

THE EPILOGUE OF TENNYSON'S IN MEMORIAM:
MARRIAGE AS A FORCE OF TRANSFORMATION

By

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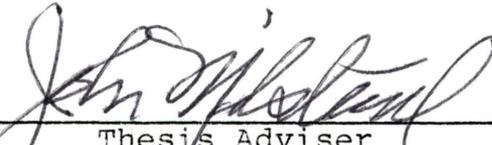
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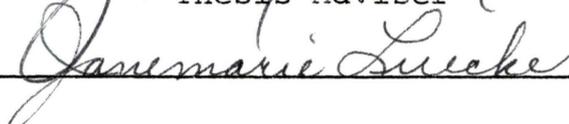


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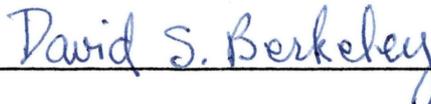
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PREFACE

This study examines the imagery, scientific metaphor, and literary conventions that Alfred Tennyson uses in the Epilogue of In Memoriam, particularly those concerning the power of marital love. The study discusses the aspects of disorder and order, death and life, and degeneracy and progress. It explores the connection of love with the force that transforms negative images into positive ones.

The findings of the study are that Tennyson incorporates several literary conventions to convey that love can indeed transform disorder, death, and degeneracy into order, life, and progress. Tennyson draws upon pagan, Judeo-Christian, and Renaissance literature. Scientific metaphor supports the power of love, and the images of the Epilogue incorporate and transform the images of the elegy.

The members of my thesis committee have been splendidly supportive and enlightening. I thank Dr. John Milstead, my advisor, for his example of intellectual vitality. I have been influenced by his example since my freshman year in college; during graduate school I have gained an increasing appreciation of Dr. Milstead as an instructor and thinker. I thank him much for his guidance and support as my

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I must resort to understatement when describing my gratitude to my husband, for I am unable to describe the invaluable services of this best friend. Suffice it to say that he has been my "man for all seasons"; to him goes the major credit for the harvest.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Tennyson said the following about In Memoriam: "It begins with a funeral and ends with a marriage--begins with death and ends with a promise of new life--a sort of Divine Comedy, cheerful at the close."¹ This cheerful "close" (Epilogue) does not facilely exclude negative images present in the rest of the elegy, but shows them transformed by the power of marital love. Drawing upon literary convention, contemporary scientific thought, and a set of recurring images, Tennyson uses the marriage in the Epilogue to symbolize the creation of order from disorder. This order promises immortality and progress for mankind, and its dynamic quality is manifest in the bridal couple and in the child they will create.

Scholars have given much attention to IM as a whole, but relatively few have discussed the Epilogue in much detail. Those who do treat the Epilogue often examine the quality of its tone or treat the epithalamium's effect upon the unity of the elegy. Though some critics are satisfied with this ending, many are not.² Those who are not satisfied often feel either that this last poem is a poor one or that it is called upon to do too much at the last moment.³

The studies most relevant to this essay, however, are those which examine the symbolism of the marriage itself and the literary conventions that Tennyson uses. The imagery and use of conventions, I believe, shows the Epilogue a successful end to IM. While Valerie Pitt notes primarily the Dantean aspects of this marriage, Eugene R. August supplements the Dantean viewpoint with a discussion of Tennyson's scientific metaphor. Joanne P. Zuckermann argues that the Epilogue blends conventions of romantic love with those of Victorian domestic love, but she examines few epithalamic conventions, nor does Buford Scrivner, Jr., in his neo-platonic description of the marriage. Gordon D. Hirsch and Robert Pattison do comment on some of the symbolism of the marriage, but their comments upon the literary conventions, however insightful, are brief.⁴

In this essay, therefore, I shall look more closely at the marriage of the Epilogue, noting how Tennyson supplements his scientific metaphor and scheme of recurring images with the use of literary conventions. In this manner, he successfully symbolizes the ability of creative love to bring order from disorder, immortality from death, and progress from degeneration. Because a sacred and fruitful marriage is a dynamic system, its qualities of order, life, and progress are inseparable, as Tennyson's synthesizing imagery demonstrates. For the ease of analytical discussion, however, I shall arbitrarily separate the three qualities, admitting their tendency to overlap. Chapter II will

deal with images of disorder and order, Chapter III with death and immortality, and Chapter IV with degeneracy and progress. First, however, I shall review pertinent elements of Tennyson's literary tradition.

Literary Background

The epithalamium is literally the song sung at the bridal chamber, but throughout history poets have often called several types of wedding songs epithalamia.⁵ I shall thus use the term in a general sense rather than the sense in which the pagans first used it. Three of the most famous and influential wedding songs were written by Catullus, one of Tennyson's favorite writers. His carmen 61 exhibits what Gary McCown terms the archetypal structure of a wedding, a tripartite form involving the bride's transfer from her parental home, to a procession, to her groom's home. Later poets such as Ben Jonson imitated Catullus' carmen 62, the virginity-marriage debate that argues the cruelty or benevolence of Hesper, the wedding star. This wedding song uses the famous metaphor of the maid as beautiful uncut flower; it awards higher praise, however, to the matron, for only the wedded vine can bear fruit and continue the human race. Catullus' carmen 64 has epic overtones, for it celebrates the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and prophesies the birth of Achilles, who will be greater than his father. Catullus contrasts the blessed marital union with the illicit passion of Ariadne and Theseus, and he contrasts

the time of Peleus' wedding with the degeneracy of present times: gods attended the wedding of Peleus, but they refuse to attend the weddings of mortals in Catullus' degenerate times.⁶

After Catullus' time, the Roman poets shifted from emphasis on the actual marriage rites and praise of the marriage gods to elaborate praise of the wedding couple. They thus imitated the epic *carmen* 64 more often than they did *carmen* 61 or *carmen* 62. The four main parts of the wedding-song of this age are as follows: the proemium, which states the occasion; peri gamou, "about marriage," which McCown says "glorifies the love that rules the world by celebrating the marriages of the elements which brought order out of chaos"; encomium ton gamounton or praise of the couple, the most important part of the song in this Silver Age; and ekphrasis tes numphes, description of actual wedding events. Many poems of this period have an epic quality, and gods and mortals mingle. In one song, the poet Statius invokes the moon goddess Cynthia to hasten the delivery of the bride's first child; this invocation is but one of many that occur throughout pagan and Christian epithalamia.⁷

The pagan work Pervigilium Veneris epitomizes the peri gamou, and it also uses much imagery concerning the hieros gamos, marriage of the earth and sky. Vergil's Fourth Eclogue is important in its prophecy of a son who will bring back the Golden Age and in theologians' interpretation

of it as a prophecy of Christ's birth (hence its designation as the "Messianic Eclogue"). Another key epithalamium is Martianus Capella's De Nuptiis Philologie et Mercurii, a philosophical poem that allegorizes the wedding of wisdom and eloquence and includes the dispensation of the seven liberal arts. Pertinent elements include the apotheosis of the bride, the presence of Urania and other Muses, the union of human and divine, and the use of the following images: moon, lilies, roses, Hesper and Phosphor.⁸

The Bible also contains poetry concerning marriage. Genesis begins with the first marriage and Revelation describes the final marriage to come. A Biblical song that is especially important to the epithalamic and theological tradition is the Song of Songs. On the literal level this song represents the wedding of Solomon and a bride, but Christian theologians have long attributed to it the allegorical representation of other weddings: the union of the Holy Spirit and Mary, in the Virgin Womb (Incarnation); the apocalyptic union of Christ with the Church, Mary, and the individual soul, or the Marriage of the Lamb with New Jerusalem. Moreover, these marriages also look back to the marriage of the divine with the first humans, Adam and Eve, and Eve's violation of her obedience to God. It was this violation that necessitated the second Eve, Mary, and the second Adam, Christ, if the soul was to live.⁹

The Song of Songs was especially important for its depiction of the woman as an enclosed garden, or hortus

conclusus. After the first garden (Eden) is violated, Mary restores its purity and fertility in her womb. After the tradition of the Virgin as the hortus conclusus, it became difficult for poets to refer to the defloration of the bride as a positive occurrence. Except for the most sacred epithalamia of the Medieval Age, wedding songs continued to emphasize Christ's birth in wedlock and his blessing of the marriage at Cana.¹⁰

Several elements of the Song of Songs occur in the wedding at the end of Dante's Commedia. Dante employs, for example, the hortus conclusus metaphor. As A. Bartlett Giamatti writes, Dante is one of the first epic writers to successfully integrate the garden and the city, combining the concepts of Eden and of the New Jerusalem.¹¹ I shall indicate in the text of my essay other elements that Tennyson adapts.

The neo-Latin period produced many epithalamia, some using the bride-as-flower metaphor and the association of water with germination. McCown writes that the flower image is archetypal, the flower bed or garden synonymous with the marriage bed: each needs cultivation in order to be fruitful. The neo-Latin poets often use fire to symbolize the passion of the married lovers, but they sometimes soften its destructive connotations by associating it with the life-giving sun and with the family hearth. The crown image is an important one, for the epithalamia often celebrated marriages of important political figures.

As with the British culture, these marriages were often an attempt to reconcile factions of a country or even to reconcile two kingdoms. The poets thus idealize the marriage and the harmony it will bring.¹²

Of the British wedding songs, perhaps the most famous is Edmund Spenser's Epithalamion. Celebrating the poet's own wedding, this poem adapts classical metaphors to the British tradition. Spenser compares the bride to the moon, then later addresses the dual nature of Cynthia at the bridal chamber: she is both queen of virgins and assistant in childbirth. The song also contains a desire that the progeny may be great and that they may receive immortality in the palaces of the stars. Spenser also celebrates several mythical weddings in his Faerie Queene and addresses a future double wedding in Prothalamion.¹³

An important feature of British wedding songs, including the Epithalamion, is their treatment of night. Although they celebrate the wedding night as a joyful one, they often include invocations against the ominous qualities associated with night. The Christian weddings, unlike the Roman ones, took place at noon rather than at night, and the British poets write with more reserve concerning evening events. Thus McCown notes the night imagery in Juliet's speech (Romeo and Juliet) as typical of the ironic epithalamium rather than of the comic or usual epithalamium. Ben Jonson and John Donne wrote several epithalamia, but I shall incorporate their contributions into the text of

my essay.¹⁴

John Milton's depiction of Adam and Eve's wedding is but a small part of a very large work. Nonetheless, it is important in the epithalamic tradition because it embodies much of the Protestant view of Eden, the Fall, and the concept of felix culpa (fortunate fall). Moreover, it does this in very powerful and influential poetry, poetry that Tennyson greatly admired.

Those elegies that end with a wedding song are relatively few. Hirsch sees Tennyson's elegy as returning to Hallam's view of the Dantean "elegies" of the Vita Nuova and the Comedy. Theocritus' idyl XV describes both Adonis' death and his forthcoming marriage, and Henry Peacham follows his lament on the death of Prince Henry with a celebration of the marriage of Elizabeth, Henry's sister.¹⁵

While Tennyson draws upon precedent and the established language of convention, he adapts these to his age and to the occasion, using scientific metaphor and the concept of evolution. Although he is no orthodox Christian, Tennyson endorses the concepts of immortal love and the example of Christ. He uses the mythology of the pagans and of the Christian religious tradition to describe the force that lends a divine spark to marital love and to mortals and their children.

ENDNOTES

¹Alfred Tennyson, In Memoriam, The Works of Tennyson, with Notes by the Author, ed. Hallam Tennyson (New York, 9 1939), pp. 241-80. All further references to this work appear in the text. Line references to the Epilogue are preceded by "E.," those to the Prologue by "Prol." Unless I indicate otherwise, when quoted words are italicized (underlined) the emphasis is mine.

²For scholars who are fairly satisfied with the Epilogue, cf. the following: A. C. Bradley, A Commentary on Tennyson's "In Memoriam" (London, 1901), pp. 217-19; E. J. Chiasson, "Tennyson's 'Ulysses': A Re-Interpretation," Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson, ed. John Killham (New York, 1960), pp. 167-71; Clyde de L. Ryals, Theme and Symbol in Tennyson's Poems to 1850 (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 261-62; John F. Genung, Tennyson's "In Memoriam": Its Purpose and Its Structure; A Study (New York, 1970), pp. 196-99; E. D. H. Johnson, "In Memoriam": The Way of the Poet," Victorian Studies, 2 (1958), 147-48; Christopher Ricks, Tennyson (New York, 1972), pp. 216-17, 226, 230; Dolores Ryback Rosenblum, "The Act of Writing In Memoriam," Victorian Poetry, 18 (1980), 134; Dennis Welch, "Distance and Progress in In Memoriam," Victorian Poetry, 18 (1970), 169-77; G. M. Young, "The Age of Tennyson," Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson, ed. John Killham (New York, 1960), p. 40. The following scholars note the effect of a wedding-song at the end of an elegy: Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 116-27; Arthur J. Carr, "Tennyson as a Modern Poet," Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson, ed. John Killham (New York, 1960), pp. 61-62; Lore Metzger, "The Eternal Process: Some Parallels Between Goethe's Faust and Tennyson's In Memoriam," Victorian Poetry, 1 (1963), 189-96; Joseph Sendry, "In Memoriam and Lycidas," PMLA 82 (1967), 437-43.

³The following scholars find the Epilogue itself unconvincing: A. Dwight Culler, The Poetry of Tennyson (New Haven, 1977), pp. 186-96; John D. Rosenberg, "The Two Kingdoms of In Memoriam," JEGP, 58 (1959), 238-39; Eric Smith, By Mourning Tongues: Studies in the English Elegy (Ipswich 1977), pp. 120-23. James R. Kincaid finds the poem itself brilliant but thinks it is unable to reverse the dark irony present in much of the elegy (Tennyson's Major Poems: The Comic and Ironic Patterns [New Haven and London, 1975],

p. 109). Gerhard Joseph states that the marriage itself is a positive symbol but that the speaker himself is outside the "magic circle of happiness" (Tennysonian Love: The Strange Diagonal [Minneapolis, 1969], p. 99). Alan Sinfield notes rather tentatively that the Epilogue is not a good conclusion in a logical sense but that "poems work according to their own principles" (The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" [New York, 1971], p. 115).

⁴For the cosmic implications of the marriage, cf. Valeria Pitt, Tennyson Laureate (London, 1963), pp. 99-100, 114-23. Eugene R. August, "Tennyson and Teilhard: The Faith of In Memoriam," PMLA, 84 (1969), 217-26. Joanne P. Zuckermann, "Tennyson's In Memoriam as Love Poetry," Dalhousie Review, 51 (1971), 215-16. Buford Scrivner, Jr., "Question and Answer: The Philosophic Progression of In Memoriam," Cithara, 14 (1974), 57-59. Gordon D. Hirsch, "Tennyson's Commedia," Victorian Poetry, 8 (1970), 93-106. Robert Pattison's study is especially useful. He notes the recurring theme of marriage throughout IM, saying that Tennyson "paid his greatest tribute" to Sappho and Catullus by skillfully knitting together "their distinct traditions of elegy and epithalamium" (Tennyson and Tradition [Cambridge, Mass., 1979], pp. 110-11, 127).

⁵Robert H. Case, ed. English Epithalamies (Chicago, 1896), p. viii. Those studies most helpful in their discussion of the epithalamium as genre are as follows (in addition to Case's): Thomas T. Greene, "Spenser and the Epithalamic Convention," Comparative Literature, 9 (1957), 215-18; Gary Mason McCown, "The Epithalamium in the English Renaissance," microfilm copy (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1968); James A. S. McPeck, Catullus in Strange and Distant Britain (Harvard Studies in Comp. Lit., Vol. 15 [Cambridge, Mass., 1939]); Virginia Tufte, The Poetry of Marriage: The Epithalamium in Europe and Its Development in England (University of Southern California Studies in Comp. Lit., Vol. 2 [Los Angeles, 1970]); E. Faye Wilson, "Pastoral and Epithalamium in Latin Literature," Speculum, 23 (1948), 35-57.

⁶For a discussion of Catullus' epithalamia, cf. McCown, pp. 1-35. Pattison comments on the tripartite structure of Tennyson's Epilogue, p. 111.

⁷McCown, pp. 36-60.

⁸McCown, pp. 306, 78, 90-93.

⁹McCown, pp. 89, 96; Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth Century Poetry (Madison, 1966), pp. 3-29.

¹⁰Cf. Stewart, pp. 31-59; McCown, pp. 25, 113.

¹¹A. Bartlett Giamatti, The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic (Princeton, 1966), pp. 114-19.

¹²McCown, pp. 77, 129-34, 164-68.

¹³Edmund Spenser, Epithalamion, The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. R. Morris (London, 1924), lines 148-50, 372-89, 409-23; "Prothalamion," The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. R. Morris (London, 1924), pp. 605-07. Cf. especially Books 1, 3, and 4 of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London, 1977).

¹⁴McCown, pp. 347-48, 372; cf. his chapter, "The Ironic Epithalamium in Romeo and Juliet," pp. 367-93.

¹⁵Hirsch, p. 98. Cf. Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet, p. 116: "Like Theocritus, who concludes with an epithalamium his idyl celebrating the feast of the resurrection of Adonis, he [Tennyson] ends his entire sequence, rather unexpectedly, with a marriage hymn." Cf. Henry Peacham, the Younger, The Period of Mourning; Disposed into Size Visions, Together with Nuptiall Hymnes (London, 1613).

CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE AS A FORCE OF ORDER

To express the transforming power of marital love, Tennyson includes in the Epilogue images of disorder as well as images of order. Several of the images refer back to earlier parts of the elegy and its symbols of disorder. Symbols used both by Tennyson and by the epithalamic tradition include the garden or city and those of the ordering of nature and the elements.

Images of Disorder

The Spoiled Garden: Lust and Time

The garden is a very important symbol of order in the epithalamic tradition. In order for the garden to be cultivated, the groom, or sower, must enter it. However, if someone unworthy enters the garden--Satan entering Eden, for example--he can bring with him devastating disorder. This disorder has long been associated with lust, lust of the senses and lust for knowledge.

Images of the spoiled garden occur in the Epilogue. Cecilia, as a bridal flower (E. 25, 33-34), is similar to many virgin brides. Catullus uses the flower to represent the bride in his carmen 62, the famous marriage-virginity

debate. In that poem, the bride "approaches in her virgin bloom." Like a "flower in some garden," it is beautiful as long as it is untouched; once the body's flower is gathered, however, the woman loses her worth.¹ In the Epilogue, Tennyson stresses the tender quality of Cecilia's flower by mentioning the "bud" of her life and by describing her as she was growing up: Tennyson bounced the young girl upon his knee and "watched her on her nurse's arm" (E. 33-4, 45-48). Moreover, Cecilia's flower is more than tender--it is "perfect," and as a rose it is the highest of flowers (E. 34). All these images symbolize Cecilia's delicacy, chastity, and virtue.

Several images, however, depict the imminent defloration of the virgin. Tennyson, the brother who serves as father,² is about to remove the shield that has protected the flower from harm (E. 47-8). This harm includes not only the damaging effects of the elements and of the world at large, but also the sexual invasion of a male. Love-making is often referred to in martial terms and the virgin is of course the more defenseless adversary.³ When the father removes his shield, Cecilia will be left at the mercy of the groom, who is great and "full of power" (E. 37-8). His victorious violation of the garden is suggested by the cut flowers that the maidens throw when the vows have been taken and by the simile that depicts him wearing a flower lightly and easily (perhaps referring to a literal boutonniere) (E. 39-40).

This image of the violated garden is further reinforced by earlier sections of IM. Hallam too had been a flower among men (99. 4) until a hand plucked him before he was ripe (75. 13). The disorder caused on this day is depicted in anti-epithalamic terms that describe the disarray of the garden. The invasion "sicken'd every living bloom," and it made "The rose / Pull sideways, and the daisy close / Her crimson fringes" (72. 7, 10-12). The dead leaf of the Epilogue recalls the leaves of Arcady: "alive and speaking" when Hallam's flower was present, but silent upon his abduction by the Pluto-like figure of Death (23. 9-12).⁴

Tennyson explicitly connects the bride with Eve and with Eden, for she glows like the moon "of Eden on its bridal bower" (E. 27-8). By extension of metaphor, Edmund stands for Adam; however, he could also suggest the serpent, for some theologians associate the Fall with Eve's sexual union with the serpent, perhaps occurring even before she had consummated her union with Adam. Edmund, as associated with learning (E. 37-40), thus implies Eve's lust for knowledge forbidden to her, her desire to disturb the order that God had imposed.⁵ As Cecilia joins with Edmund, she moves to the graveyard and the images of disorder associated with it. This image suggests her expulsion from the garden because she allowed Eden to be violated by potent forces of irrationality. It also suggests the disorder that the Renaissance poets often associated with the sexual act: as the microcosmic garden of the bride's body is violated by

external forces, and the orderly garden of her mind is disrupted by unruly passion.⁶

The comparison of Cecilia to the Virgin Mary--the "perfect rose" (E. 34)--increases the discomfiting aspects of Cecilia's defloration. As the most fruitful of women, Mary was also the most pure: known to no man. As Stewart notes, medieval iconography often pictures the Virgin as residing in a walled garden with a locked door, to which only Gabriel has a key.⁷ The implication is that to violate the symbol of perfect closure is to violate order itself.

Other images connect Cecilia's garden with a fallen paradise or garden. Tennyson describes Cecilia as a rose who is "as fair as good," and thus recalls his times with his friend Hallam: "And all we met was fair and good" (23. 7). Tennyson undercuts the apparent paradise when he writes the following lines:

If all was good and fair we met,
 This earth had been the Paradise
 It never look'd to human eyes
 Since our first sun arose and set. (24. 5-8)

The words of the Epilogue thus connect Cecilia's paradise with the garden that remained inviolate only one day. It is as if the setting of the sun--and with it the bedding of the Lushingtons--brings with it the fall of Paradise.

Noon, the time of the wedding, is traditionally British, but it is also the time that Dante associates with the Fall and the violation of the garden.⁸ Because the bride is likened to the moon (E. 27-8), she is associated with the

goddess Diana, who often hid herself in shady groves that she might bathe. This goddess is the protectress of those who "love . . . nocht to ben a wyf and be with childe."⁹ Virgins in distress often called upon her to help them preserve their virginity, their intactness. In his Divine Comedy, Dante places in the sphere of the moon women who "had taken vows as nuns but were forced to break them in order to contract a political marriage."¹⁰ In this context, physical or secular marriage is forced upon those dedicated to Diana, or married to Christ and dedicated to the example of the Virgin Mary.

Cecilia passes to another type of bower after the church ceremony when she goes to her bridal chamber. Tennyson includes images of closure, often present in descriptions of the enclosed garden or womb of Mary: doors, roof and wall (E. 117-18). The virgin Cecilia is not alone, however, for her new groom is with her inside the bridal chamber. Moreover, just outside this system of closure lies the ocean, an archetypal symbol of confusion. This ocean is also associated with the conception and the entrance into the watery womb.

Time, as well as lust, brings disorder to the earthly garden. On earth, "everything that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment."¹¹ Thus depictions of pastoral gardens, or prelapsarian Eden, and of a heavenly paradise often exclude the existence of time. In the Epilogue, however, time is an insistent force, as its association with

the modal "must" indicates:

But now set out: the noon is near,
And I must give away the bride (E. 41-2)

But where is she, the bridal flower,
That must be made a wife ere noon? (E. 25-6)

But they must go, the time draws on,
And those white-favor'd horses wait:
They rise, but linger; it is late;
Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone. (E. 89-92)

Time spurs on the wedding, speeding the couple's departure from the walled church to the sea and its association with confusion. Cecilia, in receiving the seed, will bring forth fruit, but her flower must fall in order for that to occur (E. 135-6). Unlike paradisaal gardens, she cannot possess simultaneously flower and fruit. Like the beauty of the object of the following sonnet, Cecilia's springtime beauty will soon fade:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now,
Will be a totter'd weed of small worth held.¹²

Tennyson refers to the changes time makes upon the body when he says that the passing years have "remade the blood and changed the frame" (E. 9-12).

The Evil City and Alienation from Nature

Suggestions of order or disorder accompany Tennyson's use of the city, town, or village. In epic poetry, the city can be good: the Rome of the Aeneid, the New Jerusalem of Revelation and of Dante's Commedia, the Heavenly City of Spenser's The Faerie Queene. The city can also represent

evil: Sodom, Dante's Florence, Spenser's Court of Lucifera, Milton's Pandemonium. In pastoral poetry, the city usually has negative connotations, as it does in FQ. 6. In his Epilogue, Tennyson mentions the "silent-lighted town" that the moon passes on its way to the bridal chamber (E. 112). This town recalls the "mother-town" of Vienna, a honeymoon spot that Tennyson nonetheless associates with evil (91. 21). Moreover, the walls of the bridal chamber (E. 117-18) and the "blind wall" of the church that inclose grave and altar suggest the walls of evil Vienna (E. 63, 85. 19).

Tennyson thus follows the tradition of the Bible, Dante, Petrarch, and Spenser when he associates a city both with evil and with a woman. In this epic and epithalamic tradition, the city or town can be a powerful symbol of disorder and corruption, as the title "whore of Babylon" indicates. Tennyson also describes the Arcadian Hallam's dislike of the town:

But if I praised the busy town
 He loved to rail against it still,
 For ground in yonder social mill
 We rub each other's angles down. (89. 37-40)

Images of Order

The Restored Garden: Love and Time

Like Catullus in carmena 62, Tennyson ultimately supports the defloration of the bride as something very positive: this defloration occurs within the bonds of marriage, and a divine presence orders the passions of the couple so

that a new garden is created. Although Cecilia will lose the flower of her maidenhood, she will not lose the flower of her chastity and her virtue. As long as Cecilia continues faithful in her love for her husband, her flower of fairness and goodness will grow forever (E. 36). Tennyson even indicates that Cecilia grew specifically for the purpose of wedding Edmund, and fulfills an ordered plan in doing so: "For thee she grew, for thee she grows" (E. 35). In committing herself to a love that is vital yet ordered, Cecilia avoids both the wildness of illicit love and the chaos that results from neglect. Thus she contrasts favorably with the "heart that never plighted troth / But stag-
nates in the weeds of sloth" (27. 10-11).

Tennyson softens the destructive connotations of defloration by emphasizing the groom's tenderness. Edmund is as gentle as he is powerful (E. 37-8). The father removes his protective shield because he knows that the groom is worthy and faithful (E. 37; 85. 5-16). Moreover, the bride gains a protector that the unwed maid does not have: the marriage god Hymen, the "shield" of women in Catullus' carmen 62. With other Christian brides, Cecilia can also appeal to the protection of Jesus, who treats his bride with great care.¹³

Tennyson also depicts the bride's attitude as primarily one of love and trust. She shows only the conventional fear necessary to imply her modesty, as Tennyson indicates in an address to Edmund: "She fears not, or with thee beside /

And me behind her, will not fear" (E. 43-44). Her "sweet 'I will'" (E. 56) implies a joyful surrender rather than a disorderly ravishing. Thus the groom gains a quiet, rather than unruly, entrance to the garden of the bride.

This joyful surrender of will is the prerequisite to a perfect order as depicted by Milton, Dante, and Tennyson himself. In his speech to Adam, Raphael explains that Eden will remain unspoiled as long as Adam submits to God:

Myself and all th'Angelic Host that stand
In sight of God enthron'd, our happy state
Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
On other surety none; freely we serve,
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall.¹⁴

In Dante's Paradiso, Piccarda explains the key to the order and bliss in the heavens with the words "In His will is our peace." Tennyson himself says to Immortal Love, the groom of the apocalyptic marriage, "Our wills are ours to make them thine" (Prol. 16). Zuckermann states that the very will to love and to remain faithful is an important part of marriage and order; by the end of the poem, she states, the "'I will'" is Tennyson's as well as Cecilia's. Moreover, Edmund also answers the "'I will'" of faithful love. This vow implies a willingness to make sacrifices--even to die--to preserve his wife, much as Christ died to preserve his bride (the Church).¹⁵

The groom's support of the bride is implied in Edmund's support of the flower, suggesting the vine-tree topos of pagan poetry (E. 37-40). According to Catullus' carmen 62, "a

vine unwedded never bears / Ripe grapes but with a headlong heaviness wears / Her tender body"; if she is married to "the elm her husband, then all love her well."¹⁶ In the epithalamic tradition, even the palms of paradise suggest union and order. In a poem by Claudian, trees, including palms, wed each other. Sir John Davies also includes a wedding of the trees in his imitation of this poem.¹⁷

The wedding day of Cecilia has restored the garden that was violated on the dark day that Hallam's flower was plucked (E. 8, 99. 4). New flowers grow as Cecilia's is plucked for a sacred purpose. Their faces blooming, the members of the community pass the grape, the symbol of the union of bride (vine) and groom (tree) (E. 80-2). Another flower image occurs after the defloration in the bridal chamber, for the groom's entrance into the bride's garden will lead to a higher garden: the seed will lead to "flower and fruit" (E. 136). Although the leaf in the Epilogue does not speak, as it did in the Arcady mentioned earlier, it nonetheless participates in the joy by trembling (E. 64). The bells, moreover, seem to speak in a pastoral manner when they "tell the joy to every wandering breeze" (E. 61-2). The movement of the "blind wall" in response to the marriage vows suggests the enlivening power of Orpheus and the ordering power of Amphion (E. 63).

The Edenic imagery ultimately supports the order of the Lushingtons' marriage, for it represents both the innocence of the unfallen Eden and the knowledge of the restored Eden.

Tennyson does associate Edmund with knowledge, but not with hubris. Rather than being obsessed by knowledge, Edmund wears it lightly (E. 37-40). Moreover, the music of the Lushingtons' union (E. 1-4) suggests that of the Prologue: a harmony that combines mind and soul, admits its feeble understanding of the divine, and reverences the God of immortal Love (Prol. 25-29). This true and tried groom was one who had sustained his trust in the divine (85. 5-10). As a type or replacement of Hallam, he seems associated with the "reverence and charity" of heavenly wisdom (114. 25-28). The description of Edmund wearing the flower is similar to a description of Hallam and implies the paradisaic souls of both men:

[Hallam] Best seem'd the thing he was, and join'd
 Each office of the social hour
 To noble manners, as the flower
 And native growth of noble mind. (111. 13-16)

As Hallam's words disarmed the double-tongued serpent (110. 7-8), Edmund's virtuous words helped Tennyson fight the serpent of despair (85. 9-16). Edmund is thus associated not with the serpent who brings disorder, but with Christ and Hallam, who conquer disorder.

The sexual union implied by the bridal bower of Eden is a positive one. God created this bower for Adam and Eve and, more importantly, he created Adam and Eve for each other, commanding them to multiply and thus populate his orderly creation.¹⁸ In PL, part of which McCown designates as an epithalamium, Milton is careful to stress the innocence of unfallen sex, where the passions are ordered by reason

and by a love of God.¹⁹ The minister who joins the Lushingtons in the house of God is an intermediary of the divine force that brought the first woman to the first man, sanctioning and blessing their union.²⁰ Thus God is present at this Eden just as he was present at the first, and this time the couple asked him to be present. The moon of unfallen Eden, as part of God's orderly creation, would have no negative effect upon the persons below, but would indicate the presence and the light of God, even at night.

Unlike the perfect rose of Mary, Cecilia will unite physically with a man before she brings forth fruit. However, this groom is a very worthy and special groom, one for whom she has specially grown (E. 35). By associating Edmund with Christ and the chaste Hallam, Tennyson stresses the spiritual fulfillment in the Lushingtons' physical union. The presence of wine at the wedding is a reminder of the water that Christ transformed into wine, a symbol of his sanction of marriage.²¹ The ring or wedding band, in its union of Cecilia and Edmund, symbolizes an order that involves but sublimates physical union. Its closed circle represents a new order that is nonetheless intact: partners have willingly vowed to preserve the union, and God himself has joined them.

Tennyson has connected the fall of paradise with the setting of the first sun, but he elevates the garden of the Lushingtons' love by providing it with a "whiter sun" (E. 78). It is as if paradise is given a second opportunity, is

created anew along with its second sun. Dante associates noon with Adam's fall; he also associates noon with the death of Christ.²² When Christ sacrificed his life, he finished what was necessary to save his bride from everlasting death. Thus he made possible the heavenly paradise to come and the Marriage of the Lamb. Noon, as the number twelve, is also a common symbol of order in Christian literature. As the mid-point of day and the time of the wedding, it imbues the marriage with even more symmetry.

The moon imagery also suggests the order inherent in the marriage. The moon goddess Diana (or Cynthia) has a dual nature concerning young women: once the virgins have decided to marry, she blesses the generation of their wombs. Like Tennyson, Spenser first compares his virginal bride to the moon, then later addresses the moon again at the bridal chamber. Edmund, poet and groom, sees Cynthia at his window, then says the following:

O fayrest goddesse, do not thou envy
 My love with me to spy:

 . . . to us be favorable now;
 And sith of wemens labours thou hast charge,
 And generation goodly dost enlarge,
 Encline thy will t'effect our wishfull vow,
 And the chaste wombe informe with timely seed.²³

Tennyson, as poet-brother rather than poet-groom, does not see the moon outside his bridal chamber, but withdraws from the company and invokes it to attend the bridal chamber of the Lushingtons'. Touching the bridal doors and bower with her shade, she blesses the virgin as she consummates the

wedding with her groom. Moreover, as protectress of women, she acts as a divine force that orders the passion of the groom. In its ability to control tides, the moon also brings order from the ocean that surrounds the chamber (ll2. 13-16).

The star imagery, present both at the wedding ceremony and at the consummation, is associated with divine order and system. The eyes of Cecilia, like the star of Eden, are part of an orderly innocent creation. They do not blindly run, but vibrate with the bright light of love.²⁴ Their vitality is reminiscent of Beatrice's, as she reveals to Dante the perfect order of God's paradise.²⁵ The association of Cecilia's eyes with union is further strengthened by the fact that her two eyes come to resemble one star, converging in a focal point of light.

Time comes to assume positive and orderly connotations by the end of IM, as Alan Sinfield indicates. The epithalamium demonstrates the order that immortal Love brings from time. In describing the time that has passed since Hallam's death, Tennyson writes not "nine" years, but "thrice-three" (E. 10). He thus shows its root to be that of the trinity, the perfect symbol of order in the Christian tradition: the three of the trinity is actually a three-in-one. This number is the number of Beatrice in the Vita Nuova and the Commedia: Dante used it to associate her with perfection and thus perfect order.²⁶ Though the passing of time has affected Tennyson's body, perhaps adversely, it has allowed

him the time to cultivate the garden of his soul and to grow spiritually (E. 17-20), through his own wedding with immortal Love.

The insistence of time is undeniable, but in the epithalamic tradition this is often a good thing on the wedding day, at least for bride and groom. Spenser thus laments that night takes so long in coming on the day that he is wed.²⁷ Tennyson also undercuts the relentlessness of time in his description of the couple as they prepare, half-regretfully, to leave. When Tennyson says that "time draws on" and "those . . . horses wait," time waits for the new couple and the order that they include (E. 89-90). Tennyson reinforces this temporary slowdown of time in the rhythm of the following line: "They rise, but linger; it is late" (E. 91).

The Beneficent City and Ordering of Nature

As a result of immortal love and marital union, the human community becomes a symbol of sublime order rather than of alienation from the natural order of the garden. Cecilia, as bride, foreshadows the bride of Christ in heaven, the city of the New Jerusalem.²⁸

Even the structure of the epithalamium suggests the structure of the new city: the wedding song is built of 144 lines, and the wall of the bride of Christ is 144 cubits in measure. (The number 144,000 is a very important number in the book concerning the Apocalyptic marriage, for it is the

number of the virgins at the marriage of the Lamb.) Other Apocalyptic images are present in Tennyson's wedding song: the crown, the book of names, the open book of nature (E. 128, 57, 132).²⁹

Her union with Edmund will eventually lead to a race that will once again govern the earth as Eden is restored (E. 130-32). The crowning race that will result from her union with Edmund will not be king in a corrupt earthly court, but will rule in the courts of love, perhaps on earth and in heaven.³⁰ The perfect rose will thus result in the glorious court of the crowning race, those who live in God. This combination of the rose and the city is certainly not as elaborate or as clearly defined as that of Dante's paradise, but the suggestion is there. Pitt believes that the wedding in Tennyson's epithalamium suggests the Dantean cosmic design. August notes the resemblance between the last line of Tennyson's epithalamium and the last line of Dante's Paradiso. It would not therefore be surprising if Tennyson's elegy ended with a poem that shares structural similarities with the Paradiso, and with the last book of another of Tennyson's favorite works, the Bible. Nor would it be surprising if Tennyson ended his elegy as Milton ended "Epitaphium Damonis."³¹

Earlier in the poem, Tennyson indicates Dante's terrestrial Eden and the heavenly paradise. He at first connects the "mother-town" of Vienna with evil, but looking through Hallam's eyes he sees the circled dance of the blissful in

heaven (98. 30). The sport and song are also reminiscent of the Dantean paradise. The dance of crimson and emerald suggests the dance of love and hope; the open plain suggests the terrestrial paradise, and the imperial halls the city of God or the court of Love (126. 5-8).³²

The ordering force of marital love extends beyond the garden to include all of nature. In Tennyson's Epilogue, the peri gamou is present, that depiction of the union of the elements. This union is clearest in Tennyson's prophecy of the "one element" that will someday result from the marriage (E. 142).³³ It is present more subtly, and in more detail, in the choragus' address to the forces of nature (E. 107-24). When the choragus addresses the moon, he is addressing the lowest sphere of the element of "fire."³⁴ The "shining vapor" (E. 111) suggests the union of fire, air, and water, and as it travels "over down and over dale," union with the earth is suggested. The element of earth is again present in the "mountain heads," which in their height reach up to the air and to the fire, and which are touched by the fire of the moon. The "glancing rills" and the "friths" that "spread their sleeping silver through the hills" thus unite water, fire, and earth. The "happy shores" unite water and earth, and the fire of the stars reaches down through the air to touch the "shores" of earth and water. Creation causes a being to strike his vast essence into the physical bounds of the earthly body, all within the bride's womb. Love causes this union of elements, just as

all flow back up to God when, as the result of faith and
"self-control," "we close with all we loved, / And all we
flow from, soul in soul" (131. 9-12).³⁵

ENDNOTES

¹ Carmen 62, "A Wedding Choral," Catullus: The Complete Poems, tr. and ed. F. A. Wright (London, 1926), lines 5, 45-54.

² Cf. Christopher Ricks, Tennyson (New York, 1972), 216-7: "Tennyson's relationship with his sisters within the poem [IM] is presented . . . as one in which Tennyson had to be father as well as brother. . . . As elsewhere in Tennyson, a brother makes a good father."

³ Virginia Tufte, The Poetry of Marriage: The Epithalamium in Europe and Its Development in England, (University of Southern California Studies in Comp. Lit., Vol. 2 (Los Angeles, 1970]), p. 64.

⁴ Cf. Victorian Poetry and Poetics, ed. Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange (2nd ed., Boston, 1968), p. 51. The following lines of IM demonstrate an almost lover-like relationship between Hallam and Death: 22. 13-20, 82. 3-4, 74. 11-12: "Death has made / His darkness beautiful with thee." Cf. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, V.iii.102-05.

⁵ Cf. David S. Berkeley, A Milton Guide (Stillwater, Ok., 1965), p. 269.

⁶ Cf. John Milton, Paradise Lost, John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose Works, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, 1957), 8.561-94, 633-37, Raphael's warning to Adam.

⁷ Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth Century Poetry, (Madison, 1966), pp. 35-41.

⁸ Dante Alighieri, The Paradiso, tr. and ed. John Ciardi (New York, 1970), 26.139-43, ed.'s note p. 296.

⁹ Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale," The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. John H. Fisher (New York, 1977), lines 2308-10.

¹⁰ The Paradiso, ed.'s note p. 45.

11 William Shakespeare, Sonnet 15, The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. B. Evans (Boston, 1974), lines 1-2. Cf. also the Garden of Adonis in Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London, 1977), 3.6.39.

12 Shakespeare, Sonnet 2, The Riverside Shakespeare, lines 1-4.

13 Catullus, "Carmen 62," line 55; Ephesians 5:23.

14 Milton, PL, 5.535-40.

15 Dante, Paradiso, 3.85; Joanne P. Zuckermann, "Tennyson's In Memoriam as Love Poetry," Dalhousie Review, 51 (1971), 215-16.

16 Catullus, "Carmen 62," pp. 198-99.

17 Gary McCown, "The Epithalamium in the English Renaissance," microfilm copy (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1968), pp. 67, 315.

18 Genesis 1: 28-9.

19 Milton, PL 4; Gerhard Joseph, Tennysonian Love: The Strange Diagonal (Minneapolis, 1969), p. 12.

20 Cf. Cheryl H. Fresch, "'And brought her unto the man': The Wedding in Paradise Lost," Milton Studies, 16 (1982), 21-34.

21 McCown, p. 113.

22 Dante, The Inferno, tr. and ed. John Ciardi (New York, 1954), p. 189.

23 Edmund Spenser, Epithalamion, The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. R. Morris (London, 1924), lines 372-7, 382-86.

24 Cf. IM 3.5, then compare E. 31-2.

25 Dante, Paradiso 4.139-43, 5.88-90.

26 Alan Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" (New York, 1971), p. 115. Cf. Mark Musa's intro. to Dante's La Vita Nuova (Bloomington, 1962), p. xv.

27 Spenser, Epithalamion, lines 278-83.

28 McCown, pp. 84-6.

29 Revelation 3-7, 10, 12, 19-22.

30 Cf. Genesis 1-2 for the description of human's dominion over the earth. For descriptions of the kingdoms Tennyson envisions, see the following articles: Eugene R. August, "Tennyson and Teilhard: The Faith of In Memoriam," PMLA, 84 (1969), 217-26; John D. Rosenberg, "The Two Kingdoms of In Memoriam," JEGP, 58 (1959), 228-40.

31 Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate (London, 1963), pp. 99-100; August, pp. 225-26; John Milton, "Epitaphium Damonis," John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957), pp. 132-39.

32 Dante, Paradiso, p. 41.

33 McCown, p. 311.

34 Dante, Paradiso, p. 41.

35 Milton, PL 5.469-512.

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE AS A FORCE OF LIFE: IMAGES OF DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

Epithalamists have long celebrated the immortality that marriage symbolizes. Fruitful marriages provide historical immortality for the parents and for the human race. The Christian marriage is a sacrament that symbolizes the immortality of the human soul, for it adumbrates the apocalyptic marriage of Christ and the soul. In the Epilogue, Tennyson presents images that indicate the inevitability of man's physical death and that suggest extinction. He then shows the immortality that sacred marital love brings from death.

Images of Death

The Grave and Church

Several epithalamia gently indicate the future death of the bridal couple, asking that they may live long before this death occurs.¹ A few wedding songs also refer to the recent death of a loved one.² In his epithalamium, Tennyson includes several indications of death, some not very gentle, and he attaches this wedding song to a long threnody.

Cecilia conveys the inevitability of man's death very strikingly when she stands surrounded by graves (E. 51).

This bride, like Eve, has moved quickly from association with a garden of life (E. 28, 32, 50) to the wasteland of death. Although Cecilia and Edmund do not deliberately violate Eden before they conceive their children, like Adam and Eve they are aware that they bring into the world creatures that must die. The circle of death in the Epilogue recalls an earlier one of IM, that of the pastoral poet as he is surrounded by the grasses of the grave (21. 1-4). In this case the poet sings an elegy, for like the poets of the Bible, he realizes that all flesh is but as grass, grass that soon dies.³

In the epithalamic tradition, Cecilia suggests the bride of the Song of Songs. Her relationship to the pensive tablets of death recalls that of the bride when she moves from the Eden of God's love to the tablets that delineate His justice: the Law of the Ten Commandments. These tablets bring with them the spiritual death of all humans except Christ, for only he is perfect enough to fulfill the Law.⁴ The tombstones themselves clearly connect man's birth with his physical death, the marriage day being but one day in between. These stone records seem much more permanent than the paper wedding book, and they often omit the date of one's wedding.

Elsewhere in IM Tennyson uses the grave as a link between marriage, birth, and death. In an epithalamium, or anti-epithalamium, to his brother Charles, Tennyson describes a honeymoon destination as a place of death (98. 1-8). He

describes Vienna as a place where bridal pairs are severed, and he also connects this place of consummation with the death of children: "fathers bend above more graves . . ." (98. 15-16). This image suggests not only the unexpectedness of death but perhaps even the end of a family line. It thus lends ominous overtones to Tennyson's prophecy of the Lushington son, for it is possible that like Hallam he will die young. Edmund and Cecilia may soon bend above their son's grave just as Cecilia now stands upon the dead.

With her feet on the dead, Cecilia might suggest a triumph over the dead, but physical death will come for her also. This picture recalls that of the Prologue, in which the Son of God places his foot on all that is vital, as vital as Cecilia seems now (Prol. 1-8). Humans are not only powerless to counteract this act: they are also often unable to understand it (Prol. 10-11, 15-16).

Standing upon the stone records of dead organisms, Cecilia also suggests the evolutionary process and Nature's fossil records. Nature's graveyard seems even more wasteful than man's, for she is careless of whole species: "From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone / She cries, 'A thousand types are gone; / I care for nothing, all shall go'" (56. 2-4). Though man is the top or last layer of fossil strata, he may become extinct nonetheless (56. 19-20).

Just as the grave unites marriage and death, so does the location of the wedding and the person who performs it. The place of marriage and baptism also contains the "vaults

of Death" (3. 2). The place where the wedding audience passes the grape is also the final resting place for those who are unable to partake of it (10. 13-16). When the minister performs the marriage ceremony, he usually mentions the words "till death do you part" and "as long as you both shall live." Once either marriage partner has physically died, he is as powerless to breathe life back into the body as was Tennyson at Hallam's funeral (17. 13-20). In physical terms, the life "does but mean the breath" (56. 5-8).

The wedding bells also carry associations of death. They suggest Hallam's death bell and Tennyson's adaptation of Catullus' elegy, "Frater ave atque vale":⁵

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
 One set slow bell will seem to toll
 The passing of the sweetest soul
 That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
 Eternal greetings to the dead;
 And "Ave, Ave, Ave," said,
 "Adieu, adieu," for evermore. (57. 9-16)

Tennyson found this elegy especially touching, since the Romans often held no belief in the afterlife.⁶ The words that follow this section also link with the epithalamium: "In those sad words I took farewell" (58. 1); "Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone" (E. 92). Like the bride in section 40, Cecilia will probably return after she takes this leave from home (40. 5-6), but the day will come when she will not return.

Images of Light and Dark

In the Epilogue, several images of light and dark suggest man's death. Unlike many British epithalamists, Tennyson does not begin the wedding song with the dawn of day and its associations of new life, nor does he mention the dawn of the following day. He follows tradition in his description of the noon ceremony, but he accompanies this noon with images of night, often ominous in British poetry and in IM.⁷

By using a couplet that rhymes "noon" and "moon" (E. 26-7), Tennyson connects the two audially, spatially, and semantically. This connection suggests the definitions of "noon" as "midnight" ("noon of night") and as "the place of the moon at mid-night." Tennyson himself used the word in the former sense in his Poems, when he wrote that "Night had climbed her peak of highest noon." Milton used the latter sense in "Il Penseroso": "To behold the wandring Moon, Riding neer her highest noon. . . ." ⁸ The other noons of IM are usually associated with darkness or with separation. The noons are clouded when spring refuses to come, after Hallam's death; after the Tennysons leave Somersby, the brook travels unloved at noon and in the evening (83. 5-8, 101. 9-12). Tennyson's other mention of noon is that of the "dark day" he mentions in the epithalamium, the thick noon of Hallam's death (E. 8, 72. 26). On this day the sun is darkened, as if to indicate the death of Hallam and of the

sun itself (72. 8). Since the sun is often a metaphor for the groom in epithalamia, the connection of sun with night also suggests the death of the groom.⁹

The images of earlier parts of IM lend ominous connotations to the moon and star also. When Cecilia enters "glowing like the moon," she recalls earlier descriptions of Hallam (E. 27). Like Prince Henry in Peachum's epithalamium, Hallam too suffered an early eclipse.¹⁰ Hallam's divine light did not last long, though it glowed as brightly as does Cecilia's (87. 35-6). In an ironic epithalamium that recalls Hallam's thwarted wedding plans, Tennyson describes the "glow to which . . . [Hallam's] crescent would have grown" (84. 1-4), and he laments that Hallam died before producing any children (84. 9-20). Tennyson's description of Hallam's potential as large and lucid on his brow resembles the present description of Cecilia (91. 5-8). She too may soon die and resemble instead the hard crescent that appears on the birthday of the deceased Hallam (107. 9-12). Such a moon of death suggests the Roman Diana and her associations with Proserpine and Hecate.¹¹

The star of Cecilia's eyes recalls the ethereal eyes of Hallam (87. 37-40), eyes that are now dead and lifeless (90. 5-6). In the star's association with the entrance of the bride, it is linked by epithalamic tradition to Hesper. IM associates Hesper with death. Tennyson describes Hesper as ready to die and he depicts Hesper or Venus as ready to fall into the grave (121. 1-4, 89. 47-8). Even the nativity star

of the Lushington son will one day fade with death (E. 122). Shakespeare depicted this idea in the following lines of Sonnet 60:

Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses gainst his glory fight,
And Time that give doth now his gift confound.¹²

Tennyson uses the word "shake" several times in the epithalamium (E. 24, 93, 102, 117). Throughout the elegy Tennyson has used the shade as a symbol of death and mourning (66. 5, 22. 12-20, 23. 1-8). The shadow of death came for Hallam and for those in the graveyard: it will come for the Lushingtons also, and for all humans. Tennyson suggests the Lushingtons' death in the shade that falls on the community at their departure (E. 93) and in the shade that touches the doors of the bridal chamber (E. 117). The bridal chamber may bring forth a son that leads to a crowning race, but death will come for him (E. 128). Death and sadness throw their shadow on the glory of even kings, as Tennyson states in his description of the honeymoon city of Vienna (98. 18-19). Even the gloom that attends the Lushingtons' bridal chamber recalls the gloom of the tomb that Tennyson mentions in an earlier poem to Edmund (85. 73-76).

The darkness and shade of the epithalamium also suggest the sunset and its connotations of death, a metaphor that Tennyson uses several times in the elegy. He describes the west as the grave of the sun (89. 48), and depicts the sun as dying or already buried (3. 8, 121. 1-2).

Images of Water

Though the water imagery of the Epilogue carries associations of the womb, it also suggests man's death.¹³ The sea is the grave of the praying mother's sailor son (6. 13-16), and it is the means whereby Hallam's body reaches England (9. 17). Images of the ocean figure prominently in a section where Tennyson discusses the effects of mortality on love. When Love hears "the moanings of the homeless sea" and the "sound of that forgetful shore," she falters and despairs (35. 1-16). In a later section, the shore and the "Godless deep" suggests the nonexistence of God and man's ultimate end in death (124. 9-12). Tennyson also uses the sea to indicate death in the allegory of 103. In another of Tennyson's poems, Ulysses sails the ocean perhaps as much in search of death as in search of knowledge.¹⁴

Even the beautiful rills and friths of the epithalamium have overtones of death. It recalls the trip to the death-city of Vienna and to the burial spot of Hallam (98. 1-10, 19. 1-8). The fair Danube leads only to the dim river of Lethe (98. 6-9). Like the Lushingtons, Hallam lies at pleasant shores close to ocean sounds, but he can no longer hear them (19. 1-4, E. 120-21).

Images of Life

The Grave and Church

The divine presence in marital love brings life out of

death. Although the bride, like Eve, moves from a paradise to a cemetery, she passes beyond this grave with an increase in the power of life (E. 71-4). The pensive tablets, associated with death and with the Old Testament Law, lead to resurrection because of the living words of life, the Incarnate Word of Immortal Love (E. 51-3). Christ, the seed of Eve and Adam, counteracts the death that the first parents caused. Christ himself fulfills the Law of Moses' tablets, rescuing his bride from the circle of spiritual death.¹⁵

The groom of the Song of Songs does not abolish physical death in this world, but his death and resurrection show that one need not fear the grave. The tombstones, with their dates of death, lose their negative connotations, for the book of life will replace them (E. 131-2).¹⁶

The ring of love and of the bride's submission to her groom, immortal Love, suggests eternal life and not a futile death (E. 52-3). In shedding his blood to rescue his bride, the groom of the Song of Songs has shown that "love is stronger than the grave."¹⁷ The "chalice of the grapes of God" will give new life to those who rest under the ground (10. 13-16). Like Theocritus' Adonis, the Groom of Christian tradition went under the earth to give it new life, and he returned in joy to his bride.¹⁸

With her foot on the grave, Cecilia is a reminder that though humans now die physically, some day they will rise to live forever. A being "human and devine" has defeated Death itself for his bride, and he will not leave his creation in

the dust (Prol. 9-14). The Soul need only faithfully trust the groom (Immortal Love) to realize that she will never die (Prol. 11).¹⁹ Hallam rises from the dust when he weds Immortal Love. Cecilia ends her life as a virgin because she has great faith in Edmund's undying love.

Like the Dantean dance of Vienna, the Lushingtons' wedding dance defeats the Totentanz or dance with Death (98. 21-32, E. 105, l. 12). The colors of the Vienna dance, crimson and emerald, symbolize the love and hope that see life beyond the grave (98. 30-2).²⁰ Death is but a second birth (45. 16), and those that leave this life early are all the sooner born into a more blissful one.

Although the church is a place of funerals, the communion service that occurs there is a reminder that resurrection will follow that funeral (10. 15-16, 37. 19-20). The minister cannot breathe physical life into humans, but as the intermediary of Love he can inspire spiritual life. His presence in conjunction with Edenic imagery suggests God's as he breathed into man a spirit that is eternal.²¹ As the minister breathes living words into the ear of the perfect rose, he suggests a traditional iconographical representation of the Annunciation and the Incarnation of Christ. Tennyson thus suggests the resurrecting force that results from the marriage of the divine and human, of Christ and Mary. The words "till death do you part" apply to human marriages, but they will fade at the "far off divine event," the indissoluble marriage of Creator and Creation (E. 143-44).

The church bells, with their suggestion of death, also bring the suggestion of the bells of a new birth, that of the Lushingtons' son. Tennyson's epithalamium also suggests the triumph over mortality implied in Catullus' elegy. Having said "adieu" to Hallam, Tennyson later states the following: "tho' my lips may breathe adieu, / I cannot think the thing [spirit] farewell" (123. 11-12). Cecilia will one day leave home for the last time, but she will go to live in Life itself (40. 5-6, 32. 8, E. 140).

Images of Light and Dark

Even Tennyson's use of darkness recalls that immortal love exists in night as well as day. When he uses images of night or darkness, he illustrates that God "dwells not in the light alone" but brings light and life out of what seems dark to humans (96. 19-20). The noon and its associations with night and with the "thick noon" of Hallam's death also suggests the hour of Christ's death.²² At this dark noon, Christ fulfilled his vows to his bride, the Church, and rescued her from death. With his resurrection, he brought a new dawn of Hope.²³ The evening star of Hesperus is associated with the bedding of the bride and the conception of new life. Thus Donne asks in his épithalamium, "The amorous evening star is rose: / Why, then, should not our amorous star [the bride] enclose / Herself in her wished bed?" The grave leads to new life just as the sexual "death" of the bed is a grave that leads to a cradle.²⁴

Perhaps the most important demonstration of the darkness that leads to the light of life occurs in the structural center of the song, at the mid-point or noon.²⁵ This core, while blending light and darkness, indicates the life that triumphs over all as a result of love:

O happy hour, behold the bride
 With him to whom her hand I gave.
 They leave the porch, they pass the grave
 That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the day is bright for me.
 For them the light of life increased,
 Who stay to share the morning feast,
 Who rest to-night beside the sea. (E. 69-76)

At this "happy hour" of noon, the mid-point of day and night, darkness and light reveal God's love. The couple passes from the moon and star of Eden, beyond the dark grave to a whiter sun (E. 71-2, 77-8). This occurs because of their union with each other and with the light of life, or immortal love. In the Prologue Tennyson associates Immortal Love with light when he asks, "Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light" (Prol. 32). He also associates light with the Incarnation (30. 29-32), which brings life out of the night of death.

The phrase "light of life" recalls Dante's terms for the Son of God as the "Living Light."²⁶ It also suggests Christ's description of himself in John 8:12 "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." In Dante, of course, the connection between God and the sun or light is a very integral one. He indicates its generative power in the

following lines:

All things that die and all that cannot die
are the reflected splendor of the Form
our Father's love brings forth beyond the sky [Sun]

So once a quickening of the dust of earth
issued the form of the animal perfection [Adam and Eve];
so once the Virgin Womb quickened toward birth.²⁷

The whiter sun of love replaces the idea of the sun as dying (E. 77-8, 3.8). When Cecilia takes Edmund's hand, she adumbrates the time when she will take the shining hand of Christ and go beyond the shadow of death (84. 41-4). Thus the shade that falls when the Lushingtons leave and the shade that touches their chamber lose much of their negative quality. Tennyson also softens the shade in other ways, he uses simile rather than metaphor, and he also employs a double diminutive: "A shade falls on us like the dark / From little cloudlets on the grass" (E. 93-4). Moreover, this shade leaves as Tennyson and the others talk about the couple that has just left (E. 95-100). The shade that touches the bridal chamber is connected to the moon and its generative power, and even the gloom is tender (E. 117-18).²⁸

Though the moon recalls the early death of Hallam, its continuing glow suggests the immortality of the force of love. Hallam was merely its vessel, as Cecilia is now--immortal love provides the light. The moon goddess whom Tennyson invokes has traditional associations with the underworld, but the description of her shining vapor and her tenderness associates her with the gentler versions of the deity.²⁹ The rising fire Tennyson addresses is much like the

aspiring fire of Donne's epithalamion. Donne says that this fire, representing the love of bride and groom, will be eternal, never turning to ashes.³⁰

The nativity star of the Lushington son in some ways suggests the rebirth of Hallam.³¹ It also recalls Hallam's apotheosis after death, for he has become a "dear spirit, happy star" who watches from the quiet shore of heaven (127. 18, 85. 81). In his Epithalamion, Spenser desires such a dwelling-place for his children after their death, and he invokes the "happy influence" of the stars to help the newlywed couple.

Images of Water

As in Lycidas, the water imagery of the Epilogue becomes a symbol of birth, baptism, and immortality.³² When the Lushington son draws from the vast to take form in the watery womb, he seems to rise from the "vast and wandering grave" of the sailor (6. 16). Tennyson also implies the evolutionist's concept of the sea as life source, through the use of embryological metaphor (E. 121-6). The rills of the epithalamium, lit by the generative moon of love, resemble those of 103, Tennyson's allegory about the after-life. In this section of ocean imagery, Tennyson mentions the phrase "From deep to deep" (103. 39), a phrase he uses elsewhere to suggest the positive cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.³³ The brightness of these streams and the marital love to which they lead ultimately suggest not the dark

Lethe of Hell and death (98. 7-8), but the bright, life-giving Lethe of Dante's paradise, that from which the crowned race of heaven drinks (E. 128).³⁴

ENDNOTES

¹ Cf., for example, John Donne's "Epithalamion Made at Lincoln's Inn," The Poems of John Donne, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford, 1912), pp. 141-44.

² Cf. Henry Peacham, the Younger, "In Honour of the Marriage," The Period of Mourning; Disposed into Sixe Visions, Together with Nuptiall Hymnes (London, 1613), 1.1-2, 3.71-77.

³ Isaiah 40: 6-8; 1 Peter 1: 24-25.

⁴ Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth Century Poetry (Madison, 1966), p. 83.

⁵ Cf. Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange, ed., In Memoriam, Victorian Poetry and Poetics (2nd ed., Boston, 1968), p. 57.

⁶ A. Dwight Culler, The Poetry of Tennyson (New Haven, 1977), pp. 177-78.

⁷ Gary McCown, "The Epithalamium in the English Renaissance," microfilm copy (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1968), pp. 24, 347-48.

⁸ "Noon," OED, (1979).

⁹ Virginia Tufte, The Poetry of Marriage: The Epithalamium in Europe and Its Development in England (University of Southern California Studies in Comp. Lit., Vol. 2 [Los Angeles, 1970]), pp. 107-10.

¹⁰ Peacham, 1.1-2.

¹¹ Edward Tripp, Crowell's Handbook of Classical Mythology (New York, 1970), p. 105.

¹² William Shakespeare, Sonnet 60, The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. B. Evans (Boston, 1974), lines 5-8.

¹³ Alan Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" (New York, 1971), p. 150.

14 Cf. Alfred Tennyson, "Ulysses," The Works of Tennyson, with Notes by the Author, ed. Hallam, Lord Tennyson, (New York, 1939), lines 60-63.

15 Stewart, pp. 25-9, 86-96.

16 Revelation 5: 7-10, 10: 2, 20: 12, 21: 27.

17 Stewart, pp. 25-9, 86-96.

18 Theocritus, Idyll XV, The Poems of Theocritus, tr. Anna Rist (Chapel Hill, 1978), pp. 136-42.

19 Cf. Joanne P. Zuckermann, "Tennyson's In Memoriam as Love Poetry," Dalhousie Review, 51 (1971), 215: "Cecilia, 'Her feet, my darling, on the dead,' forms an almost physical link between past and future, death and life, human sorrow and divine consolation." Zuckermann believes, however, that what creates the union "is not the supernatural activity of the Church, but the assent and resolve of the human will."

20 Dante, The Purgatorio, tr. John Ciardi (New York, 1961), 29.122-25; p. 301.

21 John Milton, Paradise Lost, John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose Works, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, 1957), 10.782-86.

22 "Noon," OED (1979).

23 For a discussion of IM 30, cf. Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate (London, 1963), 93: "We have already passed from grief . . . to the hope contained in Revelation." The "'light that shone when Hope was born'" refers both to the sun and "to the new dawn of the afterlife."

24 Donne, "Epithalamion Made at Lincoln's Inn," lines 61-63, 77-78.

25 "Noon," OED (1979). For an extensive structural analysis of an epithalamion, cf. A. Kent Heatt, Short Time's Endless Monument: The Symbolism of the Numbers in Edmund Spenser's "Epithalamion," (New York, 1960).

26 Dante, The Paradiso, tr. John Ciardi (New York, 1970), 13.55.

27 Dante, Paradiso, 13.52-54, 82-84.

²⁸ Cf. George Wither, "Epithalamion," The Poetry of George Wither, ed. Frank Sidgwick (New York, 1968), lines 199-204.

²⁹ Tripp, p. 105.

³⁰ John Donne, "Nuptial Song, Eclogue, December 26, 1613," The Poems of John Donne, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford, 1912), ll.1-11.

³¹ Sinfield, p. 151.

³² Edmund Spenser, Epithalamion, The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. R. Morris (London, 1924), lines 409-26; John Milton, "Lycidas," John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose Works, lines 165-77.

³³ Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Idylls of the King, The Works of Tennyson, with Notes by the Author, ed. Hallam Tennyson (New York, 1939), l.22.

³⁴ Dante, The Purgatorio, tr. John Ciardi (New York, 1970), 30.144-46, 31.94-102.

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE AS A FORCE OF PROGRESSION

Epithalamists have long celebrated marriage as a means of progress, both for the marital partners and for the human race. Tennyson generally believed in the progress of the human race, but he questions it in a poem on the death of Hallam, who was one of nature's finest works. The Epilogue of this poem presents suggestions of degeneracy, then indicates the force that triumphs over it. Images that Tennyson uses to indicate direction, whether positive or negative, include light images and ladder images. In IM, as in Dante, an increase in light often indicates an increasing nearness to wisdom and divinity. The chain or ladder images that Tennyson uses include those involving the pagan ages of man, the chain of being and biological evolution, and a system of typology.¹

Images of Degeneracy

Images of light--throughout the poem--are associated with love, God, and knowledge; as I have shown earlier, however, the poet uses several images of dark in the epithalamium (E. 24, 26, 93, 102, 117-18). Moreover, though the poem begins at noon, it ends with the principals

as they are resting at night, as if in the twilight of the age (E. 71-72). The son, conceived in darkness, recalls Tennyson's earlier descriptions of himself as a helpless infant crying for the light of understanding (54. 16-20, 124. 17-24). The Epilogue's description of the status of Tennyson's love (E. 15-16) and of the child as he takes form in the womb echoes Tennyson's earlier remark:

I . . . beheld again
 What is, and no man understands;
 And out of darkness came the hands
 That reach thro' nature, moulding men. (124. 21-24)

It is possible that there is no God in the darkness, only emptiness (34. 1-4, 13-16). Even if there is an ultimate light, however, man's journey toward it begins in darkness, and will not find perfect life in this life even with hard work (54. 13-20). Like Dante, man begins in the woods of darkness and must descend to the Inferno.² Tennyson's description of humans as only the "broken lights" of God is similar to Spenser's depiction of man's lot: humans are "wretched earthly clods" that live in "dreadful darknesse." The stars of the Lushingtons' wedding night, like those in Spenser's Epithalamion, lend a bit of light, but they also emphasize the great difference between the heavenly court and the earthly one (126, 111. 1-4, 127).³ Moreover, in order for the Lushington son to enter this earthly court, he must first leave that of the sky. He, like Christ leaves the "Courts of everlasting Day" only to live in a "darksome House of mortal Clay."⁴

Even the images of light sometimes suggest man's unhappy state. The star, associated with the wedding and with evening, suggests Hesper, a star Tennyson associates with dimness, decadence, and the end of glory (l21. 1-4). Tennyson's poem "The Hesperides" is an extended metaphor linking the evening star and the twilight of civilization.⁵ The virginity debates of Catallan epithalamia often also associate Hesper with degeneracy, for he brings with him the end to a happy way of life. Even the fire that rises from the downs in the Epilogue recalls the fiery, yet earthly, knowledge of an earlier section (l14. 5-15, E. 108). Unless one subordinates this knowledge to heavenly wisdom, its fire becomes a destructive power that leads to a disharmony of the soul and a decay of happiness (l14. 17-28, Prol. 25-29).

The ages of man is a myth most commonly used by the pagan writers, though the Bible, Dante, Spenser and others sometimes incorporate it. In this myth, the hierarchy of ages begins with the golden and descends, through silver and brass, to the iron age. Catullus, in carmena 64, refers to the degradation of man since the age of Achilles, and Spenser describes the passing of the golden age in the Faerie Queene.⁶ Tennyson employs this motif throughout the poem. By mentioning Hallam's death, the Epilogue clearly indicates that man does not live in the golden age. In a section that in some ways parallels the Epilogue, Tennyson describes the "iron hour" that prevented Hallam's

wedding and the birth of any children (84. 13-16). This same hour could come for the Lushingtons at any time, despite the community's wishes. Hallam is "perchance, perchance" at the wedding of the Lushingtons (E. 85-88). The possible but not certain presence of the semi-divine being suggests two things. It recalls Tennyson's earlier statement that if the dead were to return, they would receive only an "iron welcome" because of the changes wrought since their death (90. 5-8). The situation also implies, by its very uncertainty of Hallam's presence and by his complete lack of physical presence, the loss of the golden age: it recalls Catullus' lament that the gods no longer attended mortal weddings.⁷ A mortal cannot call the dead from their golden day of peace unless he can provide them with an equally peaceful haven on earth (94. 1-8).

The day of Hallam's death brought an end to what Tennyson had mistakenly considered a golden age, and it prevents the Epilogue from being a part of this idyllic state. As Tennyson told Edmund, the death of Hallam ended the possibility of "golden hours of friendship" (85. 105-08). It ended, for Tennyson's sisters as well as for himself, the "all-golden afternoon[s]" of Somersby (89. 25-8); it transformed the golden hills into the iron horns of a desolate wood (85. 28, 107. 12) and into the iron hill of death (56. 20). Even the golden hour of the yew fades soon (39. 6-12).

When Tennyson uses gold imagery to describe the earth

after Hallam's death, he often does so in a negative context. He associates it with idolatry and hypocrisy (111. 3-4, 96. 23), and with greed (106. 26). Moreover, in poems such as "Locksley Hall," he links gold to the materialism that often hinders happy marriages.⁸

Interested in the scientific discoveries of his day and in the literary tradition of his past, Tennyson drew upon the dynamics of evolution and the order of the chain of being when he wrote. However, he was sometimes uncertain of the success of the first concept and of the validity of the second. It was possible that nature had no direct plan or that it had one which involved the destruction of humans. It was also possible that the Homo sapiens had no soul or unique intelligence, that it differed from the beasts only in degree, not kind.⁹

The Epilogue suggests that humans are presently closely related to brutish desires and limitations (E. 133). The embryological stages of the Lushington son illustrates this statement in a very graphic manner (E. 125-6). These images and others in the Epilogue recall some of Tennyson's earlier, more pessimistic statements on the nature of human beings. Expressing faith in immortality though she stands on a grave, Cecilia suggests the description of humans as more inharmonious than the early dragons (56. 13-24). If humans are mortal rather than immortal, they are very slow to adapt to this fact, to change in order to accept it and live happily.

The Homo sapiens is out of touch with reality, and it is dangerous for a species to be in such a position. If human beings sacrifice for others rather than fighting viciously like the dragons, they will be more likely to lose a struggle of the fittest and less likely to create a survival-oriented race. Perhaps Edmund's learning and Cecilia's virtue do little to increase their chances of brute physical survival: the person whom Tennyson considered the best of humankind (Hallam) died even before he could produce any offspring. Persons such as Cecilia and Edmund seem likewise little adapted to survive in the laissez faire economy, for they are neither greedy nor selfish. In all probability, they will rear a son who possesses, along with their virtues, similar limitations in survival skills.

The Homo sapiens is perhaps the latest of nature's works, but that does not necessarily assign it any special worth. Humans live but a short time, much shorter than a yew tree, yet they often fail to recognize their mortality (76. 5-8). When Tennyson himself feels near death, he sees men as but the "flies of latter spring . . . [that] weave their petty cells and die" (50. 10-12). According to this metaphor, the Lushington son is not an epic hero, but the egg of a lowly fly (50. 11).

Even the human's supposed intellect and soul may be no more than "magnetic mockeries," the result of unexalted materialism (120. 3), of chemical impulses.¹⁰ If humans are but "greater ape[s]," they cannot work out the beast:

they must be resigned to remain as nature has made them (118. 27-28). If humans actually are unavoidably bestial, the community might as well partake of the grape in a satyr-like manner rather than in a sacred one; they should not feel guilty for drinking and being merry (35. 21-4). As Cecilia stands on the grave, she stands on something similar to nature's fossil records. Though she believes that she will one day rise above her present existence, she, and Hallam, may merely serve as the substance for lower forms of life (82. 3-4).

In IM, Tennyson employs both the traditional Judeo-Christian typology and a system of personal "types," such as that involving Hallam and the Lushington son. Some of the typology implies the degradation of humankind. In Chapter II, I discussed much of the Judeo-Christian typology that connects Cecilia to Eve and the present earth to the fallen world. This same typology depicts the children of Adam and Eve as less than those first parents: Cain and Abel were not directly created by God, and they were conceived after sin was brought into the world. Moreover, several theologians consider the very act of procreation sinful, unfallen sex being no longer possible. The descendants of Adam and Eve usher in a lower world than their parents first met, and Cain brought with him the first murder, a fratricide.¹¹ The description of humans as half-akin to brute, as passing through various embryological stages, links them in some ways more to the beasts of

Genesis than to the creatures made in God's image. These humans did not question their ancestry and, unlike the Victorians, they controlled nature and the world about them.¹²

Hallam may be a type of Christ, but unlike Christ he is unable to give evidence of his physical resurrection. Like all modern Christians, Tennyson must take on "faith alone" what the doubting Thomas was privileged to see (Prol. 1-4). However exemplary Hallam is, his power is less than that of Jesus', and the same probably will be true of the Lushington son. Moreover, the Lushington son will not even catch a glimpse of Hallam, for he will have died at an even earlier age than did Christ. Cecilia and Edmund do not find themselves in a perfect world, nor can they speak directly with the angels and with God.¹³ They cannot choose whether or not to keep an innocent bliss, but must work within a sullied world in an effort to approach that bliss as nearly as possible. Even if they live in obedience, unlike Adam and Eve, they will suffer death, as the graveyard demonstrates (E. 50-1).

Images of Progress

Although the epithalamium ends its description of the wedding festivities with night rather than with dawn, it promises light for the future. The son that they conceive in the night will lead to the everlasting day when man looks eye to eye on what are now dark mysteries to man

(E. 129-32; 5. 3-4). The power that will bring this light from seeming darkness is that which aided Hallam and Tennyson in their doubts, and Moses in his trials: the immortal Love that hid himself, that man might bear his glory (69. 13-20, 96. 17-24). Tennyson's wedding song, like Dante's, finds its way past the woods and the shade to the crown and the light of God (E. 93-6, E. 122-44). While on earth, the Lushington son will perhaps often cry in the night of doubt, as Tennyson did. However, if the child trusts the father of the skies whence he came, his blind clamor will eventually lead to wisdom (54. 1-4, 16-20, 124. 17-20), and he will receive illumination from above.¹⁴

As Tennyson indicates in the Prologue, faith must precede knowledge or illumination (1-4, 15-26). When Cecilia demonstrates her great faith as she takes her wedding vows, she takes a large step up the stairway that leads toward God, the stairway that leads to love (54. 13-16). In her representation of the bride of Christ, she must have faith in things not yet seen in order to someday take her place beside the groom, in the land where there will be night no more.¹⁵

Though human beings now dwell in relative darkness, God has given them a model and words that even their lowly intellects can understand (36 5-8). In his marriage to the Virgin Mary, God created a Word that exemplified the creed that the shadow reveals only to the dead (23. 4-5). This Word explained the truths that are normally a dark or

mysterious part of man's existence (36. 1-16). The essence of a human must leave the starry skies if it is to define and learn about itself; it must go to a darker world (45). However, Christ and Hallam have shown that after death the human rejoins heaven's light (127. 18). The hands that seem dark on earth will give way after death to a shining hand (84. 41-4, 124. 23-4).

As the stars in Spenser's Epithalamion lend a heavenly light to the mortals below, God lends new light to the world each time he sends another creature in his image: Christ, Hallam, the Lushington son, or any human. As he provides a divine spark to each body--each "darksome house of mortal clay"¹⁶--he provides another means whereby those on earth can understand him (36. 1-2). Because great love is involved in this creation from the sky, the Lushington son will be an especially apt messenger between the courts of love on earth and in heaven (126).

The star of the bride suggests Hesper, but not a dim one: it vibrates with the energy of love and bliss and with the hope of the new life (Phosphor) to come (E. 31-2, 121). Typologically, this star of Eden foreshadows the nativity star of Christ and the "bright and morning star" of Revelation (E. 31-2).¹⁷ The Hesper of Cecilia's virginity leads to the Phosphor of her motherhood, not just of a Lushington, but of a higher race.¹⁸ Her son is but one of many "afterChrists" or "before Omegas," those who are born before the far-off divine event (E. 143-4).¹⁹

Light and fire, like knowledge and power, can be dangerous, yet Tennyson depicts the light of the Epilogue as the light of obedient love. Like Dante as he ascends the ladder of the elements, the fire of the earth rises because it is drawn by the heavenly fire (E. 107-08). Tennyson describes this tendency in an earlier section concerning his love for Hallam:

But this it was that made me move
 As light as carrier-birds in air;
 I loved the weight I had to bear,
 Because it needed help of love. (25. 5-8)

While Tennyson's love is at first directed toward Hallam, like Dante's for Beatrice, Hallam's seems directed toward Love itself:

Thy spirit ere our fatal loss
 Did ever rise from high to higher,
 As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
 As flies the lighter thro' the gross. (41. 1-4)

The rising of the elements, reflecting the Lushingtons' love, also recalls Raphael's description of the creation as it aspires toward its Creator.²⁰

Tennyson uses light imagery to depict humankind's properly controlled use and increase of power. Edmund's learning, though associated with light, is gentle and flowerlike, not fiery and obsessive (114. 13-15). Tennyson depicts Edmund as worthy and virtuous, not hubristic (85. 5-16). In his consistency and liberal-mindedness, he resembles the controlled, heavenly Wisdom more than he does the impetuous, earthy knowledge (E. 37-9, 114. 17-22). Moreover, Edmund, unlike "Knowledge," does not fear the

grave (114. 10).

When Cecilia and Edmund pass from the darkness of the grave to the light of the other side, Tennyson describes the increase in light with the metaphor "whiter sun" (E. 78). This description is similar to one that Dante uses when he and Beatrice pass from Purgatory to the heavenly paradise:

And suddenly, as it appeared to me,
Day was added to day, as if He who can
had added a new sun to Heaven's glory

As the bride and groom vow their immortal love to each other, they foreshadow the love of the soul and God. They thus symbolize the upward journey that the soul undergoes when it loves.²¹

Using the myth of the ages in an innovative way, Tennyson (unlike Virgil) depicts the golden age as something that man works toward, not something he circles back to. Tennyson therefore describes humans as able to mould and perfect the iron that surrounds them if they are willing to suffer and sacrifice (117. 13-28). The present earthly existence--an iron age in the death and pain that it involves--can thus serve as a raw material, from which humans can make what they will. Tennyson thus uses the myth of the ages much as Milton does when he describes Christ as "fetching the age of gold," though the Christian far surpasses the pagan.²²

Hallam's death precludes a golden age setting for the epithalamium, but Tennyson does suggest a silver age

quality. The poet feels that the spirit, though not the body, of Hallam might be at the wedding (E. 85-8) and he certainly does not indicate any displeasure on the part of the deity (E. 34, 52-3, 74, 140-44). The rivers that lead to the place of conception have a silver quality (E. 116), and the son that will soon be born in some ways resembles Virgil's "messianic" son:

Justice returns. . . .
 With a new breed of men sent down from heaven.
 Only do thou, at the boy's birth in whom
 The iron shall cease, the golden race arise,
 Befriend him, chaste Lucina

 He shall receive the life of gods, and see
 Heroes with gods commingling, and himself
 Be seen of them, and with his father's worth
 Reign o'er a world of peace.²³

While the Lushington son will not bring immediate peace, he will work in an effort to approach it as quickly as possible. The time will come when all "commingle" (E. 141-4). Tennyson cannot regain the golden times with Hallam, but he sees in the new child an opportunity for the world to go forward to seek such bliss.

In the Epilogue, the metaphors of evolution and of the chain of being ultimately support the view of man as a spiritual organism that is progressing. Man has some animal limitations, but some of his biological limitations actually foster spiritual and communal qualities. The Lushington son, like the infant Tennyson describes earlier ((45., 124. 17-24), will for several years be unable to survive without the help of his mother and father. This very helplessness is especially long-lasting in humans,

causing them to form family units that often foster love as well as physical growth.²⁴ Thus Tennyson describes the important educational and emotional food that he and his brother received from their mother long after they separated from her breast (79. 13-16). When the infant ceases to cry because he knows his father is near, he feels not only physically, but emotionally protected. It is humans' spiritual quality that causes them to take the biological term of father and apply it to a force they cannot touch, to abstract a loving deity from a word that could remain a mere genetic distinction (30. 31-2).

Humans cannot be sure of their immortality, but by cultivating those qualities that transcend survival, they elevate and perhaps even extend the time they spend on earth. Love and peace make the wedding more memorable and thus permanent than does mere sensual indulgence (E. 97-9). The memory of peace--and of pain--also helps humankind avoid confrontations with its most dangerous predator, humankind. Hallam was an excellent example of the species in that he could bring harmony from disharmony and make friends of potential enemies (110). Edmund and Cecilia seem to share similar qualities.

Heredity indicates that their son will be born with at least some of the same tendencies of personality traits; environment suggests that he will develop similar virtues.

Human willingness to trust, to sacrifice, to nurture one another indicates something above animal sensualism and

selfishness, and Edmund and Cecilia exhibit their selflessness in their devotion to one another and in their submission to someone they cannot see. Knowing that their earthly lives will be relatively short, the Lushingtons nonetheless choose to live them in a manner that involves commitment, responsibility, and limitation of personal freedom. Both Cecilia and Edmund step to a higher, richer life. It is noteworthy that he who sacrificed the most and most curtailed his personal freedom (Christ) has been remembered much longer than any yew tree lives, though he died so young. Such humans clearly rise above comparisons with flies, and the Lushington son will continue the example of that other Son.

Perhaps the greatest indication that humans can work out their animal limitations lies not so much in biological and evolutionary history as within the individual. Tennyson has overcome his "fear of animal extinction" through work and through a sort of marriage with immortal Love Himself.²⁵ Cecilia grows to perfection because she grows out of love for another. It is the very desire to be better than one is that makes humans anything but bestial.

Since typology looks forward as well as backward, the Epilogue promises improvements for the race. Hallam and the Lushington son are not just men who refer back to the Incarnate Christ: they also anticipate Teilhard's Omega, or the one element of the Alpha and Omega (E. 142).²⁶ As modern persons, they can address those of their time and

speak in their language, adapting Christ's basic truths to a new idiom and environment.

The wedding bells recall that humans should not only remember the Christ of Christmas morning (28) but also ring in the Christ that is to be (106. 29-32). The rose of Mary as well as that of Eve, Cecilia recalls the perfection that God can bring out of even a fallen world. Dante depicts God's miraculous grace in Beatrice and in his restoration of Adam to paradise.²⁷ When the divine event occurs and humans again rule the earth, they will have eaten of the tree of knowledge and of the tree of life, something that Adam and Eve could not do. Moreover, mortals will not only live in direct contact with God: they will live in him, as Hallam does now (Prol. 39, E. 140). Like the bride of the Song of Songs, mortals will witness what is even more splendid than God's perfect justice--God's grace and mercy.

Tennyson believes that God gives human beings the option of forming their own types, both externally and internally. Although God himself takes part in the forming of the Lushington son, he gives much of that forming ability to the parents and to the family that will influence the youth. This family will no doubt strive to train the son up in the same virtues that Hallam and Christ exhibited. When the poet blesses the birth of this son as related to the great men who has just passed, he does something similar to what Henry Peachum did in his epithalamium for Elizabeth and Frederick (E. 123-8, 137-8). This poem was

written shortly after the death of young Prince Henry, and includes the following lines:

. . . pass ye many an happy night,
 Until Lucina brings to light
 An hopeful prince, who may restore,
In part, the loss we had before:

. . . .
 That one day we may live to see
 A Frederick Henry on her knee;
 Who mought to Europe give her law,
 And keep encroaching Hell in awe²⁸

Hallam continues the example of Christ, the Lushington son that of Hallam, and so on. Each person has the opportunity to work thus within himself and for his race, and God has given him time in which to do this (118. 1-4, 13-28). Moreover, in the example of Christ, God has given humans a spiritual rock of obedient will (131. 1-4). Christ epitomizes a human who rises on the stepping-stones of his dead self (1. 1-4). He also provides a type for humans such as Cecilia (33. 9-16), as she sacrifices the known for the glorious time to come.

ENDNOTES

¹ A. Dwight Culler, The Poetry of Tennyson (New Haven, 1977), pp. 160-61.

² Cf. Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate (London, 1963), pp. 99-100, 114; Pitt states that the structure of IM is somewhat like the three-fold structure of the Commedia.

³ Edmund Spenser, Epithalamion, The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. R. Morris (London, 1924), lines 411-12.

⁴ John Milton, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," John Milton: Complete Poetry and Major Prose Works, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, 1957), lines 13-14.

⁵ Alfred Tennyson, "The Hesperides," The Works of Tennyson, with Notes by the Author, ed. Hallam Tennyson (New York, 1939), pp. 873-75.

⁶ Cf. Dante, The Inferno, tr. John Ciardi (New York, 1954), 14.97-108, p. 133; Daniel 2: 32-4; Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London, 1977), Proem to Book V.

⁷ Virginia Tufte, The Poetry of Marriage: The Epithalamium in Europe and Its Development in England (University of Southern California Studies in Comp. Lit., Vol. 2 Los Angeles, 1970), p. 21.

⁸ Cf. IM, p. 72.

⁹ Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century Poetry (New York, 1936), pp. 418-21.

¹⁰ Cf. Beach for some of Tennyson's views on evolution and the spirit.

¹¹ Cf. John Milton, De Doctrina Christiana, John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose Works, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, pp. 431-34; David S. Berkeley, A Milton Guide (Stillwater, Ok., 1965), pp. 267-68.

- 12 Cf. Genesis 1: 27-28.
- 13 John Milton, Paradise Lost, John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose Works, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, 1957): compare 8.295ff and 10.235-40.
- 14 Cf. Dante, The Paradiso, tr. John Ciardi (New York, 1970), 10-14.
- 15 Hebrews 11: 1; Revelation 21: 25.
- 16 Milton, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," line 14.
- 17 Revelation 22: 16. Cf. also Revelation 2: 28.
- 18 For example, see Ben Jonson, "Epithalamion," Hymenaei, or The Solemnities of Masque and Barriers at a Marriage, Ben Jonson, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford, 1941), Vol. 7, lines 25-32.
- 19 Eugene R. August, "Tennyson and Teilhard: The Faith of In Memoriam," PMLA, 84 (1969), 224-25.
- 20 Dante, Paradiso, 1.99-117. For Raphael's explanation to Adam, cf. Milton, PL 5.469-74: "one Almighty is, from whom / All things proceed, and up to him return, / If not deprav'd from good."
- 21 Dante, Paradiso 1.61-63. Cf. Pitt, p. 114: "For Dante, the way from loss to the experience of the highest things was by way of love." Cf. Gordon D. Hirsch, "Tennyson's Commedia," Victorian Poetry, 8 (1970), 104: "The marriage, particularly in the expanding context of the last stanzas of the epithalamium, seems to be a shadowing forth of things to come, the marriage of the soul to God and the apocalyptic Christian marriage, the 'one far-off divine event.'"
- 22 Milton, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," line 135.
- 23 Virgil, Eclogue IV, The Poems of Virgil, tr. James Rhoades (Chicago, 1952), lines 6-10, 15-18.
- 24 For a discussion of scientific materialism, cf. Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-70 (New Haven, 1957), p. 70. For a discussion of Tennyson and the myth of evolution, cf. Beach, pp. 413-22.

25 John D. Rosenberg, "The Two Kingdoms of In Memoriam," JEGP, 58 (1959), 232.

26 August, p. 323; Revelation 21: 6.

27 Dante, Paradiso 26.103-43.

28 Henry Peacham, the Younger, "In Honour of the Marriage," The Period of Mourning; Disposed into Sixe Visions, Together with Nuptiall Hymnes (London, 1613), ll. 71-74, 76-79.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Epilogue of Tennyson's In Memoriam contains several images with apparently negative connotations. The wedding-song echoes several aspects of the threnody that it follows, including implications of disorder, death, and degeneracy. It also implies these forces as potentially present in marriage and in everyday existence. Like many other epithalamia, however, the Epilogue idealizes marital love as a powerful, dynamic union. Marital love symbolizes and works for the highest that humans can attain, including a union of human and divine. Indeed, its qualities of commitment, sacrifice, faith, and generation signify the divine-in-man.

In the Epilogue, Tennyson draws upon several traditions and literary works. He incorporates elements from Catullus and other pagan writers; from Biblical sources such as Genesis, Song of Songs, and Revelation; from Dante and the Catholic tradition; and from English Renaissance poetry. Tennyson blends the myths from these traditions with those of Victorian scientific thought and of IM as a whole. He thus describes the transcendent power of love in a compact, but very rich, language, drawing upon established

patterns of expression to describe the indescribable.

On the surface, observations concerning the inadequacy of the Epilogue are perhaps understandable: the change from elegy to elaborate wedding-song might seem contrived. However, the imagery and concepts of the epithalamium link it undeniably to the major movements of the elegy. As elegist, Tennyson has grown to see that the force of love and life is eternal, whatever its form. In the wedding-song, he merely reveals the love that has been ever present.

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