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Tennyson'ın In Memoriam Adlı Şiirinde İnanç, Hüzün ve Aşk

Faith, Melancholy and Love in Tennyson's In Memoriam

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Öz

Viktorya Çağı'nın en iyi şairlerinden biri sayılan *In Memoriam* (1850) Tennyson'ı yakın arkadaşı Arthur Hallam'ın ölümünden sonra mahvoolmuş bir adam olarak çizer. Tennyson, bu uzun ağıtı merhum arkadaşının anısına yazmıştır. Bu makale; inanç/şüphe, melankoli ve aşkın bu şiirde merkezi bir öneme sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Şüphe ağırlıklı olarak bu şiiri nitelemektedir. Çünkü Hallam'ın zamansız ölümü şairi inancını sorgulamaya itmiştir. Söz konusu şiire kuşkunun ve inancın yanı sıra, melankoli hâkimdir. İşaret ettiği Shakespeare soneleri gibi, *In Memoriam* aynı zamanda da aşkın merkezde olduğu bir şiirdir. Bu üç unsur, ana tema olan yas teması etrafında toplanır. Bu çalışma, bu üç unsurun birbiriyle ilişkili tartışmasına dayanmaktadır. Şüphe ve inanç şiiri olarak *In Memoriam*, şairin ruhun bedene olan üstünlüğüne inandığını ya da inanmak istediğini ve bu dünyadan göçmüş arkadaşıyla ruhani bir kavuşmaya özlem duyduğunu göstermektedir. Bir ağıt olarak *In Memoriam*, arkadaşına olan sevgisini yeniden canlandırdığı ve diri tuttuğu için, şairin melankoliye ve kedere isteyerek tutunduğuna işaret etmektedir. Bir aşk ve dostluk şiiri olarak ise, şairin sevgisini dile dökmek için şiirsel dili kullandığını ve ötelenen beden, aşkın ve yakınlığın şiirsel betimlemelerinde geri döndüğünü dile getirmektedir. Yakın arkadaşının bedeniyle ile dokunma duyusu üzerine kurulu bir yakınlığı arzulayan beden, şairin zihnine meydan okur, onu inancını sorgulamaya iter ve şaire ruhani bir birlik müjdeleyen ruhun karşısına çıkar; böylece şairin beden ve ruh, aşk ve inanç arasında gidip gelmesine neden olur. Dolayısıyla, bu makale Viktorya dönemi şairinin inanç ve aşk arasında, ölümden sonra ruhani bir birleşme fikrini kutsayan ruhla ile dostun sıcak bedenine dokunmayı arzulayan beden arasında ikiye bölünmüş zihninde, melankolinin bir eşik alan olarak bulunduğunu iddia etmektedir. İnançlı âşık, ölümden sonraki ruhsal birleşmeye inanmayı istemektedir. Ama aynı zamanda tutkulu âşık da tensel bir teması arzulamaktadır. Arafta kalan hüznü âşık ise, tecessüm etmeyen bir birleşmeyle cismani, tensel bir teması arasında bir sarkaç gibi salınmakta ve bu ikilik arasındaki ayrımı ortadan kaldırmayı istemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tennyson, In Memoriam, İnanç, Hüzün, Aşk.

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Abstract

Regarded as one of the greatest Victorian poems, *In Memoriam* (1850) portrays Tennyson as a man devastated by the demise of his bosom friend Arthur Hallam. Tennyson composed this long elegy to pay tribute to his departed friend. This paper points out that doubt/faith, melancholy and love are fundamental to *In Memoriam*. Doubt predominantly characterises this poem because Hallam's untimely death made Tennyson harbour reservations about his faith. Besides doubt and faith, melancholy pervades this poem. Like Shakespeare's sonnets it refers to, this elegy is also marked by love. These three elements, doubt/faith, melancholy and love are centred around the main theme of grief. This study is based on the interconnected discussions of these three elements. As a poem of faith and doubt, *In Memoriam* shows that the poet believes, or longs to believe, in the supremacy of the soul and yearns for a spiritual union with his deceased friend. As a poem of melancholy, this elegy evinces that the poet chooses to be engulfed in sorrow and dejection as grieving reinvigorates his love for Hallam. As a poem of love and bonding, it demonstrates that the poet utilises poetic language to articulate his love, and the body resurfaces in his poetic descriptions of their love and intimacy. The body that desires a tactile intimacy with his friend's body challenges the poet's mind, urges him to question his faith and confronts the spirit that promises the poet a spiritual union, thereby causing the poet to oscillate between the body and the spirit, to vacillate between his love and his faith. Hence, this article asserts that melancholy emerges as a liminal space in the Victorian poet's divided psyche between faith and love, between the spirit that celebrates a union after death and the body that desires to touch the friend's warm body. The faithful lover seeks to believe in spiritual union after death; however, the amorous lover desires to have a bodily contact. Dangling in a limbo zone, the melancholic lover wavers between a disembodied union and an embodied intercourse, desiring to bridge the gap between the two.

Keywords: Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, Faith, Melancholy, Love.

INTRODUCTION

In Memoriam shows Tennyson as a man whose life was marred by the loss of his best friend in youth. Hallam's untimely death in 1833, which is described as "the most significant event in Tennyson's life," seemed an overwhelming calamity to the poet¹. *In Memoriam* is an elegiac tribute Tennyson paid to this early friendship and an homage to Hallam, who always remained as the poet's muse². This article points out that *In Memoriam* is predominantly characterised by doubt/faith, melancholy and love. To begin with, doubt pervades this poem since Hallam's sudden death made Tennyson question his faith. Therefore, Ricks states that T. S. Eliot remarked that the poem is significant not "because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt"³. Hence, it is a poem of doubt and uncertainty that also embodies "scientific and cultural anxieties" of Victorian England⁴. This long elegy is also marked by a sense of melancholy and desolation. Auden claimed that "there was little about melancholia that he [Tennyson] didn't know; there was little else that he did"⁵. It is therefore a poem of despair and despondency. Besides, it is also regarded as a love poem. Like Shakespeare's sonnets, to which the poem alludes⁶, *In Memoriam* vests its most intense emotion in male bonding that has homoerotic overtones. These elements, namely doubt/faith, melancholy and love, revolve around the comprehensive theme of grief. The structure of this article is predicated upon the interrelated discussion of these three elements. As a poem of faith and doubt, *In Memoriam* demonstrates that the

¹ Gill 1987, 1.

² Bloom 2010, xv.

³ Ricks 1989, 213.

⁴ Rauch 2002, 481.

⁵ Auden 2002, 204.

⁶ Morgan 2000, 224.

poet believes, or longs to believe, in the supremacy and immortality of the soul and deeply yearns for a spiritual union. As a poem of melancholy, this elegy shows that the poet chooses to be immersed in sorrow and despondency since grieving rejuvenates his love for his friend. As a poem of love, male bonding and homoerotic desire, it reveals that the poet deploys poetic language to verbalise his love, to embody his longing for physical touch, and the body returns in his poetic descriptions of their love. Hence, the spirit permeates his expressions of loss and longing; then, melancholy emerges as the poet despairs and grieves the death of his friend. His melancholy leads the poet to describe his desire to touch the body of his dear friend. Melancholy appears as a liminal space between the spirit and the body, between faith and desire. An understanding of the immortality of the spirit urges the faithful lover to believe that their souls will be reunited eternally. However, an appreciation of the body goads the doubting lover into desiring a corporeal union with his friend. Spiritual union confronts embodied existence. Melancholy may be regarded as an in-between space between the longing for a spiritual union and the yearning for an embodied intercourse. The divided Victorian poet, who embodies the dividedness of the age and inhabits this limbo zone, oscillates between the ethereal, immaterial existence of the human soul and the material, earthly existence of the human body. Hence, this article contends that melancholy emerges as an interspace between the spirit and the body in the Victorian poet's psyche cleft in twain. Therefore, the poem does not record a progressive, linear development from despair to hope, as it registers the muddled poet's meanderings between faith and doubt, love and loss, disembodied union and embodied intimacy. The poetic mind behind *In Memoriam* does not "straightforwardly progress"⁷. Instead, this study argues that the poet, who suffers from the "damned vacillating state" as Tennyson says in "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind,"⁸ oscillates between his belief in the ascension of the disembodied soul and his desire for an embodied understanding of love.

1. In Memoriam as a Poem of Doubt and Faith

As a poem of religious faith and doubt that represents the dividedness of the Victorian age, *In Memoriam* features the conventional approach to the relationship between the spirit and the body. This elegy seems to be characterised by the long-established dichotomy between the spirit and the flesh, which becomes even more prominent in the Victorian age, divided between nostalgia for a pre-modern, pre-industrial idyllic life and an endeavour for a modern, industrial, scientific and progressive life. On the one hand, the poet strives to make his poem embedded in the spiritual aspect since he laments the decease of his friend whom he believes has sojourned to the realm of the soul. He intends to spiritualize his vision so that he can contact his friend on the spiritual level; he seeks to disconnect himself from the terrain of the flesh. On the other hand, his elegiac poem is haunted by the body; the matter, which is to be wiped out from his spiritualised vision, comes back as the repressed returns via its own mode of repression. This chasm between the spirit and the flesh causes the poet to oscillate between the supposedly opposing sites of human existence. The spirit and the matter collapse into one another as the fleshliness of his spiritual experience and the spirituality of his bodily perception partake of one another. The Victorian poet, whose understanding of life is challenged by the scientific advances of the age such as multiple studies in evolution, biology, geology and astronomy, oscillates between the religious, traditional explanation of life on earth and a modern appreciation of life emerging in the light of technological improvements and scientific developments. Therefore, *In Memoriam* embodies the dilemmas of the Victorian age as well as representing the poet's individual grief and personal ruminations about life and death.

At first, Tennyson appears to have aligned his vision with the spirit, which makes him grieve over the rupture between the spirit and the matter. In accordance with the attempt to prioritize the spirit over the matter, the prologue of *In Memoriam* opens with "Immortal Love" represented in the notion of the Holy Trinity through "Strong Son of God". The celestial love that binds God and his Son

⁷ Tate 2012, 96.

⁸ Tennyson 2009, line 190.

permeates the poem as the poet yearns to be immersed in this kind of love so that he can be reunited with Hallam in a spiritual realm. He considers that he will not be able to see Hallam alive and clothed in flesh, "when clasped in clay" as the poet says in the ninety-third lyric of *In Memoriam*⁹. He longs for the time when his spirit will be merged with Hallam's spirit: "Where all the nerve of sense is dumb, / Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost"¹⁰, as Tennyson imagines in the ninety-third lyric of *In Memoriam*. He is deeply longing for a time when his soul will dissolve into that of his departed friend and their souls will be thus intertwined. Tennyson's approach to Hallam's death suggests the notion of the Platonic spiritual evolution. This age-old understanding of spiritual evolution is described by the metaphor of the steps "by which a soul might rise from love of a beautiful person to love of Divine Beauty, Truth and Goodness"¹¹. He treads on "the great world's altar-stairs / That slope through darkness up to God" as it is suggested in the fifty-fifth poem of *In Memoriam*¹². Thus, he points to the possibility of spiritual evolution through the stair-image. He believes that his soul will become ethereal and disappear into the celestial realm.

Tennyson's elegy is marked by his belief in the supremacy and immortality of the spirit and his attempt to overcome human beings' mortality, to give an end to the "almost tragic imprisonment in the physical self" through believing in ascension of the mortal clay to the spiritual state of being¹³. He labours to take it for granted that the spirit outlives the flesh and he holds it true that "men may rise on stepping stones / Of their dead selves to higher things" as it is described in the first poem of *In Memoriam*¹⁴. This veneration of the soul reminds one of Fowles, who speaks of the Victorian belief in the glorified supremacy of the soul in the *French Lieutenant's Woman*, a novel set in the Victorian era. This novel puts forward the idea that the Victorians saw "the 'soul' as more real than the body, far more real, their only real self; indeed, hardly connected with the body at all, but floating high above the beast¹⁵". On the other hand, the Victorian scientific developments that challenged the biblical truths¹⁶ seemed to defy the presence of the spirit. Therefore, Tennyson also appears to be a "Man, 'who seemed so fair', under the older idealistic dispensation, now seems debased by a monistic naturalism which denies the soul and insists, with a dogged literalness, that 'The spirit does but mean the breath¹⁷". Similarly, Tennyson, assumed to reflect the Victorian *zeitgeist* in his poem, admits to the eternity of the soul; yet, his acknowledgement of the superiority of the spirit refutes itself as the matter returns through its own repudiation. Tennyson, being divided himself, embodies the Victorian fissure in his elegy. His poem "interweaves a private loss with more epochal anxieties, as though seeking in bereavement a route to the spirit of the age¹⁸". He seeks to alleviate his pain by believing in the eternal life of the soul; however, the emerging anxieties of the Victorian age appear to muddle his mind and to discourage him from believing in the eternity of the human spirit.

As a result of this divide, Tennyson experiences the confusions of a blurred mind; "[b]elief and unbelief coexisted uneasily" in Victorian England¹⁹. He grieves the death of his bosom friend. He admits his failure in faith and asks for forgiveness in the prologue of *In Memoriam*:

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.

⁹ Tennyson 2009, line 4.

¹⁰ Tennyson 2009, lines 7-8.

¹¹ Turner 1976, 121.

¹² Tennyson 2009, lines 15-16.

¹³ Armstrong 1993a, 141.

¹⁴ Tennyson 2009, lines 3-4.

¹⁵ Fowles 1970, 288.

¹⁶ Gill 1987, 5.

¹⁷ Buckley 1970, 216.

¹⁸ Perry 2002, 115.

¹⁹ Watson 2002, 134.

I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved²⁰.

He seeks to comfort himself through the consolations of the mystic tradition. Accordingly, he believes that the dead is reclaimed, so death is not an end, but a reunion with God. His spiritual and mystical experience refers to “the passage from initial illumination, through a period of darkness in which there is no comfort and no assurance of the divine presence and on to a rekindling of the spiritual light that first brightened and warmed the soul²¹”. He desires to maintain his love for Hallam through his love for God in whom he assumes Hallam survives death. As a result, Tennyson seeks Hallam “on the mystic deeps” as it is described in the one hundred and twenty-fifth lyric of *In Memoriam*²². He believes that he can attain spiritual recovery through his mystical insight, through truths that the thirty-sixth lyric of *In Memoriam* shows as “[d]eep-seated in our mystic frame²³”. Hence, feeling that something “touches me [him] with mystic gleams / Like glimpses of forgotten dreams”, as Tennyson describes in “The Two Voices²⁴” the poet relies on the ascent of the mind/spirit from the physical and transitory to the unchangeable and the imperishable; he searches for a communion with the universal spirit that is all-inclusive. Buckley points out that Tennyson trusts “God is love, transcendent, all-pervading! We do not get *this* faith from nature or the world (...) We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us²⁵”. He yearns to be steeped in divine light, which he assumes encompasses the universal spirit, thus allows his spirit to merge with Hallam’s spirit; he seeks to “fuse the idea of the self with that of the dead friend, to preserve both”, to accomplish reunion and commune with the departed²⁶. He envisages a celestial union in which his soul will be interwreathed with the soul of his bosom friend.

Imagining a reunion with his deceased friend, Tennyson craves a spiritual contact with Hallam. The second poem of *In Memoriam* introduces the image of the yew tree, “which graspest at the stones / That name the underlying dead²⁷”. The ancient yew tree, growing in the grounds near the clock tower and church where Hallam was to be buried, seems neither to blossom in spring nor to change from its dark mournful colour in summer:

O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,
Who changest not in any gale,
Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom²⁸.

The poet associates himself with the mournful yew tree, linking scenery to the states of his mind. Grieving Hallam’s death, he feels that he does not blossom like the yew tree. Tennyson desires to reunite with his friend as the yew tree grasps at his friend’s grave. The second lyric of *In Memoriam* portrays him as gazing on the tree and yearning to step out of his body and “grow incorporate into

²⁰ Tennyson 2009, lines 37-40.

²¹ Gill 1987, 27.

²² Tennyson 2009, lines 13-14.

²³ Tennyson, 2009, lines 1-2.

²⁴ Tennyson, 2009, lines 380-381.

²⁵ Buckley 1970, 220.

²⁶ Jordan 1988, 114.

²⁷ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-2.

²⁸ Tennyson 2009, lines 9-12.

thee [the yew tree]²⁹". He dreams of shedding off his mortal cloth, transforming himself into the incorporeal state of being. He also imagines mingling with the tree in order to unite with Hallam and being one with Hallam through the circle of the branches that extend into the celestial realm and the roots of the tree that suck the minerals of the earth: "The branches like stiff fingers grasping the headstone evoke as in a mirror reflection the roots beneath that hold the nameless skull and bones, deprived of individuality³⁰". Thus, he desires to hold on to his friend like the roots that cling to the body of the deceased, the roots that feed and nourish on the corpse of his departed friend. Thus, the branches of the tree above the soil are commingled with the roots of the tree under the soil, and they seem to him to be the same as if they were mirror reflections of one another. This image of the roots and the branches that are fused into oneness is suggestive of the poet's deep yearning to be mingled with his late friend as if they were mirror images of one another.

As a poet of doubt and faith, Tennyson is haunted by what is described in the fifty-sixth lyric of *In Memoriam* as lying "behind the veil³¹". This veil metaphor stands for the rupture between the spirit / the spiritual realm and the body / the earthly realm; he strives to connect these two sites of existence. The poet seeks to comfort himself by assuming that the latter, being transient, ends in the eternity of the former; he tries to reassure himself that he might know what lies on this side of the veil, yet the uncertainty regarding what lies behind the veil destabilizes and upsets him. Even if he convinces himself that he believes in God, he does not know if God believes in him, so he despairs. The bereaved poet remembers his old friend, but he questions if his old friend remembers him in the sixty-fourth lyric of the elegy³². His doubt makes him unable to answer these questions; therefore, he suffers from the anxiety resulting from the "gulf that ever shuts and gapes," which is mentioned in the seventieth lyric of the elegy³³. This gulf incarnates the chasm between Hallam and himself, the spirit and the body. In order that he could survive this divide, he holds on to the Platonic duality. Hence, he believes in the eternity of the soul; he thinks that he "shall know him [Hallam]" as it is noted in the forty-seventh lyric³⁴ when he perishes and ascends the imperishable, celestial realm of the spirit. Therefore, he believes in "[t]he likest God within the soul," which assures him that "no life may fail beyond the grave" as Tennyson says in the fifty-fifth lyric of *In Memoriam*³⁵. Similarly, the eighty-seventh lyric of *In Memoriam* shows him as he is clinging to the eternal soul of his deceased friend, "the God within him" and his "ethereal eyes³⁶". Tennyson hopes that his own misery at Hallam's death will eventually prove a means of ascension.

2. *In Memoriam* as a Poem of Melancholy

As opposed to his faith in the ascension of the human soul that is supposed to alleviate his pain, the poet of *In Memoriam* holds on to the feeling of melancholy. He is "swallowed up in an abyss of grief and dissolution³⁷". However, grieving allows him to maintain his emotional attachment to Hallam. The Victorian poet is immersed in grief, yet he seems to benefit from the state of grieving since he realizes that his grief revitalizes his love, even though the faithful lover wishes to believe in the eternity of the human soul and to grieve the loss of his bosom friend no more. For instance, he says that he wishes love to clasp grief because he fears both would be diminished without one another; the first lyric of *In Memoriam* is indicative of this desire: "Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned³⁸". He dreads that his love would dwindle without his mourning the death of his friend. Although he wants his grief to be consumed by love, he fears that his love would be consumed up without his grief.

²⁹ Tennyson 2009, lines 15-16.

³⁰ Jordan 1988, 115.

³¹ Tennyson 2009, line 28.

³² Tennyson 2009, line 28.

³³ Tennyson 2009, line 6.

³⁴ Tennyson 2009, lines 7-8.

³⁵ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-4.

³⁶ Tennyson 2009, lines 36-39.

³⁷ Shaw 2002, 473.

³⁸ Tennyson 2009, line 9.

Therefore, the first lyric of the poem shows him as preferring “to be drunk with loss, / To dance with Death³⁹” rather than come to terms with death, believe in the immortality of the soul and accept the state of bereavement. The poet’s *danse macabre* reinvigorates his love for his dead friend. He dances out of his faith which promises him a spiritual union with his departed friend, and he dances with death and thus holds on to his friend rather than let him go. His acknowledgment of loss, he fears, would obliterate his love. Consequently, he calls sorrow “cruel fellowship,” thinks that sorrow is both “sweet and bitter” and ventures to “[e]mbrace her [sorrow]” in the third lyric of the elegy⁴⁰ because the dejected poet says in the twenty-eighth lyric that his “sorrow [is] touched with joy⁴¹”. His sorrow is joyful, his melancholy makes him gay. He treats sorrow in a more familiar and less dreading way because “[w]hat he yields to now will help to remake him⁴²”. Through the act of grieving, Tennyson struggles to weave over the gap between Hallam lost forever and Hallam to be reunited with. Through mourning, he also revivifies the prelapsarian state of wholeness and bliss, “a golden world of friendship” and an elysian realm of harmony, love, intimacy and integrity that he has experienced with Hallam⁴³. He reminisces in the twenty-fourth poem of *In Memoriam* that “[t]his earth had been the Paradise⁴⁴” prior to Hallam’s death. He holds on to the idyllic past by grieving his bereavement because “the haze of grief / Makes former gladness look so great” as Tennyson says in the twenty-fourth lyric of the elegy⁴⁵. Thus, he resuscitates the Arcadian state of existence through singing a woeful song; he seeks to reclaim the scene he creates in poem ninety-five which is “simultaneously pastoral, idyllic, and congenial to human activity and companionship⁴⁶”. As he attaches himself to the memory of his friend prior to his untimely death, the melancholic lover seems to forget the spiritual comfort that provided by the union of the human souls in the celestial realm of the eternal and the divine. The faithful lover’s consolation at the idea of the commingling of the ethereal spirits is supplanted by the melancholic lover’s reimagining the prelapsarian realm of pure joy and unmitigated gaiety prior to the death of his friend.

Grieving rejuvenates his love and thus he attempts to fight against the sense of weariness that characterises the fourth lyric of *In Memoriam*. He seems to be worn away by his sorrow however hard he tries to cling to his friend’s memory through grieving his death. He gives his powers away to “Sleep” and muses with his heart rather than with his mind. His heart beats so low; he fears that his heart would “fail from thy desire”; therefore, he invites his eyes to burst into tears: “Break thou deep vase of chilling tears, / That grief hath shaken into frost⁴⁷”. Abrams states that Tennyson explains in his notes that “water can be brought below freezing-point and not turn into ice – if it be kept still; but if it be moved suddenly it turns into ice and may break a vase⁴⁸”. This image suggests that Tennyson does not want to be frozen by his grief; he does not want to be numbed because he believes grief is reinvigorating. Rather than being dulled, he desires to rejuvenate his love through grieving. He defies stillness which grief might instil upon him; he does not want to be “the fool of loss” as the poet says in the fourth poem of *In Memoriam*⁴⁹. He refuses to be enfeebled by loss; on the contrary, he wishes to revitalize his love through mourning. He attaches himself to Hallam as the object of melancholy while he is grieving.

3. *In Memoriam* as a Poem of Love

³⁹ Tennyson 2009, lines 11-12.

⁴⁰ Tennyson 2009, lines 1, 3, 14.

⁴¹ Tennyson 2009, line 19.

⁴² Thomson 1986, 121.

⁴³ Gill 1987, 3.

⁴⁴ Tennyson 2009, line 6.

⁴⁵ Tennyson 2009, lines 9-10.

⁴⁶ Fletcher 2002, 498.

⁴⁷ Tennyson 2009, lines 1, 4, 8, 6, 11-12.

⁴⁸ Abrams 2000, 1234.

⁴⁹ Tennyson 2009, line 16.

As the poet clings to his melancholic loss, *In Memoriam* becomes a love poem. Therefore, this paper argues that melancholy emerges as a liminal space between faith and love, between the spirit and the body. Read as a poem of faith and doubt, this elegy shows the poet as a believer who is invested in the spiritual union of his soul with Hallam's soul. However, this attitude means that the faithful lover is to be comforted by the idea of the immortality of the soul and thus he is no longer to mourn the loss of his friend. Yet, the grieving lover also feels that his melancholy allows him to reinvigorate his love for his friend even more passionately; therefore, he reanimates their love in the golden realm of happiness and wholeness; he continues grieving and he does not let his friend go. Hence, melancholy as an intermediate zone between the spirit and the body leads the poet to reimagine their love and reinvigorate their intimacy via using a poetic language that abounds in tactile images which foreground the poet's desire for physical touch, the lover's hankering after the body of the deceased friend. Disembodied spiritual comfort is replaced by an embodied sense of love and intimacy. Accordingly, the image of the faithful lover that takes comfort in the immortality of the human spirit is supplanted by the image of the melancholic lover who insistently clings to the memory of his friend, reimagines their idyllic life before Hallam's death and reanimates his desire to be in touch with his friend, to be in physical contact with his lover. This is how melancholy as a limbo zone deflects the poet from the realm of the spirit and goads him into the realm of the body. As a result, *In Memoriam* transforms into a poem of love, intimacy and desire from a poem of faith and doubt. Had the poet persevered as a faithful lover who was to be comforted by the promise of the immortality of the soul, *In Memoriam* would be predominantly a poem of faith and doubt. Yet, the poet perpetuates his love through his melancholy.

Poetry provides the melancholic lover with a means to verbalise his loss, articulate his love, rejuvenate his affection and embody his desire to be in touch with his friend once again. As he employs poetic language, the lover's body returns despite the above-mentioned belief in the ascendancy of the human soul. The amorous body seeks after a corporeal intimacy. The melancholic poet feeds upon his grief; he strives to articulate his sorrow in the fifth lyric of the long poem although he is aware that his pain is almost unverbalizable as language falls short of the intensity of his sorrow:

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put it in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within⁵⁰.

His grief resists articulation. Nevertheless, he attempts to express his pain "in measured language" so that he can soothe his "unquiet heart and brain" and he will wrap himself in words "[I]ike coarsest clothes against the cold" as it is described in the fifth lyric of *In Memoriam*⁵¹. By wrapping himself in words, he wraps himself in his own interiority; he is willing to be immersed in his sorrow; he takes shelter in the expression of his grief however crude the enfolding poem may be. His pain is inexpressible because "Thought leapt out to wed with Thought / Before Thought could wed itself with Speech" as the poet says in the twenty-third lyric of the poem⁵². His sorrow is incommunicable because articulation falls behind contemplation; he defies words because they are "vague" and they are described as "matter-molded forms of speech" in the ninety-fifth lyric of *In Memoriam*⁵³. He believes that linguistic expression does not express his profound longing. Language amounts to nothing in his eyes since death "put our [their] lives so far apart / We [Hallam and himself] cannot hear each other

⁵⁰ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-4.

⁵¹ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-12.

⁵² Tennyson 2009, lines 15-16.

⁵³ Tennyson 2009, lines 45-46.

speak” as the poet complains in the eighty-second poem of *In Memoriam*⁵⁴. Therefore, Tennyson’s elegy is defined as “this song of woe” which is “after all an earthly song” in the fifty-seventh lyric of *In Memoriam*⁵⁵. His articulation of love for Hallam and grief for his loss does not express the celestial love that he seems to be willing to acquire. Being deprived of a heavenly medium to articulate his inarticulate love, the poet is seen in the fifty-fourth lyric like “[a]n infant crying in the night, / An infant crying for the light⁵⁶”. Tennyson uses ‘infant’ to mean ‘with no language but a cry’, “invoking the Latin root *infans*, unable to speak⁵⁷”. He desires to be dislodged out of the darkness of bereavement. The wordlessness of the infant evokes the golden realm of their friendship, bonding and intimacy, which cannot be wholly expressed though the symbolic means of language. The infants of this prelapsarian realm are envisaged as lacking in nothing. Linguistic signifiers are not needed in this idyllic state of existence. However, poesy that transgresses the boundaries of symbolic language enables the lover/poet to incarnate his love, allows him to embody his love for Hallam through tactile images.

In a Proustian manner, Tennyson goes through the remembrance of things past; he digs into the past and his memories with Hallam; he digs with his pen as Seamus Heaney does in his poem “Digging.” He seeks to keep his love alive as Shakespeare immortalizes his beloved through his sonnets. He visits the house in London, where Hallam lived; this visit is recounted in the seventh lyric of *In Memoriam*:

Dark house, by which once more I stand,
Here in the long lovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand⁵⁸.

The melancholic poet feels forsaken and deserted; “every pleasant spot” where they used to meet is described as dark without Hallam in the eighth lyric of *In Memoriam*⁵⁹. However, his “poor flower of poesy,” fostered by his grief, does not fade yet as the lover/poet notes in the eighth lyric of the elegy⁶⁰. He will plant this flower of poetry on his tomb where it may bloom if it can, or where it may die if it should die. Metaphorically, his flower of poetry blooms there since it is nourished by Hallam’s memory as the yew tree grasps at the stones of the grave. The flower of poetry allows the amorous poet to express his desire that has homoerotic overtones.

In this poem of love, bonding and desire, Tennyson, transgressing gender boundaries⁶¹, assumes the feminine gender in his expression of grief. He considers himself and Hallam to be “[t]wo partners of married life” and he thinks of his spirit “as of a wife” as it is seen in the ninety-seventh lyric⁶². The bereaved poet “plays the part of the deserted ‘heroine’⁶³” and employs “the language of marriage and sexual love⁶⁴”. Similarly, in the twelfth poem of the elegy, he likens himself to a dove that bears “through Heaven a tale of woe / Some dolorous message knit below / The wild pulsations of her

⁵⁴ Tennyson 2009, lines 15-16.

⁵⁵ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-2.

⁵⁶ Tennyson 2009, lines 18-19.

⁵⁷ Jordan 1988, 124.

⁵⁸ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-4.

⁵⁹ Tennyson 2009, lines 9-12.

⁶⁰ Tennyson 2009, lines 19-20.

⁶¹ Riede 2000, 660.

⁶² Tennyson 2009, lines 5-8.

⁶³ Turner 1976, 118.

⁶⁴ Armstrong 1993b, 259.

wings⁶⁵". The poet yearns to leave his mortal ark behind like the dove soaring through the heavens; yet, the wild pulses of the lover's body permeate this tale, as well. The thirteenth lyric of *In Memoriam* demonstrates that he also attributes the feminine gender to Hallam in his articulation of sorrow by likening himself to a widower:

Tears of the widower, when he sees
A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
Her place is empty, fall like these⁶⁶.

Tennyson's imagination of a reunion with Hallam is marked by a strong sense of bodily experience of loss even though it initially appears that the binary frame founded upon the antipodal spirit and flesh occasions the rift between the two. As *In Memoriam* metamorphoses into a poem of love and bonding, the gulf between the spirit and the body is bridged. It is possible to argue that the body becomes even more prominent. The amorous body of the lover/poet is reinvigorated and is alive with the desire to be in physical touch with the friend. He suffers from "[a] void where heart on heart reposed" yet this void is also where warm hands have pressed and closed" as it is described in the thirteenth lyric of the elegy.⁶⁷ The flower of poetry blooms as the lover is reincarnated and his warm hands are clasped within those of the poet. Poetry reanimates the dead lover, pumping blood to his heart and thus warming his hands. His longing for physical touch, which is regarded as "the highest form of love's confirmation,"⁶⁸ reveals that the seemingly wished-for spiritual reunion does not wipe out the corporeal aspect of their intimacy. Tennyson's perception of immortality is "rooted in his inexhaustible impulse to visualize and to touch Hallam."⁶⁹ In response to the surfacing of the corporeal state of love, a couple of lines later in the same poem, he longs for "[t]he human-hearted man I [he] loved" and for his "breathing voice⁷⁰". Thus, the physical expression of his love for the departed is expressed by the flower of poetry. As a poet of vacillating states, Tennyson, who glorifies the spirit, now venerates the body even more passionately as he believes that the sense of touch is the most sublime form of love's confirmation.

The faithful lover who forsakes the flesh is now fascinated by the material existence of human beings, as his poem is accentuated by his deep desire for the physical touch. He seeks to present his longing for the bodily intercourse in a spiritual fashion, yet the spirit and the matter collapse into one another in his perplexed mind. He has a strong urge to touch Hallam's "hands so often clasped in mine [his]" as it is described in the tenth lyric of the elegy⁷¹. On the other hand, the thirty-fifth lyric of *In Memoriam* shows the believer as attempting to abstain from the body, from the "coarsest Satyr-shape" of the bodily contact⁷². All the same, the eighty-fourth lyric of the long poem shows that he feels exalted by "[a] central warmth diffusing bliss" which oozes out of Hallam's being in his "glance and smile, and clasp and kiss⁷³". The lover/poet reclaims the sublime beauty of the warm bodies. The ninety-third lyric of *In Memoriam* portrays the amorous lover/poet as ardently desiring a physical union; he desires Hallam to "[d]escend, and touch, and enter⁷⁴" in a line that alludes to John Donne's Holy Sonnet 14, which calls out to God to ravish him and batter his heart. Like Donne's holy sonnets, which glorify a

⁶⁵ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-4.

⁶⁶ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-4.

⁶⁷ Tennyson 2009, lines 6-7.

⁶⁸ Gill 1987, 75.

⁶⁹ Craft 1993, 161.

⁷⁰ Tennyson 2009, lines 11-12.

⁷¹ Tennyson 2009, line 19.

⁷² Tennyson 2009, lines 22-24.

⁷³ Tennyson 2009, lines 6-7.

⁷⁴ Tennyson 2009, line 13.

spiritual union through physical union, Tennyson's poem upholds a communion that is embodied, and spiritually exalting because of the very fact that it is expressed through bodies. For the amorous lover/poet, bodies become sacred. The poet wants Hallam to touch him so that "My ghost may feel that thine is near" as it is described in the ninety-third lyric⁷⁵. By means of corporeal contact, he desires to achieve an incorporeal union with Hallam's spirit. Similarly, when Tennyson reads Hallam's letters, he feels that his dead friend touches him from the past; this feeling is expressed in the ninety-fifth lyric of *In Memoriam*:

All at once it seemed at last
The living soul was flashed on mine.
And mine in this was wound, and whirled
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world⁷⁶.

Thus, their bodies are intertwined in a moment of transcendence; this intercourse celebrates the deep pulses of the earth as it also glorifies the deep pulses of the dove, the bird that symbolises the goddess of love. Though imagination and imaging in the realm of poesy, the poet hears the pulses of the lover's body.

A "homoerotic rhetoric"⁷⁷ pervades Tennyson's elegy which is also a poem of love and bonding besides being a poem of doubt and faith, and a poem of melancholy. His poetic insight challenges "a masculine discipline that would repress and sublimate grief" by indulging "instead an utterly unregulated suffering, which seems to dissolve the structures of masculine identity"⁷⁸. Hood also points out that Tennyson's urge is divining desire because his desire is expressed in a divine light. The lover's desire is divine as his body is sacred. Similarly, Hood notes that Sinfield argues that his "desperate erotic distress...is indistinguishable from his grief"⁷⁹. Erotic desire becomes enwreathed with grief. The melancholic poet reinvigorates his desire through clinging to the memory of the departed. Grief makes his erotic desire even more passionate. Tennyson has riveted the poem with the imagery of erotic desire. This erotic imagery is a manifestation of his most sustained pronouncement of the power of desire to transcend the limitations of time and space, and to be reunited with Hallam in the golden realm of friendship, love and bonding. Human beings become immortal through their mortal bodies. Tennyson presents erotic desire as "an essential image of the desire for transcendence"⁸⁰. His spiritual quest is drenched in sensual imagery; thus, the state of the body is merged with the state of the spirit, which the poet cherishes to bridge the gap between the flesh and the soul.

The states of the body and the spirit merge into one another in the above-mentioned mystical experience, in which Tennyson delights since such moments shatter the rupture between the spirit and the matter. In a letter of 1874, replying to an inquiry about his experience of mystical trances, Tennyson wrote:

A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone.
This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself

⁷⁵ Tennyson 2009, lines 15-16.

⁷⁶ Tennyson 2009, 34-40.

⁷⁷ Psomiades 2000, 42.

⁷⁸ Hood 2000, 102.

⁷⁹ Hood, 2000, 103.

⁸⁰ Hood 2000, 111.

silently, till all at once, as if it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life.... This might... be the state which St. Paul describes, 'Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell.'... I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? But in a moment, when I come back to my normal state of 'sanity', I am ready to fight for *mein liebes Ich* [my dear self], and hold that it will last for aeons of aeons⁸¹.

Tennyson speaks of the fragmentation between the conscious being and the boundless being, in other words the matter and the spirit. Yet, he goes beyond the fragmented human being; he is fascinated by the fact that the supposedly opposing states of being intermingled with one another since he cannot tell whether he had such an experience in the body or out of the body. The prologue of *In Memoriam* shows him delighting in such a mystical trance through which he believes that "mind and soul, according well, / May make one music as before⁸²". The death of his bosom friend first urges him to find consolation in the immortality of the human spirit, then his melancholy that feeds on his grief prompts him to hold on the object of his melancholy and to imagine touching the body of his friend. The melancholic poet oscillates in a liminal space between the faithful lover and the amorous poet.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Tennyson is a poet who experiences the chasm between the body and the soul which he grieves through lamenting his friend's death which leaves him "a wounded man for the rest of his life⁸³". The poetic voice of *In Memoriam* vacillates between the metaphysical and the physical, between "a spiritual dimension of selfhood" and "an embodied mind⁸⁴". He oscillates between the realm of the flesh and the realm of the spirit; he strives to bring the two together. Since this elegy is written and rewritten over the course of seventeen years, the poet seems to be shifting between states of mind throughout the long poem. This paper coheres around faith, melancholy and love for the sake of unity and clarity, yet the structure of this study does not reflect the progress of the poem as the poetic voice constantly wavers between those elements. On the one hand, he wishes he were dead, he could go beyond the confines of human mortality, and he could be spiritually reunited with Hallam. On the other hand, the one hundred twenty-first lyric of *In Memoriam* shows that he wishes he were Orpheus to bring his friend back to life. In this lyric, he not only sympathizes with "Sad Hesper o'er the buried / And ready, thou, to die with him," but also, he welcomes "Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night⁸⁵". He both rages against the dying of the light and cherishes the engulfing darkness. In the same lyric, we see the poet/lover eventually trying to realign the morning star with the evening star; he calls them "Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name"⁸⁶ so that his misery resulting from the divide between the two could end. Hesper and Phosphor are combined in the planet Venus, that is both evening and morning star, and that is the goddess of love. The sadness of the morning star merges with the joy of the evening star. Oppositions coalesce into one another in the domain of the goddess of love. The poet/lover's melancholy that revitalises his love emerges as an interspace, an intermediate zone between the domain of the spirit and the realm of the body. The double name of the goddess of love bridges the gap between the spirit and the body. The spirit flows into the body and the body embraces the spirit through melancholy. The doubleness of this elegy, published in 1850, could be regarded as a response to the dividedness of the Victorian age.

⁸¹ Abrams 2000, 1265.

⁸² Tennyson 2009, lines 27-28.

⁸³ Gill 1987, 2.

⁸⁴ Tate 2012, 93.

⁸⁵ Tennyson 2009, lines 1-2, 9.

⁸⁶ Tennyson 2009, line 17.

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