Victorian Lyric in the Anthropocene

DEVIN M. GAROFALO

WHEN Charles Lyell chronicles humankind's rise to geologic power in the *Principles of Geology*, he talks out of both sides of his mouth. Detailing the human species' seemingly unmatched force as a terrestrial "levelling agent," he ruminates on an unsettling possibility that haunts the present: "it admits of reasonable doubt whether, upon the whole, we fertilize or impoverish the lands we occupy."[1] Already at the time of Lyell's writing, the human species had "displaced" or altogether extinguished "a number of beasts of prey, birds, and animals of every class" (2:148) through deforestation, hunting, and the "progress of colonization" (2:150–51). But elsewhere in the *Principles*, Lyell puts into question what this history of environmental degradation otherwise seems to assert: that to be human is to possess a singular capacity for mastery. Thus, Lyell declares, "we ought always, before we decide that any part of the influence of man is novel and anomalous, carefully to consider all the powers of other animate agents which may be limited or superseded by him" (2:206). Tracing how swarms of insects gave dramatic and lasting shape to the German arboreal landscape in ways that humans could never replicate, he concludes: "[I]t does not follow that this kind of innovation"—human innovation—"is unprecedented" (2:206). Even as Lyell imagines humankind as "superior" in its capacity to act as "*a single species*," he persistently lingers with the very real possibility that humans do *not* possess a "novel and anomalous" hold over the world (2:207, emphasis original). Instead, the *Principles* traces how the world is shaped by "physical causes" and nonhuman agencies that elude control and unmask the relative "insignifican[ce]" of humankind's "aggregate force" (2:207). Inasmuch as humans comprise only one part of an agential assemblage whose shifting interactions elude anthropogenic mastery, the *Principles* imagines humankind as interpenetrated by and profoundly susceptible to nonhuman life-forms and forces. According to Lyell, then, deep history speaks not only of the human species' seemingly privileged capacity for action

Devin M. Garofalo is an assistant professor of English at the University of North Texas. Her research and teaching focus on Romantic and Victorian literatures, formalism, and the environmental humanities. This essay is drawn from her current project, "Interworlds." Her work has also appeared in *Essays in Romanticism* and *Women's Writing*.

Victorian Literature and Culture, Vol. 47, No. 4, pp. 753–783.

doi:10.1017/S1060150318001602

but also its nonintentionality, noninstrumentality, and vulnerability. That the *Principles* tells a story about the porous interfaces between human and nonhuman geologic agents is perhaps surprising, given that it emerged and participated in a moment which, for many, marks the zenith of imperial and anthropogenic power.[2]

In this essay, I take up recent calls by Jesse Oak Taylor and others for a consideration of "Victorian literature as Anthropocene literature"—for a strategic presentist accounting of "how the Victorian era might help us imagine alternative futures to the various mass extinctions that loom just over the horizon of the present."[3] I do so by exploring how Victorian literature is concerned with problems of subjectivity, agency, and futurity that also pervade our contemporary moment of climatic disaster. As my brief foray into the *Principles* intimates, these problems take distinctive shape in the nineteenth century, during which thinkers grappled as never before with "the dawning self-awareness" of a novel "formulation of the geological record and deep time" that was "concomitant with humanity's emergence as an agent within that record and on that timescale."[4] Tinged with distinctly geologic and newly possible ways of thinking the human, Victorian lyric poetry in particular straddles the incommensurable models of human agency that Lyell marks—and that reverberate into the present. These very incommensurabilities have shaped how scholars read such poetry. Barbara Johnson, for instance, has described the lyric "I" as the utterance of an animating and distinctly human subject possessed with the "capacity to *call*" the nonhuman and the inanimate into anthropomorphic life. The poet turns necromancer by way of his lyric "authority," "transform[ing] an 'I-it' relationship into an 'I-thou' relationship." Here, lyric and its figures—especially apostrophe—"mak[e] a relation between persons out of what was in fact a relation between person and non-person," forging the nonhuman world in the image of humankind.[5]

Defined in these terms, the normative lyric subject is self-knowing and commanding, "concern[ed]," as Anthony Reed suggests, "with recollecting and transmitting events constitutive of the individual psyche."[6] Normative lyric "expression" is thus "grouped under the sign of the voice" or the vocative. The precondition of normative lyric expression, in other words, is a mouthliness—a way of speaking—exclusive to the human face and form. Critically, lyric thus defined not only radically separates this face and, by extension, this form of lyric subjectivity from the nonhuman but also casts aside human beings who fall outside a set of narrow, normative confines. Normative lyric voice, in other words,

signifies a restricted and restrictive as opposed to all-embracing humankind. Thus, as Reed writes, it "corresponds with the emergence of the modern, bourgeois subject"—with the model of subjectivity emergent in William Wordsworth's conception of the poet as "a man speaking to men" and John Stuart Mill's formulation of lyric as promulgating "one highly delicate and sensitive specimen of human nature."[7] Here, we should take Mill's use of the word "specimen" seriously, for it exposes the *speciating* power of the normative lyric subject: it points toward a particular *species* of subjectivity and, by extension, humankind. If, in Wordsworth's formulation, the poet is a "man speaking to men," the word "man" names the process whereby "a subset of people" came to be figured as "*the* image of the human as such" on the basis of their seemingly privileged capacity for mastery, both colonial and, I would add, geologic.[8] This form of normative lyric expression gives voice to a humankind embodied in the supposedly singular "specimen" of the bourgeois European white man. In this way, it coincides with Lyell's vision of the human as a privileged, possessive, purposive locus of imperial and planetary power.

But there is another, very different, Victorian lyric mode that dovetails with Lyell's rival imagining of the human as dispossessed of self-possession and thus radically othered from itself, as interpenetrated and interpenetrative, as shot through with beings and agencies normatively taxonomized as nonhuman. This other model of lyric subjectivity posits the human in more collective and even distinctly nonhuman terms. It does so by plumbing "the possibilities for 'we' that remain unexplored"—by sketching otherwise "unthinkable forms of desire and intimacy" (and, I would add, agency) that are emergent in the "intertwinement of life with life" but also "lie beyond our current organizing rubrics."[9] Victorian lyric poetry is replete with relationalities that contravene classificatory order; that shimmer with more-than-human vitalities and agencies; that conjure evanescent, collectivizing, potentially radical intimacies into being. Thus, Isobel Armstrong tracks how Victorian lyric expression takes the form of "discontinuous and uncertain oscillation[s]" that unsettle and even dissolve the conventional distinctions between subject and object, "exploit[ing] the vital ambiguity of the relation between self and world."[10] Concerned with similar ambiguities of relation, Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins trace the "tendency" of the lyric "I" to "get off the subject," to disfigure the normative model of "subjectivity attributed to persons and poems" and thus verge beyond vocative anthropomorphism.[11] So imagined, the Victorian lyric subject resists

anthropomorphic forms of reading, for it is emphatically plural and distributed, vulnerable to and permeated by external—and distinctly nonhuman—beings and energies. This involuted, porous, intercommunicative lyric "I" unsettles the normative, colonial, anthropocentric one that coincides with the nineteenth-century emergence of modern "man" as an imperial and planetary agent—with the emergence of the privileged, all-powerful, terraforming *anthropos* that emblematizes and conditions our anthropogenic present as well as our past.[12] For this reason, I contend that Victorian lyric poetry might afford an old but pressing language for thinking and acting beyond the human—for tarrying with nonhuman life-forms, planetary agencies, and patterns of relation that are ineluctably and perhaps unprecedentedly expansive—in an epoch seemingly defined by unchecked human power.

To think across the anthropogenic resonances and potentialities of the Victorian lyric "I," this essay turns to a poem that experiments with the Janus-faced dimensionality of lyric subjectivity: Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Shuttling between person and nonperson, individual and species, the shallows of human temporality and the depths of natural history, the poem scales up the loss of a single person to consider the annihilation of the human species. Scholars from Diana Fuss to Jahan Ramazani have traditionally positioned *In Memoriam*—and, more broadly, the Victorians—in a premodern elegiac canon that possesses little if any relationship to mass death. Only "[a]s warfare was industrialized and mass death augmented," Ramazani argues, did elegy mount a critique of death en masse.[13] But this account of mechanized warfare overlooks another form of widespread and systematic extermination that was, as my opening invocation of the *Principles* attests, already all too visible in Victorian Britain: species extinction. From the dodo's vanishing in the seventeenth century to the various extinctions—small- and large-scale—documented by Lyell, people were mourning the human species' capacity to eradicate life in the aggregate well before the Great Wars. If, as Taylor suggests, Victorian elegy "echoes beyond the human," I argue it does so because of how the intersubjective, extrahuman, geologic inflections of the lyric "I" radically disarticulate the *anthropos* at the precise moment in which it otherwise appears to have attained absolute mastery over the planet.[14] The poem does this, I argue, as it mobilizes lyric address to enliven the elegiac figures of yew tree and corpse. These seemingly inanimate figures are in fact animate, their material excesses proliferating across and within the seemingly bounded borders of the human.[15] Attending to the deindividuated and more-than-human

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318001602 Published online by Cambridge University Press

valences of Tennyson's lyric subject shows how the excesses of figuration metamorphose into something slippery and strange as they are leveraged in the Victorian period to engage newly discernible, equally mercurial confluences between anthropogenic enterprise and geophysical force, human action and nonhuman agency.

I argue that *In Memoriam*'s lyric "I" is a vehicle for grappling simultaneously with the deaths of individuals and of types.[16] Lyric expression is here mobilized to envision "human being" in the more expansive terms of "species being," to consider "what is lost when a species goes extinct," to tussle with how extinction marks the passing of not only individual material beings but also conceptual categories with which to think.[17] Even as *In Memoriam* inhabits and mourns what Tanya Agathocleous calls "the present of no future," the poem also fantasizes insistently about the death of the human *as a category*—about the posthuman futurities this extinction event might unleash.[18] This fantasy plays out by and through the lyric "I," whose "incorporate" form—to use Tennyson's phrasing—persistently eludes and exceeds the human.[19] In so doing, it models a form of subjectivity that is unconsolidated, aleatory, and, at times, distinctly nonhuman. Tennyson's lyric "I" thus disfigures the human as we know it, lingering with and in a future that materializes as the normative, human, world-making subject goes gossamer under the influence of nonhuman forms and forces. *In Memoriam*, that most biographical and personal of poems, is thus quite strangely preoccupied with the pressing task of thinking beyond—and perhaps giving up—the arbitrary taxonomies of individual and type, human and nonhuman. As it brings the normative speaking subject to the brink of extinction, the poem makes an urgent case for the function of Victorian lyric in our long geohistorical present and a posthuman future that looms increasingly large.[20]

1. "Incorporate" Subjectivity

Tennyson insisted that the lyric "I" of *In Memoriam* shuttles fluidly between persons and species. In *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son*, Hallam Tennyson recalls how his father described *In Memoriam* as "a poem, *not* an actual biography." Hallam's memoir records Tennyson as having once stated that the lyric "I" of the elegy "is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking thro' him."[21] Tennyson repeated this idea on more than one occasion. "When reading 'In Memoriam'," James Knowles reports, the poet once

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318001602 Published online by Cambridge University Press

said: "It is rather the cry of the whole human race than mine. In the poem altogether private grief swells out into thought of, and hope for, the whole world. . . . It is a very impersonal poem, as well as personal."[22] Not insignificantly, it is on both "personal" and "impersonal" registers—the scale of the individual and the scale of the species—that Tennyson explores his "thought of, and hope for, the whole world."[23] The poem's anonymous publication amplifies the "impersonal" orientation of its lyrics. That *In Memoriam* was identified almost immediately as Tennyson's work reinforces, rather than complicates, this argument. In this sense, the affected anonymity of *In Memoriam*'s author—the stark expanse of its title page and the impersonality it provocatively performs—is a polemic: it incites readers to remove the poem from the grip of biography and read it instead as coming from no one and from everyone, from no person in particular and, at the same time, an entire "race" or species.[24]

Superficially, the erasure of individual identity here might be seen to coincide with normative lyric subjectivity. In such a reading, *In Memoriam*'s blank title page and Tennyson's identification of his poem as "the cry of the whole human race" posit a lyric "specimen" or subject who exemplifies the restrictive notion of humankind that anchors Mill's theorization of poetic universality. So understood, lyric constitutes an overheard "soliloquy," an "unconscious" mode of expression that "paint[s] the human soul truly" such that self-disclosure is at one and the same time species-disclosure.[25] Readers of poetry who recognize their selves in this normative lyric "specimen" are interpellated into the category of the human, whereas those who do not are abjected as nonhuman. Yet I argue that the poem's impersonal and perhaps nonpersonifying "I" steadfastly resists this universalizing model of lyric subjectivity and its implicit species taxonomy. In other words, the concept of species is itself at stake in *In Memoriam*'s impersonal "I" and the poem's insistent commingling of human and nonhuman such that the human as a conceptual category is effectually dissolved.[26] Thus, the speaker longs for the de-subjectivated place to which Hallam has traveled in death: a shifting world that "has centre everywhere / Nor cares to fix itself to form" (33.3–4)—a world whose forms decenter and even annihilate the category of the human altogether. Insofar as the "I" of *In Memoriam* marks the fantasy of breaking form—of escaping the alienating fixity of the type—it makes possible a more capacious imagining of the relationship between lyric subjectivity and collectivity within and across species.

This is evident in section 2, which imagines the lyric speaker not as hermetically isolated but as de-subjectivated such that he becomes inextricable from the nonhuman figures of yew tree and corpse. The speaker here metamorphoses into an entity more "incorporate" in form and agency:

> 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.
>
> The seasons bring the flower again,
> And bring the firstling to the flock;
> And in the dusk of thee, the clock
> Beats out the little lives of men.
>
> O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
> Who changest not in any gale,
> Nor branding summer suns avail
> To touch thy thousand years of gloom:
>
> And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
> Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
> I seem to fail from out my blood
> And grow incorporate into thee. (2.1–16)

Initially, these lines might be understood as epitomizing the pathetic fallacy. Tennyson says as much near the poem's conclusion, wondering: "What find I in the highest place, / But mine own phantom chanting hymns?" (108.9–10). If "on the depths of death there swims" only "The reflex of a human face" (108.11–12), what "profit" (108.5), what "fruit" (108.13), what "wisdom" (108.16) could the poem ever offer? And yet, though the specter of the pathetic fallacy haunts Tennyson's yew trees and corpses, it cannot fully account for the inherent strangeness of these figures in and of themselves, or for the wayward interrelationalities they proliferate. To attend exclusively to the pathetic fallacy is, as Jonathan Culler puts it, to risk "reduc[ing] the strangeness" of lyric figuration and the "natural objects" toward which "direc[t] address" turns in the poem.[27] Armstrong argues precisely this point in her reading of section 2, which she understands as gripped by a deep and generative uncertainty about whether language is "mind-moulded or matter-moulded, actively shaped by the self" or "passively formed by an external world."[28] *Or*, I would suggest: something between these two extremes, something more slippery, something more strange.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318001602 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The yew's affective capacity—its simultaneous and paradoxical figuration as unfeeling *and* feeling, as narcotic *and* moody—is especially curious. These affective discontinuities make visible how the yew fails (or, perhaps, refuses) to mirror perfectly the poet's anthropomorphizing desires for "stubborn hardihood." The yew's backtalk moves in antithetical directions, its response to the poet simultaneously compliant and noncompliant. This recalcitrance takes overt and distinctly material shape as the yew tree "grasp[s]," reaches, acts such that it is as mobile as immobile, kinetic as rooted, active as passive. As with the veneer of the pathetic fallacy, the tropes of lyric and elegy—the figures of direct address and yew tree—here become fantastical. Re-visioned by way of the Victorian geologic imaginary, they together make visible an increasingly acute self-awareness of the entanglements between human and nonhuman experience, between worlds anthropogenic and posthuman. Thus, if in section 2 the world is "mind-moulded," the yew insists simultaneously upon a world that is "matter-moulded" by insinuating itself into the forms of earth and corpse such that they are "mouldered," "moulded," transfigured anew. The language of physiological agency, like the tree's shifting affects, bespeaks a lyric addressee that inconsistently mirrors and sometimes actively distorts the speaker's desires for "dreamless" immutability.

The ways that lyric and elegiac trope might together slip into something more elusive, more agential, is likewise evident in section 76, another poem preoccupied with the geologic recalcitrance of trees:

> Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
> And in a moment set thy face
> Where all the starry heavens of space
> Are sharpen'd to a needle's end;
>
> Take wings of foresight; lighten thro'
> The secular abyss to come,
> And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb
> Before the mouldering of a yew;
>
> And if the matin songs, that woke
> The darkness of our planet, last,
> Thine own shall wither in the vast,
> Ere half the lifetime of an oak.
>
> Ere these have clothed their branchy bowers
> With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain;
> And what are they when these remain
> The ruin'd shells of hollow towers? (76.1–16)

Pondering once again "the mouldering of a yew," the poet's "deepest lays are dumb" (76.7–8). Here, the action of "mouldering" and its transitive objects are shifty. On one hand, the yew is figured *as* "mouldering"—as an image of decay in slow time. But, in section 2, the yew is also imagined in precisely the opposite terms: long-historied and immutable, a figure of "stubborn hardihood." That the yew signifies an interminable duration points toward a counterreading of section 76, wherein the yew is an agent *of* "mouldering"—an agent whose geologic longevity enacts "mouldering" upon others, decomposing and recasting their forms. Here, I am particularly interested in the strangeness of Tennyson's language: the poet ponders not the literal yew, as he does in section 2, but rather its "mouldering" force—its materialization of those planetary processes of de- and re-formation that come to bear upon the speaker as he considers the yew tree's unattainable durability and, by extension, the temporal infinitude of a "secular" or geologic "abyss" (76.6). Thus, in the third and fourth stanzas the poet and his "lays" (76.7) are dis- and re-composed in temporal confrontation with the yew and its geologic materiality. Both poet and poem must eventually "wither"—and, indeed, are already withering—"in the vast / Ere half the lifetime" of comparatively geologic plants like yew trees. The poet's speechlessness—his loss of voice, of language, of an expressive capacity that would seem distinctly human—refigures the "wither[ing]" of the human individual as the "wither[ing]" of the human species. The human form here "moulders"—decomposes, discomposes, recomposes—into something Other. Lingering in the fallout, the lyric closes with the haunting image of a posthuman world wherein poems and civilizations alike have been reduced to "The ruin'd shells of hollow towers" (76.16)—to exoskeletons whose hollowed out, unindividuated, abstracted forms invite speculation about the life of poetry in a future when the human has come and gone.

It is this posthuman world order that Tennyson describes as "incorporate" in section 2, a lyric wherein the "materiality" of the dead "speaks volumes."[29] Here, the corpse's "dreamless head" is "net[ted]" with the "fibres" of the yew, whose "roots" are also "wrapt about the bones," their frameworks slowly enmeshing over time (2.3–4). Still possessing identifiable appendages—heads and roots, bones and tissues—corpse and yew nevertheless exist in an "incorporate" or hybrid state, their kinetic structures retaining formal specificity while at the same time establishing material contiguities that disrupt the boundaries between human and nonhuman.[30] Fugitive in both the transitory and transgressive senses of the word, the forms of corpse and plant here

wander from the confines of taxonomic schemata to enunciate a world full of new, promiscuous life. It seems telling, in this context, that yew trees signify the very real possibility of biological hybridization. In the *Principles*, for instance, Lyell comments on the frequency with which,

> during the heat of a summer's day, do we see the males of diœcious plants, such as the yew-tree, standing separate from the females, and sending off into the air, upon the slightest breath of wind, clouds of buoyant pollen! That the zephyr should so rarely intervene to fecundate the plants of one species with the anther-dust of others, seems almost . . . [a] miracle. (2:55)

But whereas the *Principles* turns away from the implications of the yew's procreative havoc by insisting on "a natural aversion in plants, as well as in animals, to irregular sexual unions" (2:55), *In Memoriam* plays out these peculiar copulations. That the yew tree co-opts the forces of "air," "wind," and "zephyr" for reproductive purposes is a case in point:

> Old warder of these buried bones,
> And answering now my random stroke
> With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
> Dark yew, that graspest at the stones
>
> And dippest toward the dreamless head,
> To thee too comes the golden hour
> When flower is feeling after flower;
> But Sorrow—fixt upon the dead,
>
> And darkening the dark graves of men,—
> What whisper'd from her lying lips?
> Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
> And passes into gloom again. (39.1–12)

Here, the speaker imagines himself as having mobilized the pathetic fallacy to compel the tree to "answe[r] now my random stroke" (39.2). But in so doing, the speaker, however unknowingly, becomes a sexual partner of sorts for the tree. His caressing "stroke" looses "fruitful cloud[s] and living smoke" of pollen—of the yew tree's propagative matter (39.3). The word "random" is an indicator, here, of how the speaker is more instrument than necromancer. His "stroke" is a measure not of mastery but impotence, not of intentionality but nonintentionality, not of life but a capacity to *be called into life*—to be called into intercourse by and with a not-necessarily-human agent. The always "grasp[ing]" plant (39.4) thus instrumentalizes the speaker's agency for its own purposes, incorporating him into a weird and wild act of interspecies copulation

that circumvents the conventional pattern of animating human call and acquiescent nonhuman response.

Similar copulations are on view in section 2, wherein the yew tree "incorporates" into itself the figures of corpse and, later, speaker. "Net[ting]" (2.3) and involving itself into the corpse such that the skeletal integrity of the human frame is compromised, the yew tree's "grasp[ing]" (2.1) appendages suggest how the human might be profoundly permeable to the nonhuman. Meshed with "fibres" (2.3) and intertwined with "roots" (2.4), the corpse is a figure for the human species reconfigured, for how the human commingles with otherwise distinct material forms such that it enters into an intersubjective, involuted, "incorporate" assemblage. In the final moments of section 2, the speaker metamorphoses in precisely this way. He "seem[s] to fail from out [his] blood" (2.15) as he is ensnared in the yew's spidery grasp. Here, I read the word "seem" as marking an out-of-body, surreal experience—a moment of lyric disassociation, wherein the subject is alienated from himself as he "fail[s] from out [his] blood." He observes his own disarticulation as if not himself, as if Other. This moment of lyric dissociation is compounded by the yew's covering over of the very thing—the name—by which human persons are designated as persons. "[G]rasp[ing] at the stones / That name the under-lying dead" (2.1–2), the plant actively obscures the name of the individual and, by extension, the category of the human. Suspended in an unindividuated and dissociative state, the speaker "grow[s] incorporate" into that which once was not "I" or "me," revealing a self that is neither strictly human nor his own.

2. Apostrophe without Voice

Tennyson's vision of a person "grown incorporate into" (2.16) nonpersons lends a political valence to these intersubjective metamorphoses. As the poet is incorporated or "unit[ed], combin[ed], mix[ed], blend[ed]" with nonhuman life-forms, he is also "form[ed]," or perhaps reformed, into a more distributed and intercommunicative "*corporation or body politick*."[31] The figure of apostrophe makes legible how this interspecies body politic destabilizes the primacy of human power. Apostrophe is conventionally understood as a mode of lyric address wherein the poet calls out to and thus animates the dead. This call is conventionally produced by and through speech—a seemingly isolable, legible, possessive human voice—which magicks the nonhuman world into anthropomorphic life. Thus, even as Culler argues against the

temptation to "imagine that lyrics embody voic*es*," he insists that a universal characteristic of lyric expression is its insistent production of "voic*ing*."[32] Taking shape through "the echoing of rhyme, assonance, or alliteration, and rhythmic patterning," voicing names a set of poetic devices that resist consolidation into "the distinctive voice of *a* speaker"—the voice of an individual, consolidated subject—and yet nevertheless suggest a *type* or *species* or *category* of voice that culls its power from the "patterning" of grammar or of human speech. Culler's preferred example of "voicing"—"the gratuitous 'O' that accompanies many apostrophes"—is an overtly human form of speech that connotes a "poetic subject" taxonomically distinct from the "natural object." The "O," in other words, "connects" an implicitly human "mouth" to an anthropomorphizing "event" that reconstitutes and replicates human subjectivity in the nonhuman.[33] "Voice," as Paul de Man argues, thus "assumes mouth, eye, and finally face" or, rather, a human form.[34] Theorized as such, it is an instrument of anthropomorphic violence: it colonizes, eviscerates, and altogether erases nonhuman bodies and modes of expression, positing the human form as *the* condition of speech. Troubled by such figural violence, Giorgio Agamben's essay on Giovanni Pascoli's onomatopoeias concludes by asking a question that, I think, also haunts *In Memoriam*: "Can there be speech, poetry, and thought beyond the letter, beyond the death of the voice and the death of language?"[35]

In Memoriam's lyric figures offer one answer to this question by gesturing beyond anthropomorphism and, more broadly, human voice. As they pluralize and deanthropomorphize the lyric subject—as they put into question who is calling upon and animating whom—these figures reveal and exploit what de Man describes as a slippage between "figuration and disfiguration," between "the giving and taking away of faces" or, to put it a different way, between faced-ness and facelessness.[36] Figuration thus affords rich terrain for "conceptualizing modes of communication not securely anchored in the word"—for envisioning forms of expression that slip out of and even resist humanness.[37] Teeming with a poetry that readily "change[s] to something else" (77.11), *In Memoriam* rarely if ever conjures a lyric subject, or marshals poetic modes of expression, that are strictly human. Thus, the poem's "mortal lullabies" are perhaps as posthuman as human (77.5). They are, as Prins argues of Victorian poetry more generally, "mediated" and "estrang[ed]" from the human, their soundings evoking futures in which the human, both in form and in language, is technologized to unexpected ends—to "bind a book," "line a

box" (77.6), "curl a maiden's locks (77.7)—or forgotten altogether. The "lullabies" of a posthuman world, *In Memoriam*'s lyric figures resist the urge to "read Victorian poetry anthropomorphically" and thus "hold on to an idea of the human in a time when humanities seem increasingly in question." The lyric "I" of *In Memoriam* eludes and exceeds what Prins calls "lyric humanism," suggesting instead a poetic subject whose taxonomic status is decidedly less cut and dry.[38] Thus, as it dissolves the category of the human, *In Memoriam* subjects its poet-speaker to a taxonomic death. This death is of course staged most immediately on the poem's title page, whose authorless expanse experiments with what de Man calls the "opposition between the name and the nameless," the "privative" power of language and the defacements it enacts upon the human subject.[39] Nameless and abstracted, the speaker grows increasingly "incorporate" with nonhuman organisms like the "Old Yew" (2.1), which circumvent his apostrophic calls and in so doing disrupt the strictly policed circuitry of human speech—the seemingly irreconcilable divide between "I" and "you," subject and object, self and other—and the anthropogenic power this circuitry assumes.

Here, it is worth considering the homophonic resonance of "yew" and "you." This sonic confusion exposes a lyric addressee that tends toward excess; that is plural, superabundant, luxuriant; that, as it refuses to stay in its proper lexical place, unfurls beyond and disarticulates the contours of human speech. The yew tree thus looks increasingly more subject than object. Person and nonperson are apostrophically "incorporated" in section 2 such that "the syntax go[es] mad, making no distinction between self and objects."[40] This breakdown extends to the distinction between human and nonhuman, revealing how the seemingly inanimate addressee not only occupies an interpenetrative relationality to the speaker but might also possess a capacity to call or to animate, though that call does not necessarily take the form of a conventional, auditory, legible poetic voice. The mischievous and insubordinate yew tree illustrates this point. Despite the poet's efforts to wrestle the yew into doing what it is told—to pacify it into silent anthropomorphism—the plant rarely submits, and when it does, that submission shimmers with a recalcitrance never fully extinguished. Thus, in sections 2 and 39, the yew is as much an addressee gone rogue as an addressee pacified. Its slippery affects and "grasp[ing]" appendages slink beyond the poet's control, hijacking the poet's "stroke" such that the poet is called out of humanness and reanimated as something other than human. The yew tree in this way destabilizes the mastery of the apostrophic addressor.

Resisting the poet's anthropomorphizing summons and then wrangling that same poet into an "incorporate" compact, the yew assumes the role of apostrophizer. If the "O" of apostrophe smacks of human speech and anthropogenic power—if, as Culler argues, the "O" "proclaims its artificial character rather too obviously"—this trope is curiously absent from *In Memoriam*'s apostrophic calls to the yew tree.[41] The absence of the "O" intimates how these calls to the yew tree, especially their capacity to boomerang beyond the poet's control, are anything but "artificial."

The lyric "I" of *In Memoriam* in this way registers a world of distributed agencies, wherein corpses, plants, and other nonhuman entities resist the violence of personification and, in so doing, supplant the discrete categories of human and nonhuman with more-than-human ecologies. The slew of apostrophes that shadow the speaker's initial address to the yew tree are aswarm with wayward relationalities. Addressing "Sorrow" (3.1) and "Sleep" (4.1), his own "heart" (4.5 and 8.18), a "father" (6.9) and a "mother" (6.13), a "dove" (6.25), the "Dark house" that was once Hallam's home (7.1), and the "Fair ship" (9.1) that transports the "dark freight" (10.8) of Hallam's corpse, the opening sections of *In Memoriam* indiscriminately apostrophize entities as variable as abstractions and body parts. This apostrophic onslaught culminates in an image of disembodied "hands" (10.19), of a human body disarticulated into parts, "toss[ing] with tangle and with shells" (10.20). What emerges, here, is an apostrophic ecology which asserts that to be human is not simply to grapple with entanglement but to actually *be* "tangle"—to *be* "[a] complicated and confused assemblage" or "a confused network" of beings and agencies, "a tangled mass" of "intertwisted" forms, or, perhaps, "[a] tall and limp or flaccid person," a being whose loose and limber flesh does not stay in the lines but instead elasticizes and renegotiates the boundaries of taxonomic form and personhood.[42] The lyric "I" of *In Memoriam* thus participates in an alternative economy of exchange wherein humans and even poetic voice itself are dehumanized or, perhaps, zoomorphized. Apostrophe, then, is not always that which "turns toward anything the poet throws his voice to, and in so doing magnetizes a world around his call."[43] In *In Memoriam*, lyric figuration transpires beyond and outside of human voice, beyond and outside of human speech. It is an "incorporate" mode of expression that emanates unsystematically from a multitude of nonhuman and de-subjectivating centers. The poem provocatively refuses to perpetuate the normative disparities between subject and object or human and nonhuman, to essentialize or "thing-ify" nonhumans as inanimate, powerless, speechless beings

whose only hopes for animacy rest in their willing submission to a poet's "voicing," to a human call to humanoid life. If apostrophe is indeed deeply hyperbolic in character, in *In Memoriam* it is so not simply because it "risk[s] animating the world, investing mundane objects or occurrence with meaning."[44] Rather, the hyperbole of apostrophe in the poem is its insinuation that an animate, agentic, speaking world already exists and persists—flourishes, even—without the assistance, and indeed in the total absence, of the human. Such a world does not naturalize, or desire, or require human intervention. And perhaps most radically, it discloses how lyric is a vehicle for nonhuman expression—for not only the animal (or what Tobias Menely calls "creaturely") voice that exceeds and escapes the contours of the word, but also the silent, voiceless (which is not to say speechless), refractory calls of plants and similarly mouthless life-forms. *In Memoriam*'s "incorporate" poetics thus prophesizes a future in which poetry assumes a nonvocative, otherworldly, distinctly posthuman afterlife.

3. Lyric Extinctions

In *In Memoriam*, the "grow[ing] incorporate" of mutually apostrophizing humans and nonhumans posits the extinction of the normative speaking subject as the enabling condition of this more radical lyric mode. This is made especially clear by the contrasting forms of normative and posthuman subjectivities in the poem as well as the transformative sense of possibility with which the latter are imbued. In contrast to the isolable, isolated, bounded self, which is one of the hallmarks of lyric subjectivity normatively understood, Hallam in death occupies an "incorporate" world full of intersubjective penetration. He is unbound by restrictive form. Thus, the poem persistently figures him as a capacious and shifting vacuity—as "hollowness, emptiness, vacancy, blankness, dumbness."[45] In the place where Hallam once stood, Tennyson imagines "A void where heart on heart reposed; / And, where warm hands have prest and closed, / Silence" (13.6–8). Likewise, the ship that carries Hallam's body home is laden, quite strangely, with absence—with a "vanished life" whose void forms resist individuation (10.8). Why, in a poem about a human individual, does that individual remain largely and sometimes vexatiously invisible, shrouded in shadow, gossamer in substance, crepuscular in form? The obvious answer, of course, is that Hallam is dead. But more than a dead individual, he is dissipated and distributed across life-forms. Vacated and dimensionless, Hallam resists individuation even as he is

elegized, offering an alternative to the isolated, consolidated, taxonomically defined speaking subject. That this alternative appears in death is crucial, because Tennyson likewise suggests that individual death coincides with the larger-scale, unindividuated forms of extinction. If Hallam embodies individual death, in other words, he is also a figure for death in the abstract, for death unindividuated, for death in the aggregate. If, as Taylor argues, abstraction makes possible the "aggregat-[ion]" of individuals into species "based on some shared characteristic or characteristics that ignores distinguishing particularities," Hallam's abstracted forms facilitate a similar leap from individual to species or, rather, from individualized to unindividualized death, from the passing of a single life to the extinction of life *form*, of the *categories* that partition human and nonhuman.[46] Evacuated and abstracted, Hallam embodies the death of a life metamorphosed into the extinction of a type—the transfiguration of individual death such that it coincides with death in the aggregate, with the dissipation of a species, with the annihilation of the human as a category for restrictively taxonomizing or meting out agency and value.

Such transfigurations anchor sections 55 and 56, which conflate the passing of persons and of species, experimenting with a slippage that surfaces again and again in *In Memoriam*. In these so-called extinction lyrics, Tennyson famously conjures two conceptions of "Nature" (55.5) in quick succession: one that is "careful of the type" at the expense of "the single life" (55.7–8)—the individual human person—and a maniacal one that "care[s] for nothing at all" (56.4), obliterating "A thousand types" (or, perhaps, the very notion of the type) indiscriminately and without hesitation (56.3). John D. Rosenberg interprets these lines as "the nadir of despair in *In Memoriam*." They "generaliz[e] and impersonalize[e]" the "calamity of individual loss so personally expressed" elsewhere, amplifying that "loss" so that it encompasses the potential extinction of "the entire race" of humankind.[47] Here, death and extinction collapse into each other, the former standing in synecdochally for the latter. The synecdochal oscillation between individual and species—between death and extinction—gives shape to the poem as a whole.[48] Such oscillations are visible in the shape-shiftings of the word "death," which Erik Gray tracks by way of the "distorting mirror" of polyptoton, whose imperfect repetitions figure the word in "slightly altered form[s]." "[I]t is no coincidence," as Gray argues, that "death" is "commonly subject to polyptotic variation" in *In Memoriam*. Interweaving "biological and linguistic morphology," these variations convey death's capacity for profound

"change."[49] Significantly, these variations are often scalar, marking how death slips fluidly from the singular into the plural, the individual into the collective, the micro into the macro. Thus, the poem's first reference to death takes the form of "Death" with a capital, ideational, figural "D" (prologue 7). If "Life" is here abstracted to encompass not only the lyric subject but also its types—the collective and speciating human "we" (prologue 2) as well as an aggregate of life-forms running the gamut from "brute" to "man" (prologue 6)—"Death" is similarly abstracted. It is poised to crush to dust the human individual *and* the unindividuated, collective, abstracted "skull" of all life-forms, both human and nonhuman (prologue 8). The lyric "we" here swells to cut across the "us" of humankind and the "us" of the myriad life-forms who together confront a world in which neither individual nor type can stay. The poem thus announces from the outset that to speak of death is to speak of extinction—to shuttle between the dissipation of persons and species, of individual and aggregate life, of the agential human subject and its supposedly passive nonhuman antithesis. As the category of the human dissolves, it takes with it the taxonomic estrangement upon which the categories of human and nonhuman are together predicated.[50]

The slippages between death and extinction are in this way a perhaps unexpected source of fantasy in *In Memoriam*. Nowhere is this more evident than in the poem's figurative experiments with incorporate forms of subjectivity and voiceless apostrophe. Thus, whereas many readers rightly view extinction and its attendant anxieties as a source of despair, I argue that they just as frequently mark a wellspring of desire.[51] Experimenting with how human and nonhuman, as well as individual and type, are deeply unstable and wholly unnatural categories, Tennyson figures extinction as a source of formal possibility or, rather, liberation: it constitutes a new frontier for being and animacy in the poem. In *In Memoriam*, extinction is an "impersonal" (and perhaps depersonalizing) process whose abstracted and abstracting forms undo the closure of individual human subjectivity, forcing an imagining of entwined human and nonhuman experience. Tennyson's yew trees materialize the abstracted and abstracting forms of extinction and the posthuman futures with which they shimmer, especially as they insinuate themselves into corpses and thus disrupt the category of the human as defined by physiological boundaries. Corpses—nonpersons-who-were-once-human persons—occupy the interface between the categories of human and nonhuman as well as between death and extinction. As such, they possess a "materiality" that Deborah Lutz contends "held a certain enchantment for Victorians" because it unsettles

"[t]he boundaries between self and other."[52] Section 10 is one of many lyrics to experiment with and reorganize these boundaries. Here, Tennyson imagines Hallam's corpse as "rest[ing] beneath the clover sod"—as enmeshed with "rains" and roots and rocks, "toss[ed] with tangle and with shells" (10.13–4 and 19–20). Following on the heels of a quatrain whose anaphoric structure—"I hear," "I hear," "I see," "I see" (10.1–4)—figures the alienation of the normative, subjectivating, possessive "I" on the page, the intermingled forms of corpse, "clover sod," "tangle," and "shells" together display how the abstracting forms of extinction proliferate formal porosities where seemingly impermeable surfaces once stood. *In Memoriam*'s corpses are in this way as geologic as they are elegiac, as experimental as they are generic. Intertwined with the language of climate and type, they convey how extinction intermingles human and nonhuman such that the lyric subject's isolation is undone. The figure of the corpse facilitates the "see[ing] of oneself as becoming or being material." It "mak[es] meaning in the face of—and *with the face of*—death."[53] Or, to use Tennyson's own language, the corpse experiments with the "changes wrought on form and face" by "Death" (82.1–2), with the disfiguration of the human face and type, with the putting on of faces that are not strictly human—that resist categorization.

Positing such disfigurations—or, perhaps, extinction events—as the enabling condition of lyric, *In Memoriam* explores how poetry is a materially incorporate process that dis- and refigures not only its human speaker but also its human readers and auditors. In section 21, the speaker considers how poetry is in material and "incorporate" commerce with organic and inorganic life-forms:

> I sing to him that rests below,
> And, since the grasses round me wave,
> I take the grasses of the grave,
> And make them pipes whereon to blow.
>
> The traveller hears me now and then,
> And sometimes harshly will he speak:
> 'This fellow would make weakness weak,
> And melt the waxen hearts of men.'
>
> Another answers, 'Let him be,
> He loves to make parade of pain
> That with his piping he may gain
> The praise that comes to constancy.'

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318001602 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A third is wroth: 'Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

'A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?'

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad: her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol'n away. (21.1–28)

Here, poetry is figured as the progeny of an interspecies materialism rooted in the "incorporate" forms of poet, corpse, and plant. Sitting atop Hallam's "grave" amidst a sea of "grass," the poet fashions a set of "pipes" from the surrounding reeds with which to compose a song in honor of "him," the dead. This song is not the work of a single human author but, rather, an interspecies compact made legible only in the space after death. Lyric speech, in other words, emerges in the moment at which the poet's lips conjoin with the tubular orifices of grass. Growing from soil enriched by the decay of human remains, the "grasses of the grave" transport the poet into "incorporate" intercourse with "him that rests below." Recalling the involuted forms of poet, corpse, and yew in sections 2, 39, and 76, this moment of formal incorporation—which stretches into the final quatrain, wherein the poet's song mingles with the "note[s]" of the warbling linnets—positions poetry, and lyric in particular, as a desubjectivating and largely nonhuman phenomenon. The poem here insists on a more capacious theory of the lyric whose multivocal, intersubjective, extrahuman resonances transform the material world and its sociopolitical structures, making realizable intersubjective forms of expression, of relationality, of co-creation.

This argument is, perhaps surprisingly, reinforced by the arguments of poetry's detractors as they are represented in *In Memoriam*. In section 21, one of the travelers goes so far as to suggest there is little if any place for poetry in a time when the voice of the body politic has drowned out

that of the "private" individual and when "Science" has, under the banner of empire, developed an appetite for other planets. In a historical moment like this, poetry is, according to the travelers, sentimental at best and self-indulgent at worst. But section 21 also shows how these dismissals of poetry express anxiety about its deeply (de-)formative powers. The first traveler worries over what poetry does to "men" and, by extension, humankind. In "melt[ing] the waxen hearts of men," verse provokes an excess of feeling that would make men "weak." These lines gesture to the ways in which this "weakness" might operate not only at the scale of the individual reader but also the collective, infecting the entire human species. Poetry, in other words, functions as a destabilizing force: it unravels the "hearts" of its readers and, by extension, the "waxen"—translucent, malleable, plastic, precarious—forms of "men." *In Memoriam* thus invites one to imagine humankind as quite literally melting away under the influence of poetry. "Waxen" seems an especially telling word, here, given its significance in Victorian funerary culture. Wax is the stuff of death masks and effigies, and in its adjectival form the word figures the collective "men" as pale and corpselike in pallor, as in the throes of defacement or disfiguration. The melting forms of poetry here trigger an extinction event wherein man is transformed in and by verse, and is then man no more. Reconfigured by way of poetry, the human auditor or reader becomes receptive to new imaginative categories and abstractions; to very different forms of agency and collectivity; to a dynamic, burgeoning, intercommunicative world and a future that is emphatically posthuman.

4. Victorian Lyric Now

In this essay's final turn, I briefly consider whether the lyric "I" of *In Memoriam* affords a language through which to conceive the Anthropocene, its human causation, and its legacies. Recent scholarship on deep history and object-oriented ontology sometimes takes the notion of a normative, consolidated, privileged humanity for granted. This position is perhaps most prominently declared in Timothy Morton's writing on ecological disaster. In an essay that tracks the continuities between the Victorian period and its anthropogenic fallout, he describes the human species' capacity to "ac[t] as a geophysical force" as formally akin to the "numerous hyperobjects" that structure life and world at present. As one of Morton's so-called hyperobjects, humankind seems to command "powers reserved for God, that are thinkable yet unthinkable, speakable yet

unspeakable."[54] Here, the human is singularly capable of wielding and consolidating power. Such claims presume that the so-called Anthropocene can be fixed only by those who broke it.[55] There is no room in this perspective for thinking beyond the extremity of supreme mastery and its corollary, supreme impotence, that together suffuse much contemporary environmental discourse. Comprising two sides of the same coin, these extremes careen between a "comic faith" in the human as agentic anomaly—as Earth's most "naughty but very clever children" who will dream up a superheroic "technofi[x]" once again and just in the nick of time—or the narcissism that emerges in the wake of an "abstract futurism" in which the "game is over" and all that remains, as Donna Haraway puts it, is the "sublime despair" of humankind's unprecedentedly cataclysmic handiwork.[56] However different they might seem, both of these perspectives are similarly exceptionalist. They are also equally dangerous. As Claire Colebrook puts it, they cover over how "humanity is not an actuality from which we can draw grounds for action."[57] Together, these perspectives perpetuate the fantasy that humans are the sole guardians of (or are entirely evacuated of material and ethical attachments to) nonhuman life-forms and the planet itself. And like normative lyric subjectivity, these perspectives also flatten intraspecies dissonance—the differences that exist *within* species—thereby perpetuating the fallacy of a monolithic humankind universally accountable for environmental degradation, uniformly at the mercy of its repercussions, and equally obligated (but also similarly dispossessed of the capacity) to act.

But what would it mean, in this context, to take seriously *In Memoriam*'s imagining of lyric being—of interpenetrative selves, bodies, agencies, forces—as an affordance for the future? To reimagine subjectivity as the co-constitutive nexus between ourselves and the myriad life-forms and material planet with whom we cohabit—between selves that are emphatically and unconditionally not *our* selves, that never were or will be strictly our own, but rather have always been irrevocably intertwined with and porous to the multiformity of life and of planet? The forms of lyric poetry I have discussed in this essay afford viable points of departure for answering these questions—for rethinking the human as neither the possessive individual nor a homogeneous unity charged with breaking (and fixing) the world and its futures. If our contemporary "crisis point" is borne from the *categories* of subjectivity and agency at issue in contemporary environmental discourse—from the flattening and false "discontinuities" that at once give shape to and meet their annihilation in *In Memoriam*—it may be critical to think about these categories by and

through Victorian lyric experiment. To be absolutely clear, by rejecting the notion of the human as defined through agency, what I am *not* saying is that we catapult to an opposing notion of the human as a site of complete passivity. To reiterate: these extremes are two sides of the same exceptionalist coin. And, of course, to position the human as totally powerless would be to give the human (or, to be more specific, the particular humans most responsible for wreaking environmental havoc to accumulate capital) a pass, so to speak; to take as a given an aporia between complete power and complete impotence; to slip into a sublime and narcissistic anthropocentrism. What I *am* saying, however, is that by rejecting the notion of the human as defined through voice and agency—by imagining instead how humans, animals, and planet are enfolded in and, as Haraway puts it, "at stake with each other"—we open ourselves up to very different, more complex, redistributed forms of individuality and collectivity, agency and futurity.[58]

In Memoriam and other Victorian lyric poems that experiment with incorporate, nonanthropomorphic, collective forms of expression might constitute such an opening up by way of their intersubjectivity. Taking shape through a weaving of being and speech that disfigures the human—that reconfigures the relationships between the human and the nonhuman, the singular and the collective, such that the distinctions between them slip away—Tennyson's speaking "I" calls attention to a plural, distributed, extrahuman sense of being. It posits the human subject as "ecologically excessive," to borrow Kathryn Yusoff's phrasing—as shot through with nonhuman dimensionalities, as permeated by and in communication with energies that are at once alien to but also constitutive of the self.[59] This subject is, in other words, profoundly open to and renegotiated by way of nonhuman forms and forces that are at once external and internal. To understand the world in this way—to imagine it as not only before, and around, but also *with* and *inside* us; as capacious and plural, layered and intercommunicative—might allow us to imagine and think with multiple forms of being and agency, and to inhabit and participate in them as potentialities. Lyric poems like *In Memoriam* have much to tell us about the geophysical forms and systems that were emergent in the Victorian period and that continue to shape our world at present. As Tennyson's lyric "I" resists the bifurcated account of human subjectivity—at once all-powerful and utterly impotent—that has become commonplace, it registers our drift away from older and necessarily poetic reservoirs of possibility. *In Memoriam* in this way calls for us to turn back to and take up a newly and urgently Victorian, which is to say not-so-human, life in lyric.

Notes

Scholarship is a collective endeavor. I am especially grateful to Stacey Balkan, Julia Dauer, Devin Griffiths, Lenora Hanson, Nathan K. Hensley, Ashvin R. Kini, Caroline Levine, Jessie Reeder, and the anonymous readers for their generosity and insights.

1. Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, 2:207 and 2:148. All quotations from the *Principles* will hereafter be cited parenthetically in the main text.
2. This is not to say that Lyell never advocates for or naturalizes imperial relations between the English nation and its colonial others or between humankind and planet. But this is only one side of the complex and contradictory story the *Principles* tells. Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz situate Lyell in a long line of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers who were acutely aware—and, in some cases, wary—of the geologic footprint of the human species. See Noah Heringman's account of this footprint, which he understands by way of the figure of inscription.
3. Taylor, *Sky of Our Manufacture*, 21; Coombs and Coriale, "V21 Forum," 88.
4. Taylor, "Tennyson's Elegy," 226.
5. Johnson, *Persons and Things*, 9. Susan Stewart goes so far as to say it would be "unbearable to imagine lyric" in anything other than the "terms of subjectivity" in her "Preface to a Lyric History" (212). For like-minded arguments, see also Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* and Helen Vendler.
6. Reed, "Erotics of Mourning," 23.
7. Reed, "Erotics of Mourning," 25; Wordsworth, Preface, xxviii; Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry," 67.
8. Reed, "Erotics of Mourning," 26 (emphasis mine).
9. Reed, "Erotics of Mourning," 23–24.
10. Armstrong, "Collapse of Subject and Object," 181 and 201. See also Armstrong's introduction to *Victorian Poetry* and her essay "The Victorian Poetry Party."
11. Jackson and Prins, "Lyrical Studies," 523.
12. Bonneuil and Fressoz trace the strange and contradictory temporalities of the Anthropocene back to numerous, competing points of origin. One of these is the formalization of the Enlightenment liberal subject, who "emphasizes the value of man, the modern subject, as autonomous agent acting consciously on his history and settling

conflicts by dominating nature" (19). On the challenge of historicizing and narrating our global climatological crisis, its geneses, and shifting temporalities, see Aravamudan, "The Catachronism of Climate Change"; Bonneuil and Fressoz, *Shock of the Anthropocene*; Chakrabarty, "Climate and Capital"; Ghosh, *The Great Derangement;* and Steffen et al., "The Anthropocene."

13. Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning*, 1. Like Ramazani, Fuss locates a break in the elegiac tradition at the turn of the twentieth century, tracing the emergence of "a new type of dying" that marked a transition away from the model of "good death" that, as she argues, predominated during the Victorian period (*Dying Modern*, 30).
14. Taylor, "Tennyson's Elegy," 228.
15. Irene Hsiao addresses the "difficulty" of "assessing [the poem's] genre," which derives in part from its interweaving of the "supralinguistic" teleology of elegy ("Calculating Loss," 174) and "the vagaries of lyric instability" (175). The poem's speaking subject, Hsiao contends, continually "defies the project of elegy" (174) as it "contradicts what is essential to the [normative] lyric 'I,'" namely "that there is something individual and isolable, something private and particular about experience, action, and will that generates a position of speech encompassed by the border we designate as the body" (175). I, like Hsiao, attend to *In Memoriam*'s lyric figures, which unsettle or perhaps reanimate elegiac convention as they are brought to bear upon yew tree and corpse. Lyric here verges into elegy and vice versa.
16. Barri J. Gold offers an incisive reading of different scales of "loss" in *In Memoriam*. The poem, she argues, "thoroughly entangles" the "loss of a friend" with "other kinds of loss" (34), such that "[p]ersonal death" is rendered "cosmological" in magnitude (*ThermoPoetics,* 48). Anne-Lise François reads lyric more broadly as an "attemp[t] to hold together overlapping yet semi-autonomous temporal scales" (243), such that the "cosmic condenses into something touchable," into "something available to sensory perception" (250). This essay builds on François's reconsideration of lyric in the light of the Anthropocene by tracing the particular work of Victorian lyric at present—by attending to a lyric tradition that is historically situated and, at the same time, imagines a longer, shared, transhistorical environmental moment.
17. Taylor, "Tennyson's Elegy," 224.
18. Agathocleous, "In the Present," 90. I am indebted to recent work by Ashley Dawson, Donna Haraway, and Ursula K. Heise, who trace the

complex relationships between mass extinction, ecodiversity, and cultural production. Dawson articulates in devastating terms why narratives of crisis do and should predominate at present: "[T]he wave of extinction that is decimating plants and animals around the planet strikes at the most intimate and potent of human faculties: the imagination" (*Extinction,* 102). Heise, too, contends that endangered and extinct species are entangled in "broader structures of imagination" (*Imagining Extinction,* 6). But also of interest to me are Haraway's warnings against the "bitter cynicism" that has emerged in response to anthropogenic extinction events (*Staying with the Trouble,* 3). Haraway advocates for the admittedly risky yet also necessary work of tarrying with "the trouble"—with the "thick copresence" of material life (4), its fluctuating and otherworldly relationalities, its openings onto unexpected forms of creation or "sympoiesis" (5). Like Haraway, I understand extinction not strictly as a mechanism of foreclosure or alienation or devastation, though—to be absolutely clear—it is most certainly all of these things. In this essay, however, I trace the possibilities bound up in the extinction of *the conceptual category* of the human and its destructive partitioning off of the nonhuman. As I will argue, the extinction of the human as a category forms the basis for lyric experiment in *In Memoriam.* If much recent work in the environmental humanities has proclaimed and, in some cases, celebrated (or at the very least deemed conceptually necessary) the death of nature, Tennyson stages a similar intervention with respect to the human.

19. Tennyson, *In Memoriam,* 2.16. All references to this and other Tennyson poems are taken from Christopher Ricks's edition and will hereafter be cited parenthetically in the main text.
20. Drawing on Cary Wolfe's definition, I use "posthuman" in this essay to name a coming after, but not in the sense of a progressive "narrative of historical change" (xvii) that fetishizes the normative human subject's capacity to "transcen[d] the bonds of materiality" (xv)—to achieve transhuman, borderless, immaterial, immortal life. This brand of posthumanism only "reproduce[s] the very kind of normative subjectivity against which it is ostensibly situated" (*What Is Posthumanism?* xvii). Like Wolfe, I use "posthuman" to denote "a historical moment"—a historical after—"in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore" (xv). *In Memoriam* imagines precisely such a "coming after."

21. H. Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 305.
22. Knowles, "Aspects of Tennyson II," 182.
23. My reading of lyric impersonality is informed by Sharon Cameron's theory of impersonality as an "extinction" (viii) that unsettles "the boundary of the human particular" and, with it, "elementary categories we suppose to be fundamental to specifying human distinctiveness" (ix).
24. For an excellent account of Victorian lyric impersonality, see Veronica Alfano's "Technologies of Forgetting."
25. Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry," 71, 75, and 67.
26. My thinking in this essay is indebted to Reed's on contemporary black experimental poetry and the radical disarticulation of normative lyric subjectivity ("The Erotics of Mourning"). I also want to acknowledge outright that whereas a poem like Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014) expressly critiques the normative, white-supremacist, bourgeois lyric subject and its corollary notion of the human as a locus of hegemonic mastery, Tennyson is not so concerned with playing out equitable relations specifically between white and nonwhite humans—between, say, the English aristocracy and indigenous communities in British India. Indeed, some of Tennyson's poems, perhaps most iconically "Ulysses" (1833), reify white imperial mastery. Even so, what I explore in this essay by way of *In Memoriam*'s lyric impersonality is how Victorian lyric poetry might afford ethical ground for thinking inter- *and* intraspecies differentiation and, by extension, more equitable models of political collectivity, insofar as the Victorian lyric "I" unsettles the colonial and terraforming *anthropos*.
27. Culler, "Apostrophe," 154–55.
28. Armstrong, "Collapse of Subject and Object," 177.
29. Fuss, *Dying Modern*, 67.
30. I emphasize the retention of formal specificity to call attention to *In Memoriam*'s differentiated—as opposed to flat or homogenizing—materialism. Here, material particularity is not mutually exclusive to material collectivity, but is both preserved by and co-constitutive with "incorporate" forms of relationality.
31. Soule, "Orb," 216; Jones, "Orb," n.p. (emphasis mine).
32. Culler, *Theory of Lyric*, 35 (emphasis mine).
33. Culler, *Theory of Lyric*, 35, 213, 223. If scholars have long projected the human form onto the lyric "I," *In Memoriam* has proved no exception to this rule. Denise Gigante, for instance, locates an "anonymity"

in Tennyson's ballad meter, which works to convey a "communal"—but also necessarily—"human voice" (493).

34. De Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," 76.
35. Agamben, "Pascoli," 75.
36. De Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," 76.
37. Menely, *The Animal Claim*, 4.
38. Prins, "Voice Inverse," 47, 46.
39. De Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," 77, 80.
40. Armstrong, "Collapse of Subject and Object," 175.
41. Culler, "Apostrophe," 169. To be clear, the "O" indeed appears elsewhere in the poem—in the apostrophe to "Sorrow" immediately following section 2, for instance—but is eschewed in the yew tree poems, which are perhaps the most iconic examples of apostrophe in *In Memoriam*. I take seriously this absence and what it signifies more broadly for our understanding of lyric expression as it reaches beyond the vocative and, thus, beyond human speech in the poem as a whole.
42. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "tangle, *n.2*" and "tangle, *n.3*."
43. Johnson, *Persons and Things*, 10.
44. Culler, *Theory of Lyric*, 38.
45. Christensen, "Navigating," 382.
46. Taylor, "Tennyson's Elegy," 229.
47. Rosenberg, *Elegy for an Age*, 53.
48. Anna Barton reads *In Memoriam*'s engagement with Darwinian theories of speciation and extinction in similar terms, arguing that the developing child of Tennyson's infant lyrics becomes a synecdochal "representative" for "the evolutionary progress of the species" ("By an Evolutionist," 89–90).
49. Gray, "Polyptoton," 856, 846, 845.
50. Tennyson's "Tithonus" (1860) imagines a world similarly prone to dissolution or decline wherein "the woods" interminably "decay and fall" (1) while "Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath" (3). Though the poem at times departs from *In Memoriam*'s interest in those logics of material and political relationality that emerge in the wake of the individual and collective passing of the human, it at other times meditates upon the pitfalls of "cruel immortality"—of a world in which the human does not dissipate at "the quiet limit of the world" (7) but instead transcends that "limit" such that it might walk the earth interminably and to devastating consequence. Thus, having been granted immortality, Tithonus discovers the

human unbounded is the human "in ashes" (22), self-annihilated and annihilating, "wasted" and wasting (19). Tithonus makes a final and telling plea to God: "Release me, and restore me to the ground" (72), so that "I earth in earth" might "forget these empty courts" (75). Tithonus, like *In Memoriam*, in this way imagines the death of the human individual and the extinction of "Man" as a transformative "release"—a radical commingling with the nonhuman.

51. See, for instance, Geric, "Tennyson's *Maud*"; Rosenberg, *Elegy for an Age*; Sacks, *The English Elegy*; Tomko, "Varieties of Geological Experience"; and Zimmerman, *Excavating Victorians*.
52. Lutz, *Relics of Death*, 1, 10.
53. Lutz, *Relics of Death*, 10, 3.
54. Morton, "Victorian Hyperobjects," 494.
55. For precisely this reason, Eileen Crist and many others take issue with the term "Anthropocene," for it "delivers a Promethean self-portrait" of humankind as "a genius if unruly species, distinguishing itself from the background of merely-living life" ("On the Poverty," 131). The term "Anthropocene," in other words, is often complicit in the very forms of thought and of action it purports to name, elucidate, and critique. In an effort to decenter the human and better attend to particular moments or temporalities at work in the long and manifold history of anthropogenic environmental destruction, as well as to specific systems of development and accumulation, scholars have proposed numerous alternatives to "Anthropocene." These include Capitalocene, Chthulucene, Plantationocene, Thermocene, and, perhaps most recently, Alienocene. For overviews of the term "Anthropocene" and its numerous discontents, see Stacey Balkan's rich keyword essay ("Anthropocene") and Jason Moore's edited collection on this subject, in which Crist's work is reprinted (*Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*).
56. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 3–4.
57. Colebrook, *Death of the PostHuman*, 13.
58. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 55.
59. Yusoff, "Geologic Subjects," 384.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. "Pascoli and the Thought of the Voice." In *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, 62–75. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Agathocleous, Tanya. "In the Present of No Future." *Victorian Studies* 59, no. 1 (2017): 90–93.

Alfano, Veronica. "Technologies of Forgetting: Phonographs, Lyric Voice, and Rossetti's Woodspurge." *Victorian Poetry* 55, no. 2 (2017): 127–61.

Aravamudan, Srinivas. "The Catachronism of Climate Change." *diacritics* 41, no. 3 (2013): 6–30.

Armstrong, Isobel. "Tennyson, the Collapse of Subject and Object: *In Memoriam*." In *Language as Living Form in Nineteenth-Century Poetry*, 172–205. Brighton: Harvester, 1982.

———. "The Victorian Poetry Party." *Victorian Poetry* 42, no. 1 (2004): 9–27.

———. *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Balkan, Stacey. "Anthropocene." In *Global South Studies: A Collective Publication with the Global South*, October 20, 2017, https://globalsouthstudies.as.virginia.edu/key-concepts/anthropocene.

Barton, Anna. "By an Evolutionist: Poetic Language in Chambers and Tennyson." In *The Evolution of Literature*, edited by Nicholas Saul and Simon J. James, 87–100. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011.

Bonneuil, Christophe, and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. *The Shock of the Anthropocene*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: Verso, 2016.

Cameron, Sharon. *Impersonality: Seven Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Climate and Capital: On Conjoined Histories." *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 1 (2014): 1–23.

Christensen, Allan C. "Navigating in Perilous Seas of Language: *In Memoriam* and 'The Wreck of the Deutschland.'" *Victorian Poetry* 47, no. 2 (2009): 379–401.

Colebrook, Claire. *Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction*. Vol. 1. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2014.

Coombs, David Sweeney, and Danielle Coriale. "V21 Forum on Strategic Presentism: Introduction." *Victorian Studies* 59, no. 1 (2016): 87–89.

Crist, Eileen. "On the Poverty of Our Nomenclature." *Environmental Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2013): 129–47.

Culler, Jonathan. "Apostrophe." In *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, 149–71. New York: Routledge, 1981.

———. *Theory of the Lyric*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Dawson, Ashley. *Extinction: A Radical History*. New York: OR Books, 2016.

De Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-Facement." In *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 67–82. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

François, Anne-Lise. "Ungiving Time: Reading Lyric by the Light of the Anthropocene." In *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geologic Times*, edited by Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor, 239–58. College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017.

Fuss, Diana. *Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Geric, Michelle. "Tennyson's *Maud* (1855) and the 'unmeaning of names': Geology, Language Theory, and Dialogics." *Victorian Poetry* 51, no. 1 (2013): 37–62.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
Gigante, Denise. "Forming Desire: On the Eponymous *In Memoriam* Stanza." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 53, no. 4 (1999): 480–504.
Gold, Barri J. *ThermoPoetics: Energy in Victorian Literature and Science*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010.
Gray, Erik. "Polyptoton in *In Memoriam*: Evolution, Speculation, Elegy." *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 55, no. 4 (2015): 841–60.
Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
Heise, Ursula K. *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
Heringman, Noah. "Deep Time at the Dawn of the Anthropocene." *Representations* 129, no. 1 (2015): 56–85.
Hsiao, Irene. "Calculating Loss in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*." *Victorian Poetry* 47, no. 1 (2009): 173–96.
Jackson, Virginia, and Yopie Prins. "Lyrical Studies." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (1999): 521–30.
Johnson, Barbara. *Persons and Things*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008.
Jones, Stephen. "Orb." In *A General Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language*. London, 1804.
Knowles, James. "Aspects of Tennyson II." *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* (January 1893): 164–88.
Lutz, Deborah. *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
Lyell, Charles. *Principles of Geology* (1830–33). 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
Menely, Tobias. *The Animal Claim: Sensibility and the Creaturely Voice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
Mill, John Stuart. "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties." 1860. In *Dissertations and Discussions Political, Philosophical, and Historical*, 1:63–94. London: J. W. Parker, 1859.
Moore, Jason, ed. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland: PM Press, 2016.
Morton, Timothy. "Victorian Hyperobjects." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 36, no. 5 (2014): 489–500.
Prins, Yopie. "Voice Inverse." *Victorian Poetry* 42, no. 1 (2004): 43–59.
Ramazani, Jahan. *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
Reed, Anthony. "The Erotics of Mourning in Recent Experimental Black Poetry." *Black Scholar* 47, no. 1 (2017): 23–37.
Rosenberg, John. *Elegy for an Age: The Presence of the Past in Victorian Literature*. London: Anthem Press, 2005.
Sacks, Peter. *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Soule, Richard. "Orb." In *A Dictionary of English Synonymes*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1871.

Steffen, Will, *et al*. "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives." *Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences* 369 (2011): 842–67.

Stewart, Susan. *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

———. "Preface to a Lyric History." In *The Uses of Literary History*, edited by Marshall Brown, 199–218. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

"tangle, *n.2*" and "tangle, *n.3*." *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com.

Taylor, Jesse Oak. *The Sky of Our Manufacture: The London Fog from Dickens to Woolf*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016.

———. "Tennyson's Elegy for the Anthropocene: Genre, Form, and Species Being." *Victorian Studies* 58, no. 2 (2016): 224–33.

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. *The Poems of Tennyson*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. 3 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Tennyson, Hallam. *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son*. Vol. 1. London: Macmillan, 1897.

Tomko, Michael. "Varieties of Geological Experience: Religion, Body, and Spirit in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Lyell's *Principles of Geology*." *Victorian Poetry* 42, no. 2 (2004): 113–33.

Vendler, Helen. *Invisible Listeners: Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Wordsworth, William. Preface to *Lyrical Ballads with Pastoral and other Poems*, 1:i–lxiv. London, 1802.

Yusoff, Kathryn. "Geologic Subjects: Nonhuman Origins, Geomorphic Aesthetics and the Art of Becoming *In*human." *Cultural Geographies* 22, no. 3 (2015): 383–407.

Zimmerman, Virginia. *Excavating Victorians*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.