

Tennyson's Lyric Betrayals: Feminine Re-Formation in *The Princess* and *In Memoriam*

THE PRINCESS: A MEDLEY

A Strange Diagonal: Gender and Genre

In 1838, Alfred Tennyson mused, “if I meant to make any mark at all, it must be by shortness, for the men before me had been so diffuse, and most of the big things except ‘King Arthur’ had been done.” He later added that “a small vessel, built on fine lines, is likely to float further down the stream of Time than a big raft.” Tennyson’s version of the Arthurian legend, fittingly, is not a unified epic but a collection of shorter idylls (classical scholar Edmund Lushington, the poet’s close friend, indicated his awareness of this generic liminality by suggesting the title “Epylls of the King”).¹ *Idylls of the King* shares its formal approach with *Maud*, *In Memoriam*, *Pippa Passes*, *The House of Life*, Clough’s *Amours de Voyage* (1858), FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859), George Meredith’s *Modern Love* (1862), Coventry Patmore’s *The Angel in the House* (1854–1862), and James Thomson’s *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874): many long Victorian poems are assembled from smaller units, from stanzas or verse paragraphs regular or irregular in length.

Indeed, friction between lyric brevity and narrative discursiveness underlies some of Tennyson’s best-known texts. *Maud* is tonally fragmented by sudden stanzaic shifts; frustrated formal repetition undermines *In Memoriam*’s journey toward consolation. The second part of

this chapter will focus on Tennyson's great elegy as it turns to a consideration of memorialization and mourning. But nowhere do discomfiting intersections of genre appear more plainly than in that *soi-disant* "Medley," *The Princess* (1847). As this work showcases such intersections, drawing attention to the Victorian discourse surrounding genre, it subtly recalibrates the categories of lyric and narrative. And it touches on another of this study's major concerns by gendering these categories. It reveals the amnesiac nature of lyric memory, the ways in which such remembrance can reconfigure plot, and the consequences of associating women with retrospective little songs rather than politically engaged epics. The mnemonic form that helps to produce lyric forgetfulness affects the poem's attempts to tell a steadily advancing story, its gender politics, and the manner in which it is read and recalled.

The Princess is a text in which short lyrics both shape and radically destabilize a lengthy versified narrative regarding women's proper place in society. In its original form, it contained seven books of blank verse, punctuated by five blank-verse songs. Concerned that his work was too obscure ("I thought that the poem would explain itself, but the public did not see the drift"), Tennyson added six more lyrics to the third (1850) edition.² But these rhymed intercalary songs—the first appears between Books 1 and 2, the second between Books 2 and 3, and so on—often seem only tangentially related to the main storyline. They sharpen the distinctions between genres; this is not a plot constituted by lyric form like *Maud* or *In Memoriam*, but a plot apparently derailed by lyric form's self-enclosed and independently memorable patterns. Yet the relationship between story and songs is in fact more complex, as an analysis of gender in *The Princess* will make clear.

Given that the intercalary lyrics are assigned to female speakers and tend to feature domestic and sentimental themes, and that the male speakers employ a male character to tell the tale of a thwarted feminist leader in rather derisive tones, *The Princess* all but requires its readers to link gender and genre. Many critical accounts associate the poem's purposive storyline with masculinity and its exquisite intermittent songs with femininity. While I often refer to this well-established division, I also take a fresh tack by approaching it via the figure of the child. Effectively sexless, appearing in both the men's and the women's contributions, infants in *The Princess* provide a new perspective on issues of both gender and genre when viewed through the lens of memory. More specifically, though the role of children in this poem has been discussed, it has

rarely been related to the role of lyric—either to individual songs or to the generic trajectory of Tennyson's career.³

In exploring this trajectory, it is useful to know why Tennyson felt compelled to write *The Princess* in the first place. Reviewers were urging him to produce a substantial narrative poem, relevant to the age; his lyrical collections were admired for their delicate beauty, but often condemned as both childish and effeminate. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, in his 1846 satire *The New Timon: A Romance of London*, calls Tennyson "School-Miss Alfred" and accuses him of "[o]utbabying Wordsworth." Patmore likens him to "a great child, very simple and very much self-absorbed." Later in Tennyson's life, Alfred Austin is still snarling that "pretty, beautiful, tender, elegant" poetry resembles mere "fragments or driblets [...] food for babes" and cannot replace a "great subject greatly sung." Was Tennyson capable, critics wondered, of composing in a more adult and manly vein? Could he say, in Stedman's words, "[e]nough of lyrics [...] let me essay a masterpiece"? Spedding, for example, hopes that he will "find a subject large enough to take the entire impress of his mind." Even Mill (his high regard for "overheard" or confessional qualities notwithstanding) recommends that Tennyson supplement his "sensual imagery" and depiction of "passive and dreamy emotion" with "solid and mature thinking [...] philosophy as well as poetry," differentiating himself from "the sentimental weakling." As Edgar Finley Shannon puts it, Tennyson is told that he must "idealize and mirror contemporary life and thought," must "display more human sympathy," in short must "write a long poem—a sustained work on a single theme."⁴ Only with an achievement of this magnitude, reviewers suggest, would he cease to be puerile. And only by abandoning mere introspective sentiment and actively involving himself in the affairs of the nation (by taking a man's prerogative, in other words) would he cease to be womanish.

Ironically, although Tennyson wrote *The Princess* partly in order to escape his reputation as an immature or effete songster and move toward the masculine realm of epic, this poem's lyrics have consistently attracted more critical attention than its narrative. As Tennyson suspected, their brevity—which contributes to their formal memorability—has allowed them to float further down the stream of Time. Anthologists identify its songs as *The Princess's* only praiseworthy feature, blithely cutting them out of context; many feminist scholars single them out for censure, calling them transparently manipulative domestic paeans that quash female ambition. By closely reading these songs and comparing their emotional

appeals to the demands of small children, concentrating in particular on both babies' and lyrics' links to half-defined nostalgia, I will show that they are neither isolated gems irrelevant to the plot nor straightforwardly misogynist propaganda within this misogynist story. Children will act as mediating figures, weaving together themes of remembering and forgetting that appear in both story and songs—and illuminating Tennyson's authorial self-fashioning.

In *The Princess*, the benevolent aristocrat Sir Walter Vivian opens his grounds to the public. As they enjoy this holiday scene, in which technological demonstrations and frolicking rustics reveal Tennyson's interest in both tradition and innovation, seven male friends (including Sir Walter's son) decide to tell by turns the tale of a warlike medieval Princess. They are inspired by Sir Walter's young daughter Lilia, who insists that women are as capable as men. Although Lilia and her maiden aunt Elizabeth do not take part in the storytelling, they do produce intermittent songs to charm and spell the male narrators. In the inset-tale, an effeminate young Prince—cursed with what he calls “weird seizures” (1.14)—tells of his childhood betrothal to the Princess Ida. Ida has grown up fiercely independent and is much stronger-natured than her would-be suitor, dedicating herself to women's education and refusing to marry. The Prince's brutal father urges him to take Ida by force; instead, the Prince and his friends Cyril and Florian don drag and run off to pass as undergraduates at Ida's all-female college. As soon as he meets her, the Prince falls hopelessly in love with the magnificent and silver-tongued Ida. Cyril becomes enamored of Psyche, Florian's sister, who has a baby girl named Aglaïa. And Florian is smitten with Melissa, whose mother is the villainous Blanche. When tipsy Cyril sings a tavern-song, the three friends are publicly revealed as males; shortly after, the Prince saves Ida's life. Ida still refuses to honor her engagement, and she seizes Aglaïa to punish Psyche for conspiring with the men. Eventually the two kingdoms stage a tournament to decide the Princess's fate. Ida is championed by her brother Arac, whose side wins the day. The Prince is injured, and Ida reluctantly agrees to nurse him—and to transform her college grounds into a hospital for the wounded. Softened at last, she returns Aglaïa to Psyche and (it is strongly implied) accepts the Prince's suit.

Though he was under pressure to compose a long and overtly didactic poem rather than brief, feminine, babyish lyrics, Tennyson's lingering discomfort with this task is clear in *The Princess*. First, he includes the women's songs; apparently sung for the most part not individually but

in unison, these allow him to emphasize the intimate anonymity of lyric voice. Second, he continues to play up this impersonality by surrounding the main plot with a frame that attributes it to multiple narrators, whose stories are later woven together by an unnamed speaker. Tennyson can thus present sincere-sounding narration while still enforcing authorial remoteness and indistinctness, rather than seeming to offer social commentary *in propria persona*.⁵ This hedging means that his ideological position is also ambiguous. While ostensibly endorsing a plot that depicts Ida's surrender to domestic love, he can leave open the possibility that readers are meant to take exception to it. *The Princess*, then, cautiously navigates between detachment and engagement, between earnestness and mockery (perhaps we are meant to sympathize with the female characters who find Ida's bluestocking aspirations admirable, or with the male characters who tend to find them laughable), between lyric and narrative modes.

Tennyson's unnamed frame-narrator is just as indecisive. He says of the feuding male and female collaborators, "I, betwixt them both, to please them both, / And yet to give the story as it rose, / I moved as in a strange diagonal, / And maybe neither pleased myself nor them." In vain he searches for a single style to "bind the scattered scheme [...] / Together in one sheaf" (Conclusion 25–28, 8–9). And it has become evident that this "strange diagonal" is conspicuous on the level of genre as well. Though Tennyson added the 1850 songs to ensure that readers would understand his work and recall it accurately, they come across as a half-rejected generic graft that threatens to make the blank-verse epic tale comparatively unmemorable. Indeed, his subtitle sounds insecure and defensive, particularly when paired with his dismissal of the poem as "after all, only a medley."⁶ The generic hybridity of *The Princess* is a compromise that, for some, fatally compromises this work by turning it into an indeterminate amalgam.

So in more ways than one, its persistent lyricism undermines *The Princess*. Tennyson tries to distance himself and his frame-narrator from both intercalary and intra-plot songs by displacing most of them onto female speakers. But when it surfaces, lyric still causes the men's tale to eddy into descriptive stasis. And again, the women's songs both confuse the overall tone of *The Princess* and—bearing in mind the often undefined nature of a typical lyric "I"—underscore the strange quasi-anonymity of this poem's shifting narration. Tennyson is betrayed by lyric: he depends on it to clarify central ideas in an edifying and topical work, but it disjoins his long poem and sabotages

his efforts to claim masculine authority. The haunting songs, with their elusive brevity, both infect and draw attention away from the story. T. S. Eliot concludes that “for narrative Tennyson had no gift at all.”⁷

Criticism of *The Princess* frequently focuses on its painfully self-conscious generic heterogeneity. In spite of the initial popularity that springs in part from this poem’s careful mix of liberal and conservative rhetoric, many of Tennyson’s contemporaries believe that its status as an eclectic medley renders it an incoherent “glittering castle in the air” instead of the “predestined masterpiece.” Barrett Browning is baffled: “isn’t the world too old & fond of steam, for blank verse poems, in ever so many books, to be written on the fairies?”⁸ The generic, tonal, and ideological equivocations of this belated epic seem to disqualify it from fulfilling either Tennyson’s potential or his public duty to write a great long poem. It juxtaposes but fails to interweave linguistic exquisiteness and cultural relevance, mimetic engagement and escapist fantasy, acceptance and rejection of social change, the present and the past. More recent critics, too, have called the medley a failure. Self-deprecatingly resisting generic classification and choosing a medieval setting for its inset-tale, it refuses to take a firm stand on the nineteenth-century Woman Question; feminist scholars like Kate Millett have therefore come down particularly hard on *The Princess*.⁹ Charismatic Ida, who begins to challenge patriarchy’s foundations, dissolves (via the near-farical plot) into the target of satire—or (via the sentimental lyrics) into the heroine of a conventional love story. Her rebellious discourse is both showcased and regulated.

Embedding short poems in his epic-length work, then, has obvious drawbacks for Tennyson—though in his troubled search for a poetic identity, he may well have thought that this generic tension would let him have it both ways. When Ida endorses “song / Used to great ends” over plaintive lyric (4.119–120), she echoes the critics who urge her creator to inhabit a manlier compositional mode. But although several of the interspersed lyrics deal with situations more sober and realistic than those portrayed in the whimsical narrative they interrupt, many of these songs also embody in their style the brooding sensuality typical of Tennyson’s early work. While the narrative tackles current affairs and looks to the future, “Tears, idle tears” relishes the mingled pleasure and pain of dwelling in memory. While the narrative depicts telegraphs and steam and heroic action, “The splendour falls on castle walls” slips into mellifluous repetition and a longing for stasis. Thus Tennyson, if he cannot reconcile them, can at least steer between reflection and sensation.

He can respond to critical demands while still asking his readers to remember the old Tennyson, who made his mark by shortness and who tended to be less concerned with what Yeats would later deem the poetic impurities of history, politics, science, and morals. The narrative may sink into undecided evasions as it attempts to negotiate a tonal compromise between mockery and solemnity, but the strikingly memorable lyrics evoke a distinct poetic selfhood.

In fact, although these treacherous lyrics unsettle their poem's storyline—making it confused and uncertain and therefore forgettable, worthy for some of being consigned to obscurity—they also constitute its chief claim on individual and canonical remembrance. Many anthologies make room for “Tears, idle tears” or “The splendour falls on castle walls,” but few include a selection of *The Princess's* narrative.¹⁰ In this way, the songs create familiar, self-perpetuating cultural categories that affect the way in which Victorian poetry is known and recalled; for instance, they reinforce the mid-twentieth-century notion that Victorian verse features intense emotionality and sonic gorgeousness for its own sake. Even critics who disparage the blank-verse plot of *The Princess* as bloated and pompously didactic, too closely tied to nineteenth-century issues, see more universal relevance in the euphonious lyrics. Bernard Bergonzi calls them “a delightful anthology rather arbitrarily inserted into the narrative.” In 1870, Alfred Austin acknowledges that the poem's “pretty little songs” are “perpetually quoted,” adding that “their very survival will doom the text from which they are selected to practical oblivion.” Eve Sedgwick points out that “it is among the ironies of this passionate and confused myth of the sexes, that it has come to be valued and anthologized almost exclusively on the basis of its lyrics, its self-proclaimed ‘women's work.’”¹¹ So the tendency is to recall the brief lyrical disruptions of this storyline, thus selectively forgetting the storyline itself; indeed, the formally mnemonic and non-topical nature of these songs makes them appear both durable and portable, easily detached from narrative context. Tennyson believes that “every short poem should have a definite shape, like the curve [...] assumed by a severed tress or the rind of an apple when flung on the floor.”¹² He associates lyrics not only with well-defined form but also with remnants and remainders. Paradoxically both fragmentary and “perfectly finished,” “the lyric [...] lasts best.”¹³ In *The Princess*, lyric is what remains when plot breaks down.

Enfeebled by tonal vacillations and the overelaborate fictiveness of its medieval setting, Tennyson's plot is ripe to be overshadowed by the very songs that help to signal its uncertainty. These songs obtrude themselves on the attention partly because of their apparent irrelevance to the narrative, though it will become clear that they are not actually irrelevant. And again, they are particularly memorizable because they employ (and exaggerate) typically lyrical formal techniques that stand in stark contrast to discursive blank verse.

Tennyson's songs are not the only phenomenon that creates flickers in his plot trajectory. "Myself too had weird seizures [...] I seemed to move among a world of ghosts, / And feel myself the shadow of a dream" (1.14, 17–18). Another late addition to Tennyson's composition (they were first included in the fourth edition of 1851), the Prince's seizures are also an unsettling force. Perhaps, like the lyrics, they betray the poet's lingering preference for depicting isolation and escapism rather than realistic action. After all, the effete Prince requires Ida's love to cure his malady and teach him to tell "[t]he shadow from the substance" (1.9). As the Prince's identity wavers, so does that of the protean Tennyson, who negotiates stylistic and generic diagonals. Tennyson explains that he added the seizures to account for his poem's "anachronisms and improbabilities" and his hero's "too emotional temperament" and "want of power"; diverting the Prince into unexpected detours on the path to Victorian married manhood, these peculiar fits echo the poem's inconsistencies and ambivalences.¹⁴ They weaken the unity of *The Princess*, the confidence of its normative claims about gender, the masculinity of the Prince, and the advancing teleology of the tale he tells. Characters and plot begin to seem artificial, insubstantial, and incoherent.

Lyrics, then, are the generic equivalent of seizures. Both are forces that *The Princess* must somehow contain, as their nebulous retrospection (tones of vague nostalgia, the feeling of inhabiting "a world of ghosts" due to an ancient curse) threatens to destabilize the putative goals of the narrative that surrounds them. And for the Princess as well as the Prince, persistent yet ill-defined memories of the past will turn out to be dangerous stumbling blocks.

Trances cease to plague the Prince when he wins the once-unconquerable Ida, reasserts his manhood, and restores patriarchal order. Similarly, as I will show, the lyrics eventually assimilate themselves to Tennyson's anti-feminist plot. This pattern prompts a crucial question: the logical progression of the poem's blank-verse narrative may be compromised by lyric, but to what

extent are Tennyson's lyrics anti-progressive in the political sense?¹⁵ How do they relate to Ida's activist agenda, to her attempt to control the ongoing narrative of women's fight for equality? If the lyrics (like the overheard songs of *Pippa Passes*) influence their poem's narrative action, do they bolster the plot ideologically even as they disrupt it formally?

The medley's gendered division of labor implies that this is indeed the case. Here is one of the men who shoulder the task of narrative: "let the ladies sing us, if they will, / From time to time, some ballad or a song / To give us breathing-space" (Prologue 233–235). Ballads and songs seem to be of secondary importance, decorative filler at best. Less substantial than the plot, they provide entertainment while the male storytellers rest. Women's voices, valued in anthologies, can be marginalized and forgotten within the narrative. Yet these lyrics also appear to be subversive, subtly altering the poem's attitude toward Ida. The men at first take a "mock-heroic" tone; Lilia protests, and by helping to sing hauntingly poignant lyrics, she moves the story toward a more "solemn close" (Conclusion 11, 17). After all, Ida's genuinely stirring speeches are also part of the male-voiced plot. This stylistic adjustment, like the superior staying power of the songs, may compensate for Ida's eventual defeat. What's more, as past-oriented lyrics temporarily arrest and resist the progress of the male-engineered pentameter narrative, they become a muted counterplot and briefly stave off Ida's fate.¹⁶ If female singers can neither shut down nor join the men's storytelling, they can at least delay it instead of serving solely as tractable listeners who learn about women's proper role. The introduction to this study notes that Browning's Porphyria, Tennyson's Oriana, and Hemans's Leonor are all killed (directly or indirectly) by their lovers—but their striking lyrical intrusions, or even their silences, challenge male plot-making.

One could argue, though, that this very postponement is titillating. The more Ida's inevitable capitulation is deferred via lyric's repetitive patterns, the more an eager reader—invested in the satisfying resolution of the marriage plot that drives the inset-tale—wants to return to the narrative and witness that capitulation. So in this sense the lyrics support the story, both making its dénouement more desirable and giving the men time to plan it out. As far as their content goes, it certainly seems that lyrics conspire with plot to subjugate women by requiring them to sing songs glorifying love, matrimony, and childbearing. Women cannot tell the tale of their own struggles, but are instead asked to produce pleasing ditties that sabotage the heroine who champions their cause.¹⁷

Ida herself is unable to comment on the intercalary lyrics; located outside the story in which she is a character, they are shielded from her critical voice. She can neither repudiate feminized lyrical stasis nor direct the progressions of plot. And within the narrative, lyric also works against her. Though Ida initially rejects “Tears, idle tears” as “sweet [...] and vague” (4.46), too self-indulgently sentimental, she later reads “Now sleeps the crimson petal” and “Come down, O maid” at the wounded Prince’s bedside. She believes that she lacks a listening audience, speaking “to herself, all in low tones” (7.160), and so appears to be an overheard lyricist par excellence. Yet the Prince regains consciousness and becomes an identifiable auditor, contextualizing lyric and drawing it into narrative machinations, turning Ida’s recitation into a courtship scene. She ensnares and seduces herself through song.

When she reads these two poems, Ida is apparently possessed by an alien voice and an alien sensibility, so much so that she forgets her own scorn for lyric. This recalls Culler’s “bad” memory: rote, automatic repetition that does not demand understanding or tolerate paraphrase. And lyrics in *The Princess* inflect their lines with hazy amnesia or impercipient in other related ways as well: often focusing on an elusive past, they provide few individuating details about their speakers. So while they allow for feminine self-expression, moving Lilia closer to her goal of being a “mighty poetess” (Prologue 132), songs also drain the identity and confine the speech of women—both Ida and the frame-singers—to anonymous, amnesiac chanting. Unlike the male storytellers, women are associated with a mode of utterance that requires mechanical rather than intellectual knowledge. Lyrics use iterative sonic and stanzaic structures to suspend time briefly, providing a respite from the inexorable march of the plot that will subdue Ida; yet they also challenge this heroine’s status as a “[g]rand, epic” reformer (Prologue 219) and an epic poet, removing her from future-oriented action and so affirming the overall trajectory of the story that traces her downfall. Mnemonically restricted, conventional, and depersonalizing lyric form limits and reforms her. In a world turned topsy-turvy by Ida’s radical feminism, songs provide static and orderly oases of recognizable sentiment, bolstering this effect via ballad-like stanzas that connect them to the literary past. Tennyson’s blank-verse intra-plot songs and rhymed intercalary songs have similar effects, and so I consider them together. However, I discuss the important fact that certain lyrics appear *within* the narrative, and I track the relationship between blank-verse songs and story.

Blessèd, Cursèd, Memory: Tennyson's Lyrical Children

Two major camps, then, have emerged among critics who link gender and genre in this poem. Most condemn the songs as regressive or reactionary, while some praise them as dissident and pro-feminist.¹⁸ But the figure of the child, which has often been neglected or misconstrued in studies of *The Princess*, affords a fresh perspective on this controversy. Tennyson wrote of his medley that "[t]he child is the link thro' the parts, as shown in the songs, which are the best interpreters of the poem."¹⁹ In the pages that follow, I explore the connections among the songs, the women (or feminized men) who sing them, and the children about whom these characters often sing. To what extent do lyrics, which turn out to have certain infantile qualities, also infantilize women? And when lyrics confirm their tendency to depict, enact, and cue remembrance by causing characters to recall their own childhoods (and so to focus on traditional hearth-centered models of femininity), how does this position those lyrics in relation to the plot—and what does it reveal about memory's ties to genre and gender?

Before turning to the lyrics, it is worth considering children's role in the narrative. Just as she must learn to sing love-songs rather than scorning them, so Ida must be transformed from a cold virgin into a nurturing wife and potential mother. She is at first lukewarm in her attitude toward children, and studiously uninterested in sex; she admits to a fondness for babies, but wishes they "grew / Like field-flowers everywhere" (3.234–235). She warns her pupils about the dangers of children, both literal and metaphorical: these girls must avoid domestic entrapment, and they must not let men equate them with infants. Women's "name is yoked with children's" (5.408), and they are made into "pretty babes / To be dandled" (4.128–129). (Lilia, whose future is being debated in *The Princess*, also spurns those who "love to keep us children"—but the narrator still insists on calling her "[h]alf child half woman," a "little hearth-flower" with a "tiny silken-sandaled foot" [Prologue 133, 101, 165, 149]). At one point Ida even describes females en masse as "soft and milky rabble," linking childbearing with infantile weakness (6.290, my emphasis). And in a formulation to which I will return, she proclaims that all women "must lose the child" and embrace autonomous adulthood (1.136). Ida has a point, of course; Victorian women, whose interests were bound up with those of husbands or fathers, were in many ways accorded the same legal rights as children. Motherhood and enlightened

feminism, despite the Prince's attempts to reconcile them in his final courtship speech, are incompatible in Ida's view.

Other characters in *The Princess* overflow with pro-child and pro-maternal rhetoric, anticipating Ida's domestic conversion. Women should neither "fail in childward care, / Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind" (7.267–268), the Prince reminds his intended as he woos her. The "bearing and the training of a child / Is woman's wisdom," and children are her "due" (5.455–456, 3.228). Psyche's status as a mother introduces a moral imperative that leaves Ida no choice but to give Aglaïa back. And Ida herself, in her newfound tenderness, urges the forgiven Psyche to "[k]iss and be friends, like children being chid" (6.271). She also becomes more kindly disposed toward the Prince on the grounds that "[h]is mother lives" (5.398). Maternal instincts cannot be eradicated; it turns out that many of Ida's students would prefer to rear children than to fill their heads with facts (2.438–442). The Prince's father, who says of Ida that a "lusty brace / Of twins may weed her of her folly" (5.453–454), asserts that "[m]an with the head and woman with the heart" (5.439) is the proper ordering of the world—and indeed, motherhood consistently associates women more with feeling hearts and fertile bodies than with thinking minds.²⁰ While Ida speaks with regret of "my barren breast" (6.185) and is asked if she has "[o]ne pulse that beats true woman" (6.164), Cyril believes that Blanche can be softened because she has "the mother's heart" (3.131).²¹ Its figurative implications aside, the breast is also the place where a mother ought to hold, cherish, and nurse her infant. At one point, the bereft Psyche's body seems to seek out her child with a will of its own ("half / The sacred mother's bosom, panting, burst / The laces toward her babe; but she nor cared / Nor knew it" [6.131–134]). Women are apparently truest to their own desires when they both emulate and bring forth babies.

Two child figures are the instruments of Ida's change of heart. The first is Aglaïa, whom Ida seizes to punish her disloyal colleague. She cannot maintain her pitiless stance, however, and Aglaïa's fate proves that "Ida has a heart" (6.218). Maternal sympathy triumphs over the Princess's determination to raise the baby as a feminist. Reuniting mother and child, she reaffirms the vital importance of the family unit and elevates emotion over intellect. Aglaïa is also the pivot on which the poem's central debate shifts; the question at hand ceases to be "should women be educated on equal terms with men?" and becomes "should Ida give up Aglaïa, pardon Psyche, and marry the Prince?" Unwittingly, little Aglaïa even helps

to solidify the romance between Psyche and Cyril. When this young man pleads with Ida to return the baby, he confirms himself as Psyche's knight in shining armor. Her professorship at an end, Psyche is now ready to be a full-time wife and mother. In 1882, the critic Samuel Dawson cannily casts Aglaia as the heroine of *The Princess*. Noting the baby's influence on Ida, he waxes poetic: "O fatal babe! more fatal to the hopes of woman than the doomful horse to the proud towers of Ilion—for through thee the walls of pride are breached, and all the conquering affections flock in." (This observation leads Dawson to conclude that the songs are "integral parts of the main motive of the piece."²²) It seems fitting that child imagery is used to belittle Ida's feminist vision: no longer fiery, she becomes "but a girl" as she learns to accept the Prince's love and to see her former activism as "farce" (7.227–228). Moreover, the frame-speaker remarks that "[t]his fine old world of ours is but a child" that needs time to "learn its limbs" (Conclusion 77–79), absorbing Ida's rebellion into a gradualist model of change (which relies on heaven's masculine-coded guidance) and dismissing it as a mere symptom of humankind's growing pains.²³ Aglaia is in many ways a typical Tennysonian infant, as the poet is fond of using children to heal his troubled characters and restore them to healthy domestic life. There is the tormented speaker of "The Two Voices" (1842), who sees a young family and shakes off his "dull and bitter" mood (*PT* 1.592); there is the angst-ridden speaker of "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind" (1830), who takes comfort in picturing himself as a "trustful infant on the knee" (*PT* 1.218); there is the epithalamion that closes *In Memoriam*, discussed in detail in the second part of this chapter; as a negative example, there is the childless Guinevere of the *Idylls*, whose unnatural lust destroys a kingdom.

The second child figure is the Prince himself. Elsewhere in Tennyson, trances are a sign of imaginative authority; the Prince's seizures, however, paint him less as a rapturous visionary and more as a sickly baby. And once wounded in battle, he is further infantilized, with no more awareness or power "than infants in their sleep" (7.39). Like the "Supposed Confessions" speaker, he indulges in a fantasy of passivity and nostalgic regression that assimilates his nurse Ida to the enduring Oedipal ideal embodied by his mother: he is an "insatiable child who demands to be born into his masculine heritage," and "by feigning infantile helplessness he can convert his virago into the glowing image of mama."²⁴ His apparent weakness is more effective than any show of force, as it obliges Ida to open her heart to him. Lying as if in the womb,

“silent in the muffled cage of life” (7.32), the fetal Prince nonetheless reclaims the virile dominance that had once belonged to Ida. She is reformed in the process, becoming both his mother—he returns “to life, to life indeed, through thee” (7.324)—and the bearer of his future children. It seems likely that she will become, like the Prince’s mother before her, “[n]ot learnèd, save in gracious household ways” (7.299).

Yet this poem’s equation of babyishness and femininity does at first apply to the Prince as well. He describes himself as “blue-eyed, and fair in face, / Of temper amorous, as the first of May, / With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl” (1.1–3). He wears women’s clothing, sings in falsetto, and is given to fainting fits; he is the advocate of love poetry, domestic ideals, wistful remembrance, and soft sentiment. And Ida, while beautiful, is frequently portrayed as masculine with her forceful temperament and wide-ranging intellect. When the Prince muses that “in the long years liker must they grow; / The man be more of woman, she of man” (7.263–264), he may appear to embrace such gender-blurring and advocate for androgyny as the goal of evolution. However, evolution relies on procreation, and the demands of matrimony and childbearing ultimately preclude adult androgyny. If she wishes to see the “crowning race of humankind” (7.279) emerge, Ida must give up her vision of self-reliant womanhood. While the infant, in its blending of mother and father, is another androgynous figure—none of the children mentioned in the lyrics are assigned a gender—this androgyny is again safely mediated through marriage. Sexless children, then, re-sex their parents. As Ida sits by her suitor’s sickbed, she lets romantic love transform him into a properly masculine man and her into a properly feminine woman. The goal is not effacement of gender, but its appropriate calibration within wedlock; traditional male–female binaries (and, implicitly, hierarchies) are reconfirmed as love corrects the Prince’s objectionable effeminacy and Ida’s threatening aggression.²⁵ They may complete one another, but they remain “[d]istinct in individualities” (7.275). The Prince will accentuate his womanliness, but only in order to guarantee this quality in Ida. He must, as I will show, temporarily reverse the gendering of genre in *The Princess* and sing lyrics before she will recite them. In the end, his beliefs do not differ much from those of his brutish father.

It is significant that the bedside love scene is also the site of Ida’s conversion to the female-gendered realm of lyric. This is where she reads “Now sleeps the crimson petal” and “Come down, O maid” aloud—thus giving herself over to the compellingly memorable force of song, and

forgetting not only her poetic preferences but also her political convictions. It is unsurprising that many of *The Princess's* songs feature children; like Aglaïa and the baby-Prince, these lyrics help to reform Ida.

Lyrics portray children, and lyrics resemble children. Small and self-contained, often narcissistic yet quasi-anonymous, paradoxically both inchoate and perfectly complete, appearing at first to stand outside temporal flux, these songs use familiar form and pleasing sounds to appeal to the emotions. Their circumscribed sentimentality makes them emblems of idealized childhood (and of idealized, infantilized femininity). Tucker mentions an element in *The Princess* that "trigger[s] the reflex sentiments"; Graham Hough mentions an element that can "embody useless, irrational or instinctive emotions, and so oppose the active intellectualism of the Princess Ida herself."²⁶ Tucker is thinking of babies and Hough is thinking of lyrics, but the descriptions could easily be interchanged. Tennyson himself associates the two when he claims that its songs are the key to *The Princess*, and that children are the key to the songs.

In one impassioned speech, Ida rejects childbearing in favor of heroic achievement: "children die," she reasons, but "great deeds cannot die" (3.236–237). Neither fragile infants nor delicately nostalgic little poems interest her. But like her rejection of "Tears, idle tears" and her abduction of Aglaïa, this declaration sets Ida up for a reversal. Babies and songs alike overcome her love of vigorous action, rational thought, and expansive rhetoric. And they both accomplish this task through appeals to the heart. Ida, beginning to soften, says of Aglaïa that her "tender orphan hands / Felt at my heart" (5.425–426). As she sits next to the wounded Prince and demonstrates her newfound devotion to love-songs, "something wild within her breast, / A greater than all knowledge, beat her down" (7.222–223); the language of the heart eclipses the language of intellect, bringing with it images of diminution. With their smallness and formal self-restraint, sentimental lyrics—which are often easy to learn by heart—constrict the ambitious Princess who reluctantly internalizes them. Their repetitive structures, though they tend to disrupt or delay plotted progression, also echo the repetitive narrative pattern of maid-become-wife-become-mother obsessively rehearsed in this poem—and made ever more desirable through the titillating pauses afforded by lyrical interruption.²⁷

The iterative techniques that underlie the songs surface at significant moments within the narrative as well. Begging Florian's sister not to reveal that they are men (2.219–261), the three interlopers ask her "Are you that Lady Psyche?" (or some variant of this question) no fewer

than eight times. In the process, they repeatedly urge her to recall her own happy childhood and her maternal status. “‘Are you that Psyche,’ Florian added; ‘she / With whom I sang about the morning hills [...]?’” “‘You are that Psyche,’ Cyril said again, / ‘The mother of the sweetest little maid, / That ever crowed for kisses’” (2.228–229, 259–261). At last Psyche, emotionally overwhelmed by these insistent domestic recollections and by the child figure that embodies them, agrees not to tell Ida that there are men within her walls.²⁸ “Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth” spring “[f]rom out a common vein of memory,” strengthening her resolve to honor past loyalties over present ones (2.293–294). As Cyril pleads with Ida to return Aglaia (6.147–171), he also links nostalgia and memorably repetitive tactics, reiterating “Give her the child” three times while asking the Princess to remember the “breast that fed or arm that dandled you” (6.165).

Thus interwoven with maternity, memory betrays the Princess. The mnemonic lyrics—divorced from the contemporary concerns of the frame-narrative, simultaneously backward-looking and timeless—steer her toward passive conventionality. When the Prince is wounded, Ida sinks into reminiscence: “a day / Rose from the distance on her memory, / When the good Queen, her mother, shore the tress [that is, the tress of Ida’s hair carried by the Prince] [...] Her noble heart was molten in her breast” (6.95–97, 103). She begins to focus not on grand utopian schemes for the future, but on fond remembrances of childhood. By the end of the poem, she is wholly re-possessed by memories of bygone days and by bodily memory, reflected in the haunting songs (which prompt her to regret her own “faultful Past” as she accepts the Prince [7.232]) and in the time-honored biological mother-instinct that she finally embraces. Ida and the Prince were promised in marriage when they were infants; lyrics encode Ida’s once-forgotten “baby troth” (5.388), her child self or the shadowy “dead self” (3.205) of her girlhood come back to upbraid her. They also encode collective wisdom regarding women’s traditional household duties, as well as love poetry’s clichéd sentiments—which Ida once scorned as the “tinsel clink of compliment” that proves its utterer “still the child” (2.41–44). Therefore she both remembers and forgets herself by opening her heart to babies and songs.²⁹ Cloudy memories cause the infantile Prince to slip into a fugue state: “I remembered that burnt sorcerer’s curse [...] I seemed to move in old memorial tilts [...] doing battle with forgotten ghosts” (5.464, 468–469). Ida, too, is removed from her identity via the retrospection associated with lyric’s vague and anonymous yearnings.

Here is the Prince's account of how Ida comes to love him:

[...] out of long frustration of her care,
 And pensive tendance in the all-weary noons,
 And watches in the dead, the dark, when clocks
 Throbb'd thunder through the palace floors, or called
 On flying Time from all their silver tongues –
 And out of memories of her kindlier days,
 And sidelong glances at my father's grief,
 And at the happy lovers heart in heart –
 And out of hauntings of my spoken love,
 And lonely listenings to my muttered dream,
 And often feeling of the helpless hands,
 And wordless broodings on the wasted cheek –
 From all a closer interest flourished up,
 Tenderness touch by touch [...] (7.86–99)

Tennyson's emphasis on the power of memory is supported by his use of the anaphoric "And" and of repetitive phrases such as "heart in heart" and "touch by touch," which help to make this passage itself a strikingly memorable tableau within the brisk onward flow of the blank verse. Its iterations are especially conspicuous amid narrative and syntactic linearity. The throbbing of the silver-tongued clocks echoes the beats of the mnemonic love poems that Ida will recite and that cue her transformation, while bittersweet "memories of her kindlier days" and "hauntings of my spoken love" evoke these poems' nostalgic nature. For Tennyson, "[b]lessèd, cursèd, Memory" ("Memory," *PT* 1.287) can be a pleasurable but dangerous distraction from one's responsibilities in the present.³⁰ And Ida demonstrates both the blessing and the curse of memory; the Prince no doubt rejoices as she remembers her old self through song, but feminist readers see her lyric reversion as a disappointing abandonment of her forward-looking nature.

As lyrics both undermine the unified authority of *The Princess* and save it for posterity by causing it to be remembered only incompletely, so they both undermine the activist zeal of the Princess and save her for proper Victorian womanhood by prompting her to forget herself. Her spiritual rebirth makes her available for childbearing, as well as for infantilization within marriage. Lyrics, children, and lyrics-as-children entrap and domesticate her; providing a respite from narrative, songs nonetheless reinforce the male storytellers' message.

When it comes to the lyrics, most studies of *The Princess* focus on a few much-anthologized favorites. I examine them all in the context of the poem's larger plot, beginning with a glance at the first intercalary song Tennyson wrote for his medley—a song he eventually decided not to use. This poem is a valuable starting point, as it anticipates many of the lyrics' major themes. Titled "The Losing of the Child," it features a young boy who is swept away by a flood and then recovered: "The child was lost and found again, / And we will keep the child" (*PT* 2.299).³¹ Order is restored, as the once-wild river (like the once-wild *Ida*) is confined within "his bound again." Singing this song, the women of *The Princess* would have praised in a neatly satisfying chiasmus "the child so meek and wise, / Who made us wise and mild!" "The Losing of the Child" provides a literal counterpart to *Ida*'s frustrated demand that women must "lose the child," and confirms the Prince's rejoinder that they should never "lose the childlike." In fact, her father reports that *Ida* is wont to compose "odes / About this losing of the child," "dismal lyrics" that are persuasive and infectious enough to serve as rallying cries when *Ida* founds her university (1.139–141). Tennyson undercuts his heroine by making "The Losing of the Child" a memorable poetic phrase that betrays her. It transforms a desire to mature into a fear of child death; it reconfigures feminine lyrical utterance, associating it not with fiercely rebellious manifestoes but with sentimental domestic fantasies that equate change with chaos. *Ida*, haunted by her babylike suitor and by *Aglaia*, cannot lose the child. Like *Psyche*, she must regain it to achieve true womanhood. It comes back from the flood and becomes the hero of a cautionary tale. It cannot be forgotten or successfully repressed. Lyric-like, it resurfaces in memory. Indeed, "Then we brought him home again, / Peace and order come again, / The river sought his bound again, / The child was lost and found again" enacts its theme of inexorable return through mnemonically relentless iteration. The poet-critic Aubrey de Vere notes that this same dynamic appears throughout *The Princess*, which offers "a perpetual child-protest against *Ida*'s Amazonian philosophy, which, if realised, would cast the whole of the child-like element out of the female character."³²

Anna Jane Barton observes that *Ida*'s odes and Tennyson's rejected song are kept out of the text—but that several notable repetitions of "the losing of the child" (or its variants) make this phrase baby-like in its compelling curtailment. For Barton, the place of lyrics within blank verse corresponds to the place of the infant within a Victorian family. Children were simultaneously ideals of pure innocence and threatening figures who

would outlive and replace their caregivers; thus they were both protected by and cordoned off in nurseries. Barton describes what she calls “nursery poetics” in *The Princess*: “It is this impenetrable, languageless (literally, infantile) articulation uttered by the child in the nursery that I would like to name lyrical.” The mnemonic formal devices of lyric, as I will show, can resemble baby talk. Moreover, Barton confirms that Tennyson’s lyrics represent vestiges of his earlier poetic style. Because he (like Ida) fails to repudiate or forget lyricism, his long poem does not “lose the child.” He barricades nursery lyrics within his narrative, but—since he shelters and nurtures them in the process—he cannot silence their cries. They are “memorial traces of Tennyson’s professional infancy.”³³ Like the infantile and effeminate Prince, Tennyson does not consistently distance himself from a poetic mode often criticized as womanish or babyish. The next section expands these “Losing of the Child” themes into a sustained analysis of all the *Princess* songs, in which the interaction of memory and forgetting sheds new light on the gendering of genre, the relationship between lyric and narrative, the significance of Ida’s fate for the politics of this poem and for Tennyson’s poetic identity, and Victorian remembrance more generally.

The Days That Are No More: A Reading of the Princess Songs

There are eleven lyrics in *The Princess*, and they fall into four groups. First there are three intercalary songs, which—directly or indirectly—demonstrate the counterintuitive power children derive from their smallness and inarticulateness. These lyrics, as if displaying the requisite humbleness, remain largely detached from the plot. Book 4 allows two blank-verse lyrics to break into the narrative, exacerbating the tension between story and songs until it reaches a dramatic breaking point. This drives lyric back out of the blank verse, and two more intercalary songs reconstruct the initial pattern—though lyric and narrative can no longer be kept neatly separated. Finally, as the last four lyrics enter not only the story but also Ida’s mouth, generic categories blend into and redefine one another. The key recurring themes and features of these lyrics are smallness, stasis, amnesia-inflected memory, mnemonic iteration, and the link between mothers and children. It is important to encounter the lyrics in the order in which they appear; mimicking the reading experience reveals that songs at first offer unexpected and apparently free-standing

emotional appeals, then gradually tighten their connections to the plot and cue a revaluation of gender and genre.³⁴

The first three intercalary songs accentuate littleness and repetition, demonstrating how strongly these qualities can influence hearts and minds. “As through the land at eve we went” appears between Books 1 and 2. Though its speaker is male, it is of course sung by women.

As through the land at eve we went,
 And plucked the ripened ears,
 We fell out, my wife and I,
 O we fell out I know not why,
 And kissed again with tears.
 And blessings on the falling out
 That all the more endears,
 When we fall out with those we love
 And kiss again with tears!
 For when we came where lies the child
 We lost in other years,
 There above the little grave,
 O there above the little grave,
 We kissed again with tears. (1[^]2.1–14)

The grave of their long-dead child reconciles a quarrelling couple by reducing them both to tears.³⁵ Set at the end of the day and the waning of the year, this lyric dwells on moribund closure. Fittingly, Tennyson emphasizes formal truncation throughout. “As through the land” contains no words that are more than two syllables long; it includes five wholly monosyllabic lines; it is fourteen lines in length, but offers tetrameter and trimeter instead of sonnet-pentameter. These shorter meters, the staple of ballads and nursery rhymes, tend to sound anonymous and incantatory—which is apt for a poem that lends its speaker few idiosyncratic contours. This impersonality is reinforced by the poem’s chant-like repetitions, which continue to underscore diminution. It concludes with “There above the little grave, / O there above the little grave, / We kissed again with tears,” lines in which the rhyme of “grave” with itself calls attention to the fact that smallness is insisted on twice over. The fifth and sixth lines, both starting with “And,” rely on halting anaphora to tie their thoughts together. Even the near-replication of “fell [...] fell [...] falling [...] fall” suggests both tongue-tied stammering and

shrinking or dwindling. Imagery of transience and contraction will eventually help to scuttle Ida's ambitions—as will the romantic reconciliation adumbrated in the thrice-invoked kiss, which mirrors the multiple repetitions in "The Losing of the Child" ("We kissed *again*") and foreshadows Aglaïa's role in uniting Prince and Princess. The littleness of lyrics both lessons and lessens Ida, providing a linguistic and emotional model that she will struggle to resist. At the end of the epic, newly aware of herself as a sexual being, she imitates the wife in "As through the land"; both women allow children to awaken their affections, as the Prince is cast as both the insensible infant and the loving husband.

So although "As through the land" promotes quasi-inarticulate self-withholding over fluent self-expression, this slight lyric—like the little child it describes—remains a source of strong sentiment. The repetitive brevity that creates an aesthetic of depersonalized attenuation is also a mnemonic device; children may pass away, and lyrics may pass by quickly, and for these very reasons they are difficult to forget. The song itself becomes a gravestone, a haunting marker of influential absence. Notably, the remembrances of "other years" that it encodes are vague and fragmentary. "As through the land" does little to individuate this couple or explain their child's death. The labored monosyllables of "We fell out, my wife and I, / O we fell out I know not why" highlight the same kind of unmotivated, arbitrary emotion that drives "Tears, idle tears" ("I know not what they mean"). Lyric memory, while persistent, is shot through with amnesia. The male storytellers mention specific past incidents in order to wrestle with knotty social issues and decide Ida's fate, but the female singers dwell on sentimental themes that often involve hazy remembrance of things past. Men look forward while unfolding a lengthy and elaborate blank-verse plot, but women offer short stanzas that look backward while mourning losses that tend to remain intractably distant and indeterminate. And Ida herself demonstrates this kind of forgetful retrospection when she lets nostalgia eclipse her radical agenda. "As through the land," like the two lyrics that follow it, shows that Tennyson's sweet-sounding songs do take on polemical authority in the context of the narrative. As they praise harmonious domesticity and dictate women's roles, their memorable lyrical techniques sweeten, disguise, and reinforce the persuasions of plot.

The next intercalary song, which appears between Books 2 and 3, is spoken by a mother who coos to her baby in hypnotic falling meters.

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
 Wind of the western sea,
 Low, low, breathe and blow,
 Wind of the western sea!
 Over the rolling waters go,
 Come from the dying moon, and blow,
 Blow him again to me;
 While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
 Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
 Father will come to his babe in the nest,
 Silver sails all out of the west
 Under the silver moon:
 Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep. (2[^]3.1–16)

This anonymous speaker's oblique remembrances of past love ("blow him again to me") enforce feminine stasis and passivity, as the nostalgic mother patiently waits and eschews narrative action while the father roams. "Father will come to his babe in the nest": again, their child reunites a divided couple and ensures the continuance of the familial bond. Again, the child is small and silent but powerful—not dead this time, but sleeping. And the small lyric is powerful as well. The doubled redundancy of "Sleep and rest, sleep and rest," the fact that each stanza contains only two rhyme-sounds, the recurrence of whole lines ("Wind of the western sea" and "Father will come to thee soon"): all emphasize the lullaby's mnemonic as well as its soothing qualities. Just as a baby "on mother's breast" keeps the memory of the absent father alive, so its infantile smallness and repetitiveness make this song memorable. The husband will return to the nest, and the lyric will return to the mind, echoing "The Losing of the Child" and anticipating the remembered friends who sail up from the underworld in "Tears, idle tears." Ida's intra-plot compliance with such insistent domesticity thus seems both conspicuous and unsurprising.

Here the devices of lyric repetition are so exaggerated that "Sweet and low" not only resembles a nursery rhyme but also verges on infantile babble. Lines like "Low, low, breathe and blow" and "Over the rolling waters go" turn internal rhyme and assonance into "O, O, O." Baby talk, associated both with children's speech and with women's self-infantilizing speech to children, also surfaces elsewhere in *The Princess*. Telling Ida of

his youthful love for her, the Prince recalls: "I babbled for you, as babies for the moon [...] With Ida, Ida, Ida, rang the woods" (4.408, 413). His impassioned recollections transform the eloquent Princess's name into nonsensical prattle. When Psyche tearfully demands Aglaïa of Ida, she speaks in broken child-like iterations: "Mine—mine—not yours, / It is not yours, but mine" (6.124–125). Longing for her baby, she begins to talk like one. Like the meek silence of the once-outspoken Ida at the end of *The Princess*, Psyche's inarticulate state speaks volumes; she was an inspiring lecturer, but maternal devotion leaves her with almost "no language but a cry" (*In Memoriam* 54.20).³⁶ And on regaining her infant, Psyche "mouth[s] and mumble[s] it" (6.196) in near-bestial fashion. When Ida voices her preference for heroic acts over children, she tells the Prince that "[h]owe'er you babble, great deeds cannot die." Here she dismisses the lyrical love-speech that she will later accept—and that "Sweet and low" has already put in the mouths of women.

Images of diminishment, as in the first intercalary song, pervade "Sweet and low." Even the two lines that could be scanned as pentameter ("While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps" and "Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep") are adamantly iterative and "little"; the moon is dying; the repeated word "low" indicates smallness and humbleness as well as the wind's gentleness. Falling in love, Ida will also fall from epic stature into a similarly pared-down and quiescent lyric aesthetic that rejects progressive action. Indeed, *The Princess* consistently associates Ida's change of heart with the language of reduction and lowering. A new affection "beat[s] her down" at the Prince's bedside, mirroring Lilia's declaration that "convention beats [women] down" (Prologue 128). Ida reflects on "the woman's fallen divinity," mourning the "[d]warfs of the gynaeceum" who are "[c]ramped under" by custom (3.207, 261–262). But later, with a "drooping languor" stealing "[d]own through her limbs," she describes her budding tenderness: it "drags me down / From my fixt height" (6.251, 288–289). Liberated intellectual elevation again gives way to restricted sentimental lowness.³⁷ The last line of "Sweet and low" accentuates compact stillness, as repeating "sleep" three times (and placing it at the beginning and end of the line) creates an emblem of miniaturized docility and self-enclosure. And though it is only indirectly relevant to the plot, this song appears after a mention of "solemn psalms, and silver litanies, / The work of Ida, to call down from Heaven / A blessing on her labours for the world" (2.453–455). A song that is both childish and maternal replaces Ida's feminist compositions.

“The splendour falls on castle walls,” located between Books 3 and 4, contains similar themes.

The splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river:
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying. (3⁴.1–18)

In a poem that privileges evocative repetition over plotted progression, a nameless speaker again presents images of diminution and collapse that forecast Ida's fate. The word “falls,” variants of which recur in “As through the land,” returns. The sun sets, the music of the horns grows thinner, echoes die and faint. “O hark, O hear” sinks into redundancy. And remembrance falters too. While the decelerating pattern of three consecutive stressed syllables in “long light shakes” and “yon rich sky” reflects an attempt to emphasize and preserve a transient moment of vision, to stop it from disappearing into the past or its memory from vanishing, the melancholy fading trochees of “answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying” eventually take over. This song describes “snowy summits old in story,” projecting itself into a nebulous past; fittingly, it clings to weakening echoes, dim memorial traces of an increasingly distant (“farther going”) original event that haunt an indistinct landscape of “hill or field or river.” Reviving and reiterating the word “dying,” far from counteracting its significance or bringing Elfland any nearer, only

adds a sense of spellbound unreality to the feeling of loss and forgetful retrospection that Ida will soon experience as well.

Yet alongside the imagery of amnesiac attenuation, and masked by the return of this poem's refrain, is a more confident proclamation: "Our echoes roll from soul to soul, / And grow for ever and for ever." This description of radical durability signals the lyric's persistently memorable nature, which is underscored by its internal rhymes ("falls / walls," "shakes / lakes") and its childishly repetitive chant of "for ever and for ever." But the "soul to soul" lines have another related meaning, especially because they are addressed to a "love." Infants, featuring prominently in the first two songs, seem absent from "The splendour falls." James R. Kincaid, though, proposes that this incongruous vision of growth refers to childbearing. The contrast between dying echoes and swelling echoes maps onto Ida's misguided longing for fame and *The Princess's* endorsement of loving domesticity.³⁸ The former is ephemeral, the latter long-lasting. Ida may have "great deeds / For issue" (3.226–227), but this lyric hints that her immortality will instead be assured through procreation, or what the Prince calls "sowing the To-be" (7.273). Exalting maternity, lyrics are themselves babylike as their formal memorability—which bolsters their ability to persuade and convert Ida—mirrors physical reproduction as a form of endurance.

Ida's implicit rejection of the dreamy gorgeousness of "The splendour falls," though this lyric is not heard within her inset-narrative, is apparent not only in her doubts about motherhood but also in the more scientific approach she takes to sunset in the first lines of Book 4: "There sinks the nebulous star we call the Sun, / If that hypothesis of theirs be sound." The medley anxiously offers both sonic beauty in the lyrics and topical engagement in the epic tale, but here the exaggerated pedantry of Ida's assertion subtly affirms the superiority of the former mode. Tennyson's poetic identity is at stake as he negotiates questions of gender and genre, displacing potentially effeminate lyric speech onto female speakers (speakers who are more conventionally womanly than Ida) even as he tacitly extols it.

"Tears, idle tears" is the first song to be sung within the inset-narrative, and this sudden intrusion brings the generic tensions of *The Princess* to the fore. Until now, lyric has threatened Ida's epic world from outside—though this narrative ultimately works against her, and the songs in fact support the momentum of the men's plot. But now lyric shows its hand by insinuating itself into the poem proper. It brings the

ambitious Ida face-to-face with a form that connects its female practitioners to childlikeness, regression, miniaturization, and the vacant solipsism of vague nostalgia.

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more. (4.21–40)

The student who performs “Tears, idle tears” demonstrates the appropriate emotional response: “She ended with such passion that the tear, / She sang of, shook and fell” (4.41–42). This display of self-perpetuating womanly weakness awakens Ida’s disdain, and she takes pains to distance herself from the spectacle of the lamenting maiden and from the song’s yearning for days gone by. “Well needs it we should cram our ears with wool” when hearing such echoes from “the mouldered lodges of the Past,” declares the Princess, mocking the first line of the song as she repudiates “fancies hatched / In silken-folded idleness” (4.45–49).

Many analyses of this well-known and formally self-contained song wrench it out of its narrative setting, creating a misleading cultural memory of Victorian lyric. But I read it in context. With the preceding

songs and the epic framework in mind, this poem's form is highly significant; its presence in the narrative allows it to be rendered in blank verse rather than rhymed trimeter or tetrameter. So although lyric and plot still diverge in important ways, the two are no longer tidily separated. Songs are now subject to Ida's criticism, but they also have a chance to appeal to her directly. Moreover, story and songs in *The Princess* will now begin to interact with and transform each other.

In accommodating lyric, the narrative explicitly thematizes generic debate. "Tears, idle tears" sets off a singing contest, which unfolds as follows: the disguised Prince answers Ida's condemnation with a falsetto love-song. Then Ida replies that her own productions, "Valkyrian hymns" and exhibitions of "the passion of the prophetess," are far worthier than his trivial ditty. Poetic attention is "duer unto freedom, force and growth / Of spirit than to junketing and love," she claims, for "great is song / Used to great ends" (4.119–124). Cyril's saucy rejoinder is the "careless tavern-catch" that forces the Prince to reveal his identity with a "Forbear, Sir" (4.139, 144). Aghast and furious at the presence of men—or is she more enraged at the frivolous little song that resists her utilitarian approach to poetry?—Ida literalizes lyric falling-imagery by tumbling into the river. Her helplessness permits the Prince to shore up his masculine credentials and complete a heroic rescue. This sets off the chain of events (the tournament, the conversion of Ida's college into a hospital, the sickbed scene) that leads to the Princess's capitulation. The volatile and unwonted interaction of lyric and narrative causes the plot to swerve drastically. And Cyril's song, full of material "[u]nmeet for ladies" (4.141), also violates the association of lyric with femininity. Both gender-boundaries and genre-boundaries are transgressed. But this infringement, even as it introduces narrative twists, prompts the plot to compensate by correcting its irregularities; the men stop cross-dressing and take bold action on the battlefield, Ida renounces her educational project, lovers couple off, and all the lyrics henceforward are sung or read by women. Heeding the demands of Ida, whose criticisms of lyric sound like those of his own reviewers, Tennyson also uses lyric to put her in her place. As Laurence Lerner says about Ida's early disapproval of melancholy song, "it meant rejecting Tennyson: what could he do in return except betray her?"³⁹

"Tears, idle tears," in initiating contact between song and inset-narrative, makes the generic contrast clear by declining to depict events or character. Its wistful speaker is almost entirely unindividuated, and

even the gender of the lovers it describes, often a central concern in the songs, is not specified. The “I” itself disappears after the first line, to be replaced by “we”; at one point, the speaker can summon only a depersonalized definite article (“the heart” rather than “my heart”). Most situational details are filtered through metaphor. “Tears from the depth of *some divine* despair” reinforces both the poem’s non-particularity and its inhumanity. Its speaker is earnest but undefined, the cause of its grief is ambiguous, and the unrecoverable pastness it struggles to mourn is general. The lyrical invasion of “Tears, idle tears” gives rise to emotion that is generic in both senses.

Crucially, here the perceiving self is both constituted and evacuated by its indeterminate recollections. It is not jarring when the speaker suddenly inhabits the perspective of a dying person, because memory itself has become a death in life. Ordinarily “[o]ne forgets or remembers *something*,” but “Tennyson drives us to a land where there is no something, where what we find is so much nothing that there may be no *we* to experience it”; though the poem expresses what Tennyson calls “the passion of the past” (“It is the distance that charms me in the landscape”), memory’s origins and motivations remain unexplained.⁴⁰ Remembrance is figured as desire that can never be satisfied because it is unanchored and undirected—futile nostalgia for its own sake, “all regret” instead of any nameable regret. “I know not what they mean”: it seems that the idle tears of lyric are impersonal and opaque, obscuring distinctive selfhood. Thus lost days are both “fresh” and “strange.” Elusive memories constantly renew themselves, but they continue to be as uncannily half-recognizable as friends returned from the underworld.

This song is also determinedly self-negating and non-teleological, which highlights its dissimilarity to the men’s plot. Fields that are happy are at the same time forebodingly autumnal, and the “first beam” of sunrise that touches the arriving ship (“up from the underworld”) is juxtaposed with the “last” beam of sunset that touches the departing ship (“sinks [...] below the verge”). In the third stanza, fading and dilation balance one another. Waking birds meet dying ears; dawn meets darkening eyes; the casement “grows a glimmering square,” but this imagery of growth signals the occlusion of vision and the onset of death. And “Death in Life” replaces even this decisive occurrence with a state of thwarted limbo. Sonic pairs, such as the “tears / mean” and “rise / eyes” couplings that begin and end the first and third lines, reinforce this poem’s inert and repetitive self-enclosure—which James Richardson

reads through the lens of faltering memory, arguing that the end of such lines "vaguely remember[s] the beginning."⁴¹

The refrain of "Tears, idle tears" is a structural reflection of this amnesiac circularity. It ensures that each stanza is an immobile tableau, formally closed but thematically unresolved. Marking out the passing of intrapoetic time, it also suspends sequential advancement through time: every image from various stages of life, each temporal permutation, ineluctably becomes part of the past as it cues an unremitting focus on the paralyzed and unchanging assonance of "the days that are no more." But even while repeating it, the poem refuses to elucidate this phrase. These days are "Fresh [...] Sad [...] So sad, so fresh [...] Ah, sad and strange [...] so sad, so strange." Adjectives intensify ("Sad [...] So sad"), then shift into gentle bewilderment ("Ah, sad"), then slip back into the same now-dulled intensification ("So sad"). Memorable though it is, the refrain records only frustrating failures to revive or grasp the past (even the final stanza's descriptive flurry of "dear," "sweet," "deep," and "wild" does not clarify it, and even "remembered kisses" are confined to a time "after death" while mixing with those "feigned" by fancy). Just as the days that are no more can be neither recalled nor forgotten, just as they no longer truly exist yet have not wholly vanished, so "the days that are no more" balances insistent repetition against stubborn imprecision. Mnemonic devices are also devices of obsessive yet anonymous emotion; Tennyson's lyric takes a perverse pleasure in both dwelling on and emptying such emotion.

In its static non-progressions, in its reliance on loose associative ties rather than orderly logical ones (the last three stanzas begin with "Fresh as [...] Ah, sad and strange as [...] Dear as," as if casting about for new adjectives), and in its amnesiac refrain, "Tears, idle tears" epitomizes the function of feminized songs (and feminized lyric memory) in *The Princess*. This childlike poem cannot develop. It offers no cogent narrative, making no headway toward consolation or increased self-awareness or understanding of the past. Douglas-Fairhurst identifies the lyric's forgetful qualities as babyish, observing that refrain can be "invested with a past without being said to remember anything, as a child's genealogy will be revealed in its growth"; Daniel Albright also speaks of its "infantile feeling without an object, feeling-in-itself."⁴²

Although dwelling on "the days that are no more" drains this speaker of identifying characteristics, it is possible to describe the emotions of "Tears, idle tears" more precisely. The poem was composed at Tintern

Abbey, which Tennyson calls “full for me of its bygone memories” and of “the sense of the abiding in the transient.”⁴³ This lyric is haunted by remembrances of another poet’s remembrances, which again seems to distance it from personal retrospection. But Wordsworth’s invocation of the past ultimately clarifies Tennyson’s nostalgia: private yet universal, particular yet vague, it is the feeling of loss that comes from growing up. Thus it is doubly childish. First, though Ida requests a tune because “lightlier move / The minutes fledged with music” (4.18–19), it seeks to use lyrical form to freeze or recapture fleeting time and so escape age and death (thus the juxtaposition of “abiding” and “transient”); second, it is so attenuated and vestigial an emotion that the speaker of “Tears, idle tears” cannot name it. It is an undeveloped longing for unattainable immaturity, a lament over onrushing temporality itself.

Both thematically and formally, then, “Tears, idle tears” poses a challenge to the Princess’s endorsement of female maturation (the “losing of the child”) and of social change (which mimics personal growth on a larger historical scale). Its amnesiac memory removes it from the action, immediacy, clear causation, linear chronology, and specific knowledge of the men’s plot. Its details—a tear, a bird, a window—seem disparate rather than coherent. Instead of individual agency and a focus on the present, it depicts unwilling fixation on the dim long-ago. Impotent yearning and enervating reminiscence replace noble deeds and farsighted concern with the future (“growth / Of spirit”) as feminine concerns, just as “hopeless fancy” replaces hope. Enticingly undeveloped, childlike in its non-purposive power, this small poem is a baby figure that helps turn Ida into a loving mother rather than an activist: “Tears, idle tears” sets off a chain of events that derails her ambitions for poetry and for womankind. Trapped by memorably repetitive and anonymous stanzas that enforce emotive self-forgetting, she begins her journey toward love-songs and marriage. This lyric’s speaker and its female singer, like the softening “As through the land” wife, anticipate Ida’s self-defeating and self-estranging recitations at the Prince’s bedside. Demonstrating the interwoven nature of lyric remembrance and amnesia, the Princess’s version of this poem’s indistinct memorial preoccupations will involve forgetting her own well-laid plans as she sinks into the past. So its conspicuous divergence from Tennyson’s plot is precisely what allows “Tears, idle tears” to shape and support that plot.

It is unsurprising that Ida disapproves of this song; shortly before it began, in fact, she had argued that womankind must continue to evolve.

"Let the past be past," she therefore retorts, frowning on any poem that "moans about the retrospect" in favor of works rich with hopeful "hues / Of promise" (4.58, 67–69). Yet "the days that are no more" make multiple claims on Ida—via the remembrance of her youthful marriage-troth, as hinted by this song's tribute to Wordsworth, but also via a literary tradition that often links lyric form to feminized sentiment. When the Prince aspires to return with his bride to a "statelier Eden" (7.277) of perfected domesticity, even his vision of progress is figured as regression (much as infants signify both futurity and pastness). Ironically, the very purity of the ungendered "Tears, idle tears" speaker's emotional imperatives obliges Ida to comply with the gendered designs of plot, and to emulate the longed-for state of childlike innocence that inspires this song's nostalgia. Lyric, which betrays Tennyson by turning his epic poem into a discontinuous generic hybrid, betrays Ida too.

Making his voice "maidenlike as far / As I could ape their treble" (4.73–74), the Prince responds to Ida and underscores his androgyny by recalling and performing a love-song. His blank-verse poem is a parodic version of the preceding lyrics. It replaces the sorrowful maiden who sings "Tears, idle tears" with a croaking cross-dresser—apparently the Prince's falsetto is less than convincing, as "still my voice / Rang false" (4.102–103)—and its repetitive structure is anything but subtle.

O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown:
 Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
 But in the North long since my nest is made.

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
 And brief the sun of summer in the North,
 And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
 Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her mine,
 And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee. (4.75–98)

The delicate echo of “*Rise* in the heart, and gather to the *eyes*” has given way to a first line in which fully half the words are immediately reduplicated. “Swallow, Swallow [...] flying, flying [...] tell her, tell her”: the Prince has practically developed a stammer. His reiterative diction, which delays the “tell her” command only to give it twice, is ludicrously non-progressive. Moreover, the song’s pairing of “Swallow” with “follow” (a clichéd avian rhyme to rival “love / dove”), its excessive use of the hackneyed “O” to open stanzas, and its reception in the plot (the women stare and laugh) highlight the embarrassing nature of unmanly lyric—and also imply that Tennyson intended it in part as a joke.⁴⁴ Lyric, epitomized in “Tears, idle tears,” is now absurdly exaggerated and stretched to its breaking point. This is the only one of *The Princess*’s eleven songs to be sung by a man within the inset-narrative; as befits his role as a female impersonator experimenting with a feminized genre, the Prince’s take on lyric is downright campy. Song will soon become explicitly comical in Cyril’s unrecorded tavern-ditty of “Moll and Meg” (4.140). And lyric gone overboard pushes Ida over the edge, setting off the damsel-in-distress near-drowning episode that will impel her toward wifehood and motherhood.

As if anticipating these events, the Swallow song emphasizes its own infantile traits. “Sweet and low” may have been sing-song and babbling, but the Prince’s poem is overwrought with twee onomatopoeia: the speaker longs to “pipe and trill / And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.” He harks back to the first set of intercalary lyrics in his reliance on iterated smallness. “Fall upon,” recalling the repetitions of “fall” in “As through the land,” taps into the imagery of diminution and stasis associated with Ida’s conversion. “O tell her, brief is life [...] And brief the sun

of summer [...] And brief the moon of beauty." Lyric, with its "jewels five-words-long" that "[s]parkle for ever" (2.355–357), here intimates that babylike littleness is one source of its aesthetic power and endurance (which Ida corroborates by observing that "slight" love-songs [4.109] can break the hearts of weak women); indeed, both its brevity and its familiar diction contribute to the song's mnemonic nature.

This lyric's resemblance to hauntingly memorable babble is confirmed by its child imagery. The Prince, in his avian alter ego, fantasizes that the beloved might "lay me on her bosom, and her heart / Would rock the snowy cradle till I died." Here he is a baby figure, relishing helplessness and longing to settle into a "nest" like one of the bird's "brood."⁴⁵ He attempts seduction not by eroticizing Ida but by infantilizing himself; when he hopes that she will put an end to her titillating delay (a delay both reinscribed and challenged by songs like this one) and "clothe her heart with love," that affectionate bosom is more maternal than sexual. The emphasis on comical transvestism in this episode has already begun to make Ida's dream of gender equality seem more silly than splendid, and the twinned persuasions of the lyric and the babyish Prince prepare her for a descent into the river and into nuptial compliance. Again, the anti-narrative nature of this echoic little song—in which syntactical doubling-back appears in place of overt concern with remembrance—is what lets it strengthen the narrative's anti-feminist agenda.

Once the generic debate initiated by lyric's entrance into plot has degenerated into Cyril's tavern-catch, story and songs are again briefly segregated. It is as if Tennyson anxiously demonstrates that he can be wholly immersed in epic action and wholly immersed in sonic beauty, that he need not sacrifice or dilute either mode. (In the process, however, treacherous lyric reinforces its connection to the marginalized female singers and its unmanly disposition.) In fact, the formal strictures of intercalary songs now intensify, underlining their distinctness from narrative—although this overemphasized separation also reminds readers of the thematic links that have been developing between lyrics and plot. "Thy voice is heard through rolling drums," which Lilia sings solo between Books 4 and 5, accentuates the proper role of women and of songs: both supplement action without taking part in it directly, as Lilia's lyric tacitly foreshadows the narrative's violent tournament. This, then, is a song about the place of songs within blank verse.

Thy voice is heard through rolling drums,
 That beat to battle where he stands;
 Thy face across his fancy comes,
 And gives the battle to his hands:
 A moment, while the trumpets blow,
 He sees his brood about thy knee;
 The next, like fire he meets the foe,
 And strikes him dead for thine and thee. (4⁵.1–8)

Just as women in the frame-narrative of *The Princess* use unassuming lyrics to exercise a “silent influence” (Conclusion 15) that counteracts the male tendency toward burlesque, just as dead or sleeping infants are compelling in their stillness, so the female addressee of “Thy voice is heard” is the mute and passive inspiration behind her husband’s war-time courage. Her voice is heard and her face appears, but only through the distancing medium of remembrance. Lyric-like, children also instigate strong instinctive emotion when recalled to memory: on recollecting “his brood” about his wife’s knee, a warrior attacks the enemy. Both children and nostalgia apparently quell women’s rebellious tendencies but arouse men’s righteous ferocity.

After her solo, her chance to take on Ida-esque magnificence, Lilia orders the men to cease their mockery and portray women as “great and good” (4⁵.23). Nonetheless, the narrator refers condescendingly to her “warbling fury” (4⁵.10), and her little lyric—at eight lines long, the shortest in *The Princess*—bears a formal resemblance to a nursery rhyme. Its iambic tetrameter is steadier, its simple *abab cdcd* rhyme scheme more regular, than any other song thus far. Monosyllables abound: “The next, like fire he meets the foe, / And strikes him dead for thine and thee.” Every line is endstopped and chant-like. Bolstering traditional gender roles via conventional and memorable form, this childish song re-establishes the place of female-coded lyric outside the male-dominated plot.⁴⁶ Ironically, in so doing, it again supports the plot trajectory.

“Home they brought her warrior dead” appears between Books 5 and 6; it continues to reinforce the formal division between story and songs, which again has the effect of causing them to converge conceptually.

Home they brought her warrior dead:
 She nor swooned, nor uttered cry:
 All her maidens, watching, said,
 “She must weep or she will die.”

Then they praised him, soft and low,
 Called him worthy to be loved,
 Truest friend and noblest foe;
 Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
 Lightly to the warrior stept,
 Took the face-cloth from the face;
 Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
 Set his child upon her knee –
 Like summer tempest came her tears –
 “Sweet my child, I live for thee.” (5[^]6.1–16)

Although its lifeless hero and woeful heroine echo the Prince and Ida, this poem's versification contrasts starkly with the blank verse that surrounds it. Like “Thy voice is heard,” it is set in steady tetrameter and in a regular *abab* rhyme scheme. It may be the sequel to Lilia's song, depicting the death of the man who battled for his “brood.” Now it is his wife who is affected by their infant and her persistent memories, though in a sentimental rather than an action-based context; she does not weep over her slain husband until a nurse sets “[the husband's] child upon her knee.” This child—a symbol of memory's demands portrayed in formally mnemonic stanzas—recalls the mother to her situation, to her duty, to the version of her dead spouse preserved in her living baby. Her stubborn refusal to move is also a refusal to be moved, but she displays the necessary emotion at last, and this break in her resolve is reflected rhythmically. “Like summer tempest came her tears” represents the first disruption of this poem's smooth anacreontics. It is eight syllables, not seven, and the accelerated flutter of “Like summer tempest” (rather than, say, “In a tempest”) mirrors the woman's passionate outcry. She is a double both for the newly domestic Ida, whose future will be in children and love-songs rather than the “great deeds” she admires, and for the hysterically maternal Psyche. “Sweet my child, I live for thee” evokes Cyril's injunction to his beloved: “live, dear lady, for your child” (5.77). And the phrase “soft and low” revisits “Sweet and low.” It seems that little songs and little children require women to learn softness and diminution and nostalgia, and that women's narrative fate will be adumbrated by the anti-narrative devices of brief and iterative lyric.

But there is a notable exception. Ida's post-tournament song of triumph, "Our enemies have fallen," appears within the plot. It is the first of four lyrics that will be (explicitly or implicitly) spoken by Ida, and that will gradually redefine the relationship between story and songs. Here, the Princess reveals a different side of lyric.

Our enemies have fallen, have fallen: the seed,
The little seed they laughed at in the dark,
Has risen and cleft the soil, and grown a bulk
Of spanless girth, that lays on every side
A thousand arms and rushes to the Sun.

Our enemies have fallen, have fallen: they came;
The leaves were wet with women's tears: they heard
A noise of songs they would not understand:
They marked it with the red cross to the fall,
And would have strown it, and are fallen themselves.

Our enemies have fallen, have fallen: they came,
The woodmen with their axes: lo the tree!
But we will make it faggots for the hearth,
And shape it plank and beam for roof and floor,
And boats and bridges for the use of men.

Our enemies have fallen, have fallen: they struck;
With their own blows they hurt themselves, nor knew
There dwelt an iron nature in the grain:
The glittering axe was broken in their arms,
Their arms were shattered to the shoulder blade.

Our enemies have fallen, but this shall grow
A night of Summer from the heat, a breadth
Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power: and rolled
With music in the growing breeze of Time,
The tops shall strike from star to star, the fangs
Shall move the stony bases of the world. (6.17–42)

This fierce blank-verse poem revises many of *The Princess's* lyrical conventions, most notably in its lack of concern with nebulous remembrance or domestic love. It renders "the hearth," alongside "boats and bridges for the use of men," as a concrete and constructible object rather than

an icon of idealized and feminized home-life. It reassigns descent and attenuation to the defeated men—every stanza starts with “Our enemies have fallen,” repetition that is anything but humble or soothing—while claiming images of development and expansion for women: Ida describes a “little seed” that has “risen [...] and grown a bulk / Of spanless girth,” floating her song forth on the “growing breeze of Time.” Modest smallness is repudiated and its proponents mocked. She also transmutes the theme of procreation into metaphor, producing “fruits of power” instead of children. “Strike from star to star” rewrites in martial key the gentle maternal hint of “roll from soul to soul” in “The splendour falls,” blazing a new trail to immortality via “great deeds / For issue.” Mournful and unanchored nostalgia gives way to detailed accounts of a specific recent event—and to confident prophecy, as Ida predicts that her cause will “move the stony bases of the world.” Frequent enjambment replaces the endstopping that associated the last two intercalary songs with childish chanting. Ida warns that a revolution is at hand; her enemies have heard “songs they would not understand,” and readers may have underestimated the authority of female lyrical speech.

However, this ambitious song is undermined by its place within the men’s plot, as Ida’s attempt to integrate lyric and narrative modes backfires. She recites it from atop the battlements “[w]ith Psyche’s babe in arm” (6.15); as Alisa Clapp-Itnyre points out, “[b]y including the baby in their description, the male narrators align [Ida] with the simplicities of a child and assign her a domestic role instead of her chosen political one.”⁴⁷ The oracular Princess is unaware that the infantile plunder she holds will soon melt her heart and bring her down from her lofty position—even as mnemonic lyrics do the same. In Ida’s own words, holding Aglaïa to her breast “seemed to charm from thence / The wrath I nursed against the world” (5.426–427). Her proud victory, which here turns song into “scraps of thundrous Epic” (2.353), will be short-lived. Ida’s vision of flourishing seeds ultimately only emphasizes her own bodily barrenness, motivating her eventual descent into the fertile valley of “Come down, O maid.”

The lyric between Books 6 and 7 confirms that story and songs are not operating independently. Previous intercalary interludes have related to the inset-tale only obliquely. It is not obvious why “As through the land,” for example, should appear as the three disguised men enter Ida’s college. But lyric now shapes and reinforces plot through both formal strategies and content; “Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea” is

directly connected to its narrative context (that is, Ida's reluctant agreement to lift her ban on men and turn her college into a hospital).

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
 The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape
 With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
 But O too fond, when have I answered thee?
 Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?
 I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:
 Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!
 Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
 Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are sealed:
 I strove against the stream and all in vain:
 Let the great river take me to the main:
 No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
 Ask me no more. (6[^]7.1–15)

This lyric, in which the speaker unwillingly gives in to love, fits smoothly into the plot trajectory. In fact, it takes on clearer and more concrete referents when read with the narrative in mind. “I love not hollow cheek or faded eye: / Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!” could allude to the conventional posture of the spurned suitor (compare John Suckling’s “Why so pale and wan, fond lover?”), but it seems also to refer to the wounded Prince.⁴⁸ “I strove against the stream and all in vain: / Let the great river take me to the main” has an obvious metaphorical meaning, but it could also evoke Ida’s plunge into the water. What’s more, as she agrees to tend the injured men, she sighs “I stagger in the stream [...] let it be” (6.301–303). Both the choric frame-women and the Princess’s tormented inner monologue utter “Ask me no more.” Song’s anonymous yet feminized voice is now Ida’s voice as well. Treacherous lyric, which seemed to offer a brief respite from the story of her downfall, is bound up with plot’s progressions (though, ironically, it also betrays Tennyson by diluting or distracting from plot). Previously, it had intimated this connection by lingering on the past and imposing dull immobility on Ida. But now, even as it instead describes change and looks to the future, it does so in order to reiterate her change of heart.

This last intercalary song dramatizes a moment of noncommittal hesitation—between isolated lyric and plot-linked lyric, between love and its denial. This liminality is reflected formally, as “Ask me no more” is the only song in *The Princess* to be both rhymed and set in pentameter. “But” and “Yet,” in the first two stanzas, signal indecision. “The moon *may* draw the sea; / The cloud *may* stoop from heaven and take the shape [...] of mountain or of cape” lets a reader imagine both this too-tempting descent and a speaker who chooses never to stoop or to re-form herself. And “Thy fate and mine are *sealed*,” besides implying that these fates are unchangeable, allows “sealed” to mean either “fused together” or “closed off, separated.” Recalling the refrain-based circularity of “Tears, idle tears,” the phrase “ask me no more” starts and ends each stanza and so makes them into sealed-off units; the *abba* rhyme scheme further suggests self-containment, countering the poem’s erotic exigencies.

But this refrain also reveals incremental shifts that lead to a major reversal. Recurring seven times, “Ask me no more” begins to sound like protesting too much. Additionally, it places both a trochee at the start and a conspicuously shortened line at the end of every mostly-iambic stanza. Calling attention to itself by altering the meter and by unbalancing the self-contained stanzaic symmetry that it also helps to create, conveying both passionate overflow and resigned depletion via those short lines, “Ask me no more” is an ambivalent command that perversely intensifies the wish to be asked. Repetition again supplies a titillating and temporary delay. It also ensures that a sentiment—the desire to resist persuasion—can be both fixated upon and drained of meaning, made both memorable and forgettable. As the refrain signals first flat refusal and then uncertainty and finally inevitable capitulation, so the speaker’s addressee is called first “O too fond” and then “O my friend” and finally “dear love.” In its question-free last stanza, “Ask me no more” hints that asking is no longer necessary—“for at a touch I yield.”⁴⁹ Lyric’s mnemonically iterative structure, like its reinhabitable voice, foreshadows and encourages Ida’s acceptance of love; returning to the refrain, she enacts and internalizes the pattern of her gradual submission. Infants, noticeably absent from this song, linger at its edges. It is a self-conscious prelude to marriage and childbearing. “Let the great river take me to the main” is not only surrender to love and not only Ida’s near-drowning, but also surrender to the erotic designs of the narrative. A tacit anticipation of the emergence of future generations takes precedence over

majestic solitude and the immortality provided by time-defying fame.⁵⁰ This song signals the end of female independence, as well as the end of lyric's nominal independence from plot.

From a reader's perspective, what is the significance of plot-points explicitly infiltrating the lyrics, even when those lyrics lie outside the narrative? Does this generic fusion lend women's songs a powerful new relevance, letting them participate in the ongoing epic action rather than dwelling chiefly in hazy retrospection? Or does such fusion imply that female singers no longer have their own forum for self-expression, and are now made straightforwardly complicit in the male story of seduction? Was lyric a bait-and-switch that only appeared to offer an escape from the anti-feminist plot? Even as lyric betrays Tennyson by fracturing his long topical poem with feminized interludes, does it betray Ida by giving up any counterplotting potential? Both betrayals do seem to be in effect here. For the Princess, song is dangerously inextricable from narrative; for her creator, song is dangerously detached from and antithetical to narrative; for both, the polished slightness of song threatens to thwart epic ambitions.

The figure of the child again elucidates questions of genre. Infants signify static diminution, but they also hold the promise of maturation. "Ask me no more" shows the babyish lyric growing out of its intercalary isolation and taking on a role in the teleological world of the marriage plot. Wives and mothers and especially children, appearing in the songs and sparking emotions that are echoed in the narrative, can now more easily compel Ida to resign herself to domesticity. In this way, even as the songs claim heightened authority, they force the women who sing them to dwindle and recede; the plot allows the last two intra-narrative lyrics to serve as thin disguises for the Prince's voice, which enchants and subdues Ida by speaking through her. And particularly in the final song, which represents the most overt attempt to harmonize or unify Tennyson's two poetic modes, it will become clear that the amnesiac nostalgia associated with children and with lyrics both supports and subtly undermines these anti-feminist generic negotiations.

"Now sleeps the crimson petal" features drooping peacocks and infolding lilies that, as they slip into a lake, recall Ida's near-drowning. Thus her recitation, which is three times specified to be "in low tones," "low," and "low-toned" (7.160, 177, 208), has the usual implications of dwindling and diminishment—especially given its function in the plot.

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
 Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
 Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:
 The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
 And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
 And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
 A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
 And slips into the bosom of the lake:
 So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
 Into my bosom and be lost in me. (7.161–174)

Giving up fiery declamation in favor of song, Ida lets another voice—that of this sonnet's speaker, a double for the Prince, who writes love poetry—ventriloquize and silence her. Using the hauntingly undefined yet familiar quality of the lyrical "I" to draw parallels between her situation and that of the songs' personae, she loses her idiosyncratic feminist identity. This "Poet-princess" (3.256) now reads the words of others rather than composing her own "Valkyrian hymns." She is not a Valkyrie who guides slain warriors, but a self-seducing nursemaid to an injured suitor; like a bird, she is "[r]apt in her song, and careless of the snare" (1.218). Love language, which Ida once dismissed as forgettable "barren verbiage" (2.40), becomes an enduring part of her consciousness and undoes her.⁵¹ As song and story meld, as lyric is enlisted in the service of plot, Ida's role in the narrative is also lyricized.

Especially given its seductive context, "Now sleeps the crimson petal" is notable for the indeterminacy of its sexual imagery. If this is a woman speaking to a man, then it becomes difficult to account for the eroticism of "Now lies the earth all Danaë to the stars, / And all thy heart lies open unto me." If it is the opposite, then what to do with "slip / Into my bosom and be lost in me"? Such gender confusion calls attention to the feminized position of the silent and passive Prince, whose persuasions are displaced into Ida's mouth. But the narrative, aided by Ida's lyric

recitations, will soon renormalize this inconsistency and so end the war between the sexes (the inset-story concludes with her patronizing lover telling the mute Princess to “[l]ay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me” [7.345]). Despite the attempts of critics such as Beverly Taylor to read this song as an icon of complementary equality (and *The Princess* itself as pro-feminist), any elision of gender-based hierarchies here is only temporary.⁵²

Uncertainties of gender aside, the recurring lyric emphasis on the heart is clear. Metaphorical bosoms are penetrated by folded lilies that reflect the songs’ self-enclosed smallness; perhaps “all thy heart lies open unto me” is less a sexual description than a reminder of Ida’s vulnerability to the memorably insistent sentimentality of nostalgic lyrics. She is ventriloquized not just by the narrators, and not just by the Prince, but also by the anonymous and amnesiac voice of lyric itself, which suppresses her defiant tendencies by presenting itself as her own thoughts. The repetitive syntax of “Now sleeps the crimson petal,” particularly the “Now” that opens each stanza and the refrain-like “with me [...] on to me [...] unto me [...] in me,” highlights its mnemonic nature. It also creates a trancelike atmosphere, fatal to Ida, in which history, identity, and situation can be all but forgotten—fitting for a poem in which a nameless ghost emblemizes impercipient retrospection.

And as in the slowly shifting “Ask me no more” chorus, this iteration embodies lyric betrayal. Its mesmeric qualities conceal forceful intensity. Even the violence of Danaë’s rape is beautifully anaesthetized by a shimmering and somnolent landscape in which waking and sleeping blend, harking back to the self-cancelling equilibrium of “Tears, idle tears.”⁵³ Imperatives abound (“waken thou,” “fold thyself,” “slip / Into my bosom”), but their languorously soothing linguistic context disguises their vigor. Sexuality seems wholly natural and unavoidable, everywhere and nowhere. It is suffused through the dreamily immobile scene, through the web of metaphors, and through the sensual play of sound (now/nor, waves/wakes, slides/slips). Most movement in “Now sleeps the crimson petal” is absorbed by stillness. That anaphoric “Now” is not exigent but infinitely suspended in an eternal present, shading into numb atemporality (does the first line imply that white and red petals sleep by turns, or sleep simultaneously?). “*Now* sleeps” is at first glance hard to distinguish from the visually similar “*Nor* waves [...] *Nor* winks,” demonstrating the twinning of motion with its negation.⁵⁴ Ida’s new compliance with plot is ensured via lyric repetition, misdirection, and stasis

that mask urgent erotic demands; for her, to remember this poem is to forget the self. Both Danaë and the Princess find their virginal isolation disrupted, but the shower of gold that penetrates Ida's epic stronghold is not a child-begetting god but the childlike lyric.

Images of encompassment run throughout the poem. Even the unusual arrangement of this sonnet's stanzas—a quatrain, three couplets, then another quatrain—heightens this effect, as do Tennyson's occasional enjambments; the hanging verbs in "leaves / A shining furrow" and "slip / Into my bosom" urge a reader's eyes over the line-break, letting one line merge into the next. And as this song slips into Ida's bosom, as one lover hopes to subsume the other, so lyric itself is apparently incorporated into plot, shaping the way in which events unfold even more directly than did "Tears, idle tears" and "O Swallow." The final song, "Come down, O maid," represents the culmination of lyric–narrative integration. Only two lines of narrative separate "Now sleeps the crimson petal" from "Come down, O maid." But while the unrhymed pentameter of the former poem is divided into short stanzas, the latter blends in far more readily with its blank-verse context. Its frequent enjambments and caesurae balance its penchant for repetition, and it is the only intra-plot lyric rendered in one continuous verse paragraph.

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
 What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
 In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
 But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
 To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,
 To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
 And come, for love is of the valley, come,
 For love is of the valley, come thou down
 And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
 Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
 Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
 Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
 With Death and Morning on the silver horns,
 Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
 Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
 That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
 To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:
 But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
 To find him in the valley; let the wild

Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
 The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
 Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
 That like a broken purpose waste in air:
 So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales
 Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
 Arise to thee; the children call, and I
 Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
 Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
 Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
 The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
 And murmuring of innumerable bees. (7.177–207)

This song continues the gender-bending self-seduction of its predecessor. As she reads it aloud, Ida gives voice to a shepherd who implores his beloved to descend from the harsh mountains to the bucolic valley. She combines the authority of male-gendered plotting with the charms of feminine lyricism in order to enforce conformity in herself, becoming “meek” and “mild” and tongue-tied after her recitation (7.210–211), moving from icy remoteness toward warm domesticity. The mountain is linked to solitary distinctness, with eagles that “yelp alone” and with Death, the ultimate figure of separation. The “silver horns,” the “furrow-cloven falls,” and the “white ravine” emphasize this stark landscape’s articulation of its constituent parts: a *ravine* is a dividing gash, unlike the similar-looking *vine*, which symbolizes unity and growth in the valley. So the mountain is a world not of ambiguous “happy threshold[s]” but of clearly delineated borders. It is a Love-less location, where the sexual “spill” immediately cues the barren “waste.”

However, the alluring valley favors synthesis and gently eroticized unification. The anaphoric structure of “Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize, / Or red with spirted purple of the vats, / Or foxlike in the vine” implies that any one of these claims about Love’s location is as true as any other. He has dispersed himself throughout the scene. His landscape reflects entanglement, mild disorientation (“maize” evokes “maze”), and the fusion of disparate entities—after all, Love joins hands with Plenty, immerses himself in wine and conflates purple with red as he does so, becomes “foxlike.” “[B]y the happy threshold, he” is significant not only in its momentarily perplexing syntax—the reader may expect a verb after “he,” and must realize that the scene is one of fluid diffusion rather

than discrete individual action—but also in its vision of literal liminality. Between-ness and blending dominate the realm of Love.

Thus sterile singularity gives way to bountiful interweaving, and sublime “firths of ice” yield to rustic lawns. The pervasive lyric language of diminishment and of low tones, Ida’s descent from her battlements to nurse wounded men, her fall into the river: all culminate in the shepherd’s repeated injunctions to “come down.” Just as the “Ask me no more” speaker reluctantly plunges into Love’s “great river,” so this once-frigid maid will heed her shepherd. Song’s enchanting iterations control its female subjects and performers and addressees, not through logical persuasion but through strikingly memorable images and phrases like the assonant “spirted purple.” The maid, who has no opportunity to give her reasons for refusing, is stymied by a lushly euphonious lyrical apostrophe that silences even as it idolizes her.

Vague but persistent retrospection underlies the sentimental power of this mnemonically repetitive song. “[C]hildren call” from the valley, embodying both the household duties that women may not forget and the memory-based appeals of lyric. The maid is implicitly enjoined to remember the valley, to remember the children, to remember the waiting lover, to remember the familiar and nostalgic world of pastoral. Memory, which remains half-defined (whose children are these? what separated maid and shepherd?), prevents Ida and the maid from pursuing the demands of ego or defying long-established conventions.

But as this poem dwells on dim recollections, its amnesiac tendencies produce an extreme version of intermingling that becomes self-forgetting and self-defeating. The shepherd’s voice begins to fade. Launching into his final exhortation, he equates his own song with the features of the scene: the “vales,” the “azure pillars of the hearth,” the call of the children, and the entreaties of “thy shepherd” are all presented as reasons to join him. And as he undercuts the force of his words by juxtaposing them with columns of smoke, those words wearily decelerate. The enjambments of “vales / Await thee” and “hearth / Arise to thee” have a sluggish and devitalized effect, especially when combined with the semicolons that interrupt each line again after “thee.” A reader strains across the line-break in search of the verb, only to encounter an immediate caesura, which creates a lethargic, limping feel.⁵⁵ This pattern, along with the tendency to privilege imagistic fusion over differentiation, obscures and obstructs the speaker’s voice.

As blending becomes cripplingly dense, the shepherd also loses his maiden in the landscape. Though this is a love-song, he can hardly distinguish her from her surroundings. “[S]weet is every sound, / Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet”: this is his final, feeble address to his beloved. He praises her for half a line (“Sweeter thy voice”), but an encompassing chiasmus allows the natural world to efface both pleading man and passive woman (“sweet is every sound [...] every sound is sweet”). By twice affirming the sonic sweetness of the setting, the shepherd makes these lines distractingly alliterative, ensuring that it is soundscape as well as landscape that compromises his appeal. The sinuous repetition of “And come, for Love is of the valley, come, / For Love is of the valley, come thou down” drains this command of urgency and turns it into an incantatory mantra—one that threatens to become strangely literal, given that the speaker seems just as enamored “of the valley” as of the distant maid. Intimate speech is rendered nebulous and impersonal, a lyrical tendency that for once appears to be impeding rather than encouraging female compliance with plot.

The conclusion of “Come down, O maid” is almost suffocating in its iterative verbal play: “Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn, / The moan of doves in immemorial elms, / And murmuring of innumerable bees.” There are as many as thirteen syllables in the first of these lines if “myriads,” “rivulets,” and “hurrying” remain unelided. While extra syllables usually speed up a poetic line, in this sonic context they sound heavy and labored. Repetition of “m” (which onomatopoeically performs “murmuring”) and an abundance of prolonged, stressed vowel sounds (in “moan,” “immemorial,” “innumerable”) create an effect of languidly hypnotic droning. Whirring bees drown out the shepherd, and this song of seduction ends in a static anticlimax. An indicative list of sounds displaces the imperative of “Come down, O maid.” Everything, from speaker to beloved to picturesque scene, has vanished into the uniform sounds of insects. What’s more, these concluding lines deny the existence of specifics. There were a “thousand wreaths” on the heights, but here there are only “myriads” of rivulets and “innumerable” bees. The mountain’s severe clarity is replaced by a landscape in which the tendency of mnemonic lyric form to generate opacity and amnesia—ancient trees are “immemorial,” out of memory’s reach—causes even the poem’s basic premise to dissolve. (Fittingly, these final three lines have proved so independently memorable that their narrative context is frequently overlooked.) While lyric impercipience often means that *Ida* forgets herself

and pursues faded memories of childishly tender feeling, and while sensual language in "Now sleeps the crimson petal" reinforces its erotic invitation, here iterative sonic beauties risk turning the invitation itself into a "broken purpose."

This poem may appear to bring the medley to a tidy conclusion. Prince and Princess unite, the hearth is universally exalted, and song is absorbed into plot. When Ida comes down from her mountain height to recite poetry for her suitor, it might seem that she journeys into new generic territory. The valley's aesthetic of unification means that narrative progress merges with lyric emotionality, and a peaceful domestic idyll is the result. "Come down, O maid" is, in fact, identified as a "small / Sweet Idyl" (7.175–176). From this perspective, the descending Ida enters the humbly anonymous and diminished mode that previous lyrics have prepared for her; this song's startlingly sublime mountain imagery, which it takes pains to reject, only emphasizes the fact that the songs have contained undertones of domestic idyll all along. Their treacherously mnemonic nature has obliged Ida to internalize both soft sentiment and the evacuated reduction that it can imply for women. Her purpose, too, has been broken.

Yet even while repudiating the "splendour" of the maid's mountain, the shepherd cannot help but dwell on it. Height brings one "near the Heavens," near stars and sunbeams, near eagles and shining ravines. "What pleasure lives in height" is evident. From this perspective, the feminine realm associated with lyric—at the instant of its final absorption into an idyllic plot—reimagines itself as the site of soaring resplendence (in the style, perhaps, of Ida's "dismal lyrics"). It suddenly lays claim to descriptions of female self-reliance and far-seeing elevation, rather than modest smallness, and resists giving up the last of its independence to sink into the valley of male-controlled narrative. Is lyric symbolically located on the secluded mountaintop or in the cozy valley? Does lyric impersonality manifest itself as aloof inhumanity or socialized self-sacrifice? Does lyric amnesia chiefly undermine female ambition or plotted teleology? "Come down, O maid" demonstrates the complex generic repercussions when story and songs converge.

So in one sense, this song shows Ida taking leave of her majestic heroism (and forsaking the mountainous implications of her name) to settle into the idyll—the happy marriage of lyric and narrative. Lines that are haunted by memories of love and children's cries erode her feminist identity. This portrait of self-seducing Ida as the shepherd's addressee

pathologizes chaste self-sufficiency and so turns her into a cold prude, not an inspired visionary. By abruptly revising lyric and associating it with barren loneliness, “Come down, O maid” makes the earlier and more prevalent version of lyric—the sentimental version that shades into idyll here—more appealing. Songs that glorify love and maternity are confirmed as disciplinary salvos against a too-ambitious heroine, and the conflicted Tennyson can tacitly justify his own devotion to lyricism. For Ida, perhaps the true nature of lyric betrayal is that it reconfigures plot as domestic and romantic, even as the story of an all-female college becomes an old-fashioned chivalric tale in which knights battle for fair ladies. In part through baby-lyric’s memorial ties to the literary past, through its use of ballad-like stanzas that signify “the infancy of English poetry” and are “suited for the primal emotions,” familiar anti-feminist convention takes over and renormalizes gender.⁵⁶ Hearth-centered songs set up the descent into idyllic docility, robbing Ida of sublimity and preventing her from aligning the plot with her own lofty ideological objectives. Like the effeminate Prince and the formidable Princess, lyric and narrative merge with and correct one another; lyric domesticates or infantilizes plot, while plot incorporates lyric into the eroticized temporal patterns that lead toward marriage.

Tucker associates the heights with lyric isolation and the valley with idyll, arguing that “Come down, O maid” enacts “Tennysonian plunging of individuality into a larger choral whole.”⁵⁷ But despite the imagery of lonely splendor in this final song, Tucker’s plunge has in fact been connected with *lyric* throughout *The Princess*. The shepherd’s praise of sexual love shows that Death is in the valley as well, for reproduction and death—two types of echoes rolling from soul to soul—both negate the individual agent. Repetitive lyric forms paradoxically indicate both procreative propagation and deathly stasis. The infantile demands embodied by the calling children, which underscore the song’s mnemonic nostalgia, thus also bolster the lyric themes of female self-surrender and self-forgetting. Indeed, a “private yet impersonal mood,” intimate and anonymous as idle tears, permeates the songs; sung in unison, they create a repressive collective identity.⁵⁸ Lyrics deny women idiosyncratic character and involvement in progressive public action, confining them to orthodox and prefabricated selfhoods transmitted via memorable texts. They guide Ida down the well-worn paths of idyllic domesticity.

In another sense, though, this song’s anticlimactic conclusion blocks the triumph of idyll and implies that Tennyson himself is taking an

unwilling leave of the proudly autonomous version of lyric. Ida reciting to herself, and so guaranteeing a well-ordered society as she accepts passive wifedom, mirrors Tennyson coaxing himself down from the solipsistic lyric mountaintop and into the socially engaged mode of masculinity that critics had urged on him. Her secluded college, in spite of its relevance to contemporary politics, also functions as an abandoned Palace of Art.⁵⁹ But indecision continues to attend this embrace of idyll. Its admiration of the mountain and its final retreat into verbal gorgeousness show that “Come down, O maid” is unable to forget its newly purified lyric vision, even as Tennyson is unable to forget his earlier compositional style. This poem represents the author’s anxious glance over his shoulder, his hesitation wholly to inhabit the epic (or idyllic) mode, his efforts to have it both ways. Like the past-haunted Ida, he is betrayed by lyric remembrance: “Tennyson’s deepest allegiance to lyricism [...] subverted his deliberate attempt to transcend it.”⁶⁰ The depiction of the heights—tellingly, a region here associated with femininity—remains compellingly memorable.

Conclusion: The Gift of Lyric

Given this generic ambiguity, it is fitting that the frame-narrative of *The Princess* ends on an undecidable note. The storytelling party sits contemplating “the future man” (Conclusion 109), while Lilia quietly removes the scarf that she had draped over the statue of a male ancestor. Putting a stop to the poem’s last episode of cross-dressing appears to signal a neat restoration of gender normalcy; the concluding tone is more tentative than confident, however, and the epic—which begins and ends with storytelling on the lawn, posing questions that lack clear answers—resembles “Tears, idle tears” in its circularity. And there is lingering uncertainty at the end of Ida’s tale as well. Says the Prince in the final lines of Book 7, “Yield thyself up: my hopes and thine are one: / Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself; / Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me.” Does he then, in appropriating her hopes, rely on Ida as the strong foundation of his mature masculinity? The recalibration of gender may be incomplete—just as the tonal compromise between male mockery and female gravity remains ambiguous, and as the medley arrangement allows for multiple interpretations of the relationship between lyrics and plot. Prince and Princess are never pictured in wedded bliss. Though Ida wavers and weakens, giving the Prince the last word, she never explicitly

declares her devotion. She and Lilia end their tales with silent gestures that, while they apparently cede authority to men, leave the Woman Question open.

The mountain-maiden's implied descent echoes Ida's implied capitulation, but "Come down, O maid" does allow its seduction to taper off into alliterative chanting. As this song fades away, the maid hovers in what Christopher Ricks might call a penultimate state.⁶¹ Again, just at the moment when lyric and narrative seem to merge into idyll (and so to fulfill the male-designed plot's pursuit of the communal values embodied in marriage), Tennyson reserves a space for purposeless sonic beauty. Both maiden and feminized song hesitate on the verge of domestic absorption, which cannot quite conquer autonomous isolation. Marriage plot notwithstanding, Ida's fate cues a great deal of disappointment and dissent. Even young Walter Vivian says of the Princess, "I wish she had not yielded" (Conclusion 5). Her individual ego still makes its needs felt, and readers look back longingly at the splendor of the mountain.

From one point of view, memory defeats Ida. She is reformed by mnemonically anonymous and conventional lyric, and by the children who personify its strategies. She cannot escape gender norms and vague nostalgia that prompts self-forgetting, despite her contempt for "the mouldered lodges of the Past." From another point of view, however, strategically amnesiac memory redeems her, as readers may choose to recall her strength and eloquence rather than her downfall. Karen Chase and Michael Levenson propose that Tennyson's poem can be "read non-narratively"—that is, non-chronologically.⁶² This is borne out by the fact that the women's little songs have proved to be more durable than the anti-feminist story they interrupt; they offer a respite from plot after all, and in so doing, they provide a way of approaching the poem that does not rely on narrative teleology. This is the gift of lyric, and it can apply to the inset-tale as well. Even if one concludes that Ida's fate is undebatable, it is possible to remember her as an independent heroine whose voice outlives her silencing. So this poem's focus on the past and its proclivity for selective forgetting are not necessarily regressive or conservative. Songs and women both challenge the societal constraints that subordinate them to topical narrative and to men; for Ida and for Tennyson, feminized lyricism is both liberating and restrictive.

Lyrics betray Tennyson by disrupting his long poem, making him a mother to childish songs rather than a masculine epic author. Likewise, lyrics and lyric-babies betray Ida by rendering her epic plot idyllic,

associating it with sentiment and backward glances. But aesthetically, like a memorable song, memorable Ida triumphs. Numerous critics disregard residual tensions surrounding both genre and gender by claiming that Tennyson's epic works its way toward a self-assured synthesis of the perspectives it presents; the instability they overlook can signal fruitful openness and indeterminacy, not an unsatisfying muddle.⁶³ Just as the cultivated lawns of Vivian-place overflow with a wild variety of people and activities, so the "medley" conceit cannot contain or neutralize this poem's rich polyphonic contradictions and flashes of self-subversion. Without reproducing misleading readings of the songs that overlook their narrative context, I have sought to acknowledge the way in which our memory and understanding of this poem is not limited by its plot trajectory.

Historian Charles Kingsley calls *The Princess* a "mirror of the nineteenth century" because, despite its depiction of "new temptations and aspirations," it still "striv[es] to reproduce [...] the forms and experiences of all past time."⁶⁴ The selective remembrance to which this medley is subjected, the amnesiac indistinctness and withholding that inflect its lyric nostalgia, Ida's tendency to forget her own mission as she internalizes the infantile vagueness of mnemonic songs, Tennyson's apparent need to preserve a vanishing version of traditional domesticity, even the connection between Ida's scorn for motherhood and the fear that the discovery of deep time would cause the nurturing figure of Mother Nature to be lost forever—all confirm that Victorians are both preoccupied with and distanced from the past as they undergo a memory crisis.⁶⁵ To recall is often to obscure or transmute the object of recollection. In the next section, I consider a poem that is even more fixated on memory and forgetfulness.

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

No Language But a Cry: Lyrical Mourning

This reading of *The Princess* sheds new light on the definitive Victorian work of remembrance, *In Memoriam A. H. H.* (1850). I will use the figure of the child to reconsider the much-debated question of whether and to what extent Tennyson's discrete lyrics cohere into a unified narrative, asking how his long stanzaic poem's complex relationship to plot affects its struggle to memorialize a lost loved one. In the context of

mourning, what is the significance of lyric forgetfulness? What do the poem's fraught attempts at commemoration reveal about the interplay between lyric and narrative, and between gender and genre? What does this dual interplay, in turn, reveal about Tennyson's approach to elegiac retrospection? How do *In Memoriam*'s lyrical qualities and amnesiac version of memory influence its gender politics—that is, how do rendering his elegy in short and quasi-discontinuous sections, and flirting with the possibility of forgetting Hallam, allow Tennyson to eroticize his love for his friend?

It is unsurprising that *In Memoriam*, like *The Princess*, grants children a prominent role. The former was a work in progress when the latter came out in 1847, and Tennyson finally published his elegy in the same year that he added the baby-centered songs to Ida's tale. Peter M. Sacks believes that a "return to childhood is essential to [*In Memoriam*]'s consolation," putting a favorable spin on Paull F. Baum's disapproving declaration that both texts feature "Tennyson's favorite solvent of all hard questions, the little child."⁶⁶ I will investigate the mutually illuminating nature of *In Memoriam*'s form and its portrayal of remembrance, ultimately linking both to this poem's infants. To a lesser extent, I will also use issues surrounding genre and mnemonic form to reassess the poem's place in individual and canonical memory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways in which lyricism and nostalgia, read through the lens of babyhood, shape the elegy's depiction of gender and provide a fresh perspective on its place in the Victorian era.

For many nineteenth-century critics, *In Memoriam* succeeds where the "strange diagonal" of *The Princess* fails. It is a lengthy poem that shoulders the virile task of addressing topical matters, most notably the relationship between science and faith, without either wholly sacrificing or being overwhelmed by linguistic gorgeousness and brooding introspection. It does not permanently retreat into the past or into the mind. The private emotions it describes become not only public but also universal—and therefore culturally memorable. To borrow terms from Shelley's posthumously published "A Defence of Poetry" (1840), it permits Tennyson to join the "legislators of the World" without entirely ceasing to be "a nightingale who sits in darkness, and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds." Reviewers rejoice: "a penetrating poet's glance is turned on this age itself" as Tennyson combines "intense beauty" with "reflections [...] on society," thus producing an "heirloom" that will last "as long as the English tongue endures."⁶⁷

In Memoriam met with broad acclaim, and the poem was in its fifth edition by 1851 (it went through thirty editions during Tennyson's lifetime).

Yet despite its use of lyrics as vehicles for social commentary, and despite its smoother integration of didactic rhetoric and apparently self-directed meditation, Tennyson's best-known long poem resembles *The Princess* in that it features conspicuous generic hybridization. Its inchoate plot is both shaped and deformed by lyrical brevity. The alternative titles Tennyson considered, *Fragments of an Elegy* and *The Way of the Soul*, provide two different perspectives on the unity of *In Memoriam*. Perhaps it is a disparate collection of short verses, each striving to capture the hopes or misgivings of a transient and isolated moment, which futilely circles back to the same unresolvable emotional states in spite of its sudden changes of topic (Tennyson, after all, had no thought of combining these sections into a single work when he first began composing them). Perhaps it is a narrative poem that traces a mourner's mental trajectory toward solace, in spite of various digressions and delays and setbacks. Perhaps it can be both, an episodic elegy depicting a sequence of pivotal internal and external events that is held together in part by the consistency of its form. But in any case, it seems clear that the recurring stop-and-start of the stanzaic sections and short tetrameter lines that make up *In Memoriam* complicates Tennyson's ability to construct systematic arguments or to navigate smoothly through time toward peaceful consolation. Each fleeting lyric appears to begin anew, promising or threatening to overwrite the tentative conclusions of the one that preceded it, only to have its own momentum abruptly arrested by the next lyric. A potentially endless series of formal terminations counterplots narrative closure and creates gaps in linear continuity. And the sonic oscillation of the poem's *abba* stanzas, with their inevitable return to the opening rhyme-sound, parallels the fitful fluctuation of moods that are nonetheless drawn back again and again to despair at the irrevocable fact of Hallam's death. At times it seems that no rhetorical, plot-based, or imagistic construction can undo this appalling absence; at times even the divisions between sections feel as if they encode the inexorable distance between the two friends. Much of the pathos of *In Memoriam* derives from its redundancy, from its compulsion to repeat that suggests a mourner's traumatized fixation on the past—a fixation that, despite its forgetful tendencies, cannot block or move on from certain painful emotions.

The title *Fragments of an Elegy* is nearly as defensive as *A Medley*, and Tennyson often sounds embarrassed or apologetic concerning his

generic choices. Lyrics are only “brief lays,” “[s]hort swallow-flights of song,” disjointed and undeveloped thoughts rather than definitive statements (48.1, 15). To some they may signify an unseemly exhibition of “private sorrow’s barren song,” which introduces the language of stereotypical femininity by contriving to “make weakness weak” with a voice that “sicken[s]” and “swoon[s]” (21.14, 7, 17). In this context, even “barren” is both a description of profitless angst and a gendered term. (Theologian Benjamin Jowett would later write of Tennyson’s grief that “[i]t would not have been manly or natural to have lived in it always.”⁶⁸) To the criticism he anticipates, Tennyson can only reply “I do but sing because I must, / And pipe but as the linnets sing” (21.23–24)—an image of instinctive, overflowing sentiment also frequently associated with female writers, and applied to the female singers in *The Princess*, who warble “[l]ike linnets in the pauses of the wind” (Prologue 238). The poet, who compares himself to a “[w]ild bird,” “cannot all command” his fugacious and heartfelt songs (88.1, 10).⁶⁹ These womanly connotations are underscored when Tennyson (who brings forth lyric-children) specifies that his linnet is a mother, lamenting because “her brood is stolen away” (21.28). And a few sections earlier, waiting for the ship that bears Hallam’s body, he assumes the position of the memory-haunted mothers in “Sweet and low” and “Home they brought her warrior dead.”

Sometimes Tennyson, identifying more with the brood than with the mother bird, worries that *In Memoriam* is merely puerile. He imagines being called “fool” and “child” (69.13). His prologue asks forgiveness for the “[c]onfusions of a wasted youth” (42) that follow, while his epilogue speaks of “the songs I made” as immature “echoes out of weaker times” (21–22). Such uneasiness is no doubt due in part to the fact that he composed the elegy over a seventeen-year period, beginning when he was just twenty-four years old. As Erik Gray notes, even writing in tetrameter instead of grander and more expansive pentameter seems juvenile. Wordsworth and Milton, for example, favor four-beat lines mainly in their early works.⁷⁰ Indeed, Tennyson’s anguish and uncertainty and trepidation turn him into “An infant crying in the night: / An infant crying for the light: / And with no language but a cry” (54.18–20), in a lyric that follows *The Princess* (“Low, low, breathe and blow”) in converting poetry into babyish babble. The sounds of the repeated phrase “an infant crying” continue to echo in the words “in,” “with,” “cry,” “night,” and “light”; the thwarted monosyllables of “in the night / for the light” flirt with obsessively redundant inarticulacy.⁷¹ Here the link

between babies and lyrics emphasizes the static and regressive helplessness of the mourner, the fragility of his sense of self, his near-inability to put overwhelming emotions into words or form them into coherent narratives, his cripplingly exaggerated orientation toward the increasingly dim past, and the unwilling nature of his earnest and attenuated songs.

Similar verbal patterns crop up throughout *In Memoriam*, in the incantatory iterations of "Ave, Ave, Ave [...] Adieu, adieu" (57.15–16), "Be near me [...] Be near me" (50.1, 5), "Behind the veil, behind the veil" (56.28), and "Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine" (129.8) (which mirrors Psyche's frantic "Mine – mine – not yours, / It is not yours, but mine"). Hypnotically fractured sonic design supersedes logic; reiterating his hope that comforting assurances exist "behind the veil," for instance, is all Tennyson can do in response to a nightmarish vision of ravaging Nature.⁷² He desperately wants to believe in a loving God and in personal immortality, but cannot always convince himself that these things exist. Multiple pleas for Hallam to return and declarations that he is "mine" only highlight their own babble-like impotence and Hallam's continued absence.

Tennyson's embarrassment, then, derives in part from the feminized and infantile aspects of his lyrical poem. Writing self-soothing "lullabies of pain" (77.5), he admonishes himself to "fret not, like an idle girl" (52.13). The generally positive response to *In Memoriam* notwithstanding, some commentators did focus on these same qualities. One early review posits that the poem must have issued "from the full heart of the widow of a military man"; Manley Hopkins (father of the poet Gerard), considering Tennyson's "plaintive" verses of "amatory tenderness," asks "who would not give them a feminine application?"; FitzGerald grumbles that "if Tennyson had got on a horse and ridden twenty miles, instead of moaning over his pipe, he would have been cured of his sorrows in half the time"; an American critic declares that the mawkish writer is fit only for "beardless boys, and miss in her teens."⁷³ Indulging in excessive regret and despair, especially in memory-laden lyrics that seem too heartbroken to sustain future-oriented narrative action or to replace shattered brevity with discursive teleology, may appear both effeminate and childish. I will return to the treatment of gender in *In Memoriam*, but for now it is enough to note that lyric betrayal haunts this poem as it haunts *The Princess*.

This helps to explain Tennyson's long delay in publishing the elegy. Having first circulated privately, *In Memoriam* was anonymous when

it finally appeared in print, although its authorship was an open secret. Further counteracting the deeply personal nature of his poem, Tennyson insisted that it often features not autobiography but “the voice of the human race.”⁷⁴ He simultaneously inhabits and disowns the passionately self-revelatory mode that can come off as dangerously unmanly, showcasing lyric’s capacity for both earnest open-heartedness and vague withholding or generalizing (illustrated in the collaborative *Princess* songs, and here tied to a mourner’s dissociative coping strategies).

And for all his lyrics’ static iterations and abrupt transitions, for all their resistance to sequential advancement, Tennyson does lay claim to poetic masculinity by absorbing them into what many read as a story of redemption. They become “eddies in the flood / Of onward time” (128.5–6). By the end of the elegy, renewed hope seems to compensate for numb anguish. Recurring phrases, narrative milestones, and thematic clusters structure and unify the poem—which offers, alongside expressions of desperate grief, political ruminations and reflections on the state of the nation. For instance, there are three Christmas celebrations by which to measure the mourner’s emotional progress, though even these also demonstrate cycling repetition and wistful nostalgia. Its lyrics are more closely interrelated and less apparently autonomous than the *Princess* songs, as each metonymically points back to the central sorrow of the larger whole. Unsurprisingly, anthologies that include only short selections from *The Princess* tend to feature *In Memoriam* entire.⁷⁵ Its attempt to use lyric to comprise a protracted plot sets *In Memoriam* apart from most of the other texts I examine. For this reason, I will adjust my methodology here; I will focus more on synthesis, and on finding thematic threads that tie the sections together, than on close readings of individual lyrics.

The double nature of this poem means that its cultural afterlife involves (in Culler’s terms) both the microcosmic “bad” memory associated with the involuntary internalization of lyric and the macrocosmic “good” memory of narrative, which favors summary and paraphrase over verbatim reproduction. Do its sections generally aspire to self-enclosed atemporality, or must they be read in context? T. S. Eliot, like many anthologists, believes that “the poem has to be comprehended as a whole. We may not memorize a few passages.”⁷⁶ But given the incessant quotation and misquotation of Tennyson’s most aphoristic lines, such as “’Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all” (27.15–16, 85.3–4) (an adage that one may easily repeat without

recalling that it refers to a friendship between two men), it seems clear that the succinct stanzas of *In Memoriam* can generate independently mnemonic snippets that cue oversimplifications or misrememberings of the poem. And surely it is particularly tempting to decontextualize selections that do not make specific reference to Hallam's life and circumstances. Such selections are, in a sense, too familiar to be closely examined.

When FitzGerald asserts that no elegy should be longer than "Lycidas," or when William Johnson Fox praises Tennyson's short lyrics, they anticipate the *fin-de-siècle* urge to condense and purify verse—to strip away pontification and polemic. This urge meant that Tennyson's poem "underwent a scrutiny aimed at winnowing its lyrical essence from its accidental cultural excrescences"; until fairly recently, its portrayals of sorrow and faith received more attention than its political pronouncements. Creating such an intra-poetic aesthetic hierarchy reinforces the notion that lyric provides a timeless and portable record of intense impressions that is largely unconcerned with overt social commentary.⁷⁷ Whittled down in this way, lacking the very topical material that reviewers had demanded of Tennyson and that many Victorian readers found compelling, the elegy had a better chance of escaping the early twentieth century's disdain for Victorian preachiness (though it was still open to accusations of sopiness). Like the much-anthologized songs from *The Princess*, *In Memoriam* thus both enters and shapes cultural remembrance, cementing the lyric's status as a memorable generic category that has influenced contemporary conceptions of the Victorian period—and that will resurface in each chapter of this book.

Our Memory Fades: Forgetting Hallam

In threatening its cohesion, lyricism affects both the way in which *In Memoriam* has been remembered and forgotten and the way in which it remembers and forgets Hallam. The poem's narrative unity is the first of the issues that I will re-examine in light of the role of children; its depiction of memory, introduced here, is the second.

Tennyson constantly grapples with the fear of shapelessness, of chaos, of randomness or meaninglessness. He cannot bear the idea that his sporadically composed poem offers only a kind of "transient form" and "mingles all without a plan" (16.7, 20), that he is like a shrieking infant or an "unhappy bark" that "staggers blindly ere she sink" into

“vacant darkness” (16.12–14, 34.16), that his loving memories emerge only through “wandering cries” (Prologue 41) signaling “wild unrest” (15.15), that uncaring Nature will allow humankind to be “blown about the desert dust, / Or sealed within the iron hills” (56.19–20) like extinct species of the past, that the physical world can “flow / From form to form, and nothing stands” (123.5–6), that the past itself will be obliterated by “Time, a maniac scattering dust” (50.7). But worst of all is the thought that his friend, molded in God’s image, has been rendered “formless” by death (22.15). If Hallam can no longer be apprehended or understood, if he is mutable and evanescent, if it is difficult to write an elegy that makes him part of a coherent and steadily developing plot, then how can he be memorialized?

The lyrics of *In Memoriam*, even as they reflect fractured curtailment, also represent Tennyson’s attempt to combat moribund amorphousness with stabilizing form. Like the recurring Christmas celebration on the level of narrative, they impose order on grief. This poem’s sheer scale, one hundred and thirty-three total sections, suggests tumultuous emotional excess that must be delimited or contained in regularly patterned quatrains. In the 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth famously claims that familiar meter “temper[s] the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions”; Tennyson strikes a similar note when he uses formal convention and lyrical circumscription to avoid the “sin and shame” of “draw[ing] / The deepest measure from the chords” (48.11–12).⁷⁸ Electing not to unfold his “deeper anguish” through incapacitated silences or frantic wails, he chooses simply to “speak a little” (19.15–16) in tetrameter quatrains. Lyrics are thus simultaneously traumatic and therapeutic. “Numbing pain” through “measured language” (5.6–8) and making speech possible by enacting a kind of stunned reticence, they are a mechanism for the anaesthetized continuation of mourning. The terse stanzas that regulate and subdue agony, creating the impression that something is always being held back (“what I see I leave unsaid” [74.10]), also provide it with expressive shape. Ironically, treacherous lyric form both restrains and enables feminized emotional display.

These lyrics perform a similar service for Hallam. Death, in unforming Tennyson’s beloved friend, changes him into “something strange” (41.5)—but the steady throbs of the quatrains render him more familiar and more graspable. There is a similar solace in exercising control over past experience, and in striving to preserve Hallam’s particularity,

by viewing their relationship as a stanza-like “bounded field, nor stretching far” that will claim an identifiable place within the “eternal landscape of the past” perceived by the dead (46.14, 8). A mourner’s recollections may warp and dissipate, as shown below, but lyrics use mnemonic form to frame and secure them, to lend them lasting and comfortingly predictable structure. If they are considered as a series, the way in which the sections of *In Memoriam* echo one another mimics the process of calling up the elusive past. And if they are considered singly, these sections capitalize on their memorably brief and iterative nature to suspend linear time in favor of quasi-atemporal equipoise (a divinized state in which there “is no before” [26.10] and “the sliding hour” may be disregarded [43.5]), hoping to remove Hallam from the relentless flux of chronology that robbed him of life and that may transform him into a dimly recalled remnant of his former self. As Sacks puts it, this poem’s accumulation of preserved instants means that Tennyson vainly tries “to cling to the lost object of his love” while “resisting the very passage of time that makes loss so irreversible”; he does so through stanzas that achieve “an effect of being withheld from time,” as each appears to “bury or seal itself in a past on which it seeks to confer a timeless presence.”⁷⁹ Tennyson’s frequent use of the present tense underscores his desire to evoke a heaven-like synchronicity in which treasured reminiscences will not slip away. He tries to believe that his and Hallam’s friendship “masters Time indeed, and is / Eternal” (85.65–66). After all, as he surmises, “everything which happens to us we remember; it is all stored up somewhere to come forth again upon occasion, though it may seem to be forgotten.”⁸⁰

Perhaps there is no cosmic order that guarantees the salvation of the soul. Yet although one cannot always detect the “deep pulsations of the world” (95.40), one can at least count on the calmingly consistent metrical pulses that defy death’s ruptures by transmitting a memorable record of Hallam to a great number of readers.⁸¹ The stanzas’ tendency to generate quotable epigrams of mourning (“’Tis better to have loved and lost”), even to the point of repeating trite platitudes (“’Tis held that sorrow makes us wise” [108.15, 113.1]), means that they can circulate widely and enter many minds. Indeed, Queen Victoria herself uses this poem to navigate her sorrow after the death of her husband, taking advantage of the mnemonically reinhabitable quality of the lyric “I.”⁸² Sharing “[m]emories [...] of death” (99.15–16) with others provides Tennyson some cold comfort. In a sense, too, it is consolatory merely to

make aphoristic assertions amid the erratic confusion of grief (and in an elegy heavily featuring the interrogative mode). Measured language takes on the hieratic power of religious utterance despite the poem's fears and hesitations, and despite the fact that its generic indeterminacy represents yet another uncertainty in an increasingly doubt-laden age.

A highly recognizable sentiment, says Arthur Christopher Benson, is likely to remain "in the armoury of thought" once it is articulated in verse.⁸³ The lyrics of *In Memoriam* are memorable partly because of their patterned concision and partly because of their thematic, formal, and (to some extent) generic familiarity. For a time, Tennyson incorrectly believed that the *abba* tetrameter stanza was his own invention. But one need not be aware that Ben Jonson and others had already used the form to note that these four-beat quatrains recall traditional ballads, the "hymns" mentioned in section 108 (10), and nursery rhymes. They contain more specific allusions as well: alongside references to Shakespeare and the Bible, Tennyson includes nods to pastoral convention ("I take the grasses of the grave, / And make them pipes whereon to blow" [21.3–4]).⁸⁴ Nostalgically reviving this ancient model of elegy universalizes the poet's woe and gives him a prefabricated template for mourning, tempering his asocial isolation with the assurance that his loss is neither unspeakable nor without precedent. Like Hallam's body, *In Memoriam* takes its place "[a]mong familiar names" (18.7), and so demonstrates that the literary past can persist despite the ravages of time. And as he lends durable shape to his grief through allusive little stanzas, Tennyson seeks to create a secure space in which to safeguard the memory of his friend.

However, these strategies of commemoration can instead breed forgetting. Tennyson grants Hallam fresh form through his carefully designed stanzas—and, because each new lyric provides a new opportunity to imagine what the dead man has become, through a complex web of metaphors. But at the same time, the shifting multiplicity of the sectional re-articulations and contradictory comparisons that weaken *In Memoriam*'s narrative tendencies also turn Hallam into a flickering ghostly entity, lending an amnesiac strain to the elegy. He is son and mother and wife and brother and lover, phantom and spirit and pantheistic presence; he is everywhere and nowhere, "mixed with God and Nature" (130.11). No stanza's tentative analogy, no lyric's time-suspending apostrophic address, can fully recapture him. And in deriving its mnemonic appeal partly from its connections to well-known genres and canonical texts, as well as from its use of recognizable stock figures (grieving mothers, lovesick girls), the poem at times compromises the

torturous singularity of the particular death it mourns. As it follows the elegiac practice of universalizing grief, it risks converting heartfelt sorrow into sententiousness, or into an allegory for the ubiquitous sense of regressive loss expressed in "Tears, idle tears." Herein lies the peril of using private distress to contemplate more general existential dilemmas. What are we lamenting, what are we recalling, if the beloved's individual selfhood is eroded or transcended? Intimate memories are mediated by shared cultural associations and by the public task of elegizing, as a quasi-confessional poem flirts with collectivized impersonality. "Common is the commonplace" (6.3), writes Tennyson dismissively in response to hackneyed words of reassurance—but there is a discomfiting implication that his own pain, especially when communalized via allusive phraseology and traditional form, is every bit as commonplace.⁸⁵ The single life has become the type. Honoring Hallam through engagements with poetic convention, though it begins to free Tennyson from helpless self-absorption, ultimately blurs the dead man's contours. It simultaneously saps his individuality and ties him to days gone by, with the half-remembered "great of old" (74.8).

These anxieties are explicitly addressed in the text. At several points, *In Memoriam* hopes or imagines that the past can be kept perfectly intact in memory and that grief will therefore never abate. Tennyson, imitating the "stubborn hardihood" of the yew (2.14), is determined to remain "drunk with loss" (1.11); "a thousand memories call" to Hallam (111.10), and even the wife to whom the poet compares himself "never can forget" her husband's love (97.14). For the dead, at least, all "silent traces of the past" may be forever conserved within the "figured lea[ves]" of their flower-like souls (43.7, 11). The same is not true, however, for the figured leaves of this poem. Of course, Tennyson cannot forget his companion entirely. But there are troublesome amnesiac hints in his sporadic inability to picture Hallam's face, to articulate the nature of their relationship or of his bereavement, to reconcile what his friend was then with what his friend is now, or to sustain the intense regret he feels at Hallam's death. With a resolution not to remain the "fool of loss" comes the declaration (albeit in a dream) that "[s]omething it is which thou hast lost" (4.16, 9, my emphasis). Similarly nebulous language appears in the descriptions of time spent with Hallam as "days that grow to something strange" (71.11) (a reminder that the formless friend is himself "something strange"), of a "sense of something lost" during Christmas (78.8), and of the poet's anguish as "changed to something else" (77.11) with the passage of time that allows him to

become “something greater” (Epilogue 20). What Lazarus experienced in the grave, after all, remains shrouded in mystery. Hallam fades, and so does sorrow, with “I count it crime / To mourn for any overmuch” (85.61–62).

Indeed, although Tennyson’s anxiety about his own failing recollection is sometimes disguised as a fear that Hallam will forget *him* (“Does my old friend remember me,” or am I merely a “distant dearness” or a “fading legend of the past” that grows “blanched with darkness” [64.28, 19; 62.4; 61.8]?), Lethe runs throughout the poem. Memory’s voice dwindles, reduced to “murmuring the past” (92.8) when the poet begins to abandon the fantasy that his friend might appear in a vision. Only mourners who possess an inner serenity that eludes Tennyson can experience “memory like a cloudless air” (94.11); his own troubled heart can claim no such memorial clarity. The “[k]nown and unknown” Hallam becomes, like a friend rising “up from the underworld,” uncannily half-familiar—a disarticulated assemblage of “hand and lips and eye” that cannot quite be re-membered (129.5–6).⁸⁶ Struggling both to reconstitute and to imitate him, Tennyson worries that he will have “looked in vain” at this paragon of virtue (109.22). While it is dreadful to think that “lapse of moons can cancer Love” or reveal it as “indifference to be” (26.3, 12), the dead do inevitably slip away from our knowledge and remembrance, making fewer and fewer demands on our emotional lives as time passes. “I have lost the links that bound / Thy changes” (41.6–7), sighs Tennyson of the friend who returns to him in cryptic dreams. Even transmuting Hallam into an immortal Christ-like figure with whom Tennyson may be reunited, rather than an irreplaceable human individual—“Less yearning for the friendship fled, / Than some strong bond which is to be” (116.15–16)—diffuses and distorts him (the plaintive imprecision of “something” resurfaces in “some”). An insubstantial abstraction, a dimly idealized “Spirit, not a breathing voice,” displaces “[t]he human-hearted man I loved” (13.11–12).

Once we begin to “count their memories half divine” (90.12), we guarantee that the dead are fundamentally disconnected from the living. What’s more, if the tenuous link between Hallam and Tennyson lies largely in the latter’s ability to recall days gone by, then the memorial falterings that transform Hallam into a “[s]trange friend” (129.9) also demonstrate Tennyson’s radical self-detachment or self-forgetting. As Gregory Tate says, “the process of remembering draws attention to the mutable nature of personal identity”; this is true first and foremost of the evaporating beloved, who is reduced to a “vivid absence” or a “bright

haze" or a "luminous vagueness" that "presses like memory yet recoils under scrutiny," the central void around which *In Memoriam* revolves.⁸⁷ Hallam becomes a "statue veiled" (103.12), with a recognizable yet obscured shape. But Tate's point also applies to the often self-estranged mourner, whose sense of his own character depends on his relationship to the past. His need to regain Hallam is almost tantamount to a death wish, but he also asserts that to let go of grief is to admit that "all he was is overworn" (1.16). In this he resembles the "Tears, idle tears" speaker, whose selfhood is both comprised and unmade by his indistinct memories. Narcissistically, the mourner at times allows his own dramatized emotions ("mine own phantom chanting" [108.10]) to eclipse or stand in for recollections of his friend. Yet despite the clear biographical connection between Tennyson and his poetic persona, which justifies the critical tradition of eliding the distinction between them, this speaker also remains paradoxically indeterminate and quasi-anonymous. His frustrated desire for an unattainable yet persistent past, which influences the amnesiac discontinuities and iterations of his lyricized elegy, prevents him from confidently inhabiting the present as a fleshed-out personality who uses well-defined memories to craft a teleological plot.

So *In Memoriam* is fixated on describing and enacting forgetfulness. Even after Tennyson briefly overcomes Hallam's strangeness to commune with his "living soul," this epiphanic trance is quickly "stricken through with doubt." He finds it nearly impossible to understand "[t]hrough memory that which I became" (95.36, 44, 48). In 1838, the poet writes to his future wife Emily Sellwood: "a known landskip [*sic*] is to me an old friend, that continually talks to me of my own youth and half-forgotten things."⁸⁸ Accordingly, when he and his family must leave their old home in Somersby, the move away from its well-known scenes replicates Hallam's increasing remoteness. Somersby is imbued with the "gracious memory of my friend," and the loss of mnemonic associations that give Hallam a kind of external form means that "once more he seems to die" (100.4, 20). Amid a flurry of negation ("Unloved" is repeated three times), "our memory fades / From all the circle of the hills" (101.23–24). The twofold implication is that the Tennysons will no longer be recalled and that their own homesick recollections will weaken.⁸⁹ Additionally, after lavishing praise on the idyllic hours he and Hallam spent together, Tennyson wonders whether his memories have become deceptively idealized. Perhaps "the past will always win / A glory from its being far," and will present itself as self-contained,

unreachable, and curiously alien as it “orb[s] into the perfect star / We saw not, when we moved therein” (24.13–16). Nostalgia’s creation of a hazy golden age may be fairly innocuous, but other varieties of imperfect remembrance are more ominous; *In Memoriam* itself may be forgotten despite its efforts to safeguard Hallam for posterity.⁹⁰ It may “wither in the vast” (76.11), obliterating both “long-forgotten” mourner and mourned (77.12), for “the path that each man trod” will soon enough “be dim” (73.9–10). The amnesia that underlies many lyrics’ evacuated voices and half-defined situations, and that is illustrated so dramatically in “Tears, idle tears,” here betrays Tennyson and undermines his commemorative project. This is an elegy that frequently encodes occlusion and vacancy—via the earnest yet self-withholding nature of its first person, and via the perpetual absence of the unrecoverable Hallam, whose death is a rupture that no act of remembrance can heal.

The feminization of such lyric forgetfulness—emphasized in *The Princess*, in which song-singing women are associated with an unfocused and unparticularized version of memory that tends to preclude detailed plot-making—is manifest here as well. Tennyson risks not only losing sight of his cherished experiences with an eminently manly friend who modeled constant self-improvement, but also forfeiting his ability to convert experience itself into a unified and masculine-coded narrative that relies on stable memories in order to move forward. This gendered pattern will take on deeper significance later in the chapter.

In his concern with forgetting, Tennyson exposes a self-defeating dilemma at the heart of elegy itself—one that is especially relevant to the Victorians as they grapple with the memory crisis. To complete the work of mourning or to finish the poem, attempting to frame its lyrical sections as a narrative of self-recovery, is (despite plot’s ostensible basis in memory) to forsake the beloved. To find comfort, to form new attachments, to proceed from childish despair to mature acceptance of death, or to look back on days gone by without passionate yearning is to lose touch with the past. Change, healing, and progress mean disloyalty, forgetting, and failure. Section 46 makes this clear: “The path we came by [...] Is shadowed by the growing hour, / Lest life should fail in looking back” (2–4). A “backward fancy” and the “low beginnings of content” are at odds (84.46–48). From this perspective, the poem’s length and lyric repetitiveness reflect its masochistic effort to interrupt or delay the narrative resolution it also desires. *In Memoriam* tries to prolong the agonized retrospection that makes Tennyson into a lonely martyr. During

its composition, it also defers the moment at which he must monetize his emotions, turning forlorn appeals to Hallam into self-aggrandizing appeals to an audience by publishing his work. This poem brought Tennyson fame, poetic authority, the Laureateship, financial security, and a long-anticipated marriage; his success and reputation are built on the public aestheticization of his friend's death, and his durable textual monument to Hallam enshrines the writer himself alongside the elegists he echoes (thus fulfilling the convention of outshining an elegized poet). The mockery of an imagined critic who sniffs that Tennyson is seeking praise for his unseemly "parade of pain" (21.10) hits close to home.

Hence *In Memoriam* strives to stave off the guilt associated with upstaging, relinquishing, or misperceiving Hallam, demonstrating devotion through protracted endeavors to reclaim him. Such vain efforts—strung out over seventeen years, over one hundred and thirty-three sections, over the three years that pass within the poem—become perversely pleasurable as they use the disciplinary brevity of tetrameter quatrains to deny themselves a rhetorical release or a clear narrative climax. Maintaining some kind of emotional contact with Hallam, even if doing so both reawakens sorrow and confirms that the longed-for past can never be restored, is for Tennyson preferable to ending the elegy or resigning himself to the fact that grief can perish (what if "the victor Hours should scorn / The long result of love" [1.13–14]?). Paradoxically, using lyric concision and iteration to confound narrative cohesion and progress both blurs Hallam's memory and prevents him from vanishing entirely. The poem itself may proceed "with aimless feet" (54.5). The rhythmic "thousand shocks that come and go [...] undulations to and fro" (113.17, 20) of the stanzas may be cyclical and directionless, favoring formal symmetry over development, revisiting fading memories time and again. But they are also the pulses that keep those fading memories alive. They animate the text that stands in for the lost friend, acting as his "loved remains" (9.3).

Each lyric makes its own attempt to sustain remembrance and defy death by halting time, thus compromising (or at least complicating) the unfolding of narrative. But the very brevity that makes these attempts possible also signals life's transience, as well as the fragmented and ephemeral nature of nostalgic memory. The form of *In Memoriam*, with its iterative little stanzas that restrict discursive detail, hollows out the elegized subject. Its lyrical sections represent a series of foiled resurrections, repeated invocations that cause a stunted version of Hallam to recede further and further into the distance—even as they lend him

linguistic presence and memorable form. Forever ending and so reinscribing lack, the lyrics resemble the *Princess* song “As through the land” as they become gravestones that commemorate emptiness. Deborah Lutz, in fact, sees the elegy as a tomb for “[Hallam’s] body or its palpable absence.”⁹¹

So the past remains both spectral and hauntingly insistent in *In Memoriam*, especially because this poem’s many self-similar sections may begin to blend together and lose their distinctness (producing a form of lyrical amnesia that will resurface in the Chapter 5 discussion of Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad*). This elegiac predicament harks back to the double-edged quality of repetition itself. Does rehearsing Hallam’s demise for more than seven hundred identically structured stanzas intensify or dull memories of him? Does it make him more accessible and familiar or, like a word repeated again and again (“Ave, Ave, Ave”), more alien? Such iteration risks fatiguing the reader or becoming mechanical and monotonous, as empty as habit-based “form[s] / Through which the spirit breathes no more” (105.19–20); here Tennyson highlights a troubling aspect of the word “form,” one related to Culler’s “bad” rote memory and to his own distrust of commonplaces, that preserves the past but drains it of meaning over time. As section 57 shows, to greet the dead “o’er and o’er” (13) is always to say both “ave” and “adieu.” It is to accept a circular, “echo-like” aesthetic (30.13) that recapitulates but cannot quite recapture days gone by—“Adieu, adieu,” fittingly, echoes both the ghost’s speech in *Hamlet* and Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”—in refusing to “think the thing farewell” even in the act of leave-taking (123.12). It seems that *In Memoriam* must choose between the pathological self-torment of obsessive grief and the cruel indifference of recovery, both of which reflect the forgetful remembrance that stems from its form’s repetition-with-variation. Lyric betrayal emerges once more.

Deep Relations: The In Memoriam Stanza

In the following section, reassessing the role of children will afford a new perspective on this poem’s treatment of forgetting and of lyricized narrative development. But first, the *In Memoriam* stanza itself merits careful examination in light of the former topic; few critics have linked Tennyson’s signature *abba* quatrains to his concern with flawed memory. Ricks offers one of the most pertinent analyses, connecting the stanzas’ perpetual reversion to their *a* rhyme with the fact that “*In Memoriam*

both yearns for and fears an end [...] [The speaker] wishes not to be in pain, but it is his pain which is the living witness to his love." For this reason, "Is this the end? Is this the end?" (12.16) is a chant that combines dread and desire.⁹² The closing line that momentarily sounds like a refreshing new thought after a pair of *b* rhymes turns out to be a glance back at the past, a recession toward the initial *a*. In Tennyson's tetrameter, contraction always follows dilation. "And forward dart" gives way to "and back return" (12.17–18), using the mirror-like *abba* design to offer "old results that look like new" (128.11). I would add that the amnesiac remembrance that pervades Victorian poetry, and that takes on special pathos in the context of elegy, also shapes this stanza form; the rhyme scheme's nostalgic relapses or regressions emphasize Tennyson's lyrical postponement not only of narrative progress and resolution but also of its attendant indifference and forgetfulness.

Yet such forgetfulness is ineluctable, even amid grief, and the *abba* scheme ties formal memorability both to wistful reminiscence and to its falterings. Here Tennyson describes his own loyal heart:

Still mine, that cannot but deplore,
That beats within a lonely place,
That yet remembers his embrace,
But at his footstep leaps no more [...] (85.109–112)

And here he laments the imperfect nature of remembrance:

O last regret, regret can die!
No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry. (78.17–20)

In the first stanza, the separation of the *a* lines suggests the vast distance between Tennyson and Hallam, permanently severing the former's rueful heart from the latter's footstep. The rhyme-structure overlaid on these pulsing metrical feet keeps the throbs of heartbeats and of footfalls apart, and the stanza's regular rhythms echo the inexorable passage of time even as that same formal consistency indicates an unwillingness to let the past go. In the second stanza, the *a* lines record the emotional obstruction that results from such distancing. Just as Tennyson's heart no longer leaps, so the ambiguous ebbing of regret means that his tears no longer

flow. It has become clear that allowing grief to lessen frequently implies memorial failure, and the very sound of the outer rhymes encodes this weakening of recollection. By the time we arrive at “leaps no more” and “tears are dry,” the phrases “but deplore” and “regret can die” have begun to fade from our minds. Sarah Gates also hears the anticipated but delayed rhyme as an anticlimactic sign of remoteness and loss rather than closure: “the second ‘a’ recollects only dimly the first ‘a,’ which by then has become a faint echo.”⁹³ The reader’s waning but persistent memory of each opening rhyme-sound parallels Tennyson’s waning but persistent memory of the far-away Hallam, as the fourth line remembers the first indistinctly (and in section 85, subtly undermines “deplore” with the rhyming phrase “no more”). It is little surprise to learn, later in section 85, that the poet’s heart has in fact moved on. It “seeks to beat in time with one / That warms another living breast” (85.115–116).

The amnesiac division of the *a* lines becomes especially clear when contrasted with the stronger and more self-assured rhyme of the quatrain’s embedded *b* lines. Both stanzas above use the compact mnemonic force of this internal couplet, which they enfold “as though seeking to protect a memory of Hallam [...] from change,” to hold out hope that he can be kept near and recalled clearly.⁹⁴ Anaphoric repetition of “That” reinforces the tight bond between the “place / embrace” lines (which themselves seem locked in a close embrace as they speak of tenacious memory), while the use of “same” to model sonic uniformity in the rhyme with “frame” exhibits an urgent need to resist change and sustain impassioned remembrance. But such intimate connections or “deep relations,” both alluded to and demonstrated in these *b* pairings, are short-lived. The couplet creates a sense of memorable finality—which is immediately destabilized and obscured by the belated return of the *a* rhyme.⁹⁵ A deadened heart and vanished tears displace a remembered touch and the continuance of regret. And the fact that the *b* rhymes intervene to divide the stanza’s first and last lines, using their mnemonic form to generate amnesia, implies that remembering and forgetting are inextricable in a poem that serves as a lasting record of the ways in which nostalgia distorts the past and memory alters over time.

The Same, But Not the Same: Babies, Progress, and Identity

It is the figure of the child that begins to resolve the uncertainties and incongruities surrounding lyric-inflected narrative and elegiac

forgetfulness. While an infant "with no language but a cry" substantiates *The Princess's* equation of babies and songs by underscoring the static and isolated impotence of these little verses, *In Memoriam* also uses children to associate its lyrics with cooperative growth and advancement. Tennyson's elegy concludes with a triumphant epithalamion, that imagines the newlyweds conceiving a child: "A soul shall draw from out the vast / And strike his being into bounds," counteracting formlessness and ultimately acting as "a closer link / Betwixt us and the crowning race" (Epilogue 123–124, 127–128). Bounded limitation thus becomes powerfully dynamic—both in the newborn and in the poem that describes him. Perhaps this elegy, with its sectional re-articulations and its stanzas forever circling back to the *a* rhyme, seems to make little progress. Perhaps its lyrics can, infant-like, seem self-enclosed and undeveloped and immobile. But considered en masse, those lyrics also illustrate a mourner's self-recovery and reveal humankind's march through time toward godly perfection. Their regularity is not stagnant, and their fluctuations are not arbitrary. Likewise, the emergence of new generations shows that an orderly and teleological mode of evolution, guided by the masculine power of heaven, underlies feminine Nature's chaotic depredations; the rise of past species' "seeming-random forms" (118.10) was always a necessary part of human history, which means that even Hallam's death is part of a divine plan.⁹⁶ Lyrics and infants alike are linked to masculinized plot-making, artistic "toil coöperant to an end" (128.24), not merely to disorder or feminized stasis.

Instead of remaining diminutive and constricted, then, babies hold abundant promise and potential. Their smallness is that of the seed in Princess Ida's "Our enemies have fallen," with its inherent capacity for growth into "flower and fruit" (Epilogue 136). As infants blossom into personality, as violets spring from Hallam's ashes, as the generations ascend toward higher things (and as each individual may "type this work of time" [118.16] by becoming a perfected self in the kingdom of heaven), so Tennyson hopes that his expressions of incommunicable emotion will cohere into a tale of faith regained and a confident prophesy. And as children help him to reconcile patterned lyricism and extended narrative—just as they reconcile science and religion—they uncover a vital continuity among past and present and future.⁹⁷ Infants model a version of simultaneous regression and progression, like the "statelier Eden" of *The Princess*, that may redeem the version reflected in a plot shaped by nostalgia and lyricism. Babies gestating in the womb

recapitulate the stages of evolution as they shift “through life of lower phase” (Epilogue 125), yet they move this process forward once they are born; thus the epithalamion infant honors time past while ushering in the years to come. And because Hallam was “a noble type” (Epilogue 138) who prefigured the “crowning race” and who has now achieved the exalted state to which humanity aspires, remembering him means engaging with futurity. To mourn this friend is not simply to wallow in regret. To contemplate “a life behind” is still to have “an upward mind” (41.24, 21). It is appropriate that the conception of the epithalamion baby represents Tennyson’s spiritual renewal, as well as the near-apotheosis of Hallam—who is remade in the “second birth of Death” (45.16) as he sheds the “chrysalis” of his body (82.8), and whose birthday is juxtaposed with Christ’s.

Reading *In Memoriam* from this perspective confirms not only that lyric nostalgia can be future-oriented but also that the stop-and-start of lyric form itself can feel more like a sequence of rebirths, each building on the one before, than a set of undecided vacillations. It follows that continuity and iterative discreteness may be harmonized rather than opposed. Short sections and single lives both prove to be part of a larger system. Lyrics need not adhere to strict narrative chronology in order to proceed toward “one far-off divine event” (Epilogue 143). Fittingly for a poem that mentions a “higher height” (63.12) and a climb “from high to higher” (64.13), even linguistic echoes may pursue closure and depict purposeful forward movement. Repeating “So careful of the type” (55.7, 56.1) shows that arguments can unfold sequentially across sections, and revisiting Hallam’s house demonstrates not unceasing angst but steps toward solace. Multiple reiterations of “Ring out [...] Ring in” in section 106 use sonic sameness to produce an atmosphere of mesmerized calm, in which the resultant forgetting of painful desire for the past—and the absorption of Hallam’s particular loss into more general themes—manifests itself as transformative emotional development rather than shameful betrayal (“let him die [...] let him go” [106.4, 7]). The advent of a new year, like the arrival of a new child, brings hope and rejuvenation to “expectant nature” in spite of its regular recurrence (83.3). What might look like frustrated circularity in both form and imagery eventually lets human souls overcome temporal separation to “close with all we loved, / And all we flow from” (131.11–12).⁹⁸ Infantile lyricism can advance, not impede, plot-based progress toward consolation.

Section 124 further combats lyric betrayal by justifying and redeeming the primal hysteria of the infant crying for the light.

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach through nature, moulding men. (9–24)

As Ida's inert and infantilized Prince was able to turn her into a nurturing mother, here the self-infantilized Tennyson successfully calls forth a Heavenly Father. A feeble and forsaken baby turns out to have been a beloved child of God all along, and its helpless inarticulacy (underscored in the repetition of "cries [...] crying") leads to awareness of a divine parent. *In Memoriam* sometimes addresses Hallam directly, and must apparently resign itself to the impossibility of his responding in kind. If crying out in misery can summon God, however, then apostrophes to a lost friend may not be wholly in vain.

But the key revelation here is that the cries of the fearful child, far from betraying unmanly weakness, are an authentic response to the terrifying uncertainties that plague all humanity. No longer embarrassing or debilitating, the overflow of instinctive emotion—linked to femininity and lyricism as well as babyishness—not only accurately reflects but also helps to quell insecurity and despair. Tennyson silences the voice that says "believe no more" not through rational argumentation but through the heart's simple assertion "I have felt," a declaration delivered not "like

a man” but “like a child.” Indeed, as it melts, the assonant “freezing reason” is taken over by the same kind of sonic iteration that characterizes “cries [...] crying.” Here the turn away from logic that sounded merely desperate in “[b]ehind the veil, behind the veil” becomes convincing, especially given that grief cannot simply be reasoned out of existence; aided by the formal discontinuity that allows for constant self-reinvention, the poet combines powerful flashes of sentiment with intermittent movement toward assured belief. The baby’s trust is a wholehearted version of the poet’s hard-won faith, which he struggles to maintain, in a loving God and in the ability of his disparate lyrical cries to grope their way toward cohesion and solace. As Tennyson looks back on moments of despondency and creates a new context in which they are not merely faint-hearted and futile, so this revised vision of babyhood informs our recollection of the infant “crying in the night.”⁹⁹ Through memory, as with the two visits to Hallam’s house, one may retroactively discover interconnected teleology in the text and unified wholeness in the speaker. Through the mutually determining forces of memory and of lyric form, Tennyson can attempt to make his sorrow orderly.

Another meditation on infancy, section 45 considers the way in which babies become unique selves. At first the child cannot distinguish himself from “the circle of the breast” (3).

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of ‘I,’ and ‘me,’
And finds ‘I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.’

So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As through the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined. (5–12)

Substituting smoothly undulating polysyllables (“His isolation grows defined”) for the restless throbs of “in the night / for the light” points to the baby’s increasingly sophisticated mindset and burgeoning language skills. In section 47, this description of human distinctiveness allows the poet to claim that the dead retain their individuality; for him it is unthinkable that the “separate whole” of any person should be absorbed into an amorphous “general Soul,” even in the afterlife (1, 4).

How can two friends reunite and recognize one another in heaven if they have blended together, if they do not possess “[e]ternal form” (47.6)? Importantly, the stanzas above also show that unified self-consciousness (“a separate mind”) cannot exist without linguistic disjunction (“the use of ‘I,’ and ‘me’”). If he were not differentiated from his surroundings, set apart and carefully contained, the baby would not be a nameable self and would have no meaningful perspective from which to navigate or narrate experience. Without a body and mind that are distinctly demarcated from the rest of the world, there is no account of personal identity, self-bettering, or relationships with others. Just so, *In Memoriam* can only offer an account of mourning by using the circumscribing power of brief stanzaic form to lend discernible shape to what might otherwise be chaos, to separate and identify each moment or mood and so to understand what links them. Narrative progress and continuity rely on lyric re-articulation.

However, the infant has not yet taken on a rigidly delineated character. “Grows,” “gathers,” “learns,” “finds,” “rounds”: here the use of present tense implies that the process of individuation is incomplete, gradual, and ongoing. Clear memory has only begun, and separation is newly under way. A lyric “I” often manages to be both self-regarding and all but free of particularizing traits, which is exactly the balance a baby achieves as it starts to fill in its *tabula rasa* while still clinging to its newness and innocence.¹⁰⁰ Though the child “fix[es] itself to form” (33.4), it does so only loosely. The juxtaposition of endstopping and enjambment in the stanzas above evokes the child’s half-defined status (each line in the first quatrain ends with a mark of punctuation, while the second is more fluid and sustained), as does the juxtaposition of unsystematic listing (“And [...] And [...] And”) and the causal organization implied by the word “So.” These contrasts correspond to the way in which Tennyson’s sections sometimes cluster together and insist on their plot-based ties despite the breaks that divide them. They constellate without sacrificing the formal integrity that also aids such constellation.

Crucially, Tennyson’s portrayal of the baby moving toward bounded selfhood also reveals that meaningful remembrance is contingent upon certain kinds of mental, physical, and temporal distance, and so addresses the second of the elegiac issues I have considered—that is, the significance of forgetfulness. A maturing child, as Tennyson puts it one section earlier, necessarily “forgets the days before / God shut the doorways of his head” (that is, before the sutures in his skull fused together) (44.3–4);

in order to attain “clear memory,” it seems, he must both forgo and forget comforting unity with his mother. Looking back on *In Memoriam* as a whole, recalling it at a remove, helps to counteract the disjointedness that a reader experiences while working through it. And in the same way, the poet begins to hope that freeing himself from oppressively vivid remembrances of Hallam will afford a new and more genuine apprehension of his friend.¹⁰¹ It may be fitting, given Hallam’s near-apotheosis, that he should inhabit a hazy past that “win[s] / A glory from its being far.” Even as the shifting sections of the poem confirm that he cannot be perceived with immediacy or precision, Hallam remains its focal point “whate’er he be” (107.23). Though it can be painful, subjecting him to the unstable recollection cultivated by a tenuously connected series of mnemonic yet self-similar lyrics is not only an authentic representation of grief (depicting a smoothly plotted journey toward reunion with the beloved would be disingenuous) but also the best way to know him after his death.

A lyric that stresses Hallam’s unfamiliarity, that splinters him into “hand and lips and eye,” that calls him “[s]trange,” that seems to protest too much with “[m]ine, mine, for ever, ever mine,” concludes in a resoundingly confident chiasmus—which redeems the chiastic amnesia of the *abba* quatrain—that he is “[l]oved deeplier, darklier understood” (129.6–10). Acknowledging that Hallam grows more and more remote need not expunge his identity or compromise Tennyson’s devotion, but can grant the dead man looser and more flexible form. Known only as “some diffusive power,” he is still loved “more and more” (130.7, 12); “[r]egret is dead, but love is more” (Epilogue 17), a fact that softens the anguish of conceding that grief can “be changed to less” and “regret can die” (78.16–17). A mention of “drooping memory” (79) in the poem’s final section may imply that memory falters or that it continues to be heavy with sorrow, or perhaps both, but in any case such memory permits Tennyson to discover a more hopeful mode of grieving that converts Hallam into a benevolent guest at a nuptial celebration.¹⁰² Even after admitting that he “cannot see [Hallam’s] features right” when remembering him, Tennyson manages to summon his friend’s “fair face” once he realizes that it cannot be forcibly recovered by an act of will (70.1, 16). Now, instead of demanding that his companion assume the familiar “form by which I know / Thy spirit” (91.5–6), the poet learns to accept his posthumous “other form” or “after form” (85.35, 91.15). Time’s alienating “changes wrought on form and face”

cannot permanently conceal the spiritualized Hallam (82.2). Like the lyric amnesia that recalibrates future-oriented narrative by allowing it to emerge through constant occlusions and nostalgic doublings-back, they instead enable Tennyson to view him through altered eyes.

Tess Cosslett proposes that love and forgetfulness, which may appear to be opposed in the elegy, are actually "simultaneous and interdependent"; Michael Mason remarks that "the mourner is not learning to find Hallam [...] but learning to lose him"; W. David Shaw discusses Tennyson's recognition that "until the dead are forgotten, they cannot be genuinely recalled"; John D. Rosenberg declares that the poet "never fully possessed persons or places until he had lost them."¹⁰³ These critics find that Hallam, present in absence, can only be approached when he is idealized or kept out of focus. Vague impercipient, which might seem to inhibit the act of memorialization, partially comprises it. If only we could "forget the widowed hour" (40.1), it would be possible for us to understand at last that we will see our deceased loved ones again. In a similar vein, hoping to regain a "Present of the Past," Tennyson longs for an "opiate trebly strong" that will bring both sleep and forgetting (71.3, 6). What at times feel like troubling amnesiac lapses in Tennyson's attempts to describe Hallam can reflect a liberating ability to reinvent and reimagine him—an ability that, as it locates him in a broader existential context, ultimately reveals his true essence.

Like lyrics, then, infants are figures of imperfect or indistinct remembrance. As a baby must separate itself from its earliest experiences in order to claim its own memories, drawing a veil over Hallam's mortal incarnation helps Tennyson perceive him accurately. All the same, some traces of the past are cherished even as they recede; their imprecise and truncated nature means that they are well suited to being preserved in memorable little stanzas that convey what Seamus Perry calls "a ubiquitous feeling of incompleteness."¹⁰⁴ Such traces are "[s]o far, so near," "[f]ar off [...] but ever nigh" (129.2, 130.13), converted into a source of consolation rather than guilt. Placing Hallam at a remove, in fact, fuels Tennyson's wish to be reunited with his friend. As section 117 explains, the role of earthly time (and perhaps of a protracted, semi-continuous, and ambiguously unplotted elegy as well) is to delay the two men's meeting "[a] little while" so that "out of distance might ensue / Desire of nearness" (3, 5–6).¹⁰⁵ Remembering and forgetting are, like dim Hesper and bright Phosphor in section 121, two names for the same phenomenon.

Time may separate the friends, but its steady passing also brings them closer. And although temporal development in *In Memoriam* can appear to be synonymous with the shameful forsaking of Hallam's memory, and can appear to replace him with an impersonal notion of progress, babies show that goal-directed change over time need not abandon the past or annihilate individuals or fracture identity. As we age, we are no longer our infant selves, yet we have not truly left those selves behind; we are "[t]he same, but not the same" (87.14). A child's growth thus exhibits organic unity without fixed stasis, sequential progression without irreparable loss, and a template for the self-surpassing feat—no longer rejected as incompatible with a mourner's memorial duties—by which people (and the human race itself) may "rise on stepping-stones / Of their dead selves to higher things" (1.3–4).¹⁰⁶ Such maturation exemplifies both unified permanence and ongoing advancement in a state of "[e]ternal process" (82.5) that carries mortals toward the afterlife. It does what *In Memoriam* aspires to do via the compact and memorable stanzas that use accreting repetition-with-variation to proceed toward an optimistic conclusion (a "closing cycle rich in good" [105.28]), relieving the fear that ending the elegy would mean failing or forgetting Hallam. Erratic though it is, this lyrical poem does depict a dynamic spiritual quest on which an individual rediscovers himself and re-enters society. It both preserves and develops the identities of mourner and mourned alike.

So children point to alternative versions of both narrative and memory. If the evolution and extinction of species signals not God's indifference but humankind's ascent toward perfection, if ruinous floods that put the poet in mind of Lethe's "forgetful shore" eventually "sow / The dust of continents to be" (35.14, 11–12), then progress can emerge through apparent discontinuity and disorder—and acknowledging changes in grief or lacunae in remembrance need not signal the mourner's heartlessness. To "find in loss a gain to match" (1.6), to idealize and blur the still-present mental image of Hallam with the passing years or transmute private pain into universal wisdom, is no longer to suffer guilt. *In Memoriam* takes advantage of newborns' demonstration that change and constancy can coexist. There is a middle ground between paralyzingly obsessive remembrance and forgetful desertion: Tennyson insists that his "centred passion cannot move," even if his sorrow appears at times to be lessened or transformed beyond recognition as it puts aside its "harsher moods" (59.9, 7). Though each season still revives his "old affection of the tomb" (a phrase that appears twice in three lines, as if to ensure

that it will be recalled), he comes to realize that he is inventing what "methinks the dead would say" because he cannot know it (85.75–77, 94). Purely "fancy-fed" (85.96) communion mingles with more precise remembrance, and if Hallam's character starts to lose its contours (is he a brother? a mother? a spirit?), this form of amnesia manifests itself as imaginative reshaping rather than traumatic destruction.

Moreover, fears of being "overworn" notwithstanding, dissociating himself from Hallam may ultimately protect Tennyson's identity instead of jeopardizing it. The loss of a dear companion with whom he can envision fusing after death as a "single soul" (84.44) threatens to colonize his sense of self, leading him to ask both "[w]hat art thou then?" and "what am I?" (130.5, 54.17)—but making Hallam's specter more distant and nebulous begins to free Tennyson from its influence.¹⁰⁷ Kincaid believes that the weakening of memory allows the poet to shield himself from melancholia and to reconstruct an intact, autonomous selfhood. He explains that "Tennyson calls up the past obsessively in order to demonstrate how much he does not need it, does not remember it. It is evoked to reveal that it is not there; he works his mind backward to show that there is no backward." Gerhard Joseph agrees, positing that "mourning involves a highly duplicitous act of memorialization as the alternative impulses of remembering and forgetting ensue over time [...] the ego, in its desire for self-preservation, remembers [...] in order to forget, prolongs the attachment in order to detach."¹⁰⁸ In the end, though, Tennyson neither cruelly relinquishes nor stubbornly clings to his memories of Hallam. As *In Memoriam*'s lyrics stand apart from one another partly in order to seek tentative coherence and interrelation, the poet uses amnesia to perceive and understand his lost friend. It has become clear that both apparent paradoxes are encapsulated in the way a baby gradually separates itself from its environment. And the poem's lyricism and forgetful nostalgia also affect its treatment of gender and sexuality.

Manhood Fused with Female Grace: Gender and Genre Revisited

Hovering at the edge of distinctly formed knowability and hesitating between the time-bound and the atemporal, lyric-like children provide a model by which the divinized Hallam may be comprehended. Furthermore, by complicating the portrayal of gender in *In Memoriam*, babies' redemption of fractured lyric emotionality and of flawed memory generates both another variety of lyric betrayal and a tactic for enriching

elegiac commemoration. If Hallam's identity is made radically adaptable and infused with infinite child-like possibility by a poem that juxtaposes a multiplicity of transitory perspectives, he can become not only an angelic abstraction but also Tennyson's spouse. The poet thinks "of my spirit as of a wife" (97.8), describes the "virgin" heart with which he "plighted troth" to Hallam (85.108, 27.10), and repeatedly refers to himself as "widowed" (9.18, 17.20, 85.113)—co-opting language that is more obviously applicable to his sister Emily, who was engaged to be married to Hallam. He compares his desolation to that of a young woman whom loss consigns to a passive and frustrated state of "perpetual maidenhood" (6.43); he envisions Hallam as a worthy suitor who leaves behind his first love to "wed an equal mind" (62.8); he himself is like "some poor girl whose heart is set / On one whose rank exceeds her own" (60.3–4).

One need not hypothesize about the historical Tennyson's sexual preferences to note that these analogies, made possible in part by lyric disjointedness, threaten to undermine his poetic masculinity. But their generic context both emphasizes and dilutes their treacherously sexual nature. The lyricism that feminizes and so further romanticizes such language also allows Tennyson to disown it by placing it alongside many contrasting descriptions and reassuringly manly topical meditations. Feminized lyric, after all, cannot be dismissed as static weakness or mere sentiment; it underlies the poem's narrative arc toward hopeful futurity. Tennyson uses this association to create another sort of narrative, issuing Hallam an erotic invitation to "[d]escend, and touch, and enter" (93.13)—which the poet can do because *In Memoriam's* discrete structure also lets him abandon this tack with ease, briefly employing it to lend affective depth to his love for Hallam without exploring its implications in a detailed and discursive plot. And while the anonymizing effects of Tennyson's allusive tetrameter can look like attempts to disguise or disavow the suggestions of same-sex desire in his elegy, this form-based move away from individuality seems at the same time to enable such suggestions. Disclosure and suppression cannot easily be disentangled, as my reading of *A Shropshire Lad* will confirm, for "words [...] half reveal / And half conceal the Soul" (5.3–4).¹⁰⁹ As he does when he ascribes unnamed "desire" to his personified heart (4.5), the poet makes this desire his own and not his own.

To re-enact Hallam's demise by dissolving or misremembering his fixed and tangible form is to risk rendering him ungraspable. However, as it transcends his historical and material subjectivity, doing so also

allows him to be re-formed. Christopher Craft shows that Hallam's death and the process of mourning "inscribe a prophylactic distance" between Tennyson and his beloved friend; "every act of vivifying memory" simultaneously brings about "terminal forgetting," suspending Hallam between ineluctable inaccessibility and comforting recuperability.¹¹⁰ Tennyson employs lyric forgetting to disembody the dangerously attractive subject of elegy and only then to craft amatory metaphors. Once safely incorporeal and invisible, once confined to the increasingly faint and defamiliarized past, Hallam is available for unorthodox expressions of devotion. The invitation of section 93 can be issued because he is no longer "claspt in clay" (4) as a living man. Although it endeavors to overcome the "distance of the abyss / Of tenfold-complicated change" (11–12), this invitation also stems from such distance and change. "So, dearest, now thy brows are cold, / I see thee what thou art" (74.5–6): Tennyson could not call his friend "dearest" when those brows were warm, but the posthumous separation that breeds liberating forgetfulness reveals the emotional truth behind this mode of address. To lose Hallam, to turn him into a revisable textual form rather than a physical entity, is to gain thrilling new knowledge of him and new imaginative contact with his body. The amnesia-inflected understanding that lyrics afford creates a fresh context for the poet's flirtations with femininity.

Strategically forgetting or obscuring the old Hallam, then, breeds both detachment and renewed intimacy. In the same way, imagining himself as a lovesick girl or a bereaved wife may efface Tennyson's autobiographical specificity within the poem, but it also uses commonplace domestic situations to add memorable depth and nuance to his experiences. Painfully private grief over a near-indescribable bond of friendship succeeds in finding a means of expression that both adds a protective layer of impersonality and points to the all-encompassing nature of the loss.¹¹¹ Loosening gender categories makes the poet's plight easy to identify with, and so counteracts the transgressive implications of such loosening. (Something similar could be said about *In Memoriam's* allusions to Shakespeare's sonnets, which augment the elegy's mnemonic power by echoing highly recognizable and much-admired works in which challenges to normative heterosexuality cannot quite be overlooked or repressed.)

Tennyson's quasi-forgetting of his friend recalls the infant who, not yet wholly confined within a singular identity, has also not yet wholly severed the connections between itself and the beloved maternal Other.

Though a maturing child “forgets the days before / God shut the doorways of his head,” evoking Wordsworth’s view of birth itself as “a sleep and a forgetting” that estranges humans from their knowledge of immortality, a mystic “little flash” of that early time of maternal unity still returns on occasion (44.8).¹¹² Little flashing memories of Hallam as he was also continue to haunt the elegy, even as “the happy dead” may sometimes feel a “dim touch of earthly things” (44.1, 11). Hope for the future and generalizing visions of Hallam’s “kindred with the great of old” (74.8) do not entirely nullify Tennyson’s lingering wish to regain the lost corporeal link with his companion. There is his preoccupation with the fate of Hallam’s corpse, his recurring thought of clasping Hallam’s hand, and the brief suggestion of rather unsettling physicality in “[t]he dead man touched me from the past” (95.34). Far from being seamlessly converted or absorbed into metaphors for spiritual fulfillment, such yearnings are at times only strengthened by the lyrical poem’s use of shifting comparisons to alter its subject—especially when those amnesiac alterations permit Tennyson to add erotic overtones to his desires.

In fact, the figure of the child is relevant in more ways than one to this poem’s homoerotic subtext. Jeff Nunokawa contends that queer desire is itself portrayed as childish in *In Memoriam*, that it becomes a youthful phase to be superseded (as shown in the closing epithalamion) by conventional love and marriage.¹¹³ All the same, it remains in the male psyche as a faint trace that heterosexuality and devotion to Christ obliquely memorialize and rely upon. From this perspective, the themes of evolution, progress, and amnesiac remembrance that I have associated with infants take on new significance. Identifying homoeroticism with an undeveloped version of the self—a version that is, like an infant, both distinct from and synonymous with the adult self—allows Tennyson to voice these troubling desires while also moving beyond them, to revise them without abandoning them, to recall and forget them.

Similarly, the reconciliation of lyric and narrative modes disclosed by a baby’s growth means that Tennyson can lay claim to the feminized quality of lyrical sentimentality as he mourns, only to regain masculine authority by completing his socially engaged poem and resolving to put away despair. Goal-bound narrative appears to triumph over fragmented flux, even as God controls red-clawed Nature. By the end of the elegy, he is giving away his sister Cecilia at her wedding, a surrogate *paterfamilias* rather than a weeping widow.¹¹⁴ Male and female join together not in the androgynous character of the poet, or in Hallam’s “manhood fused

with female grace" (109.17), or in an intimate communion between the two men that resembles a spiritual marriage (an early draft of section 93 pleaded "Stoop soul and touch me: wed me"), but in a literal marriage ceremony and in the context of wedded procreation. Children in *The Princess* return Ida and her suitor to well-established household roles; *In Memoriam* also uses babies to contain the very implications of gender nonconformity that they help to create. Earlier in the elegy, imagining his sister Emily's marriage to Hallam had allowed Tennyson to envision his own eternal union with this new brother—as symbolized by Hallam's unborn sons, who would have embodied a now-impossible version of child-based futurity by commingling the male friends' blood. Hallam's death means that the two men cannot bring forth children to immortalize themselves and advance the human race, but commemorating their love does produce songs "of Sorrow born" (48.1) that fulfill a similar function in lending Hallam fresh vitality. Julia F. Saville argues that with Emily as a legitimizing mediator whose presence helps the male friends express their affection (and who is, I would add, conveniently half-forgotten due to the lyrics' rapidly shifting perspectives), Hallam can thus become "the inseminator of Tennyson's feminized poetic imagination."¹¹⁵ But the epithalamion is more determinedly conventional, with its family-centered language that praises the beauty of the bride (soon to be a mother) and the learnedness of the groom. Such sexual renormalization is part of the poem's plot-based maturation, and it absorbs infants into a more conservative model of domesticity.

Indeed, when women are represented as wives and mothers, children and the childlike signify (as Ida feared) those women's household duties and their patriarchal infantilization.¹¹⁶ One of Tennyson's female alter egos, possessed of a "simple heart" rather than an intellect, "darkly feels [her Hallam-esque husband] great and wise." As she insists, "I cannot understand: I love." Desperately holding on to the past's "withered violet" in the form of "early faith and plighted vows," she is regressive in more senses than one (97.20, 34–36, 26, 30). However, the predictable patterns of domestic life—and of mnemonic poems that dwell on "[m]emories of bridal [...] of birth [...] of death" (99.15–16)—soothe Tennyson where they undo Ida. She is humbled and reformed by the voice of lyric; he is comforted and re-formed, employing potentially effeminate little stanzas both to carve out a rich new set of relationships with the disembodied Hallam and to mask these relationships' unorthodox nature with a turn to more traditional imagery. Babies and babyish

verse suggest that discontinuity can reinforce plot, that forgetting can improve understanding, and that the strategic amnesia of a lyricized elegy can generate faintly erotic emotional nuance without derailing its quest for consolation and masculine poetic authority.

This attempt to counteract lyric betrayal, though, is not altogether successful. Lyrics' stubborn resistance to narrative absorption de-emphasizes Ida's defeat in *The Princess*, and this same phenomenon destabilizes the optimistic conclusion of *In Memoriam*. The elegy is ultimately too fractured and circuitous, too rife with contradiction and reiteration and memorable doubt, to inhabit firm faith entirely comfortably. Tennyson commits himself *almost* completely to Victorian household ideals—his domesticized take on pastoral elegy is another selective misremembering—while not quite surrendering memories of introspective Romantic isolation, suppressing lyricized femininity and queer desire, or completing the work of mourning.¹¹⁷ Even Cecilia's wedding is haunted by Emily's phantom nuptials, which would have made Hallam and Tennyson brothers and (almost) co-parents. Neither part of the poem's frame, neither the devout assurances of the epithalamion nor the confident cadences of the prologue, feels wholly earned. The final stanzas of a poem that Tennyson finds "too hopeful" do not necessarily get the last word; its fraught journey, its persistent textual past, can seem more significant than its destination.¹¹⁸

Conclusion: Victorian Mourning

Thanks to its overt topicality, *In Memoriam* provides an especially useful opportunity to historicize this book's claims about the inextricability of remembering and forgetting. To observe that Tennyson's masterpiece both refines and universalizes the sorrowful retrospection that pervades much of his work, or that it is particularly relevant to a society in which many people suffered the premature loss of a loved one, has become a critical commonplace. But a different approach to placing the poem in context helps to explain its cultural durability. The Victorian memory crisis, which involves fixation on and alienation from the past, has perhaps its clearest literary expression in this elegy. *In Memoriam* finds itself at an amnesiac distance not only from Hallam but also from an illusory golden age of simple piety and harmony with nature. Both, it turns out, are linked to childhood or the childlike. The innocent sister described in section 33 clings to an "early Heaven" and "happy views" (6) that Tennyson remembers yet cannot recover; she resembles Lazarus's sister of old,

whose pure and girlish faith abolishes "[a]ll subtle thought" (32.9). And moving away from the much-loved home of his youth to unfamiliar "lands where not a memory strays" (104.10) prompts the poet to conjure up a bucolic idyll visible only in hindsight ("Here thy boyhood sung [...] and heard / The low love-language of the bird / In native hazels tassel-hung" [102.9–12]). Somersby's friendly vistas are associated both with Hallam and with childhood, and so they doubly represent the idealized joy of vanished days—though a "stranger's child" (101.20) will now become acquainted with these scenes, again tying children to futurity as well as to repetition and regression. In a new home, Tennyson finds that he has all but lost touch with the time-honored Christmas customs once kept alive by "dying use," though he still resolves to hold the holiday "solemn to the past" (105.12, 16).

Delightful days spent with Hallam strengthened Tennyson's faith and transported him to a landscape ringing with "many a flute of Arcady" (23.24), confirming that the losses of both piety and closeness to nature are bound up in the poem's main bereavement. Already a backward-looking mode, pastoral (particularly the conventional solace of pastoral elegy, and perhaps the homoerotic hints of its classical incarnations) is itself mourned in this Arcadian recollection. Despite the child's redemption of forgetting and of temporal mutability, despite the focus on familiar domestic scenes that attempts to compensate for upheavals both private and societal, despite the fact that Hallam himself declares verse to be a cultural "check acting for conservation against a propulsion towards change," this disjointed and generically undecided elegy is saddened that it cannot reliably regain the lost days it romanticizes.¹¹⁹ It reflects the experiences of Victorians who witnessed rising industrialization, urbanization, and rational skepticism posing challenges to still-influential traditional ideals. Indeed, towns and streets tend to be "noisy" or "unlovely" for Tennyson (69.5, 7.2), while scientific discoveries about the eradication of whole species inspire fear that single lives are insignificant. "There rolls the deep where grew the tree" (123.1): the world is a memorial that bears fading traces of the personal and geological past. Nostalgic inertia and regret undermine the message of self-improvement and heaven-ratified social progress that many of Tennyson's contemporaries admire in the poem, even as doubt and pessimism undermine Victorians' moral certainties. This elegy must come to terms with the amnesiac retrospection that shapes nineteenth-century memory. If the inscrutable vastness

of deep time means that much of human history lies beyond human knowledge, then what does it mean to recall the past?

As mentioned above, some of Tennyson's melancholy stems from looking forward rather than looking back. He anticipates his poetry being forgotten, seeing little hope for verse that commemorates "little lives" (2.8) which will soon "lie / *Foreshortened* in the tract of time" (77.3–4, my emphasis)—an appropriate adjective, given that brief lyrical forms both encourage and encode amnesiac remembrance. "I shall pass; my work will fail" (57.8), and Hallam's memory may disappear along with the "cry that lasts not long" in these "fading days" (75.9–10). Struggling not to lament the fact that others may forget Hallam, for God's regard is more important than earthly praise, helps Tennyson tacitly acknowledge that his own flawed efforts to memorialize his friend and gain fame may also "[f]ade wholly" (73.14). As novels take over the work of narration and social commentary, *In Memoriam* is a "primrose of the later year" (85.119) that risks forgettable belatedness.¹²⁰

Of course, despite these fears of being overlooked, despite the novel's rise, and despite the disproportionate emphasis on certain of its lines and stanzas, Tennyson's elegy occupies a central place in the Victorian consciousness partly because it embodies the memory crisis. And the role that the figure of the child plays in its reception underscores that fact. Honoring the years of "childhood's flaxen ringlet" (79.15), Tennyson explains that he still responds to Christmas bells because "they controlled me when a boy" (28.18); some Victorian critics, too, read *In Memoriam* (especially its devotional messages) through the lens of childhood memories. One commenter remarks that the poem provides "fulfilments of the words which we learnt at our mothers' knee," while another praises Tennyson's defense of "those first principles"—such as God's love and the immortality of the soul—that "belong to our earliest childhood."¹²¹ Children emblemize the way in which this elegy's mnemonic qualities derive in part from the familiar nature of its form and content. Readers' recollections of their own retrospectively romanticized younger days, particularly of domestic bliss and simple piety that now seem faint and faraway, parallel their recognition of biblical phrasing and hymn-like stanzas. Infants, whose embryological development was thought to re-enact the history of the human race in miniature, and who serve as reminders of a common past, are also figures of amnesiac personal remembrance.

Its appeal to memory was such that as the century wound down, *In Memoriam* was nostalgically converted into a marker for a time when poetry

was more socially engaged, more formally conventional and thus accessible, and more morally uplifting—though this, of course, also represents selectively forgetful retrospection.¹²² Eliot's *The Waste Land*, another elegy for a generation, shares with most long poems of the twentieth century a tendency to embrace discontinuity, resist resolution, and value individual innovation over appeals to traditional authority; *In Memoriam* shows signs of this Modernist mindset, but it does not relinquish a more didactic, hopeful, and cohesive poetic ideal. The child's partial independence from days gone by signals that Tennyson can craft new hybrid genres, revising yet maintaining contact with the literary past. And the child's reconciliation of circumscribed singularity and teleological interconnection signals that as he matures into a public poet, he can also maintain contact with lyrical modes of expression.

NOTES

1. Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), 1.166, 2.230. The word "idyll" comes from Greek *eidyllion*, "little picture" or "little form"; it implies a more modest scope than "epic."
2. Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.254.
3. One notable exception is D. B. Ruderman's "The Breathing Space of Ballad: Tennyson's Stillborn Poetics" (*Victorian Poetry* 47.1 [Spring 2009]), which shares several of this chapter's concerns. Though Ruderman focuses primarily on Tennyson's anxieties about the traumatic "birth" of his work into the public realm, he and I both equate iteratively static songs and dead children. The valuable work of Alisa Clapp-Itnyre and Anna Jane Barton also links lyrics and infants. Clapp-Itnyre, "Marginalized Musical Interludes: Tennyson's Critique of Conventionality in *The Princess*," *Victorian Poetry* 38.2 (Summer 2000); Barton, "Nursery Poetics: An Examination of Lyric Representations of the Child in Tennyson's *The Princess*," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 35.2 (2007). A version of Ruderman's argument also appears in his recent book, *The Idea of Infancy in Nineteenth-Century British Poetry: Romanticism, Subjectivity, Form* (New York: Routledge, 2016), and a version of Barton's appears in her *Tennyson's Name: Identity and Responsibility in the Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).
4. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The New Timon: A Romance of London* (London: Henry Colbourn, 1846), 51. Coventry Patmore qtd. in Basil Champneys, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 198. Austin, *The Poetry of the Period*, 6–9.

- Stedman, *Victorian Poets* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1887), 164. James Spedding, review of Tennyson's *Poems* (1842), *Edinburgh Review* 77 (April 1843): 391. Mill, "Tennyson's Poems," *London Review* 1 (1835): 419–420, 423. Edgar Finley Shannon, Jr., *Tennyson and the Reviewers: A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon His Poetry, 1827–1851* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 92. W. H. Auden, too, considered Tennyson "the great English poet of the Nursery." Introduction to *Tennyson: An Introduction and a Selection* (London: Phoenix House, 1946), xv.
5. Thus Tennyson, while not quite an omniscient epic or novelistic narrator, is also not a writer of monologues (the seven putative storytellers do not offer seven different styles). One is reminded of "The Epic" (1842), which distances Tennyson from the ambitious scope of "Morte d'Arthur": "these twelve books of mine / Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth, / Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt" (*PT* 2.2–3). See Linda K. Hughes for a discussion of *The Princess* in relation to Tennyson's dramatic monologues. *The Manyfacéd Glass: Tennyson's Dramatic Monologues* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987), 131–135.
 6. Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 2.71.
 7. Eliot, *Essays Ancient and Modern* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1936), 192. Carol T. Christ remarks on Tennyson's strategy of "counter[ing] the aesthetic and subjective implications" of lyrics by embedding them within long narratives (*Victorian and Modern Poetics*, 63).
 8. Unsigned review, "The Poetry of Tennyson," *Quarterly Review* 176 (1893): 18–19. Barrett Browning, *The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, 1845–1846*, ed. Elvan Kintner (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 1.427. Tennyson himself calls *The Princess* "something of a fairy tale without the fairies" (Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.249). FitzGerald sees it as "a wretched waste of power" that signals Tennyson's inability to do "what he was born to do" (*The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, 1.604). And Thomas Carlyle pronounces it "very gorgeous, fervid, luxuriant, but indolent, somnolent, almost imbecile." *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. 22, ed. Clyde de L. Ryals and Kenneth J. Fielding (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 182. These criticisms evoke the Victorian question, increasingly common as the century progressed, of how (or whether) poetry should compete with the topical engagement of the rising novel. Ironically, some critics see in Tennyson's multi-vocal and discontinuous poem an accurate reflection of the overwhelming (and perhaps ultimately unrepresentable) experiential diversity and philosophical controversy that characterizes the nineteenth century. Aubrey de Vere maintains that *The Princess* "resembles the Age,"

- since one might well "pronounce the age a Medley." Review of *The Princess: A Medley*, *Edinburgh Review* 90 (1849): 388. The title of John Killham's *Tennyson and The Princess: Reflections of an Age* (London: Athlone Press, 1958) reinforces this point.
9. Millett believes that Tennyson's medieval setting allows him to avoid thoughtfully addressing the contemporary resonances of the ongoing conflict between feminism and established values. *Sexual Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 77–79.
 10. See (for example) Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange's *Victorian Poetry and Poetics*, Valentine Cunningham's *The Victorians: An Anthology of Poetry and Poetics*, Christopher Ricks's *New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom's *Victorian Prose and Poetry*, and Daniel Karlin's *Penguin Book of Victorian Verse*. The detachable nature of these lyrics is confirmed by Tennyson's habit of reading and reciting them with no accompanying narrative context from *The Princess*, and by the existence of musical settings and translations of isolated songs. *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 3.176, 3.75. Indeed, Tennyson's long works are often treated as compendia of quotable lines and aphorisms, with memorable selections ("Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all" [*In Memoriam* 27.15–16, 85.3–4]) regarded as free-standing jewels of wisdom rather than parts of a larger poetic entity. As W. W. Robson writes, "Tennyson's lines and phrases are quoted and misquoted, his best-known short poems parodied, his aphorisms cited for approval or mockery, as much today as they were in the nineteenth century." "The Present Value of Tennyson," in *Studies in Tennyson*, ed. Hallam Tennyson (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1981), 53. Notably, many of Tennyson's most mnemonic lines are in tetrameter, the incantatory meter of ballads and weather saws and nursery rhymes.
 11. Bernard Bergonzi, "Feminism and Femininity in *The Princess*," in *The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations*, ed. Isobel Armstrong (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 46. Austin, *The Poetry of the Period*, 11. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 133. Sedgwick mentions the similarity between increasingly marginalized poetry and women's work: both, in the Victorian era, are often figured as "ornamental, angelic, and negligible."
 12. Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.507.
 13. Cornelius Weygandt, *The Time of Tennyson: English Victorian Poetry as It Affected America* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), 116. James Knowles records in 1872 that Tennyson saw his "most perfect" poetry as "only fragments of things" (*The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 3.36).

14. Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.251. For Diane Long Hoeveler, the seizures are “the objective correlative of [the Prince’s] psychic imbalance and sexual abnormality.” *Manly-Women and Womanly-Men: Tennyson’s Androgynous Ideal in The Princess and In Memoriam* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1981), 3. Robert Pattison explains that, like the Prince, “the poem is given to weird fits in which the events it describes are no longer perceived in the logic of narrative, but are shadowed forth in lyrical elements.” *Tennyson and Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 99. See also James W. Hood (*Divining Desire: Tennyson and the Poetics of Transcendence* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000], 94) and Albright (*Tennyson: The Muses’ Tug-of-War* [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986], 220–221).
15. I owe this “progressive / progression” pun to Seamus Perry, who remarks on the way in which Tennyson’s narrative sequences and potentially liberal politics fall into circularity and conservatism. *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005), 106.
16. Linda M. Shires argues that “digressive lyric energy” ultimately “subverts the unfolding of the narrative.” “Rereading Tennyson’s Gender Politics,” in *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*, ed. Thais E. Morgan (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 57. Albright believes that Ida strives “to freeze herself out of the fabulous action, grow sober and self-contained” (*Tennyson*, 224). And Elaine Jordan points out Ida’s “sullenly pleasurable resistance to circumstance,” her “self-infolding.” *Alfred Tennyson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 60.
17. Millett calls the songs “frank propaganda for hearth and home [...] placed in the mouths of the girls who listen—they are not otherwise permitted to intervene in the discussion of their fate” (*Sexual Politics*, 77). Though the intercalary songs are sung by the women, they are subject to the editorializing of the male frame-poet.
18. Clapp-Itnyre, for instance, reads *The Princess* as strongly pro-woman. She sees in the lyrics, which portray infant mortality and absent husbands, a realistic depiction of a Victorian woman’s lot. Moreover, children in *The Princess* come to represent the female capacity for creation: “whereas the men use the figure of the child as a metaphoric and metonymic equivalent to woman to demote her, the women heighten this child figure into a symbol of women’s futuristic art which is genderless, timeless, and limitless” (“Marginalized Musical Interludes,” 230). (Here she echoes Albright, who sees the child as a “living emblem of the structureless, the inarticulate, the unresolved, the virtual” [*Tennyson*, 238]). My reading of both lyrics and babies differs from that of Clapp-Itnyre, as I emphasize the nostalgically domestic persuasions of the songs and the tendency of children to enforce traditional gender hierarchies.

19. Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.254.
20. *Aurora Leigh* echoes the Prince's father; the heroine muses that she might have been "a better woman after all, / With chubby children hanging on my neck / To keep me low and wise." Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, ed. Kerry McSweeney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 53.
21. Kirstie Blair concludes that men and women are "co-sharers of the heart" in *The Princess*, and that the poem resists feminizing heart-language; yet it seems to me that the bosom is often the figurative location of maternal sentiment. *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 112. Beverly Taylor maintains that the poem's focus on bosom-centered maternity is actually pro-feminist, since it celebrates female sexuality—though I would counter that emphasizing motherhood implies that female sexuality should be expressed *only* in the context of childbearing. "'School-Miss Alfred' and 'Materfamilias': Female Sexuality and Poetic Voice in *The Princess* and *Aurora Leigh*," in *Gender and Discourse in Victorian Literature and Art*, ed. Antony H. Harrison and Beverly Taylor (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), 9. I also disagree with W. David Shaw, for whom the songs that help to sexualize Ida are agents of liberating self-discovery rather than suppression. *The Ghost Behind the Masks: The Victorian Poets and Shakespeare* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 15–16.
22. S. E. Dawson, *A Study, with Critical and Explanatory Notes, of Alfred Tennyson's Poem The Princess* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1882), 37. In an 1882 letter, Tennyson congratulates Dawson on an astute analysis of the poem; he explains that "the songs were not an afterthought," as they are meant to clarify that "the child, as you say, was the heroine of the piece" (*The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 3.238).
23. Helsinger believes that *The Princess* associates women not only with actual infants but also with "revolutionaries [...] laborers and barbarians, figures for the childhood of the race." *Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain, 1815–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 92.
24. Marion Shaw, *Alfred Lord Tennyson* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), 44; Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 78. See also Terry Eagleton, "Tennyson: Politics and Sexuality in *The Princess* and *In Memoriam*," in *Tennyson*, ed. Rebecca Stott (London: Longman, 1996), 81. Shaw adds that the drag-wearing Prince resembles a little Victorian boy in skirts (*Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 115–116).
25. For analyses of the poem's normative stance on gender, see Hoeveler, *Manly-Women*, 3–4; Eagleton, "Politics and Sexuality," 77–81; Donald E. Hall, *Fixing Patriarchy: Feminism and Mid-Victorian Male Novelists*

- (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 44–62; and Marjorie Stone, “Genre Subversion and Gender Inversion: *The Princess* and *Aurora Leigh*,” *Victorian Poetry* 25.2 (Summer 1987): 107–115. Just as the Prince cross-dresses “as a strategy for infiltration” and control, writes Hall, so he “cloaks himself in pseudo-feminist rhetoric in order to colonize and contain” (57). But Gerhard Joseph, denying that gender categories are re-stabilized, sees in *The Princess* a “forecast of the epicene heroes and heroines of the Aesthetic movement.” *Tennysonian Love: The Strange Diagonal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 119.
26. Graham Hough, “Tears, Idle Tears,” in *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*, ed. John Killham (London: Routledge and Paul, 1960), 190. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 441. Albright associates the lyrical and the infantile, musing that “lyrical nature” is “newborn or embryonic, not yet congealed into particular forms” (*Lyricality in English Literature*, 95). While Albright is interested in the childish qualities of poetic perception, I am interested in the babylike qualities of lyrics themselves. Ruderman makes a related point when he mentions the infantile character of lyrics and of the Prince’s seizures (“The Breathing Space of Ballad,” 165).
 27. Sedgwick, speaking of the simultaneously infantile and chauvinistic Prince, writes that “[t]he privileged avenue from a baby’s need to a woman’s sacrifice is one of the most repetitively enforced convictions [...] especially in the lyrics” (*Between Men*, 123). Notably, Ida speaks of Aglaia in a postscript to a much less tenderly worded letter; that postscript, like lyric itself, is memorable in its very marginalization and brevity.
 28. John Batchelor notices that Cyril’s very name is an anagram of “lyric”—a fitting association, given his reliance on linguistic iteration. *Tennyson: To Strive, To Seek, To Find* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2012), 145. See also Christine Bolus-Reichert for a thoughtful analysis of Psyche’s nostalgic change of heart. *The Age of Eclecticism: Literature and Culture in Britain, 1815–1885* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), 154.
 29. Says James D. Kissane, “Ida is accepting a part of her own nature that she had repelled” when she embraces Psyche’s baby. *Alfred Tennyson* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), 96. F. E. L. Priestley maintains that Ida’s exorciation of lyric shows her repressed attraction to it. *Language and Structure in Tennyson’s Poetry* (London: André Deutsch, 1973), 90.
 30. See Joseph for the dangers of memory (*Tennysonian Love*, 27–28).
 31. This lost-and-found baby would have been the only gendered child in the lyrics, and his maleness hints at the infantile nature of the Prince.

- Early versions of "Sweet and low" and "Home they brought her warrior dead" also specify that the children they feature are boys.
32. De Vere, review of *The Princess*, 400.
 33. Barton, "Nursery Poetics," 492–499. Fittingly, many songs in *The Princess* make use of memorably childish sing-song as they describe infants.
 34. Tucker observes that by the end of the poem, Ida has begun to speak "tremulously" (7.313) and with sighs, signaling the onset of a "selfless, haunted lyricism" within the blank verse (*Doom of Romanticism*, 362). And Jason R. Rudy posits that "brief flashes of lyric intimacy" coincide with "the passing of the narrative tale from one male speaker to the next." Thus the lyrics—far from being marginal—are for Rudy the connective "relay points" that lend coherence to *The Princess*, adding emotional nuance and physiological affect to its intellectual content. Rudy's point is a striking one, though he underplays the apparent disconnection of many lyrics from the plot. *Electric Meters: Victorian Physiological Poetics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 63.
 35. *Modern Love* contains a darker version of this scene, in which the memory of a dead child fails to reunite an estranged couple.
 36. Eric Griffiths remarks on Tennyson's "self-conscious vocal thwarting" of Psyche. *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 104. See also David Goslee (*Tennyson's Characters: "Strange Faces, Other Minds"* [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989], 122) and Lindal Buchanan ("Doing Battle with Forgotten Ghosts": Carnival, Discourse, and Degradation in Tennyson's *The Princess*," *Victorian Poetry* 39.4 [Winter 2001]: 580–581). Perry connects the "Ida, Ida, Ida" passage to a similar moment in *Maud*: "Birds in the high Hall-garden [...] Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud, / They were crying and calling" (*Alfred Tennyson*, 126). One might also recall "Oenone" (1832), which turns both "lone Oenone" ("loney noney"?) and the repeated "mother Ida" (a name the newly maternal Princess echoes) into near-babble (*PT* 1.431).
 37. Buchanan associates lowness and "degradation" with unintellectual physicality in *The Princess*, drawing a contrast between the lofty masculine head and the lowly feminine womb ("Doing Battle with Forgotten Ghosts," 583). Anticipating Ida's diminution, the Prince carries her image in miniature before he meets her.
 38. James R. Kincaid, *Tennyson's Major Poems: The Comic and Ironic Patterns* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 72. See Dawson, *A Study*, 38; see also Thomas J. Assad, *Tennysonian Lyric: "Songs of the Deeper Kind" and In Memoriam* (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1984), 44, 50–52.

39. Laurence Lerner, "An Essay on *The Princess*," in *The Victorians*, ed. Laurence Lerner (London: Methuen, 1978), 221.
40. Kincaid, *Annoying the Victorians* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 110; Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.253. Hough speaks of the poem's "undifferentiated regret and sorrow" ("Tears, Idle Tears," 187). James Richardson, too, calls this sorrow "objectless" (*Vanishing Lives: Style and Self in Tennyson, D. G. Rossetti, Swinburne, and Yeats* [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988], 23). J. Hillis Miller—whose reading also touches, as mine does, on the proliferation of adjectives in the last stanza—points out that tears "obscure clear vision of what generated them"; the act of indulging in mournful nostalgia, in other words, threatens to conceal its own origins. *Topographies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 144. Tucker also discusses the impersonality of "Tears, idle tears," which "portrays memory as a force disrupting identity" rather than the "core of individual identity"—a description that dovetails well with the notion of "bad" rote remembrance (*Doom of Romanticism*, 367–368).
41. Richardson, *Vanishing Lives*, 22.
42. Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 168; Albright, *Tennyson*, 230. Griffiths detects a "conflict between Ida's progressivism and the lyric's harking-back," which manifests itself in her ambiguous desire to "let old bygones be" (4.51); this phrase could intimate either abandoning the past or letting it remain. "Tennyson's Idle Tears," in *Tennyson: Seven Essays*, ed. Philip Collins (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 54; *Printed Voice*, 122–123. See also Henry Kozicki and Perry on lyrical non-progression. Kozicki, "The 'Medieval Ideal' in Tennyson's *The Princess*," *Criticism* 17.2 (Spring 1975): 129; Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, 24.
43. Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.253. As Tennyson explains, the poem expresses not "real woe" but yearning "for that which seems to have passed away [...] for ever" (Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 2.73). Wordsworth's request in "Tintern Abbey" that his sister never forget him, and that her "memory be as a dwelling-place / For all sweet sounds and harmonies," echoes Ida's internalization of familial duties and euphonious lyric (Wordsworth, *Major Works*, 135). Tintern Abbey is near Arthur Hallam's grave, and the ship from the underworld anticipates the imagery of *In Memoriam*; sorrow for his friend is another private emotion that Tennyson diffuses and disguises in this song (see Joseph, *Tennysonian Love*, 152). Kissane mentions Tintern Abbey and, like me, concludes that Tennyson mourns time's passing. "Tennyson: The Passion of the Past and the Curse of Time," *ELH* 32.1 (March 1965): 95. Owen Schur joins Harold Bloom in identifying "Tears, idle tears" as a self-consciously belated response to Romantic representations of melancholy. Schur, *Victorian Pastoral: Tennyson, Hardy, and*

- the Subversion of Forms* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), 111, 114–116; Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 161–163.
44. Griffiths points out the “follow / swallow” cliché, calling this poem “chirpy” (*Printed Voice*, 226), while Perry notes its “cyclical recurrences, lyrical immobility, yearning repetitiveness” (*Alfred Tennyson*, 105).
 45. As she reads poetry by the Prince’s sickbed, Ida’s love-awakening is signaled by the song of “a bird, / That early woke to feed her little ones” (7.235–236).
 46. Albright remarks that this song’s thumping beats represent exactly the kind of poetry a child might enjoy hearing (*Tennyson*, 240). See also Rod Edmond for Lilia’s role as a solo singer. *Affairs of the Hearth: Victorian Poetry and Domestic Narrative* (London: Routledge, 1988), 91. Interestingly, “Thy voice is heard” occupies the only intercalary interlude that also contains several lines of blank-verse frame narrative; the division between lyric and plot remains volatile and unstable.
 47. Clapp-Itnyre, “Marginalized Musical Interludes,” 233. See also Catherine Barnes Stevenson on Ida and infertility. “Tennyson’s ‘Mutability Canto’: Time, Memory, and Art in *The Princess*,” *Victorian Poetry* 13.1 (Spring 1975): 28.
 48. John Suckling, “Song,” *Selections from the Works of Sir John Suckling*, ed. Alfred Suckling (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1836), 70.
 49. I am indebted to W. David Shaw for this observation about the changing implications of the refrain, especially in relation to the poem’s use of the interrogative mode. *Alfred Lord Tennyson: The Poet in an Age of Theory* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 23; *The Ghost Behind the Masks*, 16. See also Jordan, *Alfred Tennyson*, 106.
 50. For perspectives on the way in which these songs are absorbed into narrative’s design, see Pattison (*Tennyson and Tradition*, 100–102) and Albright (*Tennyson*, 235–248). Kenneth M. McKay believes that, in *The Princess*, “true progress lies in submission to the temporal human condition, not in an effort to overleap it.” *Many Glancing Colours: An Essay in Reading Tennyson, 1809–1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 181.
 51. Kincaid, citing Ida’s hatred of clichéd poetic sentiment, believes that she is “defeated by voices, by words” as well as by children (*Tennyson’s Major Poems*, 69–72).
 52. Taylor, “‘School-Miss Alfred’ and ‘Materfamilias,’” 14. Wendell Stacy Johnson detects an attempt in this lyric to reconcile celibate Ida with maternal Ida—“the sexual rose with the chaste lily, or fruitful flesh with unsullied spirit.” *Sex and Marriage in Victorian Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 132.

53. I owe this observation to Christopher Ricks. *Tennyson* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 201–202. W. David Shaw notes a similar softening effect in the echo of “The fire-fly *wakens: waken* thou with me.” *Tennyson’s Style* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 127. In general, verbal repetition both emphasizes and obscures (or even negates) its own content.
54. Richardson (*Vanishing Lives*, 40–41) and Ricks (*Tennyson*, 201) both note this resemblance. Reading a poem that disguises its own eroticism obliges Ida to “impersonate at once the persuasive masculine self that speaks and the acquiescent feminine self that pliantly listens,” adds Tucker. In this way, she enters “the stance of acceptance that is being imposed on her by the narrative”—that is, “the prescriptive injunction to oblivious fecundity in mates and mothers” (*Doom of Romanticism*, 367–369).
55. This inverts the pattern of the accelerating enjambments in “Now sleeps the crimson petal.”
56. Ruderman, “The Breathing Space of Ballad,” 163.
57. Tucker, *Doom of Romanticism*, 374. Tucker draws a distinction between “lyric dismissal, which exhausts the world of social contexts and literary pretexts for the sake of unmediated commerce between self and cosmos” and the ultimately triumphant “idyllic acceptance, which accommodates the given world within an artifice that concedes the fictiveness of the self, as a construct authorized by its place in history” (*Doom of Romanticism*, 350, 353, 310). It is worth noting that Ida and Psyche were once “faster welded in one love / Than pairs of wedlock” (6.236–237); though I will not elaborate such a reading here, it would be possible to link this poem to a central theme of *In Memoriam* by arguing that the Prince converts Ida not from chaste solitude but from same-sex love.
58. The phrase is Tucker’s (*Doom of Romanticism*, 362). See also Schur (*Victorian Pastoral*, 151) on procreation and death.
59. See Tennyson, “The Palace of Art,” *PT* 1.438–456. A. Dwight Culler argues that “Come down, O maid” reflects Tennyson’s poetic development, since Ida leaves the lyrical heights to dwell in the idyll, the form “most in harmony with [Tennyson’s] genius.” *The Poetry of Tennyson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 148. See also Griffiths on the Palace of Art (*Printed Voice*, 122–123). Buckley calls Ida the “projection of Tennyson’s own aesthetic vision and conflict” (*Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960], 101), while Joseph remarks that she is deemed “necessary to the maturation of a male poet” (*Tennyson and the Text: The Weaver’s Shuttle* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 174).

60. Robert Bernard Martin, *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 313.
61. See Ricks, *Tennyson*, 32.
62. Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 125. See also Buchanan ("Doing Battle with Forgotten Ghosts," 593) on the persistence of Ida's voice.
63. For instance, Jeanie Watson joins James W. Hood and W. David Shaw in proposing that *The Princess* ultimately provides unified equipoise. Watson, "Tennyson's *The Princess*: The Ideal of 'Like in Difference,'" *South Central Review* 4.1 (Spring 1987). It is true, however, that the blending of song and story into idyll hints at a smoother generic integration in future compositions.
64. Charles Kingsley, "Tennyson," *Fraser's Magazine* 42 (1850): 250.
65. James Eli Adams links Tennyson's portrayals of motherhood to conceptions of Mother Nature. "Woman Red in Tooth and Claw: Nature and the Feminine in Tennyson and Darwin," *Victorian Studies* 33.1 (Autumn 1989): 19–23. Virginia Zimmerman discusses deep time, arguing that *The Princess's* medley structure resembles a museum display of fossil strata. *Excavating Victorians* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 71–74. Bolus-Reichert—who notes that Ida herself strategically misconstrues the past in order to support her feminist beliefs—posits that the poem's eclecticism signals "the wholeness of the past seen against the fragmentariness of the present" (*The Age of Eclecticism*, 143, 152).
66. Peter M. Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 185; Paull F. Baum, *Tennyson Sixty Years After* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 114–115. There are quite a few linguistic correspondences between the two long poems as well; section 67 echoes both "The splendour falls on castle walls" and "Now sleeps the crimson petal" ("There comes a glory on the walls [...] like a ghost / Thy tablet glimmers" [4, 15–16]), while section 12, with its description of watching "the sails at distance rise" (11), resembles "Tears, idle tears."
67. Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," 535, 516; unsigned review of *In Memoriam*, *Eclectic Review* 28 (1850): 335; John Forster, review of *In Memoriam*, *Examiner* (8 June 1850): 356; unsigned review, "New Poetry: Tennyson, Browning, and Taylor," *English Review* 14 (1850): 72. I am indebted to Shannon's invaluable book for pointing me to these reviews.
68. Ricks (*PT* 2.313) draws attention to this remark; though Hallam Tennyson includes it in his privately printed *Materials for a Life of Alfred Tennyson*, he ultimately elects not to publish it in the *Memoir*.

69. Turning once more to Alfred Austin's excoriation of Tennyson, which relies on a similar image of miniaturized avian domesticity: the poet never pursues manly sublimity, but instead "twitters under our roof [...] builds himself a warm nest under our gables and even in our hearts" (*The Poetry of the Period*, 30).
70. Erik Gray, *The Poetry of Indifference: From the Romantics to the Rubáiyát* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 91.
71. For related readings see Alan Sinfield, *The Language of Tennyson's In Memoriam* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), 194; Perry, "Elegy," in Cronin, Chapman, and Harrison, *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, 120; and Kiera Allison, "The Repression of the Return: Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and the Art of the Unheard Echo," *Victorian Poetry* 53.1 (Spring 2015): 41. Timothy Peltason describes the "infantile rhymes and repetitions" of these lines (*Reading In Memoriam* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985], 84), while Rosenberg calls their assonance "pre-lingual" (*Elegy for an Age*, 43, 244n).
72. As Batchelor (*Tennyson*, 188) asks of Tennyson's attitude toward eternal life, "Can one, by reiteration and by circling round the idea, make it feel true?"
73. Qtd. in Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.298; Manley Hopkins, "The Poetry of Sorrow," *Times* (28 November 1851): 8; FitzGerald, *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, 1.486; unsigned review of *In Memoriam*, *Brownson's Quarterly Review* 4 (1850): 540.
74. Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.304–305.
75. See, for instance, Houghton and Stange's *Victorian Poetry and Poetics* and Cunningham's *The Victorians: An Anthology of Poetry and Poetics*. Tennyson was known to forbid editors from reducing his magnum opus to excerpts; he was also unwilling to allow individual sections of *In Memoriam* to be set to music (*The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 2.460, 2.536).
76. Eliot, *Essays Ancient and Modern*, 195.
77. Tucker, *Doom of Romanticism*, 377. Of course, Tennyson's poetry reflects his time even when it does not directly address current events, and can offer mnemonic form even when it does. Tucker adds that *In Memoriam* succeeds in "creating the taste and the terms by which it is to be enjoyed and understood" (*Doom of Romanticism*, 378); Anna Barton, too, believes that the poem "helped to form the public sensibility" of the nineteenth century (*Tennyson's Name*, 56). Baum maintains that despite the public's penchant for using *In Memoriam* as a quotable phrasebook, "few people will have in memory more than a general notion of its content" (*Tennyson Sixty Years After*, 106). Arthur Waugh is also of the opinion that the elegy will "be always read and

- remembered for special passages rather than for the strength and unity of its argument." *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Study of His Life and Work* (London: William Heinemann, 1893), 127. Morton Luce, while pointing out that Tennyson's language "mingles with the speech of our daily life; it is sung in our hymn books, and preached with our sermons [...] it is referred to or quoted by a very large proportion of the best books," singles out a few "lyrical outbursts" for special consideration. *A Handbook to the Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 282–283. George O. Marshall writes that *In Memoriam's* "[s]tanzas and phrases became so incorporated into the common consciousness that by the end of the century there was hardly any significant passage that had not become trite from excessive quotation," which means that the poem is only "remembered in sections." *A Tennyson Handbook* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963), 122.
78. Wordsworth, *Major Works*, 611.
 79. Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 168–169. Cornelia Pearsall describes Tennyson's creation of a "rhythmic state that at once defies and keeps time"; Irene Hsiao argues that "[t]he lyric is [...] drawn out of the process of living, fetishizing a moment, expanding and suspending it, forbidding it to end." Pearsall, *Tennyson's Rapture: Transformation in the Victorian Dramatic Monologue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7; Hsiao, "Calculating Loss in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*," *Victorian Poetry* 47.1 (Spring 2009): 178.
 80. Tennyson qtd. in Norman Page, ed., *Tennyson: Interviews and Recollections* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 190.
 81. Michael Wheeler hears "systolic-diastolic movements" in the beats of the stanzas. *Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 225. And Blair offers a valuable analysis of the role of the heart in *In Memoriam*; she examines the way in which the poem's rhythmic pulses broaden its sentimental appeal (*Culture of the Heart*, 184–189).
 82. In 1835, John Moore Heath reports that draft sections of the poem have become "the expression of each voiceless thought" for his grieving sister (*The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 1.129). In 1859, the recently bereaved Alexander Macmillan gives a similar account: "*In Memoriam* is still often read at our fireside and every line is linked with the memory of those two blessed brothers" (*The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 2.243). When Charles and Emma Darwin's daughter Annie dies in 1851, Emma too reads *In Memoriam* (see Alexis Harley, *Autobiologies: Charles Darwin and the Natural History of the Self* [Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015], 170). The hero of Charles Kingsley's 1850 novel *Alton Locke* peruses Tennyson and discovers "the embodiment of

- thoughts [...] which I had concealed, because I fancied them peculiar to myself." *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet: An Autobiography* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 1.140.
83. Arthur Christopher Benson, *Alfred Tennyson* (London: Methuen, 1904), 172. As Matthew Arnold writes, poets should address "those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time" ("Preface to First Edition of *Poems* [1853]," 4).
 84. Tennyson acknowledges the derivative nature of the *In Memoriam* stanza in an 1870 letter: "there is no particular invention in the form, seeing that [it] may be regarded as only a quatrain of the sonnet shortened" (*The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 2.553). See Denise Gigante for Renaissance echoes in the poem, A. A. Markley for a thorough account of classical influences, and Marion Shaw for connections to hymns. Gigante, "Forming Desire: On the Eponymous *In Memoriam* Stanza," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 53.4 (March 1999); Markley, *Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Shaw, "In Memoriam and Popular Religious Poetry," *Victorian Poetry* 15.1 (Spring 1977). Additional explorations of Tennysonian intertextuality appear in Douglas-Fairhurst and Perry, *Tennyson Among the Poets*; Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*; and Gray, *Milton and the Victorians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
 85. Ironically, as Blair points out, even Tennyson's critique of the commonplace recalls Hamlet's "Ay, madam, it is common" (*Culture of the Heart*, 193). In 1909, in fact, Thomas Hardy complains of *In Memoriam* that "much of the content has grown commonplace" (*The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, vol. 4, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984], 5). Capitalizing on the double significance of the word "form" by associating *In Memoriam*'s consistent meter with communal religious rituals, Blair (as I do) believes that the "repetitive stanza forms, recurrent rhymes, and steady beat" of the elegy not only call up familiar hymns but also link "such reassuring predictability with the security of faith." At the same time, however, she notes that describing Hallam in overly familiar language may efface his individuality. *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 166ff; *Culture of the Heart*, 186, 192–194. Tucker makes a compelling case that Tennyson is deeply reliant on cultural tropes and clichés (*Doom of Romanticism*, 399).
 86. Section 90 also muses on the uncanny, wondering what would happen if the remembered dead were to return; section 104 offers a muted version of this unfamiliarity, as Tennyson hears church-bells pealing in his new home and senses a "murmur in the breast, / That these are not the bells I know" (7–8).

87. Gregory Tate, *The Poet's Mind: The Psychology of Victorian Poetry 1830–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 110; Peltason, 15–16; Albright, *Tennyson*, 181, 184; Allison, “The Repression of the Return,” 45.
88. Tennyson, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 1.166.
89. As Kissane puts it, “as they are forgotten, they will also forget” (“Passion of the Past,” 101).
90. See Douglas-Fairhurst (*Victorian Afterlives*, 242) and Gray (*Poetry of Indifference*, 72) on these enactments of forgetfulness; Gray believes that *In Memoriam* grapples with a conflict “between memory and ambition,” touching on Tennyson’s ambivalence about using a past trauma to advance his career. Blair draws a parallel between a weary reader’s potential indifference to this long poem and the indifference that Tennyson fears will overtake his own attitude toward his friend (*Culture of the Heart*, 190–191).
91. Deborah Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 114. Additionally, Lutz describes *In Memoriam* as a kind of lyric reliquary. W. David Shaw considers the poem’s use of “formulaic devices” that resemble both epigrams and “epitaph-like inscriptions” (*Tennyson’s Style*, 136, 140). I am indebted to Helen Hayward’s insight that the stanzas offer “repeated resuscitations of the memory of Hallam, followed by repeated re-enactments of his death.” “Tennyson’s Endings: *In Memoriam* and the Art of Commemoration,” *English* 47 (Spring 1998): 3.
92. Ricks, *Tennyson*, 215–216. Hayward follows Ricks’s lead, proposing that the elegy regards endings “with mingled attraction and revulsion” (“Tennyson’s Endings,” 3); Gigante adds that a series of *abba* stanzas invokes the octave of an Italian sonnet, but permanently postpones the satisfying release of the volta (“Forming Desire,” 493).
93. Sarah Gates, “Poetics, Metaphysics, Genre: The Stanza Form of *In Memoriam*,” *Victorian Poetry* 37.4 (Winter 1999): 508. While it is possible to read this return to *a* as a satisfying reclamation or restoration of the past, Gates’s point is well taken. Hsiao’s reading of section 85 also features a fruitful comparison of heartbeats, footsteps, and metrical beats (“Calculating Loss,” 186–187).
94. Perry, “Elegy,” 119.
95. Sinfield finds that Tennyson is most likely to enjamb over the break between the third and fourth lines of each stanza; he posits that the poet uses this tactic to prevent his internal couplet from taking on too much “strength and independence” (*Language*, 184). As Peter McDonald says, citing Hallam’s description of rhyme’s ambiguous appeals “to Memory and Hope,” “what is joined together in the *bb* couplet is counterbalanced by what that couplet puts asunder” in the opening and

- closing lines. *Sound Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173–174.
96. Ida's Prince also mentions the "crowning race" as he envisions domestic love shaping the future of humankind; this same phrase appears in *Maud* as well, immediately preceding the remark that "As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe for his birth, / So many a million of ages have gone to the making of man" (*PT* 2.531). Tennyson's "De Profundis," a meditation on the birth of his son Hallam, contrasts the infant's form with the shapeless vastness from which he came—and refers to him as a "prophet of the perfect man" (*PT* 3.68), confirming the poet's belief that infants are "prophets of a mightier race" (Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.369). See also Harley, who reads *In Memoriam* alongside the work of natural historians who regard "change as development or progress [...] death as the mechanism by which progress happens" (*Autobiologies* 168–169).
 97. The closing stanza of section 121, for instance, addresses Hesper-Phosphor: "like my present and my past, / Thy place is changed; thou art the same" (19–20). Donald S. Hair declares that "present and future [...] are fused" in the child; for Adams, the image of children with loving mothers creates "biological and social continuity" in both *The Princess* and *In Memoriam*. Hair, *Domestic and Heroic in Tennyson's Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 11; Adams, "Woman Red in Tooth and Claw," 22.
 98. As Sinfield says, even closed circles become part of "a cycle, an onward moving progression" in the elegy (*Language*, 147–148). See also Gates, who views the *In Memoriam* stanza as a key to the poem as a whole ("Poetics, Metaphysics, Genre," *passim*); she cannily identifies in the *abba* quatrains a spiral movement that balances static reiteration with genuine transformation. And a similar pattern, she argues, surfaces in the elegy's recurring imagery and in the mourner's spiritual growth.
 99. Perhaps, as Kiera Allison proposes, the appearance of "crying for the light" already reflects a hopeful turn ("The Repression of the Return," 48). And it is worth bearing in mind that, according to Matthew 18:3, only those who "become as little children" will enter heaven.
 100. Tennyson was fascinated by the ebb and flow of selfhood; he could enter a trance-like state during which, as he repeated his own name to himself, "out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being" (Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 1.320).
 101. Ruderman, in his reading of this section, concludes that memory is "inseparable from forgetting" (*The Idea of Infancy*, 199); Betsy Winakur Tontiplaphol believes that Tennyson seeks "a respite from suffocating

- intimacy" (*Poetics of Luxury in the Nineteenth Century: Keats, Tennyson, and Hopkins* [Burlington: Ashgate, 2011], 101). Marion Shaw, however, proposes that a "search for the mother" and a desire to regress to infancy haunt *In Memoriam* (*Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 150–152, 158). Thomas J. Brennan, who echoes this point, also compares a wordless baby's link to its mother with Tennyson's fantasy that his and Hallam's "Thought leapt out to wed with Thought / Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech" (23.15–16). *Trauma, Transcendence, and Trust: Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Eliot Thinking Loss* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 86. Anna Henschman, drawing comparisons to astronomy rather than to the links between mother and child, makes the related claim that Hallam is a "distant object that cannot be seen in its true position" but that "proximity likewise blunts perception." "The Globe we groan in': Astronomical Distance and Stellar Decay in *In Memoriam*," *Victorian Poetry* 41.1 (Spring 2003): 32, 39.
102. If the poet's "regret / Becomes an April violet, / And buds and blossoms" (115.18–20), a description set in a lyric rife with imagery of both vanishing and regeneration, does this imply that the regret flourishes or that it diminishes? The declaration that Hallam's "grave is bright for me" (Epilogue 73) illustrates a similar hesitation between dwelling on and transcending the past.
 103. Tess Cosslett, *The "Scientific Movement" and Victorian Literature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 50; Michael Mason, "The Timing of *In Memoriam*," in *Studies in Tennyson*, ed. Hallam Tennyson (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1981), 163; W. David Shaw, *Elegy and Paradox: Testing the Conventions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 214; Rosenberg, *Elegy for an Age*, 57. Richardson characterizes the fading past as "nearly unrememberable" in *In Memoriam*—yet he concludes that "Hallam's loss of distinctness in memory" actually ensures his immortality, as he becomes an outgrowth of Tennyson's own consciousness (*Vanishing Lives*, 4, 88).
 104. Perry, *Alfred Tennyson*, 136.
 105. This desire, paradoxically, sometimes becomes a "vacant yearning" (108.6) that refers only to itself as its object fades from view, generating intransitive sorrow in the style of "Tears, idle tears." "I have felt," declares the heart, and Tennyson is one who "loves but knows not" (42.11). But felt what, knows not what? The mnemonic self-containment of lyrical form can result in oddly "vague desire" springing from emotions that "will not tire" despite this vagueness (110.18–19). For Davis, *In Memoriam* typifies Victorian verse in that it portrays "vicious circles of pining at pining" (*Memory and Writing*, 388); Leighton offers a related observation about the intransitive nature of "'Tis better to

- have loved and lost" (*On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 71).
106. Sacks makes a similar point about another infant: meditating on the birth of Jesus "allow[s] the poet to reconcile his antipathy to temporal change with his myth of evolution" (*The English Elegy*, 180). William E. Buckler also touches on the complex continuity of the childhood self. *The Victorian Imagination: Essays in Aesthetic Exploration* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 192. Barri J. Gold concludes that Tennyson finds a way to "subordinat[e] the loss that drives the poem to the larger concept of change." "The Consolation of Physics: Tennyson's Thermodynamic Solution," *PMLA* 117. 3 (May 2002): 452. Death represents not a total erasure but a different state. What's more, though individual lives come to an end, children are the "grain by which a man may live" (53.8). They grant their parents a kind of immortality. Having redeemed progress, infants can perhaps also redeem atemporal stasis, linking it to the ecstatic transcendence of eternal life—which is the ultimate end to which all mortal narratives lead—rather than to stagnant sameness.
 107. Aidan Day believes that depicting a reunion with Hallam would mean that "the speaking voice is engaged in affirming its own dissolution, affirming a loss of the difference that constitutes its speaking." "The Archetype That Waits: *The Lover's Tale*, *In Memoriam*, and *Maud*," in Collins, *Seven Essays*, 95.
 108. Kincaid, *Annoying the Victorians*, 104; Joseph, "Producing the 'Far-Off Interest of Tears': Tennyson, Freud, and the Economics of Mourning," *Victorian Poetry* 36.2 (Summer 1998): 127. Joseph uses Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" to consider the process of disengaging desire from lost objects and finding mechanisms to compensate for loss.
 109. For Tennysonian tetrameter as concealment, see Gigante, "Forming Desire," 492; Christopher Craft, relatedly, observes that *In Memoriam* presents "a problematization not merely of desire between men, but also of the desire (very urgent in the elegy) to speak it." *Another Kind of Love: Male Homosexual Desire in English Discourse, 1850–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 47. The word "form" itself indicates both abstract Platonism and concrete physicality (one could read "[d]escend, and touch, and enter" as an invocation to the Muse). For more on the significance of this word, see Leighton (*On Form*, 63–64) and J. C. C. Mays ("In Memoriam: An Aspect of Form," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 35.1 [October 1965]). Leighton (*On Form*, 64) remarks that Tennyson's ambiguous use of "form" ultimately "allows the soul to be the body"—a crucial legacy for Aestheticism—while Sarah Rose Cole mentions that his use of heart imagery also

- hesitates between the corporeal and the abstract. "The Recovery of Friendship: Male Love and Developmental Narrative in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*," *Victorian Poetry* 50.1 (Spring 2012): 62. And Griffiths (*Printed Voice*, 166) discusses Tennyson's hope that disembodied voices, both the voice of the poem and the lost Hallam's voice, will be reincarnated.
110. Craft, *Another Kind of Love*, 52, 60. Darrel Mansell offers a similar observation about Hallam's conversion into rewritable language. "Displacing Hallam's Tomb in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*," *Victorian Poetry* 36.1 (Spring 1998): 102–103 and *passim*.
 111. Richard Dellamora makes a comparable point about Tennyson's use of feminizing metaphors to depict his otherwise incommunicable love for Hallam. *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 35.
 112. Wordsworth, "Ode [There was a time]," *Major Works*, 299. "The Two Voices," on a similar note, asks "is not our first year forgot? / The haunts of memory echo not"—but adds that "mystic gleams / Like glimpses of forgotten dreams" do resurface (*PT* 1.590). Isobel Armstrong points out that an infant "includes the other in its definition of self-separation, fusing subject and object in the process of creating relationship." "The Collapse of Object and Subject: *In Memoriam*," in Tucker, *Critical Essays on Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 141.
 113. Jeff Nunokawa, "*In Memoriam* and the Extinction of the Homosexual," *ELH* 58.2 (Summer 1991): *passim*.
 114. Here I draw on the work of Adams, who asserts that the poet "stages his grief as a conscious resistance to norms of manhood" (*Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995], 46); Marion Shaw, who shows Tennyson hovering between male- and female-gendered rhetorical positions, believes that he revises the Victorian image of masculinity. He can "incorporate *within* public, masculine life, the claim to that authoritative subjectivity which is usually associated with the feminine" (*Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 50). Hoeveler offers a related claim that complicates the point I make below about spiritual marriage, arguing that Tennyson's feminine qualities are eliminated only when he becomes one with the Christ-like Hallam (*Manly-Women*, 12). Dellamora (*Masculine Desire*, 33) goes further, noting that even in the epithalamion, there is an intensely affectionate bond between Tennyson and Edmund Lushington (who, in marrying one of the poet's sisters, stands in for Hallam). The wedding thus uses the bonds between husband and wife, and between two brothers-in-law, to disguise Tennyson's continued desire for unity with his friend. Mary Jean Corbett likewise maintains that Hallam haunts

- this final scene. "No Second Friend? Perpetual Maidenhood and Second Marriage in *In Memoriam* and 'The Conjugal Angel,'" *ELH* 81.1 (Spring 2014): 308. But Eagleton calls the epithalamion a "triumphant reaffirmation of bourgeois sexual reproduction" ("Politics and Sexuality," 85).
115. Julia F. Saville, "Marriage and Gender," in Cronin, Chapman, and Harrison, *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, 537. See Albright (*Tennyson*, 182) for a related discussion of Hallam's sons; see also Corbett ("No Second Friend?," 303 and *passim*) for an argument that Hallam's and Tennyson's familial link through Emily creates the conditions for the homoerotic ties between them.
 116. This is true despite the fact that a woman whose task is "to rear, to teach" also "knit[s] / The generations" (40.13–16) and so shapes the future via childbearing. On maternity in *In Memoriam*, see Adams ("Woman Red in Tooth and Claw," 13–17).
 117. See Pattison for Tennyson's version of pastoral elegy (*Tennyson and Tradition*, 113–115). I owe the point about Romantic strains that persist within Tennyson's verse to Tucker, who links infants to the cultural and individual past (*Doom of Romanticism*, 404). On this topic, see also Helsinger (*Poetry and the Thought of Song*, 30).
 118. Tennyson qtd. in *PT* 2.312.
 119. Hallam, "On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry," 620.
 120. Roger Ebbatson, who connects *In Memoriam* to "a sense of [the] age as defined by melancholia," also sees the primrose as an icon of belatedness. *Landscapes of Eternal Return: Tennyson to Hardy* (New York: Springer [Palgrave Macmillan imprint], 2016), 89. FitzGerald believes that the "cursed inactivity [...]" of this 19th century" prevents Tennyson from fulfilling his artistic potential (*The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, 1.696). According to Isobel Armstrong, however, this elegy "seems to be abandoning the culturally marginalised status of the poet" (*Victorian Poetry*, 253).
 121. Kingsley, "Tennyson," 255; Frederick William Robertson, *Lectures on the Influence of Poetry and Wordsworth* (London: H. R. Allenson, 1906), 40.
 122. See Samantha Matthews on the tendency of *In Memoriam* not only to stand in for Hallam's body but also to memorialize the end of Tennyson's life and of the nineteenth century. *Poetical Remains: Poets' Graves, Bodies, and Books in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 257.

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