Proem Study Guide

Proem by Alfred Tennyson, 1st Baron Tennyson

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Introduction

"Proem" was originally published as the introductory passage to Alfred, Lord Tennyson's booklength poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.* The complete poem consists of 131 sections and was written over the course of seventeen years, capturing the development of the poet's grief over the death of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam. The influence of Hallam's death can be seen in several of Tennyson's poems, including "Ulysses," "Tithonus," "The Two Voices," and "Break, break, break."

Tennyson met Hallam in the 1820s at Trinity College, Cambridge. Hallam was considered by his classmates to be one of the most promising scholars of the day, until his sudden death from a stroke in 1833, at age twenty-two. Hallam and Tennyson were close companions. They traveled through Europe together, and at the time of his death, Hallam was engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily.

In Memoriam A. H. H. is considered one of the single most influential poems of the Victorian age. It was a favorite of Queen Victoria's and her husband Prince Albert and was so admired by the royal couple that Tennyson was appointed poet laureate the year the poem was published. Throughout the last half of the century, *In Memoriam A. H. H.* was frequently quoted in church sermons, due to Tennyson's masterful control of the language and the poem's mournful contemplation of humanity's relationship to the eternal. In modern times, the poem is seldom read in its 2,868-line entirety, but individual sections like "Proem" are considered examples of Tennyson's poetry at its best.

Author Biography

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was born August 6, 1809, in Somersby, Lincolnshire, England. His father was a clergyman, the rector of Somersby, a profession for which he was not well suited and of which he was not fond. Tennyson was the fourth of twelve children. At an early age he showed a talent for writing, and began writing poetry by age eight. By the time he was eighteen, in 1827, he had published his first volume of poetry, *Poems by Two Brothers*. Though his older brothers Frederick and Charles wrote some of the poems in the book, most were by Alfred. The same year, Tennyson left home to attend Trinity College, Cambridge. There he gained recognition for his work, winning a major poetry prize.

While he was at Trinity, Tennyson became close friends with Arthur Henry Hallam, who was considered one of the school's outstanding literary talents. Hallam introduced Tennyson to Emily Sellwood, with whom the poet fell in love. In turn, Tennyson introduced Hallam to his sister, also named Emily, with whom Hallam fell in love.

Tennyson experienced a series of setbacks after his book *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was published in 1830. In 1831, Tennyson's father died. Tennyson's older brother Edward committed himself to a mental asylum, where he lived until his death in 1890. In 1832, Tennyson published *Poems*, which was harshly criticized in nearly every review. In 1833, Hallam died suddenly, at the age of twentytwo.

Tennyson was so shocked by Hallam's death that he vowed to publish no more poetry for ten years. During that time, he worked on *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, the work that "Proem" introduces. He started the first lines of it within days of hearing about Hallam's death.

Tennyson barely eked out a living, and was too poor to marry Emily Sellwood until the publication of *Poems* in 1843 made him financially independent. He married Emily in 1850, and Queen Victoria, influenced by the publication of *In Memoriam* that same year, appointed him to succeed William Wordsworth as poet laureate.

Tennyson lived the rest of his life in fame and prosperity. He wrote poetry, focusing on long romantic narratives, and a few plays, which were unsuccessful. He was one of the most famous and well-recognized men in England when he died October 6, 1892.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-4

The "Proem" for Tennyson's long poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.* literally opens with a strong beginning: the word "strong" emphasizes the speaker's awe and gives the poem a powerful tone. The phrase "Strong Son of God" can be read in two ways. The most obvious of these is that it is a reference to Jesus, who is referred to frequently in Christian doctrine as the Son of God. This emphasis on God's human element also serves to imply a human subject to the poem, perhaps Arthur Henry Hallam, who is not mentioned in "Proem," but whose initials appear in the title of the longer poem. Throughout the longer poem, readers find more evidence that Tennyson has drawn a connection between Christ and Hallam, whom he represents as a figure for the higher race of humanity that is expected to develop from Christ's prophesied second-coming.

The last three lines of this first stanza refer to the unknown aspects of God. Tennyson points out that human faith is based on a lack of direct experience, noting that people believe in God even though they cannot see Him.

Lines 5-8

Ancient and medieval astronomers believed that the Earth was surrounded by a series of transparent orbs, or spheres, that rotated around it, accounting for the change from night to day, which the poem refers to in line 5. Saying that they are God's is Tennyson's way of noting that God holds power over all the universe. Even more impressive is the power, noted in line 6, to make life, and the corresponding power to make death. Line 8 uses the image of a foot crushing a skull to show how God maintains control over the life that He has made.

Lines 9-12

Tennyson follows the brutal image of God's foot on man's skull with the declaration that God is in fact good and concerned and will not abandon humanity to the mechanical world. There is a slight shift in the voice of the poem's speaker from line 9, which refers to humanity as "us," to line 10, in which "man" is referred to as "him." This shift becomes clear in the rest of the stanza, in which the speaker shows that a normal person feels entitled to more than just death: the poem's speaker, on the other hand, is willing to accept anything that God decides to do for or to humanity. He has complete faith that, regardless what happens or how it seems at the time, God is just.

Lines 13-16

This stanza addresses one of the most basic tenets of Christian faith, that of free will. Line 13 refers back to the issue, raised in the first stanza, of Jesus being not just God but God's human son. This makes him, according to Tennyson, the ideal human. Having stressed God's dominance over all things in the universe in the previous stanzas, here the poem says twice, in lines 15 and 16, that humans control their own will.

Lines 17-20

"Little systems" in line 17 refers to all things that humans have created, from games to governments, arts, and sciences. Saying that they "have their day" emphasizes how temporary they are, how quickly they will be gone, in what must seem no more than a day in God's larger perspective. Calling these systems "broken lights of thee" in line 19 affirms that all things human are part of God, while line 20 asserts that even if these parts were all added together, the mystery of God would be still greater than their sum.

Lines 21-24

At the center of the poem, Tennyson explicitly states its main point: the fact that faith in God exists independently of knowledge, because knowledge only applies to things that humans can experience. In line 22, all knowledge is referred to generally as things that can be seen. The lack of knowledge is presented as darkness, with faith a beam of light that cuts through it, giving the faithful person less reason to fear the world.

Lines 25-28

Having identified the differences between faith and knowledge, Tennyson asserts that the two must coexist. A purely religious poem might dismiss knowledge of the physical world as unimportant; here, though, Tennyson calls for increasing understanding of the physical world "more to more." He takes a stand against a purely worldly position, however, saying that reverence should grow at the same time that knowledge grows. Line 28 makes the assertion that a proper balance between "mind" and "soul" is the natural, original state of human understanding, implying that such a balance existed "before" the two aspects started growing.

Lines 29-32

This stanza returns to directly addressing God and asking for His assistance. The poem claims that humans are intellectually and physically insignificant, and then, in line 30, admits that humans often will either mock or fear God. Still, the poem asks God to accept human weakness and to ignore the insults humans direct at Him. In line 32, what is usually referred to as the "world" is mentioned in the plural, "worlds." By calling

mankind "thy vain worlds," Tennyson acknowledges all of the variations of social understanding, as in the expression that describes someone being "in his own world." While the God that Tennyson addresses in the poem is clearly a Christian God, this plurality indicates an understanding of the many different human perspectives, which understand existence so differently that they might as well be living on different planets.

Lines 33-36

The speaker of the poem asks God's forgiveness, pointing out the fact that his humble behavior cannot be an affront against God, who is too great to be affected by human affairs. Line 33 refers to "what seem'd my sin," while line 34 mentions "what seem'd my worth": both phrases point to the same element, that of human pride, which would make the poem's speaker think he is as important, if not more important, than God himself. In identifying sin and worth as mere illusion, the poem stresses the fact that God is far above such mundane things, which mean so much to humans. "Merit," the measure of human worth, is said to be only of value to humans, not to God.

Lines 37-40

As the poem nears its end, Tennyson finally mentions his grief for his dead friend, the "one removed," who is identified in the larger poem but not in this "Proem." Tennyson asks God's forgiveness for concentrating so much on another human being, excusing the lack of attention to God by showing how much his absent friend is connected to God. "Thy creature," he calls his friend, noting that his belief that his friend has gone to live with God in death makes him, in Tennyson's opinion, "worthier to be loved."

Lines 41-44

The last stanza apologizes for the poem's weakness in explaining the poet's ideas, characterizing his words as "wild and wandering cries." Addressing God, the poet begs forgiveness for being unable to discuss matters intelligently, identifying his problem as being caused by wasting his youth away when, presumably, he should have spent more time studying, so that his discussion of religious topics would be more solid. Ironically, it was with the dead friend whom he eulogizes in this poem that Tennyson spent much time in his youth, making him the cause of the time that he says was wasted. After apologizing for his intellectual shortcomings, he ends the poem by asking God to make him wise.

Themes

Free Will

In line 16, the speaker of Tennyson's "Proem" tells God, "Our wills are ours, to make them Thine." One of the central beliefs of the Judeo- Christian tradition, within which Tennyson wrote, is the understanding that human beings are able to make their own decisions and are not just the sum of their genetic predisposition and experiences. Without free will, humans would not be responsible for their sins or their good deeds but, like machines, would only behave according to external influences.

The poem asserts that humans have free will, and points out how this freedom, which could lead to bad behavior, is ultimately to God's benefit. Humans have the ability to choose to do God's bidding, which makes their worship of Him more significant than it would be if they had no choice. Being omnipotent, God does not need this explained to Him by Tennyson; the poem's description of free will may be phrased as an explanation, but it serves more as an acknowledgement of the responsibility humans have to actively, consciously obey the will of God.

The emphasis on free will fits in with the poem's overall analysis of the symbiotic relationship between knowledge and free will. If humans could have concrete knowledge of the nature of God and what God wants, then the obvious thing to do would be to follow God's bidding. Without any certainty, though, humans are able to, as the poem observes, mock God or fear Him. Worship becomes a greater achievement, one that is accomplished only through disciplined faith.

Reverence

The poem begins with strong praise of God, mentioning strength, love, and immortality in the very first line. Though it continues its praise, there is emphasis on the fact that reverence is based on uncertainty. In effect, the poem puts forth the idea that to revere God, one by definition does not *know* what one is talking about. Awkward as this position seems, it is one with which the poem is comfortable. Tennyson explains faith and how it contrasts with knowledge, and how there is much to existence that extends beyond humanity's limited knowledge. These explanations add together like a mathematical equation to support the idea that God is greater than humans can ever know.

In the poem's last stanza, the speaker of the poem subjugates himself completely to God, dismissing his own poetry as "wild and wandering cries" and "confusions of a wasted youth." Although the poem shows a disciplined attempt to make sense out of matters that go beyond human capacity, the poet still asks God's forgiveness, for fear that any of the things said in the poem might be wrong or might offend Him.

Mourning

Although death is mentioned frequently in "Proem," Tennyson does not mention the loss of any specific person until the tenth stanza, in which he asks God to "forgive my grief for one removed." Up to that point, death is discussed in terms of the human condition, as a way to show the contrast between the fleeting nature of human life and God's eternal existence, in order to give a context to humankind's limited knowledge. Death is referred to in the second stanza as a tool which God made and controls; in the fifth stanza it is mentioned to show how insignificant human life is; and in the eighth stanza there is a hint it is the fear of death that causes humans to turn from God.

When the idea of mourning is added to the poem, the discussion about God becomes more personalized. For most of the poem, Tennyson analyzes the fact that God cannot be known, but can only be experienced through blind faith. By noting his departed friend, "I trust he lives with Thee," Tennyson creates a connection between God's omnipotence and the limited capacity of humans. The fear and mocking of death explored earlier in the poem becomes irrelevant once Tennyson acknowledges death leads somewhere, and the meaningless void that follows death has meaning in this context. Although it is only mentioned late in the poem, the belief that Tennyson's friend's death is not meaningless, that death has led his friend to God, gives this poem a reason to tilt toward faith in God even when evidence and knowledge of God is lacking.

Style

Iambic Tetrameter

"Proem" is written in quatrains, which are fourline stanzas. It follows the rhyme scheme *abba*: the word at the end of the first line of each stanza rhymes with the word ending the last line, making the "a" rhyme, and the two middle lines end with the "b" rhyme. The lines follow an iambic tetrameter pattern. Iambic is a pattern of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, as in "for*give*" and "em*brace*." This pattern is obviously subject to variation, especially at the beginnings of stanzas: outside of the context of the poem, the natural tendency for reading such phrases as "strong son" and "thine are" would be to put the stress on the first syllable, not the second. Tetrameter contains the Greek prefix "tetra," meaning "four": there are four iambs in each line. This metrical form is so strongly associated with Tennyson's poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, for which "Proem" is a preface, that it has been referred to as the *In Memoriam* stanza.

Monologue

In this poem, the speaker talks directly to God, asking for God's understanding and forgiveness and taking every possible opportunity to praise God. It follows a logical rhetorical structure, establishing God's greatness in the first three stanzas, then explaining the problem of free will, then explaining how faith can be used to help humans deal with things they cannot know, and finally referring to the speaker's personal grief over the death of his friend, which has been the unexamined reason behind all of these ruminations about existence. This monologue addresses God often, indicating it means to invoke God, to ask Him for help; but the poem can also be read as a display of the mental process through which grief takes a human mind in its quest for consolation.

Historical Context

Victoria and Albert

Tennyson is the poet most closely associated with the reign of Queen Victoria, and this poem in particular is considered representative of the Victorian age. Victoria was born in 1819, and in 1837, not yet twenty years old, she ascended to the throne of England, beginning a reign that would last nearly sixty-five years. She was politically active and involved in the business of running the country, even from the start.

In 1840 Victoria was married to Albert, her first cousin. It was an arranged marriage, but Victoria and Albert fell deeply in love and consulted with each other on all matters. It was Albert who first read Tennyson's *In Memoriam A. H. H.* and brought it to Victoria's attention, directly influencing Tennyson's 1850 appointment as poet laureate. Under Albert's influence, while still in her early twenties, Victoria changed from a liberal to a conservative political attitude, which affected the way England was governed in both domestic and international affairs. Victoria and Albert were married for twenty years, until Albert's death in 1861 from typhoid fever. After his death, Victoria remained devoted to Albert's memory, and she never remarried. Her popularity as a monarch grew as she aged, as England exerted its dominance over world affairs, becoming the world's most powerful country because of its strong navy and its colonization of Africa, India, and other territories that raised its financial power to ever-increasing heights.

Literary tastes changed during the time of Victoria's reign, reflecting the queen's tastes. The nineteenth century began with the romantic movement, which was initiated by Wordsworth and Coleridge and most frequently associated with Shelley, Keats, and Byron. Romantic poetry can be generalized as focusing on nature and on the importance of individual judgement and emotional reaction over the pressures of social institutions. Victorian literature, on the other hand, is generally concerned with how individuals fit into the social scheme, with formality and decorum. This poem, an introduction for a work written between 1833 and 1850, shows the influence of both eras. Tennyson has the romantic's sense of self-importance in his telling of his individual experience of grief, but he also expresses concern about the proper relationship with God and his fellow humans that came to characterize most literature during Victoria's reign.

The Industrial Age

At the same time Tennyson was writing this poem, England was undergoing a major change in basic economic structure, from agriculture to industrial production. Coal-powered machines made large-scale manufacturing possible, and this in turn created a surge in urban populations, which created a need for more jobs. London, for example, which had kept a stable population for centuries, grew fourfold between 1801 and 1841, from 598,000 to 2,420,000. New technologies made centralized industry possible: rail

lines allowed manufacturers to produce items by the ton and transport them to distant points for sale; electric lighting (first invented in 1808) made it possible for workers to continue to labor beyond normal daylight hours; telegraphs allowed businesses to place orders and make arrangements in a fraction of the time it took to send representatives from one town to another.

The drawback of the industrial age was that rapid expansion caused cities to quickly became overpopulated with people, creating unsanitary conditions. Diseases such as typhus spread rapidly in crowded tenements, and the situation was made more perilous by the fact that workers, including children, worked long hours with little pay. Pollution was blinding, darkening the skies of industrial cities at midday. All of these conditions caused a crisis of faith: the benefits of industrialization turned out to be the cause of misery for millions of British citizens. Tennyson plays off this tension by contrasting knowledge with faith in this poem.

Critical Overview

Tennyson's poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, which "Proem" introduces, has always been considered one of Tennyson's most important works. George O. Marshall Jr., explained in 1963 in *A Tennyson Handbook*, "One of the most remarkable things about *In Memoriam* was its popularity with Tennyson's contemporaries. It seemed to be such a satisfactory answer to the problems of existence, especially those raised by the struggle between religion and science, that the Victorians clasped it to their bosoms to supplement the consolation offered by the Bible. This wholehearted acceptance of its teachings went from the highest to the lowest."

Marshall's account of the poem's reception is at odds, however, with that of G. M. Young, in his essay "The Age of Tennyson." Young's essay argues that Tennyson was less a Victorian poet than a modern one, explaining:

> *In Memoriam* was influential in extending his renown, but within limited range: many of its earliest readers disliked it, many did not understand it, and those who admired it most were not always the best judges of its poetry.

T. S. Eliot, writing in his *Selected Essays*, has declared that *In Memoriam*'s "technical merit alone is enough to ensure its perpetuity." Eliot also noted, "While Tennyson's technical competence is everywhere masterly and satisfying, *In Memoriam* is the least unapproachable of all his poems." Eliot's influence is evident in contemporary views of Tennyson's poem: while Tennyson's other works are critically respected, modern readers tend to take particular interest in the perspective taken by *In Memoriam*, which examines one person's grief (though Tennyson himself wanted readers to understand the views held by the speaker of the poem were not necessarily his own). This directness makes this poem, of all Tennyson's works, the most similar to the poetry with which twenty-firstcentury readers are familiar.

Criticism

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Critical Essay #1

Kelly is a creative writing and literature instructor at two colleges in Illinois. In this essay, Kelly explains why it is better to analyze Tennyson's poem without considering the larger work that it introduces.

The difficulty one finds in approaching a work like Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Proem" is one that troubles anyone practicing literary criticism and, in fact, anyone trying to understand life: how much should be examined at any one time? Even with an average poem, possibilities abound, since there exists any extent of background information that could be useful for helping readers comprehend the lines on the page in front of them. Biographical information is often referred to, and so are similar poems from the poet's canon, or poems written around the same time, or poems that clearly influence the subject matter.

"Proem" has all of these elements. It is the introduction to a longer piece, *In Memoriam A. H. H*. . The most obvious direction that a line of inquiry might be inclined to take is toward the larger poem, to see how this segment compares to the whole. Furthermore, this entire work deals with the most moving, significant event in Tennyson's otherwise stuffy literary life, the death of his dear friend Arthur Henry Hallam. The magnitude of this one event was so compelling to Tennyson that the bulk of his work in his important formative years, from twenty-four to forty, was spent trying to capture the experience in this one work. Most of Tennyson's poetry deals with subjects drawn from classical literature. The temptation to explore him through *In Memoriam* is strong, and could easily be justified as a rare opportunity that must not be ignored.

Finally, there is the fact that "Proem" is a part of the larger work, and should only be separated from it when absolutely necessary. One of the most influential poets in modern literature, T. S. Eliot, explicitly warned readers that it would be a mistake to break down *In Memoriam*, to examine any individual part, realizing the damage that such an act could do to the entire piece. In his discussion of *In Memoriam*, Eliot asserted that "the poem has to be comprehended as a whole. We may not memorize a few passages, we cannot find a 'fair sample'; we have to comprehend the whole of a poem which is essentially the length that it is." Given Eliot's stature, it might be a good idea to do just as he commands, assuming he knows best on poetic matters.

Those are the reasons for examining "Proem" in a larger context. There are also very good reasons, though, for letting this piece stand as an individual unit and examining it as such. For one thing, it was written separately, after the rest of the poem was already done. This introductory section ends with the date 1849, which shows it to have been one of the last pieces written. As much as Tennyson wanted it to be a part of *In Memoriam*, he also gave it some degree of autonomy by drawing attention to the fact that it was written out of sequence with the other sections that have been pieced together for this poem.

And, regardless of the poet's intentions, the fact remains that "Proem" actually stands independently. It has a definite beginning and end, assigned to it by the author: looking at this one segment without the context of the rest of the poem would not be anything like, as Eliot implies, taking a random section from the middle and pretending that it is supposed to have meaning. In a case like that, the reader defines what the piece is saying by defining its length, separating it from other information that it is tied to; in this case, though, it already has its own independent identity. As much as the case exists for looking around any one artistic piece in order to draw intellectual connections to the facts of the author's life or to other things that he wrote, still there is at least a reasonable case to be made for considering a poem like this as its own freestanding entity, in order to see what it, alone, says.

And that, ultimately, is the deciding factor. The piece does have a context, as every work of art will, but focusing too much on the context can actually drive readers away from its unique significance, putting them on the trail of research before they have given the work itself their fullest attention.

Examined on its own, "Proem" turns out to be less a memorial to Hallam than a general statement on the author's insecurity that surrounds his grief. There are two defining characteristics of this piece. One is the hazy way in which it approaches its own subject; if it were not in the context of a piece called *In Memoriam*, readers would not know until the end that it is written about the death of a friend. The other is the way that this poem begs for forgiveness at the end, just as the aspect of grief is being introduced, a show of humility that reflects the relationships that the poet has with both God and his departed friend.

Starting from the beginning, this does not seem at first to be a poem about grief, but about God. The first nine stanzas, spanning thirty-six lines, deal solely with the relationship between humans and God, focusing on the mysteries that lie beyond this life, and the proper attitude that one should take when contemplating the subject of the Almighty. This extended section, while seeming to be about praise, actually raises some questions about the speaker's devotion. The first is, of course, in the first line, which implies that the poet's verse might be aimed at someone other than who it identifies. On its own, the phrase "Son of God" traditionally refers to Jesus, who is described in these words in the New Testament. It is unusual though that the poet should address the Son of God here while the rest of the poem speaks of the reverence that is usually accorded to God proper, but it is not unusual enough to affect any reading of the poem. It is, however, coupled with "immortal Love" on the same line. This again could be explained as a description of Jesus, whose philosophy is described as being based on love, but it is a noticeably odd reference, and, coupled with the first phrase (and the fact that Tennyson has begun the poem with "strong," as if God's power is in any way comparable to anything) leaves the impression that the poem has another agenda than just calling on God for the sake of praise.

When the tenth stanza mentions "my grief for one removed," the poem's uncertainties come into sharper focus. Much of the talk of God up to that point has centered on death, and that, like the strange references in the first line, could be considered appropriate,

but still seems strangely narrow. A reader who knows this poem to be part of a memorial already knows that the death of a friend is the reason for its existence, but without this foreknowledge, the first nine stanzas build a mystery about the speaker's obsession that the tenth and eleventh explain. The introduction of personal emotion at this late point shades what came before it. Suddenly, the poem is less a song of praise for God than it is a hopeless rant, as if the speaker has been trying in vain to ignore the looming subject of his friend's death and, in the end, can no longer suppress it.

This is why the most crucial aspect to "Proem" may well be its entreaties for forgiveness. These pop up suddenly and increase frequently: "forgive" starts the last three quatrains, and one additional occurrence starts the third line of stanza eleven, leaving readers with a final stanza in which half of the lines ask God for forgiveness. Despite the praise of God mixed with acute consciousness of death in the first three quarters of the poem, and despite the grief that comes up quickly in the last section, when the death of the speaker's friend has finally been brought out into the open, the one overriding emotion that readers are left with is the author's humility. For a person to fall prostrate before God like this is not at all unusual in poetry; what is unusual is that the pleas for mercy come only as the poet's love for his departed friend comes out. The implication is that God would be displeased with the uncontrollable affection that the poem's speaker has for another person. Coming after so much discussion about the proper way to revere God, there is certainly more than a hint that the speaker's worldly love for his friend would detract from his reverence. Directly praising or lamenting his friend could never draw readers to understand the depth of emotions as are conveyed here; readers have to put the pieces together in order to see that the speaker of this poem is so powerfully grief-stricken that he fears that God will feel slighted or jealous, and he needs to beg forgiveness for the emotions that he cannot control.

These facts come from "Proem" itself; the rest of *In Memoriam* describes Arthur Hallam in a different way, and develops themes that are not yet begun in this opening section. To understand the poem in the larger context might be useful. Then again, it could be distracting: much of what makes the eleven stanzas of "Proem" effective is found in the delicate balance and pacing that these ideas have among each other. One need not know who Tennyson lost, how long he grieved, or how long he worked on the poem that follows this introduction in order to feel the poet's apprehension about a sorrow so great that all he can think to do about it is apologize.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on "Proem," in *Poetry for Students*, Gale, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Fredeman discusses the life and work of Tennyson.

More than any other Victorian writer, Tennyson has seemed the embodiment of his age, both to his contemporaries and to modern readers. In his own day he was said to be□with Queen Victoria and Gladstone□one of the three most famous living persons, a reputation no other poet writing in English has ever had. As official poetic spokesman for the reign of Victoria, he felt called upon to celebrate a quickly changing industrial and mercantile world with which he felt little in common, for his deepest sympathies were called forth by an unaltered rural England; the conflict between what he thought of as his duty to society and his allegiance to the eternal beauty of nature seems peculiarly Victorian. Even his most severe critics have always recognized his lyric gift for sound and cadence, a gift probably unequaled in the history of English poetry, but one so absolute that it has sometimes been mistaken for mere facility.

The lurid history of Tennyson's family is interesting in itself, but some knowledge of it is also essential for understanding the recurrence in his poetry of themes of madness, murder, avarice, miserliness, social climbing, marriages arranged for profit instead of love, and estrangements between families and friends.

Alfred Tennyson was born in the depths of Lincolnshire, the fourth son of the twelve children of the rector of Somersby, George Clayton Tennyson, a cultivated but embittered clergyman who took out his disappointment on his wife Elizabeth and his brood of children□on at least one occasion threatening to kill Alfred's elder brother Frederick. The rector had been pushed into the church by his own father, also named George, a rich and ambitious country solicitor intent on founding a great family dynasty that would rise above their modest origins into a place among the English aristocracy. Old Mr. Tennyson, aware that his eldest son, the rector, was unpromising material for the family struggle upward, made his second son, his favorite child, his chief heir. Tennyson's father, who had a strong streak of mental instability, reacted to his virtual disinheritance by taking to drink and drugs, making the home atmosphere so sour that the family spoke of the "black blood" of the Tennysons.

Part of the family heritage was a strain of epilepsy, a disease then thought to be brought on by sexual excess and therefore shameful. One of Tennyson's brothers was confined to an insane asylum most of his life, another had recurrent bouts of addiction to drugs, a third had to be put into a mental home because of his alcoholism, another was intermittently confined and died relatively young. Of the rest of the eleven children who reached maturity, all had at least one severe mental breakdown. During the first half of his life Alfred thought that he had inherited epilepsy from his father and that it was responsible for the trances into which he occasionally fell until he was well over forty years old.

It was in part to escape from the unhappy environment of Somersby rectory that Alfred began writing poetry long before he was sent to school, as did most of his talented

brothers and sisters. All his life he used writing as a way of taking his mind from his troubles. One peculiar aspect of his method of composition was set, too, while he was still a boy: he would make up phrases or discrete lines as he walked, and store them in his memory until he had a proper setting for them. As this practice suggests, his primary consideration was more often rhythm and language than discursive meaning.

When he was not quite eighteen his first volume of poetry, *Poems by Two Brothers* (1827), was published. Alfred Tennyson wrote the major part of the volume, although it also contained poems by his two elder brothers, Frederick and Charles. It is a remarkable book for so young a poet, displaying great virtuosity of versification and the prodigality of imagery that was to mark his later works; but it is also derivative in its ideas, many of which came from his reading in his father's library. Few copies were sold, and there were only two brief reviews, but its publication confirmed Tennyson's determination to devote his life to poetry.

Most of Tennyson's early education was under the direction of his father, although he spent nearly four unhappy years at a nearby grammar school. His departure in 1827 to join his elder brothers at Trinity College, Cambridge, was due more to a desire to escape from Somersby than to a desire to undertake serious academic work. At Trinity he was living for the first time among young men of his own age who knew little of the problems that had beset him for so long; he was delighted to make new friends; he was extraordinarily handsome, intelligent, humorous, and gifted at impersonation; and soon he was at the center of an admiring group of young men interested in poetry and conversation. It was probably the happiest period of his life.

In part it was the urging of his friends, in part the insistence of his father that led the normally indolent Tennyson to retailor an old poem on the subject of Armageddon and submit it in the competition for the chancellor's gold medal for poetry; the announced subject was Timbuctoo. Tennyson's *Timbuctoo* is a strange poem, as the process of its creation would suggest. He uses the legendary city for a consideration of the relative validity of imagination and objective reality; Timbuctoo takes its magic from the mind of man, but it can turn to dust at the touch of the mundane. It is far from a successful poem, but it shows how deeply engaged its author was with the Romantic conception of poetry. Whatever its shortcomings, it won the chancellor's prize in the summer of 1829.

Probably more important than its success in the competition was the fact that the submission of the poem brought Tennyson into contact with the Trinity undergraduate usually regarded as the most brilliant man of his Cambridge generation, Arthur Henry Hallam. This was the beginning of four years of warm friendship between the two men, in some ways the most intense emotional experience of Tennyson's life. Despite the too knowing skepticism of the twentieth century about such matters, it is almost certain that there was nothing homosexual about the friendship: definitely not on a conscious level and probably not on any other. Indeed, it was surely the very absence of such overtones that made the warmth of their feelings acceptable to both men, and allowed them to express those feelings so freely.

Also in 1829 both Hallam and Tennyson became members of the secret society known as the Apostles, a group of roughly a dozen undergraduates who were usually regarded as the elite of the entire university. Tennyson's name has ever since been linked with the society, but the truth is that he dropped out of it after only a few meetings, although he retained his closeness with the other members and might even be said to have remained the poetic center of the group. The affection and acceptance he felt from his friends brought both a new warmth to Tennyson's personality and an increasing sensuousness to the poetry he was constantly writing when he was supposed to be devoting his time to his studies.

Hallam, too, wrote poetry, and the two friends planned on having their work published together; but at the last moment Hallam's father, perhaps worried by some lyrics Arthur had written to a young lady with whom he had been in love, forbade him to include his poems. *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* appeared in June 1830. The standard of the poems in the volume is uneven, and it has the selfcentered, introspective quality that one might expect of the work of a twenty-year-old; but scattered among the other poems that would be forgotten if they had been written by someone else are several fine ones such as "The Kraken," "Ode to Memory," and□above all□"Mariana," which is the first of Tennyson's works to demonstrate fully his brilliant use of objects and landscapes to convey a state of strong emotion. That poem alone would be enough to justify the entire volume.

The reviews appeared slowly, but they were generally favorable. Both Tennyson and Hallam thought they should have come out more quickly, however, and Hallam reviewed the volume himself in the *Englishman's Magazine*, making up in his critical enthusiasm for having dropped out of being published with his friend.

The friendship between the young men was knotted even more tightly when Hallam fell in love with Tennyson's younger sister, Emily, while on a visit to Somersby. Since they were both so young, there was no chance of their marrying for some time, and meanwhile Hallam had to finish his undergraduate years at Trinity. All the Tennyson brothers and sisters, as well as their mother, seem to have taken instantly to Hallam, but he and Emily prudently said nothing of their love to either of their fathers. Dr. Tennyson was absent on the Continent most of the time, sent there by his father and his brother in the hope that he might get over his drinking and manage Somersby parish sensibly. Arthur's father, the distinguished historian Henry Hallam, had plans for his son that did not include marriage to the daughter of an obscure and alcoholic country clergyman.

In the summer of 1830 Tennyson and Hallam were involved in a harebrained scheme to take money and secret messages to revolutionaries plotting the overthrow of the Spanish king. Tennyson's political enthusiasm was considerably cooler than Hallam's, but he was glad to make his first trip abroad. They went through France to the Pyrenees, meeting the revolutionaries at the Spanish border. Even Hallam's idealistic fervor scarcely survived the disillusionment of realizing that the men they met were animated by motives as selfish as those of the royalist party against whom they were rebelling. Nonetheless, in the Pyrenees Tennyson marked out a new dimension of the metaphorical landscape that had already shown itself in *"Mariana,"* and for the rest of

his life the mountains remained as a model for the classical scenery that so often formed the backdrop of his poetry. The Pyrenees generated such marvelous poems as *"Oenone,"* which he began writing there; *"The Lotos- Eaters,"* which was inspired by a waterfall in the mountains; and "The Eagle," which was born from the sight of the great birds circling above them as they climbed in the rocks. Above all, the little village of Cauteretz and the valley in which it lay remained more emotionally charged for Tennyson than any other place on earth. He came again and again to walk in the valley, and it provided him with imagery until his death more than sixty years later.

Early the following year Tennyson had to leave Cambridge because of the death of his father. Dr. Tennyson had totally deteriorated mentally and physically, and he left little but debts to his family, although he had enjoyed a good income and a large allowance from his father. Tennyson's grandfather naturally felt that it was hardly worth his while to keep Alfred and his two elder brothers at Cambridge when it was only too apparent that they were profiting little from their studies and showed no promise of ever being able to support themselves. The allowance he gave the family was generous enough, but it was not intended to support three idle grandsons at the university. Worse still, neither he nor Dr. Tennyson's brother Charles, who was now clearly marked out as the heir to his fortune, attended the rector's funeral, making the division in the family even more apparent. The widow and her eleven children were so improvident that they seemed incapable of living on the allowance, and they were certainly not able to support themselves otherwise.

This began a very bitter period of Tennyson's life. An annual gift of £100 from an aunt allowed him to live in a modest manner, but he refused his grandfather's offer to help him find a place in the church if he would be ordained. Tennyson said then, as he said all his life, that poetry was to be his career, however bleak the prospect of his ever earning a living. His third volume of poetry was published at the end of 1832, although the title page was dated 1833.

The 1832 *Poems* was a great step forward poetically and included the first versions of some of Tennyson's greatest works, such as *"The Lady of Shalott," "The Palace of Art," "A Dream of Fair Women," "The Hesperides,"* and three wonderful poems conceived in the Pyrenees, *"Oenone," "The Lotos-Eaters,"* and *"Mariana in the South."* The volume is notable for its consideration of the opposed attractions of isolated poetic creativity and social involvement; the former usually turns out to be the more attractive course, since it reflected Tennyson's own concerns, but the poems demonstrate as well his feeling of estrangement in being cut off from his contemporaries by the demands of his art.

The reviews of the volume were almost universally damning. One of the worst was written by Edward Bulwer (later Bulwer-Lytton), who was a friend of Tennyson's uncle Charles. The most vicious review, however, was written for the *Quarterly Review* by John Wilson Croker, who was proud that his brutal notice of *Endymion* years before was said to have been one of the chief causes of the death of Keats. Croker numbered Tennyson among the Cockney poets who imitated Keats, and he made veiled insinuations about the lack of masculinity of both Tennyson and his poems. Tennyson,

who was abnormally thin-skinned about criticism, found some comfort in the steady affection and support of Hallam and the other Apostles.

Hallam and Emily Tennyson had by then made their engagement public knowledge, but they saw no way of marrying for a long time: the senior Hallam refused to increase his son's allowance sufficiently to support both of them; and when Arthur wrote to Emily's grandfather, he was answered in the third person with the indication that old Mr. Tennyson had no intention of giving them any more money. By the summer of 1833, Hallam's father had somewhat grudgingly accepted the engagement, but still without offering further financial help. The protracted unhappiness of both Arthur and Emily rubbed off on the whole Tennyson family.

That autumn, in what was meant as a gesture of gratitude and reconciliation to his father, Arthur Hallam accompanied him to the Continent. In Vienna Arthur died suddenly of apoplexy resulting from a congenital malformation of the brain. Emily Tennyson fell ill for nearly a year; the effects of Hallam's death were less apparent externally in Alfred but were perhaps even more catastrophic than for his sister.

The combination of the deaths of his father and his best friend, the brutal reviews of his poems, his conviction that both he and his family were in desperate poverty, his feelings of isolation in the depths of the country, and his ill-concealed fears that he might become a victim of epilepsy, madness, alcohol, and drugs, as others in his family had, or even that he might die like Hallam, was more than enough to upset the always fragile balance of Tennyson's emotions. "I suffered what seemed to me to shatter all my life so that I desired to die rather than to live," he said of that period. For a time he determined to leave England, and for ten years he refused to have any of his poetry published, since he was convinced that the world had no place for it.

Although he was adamant about not having it published, Tennyson continued to write poetry; and he did so even more single-mindedly than before. Hallam's death nearly crushed him, but it also provided the stimulus for a great outburst of some of the finest poems he ever wrote, many of them connected overtly or implicitly with the loss of his friend. *"Ulysses," "Morte d'Arthur," "Tithonus," "Tiresias," "Break, break, break,"* and *"Oh! that 'twere possible"* all owe their inception to the passion of grief he felt but carefully hid from his intimates. Most important was the group of random individual poems he began writing about Hallam's death and his own feeling of loneliness in the universe as a result of it; the first of these "elegies," written in four-line stanzas of iambic tetrameter, was begun within two or three days of his hearing the news of Hallam's death. He continued to write them for seventeen years before collecting them to form what is perhaps the greatest of Victorian poems, *In Memoriam* (1850).

The death of his grandfather in 1835 confirmed Tennyson's fear of poverty, for the larger part of Mr. Tennyson's fortune went to Alfred's uncle Charles, who promptly changed his name to Tennyson d'Eyncourt and set about rebuilding his father's house into a grand Romantic castle, with the expectation of receiving a peerage to cap the family's climb to eminence. His hopes were never realized, but his great house, Bayons Manor, became a model for the home of the vulgar, nouveauriche characters in many of Tennyson's

narrative poems, such as *Maud* (1855). Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt's inheritance was the final wedge driving the two branches of the family apart; he and his nephew were never reconciled, but Alfred's dislike of him was probably even more influential than admiration would have been in keeping Charles as an immediate influence in so much of Alfred's poetry.

The details of Tennyson's romantic attachments in the years after Hallam's death are unclear, but he apparently had at least a flirtation with Rosa Baring, the pretty young daughter of a great banking family, some of whose members had rented Harrington Hall, a large house near Somersby. Tennyson wrote a dozen or so poems to her, but it is improbable that his affections were deeply involved. The poems suggest that her position made it impossible for him to be a serious suitor to her, but she may have been more important to him as a symbol of wealth and unavailability than as a flesh-and-blood young woman. Certainly, he seems not to have been crushed when she married another man.

In 1836, however, at the age of twenty-seven, Tennyson became seriously involved with Emily Sellwood, who was four years younger than he. By the following year they considered themselves engaged. Emily had been a friend of Tennyson's sisters, and one of her own sisters married his next older (and favorite) brother, Charles. Most of the correspondence between Tennyson and Emily has been destroyed, but from what remains it is clear that she was very much in love with him, although he apparently withheld himself somewhat in spite of his affection for her. He was worried about not having enough money to marry, but he seems also to have been much concerned with the trances into which he was still falling, which he thought were connected with the epilepsy from which other members of the family suffered. To marry, he thought, would mean passing on the disease to any children he might father.

In the summer of 1840 Tennyson broke off all relations with Emily. She continued to think of herself as engaged to him, but he abandoned any hope of marriage, either then or in the future. To spare her further embarrassment, the story was put out that her father had forbidden their marriage because of Tennyson's poverty; this legend has been perpetuated in the present century.

Through the second half of the 1830s and most of the 1840s Tennyson lived an unsettled, nomadic life. Nominally he made his home with his mother and his unmarried brothers and sisters, who continued to rent Somersby rectory until 1837, then moved successively to Essex and to Kent; but he was as often to be found in London, staying in cheap hotels or cadging a bed from friends who lived there. He was lonely and despondent, and he drank and smoked far too much. Many of those who had known him for years believed that his poetic inspiration had failed him and that his great early promise would remain unfulfilled; but this was to neglect the fact that when all else went wrong, he clung to the composition of poetry. He was steadily accumulating a backlog of unpublished poems, and he continued adding to his "elegies" to Hallam's memory.

One of the friends who worried away at Tennyson to have his work published was Edward FitzGerald, who loved both the poems and their author, although he was too

stubborn to hide his feelings when a particular poem failed to win his approval. "Old Fitz" nagged at Tennyson, who in the spring of 1842 agreed to break his ten long years of silence.

The two volumes of *Poems* (1842) were destined to be the best-loved books Tennyson ever wrote. The first volume was made up of radically revised versions of the best poems from the 1832 volume, most of them in the form in which they are now known. The second volume contained new poems, among them some of those inspired by Hallam's death, as well as poems of widely varying styles, including the dramatic monologue *"St. Simeon Stylites"*; a group of Authurian poems; his first attempt to deal with rampant sexuality, *"The Vision of Sin"*; and the implicitly autobiographical narrative *"Locksley Hall,"* dealing with the evils of worldly marriages, which was to become one of his most popular poems during his lifetime.

After the reception of the 1832 *Poems* and after being unpublished for so long, Tennyson was naturally apprehensive about the reviews of the new poems; but nearly all were enthusiastic, making it clear that he was now the foremost poet of his generation. Edgar Allan Poe wrote guardedly, "I am not sure that Tennyson is not the greatest of poets."

But the bad luck that Tennyson seemed to invite struck again just as the favorable reviews were appearing. Two years earlier, expecting to make a fortune, he had invested his patrimony in a scheme to manufacture cheap wood carvings by steamdriven machines. In 1842 the scheme crashed, taking with it nearly everything that Tennyson owned, some £4,000. The shock set back any progress he had made in his emotional state over the past ten years, and in 1843 he had to go into a "hydropathic" establishment for seven months of treatment in the hope of curing his deep melancholia.

This was the first of several stays in "hydros" during the next five years. Copious applications of water inside and out, constant wrappings in cold, wet sheets, and enforced abstinence from tobacco and alcohol seemed to help him during each stay; but he would soon ruin any beneficial effects by his careless life once he had left the establishment, resuming his drinking and smoking to the despair of his friends. A rather more effective form of treatment was the £2,000 he received from an insurance policy at the death of the organizer of the woodcarving scheme. In 1845 he was granted a government civil list pension of £200 a year in recognition of both his poetic achievements and his apparent financial need. Tennyson was in reality released from having to worry about money, but the habit of years was too much for him; for the rest of his life he complained constantly of his poverty, although his poetry had made him a rich man by the time of his death. In 1845 the betterment of his fortunes brought with it no effort to resume his engagement to Emily Sellwood, showing that it was not financial want that kept them apart.

The Princess, which was published on Christmas 1847, was Tennyson's first attempt at a long narrative poem, a form that tempted him most of his life although it was less congenial to him temperamentally than the lyric. The ostensible theme is the education

of women and the establishment of female colleges, but it is clear that Tennyson's interest in the subject runs out before the poem does, so that it gradually shifts to the consideration of what he thought of as the unnatural attempt of men and women to fulfill identical roles in society; only as the hero becomes more overtly masculine and the heroine takes on the traditional attributes of women is there a chance for their happiness. Considerably more successful than the main narrative are the thematic lyrics that Tennyson inserted into the action to show the growth of passion and between the cantos to indicate that the natural end of the sexes is to be parents of another generation in a thoroughly traditional manner. The subtitle, *A Medley*, was his way of anticipating charges of inconsistency in the structure of the poem. As always, the blank verse in which the main part of the poem is written is superb, and the interpolated lyrics include some of his most splendid short poems, such as *"Come down, O maid," "Now sleeps the crimson petal," "Sweet and low," "The splendour falls on castle walls,"* and *"Tears, idle tears."* The emotion of these lyrics does more than the straight narrative to convey the forward movement of the entire poem, and their brief perfection indicates well enough that his genius lay there rather than in the descriptions of persons and their actions; this was not, however, a lesson that Tennyson himself was capable of learning. The seriousness with which the reviewers wrote of the poem was adequate recognition of his importance, but many of them found the central question of feminine education to be insufficiently considered. The first edition was quickly sold out, and subsequent editions appeared almost every year for several decades.

Tennyson's last stay in a hydropathic hospital was in the summer of 1848, and though he was not completely cured of his illness, he was reassured about its nature. The doctor in charge apparently made a new diagnosis of his troubles, telling him that what he suffered from was not epilepsy but merely a form of gout that prefaced its attacks by a stimulation of the imagination that is very like the "aura" that often warns epileptics of the onset of a seizure. The trances that he had thought were mild epileptic fits were in fact only flashes of illumination over which he had no reason to worry. Had it been in Tennyson's nature to rejoice, he could have done so at this time, for there was no longer any reason for him to fear marriage, paternity, or the transmission of disease to his offspring. The habits of a lifetime, however, were too ingrained for him to shake them off at once. The real measure of his relief at being rid of his old fear of epilepsy is that he soon set about writing further sections to be inserted into new editions of *The Princess*, in which the hero is said to be the victim of "weird seizures" inherited from his family; at first he is terrified when he falls into trances, but he is at last released from the malady when he falls in love with Princess Ida. Not only this poem, but his three other major long works, *In Memoriam, Maud*, and *Idylls of the King* (1859), all deal in part with the meaning of trances, which are at first frightening but then are revealed to be pathways to the extrasensory, to be rejoiced over rather than feared. After his death Tennyson's wife and son burned many of his most personal letters, and in what remains there is little reference to his trances or his recovery from them; but the poems bear quiet testimony to the immense weight he must have felt lifted from his shoulders when he needed no longer worry about epilepsy.

Tennyson's luck at last seemed to be on the upturn.

At the beginning of 1849 he received a large advance from his publisher with the idea that he would assemble and polish his "elegies" on Hallam, to be published as a whole poem. Before the year was over he had resumed communication with Emily Sellwood, and by the beginning of 1850 he was speaking confidently of marrying. On 1 June *In Memoriam* was published, and less than two weeks later he and Emily were married quietly at Shiplake Church. Improbable as it might seem for a man to whom little but bad fortune had come, both events were total successes.

The new Mrs. Tennyson was thirty-seven years old and in delicate health, but she was a woman of iron determination; she took over the running of the externals of her husband's life, freeing him from the practical details at which he was so inept. Her taste was conventional, and she may have curbed his religious questioning, his mild bohemianism, and the exuberance and experimentation of his poetry, but she also brought a kind of peace to his life without which he would not have been able to write at all. There is some evidence that Tennyson occasionally chafed at the responsibilities of marriage and paternity and at the loss of the vagrant freedom he had known, but there is nothing to indicate that he ever regretted his choice. It was probably not a particularly passionate marriage, but it was full of tenderness and affection. Three sons were born, of whom two, Hallam and Lionel, survived.

After a protracted honeymoon of some four months in the Lake Country, Tennyson returned to the south of England to find that the publication of *In Memoriam* had made him, without question, the major living poet. It had appeared anonymously, but his authorship was an open secret.

This vast poem (nearly 3,000 lines) is divided into 131 sections, with prologue and epilogue; the size is appropriate for what it undertakes, since in coming to terms with loss, grief, and the growth of consolation, it touches on most of the intellectual issues at the center of the Victorian consciousness: religion, immortality, geology, evolution, the relation of the intellect to the unconscious, the place of art in a workaday world, the individual versus society, the relation of man to nature, and as many others. The poem grew out of Tennyson's personal grief, but it attempts to speak for all men rather than for one. The structure often seems wayward, for in T. S. Eliot 's famous phrase, it has "only the unity and continuity of a diary" instead of the clear direction of a philosophical statement. It was bound to be somewhat irregular since it was composed with no regard for either chronology or continuity and was for years not intended to be published. The vacillation in mood of the finished poem, however, is neither haphazard nor capricious, for it is put together to show the wild swoops between depression and elation that grief brings, the hesitant gropings toward philosophical justification of bereavement, the tentative little darts of conviction that may precede a settled belief in a beneficent world. It is intensely personal, but one must also believe Tennyson in his reiterated assertions that it was a poem, not the record of his own grief about Hallam; in short, that his own feelings had prompted the poem but were not necessarily accurately recorded in it.

To the most perceptive of the Victorians (and to modern readers) the poem was moving for its dramatic recreation of a mind indisposed to deal with the problems of contemporary life, and for the sheer beauty of so many of its sections. To a more naive,

and far larger, group of readers it was a work of real utility, to be read like the Bible as a manual of consolation, and it is surely to that group that the poem owed its almost unbelievable popularity. Edition followed edition, and each brought Tennyson more fame and greater fortune.

Wordsworth, who had been poet laureate for seven years, had died in the spring of 1850. By the time Tennyson returned from his honeymoon, it must have seemed to many a foregone conclusion that he would be nominated as Wordsworth's successor. Tennyson knew that the prince consort, who advised the queen on such matters, was an admirer of his, and the night before receiving the letter offering the post, he dreamed that the prince kissed him on the cheek, and that he responded, "Very kind but very German." Early the following year he was presented to the queen as her poet laureate and kissed her hand, wearing the borrowed and tootight court clothes that Wordsworth had worn for the same purpose on the occasion of his own presentation. The straining court suit was emblematic of the passing of the office from the greatest of Romantic poets to the greatest of the Victorians.

At the end of November 1853 Alfred and Emily Tennyson moved into the secluded big house on the Isle of Wight known as Farringford, which has ever since been associated with his name. Emily loved the remoteness and the fact that their clocks were not even synchronized with those elsewhere, but her husband sometimes had a recurrence of his old longing to be rattling around London. Most of the time, however, he was content to walk on the great chalk cliffs overlooking the sea, composing his poems as he tramped, their rhythm often deriving from his heavy tread.

It was perhaps his very isolation that made him so interested in the Crimean War, for he read the newspapers voraciously in order to keep current with world affairs. *"The Charge of the Light Brigade*" was one result in 1854 of his fascination with the heroism of that unpopular war. *Maud*, in which the hero redeems his misspent life by volunteering for service in the Crimea, was published the following year. In spite of that somewhat conventional- sounding conclusion, the poem is Tennyson's most experimental, for it tells a thoroughly dramatic narrative in self-contained lyrics; the reader must fill in the interstices of the story by inference. The lyrics are not even like one another in scansion, length, or style. The narrator of the poem is an unnamed young man whose father has committed suicide after being swindled by his partner. The son then falls in love with Maud, the daughter of the peccant partner; but since he is poor and she is rich, there is no possibility of their marrying. When he is bullied by her brother, he kills him in a duel. After Maud also dies the narrator goes temporarily insane; he finally realizes that he has been as selfish and evil as the society on which he has blamed his bad fortune. In an attempt to make up for his wasted life, he goes to the Crimea, with his subsequent death hinted at in the last section of the poem.

As always, Tennyson is not at his best in narrative, but the melodramatic content of the plot finally matters little in comparison with the startling originality of his attempt to extend the limits of lyricism in order to make it do the work of narrative and drama, to capitalize on his own apparently circumscribed gift in order to include social criticism, contemporary history, and moral comment in the lyric. In part it must have been a

deliberate answer to those who complained that his art was too selfabsorbed and negligent of the world around him.

The experimental quality of *Maud* has made it one of the most interesting of his poems to modern critics, but to Tennyson's contemporaries it seemed so unlike what they expected from the author of *In Memoriam* that they could neither understand nor love it. An age that was not accustomed to distinguishing between narrator and poet found it almost impossible not to believe that Tennyson was directly portraying his own thoughts and personal history in those of the central figure. The result was the worst critical abuse that Tennyson received after that directed at the 1832 *Poems*. One reviewer went so far as to say that *Maud* had one extra vowel in the title, and that it made no difference which was to be deleted. Tennyson's predictable response was to become defensive about the poem and to read it aloud at every opportunity in order to show how badly misunderstood both poem and poet were. Since it was a performance that took between two and three hours, the capitulation to its beauty that he often won thereby was probably due as much to weariness on the part of the hearer as to intellectual or aesthetic persuasion.

Ever since the publication of the 1842 *Poems* Tennyson had been something of a lion in literary circles, but after he became poet laureate he was equally in demand with society hostesses, who were more interested in his fame than in his poetic genius. For the rest of his life Tennyson was to be caught awkwardly between being unable to resist the flattery implied by their attentions and the knowledge that their admiration of him usually sprang from the wrong reasons. It was difficult for him to refuse invitations, but he felt subconsciously impelled when he accepted them to behave gruffly, even rudely, in order to demonstrate his independence. His wife's bad health usually made it impossible for her to accompany him, which probably increased his awkwardness. It all brought out the least attractive side of a fundamentally shy man, whose paroxysms of inability to deal with social situations made him seem selfish, bad-mannered, and assertive. In order to smooth his ruffled feathers, his hostesses and his friends would resort to heavy flattery, which only made him appear more arrogant. One of the saddest aspects of Tennyson's life is that his growing fame was almost in inverse ratio to his ability to maintain intimacy with others, so that by the end of his life he was a basically lonely man. All the innate charm, humor, intelligence, and liveliness were still there, but it took great understanding and patience on the part of his friends to bring them into the open.

Idylls of the King was published in 1859; it contained only four ("Enid," *"Vivien," "Elaine,"* and *"Guinevere"*) of the eventual twelve idylls. The matter of Arthur and Camelot had obsessed Tennyson since boyhood, and over the years it became a receptacle into which he poured his deepening feelings of the desecration of decency and of ancient English ideals by the gradual corruption of accepted morality. The decay of the Round Table came increasingly to seem to him an apt symbol of the decay of nineteenth- century England. It was no accident that the first full-length idyll had been "Morte d'Arthur," which ultimately became□with small additions□ the final idyll in the completed cycle. It had been written at the time of the death of Arthur Hallam, who seemed to Tennyson "Ideal manhood closed in real man," as he wrote of King Arthur; no

doubt both Hallam's character and Tennyson's grief at his death lent color to the entire poem.

Like *The Princess,*, *In Memoriam,* and *Maud*, the idylls were an assembly of poetry composed over a long time□in this case nearly half a century in all, for they were not finished until 1874 and were not all published until 1885. Taken collectively, they certainly constitute Tennyson's most ambitious poem, but not all critics would agree that the poem's success is equal to its intentions.

For a modern reader, long accustomed to the Arthurian legend by plays, musicals, films, and popular books, it is hard to realize that the story was relatively unfamiliar when Tennyson wrote. He worked hard at his preparation, reading most of the available sources, going to Wales and the west country of England to see the actual places connected with Arthur, and even learning sufficient Welsh to read some of the original documents. "There is no grander subject in the world," he wrote, and he meant his state of readiness to be equal to the loftiness of his themes, which explains in part why it took him so long to write the entire poem.

Although Tennyson always thought of the idylls as allegorical (his word was "parabolic"), he refused to make literal identifications between incidents, characters, or situations in the poems and what they stood for, except to indicate generally that by King Arthur he meant the soul and that the disintegration of the court and the Round Table showed the disruptive effect of the passions.

In all the time that he worked on the idylls Tennyson constantly refined their structure□by framing the main action between the coming of Arthur and his death, by repetition of verbal motifs, by making the incidents of the plot follow the course of the year from spring to winter, by making different idylls act as parallels or contrasts to each other, by trying to integrate the whole poem as closely as an extended musical composition. Considering how long he worked on the poem, the result is amazingly successful, although perhaps more so when the poem is represented schematically than in the actual experience of reading it.

As always, the imagery of the poem is superb. It is less successful in characterization and speech, which are often stilted and finally seem more Victorian than Arthurian. Even Arthur, who is meant to be the firm, heroic center of the poem, occasionally seems merely weak at the loss of his wife and the decay of the court rather than nobly forgiving. Individual idylls such as *"The Last Tournament"* and *"Gareth and Lynette"* have considerable narrative force, but there is an almost fatal lack of forward movement in the poem as a whole.

The reviewers were divided between those who thought it a worthy companion of Malory and those who found it more playacting than drama, with the costumes failing to disguise Tennyson's contemporaries and their concerns. The division between critics still maintains that split of opinion, although it is probably taken more seriously in the 1980s than it was earlier in the twentieth century. Whether that attitude will last is impossible to predict.

In spite of the adverse reviews and the reservations of many of Tennyson's fellow poets, the sales of *Idylls of the King* in 1859 were enough to gladden the heart of any poet: 40,000 copies were printed initially and within a week or two more than a quarter of these were already sold; it was a pattern that was repeated with each succeeding volume as they appeared during the following decades.

The death of his admirer Prince Albert in 1861 prompted Tennyson to write a dedication to the *Idylls of the King* in his memory. The prince had taken an interest in Tennyson's poetry ever since 1847, when it is believed that he called on Tennyson when the poet was ill. He had written to ask for Tennyson's autograph in his own copy of *Idylls of the King*, and he had come over unannounced from Osborne, the royal residence on the Isle of Wight, to call on Tennyson at Farringford. In spite of the brevity of their acquaintance and its formality, Tennyson had been much moved by the prince's kindness and friendliness, and he had greatly admired the way Albert behaved in the difficult role of consort.

Four months after Albert's death the queen invited Tennyson to Osborne for an informal visit. Tennyson went with considerable trepidation, fearful that he might in some way transgress court etiquette, but his obvious shyness helped to make the visit a great success. It became the first of many occasions on which he visited the queen, and a genuine affection grew up on both sides. The queen treated Tennyson with what was great informality by her reserved standards, so that the relationship between monarch and laureate was probably more intimate that it has ever been before or since. She had an untutored and naive love of poetry, and he felt deep veneration for the throne; above all, each was a simple and unassuming person beneath a carapace of apparent arrogance, and each recognized the true simplicity of the other. It was almost certainly the queen's feeling for Tennyson that lay behind the unprecedented offer of a baronetcy four times beginning in 1865; Tennyson each time turned it down for himself while asking that if possible it be given to Hallam, his elder son, after his own death.

His extraordinary popularity was obvious in other ways as well. He was given honorary doctorates by Oxford and Edinburgh universities; Cambridge three times invited him to accept an honorary degree, but he modestly declined. The greatest men in the country competed for the honor of meeting and entertaining him. Thomas Carlyle and his wife had been good friends of Tennyson's since the 1840s, and Tennyson felt free to drop in on them unannounced, at last even having his own pipe kept for him in a convenient niche in the garden wall. He had met Robert Browning at about the same time as he had met Carlyle, and though the two greatest of Victorian poets always felt a certain reserve about each other's works, their mutual generosity in acknowledging genius was exemplary; Browning, like most of the friends Tennyson made in his maturity, was never an intimate, but their respect for each other never faltered. Tennyson was somewhat lukewarm in his response to the overtures of friendship made by Charles Dickens, even after he had stood as godfather for one of Dickens's sons. It is tempting to think that some of his reserve stemmed from an uneasy recognition of the similarity of their features that occasionally led to their being confused, particularly in photographs or portraits, which can hardly have been welcome to Tennyson's self-esteem.

Tennyson maintained a reluctant closeness with William Gladstone for nearly sixty years. It was generally accepted in London society that if a dinner was given for one of them, the other ought to be invited. Yet the truth was that they were never on an easy footing, and though they worked hard at being polite to each other, their edginess occasionally flared into unpleasantness before others. It is probable that some of their difficulties came from their friendship with Arthur Hallam when they were young men; Gladstone had been Hallam's best friend at Eton and felt left out after Hallam met Tennyson. To the end of their days the prime minister and the poet laureate were mildly jealous of their respective places in Hallam's affections so many years before. The feeling certainly colored Gladstone's reactions to Tennyson's poetry (which he occasionally reviewed), and nothing he could do ever made Tennyson trust Gladstone as a politician. The relationship hardly reflects well on either man.

Almost as if he felt that his position as laureate and the most popular serious poet in the English- speaking world were not enough, Tennyson deliberately tried to widen his appeal by speaking more directly to the common people of the country about the primary emotions and affections that he felt he shared with them. The most immediate result of his wish to be "the people's poet" was the 1864 volume whose title poem was *"Enoch Arden"* and which also contained another long narrative poem, *"Aylmer's Field."* These are full of the kinds of magnificent language and imagery that no other Victorian poet could have hoped to produce, but the sentiments occasionally seem easy and secondhand. The volume also contained a number of much more experimental translations and metrical innovations, as well as such wonderful lyrics as *"In the Valley of Cauteretz,"* which was written thirtyone years after he and Hallam had wandered through that beautiful countryside, and *"Tithonus."* There was no question that Tennyson was still a very great poet, but his ambition to be more than a lyricist often blinded him to his own limitations. His hope of becoming "the people's poet" was triumphantly realized; the volume had the largest sales of any during his lifetime. More than 40,000 copies were sold immediately after publication, and in the first year he made more than £8,000 from it, a sum equal to the income of many of the richest men in England.

Popularity of the kind he had earned had its innate disadvantages, and Tennyson was beginning to discover them as he was followed in the streets of London by admirers; at Farringford he complained of the total lack of privacy when the park walls were lined with craning tourists who sometimes even came up to the house and peered into the windows to watch the family at their meals. In 1867 he built a second house, Aldworth, on the southern slopes of Blackdown, a high hill near Haslemere, where the house was not visible except from miles away. Curiously, the house resembles a smaller version of Bayons Manor, the much-hated sham castle his uncle Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt had built in the Lincolnshire woods. To his contemporaries it appeared unnecessarily grand for a second house, even slightly pretentious; today it seems emblematic of the seriousness with which Tennyson had come to regard his own public position in Victorian England, which was not his most attractive aspect. For the rest of his life he was to divide his time between Farringford and Aldworth, just as he divided his work between the essentially private, intimate lyricism at which he had always excelled and the poetry in which he felt obliged to speak to his countrymen on more public matters.

In the years between 1874 and 1882 Tennyson made yet another attempt to widen his poetic horizons. As the premier poet of England, he had been compared□probably inevitably□to Shakespeare, and he determined to write for the stage as his great predecessor had done. At the age of sixty-five he wrote his first play as a kind of continuation of Shakespeare's historical dramas. *Queen Mary* (1875) was produced in 1876 by Henry Irving, the foremost actor on the English stage; Irving himself played the main male role. It had been necessary to hack the play to a fraction of its original inordinate length in order to play it in one evening, and the result was hardly more dramatic than the original long version had been. In spite of the initial curiosity about Tennyson's first play, the audiences soon dwindled, and it was withdrawn after twentythree performances; that was, however, a more respectable run than it would be today.

His next play, *Harold* (1876), about the early English king of that name, failed to find a producer during Tennyson's lifetime, although he had conscientiously worked at making it less sprawling than its predecessor. *Becket* (1884), finished in 1879, was a study of the martyred archbishop of Canterbury; Tennyson found the subject so fascinating that he once more wrote at length, in this case making a play considerably longer than an uncut *Hamlet.* Becket was, not surprisingly, not produced until 1893, the year after Tennyson's death. Following *Becket* in quick succession came *The Falcon* and *The Cup* (published together in 1884), *The Foresters* (1892), and *The Promise of May* (published in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years after, Etc.* in 1886), all of which abandoned the attempt to follow Shakespeare. On the stage only *The Cup* had any success, and that was in part due to the lavish settings and the acting of Irving and Ellen Terry. After the failure of *The Promise of May* (a rustic melodrama and the only prose work in his long career), Tennyson at last accepted the fact that nearly a decade of his life had been wasted in an experiment that had totally gone amiss. Today no one would read even the best of the plays, *Queen Mary* and *Becket*, if they were not the work of Tennyson. They betray the fact that he was not profound at understanding the characters of other persons or in writing speech that had the sound of conversation. Even the flashes of metaphor fail to redeem this reckless, admirable, but totally failed attempt to fit Tennyson's genius to another medium.

The climax of public recognition of Tennyson's achievement came in 1883 when Gladstone offered him a peerage. After a few days of consideration Tennyson accepted. Surprisingly, his first thought was to change his name to Baron Tennyson d'Eyncourt in an echo of his uncle's ambition,but he was discouraged by the College of Arms and finally settled on Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater. Since he was nearly seventy-five when he assumed the title, he took little part in the activities of the House of Lords, but the appropriateness of his being ennobled was generally acknowledged. It was the first time in history that a man had been given a title for his services to poetry. Tennyson claimed that he took the peerage on behalf of all literature, not as personal recognition.

The rest of his life was spent in the glow of love that the public occasionally gives to a distinguished man who has reached a great age. He continued to write poetry nearly as assiduously as he had when young, and though some of it lacked the freshness of

youth, there were occasional masterpieces that mocked the passing years. He had always felt what he once described as the "passion of the past," a longing for the days that had gone, either the great ages of earlier history or the more immediate past of his own life, and his poetic genius always had something nostalgic, even elegiac, at its heart. Many of the finest poems of his old age were written in memory of his friends as they died off, leaving him increasingly alone.

Of all the blows of mortality, the cruelest was the death from "jungle fever" of his younger son, Lionel, who had fallen ill in India and was returning by ship to England. Lionel died in the Red Sea, and his body was put into the waves "Beneath a hard Arabian moon / And alien stars." It took Tennyson two years to recover his equanimity sufficiently to write the poem from which those lines are taken: the magnificent elegy dedicated *"To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava,"* who had been Lionel's host in India. Hauntingly, the poem is written in the same meter as *In Memoriam*, that masterpiece of his youth celebrating the death of another beloved young man, Arthur Hallam. There were also fine elegies to his brother Charles, to FitzGerald, and to several others, indicating the love he had felt for old friends even when he was frequently unable to express it adequately in person.

Lionel's death was the climax of Tennyson's sense of loss, and from that time until his own death he became increasingly troubled in his search for the proofs of immortality, even experimenting with spiritualism. His poetry of this period is saturated with the desperation of the search, sometimes in questioning, sometimes in dogmatic assertion that scarcely hides the fear underlying it. Yet there were moments of serenity, reflected in such beautiful poems as *"Demeter and Persephone,"* in which he uses the classical legend as a herald of the truth of Christianity. And there was, of course, *"Crossing the Bar,"* written in a few minutes as he sailed across the narrow band of water separating the Isle of Wight from the mainland. At his request, this grave little prayer of simple faith has ever since been placed at the end of editions of his poetry.

Tennyson continued to compose poetry during the last two years of his life; when he was too weak to write it down, his son or his wife would copy it for him. When he had a good day, he was still able to take long walks or even to venture to London. The year before his death he wrote a simple and delicate little poem, *"June Heather and Bracken,"* as an offering of love to his faithful wife; to her he dedicated his last volume of poetry, which was not published until a fortnight after his death. His friends noticed that he was gentler than he had been for years, and he made quiet reparation to some of those whom he had offended by thoughtless brusquerie.

On 6 October 1892, an hour or so after midnight, he died at Aldworth with the moon streaming in at the window overlooking the Sussex Weald, his finger holding open a volume of Shakespeare, his family surrounding the bed. A week later he was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, near the graves of Browning and Chaucer. To most of England it seemed as if an era in poetry had passed, a divide as great as that a decade later when Queen Victoria died.

One of the most levelheaded summations of what he had meant to his contemporaries was made by Edmund Gosse on the occasion of Tennyson's eightieth birthday:

> He is wise and full of intelligence; but in mere intellectual capacity or attainment it is probable that there are many who excel him. This, then, is not the direction in which his greatness asserts itself. He has not headed a single moral reform nor inaugurated a single revolution of opinion; he has never pointed the way to undiscovered regions of thought; he has never stood on tip-toe to describe new worlds that his fellows were not tall enough to discover ahead. In all these directions he has been prompt to follow, quick to apprehend, but never himself a pioneer. Where then has his greatness lain? It has lain in the various perfections of his writing. He has written, on the whole, with more constant, unwearied, and unwearying excellence than any of his contemporaries. . . . He has expended the treasures of his native talent on broadening and deepening his own hold upon the English language, until that has become an instrument upon which he is able to play a greater variety of melodies to perfection than any other man.

But this is a kind of perfection that is hard to accept for anyone who is uneasy with poetry and feels that it ought to be the servant of something more utilitarian. Like most things Victorian, Tennyson's reputation suffered an eclipse in the early years of this century. In his case the decline was more severe than that of other Victorians because he had seemed so much the symbol of his age, so that for a time his name was nearly a joke. After two world wars had called into question most of the social values to which he had given only the most reluctant of support, readers were once more able to appreciate that he stood apart from his contemporaries. Now one can again admire without reservation one of the greatest lyric gifts in English literature, although it is unlikely that he will ever again seem quite the equal of Shakespeare.

When the best of his poetry is separated out from the second-rate work of the kind that any writer produces, Tennyson can be seen plainly as one of the half-dozen great poets in the English language, at least the equal of Wordsworth or Keats and probably far above any other Victorian. And that is precisely what his contemporaries thought.

Source: William E. Fredeman, "Alfred Tennyson," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 32, *Victorian Poets before 1850*, edited by Ira B. Nadel, Gale Research, 1984, pp. 262-82.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Zuckermann depicts In Memoriam *as a series of love poems influenced by Shakespeare's sonnets.*

Most of the few modern explanations of *In Memoriam* have, like E. B. Mattes' *In Memoriam: The Way of a Soul* and Graham Hough's "Natural Theology in *In Memoriam"*, concerned themselves principally with the source and precise meaning of the poem's intellectual speculations. While inevitably admitting Tennyson's ultimate subjectivism, critics have concerned themselves little with the nature of the subjective experiences underlying the poem or the literary conventions governing their presentation.

In Memoriam is indeed in one sense a philosophical poem: it must have been amongst the works which prompted Jowett to say to Tennyson, just before the latter's death: "Your poetry has an element of philosophy more to be considered than any regular philosophy in England." But its philosophy is based not on the premise *Cogito, ergo sum,* but on the premise *Amo, ergo sumus,* and its relationship to a tradition of speculative or philosophical love poetry is clear. It is, in fact, one of the greatest series of love poems in the English language, and it seems to me that it can be most fruitfully approached by considering it as such, and by examining the literary conventions, the diction and the imagery through which the experiences of love and loss are presented and directed in the poem. This article is intended as the beginning of such an approach.

In Memoriam is both a traditional love poem and an evidently Victorian love poem. Interwoven with the depiction of the love of Tennyson and Hallam, which is sometimes presented in terms of an older and more obviously timeless tradition, are dozens of references to and vignettes of domestic love□of marriage, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, of the widowed, and of the simple, rural love-tragedies which play such an important part in Victorian literature and popular writing. My aim in this article is to explore the way in which these conventions are blended, and to show how Tennyson builds up his philosophy not on the external intellectual supports which provide its flourishes and decorations and sometimes its tools, but on the simple, self-validating experience of human love. I wish, that is, to examine the poem on the kind of basis which Tennyson himself suggests in lyric XLIX, in which he indicates that it utilizes 'random influences,' 'From art, from nature and the schools,' but makes it clear that these are only the masks and tools of a personal emotional experience.

The poem in its final form is, of course, both personal and universal in its interest, and Tennyson said firmly that it was to be viewed as "a poem, *not* an actual biography," and that the "I" of the poem was sometimes to be regarded not as the poet, but as "the voice of the human race speaking through him." He conceived of it as a "kind of *Divina Comedia,* leading from despair to happiness." This latter description clearly refers not only to the structural outline of the poem and the fact that it is a carefully shaped whole rather than a mere diary of experience, but also to the role of a dead human beloved in

leading the poet to a perception of universal truth and love; as Beatrice is to Dante, so Hallam is to Tennyson.

A sense of what one might almost call the poem's archaism, of its contact with older traditions of love poetry, was early noted by Sara Coleridge. In contrasting the essential modernism of *The Prelude* (which she recognised even in the 1850 version, published in the same year as *In Memoriam*) with the less fundamentally original quality of *In Memoriam,* she commented on the "Petrarchanism" of the latter work. This is indeed one of many examples of a Victorian poet's reaching back to older traditions of love poetry. The Rossettis, of course, were under a special family influence: but one thinks too of the influence of Donne upon Browning, the greatest of the Victorian love-poets, and the allusions to Dante in "One Word More"; or one recalls Coventry Patmore, writing the best lyrics of *The Angel in the House* under the influence of the Metaphysicals. But the love poem which most pervasively influenced *In Memoriam,* which we knew that Tennyson read with special attention during the period of its composition, and which may even have helped to suggest its form, are undoubtedly Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

Both the *Sonnets* and *In Memoriam* are series of lyric poems in a continuously used metrical form, in which a story is discerned through the lyric utterances rather than related in narrative form. In creating such a series, Tennyson has, as it were, accidentally stumbled upon an ideal solution to the problem of devising an appropriate form for a long poem, in an age which, if anything, rather overvalued the spontaneity of the brief lyric outburst. It has been frequently recognized that this was one of the problems confronting Victorian poets, and that the characteristic solution was to build up a longer poem out of shorter units. One sees this type of poetic form in such poems as *Maud, The Idylls of the King* and *The Ring and the Book,* and it is in some sense perpetuated in Yeats's rather Wordsworthian insistence that his total poetic output should be placed in a certain order and regarded as a single major work. Tennyson, however, has achieved perhaps the most perfect compromise between lyric spontaneity and major constructive art in *In Memoriam,* by taking a large group of highly personal poems, commenced without any view to publication, and arranging them in a series which must be read as a carefully structured whole. One of the few models which could really have helped to suggest such a solution is that of the sonnet sequence.

The resemblances between *In Memoriam* and Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are evident□the many meditative poems, the occasional poems referring to or commemorating an external event or an anniversary, the groups of lyrics on related themes which form smaller units within the larger work□ but of course Tennyson has gone much further towards ordering his series than Shakespeare. His obvious model for the poem's larger structure is the major elegy, as represented by *Lycidas* (to which there are many resemblances and allusions) and *Adonais* (which Hallam has been the first to bring back to England in printed form). The models afforded by the sonnet sequence and the elegy fuse easily, since Shakespeare's sequence is so pervaded by the sense of time, transience and loss as to be almost anticipatorily elegiac. Sonnets like "Not marble nor the gilded monuments," "Since brass nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea," and "To me fair friend you never can be old" seem almost predestined models for elegiac poetry.

One wonders too, in an idle and tentative way, if Shakespeare's reference to a three years' friendship in the lastmentioned sonnet might have suggested Tennyson's time-scheme of a three years' mourning, which does not, of course, correspond to the actual span of time covered by the poem. At all events, the completed *In Memoriam* combines much of the generalising bent of the classical, public elegy, which was usually written for a person not well known to the poet, with a much greater degree of the poignantly personal quality of the *Sonnets*.

Not that Shakespeare's *Sonnets* lack generalisation and universal validity: few works seem to speak so personally for every reader, or so convincingly of general truth. But their universality springs, paradoxically, from their very intimacy. By addressing them directly to the Friend and the Dark Lady, like letters, Shakespeare has reduced to a minimum the need for description and narrative, aimed at the unknowing and potentially unsympathetic world, which would particularise and restrict them: of the beauty which he promises so often to immortalise, he actually describes not so much as the colour of eyes and hair. What we hear is the voice of the basic emotion itself, expressing itself through universally recognised patterns of imagery. In the same way Tennyson, whilst giving poignancy by the occasional reference to hand or eye, offers no description of Hallam, and withholds even the most generalised account of his character and activities until late in the sequence. His lyrics are addressed to various friends, to God, to himself, to a number of personifications, and in some of the most crucial instances, to Hallam himself. Both sequences, Shakespeare's and Tennyson's are "overheard" poetry, and derive many of their most distinctive features from this fact.

The resemblance of *In Memoriam* to the *Sonnets* is particularly apparent in lyrics LX-LXV, and an examination of this group throws much light on the way in which the techniques of love poetry are made to serve Tennyson's special ends. In LX Tennyson compares himself, deserted by the dead Hallam, to:

. . . some poor girl whose heart is set
On one whose rank exceeds her own.

The beloved moves on to his proper sphere, and she is left to find "the baseness of her lot," and "envying all who meet him there." In LXII Hallam is again likened to one who has outgrown a childhood sweetheart, although this time a girl below him in moral stature rather than mere social position. In LXIII Hallam's possible pitying memories of Tennyson are compared to the poet's love for his dog or horse, whilst in LXIV Hallam is seen as a great public figure, whose boyhood friend, left behind in their simple home, still wistfully broods on him and wonders if he remembers their relationship. The spirit throughout the group is one of the utmost humility and self-abnegation. The highborn lover, the public man, and the poet bestowing a little spare affection on his dog or horse, are all images of a higher being, moving in his "proper sphere" and wholly right in his attitude to those so far below him. The deserted girl in LX cries "How should he love a thing so low?" and Tennyson begins LXII by a direct renunciatory address to Hallam:

Though if an eye that's downward cast
Could make thee somewhat blench or fail,

Then be my love an idle tale
And fading legend of the past.

Yet throughout the section one feels, as one always does feel with this type of love poetry, that a tendency to blame the beloved or to demand more assertively some return of affection, has been overcome by strength of love, exercise of will, and magnanimity.

None of this is literally appropriate to Tennyson's situation. Hallam has not "deserted" him, however justifiably and properly: he has been snatched away by death. Unlike the highborn lover and the public man, he had no opportunity to make the false but romantically generous choice and count the world well lost for love. But an exclamation at the end of lyric LXI makes us recognise, early in the group, the provenance and nature of these emotions, and recall the situation in which they were literally appropriate:

I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.

It is almost as though Tennyson wishes at this point to render absolutely overt a resemblance which is present throughout the section in tone, emotional quality and increased archaism of diction, but is not elsewhere thrust upon our attention by close verbal parallels or direct allusions. Thus alerted, we remark the similarity of the deserted girl of LX, all humility, yet still "Half jealous of she knows not what / And envying all who meet him there," to the Shakespeare of Sonnets 57 and 58, who dare not chide the beloved for his voluntary absences, but must "Like a sad slave stay, and think of naught / Save where you are how happy you make those." Similarly Tennyson in LXII, exonerating the beloved from even thinking about him if it would be a source of pain or trouble, echoes, although with an exact reversal of roles, the Shakespeare of 72:

No longer think of me when I am dead

for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.

Lyric LXV deserves quoting in full, both as the climax of this section, and for the key it provides to Tennyson's method and achievement throughout *In Memoriam.* Here again the archaism of diction is unusually marked, and one notes the characteristically Shakespearean initial epithet, 'sweet,' and the Shakespearean sound-patterns of a line like the second in the last stanza:

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;
I lull a fancy trouble-tost
With 'Love's too precious to be lost,
A little grain shall not be spilt.'

And in that solace can I sing,
Till out of painful phrases wrought
There flutters up a happy thought,
Self-balance on a lightsome wing;

Since we deserved the name of friends,
And thine effect so lives in me,
A part of mine may live in thee
And move thee on to nobler ends.

By treating love cut off by death in terms and images appropriate to love slighted or rejected, Tennyson has eventually come, in this lyric, to a sense of a continuing and mutual relationship, in which both he and Hallam can still give and receive. What reassures him, here and throughout the poem, is his sense that Hallam has survived in such a way that he can still make human claims upon him and humanly generous concessions to him. And this sense is expressed through, makes its impression upon the reader by means of, and is to some extent actually generated in Tennyson by, the diction and techniques of love poetry. Hallam is constantly addressed throughout the poem as though he were the living recipient of conventional love poetry, and this perhaps does more than anything else to establish the conviction of his survival. He is both addressed and spoken of in the third person in the language of such love poetry: "My Arthur," "Dearest," "My Love," "The man I held as half divine," "A little while from his embrace," "Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine,"□such epithets and phrases ring throughout the poem. Even the more neutral "friend" in such lines as "Since we deserved the name of friends," and "Unto me no second friend," takes on the power of love-language once the Shakespearean context is established. In the lyric just quoted in full, the nature of Tennyson's conviction is made particularly clear. It is self-validating and self-sustaining□"Self-balanced on a lightsome wing"; and it is not merely recorded in poetry, it is generated in part by the act of writing poetry; the poet creates it by singing, and it is wrought out of "phrases."

The group of lyrics we have been examining follows closely upon one of the poem's most serious and best-known outbreaks of doubt and questioning. In lyric LV the prodigal bounty of Nature has led Tennyson to reflect that "So careful of the type she seems, so careless of the single life," whilst in LVI geological evidence has pressed upon him the thought that not only is the individual doomed to die fruitlessly, but the race itself is heading for extinction. No speculative reply is attempted, no external counter-evidences are adduced: after a brief interlude, Tennyson produces, by way of answer to his doubts, the group of Shakespearean love-lyrics. Not that he wishes to suggest too great a certainty: he deliberately belittles his own achievement by the use of such words as "sing," "flutters," "fancy," "lightsome," in the concluding lyric of the section. But ultimately, of course, he did believe that the testimony of the imagination and the emotions was more valid than that of the reason, and in those lyrics in which he distinguishes between knowledge and wisdom, or shows us the heart leaping up "like a man in wrath" to answer the claims of the "freezing reason," he makes explicit his views. If *In Memoriam* were to be given a Shakespearean epigraph, it would come after all not from the *Sonnets* but from "The Phoenix and the Turtle": "Love hath reason, reason

none." In later life his only anxiety about *In Memoriam* was that it suggested too much *speculative* certainty: he would almost have liked to add another section, which, by reopening the poem's intellectual doubt, would "throw man back to the more primitive impulses and feelings."

T. S. Eliot felt that Tennyson had gone further than he thus acknowledged, not merely suggesting too much purely speculative certainty, but essentially falsifying the record of his feelings. He called it a poem of religious despair, and commented that "Its faith is a poor thing." But the real key to Eliot's dislike of Tennyson's faith comes, I believe, earlier in his essay, and involves less a judgment of the strength or reality of that faith, or the effectiveness of its artistic expression, than a criticism of its nature and foundations. He writes: "Yet the renewal craved for seems at best but a continuance, or a substitute for the joys of friendship upon earth. His 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." This is a fair and perceptive comment on the poem, but not necessarily, as Eliot clearly intends it to be, a serious indictment of it. We are being offered not a literary assessment of the poem's value, but the statement of a conflict of opinion between an ascetic poet of renunciation, and a very different poet, who approaches a variety of religious experience not by renouncing, but by clinging to human love. It is, indeed, difficult to see what is, in Eliot's terms, "religious" about the poem's despair: in its despair and faith alike, it is a poem of human love before it is anything else.

Certainly the tendency which Eliot disapproves of is not peculiar to Tennyson: it is characteristic of the Victorian era. Writers as diverse as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Coventry Patmore, Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Charles Kingsley and Charles Reade image the resumption in Heaven of human relationships severed by death, or treat romantic love as a guarantee of personal immortality. Even George Gissing bears negative testimony to the strength of the tradition, when he makes one of the characters in *New Grub Street* remark: "The days of romantic love are gone by. The scientific spirit has put an end to that kind of self-deception. Romantic love was inextricably blended with all sorts of superstitions□belief in personal immortality, in superior beings, in□in all the rest of it."

Walter Houghton, in *The Victorian Frame of Mind,* deals very briefly, at the end of his section on "Love," with the profound significance of idealized romantic love in Victorian literature. He points out that it could serve as a kind of substitute religion for some of the agnostics of the period, whilst men clinging to faith but troubled by doubts could use human love as a prop to their religion, treating it as a foretaste and guarantee of Heaven. But in such a general and wide-ranging survey of the period, Houghton is not able to investigate and develop the topic as fully as its importance merits. One might almost say that what the solitary, in his various guises of wanderer, seeker, outcast and hermit, was to the Romantic imagination, the pair, involved in a profound human relationship, was to the Victorian mind.

"Romantic love" implies an extreme idealization of human love, and an extreme insistence on fidelity and permanence, which is essentially "monogamous" even where the love is, as often in the medieval tradition, extra-marital. Thus defined it is not a

prominent theme in Romantic poetry. It seems a gross over simplification, but not a total distortion, to suggest that the Romantic quest for permanence was carried on mainly in relation to nature, and that as science cut the ground from under the nature worshipper's feet, attention was transferred to romantic fidelity in love. It may be too facile to compare Wordsworth in "A slumber did my spirit steal" consigning the beloved to the custody of "rocks and stones and trees," with Tennyson in *In Memoriam* perceiving that "The hills are shadows and they flow / From form to form and nothing stands," and clinging to the individual human personality: but it indicates something of what was taking place.

Houghton, in discussing the interaction of religious impulses and romantic love, does not mention *In Memoriam.* In a sense this is scarcely surprising, since love-poetry is generally thought of as dealing with a romantic and physical attachment between a man and a woman. One perhaps invites misapprehension by linking *In Memoriam* with Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and discussing it as love poetry. After all, Tennyson does use a sexual relationship as a metaphor for his own relationship with Hallam on many occasions. Occasionally he takes on the male identity, but he casts himself as the female, the wife or the deserted girl, often enough to explain the delicious absurdity of one of the earliest reviews which commented: "These touching lines evidently come from the full heart of the widow of a military man." 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.

Here, as in the matter of the poem's form, Tennyson seems to have had ready made for him a situation which other Victorian writers went out of their way to construct. He is celebrating a love relationship which both is and is not an ordinary romantic one. One might compare Browning's use of the relationship between Pompilia and Caponsacchi in *The Ring and the Book,* which borrows and transforms many motifs and conventions of romantic and chivalric poetry to present a special type of non-physical relationship. Or one might cite the minor example of *The Cloister and The Hearth,* in which a married man, believing his wife to be dead, takes the vows of a celibate priesthood, and must establish a special type of relationship with her when he rediscovers her. Both Browning and Reade show their lovers passing beyond death, looking to other than an earthly fruition of their love.

Most of the best love literature deals with unhappy or frustrated love, of course, because in such situations love becomes its own reward, and the writer is impelled to deal with the nature of the emotion and its profounder implications, rather than the mundane details of the relationship's consummation and continuation. But in relationships in which consummation and the daily trivia of shared existence are not merely denied but in some way out of the question, this effect is heightened. Browning and Reade deal with situations in which the straightforward living out of the relationship in commonplace domesticity is tabooed in a special way, and by taking priests as their heroes force us to place the romantic relationships in an explicitly religious context. But

Tennyson had experienced a relationship with a similar value for poetry, and such a one as no Victorian writer would ever have created as a fiction: and he had the Shakespearean precedent for presenting this relationship through the conventions of romantic love poetry. *In Memoriam* is what it is, an exploration of human love in a religious context and against a background of loss and deprivation, not only because Hallam died, but because of the intrinsic nature of the relationship between the two, and the literary conventions available for its presentation.

Yet Tennyson does use, in abundance, the realistic and mundane domestic imagery which his theme removes from the central position in the poem. Perhaps its most prevalent images are the domestic ones of various kinds. The poem thus looks in two directions: towards the romantic, the ideal and unknowable through its theme of sublime love and premature death, and towards the practical business of living, the duties and domesticities of daily life, through its dominant imagery and many of its incidents. This is the familiar Tennysonian dichotomy□Ulysses and Telemachus raising their critic-branded heads□but the two strains are unusually well fused in this poem, since the domestic imagery accommodates both an exceedingly romantic view of marital love and fidelity, and an exceedingly practical view of marital and domestic duty.

A really full exploration of the domestic imagery of *In Memoriam* is certainly needed, but I wish to conclude this article with a brief examination of two examples of this aspect of the poem, the section in which personal immortality is first mentioned, and a few of the lyrics which deal directly with marriage.

It is very noticeable that the first intimations of faith and hope in *In Memoriam* arise in a domestic context. In lyric XVIII, when Hallam's body is finally brought home and buried, the stress is entirely on a purely pagan sense of homecoming:

'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.

Tennyson was admittedly not present at Hallam's funeral, and so is unlikely to write about it in any detail, but the total absence of all religious reference, at a point where the lost beloved is being buried in a churchyard with Christian rites, is still striking. It is indeed necessary to the poem, which derives faith from love and loss, that the purely human experience of total grief should be established first.

The earliest explicitly religious references occur in the section dealing with the poem's first Christmas, beginning with lyric XXVIII. But the bells of this lyric, although they ring out the traditional message of "Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace," call the poet's attention less to these words than to the fact that they are the bells of "four hamlets round." Their associations are local and biographical, and they bring Tennyson a measure of stability not because of their religious message, but because "they controlled me when a boy." In the last line he refers to them as "The merry, merry bells of Yule," giving the festival its pagan name.

In the next lyric the only mention of the church is a passing reference to "the cold baptismal font," from which the poet shrinks away to make a wreath for the home. The next lyric begins with a domestic celebration of Christmas, its centre not the altar but the hearth. The family try in vain to pretend merriment, and eventually, sitting hand in hand in a circle, they are moved to tears by a song which they sang the year before with Hallam. Then "a gentler feeling" comes upon them, and they are able to see death as peace and rest. Finally, after silence and tears:

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang, 'They do not die
Nor lose their mortal sympathy.
Nor change to us, although they change.

Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gather'd power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil.'

And then, and then only is Tennyson ready to conclude the lyric with a prayerful and explicitly Christian welcome to Christmas morning. Two things are noticeable here. Firstly, the family, like Tennyson in lyric XVI, *sing* their way to faith and solace, and at the climax of their experience, Tennyson invents the words of their song. Through the fusion of the family's song with the poet's lyric utterance, the singing of a domestic Christmas becomes a metaphor for what the poet himself is experiencing □the attainment of faith not through speculative reasoning but through surrender to artistic and emotional impulse. Secondly, the poet has selected an occasion ideally suited to his purpose, a major religious festival which was becoming, in Victorian England, very much the festival of the secular home and family, and has worked toward its religious meaning through its domestic celebration, in explicit isolation from the Church.

In the next two lyrics, XXXI and XXXII, the particularly rationally incredible miracle of the raising of Lazarus is simply accepted without comment and used as a basis for reflection, the domestic context being maintained by a focussing of attention on the relationship between Lazarus and his sister. After the interestingly ambiguous XXXIII, Tennyson attains a note of personal affirmation in lyric XXXIV:

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Or earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is.

This confident note will not be consistently maintained: even here the affirmation has the passion of despair, and soon the new-found faith will be probed and tested. But from this point onwards the notion of Hallam's personal survival is never long absent from the poem, and soon belief in it will begin to be strengthened by poems directly addressed to him.

Throughout the poem religious experience arises from, or is carefully related to a domestic context: one of the most striking examples is lyric XCV, in which the poet's visionary experience is carefully prepared for by an account of the preceding family scene on the lawn, with such concrete realistic details as "the fluttering urn." Domestic imagery is also frequently used metaphorically, most interestingly in those lyrics in which Hallam and Tennyson are compared to a married couple, in which it would, I think, be possible to show a steady and consistent development in the use of the image. In lyric XCVII the "marriage" of Hallam and Tennyson persists, unbroken by death, at once binding the poet to the remote but ever near ideal, and enabling him to carry on contentedly in his own lower sphere:

Two partners of a married life□
I look'd on these and thought of thee
In vastness and in mystery,
And of my spirit as of a wife.

The husband of this marriage is no longer the young man of their early days: he is rapt in deep thought, and despite their continuing union seems to have moved away from his wife□"He seems so near and yet so far," whilst "the faithless people" even say that he no longer loves her. But she treasures the withered violet he gave her years ago, and maintains a blind but unshakeable faith in his love. This is, of course, a purely human faith in the emotional constancy of a human being, but it is described in terms which inevitably suggest religious faith. Indeed, when the wife is contrasted with "the faithless people," one almost sees her as the Church as the Bride of Christ. In the strength of her faith, she is able to carry on a life of simple grace and usefulness, which is still somehow linked to and animated by her husband's larger sphere:

For him she plays, to him she sings,
Of early faith and plighted vows;
She knows but matters of the house,
And he, he knows a thousand things.

Again a domestic song becomes a metaphor for Tennyson's activity as poet, and reminds us of the crucial role this plays in sustaining his faith.

This lyric is full of the same humility and restrained self-abnegation as the Shakespearean group which we examined earlier. Tennyson is not, after all, in ordinary human terms, as confined, meek and ignorant as the wife of the poem, whatever he may be in relation to a beautiful spirit, and his placing himself on her level shows the willed humility of romantic love. And the wife in the lyric partially wills her belief: she sings "of plighted vows" rather than of purely spontaneous emotions, and she resolutely refuses to listen to "faithless people."

Indeed, *In Memoriam* as a whole does not simply depict spontaneous and irresistible emotion triumphing over the "freezing reason"; it is also, to some extent, a triumph of the will. The spontaneous instinct, the love which can sometimes leap intuitively across the barrier of death, is there; but it is confirmed and strengthened into a creed by the

exercise of the will□at once the religious will to believe, the romantic will to remain faithful in love, and the artistic will to create. Certainly one can hardly help sensing, in reading the poem, that Tennyson believed in part because he wanted to believe, and it is this aspect of the poem which has disturbed most modern readers and critics, leading them to feel it valueless for them as a religious and philosophical document, and falsified as an emotional record.

But the view that faith is not merely a supernatural gift but a virtue, and loss of faith not merely a deprivation but a wilful sin, that faith depends in part on the will, is perfectly orthodox and traditional. This view became particularly important in the nineteenth century: we might recall the Pope's reflections in *The Ring and the Book,* or Bishop Blougram's willed choice between "a life of doubt diversified by faith" and "a life of faith diversified / by doubt." Or we may remember Coleridge arguing, in the *Biographia Literaria,* that religion, as the source of morality, must have a moral origin, and that "the evidence of its doctrines could not, like the truths of abstract science, be wholly independent of the will."

The same considerations apply to human "faith" or fidelity in love: one "falls in love," but the maintenance of the bond depends in part upon the will, and the "faithless one" has been traditionally regarded as reprehensible, as much under the code which governed "false Cressida" and "true Troilus" as under religiously and socially sanctioned attitudes toward marriage like those prevailing in Victorian England. The exercise of the will in *In Memoriam* seems to me fundamentally of this kind: not the self-blinding of a stupid, cowardly or philosophically anti-rational man trampling on his own legitimate doubts, but the will of a romantic or chivalric lover, often imaged as a married lover, spurning temptations to infidelity. For this reason it seems not a means of falsification, but an essential part of the poem, of the emotions involved, and of the tradition to which the poem belongs.

The elegy ends with an epithalamium for Cecilia Tennyson and Edmund Lushington. Earlier in the poem Tennyson has avoided mention of orthodox religion in his treatment of Hallam's funeral, has not entered the church for the celebration of a festival so mysterious as Christmas, and has found the baptismal font, the source of a purely supernatural life, "cold." But now, when human love and domesticity move into the church in triumphal procession, for the celebration of a natural sacrament, ratified but not conferred by the Church, Tennyson can join the crowd and take part in the ceremonies. Cecilia, "Her feet, my darling, on the dead" and her ear to "the most living word of life," forms an almost physical link between past and future, death and life, human sorrow and divine consolation. But the words of the marriage ceremony actually quoted are lacking in all reference to the supernatural:

The 'Wilt thou?' answer'd, and again
The 'Wilt thou?' asked, till out of twain
Her sweet 'I will' has made you one.

What has created the mysterious and indissoluble union, which the whole poem is now seen as leading up to, is not the supernatural activity of the Church, but the assent and

resolve of the human will, ratifying and rendering permanent the romantic passion which was an essential accompaniment to this act of the will, but which could not have stood alone. Insofar as Cecilia and Edmund are symbolic equivalents of Hallam and Tennyson, Cecilia evidently stands for Tennyson, since she is his blood relative, and since he has most often depicted himself as the wife: and it should be noticed that it is Cecilia's "I will," in one sense dependent and responsive, but in another final and conclusive, which actually rivets the unbreakable link. And by then the poem has become Tennyson's "I will."

The writing of it had been an exercise both of art and of autotherapy, and in hitting upon its form, an elegy composed of a series of love-lyrics, Tennyson took a major step towards the solution of both his artistic and his personal problems. The faith and solace which he found, he found in part through singing of them: he learned to feel Hallam's presence by addressing him; and by addressing him in both the language of traditional love-poetry and the imagery of Victorian domestic fiction, he was able to give the fullest possible expression to his feelings, and to take in the widest possible range of interest. One of the major principles of the poem's unity is its inter-weaving of different modes and images of human love.

A fuller examination of *In Memoriam* as love poetry is obviously necessary. More attention needs to be given to the development of particular strands of imagery, to the distribution of archaic diction, to the shifts between "I" as the poet and "I" as "the voice of the human race speaking through him," and to the shifts between poems nominally addressed to different listeners, in particular the distribution and immediate context of the poems addressed directly to Hallam. But I hope that I have succeeded in indicating some of the lines of enquiry for such an approach to the poem.

Source: Joanne P. Zuckermann, "Tennyson's *In Memoriam* as Love Poetry," in *Dalhousie Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2, Summer 1971, pp. 202-17.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay excerpt originally published in 1910, Bradley provides an explication of Tennyson's work, and explains its appeal to readers as the expression of a shared and common experience.

Critical Essay #5

It is a fashion at present to ascribe the great popularity of *In Memoriam* entirely to the 'teaching' contained in it, and to declare that its peculiar position among English elegies has nothing to do with its poetic qualities. This is equivalent to an assertion that, if the so-called substance of the poem had been presented in common prose, the work would have gained the same hold upon the mass of educated readers that is now possessed by the poem itself. Such an assertion no one would make or consciously imply. The ordinary reader does not indeed attempt to separate the poetic qualities of a work from some other quality that appeals to him; much less does he read the work in terror of being affected by the latter; but imagination and diction and even versification can influence him much as they influence the people who talk about them, and he would never have taken *In Memoriam* to his heart if its consoling or uplifting thoughts had not also touched his fancy and sung in his ears. It is true, however, that he dwells upon these thoughts, and that the poem is often valued by him for its bearing upon his own life; and true again that this is one reason why he cares for it far more than for elegies certainly not inferior to it as poems. And perhaps here also many devotees of poetry may resemble him more than they suppose.

This peculiar position of *In Memoriam* seems to be connected with two facts. In the first place, it alone among the most famous English elegies is a poem inspired by deep personal feelings. Arthur Hallam was a youth of extraordinary promise, but he was also 'dear as the mother to the son.' The elegy on his death, therefore, unlike those on Edward King or Keats or Clough, bears the marks of a passionate grief and affection; and the poet's victory over sorrow, like his faith in immortality, is felt to be won in a struggle which has shaken the centre of his being. And then, as has been observed already, the grief and the struggle are portrayed in all their stages and phases throughout months and years; and each is depicted, not as it may have appeared when the victory was won, but as it was experienced then and there. In other elegies for example, scarcely anything is to be found resembling the earlier sections, which describe with such vividness and truth the varied feelings of a new grief; scarcely anything, again, like the night-poems, or the poem of the second anniversary, or those of the third springtime. Stanzas like these come home to readers who never cared for a poem before, and were never conscious of feeling poetically till sorrow opened their souls. Thus much of *In Memoriam* is nearer to ordinary life than most elegies can be, and many such readers have found in it an expression of their own feelings, or have looked to the experience which it embodies as a guide to a possible conquest over their own loss. 'This,' they say to themselves as they read, 'is what I dumbly feel. This man, so much greater than I, has suffered like me and has told me how he won his way to peace. Like me, he has been forced by his own disaster to meditate on "the riddle of the painful earth," and to ask whether the world can really be governed by a law of love, and is not rather the work of blind forces, indifferent to the value of all that they produce and destroy.'

A brief review, first of the experience recorded in *In Memoriam,* and then of the leading ideas employed in it, may be of interest to such readers, and even to others, as it may

further the understanding of the poem from one point of view, although it has to break up for the time that unity of substance and form which is the essence of poetry.

The early sections portray a soul in the first anguish of loss. Its whole interest is fixed on one thing in the world; and, as this thing is taken away, the whole world is darkened. In the main, the description is one of a common experience, and the poem shows the issue of this experience in a particular case.

Such sorrow is often healed by forgetfulness. The soul, flinching from the pain of loss, or apprehensive of its danger, turns away, at first with difficulty, and afterwards with increasing ease, from the thought of the beloved dead. 'Time,' or the incessant stream of new impressions, helps it to forget. Its sorrow gradually perishes, and with its sorrow its love; and at last 'all it was is overworn,' and it stands whole and sound. It is not cynical to say that this is a frequent history, and that the ideas repelled in section XC are not seldom true.

Sometimes, again, the wound remains unhealed, although its pain is dulled. Here love neither dies nor changes its form; it remains a painful longing for something gone, nor would anything really satisfy it but the entire restoration of that which is gone. All the deeper life of the soul is absorbed in this love, which from its exclusively personal character is unable to coalesce with other interests and prevents their growth.

In neither of these extreme cases is there that victory of which the poet thinks even in the first shock of loss, when he remembers how it has been said

That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

In the first case there is victory of a kind, but it is a victory which in the poet's eyes is defeat; the soul may be said to conquer its sorrow, but it does so by losing its love; it is a slave in the triumph of Time. In the second case, the 'self' refuses to die and conquers time, but for that very reason it is bound to the past and unable to rise to higher things. The experience portrayed in *In Memoriam* corresponds with neither case, but it resembles each in one particular. Sorrow is healed, but it is not healed by the loss of love: for the beloved dead is the object of continual thought, and when regret has passed away love is found to be not less but greater than before. On the other hand regret does pass away, and love does not merely look forward to reunion with its object but unites freely with other interests. It is evident that the possibility of this victory depends upon the fact that, while love does not die, there is something in the soul which does die. The self 'rises' only on the basis of a 'dead self.' In other words, love changes though it does not perish or fade; and with the change in it there is a corresponding change in the idea of its object. The poem exhibits this process of two-fold change.

At the beginning love desires simply that which was, the presence and companionship of the lost friend; and this it desires unchanged and in its entirety. It longs for the sight of the face, the sound of the voice, the pressure of the hand. These doubtless are desired as tokens of the soul; but as yet they are tokens essential to love, and that for which it

pines is the soul as known and loved through them. If the mourner attempts to think of the dead apart from them, his heart remains cold, or he recoils: he finds that he is thinking of a phantom; 'an awful thought' instead of 'the human-hearted man he loved'; 'a spirit, not a breathing voice.' This he does not and cannot love. It is an object of awe, not of affection; the mere dead body is a thousand-fold dearer than this,□naturally, for this is not really a spirit, a thinking and loving soul, but a ghost. As then he is unable to think of the object of his love except as 'the hand, the lips, the eyes,' and 'the meeting of the morrow,' he feels that what he loves is simply gone and lost, and he finds his one relief in allowing fancy to play about the thought of the tokens that remain (see the poems to the ship).

The process of change consists largely in the conquest of the soul over its bondage to sense. So long as this bondage remains, its desire is fixed on that which really is dead, and it cannot advance. But gradually it resigns this longing, and turns more and more to that which is not dead. The first step in its advance is the perception that love itself is of infinite value and may survive the removal of the sensible presence of its object. But no sooner has this conviction been reached and embraced than suddenly the mourner is found to have transferred his interest from the sensible presence to the soul itself, while, on the other hand, the soul is no longer thought of as a mere awful phantom, but has become what the living friend had been, something both beloved and loving. This conquest is, indeed, achieved first in a moment of exaltation which cannot be maintained; but its result is never lost, and gradually strengthens. The feeling that the soul of the dead is something shadowy and awful departs for ever, and step by step the haunting desire for the bodily presence retires. Thought is concentrated on that which lives, the beauty of the beloved soul, seen in its remembered life on earth, and doubtless shown more fully elsewhere in a life that can be dimly imagined. At last the pining for what is gone dies completely away, but love is found to be but stronger for its death, and to be no longer a source of pain. It has grown to the dimensions of its object, and this object is not only distant and desired, but also present and possessed. And more□the past (which is not wholly past, since it lives and acts in the soul of the mourner) has lost its pang and retained its loveliness and power: 'the days that are no more' become a life in death instead of a 'death in life'; and even the light of the face, the sound of the voice, and the pressure of the hand, now that the absorbing desire for them is still, return in the quiet inward world.

Another aspect of this change is to be noticed. So long as the mourner's sorrow and desire are fixed on that which dies they withdraw his interest from all other things. His world seems to depend for its light on that which has passed away, and he cries, 'All is dark where thou art not.' But as his love and its object change and grow, this exclusiveness lessens and its shadow shrinks. His heart opens itself to other friendships; the sweetness of the spring returns; and the 'mighty hopes' for man's future which the friend had shared, live again as the dead friend ceases to be a silent voice and becomes a living soul. Nor do the reviving activities simply flourish side by side with love for this soul, and still less do they compete with it. Rather they are one with it. The dead man lives in the living, and 'moves him on to nobler ends.' It is at the bidding of the dead that he seeks a friendship for the years to come. His vision of the ideal man that is

to be is a memory of the man that trod this planet with him in his youth. He had cried, 'All is dark where thou art not,' and now he cries,

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

For the sake of clearness little has been so far said of the thoughts of the mourner regarding the life beyond death. These thoughts touch two main subjects, the hope of reunion, and the desire that the dead friend should think of the living and should even communicate with him. The recurrent speculations on the state of the dead spring from this hope and this desire. They recur less frequently as the soul advances in its victory. This does not mean that the hope of reunion diminishes or ceases to be essential to the mourner's peace and faith; but speculation on the nature both of this reunion and of the present life of the dead is renounced, and at last even abruptly dismissed. The singer is content to be ignorant and to wait in faith.

It is not quite so with the desire that the dead friend should now remember the living, and should even communicate with him. True, this desire is at one moment put aside without unhappiness, and it ceases to be an urgent and disturbing force. But long after the pining for the bodily presence has been overcome, it remains and brings with it pain and even resentment. It seems to change from a hope of 'speech' or 'converse' to a wish that the dead should in some way be 'near' to or 'touch' the living; and thus it suggests the important group of sections XC.-XCV. Here the poet even wishes at first for a vision; and although he at once reflects that neither this nor any other appeal to sense could convince him that the dead was really with him, he does not surrender either here or later the idea of some more immediate contact of souls. On the other hand, he is not sure that the idea is realised, nor does his uncertainty disturb his peace. What he desires while he remains on earth is contact with 'that which is,' the reality which is half revealed and half concealed by nature and man's earthly life, and which, by its contact, convinces him of the reason and love that rule the world; and, as now he thinks of his friend as 'living in God,' he neither knows nor seeks to know whether that which touches him is to be called the soul of his friend or by some higher name.

It appears then that the victory over sorrow portrayed in the poem is dependent upon a change in the love felt by the living for the dead, and upon a corresponding change in the idea of the dead. And some readers may even be inclined to think that the change is so great that at last the dead friend has really ceased to be to the living an individual person. He is, they will say, in some dim fashion 'mixed with God and Nature,' and as completely lost in 'the general soul' as is Adonais in Shelley's pantheistic poem: and so the poet's love for him has not merely changed, it has perished, and its place has been taken by a feeling as vaguely general and as little personal as the object to which it is directed. As my purpose is neither to criticise nor to defend the poet's ideas, but simply to represent them, I will confine myself to pointing out that the poem itself flatly denies the charge thus brought against it, and by implication denies the validity of the antitheses on which the charge rests. It is quite true that, as the poet advances, he

abandons all attempts to define the life beyond death, and to form an image of his friend, 'whate'er he be.' It is quite true also that he is conscious that his friend, at once human and divine, known and unknown, far and near, has become something 'strange,' and is 'darklier understood' than in the old days of earthly life. But it is equally clear that to the poet his friend is not a whit less himself because he is 'mixed with God and Nature,' and that he is only 'deeplier loved' as he becomes 'darklier understood.' And if the hope of reunion is less frequently expressed as the sense of present possession gains in strength, there is nothing in the poem to imply that it becomes less firm as the image of reunion becomes less definite. The reader may declare that it ought to do so; he may apply to the experience here portrayed his customary notions of human and divine, personal and impersonal, individual and general; and he may argue that whatever falls under one of these heads cannot fall under the other. But whether his ideas and his argument are true or false, the fact is certain that for the experience portrayed in *In Memoriam* (and, it may be added, in *Adonais* also) they do not hold. For the poets the soul of the dead, in being mingled with nature, does not lose its personality; in living in God it remains human and itself; it is still the object of a love as 'personal' as that which was given to

the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

Source: A. C. Bradley, "The 'Way of the Soul,'" in *A Commentary on Tennyson's "In Memoriam,"* Archon Books, 1966, pp. 36-48.

Adaptations

The British actor Sir John Gielgud recorded "Proem" and other sections from *In Memoriam* on an audiocassette titled *Stanzas from "In Memoriam"* (1972). It was produced by the Tennyson Society and published by the Tennyson Research Centre.

Topics for Further Study

In 1850, the year that "Proem" was published, Tennyson became the poet laureate of England, replacing William Wordsworth. Research and report on how the differences in the two men's styles affected British literature.

Research the seven stages of grief that have been outlined by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and other psychiatrists. See which parts of the poem can be traced to each stage.

The poem refers to the night and day as "orbs of light and shade." Look up the ancient theory that held that the sun and planets were held in spheres that surrounded the Earth and create a three-dimensional model to present this idea to your class.

Near the end of the poem, Tennyson, one of Britain's most famous poets, asks God to forgive his "wild and wandering cries." Many of today's most popular musicians, by contrast, tend to brag about their achievements. Write a poem or essay that outlines your position on the importance of humility.

Compare and Contrast

1850s: Great Britain is the world's political and economic leader.

Today: Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, America is the single remaining superpower in the world.

1850: Most of the world is agricultural. The following year, Britain becomes the first nation in the world to have the majority of its population living in cities.

Today: Most of the world's population is clustered into cities and their surrounding suburbs.

1850s: Life expectancy in Great Britain is between 43 and 47 years. Tennyson lived almost twice this, though his friend Arthur Hallam, memorialized in this poem, lived less than half the average.

Today: The average life expectancy for men in Great Britain is 75 years old; for women, it is 80.

1850s: Tea outsells coffee for the first time in Great Britain, due in large part to the introduction of a new custom, afternoon tea, ten years earlier.

B>Today: Though an afternoon break is often considered impractical in the international business climate, many British citizens still manage to find time for the traditional tea break.

1850s: In a world with no mass media, the person holding the post of poet laureate is famous across Great Britain.

Today: Poets are not as important to most citizens as musicians and movie stars; students interested in finding out about the current poet laureate can, however, learn background information within minutes from the Internet.

1850s: If Tennyson wants to visit America, he can travel from London to New York on the fastest clipper ship of the time, arriving in ten days.

Today: Travelling from London to New York on the Concorde can be done in less than three and a half hours.

What Do I Read Next?

The Norton Critical Edition of Tennyson's poem *In Memoriam* contains background and sources, along with critical essays. It was edited by Robert H. Ross and published in 1974 by W. W. Norton.

Readers interested in this poem might want to compare Tennyson's style to the works of the man who inspired him. *Poems of Arthur Henry Hallam*, published in 1988 by AMS Press, reproduces Hallam's work.

William Wordsworth, who preceded Tennyson as poet laureate of England and was one of the founders of the romantic movement, wrote a long poem titled *The Prelude*, which is similar in theme to *In Memoriam*. The first edition of Wordsworth's poem was published posthumously in 1850, the same year as Tennyson's poem.

The poet's grandson, Charles Tennyson, wrote *Alfred Tennyson*, a biography that reflects its author's access to family-owned sources. It was published in 1968 by Archon Books.

Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet, by Jerome Hamilton Buckley, combines biographical and critical analysis of Tennyson's life. It was published in 1960 and remains a standard source in Tennyson studies.

At the same time Tennyson was laboring over *In Memoriam* in England, Emily Dickinson was writing poetry in the United States that was not published until years after her death. Many of Dickinson's poems deal with mortality. Fans of Tennyson's poem may be particularly interested in how the poem compares to Dickinson's "I Reason, Earth is Short," number XXIII in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, first published in 1924 by Little, Brown.

Further Study

Campbell, Matthew, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Campbell devotes an entire chapter to *In Memoriam*, putting its structure into context with the works of Tennyson's contemporaries.

Kingsley, C., "On *In Memoriam* (1850) and Earlier Works," in *Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*, edited by John D. Jump, Barnes & Noble, 1967, pp. 172-85.

Reading a review of Tennyson's long poem from the time period when it was published gives a sense of what a departure the poem was from Tennyson's usual style and how uncertain Tennyson's reputation was before *In Memoriam* sealed his fame.

Tennyson, Charles, and Christine Falls, *Alfred Tennyson: An Annotated Bibliography*, University of Georgia Press, 1967.

This book-length bibliography is several decades old, but it is useful as a reference to many studies of the poet published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Turner, Paul, *Tennyson*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.

What distinguishes this work from many other booklength analyses of Tennyson is the way that Turner presents his thoroughly researched background information in a style that is easy to follow.

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Eliot, T. S., "*In Memoriam*," in *Tennyson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Elizabeth Francis, Prentice-Hall, 1980, p. 133, originally published in *Selected Essays*, Faber and Faber, 1932.

Marshall, George O., Jr., "Tennyson the Teacher," in *A Tennyson Handbook*, Twayne Publishers, 1963, p. 122.

Young, G. M., "The Age of Tennyson," in *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*, edited by John Killham, Barnes & Noble, 1960, p. 25.

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, PfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of PfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of PfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in PfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by PfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

PfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Poetry for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Poetry for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Poetry for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from PfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from PfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Poetry for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Poetry for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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