

## Tennyson's "Tithonus" and the Revision of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" \*

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### Introduction: Allusions and Echoes

Tennyson's 1860 dramatic monologue "Tithonus" resonates with well-tracked Wordsworthian echoes and allusions, many of which allude directly to "Tintern Abbey" (1798). Seamus Perry, for instance, notices how "Tithonus" provides a "remarkable variation" on the theme of "Tintern Abbey"'s exploration of the self in time (52): "The speaker, granted the immortality he craved, but not eternal youth, is always the same yet dreadfully mutable" (52).<sup>1</sup> The perpetually ageing Tithonus describes his woeful condition to his auditrix, Aurora, unable almost to recognise his younger self:

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart  
In days far-off, and with what other eyes  
I used to watch—if I be he that watched—  
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw  
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;  
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood  
Glow with the glow that slowly crimsoned all. (50-56)

Wordsworth's speaker in "Tintern Abbey" also looks back to an earlier self:

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\* For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debate/tennysons-tithonus-revision-wordsworths-tintern-abbey>.

I cannot paint  
 What then I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
 That had no need of a remoter charm,  
 By thought supplied, nor any interest  
 Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
 And all its aching joys are now no more,  
 And all its dizzy raptures. (75-85)

The connection between the two poems is clear; both speakers bemoan their changefulness, although for Wordsworth's speaker "other gifts / Have followed" (86-87): he has learned "To look on nature, not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes / The still, sad music of humanity" (89-91). For Tithonus, by contrast, there is no such recompense: he is left to beg for restoration "to the ground" (72) as a form of release from his cycle of continuous decay.

"Tithonus" not only forms a poetic response to "Tintern Abbey" in the way Perry describes, however, but also revises the connection between memory and nature underpinning Wordsworth's narrative of "returning." As I will show, "Tithonus" contains many more echoes to Wordsworth than previously recognised, echoes that enable Tennyson to revise, rather than simply to refashion, Wordsworth's poetic trope.

I use the term "echo" itself as a viable means by which to map this Wordsworthian language in the text. Sarah Annes Brown points out that allusion

strongly implies agency; it suggests that a later writer has deliberately referenced an earlier work, inviting the reader to notice and reflect on the connection. Sometimes the echo is so unmistakable, so distinctive, that we experience no doubt in identifying a deliberate allusion. (7-8)

Brown uses the word "echo" here to imply intentionality, but later confirms that

[a]n echo is a more neutral word which doesn't rule out the possibility of conscious borrowing but implies that the connection isn't strong enough to prove deliberate agency or to ensure recognition in the majority of attentive readers. (8)

John Hollander also uses the term as:

a metaphor of, and for, alluding, [that] does not depend on conscious intention. The referential nature of poetic echo, as of dreaming (or Coleridgean "symbol" as opposed to conscious "allegory"), may be unconscious or inadvertent, but is no less qualified thereby. (64)

In focusing on "echo," this essay both allows meanings to arise that would otherwise have remained hidden and makes a significant intervention in the critical analysis of Wordsworth's poetic influence in the poem.<sup>2</sup>

I also draw on the theory of intertextuality, of the text as engaged in unconscious dialogue with previous texts.<sup>3</sup> My discussion of "Tithonus" and its reworking of "Tintern Abbey" is therefore premised on the way in which historical and cultural context cannot fully account for an author's poetic and literary associations, as "literature itself has a history, [...] speaks with others' words, talks back to them, and manifests authors' own histories of reading and writing" (Bruster 3 qtd. in Brown 16).

By 1860 the Wordsworthian correspondence between memory and nature had become difficult to sustain for Tennyson. In *In Memoriam* (1850), revisiting the River Wye brings only "tears that cannot fall" (Rapf 377n14), for example.<sup>4</sup> Nature has lost its once privileged position. In "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth writes of a nature that is the "guardian" (110) of the speaker's "heart, and soul" (110) and "Of all [his] moral being" (111). In *In Memoriam*, Tennyson, who is known to have been influenced by the work of the evolutionary scientist Charles Lyell (*The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes* 2: 370-71, note lv), acknowledges a "Nature" that is "careless of the single life" (LV 8) and "red in tooth and claw" (LVI 15). Nature has betrayed "The heart that loved her" ("Tintern Abbey" 123) in this sense. In reworking the

connection between mind and nature as it appears in "Tintern Abbey," Tennyson can release himself from a Wordsworthian narrative that privileges a psychologised relationship with nature and to which he is no longer committed.

The revisionary processes at work in "Tithonus" are evident in the earlier "Tithon," on which the 1860 "Tithonus" is based, but their effects gain in intensity in the later monologue. The monologue as a form is already establishing a difference from Wordsworth in its rejection of Romantic universal subjectivity and its adoption of a fictional and performative persona.<sup>5</sup> In the monologue, a silent addressee directly "reverses the Romantic ideal of the poet's private, lyrical self-expression" (Martens 9), while the dialogic language of the speaker opens up the text to time and history. Thus, in reworking Wordsworth's interaction between mind and nature, "Tithonus" is consolidating a new poetic alongside revising what has become a somewhat anachronistic poetic trope.

### Wild Aurora

In "Tintern Abbey," the speaker is nourished by nature under an untroubled, "quiet" (8) sky. It is nature that provides a way for the speaker to "see into the life of things" (49), to gain "a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused" (95-96), whatever that "something" is. This process is a product "Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create, / And what perceive" (106-07), and is casual, quotidian, yet sustaining; yet the gleams of transcendence formed in the mind are always in danger of being "half-extinguished" (58). Dorothy, the speaker's auditrix, becomes the person to whom the experiences of the eye and ear are entrusted, the guardian of those highly treasured moments of sublimity, with the speaker hoping to read his "former pleasures" (118) in her "wild eyes" (119). The adjective "wild" here has a particular significance, as "wild" in Wordsworth's poem is explicitly associated both with nature and the trans-

endent process to which it gives rise: nature is a "wild secluded scene" (6) which engenders "wild ecstasies" (138). Dorothy is linked to this "wild" landscape, and its capacity to induce pleasure in the speaker, through her "wild" eyes. As a result of her "wildness," Dorothy becomes "nature," as well as a future custodian of the transcendent moments to which it gives rise; her "wildness" implies that her role as guardian is not a secure one, however.

In "Tithonus," Aurora is assigned a similar role to Dorothy, in that she is the speaker's auditrix but also "nature," though not in the sense of a pathetic fallacy (Shaw 87). Intertextual echoes between "Tithonus" and "Tintern Abbey" underline the connections between both Aurora and nature and Aurora and Dorothy in the latter's capacity as "nature": Aurora's beauty is emphasised in "Tithonus," for instance, by being evoked through the "beauteous forms" (22) of nature borrowed from "Tintern Abbey," with the speaker confirming that she "ever thus [...] grow[s] beautiful" ("Tithonus" 43). "[N]ature and the language of the sense" (108) anchor the speaker's "purest thoughts" (109) in "Tintern Abbey": Aurora is described as having "pure brows" and "shoulders pure" ("Tithonus" 35), immersing her in the language and epistemology of the earlier poem. It is from these "pure" brows and "pure" shoulders that the "old mysterious glimmer" (34) of imaginative transcendence steals for Tithonus, confirming Aurora in her role as Wordsworth's "nature" in the poem.

Darkness releases, rather than conceals, another intertextual echo between "Tintern Abbey," Aurora and nature, deepening the sense in which "Tithonus" is reworking Wordsworth's sympathetic nature. "Tintern Abbey," like much of Wordsworth's poetry, contains darkness as well as light, as Keats notably recognises, when he writes of how Wordsworth's imagination in the poem is "explorative of [...] dark passages" (*The Letters of John Keats* 280). Nature is inflected with a dark and potentially dangerous malignity in "Tintern Abbey," despite her power of being able to engender the light of transcendence in the speaker. She is Wordsworth's loving "nurse" (109), but her nurturing capability shields an incipient malevolence: the sycamore

under which the speaker sits to contemplate his beloved nature's beauty is "dark" (10); her music has the power to "chasten and subdue" (93). In "Tithonus," Aurora as "nature" unmasks this malevolence. She is lightness and lucidity (53), but also darkness: she moves in a "dark" world; her "wild team" (39) shake the "darkness" (41) from their loosened manes; she bathes Tithonus in her "rosy shadows" (66; emphasis added). She has the power to "scare" (46) Tithonus with her tears, to make him "tremble" (47) with the thought that the Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts; her team "beat" (42) the twilight into flakes of fire, with the echoing beat here a useful reminder of the intertextual transference taking place in the poem (see Hollander 64).

If Aurora evokes the dark and volatile nature of "Tintern Abbey," then she also evokes Dorothy in her role as nature; Dorothy, too, contains "dark passages," although these remain, like nature's malevolence in general, implicit in Wordsworth's poem. Nature produces "sensations sweet" (27) in "Tintern Abbey," and Dorothy's memory is "as a dwelling-place / For all sweet sounds and harmonies" (141-42) that nature produces, with "sweet" linking Dorothy directly to nature; Aurora's "sweet eyes brighten" (38) close to Tithonus's eyes. But the association has "darker" overtones through the presence of the adjective "wild" in both texts; just as Dorothy has "wild eyes," which link her to the "wild secluded scene" (6) of "Tintern Abbey," so Aurora is inflected with wildness: she has a "wild team" (39), as she does in the earlier "Tithon" (35). She is nature here, with the same capacity for sweetness and wildness as Dorothy, a duality neatly emblematised in whisperings that are not only "sweet" but "wild" ("Tithonus" 61).

Malevolence is related to the way in which nature is eroticised in "Tintern Abbey," as is Dorothy as "nature" through her "wildness," and this is a pattern replicated in "Tithonus": the speaker in "Tintern Abbey" describes nature as "a feeling and a love" (80), which produces "aching joys" (84) and "dizzy raptures" (85) that produce "wild ecstasies" (138) in him; it is "the thing he loved" (72). Nature's eroticism signals another potential inconstancy, to complement the potential wildness she encompasses in "Tintern Abbey," but this is a sub-

merged effect, like that of wildness: she is a lover who loves and then leaves, "the thing he *loved*" (72; emphasis added). In "Tithonus," Aurora is objectified as erotic "nature": it is her "shoulders" (35) which are pure, her "eyes" which are sweet (38), her "cheek" which is reddened (37). The erotic implications of Dorothy's "wildness" are made manifest, as what is implicit in "Tintern Abbey" becomes explicit in "Tithonus": the "wild" (39) team "love" (40) Aurora, and are "yearning" (40) for her "yoke" (40); they shake their "manes" (41) like loosened hair.

Aurora's eroticism in "Tithonus" is streaked with the artificial, a disingenuousness suppressed or denied in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." If Dorothy is "wild" nature, then she is nature with its social inscription denied. Wordsworth is often criticised for "greening" nature (Makdisi 49, quoting Levinson 24-39), for portraying her as a purely benign force, and for failing to acknowledge that she is a "construct" as much as she is an expression of natural forces. Saree Makdisi notes how in Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk*

the straight lines of the enclosure hedges are softened, and [...] transformed into graceful "*willowy* hedgerows," anticipating *Tintern Abbey's* "hedgerows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines / Of sportive wood run wild." (54)

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

Nature's own sounds are foregrounded in "Tintern Abbey" and are synonymous with the transcendence they produce in the mind of the speaker: the mountain-springs create a "soft inland murmur" (4); the "sounding cataract" (76) haunts Wordsworth like a passion. Dorothy is also associated with the sounds of transcendence in her role as nature; Wordsworth's speaker hears in her "voice" the language of his "former heart" (117). She will become his "voice" (148) as well as his eyes. Aurora, like Dorothy, is allied with the sounds as well as the

sights of nature. Her eyes are “tremulous” (26), and thereby infused with a sense of musically repeated notes, combining the senses of sight and sound as in “Tintern Abbey”: her team “beat” (42) alongside her, which has rhythmic as well as menacing overtones. However, where Dorothy’s association with nature’s “sweet sounds and harmonies” (142) will ostensibly secure Wordsworth’s future “immortality,” Aurora’s is linked to the “strange song [Tithonus] heard Apollo sing / While Ilion like a mist rose into towers” (62-63). Sweet sounds become a strange harmony in Aurora’s immortal world, as the musical accord that nature produces in the mind of the speaker in “Tintern Abbey” becomes “strange” and disconnected. Dorothy is indirectly associated with disharmony in “Tintern Abbey”: if Wordsworth hopes to hear the voice of nature in Dorothy’s “voice” (148), then it is a voice of nature that nevertheless sings the sad music of humanity. It is left to “Tithonus” to make this disconnection explicit, with an Ilion that rises into towers from Wordsworth’s “misty mountain-winds” (136).

In revising Wordsworth’s poem in this way, Tennyson nevertheless replicates Wordsworth’s apparent gender bias: Anne K. Mellor writes persuasively of how in “masculine” Romanticism, the six major male poets, including Wordsworth, “often subtly regender both the subject and the object as male and in the process erase the female from discourse: she does not speak; she therefore has no existence” (19). So:

Dorothy remains a silenced auditor in *Tintern Abbey*, a less conscious being whose function is to mirror and thus to guarantee the truth of the poet’s development and perceptions, even as the poem itself acknowledges the existence of an unbridgeable gap between the poet’s forever-lost past subjectivity and his present self. (19)

Dorothy has a “voice” in “Tintern Abbey,” yet does not “speak”; in “Tithonus,” Aurora is similarly reduced to a “whisper.”

In "days far-off"

Tennyson reworks Wordsworth's nature in "Tithonus," but Tithonus, in his role as Wordsworth's speaker, undergoes a similar reconfiguration. "Tithonus," as Perry suggests, provides "a remarkable variation" (52) on the theme of "Tintern Abbey"'s changefulness. And yet the echoes to Wordsworth work to question the process, and value, of the poem's "abiding" self, where the speaker "discovers he is the same, but not the same, person that he was five years before" (Perry 47). Tithonus speaks of a self able to reach moments of sublimity, but this is a self previous in time. It is in "days far-off" (51) and "with [...] other eyes" (51) that Tithonus "felt [his] blood / Glow with the glow" (55-56) of transcendence Aurora as "nature" produces in him. This is a self at once itself and not itself, but it is also a moment of Tinternesque sublimity, as "Tithonus" borrows directly from "Tintern Abbey" to describe Tithonus's experience of reencountering his former self. "[F]elt my blood / Glow" (55-56), for instance, echoes with the "sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart" (27-28) that feed the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" in his "hours of weariness" (27), replicating the intimate connection between imagination and feeling that exists in Wordsworth. Wordsworth's images of blood and heart also resonate in the "crimsoned" (56) Aurora as she suffuses Tithonus with her glowing "presence" (57). The text's replacement of an iamb with a trochee in the first foot of the line—"Glow with the glow"—captures the rhythm of the sensations "felt in the blood," while the slow pull of alliteration and assonance in the same line hints at how Tithonus's moment of transcendence is taking place out of ordinary time.

Tithonus himself does not want to transcend time in the way offered in the moment of Wordsworthian sublimity; his sensations sweet do not pass into the "purer mind" (29) with "tranquil restoration" (30) as they do in "Tintern Abbey." Rather, he wants to exist

inside time and outside of feeling, which parallels in turn his desire to relinquish his immortality for a return to the mortal world.

Tithonus views his former self, a self that was able to feel and to glow, just as Wordsworth's speaker in "Tintern Abbey" views his former self and his previous moments of transcendence, but Tithonus is tired of the "gift" (27) of transcendence now, and wants to return it and himself to the ground. Tellingly, the "other eyes" (51) to which Tithonus refers reveal that the moment of retrospective sublimity is potentially vitiated from within and therefore not worthy of being "remembered," as the phrase contains intertextual echoes of Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk*. The first of the two 1793 editions of *An Evening Walk* includes a speaker "with other eyes" (1793, 17), who looks back at his former ability to invest nature with significance, an ability he subsequently loses but recaptures. Unlike Wordsworth's speaker in the poem, Tithonus is unable to recover his lost imaginative power, and remains trapped within the process of looking back "with [...] other eyes" ("Tithonus" 51). He fails to sublimate, and thus recover, his loss in the way that Wordsworth's speaker does, as the intertextual echoes at work in the poem prevent him from doing so. The double set of "days far-off" (48 and 51) of which he speaks, for instance, echo Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper," which is predicated on the speaker's observation of the Reaper's perpetual revisiting of a sorrow:

Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang  
As if her song could have no ending. (23-26)

The double-set lines, in effect, work as a framing device, trapping the speaker within his own imaginative loss. Like the Reaper, Tithonus is caught in a cycle of revisiting an imaginative vacuum from which he wants to escape but in which he is inextricably bound. Rather than

"dreadfully mutable," the text manoeuvres toward making Tithonus dreadfully *immutable* here.

Tithonus is trapped with his own failing imagination and with his inconstant and discordant nature, Aurora. The "warmer love" (154) nature induced in Wordsworth's speaker in "Tintern Abbey" becomes "cold" and distant in "Tithonus": in contrast to the "shooting lights" (118) of Dorothy's eyes, "cold / Are all [Aurora's] lights" (67), and "cold" are Tithonus's "wrinkled feet / Upon [her] glimmering thresholds" (67-68). In another echo with *An Evening Walk*, "cold" Aurora's "tears" (45) evoke the "cold cheek" (1849, 322) and the "shuddering tear [it] retains" (1849, 322) of the earlier poem, when the speaker realises that his imaginative powers are momentarily lost to darkness. "Glimmering" specifies a "faint or wavering light" (OED: glimmering, n.), but the word is also suggestive of *An Evening Walk*, where it, too, indicates a weakened or wavering imagination. In Wordsworth's poem, the speaker experiences a moment of transcendence, where "music, stealing round the glimmering deeps / Charmed the tall circle of the enchanted steps" (1849, 303-04). The mind's imaginative power appears to be subverted in Wordsworth's poem, although the loss remains couched rather than explicit, or is displaced onto a source other than the failing power of the mind itself. For instance, with the coming of night comes the loss of imagination, where "Lost in the thickened darkness, glimmers hoar" (1849, 312), prompting the speaker to exhort: "Stay! pensive, sadly-pleasing visions, stay! / Ah no! as fades the vale, they fade away" (1849, 319-20). Whilst the speaker acknowledges that the "glimmers" are lost and the visions fading, he nevertheless attributes this loss to the darkness rather than to the mind's failing powers. The use of the present tense "glimmering" (68), however, emphasises that Tithonus cannot break free from his cycle of yearning and fading; nor can he attribute his failing power to the "darkness" that is Aurora. Additionally, "the old mysterious glimmer" (34) that steals from Aurora's "pure" brows and "shoulders" (35) for Tithonus evokes the "burthen of the mystery" ("Tintern Abbey" 38) of the earlier poem, but whereas for the speaker

of "Tintern Abbey" transcendence acts as a powerful mystery and a pulse of warm sensational blood that feeds the purer mind, for Tithonus it acts only as an enervated glimmer that results in cold, wrinkled feet.

There seems to be no hope of escape from this post-"Tintern" world for Tithonus, no projections into or onto the future, only a perpetual present of loss and fading power, as Tennyson reworks the mind's connection with nature. Whereas the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" finds the mind's transcendence of nature rewarding, as there will always ostensibly be "food / For future years" (64), Tithonus is "consumed" by the process of "transcending." The "gloomy wood" (78) sustains the speaker in "Tintern Abbey": it is literally an "appetite" (80), a provision of spiritual nourishment. The "gloom" (37) of the dark world has an obverse effect in "Tithonus": Aurora's "cheek begins to redden through the gloom" (37), but gloom carries the sense of melancholy or depression as well as a sense of darkness (*OED*), counterpointing the "life and food / For future years" (64-65) that nourishes Wordsworth's speaker. In Wordsworth, "to deny imagination its darker food, to seek and make it a 'Shape all light,' is to wish imagination away" (see Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* 141), but in "Tithonus," the food with which the imagination is fed connotes depletion rather than nourishment. Aurora's blush—itsself transient or even duplicitous—cannot feed this loss of hope for Tithonus, as Aurora herself functions as its cause, the heart of its darkness. She represents Wordsworth's speaker's repository of hope writ large, but can offer Tithonus only an etiolated present, tendering not the growth of the mind through darkness (see Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* 139-40) but merely perpetual and enervating stasis.

The speaker's circular return to his moments of sublimity in "Tintern Abbey," those moments that nourish him in his loneliness but which nevertheless echo with loss are hyperbolised in Tithonus's circular return to his faded nature, Aurora. With Wordsworth, "his mind circles and haunts a particular place until released into an emancipatory idea of Nature" (Hartman, *The Unremarkable Words-*

worth 137). Tithonus's mind circles but cannot be released, as his "nature" remains suffocatingly dark rather than emancipatory. Nature as woman becomes the destroyer rather than the creator, as the text works to sunder Wordsworth's "covenant between mind and nature" (Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry* 267). In "Tithonus," nature does not remain supine, a passive partner over which the mind can continue to have an ongoing and superior control, but a wilful seductress and destroyer with the power to tease and depress as well as to feed the mind. The moral and cooperative nature which sustains the speaker in "Tintern Abbey" no longer exists, as the text works to reveal her as a recalcitrant partner. Wordsworth comes to postulate a non-cooperative nature in the 1807 "Elegiac Stanza," "Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont," but "Tithonus" specifically disassembles the imaginative promise of "Tintern Abbey," confirming and consolidating the essential vacancy at its core and laying bare the ruptured relationship between mind and nature—and the mind and itself—in the post-"Tintern" world unconsciously or inadvertently created in the text.

The evidence of an imaginative self that exists prior in time is less potent in the 1833 "Tithon," from which the 1860 version is drawn. Tithon bemoans how he was once "wooed" (47) by Aurora's charms: "Ay me! ay me! with what another heart, / By thy divine embraces circumfused, / [...] With thy change changed, I felt this wondrous glow" (41-44). He recognises that Aurora's "change" is "changed," her blackness dissipated, unlike in the later version, where it continues to depress and subdue. The "wondrous glow" that ends line 44, however, while extended in its intensity via its enjambment, nevertheless lacks the connective beat to Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" of "Tithonus," suspended in splendid isolation as it is at the end of the line. The connections to "Tintern Abbey" gain in intensity in the later poem, where they also create a more persistent effect. "Tithon," for instance, is suggestive of a self-expressive lyricism, where lines 11-15 assert a "personal emotional state [that] is couched as a definitive

statement of a universal condition, outside language" (Slinn 86), although:

[a]fter the initial self-pitying lament, the passage seeks, through rhythmic regularity and repeated infinitives, to transcend the individual predicament, depicting an ahistorical condition of mythic suffering. (Slinn 86)

"Tithonus" supplants the strategies of the earlier poem, as it becomes the "poetry of enactment" (Slinn 86), replacing the lyrical and self-expressive with the performative and dramatic. Tennyson's reworking of Wordsworth's narrative of recurrence ostensibly strengthens the form of the monologue, with its fictionalised self, as it distances it further from the earlier poet's universal subjectivity. The Wordsworthian echoes and associations in the poem simultaneously work to complicate its performative and rhetorical status, however, pulling it inexorably back to the Wordsworthian lyricism and universalism it is formulated to supplant. Tennyson's attempt to create a new poetic is compromised by the language of the very poet whose self-expressiveness he is attempting to supplant. And yet, paradoxically, it is Wordsworth's language that enables the monologue to function by anchoring its dramatic experimentation, providing the linguistic scaffolding from which the text can work its revisionary changes. Herbert F. Tucker, Jr. reveals how the subdued lyric presence in the monologue—"what you cannot have and what you cannot forget" (235)—frequently functions as a disruptive or irruptive force, breaking through the dramatic narrative in discrete acts of transgression. Tucker cites Robert Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi" (1855) as an illustration of the disruptive lyrical patterns at work within the monologue, where "*stornelli*," "lyrical catches Englished in italics," or transgressions "into lyric" in Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842) break into the "story" (233-34). But the absorption of Wordsworth's language in Tennyson refutes Tucker's transgressive pattern as it is woven organically into the poem. Wordsworth's narrative of the mind's interaction with nature survives despite its vitiated state, helping the poem to cohere in its dramatic form. Tennyson may wish

to free himself from both Wordsworth's imaginative investment in nature and the earlier poet's universal subjectivism, but is nevertheless dependent on both for his poetic and dramatic effects. Likewise, Tennyson's revisions do not liberate Tithonus from his cycle of endless return; they do not release him to the ground. Rather, he is as trapped by his "immutable" self as he is by the self that is forever changing.

### "Resolution and Independence"

"Resolution and Independence" (1807) continues Wordsworth's preoccupation with the question of whether the failing imagination can be revived. Tithonus has been granted immortality without immortal youth, but the echo of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" in the poem works to draw attention to how immortal age has not only wearied Tennyson's speaker, but deprived him of imaginative power. In "Resolution and Independence," the speaker has the power to invest the Leech-Gatherer with imaginative significance, even if this is via a "troubled imagination" (O'Neill 58). Wordsworth writes on the nature of the imaginative process taking place in the poem in explanation of the image of the Leech-Gatherer as a "huge stone" (57) that lies "top of an eminence" (58) and as a "sea-beast" (62) sunning itself on rock or sand:

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

governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers. (*Wordsworth: Poetical Works* 754)

The Leech-Gatherer has no imaginative power, however; he functions as one of the unimaginative souls Wordsworth had in mind when writing the final version of *The Ruined Cottage* in 1804 (see Davidson 79), who are ineluctably separated from those invested with the power to transfigure their lives through the imagination (see Davidson 79). He appears, instead, to be a conduit to imaginative power, curing the speaker of the descent into the “de-sublimated” madness into which he has sunk (see Weiskel 58). Verbal connections abound between Tithonus and the Leech-Gatherer, which emphasise that Tithonus, like the Gatherer, has little or no imaginative power. Both “roam”: Tithonus, a “white-haired shadow” (8), roams “like a dream / The ever-silent spaces of the East” (8-9); the Gatherer “roamed” (103), and paces “About the weary moors continually, / Wandering about alone and silently” (130-31). The Leech-Gatherer is “grey” (56); Tithonus is a “gray shadow” (11).

The Leech-Gatherer exists as one of the “ordinary men” (“Resolution and Independence” 96), one of those, like the speaker of “Tintern Abbey” and the speaker of “Resolution and Independence,” who have “the power to die” (“Tithonus” 70). His “measured phrase” (95) may place him “above the reach” (95) of most, and he may be invested with mystical status by the speaker, but he remains mortal nonetheless. Tithonus lacks the capacity to die, by contrast, and has the power only to roam. He is doubly doomed in this sense: doomed to roam without the ability to die, and doomed to live without imaginative power. Echoes foreground the reverse positions here of Tithonus and the Leech-Gatherer. In “Tithonus,” it is “happy men” (70) who have the power to die, like the “ordinary men” (96) of “Resolution and Independence”: Tithonus is excluded from this happy, ordinary race by the gift of unwanted immortality. The speaker of “Resolution and Independence” is “a happy Child of earth” (31), as, ultimately, is the Leech-Gatherer, and was once “as happy as a boy” (18) before his

state of despondency. All are "happy" in this way, except for Tithonus.

The Leech-Gatherer might be seen as dying "into the life of nature" (Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry* 202), the very nature in which Tithonus craves to be immersed, but to which he is denied access. Tithonus cannot die into the life of Aurora as nature, as she does not provide the safety and comfort of Wordsworth's nature in "Tintern Abbey." "Resolution and Independence" exemplifies a Wordsworthian "faith in nature" (Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry* 203) that "Tithonus" works to deny, although Wordsworth's "nature" echoes through Tennyson's poem, nonetheless: in "Resolution and Independence," the air after the storm is filled with the "pleasant noise of waters" (7) and the hare "from the plashy earth / Raises a mist" (12-13); in "Tithonus," the "mists are far-folded" (10) and the air is "soft" (32). The liminality of the Leech-Gatherer, a natural, yet seemingly supernatural being, "not all alive nor dead" (64), is also evoked in Tithonus's liminal state, on the edge of the world where he was born, but consigned to a perpetual after-life from which he wants to escape. The Leech-Gatherer is a part of nature, no more so perhaps than in the description of him in the lines Wordsworth picks out to illustrate the powers of the imagination, although he is in this sense also "imagined" as a part of nature:

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie  
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;  
Wonder to all who do the same espy,  
By what means it could thither come, and whence;  
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:  
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf  
Of rock or sand repositeth, there to sun itself;

Such seemed this Man. (57-64)

Tithonus, too, was once part of nature, and is longing to be "earth in earth" (75), but is confined by the text to a state beyond nature. Tithonus, as speaker, is denied an act of imaginative revivification, such as

the speaker of Wordsworth's poem experiences through the Leech-Gatherer as a part of nature; Aurora as nature does not stimulate his imaginative powers, but depletes them.

The latter effect gains emphasis through time changes in both "Resolution and Independence" and "Tithonus." "Tithonus" looks back to a time when he could "Glow with the glow" (56), and be full of transcendent power, but that transcendent power belongs to his past, a past he appears doomed perpetually to revisit. In "Resolution and Independence," the speaker acknowledges the differences between past and present selves: he "was a Traveller *then* upon the moor" (15; emphasis added), when he "heard the [...] distant waters roar" (17). The time difference replicates itself in "Tithonus" in the way in which Tithonus looks back on his former self, although Wordsworth's speaker's subsequent move into sublimity appears exhausted for him. Similarly, "Resolution and Independence" functions as a "dialogic" poem, albeit an implicit one (O'Neill, "'A Kind of an Excuse'" 57), as Wordsworth "confronts and seeks to overcome the self that experiences chilling 'thoughts'" (O'Neill, "'A Kind of an Excuse'" 57); he also steps "'outside himself' while examining his imagination at work" (O'Neill, *Romanticism* 42). Tennyson's speaker is also bifurcated in this way, as he seeks to absorb "chilling 'thoughts'" of his former imaginative self. This, combined with the sharing of linguistic phrases between the poems, confirms that if "Tithonus" is inadvertently reworking "Tintern Abbey," then it does so, in part, via "Resolution and Independence." At the same time, the revisions in "Tithonus" rework Wordsworth's own imaginative rewriting in "Resolution and Independence," which itself acts as a corrective or "answer" to "Tintern Abbey"'s doubts over the power of the imagination to continue to sustain itself. "Tithonus" advertises its dependence on a Wordsworthian narrative that it simultaneously promotes as obsolete; and as with the revision of "Tintern Abbey", the text relies on the language of the earlier poem for its dramatic and poetic effects.

### Conclusion: Broken Fragments

Isobel Armstrong in her influential account of Victorian poetry claims that all Victorian poetry is a site of "endless struggle and contention" (10), struggle "with a changing project, struggle with the play of ambiguity and contradiction" (10). Armstrong avers that what she calls the "double poem" (13) is a materialisation of such struggle and contention. Whilst this essay has not argued for "Tithonus" as a "double poem" in Armstrong's sense,<sup>6</sup> it has nevertheless revealed the text as having a "changing project" and as supporting a play of ambiguity and contradiction. Through its analysis of Tennyson's "own history of reading and writing," this essay has revealed the "changing project" of "Tithonus" to be the revision of "Tintern Abbey"'s trope of the self reencountering itself in time. It has also revealed Tennyson's contradictory reliance on the broken fragments of a Wordsworthian narrative he has himself dismantled. Tennyson was sensitive to the claim that he "borrowed" words and phrases from other poets, claiming that critics did not "allow" him any creative autonomy (see Rawnsley 71). Yet Tennyson's creative autonomy is compromised in "Tithonus." Harold Bloom maintains that all "modern lyrics" cannot "surmount" their poetic debt to "Tintern Abbey" (17). On the evidence that this essay has uncovered, Bloom's assertion is as apposite to Tennyson's "Tithonus" as it is to any other modern lyric.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Critics who have traced Wordsworth's influence in "Tithonus" include Christopher Ricks. Ricks is prompted to say of the replacement of the opening lines of the 1833 "Tithon"—"Ay me! ay me!" (1)—with "The woods decay, the woods decay and fall" (1) in the 1860 "Tithonus" that this "suggests the influence of one of [Tennyson's] favourite passages of Wordsworth" (*The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes* 2: 607n1). Eric Griffiths, in another essay—"Tennyson's Breath"—draws attention to the way in which "Tennyson retunes the cadence of 'immortality / Broods' into 'immortality / Consumes' as he revalues 'darkness ... dark-

ness', from which in Wordsworth's ode 'we' long to escape" (139); as Griffiths says, the poem shows how "'Tithonus' and its writer live in time as Tithonus the speaker does not [...] through the poem's re-setting of Wordsworth's 'Ode...' to new and dissentient harmonies" (140). Daniel A. Harris has also drawn attention to the influence of "Tintern Abbey" itself in "Tithonus," suggesting that the closing lines of "Tithonus," where monologue moves to soliloquy, are a "careful inversion" of the pattern of "Tintern Abbey," revealing the "loss of community that accompanies his [Tithonus's] linguistic inadequacy" (106).

<sup>2</sup>This essay accepts that Wordsworth does not have connotative ownership of all of the words and phrases at work in the poem, and that there could at times be competing allegiances or debts. "Tithonus" echoes with poets' voices other than Wordsworth's, as assorted critics have made clear. The poem alludes to John Keats, for instance: Harris examines the poem's Keatsian connections, claiming that Tennyson's rendering of the changeable Dawn develops Keats' methods in "To Autumn" (see 106); and Ricks, in his gloss to the poem, cites Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Milton as key sources (see *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes* 2: 608n2; 610n49). Richard Cronin points out that Keats has long been recognised as an important precursor in Tennyson's poetry generally, as has Percy Bysshe Shelley, although Cronin suggests that Tennyson "reads Shelley through poems written by the women poets who succeeded him" (106), like Felicia Hemans and Letitia Landon. But the presence of other voices in "Tithonus" does not negate the unconscious or inadvertent Wordsworthian echoes in the poem and the effects that these generate. A longer version of this article will appear in my book, *Tennyson Echoing Wordsworth*, to be published by Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>3</sup>I nevertheless acknowledge "recent developments in new historicism [that] have taken onboard a post-structuralist historiography, which sees events, times, circumstances, and places as themselves textually mediated. In other words, intertextuality has come to be recognized as a function of historical consciousness [...] The worlds 'behind' poems can be observed in a more complex, layered fashion by investigating the connections they make (consciously and unconsciously) with each other" (Newlyn ix). For an overview of neo-intentionalist critical approaches to intertextuality see Burke (51) and McCann (72-82); both quoted in Martens (12n43).

<sup>4</sup>Rapf is referring to lines 9-12 of Section 19 of *In Memoriam* here. She writes of how "Wordsworth uses the 'sylvan Wye' as a spiritual catalyst in 'Tintern Abbey,' but [how] Tennyson associates its water with his sorrow, an anguish that drowns his song" (377n14).

<sup>5</sup>For more on the origins of the monologue see Langbaum. Tennyson, alongside Robert Browning, was instrumental in the development of the dramatic monologue. For more on Tennyson's role in the creation of this new form see Hughes.

<sup>6</sup>Armstrong describes the "double poem" as a "deeply sceptical form. It draws attention to the epistemology which governs the construction of the self and its relationships and to the cultural conditions in which those relationships are made. It is an expressive model and an epistemological model simultaneously" (13).

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