GENDER POLITICS IN TENNYSON'S EARLY POETRY

GENDER POLITICS
IN
THE EARLY POETRY
OF
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

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A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Master of Arts
McMaster University

MASTER OF ARTS (1999) McMaster University
(English) Hamilton, Ontario
TITLE: Gender Politics in the Early Poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson
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SUPERVISOR: Dr. Grace Kehler
NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 97

ABSTRACT

This study explores representations of gender in the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson as they apply to Victorian England. In particular, it addresses the apparent gender transgressions that seem to occur in his presentation of "masculine" women and "feminine" men; these transgressive portrayals seem to defy a society that maintains a binary of gender strictly contrasting women and men through opposing roles and qualities. Several critics have explored Tennyson's use of "masculine" women and "feminine" men in relation to his society. Some of these critics maintain that he still challenges the rigid Victorian norms despite conservative closures, while others argue that he presents two readings simultaneously; while he reinforces conservative gender in his endings, he still leaves the possibility for gender transgression open. Another group of critics, with whom I align myself, maintains that Tennyson ultimately reinforces such conservative gender distinctions. However, while most of these critics contend that Tennyson's reinforcement of gender is either unintentional or only occurs in the latter stages of the poem, I maintain that conservative norms of gender are apparent even when gender transgression seems most evident. Furthermore, while most criticism on Tennyson and gender deals with his later poetry, from *The Princess* (1847) onwards, my study includes a full chapter on Tennyson's representations of gender as early as "Mariana" (1830), and also including "The Lady of Shalott" (1832) and "Ulysses" (1842).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Grace Kehler, who demonstrated enormous patience and perseverance with me all throughout the thesis writing project. Dr. Kehler encouraged my project at all stages, while helping me maintain my focus and clarity throughout. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. John Ferns, who helped me tremendously in the proposal writing process, and who, along with Dr. Kehler, guided the initial stages of the project formation. Finally, I would like to thank my second reader, Dr. Brian John, who I had not met until the thesis defense, but who took the time to read and edit my thesis prior to the defense.

In addition, I would like to thank my family, who encouraged me throughout the summer months to keep focused on the task at hand and, who, along with Dr. Kehler, helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel: the light that is realized in the pages that follow.

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INTRODUCTION – VICTORIAN REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER

According to Mary Poovey, the Victorian era was one in which social and literary representations of gender were governed by "the emergence of oppositional formulations" (3).[1] Such formulations entailed men and women's division into "separate but supposedly equal 'spheres'" in which they performed different kinds of labor (Poovey 8-9). While men conducted their business and politics in the rhetorically designated "public" sphere from which women were socially excluded, the ideal woman, aptly named "the angel in the house", was self-sacrificing, asexual, and morally influential. She brought a "moral purity to the home that she at once [created] and [sanctified]" (Christ 146).[2] However, the most important feature of femininity in the Victorian era was that it was considered subordinate to masculinity, hence Poovey's emphasis on "supposedly" equal spheres. Socially, women had no legal rights. Martha Vicinus reveals that "at the beginning of the Victorian period, according to common law, a married woman had no separate identity from her husband....By law, whatever a wife earned belonged to her husband" (*A Widening Sphere* xiv). Thus, women were not only subordinate to men in terms of their relegation to an inferior sphere; they were also inferior by means of the patriarchal law.

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[1] "Gender" is a problematic term that has been debated in recent criticism. However, I will use it as Mary Poovey does, to refer to the social construction of "femininity" and "masculinity", rather than any biological difference between the two.

[2] For other accounts of "the angel in the house" as the predominant norm for Victorian women, please see Nina Auerbach's *The Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* and Elizabeth Helsinger (*et al.*), ed., *The Woman in Question.*

Poovey's study, however, questions the "naturalness" of the separate spheres and the "norms" of femininity and masculinity; she maintains that the "organization of sexual relations are social, not natural phenomena" (2).[3] Women's increasing social power problematized the rigid binary system of gender; as Marion Shaw maintains, it was an era when "feminism became an organized force with specific social and political aims" (7). The major social and political aim pertinent to this study is women's independence from men through better education and employment in positions normally reserved for men. Martha Vicinus declares that

> For the first time in history a small group of middle-class women could afford to live, however poorly, on their earnings outside heterosexual domesticity. ...Middle-class single women had the education, economic opportunities, and personal confidence to take advantage of larger social changes. (*Independent Women* 6)

Accompanying such "larger social changes" was a change in literary representations of women. Rather than depicting women as mere domestic angels, mid-Victorian writers were presenting transgressive images of women in their literature. Nina Auerbach discusses alternative images of women represented in literature, for example "the old maid" and "the fallen woman" (61) as being excluded from domesticity. Although such images are transgressions from the stereotype of the "angel in the house", these images themselves become stereotypes of what Vicinus refers to as "a symbolic triad" in which women are "either the ideal mother/wife or a celibate spinster or a promiscuous prostitute" (5). Consequently, Auerbach dismisses such literary

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[3] Mary Jacobus goes further than Poovey in dismissing the "naturalness" of gender; she maintains that for gender "there is no literal referent to start with, no identity or essence" and that gender identity is "instituted by and in language" (4).

representations as also being "artificial creations of the tyranny of the patriarchal family" (61), and thus not entirely transgressive.

This study will examine the extent to which literary representations of "femininity", and by implied comparison, "masculinity", are transgressive in the early works of Alfred Lord Tennyson. In his poetry up to and including *The Princess* (1847), Tennyson represents women who appear transgressive through their apparent rejection of the "domestic angel" norm.[4] His heroines ostensibly evolve beyond the "symbolic triad" of Victorian stereotypes to embody masculine characteristics. Such characteristics include an emphasis on education, independence, non-domestic employment, and, finally, freedom from marriage. In addition to evidently presenting "masculine" women, Tennyson also seems to present "feminine" men in his poetry up to and including *In Memoriam* (1850). Such men are not only feminine in appearance, but also seem to embody characteristics such as domesticity, passivity, and excessive emotion. The representation of feminine men and masculine women challenges the rigid binary of gender that permeates Victorian society by conflating the boundaries between the two genders. Such a conflation of gender boundaries elevates femininity, as it is no longer clearly inferior, and subsequently diminishes masculinity.

A number of major studies have re-examined Tennyson's poetry with particular attention to gender, and these studies can be divided into three distinct groups: critics who claim that Tennyson challenges conventional notions of gender by elevating the status of femininity, critics who claim that Tennyson's representation of gender is

ambiguous insofar as he both challenges and reinforces conventional femininity, and,

finally, those who claim that Tennyson clearly reinforces traditional Victorian concepts

of femininity. The first group of critics demonstrates how Tennyson questions the

Victorian myth of gender in his poetry, and so indicates his support of feminism. In his

still influential 1958 study of *The Princess*, John Killham suggests that Tennyson's

elevation of femininity through the progressive Ida makes him a feminist, and that his

poem is "really a serious attempt, artfully disguised, to change an outworn attitude to an

important human problem" (3). Similarly, Elaine Jordan compares Tennyson's position in

In Memoriam as "feminized poet" to a physical hermaphrodite who is "disturbing to

culturally accepted norms of what is feminine and what is masculine" (12). Other critics,

for example, Carol Christ and Alan Sinfield, contend that, while Tennyson does not

directly challenge conventional norms of femininity, he does, in fact, idealize femininity,

elevating it over masculinity. According to Christ, Tennyson finds the feminine element

attractive because of "man's desire to escape the burdens of action and sexuality made

difficult to bear by the social climate of the age, and from his desire to incorporate a

passivity and desexuality he assumed was women's moral identity" (159). Although

Christ insists that Tennyson takes such a stance "not merely because he wants to keep

women in their place" (156), I will argue that Tennyson's idealization of femininity is an

attempt to reinforce the ideology of separate and unequal spheres.

A second group of critics insist that Tennyson's poetry is ambiguous insofar as it

both challenges and reinforces Victorian norms of femininity. Isobel Armstrong contends

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[4] I am not suggesting that Tennyson does not challenge Victorian gender conventions in his later

that two readings are possible in "The Lady of Shalott" (61). On the one hand, the Lady

is locked into a world dominated by "rigid oppositions"(61) but on the other hand, she

"dissolves and interrogates the fixed positions and oppositions" (62) in the poem.

According to Linda Shires, these readings "both [reproduce] and [contest] ideologies"

(50) in his works to create "a disturbance of gender roles" (65), and, according to Beverly

Taylor, these disturbances remain even after his apparently conservative closures (xii),

such as the marriage in *The Princess*.

The final group of critics maintains that Tennyson reinforces conservative norms

of Victorian femininity and masculinity in his poetry. Dwight Culler and Marion Shaw

deal with all of Tennyson's poetry, including his earlier poety such as "Mariana" and

"The Lady of Shalott". Culler maintains that the seemingly transgressive heroines "find

[themselves] in the closed situation" (41) not unlike that of the domestic sphere. Jeff

Nunokawa deals with masculinity in *In Memoriam*, asserting that Tennyson's use of

homoerotic imagery is merely an early stage in the development of "normal" male

heterosexuality (198-9), so that traditional values of masculinity are maintained. Eve

Sedgwick, Terry Eagleton, Kate Millett and Donald Hall all deal exclusively with *The

Princess* to claim that Tennyson's highlighting of the feminine in his poetry is a merely a

strategy to resubordinate women and, thus, to reinstate the patriarchy. Unlike Sinfield and

Christ, who insist that Tennyson celebrates the feminine in his poetry, Eagleton contends

that Tennyson's project is to subordinate the feminine and reassert the traditional

patriarchal order so that the "masculine voice maintains its dominance" (82). Similarly,

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poetry. The reason for dealing with his early poetry is to suggest that gender transgression is possible even

Donald Hall asserts that in *The Princess* "male hegemony is reaffirmed and women [are] again relegated to a position of domestic containment" (58). Hall is no doubt correct in suggesting that Tennyson's appropriation of the feminine functions to silence women by speaking for them (46). My study will examine Tennyson's process of appropriating the feminine as a strategy of marginalization in poetry prior to *The Princess* (and after it in *In Memoriam*).

Several critics dealing with Victorian gender note the difficulty of men in feminism; in particular, they insist that men assume female voices in order to speak for women, silencing them with their patriarchal ideology. Thais E. Morgan contends that "the rhetoric of self-deprecation...participates in the devalorization of woman's speech and the kind of knowledge associated with the domestic sphere" (8). Morgan's statement, taken in context with Killham's assertion that Tennyson is a feminist, makes it seem as if Tennyson's appropriation of a female voice is merely a strategy for deprecating it, and, therefore, reinforcing the patriarchy as the dominant Victorian ideology, and, by extension, women's inferiority within that ideology. Similarly, Elaine Showalter asserts that men "silence or marginalize feminist criticism by speaking for it, and...use feminist language to reinforce the continued dominance of a male literary canon" (129).[5] In my study, I will deal with this strategy of marginalization that Tennyson employs. I contend that Tennyson uses femininity as a guise or cover by which he can artfully reinforce conservative gender conventions. Thus, while Tennyson's poems appear to present the

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in the earlier stages of the Victorian era.

[5] Not unlike Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar maintain that part of the strategy employed by male authors to subordinate women in literary representations is "appropriating their words in order to usurp or trivialize their language" (149).

possibility for gender subversion, he ultimately reinstates the conservative and unequal gender divisions that permeate Victorian society.

Tennyson's appropriation of femininity occurs in two forms: in his adoption of the feminine voice in poems such as "Mariana" and more subtly in *In Memoriam*, and, secondly, in his presentation of "feminine" men who themselves appropriate the characteristics of femininity merely to reinstate their inferiority. Although it appears as if Tennyson questions the rigid binaries of gender in his poetry by presenting "masculine" women and "feminine" men, his appropriation of "femininity" does not make him a feminist. In fact, Tennyson uses such binaries in his poetry not only to reinforce Victorian concepts of "masculine" and "feminine", but also to reinstate the uneven patriarchal relation between those binaries and to reassert the inferiority of "femininity" and the female subject within that relation.

This study will be divided into three chapters. The first will look at Tennyson's earlier short poetry including "Mariana" (1830), "The Lady of Shalott" (1832), and "Ulysses" (1842). In all three poems, it appears that Tennyson problematizes the male-centered literary tradition by using feminized figures from earlier literature and expanding their previously marginalized role. In "Mariana", Tennyson presents a woman who transgresses the norm of the domestic angel by her apparent independence from men and by her lack of maintenance of the domestic sphere. However, Mariana's inability to function without her lover reinforces women's dependence on and inferiority to men. "The Lady of Shalott" also seems to challenge this stereotype of "angel in the house" as she seems to be performing independent labor, but her venture into the public sphere is

problematized when her work is destroyed, once again illustrating the difficulty of female independence. The element of femininity is also apparent in "Ulysses", but in this poem, femininity is located in an unusual source – a biological male - Telemachus. However, Telemachus' masculinity is restored at the end of the poem, and the element of the feminine is once again marginalized.

In my second chapter, I will examine *The Princess* (1847), which potentially subverts gender norms with the introduction of a feminized male, Hilarion, and a masculine woman, Ida. This poem presents the possibility of eliding rigid gender differences with the creation of a woman's university, and the subsequent entrance of women into the public sphere. However, both Ida and Hilarion return to "proper" roles of femininity and masculinity by the end of the poem when the already enclosed space of the university is converted into a hospital, and women resume their proper roles as nursemaids to men. The apparently feminine Hilarion, like Tennyson, appropriates femininity as a strategy to resubordinate it; his adoption of "feminine" weakness brings out Ida's proper femininity, and, consequently, the marriage at the end marks the full return of both characters to conventional gender roles.

The third chapter deals with *In Memoriam* (1850), and, specifically, with the feminization of Tennyson as both a poetic figure and a character in the poem. This feminization works on two levels: first in Tennyson's figuring of himself as Hallam's lover, and secondly, in Tennyson's intense expression of emotion. Tennyson's apparent homoerotic imagery, along with his intense display of emotion, is only a superficial feminine "cover" which is eventually transcended.

The homoerotic imagery between the two men is often a metaphor for their mental connection, and, furthermore, the physical imagery itself is a manifestation of their homosocial bond. Both Tennyson's feminized grief and his apparent homosexuality are transcended at the end of the poem. The reassertion of heterosexuality is emphasized in the marriage between Tennyson's sister Cecilia and Edmund Lushington, reasserting the binary division between Victorian norms of "masculinity" and "femininity".

CHAPTER ONE – TENNYSON'S EARLY POEMS

Despite the vast amount of critical work done on gender and Tennyson that has been applied to *The Princess* and later poems, relatively little work exists on his early poetry. The three short poems that I will base the first part of my study on are "Mariana" (1830), "The Lady of Shalott" (1832), and "Ulysses" (1842). All three poems are similar in that they draw on previous literature and rewrite conventional norms of femininity, seemingly expanding its marginal role. Tennyson was not alone in his reworking of canonical literature, however; it was common in the Victorian era for writers to draw upon previous literary characters. T.S. Eliot reveals that "we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of [an author's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (1265).[1] Indeed, Tennyson's individuality is apparent in his references to canonical literature. He bases many of his poems on canonical literature, but at the same time demonstrates his individuality by his divergence from such literature.

The aspect of Tennyson's individuality most relevant to this study is his portrayal of femininity. In all three poems, Tennyson appears to diverge from the canon in his centering of the previously marginalized element of femininity. The first part of my chapter deals with "Mariana", where Tennyson draws on Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure* to refigure the role of Mariana. He expands Mariana's role from a minor

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[1] Although Eliot is writing in the modern era (1919), and presumably discussing modern poets, his theory does not exempt Victorian poets as his theory of historicity is not time specific, and furthermore, Tennyson himself is clearly influenced by previous literature.

character in Shakespeare's play to a central one in his own poem. Tennyson also diverges from the conventional portrayal of Victorian women as "the angel in the house". Whereas in Shakespeare's play, Mariana eventually marries the man who jilts her, in Tennyson's poem, she remains unmarried. Furthermore, Mariana's neglect of the grange where she resides is contrary to the typical "angel in the house", whose duty is both the physical and moral management of the domestic sphere. However, although Mariana is not married to her lover, she is not independent of him, as her existence outside of her static trance is contingent on his return. Subsequently, her neglect of the grange is a direct result of her loneliness; because women traditionally maintain a home for a man, the absence of a man causes Mariana to neglect the obligatory housekeeping duties. Thus, through Mariana's mismanagement of the home, and her repetitive trance, Tennyson reinforces women's dependence on men.

The second part of my chapter will deal with "The Lady of Shalott", from which Tennyson draws on previous mythology. His character of Lancelot is based on Arthurian legends, but, more importantly, his Lady is derived from various myths of the female weaver. The Lady appears to diverge from the stereotypes of femininity even further than Mariana; she is represented as a self-sufficient artist, and, the pleasure she takes in her art along with its apparent recreation of reality seems to make her a successful artist. By drawing on a Platonic theory of art and the artist, and illustrating its relevance to Victorian gender analysis, I will demonstrate how the Lady of Shalott and her world of shadows appears to alter the "reality" of conventional stereotypes. Like Mariana, though, Tennyson's Lady is unsuccessful in altering such stereotypes as she is ultimately unable

to succeed in the public world of art, and moreover, the confined space that she exists in resembles the domestic sphere more so than the public one.

Finally, the last part of my chapter will deal with "Ulysses", in which Tennyson draws on both Homer's *The Odyssey* and Dante's Ulisse for his representations of Ulysses, Penelope and Telemachus. While the first two parts of the chapter deal almost exclusively with femininity as it is located in women, this final part, looking ahead to my last two chapters, will deal with the potentially transgressive displacement of femininity onto a male character: Telemachus. The placement of femininity onto a biological male not only disrupts traditional gender norms, but it also elevates femininity from its previously marginal status. In this chapter I will briefly discuss Victorian masculinity as it applies to a typically masculine character, Ulysses, and show how he compares and/or contrasts with the women in the two previous poems. I will then juxtapose Ulysses with his son Telemachus to show how Telemachus appears feminized: he seems to be associated with domesticity and feminine qualities. However, Telemachus ultimately possesses more agency than his father; while Ulysses is an inactive king, his son is the inherent ruler who possesses full control over the subjects from who Ulysses is distanced. In all three poems, thus, it appears as if Tennyson makes radical alterations to the canon through his reworking of conventional Victorian stereotypes of femininity. However, while Tennyson does make alterations to the previous literature, his alterations ultimately reinforce rather than problematize the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.

In "Mariana" (1830), the earliest of the three short lyrics studied, Tennyson appears to rewrite the masculine literary tradition by drawing on a canonical author,

Shakespeare, and taking the minor female character, Mariana, away from the margins and into the center of his lyric. Tennyson expands his epigraph, "Mariana in the moated grange," into an entire lyric, one supposedly from the point of view of Mariana.[2] However, it is not only Tennyson's focus on a female subject that seems to necessitate his feminism; it is also his presentation of what seems to be an unconventional type of femininity in "Mariana" that makes it appear as if he is challenging rigid Victorian gender stereotypes.

From the start of the poem, it is apparent that Mariana does not embody characteristics of the typical Victorian "angel in the house." First of all, she is not married to her lover, who has deserted her, and, secondly, she neglects the grange where she lives. Whereas in the Shakespeare play, Mariana weds the man who jilted her, in Tennyson's poem he never comes. Shakespeare's play features conventional femininity, not only because Mariana's fate ends up to be marriage, but also because her sexuality is considered appropriate within the limits of such an institution. Tennyson diverges from Shakespeare both in Mariana's prolonged single status and in her implied sexuality: she is unmarried but not virginal. In Victorian England, it was considered not only unconventional but also transgressive for women to have sexual relations outside marriage, and such women were labelled as "fallen women" who "came to embody everything in womanhood that was dangerously, tragically, and triumphantly beyond social boundaries" (Auerbach 150). It was not only outside marriage in which women were perceived as being devoid of sexuality, however; it was even *within* marriage that

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[2] Dwight Culler reveals that Tennyson's epigraph is not taken directly from the play; in fact, the

their sexuality was both condemned and repressed. Elaine Showalter reveals that sexual

behaviour in a "'proper' woman" was "considered to be impossible" (102). Within

marriage, though, sexual behavior was rationalized or replaced by the maternal instinct

(Mitchell 42). From reading Shakespeare, the reader of Tennyson's poem is aware that

Mariana is not married, and because of her sexual relations outside of marriage, she is

transgressive of Victorian norms of femininity.

Moreover, Mariana's neglect of the house is contrary to the Victorian "angel in

the house" whose duty is to manage the household both physically and morally. Michael

Brooks maintains that the Victorian home is

> a place of peace and order, separated from the world outside by a
> metaphorical wall composed of delicate feelings and instinctive
> withdrawals and by a literal one composed of the bricks which surrounded
> a suburban garden. Here, the mother rules, and the father refreshes himself
> after a day in the coarsening world of commerce (82).

Mariana's exclusion from conventional domesticity is apparent in the fact that there is no

man to come home and refresh himself. Furthermore, the physical decay that is evident in

the "level waste" ("Mariana", line 44) implies the moral mismanagement of the house.

The opening of the poem reveals the state to which Mariana's house has disintegrated:

> With blackest moss the flower-plots
> Were thickly crusted, one and all:
> The rusted nails fell from the knots
> That held the pear to the gable wall.
> The broken sheds looked sad and strange.... (1-5)

Several critics maintain that the landscape reflects Mariana's inner turmoil, rather than

her transgressive behavior. Arthur Carr, for example, asserts that "the lines between inner

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actual line in the play reads "There at the moated grange resides this dejected Mariana" (*Measure for*

and outer reality are obliterated and her house becomes a house of dreams, disappointment, and death" (51). While this is partly true, I would also argue that Mariana's sexual transgression has consequences for her domestic life, as represented by the dilapidation of her house and yard. Marion Shaw maintains that Mariana is "the new *femme fatale*" whose "source of... power is essentially domestic and familiar" (105). While Mariana is the fallen woman, she is not able to exert her typically feminine influence in the domestic sphere, as the house and its property are barren and decayed. The "blackest moss" (1) of the flower-plots not only replaces the conventional "garden" in Brooks' description; it also symbolizes Mariana's position as the "fallen woman". The strangeness (5) of the broken sheds symbolizes Mariana's strange behavior as it deviates from conventional Victorian femininity. Similarly, the falling of the rusted nails from their knots (3) represents the extent to which Mariana has "fallen" not just sexually, but literally, from stereotypical images of the feminine. In fact, the entire poem is permeated with images of black and darkness to illustrate the extent to which Mariana has transgressed; the fact that "she could not look on the sweet heaven" (15) connotes her lack of conventional angelic behavior. Further unconventionality is demonstrated by her waking "in the middle of the night" (25), by the "thickest dark [that] did trance the sky" (18), the "dark fen" (28), and "blacken'd waters" (38). Victorians commonly linked darkness with female sexuality; Elaine Jordan maintains that the fallen woman is commonly described in literature as "the dark unhappy or unfair one, who's no lily" (114). Mariana's unhappiness is evident as she continuously declares that her "life is

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Measure III.i.276)

dreary" (9), and, furthermore, her association with darkness clearly marks her as the fallen woman.

Mariana's position as a "fallen woman" appears to depend on the closeness of her relationship to the landscape. Carr and others, for example, James Sherry, see not only a projection of Mariana's moods on to the landscape, but they contend that there is a complete conflation between the subject (Mariana) and the object (the landscape) in the poem.[3] Culler maintains that "one has the impression that the entire poem is spoken by Mariana." His reason for this is that "the grange is described for us as Mariana sees it" (42), and John Pettigrew maintains that "the setting in which Mariana lives and moves *is* her being" (23). While there are definite parallels between the landscape and Mariana's mood, there are also stark contrasts between the description of the landscape and the four lines spoken by Mariana at the end of each verse paragraph to show that the two are not in unison. Alan Sinfield asserts that "the narrator seems equally committed to the identification of self and non-self" (97).[4] Whether Sinfield is referring to Tennyson or Mariana as a narrator is not clear, but in either case there is a clear division between Mariana's lines and those of Tennyson. Besides the obvious fact that Mariana's lines are placed in quotation marks to set them aside from the rest of the poem, the most clear contrast between her four lines and Tennyson's eight is the fact that, while the time in the poem progresses, Mariana remains in a timeless limbo. The "slow clock ticking" (74) "confounds" the senses of Mariana; while it is "slow", it is not stopped dead like Mariana

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[3] Sherry asserts that the "landscape and subject have become interfused, indistinguishable" (212) in "Mariana".

[4] Elaine Jordan also insists on the separation between Mariana and the natural world in her contention that in "Mariana" "there [is] no necessary link between feeling and the natural world" (73).

herself. The poem progresses over twenty-four hours; it begins in the evening, where "her tears fell with the dews" (13), to "the middle of the night" (25) and then "all [the next] day" (61) that Mariana spends inside the house, and finally to evening where "the day was sloping towards his western bower" (79-80).

In contrast to the passing of time outside Mariana, she herself remains in a state of perpetual stillness as she repeats the refrain:

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

While there is some slight variation in the repetition of this refrain, as it changes from her "life", to the "night", to the "day", and then back to "night" and "life" again, even the small variations within the refrains themselves are repeated. Mariana's words, and supposedly her mental state, apart from the poet-narrator's words, remain in a state of stillness. The repetition of Mariana's words reinforce not only her stillness and her solitary state, but also her passive femininity that accompanies the stillness and solitude. On another level, the repetition also reinstates the Victorian gender stereotypes that Tennyson's bringing Mariana out of the margins apparently purports to criticize. Her state of sadness comes not necessarily just from within, but also from without, as her happiness seems to depend on her lover's arrival. Mariana's wish for marriage, or the other alternative, death, ascribes to, rather than questions, a conventional notion of femininity. In the Victorian era, there were few alternatives to marriage: "woman's goal is marriage, which provides her with station, role, duties, and economic security; anything...that interferes with the goal is counterproductive..." (Mitchell 46). Although

Mariana is never married to her lover as she finally decides that "'he will not come'" (82), a desire for marriage makes her more of a conventional, rather than a transgressive, heroine. Marion Shaw contends that "the moral thrust of [Tennyson's] poems lies in a search for stability, domestic contentment and social legitimacy" (14) in which "marriage is thought of as potentially the main source of personal happiness and fulfillment and also as a central, stabilizing social institution" (37). Mariana never realizes this state, but her (and Tennyson's) aspiration to such a state marks her position within the bounds of conventional Victorian femininity. As Mariana does not seem to be aware of any other alternatives besides marriage and death, her lack of resistance to this circumscribed ideology indicates Tennyson's desire to keep women relegated to the domestic sphere.

Although the domestic space in which Mariana resides is not well maintained, she is nonetheless enclosed in both the literal space of the grange and the social conventions of Victorian femininity that relegate her to that grange. Mariana is what Culler refers to as one of Tennyson's "immured maidens" (41) along with the Lady of Shalott and Princess Ida. Tennyson's style works to reinforce this enclosure; the cyclical passage of time within the poem itself and even the alternation between "night" and "day" in the verse of Mariana herself denotes not only repetition but a cycle or circle as well. Additionally, images of circularity dominate the poem: the "knots" (3) from which the rusted nails fell, the "stone" cast (37), the "moon" (49; 53), the "cell" (54) from within which the winds bound, and, of course, the "slow clock ticking" (74), just to name a few. Even the repetition of the "o" sounds in the poem emphasize the sense of enclosure, for example, "the sparrow's chirrup on the roof" (73), the "slow clock" (74), and the

"wooing wind aloof" (74). The verse form itself, both the regularity of the meter and rhyme scheme, represents not just repetition and enclosure but also conservatism as well. Although Elaine Jordan argues that "the rhythmic and imagistic effect of "Mariana" is of something enclosed," she contends that "the rhythm...offers a suddenly pleasurable resistance to circumstance" (60). The rhythm is certainly enclosed, but it is definitely not a resistance to circumstance. The regular iambic tetrameter presides through most of the poem itself, except, of course, when Mariana is speaking. In Mariana's refrain, two variations occur. First of all, the lines alternate in length and rhythm, and secondly, two dactylic feet open up lines one and three of the refrain. The difference in meter for Mariana's lines emphasizes the contrast between her spoken lines and the description of the landscape, thus reinforcing the stillness of the domestic sphere in which she exists. Similarly, the rhyme scheme emphasizes both repetition and enclosure: abab, cddc, efef. In the second quatrain in particular, the first line is rhymed with the fourth line, enclosing the rhyme between the second and third line. In all other quatrains, the rhyming of every second line emphasizes a constant repetition not just in the dreary life of Mariana, but in the patriarchal gender ideology that makes her life so dreary.

Not only is Mariana's enclosure within the domestic sphere a reinforcement of patriarchal ideology, but her lack of maintenance of such a sphere also coincides with such an ideology. Sally Mitchell reveals that "the central image of Victorianism is the enclosed family; it provided an escape from the disorder and confusion of the world into the perfection of a miniature, individually created social order" (41). Mariana, like the perfect Victorian family, is certainly "enclosed", as I have shown, and she is separated

from the outside world as her lines of speech vary drastically from Tennyson's description of the natural world. But while Mitchell maintains that enclosure necessitates protection, Anthony Wohl insinuates that the image of the house can also be seen as a "confining cell, a 'cage'... an emotional prison in which possessiveness could both create and destroy and where exploitation or frustration characterized relationships" (16). Indeed, the images of circularity that dominate the poem illustrate that Mariana is certainly trapped in the repetitiveness of her thought, as she has been both "exploited" and "frustrated" in her relationship with her lover. As it is her lover who has made it impossible for her to completely fit the image of the "angel in the house", what little she deviates from it is not under her control. Since it is for the comfort of a man that a woman keeps the house, then the physical corruption in the landscape and the moral corruption on the part of Mariana are well explained even within Victorian stereotypes; if there is no man present, then not only is her maintenance of the domestic sphere pointless, but also her continued existence, since, apart from men, "women were positioned as non-existent at midcentury" (Poovey 23). Thus, despite Tennyson's movement of Mariana from the margins of canonical literature to the center of his poetry, he ultimately reinforces the patriarchal gender ideology that permeated Victorian society.

II

Not unlike "Mariana", "The Lady of Shalott" also draws on previous literature to bring the element of femininity as evident in the title character from the margins to the center of the poem. Isobel Armstrong argues that the poem, unlike "Mariana", "has no [direct] source, and is in fact a conflation of a number of mythic structures... fusing the

many myths of the weaving lady, from Arachne to Penelope, with the myths of reflection

carried by Narcissus and Echo..." (61); and Lancelot, of course, derives from the

Arthurian legends. As is the case in "Mariana", in "The Lady of Shalott" Tennyson's

centering of femininity is unconventional. Although Elaine Jordan maintains that "neither

'Mariana' nor 'The Lady of Shalott' yield their full interest as protests against the

condition of women" as "their female subjects are used to project the problems of the

artist" (60-1), the fact that both subjects are female is extremely relevant.[5] By her role as

an artist, and the subsequent independence that accompanies such an endeavor, the Lady

of Shalott, like Mariana, appears to defy the conventional "angel in the house".

In the Victorian era, it was unusual for women to be artists, not only because men

dominated non-domestic work, but also because art offered the potential for financial

independence, and, thus, freedom from marriage. Writing is a profession which is

"economically viable, if not [a] universally lucrative, profession" (Poovey 103). As

female writers began to gain popularity in the public sphere, men envisioned their

emergence in the public sphere as a threat to women's ideal domesticity, as "an act of

aggression [that] inaugurated a battle of the sexes" (Gilbert and Gubar 65). Similarly,

another form of art that represented financial independence for nineteenth-century

women was acting. Acting provided a "vicarious release in the notion that here was an

area of special dispensation from the normal categories, moral and social, that defined

woman's place" (Kent 94). Not unlike the actual female artist figures in the Victorian

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[5] Not unlike Jordan, Gerhard Joseph maintains that "in his first works Tennyson is unrealistic in his portrayals of women, whose primary function seems to be a definition of man" (41). What Joseph sees as "unrealistic" is perhaps the unconventionality with which Tennyson appears to present women as they defy classic Victorian stereotypes.

era, the Lady of Shalott is unusual as she transgresses typical gender boundaries through both her profession and the self-sufficiency that accompanies it.

Both the Lady's role as an artist and her relationship to Victorian gender conventions are made explicit through the relevance of the poem's Platonism. Not only is Platonic philosophy relevant to the Lady's art but it is also commensurate with Victorian gender ideology. Mary Poovey maintains that the patriarchy articulates "a 'natural' difference between the sexes [to] delineate social roles" (2). Not unlike the Platonic world of "forms" in which true reality supposedly exists, the Victorian stereotypes of "male" and "female" are considered to be eternal and unchanging concepts by patriarchal authority. As an artist, not only does the Lady diverge from gender conventions but also from Platonic reality as "she weaves by night and day / A magic web with colors gay" (37-8). The source of the images for the Lady's web are not from reality but from a mirror which itself is a reflection of that reality so that the Lady's world is "at more than one remove, the shadow of a shadow" (Gribble 29). M.H. Abrams discusses the relationship between the different levels of Platonic reality:

> The first category is that of the eternal and unchanging ideas; the second, reflecting this, is the world of sense, natural or artificial, and the third category, in turn reflecting the second, comprises such things as shadows, images in water and mirrors, and the fine arts. (Abrams 8)

The hierarchy of "realities" in Platonic philosophy indicates that art, as well as the mirror image to which art is compared, is a direct reflection of nature, or "the world of sense", and since it is only a reflection, rather than reality itself, then it is inferior to reality.

In Tennyson's poem, the reflection of Camelot in the mirror of the Lady of Shalott represents the relationship between art and reality, as "moving through the mirror

clear…shadows of the world appear" (46-48). Because the mirror is clear, the objects reflected in the mirror are presumably direct representations of objective reality. However, these objects are also inferior, as they are merely "shadows". The shadows in the mirror of the Lady of Shalott correspond to Plato's "shadows" as being among the third category of reality in which art is a direct imitation of nature. However, the Lady's art is not merely a direct imitation of an inferior nature; rather it is a recreation of what is perceived as objective reality since "in her web she still delights / To weave the mirror's magic sights" (64-5). The word "magic" implies that what is seen in the mirror is already removed from objective reality, and is to some extent artifice, although it is created rather than reflected. Because she "delights" in what she creates, though, it is apparent that initially the Lady sees her world of art as differing from nature. The Lady's recreation of reality, therefore, coincides with Plato's insofar as it is removed from nature; however, she diverges from Plato in the sense that her art is a recreation of, rather than being inferior to, objective reality. Therefore, rather than being a mere "mirror" to nature, the Lady of Shalott's art functions to recreate and improve upon nature, and, thus she seems to be not only a female artist but a successful female artist.

While on one level the Lady's reordering of reality through her web questions the Platonic theory of art as imitation, and appears to challenge the supposed "reality" of the Victorian stereotypes, on another level she confirms the "reality" of such stereotypes. As already discussed, the Lady's function of weaving "a magic web with colors gay" (38) can associate her with an artist, but it can also associate her with domestic weaving and the private sphere that accompanies that weaving. Though seemingly self-sufficient, the

Lady is still associated with fairly conventional female labor, as she is contained in the domestic sphere since she lives and works in the same place. Moreover, the Lady's role as an artist is also problematized by her failure to integrate her art in the public sphere, Camelot. In her first and only appearance there, "singing in her song she died" (152). The Lady's death, accompanied by the destruction of her art in the public sphere, is a suggestion that women are incapable of existing self-sufficiently in that sphere. The Lady herself even admits that her art is inferior and undeserving of public attention as she declares to be "half sick of shadows" (71). The Lady's rejection of her own art not only confirms that what is presumed to be the Platonic world of "forms" is true reality, but also that the gender stereotypes that are presumed to be natural are, in fact, so: women's art is inferior, and they are not meant to be artists. Thus, Tennyson reinforces the conventional Victorian notion of women's inability to exist outside a domestic setting.

There is a sense, however, in which the Lady is successful as an artist; although her art does not survive in the public sphere; she is able to leave her signature on the boat. By her signature, she has brought herself into existence and defined herself for others to read as "round the prow [the men] read her name, / *The Lady of Shalott*" (161-2). The italicizing of her name indicates that, by writing her name on the boat, the Lady creates a metatext within Tennyson's larger text, so that the prow of the boat comes to stand for the poem itself. Ann Colley asserts that the Lady's naming of herself allows her to "create her own identity" (374) and, thus, to "separate herself from a world ironically enslaved to naming objects" (375). It does seem as if the Lady separates herself from the patriarchal world that creates her since she makes herself known to the men who "[cross]

themselves for fear" (166). However, it is not the Lady who creates her own identity but the men who regard her signature on the boat. In fact, "she does not name herself," as Armstrong asserts, "but places herself in a pre-given hierarchy when she writes that she is 'The Lady of Shalott'" (64). Whether the Lady intentionally places herself in such a patriarchal context or not is not clear, but what is discernible is her inferiority to the men who subsume her. Lancelot declares that "'she has a lovely face; / God in his mercy lend her grace'" (169-171). Because he has the last word in the poem, it is Lancelot who both critiques and rejects the Lady's art, and, furthermore, her independence from gender norms. His declaration that "she has a lovely face" places her firmly within the conventional role as the objectified female. Furthermore, his prayer to God to "lend her grace" reinforces the patriarchal world in which God is seen as the masculine protector. Although it can be argued that the Lady's naming of herself is a revising of the objective world, the objective world also changes her; her entry into the public world causes her death (155). Since Lancelot does not recognize the lady as an artist, her art goes wholly unacknowledged by the patriarchal world into which she is subsumed, so that the existence that she has created for herself is problematized both through her death and through the male rejection of feminine art.

Furthermore, Lancelot is a more successful artist than the Lady. Whereas the Lady's song is heard by "only reapers" (28), his song "tirra lirra" (107) is what causes the Lady to "[leave] the web...[leave] the loom" (109) so that "the curse" comes upon her (116). The reapers who hear the Lady's song reduce her to a world of shadows as she is merely "the fairy Lady of Shalott" (35-6), but Lancelot, although initially a shadow as he

"flashed into the crystal mirror" (106) of the Lady, is more real than the "fairy lady" who

cannot exist in the public sphere of Camelot. Although Nina Auerbach contends that

women's "enlargement" into myth empowers her as she "has more in common with

fictional creations than she does with living men" (15), her reduction to a signature on a

boat for men to read makes her susceptible to the stereotypical male gaze.[6] Carl Plasa

argues that initially the Lady's gaze at Lancelot reverses such a stereotype, but it is the

Lady who is reduced to an object in the end.[7]

Tennyson's reinforcement of conventional femininity is enhanced through his use

of repetition. Repetition denotes a lack of progress or change, not only in the trajectory of

the poem but in the patriarchal ideology that dictated Victorian society. Such a repetition

is evident in the verse form of the poem; the Lady sings "a song that echoes cheerly /

From the river winding clearly" (30-31). The notion of echo seems to indicate that art is a

direct representation of reality, a representation that is "echoed" in the verse form itself as

"cheerly" and "clearly" rhyme. In fact, they are almost identical in sound except for the

first phoneme in each line, "ch" and "cl", being distinct from one another. Moreover, the

trochaic tetrameter verse implies the notion of echo as each singular foot and line mirrors

the other. The song that the Lady is singing is implicit in the rhythm of the poem itself;

the regular verse form, the repetitive rhyme scheme, and the refrain in the words

"Camelot" and "Shalott" make the poem seem as if it is a song itself. The singing of the

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[6] Like Auerbach, Elliot Gilbert contends that, in his poetry, Tennyson investigates a community in which "the female energy of myth substitutes for the male energy of history" (182).

[7] Plasa contends that with such a gaze reversal the text "subversively exposes the ideologically constructed nature of the feminine, thereby circumscribing the claims for mastery...which men make over women" (256). However, Plasa does not consider the fact that the Lady is not gazing at Lancelot himself, but at a *shadow* of him.

Lady is "echoed" in the musical form of the poem itself, so that her art and Tennyson's seem to "mirror" one another. Furthermore, the rhyme scheme, aaaabcccb, represents not only repetition, but a sense of enclosure and containment as "Camelot" and "Shalott" are repeated at the ends of line five and nine respectively, operating to create a self-contained verse form in the way that the Lady is contained in her own space. Camelot, the world of reality, and Shalott, the world of art, seem to be mirrored by the rhyme in the words themselves. However, there are stark differences between not only the words and the way that they are used in the verse form but also between the two distinct worlds that the words represent.

The differences between these two worlds are a reflection of the Victorian notion of separate spheres and the role of conventional femininity that the Lady represents in her enclosure. Her containment is illustrated by her position on the "island of Shalott" (9) and in "four gray walls [and] four gray towers" (15) which enclose the private, domestic sphere from the public one. The Lady's imprisonment, even at the beginning of the poem, is reflected in the repetitive isolation of her name from the rest of the verse: it is both on a line by itself, and the rhythm of the line differs from the rhythm of the rest of the poem. Rather than being eight syllables long, "The Lady of Shalott" is only six. Thus, both the Lady of Shalott herself, and the line that represents the Lady, are isolated, and are also enclosed in the world of art and in the system of repetition that subsumes the Lady. The refrain "The Lady of Shalott" is repeated throughout the poem, concluding the verses in all of part four, and demonstrating, like her death, that she is unable to escape the

patriarchal conventions that isolate and subordinate the female artist.[8] The restoration of patriarchal order is implicit not only by the failure of the female artist but also by the success of the masculine one. The Lady's attempting to bring her art into the public sphere represents the only potential disruption to the order that is created both in the content of the poem and in its verse form. The refrain "The Lady of Shalott" is replaced by "Sang Sir Lancelot" (108), and it is following this refrain that the Lady "left the web...left the loom" (109), causing her world of art to be destroyed. Sir Lancelot's singing in Camelot not only represents his success in bringing the two worlds together; it also illustrates his superiority over the Lady and her art. This refrain is replaced once again by "The Lady of Shalott", illustrating her inability to escape her marginal world as patriarchal order is restored.

<div align="center">III</div>

In "Ulysses", as well as in "Mariana" and in "The Lady of Shalott", Tennyson draws upon previous literature and appears to refigure the previously marginalized element of femininity. The two main sources that Tennyson draws upon are Homer's *The Odyssey* and Dante's Ulisse from *The Divine Comedy*. However, it is Homer's representation of Ulysses with which I am primarily concerned. As was the case in the two previous poems, Tennyson diverges from historic literature in his representation of femininity. Elaine Jordan reveals that "in the original story Ulysses' wife Penelope has been waiting for twenty years, weaving. She has said that she will choose one of her suitors once the weaving is finished; every night she undoes what she had woven during

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[8] The other less common refrains used in the poem, "The island of Shalott", "remote Shalott", and

the day" (71). Like the weaving of the Lady of Shalott, Penelope's weaving is not only a form of art, it is also a form of her independence both from men and from gender conventions, as it is through her weaving that she refuses to marry. However, in Tennyson's poem, as in Homer's *The Odyssey*, Ulysses return to reclaim his wife. Tennyson marginalizes Penelope's entire history to a mere phrase; he reduces her to "an aged wife" (4) placed by a "still hearth" (2), omitting her artistry and reinforcing her position within the patriarchal gender ideology.

Although Tennyson's marginalization of Penelope, like that of Mariana and the Lady of Shalott, reduces the prominence of femininity and reinforces gender conventions, in "Ulysses" he represents femininity in a unique way. While in the first two poems Tennyson represents femininity within female figures, in "Ulysses" Tennyson appears to locate femininity within Ulysses' son, Telemachus. The embodiment of femininity within a man not only transgresses conventional Victorian notions of gender as being rigidly defined in a binary system, but, as was the case in "Mariana" and "The Lady of Shalott", it seems to draw the feminine away from the margins and into a more prominent position, as Telemachus is the focus of an entire verse paragraph.

Although the first two-thirds of this chapter have dealt almost exclusively with femininity, it now becomes necessary to discuss its binary opposite, masculinity, in order to discuss the potential transgressive displacement of femininity onto a masculine character. In order to discuss masculinity, I will demonstrate how the title character of the poem, Ulysses, clearly embodies characteristics of conventional Victorian masculinity,

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"still Shalott", also reinforce the isolation of the Lady

and how he differs from Telemachus. Marion Shaw maintains that "the socially acceptable behavior denoting manliness" involves "being a strong, reliable worker, an authoritative yet loving husband and father, and a respected public figure" (60). Although I will eventually discuss Ulysses' role as a loving husband and father, first I will discuss his role as a public figure, which his existence in the political sphere clearly illustrates, not only in his role as a monarch on the island but also in his past adventures. While the spheres of "Mariana" and "The Lady of Shalott" are limited, that of Ulysses is virtually limitless. The Lady of Shalott is confined "by the margin" (19) of Camelot, but Ulysses' territory of experience and action is boundless as the "margin fades / for ever" (20-1). He declares that

> Much have I seen and known; cities of men
> And manners, climates, councils, governments. (13-14)

The "councils" and "governments" that Ulysses has access to are clearly shut off from the women of the earlier poems who are trapped within a confined domestic space. In contrast to Mariana, who does not leave her deserted grange, and the Lady of Shalott, who is cursed when she ventures outside her tower, Ulysses "cannot rest from travel" (6). Furthermore, while the Lady of Shalott achieves some fame after her death, while still alive, Ulysses recognizes his own fame: "I am become a name" (11). The lack of limits imposed on Ulysses clearly indicates his affinity with conventional Victorian masculinity.

Not only is Ulysses' sphere of action limitless, but he acts, rather than waits; his greatest fear is becoming "an idle king" (1), whose fate is "to pause, to make an end" (22). Moreover, Ulysses is associated with the qualities of the Victorian upper-middle

class "paterfamilias" who was both remote and sovereign (Roberts 59). Ulysses'

remoteness from his people is clear as he "[doles] unequal laws" (4) to citizens who truly

do not know him (5). Also, Ulysses' calling his people "savage" (4) demonstrates his

dislike for them, and, therefore, his disinclination towards associating with them.

Furthermore, the Victorian paterfamilias delegated the duties; "like an emperor, he

delegated, amply and freely, much of his power...everyone in the household in fact had

his sphere" (Roberts 62-4). Being an actual sovereign, Ulysses delegates a certain amount

of responsibility to his son; Telemachus is left with "the scepter and the isle" (34), and he

is "centered in the sphere of common duties" (39).

Given his "sphere of common duties" (39), Telemachus appears to be feminized.

Unlike his son, Ulysses is active and his activity seems boundless, for he follows

"knowledge like a sinking star / Beyond the utmost bound of human thought" (31-32).

Telemachus, in contrast, is clearly bounded by his confinement to the "isle" (34) while

Ulysses makes plans with his mariners "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" (70).

Ulysses separates himself from Telemachus, declaring that "he works his work, I mine"

(43). However, it is not only the separation of spheres that marks the difference between

the two men; it is also Telemachus' association with feminine qualities that problematizes

his masculinity. Ulysses asserts that Telemachus will

> ...by slow prudence... make mild
> A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
> Subdue them to the useful and the good.
> Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
> Of common duties, decent not to fail
> In offices of tenderness.... (36-41)

The descriptive words "soft" and "slow", and the "offices of tenderness" (41) which

Telemachus performs are evocative of the maternal instinct ascribed to Victorian woman.

Mary Poovey maintains that "maternal instinct was supposedly noncompetitive,

nonaggressive, and self-sacrificing" (77). As Telemachus' work is separated from

Ulysses', he does not compete with him, and, moreover, Telemachus' lack of aggression

is apparent in his use of "soft degrees" to subdue the subjects. Furthermore, the modifier

"slow" opposes Ulysses' world of action since "to pause" (22) is what he dislikes most of

all. It appears, thus, as if Tennyson incorporates the element of femininity into

Telemachus, therefore questioning the rigid gender distinctions of Victorian society, and

elevating femininity from its previously inferior position.

However, Telemachus' incorporation of conventional Victorian masculinity is

more prominent than it appears. Roberts describes the relationship between the father and

the son, and the resulting impact on the son:

> The delegation within the household of so many responsibilities along
> with frequent absences did, however, raise problems. It weakened, for the
> boys, a close identification with their father and so hindered the
> development of their masculinity. (72)

Roberts' trajectory of the historical son's development illuminates that of the fictional

Telemachus; Ulysses' twenty-year absence during the Trojan War appears to have

"hindered" the development of his son's masculinity. However, while Telemachus seems

to embody feminine qualities, he has a certain amount of agency, as he is able to

transform the subjects from "savage" (4) to the much milder "rugged" (37), and

eventually to "mild" (36). Telemachus' power and authority are revealed in the word

"scepter" (34); while it may seem that Ulysses is giving him a decorative rod, he is really

giving him the power and authority that the rod symbolizes, as he will have absolute rule of the island. Thus, while Telemachus may be contained in terms of physical space, the power and agency that he can exert within that space is virtually limitless. Since he will be taking over Ulysses' role of "[doling] unequal laws" (4), then Ulysses' sovereign patriarchy will be passed from father to son, therefore making Telemachus into a patriarchal ruler, and thus completing his successful development of conventional Victorian masculinity.

Furthermore, Telemachus is able to act even more successfully than his father Ulysses, indicating his potential for becoming an even greater patriarch. While Telemachus accepts the "isle" (34) to which his father confines him, he is still able to "make mild" and to "subdue" the "rugged people". In contrast, Ulysses' own (at least temporary) confinement on the isle results largely in inaction; while he recounts his days of action and experience he is presently an "idle king, / By [a] still hearth" (1-2). Although the home is generally a secluded refuge for men, Ulysses' apparent inability to function well within the family contrasts him with Telemachus, who is able to perform his assigned duties. Since Telemachus is able to act with the same limitations imposed on him as Ulysses, then he possesses the potential for an even greater masculinity than his father has.

However, I do not want to suggest that Ulysses is feminized through his comparison with Telemachus as they work in separate spheres (43). Jerome Buckley dismisses Ulysses' masculinity since he is "prepared to rationalize his retreat from social responsibility, to abandon his people, desert his aged wife and speak condescendingly of

his 'most blameless' son" (3). Because Ulysses seems to denote a clear separation between his world of action and Telemachus' world of inaction, several critics insist that Ulysses harbors a negative attitude towards his son. Roberts maintains that frequent absences by the father cause sons a lack of close identification with their fathers (72), and John Pettigrew asserts that in the Telemachus passage "the dominant tone… is rather like that of the first paragraph to which we are taken back by the reference to a present social context, and by a certain similarity in Ulysses' attitude towards Ithaca and its people" (Pettigrew 70).[9] Although we are taken back to the present, there is a definite shift in tone between Ulysses' attitude towards his people and that towards Telemachus. It is apparent that, in spite of their differences, Ulysses admires Telemachus. Firstly, he applies adjectives with positive connotations to Ulysses, calling him "blameless" (39), "decent" (40), and insisting that he is "well-loved" (35). Secondly, Ulysses' use of the first person possessive "my" and "mine" (33) establishes the connection between Ulysses and his son. In contrast, Ulysses refers to his wife and people with the indefinite article; Penelope is merely "an aged wife" (3), and his people are "a savage race" (4). Thus, while Ulysses denies any personal connection between himself and his wife or people, he suggests that he and his son are connected. Despite the fact that they work in separate spheres, Ulysses' admiration for Telemachus establishes the fact that Telemachus has developed successful traits of conventional Victorian masculinity.

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[9] R.H. Hutton also maintains that Ulysses expresses "contemptuous satisfaction in the capacity of Telemachus to fill his place" (from *Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. John Jump, p.365). Hutton's insistence that Telemachus is filling Ulysses' place, however, signifies that Telemachus is inheriting, rather than rejecting, his father's masculinity.

Some criticism implies that Ulysses' admiration of Telemachus is not an admiration of his son per se, but an admiration of the element of femininity that Telemachus embodies. For example, Carol Christ believes that Tennyson admires the feminine element in his poetry because of "man's desire to escape the burdens of action and sexuality made difficult to bear by the social climate of the age" (159). As Tennyson's biographical records indicate, it is clear that he associates himself with Ulysses. He says that "Ulysses" "gave [his] feeling of going forward and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memoriam*" (Ricks 560). Since Ulysses stands in for Tennyson, then Christ's assumption that Tennyson idealizes femininity suggests that Ulysses admires the feminine element in Telemachus. Ulysses' declaration that "he works his work, I mine" (43) would seem to support both the Victorian notion of separate spheres and that Ulysses' admiration of his son is an admiration of the feminine qualities that accompany the separation of spheres. It seems that Ulysses does, indeed, rhetorically reinforce the notion of male and female as opposing but complementary parts; he is "matched" (3) with Penelope, and his son Telemachus, while "well-loved" (35) by his father, is also working separate work. Throughout the rest of the poem, Ulysses uses conventional methods of opposition that reflect the separation of spheres; he asserts that he and his mariners have "free hearts, free foreheads" (49). This passage looks back to Ulysses' previous assertion that "much I have seen and known" (13). In both statements, Ulysses reconciles sense perception with intellect; the "hearts" represent emotion or sense perception, and the "foreheads" represent intellect. Moreover, men were commonly associated with intellect and women

with emotion, and the reconciliation of emotion with intellect also represents the complementary nature of masculinity and femininity. Ulysses' rhetorical reconciliation of opposites expresses not only the vastness and limitless of his sphere but his belief in separate spheres of work for men and women.

However, while Ulysses' belief in separate spheres of work for men and women attests to his (and Tennyson's, [as Ulysses represents Tennyson]) belief in conventional Victorian gender divisions, it does not necessitate his admiration of femininity. On the contrary, David Roberts insists that "masculinity [was] a quality highly prized by early Victorian fathers" (72). As already discussed, Ulysses limits his wife to the margins of the text by his reference to her as "an" aged wife, rather than "my wife." The possibility for his admiration of femininity is also problematized by his yearning for the world of action and his resentment at resting "by a still hearth" (2). Moreover, since it is apparent that Ulysses' handing of his "scepter" (34) to Telemachus is symbolic of his passing on his power, authority, and masculinity, then not only are the father and son not binary opposites (although they work different work, it does not mean that their work is *opposite*), but Ulysses' admiration of Telemachus is an admiration not of his femininity but of his masculinity. Telemachus' retention of conventional masculinity, combined with Penelope's marginalization, therefore illustrates Tennyson's reinforcement of Victorian notions of gender: the feminine element remains marginalized while masculinity is prominent, powerful and active. Thus, in "Ulysses", as well as "The Lady of Shalott" and "Mariana", while Tennyson seems to present unconventional images of femininity, he ultimately reinforces the traditional Victorian idea of femininity in which

women were domestic, passive and marginalized. Telemachus' role as a seemingly feminized male looks ahead to my second chapter in which Hilarion takes on the guise of a woman, and eventually to my third which deals exclusively with the apparently feminized poet-narrator.

CHAPTER TWO – *THE PRINCESS* (1847)

The Princess (1847), Tennyson's most controversial poem in terms of gender representation, is doubly problematic in that it represents not only a "masculine" woman but also a "feminine" man. In my first chapter, my focus on femininity dealt with the feminine as it was embodied in the characters of Mariana and the Lady of Shalott. In dealing with my final short poem, "Ulysses", I discussed a more radical manifestation of femininity: the element of the feminine as it was located in a biological male, Telemachus. The transgressive displacement of femininity in a man challenges the rigid binary gender system by conflating the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, and, subsequently, the conflation between masculinity and femininity elevates femininity as it is no longer clearly the inferior element.

In this chapter, I will continue to discuss the transgressive conflation of the masculine and the feminine, and, thus continue to deal with Victorian conceptions of masculinity as well as femininity. The first half of my study of *The Princess* will focus on the "manly" woman Ida, who, like the Lady of Shalott and Mariana, diverges from Victorian notions of femininity as she defies the conventional image of the "angel in the house". Not unlike the Lady of Shalott, Princess Ida appears to defy the patriarchal gender system through her refusal to marry. However, Ida seems even more unconventional than the women studied in my first chapter. She embodies characteristics traditionally reserved for Victorian men: she is educated, independent, and self-sufficient. The second half of my study will focus on the seemingly feminized Prince, and, in

particular, on the conventions of femininity which seem not only subverted but also elevated through their location in a man.

Many critics of *The Princess* feel that Tennyson, at least initially, presents unconventional and/or positive images of femininity through the seemingly masculine Ida and the apparently feminine Hilarion. John Killham argues that the poem is a conscious attempt on the part of Tennyson to challenge rigid gender conventions, and to promote a new image of femininity. Killham maintains that the poem attempts "to sketch out the lines of a new type of relationship" (4) between the sexes in which the position of women is changed. According to Killham, Tennyson is "interested in something more than [marriage as]… the ultimate solution" (5), and that something is "the theme of women's higher education" (15). Carol Christ asserts that, although Tennyson converts Ida to the conventional "angel in the house" through her marriage to Hilarion, he presents this stereotype as positive rather than negative. She maintains that "Tennyson's women most frequently fail at their task…because Tennyson [has an] exalted vision of their mission" (153), a mission that requires them to minister to the needs of men. Tennyson works to reinforce this stereotype by returning Ida to her "proper" role as the "angel in the house" and by suggesting the inferiority of the domestic woman.

Other critics maintain that Tennyson intends to subvert conventional notions of femininity but inadvertently reinforces them. For example, Alan Sinfield argues that *The Princess* "reinstates the gender distinctions it purports to criticize" (141). While Tennyson clearly does reinstate traditional gender distinctions, I am not sure that he "purports" to criticize them at all. In fact, as several critics contend, Tennyson's

ideological agenda is to represent unconventional femininity as dangerous and irrational, so that the return of Ida to her "proper" sphere reestablishes "reasonable" order and tradition.[1] Kate Millett, for example, contends that "Tennyson's actual premise is that Ida may study or love[;] not both" and that the poem "proceeds to 'change the subject' from education to marriage" (77). However, while most of these critics contend that, at least at the start of the poem, gender transgression takes place, as the subject is initially women's "education", I will show that, even in the beginning, Tennyson clearly promotes the conventional role of the "angel in the house". I concur with Donald Hall, who asserts that Tennyson merely appropriates the words and actions of women in order to silence them and reinforce the patriarchy. Hall claims that the patriarchy "was by definition a structure of subsumption, one through which the words and demands of others were ingested, modified, and incorporated by the patriarch" (46). If Tennyson appropriates the feminine in writing from the feminine point of view, Hilarion also appropriates feminine qualities in order to resubordinate the feminine; this strategy becomes physically manifest when Hilarion dresses as a woman in order to get Ida to marry him and to leave her newly founded women's university. By contrast, Ida "appropriates" masculinity, but in order to attain its privileges rather than to devalue it. Although it may seem that even at the beginning of the poem that Hilarion is "truly" feminine and Ida is "truly" masculine, I will demonstrate that, even initially, slippages in the literal and metaphorical costumes of both characters reveal not transgressive gender categories but the conservative versions of "masculinity" and "femininity" that Tennyson wishes to promote. Both Ida and

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[1] As I have noted in the introduction to my study, critics who make this argument are Kate Millett,

Hilarion, therefore, are already in their "proper" roles of masculine masculinity and feminine femininity that they will occupy fully by the end of the poem.

I

Ida seems to initially embody unconventional characteristics of femininity, but such characteristics are merely a façade. She appears to repudiate the traditional role of the "angel in the house" who is domesticated, uneducated, and both receptive to and inferior to men. Ida reveals how the notion of woman worship is detrimental to women's progress and only reinforces both conventionality and subordination. While the Prince "worships [her] ideal" (2. 38), she repudiates "the tinsel clink of compliment" (41) that he offers her, thus insinuating that men's worship of women pretends to elevate femininity but in fact lowers it. Her declaration that she wants to "lift the woman's fallen divinity / Upon an even pedestal with man" (3. 207-8) implies that the "divinity" that men attribute to women is part of their strategy for reinforcing the conventionality. The false "worship" of women by men reinforces woman's conventional role as "the angel in the house", who, although providing moral support, is dependent on and inferior to men by her existence in the domestic sphere. Hence, the "ideal" that the Prince worships is not the new version of feminism that Ida promotes but the existing Victorian ideal of domesticity and inferiority.

The "new" ideal of femininity that Ida promotes resembles conventional Victorian masculinity more than it does traditional femininity. Her physical size denotes

Eve Sedgwick, Terry Eagleton, and Donald Hall.

her masculinity; she is a "great Princess, six feet high, / Grand, epic, homicidal"

(Prologue 218-9). Similarly, Ida's companions are

> Eight daughters of the plough, stronger than men,
> Huge women blowzed with health, and wind, and rain,
> And labour. Each was like a Druid rock. (4. 259-61)

The size, strength, and toughness of Ida's companions, along with their physical labor,

place them outside domesticity. Likewise, not only is Ida physically great, she is also

independent from men as she "loved to live alone / Among her women; certain, would

not wed" (1. 48-9). Unlike the Lady of Shalott and Mariana who desire marriage in their

solitary state, Ida is pleased with her single status; her separation from men is intentional,

and her dismissal of marriage as woman's ultimate fate marks her as the most

transgressive of any of Tennyson's heroines. Like the Lady of Shalott, Ida is an artist

figure who writes "awful odes... / Too awful, sure, for what they treated of, .../ And

dismal lyrics, prophesying change / Beyond all reason" (1. 137-138, 141-142). The male

narrator labels Ida's lyrics and rhymes "dismal" and "awful" because their lack of

conventionality threatens the strict gender codes. Not only is women's art

unconventional, as it is a public endeavor that is empowering and self-sustaining, but the

content of Ida's art evokes unconventionality as she is "prophesying change". Like

artistry of the Lady of Shalott, that of Ida can be seen as an attempt to reorder reality. The

Lady's weaving the shadows of Camelot in her mirror is analogous to her role as an artist

attempting to change society, and similarly, Ida's "odes" and "rhymes" are an

unconventional occupation for a woman and they speak about a change of gender

convention.

Not only is Ida is an artist but she and other women are "all wild to found an University" where "they see no men" (1. 149-51). At the time of the poem, women were not permitted access to men's universities, nor did they have any of their own. Rita McWilliams Tullberg reveals that "in 1837 there were only four universities in England, none of them open to women" (117). Even when women were finally admitted into universities by the end of the nineteenth century, they still occupied "secondary supporting roles within a morally renewed society" (120) in which "middle-class girls were to be prepared not for married life, but for the marriage market" (121), thus treated like commodities of exchange between men.[2] The reason for the delay in allowing women into universities where they were recognized as equals to men was because men feared education would make women independent. McWilliams-Tullberg reveals that the patriarchy feared "that women would compete with men for jobs" (139), and that women would no longer act as a moralizing influence in the idealized Victorian family.

Tennyson's *The Princess* links education with feminine independence. From the beginning, the poem describes the separateness of the women's university from men, noting that "the land…for miles about / Was tilled by women" (1.189-90). The women have shut themselves off from all male influence, as the inscription on the university's gate reveals: "LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF DEATH" (2.178). Women's desired independence from men is also evident at the level of the frame narrative. The story of *The Princess* is created by a group of frame narrators so that it is a story within a

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[2] For a full explanation on women's role as the enforcer of bonds between men, see Sedgwick.

story. Lilia, one of the women in the group, expresses her desire for female education and independence. She declares:

> ...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. (Prologue 133-6)

Lilia stands in for the Princess by virtue of both her sex, and her desire for female independence. Her comparison with the Princess juxtaposes the frame narrative with the main story, highlighting the fact that the main story itself is removed from reality even further than the narrative.[3] The frame narration that surrounds the tale is already one remove from reality as it is Tennyson's art, and the story that the frame narrators themselves create is yet another remove away. Like the shadows of Camelot that appear in the mirror of the Lady of Shalott, and then in her art, the story of the Princess is already thrice removed from reality. The fact that Tennyson creates such narrative distancing emphasizes the unreality of the women attaining equality through education and independence.

Furthermore, women's separateness from men is actually detrimental to their cause. While they appear to be independent through their isolated education, they are paradoxically reinforcing their own subordination by creating a separate university. First of all, women's need for "separate" education implies that they cannot compete with men. McWilliams-Tullberg discusses the fears of Emily Davies, a female professor who opened a college for women in 1869:

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[3] By "reality" I mean historical Victorian society.

> In the field of intellectual emancipation, she insisted that women could only be judged in men's terms. As the idea of higher education took root, she grew increasingly afraid of "separateness", and repudiated every suggestion that women should start their own university instead of challenging the male exclusiveness at Cambridge. (128)

Davies' desire to "challenge the male exclusiveness at Cambridge" derived from her wish for equality between the sexes, and, implicitly, her wish for gender transgression, as women's intellectual capabilities could be equal to men's. Her fear of "separateness" was a fear of the rigid gender hierarchy in which men were supposedly more intelligent than women. The rhetoric of separation in *The Princess* evokes the notion of separate spheres that is so central to Victorian gender ideology. This initial separation paves the way for "their fair college [to be] turned to hospital" (7. 2), so that women are returned to their proper roles as nursemaids to men, ministering to their needs both physically and spiritually.

However, even before the final transformation of the all-female university into the domestic sphere, and Ida's masculinity into femininity, it is apparent that the masculinity she appropriates is a "costume", or a false self that will be shed by the end of the poem. As Linda Shires suggests, "the 'womanliness' of Ida is revealed as having been merely hiding all along" (56) when "her falser self slipt from her like a robe, / And left her woman" (7. 146-7). However, the artificiality of Ida's "robe" is apparent from the beginning. Her dressing in an unconventional femininity is physically manifest by her wearing of the university gown; the "masculine" role of university student that Ida appropriates is merely a costume. The gown, however, does give glimpses of Ida's conventionality; it is "lilac, with a silken hood..., / And zoned with gold" (2. 3-4). The

feminized gown that Ida and her companions wear not only undermines their project of amending traditional femininity, but it also points to the conventional femininity that Ida embodies under her guise of masculinity. She tells the disguised Prince that "in truth / We shudder but to dream our maids should ape / Those monstrous males" (3. 291-3). Although Ida's calling men "monstrous" appears to refer to her unwillingness to be associated with them, it is, in fact, her own appropriation of masculinity that she is belittling, as later on she says to Hilarion that "we seem a kind of monster to you" (3. 259). Although it appears as if Ida is refuting the conventional association of masculine women with "monstrosity", she is, in fact, assenting to it as she embodies conventional femininity. What is monstrous, then, is not biological men but women who pretend to be men, so that the monstrosity is associated with deviation from conventional gender roles. The term "dream" enforces the unreality of Ida's masculinity, and its contrast with "truth" emphasizes that the "truth" is that Ida's appropriation of masculinity is false, as she is, in fact, traditionally feminine.

In fact, it is not Ida who initially chooses to reject conventional femininity. The Princess is ostensibly brainwashed by Lady Blanche and Lady Psyche who "fed her theories,... / Maintaining that with equal husbandry / The woman were an equal to the man" (1.128-30). The Prince reveals that "it was ill counsel had misled the girl / To vex true hearts" (7. 226-7). The "true heart" of the Princess, her embodiment of a traditional femininity that maintains the inequality of women, has thus been disguised not of her own accord but by others, who were similarly misled. In fact, Lady Blanche and Lady Psyche themselves are, even early on, "truly" feminine underneath their guise of

masculinity. Lady Psyche initially breaks the rules of the university; she allows men to "enter" and leave again without punishment. On trying to decide whether or not to let her brother escape without the punishment of death, Lady Psyche notes her conflict as one in which "love and duty clash" (2. 273). "Duty" represents the public, political sphere in which she must uphold the rules of the college, and "love" represents the domestic, private sphere to which women are relegated. Psyche ultimately lets love win out, showing her true femininity underneath her guise of masculine duty, and as a result returns to a trapped state as she paces "like some wild creature newly-caged" (281). Psyche is relegated to a maiden-like state as she "[holds] out her lily arms" (283), smiles "faintly" (284) to Florian, begs pardon for her "needful seeming harshness" (289), claiming that "it was duty spoke, not I" (288). Thus, the sense of masculine duty that Psyche upheld was not her true femininity as she distinguishes the "I" from the false "duty" that she had assumed. The falseness of Psyche's masculinity is made manifest when she is "wrapped in a soldier's cloak…A charred and wrinkled piece of womanhood" (5. 53, 58). Like Ida, Psyche wears masculinity as a "cloak", and even before she removes the cloak, she reveals that underneath that cloak lies a traditional and diminutive version of femininity.

Similarly, Lady Blanche reveals true femininity underneath the guise of masculinity. Blanche is one of the staunchest feminists of the group; she stands "erect" and is an "affluent orator" (4. 271-2). Her public role as an orator, which accords more with the public than private sphere, is enhanced by the masculine confidence apparent in her upright stance. However, such a stance is clearly a façade, as she is "of faded form

and haughtiest lineaments, / With all her autumn tresses falsely brown" (2. 425-6). The affected arrogance of the Lady, and the dyeing of her hair are attempts to avoid existing within the circumscribed conventions of femininity, but the surface appearance of such an act is emphasized by the word "false". Ironically, the Lady's name, "Blanche", denotes white, the color most emblematic of traditional femininity, and the "six hundred maidens clad in purest white" (448) that she is partly in charge of evoke the image not of independent and intelligent women but of innocent and spiritually pure maidens. Therefore, the true femininity that Lady Blanche and Lady Psyche possess is clearly manifest even through their guise of masculinity.

The Princess' true femininity is evident when she falls into the river. Although she is running away from the Prince and from the conventional fate of marriage that his presence represents, she inadvertently falls into convention and submission when she plunges into the river. Her plunge into the river aligns her with the stereotypical and subordinate role of the victim. Nina Auerbach contends that this role of the victim can also be interpreted as empowering to women. Like Ida, the Lady of Shalott was a typical victim, who according to Auerbach "appropriated the bard's function to make her own myth" (11). Similarly, Ida appears to appropriate the role of bard by "prophesying change (1. 141)", but her prophecy ultimately turns out to be void, as she, not unlike the Lady, returns to conventional femininity. The Princess' fall is precipitated by her anger and her desire to avoid the Prince:

> For blind with rage she missed the plank, and rolled
> In the river...
> There whirled her white robe like a blossomed branch. (4. 159-61)

Not unlike the time that she rejects the Prince when "her breast, / Beaten with some great passion at her heart, / Palpitated" (4. 368-70), the Princess' embodiment of passion and her adornment in white align her with conventional femininity. The Princess' posture recalls that of the Lady of Shalott, who is "lying, robed in snowy white" ("The Lady of Shalott" 136) and "dead-pale" (157), her posture resembling a pure virginal bride floating passively to her fate. In the Lady's case, her fate is death, but in the Princess' it is marriage, as the Prince rescues her. Both women, thus, are helpless to alter their destinies, destinies ultimately controlled by patriarchal convention.

Feminine dependence, the poem indicates, even becomes apparent in seeming acts of defiance. Although Ida continues to reject the Prince after his rescue of her, she needs the masculine army of her brother Arac and his soldiers to battle the Prince and his comrades in order to achieve freedom from marriage. Arac reveals that although he does not agree with her radical version of femininity, he "[stands] upon her side" because she "made [him] swear it" (5. 281). Not unlike the Prince's chivalry in saving Ida's life, Arac defends her from the Prince's insistent attempts to gain Ida's hand in marriage, once again invoking the patriarchal ideal of "woman worship". Ida attempts to avoid the condescending "woman worship", and the dependence on men that it insinuates at the start of the poem. She does not allow any men in her academy, she will not even see them,

> Not even her brother Arac, nor the twins,
> Her brethren, though they love her, look upon her
> As on a kind of paragon. (1.152-4)

Arac, like the Prince, treats Ida as if she is a "paragon" of conventional femininity,

worshipping her not for the independent, educated woman that she vows to be, but for the

domestic angel that ultimately lies under the guise of that unconventionality. Ida goes

from rejecting all men, including her brothers, to letting her brothers and their soldiers

into the academy, referring to them as "the sole men to be mingled with our cause" (5.

401).

Ida's taking in of her brothers and their soldiers foreshadows the conversion of

the university into a hospital. Although she declares that "our rights are won" (6. 52), it is

not by virtue of her efforts that she and her women win their rights (or, at least, what they

think their rights to be), but by the efforts of their brothers to whom they deliver "'the

tender ministries / Of female hands and hospitality'" (56-7). It is not only Ida's

dependence on men that renders her subordinate, but her assumption of a typical feminine

role: domestic caregiver to men. She ultimately allows in to the university "whatever man

lies wounded, friend or foe" (6. 317). Thus, the college is fully converted into a hospital:

> So was their sanctuary violated,
> So their fair college turned to hospital;
> At first with all confusion: by and by
> Sweet order lived again with other laws:
> A kindlier influence reigned. (7. 1-5)

The men's "violation" of the women's "sanctuary" demonstrates the agency the men

have in eradicating the potential for gender transgression. Rather than Ida removing her

own costume, the men are the agents in restoring the "sweet order", demonstrating both

their conventional aggression and Ida's subsequent powerlessness even in the guise of

masculinity.

The potential for the "sweet order" to "reign", however, is already present in the university before the soldiers occupy it; Lady Psyche refers to the college as "our young nursery still unknown" (4. 313). Although she is referring to the fact that the college and the feminist movement that it embodies is still in its early stages, she inadvertently invokes an image of domesticity in the word "nursery". Rather than being a developmental facility for minds, the college ironically turns out to be a place for the development of women's conventional femininity; Psyche ultimately foreshadows the women's subsequent roles of nurses to the wounded men. As they occupy the nursery, not only are the women nurses to the young such as Psyche's child, but they themselves are "children". The women are at an immature stage of developing into conventional femininity, and the conversion of the university into a hospital marks the maturity of their traditional Victorian femininity that resides under the guise of masculine independence and academic pursuits.

It is not only the women's conversion to domestic maids that returns them to their conventional femininity, but it is their participation in the ultimate pre-assigned fate for women, marriage, that proves to be the final stroke in the removal of their masculine masks. The halls of learning also turn into halls of courtship as "Love in the sacred halls / Held carnival at will, and flying struck / With showers of random sweet on maid and man" (7. 69-71). Ida herself fully returns to "proper" femininity by her marriage to the Prince, who reinstates the discourse of separate and complementary spheres in declaring:

> ...let her make herself her own...
> ...to live and learn and be
> All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
> For woman is not undeveloped man,

But diverse. (256-60)

Although he declares that it is up to women to choose their fate, the fate that they must

ultimately achieve through "learning" is "distinctive womanhood". In stating that women

are "diverse" from men, the Prince reinforces the separate spheres of the sexes that Ida

and her companions have already gestured towards in setting up a separate university,

and then allowing it to be converted into a domestic haven. Indeed, "woman is not

undeveloped man", but undeveloped woman in the guise of a man. As they occupy the

"nursery", the women are in the immature stages of conventional femininity, but, with the

conversion of the women back to their proper sphere, Ida completely loses her guise of

masculinity as "her falser self slipt from her like a robe, /And left her woman" (7. 146-7).

Ida's masculinity, therefore, is not her true self, but a robe that she wears in an attempt to

change the conventional image of femininity. Ida's failure to maintain the masculine

guise is not of her own will, but is the object of an intricate strategy orchestrated by the

seemingly "feminine" Prince.

II

Not unlike Ida's seemingly transgressive embodiment of masculinity, Hilarion's

femininity only apparently challenges prescribed Victorian gender roles. Initially,

Hilarion seems feminine; he is soft in appearance, passionate, and prone to seizures. In

appearance, he is "blue-eyed, and fair in face, / Of temper amorous, as the first of May, /

With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl" (1.1-3). The fact that Hilarion seems "like a

girl" even before he intentionally dresses as one illustrates the superficiality of his

feminine appearance. His seizures, like his appearance, are highly superficial. They

clearly stress the difference between his superficial femininity and conventional masculinity as they are based on his inability to sometimes distinguish "the shadow from the substance" (1. 9). The Prince's femininity is, indeed, a "shadow", and his inability to distinguish it from the "substance" reflects his initial inability to penetrate the Princess' masculine "shadow" to the "substance" of conventional Victorian femininity. Since during his seizures he feels as if he is "the shadow of a dream" (18), such seizures seem to highlight his feminine qualities; his intimidation at the Princess' masculine guise makes his "heart beat thick with passion and with awe" as he heaves an "involuntary sigh" (3. 174-5). The passion that overwhelms the Prince indicates a loss of masculine control as his sigh is both a feminine gesture and "involuntary". His physical inferiority to the Princess is denoted by her "descending" to lend a hand, causing "blissful palpitations in the blood, / Stirring a sudden transport [that] rose and fell" (4. 9-11). It seems, therefore, as if the Prince's feminine qualities are something that he relishes, as his palpitations are "blissful" and not something he rejects.

In costume, too, the Prince takes on the feminine. He, along with his companions, goes to the Princess' academy wearing "female gear" and rustling "in maiden plumes" (1. 196, 199). While the Prince's dressing as a woman appears to make him seem effeminate, it, in fact, works in a paradoxical way to enhance his masculinity. In fact, like the masculine characteristics appropriated by the Princess, the Prince's feminine guise is merely a costume he appropriates (whether or not he is dressed like a woman) with the sole intent of resubordinating the element of femininity. The Prince's strategy is evident when he discards his own feminine mask, and causes Ida to shed her masculine one,

revealing the true essence of inferior Victorian femininity that lies beneath. The Prince's

strategy is most obvious by the fact that he dons his costume to gain entrance to the

academy, and to "gain / His rightful bride" (3. 144-5). The men laugh at the female gear

that they wear, not only showing the disparity between it and their true masculine natures,

but also gesturing at the inferiority of femininity. The clothes are "a sight to shake / The

midriff of despair with laughter" (1.197-8), and are something to be worn only "in

masque or pageant" (195). The frame narrators themselves refer to Hilarion as "a feudal

knight in silken masquerade" (Prologue 227), illustrating the extent to which Hilarion's

feminine qualities are merely an act and not his true self.

Moreover, it is apparent that even through the mask of femininity that the Prince

appropriates, there are enough "tears" in the costume so that his true masculinity shows.

Such tears, however, do not diminish the Prince's success. When the Prince, disguised as

a woman, tells the Princess how much he loves her, the Princess declares that "he seems

no better than a girl" (3. 202). It is ironic that the Prince, in fact, does "seem" like a

woman to the Princess as he is dressed as one. However, the Princess' initial failure to

penetrate the guise of the Prince attests to his success. He insists that her plan of

liberating women from the conventional Victorian femininity that subordinates them will

fail as her

> ...pains
> May only make that footprint upon sand
> Which old-recurring waves of prejudice
> Resmooth to nothing. (222-5)

The Prince (albeit unknown to Ida) inadvertently reveals his masculine nature through his

"waves of prejudice" against Ida and her academic companions by revealing the

superficiality of her own masculine guise. The superficiality of his guise is also apparent;

when he sings a song to Ida and her companions, he admits that his "voice / Rang false"

(4. 102-3). His voice is false both in his inability to "ape their treble" (74) and in his song

about the pursuit of a female swallow, inadvertently betraying his true intentions to Ida.

The difference between the "false" and the "true" is most readily apparent in

Hilarion's recurring seizures. The seizures seem to be a sign of weakness and, because of

the weakness, they appear to promote Hilarion's femininity. Not surprisingly, most of his

seizures occur in the presence of the "masculine" Princess. When they are riding together

the Prince exclaims:

> On a sudden my strange seizure came
> Upon me, the weird vision of our house:
> The Princess Ida seemed a hollow show,
> Her gay-furred cats a painted fantasy,
> Her college and her maidens, empty masks,
> And I myself the shadow of a dream,
> For all things were and were not. (3. 167-73)

The "hollow show" that Princess Ida appears as is the masculinity that she tries to

appropriate. Her college and maidens are, in fact, "empty masks"; they are merely a

façade of unconventionality that does not represent the true femininity residing inside the

Princess. The "strange seizure" that the Prince is having is, in fact, his confusion at the

gender transgression that Ida appears to embody in her acquisition of masculine

characteristics. He himself is "the shadow of a dream" since his feminine disguise covers

the masculine reality that lies underneath. Tennyson himself admits that "the words

'dream', 'shadow', 'were and were not' doubtless refer to the anachronisms and

improbabilities of the story" (Tennyson, quoted in Ricks, Vol. 2, 186). The

"improbabilities" that Tennyson refers to probably include the apparent femininity of the Prince, the seemingly masculine Ida, and, finally, the elevation of the element of femininity.

The "shadows" that appear in the seizures of the Prince recall the shadows that appear in the mirror of the Lady of Shalott; neither is true "reality". In other seizures, for example, when Ida rejects him before the battle, the Prince contends that the "cataract and the tumult and the kings / Were shadows" (4. 542-3), and when the battle is set that he "[dreams himself] the shadow of a dream" (5. 470). Not unlike the Lady, whose weaving of the shadows into her web constitutes a transgression as she, as a female artist, attempts to "reorder" tradition, Tennyson's presentation of an apparently feminine Prince (and masculine Princess) also seems to constitute a similar displacement. However, in both cases, Tennyson proves the "shadows" to be just that: superficial appearances of reality that are both inferior to and incapable of changing reality, a reality that is based on clear gender distinctions.

Even before he causes Ida to submit to her true femininity, the Prince reveals characteristics of conventional masculinity. He is clearly focused on his goal of "defeating" Ida, of getting her to shed her masculine guise and assume a conventional role as his wife. He contends that the Princess errs in her "masculinity":

> But in her own grand way: being herself
> Three times more noble than three score of men,
> She sees herself in every woman else,
> And so she wears her error like a crown
> To blind the truth and me. (3. 92-6)

The Prince's praising of the Princess' "nobility" in assuming masculinity is just as much a façade as the feminine costume he wears: he, in fact, does not encourage or respect her behavior. He argues that her masculinity is itself "an error" that she "wears" "to blind the truth" from both herself and him. However, he is not "blind" to the truth that he finally extracts from her. The Prince seems to elevate the Princess' unconventionality by calling her "grand", and "noble", but what is, in fact, called "grand" is her conventional femininity, trying to encourage the fact that she "sees herself in every woman" by praising it. His praising of her error for being "like a crown", as she is "three times more noble than three score of men" invokes the typical "woman worship" that men use to pretend they are elevating femininity, when, in fact, they lower it by encouraging its conventionality. This is further apparent in the Prince's chivalry towards the Princess in saving her from drowning: he

> Plunged; and the flood drew; yet [he] caught her; then
> Oaring one arm, and bearing in [his] left
> The weight of all the hopes of half the world. (4. 164-66)

The Prince's saving of the Princess' life is not an act of chivalry as much as it is his saving of his own masculinity, since conventional masculinity is associated with chivalrous acts. His augmentation of masculinity by his saving of her in turn both reveals and establishes her inferior femininity; her assumption of the role of the victim places her firmly within stereotypical Victorian femininity. The Princess reinforces her own role as the subordinate victim by crediting the Prince for placing her there; she tells him that "'[he has] done well and like a gentleman, / And like a Prince'" (4. 506-7). The Prince's diminishing of femininity is further apparent in his phrasing of her as a conquest; she is

something to be "won" (3. 257), and his eventual winning of her accentuates both her objectivity and inferiority.

The fact that the Prince's femininity is merely a guise is further apparent in his attitude towards war. The Prince appears to be against violence and war to gain Ida when he declares that "more soluble is this knot, / By gentleness than war" (5. 129-30). Since the desire to engage in war for manly "honor" is indicative of one's masculinity, the Prince's aversion to war seems to indicate his femininity. However, the Prince's apparent dislike of war is merely another "mask" that he wears as part of his strategy for gaining Ida. His father, the King, describes conventional roles of masculinity and femininity that indicate men's desire for war:

> Man is the hunter; woman is his game:
> The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,
> We hunt them for the beauty of their skins;
> They love us for it, and we ride them down. (5. 147-50)

Although to this point he has not engaged in overt violence to win the Princess, the Prince is, in fact, doing exactly what his father describes men do to gain women. He is Ida's "hunter" as he "chases" her relentlessly, even to the point of saving her as she is running away from him. The battle between the Prince and Ida for superiority is a game, not only in the sense of a contest, but also in the sense that the Prince's amusing female dress is not an indication of his conventional masculinity.

However, it is apparent the Prince's true masculinity resides beneath his feminine disguise. The "war-music" allows glimpses of his true self as the music causes him to feel "the blind wildbeast of force, / Whose home is in the sinews of a man" (5. 256-7). The Prince reveals his reason for engaging in such a battle; it is not just for Ida but for

"honour" (310), honor that will be the revelation of his masculinity and the subsequent revelation of Ida's femininity. The Prince's revelation of his strategy further enhances his masculine nature. As he is engaged in battle with Arac, he sees the Princess standing by the side. He comments that she is

> No saint -- inexorable -- no tenderness--
> Too hard, too cruel: yet she sees me fight,
> Yea, let her see me fall! (5. 504-6)

His decision to "let her see [him] fall" indicates little about whether he could defeat Arac; instead, his fall furthers his intricate strategy to get her to shed her guise of masculinity. The Prince's strategy of appropriating feminine weakness himself in order to bring it out in Ida is finally realized when she regards his mock defeat:

> ...when she saw me lying stark,
> Dishelmed and mute, and motionlessly pale,
> Cold even to her, she sighed;...
> ...shuddered, a twitch of pain
> Tortured her mouth, and o'er her forehead past
> A shadow, and her hue changed. (6. 84-86; 89-91)

Ida's masculinity falls from her as "she [sighs]" and is able to feel "pain" for the Prince. The "shadow" that passes over her forehead is the guise of masculinity that she has incorporated for the entire poem, so that with its loss "her hue changed" and she assumes true femininity. As Donald Hall argues, "men can only regain consciousness, and, by implication, potency, when the empowered woman is subdued and male ability exalted" (54).[4] However, as I have demonstrated, Hilarion's "unconsciousness" is, like all of his

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[4] Not unlike Hall, Terry Eagleton maintains that "the Prince finally wins Ida, and so achieves full manhood, only by a process which involves his regression to a childlike dependence on her 'maternal' ministrations..." (81). However, it is the Prince's rationalized, masculine strategy that evokes the feminine 'maternal ministrations' in Ida.

feminine guises, an act. Hilarion explains the reason for his incorporation of femininity.

He tells Ida that he

> ...loved thee seen, and saw
> Thee woman through the crust of iron moods
> That masked thee from men's reverence up, and forced
> Sweet love on pranks of saucy boyhood. (7. 320-3)

Hilarion appropriates the characteristics of femininity, not because he wants to elevate

femininity but because he wants to put it back in its proper and subordinate place: in a

woman. It is Ida's "iron moods" that cause him to play "pranks of saucy boyhood". The

fact that Hilarion's pranks are of "boyhood", though, demonstrates that he is falsely

appropriating such femininity. His agency in playing such pranks is due to the fact that he

can always see "the woman" that "masked [Ida] from men's reverence", and thus, he is

the one to change Ida, rather than vice versa, as Hall suggests. Thus, Hilarion ultimately

succeeds in his removal of her masculine mask; rather than his success being attributed to

his "feminine" characteristics, it is through the masculine characteristics residing under

his guise that he is able to penetrate her guise: his rational strategy, his insistent chivalry,

and his love of the "chase".

Although Christ insists that Tennyson "dramatizes a pattern of feminine

identification in his portrayal of the Prince which he never reverses" (154), by the end of

the poem Hilarion's masculinity is fully realized.[5] His marriage to Ida converts her to

conventional subordinate femininity, and, subsequently, he reinstates his proper position

as a patriarch. Hilarion's eventual shedding of his feminine guise is most apparent in his

relationship to his father. Like Telemachus' incorporation of Ulysses' masculine

attributes, Hilarion's instruction in masculinity comes from his father's speech about the "proper" roles of masculinity and femininity. When Hilarion tries to convince his father of the difficulty of winning Ida by virtue of her masculine front, the King reassures his son that

> Man [is] for the field and woman for the hearth:
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
> Man with the head and woman with the heart:
> Man to command and woman to obey;
> All else is confusion. (5. 437-441)

This speech clearly delineates the proper Victorian roles for men and women, and Hilarion incorporates all of the masculine qualities: he becomes a warrior who does battle for his bride, he demonstrates his rationality in his strategy to acquire her, and, finally, he gains command of her. The "confusion" that causes Hilarion's seizures is cleared up by the "sweet order" (7. 4) that lives in the hospital as women revert to their conventional role as passionate, tender nursemaids who are both attentive and inferior to men. Hilarion's speech to Ida before their marriage emphasizes the extent to which women are both separate and inferior to men, as Ida is not to

> ...fail in childward care,
> Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
> Till at the last she set herself to man,
> Like perfect music unto noble words. (7. 267-70)

Rather than incorporating "the larger mind" which is reserved for man, Ida's job is "childward care". She, as a paragon of femininity, is to assume a "childlike" mind, and thus to be inferior to Hilarion who has the "larger". The song metaphor that Hilarion uses to describe marriage not only subordinates femininity, as she supplies the mere "music"

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[5] Not unlike Christ, Linda Shires also asserts that "the male...remains childlike" (56).

to the man's more "noble words", but it reflects the pattern of Tennyson's tale as the women supply the music that supports men's words.

III

Hilarion's guise of femininity ultimately allegorizes Tennyson's appropriation of femininity as a means of reinforcing its subordination. Tennyson's strategy, of "masking" conventional masculinity and femininity and then revealing tradition under the semi-transparent masks, is apparent in his use of the frame tale and its relationship to the main story. The tale of the Princess is a story within a story, and the seven male narrators who tell the story make its metafictional content clear. The trajectory of the main story is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the process of its telling. Like the main story, the frame tale presents the possibility for gender transgression. Lilia, who stands for Ida, both by virtue of her desire for unconventional femininity and by the fact that she creates her out of this desire, contends that women desire to transgress the boundaries of their prescribed roles, but "convention beats them down" (Prologue 128). Lilia is still inscribed in this convention as the male narrators deflate her protest against women's subordination. They describe her as having "tapt her tiny silken-sandaled foot" (149), and, furthermore, as being "the little hearth-flower Lilia" (165). Like Ida's donning of a "silken" gown, Lilia's silken sandals, combined with her diminutive stature, reveals the conventional femininity that lies underneath of her desire to appropriate masculine characteristics.

Lilia, whose name evokes the "angel in the house" through her association with purity, stresses the interdependency of men and women that pervaded Victorian ideology.

The interdependency of the sexes is alluded to in Tennyson's mingling of the "masculine" blank verse with the "feminine" lyrics that divide up the seven chapters told by the seven male narrators. Although it appears as if women are "breaking up" the masculine dominance by this arrangement, it is, in fact, the opposite; the relationship between the masculine verse and feminine songs is unequal. The subservience of Lilia's songs is made clear when one of the male narrators instructs

> ...let the ladies sing us, if they will,
> From time to time, some ballad or a song
> To give us breathing-space. (233-5)

Not only is the male instructing the female but he also is commanding her to minister to his whims, as Ida does to the wounded men in the main story. Furthermore, the women do not break up the verses of the men, but fill the space between their narrative, complementing them in the way that a Victorian wife complements her husband. Beverly Taylor contends that "the college men admit Lilia and other women in their party to the margins of the storytelling by inviting them to punctuate the tale with lyric poems, most of which sentimentalize and perpetuate stereotyped masculine and feminine roles" (9). The women are thus supporting, rather than challenging men, not only in the actual story, but in the telling of it as they "sang / Between the rougher voices of the men, / Like linnets in the pauses of the wind" (236-8), reinforcing their role on "the margins" of the patriarchy.[6]

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[6] Kate Millett discusses how the *content* of the songs reinforces conventional modes of thinking. She asserts that "the bulk of [the songs] are frank propaganda for hearth and home and these latter morsels of domestic piety are placed in the mouths of the girls who listen -- they are not otherwise permitted to intervene in the discussion of their fate" (77).

Lilia's role as a subordinate singer reveals that her appropriation of masculinity is a false mask, not unlike Ida's masculine guise. The male narrators in the story perceive Lilia's desire for war as strange; they "thought her half-possessed" (4/5. 9). In fact, she is "feigning" in her song about battle; her masculine desire for war is, in fact, a mask that she wears to cover her true femininity. The return to conventional femininity is foreshadowed in the beginning; the eventual break up of the women's college by men is alluded to when

> ...a group of girls [who]
> In circle waited, whom the electric shock
> Dislinked. (Prologue 68-70)

The unlinking of the circle of girls is analogous to Hilarion and his companions entering Ida's academy, who both break the bonds between the women and proceed to unmask their masculine guises and reveal their true femininity beneath. After the telling of the story, Lilia herself is returned to conventional femininity, as she is silenced after the dismantling of the Princess' masculinity. The main male narrator reveals that "Lilia pleased me, for she took no part / In our dispute" (Conclusion 29-30). Lilia's silencing, like the Princess', marks her return to conventional femininity as she succumbs to male dominance. Her mask, like that of the Princess and Prince, is stripped away to reveal her conventional gender behavior. Her cooperation in being silenced by the male narrators is commensurate with the men's regaining of masculinity as "rising quietly, [she] / Disrobed the glimmering statue of Sir Ralph / From those rich silks" (116-18). The genuine nature of returning men and women to their proper Victorian roles is clearly shown by the narrator's assertion that they were all "well-pleased" (119). Since he does

not differentiate Lilia from the men, it can be assumed that she too was pleased with the return to conventional femininity, as her pleasure matters less than her seeming acquiescence. Clearly, Tennyson is pleased with the rejection of unconventional gender that he displays both in his main narrative and in his frame tale.

CHAPTER THREE – *IN MEMORIAM* (1850)

Not unlike the seemingly feminized Hilarion in *The Princess*, Tennyson's persona

in *In Memoriam* (1850) appears to embody feminine characteristics. Tennyson's persona,

obviously male as it stands for the poet himself, appears feminine in Tennyson's

expression of passion and emotion over the death of his friend Arthur Hallam. Moreover,

the imagery that Tennyson uses to describe his longing for Hallam appears to eroticize

Hallam, and, therefore, to illustrate Tennyson's sexual desire for his male friend. In his

use of wedding imagery to describe the relationship between himself and Hallam,

Tennyson depicts himself as the bride, and therefore, the "feminine" partner in the

seemingly homoerotic relationship. Accordingly, numerous critics maintain that

Tennyson challenges the rigid and conservative gender distinctions of Victorian society.

John D. Rosenberg argues that "the most startling effects of *In Memoriam* all have a

trangressive quality, a crossing of borders that normally separate the living from the dead,

the natural from the supernatural, one sex or species from another" (295). While it is not

within the scope of my project to deal with the separation of the living and dead, and

animal and human (although I will briefly touch on them), this chapter will explore the

apparent crossing of boundaries between male and female in which "Tennyson works to

elide [such] distinctions" (Rosenberg 304).[1]

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[1] Like Rosenburg, Lawrence Kramer contends that Tennyson's text "participate[s] in an attempt to dislocate the...underpinnings of Victorian, and more largely of patriarchal, culture" (351).

The apparent display of homosexual desire clearly marks *In Memoriam* as potentially the most transgressive of Tennyson's poems. While Telemachus and Hilarion of the previous poems appear feminized, neither man displays anything close to homosexual desire. While any form of sexuality was fairly repressed in the Victorian era, homosexuality was considered an absolute outrage. Christopher Craft maintains that "Tennyson's elegy manages to counterspeak its own submission to culture's heterosexualizing conventions" (98) as it "most characteristically sees the heterosexual embrace as always already interrupted" (96) as Tennyson's desire for Hallam precedes and stymies it. Tennyson's apparent homosexuality, thus, along with his incorporation of "feminine" emotions, seems to be an attempt by the poet to locate qualities of femininity within an otherwise male locus. The embodiment of feminine qualities in a male challenges rigid Victorian gender distinctions, and thus, Tennyson appears to present the possibility for gender transgression

However, as is the case in "Ulysses" and *The Princess*, the apparent feminization of men in this poem is part of a strategy in Tennyson's patriarchal ideology: once again, an unconventionally feminine man returns to conventional masculinity. Jeff Nunokawa contends that "*In Memoriam* proposes a developmental model of male sexuality which establishes the homoerotic as an early phase that enables and defines the heterosexual" so that the homoerotic is "a primary stage in the formation of the husband and father" (198-9). Terry Eagleton argues that a similar type of developmental agenda exists in terms of Tennyson's emotions as "the poem must transcend its private feminine melancholy and turn instead to the problem of 'masculine' political dominance" (85). Indeed, the poem

does transcend both the "primary stage" of the homoerotic and the "private feminine melancholy" that Tennyson expresses at the death of his friend to assert "masculine political dominance" at the poem's conclusion. Such masculine dominance takes the form of a reassertion of heterosexuality and the rigid ideology of separate spheres that accompanies conventional heterosexuality.

However, as is the case with the Prince, elements of conventional masculinity exist even when Tennyson most appears feminized. I will demonstrate that Tennyson's masculinity is initially apparent in his longing for the return of his college days, the desire to live a "public life" and his insistence on the inferiority of femininity. His insistence on the inferiority of feminine qualities, even as he embodies them, illustrates his possession or usurpation of such qualities for the purpose of resubordinating them. In the way that the apparently unconventional gender roles of the Lady of Shalott and the Prince are merely Platonic "shadows" of reality, so is Tennyson's apparent femininity in this poem. The Platonic body-soul duality apparent in the poem partly explains the image of marriage between the two men as one in which their souls, rather than their bodies are connected. Moreover, the explicit physical connection that does exist between the two men describes a homosocial, and not a homoerotic, bond. Homosocial bonds, according to Eve Sedgwick, are "about the enforcement of women's regulation within the framework of male homosocial exchange" (182). Tennyson's bond with Hallam, thus, enhances his masculinity through the subordination of women as objects, rather than diminishing his masculinity through suggestions of the homoerotic.

Accordingly, by the end of the poem, Tennyson's masculinity is fully apparent. He loses the appearance of feminine emotions that cause him to grieve over Hallam, and affirms both his own masculinity and the predominance of heterosexuality through his role in giving of his sister in marriage to his friend Edmund Lushington. Indeed, it is not the "heterosexual embrace [that is] interrupted" (Craft 96) but the homosexual one. Along with Tennyson's stripping away of his feminine cover, femininity is returned to its proper locus within Victorian women, such as Tennyson's sister Cecilia who is conventionally feminine through her marriage. Isobel Armstrong argues that Tennyson "sanctions a conservative ideology" (108) in the poem that presents "conventionalized types [of femininity to] reinforce convention" (109), in particular, the convention of the domestic angel as embodied in Cecilia. The return of conventional inferior femininity in a woman and traditional masculinity in Tennyson thus reinstates the rigid gender ideology that Victorian society upheld.

I

The element of femininity appears initially to diverge from its conventional "angel in the house" stereotype through its placement in a male. Tennyson's persona, not unlike Hilarion in *The Princess* and Telemachus in "Ulysses", appears feminized in two main ways: through his expression of grief and sorrow after Hallam's death, and through his erotic longing for his friend in which he images himself as Hallam's widow (40). The first way in which Tennyson appears feminized is through his intense emotional reaction to Hallam's death. Alan Sinfield asserts that "the emotions represented in *In Memoriam* should be understood as in uneasy relation to the dominant notions of proper manly

behavior" (132). Tennyson seems to exhibit such unmanly behavior in his display of grief. He admits that Hallam's death causes a "haze of grief" (24. 9) to envelop him, and, furthermore, that he is passionate, like the dove to which he compares himself whose duty it is "to bear through Heaven a tale of woe" (12. 2). The "wild pulsation" (4) of the dove's wings associates both the bird and, by implied comparison, Tennyson, with passion. Furthermore, Tennyson's particular comparison with the dove associates him with purity, not unlike the conventional feminine angel. Thus, the sorrow, grief and passion that Tennyson possesses in his immediate reaction to Hallam's death appear to associate him with conventional Victorian femininity.

Tennyson's passivity also seems to indicate his femininity; it is most prominent in his wish for death. Like Mariana who wishes "that [she] were dead" ("Mariana", 84), Tennyson declares:

> To Sleep I give my powers away;
> My will is bondsman to the dark;
> I sit within a helmless bark,
> And with my heart I muse.... (4. 1-4)

Tennyson's reference to his "heart" points to his effeminate incorporation of passion. Moreover, his loss of "powers" and the enslavement of his "will" signify his loss of masculinity, as it is a loss of control. Finally, his desire to "sleep" is not just a feminine passivity but also a longing for death, as is Tennyson's assertion that he "almost wished no more to wake" (28. 14) on the first Christmas after Hallam's death. Not only does Tennyson wish for death but he also wishes for a peaceful death. He maintains:

> 'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
> Like birds the charming serpent draws,
> To drop head-foremost in the jaws

> Of vacant darkness and to cease. (34. 13-16)

Tennyson, in this section, continues his conceit of himself as a bird, and although it appears to be a violent death that he longs for, as the serpent devours the bird, it is in fact in "peace" that the bird dies. He is not violently devoured by the jaws of the serpent, but "sinks" peacefully into those of "vacant darkness".

Tennyson's wish for death coincides with both his longing for the past, and, by implication, his longing for Hallam. The comparison of his past and present feelings illustrates both of these longings; he claims that "the lowness of the present state.../ sets the past in this relief" (24. 11-12), and that "the past will always win" (13). Tennyson claims that Hallam is his "prime passion in the grave" (85. 76), not only assigning feminine qualities to himself, as he expresses passion for Hallam, but also eroticizing his friend. Tennyson's desire to die is most likely part of his desire to be with Hallam, as his "prime passion" is removed from earth and life. Tennyson expresses his desire for Hallam:

> Ah, dear, but come thou back to me:
> Whatever change the years have wrought,
> I find not yet one lonely thought
> That cries against my wish for thee. (90. 21-4)

Tennyson's "wish" for his "dear" Hallam to return to him seems to be a desire for Hallam to come back from death, but since this is technically impossible, Tennyson wishes to join Hallam. Tennyson says that his "proper place" (117. 2) is not on earth, but in Heaven; while on earth, he feels that he is being delayed "a little while from [Hallam's] embrace" (3) so that "out of distance might ensue / Desire of nearness doubly sweet" (5-6). Tennyson's desire to "glance and smile [at], and clasp and kiss" (84. 7) Hallam so that

the two can "mix in one another's arms" (102. 23) accompanies images of complementary roles. Tennyson describes their relationship as being like "first love, first friendship, equal powers, / That marry with the virgin heart" (85. 107-8). The language of marriage that Tennyson uses to describe their relationship enhances his evocation of complementary roles. He claims that Hallam's "effect so lives in [him], / [and] a part of [Tennyson's] may live in [Hallam]" (65. 10-11).

Tennyson's imaging of his relationship with Hallam as a marriage, however, does not necessitate Tennyson's role as the female partner. In fact, as Gerhard Joseph maintains, "Tennyson eroticizes [Hallam], giving him female attributes" (68). Tennyson figures Hallam as a female lover of his when he tropes himself as

> A happy lover who has come
> To look on her that loves him well,
> Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,
> And learns her gone and far from home. (8. 1-4)

Tennyson's "happiness" does not indicate his current state but his state when Hallam was on earth. Tennyson incorporates the role of the male subject gazing on the female object when he "looks on" Hallam who "loves him well". He compares his reaction to Hallam's death to that of a man who finds out that his female lover has left him. Hallam is, indeed, "gone and far from home", and it appears as if his masculinity, implicit in Tennyson's comparison of him to a woman, is "gone" as well. In addition comparing Hallam to a female lover, Tennyson also compares Hallam to a mother as Hallam is dear to him as "the mother to the son" (9. 19).

However, Hallam is also associated with qualities of conventional Victorian masculinity. Like Ulysses who is "a part of all that [he] has met" (18), Hallam is "a lord

of large experience" (42. 7). His desire for eternal life and constant action echoes

Ulysses; Ulysses yearns "To follow knowledge like a sinking star,/Beyond the utmost

bound of human thought" (20-22). Similarly, Hallam declares that there are

> So many worlds, so much to do,
> So little done, such things to be. (73. 1-2)

Not unlike Ulysses, who recognizes that "[he has] become a name" (11), Tennyson

reveals that had Hallam lived, he too "would have forged a name" (16). According to

Tennyson, Hallam would have lived

> A life in civic action warm,
> A soul on highest mission sent,
> A potent voice of Parliament,
> A pillar steadfast in the storm. (113. 9-12)

With his "potent voice" and pillar-like strength", Hallam is clearly capable of a

successful masculine life in the public sphere by means of "civic action" and his

association with "Parliament". Hallam's association with the public sphere, thus,

problematizes any femininity that Tennyson may have attributed to Hallam in

Tennyson's conceits of Hallam as a female lover, but still leaves the possibility of a

homosexual relationship open with Tennyson as the feminized lover.

Tennyson frequently images himself as the "feminine" partner in the relationship;

his troping of himself as Hallam's widow reinforces his apparent homoerotic desire for

him. He refers to his parting from Hallam as "the widowed hour" (40. 1), before which he

saw himself and Hallam as "two partners of a married life" (97. 5) whose "every parting

was to die" (12). The widow's "playing" and "singing" to her late husband reflect

Tennyson's writing of the poem; he is, in fact, writing for Hallam as it is

> For him she plays, to him she sings
> Of early faith and plighted vows;
> She knows but matters of the house,
> And he, he knows a thousand things. (29-32)

By placing the woman in the "house" and claiming that it is all that she knows, Tennyson

is reinforcing the conventional discourse of separate spheres where the ignorant "angel in

the house" is clearly inferior to her more knowledgeable husband. However, since

Tennyson associates himself with the wife, he is also associating himself with her inferior

domestic knowledge. By assuming typical qualities of Victorian femininity, Tennyson

appears to be eliding the boundaries between conventional masculinity and femininity.

Marion Shaw maintains that the element of femininity is elevated through its

apparent embodiment in Tennyson. She argues that "the expressive but private and

unauthorized world of female utterance is permitted a temporary superiority over the

values of a public life" (81). The confusion of boundaries between masculinity and

femininity in Tennyson's "female utterance" has a twofold effect: it diminishes

masculinity, specifically Tennyson's, and it elevates the qualities of femininity, as located

in a man. Tennyson's description of himself as "some poor girl whose heart is set/On one

whose rank exceeds her own" (60. 3-4) illustrates his sense of inferiority to Hallam. It is

not just Hallam's "rank" that exceeds Tennyson's, but it is also masculinity that exceeds

femininity. The relationship between masculinity and femininity, like the relationship

between Hallam and Tennyson, is described in terms of a master-slave relationship.

Tennyson constantly refers to Hallam as his superior; he imagines himself walking

through "the master's field" (37. 23), and he compares himself to

> ...servants in a house

> Where lies the master newly dead;
>
> Who speak their feeling as it is,
> And weep the fulness from the mind. (20. 3-6)

The evocation of "feeling" and the "weeping" of the servants clearly align them with

femininity in their state of inferiority. Since it is the "fullness" of "mind" that they lose

when they are weeping, the servants, and Tennyson, who himself is akin to a weeping

servant, are associated with a loss of masculinity. Although Tennyson upholds the

conventional version of Victorian femininity, his association of himself with it seems to

transgress the rigid gender divisions enforced by the patriarchy.

II

At the same time that Tennyson embodies feminine qualities, he is also associated

with conventional Victorian masculinity, so that elements of the feminine and masculine

appear to exist side by side. Tennyson describes his return to his old college:

> I past beside the reverend walls
> In which of old I wore the gown...
>
> And caught once more the distant shout,
> The measured pulse of racing oars. (87. 1-2, 9-10)

As is the case in *The Princess*, women did not attend college. Furthermore, the "pulse of

racing oars" that Tennyson hears recalls his days in college as he heard it "once more".

He also recalls the place "where once [they] held a debate, a band / Of youthful friends,

on mind and art" (21-22). Tennyson's memories of his participation in the public sphere

with his friends hinge on his relationship with Hallam. He recalls that they "discussed the

books to love or hate, / Or touched the changes of the state" (89. 34-5). Tennyson's

discussions with Hallam are clearly activities that prepare men for the public sphere,

since debates about "the changes of the state" prepare men for political life. Tennyson's desire for a public life, combined with his college memories, illustrate that, while he appears to embody femininity, he also possesses qualities of masculinity.

Tennyson appears puzzled by the coexistence of both masculinity and femininity inside him when he asks "can calm despair and wild unrest / Be tenants of a single breast?" (16. 2-3) Indeed, the critics appear puzzled as well: Aidan Day, for example, asserts that "one of the dominant stitches in the fabric of the poem takes up the question of the divisions and alienations upon which self-consciousness is founded" (93). The "divisions" of Tennyson's self-consciousness, such as the "conflict between wild feeling and serenity" (Jordan 113), also extends to the apparent conflict between masculine and feminine attributes.[2] The conflict appears resolved at times when Tennyson seemingly fuses qualities of both genders inside himself; he suggests that he possesses "impassioned logic" (109. 7) and "manhood fused with female grace" (17). Still, such a fusion of masculine and feminine qualities is still a contradiction within, or more exactly, a deviation from the rigid binary gender system that dominated Victorian culture.

However, not unlike Hilarion, Tennyson's embodiment of feminine characteristics is a "cover" over his true masculinity. Even when Tennyson does embody feminine characteristics, his embodiment of them, like Hilarion's, is an intentional possession for the purpose of reinforcing the inferiority of the feminine. Marion Shaw maintains that in *In Memoriam*

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[2] Daniel Albright also refers to this conflict within Tennyson, who appears to be "a nervous locus of conflicting and unresolved feelings" (177).

> Female attributes are invaded and appropriated as a means by which male
> friendship can be celebrated and its demise mourned....these female selves
> who mourn and yearn and speak their need can be cajoled, bullied and
> dismissed, and finally, when sufficient authority over them has been
> gained, they can be figuratively speaking exchanged, and the bond
> between men created. (78)

Even at the beginning of the poem, Tennyson reveals that his "appropriation" of sorrow

is, like a costume, something to be worn and discarded. His paean to sorrow in the third

section illustrates his intentional incorporation of femininity for the purpose of

manipulating it, and thus exercising his masculine superiority over it. He deliberates:

> And shall I take a thing so blind,
> Embrace her as my natural good;
> Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
> Upon the threshold of the mind? (3. 12-16)

His desire to "embrace her" echoes a man's desire to embrace his wife, positioning

himself within the bounds of heterosexuality. Tennyson's "marriage" to sorrow is even

more evident when he asks "O sorrow, wilt thou live with me / No casual mistress, but a

wife" (59. 1-2). His other desire, to "crush her", illustrates his feelings of masculine

superiority; since women were socially inferior at the time of the poem, men had them at

their mercy and could "crush" them at their will. Furthermore, Tennyson's pondering of

whether to "embrace" or "crush" sorrow illustrates some degree of, at least temporary,

control of his emotions. His possession of sorrow is akin to Hilarion's appropriation of

femininity as a means of resubordinating it; in fact, Tennyson's control over sorrow

illustrates such a control over femininity.

Tennyson's rejection of femininity further illustrates its inferiority. Even as he

expresses grief, Tennyson acknowledges that such a feminine display of emotion is

inappropriate. He declares that he "sometimes [holds] it half a sin / To put in words the grief [he feels]" (5. 1-2).[3] Moreover, Tennyson attempts to suppress such grief as he "[hushes his] deepest grief of all…[and his] deeper anguish also falls" (19. 10,15). Although Tennyson does at times express grief, as I have shown, clearly, he is not proud of such feminine postures as he considers them a "sin". He imagines Hallam telling him to "'fret not, like an idle girl'" (52. 13) over Hallam's death, indicating that Tennyson should reject femininity and assume more of a masculine attitude. Tennyson declares that he and his friends "do [Hallam] wrong / To sing so wildly" (57. 3-4), and later on, he expresses manly pride that his emotions have not overcome his masculinity:

> And so my passion hath not swerved
> To works of weakness, but I find
> An image comforting the mind,
> And in my grief a strength reserved. (85. 49-52)

Although he admits that he felt "passion" and "grief" for Hallam, his temporary embodiment of such emotions does not eradicate his masculinity as he finds "strength" rather than "weakness" after his mourning of Hallam. Tennyson's rejection of feminine qualities, combined with his desire for masculinity, indicates his recognition that such feminine qualities are inappropriate in a man, thus reinforcing conventional Victorian stereotypes of gender.

The trajectory of Tennyson's incorporation and subsequent rejection of feminine qualities is apparent in the metaphors of growth and development that he consistently presents in the poem. In section 118, Tennyson presents a geological theory of evolution:

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[3] Although Tennyson's rejection of grief appears to come before subsequent indulgences in grief, the cyclical structure of the poem accounts for this fact. As Ricks indicates "its sections are not in the

> The solid earth whereon we tread
>
> In tracts of fluent heat began,
> And grew to seeming-random forms,
> The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
> Till at the last arose the man. (8-12)

While Tennyson's views on evolution receive much critical attention, most critics focus on the Darwinian implications of the passage.[4] The few critics that do discuss the passage as it applies to gender, for example, J.E. Adams, focus on Tennyson's Darwinism as it applies to nature and the feminine, but do not discuss masculinity.[5] No critic has suggested that Tennyson's theory of evolution can be made comparable to his theory of masculine evolution; that is, not the evolution of mankind but of *man*. Even Nunokawa, who himself sees the evolutionary model of mankind applying to Tennyson's sexual orientation does not discuss the other aspects of Tennyson's masculine development, such as the gaining of control over his emotions.[6] The progression from "tracts of fluent heat" to the rising of man is commensurate with the development from passionate femininity to solid masculinity. The "prey of cyclic storms" that invade man are, in fact, the emotional storms that seem to invade Tennyson in his initial and immature reaction to Hallam's death. Moreover, the circularity implicit in the storms reflects Tennyson's own cyclical development: since the lyrics are not organized in chronological order, then his progression is slow and involves setbacks. However, he foresees his eventual shedding of

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published order" (310), so that the poem is not a linear account of Tennyson's overcoming of grief, but rather appears as a cyclical development of such.

[4] Jerome Buckley, for example, deals with the Darwinian implications of the poem. He contends that the "speculations in *In Memoriam* do adequately anticipate *The Origin of the Species*" (15).

[5] Adams suggests that Tennyson's personification of Nature as "a feminine agent with volition and purpose" challenges the idea of the conventionally maternal and subservient image of "Mother Nature" (88-9).

his feminine guise and revelation of mature masculinity as he declares that "at the last arose the man". Tennyson goes on to call man "the herald of a higher race, / And of himself in higher place" (14-15). While mankind is "the higher race" of which Tennyson speaks, man is the forerunner of such a race as he himself occupies the "higher place" in the gender hierarchy. Moreover, in being "of himself", Tennyson is in control of himself, including his emotions, and being appropriately "manly". Thus, the fate of man is to "move upward, working out the beast" (27), a beast which represents an immature and feminine stage of development.[7] Likewise, Tennyson must "let the ape and tiger die" (28), but on a more condensed time scale as he must evolve past his guise of pure instinctual emotion and towards manly self-control.

Other developmental models that Tennyson delineates portray the relationship between geological and personal evolution. He acknowledges that he is merely "an infant crying in the night" (54. 18), at one stage in the poem, but his completion of the poem signifies a loss of his immature, infant cry and a gaining of a more mature masculine expression. Even early in the poem, when Tennyson is in the immature stages of masculine development, his eventual development into mature masculinity is foreshadowed in his wish for such a conventional masculinity. Tennyson's comparison of Hallam to a tree demonstrates such a wish:

> ...sullen tree,
> Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
> I seem to fail from out my blood

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[6] Nunokawa states that "identified with these evolutionary models, the scale from homosexual to heterosexual is defined as another version of the developmental range…" (202).

[7] Armstrong contends that the beast represents "the fixity of the feminine type" (109). Although the beast's animal nature will eventually be shed in the case of developing man, the beast itself, like woman, represents an immature stage of development as it is "fixed" in evolution.

And grow incorporate into thee. (2. 13-16)

On first glance, it appears as if Tennyson's wish to "grow incorporate" into Hallam indicates a homoerotic desire to merge with him. However, Tennyson's apparent homoerotic desire to merge with Hallam is not a desire to incorporate him, per se, but to incorporate the mature masculinity that Hallam attains, as represented by his "stubborn hardihood". Indeed, Tennyson moves from a stage of weak sickness where he "[fails] from out of [his] blood" to a stage where "less of sorrow lives in [him]" (116. 13). Tennyson's describes Hallam's overcoming of femininity:

> He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
> He would not make his judgment blind,
> He faced the spectres of the mind
> And laid them.... (96. 13-16)

Tennyson announces that he will overcome his feminine "spectres" and "[gather] strength" in the way that Hallam did, so that what "[comes] at length" will be Tennyson's true masculinity.

The Platonic imagery that permeates the poem further demonstrates Tennyson's movement from an immature, "feminine" masculinity to a more mature one with the shedding of such an immature "feminine" guise. Alan Sinfield notes the connection between Plato and Tennyson in Tennyson's references to the soul by stating that both Tennyson and Plato "refer to an ultimate reality which transcends merely mortal apprehension" (250). Such a reference to "ultimate reality" is, in fact, present in the poem. Meditating on Hallam's death gives Tennyson a chance to look forward to his own when "on the low dark verge of life / [will be] The twilight of eternal day" (50. 15-16). This "eternal day" that Tennyson refers to is also "the second birth of Death" (45. 16) in

which "blood and breath, /... [are] fruitless of their due" (13-14). While after death the body is useless but the soul lives on, before death, the soul is trapped inside the body, and relies on it for sensory impression. Tennyson declares that, while on earth, man's "separate mind" can only be accessed "through the frame that binds him in" (45. 9,11). The dependence of the mind or soul on the body demonstrates the soul's imprisonment inside the body, and this imprisonment parallels the temporary imprisonment of Tennyson's masculinity underneath his apparent femininity (despite the fact that Tennyson's body is masculine). The body-soul duality expresses Tennyson's belief that his feminine "cover" is inferior to his truly masculine soul. Like Hilarion in *The Princess*, Tennyson's femininity is merely a veil under which his true masculinity is hidden. He insists that his "hope of answer" is "behind the veil" (56. 27-28); in other words, he wishes to achieve the revelation of his true masculinity. As was the case with Hilarion, Tennyson's initial femininity causes his feelings of strangeness. He admits that Hallam's death "confused [him]" (16. 12) and

> ...made [him] that delirious man
> Whose fancy fuses old and new,
> And flashes into false and true,
> And mingles all without a plan. (16. 16-20)

The confusion between the true and false is ultimately Tennyson's confusion between his feminine "cover" and masculine "soul". His delirium is a precondition of his femininity that leaves him initially without the capability to "plan" in a manly and rational way. Similarly, his sorrow "blindly drown[s] / The bases of [his] life in tears" (49. 15-16), so that feminine emotion obscures his masculine "base". His grief is also a "mask and mime" (105. 9- 10) that "abuse[s] / The genial hour...". Not unlike Hilarion, though,

through the mask of femininity, one is allowed brief glimpses of Tennyson's true

masculinity. Tennyson reveals that no matter how much he disguises his true nature, it

ultimately shows through:

> ...howe'er he veil
> His want in forms for fashion's sake,
> Will let his coltish nature break
> At seasons through the gilded pale:
>
> For who can always act? (111. 5-9)

Since he "can(not) always act", Tennyson's true lack of a feminine form is revealed as

merely a "gilded" cover, so that, even in the early stages of the poem, his masculinity is

apparent beneath his femininity in his possession of sorrow and his masculine attributes.

Tennyson's apparent homoerotic desire for Hallam, like his grief over his death, is

part of his feminine cover. Tennyson's homoerotic desire for Hallam is for a Hallam that

is "veiled" (103. 13) in the form of a statue, but such a veiling is "known" to Tennyson,

as he admits a love of Hallam's "shape" (14). While on earth, Tennyson can still get

glimpses of Hallam's true form, but it is not until Tennyson's death that he will be able to

see Hallam's true soul properly. His homoerotic desire for Hallam is for his appearance

(not necessarily his physical appearance, but how Hallam appears to Tennyson in all

ways), and not his soul, and, moreover, such a desire occurs while Tennyson's feminine

exterior obscures his masculine soul. Tennyson's gradual overcoming of his feminine

exterior allows him to see Hallam's mind or soul. His desire to "wed an equal mind" (62.

8) problematizes the inequality that Tennyson previously ascribes to himself in relation to

Hallam, and shows that Tennyson is truly a man beneath his guise of femininity.

Moreover, the "wedding" that Tennyson desires with Hallam is a wedding not of bodies

but of "minds". Tennyson applies the homoerotic imagery, used to describe his

relationship to Hallam, to their souls, thus eradicating the sexual context in which such

passages can mistakenly be viewed. Tennyson's praise of Hallam is of Hallam's soul, and

not his body; he refers to him as "sacred essence, other form / ...crowned soul" (85. 35-

36). The "dead man" that "touched" him "from the past" is not a physical entity as "his

living soul was flashed on [Tennyson's]" (95. 34-6). Furthermore, Tennyson's love for

Hallam is

> ...the most, when most [he] feel[s]
> There is a lower and a higher;
>
> Known and unknown; human, divine. (129. 3-5)

The division between "lower" and "higher" that Tennyson realizes in his love for Hallam

is both his recognition of the difference between the soul and body, and, more

pertinently, the difference between male and female. As his love for Hallam grows, the

erotic context in which such a love can be seen is at the very least, diffused, as he loves

Hallam "mixed with God and nature" (130. 11), as a soul or Platonic essence. The

development of Tennyson's manhood is commensurate with the development of his soul

as with "eternal process moving on, / From state to state the spirit walks" (82. 5-6).[8] By

the conclusion of the poem, Tennyson's spirit finally achieves this complete state of

manhood.

The Platonism in the poem, specifically the duality of the body and the soul,

however, does not account for the use of physical imagery that describes Tennyson's

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[8] Alan Sinfield astutely notes the connection between the Platonic imagery and the theory of evolution. He contends that the Platonic phrase "'that which is' constitutes the culmination of the ladder

relationship with Hallam. Even though Tennyson frequently evokes his and Hallam's relationship through the metaphor of souls or minds, he also describes their union through physical imagery. Tennyson addresses Hallam: "Come then, pure hands, and bear the head / That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep" (18. 9-10). The physical contact between the two men, also desired as Tennyson longs for "[Hallam's] embrace" (117. 3), appears to indicate homoerotic imagery. However, the appearance of such homoeroticism is yet another "mask" like the mask of feminine passivity that Tennyson wears in his longing for "sleep". Eve Sedgwick asserts that the bonds between the men, while physical, are homosocial rather than homosexual. The homosocial signifies "the use of women by men as exchangeable objects, as counters of value, for the primary purpose of cementing relationships with other men" (186). In the context of *In Memoriam*, the woman that is used to cement the bond between (the masculine) Tennyson and Hallam is Tennyson's sister Emily. Emily's conspicuous absence from the poem enhances the diminution of women within the framework of the homosocial; their visibility as the "glue" between men is minimized, but not completely eradicated. Thus, the use of women as passive objects of exchange between men reinstates the conventional Victorian notion of a passive and inferior femininity.

Tennyson completely abandons his guise of passive and inferior femininity by the end of the poem, and, consequently, reveals his fully developed conventional masculinity. The Prologue, as Christopher Ricks reveals, is "a conclusion more truly than an opening to *In Memoriam*...it is not one so much to the poems it precedes as to the new

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imagery which has recurred explicitly or implicitly in the poem" (250), but does not link either the

way of life that Tennyson was about to enter" (Ricks 315). Accordingly, the Prologue is strategically placed at the beginning of the poems in order to demonstrate the "new way of life" that Tennyson foreshadows that he will enter. He asks God (and, possibly the reader) to

> Forgive my grief for one removed,
> Thy creature, whom I found so fair...
>
> Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
> Confusions of a wasted youth;
> Forgive them where they fail in truth. (Prologue 37-38, 41-43)

Tennyson's forewarning to the reader helps alert one to the fact that his feminine "wild and wandering cries" will "fail in truth" because they are not representative of his manhood. In placing his admiration of Hallam's physicality in the past, as denoted by the verb "found", rather than in the present, he demonstrates that he has already surpassed such a "feminine" stage. Although he struggles with issues of doubt throughout the poem, Tennyson's appeal to the ultimate patriarch, God, shows that, even at the beginning, Tennyson is aware of his potential manhood, and, moreover, his destiny to develop conventional Victorian traits of masculinity. He praises God for aiding him in his progress from being "like a child in doubt and fear...that cries" (124. 17,19) to a man; God has "the hands / That reach through nature, moulding men" (23-24). In receiving God's help, Tennyson implies that such a role of conventional masculinity that he assumes is his destiny; in other words, the attainment of conventional Victorian masculinity is "natural".

Platonism or the ladder imagery up with masculine development.

The epilogue confirms Tennyson's success in progressing from "feminine",

undeveloped masculinity to conventional masculinity. Tennyson admits that he was

"weak" before he developed; he calls the verses that he produced during his feminine

stage "echoes out of weaker times, / As half but idle brawling rhymes" (22-23).

Moreover, the wedding that takes place at the end between Tennyson's sister Cecilia and

his friend Edmund Lushington reconfirms the heterosexuality that is dubious in the

wedding imagery between Tennyson and Hallam. Donald Hair explains Tennyson's use

of marriage imagery in figuring his relationship to Hallam:

> Tennyson uses marriage because he wants to suggest the kind of
> relationship which involves the deepest human emotions; he also wants to
> suggest the ideal nature of the relationship -- its creative blending of two
> diverse natures -- and knew that he could count upon the Victorian
> idealization of marriage to evoke such a response. (23)

The "two diverse natures" which Tennyson idealizes as blending in marriage echo the

ideology of the separate and complementary spheres of masculinity and femininity. The

marriage between a man and woman in the end of the poem reconfirms the ideology of

separate spheres and women's subsequent inferiority within that arrangement. Tennyson

tells Cecilia that

> In that it is thy marriage day
> Is music more that any song...
>
> Nor have I felt so much of bliss
> Since first he told me that he loved
> A daughter of our house. (Epilogue 3-7)

In declaring that marriage is "music more than any song" he is approving its

appropriateness within Victorian conventions, as it is far more appropriate than his "wild

and wandering cries" for Hallam. The "bliss" that he feels at his sister's wedding is, at

least, partly his joy at seeing the rigid gender divisions reinstated. Tennyson's insistence

that he "must give away the bride" (42) marks his position in traditional masculinity, and

his sister, who is "waiting to be made a wife" (49) exists clearly within the bounds of

conventional femininity. The fact that Cecilia is "made a wife", rather than choosing to

be one, shows the amount to which the patriarchy, of which her poet brother is a part,

defines femininity. Tennyson describes Cecilia as the proper "angel in the house" when

he addresses her husband-to-be:

> O when her life was yet in bud,
> [You] too foretold the perfect rose.
> For thee she grew, for thee she grows
> For ever, and as fair as good. (33-36)

The trope of the woman as a flower, also present in Tennyson's description of Cecilia as

"the bridal flower" (25), is a conventional Victorian image. Moreover, her role as the

"helpmate" to man is clearly evoked as it is for Edmund that "she grew" and continues to

grow. Thus, "proper" Victorian femininity is apparent in Cecilia, who is depicted as the

"good" wife both in her comparison to a flower and in her purity. Therefore, Tennyson's

gaining of full masculinity marks the loss of any apparent "feminine" guise, and

ostensibly transfers those attributes to their "proper" place in a Victorian female, thus

maintaining the inferiority of Victorian femininity.

CONCLUSION

Although it appears as if Tennyson challenges the rigid Victorian gender system through transgressive representations of masculinity and femininity, he ultimately reinforces conservative gender norms in his poetry. His presentation of "masculine" women and "feminine" men raises the possibility for gender transgression, but, through gradually returning them to traditional gender roles, Tennyson's conservative ideology becomes apparent. Even at the stages of the poems when the characters seem most transgressive, they simultaneously embody conservative characteristics, and the gradual loss of such surface transgression confirms that their true or "natural" destiny is conservative gender.

In his representation of the masculine women, Mariana, the Lady of Shalott, and Princess Ida, Tennyson simultaneously shows their potential for traditional "femininity". Although in her isolated state Mariana appears independent, as she seems able to function without her lover, her longing for her lover, along with her lack of domestic maintenance, illustrates her conservative dependence on men. Similarly, the Lady of Shalott initially appears independent through her self-sustaining role as artist. However, even such a seemingly independent state is conservative; her "weaving" is domestic, and, moreover, it is interrupted with the arrival of Lancelot, highlighting the Lady's dependence on men. Finally, her art fails in the public sphere, demonstrating both women's reluctance and inability to exist outside the private sphere.

Princess Ida appears as the most radical of all three women. Unlike Mariana and the Lady of Shalott, she blatantly defies women's necessary dependence on men in marriage through her creation of a separate university. However, like the Lady of Shalott's isolation in her tower, Ida's creation of a separate university is an early gesture towards the ideology of separate spheres. The conversion of the university into a hospital realizes this conservative ideology, as women are returned to their proper roles as nursemaids to men. Moreover, Ida's marriage to the Prince reifies both woman's exclusive existence in the domestic sphere and her dependence on men. Tennyson's gradual conversion of his "manly" women back to conservative femininity, with the potential for such femininity in place early on, demonstrates his ideological intentions. His centering of previously marginalized literary women (with the exception of Ida), who are almost immediately stripped of their transgressive potential, is his strategy for highlighting conventional, and not transgressive, femininity.

Tennyson's strategy for his "feminine men" is slightly different, but the results are the same. Ulysses, Prince Hilarion, and Tennyson's persona in *In Memoriam* all embody the characteristics of femininity, but, even through such feminine guises, their masculinity is readily apparent. Not unlike the masculine women, the feminine men are converted to conservative masculinity by the end of their respective poems. However, even in their most "feminine" state, traditional masculinity is apparent, and moreover, it is apparent that their appropriation of female characteristics is a means of subordinating the element of femininity. In "Ulysses", Telemachus' confinement to the island, along with the "feminine" duties enforced upon him by his father, appear to illustrate his

femininity. However, Telemachus demonstrates qualities of traditional masculinity; he has at least as much agency as his father in ruling the subjects, and is potentially a better sovereign than Ulysses.

Tennyson's strategy of highlighting conservative gender is evident not only through the shedding of potential femininity by the men, but also through their use of femininity as a means of enforcing it in its proper locus, Victorian women. Hilarion appropriates the literal and metaphorical guise of femininity with the intention of winning Ida, reinforcing traditional femininity in a seemingly masculine woman. Once he converts Ida back to "the angel in the house" he reveals his traditional masculinity beneath his superficial feminine guise. Similarly, Tennyson's persona in *In Memoriam* appropriates the characteristics of femininity through his excessive emotion and his figuring of himself as Hallam's widow. However, Tennyson progresses beyond his initial emotional reaction to Hallam's death and his homoerotic desire for him, overcoming his ostensible femininity. Moreover, Tennyson's apparent homoeroticism, actually an evocation of the homosocial, along with his feminine embodiment of emotion, is merely a strategy for reinforcing the inferiority of emotion. By the end of the poem, Tennyson completely loses any sign of femininity and transfers it to his sister, who is the proper domestic angel in her marriage.

Tennyson's reinforcement of conservative femininity and masculinity entails a reinforcement of the binary of separate spheres in which women are inferior to men in the gender hierarchy. In reinstating the traditional system of gender, Tennyson seems to be enforcing what Poovey and other feminist critics deny: the "naturalness" of such a gender

configuration. However, Tennyson is actually participating in the artificiality of such a gender system; his poetry is among what Auerbach calls "artificial creations of the tyranny of the patriarchal family" (61) in its enforcement of conservative gender. Perhaps Killham is correct in arguing that Tennyson's poetry is "a solution of what was called the woman-question" (2).[1] Indeed, "it is not possible to regard his attitude towards marriage in the [poems] as a piece of unthinking conservatism" (Killham 5), but as a piece of "thinking" conservatism. Tennyson responds to the socio-economic issues of his day, such as marriage, women's education, women's work, and women's legal rights; he is among the "numerous forces [that] rally to fix [conservative gender identities] once again, working both to repair them and set them more firmly in place" (Hall 2). Although the ongoing battle between conservative and radical literary representations of gender that Gilbert and Gubar envision has no definite winner, it does have definite sides, and the side to which Alfred Tennyson belongs is clearly conservative.

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[1] By the "woman-question" I am referring to the ongoing debates about women's rights in the nineteenth century

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