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The Problem of the *In Memoriam* Manuscripts

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Among the many problems surrounding the manuscripts of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and the evidence they provide to the manner in which the poem was composed, perhaps the most important are those of the origin and nature of the Trinity College and Lincoln ledger-books, and the claim of either to be the old ledger mentioned in accounts of Tennyson's manuscripts. No matter how much is known at present about the Trinity and Lincoln manuscripts, certain difficulties continue to face the growing procession of scholars attempting to make sense of the *In Memoriam* material. It is of value to be able to confront all available material and information, and to see the peculiarities of the manuscripts and the discrepancies in accounts of them. No definite solution to the puzzle can be offered, but the missing pieces can be defined.

Of the two known major manuscripts of the poem, the more important is the Lincoln ledger with its one hundred and fourteen sections — a manuscript which has been accessible for ten years. The ledger in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, containing seventy-one [1] sections of the poem, had been of no practical value to scholars until the restrictions on its use were lifted in the summer of 1969. Fragments of the poem are contained in several other manuscripts: a notebook in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, the Heath Commonplace Book in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, papers and notebooks at Harvard, and odd papers elsewhere in the United States. Although the main value of these probably lies in their relation to the major manuscripts, each fragment or scattered section manages to make some contribution to the general problem of the *In Memoriam* manuscripts.

Mystery surrounds not only all manuscripts of the poem, but also all accounts of these manuscripts. In the first of ten volumes of col-

[1] This number includes two versions of LXVIII. For convenience, the term "section" also includes I,i: — the single motto stanza.

lected notes [2] which make up the written trial copy of Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir*, is an account of the first-written sections of *In Memoriam*. Hallam is speaking of a notebook containing versions of several poems:

> Then in this book come the first written Cantos of In Memoriam in this order
> 'Fair ship that from the Italian shore.'
> 'I hold it truth with him who sings.'
> 'When Lazarus left his charnel cave'
> 'The time draws near the birth of Christ'
> 'Old yew which graspest at the stones'
> 'Still onward winds the dreary way'

Although the phrase "in this order" seems rather definite, Hallam must have been quoting these from memory, because by the time the *Memoir* passed through two more stages and reached its two-volume printed form, these sections are five, not six, and they are listed as

> Fair ship that from the Italian shore.
> (*written on a stray sheet*)
> With trembling fingers did we weave.
> When Lazarus left his charnel-cave.
> This truth came borne with bier and pall.
> It draweth near the birth of Christ.

And between "With trembling fingers" and "When Lazarus left his charnel-cave" he has written the first draft of his "Morte d'Arthur." [3]

In the final numbering, these are sections IX, XXX, XXXI, LXXXV, and XXVIII, whereas the trial *Memoir* had listed IX, I, XXXI, XXVIII, II, and XXVI. According to Valerie Pitt,[4] the Trinity notebook (which I have not seen) in which the "Morte d'Arthur" follows "With trembling fingers" contains XXX, IX, XVII, XVIII, two versions of XXXI, and LXXXV, and is dated 1833–1835. According to Christopher Ricks [5] it also contains XXVIII and a version of XXXII. The Heath Commonplace Book has IX, XVII, XVIII, LXXXV, XXX, XXXI, and XIX. According to the Eversley Edition the first written sections were IX, XVII, XVIII, XXXI, LXXXV, and XXVIII. These sources agree only on IX, XXXI, and LXXXV, if we exclude

[2] This material, without date and pagination, is in the Tennyson Research Centre at the Lincoln City Library.

[3] *Memoir* I, 109. Here Hallam indicates also that these sections of *In Memoriam* follow the earliest version of "The Two Voices," but the information is sketchy.

[4] Valerie Pitt, *Tennyson Laureate* (London, 1962), p. 281.

[5] Christopher B. Ricks (ed.), *The Poems of Tennyson* (Harlow, 1969), p. 857.

the trial *Memoir*, but they may all be correct if each source can be taken to indicate sections *among* those which were written earliest. The 1835 date on the Trinity notebook seems to justify this possibility.

John Heath gives evidence that IX was the very first section to be composed; he copied it into his Commonplace Book and dated it "Oct. 6. 1833." It precedes a sonnet by Frederick Tennyson, dated "2 May. 1833," and three pages earlier are two stanzas dated "Sept ? 1833." The Commonplace Book itself is dated 24 September 1832. In some cases, revisions in Heath's copies were made at a later time, often by the original authors themselves. It does not seem possible to determine at what points in the years after 1832 these poems were entered into Heath's collection, nor is it vital to pursue the point. Only the deliberate dating of the "Fair ship" poem (IX) is significant here, in confirming that the section was written within six days of the Tennysons receiving the news of Arthur Hallam's death. Tennyson may have written X shortly after IX, or at least when Heath's book was at hand to be revised. The original fifth line of IX in Heath, "Draw thy dear freight to those that mourn," was altered in Tennyson's own hand to read "So draw him home to those that mourn," which is the final version of the line. The change seems to have been made to avoid a heavy repetition in X.8: "thy dark freight, a vanish'd life." It is one of the two corrections of IX in Tennyson's own hand in Heath's book,[6] and Tennyson himself must have sanctioned the dating of section IX. Therefore Heath, the trial *Memoir*, the printed *Memoir*, and the Eversley Edition agree in naming IX as the first section composed. Section X has never been considered a first-written section, but one can imagine the poet's early development of the "Fair ship" series, IX to XVII.

Among the Harvard papers are three holograph manuscripts of IX which contribute to the general mystery. They are not easily explained, although one may be the poet's original copy and another may have belonged with those papers which, according to one theory, became eventually the large Trinity ledger, from which IX is missing. Also among the Harvard papers are three stanzas rhyming *a b a b*, which became in their revised form parts of section III. Critics have suggested that Tennyson must have experimented with the stanzaic

[6] The second correction changed line 18 from "Till all my widow'd race is run," to "Till all my widow'd race be run," which is also the final printed reading.

rhyme pattern before deciding on *a b b a* for his *In Memoriam*, but there is no evidence whatsoever that III in any form is one of the earliest written sections. Furthermore, several stanzas found their way into *In Memoriam* from earlier unrelated (and unpublished) poems, and other groups of lines which only generally suggest thoughts or feelings of *In Memoriam* have been considered seminal lines for the concept of the poem. Stanzas rhyming *a b a b*, which became in revision a part of the poem, probably belong to material which existed before Arthur Hallam's death, just as the "*In Memoriam* stanza" had been used earlier by Tennyson.[1] Any assumption of stanzaic experimentation for the poem seems unfounded.

A letter from Hallam Lord Tennyson to Dr. Butler, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, dated 10 December 1897, announced the entrusting of a manuscript in perpetuity to the College. According to the letter, this was a collection of manuscript sheets of *In Memoriam* which Alfred Tennyson had given years earlier to his friend Sir John Simeon, who had them bound into a volume. Lady Simeon had readily agreed with a suggestion from Hallam that they carry out an earlier wish of the poet — that the manuscript be presented to Trinity on the condition that no copy of any part of it ever be made, and that nothing in it which had not been published should ever be published. This is the interdiction recently lifted. Even Lady Simeon had been asked never to show the private notes in it (written by James Spedding) to anyone, nor to copy anything from it. It is not known when or why Spedding had a chance to write in the book. The restriction, still in effect, on the private notes is consistent with Tennyson's desire that his poetry be read as poetry rather than as documents in his autobiography. The personal and private nature of Spedding's notes and queries may unwittingly have drawn the future reader away from the dramatic elements of the poem. Although the former restrictions had never prevented information being given about the manuscript, they had made useful discussion of it difficult. Familiar as this material may be, it is nevertheless a necessary part of the total picture of the problems under consideration here, and it bears repeating once more.

[1] Aware of no previous claimants to the stanza, Tennyson believed he had invented this particular form, but E. P. Morton exhumed a number of examples from earlier verse (see his "Poems in the Stanza of *In Memoriam*," *Modern Language Notes*, XXIV (1909), 67–70).

Hallam Tennyson in the *Memoir*[8] refers to this tall leather-bound Trinity manuscript as the "earliest jottings, begun in 1833, of the 'Elegies' as they were then called." Lady Simeon, in her letter of 9 December 1897, to Dr. Butler, calls it the first manuscript of *In Memoriam*. It may be the first manuscript of the finished poem, but it is not the "earliest jottings" of the poem — not, at least, *as it stands now*, because it lacks sections IX and XVII in any form. There is, however, one way in which its pages may include some of these first jottings and prove Hallam Tennyson correct in the *Memoir*. If Alfred Tennyson wrote out sections of the poem on sheets or scraps of paper, he might have entered them (when he saw his design for the whole work) in appropriate places in a tall ledger — now the Lincoln manuscript. Some of the individual sheets which were not lost or destroyed were given to the Simeons, were then bound into a volume, and were in turn given to Trinity College. By this line of thinking, nearly all the separate sheets could be called "early jottings," and we could suppose that *In Memoriam* was largely written by 1845, if not 1842, according to certain evidence from the Lincoln book. Furthermore, when Tennyson said he filled up empty spaces in his book with poems (*i.e.* sections), he therefore had to be speaking of the Lincoln book. But objections to this will be noted shortly.

The Usher Art Gallery of Lincoln now contains the second tall "butcher-ledger-like-book,"[9] whose one hundred and fourteen sections of *In Memoriam* include a version of the epilogue. Among its features are a section (crossed out) between LVI and LVII, a version of XCIX crossed out between LXXXV and LXXXVI, an extra version of LXX, and an abbreviated CXXIV. The order of the sections is very close to the final order from IX to CX, IX being preceded by I.i, III, IV, II, V and VI, and CX being followed by CXII, CXIII, CXI, CXVIII, CXV, CXVII, a version of CXIX, CXXII, the epilogue, CXXIII, CXXX, part of CXXIV, CXXVII, and CXXXI. Since the trial edition of 1850 contains one hundred and nineteen sections, we may suspect the Lincoln ledger to have been in use around 1849 or 1850, and to represent an almost final order for the poem. Mystery surrounds the function of this manuscript: if the poet used it as a fair copy for the trial edition, why are there a few sections missing,

[8] *Memoir* I, 297.

[9] This is Tennyson's description of the book, quoted in the *Memoir* I, 297, from a letter to Coventry Patmore. He always used the term "long" rather than "tall".

among them the prologue? If he did not arrange it for this purpose, why did he not, for his own copy and record, rearrange and add to the sheets which were bound (supposedly) as the Trinity manuscript? In addition, when reference is made by Tennyson or his friends to a long butcher's-ledger in which the poem was kept, is this indeed the Lincoln or the Trinity manuscript?

Valerie Pitt argues that the ledger referred to must be the present Lincoln manuscript — the one Tennyson left on a shelf in his London lodgings early in 1850;[10] her evidence involves a process of eliminating the existence of the Trinity manuscript in 1850. Miss Pitt cites an unidentified account of Tennyson's gift of a bundle of papers to Sir John Simeon in 1859 or 1860 — papers soiled, torn, and in scraps, all containing pieces of *In Memoriam*. The Simeons took the papers to the master bookbinder, Bedford, who with prodigious effort arranged them into the form of a long, narrow book. Because there are references to such a book before 1850, the present Lincoln manuscript must be the subject of all such references at least before 1860. But Miss Pitt remarks with justified astonishment that Bedford, unless Lady Simeon exaggerated the condition of that bundle of papers, must have been a wizard to produce a tidy book from a mess of scraps; and one must add that Bedford would have had to be an expert in the art of invisible paper-mending, since the Simeon-Trinity manuscript hardly shows signs of a conglomerate origin. Furthermore, even among the Tennyson material in the Lincoln Research Centre is the quoted inscription by Hallam Tennyson from the Trinity ledger. Hallam's inscription, signed by his father, states that the manuscript was given to Lady Simeon on 25 June 1886 — Hallam's wedding anniversary. In a letter of February 1967, Sir Charles Tennyson wrote that the original description of the Trinity manuscript's condition when first seen by Sir John Simeon is not very exact. Valerie Pitt gives no source for her information on this matter.

If the Trinity book was not formed until 1860 or later, its sheets could have been those sent to the printer in 1850, which would account for their so-called soiled condition. This theory is somewhat encouraged by the fact that about two-fifths of the sections missing in the book are to be found among the sheets of manuscript in the Harvard Tennyson papers, in some form. Tennyson may have presented the Simeons with whatever sheets he could find in 1859 or

[10] *Tennyson Laureate*, p. 279.

1860, the rest of the loose sheets turning up at later times — a line of thought which presumes that the printer returned the original sheets to the poet. On the other hand, if the Trinity manuscript was made up of loose sheets given to the Simeons, it is difficult to imagine why the sections were not bound in their final order, or why the nine-stanza version of "On a Mourner" should have been bound in among the later sections of *In Memoriam*. A further argument against the Trinity book as the printer's sheets is the occasional appearance on one page of two sections whose order bears no connection to the order of the printed poem. One can only presume that Hallam's 1886 inscription date is correct, rather than the account arguing for 1859 or 1860, as the date the book was given to the Simeons, and that the ledger was always a ledger, and not a bundle of ragged papers bound as a ledger. A fresh examination of the book's binding might reveal the answer to this problem, without removing the difficulties noted above.

The seemingly direct Hallam-Simeon evidence supporting the loose-sheets origin of the Trinity manuscript is challenged by further peculiarities in that document. Why are there so many blank pages and spaces throughout? Very little material is crossed out or altered, which suggests that Tennyson entered most of the sections after they were developed in his mind (as was his regular practice in composing new poems). But there are a few alterations or corrections made to conform to the final published versions. Why should Tennyson have bothered with these, if the Trinity book represents just an early stage in the development of *In Memoriam*? And why does the book share with the Lincoln manuscript certain odd features, which will be mentioned below?

The Lincoln manuscript, whose existence had previously been known only to the Tennyson family, was loaned to the Usher Gallery in 1959. Since 1960 this manuscript has been on "permanent" display in the Gallery's Tennyson Exhibition. One significant feature of both the Trinity and Lincoln books is the "motto" stanza (I.i) which stands alone on a page at the front of the book. Neither manuscript contains a version of the complete section I. The Lincoln ledger opens with a page containing a sketch of a church, within whose frame is an arrangement of the dates "November 3.4.th5.", the "5" being much larger than the rest; below this is "3.n.m. / 1842. N.M.5." Beneath the church is "N.8." Among other items are the silhouette drawing of a

head and the solution to a large problem in long-division. Two sketches of the same head appear in the Trinity ledger, which also has "1842" as part of its inscription material — an additional element of mystery pertaining to that manuscript's origin, especially since 1859–60 and 1886 already figure largely in its history.

Only in four or five sections have the printed versions of the poem received much alteration from the Lincoln versions (none of which, incidentally, is numbered in the manuscript). These few sections were corrected or revised in the manuscript, after having been entered in their earlier or original forms. Thus the Lincoln manuscript afforded Tennyson a visual idea of the poem's final form, although it is not itself the final form. The epilogue looks particularly messy on its pages — one of the few instances of any *In Memoriam* manuscript page representing a working copy. The last pages seem to represent a tentative record of sections which awaited final ordering according to a definite plan.

Seventeen sections appearing in the first edition of the poem in June 1850 are absent from the Lincoln manuscript: the prologue, I (in its full form), VII, VIII, LXXXVIII, XCI, XCVI, XCVII, CVI, CXIV, CXVI, CXX, CXXI, CXXV, CXXVI, CXXVIII, and CXXIX. But of these, LXXXVIII, XCI, CXXV, CXXVI, and CXXVIII *are* in the Trinity manuscript. Section CXIX might also be considered missing from the Lincoln book, because only in its last stanza does it resemble what one might call the Lincoln CXIX. Inaccuracies in Valerie Pitt's and Mrs. Mattes's accounts [11] of the Lincoln book are attributable perhaps to the former inaccessibility of this manuscript: Miss Pitt places CXVIII after CXV and CXVII, whereas it precedes CXV; Mrs. Mattes's list of the missing sections in the Lincoln manuscript is quite fictional.

At this point, questions concerning the origins, nature, and function of both known major manuscripts remain unanswered, as they must, and problems of the accounts of the manuscripts remain unsolved, the latter partly because Tennyson himself was generally both reticent in discussing his manuscripts and deliberately careless about their future. But with the preceding material in mind, we can approach anew some well-worn material from the *Memoir*, searching for evidence helpful in solving the problems and enigmas.

[11] These are in *Tennyson Laureate*, p. 97, and in Eleanor Bustin Mattes's "*In Memoriam*": *The Way of a Soul* (New York, 1951), pp. 73–74.

Recalling the Christmas holiday of 1841, Edmund Lushington wrote that

> the number of the memorial poems had rapidly increased since I had seen the poet, his book containing many that were new to me. Some I heard him repeat before I had seen them in writing, others I learnt to know first from the book itself which he kindly allowed me to look through without stint.[12]

Of meeting Tennyson briefly in Eastbourne during the summer of 1845 he wrote that the poet

> had then completed many of the cantos in "In Memoriam" and was engaged on "The Princess," of which I had heard nothing before. . . . He said to me, "I have brought in your marriage at the end of 'In Memoriam,'" and then showed me those poems of "In Memoriam" which were finished and which were a perfectly novel surprise to me.[13]

The reference to "his book" does not suggest necessarily that there was only one book at that time. It determines that there was at least one book in, and probably before, 1841, which removes the importance of the Trinity or Lincoln manuscript's 1842 dating. If indeed only the Lincoln book existed in 1841, the 1842 date may indicate the time at which Tennyson stopped entering his new sections there. Lushington's 1845 reminiscences do not destroy this supposition; they do argue that the structure of *In Memoriam* was complete in or before 1845.

Tennyson read parts of *In Memoriam* to Aubrey de Vere early in 1849 or 1850. According to de Vere,

> Sometimes towards the close of a stanza his voice dropped; but I avoided the chance of thus losing any part of the meaning by sitting beside him, and glancing at the pieces he read. They were written in a long and narrow manuscript book, which assisted him to arrange the poems in due order by bringing many of them at once before his eye.[14]

Because each page of the ledger-book could contain a maximum of eleven stanzas in Tennyson's handwriting, the tall (or "long") book was the ideal form for the purpose de Vere suggested. The Lincoln manuscript is about eighteen inches tall, but the Trinity manuscript is likewise tall.

On the other hand, Tennyson offered to read certain poems about

[12] *Memoir* I, 202.
[13] *Ibid.*, 203.
[14] *Ibid.*, 293.

Arthur Hallam in April 1849, in London, to Francis Palgrave, who recollected,

> He then brought forth a bundle of beautifully copied verse: the name "In Memoriam" I do not think he used; and read several pieces. One was No. CIII, "On that last night . . . ," which friends had specially admired: others from the early series describing the ship sailing "from the Italian shore" (No. IX): and that, I think, where parents or sweetheart await a son's or a lover's return.[15]

Thus we have a "bundle" and a "book," according to two records from 1849, and it is probably a fair assumption that the "book" is presently on display in the Usher Gallery of Lincoln. But the "bundle" problem has now been more greatly complicated by Palgrave's startling revelation: CIII and IX, which Tennyson definitely read from the bundle, are *not* in the Simeon-Trinity manuscript, and neither are VI (about which Palgrave was more cautious in his memories) nor the other poems of the "Fair ship" series. And neither CIII nor VI is among the Harvard papers. The "bundle," as we have seen already, has been substantiated both by Valerie Pitt and by the letter of Hallam Lord Tennyson to Trinity College. In the latter, however, the number of sections estimated to be in the Simeon-Trinity manuscript (one hundred) is far closer to the actual number in the Lincoln manuscript, which indicates that Hallam seems not to have examined the manuscript closely.

Despite discrepancies between the bundle known to Palgrave and the one which supposedly became the Trinity manuscript, Palgrave's words could indicate that only the Lincoln manuscript existed as a book at this time. If this were the case, we might conjecture that the bundle of papers is not only the copy used by the printer of the trial edition, but is also (at least in part) the sheets given to Trinity College by way of the Simeons. Therefore the Lincoln manuscript would be the one Tennyson left in a cupboard in London, and which he asked Coventry Patmore to rescue. The letter of 28 February 1850 to Patmore refers to

> my book of Elegies: you know what I mean, a long, butcher-ledger-like book. . . . I have some obscure remembrance of having lent it to you.[16]

Of course the theory that this ledger is now the Lincoln manuscript collapses if we grant the accuracy of both Patmore and Hallam Tenny-

[15] *Memoir* II, 486.
[16] *Memoir* I, 297.

son, who in later years affirm that this rescued book was given to the Simeons. Patmore wrote to Hallam Tennyson,

> The letter from your father concerning the MS of "In Memoriam" I gave to the late Sir John Simeon, thinking that he ought to have it, as he had the MS itself. This letter asked me to visit the lodging in Mornington Place, Hampstead Road, which he had occupied two or three weeks before. . . .[17]

At no point in the *Memoir* or in any associated document is there a shred of corrective information that the above manuscript is *not* the one presented to Sir John Simeon. Tennyson had realized that his book was missing when he wished to read some sections from it to a visiting artist. Although he may have sought the largest available grouping of *In Memoriam* sections from which to read, it seems curious that he should have no material at hand — not even the bundle of papers he had shown to others. One is still tempted to believe that only one ledger existed in 1850, but the peculiar nature of the Trinity book with its cryptic doodles and inscriptionary material (partly in Spanish), its motto stanza, blank pages and all the other features noted earlier, tends to militate against such a belief. The claims of either the Trinity or Lincoln manuscript to be the ledger mentioned in accounts of the *In Memoriam* manuscripts still seem unfounded. Will another long manuscript appear?

[17] *Ibid.* See also the footnote by Hallam, 297. Undoubtedly Tennyson did not give *two* manuscripts of the poem to the *Simeons*.

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