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The Major Themes of Tennyson

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THE MAJOR THEMES OF TENNYSON

by

Elsie Antony Panakal

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 1963
This study has arisen from a special affinity the present author feels for Tennyson. This work is an attempt to portray the essence of Tennyson's beliefs and philosophy as they are expressed thematically in his poetry. It is hoped that this analysis will throw a new light on the study of Tennyson's themes by pointing out the similarities of Tennyson's ideas to those associated with Eastern culture.

The author would like to express her deepest appreciation to Professor Martin Svaclic for his patience and assistance.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Alfred Tennyson is more dramatically allied with Victorian poetry than either Robert Browning or Matthew Arnold. Living through almost the entire century (he was born in 1809 and died in 1892), Tennyson became the prophet, the sage, in fact, the oracle of his age. Posterity has judged and dismissed Victorian exaltation of Tennyson as exaggerated, nay, even vulgar. It has drastically modified and revaluated his claims to greatness. But there is agreement among both Victorian admirers and twentieth-century critics on one point: the superb style of Tennyson. In fact, students of Victorian poetry commonly accept the poet as a master of style with a fecundity of expression but with very little to say. It can be safely asserted that both dilettantes and scholars, while busying themselves with emendations in Tennyson's poems, or the question of Victorian taste in crowning him as the poet laureate, have, to a great extent, neglected the matter of his themes.

Between Poems by Two Brothers, published in 1827, and the last volume, The Death of Oenone, Akbar's Dream, and Other Poems, published posthumously, the range of Tennyson's poetry, like the time span, is wide, and his contribution is abundant; and although it includes "so much bad poetry," it has to be conceded that there
is in it a large body of remarkable writing, remarkable both for its style and for its themes. A study of Tennyson's major themes reveals that he is not only concerned with common Victorian events and problems or with handing out cures through his poetry for all the evils of his century, but that he is also concerned with the eternal questions of man. He is completely aware of the hieratic role of the poet, and he directs his poetic vision toward the reality of the great Atman or the Supreme Being, or rather toward that invisible world which gives meaning to the Darwinian world of flux, that sphere in which the human soul will find immortality.

As far as can be ascertained, no one has conducted a study similar to the one that is undertaken in the present dissertation. Arthur Carr, in his article "Tennyson as a Modern Poet," attempts to classify some of Tennyson's themes: love of the past; loss and recovery; dreams and regressions; and frustration. These classifications, however, are too broad to be labeled as specific themes. Moreover, they are not logically parallel themes, some of them describing attitudes rather than themes. Finally, to conclude as Mr. Carr does that Tennyson's one major theme is "frustration" is to over-simplify the issue. Mr. Carr, nevertheless, enjoys the unique position of being the only critic who has attempted an analysis of the poet's themes and detached his study

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from that of Tennyson's biography and style. While other critics have made incidental references to the poet's themes, none of them has made any study as detailed as the one that is undertaken here.

By and large, the general framework of the thesis is based on such questions as: What are some of Tennyson's major themes? How does he treat them in his poems? Is some kind of thematic development or progression evident? Is one theme stressed at one stage in his poetic career and another later? Through this thematic approach it is hoped that a clearer perspective on the large body of Tennyson's poems will be obtained, thus providing a deeper insight into the poet's mind as it developed over seventy years.

The major themes of Tennyson appear to be those concerned with escape, aesthetic detachment, social and political questions, quest, appearance and reality, balance, and the Everlasting Yea.

Escape is a theme of Tennyson's early poetry: namely, the poetry written prior to Arthur Hallam's death. In this poetry Tennyson is concerned with dreams, visions, and myth in an effort to escape from the problem of facing reality.

Aesthetic detachment is also a recurring theme in the early poems. That both escape and poetic isolation are closely related will be seen from the analysis of the poems. The poet discards the isolated palace, which is symbolic of both escape and isolation, with "The Palace of Art," written in 1833. Except for two short poems, Alfred Tennyson does not publish anything until 1842.
There is a definite line of demarcation between the early poetry and the poetry that is published (at the end of the ten years' silence) in 1842. In the Memoir Hallam Tennyson offers the following interpretation of the change in the poet:

My father's comprehension of human life had grown: and the new poems dealt with an extraordinarily wide range of subjects, chivalry, duty, reverence, self-control, human passion, human love, the love of country, science, philosophy, simple faith and the many complex moods of the religious nature; whilst they were free from the brooding self-absorption into which modern poetry is liable to lapse, and from what Arthur Hallam called "the habit of seeking relief in idiosyncrasies."  

According to this statement, after 1833 Tennyson deals with the "cherished formulas of man and of society." Some of the themes from the 1842 volume of his poetry to his death are related to social and political problems of nineteenth-century England. In fact, Tennyson becomes one with the social sphere; he assumes the supreme role of a reformer.

Quest or search is another major theme of Alfred Tennyson. In many poems the search is for knowledge or for beauty. But in many others the search is the outcome of an awareness that appearance of reality is not the end; the quest is here for truth or reality. It is also a symbol of the life journey, and the end of the journey extends into reality.

The problem of balance is another major concern of Tennyson.

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2 Hallam Tennyson, Life of Alfred Tennyson, A Memoir, (London, 1898), I, 244. This work will be cited hereafter as Memoir.
"Self-control, self-reverence, and self-knowledge" are the principles upon which balance is based. Man has "Free-will" which should be utilized to make the sense conform itself to the "Law which claims a free obedience." The Memoir further quotes Tennyson as having remarked: "For I hold nothing so clear as this, that I must be as good and noble as a man can be." A life that is based on balance brings into harmony the three major transcendentals: beauty, truth, goodness.

Escape and poetic isolation are discredited, by and large, precisely because they make such harmony impossible. The concept of balance is in the background when Tennyson is dealing with social and political questions.

Tennyson is very deeply aware of the problem of appearance and reality. Indeed, the question of illusion and reality has a very personal significance for the poet. Between the two, appearance and reality, there is an experience to be explored through poetry. Throughout an entire poetic career the exploration is undertaken. And in the final analysis, Tennyson can say with conviction that "the world is the shadow of God," and that if "Dark is the world to thee, thyself is the reason why." The shadow-world constitutes appearance or the finite. This finite is upheld

3Ibid., II, 113.
4Ibid., p. 111.
5Ibid., p. 112. The Ancient Sage makes this conclusion.
by the presence of God. Therefore, "if God," he would say, "were to withdraw Himself for one single instant from this Universe, everything would vanish into nothingness."6

The concept of appearance and reality has played a significant role in both Occidental and Indian philosophy. The East has settled it by saying that the senses are deceptive. All is in a constant state of flux searching for the Atman. When the absorption into the Atman takes place, through nirvana or death, the divinity in man takes over; release from the sense is there; man ceases and becomes eternal. The West includes infinite variations in its approach to the senses. The Hindu philosophers are concerned with a complete absorption of the individual self into the Supreme Reality. This they obtain in life through nirvana, which is possible only through self-control.

Tennyson read Plato, Kant, Berkeley, and Hegel7 (as well as translations of Sanskrit poetry). Charles Tennyson has stated that "the East was a strong influence imbibed through Galland's Arabian Nights... Sir William Jones's translations of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian poetry... The story of the great oriental civilizations began to live for him in Rollin's Ancient History... and Robertson's History of India."8 It is possible that Tenny-

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6Ibid., p. 116.
7Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (New York, 1949), p. 279. This work will be cited hereafter as Charles Tennyson.
8Ibid., p. 32.
son was influenced in his idea of illusion by the Western philosophers whom he studied, but it is also likely that he was influenced in his thinking by Indian philosophy. Tennyson was subject to mystical trances akin to nirvana; in his trance-state he experienced an absorption into the Infinite. Divinity in him took over; he experienced release from the sense. And in his poetry, especially in The Idylls of the King, sense is thoroughly discounted. On the basis of these points the author has attempted to relate the theory of appearance and reality to maya (a term in Hindu philosophy), which is the assumption that matter is illusion or that the sense is unreal.

Tennyson remarked at one time that "Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colours. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet."9 In the light of this, the present writer feels justified in relating the theme of appearance and reality to maya. Although Tennyson may not have been directly influenced in any way by the mysticism of Indian philosophy, still there is something suggestive about his distinctly Indian appearance. Carlyle described Tennyson as "one of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusty dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking. . . ."10

9Memoir, III, 163.
10Ibid., I, 242.
Tennyson is also a poet of doubt grappling with the religious conflicts of his age. His poetry rests by implication on a search for the Everlasting Yea. The symbol of this search is established early in his poetry, and takes him on a long journey through the Everlasting No. Faith is also based on inner fusion or balance, and again, on the necessary reduction of the whole phenomenon of creation in terms of the real and the infinite. Tennyson, however, is not a religious poet in the conventional sense. His religion is based purely on love and on the yearning to be united with God or the real. It is subjective. "We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognizes that there is not one fruitless pang, just as there is not one lost good," he has said.\[11\] This is the Everlasting Yea and is one of the major themes of Alfred Tennyson.

In this study it becomes clear that Tennyson's themes are all inter-related and interdependent. Escape is motivated chiefly by the great disparity between appearance and reality. It naturally leads to the isolation of the poet. The isolation is imposed also by a knowledge that the artist, from his perception of the dialectic of appearance and reality, has nothing in common with the world. The poet builds himself an ivory-tower from which he views the life of common man with impersonal detachment. But the philosophy of a detached art is rejected on the basis of an awareness that isolation implies some kind of an unbalance. Beauty, truth

\[11\]Ibid., II, 109.
and goodness have to coexist. These transcendentals lead to "self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control." Communication with man on the part of the soul involves grappling with current social and political problems. But even when the poet deals with the mundane and the common events, he is deeply conscious of the clash between appearance and reality. As he grows older the clash grows, or reality asserts its significance over illusion more powerfully. More and more the poet is in search of the unknown and the surreal part of his self. He sees as through the glass "darkly." The poet finds the ultimate meaning of life and creation in faith, a faith that is reached intuitively.

Alfred Tennyson's poetry thematically fits into the general pattern of English poetry. Escape and isolation are vestiges of the romantic fancy. Tennyson's early poems, especially those in Poems by Two Brothers, are mostly imitative of Byron, from whom he has borrowed meter and diction, gloomy and forbidding sentiments, vast and warlike Oriental and Ossianic subjects. The Byronic phase gives way to the Keatsian approach to life and poetry. A writer in The New Monthly Magazine reviewing the 1830 volume of Tennyson's poetry observes: "It is full of precisely the kind of poetry for which Mr. Keats was assailed, and for which the world is already beginning to admire him."12 Shelley and Wordsworth influence Tennyson with the idea of poet as prophet. As a Vic-

12Quoted by Thomas R. Lounsbury, Life and Times of Tennyson (New Haven, 1915), p. 225, from 'New Monthly Magazine,' XXXIII, 111.
torian poet Tennyson displays a deep interest in balance, quest, and faith. Matthew Arnold advocates the concept of balance in "one aim, one business, one desire" ("The Scholar Gypsy"); Thomas Carlyle preaches the philosophy of love, work, and the moral integrity of man. These writers are motivated by the desire to create balanced men,

temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Quest and faith are also Victorian themes. In the failure of traditional values, the Victorian writer is in search of knowledge and truth as an antidote for doubt. Tennyson's major poems dealing with doubt and faith are similar in tone to Carlyle's Sartor Resartus. Thus, his poetry is not detached. In fact, Tennyson is also a modern poet in certain respects. According to Arthur Carr

... he is our true precursor. He shows and hides, as if in embryo, a master theme of Joyce's Ulysses—the accentuated and moody self-consciousness and the sense of loss that mark Stephen Dedalus. He forecasts Yeats's interest in the private myth. He apprehended in advance of Aldous Huxley the uses of mysticism to castigate materialistic culture. And in Maud, at least, he prepared the way for the verse of Eliot's 'Preludes' and 'Prufrock'. At some crucial points Tennyson is a modern poet, and there are compelling reasons why we should try to comprehend him.13

It is mainly through a thematic study of Tennyson's poetry that his place in the general pattern of English literature becomes obvious.

The thematic interpretation is based on the Memoir and on the

13Critical Essays, p. 42.
poet's own explanation of his poems as recorded by his friends in Tennyson and His Friends. Charles Tennyson's biography of Tennyson is heavily relied upon. The author has also given due consideration to the major critics of Tennyson's poetry.

But the pattern that finally evolves in the study is the result mainly of the author's sympathy with Tennyson. And this pattern is also the outcome, to a large extent, of her own interpretation of many of the poems. Each chapter is based on one major theme. Chapter IV, however, is an exception; here both social and political questions are grouped together. The development of a particular theme follows the chronological order of the separate poems. In each chapter some kind of a design is observable in the way that the poet has developed a theme. Many poems have more than one theme, and hence it might appear that there is much repetition. But a close reading will make it obvious that the repetition has a function. For instance, sometimes the general pattern within the poem may be repeated in two or three chapters in order to focus the reader's attention on the significance of the poem under observation; the particular idea which is the subject of the particular chapter is not repeated. If the reader studies each chapter as a separate unit, at the end the total pattern will become clear.

The major thesis of the entire study rests on the realization that throughout the minute phases of Tennyson's poetry, there is
an undercurrent which carries the poet in search of the only thing that was of moment to him: the truth that reality is God or Atman, and that appearance is His shadow or the illusion or maya.
CHAPTER II

THE THEME OF ESCAPE

Escape is the recurrent theme that binds many of Tennyson's early poems, precisely those written before 1834 under Juvenilia, Poems by Two Brothers, Poems Chiefly Lyrical, and Poems. During this early period Tennyson is a romantic escapist who is deeply interested in dreams, visions, and myth. He is engaged in translating experience in terms of "sensation and sound," and in retreating from crude reality into a world of imagination. At this time he is satisfied to leave serious issues alone. "Mariana," "The Sea Fairies," and "The Lotos-Eaters" are a few of the early poems of escape, remarkable for the intensity of the poet's desire to seek refuge from reality. In these early poems Tennyson is esteemed as a word-painter of landscape and water, as a projector of lyrical moments against a background daubed with wisps of clouds and pine-trees, and as a poet who is satisfied largely to deal with the intangible and the visionary.

The term "escape" is applied to activities which are motivated by a deep yearning for liberation from actual life. It consists in an attempt to withdraw from reality, in a refusal to mix with action involving responsibility, or to accept tangible solutions to the problems of life. Escape is equivalent to a
longing for the world of the marvelous, for the allurements of chance and the irrational.

The "world of the marvelous" is evoked mostly through dreams, visions, and myth. The projection of exiled and outcast figures, or the physical and symbolic removal from reality through oriental subjects are a few of the devices invented by the poet to achieve an ideal which would transcend the morbid surroundings of his young life.

His young life was steeped in gloom and intense misery at Somersby, his first home. His father was the Rector there. The Reverend George Clayton Tennyson had a domineering character. To the end of his life the Rector suffered severe bouts of neurosis and temper under a parental injustice which had designated the younger son, Charles d'Eynscourt, as heir to the vast Bayons estate and other properties, while deciding that he, George Tennyson, should go into the Church. The Rector also inherited a generous quota of his father's eccentricity if nothing else.

The Memoir offers the following account:

Undoubtedly the disinheritance of my grandfather created a feeling of injustice in his mind which descended to his sons, though my father used to reflect in later years how little this early trial personally affected them and the d'Eynscourt sons; the cousins were always good friends.¹

This injustice together with his morbid disposition made Alfred's father quite impossible to live with. What with his drinking

¹Memoir, I, 18.
habits in his later years, the Rectory was converted into a bedlam
time and again. The Memoir continues that

the sense of his father's unkindness and injustice
prayed upon his [Alfred's] nerves and his health,
and caused him at times to be terribly despondent.
More than once Alfred, scared by his father's fits
of despondency, went out through the black night,
and threw himself on a grave in the churchyard,
praying to be beneath the sod himself.²

Instead of the blue blood flowing in the veins of the d'Eyncourt
cousins, the Tennysons had "black blood," a phrase which they
thought best described their morbid strain.

Somersby was quite far from anything resembling active life.
The Tennyson children lived in a world of their own, a world
which was circumscribed for them by their father. Set in a
sparsely populated region of Lincolnshire, the place was beyond
the immediate reach of gossip and excitement. The elder children
did not hear of the battle of Waterloo at the time. The children
were deprived of companions of their age and outlook, and they
were separated from the villagers "by a consciousness of caste."
It is not surprising, therefore, that they suffered from a melan-
cholia resembling their father's.

There was besides a severely Calvinistic aunt, Mrs. Bowine,
in the family. She, according to reliable sources, used to
exclaim in her Calvinistic fervor: "Alfred, Alfred, when I look
at you, I think of the words of Holy Scripture--'Depart from me,

²Ibid., p. 20.
ye cursed, into everlasting fire."³ Outbursts of such vigor must certainly have taken their toll of the young man's sensitivity. His headmaster at Louth Grammar School was of the moral caliber of Mrs. Bowine. The Grammar School days, consequently, were one long nightmare to the poet.

Charles Tennyson, the poet's grandson, offers a happier interpretation of life at Somersby. Thus, "if life was rough and the atmosphere often stormy, they [the Tennyson children] had compensation and protection in each other and in the love of their indulgent and tender-hearted mother."⁴ The children were imaginative and provided the household with a wide variety of amusements. They josted as knights, presented private theatra- cals, and thereby succeeded in instilling a romantic flavor into the Rectory's otherwise somber atmosphere. According to the Memoir:

One of these [amusements] lasted a long time: the writing of tales in letter form, to be put under the vegetable dishes at dinner, and read aloud when it was over. I have heard from my uncles and aunts that my father's tales were very various in theme, some of them humorous and some savagely dramatic; and that they looked to him as their most thrilling story-teller.⁵

These amusements, however, provided but scant relief from the oppressive domestic situation.

³Ibid., p. 19.
⁵Memoir, I, 6.
Alfred Tennyson had two avenues open, the library at Somersby and his own poetic fancy, whereby to survive the unhappy home situation. The Reverend George Tennyson had acquired a large collection of books which proved of immense help to the intellectual growth of his children. Alfred, consequently, was well versed in the classics at an early age, and was besides, immersed in history, travel literature, and oriental tales of romance and adventure. Among the collection were works of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, Byron, Scott, and Macpherson's Ossian.

There were also Boyd's translation of Dante's Inferno, Ulloh's Voyages, Gallant's Arabian Nights, Savary's descriptive Letters from Egypt, Sir William Jones's translations of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian poetry, Sir William's Hymns to the more amorous Hindu deities, Rollin's Ancient History, the Koran, Plutarch, Petis de la Croix' Genghis Khan and Robertson's History of India. Rev. C. C. Clarke's The Hundred Wonders of the World and of the Three Kingdoms of Nature was also within reach. These books opened up whole new vistas for the young poet to explore. His early poems, especially those in Poems by Two Brothers, dealt with mountains, volcanoes, islands, buried cities, natural bridges, precipices, fossils, subterranean forests, rivers, brooks, cataracts, and mirages.

His appearance was that of a visionary. There are many striking anecdotes connected with his exploits through the wolds of Lincolnshire. The Memoir relates that "as he wandered over the wold, or by the brook, he often seemed to be in dreamland, so
that one who often saw him then called him a 'mysterious being, seemingly lifted high above other mortals, and having a power of intercourse with the spirit-world not granted to others.' The present writer sees in his preoccupation with the theme of escape an attempt to affiliate himself with the world of true reality as opposed to the world of appearance.

Tennyson exploits his imaginative faculty to the point that his entire early poetry tends to place more faith in the ethereal than in the physical reality. In his search for poetic symbols and images, he ransacks the unconscious and subconscious states of being like no other poet before him. He seems to have recoiled from the morbid domestic situation by a total negation of his problems. He buries himself in a separate world which he has conjured, like a magician, purely on the basis of his extensive reading of stories of adventure and romance.

Tennyson is influenced in his early poetry by the romantic poets. Keats, more than any other romantic poet, shows him what imaginative worlds are available to a poet unconcerned with society and politics. It is the early Keats to whom Tennyson turns for strength and inspiration. He learns from Keats to word-paint; he acquires from him a penchant for rich, sensuous details, and learns to soar above reality. The Quarterly Review has presented the following analysis:

Keats's poems, steeped as they are in the purest

6Ibid., I, 100.
essence of poetry, were peculiarly spiritual in their ideality. His mythological passion breathed a living soul into the divinities of Greece; his solitary wanderings in 'faery lands forlorn' enabled him to throw the spell of enchantment over its dreams and legends; his gleanings from field and forest were fresh, sweet, and faithful; and his interpretation of the essential inner life of poetry was conveyed in language which was itself instinct with form and aglow with colour.

In all these four points Tennyson was the follower of Keats, . . . and developed to the fruit what Keats had left in the bud.  

Both Keats and Tennyson experienced the tragedy of a bitter domestic environment. So much they had in common. Keats, however, had richer resources of the romantic fancy. Like Wordsworth he converted poetry into a vehicle of complete relief. And in converting poetry into a mode of relief (temporary, no doubt), he could stake his entire faith in its capacity to replace religion and all positive values. Tennyson differed from Keats in this respect. Poetry was not his religion, so that even when he accepted it as a means of obtaining relief, he was aware of the incompleteness of the experience. This is made obvious through the repeated revisions of his poems, not merely of vowels and consonants but even of ideas. What we experience in reading his beautiful escape poems is not near so total as our reaction to an escape poem of Keats, for example "Ode to a Nightingale."

Dreams and regressions as escape motifs are used more in the Juvenilia and Poems by Two Brothers than in the poems of 1830 and

7Quarterly Review, CLXXVI (January, 1893), 14. The author's name is not mentioned.
1832-33. After the adolescent phase, Tennyson turns more and more to art and aesthetics as subjects in his attempt to retreat from the vexing question of life. Mythology offers him another way of exploring the unknown, which is forever painted in rosy colors, as being more attractive than his own Somersby. As time progresses, some kind of a conflict is obvious in his treatment of the theme of escape. Tennyson begins to offer excuses for the acceptance of escape as a substitute for responsibility. By the time he writes "The Palace of Art" there is sufficient reason to suspect that he has sundered his bondage to the cult of the retreat into beauty of his youth. At this point the voice of the moralist is clamoring for audience. Thus, some kind of a progression is noticeable in his use of escape as a predominant theme in his early poetry.

II

Very early in Alfred Tennyson's poetry we find the recurrent use of dreams. According to E. D. H. Johnson:

From biographical records it is ascertainable that the poet was at all times subject in his sleep to extraordinarily vivid and suggestive dreams, and that this trait became more pronounced with age. Furthermore, the poems themselves show a knowledge of dream psychology unique in the period, and such as could only have been acquired through autoanalysis. 8

The passivity of the sleeping state seems to release suppressed

energies and tension, so that the poet does not only escape into a world of fancy, but also comprehends truths which are not comprehensible in a state of wakefulness. Tennyson is in the tradition of western thought when he makes use of dreams in his poetry. But he offers a fine departure in the manner of its treatment. The Syntopicon states that in the tradition of the great books, modern writers, like their ancient forbears, appeal to sensation and memory "as the natural causes of the origin and content of dreams. But except for daydreams of waking fantasy, they do not observe that dreaming may be even more profoundly a product of desire."  

In Tennyson desire seems to be the cause of dreams. W. D. Paden has stated, "in the constricted circumstances of his adolescence his appetites for sensuous pleasures were suppressed and repressed, to a rather unusual degree, by his idealism, his piety, and his fears."  

Through dreams his desires reach fulfillment.

In "And Ask Ye Why These Sad Tears Stream?" (1827), the theme is a desire which is expressed through a dream. In this case the dream is of "her that in the grave is sleeping."

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11 Poems by Two Brothers, ed., Hallam Tennyson (London, 1893), pp. 100-101. This will be cited hereafter as Brothers.
I saw her mid the realms of light,
    In everlasting radiance gleaming;
Co-equal with the seraphs bright,
    Mid thousand thousand angels beaming.

I strove to reach her, when, behold,
Those fairy forms of bliss Elysian,
And all that rich scene wrapt in gold,
    Faded in air—a lovely vision!

"In Deep and Solemn Dreams" (begun at Somersby and published at Cambridge), the theme of desire is again expressed through a dream. Tennyson's imaginative faculty finds complete outlet in this poem. Natural setting gives way to a city filled with spires and terraces. The poet is inconsolable when the dream fades and reality obtrudes itself. The transition from dreaming to waking is depicted in the change that comes over the crowd, which turns "dim and strange." Desire is the major note in this passage:

Dear lips, loved eyes, ye fade, ye fly,
Even in my fear ye die,
And the hollow dark I dread
Closes round my friendless head,

And far away, to left and right,
Whirlwinds waste the dizzy night,
And I lie and toss and mourn,
Hopeless, heartless and forlorn.

The appeal of the passage is in the intensity of its desire. There is also a pathetic dread of reality. Further, dreams are coveted, actually preferred to truth. Without dreams the poet seems unable to sleep, and sleep for its part is "tearless."

12Unpublished Early Poems, ed., Charles Tennyson (London, 1931), pp. 30-32. This will be cited hereafter as Early Poems.
In many of the early poems memory and desire play significant roles. It is through the operation of these two forces that regression is usually sought in the form of dreams. Memory is reprimanded in "Memory" (written at the same time as "In Deep and Solemn Dreams"). Thus,

Blesséd, cursed, Memory,
Shadow, Spirit as thou may'st be,
Why hast thou become to me
A conscience dropping tears of fire
On the heart, which vain desire
Vexeth all too bitterly.\(^3\)

In the conflict between memory and desire, sleep offers the solution in the form of "Hope," which is born nightly in the "house of dreams." But with waking "Hope" is converted into "Despair," a "frightful child with shrivelled cheeks." The despair that we have here must be the despair of living. As in the poem "In Deep and Solemn Dreams," waking is wholly repugnant.

Why at break of cheerful day
Doth my spirit faint away
Like a wanderer in the night?
Why in visions of the night
Am I shaken with delight
Like a lark at dawn of day?
As a hungry serpent coiled
Round a palmtree in the wild,
When his baked jaws are bare... 

Regression is complete here. Dreams and visions are the natural correlative of suppressed desires.

In another early poem, "Memory" (1827), the days of youth

\(^{13}\)Ibid., pp. 33-34.
are presented as happy and full of bloom. The reader is not prepared for passages such as the following because life at Somersby was not as peaceful as it is given us to understand from these stanzas.

Why lift the veil, dividing
The brilliant courts of Spring--
Where gilded shapes are gliding
In fairy colouring--

From age's frosty mansion,
So cheerless and so chill?
Why bid the bleak expansion
Of past life meet us still?

Where's now that peace of mind
O'er youth's pure bosom stealing,
So sweet and so refin'd,
So exquisite a feeling?

Where's now the heart exulting
In pleasure's buoyant sense,
And gaiety, resulting
From conscious innocence?

In the Cambridge edition this poem is prefaced with the following quotation from Addison: "The memory is perpetually looking back when we have nothing present to entertain us: it is like those repositories in animals that are filled with stores of food, on which they may ruminate when their present pasture fails." In this case, the past does not sanction such a return. At this point the poet has not lived long enough to experience the joys of reminiscence, nor is his life at Somersby happy enough

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14Brothers, pp. 6-11.

15The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, ed., W. J. Rolfe (Cambridge, Mass., 1898), p. 755. This will be cited hereafter as Poems. It is the standard reference used herein.
to substantiate his regrets that the past is over. What he must, therefore, be referring to is a life lived purely in imagination. In the same vein, "Ode to Memory," published in 1830, pays tribute to a memory that brings happiness from the past "to glorify the present." Dreams provide one with a whole new universe of relations and forms to replace what is familiar, whereas conscience hampers an imaginary flight into the unknown in a state of wakefulness.

In all these poems the poet is aware of the discrepancy between appearance and reality. As a matter of fact, it is in the attempt to bridge the gap between the two that the poet avails himself of the psychological process of dreaming. At this point escape comes close to being a metaphysical concern, a deep yearning to annihilate the "two dreams of Space and Time." Tennyson is quoted in the Memoir to have remarked that

to me often the far-off world seems nearer than the present, for in the present is always something unreal and indistinct, but the other seems a good solid planet, rolling round its green hills and paradieses to the harmony of more steadfast laws. There steam up from about me mists of weakness, or sin, or despondency, and roll between me and the far planet, but it is there still.17

In Poems, Chiefly Lyrical (1830), and Poems (1832-33), the dream is again a familiar motif. "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" (1830), for example, describes "another night in night,"

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16Ibid., pp. 11-13.

17Memoir, I, 223.
and a "dream within a dream." According to Paden, much of the setting and dramatic situation in this poem are borrowed from Savary. Paden also notes that in Tennyson's daydreams the valley of the Nile becomes mixed with the happy valley of Cashmere. And in his daydreams, when the adventurous young boatman comes upon a Persian girl reclining on a verdant bank, no terrifying voice exclaims, "Where are you going? Stand, or you are dead." Instead, the Caliph sits complaisant on his golden throne.

It is the song of a nightingale that is the precursor to the dream. The atmosphere is charged with:

Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress'd,

The "amorous" Persian girl on whom the dreamer gazes alone is an image of his repressed desires. There is no painful waking here. In fact, regression is so complete that all traces of reality are erased. "Withholding time," the experience is detached from place. The result is a static frigidity, in which details such as the "shallop, rustling through the low and bloomed foliage," or the "fall of diamond rilles," "the fluted vase," and the "brazen urn" assume an artificiality that is wholly timeless, devoid of life.

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18 Poems, pp. 10-11.
19 Paden, p. 36.
20 Ibid.
"A Dream of Fair Women," from the 1833 volume, is a dream-allegory imitative of Chaucer. The stillness of a deep and familiar forest is the setting for sleep and the preceding vision. Amidst the smell of violets the dreamer sinks into utter oblivion, which is resolved only by the image of death. Instead of the single Persian girl, there is an array of famous ladies, and all of them dead. As Arthur Carr has stated,

with remarkable persistence death becomes in all these poems the ambivalent counterpoise to love and desire. It embodies the hostility between sense and conscience and guards the thresholds of fantasy. The symbol of death has a double nature: frustration of desire is a kind of death; yet persistence of desire rouses the conscientious phantom of death.

Dreams are used throughout Tennyson's poetic career. But in later years, dreams are used for didactic effect. This is the case in "The Sea Dreams," written in 1858, and "Lucretius," written in 1868. The dream is used in these poems, as also both earlier and later, for a deeper concern than merely as an escape device into an imaginative reality.

During the period of escape poetry, Tennyson shows a deep concern for exiled and outcast lonely figures. He himself appears to be driven into exile by some inner force which is beyond his control. Internal conflict is obviously the motivating principle behind these themes of exile and death. The short poem "I Wander in Darkness and Sorrow," from Poems by Two Brothers, is a perfect

21Poems, pp. 53-58.

22Critical Essays, p. 50.
exercise in the outcast Byronic figure. An element of deepest melancholy, which may be the result of insecurity arising from the unhappy domestic situation pervades the whole poem. W. D. Paden offers the following interpretation which is thoroughly convincing.

The chief component of the emotional state that lies behind such verses is of course a secret sense of inferiority and guilt; the writer is convinced that he is unworthy of friends, or hope, or of a place in any community of affection. A second component is a mixture of desire of and aversion towards independence; the writer longs to escape from the status of a ward and from the domination of parents, yet can envisage such an escape into maturity only in terms of a rejection of parental authority and a consequent loss of parental love and protection. The price of independence seems to be exile. The writer punishes himself for his desire for freedom by imagining drastic consequences, and his sense of unworthiness leads him to suppose he deserves whatever he can imagine.

In the poems under consideration the price of exile is paid.

Another poem treating the same theme is "By an Exile of Bassorah While Sailing Down the Euphrates," also from Poems by Two Brothers. Here the poet bids farewell to the "land of the lily," to his harp, and also to the maiden, "the sheen of whose eyes was the Load-star which guided / My course on this earth thro' the storms of mischance!"

Death is the conspicuous theme of "All Things Will Die," a

23Brothers, p. 33.
24Paden, pp. 60-61.
25Brothers, pp. 43-44.
poem from the *Juvenilia*. Death is depicted as a very lonely experience, and as something simply inevitable. The predominant note is gloomy:

> We are call'd—we must go.  
> Laid low, very low,  
> In the dark we must lie.

The death knell of everything alive reechoes the theme in the refrain: "For all things must die." There is a finality and a suppressed yearning for release from the present misery.

There is almost a macabre realism in another poem from the *Juvenilia*, "My Life is Full of Weary Days." The theme is again death, but this time it is impending death that is treated of. "Shake hands," the person announces, "across the brink of that deep grave to which I go." In the third stanza there is a mixture of both the pathetic and the ridiculous:

> When in the darkness over me  
> The four-handed mole shall scrape,  
> Plant thou no dusky cypress-tree,  
> Nor wreathe thy cap with doleful crape,  
> But pledge me in the flowing grape.

If the poet has introduced the ridiculous for the sake of rhyme, he has succeeded remarkably.

### III

We have seen how dreams are employed by Tennyson as a means of escape. If dreams are helpful as a kind of sedative for the

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26 Poems, p. 4.  
27 Ibid., p. 24.
traumatic experiences of life, madness arises from failure of the person to escape into dreams. Positing E. D. H. Johnson's theory, "the madness, whether incipient or actual, is not directly the result of any congenital instability of mind so much as an outcome of the pressure of external events which have undermined the characters' powers of resistance." The author not only concurs with Johnson, but also adds that when escape through dreams or visions is barred, the subjects either lead a morbid existence or give way completely to insanity. Many poems, late and early, relentlessly emphasize this conviction. In these poems there is a positive refusal to restore balance after a crisis, even a total rejection of any type of effort. The characters refuse to face reality or to make the required adjustment but retire within themselves, to their "moated grange."

Many of Tennyson's favorite characters are the victims of frustrated love. "The Ballad of Orianna," a poem from the Juvenilia, treats the theme of frustrated love. Love is even punished by "vast fears and fantasies that craze the mind."

The beautiful poem "Mariana," published in 1830, is important in this respect. The subtitle from Measure for Measure is itself significant: "Mariana within the moated grange." An intensely pathetic refrain, skilfully modified in the last stanza,

28Johnson, p. 30.
30Ibid., p. 8.
is appended to each stanza:

'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

There is no evidence of any sort that Mariana would like to
improve her situation; on the contrary, the underlying despair
is final. She seems to be frozen within her setting.

The poem is the first coherent example of the subtle fusing
of mood and theme, a feature which is to reach the acme of perfection
in Tennyson's hands. For instance:

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Uplifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.

This opening stanza is a fair enough example of the whole poem.
One can conclude with Roden Noel that "every subtle touch enhances
the effect he intends to produce, that of the desolation of the
deserted woman, whose hope is nearly extinguished; Nature hammering
a fresh nail into her coffin with every innocent aspect or
movement."31 What is again striking about the poem is its
concentration, another important achievement of the poet.

"Mariana in the South," a poem of 1832-33, has the same
theme, but is slightly elaborated in its detail and effect.32

31 Roden Noel, Essays on Poetry and Poets (London, 1886),
p. 227.
32 Poems, pp. 29-30, 199-217.
As in the earlier poem, the character has escaped into herself, and chants the sad refrain:

But 'Ave Mary,' made she moan,
   And 'Ave Mary,' night and morn,
   And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
      To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

This poem is also based on a negation of action.

The protagonists of both "Locksley Hall" (1842), and Maud (1855) are the male counterparts to the two Marianas.33 They are mentioned here mainly to indicate the premise that inability to face the crisis or escape into some imaginary reality leads to serious imbalance. In "Locksley Hall," a dramatic monologue of nearly two-hundred lines in trochaics, we have a young victim of unrequited love. Tennyson interprets the poem as representing "young life, its good side, its deficiencies, and its yearnings."34 In reality the poem is full of a "ranting rhetoric" uttered by a young man who is incapable of accepting the inevitable. He balances several alternatives for his frustrated condition. He would like to run away into the tropics, or accept military exploits. These are alternatives which he may consider rather than accept his fate with a sense of noble resignation.

In Maud we have a fine treatise on the different levels and degrees of insanity. The protagonist is a melancholy and detached

33Ibid., pp. 90-94.
34Memoir, I, 252.
human being, a being who resembles the hero of "Locksley Hall." The preoccupation of this unhappy individual with the past, and the bitter awareness on his part of the "great impostor," Maud's brother, bring him very close to madness. Then love comes to his aid and even promises a complete cure for his neurosis. When the lovers are finally betrayed in the garden, the duel ensues. Everything is ambiguous after this climax, so that the protagonist does not know the degree of his guilt, or if he killed Maud's brother. Instead, he is totally inhibited and goes stark mad.  

The poem is a skillful work with its changes of rhythm and metrics adapted to the emotional changes. Tennyson demonstrates in this poem his ability to make "Nature herself reflect, redouble and interpret the human feeling." The tendency that we noticed earlier, in "Mariana," for instance, to adapt the mood to the theme has reached its highest level of perfection in this poem.

Tennyson knows all the colors and shades of melancholy. And as there are strong cases of insanity in his own family (his brother Frederick was insane at one time), he is able to enter very deeply into his characters' states of mind. Maud, as many critics see it, is a perfect study of insanity. At the same time,  

35 See Tennyson's commentary on the poem as given by Dr. Mann to be quoted in the Memoir, II, 218-220.  
36 In Tennyson's own life, when faced with a crisis such as Arthur Hallam's death, he wrote poetry in an effort to obtain balance, and in section CVIII of In Memoriam, the poet has stated the need to rise above personal tragedy.  
37 Noel, p. 239.
the poet has precedent for choosing insanity as a suitable subject of poetry. Both Wordsworth and Keats among the Romantics had done so. One can hardly miss the close similarity between, for instance, Keats's "Isabella or the Pot of Basil" and Wordsworth's "Ruth." Isabellas and Ruth are caught up in tragedies analogous to those in Tennyson's poems.

IV

We have many poems in which escape is sought through the medium of myth, art or nature. These poems deal in the simplest language with the question of escape through the senses alone.

"On Sublimity" (1827), is a poem of escape into the "wild cascade, the rugged scene, / The loud surge bursting o'er the purple sea." It is an exuberant call to the imagination to evoke pictures of Niagara,

Where all around the melancholy isle
The billows sparkle with their hues of light!
or Kentucky Cavern with its "chambers of eternal gloom," and

The snow-clad peaks, stupendous Gunotree!
Whence springs the hallow'd Jumna's
   echoing tide, . . .

In "The Grasshopper," a poem of 1830, the note of escape is certainly undisguised. The escapist yearns in this manner:

I would dwell with thee,
Merry grasshopper,

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38 Brothers, pp. 103-108.
39 Poems, p. 783.
Thou art so glad and free,
   And as light as air;
Thou hast no sorrow or tears,
Thou hast no compe of years,
No withered immortality,
But a short youth sunny and free.

In the desire to dwell with the grasshopper we note the intention
to ward off evil. Thus,

What hast thou to do with evil,
Shooting, singing, ever springing
In and out the emerald glooms,
Ever leaping, ever singing,
Lighting on the golden blooms?

the poet questions.

In both "The Merman" and "The Mermaid," poems from the
Juvenilia, there is a happy abandon, which is thoroughly unmixed
with any sense of responsibility, communal or individual. In
"The Merman" the note of care-free abandon is sounded in this
manner:

O, what a happy life were mine
Under the hollow-hung ocean green!
Soft are the moss-beds under the sea;
We would live merrily, merrily.

And in "The Mermaid,"

But at night I would wander away, away,
   I would fling on each side my low-flowing locks,
And lightly vault from the throne and play
   With the merman in and out of the rocks;
We would run to and fro, and hide and seek,
   On the broad sea-wolds in the crimson shells,
Whose silvery spikes are highest the sea.

But it is in "The Sea-Fairies," a poem of 1830, that we hear
the summons to relinquish all responsibility, and to escape into

40 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
a land of "blissful downs and dales." The sea fairies are the sirens who tempted Odysseus and his mariners on their return from Troy. This is Tennyson's first approach to myth.

The call comes from the beautiful, sensuous sea fairies.

Slow sail'd the weary mariners and saw,
Betwixt the green brink and the running foam,
Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms prest
To little harps of gold; and while they mused,
Whispering to each other half in fear,
Shrill music reach'd them on the middle sea.

What is embodied in the "shriill music" is the essence of the message to the mariners: "Fly no more." The sensuous appeal of the poem is as strong as that of D. G. Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel." The theme is carpe diem, made popular in the Victorian age by Fitzgerald, and the refrain, "Come hither and frolic and play," has the same haunting quality as the theme of The Rubaiyat.

Buckley interprets the poem as "a dramatic rendering of the seductions of a sensuous art, the temptations to escape from reason and responsibility."42

Tennyson pays great attention to the setting of the poem in order to make it contrast with the mood of the mariners. Thus, whereas the mariners are "weary," and "sailing slow," the land of the fairies is all bubble and mirth, caroling of the gales, dancing of the spangle and the swelling of the "clover-hill with

41Ibid., p. 15.

42Jerome H. Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (Cam­bridge, Mass., 1960), p. 38. This will be cited hereafter as Buckley.
bells." There is swift motion in the flitting rainbow and in the "gambolling waterfalls."

The theme of escape takes definite shape and is thoroughly undisguised in the poem "The Lotos-Eaters," a poem of 1832-33. Here again for his private purposes Tennyson enters the "public domain of myth."

In the Odyssey of Homer the hero relates how he goes by chance to the country of the Lotos-Eaters. He says that in that land, which is somewhere along the North African coast, he and his men are very kindly treated, but whoever eats the lotos food which the people gave them, becomes sleepy and forgets everything, and does not want to return to the ship. In Tennyson's tale the effects of the lotos are described as similar to "opium" and to "hasheesh." Both these drugs affect "the conceptions of space and time, making that which is near or recent appear very far away or very old." This background explains the situation that we have in the poem.

The sensuous appeal of this poem is more subtly wrought than that of "The Sea Fairies." The sea fairies as tempters are dispensed with, and we have instead the mild-eyed, erotic "lotos-eaters." In the afternoon the sailors come into a land with

many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale; . . .

Poems, pp. 51-53.

Lafcadio Hearn's Lectures on Tennyson, compiled by Shigetsugu Kishi (Tokyo, 1941), p. 53.
At this point the contrast is achieved by means of the sea which the sailors are forsaking:

... but evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.

What the imagination evokes here are languid air, waning moon, falling streams, and an indolent Nature, a Nature which dreams or even breathes in her sleep, a landscape that is speckled with fireflies, "slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn," and shadowy pine. The poem is a perfect study in the fusion of mood and theme.

The thought itself is very simple. Seeing the slothful life of the lotos-eaters, the mariners argue: Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things? What the mariners at this moment desire to exchange for slumbrous, mild-eyed and slothful ease is a life weighed down with communal responsibility and utterly consumed with "sharp distress." They long for rest from a weary life. In an attempt at rationalization the mariners want to know why they alone have to toil. In juxtaposition to their life of weary toil, here is the land of ease. Hence the spontaneous question: Why should they choose a life of labor?

The mariners, in the process of this rationalization, equate life with evil. Since there is no pleasure in warring with evil, they gladly accept "dark death" or "dreamful ease." Keats in his "Ode to a Nightingale" courted "easeful death." In that moment of mystical vision, when Keats possessed the acme of joy, and while his soul was mixed with the outpouring from "this thing of beauty"
(the nightingale) it seemed "rich to die." There is, however, a significant departure in Tennyson's poem. What the mariners search for is Epicurean release which one achieves through mere sense; what Keats strives to attain is that neo-Platonic truth which one's entire being apprehends in some rare moments.

Progressively the life of the mariners in the lotos-land becomes a long dream broken only by each other's whispers as they languorously consume the lotos. Life of action is relegated to the farthest corners of the mind. Yet over this slothful, melancholic life there is the soft shadow cast by visions of the past. In other words, complete escape, even in this land, leagues removed spiritually and physically from home, is impossible to achieve. Further, the memory of their wedded lives intrudes with considerable insistence. The mariners, when they have visions of how

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dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
   And dear the last embraces of our wives
   And their warm tears, . . .
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argue with the theory of flux. The household hearths are cold now from their long absence, and they are grown strangers to their kith and kin; so they debate. The ten years war they bravely fought is a legend in the course of time, and it would certainly be foolish to try to restore "the old order" in their little island.

Better it is to prop themselves on beds of amaranth and moly and spend the rest of their lives in blissful leisure. They have had enough of action and motion, and now let them recline
like gods in this land "in which it seemed always afternoon."
The appearance of changelessness is desireable. And in the last line, with its "we will not wander more," there is the suggestion of constant instability.

The mariners favor this god-like isolation. They can look down on dwarfed figures of men struggling in the valley below for a mere existence. They themselves are well aware of the maxim that while some of these men would be rewarded for their struggles, many would be punished with endless anguish. As for themselves they would rather rest; they will not "wander more."

Although the poem is a study in repose, there is some kind of a struggle involved in the final decision. Hence the long process of rationalization. The resolution to give up struggle is hard to accept even though the temptation is very strong. Thus the many excuses. What finally resolves the internal conflict is not the memory of their wedded lives, nor the cold household hearths, nor the thought of change that has resulted in the passage of years, but the dark vision of struggling men as ironically viewed by the impassive Lucretian gods. This last idea is an afterthought; the passage was added in the 1842 edition. According to Spedding:

Then at the end of the poem there is found an alteration of a like kind: where for the flow of triumphant enjoyment, in the contemplation of merely sensual ease and luxurious repose, with which it originally closed, a higher strain is substituted, which is meant apparently to show the effect of lotos-eating upon the religious feelings. The gods of the Lotos-eaters, it
is worth knowing, are altogether Lucretian.

These gods and the mariners look down and smile at the contrast presented by the crude realism in the valley; for the gods the contrast is between their own secure paradisiacal abode and the pitiful lot of human beings; for the mariners the contrast is between the ease of the newly discovered way of life and the life of misery which they have left behind. In short, they are looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake,
roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and
sinking ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred
in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient
tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted by an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat,
and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer. . . .

The choice at the end of a long deliberation and of a calm retrospection is a life devoid of labor. It is finally made only after the pros and cons are carefully weighed in the balance.

The deliberation which precedes the final decision poses serious questions. Are the mariners completely at peace after this choice or over it? How far is the poet serious in his theme of escape, at least as far as this poem is concerned? In so far

45Quoted by Memoir, I, 248.
as the poem does not solve these issues, it presents complex overtones.

Mention has to be made at this point of the curious quality of the meter that Tennyson has employed in this poem. The pattern of the choric song does not conform to the happy abandon of the rest of the poem. Johnson considers it "dramatic in conception." The odd stanzas weave the spell of the lotos, while the even stanzas follow a rhetorical pattern suggestive of the conflict within the conscience of the mariners. Moreover, the successive stanzas tend to increase in length as if to imply a growing recognition of all that is at stake. After the swooning magic of the seventh stanza has taken the senses captive, the meter of the last changes to imply the final troubled moment of decision when the mariners make their choice not to return to the outside world. The meter, in less scholarly terms, corresponds entirely with the troubled conscience of the mariners, while at the same time it presents the dialectic which operates within the poem as a whole. The Platonic awareness of one's obligations clashes here with the carpe diem desire for release. In any event, the final justification is pessimistic. Since the gods are indifferent, it is entirely permissible for the mariners to choose the life of luxurious repose as lived by the lotos-eaters. One could venture the conclusion that since the final

46 Johnson, p. 10.
47 Ibid.
section on Lucretian gods was added after Arthur Hallam's death, there is sufficient guarantee that Alfred Tennyson was re-con-
sidering the validity of his escape theory. At any rate, "Ulysses," written after Hallam's death and published in 1842, establishes his conviction that the answer to the vexing problem of life cannot be resolved by merely escaping the issues.

"The Palace of Art," contemporary with "The Lotos-Eaters," likewise a symbolic poem, parallels the latter in certain respects. The soul in its attempt at aesthetic fulfillment tends to place its faith in a life of total withdrawal from communal responsibility. It builds a palace for its isolated existence.

Among the frescoes on the Palace walls is

... mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and stings;
Here play'd, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or bind
All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man declined,
And trusted any cure.

Immediately we experience the flash-back to a similar scene in "The Lotos-Eaters," a scene in which the Lucretian gods contemptuously look down upon the mariners. The soul betrays its aversion to the common life when it exclaims:

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48 Poems, pp. 43-46.
'O Godlike isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

'In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep.'

The sentiment expressed in the passage comes dangerously close
to Thel's Manichean sense of distrust of life in William Blake's
poem "The Book of Thel."

The aesthetic motivation or the desire to seek refuge in
beauty, redeems the poem from the level of "The Lotos-Eaters,"
which remains solely a study in sensory escape for the sake of
escape. In "The Palace of Art" escape is not through the senses
alone. Both sense and intellect work in unison for this dangerous
isolation. It has, thus, wider possibilities than the other
poem on lotos-eating.

"The Palace of Art" is actually both the culmination of the
Keatsian influence and the total rejection of this commitment.
The Palace is in the true Keatsian tradition; it is lavishly
wrought; it is a whole world painted in striking colors and "felt
intensely through the senses." The cult of beauty Tennyson
learned from Keats (there is no implication here that Keats was
merely a cultist of beauty), finds its fullest expression in the
poem. In this respect it is the ultimate in Keatsian influence.

At the same time, the poem repudiates the Keatsian faith in
the beauty versus truth ideology. Tennyson actually wrote the
poem to prove that "God-like life is with man and for man," and
negatively that "we cannot live in art." And yet the soul lives in art for four whole years; it falls only in the fourth year! In Keats' poems, whether the ultimate truth is achieved through an urn or through a nightingale, the experience is fleeting. The transcendental moment is transitory. In the same manner, Browning in "structure brave, the manifold music" in "Abt Vogler," builds only a fleeting experience. Tennyson's Palace survives for four years! What we get in the aggregate from Tennyson's poem is a thorough conviction that the poet is a perfect craftsman, but we are left unconvinced by the symbol itself. It is too contrived to convince the reader of genuine feeling, and it lacks artistic motivation. It is, besides, transitional; hereafter the poet would deal with "pastures new."

The Palace collapses also for the reason that "godlike isolation" is neither possible nor desirable. Even at the height of its glorious isolation:

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flash'd thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
And intellectual throne.

And after four years the "riddle of the painful earth" proves to be stronger than the soul's powers of endurance and resistance. Thus, if the lotos could offer a lethe-like experience to the mariners, the soul in this instance is incapable of dismissing the higher claims of life, which consist in sharing. The poem

successfully establishes the argument offered earlier in this chapter: escape is sought as a substitute for reality; madness results from the failure to escape. In the final scene the soul is thoroughly distraught:

When she would think, where'er she turn'd her sight
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote, 'Mene, mene,' and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

The theme of escape in the light of this study is found to be mostly a juvenile theme of Tennyson. Wilfully or involuntarily he explores dreams, myth, and the exotic world of the Arabian Nights. In a state of subconscious or supra-conscious awareness, he creates a ranciful world. The poet in occupying himself with the world of his imagination, brings about a divorce between reality and unreality. At this time Tennyson is purely a romantic poet.

Like his own Lady of Shalott he has successfully emerged, by 1842, from the world of the shadows. Both "The Lotos-Eaters" and "The Palace of Art," and to a lesser degree the other early poems, investigate the possibility of escaping reality by postponing the moment of adjustment. But from the experience of the soul in "The Palace of Art," and after balancing the alternatives of escape and involvement, Tennyson concludes that escape is to be feared more than reality. With Jacob Korg one can conclude that the "anathesis of action, fulfillment and atrophy, is a prominent feature of Tennyson’s early work, though his treatment
of it does not bear any sinister implication." On the contrary, Tennyson takes the warning against the danger of prolonged immaturity.

The serious poet now emerges and, in his later poetry (from 1842 to his death), subordinates the sensuous and the purely imaginative to the moral and the mundane. He enters "the arena of Victorian controversy." Tennyson deals immediately with the desperate concerns of man and of society. In other words, Tennyson accepts "systematized thought" in the place of the pure sensation of Keats. Whether it was tragic for Tennyson's creative impulse or his poetic intuition to have repudiated the palace of art in preference to the matter-of-fact problems which mainly constitute the dearest concerns of man and of society, is quite a different question and one of complex implications. Dreams, visions, and flights of fancy into the Arabian Nights, the lotos-land, or into a symbolic palace of art, play significant roles in the evolution of Alfred Tennyson, the poet.

51 George Ford, Keats and the Victorians (New Haven, 1944), p. 47.
52 See Mr. Ford's chapter on the influence of Keats on Tennyson.
CHAPTER III

AESTHETIC DETACHMENT

Closely related to the escapist is the detached or isolated artist. He is burdened with a "private intuition," on the basis of which he feels separated from society. The medium of his art is also detached from the "rude touch of man." The artist in Tennyson's poetry is a seer, a visionary, and a prophet.

Loneliness and isolation are recurring themes in Victorian literature. As Walter E. Houghton has analyzed it, "with the breakup of a long-established order and the resulting fragmentation of both society and thought, the old ties were snapped, and men became acutely conscious of separation."1 The Victorian writer is concerned with an isolation caused by "dividing barriers"; he yearns for a "lost companionship," and he experiences a nostalgia for the past.

Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Gerard Manley Hopkins are some of the writers who present the theme of isolation in their writing. Carlyle, for instance, has recorded the experience of bitter loneliness in Sartor Resartus in this manner:

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A feeble unit in the middle of a threatening Infinitude, I seemed to have nothing given me but eyes, whereby to discern my own wretchedness. Invisible yet impene-
trable walls, as of Enchantment, divided me from all living: was there, in the wide world, any true bosom I could press trustfully to mine? O Heaven, No, there was none! ... Now when I look back, it was a strange isolation I then lived in.2


Tennyson has constantly dealt with characters who are the victims of betrayal and separation, and who, as a result, are subject to isolated existence. But the thesis of this chapter is not the isolation and loneliness of man as such, but the isolation of the artist. The chapter is based on an enquiry as to whether Tennyson accepts the detachment of the artist throughout his poetry, and if not, as to why he does not.

Tennyson, as Charles Tennyson has testified, "had adopted from Shelley and Wordsworth the view of the poet as a prophet charged with great responsibilities."3 This romantic idealization of the poet's role found favor with the Cambridge Apostles whose group Tennyson joined in 1827. F. D. Maurice, one of the

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3Charles Tennyson, p. 89.
the Apostles, on the basis of this belief in the supreme role of the poet, wrote in 1828: "He [the poet] sympathises with all phenomena by his intuition of all principles; and his mind is a mirror which catches and images the whole scheme and working of the world."4 Besides the Apostles, Browning and Carlyle were also firm believers in this theory. In Pauline (line 1019), Browning announced that he would be "priest and prophet as of old." Carlyle was convinced that "there is in him [the poet] the Politician, the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher;--in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all three."5

The artist in Tennyson's poetry starts out as a visionary. He is a complex character in his awareness of a constant interplay between appearance and reality. To him the burden of the mystery consists in this same awareness. The poet in his subtle relationship with the mystic stands apart; he is, in this position, in search of the unknown.

But the poet has to renounce his isolated palace of visions on the basis of a conflict between his inner awareness and something quite alien to it, a sense of an obligation to society. And when the artist renounces the ivory tower, he seems to be making a compromise; he does this as being the better of two choices; he does this also after promising himself that he will

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4Cited by Houghton, p. 152, from "Byron," Athenaeum, I (1829), 351.

return to his palace later when his public duties have been fulfilled. The poet accepts the role of the public mentor or statesman from the desperate need to communicate with society. There is no communication earlier, when the poet is within the "moated grange" or walled in by gray Shalott. A recurrent note in Tennyson's poetry and aesthetic philosophy is the total lack of understanding between the artist and society. This note is heard also in Browning's poetry, especially in his poems on art such as "Pictor Ignitus," "Fra Lippo Lippi," and "Andrea del Sarto."

Even when the poet is dealing with the "cherished formulas of man and of society," the artist in Tennyson's poetry stands apart. He has visions, but he ignores them in order to fulfill his duty, which consists in a line of action that is closely related to the common life.

In this chapter we shall study the artist as an isolated individual, as one who is convinced of the sanctity of his detached position. Later, we shall deal with the renunciation of the "palace of art." An attempt will also be made to analyze poems which deal with the lack of communication between the artist and society. In the final analysis, what becomes clear is that the artist, even when he has committed himself to a life of action, has moments of vision, and in the end the poet follows the vision or the "gleam" beyond the ocean shore.

I

A very early poem which presents the isolated artist is
"Armageddon," written in 1824 or 1825. 6 The poet undergoes complete transformation in this poem. Within the circle of his experience, the visionary could have fallen down and worshipped himself. 7 When the Seraph descends in brightness and looks into his face "with unutterable shining eyes," the young man is afraid.

The first utterance of the Seraph is prophetic:

"O Son of Man, why stand you here alone
Upon the mountain, knowing not the things
Which will be, and the gathering of the nations
Upon the mighty battle of the Lord?
Thy sense is clogg'd with dull Mortality,
Thy spirit fetter'd with the bond of clay--
Open thine eyes and see!"

The meaning of the Seraph's speech is quite significant. Man, as he is without the help of the "Seraph," is merely a mass of clay, whose sense is clogged and whose spirit is fettered. This picture of man is completely transformed with the aid of the spirit of poetry. He is enlightened and is able to see the vision of "truth." A prerequisite of this vision of the "whole truth" is loss of one's being in the larger image of the complete creation.

The Seraph helps the poet to attain this perception.

The poet looks up at the Seraph's command and pours forth his soul in a "Magnificat."

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6 Early Poems, pp. 6-16.

7 In the notes added to this poem we have the information that Tennyson believed that he had "mystical experience of separation of spirit from body" from time to time. This experience occurs later in "The Mystic" and "The Ancient Sage." In this condition Tennyson feels detached not only from the environment but even from himself.
I felt my soul grow godlike, and my spirit
With supernatural excitation bound
Within me, and my mental eye grew large
With such a vast circumference of thought,
That, in my vanity, I seem'd to stand
Upon the outward verge and bound alone
Of God's omniscience. Each falling sense,
As with a momentary flash of light,
Grew thrillingly distinct and keen. I saw
The smallest grain that dappled the Earth,
The indistinctest atom in deep air,
The Moon's white cities, and the opal width
Of her small, glowing lakes,...

What follows is the "Magnificat." In this song we have not only
a testimony to the private transformation that is effective here,
but there is also an indication that the poet is no longer an
ordinary being, but that he is close to the Supreme Being. This
is proved by his strong conviction in his own strength so that he
could have "worshipp'd" himself.

The experience adds to his self-consciousness at the same
time as it helps to absorb his ego. Thus,

I wondered with deep wonder at myself:
My mind seem'd wing'd with knowledge and strength
Of holy musings and immense Ideas,
Even to infinitude. All sense of Time
And Being and Place was swallowed up and lost
Within a victory of boundless thought.
I was a part of the Unchangeable,
A scintillation of Eternal Mind,
Remix'd and burning with its present fire.
Yea! in that hour I could have fallen down
Before my own strong Soul and worshipp'd it.

The core of the event lies in becoming a part of the "Unchange-
able," and the unchangeable is the reality. Appearance presents
a strange variety as is evident from this passage:

And in the red and murky Even light,
Black, formless, unclean things came fluttering by;
Some seemed of bestial similitude
And some half human, yet so horrible,  
So shadowy, indistinct and undefined,  
It were a mockery to call them aught  
Save unrealities, which took the form  
And fashioning of such ill-omened things  
That it were sin almost to look on them.

There was a "mingling too of such strange sounds," part of which  
seemed hellish and part heavenly.

"Timbuctoo," the famous prize-poem of 1829, is a rerendering  
of "Armageddon." It has some brilliant lines and is ambitious  
in its imaginative scope. Tennyson's friends, on the contrary,  
considered the poem to be a "high water mark" in literature.  
Arthur Hallam wrote, after the poem was written: "I consider  
Tennyson as promising fair to be the greatest poet of our gener-  
ation, perhaps of our century." This was exaggerated praise.

There is a similarity between the two poems in their general  
framework. In each the Angel comes down to the poet when he  
stands on a mountain, and in each there is the mystical experience.  
And the young man in "Timbuctoo" also cries out after the visi-  
tation of the Seraph:

I felt my soul grow mighty, and my spirit  
With supernatural excitation bound  
Within me, and my mental eye grew large  
With such a vast circumference of thought,  
That in my vanity I seem'd to stand  
Upon the outward verge and bound alone  
Of full beatitude.

From this vantage point of "full beatitude" the visionary is able

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8 Poems, pp. 778-780.

9 Memoir, I, 61.
to pierce the veil of mystery. Suddenly, within the depths of
this experience, the grain of sand and the atom assume their
proper perspective. At this moment the young seer contemplates
the integrity of natural laws which surpass human comprehension.
Hence he questions:

Where is he that, borne
Adown the sloping of an arrowy stream
Could link his shallop to the fleeting edge,
And muse midway with philosophic calm
Upon the wondrous laws which regulate
The fierceness of the bounding element?

His thoughts, which up to then had "grovel'd in the slime,"
now pass from "gloom to glory," and he feels

Unutterable buoyancy and strength
To bear upward through the trackless fields
Of undefin'd existence far and free.

The vision of Timbuctoo that immediately follows is so beautiful
that his spirit staggers under its intensity. One has to accept
the vision as the result solely of his isolation from the crowd.

The Seraph obviously is the spirit of poetry or the romantic
imagination. He is, we are informed, vested with the power to

Sway
The heart of man: And teach him to attain
By shadowing forth the Unattainable;
And step by step to scale the mighty stair
Whose landing-place is rapt about with clouds
Of glory of heaven.

The young man is consecrated a poet by the Seraph. Thus the
Seraph announces:

Lo I have given thee
To understand my presence, and to feel
My fulness; I have fill'd thy lips with power
I have raised thee nigher to the spheres of heaven,
Man's first, last home: and thou with ravish'd sense
Listenest to the lordly music flowing from Th' illimitable years. I am the Spirit, The permeating life which courseth through All th' intricate and labyrinthine veins Of the great vine of Fable, which, outspread With growth of shadowing leaf and clusters rare, Reacheth to every corner under heaven, Deep-rooted in the living soil of truth: . . .

We accept this as the sublime moment when the young man is endowed with spiritual insight. He is now a poet, a seer, a visionary. His lips are filled with power, and he is brought close to the mystery of creation. With ravished sense he is made capable of listening to the "lordly music" which flows from the "illimitable years." He is thus made the interpreter of the poetry of the past, and with the help of the Seraph, he is enabled to imbibe the intoxicating drink from the great vine of Fable.

In both these poems the attitude of the seer is significant. He is capable of adjusting himself to the environment. He permits himself to be guided by the Seraph and to accept the poetic values imposed by him. In some of the later poems we shall discern a certain restlessness on the part of the poet. In "Armageddon" in that hour when he is consecrated a poet, "he could have fallen down and worshipped himself." This is not the case in "The Lady of Shalott," "Tithonus," or "Tiresias," in all of which this sense of the glorification of the poet's role is conspicuously lacking. Instead of the note of the "Magnificat," what we hear in these later poems is a note of deep regret and despair.
From now on Tennyson treats the poet with special reverence. A direct descendant of the young man of "Timbuctoo" is the Mystic. "The Mystic" was published in 1830. The young man here stands apart, "he was not one of ye." And in his extraordinary position he communes with the angels, and has the ability to see into the mystery of phenomenal nature. The experience of the Mystic is of great importance as

... he hath felt
The vanities of after and before;
Albeit, his spirit and his secret heart
The stern experiences of converse lives,
The linked woes of many a fiery change
Had purified, and chastened, and made free.

The Mystic sees three shadows, though actually, the first two are not, but only seem to be. The third is "one reflex from eternity on time." He can also look at the "silent congregated hours" which create birth and death. What the poet is trying to establish is that the artist has unusual insight.

The poetry dealing with the isolated artist was in total conformity with Tennyson's own life. At Somersby in the evenings he lived much in the attic den, and now and then came down and listened to the singing of his sisters. Carlyle wrote to Emerson in 1842 a revealing letter:

Alfred is one of the few British and foreign figures (a not increasing number I think) who are and remain beautiful to me, a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, "Brother!" However, I doubt he will not come (to see me); he often skips me, in these brief visits to town; skips everybody, indeed; being a man solitary and sad.
as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, 
carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which 
he is manufacturing into Cosmos. 11

This picture of Tennyson was true to facts. And the poet seldom 
got rid of that sense of abstraction in the ethereal that was so 
prominent a feature of his personality.

Harold Nicolson's comment on Tennyson's withdrawn nature is 
concise. "For me, the essential Tennyson is a morbid and unhappy 
mystic," says Nicolson. 12 Further, this biographer has quoted a 
remarkable description of the poet from a review (by a former 
intimate of Tennyson whose name is not mentioned) of Hallam 
Tennyson's biography of his father:

No poet, perhaps, has ever come so close to the 
type of the Seer-prophet of the Old Testament as 
Tennyson, for I think none was ever so penetrated 
through and through as he was with the sense of the 
divine source of the gift of poetry imparted to him. 
He told me that this sense was almost awful to him 
in its intensity, because it made him feel as a priest 
who can never leave the sanctuary, and whose every 
word must be consecrated to the service of Him who 
had touched his lips with the fire of heaven which 
was to enable him to speak in God's name to his age. 
And so, he went on to say, nothing he had ever written 
seemed to him to have reached the standard of perfection 
short of which he must never rest; all he could hope 
was that he had brought men a little nearer to God. 
And it is just because, all through his life as a poet, 
Tennyson felt that he had a divine purpose to further, 
that the inner springs of that life, now revealed more 
fully than ever before in his son's biography of him, 
are of such surpassing interest. 13

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12Harold Nicolson, Tennyson: Aspects of His Life, Character, 
and Poetry (London, 1923), p. 27.
13Ibid., pp. 16-17.
This review is of the utmost significance in our study. The term "seer-prophet" correctly sums up Tennyson's approach to an artist.

Slightly different in tone to the three poems that we have discussed so far but proposing the same thesis, namely, that the artist is an isolated creature endowed with extraordinary powers of insight, are two poems from the 1830 volume, "The Poet" and "The Poet's Mind." The Poet is born in a "golden clime" with "golden stars above" for company. He is:

Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,  
The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,  
He saw thro' his own soul!

In the next stanzas the images are confused. Thus "the viewless arrows of thoughts" are presented as being "headed And wing'd with flame." Later the arrow-seeds cleaving take root, and grow up into flowers of gold. And the flower is truth, which with the winds co-operating is multiplied on earth. Before truth, rites and forms melt like snow.

The message of the poet is clear enough. A golden clime with golden stars marks the poet's birth, and his very thoughts blossom into golden flowers. Freedom itself is reared in the sunlight disseminated by the golden flowers. We are informed that,

He stern
Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with his word
She shook the world.

The poet is the source of all that is worth preserving. He represents values, and is, besides, the seer, the prophet, the source of freedom and wisdom.

Consequently, in the companion poem "The Poet's Mind,"
Tennyson pleads for the poet. He is a person to be protected, and his sensibilities are to be preserved. He is to be saved from "shallow wit," which is approached with a fervent plea not to vex the poet's mind.

For thou canst not fathom it.
Clear and bright it should be ever,
Flowing like a crystal river,
Bright as light, and clear as wind.

The shallow-wit is the characteristic of the dark-browed sophist. He has to be kept at a distance from the poet as the sophist is incapable of hearing the merry song of the bird, namely, the music of poetry. The poet cannot save him and has to isolate himself from his dark-haired opponent.

These five poems establish Tennyson's strong faith in the high office of the artist. Among the many endowments of the poet we discern his power to penetrate the veil. He is also vested through the supernatural intervention of the Seraph, who is the Spirit of Fable, with the burden of private intuition. He is thus a person who stands apart, isolated through this same burden, branded with a birthmark, born in a distant climate. The very ground that he treads is holy, and he is to be recognized and
given due reverence. This theory is close to the Wordsworthian and Shelleyan idealization of the poet, as Charles Tennyson has noted.

If the artist has to be isolated from "shallow-wit" and "frozen sneer," art also has to be detached. This is the thesis of "The Hesperides," a poem first published in 1832. Mr. Robert Stange presents the theory that the poem "strikes Tennyson's recurrent note of longing for a vanished or unattainable paradise and explores the persistent theme of the inhuman fascination of isolation and retreat." The present writer has taken the poem as an interpretation of the atmosphere that is required to preserve the golden apple, which, in this case, is the large symbol for wisdom and aesthetic unity. In "The Poet" we have seen the meaning of wisdom as connoting poetic insight, imagination or knowledge. In this case, the wisdom is primarily the monopoly of the West, or it (in a small compass) can be taken to mean that only the West has acquired wisdom. The apple has to be guarded from an attack from the East:

Guard the apple night and day,
Lest one from the East come and take it away.

We are given to understand that the epigraph from Milton

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15 Memoir, I, 80-85. The poem was suppressed by Tennyson after 1832, and was republished by Hallam Tennyson in the Memoir. My text is this reprint.

signifies a garden of "repose" and rest symbolic of "regeneration":

Hesperus and his daughters three.  
That sing about the golden tree.  
Comus.

Shakespeare's poem also presents a garden of peace and rest. Thus we find Zidonian Hanno wandering in "calm'd bays," hearing neither the "warbling of the nightingale" nor the "melody of the Libyan Lotus flute." With the use of o's and trochees and long lines in the first stanza a peaceful mood is evoked. After this

Came voices like the voices in a dream  
Continuous; till he reach'd the outer sea:--

And we are introduced to the song of the three Sisters. It is appended abruptly and has, therefore, a dramatic effect. The short lines give the song an incantatory effect. And yet there is anxiety and restlessness implied in the song itself. The one request made throughout the poem is for the preservation of the apple. Both the golden fruit and the garden are to be preserved from the rude attack of the East. Just as the apple stands for wisdom or poetic imagination, the song of the Sisters stands for poetry. Hence it is reasonable to assume that the apple and the singing are interrelated and co-existent. The apple is the reason for the singing, and the singing is essential to preserve the apple. In a corner wisdom whispers thus:

Five and three  
(let it not be preached abroad) make an awful mystery:  
For the blossom unto threefold music bloweth;  
Evermore it is born anew,  
And the sap to threefold music floweth,  
From the root,
Drawn in the dark,
Up to the fruit,
Creeping under the fragrant bark,
Liquid gold, honeysweet thró, and thró.

(slow movement)

The blossom bloweth into music, and the sap floweth into music.

In other words, the preservation of the fruit depends on the music of the three Sisters, and they derive their source and inspiration to sing from the sap and the blossom. The poet, poetry, and the inspiration of poetry are thus neatly related and interrelated.

We have to pause and consider the traditional meaning of the apple, namely, that it is the knowledge of good and evil, and that of the garden as the garden of Eden. Whether its significance is widened to include all knowledge or whether it signifies only poetic knowledge, the significance of the singing does not change. Its hieratic function is to guard the apple.

In the second stanza, Father Hesper is invoked to guard the dragon, who is another instrument in the safeguarding of the apple. His function is to

Number, tell them over, and number
How many the mystic fruit-tree holds,
Lest the red-comb'd dragon slumber
Roll'd together in purple folds.

Hence it is through number or poetry that the magic has to be evoked to keep the dragon awake who guards the apple. The request is made here with remarkable insistence, and the anxiety behind the request comes through with persistent appeal.

Look to him, father, lest he wink, and the golden apple be stol'n away,
For his ancient heart is drunk with overwatchings night and day
Round about the hallow'd fruit-tree curl'd--
Sing away, sing aloud every more in the wind
Without stop,
Lest his scaled eyelid drop,
For he is older than the world.

And if the golden apple is stolen away, "the world will be over-wise," the "glory unseated," and the "ancient secret revealed." The question of preserving the apple is in any event final.

The art that is to be preserved at such insistence is withdrawn, sensuous, and passive. The low west wind announcing the end of day and the beginning of night "keeps the apple holy and bright, round and full, bright and blest." The cool light from the East is screened off by the tall hillbrow, and it is the full-faced sunset that nurtures the fruit.

It is in the land of the setting sun that wisdom resides, and this wisdom has to be guarded from the aggressive heat of the East, which is not mellow like the sunset light. East and West have their final antithesis in this: East stands for cool (cold and calculated) activity, and the West for sensuous and passive inactivity. Aesthetic detachment is preserved under these special attributes of the West, and from the activity of the East. The West, for Tennyson, seems to embody nirvana or the point of stasis which we ordinarily associate with Hindu mystics in their final point of contemplation, and is the essential climate for the preservation of beauty or the golden apple.

We have the numerical symbols of five and three. Five includes the three Sisters, the Dragon and the tree. The number
denotes the five senses on a symbolic level. What the poem advocates largely is the control of the senses as a means to guard the apple. The senses assume great proportions in the preservation of the fruit; they have to mellow and mature, and through constant guard protect and preserve art. Three, on the other hand, denotes unity in diversity. The romantic poets are constantly sifting the phenomenon for the unity behind the apparent diversity. In this poem the three Sisters, who represent art, embody the symbol of oneness. The number also represents the bole, the fruit and the root, all of which constitute the one unified tree of knowledge or wisdom. "Five and three make an awful mystery," so the three Sisters sing as if to imply all that is at stake in the event of the theft of the apple by one from the East.17

The poem is a brilliant defense of poesy from the "rude touch of man." It seems to be "an interpretation of the spiritual conditions under which the poetic experiences come to life."18

II

From 1832 on it becomes more and more obvious that Tennyson is not quite so sure of the position of the artist, or of the ways to preserve art from the common man. He is not certain of

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17 See Buckley, p. 47. "The East is the common day of human action; the West is the evening of a consecrated half-light, of mystery and quiet contemplation and 'hoarded wisdom.'"

18 Critical Essays, p. 99.
the line of demarcation separating the artist's world of private intuition from the sphere of society. A merging of the two does not lead to a balanced condition; instead, the artist's private intuition vanishes before cold reality. The isolation of the Lady of Shalott is inevitable, the result of a curse. The poem, "The Lady of Shalott," was written in 1833.\(^{19}\) Within the limits of her curse she is permitted to cultivate her artistic sensibility but not her social responsibility. Isolated, within her medieval palace, "within four gray walls and four gray towers," on the island of Shalott, she is confined to a life of shadows, which are shadows of appearance and are twice removed from reality. We have here a Platonic setting. The world of Shalott is the shadow of the life around it as reflected in the mirror.

But who hath seen her wave her hand?  
Or at the casement seen her stand?  
Or is she known in all the land,  
The Lady of Shalott?

No one really has seen her. And yet there is no reason to suppose that she is in any way unhappy over her life of "twilight grayness," so consciously contrasted to the mirth and joy around her. No one has seen her stand by the casement, but that she is a reality is attested to by the reapers who have heard her sing "a song that echoes cheerly." The poem describes her sole activity, which is purely aesthetic, of day and night weaving a magic web of variegated colors. She sings, and she weaves on her canvas

\(^{19}\text{Poems, pp. 27-28.}\)
of artistic reality the reflection of the outside world.

But in her web she still delights  
To weave the mirror's magic sights,--

The medium of her art is this reflection. Her delight, however,  
is destined to disappear at the intrusion of an experience that  
is very alien to her subdued life of fancy.

Or when the moon was overhead,  
Came two young lovers lately wed:

and the Lady of Shalott responds, "I am half sick of shadows."

The response takes us unawares as we had accepted her life of  
fancy as final and artistically complete. And yet, the sense of  
alarm that the reader experiences somewhat paves the way for the  
rude result that follows. In the Memoir it is explained that "the  
key to this tale of magic 'symbolism' is of deep human signifi­  
cance," and is to be sought in the lines quoted above regarding  
the lovers.20  
This explanation is substantiated by Canon Ainger  
in his Tennyson for the Young, also on the authority of Tennyson:  
"The new-born love for something, for some one in the wide world  
from which she has been so long secluded, takes her out of the  
region of shadows into that of realities."21 If Tennyson's key  
is to be accepted, then the reason for the dissolution of the  
easletic life is love.

After the lovers have already brought a tinge of discontent  
to the Lady of Shalott's mind, appears the dashing Sir Lancelot.

20 Memoir, I, 151.

21 Quoted by the Memoir, I, 151.
He is announced in terms suiting his bold personality.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.

The contrast to the shadowy, dreamy life of the Lady of Shalott is complete. Without ceremony he "flash'd into the crystal mirror," and "tirra-lirra" by the river he sang. In Lancelot we find every facet of life denied to the Lady of Shalott. The challenge that he presents to her twilight world cannot be met, as she is already sick of shadows. One can agree with Lionel Stevenson that "as soon as emotion touches her personally through her interest in Lancelot, she defies the curse, and enjoys her brief hour of genuine life, even though she knows it will be her last."22 Therefore "she look'd down to Camelot." The curse has expressly ruled out the looking down through the shadows or beyond them at external life. Immediately the curse falls upon her.

Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side,--
and cries the Lady of Shalott, "the curse is come upon me." She abandons herself to her fate and braces herself to face the world of reality. Her poetic life finds release in the outer life but not fusion. The artist, in this instance, is completely unprepared to meet the exigencies of an active life.

What follows is disintegration, not only of her poetic consciousness, but also of her human sensibilities. Like the "dying swan" she floats down by night "chanting her death song" to Camelot. 23

In the 1842 version of this poem, Lancelot is said to recognize the Lady's lovely face. But in either case (the two versions of the poem), the well-fed wits and Lancelot are mentally confused. She has nothing in common with them. And Lancelot, in his outspoken manner, attempts to cover up the ignorance of the multitude by paying tribute to her external beauty. Deeper than this he cannot, he may not probe. Her inner self eludes him and his tribe.

The poem is a brilliant study in the adaptation of sense and sound. It is divided into four sections, and each section has its own particular mood. The first proclaims peace, twilight, and shadows. The second continues this twilight-gray mood, but has more color in the "troop of damsels," the "long-haired page," and the knights on horseback. The third stands in complete contrast to the rest of the poem, and constitutes the climax. The advent of love is announced by the sun that breaks in unceremoni-

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23 See "The Dying Swan," Poems, p. 16. This poem belongs to the Juvenilia. The setting of the poem is very close to that of "The Lady of Shalott" with its river and the general environment of loneliness. A dying swan floated down the river, and The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul Of that waste place with joy Hidden in sorrow.
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ously through the leaves upon the "brazen greaves of Sir Lancelot." Everything is in the "blue unclouded weather," so that we resign ourselves to the sad fate that follows when the Lady of Shalott abandons her state of detachment.

That Tennyson is not too sure of the position of the artist at this point is clearly indicated by the manner in which he describes Shalott and its occupant. The poet deliberately contrasts two moods, that within and without Shalott. Later, Holman Hunt, one of the Pre-Raphaelites, draws a portrait of the Lady in which he accents the melancholy. According to Elizabeth Cary, "it would be hard to describe the effect of gloom and fatality given by the droop of the Lady's figure tangled in the loosened web, and the down-sinking of the beautiful, noble head against the strong curve of the shoulder."24 The only objection that Tennyson makes to the drawing is that the young woman's "hair flies all over the shop."25 But he approves of the gloom that pervades the picture.

Not only in "The Lady of Shalott," but in "The Palace of Art," "Tithonus," and "Tiresias," Tennyson repudiates the position of the artist. The underlying tone of these poems is: Why should a man desire to be different from his kind? There is a certain conflict involved in these poems. While there is total negation of all

25Ibid.
involvement, and while isolation is an important requirement of artistic fulfillment, passive negation of external life is questioned.

Harold Nicolson offers a positive interpretation of Tennyson's peculiar attitude to art and aesthetics in the poetry of the 1832 edition. He believes that it is Cambridge and the Apostles who are primarily responsible for the transformation of the artist from the Lady of Shalott to the unimaginative Soul in "The Palace of Art."

On leaving the intensive domestic atmosphere of Somersby for a Cambridge in which the new generation, under the fomenting influence of men like Hare and Connop Thirlwall, were convinced that to them alone had been entrusted the enlightenment of a dull lethargic age, Tennyson fell, inevitably also, under the influence of the Trinity "Apostles," and the strength that was in him was diverted into ethical, and not, as one might have wished, into emotional channels. By the time he left Cambridge the harm had been done. The great lyric poet who had been born up there among the Lincolnshire wolds had been already tamed, controlled, labelled, and given a function unnatural to his genius; the wild, unhappy animal that lurked within him had been caged and shackled, and the real intention and meaning of the man had been for ever veiled—even from himself.26

This theory gains strength when we read the preface to "The Palace of Art." According to Tennyson, "Trench [one of the Apostles] said to me, when we were at Trinity together, 'Tennyson, we cannot live in art.'" "'The Palace of Art' is the embodiment of my own belief that the Godlike life is with man and for man."27

26 Nicolson, p. 25.
27 Memoir, I, 153.
The soul discovers this only after four years and submits to the theory of communal living. Tennyson is also influenced by Hallam in his change of attitude. Thus in Arthur Hallam's review of poems, *Chiefly Lyrical*, the author seems to take a double position. Hallam states that "desire of beauty" should dominate the poet, but he also defends the poet's public duties. Tennyson's desperate plea is: "Alas for me! I have more of the Beautiful than the Good!" To this Hallam replies from Hastings in 1831 that he should remember to his comfort that God has given him to see the difference. "Many a poet," writes Hallam, "has gone on blindly in his artistic pride." 29

"The Palace of Art," written in 1833, not only affirms Trench's theory, "we cannot live in art"; it is also a testimony of Hallam's tribute to his friend's ability to see the difference between the "Beautiful" and the "Good." The final choice, as this poem confirms, is in favor of the "Good." Following closely "The Lady of Shalott," this poem on the theory of art seems to be a confirmation of the problem partly raised in the first: "We cannot live in art."

O God-like isolation which art mine,

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29 Memoir, I, 106.
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain,

the Soul exclaims. There is a difference in the treatment of isolation in these two poems, "The Lady of Shalott," and "The Palace of Art." In one there is no choice; the isolation of the Lady of Shalott is already defined by the curse, and she makes use of the detachment for artistic purposes. The result, at any rate, is art. In "The Palace of Art" the motivation for isolation is non-aesthetic, and the result is self-centered ennui. Every detail is stressed in the poem so that it is a catalogue raisonnée. But the Soul is not seeking isolation in order to produce art.

In the ultimate analysis, "The Palace of Art" turns out to be a study of the unhappy impact of self-indulgent passion on a Soul. In both these poems art is represented as insufficient to answer all the questions of life or to offer all the solutions to man's problems. "When four years were wholly finished," the Soul deserts her Palace and takes her abode in a valley in a humble cottage. What is implied here is that she has chosen to live communally instead of artistically detached. But the final plea of the Soul has its overtones:

'Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
So lightly, beautifully built;
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.'

Guilt is here associated with aesthetic withdrawal. There is no feeling of guilt on the part of the Lady of Shalott. The temp-
tation is strong at this point to conclude that "The Palace of Art" is an answer to Hallam's injunction earlier that one should see the difference between the "Beautiful" and the "Good." At the same time, the Soul wants to return to her Palace on a later date, perchance, and with others. This final note confirms our statement that Tennyson is uncertain as to the line of demarcation between the artist's world and the world of public duties. Art seems to be insufficient for both the Lady of Shalott and the Soul. Hence communal living is substituted. But the poet is certainly ambiguous. He leaves the question of a detached aesthetic life still open to a possible solution and at a later date. 30

It is in "The Lotos-Eaters" that the note of isolation is heard again. But this poem is different from the two already mentioned in that isolation does not lead to artistic fulfillment (as in "The Lady of Shalott"), nor does it center itself on art. In "The Lotos-Eaters" isolation functions as a mood rather than as a medium of art, a mood to retire from active life into slothful retirement. As Buckley says, the mariners, unlike the Hesperides, serve no hieratic function. "Drugged by the lotos-bloom, they gain no quickened awareness of the beauty about

30In the 1842 volume of Tennyson's poetry there is sufficient indication that the poet has accepted public duties as the proper vehicle of poetry. But in the 1860's the plea for artistic isolation is heard again, for example, in "The Ancient Sage."
them." In "Ulysses" the theme of detachment is again picked up, but it is a detachment from common life in order to devote oneself to the exploration of untravelled spheres of action. In both these poems, therefore, isolation is not for aesthetic purposes.

III

The 1842 volume of Tennyson's poetry reveals a definite shift in his themes. We discover that the poet has merged himself completely in the life around him. He has accepted social and political problems as the proper themes of his poetry. The artist as an isolated being, as one who will be destroyed if he engages himself in the mundane life of common man, does not occupy a prominent position in the mature poetry of Tennyson. In the 1860's and later, however, the plea of the detached artist is heard again. This time the artist is disillusioned either with the code of aesthetic philosophy that he has embraced, or with the lack of communication that he finds between himself and society. The lack of communication is the serious problem of a Tiresias, a Dead Prophet, or an Ancient Sage. The artist here holds out a message to man, but man is not in the mood to heed the prophecy.

"Tithonus" is a beautiful poem, which, probably, was written

31Buckley, p. 48.
along with "Ulysses," but was published only in 1860. Very simply, the story consists in the disillusionment that follows the aesthetic choice that Tithonus has made. Tithonus starts out as a worshipper of beauty beloved by the goddess Eos. He has begged of the goddess for eternal life, but has failed to ask for eternal youth. As a result he is bound forever to the ideal of beauty. In his decayed condition Tithonus views the beauty of Eos every morning in renewed brilliance, and cannot help feeling the contrast in his aged bones. "Lo! ever thou growest beautiful," he complains to Eos. He is weary of his experience and pleads for death. Beauty here, in other words, has only brought about never-ending disintegration. His final plea to the goddess is pregnant with meaning:

Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

There is not merely a hint here; there is a serious repudiation of the theory of aesthetic detachment in these lines.

Wistfully Tithonus looks back on the first visitations of the Seraph.

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,

Poems, pp. 89-90.
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm 
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds 
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd 
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet, 
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing, 
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

The passage is pertinent. Through sexual imagery Tithonus gives us an insight into the depth of the vision that he has experienced. The experience is very close to that of both "Armageddon" and "Timbuctoo." Eos being the goddess of dawn, what she bestows is light or poetic insight. Through insight Tithonus could hear Apollo sing "while Ilion like mist rose into towers." 33 At present, the moment of truth is only a memory to him; the burden of disintegration has outweighed his youthful creativity. And, hence, we have a poem of regret. Deprived of imagination, he can only wish for the final release.

Release me, and restore me to the ground. 
Thou seest all things, and thou will see my grave; 
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn, 
I earth in earth forget these empty courts, 
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

We have been prepared for this note of utter despair and frustration at the very beginning of the poem. The opening stanza is this:

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall, 
The vapors weep their burthen to the ground, 
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath, 
And after many a summer dies the swan. 
Me only cruel immortality 
Consumes; . . .

33 In Greek mythology the walls of Troy are supposed to have risen to the music of Apollo, the god of poetry.
This note of finality is preserved throughout the poem by the careful choice of words. Tithonus is a "white-haired shadow," who roams like a dream "the ever silent spaces of the East," "the gleaming halls of morn." He is "immortal age beside immortal youth." By a careful employment of closed vowels the poet creates a mood of pathos throughout. With such lines as,

And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire,

which are very emphatic in their stress of brightness and life, Tennyson creates a contrast to the sad, isolated existence of aged but immortal Tithonus. In any event, aesthetic detachment is totally denounced in this poem.

"Tiresias" is another poem of regret over early absorption in beauty. It was also begun early but was published only in 1885. The poem opens very clearly on the note of wishful thinking: "I wish I were as in the days of old...." Tiresias is addressing himself to his young disciple. He first describes his youthful experience. Like Tennyson (in "Armageddon" and "Timbuctoo," and also in "The Ancient Sage"), Tiresias had, in his youth, yearned

For larger glimpses of that more than man
Which rolls the heavens, and lifts and lays the deep,
Yet loves and hates with mortal hates and loves,
And moves unseen among the ways of men.

And it is his wont "to seek the highest of the heights / With some strange hope to see the nearer God." What he, instead, sees

Poems, pp. 489-491.
is Pallas Athene in all her chaste beauty:

... one snowy knee was prest
Against the margin flowers; a dreadful light
Came from her golden hair, her golden helm
And all her golden armor on the grass,
And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew dark
For ever, and I heard a voice that said,
'Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much,
And speak the truth that no man may believe.'

In "Timbuctoo" the bright light from the Seraph's eyes not only
bestows inner perception, but also preserves his inner perception.
In this instance, a price is laid on the spiritual insight.

Tiresias cannot convince the people of his prophetic powers.

Therefore, he mourns:

Who ever turn'd upon his heel to hear
My warning that the tyranny of one
Was prelude to the tyranny of all?
My counsel that the tyranny of all
Led backward to the tyranny of one?

His prophetic power is futile, and he is disillusioned. Many
years ago Tennyson wrote "The Poet." In that poem we saw the
strength of the poet in beating down ignorance and anarchy with
a defenceless scroll. Through the years, however, Tennyson's own
faith in the sanctity of the Poet's vocation seems to have
weakened. He is no longer in a position to recapture the first
visitations of the Seraph.

Charles Tennyson declares that the poet is drawn to the
legend of Tiresias by the feeling that he (the poet) is very much
in the situation of Tiresias.35 Further, Tennyson sees so plainly

35 Charles Tennyson, p. 483.
where materialism and lack of faith are hurrying the world; yet he is beginning to feel that all his warnings are in vain. These apprehensions are clearly expressed in an unpublished version of the dedication:

Ahl if I
Should play Tiresias to the times,
I fear I might prophesy
Of faded faiths and civic crimes,
And fierce transition's blood-red morn,
And years with lawless voices loud,
Old vessels from their moorings torn
And cataclysm and thundercloud,
And one lean hope, that at the last
Perchance—if this small world endures—
Our heirs may find the stormy past
Has left their present purer. . . .

Cognition of truth and experience does not coincide in the case of Tiresias. Therefore, beauty, which is operative in the act of cognition, becomes sterile and even tragic in its larger results. The sad conclusion through the mouth of Tiresias is more than guaranteed:

This power hath work'd no good to aught that lives,
And these blind hands were useless in their wars,
O! therefore, that the unfulfill'd desire,
The grief forever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the prophet's heart—
Could [that] stand forth, and like a statue, rear'd
To some great citizens, with all praise from all
Who past it, saying, 'That was he!'

It might be argued at this point that the power of prophesying more than compensates for the lack of physical eyesight. But when "this power hath work'd no good to aught that lives," its purpose is defeated and leads to endless regrets. The problem is

Ibid.
only slightly different in "Tithonus," where he perceives beauty but cannot turn it to his advantage, much less to societal good.

Another poem published in Timon and Other Poems (date not mentioned) is "The Dead Prophet." The situation of the dead prophet is in complete antithesis to that of "The Poet." No attempt is made to defend the values of the prophet as in the earlier poem. As a matter of fact, Tennyson has declared that the poem was written because "the world likes to know about the roughness, eccentricities, and defects of a man of genius rather than what he really is."38

The mood is created in the very first stanza. There is great indignation among the gods over the sad treatment accorded to prophets on earth. This particular prophet has served the people in his special way and has taught them about the beauty of life and the quality of souls in that they have wings. In his music he has touched on the "whole sad planet of man / The kings, and the rich and the poor." But now that the prophet is dead, the mob decides to examine his corpse for a sign to indicate that "he was noblier-fashion'd than other men." They tumble the body without reverence, tear him from head to foot, and draw out the liver and heart.

This dead Prophet, we are given to understand, has not only sung of "an old sunset, but a sun coming up in his youth." The

37 Poems, pp. 512-513.
38 Memoir, IV, 80.
people pretend to believe him, but, obviously, do not understand him or his vision. Therefore, their need to conduct an examination of his dead body is more crude than cruel.

"The Ancient Sage," written in 1885, is another poem which deals directly with the prophet. The Sage admits to the younger man:

I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the hills.

Immediately we are reminded of the long weariness of both Tithonus and Tiresias. The Sage, at the same time, is motivated differently from Tithonus and Tiresias. He is both a philosopher and an artist and can see truth in all its clarity, but he cannot convey its message to his skeptical follower. The weariness here is not the result of perceiving an excess of beauty as is the case in "Tithonus" and "Tiresias." The Sage advocates a detached life for two specific reasons: lack of communication between him and society; and his poetic insight, on the basis of which he can perceive the dialectic of appearance and reality. As Johnson states: "The Sage ... has known mystic revelations of a kind which Tennyson himself experienced, and through them he has come to place unshakable trust in the imagination as the highest of human faculties."40

In conclusion, one sees various approaches to the question

40 Johnson, p. 65.
of aesthetic detachment in Tennyson's poetry. The artist stands out in the crowd. What is more, his isolation is carefully maintained by the belief that only isolated from common man can he fulfill his special mission to produce art. In this detached condition the artist is visited by the Seraph and is instructed in the sanctity of his position. In the later poems (beginning with "The Lady of Shalott") the isolation of the artist is questioned. The Lady of Shalott is destroyed when she attempts to combine her artistic life with the common life around Shalott. In "The Palace of Art" the poet boldly states his newly achieved belief that isolation is less admirable than participation in common life. Both Tithonus and Tiresias are punished for desiring to be different from ordinary man. In the first case, the punishment is the result of a lack of foresight; in "Tiresias" punishment follows in the wake of aesthetic revelation. The position of the artist is no longer sacred, or his position has undergone a revaluation.

The dead Prophet's experience is an indication of the change in values. Whereas earlier the poet is carefully separated from the Sophist, at this point there is no effort made to protect his dead body from irreverent curiosity. In "The Ancient Sage" as a result of this disillusionment with the role of the artist, the Sage advocates a detached life.

If the poet has given up artistic detachment for the sake of communication, he has not obtained this even through participation. The Sage gives the testimony to this conviction. As a matter of
fact, it is precisely on the basis of this lack of communication that he desires detachment.

The vision of the poet is dangerous in its consequences. The Lady of Shalott is destroyed by it. But even when the poet engages in an active life, the vision is there hovering in the background. This is testified to by King Arthur:

... and many a time they [visions] come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that suits his forehead is not air
But vision—yes, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again.41

But the vision has to be subordinated to the problem of living with man and not detached from man.

What we obtain in the aggregate is this. The capacity to pierce the veil mainly through supernatural visitations, in order to enter the "forbidden region of shadows" and acquire the highest meaning of beauty or experience, is an important aspect of Tennyson's aesthetic philosophy, and one which he attempts to embrace in the early poetry. Such an overture demands detachment from earthly commitments. But somewhere along the line, belief in the sanctity of the aesthetic position begins to wane. Thus in Tithonus and Tiresias the state of aesthetic detachment leads to deep regrets. The position of the artist becomes questionable.

In another sense, ideals have to be reconciled with social

41 Poems, p. 413.
action. The soul leaves her Palace precisely for this reason; the Ancient Sage and Tiresias make an effort to utilize their poetic insight for the good of society. But they cannot communicate. The Sage, therefore, desires to isolate himself. Hence, although the poet denounces aesthetic isolation in favor of active participation in life, isolation is again the final note.
CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL QUESTIONS

There is a definite shift in Alfred Tennyson's themes after 1833. The poet discounts escape and aesthetic detachment and concerns himself with problems which are nearest to man and to society. The 1842 edition of his poetry proves our conviction that the poet has emerged from the region of the shadows. This edition, in two volumes, contains some old poems, almost rewritten, and many new poems. According to Spedding, the handling in his later pieces is much lighter and freer; the interest deeper and purer; there is more humanity with less image and drapery; a closer adherence to truth; a greater reliance for effect upon the simplicity of Nature. Moral and spiritual traits of character are more dwelt upon, in place of external scenery and circumstance. He addresses himself [on the whole] more to the heart and less to the ear and eye.1

In this chapter we shall deal with Tennyson's attempt to affiliate himself with the simple English people and the beautiful English countryside; with purely social questions and criticism; and lastly, with poems which deal with patriotism, and with his belief in science and progress.

1Quoted by Hallam Tennyson, Memoir, I, 246.
The English countryside comes alive in many of Tennyson’s poems. The poet first makes use of the peace and serenity of the country as a foil to set off the loneliness of a Mariana. But he also makes use of the beautiful natural setting to accentuate the beauty of a Margaret, the vivacity of a Rosalind, or the perfect poise and charm of an Eleonore. It is in “The Miller’s Daughter,” first published in 1833, that he depicts in detail peaceful England and its simple people. It is a poem of contentment and happiness. Here we have the example of a perfect family, and the family is the unit of society in Tennyson’s poetry from now on.

The miller has grown wealthy and portly in the course of time. But we notice that he attributes his prosperity to his inner peace, derived mainly from his marriage and his love for Alice. The second factor is the sustaining element in his life.

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2 One should recall here that the Nature that Tennyson described in his early poetry (that studied in the second chapter) is artificial, being a reproduction of books that he had read.


4 The poet does not treat of successful love and marriage before this, as far as the present writer can tell from the early poems. We have, on the contrary, representations of people who are frustrated in love, women whose love has destroyed them as in “The Dream of Fair Women,” and women who are scornful of men as Kate, Poems, p. 23.
He has built a happy home with her. But once he had been a "listless boy,"

Late-left an orphan of the squire,
Where this old mansion mounted high
Looks down upon the village spire... . . .

It is simply on the basis of love that he has been able to live a life free of regrets.

In "The May Queen," also written in 1833, we have a poem describing the budding hopes of a very young maiden who is to be crowned the "Queen of May." All her hopes and brightness are destroyed through illness. Throughout the poem, the poet faithfully adheres to the details of a simple life. The pathetic end of the young maiden relates the poem to the Lucy poems of William Wordsworth. In truth, there is close resemblance between the two poets in the manner of their approach to English country life. Both use simple language and favor unsophisticated people.

Tennyson certainly balances the claims of the simple people against the higher claims of noble blood. Thus, in this edition, English Idyls, and Other Poems of 1842, the main theme is to be sought in the goodness and nobility of the simple people. In "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" (1842), the woman of noble birth is presented as being haughty and unlovable. But the "country

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[7] This is the heading adopted in the 1884 and subsequent editions.
"The Lord of Burleigh," also from the 1842 volume, is another poem which extols the nobility of simple people. The wealthy Lord of Burleigh woos and marries "her" under the disguise of a landscape painter. Later, the woman, who has no pretensions to wealth or title, discovers his identity and becomes very unhappy.

She wishes that her husband were once more "that landscape painter / Which did win my heart from me!" When she dies, the Lord of Burleigh attires her in the dress she wore on her wedding day, and, thus, restores the dignity of her birth.

"Lady Clare" from the 1842 volume presents a different situation. Lady Clare is actually the nurse's child, the nurse

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9Ibid., p. 107. See also Promise of May, Act II, Poems, p. 740, where Dobson tells Dora: "Thy father deducted his darters to marry gentlefoalk, and see what's coomed on it."

10Ibid., pp. 105-106.
having substituted her baby for the old earl's daughter, who died at her breast. Lady Clare views the question from a different angle from her mother, the nurse.

'I'm a beggar born,' she said,
'I will speak out, for I dare not lie.
Pull off, pull off, the brooch of gold,
And fling the diamond necklace by.'

And dressed simply she goes to Lord Ronald. He is not affected by the change in her status but marries her in spite of it. We shall see that in the later poems Tennyson adopts a very different attitude toward nobility. In fact, noble people are portrayed as haughty and uncompromising; they only respect money and title.

"The Gardener's Daughter" and "Dora," both of which were also published in 1842, are poems placed in a semipastoral setting, which is not yet disturbed by scientific progress or the "march of mind." See the Memoir, II, 44. The Memoir, I, 253, also notes: "'Dora' being the tale of a nobly simple country girl, had to be told in the simplest language, and therefore was one of the poems which gave..."
inflicted by the old farmer, whose son she has married against the farmer's wishes. He reminds the reader of these lines from the preface to "The Palace of Art":

And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
Howling in outer darkness. 14

In the end, it is through "Love" that the farmer regains balance and the happiness of his home.

Alfred Tennyson seems to be taking elaborate pains to convince the people at this time that he is the poet of the common man. He wants to assure the people that he is not isolated any longer, on the contrary, that he is concerned with the simple themes of daily life. In fact, already in "Edwin Morris," a poem written in 1839, but printed only in 1851, the wholly aesthetic poet is rebuked for his position. 15 Edwin Morris is the target of criticism. He is all too accomplished, "All perfect, finish'd to the finger-nail." The narrator finds a jarring note in Morris:

Whether he spoke too largely, that there seem'd
A touch of something false, some self-conceit,
Or over-smoothness; howso'er it was,
He scarcely hit my humor. . . .

(II. 72-76)

That the poet feels a deepened social responsibility is made

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14 Poems, p. 42.
15 Ibid., pp. 77-79.
obvious in "Audley Court," a poem first printed in 1842. Buckley remarks that

he [Tennyson] began to suspect that an indulgence in merely private sentiment might also represent a betrayal of his own most compelling intuition. Escape into an art of sensations, beautiful or melancholy, might demand the sacrifice of beauty itself, the denial of that ultimate order of being, the far-far-away to which in moments of vision he had from the beginning committed his whole poetic and "mystical" imagination.

Hence, in "Audley Court" the poet seems to assure the people that he is capable of common speech. The story is set in a plain and simple environment. The same theme is continued in "The Golden Year," a poem of 1846. Leonard, the poet, is rebuked in this instance for his isolation. People say that he lives "shut up within himself,"

A tongue-tied poet in the feverous days
That, setting the how much before the how,
Cry, like the daughters of the horseleech,
'Give,
Cram us with all,' but count not me the herd!

But one has to agree with Buckley that

he [Leonard] is actually less eager to escape social problems than to view them in the perspective of a political gradualism. He foresees the slow sure coming, as if by evolutionary process, of the golden year when "wealth no more shall rest in mounted heaps" but all shall share in the world's goods and a free trade and an enlightened press shall carry peace and Christian principle from land to land.

16 Ibid., pp. 74-75.
17 Buckley, p. 72.
18 Poems, pp. 87-88.
19 Buckley, p. 93.
Tennyson's "golden year" rests on the assumption of good work; therefore, the message is Carlylean. Its essence is in this passage.

Live on, God love us, as if the seedsman, rapt
Upon the teeming harvest, should not plunge
His hand into the bag; but well I know
That unto him who works, and feels he works,
This same grand year is ever at the doors.

(ll. 69-73)

"To -- After Reading a Life and Letters," a poem first printed in 1849, is in praise of his unnamed friend for rejecting the pursuit of poetry.  

The poem argues that

You might have won the Poet's name,
If such be worth the winning now,
And gain'd a laurel for your brow
Of sounder leaf than I can claim;

But you have made the wiser choice,
A life that moves to gracious ends
Thro' troops of unrecording friends,
A deedful life, a silent voice.

This poem deals with a recurrent motif in Victorian literature, namely, the love of action. In Tennyson this theme is present not only in "The Palace of Art," but also in section CIII of In Memoriam, and in "The Holy Grail," in which King Arthur rebukes his knights for chasing "wandering fires." A "deedful life" is the final choice of the protagonists of both "Locksley Hall" and Maud. The tide of Victorian affairs made such a choice almost compulsory; for in the absence of traditional beliefs, work or love of action became the "national religion."

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20 Poems, p. 114.
Thomas Carlyle, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, and William Morris were ardent subscribers to this philosophy. In Tennyson the Victorian concept of "work" takes the form of social responsibility; as a result of this we have many poems of his which deal with current social issues.

II

Tennyson's social poems are undoubtedly calculated to damage his rating as a creative artist. In them we have didacticism unalloyed and clothed in a language which claims to be poetry merely because of its pattern. His social poems can be classified under two groups: those which disparage society's countless evils, and those which offer solutions.

The perfect Tennysonian society is universal in its scope, unselfish, noble, and pure. In such a society each man may "find his own in all men's good, / And all men work in noble brotherhood." 21

But society is not a brotherhood. In the first place, there is sharp contrast between the different classes in Tennyson's England. In "The Miller's Daughter," "Lady Clare," and "Lady Clare Vere de Vere" we find that there is social distinction between the classes. In "Godiva," for instance, the grim Earl is surprised that his wife feels pity for the common people. 22


22 Ibid., pp. 95-96.
'You would not let your little finger ache
For such as these?'

he asks in scorn when Godiva pleads for the people who are taxed highly.

"Locksley Hall" is Tennyson's first poem of social protest, and in it he attacks a variety of social evils. In vehement style he criticizes certain aspects of Victorian life which cried for reform. Thus:

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!
Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead of the fool!

(11. 59-62)

The English lord is portrayed as an unworthy character. Amy's crime is not so much rejecting the hand of the protagonist in "Locksley Hall," as it is preferring another suitor, who is backed by title and wealth. It is in Maud, however, that we have definite indication of Tennyson's prejudice toward the wealthy class. Maud's brother is described as

that dandy-despot, he,
That jewell'd mass of millinery,
That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian bull
Smelling of musk and of insolence,
Her brother, from whom I keep aloof. . . .

(I, VI, vi)

"This new-made lord" is conscious of his status, for is he not

23Ibid., pp. 90-94.
24Ibid., pp. 198-216.
one whose "splendor plucks / The slavish hat from the villager's head?" (I, X, 1). Maud's suitor, as he is portrayed in the poem, is also an unattractive lord of wealth and name. He is

a lord, a captain, a padded shape,  
A bought commission, a waxen face,  
A rabbit mouth that is ever agape--  
(X, ii)

As William Gordon remarks, "such portrayals of rank without character reveal unmistakably Tennyson's own thought of the true relation of members of one class to those of another."25 The poet, it would seem, does not favor title and rank.

"Aylmer's Field" (1864) confirms our opinion that the poet was not in favor of wealthy people.26 In fact, the poem was unfavorably received by the public for "Tennyson's infelicity in dealing with the higher classes."27 Hallam Tennyson remarks that the opening lines of the poem unfold the moral of the poem: "The sequel describes the Nemesis which fell upon Sir Aylmer in his pride of wealth."28 Sir Aylmer's only child, Edith, falls in love with Leolin, whose "middle-class poverty" disqualifies him for the hand of Edith. In refusing consent to their marriage, Sir Aylmer destroys both lovers.


26 Poems, pp. 241-252.

27 Ibid., p. 240. See the whole introduction for the public reaction.

28 Memoir, III, 11.
The entire poem is very melodramatic, but through it all, the message of the poet comes clearly: "a pride of wealth and rank bespeaks a cultural decadence." Thus, in this poem we have:

This filthy marriage-hinderimg Mammon made
The harlot of the cities... (li. 374-375)

Inequality of wealth is the cause of untold misery. The poet was, early and late, deeply conscious of the sufferings of the poor people. Even in the 1830's he was very sensitive to the down-trodden. Hallam Tennyson notes in the Memoir that Carlyle's account of Sterling best describes, as far as I can gather, the typical intellectual undergraduate of my father's set: who hated the narrow and ignorant Toryism to be found in country districts: who loathed parties and sects: who reverenced the great traditions and the great men of past ages, and eagerly sympathized with the misfortunes and disabilities of his fellowmen.

Hallam Tennyson also writes in 1830: "These riots of the poorer classes filled my father with an earnest desire to do something to help those who lived in misery among the 'warrens of the poor.'"

Already in "Locksley Hall" (1842) we have the strong assertion that, "Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to
golden keys." In Memoriam has several lines in which the poet pleads for the poor:

Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;

Ring out the narrowing lust of gold: . . .

(Tennyson)

Tennyson states in "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" in 1855 that Maurice and he should discuss

How best to help the slender store,
How mend the dwellings, of the poor. . . .

In Maud we have the picture of the poor "hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine." With William Gordon one can certainly conclude that "Tennyson has done much to make the sufferings and privations of the poor a reality to the reading and thinking people of England and the world." 34

Throughout his life Tennyson is concerned with the poor. Enoch Arden is disabled by an accident, and he is incapable of taking care of his children; he sees, as in a nightmare, his children being reduced to "low, miserable lives of hand-to-mouth."

The city clerk in "Sea Dreams" (1860) has a small income, but the

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32 In Queen Mary, Act III, i, Poems, p. 581, we have:
The new lords
Are quieted with their sop of Abbey-lands,
And even before the Queen's face Gardiner buys them
With Philip's gold. All greed, no faith, no courage!

33 Poems, p. 222.
34 Gordon, p. 114.
the poet's sympathies are with him since the clerk is the representative of a large and unfortunate class. 35

In the poem, "On the Jubilee of Queen Victoria" (1887), 36 we have the following lines:

You, that wanton in affluence,
Spare not how to be bountiful,
Call your poor to regale with you,
All the lowly, the destitute,
Make their neighborhood healthfuller,
Give your gold to the hospital,
Let the weary be comforted,
Let the needy be banqueted,
Let the soul'd in his heart rejoice
At this glad Ceremonial,
And this year of her Jubilee.

Tennyson is thus consistent in his attitude toward the poor.

He is definitely opposed to the custom of arranged marriages. In "Locksley Hall" Amy is pictured as the "puppet to a father's threat." In The Princess there is a sarcastic representation of the bond that had been contracted between the parents of Ida and the prince. The prince explains:

She to me
Was proxy-wedded with a bootless calf
At eight years old. . . .  
(I, 11. 32-34)

And in Maud we are informed that "one of the two [Maud's suitor] that rode at her side" was in search of a bride.

Tennyson's poetry deals with mis-mated love in such poems as

35 Poems, pp. 252-256.
36 Ibid., 527.
"Walking to the Mail," 37 "The Lord of Burleigh," "Audley Court," and "Locksley Hall." Tennyson's philosophy, as indicated earlier, is based on the assumption that a happy marriage is the foundation of a good society.

Very early in his poetry marriage is accepted as a basic theme, for example in "The Two Voices," which was written soon after Hallam's death in 1833. 38 Here we have the picture of a happy family pacing to church. There is also reference made to the fact that the salvation of man rests in marriage.

One walk'd between his wife and child,
With measured footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,
The little maiden walk'd demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat. 39

Marriage as a theme is continued in his poetry. In "Edwin Morris" the curate expresses his view that "God made the woman

37 Poems, pp. 75-77.
38 Ibid., 30-35.
39 Buckley, p. 64, writes about these lines: "It is perhaps regrettable aesthetically that this group, framed by the window casement, is so stiff and stylized a metaphor of social harmony. Yet the blessing of life, even in such conventional terms, effectively banishes the counsel of despair. . . ."
for the man." In Memoriam, as every student of Tennyson knows by rote, begins with a funeral and ends with a wedding. The deep joy with which the poet describes the wedding of Edmund Lushington and the poet's sister is sufficient proof that Tennyson holds marriage in great esteem. In fact, society's happiness rests implicitly on the successful marriage. In the same year that In Memoriam was published (1850), Tennyson married Emily Sellwood. His own marriage was unclouded.

The theme of marriage is treated completely in The Princess (1855). The poet remarks that

... either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal nor unequal. Each fulfills
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two cell'd heart beating, with one full stroke,
Life.

(VII, 11. 284-290)

Here is an indication that balance in family is necessary. Therefore, as W. Stacy Johnson aptly comments,

The end of the story clearly implies the need for a balance between passion and reticence, between rose and lily, in both the man and the woman. As the prince begs, at last with success, 'Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself': he is asking the strong-willed Ida to become a wife—not a mother and nurse, and not a mere dependent, either—so that he can act as a grown-up man and she as a woman.

40 Poems, p. 78.
41 See Charles, pp. 242-245.
The husband and wife should seek the most complete and perfect development of the noblest powers of the other. The relationship, according to Gordon, "is not that of master and servant, but of two godlike souls indissolubly bound together, not as equals, but 'like in difference,' growing liker in the long years, each fulfilling defect in each. . . ."43 On the basis of this theory, The Idylls of the King can be studied as a poem in which the incompatability between Arthur and Guinevere is a contributing factor in the dissolution of the Round Table.44 Regarding his own marriage, Tennyson remarked: "The peace of God came into my life before the altar when I wedded her [Emily Sellwood]."45

Under social evils is listed "greedy speculation" (Maud), which, the protagonist believes, is responsible for the death of his father. The protagonist attacks the "broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things, / Whose ear is cram'd with his cotton, and rings" (I, X, iii). In the alehouse, Jack on his bench has "as many lives as a Czar," and in his own household, his servants are "ever ready to slander and steal." If the man of science

43Gordon, p. 90.

44For a thorough analysis of the theme of marriage in The Idylls of the King, see Stacy Johnson, pp. 8-10.

45Memoir, II, 129. It is possible that Tennyson was influenced in his theme of marriage by Coventry Patmore, whose Angel in the House (1854), had for its theme that only in marriage can humanity's natural goodness and nobility find true expression. Tennyson and Patmore were friends, but there is no reference to Patmore's poem either in the Memoir or in Charles Tennyson's study.
is after self-glorification, the poet is also not without blem-

ish. In fact, the passionate heart of the poet is "whirl'd

into folly and vice." Nature herself seems to sanction a "uni-

versal selfishness," for she is

one with rapine, a harm no preacher

can heal;

The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow

spear'd by the shrike,

And the whole little wood where I sit is a world

of plunder and prey.

(I, IV, iv)

This is the situation within Nature; and in society, the duel is

accepted as the proper means of settling a personal feud.

All these private and public strifes are resolved through

war in both "Locksley Hall" and Maud. It is not that Tennyson

was in favor of war, but that he seemed to believe that war as

a symbol of action is a means to an end, in this case, the

realization of man himself. In other words, war would bring out

the best in everybody; he seemed to have accepted public warfare

as a solution to the private ills. In the "Epilogue" to "The

Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava" (1885), Tennyson has

crystallized his convictions on the necessity of war. It is

stated that

he needs must fight

To make true peace his own,

He needs must combat might with might,

Or Might would rule alone;

One should note here the glorification of the poet in

Chapter III.
And who loves war for war's own sake
Is fool, or crazed, or worse... 

In commenting on this epilogue, Hallam Tennyson has mentioned that "no one loathed war more than he [Tennyson] did, or looked forward more passionately to the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world." It would appear that his attitude toward war did not change with the passing of years. In fact, it disturbed the poet that the people considered him a "warmonger." The "Epilogue" seems to be his defence against such a charge.

When in 1864 Tennyson returned with the volume of Enoch Arden to the romance of real life among his own people, the volume was heartily welcomed. In this volume we have subjects from English life: the sailor, the farmer, the parson, the city lawyer, the squire, the country maiden, and the old woman who dreams of a past life in an old restful age.

The popularity of this volume probably rests on the fact that the poet had stripped his style of its "jewels and ornaments." As Elizabeth Cary remarks, "he had abjured all perplexing speculation as well, and had refrained from indulging in scientific suggestions, he had even let the superstition of the uneducated slip into his lines..." To a certain extent this is true,

47 Poems, p. 510.
48 See the Memoir, II, 227.
as a reading of the poems will indicate.

The story of "Enoch Arden" is very simple. Likewise, in the two Northern Farmer poems ("Northern Farmer Old Style" and "Northern Farmer New Style") we have primeval simplicity. Through these two poems Tennyson is able to picture the agrarian revolution. Whereas the old farmer was satisfied with his small holding, the new farmer is inspired by larger ideas with regard to both holdings and in the manner of farming itself. The ruling passion of the new farmer is "propetty, propetty, propetty." To a large extent, the transformation is not happy. The farmer merely acquires the false ideals and values which the wealthy nobleman has been accused of possessing. Thus when the new farmer exclaims:

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass ans' 'er munny too,
Maakin' 'em goë togëther, as they've good right to do,
we are reminded of Sir Aylmer.

Tennyson's role as a social reformer is unashamedly aggres-

50 Poems, pp. 261-264.

51 Tennyson has commented about "Northern Farmer New Style" in this manner in the Memoir, III, 12: "The 'Farmer, noe style' is likewise founded on a single sentence, 'When I canters my 'ese along the ramper [highway] I 'ears propetty, propetty, propetty.' I had been told that a rich farmer in our neighborhood was in the habit of saying this. I never saw the man and know no more of him. It was also reported of the wife of this worthy that, when she entered the salle à manger of a sea bathing-place, she slit her pockets and said, 'When I married I brought him £5000 on each shoulder.'" The Memoir adds that Alfred Tennyson was fond of telling such stories.
give in "looksley Hall sixty Years After" (1886). As a treatise on social criticism, this poem is in the lines of the earlier "looksley Hall," but the criticism that is raised here is louder and bolder, positively undignified. The unstable and passionate hero of "looksley Hall sixty Years After" is an old man of eighty. The pettiness and cruelty of man, and the terrifying social evils of which humanity is the victim, are some of the questions which are raised by the poem. The proud cities have become "warrens of the poor," reservoirs of dirt and disease, monstrosities of slated hideousness. Thus, for example, it is stated:

There the master scrimp's his haggard sempstress of her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.
There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

(11. 221-224)

Samuel C. chew interprets this period in which Tennyson directed his energy and devotion to social criticism as an "unprofitable decade." One has to accept this judgment as impartial, for from the moment that Tennyson identified himself with the age, its minor and major social conditions, he assumed the position of "counselor to his countrymen," and accepted poetry as a fitting vehicle to express his opinions. Chew further adds

52 Poems, pp. 517-524. See the Memoir, IV, 93-94 for Lord Lytton's letter commenting Tennyson's courage in writing such a poem of social denunciation.
that Tennyson

returned to the kinds of poetry of which he was a master. The abandonment of the historical drama may have brought a relief which accounts for the recovery of genius in his seventieth year. . . .

Save in a few pieces such as the ranting, ineffectual Locksley Hall Sixty Years After, he was content in this final period to resume once more the manner and matter native to his genius as a poet of solemn, introspective, and melancholy moods, of romantic atmosphere and lovely landscape, and as an elegist and the contemplator of the mysteries of life and death. 53

Some of Tennyson's later poems are truly among the greatest that he has written: for example, "Demeter and Persephone," "Rizpah," "Merlin and the Gleam," "The Death of Oenone," "Akbar's Dream," and "Crossing the Bar."

III

England had committed itself to industrialization, free trade, and the expansion of the empire, and it succeeded in all. England not only became the "workshop of the world," but it held supremacy over the sea and the land; it became the world marketer, the world banker, and even accepted its colonies as its "burden" to redeem from "barbarism." The Crystal Palace of 1851 is the veritable symbol of Victorian progress, expansion, and achievements.

In such an age of industrial and colonial expansion, one might expect the writers to deal with large, imperialistic themes

and ideals. But the early Victorian literature is mainly English. The writers are concerned largely with their immediate problems, and even when they deal with abstract theories of faith and doubt, appearance and reality, they remain painfully nationalistic, and in their insularity concentrate their energy on "English institutions and virtues."

The Victorians made Tennyson their high priest and national poet. They made him the poet laureate in 1850. The poet repaid his people for this confidence by instilling in them an unlimited sense of national pride. He wrote patriotic and occasional poems celebrating national events; he wrote "The Charge of the Light Brigade" to fire the English soldiers in the Crimean war with enthusiasm for the cause of victory; he was inspired to write "Hands All Round," "Britons, Guard Your Own," and "The Third of February" when England was thrown into a turmoil by Napoleon's coup d'etat. 54 He also wrote poems in which he embodied his faith in the Victorian age, in his country which he believed was the greatest on earth. Occasionally, however, he also showed concern over the whole world. 55 But, on the

54 See Charles Tennyson, pp. 265-266. It is given us to understand that "Hands All Round," in particular, was written with tears streaming down the poet's cheeks.

55 In 1870 Tennyson, anticipating that England, if it continued as it was, unprepared, would be some day invaded and smashed, said: "We rashly expose ourselves to danger, and in our press offend foreign powers, being the most beastly self-satisfied nation in the world." See the Memoir, III, 127-28. Such a statement is indicative of an awareness in him that there were other countries besides England. This awareness on his part
whole, he was insular as he had proved by his statements on, for instance, Ireland. 56

Arthur Sidgwick remarks that in the patriotic poems of Tennyson there is a new departure:

It is easy to idealize freedom, revolution or war: and the ancients found it easy to compose lyrics on kings, athletes, warriors, or other powerful persons. From the days of Tyrtaeus and Pindar, to Byron, Shelley, and Swinburne, one or other of these themes has been the seed of song. But the praise of ordered liberty, of settled government, of political moderation, is far harder to idealize in poetry. It has been the peculiar aim of Tennyson to be the constitutional, and in this sense the national, poet: and it is his peculiar merit and good fortune to have succeeded in giving eloquent and forcible expression to the ideas suggested by these aims. 57

Tennyson was both eloquent and forcible in these political poems.

In 1830 Tennyson wrote two political poems: "You Ask Me Why" and "Love Thou Thy Land," 58 In the first he announced that his land,

is the land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose,

finds its fullest and noblest expression in "Locksley Hall" in which the young dreamer speaks of the "Parliament of man, the Federation of the World."

56 See the Memoir, IV, 102-103. Tennyson states that the Celt is dangerous in politics, "for he yields more to his imagination than his common-sense." He also adds that the Irish are difficult to deal with, because "the English do not understand their innate love of fighting, words and blows." In the same breath he adds that "whatever she [Ireland] may say, she is not only feudal, but oriental, and loves those in authority over her to have the iron hand in the silken glove."

57 Sidgwick, Friends, p. 331.

58 Poems, pp. 60-62.
The land, where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will;
A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent. . . .

He hoped to see "the settled government" preserved despite
"banded unions," the reformers of the old regime.

"Love Thou Thy Land" prefigures the larger images of his
age and describes his fears and misgivings regarding the future.
The main theme here is "change." Thus,

So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
he desires. According to Sidgwick, "it would be hardly an exag-
eration to say that it [the poem] sums up human history in
regard to one point—namely, the disturbing and even desolating
effect of the new Political Idea, until its triumph comes,
bringing a higher and more stable adjustment, and a peace more
righteous and secure."59

In "Locksley Hall" the young man suddenly puts a stop to
his "babbling" and exclaims:

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our
    glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast
    with lower pains!

Evidently, the "narrow" forehead is the attribute of those people
who have never seen an "European flag," possibly also of the men
of Maratta. In any event, the people with "narrow" foreheads

59Friends, p. 332.
range on tracks "lower than the Christian child," specifically, the English child. The hero of "Locksley Hall" is, on the other hand, "the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time."

It is really remarkable that one could place such unbounded confidence and pride in one's country!

In "Hands All Round," a poem first published in 1852, we see the poet's desire for a large-minded policy on the part of the houses of Parliament, and of the people who give them power:

To both our Houses, may they see
Beyond the borough and the shire!
We sail'd wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state;
Pray God our greatness may not fail
Thro' craven fears of being great!60

In this poem there is expressed a deep passion for England. The objective is to "keep our English Empire whole!" There is great pride in England's "noble sons" expressed here, and finally, the poem ends on a note of exaltation:

To this great name of England drink, my friends,
And all her glorious empire, round and round.

Such pride is pardonable when we remember that Tennyson lived in an age which could boast that the sun never set on the English empire. William Gordon has the following comment: "It was not, however, a narrow, insular England to which he gave his heart's devotion, but the England of broad domain, of many peoples, and with a noble destiny to fulfil as the divine benefactor of the

60 Poems, pp. 515-516.
world. It was to him 'the eye, the soul of Europe.' It was, according to Tennyson, a glorious country.

In the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" the poet prays:

... keep our noble England whole,
And save the one true seed of freedom sown
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
That sober freedom out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings! 62

"The Third of February" (1852) also declares the pride of the Englishman in his country:

No little German state are we,
But the one voice in Europe; we must speak,
That if to-night our greatness were struck dead,
There might be left some record of the things we said. 63

This judgment of the position of England among the powers of the world was justified by history. It was not a new thing for England to contend for liberty.

The poet was proud of being an Englishman. In Maud, for instance, after all the railings and bitter denouncements, the young man could conclude: "I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind."

Tennyson's love of England is based on a vision of progress and scientific evolution. He begins with the higher education of women. In The Princess, as the Memoir describes it, the poet

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61 Gordon, p. 104.
62 Poems, p. 225.
63 Ibid., 269.
gives all possible views of "Woman's higher education." The book notes a report from the poet:

... the two great social questions impending in England were 'the housing and education of the poor man before making him our master, and the higher education of women'; and the sooner woman finds out, before the great educational movement begins, that 'woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse,' the better it will be for the progress of the world. 64

Tennyson is also concerned with education as a whole. William Gordon remarks that "his [Tennyson's] criticisms upon educators, upon schools, upon the studies pursued and the methods of teaching, enable us to judge of the educational ideal which seemed to him most worthy of being cherished." 65

It is scientific progress that Tennyson believes in, as this prophesy of the future from "Locksley Hall" seems to indicate:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nation's airy navies grappling in the central blue; . . .
(11. 119-124)

64Memoir, II, 23. According to Dawson, the Canadian editor of The Princess, "no doubt such ideas were at the time 'in the air' in England, but the dominant, practical Philistinism scoffed at them as 'ideas' banished to America, that refuge for exploded European absurdities." In so far as the ideas are not "absurdities" Tennyson was quite advanced for his age.

65Gordon, p. 190.
Here the progress that he envisions is not merely the progress of England but also of the whole world. Therefore he concludes with the line: "In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

The poet loves science as a means of progress. He revels in its achievements without denying its limitations. In In Memoriam (XXI), he states that we are at a time,

When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon.

This poem is a brilliant attempt to reconcile moral questions with the principle of evolutionary science. Tennyson does this by borrowing images profusely from geology and astronomy.

It is true that "science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point" ("Locksley Hall," l. 134); yet the progress made by science has been real. Thus in the year 1887, Tennyson and his countrymen could look back upon

Fifty years of ever-broadening Commerce!
Fifty years of ever-brightening Science!
Fifty years of ever-widening Empire!

For further details on Tennyson's interest in science, see Ralph B. Crum, Scientific Thought in Poetry (New York, 1931), pp. 157-190. See also the Memoir, IV, 191, for Hallam Tennyson's remark that Tennyson would tell the children "about the great facts and discoveries in Astronomy, Geology, Botany, Chemistry, and the great problems in philosophy, helping us toward a higher conception of the laws which govern the world and of 'the law behind the law.'" Science, along with philosophy, therefore, must have provided the poet with a basis for his theory of balance.

Poems, p. 527.
This progress of England is dependent upon not only the progress of science but also the ability of England's Queen Victoria.

Belief in evolution goes hand in hand with belief in science. Tennyson positively accepts the theory of evolution, and he bases his philosophy of balance on it. Thus, life is comparable to a process of smelting, according to evolution, and man rises from the beast to the ideal level (Chapter VI). Section CXVIII of In Memoriam presents the theory that

The solid earth whereon we tread
In tracts of fluent heat began,
   And grew to seeming-random forms,
   The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
   Till at the last arose the man;

Who threw and branch'd from clime to clime,
   The herald of a higher race. . . .

Evolution gives man a hope in the future. In Maud (I, IV, vi) it is stated that "so many a million of ages have gone to the making of man." Man has made such great progress that in the ages to come he will be "no longer half akin to brute."68

Tennyson in his old age fell a prey to "depression and ennui"; even his faith in evolution and science could not save him from an intense dread of the disappearance of ideals. Writing about Tennyson's despondency in 1884, Charles Tennyson notes that the pessimism of the poet is first expressed in an unpublished version of the dedication to "Tiresias." It reads thus:

68 See also The Promise of May, Act I, Poems, p. 737. Edgar speaks of man as the "child of evolution."
If I should play Tiresias to the times,
I fear I might but prophecy
Of faded faiths and civic crimes,
And fierce transition's blood-red morn,
And years with lawless voices loud,
Old vessels from their moorings torn
And cataclysm and thundercloud,
And one lean hope, that at the last
Perchance—if this small world endures—
Our heirs may find the stormy past
Has left their present purer... 69

Alfred Tennyson, the prophet of his age, is no longer sure of his position.

This point is taken up in "The Ancient Sage." Thus the Sage is sick of living in the city and seeks refuge from the turmoil and trouble of the time. 70 In "Despair" (1881) the man desires to commit suicide because the "promise had faded away." 71 He complains of a world, "all massacre, murder, and wrong." Human beings are victims of "brainless Nature." Sadly enough, the belief in evolution is clouded here. Thus we "Come from the brute, poor souls--no souls / --and to die with the brute--."

The poem presents Tennyson's earnest effort to argue the necessity

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69 Charles Tennyson, p. 483. Also see his comments on Tennyson in 1886. Charles Tennyson has noted that the poet at this time was more than ever "obsessed by the thought that the world was standing on the brink of a revolution such as had never been seen before--'a last dim battle in the West' which, if it came, would be world wide." p. 491. See also the Memoir, IV, 102, in which Tennyson is quoted as saying in 1887 that he tried in his Idylls to teach men "the need of the Ideal." He added: "But I feel sometimes as if my life had been a useless life."

70 Poems, pp. 497-501.

71 Ibid., 495-497.
of belief in "free will and immortality," in an age which has been attacked as having displayed a "vulgar half-knowledge."
The desperate man explains it thus:

... these are the new dark ages, you see,
of the popular press,
when the bat comes out of his cave, and the owls are whooping at noon,
and doubt is the lord of this dunhill and crows to the sun and the moon,
till the sun and the moon of our science are both of them turn'd into blood,...

(11. 88-91)

The note of disillusionment is echoed also in "Vastness" (1885). In Buckley's strong language, "measured against the fierce lusts of a decadent society, the bourgeois ideal of marriage... seems almost ironically bland and helpless: 'Household happiness, gracious children, debtless competence, golden mean.'"

The mood of pessimism reaches its climax in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After"; in this respect this poem is a study in contrast to the earlier "Locksley Hall." Almost five decades separate the two poems. Whereas in the earlier poem, despite

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72 Ibid., 533-534.
73 Buckley, p. 231.
74 See the Memoir, IV, 91-92. It seemed to Tennyson that the two "Locksley Halls" were likely to be in the future two of the most historically interesting of his poems, as descriptive of the tone of the age at two distant periods of his life: partly, perhaps, because the following four lines were written immediately after the death of Lionel and described his chief characteristics:

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worship, being true as he was brave;
its social criticism, the poet projected a vision of progress
and the upward trend, the later poem describes a devolution. The
"leading light of man" has disappeared for ever, and the age has
lost its capacity for wonder until even the miracles of science
are taken for granted. It might be that the clue to the under-
lying despair is to be sought in the failure of social imagination
to keep the pace with scientific development; therefore, there
among the glooming alleys "progress halts on pallsied feet."
Political power has been usurped by the "practical hustings-liar,"
and the old political common sense has been submerged in a
"realm-ruining" party strife. The sanction of all such defections
is to be sought in a philosophy, which would reverse the course
ef evolution by lowering "the rising race of man" back into the
beast again.

Although Alfred Tennyson did not write poems with such
strong theories--political, social, scientific or evolutionary--
any more, there is one poem in the posthumous volume entitled
"The Dreamer," which mildly echoes the tone of "Locksley Hall

Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd
beyond the grave!
Truth for Truth, and Good for Good! The Good, the True,
the Pure, the Just!
Take the charm "For ever" from them and they crumble
into dust.

The author is in no way implying that the protagonists of the
two Locksley Hall poems (and also Maud) is the poet himself,
but her theory is that in the rhetoric in these poems, one can
see the embodiment of Tennyson's social and political opinions
and views.
Sixty Years After."75 In this lyric the dreamer admits that

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I am losing the light of my Youth
And the Vision that led me of old,
And I clash with an iron Truth,
When I make for an Age of gold,
And I would that my race were run,
For teeming with liars, and madmen, and knaves,
And wearied of Autocrats, Anarchists, and Slaves. . . .
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But apart from this, as has been mentioned before, the poet settles down to a calm life, and he invokes the Seraph once again in an attempt to produce some of his best poetry.

We have seen the transition from the poet of "The Lady of Shalott" to the poet of Maud and "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." In these later poems Tennyson makes it obvious that he has accepted the themes of man and society as proper for poetry. Edward Fitzgerald boldly stated in a letter to Frederick Tennyson after the publication of The Princess that

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I am considered a great heretic for abusing it [The Princess], but it seems to me a wretched waste of power at a time of life when a man ought to be doing his best, and I almost feel hopeless about Alfred now. I mean about his doing what he was born to do. 76
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It is apparent in this chapter that Fitzgerald was justified in his fears and his opinion of the poet at this time. But Tennyson had to be a national poet; England looked to him as the successor of William Wordsworth, and Tennyson took the job more seriously than Wordsworth.

75 Alfred Tennyson, The Death of Oenone, Akbar's Dream, and Other Poems (London, 1892), pp. 87-88.

76 Cary, p. 82.
The interest of this chapter rests in discriminating the different moods of Tennyson. The same poet, who could write the beautiful poem, "The Lady of Shalott," could also write the pseudo-dramatic rhetorical poem, "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," and "The Dreamer," one of his best lyrics of his very old age. It is evident that between "The Lady of Shalott" and "The Dreamer" there are many poems on social and political questions, the bulk of which contain as much poetry as the average newspaper.

It is unfortunate that Tennyson should have made the compromise (for that it was a compromise is indicated by the speech of King Arthur in "The Holy Grail"), and that he should have ignored his poetic fancy to cater to the public taste. In the final analysis, however, it has to be conceded that although he wrote a good deal of bad poetry, because Tennyson was able to revivify on occasion the early creative spark, he has earned for himself a place beside Keats and Wordsworth; were these "gleams" not present, he would today be ranked with Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith, the Spasmodic poets.
CHAPTER V

QUEST

Quest as a theme is not limited to Alfred Tennyson alone. It is, rather, a prevalent Victorian theme carried over from the Romantic age, which showed a serious preoccupation with the realm of the imagination. In such poems as Shelley's "Alastor" and "Epipsychidion" and Keats's "Endymion," there is a clear manifestation of the quest motif. Tennyson's age, too, is concerned with the idea of search, but search of a different nature. The Romantic poets are concerned with ideal beauty; the Victorians, on the other hand, make the theme a private vehicle to explore their "alien vision," which is brought to focus by the religious and scientific unrest of the age of Victoria. The theme is motivated by a shift in values and the Victorian search itself is for knowledge or for something equivalent to knowledge and certainty; the quest is for ultimate values that will transcend the Darwinian philosophy of flux.

We have from the Victorian age a series of poems which exploit the theme from all angles, but with consistent emphasis upon the concept of search itself as a cathartic experience. Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" demonstrates the point. Childe Roland is motivated more by his quest itself
than by its outcome. Ulysses and the Scholar Gypsy along with Childe Roland are bound on a mission involving faith and energy, but they are only vaguely concerned with the outcome of the venture.

Knowledge, the sumum bonum of existence, is the Hesperian fruit held out to the Victorian searcher. Tennyson's Ulysses is the representative figure, and he yearns

in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

We have Browning's Paracelsus seeking

to comprehend the works of God,
And God himself, and all God's intercourse
With the human mind...

Matthew Arnold recognizes in "The Buried Life,"

an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life,
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us, to know
Whence our thoughts come and where they go.

And his Scholar Gypsy survives the intellectual confusion by the sole means of quest for knowledge; in this case, knowledge remains the only end in view. George Meredith in "Modern Love" declares:

Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When not for certainties in this our life!

Arnold's Scholar Gypsy, the protagonist of "Modern Love," and Ulysses, among others, are concerned with a "search for knowledge, not primarily for passion, or for beauty or even for glory."
Knherian Smidt asserts that "the knowledge which was sought was that of ultimate things, the matters that philosophy and religion usually make it their business to deal with."¹

Darwin's cosmological challenge coincided with the challenge launched by the Higher Criticism against established Christian religion and tradition. Both faith in religion and faith in the universe had to be reevaluated, then restored. Tennyson accepted the upsetting of values and adopted quest as a palliative. From his personal need, the poet accepted search as a proper means of facing the spiritual conflict of the age. With George Roppen one agrees that "the Tennysonian quest is almost always a mystical adventure and implies an exploration into the hidden meanings of existence, into the world of spiritual essence, and beyond death."² The mystical adventure is founded upon the assumption that a total spiritual fulfillment is the ultimate reality: that which really counts.

More than any other Victorian poet, Tennyson has given scope and depth to the theme. He exploits it through a long stretch of poetry. From the beginning it serves him for many purposes. First, it is a means of escape; later, it is a vehicle by which


²George Roppen, "Ulysses and Tennyson's Sea-quest," English Studies, XL (1959), 86. With regard to Tennyson's ambivalent attitude to death, Roppen remarks that it is "partly a longing for peace, for Nirvana, partly a horror of death as the end of identity." See p. 80.
to explore the undiscovered lands of knowledge, both spiritual and philosophical. It is also a search for a "gleam." In "Merlin and the Gleam" the entire poetic career of Tennyson is rendered in the mode of a quest. Finally, the search is for immortality or is a symbol of death. The poet, in other words, incorporates the theme into his entire poetic career and approaches it for different purposes at different times.

Tennyson has a special vocabulary for dealing with the theme of quest. "Deep" is a basic word. "From the great deep to the great deep," King Arthur is said to have passed. One can interpret this passing as the cycle of life. "Margin," "marge," and "brim" are other words repeated in Tennyson's search poems. "Star" has a great significance in the pattern of crossing the sea of life; the star always beckons from the other side. In "The Holy Grail" and "The Sailor Boy" the star symbol is repeatedly used. In the same order, Ulysses and Sir Galahad sail into the "starlit sea." In "Ulysses" the "sinking-star" images aspiration and yearning for knowledge.

In his treatment of the theme itself, the poet makes use of the familiar voyage motif. The sea embodies "eternity." The Tennysonian river (in Shalott and elsewhere) is life. And water, in its limited sense, symbolizes drowning or destruction.

Familiar with the sea and water all his life, Tennyson is, perhaps, our greatest poet of the sea. From the scenes and echoes around the Isle of Wight and the slow movement of Lymington Harbor, he seems to have imbibed an immense appreciation of
the influence of the water. "Moan," "boundless," and "deep" are three words which connote an intimate awareness of the sea, and are used by Tennyson with spontaneity. He has packed into them, throughout a long poetic career, a great deal of his sensitivity to the sea. Bernard Groom goes to the extent of asserting that "these three words seem to have dwelt in his mind in his broodings on the sea, slowly accumulating suggestiveness and meaning during the whole of his life."

In "The Sea Dreams" we have: "And I from out the boundless deep." In "The Ancient Sage" describes that "one ripple on the boundless deep." In "Ulysses" "the deep moans round with many voices." And, lastly, in "Crossing the Bar" we have these beautiful lines:

When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

These motifs and images are used by Tennyson throughout his entire poetic career, until they acquire a very deep and personal significance in his later poetry.

The hero is, at times, prompted by deep yearning or aspiration as in "Ulysses." The quest is for a vision in "The Voyage" and "The Holy Grail." Or again, it is a summons from the sea as in In Memoriam and in "Crossing the Bar" that motivates the quest. It is sometimes also an aspiration toward a spiritual fulfillment. The voyage is into the next world in "The Passing of Arthur," "Crossing the Bar," and "The Lady of Shalott." In

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"Ulysses" the voyagers are in search of experience; there is fusion of experience and knowledge in this poem. In "The Voyage of Maeldune" the voyagers are forced to relinquish their quest as their interests are primarily selfish. Finally, in "Merlin and the Gleam" the poet traverses life from the "morning hills" down by the cataract over the level to the ocean shore.

I

In the early poetry of Alfred Tennyson there is a strong temptation to seek refuge in the land of sensuous beauty. Buckley considers the "Recollectitions of the Arabian Nights" as a "narrative of the poetic quest rather than merely as an exercise in orientalism." The dreamer in the poem finds himself in the exotic land of Haroun Alraschid, "down the Tigris" in a beautiful landscape that is touched by nature at various points:

The living airs of middle night
Died round the bulbul as he sung;

and the dreamer disembarks from the shallop and explores the sensuous details of the magic land.

The Sea-Fairies beckon the sailors with careful motion of their sinuous limbs to a land of lush repose. And the sailors accept the call to find release in earthly beauty in "The Lotos-Eaters."

"Ulysses" (1842), on the other hand, introduces another
approach to the theme. There is a definite line of demarcation between the earlier poem on abandonment to ease and the one on Ulysses, in which all the energy is concentrated on a spiritual and philosophical search which may never end, but which in any event negates repose. This poem has been analyzed by critics from all angles. We need not concern ourselves with the points of similarity or dissimilarity that the protagonist shares with Homer's Ulysses. Our analysis is simply related to the poem as such.

Tennyson has explained that the poem was written to express "the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in 'In Memoriam.'" Whereas the Lotos-Eaters are satisfied with the pale-yellow repose of the lotos-land, the men of Ulysses are of one accord with their master in braving the unknown, which symbolically may mean eternity or immortality of the soul.

"It little profits that an idle King," the poem begins, and it ends on an earnest note: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." "Idle," "still hearth," "barren crags," "aged wife," "hoard," "sleep," and "feed" are all carefully selected to express the stillness and passivity at Ithaca against which Ulysses is contending. Not only is life there passive and still,
it is barren and of little value to humanity, in that the people
hold whatever they can without any regard to future increment.
There is also a note of utter domesticity which is at odds with
any sense of imagination. As against this sterile environment
Ulysses projects the vision of an expanded horizon, where one can
drink "life to the lees" and where one cannot "rest from travel."

After a recounting of his stormy background, which is color-
ful for its suffering and adventures through "scudding drifts,"
"cities of men / And manners, climates, councils, governments,"
Ulysses closes the passage with the vivid lines:

Yet all experience is an arch where thro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.

Experience is not a final resting place but an arch, that is, an
entrance to further experience, the horizon of which recedes as
the traveller goes on. We are reminded here of a ship on the
sea on an afternoon when the sun is bright but not too bright.
The ship as it voyages into the unknown has always the expanding
horizon as the point of focus. Experience is the arch of the
horizon; one arch of experience extends into another. The figure
is continuous.

After another pause Ulysses stops to consider that some
believe breathing to be living. Here we have an oblique refer-
ence to the Lotos-Eaters. But as far as Ulysses is concerned,
hours not devoted to experience are doomed to eternal silence.
When devoted to action, they are harbingers of new ideas. The
image here is connected to the continuum of the arch. Further,
Ulysses desires "To follow knowledge like a sinking star, / Beyond the utmost bound of human thought." Samuel C. Chew comments that "the determination to follow knowledge wherever it led is characteristic of the period which was becoming aware of the perilous seas of scientific speculation."  

The quest in this case is associated with scientific knowledge.

The purpose of Ulysses and his men is glorious and takes in the resolve not to "rust unburnish'd" but "to shine in use." The resolve of the aged Ulysses to keep moving in spite of failure to discover the new world is heroic. It is a total acceptance of action in the face of odds, even death, and is motivated by a vision through the present into the future. The symbol of search leads to two ends: experience and knowledge. Bound on this double adventure, Ulysses is resolved, in spite of the fact that that he is made "weak by time and fate," "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." The quest on the whole has for its requirement, action. Therefore, the poet sanctions it wholly.

Ulysses is not simply running away from his responsibilities at Ithaca, but he is delegating them to his son, Telemachus. The

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7 Chew, p. 1384.

8 See the Memoir, I, 309, for the comment of Aubrey de Vere.

9 Cary, p. 78, quotes Browning to have remarked that "Ulysses" must have "come home to Peel, then at the height of his power and prosperity, as an image of his own spirited, active, contentious life." Tennyson felt the need at this time of mixing with action. See In Memoriam, Section CVIII.
quest is also philosophical and entirely subjected to the beauty of experience as the testing point of life. The philosophical quest involves both "Truth" and "Good." This fusion is totally responsible for the harmony and peace that exist in the poem, for a sense which is curiously absent in the poem on Lotos-eaters in spite of its philosophy of repose. The Grail search will belie this harmony and peace. And in the failure to synthesize the conflicting elements of the known and the unknown, rests the failure of the search itself in the later poem.

"Tithonus" is a poem in contrast to "Ulysses." Whereas activity underlies the second poem, "sloth" is the key word to the study of "Tithonus." The yearning of Tithonus is for immortality, and the frustration that follows his search is explainable only in terms of the nature of his quest. Whereas the search in "Ulysses" involves "Truth" and "Good," Tithonus is motivated merely by "Beauty." The image of Tithonus is diametrically opposed to that of the aged Ulysses, rich in experience, ready to brave the unknown again in quest of more experience. And the final note of "Tithonus" is frustration.

II

"Ulysses" was created from the need of going forward immediately after Arthur Hallam's death. The last voyage of Ulysses becomes, in other words, Tennyson's "quest within himself of
fresh strength and ultimate vision." It is a pursuit of self-
realization. The star which is "sinking" is symbolic of the
nature of the adventure itself, which cannot be completely successful. It is as Mr. Sonn represents it, "a kind of self-serving religious vocation."

In the "rambling spiritual journey" of In Memoriam the poet again probes truth, but truth of a different nature. The search is spiritual here, a search for the meaning of existence. Experience, in this elegy, is the experience of sorrow, which the poet survives through his quest for truth or "wisdom" to be precise:

"This held that sorrow makes us wise;
Yet how much wisdom sleeps with thee
Which not alone had guided me,
But served the seasons that may rise;

For can I doubt, who knew thee keen
In intellect, with force and skill
To strive, to fashion, to fulfil--
I doubt not what thou wouldst have been.

(CXIII)

"To strive, to fashion, to fulfil" is very close to "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" in "Ulysses." Hallam had fulfilled this mission in his short life on earth, the mission on which Ulysses and his men are bound to accomplish. The entire "spiritual journey" of In Memoriam is undertaken in order "to

11 Ibid., 88.
strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

The poem delineates "the Way of the Soul." It is, writes Bradley, a "journey from the first stupor and confusion of grief, through a growing acquiescence often disturbed by the recurrence of pain, to an almost unclouded peace and joy." Although there are no mariners in this poem, the journey is implied both spiritually and literally. Twice the symbol of a ship is evoked. The first time it is the ship bearing the body of Arthur Hallam, and the second is in the dream allegory of CIII.

In the first instance, Tennyson is afraid that the storm might cause the ship to founder, and "the roaring wells / Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine." Water forbodes drowning and destruction. There is the repeated use of the coming ship, with a faint hope, the subconscious yearning, that his friend might be coming back alive:

If one should bring me this report,
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And found thee lying in the port;
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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)

And when the ship does arrive, although with the dead body, he is relieved. Therefore, he addresses the ship:

So kind an office hath been done,
   Such precious relics brought by thee,

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The dust of him I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run.
(XVII)

That water plays an important role is apparent from the choice of terms. The body has been conveyed from the Danube to the Severn:

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore
And in the hearing of the wave.
(XIX)

The journey motif is continued in describing the life on earth. Life is a path or track. Thus in XXV:

I know that this was Life,—the track
Whereon with equal feet we fared;
And then, as now, the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

The poet could not grow weary on this path as Hallam supported him with the burden. And now that his friend is dead:

Still onwards winds the dreary way;
I with it, for I long to prove
No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.
(XXVI)

The journey is undertaken to prove that love can strengthen one to "strive, to seek, to find," in this case, the meaning of existence.

In section XXXVIII the journey is continued through lonely paths. The poet admits that

With weary steps I loiter on,
Tho' always under alter'd skies
The purple from the distance dies,
My prospect and horizon gone.

The poet's steps are not buoyant like the steps of Ulysses, nor is there envisaged an endless arch of experience. On the contrary,
the horizon has disappeared. The poet is able to discern the disparity in the levels of existence between his dead friend and himself left on earth. Thus:

My paths are in the fields I know,
And thine in undiscover'd lands.

(XL)

Arthur Hallam has soared above the common level of "dreary days." He is Ulysses, but the poet himself is left behind to shoulder the responsibility of living like Telemachus. There is pathos here. Tennyson wants to "mix with action" and to explore the reality like Ulysses. But it is Hallam who has passed away leaving the poet behind to shoulder the responsibility of living.

The growth of man from infancy is presented through the motif of journey:

We ranging down this lower track,
The path we came by, thorn and flower,
Is shadow'd by the growing hour
Least life should fail in looking back

(XLVI)

There is presented here the gradual waning of memory. However, after death, memory does not play a role of forgetfulness, but will project the whole past life. So when the poet joins his friend he will experience this:

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd,
The fruitful hours of still increase;
Days order'd in a wealthy peace,
And those five years its richest field.

Although the five-year stretch is a "bounded field," the two friends will be united at that moment in an eternity which will stretch from "marge to marge."
It should be noted that the gloom in the lines quoted above from section XLVI is echoed later in section LXXIII: "We pass; the path that each man trod / Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds." And, yet, at this point there is a faint vision of the glorious world which Ulysses was exploring. Therefore the poet exclaims:

So many worlds, so much to do
So little done, such things to be. . . .

The journey motif that we have delineated so far is picked up in the important section CIII. The setting is just prior to leaving Somersby. Emily Tennyson has quoted the poet's own admission of a dream.

I have a dream which comforts me on leaving the old home and brings me content. The departure suggests the departure of death, and my reunion with him. I have grown in spiritual grace as he has. The gorgeous sky at the end of the section typifies the glory of the hope in that which is to be. 14

The "maidens" are the "Muses, poetry, arts—all that made life beautiful here, which we hope will pass with us beyond the grave." 15 The river that springs up in this section is life itself. Then "flew in a dove / And brought in a summons from the sea." The Sea is eternity, the poet explains further, but the ship is not explained. As for the journey itself, it is "by many a level mead" and "shadowing bluff." Through the journey the maidens gather strength, and the poet himself "wax'd in every

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14 Alfred Tennyson, In Memoriam, (New York, 1906), p. 259. The author has referred to this edition only for these explanations.

15 Ibid.
Until the forward-creeping tides
Began to foam, and we to draw
From deep to deep, to where we saw
A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,
But thrice as large as man he bent
To greet us.

This man was Arthur Hallam.

According to Tennyson, the river-journey typifies "the
broadening and deepening of life, and the spiritual expansion
which will fit the poet to meet his friend again; also 'the
great progress of the age.'"¹⁶ The image in this section is not
only that of "Ulysses" but also of "Crossing the Bar." In one
the margin fades into a world of adventure; it is eternal life
that is the end of the exploration in the other. In the section
quoted above from In Memoriam, eternity is the end of the quest,
and the poet is made worthy of this experience through the
mystical incident of section XCV.

On a large scale, the entire poem moves in the direction of
a spiritual reunion with his friend as a way of discovering the
meaning of existence. Thus, already in XCVIII the poet has ex-
pressed his desire to experience

No visual shade of someone lost,
But he, the Spirit himself, may come
Where all the nerve of sense is numb,
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.
The quest is more specific in the last poem in the same section. The poet yearns to be united with his friend, and cries out:

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.

In section XCV the poet consummates his search. It is a spiritual experience, mystical in its overtones, the same as we have seen in "Timbuctoo," "Tiresias," and "The Ancient Sage;" in which the poet finds complete union with the spirit of Arthur Hallam. He describes it thus:

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,

Aeonian music measuring out
The steps of Time--the shocks of Chance--
The blows of Death.

(vs. 9-11)

In other words, the "shocks of Chance" and the "blows of Death" are resolved. From this point onwards the poet can face life's challenge without flinching as Ulysses and his men had done earlier. And in section CIII (as we have already seen) the voyagers symbolically enter eternity. Literally the poet renounces the past.

That "Tennyson early conceived of his adversity as a spiritual pilgrimage through purgatorial grief and suffering towards fulfilment, truth and peace" is reflected in sections LXXXII and
CXVIII. In the first section, life is compared to

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shattered stalks,
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

In the other section, the poet pictures the spirit of man as surviving the "attributes of woe."

They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who threw and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom. . . .

Finally, in section CXXV the poet glances over his spiritual growth or pilgrimage:

Whatever I have said or sung,
Some bitter notes my harp would give,
Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth,
She did but look through dimmer eyes;
Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fix'd in truth;

And if the song were full of care,
He breathed the spirit of the song;

17Roppe, p. 80.
And if the words were sweet and strong
He set his royal signet there;

Abiding with me till I sail
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
And this electric force, that keeps
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

The closing lines indicate that it is the spirit of Hallam which
was fused with the poet's spirit through the trance experience of
section XCV, that will sustain him through the life journey under-
taken here in quest of the eternal Spirit which abides in the
"mystic deeps."

The poem takes in its range a search for spiritual absolutes
in the form of immortality, continuation of the earthly life in
the eternal, and the sublimation of earthly love. The "Way of the
Soul" covers a long tract of time; the soul gropes both on earth
and in the region of the spirit. In the final analysis, it is
through the fusion of the living with the dead, and through the
dream allegory embodying a journey to eternity itself, that the
quest is fulfilled. The poet that emerges from these mystical
experiences has obtained spiritual values which would sustain
him through the rest of his life journey. The hope and faith
that he has acquired are mirrored in section CVI, in which the
poet rings out the old and rings in the new. In contrast to the
quest in "The Holy Grail," in this poem the poet has purged him-
self and has emerged the stronger for his search.

As in "Ulysses" there is the summons from the sea in CIII,
which is figurative of a life of active commitment in pursuit of
earthly goals, and which suggests, through the river motif, "the
severe struggle with doubt" in the second part of *In Memoriam*. This struggle is absolutely necessary for the attainment of artistic as well as spiritual maturity. In this crucial section, the quest is also the figure of death, and we shall see this figure developed in other poems of a later date.

III

The exploration is undertaken for a vision or a "gleam." The vision is equivalent to the "higher poetic imagination." The theme, in this instance, is similar in scope to that of some Romantic quest poems which we have glanced at briefly in the introduction to this chapter.

A short poem, "The Voyage," first printed in 1864, takes up where "Ulysses" leaves off. According to Palgrave, "Life as Energy, in the great ethical sense of the word,--Life as the pursuit of the Ideal,--is figured in this brilliantly descriptive allegory." We should recall here that Tennyson had once professed "Life" to be the pursuit of an "Ideal," precisely, the poet's ideal as represented by the Seraph. Later, the idealistic approach was discounted on the basis that it was detached from common life. At the same time, it has been mentioned that the poet never lost sight of visions; they were merely relegated

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into the background. 20

"The Voyage" presents the "proud chant of mariners" who sail for "evermore" after the "one fair vision." It starts with the ship leaving the "painted buoy" behind. The mariners declare in the first stanza.

And madly danced our hearts with joy,
As fast we fleeted to the south.

There is no end to the search, and the mariners are aware of it:

We knew the merry world was round,
And we might sail for evermore.

This is the mood of the voyagers, and it is the same as that of Ulysses and his men. At the same time, the voyage in this poem is different from that in "Ulysses," in so far as it is undertaken purely in search of a vision or poetic ideal.

Quiet and determined, the mariners stick to their original resolve to seek the vision, and are not tempted by the warm climate or the sensuous tropics. On the contrary,

At times a carven craft would shoot
From heavens hid in fairy bowers,
With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,
But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

(VII)

For one fair Vision ever fled
Down the waste waters day and night,
And still we follow'd where she led,
In hope to gain upon her flight.

(VIII)

This is the end of their quest, and from this they will not be sidetracked even by the cynic among them. He

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20 See Chapter III for speech of King Arthur.
saw not far, his eyes were dim,  
But ours he swore were all diseased.  
(x)

But the voyagers themselves have the vision, diseased or not, 
that is needed in order to preserve in their quest for the 
ideal beauty. They are not disillusioned like the protagonist of 
"Alastor," simply because their search is never ended. Their 
journey is, on the other hand, again a continuum in the same 
manner as the journey of Ulysses is. These men are ready to 
"sail for evermore" in pursuit of their "fair vision." In this 
way the poem is representative of the Victorian quest, and can 
be grouped with, for instance, "The Scholar Gypsy."

In fact, both in "The Voyage" and in "Ulysses" there is a 
strong resemblance to the poem of Arnold. In all three the 
underlying determination is to seek "the one aim, one business, 
one desire." The voyagers, unlike the lotos-eaters, are not 
susceptible to the distractions of life, but they remain steadfast in their pursuit. In both "Ulysses" and "The Voyage," as 
Buckley indicates, "Tennyson invokes the image of travel as the 
symbol of a continuum, a restless aspiration coincident with life 
itself."21

In "The Voyage of Maeldune" (1880) the search is motivated 
by revenge, and not any "fair vision."22 Maeldune was driven

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21 Buckley, p. 60.

22 Poems, pp. 479-483. See the introduction for the Celtic 
source of this poem. And see also the notes on p. 866 on the 
different "Isles."
by the desire "to strike off his head," who had "stricken his father dead." He and his men,
came to the isle in the ocean, and there on the shore was he.
But a sudden blast blew us out and away thro' a boundless sea.

The rest of the poem is a series of stops on the "Silent Isle," the "Isle of Shouting," the "Isle of Flowers," the "Isle of Fruits" and many more down to the "Isle of a Saint." The poem describes "the arrival through the pain and tribulation of the life journey at an ultimate recognition of moral truth." Buckley continues the interpretation that each isle that comes between Maeldune and his objective represents the distractions of living and the satiety that follows indulgence . . . the allegory, though clear, is unobtrusive and never solemnly didactic. In the end the hermit counsels Maeldune to desist from vengeance and 'suffer the Past to be Past.' But the wisdom Maeldune has attained is not suddenly thrust upon him; it is the inevitable product of his own rigorous experience.23

In the final analysis, the voyagers learn the lesson of charity (like the soul in "The Palace of Art") and relinquish their search for revenge.

The Grail quest, which constitutes one of the most important poems in this chapter, is also for a vision, a vision not of the poet's "Ideal" but one of spiritual magnitude.24 The search is

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23Buckley, pp. 219-220.
24Poems, pp. 400-413.
motivated by a strong need to make up for a defective existence. The external symbol of the Grail is actually the projection of the hope of the knights for the restoration of balance in their lives, and it comes to represent salvation itself. Only Galahad and Percivale's sister accept the Grail as the symbol of the ultimate reality rather than as a private symbol of man's inability to resolve nobly the war of flesh and spirit. And these two are rewarded for their faith. The others of the Round Table who undertake the quest are motivated differently and are rewarded according to their spiritual insight. The entire realm of King Arthur is founded generally on the inner vision of a poet, Merlin. Camelot is described in "The Holy Grail" as the work "by Merlin wrought, dreamlike." In this Idyll the theme is the search for a gleam, particularly, the cup of Joseph of Arimathæa.

The vision of the Grail appears to the knights of the Round Table during the absence of King Arthur. The story is related by Percivale to Brother Ambrosius. Only Galahad and Percivale's sister see the Grail in toto. Percivale, on the other hand, is sidetracked by situations of a highly sensual nature. On Arthur's return he finds the knights ready to venture on their quest, fired mostly by details of Galahad's vision. The King immediately senses the tragic implications of the quest.

In his final denunciation of this visionary quest, Arthur warns the knights that they are following "wandering fires,"

25See also Chapter VI for the interpretation of this poem.
and in the process will be lost in the "quagmire."

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign--
A sign to maim this Order which I made. . . ."

(11. 293-297)

The King tells them that they are men "With strength and will
to right the wrong'd, of power / To lay the sudden heads of
violence flat." But now they pass to fulfill their vows, and, therefore,

This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire!

(11. 318-320)

The King regrets that his knights have committed themselves in
this manner; and he discourages the quest as being vague and
unrealistic for those who have no affinity toward the life of
contemplation. To such as Lancelot, Percivale, and Gawain,
Arthur recommends a life of action centered upon the Round
Table. At the same time, Tennyson, as Hoxie Neale Fairchild
remarks, "is far too imaginative to be incapable of feeling
what mystical experience must mean to mystical people." 26 Tenny-
son accepts a Galahad and a Percivale's sister. What he does
is to make a distinction between imaginative and unimaginative
people and to recommend the quest for the first. Earlier, in
relating the domestic duties of Ithaca to Telemachus, Ulysses

26 Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry,
was drawing the same line of demarcation. Although the Victorian writers, with Carlyle at the lead, distrusted the life of contemplation, they did accede to the claims of a Scholar Gypsy, a Galahad, and a Percivale's sister.

The quest itself is shrouded in mystery. The nature of appearance and reality is brought into sharp focus here. Galahad and Sir Percivale's sister are able to pierce the veil of appearance. For the others, as Arthur predicted, the quest is a "form of self-deluding lunacy." For Gawain it is merely a "will-o'-the wisp"; he is soon diverted from the adventure. Lancelot experiences madness; or his earlier disorder of the mind is suddenly released in its full force. Sir Bors perseveres and is rewarded with the vision, but he is not seriously concerned with its spiritual potency; he, like his King, prefers the Round Table and its duties. In Sir Percivale's experience there is a strange variety; the Grail that he saw under Galahad's guidance and the memory of it in later years are curiously at odds with each other. We are informed that his quest is one series of strange mirages.

And spake I not too truly, O my knights? Was I too dark a prophet when I said To those who went upon the Holy Quest, That most of them would follow wandering fires, Lost in the quagmire?--lost to me and gone, And left me gazing at a barren board, And a lean Order--scarce return'd a tithe-- And out of those to whom the vision came My greatest hardly will believe he saw. Another hath beheld it afar off, And, leaving human wrongs to right themselves, Cares but to pass into the silent life. And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,  
However they may crown him otherwhere. . . .  
(11. 884-898)

Brought to close analysis, the experience of the quest has served to bring unbalance into the Round Table, itself a symbol of balance and order. The Order is "maimed" by it, as we can see from the passage. This vision is therefore not fully admirable.

"Merlin and the Gleam" (1889) is the last poem dealing with the search for a vision.27 The poem is autobiographical. Merlin shares the steadfastness of Ulysses, of the voyagers in "The Voyage," and of the Scholar Gypsy. He is thus essentially a Romantic poet who is motivated by the fairy Nimue or the "higher poetic imagination."28 The poem also establishes our theory that throughout an entire poetic career Tennyson is fully aware of the vision or the visitation of the Seraph. Even when he renounces the Palace of Art or breaks loose from the gray walls of Shalott, he is aware of the force of "the higher poetic imagination." In the end, with the Ancient Sage he follows the "gleam" beyond the ocean shore to the abode of the Supreme Being.

This poem, with its quaint dimeter line, has charmed both reader and critic. The ecstatic commentary of Stopford A.

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27 Poems, pp. 550-551. See also the Memoir, I, pp. viii-xii where Tennyson offers this poem as his "autobiography." There is a remarkable similarity between the meter of this poem and the songs of Bhagavad-Gita.

28 Memoir, IV, 138.
Brooke runs in this manner:

I know no poem of Tennyson's which more takes my heart with magic and beauty; but that is a personal feeling, not a critical judgment. Yet how lovely, how pathetic, and how noble on the old man's lips is the beginning. . . . Verse by verse we company with the poet flying forward to the Gleam. To pursue it is the love of life; to die in its pursuit is joy, for beyond death its glory shines.29

The poem is, indeed, lovely and pathetic, and structurally perfect. Through the image of voyage, the poet recalls his past, his youth, his poetic career culminating in the story of the Round Table and the present. Through it all there is the quest for the "gleam." "I am Merlin who follow the Gleam," the poet affirms, and the "gleam itself,

There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers. . . .

It seems safe to say that the "gleam" is "the Pilot" of "Crossing the Bar" and is the end of the life journey. It has also played the role of the guiding star. Finally, it appears to be the symbol of unity in the career of Alfred Tennyson.

The autobiographical poem delineates the entire poetic career of Tennyson. In section IV, there is the representation of the Palace of Art days when escape and aesthetic detachment were deliberately preferred to the dull reality of common life. Tennyson himself admitted that the following stanza deals with

29Brooke, pp. 506-507.
Then to the melody,
Over a wilderness
Gliding, and glancing at
Elf of the woodland,
Gnome of the cavern,
Griffin and Giant,
And dancing of Fairies
In desolate hollows,
And wreaths of the mountain,
And rolling of dragons
By warble of water,
Or cataract music
Of falling torrents,
Flitting the Gleam.

Buckley adds that "the elves, gnomes, giants, and dragons, which nowhere figure greatly in Tennyson's poetry, may symbolize the delights of fanciful escape, the attractions of the Palace of Art"; one should recall that they were discussed in the early chapters on escape and aesthetic detachment.

Section V alludes to the pastorals:

Down from the mountain
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on
Silent river,
Silvery willow,
Pasture and plowland,
Innocent maidens,
Garrulous children,
Homestead and harvest,
Reaper and gleaner,
And rough-ruddy faces
Or lowly labor,
Slided the Gleam--

Here we have the minor details of life which the poet comes to

30Memoir, IV, 138.
31Buckley, p. 241.
treat in such poems as English Idylls. These poems were immensely popular in his days and are a challenge to the modern student in evaluating the poetic merits of Alfred Tennyson.

Reality and appearance clash in The Idylls of the King. Therefore in section VII the poet is bewildered by the consequences of the clash.

Clouds and darkness
Closed upon Camelot;
Arthur had vanish'd
I knew not whither,
The King who loved me,
And cannot die;
For out of the darkness
Silent and slowly
The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry glimmer
On icy fallow
And faded forest,
Drew to the valley
Named of the shadow,
And slowly brightening
Out of the glimmer,
And slowly moving again to a melody
Yearningly tender,
Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow
But clothed with the Gleam.

The Arthur of In Memoriam and the Arthur of The Idylls become one here. When the Gleam disappears, the shadow is cast over the valley. This is the same shadow that was cast over the poet and Arthur Hallam in In Memoriam (XXII). But the Gleam shines again, and the shadow becomes "no longer a shadow." The Gleam, as far as one can see, is the saving element and the one coveted end of the long quest. It is that which brings hope to the poet while traversing the valley of shadow, with the realization that appearance and reality do not balance any more, or that the "fair
"illusion" is fair no longer.

The final plea to the Mariner, to all who are bound on a quest is introduced in section I.

O young Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician
With eyes of wonder,
I am Merlin,
And I am dying,
I am Merlin
Who follow the Gleam.

The poet himself is taught to follow the "gleam" by the mighty "Wizard,"

Who found me at sunrise
Sleeping, and woke me
And learn'd me Magic!

(II)

But some time in his life he was forced to discard the "Private intuition" by,

A barbarous people,
Blind to the magic
And deaf to the melody,
Snarl'd at and cursed me. 32

(III)

He was forced to renounce a detached life in an aesthetic palace,
in favor of a life in a cottage with its promise of a communal living which is equivalent to "complete existence." But the "Master whisper'd, / 'Follow the Gleam.'"

32This probably refers to the criticism of Christopher North which is blamed for Tennyson's silence between 1833-1842. In any event, Tennyson's reply to North makes it obvious that his feelings were hurt. See Memoir, I, 124-126.
That the poet included the "gleam" in his life even when busy with the "cherished formulas of man and of society" is clear from the last sections of this poem. Just as the poem begins with a call to the Mariner to follow the gleam, so it ends with a similar call.

O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions
Launch your vessel
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the Margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam.

"In these lines," Gordon S. Haight remarks, "we hear for the last time the brave voice of his Ulysses, now too old 'to sail beyond the sunset,' but with the same indomitable spirit urging the course on younger Mariners." 33 The vision, in the end, is the center of all his poetic inspiration. Besides, it is also the unifying element which gives the poet a purpose. It is representative of reality in its ability to pierce the veil of appearance in order to obtain a glimpse of the reality. Through the symbol of the "gleam" a whole poetic career falls into a pattern.

IV

Tennyson uses voyage also as a symbol of death or as a pas-

sage into the next world. This is apparent in such poems as "The Lady of Shalott," "Morte D'Arthur," "The Passing of Arthur," and "Crossing the Bar." In all these poems, physical death is the ultimate end of the journey itself.

In "The Lady of Shalott" the journey functions as the summoner of death. The Lady leaves her web and the mirror in search of reality. And reality is death in this case.

Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And,

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right--
The leaves upon her falling light--
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

She died before she ever reached Camelot. Her end symbolizes her inability, on the basis of the detached and merely aesthetic life that she has led so far, to face life as it is represented at Camelot.

"Morte D'Arthur" also represents journey as the symbol of life ebbing away and mingling with the larger sphere of spiritual reality. ("The Passing of Arthur" is a rerendering of the early

34 Poems, pp. 27-28.
35 Ibid., 64-68.
Both poems present King Arthur as being carried out to the sea in a ship wreathed in black. Three Queens bear the King to

... a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were war
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream--

(11. 244-248)

After the final parting between Sir Bedivere, symbol of life, and King Arthur, symbol of death,

... the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs.

(11. 316-320)

The setting is presented in terms of "moan," the "Dead world's winter dawn," the ship as a "black dot against the verge of dawn," "the mere," and "wailing." As Bedivere stands moaning, the "weird rhyme" of the earlier "Coming of Arthur" reaches him. And he thinks: "From the great deep to the great deep he [Arthur] goes." All between is the appearance of living.

"Crossing the Bar" (1889) is a poem in sixteen lines and deals with the complete implications of the quest theme and makes use of a great many of Tennyson's stock words. The significant theme that presents itself is that of "the return of the soul to eternity." It is the picture of man crossing in its final stages

36 Poems, p. 753. Shortly before his death Tennyson asked that this poem be placed at the end of all editions of his poetry.
the gap between "the great deep and the great deep." The theme is presented through the image of a voyager boarding the ship.

Sunset and evening star,
   And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
   When I put out to sea.

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
   The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
   When I have crossed the bar.

He may be carried far "from out our bourne of Time and Place" during his sojourn upon the earth, but he is confident at the end of seeing the Pilot. As Tennyson has explained, the Pilot is "That Divine and Unseen who is always guiding us." 37 The figure of the Pilot has caused confusion to many readers, and the present author has accepted Buckley's interpretation as quite convincing. Thus according to him,

those very literal readers who object to the image of the Pilot on the assumption that voyagers may usually see their pilot before reaching the bar should be reminded that the night of Tennyson's embarkation is "dark" and that the speaker, after he has crossed the bar, hopes to see his Pilot not necessarily for the first time but rather "face to face," in the full light, no longer through a mist darkly. 38

In any event, "crossing the bar" is symbolic of the life journey between time and eternity. Death has ceased to frighten the poet, we notice. Death was a fearful experience to him earlier, specifically in "The Supposed Confessions" and in In

37 Memoir, IV, 140.
38 Buckley, p. 243.
Memoriam. The new trend of confidence may have been motivated by the realization that Arthur Hallam is waiting for him in the "mystic deeps" beyond life.

Quest is thus a recurring theme in Tennyson's poetry throughout his life. At first it is accepted as a means of escape. Then it is used as a means to acquire faith or a certainty that life should be endured no matter what the odds. "Ulysses" and then In Memoriam exploit this possibility. In both these poems, the concern is mainly to reach a certainty, through the acquisition of experience and knowledge in the first poem, and through spiritual certainty that death opens the avenue of reality in the second. More and more, quest turns out to be a spiritual symbol, a means to probe into the mystery and to relate appearance to reality. But the search fails in "The Holy Grail" on the basis that the knights are unable to relate the two aspects. Quest is also a symbol of death or a crossing of life. In In Memoriam, "Passing of Arthur," and "Crossing the Bar" it turns out to be a passport to eternity. Finally, in "Merlin and the Gleam" the journey is undertaken in search of the vision, for that symbol which guides one through life and even gives meaning to the life journey. Thus, Tennyson approaches the theme from various angles. It is not merely a symbol of escape; it has wider possibilities and is used in a larger context. 39

39 It should be mentioned that E. D. H. Johnson has misfired in his conclusion that the Tennyson quest is a means of escape. On the contrary, quest opens avenues of reality. When it does
not merge with reality, it is thoroughly discredited as in "The Holy Grail." See Johnson, p. 53.
CHAPTER VI

BALANCE

Along with both a love of the country and a concern for social and economic problems, Alfred Tennyson incorporated into his poetry the concepts of chivalry, duty, reverence, self-control, human passion, and human love. These concepts were basic to the theory of balance in Tennyson's mature poetry. Earlier we referred to the warning of Arthur Hallam that "Beauty" and "Good" must be related. Tennyson seemed to have incorporated that principle of transcendental relationship into his thought, for many of the poems which he wrote in the wake of Hallam's admonition deal immediately with this fusion. As a further step, he added "Truth" to this dual theory and made an ethically complete circle.

Truth, goodness, and beauty have been discussed throughout the tradition of western thought. They are known as transcendental. In Tennyson's poetry there is a deep awareness of the three "transcendentals"; everything is denominated under "true

1Memoir, I, 244.

2See Hutchins, I, 112. He states that "they have been called 'the three fundamental values' with the implication that the worth of anything can be exhaustively judged by reference to these three standards--and no others."
or false," "good or evil," "beautiful or ugly."

He also believed firmly in "self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control," and determined "To live by law, Acting the law we live by without fear." These almost self-evident principles were to him "the foundations of all ethics." It is not possible to determine with any amount of accuracy the direct source of this ethical theory of Tennyson. It was noted about Tennyson that there was a "wholesome balance about his mind." Tennyson himself stated that

our wills are free and independent; but they are free in order that we may make them conformable to law, so that ultimately the will is perfectly free and yet perfectly determined in the assertion of the highest ideal, and the limited individual will is made one with the will of the Universe. Self-reverence arises from self-knowledge. And, further, a man discovers the value of his soul and understands the resources of its nature in obedience to the great maxim "Know thyself."

3Charles Tennyson, p. 133.

4In The Upanishads the means by which man can realize "Self" are "control of the body, the mind, and the senses." The knowledge of God is obtained "by him alone who has purified his mind by the practice of austerities, self-control, and other spiritual disciplines..." See The Upanishads, tr., from the Sanskrit with introduction and with notes and explanations, by Swami Nikhilananda (London, 1951), p. 247.

5Bishop of Ripon, Friends, p. 300. Also see p. 135 for Dr. Warren's statement that Tennyson was "the most balanced and sane" of the three, meaning, Tennyson, Fitzgerald, and Carlyle.

6As quoted by Charles Tennyson, p. 133.

7See Fairchild, p. 485. According to Fairchild self-knowledge is impossible.
Self-control, very close to the concept of "duty" as understood by the Englishmen, involves the struggle between the ego and the id, the spirit and the matter.

The foregoing chapters make it obvious that the early poems point in the direction of a definite code of balance. Briefly, escape or aesthetic detachment could not provide the climate essential for the preservation of happiness. The Lotos-eaters, while imbibing the essence of the lotos-land, stifled the memory of an individual responsibility which they had abandoned. They possessed "Beauty" in the sensuous land but only at the expense of "Truth" and "Goodness." The senses predominated in "Tithonus" and "Tiresias," but the acquisition of "Beauty" was in neither case equated with "Truth" or "Goodness." In all these poems, subservience to "Beauty" in one form or another made disintegration inevitable. The tragedy of a Lady of Shalott, a Tiresias, or a Tithonus, therefore, stemmed from the separation of "Beauty," "Truth," and "Goodness."

Tennyson seems to accept as true that a life based on a blind disregard of balance is tragic. "Genone," "The Palace of Art," and "The Vision of Sin" vindicate this point of view. Many other poems—"The Sisters," Maud, "Revenge," The Princess, for instance, are also pronouncements on the lack of fusion in private lives. At the same time, in some other poems order is sought throughout the entire cosmos. This is the case in In Memoriam and The Idylls of the King. Balance is accepted in these long poems as the basic point upon which supreme order is
Tennyson was interested in this theme all his life since the palace of art was discarded. But, both early and late, there is an indication that he is fully aware that equilibrium does not exist in man and in society. During the 1860's he became concerned with metaphysical issues. "Lucretius," published in 1868, turns out to be his boldest pronouncement on the lack of fusion. "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control" do not coalesce in this poem. On the contrary, there is complete lack of control in Lucretius. This awareness on the poet's part that there is no balance in man, and, consequently, in society, is basic to the entire sequence of The Idylls of the King. Lucretius, the knights of the Round Table, and Guinevere are unhappy victims of a philosophy which tends to stress the sense over the spirit, or the spirit over the sense.

I

"Oenone" (1833) is the first affirmative statement of the positive philosophy of balance, which is strictly opposed to either escape or aesthetic detachment. The poem is the story of Oenone, once the playmate of Paris, but now rejected by him for Aphrodite. The entire poem is Oenone's detailed description of

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8 Poems, pp. 38-42.
the selfish choice of Paris, elected the "umpire" by the gods who "ranged on the halls of Peleus," to bestow a "fruit of pure Hesperian gold" on the most fair. Paris would gladly bestow it on Oenone, but three goddesses are vying for the golden fruit: Here, Pallas, and Aphrodite.

At the bower where the choice takes place, Here makes the first bid, the "proffer of royal power, ample rule / Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue / Wherewith to embellish state." The thought of power flatters Paris, and he is ready to bestow the fruit on Here. Then Pallas makes her speech:

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign power,  
Yet not for power (power of herself  
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear;  
And, because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.  

(11. 141-147)

The promise of Aphrodite, who is the fairest of the three, is short and to the point: "I promise thee / The fairest and most loving wife in Greece." Paris makes his choice.

In the sequel to this poem, "The Death of Oenone" (1892), Oenone's love turns to bitter hatred. She is determined not to die alone. Instead, she plots a "far-off doubtful purpose" of revenge, which prefigures the destruction of Troy. Paris should have accepted the offer of Pallas, the goddess of wisdom. Instead, he makes his choice in favor of beauty and thus precipitates Oenone's prophecy. Both Paris's choice and Oenone's prophecy point toward mental conflict. "Self-reverence, self-
knowledge, and self-control" are the central virtues of a line of action with its promise of happiness. As Arthur Carr interprets it:

Paris' lack of judgement in taking Aphrodite's bribe calls forth Oenone's prophecy of disaster to society through the sins of adultery [as in Idylls of the King]. Although both the poet and the nymph applaud the ascetic principles of Pallas Athene, the secret of the poem lies in the symbol of Oenone herself, who combines the promise of erotic pleasure with wisdom that leads to power. In the warfare between Sense and Conscience, Tennyson achieves equilibrium, though not stability, for the symbol is genuinely ambivalent. The balance of powers is not guaranteed by any 'objective foundations common to all men.'

The poem, as it has come down to us, is an interesting study in antithesis. The theme, obviously, is fusion or balance, but the texture of the poem is in entire conformity with Paris's choice of a philosophy of "art for art's sake." The appeal of the poem is in its stately movement and fulness of sound, for the whole poem is rich in sensuous details. With Tennyson such a tension between theme and approach is not unusual. Earlier, in "The Lotus-Eaters" we noticed the discrepancy between the admonition to discard a life of repose and the slow-moving lines of the poem itself. In the same manner, "Oenone" advocates balance, but the texture of the poem is certainly opposed to a discarding of the sensuous in life.

9Carr, Critical Essays, p. 52.

10The poem was revised considerably before its republication in 1842. Tennyson made the descriptions clearer and the speech of Pallas weighty and direct. The present text is the 1842 version.
It has already been noted that "The Palace of Art" (1833) presents the problem of a divided sensibility. The poem is a fusion of the earlier themes of escape and isolation, but above all else, it is a strict defense of the concept of balance. The soul has created a beautiful idyllic setting in order to live in disdainful detachment from the corrupt and common life of the earth. But even at the height of her proud detachment there is conflict resulting from the separation of the three sisters, "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good."

In the dedication to this poem Tennyson stated his theory, which in "Oenone" has served the basic theme:

That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge, are three sisters
That dost [sic] upon each other, friends to man,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sunder'd without tears. 11

The soul is surrounded by "Beauty," the best of the traditions of art and aesthetics. Her palace is the living symbol of a philosophy that searches for fulfillment through art and art alone. In this the soul has sinned. She has sundered her existence from "Good" and "Knowledge." She has the representation of "Knowledge" among the frescoes on the wall, but only for its value as art, and, in any event, she is lacking entirely in the wisdom born of the knowledge that "The Hesperides" advocated. By living a life of "proud disdain," she has completely ruled out the possibility of "Good" which, from the point of view of

11 Poems, p. 42.
this poem, consists in communal sharing. Chastisement follows
this violation.

"St. Simeon Stylites" (1842) illustrates the "morbid and
vainglorious practice of asceticism," which is as harmful as
the proud detachment of the soul.12 This passage is a fair
representation of the limited vision of the man:

Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all the saints
Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth
House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the saints;
Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake; the chill stars sparkle; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.
I wear an undress'd goatskin on my back;
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck;
And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with thee till I die.
(11. 104-117)

The passage smacks only too strongly of the Pharisee in the Bible,
and aligns us against St. Simeon. In the final section St.
Simeon has hopes of a reward that he thinks is coming to him
for a long life of penitence.

Disregard of balance results in excess. This is the major
theme of "The Vision of Sin" (1842).13 The story is presented
in the form of a vision. The young man enters a Bacchanalian
setting.

12Ibid., 79-82. See also "St. Telemachus" (1892), in which
the holy man is denounced as a "deadless dreamer, layking out
a life / Of self-suppression, not of selfless love."
13Ibid., 111-114.
A sleepy light upon their brows and lips—
As when the sun, a crescent of eclipse,
Dreams over lake and lawn, and isles and capes—
Suffused them... The next stanza is a sensuous description of erotic amusements.

The music in a "mellow sound" evolves from the "lower ground," and it winds upward in voluptuous circles. Its effect on the hearers is on a par with the effect of the lotos on the lotos-esters. Everything about it and in it is suggestive of passion, "panting," "thronging in," "palpitating," and at last it

Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,
Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
Flung the torrent rainbow round.

With this motion of the rainbow the entire company is thrown into a calypso whirl of sensual activity. The people "twisted hard in fierce embraces / Like to Furies, like to Graces." The picture that is painted here is worthy of a Rubens.

The visionary "looked up towards a mountain-tract," and

saw through the darkness of the dawn that,

God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
Unheeded; and detaching, fold by fold,
From those still heights, and, slowly drawing near,
A vapor heavy, hueless, formless, cold,
Came floating on for many a month and year,
Unheeded... God has been a witness and has made Himself an "awful rose of dawn." Symbolically this rose would represent the order which the earthly revelry has violated. At this point it is very important to keep in mind that the vapour comes floating for "many a month and year." In other words, God's symbolism is extended
over a period of time, and is not accidental. But the significance is wholly lost on the youth and his world.

The dream is broken at this point and linked to another, in which the youth has degenerated into an old man, "a gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as death." No "child of sin" leads him now, but he comes with the sophistication that is the inevitable result of years of sin.

The meter changes to short seven syllabled lines with alternate rhymes, four lines to a stanza. The stanzas effectively spell out the cynicism of the old man. Whereas he has been a passive participant in the earlier activity, in the sense that he was led into the voluptuous gaiety, he is now a vehement moralist ready to pass bitter comments on values, on life and death. His nonchalant attitude toward the present and his casual reference to death remind one of the philosophy of Omar Khayyám. But in reality, the indifference of the sinner is only a pose. He is a moralist, disillusioned and bitter about the unhappy choice he has made and which has hastened his dissolution. He had started out as a poet but lacked the depth to heed the significance of "God's awful rose of dawn." Awful connotes something ominous; rose signifies passion; and dawn brings hope. He chose to repudiate the hope that was held out to him and, having accepted the choice of passion, precipitated the devolution. The picture is grim. The only relief is in the wine which he drinks by the gallon with the "wrinkled ostler, grim and thin."

It enables him to "mingle madness, mingle scorn," over a life
that is spent unheeding God's "awful rose of dawn."

The final stanza resumes the early verse pattern, aa, bb, cc, and dd, and brings the devolution to its final stages:

Once more unrose the mystic mountain-range;
Below were men and horses pierced with worms,
And slowly quickening into lower forms;
By shards and scurf of salt, and scum of dross,
Old plash of rains, and refuse patch'd with moss.
Then some one spake: 'Behold! it was a crime
Of sense avenged by sense that wore with time.'

And one: 'He had not wholly quench'd his power;
A little grain of conscience made him sour.'
At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope?'
To which an answer peal'd from the high land,
But in a tongue no man could understand;
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

Excess leads to imbalance; men and horses devolve into lower forms as a result. The first two judgments proffer no hope at all, but the third, with the insistence of a far-off image of conscience that has remained in the sinner, leads to the question: Is there any hope?

The answer is the vision of God's "awful rose of dawn."

In the first instance the "rose of dawn" had shed its petals enveloped in a vapour. In this last instance there is no vapour leading from the rose. It is very simple and detached, and simply prefigures the promise of salvation.

With "Duty and Love" (1842) Tennyson introduces the English

14 According to Tennyson the poem touches upon "a more awful subject than any of these; the end here and hereafter, of the merely sensual man." See Memoir, I, 250.
watchword "Duty," and embodies the national idea of self-control and loyalty. The poet stresses duty in "Enoch Arden," in the portrayal of the Duke of Wellington, in In Memoriam, and in The Idylls of the King.

"Love and Duty" presents a series of questions on love, error, and sin. The final resolution is reached on the basis that one should keep "passion in a leash." It is duty which resolves the situation of a divided will:

... and Duty loved of Love—
O, this world's curse—beloved but hated—came
Like Death betwixt thy dear embrace and mine,
And crying, 'Who is this? behold thy bride,'
She push'd me from thee.

In many other poems reconciliation to the inevitable is delayed. "Locksley Hall" (1842), for instance, toys with the idea of revenge and evades responsibility. In Maud (1855) also there is the postponement of duty. The acceptance of responsibility—in this case responsibility consists in submitting one self to fate—comes too late. The garden episode, of which tragedy is the inevitable result, is the result of the postponement of duty.

Through all the denunciations and railings against social and moral disorder which, incidentally, are only the projection of the disorder in the mind of the protagonist, there is a strong

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15 See Elizabeth Cary for her interpretation of this English virtue. Cary, p. 197.
16 Poems, pp. 85-87.
plea for fusion or balance. 17

Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone
For ever and every by,
One still strong man in a blatant land,
Whatever they call him—what care I?—
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
Who can rule and dare not lie!

(I, X, v)

This yearning is repeated in

ah for a man to arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be: 18

(vi)

The hero of Maud acquires the equilibrium in the end and makes his peace with himself and the world.

Underlying the more pronounced social questions in The Princess (1947) is the great need for fusion. 19 The chief characters in this long "medley" are Ida and the prince. The two separately represent a divided sensibility. Together they achieve the unity and purpose required for a unified existence. Ida has "intimations" of the place of woman in society. She is the great emancipator of her sex and conceives of a woman's university as a starting point. In her divided sensibility she separates the sexes and advocates complete emancipation based on a disjunctive existence of man and woman. What evolves in the poem is a

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17 Ibid., 205.

18 One is reminded here of Carlyle's theory of the hero. This yearning for a man "with heart, head, hand" is also obvious in Arnold's writing.

19 Poems, pp. 115-162.
situation closely related to Love's Labours Lost. In her sincer­ity Ida assumes more of a masculine role than she had intended. At the same time, she bears a marked resemblance to the soul in "The Palace of Art." In the words of Buckley: "Behind the high walls of her academic retreat, in her temples of artifice, she cultivates all knowledge, including art, with the inhuman abandon of the soul in the Palace." Ida's sin, therefore, is the same as that of the soul, the separation of "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good." "Beauty" she has, and "Truth" in the knowledge of what she wants she has; but she violates the code of "Goodness" which consists in communal sharing and in accepting societal rules.

The prince is rather effeminate and is afflicted with "weird seizures." He is a dreamer, and the weird seizures are symbolic of his total lack of perspective, his inability to distinguish between reality and appearance. The weird seizures were added in 1851, The Princess having undergone considerable revision since its first appearance in 1847. Tennyson has remarked on the addition thus: "His too emotional temperament was intended from an artistic point of view to emphasize his comparative want of power." All reality to the prince consists in his pursuit of Ida. Honor, self-respect, and pride, along with all the masculine virtues, are sacrificed on the altar of love.

The final resolution is also to be sought in love or goodness.

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20 Buckley, pp. 101-102.
21 Memoir, II, 26.
Knowledge of this love reveals to Ida that her efforts have been "far less for truth than power / In knowledge." Intellect and emotion are united in her at this moment, and in the role, so different from that of the "queen of farce," she is able to realize the suppressed masculinity of the prince. Both suppressed manhood and suppressed womanhood are brought under the influence of "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good" operating together for the good of society and the preservation of ultimate values. As Tennyson explains it: "In the end we see this lioness-like woman subduing the elements of her humanity to that which is highest within her, and recognizing the relation in which she stands towards the order of the world and toward God."

II

One of the chief objectives of In Memoriam (1850) is to establish the relation in which man stands towards the "order of the world and toward God." The story of this poem, in a sense, turns out to be also the story of the universe. Tennyson was occupied with the composition of the poem for seventeen years. In other words, he was occupied with the poem ever since he discarded the palace of art philosophy. In this poem, to a large extent.

22 Memoir, II, 23.

23 Speaking of Princess Ida in The Princess, Tennyson said that in the end we see this woman "subduing the elements of her humanity," and recognizing the relation in which she stands towards "the order of the world and toward God."
extent, he achieves the fusion of "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good." Balance bases itself here on the three virtues of "self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control."

The death of Arthur Hallam unbalances the poet completely. His first attempt, therefore, is to grope his way out of the personal chaos, and he composes verses in an effort to achieve control over himself. Taken so, art becomes the point of balance.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold. . . .

(V)

From another point of view, the poem is a judgment of Tennyson on the need for balance in Nature and the cosmos. Hallam is the steadying influence, the one factor which keeps excess under control, and is the focal point between matter and spirit, doubts and fears, life and death.

In his profound sorrow the poet grasps at abstract reasoning to steady himself. The first solid conclusion that he arrives at is:

'T is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

(X-VII)

Love, which we have already equated with "Good," is the first requirement in the attempt to regain balance.

But Hallam is dead and will not return from the tomb as did Lazarus. Tennyson recalls the three principal actors at Lazarus'
resurrection: Jesus, Lazarus and Mary. Mary did not demand any explanations or revelations, for

... there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

(The incident offers faith as the clue. Therefore,

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure...

Mary is a type that does not exist everywhere, and although her type is needed to hold the balance between flesh and blood and divine truth, each individual is capable of preserving the necessary balance. Hence,

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in world of sin,
And even for want of such a type.

(XXXIII)

From birth to death our life is a process in which memory wanes gradually: "Lest life should fail in looking back." But in death, memory takes in its range the whole of life perfectly and at once. Arthur acquired this perspective after his death, the poet believes. Therefore, when the poet joins his friend in death he will also acquire this perspective. At the same time, the balance that he is looking for is not to be sought in "re-merging in the general soul." The "Over Soul" idea (In Memoriam, XLVII) precludes individual existence. As Tennyson sees it, there can be no order in such a theory. Hence, if there is any validity at all to the theory of the "general soul," he wishes for a temporary reunion with Hallam before it happens.
The temporary union, in fact, is a harsh necessity.

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

Therefore he prays:

Be near me when my light is low,
   When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
   And tingle; and the heart is sick,
   And all the wheels of being slow.
   (L)

The whole of section L argues strongly for balance. Through his fears and anxieties he seeks Hallam as his steadying point.

The poet is suddenly apprehensive that he will never answer Arthur's love worthily, that he will never reach the ideals. Arthur, however, gives hope that one should not fret simply because "life is dashed with flecks of sin." Many have seemingly gained strength by experiencing some waywardness. From the point of view of this doctrine, the youth in the "Vision of Sin" did not sin through waywardness, but through persistence in the wayward life.

It is trusted here that "somehow good / Will be the final goal of ill."

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
   That not one life shall be destroy'd,
   Or cast as rubbish to the void,
   When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
   That not a moth with vain desire
   Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
   Or but subserves another's gain. . . .
   (LIV)
There is beauty underlying the pragmatic unity and order. It is for this reason of a purposiveness behind creation that God had made Himself an "awful rose of dawn," as a bridge to close the gap between creation and the deity.

If this theory is true of living matter, it is also true of "life beyond the grave." The likeness of God within the soul bears testimony to this pervading order. The poem reaches its first climax in sections LIV and LV. The entire order that Tennyson has built up on faith and love suffers a severe setback in sections LV-LVI on the basis of the strife between Nature and God.

Science has concurrently disclosed the cruelty of Nature, which is corroborated by the fossil remains of extinct species found in quarried stones and the like. Nature is completely shorn of all beauty here; on the contrary, she is "red in tooth and claw." She ruthlessly argues: "A thousand types are gone; / I care for nothing, all shall go." Hence, there follows utter confusion.

No more? A monster then, a dream,  
A discord. Dragons of the prime,  
That tare each other in their slime,  
Were mellow music match'd with him.  

(LVI)

The danger which inheres here is that of excluding the possibility of any balance under the circumstances. According to the Memoir As he [Tennyson] exulted in the wilder aspects of Nature . . . and revelled in the thunderstorm; so he felt a joy in her orderliness; he felt a rest in her steadfastness, patient progress and hopefulness; the same seasons ever returned; the same stars wheeled
in their courses; the flowers and trees blossomed and the birds sang yearly in their appointed months; and he had a triumphant appreciation of her ever-new revelations of beauty.

But he was occasionally much troubled with the intellectual problem of the apparent profusion and waste of life and by the vast amount of sin and suffering throughout the world, for these seemed to militate against the idea of the Omnipotent and All-loving Father. 24

Now that Nature has failed him, he is ready to give up all hope. But it is love that saves him. Faith's conclusion prompted by love is reached in section LXV: Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt. The poet yearns to be reunited with his friend. But the reunion presupposes fusion as is evident in this poem:

How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

(XCIV)

The poet's strongest anguish has spent itself; further, friendship with Lushington has filled the gap to a certain degree. In this frame of mind he actually experiences a mystic union with the dead in section XCV. As a result of this union balance is achieved. At the close of the experience he cries:

'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away [the experience];
And East and West, without a breath,
Mint their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

In the new perspective that follows this union, even the disorder in Nature acquires a meaning. In the final sections

the poet regards "knowledge" (scientific knowledge) itself, if cut from "love and faith," as the expression of a delirium, "some wild Pallas from the brain / Of demons." But by then the "reverence" he has acquired through the mystical union protects him from the menace of such knowledge; and faith, transcending disorder and denial, allows him at last an intimation of aesthetic wholeness:

I see in part
That all, as in some piece of art
Is toil cooperator to an end,
(CXCVIII)

As in a puzzle all the pieces are fitting now to form the whole pattern.

In section XCIV the poet professes a deep devotion to knowledge and looks forward to its wide extension. But he is insistent that "knowledge know her place." "She is the second, not the first." Wisdom is higher; and wisdom will teach that "reverence" must interpret and supplement the known and unknowable. Our problem is simply the lack of perspective; it is this fact that causes the terrible confusion in the poet's mind earlier with regard to the excess in Nature. Hallam had this wisdom, and the poet addresses him thus: "O friend, who camest to thy goal / So early, leaving me behind,"

I would the great world grew like thee,
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity.

Hallam had the fusion of the three elements of "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good." The final plea is taken up in CXVIII.
The section is a re-statement of Tennyson's faith in the necessity of order. It elaborates the four stages sculptured on the walls of Camelot. And in order to reach the last stage, man has to remember that "life is not as idle ore" (as the lotos-eaters believed it to be), but that the ore has to be smelted. One might mention here that the image of the ore and smelting recalls Keats's image, in which the world is pictured as "the vale of soul making."25 That Tennyson also views suffering as a means to an end is indicated early in section LXXXI, where he exclaims:

My sudden frost was sudden gain,
And gave all ripeness to the grain
It might have drawn from after-heat.

The poet in the section under discussion (CXVIII), declares very strongly in favor of the balance in man. Therefore, he cries,

Arise and fly
The reeling Fawn, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

In "The Vision of Sin" we noticed the evolution of man in reverse action. The Idylls of the King, contrary to King Arthur's wish, is also devolutionary. From this point of view, In Memoriam is central to a study on balance. It works out the upward trend.

The upward trend is preserved in the Duke of Wellington, who is the epitome of balance. The "Ode on the Death of the Duke

of Wellington," written in 1852, describes the duke as a

... man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.

Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.

In "Enoch Arden" (1864), although there is a good deal of bathos, the central theme of the poem made it popular with the English people. As one critic has stated, the poem is "exceptionally pure in its delineation of self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice." In this respect there is resemblance between this poem and the Ode on the Duke of Wellington.

III

From 1860 on it becomes increasingly difficult for man to achieve the "upward trend." Sir Aylmer Aylmer ("Aylmer's Field" 1864), for instance, has no self-control. He cannot "curb the beast," and he thus precipitates tragedy. "Lucretius" (1868) is another study based on the lack of fusion in man.

"Lucretius" is Tennyson's positive assertion that a life not based on fusion is doomed. Head, heart, and hand should work

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26 Poems, pp. 223-226.
27 Ibid., 227-240.
28 Cary, p. 194.
29 Poems, pp. 275-278.
in unison for this perfect existence. Lucretius, on the contrary, is motivated by reason alone, and he violated the code of balance by aspiring to the calm detachment of the Lucretian gods.

The poem is based on an existence where "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good" have been sundered, and is, in its theme, close to Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*. In failing to fuse these elements, Lucretius has to bow down to the inevitable tragedy. The poem is a forceful dramatic monologue, the action of which is based on the dreams and visions of a very sensuous nature, which the philosopher experiences as a result of the potion administered by his wife. Lucretius decides to commit suicide. This solution is accepted not as a means of escape, but as an admission of the futility of any attempt to bridge the gap between reason and imagination that exists in the philosopher. What the poem creates is tragic irony.

The central concept of Lucretian philosophy is the theory of the atom. Lucretius's first dream evolves into the atomic universe. The setting is appropriately a raging storm. Rushing rain, and thunderbolt—"me thought I never saw so fierce a fork"—are appropriate for the atomic destruction that is visualized here. During the dream:

A void was made in Nature; all her bonds
Crack'd; and I saw the flaring atom-streams
And torrents of her myriad universe,

all rushing to the last dissolution. And this dream is very true to Lucretius's own philosophy.

The second dream is a vision of lewdness, to which the
philosopher is particularly averse, having devoted a whole life-
time to spurning passions.

In the third dream, Helen of Troy, all her beauty imaged
in her breasts, is seen to brave the thrusting sword:

\begin{quote}
sword
Now over and now under, now direct,
Pointing itself to pierce, but sank down shamed
At all that beauty. . . .
\end{quote}

(ll. 61-64)

As he stared, a fire "shot out of them" and "scorched" the phil-
osopher.

Together the three dreams point to the tragic unbalance in
Lucretius resulting from his disjointed existence in which reason
has the sole control. The philosopher's conflict is the punish-
ment for accepting reason in the place of a fusion of reason
and imagination. Lucretius has offended Venus, or so he ration-
alizes now, and has not paid homage at the altar of love. Paris,
his "beardless apple-arbiter," declared her to be the "fairest."
But by accepting "Beauty" alone, Paris also had violated the
code of unified living. Lucretius, for his part, has completely
ignored the "fairest." Further, by rejecting communal living, he
also violated "Good."

He gropes for some reassurance. Like the poet in In Memori-
ium, he realizes that Nature is a partner in the excess to which
he is now subjected. He beholds the loathsome picture of the
rape of an Oread by a Satyr. The irony rests on the fact that
the philosopher had rejected the existence of these unbalanced
monsters; but now he is not sure whether the sight revolts or
attracts him. His response is mixed:

\[ \text{do I wish--} \]
\[ \text{What?--that the bush were leafless? or to whelm} \]
\[ \text{All of them in one massacre?} \]

(11. 205-207)

The basis of order collapses; Lucretius had established it on a "settled, sweet Epicurean life," detached, agnostic, untroubled by passion, and the "lust of blood / That makes a steaming slaughter-house of Rome." But now, under the influence of the potions, he realizes that the order he had believed in is not order but disorder. The disillusion is so thorough that he commits suicide.

"Lucretius" is a beautiful testimony to a faith that Tennyson himself had acquired, a faith based on the assumption that man is sustained as man only by his intuition of an order which transcends empirical values. This faith controls the new scientific rationalism and subordinates it to the older ethical and religious idealism. "Lucretius," therefore, comes down to us as a strong pronouncement on the impossibility of sustaining universal order on science alone. Reason has to be fused with imagination to achieve the necessary faith.

The complete sequence of the Idylls was published between 1859 and 1885. In the final form there are twelve poems, which together represent order or lack of order in Camelot. King Arthur is the central figure; the initial effort on the part of the poet, therefore, is to establish the reality of the king.
The first Idyll, "The Coming of Arthur," serves this purpose. His birth is shrouded in mystery. What we discover is that Arthur is the son of Uther by Ygerne. Ever since Uther's death the lords have fought like "wild beasts."

When Merlin finally brings Arthur forth as the king, it is to inaugurate a new order, for "The old order changeth, giving place to new." Arthur is the harbinger of this new order. The new order is ushered in in the spring when he marries Guinevere. His yearning for her is symbolized by his desire to "lift her from this land of beasts,"

Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.

(11. 90-93)

The light and dark images and the life and death images are accentuated by the introduction of the three queens, who come to receive him in his final exit, and the Lady of the Lake,

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the King his huge corse-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out.

The "Coming of Arthur" has a thematic purpose. It is to bring law and order into the land and into private lives. The rest of the Idylls are so grouped that in some the spirit triumphs and in others the beast has the mastery. The Idylls turn out to be a repudiation of the false premise that perfect fusion or balance can be achieved in Camelot, which symbolizes

30Poems, pp. 304-311.
As Dean Alford has described it:

One noble design warms and unites the whole. In Arthur's coming--his foundation of the Round Table--his struggles and disappointments, and departure--we see the conflict continually maintained between the spirit and the flesh; and in the pragmatical issue, we recognize the bearing down on history and in individual man of pure and lofty Christian purpose by the lusts of the flesh, by the corruptions of superstition, by human passions and selfishness.

In other words, the design of an order is there, but "the lusts of the flesh," "the corruption of superstition," and "human passions and selfishness," destroy it.

The fusion of the spirit with the senses is essential to Arthur. That is why at his coronation he bound the knights of the Round Table by "strait vows to his own self" and to general order in Camelot. The figure of the Round Table is itself symbolic of the law and order that Arthur and the knights have vowed to preserve. On the literal level this bond serves to free the land of bestial lords, and on the ideal level of the beast in man.

"Gareth and Lynnette," the second Idyll, is singular in its preservation of the ideal order that Arthur has accepted. Arthur's knighthood preserves a "pristine health and vigour" in the poem. Gareth is full of ideals, and being young and naive, he has no misgivings such as his mother, Bellicent, has regarding

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31 *Memoir*, III, 164.
32 *Poems*, pp. 311-333.
Arthur's sovereignty. When she attempts to dampen his enthusiasm by declaring that "there may be some who deem him not / Or will not deem him, wholly proven King," Gareth replies:

Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd
The idolaters, and made the people free?
Who should be King save him who makes us free?

(11. 133-136)

Through this faith in the king, who to him represents perfect order, he achieves liberation and victory as a knight of the Round Table.

Geraint loves Enid tenderly, but he is disturbed when he hears a rumor touching the queen. He is afraid,

lest his gentle wife,
Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd or should suffer any taint
In nature.

(11. 29-32)

This is the earliest mention of Guinevere's defection. The first effect of Guinevere's sin takes the form of a deception that Geraint practises in order to leave Camelot. Following this, he attributes a vague infidelity to his faithful wife also, and finally subjects her to fantastic trials.

The order of the Round Table begins to show dissolution from now on. Geraint's problem is want of faith in his wife, and he resorts to duplicity. Guinevere's sin is also covert, and by its very necessity to be hidden from the deceived king, spreads its poison through the entire Order that Arthur has

33Ibid., 333-357.
established. Since Arthur is constantly absent from Camelot, there is no disharmony between him and his queen until the very end. The precarious equilibrium is set off by the marital disharmony in Geraint’s life. But Enid is pure. When Earl Dorm taunts Enid, he indirectly opens Geraint’s eyes to his wife’s goodness. Earl Dorm is the counterpart of Modred in this respect. In a later Idyll Modred opens Arthur’s eyes to Guinevere’s infidelity.

Geraint is taken prisoner by Earl Dorm, and while he lies unconscious, Dorm “smote Enid on the cheeks.” Enid’s cry of utter helplessness fires Geraint to action, and her faith enables Geraint to be reunited to his wife and to re-establish balance in his life. In his wife are united “Beauty,” “Truth,” and “Goodness”; it is this order that enables Geraint to regain his lost happiness.

While Geraint is recovering from his wounds, Arthur goes forth and casts his eyes on those who are to “guard the justice of the King,” and as

Men weed the White Horse on the Berkshire hills,
To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
He rooted out the slothful officer. . . .
(11. 935-937)

But Arthur is strangely ignorant of his wife's infidelity. Geraint and Enid leave Camelot and thereby preserve their dear-bought happiness. And in Camelot seemingly “all was well,” Tennyson says.

In the next Idyll, “Balin and Balan,” the defection of the
queen leads to fratricide. Balin "the savage" is subjected to "dark moods." Balan cautions him when he is on his way to fight for Arthur:

Let not thy moods prevail when I am gone
Who used to lay them! hold them outer friends,
Who leap at thee to tear thee; shake them aside,
Dreams ruling when wit sleeps!

(11. 137-140)

Left alone at Camelot, Balin strives hard to cultivate courtesy, and attempts to emulate Lancelot as the model knight. Further, he believes that it is Lancelot's devotion to the queen (in a chivalric sense, of course) that preserves his knightly virtues and he wears Guinevere's favour to bring him honor.

Balin's problem is very psychic and personal. Therefore, when he innocently comes upon a tryst between Lancelot and Guinevere, he is thoroughly confused;

Nor stay'd to crave permission of the King,
But mad for strange adventure, dash'd away.

His dark mood turns into pure madness; his utter imbalance of Balin is presented through animal imagery. Thus, he roams through the forest:

Now with slack rein and careless of himself,
Now with dug spur and raving at himself,
Now with droop't brow down the long glades he rode;
So mark'd not on his right a cavern-chasm
Yawn over darkness, . . .

. . . and others from the floor,
Tusklike, arising, made that mouth of night
Whereout the demon issued up from hell.

(11. 304-311)

34Ibid., 357-366.
Later, in his restlessness, he hangs the "favor" on a tree and moans, "my violence, my violence." In this distraught condition he cannot hear the music of Camelot.

The wily Vivien comes upon him now and convinces him of Guinevere's sin. This immediately recalls the love-tryst of the queen. Balin whispers, "It is true." The reaction that follows is the result of his complete disorder; all the beast in him now leaps forth. Balan hears his yell and mistakes it for the cry of a wild animal; the brothers come to grips, unaware of their identity, and kill each other.

"Merlin and Vivien" is a study in contrast to "Balin and Balan." If it is the beast in man that leads to destruction in the one, it is the exercise of too much reason that causes destruction in the other. In both, Vivien is the ultimate cause of the final disintegration. But the primary cause remains the same: Guinevere. From Mark's hall, where the rumour about Guinevere had reached, Vivien comes and asks succour of the queen. In Camelot she bides her hour like a snake. Vivien represents the lowest level in Tennyson's moral order.

When Vivien discovers that she is simply scorned for her designs on the king, she seeks out Merlin and aims all her wily art at him.

... whom at first
She play'd about with slight and sprightly talk,

And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd points
Of slander, glancing here and grazing there... (ll. 168-171)

And "so the seasons went." What becomes obvious here is that
the Sage is inexperienced in the arts of a "wily woman"; he
has communed too long with the "starry heavens," and has re-
stricted himself solely to intellectual pursuits. Through pure
reason he knows

the range of all their arts,
[And] Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls, (ll. 165-166)

but he is sadly lacking in worldly experiences. Therefore he
has even confided in Vivien the fact that he knows of a charm
that can strip a man of all his powers. Vivien fiercely desires
this knowledge and attempts to wrest it from him.

She succeeds in her tenuous hold on the Sage simply because
Merlin permits her to accompany him into the woods. His final
defeat is, therefore, already anticipated; and when it comes,
the reader agrees with Vivien that he has acted as a "fool."
Tragedy is entirely out of the question here.

With Merlin's downfall the Round Table hastens toward its
final dissolution. The story of Elaine is based on a re-render-
ing of the earlier "The Lady of Shalott." The present Idyll is
named "Lancelot and Elaine."36 Elaine, like the Lady of Shalott,
also lives in fantasy. But when Lancelot leaves for Camelot,
Elaine's life of fantasy finds relief in death. Guinevere is

36Ibid., 360-399.
only indirectly the cause of her death.

Tennyson's opinion on asceticism has been pronounced earlier in "St. Simeon Stylites." Arthur's condemnation of the Grail quest recalls "St. Simeon Stylites." In his undivided sensibility King Arthur perceives the quest to be "self-deluding lunacy" for all except a Galahad or a Percivale's sister. But the knights are as powerless to resist the spiritual force as Arthur is to stem the tide of utter annihilation that faces his Order. The knights of the Round Table have permitted themselves to be morally and psychically influenced by the general disorder, and their involvement in the spiritual quest is merely their attempt to find release from the burden of their private sins. According to a holy man:

... When King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's heart became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!

(11. 89-94)

When the Grail does come, only Sir Percivale's sister and Galahad are able to see the vision clearly. The entire Round Table could have seen it, but sin has polluted their vision. Therefore, to all except the two privileged ones it turns out to be a "wandering fire" that simply hastens them toward their dissolution. Guinevere's comments upon the quest is significant: "This madness has come on us for our sins." Arthur, for his part, sums up the final results in terms of his earlier speech and, thus, gives a unity to his actions:
And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires;
Lost in the quagmire—lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board,

My greatest hardly will believe he saw.
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And, leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.

(11. 884-895)

This one is Lancelot. The disorder caused by his adultery takes
the form of sporadic madness in him. There is, however, strange
dignity in his acceptance of the private burden of his sin.

Percivale’s recital of his experience convinces us that the
whole poem is a witness to the complete disorder that has
descended upon Camelot. The wandering fires of his visions turn
to "dust and ashes." The wasteland image is consistently main-
tained. Thus the chapel is an "empty chapel"; and as the knights
return to Camelot, they and their horses stumble over "heaps of
ruin." At this moment Percivale is unable to answer Sir Pelless’s
question: "Have any of our Round Table kept their vows?" In
short, Camelot has turned into a corrupt and decadent society.

Arthur makes one more effort to rebuild the Round Table.
But the corruption is only intensified in the last Idylls. In
"Pelless and Ettarre" it takes the form of a betrayal of honor. 37
Pelless loves Ettarre, who however, is not worthy of his devotion.
This noble knight entrusts Gawain with pleading for him with

37 Ibid., 413-422.
But when Pelleas perceives Ettarre and Gawain sleeping together, he becomes indignant. Frustrated, he allows the animal in him momentarily to master him:

Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs, and clench'd His hands, and madden'd with himself and moan'd. . . .

(11. 450-451)

Ettarre wakes up to the falseness of Gawain and the honor of Pelleas only too late.

Pelleas's disenchantment turns out to be the climactic point in the story of Guinevere and Lancelot. Pelleas is aware that the falsity of the queen is primarily responsible for the disorder in Camelot. He cries:

I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame, And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.

(11. 556-558)

In his encounter with Lancelot, Pelleas is overthrown. But to the queen, as also to Lancelot and Modred, it is clear that the "time is hard at hand" for the final reckoning.

The corruption that we have studied so far reaches its dramatic point in the last five Idylls, wherein Camelot becomes "an arid land full of disloyalty, adultery and lack of faith."

According to Burchell: "Here the once radiant Knights of the Round Table are revealed as ugly and selfish and without honor—with souls as empty as those Eliot found in the hollow men or Conrad saw at the innermost station of the heart of darkness."

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38 See S. C. Burchell's article, "Tennyson's 'Allegory in the Distance,'" PMLA, LXVIII (1953), p. 423.
And in "The Last Tournament" the corruption of Camelot is brought to sharp focus. It is appropriate to have named it "The Tournament of Dead Innocence." The morning of the tournament "brake with a wet wind blowing." The rains fell and the white mist "clung to the dead earth, and the land was still" as though announcing the bitter doom. And in the ensuing conflict Lancelot loses the combat to Tristram. There is open discourtesy now. "All courtesy is dead" murmur some, and one, "The glory of our Round Table is no more."

Tristram openly declares his love for Iseult, Mark's wife. Hence he, while accepting the gems, cynically remarks to Lancelot:

O chief knight
Right arm of Arthur in the battle-field,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the world;
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine.

(11. 201-204)

Mark takes quick revenge on Tristram. Arthur, on the contrary, through ignorance prolongs the liaison of his queen. The last two Idylls, "Guinevere" and "The Passing of Arthur" are merely epilogues from the point of view of this chapter.

The Idylls of the King falls into a pattern. Arthur is an idealized ruler and is symbolic of order. To make King Arthur the "composite of the moral earnestness of Hallam and the exem-

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39 Poems, pp. 422-433.

40 Ibid., 433-450.

41 Tennyson read Edmund Spenser. He could have obtained the picture of King Arthur from Spenser. But there is no indication regarding possible influence.
plary hearthside virtues of the Prince Consort" is Tennyson's intention. The adulterous passion of the queen then turns out to be the principal agent in the dissolution of this order, and each of the Idylls portrays a single malady caused primarily by this first disorder. Finally, in "The Last Tournament" there is utter confusion and chaos. The chaos that results from human passions and lack of self-control results in the ultimate destruction of Camelot.

Whereas Arthur represents the fusion of "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good," the queen stands for uncontrolled passions. Therefore, war between sense and spirit becomes an issue. The knights and the queen cannot work out the "upward trend" or meet the king on his own grounds. Balance can exist only where the spirit and the sense participate mutually. In the final analysis, the entire poem comes down as the "biography of a wasted civilization." And this civilization of Camelot is symbolic of human civilization on the whole in that Camelot represents society.

Three types of images are used by Tennyson throughout the poem to delineate the progress of order or disorder. They are the season image, music image, and animal image. The seasons are inaugurated in the springtime marriage of King Arthur, and the arrival of Gareth when the Round Table is in its purity. During a long, hot summer intense idealisms and strong passions have spent themselves. In the "decadent October" the "Last
"Tournament" takes place. Guinevere is repentant in November when the snow and frost modify the earth. The sequence is closed with the "winter wasteland" of Arthur's defeat and passing. The seasons, thus, provide a cyclic pattern to the poem.

The image of music is evoked mostly through Merlin's description of Camelot as the "city built to music." At the foundation of the Round Table the knights raise their voices in a peal of music; they are "all one will" with their king. Gareth arrives at the gate of Camelot and is greeted with music, and Merlin explains the occurrence:

For an ye heard a music, like snow  
They are building still, seeming the city is built  
To music, therefore never built at all,  
And therefore built for ever.

Arthur requests Balin "to move with music to thine Order and the King." But back in the forest, wrestling with his "dark moods," Balin cannot hear the music of Camelot. Vivien sings a litany of hell and silences "the wholesome music of the wood." Later she boldly affirms in the presence of Merlin:

It is the little rift within the lute,  
That by and by will make the music mute,  
And ever widening slowly silence all.

Tristram has not only broken his own music but he "breakest Arthur's music too." In the final tournament, instead of music there is only chaos and confusion. The only music that Bedivere hears in the last scene comes from beyond the "deep." The black-stoiled figures lift "one voice of lament" and bear Arthur away.

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint  
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,  
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice  
Around a king returning from his wars.

We have already noted that King Arthur undertook to drive  
the beast out of Camelot. And we have also noticed that one of  
the major causes of the dissolution of Camelot is the force of  
passion. Idyll by idyll, Tennyson delineates the surrender of  
man to the passions through animal imagery. Throughout the poem,  
to quote Edward Engleberg, "the beast image appears, most often  
metaphorically, to point up the old medieval and Renaissance  
view of man divided against himself by divine strivings and a  
bestial predisposition." This leitmotif provides the entire  
poem with a certain unity and a dramatic intensity.

Whereas the seasons establish the cyclic pattern in the  
poems, the beast image "serves to picture graphically this cir-  
cular progression" from beast to man to beast. The land that  
King Arthur arrives at is a "sterile, brute-ridden wasteland."  
Even the infants there are suckled on the "breasts of wolves,"  
and they grow into "wolf-like men, / Worse than the wolves."  
Gareth's enemy has disguised himself in animal skins and has the  
appetite of wild beasts. Edyrn, one of the opponents of Geraint,  
terms himself "the sparrow-hawk." And in Earl Dorn the animal  
is more than apparent; even his men eat with "tumult in the naked  
hall / Feeding like horses when you hear them feed." Engleberg

43Edward Engleberg, "The Beast Imagery in Tennyson's Idylls  
of the King," FLH, XXII (1955), 287.
remarks that "what saves Geraint aside from Enid's loyalty is his ultimate understanding of these warning signs from fallen humanity." 44

Balin was the "savage," and had often "wrought some fury" on himself. When he encounters the queen and her lover, he "dissolves, as it were into wild nature":

... Here I dwell
Savage among savage woods, here die--
Die--let the wolves' black maws ensepulchre
Their brother beast, whose anger was his lord!

In this condition, "he ground his teeth together, sprang with a yell, / Tore from the branch." Balan hears the yell: "That weird yell, / Unearthlier than all the shriek of bird or beast." When the brothers kill each other, Vivien exclaims that they are "brainless bulls / Dead for one heifer."

Vivien herself is the snake woman, the Lamia of Keats. She uses animal images in her talk and hunts Merlin down. At his feet she sits "creeping," "wily," and "curling." And she "clung like a snake" to the Seer and strangles her victim "in the image of the serpent." She is, as Engleberg says, "Death itself in the image of the snake," and thus she stands,

Stiff as a viper frozen; loathsome sight,
How from the rosy lips of life and love
Flash'd the bare-grinning skeleton of death!

In "The Holy Grail" Percival describes the halls of Merlin:

And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall;

44Ibid., 289.
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings.

Galahad alone reaches the fourth level of this Platonic ladder.

When the knights come back to Camelot, the city is a wasteland again and there are

borneless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
Raw that they fell from.

With the Idyll of "The Holy Grail," we see the devolution of man.

In "Pelless and Ettarre," Pelless in "utter shame" like a "hound beaten" crawls through the court. He identifies himself with the beast and cries:

Let the fierce east scream thro' your eyelet-holes,
And whirl the dust of harlots round and round
In dung and nettles! hiss, snake--I saw him there--
Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell!

Fool, beast--he, she, or I? myself most fool;
Beast too, as lacking human wit.

At this point even Arthur is haunted by the fear that his kingdom might "reel back into the beast." And Dagonet the fool, with the persistence of King Lear's Fool, calls the King the "king of fools" for hoping that he could raise "men from beasts." In "The Last Tournament" his knights do behave like a "pack of wolves." And Iseult is afraid that Tristram has grown into a "wild beast" himself.

Later on, even Guinevere turns into a "beaten animal" "who grovel'd with her face against the floor." In this case "Beauty" is represented as having disintegrated into its ugliest aspect.
The idea of the queen as a "grovelling beast" may shock the modern reader as being very Victorian and priggish. But "Beauty" when detached from "Good" was ugly to Tennyson as early as the "Palace of Art."

Finally, Modred as the Fox has waited "couchant with his eyes upon the throne / Ready to spring." And he succeeds in bringing the fair city to its final stages of disintegration. Arthur is sufficiently motivated when he cries out: "And all my realm / Reels back into the beast, and is no more." King Arthur's purpose to elevate man from the level of the beast is defeated. Man has ignored the ideal which consists in fusing "self-reverence, self-knowledge and self-control."

The poet is concerned with the issue of balance all his life until the very end. In "The Revenge" (1876)45 and "The Voyage of Maeldune" (1879)46 we have tragic situations, which are the result merely of the violation of order. "The Ring" (1889) presents a strange story in which are described the consequences of violating a promise.47 The ring is symbolic of order and balance,

\[
\text{And if the ring were stolen from the maid,} \\
\text{The theft were death or madness to the thief.} \\
\text{(l. 176-177)}
\]

It brings madness and death to Muriel because she accepts the

45 Poems, op. 458-461.
46 Ibid., 479-483.
47 Ibid., 534-542.
ring without fulfilling the main requirement for accepting it, namely love.

In "Romney's Remorse" (1889), Romney violently denounces his early devotion to art or "Beauty" in Tennyson's private language.

This Art, that harlot-like
Seduced me from you, leaves me harlot-like
Who loves her still, and whimper, impotent
To win her back before I die—and then—
Then, in the loud world's bastard judgment-day,
One truth will damn me with the mindless mob,
Who feel no touch of my temptation,
the temptation to win fame as an artist. Romney's wife is symbolic of balance in this poem, and his return to her is significant.

I have stumbled back again
Into the common day, the sounder self.
God stay me there, if only for your sake,
The truest, kindliest, noble-hearted wife
That ever wore a Christian marriage-ring.

Another poem to be analyzed in this chapter is "Demeter and Persephone," which was also published in 1889. In this poem Tennyson returns to myth for the last time. The story is that the Earth-Goddess is separated from her child, Persephone.

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48 Ibid., 552-554.
49 Ibid., 528-530.
50 See Memoir, IV, 136, for Tennyson's remark that he would write this poem but that he would put it into a new frame. In the original story Persephone was raped by a god of the underworld. In Tennyson's poem the modern element is introduced when he makes use of the poem to establish his theory of balance.
Demeter is unhappy and suspends fertility in Nature; the earth dries up as a result of this unbalance. The gods are disturbed by the disorder on earth and allow Persephone to return to her mother for three of the four seasons each year. Demeter is not entirely satisfied with this situation, but she permits the earth to be fertile again.

The symbol here operates on two levels. When the goddess is searching for Persephone there is social unbalance. Nature becomes mad and irrational. There also is, on the other hand, a personal level of meaning here. It consists in the separation of a mother from her child. In both cases, the result is disorder. Persephone is the symbol of order; she bridges the gap between the phenomenal world and the world of the shadows.

The Bright one in the highest
Is brother of the Dark one in the lowest,
And Bright and Dark have sworn that I, the child
Of thee, the great Earth-Mother, thee, the power
That lifts her buried life from gloom to bloom,
Should be for ever and for evermore
The Bride of Darkness.

According to Johnson, the poem "becomes a symbolic representation of Tennyson's entire poetic career."\(^{51}\) The present writer would extend the symbol to a fusion of "Earth," "The hateful fires of torment," and the "silent field of Asphodel."

The theme of balance was an important theme in Tennyson from 1833 onwards. It grew out of an awareness that art alone cannot satisfy a human being. The struggle for balance in the

\(^{51}\)Johnson, p. 66.
poet's life was precipitated by the death of Arthur Hallam and by the important and revolutionary scientific discoveries of his age. These discoveries tended to reevaluate the familiar concept of order. The observations of Charles Lyell reduced the "whole intellectual and moral life of the human race" into insignificance. Man found himself "violently dethroned from his position at the center of the Universe and relegated to an obscure position in one of its least important elements."52 The Renaissance theory of anthropocentric order was forced to give way to the new science. Finally, Darwin's theory cast a further shadow over the pessimism of the age. This last theory sees men as the result of evolution; and man might disappear in the course of future evolution. Tennyson himself, in the wake of the Darwinian thesis, has committed his theory to rest in this: The world is part of an infinite plan, incomplete because it is a part. Nature "red in tooth and claw" representative of the incomplete segment, is the cause of the imbalance.

In spite of the conflict within himself and in Nature, Tennyson believed in an order of perfection, what he considered reality. It was his effort to make clear the need to establish order in man, so that his disjointed condition on earth might be endured. Man also needs the fusion of "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good" in order to conform to the total order that exists in what he has already termed "the infinite plan." "Be ye perfect

52 Charles Tennyson, p. 249.
"as your Father in heaven is perfect" is the central concept of his theory. And the entire concept is based, as we shall see in Chapter VIII, on "I have felt" (In Memoriam, CXYIV). The order is in existence only on the basis of his "feeling." Science and knowledge refute any order at all. But he "feels" that there is perfect order, and he "feels" that man should obtain the equilibrium that is a requirement in order to observe the ultimate order in creation. 53

Throughout his poetry Tennyson displayed his major concern over such issues as a complete participation in life, a working out of the beast, a search for the ultimate reality. These issues are closely related to and based upon the three transcendentals, "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good," which, in their turn, depend upon "self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control."

53 See Charles Tennyson, pp. 249-251, for his interpretation of Tennyson's eclectic faith, what we would call his "objective foundations."
CHAPTER VII

APPEARANCE AND REALITY

Underlying a great body of Tennyson's poetry is a serious concern over the problem of "appearance and reality." Tennyson is tormented by the question of the nature of appearance. This is the eternal question of *maya* that has come down to us since the days of *The Upanishads* and *The Bhagavad Gita* of Hindu philosophy. To the Hindu philosophers the entire world is *maya*, which literally means "illusion." The world is simply a magic play staged by the Universal Soul for itself.

Tennyson is not able to dismiss the question so conveniently. To him the appearances of reality are the illusion. But the illusion is also what he considers "The double seeming of the single world" in "The Ancient Sage." Most of his poems reveal this "double seeming" to the reader but not to the protagonist. The poems which have this theme rest on the inability of the protagonist to see this "double seeming of the single world."

The problem of the relation between appearance and reality has been a part of Western thought since the time of Plato. The present writer does not maintain that Plato obtained the inspiration for his basic philosophy of "the illusion of the senses" directly from Indian thought. But that a partial similarity
between Platonic thought and Hindu thought is a teasing possibility has occurred to some Western writers as well. One historian has boldly indicated that in Book VII of the Republic of Plato "the myth of the Cave" embodies the concept of maya. Plato's possible borrowing is not far-fetched when we recall that in the sixth century B.C. King Darius (548-485 B.C.) did bring Greece and India into contact with each other.

Tennyson read Plato, Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, Schlegel, Fichte, Hegel, and Ferrier. But, as Hallam Tennyson stated, "the philosophers of the East [also] had a great fascination for my father, and he felt that the Western religion might learn from them spiritually. He was sure too that Western civilization had

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1See David G. Ritchie, Darwin and Hegel (New York, 1893), pp. 109-110. Ritchie holds that "Plato's visions of another world have fixed themselves indelibly on the mind of the Western man," but the Western man hardly knows, "without the most careful examination, how many of those beliefs that are often spoken of as if they were peculiar to Christianity, are due directly or indirectly to Platonic influence. Thus, even if it should be the case that the mythical element in Plato is [as Hegel holds] quite unessential to his philosophy, or [as Teichmüller holds] not believed in at all by Plato himself, this mythical element would still deserve the attention of all students of human thought, both as taking up previous Pythagorean, Orphic, probably Egyptian and perhaps Indian ideas, and as influencing all the Hellenic and Roman world. . . ."


3The influence of Greece in India is seen in the Gandara art which is extant today. If Indian art is influenced to the extent that it has been, it is possible that Greece was influenced by Indian thinking.
even in his time developed Eastern thought and morality; but what direction the development would ultimately take, it was impossible to predict. The poet could have been influenced by any one of the Western philosophers already mentioned. These Western thinkers are deeply conscious of the conflict between the appearances of reality and reality itself. Tennyson is, however, more acutely aware of the conflict between the two; at one point he even reduces all appearances of reality to illusion, and to illusion only. He had trance-like experiences all his life. The present writer does not find any relationship between these experiences and the trances of Christian saints. Tennyson's experience verges on the self-hypnotic and is somewhat akin to the trance-like experience of the Hindu mystics. Considering these trance states that the poet was subject to all his life, and the severe realization on his part that matter is simply illusion, the present writer, with her Eastern background, may be more aware than others of a pattern in Tennyson's poetry which is more Eastern than Western. Camelot in The Idylls of the King, for instance, is and is not. It turns out to be a magic play as in Hindu philosophy. It is precisely this philosophic insight which the poet experiences that all matter is illusion, which

4 Memoir, IV, 168.

5 Tennyson commented about them to Tyndall: "By God Almighty, there is no delusion in the matter! It is no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of transcendent wonder, associated with absolute clearness of mind." See the Memoir, IV, 276-277.
first raised the question in the present writer's mind, that Tennyson might be approaching the question of the appearances of reality and reality itself from a slightly different viewpoint from that of most Western thinkers.

Many of the protagonists in Tennyson's poetry accept the appearance for the reality itself. They take the shadow for the substance. (I may call the shadow the fair illusion in this chapter from time to time.) This is a compromise demanded by the need in life of a "seeming happiness." But the poet himself is aware of the conflict between reality and appearance. He is constantly sifting the shadow in order to obtain the substance or to feel the great Atman behind maya.

The works which have "appearance and reality" as their major theme are: The Devil and the Lady, "Will Water proof's Lyrical Monologue," In Memoriam, "The Princess," "The Higher Pantheism," "Flower in the Crannied Wall," "De Profundis," "The Sisters," The Idylls of the King, "The Ancient Sage," "God and the Universe," and the Hymn added to "Akbar's Dream." Even the terminology in some of these poems is similar to that of The Upanishads and the Gita.

In the early poems of Alfred Tennyson, specifically, there is maintained a delicate balance between appearance and reality (appearance is what is apparent to us, and reality is the eternal truth behind creation). As the poet grew older, however, he became concerned with the "double seeming of the single world," or he yearned for the substance. In his old age he stated that
The only thing that he cared for was the sight of God.\(^6\) This union was partially achieved by him in life through his trance experiences, for example, in the mystic union with Arthur Hallam's spirit in *In Memoriam*.

Tennyson's private awareness was attuned to perceive the "double seeming."\(^7\) He was the Somerset mystic, who in his roamings through the world and marsh came to associate himself more with the sphere of substance than we in our sublunary way of life. While discussing the Holy Grail he declared: "I have expressed there my strong feeling as to the Reality of the Unseen." And quoting these lines from the poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In moments when he feels he cannot die,} \\
\text{And knows himself no vision to himself,} \\
\text{Nor the High God a vision,}
\end{align*}
\]

Hallam Tennyson has offered the interpretation as given by the poet.

Yes, it is true; there are moments when the flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the Spiritual the only real and true. Depend upon it, the Spiritual is the real: it belongs to one more than the hand and the foot. You may tell me that my hand and my foot are only symbols of my existence, I could believe you; but, you never, never can convince me that the I is not an eternal Reality, and that the Spiritual is not

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\(^6\) Sir James Knowles in "Tennyson and Aldworth," *Friends*, p. 252, states that when he was asked, what his deepest desire of all was, he said, "A clearer vision of God."

\(^7\) Montagu Butler in "Recollections of Tennyson," *Friends*, p. 210, remarks that Tennyson would often talk of the unreality of the world as known to the senses.
the only true and real part of me. 8

In this passage the poet first tends to reject the "hand and feet" as being part of the substance to which all flesh belong "misfortunately." But later he says that the I is the eternal "Reality," the I of which the spiritual is the only true and real part. Tennyson's personal awareness of reality is what poses the problem of the "double seeming" which the Ancient Sages present as being a serious obstacle in evaluating appearance and reality.

In all the early poems dealing with the theme of escape, the deeper concern is that of equating what seems to exist with what does not, and what does not seem to exist with what exists. Escape provides the relief, so that the whole vexing question of becoming can be boldly repudiated. Life poses a problem only because of the private intuition which questions the validity of appearance. With maturity Tennyson came to accept the responsibility of facing the clash between appearance and reality, or the real and the unreal. He learned to live with his private intuition and still participate in the drama of life.

The conflict deepens with the passing of years. Finally, in The Idylls of the King the crisis is reached; here appearance and reality seldom coincide; appearance is, in fact, at two different levels. From this viewpoint the characters of the Round Table lead a kind of double life. Charles Tennyson has mentioned that Tennyson toyed with the idea of naming the Idylls

8Memoir, III, 116.
The True and the False. It is in this "double seeming" of life in Camelot that every reader finds his greatest satisfaction, because it is in disjunction that the deepest theme of the poem rests.

In "The Lady of Shalott," the individual soul is brought into the "magic play" under a spell. In that strange setting, which is Platonic, she is able to cultivate her belief that appearance is the "fair illusion." Her belief provides the essential climate for the preservation in this poem of art. But what seems to exist is only the shadow of reality ("appearance" in Tennyson's language) as reflected in the mirror. As the present writer has noted in Chapter II, the Lady of Shalott's existence is at two removes. Lancelot forces reality into the mirror, and the Lady accepts the challenge and questions the validity of appearance as she knows it in Shalott. She becomes aware of the disparity that exists between the shadow that is reflected in the mirror and the life at Camelot. At that moment the foundations of appearance at Shalott crumble. The clash between appearance and reality leads to tragedy. (Lancelot as the symbol of reality forces tragedy upon the Lady of Shalott,

9Charles Tennyson, p. 316.

while he brings fantasy and then death to the Lily Maid of Astolat.

But in "The Lotos-Eaters" there is no tragedy as such. The lotos-eating casts a half-mellow, half-suffused light over appearance. Life in the lotos-land is also at two removes. The Lotos-eaters strike a beautiful pose against the background. They accept the "seeming" peacefulness as the "fair illusion" and as superior to the reality of toil and misery; and they are satisfied to spend their lives in this muted state of existence, where appearance is so much more attractive than reality. These people are aware that they are substituting the shadow of the lotos-land for the reality of life. (They have flashes of reality.) Nevertheless, they give up the struggle of life to embrace the reality of a struggle-free existence which is non-existent.

Will Waterproof in "Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue,"11 under the influence of wine, looks "at all things as they are / But thro' a kind of glory." That glory is lent by the wine. Later, however, the truth seems through his inebriated brain:

The truth, that flies the flowing can,
Will haunt the vacant cup;
And others' follies teach us not,
Nor much their wisdom teaches;
And most, of sterling worth, is what
Our own experience preaches.
(11. 171-176)

But he is chagrined at this intrusion of reality with its sour note. And hence he demands:

11 Poems, pp. 102-105.
Ah, let the rusty theme alone!

We know not what we know.

But for my pleasant hour, 't is gone;

'T is gone, and let it go.

(11. 177-180)

Already here is foreshadowed the double life of Camelot. Will Waterproof tries to escape the truth that "we know not what we know."

In "Tithonus" the problem is briefly the conflict between appearance and reality. Tithonus had accepted the "fair illusion" as being permanent, without submitting himself to a close analysis of the very nature of illusion. Illusion in its very nature of "illusionness" can only be temporary. The tragedy of Tithonus is necessarily implied in an attempt to extend the illusion of life or the illusion of reality. His inability to accept life is, undoubtedly, at the root of his problem.

II

After glancing briefly at poems in which escape provides the relief whenever the "fair illusion" cannot be maintained, we now deal with poems which are deliberate attempts to evaluate the problem of appearance and reality and of "fair illusion."

An early play, The Devil and the Lady,12 was written when the poet was fourteen or fifteen. The play presents speculation in the vein of Bishop Berkeley and also foreshadows much of the

thought familiar in the metaphysical poems of his last years. 13

0 suns and spheres and stars and belts and systems,
Are ye or are ye not?
Are ye realities or semblances
Of that which men call real?
Are ye true substance? are ye anything
Except delusive shows and physical points
Endow'd with some repulsive potency?
Could the Omnipotent fill all space, if ye
Or the least atom in ye or the least
Division of that atom (if least can dwell
In infinitesimal divisibility) should be impenetrable?
I have some doubt if ye exist when none
Are by to view ye; if your Being alone
Be in the mind and the intelligence
Of the created? should some great decree
Annihilate the sentient principle
Would ye or would ye not be non-existent?

(II, 41-58) 14

The passage as spoken by the Devil reflects the poet's conviction
that "matter is mere illusion and spirit the only true reality." 15

Magus, the necromancer, accepts for the reality the deceitfully
fair appearance of his wife. Charles Tennyson adds that it is
remarkable that "he [Tennyson] seems already to be realizing

13 See Charles Tennyson, p. 41.

14 Here is clearly embodied the illusion of the senses of
Plato. But it is also the basic Hindu idea that "all is maya,
maya only."

15 See the Memoir, IV, 215, for Tennyson's comment: "Matter
is of greater mystery than mind. What such a thing as matter is
apart from Spirit I have never been able to conceive. Spirit
seems to me to be the reality of the world." This comment was
made in 1892 and goes to prove that he has been consistent in his
approach to the problem of appearance and reality. See also
Hindu Philosophy: The Bhagavad Gita, trans. with notes by John
Davies (London, 1890), p. 97, for this passage: "But above this
visible nature there exists another unseen and eternal, which,
when all created things perish, does not perish... This is
called the Unmanifested, the Imperishable..."
that only in these two ideas can man, 'the lone ephemeris of one small hour,' find a countercharm to the terrible conviction, forced on him by recent discoveries in geology and astronomy, of the insignificance of humanity in the face of the immeasurable forces of Nature."\(^{16}\)

In *In Memoriam* the conviction that matter is mere illusion temporarily founders, and the poet is forced to rebuild his theory of the true reality. This long poem is an attempt on the poet's part to rebuild faith on true reality. Arthur Hallam's death is more shocking because the poet had accepted the state of friendship for a permanent and fair illusion.

At the outset the poet lacks faith to accept the impermanence of appearance. He gropes for some tangible answer to his problem. The vision of the universe which he conjures up only gives rise to a vague fear that Nature cannot satisfy his doubts:

'\textit{The stars},' she whispers, 'blindly run; 
A web is woven across the sky; 
From out waste places comes a cry, 
And murmurs from the dying sun;

'And all the phantom, Nature, stands-- 
With all the music in her tone, 
A hollow echo of my own,-- 
A hollow form with empty hands.'

(III)

(For had not astronomers startled the universe with the observation that the sun was losing its heat?) Nature, therefore, cannot solve his vague fears. "All the music" of Nature is but

\(^{16}\textit{Charles Tennyson, p. 43}.$
a "hollow echo" of his own fears. At this point, he welcomes sleep to escape from his misgivings. He seeks to escape his burden through sleep and regression.

Once Arthur Hallam's remains are brought to England and laid on English soil, the poet acquires the courage to take stock of his environment. Tennyson recalls the four years when they had been together and had enjoyed the "fair illusion." At the same time, now he can evaluate the past with a tolerable objectivity. The happiness that they believed to have existed was not perfect even though the "fair illusion" was maintained:

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

Is it, he asks,

that the past will always win
A glory from its being far,
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not when we moved therein?

(XXIV)

The entire problem of appearance is raised in this question. Is experience based on appearance valid? At the same time, is not the appearance made beautiful through the love they shared? Their love makes everything perfect. Therefore he wants to believe in the future.

If some voice "should murmur" from the narrow house:

The cheeks drop in, the body bows;
Man dies, nor is there hope in dust;

(XXXV)

he would conclude that in spite of the impermanence and waste in
Nature, death cannot be the end of appearance; death is the turning point toward reality. Love is the basis of reality. If death, on the other hand, were seen from the outset as total extinction, love would never have been, or at least would have existed only in its lowest form of physical desire.

Slowly, on the basis of this new faith born of love, the poet gathers strength in the belief that Hallam dead is more real than Hallam living. We are close to the ideal during infancy. Appearance and reality do not clash in that premature state of existence. But the child grows and discovers:

I am not what I see.
And other than the things I touch.

(XLV)

The disillusionment grows until he is faced with the realization that behind our fair illusion is the picture of a "thousand types" which have vanished. "Are God and Nature then at strife," or are appearance and reality at odds with each other?

The strife, in his own mind, continues until he obtains a reconciliation between the two forces. Only through a mystical fusion is this reconciliation achieved. Life and death are merged in a mystic experience. From this experience Tennyson draws the courage to face the conflict of appearance and reality, substance and shadow, truth and fiction.

Hallam apprehended the reality because he had wisdom, the highest attribute of a man of balance. Through wisdom man apprehends reality.

For she [knowledge] is earthly of the mind,
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
(CXIV)

Tennyson seems to acquire "wisdom" after his mystical experiences.

From another viewpoint, we realize that the poet is occupied with sifting the shadow to reach the substance. The "weird seizures" in The Princess, for instance, permit the prince to distinguish between the shadow and substance. In presenting the poem from the added point of view of the prince, who has strange experiences of a shadowy nature, the poem acquires a third dimension.

The prince had inherited a very curious family heritage:

Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire burnt
Because he cast no shadow, had foretold,
Dying, that none of all our blood should know
The shadow from the substance, and that one
Should come to fight with shadows and to fall;

And, truly, waking dreams were, more or less,
An old and strange affection of the house.

(I, 11. 6-13)

The old sorcerer had been killed (for not casting the shadow over appearance so that it would be the fair illusion). The prince has inherited the "weird seizures" as a result. But curiously enough, they have an exactly opposite effect upon the prince in this poem. It is not, as Buckley claims, that the "weird seizures" prevent the prince from knowing "the shadow from the substance"; on the contrary, they reveal to him just that, the substance behind the shadow. Cyril, one of his friends, is

17 Poems, pp. 115-162.
18 Buckley, p. 100.
proud that he can distinguish the substance from the shadow:

I
Flatter myself that always everywhere
I know the substance when I see it. Well,
Are castles shadows? Three of them? Is she
The sweet proprietress a shadow?
(II, 11. 389-393)

The prince also sees the substance but only with the help of
the "seizures."

Thus, when the "weird seizures" come upon him, he would
feel himself "the shadow of a dream"; appearance is actually
projected at two removes, through the shadow of the dream which
is in essence unreal. In this poem, since the life of the prince
is not based on the "fair illusion" on account of the shadow
cast by his "seizures," he is able to penetrate beyond the
appearance to reality.

In order to gain entrance into the academy, the prince and
his companions have disguised themselves. So what the princess
believes to exist does not exist, but she is unable to see
through the veil of disguise as she, in her role as the "queen
of farce," lacks the ability to penetrate into the core of
reality which exists beyond the veil of appearances. In effect,
to the prince the "weird seizures" serve the function of presen-
ting the truth behind the artificial. Thus, observing Princess
Ida "among her maidens, higher by the head," a "self-appointed
goddess," proud as the soul in "The Palace of Art," the prince
suffers one of his "familiar distortions."

I drew near;
I gazed. On a sudden my strange seizure came
Upon me, the weird vision of our house
The Princess Ida seem'd a hollow show,
Her gay-furr'd cats a painted fantasy,
Her college and her maidens empty masks,
And I myself the shadow of a dream,
For all things were and were not.

(III, 11. 166-173)

The distortion stresses or brings to focus the essential aspect of the hollowness of the immediate situation. Through a new perspective the prince obtains a vision of what really exists behind the artificial academy which the princess has so lovingly created. Buckley's theory is that "far from being an unnecessary intrusion in the medley, the 'weird seizures' thus reinforce its deepest theme, the clash between shadow and substance, illusion and truth, the ultimate relation of art and life." They further add poignancy to the absurd situation which the princess has evoked through the resolve to defeat the law of nature.

Later, when the disguise of the prince and his two friends is discovered, the princess summons Amazonian women to thrust the gentlemen out of her sacred portals. The situation acquires its proper perspective through another "weird seizure." In this, according to the prince:

I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts;
The Princess with her monstrous woman-guard,
The jest and earnest working side by side,
The cataract and the tumult and the kings Were shadows; and the long fantastic night With all its doings had and had not been,
And all things were and were not.

(IV, 11. 539-545)

19 Ibid., 101.
The prince, certainly, had been among "his shadows" as long as he was cursed with the "weird seizures." In his capacity to suffer a distortion in the familiar appearance, he had been unable to exert his manhood. Manhood was, on the contrary, negated. In the war that follows to break or hold his betrothal to Ida, appearance and reality will find their final synthesis in order to create a true illusion. But during that war:

... like a flash the weird affection came.
King, camp, and college turn'd to hollow shows;
I seem'd to move in old memorial tilts,
And doing battle with forgotten ghosts,
To dream myself the shadow of a dream... 

(V, li. 466-470)

He fights through the whole battle as though in a dream. In the end:

... the blade glanced,
I did but shear a feather, and dream and truth
Flow'd from me; darkness closed me, and I fell.

(V, li. 529-531)

The prince resolves both dream and substance in his fall.

In the final analysis, the "weird seizures" turn out to be dependent upon the perversity of the princess for their continuation. As soon as she discards her perverse choice and embraces the reality as embodied in life, the "weird seizures" of the prince vanish. Through them, however, the futilities of the prince are liberated; and indirectly the futilities of the princess also are solved.

Regarding the songs in The Princess, Arthur Sidgwick comments that these present an "illuminating and pointed contrast between the true and deep and permanent realities of human experience--
life, death, love, joy, and sorrow—each of which is touched in
turn in these exquisite little pictures, and on the other hand
the fantastic unreality in the poet's view of the Princess's
ideals and experiment." The poems are, thus, illustrative of
the thesis of appearance versus reality.

III

As has already been noted, Tennyson would often talk of
the "unreality of the world as known to the senses." He also
expressed his conviction that the "material universe, which
often seems so menacing and purposeless, may be the vision of
God, if not actually a part of God Himself." According to
Knowles, Tennyson's desire to obtain "a clearer vision of God"
"exactly expressed the continued strivings of his spirit for
more light" upon every possible question. This is clearly
apparent in his poems. At any rate, Tennyson joined in the found­
ding of the Metaphysical Society in 1869. He was modest about
his own metaphysical attainments, saying that although he had
"a gleam of Kant" he knew the other metaphysicians "obiter and
obscurely through the talk of others." Tennyson questions the validity of appearance in "The Higher

21 Charles Tennyson, p. 374.
22 Knowles, Friends, p. 252.
23 See Charles Tennyson, p. 381.
pantheism," which was written in 1869.24 "The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains" are the vision of Him who reigns."25 The idealistic representation of matter leads to its parallel thesis: "The vision is He, but He is not that which He seems." He is not that which He seems through the reflection in His creation. The idea that we have of God from looking around is certainly different from the reality of God Himself. Johnson comments that the poem establishes "the insubstantiality of the whole phenomenal world and the single reality of the spirit."26 A more complete analysis of the paradox is presented by Stopford A. Brooke:

There is something, he thought, below the appearance of Nature, but what it is we can only guess; and it may be something absolutely different from what we perceive the universe to be, or what we imagine to underlie our perception of it. He believes that the life of God is there, but what we see and feel in Nature tells us nothing true about that life. We only see that distorted image of it which is mirrored by our imperfection.27

"Flower in the Crannied Wall," written at the same time as "The Higher Pantheism,"28 is another attempt to penetrate the "supersensuous, unattainable secret" hidden below phenomena.

24 Poems, pp. 273-274.

25 See Charles Tennyson, pp. 373-374, for his explanation that in "The Higher Pantheism" Tennyson explores the idea at which he had hinted in In Memoriam.

26 Buckley, p. 170.

27 Brooke, p. 478.

28 Poems, p. 274.
He asks the flower "root and all" to yield the secret of its reality; the flower in hand is the appearance, and the secret is the reality. The sun, the moon, and the stars are the vision of the whole. The flower in its turn and everything else in the universe comprise the appearance or the shadow of the truth.

That the familiar world is the shadow of a true vision is basic to the poem "De Profundis," first published in 1880. Written at the birth of his eldest son, the poem is a beautiful tribute to the "other sphere" from which man takes his being.

The poem has two greetings. In the first greeting, which starts out with:

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Where all that was to be, in all that was,
life is viewed as we see it in the world, and as we know it by physical science, as a phenomenon. It is as the materialist would view it, not indeed coarsely, but as an outcome of all the physical forces of the universe, which have ever contained in themselves the potentiality of all that was to come. The child comes "out of the deep" and sojourns here on earth until he departs "to that last deep where we and thou are still."

The second greeting has two parts, both of which are concerned with the world of "reality." The world of appearance treated of in the first greeting is discarded here. And we gaze

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29 Ibid., 483-484. See W. Ward, Friends, pp. 475-480. W. Ward is the son of Tennyson's friend, W. G. Ward. The son has reproduced here Tennyson's own commentary on this poem as given to his father. The present study is based on this explanation.
into the world of spirit. We see the new-born babe coming to us from that true world, with all the "abyssal depths of personality." The child is the "spirit, the moral being"; he is the reality which impinges on the world of appearance.

The first great deep of the spiritual world is "that true world within the world we see, / Whereof our world is but the bounding shore." And this indication, that the second greeting gives the deeper and truer view, Ward comments, is preserved in some of the "side touches of descriptions." In the first greeting, for example, the moon is spoken of as "touch'd with earth's light." In the second greeting the truer and less obvious fact is suggested. It sends the sun "down yon dark sea."

Life from the spiritual viewpoint is in part a veiling and obscuring of the true self from the external world of phenomena. The soul is half lost in the body, which is part of the phenomenal world. He addresses the soul as the "dear Spirit, half-lost / In thine own shadow and this fleshly sign." The sun and moon are but shadows, as the body of the child is itself but a shadow, shadow of the spiritual world and of God Himself. Tennyson further explains that choice of the good is to lead the spirit ever nearer to God.30

The great mystery is not matter, but "that thou art thou, /

30From this explanation it is obvious that "balance," in the sense of conditioning oneself to live an ordered life, is basic to the ultimate realization of reality as distinguished from appearance.
With power on thine own act and on the world." In other words, the two great facts which consciousness tells us unmistakably regarding the spiritual world are "the facts of personality and a responsible will." Through the symbol of "out of the deep" birth and death are presented as the "coming from and returning to the spiritual world and God Himself."

In the 1880's Tennyson was deeply concerned with the problem of appearance. In "The Sisters" (1880) most of the complications are the result of a clash between appearance and reality. It is a story of broken promise and consequent tragedy. The protagonist cries out:

My God, I would not live  
Save that I think this gross hard-seeming world  
Is our misshaping vision of the Powers  
Behind the world, that make our griefs our gains.  

(11. 223-226)

The tragedy of our lives, Tennyson believes, is our own distortion of the fair vision. This, to a large extent, is the foundation upon which Tennyson builds his faith.

The voice of the disillusioned man is heard also in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," written in 1886. "All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom disappears," (1. 253), the old man bewails. But the old man will not give way to the materialism of the age. He cannot believe that "the material world is all that exists and that the dead, with all their

32 Ibid., 517-524.
spiritual struggles and failures and victories, have gone forever."

IV

The first four Idylls were published in 1859, and the last one in 1885. But the poet published "Morte D'Arthur" as early as 1842. It becomes obvious from these dates that the poet was occupied with the entire poem over many decades. One of the major themes of the whole poem is the clash between appearance and reality. In no other poem is the validity of the "shadow" more completely negated or the "double seeming of the single world" better established than in this poem.

Life in Camelot moves on two different and conflicting levels. What seems to exist does not exist, and what does not seem to exist exists. The ideal and the apparent are constantly being mixed up, and the chief actors of the magic play staged around the Round Table by Merlin are deceived by the senses; they allow the senses to master them. Their failure consists in accepting appearance in the place of reality.

In the first place there is mystery over Arthur's birth. The "seeming" grandeur of his victory in battles is, therefore, constantly being equated with the dubiety concerning his birth. Leodogram needs the assurance that appearance is in conformity with the reality. The conflict that arises from this particular

33Quoted by Charles Tennyson, pp. 491-492.
problem is resolved only through a dream. Here we recall the explanation that is rendered at the outset, that escape through dreams or whatever other means, is one way of solving the complex issue of appearance versus reality. The dream is used here not as a means to escape, but as a clue to the reality.

At the creation of the Round Table, near King Arthur stands the Lady of the Lake. The setting is misty, shadowy:

A mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;

... for she dwells
Down in a deep--calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world--and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord. 34

By linking her to the image of Christ, the poet makes her the symbol of reality. But the Lady of the Lake is seen only shrouded. Nevertheless, this symbol provides the final fusion of the shadow with the substance, for it is only after she has retrieved the sword "Excalibur" that Arthur can pass to reality.

Gareth arrives at Camelot disguised as a kitchen "knave." 35 His first picture of Camelot is shrouded in mist and smoke and is a shifting picture.

At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below;
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.
(11. 189-193)

35 "Gareth and Lynette," Ibid., 311-332.
Those who went with Gareth were afraid and cried out. One cried out: "Here is a city of enchanters," and "let us go no further."
Another echoed him: "The King is not the King, / But only changeling out of Fairyland." And again:

Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision.

(11. 203-204)

But Gareth's purity enables him to see through the mist.

He and his men are greeted by music. And when he meets Merlin, his greeting echoes the bewilderment of his companions:

Your city moved so weirdly in the mist--
Doubt if the King be king at all, or come
From Fairyland; and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy kings and queens;
Or whether there be any city at all,
Or all a vision. . . .

(11. 241-246)

And Merlin answered that truly the city was built by fairy queens "to the music of their harps."

And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King; tho' some there be that hold
The King a shadow, and the city real.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.

(11. 259-274)

Arthur Sidgwick, one of Tennyson's friends, has commented on this passage: "Beneath the strangely beautiful surface meaning of these lines there lies the deep allegoric meaning that often what seems visionary is in truth a spiritual and eternal
To everyone else everything seems real except the king. Here we have the "double seeming of the single world." Merlin is the great deceiver, and Arthur is the idealist who represents reality.

Merlin's explanation, with its dubious significance, angers Gareth. Therefore Merlin replies:

Confusion, and illusion, and relation, elusion, and occasion, and evasion? I mock thee not but as thou mockest me, And all that see thee, for thou art not who Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art. (11. 281-285)

The implication is that he can see through the disguise of Gareth. (Later on, however, his penetration cannot fathom the artifice of Vivien.)

E. D. H. Johnson has aptly remarked that "it [Camelot] seems a kind of Palace of Art, and the poet deliberately leaves in question whether it is real or existent only in the enchanted realm of the imagination." In the events that take place in Camelot the characters assume a different appearance from each actor. Appearance and reality seldom, if ever, coincide here.

Thus, Kay, the Seneschal, cannot see through Gareth's disguise, and from this inability arises the lack of balance in him, and he subjects Gareth to a certain degree of suffering.

36 Cited by Sidgwick, Friends, p. 341.
37 Johnson, p. 44.
The blindness of Kay is taken up by Lynette, whose illusions regarding Gareth disappear only at the end of that Idyll.

The problem of Geraint in the Idyll "Geraint and Enid" is based on the confusing of appearance and reality. Geraint, in his deluded state, accepts his wife's devotedness for inconstancy. Enid the pure is an illusion. The appearance is truly ugly and against her honor. It is at the end of a long and painful process, not of disillusionment but of enlightenment, that Geraint is able ultimately to balance the shadow and substance. In his disjointed condition, the result merely of taking true for false, he distorts the fair illusion and attributes a double meaning to the innocent remark of Enid, "O me, I fear that I am no true wife"—which is in truth a statement she makes for not being brave enough to tell Geraint what the public think about him—and torments himself.

And as Geraint takes true for false, King Arthur takes false for true, and therefore, "at Camelot, seemingly all was well."

Arthur offers one commentary on the entire question of appearance and reality. Thus, at the beginning of "Geraint and Enid," he declares:

O PURBLIND race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a lifelong trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Growing, how many, until we pass and reach
That other where we see as we are seen!

(11. 1-7)

38 Poems, pp. 344-357.
It is the "feeble twilight" that is responsible for the phenomenon of the "double seeming of the single world."

Balin dies deluded in "Balin and Balan." He takes the queen for pure and faithful as her fair appearance. Further, he attempts to imitate the courtly virtues of Lancelot, assuming that Lancelot's courteousness is the result of a strong devotion to Guinevere. He concludes that

\[
\text{this worship of the Queen,} \\
\text{That honor too wherein she holds him--this,} \\
\text{This was the sunshine that hath given the man} \\
\text{A growth, a name that branches o'er the rest,} \\
\text{And struggle against all odds, and what the King} \\
\text{So prizes--overprizes--gentleness.}
\]

Therefore would he wear a token of the queen, and boldly would he ask to "bear her crown-royal upon shield." To this Guinevere answered:

\[
\text{Thou shalt put the crown to use.} \\
\text{The crown is but the shadow of the king,} \\
\text{And this a shadow's shadow, let him have it,} \\
\text{So this will help him of his violences!} \\
(11. 198-201)
\]

Balin replied that it was "no shadow, but light," "no shadow, but golden earnest of a gentler life." Everyone rejoices at this reply. If some of the knights were aware that Balin was mistaken, they did not mention it.

Unwittingly Balin comes upon a tryst between Lancelot and Guinevere and is completely shaken:

\[
\text{Queen? Subject? But I see not what I see.} \\
\text{Damsel and lover? hear not what I hear.} \\
(11. 276, 277)
\]

39Ibid., pp. 357-366.
He dashes away convinced that he did not see what he saw, nor hear what he heard. Nevertheless, for a brief moment he compares the wild life of the forest, which he left to acquire "courtly virtues," (the ironic virtues of the court of Laputa) with the life of the Round Table, and innocently yearns for the first. In the forest, close to Nature, appearance had not conflicted with reality. There was harmony between his wild nature and the wildness in Nature. In the court the apparent poise and harmony belie the truth. But this thought, "Was I not better there with him [Balan]?" is merely a flash.

Garlon, who hates Arthur and the Round Table, taunts Balin about the favor, which he declares that he is wearing since

The Queen we worship, Lancelot, I, and all,
As fairest, best, and purest, granted me
To bear it!

(11. 344-346)

And Garlon answers with contempt:

Fairest I grant her—I have seen; but best,
Best, purest? thou from Arthur's hall, and yet
So simple! hast thou eyes, or if, are these
So far besotted that they fail to see
This fair wife-worship cloaks a secret shame?
Truly, ye men of Arthur be but babes.

(11. 351-356)

Vivien echoes Garlon:

And now full loth am I to break thy dream,
But thou art man, and canst abide a truth,
Tho' bitter.

(11. 493-495)

But Balin cannot accept the truth and thus loses balance. It is

Laputa seemed to be good.
also possible that the inability to perceive truth is due to the initial lack of balance in him. He had found balance temporarily in the fair illusion at Camelot. The present conflict between the "fair illusion" and reality confuses him, and he submits to his own wild and unruly nature.

The cry of despair that is wrenched from Balin is mistaken by his brother for the cry of some wild animal. Balan also confuses appearance and reality. Neither recognizes the other, and they battle. Before he dies, Balin hears from Balan that "pure as our own true mother is our Queen." Appearance assumes the "fair illusion" before Balin's dying vision!

To Balin, Guinevere and Lancelot are beautiful and brave; however, in fact they are evil. His death spares him the necessity of adjusting his vision to reality. After his death the ugly sin of the queen assumes its proper magnitude in the eyes of all except the king; it destroys the "fair illusion" of Camelot, and in the last analysis offers an excuse for the "deliberate hypocrisies" of the whole culture. The fair illusion is what maintained order. Now that it does not exist in Camelot, the story as it develops is merely a series of personal crises resulting from the disillusionment.

Merlin, who is the first cause of the "fair illusion" of Camelot, is destroyed by Vivien. She attacks the Seer simply on the basis of the illusions to which the knights of the Round Table are subjected. She does not believe in illusions; so her attempt to wrest Merlin's "magic wand" is symbolic of her dis-
belief in the world of the imagination.

Elaine, the absurdly naive character, on the contrary, welcomes illusion. She is, like Balin, willing to stake her faith upon the "fair illusion" that she believes is embodied in Lancelot. Lancelot, although

The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr'd his face,

(ll. 244-246)
appears to be almost godlike to the Lily Maid of Astolat. She compels him to wear her favor to the Tournament, and when he was gone,

Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

(ll. 395, 396)

No one discovers Lancelot at the Tournament as he fights disguised. He wins the Tournament and the last of the gems.41

Guinevere is angered that Lancelot had worn some woman's favor. She takes the false to be true and so lives in rage. But Lancelot, after winning the gem, is grieved to hear the truth that Elaine is in love with him:

His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

(ll. 871, 872)

Elaine, on the contrary, persists in being deluded. To her father she cries:

41 Poems, pp. 380-400. There were nine gems which the king had acquired before his coronation, and he had ordered a tournament to be held once every year to "joust for one of these." Lancelot won all of them.
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain; so let me pass,
(11. 1082, 1083)

and she goes to death deluded.

In the epilogue to this tragic story, Lancelot and Guinevere expose their illusions and delusions. The queen in her rage hurls the gems into the river; the pyrrhic victory is transitory, no sooner gained than lost. The queen excuses her behavior as "jealousy in love," even though her action rejects the nine years' labor of Lancelot, and it is this rejection which is proof of a "waning love." Again, the gems might be symbolic of Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat, whom Guinevere has destroyed, although unwittingly.

Lancelot is disillusioned in his queen and muses to himself:

You loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too--now at last--
Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
(11. 1383-1390)

There is strange revelation in this. The court does not believe in a "waning love" between the two, and the queen herself is not aware of Lancelot's doubts and fears. Appearance and reality are not resolved for any except Lancelot.

The Holy Grail is not "the phantom of a cup that comes and goes"; it is the true reality, but only Galahad and Percivale's
The Grail episode is packed with illusion; appearance and reality rarely coincide here.

For Percivale, who recounts the tale of the Grail quest, the entire adventure results in a series of illusions or "mirages." He is, for instance, thirsty at one time, and he sees a brook:

"I will rest here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the quest;"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And thirsting in a land of sand and thorns.
(11. 385-390)

This is a fair specimen of the other experiences that he encounters. Everything turns to dust and ashes. Vainly he tries to keep the "fair illusion" before him as a talisman in his search. But all that he encounters is PHANTOM. After he has purged himself of his sin, he is able to see the Grail "far off."

The king had warned the knights that they would follow "wandering fires." The knights, however, did not heed this prophecy. Here again the double level of appearance is in operation. All that the knights encounter is maya, and the Grail quest turns into a frustrating event for all except a Galahad and a Percivale's sister. That the foundations of Camelot have collapsed is obvious from the wasteland imagery that Tennyson has used here and in the rest of The Idylls of the King. The chapel, we are told, is an empty chapel. Thus, even spiritual values are not sufficient to guarantee any stability. The Grail

\[^{42}\text{Ibid.}, 400-413.\]
quest merely serves to widen the breach between appearance and reality.

King Arthur alone is able to maintain the "fair illusion" until the very end. What seems to exist does not really exist, and the knights of the Round Table are reconciled to this. But Arthur knows the experience of visions, as he admits that

many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
That air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision--yea, his very hand and foot--
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again.

(11. 907-915)

In his trance-like experience he is entirely convinced that appearance is maya, that even his very hand and feet are unreal. And in moments when he feels he cannot die (one can take this for the awareness of reality), since he is the exemplar, he knows that God is not a vision as he himself is not.

The inability to find the truth behind Camelot rested, by implication, on his exemplary nature, on his nobility which could not impute any dishonor to his knights or his queen. He came to Camelot to bring order and balance, to raise man above the level of the beast. In another chapter we studied how he failed to do so, even though Tennyson had presented him as "ideal man clothed in real manhood." He fails precisely because the knights lack the vision to rise to the level of the ideal as embodied in the Grail. And lacking imagination, the knights are unable to
benefit from the spiritual values of the Grail.

It should be noted here that Tennyson made a private compromise when he abandoned the Palace of Art. But this compromise did not necessarily involve a complete loss of his capacity to experience visions. The capacity was there, but he subordinated it to the larger demands of communal living. We have, therefore, a very complicated situation in the Idylls. The king believes that he has ignored the vision in order to participate in the reality at Camelot. But, in truth, he does not see the reality. The knights of the Round Table are aware of the reality (the corruption at court), and desire to purge themselves of their private burden of sin through participation in the vision of the Grail. They are frustrated in their attempt, merely because their vision is clouded by a total submersion in the sense-life without any regard to the spirit. The Grail quest is, therefore, responsible, among other things, not for their salvation but for their destruction.

After the Grail quest, the Order hastens to its final dissolution. The experience of Sir Pelleas is a complete antithesis to the experience of Balin. Whereas Balin died deluded, Pelleas suffers a painful disenchantment. He also has brought to Camelot the purity of Gareth's vision, and faith in the purity of the Round Table. But his vision becomes clouded through participation in the general corruption. In other words, the Camelot of Pelleas's day is very different from the earlier fair city.

Sir Pelleas is in search of a woman "fair and pure as
Guinevere." The one he chooses is Etterre. But neither she nor Guinevere conforms to the vision of Pelleas: Guinevere is not pure, and Etterre is not fair but proud. She conceals her essential cruelty as Vivien had belied her sly nature. In the natural order of things, Pelleas's perseverance in courting Etterre is misinterpreted as perversity. Thus, both Pelleas and Etterre take false for true.

Pelleas's disenchantment is caused by the sight of Gawain (whom Pelleas had sent as his emissary) in the "willing arms" of Etterre. He does not continue to believe in the fair illusion as Balin had done before him; on the other hand, as Buckley has explained, "he now imputes hypocrisy to the whole Round Table, blames the King for having made 'fools and liars' of all his subjects, and charges himself with self-deception and blind sensuality."43 Thus, we hear Pelleas denouncing his love: "I never loved her, I but lusted for her." Truth confuses him. To Etterre also disenchantment is due, disenchantment in Gawain. She has a momentary glimpse of the truth.

By the time of "The Last Tournament,"44 again with Buckley one can safely agree that "only Arthur can believe in the correspondence of the fair appearance and the true reality."45 And Dagonet, the fool, remarks with suppressed irony: "The world /

43Buckley, p. 180.
44Poems, pp. 422-433.
45Buckley, p. 181.
Is flesh and shadow."

Tristram is a cynic and a realist as Vivien had been. Therefore, without any qualms of conscience, he is able to "exploit the new hollow conventions" of a corrupt Camelot. Mark, on the contrary, takes revenge upon Tristram when he attempts to exploit his marriage. The unreality at Camelot—in so far as Arthur has still not discovered Guinevere's infidelity—is balanced by the realism at Mark's court. But then Mark has no illusions to lose, whereas Arthur had and still has faith in the "fair illusion."

In fact, Arthur is the last one to be disillusioned in his Camelot. Until the very end, when Guinevere flees to the convent, the fair illusion glosses over the crude reality for the King.

"Guinevere" is only ineffectually significant in the interplay between appearance and reality. The novice comforts the queen within the sacred portals of the convent (it is like the Palace of Art or Shalott with its symbol of refuge from reality) that her suffering, whatever its source, does not indeed flow from "evil done." And the novice babbles to Guinevere the deplorable court condition, quite ignorant of Guinevere's identity. Guinevere, at this point, is truly repentant. But Arthur does not accept the truth, just as Geraint remained stubborn toward Edyn. Geraint, in turn, "anticipates the cynics" who would not believe in Arthur's goodness. Guinevere strains herself to obtain a last glimpse of her husband as he prepares to depart

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*46* Poems, pp. 433-443.
from the nunnery, and

she did not see the face,
Which then was an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapor rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.
(11. 591-601)

The last battle in "The Passing of Arthur" continues this "ghostlike" image. Johnson remarks that Arthur's last battle is "fought in a haunted mist so dense as to obliterate all distinction between the real and unreal." It is described as the "last, dim, weird battle," with far away "the phantom circle of a moaning sea" in the background. Gawain visits the king in his sleep, and laments:

Hollow, hollow all delight!
Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering wind,
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight!
(11. 33-38)

Arthur is bewildered by the starkness of the truth, and to Sir Bedivere moaned:

... I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be king;
Behold, I seem but king among the dead.
(11. 144-146)

47 Ibid., 443-450.
48 Johnson, p. 46.
On his heart has fallen "confusion." In the midst of all this disillusionment, Sir Bedivere performs the last acts of deception by not fully carrying out Arthur's request to throw Excalibur away into the "mere." The end of the Order is portrayed in the last solemn scene when King Arthur is received by the three queens and, shrouded in black, gently laid in the large dusky barge, "dark as a funeral scarf from stern to stem." With Sir Bedivere one can conclude:

But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world. . . .
(11. 402-403)

Arthur offers a very revealing explanation of his ideals and what they have resulted in. Thus he means just before the last fatal battle:

I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as He would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is--
Perchance, because we see not to the close;--
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain,
And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
(11. 9-26)

There are two possible interpretations that one can advance. One is that God is reflected in non-rational Nature more than in man. It looks as though "some lesser god" had made this earth on which
men abound. The second interpretation could be that the whole world is fair, but man is not able to see it as fair, for the simple reason that "those eyes of men are dense and dim." In any event, both interpretations conform to Tennyson's opinions posited earlier, that the "material universe may be the vision of God, if not actually a part of God Himself," and that,

... this gross hard-seeming world is our misshapen vision of the Powers Behind the world, that make our griefs our gains.

Simultaneously, the entire passage moves on a "double seeming of the single world," which is the basic point in the last poem to be analyzed in this chapter, "The Ancient Sage."

V

The poem on the Ancient Sage is significant in a thematic interpretation of Tennyson's poetry. Written in his old age, the poem occupies an important position in the entire body of Tennyson's poetry not only for the themes embodied in it, but also because it was very "personal" to Tennyson. There are indications that the aged Seer speaks for Alfred Tennyson.

The younger man is dismayed by the first appearance of difficulty and pain in the world, as he has been satisfied for

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50 Memoir, IV, 78.
a time with the immediate pleasures within his reach. The absence of spiritual light makes the young man see only the immediate pain and failure in the universe. He has no patience to look beyond or to reflect if there be not an underlying and greater purpose which temporary failure in small things may further. But the spiritual truth of God’s existence and the spiritual purpose of the universe elude his mind.

In contrast is the Sage himself. His very first statement is a negation of appearance:

I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the hills.
(11. 15, 16)

Further, "things are not what they seem," he holds. The first view is ever incomplete, though he who does not have patience of thought will not go beyond the first view. That concentration and that purity of manners which keep the spiritual soul and self undimmed, and preserve the moral voice within articulate, are indispensable if we are to understand anything beyond the most superficial phenomena about us. The keynote is in his statement that

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw
From yon dark cave, but, son, the source is higher. . .
(11. 9, 10)

The hopefulness of the spiritual mind is based on a deep conviction of the reality of the spiritual world, and an unfailing certainty that there is in it a key to the perplexities of this universe of which we men understand so little. The Sage posits an empirical approach to establishing truth, the same empiricism
of "Flower in the Crennied Wall." And again, it is also in the lines of "The Higher Pantheism." Thus, the Sage believes that what sustains reality is the "Nameless":

And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark. 51
(ll. 50-52)

(This is exactly what happens in the Idylls).

There is in man the craving for the "fair illusion":

And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
And show us that the world is wholly fair.
(ll. 178-182)

At the same time, this world is the "range of Night and Shadow."

And to his disciple the Sage offers the clue:

But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy will,
(ll. 108-110)

to "do-well" with the sole intention of being able to behold in the final analysis:

The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!
(ll. 294-285)

The young philosopher is filled with despair because the universe does not correspond to his yearning for a "fair illusion." He has attempted to take the "dial for the deity."

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51 See also The Bhagavad Gita, p. 105, where the Holy One declares: "I am the way, the sustainer, the Lord, the witness, the dwelling, refuge, and friend." See also p. 117, "There is nothing, whether moving or fixed, that can exist without Me."
The interpretation of E. D. H. Johnson makes my own line of thought clearer: "The sage, who, of course, speaks for Tennyson, has attained to full self-reliance, and as a result passed beyond the need for outside support. ... But the sage, we find, has known mystical revelations of a kind which Tennyson himself experienced, and through them he has come to place unshakable trust in the imagination as the highest of human faculties." 

This imagination, which entails vision, is the basis for establishing the truth within oneself that "appearance is the fair illusion." And this imagination also enables one to see through the veil of appearance to the ultimate reality. The Sage has this insight. But most of Tennyson's characters do not have it, and, consequently, they are subjected to tragedy.

The Sage himself is so conditioned that he can differentiate not only between the shadow and substance, appearance and reality, but can also discern the "double seeming" within appearance. King Arthur has the vision, but he cannot see the "double seeming." Therefore in the end he finds himself betrayed by his wife and his Round Table.

The last volume of Tennyson's poetry, The Death of Oenone, Akbar's Dream, and Other Poems contains poems which present the theme of appearance and reality. God is addressed in the Hymn which closes "Akbar's Dream" as "Shadow-maker, shadow-slayer, arrowing light from clime to clime." God is "Changeless"; He is

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52 Johnson, pp. 64-65.
"Timeless in the flame that measures Time." 53 And in "God and the Universe," we have a reaffirmation of the faith that was presented through "The Higher Pantheism." "The myriad world," admits the poet, is "His shadow"; therefore, "Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is great." 54

The problem of appearance and reality, in conclusion, is a major concern of Alfred Tennyson early and late. The poet is motivated by a strong conviction that the "outward show" is specious, but that beyond this show is a "world of reality," which is within reach of those who are concerned with truth. Tennyson seems to have lost this perception following Arthur Hallam's death. In Memoriam, therefore, turns out to be an attempt to discover this truth again.

Individuals who cannot perceive the truth accept the appearance as the "fair illusion." The Lotos-eaters are satisfied with this "fair illusion." They obtain "seeming happiness" in life. Many of the characters in The Idylls of the King also accept appearance as the "fair illusion." They are satisfied with the shadow. But those characters, both in the Idylls and in other poems, who attempt to probe beyond the shadow perish because they are not capable of perceiving the "world of reality," since in their private lives they show a lack of balance.

It is in the mature poetry of Tennyson that appearance and

54 Ibid., 110-111.
reality clash. What seems to be does not conform to what is, and moreover, the lack of conformity leads to tragic implications. In any event, in The Idylls of the King appearance and reality seldom coincide; on the contrary, appearance is discounted as maya, or a magic play staged in this instance by Merlin the magician.\textsuperscript{55} Camelot disappears.

In "The Ancient Sage" the entire problem of appearance and reality is treated in concrete detail. The Sage has acquired the wisdom, and, consequently, the vision to peer beyond the illusion and the plurality of appearance into the One Reality. On the basis of this wisdom he is also able to solve the conflict between the "imperfect world," which is appearance, and the "perfect attributes of God," which represent reality. In Tennyson's private view the Sage is himself. One can conclude, therefore, that in the end the poet finds a solution to the whole vexing question of appearance and reality before his death.

\textsuperscript{55}See Appendix II for excerpts from the Gita and The Upanishads.
CHAPTER VIII

THE EVERLASTING YEA

Like Thomas Carlyle in Sartor Resartus, Alfred Tennyson showed a progression from an Everlasting No to an Everlasting Yea in his poetry. They both "went through the storm and stress of a doubting age, both took their stand on the solid rock of God and of real, healthy human nature,—both emerged in the Eternal Yea."1 J. A. Froude in his history of Carlyle stated:

In this condition the best and bravest of my own contemporaries determined to have done with insincerity, to find ground under their feet, to let the uncertain remain uncertain, but to learn how much and what we could honestly regard as true and believe that and live by it. Tennyson became the voice of this feeling in poetry; Carlyle in what was called prose, though prose it was not, but something by itself, with a form and melody of its own.2

The condition that Froude is referring to is, of course, the lack of faith in religion in its established form. The state of unbelief in the age of Victoria is reflected also in the version of The Rubaiyat by Fitzgerald. Dr. Warren, one of Tennyson's friends, has remarked that "In Memoriam and The Rubaiyat of Omar


Khayyám; 'The Eternal Yea' and 'The Eternal No,' 'the larger hope' and 'the desperate sort of thing unfortunately at the bottom of all thinking men's minds, made Music of'--few friendships, few conjunctions, personal or literary, could be more interesting or more piquant."

Froude has also stated that Tennyson's poems, "the group of poems which closed with 'In Memoriam,' became to many of us what the 'Christian Year' was to orthodox Churchmen." What the poems delineate, to be precise, is "the way of the Soul" from the depths of misery in "The Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind" to hope in immortality in In Memoriam. But In Memoriam is not the last word of Tennyson on the problem of doubt and faith. "His faith," Dr. Warren remarks, "even to the last, was still at times dashed with doubt, for, with 'the universality of his mind,' he could not help seeing many sides of a question." One should recall here Browning's "Bishop Blougram's Apology," where Blougram says that doubt may be a good thing. The Pope in The Ring and the Book echoes this. Matthew Arnold and Arthur Clough were also torn by doubt and uncertainty. The problem of the poet is simply this, that he always finds an "[apparent] contradiction between the 'imperfect world,' and the 'perfect

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4 Froude, I, 291.
attributes of God. This fact relates the theme of doubt and faith to the earlier one of "appearance and reality." But Tennyson resolved the inner conflict; Browning's optimistic faith transcended his doubts; Arnold and Clough, on the other hand, could not settle their conflicts.

Tennyson regards the instinct of conscience as the root of faith. His method, says Wilfrid Ward,

consisted in the presentation of two opposing veins of thought, of questioning and doubt on the one hand, and of instinctive assurance on the other. Each line of thought is given its weight. The instinctive assurance is not set aside in consequence of the speculative doubt, nor is it allowed to check the doubt in its critical function. Doubt and questioning may lead to the discovery that some instinctive beliefs are based on mere prejudice. Yet there are instincts which bear in their signs of authority,--as the inner voice appealed to in 'The Ancient Sage,'--and the fact is recognized that doubt and questioning may be morbid and a consequence of intellectual doubt. In 'The Two Voices' these two elements are formally expressed.7

"Perdidi Diem"8 (contemporary with The Devil and the Lady) voices the first murmurings of doubt and gloom which animate "The Supposed Confessions" and "The Two Voices."

I must needs pore upon the mysteries

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7Quoted in "Newman and Tennyson," Spectator (July 18, 1896), p. 75.
8Early Poems, pp. 35-37.
Of my own infinite Nature and torment
My spirit with a fruitless discontent:

the poet laments in "Perdidi Diem." Here, as in other poems,
Tennyson turns to his inner self, or the "instinct of conscience,
to find the solution to his doubts, to the problem which is
closely related to the conflict within Nature. In In Memoriam
the conflict is resolved, and it will be seen that the solution
is arrived at mostly through intuition.

"The Supposed Confessions" (1830) presents the poet's lack
of faith in religion.9 The poet is torn between his awareness of
his sinfulness, together with the lack of belief in traditional
religion, and his desire to obtain the Christian peace that his
neighbors seem to be enjoying. His inner resources have failed
him, and from the powerlessness of isolation he cries out for a
kind of reintegration. He yearns to share the faith and "scorn
of death" of the orthodox Christians. In his childhood he had
enjoyed faith at his mother's knee, and therefore he prays:

Would that my gloomed fancy were
As thine, my mother, when with brows

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9 Poems, pp. 4, 5. See also Charles Tennyson, p. 44, for the
contrast that he has worked out between the "mood" of The Devil
and the Lady and three later poems, "The Supposed Confessions,
"The Two Voices," and "The Lotos-Eaters." Charles remarks that
a great change has taken place in the poet. From the later poems
and the old high spirits and the naive self-confidence have van-
ished. "In their place are clouds of diffidence, uncertainty
and gloom—but sounding through all is a new note of magic—'the
horns of Elf-land faintly blowing.' One can see the beginnings
of this change in some of the passages added to the play in the
Trinity manuscript, for example, in Magus's lament on discovering
the efforts of the lovers to rob him of his wife."
Prout on thy knees, my hands upheld
In thine, I listen'd to thy vows.

(1l. 66-71)

The nostalgia of remembering the "sweet past" persists, but it cannot bring back his early faith to him. Today, on the other hand, he is unable to conform to the ritual of "bowing" and "kneeling" and even dares to ask:

"why pray
To one who needs not, who can save
But will not?"

(1l. 89-91)

The question recalls the Lucretian philosophy of a god who does not care for his creatures. And yet he wishes that he might regain faith. It might not be the traditional faith. On the contrary, he admits that it is right to doubt and question, but holds that some creed is better than no creed at all.

Shall we not look into the laws
Of life and death, and things that seem,
And things that be, and analyze
Our double nature, and compare
All creeds till we have found the one,
If one there be?

(1l. 172-177)

The issues that are raised here are the result of his perception of a certain diversity in appearance and reality. From this perception he feels the deep need to find a creed that will satisfy his inner and private demands.

The poems which we have analyzed so far were written prior to Arthur Hallam's death. Following the death, which to Tennyson was such a severe shock (as some critics assume, the only shock of his long life), the poet expresses his need for "going forward and braving the struggle of life." "The Two Voices," a poem writ-
ten soon after the news had reached him, describes one of the agonizing moods through which he had to pass as a result of it. The poem clearly projects both his desire to commit suicide and his struggle with that temptation. In the end it is the sight of a happy married couple pacing to church that resolves the conflict. (It is unfortunate that Tennyson should have availed himself of so Victorian and so inartistic an ending.)

The poem is presented in the form of a debate on the conflict between life and death. The argument proceeds, in Buckley's words, "through the long night of the soul in a darkness which is the very image of despair." It blends within itself the themes of balance, substance and shadow, and poetic isolation. In this respect it is a beautiful and characteristically Tennysonian argument, setting forth his belief that man's salvation lies in the awareness of these ingredients of life and of man's ability to work out his doubts and fears so as to achieve faith in the immortality of the soul.

The argument is between the poet, who is also the generic I, and the Nephilomelian Spirit embodying despair. The dispute takes the image of a wrestling bout, which in the end is simply a contest between doubt and faith. It opens on the suicidal solution that the voice of doubt offers to the despairing poet. This argument is met by faith in the beauty of man. Man was

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10 Poems, pp. 30-36.
11 Buckley, p. 63.
created on the sixth day and has the requirements of perfection.

She [Nature] gave him mind, the lordliest
Proportion, and, above the rest,
Dominion in the head and breast.

(11. 19-21)

The opposing voice negates the claims of perfection as being the
figment of the poet's own imagination. On the contrary, man is
reduced to a mere nothing:

Tho' thou wert to be scatter'd to the wind,
Yet is there plenty of the kind.

(11. 32-33)

The voice of despair approaches its victory by announcing:

Thou art so steep'd in misery,
Surely 't were better not to be.

Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,
Nor any train of reason keep;
Thou canst not think, but thou wilt weep.

(11. 47-51)

At this point the poet is almost vanquished by doubt. And
yet he keeps pushing forward on the basis of his blind faith in
progress and in the goodness of God's plan behind creation:

And men, thro' novel spheres of thought
Still moving after truth long sought,
Will learn new things when I am not,

(11. 61-63)

he consoles himself. On the basis of a certain progress in the
universe he projects his belief:

were this not well, to bind mine hour,
Tho' watching from a ruin'd tower
How grows the day of human power?

(11. 76-78)

But the voice, in Buckley's words, "deriding the ideal as
illusion born of empty pride, insists on a universal relativism;
neither the best nor the worst of creatures, man is simply in-
significant, and 'Because the scale is infinite,' the will of a
Ulysses to seek and to find is, like every human desire of pro-
gress and power, futile and contemptible."\(^{12}\) Thus,

'T were better 'not to breath or speak,
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek.

(11. 94-96)

The poet now argues that suicide will cause public comment,
and the opposing voice justly criticizes his "divided will,"
which is sensitive to public opinion. The poet is reminded of
the days when he had the conviction:

When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,
Among the tents I paused and sung,
The distant battle flash'd and rung.

(11. 124-126)

And he had, in his pure idealism, sought for "spiritual absolutes."
To this the voice answers:

thy dream was good,

While thou abodest in the bud.
It was the stirring of the blood.

(11. 157-159)

"Men with knowledge" have been forced to give up the struggle
against materialism, and even life:

Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,
Named man, may hope some truth to find,
That bears relation to the mind.

(11. 175-177)

The voice of despair now portrays the fearful aspect of death.

From grave to grave the shadow crept;

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 64.
In her still place the morning wept;
Toch'd by his feet the daisy slept... (ll. 274-276)

The relentless shadow strikes desolation as it sweeps along. It strikes both man and Nature, and is presented as the ultimate end of the struggle of life.

The poet gropes for an answer inside himself, in the "heat of inward evidence," or in the intuitions "by which he doubts against the sense." One last argument that the voice flings at him is aimed against evolution. The life of one generation as it passes away is

A life of nothings, nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth!
(ll. 331-333)

The poet answers this with the theory that life is not thus detached but fits into a general and complete pattern, in which it has its own claims and its own significance in creation. The argument here borders on re-incarnation;

Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams--

So something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.
(ll. 379-384)

At once the voice of death demands that the poet should speak on the basis of the "pain of reality," and not on dreams (of incarnation or whatever).

The debate is won by the voice of faith. Although the faith that wins may not correspond to Christian beliefs, it still points
in the right direction. And although it borders on pagan affirmation, on the basis of this faith the poet yearns for more life.

Thus:

Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly long'd for death.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
O, life, not death, for which we want;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

(ll. 394-399)

The final note is identical to that of "Ulysses," which poem was written from a need to reassure himself that, in spite of death and pain, life had to be endured. But the Eternal No is only stemmed in its tide. The battle is still not won completely; the Eternal Yea has not yet been reached.

"Locksley Hall" (1842) was also written during the silence following Arthur Hallam's death. Even though the poem is designed as a "dramatic recital and not as a thinly disguised subjective complaint," yet, as Buckley has stated, "its movement from defeat toward a reaffirmation of life follows the direction of 'The Two Voices' and reproduces with almost excessive heightening the general process of Tennyson's emotional development." The initial negation of life is followed by the Everlasting Yea that is based on an active participation in life. Carlyle also searches for relief in action. Following the pattern of Carlyle's

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13 Poems, pp. 90-94.
14 Buckley, p. 76.
thinking, Tennyson discards a life of fancy: "Fool, again the dream, the fancy!" he exclaims after his mind plays with the thought of a life of escape in the tropics. The last note, therefore, rings with the optimism of Ulysses: "For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go." Both Ulysses and the protagonist of "Locksley Hall" accept a life of action, together with the soul who has discarded her Palace of Art.

There is paradox presented through the note of indifference, chiefly in the classical poems that he wrote during this time, dealing with the philosophy of the Lucretian gods. We noted earlier that the 1832 ending of "The Lotos-Eaters" contained no reference to the Lucretian gods. Aubrey de Vere thus comments on the Lucretian ending that the poet added to the version of 1842:

I remember the poet's pointing out to me the improvement effected later by the introduction of the last paragraph setting forth the Lucretian Philosophy respecting the Gods, their aloofness from all human interests and elevated action, an Epicurean and therefore hard-hearted repose, sweetened not troubled by the endless wail from the earth.15

From an artistic point of view the addition strengthens the poem by adding greater meaning to the desire of man to embrace a life of ease. But from a philosophical viewpoint, the Lucretian gods are the pegs on which to hang the poet's subconscious fears and doubts regarding the fate of man, and of himself in particular following the death of his friend.

15Memoir, I, 308.
The added lines are these:

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to love and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their rector, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deens
and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,
and praying hands. 16

This picture of the reclining gods seems to have satisfied the poet. The same note is heard in The Rubáiyát. Thus, we are

But helpless Pieces of the Game he plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and Thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.
(LXIX)

In both these passages there is a clear indication that man is aware of the indifference of gods, and is, therefore, himself accepting a care-free life. The life of the gods offers man the final excuse for his negation of duty and responsibility.

In "Walking to the Mail" (1842) John interrogates in this manner:

What ails us who are sound,
That we should mimic this raw fool the world,
Which charts us all in its course blacks or whites,
As ruthless as a baby with a worm,
As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows
To pity.

(11. 97-102) 17

16 Poems, p. 53.

17 Ibid., 75-77.
But John also insists on being brave through the struggle of life. Thus he admonishes James to put "the best foot forward."

Both in "Locksley Hall" and Maud we hear misgivings regarding the attitude of gods towards human beings. It is the aged Tithonus, however, who is loudest in his complaint of the indifference of gods.

Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was in ashes.

The concept in all these poems is related to the theory of "Nature red in tooth and claw." Though Tennyson is not a fatalist of the school of Thomas Hardy, still as one living in the age of Darwin he cannot wholly avoid some infiltration of these ideas, which are so much a part of the liberal Victorian temper.

II

The indifference of gods, the idea of fate, and the theory of "Nature red in tooth and claw" find their resolution in In Memoriam. This poem is more than a mere recording of Tennyson's doubts like "The Two Voices." It shows a clear progression from

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18 It has to be noted here that apart from Maud all the other poems are contemporary ("Tithonus" was published later but was written early).

the Everlasting No to the Everlasting Yea. Fitzgerald quotes Lowell as having said that "it would not be difficult to find 'parallel passages' between Tennyson and Carlyle, between Sartor Resartus and 'In Memoriam.'"

The Everlasting Yea of In Memoriam is not based on traditional dogma but is reached through intuition. It is through intuition that Tennyson solves the conflict in this poem, a conflict that can be defined as the poet's awareness of the clash between appearance and reality, between the sense and the spirit.

Tennyson said about this poem: "The different moods of sorrow as in a drama are dramatically given, and my conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through Faith in a God of Love. 'I' is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking thro' him." To obtain this faith at the end there has to be love between human beings. As Svaglic has noted, the theme of the poem is to be sought in the lines:

'T is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

(XXVII)


21 James Knowles sums up his personal religion in the words of the poet: "There is Something That watches over us, and our Individuality endures." Knowles, Friends, p. 262.

22 Memoir, II, 97.

According to this, although the "Strong Son of God, immortal Love," with an invocation to whom the poem begins, has only a "hazy connection with the Logos, or the Incarnate God" (in the language of T. S. Eliot), this invocation certainly sets the mood of love that is basic to the faith that is to follow.24

The poem presents, in Charles Tennyson's words,

the reality of the self, the power of free will, the survival of the human spirit after death, the existence of a personal God, a God that is Love, controlling the forces of Nature and guiding them according to some universal law to a final harmony—these seemed to him the essential elements which any satisfactory creed must establish, and during the seventeen years which had passed since Arthur's death the thought of them had never been long absent from his mind.25

In any event, these are the issues that the poet confronts in this long poem. In dealing with these issues one notices that the successive parts of the poem mark a progression from despair to hope, from the Eternal No to the Eternal Yea.26

The first part of the poem comprises eight sections. The note is bitter sorrow here, the yew tree in the second section being the symbol of this sorrow. In poetry he finds relief, and


25Charles Tennyson, p. 250.

26This study of the successive parts of the poem is based on Prof. Svaglic's structural analysis, which in turn is based entirely on the division given by Tennyson himself to Knowles, and should be consulted by every student of In Memoriam. It certainly helps one to remember the parts more easily than either Bradley's study or Genung's. Besides, it follows a logical pattern which is more convincing than the division of the critics already mentioned.
therefore declares:

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
    Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

(V)

In the last part of the poem (C:V), as Svaiglic notes, we shall find that in the poet's breast

    Spring wakens too, and my regret
    Becomes an April violet,
    And buds and blossoms like the rest.

The second part (9-20) has to do with the arrival of the ship bearing Arthur Hallam's body, and his burial in England. The poet's sorrow has not diminished. And the saddest poem in this group is an address to "Time," the great healer.

    Come, Time, and teach me, many years,
        I do not suffer in a dream;
    For now so strange do these things seem,
        Mine eyes have leisure for their tears,
    My fancies time to rise on wing,
    And glance about the approaching sails,
    As tho' they brought but merchants' bails
    And not the burthen that they bring.

(XIII)

So great is the poet's shock that if Hallam were to return one morning, alive, he would not consider it strange.27

27Ralph Wilson Rader in "Tennyson in the Year of Hallam's Death," PMLA, LXXVII (September, 1962), 419, has made a study to contradict the traditional belief that Tennyson was "sunk for long months in dark grief, isolated and immobile at Somersby. . . ." According to Mr. Rader, the reaction was not so steady. There were recurrent spells of despair, reawakenings of sorrow, private hours of deep mourning, but, on the whole, the poet was also in a position to take care of the affairs of normal life. He appears more active, less of a recluse, less absolutely crushed than has been supposed.
In the third part (20-27) it is given us to understand that despite criticism the poet persists in singing because he believes in the bond of love that exists between himself and Hallam. And he looks back and admits,

\[
\text{this it was that made me move} \\
\text{As light as carrier-birds in air;} \\
\text{I loved the weight I had to bear,} \\
\text{Because it needed help of Love;} \\
\]

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
When mighty Love would cleave in twain
The lading of a single pain,
And part it, giving half to him.

(XXV)

The fourth part (28-49) begins and ends in sorrow. He mourns and believes that the earth mourns for him. It is only fitting that he should relate his sorrow to the environment on the anniversary of Hallam's death.

The birth of Christ also falls in this group. It adds to the poet's sorrow that his friend is not there to be a part of the joyful season. Here is the first indication that the faith which he is reaching for is not traditional, not an objective ideal based on revelation and the incarnation. On the contrary, Hallam himself is vaguely associated with Christ. So Christmas, instead of bringing some promise of an immortality or a communion of the living and the dead, merely points to the absence of his friend from the hearth.

The poet urges men to "cling to faith, beyond the forms of faith." But, as Hallam Tennyson has stated, "While he did this he also recognized clearly the importance and the value of def-
initions of truth, and his counsel to the very man who prided
himself upon his emancipation from forms was:

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days. . . ."

Already in "The Supposed Confessions" we noticed a sincere attempt
to grasp at some kind of creed.

Soon after the statement in favor of form (the passage that
Alfred Tennyson has quoted is section XXXIII), Tennyson gives the
hint that the faith that he is searching for is subjective. Thus:

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

which conviction, later on, leads to the "I have felt" thesis that/forms such an integral part of his private religion. That the
poet needs a subjective affirmation is obvious from section
XXXVI.

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him that made them current coin. . . .

Man, according to this, "simply intuits certain basic truths."
Orthodox faith is reflected nowhere in the poem. Even the immor-
tality that he comes to believe in is pragmatic, based as it is
precisely on the strength and value of love. 29

28Memoir, II, 103.
29See also Fairchild, p. 115, who notes that "Tennyson's
The fifth part (50-58) finds the poet in the "depths." The Eternal No is at its loudest here. In the first lines he reviews their Cambridge days, four years of friendship between himself and Arthur Hallam. But as they "breeze along" the path of life, the shadow was waiting.

The poet's hope of the survival of the human race is suddenly destroyed by the theory of "Nature red in tooth and claw." This theory confirms the poet's worst fears at this point. The "reckless profusion" and the fearful destructiveness of Nature, as far as the poet is concerned, destroy all hopes of any purpose behind the universe. Tennyson falters:

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

Belief in a loving God and in immortality derives from those inward feelings which were given their sharpest focus by Arthur's death. He knows that his belief cannot be supported by rational proof."

30 Bishop of Ripon in Friends, p. 300, notes that once Tennyson made him take to his room Winwood Reade's Martyrdom of Man. "There never was such a passionate philippic against Nature as this book contained. The universe was one vast scene of murder; the deep aspirations and noble visions of men were the follies of flies buzzing for a brief moment in the presence of inexorable destruction. . . . It put with irate and verbose extravagance the fact that sometimes, 'Nature red in tooth and claw, With ravine shrieked against his creed;' but it failed to see any but one side of the question." Tennyson could have been influenced by this book. Also see Houghton, p. 69, for Houghton's explanation that "either there is no God and no immortality, but only Nature, indifferent to all moral values, impelling all things to a life of instinctive cruelty ending in death; or else God and Nature are locked in an incredible and inexplicable strife."
O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

(LVI)

Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* also questions the appearance of creation: "It is all a grim Desert, this once-fair world of his; wherein is heard only the howling of wild-beasts, or the shricks of despairing, hate-filled men..."  

In the next part (69-71) contrary to our expectations, a lighter note is introduced.

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Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;
I lull a fancy trouble-tost
With 'Love's too precious to be lost,
A little grain shall not be spilt.'
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(LXV)

The basis upon which faith is grasped in this section is love. It does not matter whether or not the dead one remembers; what matters is the survival of love. The last line, as the present writer interprets it, is also a challenge to the destructiveness in Nature. It is a conviction that "a little grain shall not be spilt," or that what God has created will be saved and preserved because there is love.

Hereafter the poet can think with complacency even of the grave. Thus:

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When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water of the west
There comes a glory on the walls:
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31 Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (London, 1897), p. 130. This work will be cited hereafter as Carlyle.
Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name...

(LXVII)

In this mood we are prepared for the Carlylean note of optimism in LXXIII: "So many worlds, so much to do, / So little done, such things to be." Carlyle remarked that "doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action."32

In part seven (72-98) the famous fusion of spirits also takes place. Though the poet cannot explain the trance of XCV, from now on his spirit really turns to the future. This poem is important as being the one on which the "I have felt" thesis of Tennyson's faith is based. "I have felt" is first an affirmation of personal power and second a declaration of belief. One can conclude that Tennyson could not realize himself in God; he realizes God in himself through his union with Arthur Hallam. With Carlyle he seems to believe that "the Ideal is in thyself, the impediment too is in thyself."

Since his religion is so personal, he defends doubt in XCVI:

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Carlyle also believes in doubt. Indeed, he grapples with the "temptation in the Wilderness," and admits that we "all have to be tried with such."33 With regard to Tennyson, T. S. Eliot

32 Ibid., 156.
33 Ibid., 156.
makes the comment that the poem "is not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt. . . its doubt is a very intense experience." It is in this respect that In Memoriam is a mirror of Victorian unbelief. Tennyson battles with his doubts just as Teufelsdröckh battles with the "temptation in the wilderness." The Eternal No is accepted as an integral part of life.

In the next part (99-103) there is the departure of the poet from Somersby. It is a symbolic farewell, as the allegoric poem indicates (CIII). Here the poet is fully bound on his way to eternity. Later poems will continue this voyage to eternity motif. And with the final part (104-131) we have one long peal of Everlasting Yea. The poem CVI rings out the old and rings in the new. The emphasis is on the new year, on progress, on hope, and on a future that will be rich in the "love of truth and right" and "the common love of good." In the final analysis, therefore, "Beauty," "Truth," and "Good" are again the basis of hope, the hope for material prosperity or eternal life, or for both. The final period of perfection that is figured in CV in the rising worlds by yonder wood.
Long sleeps the summer in the seed;
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
The closing cycle rich in good,
is a complete negation of the earlier image of "Nature red in tooth and claw."

34Fliot, Critical Essays, p. 214.
The poem is, on the whole, a search after the Eternal Yea. And the conclusion to the poet's "long search is summed up in the opening stanzas," or the Prologue to the poem which was added in 1849. Especially in the poem:

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest Life in man and brute;
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made,

we see clearly the victory over doubt and, specially, fear of death. Carlyle's Everlasting Yea is also based on the belief that the "universe is godlike and my Father's."35

III

"The Ancient Sage" (1885) is a poem of Tennyson's old age, and is basically a continuation of the poet's belief in the Eternal Yea. It is in form a dramatic poem, wherein an aged Seer of high, ascetic life, living a hundred years before Christ, holds a discourse with a younger man. Browning's "Cleon" and Arnold's Empedocles on Etna are examples of a like discourse based on faith and doubt. In fact, the Victorians constantly wrote poems on ultimate things, the questions that philosophy and theology usually make it their business to deal with.

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35Carlyle, p. 150. This prologue is completely "immersed in God." The Memoir, IV, 215, quotes Tennyson to have remarked about Spinoza: "Spinoza is another man who has been often misunderstood. He has been called an atheist, and yet he is so full of God that he sees Him everywhere, so much so that he leaves no room for man. He was said to be 'Gott-trunken.'" One can see an analogy in their approach to God, Tennyson's and Spinoza's.
Tennyson's poem presents the dilemma of the younger man, who in the absence of faith can only see "the immediate pain and failure in the universe." His immediate problems are based on his inability to see the truth of God's existence and the spiritual order in the universe. The Sage, on the contrary, enjoys a deep insight and a clear perspective, through both of which the eternal order that exists in God's mind is clear to him. His gospel is one of "self-restraint and long-suffering, of action of high ends." We recall that Carlyle acquires his spiritual insight on the same basis. In "The Everlasting Yea," "The first preliminary moral act, Annihilation of Self (Selbst-tödtung), had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed, and its hands ungoyved."36 The Sage admonishes the disciple:

Let be thy wail, and help thy fellow-men,
And make thy gold thy vassal, not thy king,
And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart. . . .
(11. 258-261)

His philosophy is definitely spiritual. Therefore, he proposes the passive acceptance of the burden of life: "Force is from the heights" is the central idea of his teaching and interpretation of all that perplexes the younger man. According to this, we cannot fully understand our trials and problems because we cannot grasp what is beyond or above us. But we shall be wise if we "shall steadily look upwards," for thereby enough light and

36Ibid., 149.
guidance will be discovered. This might be interpreted by some as a contradiction to the early belief that faith is to be sought within ourselves. But the Sage also believes in the validity of intuition as we shall see.

The universe has so much of the "inexplicable and the undeniable." As Ward interprets it, "The conception of God is not more mysterious than the thought that a grain of sand may be divided a million times, and yet be no nearer its ultimate division than it is now." When the youth complains that the "Nameless Power or Powers that rule were never heard or seen" he is simply looking for scientific truth. The Sage replies to this:

If thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and wilt dive into the temple-cave of thine own self, There, brooding by the central altar, thou Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice, By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise, As if thou knewest, tho' thou cannot know; For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there But never yet hath dipt into the abyss, The abyss of all abysses, beneath, within The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth, And in the million-millionth of a grain Which cleft and cleft again for evermore, And ever vanishing, never vanishes, To me, my son, more mystic than myself, Or even than the Nameless is to me. (ll. 31-46)

And so, too, when the youth calls for further proof of the "Nameless," the Sage reminds him that certain facts cannot be proved. The thought upon which the poet dwells here, Ward says,

"is similar to Newman's teaching in the Grammar of Assent, though Tennyson's use of words does not here . . . harmonize with Catholic doctrine. There are truths, the knowledge of which is so intimately connected with our own personality, that the material for complete formal proof eludes verbal statement."  

At the same time, Tennyson seems to point again to an inner awareness as the foundation of certain beliefs. The mystic experience that he describes is the ultimate basis for his deepest faith:

And more, my son! for more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself,
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
Were strange, not mine--and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were sun to spark--unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.  

(11. 229-239)

Logical proof has to be dispensed with in much that is of higher moment when the soul can experience something of this order. As stated earlier, the foundations of Tennyson's ultimate belief in God, and, consequently, his negation of appearance to obtain the reality, are purely subjective. The poet has trance-like experiences throughout his life.

We cannot prove anything, except through intuition. In the

38Ibid., 235-236.

39This experience is exactly on the lines of what the Hindu mystics describe as the consummation of Yoga.
language of the Sage:

Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,

For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven.

(11. 59-62)

But proof is not necessary for a person who is attuned to the spirit-world as Tennyson is. Through his mystical aspirations he has the necessary proof within himself. The empiricism which underlies his faith is the empiricism of the I, and not of science or proven facts. 40

It is on the basis of this personal belief in the ultimate Reality that order and balance are restored or even created. And the faith that he "feels" is unrelated to "form."

And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!
She reels not in the storm of warring words,
She brightens at the clash of "yes" and "No,"
She sees the best that glimmers thro' the worst,
She feels the sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd "Mirage!"

(11. 69-77)

It is purely subjective.

In this passage we have the basis of our thesis on "appearance and reality." The hopefulness of the spiritual mind is based on a deep conviction of the reality of the spiritual world within which the poet is certain that there is a key to the per-

40 Fairchild, p. 129, remarks that "the Sage draws personal confirmation of this Faith from Wordsworthian intimations of immortality experienced in boyhood and from the fact that repetition of his own name gives him a sense of the Nameless."
plexities of this universe of which man understands so little. As Ward has interpreted it: "However perplexing the universe now seems to us we have this deep trust that there is an explanation, that when we are in a position to judge the whole, instead of looking on from this corner of time and space, the truth of the spiritual interpretation of its phenomena will be clear." 1

The theory that is raised here is the same one that we analyzed toward the end of the "Theme of Balance" (Chapter VI): The world is part of an infinite plan, incomplete because it is a part; and in order to be in a position to see the whole reality, at some time we have to acquire an inner balance, since order is a characteristic of the entire creation as it is visible to God, the ultimate Reality.

The young man's problem is wholly dependent upon the failure of the "fair promise and the collapse of apparent purpose in Nature and in Man" (the fair illusion and the lack of balance). Thus:

The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men;
Who clings to earth, and once would dare
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,

The poet whom his age would quote
As heir of endless fame--
He knows not even the book he wrote,
Not even his own name.
For man has overlived his day,
And, darkening in the light,

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1 Ward, Friends, p. 237.
Scarce feels the senses break away
To mix with ancient Night.

(11. 111-153)

But the Sage, instead of contradicting the youth, simply believes that the "darkness is in man." The darkness is the result of our imperfect vision. The Sage proclaims that the "doors of night may be the gates of light," or again that "the shell must break before the bird can fly." The final message of the Sage is to be sought in alms, in doing well, and in thinking well. Here one is reminded of the theory of balance to which Tennyson subscribes all his life. According to Fairchild, "right working is the grand desideratum; but he acknowledges that there can be no right working without right thinking, and he does not know what to think except that it is important to 'curb the beast.'" Curbing the beast in man is actually the foundation upon which right thinking, and, ultimately, right acting can be soundly based. As the Sage declares, in the final analysis, it is the beast in man that serves as an opaque screen between the "Nameless and thyself." In other words, balance leads to a clear perception of appearance and reality, and, finally, to God.

In "Vastness" Tennyson poses the question: "Hast thou made all this for naught! Is all this trouble of life worth undergoing if we only end in our own corpse-coffin at last? If you allow a God and God allows this strong instinct and universal

\[42\text{Fairchild, p. 130.}\
\[43\text{Poems, pp. 533-534.}\

yearning for another life, surely that is in a measure a presumption of its truth. We cannot give up the mighty hopes that make us men."\(^{44}\)

Each picture of the universe arouses an "instinctive sympathy," a feeling that: "It cannot be worthless and meaningless." But again it is human love that the poet looks to as conveying the sense of "man's immortal destiny." We have seen in *In Memoriam* how the union of spirit with spirit through love cannot be denied even by the strongest doubts. And with Ward one can conclude that "the bewildering nightmare of the nothingness and vanity of all things is abruptly cut short, as the sense of what is deepest in the human heart promptly gives the lie to what it cannot solve in detail...."\(^{45}\)

Therefore, in the last lines of "Vastness" the poet declares:

> Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever: the dead are not dead but alive.

Thus, it is love that is at the depth of the human heart and which resolves the conflict.

In "Vastness" (1885) the poet restates that "we cannot give up the mighty hopes that make us men."\(^{46}\) But the hope itself is the outcome of a long and arduous battle with doubt. In "The

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\(^{44}\) As interpreted by Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, II, 118.

\(^{45}\) Ward, *Friends*, p. 244. Ward's explanations are based on the poet's own words as noted by W. G. Ward.

\(^{46}\) Poems, pp. 533-534.
Supposed Confessions," "The Two Voices," and In Memoriam we are
given to understand that Tennyson's doubt is deep and earnest.
The initial doubt is based on the "feeling" that he has lost
the traditional faith. Later on, the conflict in Nature following
the death of Hallam (and in a way brought to focus by the death
itself) has also to be solved.

The first note of affirmation, or The Everlasting Yea, is
heard in In Memoriam. The Sage continues this note although
the disciple is seriously concerned with the conflict that makes
itself apparent. But the faith that Tennyson obtains through the
agony of In Memoriam is not based on the dogmas of Christianity. 47
At the same time, Tennyson is aware of the truth that "faith is
deeper than doubt." Faith is, in his old age, an integral part
of his being, faith in immortality and in the ultimate Vision of
God. "I can hardly understand," he said, "how any great, imagina-
tive man, who has deeply lived, suffered, thought and wrought,
can doubt of the Soul's continuous progress in the after-life." 48
His greatest desire in his old age, as has been noted, was "the
perfect vision of God."

But even at the very end Tennyson had doubts as is proved

47See Bishop of Ripon, Friends, p. 298, for his description
of a certain experience that he had with the poet, when he spoke
of the apparent dualism in Nature: the forces of darkness and
light seemed to meet in conflict. Then the poet added, "If I
were not a Christian, I should be perhaps a Parsee."

48Memoir, II, 118.
"Still--at times / A doubt, a fear," he confesses to have experienced. In his own mind, however, he reaches a conclusion based on a universal religion. Accordingly, the temple of his dream is

neither Pagod, Mosque, nor Church,
But loftier, simpler, always open-door'd
To every breath from heaven, and Truth and Peace.

One should recall the earlier statement of the poet in In Memoriam, that man should "cling to faith, beyond the forms of faith." In "Akbar's Dream," the emperor declares:

And what are forms?
Fair garments, plain or rich, and fitting close
Or flying looselier, warm'd but by the heart
Within them, moving but by the living limb,
And cast aside, when old, for newer,--Forms?
The Spiritual in Nature's market-place--

For himself,

I can but lift the torch
Of Reason in the dusky cave of Life,
And gaze on this great miracle, the World,
Adoring That who made, and makes, and is,
And is not, what I gaze on--all else Form,
Ritual, varying with the tribes of men.

It is not that he completely discounts forms, for, as he admits, they are

needful: only let the hand that rules,
With politic care, with utter gentleness,
Mould them for all his people.

The central thesis here is that God or the Reality is all that matters; forms are needful, but a faith that transcends forms is superior. The poet's own personal faith was based on this con-

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49 The Death of Oenone, pp. 27-39.
viction, for he did not have any set form of belief.

Tennyson regards the instinct of conscience as the root of faith. From this he bases faith itself on "intuition." The mystical experiences which he enjoyed all through life provided him with the foundations for the final resolution of the conflict between appearance and reality, the utter wastefulness in nature, and the apparent lack of order according to the vision of man. He attempts to "reach the law within law." In this respect he is close to Cardinal Newman. But Newman is a far more earnest believer in the dogmas of Christianity, and does not have to base his faith on inner belief alone. Tennyson's beliefs are almost always based on the inner experience. But, at the same time, both Tennyson and Newman endeavored "to confront doubt with the steadiest and the most intrepid gaze, and held that the more frankly we meet and measure it, even when it seems to threaten us with utter disaster, the more surely shall we ultimately triumph over, not indeed all our doubts, but all those which would leave us without any helm in the storm, and without any compass by which to steer."51

The mystery is that Tennyson could reach The Everlasting Yea in the absence of traditional religions. That he did achieve faith is more than obvious. What he seems to have done is to base his subjective belief on "the first principles of all

50"Newman and Tennyson," Spectator, p. 75.
51Ibid.
the creeds" which he could find within himself. His Everlasting Yea is founded purely upon these basic truths as embodied in "The Ancient Sage"; that all is right; that darkness shall be clear; that God and "Time" are the only interpreters; that "Love is King"; that the immortal is in us; and, finally, that "All is well, though Faith and Form be sundered in the Night of Fear."

But in order to obtain this faith he has to pass through the "dark night of the soul," or grapple with the Eternal No of Carlyle.

In a wide spiritual sense the entire volume of Tennyson's poetry evolves perpetually upon his search for the Everlasting Yea. This is obvious from the conflict in "The Ancient Sage." In fact, the dialectic of this poem is, more or less, on the pattern of "The Two Voices." The difference is that in the later poem, we obtain the feeling that the battle is over, and that the Everlasting Yea will not be lost again. Clough and Arnold never succeeded in resolving their doubts. In this respect, Tennyson certainly proved himself master of the religious situation that existed in the age of Victoria.

52 For further notes on Tennyson's subjective "religion" see his conversation with Bishop of Ripon, Friends, pp. 303-304.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

A study of the major themes of Tennyson's poetry makes the following conclusions obvious: The themes are all closely related; except for the theme of escape, there is no apparent break in the development of these themes; one cannot, however, conclude that the poet is preoccupied with a certain theme at a certain period to the point that he is not concerned with any others.

The relationship that exists among the themes is obvious in this study. Escape and isolation are closely bound together. Escape, however, is merely a theme of his early poetry. Poetic isolation, on the other hand, is not only advocated by the early poet; it is also embraced by the Ancient Sage.

A certain degree of detachment is necessary for the poet to fulfill his role completely. The present writer is of the opinion that in this state of detachment, the poet is barred from a life of ordinary experience; the Lady of Shalott is an example of this. Here we have detachment, and this is also the prerequisite of art. But the poet denounces a detached existence later on, as for instance in "The Palace of Art." The soul leaves the palace expressly to mix with the common man.

It is when the poet is detached that he is blessed with
visions. Visions are necessary for the poet to channel his poetic faculty in the direction of creative art. When the poet attempts to merge visions with the mundane affairs of daily life, he is frustrated in the result. Somehow such a fusion is not possible. Therefore, Alfred Tennyson embraces the role of a public poet. A large body of his poetry between "The Palace of Art" and "The Ancient Sage" is devoted to a minute observation of the Victorian life. This poetry ("Enoch Arden," "Aylmer's Field," and the two Locksley Hall poems, to mention only a few) is full of bathos, melodrama, and invective against social and political injustice. It is this type of poetry which forces the student to wish desperately that he had not written so much, or that he had not taken the problems of Victorian life as his private responsibility.

It becomes quite evident that his public and private awareness are in conflict with each other. It is King Arthur who admits that he has visions but that he ignores the visions in order to fulfill his public role.¹ That Alfred Tennyson forgets his public role in the course of his long career is clearly evident in such poems as In Memoriam, The Idylls of the King, and in some of the shorter poems. In these poems Tennyson once again gives indication of an abundance of poetic fancy.

Escape is the only theme about which one can say with certainty that it is an adolescent theme of Alfred Tennyson. Poetic

¹See page 84.
isolation, as has been indicated, is not only the concern of the early poet, but it is a repeated theme of his later poetry as well.

Balance, appearance and reality, quest, and the Everlasting Yea are some of the other major themes that bind both his great and mediocre poems. In delineating these themes, Tennyson has proved himself to be a serious poet, in fact, a major poet of the Victorian age, and as one who is concerned constantly with the eternal questions of man and of the world and the hereafter. In these four themes one can discern the poet's concern with the meaning of existence, with immortality, death, love, and the Ultimate Reality or the Atman.

All these themes are closely related. The being which lacks balance also lacks the sensibility to assess the significance of reality as being superior to the flux of life. This being tends to place all faith in the permanence of appearances of reality and on the mutable values of life. It is balance, based as it is on "self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-sacrifice," which enables one to perceive the truth that it is in conjunction with God, the Supreme Reality, that man can find the meaning of existence.

In the final analysis, one has to concede to the total unity that exists in Alfred Tennyson's poetry, a unity that is mainly thematic and not stylistic. As has been mentioned in the Introduction, there is constant interplay between the themes themselves. Escape leads to imbalance; at the same time, escape
is the result of the dichotomy that the poet is aware of, be it between appearance and reality or the transitory and the permanent. Balance helps one to approach this dichotomy with a "complete perspective." Faith is the conviction that the "real" is all that matters in life. Simultaneously, as the poet is aware of the philosophic implications of existence and with the problem of appearance and reality, he is conscious of his obligations to society. Hence he discounts aesthetic detachment. His poetic sensibility, however, is never completely destroyed.

Whatever the poet may mean by faith, he derives it from within. Existence is to him the clue to the necessity of balance and the belief in the Ultimate Reality. Faith in the immortality of the soul is a necessary conclusion to faith in one's own existence.

Tennyson has, as we have observed, written a great deal of poetry, and much of it is second-rate and not read by anyone today. But the poet has also written some of the best poems in the language. The clue to reading Tennyson is patience. One discovers, after the adjustment has been made, that, for instance, The Idylls of the King is exciting discovery. What one discovers in the whole poem is a close affinity of the poet with the philosophy that discounts matter as illusion and the great Atman as the only Reality. A certain degree of sympathy is required to grasp the major themes that underlie this poem. The same can be said of all the poetry of Tennyson. With patience one can arrive at the total pattern that exists in, not only The Idylls
of the King, but in In Memoriam and all other poems which contribute to the greatness of Alfred Tennyson.

The author is aware of the incompleteness of this study. And yet, with the approach that is undertaken here, one should be able to find the bearings.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no meaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.
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APPENDIX I

THE HOUGHTON LIBRARY COLLECTION OF

THE TENNYSON PAPERS

The Tennyson Papers
Purchased from
Sir Charles Tennyson
The Middle House
Southwold, England

Amy Lowell fund. Received: 1947-1954

The manuscripts of Alfred, Lord Tennyson secured from Sir Charles Tennyson are listed here in three sections. The first is a series of 72 notebooks: the second, 275 folders of loose papers, a great many of which were ripped by Tennyson from these notebooks or others like them; and the third, 42 folders containing papers collected by the Rawnsley family and bequeathed to Sir Charles. Thus the first two groups are parts of one natural whole, while the third is completely independent. The third group has been listed according to standard Houghton Library practice; the other two a little differently.

In the first two sections it is understood that all MSS. are in the autograph of Tennyson unless otherwise noted. "H. T." or "E. T." in parentheses means that the MS. is in the hand of his
son, Hallam Tennyson, or his wife, Emily (Sellwood) Tennyson; Tennyson's own initials are added when he revised or otherwise participated in the MS. The few other hands are identified by name, or marked "unidentified." Readers who can make identifications or who disagree with identifications are urged to discuss the matter with the curator.

The contents of the notebooks in the first section are listed page by page. Tennyson often inverted a notebook and began another series of writings at the other end; references to these inverted pages are preceded by an asterisk. The notebooks have been foliated in the lower left corner of the rectos throughout.

The paper is briefly described in the first two sections in the hope that it may help to date notebooks and fragments, and to associate loose sheets with the notebooks from which they were torn. The phrase "no watermark" is understood to mean "no recognizable watermark"; in some cases a fragment of a watermark may be seen, but not enough to identify it.

In all three sections the poems are identified by the titles used in the standard editions. Poems not found in the standard editions are listed under the titles given them by the poet; if untitled, they are listed by first lines, even if the first line is not a part of the fragment described. All poems in the three sections are represented in two indexes: the first contains all poems bearing titles, and the second is a first-line index of the remainder. Readers are also requested to inform the curator of any unidentified fragments which should be associated with a
known poem.

Sir Charles Tennyson has specified a single restriction: the texts in these MSS. may be quoted in literary and biographical studies, and may be employed in variorum notes to an edition, but they are not to be used to change or "improve" the accepted readings, especially in those poems whose final text was established in print by the poet himself.
APPENDIX II

EXTRACTS FROM THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

AND THE UPAKISHADS

United with Brahman,
Cut free from the fruit of the act,
A man finds peace
In the work of the spirit.
Without Brahman,
Man is a prisoner,
Enslaved by action,
Dragged onward by desire.

Happy is that dweller
In the city of nine gates
Whose discrimination
Has cut him free from his act:
He is not involved in action,
He does not involve others.

Do not say:
'God gave us this delusion.'
You dream you are the doer,
You dream that action is done,
You dream that action bears fruit.
It is your ignorance,
It is the world's delusion
That gives you these dreams.

The Lord is everywhere
And always perfect:
What does He care for man's sin
Or the righteousness of man?

The Atman is the light:
The light is covered by darkness:
The darkness is delusion:
That is why we dream.


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Let your conduct be marked by right action, including study and teaching of the scriptures; by truthfulness in word, deed, and thought; by self-denial and the practice of austerity; by poise and self-control; by performance of the everyday duties of life with a cheerful heart and an unattached mind.

* * *

He who knows Brahman [Atman] attains the supreme goal. Brahman is the abiding reality, he is pure knowledge, and he is infinity. He who knows that Brahman dwells within the lotus of the heart becomes one with him and enjoys all blessings.

* * *

Thou art imperishable.
Thou art the changeless Reality.
Thou art the source of life.

* * *

Earth, food, fire, sun—all these that you worship—are forms of Brahman. He who is seen in the sun—that one am I. He who dwells in the east, in the north, in the west, and in the south, he who dwells in the moon, in the stars, and in water—that one am I. He who dwells in the sky and makes the lightning his home—that one also am I. Know well the true nature of the world that it may never do you harm.2

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Elsie Antony Panakal has been read and approved by five members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 10, 1963
Date

Signature of Adviser