Tennyson and the reviewers: a study of the effects of contemporary criticism on Tennyson's revision of six poems of 1833.

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Tennyson and the Reviewers:
A Study of the Effects of Contemporary Criticism
On Tennyson's Revision of Six Poems of 1833

By

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ABSTRACT

Tracing Tennyson's poetic development is complicated by the problem of establishing the precise nature of his relationship with the contemporary reviewers. Because Tennyson revised several poems which had provoked hostile criticism, the question was raised as to whether or not the revisions were direct responses to the criticism and, perhaps, even a conscious effort to placate the critics. Although the issue has been hotly debated, most argument has been predicated on what was known of the personalities involved, or on misleading statistical analysis of the poems and the criticism. My intention in this paper was to consider the question of Tennyson's attitude to hostile criticism in the light of textual analysis, an element which has been conspicuously absent from earlier discussions.

Chapter I deals with the two schools of thought on the issue of Tennyson's dependence on the critics and surveys and evaluates the material used to support the two different positions.

Chapter II concerns the far-reaching influence of John Wilson Croker, reviewer for the Quarterly. It attempts to show that the effect of Croker's review of Poems, 1833 has been greatly overestimated by the great biographers and by many modern critics.
In Chapter III, I have analyzed the 1833 and 1842 versions of the revised poems in order to show that there is no significant correlation between the contemporary criticism and Tennyson's subsequent revisions.

The analysis clearly shows that Tennyson was revising according to principles which he alone determined. In Chapter IV, I have discussed these principles and their importance in Tennyson's development.
PREFACE

My thanks to Dr. Colin Atkinson whose enthusiasm for the Victorian period first stimulated my interest in Tennyson, and whose continued help and encouragement have been invaluable. I also wish to thank Dr. Alistair McLeod and Dr. Charles Fantazzi for their helpful suggestions.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL ATTITUDES
TO TENNYSON'S REVISIONS OF THE 1833 POEMS

By the time he was twenty three, Tennyson had produced a considerable body of work and had attracted the attention of the influential critics of the period. In 1832, Tennyson published a volume of poetry, Poems, 1833, which met with a less favourable reception than that accorded his earlier work. With one notable exception, however, the reviews were by no means aggressively hostile. After the publication and review of the 1832 poems came ten years' "silence" during which no large new body of work was published. In view of Tennyson's early rate of publication, this long period of silence assumes great importance.

In 1842, Tennyson broke the silence with the publication of two volumes of verse, only one of which contained new poetry. The other volume contained revised versions of several of the poems of 1830 and 1833. The 1833 volume had contained thirty poems, of which six were reprinted in 1842, after being extensively revised. If we add to these facts Tennyson's well-documented sensitivity to criticism, and his ambition to succeed as a poet, we are confronted with a number of questions which have concerned Tennyson scholars for many years and which must be answered by anyone who is attempting a study of the poet's development.
In view of Tennyson's "hypersensitiveness to the gadfly of hostile criticism," how significant is it that his first publication after the silent period contained revised versions of those poems which provoked the criticism he so feared? Were the revisions directly stimulated by the criticism? Were they a conscious attempt by Tennyson to avert further hostility by deferring to the judgement of the reviewers, and by correcting along the lines suggested by them? Or are the revisions evidence of Tennyson's personal dissatisfaction with his early work and therefore evidence of his increased artistic maturity?

Around a consideration of these questions, two schools of thought have developed. There are those who believe that Tennyson gave considerable heed, if not unqualified attention, to the reviewers in the correction of the poems. The implications of this point of view are that, at best, Tennyson emerges as one who is able to take and profit from criticism and, at worst, as one who can abdicate artistic integrity in order to gain psychological "safety" and the approbation of the reviewers. Such a position colours one's approach to the later poems, a fact which is clearly demonstrated by the charges of critics such as Hugh L'Anson Fausset who see in the revisions a significant turning point in Tennyson's career. Fausset claims that they are a "tragic document", and the "first stage of that conflict between genius and the commonplace, which was

to end in so overwhelming a victory for the latter. 2

The theory that Tennyson was guided by the critics is the older of the two theories. It was an opinion held by many of the poet's contemporaries, an unsurprising fact when one realizes that at this time it was popularly believed that the reviewers had been responsible for Keat's death. The body of evidence to support this particular theory is formidable in that many people have written critical works in which this view is either advanced or tacitly accepted, and used as the basis for further discussion of Tennyson's work.

The theory that Tennyson made the revisions according to principles which he determined, and that he acted independently for the most part, is a newer theory. An examination of the evidence used to support these two arguments is worthwhile, since it demonstrates the invalidity of some of the arguments and reveals that one whole area of study, essential to the solution of the problem has, surprisingly, been left untouched. Despite the fact that it is the revisions themselves which are the basis of the controversy, they have received little attention. There is general agreement that the revised poems are greatly improved, but little has been done to establish precisely the way in which this improvement has been achieved, and further to determine whether or not there is a significant degree of correlation between the

criticism and the subsequent revisions of the poem. It is with this area of study which I propose to deal.

One difficulty in trying to determine how far Tennyson was affected by the reviewers is that one is unsure of whether one should deal with the ten years' silence and with the revisions as two separate issues, or whether one should regard them as acts which have, at bottom, the same cause. Thomas Lounsbury, in The Life and Times of Tennyson, attempts to deal with the two events separately, and in so doing reveals the problems in this approach. Commenting on the ten years' silence and the revisions, he says,

Never assuredly was an author more sensitive to critical attack than was Tennyson, so far as his feelings were concerned. Never was one more independent of it in his action. Hostile criticism had no perceptible effect in dictating the omissions or alterations which were found in the edition of 1842.

There are two flaws in Lounsbury's assertions. First, he maintains that the reason for Tennyson's failure to publish was "...his excessive sensitiveness to criticism and the rough treatment to which his previous volume had been subjected." It seems, however, sound psychology to deduce that a fear of criticism strong enough to induce a ten-year avoidance of the reviewers would be easily sufficiently strong to induce Tennyson to revise the works which had prompted the criticism in the first place. In order to persuade us

4 Ibid., p. 378.
otherwise, Lounsbury must produce some convincing evidence. And this is the second flaw in his argument. He offers very little evidence in support of his claim. His only refutation of the contention that Tennyson was greatly influenced by the critics in the revising of the poems is the citing of a comment made to Tennyson by Arthur Hallam--who can scarcely be called a disinterested bystander--after Wilson's review in Blackwoods in 1832. Hallam wrote, "They little know the while that you despise the false parts of your volume quite as vehemently as your censors can, and with purer zeal, because with better knowledge."5 In something of a contradiction in terms, Lounsbury refers to Hallam's statement as the "unimpeachable testimony of his (Tennyson's) intimate friend".6 These words, however, sound more like those of a consoling friend than of a literary critic.

Lounsbury regards Hallam's testimony as unimpeachable although it refers only to the poems of 1830. The 1842 publication contained revisions of poems which had provoked more hostile criticism and could, therefore, be expected to have affected Tennyson more. Lounsbury attacks those who believe that Tennyson was guided by the critics, but the quality of his attack undermines his argument. Instead of refuting fact with fact, or baseless opinion with logical argument, he abandons everything in favour of fervent.

5 Lounsbury, p. 401.
6 Ibid., p. 406.
forceful contradiction. He says that a particular assertion "...lacked even that decent homage to fact which characterized respectable fiction". He offers, however, no concrete evidence that the assertion is untrue. Strong words are not a substitute for facts, and Lounsbury's argument has only the illusion of strength.

Though his treatment of the influence of the reviewers is "...not extensive and seems to be for the most part misleading", subsequent critics do acknowledge a debt to Lounsbury. His work is valuable since it attacked a widely held view, and if Lounsbury did not succeed in demolishing the arguments advanced by his opponents, he did succeed in calling into question the validity of their views, thereby showing the need for a more precise and detailed study of the whole question of Tennyson's debt to the critics.

Lounsbury's study points out that the very fact that the view had been held for a long time was sufficient to lend it credibility. It had been said so often that "the mere assertion of its falsity will seem to most men like a denial of the self-evident". Lounsbury used two striking examples to indicate the prevalence of the view and its unquestioned acceptance. In her biography of her father, John Wilson, who had attacked Tennyson's work under the pseudonym Christopher North, Mrs. Gordon says, "I observe that with scarcely a

7 Lounsbury, p. 405.
8 Shannon, p. viii.
9 Lounsbury, p. 402.
single exception, the verses condemned by the critics were omitted or altered in after editions".¹⁰ She offers no further facts to support this accusation. Lounsbury observes that in 1845 Browning wrote to Elizabeth Barrett:

For Keats and Tennyson, to go softly all their days for a gruff word or two is quite inexplicable to me and always has been. Tennyson reads the Quarterly, and does as they bid him, with the most solemn face in the world—out goes this, in goes that, all is changed and ranged. Oh me! ¹¹

Also in 1845, in the United States, Charles Astor Bristed stated, confidently if inaccurately, that "Of all the passages assailed by the reviewer, there is but one which has not been either entirely expunged or carefully rewritten".¹²

The important point about these three extracts is that none of the writers felt obliged to substantiate their claims by any specific reference to the texts of the poems. There seems to have been no question of their being challenged. Even a cursory reading of the poems would have revealed the glaring inaccuracy of both Bristed's and Mrs. Gordon's claims. But the willingness of Tennyson's contemporaries to believe in his deference to the critics had little to do with what was known about Tennyson's temperament and had a great deal to do with the positions and influence of the literary reviews of the time. And, of course, as we have said, even into the 1840's, it was believed that the reviewers had killed Keats.

¹⁰ Lounsbury, p. 402.
¹¹ Ibid., p. 402.
¹² Shannon, p. 36.
Tennyson's flight from the critics would therefore be seen to have some historical precedent.

Tennyson was known to have an almost irrational dread of adverse criticism. Even his first work in collaboration with his brothers contained the following plea in the preface:

Ye who deign to read, forget to apply The searching microscope of scrutiny.

James Knowles, a close friend, said that Tennyson was prone to dwell on unfavourable criticism and paid little attention to praise.

All the mass of eulogy he took comparatively little notice of, but he never could forget an unfriendly word, even from the most obscure and insignificant and unknown quarter....When remonstrated with, he would smile, and say, "Oh yes, I know. I'm black-blooded like all the Tennysons - I remember everything that has been said against me, and forget all the rest." 13

Extreme though Tennyson's fear was, the general influence exerted by the reviews was so great that his fear had some basis in fact. The reviews provided the only real outlet for literary criticism which was likely to be widely read. The reviewers were arbiters of public opinion to an extent which is difficult for the contemporary reader to appreciate. By 1818, the Quarterly and Edinburgh reviews sold over 14,000 copies of each edition, and if we consider that each copy had more than one reader, and that the influence and circulation of the reviews was to continue to grow well into the

13 Christopher Ricks, ed., The Poems of Tennyson (London: Longman's, Green and Co., Ltd., 1969). All quotations from Tennyson's poetry are from this text.
middle of the century, we have some idea of the power of the periodicals in Tennyson's day. While praise from the reviewers could not necessarily make a poet's reputation, scorn from them could severely damage it. That the criticism was often superficial by contemporary standards, and often malicious, seemed not to undermine its force and the degree to which it was accepted. Louksbury tells an anecdote which perfectly illustrates the influence of the Quarterly Review. The story is originally related in a book by Fanny Kemble, an admirer of Tennyson. She wrote,

I remember Mrs. Milman, one evening at my father's house, challenging me laughingly about my enthusiasm for Tennyson, and asking me if I had read a certain caustic and condemnatory article in the Quarterly upon his poems. "Have you read it?" said she; "it is so amusing! Shall I send it to you?" "No, thank you", said I; "Have you read the poems, may I ask?" "I cannot say that I have", said she, laughing. 14

Views such as those expressed by Browning and Mrs. Milman were based on nothing more than the facts that Tennyson had been held up to ridicule by the reviewers, that he was known to dread hostile criticism, and that he had subsequently revised several of the poems specifically attacked by the reviewers. Such conclusions seem irresponsible to the modern reader used to close textual analysis, but they are understandable if we consider both the power of the periodicals and the fact that textual analysis was not a critical method of the period. Tennyson's contemporaries felt that a

14 Louksbury, p. 329
consideration of the revisions themselves was superfluous. The word of the reviewers was beyond doubt; the validity of their conclusions was self-evident. Harold Nicholson was speaking of the Quarterly when he made the following comment, although it could apply to other influential periodicals of the day. "Not only did it guide the taste of thousands of readers, but it also set the tone for the majority of the critics." 15

Less excusable is the fact that the conclusions of Tennyson's contemporaries were accepted without question by critics of subsequent periods who were free of the influence of the periodicals. Such critics failed to examine either the revisions themselves, or the premises for the early argument that the revisions had been made with the intention of placating the critics. Very little real examination of the quality of the criticism of the time, or of the revisions was made until 1943 when Edgar Shannon published an article in PMLA. The article was the basis for a book, Tennyson and the Reviewers, (1952; rpt., London, 1957) which was published in 1952 and is now the standard work on the subject. Shannon attempted to test the validity of the statement by W. E. H. Lecky, "No poet ever corrected so many lines in deference to adverse criticism", and to reveal the extent to which the opinions of the critics affected Tennyson's poetic aims and

and both his selection and handling of subject matter.
Meanwhile, in 1951, Joyce Green published an important article in PMLA, "Tennyson's Development 1832 to 1842". The subject of the two critics is the same. Although the methods used by Shannon and Green are very similar, the conclusions reached in each case are different. Because of the sequence of publication of the articles and later the book, each writer is able to comment on the other's work.

Both writers base their conclusions on a statistical analysis of the revised poems, attempting to count the number of times where a revision coincides with a criticism. They have then tried to determine whether the revision answers the specific criticism. The two articles demonstrate very dramatically the problems of a statistical approach to this particular situation. The method is certainly more business-like than earlier methods, but disappointingly, it is no more accurate, and does little to get to the bottom of the problem.

Joyce Green arrives at the figures from which she works by reading the criticism which followed the publication of the poems of 1830 and 1842 and by counting the particular strictures and attempting to determine the grounds for each. In some cases, we find that the critics have quoted several lines of a particular poem but have italicized several words within the quotation. Each italicized word she counts as an individual stricture. She then constructs a table in which she counts the number of times that Tennyson's revisions
coincide with the critics' objections, and checks to see if the revisions do answer the particular criticism, since she argues correctly that "the fact that Tennyson altered a censured line or passage does not necessarily mean that censure alone produced the changes". Green reaches the conclusion that Tennyson accepted only 41 per cent of the total number of strictures. Of the 1830 poems, 22 per cent of the criticisms were accepted and 46 per cent of those of the 1832 poems were accepted. She therefore concludes that Tennyson was not greatly influenced by the adverse criticism and that, for the most part, he acted independently. One of the fundamental limitations of statistical analyses such as those of Shannon and Green is demonstrated by Shannon's objections to Green's research. He charges that Joyce Green distorts her statistics in Tennyson's favour by counting each italicized word as a separate stricture when the italicized words may be part of a list exemplifying only one particular point of contention. Shannon's conclusion that Tennyson was greatly influenced by the critics during the years 1833 to 1842 is largely based on the fact that "52 out of 87, or 60 per cent, of the passages that the critics censured did not reappear in 1842 as they had originally stood". The difference between the statistical results of the two pieces of work--41 per cent acceptance as opposed to 60 per cent acceptance--is a result of the different methods used by Shannon and Green to count the criticisms. Shannon says,
I have not included in my list poems cited in their entirety by the reviewers without any specific passages being condemned. Where there seems to be a definite point of criticism concerned with each italicized word or group of words, I have considered each a separate criticism. Where three or four consecutive lines were cited with several italicized words or phrases, but where the reviewer seemed to be pointing to one passage as a whole, I considered it one criticism. 16

A high degree of agreement between those involved in statistical analyses is unlikely because of the near impossibility of arriving at a mutually acceptable set of figures from which to work. Notice the use of the word "seemed" which indicates the very subjective method of arriving at the figures from which the analysis is to be made. Because Shannon uses a statistical approach himself, however, he calls into question only Green's method of arriving at her statistics, and not the inherent validity of the method itself.

Shannon also criticizes Green's conclusions since she "disregards his Tennyson's extreme sensitiveness to criticism and the fact that his dread of critical onslaught was the primary cause for the period of silence". 17 Shannon's argument is the stronger for taking this into account, although it, too, is flawed. Green attempts no evaluation of the criticism which is supposed to have stimulated the revisions. Shannon does attempt some evaluation of this, and the evaluation does cover all the major critics and periodicals, but it falls short of the close analysis which is needed since it

16 Shannon, p. 195.

17 Ibid., p. 191.
does not deal with the relationship between a specific criticism and the later revision. On the very few occasions that Shannon does attempt this type of correlation, he selects poor support for his argument, citing minor changes which have little or no significance as far as the overall effects on the poem are concerned.

Shannon says that "a few examples of the alterations will show how clear the effect of the critics often is".\(^{18}\) He then goes on to cite the following examples as conclusive evidence.

Arthur Hallam had written in the *Englishman's Magazine* that the word "unrayed" in the lines from "Recollections of the Arabian Nights".

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars unrayed,

did not convey "a very precise notion"; and Tennyson changed the work to "inlaid". After Croker had noted with derision that the name, *The Lady of Shalott*, was "below the stern" of the boat, Tennyson made the reading "around the prow". Mill judged the last stanza of "The Lady of Shalott" as a "lame and impotent conclusion", and Tennyson substituted the vastly superior stanza which now ends the poem.\(^{19}\)

What Shannon does not comment on is the fact that Tennyson, in his revisions, was making an attempt to eliminate all archaicisms such as "unrayed", and that Croker's observation, valid though it is, is rather more a criticism of Tennyson's logic than of his artistic ability. To persist in leaving the name of the boat below the stern would be a sign of

18 Shannon, p. 41.

19 Ibid., p. 41-42.
stupidity rather than of artistic independence. In the case of Mill's criticism, Tennyson cannot be said to have followed it to the letter, as Shannon implies, since in his review Mill suggests that, in fact, no conclusion is required. Shannon does not comment on the fact that the tone of the substitute conclusion is vastly different from the original conclusion which was the subject of Mill's criticism. This change is entirely Tennyson's idea and was not suggested by any critic of the period.

Neither Green nor Shannon analyses the areas in which Tennyson's revisions did not coincide with the criticism of the time and in which revisions occur in lines not mentioned, or in some cases actually praised, by the critics. Shannon does say that "in most of the poems there were many more verbal changes and omissions than were suggested by his censors, and mere altering of criticized passages would not have accomplished what he did." He does not go on to specify, however, what exactly Tennyson did do. He restricts himself to saying that Tennyson's revisions resulted in incomparably superior work. Both Green and Shannon omit any textual analysis from their work despite the fact that it seems essential in the answering of a question such as this. Both of them address themselves to the smaller units of revisions, considering only the line-by-line effect of the revision and ignoring their combined effect on the whole poem.

20 Shannon, p. 59.
The most thorough analysis of the nature of the revisions has been made by J. F. A. Pyre in an extraordinarily detailed study entitled *The Formation of Tennyson's Style*. Pyre, however, clearly limits the scope of the study by subtitling it *A Study Primarily of the Versification of the Early Poems*. He makes no mention of the possible effect of the reviewers in stimulating the revisions, a fact which should be considered when one reads Shannon's claim that Pyre's study supports the position that there was indeed a correlation between the reviewers' objections to the 1833 poems and the later 1842 revisions. Shannon states,

> Only through reading J. F. A. Pyre's painstaking study,...can one fully appreciate the extensive and salutary effect of criticism upon his technical advancement. It is necessary here merely to point out the nature of the reviewers' strictures and to outline the development presented in detail by Pyre.  

In fact, if Shannon is to prove his case by Pyre's study, it is necessary to do far more than that, since Pyre's analysis omits any reference, direct or indirect, to the "salutary effect" of criticism. His study is most revealing on the subject of Tennyson's developing skill in versification, as evidenced by the 1842 revisions, but he makes no speculation as to what stimulated those revisions. In the third chapter entitled "Revisions and Standardization", Pyre simply observes that the revisions of style and metre of those poems reissued in 1842 indicate that Tennyson "was far from satisfied with

21 Shannon, p. 42.
the execution of his more ambitious designs in a number of these poems." Shannon's use of Pyre's study to support his argument is misleading, since neither Pyre nor Shannon establishes any correlation between Pyre's findings and the criticisms of the 1830's.

Because of the demonstrable limitations of Shannon's study, and because of his emphasis on statistical rather than textual analysis, his final claim that Tennyson "would not have revised so thoroughly or been so selective in reprinting had he not been so severely censured", while not necessarily untrue in itself, must be regarded as unproven. For the same reasons, Green's counter claim that Tennyson was independent of the reviewers must also be considered suspect. No valid argument can be advanced on the subject of Tennyson's reliance on the critics unless a means can be found of determining the principles which guided the revisions— if, indeed, there were any.

I propose to examine each of the 1833 poems which were revised and republished in 1842 in an attempt to determine the basis upon which the revisions were made. Six poems are involved: "The Lady of Shalott", "Oenone", "The Miller's Daughter", "A Dream of Fair Women", "The Lotos Eaters" and "The Palace of Art". If a study is made of the first and second versions of the poems, and of the criticism directed at each poem, if the basis for each criticism is determined

and each revision examined to see if it was made with the
tention of removing grounds for the criticism, one would
be able to estimate accurately the extent of Tennyson's
reliance on the critics during the period in which he was
revising the poems. I also intend to consider the cumulative
effect of the revisions on each poem, since it may have been
fundamentally altered--thematically and/or structurally--by
the combined effect of the revisions. Most of the work done
in this area, specifically that of Shannon and Green, has
dealt with the smaller units of revision, ignoring their
combined effect.

I believe that my study will reveal that Tennyson did
indeed make the technical gains which Pyre so clearly doc-
uments, but that he also developed in other, very significant
ways. I believe that the criticism of the 1833 poems had the
salutary effect of sharpening Tennyson's awareness of defi-
ciencies in the early poems, but that the criticism in no
significant way determined the direction taken by Tennyson
in the revisions. The fact that a revision occurred in a
line censured by the critics does not mean that censure
alone stimulated the revision.

Clearly, as Pyre demonstrates, the revisions were made in
order to remove certain immaturities in style. This type of
revision furnishes the highest and most obvious coincidence
between the 1830's criticism and the subsequent revisions, and
it is on this area that both Green and Shannon focus. I hope
to demonstrate, however, that the revisions were also made in
order to improve narrative technique, and to re-structure the poems, clarifying and tightening the symbolism with which Tennyson had made tentative, and in his view, unsuccessful experiments in the 1830's. If this is indeed the case, then the revisions are indicative of Tennyson's developing maturity and sensitivity and of his movement from the lush Romanticism which characterizes his early poetry towards a symbolist aesthetic which enables him to intensify and experiment with ambiguities in his work. I can find no evidence to indicate that the criticism of the 1833 volume either suggested or stimulated changes of this nature.

All quotations in this work are from the Christopher Ricks' edition of Tennyson's poetry, which is itself based on the "Eversley" edition edited by Hallam Tennyson. Ricks' edition "seems certain to constitute the best scholarly text of Tennyson for some time to come", 23 at least until a complete multi-volume variorum edition is available. The Ricks' edition does not give the various interim changes which we know Tennyson made between the 1833 publication of the poems and the final 1842 versions. But, since an examination of Tennyson's progression towards a finally satisfying version is not within the scope of this study, the lack of a variorum edition creates no problem. I am concerned only with the initial 1833 version and the final 1842 version; for my purposes, Ricks' edition is entirely satisfactory.

CHAPTER II
THE MYTH OF CROKER'S INFLUENCE

Of the many contemporary articles written on Poems, 1833, one is invariably singled out for special attention by anyone dealing with the ten years' silence and the revisions of 1842. John Wilson Croker's clever but malicious review of Poems, 1833 appeared in the April 1833 edition of the influential Quarterly Review and was believed by the early biographers to be the single most important factor influencing Tennyson's decision to withdraw from the public eye for ten years. As we shall see, even modern scholars claim that Tennyson was greatly affected by this one review. In short, the review casts a long shadow over Tennyson's work and has for many years complicated the already complex question of Tennyson's reasons for publishing revised versions of some of the 1833 poems. Anyone who attempts to deal with Tennyson from 1833 onwards must deal with Croker and assume a position on his influence over Tennyson's work. For this reason, and before dealing with the revisions themselves, I believe that it is essential to consider Croker's article in detail and separately from the other criticism of the period.

I contend that Croker's influence on Tennyson's poetry has been grossly overestimated and that his influence on Tennyson's critics has been equally as badly underestimated.
The position of Edgar Shannon's study, *Tennyson and the Reviewers*, in relation to this issue is extremely significant since it has been influential in shaping the modern view of Croker's effect on Tennyson's work. Shannon's study traces the effect of the critics on Tennyson's entire work, but it is not necessary for us to consider any more than the first three chapters of the book, chapters which deal with the period up to the publication of the 1842 poems.

In one respect, Shannon's study has worked towards exploding one aspect of the myth of Croker's influence, but, unfortunately, it has been instrumental in reinforcing another. Shannon's work does a great deal to clarify the misconception about the contemporary impact of Croker's article. The virulence of Croker's attack led the great biographers, such as Lounsbury, Nicolson and Charles Tennyson, to believe that the criticism of the 1833 poems was generally unfavourable, a belief which persisted almost undiminished until Shannon's study. There was a tendency amongst critics to see the early criticism, particularly that of *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, as largely favourable and that of 1833 as largely hostile. Nicolson, for example, said, "Seldom has the critical community been so unanimous in condemnation". This is attributable, I believe, to the immediate impact of Croker's article. It is most important that this misconception

be corrected since the supposed hostility of the critics has been one of the traditional supports for the theory that Tennyson was greatly influenced by them, both in deciding to remain out of the public eye for ten years and in deciding precisely how to revise the poems republished in 1842.

In fact, as Shannon acknowledges, the criticism of Poems, Chiefly Lyrical and that of Poems, 1833, is far more similar than was believed. The reviews of 1830 were a mixture of praise and criticism: the criticism tempered, perhaps, by an understanding of Tennyson's youth and inexperience and by a desire to stimulate rather than discourage further efforts. Tennyson was hailed as "a master of musical combinations" and chided for irregularities of measure, antiquated words and obsolete pronunciation. He was charged with "indolence and affectation" but was recognized by Christopher North, the most hostile of the reviewers, as undoubtedly a poet of great promise.

After the 1833 publication, the reviews, with the exception of Croker's, contained the same mixture of praise and censure—perhaps this time the balance between the two having shifted rather subtly and a greater asperity being

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3 Christopher North's article appeared in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (May 1832), xxxi. 721-741. In this article, he derided as excessive the laudatory commentaries of W. J. Fox and Arthur Hallam whose praise of Tennyson was, he believed, stimulated in part by their friendship with him. His article began with adverse criticism, but concluded with warm praise of Tennyson which is sometimes overlooked. Despite his faults, Tennyson was, North decided, "a poet" with "fine faculties".
noticeable in the tone of the criticism. The reaction of the critics is understandable. By 1833, Tennyson had been sufficiently in the public eye for his faults to warrant closer examination and for the reviewers to be less inclined to excuse them on the grounds of youth and inexperience. Also, since the same flaws were deemed to be present in this second set of poems, the critics may have felt some impatience with Tennyson's failure to eliminate them, but there was not the great hostility which was popularly supposed to exist by both Tennyson's contemporaries and by the early biographers. To come closest to it, the tone in general is one of exasperation. Of all the reviews of the period, only Croker's was extremely hostile and his criticism unmitigated by any mention of Tennyson's obvious skill. Before Shannon's study, however, critics and biographers seemed to see Croker's article as somehow representative of the criticism of the period. It was so extremely hostile that it drew their eyes to corresponding negative comment in other articles, blinding them to some very positive reaction in other influential magazines. On December 1st, 1832, for example, the Athenaeum said, "In reverence and respect for his genius we have not hesitated to point out the errors of the poet--his beauties will speak for themselves...".4 Also, in December the Atlas said, "Mr. Tennyson is rich enough to afford a large fine to censure: he can suffer the penalty to be estreated, and

4 Unless the source is otherwise indicated, all comments by contemporary reviewers are quoted from Shannon, pp. 13-21.
still maintain high credit with the world". The Metropolitan said in January, 1833, "We do not pretend to say that all the poems are equally good; yet are none of them so bad that the author might not be proud to own them". Certainly William Jerdan's review in the Literary Gazette opened most abusively but, after calling Tennyson's poetry illogical and imitative and saying that the ludicrousness of the first lines of "Oenone" were sufficient to satisfy a jury as to the poet's insanity, Jerdan admitted that, despite his faults,

Mr. Tennyson seems to possess the impulse which determines a man to be a poet; and a fixed determination, though it cannot accomplish all, frequently accomplishes much, if not misled by the force of bad example. Thus we find in these pages a fine perception of rural objects and imagery, and descriptive passages of real truth and beauty. The sentiments are also, in general, pure and natural, ...Another good quality to be noted is enthusiasm—that without which they never was and never will be a poet—that which needs only to be regulated by taste and judgment to lead the possessor on to distinction. 5

One should also remember that Croker's article provoked prompt response from both the Sun and the Athenaeum whose reviewers censured Croker for his viciousness, and for his failure to see that Tennyson had "much fine poetry about him". 6

Shannon's work is most important in that he demonstrates that the effect of the article on Tennyson's contemporaries has been overestimated, but I do not feel that he states the

5 William Jerdan, Literary Gazette, No. 829 (8 Dec. 1832), 772-774.
6 Shannon, p. 20.
case strongly enough. Indeed, part of the reason for the continued modern belief in Croker's influence on Tennyson's work is the fact that no study has stated the case against Croker's influence strongly enough to kill the idea. Shannon cites the favourable comment which I have also cited, but he refers to it, rather disparagingly, as "asides" which were obscured by Croker's article. Also, in his summing up of the critics' attitude to *Poems, 1833*, there is a hesitant note. He says that the volume "was not received without approbation". I find Shannon's lack of conviction and negative phrasing difficult to understand, since, if we disregard Croker's article as extraordinarily malicious and in no way typical of the criticism of the time, the commentary is equally weighted between adverse criticism and praise, and is very similar to that of 1830.

However cautious Shannon's comment may be, his work has been extremely valuable in beginning to put Croker's work into a more reasonable perspective, and restoring a more balanced view of the reception of *Poems, 1833*. Shannon concludes his survey of the criticism with the statement that, despite Croker's attack and widespread criticism of Tennyson's affectation and obscurity, "it cannot be said that his genius went unappreciated".

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7 Shannon, p. 19.
Of course, proving that the criticism was not particularly hostile is of little significance as long as it is possible to argue that Tennyson himself believed it to be hostile. We have removed only one support for the theory that Tennyson was greatly affected by the criticism. There is still the question of Tennyson's reaction to it.

Many critics, Shannon amongst them, believe that Tennyson reacted badly to what he construed as hostile criticism after Poems, 1832. Proof most usually offered in this context is the fact that Tennyson admitted that Croker's review almost "crushed" him,\(^{10}\) that he did not publish any new volume for ten years, and that the new volume in 1842 contained revisions of those poems which were attacked. Of this evidence, the most important is the revisions. Tennyson's admission that Croker's review almost crushed him is not inherently significant; it acquires significance only when seen in conjunction with other evidence. Seen by itself, it could easily be no more than an expression of a purely private emotion which did not motivate specific artistic action. It is certainly not the same as an admission that it caused the ten years' silence and motivated extensive revisions to the six poems republished in 1842. We should also remember that this is one comment on one article out of many which were demonstrably less hostile. Speculations on the state of Tennyson's psyche so long after the event are singularly pointless in

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view of the fact that Tennyson's own comments on his reasons for the silent period are very scarce, and that there can be no more reliable evidence for a psychological study than the comments of the subject himself. Tennyson always felt that biographies were unnecessary, and that his poetry was all the personal commentary which subsequent generations would need. For these reasons, a close textual analysis of the two versions is essential since it will provide the only reliable evidence on Tennyson's reaction to the criticism of *Poems, 1832*.

But, before proceeding to this, another aspect of Shannon's study must be considered. At the moment, this statistical study, the limitations of which I have already discussed, is the most influential of modern studies of this problem. There are two reasons for this. First, it is really the only attempt to deal systematically with the relationship between criticism and revisions, and is therefore referred to by most critics who deal with this issue within a more comprehensive work. Secondly, Shannon's conclusions have been unchallenged except by Joyce Green whose analysis is considerably shorter, does not deal as extensively with Croker, and is unfortunately not as widely known. Shannon sees Croker's article as enormously influential and, in a breakdown of his statistics, he claims that Tennyson accepted 70 per cent of Croker's strictures—an extremely high percentage. Shannon's study has done more than any other work to shape the prevailing modern view that
Tennyson was greatly influenced by the critics in general and by Croker in particular. So the myth of Croker's influence continues undiminished despite Shannon's contribution to dispelling the illusion that Croker exerted great influence on the critical judgement of his own contemporaries. The power of the myth is increased by Shannon's study and by the extent to which modern scholars are prepared to accept and quote it without question.

There are two important close readings of the revised versions of the 1842 poems. Both J. F. A. Pyre and F. E. L. Priestley reach conclusions which are different from those of Shannon, but the studies have little impact on the general attitude to Shannon's work because neither study is concerned with a direct confrontation of Shannon and neither study attempts to incorporate the question of criticism as a stimulus for revision. In what may be a sign that the question has unfortunately been dropped for the time being, Priestley says only that there was a popular impression that the unfriendly reception of Poems, 1833 caused Tennyson to go through a ten-year period of inactivity. 11 Unfortunately, the fact that these more recent studies avoid the question does little to undermine the widespread acceptance of Shannon's study. John Pettigrew, in Tennyson: The Early Poems, implies that Tennyson's own improved judgement was the only criteria for changing any poem for republication. He states very firmly that the suggestion that "Tennyson collapsed before the

aggression of the reviewers...is not just misleading, it is completely wrong". 12 He also offers some textual analysis in support of his claim that the revisions are "so extensive as to release an excellence only potential in 1832, and make major poems out of minor ones". 13 Pettigrew's study is not, however, intended to be comprehensive, nor is the question of the revisions the focus of the book and, since he makes no specific mention of Shannon, his commentary, although quite interesting and, I believe, accurate, is of little help in refuting Shannon's claims and in changing modern attitudes to his study.

Such a lack of comment on Croker's influence and on Shannon's study in the works which I have cited might lead one to believe that the question of Croker's influence is dead. It is more likely, however, that Shannon's claim has been restated by others so often that "the mere assertion of its falsity will seem to most men like a denial of the self-evident", to borrow Lounsbury's words. One has only to look at such influential modern works as Jerome Buckley's Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet, (1960), John Jump's Tennyson: The Critical Heritage, (1967); and D. J. Palmer's Tennyson in the series, Writers and Their Background, (1973), to see something of the effect of Shannon's study on modern scholarship.

Buckley's comments on the problem are very revealing in that they demonstrate the pervasiveness of the belief in Croker's influence and the extent to which this belief apparently affects critical judgement. Buckley states that the extent to which Tennyson was influenced by criticism in making the revisions is still debatable, and he indicates the divergence of opinion by directing the reader to both Shannon and Green for different opinions on the issue. Buckley himself feels that while Tennyson was undoubtedly sensitive to criticism, "he steadfastly refused to change any single line with which he himself was still well pleased" and that "the ultimate arbiter of all change was his own sharpened discrimination as craftsman". 14 Although Buckley does not offer any analysis in support of his contention, it does appear that he is refuting the position taken by Shannon and that he is assessing the situation independently. In a preceding chapter, however, one is confronted with the extent to which he has been affected, albeit unwittingly, by the traditional theory of Croker's influence over Tennyson. He says,

Tennyson remembered Croker's vituperation all his life: and especially during his long productive "silence", when he revised and reshaped most of the condemned poems, he returned repeatedly to Croker's specific strictures. 15

This comment is offered without any proof of its accuracy. It has the automatic validity acquired by something which

14 Pettigrew, p. 46.

has been said many times by many people over a long period of time, but it is clearly in direct opposition to Buckley's other remarks concerning Tennyson's independence.

The myth of Croker's influence is perpetuated in other cases by what I can only call "critical inbreeding". There is an interesting example of this in the relationship between Lionel Madden's essay and John Jump's introduction to *Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*. Madden's essay in the collection entitled *Writers and Their Background* is a brief and informative survey of writings on Tennyson—a guide to students of Tennyson. Madden also surveys critical theories on Tennyson. In the section entitled "Criticism", Madden deals with Tennyson's relationship with the critics and says,

The extent to which the opinions of reviewers served not merely to irritate Tennyson but to influence his writing of poetry during the first half of his life has been carefully studied by Edgar Finley Shannon in *Tennyson and the Reviewers*. If Shannon's findings indicated that Tennyson did not suffer so much hostility and abuse from contemporary reviewers as has often been supposed, they also reveal that the reviewers "exerted a continuous pressure upon him to teach more than delight, to be speculative and analytical rather than poetical". Contemporary reviews often caused Tennyson to alter sections of his poems...16

Madden then goes on to refer the interested reader to Jump's study for further information about Tennyson's relationship with the critics. He says,

16 Buckley, p. 57.
Tennyson's sensitivity to criticism and its effect upon his poetic career as a whole is discussed by John R. Jump in his introduction to Tennyson: The Critical Heritage. 17

When the reader turns to Jump, he finds that Shannon's contentions as quoted by Madden are apparently substantiated from another independent source. Jump says very confidently,

"The adverse criticism of Croker and others affected Tennyson himself profoundly. It was evidently a major cause of the "ten year silence..." Another consequence of Tennyson's habit of brooding upon hostile criticism was the thorough revisions to which he subjected his poems of 1830 and 1833. 18

If one reads further, however, one finds that Jump indicates quite clearly that his conclusions are not reached as a result of independent study, but are, in fact, based heavily upon Shannon's work. He acknowledges his debt to Shannon,

whose exhaustive and invaluable Tennyson and the Reviewers provided a good deal of the material used in the earlier section of the present introduction. 19

Obviously the question of Croker's influence on Tennyson's revisions needs to be re-examined. I feel that the only effective way to do this is to begin by ignoring Shannon's study and to proceed empirically, in order to see if Shannon's

18 Jump, p. 2-3.
19 Ibid., p. 4.
results are duplicated when one uses a different method. Therefore, Croker's article should be examined in detail since the quality of the criticism would inevitably affect the extent to which Tennyson might be disposed to follow it. Little, if any, work seems to have been done on this. From such an examination, two important facts emerge. First, Croker's article was such that any young poet would be concerned about its impact on his career. Second, Croker's criticism is phrased in such a way that it is neither probable nor possible that Tennyson based his revisions on it.

Christopher Ricks describes Croker's article as "scabrous but unstupid", thereby emphasizing a point which is often missed. Though many people comment on the viciousness of the article, few mention Croker's wit and the skill with which he attacks. Even the staunchest defenders of Tennyson would have to admit that Croker attacks with finesse. Few people would be able to suppress a smile on reading the article. It would make a lasting impression on many, and for this reason Tennyson would have been foolish to underestimate its importance. Appearing as it did in such a widely circulated periodical, it was potentially very damaging to a reputation which he was still in the process of consolidating.

However distressed Tennyson was, he must have been aware of two facts which indicate that Croker's article was hardly written in a spirit of disinterested and impartial literary criticism. Croker's motives and impartiality should be questioned because, while Tennyson might have
feared the effect of the article on his reputation, if he believed the review to have been motivated by personal prejudice, he would be unlikely to take the specific criticisms seriously.

The Quarterly Review was a conservative journal. Croker was a lifelong Tory, having taken his seat in Parliament at the age of twenty-six. These facts are not without significance. Although Tennyson did not know the identity of the reviewer—it was long thought to be Lockhart, editor of the Quarterly—he must have been aware of the political bias of the magazine. The blending of politics and literary criticism in this period leads to confusion about motive as far as some criticism is concerned. There is speculation that Croker's hostility is attributable less to real flaws in Tennyson's work than to the fact that his work had been favourably reviewed in more liberal journals. Thus, by association with the liberal viewpoint, Tennyson became a political adversary. Indeed, Croker's article is as hostile to Tennyson himself as to his poems.

Also, Croker certainly saw Tennyson in a poetic tradition which he abhorred—following in the footsteps of Leigh Hunt and Keats, both of whom Croker had attacked. Tennyson could not have been completely unaware of this particular bias in the review since, within the first few lines, Croker himself draws attention to his notorious attack on Keats. He says, we gladly seize this opportunity of repairing an unintentional neglect, and of introducing to the admiration of our more
sequestered readers a new prodigy of genius ---another and a brighter star of that galaxy or milky way of poetry of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger. 20

Croker then acknowledges his failure to see in Keats' "Endymion" "the same degree of merit that its more clear-sighted and prophetic admirers did" and avows that his failure to recognize new talent will not be repeated in Tennyson's case.

Croker's method in the article is to affect "unmingled approbation", describing his article as a tribute to Tennyson in which he will quote "a few specimens of Mr. Tennyson's genius and point out the peculiar brilliance of some of the gems that irradiate his poetical crown". 21 But the heavily ironic tone indicates that his intent is to despatch Tennyson as he despatched Keats, though with considerably less skill. Myron Brightfield, Croker's biographer, says that Croker's attack on Keats is solidly based in that he cites specific defects: "neologisms and coinages, the metrical weaknesses of some of the verses, the domination of the necessities of rhyme over the expression of idea, the lack of organic substance and the logical progression in the story". 22 But, as Brightfield points out, the review of Tennyson's work is different. "It devotes itself exclusively

20 Jump, p. 66.

21 Ibid., p. 67

to pointing out absurdities of meaning and expression. There
are no problems of poetic theory involved and few of diction. 23
In other words, the bases for the attack are not particularly
well defined. This fact brings us to another obstacle which
Tennyson must have encountered had he attempted to base revis-
ions on Croker's criticism.

According to Joyce Green, whose study involves attempts
to isolate the grounds for each criticism, Croker charges
Tennyson with nineteen counts of absurdity, two of obscurity,
one of ludicrous associations, and three of "tender imagery".
However, this catalogue represents only Green's attempt to
pin down the grounds of censure; nowhere does Croker name
the basis on which he criticizes. The review is more nearly
ridicule than responsible literary criticism, with quotes out
of context, spiteful commentary, and deliberate misinterpreta-
tion. As I have said, the review is indisputably witty, but
one has the feeling that it has been written more to draw
attention to Croker's wit than to Tennyson's inadequacies.
Lounsbury's description of the review describes very clearly
the objectionable techniques used by Croker.

So long as the purely ironical tone was
maintained, the review, however unfair
in its criticism and, in the light of
subsequent events, however damaging to
its author, is entertaining for its mal-
lice. But, the moment the poet is
assailed directly, the observations often
degenerate into what is nothing more than
a cheap abusiveness. There was not the

23 Brightfield, p. 351.
slightest effort made to give any real conception of the nature of the work under examination. In fact, the effort was made to prevent any such conception being gained. All the tricks to which disreputable criticism resorts were employed. The least valuable pieces were largely selected for extended comment. Lines and passages were wrenched from the context explaining and modifying them, so as to give a pretext for the employment of what may be designated as a sort of horse-raidillery. In truth, the review, taken as a whole, is a peculiarly bad specimen of a bad class; for while some of it is witty, it is dishonest throughout and at times little more than vulgarly vituperative.

Had Tennyson decided to avoid further criticism of this type by deciding to revise along the lines suggested by Croker, one could scarcely blame him, but he would have had great difficulty in identifying the grounds on which Croker made the criticism. He does not analyse the poems. He simply argues that they are ridiculous or obscure, and, since he appears to base his opinion on personal reaction rather than on any specified inadequacy, it would have been impossible for Tennyson to revise the poems in order to eliminate those things which displeased Croker.

Other information, of which Tennyson could not have been aware, but which is of great importance to modern students of this problem, also leads inescapably to the conclusion that Croker has been taken far too seriously. Brightfield's biography provides much information which

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further impugns Croker's motives. From Brightfield we learn something of the personal pleasure which Croker derived from his attack on Tennyson. On January 7th, 1833, Croker wrote to a friend,

Tell your father and Mr. Lockhart that I undertake Tennyson and hope to make another Keats of him. 25

Croker was also very aware of the importance of appealing to a jaded public in order to maintain good circulation figures for the Quarterly. In order to explain Croker's viciousness, Brightfield points out that short, favourable reviews created little interest and that

To create spice and zest in a short space it was almost necessary to assail a book --to pull it to pieces or treat it in a tone of sustained irony. 26

Croker expressed much the same idea, commenting that

The public is so fastidious and indeed so blasé that its appetite requires a great deal of the piquant. Mere solidity and information will not do; there must be something to awaken the fancy or to stir the passions. 27

While undoubtedly accurate, the observation leads unavoidably to the conclusion that Croker may have exaggerated his attack and adopted the "tone of sustained irony" in order to provide the "piquancy" required to engage the public's attention. The article certainly does not rely upon "mere solidity and information".

26 Ibid., p. 337
27 Ibid., p. 337
Croker had little respect for the objects of his attacks, referring to them as "fools in the forest". The following letter to Lockhart demonstrates the glee with which Croker would demolish his targets, and the pride which he took in his ability to do so.

I would cross Southampton Water if I thought I should meet a "fool in the forest". I mean a fool in print. They are as plentiful as blackberries—more so at this season; but I happen not to have any specimen in reach. Pray help me to a fool and I will return him to you roasted, broiled, fricassied or devilled, as you may please. 28

Because of the vagueness of Croker's review of Poems, 1833—"an angry, rather patronizing, jolly outburst", Nicholson called it—it is impossible to argue that Tennyson could have based his revisions upon it even had he wanted to do so. And, after considering background information which reveals Croker's idiosyncratic attitude to Tennyson in particular and to literary criticism in general, it seems unreasonable for modern scholars to take this one review so seriously. It assumes, therefore, a more reasonable position as one review among many, most of which were less witty but more precise and less questionably motivated. It has special significance only because Tennyson quite sensibly feared for a while that it would harm his reputation and because it has excited an inordinate amount of interest and has exerted an entirely inappropriate influence on Tennyson scholarship.

28 Brightfield, p. 337.
An interesting and ironic footnote to the tale of Croker and Tennyson is that the volume published in 1842 and containing the revised versions of the 1833 poetry was indirectly the cause of a serious rift between Croker and Lockhart. In September of 1842, the Quarterly carried a political paper by Croker and a highly laudatory review of Tennyson's poems by John Sterling. The poet whose work Croker had dismissed so scathingly in 1833 was now praised by the Quarterly without Croker's having been given any prior notice of the journal's change in attitude to Tennyson's work. Greatly offended by this slight, Croker's response was a letter to Lockhart in which he said,

I have felt for some time a strong inclination to retire, and I have been only prevented doing so by the wishes of my political friends, who still think I am of some—though but little, as I am too conscious—use.

Nothing but the instances of the friends I have alluded to, and my own reluctance to break so old a connection on any personal feeling prevented my breaking off at once on the appearance of the Tennyson article in the last number—which appeared to be not only wrong in itself, but to have been an obvious and intended rap over the knuckles to me,...It was understood by others as a broad hint that my influence in the Quarterly was gone, and by myself as an intimation that our connection was drawing to a close. 29

An important point to observe in Croker's reaction to the volume containing the revisions is that he clearly did not feel that they had substantially altered the quality of the poetry since he describes the laudatory review as "wrong

29 Brightfield, p. 426.
in itself". Croker himself, therefore, did not believe that the revisions eliminated the grounds for his original criticism, and certainly did not feel, as Shannon does, that a large number of the revisions were made out of deference to his earlier article.

Despite the conciliatory tone of his reply, which is obviously an attempt to smooth Croker's ruffled feathers, Lockhart stood firmly behind John Sterling's very favourable review. Lockhart apologizes for having caused Croker distress, but goes on to say,

as to Mr. Tennyson's new poems, I may be wrong in thinking these show a vast superiority over his juvenile verses—but such, depend on it, is the general opinions among literary men of the highest class. An article was sent to me by a gentleman whom I had never seen, but of whose talents I had formed a high notion from the perusal of his own works. Neither he nor I had ever seen Mr. Tennyson. By accepting it, I fancied I was taking the easiest way to do Mr. Tennyson justice—and the way most certain to save you from any unpleasant feeling with reference to your article on his early rhymes. Everybody would see that it was the paper of a young enthusiastic hand—and if anyone observed that the former volume had been handled in a different method, why you had only to say, as I dare say that you did, that you had never seen the new book, nor the review until it was published. 30

There is no doubt that Croker's influence on Tennyson's career had already sharply declined at this point. The real irony is that Croker as a figure of influence is obviously the creation of Tennyson's early biographers who resurrected him in order to help explain the ten years' silence and the revisions. As a result of their

30 Brightfield, p. 427.
assessment of his position, and as a result of modern acceptance of Shannon's statistical study of the revisions, Croker has continued to exert an influence on Tennyson scholarship which is disproportionate to his actual importance in Tennyson's life. Textual analysis will confirm this and establish that the myth of Croker's influence is precisely that—a myth.
CHAPTER III
AN ANALYSIS OF TENNYSON'S REVISIONS

After the publication of Poems, Chiefly Lyrical in 1830, Christopher North, critic for Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, observed that Tennyson had things to learn and to unlearn.¹ In the years between 1833 and 1842, Tennyson did this learning and unlearning. John Pettigrew describes these years as "the golden years, not ones of inactivity, but the most productive of his life".² Comparison of the two versions of those six poems first published in 1833 and revised for republication in 1842 shows how very dramatic were Tennyson's gains during this period and also precisely what was learned and what was eliminated at this crucial stage in Tennyson's career.

Without establishing too rigid a classification system, it is possible to see the revisions as falling into two categories, one of which has received a great deal of attention and one of which has been almost completely overlooked. These may be called technical changes and structural changes.

The most obvious revisions and those which are most frequently dealt with are the technical changes. Archaicisms,


compounds, and awkward inversions which had led to frequent charges of affectation were removed in favour of a more direct approach, the very simplicity of which reveals a greater facility with language. There is no longer the "painful and impotent straining after originality" which North had noted. Tennyson "prunes affectations of the early Keatsian kind, he has learned to use hyphens and generally to avoid the overly decorative, his diction is stronger and more natural".

But, extensive and important though these changes are, they are not the most remarkable of the revisions. They do, of course, indicate Tennyson's improved sensitivity and skill and for this reason they are worthy of the considerable attention which has been paid them by critics such as Shannon and Green. Critics, however, have focused on them to the exclusion of the far more fundamental structural and thematic changes which Tennyson made. These changes work in conjunction with the technical improvements to enable Tennyson to "release an excellence only potential in 1832, and make major poems out of minor ones".

The structural modifications, though far less obvious at first glance, change the poems in much more significant ways than do the technical revisions, and reveal a far more remarkable development in Tennyson's competence as a poet. The sweeping structural changes have far-reaching effects: they

3 Jump, p. 52.
4 Pettigrew, p. 46.
5 Ibid., p. 46.
clarify or subtly alter theme, and they remove from the poems Tennyson's first tentative attempts at symbolism, replacing them with far more confident attempts to establish patterns of symbols and to make them integral, functioning parts of the poems. Why, then, is it that the technical revisions have attracted most attention and have been cited as the most damning evidence in the argument about Tennyson's debt to the critics? There are two reasons for the critics' tendency to concentrate on the technical changes: they are the most obvious of the revisions and, secondly, they were what the critics were seeking. If, however, we focus on the structural changes, the situation changes and the question of what precisely is Tennyson's debt to the critics must be reconsidered.

Though I must disagree with Jerome Buckley's inconclusive statement that the "extent to which Tennyson was influenced by the reviewers in making all ... revisions remains debatable", I do believe that part of his statement on the issue accurately sums up my position—one which I hope to make clear through an analysis of the six poems. He says,

The journalists who called attention to his faults might remind him of the currents of popular taste, but as far as his own art was concerned, they had very little to teach him. He, himself, was quite conscious of his own defects and fully aware of the aesthetic directions that his verse ideally should follow. And far better than anyone else, he understood the past and present intentions
of each particular poem. There was, therefore, much in the revisions that the critics could neither have dictated nor foreseen and the ultimate arbiter of all changes was his own sharpened discrimination as a craftsman. 6

I would like to draw particular attention to the last sentence. The accuracy of it can be dramatically shown once the two versions of each of the six revised poems are considered against the criticism levelled at the original 1833 versions. Tennyson's debt to the critics is easily measurable—and it is a small debt indeed. I believe that the reviewers stimulated Tennyson to examine his poetry more critically than he had previously done, and that with his self-criticism aroused, he went far beyond the expectations of the critics. There is little similarity between what they asked of him and what he achieved.

In order to prove this, the original criticism must be examined. Joyce Green has done this, listing those reviews which specifically cited each of the poems in question, and tabulating the "types" of criticism. In most cases, I have accepted her analysis of the bases for each criticism as well as her close readings of the 1833 versions, especially where the original reviews are now unlocatable. This has been supplemented with material in John Jump's Tennyson: The Critical Heritage and Edgar Shannon's Tennyson and the Reviewers. Having established as precisely as possible the essence of the criticism, the 1833 and the 1842 versions of

each poem will be compared. It should then be clear that while Tennyson might have been stimulated to re-examine the 1833 version by the contemporary critics, his revisions are far more profound than anything suggested by the reviewers. His revisions are better seen as part of the development of a major poet than the neurotic patchwork of a young man hypersensitive to hostile criticism. The full implications of Tennyson's development as seen in these poems will be discussed in the final chapter.

"The Lady of Shalott"

Articles in the following journals made specific criticism of the first version of the poem: *Atlas*, June 1832; the *Literary Gazette*, December 1832; *New Monthly Quarterly*, January 1833; *Quarterly Review*, April 1833; and the *London Review*, July 1835. The two most extensive studies of the poem were by John Wilson Croker in the *Quarterly Review* and by John Stuart Mill in the *London Review*. Mill's article was written specifically to defend Tennyson against Croker's widely publicised attack. The other articles which were critical of the poem concentrated on criticism of one or two-line units, and since the grounds for the criticism is quite clear in the great majority of cases, they can be dealt with collectively in the later analysis of the poem. Because of the scope and impact of the articles by Mill and Croker, however, they should be examined in some detail.
Chapter II established grounds for impugning Croker's impartiality and demonstrated that his criticism is more nearly simple ridicule spiced with wit and malice. In each analysis which follows, I shall detail the specific charges made by Croker as far as it is possible to do with any accuracy, but I ask the reader to bear in mind at all times the facts which were established in Chapter II concerning Croker's methods and motives. In order to be scrupulously fair, I am treating the charges of Croker in the same manner as those of other critics, but I do not wish the reader to be misled into thinking that I have reconsidered my position on Croker's article.

Croker's charges are that the poem is absurd—it makes no sense to him—and that there are instances of false rhyme. He quotes extensively, but does not analyse the flaws which he sees in the poem so that we can clearly see his objections. Much has been made of the fact that one of Croker's criticisms coincides perfectly with one of Tennyson's revisions. Croker pointed out the stupidity of writing the name of the boat "below the stern", and in the revised version, Tennyson rewrote the line to read "And round about the prow she wrote...". As I have said in Chapter I, the change is a very logical one and does not establish very effectively Tennyson's blind acquiescence to Croker in all revisions, as Shannon would have us believe. Croker's criticism is valid: Tennyson's revision is appropriate, but the question is more one of logic than of poetics. In any case, we will see that this one
change is insignificant in comparison with the other more dramatic changes made by Tennyson—changes which were not suggested by Croker or any other critic.

Mill's article was written to counterbalance Croker's review. Mill devotes a great deal of space to "The Lady of Shalott", dealing with it in a completely different way from Croker. He treats the poem as a whole and concludes that it is a tale of enchantment and, "except that the versification is less exquisite, 'The Lady of Shalott' is entitled to a place by the side of 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel'." He also praises the descriptive power and narrative skill of the poet. Mill does describe the last stanza as "lame and impotent", but he suggests that it simply be omitted since no conclusion is needed. Tennyson certainly did not follow Mill's advice since he rewrote the concluding stanza and made many more changes than Mill seems to have thought necessary. The revisions do not, in fact, correlate with the criticism. I will, therefore, explain the technical revisions to the poem not as response to criticism but rather as evidence of the growth of Tennyson's technical mastery.

According to Green's tables, the charges of other critics are that the poem contains lines which have ludicrous associations, are affected, and have false rhyme. The latter charge is made against one line only. It concerns the rhyming of "river", "mirror", and "lirra", and this Tennyson did change, though it may have been because of his own

7 Jump, p. 89.
realization that the rhyme was weak and strained. However, even if we allow that the change was prompted by the reviewers alone, it does not weaken my argument. Except in the case of Mill, no critic paid any attention to the overall structure of the poem: most of the comments are on smaller units—words and word groups. Although Tennyson did revise individual words and lines, and although the revisions appear to coincide with words or lines criticised, analysis reveals that he was primarily concerned with solving problems of structure and with clarification of theme. Significantly, no critic suggested that the poem was flawed in either of these two areas.

Also, no contemporary critic either observed or commented on the intricacies of the rhyming scheme of "The Lady of Shalott", and the extraordinary strain which it placed on Tennyson's resources. It is not surprising that the young Tennyson was, at times, forced into contrived rhyme. P. E. L. Priestley, in his recent collection of essays, Language and Structure in Tennyson's Poetry, stresses this point and suggests that in the 1833 version of the poem Tennyson had only an imperfect grasp of the "technical problems imposed by the difficult stanza form", and that he was therefore insufficiently free from technical worries to concentrate on the structure of the poem. 8 In 1842, Tennyson had mastered the intricacies of his chosen stanza form, had more resources

to draw upon, and could therefore make the purely technical revisions very quickly. He wanted to eliminate false rhyme, affectation, and awkward inversions in favour of a more sophisticated and mature style. It is in this area of technical change that there is the highest coincidence between what Tennyson did and what the critics originally suggested he do to improve the poems. Once these changes were made, he was then free to concentrate on the more significant changes in the structure which he felt to be necessary. Priestley feels that the important revisions were those made to improve the structure of the poem and the technical changes are inconsequential except insofar as they indicate Tennyson's growing competence as a craftsman.

My conclusions are very similar to Priestley's. I believe that the revisions show clearly that Tennyson was guided by principles which, when put into effect, change "The Lady of Shalott" in a more dramatic way than was suggested or could have been anticipated by any critic. Tennyson wanted to improve the narrative technique of the poem and to tighten up the symbolism of the poem so that its underlying theme would be more readily recognized. No critic commented on either theme or symbolism and Mill said that the poem was flawless from the point of view of narrative skill.

I said earlier that I did not wish to establish too rigid a classification system for the revisions; the reason
for this reluctance is the complexity of the revisions. The principles guiding Tennyson in revising are such that it is impossible to classify the revisions and deal with one class of revisions as separate from and independent of the others. They are interdependent. What might appear to be simply a technical change in order to eliminate a weak rhyme may have far-reaching effect on the narrative and the symbol structure of the poem. For these reasons, in "The Lady of Shalott", I prefer to approach the revisions in the order in which they occur in the poem.

The very first revision demonstrates the complex repercussions in technical and symbolic levels of what appears at first glance to be a simple technical change. Lines 5 to 9 were revised ostensibly in order to eliminate weak, feminine rhymes of "lily", "daffodilly", and "chilly", and in this sense the revisions answer the charge of ludicrousness leveled by the Literary Gazette, and are purely technical changes. But, the revision also allows for the repetition of the word "island", and the more dramatic introduction of Shalott, an important result of the revision, is often overlooked. The original version concentrates attention on a pretty but thematically insignificant picture of flowers and water:

The yellowleaved waterlily,
The greensheathed daffodilly,
Tremble in the water chilly,
Around about Shalott. 9 (6-9)

The 1842 version introduces the picture of people travelling

9 Christopher Ricks, ed., The Poems of Tennyson (London: Longman's, Green and Co., Ltd., 1969), p. 355. All quotations from Tennyson's poetry are from this text.
back and forth past Shalott.

And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below. (6-8)

Other revisions have been made with the intention of dramatizing the difference between the life and movement outside Shalott and the isolation of the Lady in the tower. Since the theme of the poem is built upon the opposition of Camelot and Shalott as symbols of involvement with life and isolation from life respectively, the forceful introduction of the two within the first stanza is important.

The revisions made in stanzas 3 and 4 are significant. Not only are the stanzas reversed in the later version, but they are also substantially changed despite the fact that the only lines criticized in the original version are lines 19 to 22. Lines 19 to 22 are changed, but very slightly and within the body of a far more significant series of changes.

The original version contained explicit description of the Lady leaning on "...a velvet bed/Fully royally apparelled". The last three words must be amongst the most inept that Tennyson ever wrote—yet they were not singled out by any reviewer. The isle is also described: "...all irrailed/With a rose-fence, and overtrailed/With roses...". Tennyson eliminates this in favour of a description of the heavy barges pulled by horses and of the movement of boats on the river—all movement towards Camelot. All the life either originates there or is pulled towards it. The tinselly description of the Lady is replaced by questions which we understand are
asked by the people who travel past the island. Tennyson is able to remove the tinselly and very trite picture of the Lady and replace it with a more detailed picture of the lives of people outside the island. The effect of this change is to emphasize the fertility of real life (we see the reaper working all day in the barley fields) and to whet our curiosity about the island. In one complex move, Tennyson excises weak rhyme and overly pretty detail, improves narrative technique, and clarifies the theme by intensifying the contrast between Shalott and Camelot. In cinematic terms, the first part of the poem now gives a long shot of the island, the movement around it, and the relative positions of Camelot and Shalott.

Part II begins direct description of the Lady and her life on the island. The revised version introduces the web in the first line rather than more weakly in the second after the ineffectual line, "No time hath she to sport or play". Strangely, in 1833 and the years immediately after, no criticism was made of lines 46 to 50 which are amongst the most immature in the poem. They indicate very clearly the difficulties which Tennyson was having with the rhyming scheme which he had chosen, and the fact that he had only a vague idea of how to organize the significant symbols in his work. The lines read

She lives with little joy or fear.  
Over the water, running near,  
The sheepbell tinkles in her ear,  
Before her hangs a mirror clear,  
Reflecting towered Camelot. (46-50)
For the 1842 version, Tennyson removed these lines, replacing them with the far more effective picture of the Lady weaving what she sees in the mirror. He is able to move easily within the confines of the rhyme scheme, meeting its requirements and, at the same time, including only information which is of direct narrative or thematic significance. The revision reads

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot. (46-50)

The changes brought about by this revision are remarkable. Clearly, Tennyson wished to give more importance to the mirror than he had given in the earlier version where the exigencies of the rhyme scheme had forced him to deal with it after the irrelevant account of the sheepbell. The lines which tell us that she sees the highway to Camelot only through the mirror are given more prominence. Thematically, the poem is greatly improved at this point. The Lady's isolation is depicted more forcefully and economically. After the revisions, lines 46 to 50 contrast very pointedly with lines 51 to 54. Lines 46 to 50 deal with the shadowy, colourless, unchanging world of the island; lines 51 to 54 deal with the movement on the river once again. We see people, their changing moods and colourful clothing—all moving away from Shalott.

There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott. (51-54)
The world of the villagers is far less exalted than that of the Lady, but it has a vivacity which is missing in the world of art which she inhabits.

The line "...as the mazy web she whirls" is omitted from the 1842 version in favour of "There the river eddy whirls". The change is made in order to maintain the dichotomy set up in Part I. Movement, colour, texture exist only outside the island. Tennyson is able to build very subtly an idea of the sterility and lifelessness of art in isolation.

The concept of Camelot as a centre of life is clarified by a group of revisions which are seemingly insignificant. Line 68 is revised so that the funeral goes to Camelot rather than coming from Camelot as it does in the 1833 version. A vital, real world also is a world of mortality. The subtle intrusion of death is also a gentle foreshadowing of the death of the Lady of Shalott. Once she accepts life, she is heir to all that normal life involves. Lines 86, 95, and 104 are changed so that Lancelot is going to rather than coming from Camelot. The Lady, therefore, appears to leave her loom to follow Lancelot. The change is small, but were the Lady to move to Camelot after seeing Lancelot going away from it, the point of the poem might be obscured slightly by what might appear an inconsistent move by the Lady.

Lines 127 to 135 were completely excised. The 1833 version contained a detailed description of the Lady of the same type as that removed by Tennyson in Part I of the poem. The discarded lines read
A cloudwhite crown of pearl she dight.
All raiment in snowy white
That loosely flew, (her zone in sight,
Clasped with one blinding diamond bright.)
Her wide eyes fixed on Camelot,
Though the squally eastwind keenly
Blew, with folded arms serenely
By the water stood the queenly
Lady of Shalott.

In view of the clumsiness of such verbs as "dight" and "raimented", and the triteness of "diamond bright", it might be that Tennyson had considered the lines beyond redemption and excised them as unsalvageable. But in earlier situations, we have seen him work small miracles in retrieving the important sections of weak stanzas and in adding new, significant information. In this case, the deletion is consistent with earlier changes in the poem and, indeed, is part of Tennyson's new attitude to the central figure in the poem. Consistently, when dealing with the Lady, Tennyson moves away from lushness and extravagance to the less, concrete, more austere and more mysterious depiction of her.

Lines 145 to 149 in the 1833 version comprised a weak, extended analogy. None of the critics objected to it, yet Tennyson removed it from the 1842 version. It is a poetic device without purpose, and as such, it merely holds up the narrative, drawing attention away from the Lady. The more mature Tennyson can afford to relinquish it as he is no longer trying to prove his ability to handle traditional poetic devices unless they serve his purpose.

The revision of the last stanza is complex. Tennyson removes the parchment which confuses rather than clarifies.
It is as if the revisions designed to clarify the symbol patterns in the poem have made the explanatory parchment superfluous. Yet, in a sense, the picture is more ambiguous after the revisions.

The people of Camelot in the 1833 version are stupid and smug. The poet's attitude to them is clear. But, in the revised version, the attitude is far more mysterious. The people do not understand the Lady—this would approximate society's lack of understanding of the artist—but they are not hostile. Lancelot has the last word, and it is this which creates the ambiguity. What is his attitude to her? Are we to see his words as charitable—he comments on what he can appreciate, her beauty? Or is his musing more flippant and uncaring? The former interpretation seems to fit in with the points made by other revisions. Many of the revisions are made to emphasize the separation of the world of the artist absorbed only in art and the world of the ordinary mortal.

In the early version of the poem, the Lady can see a picture of Camelot in her mirror. In the revised version, she can see only the highway and river; the implication is that she is unable to visualize the real world, so total is her isolation from it. She sees life through a mirror (her imagination?) and is more removed from life than Plato's poet. Camelot is a mystery to her, and when she comes into contact with the people of Camelot, Tennyson shows us that her world is as much a mystery to them. The important aspects
of the reaction of the people to her are their lack of comprehension and their charity—the real world is not overtly hostile to the artist.

The changes are obviously far more complex than those suggested by any critic of the period. Their effects on theme and on narrative are far-reaching and quite unrelated to anything which the reviews said about the poem. That the second version of the poem is so obviously superior to the first version is therefore attributable only to Tennyson's improved judgement and skill.

"Oenone"

The critical reception of "Oenone" was different from that of "The Lady of Shalott". "Oenone" was adversely reviewed in fewer journals. Only the Athenaeum, the Literary Gazette, the Quarterly Review, and the New Monthly Magazine found grounds for censure. It was not particularly strong, however, and, in some cases, was tempered by praise. For example, the Athenaeum commented on the overuse of compounds in the first twenty lines, but described "Oenone" as "the poem of poems in this volume ...—wild,—fanciful,—chaste, and touching". ¹⁰ Certainly, there was some hostile criticism. William Jerdan, in the Literary Gazette, claimed that on the basis of the first ten lines of "Oenone", he could have had Tennyson committed to a padded cell. And Croker, in the Quarterly Review, quoted extensively and derisively, as usual.

But, balanced against this relatively small body of adverse criticism are the facts that the *New Monthly Magazine* censured one line only, that the *Athenaeum* praised the poem, and that the critic for the *Atlas* described "Oenone" as "an exquisite morsel". The *True Sun* cited a number of what it felt were beautiful passages from the poem.

Despite these favourable comments, however, Tennyson chose to revise the poem, less extensively than "The Lady of Shalott" but in such a way that modern critics have leapt to the conclusion that there is a high degree of correlation between the criticism of the poem and its subsequent revision. Their conclusions are based on the fact that the revisions are technical rather than structural in this case, and that therefore they apparently answer the criticisms which were also technical in nature. Also, Tennyson completely rewrote lines 1 to 14 which were twice censured, both by the *Athenaeum* and the *Literary Gazette*. Further confusion arises because although "Oenone" (1842) is obviously far superior to "Oenone" (1833), the reasons for this are not nearly as obvious. It is simpler to credit the reviewers with stimulating the revisions than it is to discover what patterns there may be in the revisions. And once again, we must remember that the critics were also predisposed to finding that Tennyson had based his revisions on the critics' commentaries. Even Lounsbury, usually stout champion of Tennyson's independence, says that

*Men who concede that Tennyson did not pay much heed to Lockhart's criticism generally*
have, however, been disposed to insist that, in the case of "Oenone", he did. 11

Also, Paull Baum, in Tennyson Sixty Years After, points out the great improvements in "Oenone" (1842), but predicates his commentary on the claim that:

The good things of 1833 are, really, the resultant of the critical attacks and his Tennyson's own slow development. 12

Fortunately, assertions such as these are easy to disprove. For example, Baum's commentary is obviously inaccurate in one very important respect. I have already mentioned that Tennyson made no attempt to revise the structure of the poem. The device of presenting the judgement of Paris in the form of Oenone's lament, a device by which Tennyson can fuse an emblematic representation of the case with a human reaction to it, must be considered one of the "good things" of the poem. Yet, it was clearly present in the 1833 version and was not the result of critical attacks. As D. J. Palmer points out,

"Oenone... attempts to combine the expression of a state of feeling with a moral fable. ... The poem has it both ways: it invites us to feel with the forlorn Oenone amid the gorgeous natural scenery, and at the same time to make a judgement ourselves, reversing that of Paris. 13

Valerie Pitt, whose work, Tennyson Laureate, cites the 1833


rather than the 1842 version of the poem, also praises the subtlety of casting the judgement in the form of a lament, pointing out that because of the human and pathetic figure of Oenone, Tennyson is able to invest the poem with a sense of life and passion while simultaneously examining the implications of Paris' judgement. She describes the structure as remarkably good because it is "invented for Tennyson's purposes and therefore subordinated to them". 14

As we shall see, some of the changes which have been dismissed as simply technical or as responses to adverse criticism are, in fact, further attempts by Tennyson to make the structure work for him. By revisions, he establishes boundaries between the passionate human world of Oenone and the world of philosophy and intellect in which Paris and the Goddesses enact their drama.

Before examining the patterns in the revisions, however, it is necessary to demonstrate that there is no significant correlation between the contemporary criticism following the 1833 version and the 1842 revisions despite superficial evidence to the contrary.

Articles in the Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette both objected to compounds in lines 1 to 20. Tennyson's revisions did remove compounds such as "glenriver", "steepdown", "tendrilwine" and "cedarshadowy". But no particular significance attaches to this move once we realize that Tennyson consistently removed compounds from all of the poems that he

revise and from parts of "Oenone" not specifically criticized in the articles.

The other criticism of the first twenty lines was made by William Jerdan of the Literary Gazette. He quoted the lines and said of them

The sheer insanity of versification! and enough to satisfy a jury de lunatico inquiremends. 15

The charge is so extravagant that it is as difficult to assess its seriousness as it is to determine whether or not Tennyson responded to it in his revisions.

John Wilson Croker's charges in the Quarterly Review are easily dismissed. He complained that Tennyson repeated Oenone's prayer to Mother Ida too many times—he counted sixteen times in all—and implied that the poem would be improved by a reduction of these refrains. Croker miscounted in the first place; there were seventeen such lines in the first versions. And in the 1842 versions, there are no fewer than nineteen such lines.

Croker also charged Tennyson with prudishness in veiling the nakedness of the Goddesses with an elaborate trelliswork of bush and bramble in lines 94 to 100. Furthermore, he charged that the description of plants at this point was superfluous and illogical if it were addressed to Ida who, better than anyone, could be expected to know her own "bushes and brakes". Tennyson rejected Croker's strictures, not merely by his retaining specific words censured by Croker, but by his

rewriting the passage for totally different reasons.16

He removed silly, trite prettiness, as he had done in revising "The Lady of Shalott", and replaced it with a passage which is original, beautiful, and which has the kind of power and vitality which the mortal Oenone would surely expect to see in the approach of immortal Goddesses. The original version, containing Croker's "trelliswork", reads

They came—all three—the Olympian goddesses:
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
Lustrous with lilyflower, violet-eyed
Both white and blue, with lotetree-fruit thickset,
Shadowed with singing pine; and all the while,
Above, the overwandering ivy and vine. (92-97)

The 1842 version introduces two vivid details which herald the arrival of the goddesses: fire and wind appear on the mountainside. The weak compounds, the obscure and clumsy "lotetree-fruit", and the weak phrase, "and all the while", are eliminated. The 1842 version is both economical and powerfully dramatic.

...Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to the smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose
And overhead, the wandering ivy and vine,... (92-97)

16 The inherent flaws in Joyce Green's statistical approach to the revisions is particularly clear in a case such as this. She records Croker's strictures as rejected because the specific words quoted by Croker remain in the 1842 version--"festoons", "gnarled boughs". I agree. Croker's strictures are rejected. But not for the reasons that Green suggests. To leave this issue without looking closely at precisely what Tennyson did do with these lines is both very misleading to the reader and unfair to Tennyson who went much further than simply ignoring Croker's strictures.
Between lines 104 and 206, Croker found several single lines to quote, and we must assume that a quotation is a stricture in Croker's article. We must also assume the grounds for censure are absurdity, since, once again, the grounds are not clearly established. Tennyson made several changes between lines 104 and 206, but it is impossible to see any correlation between censures and revisions. There are patterns in the revisions, but they were not suggested by criticism and were clearly established independently by Tennyson.

On the technical level, in The Formation of Tennyson's Style, J. F. A. Pyre very succinctly explains Tennyson's main principle of revision in "Oenone". Pyre sees an overall pattern in the incredible number of changes which Tennyson made, some of which involve only one word and some of which involve complete rewriting of ten or more lines. He points out that the revisions enable Tennyson to produce the effects he desired of rich and luxuriant images without, as formerly, simultaneously confusing or disenchanting the reader through the obtrusiveness of the means by which they are produced. This is the main principle of Tennyson's progress by means of revision, his consistent standardizing of language and verse while securing with the simpler and more conventional means an augmentation of the very stylistic and metrical effect at which he had originally aimed. 17

Because of the number and complexity of the revisions to "Oenone", it is impossible to comment on each one in

this study, but it is possible to identify and discuss three
types of revisions which can be discerned within Pyre's gen-
erally stated principle of revision. One is the "landscaping"
technique, already seen in Tennyson's revisions to "The Lady
of Shalott". The other two types of revisions involve repeti-
tion and the manipulation of colour patterns so that the
dichotomy between the respective worlds of Oenone and the
Goddesses, already present in 1833, would be still more firmly
established.

The revision of the first fourteen lines of "Oenone" is
certainly the most dramatic demonstration of Tennyson's
implementation of Pyre's general principle and of the gains
which he made in the years of "silence". To attribute the
improvements in these lines to the mere removal of compounds
is to miss both the extent of the flaws in the 1833 version
and the extent of the revision to which Tennyson subjected
them. In order to see clearly what Tennyson achieved, it is
necessary to quote in full the 1833 version of lines 1 to 14.

There is a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than any in old Ionia, beautiful
With emerald slopes of sunny sward, that lean
Above the loud glenriver, which hath worn
A path through steepdown granite walls below
Mantled with flowering tendrilwine. In front
The cedarshadowy valleys open wide.
Far-seen, high over all the Godbuilt wall
And many a snowy-columned range divine,
Mounted with awful sculptures—men and Gods,
The work of Gods—bright on the darkblue sky.
The windy citadel of Ilion
Shone, like the crown of Troas. (1-14)

The description is clogged with adjectives, some clumsily
compounded, which completely overpower the weak and sometimes
obscure nouns which they are supposed to modify. Within the first three lines, the "dale" and its "sward" are buried under four unremarkable adjectives: "lovelier", "beautiful", "emerald", and "sunny". Lines 4 to 7 each contain bizarre word combinations which cause the passage to move along sluggishly. Tennyson's reaching for poetic effect is felt in "loud glen-river", "steepdown granite walls", "flowering tendriltwine", and "cedarshadowy valleys", all of which obtrude to the extent that attention is drawn away from the description itself and to the clumsiness of the way in which it is worded. These word groups and the long sentences full of awkwardly phrased detail depend upon verbs so weak that both sense and perspective are lost. As Pyre observes,

the grammatical structure is such that the picture flows together, is perhaps confused, is not analysed and graphic to the human eye. 18

One remarkable difference between the 1833 and 1842 versions of lines 1 to 14 is that the description is restructured in order to eliminate this flaw. Once again, as in "The Lady of Shalott", we see Tennyson's heightened sense of "landscape", of the importance of establishing clear physical relationships between objects in a description. In the 1842 version, Tennyson structures the description on the gradual downward movement of the eye of someone assimilating the details of the scene. The reader's eye moves from the blurred, misty slopes of pines to the "lawns and meadow-ledges midway down", to the brook

18 Pyre, p. 87.
which "roars" far below them into waterfalls which lead in turn to the sea. This downward movement is echoed by other aspects of the poem which prove conclusively how little Tennyson owed to the contemporary criticism of the original passage. Such criticism seems superficial when it is seen in the light of the extensive revisions which went far beyond anything suggested by the critics. Tennyson used rhythm and intensity of sound and detail to give a remarkable immediacy to a passage which, in its original form, had been vague and very difficult to visualize. In the 1842 version, the distant misty hills are described in soft, languorous tones which are intensified by the smoothness of the rhythm at this point. The breaks in the one long sentence describing the mist are slight—as slight as the breaks in the mist itself. Here, enjambement is used to create a specific poetic effect and is not a purposeless display of technical skill as in the first version. The second version reads

The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters; slowly drawn... (3-5)

As the eye moves downward, the mist clears; the detail is more clearly drawn—flowers can be seen on the lawns—and the sounds also become clearer; consonants become harder and sharper until we reach the masterly repetition and sharp clarity of line 9 which climaxes the description of the valley.

The long brook falling through the cloven ravine,
In cataract after cataract to the sea. (8-9)

In the 1833 version, Tennyson's efforts to be "poetic" are
painfully evident and artificial: in the 1842 version, Tennyson is able to blend form and content seemingly effortlessly. Similar changes are made throughout the poem, though the first fourteen lines are perhaps the most remarkably improved.

When Croker objected to the repetition in "Oenone", he was on the right track but, unfortunately, he was making the right objection for the wrong reason. Croker's objection was to the sixteen repetitions of the refrain, "Dear Mother Ida, Harken ere I die". Tennyson ignored this objection—as I have said, the revised version contains nineteen repetitions of the refrain. What Croker failed to observe, and Tennyson himself clearly became aware of, was that the refrain itself was not the source of the problem, but that repetitions in other areas of the poem were clumsy and needed a great deal of attention. By 1842, Tennyson had learned how to use the technique of repetition judiciously: he had learned the strengths and weaknesses of it. Because of the very obvious repetition of the refrain, it is essential that any other repetition in the poem be subtle and unobtrusive. In his revisions concerning this problem, Tennyson eliminated purposeless and obtrusive repetition, sometimes altogether, sometimes in order to replace it with a more effective use of the same technique.

I have already cited the dramatic impact of the répétition of "cataract" in line 9. In lines 16 to 17, Tennyson eliminates a pair of repetitions which are of no importance. The 1833 version reads,
Of Paris, once her playmate. Round her neck,  
Her neck all marblewhite and marblecold,  

The 1842 version:  

Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.  
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck  
Floated her hair...

There is nothing to be gained by the repetition of "neck",  
and, as I will discuss later, much to be gained by the elimination of the compound adjectives dealing with marble. Lines  
53 to 56 describe Oenone's meeting with Paris. The original reads  

I sate alone: the goldensandalled morn  
Rosehued the scornful hills: I sate alone  
With downdropt eyes: whitebreasted...

The 1842 version:  

Far-off the torrent called me from the cleft;  
Far up the solitary morning smote  
The streaks of virgin snow. With downdropt eyes  
I sat alone;

It could be argued that the revision was made in order to get rid of compounds and the archaicism "sate". This is probably true, but it is also true that the technique of repetition is far more effectively used in the second version than in the first. The second version emphasizes the solitariness of Oenone, and puts her in perspective--it re-establishes both the overall setting and Oenone's mood.

In the 1833 version, Tennyson had Oenone call out a greeting to Paris, a greeting which is omitted in 1842.

... and I called out,  
"Welcome Apollo, welcome home Apollo,  
Apollo, my Apollo, loved Apollo".

In view of the fact that Oenone's entire account of the judgement of Paris is punctuated by a repeated plea to Ida,
we must applaud the omission of lines which create the rather
ludicrous impression that Oenone can speak only in repetitions.
The fact, however, that she does not speak to Paris at all in
the final version is doubly effective in that it puts Paris
very clearly out of the world of mortals, leaving Oenone iso-
lated and a helpless spectator. 19

There is something undisciplined about the use of colour
in the 1833 version of "Oenone". In an attempt to create an
atmosphere of richness and luxuriance, Tennyson loaded the
description with colour, much of it expressed in the form of
compound words. While Tennyson was undoubtedly systematically
eliminating such compounds from his work during the period
of revision, the focus on this area had prevented critics

19 Lines 85 to 87 indicate very vividly Tennyson's
increasing facility with language. His first attempt at
repetition in Paris's instructions to Oenone is very clumsy,
although one can see the kind of verbal play at which he
is aiming. In 1842, he is able to do what he could only
attempt in 1833. In the first version, Paris tells Oenone
to wait within a cave where "Thou unbeholden mayst behold,
unheard". The 1842 version uses the full resources of
the language, but far less obtrusively: "Thou, within
the cave/. . . Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard".
Lines 150 to 164 contain Pallas's offer to Paris. Almost
the entire speech was rewritten for the 1842 publication.
There are many reasons for this; amongst them, I am sure,
is the fact that once again, as in "The Lady of Shalott",
Tennyson wanted to remove a protracted and useless analogy.
At this point, I do not propose to do a full analysis of
the passage from all possible angles, but it is instructive
to consider the early attempts at repetition which Tennyson
suppressed when he rewrote the speech. Line 153, in 1833,
read "Good for selfgood doth half destroy selfgood".
Lines 157 to 158 read, "Come hearken to me and look upon
me and consider me". These early attempts give the reader
a good idea of how much progress Tennyson made in ten years,
even in so seemingly insignificant a technique as repetition.
from seeing that not only are the compounds eliminated, but, in many cases, the ideas which they expressed are also eliminated. The second version of "Oenone" is much less highly coloured. Colours are not piled on randomly; there is a discipline and a pattern to the distribution of colour in the poem. Tennyson used it to maintain boundaries between the world of mortals, represented by Oenone, and the world of Goddesses. The opposition of the two worlds I have already discussed as one of the excellences of the poem present, but not fully exploited, in 1833. While I am not suggesting that the improvement in the symbolism of the poem is solely due to Tennyson's increased ability to manipulate colour, I do believe that his increased awareness of the possibility of using colour to underline structure must be recognized as a major step forward and a step on the road to the future use of more complex symbols in later works.

In 1833, the germ of the idea was present, but its impact was obscured by Tennyson's indiscriminate use of "white" and "gold" in an effort to create feelings of isolation and richness respectively. In 1842, the use of these words is more ordered, as several of the key revisions demonstrate.

We have already seen how, in the first description of Oenone, Tennyson revised lines 16 and 17 to eliminate the words "marblewhite and marblecold". Apparently, his first intention had been to use the evocative power of these words to communicate the loneliness of Oenone, to suggest the cold which she felt in her heart. In the 1842 version, he says
that "her cheek had lost the rose". The implications of this change are not really apparent until we reach the descriptions of Pallas and Aphrodite. Whiteness and coldness are reserved for the description of Pallas, where they represent the intellectual control which she offers to Paris, and where they contrast effectively with the warmth and seductiveness of Aphrodite. Pallas is cold, unapproachable:

... but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply. (135-141)

In the original version, Aphrodite was described as "ivory-like". Since this is clearly too reminiscent of Pallas, Tennyson eliminates it. Her hair is caught up with a purple band. This, too, is removed as perhaps too regal and formal. The final description of Aphrodite makes her seem closer to the human world than either Pallas or Hera, warmer and more approachable than either of them, so that we understand something of her appeal to Paris.

Idalian Aphrodite, beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder; from the violets her light foot
Shone rosey-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated glowing sunlights, as she moved. (170-178)

Aphrodite's colouring is reminiscent of Oenone's—"Her cheek had lost the rose"—but she has a beauty, a golden quality which Oenone, as a mortal, cannot approach.
Gold is firmly associated with the three Goddesses. Fire heralds their appearance in the revised version; the apple which Paris must award is of "pure Hesperian gold"; Here's symbol, the peacock, is enveloped in a "golden cloud"; Pallas carries a "brazen-headed spear"; Aphrodite's hair is "golden round her lucid throat". Gold gives way to fire as Oenone dimly perceives the implications of Paris's decision. She describes herself as having "fiery thoughts", as going to Troy to talk with Cassandra who has foreseen the great war, "A fire dances before her". And finally, Oenone says that "whereso'er I am by night and day, All earth and air seem only burning fire". Paris, as emissary between the two worlds, and for the moment belonging to neither, is clearly mortal but he is described as having "sunny hair" and a "milk-white palm".

Certainly, much of this is in the first version, but its impact is greater after Tennyson removes words such as "emerald", "goldensandalled", "rose-hued", and "darkblue", which clutter the poem, and after he rearranges other colours. Tennyson's intention is obviously to use colour as symbolic of mortal and immortal, and therefore, of the conflict between the two. The tightening of the symbol patterns in "Oenone" is one more step on the road to a symbolist aesthetic.

Considered separately, the revisions to "Oenone" are apparently insignificant. But I believe that the vast difference between the 1833 and 1842 versions of the poem is due to the cumulative effect of all of these ostensibly
insignificant techniques. The revision of "Oenone" was painstaking and involved revisions in areas completely ignored by the reviewers of the 1833 version. Once again, Tennyson has no debt to the reviewers despite persistent claims to the contrary.

"The Lotus Eaters"

The contemporary criticism of "The Lotus Eaters" was so insubstantial that there is no difficulty whatsoever in demonstrating that Tennyson's revisions were arrived at independently. Only two critics mentioned the poem. William Jerdan of the Literary Gazette quoted the first twenty-seven lines, italicizing five areas and complaining that "the repetitions of the words marked in italics only show the perverseness with which the "Baa-Lamb School" endeavour to mar their better parts". Jerdan's criticism need not be taken too seriously for two reasons: Tennyson made no revisions in this area of the poem and, in 1842, when the revised version of "The Lotus Eaters" was published, Jerdan wrote a review in which he lamented the changes made in the poem. Croker, in the Quarterly Review, objected to the absurdity of lines 139 to 152. Tennyson made no changes of any note in this area.

But in two other areas, substantial changes were made. Eighteen lines, 114 to 132, were inserted into the Choric Song of the mariners which forms the body of the poem, and lines 150 to 173 were completely rewritten. The changes in

20 Jerdan, Literary Gazette.
"The Lotos Eaters" are unlike those in "Oenone" and "The Lady of Shalott" in that they do not occur consistently throughout the poem but in two blocks. In their overall effects, however, the changes are similar in that they affect both the structure and theme of the poem.

In the 1842 version, Tennyson added eighteen lines, 114 to 132, which form the sixth stanza of the Choric Song. In the 1832 version, within the first five stanzas, Tennyson establishes a pattern in which stanzas describing the attractions of the island alternate with stanzas which focus on the psychological turmoil of the mariners as they wrestle with the conflict between returning to the voyage and staying on the island. The structural principle of alternating focus is effective even in the first version, but for no apparent reason, Tennyson abandoned the principle part way through the poem by having two successive stanzas, five and six, deal with the island. The insertion of the new sixth stanza between these two has two important effects on the poem.

First, the poem is improved structurally because the contrapuntal principle of alternation is adhered to throughout the poem. Secondly, the addition has the effect of clarifying the conflict of the mariners, and, hence, the central theme of the poem. This, like the theme of "The Lady of Shalott", is based upon the opposition of two worlds, one representing withdrawal from reality, one representing life with its share of hardship and toil. The poem examines the way in which the mariners are seduced, corrupted and destroyed by their withdrawal into a world of unremitting peace and sensuality.
Stanzas 2, 4, 6, and 8 trace the gradual erosion of their ability to think clearly, and the elaborate process of rationalization with which they vainly try to convince themselves of their wisdom—even of their altruism—in staying on the island. Stanza 6, lines 114 to 132, is a key step in this process. Its insertion and its link with the rewritten last section indicate Tennyson's attempt to modify subtly the theme and, by complicating the psychology of the mariners, to introduce an element of ambiguity into the theme.

In stanza 2, we first hear the voices of the men. They have already described the beauties of the island which have started to make them dissatisfied with their lot. They reluctantly recognize that men must actively toil, but they question why that should be, asking petulantly,

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone, (57-60)

Stanza 3 emphasizes the difference between this toil and the effortless growth of leaves and flowers in Lotos land. As their awareness of this distinction sharpens, the mariners' voices in stanza 4 become more belligerent, and they begin to reject, as yet without any reason, life which to them now means only labour and hardship. It is important to notice that already they have lost sight of the joys of families and of challenges and, presumably, are not the same group of men who could once have responded to the cry "Courage!" with which the poem begins. Twice they cry, "Let us alone", and they ask for the same passive existence as the plant and
vegetable life of the island—simply to be allowed to "ripen, fall and cease". Stanza 5 is still more seductively languorous as the mariners speak longingly of a twilight world of "half-dream", whispers, Lotos-eating, and "mild-minded melancholy". Stanza 6, the 1842 insertion, is most important in that it is the point at which the mariners search for and find some logical justification for staying on the island. Their decision is already made, if "decision" one can call it since their capacity for logical thought and moral responsibility has been inexorably eroded by the dreamy passivity of the island. Stanza 6 brings home with great force the insidious corrupting effect of the island. We see the mariners grasping eagerly at the weakest of rationalizations for abdicating their responsibilities and withdrawing from the real world. They are so weakened that they are able to persuade themselves that it is their duty not to return home:

For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.

Let what is broken so remain. (117-125)

The last line is ironic since it is not family ties but the men themselves who are broken.

Stanza 6 prepares us for the long last section, lines 150 to 173, which was completely rewritten for the 1842 publication. In the 1833 version, the lines were a confusion of references to toil on the sea, the virtues of the island, the Lotos-eaters themselves, and obscure, not to say incongruous, references to leaping lizards, weeping pines, creeping
vines and sleeping melons. Because of this confusion, it is almost impossible to do more than guess at the state of mind of the mariners, and, hence, at the ultimate thematic intention of the poem. The length of the lines was changed, too. In the 1833 version, the abrupt change from the long, lazy lines of the Choric Song to the shorter, choppy lines is disquieting, the more so as it seems to serve no useful purpose. In the 1842 version, Tennyson uses lines which are longer than those of the first part of the Choric Song. Pyre describes perfectly the effect of this revision:

... the rhymes are massed in trios, and the verse is prolonged to a seven, and, in some cases, to an eight-stress movement. ... Each massive trio breaks forward with a plunge and goes staggering on with a long, resounding roll, precisely suited to the ideas with which the poem concludes.

This is one of Tennyson's triumphs in unsystematic verse. Nowhere does he control the irresponsibilities of irregular rhyme and metre with a success even approximating that of "The Lotos Eaters". 21

The change in the revised version is most effective in that it clarifies the theme of the poem and introduces an element of ambiguity which had not been present in the first version. Rejoicing at having found a way of staying without feeling guilty, the men swear an oath to stay on the island, living like Gods, "careless of mankind", watching dispassionately the "ill-used race of men" of which they no longer consider themselves members. In a final attempt to convince themselves of the desirability of life on the island, they

21 Pyre, p. 42-43.
draw a graphic picture of the horrors of the real world, and their song moves confidently to a crescendo with the lines

Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights and flaming towns, and sinking ships and praying hands. (160-161)

But, they are not Gods. They cannot be dispassionate, and the words "praying hands" signal a change in the tone of the passage and in the attitude of the mariners. They cannot but identify with and be moved by the courage of men who continue to fight despite the incredible hardship. The song gradually becomes quieter, more hesitant as they reluctantly and wonderingly admit that in the midst of the fight, men in the real world can find joy and eventual peace.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song. (162)

They do suffer and die, some "in endless anguish", but "others in Elysian valleys dwell/Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel". Because they have chosen the passivity of the island, this rest is now denied to the mariners and, because they are not the Gods that they aspired to be, they cannot live guiltlessly and therefore peacefully on the island. Their last lines are poignant and wistful. They have lost confidence in the wisdom of their decision, but no longer have the strength to reverse it. They beg for reassurance that the island will give them the rest which they seek, although at heart they no longer believe that to be possible. The repetition at the beginning of line 171
is particularly effective in indicating their doubts.

Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil,
the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave
and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander
more. (171-173)

At the end, they are caught between two worlds. The tragedy of their position is that they see that, as men not Gods, they cannot hope for rest and peace of mind in withdrawal from life, but they lack the energy to engage in a life which, after the ease of the island, they can see only in negative terms.

Thematically, Tennyson examines two courses of action which he treats in other poems, withdrawal from life or involvement in it. The theme is present in the 1833 version, though it is far less effectively worked out. In the 1833 version, the mariners are addicted to a life of ease; they are merely irresponsible, and their final words are confusing, almost rambling. Because of this, it is difficult to determine Tennyson's intention, and his ultimate position in the debate. But, after the 1842 revisions, the mariners are far more sympathetically depicted. Tennyson traces their varying moods and eventual defeat with great care. Thematically, the revisions are of great significance; the confusion of the first version is replaced with a clearly structured ambiguity. Because of the sympathetic depiction of the mariners, we understand why they are drawn to the island, and we are therefore less ready to censure them. We understand intellectually that the island symbolizes an
undesirable withdrawal from life, but because Tennyson also uses all of his resources to depict the island as immensely desirable, emotionally we are drawn to it in the same way as are the mariners. The symbolic representation of the conflict between withdrawal and involvement is so subtly structured that Tennyson's final position, and hence our own, is ambivalent. We feel Tennyson's desire to censure the mariners; we see that the island is inherently and inevitably destructive, but we are attracted by the fact that it requires less effort, inflicts less pain, and is overwhelmingly more sensuous than the real world. If Tennyson makes a choice at all, it is made reluctantly, and only after great effort.

Once again, Tennyson's revisions indicate no debt to the critics, but they do indicate his increasing ability to manipulate symbol structure in order to reveal theme. We also see more of Tennyson's steady movement towards a symbolist aesthetic which will admit of more ambiguity and debate in his poetry.

"The Miller's Daughter" and "A Dream of Fair Women"

Seen in the context of Tennyson's entire work, "The Miller's Daughter" and "A Dream of Fair Women" are interesting but of no great importance. Within the narrower context of this essay, the two poems assume greater significance and must be considered in any evaluation of the period of "silence". Because thematically and structurally they are essentially minor poems, however, I do not intend to deal with them in
detail. Suffice it to say that, in studying them, we find the same lack of correlation between criticism and subsequent revision as we find in the other poems, and we find no evidence to weaken my contention that Tennyson's changes were based upon principles which he himself determined.

"The Miller's Daughter" is, indeed, as an early reviewer noted, "a graceful and tender picture, full of the spirit of English rural life", but it carries no overtone of larger meaning or suggestion. It raises no questions for debate, and is simply the story of a successful young love which is given added poignancy by the device of its being seen from the vantage point of old age.

The contemporary criticism of it was slight. Jerdan, in the Literary Gazette, objected to a certain unspecified ludicrousness, but described other parts as "very natural". The New Monthly Magazine found "slight affectation" in lines 211 to 218. Croker, in the Quarterly, quoted extensively, but his criticism, though witty as ever, is no more than general objection to the "tender" imagery. He does, however, find it refreshing "that Mr. Tennyson has united himself to his miller's daughter in lawful wedlock" since "millers' daughters, poor things, have been so generally betrayed by their sweethearts". This comment indicates Croker's unwillingness to take the poem seriously.

22 Jump, p. 144.
23 Ibid., p. 72
None of Tennyson's revisions answer these criticism. Indeed, how could they? Two major changes, however, were made which show that Tennyson's main preoccupation was with improving narrative structure, a problem which had concerned him during the ten years' silence. "The Miller's Daughter" is greatly improved by the removal of extraneous detail which detracts from the already tenuous plot line. The original first stanza, and several other lines which referred to the boyhood activities of the narrator without having any bearing on the love affair which is the focus of the narrative, are removed for this reason. Tennyson, for example, discards this stanza:

Sometimes I whistled in the wind
Sometimes I angled, thought and deed
Torpid, as swallows left behind
That winter 'neath the floating weed:
At will to wander everyday
From brook to brook my sole delight,
As lithe eels over meadows gray
Oft shift their glimmering pool by night.

The most important change in the poem is the introduction of a third character, the narrator's mother. The change involves only three new stanzas, but the tracing of the mother's attitude to Alice adds "a little dramatic tension to the otherwise loose sequence of sentimental vignettes". In other words, once again, we see Tennyson's growing awareness of how to create a tighter and more compelling narrative and, once again, we see that neither of the changes in this poem were suggested by contemporary criticism of it.

24 Buckley, p. 71.
"A Dream of Fair Women"

After its first publication, only two magazines censured "A Dream of Fair Women". The New Monthly Magazine lamented the strong overtones of Shelley, and the Quarterly Review cited lines 134 to 140 as particularly absurd. Neither criticism made any difference to the form in which the poem was republished in 1842. Apart from a few slight verbal changes, and the excision of six stanzas, the poem was republished without significant alteration. The 1833 poem began with an odd four-stanza introduction in which the poet was compared with a man sailing above the ground in a balloon. The stanzas bear no relationship to the poem itself which deals with a series of portraits of beautiful women who were involved with violent death.

Beauty and anguish, walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death. (15-16)

These two lines sum up economically and vividly the thread which connects the portraits. The 1833 version contained a two-stanza amplification of this idea. It was completely unnecessary and detracted from the power of the two-line summary of the central idea of the poem. Presumably, Tennyson recognized that it was superfluous for, in the 1842 publication, he removed it.

Once again, as in the other poems, there appears to be no connection between criticism and revision. There is, however, one important difference between "A Dream of Fair Women" and the other revised poems. It has neither a strong
theme nor a strong narrative line. Even after revision, "it never becomes any kind of enquiry or exploration: it settles for, and into, anecdotes and... charades". 25 Pettigrew describes it as "a rather indifferent whole, which points up the difficulty of the long lyric devoid of any significant narrative thread". 26 Tennyson's revisions seem to be a vain attempt to deal with this difficulty, but because the poem is flawed in its basic conception, the revisions have little effect on it. But, crude though the poem may be, it furnishes a little more support for the contention that specific criticisms did not stimulate specific revisions.

"The Palace of Art"

To the modern student of Tennyson, it may seem strange that "The Palace of Art" should have received such scant attention from his contemporary reviewers. But its place as a key poem in the Tennyson canon was relatively recently acquired. It has attracted a great deal of attention from modern critics

not so much because of its poetic techniques as because its theme seems to support one of the main theories about Tennyson's psychological and poetic development. 27

In 1833, however, it was no more significant, and definitely

26 Pettigrew, p. 43.
less successful, than many of the poems published with it.

Only the New Monthly Magazine and the Quarterly Review
censured the poem, the former because of its Shelleyan tone
and the latter because of general absurdity, the strangeness
of the collection of portraits, and the device of footnoting
which I will discuss later in the chapter.

Considering the state in which the poem first appeared
in 1833, it is surprising that the critics were not much
harsher. Pyre accurately records the condition of the first
published version when he says

the piece was at that time in no condition to
leave the artist's hands. ...not only was the
piece marred by the most astonishing crudities
of detail, it was exceedingly faulty in gener-
al construction. The poet seems to have been
embarrassed by the abundance of his materials--
an embarrassment which resulted in his append-
ing two considerable passages in notes, and in
incoherence of plan. 28

The appending of two passages referred to by Pyre is the same
footnoting technique criticized by Croker. The device is a
clumsy attempt to include superfluous material and to absolve
the poet from the responsibility of being selective. For
example, in a prefatory comment on the footnoted stanzas
describing statuary, Tennyson said, in the 1833 version,

I intended to have added something on stat-
uary, but I found it very difficult, but I
had finished the statues of Elijah and
Olympia--judge whether I have succeeded.

Croker correctly calls this "the most ingenious device that
has ever come under our observation for reconciling the

28 Pyre, p. 46.
rigour of criticism with the indulgence of parent partiality". 29

In the revised 1842 version, the footnotes are eliminated, and, to some, it might seem that this is evidence that Croker's specific criticism was acted upon. This may indeed be the case, but we must realize that the whole poem was so badly structured that it needed a complete remodelling, of which the removal of the footnotes was but a small part. Lounsbury's survey of changes made in the poem is not overstated:

"The Palace of Art" was thoroughly recast in the edition of 1842. Not merely were there in it numerous minor changes, but omissions, additions, and transpositions took place on a grand scale. In truth, over thirty stanzas of the poem, as it originally appeared, were discarded, and nearly the same number added. 30

The difference between the 1833 poem and the 1842 version is very obvious, and a comparison of the two versions shows very clearly Tennyson's reasons for revising the poem. In 1833, Tennyson had a theme and vague idea of the manner in which he would communicate it. To this end, he wrote a loosely connected and largely incoherent series of stanzas. The revisions of 1842 were made to impose some order on this series of stanzas. The revisions do not modify or clarify theme, unlike revisions in "The Lady of Shalott", "Oenone", and "The Lotos Eaters". In the latter poems, there is a close connection between structure and theme; in "The Palace of Art", no such connection exists. Jerome Buckley was probably referring to his fact when he called "The Palace of Art"

29 Jump, p. 80.
30 Lounsbury, p. 411.
a "pastiche of impressions rather than a single organic unit". Buckley also observes that because it moves "towards a pre-conceived conclusion", Tennyson, in "revising the poem for later editions, was able to add, subtract and transpose without in any way disturbing his argument". \(^\text{31}\) (And, indeed, this is the way in which Tennyson revised, by moving and regrouping stanzas instead of rewriting, as is generally his method in the other poems.)

"The Palace of Art" has three areas of focus: the exterior of the palace, the interior of it, and the progress of the soul who lives in the palace. In the first version, Tennyson moves back and forth unpredictably amongst the three areas so that there is no sense of following an orderly progression of thought. Since Tennyson described the poem as "a sort of allegory", \(^\text{32}\) some degree of orderliness is required if the reader is to be able to interpret the poem correctly. But, in the first version, stanzas one to six deal with general exterior description; from there, Tennyson moves to the interior of the palace; from there to stanzas dealing with landscapes and a series of pictures; then we have six stanzas dealing with the state of the soul which are followed most illogically with a return to exterior description. The remainder of the poem consists of five stanzas on great men of art,

\(^{31}\) Buckley, p. 51.

\(^{32}\) "The Palace of Art" was addressed to R. C. Trench, whose remark to Tennyson, "Tennyson, we cannot live in Art", prompted the writing of the poem. Tennyson wrote a fourteen line poem to Trench concerning "The Palace of Art". The first line of this poem reads "I send you here a sort of allegory".
history, literature; eight stanzas on the further progress of the soul; and the final stanzas on remorse and the desire to flee the palace. Even this survey shows very clearly the confusion caused by the lack of a structural principle.

After the careful reorganization of 1842, the structure was far more logical and coherent. The final version contains 74 stanzas which form four loosely organized groups. Part I, stanzas 1 to 13, deals with the external view of the palace, its situation, the purpose of the soul in staying there, and details of galleries, cloisters and statuary. Part II, stanzas 14 to 42, deals wholly with the interior detail. Part III, stanzas 43 to 53, concerns the soul's pleasure in the delights of the palace, and in the pleasure of isolation in the world of art. Stanzas 54 to 72 deal with the gradual descent of the soul through despair to disillusion, and finally to remorse, which leads to the desire to leave the palace for a humble cottage. Obviously, whatever flaw there might be in this revised version, it is at least much better organized than the 1833 version. The poem is much more coherent in that it has a plan; the discarded stanzas and those added improve the variety and contrast of the various descriptions. By putting together the stanzas which deal with the soul's progress, Tennyson is able to make a much more effective transition to that part of the poem which deals with the eventual disillusion and repentance of the soul.

Although the changes in the poem are remarkable, the 1842 version was far from perfect. Tennyson had begun with
a very weak structure, and to say that the revisions improved this is not the same as saying that it therefore became strong. A great deal of work was still needed to make it effective. Tennyson was obviously not totally satisfied with the revisions as he made further alterations to the poem for its final publication in 1850. For instance, lines 193 to 264 were added after 1842. These lines appear to indicate that Tennyson did not feel that he made the sin of the soul clear enough. In them, he pictures the soul as sitting in "God-like isolation", and watching men whom she pictures as "darkening droves of swine/That range on yonder plain". The lines are reminiscent of the last words of the mariners in "The Lotos-Eaters", and it may be that Tennyson hoped to communicate that the sin of the soul was the same as the sin of the mariners. There is no question, however, that it is done far less effectively, even after the revisions.

Many critics have raised the question of whether or not the poem could be salvaged, or, indeed, was worth salvaging. This aspect of the poem I intend to discuss when finally comparing the entire set of revisions which we have traced in the six poems which were republished in 1842. For now, it is enough to say that Tennyson's revisions to "The Palace of Art" were determined by his own assessment of what was necessary in order to improve the poem and not by the commentary of contemporary critics.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION
AN EVALUATION OF THE REvised POEMS

The problem of tracing Tennyson's development as a poet has been greatly complicated by the mass of material which has been designed to prove, or which has inclined scholars to believe the theory that Tennyson did not always follow his own poetic inclinations, but was influenced in his choice of material and in his treatment of it by contemporary criticism of his work. The myth of Tennyson's dependence on the critics for guidance is ostensibly supported by the fact that he was known to dwell at length on any unfavourable commentary, that he published no new volume of poetry for ten years after the publication of Poems, 1833 because of the hostile reception accorded that volume, and that he later admitted that one review of the time, Croker's, had almost crushed him. The locus classicus of this theory is the six poems from the 1833 volume which were revised for republication in 1842. It appeared that, in some cases, there was coincidence between the areas of the poems which Tennyson chose to revise and those areas which had been most severely criticized.

A study of this problem is most rewarding as it explodes the myth of Tennyson's dependence on the reviewers by destroying the premise for a question so frequently asked (and so inaccurately answered) by many Tennyson scholars: to what extent were Tennyson's revisions dictated by the contemporary
reviewers? The first significant fact which emerges is that the criticism of the 1833 volume was not nearly as hostile as has been supposed. Secondly, a study of the 1833 and 1842 texts of the six revised poems against the contemporary criticism proves conclusively that no relationship exists between the reviews and the revisions. We are therefore confronted by the far more intriguing question of what precisely Tennyson was hoping to accomplish by revising the poems.

In tracing the way in which the myth of Tennyson's dependence on the reviewers developed, another important fact emerges very clearly: the most influential study of the problem, Edgar Shannon's *Tennyson and the Reviewers*, makes only the most superficial of references to the texts of the poems. And, as we have seen, Shannon's conclusions of Tennyson's dependence on the critics have been perpetuated by the almost unquestioned acceptance of them by other Tennyson scholars. The long neglected textual analysis of the poems provides such a wealth of information essential to any informed commentary on the issue that the inherent weaknesses of those studies which ignore the texts are startlingly obvious.

What the information also reveals is that scholars' obsession with myths about the relationship between contemporary criticism and Tennyson's revisions has prevented them from seeing the incredible sophistication of those principles which did in fact determine the revisions, and which throw much needed light on the development of both
Tennyson's style and philosophy.

Tennyson was not concerned with placating the reviewers; he was preoccupied with flaws in his work which no reviewer had mentioned. He was trying to solve the problem of how to write more effective and economical narrative poetry, how to tighten structure and make it an integral functioning part of the poem, and, most importantly, how to find a mode of poetic expression which would accommodate what he called his "damned vacillating state", and would not force him into uncompromising positions which did not really reflect his true feelings.

Besides this, of course, he was also involved in making a great many technical changes. The archaicisms and compounds which stimulated most of the hostile criticism following the 1830 and 1833 volumes grew out of Tennyson's respect for the magical aspect of language: its ability to create moods and its evocative power. His subjective response to such words as "silyery", "ambrosial", and "dewy" was such that he felt that the mere use of them must strike responsive chords in the reader. Between 1833 and 1842, he learned that this was not so and revised his poetry accordingly. Because they have already received a great deal of attention in other studies, I did not intend to devote a great deal of time to the technical revisions. But it would be foolish to underestimate the salutary effect on Tennyson's poetry of a return to a more familiar vocabulary and simpler and
more direct sentence structures. However, after ten years' silence, we might expect Tennyson to have made technical progress. Far more unexpected and therefore far more intriguing is the progress which he made in manipulating structure, in communicating subtleties of theme, and in defining for himself a symbolist aesthetic.

The 1833 collection of poetry contained Tennyson's first attempts at narrative, a fact which is often overlooked. In three poems, "The Lady of Shalott", "The Miller's Daughter", and "A Dream of Fair Women", Tennyson attempted narrative with varying degrees of success. Some of the later revisions in these three poems are directed at improving narrative. In 1833, "The Lady of Shalott" already had a strong narrative line, but it was further strengthened in 1842 by the removal of distracting and irrelevant detail, as well as by the clarification of the ending. "The Miller's Daughter", in its first version, had a very tenuous plot line. Tennyson's recognition of this is implicit in the 1842 introduction of the confrontation between Alice and the narrator's mother, a completely new character, and in the elimination of stanzas which included detail not germane to the story.

The alterations seem minor, but, in fact, by recognizing and eliminating flaws in these poems, Tennyson indicates his growing ability to handle narrative. The introduction of the narrator's mother is a particularly significant change as it provides dramatic tension sufficient to heighten interest but not strong enough to overwhelm the soft tone of reminiscence.
which pervades the poem. Also, it does not overshadow the
tracing of the love affair which constitutes the slight plot line of the poem.

"A Dream of Fair Women" is the weakest of the three narratives. Even after revisions, it is hardly successful, but what is interesting to see is that Tennyson realized that the poem needed tightening up. The elimination, however, of six stanzas, superfluous though they were, could not save the poem because to begin with the narrative lines are far too weak.

All of this working and reworking was essential preparation for Tennyson's further and more complex work with narrative poetry. Although one might argue the question of whether *Idylls of the King* is completely successful viewed as one work, no one would dispute the fact that several of the individual idylls are masterpieces of dramatic narration and that, unwieldy though the entire poem might be, in general it shows a great competence in narrative structure. A study of the revisions to Tennyson's first efforts at narrative is a chance for us to see the development of this competence.

The revisions involving structure, imagery and theme are usually interdependent as we have seen in chapter III. Of all the revisions, they are the most significant. Collectively, they signal Tennyson's movement away from his early experiments with Romanticism, away from simple imitation of traditional forms, towards his own definition of a symbolist aesthetic which can accommodate the particular issues he wished to
explore in his poetry.

The revisions also prove that Tennyson did not accede to the wishes of those who urged him to take sides in the contemporary debate about the position of the artist in society, between those "advocates of sensibility and those of responsibility, between aesthetic isolation and moral commitment."

Of the six poems which were revised, four dealt with this issue. From the revisions to these poems, we can discern Tennyson's thoughts on the problem. He seems to have felt an intellectual and moral responsibility to choose commitment and involvement, but the fact remains that in revising three out of the four poems which deal with the problem of withdrawal versus involvement, he has introduced an element of ambiguity which indicates that the choice of commitment is made with reluctance, with a sense of what is lost, and with a deep understanding of why one might choose aesthetic isolation and a world of sensuality.

The revisions to "The Lady of Shalott", "Genone", and "The Lotos Eaters" do not establish Tennyson as being clearly on one side or the other. Rather, they introduce a degree of ambiguity which, in 1833, was present, though not obviously so, but which reflects Tennyson's ambivalent attitude in this debate. Except in the case of "The Palace of Art", which must be considered separately, Tennyson resisted pressure to write poetry which answered unequivocally the question of where he stood; he preferred to experiment with a newer and

more allusive form of poetry which enabled him to raise questions, to explore their implications, and to make poetry out of the conflict which arose from his trying to answer these questions.

The ambiguity in his poetry, the tension between two mutually exclusive positions, is a result of the fact that in his work, the people and places and the event in which they are involved carry a level of meaning beyond their straight referential meaning, but the people and places are not mere ciphers in code, as we might expect in simple allegory. They have the vitality of real beings. In 1833, we see the beginnings of this symbolist poetry, but the symbol patterns are confused, and Tennyson is clearly still at the stage of experiment. By 1842, we see that Tennyson has learned to clarify symbol patterns by using imagery and structure far more effectively. "The Lady of Shalott", "Genone", and "The Lotos Eaters" are fully realized symbolist poems, and mark a most important point in Tennyson's development.

The revisions to "The Lady of Shalott" emphasize the relative positions and atmospheres of Shalott and Camelot, and therefore the symbolic opposition of the two worlds. At the simple narrative level, we understand why the Lady chooses the vivid, moving world of Lancelot, but we regret that acceptance of that world also means the acceptance of mortality. At the symbolic level, we see and applaud the artist's rejection of art in isolation, free from the
pain of real life, but we regret that in committing herself to the real world, she is committing herself and her art to a people who are not overly hostile, but who may not be able to respond to or understand her. The reader's position, and Tennyson's, is clearly ambivalent.

In revising "Oenone", Tennyson disciplined his use of colour so that the dichotomy between the respective worlds of Oenone and the Goddesses, already present in 1833, would be more firmly established. He uses the colours white and gold to symbolize the cold remoteness and the "superhuman" beauty of the Goddesses. Only Aphrodite is described as being warm and "rosy-white". The description has the effect of making her seem to fall somewhere between the two worlds as the colour "rose" is deliberately reminiscent of the first description of Oenone.

This small detail helps us to understand at least one reason why, of the three Goddesses, Paris chooses Aphrodite. She seems more nearly human, and what she offers is more comprehensible. In this poem, at a literal level, we see the tragedy of Oenone's rejection by Paris, and we respond to the drama of waiting for Paris' choice, but at a symbolic level, we see that Paris is, in fact, being asked to choose between three principles which will direct his life. Paris comes to represent all men, his choice to represent one which all men feel called upon to make. Certainly, it represents a choice which Tennyson himself felt was being forced upon him. Paris is offered power and fame by Here, wisdom founded on
self-control and self-knowledge by Pallas, and erotic bliss
and the world of the senses by Aphrodite. Obviously, Oenone
urges Paris to choose the gift of Pallas and, at first, it
seems that Tennyson himself urges this choice too. But the
poem is far more subtle than it appears, and the figure of
Oenone is far more complex a symbol than it first appears to
be. Although Oenone sees that choosing Pallas's gifts would
be morally correct, and although the reader is tempted to con-
cur, Tennyson has structured the poem so that the only "right"
choice is for Paris to reject the Goddesses completely and to
choose Oenone, who symbolizes "the promise of erotic pleasure
with wisdom that leads to power". 2

It is not so much that Paris's choice is wrong (the poem
is so structured that Paris could hardly have chosen otherwise),
but that the whole concept of choosing between such qualities
is wrong. Tennyson implies that neither Paris nor Oenone see
that the perfect human life cannot exclude either the gifts of
Pallas or Aphrodite. Since he is, however, unable himself
to find any way of reconciling the worlds of intellect and
involvement with the world of senses and Art, Tennyson handles
the question in such a way that the issue of right and wrong
choice is clouded. We are put in the position of seeing that
intellectually and morally Pallas's gift is the correct one
for Paris to choose, if he must make a choice, but we also
see that a world without the sensuousness of Aphrodite is as
unappealing and cold as the imagery which is used to describe

2 Arthur J. Carr, "Tennyson as a Modern Poet", in John
Killham, ed., Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson
Pallas. The carefully selected imagery which is the result of skillful revisions introduces the element of ambiguity which we have seen in "The Lady of Shalott", and which we see again in "The Lotos Eaters".

"The Lady of Shalott" and "The Lotos Eaters" are companion pieces. There are numerous similarities between them. Each deals with the theme of withdrawal/involvement; each is structured around the opposition of two worlds; each discusses the implications and effects of a choice between the two; the clarity and impact of each poem was enhanced by the 1842 revisions. But, there is a fundamental difference between the two. Although each deals with the same theme, the perspective on that theme is different. In "The Lady of Shalott", the focus is on one who moves from a world of artistic isolation to the world of ordinary mortals; in "The Lotos Eaters", ordinary mortals try to withdraw and find respite from the troubles of real life in a world of sensuous pleasures.

That they fail to find peace is often used as support for the contention that Tennyson himself unequivocally rejects the desire to withdraw from life. But, once again, I believe that this is a misreading of the poem and a gross oversimplification of Tennyson's position. The revisions to the poem indicate that Tennyson's position is one of continued ambivalence and continued resistance to explicit and final rejection of the world of the sense, the world of art. The contrapuntal structure of the Choric Song prevents the reader from being lulled into total acceptance of Lotos-land, but it also
prevents him from being drawn to total acceptance of life and its problems. The reader, too, is buffeted back and forth, as are the mariners, and he is made to feel the pull of both worlds as they do. The mental conflict of the mariners is made very clear in Tennyson's revisions to lines 150 and 151 which have a strongly ironic tone. The mariners are rejoicing that they have successfully rationalized their decision to stay on the island, and have finally turned their backs on the endless motion and turmoil of the sea.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free, (150-151)

We know that they have simply exchanged one kind of conflict and turmoil for another. The last lines of the poem show that they become aware that the life of Gods on the island is not possible for them. With the realization of the corrupting power of the island comes the inability to take pleasure in it. From this time on, they will be endlessly torn between the desire to leave and the inability to turn their backs on the ease which the island has to offer. Because the island has robbed them of the intellectual energy and moral strength to make a final decision, the conflict, the "action" and "motion" which they had hoped to avoid, will be eternal.

As we saw in the earlier analysis of "The Lotus Eaters", the 1833 version was far more uncompromising in its condemnation of the mariners, and therefore it was far easier for the reader to assume that Tennyson condemned outright their withdrawal from life. As a result of the revisions, the 1842
version presents a far more compassionate picture of the mariners, thereby complicating our attitude to their withdrawal from life. We are more hesitant to condemn those for whom we feel compassion, and with whom we have been encouraged to identify. Quite obviously, Tennyson deplores the effect of the island on the mariners, and he sees the inherent decadence of it. It is depicted as a land of symbolic death for the mariners. Ward Hellstrom describes it as

A land of overripeness which is the prelude to death, a land where flowers may bloom, but only to fade and fall, where leaves turn yellow and fall, where apples drop in the silent autumn night. The time is not spring, but autumn; the emphasis ... is not on fruition but decay. 3

The mariners fail to see this aspect of the island, and persist in a naive faith that the island will offer the rest which they seek. Perhaps, because of this blindness to what lies ahead of them, Tennyson's attitude to them is sympathetic, especially in the last lines where we see them disillusioned and powerless to alter their fate. Through the revisions, Tennyson has introduced a degree of ambiguity so that, as in the other poems that we have considered, the question of right and wrong choices becomes clouded and the reader is finally invited to make his or her own decision or to join Tennyson in an uneasy ambivalence.

In revising three of the four poems dealing with the issue of aesthetic isolation versus social responsibilities,

Tennyson drew on his increased skill with symbolism to introduce an element of ambiguity into the poems. His aim was sometimes simply to raise the question of choice between two courses of action, sometimes to stimulate an examination of the full implications of a particular decision. He does this subtly and economically because he is able to use imagery and structure to carry part of the weight of the argument. Discussion can be carried on without disturbing the poems at a literal level by the introduction of stanzas of rhetorical argument. The advantages of this method are very clear if we compare those poems in which it is employed with Tennyson's one departure from a symbolist method of presentation.

Although "The Palace of Art" also deals with the same issues as "The Lady of Shalott", "Genone", and "The Lotos Eaters", it is very different from them. It is far more traditional than the other poems. Its meaning is explicit; its long catalogues of pictures and descriptions of architecture are no more than what they seem to be. There is one more fundamental difference between "The Palace of Art on the one hand and "The Lady of Shalott", "Genone", and "The Lotos Eaters" on the other. In "The Palace of Art", Tennyson commits himself firmly and wholeheartedly to the position that the artist is wrong to withdraw from society and to live in art. In the other poems, Tennyson shows that his position is far more equivocal. While theoretically he applauds this view, the theory is more attractive than the practice and, despite its corrupting influence, he feels pulled towards the
world of the senses, the world of art in isolation. Inevitably, the question arises as to which of these two views most accurately represents Tennyson's final position.

I believe that "The Palace of Art" is an expression of the position which Tennyson felt he should hold and which he was always being urged to adopt, but that the more ambivalent stance expressed in the other three poems is the most accurate reflection of Tennyson's feelings. This is another issue which can be resolved by a study of the revisions to the four poems.

The revisions to the 1833 versions of "The Lady of Shalott", "Cenone", and "The Lotos Eaters" are extremely complex, and have the overall effect of making the poems more ambiguous. We have seen that this effect was created intentionally, systematically, and skillfully, making it more difficult, for example, for us to censure Paris, the mariners, or the people of Camelot. Surely, if the unequivocal position taken in "The Palace of Art" represented Tennyson's real beliefs, then the revisions could have been made to render the other poems less, rather than more, ambiguous. Tennyson obviously had the ability to do this had he so desired.

Also, even after revision, "The Palace of Art" is a much weaker poem than any one of the other three. This fact alone should make us cautious. It is not sound logic to use a badly flawed poem as the basis for a final pronouncement on Tennyson's philosophy at this point. It is arguable that the ending of "The Palace of Art" has stimulated as much debate as have any of the other poems, but this is less a result of
intentional ambiguity than of accidental confusion. As Christopher Ricks points out,

The poem honestly collapses—"honestly" in that at the last minute the soul puts in a plea, but "collapses" in that this should have entailed a total reappraisal.

Out of 74 stanzas, only two are devoted to the soul's reappraisal of her way of life. One has the impression that the poem is rushed to an unconvincing conclusion because of the exigencies of a preconceived theme to which Tennyson felt obliged to adhere. Ricks describes the weak ending as "perhaps the strangest of Tennyson's conclusions in which nothing is concluded, a bathos that swallows its poem".

Even after revision, which is nothing more than a rearrangement of the stanzas which has no effect on theme, the poem is unsatisfactory and remarkably unlike the other poems which were revised so subtly. Perhaps because of the quasi-allegorical form of the poem, perhaps because of the fact that Tennyson was not wholly convinced of the point of view which he was propounding, the poem is full of unexpected flaws. Ricks comments on the "narrative pomposity", the "thoughtless vapidity", and "shallow charade" instead of "perceptible portraiture", and concludes that the whole poem is "vitiates by flummery".

Such flaws are all the more unexpected because we have seen in the other poems that Tennyson is capable of writing well-structured

4 Christopher Ricks, Tennyson (New York: Collier Books, 1972), p. 94.
5 Ibid., p. 95.
6 Ibid., p. 92-93.
and dramatic narrative which involves vividly characterized people. I think, therefore, that it is misleading to assign a place of importance in the Tennyson canon to a poem which gives no clear indication of what Tennyson was capable of producing at this time.

It is our study of the revisions to the six revised and republished poems of 1833 which provides us with the information on which to base our assessment of what Tennyson was capable of in 1842.

Once we have dispelled the popular belief that the revisions were guided only by a desire to placate the reviewers and to ward off further hostile criticism, we are free to examine the revisions objectively. What appears is that the revisions, which have been so sadly neglected, are obviously a source of much significant information regarding Tennyson's poetic development.

From the study of the 1833 and 1842 version of each of the six poems, we see Tennyson's developing ability as a narrative poet. We find that in the ten years' silence, he learned how to use imagery and structure so that both contributed to the working out of theme. The revisions also provide us with a more accurate picture of his position on those philosophical ideas with which he was preoccupied at the time. Perhaps the most dramatic fact which emerges is that between 1833 and 1842 Tennyson was moving further and further away from simple imitation of traditional forms of poetic expression towards a symbolist aesthetic which was to guide much of his
later work. Analysis of the revisions also validates the case of those people, such as Lounsbury, Hallam Tennyson, Sir Charles Tennyson, and John Pettigrew, who vehemently asserted Tennyson's independence of the critics. Although they offered no textual support for their position, analysis of the texts proves conclusively that every omission and every alteration was the result of independent judgement, and in almost every instance, that judgement was absolutely sound. 7

Undoubtedly, hostile criticism stimulated Tennyson's close examination of his work, but this is the full extent of his debt to the critics. In revising his poems, he followed the dictates of his own sensitivity and, in so doing, went far beyond anything which the critics might reasonably have anticipated.

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