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"An Image Comforting the Mind": Emotion Theory and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*

Melanie Pavao, Class of 2012

There is no adequate preparation for the intensity of the emotional experience. The same emotion, in different circumstances, can feel entirely different from what it felt like before. About two years ago, my grandfather died. I had just arrived at work a half hour before when my father called me. I immediately knew something was wrong – and when he told me my grandfather had died, I collapsed to the floor. I could not stop my tears, or finish my eight-hour shift. My grandfather had been sick for many years, yet the shock of his death hit me harder than the deaths of either of my other grandparents. During their funeral preparations and services, I eventually felt a sort of numbness and was able to go through them without much crying. I had had plenty of experience with grief and death, yet at my grandfather's funeral I could not stop crying during the entire two days, and completely broke down when his band played a funeral march in his honor. I had to take the entire next week of off work just to deal with my grief. It was so intense that I can feel that emotion rushing back just by writing. The experience of two grandparents' deaths (one only two years before) in no way prepared me for the intense grief that I experienced upon my grandfather's death. My relationship to him was certainly different – I was closer to him, I had spent more time with him, and he had helped foster my love for music. It is exactly because the circumstances were different that the grief was a completely new emotion for me, one that I had never experienced before.

Cicero and the Stoics argue that emotions are voluntary responses that can be controlled and nearly avoided through careful preparation. This preparation may involve several kinds of acts, such as reading literature that evokes an emotive response from the reader, or imagining a loved one's death before its actual occurrence. Through this preparation, the person will be able

to discipline the emotion and control her emotional reactions. In her book *Upheavals of Thought*, Martha Nussbaum emphasizes that emotions are intensely personal and are sculpted by one's own experiences and beliefs. The object of value that generates the emotion has a direct connection to the person feeling it, which gives it even more importance. Because emotions are so intensely personal, it is difficult to prepare for them in advance, especially in the case of grief. No matter how much someone has already experienced it or felt some sort of responsive sorrow after reading another's experience, she can never be fully prepared for the personal felt under new circumstances, just as I could not be prepared for how much my grandfather's death would affect me. There is no preparation that will stop the person from feeling grief, because it is new, it is individual. Nor can we ever feel the same grief that another has felt, no matter how evocative her writing is. We can, however, learn some methods of dealing with grief from another's experience. Nussbaum argues in *Love's Knowledge* that reading narrative, for instance, can provide a sort of grief therapy for the reader. Reading literature as preparation, then, is not useful for sculpting our responses in order to evade emotions, but for learning and understanding ways of dealing with them.

In this paper, I intend to demonstrate the way in which Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam A.H.H.* functions as a form of grief therapy. To do so, I will depend on the theory of emotions described by the Stoic philosophers and recently reinterpreted by Martha Nussbaum. I will present an overview of Stoic ethics with specific attention to theories of emotion. I am especially interested the Stoic theory of pre-rehearsal of emotion as a way to safeguard oneself against psychological distress. I will also briefly explain how Martha Nussbaum reinterprets this theory, specifically the way in which she describes emotions as the result of value judgments. I will emphasize Nussbaum's method of using literature as a form of therapy for emotional

experience, especially grief. Then, I will move on to Tennyson's poem *In Memoriam*, in which he describes his personal grieving process in dealing with the loss of his friend Hallam, for which he uses the poem as his own form of grief therapy.

I. Stoic Views of Emotion

The Stoics believed that happiness is the end for which all rational beings strive (Brennan 35). The Stoic Sage is the image of a perfectly virtuous person for the Stoics (37), whose actions, since his[1] soul is virtuous, are all virtuous. He is an ideal figure, though – there is virtually no chance that anyone could actually encounter such a person. One of the marks of the Stoic sage is that he lives without the four passions, or emotions (38). These four passions – pleasure, pain, desire, and fear – are to be avoided at all costs, according to the Stoics (91). Instead of feeling these emotions, they feel *eupatheiai*, or, affective responses which accord with nature (Graver 38). These corrected emotions are volition, joy, and caution. The Stoic sage also views objects that do not contribute to his happiness as indifferent (Brennan 38). Objects that the Stoic Sage views as indifferent have no personal value to him because they cannot affect his happiness. As we will see, it is often mistaken judgments of value attributed to these "indifferents" that cause the passions in the person.

It is important to understand that the Stoics did not totally reject emotional response. Rather, they recognized that it was natural for rational beings, and, because of this, there must be some use, or end, for them (Graver 36). It is therefore not wrong to have the capacity to respond to something good or bad with feeling, however it is wrong when these feelings are experienced irrationally, or, as emotions (36). The Stoics described a process of specific steps that lead up to an emotional response. The first step to an emotional response is *phantasiai*, that is, impressions

[1] I use the pronoun "he" when describing the ethical theory of the Stoics namely because women at the time, because of their inferior status, would not be able to achieve the level of the Stoic sage.

(Brennan 52). Impressions come from sense perception – they are usually something that the person sees. This image is then stored in the mind and can be called upon at any time. To explain impressions, Zeno uses the example of a signet ring being imprinted in wax. This was done to seal letters and other materials, showing that the person who sealed the material was the owner of that specific ring (Graver 25). The analogy attempts to describe what happens to the mind when it has an impression. Like the signet ring molds a specific image onto the wax, so the impression molds onto the mind a specific image that it can later refer back to. The mind, then, has the ability to form and change – it is animate.

This impression is what causes the first impulse of the mind. The Stoics described the initial reactions to impressions as *hormai*, that is, impulses (Graver 26-27). These action tendencies are not intentional but are part of the natural capacity of human beings for emotion. The *hormai* can also be described as feelings – they are the feelings that a person has without actually exhibiting an emotion. For instance, I see a piece of chocolate cake on the counter. I desire to eat the cake after I have seen it – that is the impulse. It follows the impression but stops before I make an assent. The impulse can also be described as a feeling – even though I feel desire, it is not an emotional experience because I have made no assent (that is, no judgment about the cake). I simply desire it – perhaps I am hungry, or I simply just enjoy the taste of chocolate.

The next step to experiencing emotion is the assent to the impression, which is necessary for an emotional experience. Assent, or *sunkatathesis*, can be explained as forming a judgment or an opinion. When a person assents to an impression, it is always accompanied by a proposition (Brennan 54). This means that he does not simply assent to the impression in his mind, but he assents to the impression "that such and such." It is the motion of the mind towards

something (Graver 26). Thus, different people can form different judgments in response to the same impression. For instance, my friend and I walk into my house and see my mother. I assent to the impression that I am seeing my mother and *that* she is something of value to me. My friend, however, who has never met my mother, would have the proposition that *that* is a woman of no value to her. In this way, the same impression, accompanied by two different propositions, elicits two different responses.

Simply having the impression, though, is not enough to make a judgment about it. This is where belief comes into play. Brennan defines belief as an assent to an impression (65), the event of the mind taking in the impression and forming a judgment or an opinion about it. This judgment or opinion always concerns the value of the object to the person – that is, whether it is good (worthy) or bad (worthless). This, of course, leads to the largest problem with beliefs and assents – the person can easily place good or bad values on the wrong objects (such as viewing an indifferent as good). That is, we often improperly value impressions. For instance, I could think that a large signing bonus after accepting a position in a new job is good. The bonus, though, cannot be good because it does not contribute to the my happiness – money is an indifferent object. This is actually the greatest obstacle to becoming a Stoic sage. As Brennan points out, "all non-Sages do have the disposition to attribute intense value, even the greatest value, to the objects of their emotions" (Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen 43). This false evaluation of objects as good or bad are what contribute most directly to what the Stoics call the irrational experience of emotion.

It is important to note that the evaluation of the object must exist in the mind prior to the assent to the impression – the belief must be one that the person already holds. For example, if I were to see my mother falling on the sidewalk, my response would be anger and sadness. I

would respond emotionally in this way because I have attributed a certain value to my mother – I believe that she is important to me. This evaluation of my mother as a valuable object, though, had to have existed in my mind before I witnessed her fall, or else I would not have had that emotional reaction. Graver notes that "in having an impression, the mind registers some state of affairs prior to forming an opinion about it one way or another" (Graver 24). What causes me to have that specific assent, then, is my already-held belief. This belief allows me to make a judgment of goodness or badness about the impression. In this case, I would make a judgment that this is bad. Emotional response follows this judgment.

Zeno calls emotions not judgments, but what follow judgments (Graver 29). The emotions are classified into four major groups in Stoic theory: pleasure, pain, desire, and fear. Pleasure and desire describe emotions that are "good" whereas pain and fear are the "bad"[2] emotions. The Stoics make another distinction between the four: pleasure and pain follow judgments of present objects, and desire and fear follow judgments of objects in the future (Brennan 94). For instance, I feel pain at the recent death of a loved one, but I fear the death of my loved ones in the future. What is important to note, though, is that emotions are the results of incorrect judgments of value. The Stoics believed that humans should avoid them at all costs:

> Emotions are defined by Zeno as 'excessive impulses,' that is, as action tendencies of a certain powerful kind. Since every impulse involves assenting to some impulsory impression, the definition implies that emotions, too, depend on our formulating and ratifying certain propositions about ourselves and our surroundings. (Graver 28)

Graver goes on to cite the Stobaean account of these incorrect emotions; that is, as either a contraction or elevation of the mind that is contrary to reason (28). According to the Stoics, emotions force the mind to change in way that is not natural, to respond in such a way that it is not supposed to. The mind would, for instance, contract when experiencing the emotions of pain

[2] I place "good" and "bad" in quotation marks because they do not mean what is good and bad in terms of virtue and vice, and therefore what contributes to happiness, but rather what the non-sage would consider "good" and "bad."

or fear and elevate when experiencing the emotion of love. She points out that "the affective response is not always a natural response; in fact, as ordinarily experienced it is not at all what our nature is designed to do" (34). There is, though, a natural way to experience emotion that is not irrational – the Stoics call these emotions *eupatheiai*, or, "eupathic emotions" (37-8).

Eupathic emotions are the natural versions of emotional response. That is, they exercise the capacity for human beings to experience emotion in the way that it is meant to be exercised. They can also be thought of as perfected responses, or, the kinds of emotional responses that a Stoic sage would experience. The *eupatheiai* are joy, volition, and caution, and they are parallel to the incorrect emotions of desire, anger, and fear (53). There is no eupathic emotion analogous to pain because pain only comes from something bad, or, vice. The Stoic sage, however, has only virtue and no vice, and therefore he will never feel even a corrected version of pain (Brennan 98). The *eupatheiai* can thus be thought of as elevated emotions that, with practice and self-transformation, the person can experience instead of the normal emotions.

The most important feature of the eupathic emotions is that they are correct value judgments. Most normal emotions occur because the person incorrectly values an external object (such as food or money) as something good (Graver 53). External objects, however, can neither be good nor bad, only indifferent. While the Stoic sage realizes that these objects are indifferent, the untrained person does not, and thus gives an incorrect value to them. The way to change this habit of giving good or bad values to external objects is to change one's beliefs, thus preventing the assent to an emotion. Margaret Graver calls these experiences without assent to the impression "pre-emotions" (85). Let us go back to the example where I see a piece of chocolate cake and I desire it. Remember that the impulse of desire towards that piece of chocolate was simply a feeling – I did not judge value of the chocolate nor perceive it as something that would

be good for me. I simply experienced an impulse of desire towards it. I experienced a pre-emotion at that moment, then – there was no assent or judgment about the value of the chocolate cake.

One of the marks of the Stoic sage is that he only experiences the eupathic emotions of volition, joy, and caution, and not the irrational emotions of pleasure, pain, desire, and fear. This is the way that the emotive faculties are naturally meant to be exercised; however, the normal person does not usually experience them in this way. How, then, can we even make an attempt to stop having these irrational experiences? Cicero provides one way to overcome this problem – the theory of pre-rehearsal of emotion. It is important to remember that the Stoics believed that emotions (pleasure, pain, desire, fear) were voluntary and therefore could be experienced as a function of the rational being's natural capacity for them. Learning how to experience eupathic, natural emotions rather than the irrational ones involves practicing the eupathic emotions, using, for instance, the method of pre-rehearsal.

Cicero tells his readers in *Tusculan Disputations: Books 3 and 4* that they should practice emotional response in their reactions to impressions from literature or theater. It is important here to note two things. First, that personal beliefs are the problems in these situations, not the event of the emotion itself. Cicero "hold[s] that the problem is one of belief, and not a matter of nature. For if the event itself were the problem, why would anticipating our troubles make them easier to bear?" (3:31)[3]. Second, he points out that one of the most prominent factors in the excessive experience of emotion is that of surprise. Unexpected grief or hardship, for example, is more difficult to bear than that which is expected:

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[3] The form of reference for the passages from Cicero's *Tusculation Disputations: Books 3 and 4* come from Margaret Graver's translation and commentary on the work. They have the form of Chapter: Paragraph Number.

> So this, at least, is not to be doubted, that all those things that are considered bad are worse when unforeseen. To be sure, unexpectedness is not the sole cause of great distress. Nonetheless, foresight and mental preparation can do a great deal to lessen the pain, and for this reason we who are human should always be rehearsing every event of human life. (3:30)

If the two most important factors in combating the irrational experience of emotion are foresight and mental preparation, then pre-rehearsal is the best method to address both.

What exactly is pre-rehearsal, then? Cicero specifically calls it the "pre-rehearsal of future evils" (3:29). He offers the example of Theseus in one of Eurpides' plays as an example of a person performing this act. Theseus says,

> I learned this from a wise man: over time
> I pondered in my heart the miseries
> To come: a death untimely, or the sad
> Escape of exile, or some other weight
> Of ill, rehearsing, so that if by chance
> Some one of them should happen, I'd not be
> Unready, not torn suddenly with pain. (3:29)

Here, Theseus describes how he has thought about future evils that may happen to him, such as an early death or exile, so that if these things happen, he will be ready for them and not have to experience so much pain. He is attempting to shield himself from becoming overcome with pain, the kind of emotion that has an ability to render the person irrational, and thus experience the emotion irrationally.

Another example that Cicero provides his readers with is the reaction of Telamon when he receives the news of his son Ajax's death:

> I knew, when I fathered them, that they must die,
> and when I nurtured them, it was for this.
> More: when I sent them to Troy, defending Greece,
> I knew that it was to death dealing war they went,
> not to a feast. (3:28)

Telamon points out that he was aware he was sending his children off to war and nothing less. But it is not just the fact that it is common for warriors to die in battle that prepared him to face this grief; he says specifically that while he was raising both of his sons he was aware that he was raising him for the life of the warrior, and that because of this he knew that they must die. Coupled with his awareness of the nature of war, Telamon had prepared himself for the death of his sons, rendering the news less painful when it was finally delivered to him.

These examples seem far-fetched, however, because these two figures mentally practiced the method of pre-rehearsal without the assistance of external aids. The question is, how can the normal person, who does not yet have the ability to simply mentally prepare herself for these future evils, practice this method of pre-rehearsal? One way to do this is to read or observe another's experience of that emotion. This could be in the form of watching a Greek tragedy or reading a novel in which the speaker has an extraordinary experience of grief. By doing this, the reader feels an impulse, or pre-emotion, in response to the character's encounter with grief. This can then be practice for a future experience of grief, serving as a sort of therapy during which the reader learns different methods to deal with grief.

While this description of emotion seems to work excellently on paper, though, it is not as plausible in real life. This is because our emotions are judgments of value; that is, responses based upon a certain belief that we hold. Martha Nussbaum goes into extensive detail on this subject in *Upheavals of Thought*. She argues that persons make judgments about things that they *value*. It is these judgments that provoke the most extreme emotions within the person: "Emotions…involve judgments about important things, judgments in which, appraising an external object as salient for our own well-being, we acknowledge our own neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control" (19). The impression that

the person judges, then, must be something of value to her. The judgment comes about as a result of change. The object is not fully within the person's control, and thus, when it changes, her response towards it changes as well. When her mother died, for instance, Nussbaum's love for her was suddenly accompanied by the grief and emptiness that she felt as a result of her loss: "…I had the odd sensation of having been robbed of a history, of being no longer a person who had a family history" (21). This kind of feeling would have never accompanied thoughts of her mother before her death.

Nussbaum describes the Stoic position on emotions as follows:

> For the Stoics, the judgments that are identified with emotions all have a common subject matter: all are concerned with vulnerable things, things that can be affected by events in the world beyond the person's own control, things that can arrive by surprise, that can be destroyed or removed even when one does not wish it… In short, most of the time emotions link us to items that we regard as important for our well being, but do not fully control. (42-3)

For the person to make a judgment, the object upon which the judgment is made must first of all be of some importance to the person, and second of all must be vulnerable to the changing forces of the world. The importance of the object, then, is based on one's personal beliefs. What one person may regard as important may not be the same as what the next person regards with value. Then again, what that first person may regard as important today may not have been that important to her a few years prior. To change an already established belief about an object, especially considering the object's importance to that person, is a difficult feat to accomplish. This only further shows how difficult it is to attempt to feel another person's grief as a rehearsal for one's own. The circumstances will never be the same in the future, and thus the person cannot adequately prepare. Pre-rehearsal also does nothing to change the belief, and so the method quickly becomes impossible. Thus, Telamon's preparation could never be enough for his actual experience of grief. He was simply being honest with himself about his own sons'

mortality. He was aware that they may die, but did not change his beliefs about them so that he would make a different judgment upon the news of Ajax's death. Telamon never in his speech says that his son is any less important to him as a result of his pre-rehearsal, doing nothing to change his belief about the value of his son. His grief could not be lessened through a simple acceptance of mortality. The shock of Ajax's death may not have been as jolting, but the grief he would feel as a result of it surely was not.

Nussbaum presents one more significant feature of the emotional experience in her description of the grief she felt after her mother's death. This centers on the intrinsic importance of having a special and valuable connection to the object on which the judgment is made.:

> Emotions contain an ineliminable reference to *me*, to the fact that it is *my* scheme of goals and projects. They see the world from my point of view. The fact that it is *my* mother is not simply a fact like any other fact about the world: it is what structures the geography of the whole situation, and we cannot capture the emotion without including that element…the evaluations associated with emotions are evaluations from *my* perspective, not form some impartial perspective; they contain an ineliminable reference to the self. (52)

Here, Nussbaum captures the intensely personal nature of emotions that is critical to the real experience and understanding of them. Every person will feel each emotion differently because of the circumstances that surround their judgments. Each person also has her own set of beliefs that can not be changed simply through preparing to deal with an emotion in a less shocking way. In fact, the same person can feel the very same emotion completely differently because of a change in circumstances. I had lost two grandparents before my grandfather and had gone through their services with a certain amount of grief. Those experiences, however, no where near prepared me for my grandfather's death last year. I actually felt the grief more intensely than I had in the past. Though my previous experiences with grief may have alerted me to the mortality of my family, they nowhere near changed my belief about how valuable my

grandfather was to me, and it is that judgment that I made of him that made me feel the sorrow over his death so intensely.

Nussbaum also points out that changing one's beliefs is an almost an impossible task to accomplish. Because emotional experience results from having a certain judgment, or belief, concerning the value of an object *to me*, then, it follows that this is nearly impossible to avoid feeling the emotion because of the difficulty of changing one's beliefs. She describes the trouble with changing her own false belief on a trivial subject:

> …we may often hold contradictory beliefs, especially in cases involving long habituation. In childhood I cam to think that the U.S. Supreme Court is in California...I put it on the map of my mind in that place, somewhere around Sacramento. To this day, whenever I hear the words "Supreme Court I see that dot on the map. I have know for about forty-five years that this is a false belief, and yet I still retain the belief in some form…I sometimes get to the point of making embarrassing blunders in speech. (35-6)

In a similar way, I for some reason came to believe in elementary school that Abraham Lincoln was an African-American, a belief that was humiliatingly corrected in a sixth-grade history class. To this day, however, whenever I think of Abraham Lincoln, I still associate him with being an African-American. If it is difficult to change one's beliefs on such trivial subjects as these, which we know are false beliefs, then there is little hope for changing one's beliefs concerning the value of the most important objects in our lives, such as those at the loss of which we would feel sorrow.

Upheavals of Thought is not simply a philosophical treatise on the nature of emotion, but also a narrative of the author's grieving process after the loss of her mother. Nussbaum then tells her reader how she was able to deal with her grief and move on with her life. For her, the best course of action was to go on with her normal activities. She describes how her emotions changed after her initial period of grieving: "…the ongoing structure of daily life with my daughter, with my work, with friends and colleagues and people I love, the relatively unaltered

structure of my expectations as to what would happen in that daily life the next day and the next, made the grief less chaotic for me…" (21). She is not saying here that her grief ended after a certain period of time, but merely that it lessened. Continuing with her daily life offered a therapeutic release from the extreme grief that she had been feeling. In no way did she try to change her belief that her mother was valuable and an important part of her life. She simply decided to deal with the grief by taking up her normal schedule again.

This is all not to say that pre-rehearsal is valueless. In her book *Love's Knowledge*, Nussbaum argues that literature has an important place when it comes to questions of ethics:

> My aim is to establish that certain literary texts…are indispensible to a philosophical inquiry in the ethical sphere…the activity of comparison I describe is a real practical activity, one that we undertake in countless ways when we ask ourselves how to live what to be…it is to bring them into connection with our deepest practical searching, for ourselves and others, the searching in connection with which the influential philosophical conceptions of the ethical were originally developed… (23-4)

There is an importance, according to Nussbaum, in using literary texts while considering philosophical questions. They provide answers to the question of how one should live and allow readers to hold them up "against images we derive from our knowledge of other conceptions…" (29). So, even though pre-rehearsal (that is, reading literature) cannot prevent the experience of emotion, it can help us find ways of how to deal with grief and sorrow.

It is impossible to stress enough that the irrational experience of emotion comes primarily from false beliefs, according to the Stoics. That is, it is the result of a value judgment of something that is an external object and thus should be thought of as indifferent, not as something of value. Cicero points out that

> When our belief in the seriousness of our misfortune is combine with the further belief that it is right, and an appropriate and proper thing to be upset by what has happened, then, and not before, there comes about that deep emotion which is distress. (3:61)

Pre-rehearsal does not have the ability to change those deeply held beliefs. What one person may regard as important may not be the same as what the next person regards with value. Then again, what that first person may regard as important today may not have been that important to them a few years prior. To change an already established belief about an object, especially considering the object's importance to that person, is a difficult feat to accomplish. This shows how hard it is to attempt to feel another person's grief as a rehearsal for one's own. It is difficult to see how one method can work for all of these different sets of beliefs. At the same time, however, it is important to note that the method of pre-rehearsal is virtually unlimited in the types of external aids that can be used alongside it – if Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, which will be used in this paper, does not work for a person, perhaps William Wordsworth's poem "The Brothers" will be a better match. The possibilities of texts for pre-rehearsal are anything but limited.

II. *In Memoriam*

The case study I propose for literature as grief therapy is Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. In his book *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, Herbert Tucker says that *In Memoriam's* "narrative course aims to be and demonstrably still it therapeutic" (377). It represents a *real* journey of "wild and wandering cries" (Prologue: 41)[4] through grief that the audience takes with Tennyson by reading the poem. And, it can serve as therapy for a personal experience of grief – though not as a means of prevention. I will demonstrate this by discussing the theme of time in the poem – the manner in which it passes and its importance to the progression of the poem. Next, I will discuss how Tennyson doubts whether the poem can accurately reflect the grief that he is feeling and his doubt about whether or not others can share in his emotional experience, to which he responds with his own version of pre-rehearsal. I will then describe importance of the

[4] The references to *In Memoriam* come from the most recent Norton Critical Edition of the poem, published in 2004. Because the poem is actually a series of poems, I have decided to reference them in the following way: Poem Number: lines.

three Christmases in the poem and their importance to its overall structure. Finally, I will examine the function of spirituality in the poem and the way in which it serves as an important departure from Cicero and the Stoics. I intend to demonstrate while the emotion of grief cannot be overcome through pre-rehearsal because of its debilitating nature, pre-rehearsal can serve as an important model of therapy through which the person can learn how to move past grief. Tennyson knew about the Stoics – in *Poems by Two Brothers*, an early collection of poem that he published with his older poem, Tennyson begins three of his poems in the work with quotations from Cicero: one each from *De Amicitia*, *De Officiis*, and the *Consolatio* (Lounsbury 41, 48). The first and last of these works have clear references to Stoicism, and so we can assume that Tennyson was familiar with the Stoic view of emotion.

The manner in which time passes and Tennyson's relationship to it reveal much about ways in which grief is present in Tennyson's life. The Prologue, written after *In Memoriam* was completed, includes a dedication to Christ and a brief reflection on the poem itself (Ricks 318). At the end of the Prologue Tennyson asks Christ to

> Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
> Confusions of a wasted youth;
> Forgive them where they fail in truth,
> And in thy wisdom make me wise. (Prologue: 41-44)

Sacks views the entire prologue as an invitation for the reader to participate on the journey of grief with Tennyson:

> As addressed to God, but also to the dead, this is partly the mourner's penitence for having survived, for choosing to live on, for having been unable to protect the dead, or simply being unable to mourn him more effectively. As part of a quest for readership, the plea works especially well, for it entreats the kind of active scrutiny that must enter into relation with the poet and poem and respond with an actual judgment. The plea thus posits a superior reader who will somehow complete the poem. (171)

The way that the reader will complete the poem, then, is by using it as a form of therapy – a way in which to understand the process of grief. Tennyson's reference to time in the Prologue is also important – the poem was published over seventeen years after Hallam had died. Sacks points out that

> As an introduction, this request is strangely proleptic, in the original sense of the term – it seeks to ward off, or at least preempt, criticism. What is more important, it is a defense that words against time itself by seeking to cancel or outleap time's process…this coda-prologue calls for an act of improvement that requires time, even while the call outleaps temporality with respect to the poem itself. The problem is central to the entire poem, and lies behind the first section. (171)

The poem reflects his journey through grief, then – a grief that nearly occupied Tennyson's entire life for those seventeen years, a "wasted youth." The Prologue informs the reader of the journey, a journey on which the reader will accompany the author. The poem serves as a guide through Tennyson's grief. The path is not linear, though – Tennyson describes it as "wild and wandering." It is the kind of journey that veers off course and even regresses at times, convincing the reader of the struggle that Tennyson goes through during this time. As Sacks puts it, time unfolds as "a circular rather than an irrevocably linear process" (129) in the poem. This struggle shows how difficult emotional experience is – an emotion's inherently excessive nature makes it difficult to control and thus irrational. At some points in the poem we will see that Tennyson is completely lost within his grief, showing the power of the emotion to render the otherwise rational person unreasonable.

The first reference to time after the Prologue appears in the first poem of the larger work. In the second stanza Tennyson asks

> But who shall so forecast the years
> And find in loss a gain to match?
> Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
> The far-off interest of tears? (I: 5-8)

The poet is already doubtful of the healing power of time in this section. Tennyson hesitates to believe that, even in the far future, he will be able to find "in loss a gain to match" (I: 6). He means both whether he will ever find a friend as great as Hallam, but also whether he will be able to move past the loss. This doubtfulness reoccurs throughout the poem – Tennyson seems to doubt everything in the midst of his grief.

Time also serves as an important indicator for Tennyson's place in his journey through grief in the poem. As I mentioned earlier, Tennyson goes through a series of progressions and regressions throughout the poem, rather than journeying through his grief in a linear manner. Quite early in the poem, Tennyson seems to already making strides in getting through his sorrow. The last three stanzas of Poem XI read

> Calm and still light on yon great plain
> That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
> And crowded farms and lessening towers,
> To mingle with the bounding main:
>
> Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
> These leaves that redden to the fall;
> And in my heart, if calm at all,
> If any calm, a calm despair:
>
> Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
> And waves that sway themselves in rest,
> And dead calm in that noble breast
> Which heaves but with the heaving deep. (XI: 9-20)

There are a couple of things to note here. The first is the clear relationship that Tennyson sees between nature and what is natural for human beings. He references the "calm and still light" in autumn on the plain and the "calm and deep peace" in the air. He also notes that the "waves…sway themselves in rest" because of the "calm of the seas." What is natural according to nature should also be natural in the human being – that is, if the person is in accordance with his nature, then he will feel calm and peaceful in the face of any calamity. He also recognizes

that the state of calmness is the natural state of human being – the opposite of how grief affects a person. Emotional experience, then, is unnatural, as the Stoics believed, and calmness or stillness of the person is in accordance with nature, or what is natural for the person. Tennyson is not quite at the point of complete serenity yet, but he does possess "a calm despair" in his heart. He is moving forward in his emotional experience – the passage of time is clear from the changing of the leaves. His emotional state, at this point, is not tumultuous (unlike in Poem V when he talks about his "unquiet heart"). It is not that he does not feel despair, as the Stoic sage would not, but he is at the very least serene, a large leap forward in his journey through grief. Peter Sacks notes the imagery of the ship in this poem:

> Instead of the melancholic's resistance to mobility and time, the ship moves so evenly in time that its 'favorable speed' seems to tame or becalm time itself within its motion. Like the flower, and like the evolutionary myth this is to follow, the image of the hip's voyage thus indicates the kind of resolution that Tennyson will achieve…So, too his evocations of calm are imperiled by their own potential for a mere return to the fixity of despair and to the calmness of the dead (11). The fair ship yields easily to the poet's explicitly self-reflective image of an 'unhappy bark' that 'strikes by night a craggy shelf.' In this description of traumatic shock, the conquest over time is only the nightmarish product of a delirium that fuses old and new. (176)

The imagery of the ship shows that this calm will only last for so long, and that a future distress is inevitable, setting the ship back in its course. In fact, Tennyson will not progress from here, and the last lines of Poem XI hint at the fact that he will soon regress: "And dead calm in that noble breast/Which heaves but with the heaving deep." At the end of Poem V, he is not longer calm in his despair but is feeling the emotion deeply once again, irrationally stirring his natural state, causing him to heave with sobs.

It is not long before Tennyson has regressed back nearly to the state in which he was at the beginning of the poem. In Poem XV, he writes the "the last red leaf is whirl'd away," (XV:

3) signifying the end of autumn. Little time has passed since his feeling of calmness, a reversion in Tennyson's therapeutic journey:

> And but for fancies, which aver
> That all thy motions gently pass
> Athwart a plane of molten glass,
> I scarce could brook the strain and stir
>
> That makes the barren branches loud;
> And but for fear it is not so,
> The wild unrest that lives in woe
> Would dote and pore on yonder cloud
>
> That rises upward always higher,
> And onward drags a laboring breast
> And topples round the dreary west,
> A looming bastion fringed with fire. (XV: 9-20)

Here, Tennyson is again in a state of "wild unrest that lives in woe," meaning that he again in the excessive, unnatural state of emotion in which he cannot control his grief. Sacks points out: "it is against the unfolding of time that Tennyson struggles here, as elsewhere in his poetry. He is not merely trying to cling to the lost object of his love; he is also resisting the very passage of time that makes loss so irreversible" (168). Tennyson cannot even tolerate the sound of the branches rustling in the wind, nor contemplate the cloud in the sky that strikes him. What he would normally do at this time of the year would be to enjoy the scenery of the natural world, but this becomes an impossibility amidst his grief. And, Tennyson recognizes that this is a clear regression from his previous progress: in the next poem of *In Memoriam*, he expresses his frustration at his fluctuating emotional state:

> What words are these have fall'n from me?
> Can calm despair and wild unrest
> Be tenants of a single breat,
> Or sorrow such a changeling be? (XVI: 1-4)

In this stanza Tennyson refers to the opposition of the "calm despair" that he was just experiencing a short time before and the "wild unrest" with which he is now plagued. It seems implausible that a person could be feeling these two emotional states simultaneously, but this is how much the grief is stirring Tennyson's natural state. He continues, in this poem, to wonder what the cause of such differing feelings could be:

> Or has the shock, so harshly given,
> Confused me like the unhappy bark
>
> That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
> And staggers blindly ere she sink?
> And stunn'd me from my power to think
> And all my knowledge of myself;
>
> And made me that delirious man
> Whose fancy fuses old and new,
> And flashes into false and true,
> And mingles all without a plan? (XVI: 11-20)

Tennyson gives one possibility as to why his emotional state is so dynamic; he posits that he could simply still be in shock from the news of Hallam's death – this is certainly possible, considering how early this is in the poem, the news of the death could still be fresh in Tennyson's mind. He points out that the shock "stunned me from my power to think/And all my knowledge of myself," rendering his very character into something almost unrecognizable from what he was before the death. As Cicero noted, unexpected grief is much harder to bear that grief that is expected. This, in turn, causes him to "mingle all without a plan." This is both a reference to his progress in grief and the poem itself – it is clear throughout that there is no real plan, at least in the traditional sense, to the poem. It reflects journey through grief – it is evident over and over again that this journey does not follow a straight path.

Another important theme in the poem is the Tennyson's inability to properly express his grief, due in part to the excessive nature of emotions. Throughout the poem, Tennyson finds it

difficult to put into words how he feels. Nevertheless, he is aware that the composition of the poem is an exercise for him – a sort of therapy that is aiding him in getting through his loss. He says in Poem V of *In Memoriam*:

> I sometimes hold it half a sin
> To put in words the grief I feel;
> For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the Soul within.
>
> But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
> A use in measured language lies;
> The sad mechanic exercise,
> Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.
>
> In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
> Like coarsest clothes against the cold:
> But that large grief which these enfold
> Is given in outline and no more. (V)

While the poem is short, there are a number of important references that Tennyson makes here, especially in light of emotion theory. The first is that the poet points out the inability for the poem to truly reveal his grief. He says that his words "half reveal" and "half conceal" his soul, in effect telling the reader that she cannot know the full extent of the pain that Tennyson is going through. In fact, at the end of Poem V, Tennyson says that the poem gives an "outline and no more" of his grief. It is impossible, then, for the reader to know the full extent of his experience. Pinch describes this trend in eighteenth century and early nineteenth century literature:

> It designates feelings themselves as belonging to space of exile, a place that can be imagined but not described…A reading of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century epistemologies of feelings should teach us that feelings are not inherently impossible to know; they only become so. (192)

Tennyson has the natural ability to describe his state of being, but the grief that he is feeling is so intense that it has interrupted this capacity. He cannot properly express it to the reader, and so we cannot understand it. Furthermore, Tennyson struggles with the inability of words

themselves to fully reveal the extent of his grief, considering it "half a sin" to put it into words. Tucker points out that "Tennyson serves notice that there are limits to the reliability of his language; and this very notice confirms him as a trustworthy confessant, drawing…on the soul-saving reserve of what he cannot say" (380-1). On the other hand, there is also a sense of the loss of self, which is possible through the engulfment of grief. Sacks addresses this issue: "…these lines spell out the poet's greatest concern: not merely the loss of his friend but the threatened survival, in time, of his own selfhood. The question for the poet is how to mourn while retaining a sense of self" (172). This self is threatened, though, because of the intensity of the grief that the poem is feeling.

The use of the composition of the poem as a form of grief therapy is apparent in the second stanza of Poem V. It is unlike the pre-rehearsal of emotion in that he does not read about someone else's experience, but instead puts his own grief into poetry, channeling the emotion through a new and different medium. Tennyson says that he possesses an "unquiet heart and brain," meaning that, instead of experiencing the calm of a peaceful mind that the Stoic sage would constantly feel, his thoughts and feelings are tumultuous – in other words, the emotional experience that he is going through is unnatural. Writing the poem, though, is a useful exercise for his "unquiet heart and brain." Tennyson tells the reader: "a use in measured language lies…like dull narcotics, numbing pain." For the poet, the creation of the poem is a way for him to regulate his pain, or, in other words, is a way in which to deal with his grief – it is his therapy. Poetry is useful, then, for this specific purpose – so much so that he is able to use the poem as "clothes against the cold" of grief.

Poem V is not the only place where Tennyson mentions the usefulness of the poem in aiding him with the process of his grief. In Poem LXXV, for instance, Tennyson says

I leave thy praises unexpress'd
In verse that brings myself relief.
And by the measure of my grief
I leave thy greatness to be guess'd:

What practice howsoe'er expert
In fitting aptest words to things,
Or voice the richest-toned that sings,
Hath power to give thee as thou wert? (LXXV: 1-8)

There are two important things to note about the first two stanzas of this poem. The first is the obvious point that Tennyson makes about the usefulness of the poem – it serves to relieve the poet's grief. What is more important here, however, is the value that Tennyson assigns to Hallam. While it is clear throughout the poem that Tennyson valued his friend quite highly, here he directly references the extent of his worth. The poet feels that he cannot properly describe just how valuable Hallam was, and so he decides to leave his "greatness to be guessed." Because of his inability to properly describe Hallam's personal value to him, we can infer that he was something that was nearly indispensable to Tennyson. This is important because, as the Stoics and Nussbaum argue, we experience an emotional response only to objects of personal value about which we hold beliefs. It thus makes sense why Tennyson has experienced such a deep grief in response to Hallam's death – his friend's value to him is beyond words. Because the value he regarded him with is so great, the grief in turn is just as great. The experience is also irrational, though, because Tennyson should not be assigning so much value to Hallam – he should actually consider him an indifferent, because, in the end, he does not contribute to Tennyson's happiness. This only demonstrates how common it is for us to confer large worth to "indifferent" objects, causing them to be the objects of our irrational emotional responses.

Even though he often cites the usefulness of the poem for his own grief therapy, Tennyson also experiences doubt about this very utility. One of the times when he expresses this doubt is in Poem LXXVII:

> These mortal lullabies of pain
> May bind a book, may line a box,
> May serve to curl a maiden's locks;
> Or when a thousand moons shall wane
>
> A man upon a stall may find,
> And, passing, turn the page that tells
> A grief, then changed to something else
> Sung by a long-forgotten mind. (LXXVII: 5-12)

Here, Tennyson has qualms about whether or not any other person will see the usefulness in this exercise. He worries that the sheets of paper on which the poem is printed will be used for lining boxes or curling a woman's hair rather than reading. Or, even worse, he worries that the poem will lose its worth over time – in the future, the reader may not be able to find the value and meaning in it because it is so old – the grief has already passed. It is clear that Tennyson is experiencing some serious fears about the use of poetry, specifically the use of elegiac poetry. Even though he constantly cites it as useful for therapy, he is also constantly worried about how it will be received.

These uncertainties are especially evident in Poem XXI, during which Tennyson anticipates the possible criticisms from the readers and listeners of his poem

> The traveller hears me now and then,
> And sometimes harshly will he speak:
> 'This fellow would make weakness weak,
> And melt the waxen hearts of men.'
>
> Another answers, 'Let him be,
> He loves to make parade of pain
> That with his piping he may gain
> The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth: 'Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chair and thrones of civil power? (XXI: 5-16)

There are three criticisms here of the elegy. The first criticizes the poem for being too sentimental – the poem is simply too emotional. The second critique is that the poem is just a way to gain more fame and praise rather than an actual description of his experience of sorrow. Finally, the third criticism asks what utility the poem has for the public – that is, what does the poem do to remedy societal ills? This third criticism is especially important – it directly attacks the utility of the poem rather than its content or the intent of the poet. Like the concerns in poem LXXVII, Tennyson expresses extreme doubt about the utility of the poem to others.

While he is expressing this extreme doubt, however, Tennyson also is quite aware of the reasons why he is writing *In Memoriam*:

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

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol'n away. (XXI: 21-28)

Isobel Armstrong argues that

> I *must* implies that the song is involuntary and imposed as a duty at one and the same time, willed and unwilled. Involuntary song liberates feeling…Regression to the inarticulate cry is inevitable when words are no adequate to express emotion. There may be no words to use. In that case the continuance of language can perhaps be enabled by a sport which brings it into play, inventing it as a game. (136-7)

Tennyson has no choice but to sing, or, to write *In Memoriam* in order to deal with his grief. He describes it as a natural occurrence: just as birds sing as a part of their nature, so does Tennyson. He then continues to extend the simile by describing that the birds sing both joyful and sorrowful

songs depending on their emotions – a clear indication that the kind of poetry that occurs is dependent on the emotions of the writer. By making it something which is not only natural but that he *must* do, Tennyson shows that the creation of the poem is an essential, personal form of therapy, one of the ways in which he will be able to get past his grief.

Another issue that Tennyson struggles with throughout the poem also concerns the personal nature of emotion: namely, exactly how others can share in the emotion even though they do not regard the judgment-object with the same value. In *Strange Fits of Passion*, Adela Pinch notes this difficulty in the writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

> The writers I discuss tend to tell – often within a single work – conflicting stories about the status of feeling. On the one hand, they assert that feelings are personal, that they have origins in an individual's experience and are authenticated by their individuality. On the other hand they reveal that feelings may be impersonal; that one's feelings may really be someone else's; that feelings may be purely conventional, or have no discernible origins. (7)

The same rings true for *In Memoriam*. This distinction also draws the line of difference between an actual emotion and a pre-emotion. One of Tennyson's first mentions of his struggle between the personal and communal qualities of emotion is early in *In Memoriam*:

> One writes, that 'Other friends remain,'
> That 'Loss is common to the race'–
> And common is the commonplace,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain.
>
> That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more:
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening, but some heart did break. (VI: 1-8)

At first, Tennyson entertains the thought that grief is a common feeling among all persons. It is important to note, though, that he only does so through the words of another; that is, he quotes another person saying, "Loss is common to the race." Perhaps, then, the poet can deal with his grief by thinking that loss is something that all people experience, and thus should not be

something crushing, but a normal piece of everyday life. This thought is only entertained for a second, though, and Tennyson immediately dismisses the idea in the next stanza. He points out "that loss is common would not make/ My own less bitter, rather more." The thought that everyone goes through this extreme kind of pain only exacerbates Tennyson's, making it even harder to bear. He considers these emotional experiences "too common," an experience which should not be such an everyday affair. The fact that "Never morning wore/ To evening but some heart did break" is certainly not something that helps Tennyson deal with the pain at the early stage. His initial response to this form of therapy is adamant rejection.

Even though he rejects the thought of the commonality of loss as something comforting, he does alter this idea a little in order to engage in his most principal form of therapy – that of Cicero's pre-rehearsal. Tennyson's pre-rehearsal is a little different from the way Cicero described it, mostly because he has already experienced the loss and is currently feeling the pain of sorrow. Even so, Tennyson repeatedly creates these "mini-scenes" in the poems of *In Memoriam* of other human beings' experiences with sorrow. Sacks points out how Tennyson shifts from sharing to self-absorption:

> He [Tennyson] does…allow several self-comparisons to other grievers – a father, a mother, and a young woman expecting her lover. But despite this apparent broadening of reference, the burden of the last comparison is one of extreme self-absorption, and it confirms our suspicion regarding the narcissistic element of the poet's grief. (174)

For instance, immediately following those first stanzas of Poem VI, Tennyson launches into two mini-scenes:

> O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
> Who pledgest now thy gallant son;
> A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
> Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.
>
> O mother, praying God will save
> Thy sailor, –while thy head is bow'd,

His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave. (VI: 9-16)

In the first scene he describes a father mourning the death of his son from warfare, an echo of Cicero's example of Telamon's pre-rehearsal of his son Ajax's death in war. In the second scene a mother prays to God over her son's lifeless body, hoping that his soul will be saved. These images of grief both demonstrate how common it is among human beings to feel sorrow over the loss of another. It is almost as if Tennyson has changed his mind about using the commonality of grief due to loss as a way to cope with his own sorrow. What the poet does in the next two stanzas, though, is interesting:

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, 'here to-day,'
Or 'here to-morrow will he come.' (VI: 17-24)

Tennyson immediately moves from others' experience with grief to his own, personal experience. In this specific case, Tennyson describes how he was in the process of writing to Hallam when he received the news of his death. He had been expecting his friend to return shortly, but instead he was struck with the news of his loss. It is clear, then, that Tennyson was not expecting his friend's death, making his grief, as Cicero argued, even harder to bear. It is also important to note, though, that the poet doubts whether thinking about others' experiences with grief can really help his own. His immediate move from their encounters with the emotion to his own show that his is inherently different and thus cannot really be compared with the others.

This structure occurs again later in *In Memoriam*:

A happy lover who has come
To look on her that loves him well,
Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

So I find every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The field, the chamber and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not. (VIII: 1-12)

The scene that Tennyson describes here is nearly identical to his own experience with the death of Hallam. In it, he describes the lover who expects to see his beloved but instead finds out that she is nowhere near, perhaps even dead. The lover then describes his facial expression as being drained of all happiness and joy, being replaced instead by sorrow and grief. Then, just as in the last example, Tennyson immediately moves into his own experience and likens the two. He tells the reader: "So I find every pleasant spot/ In which we two were wont to meet." Tennyson is essentially making a comparison between the two situations, pointing out where they are similar as a means of describing his grief. This is quite nearly opposite to everything that Tennyson has said earlier, leading the reader to believe that as much as he does not want to admit, Tennyson does find some comfort in others' experiences of the same kind of sorrow. The last line of this selection, "For all is dark where thou art not" echoes the line in the previous stanza "And all the place is dark." The two situations are nearly identical, and the poet puts himself in the position of another in order to imagine his grief in a different way, thus helping him deal with it. Even though he does not necessarily believe it at this point, Tennyson does find some comfort in the "commonality of grief." The only way he can do this, however, is when he and the other person that he describes assent to similar impressions. In the first situation, Tennyson could find few

similarities in the experiences. I discussed earlier how the same impression can elicit two different responses, or judgments, based on belief. This can also work oppositely: different impressions can elicit the same judgment if the belief about each separate impression is the same. The beliefs here, according to the Tennyson are similar, and thus the two form the similar judgments even though they are assenting to different impressions.

Tennyson continues to become more open to the commonality of grief – one in which the reader can understand the way grief works in others in order to then understand her own grief – as the poem continues. Poem LXXXV shows a definite change in the doubt that Tennyson experiences considering its utility. This specific poem is addressed, according to Tennyson, to his friend Edmund Lushington, who would later marry his sister Cecilia (Gray 58). In the second stanza, he tells Lushington

> O true in word, and tried in deed,
> Demanding, so to bring relief
> To this which is our common grief,
> What kind of life is that I lead. (LXXXV: 5-8)

Here, Tennyson admits that he and Lushington share in the grief over the loss of Hallam. Lushington must either have some great knowledge of Tennyson or Hallam must have been a mutual friend, or else they could not share so closely in the loss. The poet goes on to describe how helpful it is that they can share in the loss through their dialogue:

> Your words have virtue such as draws
> A faithful answer from the breast,
> Thro' light reproaches, half exprest,
> And loyal unto kindly laws. (LXXXV: 9-12)

Tennyson values the honesty that Lushington provides in reply to Tennyson's grief, which is only possible because of their friendship and because of the way that they can share in it. Thus, the narrator is beginning to openly value the commonality of loss, but only in regards to the

person who holds the loss as equal in value. The value of pre-rehearsal of emotion is not evident from the above passage, but becomes clear in the next stanzas of Poem LXXXV.

Poem LXXXV is essential to understanding the reflection of Cicero's theory of pre-rehearsal of the emotions. In the stanza following those lines specifically addressing Edmund Lushington, Tennyson writes

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

Tennyson has Stoic thinking in mind when he descries his blood as having "an even tenor kept" before he heard of Hallam's death. He was thus able to keep his emotions at bay, according to nature, until the moment that the shock arrived. This moment reminds the reader of the "wild and wandering cries" that the poet described earlier, a completely irrational experience of emotion that disrupted his otherwise calm nature. It continues to become clear that the poem is can serve as emotional therapy for those reading it – a way to pre-rehearse grief. Tennyson sees the way in which the poem can serve as therapy for his readers, and even describes the method as making the blow of Hallam's death less difficult to bear. In fact, he makes a nearly direct reference to the Stoic method of pre-rehearsal:

> Whatever way my days decline,
> I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
> His being working in mine own,
> The footsteps of his life in mine;
>
> A life that all the Muses deck'd
> With gifts of grace, that might express
> All-comprehensive tenderness,
> All subtilizing intellect:
>
> And so my passion hath not swerved
> To works of weakness, but I find
> An image comforting the mind,

And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,
That loved to handle spiritual strife,
Diffused the shock thro' all my life,
But in the present broke the blow. (LXXXV: 41-56)

There are several important points to note about this passage from Poem LXXXV. The first is in the last lines of the first stanza, in which Tennyson says that he feels "His [Hallam's] being and working in mine own,/ The footsteps of his life in mine." Tennyson describes the way in which he feels Hallam's presence in his everyday activities as "an image comforting the mind." This image is one of the ways in which Tennyson deals with his grief – it is his personal form of therapy: "It is not just that imagination, looking high and low for consolation, finds only projections and reflections of itself. In order to console a mourner, comfort must come in the mourner's own terms…" (Tucker 399). There must be a personal way for the mourner to deal with his grief, according to Tucker – and this is one of the ways in which Tennyson does this. This becomes clear when Tennyson say that, because of this feeling, he finds "in my grief a strength reserved." The image is powerful enough to help him get through his despair, and alleviates some of it in the process. Even though this is not exactly Cicero's pre-rehearsal, it is definitely a form of grief therapy. Furthermore, in the last stanza of this selection, Tennyson tells the reader that "imaginative woe…diffused the shock thro' all my life." "Imaginative woe" is identical to pre-rehearsal of emotion – throughout his life he has imagined grief (perhaps through literature or the other methods that Cicero prescribes), meaning that it helped him prepare for the experience. This means that Tennyson had experienced a pre-emotion, that is, an impulse, but did not actually make an assent to an impression when he participated in this exercise. This pre-rehearsal "in the present broke the blow," but did not fully prevent it. Even though the reader notices that time and time again Tennyson's grief is immense, he admits here

that it could have been greater if he had not been able to rehearse for it previously during his lifetime. The Stoic pre-rehearsal of emotions has worked for Tennyson by preparing him for grief, then, but not preventing it.

At the same time, though, there is always a sense of doubt in Tennyson's mind. He goes on to say:

> 'I watch thee from the quiet shore;
> They spirit up to mine can reach;
> But in dear words of human speech
> We two communicate no more.'
>
> And I, 'Can clouds of nature stain
> The starry clearness of the free?
> How is it? Canst thou feel for me
> Some painless sympathy with pain?' (LXXXV: 81-88)

In the first stanza, Hallam is speaking to Tennyson from beyond the grave. He describes a way in which the two can still communicate (of which Tennyson is already aware from feeling Hallam's "being working in mine own") outside of language. Tennyson's response to Hallam, however, is not necessarily directed towards his friend – he also directs it towards his readership. He questions whether or not the poem will be useful as a way to prepare for real experiences of grief. "Painless sympathy with pain" means having an experience of pain (for instance by reading about one in literature) without actually feeling the pain of sorrow. This, in essence, is what happens throughout the poem – the reader goes through the painful experience with the narrator, but does not actually feel the pain that Tennyson feels because there is no personal connection to Hallam on the reader's part – without this, there is no real experience of emotion.

Poem XCV is the major religious turning point of *In Memoriam*. One feature of the poem which I addressed earlier is that there is a sense of spirituality throughout the poem. Religion and belief complicated for Tennyson. The writing itself serves as therapy instead of

religion – that is, in the absence of belief in something beyond, Tennyson uses different forms of therapy in order to deal with his grief. At the same time, however, it is impossible to leave out the struggle that Tennyson has with his own personal beliefs throughout the poem – it can even be read as a journey from doubt to belief, reflecting this same struggle that he faced in his personal life. Pelatson calls *In Memoriam*

> a poem that defines and tests its faith in so many ways and that describes not just the mingled desire and reluctance of doubt to yield to faith, but also of the part to yield to the whole, of the unique self to become the voice of England, and of the moment to surrender its significance to some far-off divine event. (200)

While this element is certainly important to the poem, the journey through to belief is only secondary to Tennyson's journey through grief. Nevertheless, it still serves an important function in Poem XCV.

The scene Tennyson creates in this poem is one of the speaker who is left alone in the outdoors to ponder over his thoughts. When there are not even animals around him, Tennyson is confronted with the impression of Hallam's ghost:

> But when those others, one by one,
> Withdrew themselves from me and night,
> And in the house light after light
> Went out, and I was all alone,
>
> A hunger seized my heart; I read
> Of that glad year which once had been,
> In those fall'n leaves which kept their green,
> The noble letters of the dead:
>
> And strangely on the silence broke
> The silent-speaking words, and strange
> Was love's dumb cry defying change
> To test his worth; and strangely spoke
>
> The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
> On doubts that drive the coward back,
> And keen thro' wordy snares to track
> Suggestion to her inmost cell.

> So word by word, and line by line,
> The dead man touch'd me from the past,
> And all at once it seem'd at last
> The living soul was flash'd on mine. (XCV: 17-36)

Tennyson says that on the "fall'n leaves" are written the "noble letters of the dead," an indication that he sees Hallam in every piece of nature that is around him at this moment. These lines are important in connection with lines 33-4: "So word by word, and line by line,/ The dead man touch'd me from the past." Through the poem, Tennyson has established a sort of spiritual connection with Hallam, defined by words and the sheets of paper on which these words are written. He almost divinizes the writing of the poem because of the way it has served as therapy for him and has linked him to Hallam. Adela Pinch points out in connection with Charlotte Smith's sonnets that there is a direct connection between the experience of grief and literature itself:

> Smith's sonnets, then, highlight the *literariness* of the melancholy they express. From the first sonnet onward, they seem to argue that their melancholy may indeed be caused by the strange effects of reading and writing. Smith's poetry suggests that the extent to which the culture of sensibility and especially its literary forms may not have naturally given voice to women's feelings. They demonstrate as well the ways in which melancholy functions as a medium for the transmission of poetic convention in late eighteenth-century verse. (66)

The same rings true for Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. There is certainly a clear connection between the experience of grief and the literature itself – the way in which he writes the poem is meant to serve as a form of therapy for himself and also for his future readers. He reads in nature the letters of the deceased Hallam, just as the reader is supposed to read the natural example of grief in Tennyson's poem.

The last line of the excerpt above, "the living soul was flash'd on mine" reminds the reader of Tennyson's earlier lines "his being working in mine own,/ The footsteps of his life in

mine" from Poem LXXXV. The meaning is different in Poem XCV, however – what Tennyson describes is not just an image, but a "living soul" – it is clear that he is seeing Hallam's ghost. Mattes describes this moment as one of spiritual certainty:

> Although there naturally was no sense of separate satisfactions, this experience was therefore both emotionally satisfying and spiritually reassuring…he came face to face with 'that which is' (95:39), and glimpsed the meaning of time, of chance, and of death – those mysteries which had been more baffling than ever since Hallam's death. (51)

It is interesting that this moment of spiritual certainty comes at the same moment that he sees Hallam's ghost – this is definitely not a Christian spirituality, but rather one that Tennyson invents himself and of which Hallam is the basis. Tennyson only overcomes his doubt when he is finally certain that he can still communicate with Hallam – for instance, through his literature – and this certainty only comes when he sees his ghost. There is an immediate turn in the poem, evident in the last stanza of Poem XCV:

> 'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away;
> And East and West, without a breath,
> Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
> To broaden into boundless day. (XCV: 61-64)

Tennyson's assent to spirituality, then, is just as personal as his grief – it is his own version of spirituality, the belief in the immortality of his best friend, Hallam, serving as its basis.

The Christmas sections provide structure in what otherwise seems like a winding and wandering poem of sorrow as well as reflect Tennyson's journey through spirituality. Each Christmas reflects a different stage Tennyson's journey through grief and is an important way in which Tennyson measures time. During the first Christmas what, in the past, had been a time of joy in Tennyson's life has taken a dark turn, evident in the last lines of Poem XXVIII:

> This year I slept and woke with pain.
> I almost wish'd no more to wake,
> And that my hold on life would break
> Before I heard those bells again:

> But they my troubled spirit rule,
> For they controll'd me when a boy;
> They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
> The merry merry bells of Yule. (XXVIII: 13-16)

At this early stage of his grief, Tennyson is still buried in his despair. He says that he "slept and woke with pain" on Christmas this year, even almost hoping not to wake up that morning. Something stops him from being completely overcome with grief, however – the memory of his joy upon hearing the church bells on Christmas as a young child. When he hears the bells in the present, then, his grief is not completely overwhelming because he has that memory to help subdue his feelings of despair. Even this memory of more joyful times, however, is not enough to change the feeling of sadness at the absence of Hallam:

> With trembling fingers did we weave
> The holly round the Christmas hearth;
> A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
> And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.
>
> At our old pastimes in the hall
> We gambol'd, making vain pretence
> Of gladness, with an awful sense
> Of one mute Shadow watching all. (XXX: 1-5)

Here, Tennyson is overcome by sadness at this time of year because he feels most deeply the absence of Hallam, who had been an essential part of his Christmas celebration in the past, and so was a valued participant. Without him there, everything seems off – even though Tennyson and his family and friends attempt to celebrate Christmas as they used to, there is an eerie sense of Hallam's ghost – present yet silent, absent. Even the usual joys and remembrances of past joys are not enough to overcome the sadness that pervades this first Christmas.

Tennyson continues struggling to move on immediately after the first Christmas. Markley notes:

> …it would be more accurate to acknowledge that he [Tennyson] is working to achieve a sense of the slowness with which time seems to pass during a period of deep grief. The arrangement of the individual poems in the first edition of *In Memoriam*, in which each begins on a separate page, literally slows down the experience of reading the elegy, and contributes to the effect that each poem represents a new and particular state in one individual's progression through mourning. (73)

Poem XXXVIII reveals this slow-moving action:

> With weary steps I loiter on,
> Tho' always under alter'd skies
> The purple from the distance dies,
> My prospect and horizon gone.
>
> No joy the blowing season gives,
> The herald melodies of spring,
> But in the songs I love to sing
> A doubtful gleam of solace lives. (XXVIII: 1-8)

It is evident that, though slowly, time is passing – Tennyson describes the skies as constantly changing and also points out in the second stanza that it is now spring. His grief is not passing as quickly as the time, however, and he continues on with "weary steps." Even though spring is a joyful time of renewal of life, he sees sorrow with every joy the season brings. There is no lessening of his grief with the passing of time at this point, but Tennyson becomes more open to this lessening as a result of the progression of time towards the middle of *In Memoriam*. In fact, he admits that time changes the way he regards and feels about Hallam in Poem LIX:

> My centred passion cannot move,
> Nor will it lessen from to-day;
> But I'll have leave at times to play
> As with the creature of my love;
>
> And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
> With so much hope for years to come,
> That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
> Could hardly tell what name were thine. (LIX: 9-16)

The "centered passion" that Tennyson is talking about here is strong feeling of friendship that he will forever feel towards Hallam. He admits, though, that he cannot control what will inevitably happen with the passage of time – he will begin to move on. In consequence, the memories of Hallam will become more distant and their friendship may lessen as well. The hope here, for Tennyson, is that someday he will be able to move on from this loss: "and set thee forth, for thou art mine." At the same time, he fears that in letting of his grief he will lose Hallam completely – he is even worried that he will one day forget Hallam's name. There is a tension, then, between the desire to move on and the fear that all the memories and joy in consequence. The grief causes Tennyson to be unsure of what to do or think – the emotional experience completely disrupts his natural state of being.

The second celebration of Christmas passes a bit differently from the first. Tennyson describes the scene

> Again at Christmas did we weave
> The holly round the Christmas hearth;
> The silent snow posses'd the earth,
> An calmly fell our Christmas eve.
>
> The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
> No wing of wind the region swept,
> But over all things brooding slept
> The quiet sense of something lost. (LXXVIII: 1-8)

There are important differences here between the first and second Christmases. First, of course, is the mood of the second Christmas – it is calm rather than sorrowful, a clear progression in the process of grief. There is no open sadness; rather, silence is the characteristic trait of the holiday this year. Also, there is no awful sense of someone missing or watching over the scene, but a "quiet sense of something lost." The tone of this poem is reminiscent of Poem XI in which

Tennyson describes the calmness of his mind and heart. There is a problem with this quiet and calmness, however, which comes to light in the last stanzas of the poem:

> Who show'd a token of distress?
> No single tear, no mark of pain:
> O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
> O grief, can grief be changed to less?
>
> O last regret, regret can die!
> No – mixt with all this mystic frame,
> Her deep relations are the same
> But with long use her tears are dry. (LXXVIII: 13-20)

Tennyson feels guilt over the lessening of his sorrow. He is almost angry that there were no signs of sadness at this Christmas celebration, and wonders if and how grief can subside over time. It is obvious that it can, however, or else the Christmas would have fallen the same as the first. Tennyson realizes this and changes his tone from anger to sorrow in the last stanza of the poem, claiming that because of the length of time that he and his family and friends have spent in sorrow, there are no more tears that can be shed. The doubt Tennyson feels is significant in that it disappears by next Christmas.

The last celebration of Christmas is the most crucial to the poem. Its tone is completely different from the previous two and it marks a serious turning point in *In Memoriam* and Tennyson's emotional journey through grief:

> Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
> The flying cloud, the frosty light:
> The year is dying in the night;
> Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.
>
> Ring out the old, ring in the new,
> Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
> The year is going, let him go;
> Ring out the false, ring in the true.
>
> Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
> For those that here we see no more;

Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manner, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in. (CVI: 1-20)

"Wild" marks the change in Tennyson's tone. Previously, the poet had reserved the word "wild" to describe his uncontrollable emotional state. Here, though, the use is absolutely different – the "wild bells" are in not lost in sadness, but overflowing with joy. The bells are also ringing in a new time; Tennyson says "the year is dying in the night" and tells the bells to "ring out the old, ring in the new." The change is in the poet's attitude – he is finally ready to let Hallam go and to truly move on with his life, telling the bells to "let him [Hallam] die." And, it is not just that Tennyson is ready to let Hallam go, but he is also ready to change the tone of his poetry from now on – instead of his "mournful rhymes" he wants to "ring the fuller minstrel in." Instead of an elegy, Tennyson will now move into something lighter. Poem CVI also marks a change in Tennyson's spirituality, though. The last three stanzas read

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right.
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out the old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,

Ring in the Christ that is to be. (CVI: 21-32)

Tennyson makes a Christian alteration in these last three stanzas. He asks for the bells to ring in the "love of truth and right," "common love of good," "the thousand years of peace," and "the Christ that is to be." These are specifically Christian, moral desires. The thousand years of peace that Tennyson references is a direct reference to Revelation 20, which speaks of an angel coming and binding Satan for a thousand years (Ricks 428). Also, in Tennyson's notes he says that the ringing in of "the Christ that is to be" is a reference to the "broader Christianity of the future" (428). Has he completely bought into Christianity and decided to continue the poem speaking in Christian terms? The answer is no however, and it is important to notice the change that Tennyson experiences here. Even if he does not buy into a standard form of Christianity, he is still no longer expressing doubts about his faith. That faith, though, may be a something of his own making.

Tennyson finally realizes the importance and utility of being able to identify with others' experiences of grief and use them as a way to rehearse his own grief at the end of the poem, after the turning point of the last Christmas. In Poem CVIII he writes

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind: (CVIII: 1-4)

At this point, Tennyson finally allows himself to experience grief with others. This is not to say that he does not still believe his grief is very different from others' experiences, however, he does finally allow these other experiences to help him deal with his own. And, his personal method of pre-rehearsal as therapy must have been successful because he has finally moved on, past the loss of his friend. This allowance for the commonality of grief runs parallel to the extinguishing of spiritual doubt that Tennyson experiences in the poem. When he stops doubting

the fact that he can use forms of therapy to deal with the grief, he also realizes that others may have similar experiences and that a belief in something other can both help with these trying circumstances. It is one of his forms of therapy. It is also important to note that by the end of the poem, Tennyson almost comes to believe in Christianity:

> O living will that shall endure
> When all that seems shall suffer shock,
> Rise in the spiritual rock,
> Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,
>
> That we may lift from out of dust
> A voice as unto him that hears,
> A cry above the conquer'd years
> To one that with us works, and trust,
>
> With faith that comes of self-control,
> The truths that never can be proved
> Until we close with all we loved,
> And all we flow from, soul in soul. (CXXXI)

The spiritual belief that Tennyson arrives at here is not exactly Christian – it is more suited to the belief when he sees the spirit of Hallam in Poem XCV. He thinks that "we may lift from out of dust/ A voice" is a near echo of his experience in Poem XCV with Hallam's ghost ("And strangely on the silence broke/ The silent-speaking words (XCV: 17-18)). Also, his faith does not principally come through belief, but through "self-control." This is close to the Stoic theory of emotion – at this point, his grief is not erratic, but manageable. Tennyson, as was inevitable, is moving on, using his own form of spirituality. This is an important departure from the classical theories that see death as the end-all. For Tennyson, death is not this end-all, and he is now able to look forward to the Christ that is to come. However, the Christian element that Tennyson constantly refers back to but does not completely buy into marks an important departure from classical theories that see death as the end. For Tennyson, death is not all there it – he looks forward to the Christ that is to come. This is a significant difference from Cicero –

the only way that Tennyson's grief therapy is complete is through spiritual belief, belief in something other and further. In this way, Tennyson places spirituality in line with the classical ideas of emotion and therapy.

In Memoriam A.H.H. undoubtedly shows how intensely personal each experience of grief is and how these differing circumstances make it impossible to safeguard oneself against grief. Sorabji notes that "sometimes Stoic therapy will not work…namely that you are in a bad position and a sinking feeling really is appropriate. Bereavement would be an example. I would think it even stupid to deny the enormity of the loss" (165). This is not to say, though, that each person's experience with emotion is *absolutely* different from one another's – there are certainly similarities. For instance, Martha Nussbaum explains how sometimes, when she envisioned her mother, she would see her as healthy and alive, not wan and sickly as she had seen her after she had died (174). Tennyson describes the many instances that he sees Hallam as alive rather than dead. I found continuing with the daily activities with my life after my grandfather's death the best form of therapy for my grief, just as Nussbaum had done after her mother's death. These are merely similarities, however. Putting Nussbaum's and Tennyson's experiences with grief and their ways of dealing with it side by side would produce two divergent paths that only crossed at a mere handful of points. This only goes to show how intensely personal each person's emotional experience is according to the circumstances that surround the judgment of value that the person makes. There is no way to prepare through a pre-rehearsal, because there is no way to feel the same emotion that another felt, or to fully know what the emotion will be like when one feels it. To completely change one's beliefs in order to completely evade the emotion, on the other hand, is also impossible. The values with which we grow up permanently affect us and are not so easily erased.

When I think about my grandfather's death and the intense grief that I felt at the time of its occurrence, it still feels as fresh as the day that I received the phone call with that news. It is evident that my therapy and grieving process is still active. What I have tried to demonstrate in this paper, however, is that there is no way to suspend emotions, especially grief, because of the specific circumstances surrounding each person's experience with it. Tennyson recognized that even though there is some commonality of loss, the sorrow that one feels is too personal for anyone else to ever have the same experience. What he also recognized, though, is that there are ways in which we can put ourselves through therapy in order to better deal with grief, and one of those is to read others' dealings with it. Nussbaum places a special importance on literature for the field of ethics, telling us that it can provide us with answers to the question of how one should live. What I hope to have shown is that literature can absolutely serve as a means of therapy – to help its readers understand grief and discover methods that will help them deal with that emotion, and to give them "an image comforting the mind." While there is no way to prevent the experience, as the Stoics believed, there are certainly ways to make it a little easier to bear.

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