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## Love, Kissed into Verse: Swinburne, Tennyson, and the Failure of Love in Consummation Versus the Triumph of Love Through Time in Poetry

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Love, Kissed into Verse:

Swinburne, Tennyson, and the Failure of Love in Consummation Versus the Triumph of Love  
Through Time in Poetry

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
of Bard College

by  
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## INTRODUCTION

**Making Love Out of Nothing at All**

Stoop soul and touch me: wed me: hear  
 The wish too strong for words to name;  
 That in this blindness of the frame  
 My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

*Tennyson, In Memoriam XCIII*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam A.H.H.* is an elegy which concludes in an epithalamium, but the most intriguing wedding in the poem is the one left out of the final manuscript. The poem, which consists of 133 sections, including a Prologue and Epilogue, commemorates Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's close friend— though, reading the poem, one could easily mistake the subject for a lover. While the poem brims with passion throughout, some particularly astonishing lines have become mainstays of the criticism dedicated to unveiling the truth behind the question of desire that lurks— or, some might say, trills — in every line. In what John D. Rosenberg calls “the most impassioned lines of *In Memoriam*” (Rosenberg 307), the poem's speaker implores the deceased Hallam,

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear  
 The wish too strong for words to name;  
 That in this blindness of the frame  
 My Ghost may feel that thine is near. (XCIII, ll. 13-16)

The first line, which has raised many an academic eyebrow is actually the second draft. In the original, manuscript version, the line reads:

Stoop soul and touch me: wed me: hear  
 The wish too strong for words to name....

Christopher Ricks, in his biographical and critical study of Tennyson, finds the published line “in some ways even more disconcerting” (Ricks 205) than Tennyson's unrevised, and more romantic,

line. Why was “wed” too intimate for Tennyson? Is the revised line as sexual as most recent criticism makes it out to be? Are the lines even expressing different things?

This project did not start out with a deep investigation into the true nature of Alfred Tennyson’s friendship with Arthur Hallam, of course. Eventually, I drifted towards Tennyson and my other key author, Algernon Charles Swinburne, out of more than a few degrees of self-indulgence, but this project initially emerged when I attempted to write an essay on asexuality in *Hamlet*, and found myself forced to switch topics due to the utter lack of source material available. In their introduction to *Asexualities: Feminist and Queer Perspectives*, editors Megan Milks and Karli June Cerankowski cite the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) when defining asexuality as “a sexual orientation describing people who do not experience sexual attraction” (Milks and Cerankowski 1). To be clear, asexuality is not equivalent to celibacy. Asexual individuals are not incapable of having sex; many simply do not enjoy it or find reason to seek it out. Milks and Cerankowski ask readers to “think anew about what is so radical (or not) about having sex (or not)” (Milks and Cerankowski 3). However, by delving into asexuality, I realize that I am making this project sound like it revolves around asexuality, when it is not. Throughout the year, I have been avoiding even using the word “asexuality” when describing my project, because it is not sociological in scope, or a survey of asexual characters in literature. An interest in the lack of academic discourse concerning asexuality led me to my true research question: are love and sex inextricable?

From that question, my project has conceived of a framework for considering texts, and the presence of love and sex, or love without sex, in romantic relationships. This is certainly not meant to argue against or for sex or the lack thereof in actual relationships, but I develop this framework in order to understand how love and sex work within the texts chosen for my project. I propose the ideas of consummation and non-consummation. I define consummation as an act of sexual fulfillment. In a romantic relationship, sex, which is a product of both love and sexual desire, results.



Not all sexual experiences are necessarily sexual, though. In my first chapter, I argue that consummation fails in the Swinburne poems “Before Parting,” “The Year of Love,” and “Anactoria” in the repetition of sex within the relationships represented in the poems. Love cannot endure in time when paired with the constancy of sex. Consummation can fail in one of two ways. First, one can attempt to consummate with another individual, but the endeavor fails. While I do not discuss this form of failing consummation, I primarily discuss consummation which fails when two individuals, within an established romantic relationship (established by a prior, successful act of consummation), are unable to reach such a level of fulfillment again, which leads to the relationship’s downfall.

Non-consummation, as I define it, is much different than the absence of consummation. I use the term “non-consummation” in order for it to appear more clearly as the opposite of “consummation.” By non-consummation, I mean a romantic connection achieved without sex. Sex in terms of consummation can be any variation of sex, but non-consummation lies in the quieter expressions of love. Chiefly, I evaluate non-consummation in the many moments within Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* where Tennyson finds fulfillment in the act of clasping Hallam’s hand. I contend that even small moments of physical contact such as this can derive fulfillment equivalent to that of consummation, at least for Tennyson in the text.

Started in 1833, upon the sudden death of Hallam from a cerebral hemorrhage, and finished over the course of 16 years before it was published in 1850, *In Memoriam* remains one of the most highly-regarded elegies in English, even if the abnormally long length may “I know of no other personal catastrophe in the long history of English poetry that bore such rich or immediate fruit.” (Rosenberg 314). Though many have discussed *In Memoriam* as a queer text, there is no evidence to suggest Tennyson and Hallam ever had sex. Luckily, my interests center on their acts of non-

consummation in clasp hands, but I also will not be looking at the poem through the typical, sexual, lens, though I do strongly acknowledge the love which throbs through the poem.

Swinburne, sometimes called the “anti-Tennyson” due to his perceived lack of decorum and propensity for writing poems about risqué topics, published his first collection of poems, entitled *Poems and Ballads*, in 1866. As William O. Raymond writes in his preface to *Selections from Swinburne*, “*Poems and Ballads* immediately became in the popular mind, the most tangible and picturesque symbol of the sensuous and aesthetic tendencies of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, with their inter-blending of enchantment and peril” (Raymond xvi). Though I disagreed with most of what he wrote concerning Swinburne, Harold Nicholson’s 1926 overview of Swinburne’s works provides a glimpse into the kind of reaction Swinburne can generate, even years after his death. Though Nicholson maintains that “our objections to the majority of the poems [from *Poems and Ballads*] will...be based on intellectual and critical considerations rather than on any excessive prudery,” he refers to “Anactoria” as “meretricious lechery” (Nicholson 104) and cannot seem to advance a page without demeaning Swinburne’s work with a patronizing comment or two.

It may not be not surprising that, fascinated by the “curiously unsystematic” (Nicholson 107) arrangement of the works in *Poems and Ballads*, Nicholson takes it upon himself to organize the sixty-two poems in the collection into a “rough classification” (Nicholson 108) of nine categories: “Pre-Raphaelite,” “Incidental and Decorative, but mainly under the Pre-Raphaelite influence,” “Dramatic Monologues,” “Political,” “Complimentary Odes,” “Classical and Experimental,” “Poems on Death and Mortality,” “Poems of Passion,” and “Poems of Direct Experience.”

“Poems of Passion” is Nicholson’s largest category, featuring sixteen poems— and, though I did not consult with Nicholson and his sage wisdom prior to selecting the texts used in this project, all three Swinburne poems I use fall into this category. Nicholson would be shocked by my decision, considering he thinks it “regrettable that these particular verses should have spread their tone and

colour not only over the collection in which they appear, but even, for the unwary, over the whole mass of Swinburne's lyrical work. Except from the purely prosodic point of view, there are none of them of durable interest" (Nicolson 112). Technically, he is correct about the lacking "durable interest" with regards to "Before Parting" and "The Year of Love," as very little has been written about either poem. "Anactoria," however, is one of Swinburne's most lauded works.

## CHAPTER ONE

**Swinburne and Consummation Which Fails**

I hold it true, what'er befall;  
 I feel it, when I sorrow most;  
 'Tis better to have loved and lost  
 Than never to have loved at all.

*Tennyson, In Memoriam A.H.H. XXVII*

Though the portrayals of love within Swinburne's love poetry range considerably within the first edition of *Poems and Ballads* alone, all are depicted with thick, sensory language. Another feature of Swinburne's love poetry which frequently emerges in *Poems and Ballads* is the eventual failure of each romantic relationship. For all of the passion exerted in Swinburne's verse, love seems fundamentally unstable in the face of time. In his introduction to *Selections from Swinburne*, William O. Raymond notes the sweetness in this aspect of Swinburne's works, writing "The ecstasies of life are fleeting sensations, ever in peril of annihilation, yet this very fact adds to the vividness and preciousness of the moments in which we experience them. If beauty and love were secure and stable they would lack all spice, thrill, and adventurousness" (Raymond xxviii). After many of Swinburne's love poems reach ecstatic heights through the embroidery of overwhelming sensory details into the text, the deterioration of love is rendered within the gradual fading of sensory detail. Swinburne's "Before Parting," a poem devoted to recounting the failure of a relationship, exemplifies this phenomenon as it constructs a direct relationship between sensory detail and a relationship's continuance. The poem's title locates the relationship at its end, as the speaker reflects on how the failure came to pass:

A month or twain to live on honeycomb  
 Is pleasant; but one tires of scented time,  
 Cold sweet recurrence of accepted rhyme,

And that strong purple under juice and foam  
 Where the wine's heart has burst;  
 Nor feel the latter kisses like the first. (ll. 1-6)

Love is figured as “honeycomb,” a form of sustenance upon which the speaker and his lover subsist, but only for a couple months, as the poem notably specifies the short duration. While many of Swinburne’s love poems are unafraid to exhibit the bodies of the lovers, and particularly the bodies of the speakers’ beloveds, “Before Parting” limits references to bodies and prioritizes symbolic representations, like the metaphorized honeycomb, to render the relationship. Especially when comparing this poem to others in *Poems and Ballads* which give greater access to bodies, it becomes difficult to envision what the relationship looked like on a physical level.

Before delving into the complexities of the poem’s language, the poem’s attention to the roles of sex and love within the relationship necessitate greater examination. The poem’s final lines, “And love, kissed out by pleasure, seems not yet/Worth patience to regret” (ll. 35-36) establish a clear cause for the dissolution of the relationship. “Pleasure,” of course, stands in for sexual gratification, and, in line with the poem’s proclivity for limiting access to the body, as well as the presence of kisses in the first stanza, kissing encompasses all sexual activity. The love once shared between the speaker and the beloved was not only extinguished by the repetition of sex, which became mechanical, refiguring the sensory experience of love into “cold sweet recurrence[s],” but the line’s construction emphasizes the active role of sex in love’s destruction by describing the extinguishing as “kiss[ing] out.” The word “extinguishing” is specifically used to describe love’s ceasing because the phrase “kissing out” implies smothering by the close physical proximity. Though love is directly addressed by the poem’s end, the word “love” does not even appear until the final line of the third stanza, right at the halfway point in the six-stanza poem. A question arises: is love truly the honeycomb? Or is the honeycomb, the nourishment of the relationship, simply sex? By the end of the poem, it becomes clear that the honeycomb was both, and that the relationship, which

was once fed by love and sex, could not be sustained as sex overwhelmed and eventually eroded the love, leaving only empty intercourse.

By establishing the roles of sex and love within “Before Parting,” we can more easily navigate the landscape of the first stanza, which obscures bodies while providing a greater amount of sensory detail. Due to the position of the poem as a retrospective view of the relationship by the speaker occurring before the lovers finally part, the temporal distance still keeps some of the sensory detail less complex than it could be. We can still see the parallel decline of the sensory detail and the relationship due to the shift of imagery over time within the poem. It is as if the speaker’s ability to recollect the full sensory experience of the relationship is affected by his distance from the relationship at its height— this can be seen in the phrase “scented time.” While the actual length of the relationship is imbued with the quality of scent, it is merely described as “scented,” as the actual scent remains unclarified. The following description, “cold sweet recurrence of accepted rhyme,” increases the distance in relation to both the position of the relationship described, which is closer to the end of the relationship due to the reference to the repetitive nature of it as just a “recurrence,” and the detail. The description is more precise, modified with two adjectives, but their precision enhances the decline of love through the lack of feeling generated by the repetition of sex, as the word “cold” indicates numbness. The numbness carries into the view of the physical relationship allowed at the end of the stanza, for the relationship’s kisses are desensitized, as the “latter kisses” are not felt “like the first.”

Beyond the scented time and recurrent rhyme, the speaker’s fatigue with the relationship also cryptically extends to “that strong purple under juice and foam/Where the wine's heart has burst,” and it is here that we encounter the most vivid image yet, though it is also the description most distanced from the relationship. The activity of the image hinges on the wine’s heart bursting, and it ought to be noted that the only body part present within the entire first stanza is a heart, though not

the heart of either person within the relationship, but a heart belonging to wine, an inanimate object. The image is dynamic, and outfitted with an array of detail, from the “juice and foam” of the wine to the visual description of the “strong purple” color. Unlike the “cold sweet recurrence,” which provided two contrasting adjectives where the word “cold” undercut the sweetness, the word “strong” emphasizes the color, and “purple” is an adjective turned into a noun. It is as if the color is so graphic that it separates from the juice and foam it might have been meant to color and exists as its own entity, beneath the surface. Both the bursting activity of the image and the intensity of the sensory detail make these lines stand out as a significant illustration of the relationship at its height. In particular, the sensory detail of the wine’s color, which is so strong that it separates from the wine it is meant to describe, corresponds to the halcyon state of the relationship.

The bursting action further locates the relationship at its pinnacle. While the tiring of scented time and recurrent rhyme seem more gradual as they are unaccompanied by any action other than that of “tir[ing],” the action of bursting sets the imagery of the wine apart as a definitive moment within the relationship. The image illustrated also directly corresponds to the trajectory of the relationship— the wine is given a heart, a clear symbol of romance, but the heart bursts, an action which recalls language of ecstasy. The wine’s heart, then, coalesces into a depiction of the relationship in a time when love and sex successfully coexisted, and the action even generated the sensory detail of “strong purple under [the] juice and foam,” as it occurs “Where the wine’s heart has burst.” Thus, the image of the wine not only uses intense sensory detail to show the relationship at its height, when sex and love were found in the same action, but the action of sex and love itself within the wine metaphor causes the sensory detail to manifest. These lines still occur within the list of phenomena “one tires of,” though, so even the wine’s bursting, a dynamic representation of the relationship’s combination of love and sex, cannot be sustained.

From the wine's purple in the first stanza, we can later see the relationship change over time within the poem itself, as the dwindling sensory detail corresponds to the dwindling relationship. In the final stanza, the speaker addresses his beloved, professing "I know not how this last month leaves your hair/Less full of purple colour and hid spice" (ll. 31-32). The speaker's knowledge of his beloved also shifts throughout the poem, for the repetition within their sexual encounters causes him to claim "I know each shadow of your lips by rote" (l. 19), yet it is his hewn knowledge of the beloved's body which engenders confusion for why love has exited their relationship, as he sees "Each change of love in eyelids and eyebrows" (l. 20) but "know[s] not how love is gone out of this" (l. 23). By the final stanza, the body of the beloved has changed from the state of the speaker's full understanding which allowed him to "know each shadow of [her] lips by rote," as he puzzles over how time has left her hair "Less full of purple colour and hid spice." The description of the beloved's hair simultaneously transfers the wine's purple color and spice upon the hair while expressing the diminished intensity of both qualities, demonstrating the relationship between the sensory detail and the relationship between speaker and beloved itself. While the sensory detail within the wine metaphor in the first stanza was more intense, reflecting the stable state of the relationship in the representation of action, the sensory detail has waned by the final stanza, as has the relationship. Other than the speaker's profession that love has been "kissed out by pleasure," we can tell that the relationship is nearing its end through the poem's title, "Before Parting," which indicates that the conclusion of the poem will activate the parting and finally bring the relationship to a close.

Within "Before Parting," the greatest manifestations of sensory detail occur within objects, such as the wine. As noted before, the physical body is minimally present, not only due to the fact that the poem never shows us the full expanse of a whole body, but the body is never presented with the same amount of elaborate detail given to metaphors—in particular, metaphors concerning



objects. If “Before Parting” wants to present a relationship that was physical in nature, why limit the view of the body within the poem? An easy answer could be propriety, but Swinburne’s racier offerings in *Poems and Ballads*, where his lines happily present pale breasts and love bite-laden necks, contradict such an argument. The idea of distance figures heavily into the core concept of the relationship between sensory detail and the state of a relationship in time, and distance is exerted in a couple of different degrees within “Before Parting.”

Primarily, distance is measured between the relationship’s romantic and sexual peak and the point of the relationship in ‘real time’ within the unfolding poem. The position of the poem’s narration, at the cusp of the relationship’s collapse, establishes an initial degree of distance, seen in moments like the speaker’s recollection of the relationship’s zenith through the vague detail of “scented time.” With regards to the logic of sensory detail, if the speaker had been discussing the relationship during its romantic and sexual height, we would expect sensory detail even more intense than the moments of greatest sensory experience within the poem. Therefore, as the speaker is never presently located in that period of time, the poem is kept at that distance from the detail. Another degree of distance can be found when the poem focuses on images and objects in order to represent the relationship, either at its peak or at its current point within the poem. The first degree of distance with regards to the speaker’s perspective is a constant within the poem, but the second degree of distance within metaphorized representations is not always present, as the poem does sometimes pivot to body parts or kisses. Views of the “latter kisses” or “tears fall[ing] where your soft hair lay” (l. 10) are less distant, as they bring us closer to the physical reality of the relationship. Even when the poem represents the emotional and physical height of ecstatic consummation within an image of wine bursting, the fact that we can only see this through an image creates distance between us, as readers, and the relationship itself.

The use of distance within “Before Parting” keeps the reader separated from the height of the relationship from the poem’s beginning and steadily increases the distance as the relationship creeps to its fated failure. Confusion dominates the speaker’s feelings towards the failure of the relationship, as the speaker views his beloved’s body and laments, “I know not how love is gone out of this,/Seeing that all was his./Love's likeness there endures upon all these:/But out of these one shall not gather love.” (ll. 23-24). Though we can see growing distance and fading details within the poem, the speaker is blindsided by the fact that his beloved’s body, in her “eyelids and eyebrows” and “fair temples tremulous/With tender blood, and color of your throat” (ll. 20, 21-22) seems as if they all denote her love for him, but they are all empty visuals which deceive the eye, as love has dissolved. It is as if the speaker’s ability to sense, at least in his visual capacity, has been altered to the extent that sight cannot be trusted when gauging love. Perhaps distance factors in here, too— the association between sensory details and the position of the relationship can be further refined to connect the intensity of sensory details to love itself. The speaker does not see the full purple color in his beloved’s hair, as if his lack of love for her obscures his view, or as if love sharpened his vision.

In a similar vein as “Before Parting,” Swinburne’s “The Year of Love” also focuses on collapsing relationships, though “The Year of Love” takes the idea of representing a relationship through highly sensual objects and escalates it. Even if “Before Parting” obscured the reader from much of the sexual relationship, “The Year of Love” darkens the opacity between the reader and the relationships presented in the text, as each relationship, or “love,” is depicted by material objects. These materials continue to stress the ephemerality of relationships featuring consummation, as the materials which comprise the relationship fail to last. The poem reads as follows:

There were four loves that one by one,  
Following the seasons and the sun,  
Passed over without tears, and fell  
Away without farewell.

The first was made of gold and tears,  
 The next of aspen-leaves and fears,  
 The third of rose-boughs and rose-roots,  
 The last love of strange fruits.

These were the four loves faded. Hold  
 Some minutes fast the time of gold  
 When our lips each way clung and clove  
 To a face full of love.

The tears inside our eyelids met,  
 Wrung forth with kissing, and wept wet  
 The faces cleaving each to each  
 Where the blood served for speech.

The second, with low patient brows  
 Bound under aspen-coloured boughs  
 And eyes made strong and grave with sleep  
 And yet too weak to weep—

The third, with eager mouth at ease  
 Fed from late autumn honey, lees  
 Of scarce gold left in latter cells  
 With scattered flower-smells—

Hair sprinkled over with spoilt sweet  
 Of ruined roses, wrists and feet  
 Slight-swathed, as grassy-girdled sheaves  
 Hold in stray poppy-leaves—

The fourth, with lips whereon has bled  
 Some great pale fruit's slow colour, shed  
 From the rank bitter husk whence drips  
 Faint blood between her lips—

Made of the heat of whole great Junes  
 Burning the blue dark round their moons  
 (Each like a mown red marigold)  
 So hard the flame keeps hold—

These are burnt thoroughly away.  
 Only the first holds out a day  
 Beyond these latter loves that were  
 Made of mere heat and air.

And now the time is winterly

The first love fades too: none will see,  
 When April warms the world anew,  
 The place wherein love grew.

Succinctly divulging the plot in its first stanza, the poem presents “four loves” (l. 1) which each fail, “...f[alling]/Away without farewell” (l. 3-4), though it is unclear as to what the word “loves” refers. Presumably, these four loves each refer to four relationships, but the poem obscures any practical details of the relationships, instead presenting the sensual objects used to describe them, as well as allowing glimpses of the bodies in action. The objects are prioritized, though, as the poem’s next stanza lists the four loves in terms of their compositions:

The first was made of gold and tears,  
 The next of aspen-leaves and fears,  
 The third of rose-boughs and rose-roots,  
 The last love of strange fruits. (PB ll. 5-8)

Chiefly, the constituents of the four loves are natural items— aspen-leaves, rose-boughs, rose-roots, strange fruits— and only the second love’s “fears” are not tangible objects. A pattern can also be seen in the gradual escalation of detail in the components of the loves as the list wears on. To start, the first love’s elements, “gold” and “tears,” are simple and discrete, as well as represented by monosyllabic words, but the second love’s “aspen-leaves” increases the complexity of the image by detailing the specific type of leaf, and the complexity is echoed in the word “aspen-leaves” itself, which is both hyphenated and polysyllabic. A further step into complexity occurs in the reveal of the third love, whose two components are *both* hyphenated and polysyllabic. The final love only features a single entity, but the modification of “fruits” with “strange” raises the complexity again, for the detail is not hyphenated. Hyphenation in the naming of the previous objects serves the purpose of designating the whole from which the object derives— for example, the aspen-leaves are not the aspen itself, but they are a part of the aspen. “Strange fruits,” though unspecified as to the species of the fruits, are more whole entities, with the modification of “fruits” by “strange” not denoting the

type of fruit and reminding of the fruit tree or bush from whence the fruits came, but instead describing the fruits themselves as mysterious. The complexity of “*strange fruits*” is rooted in the difficulty of rendering the fruit in more concrete terms, like the fruit’s species or color.

The increase in detail with each love aligns with the components of each love, as a direct relationship exists between the complexity of details and the tangibility of the objects. The first love’s gold, represented later in the poem as a color, not an object, and tears are simple in that they are straightforward concepts, but relatively immaterial. Fears are also immaterial, but the second love’s “aspen-leaves” are not, and the rest of the third and fourth love’s entities are material as well. The escalating materiality of the loves would seem as if the latter loves should last longer than the former loves, working out of the extrapolated logic of sensory detail corresponding to longevity of the relationships. However, the penultimate stanza subverts such an expectation, declaring “Only the first [love] holds out a day/Beyond these latter loves that were/Made of mere heat and air” (ll. 38-40). Not only does the first love, represented by the simplest objects, last longer than the other loves, but the poem paradoxically asserts that the other loves were “Made of mere heat and air,” despite the fact that in their detail, the objects of the latter loves were most *material*. This seems to entirely rupture the correspondence between detail and the length of a relationship as seen in “Before Parting,” but individual stanzas describing the loves prove otherwise. This complicated moment does continue to reinforce the idea first explored in “Before Parting” concerning the inevitability of romantic relationships to perish in time, for the final stanza informs us of the death of the first love, which has “fade[d] too,” and no visible evidence remains of any of the loves: “none will see,/When April warms the world anew,/The place wherein love grew” (ll. 42-44). As the lack of things seen applies to “the *place* wherein love grew (emphasis mine), the objects themselves become associated with place, acting as markers of dwindling relationships, yet once the relationships fully die, their representations in objects crumble to nothing.

In line with the matter-of-fact summation of the fate of the loves in the first stanza and the tidy arrangement of the loves in the second, the poem devotes two stanzas apiece, except for the second love, to fleshing out the loves, though the stanzas serve more as images of disintegration than full portraits of a relationships. This impulse towards fragmentation corresponds to the portrayals to the loves as composites of items. Additionally, the tight organization of the poem is notably counter to the relationships described within, as if Swinburne's verse must adhere to a regimented form in order to capture the flickering and fading loves before they "are burnt thoroughly away" (ll. 37). When depicting each love in detail, "The Year of Love" employs and enhances the technique typical to Swinburne's love poetry, in which sensual objects are used as a parallel for the state of a romance. When the poem concentrates on each love individually, the disintegration of the objects embodying the love represent the collapse of the romantic relationship. This mirroring is particularly clear in the stanzas concerning the third love:

The third, with eager mouth at ease  
 Fed from late autumn honey, lees  
 Of scarce gold left in latter cells  
 With scattered flower-smells —

Hair sprinkled over with spoilt sweet  
 Of ruined roses, wrists and feet  
 Slight-swathed, as grassy-girdled sheaves  
 Hold in stray poppy-leaves — (PB ll. 21-28)

Made of "rose-boughs" and "rose-roots," and thus represented in metaphor as one of the most tangible of the loves, the third love nevertheless fails despite this seeming solidity. We see the third love in its most solid, durable state when first introduced, for when the third love's stanzas arrive, no full rose-bough or rose-root remains— the roses have already broken down to such a degree that the primary presence of the roses is in scent. First, the roses seem to remain in the "flower-smells" tingeing the honeycomb cells, then more traces can be found in the "spoilt sweet/Of ruined roses" that are notably "sprinkled over" the hair. While evocative in its sensuality, scent is still immaterial;

however, the poem's language transfers the materiality of rose-boughs and rose-roots onto the scent. In the first instance of scent, a past participle verb used as an adjective, "scattered," describes the placement of the "flower-smells," and the usage of the word in tandem with scent is particularly unusual.

The word "scattered" generally refers to the placement of objects within a space, so in describing a smell as "scattered," a sense of materiality is conferred upon scent, especially as the mind may first read the word "flower" before "smells" and assume a part of a flower will follow the hyphen. The following lines concerning the "spoilt sweet" operate in a similar fashion, as the smell of the "ruined rose" is "sprinkled over" hair. Again, "sprinkled" acts as a past participle in adjective form, and the word refers to the distribution and placement of objects, thus shaping the idea of the scent's placement over the hair into the movement of materials. Additionally, the process of transferring materiality to scent is assisted by the choice of verbs, as "scattered" and "sprinkled" both evoke the distribution of many objects, and in the context of flowers, scattering and sprinkling are actions often associated with flower petals. The poem's language, then, describes the scent of a flower in terms of petals strewn. Materiality is crucial here for the project of disintegration as metaphor for the collapse of a relationship, and the use of the words "scattered" and "sprinkled" results in a specifically fragmented materiality. We first see the relationship's objects represented by the "rose-boughs" and "rose-roots," which already sets up the relationship as an incomplete composition of parts, rather than a whole. The additional stanzas describing the first love further disintegrate the flower components, until all that remains are "grassy-girdled sheaves/[Which] Hold in stray poppy-leaves" (ll. 27-28). Roses remain only in scent, and even the leaves left over are from an entirely different kind of flower. The "grassy-girdled sheaves" contain these leaves, but this containment of stray parts is no substitute for true wholeness. If the relationship begins with a representation lacking in wholeness, it seems doomed to only wear away in time. In order to

understand the lack of wholeness, though, we must look to the body as depicted within the third love to pinpoint where sex—where fulfillment is expected—exists within the relationship.

Though the text spends most of its time considering the third love in terms of the objects which represent the relationship, the stanzas concerning the third love first open not with roses or flowers, but with a body— or, at least, part of a body, as fragmented as the petals of scent. The third love limits the view of the body to a mouth, hair, wrists, and feet, and the rest of the loves maintain this pattern, never presenting a body in full, always restricting the appearance of a body to individual parts. The first body part to emerge, the mouth, situates the third love's relationship at the beginning of its end— with “eager mouth” “Fed from late autumn honey,” the text locates the relationship in the aftermath of sex. The mouth's satiation, while not directly portraying the post-coital body, still achieves a representation of the post-coital state through synecdoche. The consumption of honey leaves the mouth “at ease,” or in a contented and nourished state, just as sexual release satisfies and relaxes the once-desirous, once-eager body. As the honeycomb consumed by the lovers in “Before Parting” figures as a fusion of sex and love, the fullness provided by the mouth's consumption of the honey in “The Year of Love” seems to similarly indicate that the honey is not just sex. By merely referring to each relationship as a “love,” the poem immediately classifies the relationships as romantic in nature, so when a sexually-charged metaphor, like the third love's honey, is introduced, the sex is romantic by default. Since the mouth is “at ease” after feeding on the honey, the contentment gained is produced not only through the metaphorized sex, but by the fact that the intercourse takes place within a romantic relationship.

The idea of contentment, or fullness, continues the endeavors towards wholeness present in “Before Parting” and the failures of wholeness within the fragmented loves of “The Year of Love.” The use of sensory detail in “Before Parting” intensifies when the text describes the successful time in the speaker's relationship when sex and love coexisted, with the greater detail transporting the



reader closer to the relationship. While it is difficult to pinpoint what amount of detail is equivalent to a relationship of wholeness and fulfillment, the erosion of detail represents the longing for fullness, as the beloved's hair is not just lacking detail, but it is "less full" of purple and spice. A similar desire for fullness can be seen in the consumption of honey, though the body presented in the third love is not whole, and thus cannot become whole, just like the objects used to represent the loves. The combination of love and sex, as represented in honey, is used to show satiation in the physical body, yet only the mouth can be seen. Without a stomach, the fulfillment of the honey appears in the mouth's position "at ease," but when the poem's attention shifts to the cells from whence the honey came, a dearth is seen in the "lees/Of scarce gold left in latter cells." The bodily presentation of the third love portrays love in finite terms. The mouth, which is still described as "eager" after satiation, yearns for a fullness that cannot be achieved by a single meal of honey— like the honeycomb in "Before Parting," love and sex must be constantly consumed and "live[d] on" in order to briefly reach stages of fulfillment. Neither "Before Parting" or "The Year of Love" offer a solution for a final fulfillment. It is worth noting that the nutritional value of honey, in actuality, is not very substantial, and could not keep a person alive. This more practical aspect is a further testament to the inability of consummation to sustain a relationship.

Like "Before Parting," the third love in "The Year of Love" cannot sustain itself through instances of brief fulfillment. The terms of the relationship are kept abstract enough that it remains unclear whether the consumption is a depiction of the first act of intercourse, or simply one of many, but the fact that the honey the mouth consumes is from the "late autumn" hints towards the relationship's denouement even before the rose petals wilt. Again, the poem's final lines claim that all the loves perish together, save for the first love, which "holds out a day" (l. 38) longer, though it too dies when "the time is winterly" (l. 41), so this timeline reinforces the idea that the late autumn honey represents a final consummation. The imagery of the "lees/Of scarce gold left in latter cells"

supports this theory as well, for the stores of honey in honeycomb have been eaten and emptied, with only “lees” of “scarce gold” remaining. The mouth may be eager, but no longer can it feed.

Where “Before Parting” and “The Year of Love” take relatively passive stances to the crumbling relationships within them, Swinburne’s “Anactoria” smolders with stubborn passion and wrestles against the failure of a relationship. “Anactoria” continues to demonstrate the inability of love to endure through time when paired with consummation, yet also reveals the failure in attempts to achieve a greater consummation by way of consumption. Swinburne, drawing inspiration from Sappho’s fragment 31, ventriloquizes Sappho in “Anactoria,” and though Sappho is clearly enamored with Anactoria, the state of the relationship established in the poem seems as uncertain as it is tumultuous. Based on Swinburne’s text alone, we may be tempted to define the relationship as concluded when reading lines such as “Why wilt thou follow lesser loves? are thine/Too weak to bear these hands and lips of mine?” (l. 15-16). Yet, Sappho’s fragment 31 complicates such a reading, as the fragment presents a brief scene in which Sappho witnesses an interaction between Anactoria and a man sitting beside her, which causes Sappho to reflect upon her own physical response to “[looking] at [her]” for just “a moment” (l. 7, qtd. in Carson 13). In her book *Eros the Bittersweet*, Anne Carson acknowledges the “Numbers of critics” who have interpreted fragment 31 as “a poem about jealousy” (Carson 13), but instead argues that Sappho is not jealous of the man, but impressed by his composure despite his proximity to her beloved: “She does not covet the man’s place nor fear usurpation of her own. She directs no resentment at him. She is simply amazed at his intrepidity” (Carson 14).

Of course, Swinburne’s “Anactoria” does not align with Carson’s reading, for his Sappho questions Anactoria and “charge[s]” her to “keep thy lips from hers or his,/Sweetest, till theirs be sweeter than my kiss” (ll. 19-20), exhibiting her jealousy towards Anactoria’s interactions with others. Fragment 31 merely places Anactoria opposite a man, where her actions are limited to “sweet

speaking/and lovely laughing” (ll. 4-5, qtd. in Carson 13), but Swinburne’s poem seems to extrapolate the scenario to the point where Sappho either infers that Anactoria is being unfaithful to her, or grieves over Anactoria’s pursuit of other lovers after their relationship has ended. Again, it is unclear if they are, or are not, in a relationship during the time in which the poem takes place, but in either case, the reference to a third party’s interruption of their relationship is a departure from the relationships within “Before Parting” and “The Year of Love,” which each expired on their own, without outside interruption.

The uncertainty concerning the exact state of Sappho and Anactoria’s relationship complicates the reading of “Anactoria” through the framework set forth in “Before Parting,” in which the richness of sensory detail corresponds to the stage of the relationship described. Even if the poem did clarify the state of the relationship between Sappho and Anactoria, the poem’s use of sumptuous language throughout the text would still not fulfill the correspondence between sensory detail and the relationship in time. However, “Anactoria” still continues the theme of love’s inability to endure through time, even if Swinburne’s version of events adds jealousy as a factor in the floundering, and ultimately failing, state of Sappho and Anactoria’s relationship. It is crucial to note that Swinburne’s Sappho is still in love with Anactoria within the temporal space that the poem takes place in, so “Anactoria,” at least, does not begin with their love wholly “kissed out by pleasure.” Ultimately, “Anactoria” does continue the concept of consummation’s strain on love as seen previously in “Before Parting” and “The Year of Love,” as Sappho’s recollection of her relationship with Anactoria demonstrates the erosion of love despite Sappho’s desperation to preserve their love.

Even as Sappho “charge[s]” Anactoria to stay away from other lovers, jealously craving her, the memory of their physical relationship reveals her exhaustion with love, too. Sappho admits, “I am weary of all thy words and soft strange ways” (ll. 35), though the “words and soft strange ways”

are not all she is weary of, for she continues to list the myriad moments and images she has grown tired of for another 21 lines. This weariness seems to align with the “tir[ing] of scented time” from “Before Parting,” in which the repetition of intercourse led to the “kissing out” of love. Indeed, within the 21 lines of Sappho’s recollection of Anactoria and their relationship, many of the lines describe their physical, sexual relationship:

I am weary of all thy words and soft strange ways,  
 Of all love's fiery nights and all his days,  
 And all the broken kisses salt as brine  
 That shuddering lips make moist with waterish wine,  
 And eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours  
 That pleasure fills with tears and feeds from flowers,  
 Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through,  
 But all the flowerlike white stained round with blue;  
 The fervent underlid, and that above  
 Lifted with laughter or abashed with love;  
 Thine amorous girdle, full of thee and fair,  
 And leavings of the lilies in thine hair.  
 Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,  
 And all the fruit of nights and flower of days,  
 And stinging lips wherein the hot sweet brine  
 That Love was born of burns and foams like wine,  
 And eyes insatiable of amorous hours,  
 Fervent as fire and delicate as flowers,  
 Coloured like night at heart, but cloven through  
 Like night with flame, dyed round like night with blue,  
 Clothed with deep eyelids under and above —  
 Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love;  
 Thy girdle empty of thee and now not fair,  
 And ruinous lilies in thy languid hair. (ll. 35-58)

Again, “Anactoria” does not demonstrate the collapse of the relationship exactly as “Before Parting” does, with a high correspondence between the amount of sensory detail and the state of the relationship, as we at least know that Sappho and Anactoria are not currently at the height of their relationship within the poem— yet, Sappho is still largely able to produce elaborate visuals for the reader, undeterred by the temporal distance in between her in the moment and her when sharing such intimacy with Anactoria. This is an ability the speaker in “Before Parting” lacked, for even

when trying to represent the highest amount of intimacy in his relationship, he was limited to representing ecstasy through symbolism, like the bursting of the wine's heart, alone.

While Sappho's ability to recall the most successful moments of her relationship with Anactoria here is not affected by time, she still shows the decline of the relationship in this section through the alteration of one image previously put forth. The final two lines of the section turn the image of "Thine amorous girdle, full of thee and fair,/And leavings of the lilies in thine hair" presented eleven lines prior, indicating a shift in Sappho's relationship with Anactoria, and using similar strategies to those presented in "Before Parting" and "The Year of Love." Anactoria's girdle, or belt, is first "amorous" when Sappho describes Anactoria wearing it during the height of their relationship, as if Anactoria's presence within the girdle transfers her own love for Sappho upon her garments. Yet, without Anactoria wearing the girdle, Sappho's description of it shifts to "now not fair," with the preposition "now" clearly attributing the change to Anactoria's absence, again indicating that the girdle was only made fair in the first place by her presence within it. A lack of fairness, or beauty, and amorousness are not exact antonyms, though— unless Sappho means to draw an equivalence between beauty and the expression of loving. This seems unlikely, though, as the changed image of the girdle occurs after the line "Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love," so even during this fraught period within their relationship, Sappho still perceives Anactoria as beautiful.

The question of the girdle and its use as a changed image is significant, for it is the only image Swinburne's Sappho gives us in this section that illustrates her time in the present, devoid of Anactoria. David A. Cook, in his article "The Content and Meaning of Swinburne's 'Anactoria,'" offers another reading of the girdle, noting the strangeness of its use in the poem (Cook 83), and instead interpreting that "the 'amorous girdle' envisaged by Sappho, is, in fact, the binding cincture of her own arms encircling Anactoria" (Cook 84). If we interpret Sappho as the girdle, then, the

amorousness applies to her— which we already know to be true, as Sappho loved and continues to love Anactoria— as does the beauty. Without Anactoria, then, does Sappho regard herself as less fair? Such a question is difficult to answer, as Sappho only details the beauty of Anactoria, and typically mentions her own physical, non-metaphorical body in conjunction with Anactoria’s body. Even if she may think her beauty changed without the presence of Anactoria, her verse, at least, remains beautiful and intricate, hence the twenty-two lines detailing the halcyon days of her relationship with Anactoria.

Beyond the girdle, the lilies in Anactoria’s hair also denote their changed relationship, and help to further the argument, previously posed in the contexts of “Before Parting” and “The Year of Love,” that love, in combination with sex, cannot endure through time. In fact, the image of “ruinous lilies in thy languid hair” from “Anactoria” bears a startling resemblance to the “Hair sprinkled over with spoilt sweet/Of ruined roses” from “The Year of Love.” Unlike the roses in “The Year of Love,” lilies are not used as a representation of the entire relationship between Sappho and Anactoria, but the lilies still demonstrate a shift in their relationship. Any delicate flower, especially a flower removed from its natural habitat, becomes a neat symbol of ephemerality, for the living flower, removed from its bush or bulb to decorate one’s hair, can only perish in time when cut off from its life source. This fated expiration can be seen in the shifting images Sappho presents in Anactoria, starting with the “leavings of the lilies in thine hair” which become “ruinous lilies in thy languid hair.” The first appearance of the lilies also resemble the “ruined roses” in “The Year of Love,” for the lilies which adorn Anactoria’s hair are not full blossoms, but “the *leavings* of lilies” (emphasis mine). Revealing the lilies as partially disintegrated even at the height of the relationship only emphasizes the transience of love, and shortens the amount of time it would take for the leavings of lilies to become “ruinous,” so perhaps the time it took for Sappho and Anactoria’s relationship to sour was especially brief.

The changing girdle and lilies further evidence the inevitability of love to falter in time, and Sappho claims at the beginning of this section of the poem that she is “weary” of Anactoria and the passionate moments they shared, but the sheer volume of description she provides seems to say otherwise. The other claim she makes in this section, “Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love,” at first seems to continue the idea of her exhaustion with Anactoria, but her statement points to Anactoria’s beauty as the culprit for sickening her *with* love, instead of the sickening causing her to fall out of love with Anactoria. This claim seems closer to the truth than her previous claim of weariness, and Sappho’s account of Anactoria’s effect upon her body in the poem’s first few lines corroborate it: “My life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes/Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs/Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound” (ll. 1-3). Physically, the mere existence and proximity— close enough to hear her “sharp sighs” — of Anactoria to Sappho wreaks havoc upon Sappho’s body. A simple glance from Anactoria disables Sappho’s sight, Anactoria’s hair, which we may assume touches Sappho, if her sight has already been destroyed, burns Sappho’s skin, and the sound of Anactoria’s sighs have the power to “divide [Sappho’s] flesh and spirit,” or effectively kill her. Of course, Sappho survives to continue the poem, as the physical responses are just hyperbole, but the brutal metaphors still point to the affliction that is Anactoria, an affliction which plagues Sappho.

The two claims Sappho expresses, the first comprised of her exhaustion with loving Anactoria and the second professing that Anactoria’s beauty afflicts Sappho and forces her to love Anactoria more, feed into each other. Simultaneously, Sappho is both sick of and sickened into loving Anactoria— it is a self-perpetuating cycle. And, of course, all of this is brought about by the decline of Sappho and Anactoria’s relationship, as Sappho accuses Anactoria of seeking pleasure elsewhere, and Anactoria provides more pain to Sappho than pleasure. I argue that the issue

plaguing Sappho is *satiation*, and consummation alone, even the consummation Sappho and Anactoria partook in while in love, cannot provide the satiation she desires.

As she implores Anactoria to return to her, Sappho demonstrates her awareness of the role of satiation in love, for her “charge” to “keep thy lips from hers or his” rests on a condition: Anactoria may not stray “till [the lips of other lovers] be sweeter than my kiss.” Despite her own bodily weakness when confronted with the body of Anactoria, Sappho’s confidence can be glimpsed in her instruction of Anactoria, which also reveals her confidence in her own abilities to fulfill Anactoria’s desires sexually. Yet, when it comes to her awareness of whether she herself is sated or not within her relationship with Anactoria, the information Sappho provides in her dramatic monologue often conflicts. Within the section quoted above, Sappho claims to be “weary” of Anactoria, reminding of the “tir[ing] of scented time” in “Before Parting,” though the choice of the word “weary” points more towards the exertion which led to the state of weariness than the word “tired.” The first lines of the poem, illustrating Sappho’s pain upon merely viewing Anactoria, substantiate this point. This physical toil upon Sappho’s body displays Swinburne’s fidelity to his source material, for they reproduce the bodily torment the actual Sappho writes of in fragment 31. Carson returns to fragment 31 later in *Eros the Bittersweet*, and confirms the problem facing Sappho: “If we look closely at the lover in the midst of desire, for example Sappho in her fragment 31, we see how severe an experience for her is confrontation with the beloved even at a distance. Union would be annihilating” (Carson 62).

In Swinburne’s text, Sappho *has* braved the union, and though she is still pained by the sight of Anactoria’s body, as well as weary of Anactoria and the memories of their relationship, she cannot help but wish to still consummate. We see Sappho becoming lost in her own profession of weariness as her imagery moves from negative moments in their relationship where we see failure in consummation, like “broken kisses salt as brine” where the kiss is interrupted, to more abstract



images of “flowers,/Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through.” The movement occurs due to associations Sappho makes, starting at “eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours,” which moves to an elaboration on the hidden hours, “That pleasure fills with tears and feeds from flowers,” which leads us to a description of the flowers, “Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through.”

Eventually, though, Sappho seems to halt her free associations, proclaiming “Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,” as if returning her mind and her monologue back to her initial point about her weariness over Anactoria’s “words and soft strange ways.” However, one can also read her surging remark of “yea” within this section as an outburst prompted by an escalation towards ecstasy. Simply recalling the heights of passion Sappho shared with Anactoria and transmuting them into verse supplies carnal pleasure to Sappho. Throughout the poem, Sappho periodically peppers her verse with affirmations of “yea,” and though all do not seem to spring from pleasure, several do, including the moment when Sappho interrupts both herself and the personified Love with a distracted “yea” while love speaks to her, saying “...Shall kiss that would not kiss thee” (yea, kiss me)” (l. 83). While Sappho may desire, ecstasy does not come to fruition during this passage, since her spiraling verse is cut off by an em dash, in the line “Clothed with deep eyelids under and above —,” and even though a second “yea” appears in the next line. That “yea” in the line “Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love” still sounds breathless, though instead of Sappho’s prior affirmations of mounting sexual enjoyment, this affirmation seems more resigned. We can see the lack of climax, for the second “yea” here is followed by the disappointing visuals of the empty girdle and ruinous lilies. From this sexual encounter between Sappho and her memory, we can see Sappho’s desire to consummate with Anactoria raging on despite her claims of weariness with Anactoria, but the consummation fails to bring Sappho release and satiation.

Sappho has been brought to this point of what is ultimately masturbation in verse— though it seems self-pleasure was not her original intention— by the unresolved state of her relationship with Anactoria, and the recent lack of resolution and consummation which has resulted. Perhaps this is due to the lack of *Anactoria* in the sexual act. Sappho mentions Anactoria’s girdle, which is full of her, but otherwise Sappho desires her past with Anactoria, but this exercise cannot actually move her body towards Anactoria’s body for a full, true consummation. By directing her desire to the past, the lack of Anactoria at present seems to siphon the love out of the act, leaving only sex, and even then, only sex with the self.

Faced with the issue of Anactoria, who is kept out of Sappho’s reach within the space of the poem, Sappho explores multiple solutions to her problem of satiation. One of her early ‘solutions,’ never acted upon, but wished, is the death of her lack of satisfaction through the destruction of Anactoria: “I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated/With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead” (ll. 23-24). Sappho uses the word “satiated,” yet in doing so, seems to twist the definition of the word. To satiate is defined as both “to gratify to the full (a person or his desires),” and “to gratify beyond one’s natural desire; to weary or disgust by repletion” (OED, satiate v. 1,2). Working through the lines with the first definition, the declaration that Sappho is “satiated” by seeing Anactoria live does not make sense, for if she were truly “gratifi[ed] to the full,” she would not gladly have her in the opposite state of death. Perhaps the second definition is closer— if, by “satiated,” Sappho means that even seeing Anactoria continue to live is *too* gratifying, gratifying beyond a point she can bear, so in order to achieve the ideal level of gratification, Anactoria must die. But, without Anactoria, Sappho cannot achieve consummation with Anactoria.

Though Sappho revels in the idea of inflicting as much pain upon Anactoria in retaliation for the pain Sappho experiences upon the observation of Anactoria, the death of her beloved is refined into a similar solution, with more action on Sappho’s part. Perhaps inspired by her line immediately

following her wish for Anactoria's death, where Sappho announces a further desire— "I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat" (l. 25) — Sappho turns to cannibalism:

That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat  
 Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet  
 Thy body were abolished and consumed,  
 And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed! (ll. 111-114)

Consumption of the beloved seems to be Sappho's final, desperate attempt at satiating her unrestrained desires. Though the consumption of Anactoria is only theorized, Sappho has a clear plan of how she would consume Anactoria, if given the chance. While these four lines start out sounding like they would not necessarily have to refer to the lover actually eating the beloved, the brutality of the last two lines remove any form of intimacy from the picture. Not only does Sappho want to consume Anactoria, but her consumption is also a destruction. Anactoria would be destroyed, but better than the dead Anactoria festering under the ground, Sappho gains total control. Sappho's imagining of consumption seems like the most perverse way of considering the supposed wholeness which occurs when two bodies combine. Still, despite this attempt at satiation, Sappho remains unfulfilled.

## CHAPTER TWO

**Failure and Fulfillment in Non-Consummation**

....Hold  
 Some minutes fast the time of gold  
 When our lips each way clung and clove  
 To a face full of love.

*Swinburne, "The Year of Love"*

(Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever/  
 Hand from hand, as we stand by the sea)

*Swinburne, "The Triumph of Time"*

## I. Tennyson and Non-Consummation Which Fails

Approaching the concept of desire from a phenomenological angle, philosopher Hans Jonas highlights the integral roles of time and action in desire's inception in his book *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*. The book's fourth essay, "To Move and to Feel: On the Animal Soul," begins with an establishment of "three characteristics [which] distinguish animal from plant life: motility, perception, emotion" (Jonas 99). Jonas's interests chiefly lie in the development of emotion from the intersection between motility and perception, using the specific emotion of desire in order to track how emotion unfolds:

....though distinct appetite is the translation of this basic life-thrust into animal terms, these terms are really different from the vegetative ones, and it is motility which makes the difference visible: it consists in the interposition of *distance* between urge and attainment, i.e., in the possibility of a distant goal....But to experience the distantly perceived *as* a goal and to keep its goal quality alive, so as to carry the motion over the necessary span of effort and time, desire is required. Fulfillment not yet at hand is the essential condition of desire, and deferred fulfillment is what desire in turn makes possible. Thus desire represents the time-aspect of the same situation of which perception represents the space-aspect. Distance in both respects is disclosed and bridged: perception presents the object "not here but over there"; desire presents the goal "not yet but to come": motility guided by perception and driven by desire turns *there* into *here* and *not yet* into *now*. (Jonas 101)

Though Jonas frames his argument around the differentiation of vegetative plant life from animal life, imagining the most basic animal desire within an animal's pursuit of prey (Jonas 101), this

breakdown still pertains to the complexities of desire in love and sex. The essential ability to want, to desire, necessitates not only a goal, but a lack of fulfillment in that goal. Such a principle is near-identical to Carson's conception of desire in *Eros the Bittersweet*. She writes, "The Greek word *eros* denotes 'want,' 'lack,' 'desire for that which is missing.' The lover wants what he does not have. It is by definition impossible for him to have what he wants if, as soon as it is had, it is no longer wanting," and, as if about to point towards Jonas' model of predator survival as proof rather than Sappho's poetry, she assures us, "This is more than wordplay" (Carson 10). If that which is desired is sex, a romantic relationship is faced with a marked quandary: how can the relationship survive if sex— a specific act, a discrete goal— is realized? What happens after consummation?

In reality, we know that romantic relationships do not end upon the first occurrence of intercourse, and neither do the relationships portrayed within Swinburne's "Before Parting" and "The Year of Love" from the previous chapter. However, the previous chapter also established the ephemerality of love when combined with the repetition of sex, and the resultant collapse of the relationships in question. Considering these poems alongside the procedure of desire posed by Jonas, desire can be "attempted" multiple times, extending the time spent in the relationship after the first act of consummation through continued efforts to bridge the gaps of distance which emerge when a goal of sex is fulfilled, and a new goal to consummate again is formed. "Before Parting," though, sets hard limits on the potential capacity to repeatedly create and fulfill such goals, citing the exhaustion which accompanies multiple attempts, and impacts the sex itself as one does not "feel the latter kisses like the first," while also wearing away at the love within the relationship.

Again, Jonas uses the framework above in order to explain the relationship between motility, perception, and emotion, and desire stands in as the primary emotion within his example. Jonas further elaborates that the "span between start and attainment....must be bridged by continuous emotional intent" (Jonas 101). Even if we perceive the emotion exerted within the relationship in

“Before Parting” as a purely sexual desire, the repetition of sex gradually reduces the ability of the lovers to feel each other. The poem *does* establish love as a factor within the relationship and its instances of sex, so instead we could read the emotion which drives the perception-guided motility as *love*.

Perhaps, as the love does steer the partners to sex, it is more precise to define the emotion as desire, influenced by love, with love providing the “continuous emotional intent.” The exhaustion is then not only physical, but emotional, as the ability to continually set and pursue objectives of consummation wanes over time. This theory can also be applied to “The Year of Love,” which does not paint as accurate a picture of sex’s toll on the body, but does firmly assert the ephemerality of love. “The Year of Love” also provides a complicated version of fulfillment in the third love, where a mouth is simultaneously “at ease” after being fed with honey, yet the mouth remains “eager.” Especially when viewing the third love through the lens of Jonas, can we even make a definitive claim that the goal of sex was satisfied, if the mouth still seems as if it could consume more honey? Is this fulfillment? And even if it is, we can return to the nutritional value of the honey as a further reason why this system of desire cannot continue ad infinitum, for unlike Jonas’s original example of predator pursuing prey, love is physiologically less necessary for survival than food. The lovers in “Before Parting” and “The Year of Love” each, presumably, go their separate ways after the relationships fail, without withdrawal from the love and sex they once enjoyed.

Swinburne’s “Anactoria,” despite also documenting consummation’s failure in sustaining a relationship, still sets itself apart from “Before Parting” and “The Year of Love” when evaluated according to Jonas’s model of desire. Unlike “Before Parting” and “The Year of Love,” the love and sex between Sappho and Anactoria are not the only factors which lead to the failure of the relationship, as the text highlights the “lesser loves” Anactoria pursues, hinting towards Anactoria’s lack of satisfaction with Sappho in love and sex. Though the true status of Sappho and Anactoria’s

relationship is unclear, Sappho does desire Anactoria fiercely, regardless of the fact that she has already fulfilled her desire in the past. Desire, propelled by love and aimed towards sex, drives Swinburne's Sappho in "Anactoria," but how does this same phenomenon occur when the goal is not intercourse? What if the circumstances hinder even physical touch, with consummation an utter impossibility? What shape does desire take when the distance that one longs to close spans between life and death? The answers to these questions lie within Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam A.H.H.*

Even if no sexual activity ever occurred within Tennyson and Hallam's four-year friendship, it is fact that Tennyson loved Hallam, if any of the myriad declarations of love within *In Memoriam* are to be believed as corroboration of a fraction of Tennyson's true feelings towards his friend. As outlined within the introduction, over time scholars have more and more insistently examined the love which appears in the poem, seeking to uncover the 'true' form of the love. The arguments typically fall within two camps: the proof of platonic love, and the proof of erotic love. Seldom is a reading pitched which identifies romantic love in Tennyson's narrator, yet does not search for moments of sexual desire. This project does. The Tennyson speaking within *In Memoriam* loves Arthur Henry Hallam, and *In Memoriam* is a love story.

How is the love story for *In Memoriam* formed? We turn to Carson to identify a succinct recipe for the ingredients necessary for desire's creation. From her initial analysis of Sappho's fragment 31, Carson conceives a triangular structure for desire, formed by the poem's three occupants: Sappho, Anactoria, and the man Anactoria speaks to. Repudiating claims that this is merely a conventional "love triangle" and therefore a "ruse," Carson identifies a recipe for desire: "For, where eros is lack, its activation calls for three structural components—lover, beloved and that which comes between them" (Carson 16). In Tennyson, the eros is activated by the structural components of Tennyson, the lover; Hallam, the beloved; and, instead of an outside individual like

the man in fragment 31, death figures as the force which comes between them. This distance is far more severe than any gap that could have been bridged in the relationships within the first chapter's Swinburne poems, even if we did not bear witness to the steps towards consummation in "Before Parting" and "The Year of Love." Our information may be limited, but at the very least, we know the individuals in those poems were both alive— no gap could be more insurmountable than death, particularly on any physical level.

We do not necessarily *need* Carson in order to identify where romantic love manifests in *In Memoriam*, but Carson's explication of desire helps us notice how Tennyson's desire swells, particularly when facing the impossibility of physical interaction with Hallam. The previous chapter's poems highlighted failure in consummation, and much like the narrative of *In Memoriam* itself, we must reconcile with the failure in *non-consummation* before we can engage with the possibilities of success in non-consummation. Non-consummation is not the failure of an attempt to consummate, nor is it the space between a lover and her goal which desire bridges; rather, non-consummation, in the context of this project, refers to a romantic connection achieved without sex. If consummation strives towards the achievement of fulfillment through intercourse, an action of non-consummation has the same goal in mind, with different means. Though it has been argued that *In Memoriam* portrays the speaker-Tennyson's longing to join Hallam in consummation, I argue that the speaker-Tennyson's longing is not sexual— he strives to find completion within their love physically, but not carnally.

John D. Rosenberg, in his article "Stopping for Death: Tennyson's *In Memoriam*," notes that "The second half of *In Memoriam* is about how [Tennyson and Hallam] will know each other when they meet" (Rosenberg 317), implying that the first half of *In Memoriam* documents the process of Tennyson trying to fathom *how* they could be able to meet, considering Hallam's deceased state. If each of Swinburne's poems within the first chapter portrayed lovers seeking to preserve their



relationships, yet failing due to the repetition of sex, *In Memoriam* portrays a lover seeking to not merely resurrect a friendship, but physically connect with his beloved, motivated by his romantic love for the beloved. Instead of longing for connection in sexual intercourse, Tennyson's desire fixates on the goal of a *touch*, most frequently, the touch of his hand to Hallam's hand. Yet, despite the simplicity and diminutive size of a touch's physical action, a shared touch between Tennyson and Hallam is, in reality, impossible when the latter's corpse is decomposing in the ground. *In Memoriam* is not a magically-aided fantasy of a miracle, so Hallam does not wake from the dead, restored to life through a literal transformation, but he does eventually return to Tennyson, in a mental experience rendered in a physical manner. To achieve such a goal, though, Tennyson must suffer through his elegy, agonizing over the potential of a touch.

The physical touch which Tennyson craves most frequently appears in the image of clasping hands. These hands, though scattered throughout the entire poem, persistently emerge within the first fourteen sections, as Tennyson documents the sharpest pains of grief immediately following Hallam's death. These appearances of hands come in a variety of forms— though *In Memoriam* is not a fantastical text, Section 14 does present a hypothetical fantasy featuring the connection of Tennyson and Hallam's hands. Tennyson imagines traveling to a port upon hearing word that the ship carrying Hallam's body from Vienna has arrived, and as he observes the ship's passengers disembarking “down the plank/And beckoning unto those they know” (XIV, ll. 8-9), a revived Hallam materializes:

And if along with these should come  
The man I held as half-divine;  
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,  
And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,  
And how my life had droop'd of late,  
And he should sorrow o'er my state  
And marvel what possess'd my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,  
 No hint of death in all his frame,  
 But found him all in all the same,  
 I should not feel it to be strange. (XIV, ll. 9-20)

Tennyson starts out the section in the subjunctive mode, suggesting “*If one should* bring me this report” (XIV, l. 1; emphasis mine), and before he continues with the revelatory, live presence of Hallam, he stresses the fact that this scenario is speculative by adding another “if” to the beginning of this stanza, as well as repeating the word “should.” The combination of “if” alongside the past conditional form of “shall” forms conditional clauses, denoting that not only is this event speculative, but unlikely— and yet, Tennyson imagines it. He frames it as unlikely, despite the fact that we know it to be physically impossible. Perhaps the insistence on “if” before the meeting with Hallam is meant to break the reverie, a self-reminder from Tennyson that this hope will probably never come to fruition. After that second use, though, “if” does not appear again, leaving Tennyson to more freely conjecture about what he would do in this impossible ideal.

Unlike the other passengers, who beckon and attempt to catch the attention of their acquaintances at port, Hallam’s appearance is more rapid. Tennyson sees him come down the plank with the other passengers, but Hallam does not gesture to Tennyson so Tennyson can run to join him. Instead, Hallam is seen and then *felt* in an instant, as he “strike[s] a sudden hand” in Tennyson’s own hand and begins to speak to Tennyson as if he had never died, perplexed by Tennyson’s account of his grief. When applying Jonas’s conception of desire to this fantasy, we see Hallam—the goal, whose touch Tennyson longs for— move towards Tennyson upon perception. The construction of this entire event in verse confirms Tennyson’s desire, though the element of motility on Tennyson’s part is removed. If Jonas notes that “perception presents the object “not here but over there” [and] desire presents the goal “not yet but to come”,” then this fantasy stages a short drama of near-instantaneous fulfillment. Tennyson perceives Hallam “over there,” leaving the ship,

but as soon as he is seen, he immediately and palpably appears, grasping Tennyson's hand before Tennyson can even wonder if his vision betrays him, and before Tennyson can even wish for him to be near. The striking of Hallam's hand in Tennyson's is immediate gratification.

The fantasy's duration is only the twenty lines of Section 14, for Section 15 sharply shifts the scene away from Tennyson's contentment and acceptance of Hallam's returned presence and towards an atmospheric tumult, where "The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,/The cattle huddled on the lea" (XV, ll. 5-6), the weather constituting the "wild unrest that lives in woe" (XV, l. 15). Even when constructing a fantasy centered on this act of non-consummation which restores Hallam to Tennyson's side and in his hand, we see the text fail to preserve the moment in time, beyond the boundaries of its section. Furthermore, this fantasy is not even put forward in realistic terms. It illustrates a dream, but it is couched in terms of possibility. At least a dream, though still fantasy, would have occurred, even if only within a mind. Though the event shows immediate fulfillment, the linguistic construction of the section itself still engages in the desperate movement of desire, grasping at hope.

The connection forged through clasped hands does not only fail in potential fantasies—other appearances of hands early in the process of Tennyson's grief are less desperate and more melancholic. Section 7 finds Tennyson visiting "Hallam's house on Wimpole Street, London" (Gray 10n1); the section reads in full below:

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

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—  
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,  
And like a guilty thing I creep  
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away

The noise of life begins again,  
 And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain  
 On the bald street breaks the blank day.

This section, one of the shortest of *In Memoriam's* 133 sections, crafts a somber scene, restrained in both detail and syllabic use, yet furnished enough that it is all too easy to picture the slow steps of the haunted Tennyson, sleeplessly roaming the deserted streets of London before dawn and arriving at Hallam's house as if to call on him, as if the boundary between Tennyson and Hallam is but a door. Instead of the ferocious weather from Section 15, the atmosphere is utterly still— before the “noise of life begins again,” Tennyson is the only part of the scene in motion, as he “creep[s]” to the door.

His heartbeats also seem to be in motion, yet they also seem a memory of the past due to the strange tense formulation. The line could have been written “where my heart *used* to beat/So quickly,” denoting that while Tennyson's heart sped in anticipation of clasping Hallam's hand when he was alive, it no longer beats so quickly after Hallam's death. The actual construction of the line strangely suggests that “used” not employed as a marker of the heart beating as a past action, but rather to imply that his heart was a tool manipulated into beating. This is especially odd, as the passive past tense further implies that though the heart was used, Tennyson was not in control.

Perhaps, instead of either of those interpretations, the grammar is jumbled to convey both the beating of the heart in the past and the beating of the heart in the present. The line could have read “where my heart was used to *beating*/So quickly,” which would indicate a memory of repeated visits to Hallam's house and the physical anticipation of clasping hands. The line does not have an “-ing” tacked onto it, though, as if Tennyson changed his mind midway through writing the line, wanting to express the present state of the heart beating but not disposing of the “was used to.” Though the grammar seems defective, this phraseology allows both the past and present states of physical anticipation and excitement exist simultaneously. The beating of Tennyson's heart in the

present is further enhanced by the enjambment of the line, which enacts the swiftness of the beats. Reading “beat/So quickly” forces the reader to finish the thought started in the line by hurriedly moving onto the next line. The actual beats of the meter enhance the line as well— though most of *In Memoriam* is composed in iambic tetrameter, the first stanza of Section 7 starts out every line with a trochaic (lines two and three) or spondaic (lines one and four) foot, so that every line starts out with a stressed syllable. The rest of the stanza remains iambic, meaning that “beat” is stressed, and is followed up by two more consecutive beats as a result of the spondaic start of line four. Therefore, not only do we quickly move into the last line of the stanza, but sonically, the section produces three stressed syllables in a row, emulating Tennyson’s rapidly beating heart as he anticipates a hand which, as he reminds himself in the following stanza, he cannot clasp anymore. Physically, Tennyson’s body responds at the mere thought of touching Hallam’s hand, but as the stanzas progress, his attempts to retrace his paths to Hallam will not necessarily result in the fulfillment of his desired non-consummation.

Indeed, in this section, Tennyson is denied any sort of communion with the dead— his waiting for a hand proves fruitless. As Rosenberg notes, “The outstretched “hand” that closes the first stanza awaits, but never clasps, the hand that opens the second, a gulf of white space keeping them forever apart” (Rosenberg 297). The punctuation reflects this unresolved tension as well— the final lines of most stanzas in *In Memoriam* feature periods or semicolons, establishing an end to the thought or image expressed in the line. Here, in Tennyson’s desperation, the line ends in a comma, as if the line itself hopes for a resolution to the waiting. Not only is the line denied its wish, with the first line of the second stanza asserting the hard truth that the hand Tennyson waits “can be clasp'd no more.” Paired with the momentum of the third line of the first stanza speeding into the fourth line, the comma at the end of that fourth line hinders the line’s speed more than a total lack of punctuation would, but the motion of the line would be even more definitively paused if a period or

semicolon were in its place. The comma, promising continuation, can mislead the reader into anticipating a hand. If successful in manipulating the reader, we are thrust into the position of Tennyson, and we too are denied.

Rosenberg's observation of the "gulf of white space" which separates the hand of Tennyson from the hand of Hallam forever in this section reminds of how these lines also work against the poem's rhyme scheme. Though the sections are composed of varying numbers of quatrains, *In Memoriam* only includes stanzas with quatrains, and consistently uses an ABBA rhyme scheme throughout. John Hollander's *Rhyme's Reason*, a peculiar guide to various English verse forms which use the forms in order to teach them, turns to Tennyson when writing about this rhyme scheme:

Another way of rhyme can come  
From *abba* (middle two  
Lines holding hands as lovers do)  
In Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. (Hollander 16)

The preponderance of hands in the poem makes Hollander's choice of hand-holding appropriate for the intimate personification of the "middle two" lines. Elsewhere in *In Memoriam*, the rhyme scheme and content mesh in a similar fashion to Hollander's lines, where the rhymes tie the lines together and emphasize the physical contact therein. In Section 13, after Tennyson compares himself to a widower waking and weeping upon the realization of his wife's absence, he describes the widower's tears:

Which weep a loss for ever new,  
A void where heart on heart reposed;  
And, where warm hands have prest and closed,  
Silence, till I be silent too. (XIII, ll. 6-7)

Though the widower weeps over a "void," the absence of his wife, the void still contains their past in a memory of their gentle intimacy. At first, this void seems to correspond to the void of blank space in between Tennyson and Hallam's hands in Section 7, and indeed, this stanza is set up by a

strikingly similar scenario, where the widower “moves his doubtful arms, and feels/Her place is empty” (XIII, ll. 3-4). This void differs due to the memory contained in the void— where the space in between the stanzas in Section 7 separated Tennyson and Hallam, these lines separate the void of memory from the rest of the section, while simultaneously connecting to each other through rhyme. The *b* rhymes of “reposed” and “closed” sonically separate the lines from the rest of the stanza, for when the final line is read, the return of the *a* rhyme in the word “too” breaks the pattern which the two like *b* rhymes had just established.

The *b* rhymes also aid in marrying the imagery in the two lines. Both lines already mirror each other, in that they both conceive of the widower and the wife (or, Tennyson and Hallam, as Tennyson is comparing the widower’s tears to his own) as dual hearts and hands, each of which is positioned closely to the other: the hearts “repose” upon each other, and the warm hands “pres[s]” and “close.” The rhymes help to superimpose the scenes of the hearts and the hands on top of each other. The more abstract image of a heart reposing upon another heart is melded with the clearer— clearer especially due to the poem’s hand preoccupation— image of clasped hands. Since the rhyming words “reposed” and “closed” also determine the position of the hands and hearts, respectively, we may relate the way the hands are entwined around each other to the relative positions of the hearts. Perhaps the reposing hearts lie beside each other, but also mold around each other, like hands do when clasped.

Furthermore, the sonic similarity of each end-rhyme performs the movement of reposing and closing. Since “closed” is only one syllable, if we also include the sound of the preceding “and” in the rhythm, “and closed” replicates the iambic meter of “reposed.” The second syllable of each word slightly drags on the “s” sound, before quietly stopping due to the “d” at the end of the word. This rhythm corresponds to the movement of the clasping hands, which, in this case, close around each other— gently, like the dragging “s” — before the motion steadily halts, as steadily as the near-

silent “d.” From the hands, the motion can also be transferred onto the reposing hearts. Altogether, the middle two lines characterize the void of the widower’s loss through the similarity of image, movement, and sound, which all knit together to form a representation of what the widower has lost. Within the stanza, the lines create the void, a pocket of space wherein beats the memory of succeeding non-consummation from the marriage of the widower.

We know that Tennyson, comparing himself to the widower, has shared experiences of hand-clasping with Hallam when Hallam was still alive, although the abstract hearts reposing on each other seems more characteristic to a marriage. Perhaps, through the superimposition of the hand-holding upon the hearts, Tennyson can still relate to such a memory. Later in the section, Tennyson describes Hallam as “The human-hearted man I loved” (XIII, l. 11), with the reference to Hallam’s heart recalling the reposing hearts, as if their sheer proximity by each other’s side was a form of two hearts reposing. Once the void is ‘exited’ when the next line is read, the tranquil rhythm is replaced with “silence.” The memory is over; the void contains an absence that can be felt, but cannot be sustained for more than two lines. Non-consummation remains elusive, and painfully so for the weeping widowers.

## II. Non-Consummation and the Poetic Project

The first section of *In Memoriam* introduces the concept of “clasping” before any hands of Hallam’s emerge, in a justification for reveling in grief: “Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown’d” (I, ll. 9). This could be read as a thesis for the entire endeavor of *In Memoriam*, but this seems closer to a thesis prototype, a command uttered by Tennyson to readers to defend what would become a swollen elegy. Indeed, Tennyson is quite conscious of the reader’s perception of *In Memoriam*, occasionally interrupting his own sorrow with the voices of imagined critics, who condemn his poetic task and prompt a defense from Tennyson himself. Why *does* Tennyson write some hundred pages of verse lamenting Hallam? The answer to that question shifts within the text itself. Tennyson



first critiques himself, revealing in Section 5 that he “sometimes hold[s] it half a sin” (V, l. 1) to express his grief:

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,  
A use in measured language lies;  
The sad mechanic exercise,  
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain. (V, ll. 5-8)

His reasoning paints a spiritless portrait of writing as a form of morphine, merely “use[d]” to numb emotional pain. The numbness of the exercise reminds of the numbing experience of repeated sex in Swinburne’s “Before Parting,” though these circumstances are quite different. Unlike the dull repetition of sex which results in a relationship’s death once desire has fled, the production of verse in Tennyson is a reflection of Tennyson’s own desire. Throughout all 133 sections of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson’s love for Hallam remains a constant, a feat which all three of Swinburne’s poems from the previous chapter fail to accomplish. Yet, though failures of non-consummation are scattered throughout the beginning of *In Memoriam*— hands always grasping, never finding purchase — we do see Tennyson eventually succeed in non-consummation.

Tennyson himself (the historical Tennyson, not the textual Tennyson) noted that Section 57, which begins with the command “Peace” (LVII, l. 1) and ends with echoes of farewell, *sounds* like a conclusion, but it was “too sad for an ending” (Tennyson qtd. in Gray 42n1). Should this have been the ending, we would see Tennyson ultimately fail in his quest to attain non-consummation. Despite the cry of peace, it is a depressing way to end a text, particularly with its ultimate conception of the poetic project: while bidding “peace,” Tennyson tells himself and other mourners that “we do him wrong/To sing so wildly: let us go” (LVII, ll. 3-4). He believes his poem “richly shrine[s]” Hallam, but any hope is leveled by the solemn statement “But I shall pass; my work will fail” (LVII, l. 8). This pessimistic view of poetic creation seems to consider writing futile, with the possibility of even damaging the lost beloved. The barren tone of Section 57, though it rings with finality, is rather the

poem's nadir, and with the mounting shift upward which begins at its conclusion, the conception of poetry and its use shifts as well. Throughout these first 57 sections, the generation of poetry is attributed to more significant rationales than the pain-dulling regimen from Section 5. When confronted by several in-text critics, Tennyson proclaims "I do but sing because I must,/And pipe but as the linnets sing" (XXI, ll. 23-24). From compulsion to produce poetry, Tennyson later exhibits frustration with the exercise in Section 52, crying:

I cannot love thee as I ought,  
For love reflects the thing beloved;  
My words are only words, and moved  
Upon the topmost froth of thought. (LII, ll. 1-4)

The practice of loving is expressed within the practice of writing, and though Tennyson grieves that his work fails to capture anything but the surface of Hallam. He equates loving in writing as a reflection of Hallam, though this purpose of verse is eventually eclipsed by the purpose of relief, which then blossoms into attainment. Though Tennyson has been attempting to reach out to Hallam all the while, his excuses for why he writes do not match his deeds. It is Tennyson's lack of faith in his writing which blocks his wishes for non-consummation. While he claims he writes out of compulsion, or to dull the ache of his constant grief, or to enshrine Hallam and ensure his legacy, he remains committed to scouring his stanzas for Hallam and his touch. Why must Tennyson fuss?

Why can he not understand his desire as *In Memoriam's* raison d'être from the first lines? We return to Carson's *Eros the Bittersweet* to inspect desire more closely:

They are three points of transformation on a circuit of possible relationship, electrified by desire so they touch not touching. Conjoined they are held apart. The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros. When the circuit-points connect, perception leaps. And something becomes visible, on the triangular path where volts are moving, that would not be visible without the three-part structure. The difference between what is and what could be is visible. The ideal is projected on a screen of the actual, in a kind of stereoscopy. The man sits like a god, the poet almost dies: two poles of response within the same desiring mind. Triangulation makes both present at once by a shift of

distance, replacing erotic action with a ruse of heart and language. For in this dance the people do not move. Desire moves. Eros is a verb. (Carson 17)

Recall the triangulation between the lover, the beloved, and “that which comes between them,” which, in this case, is death. Carson characterizes desire with movement. Desire thrusts Tennyson through *In Memoriam*, and we can glimpse the presence of both responses of the desiring mind in Section 7, where

....my heart was used to beat  
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—

Though, as previously noted, Tennyson fails to achieve non-consummation in the touch of Hallam's hand in these lines, Tennyson's desire “shift[s] the distance,” allowing us to see both success and failure at once. As the line “So quickly, waiting for a hand” is read, the first object seen in the next line is “A hand,” as if Hallam's hand *has* materialized: there we see “what could be.” The rest of the line, which clarifies the nonexistence of the hand, shows us “what *is*.” Both exist simultaneously, and the “flickering” between them shows us desire. Yet, *In Memoriam* does not merely shows us desire for 133 sections. *In Memoriam* moves towards desire slowly, but once fulfillment is finally achieved, the poem locks itself into a cycle, and desire chases and catches fulfillment much more easily.

If Section 57 is the nadir of *In Memoriam*, Section 95 is certainly its climax— though, again, not the poem's only fulfilled act of non-consummation. Called the “spiritual marriage” (Rosenberg 306) of Tennyson and Hallam by Rosenberg, Section 95 formally stands out from most of the sections of *In Memoriam* due to its length of 16 quatrains. The seventh through twelfth stanzas, the climax of the climax, are reproduced below:

And strangely on the silence broke  
The silent-speaking words, and strange  
Was love's dumb cry defying change  
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell  
 On doubts that drive the coward back,  
 And keen thro' wordy snares to track  
 Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,  
 The dead man touch'd me from the past,  
 And all at once it seem'd at last  
 The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd  
 About empyreal heights of thought,  
 And came on that which is, and caught  
 The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out  
 The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance--  
 The blows of Death. At length my trance  
 Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame  
 In matter-moulded forms of speech,  
 Or ev'n for intellect to reach  
 Thro' memory that which I became: (XCV, ll. 25-48)

Rosenberg dubs this a “spiritual marriage,” but the manifestation of the communion between Tennyson and Hallam is physical. All of the denied touches preceding Section 95 culminate in a touch so enormous that the imagery of clasping hands that have been so omnipresent in the text will not suffice. The touch begins with clear physicality— “The dead man touch’d me from the past” — but the climax of “...and all at once it seem’d at last/The living soul was flash’d on mine” introduces the more ephemeral soul of Hallam into the image. Physicality emerges again in the next line, “And mine in this was wound,” with the winding reminding of the interlacing fingers of Section 13. Still, the line is far less precise than the clasped hands we are used to seeing within *In Memoriam*. Tennyson addresses this point, crying “Vague words!” and lamenting the difficulty of translating the experience into “speech.” Of course, some of the obscurity is famously due to a change made by Tennyson to the text in 1872, where the lines “The living soul was flash'd on mine,/And mine in

this was wound, and whirl'd" read "*His* living soul was flash'd on mine,/And mine in *his* was wound, and whirl'd" (emphasis mine). In a footnote, editor Erik Gray provides Tennyson's explanation: "The first reading. . .troubled me, as perhaps giving a wrong impression" (Tennyson qtd. in Gray, 70n5). Regardless of the change, the image is not entirely clear: we know Tennyson and Hallam's souls are wound together, but Tennyson does not illustrate the portrait of a soul. It ought to be remembered that, throughout the text, he does not illustrate the portrait of hands, either.

Clasped hands are evocative in simplicity because they are a known commodity. While this section has been read as a sexual climax, perhaps, if read as an act of non-consummation, the reason for the vagueness is clarified. Though non-consummation has chiefly appeared in *In Memoriam* in the form of clasping hands, this moment is escalated. The flashing of soul upon soul recalls Carson's phrasing of triangulation in desire, where "the ideal is projected on a screen of the actual." This moment of fulfillment, of satiation, *is* a form of an ultimate ideal— in fulfillment, do the combined souls materialize, the projection becoming the real for but a moment? Perhaps the text does not want to clarify. Perhaps it cannot. Compared to consummation, non-consummation is slippery. Defining non-consummation for the purposes of working through *In Memoriam* is simplified by Tennyson's fixation on clasping hands throughout the text, but when working with other texts, examples non-consummation would likely be more elusive. Even in *In Memoriam*, knowing to search for clasping hands does not account for moments where clasping hands will not suffice. Perhaps Tennyson struggles with language since non-consummation is not restrained to the physical, or perhaps non-consummation resists language. The issue remains unresolved, but ultimately, the pent-up desire which has ached for 94 sections is resolved through fulfillment, for dawn emerges in Section 95's final stanza, where a breeze murmurs:

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

The flashing of Tennyson and Hallam's souls upon each other is mirrored in the weather. As their souls wound, so too do the "lights" of the East and West, or the sun and the moon, which mix "like life and death." Of course, like the brief climax of an orgasm, fulfillment in non-consummation exists for an instant— just a flash. Yet, it is enough to spur on more frequent bursts of fulfillment later in the text, and the beaming dawn reflects Tennyson's emotions in the wake of fulfillment. In the dreary street by Hallam's house and in the tumultuous storm, the various forms of Tennyson's grief were projected onto his environment, and the pattern continues here.

Though words plague Tennyson when he must describe the ecstasy of non-consummation, words are also the power which render the scene into existence, and whisper "the dawn" before the dawn appears, as if on command. The spoken dawn is not merely the result of the breeze, but the more direct work of Tennyson, or, at least, the non-consummation of Tennyson and Hallam. After their souls are wound, the conjoined lovers "ca[tch]/The deep pulsations of the world," and even after Hallam vanishes, the ecstasy of non-consummation ripples and radiates, and suddenly, "...suck'd from out the distant gloom/A breeze beg[ins] to tremble" (XCV ll. 53-54), the breeze which then speaks the word "dawn," resulting in the dawn's blossoming. The words which lead into the non-consummation, allowing the touch of Hallam "word by word, and line by line," are Tennyson's own words. Unlike the words of the dawn, these words and lines remain undisclosed within Section 95, but they *are* provided in several sections prior to the climax. The words and lines perform a reverse-transcription, in which Tennyson's building wishes for Hallam's form seep into reality and create fulfillment. But first, how can Tennyson break the impossible boundary between life and death? Previously, questions were raised concerning the reasons why Tennyson does not immediately pinpoint desire as his reason for constructing the text. *In Memoriam*, though composed of a panoply of individual lyrics, does form a rough narrative which revolves around the creation of

a physical relationship with Hallam, as their first union makes up the poem's climax. Just as *desire moves*, desire drives the poem to this climax— to be utterly clear, Tennyson's desire, located in his love for Hallam, sets forth a goal of non-consummation, and Tennyson's motility guides him towards it. Though Tennyson does not fully understand his purpose for writing about Hallam, he gradually moves towards understanding as he wades through his grief. In Section 77, Tennyson states, "To breathe my loss is more than fame,/To utter love more sweet than praise" (LXXVII, ll. 15-16). Though his perspective is not entirely positive, as he frets about the endurance of poetry "Foreshorten'd in the tract of time" (LXXVII, l. 4), or lost to the ages, Tennyson amends his main purpose in poetic production. Rather than concerning himself with worries over whether *In Memoriam* will lead to acclaim, he exalts poetry's ability to let him "breathe his loss" and proclaim his love for Hallam in writing. From Tennyson's embrace of poetry as a medium not for numbing his pain and leaving him devoid of emotion, but for providing catharsis and allowing him to shape his love into words, he then discovers poetry's ability to fulfill desires. Tennyson's gradual awareness of this ability can be explained through a passage on absence from Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*:

Absence persists— I must endure it. Hence I will manipulate it: transform the distortion of time into oscillation, produce rhythm, make an entrance onto the stage of language (language is born of absence: the child has made himself a doll out of a spool, throws it away and picks it up again, miming the mother's departure and return: a paradigm is created). Absence becomes an active practice, a business (which keeps me from doing anything else); there is a creation of a fiction which has many roles (doubts, reproaches, desires, melancholies). (Barthes 16)

Unless the lover is in the brief state of fulfillment, absence "persists" — Jonas echoes within Barthes's words, for Barthes too conceives of desire as a goal. While we can definitively say that Tennyson "endure[s]" absence in the early sections of *In Memoriam*, and up until he uses his verse in order to obtain desire, he is more beholden to absence than manipulative of it. Tennyson anticipates hands, but cannot grasp them. While it could be argued that by simply channeling his grief into verse, as he does from the very start of the text, Tennyson is "active[ly] practic[ing]" desire, but the

activity does not arise until Tennyson is fully aware of how he intends to use his poetry. Within the active practice of desire, Barthes claims “there is a creation of a fiction which has many roles,” one of which is desire.

Doubts, reproaches, and melancholies all figure within the text as well, but the use of fiction to further desire is the primary action Tennyson pursues. Through the practice of active absence, Tennyson turns fiction into reality. Tennyson beckons Hallam forth, and his words spirit the form of Hallam to his body. Before examining the way in which Tennyson moves towards desire with language, the “fiction” Tennyson creates harkens back to the fantasy of Hallam’s arrival at the port, a lovely dream but a failure of non-consummation. According to *In Memoriam*, one can conceive of a fantasy, like how Swinburne considers the possibility of meeting a miraculously revived Hallam, but the fulfillment and satiation of desire only arises when one speaks through the text, calling out to that which is desired. This also seems to fulfill Carson’s conception of triangularized desire, for the *desire* entwined within the words of Tennyson’s command *move* and work their way through the text, until they break Tennyson’s silence in the dark and allow Hallam to materialize.

The three sections which feature Tennyson’s calls out to Hallam occur just before Section 95, in Sections 90, 91, and 93. The final stanza of Section 90 presents the first written call to Hallam:

Ah dear, but come thou back to me:  
 Whatever change the years have wrought,  
 I find not yet one lonely thought  
 That cries against my wish for thee. (XCI, ll. 21-24)

Tennyson calls to Hallam, for on Earth he sees no way of crossing the boundary which divides them. His love, notably unconditional, as he does not care how Hallam has changed in death, is entirely desired by Tennyson. The construction of the third line is somewhat strange, in that the line begins with Tennyson stating what he has found, although it turns out he has found nothing—nothing which holds him back from actively pursuing Hallam in language, that is. The broader



context of the section further emphasizes the desperation within Tennyson's desire, as he envisions the dead reviving to "resume their life" (X, l. 6), only to find their loved ones living changed lives, and moving on from their love of the dead, with "brides in other hands" (X, l. 14). Though he muses on the disastrous results of the reanimation of the dead, Tennyson differentiates himself from the masses, and thereby differentiates his desire. Though he does not make another direct marital comparison, by pledging his desire for Hallam to return, Tennyson effectively presents himself as the most loyal lover, unmarried and wholly devoted to Hallam. Tennyson's wishing continues in Section 91, presented in full below:

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,  
 And rarely pipes the mounted thrush;  
 Or underneath the barren bush  
 Flits by the sea-blue bird of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know  
 Thy spirit in time among thy peers;  
 The hope of unaccomplish'd years  
 Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change  
 May breathe, with many roses sweet,  
 Upon the thousand waves of wheat,  
 That ripple round the lonely grange;

Come: not in watches of the night,  
 But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,  
 Come, beauteous in thine after form,  
 And like a finer light in light.

While Tennyson's first wish was rather general, as Tennyson only wished for Hallam to return, without giving a real reason for his need or how he would like Hallam to come back, Section 91 refines his desired goal. Here, the goal reflects the non-consummation Tennyson has craved throughout *In Memoriam*, as Tennyson specifies Hallam return in the physical form "by which [Tennyson] would know." Perhaps the ability to manifest desire through verse is not entirely accurate, though, for Tennyson also specifies the time of day Hallam should arrive— "*not* in the

watches of the night.” And yet, Hallam arrives at night during Section 95. Nevertheless, Tennyson eventually receives his wish for a “sunbeam,” although he does not see Hallam underneath the sun. it requires the fulfillments

### III. *In Memoriam* and “Anactoria,” Somewhere and Always in Time

The fulfillment of Tennyson’s desire, achieved through poetic production, allows desire to cycle for eternity. Though her relationship with Anactoria is not restored, we see Swinburne’s Sappho achieving a similar result, though she uses poetry in order to preserve herself. By the end of “Anactoria,” having exhausted all of her options with regards to satiation, Sappho comforts herself with the thought that her verse will live in time through eternity, while Anactoria, the elusive beloved, will die:

Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,  
 Except these kisses of my lips on thine  
 Brand them with immortality; but me —  
 Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,  
 Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold  
 Cast forth of heaven, with feet of awful gold  
 And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,  
 Lightning, with thunder for a hound behind  
 Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown,  
 But in the light and laughter, in the moan  
 And music, and in grasp of lip and hand  
 And shudder of water that makes felt on land  
 The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,  
 Memories shall mix and metaphors of me. (ll. 201-214)

When describing how Anactoria cannot survive the onslaught of history, Sappho shifts her own simile from her earlier lines, where she imagined consuming Anactoria. There, Sappho desired to “drink [Anactoria’s] veins as wine” (l.111) as part of the process of claiming Anactoria. Here, though, the comparison of Anactoria to wine seems to reduce her in size and importance. When Sappho described how she would like to consume Anactoria, Anactoria’s body seemed composed of delicacies, as Sappho compared her blood to wine and her breasts to honey. Now, wine no longer

courses through her veins, and though she is still compared to wine, she is “spilt” wine. This comparison seems like Sappho’s retaliation in verse, for even though she never actually attempted to eat Anactoria, Anactoria is now figured as wine spilled and forgotten on the floor. Perhaps Sappho wishes to demean Anactoria through the insinuation that even if she *did* once fantasize about eating Anactoria, she would not any longer.

The first sentence begins with another “yea,” and Sappho continues to give affirmations throughout the end of the poem, but where “yea” once expressed Sappho’s pleasure in thinking about her past relationship with Anactoria, “yea” seems like an affirmation of Sappho’s own power as author of the poem. The uses of “yea” remind of the way Tennyson creates his own fulfilled desire by commanding the presence of Hallam, instead here, “yea” imbues Sappho’s statements with further truth. Unlike *In Memoriam*, though, we do not have textual evidence that her statements do manifest in reality. We do, however, have evidence from history: the mere fact that Swinburne wrote a poem inspired by the work of an ancient Greek poet is evidence enough, but Swinburne supplies more in *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, revealing “We in England are taught, are compelled under penalties to learn, to construe, and to repeat, as schoolboys, the imperishable and incomparable verses of that supreme poet; and I at least am grateful for the training” (Swinburne 20). Additionally, Sappho remains a cherished poet in the present, though her work only survives in fragments.

As Sappho promises, Anactoria *is* only known through her association to Sappho. As Kathy Psomiades writes in *Beauty’s Body*, “Sappho’s kisses can brand Anactoria’s lips with immortality because Sappho’s own lips are the source of her immortal words” (Psomiades 77). Power rests within Sappho’s language, and even if she cannot contain Anactoria within a relationship or within her body, Sappho can contain her legacy within her poetry. While Sappho characterizes Anactoria only through spilled wine, she characterizes herself in relation to many images, most of which recall moments throughout the poem, like the “bright fire,” an image which may bring to mind the

description of flowers whose form evoked “fire that half comes through” (l. 41). Sappho’s most intricate lines weave together multiple images, so when Sappho compares herself to several images, she then emerges in whichever other images are associated with the initially compared images, and her presence ripples through the poem.

After the climax in Section 95 of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson and Hallam do not succumb to the fates of the lovers in “Before Parting,” “The Year of Love,” and “Anactoria” — that is, their relationship does not only endure throughout the poem, but beyond the poem as well. Both Tennyson and Sappho use poetry in order to influence their realities: Tennyson uses verse as a method of attaining non-consummation, while Sappho can extend her lifetime through poetry through lines such as “Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die” (l. 290). But, Sappho fails where Tennyson succeeds, as Tennyson captures ultimate success in non-consummation. As previously established in the first chapter, consummation drains love from relationships, and thus, such relationships which are driven by desire for consummation cannot endure in time. While the failure of consummation was measured through the longevity of the relationships, the failure of non-consummation in *In Memoriam* must necessarily take a different form at first, as Tennyson strives to *forge* a physical relationship in touch after the relationship between Tennyson and Hallam was entirely rewritten by Hallam’s death. Failures in non-consummation, as the earlier sections of *In Memoriam* show, occur when Tennyson cannot fulfill his desire through touch. Once Tennyson does achieve non-consummation, it is then privy to the failures of established relationships. However, where we may expect the moving yet ethereal climax of Section 95 to mark the final communion between Tennyson and Hallam, *In Memoriam* continues to illustrate their love into perpetuity.

Despite Tennyson’s altering perspectives throughout the text on why he continues to compose *In Memoriam*, desire remains the poem’s central focus. As Christopher Craft notes in *Another Kind of Love*, “*In Memoriam* remains at its end what it had been at its beginning: a desiring

machine whose first motive is the restitution of lost Hallam. As such *In Memoriam* continues to do what it has always done best: it keeps its desire by keeping its desire desiring” (Craft 70). Craft’s articulation of *In Memoriam* as a “desiring machine” speaks to the efficiency of the poem in the consistent production of desire, even in the wake of fulfillment. *In Memoriam* succeeds in non-consummation into perpetuity, for the desire continues after the poem’s climax, extending until fulfillment, then extending again, repeating without end. Of the later moments of fulfillment, Section 119 stands out, as it serves as a foil for Section 7.

Doors, where my heart was used to beat  
 So quickly, not as one that weeps  
 I come once more; the city sleeps;  
 I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see  
 Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn  
 A light-blue lane of early dawn,  
 And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,  
 And bright the friendship of thine eye;  
 And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh  
 I take the pressure of thine hand.

Tennyson’s desire for non-consummation with Hallam is refreshed by fulfillments like this, where Tennyson no longer waits for a hand, but actively “take[s] the pressure of thine hand.” The city street, which was once “bald” and “unlovely” is imbued with the pastoral, the smell of meadow somehow wafting into the through it.

Desire moves, and so too does poetry. Poetry allows a forever within its verse. Like Sappho in “Anactoria,” though Alfred Tennyson is long since dead, desire chugs on within *In Memoriam*. In *In Memoriam*, we see the fulfillments in non-consummation, and we see Tennyson embrace desire in the lines “...out of distance might ensue/Desire of nearness doubly sweet;/And unto meeting when we meet,/Delight a hundredfold accrue” (CXVII, ll. 5-8). Desire propels Tennyson to minor

fulfillments, like the success in non-consummation in the taking of Hallam's hand, but is driven forever by the ultimate fulfillment. In the continuation of desire, we see the text reach towards a prolonged ecstasy, but never tire, as moments of non-consummation freshen it.

The finale of the poem promises the continuation of desire beyond the poem, for the entire endeavor finishes on the line, "And one far-off divine event,/To which the whole creation moves." (Epilogue, ll. 143-144). Creation moves, and desire follows, eagerly anticipating the "delight a hundredfold" while still being nourished by fulfillments along the way to a forever with Hallam.

## CONCLUSION

**“Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine....”**

....Hold  
Some minutes fast the time of gold  
When our lips each way clung and clove  
To a face full of love.

*Swinburne, “The Year of Love”*

In the end, non-consummation prevails, at least between the two texts studied within the scope of this project. The framework of consummation and non-consummation worked well when studying two oppositional, contemporary poets, but I wonder how this framework would hold up when applied to other authors in other eras. Ultimately, I want to continue thinking about how poetry can be a source of life, particularly in regards to love. I wonder if I can refine my framework any more— is the idea of “non-consummation” too specific to Tennyson?

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