

(76) The Traumatic Impact of Death on Human Realization

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In the final line of the poem Tennyson reveals his optimistic attitude that he will meet his God face to face after death.

I hope to see my Pilot face to face When I have crossed the bar.
Lin, 15-6

Conclusion

Tennyson explains faith and how it contrasts with knowledge, and how there is much to existence that extends beyond humanity's limited knowledge. "These explanations add together like a mathematical equation to support the idea that God is greater than humans can ever know" (Galens 2004, 208)

The most outstanding aspects of In Memoriam are its transgressive quality, a crossing the world of life and death, or it demarcates the borders that separate the dead from the living. Death in Tennyson's In Memoriam, especially in the darker, earlier sections, is not so much the end of life as a grave activity, the human dead body is in progressive activity.

Trauma has changed and transformed Tennyson's realization of life and death. As he admits his early doubt and finds the virtue and the courage to face the doubt. This attempt lead him to the transcendental signified, to the sublime through a process of reflection and meditation, that lead him to deliverance. In his poem 'In Memoriam' Tennyson admits that death is not the end, and his friend Hallam is not lost. For he believes God to help the death and enfold them with his great spiritual love. Love, Faith and imagination are necessary for Tennyson to deal with the spiritual world and communicate with the dead.

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And all at once it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine, (Canto 95.lines 33-6)

Once again the poet reflects his transcendentalism through an elevated spiritual state, which leads to have a lucid view of the universe and the concealed realms of life and death. Tennyson's spirit is floating for he reaches an ethereal dimension through love:

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face. (lyric 108) epilogue

Tennyson's comment is at least as strange as his disquieting act. For it could be said that "he saw nothing but ghosts; his greatest poetry is about absence rather than presence, about vanished persons and shadowy places, particularly the long and vivifying shadow cast over his life by the passing of Arthur Hallam" (Rosenberg1992, 291).

Death cannot limit the poet's existence as he believes, for it endows him with a new life. The spiritual life is the essence that secures the poet attachment to life. Language of departure and farewell has lost its signifier for the spiritual Tennyson sustains the physical one through a sublime state.

But in my spirit will I dwell, And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu, I cannot think the thing farewell. (Canto 123, lines 9-12)

Tennyson has crystalized his religious experience with faith and God through love and happiness. He believes that death is a happy beginning for a new love and new life. Tennyson's poem ' Crossing the Bar' is a culmination for his realization, for it conveys a great faith that cannot be shaken or undermined by the sadness of departure. As he writes:

Twilight and evening bell, And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell, When I embark; (line, 9-12)

observer. The Yew tree here, is an incarnation for the transformational state of human body into a plant. It is old for it stands for a traditional graveyard with all its graves and ashes. The tree is metaphorically deemed as a token of a spiritual word.

Old Yew, which grasped at the stones

That name the underlying dead,

Thy fibres net the dreamless head,

Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,

Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,

I seem to fail from out my blood

And grow incorporate into thee. (canto2.1-4, 13-6)

Tennyson's conceptual realization of love is totally updated after his trauma with death. Love is no longer physical or confined with the human body. It has a new and wider spectrum to enfold the all the creation. Its sublimity stems from the divine compassion reaching the simplest human passion. The one who experience the divine love shall not feel death, his spirit will be strongly associated with God and nature:

My love involves the love before; My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou, I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh; I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice; I shall not lose thee tho' I die. (canto 130, lines 9-16)

The poet here is a clairvoyant who could communicate with the dead people, as he feels their letters and words cross his mind and flash through his eyes. The poet enjoys and reads those noble words of the dead because they unite him with them through a strange communion with their living soul, as he writes:

So word by word, and line by line,

The dead man touch'd me from the past,

Beyond the profound melancholy and solitude, Tennyson also associated the Victorian mourning with tropes of sublimity. These tropes have Romantic depth and a celestial, Christian transcendence. In lyric 41 (“Thy spirit ere our fatal loss”), “the poet prefers the sublimity of intellectual and spiritual striving— Hallam’s rise, in life, “from high to higher”—to the sublime change that has “turn’d” Hallam “to something strange” (Schor 1994, 233).

The poet’s “upward mind” is empowered by a wild desire: that he writes this: That I could wing my will with might To leap the grades of life and light, And flash at once, my friend, to thee. (lyric 41). As Tennyson believes that the human body could be lost but the human spirit is strongly associated with God. The spirit is present and its presence is unlimited. Moreover, Tennyson believes “The soul-body seems to be thought of as a duality, the soul being ‘in’ the body, so that when the physical body dies the soul would either vanish into non-being or survive without its body in a discarnate state at death” (Hair 2011, 92). He ruminates his friend Hallam, as he believes that his soul is with God. Through this sublime view the poet elevates the standards of love to higher level.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.(Prologue)

Tennyson presents two-dimensional aspects of his friend: the physical Hallam and the spiritual Hallam. Thus, Death has transformed Hallam into a spirit. “A Spirit, not a breathing voice”. “The spirit dwells in the body until death, when this dualism dissolves and spirit separates itself from matter. Spirit here is something ghostly or invisible, separated even from its conventional metaphor, breath” (Hair 2011,93).

Tennyson gives equally explicit voice to the consolations of nature in his lament for Arthur Hallam. Being buried beneath a tree, Tennyson contemplates Hallam body transformed into a different creation moving through life, but in different forms. Consequently, he believes that the body is in continuous action though invisible to the

And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain

On the bald street breaks the blank day. (Canto7. 1-12)

The house is dark because it is night, because lights are dimmed in sign of sadness and melancholy. Darkness here opposes light ,which is a symbol of life and joy. The poet compares Hallam's house to a grave that has no spirit. Simply because Hallam is the spirit that departed the house. "In standing beside it "once more," the poet confesses to his repeated, pained visitations, a measure not merely of the duration of his grief (he had been mourning for seventeen years when he wrote the lines) but of a compulsive repetitiveness. While haunting Hallam's house at night" (Rosenberg1992, 297).

Post Traumatic Metamorphosis

The traumatized person will develop certain reactionary and emotional way in dealing with stressing events. Dalenberg says that "trauma has been defined by the experience of certain events and by universal or specific cognitive or emotional reactions to such events"(Dalenberg 2017, 27). Alfred Lord Tennyson has reflected new realization of life after being traumatized by death, thus he develops his views about the universe. The period of sadness, despair ,loss and doubt led Tennyson to change his thought of the human beings and all the creatures. He turned towards faith in God, towards the sublime 'transcendental signified'.

Transcendental Signified

This concept is highly revered and esteemed in classical philosophies, for it is concerned with a mysterious spiritual powerful being. Allah Almighty is the 'transcendental signified'. As the term transcendental suggests, "the logos exists independently of and outside all of the various systems that govern our thoughts. Above all, the (mental concept) that has no need for a signifier (spoken or written word). Both self-sufficient and self-determining" (Childs 2006, 131-2) Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) calls it "an external point of reference upon which one may build a concept or philosophy. Once found, this transcendental signified would provide ultimate meaning since it would be the origin of origins... providing a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign" (Bressler 1999, 109).

by Queen Victoria and countless other mid- and late-Victorian mourners” (Schor1994, 12).

The final lines of canto 49 reveal the extent of sorrow and pain experienced by Tennyson after Hallam’s death, as he writes:

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears,
Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears. (canto 49. Line 13-6)

Here, the poet is overwhelmed with sadness, depression and chaotic tranquility. Thomas Carlyle saw ‘in an articulate element of tranquil chaos’. It is a lyric about the suppression of intense emotion, a facing up to melancholia, while drowning in it” (Campbell 2004, 160).

The poet’s sadness is clearly reflected through Hallam’s empty house. Tennyson associated this house with darkness and mystery as he writes in his section of In Memoriam the "Dark House". It is composed after the traumatic event of his death. The poet is overwhelmed by a shocked loss, so the flux of mourning is so amorous that it cast a heavy burden over the poet. Consequently, life is deemed as gloomy sphere.

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,

Traumatic Events Versus Traumatic Responses

The traumatized human being will respond in different ways to their traumatic events or stressors. "The term trauma has been used in two ways, creating considerable conceptual and methodological confusion. Trauma sometimes refers to exposure to traumatic events, but in other cases, trauma refers to traumatic responses that occur following exposure to traumatic events. emotional and behavioral responses following exposure to stressors" (Kilpatrick 2017, 63-4).

Elegy as a Death response

The human sensation is strongly entangled in death issues. The extent of sadness, melancholy and pain could be lucidly reflected by poets who are the highly sensible people. Mostly, the poets responds to death in form of elegy that would convey their pure emotional and psychological states. The rhetorical tradition proved itself to be a type of ritual that was practiced by poets and orators in early civilizations. "These Rituals prescribe formal behaviour whose predictability can be comforting in moments of uncertainty and transition. The rhetorical corollary to these repeated formal behaviours is the topos or commonplace, which offers the reassurance of shared and repeated language" (Brady 2006, 1).

Thus, conventions enable the poets to express 'the self-consciousness, through laments are reflection for their deep states of grief and loss, "in which a subject's ultimate reality is a private, internal core or locus of the self, where all affect takes place prior to being publicly expressed" (Brady 2006, 4).

Coleridge summed up the romantic form of elegy as "the form of poetry natural to the reflective mind. It may treat of any subject, but it must treat of no subject for itself; but always and exclusively with reference to the poet himself" (Hammond 2004, 31). The poet reflects his response to his friend's death through solitude, isolation and melancholy. He shows no social activity. Alfred Lord Tennyson "did not attend Arthur Hallam's funeral. But the 131 lyrics he composed between Hallam's death in 1833 and 1850 became a consoling witness to the sense of deep, boundless grief articulated

beings of their beloved ones. never punctual. Early or late, sudden or protracted, it is never over in an instant says Brady, “death began before the last exhalation and ended long after the eyes were closed. From the sickbed, through the liminal period of watching and preparing the corpse, to the commemorative ceremonies which might stretch over months or years, death took its time” (Brady 2006, 1).

So, death starts as personal and private phenomena and ends as a universal where people are involved in various manners through their human passions. The human beings have thought of death as a rite passage to different world, which is designed by “separation, liminality and reintegration. The rite of passage does not only affect the dying – it also unfolds gradually for the bereaved, who are distinct in grief, take on mourning vestments and mourning attitudes, and eventually reintegrate with the community”(Brady 2006, 1).

Among so many grave situations human integrity and physical safety hold the prime position in man’s mind, whenever they are threatened or undermined a special fear network will be established within the bereaved. This fear network will construe all these dangers such as serious “threat to one’s life or physical integrity; serious threat or harm to one’s children, spouse, or other close relatives and friends; sudden destruction of one’s home or community; or seeing another person being seriously injured or killed as the result of an accident or physical violence” (Dalenberg 2017, 18).

Tennyson has been traumatized by death several times, for he experienced a series of traumas in 1831 and 1833. These years were so hard that they rendered the poet into a melancholic creature. “In 1831, Tennyson’s father died. Tennyson’s older brother Edward committed himself to a mental asylum, where he lived until his death in 1890. In 1833, Hallam died suddenly, at the age of twenty two” (Galens 2004, 205). His first experience was after the death of his father. Rosenberg affirms that “within a week of his father's death, Tennyson slept in the dead man's bed, earnestly desiring to see his ghost, but no ghost came. Years later, recalling his failed effort to conjure his father's spirit, he remarked that "a poet never sees a ghost” (Rosenberg 1992, 291).

Introduction

The human beings are vulnerable creatures, their life is mostly controlled and governed by mysterious predicaments. A wide scope of melancholy and sadness dominate the human entity in his mortal life. These overwhelming incidents leave their negative traces on human psyche. Some of these sad incidents are man-made such as wars, genocides, displacement, ethnic discrimination etc. While the other natural events are concerned with death, natural disasters, and loss.

The inflicted is called traumatized person, who develops a different type of sensation and deportment. Literature has its share of trauma and melancholy. This paper will shed light upon the Victorian poet Alfred Lord Tennyson and his Traumatic experience with death and its further impacts on his life.

Trauma

Trauma can have different forms as negative events on human mind, it is defined through stimulation that exceeds the individual's stamina to act normally. S. Freud famously spoke of traumatic stress as "the result of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli, a consequence of a rupturing of the interface between the internal and external world within the survivor's mind. Thus, from a psychodynamic perspective, a negative event can at times be seen as a trauma"(Dalenberg 2017, 15).

One of the tremendous influences that can shake the human existence is death as cruel reality for life almost entirely because of its magnitude in some instances, but in other instances, "it would achieve this status because of the inadequacy of the individual ego as a result of youth, mental illness, an unsupportive environment, or other forms of vulnerability" (Dalenberg 2017, 16)

Death as Traumatic

Death is the greatest predicament for human beings, that it overcomes the life with all its aspects and renders man a corps void of all earthly activities. It manifests its power over all the creatures. It destroys the dreams , love, ambitions and deprives the human

Abstract:-

Trauma is one of the most critical aspect of the human beings, mainly because it can affect and change their life. Death is the best representative for traumatic event, for it reflects the maximum extent of stress, sadness and melancholy. The English Victorian poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson, has sad experiences with death that lead him to think in different way. So, he develops his new way of realization of life and Death throughout his poetry especially: In Memoriam A. A. H. , Crossing the Bar.

Key words: Trauma, Death, transcendental signified, In Memoriam.

المخلص:-

تعتبر الصدمة من الصفات الانسانية الحرجة حيث انها تملك القدرة المؤثرة على حياة الانسان. ويعتبر الموت المثل الافضل للحدث الصادم لأنه يعكس الحد الاقصى من الاجهاد والحزن والكآبة. وقد واجه الشاعر الانكليزي الفكتوري الفريد لورد تينيسن تجارب حزينة مع الموت والتي قادته الى التفكير بطرق مختلفة. لذلك قام تطوير طرق ادراكه للحياة والموت من خلال اعماله الشعرية خاصة في قصائد التخليد لارثر هنري هالام وعبور الحاجز.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصدمة، الموت، المقدس، التخليد.

The Traumatic Impact of Death on Human Realization - A Reading In Alfred Lord Tennyson' Selected poems

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تأثير صدمة الموت على الإدراك البشري الإنساني - قراءة في قصائد الفرد

لورتنس المنتخبة

المدرس

شير عبد العادل موسى
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