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Tennyson: Poetics of division and openness

Choi, Byong Hyon, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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A

Tennyson: Poetics of Division and Openness

by

Byong Hyon Choi

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1991

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Abstract

Tennyson: Poetics of Division and Openness

by

Byong Hyon Choi

Advisor: Professor Michael Timko

Division is one of the essential characteristics of Tennyson's poetry and poetics, and it is manifest in all aspects of his work: structure, character, theme, ideology, and style. Its main importance, however, lies ultimately in its signifying function which produces a plurality of textual interpretations. Division is also Tennyson's poetic strategy for securing his "negative capability," the capacity to be "in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." What is unique about Tennyson's division is that it deters both moral didacticism and aesthetic radicalism, which Hallam called poetry of "sensation." Thus, division calls for endless interpretations and reinterpretations, and eventually produces a kind of textual metaphor, that critical open space emphasized by post-structuralists and deconstructionists.

This particular aspect of division has been either misunderstood or ignored. Tennyson's division was often treated as a sign of his artistic failure as well as a weakness of his moral character (Nicolson, Eliot, Auden,

Lucas, Baum). In the 1950's and 1960's, however, there emerged a critical reaction which attempted to see Tennyson's division in a new, different way. Critics like Johnson, Killham, Langbaum, and Pitt began to see Tennyson's division in terms of poetic technique, not individual psychology or morality. This critical reaction, along with the new generic and aesthetic approaches made by Buckley, Ricks, Priestley, Rosenberg, and Turner, succeeded to a certain degree in restoring a balance in Tennysonian criticism. As a result, Tennyson's division can now be seen as reflecting his creative tension, one that is necessary for producing poetry with more sophisticated and profounder artistic significance (Shaw, Sinfield, Culler, Albright, Tucker, Buckler, Peltason, Berglund, Ball, Wordsworth).

Despite these critical developments, however, the notion of Tennyson's division still appears problematic. While our reception of Tennyson's division has overcome the old prejudice, it still lacks a clear conceptualization. It is my contention that Tennyson's division needs to be seen as the essence of his poetics or creative principle, and its main objective is to produce the openness of textual interpretation.

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Reaching finally a climatic moment of my struggle, I realize that my debt is enormous to so many people for so many reasons. As Tennyson's Ulysses would say, "I am a part of all that I have met."

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
I. Introduction	1
II. The Concept of Division in Tennyson's Poetry and Poetics	5
II. A. Tennyson's Division: A Historical Perspective	17
II. B. Tennyson's Poetics and Its Post-structural Implications	50
III. Tennyson's Poetics: The Short Poems	55
IV. <u>The Princess</u> : Engagement Via Evasion	120
V. <u>In Memoriam</u> : Division and Dispersion	131
VI. <u>Maud</u> : Madness and Division	145
VII. Thirteen Ways of Looking at "The Holy Grail"	160
VIII. Conclusion	177
Notes	179
Bibliography	181

I. Introduction

Daniel Albright in his Tennyson: The Muses' Tug-of-War (1986) says Tennyson's "genius, even at its strongest, is divided and frustrated, self-impeding" (3). Whether Tennyson's genius is frustrated or not may be a debatable issue, but the fact of division is an absolute certainty. The division or internal conflict is so manifest and omnipresent in Tennyson's works that it becomes one of the dominant themes in his poetry: vacillation ("Supposed Confession"), life-weariness ("Mariana" and "Oenone"), art and the world ("The Lady of Shalott," "The Palace of Art," "Lotos-Eaters," "The Vision of Sin"), despair and hope or divided will ("The Two Voices"), ambiguity of suicide and martyrdom ("Saint Simeon Stylites," "Tiresias," "St Lawrence," "St Agnes' Eve," "St Telemachus), man and woman (The Princess), faith and doubt (In Memoriam), madness and sanity (Maud), sense and soul (Idylls of the King) are the various manifestations of this "division," which ultimately reflects Tennyson's creative principle. Critics differ on the meaning of the division, but they are unanimous in affirming its existence. The divisions can be established in a number of areas but, according to Albright, they are generally categorized as follows: (1) life, (2) personality, (3) literary history (3). However, one might insist that Tennyson's poetic text be added to the list, since that text is in fact an originator, if not a theorizer, of the division.

The first chapter attempts to explain the concept of "division" found in Tennyson's poetry and poetics. It explains how Tennyson's "division" is different from the ones of other poets, and then it shows how it produces an openness of interpretation. The second chapter discusses the various critical approaches to the "division" from a historical perspective. Pointing out the problems of the previous criticism, from Arthur Hallam to Daniel Albright and Alan Sinfield, I will attempt to argue or suggest an alternative approach to the previous discussions of the "division." The "division" has been considered as the major weakness of Tennyson's poetry, and I will try to counter that assumption.

Although my concept of Tennyson's "division" derives primarily from his work itself, it is still a presupposition from a critical standpoint. Chapter III examines my own assumption and its validity. Citing Paul Armstrong's theory, I will define (or defend) my position as "heteronomous" as well as "post-structural." I do not reject wholly the critical approaches based on historicism; however, I believe that the old notion of the "division" needs to be changed. The fourth chapter discusses Tennyson's short poems in terms of his poetics. My discussion will demonstrate how Tennyson's text is penetrated by his poetics of "division," and will explore the possibility of producing a new interpretation. The poems to be discussed are as follows: "Mariana," "Mariana

in the South," "The Lady of Shalott," "Hesperides," "Supposed Confessions," "The Palace of Art," "Oenone," "The Two Voices," "Ulysses," "Tithonus," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Tiresias," "Saint Simeon Stylites." The fifth chapter takes the discussion of Tennyson's poetics further, but with an emphasis on his poetic strategy and artistic objective. It discusses The Princess, Tennyson's "problem poem" (Tucker, 351), focussing on its narrative device which constructs a story through seven different narrators and criticizes the effectiveness of its own approach. I maintain that Tennyson's dismantling or baring his own artistic device is in its essence "deconstructive" and "post-structural." I will argue that Tennyson's main interest in The Princess is not the representation of meaning (or ideology) but the meaning of representation itself. The sixth chapter attempts to revise the conventional notion of "unity" in In Memoriam. With the publication of The Princess (1847), "division" becomes increasingly Tennyson's major artistic form, and In Memoriam is a direct extension of that development. Albright sees the unity of In Memoriam in terms of division between Urania and Melpomene, the Muses who represent the two opposing principles, and Sinfield, influenced by Roland Barthes' post-structural strategy, attempts to see the division as the "dispersion" of the speaker's subjectivity. Contrary to these two critics, I contend that "division" and "dispersion" are the essential elements in Tennyson's "unity." This view opposes the old argument that

Tennyson's "division" is the sign of his intellectual deficiency. His "division" is not deficiency but creativity. Without this supposition Maud, the poem followed by In Memoriam, cannot be appreciated properly. The Seventh chapter demonstrates how Tennyson uses the "madness" of Maud's narrator as the organizing principle of the text and how this device produces the openness of interpretation. The final chapter attempts to see "The Holy Grail" in Idylls of the King as Tennyson's allegory of reading. The structure of "The Holy Grail" is clearly symbolic, and in that sense, it enables us to discover a significance that transcends its particular function within the whole corpus of the Idylls. My view suggests that King Arthur is an author and his five knights are the readers. Text (or reading of text) is the Holy Grail, the objective of their quest. The main feature of this allegory is the role of Arthur: he not only plays the role of an author but also that of a critic. Arthur recognizes the validity of individual approaches but shows a reservation as to the validity of their critical vision. The essence of Arthur's own vision, then, is that any vision including his own can be an illusion. Thus Tennyson's narrative reveals the critical circularity of post-structuralism.

II. The Concept of "Division" in Tennyson's Poetry and Poetics

Division is undoubtedly at the center of Tennyson's literary practice, but the same may be said of the practice of other Victorian poets. Browning and Arnold are perhaps no less divided than Tennyson himself. Browning depicts Sordello as "Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife / With each" (II, 657-58). Arnold in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" imagines himself "wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born." This kind of division can also be found in the Romantic poets. Wordsworth in The Prelude says, "Thus my days are passed / In contradiction" (I, 237-8). Byron's Childe Harold cries, "Man! / Thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear" (IV, 109); Manfred, "Half dust, half deity, alike unfit / To sink or soar." The division, then, is "a literary form" in a Burkean sense. Kenneth Burke in The Philosophy of Literary Form (1941) states: "No matter how concrete and realistic the details of a book, they may be found, when taken in the lump, to 'symbolize' some over-all quality of experience, as growth, decay, drought, fixity..." (36). Thus, according to Burke, The Ancient Mariner, The Waste Land, and The Grapes of Wrath fall into the same category of literature. If we follow Burke's theory, much of post-Neoclassic poetry with its "disassociation of sensibility" can be classified as the poetry of "division" in a formal sense.

Tennyson's division, however, is deeper than Burkean literary form, and its particularity, its difference from the predecessor texts, needs to be recognized. While sharing the common characteristics of "division" within the poetic tradition, it is primarily a poetic operation or methodology, one which produces the multiplicity and openness of textual interpretation and at the same time overcomes the limitation of poetic language. When Arnold says that he is wandering between two worlds, his division is more or less limited to an emotional or meditative level. Arnold's division is little more than the poetic subject or content; that is its raison d'être. Arnold's division, therefore, does not affect or alter the outcome of the interpretation of his poem. Tennyson's division, on the other hand, is in its essence; it is a "structural" rather than the treatment of a subject, and it functions as (in Frye's terms) "a shaping principle" or "a containing principle" of his poetry (Anatomy, 83). It is therefore intimately related to the signifying performance as well as the interpretation of the poetry. For example, when "The Two Voices" are engaged in their debate, the debate itself is not the chief interest of the poem; rather, the division itself is. The true meaning of the poem lies in its "condition of meaning," the poetic structure which produces the phenomena of various meanings. We are not interested in the rhetoric of the debate as such; the "Two Voices" are often hardly

distinguishable from each other. What we are interested in, then, is the "existential" division behind these Voices that their rhetoric cannot bridge. The language is pressured to its maximum but its rhetorical power is peculiarly its own weakness; the more powerful the rhetoric is, the wider the division between the "Two Voices." In their contest, there is neither victory nor defeat. This ambiguity makes the signification of the whole poem extremely unstable, but it seems that this is exactly what Tennyson intended: to prevent the reader from gaining a fixed meaning. The division in Tennyson's text rarely allows the poem to be "closed" into a fixed meaning. It calls into doubt everything that was said in the poem; it provides the text with a certain meaning, but only with "two voices"; thus it situates the interpretation between two different meanings, and, as a result, the meaning of the whole text is actually not a meaning but an "intermeaning." From the beginning "The Two Voices" reveals a divided structure, and thus the structure itself contributes to, indeed, becomes the meaning of the poem. The result is that the poem is ultimately about itself, its own divided nature. "The literary structure," according to Northrop Frye, "is ironic because 'what it says' is always different in kind or degree from what it means'" (Anatomy, 81). Semiotically speaking, the ambiguity in Tennyson's text is the violation of the rules of the code, and this violation which is "division" in another name, is the main producer of the textual meaning. Signified is

deliberately absent despite the presence of signifier. The poetic voice and authorial voice always conflict or collaborate, and the outcome of the linguistic game, which is the text of poetry, is a kind of inspired confusion.

In Memoriam is often thought as the poem of the conflict between faith and doubt. The poem has been read and judged from the semantic perspective, and the critical reception could vary according to the impression of Tennyson's handling the antithesis. However, the struggle between faith and doubt seems simply a manifestation of Tennyson's poetic division, which in turn is the superstructure of the poem. If the division is Tennyson's poetic, a kind of "langue" which forms his poetic system, faith and doubt are "parole," the manifestation of the underlying system. The problematics in much of Tennysonian criticism lies in its misunderstanding of this important relationship between the hidden structure and the phenomenal body of the text. The obvious approach in Tennysonian criticism is to "patch" the fundamental gap in the structure of In Memoriam with any fixed interpretation. The gap between faith and doubt is infinitely wide as long as "There lives more faith in honest doubt" (In Memoriam, XCVI); the ultimate interpretation requires more than a Kierkegardian "leap of faith." Is there, however, any credible interpretation of In Memoriam? There is certainly the sign of progress from doubt to faith in the poem, but there is also a significant difference between Dante's

comedy and Tennyson's. For Tennyson there is no final stage, and the final affirmation of faith could be the preparatory stage for another round of reversal. The faith is "never the last word" if we examine it in Barthean terms. It is "nothing but a further text, the last of the series, not the ultimate meaning: text upon text, which never illuminates anything" (Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, 120).

The unmistakable "division" in Tennyson's text naturally induces one to assume that there exists a certain system of poetic principles or general philosophy which we might call poetics working behind the predominant textual phenomena. One need not search through the text in order to discover Tennyson's poetics. Tennyson's surface, as Eliot observed, is "intimate with his depths" (295), and therefore, it reveals the depths of his poetics. When we look at the titles of his poetry such as "Nothing Will Die," and "All Things Will Die," or "Dualisms," "Sense and Conscience," "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind," "The Two Voices," we cannot fail to see Tennyson's interest in the idea of division. We also find sentences and phrases which are ambivalent and oxymoronic: "Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null" (Maud, II), "I am half-sick of shadows" ("The Lady of Shalott"), "divided quite / The kingdom of her thought" ("Palace of Art"), "Sick art thou--a divided will" ("The Two Voices"), and so on. These textual phenomena, in their pattern of regularity and consistency, frame our reading of the text

in such a way that enables us to perceive the structure of division and the possibility of dual or multiple interpretations.

This vital clue to Tennyson's poetry, however, was either unnoticed or misunderstood by the Victorian critics, including Arthur Hallam, the "originator" of Tennyson criticism. Hallam, anxious to promote Tennyson as his ideal poet, "the poet of sensation," saw in Tennyson's poetry only the sensation and failed to notice the "reflection" which coexists intimately with that sensation. Hallam did not perceive that reflection is one of the essential qualities in Tennyson's poetry of sensation. Victorian poetics, in general, was in fact divided along the line drawn by Hallam: sensation and reflection, the aesthetic and the didactic. The purpose of the division was ostensibly to overcome division and achieve unity, but unity was an elusive goal. From the historical vantage of the present time, Tennyson's attitude towards unity was significantly different from that of his contemporaries. It appears that his attitude has more to do with illumination or contemplation rather than "solution." In Victorian criticism there is an absence of critical observation concerning Tennyson's concern with textual division and any possibility of interpretational openness regarding his text. Tennyson's textual division, at most, was regarded simply as the reflection of the age which underwent a tremendous change with the unprecedented speed.

The division in In Memoriam was often said to represent the divided consciousness of the Victorians. As a result, critical attention and evaluation were focussed either wholly on Tennyson's aesthetic or ethical attitude; but the critical tendency to equate the poetry with a "solution" to the poet's and the age's spiritual dilemma caused a serious tension in Tennysonian criticism.

The radical change of the critical climate in our time makes it difficult to see Tennyson's poetry as it was seen in its time. If Victorians were preoccupied with their literary ideology, we are also with our own. The rising tension between historicism and anti-historicism in our time is equivalent to the Victorian division between aesthetics and ethics. During the last few decades, for instance, many books and articles have been written about the crisis of contemporary criticism.¹ The dividing line seems to be drawn sharply over critical ideology. Thus we see structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction (Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, De Man, Miller, Fish) on the one hand, and historicism and critical orthodoxy (Hirsch, Abrams, Booth, McGann) on the other. The conflicting directions that these two group of critics embody are in fact the division of our own desire: the urge to create the text and to preserve the text. The former risks distortion and the latter stagnation. The critical divisions and reactions in Tennysonian criticism is in fact the result of the critical dilemma that critics have faced. Albright's book deals with the division in Tennyson's text,

but his critical analysis also reveals his own division:

A study of Tennyson's life makes it possible to conclude that Tennyson was a neurotic whose conflicting desires both energized and weakened his poetry. But this conclusion may be too simple, for I believe that Tennyson's aesthetic goals were themselves in conflict, and this impasse, as well as his psychological difficulties, is responsible for the strangeness of his achievement. Tennyson tried to unite two incompatible poetics, one governed by a heavenly muse who disdained the homely details of life, the other governed by an earthly muse suspicious of the ideal and vague; and because he could not effect a full synthesis, a certain lingering stress can be found everywhere in his work, a headache of inaccurate focus. (3)

According to this statement, then, Albright views Tennyson's poetic division in terms of his life, the diachronic principle, but he obviously feels uncomfortable with his approach and says: "this conclusion may be too simple." He then tries to observe the division in terms of Tennyson's psychology as well as poetics, the synchronic principles: "his psychological difficulties"; "two incompatible poetics." Thus he establishes his argument for Tennyson's division, but his interpretation of the division reveals a problem when it comes to the evaluation of Tennyson's poetry: Tennyson's "conflicting desires both energized and weakened his poetry." How can a poem be both strong and weak at the same time? Albright's judgement, as we can observe, is based on his privileged notion of "synthesis" and "focus." So his judgement of Tennyson's poetry is necessarily negative. "A certain lingering stress" and "a headache of inaccurate focus" echo his underlying assumption. Nevertheless, his judgement is

not totally negative. He believes that the division also "energized" Tennyson's poetry. He does not, or perhaps cannot, offer any explanation for this phenomenon. For Albright, Tennyson's achievement is difficult to explain: "the strangeness of his achievement." What is interesting in his criticism is Albright's own division with regard to Tennyson's division. Albright charges Tennyson for "inaccurate focus" but his judgement also appears unfocussed as is shown in his contradictory remarks: "energized and weakened."

Also problematic is Albright's evidence to show Tennyson as "neurotic." It seems doubtful that any biographical studies can demonstrate definitely that Tennyson was "a neurotic." Tennyson may have been obsessed by conflicting impulses and poetic goals, but his so-called "neurosis" can be evident only in his poetry, not in his life. Otherwise Albright would not need to say rather defensively: "this conclusion may be too simple." There are biographical studies dealing with the division in Tennyson's "life" itself. As a matter of fact, there are too many, but this, too, is a problem. Since all the biographies of Tennyson differ in many of their details, we have to be aware that the "historical" Tennyson is possibly different from the different "biographical" Tennyson. "All description," according to David Shaw, "is interpretation" (The Lucid Veil, 28). The "descriptions" of Tennyson's life are not an exception. What we believe to be the division of Tennyson's life can be an interpreted

fact inferred chiefly from Tennyson's poetry. There are of course many facts that come directly from words of the poet himself, but any biography is not possible without interpreting and translating the poet's discourse into the biographer's own views or system of signs. "History is always much more fragile and conjectural than we suppose," says Tzvetan Todorov, "since the point of view taken makes us select certain phenomena as pertinent and reject others as not" (Introduction to Poetics, xxviii). Tennyson's view of history agrees with Todorov's: "History is half-dream -- ay even / The man's life in the letters of the man" (Memoir, I, xi). No matter how scientific it pretends to be, a history, for Tennyson, is little more than a story or a fiction. What then is exactly the division in Tennyson's life which illuminates and supports Albright's thesis of Tennyson's "neurosis"?

Albright's categorization appears rather schematic and his notion of Tennyson's "life" and "personality" are too general. He neither defines the nature of the division in Tennyson's life and personality nor explains the difference between the two; he simply assumes that they are self-evident. Albright's generalization, therefore, seems to be based on the extensive body of Tennyson criticism and tradition that have theorized and emphasized Tennyson's division since his death. The tradition of Tennyson criticism as the epistemological or theoretical basis of Tennyson's textual "division" is

essentially questionable. The work of art is not necessarily dictated by the elements of life, or the interpretation of text cannot be determined by the interpretation of life. Even if it is, or it can, the connection between life and text, the creator and the created, is still too difficult to verify without risking objectivity.

However, what was apparent in Tennyson criticism, especially during the early stage, was the assumption that there is an intimate connection between Tennyson's life and text. Thus Tennyson's textual "division" was seen in terms of his "biographical" life, which was marked by the turbulence of his unstable psychology and the moral values connected with his social and temporal environment. This biographical approach became more complicated with the emergence of a new poetic ideology, aestheticism. Tennyson's "division" was now both attacked and admired by the critics, and it became in time a source of critical confusion.

In the following discussion I will attempt to place the development of Tennyson criticism in a historical perspective and demonstrate how Tennyson's textual "division" has been misunderstood. I will start with Arthur Hallam, the originator of Tennyson criticism. The inclusion of Hallam, however, may not be directly relevant with the discussion of Tennyson's "division" because he does not apply his critical concept to his analysis of Tennyson's poetry. His critical assumption does not allow

him to see Tennyson's text as divided. On the other hand, Hallam's poetics is relevant to the discussion of the "division" because he framed his poetics in the form of "division," that is, "sensation" and "reflection," and his initial approach to Tennyson's poetry was powerful enough to influence the future criticism. Hallam's criticism is also relevant to the discussion of Tennyson's "division" in the sense that Hallam distorts the fact of "division." The denial of the "division" in Tennyson's poetry is in fact the equivalent of distortion. Hence, whenever a critic claims to find "sensation" in Tennyson's poetry, as Hallam does, he risks being blind to another essential quality of Tennyson's poetry, which is "reflection," and the failure to see both sides, the structure of "division," is the failure to understand Tennyson's poetry in a proper perspective.

II. A. Tennyson's Division: Historical Perspective

The history of the critical reception of Tennyson's poetry during the Victorian period indicates how the critics have been divided from the beginning. The difference of opinion between W. J. Fox and Arthur Hallam in reviewing Tennyson's early volume, Poems, Chiefly Lyrical (1830), is almost exemplary. Fox, believing that Shakespeare was "the greatest of philosophers," praises Tennyson's poetry for its sound philosophic qualities. Hallam, on the other hand, sees Tennyson as "the poet of sensation" and commends his poetry for its aesthetic qualities. Observing these two contrasting sets of criticism concerning Tennyson, Jerome J. McGann in The Beauty of Inflections (1988) says: "Their views can now be seen, from our privileged historical vantage, to have set the terms for the entire subsequent history of Tennyson criticism and interpretation" (184). Shaw in his Tennyson's Style (1976) also comments on the same division: "The qualities that Sir Henry Taylor criticizes in Romantic poetry are exactly the qualities that Arthur Hallam praises in his review of Tennyson's Poems, Chiefly Lyrical" (51).

The influence of these critics is difficult to measure in exact terms, but Tennysonian criticism with all its ramifications developed along the critical line initially drawn by these particular critics. Thus we find that Fox is followed by the Cambridge Apostles, Henry Taylor,

various moralistic critics, Utilitarians, and the Victorian audience in general; Hallam, on the other hand, by those who emphasize aesthetics, Pre-Raphaelites, symbolists, and impressionists. The rivalry and debate between these two sets of critical attitudes or systems of values still continue, even though the emphasis on the social concern advocated by Fox is declining at the present time.

The resultant attachment to Hallam's artistic view, however, is problematic because Hallam failed to represent Tennyson adequately. This does not mean that his opponents represent Tennyson more successfully; nevertheless, Hallam's concern with aesthetic poetry in general is not convincing when he associates it with Tennyson's poetry. The significant presence of "reflection" in Tennyson's poetry simply obviates Hallam's characterization of Tennyson as the poet of "sensation." In his "friendly" review of Tennyson's early volume, Poems, Chiefly Lyrical (1830), Hallam classifies Tennyson as a poet of "sensation" rather than "reflection" and claims to have discovered Tennyson's "original genius."

The features of original genius are clearly and strongly marked. The author imitates nobody; we recognize the spirit of his age, but not the individual form of this or that writer. His thoughts bear no more resemblance to Byron or Scott, Shelley or Coleridge, than to Homer or Calderon, Firdusi or Calidasa. (Jump, 42)

Hallam's statement, daringly definite, raises some important critical questions from a "modern" or contemporary point of view. His contention, for instance, that Tennyson "imitates nobody" appears doubtful, and his

subtle elimination of Wordsworth and Keats from the list of poets of potential influence confirms his critical distortion. Hallam presents Tennyson as if the poet came from nowhere. His analysis of Tennyson's text ignores what Julia Kristeva calls "intertextuality" ² or the "dialogic relationship" in Mikhail Bakhtin's term. ³ According to Kristeva and Bakhtin, there is no "text" completely "free" of other texts. Hallam's notion of Tennyson's originality," however, seems to be based on this impossible "freedom" from other texts. Frye says that "Poetry can only be made out of other poems" (Anatomy, 97). "Every poet," says Harold Bloom in Poetry and Repression (1976), "is in the position of being 'after the event,' in terms of literary language. His art is necessary an aftering" (4). Is Tennyson an exception to this? For Bloom, Tennyson's genius is "revisionary," not original. In "Tennyson: in the Shadow of Keats" he recognizes Tennyson's "original genius" mainly in terms of "revision," and his central term "revision" denies almost half of what Hallam meant by Tennyson's "original genius." "My concern," says Bloom, "will be Tennyson's revisionist genius for internalizing Keats, a process we might have thought impossible but for Tennyson's incredible rhetorical skill" (Francis, 29).

Bloom is certainly not alone in seeing a Keatsean influence on Tennyson. George Ford in Keats and the Victorians (1962) and Shaw in Tennyson's Style (1976) are among the many who argue for its existence. While these

critics point out a Keatean influence on Tennyson, Lionel Stevenson claims a Shelleyean one. He sees a strong connection between Tennyson's "The Mystic" and "The Poet" and Shelley's idealized image of the poets as "unacknowledged legislators" in "Defense of Poetry" (Killham, 127). Stevenson also sees an analogy between Shelley's "The Witch of Atlas" and Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," "The Revolt of Islam" and "The Palace of Art," and concludes that "At the beginning of Tennyson's career several of his poems were unmistakably influenced by Shelley" (Killham, 126). Stevenson's observation can be supported by Tennyson's own remarks: "I admire his 'Alastor,' 'Adonais,' 'Prometheus Unbound,' and 'Epipsychidion,' and some of his short lyrics are exquisite" (Memoir, II, 285). There is of course a distinction between the word "imitate" and "influence." To imitate and to be influenced are not quite the same. The former requires only enthusiasm, not originality, and the latter the effort of transformation and therefore creativity. This distinction implies that Tennyson can be original in spite of the influence of Shelley and others. Hallam's distinction, however, seems to be rather rhetorical and hard to justify because, if he indeed used the term "imitate" in the narrow sense defined above, his claim of Tennyson's "original genius" would seem too excessive and perhaps meaningless. No poet is an imitator in that narrow sense

Furthermore, we know from A Memoir, the biography

written by Tennyson's son, Hallam, that Tennyson admired both Wordsworth and Keats: "He had a hearty admiration for Wordsworth, the purity and nobility of whose teaching he highly revered. 'He seems to me,' my father would say, 'at his best on the whole the greatest English poet since Milton'" (II, 288). About Keats Tennyson said, "He would have been the very greatest of us all if he had lived. There is something of the innermost soul of poetry in almost everything he ever wrote" (II, 286). This admiration, if it is genuine, cannot be supposed to have been formed only in the later period of Tennyson's life.

It is rather reasonable for us to believe that both Hallam and Tennyson shared the same feeling of admiration for Wordsworth and Keats, and it does seem odd that Wordsworth and Keats are omitted from the poets of influence. This absence seems to be the most telling fault in Hallam's criticism; indeed, this lapse reveals Hallam's crucial blindness. He seems to exclude Wordsworth and Keats deliberately in order to establish Tennyson's "original genius." What we find in Hallam's criticism is what Harold Bloom calls the "clinamen" or "poetic misreading" of Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads. Hallam compares old Wordsworth (the poet of reflection) with young Tennyson (the poet of sensation), but his critical distinction would be much less tenable if he had considered Wordsworth's entire corpus. Hallam attacks Wordsworthian poetics, promoting himself as the champion of

Tennysonian poetics.

It is not true, as his exclusive admirers would have it, that the highest species of poetry is the reflective; it is a gross fallacy, that because certain opinions are acute or profound, the expression of them by the imagination must be eminently beautiful. Whenever the mind of the artist suffers itself to be occupied, during its periods of creation, by any other predominant motive than the desire of beauty, the result is false in art. (Jump, 35)

If we consider Hallam's remarks, we find that what is portrayed as Wordsworthian poetics is in fact not really Wordsworthian. Wordsworth's Preface or poetical works lend little support to the claim that "the highest species of poetry is the reflective." Wordsworth in the Preface talks about "abstract ideas" but his purpose is to renounce them, quite contrary to Hallam's assumption: "The reader will find that personification of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose" (74). Wordsworth's reservation about "reflective" poetry can also be found in his criticism of Johnson's poem, which Wordsworth rejects because it "wants sense" (88). Furthermore, Wordsworth says, "The end of poetry is to produce excitement" (84).

Hallam's portrayal of Tennyson shows almost the same kind of "misreading" as that of Wordsworth. Hallam attempts to exclude from Tennyson's poetry any possibility related to "reflected" poetry. His discussion of "Supposed Confessions," a poem marked with certain reflective qualities, is minimal, while "Recollections of the Arabian

Nights" and "The Ballad of Oriana," which are obviously poems of sensation but far inferior to "Supposed Confessions," are fully quoted and discussed. Hallam's selection of Tennyson's poems is based not upon their unique qualities but more on those collective characteristics that can fit best his poetic ideology. Thus we find such poems as "The 'How' and the 'Why'," "A Character," "Ode to Memory," "The Poet," "The Poet's Mind," "Nothing Will Die," and "All Things Will Die," which are basically poems of reflection rather than sensation, are either eliminated from his treatment or given only a few lines of comment. Hallam's remarks on "Ode to Memory," for example, are interesting in the sense that they reveal his self-consciousness about his critical theory: "Yet in the Ode to Memory...there is a majesty of expression, united to a truth of thought, which almost confounds our preconceived distinctions" (46).

This remark is clearly an expression of Hallam's anxiety concerning the arbitrary nature of his critical division between sensation and reflection, the foundation of his criticism. Hallam is not quite sure whether "Ode to Memory" is a poem of sensation or not. The presence of "reflection" in Tennyson's poetry seems to Hallam too potent to ignore. At the same time, Hallam fails to see the fundamental flaw at the foundation of his criticism. He writes, for instance, that "a majesty of expression" in Tennyson's poem "almost confounds our preconceived distinctions." However, the word "almost" betrays his

genuine feeling; it reveals rather than conceals Hallam's self-consciousness. Hallam believes that Tennyson's poetry is both sensational and reflective, but he seems reluctant to admit it in the light of his thesis. Whether it be deliberate or not, Hallam's failure to perceive the division in Tennyson's poetry is his major critical problem.

We are better able to understand Hallam's poetics if we compare his review with Wordsworth's Preface. (It is illuminating to see and read Hallam's essay as a Victorian Preface.) Wordsworth's poetics are closely related to his political ideology. In the Preface (1978) Wordsworth states that he wrote the poems "chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure" (65). The principles behind Wordsworth's selection of a common language, stylistics, the rural manners, the emphasis on feelings, and even the disregard of the difference between prose and poetry, directly correspond to Wordsworth's political ideology, particularly his belief in liberty and democracy. Wordsworth's poetics can be best summarized in his definition of a poet: "a man speaking to men" (77). This definition implies, at the very least, that Wordsworth the poet is essentially "dialogical" in Bakhtinian sense.

On the other hand, Hallam's approach is singularly "monologic" in its range of interests. In his criticism

Hallam rules out not only Wordsworthian politics but also any other concerns except "beauty." Hallam believes that "whenever the mind of the artist suffers itself to be occupied, during its periods of creation, by any other predominant motive than the desire of beauty, the result is false in art" (35). He is, therefore, naturally suspicious of "predominant" Wordsworthian subjects. Such grand subjects as laid out in "The Recluse," "Man," "Nature," and "Human Life" appear to Hallam not the proper concern of poetry. These are, according to Hallam, "good as philosophy, powerful as rhetoric, but false as poetry" (36). For this reason, Hallam sees morality in terms of "moral temptations" (37) for the poet or as an "indulgence of heterogeneous aspirations" (38).

Hallam's poetics can be characterized as monastic, solipsistic, even narcissistic. The ideal poet, for Hallam, is a man of imagination, detached from any worldly interest, speaking only to the man in himself; he has no message for his audience except unfolding the carpet of his beautiful soul made out of his language. Hallam tries to eliminate ideology from poetry, but eliminating ideology is itself ideological. When Hallam rejects the ideological principle that can be found in Wordsworthian poetics, he in fact rejects much more than he intends to. His rejection signifies the withdrawl of his sympathy towards "the middle and lower classes of society" and at the same time identifies the poet with the ruling class of society by privileging poetry with a special status. As a result,

Hallam's poetics appear aristocratic and conservative. It is radical only in the area of aesthetics.

Following the critical line established by Hallam, Harold Nicolson in his Tennyson: Aspects of His Life, Character and Poetry (1923), defines Tennyson as "a subjective poet" (27). His concept of "a subjective poet" corresponds to Hallam's "poet of sensation." But what Nicolson chiefly takes from Hallam is Hallam's critical emphasis on division. Thus Nicolson replaces Hallam's critical terms "sensation" and "reflection," and introduces his own: "subjective" and "objective" (27); "emotional" and "instructional" (5); "pure" and "applied" (273); "a later Georgean" and "a Victorian" (6). What we observe in this development of Tennysonian criticism is that Nicolson perpetuates Hallam's notion of "division." However, while Hallam used the terms "sensation" and "reflection" to emphasize the difference between Tennyson and Wordsworth, the new poetry and the old one, Nicolson transforms Hallam's critical insight chiefly to underline the division within Tennyson himself. While Hallam applied his dualistic approach only to his own poetics, Nicolson transfers the operation of Hallam's theory directly from the poetics to Tennyson the poet and his personality. The intention in Nicolson's division is clearly to promote Tennyson's aesthetic poetry as well as Nicolson's own poetic ideology, but his theory causes some serious side-effects. Nicolson starts out with an assumption that

"Tennyson's genius was essentially of a subjective, and not of an objective, quality" (9). Using this assumption, Nicolson describes Tennyson as follows:

He was intended to be a subjective poet, and was forced by circumstances into fifty years of unnatural objectivity. He chose the easier and more prosperous course: he became the Laureate of his age; he subordinated the lyric to the instructional. And his poetry thereby has lost one half of its potential value. (10)

Here Nicolson's criticism departs from Hallam's: He sees Tennyson as both a poet of sensation and reflection, and more importantly, turns this critical aspect into a moral one.

Should his theory of division be accepted, what is at stake is Tennyson's "moral" character. When Nicolson claims that Tennyson "subordinated the lyric to the instructional," the implication is clearly the existence of a direct link between Tennyson's didactic poetry and his moral compromise. Nicolson's theory of division insinuates time after time Tennyson as a poet of dubious moral character. On the other hand, the negative implication in Nicolson's criticism in regard to Tennyson's moral character, though it is explicit, strangely lacks the critical aggressiveness he often displays elsewhere. As far as Tennyson's moral character is concerned, it appears that Nicolson calls that into question but does not condemn it. Does this mean that Nicolson himself is divided, too?

Nicolson is often not sure whether he should blame Tennyson himself or the Victorians for the problems he

cites:

I do not pretend that in regard to politics his "message" was forced upon him by the requirements of his age: We must admit, I fear, that his political poems welled up from the clear spring of personal conviction. (258)

If Tennyson's poetry is based upon his "personal conviction," in what sense could his "message" be forced upon him? To put this question in another way: If Tennyson's private feeling and life-philosophy were not fundamentally different from his age--as Nicolson strongly implies--and, more specifically, if Tennyson's longing for faith were not different from his contemporaries, how can Nicolson claim that Tennyson's In Memoriam was intended "to evolve a happy compromise" (269)?

Also puzzling is that Nicolson, despite the problem of Tennyson's "compromise," acknowledges Tennyson's artistic sincerity:

His longer poems are equally sincere. His dedication to the Prince Consort and to the Queen herself have no shade about them of the perfunctory; and the Wellington Ode, so strangely unappreciated by his contemporaries, is admittedly one of the finest in the language. (167)

If Nicolson truly believes in Tennyson's artistic sincerity, how can he accuse Tennyson of compromise, which is a reflection of an artistic insincerity? The theories of Nicolson and Hallam remain highly relevant in our time because the critical questions raised by them remain unresolved in any fundamental way. Tennyson's division still is regarded by many mainly as a moral compromise or his conformity to the pressure of his age. While the exact

definition of Tennyson's moral compromise is lacking, the notion of compromise itself persists. Even more problematic is that the theories of Hallam and Nicolson have been so deeply instituted in Tennysonian criticism that we can hardly avoid approaching Tennyson's poetry through their critical framework. Hallam's reductionism and Nicolson's essentialism created the framework for familiar reactions and divisions among the critics who followed, and this framework has become the chief obstacle in seeing Tennyson's poetry "as in itself as it really is."

T. S. Eliot's influential essay, "In Memoriam" (1936), despite its important critical insights, is essentially Nicolsonian in its way of seeing Tennyson. He observes Tennyson in terms of division, relating Tennyson's moral character to the character of his art.

Tennyson's surface, his technical accomplishment, is intimate with his depth: what we most quickly see about Tennyson is that which moves between the surface and the depth, that which is of slight importance. By looking innocently at the surface we are most likely to come to the depths, to the abyss of sorrow. Tennyson is...the most instinctive rebel against the society in which he was the most perfect conformist...

Tennyson seems to have reached the end of his spiritual development with *In Memoriam*; there followed no reconciliation, no resolution...

The genius, the technical power, persisted to the end, but the spirit had surrendered. And having turned aside from the journey through the dark night, to become the surface flatterer of his own time, he has been rewarded with the despite of an age that succeeds his own in shallowness. (Selected Essays, 295)

Eliot judges In Memoriam to be the highest achievement among Tennyson's works. Although Nicolson believes that it is the poem of "compromise," Eliot does not find in it any

evidence of compromise. On the other hand, Eliot's privileging of In Memoriam does not appear entirely objective because his theory implies a certain connection between Tennyson's poetic decline and his conformity. Maud, which was written after In Memoriam, may be inferior to In Memoriam, but its inferiority cannot be based on Tennyson's conformity. Idylls of the King may be more concerned with the social problems of Victorian society, but Tennyson cannot be called "the surface flatterer of his own time" because of his concern for his society. It should be remembered that Idylls of the King was regarded by many of Victorian critics (including Carlyle and Ruskin) as "literature of escape," not of social engagement.

Eliot, of course, is well aware of this problem. Thus he says: "The genius, the technical power persisted to the end, but the spirit had surrendered." He never makes clear, however, what he means by "spirit." If Eliot had elaborated his view of Tennyson's "conformity" instead of saying that "the spirit had surrendered," his meaning no doubt would have become clearer. The word "spirit" is too abstract to produce any specific meaning. Walter E. Houghton, in The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870, says that "social conformity was a kind of sincere insincerity" (396). This is perhaps what Eliot meant to say; but his expression of the idea is more or less literary: he touches the same thing in many different ways, equivocating the essentials.

Eliot also says: "Tennyson lived in a time which was already acutely time-conscious: a great many things seemed to be happening, railways were being built, discoveries were being made, the face of the world was changing. That was a time busy in keeping up to date. It had, for the most part, no hold on permanent things, on permanent truths about man and God and life and death" (294). If this is the world in which Tennyson lived, it is not easy to determine exactly what conformity is. The particularity of Tennyson's world and its morality must be understood on their own terms. "To dismiss an artist," says John Killham, "because of dislike of his inevitable conformity to the cultural 'context' is not, ultimately at any rate, particularly discriminating" (Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson, 20). Eliot seems well aware of this problem, and this is perhaps the reason for the critical ambiguities in his criticism. Eliot does not intend to be a moral critic; but the more he dwells upon Tennyson's division and entertains the notion of his "conformity," the more he is a moral rather than an aesthetic critic.

Eliot's portrayal of Tennyson as a divided poet between "the most instinctive rebel" and "the most perfect conformist" added weight to the Nicolsonian view, and his gesture of appreciation and condemnation, mingling of "blame and praise," was shared and followed by F. R. Leavis (New Bearings in English Poetry, 1932), W. H. Auden "Introduction" in A Selection of the Poems of Alfred

Tennyson, 1944), Paull F. Baum (Tennyson Sixty Years After, 1948), and F. L. Lucas (Tennyson, 1957). The tone of indictment, however, began to recede during the 1950s and 1960s, and the critical focus gradually shifted from Tennyson the poet to his poetry itself. F. E. L. Priestly's "Idylls of the King--a Fresh View" (1949), E. J. Chiasson's "Tennyson's 'Ulysses'--a Re-interpretation" (1954), John Killham's "Tennyson's Maud--the Function of the Imagery" (1958), collected in Killham's edition, Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson (1960), are a few examples of critical attempts to move away from the poet to the poetry.

A new critical paradigm also emerged. E. D. H. Johnson in his The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry (1952) proposed the notion of "a double awareness." Victorian poets, according to Johnson, developed "remarkable techniques for sublimating private insights without materially falsifying the original perceptions at the heart of the creative impulse" (xv). Killham also put forth this view: "Tennyson is not offering trite moral lessons but, on the contrary, figuring the incompatibility between the ugly confessions, the moral and physical shortcomings of the world, and man's inner vision" (18). These approaches offered a refreshingly new way of interpreting Tennyson's poetry. While Nicolson saw Tennyson, "a second-rate instructional poet," as "offering trite moral lessons," and Eliot found "flattery" in Tennyson's poetry, Killham sees the poet as "figuring the incompatibility" between the two

opposite worlds," as "dramatizing" the moral dilemma rather than representing morality itself. Critical attention was thus transferred from Tennyson's moral character to his poetic technique or strategy. According to this view, Tennyson may appear to conform to the popular culture but in fact registers his own independent opinion for change. This possibility enables us to reinterpret Tennyson's "division." If his "division" is intended as the "double awareness," it is not the sign of his moral weakness but strength or the struggle for artistic integrity. Robert Langbaum in his The Poetry of Experience (1957) also introduced an approach to help shift Tennysonian criticism, changing the critical emphasis from the poet to poetry, especially poetic technique. Langbaum viewed the dramatic monologue as the vehicle in which the poet expresses an uninhibited point of view while at the same time escaping the problem of personality:

We understand the speaker of the dramatic monologue by sympathizing with him, and yet by remaining aware of the moral judgement we have suspended for the sake of understanding. The combination of sympathy and judgement makes the dramatic monologue suitable for expressing all kinds of extraordinary point of view, whether moral, emotional or historical--since sympathy frees us for the widest possible range of experience, while the critical reservation keeps us aware of how far we are departing. (96)

Pointing out "the same tension between sympathy and judgement" in Tennyson's poetry, Langbaum stated that "To understand the essential Tennyson, the only Tennyson who can interest us, we must discard the Victorian image for the image, proposed by Harold Nicolson a generation ago, of

the brooding recluse of the Lincolnshire wolds and the talented misfit of Cambridge" (92). Valerie Pitt's book, Tennyson Laureate (1962), strongly echoes this view. Against Nicolson's view that "the essential Tennyson is a morbid and unhappy mystic" (27), Pitt responds as follows:

But Tennyson is not, though Nicolson would sometimes like to think so, a poet maudit. The limitations of viewing him purely as a 'morbid mystic' without the courage of his insight appear as soon as this is suggested. (Tennyson Laureate, 6)

"This view of his laureateship," she criticizes, "is as much a reaction against the Victorians as against Tennyson" (12).

Charles Tennyson's view on this issue is even more convincing:

Many critics have expressed the view that Tennyson's acceptance of the Laureateship was a mistake, that it led him to forsake the higher reaches of the imagination, where his lyric gift could have full play, and to interest himself in politics and philosophy, subjects which he was not intellectually suited to deal with, and for which his peculiar poetic gift was not adapted. I do not share this view. To me Tennyson's outstanding quality is his immense variety, and his capacity for change. Great poets do not repeat themselves and Tennyson did not (indeed could not) repeat 'The Lady of Shalott', 'The Lotos-Eaters' and In Memoriam. The Laureateship was among the influences--perhaps the chief influence-- which brought him into the mainstream of Victorian life, giving him a new interest and involvement in the tendencies of his time, both political and social, and helping him to become the representative poet of the Victorian Era. (Palmer, 211-12)

The new interpretation of Tennyson's division by these critics undoubtedly helped remove the disturbing disequilibrium in Tennysonian criticism, but their effort to separate Tennyson's poetry from the narrow moral

implication did not succeed in changing the image of Tennyson as the divided poet. Their theories, in their emphasis on the integrity of Tennyson's creative consciousness, ironically made the issue of division appear more complex and thereby, unwittingly, reinforced the notion of division.

The new biographical approach of Jerome Hamilton Buckley was another attempt to revise Tennyson's image. Buckley in his Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (1960) attempted to correct "Nicolson's brilliant but biased Tennyson," and "Baum's scholarly but hostile Tennyson Sixty Years After" (viii):

Yet the distinction that his critics have repeatedly drawn between the bard of public sentiments and the earlier poet of private sensibilities is ultimately untenable. For there was no real break in Tennyson's career; from the beginning he felt some responsibility to the society he lived in, and until the end he remained obedient to the one clear call of his own imagination. His development depended not on a sacrifice of the personal vision, but on the constant interaction between public knowledge and private feeling. (255)

Buckley's biography, preceded by Sir Charles Tennyson's Alfred Tennyson (1949) and followed by Christopher Ricks's Tennyson (1972), redefines Tennyson as a poet of "evolution" rather than division. This view is as powerful as Johnson's and Langbaum's; nevertheless, when Buckley states that "Each piece [of Tennyson's poetry], however, must be finally be assessed on its own intrinsic merits" (254), he sounds strangely ambiguous, especially from a critical point of view. How can we assess the "intrinsic merits" of each poem? Can we assess them without committing

ourselves to a certain critical context or position that is extrinsic to the poem?

Shaw in The Lucid Veil (1987) makes the following perceptive observation: "Most poems of all historical periods are instances of more than one genre" (180). Shaw's critique of generic criticism could be regarded as another attempt to "defend" Tennyson against the Nicolsonian view:

As Victorian poetry turns from representation to pure presentation, it tries to chart and even cross the boundaries of the sayable. Is the meaning of such poetry not too indeterminable for generic critics to classify? Generic criticism is by definition a labelling and naming. If new poetic genres try to name the unnameable, then the generic critic would seem to be in the indefensible position of denying the essence of what he names. (182)

According to this view, In Memoriam is generically neither tragedy nor comedy, neither lyric nor epic; also, neither a poem of unity nor disunity. As soon as this generic nature of the poem is recognized, the alleged compromise or the unnatural reconciliation of the poem, which has been criticized by Nicolson and Baum, appears prejudiced, if not "indefensible." Tennyson's use of poetic genres such as the dramatic monologue and the Idyll cannot be judged simply by the old critical framework of generic criticism. F. E. L. Priestly's comments on this issue support Shaw's view. In Language and Structure in Tennyson's Poetry (1973), Priestly states:

We must now consider, necessarily briefly, three major works whose structure is so radically different from anything written before that each virtually creates its own new genre. Needless to say, the

introduction of a new genre is a hazardous undertaking for the poet, since the critic is likely to attempt to judge it in terms of the old familiar genre. He asks at the outset, 'what sort of poem is this?', reviewing his known categories; and when it fails to fit any of them, or the one he has decided it ought to fit, is prone to condemn it as a failure. The three works [Maud, In Memoriam, Idylls of the King] to be discussed here have all suffered at some time or another, are to varying extents, from this sort of misjudgement" (106).

What then is a more valid approach to Tennysonian criticism, one that does not reduce the poet or the person to simple either-or? There is, as I have summarized, undoubtedly a mass of critical opinion about Tennyson, but it often seems little more than a reformulation of Hallam and Nicolson's approaches when it is divided between approval and disapproval of Tennyson the poet and his poetry; the critical climate is very confusing. As late as 1971, Lord David Cecil in his introduction to A Choice of Tennyson echoes Nicolson's theory in its full reverberation, and its dogmatic attitude is shocking:

The truth is that there were two Tennysons: what may be called the fundamental Tennyson, the inspiration of his successes, and the superficial, the source of his lapses. The fundamental was in-born, the superficial was largely the product of the period in which he lived. The fundamental Tennyson was an aesthete and a man of heart; tender, vulnerable, passionately affectionate, intensely responsive to whatever appealed to his sense of beauty and glory and wonder, and with a delicate delighted sensibility to the quality of words and the movement of metre. The superficial Tennyson was a less unusual phenomenon; an intelligent, conscientious nineteenth-century Englishman, liberal minded, domestic, seriously concerned with the political and religious issues of his time and who shared with his earnest contemporaries a strong sense of social responsibility. (Palmer, 14)

This kind of statement, of course, is an extreme case and,

therefore, its critical limitation appears easily noticeable. But there are many other critics whose portrayal of Tennyson is not simply black and white, and the confusion caused by their mixture of discreteness and uncertainty can be even worse than critical bias. The majority of critics could neither stay away from the tainted history nor return to it. This critical tension became intensified as they shifted their critical focus from Tennyson the poet and his personality to his text. Herbert F. Tucker in his Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism (1988) aptly summarizes the problem as follows:

I would submit that the throat-clearing rumble which comes to the top of so many Tennyson studies arises, at intellectual bedrock, in a collision between historical and ahistorical modes of signification, or between conditionalist and essentialist apprehensions of value. This fundamental conflict--which troubles Victorianists more conspicuously than specialists in other areas of English literature--also underlies much recent debate over the principles and methods proper to literary scholarship in general. (Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism, 4)

Tucker's statement indicates the critical anxiety that has surfaced during the recent decades. The growth of Tennyson criticism has coincided with the rise of various critical methodologies. Thus Tennyson's poetry has been dealt with in terms of symbolism, Freudianism, New Criticism, formalism, feminism, structuralism, and post-structuralism, all of which are basically ahistorical and essentialistic by their nature. Most of the critics, including Tucker, strive to find a middle ground in their critical practice between the historical and ahistorical or

the contextual and textual--since they are mutually corrective--but it seems increasingly doubtful if a middle ground exists in terms of literary modernism. Nevertheless, Tucker attempts to find a solution in the tension itself:

So we may faintly trust the larger hope: in the long run, the best practice will prevail upon the best-laid plans of either critical or historical sorts. Meanwhile, as a check upon short-term astigmatism, it will be well to bear in mind that what we claim as the function of criticism at the present time is likely to be out of phase with what, at any present time, we actually do. This self-critical posture, with attendant vacillation between competing textualist and contextualist approaches, may offer the soundest means of getting history back into the texts we study without denying to those texts their legitimate, historically constitutive force as landmarks of the imagination. (Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism, 9)

The methodological tension surrounding the conflict between the historical and ahistorical approaches that Tucker talks about can be productive, but the "vacillation" between competing textualist and contextualist approaches" seems to be a problematic solution. The critical distance and closeness can be achieved through "vacillation, but at what cost? Can we then study the text "as we do the stars, seeing their interrelationships but not approaching them" ?

“ Tucker wants to avoid producing a subjective meaning, what Eliot termed as "whiggery." The anxiety of "whiggery" obviously makes Tucker turn to history, but the trust in history for the ideal interpretation of the text often turns out to be illusory. Otherwise Tucker's suspicion of "the function of criticism at present time" is unnecessary. The critical problem discussed here, of course, exceeds the

boundary of Tennyson criticism. But the Tennyson problem is nothing less than a fundamental one, and the problem is very much complicated by Tennyson's "division" and desire for the openness and plurality of meaning.

I have attempted so far to demonstrate a variety of modes of Tennyson's poetic division by discussing the relevant theories in the historical context of Tennyson criticism. My discussion of this subject is by no means comprehensive but my critical objective here does not lie in the enumeration of the subject but to understand the true nature of Tennyson's division. Tennyson uses "division" for various purposes: structure, subject, style and poetics. This fact, as I have indicated, has been either misunderstood or overlooked by the early critics of Tennyson's poetry. In the critical attention given to his "use" of division is a relatively recent phenomenon, and I will attempt now to see and trace more closely the recent development of Tennyson criticism in this respect.

The text is the area where Tennyson's division appears most visible. There can be many ways of describing the modes of textual division. The formalist approach is the one that comes to mind because the formal character in Tennyson's text, or "the structural principle" in Martin Dodsworth's term, naturally suggests its own methods of approach. Dodsworth in his "Patterns of Morbidity" observes: "Doubleness provides the structural principle of

poems spaced as far apart in Tennyson's career as 'The Two Voices' and 'The Ancient Sage'. It also lies behind Tennyson's partiality to oxymoron--'faultily faultless' in Maud, or, from 'De Profundis': the pain / Of this divisible-indivisible world / Among the numerable-innumerable" (Armstrong, 24). If "doubleness" is indeed the structural principle, the perception of this characteristic is essential to the understanding of Tennyson's text. Sinfield clearly states the point: "It seems to be a fact about the way in which we perceive structures that once having discerned elements of a pattern we will naturally proceed to assimilate into it all relevant items in the context" (7). Elton Edward Smith's The Two Voices: A Tennyson Study makes the divisions solely in terms of poetic themes: "Art versus Society," "Sense versus Soul," "Doubt versus Faith," "Past versus Strength" (vii). Smith's thematic division formalizes the elements of division into a recognizable entity; at the same time it reduces inevitably the complexity of Tennyson's text. Smith discusses "The Palace of Art" under the title of "Art versus Society" but the poem can also be discussed under "Sense versus Soul," another of his titles. His formal distinction seems too tenuous and even confusing when he discusses The Princess under the two different headings: "Art versus Society" and "Doubt versus Faith." Also, Smith assigns the title, "Sense and Soul" for Idylls of the King, a strategy that signifies that his critical approach is based largely upon Tennyson's own

authority, "sense at war with soul," thus making his treatment of the poem more or less a mechanical elaboration of author's alleged intention. These formal approaches restrict Smith and hardly allow him to deal with Tennyson's poetics adequately. From the perspective of Tennyson's poetics, Idylls of the King is much closer to "Art versus Society" than "Sense and Soul."

The thematic division in Daniel Albright's Tennyson: The Muses' Tug-of-War, however, is ideological as well as formalistic. By privileging "unity" as the ultimate concern of poetry, Albright characterizes Tennyson's division as a "struggle." In other words, he imposes his own definition of "struggle" on the word "division," while he sees the division as the structure of the poem. As a result, Albright's approach appears relatively subjective compared to Smith's. He presents Tennyson's division in terms of "three struggles": "Tennyson vs. namelessness," "Personae vs. clouds," "The commonplace vs. the sublime." As we can see, the added meaning of "struggle" naturally expands the notion of division. The division between "Tennyson and nameless" seems less clear than that in "art vs. society" in a formal sense; and yet it also attempts to show the depth and range of Tennyson's division at different levels. Thus Albright makes some insightful observations in regard to Tennyson's division: "Tennyson's poetic between the desire to construct beautiful images and the desire to dissolve" (8), or "Tennyson's poetry is

happiest when he can dress up our usual furniture--and invest the ordinary with a tinge of eeriness" (11).

Albright's observations, however, appear problematic when he freely mixes Tennyson's poetics with his psychology. Like Nicolson before him, Albright privileges Tennyson's psychology over his poetics in determining or explaining the nature of Tennyson's division; as a result, his formal division of Tennyson's division is a kind of "medley" like The Princess itself. Consider, for instance, the following statement: "Tennyson tried to unite two incompatible poetics, one governed by a heavenly muse who disdained the homely details of life, the other governed by an earthly muse suspicious of the ideal and vague" (3).

The tension described in this statement is exactly the meaning of Albright's title, "Tennyson: The Muses' Tug-of-War," which states that Tennyson "tried to unite two incompatible poetics." Surely that is a debatable assumption. The word "tried" seems to be too resonant with psychological implication that cannot be verified in any convincing way. Furthermore, his description of Tennyson's poetics as "incompatible" anticipates a negative critical judgement because in such a given condition the failure is inevitable. Albright believes that Tennyson's failure can be redeemed to a certain degree by his "struggle" (another term for "try"), but his position requires the adequate aesthetic means or unity which can overcome the inherent incompatibility in Tennyson's poetics. This requirement, an emphasis on the unity, then raises doubt as to its

validity as an ideal objective of Tennyson's poetics. According to Ann Wordsworth, for instance, "Poems do not express unity: a full deconstructionist reading makes it clear that there's no unified subject and no given plenitude for the poem to compose or enact" (Untying the Text, 216). Albright's analysis, however, shows little awareness of deconstructionist readings, although his critical approaches do not lack their implications.

Alan Sinfield's approach to Tennyson's division is perhaps less formal but much concentrated than Albright's. Sinfield points to the poetic subjectivity in Tennyson's text; he states: "an analysis of the significant failure of the structure of In Memoriam may lead us to consideration of the troubled subjectivity of the poet. Criticism has exercised itself to discover organic unity in the sequence. But Tennyson acknowledged that his way of writing was hapazard" (122). If Smith found the division in the antithetical themes, and Albright in structure, whether it be psychological or textual, Sinfield thus attempts to locate it in the "subjectivity" of the poet. His critical insight lies mainly in his new interpretation of the significance of Tennyson's division: "Tennyson's final theory of subjectivity rejects earlier theories of coherence and permanence: his writing is not the representation of a unified self" (124). Sinfield obviously is attempting to change the critical framework of the Tennysonian "problem." He discounts the importance

of "structure" as the base of critical evaluation and suggests that Tennyson's "way of writing" is different from others, as is implied in Tennyson's own remarks. To seek "coherence and permanence," therefore, is a wrong approach as far as Tennyson's text is concerned.

What, then, is a satisfactory alternative way of reading Tennyson's text? "An alternative way of thinking about In Memoriam," says Sinfield, "may be drawn from Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes. This volume of autobiographical reminiscences and reflections, composed of brief sections, is like Tennyson's poem, but Barthes' aim is to prevent a structure from forming" (124). Sinfield seems uneasy about Tennyson's referential language that shapes an elegy as well as the coherence of subjectivity; nevertheless he substitutes subjectivity for structure as the source of Tennyson's division. But the division in Tennyson's subjectivity that Sinfield emphasized is not the division in an ordinary sense; it is more a "dispersion" or an "instability" or a withdrawal than a binary opposition or contradiction. Sinfield's observation seems inspired by Roland Barthes's post-structural stance:

For classical metaphysics, there was no disadvantage in "dividing" the person (Racine: "J'ai deux hommes en moi"); quite the contrary, decked out in two opposing terms, the person advanced like a good paradigm (high / low, flesh / spirit, heaven / earth); the parties to the conflict were reconciled in the establishment of a meaning: the meaning of Man. This is why, when we speak today of a divided subject, it is never to acknowledge his simple contradictions, his double postulations, etc.; it is a diffraction which is intended, a dispersion of energy in which there remains neither a central core nor a structure of meaning: I am not contradictory, I am dispersed.

(Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, 143)

Sinfield, like Barthes, does not want to see Tennysonian division only in terms of contradiction and reconciliation. The poet's subjectivity, from Sinfield's point of view, is very much a modern problem. The metaphysical concern substantiated by the coherent subjectivity is no longer apparent and Tennyson's persona is no longer primary. Sinfield finds in Tennyson a constant withdrawal from the commitment of subjectivity or the impulse to erase the image of the self. He states, "Tennyson has difficulty in thinking of himself as a continuous person" (108). Tithonus is neither a man nor a god; neither living nor dead. If we look at the uncertainty of Tennyson's subjectivity, as Sinfield suggests, the critical insistence on the textual "unity" in the Tennyson criticism of the past becomes largely irrelevant. Sinfield's approach to Tennyson's division, undeniably post-structural, does not deny the importance of the structure as the indicator of textual interpretation; however, he seems more interested in the way that the structure is made. His treatment of poetic language as a system of semiotic signs shows clearly the direction of his critical interest. Sinfield's theory of Tennyson's subjectivity, therefore, is closely related with the problem of Tennyson's poetic language. He pays close attention to the division between the sign and referent or sound and meaning in Tennyson's language and relates it to his notion of Tennyson's subjectivity:

The elaborate diction, the obstrusive syntax and the intense effects of sound and rhythm all act in the same direction. They offer not an enhanced transparency in the relationship between sign and referent, but an unattributed density in the sign itself...

...Rather than closing the gap between sign and referent, Tennyson creates, as it were, a plenitude of the sign. Language cannot be brought closer to the word, but it can be made more full and substantial in itself. (86).

This statement, echoing Roland Barthes and a host of other post-structuralists, points out the divided nature of Tennyson's language and the poetic function it plays in the overall structure of Tennyson's poetry. In the absence of subjectivity, Tennyson's mimetic language cannot convey the intended meaning; instead, it produces more signs, more motivation for meanings. Tennyson's division, then, is seen as the result of the density surrounding the linguistic signs that are constantly disowned by the poetic subject. Sinfield also goes on to observe that the signs are replaced by music and their density eventually evaporates as the subjectivity is fragmented and dispersed. In this sense Sinfield calls "Far-Far-Away" "a quintessential Tennyson poem": "This is a quintessential Tennyson poem: the repeating of the words so that language evaporates and points beyond itself to what the poet takes to be an intuition of an ultimate reality" (91).

Sinfield's approach to Tennyson seems to be most convincing and perhaps promising for the future of Tennyson criticism because of its theoretical reliance on post-structuralism. His comparison of Tennyson with Roland

Barthes is quite illuminating; it signals a departure from the orthodox criticism that stresses the critical consensus behind the text. "In the orthodox criticism," says Ann Wordsworth, "critical judgements are backed by a consensus of opinion whose assumptions are necessarily declared. Behind the accepted (primary) description of 'In Memoriam' lie certain notions about the poetry: Poems have a full referential status" (Untying the Text, 216). Sinfield's criticism is clearly a challenge to this orthodox tradition, a challenge that seems a necessary and inevitable step for the clearer study of Tennyson's poetry.

Sinfield's approach, however, fails to recognize in Tennyson's division the "openness" of the text, the plurality of meaning which Barthes emphasizes in his textual theory. Sinfield finds a pattern of "dispersion" of subjectivity in Tennyson's poetry, but he does not investigate its implications, especially Tennyson's unique poetics. He simply illuminates it by indicating its resemblance to the Barthean model. Furthermore, his notion of "dispersion," the major critical frame for the interpretation of In Memoriam, is problematic because it is not applicable to Tennyson's other poems. Many of Tennyson's poems, including "Supposed Confessions," "The Palace of Art," "Locksley Hall," and Maud, show a strong unity of self despite the internal conflict of the characters. The dispersion and the division are often significantly different from each other. The "Soul" in "The Palace of Art" is divided but not dispersed. The

sense of selfhood can be stronger when it is divided than when it is dispersed. If there is not "unified self" in the poem, it is not possible for the Soul to feel guilty.

II. B. Tennyson's Poetics and Its Post-structural Implications

Tennyson, according to William Buckler, "was not a poetic theorist in any significant meaning of that term" (The Victorian Imagination, 36). However, his reflections and remarks on his works show a theoretic consistency. Although he did not formulate his critical ideas in the same way that Wordsworth did, his poetics marked by "division and openness," reveal the critical theses of post-structuralism. After reading the review of Idylls of the King (1869), Tennyson said:

They have taken my hobby, and ridden it too hard, and have explained some things too allegorically or perhaps rather a parabolic drift in the poem... They are right, and they are not right. They mean and they do not... I hate to be tied down to say, "This means that," because the thought within the image is much more than any interpretation... Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colours. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability. (Memoir, II, 126-7)

Tennyson must have foreseen the narrowness of critical reception and "weaved" (textere) his anxiety into the text. The Idyll of "The Holy Grail" is in a sense Tennyson's allegory of reading the text. If the knights are the critics, the Holy Grail is the text. King Arthur's remark at the end of the poem, "Ye have seen what ye have seen," might be Tennyson's own. Tennyson allows his knights to achieve only the limited vision of the Holy Grail, and by doing that, he can make them desire their object more and continue to search for it.

Tennyson seems to have anticipated in his own way the modern concern with text. Central to his statement is his pronouncement, "I hate to be tied down." Tennyson repudiates any kind of reductionism of the text ("The image is much more than any interpretation"). Tennyson deconstructs his own work ("They mean and they do not"). The meaning is not monolithic but plural ("Shot-silk with many glancing colours"). Text is not a stable object ("Parabolic drift"). Text is "play" and generates "pleasure" or "hobby."

Tennyson's statement rings with the main theses of post-structuralism. His conception of text is surprisingly Barthean. Barthes proposes to see text as the "productivity" or "process," not "product" of signification.⁵ For Barthes, the text is no longer "the repository of an objective signification." He contends that "it is necessary to cast off the monological, legal status of signification, and pluralise it" (Untying the Text, 37). Tennyson's poetics and his textual practice seem to agree with Barthean position. King Arthur in "The Holy Grail" does not assign "the monological, legal status of signification" to the Holy Grail, the object of critical quest. What Tennyson emphasizes is the possibilities of pluralistic approaches to the text.

Tennyson's pluralism implies a presupposition that text is determined or produced not only by the author but also the reader. The vision of the Holy Grail can be different according to the questers. This means that the

text is merely a kind of creative space where the production of meaning is processed. Thus Tennyson, like Barthes, assigns more freedom and power to the reader, the quester of the ideal text. The Holy Grail motivates the knights, but it is the knights themselves who create the significance of the Holy Grail. To put this in Barthean terms: "A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (Image - Music - Text, 148).

The interpretive significance created by the reader, however, is limited, and in that sense, it is essentially arbitrary and unstable. The validity of interpretation based on the principle of pluralism, no matter how convincing it appears to be, is limited by its subjectivity. Hence King Arthur says, "Ye have seen what ye have seen," by which he presumably means that his knights saw the Holy Grail according to their ability. Criticism or interpretation, then, is an extremely self-conscious enterprise whose ontological ground is as "hollow" as King Arthur's Camelot. One of the ways to overcome this fundamental problem is to deconstruct its own structure of discourse and evaporate the fixed meaning endlessly. Tennyson's literary practice and post-structural strategy agree on this point. The only way to create a text is to subvert the text with the teleological vision of textual openness. Tennyson's refusal "to be tied down" to a certain meaning, and his restless repetition, "They mean and they do not," reflect his

critical vision that was far ahead of his time. Tennyson's division in his critical position, then, cannot be regarded simply as his critical evasion or confusion. Paradox is an essential part of his critical position.

Based on the same kind of argument, my critical approach to Tennyson's text can be paradoxical or "heteronomous," as Armstrong put it. "A heteronomous conception of the text," according to Armstrong, "acknowledges the paradox that interpretation is neither a total imposition of meaning nor a purely passive reception of it" (Conflicting Readings, 21). Its major objective is to preserve "the work's multiplicity without sacrificing its distinctiveness" (22).

Tennyson's division is an undeniable fact, one that supports my view of Tennyson's "text." On the other hand, I also maintain that the significance of the division in relation to the interpretation of text should be pluralistic and heteronomous. This critical position, nevertheless, is not yet an "imposition" on the text because all the interpretations are essentially based on the possibility of pluralistic significations of the text. I realize, nevertheless, that I am imposing my own view if I make a claim that Tennyson's division was intended for producing textual pluralism with post-structural implications. My interpretation of Tennyson's division is clearly a critical presupposition in that sense, but it is a necessary one for seeing Tennyson's text in a new perspective. The main challenge for my approach, then, is

how to substantiate its presupposition and prove eventually that presupposition is in fact not presupposition.

In pursuing my objective, I do not reject past historical Tennysonian criticism in its entirety; I find it useful, even indispensable, because it demonstrates at least the importance of Tennyson's division; some of the approaches are extremely skillful in proving their critical presuppositions. Their presence can help make my approach more useful and significant. I must stress, finally, that the implications in this approach, a desire for heteronomy, is not personal; it is, as I see it, Tennysonian.

III. Tennyson's Poetics: The Short Poems

Tennyson's post-structural poetics can be found more fully in his poetry, his actual practice, than in his statements about poetry. His desire for an "open" text appears to be the prime mover behind all his creativity. An analysis of Tennyson's poetry demonstrates how "openness" and "division" are closely related to each other and why his work can ultimately gain from a post-structural reading. An exploration of critical interpretation from this position can garner new meanings, rather than preserve or simply transform the old ones. The primary goal in this approach is close to that of the understanding of "poetics" in the Aristotlean sense, which is aptly described by Todorov in his Introduction to Poetics: poetics "aims at a knowledge of the general laws that preside over the birth of each work. But in contradistinction to such success as psychology, sociology, etc., it seeks these laws within literature itself. Poetics is therefore an approach to literature at once 'abstract' and 'internal'" (6). Tennyson's individual poems, then, can be regarded as the manifestations of the abstract and general structure which constitute his poetics. To seek the "laws within literature itself," which is the quintessential structuralist approach, is a crucial strategy in this study, because it can produce a credible understanding of a work that the more historical approach is powerless to produce.

The order of my discussion of Tennyson's short poems is essentially arbitrary. The reason has to do with the fact that there is very little relationship between textual division and Tennyson's poetic development except the "divergence" of division. The division in Tennyson's poetry is strongly present from the beginning to the end of his career with virtually no change. Besides, many of poems to be discussed were written more or less at the same time, and since there is not much difference in temporality, to arrange the order of discussion in terms of temporality is itself problematic.

My discussion starts with the poems, "The Lady of Shalott," "Mariana," "Mariana in the South," "Hesperides," and "Oenone." The heroines in these poems are all deserted and divided. But the more significant characteristic of these poems is that their divisions are largely symbolic rather than formal. There may not be enough signifiers to indicate the division of text, but the lack of the signifiers is itself an essential aspect of division. Division, however, is more formally articulated in the other short poems: "Supposed Confession," "Two Voices," "The Palace of Art," "The Vision of Sin," "Ulysses," "Tithonus," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Tiresias," and "St Simeon Stylites."

A lyric like "The Lady of Shalott" is a poem in which textual division is often least suspected. From the first

line, however, the poem is one of division: "On either side the river lie / Long fields of barley and of rye." The landscape is divided by the river, and the field with barley and rye again. One must assume that this description is not accidental. The banks of the river, of course, are not antithetical and the river is an illusive synthesizer; but the poem is in fact filled with antitheses: Camelot and Shalott, river and island, shadow and light, and so on. The poem is basically a weaving of these antitheses.

"The Lady of Shalott" was published in 1832 but extensively revised in 1842. The revised version reveals much more concentrated symbolism with the removal of distractive details and descriptions. For instance, the original version of lines 6-9 read: "The yellowleaved waterlily, / The greensheathed daffodily, / Tremble in the waterchily, / Round about Shalott" (Ricks, 20). These were revised later: "And up and down the people go, / Gazing where the lilies blow / Round an island there below, The island of Shalott." This revision reveals clearly the substitution of sensation for symbolic structure. The excessive bubble of the rhyming in the original are visibly suppressed, and, instead, the story of the poem is brought to the foreground directly with a rich simplicity. Tennyson's revision also shows his determination to make his text more divided and ambiguous. Following is the earlier version of lines 37-40: "No time hath she to spot

and play: / A charmed web she weaves alway. / A curse is on her, if she stay / Her weaving, either night or day" (Ricks, 22). These were changed as follows: "There she weaves by night and day / A magic web with colours gay. / She has heard a whisper say, / A curse is on her if she stay / To look down to Camelot." In the first version, the meaning of "stay / Her weaving" is clear: it means "stop." In the second, however, the word "stay" reveals ambivalent meaning: it could mean both "remain" and "refrain from" (Shaw, 64). Tennyson no doubt intended that his poem be read in both ways: A curse is on the lady of Shalott, whether she stops her weaving or not.

"The key to this tale of magic symbolism," according to Hallam Tennyson, "is of deep human significance and is to be found in the lines [60-72]" (Memoir, I, 117):

Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott. (69-72)

Hallam's view emphasizing the half-sickness" of the Lady was probably drawn from his father's own comment: "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" (Memoir, I, 117). Hallam's view, however, seems to be a needlessly narrow interpretation of Tennyson's own because it ascribes the tragedy of the Lady largely to her sexual longing. It is true that her passion as well as the sense of desolation are aroused by the young lovers reflected in her magic

mirror. It is possible that one of the "two young lovers" is the projection of her own self-image, and the moon which is the symbol of her person is overpowered by the dazzling sun, "bold Sir Lancelot." But the struggle of the lady is much more than a struggle of female and male. The significance of the struggle has to do with the antithetical relationship between imagination and reality, the paradigmatic Romantic theme. The Lady's conception of the imagination is notably Platonic. She sees it as a "shadow," whose truth is always doubtful. This shadow has been the substance of her magic, but when the Lady comes to the moment of crisis she can no longer identify herself with the shadow. Her shadowy existence can no longer withstand the light of the sun, the intrusion of the outside world. She can no longer relate Shalott and Camelot, the unreal with the real. Although the two names are rhymed, they cannot be related. Division and separation are the destiny of the heroine. Under the pressure of the outside world, her magic mirror finally cracks, making the already divided self more fragmented and anonymous. The cracking of the mirror is the natural development of "half-sickness" and therefore, the climax of the whole poem.

She left the web, she left the loom,
 She made three paces through the room,
 She saw the water-lily bloom,
 She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She looked down to Camelot.
 Out flew the web and floated wide;
 The mirror cracked from side to side;
 'The curse is come upon me,' cried
 The Lady of Shalott. (109-17)

"Seeing" here, both transitive and intransitive, is the most significant symbolic action, but when it is not mediated by the magic mirror, seeing proves to be fatal. "The curse" is its reaction. Another important action is the Lady's repeated departures: "She left the web, she left the loom." Her movement suggests a departure from the known to the unknown and it expands later to the final movement, embarking on a boat for a voyage of death. The "three paces" the lady makes in her room are an enormous distance within the geography of her mind because she will never be able to return to her former self. As a matter of fact, she does not have any stable identity to go back to. The tapestry that she wove all her life has faded from her; thus she and her former life are empty, devoid of color and meaning.

The following lines in the poem seem most crucial as well as revealing in terms of Tennyson's poetics of division:

And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.
Who is this? and what is here? (163-5)

The Lady of Shalott floats down to Camelot in a small boat and "singing in her song" dies just before she reaches the town. The citizens of Camelot appear puzzled. They want to know who she is, but all they can find out is the name written on the prow of her boat, "The Lady of Shalott." What is in her name? She is "the Nameless" despite her name. The name is the signifier; but this signifier is

devoid of the signified. It has no constitutive meaning nor epistemological authority. There are of course some clues to the identity of the Lady. They are her remarks: "I am half-sick of shadows" and "The curse is come upon me." These are the only signifiers except her singing and weaving, but what do they signify? The word "half-sick" is divided and ambivalent, and "shadows" and "curse" are totally open to various interpretations. These words are like the island itself on which the Lady lives. The signification of the whole poem, therefore, appears "floating," as the Lady in the boat or "the water-lily" that the Lady saw in her room.

The uncertainty of linguistic signs and the ambivalence of feelings are also strongly present in "Mariana":

She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!" (9-12)

The poem hardly offers any clues to establish a meaning. Mariana's monologue conceals, rather than reveals, the crucial facts to the interpretation of the poem: the identity of the person she is waiting for and her interpretation of his not coming. What is only clear is her state of feeling, "weariness" or longing for death, but, without the context of her misery, her mentality is essentially mystical.

Tennyson's attempt to establish a poetic context at the beginning of the poem, "Mariana in the moated grange,"

is little more than an intriguing suggestion, and it is not clear to what extent Tennyson intended his Mariana to be identified with Shakespeare's. In Shakespeare's play, Measure for Measure, Mariana is deserted by Angelo, her lover (III, i). It is possible, then, that Tennyson's Mariana is waiting for her absent lover. On the other hand, she denies implicitly the possibility of such interpretation by failing to identify the man she is waiting for. She not only fails to identify her lover but also fails to attempt to retrieve the past. If the past is hardly better than the present, there is no reason to try to recover the past, the man she is waiting for.

Mariana appears disconnected from reality when she repeats endlessly the same pathetic words, "I am weary, weary." And yet, she is not connected to the past, either. She is, like Tithonus, living in a permanent present. The memory of life seems to have faded in her, and this spiritual desolation confounds her sense. The man she is waiting for is perhaps not a man, but death. She has been dead for a long time spiritually, and now, she desires to end the division by realizing a physical death. Thus she lives a life of weariness and repetition instead of renewal.

"Mariana in the South" is a pendant poem to "Mariana" but the tenor of the poem seems quite different from the other. Although both poems present spiritual desolation and loneliness, "Mariana in the South" is more provincial

and picturesque. The addition of these elements alters the impact of poetic symbolism. If "Mariana" is more concerned with the longing for death, "Mariana in the South" seems to be obsessed with the desertion by her lover.

And, rising, from her bosom drew
 Old letters, breathing of her worth,
 For "Love," they said, "must needs be true,
 To what is loveliest upon earth."
 An image seemed to pass the door,
 To look at her with slight, and say
 "But now thy beauty flows away,
 So be alone for evermore."
 "O cruel heart," she changed her tone,
 "And cruel love, whose end is scorn,
 Is this the end to be left alone,
 To live forgotten, and die forlorn?" (61-72)

"Old letters" is a substitution of the absent lover, the symbol of presence and absence in simultaneity. It is exactly "The shadow of the poplar" which falls upon the bed of Mariana ("Mariana," II, 54-5). What, in fact, do the "Old letters" say, and how do they affect Mariana in the South? In In Memoriam (XCV) the old letters of the dead man deeply touch its reader "word by word" and "line by line." And then, the reader exclaims: "The living soul was flashed on mine." The "Old letters" of "Mariana in the South," on the other hand, mock Mariana. They cruelly remind her that she is no longer worthy of true love because of her fading beauty: "For 'Love,' they said, 'must needs be true, / To what is loveliest upon earth'" (ll, 63-4). "Love," then, deceives Mariana, as Aurora does Tithonus. The speaker's conditional terms strike the auditor as unconditional. Mariana feels devastated when she realizes finally that the unconditional is in fact the

conditional.

An image seemed to pass the door,
To look at her with slight, and say
"But now thy beauty flows away,
So be alone for evermore." (65-8)

It is difficult to explain the identity of "an image" in any specific terms, but it seems to be a voice coming out of Mariana's own distressed consciousness. In the most afflicted state of mind this voice becomes a prophecy turning against its own source: "So be alone for evermore." The betrayal of the absent lover transforms itself into Mariana's self-imposed curse.

Like the two Marianas, "Oenone" is also one of Tennyson's melancholy maidens deserted by her lover. But the poem is more sharply divided in many aspects. Tennyson places the central division in the difference of moral choices made by Paris and Oenone.

"Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbiased by self-profit, Oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward through a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinewed with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled through all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom."
"Here she ceas'd,
And Paris pondered, and I cried, "O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me! (155-67)

The myth of this divine beauty pageant is the most sublime and erotic in Western imagination. Three Goddesses appear naked to Paris who is a mortal, totally confounding his notion of judgement. How can a mortal judge the immortal?

The divine contestants seem to be aware of this problem. Athene says, "Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair." There is clearly a danger that Paris's judgement can be motivated by temptation, the opposite of an objective judgement. Athene appears very much concerned with this danger when Paris is offered "power" by Here and affected visibly by the offer. Watching Paris closely, Athene is both anxious and angry. As soon as Here's speech is over, Athene starts to explain to hesitant Paris about "power," indirectly attacking Here's argument. Her purpose is of course to aid Paris's critical ability by inculcating him as to the true nature of beauty so that he can be wise enough to choose herself. Thus Athene's speech starts with education: "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, / These three alone lead life to sovereign power" (142-3). It seems a little bit too late even for the Goddess to cultivate Paris's mundane taste to win the judgement of the contest.

Another dilemma that Athene faces is that her education of Paris, despite her intention, becomes a temptation in the process of judgement. Athene may think that her speech is innocent of temptation, but it is not so from Paris's as well as the readers' point of view. Moreover, Athene's moral language subtly slides into an ambiguous sensuality, creating a sense of temptation: "So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood, / Shall strike within thy pulse, like a God's." Is Athene teaching or wooing?

Is she not violating her own principle of "self-control" to obtain her goal? To be sure, Athene tries to complement her austere image with the gentleness of her sexuality, but she cannot escape the irony which she has herself created. She says, "I woo thee not with gifts" (150), but in fact she does. This indicates clearly that no one in this beauty contest plays fairly, not even Athene who claims a superior moral fairness.

Aphrodite, the third contestant, approaches Paris quite differently. Her approach is in a word physical rather than psychological. She does not show Athene's moral pretension or Here's divine distance; she takes Paris as he is, not as he should be. Her strategy makes one wonder if Aphrodite knows more about "self-knowledge" than Athene does. She shows an impressive skill and confidence in dealing with Paris. She approaches Paris directly and, instead of talking, whispers in his ears: "I promise thee / The fairest and most loving wife in Greece." Paris has to be persuaded by such an unambiguous promise, free of any "ambush'd" meanings or cumbersome impositions. No wonder that he does not show much struggle. When Athene finishes her speech, Paris simply "pondered." Paris resembles here the urbane Lancelot musing over the dead face of The Lady of Shalott. His meditation is cursory and nonchalant. The one who really agonizes over Paris's decision is Oenone, who watches the whole process from behind. Whereas Paris "pondered," Oenone "cried":

And Paris pondered, and I cried, "O Paris,

Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me! (165-7)

Oenone urges Paris to decide on Pallas but Paris rejects Oenone's plea. The sharp difference between the two seems to show that there are actually two judges in the poem, one "official" and the other "unofficial." The poem is then a monologue of Oenone, whose moral judgement is rejected by Paris, who, in turn, represents worldly value in every sense of word. To see Oenone moral and Paris amoral is, however, to misunderstand the spirit of the poem. The center of the poem is not morality, but moral division. It is true that the judgement of Paris has been idealized traditionally as a moral allegory, and Victorian critics unanimously Palladian sided with Oenone's preference for Pallas's moral principle: "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control" (142). Tennyson, however, as a rule, does not tend to give merely "rechauffe" ⁶ when he takes a commonplace mythical story. We find little evidence in the poem emphasizing the moral message.

In the early part of the poem, Paris tells Oenone that the gleaming fruit in his hand is "for the most fair" (71). The word "most fair" is in fact very ambiguous. It can mean physical or moral fairness. Every participant in the contestant appears to be divided over the interpretation of the key term "fairness." They indeed seem to verify "discord," the primal meaning of the golden apple. The participants as well as spectators (including readers and critics), therefore, are necessarily individualists or

subjectivists, and the "fairness," the challenge of the objectivist, cannot be attained with "fairness." If we can compare Tennyson to any of the characters in the poem, he is closest to the Goddess Iris, who threw down the apple of discord. Throwing the apple of discord to the readers is central to Tennyson's poetics, his approach to the unity of poetry. Like Iris, Tennyson is interested only in the troubled company of characters, foreseeing their internal division. After establishing the context of division, Tennyson departs from his text quickly, leaving the whole argument and their language to the characters themselves, and thereby, ultimately, to the readers. Tennyson's poetry, therefore, in a way like the hell gate in *Paradise Lost*, can only open and never close.

The golden apple in "Oenone" and the one in "Hesperides" seem much the same in their symbolic significance. Oenone, as a matter of fact, identifies Paris's golden apple as Hesperian: "he smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm / Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold" (64-5). Both fruits are essentially the ones of temptation and temptation always breeds internal division, whether you seek it or seek to escape from it. The Hesperides fear of losing the fruit while Oenone fears keeping it. This is hardly a difference; it is rather similar in terms of symbolism.

The golden apple of which the Hesperides sing and watch is "the treasure / Of the wisdom of the West" (25-

6). This fruit of "wisdom" appears as ambiguous as Paris's, which is decreed for "the most fair." If the problem in the meaning of "fairness" cannot be resolved fairly and convincingly, neither can the problem of "wisdom." According to Tucker, Tennyson takes the two antithetical traditions in interpreting the myth: "chastity and fruitfulness" (135). Hesiod's Theogony, Euripides's Hippolytus, Virgil's Aeneid and Eclogue, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Spenser's The Faerie Queene, and Herrick's Hesperides take the myth in both ways. Milton is the only exception in this tradition, and he uses it in Comus (393-397) exclusively for the sake of "chastity." Tennyson in the beginning of the poem places an epigraph from Comus: "Hesperus and his daughters three / That sing about the golden tree" (982-3). Tennyson, of course, does not follow Milton here, as he does not follow Shakespeare in his "Mariana." The style and the spirit of his poem are quite different from Milton's, causing Tucker to observe: "What Milton's masque had presented as the enabling condition of growth, and finally of immortality, had become for Tennyson a beautiful but emotionally disabling masquerade, performed in denial of the growth that portends death" (136-7). Tennyson's interest in the myth of Hesperian golden apple, then, seems already familiar. He is attracted by the ambiguity in the symbolism of the fruit and its guardians.

In the beginning of the lyric the golden apple is described blooming and growing as the guardians sing:

For the blossom unto threefold bloweth;
 Evermore it is born anew;
 And the sap to threefold music flowth,
 From the root
 Drawn in the dark,
 Up to the fruit (30-5)

This growth of the apple recalls "the sorrow" built by Oenone's song or the Trojan wall built by Apollo's music ("Oenone," 38-40). It portends some vague anxiety and danger when this fantastic growth finally comes to rest at its moment of fruition. There is of course no danger of decay in the garden of Hesperus, since paradise is not liable to an unnatural accident. It can be invaded by Heracles, the agent of time, as Milton's paradise is invaded by Satan. This possibility is willed from above and therefore is bound to happen soon or later. What, then, is the wisdom necessary to guard the tree? Is it wisdom at all? Nevertheless, the guardians try to delay the inevitability by their singing and watching.

The poem argues for the maintaining the status quo, keeping the fruit intact from any external elements or internal doubts. This formal argument, however, provokes implicitly a counter argument which points at the futility of such an effort. The former is based on the logos and the latter on pathos accompanied by music. It is hard to tell which is more authorial. The sound and image, signifier and signified, do not reflect each other faithfully. The Hesperians sing, "The world is wasted with fire and sword, / But the apple of gold hangs over the sea" (104-5). These words are unquestionably Tennyson's

affirmation of art comparable to Keat's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." And yet, the whole poem is also the testament of Tennyson's personal fear that art, like artists themselves, is subject to the law of nature and mutability. Frye finds that "The literary structure is ironic because 'what it says' is always different in kind and degree from 'what it means'" (*Anatomy*, 81). What Frye talks about is exactly the kind of literary experience that we get from reading Tennyson's poetry. The anti-lullaby sung by Hesperides is more soporific than any other lullaby.

Tennyson's early poem, "Supposed Confessions" (1830) is an admission of the poet's internal division. The emotional conflict is best summarized in the final sentence of the poem: "O damned vacillating state!" The cause of this psychological instability seems to be the speaker's religious faith which has lost touch with "a common faith." The way that the speaker lost his faith is significant: he lost it when he "went forth in quest of truth." The speaker appears still attached to his heroic "quest of truth," but he has become sceptical about his achievement. What he achieved is not exactly what he expected. As a result, the speaker experiences "the cloud season of a strong mind" (Arthur Hallam's comment) and feels isolated from society. What is frustrating for the speaker is the fact that the major stumbling block between faith, his desired object, and himself is his own mind which is labelled ironically "second-rate." If the mind is

"second-rate" because of its sceptical tendency, what is a "first-rate" mind? Would the speaker trust the "first-rate" mind if it embraced blind faith? The irony of the poem is that Tennyson criticizes his "second-rate mind" publicly but he values it privately. In the most autobiographical section of the poem he states:

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? (172-7)

The division between "things that seem" and "things that be" is so fundamental to the consciousness and personality of the speaker that his struggle appears nothing less than heroic. "Confessions" of the speaker, in this sense, are not necessarily confessions of weakness. The word "Supposed" in the title of "Supposed Confession" has been thought traditionally to be the poet's intention for his disguise and self-protection. According to Christopher Ricks, "Supposed" is intended "to preclude an autobiographical reading of the poem" (Tennyson, 40). It is true that the motive of disguise is undeniable. But Tennyson's real intention is more complex than it seems. Ricks's judgement obviously is based on the biographical or historical studies which portray Tennyson as extremely sensitive to public opinion. But Tennyson's text shows in this case (and many others) a quite different Tennyson. He seems to provoke the question of poetic identity by attaching the word "Supposed" to his confessions.

"Supposed" constantly directs our reading and makes us examine how much the poetic statements reflect the author. In other words, it deconstructs almost automatically the speaker's confessions and therefore two kinds of poetic consciousness operate in the text: the voice of "Confessions" and the voice of "Supposed Confessions." The voice of Confessions is not necessarily the poet's own. The voice in the starting line, "O God! my God! have mercy now," is deliberately dramatic and exaggerated. What happens here is that the voice of Supposed Confessions is imitating or mimicking the voice of conventional Confessions. The poem is then the internal dialogue between these two voices, the real and fictional, general and critical, social and individual.

The "dialogical" aspect of Tennyson's text has often been overlooked in past Tennyson criticism, but it is crucial to understand the nature of Tennyson's poetics because it is closely related with his idea of "division" and "openness." "Dialogue," according to Bakhtin, is more than "a compositional form in the structuring of speech"; it is "the internal dialogism of the word (which occurs in a monologic utterance as well as in a rejoinder), the dialogism that penetrates its entire structure, all its semantic and expressive layers" (The Dialogic Imagination, 279). What takes place in "the internal dialogism" is that "the speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system that determines this word,

within the alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver; he enters into dialogical relationship with certain conceptual aspects of this system" (282). If the internal dialogism is basically the relationship between the two different conceptual systems, its strongest character is social rather than individual. The social may be subordinated to the individual occasionally, especially in poetry, but that will depend on the style of writers, their appropriation of the language. The word, according to Bakhtin, "is born in a dialogue" and is also "shaped in a dialogic interaction with an alien word" (279). "The dialogue of voices arises directly out of a social dialogue of 'languages'" (285). What exactly is the social nature of the language? Bakhtin describes it as follows:

All words have the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and the contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word.

As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention." (293)

These statements, only a part within the large frame of Bakhtin's dialogism, can help us give Tennyson's poetry a new emphasis. Bakhtin's theory makes us scrutinize the following aspects in "Supposed Confessions": "(1) the

hierachical value of the character or of the event that forms the content of the utterance; (2) their degree of proximity to the author; (3) the interrelationship of the receiver with the author on one side, and with the character on the other" (Todorov, 47). The first category is a question raised in Aristotle's Poetics: whether the character of the poem is superior, inferior, or equal to other men. It is for Northrop Frye what makes the "fictional Modes": "myth," "romance," "high mimetic mode," "low memetic mode," "ironic mode," etc. (Anatomy, 34). The speaker of "Supposed Confessions" is the "hero of the low mimetic mode" because he is one of us; however, he can also be the hero of the "high mimetic mode" in the sense that he is a tragic hero, being isolated from his society. Therefore, the utterance of the speaker vacillates between the two fictional modes.

The second category ("proximity to the author") is a question which has to do with narrative forms: whether the poetic discourse is confession, dialogue, narration, etc. "Supposed Confessions" is not confessional in the ordinary sense; it is an "internal dialogue" within the poetic subject. The speaker's dialogue with his divided self, according to Bakhtin, is the dialogue with society. "Supposed Confessions," in this sense, is a poem of "reflection" rather than "sensation." The poetic style and posture may appear Romantic, but the kernel of the poem is Victorian because it seeks reconciliation with society.

The third category (interrelation of the character, author and reader) deals with the position of the interlocutor that does not coincide with that of the author himself. The voice of Tennyson's speaker is populated with many heterogeneous voices of society. It is allied with the voice of the public but sometimes it dares to disassociate itself from the public. When the speaker allies himself with the public, his identity appears truly "supposed." When he separates himself from the public, his identity becomes real and autobiographical. Tennyson tries to establish his identity between these two incompatibilities and in the name of art claims that the indeterminate self is the only one with which he is concerned.

Also directly relevant in Bakhtin's theory to the analysis of Tennyson's poetry is what we may call Bakhtin's philosophy of "otherness." According to Todorov, "Bakhtin starts from the simplest ground: we can never see ourselves as a whole; the other is necessary to accomplish, even if temporarily, a perception of the self that the individual can achieve only partially with respect to himself" (Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle, 95). Bakhtin's following statement is essentially Tennysonian:

I achieve self-consciousness, I become myself only by revealing myself to another, through another and with another's help. The most important acts, constitutive of self-consciousness, are determined by their relation to another consciousness (a "thou"). Cutting oneself off, isolating oneself, closing oneself off, those are the basic reasons for loss of self... It turns out that every internal experience occurs on the border, it comes across another, and this essence

resides in this intense encounter... The very being of man (both internal and external) is a profound communication. To be means to communicate... To be means to be for the other, and through him, for oneself. Man has no internal sovereign territory; he is all and always on the boundary; looking within himself, he looks in the eyes of the other or through the eyes of the other... I cannot do without the other; I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me... Justification cannot be justification of oneself, confession cannot be confession of oneself. I receive my name from the other, and this name exists for the other... Self-love is equally impossible. (Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle, 96).

Bakhtin's notion of "the other" is extremely close to Tennyson's notion of "division" because "the other" or the object of the poetic discourse helps the subject complement its shortcomings. The interlocutor of "Supposed Confessions" presents himself in terms of "the other," namely, God, his mother, the public, and so on. The subject and the object in Tennyson's poetry may not be equal but they are definitely inter-dependent upon each other. The self and the other are often antagonistic, as in the case of "Two Voices" and "The Vision of Sin," but they are in fact essential partners in the production of text and meaning. Tennyson always raises a question about his poetic subject by showing the instability and imperfection of the subject, and the quest for the answer is the meaning of the poem.⁷

The answer in Tennyson's poetry, however, is constantly "deferred" in the Derridean sense. The poetic utterance is completed only in order that the other may react to it. The utterances succeed each other to produce an answer or meaning under the different voices and

linguistic orders. The quest of meaning seldom achieves its objective. However, when the attempt for meaning has failed, the failure itself becomes the meaning of the text. As a result, the interpretation of Tennyson poetry becomes a revolving door; closing is just a new opening. The "supposed" confessions opens to the possibility of "true" confessions, and then the "true" confessions turn around to the "supposed" confessions once again. Whenever a meaning is made, it is erased by a new one, but the new meaning is in fact a old one in a different guise. If this pattern of poetic discourse is observed from a distance, what happens in Tennyson's poem is that the internal division is gradually transformed into the openness of the text, which ultimately is the only "meaning" that remains in the end.

This notion is superbly demonstrated in "The Two Voices."

"But thou canst answer not again.
With thine own weapon art thou slain,
Or thou wilt answer but in vain.

"The doubt would rest, I dare not solve.
In the same circle we revolve.
Assurance only breeds resolve." (310-15)

"The Two Voices" is a debate or dialogue between two voices representing "Faith and Scepticism," and the title itself is suggestive of the division and openness of the text. To read the poem properly, the following statement made by the second voice, the "authorial" one, is the crucial one.

As far as might be, to carve out
 Free space for every human doubt,
 That the whole mind might orb about (136-8)

The poetic intention found in this remark has often been ignored by the critics. They have concluded that the main objective of the poem is to bring about some kind of resolution or reconciliation. Donald S. Hair, for instance, states that "clearly Tennyson intends the domestic picture to resolve the inconclusive debate" (Domestic and Heroic in Tennyson's Poetry, 3). This conclusion is the basis of the critics' reasoning that the epiphany of "the Sabbath morn" is the resolution of the poem, an unsatisfactory and unconvincing one. Tennyson's poetic intention, however, appears to be exactly the opposite. He does not want to arrive at any dogmatic assertion; what he looks for is the "free space" for the undefinable signified. The scene of "the Sabbath morn" with its potent symbolism may appear to resolve the division of the two contending voices, but it clearly fails to achieve any resolution if it is seen in the context of the whole poem. Tennyson's friend Spedding was more accurate than many of modern critics in pointing out that "The dialogue ends...leaving every thing unsettled, and nothing concluded" (Ricks, 107). Indeed, it should be observed that it is the small sceptical voice, not the second voice, which is the poet's own, that indicates the dawning of the Sabbath morn.

I ceased, and sat as one forlorn.
 Then said the voice, in quiet scorn,
 "Behold, it is the Sabbath morn." (400-2)

It is appropriate symbolically for the first voice to be conscious of the coming of the dawn first because it is akin to the power of darkness. But it scorns the light instead of fearing it. The juxtaposition of the word "forlorn" with "morn," however, seriously undercuts the optimistic symbolism implicit in the "morn." Tennyson's choice of this particular set of words does not seem accidental. The ending of the poem is one more example.

And wherefore rather I made choice
 To commune with that barren voice
 Than him that said, "rejoice! Rejoice!" (460-2)

Here the last word "rejoice" is matched with "choice" and the "voice" is laid between the two other words. This arrangement of words creates an impression that "rejoice" is after all is a matter of "choice." So it is "will," not "reason," that matters ultimately, and this seems to be the logic behind "The Two Voices." But is the "will" to rejoice evident in the poem? We know that the poem in manuscript was entitled as "Thoughts of a Suicide"; we also know that Tennyson longed for death even before the death of Hallam (Memoir, I, 193; Ricks, 103). Our interpretation of the poem, however, should be grounded not on these historical bits of evidence, but on Tennyson's own poetics. The poetic and linguistic structure of "The Two Voices," and the strategy that dismantles its own structure of poetic discourse, are distinctively post-structural. The two (divided) voices constantly deconstruct and subvert the

other's assumption, and their adversarial activity creates the mechanism that dissolves the formation of any fixed meaning.

Unlike the second voice of "The Two Voices," the Soul, the narrator in "The Palace of Art," is reluctant to dismantle the Palace, the object of her discourse.

"Make me a cottage in the vale," she said,
"Where I may mourn and pray.

"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." (291-6)

According to the critics, the reluctance of the Soul to dismantle the Palace ironically causes the collapse of the Palace itself. Ricks says that "it [Soul's 'return with others'] makes perhaps the strangest of all Tennyson's conclusions in which nothing is concluded, a bathos that swallows its poem" (Tennyson, 94-5). Tucker even suspects that "Tennyson was of the aesthete-devil's party without knowing it" (Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism, 119). Without the reluctance and resistance of the Soul, however, "The Palace of Art" is simply a divided poem with no possibility of textual openness.

When she would think, where'er she turned her sight
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote, "Mene, mene," and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought. (225-28)

The internal division of the Soul here is only penultimate; "The kingdom of her thought" is "divided" but its division is not realized. The real division is yet to come, and that is the Soul's cri de coeur at the end of the

poem, which is different from the nominal division between art and society. The "allegory" of Soul breaks down at the last moment because it cries against the moral sense which is the backbone of allegory. The final stanza is the re-definition of the division on a different level.

"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." (293-96)

The word "perchance" with its Shakespearean ring (Hamlet, III, i) brings back the speaker to the original question of artistic withdrawal, which was raised by R.C. Trench's remark that "Tennyson, we cannot live in Art" (Memoir, I, 118). "The explicit moral of this poem," then, as F. R. Leavis says, "is that withdrawal [from the society] will not do" (New Bearings in English Poetry, 16).

On the other hand, the Soul knows instinctively that poetry belongs to the Palace, not the cottage in the valley. So it seems that Tennyson answers through the Soul: "Trench, we cannot live in the world, either." Tennyson risks here a self-contradiction, but that is the whole point of his poem. The unresolvable contradiction is the architecture of his Palace. In the beginning of the poem the Soul is confident that her Palace of Art is soundly built: "I built it firm" (9). In the end she reverses her view and says that the Palace is "So lightly, beautifully built" (294). She realizes that the Palatial structure is insecure without "the other," what Frye calls "the myth of concern." ⁸

Is the Soul a reliable spokesman for Tennyson? When she requests that "a cottage" be made, to whom does she speak? Is it the self "I" who says: "I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house" (1)? If it is, the response of "I" is difficult to know. If the speaking object of the Soul is God, since she sees herself as "exiled from eternal God" (263), the answer is still not known. The desperate state of the Soul, divided between the Palace and the cottage, is reminiscent of the "Attic shape" of Keats's Grecian Urn. It is forever immobile despite its moving gesture. This immobility is exactly the indeterminacy of the Soul at the last moment and is that which makes the poem sensual despite its moral content. The problem with the poem's ending is that it is a new beginning, but this oddity is natural if we view it in terms of Tennyson's poetics. Tennyson prefers fluidity to fixity in building his poetry, even if "built" rhymes with "guilt."

The enigmatic ending of "The Vision of Sin" can be no less problematic than that of "The Palace of Art" without the aid of Tennyson's poetics.

At last I heard a voice upon the slope
 Cry to the summit, "Is there any hope?"
 To which an answer pealed from that high land,
 But in a tongue no man could understand;
 And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
 Gave made Himself an awful rose of dawn. (119-224)

Tennyson compresses his whole poem into a single sentence, "Is there any hope?" and then he gives an answer which is not an answer but perhaps better than any specific answer.

What is interesting is that on the one hand the owner of the voice is anonymous, but his question is clearly stated. On the other hand, God is named as an answerer, but His answer is ambiguous. The division, however, does not end here. The question may appear certain, but it is still ambiguous. We are not sure what kind of hope is meant. The characters in the last section of the poem are marked by their "crime of sense" or "crime of malice" but the word "hope" is too broad to be limited to that particular sense. God's answer is both auditory and visual. His visual answer, making "an awful rose of dawn," comes after His auditory answer, perhaps as a way to help the understanding of His words, but the evidence of help is not quite obvious. When Tennyson uses the symbolism of "dawn," he usually means something different from our ordinary conception. The dawn of "The Two Voices" is "forlorn." The dawn in In Memoriam (VII, LXXII) and "Locksley Hall" is dreary. The dawn in "Tithonus" may be gleaming but cold. For the same reason, the "rose of dawn" in "The Vision of Sin" is only ambiguously hopeful. "Dawn dawns at the end," says Christopher Ricks, "but--as often in Tennyson--it is not exactly dayspring" (Tennyson, 174).

"The Vision of Sin" is in many aspects a companion poem to "The Palace of Art." Both are allegorical poems and maintain the image of a Palace associated with sin. If "The Vision of Sin" can be seen as a sequel to "The Palace of Art," we can imagine what happened to the Soul in "The

Palace of Art" after she pleaded for the return to her Palace. She must have left her cottage after a brief period of mourning and returned to her old Palace of Art. The Soul becomes "a youth" in a new vision.

A youth came riding toward a palace-gate.
He rode a horse with wings, that would have flown,
But that his heavy rider kept him down. (2-4)

The horse that the youth is riding appears to be either Pegasus, the winged horse that symbolizes poetry, or the one in Plato's Republic that disharmonizes with another horse, reason. Then the narrator falls into a second vision and sees this youth travelling with the horse and turning into an old age:

... I saw within my head
A gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as death,
Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
And lighted at a ruin'd inn. (59-62)

The grotesque realism surrounding this passage is similar to Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." The "ruin'd inn" reminds us of the treacherous track to the Dark Tower. But the old man, unlike Childe Roland, is a cynic, not a Romantic. The old man mocks the futility of human quest.

"Fill the can and fill the cup;
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again. (131-4)

The old man who was once a sensuous young poet now sounds like the Preacher in Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Although the old man does not like the Preacher emphasize the "duty" of man, his voice is tender and even free, and therefore, strangely moral. His last

word is intriguingly desperate and hopeful: "Yet we will not die forlorn" (206). The old man is shown in still another vision, and this time his identity is much less specific; he seems to be in a Dantean Inferno, hidden among the crowd of human shapes:

The voice grew faint; there came a further change;
 Once more uprose 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."
 Another said: "The crime of sense became
 The crime of malice, and is equal blame."
 And one: "He had not wholly quench'd his power;
 A little grain of conscience made him sour." (207-218)

The three ghostly voices in this passage are the poet's own interpretations of the death of the sinful old man. But they are not the same in their content and emphasis. Tennyson's authorial voice is always double or triple voices and his text is never singular but multiple. The first voice is moral and philosophical. It sees the death of the sensuous soul in terms of natural punishment. It uses the word "crime" to underline the physical nature of the sin. The second voice retains the notion of "crime" but it shows more a judicial judgement. It interprets "the crime of sense" as "the crime of malice." While these two voices are mainly allegorical, reflecting on morality as the ultimate reality, the third voice is rather personal, or it can be characterized as psychological as well as theological. What is unique with this voice is that it reflects on the man--both in particular and general sense--

rather than his "crime" and death. The word "crime" is conspicuously absent in its remark. It still finds the man with spiritual strength despite his moral weakness and implies that "a little grain of conscience" which "made him sour" could be a seed of hope.

This hopeful note is a cautious echo of the emphatic and defiant voice of the old man in section four, "Yet we will not die forlorn." It is an obvious irony that the vision of sin ends with hope. The text is clearly divided between sin and hope. But, again, this is the way that Tennyson produces his text. He sees sin in terms of hope, as all Christians do, and yet he qualifies hope by rejecting any straight answer. Nothing less than a straight answer is in fact ambiguity; ambiguity, however, is the necessary condition of Tennyson's text, or perhaps all texts in general, because it produces the plurality of texts. Tennyson's main task in his creation of the text is to make his ambiguity as meaningful as possible, to turn it into a kind of "lucid veil" ⁹ to reveal or conceal the reality.

"Ulysses," according to Tennyson, was written soon after Hallam's death and was written to give "the feeling about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life" (Memoir, I, 196). The feeling produced by the poem, however, does not seem to match the one intended by Tennyson.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use! (22-3)

The irony in these lines is quite striking: Ulysses is restless because of his rest. He can rest only when he is restless. Ulysses's unrest and boredom are, then, not exactly the same thing as "the struggle of life" caused by the death of friend. More problematic is the ambiguity of his purpose contrasted with the intensity of his desire for a new voyage. The most rhetorical of Tennyson's poems, "Ulysses" is really a speech or monologue by old Ulysses to persuade his fellow mariners to go on another expedition.

His rhetoric seems powerful enough to convince them that there is a need of "all experience," "an arch wherethrough / Gleams that untraveled world." At the same time his rhetoric seems to reveal a remedy of desperation, echoing the voice of the first voice in "The Two voices," arguing for suicide. This irony can make the poem not "the struggle of life" but the struggle for death. Ulysses, indeed, already hears the moaning of the deep and that moaning implies the mourning of his own death. Fighting against the odds of death is no doubt heroic and honorable; but Ulysses's moral choice between life and death appears disturbingly ambiguous. It is a longing for death. His heart works ambivalently under the surface of the signifier. Ulysses complains, "I am become a name." This is to say that Ulysses, the signifier, has lost its signified, the meaning of his life. The objective of Ulysses is then to search for the lost signified, but he realizes that it is "beyond the sunset," death itself.

Ulysses's last words are stirringly rhetorical: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." But his main success seems to be in disguising his own anxiety and "division." What takes place here, as Albright observes, is that "The strength of the language supersedes the strength of any putative speaker" (Tennyson: The Muses' Tug-of-War, 106).

Comparing In Memoriam with "Ulysses," Tennyson said: "There is more about myself in 'Ulysses,' which was written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end. It was more written with the feeling of his loss upon me than many poems in In Memoriam" (to James Knowles, Nineteenth Century XXXIII (1893) 182). There is little doubt that the conveyance of a sense of loss was intended in "Ulysses," but does this poem represent Tennyson's loss more effectively than any other? What does his remark, "There is more about myself in 'Ulysses'" really mean? It certainly emphasizes the personal element in the poem, but which is more personal and Tennysonian: the sense of loss or the struggle of life? Is "Ulysses" in Tennyson's remark meant to be the poem or the character of the hero? Tennyson revised Homeric Ulysses completely, following Dante's example in Inferno (Canto XXVI), and the Victorianized image of Ulysses was noticed by Goldwin Smith in 1855:

You may trace of this character tinging everything in the poems. Even the Homeric Ulysses, the man of purpose and action, seeking with most definite aim to regain his own home and that of his companions,

becomes a "hungry heart," roaming aimlessly to "lands beyond the sunset," in the vain hope of being "washed down by the gulf to the Happy Isles," merely to relieve his ennui, and dragging his companions with him. We say he roams aimlessly--we should rather say, he intends to roam, but stands for ever a listless and melancholy figure on the shore. (Ricks, 123)

Smith's emphasis on the "ennui" of Ulysses seems rather excessive; nevertheless, the way he describes Ulysses as a "melancholy figure on the shore," making him a kind of Arnoldian Socrates, is illuminating. Robert Langbaum explores the same aspect of the problem, but he focusses more on the "life-weariness" rather than the "ennui":

Most characteristic of Tennyson is a certain life-weariness, a longing for rest through oblivion. This emotional bias is all the more powerful because it appears to be subconscious. Not only does it conflict with the poet's often stated desire for personal immortality, but it even conflicts in a poem like "Ulysses" with what seems to be his intent...

The same weariness and longing for rest is the emotional bias of Tennyson's finest dramatic monologue, "Ulysses"; though here the emotion is couched in the contrasting language of adventure, giving an added complexity of meaning to the poem. To read "Ulysses" as a poem of strenuousness in the manner of Browning, as some critics have done, is to read with the head only and not the sensibility. For its music bears the enervated cadence of "Tithonus" and "The Lotos-Eaters." (The Poetry of Experience, 89-90)

Whether it be "life-weariness" or "ennui," the text of "Ulysses" seems clearly divided. The sensibility generated by the text constantly subverts the overt meaning. The superb ending of the poem, "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield," is no doubt the voice of the "heroic heart." It can draw the mariners magnetically for a noble cause, their destiny, but any clear destination

seems strangely absent. Some violent undertow rolls under the phenomenal surface of the text, creating a surge of pathetic fallacy that adds a complexity to the rhetorical movement, but it does not disrupt or discontinue the peace arbitrarily wrought by the language. Tennyson's surface in this sense, as Eliot observed, is always "technical" and yet "intimate with his depth" (Selected Essays, 295).

Much has been said about Ulysses's dealing with his son Telemachus and the divided personality of the heroic speaker:

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre to fulfil
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine. (33-43)

Ulysses's introduction of his son in these remarks seems noticeably intrusive. We do not know why Ulysses chose to introduce his son in the middle of his stirring speech. It is probable that Telemachus happened to approach Ulysses and his mariners and Ulysses had to recognize his son in one way or another. But Ulysses's grand manner and the lordly, dismissive tone of his voice, "This is my son... decent not to fail... He works his work, I mine," appear to work against Ulysses himself. Christopher Ricks says: "At this point something goes wrong in terms of the poem's addresses" (126). Ricks here echoes the voices of negative criticism (Auden 1943; Chiasson 1954; Smith 1963). Is

Ulysses's introduction of his son "the poet's lapse into misjudgement"? Ricks believes that "the Telemachus lines are faultily wooden rather than dramatically revealing" (126). Contrary to Ricks's position, Herbert Tucker says: "What on earth is wrong with what Ulysses says in the lines quoted above?" (210). Tucker, following Marshall (1963) and Buckler (1980), finds that Ulysses's compliment to his son is sincere, not sinister. Ulysses, according to Tucker, simply acknowledges with great rhetorical skill the qualities of his son, the action and practicality which he himself esteems all the time; or, as Dwight Culler says, "There are two ways, the active and the contemplative, and that both are necessary" (The Poetry of Tennyson, 96).

When we compare the two critical readings proposed by Ricks and Tucker, Ricks's reading seems to show more "the sensibility" emphasized by Langbaum in reading Tennyson's text: "To read 'Ulysses' as a poem of strenuousness in the manner of Browning... is to read with the head only and not the sensibility" (The Poetry of Experience, 90). While Tucker takes the signs in the text as they are given, Ricks suspects and subverts them for the meaning contrary to the "official" one. This does not mean that Ricks is more sophisticated than Tucker. Tucker also believes in the reading with "the sensibility." However, he seems to argue that the sensible reading is one thing and the subversive is another. One can be sympathetic, therefore, to both approaches; but it seems clear that the debate cannot be concluded by either approach because both lack the

perspective of Tennyson's poetics, which is based on the principles of division and openness.

Ulysses's observations about his son are clearly intrusive in the sense that they break the rhythm of his rhetorical speech. Without his comments the integrity of the poem is much the same. Without the remarks, however, the poem is less complicated and perhaps less meaningful. The first section of the poem shows Ulysses experiencing some emotional stagnation in his adventureless old age, but it describes the problem only in a general way. Ulysses is "an idle king." He is worried about "becoming a name," simply an old memory in other words. Once again, he feels "a hungry heart" within himself, "yearning in desire / To follow knowledge like a sinking star." Ulysses's self-portrait is already complete, and what Tennyson needs to do after this is only to add some color and a few final strokes. At this specific point Tennyson can tell his mariners of "the port" without digressing to introduce his son:

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, ... (44-6)

The question, then, becomes one of poetic effect. Is the insertion of the speech on Telemachus, then, Tennyson's "misjudgement," a redundant addition to the poem? What is the function of the speech? The speech seems designed in the light of his own poetics, to introduce not Telemachus but Ulysses himself. Ulysses reintroduces

himself by introducing his son (the other), and he does that by making a sharp comparison between his son and himself. The comparison that Ulysses makes is more than the simple one between two different personalities: it is also the difference between art and the world, Tennyson's central theme in his early years. Ulysses's rather blunt remark, "He works his work, I mine," can be Tennyson's implicit tribute to his dead friend Arthur Hallam, who asserted the primacy of the art over the world as far as poetry was concerned. It is possible that Ulysses's unambiguous embrace of art and idealism could be motivated by Tennyson's own sense of loss, and this is perhaps the meaning of his remark, "There is more about myself in 'Ulysses.'" Whatever the explanation may be, Ulysses's remarks on his son bring the broad image of a conventional Ulysses down to a narrow focus; at the same time they create a new sense of division in Ulysses's personality, a division that parallels the one in his rhetoric and affects the interpretation of the whole poem. They do not allow us to form a single interpretation of the poem because Ulysses is not a single, coherent subject. How can Ulysses, treated as both general and particular, be a coherent subject?

The section that follows after the speech on Telemachus is no less important in the context of Tennyson's poetics. As soon as Ulysses returns to his "original" speech, his language becomes so magnificently rhetorical that he appears already distant from the man,

the father of Telemachus.

Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
 Death closes all; but something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

The language of Ulysses is indeed impressive; but it also deconstructs subtly the solid self-image built by himself in relation to his son. The power and beauty of the language, superseding the speaker, makes the speaker almost supernatural or anonymous. When Ulysses mentions "men that strove with Gods," he creates the illusion of men who are equal to Gods. Homer's Odysseus beguiles the Cyclops Polyphemus by telling him that his name is "Outis" which means "No one." It is a pun on his real name. But the other half of his name, which he reveals to Cyclops when he is safely distant from the angry, blinded giant, is according to James Joyce "Zeus." This implies that Ulysses is both Nobody and God (Ellmann, 112). Because he is nobody, like Leopold Bloom, he can be everybody, God. One cannot be certain whether Tennyson intended to play with the name or the nameless; however, as Albright suggests, his words, "that which we are, we are," reminds us of the divine voice in the Bible: "I am that I am" (106).

Ulysses's pervasive longing for death is also echoed in "Tithonus," but it is more explicitly expressed. Tithonus asks Aurora, his lover: "Release me, and restore me to the ground." His life has long been youthless and

therefore useless. Immortality, the gift of the Goddess, has turned out to be "cruel" and he now wants to return to his original state, where "the woods decay and fall." He begs desperately: "Let me go; take back thy gift." He knows, however, that "The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts." He sees Aurora's "tremulous eyes that fill with tears" instead of answering the request. On the other hand, Tithonus remembers how the Goddess granted his wish when he asked for his immortality: "with a smile, / Like wealthy men who care not how they give." The "smile" of the Goddess, then, is cruelly deceitful, cold as the dawn itself. Furthermore, Tithonus sees the Goddess renewing her beauty "morn by morn," while he withers slowly in her arms.

What matters now, however, is Tithonus's anguish concerning his being, not the sense of betrayal. The sense of pain is felt through "timeless" time. Tithonus describes himself as "A white-hair'd shadow," and more poignantly, "once a man." Thus it is difficult to tell whether he is fully conscious or in a dream-like state. He lives at "the quiet limit" of life, where life and death are so close and yet far apart. In its opacity, "the quiet limit," like the one in "Ulysses," is "that untravell'd world whose margin fades / For ever and for ever." If the sea seems tempting to Ulysses, so does "the ground" to Tithonus: "The vapors weep their burden to the ground." The ground here, unlike the Goddess, appears responsive and sympathetic to the weeper. The difference, however, is

that whereas Ulysses yearns for more experience, Tithonus desires to be relieved from the burden of experience. Blake says that "Time is the mercy of eternity." Tithonus asks for that mercy of time, and the only way to achieve his goal is his death, the ultimate experience of the living from which he is excluded.

If this is the basic "story" of the poem, what is its textual division? Shaw finds it in the ambivalence in Tithonus's mind:

We are aware from the beginning of two conflicting attitudes in Tithonus' mind and of his inability to choose decisively between them. If sensuous immediacy without permanence is horrifying to contemplate, permanence without immediacy is just as intolerable. (Tennyson's Style, 89-90)

Shaw, then, argues that Tithonus's problem is essentially a Keatsian one:

The conflicting attitudes in Tithonus' mind raise the central question of Keats's odes: if what endures is inhuman and what is human dies, is it ever possible to combine sensuous immediacy with permanence? Is it ever possible for all that is valuable in life to triumph over time? (91)

A comparison can indeed be made between Tithonus and Aurora on the one hand and Keats and the nightingale on the other, but perhaps, not in the way intended by Shaw. Keats, weighed down by "The weariness, the fever, and the fret," listens to the nightingale, the "happy melodist, unwearied." The bird is sensuously "immediate" but its immediacy raises immediately the problem of permanence. Thus, "to think is to be full of sorrow." To combine sensuous immediacy with permanence is possible only

momentarily: "Now more than ever seems it rich to die." Keats knows that he will be defeated by time in the end. He is already becoming "a sod." The nightingale, on the other hand, is an "immortal bird," its song the symbol of permanence.

Is the song of the nightingale indeed permanent? Keats and the nightingale and their modes of existence are incompatible. The song of the nightingale always fades away, and Keats always remains behind. The ecstasy caused by this deathless bird, then, is nothing but a fantasy, "a vision, or a waking dream." This seems to be the basic problem in immediacy versus permanence in Keats's text. What is "a vision" for Keats, however, is reality for Tithonus. How real the immortality is for Tithonus! How problematic the permanence is! The permanence is nothing but a prolonging of the finite, and as soon as it is obtained, the sensuous immediacy departs: "Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful / In silence, then before thine answer given / Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek" ("Tithonus," ll. 43-45). The Goddess Aurora is as elusive as Keats's nightingale. Tithonus does not want to follow the goddess as Keats yearns to fly away with the bird; in fact Tithonus desires to live apart from the goddess. The human in Tithonus cannot bear the reality of the inhuman, the immortality without sensuous immediacy. He sees around him nothing but memories; only the goddess is both immediacy and memory, a symbol of renewal. Tithonus does not have the mysterious power of constant renewal; while he

watches the goddess renewing her beauty "morn by morn," Tithonus fades and shrinks, being "far, far away" from life. This is the reversal of renewal; the glorious renewal of the dawn goddess can only renew the determination of Tithonus to terminate his life in death. The remaining solution for Tithonus, then, is either the power of renewal or death, the termination of renewal. He appears to be barred from both possibilities, but aware that the latter is easier to attain since he is human. Tithonus is then a symbol of human desire and failure. We find in him the division between the fulfilment of desire and the failure of desire, and Tennyson, using the ancient myth of Tithonus in his unique way, polarizes this division.

Albright proposes another way of looking at the textual division in Tithonus: "In the 1860 revision of 'Tithonus,' Tennyson altered the poem to heighten the discontinuity between Tithon-as-lover and Tithon-as-rememberer" (108). The division that Albright discovers is Tithonus's divided sense of identity, and this view seems to contrast with Shaw's, "the conflicting attitudes in Tithonus's mind." For Albright the division is "discontinuity" in self-consciousness, a temporal and psychological difference between the past and present, which has little to do with Tithonus's "conflicting attitudes." He quotes:

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes

I used to watch--if I be that watched--
 The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
 The dim curls kindle into sunny rings. (50-54)

Here Tithonus tries to remember his former self, a youth with "another heart" and "other eyes." Obviously, he appears to have some difficulty of remembering the past, but his speech also shows that the vital cord that connects his past and present is not quite severed. So his discontinuity is, in fact, not discontinuity, but an anxiety of discontinuity. If Tithonus's "discontinuity" happens to be real, the agony over his prolonged life must be absurd. To feel the agony, to feel the discontinuity of self-consciousness, is the sign of remembering, the sign of continuity. This is the real division as far as "discontinuity" is concerned, and in this context Albright's notion of "discontinuity" seems somewhat superficial.

He says, for instance, "Tithonus is not quite sure that he is the man who was once Eos' lover; he has grown so spectral, so personally dim, that he cannot know that the image in his head once had reality" (108). Is Tithonus indeed "not quite sure"? Is it true that "he cannot know..."? There is no doubt that Tithonus tells us that his memory has failed and lost the sense of reality, but is his confession intended to be taken without any reservation? Albright is right if Tithonus's rhetoric is to be taken literally; but that seems not plausible if we consider Tennyson's poetics of division. The more

rhetorical the speaker is, the more contradictory is the significance of the verbal message. Tennyson's expression is always double-edged. This fact can be observed when Tithonus complains about his loss of memory and youthful sensibility. The language of Tithonus becomes most sensuous and vivid:

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,
 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 Appollo sing,
 While Iiion like a mist rose into towers. (55-63)

Certainly this seems not to be the language of a man who has lost his memory and sensibility.

"Tithonus," according to Tennyson himself, is a "pendant" poem to Ulysses: "It was originally a pendant to the Ulysses in my former volumes" (Memoir, I, 549). What does the poet mean by "pendant"? In what terms should we conceive the poem in its connection to "Ulysses": a complement or a supplement? Addressing this question, Tucker states:

Tennyson's monologue [Ulysses] based on an antique hero so happened to meet the burgeoning ethos of the first industrialized society that its onward, outward, and upward mobility was inevitably coopted, even capitalized on, by the ideologues of Victorian modernity...It captured the imagination of an era, which is to say that the era captured it--misread it, to be sure, but at any rate domesticated it to the conventions of the strenuous bourgeois ethic that was working up an empire... The downbeat "Tithonus" might have served as a counterweight retarding the hasty Victorian valorization, and also preempting the consequent modern dismissal, of Ulysses' ethic of strive-and-see-and-find. (204)

The question that Tucker raises is interesting, but his answer is as puzzling as Tennyson's own remark. We know that the Victorians read Tennyson's text with their own assumptions and prejudices, but the question here is whether "Tithonus" is intended as a complement or a sequel to "Ulysses," not why the poem appears or functions as either of them. Tucker's remarks are confusing because he seems not to be clear concerning Tennyson's responsibility in relation to "retarding the hasty Victorian valorization." The point of Tucker's argument seems to be in proving why "Tithonus" is not "a complement" to "Ulysses" (241), but I suspect that the real reason for the "counterweight retarding" has to do with Tennyson's poetics, not Victorian readership. Tucker seems to claim that "Tithonus" is a "sequel" to Ulysses because of its similarity in rhetorical styles: "Rhetorically 'Ulysses' points the restless way up and out, and 'Tithonus' the way down to easeful surcease. But at the same daemonic pitch that Tennyson's classical monologues share, the way up and the way down are much the same" (241).

If "Tithonus" is a sequel to "Ulysses" just because of rhetorical similarity, many of Tennyson's poems are in fact the sequels of "Ulysses." This is obviously a proposition difficult to accept because that would be an implicit denial of the individual qualities of the other poems. It seems to me that "Tithonus" is more than a "pendant" poem; it is rather a "complement" poem to "Ulysses" because it

tries to complement or balance whatever deficiencies "Ulysses" may have. Tithonus's rhetorical argument for death is directly opposed to Ulysses's argument for more life experience:

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?
("Tithonus," ll. 28-31)

The voice of Tithonus could well be the cry of Ulysses's mariners that was suppressed in that poem. By raising this negative voice in "Tithonus," Tennyson can counter or "retard" the valorization of Ulysses's uncertain optimism. In terms of Tennyson's poetics, all of his poems are complementary, not sequential. They can be sequential only in the sense that the later poems correct the earlier ones. In Memoriam and Maud are complementary; "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" or "The Lotos-Eaters" are complementary. Each poem is intended to reveal only a portion of the whole truth. Ulysses says that he is a part of all that he has met. Although "a part" retains the essence of the whole, it is still not the whole and therefore incomplete. To make the poem complete, Tennyson needs to have a countering voice to Ulysses.

The argument in "The Lotos-Eaters" is in a sense a response to the strenuous moral exhortation in "Ulysses": "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." The ending of "The Lotos-Eaters" seems especially to be a direct rejoinder to "Ulysses": "O, rest ye, brother

mariners, we will not wander more." This ending is also a recapitulation of Tithonus's negative argument, "Why should a man desire..." and the rehabilitation of the sceptical voice in "The Two Voices" that says, "Were it not better not to be?" "The Lotos-Eaters" starts with Ulysses's word, "Courage!" and the rest of the poem is nothing but a series of reactions to Ulysses's commanding word, especially the choric songs sung by the mariners. Particularly interesting is that the wearied mariners in their own way show their courage and determination to resist Ulysses's order:

Then some one said, "We will return no more;"
And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."
(43-45)

The mariners are of course not normal; they are already drugged after eating the lotos leaves. Their response, therefore, seems still irresolute, not firm, with their voices sounding "thin" and dreamy. One may say that they are not arguing but singing. Perhaps they know that they have to leave the island in the end, following Ulysses, their leader. Nevertheless, their argument for staying in the island is rational enough to challenge the authority of their leader. First of all, the mariners question the purpose and meaning of their action:

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings,

And cease from wanderings,
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
 Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
 "There is no joy but calm"--
 Why should we only toil...? (57-69)

The purpose of action is the one thing that Ulysses tried to avoid. He was always vague about it; in the end of his speech in "Ulysses," he says repeatedly, "It may be..." The mariners in "The Lotos-Eaters" seem to raise objections to this troublesome uncertainty about the purpose and meaning of their "toil." And they broaden their question in section four of the choric song: "Death is the end of life; ah, why / Should life all labor be?" (86-7). "The Lotos-Eaters," in this sense, is "the moral opposite of "Ulysses" (Culler, 98). Their argument is the voice of the first voice in "The Two Voices" that the second voice was unable to defeat decisively. Next, the mariners raise another question related to their home-coming:

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
 And dear the last embraces of our wives
 And their warm tears; but all hath suffer'd change;
 For surely now our household hearths are cold,
 Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,
 And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
 (114-19)

The faculty of the mariners' mind, despite the influence of narcotics, appears amazingly sharp. It shows acute sensibility and accurate reasoning. We certainly do not find in Homer's Odyssey this kind of intellectual challenge made by the mariners to Odysseus. The mariners in their vision foresee the troubles at home and fear that they might become a kind of Enoch Arden, the belated sailor. This

bleak picture is a direct challenge to the idealized one of Ulysses. This contrast seems to be Tennyson's way of "complementing" his text, and this strategy is one of the most important aspects of his poetics of division. The division takes place not only within the text but also outside the text. "The Lotos-Eaters" and "Ulysses," despite the similarity of their rhetorical style, are divided dialogically in their thematics and ideological orientation.

The final point that the mariners raise to remain in the Lotos island is an interesting one: imitation of the gods:

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar... (153-56)

The mariners envision the island as another cloudless Lucretian heaven far above the earth and death. Lucretius in De Rerum Natura describes the peaceful abodes of the gods: "Before me appear the gods in their majesty, and their peaceful abodes, which no winds ever shake nor clouds besprinkle with rain, which no snow congealed by the bitter frost mars with its white fall, but the air ever cloudless encompasses them and laughs with its light spread wide abroad" (III, 18-22). The mariners, antithetical to Ulysses, their leader, more like young Tithonus, aspire to be immortal in their ready-made Palace of Art. Far detached from the war and suffering, and, above all, free from the fear of death, Lucretius's "bug-bear," they even

seem to take an aesthetic delight, like the gods, in smiling at human misery.

What they see, of course, is not what is. Tennyson is careful to make sure that their blissful state is a narcosis, a drugged dream that can be real only in sleep. The mariners are ecstatic and aesthetic because they are static. They are in ecstasy because their senses are in paralysis. The lotos does not make them into gods, but into vegetables (Culler, 98). "The air" in Lucretius's poem "laughs with its light" ("Lumine ridet"); The air in Tennyson's poem is not like Lucretius's: "The languid air did swoon" (5). The eyelids of the mariners are "half-dropt" (136); the gods, on the other hand, are wide awake because "they smile in secret" (159). If old Hesperus's eyelids are dropping in "Hesperides," that is because "his ancient heart is drunk with overwatchings night and day" (54). The mariners do not watch. Watching happens only in the beginning of the poem, when Ulysses "pointed toward the land." Their eyelids, since then, have "dropped" because they have forgotten to watch. They feel that they have nothing to guard. They want to give up their sacred object instead of keeping it. How, then, can their eyes be open? The Lotos-island is "a land where all things always seem'd the same" (24). The word "seem'd" suggests that all things are in fact not the same. The dreamy island can be "Nature, red in tooth and claw"¹⁰ or "the dreadful hollow" ¹¹ that echoes with "Death". Nevertheless, the Lotos-island, like the garden of "The Hesperides," or the

Palace of Art, or the castle of the Lady of Shalott, has to be taken seriously because that is the "home" of art. The mariners like the Soul in "The Palace of Art" are reluctant to leave the island and their protest to Ulysses could be Tennyson's own. Odysseus seems to be absent throughout the poem except in the beginning, and his deliberate absence makes the poem open-ended. Without the reply of Ulysses, "The Lotos-Eaters" can end only in a formal sense.

"Tiresias" is an another reversal of "The Lotos-Eaters" in its rhetorical direction. If "The Lotos-Eaters" is a poem of escape, "Tiresias" is that of engagement. Tiresias, the old, blind prophet, preaches to young Menoeceus, his auditor, of civic virtue and patriotic duty: "Virtue must shape itself in deed" (85). He insinuates that Menoeceus should sacrifice his life to appease the anger of Ares and save Thebes, the city founded by Cadmus, his ancestor: "Let thine own hand strike / Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench / The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge / Thy torch of life in darkness" (151-54). The persuasive rhetoric of Tiresias, however, proceeds in a tortuous, stylistic indirection. He starts with his own story: what he was like in his youth, how he came to see the Goddess Athene in her nakedness; how he became blinded and awarded with prophetic power.

Tiresias is like Tithonus a mythical figure who symbolizes the ironic division that consists of both blessing and cursing. The original cause and the occasion

of his ironic fate appears to be accidental because his encounter with Athene took place during his wandering. But can fate be accidental?

Then, in my wanderings all the lands that lie
 Subjected to the Heliconian ridge
 Have heard this footstep fall, altho' my wont
 Was more to scale the highest of the heights
 With some strange hope to see the nearer God.

According to this passage, Tiresias was a Romantic wanderer in quest of the sublime, the ultimate experience. He was a man of "the boundless yearning" (80). His opening remarks show that he was a poet and a prophet even before he was blinded. He says that his eyes were seeking "The meanings ambush'd under all they saw, / The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice" (5-6). The word "sacrifice" sounds poignant because Tiresias failed to see his own sacrifice "ambush'd" in "the flame of sacrifice." He was blind even before he became blind.

Tiresias's blindness, however, is in other sense a power of seeing. His inner eyes open as his physical eyes dim. The power of his prophesying was born at the moment when sight and blindness were reversed. Tiresias's power of prophecy, then, is essentially paradoxical because his power was purchased with the loss of his power; the blessing was preceded by the curse; truth was tainted by unbelief: "the truth that no man may believe" (49). What is also paradoxical is Tiresias's spiritual experience of "ineffable beauty" (54) and the necessity of expressing it in prophecy.

Son, in the hidden world of sight that lives
 Behind this darkness, I behold her still,
 Beyond all work of those who carve the stone,
 Beyond all dreams of Godlike womanhood,
 Ineffable beauty, out of whom, at a glance,
 And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd
 The power of prophesying... (50-6)

If the "beauty" is "ineffable," the power in "the power of prophesying" is in fact not the power. What is also significant is that the main source of the prophesying power is "beauty," not truth. What does Tiresias or Tennyson mean by "beauty"? Can prophecy be originated by "beauty"? What is most intriguing is that Athene is not the Goddess of beauty; she is the Goddess of truth. In "Oenone" she preaches "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control" (142). The ideal elements that Athene personifies do not seem to be "ineffable beauty." Tiresias himself proves that they are not "ineffable," since he succeeds in persuading Menoeceus to sacrifice his life before the altar of those ideals. His success is ironic because his prophecy is "believed."

How does the poet show Tiresias achieving his success? In a word, Tiresias makes his point by contradicting himself. Invoking his own subjective experience, he argues that curse is blessing, weakness strength, and death life. As we can see easily, Tiresias subverts the values, norms, everything that the visible world stands for. He dips the meaning of life into the abyss of his dark spiritual world so that Menoeceus can be induced to value what is to come (death) more than what it is (life). Since life is limited and death is permanent, death is in fact life. The death,

which is eternal life, cannot be possible unless life in the world is nobly spent.

My son,
 No sound is breathed so potent to coerce,
 And to conciliate, as their names who dare
 For that sweet mother land which gave them birth
 Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
 Graven on memorial columns, are a song
 Heard in the future; few, but more than wall
 And rampart, their examples reach a hand
 Far thro' all years, and everywhere they meet
 And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
 To mould it into action pure as theirs.
 Fairer thy fate than mine, if life's best end
 Be to end well! and thou refusing this,
 Unvenerable will thy memory be
 While men shall move the lips; but if thou dare--
 Thou, one of these, the race of Cadmus--then
 No stone is fitted in yon marble girth
 Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious doom
 Nor in this pavement but shall ring thy name. (115-33)

Tiresias's rhetoric here is the mixture of intimidation and flattery. He subtly terrorizes Menoeceus by insinuating that the failure to die nobly is to lose the name, "a song / Heard in the future." To reinforce his rhetoric, Tiresias tries to convince Menoeceus that he is in a better position to achieve fame: "Fairer thy fate than mine." The basis for his argument, of course, is the fact that Menoeceus is a descendant of Cadmus. There seem to be other reasons for Tiresias's position. Menoeceus is young and blameless while Tiresias is not. Menoeceus never aspired "to scale the highest of the heights." These differences do not mean that Menoeceus is superior to Tiresias himself, but Tiresias seems to suggest that Menoeceus is at least more acceptable to the Gods. Tiresias's words, "Fairer thy fate than mine," are

"ambush'd" with dark meaning: the necessity, the inevitability of and justification for Menoeceus's death.

However, Tiresias's counsel of death to the young Menoeceus appears problematic in its moral aspect.

... but thou art wise enough,
 Tho' young, to love thy wiser, blunt the curse
 Of Pallas, bear, and tho' I speak the truth
 Believe I speak it, let thine own hand strike
 Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench
 The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge
 Thy torch of life in darkness... (148-54)

Tiresias also says to Menoeceus, "thou art wise enough." These words, which suggest both "wise" and "unwise," sound strangely ironic. Other meanings also appear to be "ambush'd" here. Tiresias is a victim of fate, but Menoeceus is not. There seems to be no absolute reason, despite all the rhetoric of Tiresias, that Menoeceus is clearly a victim of fate. He is, rather, made to be a victim of fate by the verbal magic of Tiresias, or one might say, he is the victim of Tiresias himself. Tiresias speaks in the manner of Milton's Satan: "Be famous then / By wisdom" (Paradise Regained, IV, 221-2). The one weak in wisdom has to be killed by the one stronger in wisdom, as is shown in the case of the Sphinx and Oedipus. Tiresias suggests that Menoeceus is a new Oedipus who can save Thebes by the wisdom of voluntary death.

Although the analogy between Oedipus and Menoeceus is problematic, Tiresias succeeds in transforming "The boundless yearning of the prophet's heart" into "The boundless yearning of the patriot's heart," suggesting that the mystery of prophetic power is nothing but civic virtue.

Menoceus is either an alter ego of Tiresias, or a principal partner of his spiritual enterprise, but he does not share the mystery of Tiresias's spiritual power. Thus he is just "wise enough," but "wise enough" for what? Tiresias says: "to love thy wiser, blunt the curse / Of Pallas." What Tiresias finds in Menoeceus is not wisdom but faith that often denies the self-interest for the large undefined purpose.

Even more suggestive and puzzling is that Menoeceus is to "blunt the curse / Of Pallas." What does Tiresias mean by this? What does Menoeceus have to do with the curse of Pallas? Is the curse of Pallas not Tiresias's own personal matter? And yet, Tiresias's remarks indicate that Menoeceus's noble death would address not only the problem of Ares's anger but also Pallas's curse. This double purpose raise a question: which objective is more important for Tiresias? It seems quite obvious that Tiresias is more interested in "blunting" the curse of Pallas than appeasing "The red God's anger." It does not seem to matter as long as Menoeceus sacrifices himself, since his death can signal the end of Pallas's curse on Tiresias. For the first time, his prophecy is believed.

Tiresias in the context of Tennyson's poetics of division, is unmistakably a self-portrait of Tennyson himself. The portrait appears to be deeply self-conscious and self-critical. Pulling aside the physical condition of near blindness, Tennyson, assuming the mantle of prophets

like Tiresias who are doomed to "speak the truth that no man may believe," must have felt out of step with his age. Tennyson rebukes himself through the mouth of Tiresias for his "failing" in action: "This power hath work'd no good to aught that lives" (76). At the same time, Tennyson also may have wanted to "win all praise" for his Shelleyean idealism, one well demonstrated in "The Poet" and "The Poet's Mind." "Tiresias," then, is essentially a poem about the poet, another variation on "The Palace of Art." It tries to deal with the problem of division between the nature of the poet and the social function of poetry. Tiresias appears to emphasize the latter in the process of persuading Menoeceus to offer his life for his country. He wants to make his art useful, not beautiful.

However, this appearance can be deceiving; Tiresias goes back to the pre-prophetic period as soon as Menoeceus's sacrifice is over:

... and these eyes will find
The men I knew , and watch the chariot whirl
About the goal again...(167-9)

"These eyes" are not the eyes of a prophet; they are those of a poet's. "Tiresias" was dedicated to Tennyson's friend, FitzGerald, an admirer of Tennyson's earlier poetry. After the publication of *The Princess*, FitzGerald was deeply disappointed and complained that Tennyson's later poetry lost "the old champagne flavour" (*Memoir*, I, 253). Tennyson, of course, knew of FitzGerald's disenchantment, but still chose to dedicate the poem to FitzGerald. If we read "Tiresias" closely from

a Tennysonian perspective, we can sense that Tennyson's poem "whirl [s] / About the goal again," sensation rather than the reflection, beauty rather than the morality. Tennyson seems to say, as does Tiresias, "I behold her still" (51). Thus "Tiresias" is Tennyson's genuine tribute to old Fitz and the memory of their younger days.

Saint Simeon Stylites is a holy man, quite different from Tiresias. He lacks the artistic dimension and the mental serenity of Tiresias. His turbulent personality reveals a spectacle of divisions and contradictions, and his religious extremism ultimately raises questions about his sainthood and the value of his ascetic life. Saint Simeon, according to Gibbon's account, Tennyson's main source of the poem, lived a life of "voluntary martyrdom." He spent most of his life on the top of ruined columns after leading a hard life of penance. As a result, the sensibility of his mind and body were gradually destroyed, and only the hope of a life to come, which appears often uncertain despite his self-assurance, remains.

Simeon's statuesque position on the top of the column that is as high as forty cubits from the ground implies a kind of vantage point for his spiritual aspiration. But this vantage point often seems hardly an advantage because it attracts more the attention of "the evil ones":

And yet I know not well,
For that the evil ones come here, and say,
'Fall down, O Simeon; thou hast suffer'd long
For ages and for ages!' then they prate
Of penances I cannot have gone thro'

Perplexing me with lies; and oft I fall,
 Maybe for months, in such blind lethargies
 That Heaven, and Earth, and Time are choked. (95-102)

This scene of temptation is analogous to the Biblical one. The words "Fall down" carry a double meaning: "Fall down and worship" the devil, and at the same time descending the column, discontinuing the spiritual struggle. The first test seems to be relatively easy and Simeon succeeds in passing the test. As for the second attempt, however, Simeon becomes extremely vulnerable. The devils, who are like Milton's sophist, argue that there are more and better ways of doing penance, and Simeon falls into confusion and self-doubt, even though he knows that the devils lie. The devils' argument is very clever because it hits Simeon's weak spot. Simeon has engaged with the saints, his predecessors, in a competition for superhuman suffering and he is confident about his record: "And I, in truth--thou wilt bear witness here-- / Have all in all endured as much, and more / Than many just and holy men, whose names / Are register'd and calendar'd for saints" (127-30). The devils strike right at this confidence, and Simeon "falls." Simeon, of course, does not descend the column nor worship the devils; but he psychologically falls down and climbs up again. He must "mortify" his flesh "with scourges and with thorns" and exert strenuous discipline more than ever. Thus we observe the columns become higher and higher as he moves from one to another:

Then, that I might be more alone with thee,
 Three years I lived upon a pillar, high
 Six cubits, and three years on one of twelve;
 And twice three years I crouch'd on one that rose
 Twenty by measure; last of all, I grew
 Twice ten long weary, weary years to this,
 That numbers forty cubits from the soil. (84-90)

He starts from "six cubits" and reaches "forty cubits," but Simeon realizes that there is always one more to try as long as he lives. The only way to reach the highest is death: "The end! the end!" (198). Simeon, being as weary as Tithonus, longs for death. Death is the moment of crowning, and Simeon cries out anxiously to the angel that his brows are ready (203).

One of the ironies in Simeon's spiritual aspiration, according to Albright, is that "The more he labors to be sublime, the more earthly and pedestrian he becomes" (93). Tucker also agrees with Albright's view: "This poem furthered the quest for relationship in an ironic mode, which invited readers to share the grotesque spectacle of a soul who confirms his worldliness more deeply the harder he strives to deny it" (265). The character of St. Simeon is indeed one of division, but the more significant division present in the text is Tennyson's ambivalence towards the saint. Tennyson treats him with "Part banter, part affection" as Walter treats Lilia in The Princess. Traditionally, the poem has been regarded as a satire, but, generically, it is either more or less than a pure satire. It is true that the satirical motive may probably be stronger than any other; nevertheless, it is constantly paralleled by the discourses antithetical to satire. Here

is an example of Simeon's anti-satirical speeches:

They think that I am somewhat. What am I?
 The silly people take me for a saint,
 And bring me offerings of fruit and flowers;

 Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.
 What is it I can have done to merit this?
 I am sinner viler than you all.
 It may be I have wrought some miracles,
 And cured some halt and maim'd; but what of that?
 It may be no one, even among the saints,
 May match his pains with mine; but what of that?
 (124-37)

This speech reveals Simeon's self-awareness of his own limitation, and thus, the spiritual aspect of his religious faith. Simeon in this speech contradicts Simeon obsessed and blinded by sin and saintdom. He appears much more free and open-minded, and the tone of his voice seems sincere enough to deserve serious attention.

Once we recognize the serious aspect of Simeon's character, some of his speeches which appear to be satirical can be read differently:

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,
 Who may be saved? who is it may be saved?
 Who may be made a saint if I fail here?
 Show me the man hath suffer'd more than I.

 For did not all thy martyrs die one death?
 For either they were stoned, or crucified,
 Or burn'd in fire, or boil'd in oil, or sawn
 In twain beneath the ribs; but I die here
 To-day, and whole years long, a life of death. (45-53)

The motivation of Simeon's suffering is no doubt against the true spirit of his religion, and in this sense, his speech is often received as satirical. However, his argument cannot be dismissed easily because it is based on not just words but actions, the ultimate test of faith.

His faith may not be sound, but he is at least not hypocritical. He confesses whatever it is necessary to confess, and his honesty attested by his suffering, can make his character noble and spiritual. Tennyson says in In Memoriam that "There lives more faith in honest doubt" (XCVI). It cannot be denied that Simeon's confessions does not have that "honest doubt" which Tennyson believed to be essential to the truly religious consciousness.

There are, then, two Simeons in Tennyson's text: one is fanatical, insane, vain, and mundane; the other is sceptical, self-critical, honest and humane. This division makes the interpretation of Simeon's character as well as Tennyson's text more complicated and open. "St Simeon Stylites" is subtly illusive because the character speaks with "Two Voices." The illusive nature of Tennyson's text, however, is more evident in The Princess.

IV. The Princess: Engagement via Evasion

The Princess, according to Herbert Tucker, is "a problem poem" (351). The problem, however, is already a familiar one; it is the problem of internal division surrounding an emergent social issue of the time, the equality and the education of women. Tennyson must have been drawn to the topic for various reasons. First of all, the idea of female education has been raised consistently since Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792), and in the 1830s and 1840s the voices for the reformation became more louder and militant. Caroline Norton's famous custody battle for her child against her husband in 1839 (the year when Tennyson thought of writing poem) was just one of them. Norton's campaign could have influenced Tennyson's stress on the child Aglaia in his narrative. "The child," according to Tennyson's own comments, "is the link through the parts" as well as "the best interpreters of the poem" (Mem, II 486). "The real point at issue," says John Killham (in Tennyson and "The Princess": Reflections of an Age, 1958), is "Whether the marriage-relationship could survive the fulfilment of women's aspirations." Tennyson confronts this social and ideological issue for the first time in his poetic career, and The Princess in this sense can be viewed as a prelude to his poetry of social concern, such as In Memoriam (1850), Maud (1855), and Idylls of the King (1859). The

Princess can also be considered as a natural development of Tennyson's poetry, since he had dealt with the high-born maidens: "Mariana," "The Lady of Shalott," "Fatima," "Oenone," and above all, "A Dream of Fair Women." There is, however, a difference between the predecessor poems and The Princess: In the earlier poems Tennyson idealized rather than ideolized the women. The Princess Ida, the heroine of the poem, still carries the the remote air of fatalism found in "Mariana" and "The Lady of Shalott," but she is also the first lady who comes down from the "mountain height" to the "valley" of human value (VII, 177-84). This conspicuous change in the image of Tennyson's ideal woman was acutely observed by Herbert Tucker. Tucker in his generic approach finds the poem a "Bildungspoesie": "Tennyson's Romantic situation led him, inevitably, to the practice of what might be termed Bildungspoesie: the verse narrative of a central figure's progress from self-division and cultural alienation, through stages of therapheutic encounter, to a hard-won goal of inner and outer reconciliation" (349). Tucker seems perceptive, but one major problem with his notion of "bildungspoesie" is the apparent discontent and uncertainty registred by Tennyson himself:

So closed our tale, of which I give you all
 The random scheme as wildly as it rose:
 The words are mostly mine; for when we ceased
 There came a minute's pause, and Walter said,
 'I wish she had not yielded!' then to me,
 'What, if you drest it up poetically?'
 So prayed the men, the women: I gave assent:
 Yet how to bind the scattered scheme of seven

Together in one sheaf? What style could suit?
 The men required that I should give throughout
 The sort of mock-heroic gigantesque,
 With which we bantered little Lilia first:
 The women--and perhaps they felt their power,
 For something in the ballads which they sang,
 Or in their silent influence as they sat,
 Had ever seemed to wrestle with burlesque,
 And drove us, last, to quite a solemn close--
 They hated banter, wished for something real,
 A gallant fight, a noble princess--why
 Not make her true-heroic-true-sublime?
 Or all, they said, as earnest as the close?
 Which yet with such a framework scarce could be.
 Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,
 Betwixt the mockers and the realists:
 And I, betwixt them both, to please them both,
 And yet to give the story as it rose,
 I moved as in a strange diagonal,
 And maybe neither pleased myself nor them.
 (Conclusion, 1-29)

This conclusion, really a poetic apology, seems to reveal the essence of Tennyson's poetics: division. Tennyson, unlike Arnold in his Preface to Poems (1853), neither rejects his poem nor defends his poetic practice. He even suggests that the problem of The Princess is not entirely his own. In the absence of an ideal "framework" of the story and story-tellers, caught in the dilemma between "the mockers and the realists," the Victorian audience, Tennyson insinuates that society should be held responsible along with the story-teller. Society or the audience is the originator of the text as long as it demands pleasure from the story-teller. This problem implies that the division in the text is ultimately the result of division in society. The disagreement among members of society over the rights of women is reflected in the form and style of The Princess.

Thus Tennyson ascribes his artistic problem to the

social problem by making them inseparable from each other, a strategy that requires a new poetic device or technique, one that might be called "collective authorship." Instead of a single coherent speaking subject, Tennyson devises the seven narrators to tell the story of The Princess, then tells a story about the narrators and their stories. This double frame of the poem enables Tennyson to become author-critic or producer-consumer. Even more significant than the ingenuity of Tennyson's poetic device is his "baring of the device." Like Sterne's Tristram Shandy or Fielding's Tom Jones, or Byron in Don Juan, Tennyson reveals his artistic device in the premise of his poetry. This defamiliarization ("ostranenie") of the artistic device or technique has been called by the Russian Formalist Shklovsky a distinctively modern practice. Whereas older literature tried to conceal its own art, modern literature takes the opposite approach. Frederic Jameson points out that the notion of Shklovsky's "defamiliarization" is essentially polemical and ideological.

The idea of ostranenie or defamiliarization is and must always be a polemic one: it depends on the negation of the existing habits of thought or perception and is to that degree bound to them and dependent on them as well. It is in other words not a coherent concept in its own right, but a transitional, self-abolishing one. (The Prison-House of Language, 90)

Tennyson's defamiliarization or "baring of the device" in The Princess, since it surely conforms to Jameson's or Shklovsky's description, is polemical by its own nature.

Jameson, however, appears to ignore another important characteristic in "defamiliarization," that which we call irony, which always turns towards its origin. Tennyson complains about the framework of The Princess, saying that he is impelled to adopt it. His "baring" of the problem is not only polemical but also "ironic" because the framework that he complains about is after all his own. Byron says in Don Juan that "Good workmen never quarrel with their tools" (Canto I, CCI). Why should, then, Tennyson quarrel over his own device? Perhaps the baring of his "problem," can draw critical attention from his ideological stance to art itself by the force of its irony.

The Princess, then, is both ideological and ironic. It is a work of social engagement, but the engagement is expressed through evasion. Tennyson wants to discuss a social issue that he feels strongly about, but at the same time he wants to identify himself neither with "the mockers" (the males) nor with "the realists" (the females). This personal dilemma is the central division of the poem and dictates the poetic structure as well as characterization and imagery. The setting of the poem is Sir Walter Vivian's private park, which is opened up annually to his tenants, neighbors, and the members of the local Mechanics' Institute. The narrator (of the Prologue) visits Walter, the son of Sir Walter Vivian with others of his set, and says, "We were seven at Vivian-place." These words bring to mind, certainly a deliberate play by the

poet, the seven Greek warriors who launched an attack against Thebes. The seven narrators are in a particular sense the seven warriors because they fail to achieve, according to Tennyson's assessment, their objective.

The major challenge to the story-telling expedition is division. The division seems omnipresent: setting, character, ideology, time, language. Sir Walter Vivian's park, the setting of the poem, is both ancient and modern, old and new. Its old relics, "Half-legend, half-historic" (30), are mingled with scientific objects such as a toy cannon, telescopes, a model steam engine, a fire balloon, and so on. Thus the poet says, "Strange was sight and smacking of the time," or "sport / Went hand in hand with Science." The characters are also the mixture of uncommonly opposite groups: the common people with the gentry, the students of the local Mechanics' Institute and Cambridge colleges. An individual character is divided either by ideology or gender. Lilia, Walter's younger sister, is described as "Half child and half woman" (101). As to the views of the position of women, Princess Ida and the old King, the Prince's father, are antagonistic to each other. The language used by the characters is also divided: "Part banter, part affection," or the idle talks of college students and the serious talk of women's rights, or a "summer's tale" and a "winter's tale."

The seven narrators are required to weave all the elements of division into a meaningful whole, and this task is called a "game." But a game is the other side of a

serious battle. The notion of game disguises the sincerity of war, and a sense of war undermines the superficiality of a game. The narrative movement is in its essence a dynamics of the two opposites, a game and a war, or a comedy and a tragedy. This narrative strategy has its theoretical justification, but, as far as interpretation is concerned, it creates an enormous difficulty. How should we take the whole poem? Should we take it as a linguistic game or an ideological battle?

Lilia's speech, for instance, is a case in point:

Quick answered Lilia 'There are thousands now
Such women, but convention beats them down:
.....
You men have done it: how I hate you all!
Ah, were I something great! I wish I were
Some mighty poetess, I would shame on you then,
That love to keep us children! O I wish
That I were some great princess, I would build
Far off from men a college like a man's,
And I would teach them all that men are taught;
We are twice as quick! (127-138)

The first and last parts belong to "battle" or "tragedy," while the middle to "game" or comedy. The mixture of these opposites undercuts the signification of the whole statement. According to the narrator of the poem, Lilia is "Half child, half woman" (101). If we can take this characterization as the structure of her remarks, the first and last parts belong to "half-woman" and the middle to "half child." The statement based on the image of a child cannot be taken too seriously ("game"); the statement made by "half woman", however, is meant to be taken seriously ("battle").

Lilia's answer is prompted by Walter's bantering question: "Lives there such a woman now?" (126). Lilia's "quick" answer appears to be the result of the indoctrination made by the maiden aunt Elizabeth, a militant feminist, one resembling Harriet Martineau and Mrs. Jameson. Seizing the holiday at the park as a special opportunity to speak out, aunt Elizabeth preaches to the young ladies what Tennyson ironically calls "An universal culture for the crowd," ironic because the idea of a woman's college in his day is not yet "universal." Elizabeth, however, is neither a high Romantic nor an ideal quester. Her brand of feminism, especially the idea of woman's college, has a humble, anti-Romantic origin, a program set up by the Mechanics' Institute. The seven youths, the narrators, however, ignore the historical context of Lilia's idea and set up their story in the context of romance and pastoral.

This strategy by Tennyson turns the real into the fictional; he is playing a linguistic game. We know that narrators have already had prior experience in playing this kind of story-telling game last Christmas with Lilia herself, and they now want to reproduce once more the memory of that "pleasant game" (191) to "kill Time." However, "killing time" does not mean the same to the narrators and the "ladies" in the audience:

..... and so
 We forged a sevenfold story. Kind? What Kind?
 Chimeras, crochets, Christmas solecisms,
 Seven-headed monsters only made to kill

Time by the fire in the winter.'

'Kill him now,
The tyrant! kill him in the summer too,'
Said Lilia; 'Why not now? the maiden Aunt.
'Why not a summer's as a winter's tale?

For the narrators to "kill / Time" is merely entertainment; on the other hand, for the ladies it is to attack and destroy the prejudice and bigotry in their age. Tennyson makes Time masculine, comparing it to a tyrant, a symbol of injustice. Then he invokes the predecessor text of Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale which conveys the message that "A sad tale's best for winter" (II, i, 25). The ladies' wish to have summer's tale, then, implies that they want a story not just sad but heroic for their feminist cause. The role of the ladies is not meant to be totally passive. To give the male narrators some "breathing space" (234), they are to sing "some ballad or a song" (233) between the stories. Since *The Princess* is, in fact, "a medley" (230), the poem, then, stresses both structurally and contextually diversity, a form of evasion that neutralizes the conflict of division.

Tennyson, therefore, stresses division in structuring his story. Tennyson's poem presents the various and different positions on the issue of woman's rights in his day. At one extreme is the militant feminism of Princess Ida, who, betrothed in childhood to the Prince of a neighboring kingdom, has broken off her betrothal and, with the aid of Lady Blanche and Lady Psyche, established a women's college which it is death for men to enter. At the

other extreme is the reactionary view of the old King, the Prince's father. Between these two extremes are the other characters such as Gama, Ida's father, Arac, Ida's brother, and Cyril and Florian, the Prince's friends. The Prince appears strangely devoid of ideology; he is an idealist rather than an ideologue, and his mild character, often influenced by his "weird seizures,"¹² is intended to be contrasted with Princess Ida's strong character as well as her "maiden fancies."

The "weird seizures," is also one device that Tennyson uses to stress the division between the real and the unreal, the present and the past. The marriage of the Princess and the Prince is the culmination of reconciling the divisions between man and woman, reality and vision. The man in the Princess is weakened and the woman in the Prince strengthened. Without this process of recovering or understanding their true state of nature, true reconciliation is not possible. Tennyson seems to suggest that the distinction between man and woman has to be preserved so that they can complement each other by the qualities of their generic distinction: "In true marriage lies / Nor equal nor unequal: each fulfils / Defect in each" (VII, 284-6). Rejecting the notion of equality between man and woman because of the political and ideological implications, Tennyson adopts the mythical and ironical view proposed by Aristophanes in Plato's Symposium: Man and woman, being only half-human in their separate state, are destined to seek their missing

counterparts for love. "Woman," says Tennyson, "is not undeveloped man, / But diverse: could we make her as the man, / Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this, / Not like to like, but like in difference. / Yet in the long years liker must they grow; / The man be more of woman, she of man" (259-64). Based upon this philosophy, the Prince finally declares that "The woman's cause is man's" (243), and the implication made by the Prince's remarks is clearly intended for Victorian audience.

Is The Princess, then, a poem of engagement? In order to answer the question, one has to decide which is more important in the poem: the poetic content or the poetic structure. The poetic structure is designed to deconstruct the phenomenal meaning of the text and make the possibility of interpretation perpetually open. Without the division, The Princess is basically a feminist poem. With the division, however, it is something else. It becomes a work about the division of Victorians and their values. It is, at least, a poem less concerned with a social ideology. The poem is rather concerned with its own artistic problem. In that sense, The Princess is a poem of device baring its own structure and ultimately a self-referential poem, a poem about itself.

V. In Memoriam: Division and Dispersion

"The most important critical question about In Memoriam," according to Christopher Ricks, is "In what sense do the 133 separate sections, ranging in length from 12 lines to 144 lines, constitute a whole, a poetic unity, a poem?" (212). Critical evaluation seems to be complicated by Tennyson's own statement made to James Knowles in 1870:

The sections were written at many different places, and as the phases of our intercourse came to my memory and suggested them. I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole, or for publication, until I found that I had written so many. 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 through him. After the Death of A.H.H., the division of the poem are made by First Xmas Eve (Section XXVIII), Second Xmas (LXXVIII), Third Xmas Eve (CIV and CV etc.) (Memoir, I, 304-5)

In this statement, Tennyson appears to contradict himself. If he did not write his poem "with any view of weaving them into a whole, or for publication," that means that the poem is the natural outgrowth of his personal grief over his friend's death. Then, the "I" in his poem is necessarily "the author speaking of himself" unless his elegy be a polygraph. Tennyson, however, denies that the "I" in his poem is solely himself. He later told Knowles that In Memoriam is "a very impersonal as well as personal" (Memoir, I, 305), a denial that raises a question: At what point did he realize that he had written too many sections and decide to redirect the poem for publication? At the

time of his discovery, did he then find the unity which is necessary for the publication of the poem? One assumes, of course, events did not occur in this way. Otherwise, his rather laborious division of the poem would not be necessary.

This conclusion implies that In Memoriam is originally a formless, fragmentary poem, and that a form was imposed on it to create poetic unity. This possibility is suggested by Tennyson himself when he confesses his own belated realization of the formlessness of the sections. Indeed he almost joked about his strange way of writing the poem: "The general way of its being written was so queer that if there were a blank space I would put in a poem" (Memoir, I, 305). The way that In Memoriam was written, however, is in fact hardly "queer," because Maud was also written more or less the same way, that is "backwards" (Memoir, I, 379). Tennyson's practice of writing appears to have been guided by his sense of organic form, rather than any external one, often determined by the poetic subject itself. It seems possible, therefore, that Tennyson must have relied almost solely on the internal intensity and unity inherent in the subject of Hallam's death. "We assert form," says Rolands Barthes, "because we do not grasp the subtlety of an absolute movement" (Untying the Text, 45). If this is the case, Tennyson did not need to have any particular structure to develop his poem except his poetic instinct. What, then, were the obstacles in

Tennyson's approach achieving unity in his poem?

Daniel Albright (1986) locates the chief problem in Tennyson's "indeterminacy" with regard to his poetic objective. He contends that Tennyson is divided between Urania, the Heavenly Muse, and Melpomene, the earthly Muse. The former requires Tennyson to seek the sublime and transcendent; the latter to dwell on the limited subject, Hallam's death and singing of his sorrow. These two kinds of inspirations can cause a generic division of the poem: an "encyclopedia" on the one hand, and "an elegy" on the other hand (178). Albright elaborates his distinction between Urania and Melpomene in the following terms:

Urania is... dispassionate scientific, contemptuous of little prating men, like the Soul in "The Palace of Art." The danger of embracing Urania is that the minute particulars of Arthur Hallam, all the dear things he said and did, will be lost amid ingenious and energetic inquiry into religion, natural philosophy, and geology, and that the elegist as well will vanish into the sublime. The danger of embracing Melpomene is that the flood of human, secular grief may drown the fragile vessel, the "rich shrine" (sect. 57, Tennyson's note) of In Memoriam--that is, that Tennyson may not be able to write at all. (197)

The critical framework that Albright uses in dealing with Textual division is correct and illuminating, and it can suggest possibly a new way of approaching In Memoriam. Tennyson's text indeed shows a pattern of struggling vacillation between two competing influences. The beginning of the poem in the section I, for instance, belongs to Urania.

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones

Of their dead selves to higher things (I, 1-4)

Although Tennyson do not invoke Urania, the Heavenly Muse, the way he sounds indicates implicitly that his song intends to be the Miltonic "advent'rous Song" (Paradise Lost, Book I, 13). However, the following sections from II to XXXVI, generally speaking, belong to Melpomene. The reflection on the state of the dead (II), the Sorrow (III), Sleep (IV), expression of grief (V), loss (VI), the dark house (VII), the remembrance of the past (VIII), and the entire sections from IX to XX, which are all connected with the image of ship, and the parade of pain (XXI), "'T is better to have loved and lost" (XXVII), first Christmas (XXVIII-XXX), Lazarus (XXXI), his sister (XXXII-XXXIII), "That life shall live for evermore (XXXIV), reflection on the death (XXXV), are dominated by Melpomene until the poet is reproached by Urania.

Urania speaks with darkened brow:
Thou pratest here where thou art least;
This faith has many a purer priest,
And many an abler voice than thou. (XXXVII, 1-4)

Urania's rebuke here is, of course, Tennyson's own self-criticism; but at the same time it is in a strange way a self-congratulation.¹³ Urania and Melpomene, then, represent Tennyson's conflicting desire for visionary and elegiac poetry. Tennyson appears to identify himself with Melpomene when he defends himself against the charge of Urania.

And my Melpomene replies,
A touch of shame upon her cheek:
"I am not worthy even to speak

Of thy prevailing mysteries;

"For I am but an earthly Muse,
And owning but a little art
To lull with song an aching heart,
And render human love his dues; (XXXVII, 9-16)

Melpomene is the Muse of elegy or tragedy in the tradition of Horace and Spenser. Horace says on the death of his friend, "Teach me a song of mourning, O Melpomene" (Odes I XXIV 2-3); Spenser in The Shepherdes Calender: "Up then Melpomene thou Mournfulst Muse of nyne, / Such cause of mourning never hadst afore" (November 53-4). Tennyson is bound by this tradition when he sings an elegy for his dead friend.

Tennyson's Melpomene, however, unlike Horace's, is "an earthly Muse" who owns "but a little art." So it seems doubtful whether she can teach Tennyson how to mourn in the way that he wants. She can, of course, teach the tradition of mourning, but that is not exactly what Tennyson wants. Tennyson wants his mourning to be as natural as possible, detached from the artificiality of art. In section V, Tennyson says, "I sometimes hold it half a sin / To put in words the grief I feel" (1-2). "The song of mourning" is a desecration of the poet's sacred memory of his friend. Tennyson fears to appear as if he were making "parade of pain" (XXI). This particular consciousness prevents Tennyson from engaging directly in his singing of Hallam's death.

No wonder that the beginning of the poem is vague and abstract. We do not know exactly what happened to the poet

except that the poet lost someone whom he loved dearly. The sections from I to VI seem more or less a detour to find the right entry to the elegy proper. The mental crisis of the mourner is compared to a frozen state of mind; the "deep vase of chilling tears" (IV) cannot be broken in the conventional way. Thus Tennyson resists being taken in by Melpomene in the domain of her rule. Tennyson's intense feeling for privacy is aggravated by Urania, who advocates for impersonality. If we consider Tennyson's ambivalence toward Melpomene in this context, her speech in section XXXVII (quoted above) should not be taken as the faithful representation of Tennyson's poetic intention.

In terms of his poetics of division, Tennyson needs both Urania and Melpomene. Without Urania his poetry has to risk falling into "prating." Without Melpomene, on the other hand, Tennyson's poetry faces the danger of becoming general philosophy, a sublime nothing devoid of the personal elements which he cherishes. To reconcile the two Muses is then to "weave" the text, to create a poetic unity. Such a poem of reconciliation would be a series of alternations in its deployment of poetic themes: personal and impersonal, sensation and reflection, and so on. This arrangement of division and alternation create unity out of variety, an impression that one hundred thirty-three separate parts are one. Without alternating, the monotony generated by the dark mood could not be varied.

After the intervention of Urania in section XXXVII,

we begin to notice a gradual lessening of the morbid intensity of the poet's mourning. The sections from XXXVIII to XLIX are an excursion in the spirit of Urania. The poems are more general and impersonal in their voices and poetic subjects. Tennyson's speculation on child psychology in section XLV is a good indicator of his digressive strategy:

The baby new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that "this is I"; (1-4)

In this poem, there is no "prating" or pathetic fallacy whatsoever; the tone is high and dry. And yet the section is distantly relevant to the central theme because it deals with memory and its existence after death, following the previous sections. If we isolate this section, it is a literally a fragment. If we relate it to others, it is one of many links. The Uranian sections are replaced again by Melpomene when we come to section L. The tone becomes intensely personal and elegiac.

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. (1-4)

This pathetic voice grows into "no language but a cry" (LIV) and the terrifying vision of "Nature, red in tooth and claw" (LVI). The dark mood of Melpomene persists until Urania reappears and reprimands him again: "'Wherefore grieve / Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?" (LVIII). Urania always brings a change to the poem whenever she

appears:

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
No casual mistress, but a wife,
My bosom-friend and half of life;
As I confess it needs must be. (LIX)

The mourner talks to Sorrow but his mood does not appear to be depressed, as in the beginning. His language, somewhat smacking of Donnean conceits, sounds cheerfully ironic. Sorrow in section III was "a Priestess in the vaults of Death" or "a tempestuous mistress" in Culler's term (178). The speaker, now, intends to domesticate her by turning her from a mistress into his wife. What is significant here is that the speaker is more confident in dealing with his own emotion. He dares to confront Sorrow face to face in a calm, dispassionate manner, perhaps a sign of his emotional recovery. Urania is "dispassionate," as Albright characterized her (197), but she is the one (not Melpomene) who leads the speaker from despair to hope. The signs of recovery continue as the speaker addresses Sorrow:

And in that solace can I sing,
Till out of painful phases wrought
There flutters up a happy thought,
Self-balanced on a lightsome wing: (LXV)

The hopeful mood, however, is turned around by Melpomene and slides once more into gloom. The sequence of sections LXXII to XCVIII reveals Tennyson's struggle before he reaches the resolution. "It is essential," as Culler says, "that this victory should not be achieved easily" (179). The hope of recovery is, then, not defeated; it is involved in struggle, and this internal

struggle is developed by a series of intense meditations on death: "Death has made / His darkness beautiful with thee" (LXXIV); "He [Death] put our lives so far apart / We cannot hear each other" (LXXXII); "Tis better to have loved and lost, / Than never to have loved at all--" or "My old affection of the tomb" (LXXXV); "So word by word, and line by line, / The dead man touched me from the past" (XCV); "There lives more faith in honest doubt" (XCVI).

The final process of recovery starts with section XCIX. Tennyson inserts this section deliberately to mark the transition from Melpomene to Urania. In section LXXII, the first poem of the last group, Tennyson's description of "dim dawn" appears as bleak as possible; it is in essence a nightmare.

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
And howlest, issuing out of night,
With blasts that blow the poplar white,
And lash with storm the streaming pane? (LXXII)

Now, in section XCIX, the "dim dawn" appears much different.

Risest thou, thus, dim dawn, again,
So loud with voices of the birds,
So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men; (XCIX)

The "dim dawn" here is no longer nightmarish; it is at its worst a natural phenomena that awakens the poet to the sad reality of personal loss. Section CIII is about the poet's dream, and was obviously meant to contrast with former dreams in section LXIX. Compared to previous dreary dreams, the latest dream is much more pleasant and comforting. Recalling Dante's sad and sweet pathos,

Tennyson recounts the dream in which he meets his dead friend:

... In the centre stood
A statue veiled, to which they sang;

And which, though veiled, was known to me,
The shape of him I loved, ... (CIII)

Right after this encounter with the dead, the third Christmas is introduced (CIV, CV, CVI). Unlike the two previous ones, the third Christmas is clearly less distressful, and serves as a marker of the emotional evolution that the speaker succeeded in achieving through the process of time. He can sing now along with Christmas bells, "Ring out the old, ring in the new" (CVI). This buoyancy leads to the final declaration: "Yet less of sorrow lives in me" (CXVI).

The rest of the following sections are devoted to various subjects such as Hallam's birthday (CVII), Hallam's personality whose "manhood fused with female grace" (CIX), his power of intellect (CX), contemplation on knowledge (CXIV), Time (CXVII), Science (CXX), a transcendental vision (CXXIII), religious faith (CXXIV-- CXXVIII), Hallam's final identity and significance for the poet (CXXX), the future of human race (CXXXI). As we can see in this arrangement of poetic development, the poem moves from the personal to the impersonal, from the particular to the universal, and above all, from sorrow to joy. The Epilogue is the sublime affirmation of this principle: "For I myself with these have grown / To something greater than before" (17-20). In Memoriam, says Culler, is "a poem in

process, not a product" (159). The process of change and transition has often been conceived as confusion or disunity. Albright is one of the critics who believes that the rivalry between Urania and Melpomene divides the focus of the poem: "Two opposing kinds of excess threaten to overwhelm In Memoriam, the two competing inspirations which Tennyson denominates as Melpomene and Urania; each would, without the mitigating influence of the other, cause the poem to founder" (195).

Albright's statement, however, ignores the fact that the initial influence of Melpomene, the Muse of elegy, is "mitigated" by Urania, the Muse of universal poetry, as the poem progresses towards the resolution. It is an exaggerated view, therefore, that the tug-of-war of the two Muses rocks or disturbs the whole vessel of the poem. Albright charges: "In Memoriam fails to be an elegy because Tennyson did not impress upon his material the conclusive shape necessary for psychological relief by aesthetic means" (180). If In Memoriam fails as an elegy, what, then, is it? Patricia Ball in *The Heart's Events* (1985) makes us revise our thinking of Tennyson's unity in terms of transgression and renewal of the old genre.

Tennyson...renews even as he challenges the tradition of long poem. When he works on his 'short swallow-flights of song' to organize them into a single utterance, he creates a wholly contemporary version of what began as epic story-telling...The lyric is not relinquished, revealing itself on the contrary to be the unit on which the whole depends...By conceiving his long poems as a network, Tennyson accommodates an old form to new needs...In Memoriam, then, forces us

to revise but not at all to abandon our ideas on the expected unity of a long work." (85-6)

Sinfield proposes another way of approaching Tennyson's problem of textual unity in In Memoriam:

An alternative way of thinking about In Memoriam may be drawn from Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes. This volume of autobiographical reminiscences and reflections, composed of brief sections, is like Tennyson's poem, but Barthes' aim is to prevent a structure from forming" (Alfred Tennyson, 124)

If Albright emphasizes Tennyson's divided objectives, Sinfield stresses his on Tennyson's troubled subjectivity. He contends that "Tennyson's final theory of subjectivity rejects earlier theories of coherence and permanence: his writing is not the representation of a unified self" (124). This means that the one hundred thirty three sections of In Memoriam could be, at its worst, the projections of the same number of separate subjectivities. While it is a little difficult to imagine so many Tennysons in one poem, Sinfield's theory offers one solution to the problem of unity by eliminating the assumption of its existence. If Tennyson were not interested in unity, the question of unity becomes simply irrelevant.

Sinfield's theory can be supported on one level by Tennyson's literary practice, that is, his constant relapse into division, vacillation, anonymity, "Free space for every human doubt" "the nameless," "weird seizure," mixing of the real and the unreal, which are basically devices to destabilize. Sinfield's bete noir, however, is his analogy of Tennyson's "intention" to Barthes's. Did Tennyson really try to disconnect or disperse his subjectivity in a

Barthean way? Barthes declares in his autobiography that "I am not contradictory, I am dispersed" (143). Would Tennyson say the same? Unless we can conceive a post-structuralist Tennyson one hundred years ahead of his time, the answer is negative.

Sinfield seems perfectly aware of this problem. Discussing section LIX of In Memoriam, he states:

Here Tennyson insists on the stability of his "centered passion," but suggests that readers may hardly recognize the "name" of his experience from his words. He does not, like the post-structuralist Barthes, acknowledge that the waywardness of writing points to the instability of the self, but he does detach his climax for stability from his writing, offering that writing as a space in which subjectivity moves rather than a representation of its coherence. (125)

What Sinfield tries to argue here appears more than just a new interpretation of In Memoriam. What really underlies his interpretation is the post-structural theory of the text articulated by Barthes, particularly his notion of "writing as a space." Barthes says, "as soon as the text is conceived as a polysemic space where the paths of several possible meanings intersect, it is necessary to cast off the monological, legal status of signification, and to pluralise it" (Untying the Text, 37). Sinfield almost paraphrases Barthes's strategy: as soon as the absence of "the unified self" in In Memoriam is conceived as "a polysemic space," the poem is no longer a work of unity; on the contrary, it becomes a work of plural consciousnesses in which the central subjectivity is decentred or dispersed.

The lack of coherent subjectivity is a mechanism intended by Tennyson to enhance the "productivity" of his text. The essential spirit of In Memoriam is the process, not the product. Tennyson's desire for the fluidity of text is one of the strongest undercurrents in In Memoriam. Thus Buckler sees it as a major poetic theme of Tennyson's elegy: "At the heart of In Memoriam is a theme of creative fluidity--not perpetual indecision, but a matured willingness not to settle for even the most refined dogmatic solutions available from outside the organically processed self, but to await the better event, the ultimate illumination within" (The Victorian Imagination, 48). To privilege the notion of coherent subjectivity and unity, therefore, is to limit or close the productivity of the text. "In the classical universe, a law of the signified is deduced from the law of the signifier" (Barthes, Untying the Text, 33), but the classical universe does not have the Tennysonian crisis of the sign. Instability is the mark of Tennyson's poem, whether it be of the language or poetic subjectivity. Tennyson "ceaselessly posits meaning endlessly to evaporate it" (Barthes, Untying the Text, 31). His deconstructive strategy is unquestionably visible not only in In Memoriam but also in almost all of his works, especially The Princess, Maud, and The Idylls of the King.

VI. Maud: Madness and Division

T. S. Eliot declares that In Memoriam, despite the formal divisions, is "the whole poem" (Selected Essays, 291). On the other hand, he finds in Maud "a fundamental error of form" (190). Eliot's critical judgement seems puzzling when we consider the similarities between the two poems. In terms of "form," both poems are alike: a collection of short lyrics. Eliot further states: "In Maud, Tennyson neither identifies himself with the lover, nor identifies the lover himself: consequently, the real feelings of Tennyson, profound and tumultuous as they are, never arrive at expression" (290). But this is also what happens in In Memoriam; in In Memoriam, Tennyson neither identifies himself with the mourner, nor identifies the mourner with himself. It is Tennyson himself who would deny Eliot's view: "'I' is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him" (Memoir, I, 304-5). On the other hand, Maud, which was meant to be "the history of a morbid, poetic soul" (Memoir, I, 396), reveals more of Tennyson's spiritual identity through intensity of emotion and expression. According to Jane Welsh, Tennyson appeared "strangely excited about Maud--as sensitive to criticisms as if they were imputations on his honour" (Ricks, 248). The inference seems to be that the proximity of identification between the author and the hero of In

Memoriam and Maud is at least more or less the same. Furthermore, in In Memoriam, Tennyson expresses his frustration over arriving at the right expression: "Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame / In Matter-moulded forms of speech" (XCV). And yet, Eliot says that in In Memoriam, "Tennyson finds full expression" (290). Maud does not reveal, and apparently the poet did not feel, the same kind of frustration. Tennyson expresses his repressed feelings, but he does so superbly: "O that 'twere possible / After long grief and pain / To find the arms of my true love / Round me once again!" (II, iv). Nevertheless, Eliot believes that "In Maud Tennyson never arrives at expression" (290).

One is left to wonder what are the criteria for Eliot's critical judgement? He argues that "Maud is neither one thing nor the other" (290). To be "neither one thing nor another," according to Patricia Ball, means not the failure of "form" but Tennyson's challenge to tradition as well as his creativity: "Tennyson...renews even as he challenges the tradition of long poem. When he works on his 'short swallow-flights of song' to organize them into a single utterance, he creates a wholly contemporary version of what began as epic story-telling" (The Heart's Events, 85). Maud seems to be an extension of In Memoriam, the result of Tennyson's newly found poetic genre, as far as poetic "form" is concerned. There is certainly no "fundamental error in form" in Maud. If there is such an

error, then, In Memoriam should be faulted for the same reason.

Shaw, for one, differs sharply from Eliot in his view of "form" in Tennyson's poetry: "Though it is more fragmented and hallucinatory than In Memoriam, Tennyson's Maud (1855) achieves a wholeness of form rarely surpassed in Victorian poetry" (Tennyson's Style, 165). Shaw's observation is, interestingly enough, oxymoronic if not self-contradictory; he sees in Maud both fragmentation and wholeness of form. He believes that this division is exactly what Tennyson intended, and more importantly, the form works because its uniqueness produces the text in the way it was intended. He states: "Maud is a virtuoso medley of hysteria and catharsis, of breakdown and mental therapy" (169). Shaw's word "medley" recalls Tennyson's own in the prologue of The Princess: "This were a medley!" (line 230).

The "medley" is, in fact, Tennyson's structure as well as strategy to achieve the wholeness of his text. Tennyson says that the seven narrators in The Princess are one: "Seven and yet one" (line 222). The diversity in Maud, then, is an essential character of its unity, and a deliberate example of Tennyson's poetics. The disjointed utterances and personalities, the major elements of the "medley," are the diverse moods of one character, the narrator of the poem. "The peculiarity of this poem," according to Tennyson's own assessment, "is that different phases of passion in one person take the place of different

characters" (Memoir, I, 396). Maud, then, is the center of his passion and expression, but the poet is intent on revealing her identity as well as making her serve this function.

Lisa Berglund states the formal problem of Maud in this manner:

In the case of Maud, Tennyson deliberately fails to meet readers' expectations for the relation of poetic form to content...so as to create a metaphorical key to understanding within the narrative both how Maud fails as form to contain the meaning assigned to her by the hero and how he errs in insisting that she is the content missing from his empty form of a life... Although the poem is named Maud, we know very little about her, and Tennyson implies that there is little enough to know. In her way, she is as empty as the narrator himself... However, while the narrator emphasizes his own anonymity, he keeps the name of Maud perpetually before us... The monodrama, in short, tells of an attempt to establish an alternative meaning to a dreaded suspicion, to give content form, while, through a structural parallel, it illustrates the inappropriateness of the project its narrator has undertaken. (50)

The "failure" of form that Berglund finds in Maud thus appears to be wholly different from Eliot's notion of "a fundamental error of form": Tennyson's failure, according to her, is "deliberate." Berglund's critical observation is obviously based on her division of form and content, which had been a generally accepted structural principle until the recent arrival of modern linguistics and post-structural criticism. In the latter form and content are in fact a Saussurean concept of signs, which consist of signifier and signified. Maud, then, is the signifier, "the meaning assigned by the hero," but the signified in Maud is absent. Berglund, who says, "We know very little

about her," calls this absence of the signified in Maud a failure of form. However, is the absence of the signified a failure of form? While the arbitrariness and uncertainty between the signifier and the signified are evident, that is a problem common to linguistic expressions in general. If Maud is a failure of form because the signified is absent, much of Tennyson's poetry should be seen as having the same kind of failure. What is, for instance, exactly the signified of "The Lady of Shalott," "Mariana," or "Oenone"? Is the signified evidently present in these characters? Berglund, however, attempts to mitigate Tennyson's "failure" of form in Maud by calling it a "deliberate" one in order "to establish an alternative meaning." The alternative meaning is to illustrate "the inappropriateness of the project its narrator has undertaken," that is, to show the unbridgeable division between the signifier and the signified. Maud, then, becomes a poem of frustration, not because of the narrator's psychological difficulties but because of his linguistic inability to fill up the sign.

Berglund's approach in essence appears to be De Manian. In "Autography as a De-facement" De Man states, "The name on the title page is not the proper name of a subject capable of self-knowledge and understanding, but the signature that gives the contract legal, though by no means epistemological, authority" (Modern Language Notes, 94. 1979. 913-30. P.921). If we follow De Man's approach,

Maud is in fact an autography devoid of authority. Berglund summarizes the issue this way: "Maud is assigned a meaning when she is meaningless--she is 'splendidly null'--and Maud is an immense oxymoron, in which form battles content" (51).

One fact that Berglund overlooks, however, is that Maud is misleading as a title. If the poem "illustrates the inappropriateness of the project its narrator has undertaken," the artistic center of the poem should be not Maud but the narrator, the lover of Maud, who is made ironically anonymous. Maud is simply the object or someone in the circumference of the narrator's desire, and in this sense her existence is chiefly functional. Tennyson called Maud "a little Hamlet, the history of a morbid soul" (Memoir, I, 396). The title of the poem, however, hardly reflects the poet's interest in the mentality of the narrator. It is as though one could call Hamlet "Orphelia." The fact is that Tennyson's intention is not to make Maud, the character, as important as the narrator. Her character needs to be ambiguous and enigmatic in order to be the cause and condition of the neurosis of the narrator. Thus the naming or misnaming of Maud is a contributing factor to the "formal" failure that Berglund finds in Maud.

Are the characters of Maud and the narrator really as "empty" as Berglund claims? In the context of Tennyson's poetics of division, it is more likely that Tennyson's "form" or sign is both empty and full, not fully empty.

Maud is "empty" in the sense that she is enigmatic, but full in the sense that she is the prime mover of the narrator's passion and madness. The narrator is "empty" as long as his language remains inexpressible, merely incantatory songs and dreams; but he is "full" as long as his madness persists. The most poignant irony of the poem is that the poetic structure is founded on the narrator's madness, a principle of disunity. As a result, the poem achieves both unity and disunity simultaneously.

Maud starts with the scene of "the little wood," the locus classicus of romance. In Tennyson's "wood," however, unlike Shakespeare's A Mid-summer Night's Dream or Dante's Inferno, there occurs no wandering or quest. If there is any adventure in Tennyson's wood, it is only static and internal. The poem is a landscape of a neurotic psyche, and the movement of the poem is "cinematic," as Shaw suggests (Tennyson's Style, 170). The flow of the narrative reveals many dark corners of the narrator's psyche: "blood" and "horror" (I), the violent death of his father (II), the question of suicide (III), his initial shock at the death of his father (IV), the reflections on the cause of his death (V), and so on. "The cinematic technique," says Shaw, "can either impede or accelerate the flow of the narrative"; it also, introduces overlaps, flashbacks and closeups (170). Thus the father's suicide submerges into the various scenes of social injustice. Then the narrator condemns the "old man, now lord of the

broad estate and / the Hall" (V) and indicts that society which seeks only the "lust of gain" (VI), exactly in the manner of the monologist of "Locksley Hall." The name of Maud appears for the first time in section xvii, the same number as Maud's own age.

I have heard, I know not whence, of the singular
 beauty of Maud;
 I played with the girl when a child; she promised then
 to be fair. (I, xvii)

The word "fair" here is intriguing; it could mean "fatal," as we can see in "Oenone," the golden apple in Paris's hand being engraved with "For the most fair" (71). Even the word "promise" echoes the word of temptation spoken by Aphrodite: "I promise thee / The fairest and most loving wife in Greece" (183-4). The clear implication is that the narrator sees Maud as a temptress or a Keatsean femme fatale (la belle dame sans merci). His suspicion and fear of Maud are articulated more clearly in section xix: "She may bring / Me a curse." When the narrator sees Maud as she passes by, he expresses his impression in the most ambivalent way: "Faultily faultiless, icily regular, splendidly null" (II).

Next, a close encounter with Maud takes place, but she is with her brother (IV, iii). The narrator hates Maud's brother, the "new-made lord" (X, i) who represents worldliness; but his feeling for Maud is a mixture of love and hate: "Ah Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all unmeet for / a wife" (x). Indeed, she sings "a martial song," a song of death (V,i; ii). She is a variation of The Lady of

Shalott, but her song is not for herself but for others. Maud, however, is essentially the product of the narrator's neurotic mentality, a signification assigned by the narrator to an innocent girl. Maud, in this sense, is "empty" of its own signification and, therefore, a part of the narrator himself.

The key to understanding the narrator's madness and its relationship to the structure and texture of the poem is his ambivalence towards Maud. Marilyn J. Kurata underscores the function of the narrator's mental division: "a careful reading of Maud argues that his ambivalence arises from his justified, but repressed, doubts about Maud's love for him" (51). The narrator is already "sick of a jealous dread" (X) even before he comes to know Maud closely. He is jealous of the "new-made lord," the heir of the old man of "gewgaw castle" and the suitor of Maud. The narrator watches the man helplessly as he rides by with Maud and her brother, and the sight causes in him anger and frustration: "Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I" (X, ii). He feels cheated by society because he cannot afford to marry the woman he likes. He resents the fact that Maud is purchased by the wealth, not the worth, of the man. He detests that the material world dictates and overrules the world of love and freedom, and through his particular experience and suffering he sees the injustice of his world.

The intensity of his experience leads him to suffer

another neurotic vision, the "war." He sees the world in terms of war and longs for it, but his embracing of war is to end his own war, which is already on-going but hidden from view. War for the narrator is a way of purification, as well as emotional ventilation. He envisions "rising" for war and "falling" to die: "And ah for a man to arise in me, / That the man I am may cease to be!" (X, vi). This vision of war and death parallels his passion for Maud right to the very end of the poem. Their love is in a sense a war, and the narrator's pessimism over winning the war of love results in the finest lyrical moments in Part I of Maud: "O let the solid ground / Not fail beneath my feet" (XI), "Maud is not seventeen, / But she is tall and stately" (XII), "Go not, happy day, / From the shining fields" (XVII), "The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is near;' / And the white rose weeps, 'She is late;' / The Larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear;' / And the lily whispers, 'I wait'" (XXII, x).

The narrator's war-like passion for Maud is complicated further by his concern over Maud's love for him. He debates with himself what he would do if Maud indeed favors her wealthy suitor (XVI, ii). His suspicion of Maud grows more intense when he finds the weakness in Maud's attitude towards her brother: "Yet Maud, although not blind / To the faults of his heart and mind, / I see she cannot but love him / And says he is rough but kind" (XIX, vii). There is "a grand political dinner" in Maud's house (XX, iii), and the narrator is not invited (XX, iv).

Maud, of course, cannot be blamed for failing to invite him; but her inability to do so and these lack of love for him appear the same for the neurotic narrator and lover. The narrator waits outside the hall for her to come out. While it is not clear whether they have made an appointment to meet, it seems more likely that the narrator, like Romeo, waits in hope that Maud will come out to the garden for a breath of fresh air when the party is over.

For I am not invited,
 But, with the Sultan's pardon,
 I am all as well delighted,
 For I know her own rose-garden,
 And mean to linger in it
 Till the dancing will be over;
 And then, oh then, come out to me
 For a minute, but for a minute. (XX, iv)

On the other hand, the narrator muses, "But the rose was awake all night for your sake, / Knowing your promise to me" (XXII, viii). One questions what he means by "your promise." Did Maud ever make any promise besides the one made in her childhood through her father (XIX, iv)? However, the remarks also indicate that it is the rose, not Maud, who knows the promise. The narrator's remarks in section XXI pose the same kind of problem:

O Rivulet, born at the Hall,
 My Maud has sent it by thee
 (If I read her sweet will right)
 On a blushing mission to me,
 Saying in ordour and colour, 'Ah, be
 Among the roses tonight.' (844-49)

The narrator has received Maud's message through the agency of the rivulet; did Maud, then, send a message or not? He believes that he reads Maud's "will" right, but the text

appears to suggest otherwise. Tennyson obviously wants us to see the narrator in the context of his madness, and the madness of the narrator causes the constant misreading of Maud's love. Maud's own nature seems, in fact, to be cold and aloof, but the narrator talks about her as if she were warm and responsive.

Part II of Maud starts with the recollection of the incident on the night of the political dinner party. The narrator was discovered by the jealous brother of Maud, and the quarrel based on the old enmity has between them broken out, finally resulting in the duel and death. The first line, "'The fault was mine, the fault was mine,'" is beguiling because they are the words of Maud's brother, not the narrator's. Yet it is clear to the reader that the narrator shares the sentiment of guilt. He looks at his hand in the manner of Macbeth and says, "It is this guilty hand!" (I). His real nightmare, however, is Maud's "a passionate cry, / A cry for a brother's blood." He laments, "It will ring in my heart and ears, till I die, till I die." The narrator does not offer any interpretation of Maud's "cry for a brother's death"; as a matter of fact, he tries to suppress it because it hurts him at the deepest level of emotion (See Section IV, vii). He knows well that Maud loves her brother despite his faults. In section XIX of Part I, he had observed Maud jealously: "Yet Maud, although not blind / To the faults of his heart and mind, / I see she cannot but love him." The narrator fears, then, that Maud's "cry for a brother's

blood" implies her condemnation and rejection of himself, definite proof of Maud's indifference to him, which he had suspected from the start.

The narrator in Part II, however, is a much different person from the neurotic lover in Part I. He seems pathetic rather than neurotic. His feelings of regret and sorrow find their finest expression in the quintessential lyric, "O that 'twere possible" (IV). Maud, the primary cause of madness, is now dead, and so is his passion. Thus, his emotion is now less violent and turbulent. He may still suffer grotesque visions and hallucinations: "I almost fear they are not roses, but blood" (V, viii). Nevertheless, this kind of trauma becomes less frequent, and with the absence of Maud, the psychic tension turns into a vague longing for death. The process of stabilization continues throughout Part III, and the change of personality is clearly visible:

My life has crept so long on a broken wing
Through cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear,
That I come to be grateful at last for a little thing:
My mood is changed... (VI, i)

One of the ironies in Maud is that the more his madness lessens, the more his character loses its unity. The text is divided between the need to sustain the madness, a principle of textual unity, and the authorial desire to overcome the madness, which is a principle of moral ideology. Tennyson's solution to this dilemma is to substitute the madness of love with that of war, since love and war are equally irrational in their extremes. This

strategy is already articulated carefully in Part I: "Can he tell / Whether war be a cause or a consequence? (X, iii). If this is the modus operandi of the narrator's mind, his embracing of war does not mean necessarily his turning away from love. He still does not see the fundamental difference between love and war, and, therefore, his unstable character continues to maintain its uncertainty. The view that the narrator has is similar to Derrida's notion of "difference": "As a common root, difference is also the element of the same (to be distinguished from the identical) in which these oppositions are announced" (Positions, 9).

The problem with this view, however, is an irony which becomes evident when the philosophy of the narrator is given an emphasis: he is not insane as much as he is supposed to be; his thinking is rather profound and even prophetic. The madness of the narrator, in that case, is not just a madness but a "supposed madness" as the confessions in "Supposed Confession." The "little Hamlet" in Maud may appear mad, but his madness is in fact the disguise of his true emotion. Tennyson seems to confuse madness with sanity, meta-meaning with meaning, but it is, in fact, his way of making madness meaningful.

The ending of Maud reveals the fundamental nature of Tennyson's poetics, that is, division and openness of interpretation: "And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind; It is better to fight for the good than

rail at the ill" (Part III, VI, v). What exactly does the poet mean by having his hero awake "to the better mind"? Why does he modify the narrator's conviction with the uncertainty, "as it seems"? And lastly, what does the poet really mean by the remarks, "It is better to fight for the good than rail at the ill"? Was it really better for the narrator to fight with Maud's brother and kill him in a duel? He certainly appears not better but bitter in his memory of the whole incident. What, then, is mere delusion and what is not revealed in his last statements? Byron's Cain says in the end, "I am awake at last--a dreary dream / Had maddened me" (III, i, 378-9). Whether Cain is truly repentant after killing his brother is debatable, but there is little doubt that Cain's "awakening" means what it means as far as his experience of death is concerned.

The awakening to the better mind of Tennyson's narrator, however, seems different. His remarks are essentially neither an affirmation of the present nor the rejection of the past. He vacillates between the present and the past continually; he has no fixed self; he is nothing but motion and emotion; in his deranged mind, the past always leads to the present and future; thus, he lives in time retrogressively. His awakening, therefore, may signal either a new beginning or danger of another nightmare, endless repetition and unchanged change.

VII. Thirteen Ways of Looking at "The Holy Grail"

As the title states, Wallace Stevens proposes "Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird." Stevens's poem raises a question almost immediately: Why thirteen ways? Shouldn't there be more or fewer ways to look at a blackbird? Tennyson proposes twelve ways of looking at Arthurian stories, since his Idylls of the King consists of twelve books and each book represents its own unique viewpoint. In "The Holy Grail" Tennyson proposes five ways of searching for the Holy Grail because five knights achieve their quest in their own ways. Arthur in the end says, "Ye have seen what ye have seen," and Percivale, the narrator of the poem, does not understand what Arthur means by his remarks. Percivale is a hermeneutic type of critic; he tries to interpret Arthur's remarks in terms of the truth believed to be hidden therein. Thus Arthur's tautological statement appears cryptic and puzzling when it lacks the signified anticipated by Percivale. If Arthur's final words are also Tennyson's own, how should we perceive Tennyson's meaning? Arthur's speech in the end, then, like Stevens's poem, raises a fundamental question about the nature of seeing and the validity of vision. Unlike Percivale, Arthur is not concerned with the truth or the meaning of text; he is more concerned with the way that the truth or meaning of the text is produced. In this sense, Arthur is both a structuralist and post-

structuralist who emphasizes more the verbal conditions of meaning than meaning itself.

Tennyson's pluralistic vision of text, exemplified by King Arthur, naturally suggests our own approaches. It is, perhaps, more than a suggestion; it may be seen as Tennyson's major artistic intention. Tennyson expects us to join his knights in seeking for the Holy Grail, the interpretation of his text.

My own interpretation of Tennyson's text, it shall be clear by now, is based on a set of assumptions which are essentially in harmony with Tennyson's poetics of division and openness. All the critical approaches to Tennyson's text (including my own) are, in essence, arbitrary and limited. If Tennyson employs five knights to express the vision of the Holy Grail, and Stevens suggests thirteen ways to look at a blackbird, the arbitrary nature of critical approaches require us to redefine the validity of our interpretation. Meaning may be the ultimate objective of our critical approaches, but, since there is no final meaning, meaning itself can be meaningless. An attempt to produce meaning, then, is ironical, because it questions its own purpose. My attempt to establish an analogy between Tennyson's vision and Stevens's bird-watching is more than likely to produce a "meaningless" meaning, but it can be justified if it can prove the arbitrariness of its critical activity, and show that is what Tennyson had in mind.

1. Stevens observes: "Among twenty snowy mountains, /
The only moving thing / Was the eye of the blackbird." Among the characters in "The Holy Grail," Arthur is the only one who shows a reservation about the quest of the Holy Grail. When he learns that his knights have made the vow, "his face / Darken'd" (272-3); and he says, "Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow" (276). The essence of Steven's approach is to make a distinction between the blackbird and its surrounding, and by essentializing the two objects, the snowy mountains and a blackbird, Stevens sees the blackbird better. In the same way, Tennyson both contrasts the reckless enthusiasm of the questers with King Arthur's guarded reservation in regard to the Holy Grail and emphasizes Arthur's spiritual insight.

The reasons for Arthur's disapproval of the quest are: First, Arthur fears that he would suffer "lean Order," the absence of his knights (317). Second, the physical dangers and ordeals that await his knights; their quest is like following "wandering fires / Lost in quagmire" (319-20). Third, the moral attitude of each knight, who wanders "from the allotted field / Before his work be done" (904-5). Arthur believes that the quest for the Holy Grail is in a way an abandonment of one's responsibility to this world. Guinevere, much in a similar vein, sees the quest as the "madness" caused by the despair of the sin (357). She is right as far as Lancelot is concerned. Fourth, Arthur's foresight concerning the failure of the questers: "My

greatest hardly will believe he saw. / Another hath beheld it afar off" (893-4) is confirmed. Arthur, who is the earthly counterpart of the Holy Grail, a creator of the text, knows that there is no such thing as the Holy Grail or the ultimate interpretation of the text. The vision is in its essence an illusion.

2. Stevens's second way of looking at the blackbird goes as follows: "I was of three minds, / Like a tree / In which there are three blackbirds." Stevens suggests that there is a symbolic equivalence or correspondence between "three minds" and "three blackbirds." This analogy is made possible by the beholder, "I." In "The Holy Grail" five knights are five minds, and they operate within the context of Arthur, the founder of idealism. They are the manifestations of one mind, which is King Arthur; The monk Ambrosius finds them "Stamp'd with the image of the King" (27). Tennyson's Ulysses says, "I am a part of all that I have met" (18). Arthur's knights would say the same. If Stevens's first way of looking at a blackbird underlines the difference between the two objects, his second way underscores their similarity.

3. Stevens's third way of looking is as follows: "The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds. / It was a small part of the pantomime." The blackbird can be known by its action. Arthur's knights, likewise, can be known by their quest of the Holy Grail. The significance of action or quest has to be determined by beholder or reader. Stevens sees the action of the blackbird ("whirled") in terms of

semiotic performance and drama ("pantomime"); Tennyson sees the quest of the Holy Grail in terms of multi-order signification in terms of moral allegory or human history enacted by Victorian society.

4. Stevens says, "A man and a woman / Are one. / A man and a woman and a blackbird / Are one." Tennyson appears to say, "Arthur and his knights / Are one. Arthur and his knights and the Holy Grail / Are one." This can be what Ezra Pound called "inspired mathematics." Percivale demonstrates it through his experience: "While thus he [Galahad] spake, his eye, dwelling on mine, / Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew / One with him, to believe as he believed" (485-87). In "Balin and Balan," King Arthur and his knights make the same music. When they fail to make the same music, the Order of the Round Table falls apart. One may characterize the fourth way of seeing as vision of "unity." The strength of this vision is to broaden the perception of an individual object by relating it to its environment. To see the object is to see the relation of the object with its surrounding or with the person who sees. The vision, then, ultimately, and curiously, is both social and spiritual.

What we can also observe in Stevens's fourth way of looking at a blackbird is the way in which Stevens establishes the truth. The truth, of course, is a "poetic one," or what Richards called, "pseudo-statement" that is contrasted with the "scientific statement." The main

objective of pseudo-statement, then, as Richards points out, is not to produce scientific knowledge, but psychological truth or "effects upon our feelings and attitudes." (Poetries and Sciences, 59). Thus we find in Tennyson's poem an abundance of pseudo-statements: "Man's word is God in man" ("The Coming of Arthur," 132); "For men at most differ as heaven and earth, / But women, worst and best, as heaven and hell" ("Merlin and Vivien, 812-23); "He is all fault who hath no fault at all" ("Lancelot and Elaine," 132), and so forth.

The forceful imposition of language on the object can be as shocking to the readers as the sudden appearance of the Holy Grail to the questers. But the revelation is exactly the calculated maneuver, and its effects cannot be achieved without exempting the logic. Logic or reasoning needs to be subordinated to the effects of emotion. Once the revelation is accepted, however, it can serve as a logical premise for the following signification. Thus, "A man and woman and a blackbird / Are one," is less surprising after the initial revelation, "A man and woman / Are one." This fact demonstrates how closely related seeing and believing are to each other. Stevens wants us to look at a blackbird not only as it is but also as it should be. Tennyson also asks us to read his poem in a way that it can exceed the stricture of language. He seems to suggest that one of the ways in reading "The Holy Grail" is to accept or appreciate his "meta-language," the implicit values and significance implied in the text

itself. Unless we find the moral and artistic significance in Arthurian legend, as Tennyson did, we cannot approach Tennyson's text appropriately. We have to believe that the old and the new are one.

5. Stevens's fifth observation seems to be the most critical as well as crucial among the thirteen: "I do not know which to prefer, / The beauty of inflections / Or the beauty of innuendoes, / The blackbird whistling / Or just after." Seeing is an act of choice. We see only what we choose to see. But the main point suggested in this stanza is the difficulty in choosing the critical objective as well as methodology when we deal with a text. The personal taste or philosophy (or lack of philosophy) plays a central role in such a case. The knights choose the Holy Grail, the beauty of inflections. They seek for the vision of the text in hope that it can resolve their problem, but Arthur believes that that kind of vision is an illusion. The desire for the vision of certainty is the sign of the lack of faith as well as the deficiency of imagination. Tennyson's equivalent text to Stevens's can be found in the following passage in "The Holy Grail":

"And some among you held that if the King
 Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow.
 Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
 That which he rules, and is but as the hind
 To whom a space of land is given to plow,
 Who may not wander from the allotted field
 Before his work be done, but, being done,
 Let visions of the night or of the day
 Come as they will; and many a time they come,
 Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
 This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
 This 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. Ye have seen what ye have seen.'
 (899-916)

Unlike the knights, King Arthur feels that he is restricted by his responsibility as a king; nevertheless, his rejection of the vision is not dictated by his sense of responsibility but by his philosophy. The vision of the Holy Grail is for Arthur the temptation, "wandering fires." Put another way, the vision is merely a mimesis of the ultimate vision, "the high God." Arthur's conviction is based upon the depth of his inner experience. His quest is internal. Blake says, "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God" (Erdman, 2). Arthur sounds Blakean when he says that whatever he touches or sees, the earth, light, and air, all appear to him as a vision. If this is the way Arthur sees, he is a visionary despite himself. There is "much more" in Arthur's rejection of the vision, that is, "the beauty of innuendoes" which recognizes the vision.

Jerome J. McGann in The Beauty of Inflections finds himself making a choice between "the beauty of inflections" and "the beauty of innuendoes," or "The blackbird whistling" and "just after." What he means by "The Beauty of Inflections" appears to be the literary text or interpretation closely related to its social and historical experience. The beauty is the result of the interaction between text and its environment, and beauty is in this sense directly a meaning of the text. What is important

for McGann, therefore, is the sociohistorical context or "referentiality" for the production of meaning, the physical voice of a blackbird before it flies away from one space and time to another.

What, then, is "the beauty of innuendoes"? It is the significance of the text, which appears unlimited despite the limitation of the text. In criticism, it could be an immanent and self-centered critical attitude which regards the socio-historical referentiality as an illusion. "The beauty of innuendoes" are eagerly pursued by deconstructionists and post-structuralists, and its major significance is the critical assumption that it cannot be produced by author or text alone. The readers are assumed to play the role of collaborator in producing a meaning of text. What is interesting in Stevens's and Tennyson's poems is that they play the dual roles: author and reader. This literary strategy, in McGann's term, is in the end "both determined and determinative."¹⁴ McGann's concept of "determinative" is analogous to Kant's "categorical imperative." The categorical in Stevens's and Tennyson's poetics can generate the imperative for the understanding of itself. The imperative in Tennyson's poetics creates text from a reader's point of view.

The main issue here, however, is not to know what "the beauty of inflections" or "the beauty of inuendoes" is, but to make a critical choice between the two. Stevens says, "I do not know which to prefer," but his choice is in a

way predetermined. His text is dominated by "the beauty of innuendoes." Unless the spirit of "innuendoes" prevails, there cannot be thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird. The same applies to Tennyson's text. The pluralism in "The Holy Grail" is the quest for "the beauty of innuendoes."

6. Stevens says, "Icicles filled the long window / With barbaric glass. / The shadow of the blackbird / Crossed it, to and fro. / The mood / Traced in the shadow / An indecipherable cause." Compare Steven's observation with Tennyson's own: "The whole [of Idylls of the King]...is the dream of man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin. Birth is a mystery and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the tableland of life, and its struggles and performances" (Memoir, II, 127). This comparison can be suggestive because both statements deal with the mystery of meaning or the origin of text. The blackbird is the original text and its shadow is a copy or reproduction of that original. In Stevens's poem the original text is not available, and yet the replaced text appears to function as the original one. In the same way The Holy Grail is replaced by the vision of the Holy Grail. The vision is an appearance of something that is always absent. Tennyson's questers search for the original text or experience, but what they can attain is only the shadow of what they desire.

Looking at a blackbird involves necessarily experiencing the difficulty of understanding a blackbird, the text. Lancelot in "The Holy Grail" confesses his

agony of seeing his object: "I had sworn I saw / That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd / And cover'd." Lancelot's remarks raises a question: Is the Holy Grail something veiled or the veil itself? Tennyson's answer seems to be "Behind the veil."¹⁵ We never will be able to lift the veil of Isis, the goddess of nature.¹⁶ There is always "the long window / With barbaric glass" between the object and the beholder or quester. There may be nothing behind the window other than which is in front of it. The window frames the perception of the beholder, and frustration is the meaning of text. King Arthur's remark, "Ye have seen what ye have seen," best indicates the existence of the perceptive windows in the vision of his knights.

7. "O thin men of Haddam, / Why do you imagine golden birds? / Do you not see how the blackbird / Walks around the feet / Of the women about you?" The question raised by this observation is the poet's approach to Nature in terms of art, and in that sense, the question seems to be a Keatsean or Yeatsean one: immortality of art, or art versus Nature. The trees in a Grecian urn cannot shed their leaves. The urn will remain when the generations of men pass away. The golden bird in Byzantium is called "the artifice of eternity." It can sing "Of what is past, or passing, or to come" even after its maker is gone (Yeats, 192). Thus the poet wants to be incarnated into such a deathless bird.

Stevens's blackbird is a counterpart to that kind of man-made bird. It resists and mocks at the man-made bird, asserting its own superiority. This is one of the most ironic moments in Stevens's poem because it implies that the thirteen blackbirds in his poem are far less than their natural model, the real blackbird. But, there are also certain innuendoes in Stevens's poem that the superiority of the natural bird should not be taken too seriously. This section of the poem, unlike the other twelve ones, is put into the form of questions.

Tennyson's text also raises the question of art and its permanence. Merlin, the archetypal figure of Tennyson's artist, describes Camelot as follows: "the city is built / To music, therefore never built at all, / And therefore built for ever" ("Gareth and Lynette," 272-774). Merlin's answer is paradoxical and puzzling; it angers the simple-minded Gareth. But, Merlin's ambivalent feeling towards art in a way echoes that of Stevens. The only difference between them is that Merlin sees art as supernatural while Stevens as unnatural. The distinction between the supernatural and the unnatural in art, however, is always problematic in the sense that both are in violation of natural law. Merlin, who is Tennyson's spokesman for art, tries to make the Order of the Round Table appear supernatural, but, contrary to his effort, the Order of the Round Table appears unnatural, being too ideal for human nature. The model of Camelot is the celestial city, and its builders are the Muses, not men. Camelot,

then, is a kind of place where the city and citizens are at odds. King Arthur tries and fails to reconcile the city with its citizens, Art with Nature. His art is powerless, but that is the central meaning of his art.

8. "I know noble accents / And lucid, inescapable rhythms; / But I know, too, / That the blackbird is involved / In what I know." What Stevens emphasizes in this approach is the intimate knowledge about the object or text. Without knowing the "accents" and "rhythms" of the blackbird, we cannot look at the blackbird properly. Does this mean that our knowledge precedes our looking at a blackbird? If it does, the blackbird is nothing but a manifestation of what is already in our mind. This is the most common way to look at a blackbird or text. If we follow this way, we do not discover the meaning, but only confirm it. The main insight in Stevens's eighth observation, however, is to question our knowledge. The repetition of the word "know" three times is not to emphasize the literal but the problematic in the word. Stevens implies subtly that there is a difference between what we know about a blackbird and what a blackbird knows about what we know, a human perception and something outside of human perception. To unite the two fundamentally different entities into one, or to make them involved into each other, according to Stevens, is a true way of seeing.

Tennyson's knights are aware of certain facts about

the Holy Grail, the object of their quest. They "know" its history, power, and spiritual beauty, which are equivalent to Stevens's terms "accents" and "rhythms" of a blackbird. But their knowledge of the supernatural object is extremely superficial. They neither have adequate knowledge of nor the spiritual rapport with their object, and this shortcoming, according to Tennyson, can cause a problem for their vision. Galahad among others comes close to the knowledge of his object at the moment when he sits down in "the Siege Perilous," a chair created by Merlin with a warning: "No man could sit but he should lose himself." His understanding of the divine will, although it is still far from being adequate, makes it possible for the first time for the Holy Grail to reveal itself to the knights. The appearance of the Holy Grail generates in the knights an intense desire to see, but, without the necessary knowledge or spiritual understanding of the object, their vision is either a sensual temptation or an illusion. The Holy Grail is involved in what its questers know, but the knights are clearly not; they are involved in their own minds. Thus they see only what they see.

9 and 10. Sections IX and X of Stevens's poem are an attempt to look at the object in its absence and presence: "When the blackbird flew out of sight" (IX); "At the sight of blackbirds" (X). They are, therefore, essentially a specific critical approach.

The absence and presence of the Holy Grail illuminate each other. The Holy Grail starts to disappear as soon as

it appears, but it marks the circles in the beholder invisibly and indelibly. Stevens says, "It [blackbird] marked the edge / Of one of many circles." The equivalent lines in Tennyson's text are: "And then the music faded, and the Grail / Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls / The rosy quivering died into the night." The innuendoes created by these poems are not only metaphorical but also metaphysical. Both poems show how absence contains the trace of presence or vice versa. The absence does not imply the absence of meaning; in the same sense, the presence signifies an empty space for a new meaning. Thus the appearance and disappearance of the Holy Grail is an important marker in the signification of Tennyson's text.

11. "He rode over Connecticut / In a glass coach. / Once, a fear pierced him, / In that he mistook / The shadow of his equipage / For blackbirds." The basis of Stevens's critical approach here is his personal memory, dream, obsession, or fear of his object. Stevens sees the object particularly in terms of his fear. The blackbird may be seen as the effect of his fear.

Tennyson's Holy Grail is also a mental phenomenon. He sees it as a spiritual temptation: "phantoms," "wandering fires," and "madness." "Temptation" is essentially a fear of the beholder, which implies the dominance of the object over the beholder. The beholder, in this case, cannot see the object correctly. Thus Stevens uses the word

"mistook." In the same way, Tennyson's knights mistook their illusion as the object of their quest. Both Stevens and Tennyson seem to suggest that critical illusion is also an important way of observing the object because it reveals its own corrective.

The objective of observation, however, is not to know the object but to experience it. Experience and internalization are equally important as the science and discipline of looking at the object. Tennyson's King Arthur, in this sense, recognizes the validity of the visions achieved by his knights.'

12. "The river is moving. / The blackbird must be flying." The metaphorical analogy between "moving" and "flying" makes it possible to see "the river" and "the blackbird" in the same context. In the same way, Stevens's thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird and Tennyson's five ways of looking for the Holy Grail could become an identical kind of critical and creative activity. Metaphor is essentially a principle of similarity. As soon as metaphor is established, a way of seeing is created.

13. "It was evening all afternoon. / It was snowing / And it was going to snow. / The blackbird sat / In the cedar-limbs." In this poem, Stevens sees his object mainly in terms of time: past ("It was evening"), present ("snowing"), and future (It was going to"), and this time sequence, in turn, is subsumed under the tense of simple past ("The black bird sat").

Stevens's time frame is exactly Tennyson's narrative

frame of his text. The main story of "The Holy Grail" is narrated by Percivale, one of the questers of the Holy Grail, but Percivale's narrative is also told by another narrator, the poet. Percivale's narrative encompasses present, past, and the future, but the poet's narrative is put into a simple past.

What this approach suggests is, of course, to see the object in time, but it also suggests that seeing the object in time, especially past, is to preserve and perpetuate its presence despite time. The "past" in the sentence, "The blackbird sat / In the cedar-limbs," in its innuendoes of permanence, is significantly different from the one in "It was snowing." The use of time, then, is Stevens's way of turning his blackbird into a golden bird. The blackbird that Stevens sees is already the record or history of how he saw it. The three tenses in Tennyson's narrative, then, is nothing but an architectonic scaffold necessary for building a permanent time and transcendental text.

VIII. Conclusion

Tennyson's division has been criticized as the sign of his artistic weakness and moral compromise. This view, however, has been revised and even reversed, and Tennyson's division is now perceived as the secret of his creative tension. My argument for the openness of Tennyson's text is a part of this critical movement that emphasizes irony, ambivalence, and a transcendental text.

My attempt to see Tennyson's text in terms of post-structural poetics may appear to be provocative at the present time, but, in fact, a great deal of current Tennysonian criticism is already post-structural in one way or another. What has been lacking in Tennysonian criticism is a clear conception of Tennyson's poetics of textual division, one which invites post-structural implications.

It is no longer possible to treat Tennyson's division as his intellectual and moral weakness. Unless the creative principle in Tennyson's division is conceived differently, the range of our interpretations would be extremely limited. Tennyson's division is essentially a poetic device to produce a plurality of interpretations. Previous Tennysonian criticism has ignored or misunderstood the creative aspect of Tennyson's division, even perceived it as a detrimental element in his poetry.

Tennyson's division has often been a cause of frustration for critics. It could be called "the Riddling of the Bards," or, as Merlin says, "Confusion, and illusion, and relation, / Elusion, and occasion, and evasion." This difficulty is understandable because division often works against the unity and unified understanding of the text. Tennyson was acutely aware of this fact. Nevertheless, he clearly stood by his poetics and principles. His poetic objective was not unity, but diversity, and he knew that unity, whatever kind it may be, is ultimately an illusion. Idylls of the King shows how unity (King Arthur) is overthrown by diversity (his knights and corruptions) and why that unity is illusory. Unity, for Tennyson, is an anomaly; division and diversity are reality. It may appear an extraordinary, even perverse, claim to say that the laureate poet, the spiritual spokesman and artistic unifier of the Victorian Kingdom, could have held such a vision of division. However, it is exactly for this reason that his poetry still commands, for our modern sensibilities, the great variety of critical attention that it does. His poetry still fascinates the post-structural world of critics and readers.

Notes

1. William E. Cain's The Crisis in Criticism (1984) is just one of the recent examples.
2. The term "intertextuality" was first introduced by Julia Kristeva in her presentation of Bakhtin.
3. "Dialogism" is Bakhtin's central term designating the semantic relation of two utterances or verbal communications.
4. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), 24.
5. Roland Barthes, Image - Music - Text (New York: The Noonday Pr, 1977) 157.
6. At the request of his son for a poem about Demeter, Tennyson said: "I will write it, but when I write an antique like this I must put it into a frame--something modern about it. It is no use giving a mere rechauffe of old legends" (Memoir, II, 364).
7. "Meaning," according to Bakhtin, "always answers some questions." Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984) 54.
8. Northrop Frye, The Critical Path (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1971) 36.
9. David Shaw says, "A poet's word, like his mind, are neither a mirror that clearly reflects the world nor a mask that hides it, but what Tennyson calls a 'lucid veil'" The Lucid Veil (U of Wisconsin P, 1987) 2.
10. In Memoriam. LVI, 15.
11. Maud. I, i.
12. Tennyson added the "weird seizure" in the fourth edition (1851) purposely to emphasize the Prince's "comparative want of power" (Memoir, I, 251). Tennyson also had other purpose in mind when he added the "weird seizure" to his story, that is, to heighten "the anachronisms and improbabilities of the tale." Culler, The Poetry of Tennyson (New Haven, Yale UP, 1977) 138.
13. Albright interprets the stanza as follows: "Urania tells Tennyson to adopt a less ambitious task, to go home and not to storm the heavens; but from the other

side of her mouth she tempts Tennyson to write celestial or profound poetry, the sort of visionary poetry as we have in section 36." Tennyson: The Muses' Tug-of-War (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1986) 196.

14. "Sociohistorical criticism will both assume and display the determinate character of this dynamic relation. This emphasis upon the determinate is fundamental if 'what is' is to stand in a natural or scientific relation to 'what should be.' But because knowledge is a project rather than a possession, it always falls short of a complete grasp of its objects. The determinate relation between 'what is' and 'what should be' is what Shelley had in mind when he spoke of 'something longed for, never seen.' The determinate is--in the alternative sense of that word--what exists by acts of determination. McGann, ed. Historical Studies and Literary Criticism (U of Wisconsin P, 1985) 14.
15. In Memoriam LVI, 27-8.
16. On the temple of Isis, Mother Nature, an inscription is written as follows: "I am all that is and that was and that shall be, and no mortal hath lifted my veil."

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