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# Death in the Royal Family: Victorian Funeral Sermon Techniques in Tennyson's National Poetry

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DEATH IN THE ROYAL FAMILY: VICTORIAN FUNERAL SERMON  
TECHNIQUES IN TENNYSON'S NATIONAL POETRY

by

Daniel W. Newton

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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## ABSTRACT

### DEATH IN THE ROYAL FAMILY: VICTORIAN FUNERAL SERMON TECHNIQUES IN TENNYSON'S NATIONAL POETRY

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Master of Arts

Mourning rituals and memorial aesthetics played an integral role in Victorian England. Queen Victoria's poet laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson, confronted death on a literary level. His national elegiac poetry – addressed to Victoria – is illuminated when read as a funeral sermon. By drawing out the funeral sermon techniques Tennyson incorporates, we see that he assumes a role as religious mediator to counsel and comfort Victoria in her grief.

Tennyson's funeral sermon message alters quite distinctively from Albert's death in 1861, to the death of the Duke of Clarence in 1892, where he makes a final effort to restore the Queen to an acceptance of her state and lead her to an active, healthy type of mourning. The corresponding poems, "Dedication" and "The Death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale: to the Mourners," highlight Tennyson's unique role as spiritual guide for Queen Victoria, and can be read as a series of funeral sermons. Indeed, Tennyson incorporates various funeral sermon elements over decades in order to encourage the Queen to heal and cope with the trauma of death in the royal family.

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My wife, Jedda, deserves to be acknowledged. She was always understanding and supportive - allowing me to seclude myself for seemingly endless hours in the library or in our basement to research and write. Her companionship and confidence in me have buoyed me up and enabled me to become a better scholar.

Finally, I would like to thank my deceased grandfather, Edward W. Parker, for establishing a legacy of literature and higher education. I can only hope to attain his wit and knowledge.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Dancing with Death: Victorian Celebratory Mourning Rituals.....1

Morte D' Albert: Eulogizing the Prince Consort.....15

“Mourn in Hope”: Tennyson’s Final Funeral Sermon.....36

Conclusion: Tennyson’s Enhanced Religious Position.....57

Notes.....64

Works Cited.....72

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## DANCING WITH DEATH: VICTORIAN CELEBRATORY MOURNING RITUALS

Mourning rituals and memorial aesthetics played an integral role in Victorian England. For example, as part of mourning the dead, Victorians dressed in black to outwardly express their grief. Historian James Curl describes this typical mourning attire: “The gentlemen wore full mourning, with crape bands round their top hats, while the ladies were dressed in black, with black veils, many yards of crape, black-edged handkerchiefs held to eyes, and black gloves” (3). John Harvey similarly illustrates the pervasive importance of black in Victorian funerals: “There was an increase in the use of black at funerals, black hearse-plumes, horse plumes, black-wrapped wands and staves, and trays of black feathers to be carried by mutes, rested on the head. There were also funeral furnishings at home, black trimmings for furniture, bird-cages, [and] women’s underwear” (173-174). Curl and Harvey correctly pinpoint the role of black in mourning clothing and décor because it was a sign of sincere grief for the dead as well as the depth of one’s sorrow (Harvey 173-176).

Yet wearing black was only part of complex Victorian funeral and cultural conventions. Reflective of the era, death is an ever-present theme in the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson – Victoria’s poet laureate. Victorians readily responded to his focus on death, which spans such works as “The Lady of Shalott” (1833), “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington” (1852), and “Crossing the Bar” (1892). His most famous publication, *In Memoriam*, details his painful memories of Arthur Hallam, a Cambridge school friend, and the added resolve he struggled to gain after Hallam’s death. Victorians similarly memorialized the dead with elaborate funerals in which the funeral sermon was



a large presence. The link between Tennyson and the funeral sermon genre is established easier than we may think, not only because much of his poetry deals with death, but also because his poetry peppers Victorian funeral sermons. For example, at Queen Victoria's death in 1901, many non-conformist sermons cite Tennyson (Williams 11), even in song (*Crossing* 3), because his words could comfort her mourners as they had previously consoled her. Beyond having his poetry cited in various sermons, Tennyson's elegiac poetry is also illuminated when read as a funeral sermon. This interpretation – that some of Tennyson's poetry functions as a funeral sermon – becomes even more intriguing when poems addressed to Queen Victoria are considered, for they both were “world-class mourners, the most celebrated of their century” (Rosenberg 41).

In the last twenty years, scholars have increasingly discussed the Victorian focus on death and grieving from literary, historical, psychological, and social perspectives.<sup>1</sup> My argument brings these strands together by exploring how Tennyson assumed a typical religious role. Many of Tennyson's contemporaries, including Queen Victoria, discussed his religious faith. In 1889, a few years prior to Tennyson's death, poet and essayist Frederick Myers argued that Tennyson was “a prophet, meaning by that term much more than a self-inspired mystic, an eloquent visionary” (396). At his death, *The Saturday Review* reported that Englishmen “now know what it is to witness the extinction of one of those beacon-lights of humanity which often remain unkindled for generations, and, when extinguished, leave as long a darkness behind them. The illuminant has in this case burned so long, and with so steady a power, that we have been apt to take its rays for granted” (qtd. in Tennysoniana 265). Alan Sinfield revived this discussion of Tennyson's religion in 1990. Sinfield supports Tennyson's presentation of prophetic figures like

Maud, *The Lady of Shalott*, and *Tiresias* to show how they allow Tennyson to yield a magical verbal power and claim prophetic sagacity (187). Still, it is surprising that so many critics (both Victorian and current) have labeled Tennyson as a religious prophet, mystic, visionary, and beacon-light, yet none has ever connected his poetry with the Victorian funeral sermon. By drawing out the funeral sermon techniques Tennyson incorporates in his poetry, I show how he took on a religious role – and the conventions that deal with an organized role – to counsel Queen Victoria.

My argument – that Tennyson filled the role of a faithful religious mediator – responds to those who question his religiosity and illustrates Queen Victoria's faith in him. T.S. Eliot, for one, saw *In Memoriam* as “not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt (626). More recently, Aidan Day, in *Tennyson's Scepticism* (2005), sees Tennyson's poetry overwhelmed by doubt and crises of faith. Day takes issue with Tennyson's “commitment to spiritual values” (2) and Sinfield's claim that Tennyson displays prophetic sagacity. While Day concedes that Tennyson had an “unproblematised visionary sympathy,” he firmly sees “spiritual scepticism as intrinsic to Tennyson's imagination,” and bases this conclusion on his own scrutiny and “close attention to the verbal detail of Tennyson's power” (3). Day ultimately concludes that “metaphysical scepticism is the *touchstone* of Tennyson's intellectual and imaginative life” (5).

However, Day's boasted close reading completely misses the funeral sermon conventions Tennyson incorporates, and his focus on “Tennyson's perennial insecurity about the grounds of spiritual authority” also overlooks Tennyson's role as a spiritual mediator for Queen Victoria (192). For Day, this spiritual authority comes into question

in the *Idylls*, which he argues “masks a grave questioning of spiritual authority and it is this questioning which directs Tennyson’s doom-laden treatment of the Arthurian story” (5). Differing from Day, I argue that Tennyson fills a religious intermediary role. In this role, he assumes religious power by creating a hybrid sermon situation to help Queen Victoria understand death. He replaces doubt with faith and skepticism or doom-laden verse with hope for an afterlife.

The poems I discuss, “Dedication” (1861) and “The Death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale: to the Mourners” (1892), highlight Tennyson’s unique role as spiritual guide for Queen Victoria. I argue that these poems, both addressed to the Queen, can be read as a series of funeral sermons. Certainly she did not look to Tennyson for religious counsel because he was a skeptic as Day proposes. Rather, she sought the religious counsel and healing solace in his poetry. She even admitted to Tennyson shortly after Albert’s death, “Next to the Bible, *In Memoriam* is my comfort” (H. Tennyson 1:485). Tennyson uses his religious sagacity to leverage comfort, healing, and motivation for Victoria.

In this introduction, I will present two models which frame my analysis and discussion of Tennyson. First, I will outline John Wolffe’s funeral sermon model which details the structure of typical Victorian funeral sermons. This model will allow me to show how Tennyson participates in popular Victorian memorial conventions and seeks to encourage the Queen to cope with the trauma of death in the royal family. Further, by tapping into the funeral sermon strategies Wolffe describes, I will uncover how Tennyson attempts to move Victoria to an understanding and acceptance of her grieving state. To do this, I will bring in Joyce Burland’s model, which categorizes various responses to or

stages of dealing with catastrophic events. With Burland's paradigm, I will show that Tennyson seeks to motivate Queen Victoria to recovery and activism – Burland's last stage. This analysis, in turn, reveals how Tennyson sought to comfort the Queen and help her understand death's role in society, in her family, and personally.

#### John Wolffe's Funeral Sermon Model

To discuss Tennyson's funeral sermon conventions, I follow the sermon outline given by John Wolffe's *Great Deaths: Grieving, Religion, and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* published in 2000 (57-69). Wolffe is a professor of religious studies and lecturer at the Open University in England. His research brings together religious and national identity issues with a focus on Evangelicalism and prominent deaths, ultimately producing his study of death, religion, and nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian England. As part of his exhaustive study, he details the churches' role in memorializing the dead and the sermon's influence in national mourning. Victorian funeral sermons provided opportune moments "to render last offices of affection and respect to all that is mortal" (Stuart 126). Wolffe's death and funeral discussion ranges from the Duke of Wellington's funeral in 1852 to King Edward VII's death in 1910, with a significant discussion of the deaths of Prince Albert in 1861, the Duke of Clarence in 1892, and Queen Victoria in 1901. Though his focus is more on the monumental figures' deaths and impact on society, Wolffe does pull together frequent strategies Victorian clergymen employed as part of their funeral or memorial sermons. The funeral sermon convention Wolffe describes includes the following:

- a scriptural exposition (59), sometimes loosely linked to the deceased;

- mourning for the dead and explicit references to the decedent (59), which produced “intense sorrow of domestic misfortune” (17);
- praising the dead and their virtues (59);
- celebrating death (65) in order to dwell “on the glories of the resurrected life and reunion beyond the grave” (210-211);
- a lesson of hope and direct exhortation to the listening congregation (59; 200).

As Wolffe admits, the Victorian funeral sermon genre – as well as the prior Regency and later Edwardian sermons – shows slight deviation from this pattern because clergymen “sought to conform to convention rather than to challenge it” (57).

A scriptural discussion typically introduced a funeral sermon and put the audience in a religious mindset.<sup>2</sup> The Reverend Edward White Benson, Headmaster of Wellington College and later Archbishop of Canterbury, disclosed this scriptural significance in an 1870 sermon:

It has become almost a custom that when words are to be spoken to a congregation about a great man, or a good taken from our midst by death, the preacher should preface the substance of his discourse by analyzing an example or character from Holy Writ. [. . . While this scriptural invocation] lifts the lost to a sheerer region, it seems at the same time to make more vivid the scriptural record. (3)

Though Benson does not fully explicate the resulting hagiography brought about by comparing the dead to scriptural prophets and saints, listening audiences would have

likely compared the deceased with the scriptural hero or theme. The comparison creates a clever rhetorical move and yields a positive mourning response.

Following the scriptural exposition, mourning the dead is the next element of the funeral sermon. This is evident in sermons preached at the deaths of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. The Reverend John Nash Griffin began a sermon at Albert's death by noting the universal mourning of his passing: "The sad tidings were speedily born by the electric wire to the most distant portions of the Kingdom, and as they flew upon the wings of the lightning, sudden distress sat upon all faces, and many eyes wept tears of heartfelt sorrow" (3). The Reverend Benson also mourned Albert's untimely passing: "What we have lost none can tell. He whom so many households mourn, was to us a musing father. There is more of us to whom he is not familiar in face and form. And no one need to be ashamed to sorrow indeed" (12). The mourning was similarly poignant with Victoria's death. At her service, the Yorkshire Post correspondent described how deeply the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon affected him, especially the "husky old man's voice, broken, shaking with emotion, each word coming in pain" (Fraser 17). The sincere expression of sorrow flows naturally with mourning, providing a cathartic release of pain which can move mourners closer to resolution. Further, the explicit reference to the dead (Wolffe 59) and public mourning confirm the reality of the death in order to induce healing.

After explicitly mourning the dead – something Victorians took seriously – the deceased's virtues were praised. At Caroline Colman's funeral in 1895, the Reverend Barrett praised Mrs. Colman in order to give "a few simple words of cheer" to the listeners (Stuart 143). This panegyric element also allows "the qualities in the life of the

deceased that were considered worthy of admiration and emulation” (Wolffe 60) to be the basis for moral and spiritual lessons for the survivors (58-59). For example, Reverends Griffin and Benson both praised Prince Albert’s virtues to encourage British emulation. Benson motivated the listening audience to improve by remembering “the kingly presence, that manly countenance, with its thoughtfulness, its firmness; the frank, bright eye which lighted up every face it fell upon; [and] the kindness of that ringing laugh which has sounded so often in our cloisters” (Church of England 12). Certainly, a funeral sermon would feel inappropriate if it overlooked the deceased’s strengths. At Queen Victoria’s death, even the regulated Anglican funeral sermon text praised God for the Queen: “We thank thee for the wisdom of her counsels, for the care and love with which she watched over her people, for the bright example of her noble life, for the prosperity which we enjoyed during her happy reign” (12). The non-conformist Reverend J.M. Gatrill also admired Victoria’s life: “She was a religious woman, a good woman, who set up a true standard of such lives as Christians ought to live” (12). As Gatrill’s and others’ sermons confirm, praising the dead highlights the deceased’s virtues to remember him or her and encourage similar living from the listening congregation.

After praising the dead, the clergyman gave the mourners hope by celebrating death because of “new avenues for activity and personal growth” for the deceased (Wolffe 63). After praising Albert’s life, Charles Kingsley, the Anglican Rector of Eversley, wondered aloud about Albert’s expanded potential, asking, “To what unknown heights has he not risen?” (52). When Marie Corelli mourned Queen Victoria’s passing, she quoted Tennyson to celebrate the care-free world the Queen would enjoy because her soul passed like Arthur’s:

to the island-valley of Avilion;  
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies  
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns  
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea." (52)

The celebratory sermon element, though it may feel inappropriate when contrasted with the sorrow and grief of a funeral, was actually intended to help mourners heal from the shock death causes. Wolffe admits, "Celebration may seem a provocative word when used in relation to death, but it still encapsulates much of the sermon comment on the deaths" in Victorian society (65). Thus listening audiences, though grieving their loss, could welcome this element because of the increased opportunities it provided for the deceased and the hope for healing in survivors' lives.

The final portion of Wolffe's funeral sermon model is "a direct exhortation to the hearers to be mindful of their own mortality, spiritual state, and eternal prospects" (59). This lesson to the mourners was also filled with hope for the future and encouraged them to understand their situation. Queen Victoria needed this instruction and hope from Tennyson. Pat Jalland contrasts Victoria's mourning of Albert with the mourning of her people, who "usually achieved some sort of resolution, whether through Christian faith, the memory of a loved one, family support, professional work, re-engagement in family and community activity, or remarriage" (318). Because Victoria frequently shunned societal participation and support following Albert's death, she became an "exemplar of chronic grief" (Parkes 126) and restricted herself from achieving any significant resolution. As part of his direct exhortation to the Queen, Tennyson encourages her to



achieve the resolution Jalland describes by becoming more active in her family and society, and incorporating their shared Christian faith.

#### Burland's Model

The direct lesson Wolffe's model details could move grieving audiences to understand and accept their grief, and actively advocate their recovery (Burland 1.20). An integral element of my analysis of Tennyson's three poems is their effect on Queen Victoria's coping with and understanding of death. My analysis integrates Joyce Burland's grieving paradigm, a recent approach to grief that builds on prior grieving models psychologists have observed and created. Burland follows Erich Lindemann's "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," which laid the modern foundation for grieving in 1944. Lindemann detailed the course of normal grief reactions: "(1) somatic distress, (2) preoccupation with the image of the deceased, (3) guilt, (4) hostile reactions and (5) loss of patterns of conduct" (142). Similar to Jalland's comments, Lindemann argued that "the duration of a grief reaction seems to depend on the success with which a person does the grief work, namely, emancipation from the bondage to the deceased, readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing and the formation of new relationships" (143). Elisabeth Kübler-Ross advanced Lindemann's discussion with her *On Death and Dying* in 1969. She breaks down the coping mechanisms monitored in her patients in the following stages (33): first stage: denial and isolation (34); second stage: anger (44); third stage: bargaining where individuals seek an agreement to postpone the inevitable (72); fourth stage: depression (75); and fifth stage: acceptance (99). More recently some, like Kenneth Doka, suggest grieving models like Lindemann's and Kübler-Ross's "tend to homogenize the process of grief" (1). But

Burland’s model does not compartmentalize those grieving; instead, it is a model for understanding and clarifying reactions to catastrophic events. Even though grief is a part of the model, one’s grieving process proceeds this same way. I incorporate Burland’s model because it illuminates Victoria’s mourning and Tennyson’s efforts to motivate her through the mourning process.

Dr. Burland is a clinical psychologist and directs the education programs for the National Alliance on Mentally Illness. Her model, “Predictable Stages of Emotional Reactions among Family Members,” is represented below:

#### PREDICTABLE STAGES OF EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

##### I. DEALING WITH CATASTROPHIC EVENTS

Crisis/Chaos/Shock

Denial

Hoping Against Hope

NEEDS: \*Support \*Comfort \*Empathy for confusion \*Help finding resources \*Crisis Intervention \*Prognosis \*Empathy for pain [A support group]

##### II. LEARNING TO COPE

Anger/Guilt/Resentment

Recognition

Grief

NEEDS: \*Vent feelings \*Keep hope \*Education \*Self-care \*Networking \*Skill training \*Letting go \*Co-op from System [ . . . ]

### III. MOVING INTO ADVOCACY

Understanding

Acceptance

Advocacy/Action

NEEDS: \*Activism \*Restoring balance in life \*Responsiveness from  
System. (1.19-1.20)

Burland argues that the initial stage following a traumatic event can leave a mourner shocked, “overwhelmed, confused, [and] lost” (1.19). She describes how many grapple with catastrophic events, denying that they happened and hoping against hope that everything will quickly revert to normalcy. The chaos of dealing with the catastrophic event Burland describes is evident in Victoria’s reaction to Albert’s death. The second stage is learning to cope, which often involves anger, guilt, and even ambivalently blaming the victim. During this stage, “chronic sorrow” could plague mourners, who begin “to mark time as before/or/after the event of illness” (1.19). Burland’s final stage is advocacy, something Tennyson encouraged Victoria to model. In this stage, mourners begin to understand and accept their state; “it is a sad and difficult experience,” but they begin to manage their lives (1.20). The capstone of the advocacy stage is action, literally coming out and helping others overcome their grief, like Tennyson did with Victoria. By incorporating Burland’s paradigm to discuss Tennyson’s poetry, I show how he attempts to meet the Queen’s grieving needs in order to activate her and move her to understanding.

Wolffe, Burland, and Tennyson’s Poems to Victoria

My discussion of Tennyson's poetry merges Wolffe's funeral sermon model and research in religious studies with Burland's psychological paradigm. Specifically, I trace Wolffe's sermon elements in Tennyson's work. I will show how he incorporates various elements over decades in order to encourage the Queen to heal and cope with the trauma of death in the royal family. I will argue that his funeral sermon message alters quite distinctively from Albert's death in 1861, to the death of the Duke of Clarence in 1892, where he makes a final effort to restore the Queen to an acceptance of her state. In each poem Tennyson addresses Victoria and mourns the dead, praises the dead, and celebrates post-death progression, all as Wolffe describes. Yet each poem incorporates the funeral sermon elements on a different level.

To do all of this, I examine two of Tennyson's poems addressed to Queen Victoria. I first explore the "Dedication" to Albert in *Idylls of the King*, where Tennyson commiserates with the Queen and her loss of Albert. In this chapter I show how Tennyson follows Wolffe's funeral sermon model: he mourns Albert's untimely passing by evoking the shadows of his death, praises him, celebrates his future potential, and exhorts the Queen to seek love from a multitude of people to find healing. While all of the funeral sermon elements exist in the poem, Tennyson focuses on mourning Albert and praising his virtues, which, in turn, deflates the celebration of death and the final hopeful lesson. The consequence of Tennyson's decision to focus on the mourning and praising elements may have reinforced Victoria's grief as she struggled and failed to reach the recovery stage Burland describes.

Nearly thirty years after Albert's death, Tennyson revises his use of the funeral sermon in "The Death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale: To the Mourners" (1892).

Instead of focusing on mourning and praise, Tennyson devotes much of the poem to celebrating the Duke's death and openly advising the royal mourners of their royal responsibilities. This modified approach, in turn, helped lead the Queen and other royal mourners to an understanding of death and their grief. Because of the added insight this poem gives to Tennyson's relationship with the Queen and his role as religious mediator, it merits increased critical attention. Further, it details how Tennyson matures in his use of the sermon elements, by more fully encouraging the mourners to reach Burland's advocacy stage. With Tennyson's focus on a lesson of recovery and activism, Tennyson instructs the Queen and other royal mourners how to face the revised reality after the death of a loved one, cope quickly, and understand their revised relationships to the deceased.

When these two poems are viewed with Wolffe's and Burland's models, they become illuminating funeral sermons, and add to current discussions of Victorian death and mourning, religious faith, and psychological recovery. With the combination of these varied discussions, I confirm Tennyson's resolve to assist Queen Victoria, and the colorful interplay of Victorian memorial aesthetics – both of which allow us to view Tennyson's poetry to Queen Victoria from new and insightful angles.

## CHAPTER TWO

## MORTE D' ALBERT: EULOGIZING THE PRINCE CONSORT

## Tennyson's Religious Response to Victoria's Mourning

On March 16, 1861, after a prolonged struggle with what modern doctors suspect was cancer, Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, died. The Queen had a strained relationship with her controlling and ambitious mother; yet the death produced in Victoria the most "fearful and unbearable outbursts of grief," making for "the most dreadful day" of her life (Hibbert 266). Victoria's traumatic reaction was not abnormal or unexpected, but an accurate chaotic response to a catastrophic event as clinical psychologist Joyce Burland describes (1.19-1.20). Stanley Weintraub argues that her past jaded interactions with her mother as well as an honest yearning to make things right caused her acute remorse (*Uncrowned King* 401). Certainly the Duchess of Kent's death caused Victoria to stall as "she nursed her sorrow in isolation" (Jalland 319), incubated her shock, and solidified her denial. Weintraub expands on Victoria's unhealthy state: "The Queen's mourning became so excessive that her family and the court recognized that the hysterical indulgence in sorrow was a sign of a serious nervous collapse" (*Uncrowned King* 401). Victoria was not blind to her sorrow; she admitted to her daughter Vicky, the Crown Princess Frederick, "I love to dwell on [the Duchess] and to be quiet and not to be aroused out of my grief! To wish me to shake it off – and to be merry – would be to wish me no good" (Dyson and Tennyson 51). Lord Clarendon, the former Foreign Affairs State Secretary, thought it equally damaging that she found "satisfaction to feed her grief" and was "determined to cherish it" at all costs (qtd. in Hibbert 267). Clarendon continued, "I hope this state of things won't last or she may fall

into a morbid melancholy to which her mind has often tended and which is a constant source of anxiety to PA” (qtd. in Weintraub *Uncrowned King* 401).

Prince Albert was seemingly the only one who could comfort Victoria (402). He had been a rich source of strength for her to deal productively with the burden of ruling England and managing her familial obligations. But his comfort only lasted for a matter of months; his health failed later in 1861, and his death of typhoid fever on December 14 compounded Victoria’s intense grieving. As with the Duchess’s death, the Queen showed little desire to face the reality of Albert’s passing, seemingly satisfied to mourn for an extended period of time and to make little effort to control her emotions. The Queen’s recovery was complicated because of her dual desires for others both to console her and leave her alone. At Albert’s deathbed she pathetically petitioned her family and ministers, “You will not leave or desert me now,” (qtd. in Weintraub *Uncrowned King* 432) suggesting they fill the void the Prince Consort had left. Yet, with her command to help, the Queen privately admitted that “attempts at consolation from others only made me worse” (qtd. in Hibbert 281).

Princess Alice took the liberty to extend Victoria’s plea for help to Tennyson through Sir Charles Phipps, Albert’s private secretary. Whether Victoria asked Alice to contact Tennyson is unknown; but within about a week after Albert’s death, Alice had requested that Tennyson write something about her father (Dyson and Tennyson 60). Tennyson felt overwhelmed by the request, but quickly concocted a means to mourn the royal family’s unspeakable loss by dedicating a new edition of the *Idylls of the King* to Albert.<sup>3</sup> Tennyson, in a unique literary and priestly role, filled the void of Albert’s loss with a funeral sermon.

My approach to Tennyson's "Dedication" explores Victoria's grief, something literary critics have not completely addressed.<sup>4</sup> But beyond merely itemizing reasons behind the Queen's grieving, my discussion draws out the other elements of the funeral sermon which pervade the poem. Admittedly, one would not expect the dedicatory prologue of poetry on King Arthur to be a funeral sermon in disguise. Victorian dedications are brief, perfunctory matters – but not for Tennyson. For him, this dedication is a multi-faceted opportunity to address a specific audience – the Queen – and to deliver a compact and powerful funeral sermon. By looking at the various elements of a typical Victorian funeral sermon that are woven into the poem, we can see that this "Dedication" becomes a hybrid genre – a funeral sermon in verse. Though this unique poem includes all of the funeral sermon elements, Tennyson concentrates on mourning and praising Albert, seemingly safe strategies he could employ with grieving Queen Victoria.

#### Tennyson as a Literary and Religious Figure

Before diving into a detailed discussion of mourning and praising, it will be helpful to demonstrate how Tennyson combines religious and literary roles. I argue that Tennyson fills a religious mediatory role and self-consciously accesses religious power with his prophetic poetry.<sup>5</sup> In fact he begins the "Dedication" in conjunction with religious expectations:

These to His Memory – since he held them dear,  
 Perchance as finding there unconsciously  
 Some image of himself – I dedicate,  
 I dedicate, I consecrate with tears –  
 These Idylls. (1-5)



In addition to his mourning, praise, and empathy (which I discuss later), Tennyson employs charged religious language such as “dedicate” and “consecrate” to suggest sacred biblical ordinances and connect the “Dedication” with the funeral sermon genre. Many critics agree that the *Idylls* as a whole highlight Tennyson’s religiosity because they marry the religious with the political, or, as I argue, the funeral sermon with Victoria.<sup>6</sup> Tennyson’s difficult task in religiously assisting the Queen is complicated because as Erich Lindemann details, “There is often disconcerting loss of warmth in relationship to other people, a tendency to respond with irritability and anger” (142). Despite Tennyson’s overwhelming challenge of approaching a grieving Queen who admittedly enjoyed nursing her grief, Burland’s model still suggests the Queen needs support, comfort, and empathy (1.19). Tennyson perfectly places the “Dedication” as the preface to the *Idylls* in order to unify the religious and political with an attitude of mourning. This allows him to “adopt the metapolitical stance of the sage prophet, presenting its author as the Merlin of Victorian England” (Harrison 49).<sup>7</sup> By tailoring the “Dedication” as a funeral sermon, Tennyson addresses the Queen from a religious stance and elevates his prophetic position to convince her to understand her mourning – confirming also how the *Idylls* and “Dedication” are the “capstone of Tennyson’s prophetic poetry” (Harrison 56).

#### Mourning the Prince Consort

Mourning is a vital portion of a funeral sermon, and accordingly, Tennyson commiserates the Queen’s loss. We sense that Tennyson was sincerely interested in mourning with the Queen as he relates, “I consecrate *with tears* / These Idylls” (4-5, my italics). Now Tennyson could have wept for many reasons with Albert’s death. Some

would say that he wept because his political and social power source – Prince Albert, his patron – was gone and these were bitter tears of lost power connections.<sup>8</sup> Yet that does not seem like the appropriate response for a religious sermon, or at least the Queen most likely would not have read the poem that way. Instead, Tennyson, by explaining his mutual sorrow with Albert's death, not only effectively mourns him, but also shows that he has accepted death's role in life and can sincerely assist the Queen. It is a sensitive moment when Tennyson exposes his emotions to the Queen – that Albert's death has sincerely affected him – to meet her grieving needs.

Others, like Swinburne, did not respond favorably to Tennyson's mourning of Albert as a prologue for the Arthurian narratives. Swinburne scoffed that the "Dedication" transformed the *Idylls* into the "Morte d' Albert" (56), defiling it and making it commonplace. Yet the Queen would have accepted Tennyson's comparison of Albert to Arthur, making it an effective and believable move. Even Swinburne's complaint of unconcealed mourning acknowledges, albeit tongue in cheek, Tennyson's overt intention to mourn Albert.

Tennyson continues mourning on a larger level as he links Albert to the Commonwealth, which is "commingled with the gloom of imminent war, / The shadow of his loss drew like eclipse, / Darkening the world. We have lost him; he is gone" (12-14). The shadow that Albert's death creates is overpowering imagery, eclipsing and perpetuating a worldwide solemnity in the process. This shadow is "commingled with the gloom of imminent war" in America (12). Just one month previous to his death, on November 8<sup>th</sup>, the *USS San Jacinto* intercepted the British ship *Trent* and captured two Confederate diplomats. The North's actions were an affront to British honor and civility.

Hence the “gloom of imminent war” Tennyson describes was the very real possibility of Britain tangling with the United States in the Civil War, assisting the Southern States and complicating foreign policy with America.

Yet another potential war with the United States is overshadowed by Albert’s death, or at least Tennyson situates it that way. In fact the gloom of war compounds mourning for Albert and suggests national mourning could comfort Victoria. Now Tennyson may be simply guilty of selfish hyperbole – is it possible that one man’s death could outweigh the thousands of lives already lost by January of 1862 in the American Civil War? Such a comparison could have described the Queen’s shattered emotions. Maybe Tennyson exaggerates, and Albert’s loss does not eclipse the whole world. But Tennyson elevates the gloom of Albert’s death over the imminent war in America to support and comfort Victoria because her loss of Albert did eclipse *her* world, upon which the Commonwealth depended.

On a cultural level the dark and solemn mourning images of Albert’s death reflect Victorian mourning customs. Black was the proper Victorian mourning color. In 1861 at Albert’s death, “Oxford Street shops already existed for sable women’s hats, sashed crepe ‘weepers’ for men’s tall hats, black armbands, deep purple clothes, black plumes for horses, and funeral accoutrements of every description” (Weintraub *Uncrowned King* 438). Victoria’s requirement for her court was no different: she required everyone to wear mourning clothing at all social occasions for one year after Albert’s death. When this requirement was lifted, then only because morale was depressingly low, the royal servants still had to wear a black crepe band on their arm until the end of the decade (440). Tennyson’s mourning of Albert, which is full of gloom, shadows, an eclipse, and

darkness, connects to these Victorian funeral customs of parading death and remembering the dead, and approves of the Queen's and the nation's mourning responses.

Still, Tennyson's encouragement to mourn has perceived limits. After describing the darkening shadows of Albert's death, he seems to deflate any hope: "We have lost him; he is gone" (14), echoing the empty void Albert's departure has left.<sup>9</sup> His statement is a depressing continuation of the eclipsing shadows and creates a certain degree of hopelessness. We sense this groaning despair in the "The Passing of Arthur" in *Idylls of the King*, which Marie Corelli cites at Queen Victoria's death forty years later: "And now we stand, sorrow-stricken, – even as the Queen's own Laureate, Tennyson, wrote of his 'Sir Bedivere,' "The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn / Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone!'" (9). Tennyson's mourning conclusion – that Albert is lost and gone – is a precarious admission because the Queen could react negatively and solidify her mourning. And even though such a description and explicit reference to the dead are contiguous with a funeral sermon, when not balanced with celebrating death, they provide "less an inducement to recovery than an incentive to continue mourning well past the accepted bounds" (Blair 251).

While the darkness Tennyson mentions may not fully prepare for the light of hopeful mourning and celebrating death, his mourning does address the Queen's shock and does not smother all flickering hope within her. Instead, the mourning images and stark declaration, "we have lost him; he is gone" (14), introduce the necessity for the Queen to recognize Albert's death, and keep her from hoping against hope by facing reality (Burland 1.19). Prior to his death the Queen had resisted Albert's disclosure of his failing health "by breaking into sobs and forcing him into silence" (Weintraub

*Uncrowned King* 428).<sup>10</sup> Shortly after his passing, the Queen rushed off to Osborne (437) in order to purposefully avoid the funeral and participating in the cathartic funeral week supported by “public mourning rituals and family unity” (Jalland 210).<sup>11</sup> In light of Burland’s model, Tennyson did not attempt to extinguish any remaining hope for Victoria, but took great pains to explicitly clarify the reality of her situation and tell her that Albert had, in fact, died. The reality was that they were separated, and the surreal feelings she experienced were not imagined. Understandably, a plaguing “sense of unreality” is a common response to acute grieving (Lindemann 142), and if anyone could give the Queen a healthy reality check, it was Tennyson, who urged her here to mourn and remember her altered condition.

The Queen needed this dose of reality because she “abandoned herself to the past and to her memories of him with a passionate intensity” (Hibbert 285). In visiting the Queen in March of 1862, Vicky reported, “She cries a lot; then there is always the empty room, the empty bed, she always sleeps with Papa’s coat over her and his dear red dressing-gown beside her and some of his clothes in the bed!” (qtd. in Pakula 161). When Tennyson follows the darkness Albert’s death caused with “we have lost him; he is gone,” he confirms the importance of the Queen’s understanding and grappling with her widowhood. And to ensure she understands his point, Tennyson painfully implores her to remember:

All the beauty of that star  
Which shone so close beside thee that ye made  
One light together, but has past and leaves  
The Crown a lonely splendor. (45-48)

Tennyson himself had come to terms with Hallam's death and the resulting reality his death produced is powerfully displayed in *In Memoriam*. Having already experienced a spectrum of emotional reactions with Hallam's death, Tennyson's empathy for the Queen was intended to help her cope with her shock and recognize the reality of the situation, not overpower her with hopelessness. But from the Queen's perspective, this mourning could leave her with a darkened outlook and isolated future – her light will have to shine alone. When Tennyson mourns Albert, he meets funeral sermon expectations, but limits Victoria's recovery potential with minimal momentum for hope in the future.

#### Praising the Fallen Prince

After Tennyson mourns Albert, he lauds Albert's virtuous life. Praising the dead is a common funeral sermon convention. In 1837 Thomas Carlyle had defined such praise as hero worship, which acted as “the main impetus by which society moves, the main force by which it hangs together” (par. 2). Tennyson's praise of Albert is a form of Carlyle's hero worship, the very kind of praise Victoria wanted to hear and read. Critics have discussed Tennyson's attempt to “idealize a life which was in itself an ideal” (H. Tennyson 2:479). However, most isolate this panegyric portion from the larger funeral sermon genre. In praising Albert, Tennyson compares him to the

ideal knight,<sup>12</sup>

Who revered his conscience as his king;

Whose glory was, redressing human wrong;

Who spake no slander, no, nor listened to it;

Who loved one only and who clave to her. (6-10)

Tennyson's praise here is nearly copied word for word from "Guinevere," one of the poems in the *Idylls*. The prologue's intertextuality to the body of the *Idylls* and the heroes connects Prince Albert to King Arthur. In "Guinevere," Arthur highlights the ideals of the Round Table and believes the knights should

Reverence the King, as if he were  
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,  
 To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,  
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it. (465-469)

In alluding to "Guinevere," Tennyson's description of the Round Table and the noble knights who uphold its ideals praises and describes Albert as religiously upholding the Christ and Christian principles and theology.

This allusion has additional implications for Tennyson's poem. It suggests England should remember Albert's royalty because he deserved a higher title than Prince Consort. Indeed, the allusion casts Albert as a King equal to Arthur. Albert's kingly status stems from his virtues – "his conscience [is] his king" (7) – confirming his integrity. Albert has additional kingly virtues; Tennyson reminds the Queen that Albert "loved one only and clave to her - / Her over all" (10-11). This suggests Albert's loyalty and love to Victoria, as he cleaved to her over every other person, position, and thing. Tennyson also praises Albert's diplomacy and care for the people as he glories in "redressing human wrong" (8). In "Guinevere" the knights "ride abroad redressing human wrongs" (468) and exhibit their chivalric ideals. Like these knights, Albert helps others and glories in doing so; but the allusion to the knights who "ride abroad" also

suggests Albert's international diplomacy. The gloom of the Trent affair is overshadowed, as Tennyson describes, by Albert's praiseworthy virtues.

Deathly ill, Albert was to give the aggressive American navy the benefit of the doubt in the Trent affair. We remember that on November 8<sup>th</sup>, the Union's *USS San Jacinto* intercepted the British ship Trent and captured two Confederate diplomats. Even though the North's actions insulted British honor, Albert declared that Her Majesty's government officials "are willing to believe that the United States naval officer who committed this aggression was not acting in compliance with any authority from his Government, or that, if he conceived himself to be so authorized, he greatly misunderstood the instructions which he had received" (qtd. in Weintraub *Uncrowned King* 422). Not only did Albert side-step a political disaster with America, but he exhibited his diplomatic kindness and ability to take the higher road after the North's insulting actions. It makes sense that Tennyson plants Albert as riding abroad with a kingly conscience, resolving and improving the human condition with his "far-sighted" diplomacy which brings "fruitful strifes and rivalries [to] peace" (35-36). Albert is thus praised, like Arthur, as a "flower of men, / To serve as model for the mighty world" ("Guinevere" 461-462), "the modern incarnation of chivalry" (Mancoff, "Albert the Good" 152).

Indeed "for Tennyson and his Victorian audience, Arthur's actions cast a matrix for British manhood" (Mancoff "Take Excalibur" 257-258), as Albert merges in the mythical Arthurian figure. When Albert is made equal to Arthur, Tennyson crafts an Albert brand name which becomes the "paradigmatic Victorian gentleman" (262). In line with funeral sermon expectations, Tennyson praises Albert for his accomplishments but



more so for his virtues. This insight differs from Lynne O'Brien's argument that heroism in Victorian England: "was defined according to what one does, not based on who one is. Action, not being, was revered. Victorian heroism was based on the grandeur of male aggression" (177). But Albert is not aggressive and still personifies the mythical knight of the Round Table. Tennyson preaches that deeds and being are both important and extend from the myths of these chivalrous knights and kings in his *Idylls* to Albert, a grand form of praise for the Prince Consort. Mancoff believes that Tennyson exposes himself to censure "when he used Arthur's image to praise a real public servant, the late Prince Albert" ("Take Excalibur" 274). Yet Mancoff's claim ignores the specific royal rhetorical audience Tennyson was preaching to. Instead of a blind and unwitting exposure, Tennyson's comparison is a clever rhetorical move because it portrays Albert as the embodiment of chivalric ideals and connects him to the greatest King in English history – King Arthur. The connection was not lost on Victoria or the royal family. Following the publication of the "Dedication," Vicky wrote Tennyson on February 23, 1862, "I cannot separate the idea of King Arthur from the image of him whom I most revered on earth" (H. Tennyson 2:481).

Further, the Knights of the Round Table, to which Albert has now been figuratively inducted, were known for their chivalrous treatment of women. King Arthur says these knights "lead sweet lives in purest chastity, / To love one maiden only, cleave to her, / And worship her by years of noble deeds" ("Guinevere" 471-473). In linking Albert with the noble Knights of the Round Table, Tennyson not only places him on a religious and moral pedestal, but also praises Victoria. Elliot Gilbert argues that this reverses political and gender roles in the poem, making Victoria "the true holder and

wielder of power,” and creating a feminized Arthur in Victoria (232-233).<sup>13</sup> While this may hold true to some extent, Gilbert overlooks the funeral sermon nature of the “Dedication” and steals the puffed panegyric for Albert in order to give it to Victoria. Yet the allusion Tennyson sets up, instead of connecting Arthur only to Victoria like Gilbert suggests, actually praises both Victoria and Albert. This is evidenced when Arthur admits that maiden love refines the high thoughts, amiable words, courtliness, and love of truth in the knights (“Guinevere” 478-480). And because Albert possesses these virtues, it follows that Victoria cultivated and refined them in him. Thus Albert, like Arthur, could proclaim, “Lo, mine helpmate, one to feel / My purpose and rejoicing in my joy!” (482-483). Tennyson’s praise for Albert connects him to the dead king Arthur and the living Victoria, acting as a dual compliment the Queen could welcome.

In characterizing Albert as an ideal Knight of the Round Table, Tennyson also seeks to solidify Albert’s name for later generations. He wants Albert to endure like Arthur. For he is “a Prince indeed, / Beyond all titles, and a household name, / Hereafter, thro’ all times, Albert the Good” (40-42). Albert must have had some anxiety about his title as Prince Consort; he would never be a king in life, just a prince. Still, Tennyson praises Albert for being “beyond all [these] titles,” possessing the virtues of a king and ideal knight, and unconcerned with rank and status. Mancoff summarizes this point nicely: “The Poet Laureate raised the Prince from the realm of history to that of legend” by knitting him so tightly to Arthur (“Albert the Good” 140). And in so doing Tennyson, with his brand name and magical religious power, brands Albert’s name into society.

It is true that Albert had already become a household name. His death evoked a large amount of sympathy and produced an overwhelming community of national

mourners, all of this less than ten years after “rumours had put him in the Tower for treason” (Weintraub *Uncrowned King* 433). In discussing the “real pain” of the people, *The Times* admitted on December 18, 1861, “Never in our remembrance has there been such universal sorrow at the death of an individual, and such deep and anxious sympathy with those left behind” (Editorial 6C). *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper* reported that there would not be “a fireside in England that, in the midst of Christmas revelry, will not be, now and then, overshadowed” by Albert’s tragic passing (qtd. in Wolffe 195).<sup>14</sup> When Tennyson attempts to brand “Albert the Good,” he sought to reciprocate the favors Albert had paid him in the past: Albert had branded the Tennyson name with his direct support of Tennyson’s work in nominating him for the laureateship. But do the poet’s branding and brand name compromise his artistic value? (Barton “What Profits Me My Name” 136). Albert certainly did not think so; in fact, he freely admitted the enhanced value to the literary art Tennyson’s brand name adds when he wrote Tennyson and requested an autographed copy of the *Idylls*: “You would thus add a peculiar interest to the book, containing those beautiful songs, from the perusal of which I derived the greatest enjoyment” (Dyson and Tennyson 46). Thus Tennyson’s artistic and marketplace value was lifted with Albert’s backing. In turn, he solidified Albert’s life by praising him and codified his death by placing the “Dedication” in his *Idylls*.<sup>15</sup>

Following the “Albert the Good” branding (42), Tennyson catalogues Albert’s virtues. Tennyson praises him by noting “how modest, kindly, all-accomplish’d, [and] wise” (17) Albert is, but also jabs at Parliament in the process:

Not swaying to this faction or to that;

Not making his high place the lawless perch

Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground  
 For pleasure: but thro' all this tract of years  
 Wearing the white flower of a blameless life  
 Before a thousand peering littlenesses,  
 In that fierce light which beats upon a throne  
 And blackens every blot; for where is he  
 Who dares foreshadow for an only son  
 A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his? (20-29)

Albert was the ultimate nonpartisan fiduciary – diplomatically wading between competing political factions. Here Tennyson chides Parliament, claiming that some, unlike Albert, are motivated by winged ambitions or personal pleasure. Albert, on the other hand, has not used his high office to separate himself from laboring for the ultimate good of England's "people and her poor" (34). Instead, he has lived a lovely life in service to all people of high and low places, silencing "narrow jealousies" with his actions (15). Albert was above political pettiness and beyond working just for a higher title, an aim which consumed so many in Parliament. Tennyson plays upon the peerage when he notes how Albert lived "a blameless life / Before a thousand *peering* littlenesses" (24-25, my italics). Through all of his political interactions, Tennyson argues Albert came through unscathed, unstained, and undeterred in advancing justice and mercy, creating nearly a perfect panegyric in comparison with Parliament.

In elevating Albert and denigrating Parliamentary peers for their pettiness, Tennyson casts Albert as "wearing the white flower of a blameless life" (24) before the burning light Parliament produces that perpetually examines every ruler "upon a throne /

And blackens every blot” (26-27). Albert’s purity – remaining white and unstained – in contrast with members of Parliament motivated by ambition and pleasure, confirms what William Gracie says about true Queens and Kings in the *Idylls*. Gracie insightfully discusses how true rulers are associated with the sun and light, not shadows and darkness (47). Gracie argues that Tennyson’s “Dedication,” where the Queen and Prince Albert make “one light together” (47) anticipates Arthur’s conception of marriage with Guinevere (Gracie 44):

Were I join’d with her,  
 Then might we live together as one life  
 And reigning with one will in everything  
 Have power on this dark land to lighten it,  
 And power on this dead world to make it live. (“The Coming of Arthur”  
 89-93)

Extending Gracie’s discussion in funeral sermon terms, it makes sense now that Tennyson mourns Albert by combining the eclipse and darkening of the world his death has caused with the “white flower of a blameless life” (24). More specifically, Albert’s death and “loss drew like eclipse / Darkening the world” (13-14), while his virtues continue to shine as a model for the living English people and Victoria. Linking Albert with whiteness, purity, and light compliments him and confirms the legitimacy of the allusion to King Arthur: Albert is the ideal and virtuous knight and prince. The discussion and balance of light/white and dark/black also confirm Tennyson’s discerning religious role: he could distinguish others who (like Albert) had this light, and could act as a religious beacon to which the Queen could look for comfort and healing.

Tennyson's dedication reiterates Albert's kingly virtues that he wanted the Queen and the English people to emulate. We see this when Tennyson addresses Albert in hopes that survivors would follow Albert's virtues:

Or how should England dreaming of *his* sons  
 Hope more for these than some inheritance  
 Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,  
 Thou noble Father of her Kings to be. (30-34)

The best thing Albert's death could produce with any mourner, Tennyson argues, is to inherit Albert's virtues and model his life. The people, including Victoria, should live a virtuous life, and have an unstained heart and kindly mind like the Prince Consort.

When Tennyson encourages Victoria and her people to have a heart like Albert, he especially implores the Queen to hold her heart together. This is significant because some mid-century Victorian beliefs held "that excessive emotional stimulation could cause heart disease – that one could, in effect, die of a broken heart" (Russett 955-956). On December 7, one week before Albert died, the Queen recorded her grief with Albert's failing health: "I went to my room & cried dreadfully and felt Oh! as if my heart must break – oh! such agony as exceed all my grief this year. Oh God! help and protect him . . . I seem to live in a dreadful dream" (qtd. in Hibbert 278). We sense her pain, especially with the three droning ohs of agony, grief, and fear of the unknown. In response to the Queen's grief, Tennyson, almost prophetically, directly addresses her heart-breaking feelings and the need to have a heart like Albert: "Break not, O woman's-heart, but still endure; / Break not, for thou art royal, but endure" (43-44).

This praise element – that Victoria could have a heart like Albert – would have helped her overcome the palpitation of sorrow and electric shock Albert’s death caused (qtd. in Blair 429). For Victoria, the poisonous shock could have infected the entire empire. Thus Tennyson pleaded that she not overly stimulate herself emotionally. She needs to overcome her shock and denial and learn to cope quickly, or the shock may debilitate her and the nation. Princess Alice confirmed the Queen’s progress in overcoming her grief when she answered Tennyson’s “break not” admonition: The Queen “desired [Alice] to tell Mr. Tennyson with her warmest thanks, how much moved she was in reading them, and that they had soothed her aching, bleeding heart” (Dyson and Tennyson 65). Vicky similarly disclosed how his words here had cheered the royal family, providing “drops of balm on the broken and loving hearts of the widowed Queen and her orphaned children” (H. Tennyson 1:481).

Though Tennyson did not make the connection to his own recovery in the “Dedication,” Victoria could have learned about the healing of the heart from *In Memoriam*. Michael Wheeler charts Tennyson’s progression of the heart in *In Memoriam*: “From the early lyrics of bereavement and loss, of the dark house ‘where my heart was used to beat,’ through the central lyrics of spiritual trial, where ‘the heart is sick,’ to the point at which ‘My heart, tho’ widow’d, may not rest / Quite in the love of what is gone, / But seeks to beat in time with one / That warms another living breast” (223). The progress of the healing heart in *In Memoriam* and Tennyson’s counsel to “break not” was desperately needed (43). In 1867 Victoria wrote that the “easing of that violent grief, those paroxysms of despair and yearning and longing and of daily, nightly longing to die . . . for the first three years never left me” (qtd. in Weintraub *Uncrowned*

*King* 439). She admitted to suicidal contemplations in a letter to her uncle the King of Belgium, “My life as a happy one is ended! The world is gone for me” (qtd. in Weintraub 434). She was more explicit in a letter to her daughter Vicky where she indicated her desire to die and be reunited with Albert. Ultimately, she decided against suicide because “a Voice told me for His sake – no, still endure” (qtd. in Hibbert 289). This voice was likely Tennyson’s from the “Dedication” where he prompted her to still endure. Thus his call to “break not, O woman’s heart, but still endure” (43) not only soothed her heart but may have saved her life.

#### Tennyson’s Brief Celebration and Direct Exhortation

Tennyson’s “Dedication” to Albert contains all the funeral sermon elements, but leans heavily on mourning and praising. As an entrée to the *Idylls of the King*, Albert’s “Dedication” really is a *Morte d’ Albert* as Swinburne suggests (56). The poem revolves around Albert’s death in order to provide an appropriate rhetorical funeral atmosphere to mourn Albert and compare his death to a darkening eclipse. The poem praises Albert, highlighting his virtues and legacy, molding the German Prince into a British Knight (Mancoff “Albert the Good” 161). Tennyson further expands this praise to compliment the Queen and connect her with mythical rulers. Tennyson admitted the focus on praise in a letter he sent to Princess Alice with the original copy of the “Dedication”: he wanted to in “some way ‘idealise’ our lamented Prince” (Dyson and Tennyson 63).

While the dedication does idealize Albert and mourn his loss, the celebration of death and lesson of hope are restricted in the poem. Certainly Tennyson briefly celebrates Albert’s future potential when he projects that Albert’s voice will sound “in the rich dawn of an ampler day” (35). In the end, he limits this celebratory element, possibly because it



could have proven a painful part of Victoria's coping. Consequently Tennyson glosses over it and leaves Victoria a "lonely splendor" (48), instead of forecasting her eventual reunion with Albert. Tennyson's dodging of the celebration element diminished the Queen's ability to recover as she stumbled into seclusion and isolated mourning. She fits Burland's theory of withdrawing herself from public exhibition (5). While Burland admits that emotional responses to catastrophic events can last for years (1.20), Victoria's "long years of seclusion [and] the extravagant gestures of mourning" (Dyson and Tennyson 59) were excessive.<sup>16</sup>

Tennyson does end the "Dedication" with a call to love for Victoria. But even the love he prescribes to heal her pain is not active; instead, Queen Victoria must passively wait:

May all love,  
 His [Albert's] love, unseen but felt o'ershadow thee,  
 The love of all thy sons encompass thee,  
 The love of all thy daughters cherish thee,  
 The love of all thy people comfort thee,  
 Till God's love set thee at his side again! (48-53)

With little thrust to activism, Tennyson suggests Victoria wait for various loves to overshadow, encompass, cherish, and comfort her. Not surprisingly, she responded by capping her outgoing love and restricting incoming love from her sons and daughters, and the British people. Certainly Tennyson deserves credit for the attempts he made. But his ultimate focus on mourning and praise reveal his budding experience with funeral sermon conventions and his developing religious position. The "Dedication," Tennyson's poetic

reply to Victoria's mourning of Albert, details the early stages of his religious intermediary role. As the Queen responded by incessant mourning and suffered additional tragedies in the royal family, we can chart how Tennyson alters his message and how his religious position matures to assist the Queen to recovery.

## CHAPTER THREE

## “MOURN IN HOPE”: TENNYSON’S FINAL FUNERAL SERMON

## The Shock of Eddy’s Passing

The 1890s were Victoria’s waning years. One minister-in-attendance described life with her at this time “like a convent. We meet at meals . . . and when we have finished each is off to his cell” (qtd. in Weintraub *Victoria* 516). On October 11, 1890, a rarity occurred – Victoria requested an impromptu dance in which she danced with Eddy, a favorite grandson. Stanley Weintraub pointedly paints the party: “One visualizes the silent agony of the pleasure-loving Eddy mired in chill Balmoral, dancing – ever so slowly – with his tiny, stout, lame, black-swaddled grandmother. For a moment, Victoria was back in 1840” with Albert (516). Yet in little over a year Eddy, Prince Albert Victor and the Duke of Clarence and Avondale, died of influenza, jolting Victoria back to 1861 and the trauma of Albert’s death. Each death in the royal family brought Victoria vivid reminders of Albert’s passing. Some deaths were harder than others: her daughter Princess Alice died in 1878 and her son Prince Leopold in 1884, but neither of these deaths impacted her as poignantly as Eddy’s passing in 1892 at the age of 28. His death, on January 14, 1892, aroused sympathy around the Commonwealth because he was second in line to become the King, was still relatively young, and had just become engaged to the sheltered Princess Mary of Teck.<sup>17</sup>

But for Victoria Eddy’s death recalled haunting reminders of Albert’s untimely death. Like Albert, Eddy had been perfectly healthy. The *Times* reported that “up to five days ago [he] was perfectly sound in health (qtd. in Wolfe 289). In December of 1891 the Queen had approved of his engagement to Princess Mary (who was known as May to

her family), and had taken the young couple to Albert's mausoleum for a posthumous blessing from the Prince Consort (Weintraub *Victoria* 526). Further, Eddy died on the fateful 14<sup>th</sup> – a day Victoria eerily dreaded because Albert had died on the 14<sup>th</sup> in 1861, and Eddy's father had almost died on the 14<sup>th</sup> in 1871. The obvious comparison to Albert awakened Victoria's keen grieving emotions and challenged her coping capacity.

Well into his eighties and still the poet laureate, Tennyson was shocked by the Duke's death and set out to write a "poem of consolation for the bereaved family" (Dyson and Tennyson 137). He was not well when he heard the news, and his health deteriorated rapidly under "the effort and stress of feeling" in composing the lines (139). Despite the strain he completed the poem in two days, an indication of how anxious he was to assist the royal family in their grief – and because he suffered some guilt from neglecting an earlier request from the Princess of Wales at Eddy's coming of age (H. Tennyson 2:395).

His poem, "The Death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale: To the Mourners," is directed to Queen Victoria, Princess May, and the Prince and Princess of Wales. In describing the shock of Eddy's death, the Queen also singled out these main mourners in an editorial to the *Times* on January 28: "The overwhelming misfortune of my dearly loved Grandson having been thus suddenly cut off in the flower of his age, full of promise for the future, amiable and gentle, and endearing himself to all, renders it hard for his sorely stricken Parents, his dear young Bride, and his fond Grandmother to bow in submission to the inscrutable decrees of Providence" (9E).

As Tennyson's last poetic production as poet laureate, "The Death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale: To the Mourners" has been surprisingly ignored and merits

additional critical attention in literary circles. Despite this virtually uncharted literary discussion, historians have discussed Eddy's colorful life with growing interest since the 1970s. Admittedly some critics have mentioned the poem, but only then seemingly as a footnote. Robin Inboden devotes two paragraphs to discussing it, arguing that it brings full circle Tennyson's "alignment of the politics of empire with the structure of the family" (218). Though Inboden acknowledges the elegiac nature of the poem, her allotted space leaves her little room to expand on how death drives Tennyson's message.

But the poem's focus is not on mourning and praise like the "Dedication" to Albert; instead Tennyson uses these elements to advance the mourners to recovery. My argument, that we should read this poem as a continuation of Tennyson's funeral sermon to Queen Victoria, builds on John Wolffe's Victorian funeral sermon model. In his study Wolffe connects the importance of Eddy's death to the Queen and Victorian mourning customs. However, his detailed discussion does not accommodate the necessary close reading of how Tennyson mourns Eddy and celebrates his death. My analysis of Tennyson's poem adds to the current Victorian discussion of death, and details Tennyson's final efforts to assist Victoria in coming to terms with another death in the royal family. As Wolffe's model suggests, Tennyson begins by mourning the Duke and praising his virtues. Tennyson limits his mourning and only briefly praises Eddy because he had few virtues worth emulating. Consequently, Tennyson increasingly celebrates Eddy's death in order to motivate the royal mourners to action. He expands his direct exhortation to the mourners and advises them how to face the reality of the situation, cope quickly, and understand their revised relationships to the deceased and the living English people. By highlighting the later funeral sermon elements, Tennyson gives the

mourners more hope for a reunited afterlife, and encourages accelerated activism in this life.

#### Limited Mourning and Praise for Eddy

To begin the poem Tennyson promptly introduces the sorrow and mourning Eddy's death evoked, exactly where we would expect a funeral sermon to begin: "The bridal garland falls upon the bier, / The shadow of a crown, that o'er him hung, / Has vanish'd in the shadow cast by Death" (1-3). Tennyson grieves the Duke's loss and invokes shadows that correlate with the Victorian mourning customs of wearing black to exhibit sorrow.<sup>18</sup> The first lines immediately address Eddy's death, deepening the loss with words such as "falls," "shadows," and "vanish'd" (1-3). The somber tone and Eddy's vacated space are depressing: his future crown "has vanish'd in the shadow cast by death" (3), showing how mourning can painfully displace survivors. This very brief mourning and explicit reference to Eddy begins the poem; but as the poem progresses, the mourning is more contained and replaced with an increased optimistic outlook and recovery.

Just as quickly as Tennyson mourns Eddy's loss, he transitions to praising his virtues: "So princely, tender, truthful, reverent, [and] pure" (4). Tennyson's one line of praise for Eddy differs from the dozens of lines he had given Eddy's grandfather in the "Dedication." Perhaps this is so limited because Eddy had little to praise. Much like his father, he had his share of scandalous accusations. Weintraub rants that he was "backward and almost uneducable, allegedly bisexual," and "slow-witted" (*Victoria* 3; 420). Further, "he drank heavily and chain-smoked Turkish cigarettes; he was treated for gonorrhoea and possibly for syphilis; he had gout, although a young man; and an actress

claimed her baby was his” (520). Historian Andrew Cook has recently sought to reclaim Eddy’s reputation, arguing that “there was no blot on his character” (265).<sup>19</sup> However, Cook’s commentary that Eddy’s clean character is without blot is qualified with “publicly, at least,” as if his private affairs have little impact on the shaping of his character (265). Cook also strangely concludes of Eddy’s decision to marry May, “At least for once he had done the right thing” (261).

Despite Eddy’s alleged weak morals and limited supply of praiseworthy characteristics, Tennyson still lauds him and crisply executes a clever rhetorical move. Surely, he could have chosen to expose Eddy’s imperfections and failings in order to paint a more realistic picture of his character. However, he overlooks the Duke’s blemishes so as not to disrupt the Crown. We remember Queen Victoria’s January 28 *Times* editorial, where she described Eddy as “full of promise for the future, amiable and gentle, and endearing himself to all” (9E). When Tennyson describes Eddy as “princely, tender, truthful, reverent, [and] pure,” it reflects his understanding of his mourning audience, especially Queen Victoria, and is significant in light of the overwhelming evidence against the Duke (4).<sup>20</sup> While the praise for Eddy may “apply more to Prince Albert or Queen Victoria than to their grandson” (Inboden 219), we should not see Tennyson’s glossing over the shady aspects of Eddy’s past as pandering. Instead his decorum reflects a smart rhetorical move and reverence for the dead. This allows him to more fully align his praise with Victoria’s thoughts in order to help her and the other mourners move through the mourning process. Wolffe admits that Tennyson’s strategy would have been commonplace with clergymen: “In the last quarter of the century, however, preachers tended carefully to avoid controversial ground” (60). Frankly,

Tennyson would not have met the mourners' grieving needs if he would have lambasted Eddy's failings and imperfections. So for him to turn a blind eye to scandals and focus on some positive aspects of Eddy's character helps the mourners keep hope and advance to activism.

### Celebrating and Understanding Death

Tennyson's modified mourning and praise were intended to move the mourners to advocacy. When he restricts these two elements, he expands the celebration aspect of funeral sermons and encourages the mourners to balance their mourning with a hopeful future. While his earlier admonition to "mourn" admits that mourning is appropriate in its place (5), this mourning is clarified by the poem's conclusion that there is:

No discordance in the roll  
 And march of that Eternal Harmony  
 Whereto the worlds beat time, tho' faintly heard  
 Until the great Hereafter. Mourn in Hope! (13-17)

Tennyson celebrates death in ordered religious terms. Death is divine, like a heavenly symphony, where the march of life and death plays out in "Eternal Harmony" (15). And even though some mortals may ignore or barely hear the perfect beat and roll, they can completely understand in the "great Hereafter" (17). Tennyson suggests that mourners not prolong their grieving, but sense the beauty and divinity that accompanies death. Further, when the mourners "mourn in hope," they can cleanse themselves of grief – a cathartic alternative to nursing their sorrows (17). Indeed, festering grief can poison the mind – that is why he pleads in *In Memoriam*, "Ring out the grief that saps the mind"



(106:9). Instead, he invites the mourners to cope while holding onto the hope of a celebrated life and reunion in the “great Hereafter” (17).

This celebration of death and balancing of mourning with hope clarify how even the solemn shadows Tennyson uses to initially mourn Eddy contain rays of hope. The “shadow cast by death” with Eddy’s loss echoes of the “shadow of death” mentioned frequently in the Old and New Testaments (3).<sup>21</sup> As the biblical shadow of death and darkness often gives way to greater light, Tennyson connects Eddy’s death with added faith and comfort. Tennyson also reveals how death anticipates a greater light: “The face of death is toward the Sun of Life” (12). Initially, a religious reading would see “the Sun of Life” alluding to Christ as the Son of Life.<sup>22</sup> Tennyson’s increased use of light and more complete celebration of death align Eddy’s death with life and light in the future. By associating Eddy with light, not shadows, he is linked with the archetypal queens and kings of the *Idylls*. William Gracie notes how the praiseworthy and virtuous archetypal rulers in the *Idylls* are filled with light, not darkness. For example, Gracie argues how “Arthur is described as the ‘Sun in Heaven,’ and once more Guinevere casts a shadow” (45). When Tennyson highlights how the light overcomes the darkness of death – “the face of Death is toward the Sun of Life” (12) – it reaffirms his increased celebratory focus on the light and healing that can follow a dismal death, and celebrates Eddy’s death with increased light that has religious and celebratory significance.

Not every poet celebrated death like Tennyson. Poems written by Graham R. Tomson and Thomas Newman strayed from this convention. Tomson, the simplified pen name for Rosamund Armytage-Tomson-Marriott Watson, composed some lines for Eddy that focus solely on the sorrow and darkness of his passing. She notes how “death hath

passed by and chilled with icy wing / The bridal blossoms pale and withering: / Dead!  
 With such a life to live” (4-6). Like Tennyson, Tomson mentions the chilled shadows of  
 the dismal day, but her poem never resolves its grief with the hope Tennyson proposes.  
 Tomson concludes, “Power, Glory, Love, the beckoning future vowed: / Alas! Within the  
 shadow of the shroud / Our silent tears fall fast beside his grave” (12-14). Tomson’s  
 poem is disheartening, not just in her expression of grief, but in her restricting the Duke’s  
 possibilities of future power, glory, and love. She fully deflates his future “life to live” (6)  
 and potential with a feeble “alas” (13), and isolates an image of May weeping beside his  
 grave with her “bridal blossoms pale and withering” (5). Thomas Newman also restricts  
 May from hope and future marital bliss:

Thy lover’s gone

Maiden fair Prince alone

Heir to great Britannia’s throne

Now thy bridal hopes have flown. (qtd. in Cook 272)

Like Tennyson, both Tomson and Newman grieve Eddy’s passing. But differing from  
 him, they foreclose the possibility of life overcoming death. In other words, they fail to  
 meet Victorian expectations for celebrating death, and neglect the needs of those  
 suffering from catastrophic emotional events. This erases any hope for accelerated  
 activism, acceptance, and action that Burland suggests.

Tomson’s and Newman’s poems focus on mourning, not celebration. Tennyson’s  
 poem, however, celebrates the newness of life that comes with death and meets the  
 mourners’ grieving needs. He urges them:

Yet be comforted;

For if this earth be ruled by Perfect Love,  
 Then after his brief range of blameless days,  
 The toll of funeral in an Angel ear  
 Sounds happier than the merriest marriage-bell. (7-11)

Certainly this proposal that the Duke's mourning bell produces more happiness than the future marriage-bell is a startling comparison. In order to substantiate his comforting claim, Tennyson yields to the divine order of death – that “this earth [is] ruled by Perfect Love” (7). But on a deeper level, Tennyson attempts to accentuate the hope and celebration that comes with death, which makes it a more joyous occasion than a national wedding.

Surely such a ringing image looms as an extreme statement in celebrating death. Princess May could not have seen her fiancé's funeral bell more glorious than her anticipated wedding bell. Queen Victoria admitted to Tennyson the terrible contrast of “a wedding with bright hopes turned into a funeral in the very chapel where the former was to have taken place” (Dyson and Tennyson 138). Yet, Tennyson does not expect the mourners to understand the death immediately, but wants them to understand their reality. That is why the funeral bell only sounds happier “in an Angel ear” – one who understands the divine order, roll, and march of God (10). The unsettling image for modern readers is partially answered by Victorian customs, in which death was mourned and life was celebrated simultaneously. This dichotomy emerges in Victorian novels like *Great Expectations*, in which Pip describes the undertaker Mr. Trabb as holding some “kind of black bazaar” followed by a “grim kind of dance” that accompanies his sister's funeral (qtd. in Harvey 177-178).<sup>23</sup> Even though celebrating death seems to defy modern

decorum, there blooms a hope for the future which movingly can meet the mourners' needs. For Queen Victoria, she eventually concluded how she "is very deeply touched by the beautiful lines Lord Tennyson has so kindly written" (Dyson and Tennyson 138). Previously she had read *In Memoriam* where a larger hope emerges with death: "The dead / Are breathers of an ampler day / For ever nobler ends" (118:57). The belief that death brings ampler and nobler opportunities resonates with "Crossing of the Bar." Because of the glorious hope awaiting those who die, Tennyson requests in that poem, "And may there be no sadness of farewell, / When I embark" (11-12); for "I hope to see my Pilot face to face / When I have crost the bar" (15-16). Tennyson's indulgence in contrasting the funeral and marriage bells exemplifies the Victorian performance and celebration of death. Though seemingly improper to modern audiences, celebrating death adds comfort, encourages coping, and provides hope for a reunion and a continuation of human progression.

#### A Hopeful Lesson Based on Love, Wisdom, and Active Mourning

Tennyson not only brings out the celebration of death aspect Wolffe notes, but Tennyson's direct exhortation is also well calculated for the royal mourners and assists them to Burland's advocacy stage. One of Tennyson's lessons hinges on love as an active force in the universe. He wanted the royal family to "be comforted" because "this earth [is] ruled by Perfect Love" (7; 8). He emphasized love to the mourners because it had comforted Queen Victoria in the past. Tennyson reached out to the Queen in a letter he sent her on January 30, 1892 after the poem was composed: "Madam, I venture to write but I do not know how to express the profound sympathy of myself and my family with the great sorrow which has befallen Your Majesty and your children. I know that Your

Majesty has a perfect trust in the Love and Wisdom which order the circumstances of our life and in this alone is there comfort” (Dyson and Tennyson 137). Tennyson crafts the poem to appeal to Victoria’s belief that God’s love rules the earth and comforts the sorrowing soul. Tennyson’s ability to meet Victoria’s grieving needs by specifically addressing her beliefs is illustrated by an intimate conversation they had in 1883. At that time Tennyson’s sincerity moved the Queen to tears as it did in 1892 with Eddy’s poem. She recorded in her journal how Tennyson

Talked of the many friends he had lost, and what it would be if he did not feel and know that there was another World where there would be no partings; and then he spoke with horror of the unbelievers and philosophers, who would make you believe there was no other world, no Immortality – who tried to explain *all* away in a miserable manner. We agreed that were such a thing possible, God, who is Love, would be far more cruel than any human being. [. . .] When I took leave of him I thanked him for his kindness and said I needed it, for I had gone through so much – and he said you are so alone on that “terrible height, it is Terrible. I’ve only a year or two to live but I’ll be happy to do anything for you I can. Send for me whenever you like.” I thanked him warmly. (102-103)

Tennyson and Victoria’s discussion details how the perfect love in Eddy’s poem comes from “That God, which ever lives and loves” (*In Memoriam* Epilogue:141). Surely Tennyson’s lesson of divine love helps us view him in new ways as he tailors his message to Victoria to comfort her and move her to action.

This focus on love strengthened Tennyson's relationship with Victoria. Following their discussion he wrote her, "During our conversation I felt the touch of that true friendship & sympathy which binds human beings together, whether they be Kings or cobblers" (Dyson and Tennyson 104). Thus religious love further empowered him to meet the Queen's grieving needs and induced comfort for her. For her part, the Queen reciprocated her connection with Tennyson after his son Lionel died in 1886: "I say from the depth of a heart which has suffered cruelly – and lost almost all it cared for and loved best – I feel for you" (126).

Because of their strengthened relationship, Tennyson utilizes the poem's message of love to encourage advocacy for the Queen much more than in the "Dedication." Because love "binds humans together," it gives a divine direction for death and a life hereafter (104). Consequently, Tennyson's lesson to the Queen and the other mourners is to seek this divine love in order to fully cope, and not just wait for it like the "Dedication" had suggested. The "Perfect Love" argument makes the statement of love in the "Dedication" more active, a formula for finding God's love and comfort. But instead of waiting for these various loves like the "Dedication" had suggested, the mourners could understand Eddy's tragic death by actively seeking them:

May all love,  
 His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow thee,  
 The love of all thy sons encompass thee,  
 The love of all thy daughters cherish thee,  
 The love of all thy people comfort thee,  
 Till God's love set thee at his side again! (48-53)

Such perfect love meets the mourners' needs, attempts to negotiate their revised lives, and gives them hope for the future.

Because love is interactive and reciprocal, the social importance of understanding Eddy's death is brought out as part of the direct exhortation. Charles Corr, former chair of the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement, reaches a similar conclusion: "Whatever solace or comfort is to be achieved in the aftermath of an important death will depend upon the mourners' ability to integrate his or her experiences into some form of productive ongoing living" (154). In light of the social importance of Burland's activism, Tennyson uses the love of Albert, Victoria's sons and daughters, and her people as a preparatory base to understanding God's love in the "Dedication." The mourners need to become active in their surroundings. Building on the prior poem, Tennyson anticipates a hopeful reunion when he concludes that God's perfect love rules the earth, marches in "Eternal Harmony," and unifies relationships after death (8; 15).

Not only would a more active love move Victoria to activism, but divine wisdom is also important. We remember that Tennyson revealed in his January 30 letter to Victoria: "I know that your Majesty has a perfect trust in the Love and Wisdom which order the circumstances of our life and in this alone is there comfort" (Dyson and Tennyson 137). Seeking to console her and allow her to keep hope, he includes the wisdom of moving onward and accepting another death in order to receive the solace she seeks. The Council of Exeter agreed with the comforting wisdom to be found in Eddy's death: "God in His Almighty and Infinite Wisdom [. . .] will comfort your Royal Highnesses and assuage your grief as He alone in His Almighty Power can well do" (qtd. in Wolffe 100). Tennyson knew how the Queen had been touched following Albert's

death by the life-ordering wisdom and the “march of that Eternal Harmony” (15). At that time, she and Tennyson met, with Tennyson tearfully expressing sorrow for her loss (Richardson 132). The Queen was touched by his sincerity and sent him two volumes of Albert’s favorite German poems and revealed how drawn she was to *In Memoriam*, especially the stanza, “There must be *wisdom* with great Death; / The dead shall look me thro’ and thro’ / Be near us when we climb or fall” (51:11-13, my italics). Though the mourners may not comprehend the timing of Eddy’s passing, God can still grant them understanding wisdom. This wisdom that helps the mourners better understand death also strengthens their relationship with the deceased and strengthens Tennyson’s wisdom as religious mediator. The injunction to “be near us when we climb or fall” could be read multiple ways. A religious reading would see this as a plea to God to watch out and protect the mourners. Or, this could extend the deceased’s influence on surviving loved ones, as the deceased continues to care for and protect them. Because God’s wisdom makes accepting the eternal harmony of life experiences easier, this makes Tennyson more spiritually believable when he advocates that “the toll of funeral in an Angel ear / Sounds happier than the merriest marriage-bell” (10-11).

God’s love and wisdom constitute part of the specific funeral sermon lesson Tennyson teaches. Additionally Tennyson calls for revised mourning, with more hope for the future and more limited than the “Dedication” presents. This call is unique for many who view Tennyson as a hyper-mourner, who nursed his grief like Victoria. This innovative view of him shows how he meets the mourners’ needs and really becomes a religious advocate. In order to limit the mourners’ grief, Tennyson extends mourning beyond the royal family’s household. He tells the mourners, “Mourn! That a world-wide



Empire mourns with you, / that all the Thrones are clouded by your loss, / Were slender solace” (5-7). Lord Selborne confirmed the broad extension of sympathy Eddy’s death evoked, “I do not think there has been a more tragic event in our time, or one which has more deeply touched the hearts of people generally” (qtd. in Cook 272). The *Times* conceded that throughout the British Commonwealth, “never has mourning been more truly national than in the present case” (Editorial 9A). Similar to the darkness in the “Dedication” which spread around the globe with Albert’s death, Tennyson admits that “thrones are clouded by your loss” (6). Yet the sympathy and sorrow evoked with Eddy’s death “acquired a much stronger imperial and international dimension than it had done in 1861” with Albert’s death, as memorial services occurred from Cape Town to Canada and from Australia to India (Wolffe 211). Tennyson mentions all of this to remind the royal mourners that basking in worldwide mourning will not quicken their understanding and recovery.

Despite the outpouring of sympathy in Britain and the Commonwealth, Tennyson still encourages the royal family to really mourn. He detaches the Empire’s inclusive mourning – the “Empire mourns *with* you” (6, my italics) – and signs of grief to individualize the royal mourners’ loss. The public signs of sorrow are also only “slender solace” when compared with private mourning. For the royal family, Eddy’s death remains “your loss” (6), and emphasizes their grief and promotes working through it on their timetable. This suggestion does not homogenize the mourners’ grief as Kenneth Doka argues (1), but rather accentuates that because this is their loss, they can mourn their way, something Burland also notes (1.20). While the mourners could certainly take comfort from an “aged and careworn grandparent, despairing middle-aged parent, or

distraught young lover” across the globe, Tennyson reminds them that this mourning can have a short shelf life (Wolffe 209). This differs from the “Dedication,” where Tennyson had commingled the Queen’s grief and the loss of Albert with the entire British Empire (12-15). But his message differs now: others may feel connected to Eddy and the royal family because they have lost a loved one; but Tennyson separates the sympathies of the Commonwealth so as not to trivialize the royal family’s grief and mainstream their loss.

Yet Tennyson does not distance the “world-wide Empire mourn[ing] with you” to suggest the mourners wallow in their loss. After acknowledging the commonwealth’s “slender solace,” he bluntly states, “Yet be comforted” (7). The Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales resonated with his admonition to find comfort quickly and limit their mourning – a profound statement for monarchs to trust from a poet. The Marquess of Lorne, the Queen’s son-in-law, reported to Tennyson his success at meeting the Queen’s grieving needs: “The Queen was very much touched and very much pleased with what you wrote and sent to her. [. . .] As soon as the touching lines came she spoke with tears in her eyes of their beauty, and I know that she felt much your goodness in sending them, and that they were really a comfort to her” (Dyson and Tennyson 138). The Prince of Wales was similarly affected:

The beautiful Poem dedicated to the beloved son we have lost has deeply touched our hearts, but what has greatly enhanced its value in our eyes is that you have sent a copy of it to the Princess and myself written in your hand. You may be assured that we shall always greatly prize it and that the verses emanating from so distinguished a pen will ever remain a solace for us in our grief. (139)

The Prince of Wales expounded on the support Tennyson gave him in the poem to overcome his grief. Interestingly, the Prince noted the enhanced value of Tennyson's poem which "deeply touched our hearts" (139). Somehow Tennyson's empathy had risen because his hand wrote the poem and because of the Tennyson branding his distinguished pen produced. The result was a highly valued poem the Prince could "greatly prize" because it met the Prince and Princess' personal grieving needs. As the Prince suggested, Tennyson provided "a solace for us in our grief" (139) which had risen above the "slender solace" of the Empire (7).<sup>24</sup> By meeting the mourners grieving needs, Tennyson provides the resources to move their mourning to activism, and solidifies his trusted and comforting religious brand.

Following the revised mourning, Tennyson encourages the mourners to remember their royalty and responsibility to society when he describes Eddy as "princely" (4). The royal invocation points the mourners to activism and to Tennyson's first laureate publication, "To the Queen," in which he thanked Victoria for her "Royal grace" in granting him the laureateship and concluded by recounting her duties as "Mother, Wife, and Queen" (5, 28). Tennyson advanced the familial, royal, and social responsibilities in his "Dedication" to Albert in 1861. There he admonished Victoria to "Break not, O woman's heart, but still endure; / Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure" (43-44). Later in 1872, he began "To the Queen," "O loyal to the royal in thyself" (1). The poem to Eddy reminds the mourners of these vital royal responsibilities they must fulfill and encourages them to overcome their grief in a timely and healthy manner.

The Queen needed this royal reminder to activism after Eddy's death. She had hoped Eddy's wedding would overshadow the Prince of Wales's sensational scandals.

But with his death she moaned, “Poor me, in my old age, to see this young promising life cut short” (qtd. in Weintraub *Victoria* 527). By 1892, Bertie’s scandals and behavior had increasingly embarrassed Victoria. The royal invocation Tennyson suggests, when he calls Eddy “princely,” awakens Victoria to her royal dignity and relationship with Bertie. Further, it reminds Bertie of his royal standing and need to model the “princely, tender, truthful, reverent, [and] pure” virtues Tennyson uses to describe his son (4). Wolffe confirms how the praise portion should “encourage emulation of [the deceased’s] qualities” (58), which Tennyson recommends to the Prince of Wales. When Tennyson recounts Eddy’s virtues, he does so to motivate the royal family to overcome their grief and also come together.

The royal reminder confirms that Victoria cannot bask in her grief and ignore her responsibility to her people. The public expected her to rule despite personal pain and suffering. Two weeks after Eddy’s death she addressed this expectation to overcome her grief and committed to continued ruling: “My bereavements during the last thirty years of my reign have indeed been heavy. Though the labours, anxieties, and responsibilities inseparable from my position have been great, yet it is my earnest prayer that God may continue to give me health and strength to work for the good and happiness of my dear Country and Empire while life lasts” (9E). Tennyson’s cue remains the same for the Duke’s mourners as in the “Dedication” – “Break not, for thou art Royal” (44). Or, as the poem says, “Yet be comforted” and continue ruling and guiding the British people (7). The confirmation of the mourners’ royalty helps drive the mourners to activism, and encourages them to balance their lives and accept their revised royal situation.

Tennyson motivates the royal mourners to endure and keep going. He extends the “Dedication’s” thrust to endure with increased activism in society (43-44) when he states how the Sun of Life’s “truer name / Is ‘Onward’” (13-14). As I have previously discussed, this Sun of Life overpowers the face of death and provides an optimistic outlook for the mourners’ future by lifting Eddy out of the grave’s shadows and elevating him to continued light and life. From a different angle, Tennyson’s “onward” response ties back to his poem “Ulysses,” which he reveals “was written soon after Arthur Hallam’s death, and gave my feeling about the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memoriam*” (H. Tennyson 1:196). Ulysses’s words become a model for endurance and recovery, something Tennyson did not address at Albert’s death, and are infused into his lesson for the mourners. Ulysses exhorts his shipmates: “Come, my friends. / ‘T is not too late to seek a newer world” (56-57). He then firmly concludes,

Tho’ much is taken, much abides; and tho’  
 We are not now that strength which in old days  
 Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are, –  
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (65-70)

In “Ulysses,” Tennyson saw the need of immediately moving ahead and dismissing extended grief. Admittedly, he mourned incessantly long for Hallam. But his desire existed, and he later achieved understanding. In a similar manner, he advocates that Eddy’s mourners should push onward and not yield to grief, but strive, seek, and find

understanding with Eddy's death. The mourners still have much in life to anticipate – a “newer world” Ulysses describes where “much abides” (57; 65). Further, the mourners should embrace what they are and can achieve, not what they have lost. This accelerated activism should help the mourners “drink / Life to the lees,” as Ulysses suggests (6-7). After a lifetime of learning and wrestling with death, Tennyson suggests a quicker healing and mourning process, properly balanced with hope for this life and the next.

#### Conclusion: Mourn in Hope

Tennyson's poem to Eddy's mourners – the Queen, Princess May, and the Prince and Princess of Wales – was well crafted and well received. When Tennyson died later that year, the Queen recorded in her diary the personal attention her deceased laureate had given her and her family: “I heard that dear old Tennyson had breathed his last, a great national loss. He was a great poet and his ideas were ever grand, noble, and elevating. He was very loyal, and always very kind and sympathising to me, quite remarkably so. What beautiful lines he wrote for my darling Albert and for my children and Eddy!” (Dyson and Tennyson 140). The Queen noticed and responded to Tennyson's attempts to heal her pain. She noted his remarkable sympathy and kindness in giving elevating and hopeful inspiration for her and her families' futures. Out of all Tennyson had written, it is quite remarkable she singled out the lines written for Eddy, the Duke of Clarence.

“The Death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale: To the Mourners” should not be memorable just to the Queen, historians, and a few literary critics. Tennyson's overlooked poem meets the mourners' grieving needs. It qualifies as a funeral sermon because Tennyson mourns Eddy, praises his virtues, and uses these elements to more

fully celebrate his death and encourage the mourners to activism. Because the poem can be read as a funeral sermon, it becomes a model of recovery, a means of surviving disabling grief and finding hope in the future (Blair 249). This hope overcomes grief and appropriately accentuates mourning that looks forward to a renewed future and endless possibilities in the “great Hereafter” (17). As Burland reminds us, recovery from traumatic experiences is not a competition with winners and losers (6), though Tennyson does prod the mourners towards advocacy happening sooner than later. This capstone poem deserves additional critical recognition, especially considering it was the last poem Tennyson would write as poet laureate. However that may be, the weight of the revised mourning lessons are not diminished. The mourners felt Tennyson’s guiding hand in overcoming their grief, “mourn[ed] in hope” as he admonished, and acted on his final thrust for accepting death in order to restore balance in their lives (17).

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

## TENNYSON'S ENHANCED RELIGIOUS POSITION

## Death and Mourning in Victorian Society

My discussion of Tennyson's poems to Queen Victoria has connected various scholarly strands. Though my focus has been on the poetry, other interesting aspects of the scholarly discussion have certainly informed my reading, including the cultural and political interactions of Tennyson and Queen Victoria, Joyce Burland's psychological model, and the social influence death had on Victorian society. All of these unite nicely when Tennyson's poetry to Queen Victoria is viewed from John Wolffe's funeral sermon model: mourning the dead, praising the dead, celebrating death, and giving a specific lesson of hope and comfort to the surviving audience.

Death and grieving were popular discussions in Victorian society; for "what other society has had, for its popular epic, an elegy" like *In Memoriam*? (Harvey 179). With an analysis of Tennyson's elegiac poetry to Queen Victoria as a series of funeral sermons, death and mourning play a more prominent role in Tennyson's national poetry than previously viewed. We learn of Tennyson's process from dealing with death by emphasizing mourning and praise, to his later emphasis on hope, recovery, and understanding. Tennyson's commentary was well aimed because many Victorians, like the Queen, struggled to understand death and rebuild a normal life. As the Anglican Rector Charles Kingsley confirmed, death could paralyze survivors and become "the most sad and fearful thing which puzzles poor human beings" (3). Hence Tennyson actively helped the Queen to Burland's final stage – understanding death and helping



others with their grieving. He did this most in the poem for Eddy to suggest final methods of recovery for Victoria, which also confirmed his prior personal recovery.

The two poems I discuss provide glimpses into Victoria's grieving from 1861 until 1892. Prince Albert's death in 1861 and the death of the Queen's grandson, the Duke of Clarence in 1892, represent moments of high shock and catastrophe for the Queen. Tennyson used these events to comfort and motivate the Queen to an acceptance of her state. In 1892, the *Christus Consolator* confirmed the heightened emotions these deaths caused as well as their potential for healing and strengthened religious faith: Victoria's traumatic sorrows of 1861 and 1892 were "prepared by a loving and Divine hand' binding the Empire together, and calling the nation to hear the voice of God" (qtd. in Wolfe 215). Tennyson utilized these moments to do exactly what the *Christus Consolator* suggests: he bound Victoria to her people, bound up her mourning wounds, and motivated her to increased faith.

When Tennyson sensitively mourned Albert and Eddy, he sought to comfort and help Queen Victoria. At Tennyson's son's death, she disclosed the success of his poetry to comfort her (Dyson and Tennyson 126). While it is natural to grieve and mourn the loss of a loved one, this same grief can also fructify into positive fruit – the understanding and recovery stage Burland describes. Tennyson describes this in *In Memoriam*: "For all we thought and loved and did, / And hope, and suffer'd is but seed / of what in them is flower and fruit" (Epilogue:134-136). Mourning, though painful, carves out expanded space for hope and recovery; or as Tennyson balanced it at the Duke of Clarence's death, "Mourn in hope" (16). In these two poems Tennyson detailed how difficult mourning is. Certainly death is dreadful; but Tennyson's mourning in the poems suggests that

survivors must not allow this dread to consume them. Death is difficult, but Tennyson's focus on recovery and celebration of death makes grieving manageable. Tennyson's poems model a call for increased understanding with those who grieve. Burland's model suggests the same: we all need people around us to help meet our grieving needs. Queen Victoria's life exemplifies how often unexpected and traumatic experiences can come – hence the need for constant assistance from others. Tennyson's hopeful call for mourning insightfully describes the human condition: we all have needs others meet and others help us reach our potential.

#### Insights from Queen Victoria's Grief

The Queen trusted Tennyson's religious opinion. Charles Tennyson, the poet's grandson, argues that Tennyson met the Queen on a different level from court and family because "he instinctively understood her spiritual needs and spoke directly to them, with that extraordinary simplicity and earnestness which sophisticated people were apt to find embarrassing" (210). The Queen warmly responded to Tennyson's faith-based encouragement: she addressed him in first person, signed letters "yours affectionately" or "yours truly," conferred with him on political issues, and eventually conferred the peerage on him in 1883 (210). Tennyson connected on a different level with Queen Victoria than most could. Antony Harrison suggests, "Their relationship constitutes a remarkable example of cultural symbiosis, poet and monarch alike accruing enhanced symbolic capital from it" (45). I have argued that Tennyson "instinctively understood her spiritual needs" as Charles Tennyson describes (210) by using the Victorian funeral sermon techniques. The sermons were part in establishing a strengthened connection rarely seen between poet and monarch.

Tennyson addressed very personal issues for Victoria in these two published public poems to comfort her. The Victorian public expected her to understand her grief and endure for the good of the nation because of her royalty. John Rosenberg accurately confirms this delicate private and public balance: “Victorian elegy wears both a public and a private face, the one expressive of the loss of a sustaining culture, the other of personal loss. Tennyson is unique in voicing both before so wide an audience” (41). With this unique relationship, Tennyson encouraged Queen Victoria to repair strained family relationships, advised her to come to terms with her own grieving and recovery, and revealed how her queenly behavior could act as a beacon to unite the commonwealth and which her subjects could emulate.

Part of Tennyson’s motivation for assisting the Queen was that death should be a celebration of life with new possibilities and opportunities. We see the transition from a sparse celebration at Albert’s death in 1861 to an overt celebration at Eddy’s death in 1892. When Tennyson did this, we can see his maturing as a religious moderator for Victoria. In 1861, he shied away from this funeral sermon element because of the additional pain it could cause Victoria. She responded with intense grieving, seemingly stuck in Burland’s first and second stages. Ironically, the celebratory element could have been cathartic, providing a means to release resentment and embrace acceptance. We can see this celebratory element in 1873, when the Queen recorded her anxious desire to show Tennyson Albert’s mausoleum:

When I showed him some of the details of the decorations in the building  
he said the whole effect was very beautiful & worthy of what it was  
intended for. I observed that it was light and bright, which he thought a

great point & went on to say that he wished funerals could be in white!

Why should death, which was already so dreadful in itself, be clothed in everything to make it worse, as if it were the end of all things. (Dyson and Tennyson 92)

Tennyson's commentary here exemplified his funeral sermon message – that the Queen can overcome her grief – when he mentioned his wish that “funerals could be in white” (92). Not only would a white funeral anticipate a greater celebration of death and life, but it also reflects the transition from black to white as represented in Victorian society generally, which also symbolized recovery and understanding. Because death is not “the end of all things” (92), it deserves to be celebrated. As Tennyson accepted his role as religious mediator, we find his increased focus on celebrating death as well as life as a means to release mourning feelings and embrace recovery.

In addition to formulating an integral part of the funeral sermon, celebrating death rested in the foundational Victorian and Christian belief in an afterlife. Tennyson told Bishop J.B. Lightfoot that the “cardinal point of Christianity is the life after death,” something he thought worth celebrating (qtd. in Wheeler 240). We see remnants of this in *In Memoriam*, when Tennyson suggested that death brings forth new life and should be anticipated: “the low dark verge of life / [is also] The twilight of eternal day” (50:15-16). He elaborated further on this point, stating that his “conviction that fears, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through Faith in a God of Love” (H. Tennyson 1:304-305). Michael Wheeler confirms, “Tennyson's larger hope was for the endurance of individuality after death, for the eventual salvation of the whole world, and, linked with the latter, a broad kind of Christianity, grounded in love” (Wheeler 263).

The beginning of a new life and associated hope resonated with Victoria. Her specific funeral instructions for her death confirm how Tennyson's suggestions influenced her:

Among some of the instructions the Queen had left were notes which she had made several years earlier after she spoke with Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The poet, who also loved the Isle of Wight, had convinced her that white should be the colour of a funeral, a celebration of life, not black, a sign of death, and instructions that white and purple were to be the dominant colours of all the drapes and trappings in all areas were relayed to those making and organizing the arrangements. (Keats 23)

Victoria finally evidenced, at her death in 1901, her ability to overcome her grieving: she dismissed black and the constant mourning and perpetual-widow motif she assumed. Tennyson had similarly progressed in his transition from increased mourning of Albert to balanced mourning with Eddy. With Victoria's acceptance and action, she was more fully able to celebrate death – in this case her own – and confirmed her understanding of death's necessary role. She celebrated her own death because of the increased avenues for growth that awaited her: she would be reunited with Albert and could begin “the twilight of [her] eternal day” (A. Tennyson *In Memoriam* 50:16).

#### Future Tennyson Studies

My analysis – that we can read Tennyson's poetry to the Queen as a series of Victorian funeral sermons – pushes Tennyson studies in new directions. With his incorporation of various Victorian funeral sermon strategies, Tennyson occupies a religious role that can, in turn, create new discussions of his poetry. Other laureate

poems that deal with death could be discussed more fully, such as “Prince Leopold, an Epitaph.” But beyond this laureate verse, a funeral sermon framing would enlighten his “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington” and expand Anna Jane Barton’s recent insightful argument about the ode and memorial aesthetics. The role of death in *Idylls of the King* is also enhanced, especially with the “Dedication” introducing the poems. At the end of the *Idylls*, “To the Queen” could also be discussed with its recovery focus on personal, familial, and international levels. The recovery focus of “Crossing of the Bar” could be analyzed, especially because Tennyson petitions survivors not to mourn, moan, or be sad with the farewell death creates (3; 11). Instead, the dead can “hope to see [their] Pilot face to face / When [they] have crost the bar” (15-16). Even *In Memoriam*, though surely not fully biographical or autobiographical, could be discussed in light of Wolfe’s funeral sermon elements and Burland’s paradigm, bringing new insight to the long-discussed elegy. Indeed, dozens of scholarly discussions could sprout from our view of Tennyson’s enhanced religious position brought about by his use of the Victorian funeral sermon genre.

When Tennyson died on October 6, 1892 Queen Victoria acknowledged to her rival Prime Minister William Gladstone, “A Tennyson we may not see again for a century, or – in all his originality – ever again” (qtd. in C. Tennyson 211). And this originality includes his brilliant weaving of Victorian funeral sermon conventions in verse to assist the grieving monarch, Queen Victoria.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Tennyson's elegiac work, especially *In Memoriam*, is frequently an integral portion of these significant book-length publications. One such study is Michael Wheeler's *Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology* (1990), which deftly combines cultural religious history – the Victorian obsession with death (25) – with literary criticism. Pat Jalland's *Death in the Victorian Family* (1996) targets areas Wheeler admittedly could not address – the social history of death and a thanatological study (Wheeler xi). Jalland skillfully details paradigms of death and dying in middle and upper class Victorian families. I build upon her findings to portray Queen Victoria's grieving as not representative of Victorian society generally, and thus explain Tennyson's motivation to help her. Further, Jalland's argument allows me to contextualize both the personal trauma Victoria experienced and Tennyson's attempt to meet her grieving needs, while providing the necessary social and psychological foundation of my analysis. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2002) magnifies a specific theological issue in the literary space Wheeler and Jalland create. While his subject matter is admittedly elusive and slippery, Douglas-Fairhurst still plunges into debates that interests literary critics, psychologists, and religious and social historians. However, when discussing Tennyson, he woefully concedes, "Psychological models of mourning cannot successfully be applied to the published form of *In Memoriam*, because the poem's creative evolution does not map neatly onto its finished narrative: the saddest sections were not written first; the most resigned not written last" (255). Douglas-Fairhurst's conclusion blurs his understanding of how Tennyson's representation of pain and recovery can clarify his poetry. And while

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Douglas-Fairhurst must not read *In Memoriam* as an autobiography of Tennyson's recovery, I argue somewhat the opposite – that we can read Tennyson's poetry using psychological models of mourning.

<sup>2</sup> While the scriptural exposition was intended to connect with the audience, the scriptural connection was often poorly linked to the deceased. In 1870, the Reverend Benson preached a sermon at the tragic death of a Wellington undergraduate. The first half of his sermon feels completely unrelated to the grief of the mourners and the tragedy at the loss of a youth with so much potential. As a scriptural connection, Benson used the physical layout of Jerusalem and its foundation on two rivers, which geography he unsuccessfully attempted to unite with the boy's life (Benson 3).

<sup>3</sup> After *In Memoriam*'s publication in 1850, Albert had strongly recommended to John Russell that Tennyson fill the laureateship Wordsworth had vacated. Because of this gesture, Tennyson felt some sense of obligation to Albert. This memorial dedication allowed Tennyson to sincerely praise Albert who had staunchly promoted his poetry.

<sup>4</sup> Other critics have noted portions of these elements, but they have never been combined to understand how the poem functions as a funeral sermon. Philip Eggers, for example, argues the poem overtly lionizes Prince Albert, yet complains that Tennyson allows Albert's image to outshine the idealized British knights (75). Debra Mancoff better describes Tennyson's praise of Albert, bringing in the medieval momentum of King Arthur to mourn his passing. Kirstie Blair, in a fascinating interdisciplinary study, gets closest when she compares funeral sermons preached at Albert's death with the healing message Tennyson provides to the Queen's strained nerves and heart in *In Memoriam*.



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Yet Blair's interdisciplinary balance often leans heavily on a medical focus, rather than narrowing in on Tennyson as a funeral sermon figure.

<sup>5</sup> It is very possible to read Tennyson as a funeral sermon even though his elegy wasn't given at the funeral. Wolffe confirms, "Strictly speaking they were memorial rather than funeral sermons in that they were not normally delivered at the funeral itself" (58).

<sup>6</sup> Alan Sinfield describes Tennyson as a visionary whose politically-poignant lyric holds magical power (177, 187).

<sup>7</sup> On January 19, 1862, Princess Alice wrote Tennyson to further observe his prophetic lyric powers, speaking of "the great spirit which inspired the author" in writing the "Dedication" (H. Tennyson 2:480).

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Gerhard gives an interesting discussion of mourning in economic terms. See "Producing the 'Far-Off Interest of Tears': Tennyson, Freud, and the Economics of Mourning." *Victorian Poetry* 36 (1998): 123-133.

<sup>9</sup> This tone is similar to that of the Vicar of St. Johns in Leeds who chose as his funeral sermon text 2 Samuel 3:38: "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel" (Wolffe 82-83).

<sup>10</sup> Even the press denied Albert's failing health. Just six days prior to his death, the doctors issued a public bulletin claiming "no unfavorable symptoms" existed (qtd. in Weintraub *Uncrowned King* 425).

<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Tennyson couldn't bear to attend Hallam's funeral. In fact, he would not visit the gravesite until 1850, after he had married Emily Sellwood and published *In Memoriam*.

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<sup>12</sup> In 1882 Tennyson changed the line from “my own ideal knight” to “my king’s ideal knight.” Many critics have cornered Tennyson’s change here as simple embarrassment and ridicule he received for the explicit connection to Albert. Philip Eggers calls the line an “unfortunate topic allusion to Prince Albert” (10). But for Victoria Albert was the embodied Arthur and passed to a more glorious life. However, the change also implies a shift of emphasis from Tennyson to Arthur. The “Dedication” became less of Tennyson’s response and more of mythologizing Albert with Arthur.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Linley, on the other hand, argues that Tennyson domesticates the royal scene, balancing “the moral attribute of womanhood” with Albert’s manhood (367).

<sup>14</sup> Part of the universal mourning Albert’s death caused was likely fueled by the telegraph which transmitted communication rapidly and instantaneously heightened the poignancy of the sorrow.

<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Tennyson’s branding “Albert the Good” never stuck. Certainly it pleased the Queen; but ironically, the name probably did not stick because the Queen sought to make Albert an icon in society after his death. Her hyper commodification trumps Tennyson’s branding here, and overwhelmed her people. We sense that with a comment from Charles Dickens: “If you should meet with an inaccessible cave anywhere to which a hermit could retire from the memory of Prince Albert and testimonials to the same, pray let me know of it. We have nothing solitary and deep enough in this part of England” (qtd. in Weintraub *Victoria* 324).

<sup>16</sup> Pat Jalland’s study on death in the Victorian Era confirms that most Victorians “worked through their grief in the first two years after bereavement” (318). Lindemann argues that “the duration of a grief reaction seems to depend on the success with which a

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person does the grief work, namely emancipation from the bondage to the deceased, readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships” (143). So to say “Victoria was never more Victorian than in her inconsolably protracted mourning over Albert” as John Rosenberg does could not be more inaccurate (41). The mourning and shock that come with death are normal reactions and everyone, as Burland argues, has a different grieving schedule. Victoria’s grieving was extreme even in her society, not representative as Rosenberg believes. Certainly both she and Tennyson “held on longer and let go harder” (41), but that does not make either of them symbols of societal grieving.

<sup>17</sup> Princess Mary of Teck would eventually marry the Duke of Clarence’s younger brother, George, who would ascend to the throne as George V and she as Queen Mary. Andrew Cook calls her initial engagement to Eddy a “victory for wallflowers everywhere” because they were both evidently quite reserved (258).

<sup>18</sup> The *Illustrated London News* confirms the “somber garb” of the “grief-stricken mourners” at the Duke’s funeral (The Funeral 99).

<sup>19</sup> Some have suggested Eddy was Jack the Ripper. Sir Robert Anderson, the policeman who led the Jack the Ripper investigation, recorded in his memoir that it did not take “a Sherlock Holmes to discover that the criminal was a sexual maniac of a virulent type” (qtd. in Gilman 269). Whether or not Eddy was Jack the Ripper is superfluous to my discussion. But as Robin Inboden argues, “The fact that his name would even be considered [as Jack the Ripper] shows just how far he must have been from the royal ideal of Victoria and Albert” (218-219).

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<sup>20</sup> Tennyson's idealized view of the Duke's virtues is similar to an English nun who noted that Eddy's "baptism robes [were] scarce sullied" and had "no burden of grievous sin" (qtd. in Wolffe 208).

<sup>21</sup> See Isaiah 9:2 and Luke 1:79. Psalms 23:4 states, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and they staff they comfort me."

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, 1 John 5:11-12, which states, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

<sup>23</sup> At the Duke of Wellington's funeral in 1852, St. Paul's Cathedral was "fitted up for the occasion with a splendour of solemnity of which we have no previous example" (Maxwell 470). The two competing words, splendour and solemnity, disclose the dual interests Victorian funerals sought to satisfy: both a solemn mourning experience, and a splendour of social celebration.

<sup>24</sup> Shortly after Eddy's death, the *Illustrated London News* reported how difficult this rhetorical situation was for Tennyson: "The very expression of sympathy seems almost to be a profanation of a sacred sorrow. We have no words which are gentle enough, tender enough, loyal enough" ("The Late" 1). But the Prince of Wales acknowledged the superior poetic power Tennyson exerted to comfort him and his wife.

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