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A Study of the Numinous Presence in Tennyson's Poetry

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS v

PREFACE viii

CHAPTER I 1

THE HAUNTED POET AND THE NAMELESS PRESENCE

Introduction--towards a definition of "numinous"--literary influences on Tennyson--family background--melancholia--tension between "feeling" and "action"--concern with the idea of personal immortality--"Wages"--Tennyson's vision of love--Maud--probable biographical parallels--fear of hereditary epilepsy--the "weird seizures" in The Princess--interest in ghosts--rejection of the trappings of "spiritualism"--"vision" in early poems--nature and the numinous--petit mal and Tennyson's trances.

CHAPTER II 34

ASPECTS OF THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE: (i) THE LOST BELOVED

Early education--Cambridge, the "Apostles" and Arthur Hallam--the nature of the relationship with Hallam--déjã vu and Tennyson's "passion of the past"--"If I were loved as I desire to be"--possible homosexual facet to Tennyson's feelings for Hallam.

Invisible presences in nature--Tennyson's use of Gothic--Arthur Hallam's death--Tennyson's grief and In Memoriam--"Dark house" (In Memoriam 7)--gradual advance from physical to spiritual preoccupations--"Sweet after showers, ambrosial air" (In Memoriam 86)--the "Romantic" breeze--concern with the form of the beloved in the after-life--In Memoriam 95 and mystical experience.

CHAPTER III 76

THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE: (ii) SUBJECTIVE ELEMENTS

Self-fulfilling desires--Arthur Hallam as source of, and symbol for, inspiration--melancholia--memory, imagination and the numinous--early sonnets--literary memory--"Tintern Abbey"--subliminal memory (the "passion of the past")--"In the Valley of Cauteretz"--autoinduction--illusions and hallucinations of epilepsy--voices in Tennyson's poetry--epileptic aura

a possible "source" of Tennyson's light imagery--the recurring theme of "two voices"--"The Silent Voices".

The combination of disciplines--arguments for and against a biographical approach--Tennyson's psychological need of a personal mythos.

CHAPTER IV 118

THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE: (iii) THE DARK ASPECT

Tennyson's "strange sense of guilt"--Gothic phantasmagoria--literary influences--sin and suffering--"the wages of sin is death"--possible "sources" of Tennyson's sense of guilt--repression--Jung's "shadow", and the "ghastly wraith" of "Oh! that 'twere possible"--sublimation.

In defence of a psychological approach--"supernatural" phenomena and "natural" explanations--depth of Tennyson's understanding of the mind and heart of man.

CHAPTER V 152

THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE: (iv) THE DEITY

Guilt in In Memoriam--sublimated, not repressed--increasing association of Hallam with the numen--In Memoriam 67--the pronominal emendations in In Memoriam 95--Hallam as presiding deity in the landscape--the breeze as an agent of the numinous--the holy and the good--reactivation of the Christian myth--Tennyson's "more or less anthropomorphic" view of God--Hallam and divine guidance--"some strong bond which is to be"--In Memoriam 119 compared with In Memoriam 7--the hand image in In Memoriam.

Nature and the numinous--In Memoriam 130--sublimation of Hallam to become part of Christ and nature--Platonic elements--Tennyson and the "Theodicaea Novissima"--reconciliation of good and evil--influence of Dante--In Memoriam vindicated as a "Christian poem".

CHAPTER VI 188

SYNTHESIS

Diverse arguments reviewed--possibility of reconciling disparate elements--religious experience and the "neurotic temperament"--epilepsy, the "sacred disease"--déjà vu--the prophetic strain--the sense of sin and "two voices"--the ideal and the "daemonic"--the "reality" of effect-producing phenomena--the

spirit world, Hallam and the Deity--Tennyson's private mythology based on his dead friend--the noumenal: "I have felt"--inspiration or imagination as a numinous presence--"Merlin and The Gleam"--Tennyson's final "message"--"Crossing the Bar".

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 217

INDEX 226

ABBREVIATIONS

Allott	[Keats, John]. The Poems of John Keats. Ed. Miriam Allott. Longman's Annotated English Poets. London: Longman, 1972.
AT	Tennyson, Charles. Alfred Tennyson. London: Macmillan, 1949.
Butt	[Pope, Alexander]. The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations. Ed. John Butt. London: Methuen, 1963.
Carey	Milton, John. Complete Shorter Poems. Ed. John Carey. Longman Annotated English Poets. London: Longman, 1971.
CR	Ricks, Christopher. Tennyson. Master of World Literature Series. New York: Macmillan, 1972.
Eversley	[Tennyson, Alfred]. The Works of Tennyson. Ed. Hallam, Lord Tennyson. Eversley edition. 9 vols. London: Macmillan, 1907-8. (References in the text to this edition bear the name of the particular volume concerned--e.g., Eversley: "Demeter" and Other Poems.)
Freedman et al.	Freedman, Alfred M., Harold I. Kaplan, and Benjamin J. Sadock. Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1975.
GP	Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960.
Hayden	Wordsworth, William. Poems, Volume I. Ed. John O. Hayden. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.

Hutchinson	Shelley, [Percy Bysshe]. *Poetical Works*. Ed. Thomas Hutchinson. Corrected by G.M. Matthews. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970.
IM	*In Memoriam*.
Kaplan *et al*.	Kaplan, Harold I., Alfred M. Freedman, and Benjamin J. Sadock. *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*. 3rd ed. 3 vols. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1980.
Letters of AT	[Tennyson, Alfred]. *The Letters of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*. Ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr. Vol. I, 1821-1850. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982.
Memoir	[Tennyson, Hallam, Lord]. *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*. 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1897.
Merck	Berkow, Robert. ed. *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*. 13th ed. Rahway, N.J.: Merck, 1977.
Neppe	"Symptomatology of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy". *S.A. Medical Journal*, 60 (1981), 902-07.
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (1933; supplements, 1972, 1976, 1982).
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.
PT	[Tennyson, Alfred]. *The Poems of Tennyson*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Longmans' Annotated English Poets. London: Longmans, 1969.
Rader	Rader, Ralph Wilson. *Tennyson's "Maud": The Biographical Genesis*. Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1963.
Recollections	Page, Norman, ed. *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections*. London: Macmillan, 1983.

Shatto and Shaw	Tennyson, [Alfred]. In Memoriam. Ed. Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982.
Studies	Tennyson, Hallam, ed. Studies in Tennyson. London: Macmillan, 1981.
TPP	Henderson, Philip. Tennyson: Poet and Prophet. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
VI	Buckler, William E. The Victorian Imagination: Essays in Aesthetic Exploration. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1980.

PREFACE

A reader looking to this study for a charting of the diverse religious views held by Tennyson at different periods in his life may be disappointed. My primary concern has been not with religious forms, but with the numinous impulse. However, though I approached the topic with a completely open mind, I find my own Christian convictions have been strengthened through the study of Tennyson's poetry.

As the title indicates, I have not attempted to deal with the plays. To explore both the poetry and the plays in a study of this length would have been impossible.

I have perhaps been somewhat unorthodox in attempting to combine several disciplines, especially since I cannot claim to be a specialist in the areas concerned. However, I felt it necessary to approach the subject from a number of points of view, and to see to what extent the results could be said to converge on some sort of central "truth". When I have despaired of being able to do justice to a particular aspect within the imposed limits, I have sometimes found comfort in the words of Alan Sinfield (The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", p.211): "We can only endeavour continually to approach a little closer to the central mystery; the major advances will be infrequent, but most attempts should furnish one or two hints which others will develop."

Though I have used Christopher Ricks's edition of The Poems of Tennyson as my main source, I have also referred to the Eversley edition, where necessary, for verification or clarification. With regard to In Memoriam, I have studied both the Ricks edition (in The Poems of Tennyson) and the more recent edition by Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw. I have, however, elected to refer to the Shatto and Shaw edition, partly because I found their introduction and commentary useful and stimulating, and partly because I wished to adopt their use of Arabic numerals for the different sections of the poem.

Throughout this study all biblical references are to the Authorized Version, all Shakespeare references are to the Peter Alexander edition, and all Milton quotations are from the Complete Shorter Poems, edited by John Carey. Having no knowledge of Italian, but striving to understand at least the "spirit" of Dante, I have referred to several different translations of the Vita Nuova and The Divine Comedy. Tennyson is thought to have used H.F. Cary's translation (PT 217, headnote--p.560), but his knowledge of Dante was undoubtedly enriched through his association with Hallam (IM 89, ℓℓ.23-24), as well as by his own efforts. I have used John D. Sinclair's translation of Dante, as well as Cary's earlier one; and I have also used the Penguin translations edited by Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds. I have found the introductions, commentaries and notes by Sayers and Reynolds particularly useful.

Of the numerous non-literary works I read in the course of my research, I was perhaps most excited by those of William James (The Varieties of Religious Experience, 1902) and Rudolph Otto (The Idea of the Holy, 1917; trans. 1923). The theories propounded by these two writers--both considered brilliant pioneers in their fields--have much in common with the complex idea of the numinous evoked in Tennyson's poetry several years earlier.

It has become customary for modern critics of Tennyson to consider whether the poet would have approved of their investigations. Frequently they conclude that he would have regarded their scholarship as an invasion of his privacy. I, too, have had to look at areas of the poet's life that should perhaps remain essentially private. They do, in fact, remain essentially mysterious--in some ways "numinous". And I cannot believe that a poet who "hailed thankfully and expectantly every fresh disclosure", "whether from science, or from literary criticism, or from the progress of the human conscience",[1] would entirely have

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[1]H.M. Butler, "Recollections of Tennyson", in Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections, ed. Norman Page (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.50.

disapproved of my motives, at least.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Human Sciences Research Council, whose grant enabled me to undertake this project, and to Mrs H.E. Wells, who typed the manuscript. Grateful thanks are also due to a number of people in the Rhodes University English Department and the Rhodes University Library : the ever-helpful librarians, especially Miss Sue Arnott of the Inter-library Loan division; Professor Guy Butler, who facilitated my "transfer" from the Sciences to the Arts; Miss Cathy Saloman, whose help and encouragement at that time I have not forgotten; Mr R.F. Hall, who kindly made himself available to peruse my manuscripts during the absence of my supervisor on sabbatical; and Professor Ruth Harnett, whose expertise as supervisor was matched by her patience and understanding.

Finally, I thank my husband, my daughter and my mother for their love and support.

D.E.L.L.

CHAPTER I

THE HAUNTED POET AND THE NAMELESS PRESENCE

Alfred Tennyson was born in 1809, and lived to the age of eighty-three. For more than seventy years of that time he was actively engaged in writing poetry. The result is a large body of work spread over a considerable period--a period of scientific, social, religious and political upheaval[1] which in Tennyson's poetry forms a kind of contrapuntal theme to that of his deep personal experience. He seldom shirked the task of trying to reconcile the two strains. And, according to the Memoir, contemporaries of the calibre of F.D. Maurice believed that, in In Memoriam, Tennyson "had made a definite step towards the unification of the highest religion and philosophy with the progressive science of the day".[2]

Another contemporary, R.H. Froude, discussed the individual and collective sense of being adrift in an uncharted sea which resulted from the various revolutionary developments of the so-called Victorian era. He felt that the greatest of his contemporaries were those who (as Philip Collins paraphrases) "faced the open sea and tried to find what certainties remained: 'Tennyson [Froude declared] became the voice of this feeling in poetry'".[3]

In his poetic attempts to come to terms with life and death in what he regarded as a transition age,[4] Tennyson was frequently

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[1] Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture (London: Cass, 1966), Ch.I, pp.1-13. Buckley refers to Tennyson as the "prophetic interpreter...of a troubled and tumultuous age" (p.66).

[2] Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son (London: Macmillan, 1897), I, 298.

[3] Philip Collins, "Tennyson In and Out of Time", in Studies in Tennyson, ed. Hallam Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1981), p.148.

[4] Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1949), p.491.

aware of some dimly-perceived presence which at times seemed to guide, enlighten or inspire him. The first difficulty I faced in connection with this study was finding a suitable nomenclature for this nameless presence in Tennyson's poetry. Because of the variety of ways in which the phenomenon manifests itself, or is evoked, in the poetry, all attempts at a descriptive terminology failed since terms which were valid for one poem or set of poems proved to be invalid or inaccurate in another context. Eventually I settled on the term "numinous",[5] derived from the Latin "numen", which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as "deity, divinity; divine or presiding power or spirit". Webster seems to me to capture more fully some of the meanings which, in the context of Tennyson's poetry, I associate with the term "numen" : "a spirit believed by animists to inhabit a natural object or phenomenon" (1a); "a presiding spirit: a local deity" (1b); "a dynamic or creative force: GENIUS" (2).[6]

The word "numinous", as I employ it in the title of this study, partakes of a multiplicity of related meanings listed in Webster: "of, relating to, or characteristic of a numen: SUPERNATURAL" (1a); "dedicated to or hallowed by association with a deity: SACRED" (1b); "filled with a sense of the presence of divinity: HOLY" (2a); "inspiring reverence" (2b); "appealing to the higher emotions or to the aesthetic sense: SPIRITUAL" (3a); "beyond understanding or description: MYSTERIOUS, INCOMPREHENSIBLE" (3b). John Harvey's translation of The Idea of the Holy, Rudolph Otto's seminal study of the numinous, has been extremely useful to me in my efforts to "define" or "describe" seemingly ineffable phenomena

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[5] I am indebted to Prof. John Gouws of the Rhodes University English Department for first suggesting the term. I subsequently found it had already been used in connection with Tennyson's poetry by Sinfield. See Alan Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech: Tennyson's Use of Language in In Memoriam", in The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.57.

[6] Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged (1961).

and concepts.[7]

The apprehension of the numinous is a subjective phenomenon: whether a particular person is able to conceive of a deity at all and, if so, in what way such an ontological entity or "being" is envisioned is part of the person's individuality, part of the psyche. The German Romantic, Novalis, has written: "The way to all mysteries heads inwards. Eternity, with all its worlds, all past and future, is either within us or nowhere".[8] I do not think that Tennyson's poetry militates against such an opinion, though possibly he viewed the matter from a slightly different perspective, for he believed--and I quote the words of his grandson--that "man is in some way an embodiment of the eternal spirit".[9] Or, as Hallam Tennyson put it, "Throughout his life [Tennyson] had a constant feeling of the actual Immanence of God in Man and in the Universe, and also that 'in God alone all things and all beings exist'".[10]

Given this emphasis on subjective experience, my topic calls for an exploration of the more personal of Tennyson's poems. Thus the natural bias will be towards the lyric poetry--and I use the term "lyric" not only to suggest form, but also in the sense of poems "directly expressing the poet's own thoughts and sentiments" (OED A1), or those of his lyric speakers. However, it is sometimes difficult to isolate genre. There is to some extent a blending or overlapping of lyric, narrative and dramatic elements--

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[7]Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational, trans. John W. Harvey (1923; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946).

[8]Anthony Thorlby, The Romantic Movement, Problems and Perspectives in History (London: Longmans, 1966), p.151.

[9]AT, p.486.

[10]Materials, II, 28; quoted by Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw, eds., Tennyson: In Memoriam (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p.161. The reference is to "[Hallam Tennyson], Materials for a Life of A.T., 4 vols. [1895]. The privately-printed early stage of Memoir" (Shatto and Shaw, p.xiv).

which, though frequently present throughout the history of poetry, is in a way symptomatic of the nineteenth century. Alan Sinfield writes:

> Genre implies a hierarchy and fixity of cultural values and generalizable quality in human behaviour. In the nineteenth century it no longer seemed possible to sustain it in an unselfconscious manner in the face of the rapid and manifold economic, social and intellectual changes which were taking place. The decay of genre, therefore, is associated with Romantic emphasis upon individual experience.[11]

The "decay" of genre exacerbates problems of interpretation. How is one to distinguish between the personal sentiments of the poet and those of an invented character? How are they related? On the subject of interpretation, speaking about Maud and "other monodramatic poems (the stories of which were his own creation)", Tennyson had this to say:

> In a certain way, no doubt, poets and novelists, however dramatic they are, give themselves in their works. The mistake that people make is that they think the poet's poems are a kind of 'catalogue raisonné' of his very own self, and of all the facts of his life, not seeing that they often only express a poetic instinct, or judgement on a character real or imagined.... Of course, some poems, like my "Ode to Memory", are evidently based on the poet's own nature, and on hints from his own life.[12]

Tennyson usually tried to underplay the biographical elements in his poetry--often negating the personal aspects with a kind of naive literal truth. For instance, in denying biographical links with "Locksley Hall" and "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After", he said: "I never had a cousin Amy".[13] This was factually correct, for the girl thought to have inspired the poems was not his cousin,

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[11] Alan Sinfield, Dramatic Monologue, The Critical Idiom (London: Methuen, 1977), p.56.

[12] Memoir I, 402.

[13] Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son (London: Macmillan, 1897), II, 331.

and her name was not Amy but Rosa.

Tennyson had an almost pathological aversion to the public scrutiny of any poet's private life,[14] and this attitude may have been responsible for the vehement denials of the autobiographical content of his work. On the other hand, it may be that he was genuinely unaware of the extent to which he was projecting his perceptions and reactions into his poetry. It is therefore difficult to isolate the autobiographical elements for the purpose of interpreting the poetry.

I find that the bulk of my material has been drawn from In Memoriam, Maud and a number of the shorter lyrics, including several sonnets. I have also touched upon autobiographical parallels in The Princess. Apart from occasional glancing references, I have had to exclude the Idylls of the King--but fortunately this blanket exclusion has still left me access to some important "Arthurian" material, such as the early "Morte d'Arthur" and "Merlin and the Gleam". Throughout, I have tried to maintain a balance between In Memoriam and the shorter poems.

Tennyson published his first volume (Poems by Two Brothers, 1826) only nine years after the appearance of Keats's first volume (Poems, 1817)[15] --and, but for the untimely deaths of Keats, Shelley and Byron in 1821, 1822 and 1824 respectively, might have written contemporaneously with those great spirits of Romanticism. Certainly their influence is strong in his work, though one is frequently aware, too, of the long line of English literary forebears to whom he is indebted: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth and Coleridge, to name but a few of the more obvious examples. Theodore Redpath observes that some of these writers, for example, Milton, Coleridge and Shelley, "were close

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[14] See headnote to "To -, After Reading a Life and Letters", Christopher Ricks, ed., The Poems of Tennyson, Longmans' Annotated English Poets (London: Longmans, 1969), p.846.

[15] R.A. Foakes, The Romantic Assertion: A Study in the Language of Nineteenth Century Poetry (London: Methuen, 1958), p.116.

readers of the ancient poets in the original".[16] Thus Tennyson was indebted indirectly, as well as directly, to Greek and Roman poets such as Homer and Theocritus, Ovid, Claudian, Lucretius, Catullus and--above all--Virgil.[17] Frederick W.H. Myers writes of Tennyson's "veneration for Virgil", and goes on to refer to Tennyson as "a poet whom those who best appreciated Romanticism held as romantic, while those who best appreciated Classicism felt him to be classic to the core".[18]

This duality is likewise alluded to by a later critic, W.W. Robson, who writes that he sometimes wonders "whether Tennyson was a classical or a romantic poet". Robson enlarges on the point, thus:

> Some of the poems and passages which may appeal most to modern readers reflect the struggles and frustrations of a divided nature and a sick soul. Here he seems a romantic poet. In other poems he strives hard to achieve the [classical] balance and serenity for which his soul yearned.

Robson goes on to praise In Memoriam, which he sees as "the greatest of Tennyson's poems" because in it the poet "unites the romantic and the classical". Here, Robson points out, "a personal voice, while never ceasing to be a personal voice, becomes at the great moments of the poem the voice of all humanity".[19]

Tennyson's fascination stems, in part, from the kind of duality noted by Myers and Robson. But the situation is even more complex, for in addition to being both "classic" and "romantic", he may be regarded as the arch-Victorian. Furthermore, he has strong affinities with the English Renaissance poets, upholding the ideal of poet-scholar-soldier and the balance between contemplation and

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[16] Theodore Redpath, "Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome", in Studies, pp.114-15.

[17] Redpath, "Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome", in Studies, pp.106, 110.

[18] Memoir II, 481.

[19] W.W. Robson, "The Present Value of Tennyson", in Studies, p.65.

action implicit in such a combination. Tennyson would seem to have had someone like Sir Philip Sidney in mind when, in the persona of the protagonist in Maud (PT 316), he wrote:

> Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
> Like some of the simple great ones gone
> For ever and ever by....
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.389-391)

In order to emphasize the fact that the introvert poet I shall be dealing with represents only one facet of Tennyson, I have dwelt on the complexity which makes Tennyson's work, as a body, difficult to categorize. I believe, however, that the facet I have chosen to highlight in this study is the most important. For, however much Tennyson admired action, however much his imagination was "stirred by heroism",[20] his own life was a relatively passive one. In response to a request by Leigh Hunt for "a fuller biographical account"[21] of himself, Tennyson felt obliged to reply: "I have no life to give--for mine has been one of feelings not of actions...."[22]

Frank Kermode believes that to be "cut off from life and action, in one way or another, is necessary as a preparation" for poetic vision. Kermode holds that "some difference in the artist", related to a "profound 'organic sensibility'", gives him access to this 'vision' which involves both intense joy and intense suffering. As Kermode claims, such a visionary poet

> ...must be lonely, haunted, victimized, devoted to suffering rather than action--or, to state this in a manner more acceptable to the twentieth century, he is exempt from the normal human orientation towards action and so enabled to intuit those images which

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[20] Robert Bernard Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), p.164.

[21] Martin, p.230.

[22] "To Leigh Hunt", 13 July 1837, The Letters of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), I (1821-1850), 155; quoted by Martin, p.230.

> are truth, in defiance of the triumphant claims
> of merely intellectual disciplines.[23]

If to be lonely, haunted and victimized is indeed a required preliminary to poetic vision, then Tennyson's life did not lack the necessary stimulus. Alfred was the third of eleven children born to Dr George Clayton Tennyson and his wife Elizabeth (née Fytche) at Somersby, Lincolnshire.[24] Dr Tennyson lived in the shadow of the knowledge that he was to be disinherited by his father (the poet's grandfather) in favour of his younger brother (Charles Tennyson--later Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt).[25] This act of disinheritance was to result not only in financial hardship but also in severe psychological scarring for the Somersby Tennysons. Dr Tennyson, a scholarly but dangerously morose man, forced into the Church against his wishes, grew increasingly bitter about his father's treatment of him,[26] and sank into alcoholism and violent rages which eventually resulted in a temporary separation from his wife and children.[27] He died in 1831 at the age of fifty-three,[28] leaving his children a legacy of guilt, melancholia and instability which was to take at least two of them to the point of outright insanity, and to leave none of them untouched by some form of aberration or eccentricity.[29] Of the son destined to become poet laureate, Gerhard Joseph writes: "In the umbra of his father's malaise, Alfred Tennyson cultivated his own sense of all-pervading

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[23]Frank Kermode, Romantic Image (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p.6.

[24]Martin, pp.14-16.

[25]Martin, p.6.

[26]AT, pp.27-28.

[27]Martin, pp.64-65.

[28]Martin, p.131.

[29]Andrew Wheatcroft, The Tennyson Album: A Biography in Original Photographs (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp.90-91.

loss".[30]

Although the fact is not mentioned by either Hallam Tennyson or Sir Charles Tennyson, Martin's definitive biography shows that, in addition, Dr George Clayton Tennyson bequeathed to his children the fear of hereditary epilepsy, a disease which was at that time thought to be associated with insanity and which, for that and other reasons, was socially unacceptable.[31]

Even the potentially stabilizing influence of Alfred's pious and loving mother was insufficient to counteract the "black blood" of the Tennysons.[32] Ralph Rader, describing the poet's youth, writes:

> Though Tennyson was strongly attached to his father, the older man's erratic conduct, with its by-products of gossip and scandal, inevitably had a most unfortunate effect upon his hypersensitive son, generating inner tensions and feelings of guilt which left him painfully and permanently self-conscious and subject to brooding moods of depression and despair.[33]

If Tennyson has come to be known as the nineteenth century poet of melancholy, his melancholia was clearly not without good cause, and reveals itself frequently in early poems such as "The Outcast" (PT 55) and "Unhappy man, why wander there..." (PT 52). The poet was indeed "lonely, haunted, victimised...." Small wonder that he became "devoted to suffering rather than action" (that is, action as usually understood).[34]

Nevertheless, both Martin and Ricks see the dearth of external action in Tennyson's life as creating a certain tension in his work.

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[30]Gerhard Joseph, Tennysonian Love: The Strange Diagonal (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1969), p.15.

[31]Martin, pp.10-11, 27-29.

[32]Martin, p.25.

[33]Ralph Wilson Rader, Tennyson's "Maud": The Biographical Genesis (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1963), p.89.

[34]Kermode, p.6.

Ricks puts it like this:

> Tennyson was a poet haunted by the uneasy feeling that actions speak louder than words, and by the feeling that it was the soldier who epitomized action, duty, manliness and courage. Epitomized or monopolized? Tennyson was never to escape from this tension, and often it was a richly creative one.[35]

Ricks goes on to quote the lines with which Tennyson might perhaps have sought to vindicate his own position:

> And here the Singer for his Art
> Not all in vain may plead
> 'The song that nerves a nation's heart,
> Is in itself a deed.'
>
> (PT 392, ℓℓ.77-80)

But this vindication short-circuits another typically Tennysonian conflict: what should be the nature of the "song"? Martin sums up Tennyson's ambivalent feelings thus:

> Like most artists with a conscience, Tennyson was plagued all his life with the conflicting claims of his duty to society, to the world at large, and his duty to his own sensibilities.... [P]ublic conscience and private were at constant war, and he had to face the possibility that his poetry might be only an escape from external difficulties.[36]

This inner tension was aggravated by the perpetual urging by Tennyson's contemporaries that he should use his poetic talents in a more didactic way, for the benefit of mankind. As Martin points out, in poems like "The Lady of Shalott" (PT 159) and "The Palace of Art" (PT 167)

> ...Tennyson depicts the failure of an isolated creativity, almost as if he were trying to comply with the feelings of his friends about poetry, but his own sensitivity constantly betrays him, so that the vitality of both poems lies not in

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[35] Christopher Ricks, Tennyson, Masters of World Literature Series (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p.57.

[36] Martin, p.67.

> the descriptions of the socially engaged life but in the account of the withdrawn experience.... The formal allegiance of the poems is to the external world, but it is subverted by the poetic energy of the world of the imagination, and it is that energy which is responsible for the success of the poems. It is as if Tennyson's subconscious beliefs and loyalties make their own assertion in opposition to what he is protesting.[37]

This dichotomy clearly has stylistic implications, and Joseph notes that "frequently...in Tennyson, the sensuous drift of a poem's imagery modifies and even contradicts a morally energetic theme".[38]

To be sure, however much Tennyson may have subscribed to the objective ideal of a balance between heart, head and hand, his subjective impulse, in art as in life, was towards the spiritual and metaphysical.[39] It would have been strange indeed if the poet, writing in an era of political and industrial revolution and of Parliamentary reform, had not experienced some extrovert and humanistic promptings.[40] But in the final analysis, as a man who regarded spirit as more "real" than matter, Tennyson's primary concern was with the questions of personal immortality and the immutability of love.[41] As he himself put it, "What matters anything in this world without full faith in the Immortality of the Soul and of Love?"[42] And compared with these profound concerns all others became transitory, almost nugatory.

The late poem "Wages" (first published in February, 1868) shows Tennyson's continued preoccupation with the theme of immortality.

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[37] Martin, p.163.

[38] Joseph, p.52.

[39] Memoir II, 90, 166-69.

[40] Memoir I, 41, 83, 185-86.

[41] AT, pp.405, 460, 468; Collins, "Tennyson In and Out of Time", in Studies, p.149.

[42] Memoir II, 343.

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea--
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong--
Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

(PT 354)

In this poem the trinity of hand, head and heart is again invoked (ℓ.1), but invoked only to be dismissed--albeit in a tone of nostalgia (ℓ.2). The focus then changes from the glories of warrior, orator and song to the "Glory of Virtue" (ℓ.3)--which, significantly, is perceived in terms of action but not flamboyant action ("to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong"). Virtue, however, wishes for continuance rather than acclaim; for, according to the poet, virtue is "no lover of glory", certainly not of the glory conceived in traditional, almost cliché'd terms: "She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just, / To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky" (ℓℓ.8-9). The desired reward is simply "the glory of going on, and still to be"--that is, the reward of enduring.

In the second stanza, this endurance receives added emphasis, mutating into immortality ("not to die"). And what could be more appropriate? If, as the Bible says, "the wages of sin is death", it follows with a fine logic that the wages of virtue should be "the gift of God...eternal life":[43] "Give her the wages of going on, and not to die" (ℓ.10).

[43] Romans vi:23; quoted PT 354, headnote (p.1206).

This short poem reflects, as I have said, Tennyson's metaphysical preoccupations. It also reveals the kind of sub-surface conflicts which Martin and Ricks, inter alia, have noted in Tennyson's work. In the first stanza, the "Glory of Virtue"--which is not the glory of praise and reward but the hope of prevailing--is in opposition to the glories admired by this world (the "Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song"). Ostensibly Tennyson upholds virtue and dismisses the passing acclaim which falls to soldier, orator and poet. But the incantatory tone of line 1 and the lingering note of sadness which characterizes line 2 suggest that the allegiance of the poet's heart may not be to the same principle as the allegiance of the mind.

The word "song" in line 1 is stressed. It also occupies a prominent (and climactic) position at the end of the line, so that it seems to carry greater emphasis than "warrior" or "orator". As a result, the almost elegiac tone of line 2 appears to refer most particularly to "song", the synonym for poetry. The first two lines of the poem seem to resonate with the poet's sense of regret for the ephemerality of art compared with virtue, whose rough path is ultimately seen as the road to immortality.

In the second stanza, "Virtue" is placed in opposition not to "song" but to "sin". Using the biblical quotation, "the wages of sin is death", as a starting point, the poet endeavours to make some deductions regarding the "wages of Virtue". The rhetorical question (ℓ.7) would seem to imply that if the wages of Virtue are also death ("dust"), "the struggle" (ℓ.3) to "endure" (ℓ.7) is pointless, benefiting only "the worm and the fly". For the idea of a mythical heaven beyond the grave inherent in metaphors such as the "isles of the blest", the "quiet seats of the just", and so on, is too facile to hold either attraction or conviction for the poet. It is the certainty of enduring for ever that counts, the assurance of a personal immortality that is wished for: "Give her [i.e. Virtue] the wages of going on, and not to die".

The imperatives ("give" in line 5 and in line 10) have tones of both demand and supplication, with the latter somewhat

stronger in line 5, where the verb is linked to "glory", than in line 10, where it is associated with "wages". Both lines are uttered as ardent prayers, but the closing line with its reference to "wages" also suggests that something is being claimed that has been--or will be--earned. Paradoxically, the tone is more uncertain in line 10 than line 5. For in line 5 a strong sense of continuity is suggested by the gerundive phrase ("going on"), by the adverb "still" and by the closing infinitive ("to be"). But in line 10, though the gerundive phrase ("going on") remains operative, "to be" has been displaced by "to die". Even the adjacent negative is not strong enough to cancel the reverberating effect of the strongly stressed closing word of the poem: "díe". One is left with the impression that the poet himself, though yearning for the certain assurance of immortality, and striving to assert this, is not totally exempt from underlying doubts.

The poem purports to be an exercise in metaphysical reasoning: Virtue, though personified, is an abstraction. But in the course of the poem the abstraction becomes so homogeneously, though implicitly, blended with the personality of the poet-speaker that Virtue now seems to stand for a virtuous man or woman. It is no longer merely personified: it is both personalized and generalized. The final line of the poem is the poignant prayer of the poet for <u>himself</u>--and for all mankind.

I believe that Tennyson's deeply felt need for assurance of the immortality of man--a need revealed in poems such as "Wages"--played an important rôle in the poet's apperception of the numinous. And in his poetry the recurrent theme of love is linked to his profound concern with the idea of immortality, for the poet believed that the experience of love develops individual souls, especially when that love is associated with suffering. Accordingly, he called <u>In Memoriam</u> "the Way of the Soul",[44] perhaps unconsciously

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[44]<u>Memoir</u> I, 393.

echoing Keats who saw life as a "vale of Soul-making".[45]

Love is probably, for most people, life's most intense and fundamental experience. As such it has long been a favourite theme of poets. When Tennyson takes up this theme, his handling of it naturally reflects an awareness of the long and many-faceted tradition. As T.S. Eliot argues, a poet's complete meaning can only be fully appreciated when seen in relation to the "simultaneous order" composed of all literature.[46]

The vision of love projected in Tennyson's poetry may seem "Romantic" in so far as it has a strong spiritual element. "While Tennyson followed Shelley and Keats in recognizing the aesthetic primacy of the senses, he was no less their disciple in his insistence upon spiritual love as a proper metaphor of the soul's quest for the ideal".[47] But it is important to view Tennyson's love poetry in relation to a much longer tradition--a tradition which goes back to Dante's love for Beatrice, Petrarch's love for Laura, and, in some cases, the mediaeval lyrist's love for Christ or Mary. For at times the spiritual bias in Tennyson's work becomes overtly religious. And in his best poetry Tennyson often achieves an intriguing hybridization of secular and religious love that, though not novel or innovative, is nevertheless highly characteristic and deeply moving.

Tennyson's art reflects his profound reverence for love, and the bulk of his work might be said to form a "landscape glorified by Love".[48] I am here employing in a wider context a phrase used by Hallam Tennyson to describe the milieu of Maud (PT 316), a poem of Tennyson's mature years (1855) in which we see him striving to assert a principle of order in the universe.

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[45] "To George and Georgiana Keats", Sunday 14 Feb.-Monday 3 May 1819, Letter 123, The Letters of John Keats, ed. Maurice Buxton Forman, 4th ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), p.334.

[46] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1917), in Selected Essays, 3rd ed. (1932; rpt. London: Faber, 1958), p.14; cited by Foakes, p.12.

[47] Joseph, p.20.

[48] Memoir I, 393.

The American writer, Henry van Dyke, having heard Tennyson reading Maud, felt that the "moral meaning of the poem" was to be found in the theme of love.

> It was love, but not love in itself alone, as an emotion, an inward experience, a selfish possession, that he [Tennyson] was revealing. It was love as a vital force, love as a part of life, love as an influence--nay, the influence which rescues the soul from the prison, or the madhouse, of self, and leads it into the larger, saner existence.[49]

Of all his poems, Maud seems to have been the one which excited Tennyson the most.[50] This may simply indicate that he found the use of the spasmodic mode both new and stimulating; but his continued obsession with that particular poem seems to suggest a more personal--that is, biographical--significance.[51] Tennyson, predictably, attempted to deny the biographical aspects of the poem; but Martin points out that "it is easy enough to see that many of the details of the story had parallels in his own life, and that the emotions were far from unfamiliar to him".[52] The biographical parallels have been carefully traced and documented by Ralph Rader, whose arguments I find convincing. Rader explores, in detail, how Tennyson's imagination

> ...shaped in a curious mosaic of the whole monodrama a pattern which was an analogue of the pattern of his private life in those [past] years; so that the act of creation was also an act of cathartic recapitulation by which he defined and judged his early life and attempted to put it behind him.[53]

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[49] Henry van Dyke,"The Voice of Tennyson", Century Magazine, 45 (Feb., 1893), 540-41; quoted by Rader, p.98.

[50] Rader, pp.1-2; Robson, "The Present Value of Tennyson", in Studies, pp.62-63.

[51] Wheatcroft, p.41.

[52] Martin, p.385.

[53] Rader, p.88. Culler disagrees with Rader. See A. Dwight Culler, The Poetry of Tennyson (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press,1977), p.194.

The hero in Maud is the "heir of madness",[54] and his whole outlook is warped by his unstable father's apparent suicide. A "vast speculation" (Part I, ℓ.9) from which his best friend had emerged "gorged" with wealth (Part I, ℓ.20) had resulted in the father's financial ruin. The father's possible suicide has its analogue in the premature death of Tennyson's own father, whose epilepsy was fatally exacerbated by alcoholism.[55] The financial speculation which failed resembles one entered into by Alfred Tennyson himself with a Dr Matthew Allen.[56] And the devotion of the speaker in the poem to his mother is paralleled by the poet's deep love for his mother ("a saintly woman of strong Evangelical persuasions").[57]

In the poem the speaker falls in love with Maud, the daughter of his dead father's business associate. The attitude of the speaker to Maud seems to some extent to be a conflation of Tennyson's attitudes to several people whom he loved in various ways: Arthur Hallam, the friend who died young and inspired the In Memoriam elegies; Rosa Baring, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy and socially prominent neighbouring family, who represented for Tennyson the desirable but unattainable;[58] Sophy Rawnsley, who aroused warm devotion rather than passion ("To thee, with whom my best affections dwell"--PT 252);[59] and Emily Sellwood, whom the poet finally married in June, 1850, more than twelve years after they were first engaged.[60] Maud's father and brother are studies that seem to owe something to Rosa Baring's materialistically

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[54] Memoir I, 396.

[55] Martin, p.35; Rader, p.89.

[56] Rader, p.75; Martin, pp.237, 268-69.

[57] Rader, p.89.

[58] Martin, pp.167, 219; Rader, pp.19, 21.

[59] Martin, p.167; Rader, pp.19, 60.

[60] D.J. Palmer, ed., Tennyson, Writers and their Background (London: Bell, 1973), pp.xiii-xiv; Norman Page, ed., Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp.xv-xvi.

minded family. But they are also probably to some extent inspired by George Tennyson Senior (the poet's grandfather) and his son, Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt, who inherited social and financial status at the expense of the Somersby Tennysons.

Within this framework of human relationships set up in Maud Tennyson explores many different themes which reflect his preoccupations: madness and suicide; the nature of man; the meaning of life and death; the conflict between spiritual and material values; and--above all--the "holy power of Love".[61]

The first reference to love occurs in lines 57-58 of Part I: "...there was love in the passionate shriek, / Love for the silent thing that had made false haste to the grave -". The phrase "silent thing" refers to the corpse, of course. But it is qualified by the adjectival clause, "that had made false haste to the grave -". That is, the word "thing" is, by implication and as a hidden secondary meaning, applied to the speaker's father before the moment of death. This tacitly and pathetically suggests that the man who "raged in his mood" (Part I, ℓ.53) had become in life less than human, and explains the poet's italicizing of the word "love" in line 57. The emphasis conveys the speaker's sense of awe and wonder that, in spite of his father's degeneration, his mother still felt the kind of deep love which called forth that primeval scream.

From that "shrill-edged shriek" (Part I, ℓ.16) which symbolizes the suffering engendered by love the speaker shies away. He says:

> And most of all would I flee from the cruel madness of love,
> The honey of poison-flowers and all the measureless ill.
> (Part I, ℓℓ.156-57)

The poison imagery which forms a leitmotif throughout the poem[62] is here used in revulsion against love which, in spite of its apparent sweetness, is actually "cruel madness" and a "measureless

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[61] Memoir I, 404.

[62] For example: Part I, ℓℓ.37, 43, 155, 157, 337; Part II, ℓ.300.

ill". But once the speaker has heard Maud singing her "passionate ballad gallant and gay" (Part I, ℓ.165), he is no longer proof against the intoxication of "the new strong wine of love" (Part I, ℓ.271), and the human need to be loved becomes paramount.

> Let the sweet heavens endure,
> Not close and darken above me
> Before I am quite quite sure
> That there is one to love me ....
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.405-08)

At lines 527-30 one becomes aware that the perspective of the speaker is changing. He no longer fears love on his own account, but on account of the beloved. He reasons thus:

> So dark a mind within me dwells,
> And I make myself such evil cheer,
> That if _I_ be dear to some one else,
> Then some one else may have much to fear ....
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.527-30)

However, there is also a growing awareness of the healing power of love, which operates by building up the self-image and self-esteem.

> But if _I_ be dear to some one else,
> Then _I_ should be to myself more dear.
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.531-32)

The beauty of the beloved is recognized as a means of salvation. The speaker says:

> I know it the one bright thing to save
> My yet young life in the wilds of Time,
> Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,
> Perhaps from a selfish grave.
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.556-59)

The beautiful lyric beginning "I have led her home, my love, my only friend" (Part I, ℓ.599) is a triumphant panegyric of requited love. Love seems to bring serenity at last.

> And never yet so warmly ran my blood
> And sweetly, on and on
> Calming itself to the long-wished-for end,
> Full to the banks, close on the promised good.
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.601-04)

The doubly-compounded epithet, "long-wished-for", admirably conveys the idea of protraction which it describes. But the fact that the word "end" (ℓ.603) is not at the end of either the sentence or the stanza seems to highlight the other sense of the word--where "end" means aim or purpose. In this case the aim is delineated only as "the promised good". There may be undertones of a consummation looked forward to at some future time, but the poetic meaning is much richer than that. For the simple, monosyllabic abstract noun, "good", is strengthened by an implied contrast with all the accumulated evils dwelt upon in earlier sections. This love seems at this point to have a profoundly spiritual dimension, vested in the word "good"; and this spirituality becomes overtly religious in lines 622-23 (of Part I), where the speaker says that Maud has "changed" his "fate" and made his life "a perfumed altar-flame". Thus love is the antidote to the meaninglessness of life, the "nothingness of man" (Part I, ℓ.638), the apparent determinism of the universe. The beloved becomes "the countercharm of [i.e. to] space and hollow sky" (Part I, ℓ.641). Even death can be viewed positively, since it may enhance love by proving that it endures beyond the grave and by elevating it to a higher plane:

> ...for sullen-seeming Death may give
> More life to Love than is or ever was
> In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to live.
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.644-46)

The speaker attempts to wrench his thoughts away from death, envisaging love as the inspiration to

> ...live a life of truest breath,
> And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.651-52)

But the thought of death persists (Part I, ℓℓ.653-54). It cannot be avoided, and it makes love that much more precious.

> 'The dusky strand of Death inwoven here
> With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more dear.'
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.658-59)

The selflessness of genuine love emerges when the speaker decides to forego his pathological hatred of Maud's brother for

her sake, since "she cannot but love him, / And says he is rough but kind" (Part I, ℓℓ.752-53). In deciding to "bury / All this dead body of hate" (Part I, ℓℓ.779-80), the speaker comes to feel "so free and so clear / By the loss of that dead weight" (Part I, ℓℓ.781-82). Nevertheless, the speaker, contemplating the prospect of the brother's return, says:

> ...her brother comes, like a blight
> On my fresh hope, to the Hall tonight.
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.785-86)

The image of malignity and disease used ("blight") is clearly allied to the imagery of poison[63] and parasitism[64] which has characterized the hero's speech throughout. His regeneration is thus seen to be incomplete and precarious.

Maud is rich in flower imagery, the dominant flower images being those of the lily and the rose.[65] An implied polarity develops between the images of the lily (which is symbolic of purity) and those of the rose (which is symbolic of passion). The speaker's love for Maud is at first strongly associated with the lily,[66] but a change comes about during the lover's lonely vigil in the rose-garden.[67] After describing how he found the rose brought down from the Hall by the river, the speaker says, "...the soul of the rose went into my blood" (Part I, ℓ.882). The spiritual element of love is subsumed in a passion which becomes obsessive.

Waiting for Maud in the garden on the fateful night of the ball, the speaker refers to her as "my life, my fate" (Part I, ℓ.911). The descriptions are once again passionately intense, and the speaker's state of almost manic excitement is transposed

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[63]See p.18, n.62 above.

[64]For example: Part I, ℓℓ.20, 125, 266.

[65]Part I, ℓℓ.160, 418, 423, 489-90, 575, 738, 825, 839, 849, 856, 862, 868, 876, 880.

[66]Part I, ℓℓ.416-19, 738.

[67]Part I, ℓℓ.868- 81.

to the flowers, which seem to await Maud with a similar obsessive urgency (Part I, ℓℓ.912-15).

It is, of course, ironic that the hero of the poem should speak of Maud as "my fate" when he had previously referred to her as the one "whose gentle will had changed" his "fate" (Part I, ℓ.621) and as a "countercharm" (Part I, ℓ.641) against the "boundless plan" of a "sad astrology" (Part I, ℓ.634). In other words, having earlier upheld love as a negation of a deterministic fate, he now refers to the beloved as "my fate". His thought-processes have reverted to irrationality, and his love for Maud is now expressed in passionate terms suggestive both of ancient fertility myths and Christian resurrection.

> My dust would hear her and beat,
> Had I lain for a century dead;
> Would start and tremble under her feet,
> And blossom in purple and red.
>
> (Part I, ℓℓ.920-23)

Such a pitch of passion in the type of temperament already portrayed is hazardous, and a quarrel between Maud's brother and her lover ends in violence. The lover is forced to flee. Faced with the prospect of separation "for ever" (Part II, ℓ.98), only a belief in Maud's continuing love (Part II, ℓ.99) enables the speaker to resolve to keep "a spark of will / Not to be trampled out" (Part II, ℓ.105). That his love for Maud continues unselfish and unabated becomes clear in his tender concern for her well-being, and in his return to religious imagery. The speaker prays:

> Let me and my passionate love go by,
> But speak to her all things holy and high,
> Whatever happen to me!
>
> (Part II, ℓℓ.125-27)

Maud, however, dies; and the yearning for the dead beloved, perhaps the most beautiful and characteristic note in Tennyson's poetry, finds expression in the haunting (and haunted) lyric, "O that 'twere possible" (Part II, ℓℓ.141-238). The speaker's wish for physical contact with the beloved (Part II, ℓℓ.141-44) is matched by his anguished desire for communication with the departed spirit:

Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.

(Part II, ℓℓ.153-56)

Underlying this cri de coeur is the need to know that the beloved survives beyond the grave--and in an acceptable form, not as the "abiding phantom cold" (Part II, ℓ.195) haunting a diseased mind. The imagery in lines 232-34 (of Part II) bears witness to the speaker's mental dislocation.

...I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me....

Synecdoche is a trope which Tennyson uses with great skill. And, in making "faces" and "hearts" stand for "people", he creates a surrealistic effect which suggests that the speaker is out of touch with reality, while simultaneously positing a higher order of reality: a state of mind in which parts coalesce to form wholes; in which connections are made through the vitalizing force of love. A life transfused with love becomes meaningful, a world infused with love becomes real. But one is aware of this positive only by implication; that is, as the opposite of the negative, "no love" (Part II, ℓ.234). Much more striking is the effect created by the polysyndetonic linkage of "faces" and "hearts" to "squares and streets" (Part II, ℓℓ.232-34), for this seems to imply equality between animate and inanimate, and reflects the hero's deteriorating psychological condition.

The speaker lapses further and further into a condition of insanity, which is, however, relieved by intermittent flashes of lucidity. But escape from the "cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear" (Part III, ℓ.2) ultimately comes through a vision of the dead Maud.

She seemed to divide in a dream from a band of the blest,
And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming wars--
'And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,
Knowing I tarry for thee,' and pointed to Mars
As he glowed like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.

(Part III, ℓℓ.9-14)

These lines recall the starry beacon which promises reunion in the closing couplet of Adonais.[68] But the over-insistence that "it was but a dream" (Part III, ℓℓ.15, 16, 18) seems to suggest that the speaker is, in fact, unsure. It may be a dream, it may be a vision; but the poem implies that it is certainly not an hallucination. With the speaker's return to sanity and motivation, the "dreary phantom" which has haunted him is exorcised (Part III, ℓℓ.36-37), and his spiritual regeneration can begin. The speaker had once feared that he might end like the rest of the liars and cheats he had raved against. But love wins him from the cynicism shown in earlier lines ("Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I shriek if a Hungary fail?"--Part I, ℓ.147) to a regard for others and for what he believes is right. As a result of his vision of Maud he wakes to the "higher aims / Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold" (Part III, ℓℓ.38-39). The "long-wished-for end" (Part I, ℓ.603) of a personal love finds expression in "the higher aims" of a public patriotism. The speaker "seems" to have recovered his sanity (Part III, ℓ.56), and recognizes the need for action as a therapeutic measure and a philosophical position. He says, "It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill" (Part III, ℓ.57), thus expressing similar sentiments to those expressed by the speaker of "Locksley Hall" ("I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair"--PT 271, ℓ.98). With the conviction that it is "better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill" comes a release from conflict. The speaker is finally at peace with himself, with his country, with his fellow-men and with God.

> I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
> I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned.
>
> (Part III, ℓℓ.58-59)

There are, of course, paradoxical elements in finding peace through war; but these are outside the scope of this study. What I wish to emphasize is Tennyson's view of love as a means of psychological restoration and spiritual salvation. The "doom

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[68] Shelley, Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, corrected by G.M. Matthews (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p.444.

assigned" can ultimately be accepted, even "embraced", because it is no longer viewed as a quirk of fate but as "the purpose of God".

Tennyson referred to Maud as a "little Hamlet",[69] and the closing lines of his poem are indeed redolent of Hamlet's ultimate insight: "There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.... The readiness is all".[70] In Maud, as in Hamlet, a pattern is perceived and order is established.

It might be argued that there is a certain facileness about ℓℓ.9-14 of Part III. Perhaps it is the conventional diction in the phrases such as "a band of the blest" (Part III, ℓ.10)--so like the "isles of the blest" and the "quiet seats of the just" which Tennyson himself was to abnegate in "Wages" (PT 354)--that robs the lines of their conviction, at least for some modern readers. Perhaps the attitude of a recent critic who "applauds Tennyson for avoiding the banality of the twanging harps and endless singing of hymns through Eternity"[71] (in another poem) reflects the modern view. But the Victorian reader would probably have been less censorious of familiar images meant to evoke biblical and hymnal connotations. Certainly, in purely thematic terms, one cannot fault the resolution in Maud. If the final vision of Maud savours somewhat of a deus ex machina, that is not out of keeping with what Tennyson is trying to say: that the "holy power of Love"[72] can achieve what nothing else can.

This is also, I believe, the final message of The Princess (PT 286). Though the poem purports to be about women's education, I believe that in it Tennyson was working through a personal issue. Though he was acutely aware of a deepseated need for love and marriage,[73] I think he also felt some reservations about how such

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[69] Memoir I, 396.

[70] Hamlet, V.ii.211-15.

[71] See Collins, "Tennyson In and Out of Time", in Studies, p.152.

[72] Memoir I, 404.

[73] Martin, pp.282, 286, 318.

a relationship would compare with his highly idealized friendship with Arthur Hallam. The thought of marriage was, I believe, further complicated by Tennyson's family history of epilepsy and insanity. The poet was probably afraid of passing on hereditary epilepsy to any children he might have.[74] This may explain why he wrote to Emily Sellwood after breaking their engagement,

> 'Tis true, I fly thee for my good, perhaps for thine, at any rate for thine if mine is thine. If thou knewest why I fly thee there is nothing thou would'st more wish for than that I should fly thee.[75]

Tennyson's personal preoccupation with epilepsy and its hereditary transmission would also explain the importance of the child and of the "weird seizures" in The Princess.[76] Ultimately in the poem the Prince is cured ("given back to life")--through the love of Princess Ida (VII, 324). It is significant, perhaps, that after writing The Princess, Tennyson was able to complete In Memoriam and send the manuscript to Emily Sellwood, almost as if to try to solicit understanding of his very special relationship with Hallam as well as his religious position. Once Emily had approved the manuscript the engagement was renewed, and eventually the marriage took place.

Thus the healing power of love was an important theme in Tennyson's life as well as in his work. And love was undoubtedly the informing principle of the phenomenon I have called the numinous presence. Indeed, the numinous presence is both the embodiment of love and the symbol for love.

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[74] Martin, p.248. See also Martin, pp.10-11, 140, 237-38.

[75] AT, p.181; quoted PT 279, headnote (p.727).

[76] The Princess was published in December, 1847. The "weird seizures" first appeared in the 1851 edition--that is, after the poet's marriage. One may speculate that from within the new-found security of his marriage Tennyson felt able to include passages on what had hitherto been a "hidden" concern.

The lyric "Oh! that 'twere possible" is the kernel around which the monodrama Maud was constructed[77] and, as W.W. Robson remarks, "If it is possible to say that any one passage takes us to the heart of the poem, it is surely this."[78] Ricks points out that "[i]n its original form of 1833-4, the poem ["Oh! that 'twere possible"] is plainly precipitated by the death of Hallam, and has many links with In Memoriam".[79] Certainly the lyric is one of Tennyson's most memorable poems--memorable both for its beauty and for the strange preternatural experience it describes. But this is only one of the many Tennyson poems in which the poet (or speaker) appears to have some sort of supernatural experience. One of the most intriguing aspects of Tennyson's work is the sense of a presence, often felt rather than seen, which haunts the poet and the poetry.

This presence might perhaps be called a "ghost", but the term would scarcely do justice to what the poetry shows to be a phenomenon of considerable complexity--though Tennyson certainly seems to have been fascinated by the subject of ghosts. Within a week of Dr Tennyson's death, the young Alfred slept in his father's bed, hoping that the ghost of the dead man would appear to him. His wish was not fulfilled, and years later Tennyson explained that "ghosts do not generally come to imaginative people"[80]--or, in the version of the story which Martin prints, "A poet never sees a Ghost".[81] One is thrown back on the question: if the mysterious presence in Tennyson's poetry is not a "ghost", what is it?

Tennyson's interest in the supernatural is reflected in the

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[77]Rader, p.88.

[78]Robson, "The Present Value of Tennyson", in Studies, p.62.

[79]PT 227, headnote (p.598).

[80]Memoir I, 72-73.

[81]Martin, p.132 (quoting papers in the Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln, and William Allingham's Diary, p.330).

fact that he chose "Ghosts" as the topic for his first address to the Cambridge Apostles. Unfortunately the paper was never delivered, and was in fact destroyed. But part of the prologue to it survives and is given in the Memoir. It reveals some of the difficulties inherent in speaking or writing on such a subject:

> He who has the power of speaking of the spiritual world, speaks in a simple manner of a high matter. He speaks of life and death, and the things after death. He lifts the veil, but the form behind it is shrouded in deeper obscurity. He raises the cloud, but he darkens the prospect.[82]

In spite of what Tennyson says concerning a "high matter", in the fragment of the prologue handed down to us in the Memoir, the young Alfred's primary concern is clearly to build up atmosphere, which he does less successfully here, in prose, than in his poetry. However, certain phrases stand out; for instance, "the awful sense of unutterable mystery" (Memoir I, 498). But on the whole the short piece generates neither awe nor mystery, though these were to be powerfully evoked in later poems.

It may be that Tennyson abandoned his treatise because he found himself unable to sustain the tone in which the address (or at least the prologue) was begun--a tone likely to appeal to his undergraduate audience, but not quite in accord with the sense of reverence with which Tennyson habitually approached spiritual matters. It seems to have been this sense of reverence and dignity which ultimately brought him to reject the trappings of the practice of "spiritualism", though he had himself attended seances from time to time in the hope of communicating with the spirit world he felt around him.[83] In 1887 Alfred told his brother Frederick: "I grant you that spiritualism must not be judged by its quacks; but I am convinced that God and the ghosts of men would choose something other than mere table-legs through which to speak to the heart of man."[84]

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[82] Memoir I, 497-98.

[83] Martin, pp.482, 557-58.

[84] Memoir II, 342.

The various manifestations of the nameless presence in Tennyson's poetry seem, indeed, to represent "God and the ghosts of men" finding ways "through which to speak to the heart of man". Tennyson's "visionary" apprehension of the numinous is apparent even in early poems such as "Armageddon" (PT 3) and "Timbuctoo" (PT 67). In "Timbuctoo" the young seraph says:

> There is no mightier Spirit than I to sway
> The heart of man: and teach him to attain
> By shadowing forth the Unattainable;
> And step by step to scale that mighty stair
> Whose landing-place is wrapt about with clouds
> Of glory' of Heaven....
> ....
> I play about his heart a thousand ways,
> Visit his eyes with visions, and his ears
> With harmonies of wind and wave and wood....
>
> (PT 67, ℓℓ.191-203)

Nature's rôle in numinous experience is touched on in lines 202 and 203.

Rudolph Otto, discussing the development of religious experience, writes that

> ...the valuation prompted by the moment of numinous consciousness...is attached in the first place, and very naturally, to objects, occurrences, and entities falling within the workaday world of primitive experience, which prompt or give occasion to the stirring of numinous emotion by analogy and then divert it to themselves. This circumstance is more than anything else the root of what has been called nature-worship and the deification of natural objects. Only gradually, under pressure from the numinous feeling itself, are such connexions [sic] subsequently 'spiritualized' or ultimately altogether rejected, and not till then does the obscure content of the feeling, with its reference to absolute transcendent reality, come to light in all its integrity and self-subsistence.[85]

But, as the lines of "Timbuctoo" quoted above show, Tennyson had an early appreciation of the rôle of nature as the instrument of a divine power. Although he was later to write a poem called

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[85] Otto, p.137.

"The *Higher* Pantheism" (*PT* 353--my italics), there is little suggestion of animism or pantheism in his apprehension of the numinous through nature. The preposition is perhaps the key to the concept, for in Tennyson the numinous is experienced not *in* nature but *through* nature.

In many of Tennyson's poems (for instance, in much of *In Memoriam*), the numinous presence--the shadow seen, the voice half-heard, the spirit sensed--is that of a lost loved one. By and large, Tennyson associated experiences of this kind with some sort of extrasensory perception, or revelation. However, there were times, probably more numerous than he cared to reveal, when the poet feared that some apparently supernatural episodes might spring from "the blot upon the brain" (*Maud*, *PT* 316, Part II, ℓ.200). Given his family history of insanity, instability and epilepsy, it is not surprising that such a fear should have preyed upon his mind. Martin points out that the mystical state that Tennyson claimed to reach through the repetition of his own name or the words "far-far-away"--a state which Culler interprets as arising out of a form of transcendental meditation upon the mantra of his own name[86]--may actually have been symptomatic of *petit mal*, the relatively mild form of epilepsy from which Tennyson probably suffered.[87]

Tennyson described his recurrent mystical state thus:

> [It was] a kind of "waking trance" (this for lack of a better word) I have frequently had quite up from boyhood when I have been all alone. This has often come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till all at once as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being--and this not a confused state but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words--where Death was an almost

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[86] Culler, pp.2-4.

[87] Martin, pp.85, 279.

> laughable impossibility--the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life.[88]

Such a description is not inconsistent with the "aura"[89] of euphoria and illumination alleged by some victims of the disease --including Dostoevsky--to precede an attack of epilepsy.[90] In fact, Tennyson's description of his trances is consistent with many of the features characterizing epilepsy in general and petit mal in particular. Epilepsy has been generically defined as a "disorder of cerebral function, characterized by sudden brief attacks of altered consciousness, motor activity, sensory phenomena or inappropriate behaviour".[91] What Tennyson claimed to have experienced was certainly a state of "altered consciousness". It appears, though, that the poet did not suffer the "motor activity" (convulsions) which characterized his father's more dramatic attacks. However,heightened sensory awareness before an attack is a feature of certain types of epilepsy; and conversely, acute sensory stimulation may trigger an attack.[92] In this connection one thinks of how Tennyson said that when the great violinist, Joseph Joachim, played to him, the "poetry of the bowing...produced within his head the sensation of a rushing torrent and flashes of light".[93] These sensations have

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[88] Martin, pp.28-29. See also Memoir I, 320. Tennyson was not always so ready to renounce his individuality. Writing to Lord Houghton on 6 March 1874, he expressed the belief that "the nobler nature does not pass from its individuality when it passes out of this one life" (Memoir II, 155).

[89] The term "aura" has been used in connection with the "warning sensations that an epileptic usually feels just before a seizure". See Alfred M. Freedman, Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock, Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1975), II, 2576.

[90] Martin, pp.279-80.

[91] Robert Berkow, ed., The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy, 13th ed. (Rahway, N.J.: Merck, 1977), p.1404.

[92] Merck, p.1405.

[93] Martin, p.522.

frequently been described in connection with epileptic "aura".[94] Thus it seems possible that the sensuous imagery, often synaesthetic, in Tennyson's poetry may well owe something to the "sensory phenomena" mentioned in the medical text books--though, obviously, other poets who did not suffer from epilepsy, like Shelley and Keats, have used equally sensuous and synaesthetic imagery.

Attacks of petit mal encompass "brief generalized seizures manifested by a 10- to 30-second loss of consciousness...and are more likely to occur when the patient is sitting quietly. They are infrequent during exercise".[95] Tennyson's trances usually occurred when he was sitting quietly by himself, and the fact that petit mal seizures are "infrequent during exercise" may offer one clue as to why Tennyson apparently stopped having attacks in later years. For it seems that he developed the habit of walking several miles each day[96]--which may have been more therapeutic in the long run than the hydropathy at the various establishments he visited.[97]

A point to bear in mind during the study of apparently preternatural phenomena in Tennyson's poetry is the fact that certain types of epilepsy--those due to temporal lobe or occipital lobe dysfunction--result in visual hallucinations.[98] The spectre in "Oh! that 'twere possible" may indeed have been a "juggle of the brain" (PT 227, ℓ.84).

These ideas will, however, be more fully explored in a later chapter. My purpose in introducing them here is simply to convey an initial awareness of the complexity of the symbol I have called "the numinous presence". It must also be emphasized that

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[94] See, for example, Merck, p.1406.

[95] Merck, p.1406.

[96] Martin, p.374.

[97] Martin, pp.276-81, 309, 315.

[98] Merck, p.1406.

such psychological and physiological arguments are not included for the purpose of explaining away the rainbow[99] or undercutting Tennyson's talent. Rather, they are highlighted to facilitate a greater appreciation of the genius which enabled the poet--albeit unconsciously--to transcend potentially negative factors and use them in a positive way to create what must surely be some of the most hauntingly beautiful poetry in the English language.

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[99] The Poems of John Keats, ed. Miriam Allott, Longman's Annotated English Poets (London: Longman, 1972), "Lamia", II, 234-37 (p.646).

> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the haunted air and gnomèd mine--
> Unweave a rainbow....

CHAPTER II

ASPECTS OF THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE : (i) THE LOST BELOVED

Apart from a brief and unhappy sojourn at Louth Grammar School,[1] Tennyson received his primary education at home under the expert and diligent--though possibly erratic--tutelage of his father.[2] But in November, 1827, at the age of eighteen, he enrolled at Trinity College, Cambridge.[3] And it was there that he later met Arthur Henry Hallam, a young man two years his junior and a year below him in the University, who was nevertheless destined to become the predominant influence on the poet's life and work.[4]

Arthur Hallam, a son of the renowned Whig historian, Henry Hallam, had received his schooling at Eton, had travelled extensively on the continent, and had suffered the pangs of first love--for a young woman ten years his senior--before arriving at Cambridge in October, 1828, aged seventeen years and endowed with a handsome allowance of three hundred pounds a year.[5] In contrast, Tennyson was decidedly impecunious and, until he enrolled at Cambridge, had never travelled beyond "the narrow triangle bounded by Tealby, Louth and Somersby".[6] As Robert Martin observes, "The external circumstances of their lives were so different that it is surprising the most celebrated friendship of the century should ever have begun at all".[7]

Yet from the time they were both elected, in May, 1829, to the exclusive undergraduate debating society that came to be known

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[1]Martin, pp.29-30. See also Philip Henderson, <u>Tennyson: Poet and Prophet</u> (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.5.

[2]Martin, pp.29, 36.

[3]Martin, p.52.

[4]Martin, p.69.

[5]Martin, pp.69-71. See also <u>AT</u>, pp.63-65.

[6]Martin, p.52.

[7]Martin, p.69.

as the Cambridge "Apostles" the two young men became close friends.[8] Within a few weeks Hallam was celebrating the friendship in a poem addressed to Tennyson: "O last in time but worthy to be first..."[9]; and Tennyson was blossoming under the radiant influence of a nature which he himself was to laud in In Memoriam 109 and 110, and which was described by his contemporaries as "tender, affectionate"[10] and "angelic".[11]

Hallam was as much revered for the quality of his mind as for the sweetness of his disposition. John Kemble wrote of his having a "powerful intellect" joined to a pure and holy heart, a rich and illuminating imagination and a sparkling, though kindly wit.[12] And Richard Monckton Milnes (later Lord Houghton) wrote to his father from Trinity College, in 1829, that Hallam was the only man of his own standing at Cambridge before whom he bowed "in conscious inferiority in everything".[13]

Some later writers have attempted to demythologize Hallam, devaluing his intellectual capacity[14] and pointing out less pleasant aspects of his character and appearance.[15] This is perhaps a natural iconoclastic reaction by a later generation to one who was idolized by his contemporaries in life[16] and virtually canonized

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[8] Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), pp.31-32.

[9] Betty Miller, "Camelot at Cambridge", Twentieth Century, 163 (1958), 137; Martin, pp.72-73.

[10] Memoir I, 107.

[11] Miller, p.139; TPP, p.18.

[12] Memoir I, 106.

[13] T. Wemyss Reid, The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton (New York: Cassell, 1891), I, 62; quoted by Eleanor Bustin Mattes, "In Memoriam": The Way of a Soul : A Study of Some Influences that Shaped Tennyson's Poem (New York: Exposition Press, 1951), p.13. See also Memoir I, 107; Joseph, p.64.

[14] Miller, p.140; Martin, p.73.

[15] Martin, p.100.

[16] Miller, p.139.

by them after death. It is important, however, for a true appreciation of Tennyson's poetry, to retain a sense of the personal charisma which Hallam possessed and which so irradiated the lives of his friends.

Betty Miller, assessing Hallam's early impact on Tennyson, writes:

> The transforming effect of friendship upon the uninvested emotions of Alfred Tennyson can best be gauged, perhaps, in the contrast which emerges between the 'owl-like and solitary' existence of his early days at Cambridge, when, as he put it, 'my spirit was cold And frozen at the fountain', and the upsurge of vitality that inspired the poetically inferior but biographically significant and touching poem, Life [sic].[17]

The lines of that sonnet do indeed reflect a euphoria not to be found in earlier poems and certainly not occasioned by earlier events in the poet's life.

> Art, Science, Nature, everything is full,
> As my own soul is full, to overflowing--
> ....
> I thank thee, God, that thou hast made me live:
> I reck not for the sorrow or the strife:
> One only joy I know, the joy of life.
>
> (PT 149, ll.7-8, 12-14)

Ironically, the opening line of this poem reads: "Why suffers life so soon eclipse?" Perhaps Tennyson had a premonition that the young life which had transfused his own rather bleak existence was to be "eclipsed" within a few years. It may well be that he harboured such anxieties, for by the time Hallam and Tennyson became friends, four of Hallam's ten siblings had already died young. As Mrs Miller says,

> ...by the time Arthur Hallam arrived at Cambridge, the overt brilliance and candour of his personality were shadowed by the darkest of presentiments and fears; (shared, it seems, by his friends, since after his death: 'this was always feared by us as likely to occur', one of them wrote).[18]

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[17] Miller, p.141.

[18] Miller, p.134. The words Miller quotes are from a letter of John M. Kemble to his sister, Fanny Kemble. See Memoir I, 106.

Be that as it may, when Arthur Hallam asked his father's permission to become engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emilia ("Emily"), whom he had met and fallen in love with at Somersby in December, 1829, the obstacles placed in the way of the match were financial considerations rather than concern about the state of the young man's health.[19] Certainly Hallam was well enough to travel to the continent twice with Tennyson[20] before making his final ill-fated journey there with his father in 1833.[21]

Henry Hallam and his son, having visited Hungary, were on their way back to England when Arthur suffered a stroke and died at Vienna on 15 September, 1833.[22] He was twenty-two years old.

Tennyson received the news on 1 October, 1833, and almost immediately began composing the random elegies which were to be collected and published, seventeen years later, as In Memoriam[23] --the poetic exploration of grief that was to immortalize both the poet and his friend,and to enshrine one of the most complex and intriguing relationships in the annals of English literature.

The precise nature of the relationship between Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam has given rise to much conjecture. The "old view" was that the "melancholy introvert" Tennyson found in Hallam a "sturdy complement".[24] This idea no doubt owes something to the lines from In Memoriam:

> But he was rich where I was poor,
> And he supplied my want the more
> As his unlikeness fitted mine.
>
> (IM 79, ll.18-21)[25]

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[19] Martin, pp.129, 147.

[20] Mattes, pp.25-26; TPP, p.xv.

[21] Martin, p.179.

[22] Memoir I, 105; Martin, p.182.

[23] Martin, pp.183-84.

[24] W. David Shaw, Tennyson's Style (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), p.73.

[25] All quotations from In Memoriam (abbreviated as IM) are from the edition by Shatto and Shaw.

But to see this as the complete picture is, as David Shaw points out, a "seriously distorted assessment".[26] For, effulgent as the overall effect of Hallam's personality may have been, he was at times "liable to moods of depression"[27] and fears of insanity not unlike those of Tennyson.[28] Jerome Buckley observes that Hallam's

> ...habit of melancholy introspection, the uncertainty behind his restlessness, and the essential bewilderment of spirit that commingled with his ebullience...made of Hallam the object, as well as the giver, of sympathy.[29]

This view is borne out by what Tennyson himself wrote in In Memoriam, that "each by turns was guide to each" (IM 23, ℓ.12). The poet also wrote:

> I loved the weight I had to bear,
> Because it needed help of Love:
>
> Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
> When mighty Love could cleave in twain
> The lading of a single pain,
> And part it, giving half to him.
>
> (IM 25, ℓℓ.7-12)

Thus Tennyson (Buckley continues) "accordingly found in his friend a reflection of his own sensibility, a sharer of his emotions and even his mystical intuition...."[30]

It was to such a kindred spirit that Tennyson wrote the sonnet, "To -" (PT 179), which Ricks presumes was addressed to Arthur Hallam:

> As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood,
> And ebb into a former life, or seem
> To lapse far back in some confusèd dream
> To states of mystical similitude;
> If one but speaks or hems or stirs his chair,
> Ever the wonder waxeth more and more,

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[26] Shaw, Tennyson's Style, p.63.

[27] AT, p.65.

[28] Martin, p.76.

[29] GP, p.31.

[30] GP, p.31.

> So that we say, 'All this hath been before,
> All this hath been, I know not when or where.'
> So, friend, when first I looked upon your face,
> Our thought gave answer each to each, so true--
> Opposèd mirrors each reflecting each--
> That though I knew not in what time or place,
> Methought that I had often met with you,
> And either lived in either's heart and speech.
>
> (PT 179)

The poem celebrates the "marriage of true minds",[31] and the poet seems to see this relationship as arising out of some sort of déjà vu experience (ℓℓ.7-8) which may well have been linked to what Tennyson called his "Passion of the Past"--not the past which lives in conscious memory, but the subconscious past of "I know not when or where" (ℓ.8).

It would seem, however, that Hallam, while acknowledging the similarity of their feelings and perceptions, recognized a difference in degree. He wrote thus to Tennyson:

> I am not without some knowledge and experience of your passion for the past. To this community of feeling between us I probably owe your inestimable friendship and those blessed hopes which you have been the indirect occasion of awakening. But what with you is universal and all powerful, absorbing your whole existence, communicating to you that energy which is so glorious, in me is checked and counter-acted by other influences....[32]

The "blessed hopes" to which Hallam referred were vested in Emily Tennyson. Thus, notwithstanding the amount of time and energy he expended on Tennyson as friend, confidant and unofficial "publicist and business manager",[33] Arthur was indeed open to "other influences". Alfred, on the other hand, was "so wholly absorbed in his friendship with Arthur that there was no room for

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[31] Shakespeare, Sonnet 116, ℓ.1.

[32] AT, p.113. It is interesting to note that Hallam used the phrase "passion for the past", whereas Tennyson referred to his "passion of the past". It may be that the "community of feeling" in this connection was not as close as the young men believed.

[33] Martin, p.140.

any deep attachment to a woman...."[34] For Tennyson, at least, friendship had modulated into love, and his passionate yearning to have his love reciprocated in like measure is expressed in a sonnet:

> If I were loved, as I desire to be,
> What is there in the great sphere of the earth,
> And range of evil between death and birth,
> That I should fear,--if I were loved by thee?
> All the inner, all the outer world of pain
> Clear Love would pierce and cleave, if thou wert mine.
> As I have heard that, somewhere in the main,
> Fresh-water springs come up through bitter brine.
> 'Twere joy, not fear, claspt hand-in-hand with thee,
> To wait for death--mute--careless of all ills,
> Apart upon a mountain, though the surge
> Of some new deluge from a thousand hills
> Flung leagues of roaring foam into the gorge
> Below us, as far on as eye could see.
>
> (PT 158)

The first quatrain opens with a conditional clause, "If I were loved". This is qualified by another subsidiary clause, "as I desire to be". The mid-line caesura impedes the progress of the line, creating a touching impression of tentativeness. The clause, "as I desire to be", suggests two contrapuntal meanings: "If I were loved, which I desire to be", and "If I were loved in the way I desire to be". The Allen manuscript reads, "Were I so loved",[35] which seems to endorse the second meaning I have postulated. Perhaps it is fanciful to feel that the proximity of "love(d)" and "desire" offers its own gloss on the line; but similar nuances are set up in lines 5-6 where verbs of penetration ("pierce and cleave"), leading up to a clause suggesting possession ("if thou wert mine") suggest a kind of consummation. The sonnet's sestet envisages another kind of consummation--the "joy" of waiting alone together ("claspt hand-in-hand") for death; defiant and euphoric, almost heroic, in the face of impending catastrophe or doom. One senses that Tennyson would have understood precisely the feelings that Keats expressed in a letter to

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[34] AT, p.103.

[35] See variant reading, PT 158, n.1 (p.353).

Fanny Brawne: "I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute".[36]

Oscar Wilde wrote that all art "is at once surface and symbol" and "those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril".[37] Nevertheless, I believe that an awareness of the latently sexual imagery[38] in some of Tennyson's poems enhances the reader's perception of the poetry as a reflection of what Roy Basler has called "the dual experience of unconscious and conscious mind",[39] and will, I believe, ultimately lend credence to one of the theories I shall advance as to the nature of the numinous presence.

Delving below the surface of a poet's imagery exposes one to the charge that the buried meanings allegedly discovered there are derived from the imagination of the critic rather than from the subconscious of the poet. Yet it is sometimes possible to support one's postulations concerning the imagery by reference to variant readings. For example, In Memoriam 93 reads:

> Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
> The wish too strong for words to name;
> That in this blindness of the frame
> My Ghost may feel that thine is near.
>
> (ℓℓ.13-16)

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[36] "To Fanny Brawne", Sunday 25 July 1819, Letter 139, The Letters of John Keats, p.362.

[37] Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oxford English Novels (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), p.xxxiv.

[38] Michael Greene points out that in Victorian literature "the erotic" is often "expressed at such a submerged level that the writer himself is unaware of its presence". He adds that Tennyson "seems at times to have been unaware of the latent eroticism of his work...." See Michael E. Greene, "Tennyson's 'Gray Shadow, Once a Man' : Erotic Imagery and Dramatic Structure in 'Tithonus'", Victorian Poetry, 18 (1980), 300.

[39] Roy P. Basler, Sex, Symbolism and Psychology in Literature (New York: Octagon, 1967), p.14.

In the Lincoln manuscript first reading, or what Shatto and Shaw call the "trial" edition, line 13 reads: "Stoop soul and touch me: wed me: hear...."[40] In the light of the knowledge that it replaces the word "wed", the word "enter" assumes sexual connotations which would otherwise not have been immediately apparent.

As Shatto and Shaw point out in the commentary of their edition of In Memoriam, the work abounds with images of the poet or speaker as "the spouse, widow or lover of his friend".[41] And on 14 January, 1834, the Rev. John Rashdall wrote, after a visit from Tennyson: "Hallam seems to have left his heart a widowed one".[42] It therefore seems likely that Tennyson applied the term "widow" to himself in private prose conversation as well as in poetry, and that the metaphor therefore reflects his personal feelings, and not mere poetic licence--though it must be pointed out that the poet used similar imagery in an early poem, "The Outcast" (PT 55), when he wrote of "Memory's widowed eyes" (ℓ.9).

The imagery of marriage in In Memoriam has no doubt contributed to what Martin calls the "considerable unexamined assumption" that the friendship between Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam was "sexually abnormal".[43] Martin stresses the passionate nature of friendships of the time, both within and outside the group of "Apostles", and seems to refute the probability of a homosexual relationship between Tennyson and Hallam on the grounds that "Hallam was deeply heterosexual" and that his "attachment" to

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[40]See variant reading, Shatto and Shaw, IM 93, n.13 (p.110).

[41]Shatto and Shaw, IM 9, n.18 (p.173). See, for example: Sections 13; 40, ℓ.1; 41, ℓ.20; 60; 85, ℓ.113; 93, ℓ.13 (first reading); 87, ℓℓ.5-20.

[42]Rader, p.16. In a journal article, Rader comments that "if we did not know" In Memoriam 85 was probably not composed till much later, the similarity between lines 113-16 and Rashdall's comments might lead us to think that Tennyson had, during his visit, read the clergyman that particular elegy. See Ralph W. Rader, "Tennyson in the Year of Hallam's Death", PMLA, 77 (1962), 421.

[43]Martin, p.94. See also Mattes, p.27: "Psychiatrists might consider his [Tennyson's] feeling for Hallam abnormal".

Emily Tennyson "was proof of how little apt he was to enter into a homosexual relationship".[44] Martin seems not to have considered the possibility of facultative[45] homosexuality or bisexuality; but speculation on these points is in the end unproductive. What is, however, relevant to my argument is how Tennyson himself viewed, or failed to view, his feelings for Hallam. Here Martin explicates admirably, observing: "Perhaps all relations have at least a slight element of sexual awareness, and it is probable that Tennyson's regard for Hallam had more of that than he would have wanted to admit, even to himself".[46] This is a point which requires emphasis, for it will be taken up again in Chapter IV.

From earliest childhood Tennyson seems to have been aware of invisible presences around him, manifesting themselves in nature. At the age of six, he cried out, "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind",[47] and these voices in the wind suffuse his poetry. Sometimes the ghostly nature of the voices is made explicit, as in the early poem, "Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave" (PT 45), in which the speaker addresses the wind thus: "Methinks upon your moaning course / I hear the army of the dead..." (ℓℓ.9-10). But more often the preternatural suggestions are implicit. For instance, in "The Outcast" (PT 55), having declared that he will not seek his "Father's groves", his "Father's hills" or his "Father's Hall", the speaker exclaims: "...O! what Memory might recall, / If once I paced that voiceless Hall!" (ℓℓ.29-30). Yet the Hall is not voiceless:

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[44] Martin, p.96.

[45] The term "facultative homosexuality" is used to describe the condition of those individuals who, though normally heterosexual, develop homosexual tendencies in situations where they are deprived of the company of the opposite sex--for instance, in prison or at boarding school.

[46] Martin, p.94.

[47] AT, p.25; Martin, p.21.

> The wassail wind is reveller there.
> Along the weedy, chinky floors
> Wild knots of flowering rushes blow
> And through the sounding corridors
> The sere leaf rustles to and fro....
>
> (PT 55, ℓℓ.24-28)

The "wassail wind", blowing "rushes" and "sere leaf" rustling seem like ghostly voices from the past, invisible presences that emphasize corporeal absences.

Sometimes the presences of nature are merely that--sympathetic observers, as in "Playfellow Winds" (PT 59):

> Playfellow winds and stars, my friends of old,
> For sure your voice was friendly, your eyes bright
> With sympathy, what time my spirit was cold
> And frozen at the fountain, my cheek white
> As my own hope's quenched ashes.
>
> (PT 59, ℓℓ.1-5)

More commonly the elements mirror the speaker's mood, as in the lines,

> I wander in darkness and sorrow,
> Unfriended, and cold, and alone,
> As dismally gurgles beside me
> The bleak river's desolate moan.
>
> (PT 11, ℓℓ.1-4)

In ℓ.3 the conjunction "As" suggests two meanings: "while" and "in the same way". The second meaning invites comparison between the speaker and the river, so that the external landscape becomes a correlative for the internal landscape. The three epithets in the first two lines ("Unfriended and cold and alone") are balanced by the adverb ("dismally") and two adjectives ("bleak" and "desolate") in the third and fourth lines. There is an increasing degree of parallelism between the two sets of qualifying words, culminating in correspondence (unfriended and dismal; cold and bleak; alone and desolate). That is, with respect to the inner and outer worlds depicted, the poetry seems to have moved from reflection to fusion. This is a Romantic phenomenon, strongly reminiscent of Wordsworth. And yet Tennyson's lines go beyond the interaction of subject and object--beyond the mutual imprinting by mind and eye. For the atmosphere evoked by the lines quoted depends on more than the partial personification inherent in

attributing feelings and the expression thereof to the river. A kind of transmogrification is hinted at, for the dismal gurgling of the river is also a "desolate moan", suggesting that the river is possessed by, or has become the voice of, some other force or agency. Tennyson's lines have married the natural and the supernatural.

Sometimes Tennyson's evocation of the supernatural approaches the Gothic, as in ℓℓ.21-30 of "On Sublimity", which is in some ways reminiscent of late eighteenth-century ode:

> Then, as Imagination aids, I hear
> Wild heavenly voices sounding from the choir,
> And more than mortal music meets mine ear,
> Whose long, long notes among the tombs expire,
> With solemn rustling of cherubic wings,
> Round those vast columns which the roof upbear,
> While sad and undistinguishable things
> Do flit athwart the moonlit windows there;
> And my blood curdles at the chilling sound
> Of lone, unearthly steps, that pace the hallowed ground!
>
> (PT 26, ℓℓ.21-30)

Ricks, in a footnote to lines 15-26, comments that "Paden shows the reminiscence of Il Penseroso 156-66 in the setting...." But the tone of the stanza seems to mutate from Miltonic to Gothic.

Perhaps it is appropriate to note in connection with a poem titled "On Sublimity" that Rudolph Otto holds that Gothic in art creates a numinous impression because of "its sublimity". He is speaking primarily of architecture, of course, and I do not believe that all Gothic poetry is sublime. But Otto goes on to point out that "the peculiar impressiveness of Gothic does not consist in its sublimity alone, but draws upon a strain inherited from primitive magic...."[48] And some methods of evoking the numinous began "simply in magic".[49]

A deleted note in the Trinity manuscript of "On Sublimity" suggests that Tennyson may have had Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho in mind when he wrote the following lines:[50]

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[48] Otto, p.70.

[49] Otto, p.33.

[50] PT 26, n. 61-70 (p.117).

> ...and on thy [i.e. Sublimity's] steps attend
> Shadows but half-distinguished; the thin train
> Of hovering spirits round thy pathway bend,
> With their low tremulous voice and airy tread,
> What time the tomb above them yawns and gapes:
> For thou dost hold communion with the dead,
> Phantoms and phantasies and grisly shapes;
> And shades and headless spectres of St Mark,
> Seen in a lurid light, formless and still and dark!
>
> (PT 26, ℓℓ.62-70)

Such ghoulish passages, produced "as Imagination aids" (ℓ.21), seldom find a place in Tennyson's more mature poetry. Even in the three years which intervened between the publication of "On Sublimity" (1827) and "Mariana" (1830), Tennyson had refined his techniques of creating atmosphere. In "Mariana" (PT 73) the concrete details (the "rusted nails"--ℓ.1; the "broken sheds"--ℓ.5; the endlessly "unlifted latch"--ℓ.6; and the lone poplar tree) evoke the mood. There are occasional Gothic touches (for instance, the mouse that shrieked "behind the mouldering wainscot"--ℓℓ.63-64). And the house is haunted by ghostly presences recalling earlier days:

> Old faces glimmered through the doors,
> Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
> Old voices called her from without.
>
> (PT 73, ℓℓ.66-68)

But the presences hold no terrors of their own. They serve only to underscore the terrifying reality of that most potent of absences--the absence of the beloved who "cometh not".[51]

Arthur Hallam was very much alive when Tennyson wrote his mood poems depicting the ennui and frustration arising out of the continuing absence of the beloved--"Mariana" and "Mariana in the South" (PT 160). Indeed, Tennyson and Hallam were travelling together in the South of France when the latter poem was begun.[52] But within a year of the publication of "Mariana in the South",

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[51] PT 73, ℓℓ.10, 22, 34, 46, 58, 70.

[52] Martin, p.51.

Arthur Hallam had been struck down by one of the cruel "blows of Death" and "shocks of Chance"[53] which Tennyson was to spend many lines of poetry in trying to understand. The absence of the beloved had become a harsh and apparently irreversible reality.

In "I wander in darkness and sorrow" Tennyson had written:

> In this waste of existence, for solace,
> On whom shall my lone spirit call?
> Shall I fly to the friends of my bosom?
> My God! I have buried them all!
>
> (PT 11, ℓℓ.25-28)

The imagined death or loss of a friend or loved one had provided the theme for several early poems,[54] but now suddenly the poetic vehicle had found its tenor: the friend who was all-in-all was dead. As James Kissane writes, "The death of Hallam, in transforming, as it were, a poetic attitude into a biographical fact, undoubtedly wrought a crucial influence".[55]

The poet's sense of total desolation is emphasized by the fact that he feels devoid of even that sympathy which he was wont to find in nature:

> Lo! the broad Heavens cold and bare,
> The stars that know not my distress.
> My sighs are wasted in the air,
> My tears are dropt into the abyss.
>
> (PT 214, ℓℓ.10-13)

Under the influence of extreme Sorrow, personified in In Memoriam 3, the poet begins to perceive a kind of determinism in the universe:

> 'The stars,' she [i.e., Sorrow] whispers,'blindly run;
> A web is wov'n across the sky;
> From out waste places comes a cry,
> And murmurs from the dying sun....'
>
> (IM 3, ℓℓ.5-8)

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[53] IM 95, ℓℓ.42-43.

[54] For example: "Why should we weep for those who die?" (PT 7); " We meet no more " (PT 13); "And ask ye why these sad tears stream? " (PT 25); "The Grave of a Suicide" (PT 29); "The Walk at Midnight" (PT 30); "The Dying Man to His Friend" (PT 51); "Hero to Leander" (PT 95); "Love and Death" (PT 112).

[55] James Kissane, "Tennyson: The Passion of the Past and the Curse of Time", English Literary History, 32 (1965), 87.

Sometimes the determinism seems tinged with malignity as when "the dark hand struck down thro' time, / And cancell'd nature's best" (IM 72, ℓℓ.19-20). The sense of a guiding spirit or deity working through nature which the poet envisioned in "Timbuctoo"[56] is replaced by the image of nature as a "hollow form with empty hands" (IM 3, ℓ.12), neither guiding nor nurturing, at best a mocking and meaningless reflection of the poet's own emotions (IM 3, ℓ.11).

This cynical view of nature was not, of course, a continuous phase. In shorter poems of approximately the same period--that is, shortly after Hallam's death--the poet sees nature in a slightly more positive light,[57] but by and large his intuitions of a numinous presence in nature have been shattered. The sense of disillusionment with nature is reflected in lines from "The Two Voices", a poem begun before Hallam's death but probably "affected by" it:[58] "That type of Perfect in his mind / In Nature can he nowhere find" (PT 209, ℓℓ.292-3). Sometimes, of course, nature is not only not perfect--it is not even beautiful. It may be "red in tooth and claw" (IM 56, ℓ.15), compounding the difficulty of perceiving a God of love operant in nature or even of seeing the "imperishable presences serene / Colossal"[59] reflected in it. And after Hallam's death Tennyson needed desperately to believe in Eternity and the immortality of the soul, for if Hallam lived on beyond the grave there was at least the hope of reunion at some future time. Eleanor Mattes points out, however, that

> Tennyson's feeling for Hallam was more intense than that of normal friendship. He was persistently haunted by the memory of Hallam's voice, his eyes, and the clasp of his hand, mentioning them again and again throughout

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[56] PT 67, ℓℓ.191-203; quoted on p.29 of this study.

[57] See "On a Mourner", PT 216, ℓℓ.1-20; and "Whispers", PT 215, ℓℓ.6-8.

[58] PT 209, headnote (p.522).

[59] "The Mystic", PT 96, ℓℓ.13-15.

> the elegies. What he yearned for even more than future reunion with his friend was, therefore, some form of present communion and contact.[60]

Tennyson's visit to Hallam's home, described in In Memoriam 7, represents a symbolic attempt to establish "communication and contact" with his dead friend. The poem begins:

> Dark house, by which once more I stand
> Here in the long unlovely street,
> Doors, where my heart was used to beat
> So quickly, waiting for a hand,
>
> A hand that can be clasp'd no more....
>
> (IM 7, ℓℓ.1-5)

The opening apostrophe operates at two levels. At the literal level, the house is dark because in the early hours of the morning the occupants are asleep. Resonances are set up by recalling the inmate who no longer occupies his accustomed bed in the house--who sleeps a deeper, permanent sleep. And by association of ideas, the "dark house" comes to stand for the body from which the soul has departed; the corpse. This traditional image of the corpse as a body in which the light had been extinguished must have seemed particularly appropriate for Hallam whose personality had seemed so luminous that Tennyson was to recall (in In Memoriam 87) how he and his friends "saw / The God within him light his face" (ℓ.36).

The clause "by which once more I stand" obviously qualifies the primary meaning of the opening phrase; that is, the actual house. And the heavy opening syllables (dárk hóuse), which are almost spondaic, convey an appropriate sense of gloom and depression. The phrase "once more" suggests custom: the speaker had previously been a regular visitor at this "dark house" which stands "in the long unlovely street" (ℓ.2). Apparently this description reflected a current view of the architecture of Wimpole Street (where Hallam's family lived at number 67).[61] But the street is

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[60] Mattes, p.49.

[61] Shatto and Shaw, IM 7, n.1 and 2 (p.170).

also "unlovely" because it is empty of the beloved's presence, and because it reflects the speaker's bleak feelings while he stands at the doors where his "heart was used to beat / So quickly, waiting for a hand" (ℓ.4). The quickened heartbeat--admirably reflected in the run-on line (ℓ.3)--reveals the excitement felt at the thought of an impending meeting. And the friend's imagined hand outstretched connotes warmth and welcome--so different from that "hollow form with empty hands" which is the image of nature projected in In Memoriam 3.

In "The Gardener's Daughter" Tennyson had described his friendship with Hallam ("Eustace"):

> I and he,
> Brothers in Art, a friendship so complete
> Portioned in halves between us, that we grew
> The fable of the city where we dwelt.
>
> (PT 208, ℓℓ.3-6)

It has been suggested that "Tennyson's feeling for Hallam was rather one-sided".[62] Mattes rightly refutes this idea. But while not calling in question the relative "quantity" of friendship ("portioned in halves between us"), poems such as "If I were loved, as I desire to be" do give rise to legitimate questions as to whether the quality of the friendship was the same on both sides. In this connection one wonders whether, in In Memoriam 7, it is mere coincidence or a subconscious recognition that governs Tennyson's use of synecdoche in lines 3 and 4. For the poet uses the heart, symbol of love, to depict himself--but the outstretched hand, symbol of friendship, in connection with Hallam.

The idea of the poet as lover rather than friend is emphasized by Shatto and Shaw's placing of In Memoriam 7 (together with section 119) in a "minor genre of classical poetry called paraclausithyron, or the song and actions of a lover who is excluded. The lover [Shatto and Shaw continue] stands outside the house of his mistress and laments that the door is bolted

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[62] Mattes, p.31, paraphrasing John Sparrow, who made this allegation in his introduction to the Nonesuch edition of In Memoriam (London, 1933), pp.vi-vii.

against him. He addresses the door and holds it responsible for his rejection."[63] The editors argue convincingly that Tennyson would have been familiar with the genre, and In Memoriam 7 does appear to be a variation on this theme.

In line 5 of the "Dark house" poem, the repetition of the phrase "a hand" emphasizes the concern with the corporeal which is so characteristic of much of In Memoriam. The repetition is particularly effective here, for the first usage occurs at the end of line 4, where the phrase follows a present participle ("waiting"), so that a kind of expectant pause is created at the end of the first stanza--an expectation which is dashed in the opening line of the next stanza: "A hand that can be clasp'd no more--".

It is interesting to note how the tenses in lines 1-5 both govern and reflect the ebb and flow of emotion. The poem begins in the present ("I stand"), but moves back into the past ("where my heart was used to beat"). Momentarily the poet seems to lose himself in happy memories of the past which seem so vivid as to give rise to a feeling of expectation, encapsulated in the present participle, "waiting". But in line 5 the speaker is catapulted from the imaginary present, suggested by the present participle, to the real present inherent in the present tense verbal phrase, "can be clasp'd". The line ends with the terrible finality of the adverbial phrase, "no more", which glances back to the contrasting phrase, "once more", in line 1. There is an implicit invitation both to comparison (this visit is one of many) and to contrast (no visit can ever be the same again because the door will be opened by the beloved "no more").

The phrase "no more" also acts as a lens, enlarging on the nature of the poet's experience, for it calls to mind that short, almost prophetic poem of 1826:

> Oh sad No More! Oh sweet No More!
> Oh strange No More!
> By a mossed brookbank on a stone
> I smelt a wildweed-flower alone;

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[63] Shatto and Shaw, IM 7, headnote (p.169).

> There was a ringing in my ears,
> And both my eyes gushed out with tears.
> Surely all pleasant things had gone before,
> Lowburied fathomdeep beneath with thee, NO MORE!
>
> (PT 57)

In line 6 of In Memoriam 7 the focus swings sharply from the dead friend back to the speaker himself:

> Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
> And like a guilty thing I creep
> At earliest morning to the door.

The word "door" comes at the end of both line and stanza--that is, it occupies a climactic position. The lines seem to build up to the word "door", paralleling the build-up of emotion as the speaker approaches his destination--and this effect is enhanced by the enjambment of line 7.

In line 9 (as earlier in line 5) the tension breaks, bathetically and pathetically: "He is not here". The simple syntax, so different from the convoluted sentences which have gone before, seems to underline the starkness of the negative, and the mid-line caesura represents a long pause in which the terrible fact is assimilated before the verse moves on:

> ...but far away
> The noise of life begins again,
> And ghastly through the drizzling rain
> On the bald street breaks the blank day.
>
> (ℓℓ.9-12)

The phrase "noise of life" refracts the poet's world-view by implied contrast with an earlier poem, "Life" (PT 149; quoted p.36 of this study). In that poem celebrating the spring of his friendship with Hallam, Tennyson had written ebulliently of "the joy of life" (ℓ.14). In the winter of his loss this has become "the noise of life", as early morning sounds signal that the world is coming to life again--which Hallam will not.

The dismal street scene revealed by the first light of day reflects the speaker's state of mind:

> x / | x / | x / | x /
> And ghastly through the drizzling rain
> x x | / / | / x | / /
> On the bald street breaks the blank day.
>
> (ℓℓ.11-12)

In the last line the iambic tetrameter pattern breaks down. The preponderance of heavy stresses retards the movement of the line, creating a dragging or depressed effect. As Sinfield notes, we do indeed "receive a strong impression of the poet's despair".[64]

As a result of their parallel construction (adjective plus noun), which is emphasized by the alliterated "b", the phrases "bald street" and "blank day" seem to be equated and highlighted. The "bald street" becomes a kind of correlative for the "blank day". And both become correlatives for the poet's emotional dislocation. One tends to remember lines from The Lover's Tale in which the speaker poses the question: "[Can you] build a wall betwixt my life and love, / And tell me where I am?" (PT 153, ℓℓ.171-72). Life without love--without the beloved--is "bald" and "blank", featureless and meaningless; almost unreal.

David Shaw, writing about In Memoriam 7, observes that the "hand and heart, the unlovely street and drizzling rain begin to flicker disjointedly like film-shots in a slow speed movie...."[65] The poem seems to me to suggest a condition not unlike the abnormal psychological state in which a person seems to watch his own actions from a distance with a feeling of unreality.[66] This sensation arises out of the movement of the poem from the concrete ("dark house", "doors") to the imaginary (the disembodied "hand") and finally back to a kind of reality--but a reality perceived only through filtered sense impressions which are characterized by a lack of definition ("bald", "blank") and seem "far away" (ℓ.9).

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[64] Alan Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", Language and Style Series (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p.126.

[65] Shaw, Tennyson's Style, p.288.

[66] For a discussion of the feeling of "unreality" experienced by melancholiacs, see William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature (1902; rpt. New York: Random House, 1929), p.149. James points out that "in morbid melancholy this sense of the unreality of things may become a carking pain, and even lead to suicide" (p.63). Tennyson's preoccupation with the idea of suicide is revealed through poems such as "The Two Voices" (PT 209), "The Grave of a Suicide" (PT 29) and "Tiresias" (PT 219). Ricks notes that "[a]s an impulse and a metaphor, suicide comes throughout Tennyson" (CR, p.104), and that "Tithonus" (PT 324) is "Tennyson's subtlest and most beautiful exploration of the impulse to suicide" (CR, p.129).

The feeling of unreality in the "dark house" poem is heightened by two powerful images. The first is the image of the disembodied hand. As so often in In Memoriam, the synecdoche creates a strange, surrealistic effect. But even more striking is the comparison of the speaker to a "guilty thing". The obvious suggestion is that anyone abroad in the dark hours of the very early morning must seem to be upon a mission of stealth. But the phrase "guilty thing", with its echo of Hamlet (I.i.148), also shows that Tennyson's mind must have been occupied, consciously or subconsciously, with the idea of ghosts. A strange inversion has taken place in his thought processes, however, for it is not the dead friend but the living man who is likened to a ghost ("guilty thing"). This heightens the feeling of unreality by implicitly questioning the very nature of reality. Martin Dodsworth observes that "Tennyson did not write in order to express ideas but in order to express states of mind which are of interest not so much for their own sake as for what they imply concerning the nature of reality itself".[67]

Tennyson was to say in later years that the spirit world was more real to him than the everyday world in which we move--and he was to say it with a healthy conviction.[68] Here in In Memoriam 7, however, the dissolving boundaries of reality operate negatively, revealing a consciousness numbed by the kind of grief which "makes a desert in the mind" (IM 66, ℓ.6).

In many of the early sections of In Memoriam the poet's yearning for Hallam is frequently expressed in terms of synecdoche: the poet longs for the eye, the hand, the brow, the voice or the lips of his dead friend. That is, the poet's initial longing is for the corporeal and the vocal. But as, in the midst of his grief, an awareness of some sort of presence gradually develops, that presence is silent and insubstantial. On the first Christmas after Hallam's death, the poet feels "an awful

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[67] Martin Dodsworth, "Patterns of Morbidity: Repetition in Tennyson's Poetry", in The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp.33-34.

[68] Memoir II, 90.

sense / Of one mute Shadow watching all" (IM 30, ℓ.8). However, although the Shadow itself is mute, the sound of "the winds...in the beech" (ℓ.9) seems to carry its own emotive message, moving the poet and his family to song (ℓℓ.13-16) and to tears (ℓ.20), and finally to a kind of consolation:

> 'They rest,' we said, 'their sleep is sweet'....
> (ℓ.19)

> Once more we sang: 'They do not die
> Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
> Nor change to us, although they change....
> (ℓℓ.22-24)

The idea of change poses a threat which is, in the poet's own words, "A spectral doubt which makes me cold, / That I shall be thy mate no more" (IM 41,ℓℓ.19-20). And the idea of individuals "[r]emerging in the general Soul" (IM 47,ℓ.4) the poet finds singularly uncomforting. He still needs to believe that Hallam continues as a recognizable individual with whom he will be able to communicate. The speaker wishfully postulates:

> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside;
> And I shall know him when we meet....
> (IM 47, ℓℓ.6-8)

But somehow the enjambment of line 6--that is, the lack of punctuational division between lines 6 and 7--subtly undercuts the assertion of division between "form" and "soul" in an after-life. And the closing lines of the section reveal that Tennyson is not fully convinced by his hypothesis of permanent form in Eternity, for the final wish expressed in In Memoriam 47 is that before "the spirits fade away", he should "at least" have the opportunity of alighting with Hallam on

> Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
> 'Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.'
> (IM 47, ℓℓ.15-16)

The urgent need for the beloved's presence takes the form of a prayer addressed to Hallam in section 50: "Be near me when my light is low" (ℓ.1). And sometimes it seems as if the prayer is heard and answered: "The Spirit of true love replied; / 'Thou

canst not move me from thy side...'" (IM 52, ll.6-7). Here it is the "Spirit of true love" which replies--a kind of personified abstraction. But in section 61 the dead Hallam is himself addressed as "Spirit":

> I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
> The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.
>
> (IM 61, ll.11-12)

And in section 65, Hallam is apostrophized as "Sweet soul" (l.1). The emphasis is moving from concern with the body to concern with the spirit of the dead man, and now Hallam seems to live again in Tennyson's dreams:

> When in the down I sink my head,
> Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my breath;
> Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not Death,
> Nor can I dream of thee as dead....
>
> (IM 68, ll.1-4)

Sometimes the dream has visionary impact, as in section 69. The speaker, who in his dream wears a crown of thorns, says:

> I found an angel of the night;
> The voice was low, the look was bright;
> He look'd upon my crown and smiled:
>
> He reach'd the glory of a hand,
> That seem'd to touch it into leaf:
> The voice was not the voice of grief,
> The words were hard to understand.
>
> (IM 69, ll.14-20)

Shatto and Shaw quote Tennyson as explaining these lines thus: "...the Divine Thing in the gloom brought comfort".[69] However, it might be held that such a gloss "lifts the veil but darkens the prospect".[70] What was the "Divine Thing" sensed in the gloom? Since Tennyson called it "divine", it clearly has an element of the numinous about it; and the vagueness of the word "thing" creates an aura of mystery that is in keeping with the idea of the numinous. But here in section 69, as in In Memoriam 7, the

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[69] Shatto and Shaw, IM 69, n.14-20 (p.229).

[70] Prologue to Tennyson's paper on "Ghosts", Memoir I, 497-98; quoted p.28 of this study.

word "thing" picks up resonances from Hamlet (I.i.21), and carries ghostly connotations. These connotations inherent in Tennyson's gloss, together with words such as "voice" (IM 69, ℓ.15) and "hand" (IM 69, ℓ.17), which have been used so often throughout In Memoriam in connection with Hallam, suggest that the "Divine Thing in the gloom" may have owed something to the spiritual presence of the dead friend. This suggestion is reinforced by the description of the being; for its "look was bright" (IM 69, ℓ.15). One inevitably thinks of the brightness that illuminated the face of Hallam, the brightness that his friends associated with "the God within him" (IM 87, ℓ.36), so that at times he seemed "half-divine" (IM 14, ℓ.10).

If--as in In Memoriam 69--symbolic dream visions[71] sometimes rose from the depths of the unconscious mind, the conscious mind of the poet, striving to reproduce the beloved features "on the gloom" (IM 70, ℓ.2) while awake, succeeds only in evoking a hideous hybrid of the surrealistic and the Gothic:

> Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
> A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
> A hand that points, and palled shapes
> In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;
>
> And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
> And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;
> Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
> And lazy lengths on boundless shores....
>
> (IM 70, ℓℓ.5-12)

Shatto and Shaw feel that the imagery in lines 5-12 recalls the passage in Aeneid VI in which Aeneas visits Hades and sees the ghosts of souls waiting to cross the Acheron.[72]

But "all at once beyond the will" (IM 70, ℓ.13), in a way that seems magical ("wizard", ℓ.14) because it is inexplicable, the features of the friend form. The horrors of the subconscious which find symbolic expression in images evocative of Hades

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[71] The Lincoln manuscript reading of IM 69, ℓ.14 is "There came a vision...." See Shatto and Shaw, IM 69, n.14 (p.88).

[72] Shatto and Shaw, IM 70, n.5-12 (p.230).

(ℓℓ.5-12), are cancelled by the apprehension of the familiar face, not "palled" (ℓ.7) or "pucker'd" (ℓ.10) or distorted, but "fair" (ℓ.16). The poet says:

> ...all at once beyond the will
> I hear a wizard music roll,
> And thro' a lattice on the soul
> Looks thy fair face and makes it still.
>
> (IM 70, ℓℓ.13-16)

The emotional turbulence of the first three stanzas is calmed by the vision of the dead friend in the last.

The word "thy" in line 16 attests to the immediacy of the experience. The poem begins impersonally: "I cannot see *the* features right" (ℓ.1--my italics). Succeeding lines perpetuate the sense of impersonality by means of plurals ("hollow masks", "palled shapes", "shoals of pucker'd faces","dark bulks") and a noun preceded by the indefinite article ("a hand"). But in the final stanza the vision of the beloved is perceived with such vividness that it calls forth a direct address ("*thy* fair face"--my italics). The active voice of the verb ("looks") imparts a feeling of reality to the experience. The face is not merely seen; it "looks". It seems to have volition and a calm benignity, making the poet's troubled soul "still".

There may be connotations of Christ, who stilled the troubled waters. Certainly the phrase "makes it still" looks back to its rhyming counterpart in line 13, highlighting the phrase "beyond the will". This phrase encapsulates an idea which is important in the development of *In Memoriam*; for the poet increasingly comes to realize that he cannot *will* the ghost of Hallam to come to him:

> In vain shalt thou, or any, call
> The spirits from their golden day,
> Except, like them, thou too canst say,
> My spirit is at peace with all.
>
> (IM 94, ℓℓ.5-8)

The numinous presence cannot be called up on demand, but as a quieter, more philosophic mood comes upon the poet, his awareness of such a presence grows. In *In Memoriam* 85, reiterating the realization that "'Tis better to have loved and lost, / Than never to have loved at all" (ℓℓ.3-4), the speaker reassesses his

emotional position:

> My blood an even tenor kept,
> Till on mine ear this message falls,
> That in Vienna's fatal walls
> God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.
>
> (IM 85, ll.17-20)

How different is this image of God from the deterministic one of section 72: "...the dark hand struck down thro' time, / And cancell'd nature's best..." (ll.19-20). In his new-found acceptance of Hallam's death the poet is also gradually developing an awareness of the beloved's continuing presence in his (the poet's) own life:

> Whatever way my days decline,
> I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
> His being working in mine own,
> The footsteps of his life in mine....
>
> (IM 85, ll.41-44)

If these lines create something of a doppelganger effect, there is nothing frightening or sinister about them. The word "working" connotes purpose, and its present participial form suggests continuity. The beloved, though dead, is perceived to be a guiding influence. And the gerund derived from the verb "to be" ("his *being*"--my italics) prepares for that other all-important phrase derived from the verb "to be", "that which is" (section 95).

No longer is the physical presence of the beloved of prime importance. The poet is at last able to address his dead friend in terms which move away from the corporeal. The apostrophes in section 85 pass from the abstract ("O friendship"--l.33), through the symbolic ("O heart"--l.34) to the ineffable and indefinable ("O sacred essence, other form"--l.35) and finally to the overtly spiritual ("O solemn ghost, O crowned soul"--l.36). The poet begins to feel an all-pervasive spiritual presence in the "darken'd earth, / Where all things...breathed of him [Hallam]" (IM 85, ll.31-2). Nature once more seems benign, both evocative of and reminiscent of the dead friend:

> And every pulse of wind and wave
> Recalls, in change of light or gloom,
> My old affection of the tomb,
> And my prime passion in the grave....
>
> (IM 85, ll.73-76)

The association of the dead beloved ("my old affection", "my prime passion") with both "light" and "gloom" supports my postulation on pp.56-57 of this study that "the Divine Thing in the gloom" whose "look was bright" (IM 69, ℓ.15) was at least partly a manifestation of Hallam's spirit. In section 86 the light wind ("ambrosial air"--ℓ.1) issues from "the gorgeous gloom" (ℓ.2). In this connection it is interesting to note that one meaning of the word "ambrosial" is "divine" (OED 1), and that it derives from the Greek a-brotos, meaning not mortal.

Section 86 represents one of the climactic moments in In Memoriam, for the presence in nature to which the poet has been gradually re-awakening is now infused with the spirit of Hallam. The recognition of this leads to a poem which begins quietly ("Sweet after showers, ambrosial air") but gathers momentum, seeming in its euphoria to spill over from line to line and stanza to stanza until it finally comes to rest in the quietude of the whispered word, "Peace". The whole sixteen-line section represents one long sentence, so that there is much stanzaic enjambment as well as many run-on lines which sweep the poem forward, creating an atmosphere of breathless excitement.

But if the poet and reader feel breathless, the poem itself is richly redolent of that "breath" (ℓ.10) which at a literal level is the breeze, and at a metaphorical level represents the spirit of the dead Hallam. M.H. Abrams explores the Romantic metaphor of "air-in-motion", which "occurs as breeze or breath, wind or respiration". He notes

> ...how often, in the major poems, the wind is not only a literal attribute of the landscape, but also a metaphor for a change in the poet's mind. The rising wind [Abrams continues] ...serves as the vehicle for a complex subjective event: the return to a sense of community after isolation, the renewal of life and emotional vigor after apathy and spiritual torpor, and an outburst of creative inspiration following a period of sterility.[73]

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[73] M.H. Abrams, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor", Kenyon Review, 19 (1957), 113-14.

Though section 85 of In Memoriam does indeed suggest "the return to a sense of community after isolation", in section 86 there is rather a sense of communion after isolation--communion with the spirit of Hallam.

Personification plays a large part in the evocation of the spirit in In Memoriam 86. For instance, the breeze is apostrophized ("ambrosial air...fan my brows"), and apostrophe implies personification. Secondly, the breeze breathes (ℓℓ.4,10) and is enjoined to "fan" the poet's brows, "blow the fever from" his cheeks and "sigh the full new life" into the speaker's frame. By implication, the "ambrosial air" is capable of action and volition. Furthermore, although it is formulated as a request, there is a strong feeling that the speaker's wish is in fact realized[74]--that he feels the caress of the breeze fanning his brows, cooling his cheek and sighing new life into a previously grief-racked "frame". The result is as envisaged--a liberation from tortured thoughts of "Doubt and Death" (ℓ.11) through an imaginative response to the orient star where "a hundred spirits" seem to promise "Peace".

Hallam Tennyson, as Shatto and Shaw note, commented that In Memoriam 86 "gives pre-eminently his [Tennyson's] sense of the joyous peace in Nature...."[75] But the poem goes beyond that: peace is perceived through nature as well as in nature, for the lines,

> ...and sigh
> The full new life that feeds my breath
> Throughout my frame...
>
> (IM 86, ℓℓ.9-11),

suggest a force or agency beyond nature itself. Whence issues "the full new life"? Partly it may be suggestive of the regenerative cycle in nature. Hallam's body, decomposing in the grave, is reabsorbed into vegetative nature, imparting new life. But, taken in conjunction with "sigh" (ℓ.9) and "breath" (ℓ.10), the "full

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[74] James Benziger, Images of Eternity: Studies in the Poetry of Religious Vision from Wordsworth to T.S. Eliot (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1962), p.146.

[75] Memoir I, 313; quoted by Shatto and Shaw, IM 86, headnote (p.243).

new life" seems to have connotations of God breathing life into the first man, whom he had made in his own image.[76] Without being in any way explicit, elegy 86 subtly suggests regeneration, re-creation, and paradise--though it speaks only of "Peace". The whole poem is a kind of atmospheric correlative evoking a feeling which it is virtually impossible to reproduce in "matter-moulded forms of speech" (IM 95, ℓ.46)--particularly in prose. One can only point to the sensuous quality of the poetry, beginning with the mellifluousness of the diction ("sweet", "ambrosial"), and moving on through the rich evocativeness of phrases such as "dewy-tasselled wood" and "gorgeous gloom" (so reminiscent of "Ode to a Nightingale"),[77] to the synaesthetic image of "odour streaming far" and finally to the sibilant onomatopoeia of the closing lines: "To where in yonder orient star / A hundred spirits whisper, 'Peace.'" And one must then go on to say that the whole is infinitely greater than the sum of the parts, and that the experience described is both natural and supernatural, physical and metaphysical.

In section 85 Tennyson had imagined Hallam saying to him:

> 'Thy spirit up to mine can reach;
> But in dear words of human speech
> We two communicate no more.'
>
> (IM 85, ℓℓ.82-84)

Section 86 goes some way towards showing that "dear words of human speech" are not essential for "commerce with the dead" (IM 85, ℓ.93). Nevertheless, the poet's thoughts revert, in In Memoriam 91, to his longing to re-establish contact with the dead friend as he knew him in life. He implores Hallam:

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[76] Genesis ii:7. Abrams discusses the derivations and Biblical parallels of the "Romantic" breeze (Abrams, pp.121-22). Sinfield notes that the wind in In Memoriam "arouses distinctly Pentecostal associations..." ("Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", p.66).

[77] Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", ℓℓ.38-40 (Allott, p.528):

> ...there is no light,
> Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
> Through verdurous glooms....

Come, wear the form by which I know
  Thy spirit in time among thy peers;
  The hope of unaccomplish'd years
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

(IM 91, ll.5-8)

But section 91 holds its own, internal wisdom. For though the speaker calls for the corporeal form of his friend to "come" in Spring ("When rosy plumelets tuft the larch"--l.1), it is implied that with the passage of time ("When summer's hourly-mellowing change / May breathe, with many roses sweet"--ll.9-10) he will be ready for, and therefore content with, a more spiritual, yet paradoxically a more natural, manifestation.

Come : not in watches of the night,
  But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,
  Come, beauteous in thine after form
And like a finer light in light.

(IM 91, ll.13-16)

In section 92, considering his response if he should see an apparition resembling Hallam, the poet concludes, in terms reminiscent of "Oh! that 'twere possible" (PT 227, l.69) that he "might count it vain / As but the canker of the brain" (IM 92, ll.2-3). However, the question is, in a sense, academic. For in section 93 the speaker says with a simplicity born of both conviction and regret, "I shall not see thee" (l.1). But the regret is mitigated by a larger hope:

No visual shade of some one lost,
  But he, the Spirit himself, may come
  Where all the nerve of sense is numb;
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

(IM 93, ll.5-8)

It is this spiritual communion for which the poet now yearns. He fervently appeals to the dead Hallam:

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
  The wish too strong for words to name;
  That in the blindness of the frame
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

(IM 93, ll.13-16)

In section 94, as previously quoted on page 58, the poet writes:

> In vain shalt thou, or any, call
> The spirits from their golden day,
> Except, like them, thou too canst say,
> My spirit is at peace with all.
>
> (IM 94, ℓℓ.5-8)

It is in such a mood of peace and harmony that section 95, the climactic poem in In Memoriam, opens:

> By night we linger'd on the lawn,
> For underfoot the herb was dry;
> And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
> The silvery haze of summer drawn;
>
> And calm that let the tapers burn
> Unwavering: not a cricket chirr'd:
> The brook alone far-off was heard,
> And on the board the fluttering urn:
>
> And bats went round in fragrant skies,
> And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
> That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
> And woolly breasts and beaded eyes....
>
> (IM 95, ℓℓ.1-12)

The scene is set on a summer "night" (ℓ.1) when the twilight seems to draw a gossamer veil over the sky (ℓℓ.3-4). The alliteration on "l" highlights the phrase "linger'd on the lawn" (ℓ.1). The resonating "ing" sound in "linger'd" and the long vowel in "lawn" create a relaxed mood which is enhanced by the disjointed syntax ("and genial warmth" in line 3 has no predicate; nor has "and calm..."). The overall effect is that of sense impressions being lazily registered.

The "calm" of the air "that let the tapers burn / Unwavering" is emphasized by the enjambement of line 5, and reflects the serenity of the scene and the speaker. The gentle sound of the brook "far off" and the equally gentle sound of the "fluttering urn" closer at hand seem to have a mesmerizing effect, and there is something "magical" about the bats going "round in fragrant skies" (ℓ.9). For "going round" suggests that the bats describe circles in the sky--and the circle is the symbol of magic.[78]

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[78]For examples of the recurring image of the circle in In Memoriam, see IM 12, ℓ.15; 17, ℓ.6; 30, ℓ.11; 34, ℓ.5; 45, ℓ.3; 63, ℓ.10; 85, ℓ.23; 89, ℓ.21; 89, ℓ.47; 98, ℓ.30; 101, ℓ.24; 130, ℓ.15; Epilogue, ℓ.81. For a discussion of

Rudolph Otto holds that the "'magical' note in art" is one means of evoking the numinous. He writes:

> ...the magical is nothing but a suppressed and dimmed form of the numinous, a crude form of it which great art purifies and ennobles. In great art the point is reached at which we may no longer speak of the 'magical', but rather are confronted with the numinous itself....[79]

In In Memoriam the circle imagery, which has "magical" connotations, makes a substantial contribution to the evocation of the numinous in the poem.

In In Memoriam 95 the phrase, "haunt the dusk" (ℓ.11), prepares for the supernatural experience which is to follow. For "haunt" inevitably suggests a preternatural presence, and "dusk" is reminiscent of the "gorgeous gloom of evening", described in section 86, when Tennyson sensed Hallam's spirit numinous in nature. As Sinfield says, "the 'filmy shapes / That haunt the dusk' supply a hint of the vision which is about to occur...."[80]

In In Memoriam 95 there is no invocation to Hallam to "come", no striving for "communion with the dead"; there is only the sound of voices singing "old songs that pealed / From knoll to knoll" (ℓℓ.13-14). The phrase, "that pealed / From knoll to knoll", creates an echo effect, recalling that first Somersby Christmas after Hallam's death:

> Then echo-like our voices rang;
> We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
> A merry song we sang with him
> Last year....
>
> (IM 30, ℓℓ.13-16)

---

the circle motif, see James G. Taaffe, "Circle Imagery in Tennyson's In Memoriam", Victorian Poetry, 1 (1963), 123-31. Further comment on the imagery of the circle and of magic is to be found on pp.69-70 of this study.

[79] Otto, pp.68-69.

[80] Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", p.127. The emphasis is Sinfield's.

But the scene recorded in section 95 is inherently more tranquil and harmonious: "...couched at ease, / The white kine glimmered" (ℓ.15), and the trees "[l]aid their dark arms about the field" (ℓ.16) in gentle embrace. This tender image "recalls the poet's desire for Hallam's touch",[81] and as the poet is left alone outside (ℓℓ.17-18) in the deepening darkness (ℓℓ.19-20), " a hunger" seizes his "heart" (ℓ.21) and he reads again Hallam's letters, "those fallen leaves which kept their green..." (ℓ.23). Sinfield points out that in section 75 "he [Tennyson] said of Hallam, 'Thy leaf has perish'd in the green', but now he finds that Hallam's influence remains fresh and potent through the letters".[82]

It is appropriate that a metaphor from nature should be used to describe Hallam's letters. For, as I have shown, the poet had increasingly begun to sense his friend's presence in nature. But the apparent paradox of "fallen leaves" remaining green has supernatural undertones. These are enhanced by the ambiguity of the phrase, "the noble letters of the dead". For though the primary meaning is clearly "the letters written by Hallam before his death", there is also an underlying suggestion of "letters written <u>by</u> the dead", thus presaging the possibility of communication from beyond the grave.

> And strangely on the silence broke
> The silent-speaking words, and strange
> Was love's dumb cry defying change
> To test his worth; and strangely spoke
>
> The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
> On doubts that drive the coward back,
> And keen thro' wordy snares to track
> Suggestion to her inmost cell.
>
> (<u>IM</u> 95,ℓℓ.25-32)

As the dead man's philosophy unfolds itself again, touching on metaphysical problems so like those Tennyson himself faced, there is a growing feeling of ineffability about the verse created by

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[81]Sinfield, <u>The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam"</u>, p.127.

[82]Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", p.61.

the multiple oxymoronic effects--the "dumb cry" (ℓ.27), and "the silent-speaking words" (ℓ.26) that "on the silence broke" (ℓ.25). And the weirdness is emphasized by the insistent repetition of "strange" (ℓ.26) and "strangely" (ℓℓ.25, 27).

> So word by word, and line by line,
> The dead man touch'd me from the past,
> And all at once it seem'd at last
> The living soul was flash'd on mine....
>
> (IM 95, ℓℓ.33-36)

The phrases, "word by word" and "line by line", perpetuate the sense of gradual progression begun in line 17 ("one by one") and line 19 ("light after light"). The caesura in line 33 enhances the sense of gradual development, which is further emphasized by the fact that the main clause ("the dead man touch'd me") is delayed, following rather than preceding the adverbial phrases ("word by word, and line by line"). The poetry implicitly suggests that a long waiting period precedes the epiphanic experience, and this suggestion becomes overt in the phrase "at last" (ℓ.35). Although the climactic union with the numinous presence ("the living soul"--ℓ.36) happens suddenly ("all at once") and is described in terms of a metaphor suggesting the speed of lightning ("flash'd"),[83] the poem has also taken cognizance of what Tennyson called the long "germination period" which preceded apparently-sudden inspiration.[84] The poet was, of course, speaking of artistic inspiration, of which the epiphany eventually becomes symbolic. But lines 35-36 also suggest a joyous and long-awaited consummation, having much in common with the lovely lines from "Happy: The Leper's Bride":

> [We,] moving each to music, soul in soul and
> light in light,

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[83] Bradley associates the expression with "instantaneous motion or action". See A.C. Bradley, A Commentary on Tennyson's "In Memoriam", 2nd ed. (London : Macmillan, 1902), p.191.

[84] Memoir I, 453. It is interesting to note that Professor Starbuck (an early writer on the psychology of religion) advances an "hypothesis of subconscious incubation" preceding "sudden 'conversion'". See James, p.177.

> Shall flash through one another in a moment
> as we will.
>
> (PT 424, ll.39-40)

Line 34 ("The dead man touch'd me from the past") gains power from the fact that the word "past" seems to have two meanings. Firstly it refers to the immediate past in which Hallam wrote the letters. Secondly it is suggestive of that more distant time, or state transcending time, which Tennyson called his "Passion of the Past" and which, mystically intuited, seemed to offer intimations of immortality. One recalls Tennyson writing, in the sonnet "To -" (PT 179),[85] of how on meeting Hallam he experienced the strange feeling that he had known him in some previous existence:

> ...though I know not in what time or place,
> Methought that I had often met with you,
> And either lived in either's heart or speech.
>
> (ll.12-14)

By extrapolation, the implication is that the lives of the two young men are inexplicably intertwined in or out of time. Thus the image of "the dead man" touching the poet "from the past" is somehow also a reassurance for the future. The realization comes like a flash of revelation--or inspiration.

> And all at once it seem'd at last
> The living soul was flash'd on mine,
>
> And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
> About empyreal heights of thought,
> And came on that which is, and caught
> The deep pulsations of the world....
>
> (IM 95, ll.35-40)

The "dead man" of line 34 has become "the living soul" in line 36. Tennyson originally wrote "his living soul", and this variant obviously implies the kind of spiritual union of which Foakes writes:

> The fusion of identities in love is a type of
> that larger unity which the Romantic poets sought,

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[85] Quoted on pp.38-39 of this study.

> a unity which would bind together a world that had disintegrated into a collection of individuals without ties.[86]

I shall have more to say in a later chapter about the alteration of the possessive pronoun, "his", to the more general "the". It is sufficient here to note the movement away from exclusivity towards a "larger unity", a broadening of perspective that finds its correlative in the closing line of section 95 ("broadens into boundless day").

As Shatto and Shaw note, Tennyson said of "the living soul", "perchance the Deity". But he also said, "Of course the greater Soul may include the less".[87] And certainly the imagery of line 36 is strongly evocative of Arthur Hallam. The word "flash'd", suggesting a sudden, brilliant emission of light,[88] inevitably recalls Hallam who, throughout Tennyson's poetry, has been associated with light, and who has been invoked, in section 91, to "Come, beauteous in thine after form, / And like a finer light in light" (ℓℓ.14-15). Also, "the living soul" recalls the early sonnet to Hallam in which Tennyson speaks of Hallam's "spirit" as being "circled with a living glory" (PT 141, ℓ.3). There is obviously a close correspondence between the "living glory" associated with Hallam's "spirit" in life and the "living soul" apprehended by the poet in the moment of mystical communion after Hallam's death. Furthermore, the image of the circle in the sonnet (ℓ.3) reappears in In Memoriam 95, firstly in the wheeling movement of the bats and moths (ℓℓ.9-10), and ultimately in what Sinfield calls the "winding and whirling" motion of lines 36-37.

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[86] Foakes, pp.81-82.

[87] Shatto and Shaw, IM 95, n.36-37 (p.255).

[88] There are a number of literary prototypes for Tennyson's experience; for instance, the "light from heaven" that blinded St Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts ix:3), and Dante's experience, recorded in Canto XXX of the Paradiso:

> As lightning startles vision from the eyes,
> ....
> So now a living light encompasses me....

See The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine: Cantica III: Paradise ("Il Paradiso"), trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), XXX, 46-49 (p.319).

One comes to perceive that the wheeling motion of the bats and moths adumbrates the resolution which follows in In Memoriam 95. For earlier, in "The Two Voices", the poet had written that he could not find the "type of Perfect" (PT 209, ℓ.292) in Nature. But in section 95 of In Memoriam, he watches as the bats and moths (representative of nature) describe circles against the evening sky--and the circle is the traditional symbol of perfection.

Tracing the circle imagery within In Memoriam, Sinfield concludes that in section 95

> ...the poet transcends the boundaries of physical existence and the circles which have been distinct coalesce into one in a vision of a harmonious movement involving all creation.[89]

I believe the imagery of circles and of magic in In Memoriam is directly related to Arthur Hallam's submission to Tennyson that "[s]truggle as we may Christianity draws us all within its magic circle at last".[90] John Dixon Hunt discusses the theme of magic in In Memoriam--which he suggests "may be read as an early symbolist document".[91] He fails, however, to note Arthur Hallam's remark, which I believe to have been the most important source of Tennyson's theme.[92]

The "resolution" of In Memoriam involves a perpendicular as well as circular movement. The poet has passed from his early preoccupation with literal depths, as symbolized by the "roots [of the yew]...wrapt about the bones" of the dead Hallam (IM 2, ℓ.4), to "empyreal heights of thought" (IM 95, ℓ.28) and thence again to the depths in "the deep pulsations of the world" (ℓ.40).

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[89] Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", p.63.

[90] Shatto and Shaw, IM 96, headnote (p.258). The quotation is from a letter, dated July 1831, from Hallam to Tennyson (Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln).

[91] John Dixon Hunt, "The Symbolist Vision of In Memoriam", Victorian Poetry, 8 (1970), 187.

[92] For a discussion of Hallam's influence on Tennyson's religious thinking, see pp.182-85 of this study.

But now the depths are metaphorical and metaphysical, "deep" implying tonality and intensity, and suggesting the arcane. The elegies have progressed from the material or physical to the immaterial and ineffable.

It is impossible to describe the ineffable: it can only be suggested. One way in which Tennyson does this is by a profusion of paradoxes: the "dead man" is also the "living soul"; circular and spiral movements are overlaid by perpendicular; the "heights of thought" are associated with the "deep pulsations of the world" (my italics).[93] The strangely passive form of a dynamically active verb ("was flashed") adds to the mysteriousness of the supramundane phenonomenon evoked. And though the "living soul was flash'd" on that of the poet, suggesting a momentary event, the additive clauses in the "descriptive" sentence ("And mine...was wound, and whirled...and came...and caught"--ℓℓ.37-40; my italics) are piled one upon another, suggesting both a highly complex and a more prolonged experience. This suggestion is borne out by the fact that when the speaker comes out of the trance it is almost dawn. However, the polysyndetonic linkages also give rise to the sense of a number of impressions being simultaneously intuited. Lines 35-43 thus form a kind of extrasensory equivalent to the sensory experience registered in lines 1-12.

The diction used in the passage dealing with the spiritual union of the poet and the numinous presence is also richly evocative. The word "empyreal" (ℓ.38) is derived from "empyrean", meaning "highest heaven" (OED B1), which tends to recall the "ambrosial" air in which Tennyson sensed Hallam's presence in section 86. In Christian use "empyrean" comes to stand for "the abode of God and the angels" (OED B1). But "empyreal" has also been associated with Plato ("Go soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere"--Pope).[94] In addition, "empyreal" may mean "fiery;

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[93] Gerhard Joseph points out that "Tennyson in the course of his early poetry fashions both a horizontal and a vertical spatial symbolism" to represent his vacillation between love of the sensuous and commitment to social responsibility (Joseph, p.34).

[94] OED 1 (1732: Pope, *Essay on Man*, II, 23).

composed of or resembling the pure element of fire" (OED 3), or "capable of supporting combustion" (OED 4). Thus the word links up admirably with the idea of spontaneous combustion inherent in the word "flash'd" (ℓ.36). Above all, it is significant that the Empyrean is no longer associated with the "void" ("Armageddon", PT 3, I,76) but with the absolute "heights of thought" (IM 95, ℓ.38).

The Aeonian music of line 41 recalls the music of the spheres. It measures out the "steps of Time--the shocks of Chance-- / The blows of Death"(ℓℓ.42-43), seeming briefly to reveal a principle of order in an apparently catastrophic universe. But it is at this point that Tennyson's "trance" is "cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt" (ℓℓ.43-44)--just as Keats's vision in "Ode to a Nightingale" fades at the word "forlorn", leaving that poet wondering

> Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
> Fled is that music...Do I wake or sleep?
>
> (ℓℓ.79-80; Allott, p.532)

A feeling of doubt following epiphany seems to be a fairly common feature of metaphysical experience. William James writes:

> There are moments of sentimental and mystical experience...that carry an enormous sense of inner authority and illumination with them when they come. But they come seldom, and they do not come to everyone; and the rest of life makes either no connection with them, or tends to contradict them more than it confirms them.[95]

For Tennyson, emerging from his trance,

> ...the doubtful dusk revealed
> The knolls once more where, couched at ease,
> The white kine glimmered, and the trees
> Laid their dark arms about the field....
>
> (IM 95, ℓℓ.49-52)

Section 95 has gone full circle, imitating in form the circular movements described within the poem itself. But with the approach of dawn the "calm that let the tapers burn / Unwavering" (ℓℓ.5-6)

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[95] James, p.17.

is broken:

> And suck'd from out the distant gloom
> A breeze began to tremble o'er
> The large leaves of the sycamore,
> And fluctuate all the still perfume,
>
> And gathering fresher overhead,
> Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung
> The heavy-folded rose, and flung
> The lilies to and fro, and said
>
> 'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away....
>
> (IM 95, ℓℓ.53-61)

The breeze which is "suck'd from out the distant gloom" recalls most potently the "ambrosial air" emanating from "the gorgeous gloom" which seemed to breathe the very spirit of Hallam (IM 86). The wind also brings to mind "the winds...in the beech" (IM 30, ℓ.9) which inexplicably moved the Tennyson family to tears on the first Christmas described in In Memoriam. Now, following hard on the epiphanic experience of In Memoriam 95, the wind heralding the actual and symbolic "dawn" seems to endorse the mystical experience. The voices in the wind which Tennyson heard as a child[96] and which seemed to him in his early poetry to be the voices of "the armies of the dead" (PT 45, ℓ.10) have now become the voice of Hallam, "perchance" associated with the deity. And even though the wind "died away", the sense of the numinous remains, for

> ...East and West, without a breath,
> Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
> To broaden into boundless day.
>
> (IM 95, ℓℓ.62-64)

How different is this dawn from that described in In Memoriam 7, which closed with the line, "On the bald street breaks the blank day". The day is no longer "blank" but "boundless". Infinity has become a metaphor for Eternity, and the transcendence of time is symbolized by the mixing of the "dim lights" of a midsummer dusk and dawn, "like life and death" (ℓ.63). Both life and death become almost nugatory in the face of the vastness of

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[96] See p.43 of this study.

the "boundless day" into which they broaden--the boundless day that is the correlative for the sempiternal present associated with "that which is".[97] The phrase "that which is" embraces Platonic, Hebraic and--by extrapolation--Christian conceptualizations of the deity.[98] Furthermore, the experience recorded by Tennyson in In Memoriam 95 has all four of the characteristics which William James, writing shortly after Tennyson's death, believed to be the criteria for assessing mystical states: ineffability, a noetic quality, transiency and passivity.[99]

The ineffability of Tennyson's experience is suggested in lines 45-48:

> ...ah, how hard to frame
> In matter-moulded forms of speech,
> Or ev'n for intellect to reach
> Thro' memory that which I became....

Discussing the noetic quality associated with mystical experience, James writes:

> ...mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time.[100]

The phrase, "empyreal heights of thought" (IM 95, ℓ.38), certainly suggests "knowledge" and "insight". And James's diction bears an uncanny resemblance to Tennyson's. James's "depths of truth" correspond to Tennyson's "deep pulsations of the world" (ℓ.40). And Tennyson's poetic observation on how difficult it is "for

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[97] John D. Jump refers to "the 'boundless day' of everlasting life after death". See John D. Jump, "Tennyson's Religious Faith and Doubt", in Palmer, p.110.

[98] Benziger, p.151.

[99] James, p.371. Stephen Grant notes this correspondence. See Stephen Allen Grant, "The Mystical Implications of In Memoriam", Studies in English Literature, 2 (1962), 484-85.

[100] James, p.371.

intellect to reach" that which he "became" (ℓℓ.47-48) finds its parallel in James's phrase, "unplumbed by the discursive intellect".

On the subject of transiency, James says:

> Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day. Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly be reproduced in memory....[101]

The observation concerning the difficulty experienced in trying to "reproduce" the mystical state through memory could almost be a paraphrase of lines 47-48 of In Memoriam 95 (quoted above).

James also discusses the aspect of passivity. He writes:

> Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.[102]

Tennyson writes that his soul "was wound, and whirl'd / About empyreal heights of thought" (ℓℓ.37-38). The passive verbs ("was wound, and whirl'd") implicitly suggest that the poet is at this stage subject to a "superior power". This tacit suggestion reinforces the idea of deity inherent in the phrase, "that which is" (ℓ.39). The numinous presence, first sensed in nature, then gradually felt as the spirit of the dead beloved, is developing into a religious symbol. But this aspect of In Memoriam will be explored in a later chapter.

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[101] James, p.372.

[102] James, p.372.

CHAPTER III

THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE : (ii) SUBJECTIVE ELEMENTS

> Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
> The wish too strong for words to name;
> That in this blindness of the frame
> My Ghost may feel that thine is near.
>
> (IM 93, ll.13-16)

Any honest attempt at understanding the nature of Tennyson's supernatural experiences--as outlined in the poetry and illuminated by biographical studies--must first question whether those experiences actually were "supernatural", or whether "the wish too strong for words to name" becomes in a sense self-fulfilling. Could it be that the poet's

> ...desire, like all strongest hopes,
> By its own energy fulfilled itself,
> Merged in completion?[1]

Certainly the idea of autosuggestion or autoinduction would afford a possible explanation for the phenomenon I have called the numinous presence.

Poets have been known to project or externalize their emotions with powerful results. David Perkins, discussing Wordsworth in this connection, writes that if we turn

> ...to those passages where he attempts to re-create what was felt as a moment of "linking" or union, we find, more often than not, that he seems to be directly projecting or objectifying his own feelings in the appearances of nature. In this process, the external world becomes a kind of sounding board or echo, repeating or mirroring to the mind its own emotions.[2]

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[1] "The Gardener's Daughter", PT 208, ll.232-34.

[2] David Perkins, The Quest for Permanence: The Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), p.55. In quoting the above passage I intend no pejorative implications. Subjective experience may be as "real" as objective. Tennyson certainly believed so (Memoir II, 90).

The question is whether something of a similar nature occurs in Tennyson. One cannot discount the possibility that the apparently preternatural presence may be either a projection of the poet's own emotions or an emanation of the unconscious mind.

Discussing inspiration and the unconscious mind in his essay "Some Reflections on Genius", the eminent physician and neurologist, Russell Brain says:

> Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the creations of genius is the extent to which they arise independently of the conscious mind. This has always been recognized by poets and artists. Inspiration means the in-breathing of an impulse from without, felt to be in some way separate from the conscious personality, and often therefore personified by primitive thought.[3]

Arthur Hallam was Tennyson's supreme source of inspiration. The poet tacitly acknowledges this in In Memoriam 69, where he writes of a dream in which "an angel of the night" (which I showed in Chapter II is very suggestive of Hallam) smiled upon the poetic "crown of thorns" and "reached the glory of a hand, / That seemed to touch it into leaf" (ℓℓ.14-18). Furthermore, I pointed out in Chapter II that In Memoriam 95, while recording an actual experience, is--like so many great poems--also an analogue of the poetic process. Thus the spirit of Arthur Hallam becomes both the source of, and the symbol for, poetic inspiration. In Russell Brain's terms, it is both the "personified" external "impulse" and the ultimate artistic expression of that impulse.

Tennyson's tendency to melancholia, and the reasons--both psychological and genetic--for this tendency, were discussed at some length in Chapter I. Perhaps it would be appropriate to add here that poets have often been prone to melancholy, and that "the pathetic mood may be idealized, and figure as a higher form of sensibility".[4] Thus melancholy has been associated with poetry in many ages. One thinks, for instance, of poems such as Milton's

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[3] Russell Brain, "Some Reflections on Genius", in "Some Reflections on Genius" and Other Essays (London: Pitman Medical, 1960), p.13.

[4] James, p.140.

"Il Penseroso",Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard", and Keats's "Ode to Melancholy".

Arthur Carr has observed that "moods of melancholy, sometimes mellow, sometimes acute, generate Tennyson's poetry".[5] No doubt his "melancholy-in-genius" (to borrow Kermode's term) predisposed Tennyson to experiences of a mystical nature.[6] Goethe said of poets, "Their extraordinary achievements presuppose a very delicate organization which makes them susceptible to unusual emotions and capable of hearing celestial voices".[7] Clearly, subjective elements are involved in the apprehension of the arcane.

Tennyson's apperception of "celestial voices" (to use Goethe's metaphor for the numinous) was strongly linked to the deep-seated sense of bereavement which lay at the core of his life and poetry. His emotional "suffering"[8] was associated not only with particular sorrows but with the incipient and generalized "grief for ever born from griefs to be" ("Tiresias", PT 219, ℓ.79). Even the memory of rare happy times (and these were indeed rare for the "black-blooded" Tennysons) could not dispel the poet's overwhelming sense of sadness; for, as the speaker in "Locksley Hall" observes, "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things" (PT 271, ℓ.76). Nevertheless, I believe that "remembering happier things" was one of the most powerful of the subjective elements involved in Tennyson's extrasensory experiences.

As Philip Collins has noted, "Memories, and their meaning, are a frequent theme in Tennyson".[9] William Buckler writes of memory's "rôle" in Tennyson's poetry as that of "'Mother of the

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[5] Arthur J. Carr, "Tennyson as a Modern Poet", University of Toronto Quarterly, 19 (1950), 365.

[6] Kermode, p.8.

[7] Quoted by Brain, p.19.

[8] Kermode, p.8.

[9] Collins, "Tennyson In and Out of Time", in Studies, p.133.

Muses' and chief igniter of the imagination".[10] Culler concurs in this, stating: "It is clear that for a number of years Tennyson thought of Memory as the faculty principally ministering to the poetic imagination".[11] Jerome Buckley goes a step further, pointing out that, in the "Ode to Memory", "Memory now is imagination itself, the creative force, selecting and sanctifying impressions".[12] Buckler explores the relationship between imagination and external stimuli. He writes:

> The imagination is a deep-seated presence in the inner consciousness of every man, perhaps the alpha and omega of that consciousness....there is a perpetual interaction between this inner consciousness and stimuli external to it; and since this deep-seated presence is both "artificer and subject, lord and slave," its own character is affected by the images which set its transformational powers in motion, and it is subject to a process of both strengthening and purifying according to the stimulants brought to bear upon it.[13]

When the mind is exposed to external stimuli to which it has previously been exposed, memory comes into play. Under the influence of the creative imagination, the memories evoked may be intensified or combined with other memories by a process of association, so that a veritable transformation takes place. I believe that this kind of psychological "mechanism" plays an important rôle in the apparently supernatural experience recounted in In Memoriam 95. When, in that elegy, the poet says, "the dead man touch'd me from the past", the past becomes operative not only through the old letters written by Hallam, but (I believe) through remembrance of early poems addressed to or associated with Hallam. The following is one such poem:

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[10] William E. Buckler, The Victorian Imagination: Essays in Aesthetic Exploration (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1980), p.66.

[11] Culler, p.37.

[12] GP, p.19.

[13] VI, p.54.

Thy soul is like a landskip, friend,
  Steeple, and stream, and forest lawn,
  Most delicately overdrawn
With the first twilight of the even,
Clear-edged, and showing every bend
  Of each dark hill against the Heaven,
Nor wanting many a sombre mound,
  Stately and mild, and all between
Valleys full of solemn sound,
  And hoary holts on uplands green,
And somewhat loftier antient heights
Touched with Heaven's latest lights.

(PT 136)

In his headnote, Ricks says the poem was written at Cambridge between 1828 and 1830, and he records Hallam Tennyson's comment on it: "'Another verse-portrait my father quoted to me, which he remembered with pleasure that Hallam had praised'". Ricks goes on to say, "Presumably it is not addressed to Hallam", but this deduction does not necessarily follow.[14] I doubt whether Arthur Hallam who was so generous, not to say lavish, in his commendation of Tennyson's poetry would have scrupled to "praise" a poem simply because it was addressed to himself. I believe the friend apostrophized is indeed Hallam. The face which is "touched with Heaven's latest lights" (ℓ.12) is surely that of the young man whose friends seemed to see "the God within him light his face" (IM 87, ℓ.36).

Certainly the landscape to which the friend's soul is likened has many features in common with the scene described in In Memoriam 95. The "stream" in the earlier poem (ℓ.2) corresponds to the "brook" (ℓ.7) in In Memoriam 95. Both poems mention the "lawn" (PT 136, ℓ.2; IM 95, ℓ.1). The "dusk" of In Memoriam 95 (ℓ.11)--that "silvery haze of summer" drawn "o'er the sky" (ℓℓ.4, 3)--has its prototype in the "first twilight of the even"

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[14]The word "presumably" would seem to suggest that Ricks is only making an assumption. If, however, he should be in possession of other information which he does not marshal here, it would not invalidate my argument. For Hallam Tennyson's comment shows that, whoever Tennyson may have addressed the poem to originally, the person with whom it was ultimately associated in the poet's mind was Arthur Hallam.

(PT 136, ℓ.4). The "hoary holts" and "each dark hill" and "sombre mound" in the earlier poem correspond to the "knolls" in the elegy (IM 95, ℓ.14). No doubt the scene described in both poems is Somersby. But in the time lapse between the two poems a kind of chiasmus has occurred. In the earlier poem, written at Cambridge, the friend (Hallam, I believe) is present, and it is the Somersby view which is being remembered. In the later poem the present reality is the Somersby scene and it is the friend who is being remembered. In a mood of serenity, when the poet's spirit seems to be "at peace with all" (IM 94, ℓ.8), the close association of a particular scene with a particular person brings about a kind of amalgamation that terminates in transformation. The sense of harmony at first experienced through the scene is transformed into a more intense harmony with the "soul" of the person associated with that scene. Hallam becomes a kind of presiding deity in the dimly-lit[15] Somersby landscape, and the poet, under the influence of memory and poetic imagination, experiences an overwhelming sense of unity and illumination. Similarity of setting and mood thus appears to play an important part in evoking a memory so poignant and so powerful as to transcend time, becoming a present experience of union and communion with the spirit of the dead man.

Russell Brain, exploring the concept of "creative genius" and how it works, postulates the importance of

> ...a memory capable of retaining all the relevant data and associative processes of exceptional richness by which the data can be brought together into novel and fruitful combinations in what Galton..., who also studied creative thinking, called "the ante chamber of consciousness".[16]

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[15]Tennyson wrote in "Ode: O Bosky Brook": "Rare sound, spare light will best address / The soul for awful muse and solemn watchfulness" (PT 127, ℓℓ.111-12). "Spare light" was frequently a precipitating factor in Tennyson's experiences of the numinous.

[16]Brain, p.14. The Galton work to which Brain refers is Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development (1883).

My hypothesis, then, is that the "associative processes" of memory and imagination combine to set the poet's "transformational powers"[17] in motion, so that the "soul" of Hallam apostrophized in the early poem ("Thy soul is like a landskip, friend") becomes the "living soul" of In Memoriam's climactic experience.

In the very transformation itself memory may be seen to be operative, for the terms in which the epiphany is described are strongly reminiscent of an early sonnet to Hallam.

> Me my own Fate to lasting sorrow doometh:
> Thy woes are birds of passage, transitory:
> Thy spirit, circled with a living glory,
> In summer still a summer joy resumeth.
> Alone my hopeless melancholy gloometh,
> Like a lone cypress, through the twilight hoary,
> From an old garden where no flower bloometh,
> One cypress on an inland promontory.
> But yet my lonely spirit follows thine,
> As round the rolling earth night follows day:
> But yet thy lights on my horizon shine
> Into my night, when thou art far away.
> I am so dark, alas! and thou so bright,
> When we two meet there's never perfect light.
>
> (PT 141)

The evocative imagery of twilight is once again present, and line 3 ("Thy spirit, circled with a living glory") seems to me to contain the germ of In Memoriam 95. The word "circled", which is frequently associated with Hallam,[18] not only looks forward to the circle imagery in In Memoriam, but actually adumbrates the form of that elegy (as discussed in the previous chapter). The "living glory" (ℓ.3) associated with the "spirit" (ℓ.3) of the dead friend becomes, in In Memoriam 95, the "living soul" (ℓ.36), which also glances back to the "soul" celebrated in "Thy soul is like a landskip, friend". One is conscious of the enmeshing effect described by Buckler, who observes that, in Tennyson's poetry,

> ...the threads that pass out beyond one design
> are rewoven in other designs until a grand

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[17] VI, p.54.

[18] See pp.64-65, 70 of this study.

> tapestry emerges which can never be completed, and the threads then pass out beyond the whole.[19]

The twilight setting in both In Memoriam 95 and the early poem, "Thy soul is like a landskip, friend", comes to assume symbolic significance in the face of the closing couplet of the sonnet: "I am so dark, alas! and thou so bright, / When we two meet there's never perfect light". This couplet adumbrates the post-epiphanic resolution in In Memoriam 95--that is, the confirmation received through nature after the "trance / Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt" (ℓ.44). For in the sonnet, "Me my own Fate to lasting sorrow doometh", the poet writes: "...my lonely spirit follows thine, / As round the rolling earth night follows day" (ℓℓ.9-10). But in In Memoriam 95 the apparent polarity between night and day is resolved as a midsummer's dusk blends with a midsummer dawn:

> And East and West, without a breath,
> Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
> To broaden into boundless day.
>
> (ℓℓ.61-64)

The poet perceives a symbolic endorsement of his "hour's communion with the dead" (IM 94, ℓ.4).

In his essay, "Tennyson Inheriting the Earth", Philip Collins makes the point that "[a]ll language holds communion with the dead, those dead who have no memorial except the language which they maintained, and those other dead who left the memorials of literature".[20] Inevitably, the imagination of a poet steeped in literature will be stimulated not only by personal memories but also by literary memories. For instance, Tennyson's use of the phrase "the living soul" in In Memoriam 95 suggests that, consciously or subconsciously, he was remembering the transcendent experience of an earlier poet, Wordsworth, who wrote of

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[19] VI, p.51.

[20] Philip Collins, "Tennyson Inheriting the Earth", in Studies, p.76.

> ...that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on, -
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.[21]

Though Tennyson's "vision" was in many ways different from that of Wordsworth, In Memoriam 95 and the Wordsworth lines quoted above have much in common. Wordsworth's "serene and blessed mood" is parallelled by the sense of tranquillity evoked in the opening stanzas of In Memoriam 95 (ℓℓ.1-16). In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth writes that "the affections gently lead us on"; and in In Memoriam 95 the poet is, as it were, "led" into his mystical experience by thoughts of and love for Hallam, as he re-reads the letters of that beloved friend (ℓℓ.21-24).

Tennyson's trance-like state seems to have a prototype in the experience Wordsworth describes:

> ...the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul....

Wordsworth sees "into the life of things", while Tennyson becomes aware of the "deep pulsations of the world" (ℓ.40). But these different vehicles suggest the same tenor--that of mystical insight.

In both poets the perception of the numinous is expressed in terms of the phrase, "living soul". But where Wordsworth's experience is transformational (he becomes "a living soul"), Tennyson experiences a moment of linking with "the living soul" (ℓ.36). This essential difference between Wordsworth and Tennyson is noted in another connection by Lawrence Kramer. Discussing the influence on In Memoriam of Wordsworth's

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[21] William Wordsworth, Poems, Volume I, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour", ℓℓ.41-49 (pp.358-59).

"Intimations of Immortality" Ode, Kramer writes:

> Whatever else it is...In Memoriam is surely a prolonged struggle to find a replacement for the lost presence--Hallam--that irradiated Tennyson's early world.... Unlike Wordsworth, however, Tennyson is so haunted by a sense of missing presence that he cannot make the Romantic turn inward that brings compensation and renews the self's relationship to the world. Instead he fixes on the idea of an external principle of radiance...

and yearns for "reunion" with it.[22]

Lines 93-99 of "Tintern Abbey" also suggest a kind of numinous presence:

> ...I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man....[23]

The memory of these lines would have been readily linked in Tennyson's mind with Arthur Hallam. For Hallam was buried at Clevedon, which is quite close to Tintern Abbey, where Tennyson wrote another beautiful mood poem, "Tears, Idle Tears".[24]

> 'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
> Tears from the depth of some divine despair
> Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
> In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
> And thinking of the days that are no more.'
>
> (The Princess, PT 286, IV, 21-25)

Ricks quotes Tennyson's remark: "This song came to me on the yellowing autumn-tide at Tintern Abbey, full for me of its bygone

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[22] Lawrence Kramer, "The 'Intimations' Ode and Victorian Romanticism", Victorian Poetry, 18 (1980), 318.

[23] "Tintern Abbey", ll.93-99 (Hayden I, 360). A discussion of the numinous in Wordsworth is to be found in W.A. Claydon, "The Numinous in the Poetry of Wordsworth", Hibbert Journal, 28 (1930), 601-15.

[24] PT 286, IV, n.21-40 (pp.784-85); Martin, pp.187, 193-94.

memories. It is the sense of the abiding in the transient".[25] The "bygone memories" would have sprung not only from the conscious memory, both personal and literary, but also from what one might term subliminal memory--or what Tennyson called his "passion of the past". This passion was not for the historical past so much as for the past that eludes history.

Tennyson described his "passion of the past" poetically in "The Ancient Sage":

> ...oft
> On me, when boy, there came what then I called,
> Who knew no books and no philosophies,
> In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the Past.'
> The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
> The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
> As if the late and early were but one--
> A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
> Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost and gone!'
> A breath, a whisper--some divine farewell--
> Desolate sweetness--far and far away--
> What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy?
> I know not and I speak of what has been.
>
> (PT 415, ll.216-28)

These lines, which Tennyson said represented his "own personal feelings",[26] though uttered through a persona, corroborate what Tennyson had revealed to Frederick Locker-Lampson years earlier in connection with "Tears, Idle Tears"--that the emotion he described was

> ...not real woe, as some people might suppose; "it was rather the yearning that young people occasionally experience for that which seems to have passed away from them forever." That in him it was strongest when he was quite a youth.[27]

This characteristic feeling of bereavement and looking back, experienced from an early age, found its situational correlative in the loss of Arthur Hallam, who thus becomes the vehicle for,

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[25] PT 286, IV, n.21-40 (p.784); The Works of Tennyson: "The Princess" and "Maud", ed. Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Eversley edition (London: Macmillan, 1908), p.255. See also Memoir I, 253; Martin, p.194.

[26] Memoir II, 319; quoted PT 415, headnote (p.1350).

[27] Memoir II, 73,

as well as the subject of, Tennyson's elegiac mood. Or, as James Kissane puts it:

> ...in the elegy that commemorates it, the loss of his friend becomes the "one pure image of regret" (CII) embodying these various longings and deprivations which constitute Tennyson's passion of the past.[28]

But even before his death Arthur Hallam was to Tennyson somehow symbolic of the "passion of the past".[29] I have already quoted(pp.38-39 of this study) the _déjà vu_ sonnet to Hallam (_PT_ 179) which asserts: "Methought that I had often met with you, / And either lived in either's heart and speech" (ℓℓ.13-14), and "'All this hath been before, / All this hath been, I know not when or where'" (ℓℓ.7-8). I believe that Tennyson felt he knew the answer to the question of "where" when he visited the valley of Cauteretz with Hallam in 1830. He celebrated the occasion thus:[30]

> Check every outflash, every ruder sally
> Of thought and speech; speak low, and give up wholly
> Thy spirit to mild-minded Melancholy;
> _This is the place._ Through yonder poplar alley,
> Below, the blue-green river windeth slowly,
> But in the middle of the sombre valley,
> The crispèd waters whisper musically,
> And all the haunted place is dark and holy.
> The nightingale, with long and low preamble,
> Warbled from yonder knoll of solemn larches,

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[28] Kissane, pp.97-98.

[29] All conscious memories seem also to have been subsumed in Arthur Hallam. In the "Ode to Memory" (_PT_ 84), Memory is addressed as "thou" and "thee" throughout; but ℓℓ.119-21 are addressed (as Tennyson himself tells us) to Hallam in the same terms:

> My friend, with thee to live alone,
> Methinks were better than to own
> A crown, ä sceptre and a throne!
>
> (ℓℓ.119-21)

The overall effect is that Arthur Hallam and Memory personified become virtually indistinguishable--especially in the originally published version, which appeared without the subtitle, "Addressed to -". Culler discusses this point at some length on pp.34-35.

[30] Martin, p.141.

And in and out the woodbine's flowery arches
The summer midges wove their wanton gambol,
And all the white stemmed pinewood slept above--
When in this valley first I told my love.

(PT 150--my italics)

In assessing the vital significance of Tennyson's visit to Cauteretz with Hallam, Martin has this to say:

> Something even more profound than his perception of the metaphorical meaning of the evocative landscape must have happened to Tennyson in Cauteretz, although it is impossible to know exactly what it was. Recurrently sounding through the poetry written after the Pyrenean trip is the word 'valley', always connected with love, usually with youth, and frequently with Arthur Hallam. Any supposition that one totally understands why the word had such subterranean power for Tennyson after his visit to Cauteretz is almost certain to be wrong.... What seems certain is that the unexpected romantic beauty of the ravine, 'lovelier / Than all the valleys of Ionian hills',[31] fused with some deep personal perception to make it the most potent spot poetically that Tennyson ever knew. As he was to write in The Princess, nearly two decades later, 'Love is of the valley'.[32] In the year of his own death he published 'The Death of Oenone', in which the imagery proves that the memory of the valley of Cauteretz was as green as it had been sixty years before.[33]

Indeed, when Tennyson visited Cauteretz for a second time, thirty-one years[34] after his halcyon sojourn there with Arthur Hallam, memory once again wove its inspirational magic, evoking a powerful sense of Hallam's presence:

All along the valley, stream that flashest white,
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,

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[31] "Oenone", PT 164 , ℓℓ.1-2.

[32] The Princess, PT 286, VII, 183.

[33] Martin, p.120.

[34] Line 4 of "In the Valley of Cauteretz" reads "two and thirty years ago". Martin notes that this results in "a more melodious" effect--which may be why Tennyson did not correct his supposed error (Martin, p.440).

All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
I walked with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
All along the valley, while I walked today,
The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away;
For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

(PT 326)

The stream "that flashest white" is apostrophized as the poet recalls walking "all along the valley", beside the stream, "two and thirty years ago". The archaic inverted numerical form ("two and thirty" instead of "thirty-two") seems to emphasize the long years of separation by creating a dragging effect that is heightened by the placement of the adverbial phrase of time at the end of both sentence and line. In line 6 the phrase "two and thirty years ago" is repeated--but now its position is at the beginning of the line, and the idea of time as a means of separation is subsumed in the metaphor of "a mist that rolls away". For the "living voice" of the stream seems like "the voice of the dead"; and, in a kind of imaginative transference of vitality, "the voice of the dead" becomes "a living voice". Now, however, it is not the voice of the river, but of Hallam himself.

The evocation of the numinous presence in this poem operates at two levels. Empirically speaking, the poem offers "a pattern of natural consolation".[35] That is, under the influence of memories evoked by revisiting a place formerly visited in the company of Hallam, the sound of the stream seems to become the voice of the dead man. The phrase "by rock and cave and tree", so reminiscent of the Wordsworthian phrase "With rocks, and stones, and trees",[36] emphasizes the idea of consolation through nature--albeit tacitly.

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[35] Kerry McSweeney, "The Pattern of Natural Consolation in In Memoriam", Victorian Poetry, 11 (1973), 87.

[36] Wordsworth, "A slumber did my spirit seal", ℓ.8 (Hayden I, 360). Martin, pointing out various literary influences, writes: "From his unconscious he [Tennyson] drew upon other poetry with deep meaning about energized, moralized landscapes: Wordsworth's 'A slumber did my spirit seal', Meredith's 'Love in the Valley',

At the beginning of the chapter I posed the question: to what extent are Tennyson's apparently mystical experiences "supernatural"? I have shown above that there is a "natural" explanation for the poet's sense of his friend's presence in the valley of Cauteretz. And one recalls that, in connection with The Idylls of the King, Tennyson was "at pains to point out that the narrative was rooted in a literal reality and that everything that might be taken as magical or supernatural could be adequately accounted for by naturalistic explanation".[37] Yet there is also a preternatural ambience about the poem; and this is heightened by the recollection of that earlier poem about Cauteretz which said that "all the haunted place is dark and holy".[38]

Culler says of "Locksley Hall" and "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After": "Each poem enters into relation with the other, so that the two together form a diptych, enclosed within a common frame".[39] Something similar may be said to happen with the two Cauteretz poems. Each of the poems will stand alone, effectively. But each is further enriched by association with its "paired" poem--which contributes to the tapestry effect noted by William Buckler.[40]

The phrase "the deepening [i.e., darkening] of the night", in the later Cauteretz poem assumes an even greater significance if we remember that the "dark" place in the earlier poem was also "haunted". The word "haunted" seems to echo across the intervening years, emphasizing the tension of expectation in the poem written more than three decades later. Furthermore, with the "deepening of the night" there is also a "deepening" of the voice of the stream. This was apparently a natural phenomenon noted by

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his own 'Check every outflash, every ruder sally', and a poem by Hallam himself, 'The Soul's Eye'" (Martin, p.440).

[37] Martin, p.495.

[38] PT 150, ℓ.8; quoted p.87 of this study.

[39] Culler, p.199.

[40] VI, p.51; quoted pp.82-83 of this study.

Tennyson,[41] but memories are evoked of "murmurs of a deeper voice / Going before to some far shrine"--lines from "On a Mourner" (PT 216,ℓℓ.16-17) which, according to Ricks, was written in October 1833, "immediately after Tennyson heard of the death of Arthur Hallam".[42] Therefore the deepening of the voice of the stream seems to reflect an intensification ("deepening") of the poet's own emotion, and to hint at the possibility of a kind of transmogrification. This idea is tacitly reinforced by the word "voice" (ℓ.2), which is suggestive of a personification that may have ambivalent implications. That is, the personification may be merely a rhetorical device, or it may suggest a kind of "possession".

Ultimately the idea of transmogrification, tenuously suggested in the opening lines of the poem, is endorsed by the closing lines. For, in what Culler calls a "chiastic" manoeuvre, the living voice of the stream becomes the living voice of Hallam.[43] Lines 8 and 10 read:

> Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
> ....
> The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

The italics are mine, and serve to emphasize how a small syntactical modification reflects a much greater conceptual modulation --from similarity to identicality. Culler discusses how the poem is "unified" by the fact that "its own rhythms, repetitions and structures perfectly reproduce the correspondences in time, and between nature and man, that it is the purpose of the poem to effect".

Culler goes on to discuss the metrics or "music" of "In the Valley of Cauteretz". He writes:

> Most delicately managed, perhaps, are the metrical effects, in which the odd lines are

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[41] Memoir I, 474-75; quoted PT 326, headnote (p.1123).

[42] PT 216, headnote (p.557).

[43] Culler, pp.246-47.

> of six feet, but with a caesura that occupies the time of a seventh, whereas in the even lines the caesura is filled up with sound, but the stressed syllables are alternately heavy and light so as to produce two rhythms, one superimposed upon another. This slower rhythm, additionally slowed by the occasional omission of unstressed syllables so as to place greater weight and emphasis upon the rhetorically important words, is the key to the peculiar music of this most musical of poems.[44]

In a passage which seems to me to throw some light on Tennyson's association of the sound of the stream with Hallam's voice, Carol Christ notes that "[e]xtreme emotional states such as euphoria or morbidity often transform our emotional reactions to the landscape". She goes on:

> The normal sense of boundaries between objects thus can disappear, while any detail can carry the significance of the whole. The slighter the detail, in fact, the more intensely it conveys the poet's consciousness of one spirit animating the landscape.[45]

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of the poem, "In the Valley of Cauteretz", is the repetition of the phrase, "All along the valley". It is repeated at regular intervals, five times in the space of ten lines. Each time the phrase occupies the prominent position at the beginning of a line, which tends to emphasize the incantatory effect created.

I earlier postulated that autoinduction may have played a part in Tennyson's experiences of a numinous presence. I believe "In the Valley of Cauteretz" supports my hypothesis. Tennyson himself described how he was able to induce a kind of "trance" in himself by the regular repetition of his own name or the phrase, "far-far-away".[46] The repetition of another phrase subconsciously associated with his "passion of the past" is likely

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[44] Culler, p.247.

[45] Carol T. Christ, The Finer Optic: The Aesthetic of Particularity in Victorian Poetry (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p.23.

[46] Culler, pp.3-5.

to have had the same effect[47]--and, given the links which existed in Tennyson's mind between his "passion of the past", Arthur Hallam and Cauteretz, "All along the valley" is such a phrase. The "charm in words"[48] may indeed have been instrumental in inducing in the poet a trance-like state in which the sound of the stream was transformed into the voice of Hallam.

I may seem at this point to be arguing teleologically. But the first, virtually "on-site" draft of the poem, written within two days of Tennyson's arrival at Cauteretz, also features the frequent repetition (three times in eight lines) of the phrase, "All along the valley".[49] It therefore seems highly probable that this key phrase was running through the poet's mind at the actual scene of the experience, and brought about the experience, and the genesis of the poem, in something of the same way as the phrase "someone had blundered" gave rise to "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (PT 315).[50]

Culler discusses how, "[o]ut of their own music", certain phrases "rose up into poems". Pursuing his theory that Tennyson's trance was a form of transcendental meditation, Culler continues: "Every lyric is thus in some sense an act of transcendental meditation, operating upon a particular word or phrase...."[51] Martin, however, has rightly suggested that Tennyson's trance-like state was probably epileptic in origin,[52] and epileptics are known to be able to precipitate an attack by various means. This fact would seem to support my suggestion concerning the rôle played by autoinduction in Tennyson's experiences of the supramundane.

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[47] The short poem, "No More" (PT 57), quoted on pp.51-52 of this study, describes the effect of that phrase associated with the "passion of the past".

[48] "Far-far-away", PT 426, ℓ.16.

[49] This first draft, quoted by Martin (p.440), contains all the elements germane to the argument I advance.

[50] Martin, p.381.

[51] Culler, p.5.

[52] Martin, pp.85, 279.

"In the Valley of Cauteretz" shows other features consistent with certain types of epileptic episode. Both visual and auditory illusions and hallucinations, singly or together, are recognized as common features of temporal lobe epilepsy.[53] The "living voice" of Hallam perceived by Tennyson in the Valley of Cauteretz could have been an auditory illusion of epileptic origin.

Culler has written of the "auditory" quality of Tennyson's imagination,[54] and this quality is very obvious in the many references to voices and whispers in the poetry:

> ...the deep
> Moans round with many voices.
>
> ("Ulysses", PT 217, ll.55-56)

> A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath
> From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death
> Far--far--away?
>
> ("Far--far--away", PT 426, ll.10-12)

> A wind arose and rushed upon the South,
> And shook the songs, the whispers, and the shrieks
> Of the wild woods together; and a Voice
> Went with it, 'Follow, follow, thou shalt win.'
>
> (The Princess, PT 286, I, 96-99)

These few randomly-chosen examples, in which the italics are mine, reflect the atmosphere of mystery that is generally associated with the unseen voices in Tennyson's poetry. These strange voices are more than a poetic device. They recur frequently, not only in his poetry, but in his life--from his early childhood experience of hearing a voice in the wind[55] to the "ghostly voices whispering in his ear" that caused him so much distress after the death of his brother Charles in 1879.[56] Frequently such mysterious voices are used in the poetry as a means of suggesting the ineffable--

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[53] V.M. Neppe, "Symptomatology of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy", S.A. Medical Journal, 60 (1981), 902-03; Freedman et al., p.807.

[54] Culler, p.6.

[55] AT, p.25; Martin, p.21. See pp.43, 69 of this study.

[56] Memoir II, 244.

for example in the poem "Whispers":

> 'Tis not alone the warbling woods,
>   The starred abysses of the sky,
> The silent hills, the stormy floods,
>   The green that fills the eye--
> These only do not move the breast;
>   Like some wise artist, Nature gives,
>   Through all her works, to each that lives
> A hint of somewhat unexprest.
>
> Whate'er I see, where'er I move,
>   These whispers rise, and fall away,
> Something of pain--of bliss--of Love,
>   But what, were hard to say.
>
> (PT 215)

These lines attempt to render poetically "sensations" akin to those Tennyson tried to convey prosaically in descriptions of his "trance"[57]--a state which was "the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest", and yet "utterly beyond words".[58] In a review article in the South African Medical Journal of 5 December, 1981, V.M. Neppe (paraphrasing D. Williams), refers to a sub-genus of epileptic hallucinations which he calls "hallucinations of indescribable quality", and postulates that "their indescribable quality may be associated with pathways [of the brain] not usually brought into conscious awareness".[59] One is reminded of Sinfield's observation that, in much of his poetry, Tennyson is working "on the extreme edge of human experience".[60] One is also reminded of the lines from "Ulysses" in which Tennyson, through his persona, speaks of

> ...this gray spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
>
> (PT 217, ll.30-32)

It was "beyond the utmost bound of human thought"--through the

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[57]Martin, p.84.

[58]Memoir I, 320.

[59]Neppe, p.905.

[60]Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", p.106.

noumenal ("I have felt") and the numinous--that Tennyson ultimately found his personal salvation. And his chief vehicle for suggesting the noumenal and the numinous is imagery of flashing or glimmering lights.

Sometimes the images strike the reader, as they no doubt struck the poet, with the suddenness of dramatic illumination, or even revelation:

> ...Each failing sense,
> As with a momentary flash of light,
> Grew thrillingly distinct and keen.
>
> ("Armageddon", PT 3, II, 27-29)

> ...as in the former flash of joy....
>
> (IM 122, ℓ.15)

> Flash upon flash they lighten through me--days
> Of dewy dawning....
>
> (The Lover's Tale, PT 153, I, 49-50)

> The very face and form of Lionel
> Flashed through my eyes and into my innermost brain....
>
> (The Lover's Tale, PT 153, II, 93-94)

> And as it were, perforce, upon me flashed
> The power of prophesying....
>
> ("Tiresias", PT 219, ℓ.55)

> ...the living soul was flashed on mine....
>
> (IM 95, ℓ.36)[61]

At other times the lights are perceived in a more muted form. They"gleam" and "glimmer".

> Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth....
>
> ("Sir Galahad", PT 234, ℓ.33)

> And now we lost her, now she gleamed
> Like Fancy made of golden air....
>
> ("The Voyage", PT 257, ℓℓ.65-66)

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[61] The emphasis in each of the preceding quotations is mine, as in the case of the four quotations which follow.

Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows....

("Tithonus", PT 324, ll.34-35)

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call,
Came glimmering through the laurels
At the quiet evenfall....

(Maud, Part II, ll.215-18)

David Shaw and Carl Gartlein have attempted to show that the Aurora Borealis is the source of Tennyson's imagery of flashing lights and "mystic gleams". Shaw, pointing out Tennyson's habit of taking long rambles at night, writes:

> On these northern nights it is improbable that so lonely and sensitive a youth would not have witnessed and been strangely moved by the eerie beauty of the northern aurora. Such experiences apparently made a profound impression on Tennyson, for their accurate observation is, we think, the basis of many of those striking images which critics have too often dismissed as an aesthete's indulgence in vague fantasy or make-believe.[62]

I would like to suggest, however, that Tennyson may have owed his particular brand of light imagery not to a "geophysical phenomenon"[63] but to the Aurora Borealis within his own brain--the flashing lights of epileptic aura.[64] Henderson and Gillespie believe that the

> "aura", sensory, motor, visceral or psychic, the common immediate precursor of major seizures, is not a true warning but is in fact the first few seconds of the seizure itself. In some cases the epileptic discharge consists of a sensory aura alone (sensory fit).[65]

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[62] W. David Shaw and Carl W. Gartlein, "The Aurora: A Spiritual Metaphor in Tennyson", Victorian Poetry, 3 (1965), 213.

[63] Shaw and Gartlein, "The Aurora: A Spiritual Metaphor in Tennyson", p.213.

[64] Kaplan et al., p.1474; Merck, p.1406.

[65] David Henderson and R.D. Gillespie, A Text Book of Psychiatry for Students and Practitioners, Oxford Medical Publications (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), p.550.

Light is, of course, an archetypal image, as old as poetry itself. One thinks, for example, of the light imagery in (especially) the final canto of Dante's Paradiso. In her introduction to the Penguin Classics English translation, Barbara Reynolds poses the question: "Does the Beatific Vision in the last Canto represent a mystical experience which Dante himself underwent, or is it only a symbol, intellectually arrived at, of the relationship between man's understanding and divine revelation?"[66] Tennyson's numinous experiences lend themselves to the same kind of speculation. But my association of the poet's characteristic light imagery with epileptic aura would seem to be supported by the linking of lights with "trances and visions", seizures, or "dreamy states" in the poetry.

> Careless of all things else, led on with *light*
> In *trances* and in *visions*....
>
> (The Lover's Tale, PT 153, I, 74-75)

> And like a *flash* the *weird affection* came,
> ....
> I seem'd to move, in old memorial tilts,
> And doing battle with forgotten ghosts,
> To *dream* myself the *shadow* of a *dream*.
>
> (The Princess, PT 286, V, 466-70)

> ...half in doze I seemed
> To float about a *glimmering* night and watch
> A full sea glazed with muffled *moonlight*....
>
> (The Princess, PT 286, I, 242-44)[67]

In support of his Aurora theory Shaw points out that scientific investigation suggests that sounds accompany the Aurora's "optical displays", and that Tennyson "alludes to this acoustical phenomenon in 'Sea Dreams'". Shaw admits, however, that the poet would be "exaggerating...in calling this sound musical, for it is probably analogous to the rustling of silk, or to the crackling sound that

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[66] Reynolds, introduction to Dante's Paradiso, p.14.

[67] In the above quotations, the italics are mine.

accompanies the sparks in an electrical discharge".[68] But visual hallucinations due to epilepsy may be accompanied by auditory hallucinations which may be simple (buzzing, hissing, ringing, thumping, throbbing, whistling, knocking, roaring or tapping) or complex (voices or music), depending on the area or areas of the brain affected.[69] Thus the auditory element associated with the flashing lights in Tennyson's poetry may be used to support my suggestion at least as readily as Shaw uses it to support his--perhaps more readily since (as music is a well-documented form of epileptic auditory hallucination) it is not necessary to claim poetic "exaggeration" in order to account for the phenomenon. Both Shaw's theory and mine are, of course, only hypotheses--attempts to locate some of the initial stimuli that fire the poetic imagination. And in this connection one must not forget the influence of literary antecedents.[70]

Furthermore, one must beware of trying to make all related images conform to the paradigm one has postulated. I would not take my argument in favour of epileptic aura so far as to deny that Tennyson ever saw or described the Aurora Borealis. Indeed, the moon, the stars and the "northern lights" may have seemed especially significant to him simply because they appeared to be an external reflection of his strange, "inner" lights. There may, indeed, have been times when the poet wondered which was "the real light" and which "The wisp that flickers where no foot can tread".[71] There is a hint of this kind of uncertainty about

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[68] Shaw and Gartlein, "The Aurora: A Spiritual Metaphor in Tennyson", p.216.

[69] Neppe, p.903.

[70] For instance, the word "gleam" is used by Wordsworth in lines 15-16 of "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont": "...the gleam / The light that never was... " (Hayden, I, 640); and by Pope in "Eloisa to Abelard", ℓ.146: "...gleams of glory brighten'd all the day". See _The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations_, ed. John Butt (London: Methuen, 1963), p.256.

[71] _The Princess_, _PT_ 286, IV, 338-39.

where reality ends and vision begins in the lovely lines on the Holy Grail in "Sir Galahad":

> Ah blessèd vision! blood of God!
>   My spirit beats her mortal bars,
> As down dark tides the glory slides,
>   And star-like mingles with the stars.
>
> (PT 234,ll.45-48)

It is perhaps apposite here to quote a poem about the Holy Grail. For though I cannot agree with David Shaw and Carl Gartlein that the author of the above lines was a "concrete thinker",[72] or that the flashing lights in his poetry represent, primarily, a "masterful use of auroral forms", I agree entirely that these lights did indeed hold "a spiritual significance for Tennyson",[73] and were an "analogue of revelation".[74] But that is a matter which I shall take up again in chapter V, for at this point I wish to return to the subject of numinous voices and related images in Tennyson's poetry.

In the poem "Youth" the strange voices are at first merely implied personifications of nature, but they seem to become increasingly preternatural.

> I heard Spring laugh in hidden rills,
>   Summer through all her sleepy leaves
> Murmured: a voice ran round the hills
>   When corny Lammas browned the sheaves:
>
> A voice, when night had crept on high,
>   To snowy crofts and winding scars,
> Rang like a trumpet clear and dry,
>   And shook the frosty winter stars.
>
> When I was somewhat older grown
>   These voices did not cease to cry,
> Only they took a sweeter tone,
>   But did not sound so joyfully:
>
> Lower and deeper evermore
>   They grew, and they began at last

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[72]Shaw and Gartlein, "The Aurora: A Spiritual Metaphor in Tennyson", p.221.

[73]Shaw and Gartlein, "The Aurora: A Spiritual Metaphor in Tennyson", p.213.

[74]Shaw and Gartlein, "The Aurora: A Spiritual Metaphor in Tennyson", p.220.

> To speak of what had gone before,
> And how all things become the past.
>
> (PT 223, ℓℓ.13-28)

But "suddenly a sharper voice / Cried in the future 'Come along'" (ℓℓ.39-40). The voice of the future is momentarily superimposed on the voice of the past.

Here, again, is the phenomenon of "two voices" which is found not only in the poem of that name but also in poems like "Supposed Confessions" (PT 78) and "The Ancient Sage" (PT 415). Fiona Morphet points out that "Love and Death" (PT 112) presents the same idea "in embryo", and that in "Ulysses" (PT 217) and "Tithonus" (PT 324) the idea becomes "more subtle, the voices being contained within single figures, thus making their conflicts more poignant".[75] Gerhard Joseph believes that, in The Princess, Ida and the prince "express different sides of Tennyson". Joseph continues:

> Many of his [Tennyson's] readers have noticed his habitual practice of having a character who is a version of himself besieged by "Two Voices". In such early works as "The Two Voices" and "The Palace of Art" or the even earlier "Sense and Conscience" Tennyson's divided self is heard through the debate of disembodied voices. In the latter narrative works these voices are transformed into "parabolic" characters in dramatic conflict.[76]

The idea of "two voices" has a long literary tradition, of course, an early example being the "externalized" voices representing good and evil respectively in the medieval morality plays. The Good and Bad Angels in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, and Marvell's "Debate between Soul and Body" are other instances. Pattison sees "The Two Voices" as formulated in the tradition of a

> ...kind of idyll, amoeban verse. In the original amoeban form, two shepherds exchanged verses, capping each other in a pastoral

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[75] Fiona Morphet, "Imprisonment, Time and Voice in Tennyson's Poetry" (M.A. dissertation, University of Natal at Durban 1971), p.43.

[76] Joseph, p.89.

> contest....Tennyson took the amoeban form one step further and turned it into an interior debate between the logic of despair and the assertion of hope.[77]

Perhaps Culler's opinion is the most reasonable. He writes: "It is clear that Tennyson, in combining forms and multiplying persons, is searching out a more complicated structure for a more complicated point of view".[78] However, in reviewing critical assessment of the phenomenon of "two voices" in Tennyson's poetry, I have digressed from the poem under discussion, "Youth".

Though I do not think "Youth" is one of Tennyson's best poems by any means, it is not without interest. There is something peculiarly Tennysonian about the receding consciousness symbolized in the "plain confused and dim" which "streams backward like a moving sea" (PT 223, ℓℓ.102-03) and terminates in a vision. This image represents a kind of spatial counterpart to the paradoxical lines in "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" (PT 83, ℓℓ.3-4): "The tide of time flowed back with me, / The forward-flowing tide of time". This image of time as a stream reversing its flow, whether in the service of conscious memory or of what Jung called "the collective unconscious",[79] is central to an understanding of Tennyson's experiences of the numinous. In "In the Valley of Cauteretz" (PT 326), though the stream is ever moving, it is yet the same stream by which the poet walked with his friend so many years before.[80] The image is capable of

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[77] Robert Pattison, Tennyson and Tradition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), p.58.

[78] Culler, p.80.

[79] Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, 3rd. ed. (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1966), p.22.

[80] This is the obverse of the Heraclitian argument that we never step into the same river twice. See Pattison, Tennyson and Tradition, p.63. Paden points out that Tennyson's verses beginning "All thoughts, all creeds" (PT 122) show that he took at least a passing interest in the doctrines of Heraclitus. See W.D. Paden, Tennyson in Egypt: A Study of the Imagery in his Earlier Work (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Publications, 1942), p.149, n.176.

encompassing both stasis and kinesis, and becomes symbolic of both time and timelessness, "as if the late and early were but one" (PT 415, ℓ.222).

In "The Ancient Sage" (PT 415) the poet-persona speaks of men as "thin minds, who creep from thought to thought" and "[b]reak into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now" (ℓℓ.103-04). In terms of the "Eternal Now", the dissolution of time in the déjà vu and déjà vécu poems, and the transcendence of time in poems like In Memoriam 95 become fully comprehensible. For, if we begin from such a premise, time is as much an illusion as is matter in this "dream world of ours" (PT 415, ℓ.108). Past memories and future hopes seem to be twin aspects of a reality which is symbolized by the morning and evening stars of In Memoriam:

> Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
> For what is one, the first, the last,
> Thou, like my present and my past,
> Thy place is changed; thou art the same.
>
> (IM 121, ℓℓ.17-20)

But Tennyson was not always able to hold the concepts of time and timelessness, or time and eternity, in such perfect cohesion. And in this connection it may be useful to look at a short poem called "The Silent Voices" (PT 459), which employs many of the images I have considered in this chapter, and shows how effectively Tennyson uses them to create a haunting elegiac note that lingers long after the words themselves have died away.

The ten-line poem, which was "[w]ritten at the end of his life",[81] opens with an adverbial clause of time:

> When the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
> Brings the Dreams about my bed....

The "dumb Hour, clothed in black" represents the silence and darkness of night personified--and night is, of course, a time of dreams. But there is something surrealistic and terrible about the powerfully evoked image, for it is also an image of death.

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[81] Hallam Tennyson, Harvard Notebook 56; this phrase quoted PT 459, headnote (p.1456).

The capitalization of "Dreams" suggests further personification, so that the whole extended metaphor assumes a macabre vitality. The sinister figure that represents both death and sleep ("the dumb Hour") parades the "Dreams" about the poet's bed in a ritual that tacitly recalls the temptation scenes in the old morality plays.

The temptation to the poet is, as always, to yield to what Elizabeth Waterston has called his "regressive impulse".[82] He resists the temptation, imploring,

> Call me not so often back,
> Silent Voices of the dead....
>
> (ℓℓ.3-4)

The lines are rich in paradox. Firstly there is the obvious oxymoron of "Silent Voices". Since they are the voices "of the dead", it is to be expected that the voices should be silent--remembered voices only. Yet these supposedly "silent" voices "call". The active form of the verb implicitly suggests that the voices have volition. They are more than remembered voices: they are indeed "ghostly".[83] And in context the long "a" and the resonant double "l" in "call" have a keening quality.

Though the poet implores the "Silent Voices of the dead" not to call him back, the next two lines are redolent with the allure of the past:

> Toward the lowland ways behind me,
> And the sunlight that is gone!
>
> (ℓℓ.5-6)[84]

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[82] Elizabeth Hillman Waterston, "Symbolism in Tennyson's Minor Poems", University of Toronto Quarterly, 20 (1951), 372.

[83] Hallam Tennyson records that in 1880, after his Uncle Charles' death, his father "was very unwell, suffering from a liver attack, and hearing perpetual ghostly voices". See Memoir II, 244; PT 459, headnote (p.1456); Martin, p.527.

[84] Cf."Ode: O Bosky Brook", PT 127, ℓℓ.94-95: "...the sharp sunlight occupies the sense / With this fair world's exceeding comeliness...."

The long vowels and the dipththong in "lowland ways behind me" create a lingering sense of yearning that is, paradoxically, both lightened and intensified by the momentary sparkle of "sunlight", and then fully realized with the utmost finality in the last word of the line, "gone!" The brief monosyllable seems to echo through the mind like a cry of anguish.

At the end of line 6, however, there is an almost sonnet-like "volta" as the poet swings from a negative injunction ("Call me not") to a positive one.

> Call me rather, silent voices,
> Forward to the starry track
> Glimmering up the heights beyond me
> On, and always on!
>
> (ℓℓ.7-10)

The caesura in line 7 has the effect of highlighting the preceding word, "rather", conveying a sense of resoluteness; and now the adverbs and prepositions ("forward", "up", "on", "beyond") drive the poem forward, whereas in the preceding four lines a regressive effect was created by words like "back" and "behind".

The "starry track" is not a literal (that is, earthly) track or path illuminated by the stars. Even brilliant starlight would not be sufficiently bright to illuminate a path in the absence of moonlight. I obtained verification of this supposition from an unexpected source--Lady Tennyson's Journal. Part of Emily's entry for 15 April, 1857 reads:

> A. and I go to the Pelham cottage. The stars are bright....We stumble about for it is too dark to see the paths....[85]

Thus the "starry track" must be an apparent "pathway" in the sky--a kind of heavenly path demarcated by a star or stars.

The image of a gleaming star acting as a beacon to Eternity has a long literary history on which Tennyson draws to obtain density of meaning. Shatto and Shaw note that the "stellification of Hallam" in In Memoriam "is an example of the convention

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[85] Lady Tennyson's Journal, ed. James O. Hoge (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1981), p.90.

introduced by Virgil and imitated in many English pastoral elegies, notably in 'Lycides' and 'Adonais'".[86] One thinks, too, of Shakespeare's sonnet 116, ℓ.7 ("It is the star to every wand'ring bark...."). But I believe the principal allusion in "The Silent Voices" is to Shelley's Adonais, in which the soul of the dead friend, apotheosized into a star, calls from afar (ℓℓ.493-95). Hallam had been the first to bring Shelley's Adonais back to England in printed form,[87] and I believe the poem held a special significance for Tennyson. Thus, in Tennyson's poem, the initiated will sense the numinous presence of Arthur Hallam both among the "glimmering" stars that form or light the track, and among the "silent voices" that "call" to the poet. But, enriching though this biographical association is, it is not strictly necessary to an appreciation of the poem. The image carries its own metaphysical and (through the "silent voices") elegiac implications.

The symbolic implications are enhanced by implicit association with earlier poems. Discussing, in general terms, Tennyson's symbolism, Elizabeth Waterston points out "the habitual reference to levels". She adds:

> This will not affect us in a single poem, but we have hardly to read four or five pieces before becoming aware of how often Tennyson's scenery is stratified. Again and again our eyes will be led from plain to cliff to sky. Soon we begin to speculate whether Tennyson's intellectual eye moves in the same way, and whether he expects us to follow him from a simple literal level to a more difficult allegorical significance, and perhaps beyond that to anagogy, the dominant concept beyond the specific moral value.[88]

In "The Silent Voices" the movement is from "the lowland ways" to "the heights", and the meaning connoted is indeed anagogical.

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[86] Shatto and Shaw, p.31.

[87] Joanne P. Zuckermann, "Tennyson's In Memoriam as Love Poetry", Dalhousie Review, 51 (1971), 204.

[88] Waterston, p.374.

The ten-line poem breaks naturally into three parts: the two introductory lines, followed by two four-line sections, one looking back, the other striving to look forward. The two four-line sections are full of contrasts. The phrase, "the lowland ways behind me", in the first section is contrasted with "the heights beyond me" in the second. The "sunlight" of the first section contrasts with the "glimmering" stars of the second. And the word "gone" (ℓ.6), suggesting temporal finality, is in sharp opposition to its rhyming counterpart in line 10--"on", suggesting continuity. On the surface, the repetition of the word "on", and its association with the word "always", suggest an approximation to the concept of eternity. But it is an eternity of seeking ("on and...on") rather than eternity per se.[89] Robert Martin presumably senses this ambivalence, for he writes that the "fragility" of Tennyson's "religious position flickers through 'The Silent Voices'".[90] He adds that for the poet at the end of his life "there were moments when eternity seemed as uncertain as it ever had...."[91]

In the context of a poem about an old man approaching death, the reference to "Dreams" in line 2 has a special poignancy. One remembers the biblical quotation to the effect that young men will have visions and old men will dream dreams.[92] Here we indeed have an old man "dreaming dreams", but striving to hold on to the vision of his youth, striving still to "follow The Gleam" (PT 431, ℓ.10). Tennyson is still his own Ulysses, aware of the necessity of going forward into the great unknown, "[t]o strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" (PT 217, ℓ.70). But, like "Ulysses", "The Silent Voices" is full of undercurrents, full of unformulated hope that the way forward may be the way back, and full of unexpressed fear that "[d]eath closes all" (PT 217, ℓ.51).

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[89] Culler notes, in connection with IM 95, that "for Tennyson absolute Reality is not Eternal Being but Eternal Becoming" (p.183).

[90] Martin, p.579.

[91] Martin, p.580.

[92] Acts ii:17.

In "Ulysses" these key polarities do emerge from the matrix of rhetoric and recollection:

> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
> (PT 217, ll.62-64)[93]

But in "The Silent Voices" the opposing possibilities are not articulated. They exert their pressor effect from just below the surface. I sometimes think the power of Tennyson's poetry resides not so much in what he says as in what he leaves unsaid; and often the metrics of the poem carry part of this unarticulated meaning.

The basic metre of "The Silent Voices" is trochaic[94] tetrameter, but most of the lines comprise only seven syllables, so that catalexis prevails. The "missing" slack at the end of a line seems to stretch the normal line-end pause, so that a kind of self-retarding rhythm is created. This is highly effective in enhancing the elegiac tone evoked, in this context, by the falling metre.

The opening lines of the poem would be scanned thus:

> / x | / x | / x | / (x)
> When the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
>
> / x | / x | / x | / (x)
> Brings the Dreams about my bed,
>
> / x | / x | / x | / (x)
> Call me not so often back,
>
> / x | / x | / x | / (x)
> Silent voices of the dead....

A contrapuntal scansion for line 1 would be:

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[93] Culler notes that this voyage of Ulysses is "ineluctably a night voyage. It is a voyage into all that is obscure upon the map, all that is dark and mysterious in the human consciousness, all that is shadowy either in this world or the next. It is certainly a voyage into Death ..." (p.97).

[94] Tennyson is noted for his "majestic trochees" (Pattison, p.43).

When the dumb Hour, clothed in black....

That is, normal speech rhythms tend to throw the emphasis on the phrase "dumb Hour", so that the first two feet read like a pyrrhic and a spondee rather than two trochees. The ultimate "prose" effect is of three accented syllables together ("dumb Hour, clothed"), and this molossus contributes to the oppressive, almost grotesque, effect of the line.

Line 5 is the first acatalectic line in the poem, and the possibility of several different scansions makes for significant metrical complexity. In accordance with the basic trochaic pattern of the poem the opening word would be elided:

T'ward the lowland ways behind me....

If, however, "[t]oward" is not elided, the line may be regarded as a trochaic tetrameter with anacrusis:

Toward the lowland ways behind me....

But there is a contrapuntal suggestion of iambic metre with a feminine ending--that is, iambic tetrameter hypercatalectic:

Towards the lowland ways behind me....

This brief yielding of the poem's falling metre to a rising metre links well with the emotional shift momentarily engendered by happy memories. And the overall length of the line (nine syllables compared with the poem's average of seven per line) highlights the poet's inclination to linger among memory's "lowland ways".

Line 6 returns to the trochaic tetrameter catalectic pattern.

And the sunlight that is gone!

But normal speech rhythm once again suggests a contrapuntal reading.

And the sunlight that is gone!

In this reading, although the number of feet remains the same, the overall balance has changed from four stressed plus three unstressed syllables to three stressed plus four unstressed. The "lightening" effect of the reduction in the number of heavy syllables is once again appropriate to the fleeting change of mood inherent in the line as the poet recalls happier days. The catalexis in this line is especially meaningful since the "missing" slack after the word "gone" seems to reflect the sense of loss evoked by that word.

Line 7 is trochaic tetrameter acatalectic:

Call me rather, silent voices....

The strong mid-line caesura has the effect, as I have already pointed out, of emphasizing the word "rather", thus stressing the possibility--indeed, the necessity--of choice. The emphasis on "rather" tends to create a sense of resoluteness, but at the same time this is subtly undercut by the caesural pause. Paradoxically, the very pause that highlights the positive decision to go forward also seems like a momentary hesitation in carrying out that decision. A feeling of ambivalence is created. It is as if a lack of emotional reinforcement undermines the poet's rationally made resolution. Furthermore, the interpolated vocative ("silent voices", ℓ.7) interrupts the thrust of the syntax ("Call me rather...forward"), revealing the poet's natural inclination to linger with the silent voices which are primarily associated with the "lowland ways" and the "sunlight that is gone!" Nevertheless, from line 8 both argument and metre strive to push foward, and the determined drive is reflected in the enjambment of lines 8 and 9:

Forward to the starry track
Glimmering up the heights, beyond me
On, and always on.

(ℓℓ.8-10)

However, the catalexis in line 8 undermines the enjambment, the missing slack suggesting a metrical pause in spite of the lack of punctuation. As a result, the word "glimmering", which syntactically refers to "the starry track", seems also to refer to the "silent voices"--thus: "Call me rather, silent voices, Forward to the starry track(,) Glimmering up the heights beyond me...." Through his metrical magic the poet has brought about an apparent amalgamation of "the silent voices" and the glimmering stars that lead him on toward the anagogical heights. It is a transcendental achievement.

Throughout the body of Tennyson's poetry meaning accrues to the word "glimmering". Here its indirect association with the ghostly voices receives tacit endorsement through the remembrance of lines from The Princess:

> Now droops the milk white peacock like a ghost,
> And like a *ghost* she *glimmers* on to me.
>
> (*PT* 286, VII, 165-66--my italics)

The ghostly connotations of the word "glimmering" are further enhanced by lines from In Memoriam which suggest a special link with Arthur Hallam:

> And in the dark church like a ghost
> Thy tablet *glimmers* to the dawn.
>
> (*IM* 67, ℓℓ.15-16--my italics)

But the glimmering track leads the way to "the heights" which, through meaning built up in poems like "The Voice and the Peak" (*PT* 359) and "The Vision of Sin" (*PT* 277), have come to symbolize the Deity or Eternity. The "silent voices" which at the outset symbolized the numinous presence only in the "lower" sense of the word ("mysterious, incomprehensible") have become numinous in the higher sense ("appealing to the higher emotions", "inspiring reverence", "sacred").

The "ghostly" voices have become mystical voices. But once again the poetry is subject to a modifying metrical effect. In the scansion of line 9 given above I elided the word "glimmering" to accord with the poem's basic trochaic tetrameter pattern. But when the word is left unelided (and indeed it seems to demand

its full weight of syllables), the opening foot becomes dactylic and the rhythm of the line is disturbed. The momentary metrical flicker reinforces the meaning of the word "glimmering", suggesting that at the end of the poet's life mystical apprehension still took the form of broken gleams or "broken lights".[95]

The poem's closing line is trochaic trimeter catalectic ("On , and | always | on (x) "). The short line reinforces the sense of the soul's being in a perpetual state of transition. The line seems never to arrive at its destination. One is reminded of lines from "Ulysses":

> Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
> Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move.
>
> (PT 217, ℓℓ.19-21)

The impression of unfulfilled expectation created by the short closing line of "The Silent Voices" seems to cast some doubt on whether the poet-speaker will ever reach "the heights". This doubt is reinforced by the diction. For the heights are not before him (as opposed to the "lowland ways behind" him). They are beyond him. And "beyond" suggests "out of reach" as well as "on the other side of". Although the poem is almost heroic in tone, one is constantly aware of underlying uncertainties that are part of what Elizabeth Waterston calls the "hidden meaning" in Tennyson's poems.[96]

"The Silent Voices" is above all a superb example of how Tennyson's masterly use of metre becomes a powerful tool in evoking the elegiac mood for which the numinous presence becomes the objective correlative. And the complexity of the numinous presence is beautifully illustrated by this poem. The strange presence is a projection of the poet's emotions in so far as it emanates from a particular mood--an elegiac mood in this case. One might even say a doubly elegiac mood, for the poem is pervaded by a sense of the poet's own impending death, as well as the loss of loved ones in the past.

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[95] IM, Introductory stanzas, ℓ.19.

[96] Waterston, p.373.

In one sense the numinous presence that haunts the poem is a complex of shades--"ghosts" from the past who lure the poet back in memory, though he knows he must go on. In another sense, the "silent voices" are his own inner voices--"two voices" once again pulling him in different directions, back toward "the lowland ways" and "forward to the starry track". The dichotomy is ostensibly resolved in so far as the poet's "official" voice adjures the "silent voices" to lead him forward, not back. But, as I have shown, the metrics are to some extent subversive, and the tension holds to the end.

I have already drawn parallels between this poem and "Ulysses"; and there is a sense in which the numinous presence in "The Silent Voices" is akin to Tennyson's own "gray spirit yearning in desire / To follow knowledge like a sinking star" (PT 217, ℓℓ.30-31). In "Ulysses" the fact that the star is a sinking star tends to lend the potentially heroic lines tragic overtones. The subversive metrics in "The Silent Voices" create a similar effect.

I have claimed that the numinous presence in "The Silent Voices" represents Tennyson's own divided nature as well as the "ghosts" or memories of lost loved ones, principally Arthur Hallam. This duality may appear paradoxical, but it is actually an example of that "fusing [of] subject and object" which Culler discusses in connection with "Mariana".[97] But the best elucidation of this point comes from Tennyson himself, in another line from "Ulysses". Through his persona, he says simply, "I am a part of all that I have met " (PT 217, ℓ.18).[98] Life is a constant interchange of ideas, emotions and perceptions. In every significant relationship and experience one gains something and gives something. In this way Tennyson is "a part of" those spirits represented by the "silent voices". And in the same way those spirits who inhabit the poet's memory are a part of him. There is, truly, a fusing

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[97] Culler, p.42.

[98] I believe I am justified in partially identifying Tennyson with his Ulysses, for the poet said there was more of himself in "Ulysses" than in In Memoriam. See PT 217, headnote (p.560), and Memoir I, 196.

of subject and object.

In my discussion of "The Silent Voices" I have used the term "numinous presence". Perhaps in this case it would have been more correct to say "presences"--for the phrase, "silent voices", suggests the plural. But in the end the numinous presence is generic, representing not only the dead Arthur Hallam but all those whom Tennyson had loved and lost. There came a point when the poet's grief and loss could not be compartmentalized. Thus, though the poem "Frater Ave atque Vale" (PT 385) "alludes to Tennyson's brother Charles, who had died in 1879",[99] it is also a sublimated lament for a brother poet, Catullus ("[t]enderest of Roman poets nineteen-hundred years ago") and, I believe, for Arthur Hallam, whom Tennyson had called his brother in art[100] and in love.[101] This possibly tenuous link with Arthur Hallam is strengthened by the fact that Tennyson "paraphrased" Catullus' "Ave atque Vale" in <u>In Memoriam</u> 57:

> I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
> Eternal greetings to the dead;
> And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
> 'Adieu, adieu' for evermore.
>
> (ℓℓ.13-16)

In these lines, the phrase "the dead", operates generically, implying "dead people" rather than "the dead man"; and this represents another example of how Tennyson's sense of loss and grief tended to become all-embracing.

In this chapter on some of the subjective elements which played a part in the evocation of the numinous presence, I have discussed Tennyson's natural tendency to melancholia; the relationship between memory and the imagination ; the poet's

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[99] PT 385, headnote (p.1284).

[100] "The Gardener's Daughter", PT 208, ℓ.4.

[101] IM 9, ℓ.16.

"passion of the past"; the paradox of time and timelessness; and the imagery of disembodied voices and of flashing or glimmering lights. Although I put forward a theory concerning the etiology of that imagery, linking it to the poet's epileptic condition, I have also offered a critical analysis of "The Silent Voices" which shows how effectively the poetry functions without the reader's having recourse to such ancillary associations.

Nevertheless, as Martin's biography of the poet shows, Tennyson's epilepsy was a factor which loomed large in his life, especially in the years before his marriage.[102] It is unlikely that such a great personal preoccupation would not have been reflected in some way in the poetry. It is virtually impossible, after the lapse of so many years, to say with certainty what type of epilepsy Tennyson suffered from; and epilepsies are in any case extremely difficult to classify, many of them being of "mixed" or "complex" character.[103] But, since Tennyson's imagery seems to have so much in common with the symptomatology of temporal lobe epilepsy, I have thought it worthwhile to note the fact. I realize that this is perhaps an unorthodox approach to poetry, but find myself in accord with Roy Basler, who denigrates the "notion that literature and science should be studied in separate schools and by scholars who must choose the one discipline to the exclusion of the other...." He believes this "fallacy" threatens to "damn our civilization in the twentieth century".

> Indeed [Basler continues], our only salvation lies in the fact that human intelligence cannot be wholly regimented to the discipline of the school and will find the key that unlocks life or literature in any fact or experience which proves effective in furthering understanding.[104]

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[102] Martin, pp.10-11, 17, 29, 84-5, 139-40, 150, 237-8, 248, 278-80, 292, 293, 315, 321, 326, 340, 445, 567.

[103] Neppe, pp.902-04.

[104] Basler, pp.7-8.

Thus . one discipline may sometimes shed light on another.

Opinion has been sharply divided on what rôle biographical material should play in the interpretation of poetry. One of Tennyson's critics, Elizabeth Waterston, comes down heavily on the side of the Leavisites and the New Critics. She says, "The end result of a study of symbolism ought to be a clarification of the author's topic, not of his motivation, his psychoses or his learning".[105] Arthur Carr, on the other hand, holds that

> It is not a question of choosing to consult biography in order to chart the poem or of preferring to ignore the private reference. In Tennyson's poetry the private and public worlds are fused. In the presence of such poetry, criticism must act upon life as well as upon art. Tennyson's double nature does not divide itself between the poet and the man; his poetry has a double nature and reveals not only itself but the poet.[106]

Carr goes on to quote Hallam Tennyson, who, in the preface to the Memoir of his father's life, writes:

> ...but besides the letters of my father and his friends there are his poems, and in them we must look for the innermost sanctuary of his being. For my own part, I feel strongly that no biographer could so truly give him as he gives himself in his own works....[107]

The psychological theory I postulated at the beginning of this chapter--that the numinous presence may be an objectification of the poet's emotions, or an emanation of his own psyche--could, of course, be expressed in terms more germane to literature. One might say that in the numinous presence Tennyson was creating a personal mythos to fulfil a deep psychological need. Buckler, who acknowledges "Tennyson's fascination" with the "abysmal deeps of Personality",[108] sees him as striving, through the imagination,

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[105] Waterston, p.369.

[106] Carr, p.362.

[107] Memoir I, xi; quoted by Carr, p.362.

[108] VI, p.75.

to build "not dreams but the myths that will sustain coherent beliefs even in invisible realities".[109] In the last two chapters I shall have more to say about this aspect, but in Chapter IV it will be necessary to maintain a psychological approach as I explore another important subjective factor relevant to the numinous presence--namely, what Christopher Ricks has called Tennyson's "strange sense of guilt".[110]

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[109] VI, p.51.

[110] CR, p.77.

CHAPTER IV

THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE : (iii) THE DARK ASPECT

One of the factors which exerted a profound effect on Tennyson's poetry was his strangely intense sense of guilt. I believe this manifested itself in what I shall call the dark aspect of the numinous presence. This dark aspect is adumbrated in early poems such as "Remorse" (PT 8) and "The Christian Penitent" (PT 186). In "Remorse" the poet writes:

> Oh! 'tis a fearful thing to glance
>   Back on the gloom of mis-spent years:
> What shadowy forms of guilt advance,
>   And fill me with a thousand fears!
> The vices of my life arise,
>   Portrayed in shapes, alas! too true....
>
> (ℓℓ.1-6)

The portrayal of the phantasmagoria supposedly evoked by guilt is here perhaps a little too consciously Gothic to be really effective, or to strike an intensely personal note.

However, the Gothic element in Tennyson's early poetry is thought-provoking. Marilyn Butler, writing about Gothic literature, believes that its

> ...images project an evil or disturbing environment, and though no specific moral need be pointed concerning the corruption of the present order or the desirability of rejecting authority, the subliminal frame of reference is felt to be a breakdown of control, both in the psyche and in the state.[1]

One cannot help wondering to what extent Dr George Clayton Tennyson's breakdown is the "subliminal frame of reference" for Tennyson's early use of Gothic.

On the other hand, it may be that Gothic was simply a literary style to be explored in the course of the poet's apprenticeship.

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[1] Marilyn Butler, Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p.157.

Certainly, in "Remorse" I sense a self-consciously Byronic stance. Paden points out the "danger of confounding the halting expression of deeply based fantasy with those imitations of admired attitudes which all young versers compose--in Tennyson's case, with imitations of the rhetorical despair of Byron".[2] And Ricks feels that in theme and mood, "Remorse" recalls Coleridge's "The Pains of Sleep".[3] Tennyson's poem also resembles Coleridge's in metre and rhyming. Then again, "The Christian Penitent" is clearly cast in the mould of Donne's religious sonnets. So one must not under-estimate the literary influences in Tennyson's poems dealing with guilt and conscience--or forget that poet and speaker are seldom identical.

However, I believe the poet did indeed hold the view he expressed in the opening lines of "The Christian Penitent": "We sin and so we suffer..." (PT 186, ℓ.1)--though in this connection, too, one may find literary antecedents. One thinks, for instance, of St Augustine's imaginary words to Petrarch in the Secretum: "[N]isi vitio miserum non esse neque fieri" ("[N]o one is or becomes unhappy, save through vice").[4] In Tennyson, the linking of sin and suffering is not introduced in an entirely negative context, for the poet sees suffering as redemptive, and implores God: "Touch me with sorrow! soften me with grief!" (PT 186, ℓ.9). These lines apparently carry within them a germ of the numinous in so far as they represent an awareness of the need for atonement and what Otto calls "consecration"--that is, "a procedure that renders the approacher himself 'numinous', frees him from his 'profane' being and fits him for intercourse with the numen [godhead]".[5] But in spite of the sentiments expressed, this early poetry lacks the sense of the sublime that is the aesthetic

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[2]Paden, p.53.

[3]PT 8, headnote (p.87).

[4]Stephen Minta, Petrarch and Petrarchism: The English and French Traditions, Literature in Context Series (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 1980), p.4.

[5]Otto, p.56.

analogue of the numinous in religion.[6]

The linking of sin and suffering seems to lead on to a poem of premonition, written about 1832, which begins:

> Pierced through with knotted thorns of barren pain,
> Deep in forethought of dark calamities,
> Sick of the coming time and coming woe....
>
> (PT 190, ℓℓ.1-3)

One is reminded of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind": ("I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"),[7] yet Tennyson's lines seem to me to bear the stamp of an intensely personal experience. His thorns are not only piercing, they are also knotted--suggesting a tortuous and tortured state of mind. The piercing thorns recall those thorns with which Christ was crowned when he took upon himself the sins of the world. But Christ's thorns were productive, part of the expiation, whereas in Tennyson's poem the metaphorical thorns bring only "barren" pain. The lines hold no promise of absolution or salvation, only the threat of retribution--"the coming time and the coming woe". Line 3 ("Sick of the coming time and coming woe") represents, perhaps, the fear of the wrath of God which Otto sees as a precursor of the true apperception of the numinous.[8] Admittedly the poem ends with a kind of vision ("...my eyelids unawares / Were touched and opened by a finger bright").[9] But the vision, culled from "Armageddon",[10] is considerably less convincing than the description of guilt and dread that precedes it.

In "Pierced through..."--as in "Remorse"--the Gothic emanations of the "phantasmal night" (ℓ.27) are guilt-related:

> All my past thoughts and actions I did mark
> Thick-thronging to and fro amid the gloom.
>
> (PT 190, ℓℓ.20-21)

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[6]Otto, pp.42-43.

[7]Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind", ℓ.54 (Hutchinson, p.579).

[8]Otto, pp.18-19.

[9]PT 190, ℓℓ.28-29.

[10]PT 190, headnote (p.472).

And interwoven with the phatasmagoric images is a thread of charnel-house imagery which suggests an intense awareness that "the wages of sin is death".[11] The speaker says:

> ...and I lay with sobbing breath,
> Walled round, shut up, imbarred, moaning for light,
> A carcase in the coffin of this flesh,
> Pierced through with loathly worms of utter death.
> (PT 190, ℓℓ.15-18--my italics)[12]

He likens his state of mind and soul to a "spiritual charnel low and damp" (ℓ.19) and himself to one who

> ...lamenteth bitterly
> For fear the hidden wells of scorching fire
> Should spout between the clefts and shower flame
> And flicker round his body that he die....
> (PT 190, ℓℓ.9-12--my italics)

Another poem dealing with the throes of conscience is the fragment, "Memory [Ay me!]" (PT 126), which belongs to the "Somersby-Cambridge transition period".[13] Here, too, the speaker is dogged by the remembrance of the past. Memory is like a haunting presence--a "wandering ghost aghast" (ℓ.14), clad in the trappings of life ("Limb and lip and hair and eye"--ℓ.17), but actually linked with Death (ℓ.18) and Despair (ℓℓ.25-28).

Once again there is the yoking of Death with sin; and again one senses an underlying fear that amounts almost to premonition as the speaker strives to convince himself that "May goes not before dark December, / Nor doth the year change suddenly" (ℓℓ.19-20).

But the poem's real power lies in the tension between "conscience" and "vain desire":

> Blessèd, cursèd, Memory,
> Shadow, Spirit as thou mayst be,
> Why hast thou become to me

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[11] "Wages", PT 354, ℓ.6, quoting Romans vi:23.

[12] Ricks notes the similarity between these lines and ℓℓ.7-12 of "Perdidi Diem" (PT 128). See PT 190, n.17-24 (p.472).

[13] Charles Tennyson, ed., Unpublished Early Poems by Alfred Tennyson (1931), pp.33-34; quoted PT 126, headnote (p.262).

A conscience dropping tears of fire
On the heart, which vain desire
Vexeth all too bitterly?

(PT 126, ℓℓ.5-10)

The poem, "Fatima" (PT 163) offers a similar perspective on frustration or "vain desire". Jerome Buckley writes that "Fatima" presents, "with a quite uncharacteristic abandon, a fiercer lust of the flesh, likened to the pulsing heat of the sun that leaves the spirit 'parch'd and wither'd' in the vain desire for absolute possession".[14] But Ricks notes that "Fatima" "closely imitates Sappho's Fragment 2", especially in lines 15-19.[15] Once again one is reminded of the importance of literary antecedents in Tennyson's poetry.

In "Memory [Ay me!]" (PT 126), the speaker's attitude is ambivalent. Although in the poem, "Pierced through... (PT 190), the poet tries to assuage his sense of guilt by attempting to recapture the visionary experience of "Armageddon", in "Memory [Ay me!]" the feeling of guilt is well-nigh dissipated as the speaker re-lives in memory the "anticipated zest" (ℓ.49) for the sin itself. One is reminded of lines from Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard": "I view my crime, but kindle at the view, / Repent old pleasures, and sollicit new".[16] The situation is analogous to that presented in The Idylls of the King. In "Guinevere", the "sinful queen"[17] says:

...help me, heaven, for surely I repent.
For what is true repentence but in thought--
Not even in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us....

(PT 474, ℓℓ.370-73)

But memory leads her back to the "sunlight that is gone"[18] until she grows "half-guilty in her thoughts again" (ℓ.405).

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[14] GP, p.53.

[15] PT 163, headnote (p.382).

[16] Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard", ℓℓ.185-86 (Butt, p.257).

[17] PT 474, ℓ.268.

[18] "The Silent Voices", PT 459, ℓ.6.

A similar tension in The Lover's Tale (PT 153)[19] is noted by William Buckler. He writes:

> At the center of Julian's consciousness is a mighty imaginative collision. His love for Camilla is incestuous, not so much literally as by imaginative conversion. He has refined their closeness in every possible way, prevented only by the historical facts themselves from making them issue simultaneously from the same womb;but his frenzied imagination will not consciously accept the taboo against romantic incestuous love.

Here Buckler quotes lines 25-27 of section II of The Lover's Tale:

> Why were we one in all things, save in that
> Where to have been one had been the cope and crown
> Of all I hoped and feared?

Buckler then goes on to say that the "nightmarish visions" suffered by Julian

> ...after being hopelessly separated from his love-object (II, 70-100, 163-205; III, 1-58) are all filled with psychosexual images of love and death, weddings interwoven with funerals, bacchanals rising from biers....

Buckler concludes that "the guilt which Julian has so imaginatively masked from his consciousness surfaces in nightmares impregnated by unyielding desire and relentless conscience".[20] I should like to add that the image of Camilla undergoing the metamorphosis of death as Julian embraces her (II, 197-203) is a powerful evocation of the axiom which I believe haunted Tennyson at this time: "the wages of sin is death".

In assessing Tennyson's mysterious sense of guilt one must avoid over-simplifying, for the poet's supposed guilt was a complex phenomenon. As I have already pointed out, it has literary

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[19]Though The Lover's Tale is a long narrative poem, the similarity of some of the elements within it to other poems by Tennyson suggests that it probably reflects the poet's personal preoccupations. As Buckler has noted in another connection, Tennyson was "well practiced [sic] in the use of impersonative structures through which a soul's deepest inner anguish could be empathetically released..." (VI, p.182).

[20]VI, pp.69-70.

antecedents. And the concept of original sin may have weighed on the young Tennyson, though in later life he rejected the idea.[21] But the fallibility of man was undeniable, and there was evidence enough of this at Somersby Rectory where, according to Mrs Tennyson, the rector was conducting himself in a way unbecoming to a man of the cloth and likely to have a deleterious effect on the minds of his children.[22] The young Alfred's attitude to his father was understandably ambivalent, and may well have resulted in irrational feelings of guilt. Wheatcroft writes that it was "generally agreed that the great intellectual effort" made by Dr Tennyson in educating his children "was a prime cause of his illness".[23] Wheatcroft also refers to Alfred and his brother Frederick as Dr Tennyson's "main sources of tension".[24] Thus it may have been a feeling of guilt which led the young poet to sleep in his father's bed within a week of the older man's death, hoping to see his ghost.[25] But he did not see it. As Ricks was to remark in another context, "The grim ghost of Dr Tennyson could not be exorcised by such means".[26]

The vicious prognostications of Tennyson's Calvinist "Aunt (Mary) Bourne" may also have given rise to a kind of "free-floating" guilt. She once said to her young nephew: "Alfred, Alfred, whenever I look at you I think of the words, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire". "'Which didn't make a boy of fourteen feel very comfortable,' Tennyson added when telling the story as an adult".[27]

Nevertheless, in the poetry of the pre-Cambridge period, the poet's concern with conscience seems almost academic. In

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[21]Martin, p.1.

[22]CR, p.23.

[23]Wheatcroft, p.31.

[24]Wheatcroft, p.32.

[25]Memoir I, 72-73; Martin, p.132. See p.27 of this study.

[26]CR, p.155.

[27]Martin, p.40.

later poems one discerns a more intense awareness of sin as a personal reality.

Critics have differed considerably in their opinions as to the source of Tennyson's feelings of guilt and shame. Gerhard Joseph recognizes that "the most important influences Tennyson underwent both in Somersby and later at Cambridge were in the direction of an intense moralism that was one of the characteristic emanations of Victorian thought".[28] But he also relates Tennyson's sense of guilt to his particular artistic bent. Joseph says, "The strictures of conscience insist that the indulgence in sensuous lyricism be tempered by melancholia and guilt".[29] This is, of course, the kind of guilt described in "The Palace of Art" (PT 167).

Psychologists, with association tests in mind, might find variant readings of "Rosamund's Bower" (PT 281) interesting. Lines 9 and 10 appear in the Memoir (II, 197) as: "Maze in maze he wound me round / With love". But the first reading (in the Heath manuscript) is "Maze in maze he wound me round / With shame, with error and with sin".[30] One wonders whether the association of a (forbidden) love with shame and sin is coincidental.

Ricks, also believing that the poet's melancholia or "moods of misery unutterable" were related to his "strange sense of guilt", writes:

> 'Remorse' in 1827 has proclaimed its damnability--but the question 'Remorse for what?' stayed unanswerable. The conscience in 'Memory' drops tears of fire; they scald like burning lead, as do King Lear's tears, and yet with a deeply neurotic sense that the poet (unlike King Lear) does not know what to reproach himself with--he only knows that he must reproach himself.[31]

Critics and biographers have discussed--or in some cases

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[28] Joseph, p.17.

[29] Joseph, p.29.

[30] PT 281, n.9-10 (p.735).

[31] CR, pp.76-77.

merely hinted at--the possibility of a homosexual facet to the relationship between Hallam and Tennyson. Mattes writes that "[p]sychiatrists might consider his feeling for Hallam abnormal".[32] But William Buckler rejects the "widespread, vulgar, and anti-poetic" suggestion of homosexuality.[33] Joanne Zuckerman, while placing In Memoriam within the tradition of love poetry, says:

> To suggest that there was anything consciously or overtly homosexual about the relationship is obviously absurd, and to speculate about its latent or suppressed tendencies is largely irrelevant to a consideration of In Memoriam as poetry: but nevertheless the fact that it celebrates a supreme love between men is of some importance in considering its scope and techniques.[34]

Christopher Ricks notes that "Tennyson's son, fearing a homosexual misconstruction, preferred not to print" lines such as "I wind my arms for one embrace" and a reference to "those honoured brows that I would kiss".[35] Probably the actions of Hallam Tennyson and Henry Hallam in destroying the correspondence between Alfred and Arthur have generated the very speculation they wished to avoid.

Speculation is, however, pointless. My personal opinion is that the relationship in which In Memoriam had its genesis could not have been less than "noble". Tennyson used this word to describe Shakespeare's Sonnets, and seems to point the parallel between the Sonnets and his own "elegies" in In Memoriam 61 where, addressing the dead Hallam, he asserts: "I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can / The soul of Shakespeare love thee more" (ℓℓ.11-12).

There may have been a "subterranean" element in Tennyson's feelings for Hallam.[36] If so, he vigorously repressed it.

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[32] Mattes, p.27.

[33] VI, p.207, n.31.

[34] Zuckermann, p.270.

[35] PT 214, ℓℓ.22,9. See also PT 296, headnote (p.860).

[36] Martin, pp.120,94. See also Rader, pp.144-45, n.18.

Glossing the word "dearest" in In Memoriam,[37] he said that if anyone thought he had called Hallam "dearest" in life, they were very much mistaken, for he had never even called him "dear".[38]

Whatever its source--if, indeed, it had a source--Tennyson's feeling of guilt seems to become pronounced after Hallam's death. And it is not unusual for bereavement and guilt to go hand in hand. Freedman et al. point out that the guilt associated with bereavement may manifest itself in obsessional self-questioning: "What could I have done to prevent this? Why did this happen to me?"[39] Perhaps Tennyson, in the hypersensitive state associated with intense grief, saw Arthur Hallam's death as a form of imagined retribution. As he had written earlier, "We sin and so we suffer".[40] Thus may the sense of guilt--warranted or unwarranted--compound itself.

In an age when psychology and psychiatry are no longer in their infancy, it is probably unnecessary to state that, in discussing matters such as Tennyson's feelings of guilt and their repression, I am certainly not suggesting that the poet is in fact "guilty", or in any way reprehensible. Tennyson himself implied, in In Memoriam, that only creatures lower than man can feel completely free of guilt:

> I envy not the beast that takes
> His license in the field of time,
> Unfettered by the sense of crime,
> To whom a conscience never wakes....
>
> (IM 27, ll.5-8)

As Paden points out,

> There are few men...who do not have some thoughts, imagery, and feelings which they habitually refrain from expressing; few men are without thoughts, imagery, and feelings from which they are accustomed to deflect their conscious attention,

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[37] IM 74, l.5; 122, l.1.

[38] Shatto and Shaw, IM 74, n.5 (p.232).

[39] Freedman, et al., p.811.

[40] PT 186, l.1.

> upon which they deliberately prefer not to dwell. When thoughts, imagery or feelings are disliked or disapproved to an extent that, partially or entirely without the agency of the conscious will, they cease to occur in the stream of conscious thought, they are said to be "repressed". They should be thought of as continuing to exist in the mind...below the level of consciousness. Since they are still connected with dynamic factors in the personality...they tend to seek expression with a vigor proportionate to the intensity of the emotions with which they are imbued.[41]

I believe that the repression of Tennyson's feelings of guilt--whatever their focus--gave rise to the apparently supernatural phenomenon that the poet suspected was a sign of "the blot upon the brain",[42] the "juggle of the brain",[43] or the "canker of the brain".[44] This dark aspect of the numinous presence manifests itself most notably in a beautiful elegiac poem (PT 227), written after the death of Hallam, which begins "Oh! that 'twere possible...."

In this poem the speaker is grieving over the loss of his beloved. One is tempted to draw parallels between the dead girl and the dead Hallam, and hence between the poet and the speaker. But such parallels must not be pressed too hard. At most one can assert that the speaker's ultimate perspective on grief and loss transcends an underlying sense of guilt that is so frequent a feature of Tennyson's poetry that it would appear to reflect a personal concern.

The various "versions" of the poem are discussed by Ricks in his headnote, and also by George O. Marshall, Jr. in his article, "Tennyson's 'Oh! that 'twere possible': A Link between *In Memoriam* and *Maud*".[45] In my discussion of this poem I shall

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[41] Paden, p.13.

[42] *PT* 227, ℓ.70.

[43] *PT* 227, ℓ.84.

[44] *IM* 92, ℓ.3.

[45] George O. Marshall, Jr., "Tennyson's 'Oh! that 'twere possible': A Link between *In Memoriam* and *Maud*", *PMLA*, 78 (1963), 225-29.

use the form printed by Ricks, noting the later additions, as he does.

> Oh! that 'twere possible,
> After long grief and pain,
> To find the arms of my true-love
> Round me once again![46]
>
> (PT 227, ℓℓ.1-4)

The long vowel of the opening cry ("Oh!") seems to fix the tone of yearning that characterizes the poem; and the phrase "that 'twere possible" holds within it all the heartache of a wish formulated in terms reflecting impossibility of fulfilment.

The phrase "long grief and pain" (ℓ.2) is a striking one. Normally one would refer to "long years of grief and pain" or to "long-lasting grief and pain". The contracted form seems to highlight the grief--"the thing itself";[47] and the resonating "--ng" sound in "long" reflects and emphasizes the drawn-out timespan associated with the sorrow.

In lines 3 to 4 the longed-for reunion with the lost love is symbolized in an imagined embrace which recalls the comforting image of the trees laying their "dark arms about the field" in In Memoriam 95 (ℓℓ.15-16). And the stanza of "Oh! that 'twere possible" which follows (ℓℓ.5-10) is redolent of a tranquillity not unlike that of In Memoriam 95 (ℓℓ.1-16), for in both passages the external landscape reflects an inner peace. Here the peace and tranquillity arise out of the remembrance of an enchanted love:

> When I was wont to meet her
> In the silent woody places
> Of the land that gave me birth,
> We stood tranced in long embraces,
> Mixt with kisses sweeter, sweeter,
> Than any thing on earth.
>
> (PT 227, ℓℓ.5-10)

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[46] Philip Collins notes the similarity of these lines (and also of ℓℓ.13-16) to lines from The Duchess of Malfi: "O that it were possible we might / But hold some two days' conference with the dead". See Philip Collins, "Tennyson Inheriting the Earth", in Studies, p.77.

[47] King Lear, III.iv.105.

The "long embraces" are in poignant opposition to the "long grief and pain", and there is an ethereal quality about kisses that are "sweeter / Than anything on earth".

Line 11 introduces a dramatic contrast. For, returning to the present, the speaker is beset by something unearthly in a less pleasant sense of the word.

> A shadow flits before me--
> Not thou, but like to thee.
>
> (ℓℓ.11-12)

These lines herald the dark aspect of the numinous presence, and the verb "flits" (ℓ.11) has a will-o'-the-wisp or ignis fatuus quality that is highly appropriate in context.

In Tennyson's poetry the word "shadow" is used in a number of different ways. Sometimes it stands for death itself.[48] Frequently the poet uses the word in a sense approximating to "shade" or ghost--for instance, in "Hark! the dogs howl!", he writes: "Larger than human passes by / The shadow of the man I loved" (PT 214, ℓℓ.20-21). And sometimes the word "shadow" has biblical connotations of protection.[49] But in "Oh! that 'twere possible" the shadow seems to have sinister characteristics.

It is interesting that Tennyson should have used the term "shadow" in this context, since the phenomenon he describes has much in common with what Jung called "the shadow"--which Frieda Fordham, in An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, describes thus:

> The shadow is the personal unconscious; it is all those uncivilized desires and emotions that are incompatible with social standards and our ideal personality, all that we are ashamed of, all that we do not want to know about ourselves.[50]

Fordham goes on to point out that the hazard of repressing the

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[48] IM 22, ℓ.20 ("The Shadow sits and waits for me").

[49] PT 146, ℓℓ.13-14 ("...I dared to find / A shadow and a resting place in thee"). Cf. Psalm xvii:8 ("...hide me under the shadow of thy wings"); Psalm xci:1 ("...abide under the shadow of the Almighty").

[50] Fordham, p.50.

shadow too stringently is that in the unconscious it seems to acquire strength and vigour, so that when the time comes for it to break out of the unconscious it is the "more dangerous" and the more likely to "overwhelm the rest of the personality".[51] Given the Tennysonian speaker's feelings of being "sin-sickened"[52] and tainted with "shame"[53] and "disgrace",[54] it is not unreasonable to construe the weird emanation in "Oh! that 'twere possible" as a psychological phenomenon related to the suppression of unacceptable ideas or desires.

However, this theory need not imply an indictment of Tennyson --a "proof" of his supposed guilt. For the Jungian "shadow", being common to all humanity, is also to some extent derived from the collective unconscious; and, as Fordham points out, the "collective aspect of the shadow is expressed as a devil, a witch, or something similar".[55] Once again, Jung's psychological explication is consistent with Tennyson's poetic evocation.[56] I believe that Tennyson, in describing poetically a particular "juggle of the brain", pre-empted Jung in the psychological field, as he is said to have pre-empted Darwin in the field of biological evolution[57]--though, of course, even earlier literary prototypes may be postulated.[58]

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[51] Fordham, p.51.

[52] "Sonnet [When that rank heat of evil's tropic day]", PT 146, ℓ.9.

[53] IM 51, ℓ.7.

[54] PT 146, ℓ.9.

[55] Fordham, p.50.

[56] Peter Poland has also considered Tennyson's poetry in relation to an aspect of Jungian psychology; but his exploration is concerned with dreams, and rests principally on an analysis of IM 103. See Peter Davies Poland, "'The Christ that is to be': A Study of Tennyson's Religious Thought" (Ph.D. dissertation, State Univ. of New York at Stony Brook, 1979).

[57] AT, p.83.

[58] Blake's shadow, though not precisely the same as the "shadow" of Jung and Tennyson, is an interesting fore-runner.

Line 12 of "Oh! that 'twere possible" encapsulates the chief tension within the poem. For the speaker, now addressing the dead beloved directly, says the apparition he "sees" is "Not thou, but like to thee". This observation seems to resonate with popular superstitions (as found, for example in some traditional ballads) about the nature of ghosts or devils who take on the likeness of the dead, and lead those who follow them to the grave or to damnation.[59] William James discusses the possibility of confusing the "divine and the diabolical" in The Varieties of Religious Experience (p.238). He also notes that apparently "supernatural incidents, such as voices and visions...may all come by way of nature, or worse still, be counterfeited by Satan" (p.231). It is therefore not surprising that the apparent similarity of the apparition to the beloved is disturbing and distressing to the speaker in "Oh! that 'twere possible". This similarity occasions the interjection:

> "Ah God! that it were possible
>   For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
>   What and where they be.
>
> (ℓℓ.13-16)

The unarticulated thought behind these lines seems to be that the ghostly "shadow" may in fact represent the beloved soul in its after-form--and the idea is too terrible to contemplate.

In a way my exposition anticipates the poetic revelation, for the presentation of the "shadow" in lines 11-12 is fairly neutral. Its "dark" aspect is, at this point, deducible only from the poet's response (ℓℓ.13-16). But the evil nature of the phenomenon is revealed in the stanzas that follow. Meaning accrues to the image mainly through the poet's skilful manipulation of atmosphere.

Stanza 4 reads:

> It leads me forth at Evening,
>   It lightly winds and steals
> In a cold white robe before me,

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[59] See Hamlet, I.iv.40-44.

When all my spirit reels
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
And the roaring of the wheels.

(ℓℓ.17-22)

The word "it" seems to pick up ghostly resonances from Hamlet, where the "apparition" is repeatedly referred to as "it".[60] Acting as a euphemism, "it" underlines the horror with which the speaker regards the phantom while he is nevertheless unable to resist its morbid and evil fascination. The main verb "leads" (ℓ.17) is enlarged upon in the following line: "It lightly winds and steals". The elusive quality inherent in the verb "flits" (ℓ.11) is re-emphasized here, and the word "steals" conveys a sense of stealth that connotes evil intention. The "cold white robe" (ℓ.19) has ghostly overtones indicative of the shroud. In addition the word "cold" underlines the fact that this phantom is indeed not the warm beloved described in lines 8-10. And now the associated landscape also emphasizes the difference between the remembered love and the appalling phantom. For the lost love was associated with "silent woody places" (ℓ.6), but the ghastly apparition manifests itself in a cacophonous urban setting (ℓℓ.20-22).

At line 23 there is a sudden change of scene--from the noisy street described in lines 21 and 22 to the silence of the bed-chamber, a silence punctuated by the speaker's sighs:

Half the night I waste in sighs,
In a wakeful doze I sorrow
For the hand, the lips, the eyes--
For the meeting of tomorrow,
The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies.

(ℓℓ.23-28)

Line 23 is reminiscent of Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard": "I waste the matins lamp in sighs"[61]--and the half-echo underscores the ideas of hopeless love and painful separation that prevail in "Oh! that

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[60]For instance: Hamlet, I.i.45, 126, 140, 145, 157; I.ii.214, 215, 242-44.

[61]Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard", ℓ.267 (Butt, p.259).

'twere possible" at this point.

In "Hark! the dogs howl!" (PT 214), which was also inspired by the death of Hallam, Tennyson wrote, "My sighs are wasted in the air" (ℓ.12). But in "Oh! that 'twere possible" the word "waste" has a certain ambiguity. Its main meaning is that sorrowful sighs are a waste in so far as they will not bring back the beloved. But it also implies that the speaker is wasting away through grief. And the oxymoronic phrase, "wakeful doze", suggests the semi-insomniac state so often associated with grief.

The synecdoche of line 25 is highly characteristic of Tennyson: "the hand, the lips, the eyes" finds, for instance, a parallel in In Memoriam 129 ("Sweet human hand and lips and eye"). Indeed, synecdoche is one of the most notable tropes in the so-called "germ" of In Memoriam, the short poem beginning "Hark! the dogs howl!" (PT 214):[62]

> I seek the voice I loved--ah where
> Is that dear hand that I should press,
> Those honoured brows that I would kiss?
>
> (ℓℓ.7-9)

The use of synecdoche highlights the speaker's sense of a physical loss, and is also related to the images of partial visibility (cloud, veil, shadow) that are often associated with the numinous presence.[63]

But here in "Oh! that 'twere possible", "the hand, the lips, the eyes" are not partial manifestations of a preternatural

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[62] Memoir I, 107; PT 214, headnote (p.555).

[63] For an outline of Tennyson's use of the shadow image, see p.130 of this study. The lines which seem to encapsulate the meaning of Tennyson's cloud and veil imagery occur in "The Two Voices": "...every cloud, that spreads above / And veileth love, itself is love" (PT 209, ℓℓ.446-47). An observation of Sir Charles Tennyson, in which he also uses the image of the veil, seems to me to offer a succinct summary of his illustrious relative's experiences of the numinous. Sir Charles writes that "at a moment of extreme crisis or a climax of emotion the veil wears thin and a faint beam of light shines through". See Charles Tennyson, "The Dream in Tennyson's Poetry", Virginia Quarterly Review, 40 (1964), 248.

presence, but the building blocks of memory. And, pathetically, the "meeting of tomorrow" is really the meeting of yesterday, or yesteryear. The "delight of happy laughter, / The delight of low replies" (ℓℓ.27-28) can be experienced only through memory and imagination. And the repetition of "delight" looks back to the repetition of "sweeter" in line 9, heightening the intensity of the remembered emotion. At the same time, in spite of the "distance" separating them, through the force of rhyme the word "low" (ℓ.28) seems to me to recall the cry ("Oh!") in the opening line of the poem, so that in the midst of happy memories the elegiac note recalls the reader to a sad present.

The speaker lingers a moment longer in his waking dream: "Do I hear the pleasant ditty, / That I heard her chant of old?" (ℓℓ.29-30). Then he, too, is called back to actuality: "But I wake--my dream is fled" (ℓ.31). This line inevitably recalls the closing lines of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", with all its associated connotations of the transcendental power of the imagination--and all its unanswered questions regarding the meaning of life in the face of the incontrovertible fact of death or loss.

The speaker's own doubts and anxieties are again externalized in the haunting apparition:

> Without knowledge, without pity--
> In the shuddering dawn behold,
> By the curtains of my bed,
> That abiding phantom cold.
>
> (ℓℓ.32-35)

The word "cold" echoes the earlier occurrence of that word in line 19, stressing the ghostly quality of the phenomenon and underlining the persistence--the "abiding" quality--of the phantom. And here the word "abiding" is used with highly negative connotations.

In the next stanza the poet rises, but the appalling apparition is inescapable, for it seems once again to be mirrored in the external world:

> ...the yellow-vapours choke
> The great city sounding wide;
> The day comes--a dull red ball,
> Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke,
> On the misty river-tide.
>
> (ℓℓ.37-41)

The phantom or "ghost" seems to be associated with the distorted image of the sun (ℓℓ.39-40), which creates an atmosphere of suffocation and of "unnaturalness" (in the Shakespearean sense). Indeed the "dull red ball, / Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke" comes to be almost an image of hell-fire. And the alliterative effects (on "l", "d" and "r") make the image the more powerful and memorable.

Lines 42-48 parallel lines 17-22; but a strange inversion has taken place. In the earlier passage it is the apparition that "lightly winds and steals". Now it is the speaker. He says: "Through the hubbub of the market / I steal, a wasted frame" (ℓℓ.42-43). In In Memoriam 7 the speaker creeps "like a guilty thing" to Hallam's front door. Here, too, his stealth suggests that he feels like "a guilty thing". The speaker is becoming almost "ghostly" as he is slowly worn out by his strange emotional experiences. It is as if he is being increasingly "possessed" by the malevolent shadow. And the use of the word "wasted" in line 43 endorses the ambiguity I attributed to its counterpart "waste" in line 23.

The phantom still persists:

> It crosseth here, it crosseth there--
> Through all that crowd, confused and loud,
> The shadow still the same....
>
> (ℓℓ.44-46)

The interlinking alliterative threads (on "c" and "s") mimic the "weaving" motion of the apparition (ℓ.44), and the repetition of these sounds seems to stress the persistence of the wraith. Similarly, the internal rhyme ("crowd" / "loud") underscores the cacophony associated throughout with the phenomenon.

I said earlier that line 42 reveals the speaker's sense of guilt. This view is supported by the simile in line 48:

And on my heavy eyelids
  My anguish hangs like shame.
(ℓℓ.47-48)

The comparison is "foregrounded" to a certain extent because one abstraction serves to elucidate another--which is unusual in simile. It could, of course, be argued that the word "shame" is coincidentally dependent on the exigencies of rhyme. But the same word is found in line 7 of In Memoriam 51, where the phrase "my secret shame" was later emended to "some hidden shame".[64] It does therefore appear to be significant. In Maud the protagonist's "shame" could be accounted for in terms of his killing of Maud's brother; but such narrative "accommodation" of the word is not possible for the original lyric ("Oh! that 'twere possible") or for In Memoriam.

The sense of shame suggested by the simile in line 48 of "Oh! that 'twere possible" is characteristic of poems of the same period. Ricks, writing of "Hark! the dogs howl!" (PT 214), says: "Already, as in In Memoriam ('like a guilty thing'), there is an unexplained and perhaps inexplicable sense of guilt...."[65] In line 49 of "Oh! that 'twere possible", the opening cry ("Alas") is ostensibly for the loss of the beloved; but, following immediately after the word "shame", "alas" seems also to be a cry of regret for a kind of prelapsarian innocence that still prevailed when the beloved, hearing the speaker's call,

Came glimmering through the laurels
  At the quiet even-fall,
In the garden by the turrets
  Of the old Manorial Hall.
(ℓℓ.51-54)

At this point there is again a sharp swing--from the pastoral tranquillity associated with the lost love back to the harsh, almost punitive, urban setting associated with the phantom:

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[64] Shatto and Shaw, IM 51, n.7 (p.76).

[65] CR, p.121.

> Then the broad light glares and beats,
>   And the sunk eye flits and fleets,
> And will not let me be.
>   I loathe the squares and streets,
> And the faces that one meets,
>   Hearts with no love for me....
>
> (ℓℓ.55-60)

A surrealistic impression is created in these lines, principally as a result of the mesmerizing effect of the "sunk eye" of the apparition which "flits and fleets" (ℓ.56). "Hearts" and "faces" stand for people; but, given the speaker's disturbed mood, the additive conjunction ("and") in line 59 brings some sense of a confusion of the categories of people and places, as the speaker seems to "equate" hearts and faces with "squares and streets". This situation arises because the "faces that one meets" (ℓ.59) are the wrong faces; and the hearts without love (for the poet) are impersonal, certainly not a source of solace. The speaker longs for a withdrawal from the cacophonous milieu, and for the catharsis of communication, and the healing balm of tears:

> Always I long to creep
> To some still cavern deep,
> And to weep, and weep and weep
>   My whole soul out to thee.
>
> (ℓℓ.61-64)

This is a futile longing, impossible to realize. Instead, the speaker can only attempt an exorcism. He addresses the phantom:

> Get thee hence, nor come again,
>   Pass and cease to move about--
> Pass, thou death-like type of pain....
>
> (ℓℓ.65-67)

The phrase, "Get thee hence", is a strong dismissal. Principally, it recalls Christ's words to Satan during the temptation in the wilderness (Matthew iv:10). Apparently the poet felt for the apparition something of the abhorrence that he might feel for a kind of "devil"--which ties in with Jung's theory of the "shadow" derived from the collective unconscious. For, as I indicated on page 131 of this study, Frieda Fordham has pointed out that the "collective aspect of the shadow is expressed as a devil, a

witch, or something similar".[66] The fiendish connotations inherent in the phrase, "Get thee hence", also tacitly suggest traditional ideas of possibly evil ghosts, as found in areas such as folk literature, ballads and Hamlet.

The poet issues two commands beginning with the word, "[p]ass". The first (ℓ.66) is to the phantom. The second is to the ambiguous pain associated both with the absence of the beloved and with the presence of the phantom. This pain is "death-like" because it hurts like a mortal wound, and also because the wrong kind of grieving strikes a death-blow at the memory which enshrines the lost love. When love, bereft of the "tender grace of a day that is dead" (PT 228, ℓ.15), is threatened in memory by an anguish that is somehow associated with an irrational sense of "shame", grief may assume a grotesque aspect--as it does in the ghastly wraith. The speaker does not want the true and beautiful memory of the beloved to be negated by the "doubt" (ℓ.68) which is symptomatic of "the blot upon the brain / That will show itself without" (ℓℓ.69-70). In other words, the speaker is coming to recognize the "shadow" as an emanation of a morbid imagination that interposes itself between the lover and the memory of his lost love.

At this point I wish to interrupt my discussion to say that I agree with Benjamin Jowett, and with Tennyson himself, that these were the poet's most touching lines.[67] They are surely also among his most beautiful. The very high proportion of monosyllables creates an impression of simple sincerity, though the underlying emotions are complex. The lines vary in length, and the stanzaic rhyme scheme is sufficiently fluid to create a lyrical effect without any hint of constraint.

The elusive quality of the metre reinforces the elusiveness and ineffability of the strange psychological phenomenon presented in the poetry. Yet an underlying principle of organization can be detected. Though it is possible to scan "Oh! that 'twere

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[66] Fordham, p.50.

[67] Memoir II, 466; quoted PT 227, headnote (p.599).

possible" as accentual syllabic verse of mixed metres, I believe the poem yields more readily to discussion in terms of dipodic rhythm of alternating primary and secondary stresses. In depicting how the dipodic rhythm functions in the poem, I shall use part of Derek Attridge's system, indicating primary accents or "beats" with a capital "B" and secondary accents or "beats" with a small case "b".[68] Where the symbol is bracketed it will indicate that the time normally taken up by a "beat" is occupied by a pause. (An alternative scheme would be to use the symbols " , ' and p.)[69]

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   B          b    B        (b)
   Oh!  that  'twere  possible,
          B      b         B        (b)
   After  long  grief  and  pain,
        B         b                B    b
   To  find  the  arms  of  my  true-love
    B          b      B       (b)
   Round  me  once  again!
        B        b          B         (b)
   When  I  was  wont  to  meet  her
              B      b        B       (b)
   In  the  silent  woody  places
             B           b          B
   Of  the  land  that  gave  me  birth—>
        b      B            b        B
<—We  stood  tranced  in  long  embraces,
    b          B       b           B        (b)
<—Mixt  with  kisses  sweeter,  sweeter,
        B      b         B       (b)
   Than  any  thing  on  earth.                (ℓℓ.1-10)
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[68] Derek Attridge, The Rhythms of English Poetry (London: Longmans, 1982), pp.114-21. I ought perhaps to point out that I do not propose to enter into a discussion of the relative merits of different systems of scansion. I wish only to indicate that I have found Attridge's discussion of dipodic rhythms helpful in analyzing some of Tennyson's metres.

[69] See Joseph Malof, A Manual of English Meters (1970; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1978), pp.126-37.

A degree of syncopation is evident in lines 7-9.[70] The "lines" indicated above are, of course, really "halves" of a full folk-line which would comprise four heavy stresses or beats (BBBB). However, considering the lineation as indicated by the poet, and counting both primary and secondary stresses (B's and b's), the pattern which emerges is that of basically four-stressed lines--though often the four stresses are actually represented by three stresses and a pause. Perhaps it is not too fanciful to see the pauses or "missing" beats as emphasizing the absence of the beloved, and thus contributing in an understated way to the elegiac tone of the poem.

One of the loveliest features of Tennyson's elegiac poems is, I believe, the sense of restraint that informs them. Martin Dodsworth writes:

> Tennyson's poetry is morbid, at least in the sense that it grows from morbid feelings in the poet himself. And yet it is surely not great because it is morbid, but because at its best it allows us to feel at once the poet's intense involvement with his subject-matter and at the same time his control over it. Tennyson's 'technique', that is, is not to be interpreted as idle display or decorative enrichment, but as a mark that the author has put himself to one side of his despair or spiritual sickness, and has found some release in the attempt to encompass it and to offer it to us for our meditation.[71]

This is particularly noticeable in a poem such as "Oh! that 'twere possible", where the complex emotions and weird manifestations might so easily get out of hand, and drag the poem beyond the limits of decorum. Buckley, writing of the long poem built around "Oh! that 'twere possible", notes that "[d]espite the

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[70] Malof writes that syncopation "is, theoretically, the displacement of a stress from a fixed isochronous position. Actually, however, it is the tendency of a stress to pull away from its isochronous position; whether we pronounce the stress with displacement or with compensation (e.g., hurrying or pausing) as we recite the poem is a choice in performance, not structural description" (p.132).

[71] Dodsworth, p.22.

frenzy of its content, Maud is the most carefully constructed of Tennyson's longer poems; and the verse throughout is calculated and controlled with great discretion".[72] One of the features that exercises restraint in "Oh! that 'twere possible" is the poem's adherence to an underlying, though elusive, regular metre.[73] It is as if the poet, or speaker, in the midst of his turbulent experiences--which are for the most part described in the present tense--is striving to cling to metre as a means of asserting and maintaining order in a seemingly chaotic inner world. There is, indeed, a "use in measured language" (IM 5, ℓ.6).

Lines 65-70 of "Oh! that 'twere possible", which do not appear in the Heath "A" manuscript, are placed between lines 35 and 36 in the Heath "B" manuscript. But the change is not particularly significant. The point I wish to make is that in the "original" versions--if that is not too paradoxical a plural--the poem ended with the poet or speaker still in a state of unresolved conflict; still haunted by the phantom which corresponds to "the shadow" in Jungian psychology.

As I have said, one may account for the phantom in terms of the repression of unacceptable thoughts or feelings which are never made explicit, but which seem to lurk beneath the surface of the poetry and to reveal themselves partly through words like "shame" (ℓ.48) and "doubt" (ℓ.68), and partly through atmosphere. The thought or feeling "not permitted in consciousness" for reasons of "moral or social expediency" is repressed by being willed out

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[72] GP, p.144.

[73] Edward Stokes, in an article entitled "The Metrics of Maud", refers to a number of conflicting opinions concerning the metrical organization of the long poem of which "Oh! that 'twere possible" was the "germ". His own attempts at assessing the prosody of "O! that 'twere possible" (as the lyric appears in the longer poem) rely heavily on statistical analysis. For instance, he says that "anapaests account for only twenty per-cent of the total number of feet, but throughout the section there is great metrical variation. Stanzas 1-4, concerned with the flitting 'shadow' of Maud, are almost purely iambic, with only six anapaests in seventy-two feet". See Edward Stokes, "The Metrics of Maud", Victorian Poetry, 2 (1964), 109.

of consciousness to a tortured existence in the unconscious, from which it periodically escapes to haunt the speaker.[74]

According to Freudian theory, there are two methods of dealing with guilt or imagined guilt: repression or sublimation. In the process of sublimation the guilt-provoking desire is turned towards an ideal. As Basler explains,

> A private, inner image is created by the psyche, which is in some respects far more satisfactory as a subject of desire and worship than any object of the external world can be. Through sublimation, as defined by Freud, art and religion, science and philosophy, have been developed by man, as aesthetic or theoretical escapes from or solutions for life, in symbolic patterns rather than in objective physical activity.[75]

Clearly not all "art and religion, science and philosophy" arises in this way, but the hypothesis does seem to fit the case so far as the closing stanzas of "Oh! that 'twere possible" are concerned.

The 1837 "addendum" opens thus:

> Would the happy Spirit descend
> In the chamber or the street
> As she looks among the blest;
> Should I fear to greet my friend,
> Or to ask her, 'Take me, sweet,
> To the region of thy rest.'
>
> (ℓℓ.71-76)

"Would" in line 71 is in opposition to "should" in line 74, the meaning of the stanza being: "If the happy Spirit (the dead

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[74] Basler, p.16. Basler makes a special study of Maud in terms of Freudian psychology and deals with repression in that late poem (p.78). Paden studies the early volume, Poems by Two Brothers, from the point of view of the psychological concepts of "repression", "substitution" and "ambiguity" (pp.13-14).

[75] Basler, p.16. While on the subject of Freudian theory, I should like to note in passing that Martin has commented on Tennyson's use, in "Lucretius", of "sexual symbolism of the sort that came to be known as Freudian". Martin adds that "Lucretius" was "not the first" poem in which Tennyson used this kind of symbolism (p.479).

beloved) were to appear in the form she has in the after-life, would I be afraid to greet her or to ask her to take me to that region beyond the grave?" Strangely, there is no question mark in the text as printed by Ricks. It may be that this is the result of a simple error of omission on the part of the poet. But it creates a diffuse effect. The speaker's thought seems to be only half-formulated, and to waver between question and statement. It is almost as if the poet or speaker is feeling rather than thinking.

Lines 71-76 parallel lines 13-16, and adumbrate Tennyson's similar concern with the form of the dead in In Memoriam. This concern is revealed in many of the elegies,[76] but principally in line 5 of section 130: "What art thou then? I cannot guess...."

In line 71 of "Oh! that 'twere possible", the word "would" is also to some extent subjunctive, so that a secondary or underlying meaning is denoted: "If only the happy Spirit would descend...." The note of yearning echoes and re-echoes through the poem.

However, the poet's wish remains unfulfilled, and he is only able to "call up" the beloved in memory:

> ...she tarries in her place,
> And I paint the beauteous face
> Of the maiden that I lost,
> In my inner eyes again,
> Lest my heart be overborne
> By the thing I hold in scorn,
> By a dull mechanic ghost
> And a juggle of the brain.
>
> (ℓℓ.77-84)

One might gloss line 81 ("Lest my heart be overborne") in terms of Jungian psychology. For, as I have already pointed out, Fordham (summarizing Jung) states that the danger inherent in repressing the "shadow" is that it might eventually "overwhelm the rest of the personality".[77] The poet feels that only the memory of

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[76]For example: IM 14, ℓℓ.17-19; 22, ℓ.15; 31; 44, ℓ.1; 45; 47; 64, ℓ.28; 91, ℓ.15; 92, ℓℓ.1-3.

[77]Fordham, p.51. See p.131 of this study.

the beloved's "beauteous face" can save him from the "juggle of the brain" (ℓ.84), and keep at bay the "dull mechanic ghost" (ℓ.83) that emanates from the psyche. The speaker continues:

> I can shadow forth my bride
> As I knew her fair and kind,
> As I wooed her for my wife;
> She is lovely by my side
> In the silence of my life--
> 'Tis a phantom of the mind.
>
> (ℓℓ.85-90)

Once again the reader encounters the word "shadow" (ℓ.85); but now it is used as a verb. What is shadowed forth is not the apparition of line 11 but the memory of the real girl, who was "fair" and "kind" and "lovely", and associated with the tranquil "silence of [the poet's] life" (ℓ.89). This silence seems to me to possess something of the quality described in The Idea of the Holy as a "numinous silence" or "sacramental silence". Such special "moments of silence" seem to involve an awareness that "God is in the midst", experienced in what Otto calls "numen praesens". Describing this moment in devotional service Otto explains that "what was previously only possessed in insufficiency, only longed for, now comes upon the scene in living actuality, the experience of the transcendent in gracious intimate presence, the 'Lord's visitation of His people'". Otto goes on to point out that such a transcendent silence "was found in the forms of worship of ancient Israel, and is found today in the Roman Mass, in the moment of 'transubstantiation'".[78]

Otto's discussion is, of course, overtly religious, whereas Tennyson's poem is not--though in the closing lines of the 1837 addendum it may be said to become so. The beloved in "Oh! that 'twere possible" now seems to be surrounded by a sacred aura and to exert an atmosphere of almost divine influence. Perhaps this becomes more clear when one considers a line from Maud in which the speaker says that Maud has made his life "a perfumed altar-flame".[79] Unlike the weird apparition, the "phantom fair and

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[78] Otto, pp.216-17.

[79] Maud, PT 316, Part I, ℓ.622.

good" in "Oh! that 'twere possible" (ℓ.91) is a phantom of the rational "mind" (ℓ.90), truly existing in memory (ℓℓ.85-86), and thus able to be recalled at will and to be realized as a beneficent presence.

> 'Tis a phantom fair and good;
> I can call it to my side,
> So to guard my life from ill,
> Though its ghastly sister glide
> And be moved around me still
> With the moving of the blood,
> That is moved not of the will.
>
> (ℓℓ.91-97)

The insistent effect created by the double enjambment (ℓℓ.94 and 95) and the restless repetition, with variation, in the concluding three lines of the stanza ("moved", "moving", "moved") is in sharp contrast to the serene stasis of the memory of the beloved "by my side". The speaker renounces the "dreary brow" (ℓ.98) and "dismal face" (ℓ.99) of the "ghastly" apparition, aware that it could drive him to suicide (ℓ.100), and determined that it should "fly" (ℓ.101).

But the "other" phantom (ℓ.104), the "phantom fair and good", also recedes: it "windeth far / Till it fade and fail and die" (ℓℓ.105-06). But this second death is a dying into life--for the fair phantom becomes part of the "Archetype that waits, / Clad in light by golden gates" (ℓℓ.107-08). The poet repeats: "Clad in light the Spirit waits / To embrace me in the sky" (ℓℓ.109-10). The suggested apotheosis of the beloved (ℓℓ.104-110) becomes a kind of corollary to the "transubstantiation"[80] of lines 88-89.

The archetypal light imagery of lines 108-09, together with the image of the "golden gates" (ℓ.108), implies that the great "Archetype" is the Holy Spirit of Christianity. But the reference to the "star" in line 104 calls to mind Shelley's Adonais, and thus suggests a Platonic element as well, enriching the poetic evocation of the numinous. The imagery of the closing line is still physical ("To embrace me in the sky"), but now the sky image acts as a symbol of aspiration. The speaker's non-rational

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[80] Otto, p.217. See p.145 of this study.

feelings of guilt have been sublimated into a religious symbol. The dark aspect of the numinous presence has been exorcized.

Although one hesitates to take issue with so illustrious a critic and so erudite a Tennysonian scholar as Professor Ricks, I feel that he undervalues the psychological element in "Oh! that 'twere possible". While praising the memorability of the poem, he writes rather dismissively of the psychic manifestation at its core:

> "A shadow flits before me": and the shadow becomes a ghost. The dead Hallam becomes a dead girl.... Let go by the paraphernalia of the two ghosts, and the heavenly hopes, and the wishful insubstantiality of the eroticism; one need make no conscious effort to remember what is here effortlessly memorable: a broken cry, a suicidal wish for oblivion, for dissolution, for dissolving into tears.... There is something more than a mere succumbing into morbidity in verses such as these which come so shapedly into mind on utterly non-literary occasions, occasions when one is thinking, not about shame and loss in literature, but about shame and loss.[81]

So memorable a poem surely deserves an attempt at explication and a closer reading than has been accorded it by Ricks and most other critics.[82] For the two ghosts, representing the dark aspect and the truly numinous presence respectively, are not merely poetic "paraphernalia": they are at the very heart of the experience the poem records. Though I have discussed the ghosts from a psychological point of view, in terms of repression and sublimation, they may also be seen as sophisticated versions of the Good and Bad Angels in earlier works such as Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus". That is, the two phantoms may be said to

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[81] CR, pp.141-43.

[82] William Buckler has an interesting paragraph on "Oh! that 'twere possible" (VI, pp.178-79). He discusses the "psychic pain" of the speaker in that poem (p.179).

represent the internal struggle between good and evil. Or, using terms more Romantic and less allegorical, one might say that the ghastly wraith is a figment of the diseased imagination while the truly numinous presence represents a triumph of the visionary imagination. But these apparently diverse interpretations are really only different perspectives on the same phenomenon. Whether "translated" in terms germane to modern, Romantic, Renaissance or earlier literature, the experience remains the same. But "the word is not the thing", and the description is not the experience. Semantic difficulties loom large when one is dealing with a poet who, as Sinfield has said, is working on the very edge of human experience.[83]

Let me add at once that I do not mean to imply that a poem can "mean" anything one cares to make it mean. But the chief concerns of Tennyson's poetry are love and loss; death and God; and grief--and how man's response to these in a sense "defines" him. These concerns are, in a more or less highly developed form, as old as civilized man. Each age has explored them in a certain idiom (or idioms). So a work which is essentially about man's spiritual responses to grief and loss may--in some cases, such as this--be meaningfully discussed in terms of several different idioms,[84] and the different expositions will not negate but reinforce one another.

I have found the psychological approach useful for two reasons. Firstly, it enables me to show (as Tennyson in later life was himself anxious to point out) that many of the apparently supernatural phenomena in his poetry are capable of "natural" explanation.[85] Basler writes of Tennyson's "bent toward

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[83]Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", p.106.

[84]Tennyson seems to have held a similar opinion--at least on the subject of religion. Hallam Tennyson noted that his father "thought with Arthur Hallam that 'the essential feelings of religion subsist in the utmost diversity of forms', that 'different language does not always imply different opinions nor different opinions any difference in real faith'" (Memoir I, 309). See also IM 33, ℓℓ.3-4, on faith which "has centre everywhere, / Nor cares to fix itself to form...."

[85]Memoir II, 63.

psychological naturalism",[86] and one of the poems in which this bent is perhaps most obvious is "The Holy Grail" (PT 471). Tennyson found it difficult to bring himself to write that particular "Idyll" because--as he told the Duke of Argyll in October, 1859--he doubted "whether such a subject could be handled" at that time "without incurring a charge of irreverence. It would be too much like playing with sacred things. The old writers believed in the Sangreal".[87] And, as Martin points out, what Tennyson believed was that the Holy Grail was "the product of man's imagination, not an actual vessel, and that the pursuit of it was ultimately destructive for most of mankind...."[88] In other words, the apparently supernatural phenomenon of the Holy Grail could be accounted for in psychological or "natural" terms.[89]

My second reason for favouring a psychological approach to "Oh! that 'twere possible" is that it affords me the opportunity of pointing out another aspect of Tennyson's genius: his deep understanding of the mind and heart of man. As Basler says, and as "Oh! that 'twere possible" shows, "It would be difficult to find a twentieth-century writer who penetrates so deeply or handles so subtly, for all the accumulation of scientific knowledge during the intervening years, the complex problem that is man".[90]

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[86] Basler, p.73.

[87] Memoir I, 456-57.

[88] Martin, p.478. See also Clyde de L. Ryals, "Percivale, Ambrosius, and the Method of Narration in 'The Holy Grail'", Die Neueren Sprachen, 12 (1963), 533. Ryals says the Grail "becomes a symbol of social disintegration".

[89] Memoir II, 63. Hallam Tennyson quotes his mother's journal of January, 1869. The entry does not appear in Hoge's edition of Lady Tennyson's Journal. However, the editor explains in his section on Editorial Method that Lady Tennyson's Journal "is a redaction, or epitome, made from a number of earlier diaries and journals that spanned a quarter of a century. None of these 'original' journals of Lady Tennyson's have survived. Most likely her son Hallam destroyed them in 1896 or 1897 once he had completed work on Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir" (p.x).

[90] Basler, p.92.

William Buckler, too, observes that Tennyson was fascinated by the "abysmal deeps of Personality", and that he was, primarily, a

> ...poet of human experience, perpetually probing distinctive, often strange, states of being through the placement of an imaginary persona at the heart of a processive human action that enables that character to gain an original perspective on the human condition....[91]

Yet Tennyson's poetic exploration of the uncharted reaches of the human psyche was never reductionist. Basler writes that Tennyson

> ...would not, as the Freudians seemed to do, seek to replace the religious and philosophical needs of man by their more elementary components; but would seem, as Jung has phrased it, to "accept the developed aspirations as indispensable components, essential elements, of spiritual growth" and to seek to build towards rather than reduce back to a theory of the psyche.[92]

Tennyson never ceased to seek the "God within".[93] But in order to do so, it was necessary to face "the spectres of the mind"[94] and lay them. I believe this was his poetic purpose in writing "Oh! that 'twere possible", as it was in writing In Memoriam.

I think it would be appropriate here to say I am aware that the idea of a dark aspect to the numinous presence may seem to be paradoxical. However, I am in the first instance using the word "numinous" as meaning "mysterious", and both the phantasmagoria of the early Gothic poems and the ghastly wraith of "Oh! that 'twere possible" would fall into that category. But even when one uses "numinous" in the sense of "sacred", the dark aspect is not entirely incongruous. For Otto, in The Idea of the Holy,

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[91] VI, p.64.

[92] Basler, p.93.

[93] IM 87, ℓ.36; 55, ℓ.4.

[94] IM 96, ℓ.15.

argues that a dark element, which he calls "daemonic dread", is a primitive precursor of true religious experience.[95] Otto's theories, to which I have already referred several times, will be examined more closely in the following chapters, when I explore Tennyson's own "ideas of the holy" and the part they played in his poetic evocation of the numinous.

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[95] Otto, p.15. The translator, John Harvey, quotes Coleridge's "Kubla Khan":

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover!
>
> (ℓℓ.14-16)

Harvey observes that this is "a finely numinous passage, but it is numinous at the primitive, pre-religious, 'daemonic' level: it conveys nothing of *sanctity*"--despite the poet's use of the word "holy" (Otto, pp.222-23). For the "Kubla Khan" quotation, see Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p.217.

CHAPTER V

THE NUMINOUS PRESENCE : (iv) THE DEITY

Tennyson's "strange sense of guilt",[1] discussed in the previous chapter principally in relation to the juvenilia and "Oh! that 'twere possible", also manifests itself in In Memoriam.[2] Again, the source or focus of the guilt is obscure. It may be that there was no specific focus. For in section 71 the poet, after dreaming of his Pyrenean journey with Hallam, addresses sleep (personified) thus:

> Hadst thou such credit with the soul?
> Then bring an opiate trebly strong,
> Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong
> That so my pleasure may be whole....
>
> (IM 71, ℓℓ.5-8)

Shatto and Shaw find the idea behind these lines "slightly obscure" and seem to equate "sense of wrong" with "sorrow".[3] Bradley interprets the "sense of wrong" as a sense of being wronged (by Hallam's death).[4] I find both of these interpretations unconvincing, and believe the "blindfold sense of wrong" refers to the poet's mysterious though well-documented sense of personal guilt.

One is tempted to attribute the "dream" guilt in section 71 to the "subterranean" element in Tennyson's affection for Hallam.[5] A "blindfold" sense of wrong would certainly tie in with the

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[1] CR, p.77.

[2] See, for instance: IM 7, ℓ.7; 26, ℓ.5; 51, ℓ.7; 52, ℓ.14; 71, ℓ.7. Carlisle Moore does not appear to have noticed these references, for he writes: "It is significant that there is no sense of sin, or sinfulness, in Tennyson's unhappiness". See Carlisle Moore, "Faith, Doubt, and Mystical Experience in In Memoriam", Victorian Studies, 7 (1963), 160.

[3] Shatto and Shaw, IM 71, n.5-8 (p.231).

[4] Bradley links the lines to IM 72, ℓℓ.17-28, and IM 82, ℓ.14 (p.163).

[5] Martin p.120; Rader, pp.144-45, n.18. See p.126 of this study.

theory of repression advanced in the last chapter. That is, the "wrong" may be "blindfold" in so far as it has not been recognized or faced up to--it has been repressed.

On the other hand, this "blindfold sense of wrong" may be the sense of personal "profaneness" which Rudolph Otto associates with an awareness of the numen or the numinous. He holds that

> ...this self-depreciating feeling-response is marked by an immediate, almost instinctive, spontaneity. It is not based on deliberation, nor does it follow any rule, but breaks, as it were, palpitant from the soul--like a direct reflex movement at the stimulation of the numinous.[6] It does not spring from the consciousness of some committed transgression, but rather is an immediate datum given with the feeling of the numen....[7]

To advance the theory that the "blindfold sense of wrong" in Tennyson's dream represents the "feeling of absolute 'profaneness'" experienced in the presence of the numen is clearly to imply that Hallam, the subject of the dream, is associated with the numen. This is increasingly the case throughout In Memoriam. Though guilt is certainly present in the elegies, the emphasis in In Memoriam is not on repression but on sublimation. Clyde Ryals discusses "the subtly changing status of the dead Hallam in response to the psychological and philosophical needs of the speaker" in In Memoriam.[8] He notes the change of emphasis that occurs between

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[6]Otto quotes the examples of Isaiah ("I am a man of unclean lips and dwell among a people of unclean lips") and of Peter ("Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"), the emphases being Otto's. Otto goes on to point out that the sense of "profaneness" may proceed "to 'disvalue' together with the self the tribe to which the person belongs [cf. Isaiah's cry], and indeed, together with that, all existence in general" (Otto, pp.52-53). This seems to me to throw an interesting light on the speaker's vitriolic attacks on society in Maud--though there the speaker dissociates himself from "the tribe".

[7]Otto, pp.52-53.

[8]Clyde Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend': The 'New Mythus' of In Memoriam", The Personalist, 43 (1962), 384-85. In his article Ryals uses Roman numerals for the sections of In Memoriam. I shall continue to use Arabic numerals, excepting where a direct quotation from Ryals includes a Roman number.

section 13, where Hallam is referred to as the "human-hearted man I loved" (ℓ.11), and section 14, where the dead friend becomes the "man I held as half-divine" (ℓ.10). "Half-divine" associations are embedded in the imagery of succeeding sections. For instance, the ship that bears Hallam's body home is a "sacred bark" (IM 17, ℓ.14) and the body itself becomes "the sacred dust" (IM 21, ℓ.22). In section 33--the section on his sister's way of dealing with Hallam's death--the poet writes: "Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood / To which she links a truth divine!" (ℓℓ.11-12).[9] And in section 37, the poet's "earthly Muse" (ℓ.13), Melpomene, asserts that what Hallam "said of things divine" is "dear...as sacred wine / To dying lips" (ℓℓ.18-20). As Peter Allen Dale remarks, "The words of Hallam have become here metaphorically the wine of communion...."[10] That is, Hallam's religious opinions have become not only sacred, but sacramental. And though the words are spoken by Melpomene, they express the poet's feelings. For in section 37 Melpomene and Urania represent, I believe, the characteristic phenomenon of the "two voices" of the poet in inner conflict or debate.

A sacrament has been defined as the outward sign of an inward grace, and in In Memoriam the word "grace" is increasingly associated with Hallam.[11] Furthermore, in In Memoriam 41 Hallam's spirit is likened to an "altar-fire" mounting "heavenward" (ℓ.3). But this religious metaphor causes the poet some anxiety. For he is afraid that, as Hallam mounts higher and higher in Eternity, he (the poet) himself will be "evermore a life behind" (ℓ.24). In the poet's own words,

> An inner trouble I behold,
> A spectral doubt which makes me cold,
> That I shall be thy mate no more....
>
> (IM 41, ℓℓ.18-20)

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[9]See also IM 64, ℓ.2 ("Some divinely gifted man"--my italics).

[10]Peter Allan Dale, "'Gracious Lies': The Meaning of Metaphor in In Memoriam", Victorian Poetry, 18 (1980), 154.

[11]See, for instance: IM 85, ℓ.46; 87, ℓ.33; 100, ℓ.4; 109, ℓ.17; 110, ℓ.16; 103, ℓℓ.11,27.

Passages of this kind led T.S. Eliot to write, "His [Tennyson's] desire for immortality is never quite the desire for Eternal Life: his concern is for the loss of man rather than for the gain of God".[12] Philip Collins expresses a similar view in his essay, "Tennyson In and Out of Time", when he writes that "one notes the complete absence of God from his [Tennyson's] Heaven. He is reduced to being an offstage invisible guarantor of one's getting there and meeting one's friends again".[13] Though the "motive idea" in section 41 is indeed "future reunion",[14] remarks such as those of Collins seem a little unfair. For the hope of reunion with loved ones in the afterlife is a natural response to grief; and it is not inconsistent with biblical teaching. Christ himself said to one of the thieves crucified with him: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise".[15]

Another source of anxiety to the poet in In Memoriam is that the dead Hallam may be able to perceive some "inner vileness" (IM 51, ℓ.4) or "flecks of sin" (IM 52, ℓ.14) in his living friend.

> Shall he for whose applause I strove,
> I had such reverence for his blame,
> See with clear eye some hidden shame
> And I be lessen'd in his love?
>
> (IM 51, ℓℓ.5-8)

But the poet decides that his fears are "untrue" (ℓ.9), for as he says, apostrophizing Hallam:

> Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
> With larger other eyes than ours,
> To make allowance for us all.
>
> (IM 51, ℓℓ.14-16)

The simile "like God", applied to Hallam, represents a further step in the process of sublimation. Furthermore, "God" here has

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[12] T.S. Eliot, "In Memoriam", in Selected Essays, p.334.

[13] Collins, "Tennyson In and Out of Time", in Studies, p.152.

[14] Bradley, p.156.

[15] Luke xxiii:43.

the specific qualities of Christ the expiator--the forgiver of sins.

Ryals writes that the "identification with Christ becomes almost explicit in section 61, wherein Hallam is called 'The perfect flower of human time' who lives on now in 'thy second state sublime'":[16]

> If, in thy second state sublime,
> Thy ransom'd reason change replies
> With all the circle of the wise,
> The perfect flower of human time....
>
> (IM 61, ll.1-4)

The phrase, "change replies", could be paraphrased as "exchange views". But the phrase, "the perfect flower of human time", is ambiguous. It may refer directly to Hallam, as Ryals seems to think. But the syntax appears to me to "equate" the "perfect flower of human time" with the "circle of the wise", since the two phrases are in apposition. Glossing lines 3-4, Shatto and Shaw note that the "assembly of the great spirits of all ages in the afterlife is a traditional notion", and cite Odyssey XI, Aeneid VI and Inferno IV, 79-147.[17] I believe the "perfect flower of human time" may be a reference to the celestial rose of Dante's Paradiso, and the "circle of the wise" a reference to what John D. Sinclair calls the "saints in the Rose"[18] as opposed to the "angels in the Rose".[19] The "perfect flower of human time" (my italics) helps to distinguish the "saints" from the "angels".

If, in his "second state" (IM 61, l.2), Hallam is imagined to be in conversation with the "saints in the Rose" or the "circle of the wise", he has either become one of them, or is at least associated with them--in the poet's mind, at any rate. In other

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[16] Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.387.

[17] Shatto and Shaw, IM 61, n.3-4 (p.225).

[18] The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: III: "Paradiso", trans. John D. Sinclair (1939; rpt. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), XXXII (p.463).

[19] Paradiso, XXXI (Sinclair, p.446).

words, if he is not in fact the "perfect flower of human time", suggesting Christ, he is at least deemed to be part of that composite flower which Dante depicts as being made up of the great "saints" who are closest to God. Either way, there is an increasing association of Hallam with the numen, and the epithet, "sublime", in line 1 emphasizes this. The "blurring" of the precise meaning of "the perfect flower of human time" contributes to the numinous aura that is being built up, for the numinous is characterized by mystery, ineffability and sublimity.[20]

Ryals believes that the word "ransom'd" in line 2 of section 61 has biblical overtones, suggesting "Christ's sacrifice of His life to save man".[21] He goes on to point out that in section 64 "the poet compares Hallam to 'some divinely gifted man' who is 'The pillar of a people's hope / The centre of a world's desire'". And he holds that this passage "certainly does more than hint at Haggai's calling of the Messiah 'the desire of all the nations'".[22]

In Memoriam 67 is one of the most luminous, as well as numinous, of the elegies--and "immediate luminousness" is one of the criteria William James proposes as a means of evaluating religious experience or religious opinions.[23] Section 67 begins:

> When on my bed the moonlight falls,
> I know that in thy place of rest
> By that broad water of the west,
> There comes a glory on the walls....
>
> (IM 67, ℓℓ.1-4)

At a literal level the "glory on the walls" may be simply the moonlight filtering into the church at Clevedon. But in context the word "glory" seems to possess a mystical significance,[24]

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[20]Otto, p.99.

[21]Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.387.

[22]Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.388.

[23]James, p.18.

[24]This mystical significance is made overt in line 9: "The mystic glory swims away...."

being used to describe how, hundreds of miles away, Hallam's marble memorial is irradiated (or so the poet imagines):[25]

> Thy marble bright in dark appears,
> As slowly steals a silver flame
> Along the letters of thy name,
> And o'er the number of thy years.
>
> (IM 67, ℓℓ.7-8)

These lines, which glance back towards the "heavenward altar fire" of In Memoriam 41 (ℓ.3) and forward to the "perfumed altar flame" in Maud,[26] suggest a kind of beatification of Hallam. It must be noted, of course, that, strictly speaking, this "beatification" occurs only in the poet's imagination. But I use the term in the Romantic sense, distinguishing it from mere fancy. Such is the power of the poetry that the reader tends to accept the manifestation of a "mystic glory" as a subjective reality, a truly psychic experience--a vision. One gets the impression that, when the moonlight falls upon his bed, the poet experiences a benediction that is somehow reciprocally linked to the beatification of Hallam through the symbolic irradiation of his monument at Clevedon.

Alan Sinfield, in The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", discusses how this reciprocal linkage works in the poetry. He writes:

> In the first stanza the prepositional phrases 'on my bed' and 'in thy place of rest' stand out because they occur initially in their clauses. This forces us to notice their similarity (a bed is a place of rest)--and then their dissimilarity. Despite the euphemism, Hallam's condition is very different from the poet's, yet the equivalence in syntax points up the way in which they are nevertheless joined together by the strange trance.[27]

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[25] At the time of writing these lines Tennyson had not seen Hallam's "memorial". He visited Hallam's burial place for the first time after his marriage to Emily. To do so seemed like "a kind of consecration" (Memoir I, 332).

[26] PT 316, Part I, ℓ.622.

[27] Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", p.86.

In another study, Sinfield shows how in section 67 Tennyson "uses the smallest particles of language at first to bring out the contrast between material things and the numinous, and then, by switching articles, to suggest that the mystical has become as real to him as the physical".[28] Sinfield holds that the "definite article often constitutes a plea for recognition and acceptance, and when contrasted with less definite forms it can show the boundary between the known and the not-known, the material and the spiritual".[29] He goes on to explain that, in the opening stanza of section 67,

> ...the bed, the walls, the moonlight and even Hallam's resting place have a definiteness to the poet in comparison with 'a glory'. The physical things he knows about, but the strange nature of 'a glory' is something normally beyond man's comprehension, as the syntax suggests. We find the same thing in the second stanza, where there 'slowly steals a silver flame', but when the poet has absorbed the experience and taken it into his personality, then he can write, 'The mystic glory swims away'.[30]

As the "moonlight dies" in the poet's room and the "mystic glory swims away" at Clevedon church, there is a strong suggestion of a presence withdrawn, and the next two lines have a tender elegiac quality:

> And closing eaves of wearied eyes
> I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray....
>
> (IM 67, ℓℓ.11-12)

The "eaves of wearied eyes" image is a striking one, conjuring up visions of dripping eaves that suggest eyelids shedding tears.[31] Possibly the eyes are "wearied" from weeping at the

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[28] Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", p.57.

[29] Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", pp.56-57.

[30] Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", p.57.

[31] I trust this is not too subjective a reading. The suggestion is perhaps tenuous, for there is no specific reference to the eaves dripping. But I feel here the pressure of "Il Penseroso": "...minute drops from off the eaves" (ℓ.130--Carey, p.145). I believe Tennyson felt this pressure too,

withdrawal of that numinous presence inherent in the "mystic glory".

The coming of morning ("I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray") looks back to the break of day described in In Memoriam 7: "And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain / On the bald street breaks the blank day". But though there is an elegiac sadness in the "gray" dawn (ℓ.12) of section 67, the bleak hopelessness of section 7 is absent. For the poet knows "the mist is drawn / A lucid veil from coast to coast" (ℓℓ.13-14). And the mist which is imagined as stretching right across the country provides a link with the man buried at Clevedon. Furthermore, the word "veil" carries a wealth of connotation, being one of the images of partial visibility[32] (like shadow and cloud) which are used by Tennyson to evoke the numinous presence. There are numerous examples, but--as I noted earlier (p.134, n.63)--the lines which seem to me to encapsulate Tennyson's thoughts on the matter are those from "The Two Voices" (PT 209, ℓℓ.446-47) which postulate that "every cloud, that spreads above / And veileth love, itself is love".[33] One is reminded that after commerce with the numen Moses had to cover (veil) his face, for his followers were afraid to behold God's reflected radiance.[34] This biblical story finds a parallel in Tennyson's "Armageddon". When the "young Seraph" appears, the speaker finds his "unutterable shining eyes" so

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especially since Milton in the following lines discusses the morning, but introduces the word "twilight" (ℓ.137). It is surely too much of a coincidence that Tennyson, also describing the morning, should use the word "dusk" (IM 67, ℓ.12).

[32]Valerie Hollis writes: "In passing, one might note that depiction of the "half-seen" comes to be an important part of his [Tennyson's] mature descriptive technique; in fact, a vision of the half-seen is at the heart of his mysticism". See Valerie Ward Hollis, "Landscape in the Poetry of Tennyson" (Ph.D. dissertation, Bryn Mawr College 1966), p.62.

[33]See also "The Ancient Sage", PT 415, ℓℓ.9-14, 242. The images of partial visibility in Tennyson's poetry deserve closer attention than space permits me to accord them.

[34]Exodus xxxiv: 29-30, 33.

bright that he is forced to "veil / [His] vision with both hands" (PT 3, II, 6-7).

In In Memoriam 67 (line 14), the phrase "lucid veil" (my italics) carries vestiges of such religious connotations. Dennis Welch writes: "Lucid instead of opaque, the veil reveals a connection, though intermittent, between the immanent and the transcendent".[35]

The phrase "lucid veil" is, of course, oxymoronic or paradoxical. Rudolph Otto's remarks on "moments of numinous experience" are apposite. He writes: "The consciousness of a 'wholly other' [the numen] evades precise formulation in words, and we have to employ symbolic phrases which seem sometimes sheer paradox...."[36]

In line 9 of In Memoriam 67 the poet uses the word "dusk" to describe the first light of day--a strange inversion that underscores the sense of loss that throbs beneath the closing lines of this poem. For, while dawn traditionally symbolizes hope and re-birth, nightfall suggests death. Thus alluding to dawn in terms of approaching night ("dusk") suggests a psychologically-rooted temporal disorientation. Night, holding the possibility of a mystical moonlight experience, becomes the time of hope or re-birth, while daybreak is figuratively "dipt in gray" (ℓ.12).

But the implications are not entirely negative. For deeply-embedded religious imagery operates to the end. The

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[35]Dennis M. Welch, "Distance and Progress in In Memoriam", Victorian Poetry, 18 (1980), 174.

[36]Otto, p.61. The note of paradox that recurs throughout In Memoriam reaches a climax in section 129:

> Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
> So far, so near in woe and weal;
> ....
>
> Known and unknown; human, divine;
> Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
> Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
> ....
>
> Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
> Loved deeplier, darklier understood....
>
> (ℓℓ.1-10)

"lucid veil" that is "drawn...from coast to coast" seems analogous to the curtains that were drawn across the sacred ark to cover the tables bearing the Mosaic law.[37] The word "tablet", used for Hallam's marble memorial, points this parallel:

> And in the dark church like a ghost
> Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.
>
> (IM 67, ℓℓ.15-16)

The word "glimmers", discussed at some length in chapter III, suggests "broken gleams" (PT 353, ℓ.10) or "broken lights". In the Introductory stanzas of In Memoriam Tennyson was to write:

> Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be:
> They are but broken lights of thee,
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they.
>
> (ℓℓ.17-20)

In section 67 the poetry implies that there is a reality ("a mystic glory") that is infinitely "more" than the memorial that glimmers "like a ghost" in the dark church. There seems to be an unexpressed underlying expectation that at some future time the veil will be drawn back to reveal the "mystic glory" associated with a beatified Hallam.

The section ends with the word "dawn". The temporal disorientation has been corrected; and although a deep sense of loss lingers on at the end of the poem, the word "dawn" does now seem to hold some promise. That promise is realized in section 95 when dusk and dawn blend, literally and metaphorically, to symbolize the kind of numinous experience which is adumbrated in section 67.

In section 84 the dead Hallam is envisaged "sitting crowned with good" (ℓ.5); and in section 85 he is apostrophized as "sacred essence" (ℓ.35). Having been likened in section 64 to

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[37] Exodus xxvi:1-13.

"some divinely gifted man" (ℓ.2), he is presented in section 87 as a parallel to Christ the teacher. Tennyson recalls

> The rapt oration flowing free
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> From point to point, with power and grace
> And music in the bounds of law,
> To those conclusions when we saw
> The God within him light his face,
>
> And seem to lift the form, and glow
> In azure orbits heavenly-wise....
>
> (IM 87, ℓℓ.32-38)

Words such as "power" and "grace"--especially the latter--point towards divinity, as does the reference to levitation or ascension (ℓℓ.37-38), and the religious implications become overt in lines 35-36 ("...when we saw / The God within him light his face....")

In section 95 the alteration of the phrase "his living soul" to "the living soul" exemplifies the process of sublimation that takes place in In Memoriam. Glossing lines 36-37 of section 95, Tennyson commented to Knowles: "The Living Soul, perchance the Deity--the first reading was His living Soul was flash'd on mine--but my conscience was troubled by 'his'".[38] It would seem that, in writing of the "long-wished-for"[39] spiritual consummation ("his living soul was flash'd on mine"), Tennyson's mysterious guilt once again asserted itself. However, he was able to cope, artistically and psychologically, with that guilt by sublimating his feeling for Hallam into his feeling for the deity. Yet whenever he glossed "the living soul" as "perchance the Deity", Tennyson would hasten to add, "Of course the greater Soul may

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[38] Shatto and Shaw, IM 95, n.36-7 (p.255). Cf. PT 296, IM XCV, n.36 (p.946). Shatto and Shaw list (on pp.25-26) various examples in In Memoriam of "Tennyson's deliberate attempt to obscure and make less personal the references to himself and Arthur Hallam": IM 7, ℓ.4; 23, ℓ.3; 24, ℓℓ.10,11; 30, ℓ.20; 43, ℓ.13; 51, ℓ.7; 54, ℓℓ.1,13; 85, ℓ.51; 89, ℓ.15; 92, ℓ.3; 93, ℓ.13; 95, ℓ.36.

[39] Maud, PT 316, Part I, ℓ.603.

include the less".[40] Tennyson "preferred, however, for fear of giving a wrong impression, the vaguer and more abstract later reading".[41] Commenting on the pronominal change, Alan Sinfield writes:

> The version we now have seems to me better because more mysterious, and the experience in question should certainly be that.... The mystical experience cannot be given one interpretation; it must surely seem to the person experiencing it absolutely inclusive. This is not the conventional ghost the poet had expected, but a revelation of the harmony underlying everything that is, and the vague diction is best here because it conveys this inclusiveness.[42]

The alteration of "his" to "the" and "his" to "this" does indeed enhance the numinous quality of the poem; and this is further reinforced in succeeding sections by the association of Hallam with "vastness", "mystery" (IM 97, ℓ.7) and grace.[43] Furthermore, Hallam is linked with nature in such a way that he becomes a kind of presiding deity in the landscape. For instance, Tennyson writes in section 97:

> My love has talk'd with rocks and trees;
> He finds on misty mountain ground
> His own vast shadow glory-crown'd;
> He sees himself in all he sees.
>
> (IM 97, ℓℓ.1-4)[44]

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[40] Shatto and Shaw, IM 95, n.36-7 (p.255); PT 296, IM XCV, n.36 (p.946).

[41] Shatto and Shaw, IM 95, n.36-7 (p.255).

[42] Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", pp.62-63.

[43] IM 100, ℓ.4; 103, ℓℓ.11,27; 107, ℓ.17; 110, ℓ.16.

[44] These lines, which Shatto and Shaw deduce were written between 1848 and 1850 (IM 97, headnote--p.258), have much in common with a letter written by Tennyson in 1839. He speaks of "[d]im mystic sympathies with tree and hill reaching far back into childhood. A known landskip [Tennyson continues] is to me an old friend, that continually talks to me of my own youth and half-forgotten things..." (Memoir I, 172; quoted by Hollis, p.133).

It seems to me to be significant that Tennyson uses not the past tense but the present perfect ("has talked") modulating into present ("finds", "sees").

Section 99 (the "second anniversary" section) is addressed to the day when the poet lost "the flower of men" (ℓ.4). Lines 5-16 read:

> Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red
> On yon swoll'n brook that bubbles fast
> By meadows breathing of the past,
> And woodlands holy to the dead;
>
> Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves
> A song that slights the coming care,
> And Autumn laying here and there
> A fiery finger on the leaves;
>
> Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
> To myriads on the genial earth,
> Memories of bridal, or of birth,
> And unto myriads more, of death.

There is a slight ambivalence about the lines. Syntactically, "Who" (ℓℓ.5, 9, 13) refers to the apostrophized "Day" (ℓ.4), as the verb suffixes ("-est") show. But through the power of proximity, "Who" seems also to be linked with "the flower of men" (Hallam). The "lost" beloved (ℓ.4) therefore seems a numinous presence in nature that trembles, breathes, murmurs and awakens memories.

The word "holy" in line 8 is explicit in its evocation of the numinous and although, empirically speaking, the "fiery finger on the leaves" is simply a reference to the autumnal colouring of the foliage, in context it carries connotations of the burning bush in which Moses encountered the numen.[45] And line 13 seems to contain a glancing reference to the Creator breathing life into man. But what is activated here is not man but memory. I have shown in a previous chapter how memory plays a vital rôle in the apperception of the numinous presence, and in this section of _In Memoriam_ memory is activated or energized through nature--by the "balmy breath" of the breeze, to be

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[45]Exodus iii:2.

precise. But this breeze is infinitely "more"[46] than "a wind / Of memory murmuring the past".[47] It has indeed become one of the ways in which "God and the ghosts of men" may "speak to the heart of man".[48]

At Somersby memories of Hallam are ubiquitous and endowed with their own essential energy. As the poet says in section 100, when he climbs the hill at Somersby,

> ...from end to end
> Of all the landscape underneath,
> I find no place that does not breathe
> Some gracious memory of my friend....
>
> (IM 100, ℓℓ.1-4)

The word "breathe", which features so frequently in In Memoriam,[49] comes to carry its own numinous connotations. The development of these numinous connotations is a cumulative process, but the image is made overtly religious in In Memoriam 36 (line 9): "And so the Word had breath"--the Word indicating, of course, the Logos. William James remarks on the metaphorical association of religion with "the respiratory function". He writes: "God's Breath in Man is the title of the chief work of our best known American mystic (Thomas Lake Harris); and in certain non-Christian countries the foundation of all religious discipline consists in regulation of the inspiration and expiration".[50]

In In Memoriam 100 the religious undertones are muted, but the word "breathe" certainly suggests a personification which in turn evokes the sense of a presence animating the scene.

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[46] IM, Introductory stanzas, ℓ.20.

[47] IM 92, ℓℓ.7-8. For a discussion of the breeze-wind image in In Memoriam, and its relation to what Abrams called the "Romantic metaphor" of the "correspondent breeze", see pp.60-62, 166 of this study.

[48] Memoir II, 342. See p.28 of this study.

[49] For example: IM 3, ℓ.3; 13, ℓ.12; 17, ℓ.4; 36, ℓ.9; 40, ℓ.2; 56, ℓ.7; 77, ℓ.15; 78, ℓ.11; 85, ℓ.32; 86, ℓℓ.4,10; 91, ℓ.10; 98, ℓ.5; 99, ℓℓ.3,13; 100, ℓ.3; 104, ℓ.11; 105, ℓ.20; 118, ℓ.6; 120, ℓ.1; 122, ℓ.13; 125, ℓ.10.

[50] James, p.13.

However, in section 104, which records the first Christmas away from Somersby, at High Beech in ~~the~~ Epping Forest, the new landscape is devoid of that dear presence. Even the Christmas bells sound like "strangers' voices" (ℓ.9).

> In lands where not a memory strays,
> Nor landmark breathes of other days,
> But all is new unhallow'd ground.
>
> (IM 104, ℓℓ.10-12)

The implication is that the new landscape is "unhallow'd" because Arthur Hallam has not walked there. Once again the religious implications are considerable. And in section 105 the poet, though still holding Christmas Eve "solemn to the past" (ℓ.16), forbids any form of celebration. "For who would keep an ancient form / Thro' which the spirit breathes no more?" (ℓℓ.19-20). The "spirit" is partly the spirit of Christmas,[51] but more particularly the spirit of Hallam--so intimately associated with Christmas at Somersby, as sections 27-30 and 78 show. Thus the spirit of Hallam and the spirit of Christmas become virtually synonymous. And though at High Beech that spirit seems to be absent, the "third Christmas" elegy nevertheless closes on an optimistic note, looking forward to the "closing cycle rich in good" (IM 105, ℓ.28).

The optimistic note becomes positively jubilant in section 106:

> Ring out the old, ring in the new,
> ....
> Ring out the false, ring in the true.
>
> (ℓℓ.5,8)
>
> Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
> The faithless coldness of the times....
>
> (ℓℓ.17-18)
>
> Ring out false pride in place and blood,
> The civic slander and the spite;
> Ring in the love of truth and right,
> Ring in the common love of good.
>
> (ℓℓ.21-24)

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[51] One recalls John iv:24 ("God is a spirit").

The moral concerns expressed here and elsewhere[52] may be viewed as an integral part of the poet's developing awareness of the numinous. For Rudolph Otto writes:

> Almost everywhere we find the numinous attracting and appropriating meanings derived from social and individual ideals of obligation, justice and goodness.[53] These become the 'will' of the numen, and the numen their guardian, ordainer, and author. More and more these ideas come to enter into the very essence of the numen and charge the term with ethical content. 'Holy' becomes 'good', and 'good' from that very fact in turn becomes 'holy', 'sacrosanct'; until there results a thenceforth indissoluble synthesis of the two elements, and the final outcome is thus the fuller, more complex sense of 'holy', in which it is at once _good and sacrosanct._[54]

The full import of the association of Hallam with goodness (_IM_ 84, ℓ.4; 103, ℓ.10; 109, ℓ .9, etc.) becomes clear: the dead friend is increasingly identified with the numen. And when, in the closing line of _In Memoriam_ 106, the poet writes, "Ring in the Christ that is to be", there is an underlying suggestion that Christ and Hallam are virtually interchangeable in the poet's mind. Section 107 seems to support this hypothesis. For section 106 closed with a reference to "the _Christ_ that is to be", and section 107, on Hallam's birthday, opens: "It is the day when _he_ was born...." My italics stress the fact that the pronoun "he" (_IM_ 107, ℓ.1), which actually refers to Hallam, appears to refer back to "the Christ" in the preceding line (_IM_ 106, ℓ.32).

Ryals notes that in section 104 the poet and his family "observe on Hallam's birthday the same customs as in the second Christmas poem, as though the anniversary of Hallam's birth has become more meaningful than Christ's, indeed has supplanted it".

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[52] For example, in _IM_ 118, ℓℓ.25-28.

[53] James also notes the importance of goodness in relation to religious experience. He writes: "The good dispositions which a vision, or voice, or other apparent heavenly favor leave behind them are the only marks by which we may be sure they are not possible deceptions of the tempter" (pp.21-22).

[54] Otto, p.114.

That is, Ryals claims that in section 105 "the observance of the Nativity" is "rejected in favor of a new nativity, Hallam's", in section 107--though the "poet is careful to keep the implications muffled".[55]

What the poet is in fact doing is to reactivate the Christian myth (an "ancient form"--IM 105, ℓ.20) by imbuing it with his own personal and "more or less anthropomorphic" view of God.[56] Tennyson believed that "Christianity with its divine Morality but without the central figure of Christ, the Son of Man, would become cold, and that it is fatal for religion to lose its warmth".[57] For Tennyson, Hallam represented both warmth and perfection. As Benziger writes,

> For five years Tennyson had known Hallam intimately, not as a living statue, and not as pure spirit, but as living body, mind, and spirit, constituting in all as full an earthly image of divine perfection as Tennyson craved.[58]

This "earthly image of divine perfection" is especially obvious in In Memoriam 109, where Tennyson alludes to his friend's "*seraphic* intellect and force" (ℓ.5), his "*high* nature amorous of the *good*" (ℓ.9), his "passion *pure* in snowy bloom" (ℓ.11), his "love of freedom" (ℓ.13), his "manhood fused with female *grace*" and his "wisdom" (ℓ.24).[59] There is further emphasis on Hallam's wisdom, together with his "power", "knowledge", "reverence" and "charity" in section 114 (ℓℓ.26-28).

Since for Tennyson Hallam represented the perfect image of man, it is not surprising that for him Christ should come to resemble Hallam--just as Hallam has come, in the course of In Memoriam, to resemble Christ. Hallam has been delineated in

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[55] Ryals. "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.393.

[56] Memoir I, 311.

[57] Memoir I, 325-26; quoted by Shatto and Shaw, IM 106, n.18 (p.266).

[58] Benziger, p.148.

[59] The italics are mine.

terms of God ("half divine", "the God within him", and so on) and God was to be described in terms of man ("The highest, holiest manhood, thou").[60] This is not, of course, an inappropriate description for the "Son of Man", but one has the distinct impression that the "highest, holiest manhood" is envisioned as Hallam.

Rudolph Otto's explication of "The Law of Association of Feelings"[61] furthers one's understanding of the "mechanisms" involved in the "apotheosis of Hallam"[62] and the anthropomorphizing of Christ. Otto writes that

> ...just as in the case of ideas the law of reproduction by similarity leads to a mistaken substitution of ideas, so that I come to entertain an idea x, when y would have been the appropriate one, so we may be led to a corresponding substitution of feelings, and I may react with a feeling x to an impression to which the feeling y would normally correspond. Finally, I can pass from one feeling to another by an imperceptibly gradual transition, the one feeling x dying away little by little, while the other, y, excited together with it, increases and strengthens in a corresponding degree.[63]

In this way Tennyson's feeling for Hallam--as expressed in In Memoriam--gradually becomes sublimated to form part of his feeling for Christ.

In section 114 Tennyson holds that Knowledge must be tempered by Wisdom. Shatto and Shaw, quoting Collins, gloss "Knowledge" as that "faculty whereby we apprehend not abstract but physical and sensuous truth", and "Wisdom" as "spiritual insight" or "the faculty which we derive directly from God...."[64] Tennyson writes of Knowledge:

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[60] IM, Introductory stanzas, ℓ.14.

[61] Otto, p.43.

[62] Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.397.

[63] Otto, pp.43-44.

[64] Shatto and Shaw, IM 114, headnote (p.271). Collins' explication invokes Plato (Republic, VI) and Coleridge (Aids to Reflection, Commentary on Aphorism, viii).

Let her know her place;
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain; and guide
Her footsteps, moving side by side
With wisdom, like the younger child:

For she is earthly of the mind,
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.

(IM 114, ℓℓ.15-22)

Since Wisdom is "*heavenly* of the soul" (ℓ.22--my italics) the "higher hand" seems to suggest divine guidance, and the reference to "footsteps" (ℓ.19) seems retrospectively to illuminate the eleventh stanza of section 85:

Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine....

(ℓℓ.41-44)

At that point in the poem the reference to Hallam's "footsteps" in the poet's life seemed to suggest guidance that amounted almost to a kind of benevolent possession. After encountering the same metaphor of footsteps in section 114, but now associated with a "higher hand" and "Wisdom heavenly of the soul", one comes to realize that the guidance afforded by the dead Hallam is a form of divine direction. Tennyson is moving towards the state of religious conviction to which James refers when he writes: "Most religious men believe (or 'know', if they be mystical) that not only they themselves, but the whole universe of beings to whom the God is present, are secure in his parental hands".[65]

The association with the deity is once more reinforced in section 116, in which the poet avers that "the face will shine" upon him while he muses alone (ℓℓ.9-10). It is no longer "his" (that is, Hallam's) face, but "the" face. And the fact that the face "will shine" implicitly recalls how the Apostles saw "the God within him [Hallam] light his face" (IM 87, ℓ.36). The poet is increasingly able to look forward rather than back. He says:

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[65] James, p.507.

> ...less of sorrow lives in me
> For days of happy commune dead;
> Less yearning for the friendship fled,
> Than some strong bond which is to be.
>
> (IM 116, ℓℓ.13-16)

The "bond which is to be" looks back to "the Christ that is to be" (IM 106, ℓ.32) and the two become indissolubly linked. As a result, when (in section 119) the poet again visits Hallam's home in the early hours of the morning, the dawning of the day is no longer "gray" (IM 67, ℓ.12) but "light-blue" (IM 119, ℓ.7). Nor is it "blank" (IM 7, ℓ.12). Rather it is filled with the sweet smell of "the meadow" (IM 119, ℓ.4) and "a chirp of birds" (IM 119, ℓ.5). The wonderful freshness inherent in these lines seems to me to suggest what James calls a "peculiarity" of the "state of assurance" reached at a certain point in religious conversion--namely, that an "appearance of newness beautifies every object...." James contrasts this newness with "that other sort of newness, that dreadful unreality and strangeness in the appearance of the world, which is experienced by melancholy patients...."[66] Tennyson admirably evokes these two different kinds of newness or strangeness (representing two different psychological states) in the paired poems, In Memoriam 7 and 119.

As vividly as the memory of the country scenes in In Memoriam 119 (ℓℓ.4-5), comes the memory of Hallam. And the memory has its own vitality, for Hallam is described in terms appropriate to a living body, not a corpse. The poet writes:

> [I] bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
> And bright the friendship of thine eye;
> And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
> I take the pressure of thine hand.
>
> (IM 119, ℓℓ.9-12)

Charles Sanders writes that the human hand "has always been a mighty instrument and a powerful symbol, lending itself to many various situations, purposes, and needs", and he mentions

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[66] James, pp.242-43.

several examples of the literary use of the image.[67] Clyde Ryals discusses the "transfiguration of the hand image in In Memoriam".[68] He notes that this image is "used twenty-three times in the first three parts of the elegy to indicate the speaker's desire for the physical presence of the dead friend". But in the New Year's hymn (section 106) the bells are invoked to ring in "the kindlier hand" (ℓ.30). And though the hand is occasionally "the super-human hand of Hallam"[69] it is more often the "higher hand"[70] that seems to suggest the deity. It is the hand that reaches "thro' nature, moulding men" (IM 124, ℓ.24). As Ryals says, "The hand thus becomes something more than mere physical presence: it is now a mysterious shaping power, the guiding hand which leads to wisdom".[71] All this is indeed true, but in section 119 there is still a hint of yearning for a time when Hallam was a physical rather than a metaphysical presence, for the poet writes

> ...with scarce a sigh
> I take the pressure of thy hand.
>
> (my italics)

The idea of a presence that manifests itself in or through nature (IM 124, ℓℓ.23-24) is not a new development in Tennyson's

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[67] Charles Richard Sanders, "Tennyson and the Human Hand", Victorian Newsletter No.11 (1957), p.5. The image of the hand is one which recurs many times in the Bible. Sometimes it is the hand of man; sometimes the hand of God, used either for chastisement (e.g., Deuteronomy ii: 15) or for blessing (e.g., 2 Chronicles xxx: 12). The laying on of the human hand or hands is frequently associated with healing or benediction (Acts vi:6; xiii:3; 1 Timothy iv:14; 2 Timothy i:6).

[68] Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.395.

[69] Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.395.

[70] IM 114, ℓ.17.

[71] Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.395.

poetry. As I showed in Chapter II, this phenomenon is to be found even in very early poems such as "The Outcast" (PT 55) and "I wander in darkness and sorrow" (PT 11), as well as in IM 86.[72] I touched on the matter again in Chapter III, in my discussion of "In the Valley of Cauteretz" (PT 326).[73] And in the present chapter I have commented on the way in which Hallam's presence haunts the Somersby landscape in section 100 (inter alia) of In Memoriam.[74]

In section 130 the theme of the numinous presence in nature reaches a climax. And this presence now emerges as "numinous" in the fullest sense of the word--that is, not only mysterious or supernatural but pertaining to the numen or Godhead. This lovely elegy begins, "Thy voice is on the rolling air...." The possessive pronoun "thy" refers to Hallam, who is apostrophized. And Hallam's voice is heard in the breeze ("on the rolling air"). One recalls In Memoriam 86:

> Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
> That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
> Of evening....
>
> (ℓℓ.1-3)

The opening line of section 130 seems now to offer confirmation of what was postulated in connection with section 86: that the presence felt in the "ambrosial" breeze is Hallam's.

Line 2 ("I hear thee where the waters run") looks forward to the later poem, "In the Valley of Cauteretz" (PT 326), in which the sound of the stream becomes first the "voice of the dead" Hallam, but ultimately his "living voice". And in lines 3-4 there is a play on sun/son, so that Hallam is once again associated with Christ:

> Thou standest in the rising sun,
> And in the setting thou art fair.

The alliteration on "s" highlights the image of the rising sun,

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[72] See pp.43-45, 60-62 of this study.

[73] See pp.88-92 of this study.

[74] See pp.164-66 of this study.

creating in context an almost sublime effect. This effect is not negated by the reference to the sun's "setting" in the following line, partly because the positive connotations established in line 3 ("thou standest in the rising sun") seem to resonate on into the next line together with the "s" sound which recurs in the word "setting".

The famous "In Memoriam" stanza[75] seems beautifully suited to the expression of the poet's feelings at this point. The iambic tetrameter is smooth, creating an effect of tranquillity[76] that reinforces the tone of the poem. And the a b b a rhyme scheme makes the implicit point that the beginning and the end are the same--that the "rising" and the "setting" are only different phases of the same sun. This idea has acted as a leitmotif throughout In Memoriam, occurring earlier in the blending of dusk and dawn in section 95, and in the Hesper-Phosphor image of section 121:

> Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
> For what is one, the first, the last,
> Thou, like my present and my past,
> Thy place is changed; thou art the same.
>
> (IM 121, ℓℓ.17-20)

In the second stanza of In Memoriam 130, metrical variations suggest the ineffability of the numinous presence, thus reinforcing the meaning of the words. In line 5 ("What art thou then? I cannot guess") there is metrical ambiguity in the first foot, which may be read as an iamb or a trochee. The latter reading, in which the interrogative ("What") is strongly stressed, emphasizes the quality which Rudolph Otto has called "a mystery inexpressible and above all creatures".[77]

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[75] Tennyson thought he had been the "originator" of the "In Memoriam metre", but subsequently discovered that it had been used by Sir Philip Sidney, Ben Johnson and Lord Herbert of Cherbury (Memoir I, 305-06).

[76] Alan Sinfield writes of "the smoothness and slowness" of Tennyson's "basic rhythm" in In Memoriam. (The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", p.186.)

[77] Otto, p.13 (the emphasis is the author's).

In the couplet which follows, the rhyming words ("flower / power") would seem to have feminine endings.[78] The "extra" syllables create an impression of "more"[79] that is at variance with the word "less" in the next line (ℓ.8), thus serving to support the negation of "less" in line 8: "I do not therefore love thee less".

The "diffusive power" alluded to in line 7 is virtually illustrated in the first three stanzas by the alliterative "spreading" of r's, s's and l's. One might say that the principal alliterative sounds are diffused through the stanzas.

The concept of "love" introduced at the end of the second stanza is reconsidered in the third stanza, and explored more fully, alliteration on "l", together with the repetition of the word "love", providing a kind of bridge between the two stanzas.

> My love involves the love before;
> My love is vaster passion now;
> Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
> I seem to love thee more and more.
>
> (IM 130, ℓℓ.9-12)

The negation in line 8 ("I do not therefore love thee less") has become an affirmation in line 12: "I seem to love thee more and more". The word "more" occupies the same stanzaic position as "less" (ℓ.8) in the previous stanza, so that the explicit comparison is implicitly highlighted. But "more" also looks back to its rhyming counterpart, "before". One is conscious of a sense of continuing progression in the move from "before" to "more and more".

There is also an implied contrast in the time references, "before" and "now". There have been moments in In Memoriam when the present was compared to the past to the detriment of the former. But now the comparison is positive. The "love before" has become a "vaster passion". The word "vaster" carries its own numinous

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[78] I am aware, of course, that Tennyson may have pronounced these words as monosyllables. I therefore offer my remark on the "extra" syllables tentatively.

[79] IM, Introductory stanzas, ℓ.20.

connotations in so far as it suggests the sense of grandeur and awesomeness which Otto holds is an indirect means of evoking numinous feeling.[80] The metaphysical connotations adherent in Tennyson's use of the word "vaster" come across in his "Introductory stanzas" to In Memoriam:

> Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell;
> That mind and soul, according well,
> May make one music as before,
>
> But vaster.
>
> (IM, Introductory stanzas, ℓℓ.25-29)

Alan Sinfield in his essay, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", discusses how the reader of In Memoriam becomes "accustomed to seeing something beyond the physical in an expression like 'distant gloom' [in In Memoriam 95] ...." Sinfield contends that "in this context one is likely to think of the depths of personality or of the Godhead".[81] In Tennyson's poetry the concept of vastness operates in the same way, with "spiritual connotations" becoming "subtly attached" to the idea.[82] There is something almost oxymoronic or paradoxical in the phrase "vaster passion". For, as I have said, the word "vaster" implies the awesome and remote. But the word "passion" suggests an almost physical immediacy. As I have shown elsewhere, this paradoxical element is frequently found in evocations of the numinous.[83]

The phrase "my love" in line 10 has a certain ambivalence. On the surface it clearly means "my love for Hallam", but there is an underlying sense also of "my love" meaning "the one I love" (Hallam). Thus one comes to feel that Hallam himself has become a "vaster passion"; and so, too, has the poet's love for Hallam. The "love before" has indeed become an all-pervasive passion--a "diffusive power" (ℓ.7).

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[80] Otto, p.71, See also James, pp.407, 419.

[81] Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", p.64.

[82] Sinfield, "Matter-Moulded Forms of Speech", p.56.

[83] See p.161 of this study.

The blending of Hallam with God and Nature is adumbrated in In Memoriam 111, in which the poet speaks of the expression in Hallam's eyes, "Where God and Nature met in light" (ℓ.20). Hallam has become a "diffusive power" in being "mix'd...with Nature" (IM 130, ℓ.11); and he has become a "vaster passion" (IM 130, ℓ.10) in being "mix'd with God" (IM 130, ℓ.11), for God is Love.[84] And the speaker's explicit association of his friend with the numen is once again implicitly reinforced through the use of paradox: "Far off thou art, but ever nigh" (ℓ.13).

The poet continues triumphantly:

> I have thee still, and I rejoice;
> I prosper, circled with thy voice;
> I shall not lose thee tho' I die....
> (ℓℓ.14-16)[85]

A cause-and-effect relationship seems to be set up between "I have thee still" and "I prosper", because of the corresponding position of these phrases at the start of two consecutive lines. The fact that these two "central" lines in the stanza are indented[86] has the effect of emphasizing the relationship between the two phrases --that is, of highlighting the fact that "I prosper" follows on from "I have thee still". Similarly the stanza's "b" rhyme ("rejoice" / "voice") also suggests a cause-and-effect relationship: "I rejoice" because I am "circled with thy voice".

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[84] 1 John iv:16; quoted by Charles Tennyson, "Tennyson's Religion", in Six Tennyson Essays (London: Cassell, 1954), p.93.

[85] James Kissane writes that Tennyson "does not renounce his symbol of the past [Hallam]...but reinterprets it to incorporate a promise of future reunion" (p.103).

[86] Photographs of some of the Trinity College manuscripts, as well as manuscripts in the Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln, and the Houghton Library, Harvard University, show the "middle" two lines of each stanza to be indented. The photographs are of sections 9, 31, 32, 36, 37, 40, 41, 131 and lines 57-108 of the Epilogue (Shatto and Shaw, frontispiece, and opp. pp.46, 47, 78, 79). I think it reasonable to assume that Tennyson followed the same system of indentation in all the sections of In Memoriam--as the layout in both the Ricks and the Shatto and Shaw editions would seem to suggest.

Furthermore, "I prosper" seems like an expansion of "I rejoice", while "circled with thy voice" seems to be an expansion of "I have thee still". That is, there is a kind of chiasmus in the central "couplet" of the closing stanza, which creates a sense of balance, and assurance.[87] The word "circled" is especially powerful. For the circle, the symbol of perfection, has frequently been associated with Hallam, both in In Memoriam and in earlier poems, and one recalls Hallam's words to Tennyson to the effect that Christianity eventually draws "us all" within its "magic circle".[88] There is a strong suggestion in this poem that Hallam's prophecy has been fulfilled. Tennyson has indeed been drawn into the "magic circle" of Christianity in so far as the sublimation of Hallam in Christ is now complete. Hallam is "mix'd with God and Nature".

From his newly-consolidated position of a highly personal religious conviction, the poet is able, in In Memoriam 130, to make the affirmation, "I shall not lose thee tho' I die". The word "die" (ℓ.16) looks back to its rhyming counterpart "nigh" (ℓ.13), and the words become linked through rhyme to suggest that when the poet dies his friend will be near. Here, then, is the implicit answer to the poet's prayer in section 50: "Be near me when my light is low". And the frequent interlinking of first person singular and second person singular pronouns in the closing stanza of In Memoriam 130 ("I...thee...I... / I...thy... / I...thee...I...") offers poetic testimony to the fact of a continuing relationship with the beloved Hallam. This reinforces the tacit suggestion created by the rhyming words "now" and "thou" in the previous stanza that the beloved ("thou") is very much a present reality ("now") in the poet's life. Indeed, by sublimating Hallam in both Christ and Nature the poet may feel

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[87] The patterning recalls that of "Augustan" couplet, and reminds one of Tennyson's early interest in Pope (Memoir I, 11).

[88] Shatto and Shaw, IM 96, headnote (p.258). For a discussion of the circle imagery in In Memoriam, see pp.64-65, 69-70 of this study.

assured of communion with his friend both in the present (through nature)[89] and in the future (through "the Christ that is to be").[90] And in his trance-like states the poet could look forward to experiencing the kind of communion that transcends time, partaking of what is "past, present, and to be" (IM 129, ℓ.9). "For ", as the poet had written in The Princess, "was, and is, and will be, are but is...."[91]

The numinous presence in Tennyson's poetry is a complex phenomenon. In the course of this study I have attempted to unravel some of the twisted threads which contribute to the multiplicity of meanings adhering in the symbol. I have, *inter alia*, discussed the numinous presence as a manifestation of the dead friend--a manifestation which often occurs in or through nature. And I have sought to show that the numinous presence comes to be associated with the deity. In section 130 these threads are drawn together as the dead friend becomes "mix'd with God and Nature" in the climactic poem of sublimation in *In Memoriam*. This sublimation was adumbrated in *In Memoriam* 95 when Tennyson changed the words "His living soul was flash'd on mine" to "The living soul was flash'd on mine" (ℓ.36). Now the sublimation is complete, and the poet can look forward to that afterlife in which "we close with all we loved, / And all we flow from, soul in soul" (IM 131, ℓℓ.10-11).

There is clearly an element of what Benziger calls a "more or less Platonic metaphysic" in such lines.[92] It is not surprising to find Platonic overtones in Tennyson's work, for at Cambridge he was exposed to the keen interest in Platonism of the Cambridge Apostles in general[93] and of Arthur Hallam in

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[89] In connection with "the notion of pantheistic survival" Shatto and Shaw suggest a comparison with *Adonais*, ℓℓ.370-71, 373-76, 379-82, 386-87. See Shatto and Shaw, IM 130, headnote (p.290).

[90] IM 106, ℓ.32.

[91] *The Princess*, PT 286, III, 307.

[92] Benziger, p.142.

[93] Culler, p.60.

particular.[94] The Platonic perspective that emerges in In Memoriam 130 and 131 has the effect of rationalizing Tennyson's famous pronominal emendations in section 95 ("his living soul" to "the living soul"; "mine in his" to "mine in this"). As Carlisle Moore points out, "There is, indeed, ample meaning in the amended version if it is understood that Hallam's spirit is not in a state of isolation but exists as an all but indistinguishable part of the universal spirit of the Deity".[95] But the Platonic flavour does not--and need not--negate the "resolution" of In Memoriam, which is ultimately, though not orthodoxly, Christian.

Foakes appears to think otherwise. He writes that Tennyson

> ...wanted to believe, to christianize his love for Hallam. But...the cry that all is well in the world stems not from a renewal of faith in God, but from a renewal of faith in love. To concentrate on the former, and think of In Memoriam as a religious poem in a Christian sense ...is sure to bring disappointment; its value as a poem resides in its quality as a vision of love, which ultimately transcends the poet's difficulties with both science and faith.[96]

One must indeed value In Memoriam for its "vision of love". But I hope to show that such a vision of (secular) love is not inconsistent with the aims and achievements of a great religious poem.

Some critics have described Hallam's elevation to the status of Christ in terms that suggest idolatory. Benziger, for instance, notes that, in In Memoriam 130, "Hallam is addressed not as a sort of God-Man but as a deity immanent in all creation...." Quoting the first two stanzas of section 130, Benziger comments succinctly: "Tennyson's love for Hallam has passed into worship".[97]

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[94] Mattes, p.16.

[95] Moore, p.165.

[96] Foakes, p.137.

[97] Benziger, p.153.

Clyde Ryals implies that Tennyson himself felt somehow guilty about "substituting a symbolic and transformed Hallam for the figure of Christ". Nevertheless, Ryals continues,

> ...within the progression of In Memoriam from doubt to faith Arthur Henry Hallam becomes for the speaker in the poem not only the departed friend who is mourned but also the Savior to whom the speaker looks for rescue from his doubt and despair. None of this is clear in the poem because it comes about rather surreptitiously and confusedly. Tennyson, his son tells us, "disliked discussion on the Nature of Christ,"[98] which is to say [adds Ryals] that he did not wish to confront his own ideas head on.

Instead, the poet wished to keep these ideas "under the cover of accepted Christian forms and conduct, in other words to breathe new life into an old form".

I agree with Ryals that Hallam became Tennyson's Saviour from "doubt and despair".[99] And I believe that Hallam's "Theodicaea Novissima" was the instrument of salvation.

Hallam, like Tennyson, had suffered from a sense of guilt or sin. In "Lines Written in a Great Depression of Mind", probably composed during his first year at Cambridge, Hallam cried out:

> Evil bides in me, evil bides around me:
> More in this torture than in the bliss of old days:
> O let me die!

"For Hallam," writes Eleanor Mattes, "the reality of love and the reality of evil were 'the two great fundamental truths,' as he wrote to Emily Tennyson, and he was faced with the problem of reconciling them. This he tried to do in the 'Theodicaea Novissima'...which he probably read to the Cambridge 'Apostles' in 1831".[100] In his theodicy Hallam postulated that "there is ground for believing that the existence of moral evil is absolutely

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[98] Memoir I, 326.

[99] Ryals, "The 'Heavenly Friend'", p.384.

[100] Mattes, p.17.

necessary to the fulfilment of God's essential love for Christ".[101] A discussion of how Hallam rationalized this rather startling hypothesis is outside the province of my study. Suffice it to say that Tennyson expressly requested that the "Theodicaea Novissima" should find a place in the collected "Remains of Arthur Henry Hallam", holding that the piece did great credit to his dead friend's "originality of thought".[102]

I believe it was through the eventual acceptance of Hallam's dictum that "moral evil is absolutely necessary for the fulfilment of God's essential love for Christ" that Tennyson was eventually able to come to terms with his "strange sense of guilt".[103] It seems that when Hallam was alive Tennyson, though admiring the virtuosity of his friend's theodicy, could not accept its teaching without reservation.[104] If this were not so, Hallam would have been preaching to the converted when he remarked to Tennyson, "Struggle as we may Christianity draws us all within its magic circle at last".[105] But after Hallam's death his words began to assume an ex cathedra quality. The poet, "brooding on the dear one dead, / And all he said of things divine", writes: "...dear to me as sacred wine / To dying lips is all he said" (IM 37, ℓℓ.17-20). It is possible that the letters through which Hallam "touched" his friend "from the past"[106] (in In Memoriam 95) dealt with the religious theory propounded in the theodicy:

> ...and strangely spoke
> The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
> On doubts that drive the coward back,

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[101]Philip Flynn, "Hallam and Tennyson: The 'Theodicaea Novissima' and In Memoriam", Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 19 (1979), 706. See also Joseph, p.65.

[102]"To Henry Hallam", 14 February 1834, Letters of AT, I, 108.

[103]CR, p.77.

[104]Flynn, p.707.

[105]Shatto and Shaw, IM 96, headnote (p.258). See p.70 of this study.

[106]IM 95, ℓ.34.

And keen thro' wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

(IM 95, ll.28-32)

Again, the poet's final acceptance in toto of Hallam's religious views may have led to the strong sense of communion and revelation that Tennyson goes on to describe:

And all at once it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
About empyreal heights of thought....

(IM 95, ll.35-38)

Certainly I believe there came a point at which Tennyson, too, could feel that

...Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone....

(IM 96, ll.18-20)

The poet was no longer overborne by his sense of guilt, for he was now able to accept Hallam's rationalization of the existence of moral evil. As Foakes observes, the "darkness and the light are no longer opposed, but united in a 'stronger faith'".[107] And as Tennyson himself was to observe, in a later poem, through the persona of the Ancient Sage:

...Day and Night are children of the Sun,
....
No night no day...
No ill no good....

(PT 415, ll.245-49)

Arthur Hallam's views on religion and love were greatly influenced by the Italian poets, and Tennyson was in turn influenced by them through Hallam. In In Memoriam 89 the poet writes:

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed

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[107] Foakes, p.129.

To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn....

(IM 89, ℓℓ.21-24)

The essence of the "dolce stil nuovo movement" in Italian poetry consisted in "a formal Christian spiritualization of courtly love. The Beloved actually becomes an Angel of God".[108] And by the end of the Vita Nuova "Beatrice stands in relation to Dante as Christ stands in relation to humanity".[109] Clearly the Tennyson-Hallam relationship, as described in In Memoriam, has a very early prototype in that of Dante and Beatrice. Kissane notes that, in the course of In Memoriam, "Hallam becomes less of a shadow of the past and more of a beacon for the future--as a type of earthly perfection (CXXVII, Epilogue) and, one might say, as Tennyson's Beatrice, a link from this world to the next".[110] Indeed, Tennyson himself called In Memoriam a kind of Divine Comedy.[111] And--as William Buckler says--this reference deserves "more serious and elaborate attention than the commentators have traditionally given it".[112]

Tennyson called In Memoriam "The Way of the Soul".[113] The Divine Comedy, too, might have borne this subtitle. As Dorothy Sayers points out in her introduction to the Purgatorio, "Dante's encounter with an individual living woman can be made the image of the soul's encounter with a personal living God".[114]

The Divine Comedy is both "intensely personal and magnificently public".[115] The same may be said of In Memoriam. Therefore it is

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[108] Cf. IM 69, ℓ.14: "I found an angel of the night...."

[109] "Italian Poetry", Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics, Enlarged Edition (1975), pp 409-10.

[110] Kissane, pp.102-03.

[111] Memoir I, 304; quoted PT 296, headnote (p.859).

[112] VI, p.168.

[113] Memoir I, 393.

[114] The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine: Cantica II: Purgatory ("Il Purgatorio"), trans. Dorothy L. Sayers (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1955), p.37.

[115] Sayers, introduction to Dante's Purgatorio, p.42.

probably not too fanciful to look for different levels of meaning in In Memoriam such as one finds in the Divine Comedy. When Dante meets Beatrice after a long separation (Canto XXX) she is at the literal level the Florentine woman whom he had loved many years before. But Dorothy Sayers points out that "morally (i.e. as regards the way of salvation of the individual soul)" she is "the type of whatever is, for each of us, the 'God-bearing image' which manifests the glory of God in his creation, and becomes a personal sacramental experience".[116] Arthur Hallam, at a literal level the beloved friend of Alfred Tennyson, may certainly be described as the poet's "God-bearing image". One thinks of the passage in which Tennyson describes how he saw the "God within him [Hallam] light his face".[117] And this brings to mind something Barbara Reynolds has to say in her introduction to the Paradiso:

> When Dante and his poem venture, as best they may, into the world of Reality, his guide is Beatrice, who represents his own personal experience of the immanence of the Creator in the creature. In her he had seen, in those moments of revelation which he describes in the Vita Nuova, the eternal Beauty shining through the created beauty, the reality of Beatrice as God knew her.[118]

When Tennyson, reflecting on Hallam in section 85, says, "I feel the footsteps of his life in mine" (ℓ.44), one begins to feel that Hallam is Tennyson's guide in the metaphorical journey that is "the way of the soul", just as first Virgil and then Beatrice are Dante's guides. Indeed, since Hallam was also a poet, one could view him as a kind of composite of Virgil and Beatrice.

After her death Beatrice becomes a numinous presence in the life of Dante, just as Hallam becomes such a presence in Tennyson's life. The catalytic rôle of memory in the evocation of this presence is clear in the "anniversary" Canto (XXXIV) of La Vita

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[116] Sayers, commentary on Dante's Purgatorio, p.311.

[117] IM 87, ℓ.36.

[118] Reynolds, introduction to Dante's Paradiso, p.16.

Nuova. In the prose "preamble" to the Canto Dante tells his unexpected visitors, "Someone was present in my mind just now and so I was lost in thought".[119] But in the poem which follows, memory hovers on the brink of vision:

> Within my mind there had appeared to me
> The gentle lady who is mourned by Love.
> ....
> Love felt her presence in my mind as he
> Within my ravaged heart began to beat.[120]

Unfortunately, the limits of length imposed on this study preclude a close comparison of In Memoriam with Dante's La Vita Nuova and Divina Commedia. For though the sublimation of Hallam may indeed have resulted from a deep-seated psychological need, it is not without literary parallel. And the principal parallel, the Divine Comedy, is generally considered to be "the quintessential Christian poem".[121] Therefore I feel that critics like Foakes (who warns that to "think of In Memoriam as a religious poem in a Christian sense...is sure to bring disappointment")[122] have failed to appreciate one of the most vital facets of Tennyson's great work.

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[119] Dante Alighieri, La Vita Nuova (Poems of Youth), trans. Barbara Reynolds (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), xxxiv, 9-10 (p.88). It is interesting that Tennyson, too, should have written an "anniversary" poem. Indeed, he has two "anniversary" sections--sections 72 and 99.

[120] La Vita Nuova, XXXIV (pp.88-89).

[121] VI, p.170.

[122] Foakes, p.137.

CHAPTER VI

SYNTHESIS

In the preceding chapters I may have seemed to proffer not one but several arguments, for I have discussed the numinous presence in a number of contexts that may seem not only disparate but even antagonistic. I have explored this mysterious presence in Tennyson's poetry as a phenomenon manifesting itself in or through nature; as a manifestation of the poet's dead friend; and as a product of subjective elements such as memory, guilt and melancholia. I have postulated that the poet's apperception of an apparently preternatural presence may have been induced or catalyzed by physiological or neurological as well as psychological factors; but I have also indicated the existence of literary prototypes for the presence. Finally, I have shown how religious significance accrues to the strange presence until it becomes symbolic of the Deity itself. My intention in this chapter is to show that these various interpretations of Tennyson's "supernatural" symbol are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they operate synergistically, reinforcing each other and enriching the poetry.

In essence, then, my thesis is that the numinous presence in Tennyson's poetry may be interpreted initially in natural or supernatural terms, but that ultimately this presence, which must be viewed in the context of a work of art, becomes symbolic of the deity. In antithesis, it must be noted that the presence sometimes exhibits a dark aspect that perhaps seems to be at variance with the idea of a benevolent numen. However, as I have tried to show (following Otto), it is possible to reconcile or synthesize these apparently contradictory ideas--just as it is possible to reconcile the illusions or hallucinations of epilepsy and melancholia with the apperception of a dead friend who ultimately becomes one with the Platonic Absolute, and virtually indistinguishable from the Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life.

I can think of no more appropriate place to begin this synthesis than with a quotation from _The Varieties of Religious_

Experience (1902), William James's seminal work on the psychology of religion. I have already referred several times to James (1842-1910) and his work in psychology and philosophy--which is still held in high repute today. Paul Helm has written that James's "brilliance as a descriptive psychologist is apparent in his accounts of religious experience".[1] And, according to the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, The Varieties of Religious Experience "remains a classic and has stimulated much fruitful study of the psychology of religion".[2] Furthermore, a section of the entry on William James in American Authors 1600-1900 reads: "His world, 'so various, so beautiful, so new,' was the world of the future, and, as Professor Kallen remarks, 'his positive work is still prophetic'".[3] The Varieties of Religious Experience has been of particular interest to me since I noted that many of James's findings seemed to correspond extremely closely to experiences and intuitions poetically recorded by Tennyson some years earlier. It seemed to me that Tennyson in some ways pre-empted James, as I believe he pre-empted Darwin and Jung in certain areas.

James writes:

> ...religious geniuses have often shown symptoms of nervous instability. Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy during a part of their career. They have...been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in

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[1] Paul Helm, "James, William", The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church (1974), p.524.

[2] "James, William", The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2nd ed. (1974), p.726.

[3] "James, William", American Authors 1600-1900: A Biographical Dictionary of American Literature (1964), p.414.

> their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence.[4]

There is scarcely a page in Martin's biography of Tennyson that does not reveal instances of the poet's "nervous instability",[5] "discordant inner life",[6] "melancholy",[7] "obsessions"[8] and "trances".[9] The poetry itself often reflects these qualities, ideas and experiences, which are closely linked with the poet's "exalted emotional sensibility". And in this study I have been particularly concerned with "abnormal psychical visitations" recorded in, or suggested by, some of Tennyson's poems. Thus it could indeed be said that there is a "pathological" element to be detected in the life and work of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Let me hasten to add, however, that I do not wish pejorative connotations to be attached to this term--which I borrow from James. James himself insisted on the transcendence of religious feelings and intuitions over mere "medical materialism".[10] "If there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm", writes James, "it might well be that the neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite sensitivity".[11]

The idea of a "pathological" aspect to the numinous presence emerged most clearly in the chapter in which I explored epileptic

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[4] James, p.8.

[5] For example: Martin, pp.122, 132, 139-40, 147, 237, 250, 253, 261, 279.

[6] W.W. Robson refers to "passages" in Tennyson that "reflect the struggles and frustrations of a divided nature and a sick soul". ("The Present Value of Tennyson", in <u>Studies</u>, p.65; quoted on p.6 of this study). See also pp.9-11 of this study.

[7] For example: Martin, pp.25, 140, 276, 280.

[8] For example: Martin, pp.115, 146-47.

[9] For example: Martin, pp.238, 278-80, 309, 315, 347, 554-55.

[10] James, pp.14-17.

[11] James, p.26.

aura as one possible source of Tennyson's imagery of flashing lights, and of voices and music. Such a "diagnosis" need not militate against the idea of a genuine religious experience. Certainly, a large number of epileptics--including Dostoevsky--have claimed to have had metaphysical experiences of one kind or another, so that epilepsy has come to be known as the "sacred disease".[12]

James postulates that if "there be higher powers able to impress us, they may get access to us only through the subliminal door".[13] Summing up the personal conviction to which his psychological studies have led him, James writes:

> The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in.[14]

It may be that some epileptics, because of a so-called "malfunction" of the brain, are at times able--or seem able--to perceive "worlds of consciousness" that are otherwise inaccessible to most people in this life.[15] This explanation could account for Tennyson's _déjà vu_ experiences and for the prophetic vision which he seems to me to have exhibited. Although as far as I know Tennyson himself made no claims to the prophetic strain, others have certainly ascribed it to him.[16] I have often been struck by the similarity of lines 242-45 in _The Princess_ to Hallam Tennyson's account of the poet's death-bed scene. In _The Princess_ Tennyson,

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[12] Freedman _et al._, p.1138.

[13] James, p.238.

[14] James, p.509.

[15] Tennyson himself often spoke of the "reality" of the spirit world he felt around him. See _Memoir_ II, 90.

[16] See _Recollections_, pp.62, 64, 91, 94; Wheatcroft, p.130.

using the persona of the Prince, writes:

> ...half in doze I seemed
> To float about a glimmering night, and watch
> A full sea glazed with muffled moonlight, swell
> On some dark shore just seen that it was rich.
>
> (PT 286, I, 242-45)

These lines, written many years before his death, seem, as I have said, very like a precognitive rendering of his own death-bed scene, described by Hallam Tennyson in the Memoir.

> ...the full moon flooded the room and the great landscape outside with light; and we watched in solemn stillness....we felt thankful for the love and utter peace of it all....He was quite restful...and, as he was passing away, I spoke over him his own prayer, "God accept him! Christ receive him!" because I knew that he would have wished it.[17]

Quoting lines 379-84 from Tennyson's "Two Voices"[18] as an example, William James notes that Sir James Crichton-Browne has given the technical name of "'dreamy states'" to those "sudden invasions of vaguely reminiscent consciousness" which "bring a sense of mystery and of the metaphysical duality of things, and the feeling of an enlargement of perception which seems imminent but which never completes itself". James disagrees with Dr Crichton-Browne's opinion that these "dreamy states" are linked with the "disturbances of self-consciousness which occasionally precede epileptic attacks".[19] However, we know today what it is unlikely William James could have known, for it was a closely guarded

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[17] Memoir II, 428. Audrey Tennyson's description of the scene is even more moving. See TPP, p.207.

[18] 'Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams--

'Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.'

(PT 209, ℓℓ.379-84)

[19] James, p.375.

secret: that in all probability Tennyson did suffer from epilepsy. And more recent psychiatric studies have tended to verify Crichton-Browne's hypothesis.[20]

James rejects Crichton-Browne's postulation on the grounds that the latter scholar follows the déjà vu experience (which later studies show is frequently associated with the aura of temporal lobe epilepsy)[21] "along the downward ladder, to insanity", while James himself prefers to pursue "the upward ladder". He notes that this "divergence shows how important it is to neglect no part of a phenomenon's connections, for we make it appear admirable or dreadful according to the context by which we set it off".[22]

I think, however, that what makes the phenomenon "admirable or dreadful" is the way it is handled by the individual concerned.[23] In the light of Martin's biography it seems clear that Dr George Clayton Tennyson and his son both suffered from types of epilepsy. The poor father did indeed pursue "the downward ladder" towards insanity. But it is to the credit of the talented son that he was able to transcend his misfortune--and indeed utilize it, in all probability, as a catalyst in the creation of sublimely moving and inspirational poetry. Alfred Tennyson's way was the way of the "upward ladder", the way of the idealizing imagination that leads from "gloom to glory".[24]

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[20]Freedman et al., p.2583.

[21]Neppe, p.903.

[22]James, p.375.

[23]It has been noted that "although the final psychological picture is a result of several factors, the most important aspects are the patient's inherent personality, his reactions to his disease, and the psychological mechanisms he uses to cope with the stress, anxiety, and social consequences of having epilepsy". See Harold I. Kaplan, Alfred M. Freedman and Benjamin J. Sadock, Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1980), II, 1481.

[24]"Timbuctoo", PT 67, ℓ.150.

One of the sources of "gloom" in Tennyson's life and poetry was the intense sense of guilt he so frequently revealed.[25] I have reviewed, in the course of this study, a number of different opinions as to the cause of that guilt. It seems to me that James's remarks on "self-condemnation" and the "sense of sin"[26] offer, along with Rudolph Otto's views on the same subject,[27] the most enlightening perspective on Tennyson's feelings of guilt, as well as on the recurring theme of "two voices" in his poetry. James writes thus:

> ...in all of us, however constituted, but to a degree the greater in proportion as we are intense and sensitive and subject to diversified temptations, and to the greatest possible degree if we are decidedly psychopathic, does the normal evolution of character chiefly consist in the straightening out and unifying of the inner self. The higher and the lower feelings, the useful and the erring impulses, begin by being a comparative chaos within us--they must end by forming a stable system of functions in right subordination. Unhappiness is apt to characterize the period of order-making and struggle. If the individual be of tender conscience and religiously quickened, the unhappiness will take the form of moral remorse and compunction, of feeling inwardly vile and wrong, and of standing in false relation to the author of one's being....This is the religious melancholy and "conviction of sin" that have played so large a part in the history of Protestant Christianity. The man's interior is a battle-ground for what he feels to be two deadly hostile selves, one actual, the other ideal.[28]

Throughout his life Tennyson strove for the supremacy of the ideal, but poems such as "Oh! that'twere possible" (PT 227) suggest that sometimes "lower" thoughts and impulses bodied themselves forth[29] as a dark presence that was at once compelling and

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[25] See Ch.IV, pp.118-28 of this study.

[26] James, p.168.

[27] Otto, pp.52-53. See p.153 of this study.

[28] James, pp.167-68.

[29] A Midsummer Night's Dream, V.i.14.

repulsive. Otto sees this kind of dark aspect as a rudimentary component or precursor of the truly numinous experience. He believes the numinous "has its wild and demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. It has its crude, barbaric antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious".[30]

Otto calls the "antecedent stage" of religious awe "daemonic dread", and holds that "the fantastic images to which it gives rise, are later overborne and ousted by more highly-developed forms of the numinous emotion, with all its mysteriously impelling power".[31] This development is paralleled by the change in the nature of the numinous presence as the poet-speaker in "Oh! that 'twere possible" sublimates previously repressed feelings and impulses.[32]

The dark aspect of the numinous presence in Tennyson's poetry, especially in "Oh! that 'twere possible", has literary prototypes, of course. One thinks of the dream image of the siren in Canto XIX of the Purgatorio. Dorothy Sayers, in her introduction to the Purgatorio, writes:

> There is no more insidious enemy of the true Beatrice than the false Beatrice who bears to her so deceptive a superficial likeness.[33] The two are distinguished most readily and surely by their effects--the false image turning for ever inwards in narrowing circles of egotism; the true working for ever outward to embrace the Creator, and all creation....[34]

As we have seen, this is what happens with the true image in "Oh! that 'twere possible"--and with the "true image" of Arthur Hallam

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[30]Otto, p.13.

[31]Otto, p.16.

[32]See pp. 143-47 of this study.

[33]The speaker in "Oh! that 'twere possible", addressing the dead beloved, says the phantom is "not thou, but like to thee" (PT 227, ℓ.12).

[34]Sayers, introduction to Dante's Purgatorio, p.44.

which becomes "mixt with God and Nature" in In Memoriam 130.

Like Sayers, James is concerned (in The Varieties of Religious Experience) with effects. He writes:

> ...that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself. So I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal.[35]

One cannot deny the effect exerted by the "presence" of the dead Arthur Hallam in Tennyson's life and work. Therefore in terms of James's argument, the numinous spirit of Hallam could be regarded as a reality. Indeed this is what Tennyson suggests when he writes, in In Memoriam 65, "...thine effect so lives in me..." (ℓ.10).

Tennyson often stated that for him the spirit world was far more "real" than the material one.[36] And once again James makes a series of pertinent observations:

> It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call "something there," more deep and more general than any of the special and particular "senses" by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed. If this were so, we might suppose the senses to waken our attitudes and conduct as they so habitually do, by first exciting this sense of reality; but anything else, any idea, for example, that might similarly excite it, would have the same prerogative of appearing real which objects of the sense normally possess.[37]

The "idea" of Arthur Hallam thus becomes a reality--a subjective reality[38]--and is in due course imbued with religious significance,

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[35] James, pp.506-07.

[36] Memoir II, 90.

[37] James, p.58.

[38] Sinfield, writing of In Memoriam, notes its "strong dependence on subjective experience as a way of reaching truth". He adds that this method "is fully consonant with Romantic ways of thinking. It is impossible for the poet's claims to be verified: the experience was in his mind and he believes it" (Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam", p.24).

as I attempted to show in the previous chapter. Thus the deity, too, becomes a "real" presence, though the degree of the poet's awareness and conviction of this presence may vary. As James points out,

> ...in the distinctively religious sphere of experience, many persons (how many we cannot tell) possess the objects of their belief, not in the form of mere conceptions which their intellect accepts as true, but rather in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended. As his sense of the real presence of these objects fluctuates, so the believer alternates between warmth and coldness in his faith.[39]

In strictly literal terms, the numinous presence in Tennyson's poetry may be viewed as the poet's creation of a private mythology to bolster a faith that sometimes seemed in danger of growing cold.[40] That mythology, based on the dead friend who had inspired such undying devotion, could not fail to evoke a strong response in the poet himself.[41] No wonder that, when rational argument failed to offer Tennyson assurance of immortality, his heart stood up and answered, "I have felt!" (<u>IM</u> 124, ℓ.16). And feeling is, after all, at the very heart of religious experience. "The truth is that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favour of the same conclusion....The unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us...."[42]

For Tennyson the "deep thing" that he felt when he could not know provided the impetus for the pursuit of the ideal. In his

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[39] James, p.63.

[40] Ryals, "The'Heavenly Friend'", pp.393-94.

[41] Discussing how orison may lead to mystical experience, James suggests that the "acme of this kind of discipline would be a semi-hallucinatory mono-ideism--an imaginary figure of Christ, for example, coming fully to occupy the mind. Sensorial images of this sort, whether literal or symbolic, play an enormous part in mysticism" (James, p.398).

[42] James, p.73.

work the idealizing imagination or "higher poetic imagination"[43] took on a life of its own, becoming in a sense that numinous presence which the poet symbolized as "The Gleam" in "Merlin and the Gleam" (PT 431)--the poem Tennyson regarded as his literary autobiography and personal manifesto.[44]

"Merlin and the Gleam" purports to be addressed to a "young Mariner", reminding one of Tennyson's recurrent metaphor of life as a journey "[f]rom the great deep to the great deep".[45] The mariner is "young" and at the start of his journey; but the speaker is at the end of his:

> I am Merlin,
> And I am dying,
> I am Merlin
> Who follow The Gleam.
>
> (ℓℓ.7-10)

The poem continues:

> Mighty the Wizard
> Who found me at sunrise
> Sleeping, and woke me
> And learned me Magic!
>
> (ℓℓ.11-14)

Ricks points out in a footnote to line 11 that "Haight suggests a reference to the Wizard of the North, Walter Scott, who was a major influence on the young Tennyson" (Memoir I, 12). But I believe that the Wizard referred to in line 11 is God himself, and that lines 11-14 refer to divine inspiration. Otto, in The Idea of the Holy, discusses the primitive religious man's "'magical' identification of the self with the numen",[46] and notes that the word "magic" may be used to denote "the style and means of artistic experience by which the numinous comes into being".[47] This seems to me to be precisely what Tennyson, in

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[43] "Merlin and the Gleam", PT 431, headnote (p.1412).

[44] Martin, p.570.

[45] "The Passing of Arthur", PT 475, ℓ.445.

[46] Otto, p.33.

[47] Otto, p.70.

the persona of Merlin, suggests when he claims that the Wizard woke him in his youth ("at sunrise"), and taught him magic. That is, magic refers here specifically to art (poetry), but it also has religious overtones because of its association with the "Wizard" or "Master". Agnes Weld recalls a conversation in which Tennyson assured her that he felt

> ...the gift of poetry was bestowed on him by his Heavenly Father as 'a great trust', that it might be a vehicle in which he was permitted to convey to his fellow men the message he had received from the Master.[48]

> Great the Master,
> And sweet the Magic,
> When over the valley,
> In early summers,
> Over the mountain,
> On human faces,
> And all around me,
> Moving to melody,
> Floated The Gleam.
>
> (ℓℓ.15-23)

It should be noted that The Gleam moves to "melody". On pages 97-99 of this study I indicated that the poet's apperception of a combination of flashing or glimmering lights and musical sounds may be symptomatic of temporal lobe epilepsy, and this certainly represents one level of interpretation of the lines. But at another level the lines have a deep religious significance. For Otto links music with numinous feeling,[49] and so does James, who holds that music "gives us ontological messages which non-musical criticism is unable to contradict...." That is, "not conceptual speech, but music rather, is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth".[50] And The Gleam is the symbol of "mystical truth" as much as it is the symbol of "vision" and

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[48]Agnes Weld, "A Child's Memories of Tennyson", in Recollections, p.34. The excerpt is from Agnes Weld, Glimpses of Tennyson, and Some of His Relations and Friends (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903), pp.41-50.

[49]Otto, pp.49, 61, 155.

[50]James, p.411.

of "the higher poetic imagination".[51]

Ricks in his headnote to "Merlin and The Gleam" discusses one of the problems posed by the poem: whether stanza III refers (as Hallam Tennyson believed)[52] to the unsympathetic reviews or (as Sir Charles Tennyson suggests)[53] to the family troubles which followed Dr Tennyson's death, and the attempts made by Tennyson's grandfather to divert the young Alfred from poetry. I believe the stanza is a montage of all these antipathetic elements, and that Tennyson, in his belief that poetry could not, and should not, be reduced to a series of equivalences, was creating a deliberately diffuse effect.[54]

> Once at the croak of a Raven who crost it,
> A barbarous people,
> Blind to the magic,
> And deaf to the melody,
> Snarled at and cursed me.
> A demon vext me....
>
> (ll.24-29)

Whoever they may be, the "barbarous people" are "blind to the magic, / And deaf to the melody". They fail to appreciate either the poet's art or its relation to the numinous--that is, they fail to perceive the "inspired" quality of the poetry. The linking of "blind" and "deaf" here tends to recall that other sensorial linking--the "blind mouths" in Milton's Lycidas. One is reminded that Tennyson is only one of a long line of poets who felt a deep lack of understanding and the absence of spiritual nurturing.

Line 39 ("A demon vext me") tends to recall the biblical story of the boy who was supposedly possessed by a devil and consequently afflicted with fits.[55] Tennyson may well have been utilizing the biblical idea of demonic possession to allude to

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[51] "Merlin and the Gleam", PT 431, headnote (p.1412).

[52] PT 431, headnote; Eversley: "Demeter" and Other Poems, p.371.

[53] AT, p.517.

[54] Memoir II, 127.

[55] Mark ix:14-29.

the scourge or "curse" of his family--hereditary epilepsy. Thus the "demon" could refer to the poet's grandfather ("the old man of the Wolds"),[56] and to his father, Dr George Clayton Tennyson, as well as to his own early fears regarding the prognosis for his particular "blot upon the brain".[57]

In any event, the cumulative effect of the various negative influences is devastating:

> The light retreated,
> The landskip darkened,
> The melody deadened....
>
> (ℓℓ.30-32)

Nevertheless, "The Master whispered, / 'Follow The Gleam'" (ℓℓ.33-34). Or as Hallam Tennyson paraphrases, "Still the inward voice told him [Merlin] not to be faint-hearted but to follow his ideal".[58]

> Then to the melody,
> Over a wilderness
> Gliding, and glancing at
> Elf of the woodland,
> Gnome of the cavern,
> Griffin and Giant,
> And dancing of Fairies
> In desolate hollows,
> And wraiths of the mountain,
> And rolling of dragons
> By warble of water,
> Or cataract music
> Of falling torrents,
> Flitted The Gleam.
>
> (ℓℓ.35-48)

According to Hallam Tennyson this stanza delineates the renewal of "inspiration from romantic fancy and nature". Or, in Tennyson's own words, it represents "the early imagination".[59] The images I wish to highlight are those at the end of the stanza--the "warble of water", the "cataract music" and the "falling torrents"

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[56] Wheatcroft, p.14.

[57] Maud, PT 316, Part II, ℓ.200.

[58] Eversley: "Demeter" and Other Poems, p.371.

[59] PT 431, headnote (p.1413).

(ℓℓ.45-47). The sound of water and of music seems to have exerted a profound and numinous effect on Tennyson, as I have endeavoured to show in my analysis of "In the Valley of Cauteretz" (PT 326).[60] The poetry abounds with lovely lines like "The cataract flashing from the bridge, / The breaker breaking on the beach".[61] And often mystical perceptions are suggested in terms of musical images ("Aeonian music measuring out / The steps of Time").[62] But there is some evidence to suggest that for Tennyson the sound of rushing water, as well as of music, may have been part of the epileptic aura. The poet himself relates how the quality of the bowing of the great violinist, Joachim, caused him to experience a sensation of rushing water in his head.[63]

The idea of "falling torrents" became particularly significant for Tennyson, seeming in "The Voice and the Peak" (PT 359) to symbolize some form of communication from the remote and unknowable that hints at the numinous. In that poem, Tennyson's ultimate insight seems to have been that "The Peak is high, and the stars are high, / And the thought of man is higher" (ℓℓ.31-32). The "thought of man"--that is, the mind of man--is then explored in terms of paradox:

> A deep below the deep,
>   And a height beyond the height!
> Our hearing is not hearing,
>   And our seeing is not sight.
>
> (ℓℓ.33-36)

I have already indicated the rôle played by paradox in the evocation of the numinous.[64] The linking of this expression of the numinous to the mind or "thought" of man seems to endorse an idea

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[60] See pp.88-94 of this study.

[61] IM 71, ℓℓ.15-16.

[62] IM 95, ℓℓ.41-42.

[63] Martin, p.522. See p.31 of this study.

[64] See p.161 of this study.

hinted at in "Armageddon"[65] and "Timbuctoo",[66] and finally crystallized in a phrase from In Memoriam--the idea of a "God within".[67] Such a "God within" could perhaps be described in psychological terms as the super-ego.

But, in drawing attention to the numinous significance of the auditory images in lines 45-48 of "Merlin and the Gleam", I have been obliged to digress from that poem. Stanza V continues thus:

> Down from the mountain
> And over the level,
> And streaming and shining on
> Silent river,
> Silvery willow,
>
> ....
>
> Slided The Gleam....
>
> (ℓℓ.49-61)

It is perhaps significant that The Gleam comes down "from the mountain", for as has been suggested on page 106 of this study, mountains in Tennyson's poetry possess a kind of mystical significance. There is, of course, a long tradition outside of Tennyson's poetry that enhances these connotations--for instance, the fact that Moses beheld the numen on a mountain.[68]

The Gleam seems to irradiate nature (ℓℓ.49-53)--which one might expect. As James observes, "The whole universe of concrete objects, as we know them, swims, not only for...a transcendentalist writer, but for all of us, in a wider and higher universe of abstract ideas, that lend it significance".[69]

In stanza V The Gleam also "slides" over the homely characters representative of Tennyson's "English Idyl" period (ℓℓ.55-60). But in stanza VI the poem, like the melody that accompanies The Gleam, becomes "stronger and statelier" (ℓ.63) as the poet

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[65] PT 3, II, 49-50.

[66] PT 67, ℓℓ.88-94.

[67] IM 87, ℓ.36.

[68] Exodus xix:3; xxiv:15-16.

[69] James, p.56.

introduces "Arthur the king" (ℓ.66). Here, the poet's son tells us, Tennyson "united the two Arthurs", the Arthur of the Idylls of the King and the Arthur of In Memoriam--"the man he held as half divine".[70]

Given Arthur Hallam's Christian convictions, it is appropriate that The Gleam should at this point touch "the golden / Cross of the churches" (ℓ.68) before coming to rest like a benediction on the forehead of "Arthur the blameless".[71] The hint of dissension in the lines "Flickered and bickered / From helmet to helmet" (ℓℓ.70-71) is subsumed in the closing image of The Gleam resting on "Arthur the blameless" (ℓ.73), who symbolizes all that is good.

A passage from The Idea of the Holy, quoted on p.168 of this study, suggests how the numinous attracts and appropriates "meanings derived from social and individual ideals of obligation, justice, and goodness" and how, as a result, "'[h]oly' becomes 'good', and 'good' from that very fact in turn becomes 'holy'".[72] "Arthur the blameless" becomes symbolic of the numinous, and the tone of the poem deepens to encompass the sense of reverence that is appropriate to the numinous.

But now

> Clouds and darkness
> Closed upon Camelot;
> Arthur had vanished
> I knew not whither,
> The king who loved me,
> And cannot die....
>
> (ℓℓ.75-80)

These lines clearly refer both to the passing of King Arthur and

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[70] Eversley: "Demeter" and Other Poems, p.373.

[71] This blessing bestowed by light tends to recall a similar benediction in IM 67:

> Thy marble bright in dark appears,
> As slowly steals a silver flame
> Along the letters of thy name,
> And o'er the number of thy years.
>
> (ℓℓ.5-8)

[72] Otto, p.114.

to the death of Arthur Hallam. The pluperfect and past tense verbs ("had vanished" and "loved") yield to the present tense negation ("cannot die"). Once again one is aware of a sense of paradox and mystery that contributes to the numinous atmosphere of the passage: Arthur has "vanished", though Arthur "cannot die".

The lines which follow offer testimony to the fact that Arthur "cannot die":

> For out of the darkness
> Silent and slowly
> The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry glimmer
> On icy fallow
> And faded forest,
> Drew to the valley
> Named of the shadow,
> And slowly brightening
> Out of the glimmer,
> And slowly moving again to a melody
> Yearningly tender,
> Fell on the shadow,
> No longer a shadow,
> But clothed with The Gleam.
>
> (ℓℓ.81-94)

With the passing of Arthur, The Gleam had faded "to a wintry glimmer". The "icy fallow / And faded forest" also reflect a kind of death in nature. And "darkness" (ℓ.81) is, of course, symbolic of death or the void. But out of the darkness The Gleam as it were resurrects itself, and slowly and silently moves to the "valley / Named of the shadow" (that is, the Valley of the Shadow of Death). There it slowly increases in intensity (ℓℓ.88-89), and begins again to move to music (ℓ.89) that is "yearningly tender", till it falls "on the shadow" that is "No longer a shadow, / But clothed with The Gleam" (ℓℓ.93-94). The shadow symbolizes death itself, as well as the dead friend and the "vanished" king. But as The Gleam rested "on the forehead / Of Arthur the blameless" in stanza VI, so it now rests on "the shadow", restoring it to life. The implication is that Arthur cannot die because The Gleam has overcome death.

The long syntactical unit (ℓℓ.81-94) suggests a continuity that reinforces the idea of Arthur's immortality, and this passage suggests the sublime. Otto notes how the sublime and the

magical offer "an indirect means of representing the numinous".[73] He goes on to discuss the even greater contribution to the evocation of the numinous afforded by two "negative" factors--namely, silence and darkness. I mentioned the significance of silence in the apprehension of the numinous on page 145 of this study. On the subject of darkness Otto writes:

> The darkness must be such as is enhanced and made all the more perceptible by contrast with some last vestige of brightness, which it is, as it were, on the point of extinguishing; hence the 'mystical' effect begins with semi-darkness. Its impression is rendered complete if the factor of the 'sublime' comes to unite with and supplement it.[74]

"Semi-darkness" or "spare light"[75] is a frequent feature of Tennyson's numinous poetry. Although there is no direct reference to twilight here, in stanza VII of "Merlin and the Gleam", The Gleam certainly draws out of a "darkness" (ℓ.81) that is "made all the more perceptible by contrast with some last vestige of brightness, which it is...on the point of extinguishing". That "last vestige of brightness" is The Gleam itself which has faded to a pale "wintry glimmer" (ℓ.83) after the passing of Arthur.

But the pale Gleam slowly brightens, and this brightening process suggests the inner "luminousness" that James associates with religious belief.[76] Significantly, The Gleam once again moves to music, which is so frequently and powerfully associated with the numinous.

Stanza VII would seem to represent the long period spanned by the composition of In Memoriam when, as a result of Arthur Hallam's untimely death, the poet's faith "waned" like The Gleam, but finally was regenerated--again like The Gleam.

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[73] Otto, p.70.

[74] Otto, pp.70-71.

[75] "Ode: O Bosky Brook", PT 127, ℓ.111.

[76] James, p.18.

Though Merlin is "slower and fainter, / Old and weary" (ℓℓ.99-100), he remains true to his vision, "eager to follow" The Gleam (ℓ.101) as it flies onward, "broader and brighter" and "Wed to the melody" (ℓℓ.95, 97). The poet-speaker notices

> ...whenever
> In passing it glances upon
> Hamlet or city,
> That under the Crosses
> The dead man's garden,
> The mortal hillock,
> Would break into blossom....
>
> (ℓℓ.102-08)

The regenerative quality of The Gleam is apparent, and its association with the Cross (first made in stanza VI) is re-emphasized. The religious implications are considerable.

> And so to the land's
> Last limit I came--
> And can no longer,
> But die rejoicing....
>
> (ℓℓ.109-12)

The "land's / Last limit" is symbolic of life's end. But death is no longer associated with "darkness" and "shadow" (ℓℓ.81,87) --now it is a cause for "rejoicing" (ℓ.112).

> For through the Magic
> Of Him the Mighty,
> Who taught me in childhood,
> There on the border
> Of boundless Ocean,
> And all but in Heaven
> Hovers The Gleam.
>
> (ℓℓ.114-19)

Through divine inspiration, both poetic and religious (ℓℓ.114-15), the speaker has been brought to the point where he is able to perceive The Gleam hovering on the brink of Heaven, acting as a kind of beacon for the voyage back to the "great deep" or "boundless Ocean" that symbolizes life after death. The word "boundless" carries its own numinous connotations, for like "vastness", which I discussed on pages 176-77 of this study, it suggests the infinite.

What, then, is The Gleam? Shaw calls it an <u>ignis fatuus</u>. He says the poet pursues it "and recoils from its cruel if

gorgeous will-to-change, just as Tithonus recoils from the cold rose shadows of Aurora. As fire, the flickering light is dangerous, and as part of the void it is cold and terrifying".[77] I find Shaw's interpretation strange and puzzling. It seems to me that The Gleam which "leads" the poet towards Heaven is neither "dangerous" nor "cold and terrifying". It is the means of transcendence and salvation--a numinous presence in the fullest sense of the word: mysterious, sacred and associated with genius.

Shaw's description ("dangerous", "cold and terrifying") suggests perhaps the dark aspect of the numinous--the aspect that sometimes makes one say "'my blood ran icy cold', and 'my flesh crept'". Otto points out that this particular feeling never arises out of "ordinary, natural fear" but out of fear of the "non-natural or supernatural".[78] However, I find nothing of this dark aspect of the numinous in The Gleam. And I do not believe that Tennyson would have urged the "young Mariner" to "Follow The Gleam" if it were "dangerous", "cold and terrifying".

Tennyson is himself only able to describe The Gleam in negatives:

> Not of the sunlight,
> Not of the moonlight,
> Not of the starlight!
>
> (ℓℓ.120-22)

The numinous is in the final analysis ineffable. It cannot be defined or described; it can only be suggested.[79] And the poet's closing suggestion in "Merlin and the Gleam" is that every man must seek and find the numinous for himself. The sense of urgency is palpable as Tennyson entreats the "young Mariner":

> O young Mariner,
> Down to the haven,
> Call your companions,
> Launch your vessel,
> And crowd your canvas,

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[77] Shaw, <u>Tennyson's Style</u>, p.202.

[78] Otto, p.16.

[79] Otto, pp.6, 7.

And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

(ll.123-31)

The passage reminds one of Tennyson's other, much older mariner, Ulysses, who embarked on a similar voyage. But in "Merlin and the Gleam", I find none of the sense of dark foreboding that lingers about "Ulysses" (PT 217) in spite of the poem's ultimate affirmation.[80]

"Merlin and the Gleam" is addressed to a "young Mariner", and the last stanza suggests that Tennyson was, as it were, passing on the poet's mantle. But there is also a sense in which each reader is the "young Mariner" who must pursue the ideal and seek the numinous. In Tennyson's poetry these co-exist in the "mythology" of the numinous presence which the poet created, consciously or subconsciously, out of a deep personal longing, to fulfil a specific psychological need--the need for assurance of immortality.

The last poem I wish to consider is "Crossing the Bar" (PT 462), which was written at the end of the poet's lifetime and thought by his son to be "the crown" of his "life's work".[81] Since Tennyson requested that this poem should stand at the end of his published works, it presumably encapsulates his ultimate insight and carries his final "message". "Crossing the Bar" is particularly interesting in so far as Tennyson claimed that it "came in a moment".[82] We must therefore regard the poem as the

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[80] See, especially, PT 217, ll.51, 55-56, 61-62, 70.

[81] Memoir II, 367; quoted PT 462, headnote (p.1458).

[82] Memoir II, 367. However, a facsimile of an early draft of "Crossing the Bar" in the Harvard University Library Tennyson Papers, Notebook 54, does show minor differences, principally in ll.13-14. See GP, p.257.

product of pure inspiration--notwithstanding the fact that Tennyson himself reminds us elsewhere not to forget "the long preparation...that unseen germination" period that precedes inspiration.[83] And, as I indicated on page 77 of this study, the numinous presence is both the source of, and the symbol for, inspiration in Tennyson's poetry.

"Crossing the Bar" is a poem about death, and it is based on the (implied) extended metaphor of a ship's voyage. The title refers to the fact that a ship leaving harbour has to traverse a dangerous sand bar before reaching the open sea or "boundless deep" which represents the hereafter. The poem opens thus:

> Sunset and evening star,
>   And one clear call for me!

The word "sunset" frequently carries connotations of approaching death. As a result, an elegiac atmosphere is created at the very start of the poem. The image of "the *evening* star" (ℓ.1--my italics) reinforces the elegiac mood. But the reader familiar with Tennyson's *In Memoriam* will be alert to the fact that the evening star is also the morning star[84]--so that although the tone is elegiac, it is not pessimistic.

In Shelley's elegy, "The soul of Adonais, like a star, / Beacons from the abode where the eternal are".[85] As I indicated in Chapter I, Tennyson's apperception of a numinous presence seems to be indissolubly linked with his wish to be assured of the immortality of the human soul.[86] The remembrance of the "beaconing" of the star (in *Adonais*) "through the inmost veil of Heaven" (ℓ.493) heightens the reader's instinctual awareness that the "clear call" mentioned in line 2 of "Crossing the Bar" is not only a "marine term, a summons to duty"[87] but is also a meta-

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[83] *Memoir* I, 453.

[84] *IM* 121, ℓℓ.17-18.

[85] Shelley, *Adonais*, ℓℓ.494-95 (Hutchinson, p.444).

[86] See p.14 of this study.

[87] *PT* 462, n.2 (p.1458).

phorical "summons from the sea",[88]--that is, from the hereafter. Indeed, the elementary diction and the severely truncated syntax in the first two lines of the poem suggest that time is running out for the speaker. Brevity and simplicity are not only appropriate, but essential.

The alliteration on "s" in line 1 ("Sunset and evening star") tends, in context, to emphasize the elegiac effect created by the imagery; and the alliteration on "l" in line 2 seems to echo across the line almost as a call would echo across water. In line 3 the assonance on "o" is onomatopoeic, reproducing the sound of the sea:

> And may there be no moaning of the bar,
>   When I put out to sea....

There is something ghostly about the implied personification inherent in the "moaning of the bar", and this ghostly effect is heightened by the recollection of lines from "Ulysses": "...the deep / Moans round with many voices" (PT 217, ℓℓ.55-56). Clearly the poet does not wish the ghostly voices to call him back[89] or to impede his progress when he metaphorically puts "out to sea"--that is, when he embarks on his final journey back to the "mystic deeps".[90]

Instead, the poet wishes for a full, silent tide,

> ...such a tide as moving seems asleep,
>   Too full for sound and foam,
> When that which drew from out the boundless deep
>   Turns again home.
>
> (ℓℓ.5-8)

The soft, sighing sibilants in line 5 do indeed suggest a gentle tide, and the long, muted, often assonantal vowels ("moving... / Too full"; "seems asleep") contribute to the almost somnolent effect created. The rougher sound of the sea is only momentarily recalled in the pounding onomatopoeia of "sound and foam".

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[88] IM 103, ℓ.16.

[89] Cf. "The Silent Voices", PT 459, ℓℓ.3-4.

[90] IM 125, ℓ.14.

In line 7, "that" refers to the soul, and one tends to recall the lines from "De Profundis" (PT 383) which suggest the passage of the soul at birth "from that great deep,... / Whereon the Spirit of God moves as he will" (ℓℓ.27-28). The recollection enhances the numinous atmosphere that is being built up in "Crossing the Bar".

With the exception of the first (trochaic) foot in line 1, the metre has thus far been very regularly iambic--though the number of feet per line varies. At line 8, however, there is a significant metrical variation. One possible scansion would be:

/ x | / /
Turns again home.

The effect of the spondee is to emphasize the final foot with its reference to the soul's "home". But although the second syllable in the word "again" is heavy in comparison to its first syllable, relative to the word "home" it is light. So a second, contrapuntal scansion is possible:

/ x | x /
Turns again home.

Here the second (iambic) foot is a metrical inversion of the first (trochaic) foot, so that a kind of "turn" is created within the line, and this obviously reinforces the meaning. Certainly the momentary metrical flicker at this point reflects the emotional flicker the poet experiences at the thought of returning to the soul's "home".

The construction of the third stanza closely parallels that of the first stanza, and the alliteration on "l" in line 2 is echoed in line 9, underscoring, as it were, the similarity:

> Twilight and evening bell,
> And after that the dark....

The truncated syntax once again suggests that time is running out for the poet. The diction, too, suggests the passing of time. The movement has been from "sunset" to "twilight", and what lies ahead is "the dark". The elegiac tone is deepening, and now it finds its correlative not in the "evening star" (ℓ.1) but in the "evening bell" (ℓ.9). In the terms of the metaphor of a sea voyage, this is the warning bell that indicates when

the ship is about to sail. But one also may recall John Donne's lines: "...never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee".[91] Darkness and death are imminent. But the poet desires that there should be "no sadness of farewell" when he embarks on his final voyage into the hereafter. The reason no sadness is called for is set out in the closing stanza:

> For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
> The flood may bear me far,
> I hope to see my Pilot face to face
> When I have crost the bar.
>
> (ℓℓ.13-16)

The word "bourne" (ℓ.13) recalls lines from <u>Hamlet</u>:

> Who would these fardels bear
> ....
> But that the dread of something after death--
> The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns--puzzles the will,
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of?
>
> (III.i.76-82)

The allusion strikes a sombre note that is in keeping with the archetypal image of "the dark" in line 10. In addition, the word "flood" may be deemed to carry connotations of punishment because of its biblical associations.[92] But these potentially negative effects are outweighed, I believe, by the positive assertion in line 15: "I hope to see my Pilot face to face". Though "the 'Pilot' is not a scriptural character",[93] the reference to St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is clear: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face".[94] J.H. Buckley compares H.F. Lyte's famous hymn: "Praise, my soul,

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[91] John Donne, <u>Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions</u>, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ.Press, 1975), 17, ℓℓ.10-11.

[92] Genesis vi:12-17.

[93] Edna Moore Robinson, <u>Tennyson's Use of the Bible</u> (1917; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, 1968), p.106.

[94] 1 Corinthians xiii:12; quoted <u>PT</u> 462, n.13-16 (p.1459).

the King of Heaven... / Ye behold him face to face...."[95] The "Pilot" is ostensibly Christ, who has guided the poet through life, and will guide him in the crossing over from life to death--or, more precisely, from this life to the hereafter.

Tennyson himself "explained the 'Pilot' as 'That Divine and Unseen Who is always guiding us'",[96] and Edna Moore Robinson notes that this gloss "may be used with entire truthfulness to describe Christ". She feels, however, that the description is "too large to have any necessary historical connection", and that it belongs rather "to the dialect of Universal Religion".[97] It seems to me that the image of the Pilot is typical of the diffuse imagery Tennyson uses to evoke the numinous presence. The "thought within the image" is indeed, as Tennyson put it, "much more than any one interpretation". For he held that poetry "is like shot-silk with many glancing colours. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet".[98]

My own "sympathy with the poet" has the effect of recalling Tennyson's belief that "our highest view of God must be more or less anthropomorphic" and that it is on "God and God-like men we build our trust".[99] The reference to "God and God-like men" inevitably calls to mind Christ and Arthur Hallam. I attempted to show in the previous chapter how Hallam, in the course of In Memoriam, became a guiding spirit in Tennyson's life and poetry, and was frequently equated by the poet with the divine.[100] Something of this complexity adheres to the "meaning" of the Pilot image in "Crossing the Bar". Ricks clearly senses this duality of meaning, too, for he writes:

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[95] PT 462, n.13-16 (p.1459).

[96] Memoir II, 367.

[97] Robinson, p.106.

[98] Memoir II, 127.

[99] Memoir I, 311.

[100] See pp. 153-87 of this study.

> As so often, Tennyson's mind may have gone back to Arthur Hallam, to In Memoriam CXXXI: 'And come to look on those we loved / And that which made us, face to face'.[101]

Arthur Hallam and Christ are once again virtually indistinguishable. The numinous presence symbolized by the Pilot may be either, or both. And the "evening star" referred to in the opening stanza adumbrates this ambiguous resolution. For the image recalls the beaconing star in Adonais (which I have previously shown to be associated in Tennyson's mind with Hallam) and the idea of the beloved friend as a "star to every wand'ring bark" in Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, as well as the star which shone at the birth of Christ--and which is therefore the ultimate symbol of man's hope of eternal life.

James Kincaid believes that the "overwhelming impression given by the poem ['Crossing the Bar'] is one of depression and gloom". He implies that Tennyson's "hope" (ℓ.15) is really a doubt.[102] I do not believe this to be the case. For, as I have said, the potentially negative allusions to Hamlet and the "flood" in lines 13-14 are cancelled or outweighed by the final positive allusion to Christ and St Paul in line 15. And with one exception (discussed on p.212) the rhythm of the poem is regular iambic, the regularity helping to create, in the circumstances, an impression of quiet confidence. Each stanza is rhymed a b a b; and, given the meaning, this "open" rhyme scheme also suggests a progression that is in keeping with the poet's assertion of the "hope" of immortality.

Laurence Perrine notes that hope "is ordinarily defined in terms of desire accompanied by expectation", but that "the intensity of expectation varies with each use of the word". He feels

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[101] PT 462, n.13-16 (p.1459). The lines quoted by Ricks are from the Harvard manuscript. They were eventually amended to read, "Until we close with all we loved, / And all we flow from, soul in soul" (IM 131, ℓℓ.11-12).

[102] James R. Kincaid, "'Crossing the Bar': A Poem of Frustration", Victorian Poetry, 3 (1965), 61.

that "to emphasize the word is to emphasize doubt; to speak it quietly is to indicate assurance".[103] I agree, and feel that in Tennyson's poem the word "hope" has exactly that degree of stress which one would expect in an iambic line. There is no over-emphasis, nor is the word "devalued" by proximity to a more heavily-stressed word. The word "hope", in this context, suggests a degree of quiet assurance that is largely synonymous with "trust":

x / | x / | x / | x / | x /
I hope to see my Pilot face to face

x / | x / | x /
When I have crost the bar.

Furthermore, stanza 1 corresponds in form to stanza 3, and stanza 2 corresponds in form to stanza 4, so that the poem as a whole displays an A B A B stanzaic correspondence that reflects the a b a b rhyme scheme, creating an impression of progression and assurance that is very much in keeping with the poem's final assertion and overall "meaning". Thus "Crossing the Bar" is a fine example of significant form. It possesses a kind of perfection that is very much in keeping with the idea of the numinous which it encapsulates in the image of the Pilot. And in tone and mood the poem approaches the sublime, creating an indefinable aura that transforms the relatively simple image of the Pilot into an evocative example of Tennyson's most complex symbol, the numinous presence. The poet does indeed seem to have written with his "sword bathed in heaven".[104]

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[103] Laurence Perrine, "When Does Hope Mean Doubt? The Tone of 'Crossing the Bar'", _Victorian Poetry_, 4 (1966), 129.

[104] _Memoir_ II, 129.

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INDEX

"All thoughts, all creeds" (PT 122) 102
"Ancient Sage, The" (PT 415) 86, 160, 184
"Armageddon" (PT 3) 29, 72, 96, 160-61, 203
"Break, Break, Break" (PT 228) 139
"Charge of the Light Brigade, The" (PT 315) 93
"Christian Penitent, The" (PT 186) 118-19
"Crossing the Bar" (PT 462) 209-16
"De Profundis" (PT 383) 212
"Far-far-away" (PT 426) 93, 94
"Frater Ave atque Vale" (PT 385) 114
"Gardener's Daughter, The" (PT 208) 50, 76, 114
"Grave of a Suicide, The" (PT 29) 53
"Guinevere" (PT 474) 122
"Happy: The Leper's Bride" (PT 424) 67
"Hark! the dogs howl!" (PT 214) 47, 130, 134, 137
"Holy Grail, The" (PT 471) 149
"I wander in darkness and sorrow" (PT 11) 44-45, 47, 174
Idylls of the King, The (PT 463-476) 5, 90, 122 ("Guinevere"), 149 ("The Holy Grail"), 198 ("The Passing of Arthur")
"If I were loved, as I desire to be" (PT 158) 40-41
In Memoriam: 5, 6, 17, 30, 144, 150, 153
- Introductory stanzas: 176, 177
- IM 2: 70
- IM 3: 47, 48, 50, 166
- IM 5: 142
- IM 7: 49-54, 56, 73, 137, 152, 163, 172
- IM 9: 42, 114, 178
- IM 13: 42, 154, 166
- IM 14: 57, 144, 154
- IM 17: 154, 166
- IM 21: 154
- IM 22: 130, 144
- IM 23: 38, 163
- IM 24: 163
- IM 25: 38
- IM 26: 152
- IM 27: 127
- IM 30: 55, 73, 163
- IM 31: 144, 178
- IM 32: 178
- IM 33: 154
- IM 36: 166, 178
- IM 37: 154, 178, 183
- IM 40: 42, 166, 178
- IM 41: 42, 55, 154, 155, 158, 178
- IM 43: 163
- IM 44: 144
- IM 45: 144
- IM 47: 55, 144
- IM 50: 55, 179
- IM 51: 131, 137, 152, 155, 163

IM 52: 55, 56, 152, 155
IM 54: 163
IM 56: 48, 166
IM 57: 114
IM 60: 42
IM 61: 56, 126, 156, 157
IM 64: 144, 154
IM 65: 56, 196
IM 66: 54
IM 67: 111, 157-62, 172, 204
IM 68: 56
IM 69: 56, 57, 58, 60 , 77, 185
IM 70: 57-58
IM 71: 152, 202
IM 72: 48
IM 77: 166
IM 78: 166
IM 79: 37
IM 84: 162, 168
IM 85: 42, 58, 59, 62, 154, 162, 163, 166, 171, 186
IM 86: 60f., 73, 174
IM 87: 42, 49, 57, 80, 154, 163, 171, 203
IM 89: 163, 184-85
IM 91: 62, 63, 69, 144, 166
IM 92: 63, 128, 144, 163
IM 93: 41-42, 58, 63, 76, 163
IM 94: 58, 63, 81, 83
IM 95: 47, 59, 64-75, 77, 79, 80-84, 96, 103, 107, 129, 163-64, 175, 177, 180, 183-84, 202
IM 96: 184
IM 97: 164
IM 98: 166
IM 99: 165-66
IM 100: 154, 166, 174
IM 103: 154, 168, 211
IM 104: 166-67
IM 105: 166-67, 169
IM 106: 167-68, 172, 173, 180
IM 107: 168, 169
IM 109: 35, 154, 168, 169
IM 110: 35, 154
IM 111: 178
IM 114: 169, 170-71, 173
IM 116: 171-72
IM 118: 166
IM 119: 172, 173
IM 120: 166
IM 121: 103, 175, 210
IM 122: 96, 166
IM 124: 173, 197
IM 125: 166, 211
IM 129: 134, 161, 180
IM 130: 144, 174-81, 196
IM 131: 178, 180, 181, 215
Epilogue: 178

"In the Valley of Cauteritz" (PT 326) 88-94, 102, 174
"Lady of Shalott, The" (PT 159) 10
"Life" (PT 149) 36, 52
"Locksley Hall" (PT 271) 4, 24, 78, 90
"Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" (PT 417) 4, 90
"Love and Death" (PT 112) 101
Lover's Tale, The (PT 153) 53, 96, 98, 123
"Mariana" (PT 73) 46, 113
"Mariana in the South" (PT 160) 46
Maud (PT 316) 5, 7, 15-25, 30, 97, 128, 137, 142, 145, 153, 158, 163, 201
"Memory [Ay me!]" (PT 126) 121-22
"Merlin and the Gleam" (PT 431) 5, 107, 198-209
"Morte d'Arthur" (PT 226) 5
"Mystic, The" (PT 96) 48
"No More" (PT 57) 51-52, 93
"Ode: O Bosky Brook" (PT 127) 104, 206
"Ode to Memory" (PT 84) 79, 87
"Oh! that 'twere possible" (PT 227) 32, 128-148, 150, 194-5
"Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave" (PT 45) 43, 73
"On a Mourner" (PT 216) 48, 91
"On Sublimity" (PT 26) 45-46
"Outcast, The" (PT 55) 9, 42, 43-44, 174
"Palace of Art, The" (PT 167) 10, 125
"Passing of Arthur, The" (PT 475) 198
"Pardidi Diem" (PT 128) 121
"Pierced through with knotted thorns of barren pain" (PT 190) 120-121, 122
"Playfellow Winds" (PT 59) 44
Princess, The (PT 286) 5, 25-26, 94, 98, 101, 111, 180, 191-2
"Recollections of the Arabian Nights" (PT 83) 102
"Remorse" (PT 8) 118, 120, 125
"Rosamund's Bower" (PT 281) 125
"Silent Voices, The" (PT 459) 103-114, 122, 211
"Sir Galahad" (PT 234) 96, 100
[Sonnet] "To - [As when with downcast eyes]" (PT 179) 38-39, 68
Sonnet [Check every outflash, every ruder sally] (PT 150) 87-88, 90
[Sonnet] "If I were loved, as I desire to be" (PT 158) 40
"Sonnet [Me my own Fate to lasting sorrow doometh]" (PT 141) 69, 82-83
[Sonnet] "To thee, with whom my best affections dwell" (PT 252) 17
"Sonnet [When that rank heat of evil's tropic day]" (PT 146) 131
"Tears, Idle Tears" (PT 286, IV, 21-40) 85-86
"Thy soul is like a landskip, friend" (PT 136) 80
"Timbuctoo" (PT 67) 29, 48, 193, 203
"Tiresias" (PT 219) 53, 78, 96
"Tithonus" (PT 324) 53, 97, 101
"To - [As when with downcast eyes]" (PT 179) 38-39, 68
"To thee, with whom my best affections dwell" (PT 252) 17
"Two Voices, The" (PT 209) 48, 53, 70, 101, 192.
"Ulysses" (PT 217) 94, 95, 101, 107-08, 113, 209, 211
"Unhappy man, why wander there..." (PT 52) 9
"Vision of Sin, The" (PT 277) 111
"Voice and the Peak, The" (PT 359) 111, 202
* "Voyage, The" (PT 257) 96
"Whispers" (PT 215) 48, 95
"Youth" (PT 223) 101-102
* "Wages" (PT 354) 11-14

ADDENDUM TO THE INDEX

"And ask ye why these sad tears stream?" (PT 25) 47
"Dying Man to His Friend, The" (PT 51) 47
"Epilogue [The Charge of the Heavy Brigade]" (PT 392) 10
"Fatima" (PT 163) 122
"Hero to Leander" (PT 95) 47
"Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind" (PT 78) 101
"To --, After Reading a Life and Letters" (PT 289) 5
"Walk at Midnight, The" (PT 30) 47
"We meet no more" (PT 13) 47
"Why should we weep for those who die?" (PT 7) 47