] *Idylls of the King* is now arranged in chronological order, but the 'original' idea came to Tennyson as 'The Passing of Arthur', which constitutes the final poem of the cycle, and the creation proceeded, in a manner of speaking, *ex post facto*. On the other hand, Tucker also shows that Tennyson's pet narrative device of the frame is employed to give his texts 'the illusion of retrospective return'.[41] Thus in *The Princess*, a prologue and epilogue enclose the body of the poem in an ancient, mythical world, and so the narrated events are distanced from everyday life.

What is also characteristic of Tennyson, however, is his way of seeing both sides of a situation. When he adopts one side, he never forgets to emphasise the other. Speaking to James Knowles, Tennyson said, 'all the arguments are about as good on one side as the other'.[42] Critics have observed instances of this two-sidedness in Tennyson's pairs of poems, such as 'Nothing Will Die' and 'All Things Will Die', 'The Merman' and 'The Mermaid', 'Northern Farmer, Old Style' and 'Northern Farmer, New Style', 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade'.[43]

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[39] *Memoir*, I, 379.
[40] Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 12.
[41] Ibid., p. 13.
[42] Cited in *Poems*, II, 312.
[43] See Dodsworth, p. 24; Ricks, *Tennyson*, pp. 50–51; Armstrong, p. 46.

Thus, while he generally puts more emphasis on ‘the Passion of the Past’ and ‘the permanent in the transitory’, Tennyson cannot help also shifting his focus to their opposites. Alfred Austin, criticising the lack of action in Tennyson’s poetry, commented that Tennyson’s verse, like the Princess in his ‘The Sleeping Beauty’, ‘sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells / A perfect form in perfect rest’ (23–24).[44] In ‘The Day-Dream’ as a whole, though, unlike in ‘Mariana’, the Prince does finally arrive, to awaken the Princess from her sleep, and the tension that has been building up inside the Sleeping Palace is ‘snapt’.

A touch, a kiss! the charm was snapt.
   There rose a noise of striking clocks,
And feet that ran, and doors that clapt,
   And barking dogs, and crowing cocks;
A fuller light illumined all,
   A breeze through all the garden swept,
A sudden hubbub shook the hall,
   And sixty feet the fountain leapt.

(‘The Revival’, 1–8)

Clocks start to synchronise with external time and strike the hours, and a breeze sweeps through the garden, stirring the stagnant air. Here, action is literally brought about from outside, and imagined as coming out of rest.[45]

Still more characteristic of Tennyson, however, is his finding of opposites *in* something. For example, challenging the commonly held belief that Tennyson is ‘preoccupied with word-music, with fondling, as it were, the bodies of words, to the exclusion or detriment of responsible thought’, Eric Griffiths writes sensibly that ‘Tennyson thought *in* melody’.[46] Similarly, Tennyson finds ‘ever-new revelations’ *in* the

[44] Alfred Austin, *The Poetry of the Period* (London: Richard Bentley, 1870), pp. 274–75.
[45] Seamus Perry stresses the enormous amount of energy Tennyson invests in countering repetition with progress (*Alfred Tennyson*, pp. 57–87).
[46] Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 107.

endless cycle of the seasons continually repeating themselves. Thus the poet's son recalls:

> As he exulted in the wilder aspects of Nature […] and revelled in the thunderstorm; so he felt a joy in her orderliness; he felt a rest in her steadfastness, patient progress and hopefulness; the same seasons ever returned; the same stars wheeled in their courses; the flowers and tress blossomed and the birds sang yearly in their appointed months; and he had a triumphant appreciation of her ever-new revelations of beauty.[47]

Here, Tennyson's own immersion in Nature is felicitously expressed through the frequent use of the preposition 'in' ('in the wilder aspects of Nature', 'in the thunderstorm', 'in her orderliness', 'in her steadfastness', 'in their courses', 'in their appointed months'). The 'ever-new revelations' in the seasonal cycle suggest a kind of repetition which involves change, but not in the sense of degeneration over time nor depredation from outside.

Robert Douglas-Fairhurst illustrates Tennyson's characteristic two-sidedness by looking at how, as early as *The Devil and the Lady*, 'he sets out to describe what a tapestry usually conceals: "the dark reverse of it, / The intertwining and rough wanderings / Of random threads and wayward colourings"'.[48] This passage shows how the fine and intricate texture of a tapestry is intimately connected with the confused and disorderly tangle of threads at its back. The prefix 're-' originally meant 'back', and as Ricks suggests, the poet's 'persistent need for the prefix "re-"' (as evinced from the old Tennyson *Concordance*) signals his preoccupation with the immutability of the past.[49] The 're-' in 'reverse', however, indicates a transition to an opposite state. This semantic transition itself suggests how the act of turning back, or returning, can involve something opposite to itself. In the rest of this chapter, I attempt to see in Tennyson's repetitions the

[47] *Memoir*, I, 312–13.
[48] Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Tennyson', p. 601.
[49] Ricks, *Tennyson*, p. 293.

reverse of a recollection, or a 'repetition' which is 'recollected forwards'.[50]

In his essay 'Remembering the Future', Malcolm Bowie writes, 'the thing that bothers me most is the sentimental sheen that the remembered past so often acquires, the rosy-hued patina that so readily descends on life-events once the machinery of retrospection is set in motion'.[51] The past does not emit its own radiance, but retrospection lends it splendour. 'Tears, idle tears' exemplifies this process. As was shown above, the poem expresses the vividness of the past in its characterisation of 'the days that are no more' as 'wild'. Cleanth Brooks traces the 'origin' of this characterisation. The adjective can be justified as a transferred epithet, originally applying to the man who becomes 'wild' in thinking about those 'days'. But, as a man is the combination of his memories, the adjective can also apply to what he is remembering.[52] This is shocking in itself, because it reveals that the very attributes of the past derive from the man who is living in the immediate today. But this is not the end. Brooks adds that the past is 'wild' because it breaks out in the mind, and 'reasserts the line of development which has been maintained throughout the earlier stanzas: "fresh", "strange", and now "wild"'.[53] Independent of the speaker, and in line with 'fresh' and 'strange' and in the organisation of the poem as a whole, the meaning of 'wild' seems to shift slightly. It now describes only the vividness and proximity of the past. This shift is well expressed in William Empson's review of *The Well Wrought Urn*. Empson asks himself how far one can generalise from Brooks's

[50] This chapter revolves around, and brings forward, Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's argument, in his article on 'Tennyson's Beginnings', that while they tend to be reduced to merely what has been said before, Tennyson's repetitions themselves actually involve gradual progress, or 'ever-new revelations' ('Tennyson's Beginnings', *Essays in Criticism*, 60 (2010), 1–25).
[51] Malcolm Bowie, 'Remembering the Future', in *Memory: An Anthology*, ed. by Harriet Harvey Wood and A. S. Byatt (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. 13–27 (p. 14).
[52] Brooks, pp. 173–74.
[53] Ibid. p.174.

account of the ‘transferred epithet’ of ‘wild’.

> *Wild with all regret* must be said of the speaker, not of the days he remembers; but he is the sum of his memories, and the old days themselves are *now* wild because they are breaking out into his mind. I think this kind of identification must be the regular function of the trope.[54]

The italicised ‘*now*’ captures the moment of the shift, and the reflexive pronoun ‘themselves’ seems to be used to stress that the epithet is literally applied to the old days. I am not sure whether this kind of identification is the regular function of transferred epithets; however, in Tennyson’s use of the trope at least, this kind of shift in meaning is not unusual, as I hope to show in the next chapter.

Tennyson’s greatest poem of memory, *In Memoriam*, dramatises both the glorification of the past and his scepticism about it. In his desolation, the speaker of the poem wanders to the place where he and his friend parted:

> looking back to whence I came,
> Or on to where the pathway leads;
>
> And crying, How changed from where it ran
> Through lands where not a leaf was dumb;
> But all the lavish hills would hum
> The murmur of a happy Pan:
>
> When each by turns was guide to each,
> And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
> And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
> Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;
>
> And all we met was fair and good,
> And all was good that Time could bring,
> And all the secret of the Spring
> Moved in the chambers of the blood […].

[54] William Empson, ‘The Darling in an Urn’, in *Argufying: Essays on Literature and Culture*, ed. by John Haffenden (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), pp. 282–88 (pp. 282–83).

(XXIII. 7–20)

His backward look, both spatial and temporal, presents a glorified picture of the past. Here again, the anaphora ('And all … And all … And all'), in its gesture of returning to 'the Passion of the Past', seems to represent the speaker's attempt to communicate his impassioned feelings. But the overstatements ('not a leaf', 'all the lavish hills', 'all we met', 'all … that Time could bring', 'all the secret of the Spring') betray the spottedness rather than spotlessness of the past. The speaker indeed questions himself in the succeeding section: 'was the day of my delight / As pure and perfect as I say?' (XXIV. 1–2). Tracing back further from 'day' to 'Day', he observes that the sun, which is the source of light as well as life, is already flawed: 'The very source and fount of Day / Is dashed with wandering isles of night' (3–4). According to the poet's own notes, the 'wandering isles' here refer to 'sun-spots'.[55] The speaker compares the idealised past to the sun, seeing in it incipient signs of darkening. If the past still has a glorious sheen, this is attributable to its sheer distance from the present:

> the past will always win
> A glory from its being far;
> And orb into the perfect star
> We saw not, when we moved therein […].
>
> (13–16)

As Susan Stewart suggests, 'the nostalgic is enamored of distance, not of the referent itself. Nostalgia cannot be sustained without loss.' [56] The use of the verb 'move' here recalls the line about a child 'Moving about in worlds not realised' (148) in Wordsworth's

[55] *Poems*, II, 343n.
[56] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 145.

'Ode' (1807), of whose glorifying recollections of an idealised childhood Tennyson's lines stand as a criticism.[57] From the outset, Wordsworth's speaker seeks to regain the lost glory of the past by repeating the very word 'glory':

> 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 has been of yore; –
> Turn wheresoe'er I may,
> By night or day,
> The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
>
> 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 passed away a glory from the earth.
>
> (1–18)

The ode was later retitled 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', according to Henry Crabb Robinson, 'to guide the reader to a perception of its drift'.[58] It moves from the perception of the loss of 'Heaven' which 'lies about us in our infancy' (66) to the child's recollection of 'the glories he hath known, / And that imperial palace whence he came' (83–84). Wordsworth's narrative is the reworking of a Platonic doctrine of recollection. In the Isabella Fenwick note, Wordsworth comments: 'a

[57] For a comparison of Tennyson's 'Tears, idle tears' and Wordsworth's 'Ode', see Yimon Lo, 'In the Depth of Tears: Memory, Grief and Musicality in Tennyson and Wordsworth', *TRB*, 11 (2020), 347–61.
[58] Cited in Wordsworth, *21st-century Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, p. 764.

pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations, and among all persons acquainted with classic literature is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy'.[59] 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting' (58), says the speaker at the beginning of the fifth stanza. When we are born, into 'Shades of the prison-house' (67), we are separated from 'God, who is our home' (65), yet we do not entirely forget the glories we have known, but maintain our connection to them via recollection. Thus the Ode's speaker praises 'Those shadowy recollections, / Which, be they what they may, / Are yet the fountain light of all our day' (152–54). The 'recollections' here are 'shadowy' both in the sense of 'faintly perceptible, indistinct vague' (*OED*, 1. c), and also in the sense of 'unsubstantial, impalpable; transitory, fleeting' (1. a). The speaker's conflicting endeavours to perceive his separation from the glory of his childhood and at the same time maintain his connection to it are manifest in the opening lines, with their tension between the past tense ('was', 'did seem') and the present perfect ('hath been', 'have seen', 'hath passed'). Whereas Wordsworth's speaker says, 'What though the radiance which was once so bright / Be now for ever taken from my sight' (178–79) and 'Though nothing can bring back the hour / Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower' (180–81), the speaker of *In Memoriam* reveals that it is the nostalgic sentiment for things lost that lends them their glory and splendour.

Malcolm Bowie aspires to deprive memory of any such sentiment and give it 'a life of action': 'I want memory to have a prospective dimension,' he says, 'to inhabit the future tense, to bring new worlds into being.'[60] In 'Ode to Memory', another poem on memory which Tennyson considered one of the best of his early poems, and which he

[59] Cited in Wordsworth, *21st-century Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, p. 282.
[60] Bowie, p. 14.

himself described as being ‘evidently based on the poet’s own nature, and on hints from his own life’,[61] Memory is indeed given ‘a prospective dimension’. The speaker addresses his subject as follows:

> Thou who stealest fire,
> From the fountains of the past,
> To glorify the present; oh, haste,
> Visit my low desire!
> Strengthen me, enlighten me!
> I faint in this obscurity,
> Thou dewy dawn of memory.
>
> (1–7)

This marks a complete reversal of the image of Memory in ‘Memory [Memory! dear enchanter]’. Here, Memory does not weaken the speaker’s hopes by casting the shadows of the past, but serves instead to ‘glorify the present’, arousing his ‘low desire’ (‘strengthen me’) and liberating him from ‘obscurity’ (‘enlighten me’). He does not curse Memory, but embraces her as a source of new hope:

> In sweet dreams softer than unbroken rest
> Thou leddest by the hand thine infant Hope.
> The eddying of her garments caught from thee
> The light of thy great presence; and the cope
> Of the half-attained futurity,
> Though deep not fathomless,
> Was cloven with the million stars which tremble
> O’er the deep mind of dauntless infancy.
>
> (29–36)

Where, in Kierkegaard’s *Repetition* and elsewhere in Tennyson, memory is associated with senescence, here it goes hand in hand with ‘infancy’. The newborn Hope is covered

[61] *Memoir*, I, 402. Arthur Hallam writes ‘Ode to Memory’ is ‘the only one which we have the poet’s authority for referring to early life’ (*Critical Heritage*, p. 46).

in the glory of Memory, and future possibilities are opened up for her.

The figure of Memory who 'steal[s] fire / From the fountains of the past' would provide a model for the late Victorian concept of the artist as plagiarist. In his study on originality and plagiarism in the Victorian period, Robert Macfarlane argues that in the second half of the Victorian era, there was a swing in theories of literary creativity away from 'a hallowed vision of creation as generation – which we might call *creatio*' to 'a more pragmatic account of creation as rearrangement, which we might call *inventio*'.[62] While *creatio*, the Latin for 'creation', means making something exist, *inventio*, the Latin for 'discovery', means finding something that exists. In Part II of *The Princess*, the Prince's friend Cyril, criticising the women's university, says: 'They hunt old trails […] very well; / But when did woman ever yet invent?' (368–69). However, the hunting of old trails is not necessarily incompatible with invention, but can be conducive to it. Macfarlane shows how Victorian writers, such as George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Walter Pater, Charles Reade, Oscar Wilde, and Lionel Johnson, were preoccupied with issues of originality and plagiarism, suggesting that 'as ideas', these 'were the subjects of Victorian literature, as well as what it was subject to'.[63] He argues that the period eventually rejected a Romantic view of creativity as origination from nothing, in favour of a model which takes a broader view of creativity as the discovery and displacement of pre-existing material. In such a model, originality is displayed above all in the selection and arrangement of existing words and ideas. This reorganisation of literary values was

[62] Robert Macfarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 6. For general surveys of originality and plagiarism, see Thomas McFarland, *Originality and Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Marilyn Randall, *Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit, and Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
[63] Macfarlane, p. 9.

followed by a critical reappraisal of literary stealing as a creative act.

For Tennyson, as for Victorian poets in general, plagiarism was a necessity of the time. In his introduction to Victorian poetry, Richard Cronin shows how, faced with the pressure of ever-increasing literary resources, Victorian poets had no choice but to speak through the voices of others.[64] According to Cronin, nineteenth-century poets had fuller access to a great legacy of English poetry than any of their predecessors, due to the new flourishing of philology, as well as the explosion in the availability of printed texts.[65] They were able to read voraciously in classical languages due to the advanced education in school; and in an era of empire, intercultural contacts both in the West and the East increased the intellectual and literary resources which they could draw upon.[66] As Annmarie Drury has revealed in her recent study, Victorian poets themselves acted as agents for such cultural cross-pollination through their practices of translation.[67] Thus, Victorian poetry found itself taking in the accumulated voices of others. Cronin calls this opulent reservoir of sundry voices 'The Victorian Poetry Palace', alluding to Tennyson's own 'The Palace of Art'.

Tennyson himself commented in 1880 that 'no modern poet can write a single line but among the innumerable authors of this world you will somewhere find a striking parallelism. It is the unimaginative man who thinks everything borrowed'.[68] These words accurately express the predicament of the 'modern poet' who feels they have been born

[64] Richard Cronin, *Reading Victorian Poetry* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 1.
[65] See Ibid. On how Tennyson benefited from contemporary philology as an apprentice poet, see Sarah Weaver, 'Tennyson's Wordhoard', *TRB*, 11 (2017), 25–32. I will show how the use of simile in *In Memoriam* stands as a criticism of mid-century philology in my third chapter.
[66] See also Alexander Bubb, *Asian Classics on the Victorian Bookshelf: Flights of Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).
[67] Annmarie Drury, *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[68] Cited in Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Introduction', in *Tennyson Among the Poets*, pp. 1–13 (p. 6).

too late into a world where all that there is to be said has already been said.[69] When the American writer Brander Matthews published an essay entitled 'The Ethics of Plagiarism' in 1886, he quoted a similar remark from Tennyson's letter to the Canadian publisher S. E. Dawson (1882): 'It is scarcely possible for anyone to say or write anything in this late time of the world to which, in the rest of the literature of the world, a parallel could not somewhere be found.'[70] Matthews claims that 'much which is called plagiarism is not criminal at all but perfectly legitimate' insofar as one makes 'a proper and praiseworthy use of pre-existing material'.[71] Later in the letter that Matthews quotes, Tennyson writes:

> I am sure that I myself, and many others, find a peculiar charm in those passages of such great masters as Virgil or Milton where they adopt the creation of a bygone poet, and re-clothe it, more or less, according to their own fancy. But there is, I fear, a prosaic set growing up among us, editors of booklets, book-worms, index-hunters, or men of great memories and no imagination, who *impute themselves* to the poet, and so believe that *he*, too, has no imagination, but is for ever poking his nose between the pages of some old volume in order to see what he can appropriate. They will not allow one to say 'Ring the bell' without finding that we have taken it from Sir P. Sidney, or even to use such a simple expression as the ocean 'roars', without finding out the precise verse in Homer or Horace from which we have plagiarised it (fact!).[72]

Yet while what he refers to as 'a prosaic set' has 'great memories and no imagination', these two characteristics are not always incompatible. The source-hunter, 'for ever poking his nose between the pages of some old volume', seeks to ascribe the poet's imagination to 'the creation of a bygone poet'; the poet, however, 'adopt[s]' and 're-clothe[s]' such

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[69] This is similar to the Bloomian sense of 'belatedness'. See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). For Bloom's reading of 'Tennyson in the Shadow of Keats', see Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 143–74.
[70] Brander Matthews, 'The Ethics of Plagiarism', *Longman's Magazine*, 8 (1886), 621–34 (p. 624). The letter is quoted in full in *Memoir*, I, 256–59.
[71] Brander Matthews, p. 629.
[72] *Memoir*, I, 258.

material after his own fashion, and moulds it into a new creation. More than half a century before this, in his 'Ode to Memory', Tennyson had called his goddess 'great artist Memory' (80), admiring 'the discovery / And newness of thine art' (87–88). As an artist, Memory produces something new, by remembering what already exists. In Tennyson's creative imagination, Memory works not only backwards but also forwards.

Some of his most sympathetic critics seem to be aware of the progressive dimension of Tennyson's memory. Christopher Ricks regards Tennyson's self-borrowing as a manifestation of his preoccupation with the idea of the 'irrevocable, immutable' past; however, when Ricks talks, for example, about Tennyson 'transferring "Go not, happy day"', or 'these eight lines he transferred to *In Memoriam*, CXIII', his use of the word 'transfer' pointedly implies that the lines are carried over to a different context, and acquire a new meaning accordingly.[73] In this respect, the lines might even fulfil their true potential. In 1931, Sir Charles Tennyson had already remarked: 'The remarkable thing is that the lines, when finally taken from storage, fit so naturally and aptly into their new context that they are often among the best passages in the poems in which they are employed.'[74] Going further back to 1830, Arthur Hallam, in his review of *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, had shown how Tennyson's poetry demonstrated the way in which 'the artist may transfer the spirit of the past, making it a temporary form for his own spirit, and so effect, by idealizing power, a new and legitimate combination'.[75] Hallam quotes, at full length, Tennyson's 'The Ballad of Oriana', claiming that its final lines ('I hear the roaring of the sea, / Oriana' (98–99)) are 'transferred, if we mistake not, from an old ballad (a freedom

[73] Ricks, *Tennyson*, pp. 292, 283, 290. See also Ricks, 'Tennyson's Methods of Composition', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 52 (1966), 209–30; *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 179–216.
[74] Tennyson, *Unpublished Early Poems*, ed. by Charles Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1931), p. x.
[75] *Critical Heritage*, p. 45.

of immemorial usage with our ballad-mongers, as our readers doubtless know), but the merit lies in the abrupt application of it to the leading sentiment'.[76] The usage itself is 'immemorial'; but the freedom it gives the poet allows him to work 'a new and legitimate combination' from his memory of 'an old ballad'. The word 'legitimate' here could refer to the legitimacy or lawfulness of literary stealing, as well as to the authority and authenticity of a new creation that is independent from its source. Here again, Hallam's emphasis on the sense of transferral in Tennyson's act of borrowing indicates the creative and progressive way in which the Tennysonian memory works.

This chapter has shown how Tennyson's renewed conception of Memory is itself formed through the reimagining and reworking of Wordsworth's, and of Tennyson's own earlier representations of Memory. Whereas Wordsworth's and his own early poems portray Memory as the glorification of the past, by emphasising 'the permanent in the transitory', 'the abiding in the transient', Tennyson's later poems expose the way in which nostalgic sentiment lends the past its sheen and glory, and explore the progressive dimensions of Memory, celebrating her art of creative invention. Her ubiquitous influence will be felt across the rest of my thesis. In the ensuing chapters, while discussing the other figures of repetition in Tennyson's poetry, I will be mindful of the way in which these figures are shaped through negotiation with the pre-existing ideas about them.

[76] Ibid., p. 46. The 'roaring of the sea' is not found in the ballad 'Fair Helen of Kirconnel Lea' in the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, which Hallam quotes as a source, but in 'Thomas the Rhymer', another ballad in the *Minstrelsy*. See Sir Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 2 vols (Kelso: James Ballantyne, 1802), II, 254.

2. The Substance of Mirror-Images

> '… do I chase / The substance or the shadow?'
> —Tennyson, *The Princess*

In 'To E. L., on His Travels in Greece', a panegyric on Edward Lear's *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Albania, &c* (1851), Tennyson describes how Lear's work conjured up a vivid picture of exotic lands in his mind:

> Illyrian woodlands, echoing falls
> Of water, sheets of summer glass,
> The long divine Peneïan pass,
> The vast Akrokeraunian walls,
>
> Tomohrit, Athos, all things fair,
> With such a pencil, such a pen,
> You shadow forth to distant men,
> I read and felt that I was there […].
>
> (1–8)

Among this elaborate catalogue of unfamiliar places, which has duly attracted critics' attention,[1] 'echoing falls / Of water' and 'sheets of summer glass' look oddly out of place. The poet here seems to follow in the footsteps of his friend: Matthew Bevis notes that 'rather than, say, "picture forth", "shadow forth" could imply that something remains undisclosed'.[2] The objects he describes themselves disperse their own identity through their duplicating effects.[3] The emphasis on the verisimilitude of Lear's representation thus

[1] See Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 157; James Williams, *Edward Lear* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2018), p. 92.
[2] Matthew Bevis, 'Edward Lear's Lines of Flight', *Journal of the British Academy*, 1 (2012), 31–69 (p. 32).
[3] For the use of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in nineteenth-century poetry, see Williams, 'Echo and

reveals its distance from the original scenes: Lear concludes his own parody of the poem by saying 'O! – aint you glad you were not there!'.[4] As M. H. Abrams demonstrated in his monumental study, such figures as the mirror and the shadow can stand as a reasonable analogy for mimetic theories of art, going right back to the dialogues of Plato.[5] Bevis, however, suggests that 'Notwithstanding the lessons of Plato's cave, shadows, for Lear, inhabit the realm of the knowable; they are not simply a mistake, or a deception, or a diversion from the real'.[6] Nor are they for Tennyson. This chapter dwells on Tennyson's descriptions of mirror-images, which are, as we will see below, envisaged as a form of the shadows in Plato's allegories of the cave. It shows how these shadowy existences are presented not as a defective and deceptive repetition of the original, but as possessed of a quality that is a positive substance in its own right.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Tennyson's repetitiousness has tended to be associated with his fascination with an idealised past. He attempts to redeem the past through repetition, only to find that repeated words are an empty echo of the past (in Seamus Perry's term, 'the imaginative logic of the echo'). The comparison of the Tennysonian repetition and the Kierkegaardian recollection, which is modelled on Plato's theory of recollection, illuminates our understanding of Tennyson's idealistic view of the past. While deploring the change wrought to his memory by repetition, he glorifies the

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Narcissus in Victorian Poetry', *Essays in Criticism*, 69 (2019), 178–202.

[4] Edward Lear, *The Complete Nonsense and Other Verse*, ed. by Vivien Noakes (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 549. Anna Barton describes this poem as 'a markedly inaccurate reading of Lear's Albanian journals' – 'markedly' because Tennyson was extremely meticulous about factual accuracy. Barton points out that 'The title of the poem strangely refuses the locations named in the journals' title and replaces them with "Greece" […] and the second stanza of the poem refers to Mount Athos, a place that Lear never visited' ('Delirious Bulldogs and Nasty Crockery: Tennyson as Nonsense Poet', *VP*, 47 (2009), 313–30 (p. 318)).

[5] M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953; repr. 1971), pp. 30–46.

[6] Bevis, 'Edward Lear's Lines of Flight', p. 31.

immutable past, comparing it to the sun. In the famous allegory of the cave in *Republic*, in which the sun stands as a metaphor for the Idea of the good, Socrates likens people unenlightened about the theory of Forms to prisoners chained in an underground cave. They have only seen the shadows of the objects carried by men passing along the wall, and they take the voice of those men which echoes from the wall for the voice of the shadow: 'And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?' (note that in this visual metaphor, the figure of the shadow is accompanied by its acoustic counterpart, the figure of echo).[7] Socrates then describes how a prisoner, released from his bonds, realises his errors. He accustoms his eyes first to the objects of which he had seen the shadows, and then to the light which casts the shadows on the wall. When he is dragged up from the cave, he needs to get accustomed to the sight of the upper world: 'first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves […]. Last of all he will be able to see the sun, not turning aside to the illusory reflections of him in the water.'[8] In this allegory, shadows and mirror-images are an imperfect reproduction of the real, and as such inferior and subordinate to it.

It was John Hollander in *The Substance of Shadow* (based on his 1999 Clark Lectures at Cambridge and published posthumously in 2016), who attempted to subvert this negative assessment of shadow. Hollander traces the history of shadow in Western literature from classical times through the Renaissance to the late twentieth century, revealing the way in which this darkened and darkening trope acquires a positive

[7] Plato, 'Republic', in *The Dialogues of Plato*, II, 163–500 (p. 376).
[8] Ibid., pp. 377–78.

substance in its own right. In his preface to the book, Kenneth Gross, who gathered together the material and edited the manuscript, usefully summarises its main endeavour:

> One legacy in Western thought of Plato's myth of the cave […] is to make of shadows the archetypal metaphor for the illusory world of matter and bodily perception, of mere opinion, imperfect images set against the perfect, foundational realm of ideas, the sun outside. Part of what this book does is to trace a counterhistory to the Platonic tradition, one in which shadows acquire a mysterious truth, a personality, a creaturely life, what Hollander calls 'causative rights.' He shows us the paradoxical means through which a thing by nature secondary and passing grabs at something like authority, even a kind of originality, and becomes itself a source of life […].[9]

Like its predecessor, *The Figure of Echo*, *The Substance of Shadow* explores not only the literal but also the figurative dimensions of its central topic, seeing it as a literary trope for allusion. The way an allusive shadow acquires 'something like authority, even a kind of originality' can be exemplified in the way Victorian poets, who might be marked by their secondary character, produce what Robert Macfarlane calls an 'original copy'.[10] For all their interest in the idea of origins, or originality – which is itself a bequest from their immediate predecessors – Victorian poets, as we have seen in the previous chapter, had no choice but to speak through the voices of others. To be original, they had to be (in Isobel Armstrong's words) 'overwhelmingly secondary'.[11]

In his introductory lecture, Hollander contends that the pervading Western literary conception of shadows as 'unreal and deceiving insubstantial representations of substances' is a legacy of Plato's dualism, and shows that the pairing of *substance* and *shadow* is 'ubiquitous in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century usage' and survives 'through

[9] Kenneth Gross, 'Preface', in John Hollander, *The Substance of Shadow*, pp. ix–xxvi. (p. x).
[10] See above, Chapter 1.
[11] Armstrong, p. 3.

nineteenth century'.[12] When Tennyson added the passage about the 'weird seizures' of the Prince in the fourth edition of *The Princess* in 1851, seeking to address criticism about its dreamlike sense of unreality,[13] he had recourse to this tradition, with its stress on the insubstantiality of shadow:

> There lived an ancient legend in our house.
> Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire burnt
> Because he cast no shadow, had foretold,
> Dying, that none of all our blood should know
> The shadow from the substance, and that one
> Should come to fight with shadows and to fall.
> For so, my mother said, the story ran.
> And, truly, waking dreams were, more or less,
> An old and strange affection of the house.
> Myself too had weird seizures, Heaven knows what:
> On a sudden in the midst of men and day,
> And while I walked and talked as heretofore,
> I seemed to move among a world of ghosts,
> And feel myself the shadow of a dream.
>
> (I. 5–18)

The repeated references here to the 'shadow' emphasise its reproducibility and replaceability, which is in marked contrast to the authenticity and identity of the 'substance'. Tennyson said of these lines that 'the words "dream, shadow" […] doubtless refer to the anachronisms and improbabilities of the story'.[14] While 'shadow' here refers primarily to the Prince's dreamy perception of 'a world of ghosts' of which he is a part, it can also signify the unrealistic and fictional character of the poet's own representation. The shadow as we see it, which is *The Princess* itself, is thus self-depreciatingly defined

[12] Hollander, *The Substance of Shadow*, pp. 14, 15.
[13] See Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., *Tennyson and the Reviewers: A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon His Poetry 1827–1851* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 130–31.
[14] *Poems*, II, 186.

in the Platonic paradigm by its lack of real substance (R. H. Winnick comments in his recent study of Tennyson's allusions that 'fight with shadows' is a Platonic phrase).[15] And yet the legend of the sorcerer who had been 'burnt / Because he cast no shadow' suggests how a lack of shadow can signal a lack of reality, authenticity, and substance.

In folklore and fairy tales, the losing of a shadow often represents the loss of human substance resulting from intercourse, or complicity, with evil spirits. Adelbert von Chamisso's 1814 German novella, *The Wonderful History of Peter Schlemihl* (translated into English in 1823 by Sir John Bowring,[16] and again in 1843 by William Howitt),[17] recounts the tale of a young man who in want of money sells his shadow to the devil for 'The Luck-purse of Fortunatus', which produces an endless supply of gold coins.[18] Despite his desperate remark that 'after all, a shadow is nothing but a shadow; one can do very well without that', Schlemihl is met with mockery and contempt from those who discover that he has no shadow: a young man on the street says to him, 'Decent people are accustomed to take their shadow with them, when they go into the sunshine.'[19] When he finds himself alone in a carriage looking for some shade, he realises that 'far as gold

[15] R. H. Winnick, *Tennyson's Poems: New Textual Parallels* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2019), p. 135. Plato's *Apology* at 18d reads: 'for I cannot have them up here, and examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defense, and examine them when there is no one who answers' (cited in Winnick, p. 135).
[16] Adelbert von Chamisso, *Peter Schlemihl*, trans. by John Bowring (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, Ave Maria Lane, 1824).
[17] Chamisso, *The Wonderful History of Peter Schlemihl*, trans. by William Howitt (New York: Burgess and Stringer, 1843).
[18] Ibid., p. 16. Inspired by Chamisso's story, E. T. A. Hoffmann wrote a short fiction about a Romantic artist who lost his reflection in a mirror, 'A New Year's Eve Adventure' (1816), the second tale of which features Peter Schlemihl (*The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, ed. by E. F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1967), pp. 104–29). It is not certain whether Tennyson knew either of these stories, but given that he was a great admirer of German literature, it is perfectly possible that he might have been acquainted with one or both of them. In his recent essay, Tom Baynes shows how Arthur Hallam, though this is not well-documented, was 'an enthusiastic Germanophile', and that Tennyson was following in his friend's footsteps in turning to German literature in *The Princess* ('"Out of Orcus into Life": Tennyson's *Princess*, Arthur Hallam, and German Literature', *Review of English Studies*, 69 (2017), 413–29 (p. 413)).
[19] Chamisso, *The Wonderful History of Peter Schlemihl*, p. 17.

on earth transcends in estimation, merit and virtue, so much higher than gold itself is the shadow valued'.[20] It is the very shadow that lends a human being a mortal substance (it is probably because of this that devils pursue it). Schlemihl, as it were, loses his human substance in exchange for his material wealth, or substance. Schlemihl's story, thus, shows how substance depends upon shadow for its substantiality.

The Princess is not a fairy tale, but when contemporary readers criticised its lack of reality, they stressed its fairy-tale nature. The poet's son reports Tennyson as saying: 'There have not been wanting those who have deemed the varied characters and imagery of the poem wasted on something of a fairy tale without the fairies.'[21] Tennyson's addition of the 'weird seizures' of the Prince, then, suggests how reality and substance are dependent upon unsubstantial shadow, following the very convention of fairy tales. This reliance upon the fairy-tale tradition itself shows the dependence of substance on shadow.[22]

Not only does shadow endorse the substantiality of substance, thereby partaking of the substance of the object that casts it ('the shadow, one part of us that's real', as Charles Wright has it ('A Short History of the Shadow', 34)),[23] it also appears to assume its own life, independent of its source. The psychologist and art critic Rudolf Arnheim argues that while 'the shadow is considered an outgrowth of the object that cast it […] we find that darkness does not appear as absence of light but as a positive substance in its own right'.[24]

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[20] Ibid.
[21] *Memoir*, I, 249.
[22] It is worth noting that the old Tennyson Concordance records six uses of 'substance' in the sense of 'something solid or real' (*OED*, 2, 11. a), five of which are paired with 'shadow' (the other use is paired with 'echo'). See Arthur E. Baker, *A Concordance to the Poetical and Dramatic Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (New York, Macmillan, 1914), p. 693. In Tennyson's poetic corpus, it appears as though 'substance' is almost dependent on 'shadow'.
[23] Charles Wright, *A Short History of the Shadow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), p. 39.
[24] Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 317. In his *A Short History of the Shadow*, the art historian Victor I.

It is ironic that the biggest shadow on Earth, that is, the shadow of the Earth itself, or night, does not appear as such, but as a darkness with a life of its own. Sir Thomas Browne famously praised this shadowy presence of night: 'Light that makes things seen, makes some things invisible; were it not for darknesse and the shadow of the earth, the noblest part of the Creation had remained unseen, and the Stars in heaven as invisible as on the fourth day'.[25] In *The Princess*, Tennyson imagines night not as a shadow but as darkness itself:

> for spite of doubts
> And sudden ghostly shadowings I was one
> To whom the touch of all mischance but came
> As night to him that sitting on a hill
> Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun
> Set into sunrise […].
>
> (IV. 548–553)

The earlier version reads 'To whom the shadow of all mischance but came'.[26] In revision, Tennyson seems to have attempted to preclude the association between shadow and night, as 'night' here is no longer the shadow of the Earth. It is because there is no object occluding the sun and casting shadow at the midnight that 'the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun' can be seen. So 'night' might refer just to a 'period of time stretching from late afternoon to bedtime' (*OED*, 4), or perhaps to a literal darkness which is not contingent upon material substance but is itself a substance.

Stoichita examines the visual representation of the shadow in the Western tradition, showing how 'the shadow appeared in European painting as an affirmation of body, volume and flesh', but was then endowed with 'the status of otherness' that was 'intrinsic to the myth that […] involved the creation of a double' (*A Short History of the Shadow*, trans. by Anne-Marie Glasheen (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), pp. 127, 132).

[25] Thomas Browne, *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. by Norman J. Endicott (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1967), p. 335.

[26] *Poems*, II, 249n.

Elsewhere, Tennyson repeatedly enacts the substantiation and independence of shadow. In ‘Œnone’, the eponymous heroine, forlornly missing her playmate Paris, sings to the stillness:

> ‘O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
> Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
> For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
> The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
> The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
> Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
> The purple flower droops: the golden bee
> Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
> My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
> My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
> And I am all aweary of my life.
>
> (22–32)

Her words are inhabited not only by the Tennysonian dying echoes (‘Ida … Ida … Ida … I die’) but by darkening shadows. The grasshopper ‘silent in the grass’ lacks any movement. The lizard is motionless, ‘like a shadow’. What does ‘a shadow’ here refer to? It may refer to any shadow. But motionlessness is not its general characteristic; on the contrary, the shadow is recognised by its passing quality, at least in Tennyson’s poetry (‘Then, like a shadow, past the people’s talk’ (‘The Marriage of Geraint’, 82)), ‘Past like a shadow through the field’ (‘Lancelot and Elaine’, 1133)). Here, ‘a shadow’ is difficult to generalise about, since it is a seemingly redundant repetition of ‘his shadow’ in the previous line; that is, if ‘a shadow’ refers to the shadow of the lizard, then it is much too self-evident that the lizard rests like his shadow and vice versa. John Hollander has described ‘a trope of shadowing in the verse’: ‘the lizard, not merely as motionless as his shadow (which would be trivial if he is not moving), but seeming to lose his substance to

the surface of the stone he rests upon'.[27] It is as though the sun has burned the shadow of the lizard onto the surface of the stone – the shadow is no longer contingent upon the object that casts it. The alteration of the definitive possessive 'his' to 'a' enacts the substantiation of the shadow: now, the lizard rests after the fashion of his shadow, and not the reverse. Similarly, though less elaborately, the 'winds' in the plural sound substantial, but wind is not wind which does not move – which is 'dead'.

In 'Tiresias', Tennyson borrows aspects of the scene from 'Œnone'. Tiresias tells the young prince of Thebes, Menoeceus, the story of how he surprised Pallas Athene:

> the winds were dead for heat;
> The noonday crag made the hand burn; and sick
> For shadow – not one bush was near – I rose
> Following a torrent till its myriad falls
> Found silence in the hollows underneath.
> There in a secret olive-glade I saw
> Pallas Athene climbing from the bath
> In anger [...].
>
> (33–40)

At first, 'sick', coming right after 'The noonday crag made the hand burn', comes across in its default meaning, 'suffering from illness of any kind; ill, unwell, ailing' (*OED*, 1. a). But when one reads through the unpunctuated line-ending, and reaches the preposition 'For', it turns out in fact to mean 'deeply affected by [...] longing, [...] producing effects similar or comparable to those of physical ailments' (4. a). In no time, the dashed-off parenthesis '– not one bush was near –' adds a qualification, making clear that the 'shadow' here means 'protection from the sun; shade' (11. a). Shadow in this sense forms a pleasant shelter, evoked in 'Thence through the garden I was drawn – / A realm of pleasance, many

[27] Hollander, *The Substance of Shadow*, p. 112.

a mound, / And many a shadow-chequered lawn' ('Recollections of the Arabian Nights', 100–02). Here again the shadow takes on a role independent of the object that casts it.

While 'sick' here means 'experiencing a deep longing', the juxtaposition to 'The noonday crag made the hand burn' continues to haunt this sense, so that 'sick / For shadow' recalls 'I am half sick of shadows' (71) in 'The Lady of Shalott', though 'shadows' there refer to reflections on the mirror of the world outside her isolated bower. The word 'shadow' represents more normally the dark figure which an object casts upon a surface by occluding the source of light (*OED*, 4. a.), but can also mean a reflected image or mirror-image (5. a.). Along the lines of Hollander's book, this chapter seeks to show how in Tennyson's poetry, the figure of mirror-images takes on its own substance. Like a cast shadow, a mirror-image may be regarded as a reproduction, and as such a deficient and deceptive repetition of the original; by focusing on the materiality of the mirror, however, Tennyson gives mirror-images a new meaning, which is not necessarily contingent upon their source. One of the greatest mirror poems in the language, 'The Lady of Shalott', I shall argue, can be read as a kind of metapoem which is acutely conscious of the poet's own handling of mirror-image.

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In 'Tithon', an early version of 'Tithonus' written in 1833, the hero asks Aurora, 'who gave him eternal life but not eternal youth':[28]

> Can thy love,
> Thy beauty, make amends, though even now,
> Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
> Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears?
>
> (15–17)

[28] *Poems*, I, 620.

The free-floating phrase ‘Close over us,’ set off with commas, sounds adverbial, contradicting the phrase ‘in those tremulous eyes’ in the next line. It appears as if ‘the silver star’ shines both over their heads and in Aurora’s eyes. Here, the eyes function as a mirror: ‘the silver star’ refers to the star hung in the sky up until ‘Shines’, but to the one reflected in Aurora’s eyes after ‘Shines’. The shift captures one of those Tennysonian moments of focal change.

Careful description of such details as a star mirrored in someone’s eyes is the hallmark of Tennyson. Carol T. Christ adduces a very similar vision of the poet’s to be an example of Tennyson’s ‘peculiar consciousness of the minute particulars of nature’:

> Tennyson’s famous vision of the moonlight reflected in a nightingale’s eye as it was singing in a hedgerow or Millais’s picture of Ophelia drowning amid flowers that dazzle the spectator stamen by stamen have a microscopic exactitude artificial to normal vision, almost as if a whole generation of artists were born nearsighted’.[29]

What continuity, then, is there between the asking of amends and the detailed description of the reflection of the star in the eyes? Herbert Tucker says: ‘What begins as a direct request stammers into lush descriptiveness that relaxes from the original aim: “though,” in the second line, is less a semantic disjunction than the sign of a shift between incompatible discourses.’[30] ‘[T]hough’, however, can be a ‘semantic disjunction’ too.

In ‘Tithonus’ as it eventually appeared, perhaps with the intention of making clear

[29] Carol T. Christ, *The Finer Optic: The Aesthetic of Particularity in Victorian Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 18. Interestingly, Tennyson was reportedly extremely short-sighted, which enabled him to see objects clearly only at a small distance. See *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 88, 116, 128.
[30] Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, p. 248.

the continuity, the above lines are expanded as below:

> Can thy love,
> Thy beauty, make amends, though even now,
> Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
> Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
> To hear me?
>
> (23–27)

Across the enjambed lines, the added infinitive ‘To hear (me)’, echoing ‘tears’, expresses the cause of the emotion as if the eyes heard the request, that is, as if the eyes had emotions. (Compare ‘you burst into tears to hear me’.) The ‘eyes that fill with tears’ stand as a synecdoche for Aurora’s sympathy with Tithonus and form a marked contrast with the request which is not to be granted, thus conveying a sense of ironic pathos.

This reading would be supported by the lines in Shelley’s *Revolt of Islam*, to which Tennyson alludes here. Though the Iberian Priest in Shelley’s poem orders the priestly slaves to bind Cythna to the stake, they feel pity for her: ‘The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear / From many a tremulous eye’ (XII. 14. 4567–68).[31] Here, ‘in spite of’ is obviously disjunctive. Similarly, ‘though’ in ‘Tithonus’ could signify the discrepancy between the hopeless request and the genuine sympathy. If so, Tithonus sees not so much the star shining in the eyes as the eyes filling with tears. The shift of the star from the sky to the eyes is thus accompanied by the changed focus from the star which is reflected in the eyes to the eyes in which the star is reflected. Thus the reflected light of the star assumes its own substance as the brilliance of the shining eyes, to the extent that the eyes even overshine the stars:

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[31] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson, corr. by G. M. Matthews (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 149.

> Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
> Ere yet they blind the stars […].
>
> (‘Tithonus’, 38–39)

This reading, though, might be grammatically difficult, as ‘that fill with tears / To hear me’ is a subordinate clause, and therefore not the focus of the sentence.

Tennyson attempts to overcome the difficulty in ‘Move eastward, happy earth, and leave’, an epithalamium for his brother Charles and Louisa Sellwood in May 1836:

> Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
> Yon orange sunset waning slow:
> From fringes of the faded eve,
> O, happy planet, eastward go;
> Till over thy dark shoulder glow
> Thy silver sister-world, and rise
> To glass herself in dewy eyes
> That watch me from the glen below.
> Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
> Dip forward under starry light,
> And move me to my marriage-morn,
> And round again to happy night.
>
> (1–12)

The ‘sister-world’ will shine above the horizon and ‘glass’ (which the *OED* defines in this usage as ‘to set (an object, oneself) before a mirror or other reflecting surface, so as to cause an image to be reflected’ (v, 4. a.)) her-/itself in the eyes in the glen (lines 5 to 8 rhyme *abba*, displaying a mirror-symmetry). Tennyson notes that the ‘sister-world’ refers to the moon.[32] If, as Christopher Ricks remarks in his notes, the moon hints at Emily Sellwood, the sister of Louisa,[33] then it will be the ‘sister-world’ that presents herself to

[32] *Poems*, II, 91.
[33] Ibid.

the speaker. In that case, Tennyson is obliquely describing his encounter with Emily, with whom he began to fall in love at the wedding of Charles and Louisa. But then to whom do the eyes belong?

There being no commas, the relative clause ‘That watch me from the glen below’ grammatically defines the eyes, and one reads on into the next line; but the white space at the end of the line constitutes a ‘non-temporal pause’ (Ricks’s term).[34] If one stops after the line-break, the lines read like: ‘thy silver sister-world rise to glass herself in dewy eyes, and they watch me from the glen below’. If this is so, it is not the ‘sister world’ but the one to whom the ‘eyes’ belong that encounters the speaker. Here again, the shift of the moon from the sky to the eyes causes the changed focus from the moon which is reflected in the eyes to the eyes in which the moon is reflected. The eyes into which the ‘sister world’ has shifted thus themselves take on a transferred sisterhood.

In describing the reflection of images in a mirror, Tennyson often shifts his focus from the objects from which images are reflected to the images themselves, and from the images to the mirrors in which they are reflected. This is analogous to the situation with his use of allusion, where there is a focal shift from the original text to the borrowed words themselves, and to their transferred context. Tennyson performs such textual mirroring in his descriptions of mirror-images. The speaker of *Maud* has a fancy that

> if a hand, as white
> As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid
> On the heap of the window, and my Delight
> Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost, to glide,
> Like a beam of the seventh Heaven, down to my side,
> There were but a step to be made.
>
> (I. 505–10)

[34] Ricks, ‘William Wordsworth 1: “a pure organic pleasure from the lines”’, in *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 89–116 (p. 90).

Wilfred P. Mustard points out that ‘a hand, as white / As ocean-foam in the moon’ has an echo of Horace’s *Odes*, II. 5.[35] Horace describes the white shoulders of Chloris: ‘more than Chloris whose pale shoulders gleamed like the clear moon reflected in the night sea’.[36] As Susan Shatto comments, the echo sounds ‘appropriate’ because it is set in a context similar to the original one:[37] Horace consoles the ardent lover by saying that his unripe beloved will in due course follow him. But the Horatian ‘clear moon reflected in the night sea’ is turned by Tennyson into ‘ocean-foam in the moon’; the whiteness of the moon’s reflection in the sea is transferred to the sea itself, and consequently the moon is dispersed in moonlight. If not illuminated by moonlight, the foam is white *per se*. This alteration is accompanied by a grandiose personification (‘my Delight’) and the accretion of towering and interrupting similes (‘like a glorious ghost’, ‘Like a beam of the seventh Heaven’). The *OED* defines the ‘foam’, in the sense of ‘foaming water, the sea’, as archaic and poetic and the ‘moon’, in the sense of ‘moonlight’, as poetic. Goldwin Smith, a contemporary of Tennyson, mockingly said of the literariness of *Maud* that it was ‘a little like the foam without the wave’,[38] in which we could hear a subtle echo of the ‘ocean-foam’ in *Maud*.

In ‘The Lotos-Eaters’, Tennyson reimagines Virgil’s *Aeneid*, IV. 451: where Dido is weary of gazing on the sky (‘she is weary of gazing on the arch of heaven’),[39] Odysseus’

[35] Wilfred P. Mustard, *Classical Echoes in Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1904), p. 113.
[36] Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. by Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 107.
[37] Tennyson, *Tennyson’s ‘Maud’: A Definitive Edition*, ed. by Susan Shatto (London: Athlone Press, 1986), p. 193.
[38] *Critical Heritage*, p. 190.
[39] Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. by G. B. Gould (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 452.

crew sing of their view from the ship, weary of the endless vistas of both sky and sea:

> Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
> Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
>
> (84–85)

The 'dark-blue sky' covers the 'dark-blue sea' – the adjective 'dark-blue' attaches itself pre-emptively to 'sea' as if the dark-blueness were ascribed to the sea itself, though in fact it is lent by the vaulting of the sky, as implied by the repetition. In reflecting the line from the *Aeneid* in his own poem, Tennyson reflects the wearisome sky on the sea. The 'dark-blue sky' and the 'the dark-blue sea', each with its own substantiality, cause the men to sing in the ensuing lines:

> Death is the end of life; ah, why
> Should life all labour be?
> Let us alone.
>
> (86–8)

The use of the sky and sea in 'Locksley Hall', by contrast, is quite hopeful. The speaker's father had fallen 'in wild Mahratta-battle' (155), and he 'was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward' (156). He has been jilted by his cousin Amy for a richer rival. The biographical source for this poem is Tennyson's ill-starred love affair with Rosa Baring of Harrington Hall, near the Tennyson family's home in Somersby. Rosa was too wealthy to be a good match for Tennyson; and while in 1834 he was infatuated with her; by 1835 or so he had become frustrated with her flirtatiousness; in 1836 she married Robert Shafto.[40] At first the speaker rails against Amy ('O my cousin, shallow-

[40] For a fuller account of Tennyson's relationship with Rosa Baring, see Robert Bernard Martin, *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 215–221.

hearted!' (39)), but then, in Joseph Phelan's summary, he concerns himself 'about the social organisation of England, and especially the dominance of money' ('Cursèd be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead of the fool!' (62)).[41] He is now firmly resolved to 'mix with action' (98), For he

> dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
> Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
>
> Saw the heaven fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
> Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
>
> Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
> From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue […].
>
> (119–24)

In this famous visionary passage, Tennyson imagines the sky as a mirror in which the sea is reflected. He projects onto the sky not only the 'commerce, argosies of magic sails, / Pilots', but also the 'purple twilight', which may be ascribed to the sea; Ricks compares the phrase to a line in a juvenile work of Tennyson's, 'The Mermaid':[42] 'the purple twilights under the sea' (44). But the phrase can be ascribed to the sky too; in 'The Lady of Shalott', Tennyson depicts a meteor gliding 'through the purple night' (96). This is another example of the Tennysonian mirroring in which what is reflected takes on its own actuality, independent of its source.

In these lines, the speaker's commercial and martial vision is continuously blurred by the doubling effect of mirroring. The image of 'Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales' can be read literally as a 'prophetic fact'.[43] The line, however, is

[41] Joseph Phelan, 'Empire and Orientalisms', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 800–16 (p. 811).
[42] *Poems*, II, 126n.
[43] Ibid.

a Tennysonian translation of the ancient Arabic *Moâllakát*'s metaphor for rain: 'The cloud unloads its freight on the desert of Ghabeit, like a merchant of Yemen alighting with his bales of rich apparel.'[44] It is true that 'there rained a ghastly dew' in the next line may allude to the blood from the battle (Ricks compares this phrase with one in 'The Vale of Bones', an early work of Tennyson's:[45] 'the red dew o'er thee rained' (77)). But cast onto the sky, 'the ghastly dew' sounds as though it literally means heavy rain. Lastly, the 'airy navies' in the ensuing line are most obviously associated with a battle at sea; but Edgar F. Shannon, Jr. comments that the phrase refers to the 'balloon stanzas' with which 'The Dream of Fair Women' originally began. Shannon suggests that when Tennyson 'wrote the prophetic lines in "Locksley Hall," future development of the balloon was uppermost in mind'.[46] The specific balloon in question would seem to be the one in which Charles Green, an aeronaut, made an ascent from Cambridge on 19 May 1829; Tennyson was staying at the university and observed the ascent with his own eyes. In particular, as Shannon notes: 'The phrase "pilots of the purple twilight" may owe its inspiration to the evening ascent at Cambridge'.[47] Thus the projected vision of sea battle and commerce takes on its own actuality as a literal description of the sky.

Towards the end of the poem, the speaker sees new hope, 'In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world' (128); but he has a wish to 'retreat / Deep in yonder shining Orient' (153–54): 'There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing

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[44] Cited in *Poems*, II, 126n. Hallam Tennyson has reported the origin of the poem: 'I remember my father saying that Sir William Jones' prose translation of *The Moâllakát*, the seven Arabic poems (which are a selection from the work of pre-Mahommedan poets) hanging up in the temple of Mecca, gave him the idea of the poem' (*Memoir*, I, 195).
[45] *Poems*, II, 126n.
[46] Shannon, 'Tennyson's "Balloon Stanzas"', *Philological Quarterly*, 31 (1952), 441–45 (p. 442). Richard Holmes further comments: 'Tennyson also foresaw, like Franklin before him and H. G. Wells afterwards, balloons producing the terror of aerial warfare' (*Falling Upwards: How We Took to the Air* (London: William Collins, 2013), p. 76).
[47] Shannon, 'Tennyson's "Balloon Stanzas"', p. 445.

space; / I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race' (167–68). These lines have a definite imperialist and sexist tenor and as such have deservedly been censured.[48] Yet, as I have shown above, the prophetic vision of commerce and battle mirrored onto the sky assumes its own actuality and substantiality, and the speaker's apparent imperialist endeavour is counterbalanced by this work of substantiation, which is integral to the 'poetic texture' of 'Locksley Hall', to borrow the phrase the critic W. W. Robson used to describe a counterforce to action in 'Ulysses'.

'Ulysses' has a lot in common with 'Locksley Hall'. It was written soon after Hallam's death, as Tennyson attempted to face that sorrowful experience as a poet. Tennyson's note tells us that the poem 'gives the feeling about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life' and that it 'was written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end'.[49] A possible solution to sorrow is found in action, again meaning battle ('braving the struggle', 'still life must be fought out to the end'). Like 'Locksley Hall', 'Ulysses' represents the poet's personal development from 'a private individual, with his private sorrows' to 'a responsible social being, conscious of a public world in which he has duties'.[50] Some critics have suggested that Ulysses' 'duties' sound like those of a colonial administrator.[51] 'An idle king' (1), he is resigned to 'mete and dole / Unequal laws unto a savage race' (3–5), and his son Telemachus, to whom he hands over these responsibilities, is 'discerning to fulfil / This

[48] See Phelan, pp. 800–01.
[49] *Poems*, I, 613.
[50] W. W. Robson, 'The Dilemma of Tennyson', in *Critical Essays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 191–99 (p. 192).
[51] See Victor Kiernan, 'Tennyson, King Arthur and Imperialism', in *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 126–48 (pp. 131–32); Matthew Rowlinson, 'The Ideological Moment of Tennyson's "Ulysses"', *VP*, 30 (1992), 265–76 (p. 267).

labour, by slow prudence to make mild / A rugged people, and through soft degrees / Subdue them to the useful and the good' (35–38). An element of racism is no doubt inherent in these lines; but this poem moves through (in R. H. Hutton's happy phrase) 'a resisting medium' which dissipates the resolve and energy of the poem, strenuously defying all attempts to 'subdue' the poem 'to the useful and the good'.[52] Robson shows how the 'slow movement, still further retarded by the characteristic lingering on the vowel sounds ('… mouthing out his hollow o'es and a'es'), pervades the poem'.[53] While the poem's 'need of going forward and braving the struggle of life' is manifest, 'the quality of the verse, the poetic texture' is always at odds with its action and effort.[54]

This is also the case with 'Locksley Hall'. The long, eight-stress trochaic lines of the poem, which Ricks argues are spurred by the rhythms of Sir William Jones's prose translation of 'Amriolkais', the first poem of *Moâllakát*,[55] sound rather lumbering. The diction is also subtly self-contradictory: to say 'I myself must mix with action', Ricks says, is less direct and less unequivocal than to say 'I myself must act'.[56] But more importantly, the famous visionary passage whose equivocal quality stiffened the speaker's resolve forebodes inaction rather than action: the prophetic vision of commerce and battle projected onto the sky dissolves into mere heavy rain and the balloon flight, claiming its own substance as a description of the sky.

Both the metre and the vision of the future in 'Locksley Hall' employ borrowings from 'Amriolkais'. Jones's translation of *Moâllakát* had an enormous cultural influence,

[52] *Critical Heritage*, p. 365.
[53] Robson, p. 193.
[54] Ibid.
[55] *Poems*, II, 119–20.
[56] Ricks, *Tennyson*, p. 153.

inspiring Oriental affectations in many major Victorians.[57] The speaker himself finds a perennial inspiration in the East:

> O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
> Ancient founts of inspiration well through all my fancy yet.
>
> (187–88)

Phelan notes: 'There is, in these lines, a delicate pun on "crescent" (in a poem not noted for its delicacy) which sums up Tennyson's ambivalent relation to the matter of the East.'[58] The word 'crescent', in a usage the *OED* traces back to George Puttenham's 1589 *The Art of English Poesy*, symbolises 'the Muslim religion as a political force, and so opposed to the Cross as the symbol of Christianity' (3. c).[59] Phelan argues that 'the benign idea of cultural interaction implied by these lines' is overshadowed by 'the notorious fantasy of miscegenation which immediately precedes them'.[60] And yet Tennyson did not adopt the metaphor for rain from 'Amriolkais' because of their oriental themes and subject-matter, but instead as a check on action.

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We have seen how in Tennyson's descriptions of mirrors, the focus shifts from the images reflected in the mirror to the mirror into which the images are reflected, and reflected images take on their own reality, variously affecting the speaker's action. In 'Locksley Hall', Tennyson performs a *tour de force* of projecting the prophetic vision of commerce

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[57] See Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones and Literary Orientalism', in *Oriental Prospects: Western Literature and the Lure of the East*, ed. by C. C. Barfoot and Theo D'Haen (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodolpi, 1998), pp. 27–41.
[58] Phelan, p. 800.
[59] Phelan suggests reading 'Tennyson's movement from the "crescent promise" of the first "Locksley Hall" to the "Crossed" knight of the second as symptomatic of the general coarsening of poetic interaction with the East during the Victorian period' (p. 812).
[60] Ibid., p. 800.

and battle onto the sky, by turning around the reflection of the sky into the sea. The poem's hopeful vision has a definite imperialist tenor, which has often been deplored, but the acts of self-borrowing and translation give the projection onto the sky an independent existence, thus blurring the vision. This conflation of the sea and the sky reminds us of the strange image of 'star-isles' in Edgar Allan Poe's poem 'Al Aaraaf'.

Poe's poems and short stories recurrently dramatise the substantiation of mirror-images, showing remarkable similarities to Tennyson's poems in this respect. Although Poe admired Tennyson's idealising temperament, his focus on the materiality of mirror-images in his own work can illuminate our understanding of the substance of mirror-image in Tennyson's poems, including 'The Lady of Shalott' (which I will discuss in the next section). In what follows, therefore, I wish to look briefly at the relationship between Tennyson and Poe, and the close affinities in their depictions of mirror-images.[61]

Tennyson and Poe were born in the same year, and as critics have pointed out, there are striking similarities between them. Albert J. von Frank, for example, remarks: 'The temperamental and stylistic affinities between Edgar Allan Poe and Alfred Tennyson are hard to miss, so it is not surprising to find that the American writer was an enthusiastic and persistent booster of the Englishman's reputation.'[62] Indeed, Poe played an important role in introducing American readers to Tennyson. Poe was even criticised for imitating Tennyson. An anonymous article in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (January 1844) reads: Poe 'had all Tennyson's spirituality, and might be considered as the best of his imitators',[63]

[61] Poe also shows similarities to Tennyson in his treatment of the subject of remembrance. As Jeffrey Scraba remarks, Poe's 'poetry recurrently represents the imagined repetition of a painful experience' ('Repetition and Remembrance in Poe's Poetry', in *Critical Insights: The Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by Stephen Frye (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010), pp. 34–55 (p. 35)).
[62] Albert J. von Frank, '"MS. Found in a Bottle": Poe's Earliest Debt to Tennyson', *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*, 34 (2001), 1–5 (p. 1).
[63] Cited in von Frank, p. 4n.

although Poe defended himself against these accusations, claiming that he had published first.[64] Tennyson himself said 'Edgar Poe is (taking his poetry and prose together) the most original American genius'.[65] For all his lifelong distaste for America, Tennyson, in an interview with a journalist of the *New York Times* towards the end of his life, said he had thought of visiting America to see 'a long-neglected spot in the provincial town of Baltimore, where the greatest American genius lies buried', i.e. Poe's grave.[66] Tennyson had 'a great admiration for Poe',[67] while on the other side, in 'The Poetic Principle', Poe called Tennyson 'the noblest poet that ever lived'.[68] In a conversation with Lambert Wilmer, Poe reportedly singled out Tennyson for 'warm terms of admiration'.[69] The mere fact that both poets used the same word in describing the other attests to their affinity (Baudelaire duly refers to their reciprocal regard as 'quasi-fraternal admiration').[70] They were, as it were, mirror-images of each other, embodying the Tennysonian (and Poesque) situation where it is hardly possible to decide which is the original and which is the copy.

In what claims to be the first study of the affinities between Poe and Tennyson, Gerhard Joseph contends that Poe bases his superlative praise for Tennyson on what Poe calls the 'etherisity', or 'purity of spirit', of Tennyson's works.[71] Joseph writes:

> Though neither adapts the aesthetics of Plato into his work as systematically as does Shelley, a fervent philosophical idealism lies just below the surface of both. […] Diaphanous loveliness of the finest texture, freed from any cloying passion or

[64] For Poe's self-defence, see Edgar Allan Poe, *Essays and Reviews*, ed. by G. R. Thompson (New York: Library of America, 1984), pp. 1099–1104.
[65] *Memoir*, II, 292–93.
[66] Terry L. Meyers, 'An Interview with Tennyson on Poe', *TRB*, 2 (1975), 167–68 (p. 167).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Poe, *Essays and Reviews*, p. 1492.
[69] Cited in von Frank, p. 1.
[70] Cited in Marjorie Bowden, *Tennyson in France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1930), p. 101.
[71] Cited in Gerhard Joseph, *Tennyson and the Text*, p. 27. See also Joseph, 'Poe and Tennyson', *PMLA*, 88 (1973), 418–28.

> gross materiality – that is the quality in Tennyson's best work which Poe singled out and attempted to emulate.[72]

For Poe, Tennyson's work exemplifies the emancipation from worldly passion and the ascendancy to ethereal beauty. In his 1844 review of Richard Henry Horne's 'Orion', Poe writes: Tennyson's 'Œnone' 'exalts the soul not into passion, but into a conception of pure *beauty*, which in its elevation […] transcends earthly passion as the holy radiance of the sun does the glimmering and feeble phosphorescence of the glow-worm'.[73] More than just hyperbole, the Platonic simile of 'the sun' as 'pure *beauty*' exhibits the idealising temperament which Poe finds in Tennyson. Yet, despite his Platonising and idealist tendencies, Poe's imagination is essentially material.

In his *Water and Dream*, which constitutes a series of studies in the material imagination, Gaston Bachelard addresses 'the presence of limpid water filled with vast reflections' that provokes a reverie in Poe's writings.[74] He shows how in Poe's descriptions of water, reflected images assume their own reality, producing what he calls 'absolute reflection'.[75] In Poe's poems and tales, Bachelard says,

> the reflection seems more real than reality because it is purer. […] By immobilizing the image of the sky, the lake creates a sky in her bosom. The water in its youthful limpidity is a reversed sky, where the stars take on new life. Thus, dreaming at the water's edge, Poe forms this strange double concept of a star-isle, a liquid star, a prisoner of the lake, a star which could be an island in the sky.[76]

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[72] Joseph, *Tennyson and the Text*, p. 30.
[73] Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by James A. Harrison, 17 vols (New York: AMS Press, 1965), XI, 255.
[74] Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, trans. by Edith R. Farrell (Dallas: The Pegasus Foundation, 1983), p. 47.
[75] Ibid., p. 48.
[76] Ibid., p. 47.

This strange image appears in 'Al Aaraaf', an early poem first published in 1829. At God's command, Nesace, the spirit of Beauty who bathes in 'the golden air, / Near four bright suns' (I. 17–18), urges Ligeia, her loved one, to fly to Al Aaraaf to arouse the people sleeping by the lake:

> Away, then, my dearest,
> Oh! hie thee away
> To springs that lie clearest
> Beneath the moon-ray –
> To lone lake that smiles,
> In its dream of deep rest,
> At the many star-isles
> That enjewel its breast –
>
> (II. 128–135)[77]

Bachelard asks the question: 'Where is reality – in the sky or in the depths of the water?'.[78] Poe blurs the stars and the isles in this conflated image. The 'star-isles' could refer to the stars in the sky, as it sounds as if the placid and limpid lake ('In its dream of deep rest') looks at them and smiles. The lake figures as an eye ('A lake is', says Henry David Thoreau, 'Earth's eye'),[79] but it has a 'breast'. So the 'star-isles' can also refer to the stars reflected on the lake and dotting it like isles. Poe, like Tennyson, shifts his focus from the images reflected on the mirror to the mirror itself, highlighting its materiality, or physicality, and in doing so, lending substance to the reflected image.

Over and over again in his short novels, Poe recounts the blending, or confusion, of an object and its reflected image. For example,

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[77] Edgar Allan Poe, *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe: I Poems*, ed. by Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1969), p. 110.
[78] Bachelard, p. 47.
[79] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*, ed. by William Rossi (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), p. 508.

> About midway in the short vista which my dreamy vision took in, one small circular island, profusely verdured, reposed upon the bosom of the stream.
>
> > So blended bank and shadow there,
> > that each seemed pendulous in air –
>
> so mirror-like was the glassy water, that it was scarcely possible to say at what point upon the slope of the emerald turf its crystal dominion began.
>
> ('The Island of the Fay')[80]

> As the evening approached, the channel grew more narrow; the banks more and more precipitous; and these latter were clothed in richer, more profuse, and more sombre foliage. The water increased in transparency. The stream took a thousand turns, so that at no moment could its gleaming surface be seen for a greater distance than a furlong. At every instant the vessel seemed imprisoned within an enchanted circle, having insuperable and impenetrable walls of foliage, a roof of ultra-marine satin, and *no* floor – the keel balancing itself with admirable nicety on that of a phantom bark which, by some accident having been turned upside down, floated in constant company with the substantial one, for the purpose of sustaining it.
>
> ('The Domain of Arnheim')[81]

> This lakelet was, perhaps, a hundred yards in diameter at its widest part. No crystal could be clearer than its waters. Its bottom, which could be distinctly seen, consisted altogether of pebbles brilliantly white. Its banks, of the emerald grass already described, *rounded*, rather that sloped, off into the clear heaven below; and *so* clear was this heaven, so perfectly, at times, did it reflect all objects above it, that where the true bank ended and where the mimic one commenced, it was a point of no little difficulty to determine. The trout, and some other varieties of fish, with which this pond seemed to be almost inconveniently crowded, had all the appearance of veritable flying-fish. It was almost impossible to believe that they were not absolutely suspended in the air.
>
> ('Landor's Cottage')[82]

The reflected image (or 'shadow', 'phantom', 'mimic', as Poe puts it) does not only

[80] Poe, *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe: II Tales and Sketches, 1831–1842*, ed. by Mabbott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978), pp. 597–606 (pp. 602–603).
[81] Poe, *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe: III Tales and Sketches, 1843–1849*, ed. by Mabbott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978), pp. 1266–1285 (p. 1279).
[82] Ibid., pp. 1325–43 (p. 1333)

assume a sort of reality, but also provides, in a strange reversal of the substance/shadow dichotomy, a foundation upon which the object relies: 'a phantom bark' is 'in constant company with the substantial one, for the purpose of sustaining it'.

Poe's narrator confused by the doubling effect of the shadow in his 'dreamy vision' foreshadows the speaker of *The Princess* (who cannot distinguish substance from shadow in a weird 'waking dream', feeling himself 'the shadow of a dream'), and is foreshadowed by 'The Lady of Shalott', Tennyson's most celebrated mirror poem, which not only stages the substantiation of the mirror-image, but also represents a reflection upon the substance of the mirror-image itself.[83] The poem's metapoetic awareness is the subject of the rest of this chapter.

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The titular heroine of 'The Lady of Shalott' is enclosed within the island in the river which flows down to Camelot. When she first appears in the second stanza of Part I, the Lady is surrounded on all sides:

> Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
> Overlook a space of flowers,
> And the silent isle imbowers
> The Lady of Shalott.
>
> (15–18)

The repeated phrase 'four gray' and the three-beat figure ('Four gray walls', 'four gray towers') stress her monotonous environment. The boats skim by the bank, but nobody sees or knows the Lady; only reapers hear her. In the 1832 version of the poem, a reaper hears her 'singing clearly':

[83] 'The Island of the Fay', 'The Domain of Arnheim', and 'Landor's Cottage' were published respectively in 1841, 1847, and 1849.

> Underneath the bearded barley,
> The reaper, reaping late and early,
> Hears her ever chanting cheerly,
> Like an angel, singing clearly,
> O'er the stream of Camelot.
>
> (28–32)

However, the lady is far from 'singing clearly' in the 1842 version:

> Only reapers, reaping early
> In among the bearded barley,
> Hear a song that echoes cheerly
> From the river winding clearly,
> Down to towered Camelot […].
>
> (28–32)

The song is refracted from the first version in the river. As Gerhard Joseph explains, 'while the single reaper of the first version hears the song directly, the several reapers of the second encounter it as a reverberation off the river, to which the epithet "clear" has now been shifted'.[84] And yet echoes, as distinguished from reverberations, are repetitions of sounds, which the river itself cannot propagate (at the beginning of his first chapter of *The Figure of Echo*, John Hollande defines echo as follows: 'Echoes are the reflections of sounds from solid surfaces').[85] The mysterious echo of the song from the river is an anticipation of Lancelot's reflection both in the mirror and in the river to follow. It is precisely because of this that Tennyson transfers the epithet 'clear' onto the river (fifteen lines later, as we will see, 'clear' is applied to the mirror).

Even as the reapers do not hear her song directly, the Lady is forbidden to see the

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[84] Gerhard Joseph, 'The Echo and the Mirror *en abîme* in Victorian Poetry', *VP*, 23 (1985), 403–12 (p. 408).
[85] Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 1.

world directly. She hears ‘a whisper say, / A curse is on her if she stay / To look down to Camelot’ (39–41), devoting herself to weaving. But then what does she weave? She seems to use the shadows of the world reflected in the mirror: ‘And moving through a mirror clear / That hangs before her all the year, / Shadows of the world appear’ (46–48). According to Tennyson’s note, ‘The Lady of Shalott’ is an adaptation of an Italian novelette, *Donna di Scalotta*.[86] But most of its major elements are absent from the source. Tennyson says: ‘I met the story first in some Italian *novelle*: but the web, mirror, island, etc., were my own.’[87] And indeed, all this paraphernalia seems to be what the poem is really about. In the mirror the Lady sees the knights, whom she secretly longs to encounter:

> And sometimes through the mirror blue
> The knights come riding two and two:
> She hath no loyal knight and true,
> The Lady of Shalott.
>
> (60–63)

‘Loyal knight and true’ is Miltonic, and the word-order makes ‘true’ mean at once ‘loyal’ and ‘real’. The Lady has only the reflections of the knights. And then the sight of ‘two young lovers lately wed’ (70) squeezes from her the repining at the end of Part II: ‘I am half sick of shadows’ (71).

Part III begins with the description of Lancelot.

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[86] *Poems*, I, 387.

[87] Cited in *Poems*, I, 387. The absence of these details and other mismatches have troubled scholars for a long time. Isobel Armstrong has gone so far as to say that the poem ‘has no source, and is in fact the conflation of a number of mythic structures’ (p. 83). In her 2016 study, Naomi Levine cites Ugo Foscolo’s literary essay on the Damsel of Scalot as a possible source text for the poem, though such props as the mirror, the web, and the island are not present in Foscolo’s version. See ‘Tirra-Lirrical Ballads: Source Hunting with the Lady of Shalott’, *VP*, 54 (2016), 439–54.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
    Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
    Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
    As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
    Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
    As he rode down to Camelot.
As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
    Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
    As he rode down to Camelot.

(73–104)

These lines brace themselves for resolution, suspending a moment just before an impending resolution intimated by the Lady's repining.[88] In these lines, 'he rode' occurs

[88] On Tennyson's art of the penultimate, see William E. Fredeman, 'A Sign Betwixt the Meadow and the Cloud: The Ironic Apotheosis of Tennyson's *St. Simeon Stylites*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 38 (1968), 69–83; Ricks, *Tennyson*, p. 49.

six times, the last time being redundant (‘as on he rode, / As he rode’). The ‘o’ of ‘rode’ itself repeats the first stressed syllable of the first line, ‘bow’, and then is repeated in the middle of many lines: ‘bold’, ‘yellow’, ‘remote’, ‘golden’, ‘remote’, ‘shone’, ‘Below’, ‘over’; and then in the end of the lines: ‘glowed’, ‘trode’, ‘flowed’ (‘glowed/flowed’ and ‘trode/rode’ are rime riches). In this suspended moment, Tennyson luxuriates in dazzling imagery, not least in vivid colours: ‘A red-cross knight’, ‘the yellow field’, ‘the golden Galaxy’, ‘A mighty silver bugle’, ‘the blue unclouded weather’, ‘the purple night’, ‘His coal-black curls’. Lancelot, as Paul Turner remarks, forms ‘a colourful contrast to her [the Lady’s] “gray” environment, reflected in the mirror’.[89] In the 1832 edition, the Lady’s environment was no less rich in colour: ‘The yellowleavèd waterlily, / The greensheathèd daffodilly, / Tremble in the water chilly’ (6–8), ‘The little isle is all inrailed / With a rose-fence, and overtrailed / With roses’ (19–21). In revision, Tennyson seems to have brought out the contrast between the Lady’s surroundings and Lancelot.

The contrast gradually heightened in these ways, these lines strain even more for resolution. And then:

> From the bank and from the river
> He flashed into the crystal mirror,
> ‘Tirra lirra,’ by the river
> Sang Sir Lancelot.
>
> (105–08)

The Lady sees reflected in the mirror not only Lancelot but also Lancelot’s reflection in

[89] Turner, *Tennyson* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 62. Gray may in one sense be a colour, but it is ‘the colour intermediate between black and white’, with ‘little or no positive hue’ (*OED*, 1. a). Tennyson himself writes in a later poem: ‘my life’s late eve endures, / Nor settles into hueless gray’ (‘To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava’, 49–50).

the river.[90] The first three lines which all rhyme together form a triplet, but 'river' in the first line is repeated in the third. As Ricks nicely observes, 'the only time in the poem, a word rhymes with itself – a perfect reflection: "*river*"/"*river*"',[91] as though 'mirror' reflects the previous use of 'river' in the subsequent line. And then the Lady finally breaks the prohibition and leaps into action:

> She left the web, she left the loom,
> She made three paces through the room,
> She saw the water-lily bloom,
> She saw the helmet and the plume,
> She looked down to Camelot.
> Out flew the web and floated wide;
> The mirror cracked from side to side;
> 'The curse is come upon me,' cried
> The Lady of Shalott.
>
> (109–17)

The Lady is taken out of the 'Shadows of the world', or the world of shadows, as 'the mirror cracked'. Tennyson gave Canon Ainger, the author of *Tennyson for the Young*, the following interpretation: 'The new-born love for something, for some one in the wide world from which she has been so long secluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities.'[92] According to Gerhard Joseph's survey of interpretation of the poem, early twentieth-century readers used the opposition of shadows and realities 'as a cue for ontological allegory of either a Platonic or Aristotelian persuasion – at least up to the time of the New Criticism'.[93]

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[90] David Martin was the first to observe this double reflection in 'Romantic Perspectivism in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott"', *VP*, 2 (1973), 255–56.
[91] Ricks, *Tennyson*, p. 75.
[92] *Memoir*, I, 117.
[93] Joseph, 'Victorian Weaving: The Alienation of Work into Text in "The Lady of Shalott"', *Victorian Newsletter*, 71 (1987), 7–10 (p. 7).

The New Criticism's emphasis on seeing 'most poetry as more or less obliquely about aesthetics, about the poet's self-referential forging of well-wrought urns',[94] meant the poem was reinterpreted as aesthetic allegory. Walter Houghton and G. Robert Stange's anthology *Victorian Poetry and Poetics* (1956) presents a good example of such a reading. In their notes, they remark that 'the poem suggests that the artist must remain in aloof detachment, observing life only in the mirror of the imagination, not mixing in it directly. Once the artist attempts to lead the life of ordinary men his poetic gift, it would seem, dies.'[95] A type of the artist, living in 'aloof detachment' of his own consciousness, is the type of the Romantic artist, and according to what M. H. Abrams terms the Romantic view of art as expression, what the mind perceives is modified and synthesised in the imagination.[96] Even recent, less theoretically-minded criticism has tended to view the poem more or less as an allegory for Romantic art.[97] However, such readings annihilate the singularity of the mirror; far from being 'the mirror of the imagination', the mirror in the poem only shows shadows of the real, of which the Lady becomes sick.[98]

Besides, as Joseph observes, there is a tacit understanding between the ontological and the aesthetic reading, related to the 'clear-cut dualism, wherein the mind confronts not the "real" world but rather its imitation – a "shadow" or "mirror" of the real'.[99] Writing

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[94] Ibid.
[95] *Victorian Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Walter Houghton and G. Robert Stange (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1956), p. 16.
[96] See Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 21–26.
[97] See, for example, Perry, 'Tennyson and the Legacies of Romantic Art', *Romanticisms*, 14 (2009), 1–12 (pp. 9–10); LuAnn McCracken Fletcher, '"Singing in her song she died": Form as Heterotopic Mirror in Tennyson and Byatt', *Studies in the Novel*, 48 (2016), 318–42 (pp. 320–23).
[98] According to Abrams, it is not a mirror that merely reflects the world but a lamp that sheds light on it that is the apt analogy to expression (*The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 47–69). The process is also analogous to an overflowing fountain, an image which Tennyson uses in 'The Poet's Mind': in the middle of the interior garden 'leaps a fountain / Like sheet lightning, / Ever brightening / With a low melodious thunder' (24–27).
[99] Joseph, 'Victorian Weaving', pp. 7–8.

in 1987, he says:

> But of course the essential thrust of current representation theory is to undermine such a Metaphysics of Presence, to fragment the High Mimetic mode implicit in the opposition of 'shadow' or 'mirror' and 'substance.' What we have today instead is the infinite regress of post-structuralist thought where we are invited to follow, in Jacques Derrida's words, 'a book in the book, and origin in the origin, a center in the center' beyond the inmost bound of human thought [...]. 'The Lady of Shalott' has thus taken on a paradigmatic force today that extends well beyond the poem's exemplification of the early Tennyson's aesthetics.[100]

Geoffrey Hartman, upon whose work Joseph draws, sees the Lady's wish to put herself in unmediated contact with reality as 'directness, or intellectual passion: that rigorous striving for truth, exposure, mastery, self-identification – in short, science and metaphysics – which at once defines and ravages the human actor'.[101] The Lady thus came to be read as an allegory of the Western thinker and scientist, not or not only the artist.

> 'I'm half sick of shadows,' says the Lady of Shalott, and turns from her mirror to the reality of advent. She did not know that by her avertedness, by staying within representation, she had postponed death. The most art can do, as a mirror of language, is to burn through, in its cold way, the desire for self-definition, fullness of grace, presence; simply to expose the desire to own one's own name, to inhabit it numinously in the form of 'proper' noun, words, or the signatory act each poem aspires to be.[102]

While here Hartman muddles up the mirror, art, and language together ('The most art can do, as a mirror of language'), the Lady weaves these reflections into her web, another piece of the paraphernalia, which I left untouched. Tennyson describes not only mirror-images but also a weaver weaving these together into a web. It is this different order and

[100] Ibid., p. 8.
[101] Geoffrey Hartman, *Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 97.
[102] Ibid., p. 110.

its importance that the post-structuralist reading overlooks, and it is the awareness of this distinction that makes the poem a kind of metapoem about Tennyson's description of mirror-images.

In his entry on Tennyson in *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, Robert Douglas-Fairhurst writes:

> 'The Lady of Shalott' is probably the best-known example by Tennyson of a poem which in part offers itself as a fable of writing. Perhaps it is for this reason that changing responses to 'The Lady of Shalott' also form something like a potted history of literary criticism since the poem's first publication in 1832. […] From New Critical readings […] to the playful poststructuralism of Geoffrey Hartman […], Tennyson's poem has acted as a barometer to chart the changing cultural pressures which have acted on it at different times.[103]

To use a different analogy, 'The Lady of Shalott', in which hangs one of the most renowned mirrors in English poetry, has itself acted as a mirror in which readers of different times see the reflection of their own thought. The Lady who sees the world of realities through that of shadows, being tormented by the gap between them in confinement, and weaves shadows into a web, might perhaps be regarded, up to a point, as analogous to the Romantic artist or to the Western thinker/scientist; I am more inclined, however, to identify her provisionally with Tennyson, as we observed him describing mirrors.

His disposition even rubs off on the Lady, who cries 'I am half sick of shadows': for, as critics argue, Tennyson's characteristic two-sidedness finds its fullest expression in his frequent recourse to the word 'half'.[104] Edward FitzGerald remembered that Tennyson said of those who jump to conclusions: 'That's the swift decision of one who

[103] Douglas-Fairhurst, 'Tennyson', p. 608.
[104] See Ricks, *Tennyson*, p. 51n; Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 82.

sees only half the truth'.[105] But the Lady does not shift her focus to the opposite. What separates Tennyson from the Lady is that she does not see the substance of shadow, whereas, in 'The Lady of Shalott' as elsewhere, he sees not only the world which is reflected in the mirror but also the mirror in which it is reflected. The opposition of shadows and realities that has been elaborately constructed is therefore undermined.

> And sometimes through the mirror blue
> The knights come riding two and two:
> She hath no loyal knight and true,
> The Lady of Shalott.

'The mirror blue' sounds almost like an oxymoron, for the mirror is colourless ('a mirror clear', 'the crystal mirror'). 'Blue' occurs once more, at lines 91 to 95, where the description of Lancelot is at its most dazzling: 'All in the blue unclouded weather / Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather, / The helmet and the helmet-feather / Burned like one burning flame together, / As he rode down to Camelot'. The 'blue' of the mirror can also be the reflection of the clear sky, as a transferred epithet. Still, 'the mirror blue' sounds pretty definitive, as though it *is* blue. 'Blue' is then rhymed with 'two', implying its duplication, and then with 'true', bolstering the impression that it is not a transient hue. Here again, the mirror is an entity in its own right which constitutes the real world. But does the Lady also see it as a 'mirror blue'? If she were aware of the change, she might not have taken action. While the Lady does not see the mirror as a thing in its own right, and sees the images reflected in it as a mere shadow, the poet sees the reflection of the sky as an attribute of the mirror itself. It is precisely this awareness of the substantial

[105] *Memoir*, I, 37.

change caused by repetition that distinguishes Tennyson from the Lady he describes. 'The mirror blue' in 'The Lady of Shalott' may therefore be extrapolated into a model for the figure of mirror in Tennyson's poetry. Not that it is unique to Tennyson – there may be other poets who have described the mirror in this way. The 'mirror blue' cuts a colourful figure because it hangs in the poem to draw a sharp contrast there with gray and the other dazzling colours.[106]

There is another thing always near at hand which exhibits a notable contrast to the Lady's gray environment: 'she weaves by night and day / A magic web with colours gay' (37–38). Although she may not be aware of this, her dazzling array of coloured threads is not a transparent medium but a material in itself, just as the mirror is. In describing mirrors, Tennyson captures the dynamic transference of images onto mirrors, the process being played out in the detail of his language, specifically in the choreography of words and rhyme. And then, interestingly, as images shift from their original places to mirrors, the speaker's focus changes from the images to the mirrors themselves. The speaker sees not so much images reflected in the mirrors as the mirrors themselves into which they are reflected. The mirrors thus come to have their own presence. An element which may function as a mirror, such as eyes, seas, and the sky, is not merely a disappearing medium but a thing itself. Likewise, Tennyson's language is not only the vehicle in which to bear his thought but its formal embodiment.[107]

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[106] Writing about the chromatic imagination of Tennyson's close friend Edward Lear, James Williams provides some historical context: he writes 'chemistry revolutionized painting by providing new pigments: chromium and cadmium yellows, emerald green, a "new range of purples". These paints, made newly portable by the invention of the collapsible metal paint tube (on the market from 1842), coincided with the advent of Pre-Raphaelitism' ('The Old Person of Chroma', *VP*, 58 (2020), 151–67 (pp. 154–55)).

[107] Eric Griffiths, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter, argues that Tennyson's thought is embodied in his melodies, or rather that 'Tennyson's verse sounds as if the body thought' (*The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, p. 108). Angela Leighton further demonstrates the influence of Lucretian materialism on Tennyson's 'matter-moulded forms of speech' (*In Memoriam*, XCV. 46) in 'Touching

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In the poems I have discussed in this chapter, as if to reproduce the effect of mirroring on another level, the figure of the mirror-image is more often than not accompanied by a figure of echo, such as the description of the acoustical phenomenon of reverberation, sonic and verbal reiteration, or allusion and self-borrowing – just as, in Plato's cave, the shadow of the passers-by on the wall is accompanied by the echo of their voice. It was John Hollander, in his study of 'Tennyson's Melody', who first pointed out the doubling effect of mirror and echo in Tennyson's poetry: 'These doublings of sound and picture – shadow answering noise, echo mirroring image – seem to compose, throughout Tennyson's poetic world, a music of landscape.'[108] As critics have noted, Tennyson's poems characteristically resonate with echoes. 'Given his sensitivity to the multiple charms of duplicated noise,' says Seamus Perry, 'it is no wonder that echoes should ring so impressively throughout Tennyson's auditory world.'[109] In 'The Golden Year' (1846), for instance, Tennyson describes a sound echoing among the hills, using onomatopoeia to mimic the reverberation of the sound:

> I heard them blast
> The steep slate-quarry, and the great echo flap
> And buffet round the hills, from bluff to bluff.
>
> (74–6)

Tennyson comments: 'Onomatopoeic. "Bluff to bluff" gives the echo of the blasting as I

Forms: Tennyson and Aestheticism', in *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 55–73.

[108] Hollander, 'Tennyson's Melody', *Georgia Review*, 29 (1975), 676–703 (p. 686).

[109] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 29. On the figure of musical echo in Tennyson's work, see Hollander, 'Tennyson's Melody'; Ruth Padel, 'Tennyson: Echo and Harmony, Music and Thought', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, pp. 323–36; Angela Leighton, 'Tennyson's Hum', in *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 49–69.

heard it from the mountain on the counter side, opposite to Snowdon.'[110]

But what is it about echoes that awakens the poet's sensitivity? Perry argues: 'Echoes catch a Tennysonian genius so comprehensively because they embody both reiteration (an echo repeats its original) and changefulness (an echo decays away).'[111] As we have seen, Perry elsewhere refers to this contradiction inherent in the repetition of sound as 'the imaginative logic of the echo'.[112] It is true that Tennyson sometimes yields to the almost decadent pleasure of dying echoes. In the lyric called 'The splendour falls on castle falls', Tennyson sounds out the decaying echoes throughout its refrains: 'Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying, / Blow bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying' (5–6). The poet's recording of the lyric registers the way in which his voice trails off as he repeats 'dying'. On the other hand, though, the array of repeated words on the page creates a sense of compulsion, which seems to spin out of the poet's control ('the wild echoes flying'). As Peter McDonald astutely comments: 'A voiced diminution can be, in print, an insistent reiteration; and Tennyson's lyric makes from its repeated cadence both a fading-away and a growing in stature of the words "dying, dying, dying".'[113] And yet, these contradictory processes of 'fading-away' and 'growing' seem to emphasise, albeit in different ways, the sameness and self-identity of that which is being repeated ('dying').

While echoes may involve a decay or a growth, these processes have their own dynamics. John Hollander's landmark study, *The Figure of Echo*, with which *The Substance of Shadow* 'forms a diptych' (in Kenneth Gross's words),[114] contends that 'the repeated sound is not only contingent upon the first, but in some way a qualified version

[110] *Poems*, II, 152n.
[111] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 30.
[112] See above, Chapter 1.
[113] Peter McDonald, 'Tennyson's Dying Fall', in *Tennyson Among the Poets*, pp. 14–39 (p. 16).
[114] Gross, p. xiv.

of it (a metaphor of the decaying dynamics of successive echoes, perhaps)'.[115] Exploring modes of poetic echoes ranging from mythological echo/Echo to figurative echo, Hollander addresses what appears to be the paradox of the poetic echo. In poetic imagination, echoes are a faded and fragmented reproduction of the original utterance; nevertheless, the original utterance is dependent upon its echoes for its authority, for it is the former that give resonance to the latter (I will have more to say about this in my fifth chapter). What matters for Hollander is 'the revisionary power' of the poetic echo, which gives the original voice a new and expanded life.[116] Poetic echo 'will change, but it will not fade' ('Nothing Will Die', 31). As the epigraph to his longest and most important chapter, Hollander quotes a passage from the American poet W. S. Merwin: 'echoes move forward and backward in time, in rings. […] How did we sound to the past? And there are sounds that rush away from us: echoes of future words.'[117] Following this, Hollander begins his discussion of intertextual echoes:

> When we speak metaphorically of echoes between texts, we imply a correspondence between a precursor and, in the acoustical actuality, a vocal source. What is interesting and peculiar about this is that whereas in nature, the anterior source has a stronger presence and authenticity, the figurative echoes of allusion arise from the later, present text. But it has many sorts of priority over what has been recalled in it. In one way, the relation of echo and source is like the curious dialectic of 'true' meanings of words: the etymon and the present common usage each can claim a different kind of authority.[118]

As we have seen in the first chapter, Tennyson's repetition can be understood more clearly in the light of the Kierkegaardian recollection, in which the past has an absolute

[115] Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 3.
[116] Ibid., p. ix.
[117] Cited in Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*., p. 62.
[118] Ibid.

‘authenticity’, while the present is regarded as its faded copy. But in literary allusion, the present text has ‘priority over what has been recalled in it’. Hollander suggestively compares ‘the relation of echo and source’ to that of ‘the etymon and the present common usage’. I will show in the next chapter how the uses of simile in *In Memoriam* present a critique of the mid-nineteenth century philology which reduced the current meanings of words to their etymons.

3. Unfaithful Likenesses: The Uses of Simile in *In Memoriam*

> She do the bereaved in different voices
> —Denise Riley, 'A Part Song', XIX

A year before Arthur Hallam died, in 1832, Tennyson published two sonnets addressed, it is supposed, to his friend. The second of these ('To —') tries to recall the strong sense of intellectual connection he felt when they first met:

> As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood,
> And ebb into a former life, or seem
> To lapse far back in some confusèd dream
> To states of mystical similitude;
> If one but speaks or hems or stirs his chair,
> Ever the wonder waxeth more and more,
> So that we say, 'All this hath been before,
> All this hath been, I know not when or where.'
> So, friend, when first I looked upon your face,
> Our thought gave answer each to each, so true –
> Opposèd mirrors each reflecting each –
> That though I knew not in what time or place,
> Methought that I had often met with you,
> And either lived in either's heart and speech.
>
> (1–14)

In a 'confusèd dream', where the distinction between present and past blurs, two people lapse into 'states of mystical similitude', finding in each other's words and actions their own likeness. The word 'confusèd' then can be taken to refer specifically to 'perceptions or notions in which the elements or parts are mixed up and not clearly distinguished' (*OED*, 5). This sense of confusion also appears in *In Memoriam* as its speaker reflects on the impact his friend's death has had on him: 'has the shock, so harshly given, / Confused me' and 'made me that delirious man / Whose fancy fuses old and new' (XVI. 11–12, 17–

18). As Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw note, it was not until the early nineteenth century that the word 'fuse', which had originally been a scientific term, began to be used in a figurative sense.[1] The *OED* records its first such use in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817), where the author writes: 'He [A poet, described in *ideal* perfection] diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each'.[2] This description of an ideal poet endorses the renowned Romantic principle of unity, though the rhetoric of the parenthesised 'as it were' exposes the gap between the figurative and the literal, and by extension the gap between principle and practice (the apparent clash of 'diffuses' and '*fuses*' highlights these gaps).[3] Such principles seem to underlie Hallam's own evaluation of Tennyson. In reviewing Tennyson's volume of 1830, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, Hallam praised the poet's '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'.[4] The speaker's self-portrait in *In Memoriam* as a 'delirious man / Whose fancy fuses old and new' incorporates Hallam's language into his own, enacting a unity in which 'either live[s] in either's heart and speech', though the poetic imagination that his friend praised has now become a delirious fancy.

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[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. by Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 162.

[2] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), II, 16.

[3] On the Romantic poetics of unity, see W. K. Wimsatt, 'The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery', in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1954), pp. 103–16; M. H. Abrams, 'Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric', in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to F. A. Pottle*, ed. by F. W. Hillis and H. Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 527–60; Earl R. Wasserman, 'The English Romantics: The Grounds of Knowledge', *Studies in Romanticism*, 4 (1964), 17–34.

[4] Hallam, 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson', in *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, p. 192. Reading this review in a Romantic context, Eileen Tess Johnston suggests that 'Hallam borrows Coleridge's painterly language and his metaphor for the imagination' ('Hallam's Review of Tennyson: Its Context and Significance', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 23 (1981), 1–26 (p. 7)).

This similitude of the two people is mirrored in the self-reflexive use of simile. The extended simile reveals the similarities between the way the speaker and his friend found similarities between themselves at their first meeting and the way two people find similarities between each other in 'states of mystical similitude'. The 'Opposèd mirrors each reflecting each', therefore, stand not just as a metaphor for the speaker and his friend, whose 'thought gave answer each to each', but also as a metaphor for this *mise en abyme* of similarities. A metaphor itself identifies similarities between two different things; or rather, it suggests a sense of unity, as it is not mediated by any intervening verbal markers. As Jane Wright comments:

> 'Opposèd mirrors each reflecting each' creates a sudden condensing of verbal relation which reflects the sense of condensed verbal relation evident for these two people whose thoughts 'answer' to one another – a condition that either condenses a need for words at all, or ensures the kind of precise correspondence or unity of ideas we expect from the aptest metaphors.[5]

By closing the gap between the tenor and the vehicle, metaphor represents sameness rather than similarity, unity rather than similitude. Yet the 'Methought' that opens the penultimate line of the sonnet corroborates the overarching rhetoric of simile, suggesting what the speaker is about to say is just his thought, which may not necessarily give answer to the other's. While aspiring to establish his connection to his friend, the speaker appears to recognise a sign of separation from that very same friend right from their first meeting.

The separation, both mental and physical, was finally and irreversibly confirmed by Hallam's death in 1833. In *In Memoriam*, which was published 17 years later, the speaker seeks to retain his connection with his dead friend by immersing himself in

[5] Jane Wright, 'Appreciating Memorialization: *In Memoriam, A. H. H.*', *TRB*, 9 (2007), 77–95 (p. 78).

memory, but as the poet says in one of his notes to the poem, 'if there were a perfect memory of all sorrows & sins we should not be able to bear it.'[6] Writing about Tennyson's forgetfulness, James R. Kincaid maintains that 'if memory really worked it would be of less than no use to us; it would kill us', so 'what we need is *forgetting*'.[7] Indeed, the speaker's act of recollection is often opposed by a counterforce of forgetting. Even if he himself had a perfect memory, the spirit of his friend might no longer remember him, as it will now be 'moving up from high to higher' (LXIV. 13). The speaker realises: 'It was but unity of place / That made me dream I ranked with him' (XLII. 3–4). Now that he does not share the same place with his friend, there is no link to anchor them. So he laments: 'I have lost the links that bound / Thy changes' (XLI. 6–7). In section LXXIV, he attempts to discover some links connecting his friend to this world:

> As sometimes in a dead man's face,
> To those that watch it more and more,
> A likeness, hardly seen before,
> Comes out – to some one of his race:
>
> So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
> I see thee what thou art, and know
> Thy likeness to the wise below,
> Thy kindred with the great of old.
>
> But there is more than I can see,
> And what I see I leave unsaid,
> Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
> His darkness beautiful with thee.
>
> (1–12)

Again, the way the simile reveals resemblances reflects the way in which the bereaved

[6] *Poems*, II, 363n.
[7] Kincaid, 'Forgetting to Remember: Tennyson's Happy Losses', in *Annoying the Victorians* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 99–111 (p. 100). See also Erik Gray, 'Forgetting FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát*', *SEL*, 41 (2001), 765–83 (pp. 766–68).

see physiognomic or intellectual likenesses between the dead and their kin, with the correspondence of the form to the content creating a feeling of unity. But simile does not recognise something that exceeds similarity, or likeness. In simile, the things compared are united but ultimately distinguished. When the speaker says, 'there is more than I can see', he knows that certain changes in the world beyond divides his friend from his race below.

In this chapter, I show how the poem's conflicting operations of union and division are enacted at the verbal level through its use of simile, which can be seen as a figure of echo as well as a figure of mirror-image (Steven G. Darian lists the verb 'echo' as one of the markers of the trope (as in 'The voices further back in the train echoing the distant drone of bees')).[8] The speaker uses simile in comparing his words to echoes as if to demonstrate their echoing effect:

> In those sad words I took farewell:
> Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
> As drop by drop the water falls
> In vaults and catacombs, they fell […].
>
> (LVIII. 1–4)

> For I myself with these have grown
> To something greater than before;
>
> Which makes appear the songs I made
> As echoes out of weaker times,
> As half but idle brawling rhymes,
> The sport of random sun and shade.
>
> (Epilogue. 21–24)

[8] Steven G. Darian, 'Similes and the Creative Process', *Language and Style*, 6 (1973), 48–57 (p. 53). Darian also lists 'recall' as a marker of simile (as in 'The rain striking the car recalls the impatient fingers drumming on can') (Ibid.).

Simile is a way of saying something in other words, and as such a kind of repetition. It echoes, by way of comparison, what has been said in a different manner, identifying and at the same time multiplying its signification. The self-performative repetition of simile in these lines then exposes simultaneously the desire to fix a comparison and the desire to keep it undetermined. These conflicting desires in the language could represent a counterstatement to the Romantic ideal of unity. Romantic poetics, however, is not self-evidently monolithic. In his *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*, Seamus Perry shows how Coleridge's official endorsement of unity and organicism is contradicted by his characteristic double-vision, or di-vision. [9] In a similar vein, Susan J. Wolfson convincingly shows how Coleridge's similes work against his poetics of organic unity.[10] Wolfson argues: 'The "difference" that simile, for better or worse, always implies helps explain the pervasive interest in Romantic poetics in events that call the power of comparison into question or suspend it altogether, canceling its efforts in the sensation of a totalizing unity.'[11] Drawing on her argument, this chapter explores the way in which the poem's linguistic negotiation with simile at once helps both to unify the speaker's own voice and also to bring in other, different voices.

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Tennyson once said of *In Memoriam*: '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 a new life – a sort of Divine Comedy, cheerful at the close.'[12] Elegy typically follows a movement from lingering on private

[9] Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).
[10] Susan J. Wolfson, 'The Formings of Simile: Coleridge's "Comparing Power"', in *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 63–99.
[11] Ibid., p. 87
[12] *Poems*, II, 312.

sorrow to making progress into a public world. But *In Memoriam* is not as decisive as its author claimed it to be. The moment the poem brings about what is called an 'elegiac reversal', it suffers another reversal. As the speaker of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' says, 'In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse' (47–48).[13] Seamus Perry claims that this indecisiveness, or double-heartedness, is a hallmark of the best elegies: 'the greatest elegiac poetry (like most actual grief I suppose) doesn't exhibit merely a recuperative return to the world, but rather a kind of double-heartedness, which recognizes the need to move on, while staying true to the dead'.[14] After the death of a beloved one, we might actually feel a certain reluctance or hesitancy to change our mood very rapidly; for one thing, even when we try to forget the past, we are still fixated on it and cannot help looking back to it, and for another, even when we finally make up our mind to move on, thinking that we cannot brood over the past for ever, we still question if we can be (in the poem's words) 'such a changeling' (XVI. 4). Likewise, the speaker of *In Memoriam* wavers back and forth between grief and consolation, recollection and progress, memory and hope. Although Tennyson sometimes called the poem 'The Way of the Soul',[15] a title which might seem to point to a trajectory ascending towards an end, he eventually decided on the present title, which through its very name expresses an immersion in memory.

Through recollection, the speaker retains his connection with the past, and in so doing, displays the constancy of his love for his friend ('I long to prove / No lapse of moons can canker Love' (XXVI. 2–3)). The connective process involved in memory is

[13] Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Ricks and Jim McCue, 2 vols (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), I, 6.
[14] Perry, 'Elegy', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Antony H. Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 115–33 (p. 116).
[15] *Memoir*, I, 393.

suggested by the etymology of the verb 'forget'. As Lewis Hyde writes:

> The roots of the English 'forget' go back to Old High German, where the *for-* prefix indicates abstaining from or neglecting and the Germanic **getan* means 'to hold' or 'to grasp.' To remember is to latch on to something, to hold it in mind; to forget is to let it slip from consciousness, to drop it.[16]

In *In Memoriam*, the act of remembrance often manifests itself in the form of holding. As Erik Gray notes in his introduction to the Norton edition of the poem, 'the notion of *clasping*' repeatedly appears 'as one of the central images of the poem'.[17] Through recourse to such an image, which is itself a recollection of the first of the sonnets dedicated to Arthur Hallam ('claspt hand-in-hand with thee' ('If I were loved, as I desire to be', 9)),[18] the poem demonstrates its speaker's unchanged love for his friend:

> I held it truth, with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.
>
> 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?
>
> Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned […].
>
> (I. 1–9)

The speaker chooses to confront grief rather than lose the sense of loss under the rule of the 'victor Hours' (13), since he fears that to stop grieving would be to stop loving.

[16] Lewis Hyde, *A Primer for Forgetting: Getting Past the Past* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), p. 13.
[17] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. by Erik Gray (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. xvii.
[18] Christopher Ricks notes that this sonnet 'anticipates the mood and thought of *In Memoriam*' (*Poems*, I, 386).

However, the holding on to grief is prefaced by the dropping of a belief. Eric Griffiths observes how the past tense of 'I held' marks the changing of the speaker's beliefs: 'The simple past next to "I" immediately sets off the existence of the subject against change of state, and very sharply so, for this opening section of *In Memoriam* records altered convictions about the processes of alteration through which a self passes.'[19] The speaker used to believe in the division between the states of self, but now he tries to prove his constancy by remembering the death of his friend. This alteration itself reveals his changeableness, compromising his faithfulness towards his friend. (Such a tension between constancy and changeability, integrity and diversity, is already latent in the situation of his precursor, 'who sings / To *one* clear harp in *divers* tones'.[20])

These conflicting processes of unity and division, connection and separation are embodied in the relationship between the words in a simile. The simile is 'a figure of speech most conservatively defined as an explicit comparison using *like* or *as*', where 'the function of the comparison is to reveal an unexpected likeness between two seemingly disparate things'.[21] This 'function of the comparison' seems to be shared with metaphor; but where similes require such comparative markers as 'like' and 'as', metaphors do not. Rather than comparing two things, metaphors aspire to substitute one thing for the other. Quintilian made this point clearly, in his *Institutio Oratoria*, which, along with Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Cicero's *De Oratore*, was a standard text in Victorian

[19] Griffiths, 'Tennyson's Idle Tears', in *Tennyson: Seven Essays*, ed. by Philip Collins (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 36–60 (p. 47)
[20] Tennyson says 'I believe I alluded to Goethe. Among his last words were these: "Von Aenderungen zu höheren Aenderungen," "from changes to higher changes"' (*Memoir*, II, 391). Shatto and Shaw, however, point out that these words are not found in Goethe's last writings (Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. by Shatto and Shaw, p. 162).
[21] Jacqueline Vaught Brogan and Hallie Smith Richmond, 'Simile', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 1306–07 (p. 1306).

rhetorical education:[22]

> In general terms, Metaphor is a shortened form of Simile; the difference is that in Simile something is *compared with* the thing we wish to describe, while in Metaphor one thing is *substituted for* the other. It is a comparison when I say that a man acted "like a lion," a Metaphor when I say of a man 'he is a lion.'[23]

Similes tend to be longer than metaphors by an extra 'like' or 'as', and have thus been regarded as a loose and unresolved form of metaphor. While metaphor, in theory, denotes the identification of two things that are compared, it can also take in other forms of comparison, not least the simile. In the everyday use of the word, metaphor is almost synonymous with simile, and indeed it is often used as a substitute for simile (it is probably because of the replaceability of simile with metaphor that there is no adjectival form for simile). Metaphor, thus, contains within its semantic extension a contradiction, or a paradox. Simile, with its very aspiration towards unity as well as division, identifies itself with, and at the same time distinguishes itself from, metaphor.

It is true that metaphor, which connects two things without the mediation of any verbal markers, has always attracted more critical attention.[24] Some critics have written about the uses of metaphor in *In Memoriam*: Peter Allan Dale, for example, examines the meaning of metaphor in the poem, following Wallace Stevens's remark that 'it is only au pays de la métaphore qu'on est poète'.[25] The implications of the word 'métaphore',

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[22] As John L. Mahoney points out, the educational system which emphasised the classical rhetorical tradition ranging from Aristotle to Cicero and Quintilian, developed in the sixteenth century, 'was not significantly modified until well into the nineteenth' ('The Classical Tradition in the Eighteenth Century English Rhetorical Education', *History of Education Journal*, 9 (1958), 93–97 (p. 93)).

[23] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education Vol I–V*, trans. by D. A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 429.

[24] See Jacqueline Vaught Brogan and Richmond, 'Simile', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, p. 1307.

[25] Cited in Peter Allan Dale, '"Gracious Lies": The Meaning of Metaphor in *In Memoriam*', *VP*, 18 (1980), 147–67 (p. 147). It is known that Stevens read a great deal of Tennyson's poems, including *In*

however, escape any attempt to identify it with itself. In her study of *Stevens and Simile*, Jacqueline Vaught Brogan emphasises the power of simile to sustain the conflicting processes of connection and separation. While simile works to find similarities between two things compared, it does not regard them as being identical. 'In simile', Brogan says, 'one thing is said only to resemble another, never to *be* another'.[26] To say that 'he is *like* a lion' is to recognise that he resembles a lion but that at the same time he is not a lion. By omitting 'like' and 'as', metaphor aspires to annihilate the difference between two things and fuse them into one.[27] On the other hand, simile attempts to connect one thing to another, while keeping them separate. In simile, two things are joined but still distinguished, just as in heaven the souls will be reunited but divided from each other:

> That each, who seems a separate whole,
> Should move his rounds, and fusing all
> The skirts of self again, should fall
> Remerging in the general Soul,
>
> Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside;
> And I shall know him when we meet […].
>
> (XLVII. 1–8)

Shatto and Shaw observe that these lines might be a reminiscence of Hallam's 'A

Memoriam. See Joseph Carroll, 'The Ancient and the Modern Sage: Tennyson and Stevens', *VP*, 22 (1984), 1–14.

[26] Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, *Stevens and Simile: A Theory of Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 125–26.

[27] It could also be said, though, that metaphor, despite or because of its aspiration for unity, makes us even more conscious of the incongruity between the things compared. Criticising 'the idea that a metaphor has, in addition to its literal sense or meaning, another sense or meaning', Donald Davidson argues that a sentence which features a metaphor is mostly false in a literal sense, and it is the '[a]bsurdity or contradiction' in such a sentence that 'guarantees we won't believe it and invites us, under proper circumstances, to take the sentence metaphorically'. Donald Davidson, 'What metaphors mean', in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 245–64 (pp. 246, 258).

Meeting and a Farewell', which he wrote in 1829 in fear of not meeting his friend, J. M. Gaskell, for a while:[28] 'Oh, may we recognize each other there [in another world], / My bosom friend! May we cleave to each other / And love once more together!' (38–40).[29] Whereas these lines reveal Hallam's Romantic emphasis on unity (the word 'cleave' communicates a sense of close adhesion), Tennyson's version counterbalances such a focus on self-effacing fusion by admitting the precedence of division over union. In transferring and translating his friend's words into his own, Tennyson teases out the semantic duplexity of 'cleave' in Hallam's line. 'Cleave' corresponds to two separate words with opposite meanings – one signifies 'to stick fast or adhere, as by a glutinous surface, to' (*OED*, cleave, v.[2], 1), while the other 'to part or divide by a cutting blow; to hew asunder; to split' (cleave, v.[1], 1) – with the very identity and division of these words representing their antithetical senses (they have the same spelling but different origins).[30] In this act of (in Susan Wolfson's words) '(inter)textual similizing',[31] Tennyson seeks to maintain a connection with Hallam while at the same time keeping him and his friend separate, as if mirroring the way their souls will be reunited yet divided in heaven.

The tension between the contradictory endeavours of simile is encapsulated in the 'as if' construction, another comparative marker.[32] In his 1911 book *The Philosophy of*

[28] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. by Shatto and Shaw, p. 212.
[29] Hallam, *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, p. 37.
[30] In his essay on 'The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words', Freud compares the English 'to cleave [(in the sense of) 'to split']' with the German 'kleben [to stick]' to illustrate the way in which two different words derive from an original word with a double meaning ('The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), VI, 155–61 (p. 159)). However, 'kleben', or 'to cleave' ('to stick'), and 'to cleave' ('to split') have different etymological roots.
[31] Wolfson, p. 67. For the analogy between the figure of simile and literary allusion, see also Matthew Reynolds, 'Like and Unlike: Dante in Tennyson's "Maud"', in *Likenesses: Translation, Illustration, Interpretation* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), pp. 13–36.
[32] See Jacqueline Vaught Brogan and Richmond, 'Simile', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, p. 1307.

'As If', the German philosopher Hans Vaihinger offers a close analysis of this phrase. He divides this 'strange combination of particles' into its component parts, exposing the way in which the comparison implied by the 'as' is modified by the condition implied by the 'if': 'This formula, then, states that reality as given, the particular, is *compared* with something whose impossibility and unreality is at the same time admitted.'[33] While the 'as' attempts to connect two terms through a comparison, the 'if' attempts to keep them separate by introducing a conditional clause that makes a statement which contradicts the facts. Vaihinger writes:

> First we have – this lies in the 'as' – quite clearly an equating of two terms […]. But to this primary thought another secondary one is added which is expressed by the conditional phrase. The form of this conditional statement affirms that the condition is an unreal or impossible one.[34]

Although the word 'as' in itself maintains the tension between the two conflicting desires (Tennyson uses 'as' in the sense of 'as if' in section CVII: 'Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat / Of all things even as he were by' (19–20)),[35] the compound conjunction 'as if' reveals that tension in an amplified manner. The following use of 'as though' in *In Memoriam* further exaggerates the gap in comparison:

> For now so strange do these things seem,
> Mine eyes have leisure for their tears;
>
> My fancies time to rise on wing,
> And glance about the approaching sails,
> As though they brought but merchants' bales,
> And not the burthen that they bring.

[33] Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of 'As If': A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. by C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1935), pp. 91, 93.
[34] Ibid., p. 258. See also Brogan, pp. 127–39; Wolfson, p. 94.
[35] For this use, see *OED*, as, adv. and conj., 8. b: 'Expressing a comparison with a hypothetical fact or state expressed by the subjunctive: as if, as though'.

(XIII. 15–20)

The simile allows the speaker to imagine a world in which his friend is still alive and the ship is not bringing back his remains, but at the same time it reminds him that his friend is no longer alive. The speaker, who deplores the fact that people make light of lost possible worlds (‘The world which credits what is done / Is cold to all that might have been’ (LXXV. 15–16), frequently adopts the subjunctive mood.[36] Here, the redundant repetition of the verb in the two moods (‘brought’/‘bring’) emphasises the unbridgeable gulf between imagination and reality.

The juxtaposition of ‘in truth’ and ‘As if’ in the following lines, where the speaker describes the burying of his friend at the funeral, well captures the opposition of the real and the imaginative:

> ’Tis little; but it looks in truth
> As if the quiet bones were blest
> Among familiar names to rest
> And in the places of his youth.
>
> (XVIII. 5–8)

While ‘in truth’ seeks to claim the verisimilitude of the blessing on the bones, ‘As if’ and the subjunctive (‘were’) reveals its imaginary status. As Erik Gray notes, the poet did not actually attend the burial of Hallam, and it was not until many years later that he visited St Andrew’s Church at Clevedon, where his friend is buried.[37] So this description is itself a fictional representation of the burial. Here the gap between reality and imagination is

[36] On the poem’s frequent use of the subjunctive mood, see Harry Puckett, ‘Subjunctive Imagination in *In Memoriam*’, *VP*, 12 (1974), 97–124.
[37] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. by Erik Gray, p. 17n.

thoughtfully embodied on the page in the white space after 'truth'.

It is probably this desire to keep the things compared unresolved through the opening of the imaginative space as embodied in the 'if' of the 'as if' construction that accounts for the simile's tendency to become lengthy and discursive. In his study of *The Language of Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'*, Alan Sinfield insists that as 'ways of forming figurative connections between words', there is no essential difference between metaphor and simile. He writes: 'I am inclined to agree with Middleton Murry that "it seems impossible to regard metaphors and similes as different in any essential property: metaphor is compressed simile"'.[38] However, it is the compression, or the annihilation, of the gap between literal and figurative in metaphor that essentially separates these two figures. Sinfield points out that similes 'may easily become over explicit and lengthy' and 'Tennyson sometimes falls into this trap'.[39] Indeed, one of the most prominent features of the poem's similes is their sheer length; some of the sections are almost entirely built upon an extended simile.[40] However, the poem's use of extended similes, highlighting one essential property of the trope, plays an important role in its practices of remembering and forgetting.

Section LXIV, for example, dramatises the speaker's speculation about the retention of memory through an extended simile comparing his friend, who has now moved on to a higher angelic sphere, to 'some divinely gifted man', who, despite his 'low estate', moves up the ladder of success:

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[38] Sinfield, *The Language of Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), p. 136. Sinfield's source for the Middleton Murry quotation is *Countries of the Mind*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 3.
[39] Sinfield, *The Language of Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'*, p. 137.
[40] See, e.g., sections VIII, XIX, XXI, LXII, LXV, XCVII.

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
  As some divinely gifted man,
  Whose life in low estate began
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
  And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
  And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known
  And lives to clutch the golden keys,
  To mould a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
  Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
  The pillar of a people's hope,
The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
  When all his active powers are still,
  A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
  While yet beside its vocal springs
  He played at counsellors and kings,
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea
  And reaps the labour of his hands,
  Or in the furrow musing stands;
'Does my old friend remember me?'

(1–28)

As James D. Kissane pointedly suggests, the speaker's fears about his friend forgetting him are 'inversions of a more serious, "actual" fear that the poet will forget Hallam'.[41] Here the alternating pulls of connection and separation are not only represented by the transition from 'breaks' to 'grasps' (which is underlined by the alliterative movement

[41] James D. Kissane, *Alfred Tennyson* (New York: Twayne, 1970), p. 100.

from ‘breasts’ to ‘grapples’ in the succeeding lines), but also expressed and explored through the verbal relation that the simile seeks to establish. Although ‘moving up from high to higher’ recalls the earthly ascension of the speaker’s friend (‘Thy spirit ere our fatal loss / Did ever rise from high to higher’ (XLI. 1–2)), the language here (‘makes by force his merit known’, ‘lives to clutch the golden keys’), which Elaine Jordan calls ‘the worst in *In Memoriam*’, [42] does not seem faithful to his pure and noble spirit. The simile’s connection to the subject is severed when, in yet another simile, nostalgic feelings are compared to ‘a pensive dream’; part of the extended simile itself becomes the subject, making us forget that what we are reading is a simile. While the last line (‘Does my old friend remember me?’) echoes the question at the beginning (‘Dost thou look back on what hath been’) and reminds us that what we have been reading is a simile (and as such a reimagination of the speaker’s fears about the duration of his friend’s memory), the question mark, which ought to be ascribed to the opening question, belongs to the last one, as if to indicate the simile’s independence and separation from the subject.

The speaker appears to be aware of the simile’s power of mediating the contradictory pulls of connection and separation. In section XL, the speaker, wishing to forget the death of his friend, compares the spirits of the deceased to a new bride:

> Could we forget the widowed hour
> And look on Spirits breathed away,
> As on a maiden in the day
> When first she wears her orange-flower!
>
> When crowned with blessing she doth rise
> To take her latest leave of home,
> And hopes and light regrets that come
> Make April of her tender eyes;

[42] Elaine Jordan, *Alfred Tennyson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 134.

And doubtful joys the father move,
   And tears are on the mother's face,
   As parting with a long embrace
She enters other realms of love;

Her office there to rear, to teach,
   Becoming as is meet and fit
   A link among the days, to knit
The generations each with each […].

(1–16)

This is an example of the poem's extended similes, about whose efficacy the speaker is only vaguely positive. The simile describes the bride's separation from her old home and her entrance into a new life. The 'long embrace' before 'parting' displays at the same time both the bride's slight reluctance ('light regrets') and her father's mixed feelings ('doubtful joys'); however, in 'other realms of love', she fulfils her parental duties and becomes 'A link' to the next generation. Thus, via the simile, the speaker gains a perspective from which to view his friend's death positively. In the succeeding stanza, the speaker turns to his friend:

And, doubtless, unto thee is given
   A life that bears immortal fruit
   In those great offices that suit
The full-grown energies of heaven.

(17–20)

He is now convinced that his friend has a prosperous life beyond the grave ('doubtful' in line 9 becomes 'doubtless'). The idea that the soul of the dead rises to a higher life where it develops its full potential is a recurrent one in *In Memoriam*. It is from the similarities between the spirits of the dead and a bride that the speaker gets the idea.

But more importantly, he is aware of the difference between them too: 'Ay me, the

difference I discern!' (21). Whereas the bride can return home again ('How often she herself return' (24)), his friend cannot:

> But thou and I have shaken hands,
> Till growing winters lay me low;
> My paths are in the fields I know,
> And thine in undiscovered lands.
>
> (29–32)

The shaking hands refer us back to 'A hand that can be clasped no more' (5) in section VII, the last stanza of which flashes a distant gleam of hope: 'He is not here; but far away / The noise of life begins again' (9–10). As critics have pointed out, the first two lines allow for two possible readings.[43] Typically, one would read through the unpunctuated line-ending; but the white space at the end of the first line constitutes a pause. If one stops after the line-break, the line reads as if it says: 'He is not here but rather he is far away' (note the way the repetition of 'He' in '*he*re' hints at his friend's continued existence). Here, the line-break causes a bifurcation in the voice, giving the speaker an intimation of his friend's immortality.[44] Similarly, the last line of section XL opens up the possibility that the friend is far away: 'undiscovered' implies that those lands are not yet discovered but do exist somewhere. As W. David Shaw writes: 'Tennyson is a master of paraleipsis, the rhetorical trope that, in pretending to pass over a matter, tells it most effectively.'[45] In denying something, Tennyson draws attention to it, intentionally or unintentionally. The

[43] Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, p. 127; Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 147.
[44] For a similar effect, see LIV. 13–16, LXXII. 5–6, LXXXIV. 27–29. W. David Shaw shows how Tennyson uses line breaks, ellipses, and two-way grammar to create indecision and brokenness (*Elegy & Paradox: Testing the Conventions* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 221–24).
[45] Shaw, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: The Poet in an Age of Theory* (New York: Twayne, 1996), p. 122.

trope thus bears 'the signature of his self-divided mind'.[46] One of the most famous examples of this is found in 'Mariana': 'Unlifted was the clinking latch' (6). Critics have observed how we cannot help but imagine the latch being lifted up despite the denial.[47] James Richardson calls this the paradox of 'absent presence'.[48] In section LXXXIV, for example, the speaker fancies that 'I see their unborn faces shine / Beside the never-lighted fire' (19–20). Although his friend's children are 'unborn', the speaker sees their shining faces (the sense of 'shine' shifts across the line-break, conjuring up the light of 'the never-lighted fire'). In the same way, the last line of section XL suggests the discovery of 'undiscovered lands', the ellipsis of the main verb 'are' drawing attention to the need for its presence ('are' itself means presence).

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The poem's similes enact in their verbal or linguistic relations the elegiac undertaking of remembering and forgetting. They also embody the processes of connection with and separation from the Romantic tradition that the poet's friend represents. Aidan Day shows that Arthur Hallam's own poem of 'Timbuctoo' 'reads like a versified treatise on the imagination and we should be hard pressed to recognise in it that "vital union" between language and figure which we take to be a distinguishing feature of the fully realised Romantic poem'.[49] Romantic poetics aspires towards a unity between the author and the first-person narrator, the intention and the expression, the word and its referent, and

[46] Ibid.
[47] For example, Ricks observes: 'We strain our ears for the unforthcoming sound, for "uplifted", not "unlifted"' (*Tennyson*, p. 45).
[48] James Richardson, *Vanishing Lives: Style and Self in Tennyson, D. G. Rossetti, Swinburne, and Yeats* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), p. 32.
[49] Aidan Day, 'The Spirit of Fable: Arthur Hallam and Romantic Values in Tennyson's "Timbuctoo"', *TRB*, 4 (1983), 59–71 (p. 60). Roger Ebbatson sees Hallam specifically as a belated Romantic in *Landscapes of Eternal Return: Tennyson to Hardy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 21–48.

therefore values the trope of metaphor as representing the relational function of language in producing such unity. This attitude informed not only the metaphorical use of words in poetry but also the exploration of the metaphorical nature of language. In his essay, 'A Defence of Poetry', Shelley insists that 'language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things'.[50] The adjective 'metaphorical' here, though, could be applied to any form of comparison, such a loose use of the word betraying a counterforce of division within language.

As critics have pointed out, the study of language is of central importance to Victorian poets: for them, as Sarah Weaver says, 'philology both provided a philosophical framework for the importance of their craft and influenced their literary decisions'.[51] As an apprentice poet, Tennyson personally benefited from contemporary philology, and the period in which Tennyson wrote *In Memoriam* coincides with the development of Romantic linguistic theories, which emphasise the metaphorical nature of language.[52] The rest of this chapter will focus on how the poem's use of simile presents a critique of such metaphorical theories of language, highlighting the tension within language itself between unity and division. While the poem seeks to achieve its desired unity through its engagement with a linguistic theory which upholds the unitive tendency of language, it is

[50] Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd edn (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002), p. 512.
[51] Weaver, 'Victorian Philology and the Metaphors of Language', *Literature Compass*, 12 (2015), 333–43 (p. 335).
[52] For the influence of contemporary linguistics on Tennyson, see Patrick Greig Scott, '"Flowering in A Lonely World": Tennyson and the Victorian Study of Language', *VP*, 18 (1980), 371–81; Elizabeth A. Hirsh, '"No Record of Reply": *In Memoriam* and Victorian Language Theory', *ELH*, 55 (1988), 233–57; William A. Wilson, 'Victorian Philology and the Anxiety of Language in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 30 (1988), 28–48; Richard Marggraf Turley, 'Tennyson and the Nineteenth-Century Language Debate', *Leeds Studies in English*, 28 (1997), 123–40. For Herder's invention of Romantic philology and its mediation to the Victorians through Coleridge, see Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 3–45.

also committed to the contemporary geological discourse which sees the world as being in a continual process of division. The poem's similes mediate this opposition between linguistic unity and geological division, embodying these conflicting processes in their very form.

As an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, Tennyson was acquainted with a number of leading philologists, among them his tutor, William Whewell, who played an important role in popularising philology. Tennyson joined the Apostles, the exclusive undergraduate society at Trinity, in the spring of 1829. As Hans Aarsleff notes, this society included many young scholars who were to take a lead in the new philology, such as John Donaldson, John Mitchell Kemble, Frederick Denison Maurice and Richard Chenevix Trench.[53] According to Donald S. Hair, Tennyson and his fellow Apostles reacted against the old philology, which was founded on a Lockean empiricist view of language as 'the arbitrary linking of word and thing', and turned instead to what John Stuart Mill was to call 'Germano-Coleridgian' thinking, which saw words not as 'the labels of dead things but rather living powers'.[54] This view of language was fully expounded in Trench's first and most influential book on language, *On the Study of Words*, published a year after *In Memoriam* in 1851.[55]

On the Study of Words is based on a series of lectures delivered to the pupils at the Diocesan Training School in Winchester. At the beginning of the introductory lecture,

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[53] Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780–1860* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p.192.
[54] Donald S. Hair, *Tennyson's Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 4.
[55] Trench is considered 'one of most popular linguists of mid-nineteenth-century Britain' (Tony Crowley, *Standard English and the Politics of Language*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 43). At around this same time, in Oxford, the comparative philologist Friedrich Max Müller, with whom Tennyson conversed later in his life, was propagating a similar view of language. For the influence of Müller on Lewis Carroll, see Williams, 'Lewis Carroll and the Private Life of Words', *Review of English Studies*, 64 (2013), 651–71.

Trench tries to explain to the pupils why words are worth studying by emphasising that 'in words contemplated singly, there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth […] laid up'.[56] Trench expands Emerson's characterisation of language as 'fossil poetry' into 'fossil ethics' and 'fossil history'.[57] In words, not only beautiful thoughts and images but also moral truths and historical facts are embalmed. Words quite often contain a witness to moral truths, and whether these truths are developed or debased in human history, words keep a record of that change. As a theologian, Trench derives the moral senses contained in words from their divine roots: 'God having pressed such a seal of truth upon language', says Trench, 'men are continually uttering deeper things than they know'.[58] Tony Crowley astutely comments: 'in a neat, pre-emptive reversal of Freud's interpretation of the slips of the tongue as revelations of the dark repressed aspect of humanity, Trench reads the human use of languages as revealing moral truth in spite of any conscious intention'.[59] According to this deterministic view, language acts in accordance with divine laws, independent of human control, and all we can do is help its development through our use of words, though as our faith grows weaker, our sensitivity to the primary, divine sense of words declines. In the lecture 'On the Morality of Words', Trench finds the proof of man's fallenness 'from the heights of his original creation' in the debasement of language.[60] For Trench, the original meaning of a word possesses absolute authority as the expression of universal truths, and to bring the divine power of words into full play, it is necessary to hark back to their root sense. Hence his etymological approach to words. Throughout the lectures, he seeks to explicate the divine truths latent

[56] Richard Chenevix Trench, *On the Study of Words*, 22nd edn (New York: Macmillan, 1900), p. 1.
[57] Ibid., p. 5.
[58] Ibid., p. 7.
[59] Crowley, *Language and History: Theories and Texts* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 156.
[60] Trench, p. 74.

in words with reference to their original, authoritative definition. For this purpose, he does not admit ambiguity to enter into a word, but reduces its derivative meanings to its origin:

> [A] word originally has but one meaning, and […] all the others, however widely they may diverge from one another and seem to recede from this one, may yet be affiliated upon it, may be brought back to the one central meaning, which grasps and knits them altogether.[61]

Trench suggests that the etymological exploration reveals the metaphorical relationship between a word and its meaning: quoting the German writer and philosopher Jean Paul, he writes 'All language is […] a collection of faded metaphors'.[62] Arguing that Trench's 'fascination with linguistic origins lies in the metaphorical nature of language', Sarah Weaver points out that Trench's own language is itself highly metaphorical.[63] Using the Coleridgean definition of words as 'living powers',[64] Trench compares words to trees:

> [Words] are not merely arbitrary signs, but living powers […]; not, like the sands of the sea, innumerable disconnected atoms, but growing out of roots, clustering in families, connecting and intertwining themselves with all that men have been doing and thinking and feeling from the beginning of the world till now.[65]

In contrast to the simile, which suggests the division and multiplicity of words, the metaphor represents their organic unity. The development of words is the unfolding of the divine power contained in their roots.

In her reading of *In Memoriam* as an attempt to negotiate the process of mourning

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[61] Ibid., p. 314.
[62] Ibid., p. 48.
[63] Weaver, 'Victorian Philology and the Metaphors of Language', p. 333–34.
[64] Coleridge, *Essays on his Times in the Morning Post and the Courier*, ed. by David V. Erdman, 3 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), II, 249.
[65] Trench, pp. 43–44.

via contemporary discourses on geology, language, and politics, Isobel Armstrong discusses the speaker's reference to the roots of the yew tree in relation to Trench's writings.[66] In section II, the speaker sees in the yew in the churchyard, which seems indifferent to the passage of Time ('thy thousand years of gloom' (12)), the embodiment of his lasting grief:

> Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
> That name the under-lying dead,
> Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
> Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.
>
> (1–4)

'Under-lying' here literally means 'lying under or beneath' (*OED*, 3. a); but, as a sort of dead metaphor, it can also mean 'forming a basis or foundation to' (3. b), as if to suggest the yew is living on the nutrients it gathers from the decomposing body. However, such an organic cycle of life is disrupted by the ongoing process of division. The speaker repeats the image of clasping found in the previous section ('Let Love clasp Grief'); but far from strengthening the sense of connection, the repetition of the image involves a loosening of the grip: the words of the poem say 'graspest *at* the stones', not 'graspest the stones'. Timothy Peltason comments on these lines that the speaker reaches down with the yew to the dead end of grief in 'the tactile precision of that first stanza', but, as Peltason himself admits, despite the typically Tennysonian microscopic gaze at the yew's

[66] Armstrong, pp. 250–54. Armstrong, p. 250. She concedes that: 'To put Lyell by Trench is incongruous: it is to put an infinitely subtle intellect beside a superficial populariser' (p. 256). Her treatment of Trench as 'a superficial populariser' is not quite fair, though. Matthew Sperling argues rather that 'Trench's striking, memorable, and accessible discussions of the history of language communicate the qualities and significances of their chosen examples with persuasive force – even where Trench's interpretations seem deeply entrenched in mid-Victorian conservative ideology' ('Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–1886)', in *British Writers XIX*, ed. by Jay Parini and Ian Scott-Kilvert (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2013), 317–34 (p. 323)).

'fibres', the 'dreamless head' which they net is 'an oddly loose and soft image'.[67]

Armstrong herself suggests that the poem is complicated by an antagonistic discourse, namely, Lyell's geology. She points out that 'Lyell often thinks of geological remains as a language created by the "author" of the world'.[68] But whereas Trench discovers the will of God, the author of all nature, in language, by tracing it back to its origins, Lyell only recognises patterns of change caused by the repetition in geological processes, without assuming any design or divine authorial intention behind them. As Armstrong writes:

> Lyell's charting of the ceaseless subsidence, upheaval, displacement and transfer of the earth's matter turns all geological evidence into material remains, the non-volitional posthumous monuments of past process. It posits a diachronic flux in which we can discover the manifestations of secondary causes, but not origins, an economy which demonstrates a pattern but no meaning and teleology […].[69]

The linguistic implication of Lyell's non-teleological view of the world is that a word will suffer changes in its use, acquiring different meanings which cannot be reduced back to its 'original' meaning. Armstrong suggests that *In Memoriam* 'tests out the extent to which language can be freed from the univocal "type" of meaning'.[70] Michelle Geric, in her recent study on *Tennyson and Geology*, takes up Armstrong's argument, and emphasises the significance of Lyell's geology for *In Memoriam*. While Geric argues that by following Lyell's 'strategy of division', *In Memoriam* conceived 'an entirely different poetics' that works 'against Adamic and teleological epistemologies',[71] the poem's use of

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[67] Timothy Peltason, *Reading 'In Memoriam'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 25.
[68] Armstrong, p. 261.
[69] Ibid., p. 262.
[70] Ibid., p. 265.
[71] Michelle Geric, *Tennyson and Geology: Poetry and Poetics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 13.

simile exposes the unresolved tension between the unitive and disjunctive tendencies of language. While the poem's extended similes tend to emphasise the disruptive and discursive nature of the trope, a ready recourse to repeated similes, which constitutes another, though less conspicuous, feature of the poem's use of simile, suggests the desire to unsettle as well as establish verbal connections.[72] For example,

> Henceforth, wherever thou mayst roam,
> My blessing, like a line of light,
> Is on the waters day and night,
> And like a beacon guards thee home.
>
> (XVII. 9–12)

> Thy spirit ere our fatal loss
> Did ever rise from high to higher;
> As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
> As flies the lighter through the gross.
>
> (XLI. 1–4)

The poem's successive similes across sections might also be seen as a repetitive use of simile. The speaker compares himself variously to a dove ('as a dove' (XII. 1)), to a bark ('like the unhappy bark' (XVI. 12)), to a girl ('like an idle girl' (LII. 13), 'Like some poor girl' (LX. 3)), and to a blind man ('like to him whose sight is lost' (LXVI. 8)).[73] These, together with some other examples, can be seen both as an attempt to find a perfect likeness between things compared and as an attempt to deny such a likeness.

Section V, which stands as a kind of metapoem, a self-reflexive foregrounding of

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[72] Erik Gray argues that the repeated use of a simile suggests vacillation or equivocation, giving a 'richness' to the voice ('Faithful Likenesses: Lists of Similes in Milton, Shelley, and Rossetti', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 48 (2006), 291–311 (p. 293)).

[73] Such comparisons have raised a concern about the speaker's, and the poet's, sexuality. Ricks suggests that 'the reiterated metaphor of man and wife in the poem is sufficiently explicable in the simplest terms: that Hallam had been about to marry Tennyson's sister Emily'. Ricks ascribes the queer reading of the speaker's attachment to his friend to the idea of a 'transference of metaphor' (*Tennyson*, p. 206). 'Metaphor' here, in effect, refers to simile.

its own language, describes the poles of the two conflicting views of language:

> I sometimes hold it half a sin
> To put in words the grief I feel;
> For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the Soul within.
>
> But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
> A use in measured language lies;
> The sad mechanic exercise,
> Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.
>
> In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
> Like coarsest clothes against the cold:
> But that large grief which these enfold
> Is given in outline and no more.
>
> (1–12)

Here, the speaker reconsiders the act of remembrance as a process of uniting words with emotion. The faithfulness of his words to his grief indicates his faithfulness to his friend. However, the speaker also feels some disloyalty and guilt for putting this grief into words because he doubts that words can faithfully capture his feelings: they only 'half reveal / And half conceal the Soul within'. 'The Soul within', with its capitalised 'Soul', makes the divine association compelling, and if so, this stanza would suggest the postlapsarian state of language ('I sometimes hold it half a sin'), thus evoking the original state of unity anterior to the fall of man that the Adamic view of language assumes. On the other hand, 'measured language' finds itself at the opposite end of the spectrum from the divine roots of language. A system of 'arbitrary signs', it sets up a process of autonomous operations, its 'sad mechanic exercise' merely 'numbing pain', rather than expressing it. While the speaker at this point appears to gravitate towards a disjunctive view of language, his own language probes a more ambiguous dimension. Within the span of eight lines, words are

compared to four different things, being said to be: 'like Nature', 'Like dull narcotics', 'like weeds', 'Like coarsest clothes'. These repeated attempts to establish a comparison suggest at once the desire to identify words with one particular thing and the desire to keep them separate.

In his journal for February 10, 1887, the poet's friend from Trinity College, Henry Sidgwick sees the most conspicuous manifestation of Tennyson's characteristic two-sidedness, or 'balancedness', in his doubt about the faithfulness of his words:

> Perhaps a certain balancedness is the most distinctive characteristic of Tennyson among poets […]. Perhaps this specially makes him the representative poet of an age whose most characteristic merit is to see both sides of a question. Thus in *In Memoriam* the points where I am most affected are where a certain *retour sur soi-même* occurs. Almost any poet might have written,
>
> > And like a man in wrath the heart
> > Stood up and answered, I have felt.
>
> But only Tennyson would have immediately added:
>
> > *No*, like a child in doubt and fear.[74]

The repeated 'Perhaps', qualifying the superlatives ('the most distinctive', 'most characteristic'), and 'a certain', questioning the faithfulness of his own wording, tellingly show the influence of the poem's '*retour sur soi-même*'. Tennyson's reflective mind sees a gap between intention and expression, words and things, and tenor and vehicle, but rather than signalling the abandonment of the attempt to achieve verbal connections, the poem's repeated efforts at comparison show its aspiration to mediate between the unitive and disjunctive tendencies of language.

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[74] Cited in Basil Willey, *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest Doubters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 101. The quotation is from section CXXIV (15–17) and the emphasis is Sidgwick's own.

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Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir* records Tennyson's warning against the identification of the first-person speaker of *In Memoriam* and its author:

> It must be remembered […] that this is a poem, *not* an actual biography. […] It was meant to be a kind of *Divina Commedia*, ending with happiness. 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. The different moods of sorrow as in a drama are dramatically given, and my conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through Faith in a God of Love. 'I' is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking thro' him.[75]

While revealing the end of the poem, Tennyson stresses that individual sections of the poem represent different perspectives from which different moments in his memory are viewed. When he says 'I found that I had written so many', he seems to express not only the unexpected length of the poem, but also its uncontrolled multiplicity. The qualification of the poem as dramatic ('as in drama', 'dramatically') might seem to allude to this multiplication of voice (Matthew Campbell calls our attention to 'the dramatic monologue warning' in '"I" is not always the author speaking of himself').[76]

In a disclaimer to his 1842 *Dramatic Lyrics*, Robert Browning says that many of the poems in the volume are called '"Dramatic Pieces"; being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine'.[77] He also writes in a letter to Wilfrid Meynell that his idyls 'are called

[75] *Memoir*, I, 304–05.
[76] Matthew Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 102.
[77] Robert Browning, *The Poems*, ed. by John Pettigrew and Thomas J. Collins, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), I, 347.

"Dramatic" because the story is told by some actor in it, not by the poet himself'.[78] Obviously, one of the inventors of the form uses the adjective to mean the separation of the speaker and the poet. It is this separation that separates dramatic monologue from Romantic lyric. On the one hand, dramatic monologue is, like Romantic lyric, a first-person utterance; but on the other, it is, unlike Romantic lyric, a poem spoken by someone who is not the poet.

In dramatic monologue, as in the classical rhetorical form of prosopopoeia, to which Dwight Culler traces its origin,[79] the poet sets out to speak like a character, imaginary or historical. Alan Sinfield calls this practice a 'feint': 'Dramatic monologue feigns because it pretends to be something other than what it is: an invented speaker masquerades in the first person which customarily signifies the poet's voice.'[80] There exists a tension in dramatic monologue between the poet's voice and the speaker's. And accordingly, it generates a tension in the reader between sympathy and moral judgement. In his influential study of the form, Robert Langbaum stressed the actuality of the first person which suspends the reader's judgment of the speaker and encourages the reader to participate in the speaker's experience.[81] However, Sinfield argues that while we believe in 'the actuality of the speaker', 'we feel continuously the pressure of the poet's controlling mind.'[82] The poet affects our judgement by revealing the fictiveness of the speaker through details of the presentation. Therefore, Sinfield says:

We experience the 'I' of the poem as a character in his own right but at the same

[78] Wilfrid Meynell, 'The Detachment of Browning', *Athenaeum*, 3245 (1890), 18–19 (p. 18).
[79] Culler, 'Monodrama and the Dramatic Monologue', *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 366–85 (p. 368).
[80] Sinfield, *Dramatic Monologue*, p. 25.
[81] Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition* (New York: Random House, 1957), pp. 75–108.
[82] Sinfield, *Dramatic Monologue*, p. 30.

> time sense the author's voice through him. […] What we experience in dramatic monologue […] is a divided consciousness. We are impressed, with the full strength of first-person presentation, by the speaker and feel drawn into his point of view, but at the same time are aware that he is a dramatic creation and that there are other possible, even preferable, perspectives.[83]

To this I would add that readers do not necessarily have to choose between sympathy or moral judgement, understanding or agreement. They can read the poem from their own perspectives, and their reactions vary in relation to perspectives each poem offers. Dramatic monologue thus lets in at least three perspectives. As Glennis Byron says, 'the one thing dramatic monologue is *not* is monological'.[84]

It should be noted here that Cornelia D. J. Pearsall, in her chapter on 'The Poetics and Politics of the Dramatic Monologue', sees the logic of simile behind the genre: 'The logic of the simile is the logic of the retention of a separation of identity for comparable but unlike entities', says Pearsall, 'and this logic is a defining aspect of the dramatic monologue.'[85] In dramatic monologue, while the poet attempts to speak *like* a character, he is ultimately distinguished from the speaker. Dramatic monologue, like simile, acknowledges both similarity and difference.

In Memoriam explores the power of simile to sustain the conflicting processes of connection and separation, unification and fragmentation, identification and division. The simile creates an imaginary world by comparing one thing with another. Such an imaginative space can take on its own actuality, but the very rhetoric of simile keeps literal and figurative, reality and imagination distinguished. It is this discrepancy between them that effects the division and multiplication of the voice in the poem. The speaker is

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[83] Ibid., pp. 25, 32.
[84] Glennis Byron, *Dramatic Monologue* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 15.
[85] Cornelia D. J. Pearsall, *Tennyson's Rapture: Transformation in the Victorian Dramatic Monologue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 30.

conscious of the gap between them and freely crosses the boundaries between them via simile. In this conscious control over language, we feel (to borrow the phrase Sinfield used with regard to dramatic monologue) 'the poet's controlling mind'. Sinfield suggests that the feint in dramatic monologue demands 'an impossible reading: that we should be aware that the speaker is being placed by an agent outside the fictional world (not by other characters within it, which causes no problem), and at the same time credit him with attitudes independent of that agent'.[86] The dramatic monologue, or monodrama, *Maud*, published in 1855, stages its speaker's questioning of his control over his action, through the rhetorical figure of antithesis. Repeating the same verb in the two different voices, the speaker wonders if he is the author of his action, or his self is the product of causes beyond his control. Thus, *Maud* picks up and thinks through the problem suggested by *In Memoriam*. It is in this sense that *Maud* is (in J. R. Lowell's words) the 'antiphonal voice to *In Memoriam*'.[87]

[86] Sinfield, *Dramatic Monologue*, p. 30.
[87] *Memoir*, I, 393.

4. The Two Voices of *Maud*

> Devised deviser devising it all for company.
> —Samuel Beckett, *Company*

Maud was Tennyson's favourite among his poems. He proudly claimed to his son:

> This poem of *Maud or the Madness* is a little *Hamlet*, the history of a morbid, poetic soul, under the blighting influence of a recklessly speculative age. He is the heir of madness, an egoist with the makings of a cynic, raised to a pure and holy love which elevates his whole nature, passing from the height of triumph to the lowest depth of misery, driven into madness by the loss of her whom he has loved, and, when he has at length passed through the fiery furnace, and has recovered his reason, giving himself up to work for the good of mankind through the unselfishness born of a great passion. The peculiarity of this poem is that different phases of passion in one person take the place of different characters.[1]

The poem was later retitled *Maud: A Monodrama*, which suggests a self-contained recounting of 'a morbid, poetic soul' ('*Hamlet* as a one-man show' in the words of Valerie Purton and Norman Page).[2] However, this is not a soul impervious to external pressure and interference; it is 'under the blighting influence of a recklessly speculative age'. The extended second sentence artfully epitomises the hero's ambiguous relation to the action. In this psychological drama, which explores the spectrum of emotions, 'from the height of triumph to the lowest depth of misery', the hero appears as an active agent, as well as a passive sufferer. The rapid alternation between past and present participles ('raised … passing … driven … giving') marks the turning of the tables. The verb 'pass', which

[1] *Poems,* II, 517–18. Tennyson gives a similar account to his friend, James Knowles: 'No other poem (a monotone with plenty of change and no weariness) has been made into a drama where successive phases of passion in one person take the place of successive persons' (Ibid., 518).
[2] Purton and Page, *The Palgrave Literary Dictionary of Tennyson* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 162.

appears in ‘passing from the height of triumph to the lowest depth of misery’ in the sense of ‘to go on, move forward; to make one’s way’ (*OED*, v, 7. a), is used again in ‘he has at length passed through the fiery furnace’ in the sense of ‘to undergo, suffer, endure’ (v, 18). And ‘passion’ at the end of the sentence, which picks up the ‘pass’ in ‘passing’ and ‘passed’, exhibits its inherent ambiguity. The word ‘passion’ in its modern sense refers to an active desire, which would tend to be associated with selfishness: Dean Alford, a friend of Tennyson, recognises in *Idylls of the King* ‘the bearing down in history and in individual man of pure and lofty Christian purpose […] by human passions and selfishness’.[3] But here, ‘unselfishness’ comes of ‘a great passion’. It is true that the signification of the word is more or less contingent upon its modifier; however, the word has something inherently self-surrendering in it. Wordsworth offers a concise explanation of the derivation of the word: ‘Passion, it must be observed, is derived from a word which signifies *suffering*; but the connection which suffering has with effort, with exertion, and *action*, is immediate and inseparable.’[4] Active desire may be born from the crucible of suffering, and in the way one succumbs to one’s fate, one may also submit defencelessly to desire. This semantic development of the word nicely encapsulates the speaker’s involvement with the action in the poem: he does not exercise full control over the action; rather he is forcibly dragged into action by external influences, and once they have left his control, his actions rebound upon him, exerting a substantial influence on him in the process.

The ambiguity surrounding the control exercised by this ‘egoist’ over his own action – and the alternating pull of passive and active constructions – reflects a Victorian

[3] *Memoir*, II, 128.
[4] Wordsworth, ‘Essay, Supplementary to the Preface’, in *Selected Prose*, ed. by John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p. 409.

concern with will and its limit. In his comprehensive study of the concept in nineteenth-century England, John R. Reed demonstrates that Victorian writers were keenly alert to the question of free will and determinism.[5] Against an older, rationalist necessarianism of Enlightenment philosophers, founded upon faith in the operation of a universal natural law, the Romantics asserted the power of free will, and placed fundamental authority in man. Victorian accounts of will centred on the condition of human action. Reed highlights the way in which shifted perceptions of will manifest themselves in narrative perspectives: 'If the Romantics fastened on the heroic individual at the center of dramatic events, the Victorians favored a hero more concerned with finding his place in a larger structure of experience'.[6] In his review of 'The War Passages in Maud' (1855), Goldwin Smith writes of Tennyson's poems: 'Not once throughout the poems is active life painted with real zest. Not once are we called to witness the happiness or the moral cures which result from self-exertion. Everywhere we feel the force of circumstances, nowhere the energy of free will.'[7] Active life is not painted with real zest in Tennyson's poetry because he lacks an unconditional faith in the centrality of individual agency. Rather, it is in man's endurance of 'the force of circumstances' that Tennyson locates free will. In the poem titled 'Will', published in 1855, the same year as *Maud*, Tennyson stresses the passive dimension of will ('He suffers … He suffers …' (2–3)), comparing the man of strong will

[5] John R. Reed, *Victorian Will* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989). The only book-length study of Victorian poetry and will is Campbell's *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*. Campbell's book, which this chapter both draws on and hopes to draw out, shows the way in which the Victorian interest in will is articulated through the prosody of the period. For more recent studies of the Victorian concern with free will, though without mention of Tennyson, see Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 25–45; Matthew Stanley, 'The Pointsman: Maxwell's Demon, Victorian Free Will, and the Boundaries of Science', *Journals of History of Ideas*, 69 (2008), 467–91; Roger Smith, *Free Will and the Human Sciences in Britain, 1870–1910* (London: Routledge, 2016); Andrea Selleri, 'Oscar Wilde and the Freedom of the Will', *ELH*, 88 (2021), 167–97.

[6] Reed, *Victorian Will*, xiv–xv.

[7] *Critical Heritage*, p. 188.

to ‘a promontory of rock, / that, compassed round with turbulent sound, / In middle ocean meets the surging shock’ (6–8). Although the speaker of *Maud* spots a shell on the shore whose ‘tiny cell is forlorn, / Void of the little living will’ (II. 61–62), the shell stands as ‘a metaphor for the “living will”’ because, as Elaine Jordan remarks, it can withstand ‘the shock / Of cataract seas that snap / The three decker’s oaken spine’ (73–75).[8] This recalls the opening lines of *In Memoriam*, CXXXI: ‘O living will that shalt endure / When all that seems shall suffer shock’ (1–2). Tennyson glossed the ‘living will’ as ‘That which we know as Free-will in man’.[9] It is the connection these lines draw between active willing and suffering that underlies the speaker’s ambiguous relationship to the action in *Maud*.

This chapter shows how the double consciousness of *Maud*’s speaker both as active agent and passive sufferer is communicated through the grammatical category of voice. In English, the subject’s relationship to the action may be expressed in two voices: the active and the passive. The active voice denotes that the subject is the agent of the action, while the passive implies that the subject is the recipient of the action. However, actual actions cannot be so easily categorised into these two terms. The supposed suicide of the speaker’s father presents a case in point. The speaker asks, ‘Did he fling himself down? who knows?’ (I. 9). Although the line added in 1856 suggests that his father was a suicide (‘Must *I* too creep to the hollow and dash myself down and die’ (54)), the slight dissonance underlines the unreliability of the speaker’s words. Even if his father had committed suicide, he might have been forced into it by circumstances. The speaker’s question should be considered in this light. His father might have been flung down by his failed investment and succeeding financial ruin (‘for a vast speculation had failed’ (9)).

[8] Jordan, p. 145.
[9] *Poems*, II, 451n.

Such an ambiguous relationship between subject and action cannot be formally couched in either the active voice or the passive voice.

However, some languages, including ancient Greek, have historically used a third voice, the middle, in which the verb's subject can be at once both the agent and the recipient of the action. As critics have shown, Tennyson was deeply engaged with Greek literature throughout his life, and his poetry frequently turns to Greek texts for thematic, formal, and prosodic inspiration.[10] It is well-known that the Victorian period witnessed a great revival of Hellenism, and that the literature, art, philosophy, and even language of ancient Greece was a pervasive influence on writers such as Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Benjamin Jowett, and William Gladstone.[11] Although Tennyson was not as prominent a classicist as these figures, he 'had the benefit of a classical education that rivalled that of even the most thoroughly prepared students of the ancient languages among his contemporaries', owing to the teaching of his father, who was himself 'a devoted classical scholar'.[12] In his study on the influence of classical literature on Tennyson, A. A. Markley argues that Tennyson's involvement with Greek is most clearly

[10] For accounts of Tennyson's engagement with classical literature, see A. A. Markley, *Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome*, 2nd edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); 'Tennyson', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature Volume 4: 1790–1880*, ed. by Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 539–57. On Tennyson's use of the classical tradition, see Mustard; Robert Pattison, *Tennyson and Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); Theodore Redpath, 'Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome', in *Studies in Tennyson*, ed. by Hallam Tennyson (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1981), pp. 105–30.

[11] On the Victorian enthusiasm for ancient Greece, see Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). For the influence of ancient Greek on nineteenth-century English poetry, see Kenneth Haynes, *English Literature and Ancient Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 138–73.

[12] Markley, 'Tennyson', p. 539. On how 'the more formal studies of Cambridge extended and deepened Tennyson's understanding of classical literature', see Leonée Ormond, *Alfred Tennyson: A Literary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 26–27. Tennyson was involved in translating from Greek throughout his life. He even had Gladstone read his translations from the *Iliad.* See Ibid., 153–54; Martin, pp. 459–60.

attested by his personal library, which included a number of Greek grammar books, as well as editions of classical texts.[13] One such book, Augustus Matthiae's *A Greek Grammar for the Use of Schools*, which contains Tennyson's own marginal notes, 'mostly in Greek',[14] defines the middle voice in relation to the active voice as follows: 'Most frequently, what the active simply denotes the doing of, the middle denotes the doing of, to, or for one's self.'[15]

Although the middle voice is not marked grammatically in English, there have been some forms which can be seen as relics or reincarnations of a lost middle construction.[16] It is worth noting here that it was in the mid-nineteenth century that the form called the passival, a modern revival of the middle construction, was disappearing from the English language. The passival is an active progressive with a passive meaning (as in 'The house *is building*'), and thus can be considered as a modern survival of, or analogue to, the middle voice. Although the passival can be interpreted in the same way as a passive progressive, the apparent active construction seems to give inanimate objects a certain degree of autonomy. As Lynda Pratt and David Denison show, it was what they call the Southey-Coleridge circle, a group of poets who lived in Bristol and the south-west of England and shared a political and literary radicalism, that played a key role in the doing away of the form, depriving inanimate objects of agency.[17] The form was eventually

[13] Markley, *Stateliest Measures*, p. 31.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Augustus Matthiae, *A Greek Grammar for the Use of Schools* (London: John Murray, 1822), p. 150.
[16] For instance, the medio-passive, which is syntactically active but semantically passive (as in 'This book *sells* well'), represents the modern counterpart of the middle construction. George S. Howard suggests that the lack of the middle voice precludes us from thinking about a gray area where the subject is active and passive at the same time ('No Middle Voice', *Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 12 (1992), 12–26).
[17] Lynda Pratt and David Denison, 'The Language of the Southey-Coleridge Circle', *Language Sciences*, 22 (2000), 401–22. The core members of the group included Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Charles Lloyd, Charles Lamb, Amos and Joseph Cottle, and Robert Lovell, while later members included Mary Shelley, Shelley, Peacock, Keats, De Quincey and W. S. Landor. See Ibid.,

supplanted by the passive progressive (as in 'The house *is being built*') which was popularised by the circle. Denison and Pratt argue that the group was 'extremely self-conscious linguistically', and for these literary radicals who 'wanted to distance themselves from other, older and more conservative groups', 'the progressive passive might have been a linguistic sign of group identity'.[18] One of the reasons for the replacement of the passival by the passive progressive, which Pratt and Denison call 'the single most striking syntactic change of the last three centuries', is that the former carries 'a greater risk of ambiguity (if only slightly)'.[19] While the passival can be interpreted as having a passive sense, it still maintains an active construction, sounding as if its 'non-agentive and therefore usually non-human subject' has an agency.[20] So the shift from the passival to the passive progressive marks a turn towards distinct human agency in the language. Given Tennyson's doubt about the Romantic emphasis on individual agency, it is tempting to assume that he sought to reproduce the function of the middle construction through the elaborate interweaving of the active and passive voices, and in so doing sought to signal an ambiguous relationship between the subject and the action.

Tennyson employs a range of strategies to blur active and passive in *Maud*, among the most conspicuous of which is the repetition of the same verb in the two grammatical voices. In some of the most important lines in the poem, one voice is juxtaposed with the other in adjacent phrases. For instance, as we will see further below, the speaker's existential questioning about the condition of human action in Part I of the poem is formulated by the opposition of the two voices: 'Do we move ourselves, or are moved by

pp. 401–10.
[18] Ibid., p. 416.
[19] Ibid., pp. 411, 412.
[20] Ibid., p. 412.

an unseen hand at a game / That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed?' (127–28). Such a juxtaposition of contraries in parallel phrases constitutes the rhetorical figure of antithesis, a form of parallelism that involves a seeming contradiction of ideas or words.[21] Classical authors stress 'the clarity and force that an antithesis may impart to an idea'.[22] Aristotle, for example, commends the use of antithesis 'because contraries are easily understood and even more so when placed side by side'.[23] This is exemplified by Aristotle's own use of the figure in a sentence from his *Physics*, which the American philosopher Roderick Chisholm adopts as the epigraph to his seminal paper, 'Human Freedom and the Self' (1964): 'A staff moves a stone, and is moved by a hand, which is moved by a man.'[24] The antithesis swiftly establishes a series of parallels – between active and passive, animate and inanimate, agent and event – that illustrate with almost epigrammatic succinctness the way in which a certain event is attributable to an agent ('a man') and not to any other events (what Chisholm calls 'agent-causation'). One might note that one of the most important philosophical contributions to the contemporary debate about free will and determinism is dependent on the use of the grammatical voices. Here, the figure of antithesis is used to make the statement forceful and clear, by emphasising the opposition of ideas. The antithetical juxtaposition of the two voices in *Maud*, however, does not serve merely to create a sense of conciseness and clarity; rather, it works much more to convey a sense of contradiction, confliction, and even contention.

George Puttenham's description of the figure in *The Art of English Poesy* well

[21] T. V. F. Brogan and A. W. Halsall, 'Antithesis', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 58–59 (p. 58).
[22] Ibid.
[23] Cited in T. V. F. Brogan and Halsall, 'Antithesis', p. 58.
[24] Cited in Roderick Chisholm, 'Human Freedom and the Self', in *Free Will*, ed. by Gary Watson, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 26–37 (p. 26).

captures its contentious, or quarrelling, nature: under the marginal heading of 'Antitheton, or the Rencounter', Puttenham writes: 'to answer the Greek term, we may call [the figure] the Encounter, but following the Latin name by reason of his contentious nature, we may call him the Quarreler'.[25] Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn note that 'the unspecified Latin term for *antitheton* is *contentio*, meaning a struggle or fight (as does *Rencounter*)'.[26] Puttenham's comparison of 'the Greek term' and 'the Latin name' in parallel clauses ('we may call [the figure] the Encounter'/'we may call him the Quarreler') itself offers an excellent example of this 'quarreling figure' (in Puttenham's words),[27] putting these two conceptions of the figure in tension, or contention. As Joanna Craigwood points out, Puttenham's opposition of the two names 'echoes Quintilian's dual naming of the figure as *contrapositum* and *contentio*: this figure of static balance, familiar from the witty oppositions of euphuistic writing in the late sixteenth century, is also a figure of dynamic conflict and struggle'.[28] Tennyson appears to have been aware not only of the power of the figure to create conflict but also of the conflict between the two conceptions of the figure.

In the readings that follow, I will show how the speaker of *Maud* recounts his ambiguous involvement in the action through antithetical expressions, exploring the middle ground between the two voices. The antithetical parallelism in the poem can be read as a manifestation of the speaker's indecision and struggle regarding his control over his own actions. Towards the end of the poem, however, it serves to articulate the assertion

[25] George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 295.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Joanna Craigwood, 'Diplomatic Metonymy and Antithesis in *3 Henry VI*', *Review of English Studies*, 65 (2014), 812–30 (p. 813).

of agency, or conversely, to pronounce the renunciation of responsibility. The poem thus shows how the abandonment of thinking about the ambiguity of will and suffering, agency and determinism, amounts to madness.

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Notwithstanding Tennyson's pride in his achievement, contemporary responses to *Maud* were, by and large, quite unfavourable.[29] One review in the *Athenaeum*, attributed to Hepworth Dixon, reads: 'Mr. Tennyson has never been so careless, visionary, and unreal'.[30] In tandem with 'visionary' and 'unreal', 'careless' could suggest that the poet of *Maud* abandoned his characteristic careful and accurate attention to external objects. From the very beginning, the poem presents a hallucinatory vision of the world:

> I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
> Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath,
> The red-ribbed ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
> And Echo there, whatever is asked her, answers 'Death.'
>
> (I. 1–4)

Towards the very end of his life, Tennyson told Henry van Dyke that 'blood-red heath' is 'a false comparison': 'There is no such thing in nature; but he [the speaker] sees the heather tinged like blood because his mind has been disordered.'[31] In the speaker's delusive imagination, the heath may be splattered by the blood of his father, who had been 'Mangled, flattened, and crushed, and dinted into the ground' (7). The speaker sees the reflection of his own mental image in his surroundings, regardless of what they really are, just as Echo, 'whatever is asked her, answers "Death"' (the last words of lines 3 and 4,

[29] See Shannon, 'The Critical Reception of Tennyson's "Maud"', *PMLA*, 68 (1953), 397– 417.
[30] Cited in Shannon, 'The Critical Reception of Tennyson's "Maud"', p. 398.
[31] *Poems*, II, 517.

with their half-rhymes, do not answer properly to lines 1 and 2). In such a narcissistic self-containment, as Timothy Peltason puts it, the speaker's 'solitude is troublingly close to solipsism'.[32] But although he projects his self everywhere, he is also conscious that his self is itself the projection of those around him. To borrow Theodor Adorno's description of Kafka, the speaker appears to be a 'solipsist without ipseity'.[33] While 'evidences of the speaker's obsession – and of the imprinting of obsession on his surroundings – are everywhere in *Maud*',[34] the speaker himself bears the imprint of his surroundings.

The circumstances in which the speaker finds himself are 'recklessly speculative': Christopher Ricks has taken 'speculative' to mean both 'calling everything in doubt' and 'mammonist'.[35] In 'the days of advance' (25), people are engaged in an ongoing battle to outwit each other ('who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or his word?' (26)). This state of mutual distrust and hostility that prevails among classes of society makes him ask, 'Is it peace or war?'' (27). For all his rants and diatribes about the corrupted domestic situation, however, he gets unwillingly drawn into the thought of 'Civil war' (27) as he calls it:

> Sooner or later I too may passively take the print
> Of the golden age – why not? I have neither hope nor trust;
> May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as a flint,
> Cheat and be cheated, and die: who knows? we are ashes and dust.
>
> (29–32)

[32] Peltason, 'What the Laureate Did Next: *Maud*', *VP*, 47 (2009), 197–219 (p. 201). The speaker's self-absorption is symbolised in the figure of Narcissus ('found / The shining daffodil dead' (100–101)). The trial edition of the poem reads 'sweet Narcissus' for 'shining daffodil' (*Poems*, II, 528n.).
[33] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), p. 223.
[34] Peltason, 'What the Laureate Did Next', p. 202.
[35] Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets*, p. 203.

Although the main verb of the first sentence is in the active voice, the adverbs which qualify it stress the opposite emphasis: 'Sooner or later' expresses the sense of resignation, and 'too' and 'passively', reluctantly interrupting the subject and the verbs, impede the assertion of agency. For the speaker, there is no reason not to follow the fashion of the day, but still there is no positive reason to do so, either. The shift from the conjectural 'may' to the optative 'May' shows the hardening of his resolve. Now the speaker wishes to enter a world where stony-faced and stony-hearted people will 'Cheat and be cheated, and die', only to crumble into 'ashes and dust'. The antithetical juxtaposition of the passive with the active voice here reflects the recognition that in war, one's action rebounds upon oneself, making one the victim of one's own action. As the *Iliad* tells us, 'The war god is impartial. Before now he has killed the killer.'[36] In her renowned essay, 'The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force', Simone Weil speaks of the destructive force of war over which no one has any control, suggesting that 'the true hero, the true subject, the center of the *Iliad* is force', which she defines as that which 'turns a man into a thing', or 'a stone'.[37] 'No one in the *Iliad* is spared by it', says Weil, 'as no one on earth is.'[38] Even the victor is portrayed as crushed by the very force he believes he possesses: 'To the same degree, though in different fashions, those who use it and those who endure it are turned into stone.'[39] The juxtaposing of the active voice with the passive voice in the passage above can be read as expressing this kind of reversal of action in war.

The speaker's perception of the reversibility of action in war leads him to a

[36] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 404.
[37] Simone Weil, 'The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force', *Politics*, 22 (1945), trans. by Mary McCarthy, 321–31 (pp. 321, 322).
[38] Ibid., p. 330.
[39] Ibid., p. 328.

fatalistic understanding of the way, or nature, of things. While he criticises the mammonism of Maud's father, who is 'now lord of the broad estate and the Hall' (19), as the master of a house, the speaker is duly obliged to face a below-stairs conflict with his servants:

> I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready to slander and steal;
> I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like a stoic, or like
> A wiser epicurean, and let the world have its way:
> For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal;
> The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow speared by the shrike,
> And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder and prey.
>
> (120–25)

The hard-faced speaker now wears 'a hard-set smile' and, like a stoic philosopher, adopts an attitude of *apatheia* (which literally means 'no passion' or 'no suffering'), withdrawing from 'a world of plunder and prey'. After the sequence of active verbs ('keep … know … smile … let … is … can heal'), the pair of emphatic passives ('is torn/speared') displays a chain of suffering in nature. The knowledge that a struggle over dominance is reproduced not only in human society but also in the natural world points him towards the involvement of some higher agency. The speaker then asks himself whether 'we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand at a game' (127). In other words, the speaker questions if we have power over our actions or if a higher power is pulling the strings, not just by forcing us to do things against our will, but by manipulating us into having its desired will. Here, the speaker's diffidence and indecision about human agency are indicated by the juxtaposition of the two voices in parallel structure.

A quiet, contemplative life may not bring the wild enthusiasm of war; but the speaker would rather live in peace: 'Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland

ways, / Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless peace be my lot, / Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in the hubbub of lies' (150–52). Peace is 'passionless' both in the sense of 'without passion' (*OED*, 1) and 'without suffering' (2), since he will not have to bear being lied to unless he himself participates in the world of lies. The antithetical phrase 'liars belied', like 'the biter bit' and 'the fraud defrauded', exploits a grammatical trick which creates an illusion of one suffering for one's own action. A similar trick is featured in Marvell's 'Damon the Mower', where while mowing the grass, the mower gets mown by his own scythe:

> The edgèd steel by careless chance
> Did into his own ankle glance;
> And there among the grass fell down,
> By his own scythe, the mower mown.
>
> (77–80)[40]

Prior to this, the mower had glanced at his reflection in his scythe ('if in my scythe I lookèd right' (58));[41] now it is the scythe that flashes a glance at the mower. Such reversibility of action is a dominant theme in Marvell's poetry. John Carey takes the above passage as the quintessential example of the Marvellian situation, where 'an agent finds its actions shooting back upon itself'.[42] Carey draws from Marvel's poems a number of parallels involving the antithesis of active and passive – such as 'container and contained', 'restricted and restricting', 'rained on and raining', 'pursuer and pursued', 'engraver and

[40] Andrew Marvell, *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, rev. edn, ed. by Nigel Smith (London: Pearson, 2007), p. 139.
[41] Ibid., p. 138.
[42] John Carey, 'Reversals Transposed: An Aspect of Marvell's Imagination', in *Approaches to Marvell: The York Tercentenary Lectures*, ed. by C. A. Patrides, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 136–54 (p.144).

engraving'.[43] Tennyson reportedly showed 'a special admiration' for the Marvellian combination of contraries.[44] He would enjoy reading 'To His Coy Mistress', 'dwelling more than once on […] the powerful union of pathos and humour',[45] and Michael O'Neill recognises Marvell's influence in Tennyson's 'combination of stillness and unrest, beauty of verbal contrivance and delicate richness of feeling'.[46] Marvell's principle of reversion, in which one is simultaneously an agent and a victim, might well then be an inspiration for the reversals of action in *Maud*.

Carey shows how in 'The Nymph complaining for the death of her Fawn', the fawn feeds the roses and lilies in the nymph's garden, and by doing so turns into those roses and lilies. 'Had it lived long, it would have been / Lilies without, roses within' (91–92).[47] It does live, one might say, in *Maud*. The speaker wishes to live 'Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in the hubbub of lies', 'From the long-necked geese of the world that are ever hissing dispraise' (I. 153), but most of all he wishes to 'flee from the cruel madness of love' (156). He complains to the heroine: 'Ah Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all unmeet for a wife' (158). Critics have pointed out the Marvellian allusion in the phrase 'milk-white fawn'.[48] In *Maud*, however, the fawn has 'but fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life' (161),[49] and simply by grazing on the roses she becomes the roses both

[43] Ibid., pp. 141, 144, 145.
[44] *Memoir*, II, 500–01.
[45] Ibid., II, 501.
[46] Michael O'Neill, 'Marvell and Nineteenth-Century Poetry: Wordsworth to Tennyson', in *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, ed. by Martin Dzelzainis and Edward Holberton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 756–72 (p. 772).
[47] Marvell, *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, p. 71.
[48] Byatt, 'The Lyric Structure of Tennyson's *Maud*', in *The Major Victorian Poets*, pp. 69–92 (p.82); Linda M. Shires, '*Maud*, Masculinity and Poetic Identity', *Criticism*, 29 (1987), 269–290 (p. 285).
[49] These lines draw on the following lines from 'The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn': 'Among the beds of lilies, I / Have sought it oft, where it should lie; / Yet could not, till itself would rise, / Find it, although before mine eyes. / For, in the flaxen lilies' shade, / It like a bank of lilies laid' (77–82) (Marvell, *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, p. 70).

without and within: ‘Roses are her cheeks, / And a rose her mouth’ (577–78).

As the alignment of the flight from the frenzied passion of love with the withdrawal from the tumult of war suggests, the speaker’s courtship of the heroine partially recalls his engagement with the war.[50] It was Maud’s father who had benefitted ‘from a scheme that had left us flaccid and drained’ (20), and so the speaker’s conquest of Maud stands for his local victory over his master. Although Maud, whose name derives from the Old German ‘Mahthildis’ meaning ‘mighty in battle’, joyfully sings ‘A passionate ballad gallant and gay, / A martial song like a trumpet’s call’ (165–66), as if indifferent to the speaker’s wish to draw from war, he tries to imagine his relationship with Maud away from war. At their first interview, Maud touches his hand with a smile. He is well aware that her smile may mean ‘Cleopatra-like’, ‘To have her lion roll in a silken net / And fawn at a victor’s feet’ (216, 218–19); yet he wishes ‘she were not a cheat’ (224), speculating that ‘Perhaps the smile and tender tone / Came out of her pitying womanhood’ (252–53). By section VIII of Part I, Maud no longer appears as a cruel, pitiless dominatrix:

> She came to the village church,
> And sat by a pillar alone;
> An angel watching an urn
> Wept over her, carved in stone;
> And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,
> And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blushed
> To find they were met by my own;
> And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat stronger
> And thicker […].
>
> (301–309)

[50] On the ‘disturbing confluence of the language that explores his romantic engagement with Maud with that which charts his public engagement with the war’, see Bevis, ‘Fighting Talk: Victorian War Poetry’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, ed. by Tim Kendall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 7–33 (p.18).

Alone in the village church, she is pitied by an angel (the preposition 'over' in 'Wept over her' indicates not merely the position the angel occupies but also the object of its sorrow). An earlier version of the poem presented a less human image of Maud: 'Wept over her carved in stone'.[51] This fits the speaker's earlier description of Maud as having a 'Cold and clear-cut face' (88). But by adding a comma between 'her' and 'carved' in the revision, as Robert Douglas-Fairhurst puts it, Tennyson represents the speaker's hesitation over 'the thought that Maud is as unattainable a beauty as the carved angel'.[52] Indeed, she 'suddenly, sweetly, strangely blushed / To find they [her eyes] were met by my own'.

The reimagining of the speaker's relationship with Maud required Tennyson to make another revision in the line. In the earlier version, the agent of the verb 'meet' was Maud's eyes: 'when her eyes met once with my own'.[53] The alteration from the active to the passive voice shows Tennyson grappling with the language to achieve his desired effect; in the meeting of eyes, the agent can be ambiguous. Of course, we can signal to someone to meet our eyes by staring into their eyes or waving our hand; however, we sometimes find ourselves making eye contact before we intend to. Eye contact would constitute a collective action or a joint action.[54] Philosophers of action theory have tended to identify shared intention as a condition of collective action.[55] In the case of eye contact,

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[51] Tennyson, *Tennyson's 'Maud'*, p. 71.
[52] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 211.
[53] Tennyson, *Tennyson's 'Maud'*, p. 71.
[54] Margaret Gilbert remarks that 'philosophers of action have until relatively recently focused their attention on the actions of individual human beings' ('Collective Action', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, ed. by Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 67–73 (p. 67)).
[55] See John R. Searle, 'Collective Intentions and Actions', in *Intentions in Communication*, ed. by Philip R. Cohen, Jerry Morgan, and Martha Pollack (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990), pp. 401–15; Michael Bratman, 'Shared Agency', in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Philosophical Theory and Scientific Practice*, ed. by Chrisostomos Mantzavinos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

however, a 'shared intention' will be discovered, or perhaps counterfeited, retrospectively. We can say in hindsight the meeting of eyes is an act of reciprocal affection. But do we make eye contact because we love each other, or the other way around? If so, what is it about eye contact that makes it so affective? In eye contact, one gazes into the other's eyes and at the same time one's own eyes are gazed into by the other. The word 'eye contact' nicely captures this ambiguity in its tactile implication; for when we touch someone, it is sometimes uncertain whether we have touched them or we are being touched by them.[56] In his recent philosophical reconsideration of the phenomenon, James Laing claims that 'when two subjects make eye contact, they are related as two agents acting and being acted upon by each other in a single, primitive transaction'.[57] It might be this transactional process, where the two people involved are simultaneously both agent and recipient, that gives gazing into another person's eyes its special affect. Although the poet finally endows the speaker with some initiative, his action rebounds upon himself as he feels 'suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat stronger / And thicker'. As Tennyson himself said, the speaker 'begins with universal hatred of all things & gets more human by the influence of Maud'.[58]

Nevertheless, the appearance of her intended, demanding her brother's acceptance of him as Maud's husband, reignites the speaker's belligerent passion. When a Quaker comes to the town to 'put down war' and 'the passions that make earth Hell' (373, 375), the speaker rather wishes he 'could hear again / The chivalrous battle-song / That she

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2009), pp. 41–59.

[56] As John Heron says: 'In mutual touching as in mutual gazing, each person both gives and receives in the same act, and receives moreover what the other person is giving' ('The Phenomenology of Social Encounter: The Gaze', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 31 (1970), 243–64 (p. 243)).

[57] James Laing, 'When Eyes Touch', *Philosopher's Imprint*, 21 (2021), 1–17 (p. 4).

[58] *Poems*, II, 550n.

warbled alone in her joy' (382–84). After a tender expression of love in section XII, 'Birds in the high Hall-garden', at the beginning of section XIII, the speaker struggles to win an advantage over Maud's brother by treating him with scornful indifference:

> Scorned, to be scorned by one that I scorn,
> Is that a matter to make me fret?
>
> (444–45)

The speaker again has recourse to the parallelistic juxtaposition of the two voices, but the transition from the passive to the active voice does not now indicate ambiguity about the speaker's control over his action; rather, it shows the speaker assuming control of his own language, and thereby of his own behaviour. Matthew Campbell deftly shows the way in which the speaker seeks 'a grammatical victory' in these lines: 'The verbs move through the passive sense, into a transitional infinitive with a past participle, and out towards an active verb which he uses to give himself the illusion of detached calm.'[59] The achieved victory is indeed an 'illusion'. It sounds as if the speaker initially feels scorn for Maud's brother; but it is more likely that his scorn is evoked in re-action to the brother's scorn for him. Or rather, far from being scornful, he used to wish to step into the boots of his opponent.

> I longed so heartily then and there
> To give him the grasp of fellowship;
> But while I past he was humming an air,
> Stopt, and then with a riding-whip
> Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,
> And curving a contumelious lip,
> Gorgonised me from head to foot
> With a stony British stare.

[59] Campbell, p. 147.

(458–65)

Here, the very language describing the snobbish affectation of the brother is studded with pretentious expressions, enacting the qualities of the things described.

Even at the most critical moment of the poem, the speaker moulds his behaviour on that of his opponent. At the beginning of Part II, after her brother's dinner, to which the speaker has not been invited, he and Maud meet in the garden of the Hall; but hardly has she spoken a word when her brother runs into the garden in his rage, heaping abuse on her. 'And while she wept, and I strove to be cool, / He fiercely gave me the lie, / Till I with as fierce an anger spoke, / And he struck me' (II. 15–18). The repetition ('fiercely … fierce') bolsters the impression that the speaker is simply copying his opponent. The duel is settled when her brother falls by 'the Christless code' (26): instead of turning the other cheek, the speaker strikes back at the brother. The counter-blow consequently proves fatal to the brother, and his death calls forth from Maud 'a passionate cry' (33), which is to haunt the speaker's heart and ear for evermore.

When the speaker lays out for his friend's benefit, towards the end of Part II, the circumstances in which war is justifiable, his conception of 'lawful war' is essentially a reimagination of the duel with Maud's brother.

> Friend, to be struck by the public foe,
> Then to strike him and lay him low,
> That were a public merit, far,
> Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin;
> But the red life spilt for a private blow –
> I swear to you, lawful and lawless war
> Are scarcely even akin.

(327–33)

The retaliatory logic underlying both the duel and war is demonstrated by the shift from the passive to the active voice ('to be struck … Then to strike'). In the reverse process of the 'grammatical victory' over Maud's brother, the speaker seeks to countenance the war through the law of retributive justice, whereby one gets one's deserved come-uppance. He would attack because he is attacked, and not the other way around (the sequential marker 'Then' highlights the irreversibility). Here, segues between the two voices stress the necessity of waging war rather than indicating any indecision about the speaker's control over the action. By stressing the passivity of the action, he is creating a pretext for war. In order to compare war with a duel, however, the speaker presents the enemy as a single 'public foe', cunningly obliterating the existence of the rest of the public and simultaneously representing his own people as a united entity, for whose 'merit' war is waged.[60] It is as if war would be waged against 'him'. But while 'the red life spilt for a private blow' leaves him momentarily speechless, the red life spilt for a public blow might be no less unjustifiable. The insufficient justification that the speaker puts forward reveals the potential risk of attributing the action to prior events. If we are compelled to do something by external causes and are not free to do otherwise, we cannot be blamed for our actions. This argument could be used for an unlawful purpose as in the case of the speaker. However, if we do something of our own free will when we could do otherwise, we will be morally accountable for our actions. If we give up control over ourselves, we will lose the hook upon which to hang our moral responsibility. This is why philosophers have been bent on postulating free will as grounds for moral responsibility.[61]

[60] Hallam Tennyson comments: 'What even his hero in "Maud" says is only that the sins of the nation, "civil war" as he calls them, are deadlier in their effect than what is commonly called war, and that they may be in a measure subdued by the war between nations which is an evil more easily recognized' (*Memoir*, I, 401).

[61] See, for example, Chisholm; Peter van Inwagen, 'An Argument for Incompatibilism', in *Free Will*,

For Tennyson, the wilful exercise of self-control is related to the taking of responsibility. He gave his son the following advice: a man 'should develop his true self by not shirking responsibility, by casting aside all maudlin and introspective morbidities, and by using his powers cheerfully in accordance with the obvious dictates of his moral consciousness'.[62] However, when the speaker welcomes the advent of war in Part III, as Goldwin Smith shrewdly observes, 'the justice of the war is only a parenthesis between more real motives' and the passion of the war is 'all maudlin and introspective morbidities':[63]

> 'It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,' said I
> (For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and true),
> 'It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
> That old hysterical mock-disease should die.'
>
> (III. 30–33)

At first, 'passionate' comes across as the expression of his exalted fighting spirit (as in 'A passionate ballad'); but two lines later, it suddenly takes on a rather pathetic and pathological strain, as it is coupled with 'morbid eye' (as in 'a passionate cry'). Hallam Tennyson reports, 'Free-will was undoubtedly, he said, the "main miracle, apparently an act of self-limitation by the Infinite, and yet a revelation by Himself of Himself." "Take away the sense of individual responsibility and men sink into pessimism and madness"'.[64] While, as Smith observed, 'Not once are we called to witness the happiness or the moral cures which result from self-exertion', we are called to witness the madness resulting

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pp. 38–57. Moral responsibility, though, is not necessarily dependent upon free will. In his influential essay, Peter Strawson explores the concept of moral responsibility, focusing on what he calls 'reactive attitudes' ('Freedom and Resentment', in *Free Will*, pp. 72–93).

[62] *Memoir*, I, 317.

[63] *Critical Heritage*, p. 186.

[64] *Memoir*, I, 316–17.

from the lack of moral responsibility. Isobel Armstrong comments on the last line: 'By an ironic trick of syntax the imitation disease of madness gives way to the "real" hysterical disease of war.'[65] The poem, finally, suggests how the giving up of free will, or the inability to think about the ambiguity of suffering and will in human action brings about the real madness that is war. In the penultimate stanza of the poem, the speaker describes a war in an excited and exaggerated manner: 'now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep, / And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames / The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire' (51–53). The word 'blood-red' returns from the poem's opening as if to announce 'the doom assigned' (59). Within the metaphorical language, 'blood-red' can stand as a direct reference to the blood spilt in the war. Now what the poet called 'a false comparison' becomes a vivid description of the actual reality.

Just as the actions into which the speaker is prodded and provoked by exogenous factors rebound on him, the words he utters repeatedly return to him to point the way, like a flickering beacon. William E. Buckler says: 'the cantos move to a different or a deepened state of apprehension as language surfaces and signals the consciousness of the speaker to the next shading of the issue – opens gradually the next perceptual door, including the successive phases of feeling through the illumination that language casts into the next dark space'. [66] Buckler goes on to say: 'Language is the speaker's Virgil'.[67] Matthew Campbell qualifies this suggestion by saying that it is not language as an abstract system (*langue*) but its actual use (*parole*) that leads the speaker through his 'phases of passion', and that this Virgil 'is initially of the speaker's own making'.[68] This is well put,

[65] Armstrong, p. 272.
[66] William E. Buckler, 'Tennyson's *Maud*: New Critical Perspectives', in *The Victorian Imagination: Essays in Aesthetic Exploration* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), pp. 208–26 (p. 215).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Campbell, p. 141

though with the obvious addendum that the speaker does not make his Virgil all by himself. Campbell writes:

> *Maud* alerts us to two questions that we can ask of dramatic monologue or monodrama. We have the choice of asking from the poem an assured dominion over language, tactfully expressing its speaker's consciousness and his story; or we could accept that there is a passive surrender to the processes of 'language', alien to thought or emotion, the speaker's will randomly allowing the suddenness of an articulated word to lead him to conclusions dependent on his interpretation of his previous utterances. The poem works between the possibility of both of these opposites, vividly portraying an earnest agent, struggling to construct his own unstable consciousness, and his story, in words.[69]

It is true that the speaker repeatedly picks up and mulls over the words he has uttered, and he passively lets 'his interpretation of his previous utterances' lead him to his different destinations. However, the speaker appears to be aware that 'his previous utterances', his 'own unstable consciousness, and his story, in words' are themselves the product of the utterances of previous poets. The speaker remembers that his father and Maud's father had decided that he and Maud would marry. But he wonders if this is an influence of his reading: 'Is it an echo of something / Read with a boy's delight, / Viziers nodding together / In some Arabian night?' (I. 293–96). The voice of the speaker exerts a crucial influence upon his passion, but his voice itself might be the construction of the voices he has ever heard or read.

Dwight Culler once suggested that Tennyson's description of *Maud* as 'different phases of passion in one person tak[ing] the place of different characters' was derived from Robert James Mann's pamphlet, *Tennyson's 'Maud' Vindicated* (1856),[70] where Mann describes the characteristics of *Maud*'s language as follows:

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[69] Ibid., p. 144.
[70] Culler, 'Monodrama and the Dramatic Monologue', p. 369.

> Every utterance, whether it be of sentiment, passion, or reflection, is an impulsive outburst; but it is an outburst that involuntarily clothes itself in language of the most appropriate character and vivid power. Such, both in the matter of sense and of music, is the language of *Maud*. The syllables and lines of the several stanzas actually trip and halt with abrupt fervour, tremble with joy, swell with emotion, and dance with joy, as each separate phase of mental experience comes on the scene.[71]

We can easily hear echoes of Mann's words in the poet's own account of the poem. But one of those words, 'passion', has its provenance in the poem. As we have seen, 'passion' and its cognates appear again and again in the poem, to lead the speaker into a new phase of passion. It is as though the poem's word has circled back to the poet through the hands of the critic. In this feedback loop, where the outputs are routed back as inputs, the poet, like the speaker of the poem, functions both as an active agent and a passive recipient.

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In this chapter, we have seen how *Maud* dramatises the way in which the blurring of the grammatical category of voice, notably through the repetition of the same verb in the active and the passive, gives a voice to the speaker's ambiguity and uncertainty about his own agency. The poem's use of repetition does not work to corroborate its speaker's identity and autonomy as an author of his own story, but rather represents a questioning and critique of these. Indeed, the speaker is only passively forced into action by external influences, and once he performs an action, this action rebounds upon himself to exert a substantial influence on him. It might only be by dying a heroic death in the war that he can put an end to this endless loop and become the author of his story, establishing an immutable reputation as a man of will and self-control. Still, his posthumous fame is no

[71] *Critical Heritage*, p. 199.

less dependent on influences outside his control. One's fame after death relies on the voices of the living for its continuation. This is true of the man who had the strongest will and self-control during his lifetime as well. In 'Ode on the Death of Duke of Wellington', Tennyson in praise of 'A man of well-attempered frame' implores 'civic muse' to 'Preserve a broad approach of fame, / And ever-echoing avenues of song' (74, 75, 78–79). Throughout the poem, Tennyson demonstrates the dependence of the Duke's fame on its being echoed by people, himself resounding the praise of the late war hero:

> And through the centuries let a people's voice
> In full acclaim,
> A people's voice,
> The proof and echo of all human fame,
> A people's voice, when they rejoice
> At civic revel and pomp and game,
> Attest their great commander's claim
> With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
> Eternal honour to his name.
>
> (142–50)

Reiterated 'a people's voice' is nothing but 'The proof and echo of all human fame'. The juxtaposition of 'proof and echo' indicates that one's fame is attested by its being echoed. One's fame will last forever as long as it spreads from tongue to tongue. (The eternal echo of honour contrasts with the figure of decaying echo in 'The splendour falls on castle falls'.) 'No stone is fitted in yon fitted in yon marble girth / Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious doom' ('Tiresias', 131–32): as Seamus Perry puts it, 'a better Tennysonian fame' cannot 'be imagined than remaining forever the subject of unending reverberation'. [72] Yet the farther one's fame spreads, the bigger the possibility of

[72] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, pp. 29–30.

deformation: Wellington's 'triumph will be sung / By some yet unmoulded tongue / Far on in summers that we shall not see' ('Ode on the Death of Duke of Wellington', 232–34), but 'unmoulded tongue' could be taken to mean 'immature tongue', or even 'deformed tongue'. The repeated adjective 'civic' points us to the implications of the Duke's fame coming on the tongue of the people. His fame thus rests uneasily on its public proliferation. Tennyson's last major work, *Idylls of the King*, published between 1859 and 1885, explores this duplexity in diffusive types of speech, such as gossip and rumour. While such types of speech seem to undermine Arthur's authority by producing unauthoritative stories about him (hence the speaker of *In Memoriam* says 'here [on earth] shall silence guard thy fame' (LXXV. 17)), it is by being told from person to person that the hero's fame can be established and maintained. We will see the embodiment of this paradox in the figure of *fama*/*Fama*.

5. Arthur's Fragmented Authority

'Well, Arthur, I mean to be famous.'
—*Memoir*

So said the little Tennyson 'most emphatically' to his younger brother, talking about his future during an afternoon ramble in their home fields.[1] From his earliest age, Tennyson was keenly aware of his talent as a poet and filled with an ambition to achieve public recognition. Writing poetry, for him, was not merely a private business to be pursued with a pure, disinterested passion; it also involved a public dimension, a striving for fame.[2] His scribbles on the page facing the front fly-leaf of an 1817 edition of Virgil's *Opera* are a familiar enough childhood joke, but might also be read as expressing a youthful vision of his name spreading from his hometown across England to the world:

A. Tennyson
– Somersby
3 in Lincolnshire
4 in England
5 in Europe
6 in the world
~~7 in the universe~~
7 in the air
8 in space[3]

[1] *Memoir*, I, 17.
[2] For the Victorian fame culture, see Alexis Easley, 'Gender and the Politics of Literary Fame: Christina Rossetti and *The Germ*', *Critical Survey*, 13 (2001), 61–77; Susan R. Bauman, 'In the Market for Fame: The Victorian Publication History of the Brontë Poems', *Victorian Review*, 30 (2004), 44–71; Richard Salmon, 'The Genealogy of the Literary Bildungsroman: Edward Bulwer-Lytton and W. M. Thackeray', *Studies in the Novel*, 36 (2004), 41–55; Francis O'Gorman, 'Ruskin and Fame', *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, 35 (2008), 94–112. For a panoramic review of the history of frenzied renown, see Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).
[3] Cited in Markley, *Stateliest Measures*, p. 32.

The gradual indentation on the page here stages the horizontal as well as the vertical expansion of his fame. When he wrote these words, Tennyson might have had in mind the flight of the goddess *Fama* in the *Aeneid*, who, though small at first, soon mounts up to heaven, moving quickly around the great cities and nations of the world. The Latin word *fama*, though, is unsettlingly ambiguous, containing within it the antitheses of good fame and bad rumour, praise and blame, as Philip Hardie has shown in his most extensive recent analysis of the figure of *Fama*/*fama*.[4] The fact that fame and rumour are represented by the same word in Latin tells us that fame, like rumour, is a type of repetitive and diffusive discourse that is passed on from person to person, and therefore subject to distortion. The rumours spread by Virgil's *Fama* are a mixture of fact and fiction, embodying the force which we can see at work in the game of 'Chinese whispers', where a message repeated from one person to the next has a tendency to become more and more distorted.

Tennyson understood such susceptibility to multiplication and distortion to be part of the nature of fame. In his letter of October 1825 to his uncle, who had suggested showing his poems to the poet Thomas Moore, Tennyson wrote 'the Public is a many-headed Monster, which is generally disposed to make little allowance for the sleepy fits observable in an Author'.[5] By setting the 'Author' against the 'many-headed Monster', (a term which the *OED* defines as 'frequently in extended use (usually *derogatory*), designating the masses and populace'), Tennyson seems to evoke the 'political opposition

[4] For 'the major duplicities and dichotomies that characterize the structures and dynamics of *fama*', see Hardie, pp. 6–11.
[5] *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, ed. by Lang and Shannon, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982–90), I, 7. For Tennyson's early 'anxiety about his ability to control his public image', see Jim Cheshire, '"The Public is a Many-Headed Monster": Tennyson Anticipating Fame', *TRB*, 11 (2017), 33–39 (p. 37).

between the supreme ruler and his (many) subjects' which Hardie suggests is implicit in the Latin concept of *fama*.[6] Hardie writes: 'The hero, the king, the poet all strive to assert their own unique, individual fame, which, however, is always dependent for its propagation on the multiple tongues of the crowd, whose obedience cannot be guaranteed'.[7] This unruliness and uncontrollability of the masses underlies Tennyson's ambivalence about fame and celebrity. The poet's son recollects that the later Tennyson was 'oppressed by the compliments and curiosity of undiscerning critics', and would say things like: 'I hate the blare and blaze of so-called fame. What business has the public to want to know all about Byron's wildnesses?'.[8] Here, the contradictions of fame are nicely captured in the ambiguity of 'blare and blaze'. It is well-known that Tennyson detested investigative biographies, or (in his own words) 'gossiping biographies'.[9] His 1849 poem 'To —, After Reading a Life and Letters', written 'in a fit of intense disgust after reading Medwin's book about Byron', vents his indignation at a public who dare to intrude into a poet's private life.[10] For once you have 'won the Poet's name' and 'gained a laurel for your brow', the public will 'hold their orgies at your tomb' (1, 3, 12), and now 'the Poet cannot die' (13), but

> round him ere he scarce be cold
> Begins the scandal and the cry:
>
> 'Proclaim the faults he would not show:
> Break lock and seal: betray the trust:
> Keep nothing sacred: 'tis but just
> The many-headed beast should know.'

[6] Hardie, p. 7. Hardie notes: 'The many-headed beast's many voices make it a monster of *fama*' (Ibid.).
[7] Ibid.
[8] *Memoir*, II, 164–65.
[9] Ibid., II, 165. See John Spedding, '"Curst be he that moves my bones"', *TRB*, 6 (1995), 268–71; John Batchelor, 'Alfred Tennyson: Problems of Biography', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 36 (2006), 78–95.
[10] *Poems*, II, 297.

(15–20)[11]

These lines foreshadow Tennyson's own concern about 'scandal' and 'cry' following his accession to the laureateship in 1850. Such unauthorised discourses will be reproduced and elaborated by 'The many-headed beast', for, as Rumour's self-description (Rumour about Rumour, as it were) tells us in the Induction to Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV*,

> Rumor is a pipe
> Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures,
> And of so easy and so plain a stop
> That the blunt monster with uncounted heads,
> The still-discordant wav'ring multitude,
> Can play upon it.
>
> (15–20)[12]

'Rumor' is characterised by its unregulated multiplication: it might be easy to 'play upon', but the phrase 'still-discordant wav'ring' signals its potential for dissonance and distortion. Just as the king is threatened by the dissonant tongues of the multitude, in 'To —, After Reading a Life and Letters' (which has as its epigraph the phrase from Shakespeare's epitaph, 'Cursed be he that moves my bones') the Poet is surrounded by garbled and inaccurate accounts of his personal life, and this notwithstanding the fact that 'he did but sing […]; / No public life was his on earth, / No blazoned statesman he, nor king' (21–24).

Tennyson entered public life directly in 1850, when he was appointed Poet

[11] In 'The Dead Prophet' (1885), which according to Ricks was supposedly 'occasioned by J. A. Froude's frank revelations about Carlyle's private life', Tennyson addresses the same theme. See *Poems*, III, 111.
[12] *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans and others, 2nd edn (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), p. 928.

Laureate, succeeding William Wordsworth. One consequence of 'becom[ing] a name' ('Ulysses', 11), however, was an increased number of unauthorised discourses about his own life and work.[13] Valerie Purton shows that throughout the writing of the *Idylls*, Tennyson was concerned about fame and its side effects: 'the power of Fame to distort, to magnify, to threaten integrity, must have been obvious to both Alfred and Emily, faced as they were every day with begging letters'.[14] *Idylls of the King* is Tennyson's attempt at writing a national epic that would conclude his poetic career and establish his authority as laureate. It was Virgil, the Poet Laureate of the Augustan regime, who provided Tennyson with the model for his literary career.[15] In 'To Virgil', written in 1882 to commemorate the nineteenth centenary of the death of the Roman poet, Tennyson clearly alludes, as A. A. Markley points out, to the Virgilian progression 'in his references first to the *Aeneid*, next to the *Georgics* and to the *Eclogues*, and finally back again to the *Aeneid*'.[16] Tennyson's own epic project had its genesis back in 'Morte d'Arthur' (written within months after Hallam's death in 1833 and published in 1842), one of his 'English Idyls', his experiments in the pastoral genre.[17] Although the project had been suspended for a while, due to John Sterling's negative review, Tennyson took it up again in 1856 to complete the Virgilian rota and solidify his poetic authority. Indeed, Tennyson's contemporaries often compared Tennyson's achievement in the *Idylls* to Virgil's

[13] For studies of Tennyson's use of names, see Barton, *Tennyson's Name: Identity and Responsibility in the Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008); Perry, 'Becoming a Name', *VP*, 59 (2021), 127–40.
[14] Purton, 'Tennyson's *Balin and Balan* as the Reconciliation of the Divided Self', p. 358.
[15] Markley, *Stateliest Measures*, p. 6. Richard Jenkyns remarks: 'Tennyson is often regarded, and justly, as one of the most Virgilian of English poets' (p. 32).
[16] Markley, *Stateliest Measures*, p. 6.
[17] Tennyson himself suggested a distinction between 'idyl' and 'idyll': 'Regarding the Greek derivation, I spelt my Idylls with two *l*'s mainly to divide them from the ordinary pastoral idyls usually spelt with one *l*. These idylls group themselves around one central figure' (Tennyson, *Poems*, III, 263n).

achievement in the *Aeneid*.[18] But more importantly, Virgil steered and shaped Tennyson's own conception of fame.

As an epic poem, *Idylls of the King* aims to establish Arthur's authority by recounting the authoritative story about his kingship. However, as critics have pointed out, Arthur's court is unduly occupied by such types of speech as gossip, hearsay, and rumour. While the presences of these repetitive and diffusive modes of speech may seem to counteract the epic endeavour of the poem, they represent the very processes by which Arthur's fame is disseminated. And as Virgil's *Fama* demonstrates, insofar as Arthur's authority is established and maintained through repetition and propagation, it is destined to become divided and fragmented.

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The authority of Arthur has long been a topic of discussion in Tennyson scholarship. In his 1949 essay on 'Tennyson's *Idylls*', F. E. L. Priestley identified what he called the 'fundamental problem of Arthur's authority'.[19] According to Priestley, as an allegory of the Soul, Arthur embodies spiritual values which create order out of chaos. However, as Priestley argues, these values are continually questioned within the poem. Years later, Dwight Culler pushed the question of Arthur's legitimacy in another direction: 'What is the spiritual authority by which we can regulate our society, and what are the grounds for giving it our allegiance?'.[20] More recently, as I shall discuss later, critics such as James Eli Adams and Herbert Tucker have argued that such types of speech as rumour and gossip threaten Arthur's authority in the poem, associating Arthur's status with that of the author

[18] Jenkyns, p. 8.
[19] F. E. L. Priestley, 'Tennyson's *Idylls*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 19 (1949), 35–49 (p. 38).
[20] Culler, *The Poetry of Tennyson*, p. 214.

as an epic poet writing in the late nineteenth century.[21]

Even a cursory glance at the *Idylls* will show that rumour and gossip are rampant in Arthur's court. From the start, there are various stories afloat about Arthur's origin. Asked to testify to Arthur's legitimacy, Sir Bedivere has to admit that 'there be many rumours on this head' ('The Coming of the Arthur', 177). After Arthur accedes to the throne, Lancelot's affair with the Queen, which constitutes a challenge to Arthur's kingship, soon becomes the talk of the court. Knowing everyone is gossiping about them, Lancelot says in desperation, 'let rumours be: / When did not rumours fly?' ('Lancelot and Elaine', 1186–87), where the very repetition of 'rumours', carrying over the line-break, demonstrates the potential for their unbounded multiplication. And towards the end of the poem, the collapse of the kingdom is suddenly heralded by 'a rumour wildly blown about / […] that Sir Modred had usurped the realm' ('Guinevere', 151–52).

These rumours and pieces of gossip are not unnecessary digressions from the main plot of the poem (if it has one); rather, as Donald S. Hair argues, they play a significant role in the eventual destruction of Arthur's order.[22] While such diffusive modes of speech may seem on the surface to be at odds with the epic project of the poem, they become particularly relevant when analysed in depth. As I shall show, rumour is actually an epic trope, and the establishment and maintenance of Arthur's authority, which is the main business of the *Idylls* as an epic poem, is dependent on the diffusiveness of speech. Especially when it has no definitive origin, as is the case with Arthur's claim to the throne, it is only by being shared and made public that a discourse can establish its authority.[23]

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[21] See also S. C. Dillon, 'Scandals of War: The Authority of Tennyson's *Idylls*', *Essays in Literature*, 18 (1991), 180–95; Noelle Bowles, 'Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and Anglican Authority', *Christianity and Literature*, 56 (2007), 573–94.

[22] Hair, *Tennyson's Language*, p. 147.

[23] For the 'tension between the glory of the Arthurian vision and the obscurity of its beginnings', see

Such a derivation of authority from the diffusion of speech is registered in the semantic duplicities of the Latin word *fama*.

A substantive deriving from the verb *fari* ('to speak'), *fama* literally means 'what is said'. It covers a range of meanings more or less related to speech, including 'gossip', 'hearsay', 'rumour', 'slander', 'report', 'news', 'fame', 'infamy', 'glory', 'reputation', 'scandal', and 'tradition', most of which are barely retained by its modern English descendent, 'fame'.[24] Within this range of meanings, Philip Hardie perceives 'a constant tendency of *fama* to structure itself according to a series of contrasts or oppositions', which are themselves 'open to erosion or deconstruction'.[25] One such contrast is that between flux and fixity: for example, gossip and rumour are words that refer to things that are still in the process of circulation and being fashioned, whereas fame and tradition are words for issues that have already been established and kept for preservation. This contrast, however, is not as settled as it looks. As suggested by the meanings of the words 'report' and 'news', which shift back and forth between fluid and fixed states of speech, what is now called fame and tradition 'may crystallize out of a more fluid circulation of words'.[26] Furthermore, their preservation 'depends on the repeated reuse of words within a social group'.[27] In this context of the repetitiveness of fame, the Tennysonian echo finds its local habitation. Hardie argues that fame 'has only the reality of a visual image (*effigies*) or aural echo (*resonat tamquam imago*) of that which truly exists, i.e. *uirtus*.

Richard Barber's chapter on 'The Elusive Hero' in *King Arthur: Hero and Legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1986), pp. 1–16 (p. 1).

[24] Hardie, pp. 3–6. The *OED* marks the sense of 'a report, rumour' as 'now rare', and the senses of 'glory' and 'infamy' as 'obsolete'. Middle English and Early Modern English still retained the now lost meanings of the word. On the semantic complexity surrounding Chaucer's use of the word, see Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), p. 23.

[25] Hardie, p. 3.

[26] Ibid., p. 4.

[27] Ibid.

Gloria or good *fama* is always of second-order reality, although the quality of the shadowiness of fame is variable.'[28] This fluidity of fame destabilises another contrast within *fama*, namely, the contrast between fame and infamy. In the course of its proliferation, fame can easily turn into infamy, and vice versa.

It is probably because of this dependence of fame on repetitive and diffusive speech that epic poetry, the main historical business of which has been to make the deeds of heroes famous, repeatedly makes rumour and gossip central to the action. Although these types of speech are regularly featured in the Homeric epics,[29] it is in Book 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid* that they are given their most extensive and elaborate representation. The Virgilian personification of *Fama*, who flies around spreading a rumour about Aeneas and Dido, provides an extravagant illustration of diffusive speech, and is worth quoting at length:

> At once Rumour runs through Libya's great cities – Rumour the swiftest of all evils. Speed lends her strength, and she wins vigour as she goes; small at first through fear, soon she mounts up to heaven, and walks the ground with head hidden in the clouds. Mother Earth, provoked to anger against the gods, brought her forth last, they say, as sister to Coeus and Enceladus, swift of foot and fleet of wing, a monster awful and huge, who for the many feathers in her body has as many watchful eyes beneath – wondrous to tell – as many tongues, as many sounding mouths, as many pricked-up ears. By night, midway between heaven and earth, she flies through the gloom, screeching, and droops not her eyes in sweet sleep; by day she sits on guard on high rooftop or lofty turrets, and affrights great cities, clinging to the false and wrong, yet heralding truth. Now exulting in manifold gossip, she filled the nations and sang alike of fact and falsehood, how Aeneas is come, one born of Trojan blood, to whom in marriage fair Dido deigns to join herself; now they while away the winter, all its length, in wanton ease together, heedless of their realms and enthralled by shameless passion. These tales the foul goddess spreads here and there upon the lips of men. Straightway to King Iarbas she bends her course, and with her words fires his spirit and heaps high his wrath.[30]

[28] Ibid., p. 25.
[29] Ibid., pp. 58–67.
[30] Virgil, p. 435.

Just as fame is established and maintained through its diffusion, *Fama* is defined by her continuous expansion and multiplication, which at the same time also resists definition. The parenthetical exclamation, 'wondrous to tell', points to the enduring fascination with the figure of the goddess herself; indeed, the figure of *Fama* was to be brought up again and again by later generations, constituting a recurring literary topos in Western epic poetry.

Tennyson's Arthurian epic follows this long-established tradition. Catherine R. Harland sets out Tennyson's debt to the representation of *Fama* in *Aeneid* IV in his fashioning of Vivien.[31] Indeed, Vivien, who first spreads the gossip about Lancelot and Guinevere, might well be considered the Tennysonian equivalent of Virgil's *Fama*. A closer comparison of the two figures reveals some marked similarities between them: where *Fama*, with 'watchful eyes' and 'pricked-up ears', 'sits on guard on high rooftop', Vivien 'Among her [the Queen's] damsels broidering sat, heard, watched / And whispered' ('Merlin and Vivien', 136–37); and where *Fama* 'with her words' to Iarbas 'fires his spirit and heaps high his wrath', Vivien 'let her tongue / Rage like a fire among the noblest names' (799–800).[32] Harland suggests, though, that the 'most insidious characteristic' Vivien inherits from her antecedent is confusion of the true and the false.[33] Merlin says to Vivien: 'You breathe but accusation vast and vague, / Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If ye know, / Set up the charge ye know, to stand or fall!' (699–701). Although he emphatically urges Vivien to set up her charge based on her knowledge ('ye know … ye

[31] Catherine R. Harland, 'Interpretation and Rumor in Tennyson's *Merlin and Vivien*', *VP*, 35 (1997), 57–68 (pp. 59–61). On Virgilian allusions in the *Idylls*, see Pattison; and J. M. Gray, *Thro' the Vision of the Night: A Study of Source, Evolution and Structure in Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980).
[32] On the 'indirect, skirting, allusive, insinuating' quality of Vivien's speech, see Williams, 'Tennyson's Once and Future King', *TRB*, 9 (2009), 253–69 (p. 253).
[33] Harland, p. 61.

know'), Merlin's own charge includes an unsupported supposition ('I think'), leaving undetermined the question of whether her accusation is true or not. Harland writes: 'Vivien/Fama literally corrupts the purity of Arthur's word by conflating "facta atque infecta"'.[34] However, as long as it is being passed around from person to person, Arthur's word cannot, in any case, maintain its purity. Here, Vivien and Arthur, who becomes 'Vext at a rumour issued from herself' (151), show a curious similarity. At one point, they even start to overlap:

> as Arthur in the highest
> Leavened the world, so Vivien in the lowest,
> Arriving at a time of golden rest,
> And sowing one ill hint from ear to ear,
> While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,
> And no quest came, but all was joust and play,
> Leavened his hall.
>
> (138–44)

As the parallelism suggests, Arthur and Vivien are embarking on a similar enterprise, but at opposite ends of the pole ('Arthur in the highest'/'Vivien in the lowest'). The biblical references in 'leavened' and 'sowing' even associate their undertaking with God's scheme of redemption. The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven tell how the kingdom of God, which is small at the beginning, will grow and spread across the world.[35] Although Donald Hair takes the leavening image to suggest that 'Vivien, like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, ultimately serves God's purposes',[36] it could rather be a sign that even Arthur's divine authority is only established through its spread and expansion.

In the *Idylls*, Arthur's authority is expressed through the mouth of Merlin. After the

[34] Ibid.
[35] See Matthew 13. 31–35; Mark 4. 30–32; Luke 13. 18–21; Galatians 5. 9.
[36] Hair, *Tennyson's Language*, pp. 149–50.

death of the King Uther, Merlin, who had served Uther as a prophet, catches a naked baby borne to the shore by a wave, saying 'The King! / Here is an heir for Uther!" ('The Coming of Arthur', 384–85). It is these words which help put an end to any controversy over Arthur's legitimacy, giving Leodogran a warrant for marrying his daughter to Arthur. But it is rather paradoxical that while Arthur will surely become King, his reign seems to depend on Merlin to authorise it. It should be noted here that Merlin's prediction about Arthur's future, to which Arthur himself is to be bound until his final moments, is told second-hand by Bellicent as one of the many tales concerning Arthur's birth ('let me tell thee now another tale' (358)). What, then, is the difference between Merlin/Bellicent's tale and other 'illegitimate' stories?

According to Maurizio Bettini, in Roman culture, the verb *fari*, from which *fama* derives, refers to 'a very specific way of speaking that is different from those implied by more common terms such as *loquor*, *aio*, and *dico*. […] This way of speaking was the characteristic mode of speech of the prophet.'[37] It is a powerful mode of speech, in the sense that it derives its authority from some supernatural power. 'In the sphere of *fari*', says Bettini, 'it is clear that there is not one agency alone at work (as normally occurs in utterance) but two: that of the "animator" (the immediate speaker) who actually utters the message and that of the "principal" who guarantees both its authenticity and efficacy.'[38] In the sphere of *fama*, however, there is no such 'principal'; rather, it gains its credibility and authority by being shared and made public. As the proverb pithily says, '*Vox populi, vox Dei*' ('The voice of the people is the voice of God'). The mere fact of its being talked about can attest – or appear to attest – to the veracity of a statement. Nevertheless, there

[37] Maurizio Bettini, 'Weighty Words, Suspect Speech: *Fari* in Roman Culture', *Arethusa*, 41 (2008), 313–75 (pp. 314–15).
[38] Ibid., p. 336.

is no denying that the absence of a source significantly compromises the reliability of *fama*. It means there is always an ambivalence about the authenticity of *fama*: 'it can be unreliable, but also truthful, empty chatter, but also powerful speech'.[39] However, as Bettini further argues, 'such ambivalence surround[s] divine speech as well'.[40] For in the majority of cases, the source who empowers the prophet or the seer to speak on their behalf is not actually present themselves. As a result, these two modes of speech are more similar than they appear to be at first glance. To quote Bettini again: 'the seer and the prophet are speakers very much like those who relay *fama*: they transmit a "voice" that is not their own, that reaches them from outside, but of which they are not themselves the *auctores*'.[41]

In making a prophecy, Merlin never invokes any supernatural power, which might explain the ambivalent attitude of the people regarding Arthur's authority. If Merlin's words do not have an authoritative or credible source, this can make it difficult for the people (and the poem's readers) to tell the difference between his tale and many other tales. Merlin's fame as a prophet itself then becomes the topic of conversation. Vivien asks: 'what is Fame in life but half-disfame, / And counterchanged with darkness?' ('Merlin and Vivien', 463–64). Like his king, Merlin cannot keep his fame unscathed, for there are people who would bring discredit on his name: 'since ye seem the Master of all Art, / They fain would make you Master of all vice' (466–67). To this Merlin answers:

> Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,
> But when my name was lifted up, the storm
> Brake on the mountain and I cared not for it.
> Right well know I that Fame is half-disfame,

[39] Ibid., p. 354.
[40] Ibid., p. 361.
[41] Ibid., p. 363.

Yet needs must work my work.

(499–503)

The near repetitions ('name … Fame … half-disfame') tellingly suggest that 'Fame' is itself an echo of what has already been said, and that it could easily turn into its opposite in the course of its dissemination. These lines sound like the poet's own voice. As Bettini duly notes, in ancient Greek culture, the poet was 'explicitly defined as a "prophet" of the Muse'.[42] In those days, it was thought that the poet spoke in the place of the Muse, who endowed their utterance with authority.[43] As a modern poet without his own supernatural Muse, Tennyson has to depend on public opinion, or the 'civic muse', for his poetic authority. However, the more his words spread among the people, the greater the chance of misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

In 'The Epic', which Tennyson added to 'Morte d'Arthur' in 1842 at Edward FitzGerald's suggestion, the poet Everard Hall owns up to having burnt 'His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books' (28). This self-effacing act seems to stem, at least in part, from the poet's unfulfilled wish for the preservation of his immortal fame. But one of these books ends up being rescued by one of his friends, and shared among them: 'I, though sleepy, like a horse / That hears the corn-bin open, pricked my ears; / For I remembered Everard's college fame' (44–46).[44]

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[42] Ibid., p. 337.
[43] In Plato's *Ion*, Socrates says of poets that god 'uses them as servants, as he does divine prophets and seers, so that we who hear may realize that it is not these persons, whose reason has left them, who are the speakers of such valuable words, but god who speaks and expresses himself to us through them'. *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. by D. A. Russell and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5.
[44] This repeats 'Virgil's legendary deathbed request that the unfinished *Aeneid* be burned, and his friends' refusal to carry out his wishes' (Markley, *Stateliest Measures*, p. 3).

Arthur's precarious authority in the poem might be interpreted most obviously as a representation of 'the lost reality of monarchical power in post-Reform England', where the 'masses', or 'mob' (in Walter Bagehot's words), were gaining increasing power.[45] Yet Arthur's authority is no less closely related to Tennyson's own authority as an author. It is Herbert Tucker who suggests that the questioning of Arthur's authority reflects the questioning of 'personal integrity in the epic poet' during the nineteenth century.[46] Where neo-classical criticism had adopted 'unity' as a basis of epic evaluation, historically-oriented eighteenth-century scholarship questioned 'the unity of Homer', dissolving Homer into the cultural discourses behind the text.[47] Tucker explains the way in which Arthur's authority is regained in the *Idylls* through 'the consensual logic that governs [the] legend'.[48] In deciding whether to marry his daughter Guinevere to Arthur, Leodogran consults those around Arthur; but they all tell different stories about Arthur's origin. Tucker argues that these conflicting narratives create a gap on the text: 'These disparate narratives or mini-idylls prove so mutually contradictory as to neutralize Leodogran's inquest, and so open a lacuna or "great deep" in the narrative past.'[49] As if to fill that lacuna, Leodogran decides in the end to accept Arthur's divine origin, exemplifying 'the behavior of an ideal Tennysonian reader'.[50] Playing on the king's name, Tucker writes: 'Arthur's legitimacy is vested, then, not in the traditional authority of kingship, but in what we might call "Arthurity," the strength of a gathering consensus that holds the king

[45] Richard D. Mallen, 'The "Crowned Republic" of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*', *VP*, 37 (1999), 275–90 (p. 275). Cecil Lang comments that 'the real subject' of *Idylls of the King* is 'the British Empire'. (*Tennyson's Arthurian Psycho Drama* (Lincoln: Tennyson Research Centre, 1983), p. 11). For the poem's relevance to the poet's attempt at 'nation-building', see Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse: English Poetry in a Time of Nation Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 246–73.
[46] Herbert F. Tucker, 'The Epic Plight of Troth in *Idylls of the King*', *ELH*, 58 (1991), 701–20 (p. 702).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., p. 704.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

true'.[51] However, just because there are too many narratives, it does not follow that these narratives cancel each other out. It might well be true that legends are governed by a 'consensual logic' – a folklorist observes that 'legends are merely conventionalized accounts of what was originally a rumor'.[52] But once they have established their status as legend, they need to be handed down from person to person to maintain that status, and in the course of transmission, they can undergo substantial alteration. Indeed, while Tucker shows how the author achieves a consensus among his readers, *Idylls of the King* persistently focuses on characters who attempt to break such a consensus with their own alternative narratives. Like the speaker of *Maud*, whose servants are 'ever ready to slander and steal' (I. 120), Arthur is under the continual threat of betrayal from his subjects.

James Eli Adams associates the vituperative discourses which threaten Arthur's authority with the treachery of contemporary readers. According to Adams, in the 1850s, when Tennyson was writing *Maud* and the early parts of *Idylls of the King*, the Victorian reading public was deeply preoccupied with topics such as divorce and marriage. Information about these topics was circulated by the emerging 'mechanisms of publicity' which did not necessarily care about authenticity, and included rumour, gossip, scandal, and slander.[53] The impacts of these mechanisms extended beyond just matrimonial issues: 'the increasingly far-reaching mechanisms of publicity […] were coming to strike many as almost irresistible threats to the integrity of private life'.[54] As a poet with a strong desire for privacy, Tennyson was worried that these unauthorised discourses might intrude upon

[51] Ibid., p. 705. See also Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse, 1790–1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 388–461.
[52] Patrick B. Mullen, 'Modern Legend and Rumor Theory', *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 9 (1972), 95–109 (p. 96).
[53] James Eli Adams, 'Harlots and Base Interpreters: Scandal and Slander in *Idylls of the King*', *VP*, 30 (1992), 421–39 (p. 422).
[54] Ibid., p. 423.

his own private realm. The unauthorised and inauthentic discourses surrounding Arthur may therefore be connected to those contemporary modes of discourse that were threatening 'the integrity of private life'.

Tennyson was concerned not only about the integrity of his own private life, but also about the integrity of his poems' lives. From Edgar Shannon's classic study to Kathryn Ledbetter's and Clara Dawson's more recent work, Tennyson criticism has examined how his poetry was affected by his involvement with the new publishing media of periodicals.[55] Periodicals promoted the dissemination of poems not only by providing critical evaluations of them, but also by reproducing extracts from them. Ledbetter sets out the way in which poetry comes into a 'Bakhtinian dialogue' with other texts in the pages of a periodical:

> When we read a Tennyson poem on a periodical page, meaning must be recognized in Bakhtinian dialogue with the specific periodical and its editor; its random or planned placement on the page; historical and cultural events (within the periodical or outside); literary ancestors of the poem; and our own readerly prejudices produced by criticism of the poet and his other work.[56]

While Tennyson wanted to reach a wider audience to achieve fame as a poet, and recognised the need to rely upon mass print media for the dissemination of his poems, he was tormented by the 'unpredictable forces' of the periodical, and its 'threat of textual multiplicity'.[57] Indeed, Tennyson's poems were sometimes subjected to aggressive and personal criticism on the periodical page. Tennyson's antagonism towards the reviewer-

[55] Shannon, *Tennyson and the Reviewers*; Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007); Clara Dawson, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of Evaluation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
[56] Ledbetter, p. 45. Dawson also emphasises the need to adopt the 'idea of the dialogic mode of the periodical to explore the review as a *mediation* of poetry' (p. 15).
[57] Ledbetter, p. 45.

critic who threatened to invade the private world of his poems finds an early expression in one of his juvenile poems: 'Vex not thou the poet's mind / For thou canst not fathom it' ('The Poet's Mind', 3–4)). It is well-known that the vituperative responses that followed the publication of his first independent volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) led Tennyson to a ten-year silence from 1832 to 1842. One of those responses, from John Wilson Croker in the *Quarterly Review*, almost crushed the poet, and his late poem, 'Merlin and the Gleam' (1899), suggests the abiding sense of vexation that Croker left on the poet:

> Once at the croak of a Raven who crost it,
> A barbarous people,
> Blind to the magic,
> And deaf to the melody,
> Snarled at and cursed me.
> A demon vext me,
> The light retreated,
> The landskip darkened,
> The melody deadened,
> The Master whispered
> 'Follow The Gleam.'
>
> (24–34)

The 'croak' could be intended as a pun on the name Croker. Hallam Tennyson comments: 'The "Raven croaked" ominously in the shape of the *Quarterly*'.[58] These lines might refer, as Ricks notes, to the family troubles that followed the death of Tennyson's father,[59] but the contempt for the public ('A barbarous people') and the sense of vexation ('A demon vext me') are shared with 'The Poet's Mind' (and note that Tennyson uses the same word in the *Idylls* to describe Arthur's response to a rumour: Arthur is 'Vext at a rumour issued

[58] *Poems*, III, 192n.
[59] Ibid.

from' Vivien). Tennyson was, as James Knowles records, 'supersensitive' to unsympathetic reviews, and this sensitivity 'had given him from his early youth exaggerated vexation'.[60] Yet what vexed him more than misunderstanding was the unfaithful reproduction of his poems. In a letter to the supposed author of a review of *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* in the *Quarterly*, Tennyson writes: 'Moreover the man [the author] misprints me, which is worse than lying'.[61]

As Dawson suggests, periodical reviewers 'claimed to speak *for* the public, presenting themselves as conduits for public opinion',[62] and Tennyson himself identified reviewers' opinions with those of his general readers. Shocked by the article in the *Quarterly*, he 'fancied that England was an unsympathetic atmosphere' and 'that the English people would never care for his poetry', and was 'half resolved to live abroad'.[63] This opposition between the author and his mass readership is analogous to the political opposition between the king and his subjects. Just as the king's authority is maintained but intimidated by his unruly subjects, the author's authority is dependent on, but at the same time threatened by, the reading public. In using unauthorised narratives to tell about Arthur's loss of authority, then, did Tennyson anticipate what a twentieth-century French critic called 'the death of the author'?

In his (in)famous essay of 1967, 'La mort de l'auteur', which may allude, among other things, to Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Roland Barthes casts doubt upon the very concept of the Author, which was then (in Barthes's term) 'what goes without saying', or '*doxa*' (a Greek counterpart to *Fama* which Barthes defines as 'Public Opinion, the mind

[60] *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*, p. 95.
[61] *Memoir*, I, 96.
[62] Dawson, p. 10.
[63] *Memoir*, I, 97.

of the majority, petit bourgeois Consensus, the Voice of Nature, the Violence of Prejudice').[64] He suggests that while classical French criticism endeavours to explain a work by tracing its origin to 'the voice of a single person, the author "confiding" in us', writing is the place where 'the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death'.[65] According to Barthes: 'a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'.[66] The place where this multiplicity is focused is not the author but the reader. Barthes thus officially declares that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author'.[67] However, it is ironic that just as he announces the heroic, self-sacrificing death of the author, Barthes's own authorial power is most conspicuously on display. He admits that the author has always been dead, but at the same time identifies the author as 'a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the "human person"'.[68] Furthermore, he traces the attempts of writers to loosen the sway of the author, from Mallarmé through Valéry and Proust up to the Surrealists. Barthes's writing clearly indicates a chronological pattern

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[64] Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), p. 47.
[65] Barthes, 'The death of the author', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge and Nigel Wood, 3rd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 313–316 (p. 313).
[66] Ibid., p. 315. The inverted commas seem to imply that Barthes is not quite sure whether there is such a thing as a single, authoritative message from God. Eric Griffiths points out that the Scriptures were 'not a source of univocally authoritative instruction' even in Dante's time, with theologians conducting a search for the ambiguities in God's word. Griffiths goes on to say: 'Not even Roland Barthes […] conceived of a text so writerly as to be polysemous "in every letter"'. ('Introduction', in *Dante in English*, ed. by Griffiths and Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 2005), pp. xix–cxxv (pp. lxvi, lxix)).
[67] Barthes, 'The death of the author', p. 316.
[68] Ibid., p. 313.

in the arrangement of these events:

> Mallarmé was doubtless *the first* to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner. […] *Lastly*, to go no further than this prehistory of modernity, Surrealism, though unable to accord language a supreme place […], contributed to the desacralization of the image of the Author.[69]

Barthes then puts an end to the Author by his own hands. By presenting the death of the author as a story beginning with a birth and ending with a death, he (perhaps intentionally) demonstrates his own authority over his grand narrative.

Rather like Barthes, Arthur exercises his full authority by abdicating from his throne. Towards the end of the poem, Arthur realises that 'all the purport of my throne hath failed' ('The Passing of Arthur', 160), and knowing that his time is nigh after he has been seriously wounded in the battle in the west, he decides to give up his prestigious sword. As Debra N. Mancoff comments, 'Arthur's youth was encoded in a single subject: the taking of Excalibur';[70] but while Excalibur should represent the symbol of Arthur's regal power, he is not given enough opportunities in the poem to wield it. Indeed, Excalibur is featured more often than not simply as a precious piece of jewellery. In his study on the symbolism of Excalibur in the *Idylls*, Jeffrey E. Jackson suggests that the jewel-studded sword which no longer serves its rightful purpose is associated with an effeminised materiality and materialism.[71] As such, Excalibur seems to exemplify what the poet himself referred to as 'a parabolic drift' (see further below). However, when

[69] Ibid., pp. 313–14 (my emphasis).
[70] Debra N. Mancoff, 'To Take Excalibur: King Arthur and the Construction of Victorian Manhood', in *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy (New York: Garland, 1996), pp 257–80 (p. 262).
[71] Jeffrey E. Jackson, 'The Once and Future Sword: Excalibur and the Poetics of Imperial Heroism in *Idylls of the King*', *VP*, 46 (2008), 207–29 (pp. 212–18).

Arthur tells Sir Bedivere to take the sword and cast it away into the lake, in order to try to execute the contract he made in accepting the sword,[72] he seems to invest it again with its original meaning. Thus he reminds Bedivere of 'how I rowed across / And took it, and have worn it, like a king' (200–01). Here, Excalibur is the very embodiment of regal authority. Arthur even refers to the sword using the masculine pronoun: 'take Excalibur, / And fling him far into the middle mere' (204–05). In this way, Arthur embarks on his last task as the king and endeavours to mark the end of his reign, but his plan is suddenly thwarted by his last knight, Sir Bedivere.

Coming down to the shore of the lake, Bedivere draws the sword, and in the next moment, the moon-lit sword captivates his eyes: 'all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks, / Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work / Of subtlest jewellery' (224–26). Such luxuriant description can be an impediment to the progress of the poem. Regardless of his master's order ('But now delay not' (204)), Bedivere gazes at the sword 'so long / That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood, / This way and that dividing the swift mind, / In act to throw' (226–29). Sir Bedivere ends up by leaving the sword in the waterflags and striding back to the king, to give a false report; but Arthur immediately sees through the lie. On his second errand, Sir Bedivere again becomes fascinated by the sheer gaudiness of the sword, and cries in a loud voice:

> were this kept,
> Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
> Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
> Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
> Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.

[72] In Mancoff's words, 'a pact of use and return' (p. 257) is inscribed on each side of the sword: 'On one side, / Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world, / "Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see, / And written in the speech ye speak yourself, / "Cast me away!"' ('The Coming of Arthur', 300–04').

> Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
> Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
>
> (268–74)

His boasting about the regal authority that the sword represents ('King Arthur's sword, Excalibur') suddenly slips into a reverie about the sword's creation. It feels as though time is passing slowly here. Bedivere then abandons his mission again, and strides back to his king. Realising that his knight has not flung the sword into the lake, Arthur says in disappointment: 'Authority forgets a dying king' (289). As Justin Sider shrewdly observes, Arthur is 'personifying Authority so that it may forget Arthur, rather than the other way around'.[73] Arthur thus braces himself for wielding his absolute power.

> Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
> Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
> Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
> Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
> And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
> But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
> I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'
>
> (294–300)

Employing a clear-cut opposition between 'a girl' and 'a man' and a conventional pattern ('the third time may prosper'), Arthur tries to bring his story to a quick and neat conclusion. Seamus Perry remarks that 'Tennyson's Arthur […] is characterized by his wholly uncharacterful passivity'.[74] But, even when mortally wounded, he threatens to kill Sir Bedivere himself, 'with my hands'. Under the absolute authority of Arthur, Sir Bedivere cannot help but do what he has been told to do. The speed with which he finishes

[73] Justin Sider, 'Framing Tennyson's Farewells: Authority and Materiality in "Morte d'Arthur"', *VP*, 51 (2013), 487–509 (p. 500). Sider, though, is talking specifically (going by his title) about 'Morte d'Arthur' rather than 'The Passing of Arthur'.
[74] Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 110.

the task attests to Arthur's authority.

> Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
> And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
> Among the bulrush beds, and clutched the sword,
> And strongly wheeled and threw it.
>
> (301–304)

Arthur responds: 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done' (317). While earlier on, 'he wishes Bedivere to bring back, not a sword, but a word' ('bring me word' (206)),[75] it seems now that Arthur does not require the verbal representation of the event that Bedivere offers. Just as the stories told about him by his subjects are misrepresentations of what he really is, Bedivere's report (the Latin *fama*, and the English 'fame', also meant 'report') could be an inaccurate reconstruction of what has actually happened. Arthur is well aware that the word is a double-edged sword.

By putting an end to his reign himself, Arthur reveals his authority in his final moments. If Arthur's plight reflects the mechanisms of publicity, in which the author is continually betrayed by unauthorised discourses, his renunciation of Excalibur represents both the death and revival of the Author at the same time. More precisely, the Author does 'not die, / But pass, again to come' ('The Coming of Arthur', 420–21). Indeed, the *Idylls* are themselves a revival, and therefore in some sense a repetition, of Tennyson's own 'Morte d'Arthur', which was itself committed to, but survived, the fire. It was in 1859 that the first instalment of the *Idylls* appeared. Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund observe that for contemporary readers, 'the poem began with Arthur's death in 1842,

[75] Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), p. 129.

followed by his resurgence in 1859'.[76] But at this second coming, as we have seen, Arthur does not appear with his full authority, but rather only with (to borrow Adam Phillips's phrase) a 'fragmented authority'.[77] At the end of the poem, Arthur seems to exercise his full authority in the very act of relinquishing it, and is going to come again to reign after his own passing.[78] In the meantime, though, his authority will be established and maintained, as a model to be drawn upon, through words (the words both of and within future poems), and can thus be affected by change in the course of transmission.

Tennyson's entire Arthurian corpus, including 'Morte d'Arthur', exemplifies this, being itself a reconstruction and refashioning of the Arthurian literature of the past.[79] 'The Epic', the frame which Tennyson attached to 'Morte d'Arthur' to pre-empt criticism, suggests that his epic is a remodelling, or echo, of an earlier one. Thinking that 'nothing new was said' in his epic, the fictional poet Everard Hall argues: if 'nature brings not back the Mastodon, / Nor we those times', then 'why should any man / Remodel models? these twelve books of mine / Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth' (30, 36–39). Yet his epic is not the faint and faded echo he believes it to be. Indeed, his friends are enraptured

[76] Ibid., p. 126.
[77] Adam Phillips, 'Barthes by Himself', in *In Writing* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), pp. 32–42 (p. 42). Barthes himself, in his preface to *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, declares 'the amicable return of the author', although 'the author who returns is not the one identified by our institutions (history and courses in literature, philosophy, church discourse); he is not even the biographical hero. The author who leaves his text and comes into our life has no unity; he is a mere plural of "charms," the site of a few tenuous details, yet the source of vivid novelistic glimmerings, a discontinuous chant of amiabilities, in which we nevertheless read death more certainly than in the epic of a fate'. (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. by Richard Miller (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 8).
[78] For the association of Arthur with Christ, see John D. Rosenberg, *The Fall of Camelot: A Study of Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973); Williams, 'Tennyson's Once and Future King', pp. 254–55.
[79] For a recent study of the way in which Tennyson renders Thomas Malory's Arthurian tales, see Dafydd Moore, 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: The Poems of Ossian and "The Death of Arthur"', *Review of English Studies*, 57 (2006), 374–91. For Tennyson's use of *The Mabinogion*, see Wayne Glowka, 'Tennyson's Tailoring of Source in the Geraint Idylls', *VP*, 19 (1981), 302–07.

by his reading of 'Morte d'Arthur': 'it was the tone with which he read – / Perhaps some modern touches here and there / Redeemed it from the charge of nothingness' (277–79). The way in which Hall reads the poem, his performance of it, is itself a version of it, and as such gives it a new life. Likewise, notwithstanding the poet's self-criticism, the way he renders the old material redeems his epic 'from the charge of nothingness'. For example, Tennyson's alteration of the season of Arthur's passing from summer to winter, which is accompanied by the setting of 'The Epic' on Christmas-eve, reinforces the very theme of resurrection, providing an interpretation, or a version, of the old material.[80] A version of the original does not need to be judged by its faithfulness or truthfulness. Hall thinks that 'a truth / Looks freshest in the fashion of the day' (31–32). He emphasises the appearance of a truth (how it looks) rather than its content (what it is). *Idylls of the King* was originally titled *The True and the False*,[81] which would suggest a stark dichotomy not allowing for any variation. However, Arthur's story will undergo multiplication and fragmentation in the course of being spread. As Virgil's *Fama* shows, diffusive speech corrupts the purity and unity of the original utterance by blurring the distinction between 'facta atque infecta', 'fact and falsehood', 'The True and the False'. It is probably because of this that Tennyson adopted the current title, which suggests multiplicity, and even fragmentariness (Arthur Clough regarded 'Idyll' as being almost synonymous with 'fragments': 'Tennyson is going on with fragments, or idylls as I believe he calls them').[82]

Tennyson once said of the *Idylls*: 'By King Arthur I always meant the soul, and by

[80] On how Tennyson and Virgil are 'our two great Christmas-poets', see Erik Gray, 'Tennyson, Virgil and the Death of Christmas: Influence and the "Morte d'Arthur"', *Arion*, 6 (1998), 98–113. On the way in which Tennyson adapted the old romance material to fit the contemporary fashion of realism, see Donald Hair, 'Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*: Truth "in the fashion of the day"', *English Studies in Canada*, 2 (1976), 288–98.
[81] *Poems*, III, 260.
[82] *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, II, 167.

the Round Table the passions and capacities of a man'.[83] Despite the authoritative authorial comment here, Tennyson elsewhere rejects such an unequivocal interpretation. Asked if those who interpreted the three Queens accompanying Arthur on his last voyage as Faith, Hope and Charity were right, he answered: 'They are right, and they are not right. They mean that and they do not. They are three of the noblest of women. They are also those three Graces, but they are much more. I hate to be tied down to say, "*This* means *that*".'[84] Tennyson here is not denying the validity of allegorical interpretations, but saying rather that such interpretations are not the only possible ones. While appreciating contemporary reviewers' allegorical interpretations of the poem, he frequently complained: 'They have taken my hobby, and ridden it too hard, and have explained some things too allegorically, although there is an allegorical or perhaps rather a parabolic drift in the poem.'[85] Used as an adjective in relation to 'drift' here, 'parabolic' evokes its root sense of 'a throwing beside', while the word 'drift' itself suggests that this transpositional movement would trace a wandering trajectory, along which unexpected meanings could come out. I have shown in this chapter how the threatening of Arthur's authority by illegitimate and unauthoritative discourses can be read as an allegory, or parable, of the threat to the privacy of Tennyson's own poetic life presented by acts of interpretation and textual reproduction. My reading is itself one possible interpretation, and an attempt in a 'parabolic drift' to bring out new meanings from the poem.

[83] *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*, p. 96.
[84] *Memoir*, II, 127.
[85] Ibid., pp. 126–27.

Conclusion

> Home is where one starts from.
> —T. S. Eliot, ‘East Coker’

His ‘end draw[ing] nigh’, Arthur sees ‘a dusky barge’ (‘The Passing of Arthur’, 331, 361). He begs the Three Queens to board him on the barge, which looks ‘like some full-breasted swan / That, fluting a wild carol ere her death, / Ruffles her pure cold flume’ (434–36). Setting out to sea, he bids a farewell to Bedivere, though with a characteristically Tennysonian indecision: ‘But now farewell. I am going a long way / With these thou seëst – if indeed I go / (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)’ (424–26). My reading of the *Idylls* in the last chapter has drawn a parallel between Arthur and Tennyson (the author), which I wish to extend a little further here. Arthur’s putting out to sea near the end of his life is rehearsed by Tennyson in his conclusion to his career as a poet. Tennyson’s supposed swan song, ‘Crossing the Bar’, was in fact written in 1889, three years before his death; however, it was Tennyson himself who wished later editors to ‘put my *Crossing the Bar* at the end of all editions of my poems’.[1] This is how Tennyson curated his poetic end:

> Sunset and evening star,
> And one clear call for me!
> And may there be no moaning of the bar,
> When I put out to sea,
>
> But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
> Too full for sound and foam,
> When that which drew from out the boundless deep
> Turns again home.

[1] *Poems*, III, 253.

Twilight and evening bell,
  And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
  When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
  The flood may bear me far
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
  When I have crost the bar.

(1–16)

Tennyson's putting out to sea typically ends up in a return home. Christopher Ricks notes: 'Once more, the poem turns again home, just as its last line returns to the title […]. It is a perfect epitome of Tennyson's essential movement: a progress outward which is yet a circling home.'[2] Indeed, in his early poems, such as 'Ulysses', 'The Lotos-Eaters', and *Enoch Arden*, Tennyson repeatedly delivered the recursive narrative in which characters set out to sea in order to return home, but the figures of the home and the sea in 'Crossing the Bar' is a reimagination, and even reversal, of the topographical contrast between the sea and the home these poems rely upon.

The Tennysonian sea famously resounds with moans, and 'the joining of "sea" with "moan"', as Robert Douglas-Fairhurst puts it, 'speaks of what can no longer speak for themselves: the voices of the dead'.[3] In Tennyson's vocabulary, the sea, whose constant flux keeps attracting restless souls, is sometimes almost antonymous with the home (as in 'The moanings of the homeless sea' (*In Memoriam*, XXXV. 9)). As he prepared to leave Somersby to return to Cambridge in 1828, Tennyson wrote a little poem entitled 'Home', which opens: 'What shall sever me / From the love of home? / Shall the weary sea, / Leagues of sounding foam?' (1–4). Here the sea is seen as that which severs one from

[2] Ricks, *Tennyson*, p. 296.
[3] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, p. 8.

home, or as a distance itself ('Leagues of sounding foam'). In 'Crossing the Bar', however, the speaker wishes the sea to have 'no moaning' and the tide is 'too full for sound'; indeed the sea is itself envisioned as the 'home' to which he will finally return. Tennyson at the end of his life sets out to sea to return home again, but the home he returns to is not a stable and secure one.

This thesis has shown how Tennyson's figures of repetition embody his continual questioning and reflection, providing him the scope to investigate major theoretical agendas, such as the Kierkegaardian recollection, the Platonic dichotomy of substance/shadow, and the Romantic principles of unity, human agency, and poetic authority. It has discussed not only rhetorical figures, such as simile and antithesis, but also embodied figures, such as Memory/memory, mirror-images, and *Fama*/*fama*, treating the latter as self-reflexive commentaries on the poet's own artistry of repetition. The Tennysonian home, which is repeatedly associated with the ideas of return and recurrence, might be viewed as another such embodied figure of repetition. In his narrative of 'the return home that discovered it to be no home at all' (to quote Seamus Perry's words again),[4] the idea of home keeps recurring, but something has always changed. In *Enoch Arden*, the repetition of the word 'home' makes it feel unfamiliar, or even uncanny, to the narrator, and the hero on his return: 'But homeward – home – what home? Had he a home? / His home, he walked' (664–65).[5] These are the narrator's words, but as Kirstie Blair observes, in the first line 'the boundaries between the narrative voice and the character's feelings are unclear', and therefore this line could represent 'Enoch's

[4] See above Chapter 1.
[5] Barbara Cassin shows how the Odyssean situation in which one returns home to find that 'the homeland, *Heimat*, is *unheimlich*, at home (*heim*) but not at home (*unheim*)' represents the paradigm of the 'uncanny' (*Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p. 14).

self-questioning'.[6] As if to rehearse his revisiting of the home, he revolves the word 'home' within himself, but the repetition leaves him in doubt as to the very existence of his home.

This reimagining of the home provides a critique of contemporary poetical representations of the home. Herbert Tucker shows 'how vast a web of intersecting concerns might surround a poet's tropes of home' in the 1820s, when Tennyson started writing poetry.[7] The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of thousands of 'homesick Britons' all over the world due to Britain's transition into global empire, and domestically, people were driven out of their living places due to the resettlement movement.[8] These concerns, Tucker suggests, precipitated the 'indoors migration of poetry', or the 'domestic conversion' in poetry.[9] The verse of the 1820s is typically imbued with 'the *yearning* for domestic bliss', or nostalgia, figuring home not as a physical and material place of dwelling (house) but as an idealised place of familial affection and affiliation. 'Tennyson adopts the conventions of that verse', Tucker argues, 'only to turn them, literally, inside out'.[10] Similarly, Douglas-Fairhurst in his essay 'At Home with Tennyson' shows how the poet, at a time when the home represented 'stability, security, and so on', set out to 'take the idea of home and twist it to be far more unsettled and unsettling'.[11]

Looking ahead to his death, in 'Crossing the Bar', Tennyson stages a putting out to

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[6] Kirstie Blair, '"Thousands of throbbing hearts" – Sentimentality and Community in Popular Victorian Poetry: Longfellow's *Evangeline* and Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 4 (2007), 1–18 (p. 10).
[7] Tucker, 'House Arrest: The Domestication of English Poetry in the 1820s', *New Literary History*, 25 (1994), 521–48 (p. 522).
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., p. 525.
[10] Ibid., p. 543.
[11] Douglas-Fairhurst, 'At Home with Tennyson', in *Lives of Houses*, ed. by Kate Kennedy and Hermione Lee (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), pp. 71–81 (pp. 79, 81). See also Purton, 'Tennyson, Heidegger, and the Problematics of "Home"', *VP*, 50 (2012), 227–48.

sea which turns out to be a circling home, repeating one last time his pet narrative of returning home. The poem's use of the contrast between the sea and the home is a repetition, or revisiting, of his early poems of returning home. But here he imagines the sea as home, unsettling the dichotomy of home and sea, recurrence and changeableness, stasis and action, upon which his early poems rely. The home he returns to at the end of his poetic life is neither a place that provides him with the sense of stability and identity nor a place that is lost on a second visit, but a place which one starts from, a place where a return means a new start.

Finally here, by way of conclusion, I wish to look, for an example of Tennyson's posthumous reputation as a kind of repetition in itself, at the way in which one of his successors, T. S. Eliot, dwells upon, demolishes, and rebuilds Tennyson's homes when providing his own version of the return home narrative in 'East Coker'.[12] The two poets appear to form a pointed contrast to each other in many ways. One was the Poet Laureate of the Victorian period, whose poetry allegedly represents its conservative moral values, while the other, once called a 'literary bolshevik' and a 'drunken helot',[13] is considered as the leader of the avant-garde Modernist movement, which 'was ostensibly united by, among other things, hostility to the verse of Tennyson'.[14] While the former is known for his critical reticence (as critics have observed, 'Tennyson left no body of criticism'),[15] which harked right back to his Cambridge days when he failed to deliver a paper at the

[12] For studies of the afterlife of Tennyson's poems, see Samantha Matthews, 'After Tennyson: The Presence of the Poet, 1892–1918', in *Tennyson Among the Poets*, pp. 315–35; Morton, *Tennyson Among the Novelists* (London: Continuum, 2010).
[13] Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 71.
[14] Morton, 'T. S. Eliot and Tennyson', p. 378.
[15] Miller, 'Temporal Topographies: Tennyson's Tears', in *Topographies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 134–49 (p. 134). See also Summer J. Star, 'Reading It Properly: The Poetics of Performance and Tennyson's "Merlin and Vivien"', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 58 (2016), 224–49 (p. 225).

Apostles' meeting,[16] the latter is known as a critic as well as a poet, and he even published late in his life his doctoral dissertation originally submitted to Harvard University.[17] Indeed, it was perhaps Eliot's criticism that contributed most to the devaluation of Tennyson in the twentieth century, and to Tennyson's reputation as a stupid poet: in a 1918 essay, Eliot wrote that Tennyson had a 'large, dull brain, like a farmhouse clock'.[18] Yet Eliot's criticisms of Tennyson are, as John Morton says, 'more nuanced' than those of his fellow critics, such as Ezra Pound.[19] Eliot's critical remarks are often criss-crossed with praise and blame, honour and dishonour, embodying the duplexity of *Fama*/*fama*. Thus, he does not forget to follow up the above description of Tennyson's brain with the qualification, 'which saved him from triviality'.[20] After all, the comparison of 'a large, dull brain' to 'a farmhouse clock' is not a fixed one: as Ricks says, 'Farmhouse clocks are wonderful: they're sort of beautiful and they're so sensible and the opposite of digital trickery and so on.'[21]

Although the ostensible critical stance manifested in his early essays prevented Eliot from alluding openly to Tennyson,[22] his poems, especially the later ones, contain distinct echoes of Tennysonian themes. The published drafts of *The Waste Land* show that even in his earlier work, Eliot was indebted to Tennyson for poetic inspiration. In lines from the manuscript version of 'Death by Water', which were excised in the final version

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[16] The prologue to this paper (entitled 'Ghosts') is excerpted in *Memoir*, I, 497–98.
[17] Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).
[18] Eliot, 'Verse Pleasant and Unpleasant', *The Egoist*, 5 (1918), 43–44 (p. 43).
[19] Morton, 'T. S. Eliot and Tennyson', p. 378.
[20] Eliot, 'Verse Pleasant and Unpleasant', p. 43.
[21] Ricks, 'Editing Eliot', *Bostonia*, (Winter 2008–2009), 44–45 (p. 45).
[22] For 'the contemptuous hailing-in of second-rate Tennyson' in 'Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar' (1920), see Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 258. For the nuanced politics in Eliot's allusions to Tennyson, see Longenbach, '"Mature Poets Steal": Eliot's Allusive Practice', in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. by A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 176–88 (pp. 185–86).

of the poem, Eliot gives an account of a 'voyage and shipwreck off the New England coast where he had sailed in his youth'.[23] 'With a light fair breeze, / Full canvas' (487–88), the ship was laying its 'course / From the Dry Salvages to the eastern banks' (489–90), when 'the wind declined' and 'Thereafter everything went wrong' (495, 496).[24] This causes a disturbance among the crew: one sailor 'of influence' says 'I'll see a dead man in an iron coffin, / With a crowbar row from here to Hell', and

> the crew moaned; the sea with many voices
> Moaned all about us, under a rainy moon,
> While the suspended winter heaved and tugged,
> Stirring foul weather under the Hyades.
>
> (512–14, 516–19)[25]

These lines resonate with echoes of 'Ulysses': 'Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades' (10), 'the slow moon climbs: the deep / Moans round with many voices' (55–56). The repetition of 'moaned'/'Moaned' in Eliot's lines is attuned to the repetitive music of Tennyson's verse, as it amplifies the Tennysonian echoes ('moon'/'Moans'), thus enacting the echoing of the sailor's moaning.

Although the lines containing allusions to the sea in 'Ulysses' are cut from the final version of 'Death by Water', partly because of the very references to Tennyson, and partly because they are set in America,[26] Eliot's own life seems to rehearse the Odyssean return to home. Eliot was born in America but, as if to trace his ancestor's steps backwards, moved to England, and was later naturalised as a British citizen, making the home of his ancestors his home again. His visit to his ancestral home in 1937 resulted in perhaps his

[23] Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 681.
[24] Ibid., p. 340.
[25] Ibid., p. 341.
[26] See Morton, 'T. S. Eliot and Tennyson', p. 382.

most repetitious poem, 'East Coker', the second of *Four Quartets*. According to Eliot, the title refers to 'a small village in Somerset, whereby my family lived from about the middle of the fifteenth century until 1671 when they went to New England. It serves, accordingly, for the author's purpose, as a place for a meditation on beginnings and ends'.[27] The home of his ancestors, for Eliot, was a place where things start and end. This sense of circling back is reflected in the first sentence of 'East Coker' ('In my beginning is my end' (I. 1)), and in the structure of the whole poem (as Gabriel Josipovici says, 'This is a poem that grows by coil, not by marching forward in a straight line').[28] However, just as in Tennyson's poetry, the home, or houses, portrayed at the beginning of 'East Coker' is not just the place of origin that guarantees identity and continuity:

> In succession
> Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
> Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
> Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
> Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
> Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
> Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
> Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.
> Houses live and die: there is a time for building
> And a time for living and for generation
> And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane
> And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots
> And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.
>
> (1–13)[29]

These densely repetitive lines, which are built upon the rhetorical figures of antithesis and anaphora, stage the continual rebuilding of houses. One of those houses is modelled upon that of Mariana: 'And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots'

[27] Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 925.
[28] Gabriel Josipovici, '*Four Quartets*: A Commentary', *PN Review*, 19 (1992), 44–51 (p. 46).
[29] Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 185.

carries a distinct echo of 'Mariana', which Tucker argues is 'Tennyson's most important, because most subversive, contribution to the tradition of 1820s poetry' ('the mouse / Behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked' (63–64)).[30] Or rather, it might refer to Tennyson's reshaping of Mariana's house in *Maud* ('the shrieking rush of the wainscot mouse' (I. 260)). As Morton observes, Eliot here 'makes a double allusion, calling into play lines from "Mariana" which Tennyson himself had alluded to in "Maud"'.[31] If so, the allusion may be not so much to the house itself as to the very act of refashioning it, just as Eliot himself describes the process of rebuilding houses rather than the houses themselves. Eliot's 'houses' are in an ongoing process of transformation; they are even replaced by 'an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass', and the 'timber' from which the houses are made ends up in 'flesh, fur and faeces / Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf'. These descriptions are themselves constructed from the fragments of Tennyson's own descriptions of houses. In 'Aylmer's Field', Tennyson tells how after 'the great Hall was wholly broken down', 'all is open field' (846, 853); and in 'The Deserted House', he describes the way in which 'The house was builded of the earth, / And shall fall again to ground' (15–16). In 'East Coker', Eliot provides a reimagining of these Tennysonian houses, by shifting the focus from the houses themselves to the process of rebuilding them. This very shift is effected through the recycling and reworking of Tennyson's own descriptions of houses, demonstrating how returning home can be a new start. Eliot's speaker says at the beginning of the quartet's last stanza: 'Home is where one starts from' (V. 19).[32] His ensuing injunction that 'Old men ought to be explorers' (31) reminds us of

[30] Tucker, 'House Arrest', p. 543.
[31] Morton, 'T. S. Eliot and Tennyson', p. 387. See also Carl Plasa, 'Reading Tennyson in *Four Quartets*: The Example of "East Coker"', *English*, 40 (1991), 239–58 (p. 243).
[32] Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 191.

the old speaker's resolution at the end of Tennyson's 'Ulysses'.[33] For Eliot's speaker, as for Tennyson's speaker, home is a place where a new journey begins. Eliot's last line shows how a return home, a repetition, brings about a reversal. In a Tennysonian circling back, or coiling, from an end to a beginning, the quartet returns to its opening line, but now it signals a new start: 'In my end is my beginning' (38).[34]

[33] Ibid. Stephen Sicari suggests that the line refers further back, to Dante's *Inferno*, XXVI, to which Tennyson's 'Ulysses' alludes. Stephen Sicari, 'In Dante's Wake: T. S. Eliot's "Art of Memory"', *CrossCurrents*, 38 (Winter 1988–89), 413–34 (p. 422).
[34] Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 192.

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