

TENNYSON'S DEBT TO SHAKESPEARE

TENNYSON'S DEBT TO SHAKESPEARE:
A STUDY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The literary relationship between Tennyson and Shakespeare is a subject at which many critics have hinted but which few have explored, even though Tennyson was uncharacteristically open about his many borrowings from Shakespeare.

This thesis examines Tennyson's debt by looking at many of the passages in which syntax or theme are taken from Shakespeare -- even if not consciously -- and it discusses what, if anything, Tennyson's poetry gains from awakening a reader's recollection of a Shakespearean passage or piece. The order of works discussed is approximately chronological: it begins with an unfinished play written when Tennyson was an adolescent, and then it moves on to some major and minor early publications and to the two best-known writings of Tennyson's middle years. It concludes with a consideration of Tennyson's late effort to switch careers and become a dramatist.

All through Tennyson's long life, Shakespeare was never far from his mind, but as his career advanced he gradually reduced his tendency to draw upon his knowledge of Shakespeare's works themselves and focused more on cultivating a non-literary relationship to supplement the literary. Tennyson worked hard to be considered, in his own mind as well as in the mind of his audience, a successor, of sorts, to Shakespeare. The thesis ends

with a consideration of the death of Tennyson, which in some ways was a feat of calculated image construction. When Tennyson died with a copy of *Cymbeline* practically in his hand, the symbolic display perhaps was designed to ensure that the Laureate's name and that of the bard remained linked together for posterity.

Throughout, the thesis considers Harold Bloom's theory of literary influence and argues that when it is applied to Tennyson and Shakespeare, it does not hold up. Despite all that is attractive about Bloom's model, a special case needs to be made to account for the inspiration that Tennyson drew from Shakespeare.

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INTRODUCTION

It is an unfortunate truth that the literary reputation of Tennyson has never been in the twentieth century quite what it was prior to the poet's death in 1892. Tennyson's reputation has suffered in the one hundred years since his passing in part because of the blinkered but influential reaction against all things Victorian by many Modernist writers -- a reaction that only since the 1950s has been re-examined and re-evaluated. Increasingly, the opinions expressed by some Modernists on key Victorian poets such as Tennyson are judged to have been self-serving and exaggerated. Critics such as Carol T. Christ continue to try to rescue Tennyson from the harsh judgements pronounced in the past, and gradually they have grown to understand his, as well as his chief contemporaries', compositions as having a great deal more in common with those of the Modernists than the Modernists ever had been prepared to acknowledge (13, 145-49).

Yet while Tennyson steadily has been regaining his celebrity, those who never would place him in the company of Keats and other great English poets still are numerous. Tom Paulin, for example, finds Tennyson's poetic style, brooding manner, and self-consciousness affected and tiresome:

Tennyson has always weighed on me as the original
National Heritage Poet -- all that is bogus, empty,

self-parodic, dishonest, false and dead-as-doornails in the culture is epitomized by his verse. Alfred Lawn Tennyson, as Joyce called him. His cadences remind me of cheap firetongs, flat clangy tin trays. ... The simple-minded patriotism, ... the professional *angst* and gravid sonorous chill of the verse all remind me of a solemn Victorian statue of King Alfred which I once saw in a dreary market town somewhere in the south of England. Like the skinhead pop group, Blood and Honour, Tennyson should be treated as a morbid symptom, a pathological case. (8)

Clearly, the notion of Victorian poetry, of which Tennyson's verse arguably is the most widely-recognized representative, as something from which the world has had to be rescued still holds strong, despite the rehabilitative effect of Christ's contentions. Additional angles need to be taken to supplement the thesis that Tennyson has suffered on account of a curious obscuring of the continuity that he shares with the tradition that has been quick to attack him.

This study proposes that one angle worth pursuing involves examining the significance of Tennyson's propensity to borrow from other literary sources. The subject of Tennysonian borrowings is not properly explored as often as it might be, even though it is both fascinating and complex enough that it may, if approached with seriousness, be the kind of subject that is needed in order to sustain the momentum that recent research has produced. Scholarly activity on Tennyson's work increases impressively from year to year, but very little ties together much in this expanding body of activity. Unfortunately, many of the best studies on Tennyson exist almost in isolation from one another.

Since source-hunting is a long-standing interest of individual Tennyson scholars, and since Tennyson's obligations to various poets now are so well-documented as a result, the time has arrived for an effort to make sense of Tennyson's many literary debts. Such an examination justifies much of the interest in Tennyson that has built in recent years, and it leads, perhaps, to new ways of considering Tennyson's genius as an artist. This study investigates, specifically, Tennyson's debt to Shakespeare, which is evident in virtually everything he wrote. Shakespeare was the English writer in a long list of favourites whom Tennyson held the dearest, yet his influence on Tennyson's poetry has received little critical attention. This void is difficult to understand, since relationships between Tennyson and other writers, though they have not necessarily been understood completely, have not been overlooked to quite the same extent.

William P. Mustard's *Classical Echoes in Tennyson* (1905), though nearly a century old, is a landmark piece of scholarship that continues to be recommended by critics such as E. D. H. Johnson (46). Many since Mustard, such as E. A. Mooney (1940), have examined what Tennyson owes to the Latin poets, and repeatedly Tennyson is judged to have had a discriminating ear for lines that were successful in the ancient past and a unique gift for producing superb art from them in the present. Throughout "Oenone," for example, writes Paul Turner, "Tennyson's method has been to pick out those images, phrases, and

conventions in earlier literature which seemed to possess most poetic intensity ... and to combine them into a continuous whole" (46).

As well, there has been a fair amount of interest in what Tennyson appears to have inherited from earlier nineteenth-century writers. Many have located possible sources for Tennyson's work in Byron, Shelley and Keats, and the subject has even generated a certain measure of dispute. Some wonder whether studies that argue the influence of the principle Romantic poets on Tennyson are not misguided, and it has been suggested that the presence of Keats, in particular, in Tennyson's works is overstated. Others, meanwhile, do not so much challenge the fact of the influence of the nineteenth-century poets as record Tennyson's outgrowing of it (Johnson 47). The attractiveness of any individual arguments on such subjects matters little; the essential point is that scholars have, at least on occasion, studied Tennyson's relationships to writers in whom he is known to have been deeply read. It is necessary now to extend the discussion to include others who had a profound effect on Tennyson's imagination.

Tennyson must have made more study of, and engaged in more conversations about, Shakespeare than will ever be known -- his many acquaintances included Edward Fitzgerald, Thomas Carlyle, James Spedding, Coventry Patmore, and Frederick James Furnivall, Shakespeare enthusiasts and critics all, as well as Henry Irving and John Kemble, two famous Shakespearean actors in Tennyson's

day. This thesis argues that because of the extent of Tennyson's zeal for Shakespeare, his relationship to him is at least as interesting as any other of his literary relationships, even if it is among the least pursued.

To be fair, though, the subject has not been neglected by Tennyson scholars so much as abandoned: commentators many years ago began to speculate that Shakespearean echoes in Tennyson might be worthy of serious scrutiny someday, but few since have found the suggestion tempting. A. C. Bradley, for instance, pointed out numerous passages in *In Memoriam* that recall moments in Shakespeare, but he was content only to observe them. Nearly every page of *A Commentary on Tennyson's In Memoriam* (1901) encourages the reader to compare a section with something from another great literary work, but scholars, by and large, have responded only to those that involve certain writers -- namely, Keats, Shelley, Virgil and occasionally Milton. Lines that Bradley suggests are reminiscent of Shakespeare have yet to be considered in the same depth.

Similarly, Alfred Gatty noticed a number of parallel passages in *A Key to Lord Tennyson's In Memoriam* (1886) that might have attracted more interest than they have. John F. Genung (1883) also wrote at approximately the same time that, "As a memorial of friendship, *In Memoriam* has a noted parallel in English literature which we cannot well leave uncompar'd, namely, Shakespeare's Sonnets" (41). An anonymous reviewer of *In Memoriam* also remarked in 1850 that "it is scarcely possible not

to think, that the existence of Shakespeare's Sonnets in some measure prompted the poet to the composition of his work: he has furnished them with a full worthy counterpart" (Hunt 99-100).

It seems reasonable, therefore, that the precise nature of the relationship between Tennyson and Shakespeare finally be explored in full. It is interesting to note first, though, just how much Tennyson despised discussion of literary debt. Tennyson held that nothing could ruin the appreciation of literature faster than source-hunting, and he grew especially contemptuous of John Churton Collins, perhaps the critic in his day who was most notorious for overzealous source study. Tennyson was outraged at the many instances that Collins cited as evidence of literary borrowing, and in the margins of his copy of each of Collins' essays he dismissed many suggestions "with a 'no,' a row of exclamation marks expressing consternation, or a monosyllabic rebuttal" (Pattison 6). Indeed, some of Collins' claims were egregious: he observed, for example, with reference to *In Memoriam* XXIII.4-5 ("The Shadow cloaked from head to foot/ Who keeps the keys of all the creeds"), that "Milton has described Death as the 'keeper of the keys of all creeds,'" and Tennyson curtly responded, "Not known to me," to which Christopher Ricks has added since, charitably, "Known to no-one" (II.342).

Yet Tennyson, no matter how vociferous his denials, clearly put a great deal of stock in parallel passages, a fact that surely is "strengthened by the fact that Tennyson reproduces his

own expressions" so frequently in his works (Bradley 74). Obviously, intertextual analysis was not a wholly unacceptable way of reading poetry in his estimation. Indeed, Tennyson provided glosses to many of his poems that refer specifically to other poets' works, many of which actually cite Shakespeare. In a curious note to *The Marriage of Geraint*, for example, Tennyson himself compares his "hound of deepest bells" with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* IV.i.122: "matched in mouth like bells" (Ricks III.330). In "Song -- The Owl," in which appears the term, "five wits," Tennyson likewise quotes his source, which is *King Lear* III.iv.56: "Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold" (Ricks I.224). Therefore, Collins may have offended Tennyson deeply, but when it came to Shakespeare, Tennyson never was ashamed to confess his indebtedness (Buckley 200).

J. M. Gray notes that three entries in Lady Tennyson's diary for March, 1856, record Tennyson reading, in order, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure* before finally "sett[ing] to work in earnest" on *Merlin and Vivien* (57). Not surprisingly, *The Idylls of the King* are replete with Shakespearean terms and colloquialisms (Gray 57, 147-49, 160-61). Evidently, Tennyson was in the habit of turning to Shakespeare for ideas and diction, and he made no secret of this. This study discusses in detail many of the reminiscences of Shakespeare that appear in works from all stages of Tennyson's career, and it suggests that each is significant for any of a variety of reasons. Some parallels are mere coincidences of

syntax, surely, but a fair number are interesting because they could be the result of unconscious retention of impressive turns of phrase. Bradley believes that for poets like Tennyson, who read voraciously and have a superb capacity for recall, a phrase can be "retained in memory perhaps for years, and ... reproduced without any consciousness that it is not perfectly original" (71). Other parallels, meanwhile, obviously are deliberate, including some that do nothing for the texts in which they appear apart from make the author seem pretentious. Others still, and these are the most interesting, are extremely effective echoes that define the character of Tennyson's poetry in ways that are sometimes difficult to understand. Such reminiscences of Shakespeare deserve a great deal of attention, for they reveal much about the nature of Tennyson's debt to him.

A rough progression can be traced from the imperfect allusiveness of Tennyson's youthful compositions, in which the aspiring poet occasionally seems too eager to exhibit an extraordinary breadth of reading, to the artistically mature Tennyson, who is, when at his best, an ingenious manipulator of sources. Gray intelligently cites C. M. Bowra explaining the "complex pleasure" that follows from reading a poet who alludes to others in such a way as to be always in control of his material:

Learned poetry ... by awakening echoes of some other poem seeks to add beauty and dignity to its own subject. ... The poet does not wish to pass off the work of others as his own; he aims rather at making us see his theme in the light of some other

theme honoured and glorified by [earlier] verse, and find a complex pleasure in the association of the old with the new. (43)

Poets who successfully recall previous authors in this way actually echo them, and this study makes use of John Hollander's distinctions between allusion and echo, the two prime modes of literary borrowing.

But Shakespeare was an important figure to Tennyson in more than just the sense that his poetry affected him deeply enough for him to echo it on occasion. To Tennyson, Shakespeare was an artistic ideal to live up to, and it is worth mentioning that as a young man, Tennyson etched his name into the wall at Shakespeare's birthplace (Martin 252), as if in a self-conscious effort to admit himself into the company of England's greatest poet. This thesis describes, especially in its final chapters, other things that Tennyson did in order that he be considered for posterity in the company of Shakespeare.

In light of these sometimes curious actions late in Tennyson's life, this study also considers Harold Bloom's famous theory of literary influence as it is presented in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) and *Poetry and Repression* (1976). In some ways, Bloom's model is an attractive one for the purposes of a study such as this one, given the angry defensiveness of Tennyson towards critics such as Collins. Bloom's ideas concerning the psychodynamics between poet and precursor have validity when applied to certain authors and certain predecessors, for many poets appear to struggle against their literary ancestors and

attempt to repress their influence in order that they might achieve distinct identities of their own. Very often the battle is, as Bloom says, fierce.

Bloom's theory is supported by many today, and some impressive studies have been conducted recently that put Bloom's model into application. One of the most notable is Daniel Mark Fogel's *Covert Relations* (1990), a book that investigates James Joyce's and Virginia Woolf's relationships to Henry James. Bloom's theory has been applied to Tennyson by Bloom himself (1985) in an essay that demonstrates quite convincingly Tennyson's anxieties about Keats' presence in his mind and art -- and according to Bloom, Tennyson was only partially successful in terminating Keats' influence. Also, Ann Wordsworth (1981) explores the many kinds of anxieties that went into the composition of *In Memoriam*, and sees Hallam as an influence that had to be overcome just like any other.

But in many ways, Bloom's model has substantial limitations. This study argues that Tennyson's relationship to Shakespeare is such that it is difficult to infer an act of belligerence on Tennyson's part. The relationship is, perhaps, an exception to prove Bloom's rule. It is hoped that to consider Tennyson's debt to Shakespeare as one that is not accompanied by Bloomian influence anxieties is to introduce a worthwhile new dimension to Tennyson studies, for in order to deal with the entire matter at hand one must become familiar with an unlikely range of subjects. The student must combine investigations of artistic style,

prosody, biography, and theories of influence in a manner that normally is not done.

Many individual studies of Tennyson exist largely in a vacuum, and, ideally, this study will advance an interpretive argument about some of Tennyson's works and synthesize some of the most important scholarship that has been produced to date. In doing so, it attempts to revive an old notion that Bloomian critics dismiss as too "innocent a description of intra-poetic relations" (Wordsworth 207): namely, that some poets are at their creative best when they rework, rather than defy, internalize, or revise the received literary tradition.

CHAPTER ONE:
AN EARLY FRAGMENT

The seriousness with which Tennyson took Shakespeare throughout his life is a characteristic for which he is famous. Hallam Tennyson records conversations in which his father shared a few of the moments in Shakespeare that affected him most. For instance:

"Is there a more delightful love-poem than *Romeo and Juliet*? Yet it is full of conceits.

"One of the most passionate things in Shakespeare is Romeo's speech"

Amen, amen! But come what sorrow can,
It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
That one short minute gives me in her sight.

"More passionate than anything in Shelley. No one has drawn the true passion of love like Shakespeare."

For inimitably natural talk between husband and wife [Tennyson] would quote the scene between Hotspur and Lady Percy (in *King Henry IV.I*), and would exclaim:
"How deliciously playful is that --

In faith, I'll break thy little finger, Harry,
An if thou wilt not tell me all things true!"

(Hallam Tennyson 662)

Tennyson's son also quotes his father specifying three of his favourite exchanges in all of Shakespeare:

"One is in *King Lear* when Lear says to Cordelia, 'So young and so untender,' and Cordelia lovingly answers, 'So young, my lord, and true.' And in *The Winter's Tale*, when Florizel takes Perdita's hand to lead her to the dance, and says, 'So turtles pair that never mean to part,' and the little Perdita answers, giving her hand to Florizel, 'I'll swear for 'em.' And in

Cymbeline, when Imogen in tender rebuke says to her husband,
 'Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?
 Think that you are upon a rock; and now
 Throw me again!
 and Posthumus does not ask forgiveness, but answers, kissing her,
 'Hang there like fruit, my soul,
 Till the tree die.'"
 (661)

So deep was Tennyson's familiarity with Shakespeare that Frederick James Furnivall, founder of the New Shakespeare Society and perhaps the greatest of nineteenth-century Shakespearean scholars and editors, frequently found himself consulting Tennyson on the authenticity of texts (Buckley 199).

But not only is Tennyson known for an impeccable memory of Shakespeare and a passion for quoting his favourite lines, he also is known to have been this way from an uncommonly young age. This chapter examines *The Devil and the Lady* (1823), an early, fragmentary verse drama fashioned in the blank-verse style of the Elizabethan playwrights that draws heavily upon Shakespeare's works.

In many places, *The Devil and the Lady* reveals Tennyson as an extremely enthusiastic reader of Shakespeare, and, unfortunately, Tennyson at times goes to great lengths in it to ensure that his audience is aware of his reading. For this reason, quite apart from the fact that Tennyson never was able to master the art of characterization for the theatre (even his skill in handling dramatic devices in later, longer poems such as *In Memoriam* always remained less developed than his genius for

conveying the intensity of single, emotional experiences), the play is not entirely successful. But although *The Devil and the Lady* is immature, at least it is more than merely an imitative piece -- "Bleeding gobbets of erudition are stuck into the text," as Robert Bernard Martin observes, "the natural swank of a fourteen-year-old displaying what he knows," but many of the references to other texts show that Tennyson is no ordinary beginning poet. In fact, some of them suggest a young writer who is "unselfconsciously forging an original style from that of others" (37). The nature of this style is worth exploring.

Despite the play's almost amusing flaws, Tennyson aspires to do more than he normally is granted credit for in *The Devil and the Lady*. The importance of this fragmentary piece has less to do with what Tennyson should have done to make it work than with what he thought he was doing. He may indeed be "showing off" somewhat on occasion through his numerous reminiscences of great authors from the past, especially Shakespeare, but often he overcomes the initiate's urge just to proudly and unabashedly ape them. The result is a piece that contains certain moments in which Tennyson operates at a level far beyond that of most adolescent writers. A thorough examination of *The Devil and the Lady's* obligations to Shakespeare will illustrate a few such moments.

Deep familiarity with Shakespeare is evident from the beginning of *The Devil and the Lady* when the reader immediately is reminded of *The Tempest*. Like Shakespeare's play, Tennyson's

work presents a central character who is mortal but who employs magic to do two things: first, to preserve high ideals that he could not possibly maintain otherwise, and second, to keep a supernatural being obediently in his service. This resemblance is confirmed as soon as the Devil, having just been summoned by Magus, speaks his first words:

I come, O I come, at the sound of my name ...
I rush through the torrent and ride on the flame
Or mount on the whirlwind that sweeps through the sky.
(41-44)

As Mooney shows, the syntax of this speech is modelled, roughly, on the first words of Ariel (118-19):

... I come
To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curl'd clouds. (I.ii.189-92)

Tennyson also seems to have taken the name and qualities of his drunken oaf, Stephanio, from Stephano in Shakespeare's play, and Stephanio is not unlike both the Master of the ship and the Botswain in *The Tempest*. Indeed, his initial speech,

... It seems I've run aground here. (II.v.2)

perhaps deliberately recalls the first words of Shakespeare's Master of the ship:

... speak to th' mariners. Fall to't,
yarely, or we run ourselves aground. (I.i.3-4)

In addition, Stephanio is fond of saying "yare" (II.vi.38), a word that is uttered in *The Tempest* not just by the Master, as above, but on several occasions by the Botswain as well:

Yare, yare! Take in the topsail. (I.i.6)

Down with the topmast! Yare! Lower, lower! (I.i.34)

... our ship --
Which, but three glasses since, we gave out split --
Is tight and yare, and bravely rigg'd as when
We first put out to sea. (V.i.224)

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Tennyson has Magus promise the Devil, should the Devil fail to be sufficiently obedient to his will:

... I will rive yon mighty Cedar-Tree
Sheer from its topmost windiest branch unto
The lowest fang o' the root -- between each half
I'll place thy sinful carcass. (III.ii.39-42)

This threat seems to have its source in Prospero's, "I will rend an oak/ And peg thee in its knotty entrails till/ Thou hast howled away twelve winters" (I.ii.294-96).

But while *The Tempest* is the most used Shakespearean play in *The Devil and the Lady*, it is by no means the only one. It is difficult not to be reminded, for example, when the Devil puts on a woman's cloak so that he can "unsex" himself (I.ii.73), of one of the most famous speeches in *Macbeth* -- namely, Lady Macbeth's, "Come, you spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here" (I.v.40-41). When the Devil upbraids Amoret for weeping over her captivity to him, he contemptuously refers to her tears as "beads of sensibility" (I.v.130) and a "woman's weapons, sword and shield" (I.v.133), just as King Lear, in a moment of anguish, implores of the gods:

... touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! (II.iv.276-78)

Mooney suggests, too, that when Amoret continues to cry and the annoyed Devil exclaims, "More yet? at this rate/ You'd float a

ship o' the line" (I.v.142), Tennyson has borrowed a simile that appears in Capulet's reprimand of Juliet (122):

Thou counterfeits a bark, a sea, a wind:
For still thy eyes, which I may call the sea,
Do ebb and flow with tears; the bark thy body is,
Sailing in this salt flood ... (III.v.132-35)

Furthermore, when the Devil describes what soon will become of the audacious Antonio, his words surely suggest a passage from *King Lear* once again (Ricks I.42):

There shall be no sound place within thy person;
Thou shalt be all the colours of the rainbow,
With bruises, pinches, weals, *et cetera*;
And various as the motley-coloured slime,
Which floats upon the standing pool, wherein
Do breed all kinds of reptiles -- creeping things,
Vile jellies and white spawn and loathsome newts.
(*The Devil and the Lady* II.iii.25-31)

Gloucester. Who are you there? Your names?
Edgar. Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the
toad, the todpole, the wall-newt, and the water; drinks
the green mantle of the standing pool.
(*King Lear* III.iv.127-34)

"Vile jellies" seems to have been taken from the same play as well (Ricks I.42), since "Out, vile jelly!" are Cornwall's words upon his gouging out of Gloucester's second eye (III.vii.83).

Gloucester's torture, Lear's disillusionment, Capulet's want of sympathy, Lady Macbeth's appetite for evil, and Prospero's tyranny -- all of these represent significant dramatic moments in Shakespeare, not just passages of particularly potent poetry. When Tennyson alludes to these passages from Shakespeare, he relies on more than the eloquent language in which such moments

are expressed. Far from just borrowing syntax, he attempts, with varying degrees of success, to generate power through association. Although *The Devil and the Lady* usually is dismissed as a composition that is of interest to critics not because it is intellectually challenging, but simply because it provides evidence of an immense amount of reading, it in fact represents a formidable attempt at producing a sophisticated work of literature. Because of the stock Tennyson puts in the power of association, there is more to *The Devil and the Lady* than may, at first, appear.

The Devil and the Lady is a farcical drama about a man who will do anything to avoid the humiliation of cuckoldry, but Tennyson hardly occupies himself with making it particularly funny. As is the case with many Restoration comedies on this theme, there is a cynical side to the play. As often happens with respect to works from that period, the reader is not entirely loath to see the ever-protective husband cuckolded. The situation is funny, certainly, but there also is a sense of nemesis as the reader anticipates the worst fears of the paranoid Magus coming true. The spectacle of the disguised Devil leading on a group of foppish would-be seducers may be amusing enough in itself, but one never forgets that the prime motives from which all characters in the play act are vicious ones: jealousy, contempt, and covetousness each define one or another of the mortals, and the Devil is as acridly misanthropic as it is possible for a character to be.

Appropriately, the Shakespearean works from which Tennyson borrows turns of phrase in *The Devil and the Lady* are not the humorous ones that one might expect to have functioned as source material, but instead those that are known for wretched, afflicted central characters who operate from similar motives. When the Devil dons women's clothing so that he can dupe the suitors of Amoret, the verb "to unsex" surely is not just a convenient, alternative way of describing the action, perhaps retained from Tennyson's vast reading in the event that he ever should need a synonym for "disguise." Rather, "unsex" immediately reminds the reader of the Shakespearean context from which it is taken and draws attention to all that the Devil and Lady Macbeth have in common. Each is a character who achieves ends by identifying weaknesses in others and by becoming proficient at pressing advantages over such people, and each also takes measures to suppress natural feelings and tendencies that might prove hindrances to the fulfilment of crude personal ambitions.

Lady Macbeth, in her famous monologue after she receives news that King Duncan intends to be an overnight guest in her home, implores that she be divested of all qualms and compassion. She wants evil spirits to make her capable of overcoming the impulse to pity, to eliminate "th' milk of human kindness" (I.v.17) that exists naturally in her breast and for which she feels nothing but contempt. She wants that "no compunctious visitings of nature/ Shake my fell purpose" (45-46). Thus, the

spirits to whom Lady Macbeth prays, who "tend on mortal thoughts," either can be wicked ones who literally attend to designs of death and murder or, on another level, ones who govern the standard thoughts of mortals and have the power to modify them, stopping up "th' access and passage to" specific human instincts (44). Tennyson's Devil shows similar resolve just before he disguises himself as a woman, and, interestingly, he does so for like reasons:

I am in troth a moralizing devil
 Quite out o' my element: my element, fire.
 Then come my spirit, with thy torch light up
 The strongest flame of thine ability,
 Use all thine efforts -- work thy passage, as
 The restless rushing of a fiery flood
 Within the hollow and sonorous earth.
 Now to my charge -- I must be violent, fierce,
 And put that ugly disposition on
 Which is my portion by inheritance
 From my great grandsire Lucifer. Good lack!
 I'll make the scurvy-pated villains skip
 As they were mad, e'en though they thronged about me
 As thick as Beelzebub on Beelzebub,
 Alias, as thick as horse-flies on horse-dung.
 (183-97)

By the time the Devil uses the word "unsex," the association that Tennyson attempts to fashion is unmistakable. He depends on the reader's familiarity with the Shakespearean monologue and, by extension, his understanding of the two characters as having a considerable affinity.

Macbeth is not the only play that is recalled in this same scene from *The Devil and the Lady*. "Fiery flood" appears in *Measure for Measure* in the passage in which the condemned Claudio articulates his fear of the unknown and expresses understandable

discontinued, and something that the Devil is sardonic enough about already.

Reminiscences such as these do little to strengthen the literary merit of *The Devil and the Lady* because, unlike the "unsex myself" passage, they do not have enough of what John Hollander calls "resonance of context" (118). Because of key personal characteristics of the Devil, and because of the "I must be violent" speech in Scene V, the reader should already sense that the Devil has an affinity with Lady Macbeth before Tennyson solidifies the association with a clear syntactical link. The borrowing of "fiery flood," on the other hand, makes little use of the context in which it appears and instead is a reference to *Measure for Measure* in a general sense only. Tennyson makes this reference when probably any reference to the same play would do, for he simply wants something to encourage an association between his dark comedy that explores the consequences of domination and underhanded manoeuvring, and Shakespeare's. Since this point of association lacks anything more substantial, it demands of the reader more of a stretch of the imagination than it should, and thus comes off looking more like pedantry than creative literary borrowing.

The reference to *Hamlet* is, perhaps, slightly more effective in that its original context is not wholly irrelevant. Hamlet plans to feign madness because, always hesitant to act decisively, he feels that despite his father's Ghost's convincing revelation about the identity of the murderer he must accumulate

more unimpeachable evidence against Claudius before retaliating. Hamlet reasons that if he can gain a reputation for irrationality or dull-wittedness, then Claudius and others might become careless around him and incriminate themselves without any idea that Hamlet is calculating revenge. Tennyson's Devil plans to execute the same sort of entrapment by altering his physical appearance before Amoret's suitors. On another level, as well, the Devil vows to follow through his orders to sequester Amoret by hardening himself completely and substituting an "ugly" nature for his "moralizing" one. In this way, each character recognizes a need to be unlike his usual self in order to achieve his purpose.

But even though this reference to *Hamlet* provides a more substantial connection than does the one to *Measure for Measure*, it still seems clever borrowing of syntax for its own sake more than genuine, well-executed literary allusion. The reminiscences of *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure* each depend on the reader's familiarity with the Shakespearean originals, yet they are of interest above all because they are amusing. To a well-read reader with a memory like Tennyson's, it is gratifying to be able to identify such allusions, but beyond this aspect of literary gameplay the use of another writer's vocabulary adds something to a work only when the emotional experiences created and sustained by the original contexts are imported successfully.

John Hollander offers a useful discussion of why exactly some literary allusions are effective while others are not.

According to Hollander, not all borrowings are the same in quality because not all are the same in kind:

We might ... propose a kind of rhetorical hierarchy for the relationship of allusive modes. Actual *quotation*, the literal presence of a body of text, is represented or replaced by *allusion*, which may be fragmentary or periphrastic. In case of outright allusion, ... the text alluded to is not totally absent, but is part of the portable library shared by the author and his ideal audience. ... But then there is echo, which represents or substitutes for allusion as allusion does for quotation. There seems to be a transitive figurational connection among them; it points to what we generally mean by *echo*, in intertextual terms. (64)

Allusion, in other words, involves no particular relationship between two works, while echo can contribute a considerable amount of meaning to a text. In fact, a text that echoes properly "has many sorts of priority over what has been recalled in it" (62). The discussed references in *The Devil and the Lady* to *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure* achieve something beyond quotation, but they do less than echo does because they provide nothing in the way of interpretation.

The echo of Lady Macbeth's appeal to the evil spirits gives Tennyson's *Devil* unique strength of character by reminding the reader of Lady Macbeth's speeches and behaviour. The reader must be familiar with Shakespeare's play to fully understand the *Devil*, but he or she also must think about the motives of a complex character. In other words, it is equally important both to recognize and comprehend Tennyson's Shakespearean source if this aspect of *The Devil and the Lady* is to be fully appreciated.

Unfortunately, most of the reminiscences in *The Devil and*

the Lady demand of the reader only good memory rather than memory as well as comprehension. It is interesting and amusing to note the language that is borrowed from *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet* as well, but ultimately these allusions fall short of being significant, interpretive echoes. It requires a stretch of the imagination to say that Tennyson's play about an alienated woman and her oppressors gains significantly by way of rather forced linguistic connections with two Shakespearean works that centre, to some degree, on a similar subject.

The connections with *The Tempest* already discussed, however, are successful ones because Tennyson, much as he does with the echoes of *Macbeth*, manages to establish meaningful thematic links with Shakespeare's play. The similarities between the opening lines of the Devil and Ariel are unmistakable, and it seems that the Devil is meant to be seen as a character who is not omnipotent and invincibly evil but rather a sort of prisoner. Magus is nothing like Doctor Faustus -- he is not bound by a contract to surrender his soul in exchange for the supernatural capacities that he wields. He has the Devil at his beck and call, and the Devil, though an extremely vindictive character, does not necessarily carry through his assignments with relish. He has grave trepidations about the task to which Magus has just put him, and even though it is amusing when the Devil lists the things he would sooner do than keep a woman against her will (I.i.84-101), the fact that he has no choice in the matter is significant. Therefore, like Ariel, he is imprisoned by his

powers at the same time that he is master of them, and essentially he is at the mercy of one man who wishes to harvest them in a particular, self-serving way. It is equally significant that Tennyson should ensure that the similarity of their situations not be forgotten when he has Magus, explaining what he will do to the Devil in the event of insubordination, echo Prospero's threat to Ariel.

But the most interesting thing about the association between *The Devil and the Lady* and *The Tempest* is that Tennyson makes Magus resemble Prospero in ways that go far beyond the fact that they are both mortal men who happen to exploit supernatural beings for their own purposes. Like their servants, Magus and Prospero are revealed as prisoners of their own unique abilities in the sense that each is utterly incapable of functioning in the real world without them. Prospero had effectively forfeited his dukedom by neglecting his responsibilities as ruler in favour of the study of magic, averse as he was to participation in the pressure-filled world of politics. Though not a wholly malevolent sovereign on his island, he rules strictly by decree because nobody can oppose his will, and, as a result, he gains a false sense of security about his capacity for effective and just leadership. His prime motivation throughout the play is an earnest desire for a world in which the righteous are rewarded and the wicked repentant, and he uses magic to achieve this goal. Flushed with his own success in gaining his title back after having terrified and tormented his conspirators into guilty

submission, he overlooks one potential problem in his triumphant return home that should be obvious -- the fact that his treacherous younger brother remains unconvinced.

After all, in the final three scenes of the play, scarcely a word is heard from the frigid Antonio, the very man who orchestrated Prospero's deposal in Milan. Everybody but Antonio grovels before Prospero and expresses profound respect for him. *The Tempest's* happy ending thus is darkened somewhat by the danger that probably lies ahead for the restored Duke of Milan, since he now is, by his own volition, devoid of the supernatural powers to which he is accustomed. He heads home to govern with no practical experience in the world whatsoever, completely oblivious to the ill-will of the sovereign whom he replaces. Tragically, Prospero has spent his entire adult life clinging to a lofty ideal of universal goodwill, which he mistakenly believes to have accomplished by the end of the play. In reality, he re-enters the world in which he was born blinded by his own naivety, with his welfare in serious jeopardy now that his illusory "rough magic" is eradicated and he can no longer protect himself in the event of a backlash from his brother.

Tennyson's Magus should remind the reader of Prospero because he attempts to sustain an impossible ideal by completely artificial means. In a world that he knows is savage and wanting in justice, he clings to an ideal of womanhood in order to keep himself sane. When he intends to depart on an extended sea journey, knowing what lustful men will attempt in his absence, he

wishes to see to it that his wife's virtue will be protected. He does not understand that Amoret despises him and gladly would cuckold him at first chance, as she makes clear on at least two occasions after Magus makes his exit:

Go thy ways
 Thou yellowest leaf on Autumn's withered tree,
 Thou sickliest ear of all the sheaf -- thou clod,
 Thou fireless mixture of Earth's coldest clay,
 Thou crazy dotard, crusted o'er with age
 As thick as ice upon a standing pool. (117-22)

In all conscience
 My mate is stale enough. (I.v.162-63)

Magus surely suspects a certain amount of resentment on her part, given the severity of the limitations that he imposes upon her, but rather than deal with this and seek true, mutual love, he upholds the age-old idea of female chastity, insisting all the while that his belief in his wife's fidelity is, as Gerhard Joseph calls it, "the compass that keeps him to the pole of optimism" (122). Ironically, the only way for him to preserve this cherished image of womanhood is to forcibly confine his wife. She, of course, in turn grows all the more contemptuous of her husband because of her confinement.

Through his irresistible "Necromantic arts" (I.iv.19), then, Magus enlists the reluctant Devil to assist him in sustaining this self-serving ideal that he himself helps to destroy, but like Prospero he never will experience the disillusionment for which he sets himself up as long as he keeps his practice of sorcery going. Outer beauty will always be accompanied by inner virtue for Magus, even if he must force it to be so; and

obviously, if he ever abjures his craft Magus will find himself living in the "weary scene of surmise and mistrust" that he genuinely fears so much (*The Devil and the Lady* I.i.92).

Thus, Tennyson forges a worthwhile link when he deliberately reminds the reader of *The Tempest*. The similarities between Magus and Prospero help to make the play a rather unsettling one instead of just another burlesque about a January-May relationship. The reader of *The Devil and the Lady* is invited to apply insights that might be made into Shakespeare's play to Tennyson's, and the result is a more complex, accomplished piece of work than normally is acknowledged. Even at fourteen, Tennyson was capable of using classics from the past as not just convenient texts in which to find effective phraseology but as fully dramatic source material. Unfortunately, Shakespearean pieces function in both ways in *The Devil and the Lady*, and not every attempt to utilize source material comes off as well as it might.

Over time, however, Tennyson evidently learned what worked whenever he felt that a reference to Shakespeare was in order. It is interesting that he should have written, only a few years after *The Devil and the Lady*, an essay for the Cambridge Apostles -- an undergraduate society to which he belonged -- that presents in one portion a fictional conversation about ghosts, a fragment of which reads:

"And wherefore," says one, granting the intensity of feeling, "wherefore this fever & fret about a baseless vision?" "Do not assume," responds another, "upon the

authority of a quotation from Shakespeare that any vision is baseless. There is rhyme and reason for every thing."
 (Mermin 18)

"Baseless vision" is another reference to *The Tempest*, the term coming from Prospero's speech upon the renunciation of his "rough magic":

Our revels now are ended. These our actors
 (As I foretold you) were all spirits, and
 Are melted into air, into thin air,
 And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 ... shall dissolve. (IV.i.148-54)

The importance of this curious essay, most of which now is lost, is twofold. First, it presents another example of Tennyson using Shakespearean diction to add meaning to his own text, as the rhetoric of the sceptic is enhanced by the reference to Prospero's final cessation of his involvement with all things and beings without physical foundation. Apparently, Tennyson's sceptic prefers a world of tangible things and empirical reason -- the exact kind of world that Prospero thinks that he is re-entering so triumphantly. Second, and even more interesting, the essay presents an argument that when language is borrowed from Shakespeare it does not always carry power in itself. The language of Shakespeare's plays is beautiful, certainly, and to quote it perhaps shows taste and learning, but it does not necessarily stand on its own as having "authority."

Tennyson probably had found that some of the references in works like *The Devil and the Lady* had worked well while others had not, perhaps because he realized that sometimes he had looked to Shakespeare too much as an authority. He seemed to assume

that if a certain arrangement of words had produced good poetry once in the past, then it should again. *The Devil and the Lady* represents Tennyson at a stage in his development when he is just beginning to learn that poetry is never merely the sum of its parts. Although the play is far from a successful one, it reveals him as having the makings of a great writer, for according to Hollander's theoretical model:

What a great writer does with direct citation of another's language is quite different from what a minor one may be doing. Similarly, his handling of a commonplace will be radically interpretive of it, while the minor writer's contribution will be more one of handing on the baton, so to speak, of cultivating the topos rather than replanting or even building there. (73)

The Devil and the Lady perhaps has not enough moments that interpret and "replant" what Tennyson borrows from Shakespeare, but it has some, and, for a composition by a writer of fourteen, many.

CHAPTER TWO:
TENNYSON'S EARLY PUBLICATIONS

To Tennyson's credit, the "cultivating" of which he is guilty on occasion in *The Devil and the Lady* he never is guilty of on the same scale again when he develops a distinctly Shakespearean presence in his poems. Even in poetry that qualifies just as much as juvenilia, Tennyson is increasingly creative as a literary borrower, and he wisely echoes more often than he alludes. "Mariana" (1830) is a superb example of slightly later poetry that puts source material to use in the prudent manner that is witnessed only at moments in *The Devil and the Lady*.

It is significant that "Mariana," which presents the lament of a despairing woman who awaits the arrival of a lover and finds herself, in his absence, sapped of her will to live, should take its epigraph, "Mariana in the moated grange," from *Measure for Measure* III.i.264. However, many critics have insisted that this is not an important fact. Harold Bloom says that the Mariana of Tennyson's poem has absolutely nothing in common with the emotionally abused wife of Angelo in Shakespeare's play, for "Shakespeare's Mariana is waiting for a deceiver who has no intention of arriving. All that Tennyson really wants from *Measure for Measure* is that moated grange" ("Shadow" 131).

According to Elaine Jordan, likewise, "The epigraph of 'Mariana' ... is enigmatic; as with the later monologues we do not know how much the context of the sources should affect response" (59). Herbert F. Tucker similarly argues that whomever Mariana anticipates in vain, "we specify ... Shakespeare's Angelo at our peril" (74), for Tennyson "wanted the suggestive force of a phrase, an image at most, and certainly not the manifold irrelevancies of a Shakespearean problem play" (28).

But it is difficult to imagine Tennyson going so far as to specify another writer's work in an epigraph to a piece without wishing that context have some bearing on his work. Despite Bloom's assertion that Tennyson wanted "that moated grange" and nothing else, Shakespeare's minor figure of tragic abandonment has, in fact, a great deal to do with Tennyson's, whom Pattison describes as "a careful rendering of Shakespeare's character" (12). The reader may know next to nothing either about the state or the environment of the original Mariana except that she has been left at some farmstead "in her tears" (III.i.215), but what Tennyson brings to each is far from arbitrary. When Tennyson describes the poplar tree that is so conspicuous at Mariana's grange because "For leagues no other tree did mark/ The level waste, the rounding gray" (43-44), that single object, unmistakably symbolic of the sexually frustrated Mariana's "one obsessive thought" (Turner 46), though it is a highly creative innovation, is hardly incongruent with what the reader already understands about Shakespeare's character. Far from borrowing a

locale only for his own poem, as well as a name for his protagonist, Tennyson, as Pattison explains, exploits the entire milieu in which the original character is figured. Having been in Shakespeare's explicitly sexual drama "the compromised character ... who eagerly accepts the assignment from which the chaste Isabella recoils," she becomes, in Tennyson's work, "what she only is by implication in the original -- a character study of unrequited physical love" (Pattison 12).

Further evidence that *Measure for Measure* is not far from Tennyson's mind in this poem lies elsewhere in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), the volume in which "Mariana" first appeared. Just as Tennyson's Mariana is modelled on Shakespeare's sexually frustrated character, so is the protagonist of "Isabel" based on the upright Isabella of Shakespeare's play. Tennyson addresses his character at the end of "Isabel" with:

... the world hath not another
 (Though all her fairest forms are types of thee,
 And thou of God in thy great charity)
 Of such a finished chastened purity. (38-41)

Isabel already had been connected specifically with the paragon of chastity in *Measure for Measure* by way of a simile that describes her impressive personal aura:

The mellowed reflex of a winter moon;
 A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,
 Till in its onward current it absorbs
 With swifter movement and in purer light
 The vexèd eddies of a wayward brother:
 A leaning and upbearing parasite ...
 (29-34)

As Pattison points out, this simile not only is "clearly derived from the plot of *Measure for Measure*," but also, it underscores

the contrasts between her and Mariana. It suggests that the inspirational Isabel has the effect of casting shadows while the languishing Mariana literally dwells in them (55-56). Thus, "the characters are mirror images" of one another (Pattison 13), and in this way Tennyson brings to life a fascinating contrast on which Shakespeare had dwelt little.

Measure for Measure needs to be considered an important source text for "Mariana" because, evidently, Tennyson conceived of it and "Isabel" as companion pieces. In every printing of both *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* and the various compilation volumes in which Tennyson had a say, the two poems are adjacent (Pattison 13). Given "Isabel"'s certain recalling of the Shakespearean work, it seems reasonable to infer that a juxtaposed piece named for a character from the same Shakespearean play, which has a central figure who shares both the characteristics and the harsh circumstances of her namesake, owes more to *Measure for Measure* than simply an epigraph. The significance of *Measure for Measure*, beyond the setting that appears in "Mariana," certainly was not lost on Arthur Henry Hallam, who once praised the commendable flair for language of his beloved as follows:

Your letter, like all other things that are yours, is delicious. Why was I not with you in the gardens of Dalby! Henceforward, however, they are a part of me; I have no notion how they really appear, but you have told me something of their inhabitants, and that is sufficient for imagination to work with. From the single image of you, standing there among the flowers, and listening to the "clear carol" and the "solemn

cawing," the whole scene has shaped itself out, with a wonderful propriety and grace, just as Alfred's Mariana grew up, by assimilative force, out of the plaintive hint left two centuries ago by Shakespeare for the few who might have ears to hear, and a heart to meditate. (Kolb 433)

Concerning strictly Tennyson's relationship to Shakespeare, if *The Devil and the Lady* reveals Tennyson as a young poet just learning the value of echo over allusion, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* perhaps reveals him as one who has learned the additional value of manipulation of sources. By the age of twenty-one, he had enriched his sensitivity to what Hollander calls "the resonances of context" by taking it a step further -- beyond just finding Shakespeare extremely inspiring, Tennyson had developed a workable imaginative debt to him. This does not quite make Tennyson a revisionist, nor does it call his creativity into question. His debt to the great playwright is such that he is able to take a memorable moment and, as he once put it with reference to "Mariana," "rise to the music of Shakespeare's words" (Ricks I.205).

Tennyson relies on Shakespeare in another interesting way when he tries to achieve a certain effect in "Mariana." The image of flatness is central to the poem, and according to Paul Turner it happened to "acquire ... new meaning for [Tennyson] at Cambridge, where he wrote in 1828: 'I know not how it is but I feel isolated here in the midst of society. The country is so disgustingly level ...'" (46). Surely in the context of the poem the motif of anguished desertion would not be as impressive if the image of flatness were not completed by the image of the

neglected garden that is introduced in the very first stanza ("Weeded and worn the ancient thatch" [7]). The idea to combine the two for maximum effect may have been inspired by a passage from *Hamlet*, with Tennyson providing his own original details:

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed. ... (I.ii.133-36)

So Shakespeare was, to Tennyson, not just a source of diction and a starting point for new poetry, but also a poet to whom Tennyson could turn to complete an idea, and in whose works "he could find appropriate imagery for expressing the moods in question" (Turner 45).

A few of the lesser-known selections from *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* suggest that Tennyson's debt to Shakespeare had grown even more complex by 1830. It is profitable to look at some of them and to discuss briefly what they look forward to in Tennyson's later poetry. Some minor works owe just as much to Shakespeare as "Mariana" and "Isabel" do, yet the nature of their debt is not explained adequately if one considers only the matter of "resonance of context" and interpretive echo.

While "Mariana" presents a deliberate, imaginative rendering of a particular character and is best understood when the reader fully fathoms its relationship to its source, "To -- [Sainted Juliet!]" is inspired by what Tennyson had read in *Romeo and Juliet* without being related to specific features of Shakespeare's play. The poem, in its entirety, reads as follows:

Sainted Juliet! dearest name!
 If to love be life alone,
 Divinest Juliet,
 I love thee, and live; and yet
 Love unreturned is like the fragrant flame
 Folding the slaughter of the sacrifice
 Offered to gods upon an altarthrone;
 My heart is lighted at thine eyes,
 Changed into fire, and blown about with sighs.

As Ricks points out (I.223), the final two lines are modelled on Romeo's, "Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs,/ Being purg'd, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes" (I.i.190-91). So once again, Tennyson does not make casual use of Shakespearean syntax, in that he avoids borrowing vocabulary purely for its own sake by deftly importing a sufficient amount of what emerges in the original context to capture the passion of Romeo's speech to Benvolio. There is power in the association, and Hollander probably would approve of the manner in which Tennyson "replants" the topos of Shakespeare rather than "cultivates" it. Yet there is nothing at all interpretive about "To -- [Sainted Juliet!]." Ricks rightly observes that the poem is a "variation" on Romeo's words (Ricks I.223) and therefore it is quite unlike anything examined thus far. It could not substitute for Romeo's speech on love for the simple reason that Romeo has yet to meet Juliet at this point in the play. He is still pining over his unrequited love for Rosaline when he explains how "Love is a smoke," and Tennyson simply imagines how Romeo might have altered this definition of love when describing his feelings for Juliet later on.

In the original, Romeo essentially defines love as a form of lunacy ("What is it else? a madness" [I.i.193]), and indeed, he shows many of the signs of the deranging disease of melancholy. Even the image of a fire sparkling in a person's eyes suggests more the countenance of a madman than an individual who is delighted to be involved in a caring relationship. There is nothing healthy about love, according to Romeo's definition, and having experienced it for the first time he has lost all sense of time and place. As Benvolio astutely says, love is "so tyrannous and rough in proof!" (170).

But Romeo does not necessarily have in mind love for Rosaline in particular, who has disappointed Romeo by responding to his advances with a decision to remain chaste. He is interested in ideal love more than love for one, certain woman, and for this reason the contrasts with Tennyson's speaker are considerable. The speaker in "To -- [Sainted Juliet!]" declares his love for a particular person, whom he names twice. Romeo is vague about the object of his passion, and Rosaline probably could just as well have been almost anybody else. Romeo is really in love with the idea of love.

Moreover, whereas love to Romeo is an extremely destructive force, "A choking gall" (I.i.194), Tennyson's speaker finds that love is not destructive at all but a necessary means to life. Presumably, it is worse never to have loved, for he tells his beloved that "I love thee, and live" (4). "To -- [Sainted Juliet!]" also distinguishes between two opposing experiences of

love, describing, on the one hand, the pain of unreturned affection in terms of a sacrificial fire, while explaining, on the other, that the mutual love between the speaker in the poem and his Juliet is something quite different.

Finally, love is, in Romeo's speech, nothing more than a blinding cloud of smoke which, once it has risen and been cleared away, leaves evidence of its assault on the senses in the form of tiny flames that sparkle in the eyes of its victims (and these victims immediately take leave of their rational faculties). Tennyson's poem, on the other hand, presents the reverse: love ends up as a smoke, the source of which is the lover's blazing heart, having been ignited by the eyes of the beloved. The poem is ambiguous about what exactly is "blown about with sighs," for it could be either fire or smoke, but, nevertheless, the final line presents a metaphor for expansion rather than consumption, unlike line 6 of the same poem, and unlike line 190 of Romeo's speech. In other words, there is nothing to suggest that the experience of love hampers the lover in the manner that smoke does.

Therefore, "To -- [Sainted Juliet!]" is a song that Shakespeare's Romeo might well have sung to Juliet, but both its words and its premise are entirely Tennyson's creation. It helps to be familiar with the syntax that is taken from *Romeo and Juliet*, but this is so not because proper interpretation of the source material is relevant to Tennyson's poem and may help to inform it. On the contrary, the reader is expected to notice not

consistencies with the original context but instead inconsistencies, and the poem's strength lies in the degree to which Tennyson reworks a particularly moving passage. Tennyson creates, in other words, in "To -- [Sainted Juliet!]," an original work of art from a few borrowed words, and though the poem is not a great accomplishment and never was reprinted after 1830 (Ricks 223), it has value to the student of Tennyson. It is an experimental piece that represents an effort to seek new ways of rising to the music of Shakespeare's words. Tennyson always realized that a significant part of his identity as a poet lay in both his ability to write creative variations on other poets' tropes without plagiarising them, and in his gift for echoing just enough of the diction of others that his poetry presents old material in new, vibrant ways. But by 1830, Tennyson was in the habit not only of echoing and reworking Shakespeare, but also of commenting on the literary relationship that he was establishing with him. It is interesting to note two pieces from *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* that indicate that Tennyson, even while a young man, had given considerable thought to the role of Shakespeare in his artistic life.

"Song -- The Owl" basically combines the techniques that Tennyson had put to good use in "Mariana" and "To -- [Sainted Juliet!]." It is based on the song that Winter sings at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and it might well apply to the owl in the original composition just as the events in "Mariana" are related to *Measure for Measure*. The poem reads:

When cats run home and light is come,
 And dew is cold upon the ground,
 And the far-off stream is dumb,
 And the whirring sail goes round,
 And the whirring sail goes round;
 Alone and warming his five wits,
 The white owl in the belfry sits.

When merry milkmaids click the latch,
 And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
 And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch
 Twice or thrice his roundelay,
 Twice or thrice his roundelay;
 Alone and warming his five wits,
 The white owl in the belfry sits.

It is anything but a simple "pastiche," even though Peter Levi calls it that (68), but at least one term in the poem comes from elsewhere in Shakespeare: "five wits," as Tennyson acknowledges, is taken from *King Lear* (Ricks I.224).

The poem, like the original song, is about the uneasy relationship between poetry and the harsh, real world. Shakespeare's song contrasts profoundly with the one immediately before it in the play, which is sung by Spring and smacks distinctly of the pastoral, and therefore might have been a suitable song with which to conclude a traditional comedy in which all loose ends are tied and all the right characters end up happy. However, when Shakespeare follows up this lyric with the song by Winter he makes it function much as "The rain, it raineth every day" does at the conclusion to *Twelfth Night*: it awakens the audience from its reverie and reminds it that it must leave, however reluctantly, the world of make-believe when it leaves the theatre. Armado says in response to Winter's song that "The

words of Mercury are harsh after the/ Songs of Apollo" (V.ii.930-31), but if these are harsh words, they are not false.

Tennyson exploits this whole milieu from *Love's Labour's Lost* and creates an interesting variation that emphasizes the wise owl's strict care for his five senses, which at all costs must not go numb in frigid weather. In fact, the owl in the belfry represents the kind of poet that Tennyson would like to be -- namely, a poet of reality rather than of fancy. He admires the owl's majesty as he sits in isolation from everyday life with the world toiling around him, keeping his capacity for practical wisdom sharp. Admittedly, "Song -- The Owl" is far from an immortal piece of literature, but it is fascinating to evaluate the implications of it with its companion piece, which is aptly titled, "Second Song (To the same)."

In that poem, Tennyson addresses the owl whom he has just described:

Thy tuwhits are lulled, I wot,
 Thy tuwhoos of yesternight,
 Which upon the dark afloat,
 So took echo with delight,
 So took echo with delight,
 That her voice untuneful grown,
 Wears all day a fainter tone.

I would mock thy chaunt anew;
 But I cannot mimick it;
 Not a whit of thy tuwhoo,
 Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,
 Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,
 With a lengthened loud halloo,
 Tuwhoo, tuwhit, tuwhit, tuwhoo-o-o.

The Owl represents not merely the bird who warms his precious "five wits," in the companion poem, but on a separate level, he

stands for Shakespeare himself. The speaker is very conscious of the degree to which the elegance of Shakespeare is quoted and relied on in modern poetry, and he is somewhat concerned that the "tuwhoos of yesternight," echoed so often "with delight," are in danger of being trivialized from overuse. Poets tend to look so much to the great master as an authority figure, much as the sceptic in Tennyson's essay on ghosts does, that the sheer power of Shakespeare's language perhaps carries "a fainter tone" today. The speaker worries that the world values less than it should the pure achievements of Shakespeare's craft and, loath to see him become too tired, resolves to use his talents to give Shakespeare's extraordinary verse new life. "I would mock thy chaunt anew," he declares, but without unrealistic hopes that he can equal it. By his own confession, he is not capable of actually "mimicking" such great feats of language -- "Not a whit", he says -- but he is determined to use it in a way that does not cheapen it, despite the tendency of his age to allow its impressive force to be "lulled."

Such, then, is Tennyson's assessment of his relationship to Shakespeare by the age of twenty-one. To him, Shakespeare was an inspiration as well as an artist whose works he saw no harm in "chanting anew." Tennyson's main worry was not whether he was capable of preserving his own originality as a poet in his endeavours to "mock" Shakespeare, but rather whether he was capable of rising to such an occasion. If he had anxieties, they were about his ability to meet the standard that he had set for

himself. The next chapter considers just how successful Tennyson was at producing the magic of Shakespeare "anew" in the poems of his middle years.

CHAPTER THREE:
IN MEMORIAM AND MAUD

It is worth investigating next the nature of Tennyson's debt to Shakespeare in his mature years, once the experiments of *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* were well behind him. By the time of his major publications of the 1850s, Shakespeare had become for Tennyson exactly what the two "Owl" poems had indicated he would -- that is, a predecessor towards whom one aspires rather than an ominous shadow from whom one must escape. This chapter examines new directions in which Tennyson took his debt to Shakespeare and explains why it would be strange to suggest that he ever felt antagonistic towards him.

The presence of Shakespeare is felt everywhere in poems such as *In Memoriam* (1850), arguably Tennyson's supreme achievement. It is far from easy to determine the exact kinds of inspiration that Tennyson drew from Shakespeare in the composition of this piece. The scholar's task is to divine which passages in *In Memoriam* are intelligent, creative echoes of Shakespeare, not unlike the ones seen in earlier works, which are equally legitimate variations on syntax, and which are accidental reminiscences that might lead to questions about unacceptable artistic debt and unwelcome literary influence.

Without question, Tennyson frequently and deliberately reminds the reader of certain moments in Shakespeare in order to give moments in his own poem a particular emotional resonance. One example appears in Section LXXVIII, the section in which Tennyson describes his second Christmas after Hallam's death. He begins to wonder whether his grief has not subsided somewhat, and fearing that it may have, he becomes vexed. He observes on Christmas Eve that he has not shed a "single tear," and that he no longer bears any other sort of "mark of pain" (14). The absence of these things is, he finds, extremely troubling, and he exclaims, "O last regret, regret can die" (17), suggesting that everyone present at the gathering has a duty never to cease open mourning. He admits that "over all things brooding slept/ The quiet sense of something lost" (7-8), yet this seems insufficient. It is not enough only to remember Hallam forever -- there must be outward signs of sorrow at all times.

Tennyson puts his mind at ease somewhat by deciding that Sorrow has not, in fact, dissipated. On the contrary, "with long use her tears" simply have become "dry" (20). Nevertheless, he is unhappy with both his own and his company's failure to make more of a display of grief, and in order to emphasize that a very crucial duty is going unfulfilled, he uses a term that links Section LXXVIII with the famous closet-scene in *Hamlet*. The observation that no one seems to show a "token of distress" (13) as the party participates in "dance and song and hoodman-blind" immediately recalls the following words of Hamlet to Gertrude:

Else could you not have emotion, but sure that sense
 Is apoplex'd, for madness would not err,
 Nor sense to exstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
 But it reserv'd some quantity of choice
 To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
 That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
 ... O shame, where is thy blush? (III.iv.71-81)

The speech is from what arguably is the emotional climax of the play, when Hamlet castigates his mother for her questionable judgement, calls her corrupt, and forces her to confront her deteriorating conscience. The reproof is effective enough that Gertrude finally implores him to stop, and Tennyson's use of the Shakespearean term for the game, "blindman's bluff," places the reader in the midst of this chaotic scene and all of its rhetoric about dishonour and shame. Rather than be heavy-handed and borrow diction that has to do directly and obviously with the matter at hand, Tennyson uses a term that unmistakably comes from the same exchange and imports only the spirit of the speech from which it is taken. In other words, Tennyson's own unsteady conscience about his failure to maintain a public show of grief is given special energy by means of this timely link with one of the most relentless speeches ever composed on the neglect of moral duty.

Indeed, many terms that appear in *In Memoriam* similarly remind the reader of key moments in *Hamlet*. Section VII presents Tennyson visiting Hallam's home after having spent a sleepless night and finding that his friend is, of course, not there to receive him. Standing outside his house, he appears to be in a trance -- one from which only the nearby early-morning "noise of

life" is able to arouse him (10) -- and in this scene he addresses Hallam's house:

Dark house, ...
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.
(1-8)

"Guilty thing" appears in the first scene of Shakespeare's play when Horatio describes and rationalizes the departure of the ghost who has just visited him and Marcellus:

... it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day, and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
Th' extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine. (148-155)

In associating his actions before Hallam's house with those of Hamlet's father's ghost, Tennyson recalls Horatio's explanation that the break of day is a summoning away of all spirits. For readers who recognize the original context of "like a guilty thing," the effect of Section VII is strengthened tremendously as the echo lends to Tennyson's lines a sense that the trauma of Hallam's death has caused the speaker to wander the earth in just the same manner as that of a restless spirit. In the end, daylight brings Tennyson out of this trance, just as it calls away the ghost in Shakespeare's play, but the reader is left with a chilling impression of the extent to which Tennyson has failed to find consolation for his loss.

The previous section, Section VI, already states that to try to bear in mind the adage, "Loss is common to the race" (2),

which may have been taken from Gertrude's insensitive advice to her son concerning Hamlet's despondency over his father's death (I.iii.72), only makes the speaker's loss "rather more" (6) bitter. It seems fitting that the section that follows this one should present an image from the same play that serves to illustrate the depth of the psychological impact of Tennyson's loss.

As well, *In Memoriam* is replete with passages that recall moments in Shakespeare in far less obvious ways. Such passages require analysis that involves more than just discussion of source-manipulation, literary borrowing, or imaginative debt. As Bradley suggests, readers with a memory like that of Tennyson commonly are subject to tricks of memory in which "a phrase is retained ... perhaps for years, and is reproduced without any consciousness that it is not perfectly original" (71). It is worth considering moments in *In Memoriam* in which Shakespeare may well have been echoed by accident.

Bradley (104), recommends that the reader compare,

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
Or breaking into song by fits,
Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloaked from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
I wander ... (XXIII.1-7)

with Posthumus' speech in *Cymbeline*:

... he had rather
Groan so in perpetuity than be cur'd
By th' sure physician, death, who is the key
T' unbar these locks. (V.iv.5-8)

Alfred Gatty likewise submits that,

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
 And in a moment set thy face
 Where all the starry heavens of space
 Are sharpened to a needle's end. (LXXVI.1-4)

may have a parallel in the first act of the same play:

I would have broke mine eye-strings, crack'd them, but
 To look upon him, till the diminution
 Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle.
 (I.iii.17-20)

In both instances, vocabulary is somewhat similar but little else is. There appears to be no power in either association with *Cymbeline*. These reminiscences surely are explained either as coincidence, or else as chance reproductions of language from what was one of Tennyson's favourite Shakespearean dramas.

Tennyson's enthusiasm for the Sonnets also manifests itself in *In Memoriam*. Section XXXVIII presents Tennyson "loiter[ing] on" (1) in a completely cheerless spring, with his departed friend still constantly on his mind:

No joy the blowing season gives,
 The herald melodies of spring.... (5-6)

As Ricks notes (355), Line 6 strongly recalls "herald to the gaudy spring" in Shakespeare's Sonnet 1, and this hardly functions in the manner that echo should. The reader perhaps is reminded of Shakespeare's poem, but nothing can be made of this, for nothing in that poem about the dangers of selfish hoarding and the refusal to produce offspring appears to contribute to one's understanding of Tennyson's passage. There are many similar instances throughout *In Memoriam* -- Section XLVIII, for example, speaks of visitations from Hallam by night and describes how "Thy marble bright in dark appears" (5). The expression

perhaps comes from Sonnet 43, when the speaker gazes upon his beloved in dream visions and finds that her eyes, "darkly bright, are bright in dark directed" (4). To cite another possible parallel, Section CXVIII, so famous for its evolution motif, urges the reader to "Contemplate all this work of Time" (1) and the "solid earth"'s many "seeming-random forms" (9-10), and finally concludes with:

Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die. (25-28)

"Sensual feast" is found in Sonnet 141, when the speaker admits to his beloved that he has no "desire to be invited/ To any sensual feast with thee alone" (7-8).

It is one matter to study Tennyson's ability to exploit earlier material in order to make new art from it and to trace the development of his success, but it is quite another to make sense of more subtle, perhaps even disputable, parallels. To understand fully Tennyson's relationship to Shakespeare, it is necessary to extend the discussion of debt to include unintentional similarities between works by each poet, and to speculate on how Tennyson might have felt about any suggestion that he lived ambivalently "in the shadow" of one of England's foremost poets.

According to Bloom, poets invariably have favourites among all writers who precede them, but most are so fond of reading and admiring the works of their predecessors that they never become more than mere imitators of them. Others become so frightened of

being thought imitative that they systematically try to repress whatever influence their predecessors might have. To accomplish this end, Bloom argues, successful poets misread the works of others, in order that they might satisfy themselves that their writing parts company with what others have produced, thereby establishing for themselves a claim to originality.

Bloom's model is distinctly Oedipal. The relationship between poets and their forefathers is one of love and hate, for, paradoxically, writers whom poets venerate the most are the very ones towards whom poets grow hostile, absolutely resentful of the ways in which their imaginations are controlled by the literary output of others. Accordingly, they attempt to "slay" them by way of misreadings in order to forge artistic identities of their own. "The young citizen of poetry," Bloom explains, "from his start as a poet quests for an impossible object, as his precursor quested before him. ... Oedipus, blind, was on the path to oracular godhood, and the strong poets have followed him by transforming their blindness towards their precursors into the revisionary insights of their own work" (*Anxiety* 10). Just as Hollander discusses what makes some poets stronger than others, so too does Bloom explain that:

No ... poet can reduce the significance of the precursor's mastery, because it is not possible for the ... poet to transcend the oppositional relationship that is ultimately a negative or dialectical identification with the precursor. That relationship can be transcended only by refusing the perpetual burden and conflict of *becoming a strong poet*. ("Shadow" 129)

It is worth considering whether Tennyson is a revisionist in this sense. He may, in fact, have laboured hard to make poems such as *In Memoriam* as un-Shakespearean as possible but with only partial success. Perhaps he felt that his source material always was more carefully controlled than it really was -- perhaps he experienced Bloomian influence anxieties because the power of his great precursor's verse was too strong for all things Shakespearean to be prevented from finding their way into Tennyson's poetry.

There can be no doubt that Tennyson occasionally experienced anxieties about the influence of other poets on him. Margaret A. Lourie surveys some of what Tennyson may have picked up from Shelley, whom Tennyson was among the first in England to esteem (5), and finds enormous "coincidence of diction, metaphor, and theme" in several poems (8). She notices that "The Poet's Mind" (1830), in particular, owes much to *Alastor*, especially in the first stanza of the original. The first fourteen lines of the poem as it first appeared in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* read as follows:

Vex not thou the poet's mind
 With thy shallow wit:
 Vex not thou the poet's mind;
 For thou canst not fathom it.
 Clear and bright it should be ever,
 Flowing like a crystal river;
 Bright as light, and clear as wind.
 Clear as summer mountainstreams
 Bright as the inwoven beams,
 Which beneath their crisping sapphire
 In the midday, floating o'er
 The golden sands, make evermore
 To a blossomstarrèd shore.
 Hence away, unhallowed laughter!

As Lourie observes, the "blossomstarrèd shore" recalls the parasites in Shelley's poem that are "starred with ten thousand blossoms" (I.440). The settings of the poems are identical: "The Poet's Mind" is set at "midday" and *Alastor* at "noonday" (I.440). Furthermore, the "inwoven beams" strongly suggest Shelley's moon, "with whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed/ To mingle" (II.648-49), and "the dark-browed sophist" of "The Poet's Mind" (II.1) clearly "is warned away from an enclosed mental garden that Tennyson inherited from Shelley" (Lourie 9). What is most interesting about "The Poet's Mind," however, is that the latter seven lines of Stanza 1 were eliminated in all printings subsequent to that in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. It is as if Tennyson "cancelled the last half of Stanza 1 because its debt to this particular *Alastor* landscape was too patent" (Lourie 9).

"To Virgil" (1882) is another interesting study for a different, but related, reason. This much later poem makes liberal use of Virgilian echoes, but Tennyson scrupulously avoids making it too Virgilian a poem; as Pattison remarks, the poem deliberately "is couched not in the heroic dactyl but in the trochee, a meter that Tennyson had made his own vehicle" (Pattison 171). According to Pattison, this "is typical of Tennyson's approach to the [literary] tradition: to use it as a source out of which the craftsman evolves new creations, creations that are demonstrably linked to tradition but surpass it" (2).

A great deal of contemporary criticism held that Tennyson's poetry contained too much tradition in the form of echoes and not enough improvements upon it (Pattison 2). Tennyson was sensitive to such criticism, and he had little patience with Collins and others who made more of his borrowing than he felt was appropriate. In fact, he became extremely defensive about it:

There is, I fear, a prosaic set growing among us, editors of booklets, and book-worms, index-hunters, or men of great memories and no imagination, who *impute themselves* to the poet, and so believe that *he*, too, has no imagination, but is for ever poking his nose between the pages of some old volume to see what he can appropriate. They will not allow one to say "Ring the bell" without finding that we have taken it from Sir P. Sidney, or even to use such a simple expression as the ocean "roars," without finding out the precise verse in Homer or Horace from which we have plagiarised it (fact). (Ricks I.xix)

On another occasion, Tennyson lamented that critics can get from "the moanings of the homeless sea," 'moanings' from Horace, 'homeless' from Shelley. As if no one else had heard the sea moan except Horace" (Gray 43).

But Tennyson's anger, in both cases, clearly exaggerates the case. Such defensiveness from a poet who uses, by intention, the diction of others with such frequency perhaps suggests that Tennyson occasionally felt unsure about his originality. Since he was so quick to insist that any influence in his poetry shows exclusively in the places where he had intended it to show, perhaps Bloom's thoughts on the relationship between poet and precursor are applicable to Tennyson's relationship to the one man to whom his imaginative debt is, arguably, the largest. Tennyson had written a rather ambiguous poem called "Memory [Ay

me!]" (1831), which suggests with one line -- "Blessèd, cursèd Memory" (5) -- that memory for anything, even the most beautiful of somebody else's poetry, can be a mixed blessing. Pattison explains the paradox as follows: "the past is at once a weight suppressing the craftsman's creativity and the wellspring of the craft itself" (2). Since Tennyson could recall nobody's poetry more quickly than he could Shakespeare's, it seems plausible that he might have grown ambivalent about what it contributed to his own writings.

But perhaps the most convincing evidence that Tennyson experienced influence anxieties is provided by Harold Bloom himself, who cites "Mariana," among others, as typical of Tennyson's "beautiful misprision of Keats" ("Shadow" 130). Bloom is not interested in echoes, dismissing them as "tags" and "essentially ornamental allusions" (131). His interest instead is, in essence, the way in which Tennyson goes to great lengths to do with a poem like "Mariana" what Keats would never have done: according to Bloom, "Mariana" "revers[es] Keats' heroic and proleptic naturalism" by having the protagonist achieve "a synaesthetic vision." Mariana is only too willing to weave into one the sparrow's singing at the end, the ticking of the clock, and "the poplar's erotic cry"; in this way, she narcissistically replaces "near-stasis or slow-pacedness" with language of the sense that involves the sounds and sights of passing time, thereby making a "metaleptic reversal of the most characteristic of Keatsian metonymies" (133).

Bloom argues that the heroine in Tennyson's poem needs to be treated as a poet herself, since sexual anguish often functions as "a mask for influence-anxiety." Thus, "her true affliction is the Romantic self-consciousness of Keats and Shelley as solitary questers made yet one generation more belated, and no bridegroom, if he ever arrived, would be able to assuage her malaise" (133). Bloom concludes that:

What ... is Mariana repressing? Why, that she doesn't want or need the other who cometh not. What would she do with him, what mental space has she left for him? And what is Tennyson the poet repressing? Only that the most dangerous and powerful and authentic part of his own poetic mind would like to be as perfectly embowered as Mariana's consciousness is, but of course it can't. And yet, Tennyson *has* surpassed Keats in his misprision of Keats' mode, for even Keats is not, could not be, the sustained artist that Tennyson is. (135)

According to Bloom, this is the kind of thing that strong poets must do in order not to remain minor versifiers forever, and in the last analysis Tennyson did not manage to do it often enough over his career:

Tennyson was too sublimely repressed a poet to develop very overtly his ambivalence towards his prime precursors. ... But Tennyson ... was a preternaturally strong poet, and we have seen something of his strength at misprision. The shadow of Keats never did abandon him wholly, and so the stance of belatedness became a kind of second nature to him. (149)

Bloom cites as evidence later poems such as "Tithonus" and *The Holy Grail* -- the former, he says, being no more than "a High Romantic crisis-poem, masking as a dramatic monologue" (143), and the latter simply spelling out in symbolic form the story of Tennyson's artistic life with Tennyson represented in Percival, "the belated quest of Victorian Romanticism," and the High

Romantic quest, lead by Keats, represented in Galahad, out of whose shadow Percival is unable to escape (149).

However, as attractive as Bloom's ideas can be for explaining Tennyson's feelings about some poets, it does not follow that his relationship to Shakespeare is identical to his relationship to others; the desire to escape the influence of Shakespeare is not necessarily there. Tennyson may have struggled to make his work less conspicuously like the work of many other poets, but the case of the influence of this particular predecessor is, perhaps, exceptional. To understand why, one must look at the psychodynamics in a different way and allow that a precursor's presence can be large without being oppressive.

Bloom's theory insists that a poet always feels a certain amount of hostility towards all of those who influence him, even if he is not aware of such feelings. Tennyson, though, may have been incapable of becoming belligerent towards Shakespeare at any level of consciousness, particularly at the time of the composition of *In Memoriam*. It is useful to bear in mind that Arthur Henry Hallam had been enormously partial to Shakespeare's Sonnets, despite his father's famous judgement of them, a denunciation that was very influential in literary circles:

Perhaps there is now a tendency, especially among young men of poetical tempers, to exaggerate the beauties of these remarkable productions. ... An attachment to some female, which seems to have touched neither his heart nor his fancy very sensibly, was overpowered, without entirely ceasing, by one to a friend. ... [I]t is impossible not to wish that Shakespeare had never written them. There is a weakness and folly in all

excessive and misplaced affection, which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments that abound in this long series of sonnets. (Ricks II.314)

Arthur Hallam disagreed sharply. He once wrote the following words of praise for the Sonnets in *The Influence of Italian Upon English Literature* (1831):

It would have been strange ... if, in the most universal mind that ever existed, there had been no express recognition of that mode of sentiment, which had first asserted the character, and designated the direction, of modern literature. I cannot help considering the Sonnets of Shakespeare as a sort of homage to that Genius of Christian Europe, necessarily exacted, although voluntarily paid, before he was allowed to take in hand the sceptre of his endless dominion. (Ricks 313)

Tennyson was in perfect agreement with Arthur on this matter. He said later on in his life that "Henry Hallam made a great mistake about [the Sonnets]: they are noble" (Ricks 314).

It is difficult to imagine Tennyson growing combative over the Sonnets throughout the 1830s and 1840s, at just the time when he could not have been more pleased to keep them as fresh as possible in his mind. He read and re-read them countless times as he mourned the loss of his dear friend (Ricks 313), and this fact is far from surprising: Hallam had enjoyed the poems a great deal, and a few of the Sonnets perhaps seemed topical in their "ardent tone of affection in the language of friendship" (Henry Hallam in Ricks 314).

As Benjamin Jowett records, Tennyson, in his grief, quite consciously turned to Shakespeare in order to learn something from Shakespeare's incomparable "power to draw himself for his fellow men." So while "in that ... phase of mind he found the

Sonnets a deeper expression of the never to be forgotten love which he felt more than any of the many moods of many minds which appear among [Shakespeare's] dramas" (Ricks II.313). If the language of any piece by the poet whom Arthur called "the most universal mind that ever existed" should happen to have penetrated Tennyson's composition, that hardly seems something that Tennyson would have wanted changed. In a sense, the occasional turns of phrase that are, perhaps, unconsciously reproduced from the Sonnets in *In Memoriam* make up the best tribute to his friend that Tennyson could muster.

Bloom's theory, then, does not adequately explain the nature of the relationship between poet and forerunner every time. It does not allow for special literary relationships that almost need to be explored on near-personal, even non-literary levels. Occasionally it is possible for a poet to maintain his status as "strong poet" by compromising no integrity or originality, while still not growing antagonistic towards his precursor, and certainly without having to pull off some workable "misprision" of a work that he greatly reveres. Bloom maintains that Tennyson had the ability to overcome Keats' influence but lost it upon the death of Hallam, one of the world's first and most enthusiastic champions of Keats. Unfortunately, as he explains, Tennyson became far too obsessed with his own

belatedness as a poet, [or] his arrival on the scene *after the event*, after the triumph of poetry of "reflection" in Coleridge and Wordsworth, and of poetry of "sensation" in Shelley and Keats, to use a critical distinction invented by Hallam. Hallam's enormous contribution to Tennyson was to overcome the poet's

diffidence, and to persuade him that he could become a third, with Shelley and Keats. Hallam dead, Tennyson knew not only the guilt of a survivor but also the obsessive poetic fear of belatedness, the fear that torments his own Sir Percivale, that every repressed voice crying from within will proclaim: "The Quest is not for thee." ("Shadow" 145)

Perhaps what makes the case of Shakespeare different is that Shakespeare is far enough in the past that there need not be troubled feelings about whether or not Tennyson is "belated" in relation to him. With time, Shakespeare's presence becomes somewhat magical in the English literary imagination, occupying a place that makes him at once "the most universal of minds" but still no competition for any poet who arrives as much as two hundred years after him. Shakespeare becomes the standard against which subsequent poetry in English is to be judged, without having to incur, at least for Tennyson, the wrath that any oppressive influence might incur. In other words, a new poet proves himself either as imaginative and felicitous as Shakespeare or not, and Shakespeare's body of work stands as a point of comparison only and need not represent a figure of tyranny that must be "internalized" or a spirit that must be exorcized.

Another great work from the same decade, *Maud* (1855), reveals a great deal about Tennyson's relationship to Shakespeare at mid-career, and it suggests much that is similar about it. *Maud* represents one of Tennyson's earliest efforts to compose a poem with a complex plot, and it is evident that Tennyson turned to Shakespeare for ideas. The poem has many elements from *Romeo*

and *Juliet*, in particular, especially in its employment of certain devices that serve to strengthen the work's tragic impact. For example, Tennyson's hero utters these words that surely foreshadow his experiences later on:

O let the solid ground
 Not fail beneath my feet
 Before my life has found
 What some have found so sweet;
 Then let come what come may,
 What matter if I go mad,
 I shall have had my day.
 (I.398-404)

As Thomas P. Harrison suggests, "The same ironical sentiment appears in Romeo's solemn rejoinder to Friar Lawrence" (81), which Tennyson called "one of the most passionate things in Shakespeare" (Hallam Tennyson 662):

... come what sorrow can,
 It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
 That one short minute gives me in her sight.
 Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
 Then love-devouring death do what he dare,
 It is enough I may but call her mine.
 (II.vi.3-8)

Tennyson also takes from *Romeo and Juliet* some elements of plot and characterization, especially as regards the poem's main antagonist, Maud's brother, who is like Tybalt. Just as Romeo realizes that it is not in his best interests to fight the cousin of his beloved, and accordingly answers Tybalt's hostile words with, "The reason that I have to love thee/ Doth much excuse the appertaining rage/ To such a greeting" (III.i.62-64), Tennyson's speaker likewise claims, and for similar reasons, "I longed so heartily then and there/ To give him the grasp of fellowship" (I.458-59). Later, he forces himself to say, in a moment of

acute frustration, "Peace, angry spirit, and let him be! / Has not his sister smiled on me?" (I.487-88). Maud's brother has Tybalt's love for retaining enemies, as it turns out, and he remains unreceptive to all gestures of reconciliation and goodwill. Just like Shakespeare's antagonist, he dies in a duel that he stubbornly provokes, and his death forces the unhappy hero to flee for his life. It is imprudent to push the affinity between these two pieces too far, but the similarities that exist are unmistakable. Tennyson's habit of writing poems that have interesting points of comparison with Shakespearean works certainly was not curtailed as his career advanced.

Moreover, Tennyson himself explicitly invited readers, just as he had done in his epigraph to "Mariana," to consider how *Maud* relates to another Shakespearean source, this time *Hamlet*. He did so on at least two separate occasions: once when he called the poem, outright, "a little *Hamlet*" (Hallam Tennyson II.409), and when he once said, a bit more suggestively, that *Maud* is "slightly akin to *Hamlet*" (Hargrave 151). *Maud* does not actually echo *Hamlet* any more than it does *Romeo and Juliet*, but despite Thomas P. Harrison's criticism that the poem does not deal with the theme of madness as Shakespeare's plays does, and therefore does not warrant the comparison that Tennyson urged (80), there are several interesting similarities between Tennyson's second masterpiece and the play with which he chose to associate it.

First, *Maud* presents a protagonist who, like Hamlet, has lost his father as a result of somebody else's avaricious

designs, and becomes consumed with the need for revenge. Things then become complicated by the fact that he finds himself, just as Hamlet does, in love with the daughter of an arch foe. *Maud* also is set in a context in which a huge war is close at hand, just as *Hamlet* opens with speculation that Fortinbras of Norway is on the verge of invading Denmark in order to seize back all that Hamlet's father had won in battle previously. Nothing comes of this threat in Shakespeare's play, of course, but as Harrison notes, "the aura of war and the presence of internecine tensions persist" in both pieces (275).

War and battle remain important themes in these works because each self-indulgent hero eventually determines that by fighting he can do much to preserve his honour. Hamlet, inspired by a conversation with a captain who is heading off to fight dutifully in Poland, decides that it is worthwhile "to find quarrel in a straw/ When honour's at the stake" (IV.iv.55-56) and then he announces, "O, from this time forth,/ My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!" (65-66). The speaker in *Maud* similarly resolves that "It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;/ I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,/ I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned" (III.i.57-9). In this way, each hero puts a permanent end to his habit of introspection and seeks to justify himself by making the preservation of honour the first among priorities (Hargrave 156).

Before showing such determination, the two heroes are marked by a propensity to delay things. They mope too much over their losses and allow themselves to slip into melancholia about all that is wrong with the world, just when they might be taking action and doing what they can for themselves. Tennyson's speaker makes complaints such as, "And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,/ And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life" (I.i.39-40). Hamlet, in a similar fashion, frequently is paralysed by his ponderings of man's evil nature. As Hargrave suggests, each character is prone to "inertia in a too-complex world" (153).

Thus, with the reader so much reminded of Shakespeare's character, part of the overall emotional effect of *Maud* is helped along by the often-overlooked likenesses between Tennyson's poem and *Hamlet*. As is the case with *Maud* and *Romeo and Juliet*, however, the kinship between the two works must not be overstated, for there are significant differences -- most notably, one piece ends with the hero triumphantly, indeed almost foolishly, heading off to fight for England and God and all things "right," while the other finishes only with mass death. Yet clearly, any judgement that can be made on Tennyson's protagonist, no matter what his faults, are possible to balance with profound sympathy for him (Anthony Harrison 281), as is the case with the ineffectual but severely wronged character in Shakespeare's play. Tennyson evokes the reader's sympathy by skilfully making *Hamlet* an important analogue to his poem, and

then by singling out that play as an analogue, he urges a certain kind of understanding for his complex character's difficulties and motives.

Tennyson, then, means to be taken seriously when he relates any poem of his to something by Shakespeare. *Maud* is one of his most successful efforts at "mocking" Shakespeare's "chaunt anew" because it captures the intensity of *Hamlet* without becoming too derivative. Like *In Memoriam*, but without the echoes, it reproduces the spirit of what Shakespeare accomplished in such a way that Shakespeare remains a friend rather than a foe. Bloom's suggestion that poets fight against their predecessors has its merits, but ultimately it does not allow for the kind of relationship that Tennyson cultivated with Shakespeare, which became, over time, increasingly near-personal.

Tennyson wanted his work to be known for its connections to and similarities with Shakespeare's, and he had no trouble with having his image overlap somewhat with that of England's greatest poet. Indeed, the more closely he could be associated with Shakespeare, the better, and in later years he went to great lengths to push the two images ever closer together and bring the near-personal relationship to new heights. His efforts to do so are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR:

TENNYSON AS PLAYWRIGHT AND THE DEATH OF TENNYSON

When Tennyson was in his sixties and living in London, he attempted a career in writing for the theatre. Naturally, Shakespeare remained on his mind as much as ever, and as he composed his dramas he continued to draw extensively from Shakespeare's plays.

Some of Tennyson's dramatic works borrow only certain facets of plot and character as a means of enriching the drama. *The Falcon* (1879), for instance, is a one-act play that is based on a story by Boccaccio, and it is one to which Tennyson adds several elements, once again from *Romeo and Juliet*. The original story, Novel IX of Day Five in *The Decameron*, consists only of two characters, the unsuccessful but resolute lover, Federigo degli Alberighi, and a wealthy widow named Monna Giovanna, the object of Federigo's affections. With Federigo having wasted all of his money trying to buy the love of Monna, only to find that his feelings are unreturned, Boccaccio's story opens with the male protagonist left without a single possession in the world apart from a valuable hunting bird, upon whom he is forced to depend for his substance.

One morning, Monna visits Federigo's dwelling with the most unusual of requests: she wishes to take his bird away, for her ailing son has just asked for it. However, she does not state

the purpose of her visit until after she has been served some breakfast, whereupon she discovers that the precious falcon was breakfast. The unhappy Federigo no doubt would have obliged Monna, but as he explains, "having respect to your high dignity and desert, I deemed it due and seemly that in your honour I should regale you, to the best of my power, with fare of a more excellent quality than is commonly set before others" (52). Monna's son dies, perhaps from a broken heart after having been deprived of Federigo's falcon, but Monna decides that she is so impressed with Federigo's selflessness that she agrees to marry him. The story ends with Federigo having both the woman he loves and some money once again. In the future, he vows to keep far "more exact accounts" (53).

Tennyson's version of the story adds two more *dramatis personae* -- Filippo, a foster-brother to Federigo, and Elisabetta, Federigo's nurse. Filippo is not unlike Shakespeare's Mercutio, in that the cynical realism of his character makes him function as a foil to the somewhat dreamy Federigo. He is suspicious of love, and he does not let his foster-brother forget the misery that his opulent, extravagant passion has inflicted upon all of those close to him. For example, he declares bitterly when asked about the contents in the pantry that there are nothing but "Shelves and hooks, shelves and hooks, and when I see the shelves I am like to hang myself on the hooks" (715). Moreover, his efforts to laugh Federigo out of his troubles occasionally border, like Mercutio's, on the

insensitive, especially when he mocks Federigo's many protestations of love:

Ah, Monna Giovanna, you here again! you that have the face of an angel and the heart of a -- that's too positive! You that have a score of lovers and have not a heart for any of them -- that's positive-negative: you that have *not* the head of a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in it -- that's too negative; you that have a cheek like a peach and a heart like the stone in it -- that's positive again -- that's better! (715)

Elisabetta, although she does not taunt Federigo as Filippo does, likewise has a practical outlook on life that contrasts sharply with the idealism of Federigo. She is to some degree reminiscent of Juliet's Nurse (Pinion 207), since just as the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* is completely uninterested in the lofty passion of the young lovers, so too does Elisabetta choose to look at matters solely in a realistic way. She criticizes Federigo for selling his grand palace and moving to a mean cottage just so that he could purchase, anonymously, a necklace for his beloved. She points to the beads that she wears about her neck and says, "My Piero, God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me, Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him" (714).

Also, Elisabetta has absolutely no patience for the convention of male self-sacrifice in courtly love, and she points out disgustedly that Monna Giovanna is "rich enough to have bought [the necklace] for herself" (714). She resembles the Nurse even further when she tries to act as a go-between for

Federigo: "I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last!" (715), cries she upon the approach of Monna towards Federigo's humble cottage.

But perhaps the most significant element from *Romeo and Juliet* that Tennyson brings to Boccaccio's story involves the reason for Monna Giovanna's failure to respond to Federigo's advances. In Boccaccio, she cares "not a jot for what he [does] for her sake, nor yet for him" (48). He is beneath her on the social scale, and therefore her brothers chide her at the end of the story when she announces her intention to marry Federigo: "Foolish woman," they say, "... How shouldst thou want Federigo, who has not a thing in the world?" (53). Tennyson complicates matters by having his protagonists separated, as Shakespeare's are, not by snobbish indifference on the part of the lady but by an age-old family conflict. Tennyson's Monna always has been deeply touched by Federigo's generosity, but as she explains, she is prevented from acting on her feelings:

I can never marry him.
His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl
At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd him there.
The feud between our houses is the bar
I cannot cross. (716)

Overcome at last by Federigo's munificence, she swears, "I love you!/ Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo," and Federigo pledges, "Peace and conciliation! I will make/ Your brother love me." He expects that he will be able to accomplish this by doing his best to help to heal her son, who does not die in the play but is now referred to by Federigo as "your son and mine" (723).

Thus, Tennyson models two new characters on masterful creations by Shakespeare in order to embellish *The Falcon* with lasting comic moments, and he uses one of Shakespeare's central ideas in *Romeo and Juliet* to grant his protagonists more complex motives than Boccaccio allows his. In this way, Tennyson transforms, with the help of Shakespeare, an extremely simple fable into a fairly sophisticated -- and infinitely more stageable -- play.

Other plays use Shakespearean plot and character even more profoundly. *The Promise of May* (1882) has a source in *King Lear*, especially in the way in which Edgar, its main male character, is presented as a combination of Gloucester's two sons, Edmund and Edgar. Like Shakespeare's Edgar, Tennyson's is a confused, disinherited young man, but like Edmund, he also is a scheming seducer who manages to woo two sisters, of whom one eventually dies as a result (Dennis 208). Moreover, just as Shakespeare's Edgar disguises himself as a madman and then tries to win his father's confidence and love before revealing his true identity, Tennyson's returns to the homestead of Eva, the girl whom he ruined, disguised as a wandering, "worn" (736) man named Harold, who speaks a great deal of uncanny nonsense. As Harold, he soon takes an interest in Eva's sister, Dora, who still laments her sibling's disastrous disappearance with Edgar five years ago. Knowing that his is a hated name in such parts of the country, he resolves, "I must make her/ Love Harold first, and then she will forgive/ Edgar for Harold's sake" (738).

As Dennis further points out, Tennyson's Edgar is, like Edmund, quick to defend his contemptible conduct on grounds that it is sanctioned by some superior natural law, if not by stuffy, human moral codes (209). Shakespeare's character declares:

Thou, Nature, art my goddess, to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? (I.ii.1-6)

Tennyson's Edgar, equally bitter about social conventions, sees himself as a visionary, and he announces with glee that:

The storm is hard at hand will sweep away
Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs, marriage
One of the feeblest! Then the man, the woman,
Following their best affinities, will each
Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears.
(*The Promise of May* 729)

Edgar also talks of "naked Nature/ In all her loveliness" (730), and complains that "if we did not strain to make ourselves/
Better and higher than Nature, we might be/ As happy as the bees
there at their honey/ In these sweet blossoms" (730).

Furthermore, he confidently deduces that:

It is Nature kills. ...
And if my pleasure breed another's pain,
Well -- is not that the course of Nature too,
From the dim dawn of Being -- her main law
Whereby she grows in beauty ... ? (727)

Finally the many parallels between *The Promise of May* and *King Lear* are confirmed upon Edgar's words as soon as he makes his first entrance in the play. He utters, "'What are we,' says the blind old man in Lear?/ 'As flies to the Gods; they kill us for their sport'" (726), and his speech obviously refers to

Gloucester's, "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods,/ They kill us for their sport" (IV.i.36-7). Through this reference to Gloucester's most famous and despairing words in *King Lear*, Tennyson generates power through association once again. The association magnifies the callousness of Edgar's frequent musings about the kind of universe in which man lives, and it reinforces the play's central theme of filial spite and ingratitude, a theme that applies to *The Promise of May* not just because Edgar's chief motives so exactly recall those of the treacherous Edmund, but also because certain of the experiences of the Steer family are not unlike those of Lear.

First of all, Farmer Steer falls, as King Lear does, under the impression that his favourite daughter has betrayed him, and like Lear he angrily expels his daughter, only to live the rest of his life tormented by guilt. He "suggests both the insane Lear and the sightless Gloucester" when he is in his decline (Dennis 208), since it is marked by embarrassing, babbling senility and absolute blindness. "In addition," says Dennis, "just as the violent storm reflects and intensifies Lear's ill fortunes, so nature responds to the personal tragedy of Steer. ... [His] farm falls into neglect and blight" (209). Other similarities between the two plays are kept to a minimum, for Tennyson's wish is not to rewrite *King Lear*, but rather to be reminiscent of Shakespeare's great tragedy, with an attentive enough ear all the while to "resonances of context." His play, in

the end, yields similar emotions to those of Shakespeare's without merely "cultivating" (Hollander 73) them.

But what is most interesting about Tennyson's late involvement with the theatre is not so much that he wrote more pieces that drew upon his extensive acquaintance with Shakespeare, but that he ever attempted a dramatic career. It may be that Tennyson felt he needed to start writing dramas in order that he could be more like Shakespeare. After all, Queen Victoria's England fancied itself in the vanguard of a new Renaissance (Martin 511), and who better to be the literary spokesman of such an age than the current Poet Laureate? Tennyson perhaps was flushed, too, with what he considered his success in creating characters for the longer poems of the previous twenty years -- for according to Martin, the harsh truth that Tennyson's experiments with character between about 1855 and 1875 were not all resoundingly successful never was "pressed home to him by his family and close friends" (511).

Moreover, Tennyson was not unused to overt comparisons of himself with Shakespeare. As early as the 1840s, Samuel Rogers had stated, with reference to "Locksley Hall," in a review of *Poems* (1842), that "Shakespeare could not have done it better" (Fausset 111). Henry Irving continued to encourage Tennyson in this way: "You don't disdain," he once asked him, not at all unobsequiously, "to be ranked with Shakespeare?" (Martin 523). In an article called "Tennyson" in *Views and Reviews* (1890), W. E. Henley also said of "On the Jubilee of Queen Victoria" (1887):

From the first Lord Tennyson has been an exemplar; and now in these new utterances, his supremacy is completely revealed. There is no fear that "All will grow the flower, for all have got the seed"; for then it was a mannerism that people took and imitated, and now -- ! Now it is art; it is the greater Shakespeare, the consummate Rembrandt, the unique Velasquez; and they may rise to it that can. (446)

Tennyson himself once even said, perhaps only half-jokingly, "that he had probably the greatest mastery of the language of any poet since Shakespeare, but had nothing more to say" (Levi 200). So it is not surprising that he eventually should have decided that in order to be considered, as Shakespeare is, a genuine literary representative of an age, he had to start using the theatre as a medium, doing with it for his own era what Shakespeare had done for his.

Prompted by this desire to be Shakespeare's successor, Tennyson, with the assistance of his circle of acquaintances, was able to convince himself that he was nothing less than "a good playwright lost to the world" (Martin 511-12), and having determined this, he did very little to conceal his motivation to embark on a dramatic career. In his own words, he deliberately sought first "to complete the line of Shakespeare's English chronicle plays" (Pinion 201). Accordingly, he decided first to present in *Queen Mary* (1875) an account of the troubled reign of Mary Tudor. Next, he wrote and saw produced *Harold* (1876), which tells of the short-lived reign of Harold II and his defeat by William of Normandy. In Tennyson's final play of this kind, *Becket* (1879), the subject is the turbulent relationship between Thomas à Becket and King Henry II. Whatever these plays actually

owe to Shakespeare's history plays is less important than the fact that Tennyson wrote them at all, thus making good his intention to write blank-verse historical drama in the manner of Shakespeare.

Interestingly, Tennyson constantly drew compliments that continued the popular association of the two playwrights. Sir Richard Jebb, for instance, credited *Queen Mary* with having a "dramatic fire" that had no match anywhere since Shakespeare (Pinion 202). George Henry Lewes likewise called *The Bower*, a shortened version of *Becket*, nothing less than "the most dramatic play since Shakespeare" (Lang 217). Henry S. King and Company, the original publisher of Tennyson's dramas, promoted its edition of *Queen Mary* by quoting, in its edition of *Harold*, in what would be the equivalent of dust-jacket promotional material today, *The Times* saying, "We do not know where to look in post-Shakespearean English poetry for a poem, in which the true fire of the drama so burns." The same promotional piece quotes *The Spectator* saying, "On the whole we think we may say that this is a play which will compare with something more than advantage with Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. Certainly we should be surprised to hear that any true critic would rate *Queen Mary*, whether in dramatic force or in general power, below *Henry VIII*, and our own impression is that it is a decidedly finer work of dramatic art."

In the end, Tennyson did not persist in his ambition to provide a "continuation of Shakespeare's historical plays" (Martin 512). Yet after he had completed his last play, *The*

Foresters (1881), which is set in the time of Robin Hood, he proudly described it in these terms: "I have sketched the state of the people in another great transition period in the making of England" (Hallam Tennyson II.173). Evidently, Tennyson never doubted his success in carrying out his self-appointed role as "poetical historian" (Fausset 251) of England in the style of Shakespeare, and for the rest of his life he remained encouraged, not dissuaded, by all comparisons with England's greatest poet and dramatist.

In fact, Tennyson continued to do his best to have his and Shakespeare's images cohabit, right up to his dying day in 1892. As Hallam Tennyson records (774-77), Tennyson repeatedly cried "I must have my Shakespeare" for days while he was on his deathbed, and when he finally got the copy of *Cymbeline* for which he moaned, he never let the book be seen closed, even though he was far "beyond reading" (Levi 323). As Joseph suggests, Tennyson, "like so many before and after him, like his early model Keats just before *his* death, separated Shakespeare from the rest of the English writers and created for him a redoubt of special eminence" (78).

Certainly Tennyson must have been genuine about wanting a copy of Shakespeare with him as he languished; no doubt he would have read from *Cymbeline* if he could. It seems equally likely, however, that Tennyson had other things in mind when he made a point of dying with something representative of Shakespeare in the vicinity. After a lifetime of being ranked side-by-side with

the greatest of English poets and dramatists, it was important that he be seen spending his final moments with a sample of Shakespeare's work close at hand. It was a way, perhaps, of solidifying forever in the minds of Englishmen the association of himself with Shakespeare that he and his contemporaries had forged. Hallam and Emily Tennyson definitely did not mistake the significance of this -- they saw to it that Tennyson was buried with a copy of the play for which he had called right in his hand (582).

Therefore, Tennyson's relationship to Shakespeare had developed into a relationship that needs to be discussed in terms of something more than influence-anxieties. Far from being indebted to Shakespeare only for ideas and turns-of-phrase, and far from growing hostile to his presence in his compositions, Tennyson had come to a point at which his own identity and Shakespeare's could not be close enough. Despite Bloom's demands that a writer find the presence of any other writer haunting and grow bellicose because of his inheritance from him lest he be condemned to write feeble verse forever, Tennyson shows in his relationship to Shakespeare that it is possible for a writer to find a literary ancestor anything but stifling.

He conceived of Shakespeare as a means to his own identity and growth at all stages of his long life, and Tennyson could not have done more to draw attention to his debt to Shakespeare, yet he never lost his creative edge either in his own eyes or in the eyes of his audience. Presumptuous though the association may

seem to modern readers, it was perfectly reasonable to Tennyson and to the Victorians. The Victorian sensibility challenged writers to operate within a literary tradition, not in spite of it, and Tennyson used his inspiration from Shakespeare to help him to rise to the occasion.

CONCLUSION

Tennyson once wrote, apparently in disgust over the publication of an unflattering biography of Byron (Ricks II.297), a poem called, "To --, After Reading a Life and Letters." At the head of the poem he quotes a line from Shakespeare's epitaph: "Cursed be he that moves my bones." In the poem he proceeds to threaten any future biographer of an anonymous poet who should happen to write a biography that defames him: "My Shakespeare's curse," he says, "on clown and knave/ Who will not let his ashes rest!" (27-8). The poem reveals much about the way in which Tennyson idealized Shakespeare.

One thing that always fascinated Tennyson was the fact that nobody can know many of the details about Shakespeare's life. This is how Tennyson preferred things -- in fact, he is known to have publicly "thanked God Almighty with his whole heart and soul that he knew nothing, and that the world knew nothing, of Shakespeare but his writings" (Lang II.319). One of the best aspects to admire about Shakespeare, according to Tennyson, is that the man is ultimately unknowable, in the sense that whomever Shakespeare really was, the sense of mystery about his identity today is what matters most. Shakespeare's real actions and the real events of his life mean little when measured against the image constructed of him by devotees now. Essentially, Tennyson

was fascinated by Christ for the same reasons, as the opening lines to the Prologue of *In Memoriam suggest*, which he allowed to appear in *The Book of Common Praise*:

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove.

This is not to say that Shakespeare was elevated, in Tennyson's imagination, to the point that he had parity with Christ, but it is worth pointing out that Tennyson valued Shakespeare for more than his writings. His works owe a great deal to the plays and Sonnets, but the relationship can only be understood fully when non-literary aspects of the relationship are given careful consideration. To Tennyson, Shakespeare had almost a personal presence in his life, and he remained an ideal to live up to both in his capacity as a poet and in his capacity as spokesman for an entire epoch of history. Shakespeare was, in other words, the ultimate English artist.

This thesis argues that if there are Bloomian anxieties about Shakespeare's influence in Tennyson's poetry, then surely it is difficult to explain away Tennyson's habit of encouraging comparisons of his works with Shakespearean pieces, as well as his not deeply-hidden ambition to be a Shakespeare to the Victorians. Tennyson was impressed not only with Shakespeare's artistic achievements, but also with the very idea of a Shakespeare, as was the rest of his age. The Victorians desperately wanted to have a person who could meet the standard

that Shakespeare had set long ago, and they looked to Tennyson to do it; and Tennyson, according to many, did not disappoint.

Many of Tennyson's works, of course, particularly the dramas, are not judged today to be of such high quality that they can be ranked with Shakespeare's, but this is beside the point. The important consideration is that Tennyson often was affected by image as much as by text: whatever modern theories concerning literary relationships may say on the matter, it was characteristic of the ethos of Tennyson's age to hold that the more a poet like Tennyson could be perceived to resemble Shakespeare, the stronger his poetic identity would be.

Therefore, the poem that quotes Shakespeare's epitaph is a fitting one with which to conclude this study because it says so much about Tennyson's thoughts about his relationship to Shakespeare. Presumably, the anonymous poet referred to is Tennyson himself, at a moment when he is worried that his personal life one day will be the subject of an unscrupulous book that will make his poetry of secondary interest. Tennyson wants his material to speak for itself, just as Shakespeare's does, and so he lets Shakespeare provide the words of the curse that he wishes to level upon anybody who should focus on biographical irrelevancies that might cause his image to have less in common than he would like with that of Shakespeare. After all, in the popular mind of nineteenth-century England, Shakespeare's image was quite untarnished.

"To --, After Reading a Life and Letters," then, is a perfect illustration of Tennyson's desire to have his artistic identity remain as close as possible to that of the most respected of English poets, and it was with this ambition in mind that he composed much of his poetry throughout his career.

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