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ADULTERY AND REVISION IN TENNYSON’S 1859

IDYLLS OF THE KING

by

JANICE L. HEWITT

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Robert L. Patten, Director
L. S. Autrey Professor, English

Helena Michie, Professor
English

Martin J. Wiener
M. G. Jones Professor, History

Houston, Texas

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ABSTRACT

Adultery and Revision in Tennyson’s 1859
Idylls of the King

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Janice L. Hewitt

Tennyson’s 1859 Idylls of the King responds to and comments on a complex of mid-Victorian fears centered on female sexuality, adultery, and the rising assertiveness and power of women. Tennyson revises his medieval sources in order to make adultery the unifying element in all four early idylls. By making his characters severally revise the appearance of Guinevere’s adultery, Tennyson illustrates England’s growing difficulty in determining truth.

Because Tennyson’s poem is now usually read as idylls excerpted from the whole or as the completed work of twelve idylls, it is difficult to see the centrality of the Woman Question in the 1859 idylls, each named for a woman: "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere." Critics often read the women as schematic versions of "true" or false": Enid the true wife, Vivien the false harlot, Elaine the true and innocent virgin, Guinevere the falsely adulterous wife. Tennyson, however, undercuts each of these stereotypes, while at the same time illustrating the hazards of individualism.
All four women defy traditional authority in ways not found in Tennyson’s sources. Geraint believes that Enid, like Guinevere, is potentially adulterous. Enid is not, but she moves from being properly assertive to becoming dangerously controlling. Vivien is not the unprincipled harlot that Merlin names her, but she seizes powerful knowledge that had previously belonged only to males. Elaine, kept from marriage by Lancelot’s adulterous love for Guinevere, is not the sweet medieval maiden who dies for lack of love. Instead, her sexual willfulness becomes monomania; she chooses death and controls her family. Guinevere’s adultery is indeed contagious, but Tennyson shows clearly that, nonetheless, Guinevere has a far clearer-eyed view of reality, of life’s "lights and shadows" than does her "blameless" husband. The kingdom falls not because of Guinevere’s adultery, as Arthur believes, but because of many misguidedly selfish decisions, including those of Arthur himself.

By the end of the 1859 Idylls, it is evident that Tennyson is investigating the transition in nineteenth-century England from traditional authority to individual choice, with all its "wealth and all the woe." Women’s increasing assertiveness is central to that worrisome process.
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INTRODUCTION: "EVERY MAN IMPUTES HIMSELF"

"Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colours. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet."

In this study of Tennyson’s 1859 Idylls of the King, I look at how Tennyson modifies his sources in his responses to several mid-Victorian social issues, especially those centered on women. Because the dynamics of the four early idylls shift markedly once they are incorporated into successive, expanded versions of the work, it is important to look at Tennyson’s first published version outside the context of the Idylls as a whole. I bring to the study a blend of historicism, feminism, and poetics, believing that although it is impossible entirely to reconstruct the past, it is possible to recover some of the cultural context within which Tennyson writes and against which he imaginatively struggles.

**Tennyson’s Sources**

Scholars agree that Tennyson’s main sources for Idylls of the King are Lady Charlotte Guest’s translation from the Welsh of The Mabinogion and Malory’s Morte d’Arthur, copies
of which were in Tennyson’s personal library.¹ The Tennyson Research Centre in Lincoln, England, houses more than two thousand books known to be Tennyson’s,² including several editions of Malory and volume three of Guest’s *The Mabinogion* (1839). Because the Centre does not have volume two of *The Mabinogion*, which includes the tale of "Geraint the Son of Erbin," Tennyson’s main source for "Enid,"³ I was unable to use Tennyson’s copy for his annotations or for quotations.⁴

Tennyson owned at least three editions of the Caxton printing of Malory: those by Walker and Edwards, 2 vols. (1816); R. Wilks, 3 vols. (1816); and Robert Southey, 2 vols. (1817). The Centre has neither Southey volume, but does have all three Wilks volumes. The Centre holds volume one of the Walker and Edwards edition, which Hallam Tennyson

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¹ Tennyson was well read in ancient English history, comparative religion, primitive cultures, sociology, and psychology, all of which colored the composition of the *Idylls*. Tracing of those influences is beyond the scope of this study, however.

² The Centre’s holdings are catalogued in *Tennyson in Lincoln: A Catalogue of the Collections in the Research Centre*. My research at the Centre proved helpful in determining sources. If a book’s pages were uncut, it was safe to assume that it had not much influenced Tennyson.

³ In Guest’s notes Tennyson could also have read about how Chretien’s "Erec and Enide" differs from the Welsh version.

⁴ All quotations in my study of "Enid" are taken from a 1906 reprint of the 1849 revised edition of *The Mabinogion*, the only copy Interlibrary Loan could secure.
said was "much used" by his father (Memoir 1: 156).\(^5\)

Hallam's contention is borne out by Tennyson's various notations.\(^6\)

\(^5\) Ricks calls the Wilks and the Walker editions "reprints" of Caxton (Poems 3: 261), but the editions differ markedly, as Wilks notes proudly in his Introduction:

When this Work was recommended to our consideration, it was remarked, that some sentences highly needed pruning, to render the text fit for the eye of youth; and that it might be no longer secreted from the fair sex. This has led to a very careful revisal of the whole work; every indecent allusion has been carefully expunged; and the Work may now, with confidence, be placed in the hands of the most scrupulous. But the objectionable and, indeed, obscene passages are certainly preserved in the rival edition of two volumes. In ours, the goatish fancy will seek in vain for the sentence that indelicately describes the feat of the giant.

Such a statement would send most readers searching for the expunged passage. Tennyson, well aware of the controversy between the two publishers, carefully marked in his copy of Walker and Edwards the sentence deleted by Wilks. In both versions Arthur kills a giant who had killed a Duchess, but Wilks deletes the details that are in Caxton: "he hath murthered her in enforcing her, and hath slit her unto the navel." Tennyson's general preference for the Walker and Edwards edition is evidenced in the many notations, identifiable as being in Tennyson's hand, in his copy of Walker. In contrast, only scanty markings appear in Wilks.

Andrew says that both the Walker and Edwards and the Wilks editions are based on the "corrupt Stansby edition of 1634," but that the Wilks edition is "somewhat better" (20). What is important to this study is the indication that Tennyson used the former edition as source.

All quotations from Malory in this study are taken from the Walker and Edwards edition of 1816.

\(^6\) The most frequent mark is a line drawn alongside a notable passage or under a striking word or phrase: "And therewithal sir Tristram went unto him, and took his lady from him; and, with an awkward stroke, he smote off her head" (330); and "the hurling wind" (375). To indicate a surprising or perhaps previously unknown word, Tennyson wrote the letter \(\#\) in the margin: "this is but a daffish Knight" (442). Such notations cannot directly be linked
For example, in espousing forgiveness in the *Idylls*, Tennyson moves imaginatively from medieval chivalric rules into the uneasy nineteenth-century blend of religious and secular approaches to forgiveness. In Walker and Edwards, Tennyson marked several passages that exemplify gentleness and the ability to forgive, one of which is particularly suggestive of the way in which Tennyson blends the medieval chivalric world with that of the nineteenth-century:

And so, at the last, sir Launcelot smote him down, grovelling upon his hands and knees, and then the knight yielded him, and sir Launcelot received him goodly (369).

Tennyson makes Guinevere grovel, too, followed by Arthur's Biblically cadenced "Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God / Forgives" ("Guinevere" 541-2). There is, however, a strangely secular sense in the farewell scene that grovelling, rather than confession or repentance, must precede forgiveness. As the example suggests, the *Idylls* is not simply a new edition of the sources, but an imaginative synthesis of selected elements. Tennyson brings to bear a nineteenth-century sensibility in his retelling of the Arthurian matter.

In addition to the main sources, Tennyson also uses such sources as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the Vulgate *Merlin*, translated in part in with the *Idylls*, but they undoubtedly colored the poet's thinking.
Southey's Preface to his edition of Malory. Tennyson was widely read in Arthurian literature, however, so that there are undoubtedly many imaginative inclusions, the tracing of which is beyond the scope of this work.

**Tennyson's Departures From His Sources**

In modifying his sources, Tennyson never hesitates to omit, add, or change characters or events. Morgan le Fay never appears in *Idylls*, for example, though she is a key figure in Malory, where she is Arthur's sister, a sorceress, and mother of Mordred, Arthur's son through unwitting incest. Because Tennyson eliminates much of the supernatural in *Idylls* and wants Arthur to be "ever virgin save for" Guinevere, he excises Morgan despite her presence in an early prose sketch of the *Idylls* (Staines 7). Tennyson adds to the *Mabinogion* the rumored adultery that motivates Geraint's abrupt departure from court, a crucial addition that unifies the 1859 idylls and responds to

7 Staines believes the Vulgate *Merlin* to be the main source for "Vivien" (27).

8 See Staines' *Tennyson's Camelot* for a fine comparative reading of the *Idylls* and its sources. My reading of the early idylls differs significantly from that of Staines, who finds Tennyson's rendering of the four women far less complex and enigmatic than I do.

See also Simpson's *Camelot Regained* for a detailed survey of the Arthurian-based literature available to British readers prior to the publication of *Idylls of the King*. Tennyson would have been familiar with many of those Arthurian-inspired publications.
nineteenth-century fears of contagious adulterous example.\textsuperscript{9} The poet also changes Malory's sequence of events so that Guinevere chooses to flee to Almesbury before Arthur's death, thereby allowing the poet to invent the farewell scene between Arthur and Guinevere at the nunnery, substituting it for Malory's farewell there between Guinevere and Lancelot.

In a pattern that holds throughout all twelve of the completed idylls, the 1859 Idylls contains two idylls that remain close to the source and two that are almost entirely imaginative. In "Enid" and "Vivien," the two that remain close to their sources, subtle changes are crucial to Tennyson's emphases. In "Vivien" and "Guinevere," the two in which Tennyson elaborates upon "an undeveloped moment" in the source (Staines 42), Tennyson's changes are extensive. Most of Tennyson's modifications, however, whether subtle or broad, incorporate into his idylls nineteenth-century psychological realism, increasing secularization, and issues concerning women. Mid-Victorian fears of female sexuality and of increasing female assertiveness are the focus of this study.

\textsuperscript{9} Staines believes that "What primarily separates Tennyson's account of the Enid story from his Welsh source is the superimposition of the rumour of Guinevere's adultery. Guinevere has only a minor role in the idyll, but her sin, or at least the rumour about it, makes her an unseen presence throughout the poem" (41). As will be apparent in chapter one, I find other modifications crucial as well.
An experiment in genre, the *Idylls* incorporates aspects of the epic such as an epic hero and a twelve-part structure, but it also includes the psychological realism so typical of the nineteenth-century novel.\(^{10}\) In "Enid," for example, Tennyson not only adds the rumor of adultery but depicts a Geraint by nature vulnerable to such a rumor. In "Elaine" Tennyson's addition of two adjectives, "willful" and "mad," move the tale from Malory's pathetic romance into the Victorian psychological realm of sexual monomania. Tennyson changes Vivien from pursued to pursuer, gives her manipulative knowledge, and adds to the story line her purposeful pursuit of male knowledge and power. In Guinevere, Tennyson depicts an adulterous queen with compelling reasons to love Lancelot rather than Arthur and, in a small but astute addition, in part bases Guinevere's jealousy on her fears of aging. Tennyson's addition of psychological realism to his Arthurian characters makes them more convincingly a part of the poet's commentary on nineteenth-century issues.

Tennyson's ambivalence toward issues of female power evidences itself in each of the early idylls. The poem complicates Geraint's character, making him far more threatening and rigid in his thinking than the Geraint in the *Mabinogion* so that Enid's timid rebellion seems even

\(^{10}\) See Tucker, "Trials of Fiction: Novel and Epic in the Geraint and Enid Episodes from *Idylls of the King*," for a negative reaction to the experiment.
more necessary than that in the source. Yet, by means of imagery and the addition of key lines, Tennyson also makes his Enid threateningly powerful and controlling. Vivien, vastly different from the source figure, is, in 1859, both frightening and potentially heroic.\(^{11}\) Elaine is no longer simply the pathetic creature dying for love; Tennyson makes her choose suicide and then become a powerfully controlling invalid. Guinevere, usually read as a repentant figure who turns to religion and the promise of salvation, is rendered ambivalently to idyll's end. In the midst of repentance she thinks of Lancelot rather than of Arthur and the promise of heaven; Tennyson's description of her years in the nunnery suggests not the hope of salvation but a bleak diminution of earthly possibilities.

Tennyson's treatment of Guinevere's last years is but one example of the way in which the poem reflects the tensions between religious belief and the increasing secularization of the nineteenth century. Geraint, in his repeated use of "obey," echoes vows from the marriage ceremony in the *The Book of Common Prayer*, but always in such a way as to make the need to obey sound indefensible. Adultery, the subject of one of the Ten Commandments, and always a sin in the eyes of the church, is in the *Idylls*

\(^{11}\) As I note in the Epilogue, it is almost impossible to read Tennyson's Vivien sympathetically after the poet adds to the first version and then inserts "Balin and Balan" just ahead of the altered version.
largely a secular offense rather than a religious one. At the end of "Elaine," for example, although Lancelot uses the word "sin," his remorse manifests itself not in fear for his soul but in his fears for the damage his example has done to the young knights. Orthodox religion plays no part in "Vivien," knowledge and power coming instead from an ancient book of incantations, use of which traps Merlin in a secular version of life after death. Only Arthur bases his actions on orthodoxy, forgiving Guinevere in the most Christian of manners. Yet Tennyson undercuts even this by making Arthur blind to his own part in the downfall of the kingdom.

I do not believe this is a willful reading of late twentieth-century sensibility into a nineteenth-century work. Tennyson chose to tailor his sources in order to introduce ambivalence and to dramatize the complexities of the mid-Victorian Woman Question. His readership chose for the most part to read the 1859 Idylls as espousing Arthur's ideals and as roundly condemning Vivien and Guinevere while applauding the devotion of Enid and Elaine. It is possible to read the Idylls in such a true and false dichotomy, but the poem, read closely, offers much less certainty.

Publishing History

The publishing history of the twelve-part Idylls of the King provides insight into Tennyson's changing emphases
during fifty years of composition and revision. In 1857 Moxon printed six copies of the two-idyll trial edition of Tennyson's *Enid and Nimüe: The True and the False,* a title that signals the centrality of women as well as the thematic contrast of truth and falsehood.

Two years later, publication of the expanded proof edition by the firm of Moxon adds "Elaine" and "Guinevere" to the first two idylls in a volume now titled *The True and the False: Four Idylls of the King.* The title then becomes simply *Idylls of the King* in the first edition, issued in

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12 I have examined the 1859 *Idylls* within the larger framework of succeeding editions of *Idylls.* For more detailed information, see "A Study of the Publication of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*" by McCullough and Brew. According to McCullough and Brew, between 1859 and the complete *Idylls* of 1889, Tennyson published ten editions of the 1859 volume "ranging in nature from virtual reprints to extensively revised and enlarged editions such as the fourth and ninth" (156). The *Idylls* were also included in many other editions, but except where noted, as in the 1873 *Cabinet Works,* the publications did not greatly affect the content of the *Idylls.*

For an analysis of how Tennyson wove his idylls together over the long course of publication, see Kathleen Tillotson's classic study, "Tennyson's Serial Poem."

13 Only one of the six copies survives and is in the British Museum. According to a note in F. J. Palgrave's hand on the surviving copy, the other five were recalled by Tennyson in response "to a remark upon Nimue which reached him." See my comments in chapter two.

A microfilm of the 1857 edition was kindly loaned to me by Dr. George W. Bain, Head, Archives & Special Collections of the Vernon R. Alden Library, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. All quotations from the 1857 trial edition are taken from a copy of that microfilm.

14 Charles Tennyson suggests that the title change was "probably because of the publication of a novel by the Honourable Lena Eden entitled *The False and the True,*" but he gives no Tennysonian evidence for the claim (317).
40,000 copies in June 1859 and soon followed by the second edition in December 1859.\(^{15}\) Tennyson's retention in proof of "The True and the False" suggests the theme's underlying and continuing importance.\(^ {16}\) Although titled *Idylls of the King*, the first eight editions, appearing from 1859 to 1869, continue to contain idylls named solely for women: "Enid"; "Vivien," a retitled "Nimuë";\(^ {17}\) "Elaine"; and "Guinevere." The "Dedication" to Prince Albert, added in the fourth edition of 1862, appears in succeeding editions of the *Idylls*, although it is omitted in the four volumes of the Moxon 1867 and 1868 Folios illustrated by Doré.\(^ {18}\)

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\(^{15}\) All quotations from the 1859 *Idylls* are from the Moxon first edition. For the convenience of the reader I have indicated line numbers as found in Ricks's *Poems*, vol. 3.

\(^{16}\) Tillotson says that the change in title "has been taken to imply a change of purpose, but I think wrongly. For the 'true and the false' remains as one of the large, simple antitheses that are among the 'vertebrae' of the whole poem. It is not a crude contrast, for it is crossed by the doubtful question of what is true and what is false" (91). I go a step further by suggesting that the difficulty of distinguishing true from false was a crucial issue for many Victorians.

\(^{17}\) See fn. 4 in chapter two for a discussion of the name change.

\(^{18}\) Each of these volumes contains a single idyll, still titled as in the 1859 version: "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere." Tennyson, usually unenthusiastic about illustrations because they could not possibly be true to the poem as a whole, was very pleased with the Doré engravings. After he had seen the first few of the engravings, he wrote to Doré of the "grand plaisir" the drawings had given him because it seemed to him that "leur beauté morne et noble accorde parfaitement avec le génie des vieilles légendes" (*Letters* 2: 452). I suggest, too, that the drawings may well have appealed to Tennyson because, without exception,

In an attempt to attract an even wider market, Strahan also published in 1869-70 \textit{The Holy Grail and Other Poems}, which includes only "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Etarre," and "The Passing of Arthur," but which indicates in what order these four idylls should be read in relation to the earlier four and states: "These four 'Idylls of the King' are printed in their present form they are done on a grand scale that puts small human figures against a vast backdrop of nature in a relationship that was consistently important to Tennyson. The earlier illustrations for the so-called "Moxon Tennyson" of 1857, drawings that Tennyson disliked (Martin 414-15), have a much narrower focus and try, by a single illustration, to represent an entire poem. In contrast, the nine full-page engravings in each of the folios can suggest a broader range of the poem's concerns.

\textsuperscript{19} Although the publication date on the title page of \textit{The Holy Grail and Other Poems} is 1870, the book actually appeared in December 1869. The other editions appeared in 1870.
for the convenience of those who possess the former volume." Then in 1872 Strahan published *Gareth and Lynette Etc.*, which includes the title idyll plus "The Last Tournament," the latter idyll having been published earlier as the lead inclusion in the December 1871 issue of *The Contemporary Review*. 20

Even after the publication of six additional idylls, Tennyson authorized republication in 1867-8, 1873, 21 and 1876 of just the four early idylls, each still named only for the women. Tennyson's decision not only indicates the continuing popularity of the four early idylls, but also suggests that he believed them still to be artistically and thematically cohesive. The artistic achievement is remarkable: the first four woman-titled idylls can not only stand alone, but also blend smoothly into the *Idylls* as a

20 Tennyson, with the sole exception of the journal publication of "The Last Tournament," preferred to publish his idylls in book form. His publisher, Strahan, published *The Contemporary Review*, however, and his friend James Knowles, who had written the favorable review of *Idylls* in the 1870 *Spectator*, had taken over the editorship of *The Contemporary Review* in April 1870. Under Knowles's editorship, the *Contemporary* exhibited "a full consciousness of the cultural conflicts and dramatic tensions of the time" (Alan Willard Brown 173), especially the religious and scientific conflicts and tensions debated by The Metaphysical Society, of which Knowles and Tennyson had been founding members in 1869. Publication of "The Last Tournament" in such a journal would, then, be peculiarly appropriate.

21 The 1874 *Cabinet Works*, which included all the idylls except "Balin and Balan," shows considerable revision, especially of "Vivien," to which Tennyson added lines 6-146, 188-194, and 816-18, to be discussed in chapter two.
ten-idiyll whole. Tennyson seems always to have known an idyll's placement relative to the more recently written idylls and never changed their order. From 1859 on, even in the editions containing only the four idylls titled for women, the title of the volume remains *Idylls of the King*, a title that from the beginning ties the early domestic idylls to the larger work and to the elusive nature of King Arthur.

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22 It could be argued that Tennyson published the 1873 and 1876 editions solely to help those readers who had purchased the 1869 *The Holy Grail*, which did not include the first four idylls of 1859. It could also be, of course, that Tennyson was alert to additional income from republication of a popular work. Detailed publication history is beyond the scope of this paper, however.

23 Tennyson's title is purposely enigmatic in its reference to "the King" rather than "King Arthur." In the *Spectator* of January 1, 1870, James Knowles, Tennyson's personal friend and editor of *Nineteenth Century*, published "Tennyson's Arthurian Poem," a letter to the editor supposedly based on a conversation with Tennyson. Knowles writes, "King Arthur, as he has always been treated by Tennyson, stands obviously for no mere individual prince or hero, but for the 'King within us'--our highest nature, by whatsoever name it may be called--conscience; spirit; the moral soul; the religious sense; the noble resolve. His story and adventures become the story of the battle and pre-eminence of the soul and of the perpetual warfare between the spirit and the flesh." Since so much of what we "know" about Tennyson's thoughts comes from secondary sources such as Knowles and Hallam Tennyson, both often bent on turning Tennyson into a conventional thinker, we cannot be certain that the "King within us" are Tennyson's words. The rest of the quotation sounds like Knowles's interpretation since Tennyson generally tried not to be tied to specific interpretation. "Tennyson's Arthurian Poem" is reprinted, in part, in Hallam Tennyson's *Tennyson and His Friends*, 498-503.

24 An attempt to verify or disprove King Arthur's historicity is beyond the scope of this paper. But as Richard Barber indicates, the continuing popularity of the
"Balin and Balan," the last idyll to be written, was completed in 1872 but not published until 1885 in Tiresias and Other Poems, despite its thematic importance in the Idylls. A footnote at the bottom of the first page of "Balin and Balan" in Tiresias gives the only indication that the poem is part of Idylls of the King: "An introduction to 'Merlin and Vivien'" (117). Only in 1888, four years before Tennyson's death, were all twelve idylls published as Idylls of the King in the New Library Edition.

During the lengthy course of composition and publication, Tennyson moves from the domestic and women's issues of the 1857 Enid and Nimue to wider political and metaphysical questions in 1870 and then to the intersection in 1872 of domestic with political and metaphysical questions. In the Epilogue of this study I suggest the various impacts on the 1859 idylls as they are incorporated into succeeding editions.

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story over some fifteen centuries testifies to people's need for Arthur, whether historic or mythic. Barber notes, "Arthur's magic is that he is a shape-shifter; but he does so subtly and slowly, changing his form to suit the needs of each new age" (2). See Barber, The Arthurian Legends. The same can be said of the other characters in the Arthurian matter, but the need to prove the historicity of a Guinevere or a Tristram seems not to be so emotionally imperative.

For Tennyson's purposes an Arthur who is both fictional and historical would be satisfyingly enigmatic.
Critical Response To The 1859 Idylls Of The King

Response In 1859

_Idylls of the King_ was widely reviewed in 1859, most of the reviewers reacting favorably to the poem. The most conservative tended to stress Guinevere's wrong-doing and Arthur's Christian example; they either condemned Vivien or the inclusion of her idyll or ignored that portion of the book. The moderates looked at the contemporary relevance of the poem, accepted Vivien's inclusion, were not so harsh in their judgment of Guinevere (nobody criticized Lancelot), and praised Arthur's example. The more "liberal" of the critics tended to be even less judgmental of the women and found the poem relevant to mid-Victorian concerns, although some complained about the poem's setting in the past rather than in the present.25 All groups tended to praise the beauty of the poetry.26 Nineteenth-century sensibility manifests itself in the general assumption among the critics that a poem has the potential of changing a sensitive reader, whether for good or ill. Hence the praise of

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25 As Binhammer points out, the valorization of female domesticity often crossed political boundaries, with both conservative and liberal agreeing on adultery's harmful effects on home and nation (410).

26 See Andrew's _An Annotated Bibliography_. Andrew summarizes and prints excerpts from a wide range of criticism. Her emphasis is not always mine, but the book is extremely valuable in determining when and where reviews were published and in identifying many of the anonymous reviewers. Her "overview of the Criticism," pp. 11-69, gives a sense of the responses to the major editions.
Arthur's farewell speech or distress at the inclusion of Vivien's unprincipled example. The critics' varying responses validate Tennyson's perceptions that "Poetry is like shot-silk" and that "Every man imputes himself."

A sampling of the critical responses will illustrate the range of opinion. Elizabeth J. Hasell's unsigned review in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* gives an evaluation from a distinctly feminine viewpoint that believes in separate spheres. Hasell, a self-taught classical scholar and ardent worker on behalf of the poor, notes that "The feminine element predominates decidedly in the work" (610). Hasell is among those who find the characters lifelike and relevant to the nineteenth century. She wonders, however, how Tennyson could have written in "Enid" a tale of such mediocre interest--of a hero so utterly stupid? In the name of the ladies of England (who, we are sure, will agree with us), we beseech him, for the future, to wed his gentle Enids--those patterns of womanhood whom he draws so well--to men somewhat worthier of them (613).

Hasell then condemns the inclusion of Vivien and says of the scandal that Vivien tells Merlin, "we are sorry it should pollute the pages" (614). Hasell's echo of Tennyson's use of "pollute" testifies to the word's emotional currency. It is not surprising, then, that Hasell gives her highest praise to the moral message that
Tennyson's Arthur delivers to Guinevere, about whom nothing sympathetic is said. Indeed, Hasell ties Guinevere directly to failed mid-Victorian wives. Sounding much like Mrs. Ellis, author of the 1840s advice books to women, Hasell writes

Saddest of all reproaches to a woman, to have been chosen by Providence as a good man's helpmeet in some worthy and noble undertaking, and not merely to have failed to help him (sad enough and common enough as that is!) but to have worked against him (624)!

Assigning no blame to Arthur for the adultery or for the breakdown of the kingdom, Hasell says fervently that the "manly purity" and "noble forgiveness" of Arthur's speech will bear witness "that the age which produced it could not be wholly corrupt," when some future Macaulay looks at nineteenth-century England and sees the popularity of "Traviata," passage of the Divorce Bill, and the "coarse passages in 'Vivien'" (624).

J. M. Ludlow also finds in the Idylls a moral message for the mid-Victorian. Ludlow, a prolific writer, active social reformer, and conservative Christian, praises Tennyson for making the reader feel, "as only true genius can, the self-punishing power of guilty love" (65). His review in Macmillan's Magazine is appropriately titled "Moral Aspects of Mr. Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King.'"
Finding Tennyson a "Christian poet" because of the poem's "crowning lesson" of "Reformation through Love," Ludlow draws close parallels between the world of the *Idylls* and that of the mid-Victorian:

Unfortunately the 'revolting' is all around us. Year-long betrayals of the husband by the wife, of the friend by the friend, are not the monopoly of the mythical or semi-mythical personages of the Arthurian legends. . . . [Although] one does not expect that the story of Lancelot and Guinevere will recall man or woman from actual sin, committed or about to be committed, like the preaching of a Samuel Wilberforce, [reading the book will help those] trembling on the verge of maturity (67).

Then, in a surprising reading of Arthur that anticipates those of twentieth-century critics such as Gerhard Joseph, who calls Arthur a "prig" (*Tennysonian Love* 71), Ludlow condemns Arthur:

I have one fault to find with the morality of the work. It surely is a serious mistake to have represented Arthur free from self-reproach at the last. It *was* partly his fault that Guinevere had sinned,--at least, that she had sinned for so long. His forgiveness is too self-righteous


. . . . He has no right to speak as if Guinevere had not been given into his keeping, and as if he had not failed to keep her safely, by neglecting to understand her feelings and her character. It is true that he has sacrificed his wife to his ideal Round Table, and the discovery ought well-nigh to overwhelm him (70).

Ludlow does not so much exonerate Guinevere as blame Arthur for having neglected his duty as husband. Ludlow evinces the same Paulian mindset as that felt by Geraint and by many who spoke in the Divorce Bill debates: a husband is responsible for his wife's behavior. Ludlow sees Guinevere as a weak vessel both defined and protected by her husband.

William Ewart Gladstone, a combination of conservative Christian and "liberal" politician, also puts moral issues at the forefront in his unsigned review in The Quarterly Review. Although he defends Tennyson's inclusion of Vivien on the grounds that "Poetry, the mirror of the world, cannot deal with its attractions only, but must present some of its repulsions also," he says that in reading "Vivien" he misses "the pleasure of those profound moral harmonies, with which the rest are charged" (471). Pointing out that Tennyson diminishes Lancelot's stature by elevating that of Arthur

27 This conservative assumption is but one example of those under increasing attack by activists such as J. S. Mill.
(in the process making Guinevere choose the clearly inferior man), Gladstone concludes by applauding the way Tennyson changed his source Arthur:

He has encouraged . . . us to conceive of Arthur as a warrior no less irresistible than Lancelot, as even perfect in purity, and as in all other respects more comprehensive, solid, and profound. . . . We know not where to look in history or in letters for a nobler and more overpowering conception of man as he might be than in the Arthur of this volume. Wherever he appears, it is as the great pillar of the moral order, and the resplendent top of human excellence (477). Gladstone is the type for all later critics who find perfection embodied in Tennyson’s Arthur.28

Critical response also occurs in letters written in reference to the 1859 Idylls. Those reprinted in the Memoir tend, of course, to be favorable, especially those written directly to Tennyson. His mother’s response is an example of the way in which the Idylls could be read as unblemished espousal of Christian belief:

28 Staines, for example, says that although Guinevere experiences "human growth," Arthur cannot because of his "perfection" (50). Although his comment is in part a criticism of Tennyson’s writing, it does not acknowledge the imperfections that I find in Tennyson’s characterization of Arthur.
It does indeed . . . give me the purest satisfaction to notice that a spirit of Christianity is perceptible through the whole volume. . . . O dearest Ally, how fervently have I prayed for years that our merciful Redeemer would intercede with our Heavenly Father, to grant thee His Holy Spirit to urge thee to employ the talents He has given thee, by taking every opportunity of endeavouring to impress the precepts of His Holy Word on the minds of others. My beloved son, words are too feeble to express the joy of my heart in perceiving that thou art earnestly endeavouring to do so (1:452).

John Ruskin’s letter is the only one cited in the Memoir that blends criticism with praise. Ruskin uneasily says, "I am not sure but I feel the art and finish in these poems a little more than I like to feel it" and goes on to criticize the content:

Treasures of wisdom there are in it, and word-painting such as never was for concentration, nevertheless it seems to me that so great power ought not to be spent on visions of things past but on the living present. For one hearer capable of feeling the depth of this poem I believe ten would feel a depth quite as great if the stream
flowed through things nearer the hearer
(1: 452-3).

Ruskin's comments are not surprising from one who praised
the irregularities of Gothic workmanship and at the same
time strove to blend the past into the art of the present.
He, like Ludlow, feels the need to work for the good of the
living.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, living in Italy in the
midst of the turmoil surrounding the fight for political
unity, expresses similar reservations in an October 1859
letter to William Allingham:

Perhaps the breathing, throbbing life around us in
this Italy, where a nation is being new-born, may
throw King Arthur too far off and flat. . . . The
colour, the temperature, the very music, left me
cold. Here are exquisite things, but the whole
did not affect me as a whole from Tennyson's
hands. I would rather have written Maud, for
instance, than half a dozen volumes of such Idylls
(Allingham 104).

Certainly Maud, with a protagonist who volunteers for action
in the Crimean War, would seem more contemporary to her.29

Browning is an early version of dismissive critics such as
T. S. Eliot, Christopher Ricks, and Herbert F. Tucker.

29 Because Barrett-Browning died before publication in
1869 of The Holy Grail and Other Poems, we cannot know if
her view would have softened in light of the larger work.
Contemporary Criticism

Contemporary criticism has tended either to neglect the Idylls or to focus on the work as a whole. If any of the 1859 idylls receives critical attention, that focus often reduces the women to the binaries of true and false. Although since Kathleen Tillotson’s 1965 seminal study, "Tennyson’s Serial Poem," many critics have looked afresh at the Idylls, seeing it as more than a series of ill-attached fragments, T. S. Eliot’s 1936 comment that "Tennyson could not tell a story at all" continues its negative influence. Critics such as Christopher Ricks and Herbert F. Tucker still tend to find the Idylls inferior to Tennyson’s earlier work, though not necessarily on Eliot’s grounds.

John D. Rosenberg’s The Fall of Camelot gives the poem the attention it merits, however, giving full credit to Tennyson’s meticulous crafting of the work’s complexity and unity over its many years of composition. Although

30. Eliot wrote in his 1936 essay on In Memoriam that "Tennyson seems to have reached the end of his spiritual development with In Memoriam; there followed no reconciliation, no resolution." Eliot was correct; Tennyson continued to grapple with religious doubt as is evidenced in "Guinevere" and "The Holy Grail." Eliot’s denigrative remark about the Idylls occurs in the same essay. Cited in Rosenberg 5.

31. For example, Simpson’s informative and detailed Camelot Regained purposely stops short of the Idylls in order to refute Kathleen Tillotson’s claim that "one of Tennyson’s difficulties, as modern readers are not always aware, was that his matter was new" (1). Simpson, in his attempt to prove that Tennyson was not the "father of the Arthurian renaissance" (1) gives the Idylls short shrift indeed.
Rosenberg writes about the work as a whole, he does not reduce the women of the early idylls to simple contrasts. Instead, Rosenberg suggestively comments:

The *Idylls of the King* is not only explicitly and constantly *about* the hazards of mistaking illusion for reality; it *dramatically enacts* those dangers, ensnaring the reader in the same delusions that maim and destroy its characters. Nothing in the poem is as it seems, and nothing seems to be what it is, with the possible exception of Arthur, who may himself be the most dangerous of illusions, the *homme fatale* of the *Idylls* (10).

Although I approach the work in a different way, Rosenberg's insight is key to understanding what I think of as the complexity and ambiguity that Tennyson builds into his poem. "The *Idylls,*" Rosenberg says, "dramatizes on all levels the only conflict that can engage the mature moral imagination— the clash not of right versus wrong but of right versus right" (24). Elaine, for example, is both "pure and passionate, sexual and innocent" (25). Rosenberg's remains the richest study to date of the *Idylls.*

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32 Rosenberg looks especially at Tennyson's use of various devices to achieve unity in the twelve-part poem. For example, Tennyson changes Malory in order to move during the course of the poem from Maytime in "The Coming of Arthur" to winter in "The Passing of Arthur." The change, Rosenberg says, moves the poem from romance to tragedy with tragedy's inevitable apocalyptic ending. Although I do not find the *Idylls* as apocalyptic as Rosenberg does, I
Marion Shaw brings feminist criticism to bear on the *Idylls*, finding that to Tennyson marriage is "a social absolute" in which "romantic love" is irrelevant (34). "The frailty and treachery of the sexual bond become the focus for a generally darkening view of marriage and a metaphor for society's other discontents" (37). Even so, Shaw says, "marriage is thought of as potentially the main source of personal happiness and fulfilment and also as a central, stabilizing social institution" (37). Shaw finds in the *Idylls* of 1859 "a scrutiny of the perils which beset marriage: uxoriousness, prostitution, adultery, sterility" (50). I certainly agree that marriage and adultery are central to Tennyson's examination of nineteenth-century issues, but I find Tennyson less rigid and more sympathetic in his views of the blighted marriage in "Enid" and the failed marriage in "Guinevere" than does Shaw. In "Enid," for example, I see not uxoriousness, but a taint of nature in Geraint, a tendency exacerbated by rumors of adultery. I read Vivien not as a prostitute but as a strong-willed woman seeking power.

Shaw is representative of many critics in saying that "Guinevere" "is an uncompromising statement of the power of female sexuality to bring down a state" (122). Certainly many mid-Victorians linked the health of the state with the moral stature of women. In contrast, my reading finds that nevertheless acknowledge a great debt to the way in which he approaches the poem.
Tennyson gives a wide variety of reasons for the downfall of the state. Nor do I read the text as if Arthur were speaking Tennyson's mind in the farewell speech. Shaw, however, says that

When Arthur says to Guinevere, 'mine own flesh, /
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries / I loathe thee' ('Guinevere', 551-3), he seems to speak of a revulsion which is Tennyson's as well as his own (122).

Shaw, then, is aligned with those critics who find Tennyson deeply critical of women's sexuality and fearful of women's polluting potential. As will be evident, my analysis finds Tennyson depicting not only the results of women's frailty, but of men's as well.

With the observance in 1992 of the centennial of Tennyson's death, critics have evinced renewed interest in the Idylls. In Victorian Poetry's 1992 special issue devoted to Tennyson, for example, seven of the fifteen articles analyze aspects of the Idylls. Issues of gender continue to attract interest; imperialism and historicism infuse other studies.

In his "Idling in Gardens of the Queen: Tennyson's Boys, Princes, and Kings," U. C. Knoepflmacher places the Idylls in a continuum of Tennyson's investigations of the binaries of gender. In the 1859 Idylls Tennyson finally
confronts "adult female sexuality" in his "double pendants of portraits of 'true' and 'false' women" (346). Tennyson finally questions his earlier "one-sided portraits of the 'good mother'" and converts "the childless Guinevere into a defective maternal figure whose sexual nature proves ruinous to the adolescent idealism Tennyson now extends to a host of Hilarions" (346). Knoepflmacher's reading of Guinevere is thus one that focuses on Guinevere's destructiveness, a reading that, like some in 1859, reduces Tennyson's complexities to bipolar contrasts.

In "Sexuality and Nationality in Tennyson's Idylls of the King," Margaret Linley makes a convincing connection between gender and imperialism, pointing out that "Guinevere" was written at the time of the Divorce Act

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33 Gerhard Joseph's earlier Tennysonian Love: The Strange Diagonal is an early gendered study that traces Tennyson's changing views of love, finding it near the end of his life "becoming both more intensely maternal than it had already been and triumphantly androgynous" (155).

In his more recent study, Tennyson and the Text: The Weaver's Shuttle, Joseph opposes the conscious, historically based essentialism of Ricks with his own recognition that a critic always imputes himself. The phrase is Tennyson's own recognition, of course, but Joseph adapts it to post-Saussurean perceptions. Even so, Joseph readily admits, he finds biographical emotional centers for his studies of Tennyson's "inadequate mediation of language" (24). In chapter three I differ from Joseph markedly in interpreting Tennyson's treatment of women in the Idylls.

34 My reading differs from this in that I read "true and false" as larger categories than those associated with the four women, each of whom I find to be a combination of true and false. I find "true and false" also significant in light of the nineteenth-century's growing difficulty in determining truth. Knoepflmacher goes beyond the 1859 Idylls to show that the last three idylls written radically question the idealization of mothers.
debates of the late 1850s, "when woman's rivalous competitive acts against masculine interests were emphasized, and just after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, which was perceived in violent and racist terms as a threat to English colonial interests" (365). I also discuss "Guinevere" within the context of the Divorce Act debates, but I emphasize the connection with adultery, the central moral issue in the discussions.\(^3\)\(^5\)

Ian McGuire also looks both at gender and at colonialism, but he focuses on "To the Queen" and its attempts to tie contemporary England to the events in the Idylls. McGuire notes "Tennyson's ambivalence when confronted by the ideologically sanctioned opposites of his time" and links that ambivalence with "the epistemological uncertainties of an imperial nation located between the cultural dominants of Romanticism and Modernism, and the socio-economic phases of industrialism and commodification" (396-7). My reading would say rather that Tennyson makes use of epistemological uncertainty in order to demonstrate the era's difficulty in determining truth.\(^3\)\(^6\)

\(^3\)\(^5\) I say little about imperialism in my study because, although the 1859 Arthur alludes to Guinevere's neglected--and crucial--role in his plans for expanding and keeping safe his realm, the issue of imperialism gains real importance in the 1862 "Dedication" and becomes central in 1869. Linley makes a strong case for women's moral responsibility, as did so many mid-Victorian writers. She, like King Arthur, however, tends to ignore the male responsibility for morality and empire, although Tennyson clearly makes that connection as well.
Linda Shire's study, also gendered, finds that "patriarchal masculinity" is "little more than a role men play" (402) in response to "the fact of increased female power in both domestic and public enterprises" (403) and to "men's perceptions about the feminine within themselves" (404).\footnote{37} She is one of the few critics to note, as I do as

\footnote{36} See also Alan Sinfield, who believes strongly in the "politics of poetry." At the time the \textit{Idylls} was published, he says, "For Victorians, the importance of these poems derived from their apparent concern with Christian sexual morality." He cites Dean Alford's famous 1873 comment that the poem concerns "the conflict continually maintained between the spirit and the flesh" (2-3). Sinfield, however, finds Tennyson personally involved "in the patterns of deference which sustained a social hierarchy and, to a degree, masked the realities of power," a position that marked the poet "as a man of his time" (163). The 1859 \textit{Idylls} "were conceived and received" within the middle class's ideals of social relations and public order (164). Sinfield notes wryly, "For those who could not get to central London to gaze at the great men and beautiful women in their charmed spectacle, \textit{Idylls of the King} may have proved an acceptable substitute--a comparable distraction from the realities of power" (164). I certainly concur with Sinfield's view that society keeps order largely through means of invisible power, but what we really see in the \textit{Idylls} is the absolute breakdown of that "charmed spectacle."

If, as Jackson Lear suggests in \textit{No Place of Grace}, the mid-Victorian was in part attracted to things medieval because they represented an order apparently under attack in the nineteenth century, Tennyson was giving his readers not what they craved, but a dystopia that reflects nineteenth-century tensions rather than escape to hierarchical orderliness.

Although Tennyson seems to suggest in his epilogue, "To the Queen," that the nation needs to change its ways in order to avoid a similar debacle, I suggest that it is the necessity to choose for others rather than for self that Tennyson addresses.

\footnote{37} See also the frequently cited article by Elliot L. Gilbert, "The Female King: Tennyson's Arthurian Apocalypse." Gilbert says, too, that "a major theme in the poem as well as to one of the central problems of Victorian society [is] the growing assertion of female authority" (865). Gilbert
well, the threatening aspects of Enid, writing that
"Tennyson was ready to turn in *Enid*, the first poem of the
1859 *Idylls*, to the power of women and the emasculation of
man" (408). 38

In "Harlots and Base Interpreters: Scandal and Slander
in *Idylls of the King*," James Eli Adams addresses a central
issue in the *Idylls*. Moving away from the usual assignment
of blame to the women, Adams notes that Merlin uses the word
"harlot" to refer to the "crowd." Vivien's crime, thought
by many to be the seduction of a "very Tennyson-like
Merlin," is "less a matter of seduction than of defamation"
(421). Adams firmly links biography with poetry, believing

reads the *Idylls* "as an elaborate examination of the
advantages and dangers of sexual role reversal, with King
Arthur himself playing, in a number of significant ways, the
part usually assigned by culture to the woman" (865).
Gilbert sees the "advent of a king who proposes to reign
without the authorization of patrilineal descent" as an
attack on history and the old order, so that the feminized
king underscores the new belief in "power [that] is natural
and internal rather than historical and external" (869), in
a reflection of the "nineteenth-century feminine ideal"
(871). Such kingship is doomed, however, because it
"rejects the stability of patrilineal descent and seeks
instead to derive his authority from himself" (875), looking
ahead to "the fragmentation and alienation of a modernist
waste land" (876).

I see Tennyson less as an author condemning rising
female authority than as one seeking to illustrate that in
such a changing society, the individual must try to avoid
self-serving choices. Arthur is less a feminized figure
than one who represents rigid, idealized thinking.

38 I read "Enid" not so much as an emasculation of
Geraint, but as a study of a potentially good marriage that
falls short of its potential. Tennyson is ambivalent about
the changing role of women, making Enid both properly
assertive and yet subsequently gaining psychological control
of her husband.
that "Tennyson's representation of sexual transgression is inseparable from his notorious preoccupation with the mechanisms of Victorian publicity" (422). "The indulgence in scandal is thus aligned with an array of destructive passions as a standing threat to Arthur's realm" (430). Adams's linking of scandal in the *Idylls* with the rising power of publicity in nineteenth-century England is convincing. I think, however, that in this instance a universalist as well as an essentialist interpretation works. Gossip and scandal were operative long before the possibility of modern publicity, which simply exacerbated the damage.

In "Learning How To See: The Holy Grail," Timothy Peltason concludes, as I do in this study of the 1859 idylls, that the poet's "multiplication of perspectives and possibilities" centers on the question of determining truth. Despite--and because of--the five different accounts of the Grail visions, Tennyson offers in this comment a comforting sense that the truth is out there somewhere, whole and pure, and that each of these speakers produces a version of it from which something stable beyond them might be inferred. The very partiality of their visions seems to affirm the existence of an intelligible and rational order that dispenses visions by rule (464).
I find, too, that although Tennyson writes of parallax, shot-silk, and of imputing oneself, he believes in "truth" as an actuality, not as a construction in the late twentieth-century sense.

In "Trials of Fiction: Novel and Epic in the Geraint and Enid Episodes from *Idylls of the King*," Tucker takes the somewhat unusual step of looking at the 1859 *Idylls* apart from the work as a whole. Tucker focusses on "Geraint and Enid" as an experiment in challenging "popular fiction on its own formal ground" so that the idyll "looks and feels like a work of fiction in so many respects" (442). Tucker finds Tennyson's experiment to be in response to the poet's "self-figuration as cultural mouthpiece," a comment that recalls some of Sinfield's remarks (see fn. 36). Tucker then compares the idyll with domestic fiction, finding Tennyson's work wanting in all respects. As chapter one shows, I find "Enid" a complex and convincing study of nineteenth-century domestic tensions.

Despite my wide differences from Tucker, I find that his *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* offers suggestive areas of entrance into the 1859 *Idylls*. I believe that Tennyson would agree with Tucker's statement that "to read with care Tennyson's work from 1842 and thereafter is to find close reading of poetic texts expanding irresistibly into consideration of Victorian social texts as well"
Indeed, after reading such texts as *The Princess* (1847), *In Memoriam* (1850), and "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854; 1855), Tennyson's reading public expected him to address "social texts." Tennyson's narrator in "The Epic" (1842) enunciates the need for contemporaneity: "A truth looks freshest in the fashion of the day." One of the frequent questions in reviews of the 1859 *Idylls of the King* is whether the poem addresses contemporary concerns. One reviewer states bluntly, "Mr. Tennyson has a place among us which his art, almost perfect as it is, could not have gained if the pulsation of his verse had not beat in harmony with the nation's life" (481). The anonymous reviewer and Tucker are correct: Despite its medieval setting, the *Idylls of the King* not only reflects mid-nineteenth century England's passionate interest in things medieval but also

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39 My critical stance is also based upon a blend of close reading and historicism, but my reading of the *Idylls* differs from some of Tucker's conclusions. For example, Tucker says that "Tennyson prized the past as the temporal locus of a power more important to him than the past itself: the power of what cannot be changed" (13). Although I recognize that Tennyson begins each idyll in *medias res*, I believe that Tennyson looks not so much at what cannot be changed but at how his characters respond to the precipitating circumstances.

40 This review in *The British Quarterly Review* 30 (July and October 1859) contrasts with that of John Nicol who wishes that Tennyson had chosen to write about nineteenth-century London, in which "lie richly scattered the yet unwrought materials for modern tragedy." Nicol fears that retreat into the imagined medieval past might "conceal from us the duty of remedying the evils of the earth" (525).
comments on current social issues, a combination certainly "in the fashion of the day."

Tucker's narrower focus, however, as indicated in his title's phrase, "the Doom of Romanticism," is on "doom," which Tucker uses to mean either "inevitability" or the death of Romanticism. Tennyson, Tucker says, was fascinated "with inevitability" (13). Tennyson's speakers are notable for their lack of pluck; they exhibit determination rarely and suffer it often. Typically they come into voice after the fact, once some irrevocable deed has been committed and its consequences are making themselves felt . . . . His speakers are responsive but not responsible, at least inasmuch as responsibility implies the capacity for present or future action (15).

What Tucker says of Tennyson's preoccupation with doom as inevitability is only partially true and then only if the twelve parts of the Idylls are read as a whole. The "doom" associated with "The Coming of Arthur" and "The Passing of Arthur" accords most closely with Tucker's sense of inevitability, although even in these idylls, Tennyson's use of "doom" is more complex than Tucker's "inevitability." In several other contexts in the Idylls varying definitions of "doom" are also key:41 Tennyson complicates its reading as

41 In "Guinevere," for example, within the space of a hundred lines, Arthur uses "doom" in three distinctly
"inevitability" by the sheer number of variations he employs. Indeed, in the *Idylls* as a whole, doom as inevitability plays a much smaller role than it does in Malory's version of Arthurian matter. Instead, Tennyson updates the subject of doom into an investigation of individual choice, which he makes consequential even in a world of chance and inevitable change.

Neither do I find Romanticism dead in the *Idylls*. Rather, Tennyson dramatizes Romanticism's legacy, the rising tide of individualism that paralleled the weakening of traditional authority: husband, church, and monarch. He makes his characters notable for their pluck and determination; they defy inevitability and strive to make their own impress upon circumstance. 42 Tucker is correct in different ways. In lines 445-446, "Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies / Have erred not, that I march to meet my doom," "doom" sounds like an inevitable end. In line 534, "The doom of treason and the flaming death," the reference is to law and the fixed punishment for a wife's adultery. Because Arthur ignores the law, the sense of inevitability is thoroughly undercut. Finally, in lines 555-556, Arthur says, "My love through flesh hath wrought into my life / So far, that my doom is, I love thee still." Here Arthur confesses to a fleshliness that Guinevere (and most critics) has been blind to, but "doom" refers to cause and effect, not to inevitability.

42 The reviewer in *The British Quarterly Review* 30 (July and October 1859) draws an explicit parallel between the pluck of Tennyson's medieval characters and that of nineteenth-century English soldiers: "In fact, there is reason for this faith in men, rather than circumstance. The achievements of the Round Table are conceivable to the heroes of India. The knightly qualities of Lancelot have been emulated by many a Crimean soldier" (483). The emphasis is on defying circumstance through character.
one qualification, however. Tennyson celebrates individual action, but not of Romantic figures. Even Arthur, who has mythic stature, is no Manfred defying the gods, no isolated figure silhouetted on the mountain top. Instead, Arthur tries to work within the community of the Round Table for the good of the even greater community, "the realm."

Ironically, Arthur fails in his self-disciplined, unselfish attempt because he can no longer control those around him, who increasingly choose self over community. At the end of "Guinevere," the final idyll in the 1859 edition, Tennyson’s Arthur goes to his death not because of doom, but because of a series of human choices—including his own—that have undermined his authority.

Tennyson’s King Arthur, combining in himself the roles of husband, monarch, and representative of the church, is a particularly apt choice to embody all three types of waning traditional authority, authority that was weakening in mid-Victorian England as well as in Arthur’s fictive kingdom.\(^{43}\)

\(^{43}\) Although women were not so politically visible as they would become later in the century, a husband’s absolute authority was being attacked politically as in Caroline Norton’s well-publicized divorce and in the Parliamentary debates on the Divorce Bill and the Married Women’s Property Act. Literature, too, more indirectly launched attacks in such novels as Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Florence Nightingale’s unpublished *Cassandra* (1852) is a passionate attack on the status quo. (See *Cassandra*, Ed. and Introd. Myra Stark. In her Introduction, Stark situates Nightingale in the nineteenth-century’s expectations for a middle-class woman and elucidates Nightingale’s rebellion.) The traditional relationship of husband and wife is an issue that Tennyson addresses directly in "Enid."
Guinevere’s wedding vows should have bound her unequivocally to one man only, but the poet gives us a largely sympathetic rendering of the tensions between that vow and Guinevere’s emotional estrangement from her husband. Tennyson’s Arthur points out that to become a knight of the Round Table, each man has to swear to obey the King, act in the name of Christ, and live selfless lives. All prospective knights must vow

   To reverence the King, as if he were
   Their conscience, and their conscience as their King
   To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
   To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
   To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
   To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
   To love one maiden only. ("Guinevere" 465-72)

Yet even in the early idylls, Tennyson demonstrates the breakdown of the knights’ promises. Geraint listens to slander and flees Arthur’s court, excusing himself with a lie; Merlin is undone by Vivien’s slanders; Gawain is a self-serving gossip who tries to seduce Elaine; Modred is a

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The monarchy was perceived as weakening as a result of several factors: Queen Victoria’s voluntary seclusion, the increasing power of the Prime Minister, and the shift in power as the result of the Reform Bill of 1832. The church had steadily been losing power, a situation the Oxford Movement tried to rectify. The on-going debates concerning the clash between science and religion further testifies to the church’s uneasy position.
spy and traitor; and Lancelot agonizes between love and loyalty. Arthur is the only Tennysonian character in the early Idyls for whom religious belief is the basis for action. In all editions, beginning in 1859, the Idyls chronicles Arthur's diminishing control, whether of family, Round Table, or religious leadership, in the face of individual assertiveness.

Even so, the Idyls is not a mournful elegy for the "pastness of the past." Tennyson recognizes that the "old order" inevitably changes, pointing out, for example, that before his loss of power, Arthur had evicted the heathen from his territory and had replaced Roman authority. Rather than mourning Arthur's defeat, Tennyson looks sharply at the difficult time of transition from the old to the new order, with all the tensions and contradictions inherent in the change. In the absence of absolute authority, an individual has increased difficulty in determining truth, may not always choose wisely, and may choose for self rather than for the good of others.

Although suggestions of the more male-centered political and metaphysical themes of the final twelve-part Idyls also appear in early versions, women's defiant choices are central to the two-idyll trial edition of 1857 and the subsequent four-idyll 1859 publication. Tennyson's omission in 1857 and 1859 of his "Morte d'Arthur" (1833,
pub. 1842)\textsuperscript{44} indicates that he intentionally centers the early idylls on the Woman Question, a center of intellectual and emotional ferment in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{45} It was a time of ideational turmoil when it was inevitable that people would both welcome and fear change, would both prize and abhor growing individualism.

Increasing female assertiveness seemed especially threatening to the mid-Victorian because the home had become essential as a place of refuge and the center of moral values. In 1856 the Reverend J. A. James asserted, in one of his many advice books, that home, "the elysium of love - the nursery of virtue - the garden of enjoyment . . . home - sweet home - is the sphere of wedded woman’s mission" and is

\textsuperscript{44} "Morte," included in its entirety in the 1869 \textit{Idylls}, proves that Tennyson knew from 1833 the ending of his projected long poem. See Ricks, \textit{Poems} 3: 259-61 for a summary of Tennyson’s comments about the composition process.

\textsuperscript{45} Binhammer suggests that domestic ideology was overtly codified in the 1790s, the period in which Mary Wollstonecraft wrote \textit{A Vindication of the Rights of Woman} (1792). Binhammer uses "domestic ideology" to "designate the set of ideas and practices that ‘naturalized’ woman’s role as an unpaid domestic servant, a household manager, a consumer but not producer of goods, and a wife and mother who was fulfilled by her ‘private’ life" (410). Such confinement to the private sphere restricted her activities but gave her higher moral stature than previously.

The term "The Woman Question" continued in use, however, changing focus as the suffragette movement gained strength. As a young man Tennyson had enthusiastically celebrated passage of the 1832 Reform Bill, and he certainly advocated university education for women, but he was also wary of burgeoning individualism, which he both admired and feared. His focus in the \textit{Idylls} is less on sexual difference, however, than on the ramifications of the changing social order.
"the proper scene of woman's action and influence." James would perhaps not have felt it necessary to write so many tracts for his parishioners had he not feared the erosion of character among his female flock.

In his 1859 *Idylls* Tennyson astutely combines two major mid-Victorian motifs: domesticity and medievalism. Davidoff and Hall note a growing Victorian belief that "men could operate in [the] amoral world [of business] only if they could be rescued by women's moral vigilance at home" (74). Mrs. Sarah Ellis frames that belief within popular medieval imagery:

But never wearied knight, nor warrior covered with the dust of battlefield, was more in need of woman's soothing power, than are these care-worn sons of toil, who struggle for the bread of life, in our more peaceful and enlightened days" (*Wives* 38).

In addition to asserting how essential the woman's role is to nation and to home, Ellis, like James, also fears that "the women of England are deteriorating in their moral character" (*Women* 5). Ellis roundly admonishes her female

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46 Cited in Davidoff and Hall 115.

47 Although Tennyson's medieval setting precludes a world of business, neither Geraint nor Arthur feels that he can operate successfully in the world without the support of a chaste and loving wife.
readers that their influence is crucial not only within the home but far beyond as well:

It is the domestic character of England—the home comforts, and fireside virtues for which she is so justly celebrated. These I hope to be able to speak of without presumption, as intimately associated with, and dependent upon, the moral feelings and habits of the women of this favored country. . . . You have deep responsibilities; you have urgent claims; a nation’s moral worth is in your keeping" (Women 5-6).

Coventry Patmore, a frequent visitor in the Tennyson home, must also have been fearful of women’s changing roles and especially of their increasing independence, surely a sort of demoralization in his eyes, or he would not have taken the conservative position that a woman in love becomes childlike and dependent:

A rapture of submission lifts
Her life into celestial rest,
There’s nothing left of what she was,
Back to the babe the woman dies,
And all the wisdom that she has
Is to love him for being wise.

("In Love" 2.8.118)48

48 Tennyson’s personal copy of Patmore’s The Angel in the House: The Betrothal (1854) is in the Tennyson Research Centre. Its pages are cut.
Patmore's hopeful and idealized characterization depicts the circumscribed view of women that Tennyson paints in his Geraint.

Tennyson's Enid and Guinevere would have been read in 1859 in the context of contemporary expectations: not only was a wife expected to exhibit the sweet submission celebrated by Patmore, but she was responsible for the moral health of both home and country. Such an empowered woman could avoid being a threat to traditional authority only if she remained sweetly submissive. Enid, Guinevere, Elaine, and Vivien all break free of sweet submission and are therefore threats to varying degrees. Each woman, with differing effects, has "difficulty in mild obedience."\(^{49}\)

Because a reader now usually sees in an anthology only a few of the idylls plucked from the whole\(^{50}\) or reads the twelve-idyll version as published in 1885, it may be difficult to realize the impact of Tennyson's early focus on women. The four early idylls, each named for a woman--"Vivien," "Enid," "Elaine," and "Guinevere"--exhibit deep interest in depicting female characters both "responsive" and "responsible," both "true" and "false."

\(^{49}\) The phrase is one the narrator uses in description of Enid ("Geraint and Enid" 104), but it is applicable to all four female protagonists in the early idylls.

The first two chapters address Enid and Vivien, but not as opposites on the moral spectrum. In chapter one I look at Enid as situated within mid-Victorian changing perceptions of individual responsibility and changing expectations for marriage. Tennyson believes in the possibility of good marriage, but also sees great difficulty in establishing and maintaining one. In his exploration of the tensions, Tennyson darkens both Geraint and Enid, giving her psychological control of her husband at the idyll's end. In chapter two I find that Tennyson makes Vivien not the "false" harlot as opposed to the "true" wife, but an exaggerated version of Enid, the strong-willed modern woman seeking male power and knowledge.

Chapters three and four analyze Elaine and Guinevere, not simple contrasts of "true" and "false," but more closely allied because of uncontrolled sexual passion. I situate my study of Elaine within the mid-Victorian fears of female willfulness, unleashed passion, and madness. Tennyson makes of Elaine not only the pure, innocent virgin of romance but also a woman driven to monomania by her uncontrolled passion for Lancelot. In "Guinevere," Tennyson looks at a different sort of uncontrolled passion, adultery, which mid-Victorians greatly feared as a sign of contagious social disorder. Tennyson adds substantially to Malory in order to make Guinevere central, to invent the little novice, and to include Arthur's farewell speech, additions that complicate
and comment on the adultery. I give a much more sympathetic reading of Guinevere than do many critics and see Arthur as a symbol of failed traditional authority.

Finally, in the Epilogue I suggest ways in which succeeding editions of the Idylls affect the dynamics of the four 1859 idylls as Tennyson incorporates them into the larger work.
CHAPTER ONE. "ENID": DIFFICULTY IN MILD OBEDIENCE

"For man is man and master of his fate."

In "Enid," Tennyson's departures from The Mabinogion's "Geraint, the Son of Erbin" move the tale from medieval romance into an idyll infused with nineteenth-century issues. Although the story line remains basically the same as that of the source, the poet's modifications of plot and character reflect and comment on mid-Victorian fears of female sexuality, assertiveness, and control. Tennyson eliminates plot elements and details that do not contribute directly to his focus on marriage and the interplay between Enid and Geraint. The hunt for the white stag, so important in The Mabinogion, for example, is reduced to the background needed to allow Geraint to vow vengeance for the insult given the queen. The poet minimizes King Arthur's role, but he introduces the rumor of the queen's adultery as motivation for Geraint's actions. Many of the deletions serve to focus and to heighten the drama of the story; most tend to tie the medieval legend with nineteenth-century domestic concerns.

Incorporating nineteenth-century psychological realism, Tennyson portrays a Geraint rigid in his thinking; fearful
of challenges to his authority; potentially violent; and suspicious, by nature, of female passion, an Othello figure ready to believe any wife capable of adultery.¹ Physical abuse of wives had become more and more a public issue following Caroline Norton's widely publicized divorce and during the 1850 debates on divorce and married women's property. For example, in 1855 appeared the pamphlet titled "Remarks on the Law of Marriage and Divorce; suggested by the Honourable Mrs. Norton's Letter to the Queen." In 1850 and 1851 John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor wrote a series of letters to the Morning Chronicle "decrying the light sentences meted out to wife-beaters and parliamentary indifference to drafting legislation to deter domestic violence, both of which they saw as reflections of the low regard in which women were held" (Shanley 157; 159-60).

With the exception of King Arthur, all the males in "Enid" are either verbally violent or potentially physically violent toward Enid.

Easily convinced of Guinevere's adultery,² Geraint is psychologically ready literally to believe Enid's "O me, I

¹ See Shanley for a fuller discussion of the inequities of the law and the mounting attack on the concept of a wife as property of the husband.

² Staines notes that "Enid becomes a new work by the small but extremely important additions Tennyson introduces into the story. The most vital, indeed crucial, addition is the growing suspicion of Guinevere's adulterous behaviour" (38). As a result, "The story of Enid's plight is cast in a new light" (39).
fear that I am no true wife" ("Marriage of Geraint" 108). \textsuperscript{3} To his rigid thinking, if Enid is not "true," she must be "false," a term that for Geraint as for Arthur means being sexually unfaithful. Geraint is locked into the tendency toward simple definitions and bipolar distinctions. Geraint’s suffering is genuine, as is his love for Enid, but Tennyson makes of him an example of an individual who consistently makes choices based on self-deception and self-interest, an increasingly dangerous practice in a nineteenth-century world in which selfish individualism seemed to be burgeoning.

Tennyson contrasts Geraint with the new version of Enid, a wife rightly and yet frighteningly assertive. Tennyson’s Enid enacts the mid-century’s recognition that an individual must, in defiance of traditional authority, learn to determine truth for oneself. In depicting the relationship between the Geraint and Enid, Tennyson examines within the context of a potentially companionate marriage the tensions inherent in the clash between threatened patriarchal authority and the new individualism as evidenced in women’s assertiveness. Enid moves toward assertiveness

\textsuperscript{3} The Enid of The Mabinogion says, "Alas, and am I the cause that these arms and this breast have lost their glory and the warlike fame which they once so richly enjoyed!" (240). Her husband interprets this as meaning that "it was not in thinking of him that she spoke thus, but that it was because she loved some other man more than him" (241). Tennyson’s word choices much more clearly put the exchange in the context of wifely fidelity.
and self reliance, two stereotypically masculine attributes in mid-Victorian society. Geraint finds Enid dangerous to his sense of manliness, a response that the text shows to be both true and false.

**Tennyson's Modifications of His Source**

In a significant departure from *The Mabinogion*, "Enid" both validates the nineteenth-century concept of companionate marriage based on love and notes the tensions inherent in such a marriage. Marion Shaw points out,

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4 Knight believes that in the *Idylls* Tennyson consistently portrays women as threatening in deference to the powerful men in mid-Victorian society "for whom the containment in moral and patriarchal bounds of powerful and sensual women was an absolute necessity" (165). Not surprisingly, Knight notes Tennyson's "emphasis on the dangerousness" of Enid and says that "the action of the story will exorcise the threatening power of women." Enid "cannot resist helping [Geraint], however angry this makes him; service is natural to her and attractive to him. This is acceptable to Geraint finally, because it is clear she has no separate identity" (162). In contrast, my reading says that Enid moves into separate identity.

5 Shaw, like Knight, speaks of Tennyson's uneasiness toward women: "Fear of women and despair of marriage become increasingly present in Tennyson's poetry and culminate in the hysterical misogyny of 'Lucretius' and the austere advocacy of celibacy of *Idylls of the King*." To combat his fear of having become effeminate, Geraint "requires, of course, violent combat on the part of the man and, equally important, a wife who is unquestioningly devoted, a patient Griselda to provide the magnifying mirror for his masculine authority" (10; 51). Like Knight, she tends to ignore the subtleties that make Enid more complex than the "good wife" in schematic comparison with Vivien, the "harlot." She also reduces Elaine to "pure virgin" and Guinevere to the contrasting "remorseful adulteress" (50).
Tennyson was a sensitive register of changing attitudes in the nineteenth century towards marriage and also, inextricably linked, towards women . . . . Marriage, at least for the middle classes, ceased to be primarily a working partnership based on economic and class considerations and came to be viewed as a source of moral security and emotional companionship (38).

The basis for companionate marriage, Tennyson suggests, is love. In *The Mabinogion* Geraint does not fall in love with Enid upon seeing her, but instead finds it expedient to love her. He needs to fight in the sparrow hawk tournament in order to avenge an insult to Gwenhyvar, but the tournament rules dictate: "no man can joust for the Sparrow Hawk, except the lady he loves best be with him" (226). Enid's father agrees to Geraint's proposal: "And if, when the appointed time shall come to-morrow, thou wilt permit me, Sir, to challenge for yonder maiden that is thy daughter, I will engage, if I escape from the tournament, to love the maiden as long as I live; and if I do not escape, she will remain unsullied as before" (227). Love is here a matter of vow, not feeling; Enid has no part in the exchange between father and suitor.  

6 The author of *The Mabinogion* makes of his Enid a simple pawn in the marriage game and sums up Enid's role in one sentence: "I will render the best service I am able."
In contrast, Tennyson makes Geraint falls in love with Enid before the sparrow hawk tourney and she with him, choosing to marry him after having turned down two previous suitors, either of whom would greatly have improved the family's finances. Tennyson therefore seems to validate free choice and love as necessary precursors to a successful marriage, a supposition that is strengthened by the poet's invention of Guinevere's advice to Geraint. Guinevere, who had lain "late into the morn, / Lost in sweet dreams and dreaming of her love / For Launcelot," says to Geraint:

'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all;
And may you light on all things that you love,
And live to wed with her whom first you love:
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.'

("Marriage of Geraint" 225-31)

Tennyson suggests that Geraint participates in the same sort of simplification: "And seeing her so sweet and serviceable, / Geraint had longing in him evermore / To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb" ("Marriage of Geraint" 393-5).

7 Wynne-Davies comments, "Unlike the source text, Enid's feelings are to be considered, but she still remains the property of her father to be given according to his will" (135). It is a common assumption that women were handed from father to husband as a sort of property, but I suggest that Tennyson blunts that possible interpretation by adding Enid's refusal of two previous suitors. Tennyson thereby grounds in earlier decision-making Enid's later disobedience to her husband.
In Guinevere's poignant comment, Tennyson suggests that the royal marriage is unhappy because Guinevere was unable to marry the man whom first she loved, a suggestion later validated by Merlin.

Even in this apparent evidence of Geraint's love, Tennyson suggests psychological complications, however. Tennyson softens "unsullied," but has Geraint say, "And if I fall her name will yet remain / Untarnish'd as before" (500-1). In both The Mabinogion and the Idylls there is the strong suggestion that once Enid is no longer a virgin, even if marriage and love are in the equation, she will no longer be clean, but dirtied and tarnished. If sexual activity were perceived as making a woman unclean, it would be a short psychological step to assume that she could also become adulterous. In Tennyson's version, Geraint, speaking to Yniol, says, "but if I live, / So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost, / As I will make her truly my true wife" (502-2). The forceful control of "make" along with the doubled emphasis of "true" provides a psychological basis for Geraint's obsessive fears.

Although Tennyson suggests the possibility of a mutually loving marriage for Enid and Geraint, he problematizes their relationship in other ways as well, pitting husband and wife against each other in the nineteenth-century's uneasy and changing ideology. Tennyson himself had been married for six years when he began writing
"Enid," long enough to have learned of the inevitable differences between the idealized betrothed and the actual spouse.\(^8\) He also had first-hand, painful knowledge of his parents' difficult and sometimes violent marriage. Tennyson writes, then, both from personal experience and from knowledge of society's changing attitudes. It seems at first as if Tennyson places all blame on Geraint, but as

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\(^8\) Although Emily Tennyson looked fragile and suffered after 1858 from increasing physical weakness, she gave birth to three sons (the first stillborn) between 1851 and 1854, was in charge of running the household at Farringford on the Isle of Wight from 1855 on, and after 1861 oversaw both Farringford and Aldworth. The logistics of running two large houses and of seasonally moving children, servants, and household goods from one house to another must have been challenging. Emily was a competent manager, not a submissive taker of orders.

After a visit to Farringford in 1859, Edward Lear, a fervent admirer of Emily Tennyson, wrote to a friend: "I should think computing moderately, that 15 angels, several hundreds of ordinary women, many philosophers, a heap of truly wise and kind mothers, 3 or 4 minor prophets, and a lot of doctors and schoolmistresses, might all be boiled down, and yet their combined essence fall short of what Emily Tennyson really is" (qtd. in Martin 427). Apparently Tennyson neither wanted nor obtained a wife who could not make decisions for herself.

Ann Thwaite asserts in her biography of Emily Tennyson that the relationship between husband and wife was that of mutual respect and love (588). She points to the Dedication in *The Death of Oenone* as an indication of the poet's feelings:

I thought to myself I would offer this book to you,
This, and my love together,
To you that are seventy-seven,
With a faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer-new
As the green of the bracken amid the gloom of the heather.
will be apparent later in my argument, he is also uneasy about Enid's newly developed assertiveness.

The poem's medieval Geraint enunciates the same values as those of a conservative mid-Victorian husband: Geraint wants a wife who is beautiful, submissively obedient, morally pure, and chastely passionate.9 But vulnerable to the sort of thinking that makes a woman either a virgin or a harlot, Geraint is also deeply afraid that his wife will be

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9 Actual Victorian attitudes toward female sexuality varied considerably. Dr. George Drysdale advocated in his *The Elements of Social Science* (1854) "a proper healthy exercise for the sexual organs, and a healthy outlet for the sexual emotions and passions. . . . To have strong sexual passions is held to be rather a disgrace for a woman, and they are looked down upon as animal, sensual, coarse, and deserving of reprobation. The moral emotions of love are indeed thought beautiful in her; but the physical ones are rather held unwomanly and debasing. This is a great error. In woman, exactly as in man, strong sexual appetites are a very great virtue; as they are the signs of a vigorous frame, healthy sexual organs, and a naturally developed sexual disposition." Drysdale advocated "preventive intercourse" both inside and outside marriage in order to prevent disease.

In contrast, Dr. William Acton in *Functions and Disorders* (1857) represents the extreme position that females, even after marriage, are not sexually passionate: "Many of the best mothers, wives, and managers of households, know little of or are careless about sexual indulgences. Love of home, of children, and of domestic duties are the only passions they feel. As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband's embraces, but principally to gratify him; and, were it not for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions."

Other writers advocated a carefully regulated schedule for sexual intercourse within marriage, ranging from once a week to once a month. Some health extremists such as the Purity Crusaders advocated complete abstinence. Certainly the actual range of human experience extended from one extreme to the other. Cited in Helsinger 2: 61-66.
unfaithful. Against Geraint's fear that even the ideal wife is by nature subject to taint, Tennyson portrays an almost Griselda-like Enid. Enid is beautiful, submissive, morally superior, and chastely passionate—but she is not obedient in the sense that Geraint demands, that nineteenth-century advice books mandate, or that the Anglican marriage ceremony dictates. All three of these authorities demand unquestioning obedience on the wife's part.

"With difficulty in mild obedience," is the narrator's enigmatic comment on Enid's attempts to control captured horses, but the phrase aptly describe Enid's situation throughout the entire idyll. Enid has difficulty being mildly obedient either to fortune's whims or to her husband's unreasonable dictates. In his modification of the

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10 Critics frequently compare Enid with patient Griselda. See, for example, Rosenberg, 50.

11 The phrase follows the first of the three times Enid disobeys Geraint's command of silence by alerting him to danger. He has told her to drive the three captured horses: "He follow'd nearer: ruth began to work / Against his anger in him, while he watch'd / The being he loved best in all the world, / With difficulty in mild obedience / Driving them on" ("Geraint and Enid" 101-105). "With difficulty in mild obedience" can modify either the "being" of the preceding line or "driving" in the following line, thereby providing the reader an enigmatic choice.

The quotation is from the 1857 trial edition. All quotations from the Idylls are taken directly from Tennyson's authorized editions.

In The Mabinogion the comparable passage states: "and it grieved him as much as his wrath would permit, to see a maiden so illustrious as she having so much trouble with the care of the horses" (245). Tennyson's addition adds both the aspect of obedience and the possibility of multiple interpretation.
Griselda of *The Mabinogion*, Tennyson does not make his Enid either whimsically or willfully disobedient. Rather, he makes of Enid an example of the individual who must make her own choices depending on circumstances rather than on someone else's authority. Her flexibility of thinking, although timid, contrasts with Geraint's rule-bound and fearful rigidity.

Enid, obedient unless she believes that her implicit obedience will bring harm to others, enacts a version of John Stuart Mills's advocacy of a blend of "virtue and free will, of individual autonomy and responsibility" (Semmel 12). In much of the idyll, a Griselda-like Enid evinces the Carlylean (and Christian) belief that "sacrifice and the renunciation of happiness is the necessary road to virtue" (Semmel 13). But Tennyson's Enid is more than a submissive Griselda; she exerts individual will and autonomy. Mill's *On Liberty*, also published in 1859, states:

> Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing (123).

Enid represents a timid step forward for a wife's right to make decisions, to grow and develop despite authority's

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12 Cited in Gilmour 162.
disapproval. Her Millean "virtue" consists neither in total sacrifice of the self nor in the unrestrained individualism that many mid-Victorians feared, but in a new sort of Romanticism: individualism dedicated not to individual interest but to the common weal. 13

Tennyson's Enid struggles to judge for herself, but not on behalf of self. Such an Enid may sound suspiciously like yet another idealized version of the subservient, selfless wife, but there is a crucial distinction. On the basis of reason, Enid outwits and subverts potentially dangerous authority, not once but several times, besting her husband as well as other powerful and controlling men. By showing Enid so clearly in the right on each occasion, Tennyson distances her from the fearsome Victorian stereotype, the "strong-minded woman," the "real threat to the womanly woman" (Helsinger 3: 89). Enid moves beyond being simply properly assertive. Indeed, in her efforts to master her own fate, Enid accords with Mills's approbation not just of reason, but of a newly secularized "right reason." Mill did not believe that choosing virtue was easy, recognizing that the choice could mean not only choosing virtue over "irrational impulse" but also sometimes over "rational

13 Semmel states that On Liberty is not "a plea for the negative freedom of the liberty of the individual against the state and society. . . . but was in fact a tract whose major purpose was to advocate the positive freedom of self-development--and of self-control and self-dependence--of the German philosophers, and that this constituted an important part of Mill's conception of virtue (14)."
interest" (Semmel 16). In other words, right reason required that one sometimes had to choose values over rational goals. Right reason, then, would make it possible for Enid to indulge Geraint's need to command and to prove his manliness, but also enable her to decide that she must not always follow his commands. She is capable of the free play of the mind, the "strenuous open mindedness" (Gilmour 160) that Mill so prized. Tennyson's Geraint, in contrast, thinking that he acts always on the side of virtue and the letter of the moral law, behaves rigidly as he struggles to control Enid, as he believes a husband should.14 Enid evinces a balance and suppleness of thought that Geraint lacks.

The scene in which the two meet for the first time illustrates the way in which Tennyson compares the traditional, conservative thinking of a Geraint with that of an Enid's self-assertive individualism. By means of Enid's song, complete invention on Tennyson's part, and Geraint's reaction to the singer, Tennyson suggests two different ways of looking at the world.

Three aspects of Geraint's response to the song are especially cogent: Enid's voice is "so delicately clear" and "sweet" that it makes him think of a nightingale; he

14 Jordan notes Geraint's "extremism, the difficulty he has with subtler interactions." I differ, however, from her less nuanced statement that "Enid" "is really more concerned with the husband's bad behaviour than with the wife's exemplary submission" (162).
immediately decides, "Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me." In those reactions, Tennyson incorporates the menacing overtones of Philomela, Geraint's belief that God is operative in the world, and Geraint's reduction of Enid to the accident of her lovely voice. Geraint shows no reaction to the import of the words that Enid chooses to sing.

Throughout the idyll, Tennyson's heavily freights the bird imagery, so that Geraint's comparison of Enid's voice with that of a nightingale carries notable significance:

and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form;
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;
And made him like a man abroad at morn

To think or say, 'there is the nightingale;'

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15 Tennyson underscores Geraint's unreasoned response with the young man's reaction to seeing Enid: "In a moment thought Geraint, / 'Here by God's rood is the one maid for me'" ("Marriage of Geraint" 368).

A former student of mine, a young doctor from Syria, told me that her grandfather had fallen in love with his future wife when he heard her singing through an open window. His reaction was essentially the same as Geraint's. Both reactions are a variation on the Romance tradition of love at first sight: the real man and the fictional character both reduce the beloved to her singing ability, only a single aspect of a complex personality.
So fared it with Geraint.16

("Marriage of Geraint" 329-343)

The comparison seems delicate and apt. The nightingale's well-loved song, which is exceptionally musical, is heard more often than the secretive bird is seen.17 The passage resonates with conflicting nuances, however. Along with the positive effect of "sweet voice" (mentioned twice) and the joy with which it is heard by the "lonely" man, "nightingale" also inevitably suggests Philomela, who, raped, sang through her pain.18 Tennyson's choice of the nightingale simile therefore opens the possibility that, as a result of her association with Geraint, Enid may be sexually mistreated.

16 Rosenberg calls this passage "merely ornamental description" which "in its meticulous picturesqueness, imitates a Victorian narrative painting" and suggests "that Tennyson was still under the cloying shadow of the domestic idylls" (76). My feminist perspective takes a darker view.

17 Jordan points out, although in a somewhat condescending tone, that "Much simple pleasure in Enid comes from its natural images, which Tennyson's notes associated with home occupations, gardening or cliff-walking at Farringford. Enid is associated with hidden, shy, sudden presences, birds, fish, water" (161). I agree but will also point out that Tennyson uses a natural image to suggest his ambivalence about Enid's new-found assertiveness.

18 Michalos analyzes the philomela myth as showing not only a victim's pain but also the strength inherent in the victim's subsequent resistance: "You shall hear the nightingale sing on as if in pain." See especially chapter four, "Susan Glaspell: Marginalized Women Marginalizing Men" 74-150.

Tennyson's nineteenth-century readership would have been well acquainted with the mythological overtones associated with a nightingale.
Other possibilities are inherent in "nightingale" as defined in nineteenth-century slang. "Bird" referred to either female or male genitals, and "nightingale" meant prostitute (Richter 20:151). The bird imagery associated with Enid in the Idylls thus provides a nexus for the contrast of delicate beauty with coarseness or even violence in reaction to that beauty. When the males in the poem use such terms to describe Enid, they define woman in terms of sexuality and adultery. Because Tennyson compares Geraint's reaction with that of "a man abroad at morn / When first the liquid note beloved of men / Comes flying over many a windy wave / To Britain," the reaction becomes more inclusive and may even suggest a reaction typical of "men" in Britain. There is thus potential danger to women inherent in men's attraction to their beauty. Is this a note of warning concerning the surface qualities upon which many marriage mates were chosen in mid-nineteenth-century England? It may be a comment, as well, on the difficulty inherent in establishing a truly companionate marriage.

As Tennyson moves to the text of Enid's song, he subtly undercuts Geraint's sturdy belief that all his actions are based upon the will of God: "It chanced (my emphasis) the song that Enid sang was one / Of Fortune and her wheel."

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19 It is amazing how many terms in Sexual Slang define women in terms of their sexuality or desirability.
The verb "chanced" and Enid's choice of what to sing are in direct contrast with "By God's grace" and "By God's rood." In saying "Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me," Geraint seems to remove all choice in the matter from Enid, believing that it is solely the male's God-given prerogative to choose a mate. Enid's song indicates her belief both in chance and choice.

In Enid's seemingly medieval song Tennyson incorporates Millean virtue. The singer chooses how to respond to what chance and circumstance send:

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.'
Tennyson's Enid ends each stanza with defiance of what Fortune can do. The Enid of *The Mabinogion* is given no such disinterested courage, no fervent belief that "man is man and master of his fate."  

Ideologically, the *Idylls*'s Enid actively participates in the mid-nineteenth century tensions between will and circumstances. She illustrates what John Stuart Mill writes in his Autobiography: "Though our own character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape these circumstances . . . our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing" (119). What is crucial is that Tennyson makes the woman, Enid, exert her will in the face of actual, painful experience, while Geraint, supposedly the superior and rational male, is consistently and irrationally motivated by appearance rather than reality, whether of

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20 Jeanie Watson, writing of *The Mabinogion*'s Enid, notes that most earlier criticism had focused on Gereint, largely dismissing Enid as one whose "task . . . is passively to endure." Instead, Watson asserts, "At the very heart of this story is the willed disobedience of Enid . . . [who] deliberately goes against Gereint's wishes, not once but time and again." Watson concludes that "The tale argues for male and female equality of personhood, an equality that is carried over into marriage" (115-16). Although Tennyson subsumes other nineteenth-century issues into this idyll as well, his Enid accords closely with Watson's reading.

21 Although Autobiography was not published until 1872, it documents the development of Mill's thinking and is therefore relevant to a study of a work published in 1859.
Enid's singing, rumor of Guinevere's adultery, or the slightest suggestion of disloyalty on Enid's part.

By means of Enid's notably secular song, Tennyson makes of her a woman who depends on herself and yet, as indicated in the repeated "we," also sees herself as a member of a wider community. Although she prays later, when Geraint is in physical danger, there is here no request for God's help. Geraint may judge her by appearances, but in a corollary to a nightingale who sings through her pain, Tennyson's Enid will be an active antagonist toward anything fortune sends her.

As Geraint's nightingale simile suggests, male dominance is part of what Enid must face. Geraint's choice of the nightingale image becomes even more unsettling when placed within the framework of other male reactions to Enid. Enid's father also compares her with a bird when he says to Geraint immediately after the Fortune's Wheel song: "Hark, by the bird's song you may learn the nest'/... 'Enter quickly" (359-60). Yniol's statement of welcome certainly may be read literally, but the disturbing aspects of Yniol's double entendre cannot be ignored. There is no literal reason for Geraint to "enter quickly" into the ruined castle, and that phrase, coupled with "learn the nest," suggests sexual entry. Certainly Yniol, given his poverty, would like his daughter to marry, and Geraint's dress and horse signal a well-to-do knight. The coarse double
entendre serves as coded permission for Geraint to woo, but it also reduces Enid to a sexually desirable object.

Bird imagery as metaphor for male violence appears again when Geraint, before marriage, looks at Enid obediently wearing her "faded silk" for her departure to the court:

Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet her thus attired;
And glancing all at once as keenly at her,
As careful robins eye the deliver's toil,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,
But rested with her sweet face satisfied.

("Marriage of Geraint" 771-776)

For centuries, "robin" had been used to refer to "penis"; that connotation along with that of delving into a field would in turn suggest the idea of a man's "plowing his own field," a direct reference to sexual intercourse. Enid's burning cheeks and downcast eyes react to Geraint's intensely sexual gaze. Because his gaze coincides with proof of Enid's obedience, Geraint's sexual response is tied to assurance of his control of Enid. The robin image makes more believable, therefore, Geraint's later need for absolute control when he suspects that Enid is potentially unfaithful. Additionally, robins eye deliver's toil in order

22 A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature 2: 1163.
to kill, eat, and absorb prey into self. Geraint intends nothing less than to subdue Enid completely to his will, to kill her "self." 23

The single reference would be startingly strong, but Tennyson uses much the same language shortly after Enid has outwitted Limours in order to save both Geraint and herself. Geraint has just reiterated his command that she "obey" him:

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil;
And that within her, which a wanton fool,
Or hasty judger would have call'd her guilt,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied.

("Geraint and Enid" 430-435)

In both cases Enid is intensely discomfited, even frightened. And rightfully so. Geraint combines sexual need, a drive to control the loved one, and the potential for violence.

Because in nineteenth-century slang, "bird" could refer to either the penis or to the pursued female, potential

23 The definition of wife as "selfless" has long been a stated ideal, both within and outside the Christian tradition. In Sir Walter Scott's Waverley (1814), for example, Flora Mac-Ivor tells a suitor that she could never be the kind of wife he needs: "The woman whom you marry ought to have affections and opinions moulded upon yours. Her studies ought to be your studies;--her wishes, her feelings, her hopes, her fears, should all mingle with yours. She should enhance your pleasures, share your sorrows, and cheer your melancholy (215)."
sexual violence is suggested in other imagery as well. That hint of violence is intensified when Earl Doorm, the man who brags of compelling "all creatures to my will" (628), says to Enid:

But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done,
For ye shall share my earldom with me, girl,
And we will live like two birds in one nest.

("Geraint and Enid" 623-626)

The parallels with Geraint are clear: both men would rule a wife; sexual possession is the goal of each.24 Two birds, first Geraint and then Doorm, would possess the nest. What seems like an image of safety, "two birds in one nest," is fraught with potential danger for Enid.25

24 Tennyson often suggests a sort of unsavory male bonding. Perhaps Geraint is most reprehensible at the moment of his self-serving lie to Limours, who has asked permission to speak to Enid. Geraint gives "free leave" to speak and adds, "Get her to speak: she does not speak to me." For Tennyson, "whose veracity was almost fanatical" (Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson 9), that single addition to his source would be enough to discredit Geraint as a morally upright human. If Hallam was correct when he wrote that his father "would say, 'I would pluck my hand from a man even if he were my greatest hero, or dearest friend, if he wronged a woman or told her a lie,'" Geraint stands doubly damned (Memoir 1: 250).

25 Tennyson was not alone in his mid-century concern with domestic violence, a hazard ignored in the advice books for wives. In George Eliot’s "Janet’s Repentence," published in 1858 in Scenes of Clerical Life, Dempster beats his wife, Janet (285). Trollope’s Robert Kennedy is a drunken despot whom his wife, Lady Laura Kennedy, finally leaves (Phineas Finn (1869) and Phineas Redux (1874).
Because Tennyson makes such central use of bird imagery in establishing threats to Enid, it is not surprising that he takes the same approach when he makes Enid threatening as well. Although Tennyson establishes Enid as a rationally moral examplar, he also suggests some of the frightening aspects of her assertiveness, moving from her hesitant disobedience at the idyll's beginning to her psychological control of Geraint at the idyll's end. In so doing, Tennyson looks at some of the more disturbing ramifications of women's growing independence. Three additions to The Mabinogion are particularly important: calling Enid a "ragged robin"; adding the moment when Enid cannot--or will not--explain away Geraint's fears; and adding Enid's final disobedience, one not necessitated by circumstances.

Because Tennyson was such a careful writer, it was a purposeful decision to change Enid from a "pretty beggar" to a "ragged robin" in the 1859 edition. The new metaphor makes Enid potentially destructive rather than appealingly needy and signals that a weak Enid has the "robin" potential

Perhaps the most poignant example occurs in Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848), in which Helen Huntingdon finally finds the courage to flee from her drunken, abusive, adulterous husband. The potential parallel with Geraint and Enid occurs, not in Helen's disastrous first marriage, but in her second, glowingly described by Winifred Gérin in the Introduction as "her eventual happy marriage with a decent man" (16). In actuality, Helen's second husband, Gilbert Markham, is also a physically violent man with an uncontrollable temper. "Enid," along with other literary examples such as these, gives the lie to the mid-Victorian myth of domestic happiness in which the man wisely commands, the wife unquestioningly obeys.
to subdue Geraint, despite his sparrow hawk status. I discuss the change in "Changes in the 1859 Version."

The second addition introduces one of the most poignant moments in "Enid"--the moment when Geraint realizes that Enid is truly a true wife, swears never again to doubt her faithfulness, and yet is deeply in need of Enid's assurances. Enid, however, says nothing, and the moment for healing is forever past:

'Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you yester-morn--
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true wife:
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it:
I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than doubt.'

And Enid could not say one tender word,
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart.

("Geraint and Enid" 734-46)

Geraint's agonized repetition of "I heard you say" shows how deeply he needs interpretation of what he still mistakenly believes is empirical evidence. Because he vows never to ask her meaning, and because she says nothing to heal him, there will forever be a blank in their marriage. Because of Geraint's foolish vow of silence and her lack of response,
psychological control shifts to Enid: the possibility of a truly companionate marriage is blighted. 26

In the third addition Tennyson portrays Enid purposely seizing control in a blatant, unnecessary extension of her earlier justifiable disobedience. A newly assertive wife may become too powerful, he suggests. Three times Enid breaks Geraint's command of silence in order to warn him of actual danger, of which he may well not have been aware. This time, however, there can be no doubt that Geraint sees the armed knight directly ahead. Enid is sitting behind Geraint on his charger so that she has to lean out from behind his broad shoulders to see around him. Even so, she takes control by warning the approaching Edryn not to attack her husband. It is a small but telling moment. The woman who courageously defied her husband when circumstances demanded it now takes control when it is not necessary.

I suggest, too, that the lines immediately preceding Enid's action indicate that the couple is, in fact, leaving Eden rather than returning to nuptial paradise:

And never yet since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind

26 Jordan reads the idyll in part as "the wrangling of domestic comedy, with Enid as foil to Geraint's absurdity" (163). Certainly Enid turns the tables on Geraint in seizing psychological control, but I read the ending as commenting sadly on lost opportunities. The ending is comic in the classic sense of being "happy," but it is a Chekovian sort of happiness.
Than lived thro' her,
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But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
Like that which kept heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain:

("Geraint and Enid" 762-70)
The "useful trouble of the rain" has supplanted mist. By such small gestures does Tennyson signal that Geraint does have something to fear: not his wife's sexuality, but her new-found assertiveness. Already bound by his own vow not to question Enid's earlier action, Geraint now silently lets her take control. Tennyson has demonstrated that Geraint's rigid, foolish authority is outdated; now he suggests the danger inherent in women's new assertiveness as well.

In "Vivien," Tennyson not only illustrates the contrast between the "true" Enid and the "false" Vivien, but also portrays an assertive and controlling Enid writ large.

Changes In The 1859 Version
If one way of determining Tennyson's emphases is by means of his departures from the source, authorial editing gives additional clues. Although Tennyson was an inveterate tinkerer, even of his published poetry, he made remarkably few changes in "Enid" after the 1857 trial edition, most additions and corrections having been made prior to the six-copy trial run. I have chosen, therefore, to look closely
at some of Tennyson's own editing prior to publication of "Enid" in 1859.\(^{27}\)

In analyzing the changes I have used the following manuscripts:

1. The Kensington ms, identified by Richard Jones as having been printed prior to the 1857 edition and part of the John Forster bequest to the Victoria and Albert Museum;
2. The 1857 Palgrave copy of the 1857 *Enid and Nimuē*;
3. Tennyson's handwritten changes on the Palgrave copy, which Jones identifies as "MS";
4. The "Enid" bound in after the 1859 "Enid", pp. 56-95 in volume 30 of *Archives*;
5. The Lincoln P205 ms, volume 20, pp. 159-277 of *Archives*; and
6. The 1859 first edition of the *Idylls*.

According to Jones's 1895 study, *The Growth of the Idylls of the King*, there was a printed version of "Enid" prior to the 1857 trial edition. This "oldest proof", identified by Jones as the Kensington ms ("K"), part of John Forster's bequest to the Victoria and Albert Museum, is the source for his comparisons with subsequent printings in 1857, 1859, and 1869. "K" is similar to, but not identical with, the "Enid" bound in after the "Enid" of the trial edition of the 1859 *Enid and Nimuē: The True and the False*

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\(^{27}\) Tennyson's editing of "Vivien" offers dramatic contrast because his most telling changes in that idyll were made in later editions, as I note in the Epilogue.
currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Ricks does not note that the interpolated "Enid" in volume 30 predates and differs from the Palgrave 1857 trial edition, now in the British Museum. Another early "Enid," which is similar to, but not identical with either "K" or the one found in volume 30, is that from the Tennyson Research Centre holdings, Lincoln P205.

Because I have been unable to locate a copy of the "K" manuscript, I will base my analysis on Jones's citations from that source. For all other sources I used the original source or the reproductions in Archives. There are no changes of note in the Victoria and Albert Forster 48.c.40, but in the Lincoln P205 there are numerous handwritten corrections and additions, all of which have been incorporated in the 1857 Palgrave copy. It is tempting to assume that the P205 is a working proof, but a comparison with the way in which Tennyson corrected the Palgrave copy prior to the 1859 Idylls suggests that the P205 manuscript was corrected after the publication of the 1857 trial edition. Of the many changes written into the Palgrave text, only some were incorporated into the 1859 Idylls; all of the changes in P205 appear in the 1857 version. I have

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29 There are no handwritten corrections in this version to identify it as having been proofread or changed by Tennyson.
underlined changed words and phrases for the reader’s convenience.

Many of the changes in succeeding versions are, not surprisingly, of punctuation and spelling. Tennyson once complained in a letter to the firm of Moxon "about the printers, who would insist on printing erasures and corrections and committing 'other sins of the utmost inhumanity'" (Charles Tennyson, Tennyson 218). In all three versions of the "K" manuscript, for example, appears the typesetting error, "I am Geraint / Of Droon," corrected in all subsequent editions to "Geraint / Of Devon." There are so many punctuation changes and corrections that Jones does not note them.

Some additional changes can be categorized as those made to improve the rhythm of the blank verse or to avoid inelegancies. For example, in the "K" manuscripts and in the 1857 Palgrave, Tennyson writes that Geraint "Had wedded Enid." When he found out that in Welsh "Enid" is pronounced with a short 'e,' he substituted "married Enid" in order to avoid an ear-jarring internal rhyme pronounceable only by someone with a cold. Another early change from the "K" of Lincoln P205 to the 1857 trial edition improves both grammatical and rhythmical sense: "And bared the column of his knotted throat, / The massive heroic of his square breast" becomes "And bared the knotted column of his throat, / The massive square of his heroic breast" ("Marriage of
Geraint" 74-5). Some seemingly small changes facilitate the physical production of a spoken sequence. In Lincoln P205, for example, the line reads "And tho' he loved and reverenced her too much," a line in which "and tho'" requires drastic reconfiguring of tongue and mouth to enunciate both the "d" and the "th." Tennyson changed it to read "Then tho'," a sound sequence far easier to produce. Additionally, the weak grammatical linkage of "and" becomes "then," which serves to advance the action.

Other changes are more heavily freighted, reflecting Tennyson’s developing ideas. One such area is that of the bird imagery so central to "Enid." In his comparison of "K" with succeeding versions, Jones notes, for example, that the line "Tits, wrens, and all wing’d nothings peck him dead!" ("Marriage of Geraint" 275) is missing from the oldest version, but is present in 1857:

**Whereat** Geraint flash’d into sudden spleen:
' A thousand pips eat up your sparrow hawk!
**Tits, wrens, and all wing’d nothings peck him dead!**

**You** think the rustic cackle of your bourg
The murmur of the world! What is it to me?
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!
Speak, if you be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
Where can I get me harbourage for the night?
And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!
"Marriage of Geraint" 273-282

Apparently Jones was working from an uncorrected version and had not seen the corrected one now at Lincoln because the changes he notes for 1857 are those added to the Lincoln manuscript.\(^{30}\) This early addition of "Tits, wrens, and all winged nothings peck him dead!" illustrates the thematic centrality of the bird imagery in "Enid." Tits and wrens are among the tiniest of British birds, only larger, perhaps, than "winged nothings" or the pips (hatchlings) of the preceding line. A common sight is that of a tiny bird protecting its young by repeated swooping attacks on a larger predator, attacks that pose no real threat to the safety of the preying bird. Tennyson’s added line suggests, however, that the tiniest of birds could be potentially deadly for the sparrow-hawk, a bird of prey and symbol of knightly prowess. By extension, then, a small bird such as the nightingale, with whom Enid will be compared within three pages, could pose danger to Geraint, who will shortly "earn the name of sparrow-hawk."\(^{31}\)

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\(^{30}\) Archives 20: 173.

\(^{31}\) "Tits, wrens, and all winged nothings peck him dead," which appears in all subsequent additions, was added, in Tennyson’s hand, to the printed ms now located at the Tennyson Research Centre (P205). This ms, identified by Ricks as "proofs/trial Enid and Nimue: The True and the False (1857) Idylls of the King (1859) is not identical with that identified by Jones as the earliest proof, however.

Because Ricks made little effort to indicate chronological order of proofs, trial editions, and
At the same time, the passage as a whole also suggests that Geraint himself, because he flashes so easily into anger, is also potentially dangerous. That suggestion is strengthened by another 1857 addition five lines later in which Geraint, out of control, shouts repetitively for weapons: "And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy." Indeed, anger will prove to be a prime motivator for Geraint throughout the idyll.

An even more crucial change makes Enid potentially dangerous as well. As noted earlier, Geraint twice looks threateningly at Enid "as robins eye the delver's toil." In a key 1859 change, Tennyson also identifies Enid with a robin\(^{32}\) when she becomes a "ragged-robin" in the hedge rather than a "pretty beggar," as she had been in the three "K" manuscripts and in 1857. When Enid's mother describes her as a "robin" the girl, like Geraint, becomes potentially deadly:

> Let never maiden think, however fair,
> She is not fairer in new clothes than old.

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\(^{32}\) The much loved, tiny English robin is a very different bird from the large, sturdy member of the thrush family in the United States.
And should some great court-lady say, the Prince
Hath picked a **ragged-robin** from the hedge,
And like a madman brought her to the court,
Then were ye shamed, and worse, might shame the
Prince
To whom we are beholden.

("Marriage of Geraint" 721-727)

Harold Littledale wrote in 1893 that the ragged robin "is a red wildflower, also called Cuckoo-flower, and is common in English hedgerows; but when Enid’s mother speaks of a Ragged Robin from the hedge, she is thinking less of the literal wildflower than of a ragged beggar-girl from the roadside" (132-3). Perhaps. Surely either beggar or robin would remind the reader that Guinevere had promised Geraint to clothe his bride "like the sun" whether she was "the daughter of a king" or "a beggar from the hedge." The image resonates far beyond that echo, however. Red is the color of passion, not of submission, and signals possible rebellion on Enid’s part. And readers who know the alternate name, the Cuckoo-flower, could also add the negative connotations of the cuckoo, a bird associated with cuckoldry and with parasitizing other birds’s nests. The suggestion of adultery is inherent in the reference. "Beggar," which suggests the tales of either Cinderella or of Cophetua and the beggar, has far fewer sexual and potentially threatening nuances for what Enid might bring to
marriage. It is suggestive, too, that Tennyson puts the phrase, "ragged-robin," into the mother's mouth, rather than the narrator's, as if the ragged and seemingly powerless mother knows, and perhaps shares, her meek daughter's potential for assertiveness. Even so, none of these undertones takes away completely the romantically appealing picture of the needy small bird being rescued by the strong chivalric knight. Tennyson plays with the imagery so that it has multiple potentiality.

Many of the changes, both of the "K" manuscripts and of the 1857 version, develop the relationship between Geraint and Enid, often to the further denigration of Geraint's character. In "K" and 1857, when Geraint commands Enid to "put on your worst and meanest dress / And ride with me," the words that follow are "And Enid wonder'd at him: / But then bethought her of a faded silk." In 1859 Tennyson adds

And Enid ask'd, amazed.
'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'
But he, 'I charge you, ask not but obey.'
Then she bethought her of a faded silk.

("Marriage of Geraint" 131-134)
The change to "amazed" intensifies Enid's astonishment at Geraint's inexplicable command. Her question adds a complex of nuances. She seems properly submissive, ready to assume all blame, an attitude believable in light of her earlier agonized self-questioning and readiness to be at fault for
Geraint's uxoriousness: "I am the cause because I dare not speak." When she refers to herself as "Enid" rather than as "I," it is almost as if the attack has so jarred her sense of reality that she is momentarily separated from her sense of self. Despite the repetitious use of "Enid" three times in two lines, Tennyson never changed the wording.

The addition of "I charge thee, ask not but obey" both echoes the *Mabinogion* and deviates from it. The source reads: "'I know nothing, Lord," said she, "of thy meaning.' 'Neither wilt thou know at this time,' said he" (241). In keeping with Tennyson’s theme of failed opportunities for companionate marriage, Tennyson's Enid comes far closer to asking a direct question, and his Geraint is much more blunt in silencing her. Replacing the suggestion of future explanation inherent in "at this time," "ask not but obey" obviates any opportunity for discussion.

Tennyson's addition of yet another "obey" stresses Geraint's obsessive use of the word. By such repetition Tennyson questions the narrow mindset of a man such as Geraint, who consistently thinks in terms of a wife's "obeying" her husband to the letter of the Anglican marriage vows, although he is lenient in their application to himself. In "The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony" in *The Book of Common Prayer*, (307-14), the officiating priest asks

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33 Interestingly, Tennyson had indicated in the P205 ms that "am" should be italicized in "I am the cause because I dare not speak," a correction not retained.
the man, "Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health?" The priest then asks the woman, "Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health?" To each of these questions the answer is "I will." Geraint neither comforts nor honours Enid; Enid, however, recognizes that "to obey," despite its prominence as first in the list, does not necessarily conduce to the remaining commands in the list. In the spoken marriage vows that follow, each partner swears "to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." To the wife's vow is added, however, "to love, cherish, and to obey," a second instance of obeying. The Solemnization of Matrimony closes with a declaration by the priest of the duties of man and wife, with the rubric declaring that "the Minister shall read as followeth." In other words, the priest has no option but to include what "followeth." What follows is the familiar Paulian exhortation,\(^\text{34}\) "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it." Next comes advice from Paul's letter to the Colossians: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." The wife is defined as "the weaker vessel."

\(^{34}\) Paul did not actually write this famous passage, which was added by the patriarchal church fathers some four hundred years after Paul's death. Such repeated insistence on the wife's obeying suggests deep uneasiness that wives will not obey. Such is Geraint's plight, too.
To indicate to all women that they, too, must subject themselves to their husbands' commands, the priest must then turn to the new wife and to the other women in the congregation, again quoting Saint Paul. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church. . . . Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. And again he saith, Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." And then once more from Saint Paul: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." Whereas the husband is exhorted to "love" and "honour" his wife, the wife is several times told to "obey," "submit," and "subject" herself to her husband's authority. 35 By demonstrating that Enid is right in not following her husband's commands, Tennyson questions the church's authority. Both church and Tennyson's Geraint require obedience in a desperate attempt to control women,

35 Such sentiments were not confined to England, of course. Beginning in 1859, for example, marriage ceremonies in Mexico included reading a letter by politician Meichor Ocampo. His letter reads, in part: "The man, whose sexual attributes are principally courage and strength, should and will give protection, food, and guidance to the woman. The woman, whose principal attributes are abnegation, beauty, compassion, perspicacity, and tenderness, should and will give her husband obedience, pleasure, assistance, consolation, and counsel, always treating him with veneration due to the person that supports and defends her" (Qtd. in Leahy 267). Note that "obedience" is again first in the list. Geraint, along with many a mid-Victorian British husband, would be perfectly at ease with Ocampo's dictates.
whose unruliness they fear. Tennyson's Geraint is especially fearful because of his deep-seated fear of women's sexuality and potential for adultery, fear that the poet added to the source because of nineteenth-century fearfulness. The Geraint of The Mabinogion needs no such repetition of "obey."

An insight into Tennyson's grasp of psychological realism in his thinking about Geraint can be glimpsed in a change the poet toyed with but in the end did not make. In "K", 1857, and again in 1859, Geraint's explanation as to why he wants Enid to wear the faded silk dress to court indicates that his command is meant to prove her love for him. He tells her mother that since Enid agreed to wear the dress without questioning him, he "felt / That I could rest a rock in ebbs and flows, / F ixt on her faith" (MG 811-12). In Tennyson's hand on the 1857 Palgrave copy "felt" is changed to "knew," a change wisely not incorporated. "Felt" is a far more accurate indicator of Geraint's basic uneasiness about women's "nature." "Felt" echoes exactly the tension expressed just moments earlier when Enid had appeared dressed as commanded, and Geraint had happily looked at her "As careful robins eye the delver's toil." "Felt" also looks ahead with irony to Geraint's next words: "now therefore I do rest, / A prophet certain of my prophecy, / That never shadow of mistrust can cross / Between us" ("Marriage of Geraint" 813-16). In a reflection
of widespread nineteenth-century belief that a husband should, and could, control his wife, Geraint is as incapable of knowing the complexities of truth as he is of trusting his wife.

A further change leaves no doubt that Tennyson is not targeting just Geraint but is speaking of a mid-Victorian tendency to misjudge truth. Tennyson changes "themselves" to "ourselves" in the now-famous interpolated comment that marks the division between the two halves of "Enid," which in "K" reads:

O purblind race of miserable men,
 How many among us at this very hour
 Do forge a life-long trouble for themselves,
 By taking false for true, or true for false;

From 1857 on it becomes:

O purblind race of miserable men,
 How many among us at this very hour
 Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
 By taking true for false, or false for true;

("Geraint and Enid" 1-4)

The "ourselves," remarkably inclusive, makes it difficult for narrator, character, or reader to assume that it is only "they" who make such errors in judgment, errors that have "life-long" consequences. It is, with the added weight of the narrator speaking directly to the reader, yet another
indicator of the difficulty of "knowing" truth, despite Geraint's certainty that he can distinguish true from false.

By reversing the order, so that "taking true for false" is noted first, Tennyson ties the comment to Geraint's error in the first half of "Enid." And if Geraint mistakes true for false, Enid in the second half consistently remains true to a husband whose self-centered behavior demonstrates falsity to all his vows: to King Arthur, the chivalric code, his wedding vows, and even to the customary virtues of self-control and honesty.

A final change related to Enid, words that reinforce Tennyson's sad comment on the inability even of lovers to speak truth to one another, is handwritten in both the Lincoln P205 and the Palgrave versions, but not incorporated in 1859:

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers again: she could not speak,
Not even to her own self in silent words.
And shadows of a sound: she did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain:
Perhaps Tennyson felt that the comment, just seventeen lines earlier, had been sufficiently poignant. Geraint had just said that he would "henceforward rather die than doubt," and "Enid could not say one tender word." But that Tennyson even considered adding another reference to inability to speak points to his concerns. Geraint will keep silent when he should speak, and so will Enid. This will be a marriage of appearances, not of open hearts.

The final notable correction to appear in 1859 is the change from "shore" to a word of considerably more power: "sewer." The change occurs in Geraint's request, made after he has heard rumors of Guinevere's adultery, to return home:

He made this pretext, that his princedom lay
Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law:
And therefore, till the king himself should please
To cleanse this common shore of all his realm,
He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches.

("Marriage of Geraint" 33-40)

"Common shore" becomes "common sewer," a term that sets up emotionally charged sympathetic vibrations both in the Idylls and in Victorian culture.
Tennyson's change to "sewer," with all its connotations of filth, disease, contagion, and pollution, introduces the metaphor important in "Vivien" and then central to Arthur's denigration of Guinevere in his farewell speech. Tennyson places "sewer" in the midst of Geraint's revulsion against Guinevere's alleged adultery, fearing lest Enid "Had suffer'd or should suffer any taint / In nature." Geraint believes the power of contagion to be so great that it can infect even an innocent woman's very "nature." Geraint's fear is so powerful that he does not wait for "proof," but flees from court with his wife as if they were escaping London's cholera epidemic of 1849. Tennyson did fear the contagion of influence, but he makes an ironic comment on the tendency of the mid-Victorian male to blame the fallen or the weak woman for sexual contamination. Although Tennyson's Geraint fears that Enid will be contaminated, it is he himself who by his "nature" is predisposed to think the worst of women and is therefore the one infected by the rumors.

Changes After 1859

Although Tennyson makes few changes in "Enid" after 1859, some are significant. The poet continues to edit for the sake of melody or of grammatical clarification. For example, in 1869 the line "(They sleeping each by other)" becomes "They sleeping each by either," a change that makes
for fluidity of sound production as well as adding an internal rhyme that instantiates the couple's closeness.

Some alterations affect meaning significantly, however. In 1859 Geraint calls Guinevere "our kind Queen," but that becomes in 1873 "our fair Queen," a change that diminishes Geraint's description to appearance, the trait on which he usually bases his opinions. More importantly, the change provides an important thematic contrast between Guinevere and Enid. Throughout the Idylls, people are influenced by Guinevere's appearance, whether of her beauty or the seeming "fact" of her adultery. The only "good" she does in the Idylls is that of reforming Edryn. But at the close of "Enid," Tennyson writes that "Enid, whom her ladies loved to call / Enid the Fair, a grateful people named / Enid the Good" ("Geraint and Enid" 961-3).

By calling Guinevere merely "kind" and Enid "good," a word not used in The Mabinogion, Tennyson evokes the Victorian passion for selfless good works in the world. Enid is "good," not because she is sexually chaste or faithful to her husband, but because she helps others in a way that a Charles Kingsley or an F. D. Maurice would surely applaud. Although I believe that Tennyson establishes Enid within a secular moral framework, her actions would also be approved by a Cardinal Newman, a Mrs. Ellis, or the strictest Evangelical. As George Watson notes of an age in which secularist and religious believer could eye one
another warily in the search for truth, the two could agree on "a doctrine of virtue, not of gain." He notes, "It is one of the strengths of Victorian liberalism that it can excite the enthusiasm of those of great faith or of none" (50). Watson's insight partially explains the range of readers' reactions to Enid and to the Idylls. What Tennyson unequivocally validates, however, is work in the world.

Changes in spelling also suggest Tennyson's thinking. Charles Tennyson suggests that the poet "made a number of small alterations in the four Idylls of 1859, chiefly by changing the modern forms of verbs and pronouns into the archaic, in order to make the style more congenial to that of the 'Passing of Arthur'", published in 1870 (Tennyson 403). The critic's 1949 comment, probably correct, makes a prophetically ironic comment on present practice, because Ricks has reversed Tennyson's intent by modernizing the spelling in his three-volume The Poems of Tennyson, considered by most to be the accepted scholarly edition.

Tennyson also makes a suggestive change in capitalization. In the "K" manuscripts, the Palgrave copy, and the 1859 publication, "king" is consistently written in lower case, while "Queen" is regularly capitalized. Because Tennyson was so meticulous an editor, it is likely that he intended the difference. In later editions, both words are capitalized, but the difference in the earlier versions suggests Tennyson's early emphasis on Guinevere rather than
on King Arthur. The earlier use of lower case for "king" also tends to give credence to Tennyson's statement to his friend James Knowles that the new title, Idylls of the King, refers not to King Arthur, but to the "King within us."\textsuperscript{36}

In the Epilogue, I suggest that the change from the original "Enid" to the two new titles indicates a move away from Tennyson's early focus on women. I look, too, at how the impact of "Enid" shifts as the idyll is incorporated into the larger work.

\textsuperscript{36} James Knowles makes this comment in "Tennyson's Arthurian Poem," published in the \textit{Spectator} of January 1, 1870 and reprinted, in part, in Hallam Tennyson's \textit{Tennyson and His Friends}, 498-503.
CHAPTER TWO. "VIVIEN": WOMEN SEEKING POWER

"I have made his glory mine."

Tennyson's Vivien is a menacing version of the potential danger writ small in timidly assertive Enid, but at the same time Vivien is a potential hero justified in seeking knowledge. Tennyson depicts a Vivien who uses her wits and her sexuality to defeat the wisest man in the kingdom, thereby embodying in this young woman two mid-Victorian threats: disruptive female sexuality and women's rising demands for power and knowledge. In "Vivien" as in "Guinevere" Tennyson radically modifies and adds to his source in order to embed the tale within that of Guinevere's adultery and to dramatize Vivien's tactics. The poet changes Vivien from pursued to pursuer, adds imagery that links her both to the past and to mid-Victorian England, and invents the background of the magic spell so that Vivien seizes what had heretofore been used for male domination of women. Vivien is a self-controlled woman who observes closely, plans carefully, and achieves greatly.

It is important to read the 1859 version as it was then published because, more than in any other idyll, corrections and changes in succeeding editions of "Vivien" affect the idyll's emotional and thematic impact on the reader. In
1857 and 1859 the emphasis is on tracing Vivien's long and surprisingly successful seduction of Merlin. References to court, to Arthur, and to Guinevere and Lancelot's adultery are crucial elements in the seduction, but in 1859 Vivien's motivation is simpler and yet on a more heroic scale than in later versions. She is more nearly representative of "woman" in the early renderings when she has no family vengeance to spur her on, no upbringing in Mark's court to mold her outlook. Missing, too, in 1859 are her ties with Modred's plotting and spying. In 1859 Vivien is a mysterious Lamia/Mary Magdalene of unknown background; later she becomes a seductress very much grounded in later-Victorian belief in the effective influence on character of surroundings. Tennyson's basic conception of Vivien develops, then, from the Nimue of 1857, whose name suggests Malory's literal enchantress, to Vivien, whose sexual wiles bring her knowledge and empowerment, and finally to a Vivien who is the vengeance-seeking product of her circumstances and upbringing.

I consider Tennyson's Vivien a powerful and important character, not only in "Vivien" but in the Idylls as a whole. Elaine Jordan, however, believes that "The most significant thing about Vivien is her triviality," at the same time agreeing with Ricks that "she signifies 'the lustfulness of the flesh' which 'could not believe in anything good or great'" (158-9). The two views seem
incompatible, since fleshly lust does not seem trivial in
the *Idylls*, where it is credited with bringing down both the
kingdom's wisest man and the Round Table itself.

Other critics, while not saying that Vivien is trivial,
yet simplify her as representing lustfulness. Gerhard
Joseph, for example, says that Vivien is "endowed with the
flatness of a medieval vice" and is "Tennyson's most
deliberate experiment in the 'fleshly' mode," a *femme fatale*
in direct polarity with Enid, who is a "paragon of
redeemptive womanhood" (*Tennysonian Love* 169, 125). Marion
Shaw, in a more feminist reading, yet says that Vivien and
Enid "provide the harlot and good wife figures in the sexual
scenario. They are complemented by Elaine and Guinevere as
pure virgin and remorseful adulteress. The world of the
*Idylls* is highly schematic and the four women present what
we now think of as Victorian stereotypes of womanhood" (50).
Clyde de L. Ryals reduces Vivien to "harlot," but gives her
interesting roots in earlier Tennysonian depictions of
*femmes fatales* (49).  

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1 Ryals says that Vivien is "like Eleã­nore, a woman in
whom 'all passion becomes passionless'; like Fatima, who
vows 'I will possess him or will die'; like Lady Clara Vere
de Vere, the 'great enchantress' who seeks 'to break a
country heart / For pastime'; like Helen and Cleopatra in 'A
dream of Fair Women,' who 'brought calamity' wherever they
came. The only real variation on the idylic formula that
we find here is Merlin, the wise old man who is reduced to
ruin by a young enchantress" (41).

Vivien is certainly passionate, though the passion is
not sexual. In the 1859 edition she is passionate about
gaining Merlin's knowledge and power; in later editions she
is passionate in her vengeance. "I will possess him or will
I suggest that Vivien is neither trivial nor simply allegorically fleshly but is a shrewd observer of human behavior who plans carefully, achieves greatly, and then disappears into the world, a newly empowered and knowing female of mythic proportions. What is remarkable about Tennyson's conception of this "fallen woman" is his deviation from the standard nineteenth-century depiction of the fallen woman either as powerless or reformed. His Vivien is neither. She exultantly gains control and experiences no regrets.

The "Vivien" of 1857 and 1859 and its Sources

Before Tennyson's conception of Vivien developed to that of the assertive, power-seeking female, he thought of her as a Lady of the Lake with supernatural powers. Early manuscripts from about 1833-1840, in which Tennyson jotted ideas for working with Arthurian subjects, include the name "Nimue" as well as references to "The Lady of the Lake" and "the Ladies of the Lake" (Memoir 2: 123-4). In the 1857 trial edition Tennyson first calls Vivien Nimuë, in Malory a woman skilled in sorcery, which she uses to help others. There is no record of Tennyson's explanation for the change to "Vivien," which first appeared in 1859, but at least one die" describes Elaine, not Vivien. Never does Vivien pursue merely as a pastime, but she does bring calamity to the man who succumbs to her passion. Ryals is certainly correct, however, in linking Vivien with Tennyson's lifelong interest in portraying women's passions of all varieties.
friend, Edward Burne-Jones, apparently claimed responsibility. Tennyson may well have decided on this change of name, regardless of criticism, because his emphases differ so markedly from those in Malory.  

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2 Hallam Tennyson gives no reason in A Memoir for the name change to Vivien, nor is the change mentioned in Tennyson's extant letters. In her Journal entries for 19 March and 30 March 1856, Emily Tennyson refers to "'Merlin' ('Vivien')," but in other entries in 1856-7 calls the idyll simply "Merlin." On 12 June 1857, however, she writes, "A. resolves not to publish 'Nimuë' ('Vivien') & 'Enid' until he has a bigger book." She gives no reason for the name change either. Since Hallam and his mother rewrote her journal after Tennyson's death and then destroyed the original, the earlier references to "Merlin" were likely added after the fact, since the idyll's title change from "Vivien" to "Merlin and Vivien" did not occur until 1869. The emendations by Tennyson's wife and son are further complicated by James O. Hoge's editing of the Journal without use of ellipses. See Hoge 62-3; 94.

According to Georgiana Burne-Jones, her husband was responsible for the name change: "Vivien had been written two years before, but was then called by its author Nimuë--the name of the Damsel of the Lake with whom, as she is represented in Malory's Morte d'Arthur, Edward's imagination had been dealing so closely in his Oxford picture--and Mr. Prinsep recalls his pained face and eager expostulation when he found the poet in his Idyll had modernized and altered the character while preserving the ancient name. 'Tennyson,' says Val Prinsep, 'good-naturedly changed it to 'Vivien'" (Memorials 1: 182).

Unfortunately, as with A Memoir, we are dealing in Memorials with a work written after the subject's death in order to memorialize and sanitize the subject. It would certainly add to Burne-Jones's credit if he had influenced the great poet. I have been unable to locate anything written by Val Prinsep in order to validate the story, but Tennyson was well acquainted with both Prinsep and Burne-Jones at the time he was writing the 1857 idylls, and Burne-Jones, Prinsep, D. G. Rossetti, and William Morris were working on Arthurian murals for the Oxford Union during the summer of 1857.

3 Chapter LX of the Caxton Malory is cited in part by Ricks (Poems 3: 393). What follows is a more complete version taken from Walker and Edwards's 1816 edition of
Caxton, 1: 104-6. Especially cogent are the references to Merlin's foreknowledge, which Ricks omits.

Chap. LXX. How Merlin was assotted and doted on one of the Ladies of the Lake, and he was shut in a Rock, under a Stone, by a Wood side, and there died.

Then after these quests of sir Gawaine, of sir Tor, and of king Pellinore, Merlin fell in a dotage on the damsel that king Pellinore brought to the court with him; and she was one of the damsels of the lake, which hight Nimue. But Merlin would let her have no rest, but always would be with her in every place; and ever she made Merlin good cheer, till she had learned of him all manner of things that she desired, and he was so sore assotted upon her, that he might not be from her. So, upon a time, he told unto king Arthur, 'That he should not endure long, and that, for all his crafts, he should be put in the earth quick.' And so he told the king many things that should befal ... Also he told king Arthur that he would miss him, yet had ye rather than all your lands to have me again. 'Ah!' said the king, 'sith I know of your adventure purvey for it, and put away, by your crafts, that misadventure.'--'Nay,' said Merlin, 'it will not be.' And then he departed from king Arthur. And within a while the damsel of the lake departed, and Merlin went evermore with her wheresoever she went. And oftentimes Merlin would have had her privily away by his subtle crafts; and then she made him to swear that he should never do none enchantment upon her if he would have his will; and so he swore.

So she and Merlin went over the sea unto the land of Berwick, whereas king Ban was king ... And then, soon after, the lady and Merlin departed; and by the way as they went Merlin shewed her many wonders, and came into Cornwall. And always Merlin lay about the lady, for to have her maidenhead; and she was ever passing weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him; for she was afraid of him, because he was a devil's son, and she could not put him away by any means.

And so, upon a time, it happened that Merlin shewed to her in a rock where was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, which went under a stone. So, by her subtle craft and working, she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there; but she wrought so there for him, that he came never out, for all the craft
In "Vivien," in addition to embedding the tale in his larger thematics of adultery, Tennyson reverses the roles of pursuer / pursued found in Malory so that in the Idylls, the female becomes the sexual aggressor who imprisons the powerful male, not in order to protect herself from his sexual advances, but to gain his knowledge. In Malory, Nimue ever "made Merlin good cheer, till she had learned of him all manner of things she desired" and then later, when she is "passing weary" of Merlin’s attempts "for to have her maidenhead," imprisons him under a great stone "by her subtle craft and working," and according to the heading of the chapter, leaves him to die.

However, as Ricks suggests (Poems 3: 393), the new name Vivien has ties with the Romance of Merlin, which Tennyson knew from Southey’s Preface to his 1817 annotated version of Malory.4 This Vulgate version of Vivien has many similarities with Tennyson’s creation, though here, too, Tennyson adds important variations. As in Malory, the Romance Merlin has foreknowledge ("Merlin, who saw his own fate, and with all his wisdom was unable to avoid it"), but is paralyzed intellectually by his love for Viviane and by what she has learned from him. Merlin tells his master Blaise that he must follow Viviane and will never return:

\[\text{that he could do: and so she departed, and left Merlin.}\]

4 Staines finds evidence of Tennyson’s familiarity with Southey’s translation in notes Tennyson made, those found in Harvard Notebook 16 (7; 27).
'I needs must go, for so I have covenanted and promised; and even if I had not covenanted, I am so taken with her love that I could not forbear going. All this have I done myself, for I have taught her great part of what I know, and she will still learn more from me, for I have no power to withhold myself' (Southey xliiv).\textsuperscript{5}

Tennyson's conception of his wily Vivien may well owe inspiration to the \textit{Romance}, in which Viviane "showed [Merlin] greater semblance of love than she had ever done before, as one who knew so many enchantments that never other woman knew so much. Tennyson's Vivien also fawns and flatters in order to get the final crucial control. The Vulgate Merlin, like Tennyson's Merlin, knows what she wants, knows it is to his harm:

So she devised within herself how she might detain him for ever more; but never could she compass nor achieve this: then was she full sorrowful and vexed, and cast about how she might discover it. Then began she to fawn and to flatter Merlin more than before; and she said to him, My sweet friend, I do not yet know one thing which I would fain know, I pray you teach me it. And Merlin, who

\textsuperscript{5} Southey's translation of the Vulgate \textit{Romance} is on pp. xliii-xlviii in his Notes to the Preface. I am indebted to the Interlibrary Loan Department of Rice University for access to an 1817 edition.
well knew what it was, and to what she tended, said to her, Mistress, what is it? Sir, said
Viviane, I would have you teach and show me how to inclose and imprison a man without a tower,
without walls, without chains, but by enchantments alone, in such manner that he may never be able to
 go out, except by me (xlv).

Merlin, realizing what is in store for him, yet agrees to
tell her, saying "but I am so taken, that perforce will I or
not, it behoves me to do your will." Then Viviane,
for her great treason, and the better to delude
and deceive him . . . put her arms round his neck,
and began to kiss him, saying, that he might well
be hers, seeing that she was his; You well know,
said she, that the great love which I have in you,
has made me leave father and mother that I may
have you in my arms day and night. . . . Seeing then
that I love you and you love me, is it not right
that you should do my will and I yours? (xlv).

Sex is not, as in the Idylls, the weapon that Viviane
uses, because it is clear that sexual consummation had
occurred for the pair many times prior to Merlin's literal
imprisonment. Merlin succumbs to Viviane's argument of
mutual love and tells her the charm. Then, when Merlin is
asleep in the forest of Broceliande after they "disported
together and took their solace," Viviane enchants Merlin so
that "it seemed to him that he was inclosed in the strongest
tower in the world." Viviane, however, promises that
'I shall often be here, and you shall hold me in
your arms, and I will hold you in mine. And in
this she held her covenant to him, for afterwards
there was never night nor day in which she was not
there' (xlvi).

Merlin is indeed never able to leave the "tower," but,
unlike Tennyson's Vivien, Viviane often "regretted what she
had done, for she had thought that the thing which he taught
her could not be true, and willingly would she have let him
out if she could." This Viviane is tellingly different from
both Malory's and Tennyson's Nimuë, both of whom leave
Merlin to die.

Southey's editorial comment on his translation of the
episode may well have inspired the idyll's closing words for
Tennyson. Southey notes, "The writer very properly remarks
upon Merlin, for having taught his mistress so much, guil en
fut depuis, et est encore tenu pour fol." "Vivien" ends:

Then crying 'I have made his glory mine,'
And shrieking out 'O fool!' the harlot leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echo'd 'fool.'

("Merlin and Vivien" 969-72)

Tennyson blends aspects of Malory's Morte and the
Vulgate Romance and then adds to those concepts in order to
portray a Vivien more in keeping with Victorian anxieties about women. When Tennyson drops Malory's idea of Merlin's being a sexual predator from whom Nimue is driven to defend herself, the reader's sympathy shifts away from Vivien. In a partial echo of Malory and in a nod both to dramatic action and to Victorian sensibilities, Tennyson withholds the act of sexual consummation until the climax of Merlin's yielding, and then phrases it in magnificently euphemistic storm imagery. He retains, in recognition of male Victorians' fears of women's growing power, Vivien's desertion of Merlin, buried "quick" in the oak that "look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork." Sexual power that is as imprisoning as Vivien's is fearful indeed. In sum, Tennyson keeps, and dramatizes, those aspects of both stories that make Vivien a potant threat to Merlin, the wisest of men.

By means of imagery added to his sources, Tennyson powerfully characterizes his Vivien as potentially deadly. The snake imagery that Tennyson associates with Vivien throughout the idyll suggests not only the fallen Eve but also the deadly Lamia and the fearsome Medusa. Indeed,

6 In her discussion of Medusa and the male gaze, Aisenberg notes that "The snakes that replace Medusa's own locks are . . . a sexual symbol. . . Indeed, it is precisely this union of eroticism and destruction, fused in Medusa's visage, that is particularly associated with feminine evil," a Freudian reading of the myth (85).

In the original myth, according to Bullfinch, Medusa "was once a beautiful maiden whose hair was her chief glory, but as she dared to vie in beauty with Minerva, the goddess deprived her of her charms and changed her beautiful ringlets into hissing serpents. She became a cruel monster
Tennyson's version of Vivien carries connotations of dangerous women from the classics, mythology, and Romantic poetry such as Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and Coleridge's Geraldine. Vivien is sister, too, to the dangerous women who were favorite subjects for Pre-Raphaelite and other Victorian painters. 7 There can be no of so frightful an aspect that no living thing could behold her without being turned into stone" (Cited in Aisenberg, 84). For the Victorians, "no living thing" had become limited to men, for whom Medusa had become a fearsome female figure. See fn 8.

In the image of the gold snake that holds back and then releases Vivien's long hair in the seduction scene, Tennyson simultaneously suggests the fallen Eve, Mary Magdalene and Medusa. Loosened hair frequently denotes loosened self-control over sexual impulses, whether in the nineteenth century or any contemporary Harlequin romance.

Tennyson predated Freud in imaginatively associating snakes with sexuality and passion. The image remained fresh to him even at age seventy-seven when in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," he refers to "serpent passion" (167).

See also Auerbach for her discussion of woman as Lamia and Medusa (8-9).

See Michie on the Victorians' psychological displacement of women's hair to "represent their wantonness, their unnameable body parts" (99-100).

7 Vivien, Guinevere, La Belle Dame sans Merci, Medea, Circe, Pandora, and the Medusa were popular subjects for Victorian painters. In a particularly revealing detail, Burne-Jones gives Vivien the same headdress of snakes in "The Beguiling of Merlin" (1872-3) that he later places on the Medusa's head in "The Baleful Head" (1885). Further, in the same sort of connectedness that Tennyson sees between Enid and Vivien, Burne-Jones gives the same face to the innocent beloved in "The Baleful Head" as that of the Medusa, and the scene takes place under an apple tree laden with Eve's fruit. The model for both paintings is Maria Zambaco, the mistress with whom Burne-Jones was in love between 1867-70 and from whom he had been trying unsuccessfully to distance himself. A repeated theme in Victorian painting and writing is that of the deleterious or even fatal effect on a man of being in love.

Another popular subject for painting depicted a man, often a knight in armor, rescuing a helpless woman, Perseus rescuing Andromeda, for example. In the rescue paintings,
doubt that Tennyson's Vivien is a highly dangerous lady, representative of powerful women who pose a danger to a man's freedom of thought and action. Merlin says bluntly that because of Vivien, he will lose his "name and use and fame." And he does.

In addition to the mythical and literary connotations surrounding Vivien, Tennyson adds biblical allusions and imagery that tie her unmistakably to Mary Magdalene. The allusion speaks to the Victorian stereotyping that divided women into the bipolar categories of virgin and harlot, Mary and Mary Magdalene. Fallen women were commonly referred to as Magdalenes; shelters set up to help fallen women to reform were called Magdalene Houses. The very similarity of the names Mary and Mary Magdalene suggests that every virgin has the potential to become a whore once she has sexual knowledge, a blurred dichotomy that leads to the sort of fixated yet muddy thinking that makes Geraint distrust Enid and Arthur to compare Guinevere with a prostitute.

Tennyson's readers would have been familiar with such contemporary evidence of the Mary / Magdalen continuum as that which is central to the Reverend William Tuckniss's "Introduction" to volume four of Henry Mayhew's London...
Labour and the London Poor, published in 1862 and subtitled Those That Will Not Work, comprising Prostitutes, Thieves, Swindlers and Beggars, by several contributors. Tuckniss's apparently unconscious vacillation illustrates the Victorian struggle with conflicting evidence and unclear moral distinctions. Tuckniss writes

Ah! who can wonder that our streets swarm with the fallen and the lost, when SIN OR STARVE is the dire alternative! Who cannot track the via doloroso between the 15,000 starving and the thrice that number living by sin as a trade!

(xxix).

His use of the word "trade" directly conflicts with the book's sub-heading, which says that prostitutes are unwilling to work; Tuckniss recognizes that they must work as prostitutes or starve. On the following page, however, he speaks with approval of "The Society for Promoting the Employment of Women" for helping to "honest industry" those "who now labour under strong temptations to abandon themselves to a life of criminal ease and self-indulgence."

It is seemingly a short step from a Mary to a Magdalene, newly at ease and self-indulgent.

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8 Mayhew's four-volume London Labour and the London Poor studies life in 1850s London. In a reflection of growing respect for science, he emphasizes facts and statistics, as well as reporting on hundreds of personal interviews. All quotations are taken from the unabridged 1968 Dover reprint of volume four.
In "Enid," "Vivien," and "Guinevere" Tennyson illustrates the fear of sexual contagion and its resultant disorder. Sounding much like Tennyson's Arthur in his farewell speech to Guinevere, Tuckniss mixes the tone of compassion with that of the contemporary horror of unleashed female sexuality. A woman's full potential to be an irresistible and poisonous influence is unleashed the moment she is willing to engage in illicit sex:

Who can tell the pestiferous influence exercised on society by one single fallen woman? Who can calculate the evils of such a system? Woman, waylaid, tempted, deceived, becomes in turn the terrible avenger of her sex. Armed with a power which is all but irresistible, and stript of that which can alone restrain and purify her influence, she steps upon the arena of life qualified to act her part in the reorganization of society. The *lex talionis*--the law of retaliation--is hers. Society has made her what she is, and must be now governed by her potent influence. The weight of this influence is untold: view it in the dissolution of domestic ties, in the sacrifice of family peace, in the cold desolation of promising homes; but, above all, in the growth of practical Atheism, and in the downward tendency of all that is pure and holy in life! (xxxix)
Such is Geraint’s fear; such is the basis for the gossip about Guinevere; such is Vivien’s sexual power.

Tuckniss makes clear the close connection between Mary and Magdalene in his closing paragraph, addressed to his male readers:

In all the million claims upon your faith, upon your feeling as a man, upon your benevolence as a Christian, you will never fulfil a mission dearer to Christ, you will never promote a charity more congenial to the spirit of this gospel; you will never more surely wake up joy in heaven, and force tears into the eyes of sympathetic angels, than when you can bring a Magdalene face to face with her Redeemer, and thrill her poor heart, even to breaking, with the plaintive music of that divine voice, calling her by name—MARY (x1).

Three times Tennyson alludes to Mary Magdalene in Vivien’s actions, and reinforces the harlotry aspect by having both the bardic narrator and Merlin call her a "harlot." Vivien differs dramatically, however, from both

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9 Brownrigg notes, "The tradition of the Church has from early times identified Mary of Magdala with the woman living an immoral life in the city. Rightly or wrongly, Mary has become for all Christians the type of passionate penitent" (299). Although church tradition associates Mary of Magdala with the sinful woman who comes to the home of Simon the Pharisee, the link is not certain. She is named specifically only in scenes at the tomb and the sighting of the risen Christ.

The nineteenth-century use of the term "Magdalene" to refer to a fallen woman testifies to the potency of the
the Biblical Magdalene and the sort of Magdalene hoped for in the Magdalene Houses. She does not suffer because of her harlotry, and she never repents. Rather, by means of imagery, Tennyson associate his Vivien with the biblical pre-repentant Mary Magdalene. In Luke, Jesus agrees to eat at the home of a Pharisee:

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. (Luke 7:37-8)

Mary Magdalene is usually portrayed with her hair hanging to her knees.\(^{10}\) In an echo of Mary Magdalene, Vivien washes the "blossom dust" from Merlin's feet. In a dark parody of Magdalene's repentant actions, Tennyson writes of Vivien: "There lay she all her length and kissed his feet," saying "Trample me, / Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the world, / And I will pay you worship" ("Merlin and Vivien" 217; 224-6).\(^{11}\) Vivien weeps again shortly before the final tradition. See Comay and Brownrigg, eds. *Who's Who in the Bible.*

\(^{10}\) *Who's Who in the Bible* 300.

\(^{11}\) Critics have often noted the Christ-like aspects of Arthur. Here, however, Vivien treats Merlin as a Christ figure whom she is ready to worship.
seduction of the flattered Merlin: "the snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid / Slipped and uncoiled itself, she wept afresh" ("Merlin and Vivien" 886-7). In addition, one of Tennyson’s most sexually explicit passages recalls the Biblical passage in which a repentant prostitute at the town’s well gives Christ a cup of water:

But yesterday you never open’d lip,
Except indeed to drink: no cup had we:
In mine own lady palms I cull’d the spring
That gather’d trickling dropwise from the cleft,
And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer’d you it kneeling.

("Merlin and Vivien" 270-74)\textsuperscript{12}

Despite the depiction of Vivien as harlot and unrepentant Magdalene, Tennyson also makes of her a potential hero. Nowhere else in Malory or in Tennyson is there such an elemental struggle for power between man and woman as that between Merlin and Vivien.\textsuperscript{13} Enid timidly begins to assert herself in the first idyll, but is able to

\textsuperscript{12} Tennyson’s sexually charged use of "cup" here looks ahead to "The Holy Grail," in which the Grail is described in highly sexual terms.

\textsuperscript{13} It could be argued that such a struggle exists in the relation between Arthur and his sister, Morgan le Fay, in Malory. But Tennyson wanted to remove any suggestion of the incest that produced Modred as Morgan’s son in Malory, and he also eliminated the sort of magic that allowed Morgan literally to change shapes in Malory. As a result Tennyson eliminates Arthur’s sister completely from the text except for Arthur’s reference to Modred as "my sister’s son, no kin of mine."
do so only when outside the stifling enclosure of childhood home and husband's manor. The 1859 Vivien acts self-reliantly, completely outside the strictures of family and community. Tennyson purposely invokes parallels between his 1859 Vivien and his epic hero, Arthur, so that the early Vivien evinces qualities usually associated with a mythical male hero. By so doing, Tennyson complicates the negative effects produced by the snake and Magdalene imagery.

Tennyson was familiar with the concept of heroes, both from his classical studies and from his contemporary reading. In his introduction to In Quest of the Hero, Robert A. Segal notes that "The study of hero myths goes back at least to 1871, when the English anthropologist Edward Tylor argued that many of them follow a uniform plot, or pattern" (vii). Tennyson owned both volumes of Tylor's Primitive Culture and was an avid reader both of anthropology and comparative religion.¹⁴ Tennyson's personal friend Max Müller wrote and lectured extensively on anthropology and religion; Tennyson also had several of his books, dated 1861 to 1892, in his personal library. Because Tennyson was well versed in folklore and mythology, as well as in history, it is a reasonable assumption that he knew well the characteristics of a mythical hero, or a mythical one based

¹⁴ Tennyson owned the first edition, published by Murray in 1871, but the only one now readily available is the fifth. The book's republication forty-two years after it originally appeared attests to its continuing value.
on an historical hero. Tylor, sensitive to the issue of the relation of myth to history, states that "some wild legends undoubtedly . . . contain a kernel of historic truth" (280). It is just such a blend of history and myth that Tennyson exploits so well in his depictions of Vivien and Arthur. Although Vivien is not "historical" in the sense that readers consider Arthur and Guinevere, or even Lancelot or Tristram, Tennyson purposely gives her some attributes of archetypal male heroes. Segal calls Tylor the first of those to study the hero in myth and reprints works of four other noted theorists, including Lord Raglan, whose approach most nearly accords with that of Tylor and with those aspects of heroic myth that Tennyson incorporates

15 Tylor studies primitive cultures in order to find patterns, using mythology "as a means of tracing the history of laws of mind" (1: 275). Mythology begins in the most primitive of cultures and then changes form as civilizations become less primitive: "the child is father of the man" (1: 282). A primitive belief in animism may eventually show itself in personification, for example, an evolution that was undoubtedly of interest to Tennyson, a poet profoundly sensitive to change (1: 285). Tylor's approach is not a scientific justification of Spencerian positivism, however, but is a study in how the past is the key to the present, just as the present is the key to the past. The same sort of approach infuses the scientific search for patterns in geology, in which there is no teleological aim whatsoever. It is readily apparent why Tennyson would be interested in Tylor's ground-breaking work.

16 Critics are often uneasy with Tennyson's uneven presentation of Arthur, both an Arthurian hero and a Christ figure, for example. I suggest that Tennyson purposely makes Arthur an enigmatic blend of Celtic and Arthurian mythic hero, historical king, and Christ figure, as I discuss in the Epilogue.
Raglan lists twenty-two aspects of the hero and says that Arthur fits nineteen of them. Vivien fits several of the first eleven:

(1) The hero’s mother is a royal virgin;
(2) His father is a king, and
(3) often a near relative of his mother, but
(4) The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
(5) He is also reputed to be the son of a god.
(6) At birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him, but
(7) He is spirited away, and
(8) Reared by foster-parents in a far country.
(9) We are told nothing of his childhood, but
(10) On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.
(11) After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast,
(12) He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
(13) Becomes a king.

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17 Segal, vii. Lord Raglan, born 1885, published The Hero (London: Methuen) in 1936. The portion included in Segal’s compilation is the center section, which discusses myth. According to Segal, The Hero was reprinted by Vantage Books in 1956 and is the copy he cites. Tennyson could not have known Raglan’s work, but Raglan draws on sources, such as Tylor, with which Tennyson was familiar.
(14) For a time he reigns uneventfully, and
(15) Prescribes laws, but
(16) Later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, and
(17) Is driven from the throne and city, after which
(18) He meets with a mysterious death,
(19) Often at the top of a hill.
(20) His children, if any, do not succeed him.
(21) His body is not buried, but nevertheless
(22) He has one or more holy sepulchres.

(Segal 138)

Although it can readily be seen how well Arthur fits the pattern, what is crucial to note is the way in which Tennyson establishes Vivien as a mythical hero so that she has potential for far-reaching action in the world beyond the usual domestic, female space.

Vivien matches several of Raglan’s first eleven criteria and then disappears into the world, her future potent but unknown to the reader. In 1857-59, in contrast with Enid, who is given both mother and father as well as a detailed background, Vivien simply is at court, a woman of mysterious background. We are told nothing of Vivien’s childhood, but when she reaches adulthood, she goes to Arthur’s court and then to the wild woods of Broceliande, where she defeats a mighty adversary and escapes with his
power. Her victory is so total that as she leaves the stricken Merlin, all of nature accedes to her victory, with the woods echoing her cry, "Fool!" Then, by means of Tennyson's masterful addition of Merlin's story recounting the charm's history, Vivien also in a sense becomes king. It was, after all, a king who had earlier used the ancient charm to imprison his wife who, like Enid, "Waged such unwilling tho' successful war / On all the youth, they sicken'd; councils thinn'd, / And armies waned" ("Merlin and Vivien" 568-70). Once Vivien possesses the charm and has imprisoned Merlin, she takes the place of the king. Because she has defeated Merlin, she assumes his "glory," glory presumably made up of "use, and name, and fame." She is poised on the edge of step twelve of Raglan's scheme.

Vivien is in a sense sown upon the wind at idyll's end as well, disappearing as she does into the wilds of the world. What she will do with the new power that she has wrested from male control, what sort of "glory" she will attain, is unanswered. Tennyson suggests, however, that unlike Enid, Vivien will use her newly gained power solely for self. Tennyson's Vivien would resonate to Victorians fearing the results of women's changing roles, demands for education, and growing assertiveness. Tennyson makes Vivien

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18 Since Tennyson is here enigmatic as usual, it is also possible that nature is telling Vivien that she is a "fool" for usurping Merlin's rightful dominion. In neither interpretation could she be considered trivial, however.
supremely self-referential in 1859. She is also, except for her moments of genuine anger and fear, self-disciplined and without passion for anything except her carefully planned seduction of Merlin. She is frightening--and dangerous--because she combines will and self-control, two Victorian ideals, but used in the service of self rather than of others. The motive Tennyson gives her in 1857-59, that she was observed in her unsuccessful attempt to seduce "the blameless King" and as a result was the object "of the laughter of an afternoon," seems insufficient to explain more than the attempted seduction of "the most famous man of all those times." Her repeated attempts to learn the charm attest to a much greater need than simple revenge, a need to seize from Merlin the control that men had used for centuries to control women.

In the preceding idyll, Enid breaks free from Geraint's unreasonable control. Vivien, Enid's extension, breaks the chain of transmission of knowledge from one man to the next. Women's new freedom will create frightening situations, Tennyson suggests, but such change will occur, with consequences as yet unknown. In this early idyll, Tennyson finds selfish individualism driving the potentially heroic Vivien. In later idylls, especially "The Holy Grail" and "The Last Tournament," he finds similarly destructive male responses.
Changes from the 1857 Trial Edition to the Idylls of 1859

Many of the changes Tennyson makes in his 1859 edition strengthen the snake and Magdalene associations that constitute the major imagery associated with Vivien. Although Tennyson makes Vivien represent the emerging strength of the nineteenth-century woman, part of that woman is also Lamia’s descendant, an image Tennyson elaborates in 1859. Three important changes in the 1859 edition develop the snake imagery, the first in the two following added lines:

She play’d about with slight and sprightly talk;
And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom’d points
Of slander, glancing here and gazing there;
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the Seer
Would watch her at her petulance . . .

("Merlin and Vivien" 169-173)

"Faintly-venom’d points / Of slander" serves a double purpose, linking Vivien herself with a poisonous snake and underscoring the deadly potential of slander, another of Tennyson’s key themes in the Idylls and one that he will highlight in later editions.\(^\text{19}\) The suggestion of poisonous

\[\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\text{ A fable cited by Wylen in his study of gossip (1) underscores Tennyson’s association of Vivien with a snake: A fable. All the animals that prey upon humankind gathered in the forest to elect a ruler. The wolf stood up first to announce his candidacy. ‘Vote for me,’ said the wolf, ‘for with my powerful jaws I can rip a person to shreds in no time!’}\]
slander adds new dimensions\textsuperscript{20} to the explicit association of Vivien with a snake in the 1857 description at the start of the seduction scene in Broceliade:

And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him, slid up his knee and sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake . . .

("Merlin and Vivien" 236-40)

Tennyson adds in 1859, in conjunction with a description of Vivien’s loosened hair, a further snake reference:

She paused, \textit{she turn’d away}, she hung her head,
The \textit{snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid}
\textit{Slipt and uncoil’d itself}, she wept afresh,
And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm
In silence . . . ("Merlin and Vivien" 885-9)

\textsuperscript{20} See Adams for a discussion of Tennyson’s sensitivity to nineteenth-century slander.
The snake of gold and the suggestively loosened hair suggest how Vivien's wiliness and open sexuality engender the coming storm of Merlin's passion.

By a simple change in 1859 Tennyson adds a note of psychological realism to make Vivien a more convincing seductress. In 1857, Vivien teases Merlin by saying, "You cage a pretty captive here and there," an adjective that in 1859 becomes the more erotic "buxom captive" (540). The new word evidences Vivien's ability subtly to flatter the aged Merlin by assuming erotic activity on his part. The line also breaks Merlin's resistant mood by making him laugh.

Rather than being maladroit at characterization, as Gerhard Joseph claims, Tennyson has succeeded exactly in catching the nuances of a young girl skilled at pretense—being by turns kittenish, sexy, saucy, petulant, weepy, and mock angry when necessary to evoke the desired masculine responses. Although Merlin only "half-believed her true," his partial belief is enough to allow her stratagems to continue.

Two other changes in the 1859 edition underscore Merlin's vulnerability to Vivien's strategies. What in 1857 is his response to "the seeming-guileless simple-hearted thing" becomes the "seeming-injured simple-hearted thing." The change makes Merlin a bit less cognisant of Vivien's wily ways. Then, when Vivien is genuinely frightened by the bolt of lightning, Merlin in 1857 puts his arm "Around her
waist in pity, not in love." When that becomes in 1859
"About her, more in kindness than in love" (905), the phrase
allows for some love as well as kindness. The change not
only allies this Merlin with the besotted Merlin of Malory,
but makes his reaction more complex than it had previously
been. His capitulation ironically now results from a moment
of the highly prized Victorian fellow feeling.

A key addition in 1859 makes Merlin’s capitulation
psychologically convincing. In an extension of the
additional lines about the snake of gold slipping from
Vivien’s hair, Tennyson writes:

And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm
In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her true:
Call’d her to shelter in the hollow oak,
‘Come from the storm’ and having no reply,
Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the face
Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or shame;

("Merlin and Vivien" 888-95)

"He let his wisdom go / For ease of heart, and half believed
her true." Tennyson’s psychological insight is acute.
Merlin, overborne by his recognition of Arthur’s losses, the
eager slanders of the court, and the increasingly selfish
individualism he has witnessed, has exiled himself. Merlin,
like many a mid-Victorian fearful of apparent, growing
disorder, is unable to believe that change works to the
good, that even "good custom" can "corrupt the world."

Lust is not the motivator; it is ease of heart that
Merlin craves, a need that Vivien cleverly intensifies by
two tactics in the interchange that follows. After telling
Merlin that her song is one "I heard the great Sir Lancelot
sing," Vivien sings to Merlin of Love: "if Love be ours, /
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers: / Unfaith in
aught is want of faith in all" (385-9). In so singing,
Vivien reminds Merlin of his great grief at the King's
betrayal, but she also succeeds in setting up a bipolar
division between faith and unfaith, true and false, that
allows for no gray areas. If Merlin accepts her song, then
he must unconditionally condemn unfaith.

By her song, Vivien establishes the shape of the
discourse to follow, her examples of court gossip. At first
Merlin disproves each of her slanders spiritedly, if not
convincingly. But when she brings up Sir Lancelot's
"commerce with the Queen," so well known that even children
speak of it, Merlin is defeated. He tries to deflect her
argument, but does not really address it: when Lancelot
"went ambassador, at first, / To fetch her, and she took him
for the King; / So fxt her fancy on him: let him be"
("Merlin and Vivien" 772-5). He does not deny the
adultery, as he had Vivien's other charges, nor does he
speak aloud in Arthur's defense against Vivien's charge:
"Him? is he man at all, who knows and winks? / Sees what his fair bride is and does, and winks?" Rather:

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing, said:
'O true and tender! O my liege and king!
O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who would'st against thine own eye-witness fain
Have all men true and leal, all women pure;

("Merlin and Vivien" 788-92)

Here, Merlin, too, accuses Arthur of seeing yet saying nothing, but finds Arthur himself blameless, so that he is now in the position of having defended both Guinevere and Arthur. In his dilemma Merlin expresses Tennyson's own ambivalence. Vivien, observing Merlin's destitution, knows that he is "overborne," knows that she has defeated him. Tennyson has caught exactly the vulnerability of even the wisest old man, who has seen the dreams of his youth disappear, his powers wane, his usefulness diminish. His need to be solaced overcomes him, and he yields to yet another psychologically realistic need: that of an old man hoping to feel young again. When Vivien

clung to him and hugg'd him close;
And call'd him dear protector in her fright,
Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd him close.
The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
Took gayer colours, like an opal warm'd.

("Merlin and Vivien" 943-8)

Tennyson's control of the reader in these lines parallels Vivien's control of Merlin. The repetition of "hugg'd him close" and "fright" enacts the repeated assaults on Merlin's wisdom. The changes rung on the 'u' and 'o' sounds of "But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd him close" suggest the variety of tactics Vivien uses during the course of the idyll. Vivien, pretending anger that Merlin had put his arm around her, has just declared that she must leave: "Farewell; think gently of me, for I fear / My fate or folly, passing gayer youth, / For one so old, must be to love thee still" (925-7). The visually perfect image of an opal, warmed by human touch and emitting the palest sparks of fire contrasts with the sparkling clarity of the diamonds and the blood-red rubies in "Guinevere." Vivien's lie, "to love thee still" will echo around Arthur's words in "Guinevere," both as contrast and as undercutting Arthur's veracity as well.

In 1859, then, Tennyson's focus is mainly on Vivien's battle for power. Vivien, a potential female hero, defeats Merlin and gains knowledge by telling him the unsavory truth about actual court life, truth that he had already recognized but from which "great melancholy" he had fled. Yet Tennyson leaves us with the unsettling picture of a Merlin who has lost everything--use, name, and fame--because
of her successful seizure of knowledge and its resultant power. There is much both to admire and fear in this newly empowered woman.

In the Epilogue I suggest ways in which major additions to "Vivien" in 1869 and 1885 radically change the way in which the idyll can be read.
CHAPTER THREE. "ELAINE": WILLFULNESS, SEXUAL EXCESS, AND INSANITY

"Being so very wilful you must die."
"I am mad. I love you: let me die."

The 1859 idyll "Elaine" looks at the consequences of individual action just as "Enid" and "Vivien" do, but in the character Elaine Tennyson examines the vexed and intertwined issues of passion and excess, willfulness and will, especially as they apply to women. For many mid-Victorians excessive passion meant dangerous loss of self control for either men or women; for woman as moral center of the home, self control was especially crucial. Exertion of one's will was essential because crossing the line into willfulness could mean selfishness rather than the desirable goal of concern for others. Indeed, in the growing science of psychology, some nineteenth-century practitioners believed that madness not only resulted from a loss of self-control but also could be cured if sufficient self control were exerted. Passion that led to madness was especially feared in women, who were deemed more vulnerable to sexual excess than were men.¹

¹ See especially Showalter 1-144. Showalter notes, "Even when both men and women had similar symptoms of mental disorder, psychiatry differentiated between an English malady, associated with the intellectual and economic pressures on highly civilized men, and a female malady,
Tennyson's portrayal of Elaine is often read as that of the idealized mid-Victorian female, a woman both pure and passionate, a young woman whose love—literally faithful to the death—contrasts with Guinevere's shameful passion and broken marriage vows. Such a reading is defensible, but incomplete. I suggest that Tennyson complicates Elaine, just as he does his Enid, by adding a dark side to her admirable qualities. By her idyll's end, the patient, subservient Enid has become dangerously assertive and has gained psychological control of her husband. By the end of "Elaine," the lily maid's pure and faithful love is darkened by the madness of monomania, and her girlish willfulness has become unbending control of those around her.\(^2\)

In contemporary reviews of the 1859 Idylls, reactions toward the character of Elaine were favorable, though most reviewers said more about Guinevere, Vivien, or even Enid than about Elaine. Writing in the October 1859 Westminster Review, for example, John Nicol said that

associated with the sexuality and essential nature of women" (7).

\(^2\) The works of the French physician, J.E.D. Esquirol, were widely available in mid-century England; James Prichard further popularized his theories. Esquirol believed that women were especially likely to lose self control and to become insane. Elaine's unimpaired ability to plan and to act despite her monomania is explained in Prichard's definition of monomania "as a form of Intellectual Insanity 'in which the understanding is partially disordered or under the influence of some particular illusion . . . while the intellectual powers appear, when exercised on other subjects, to be in a great measure unimpaired'" (Shuttleworth 51).
Elaine has no more resemblance to the mystic and metaphysical Lady of Shalott than she has to Vivien or Guinevere. Judged not by the code of modern times, or the manners of a formed society, but as a child of nature in an age which has been invested by the imagination with many of the features of childhood, the lily maid is one of the sweetest of all ideal creations (513).

If Nicol saw Elaine as idealized but not of the nineteenth century, other critics speak of the genuineness of humanity portrayed in the poems. A reviewer in the Constitutional Press, one of several reviewers who refer to the connection between "Elaine" and "The Lady of Shalott," writes that "Elaine is the old legend of The Lady of Shalott—the lady who fruitlessly loved Lancelot—divested of all magic, and filled with the rich life of humanity" (399). 3

Other reviews of "Elaine" make direct comment on the idyll's moral tone. J. M. Ludlow, in a review titled "Moral Aspects of Mr. Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King,'" points out how Tennyson has in many instances improved the moral tone of his source:

The story of Elaine in Mallory, touching as it remains after all, is clouded by suspicious analogies with the earlier and much less pleasant

3 This unsigned review is not cited in Andrew's Annotated Bibliography, but a copy is in the archives of the Tennyson Research Centre in Lincoln, England, catalog number 4462.
tale of an Elaine who became, by a deception certainly far less offensive than that of Uther Pendragon, since it involved only the sacrifice of her own honour, the mother of Galahad (Pt. III. c. ii.). The latter story in itself is rendered offensive at one of its most pathetic moments by the abrupt proposal of the lady that Lancelot shall take her for his mistress (c. cxxiii.), if he will not for his wife. Compare with this the delicacy of the passage in the Idyll:—

"'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you through the world.'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay; the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blaze its own interpretation'"—
in which all the possible consequences of the girlish folly of her proposal are so tenderly
pointed out as mere hypothetical calumnies
(68-9).

Because Ludlow's publisher, Macmillan, was a personal friend of the Tennysons, it is not surprising that the review is favorable, but it is also significant that nineteenth-century moral values are brought to bear on this work in medieval dress.

Only one critic says anything negative about Elaine's actions. This critical voice, that of Coventry Patmore, is very much that of a conservative mid-Victorian gentleman who fears the rising assertiveness of women and who therefore defends the traditional hierarchy:

But the love of Elaine for Lancelot is too much mixed up with the marvellous and improbable in incident to be effective as human passion,--not to say that it takes the least attractive form of love in woman, namely, that in which she becomes the suitor. Not all the skill and delicacy of Mr. Tennyson's language, nor all the 'extenuating circumstances' brought to bear, are sufficient to

4 Gladstone makes a similar comment in his article in The Quarterly Review, writing "The most important alteration which the poet has made is in the form of the request which the maiden proffers to Sir Lancelot, when she learns that she cannot be his wife; and he has made it with excellent taste and sense. But while he has preserved its general form, he has broadened and deepened its features, and lengthened those avenues which it opens into the destinies and heart of man" (473).
render this inversion of right order altogether pleasing (258). 5

If critics in 1859 were not greatly upset by Tennyson's rendition of Elaine's unseemly proposal of marriage or her willingness to follow Lancelot without benefit of marriage, it is because they focussed on the pathetic tale of unrequited love. No one comments, for example, on Tennyson's delicate addition to Malory so that Victorian readers could think that Elaine never spent the night in the same room with Lancelot:

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
And past beneath the wildly-sculptured gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin;
There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and past
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave: so day by day she past
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night:

...............................
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her;  "Lancelot and Elaine" 837-856

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5 Andrew cites the same review of the same date but gives the pages as 125-133. The copy in the Tennyson Research Centre is numbered 247-263, catalog number 4520.
Neither has any critic, either in the nineteenth century or more recently, noted the carefully enigmatic touches in the cited passage. Certainly, Elaine observes the decencies by sleeping each night at the home of her kin in the city. But Elaine not only nurses Lancelot "every day," but also "many a night." And why the strange association of Elaine with Eve and "man's first fall" in conjunction with "And never woman yet . . . Did kindlier unto man"? These low-key inclusions suggest Elaine's potential not only for breaking society's rules of conduct, but also for being a Vivien-like seductress. Enigmatic, too, is the continuation of that same passage, in which

the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,
Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best
Closest and sweetest. (845-865)

If Lancelot held Elaine tenderly, foregoing only sexual intercourse, he gave the young girl false messages, indeed.

As I note in the Introduction, those critics who have analyzed the 1859 Idylls as a separate publication from Idylls as a whole have tended to simplify the four central female figures, even while noting that these early idylls center on women. Clyde de L. Ryals, for example, says that
the "contemporary reading public doubtless" valued the "contrast between the true maiden (Elaine) and the true wife (Enid) on the one hand, and the harlot (Vivien) and the faithless wife (Guinevere) on the other" (40). Gerhard Joseph asserts that

The ultimate feeling one gets in ruminating among Ygerne, Bellicent, Guinevere, Lynette, Enid, Vivien, Elaine, Galahad's nun, Etтарre, and Isolt is that they are less individual characters than juxtaposed aspects of a single morally variegated female principle (Tennyson and the Text 185).

Certainly Tennyson, especially in the four early Idylls, investigates aspects of the larger "woman question," but within the context of nineteenth-century concerns rather than as an "essential female principle." In "Elaine," as in the other three early idylls, Tennyson puts emphasis on female choices and their consequences. As Rosenberg notes,

Even of this simplest of the poem's thematic antitheses--white as purity, red as passion--we cannot say 'this means that.' The lily maid of Astolat, white in purity, is at first glance a personification of Virgin Innocence; but her dreams are insistently sexual and the sleeve she gives Lancelot is scarlet, for her purity... is profoundly passionate. ... [She is] both pure and passionate, sexual and innocent, embodying the
same intense conjunction of contrary elements that
draws her instantly—and fatally—to Lancelot (24–5).

Rosenberg is right when he says that Elaine is both pure and
passionate, sexual and innocent. I would like to take
Rosenberg's observation a step further by looking at the
ramifications of two small but key additions that Tennyson
makes to his source in Malory, additions that make of Elaine
a victim of a nineteenth-century malady, not an example of a
"female principle."

Although Tennyson stays close to the basic tale in
Malory, he adds two crucial words, "wilful" and "mad" to
"Elaine," thereby bringing the centuries-old Romance into

6 Rosenberg suggests that Tennyson uses the color red
to link spiritual passion with sexual passion, pointing out
that "as 'The Holy Grail' makes clear, spiritual values can
drive men as mad as sexual obsession. Tennyson suggests a
possible connection between the two: the color red, which
throughout the Idylls symbolizes sexuality, is also
associated with the Grail itself, first seen as 'rose-red'
by a nun in a condition of erotic ecstasy, then as 'blood-
red' by Galahad—as is fitting for the vessel that bore
Christ's blood" (25). Certainly it is no accident that it
is in "the bloodred light of dawn" that Elaine sings her
increasingly shrill and sexually passionate desire for
death, ending with "Let me die!"

Rosenberg does not note, however, that in "Elaine," it
is Arthur who is robed in "red samite," a pleasingly
ambiguous comment on Guinevere's earlier assertion in that
idyll that Arthur is "That passionate perfection" who lacks
"the colour" that comes from the "low sun." Does Arthur
really lack sexual passion? He will state in "Guinevere"
that "My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life / So
far, that my doom is, I love thee still." Real agony
surfaces in his "I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
/ But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's." But the
reader has only Guinevere's word against Arthur's; no
authorial comment settles the matter.
nineteenth-century England. It is true that the pearl-embroidered red sleeve symbolizes the purity that overlays and enhances the passionate substance. But just as Tennyson makes Enid both the ideally obedient and yet dangerously assertive wife, he gives us an Elaine whose seemingly admirable blend of purity and passion breaks society's boundaries. I suggest that Elaine represents not only the ideal young woman and potentially ideal wife, but also the disastrous results of willfulness and unmastered passion. Desirable exercise of self-control crosses the boundary into willfulness; unmastered passion moves into the excess that many mid-Victorians would categorize as a kind of madness. When Elaine says of herself, "Being so very wilful you must die," she recognizes the danger. When she says to Lancelot, "I have gone mad. I love you: let me die," she sees in herself what many a mid-Victorian feared, the excess that leads to madness and even death. Elaine, obsessed with her fruitless passion, wills her own death, rigidly controlling the process and all those around her as she orchestrates her Romantically memorable death.

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7 Because Tennyson tinkered so little with the text of Elaine once it was published in 1859, his additions to source are a more fruitful focus than are the changes to his own work.
"Being So Very Wilful You Must Die"

Just as mid-Victorians could construe the concept of passion either negatively or positively, so were they ambivalent about the ramifications of will and self-control, especially as related to passion. Martin Wiener defines this crux:

Civilization was coming to be seen in terms of the new character ideal--that of the self-distancing individual capable of disciplining his impulses and planning his life--taking shape across the spectrum of social action and policy as a liberal solution to an apparently rising tide of passion and willfulness (47).

With the weakening of church authority, growing philosophical difficulty in ascertaining truth, and a rapidly changing social and political context, individuals were expected to take more responsibility for their own character and actions. And this both because of and in spite of "an apparently rising tide of passion and willfulness." It is within this context of passion, willfulness, and self control that I wish to examine Tennyson's version of Elaine. By adding "wilful" as the key descriptive word of Elaine's character, Tennyson sites Elaine squarely within this Victorian ideological tangle of will / willfulness and passion / excess. She is no longer simply Malory's pathetic medieval maiden who dies of
misplaced and unrequited love. Tennyson manages to retain the pathos while at the same time depicting an Elaine who now also dramatizes issues important to Victorians. As will be discussed later, Tennyson's second key addition to Malory, that of the word "mad," brings into play another Victorian fear: that excessive passion could result in a form of insanity. The fear of insanity was widespread; the fear of passion-induced insanity was particularly worrisome because of the simultaneous fears concerning the "rising tide of passion and willfulness." Indeed, a suggestion of the cause of the insanity inheres in the cure; many psychologists believed that insanity could be prevented or controlled by will power on the part of the afflicted. For the mid-Victorian, proper exercise of the will, especially in the realm of self control, was crucial.

John R. Reed provides valuable access to Victorian views of will: "free will (as opposed to determinism), volition (as the power to initiate action), and strength of will (as a character trait revealed in assertion and self-control)" (ix). Reed notes that before the Romantic movement, free will had been defined within a religious context that argues for "submission to the will of God" (xiv), so that "the correct application of man's free will was to make it accord with God's" (6). The Romantics, however, tended to secularize the will or at least to put it into heroic opposition to the gods or circumstances. But
because the Victorians tended to distrust the self-centered aspects of the solitary hero, self-centered heroism segued into a new view. Although individual action remained both possible and admirable, self-control for the good of others became the goal. Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4) illustrates the shift in his chapter "The Everlasting Yea": "For the God-given mandate, Work thou in Welldoing, lies mysteriously written, in Promethean Prophetic Characters, in our hearts" (138). The hero becomes not Manfred, but Prometheus, who, heroically defying the gods, works for good of mankind, not self. Carlyle's narrator advises the reader: "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe. . . . the Self in thee needed to be annihilated" (145). As Reed suggests, "The movement from Romantic to Victorian years is a movement . . . from aggressive heroism, or what might be called the imperial will, to controlled heroism, or the reflective will. . . . A central image of the right application of the will for mid-Victorians was Florence Nightingale, to them a model of self-renunciation in the service of a great cause"
(9). In his switch from Byron to Goethe, Carlyle does not, however, eliminate God in the move to self-control: "The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's!" (142).

Despite increasing secularization, many Victorians continued to emphasize the will of God in relation to human will, although other Victorians' interest in Romantic individualism shifted into the secular realm. The ongoing debates concerning the collision between science and religion attest to the energetic dialogue. Whether people tended to think of self and will within religious or secular

10 What makes Tennyson's Enid and Elaine interesting is their apparent exemplification of total self-renunciation while at the same time becoming dangerously assertive. Florence Nightingale, too, evinced a different reality behind the idealized self-sacrificing nurse. She tyrannized those who worked to advance her causes and did not hesitate to demean those with whom she disagreed or who, like Sidney Herbert, did not accomplish her wishes. See Strachey, Eminent Victorians.

11 Tennyson's King Arthur might be said to exemplify the transition from Romantic to Victorian hero, a mixture of heroic lack of control on the battlefield and calculated self-control at home. In Lancelot's description of the battle on Baden Hill, Arthur stood "High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume / Red as the rising sun with heathen blood," yet "mild he seems at home, nor cares / For triumph in our mimic wars."

12 See, for example, Helmstadter and Lightman, eds. Victorian Faith in Crisis. See also chapter two of Gilmour's The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890. For a detailed study of The Metaphysical Society, founded in 1869 specifically to debate the conflicting claims of religion and science, see Brown's The Metaphysical Society. Tennyson, a founding member of the Society, remained interested in the issues, though he attended few meetings.
contexts, however, "Most Victorian writers assume the necessity for the submission of the self to some higher principle, whether God, law, or the State," suggests Reed (xiv). What Tennyson illustrates in *Idylls* as a whole is the breakdown of that submission, not in the interest of Romantic heroism, but of individual self-interest. In "Elaine" Tennyson explores in nineteenth-century terms the self-controlled and carefully orchestrated death of a young woman not constrained by religion, family, or the State. Elaine, willful, passionate, and in a sense mad, is not the passive victim of determinism, but, like a fledgling Nightingale, exerts what power she has.

In discussion with Lancelot about the upcoming diamond tourney, the Lord of Astolat's first words about his daughter, Elaine, include the crucial word, "wilful." In jest, he says that his son Lavaine will win the diamond "and bring it in an hour / And set it in this damsel's golden hair, / To make her thrice as wilful as before." Even in this context of humorous male exchange, "wilful" is a strange choice to describe the effect of owning a rare jewel; "wilful" seems to refer neither to free will nor to volition, but rather to a pleasaureably innocent and childish tyranny over the males in the household. The effect of the father's remark, however, is that of the double-edged loving banter that the powerful sometimes use to denigrate the
powerless. Elaine is powerless to deflect the unflattering remark made to characterize her to the handsome stranger.

The word "wilful" reappears when Elaine asks her father's permission to find and nurse the wounded Lancelot:

'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'

(745-5)

In these three lines Tennyson suggests how in a young woman's mind may be linked the nuanced connections among will, wilfulness, and possible insanity. Elaine believes she is willful because her father has been too indulgent, but she also suggests that unless he allows her to continue her willfulness, she may go mad. The syntax suggests that he may allow her to go mad. The underlying suggestion is that Elaine recognizes her passion to be capable of driving her mad unless she takes action so that she is not the inevitable victim of unrequited love. Death as a result of unrequited love is, of course, the death that takes Malory's Elaine. There is no suggestion in Malory that Elaine loses her wits, but only that she dies because Lancelot does not

13 There is a strong suggestion in this idyll, as in many nineteenth-century novels, that the absence of a mother contributes to a young girl's ill-disciplined decisions, thereby setting the context for her possible self-willed downfall. According to Elaine's father, the family has consisted of only the father and three children for at least ten years. See, for example, *Emma, Middlemarch, Vanity Fair*, and *Jane Eyre*. 
love her. Tennyson, however, rings some psychological changes on that pathetic death.

"Wilful" recurs in the final line of the permission-seeking scene in a masterful dramatic monologue that provides the next link in the chain of sexual passion, willfulness, madness, and death, when Elaine's father says:

'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit you well, my child,
Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it--
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a Queen's--
Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go.' (766-72)

What remains unspoken in this brief dramatic monologue is Astolat's realization that his daughter loves Lancelot, a finding followed by his belief that her love is hopeless. He is "sure" that "this fruit is hung too high" for her to reach. Whether growing up in an all-male household would have alerted Elaine to her father's coarse double entendre is uncertain. But certain it is that what is unspoken during the dash between "a Queen's" and "'Nay, I mean nothing'" refers to some flash of understanding and resultant facial expression on Elaine's part, an expression fierce enough to make her father change the subject and abruptly give permission. Elaine had earlier broken off
conversation with Gawain as soon as it touched on Lancelot's unsavory reputation:

'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'you love him well,
But would not knew you what all others know,
And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and moved away.  
(675-8)

Her father's repetition of "wilful" immediately following his echoing of Gawain's insinuations works its psychological damage:

And while she made her ready for her ride,
Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,
'Being so very wilful you must go,'
And changed itself and echoed in her heart,
'Being so very wilful you must die.' (774-8)

Just as Elaine is both pure and passionate, she knows the truth about Lancelot and willfully lives in fantasy. Numerous critics have cited the relationship between the Lady of Shalott and Elaine, both artists, both risking all for the sake of love. But the big difference, I suggest, is in the nuances of the actions. The Lady of Shalott's decision is abrupt, yet made in full consciousness of the "curse" that will destroy her. Replacing the crushing determinism of "the curse is come upon me," Tennyson gives the 1859 Elaine free choice, which she exercises in willful
defiance of those who try to impose their interpretations of reality upon her, finally choosing to die. The significance of Lancelot's acceptance of Elaine's red sleeve vies with evidence of his attachment to Guinevere, for example, but Elaine indulges in romantic fantasy. Tennyson gives us a much more complicated Elaine than the one found in Malory or in "The Lady of Shalott"; the Elaine in Idylls enacts the Victorian virtue of self-reliance but within the dangerously rising tide of passion and willfulness. She makes choices that ignore important evidence, details that Tennyson adds to Malory.

For example, Tennyson, in a reference to the nineteenth-century belief in the revealing characteristics of an individual's physiognomy, has Elaine believe that

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14 Malory's Elaine is even more inopportune than Tennyson's when she wishes to find the injured Lancelot, saying to her father: "I require you give me leave to ride and to seek him, or else I wot well I shall go out of my mind." But in Malory there are no dramatic moments in which Gawaine and her father suggest Lancelot's love for Guinevere (Walker and Edwards 2: 362).

15 The study of physiognomy was based on the same sort of physicalist approach used by those early psychologists, such as Gall and Spurzheim, who sought to make a science of phrenology. Phrenology, though largely discredited as a science by mid-century, remained popular with lay practitioners, and did stimulate the later scientific study of the brain's functions, according to Arieno 63-5.

Both phrenology and physiognomy deal with the free will/determinism issue, so that in an attempt to explain insanity or criminal behavior, the evidence of either phrenology or physiognomy could be used in service of scientific determinism. As early as 1824, for example, Alexander Morison includes material on "The Physiognomy of Insanity" in his Outlines of Mental Diseases (Edinburgh: Lachlan & Stewart). Morison states, "The appearance of the face, it is well known, is intimately connected with, and
she can read Lancelot's face during their first encounter. Elaine

... read his lineaments.

The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere his time. (243-6)

And yet, "she lifted up her eyes / And loved him, with that love which was her doom" (258-9). Tennyson does not state that Elaine could read the specific guilt in Lancelot's face, but the conjunction of lines suggests just that. Tennyson then underscores Elaine's belief in her ability to read Lancelot's character in this description of her night's fixation:

And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,\(^{16}\)

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dependent upon, the state of the mind. The repetition of the same ideas and emotions, and the consequent repetition of the same movements of the muscles of the eyes, and of the face, give a peculiar expression" (Cited in Skultans 71).

As Wiener points out, "Physiological psychology touched fundamental issues concerning free will and the nature of moral action" (Reconstructing 165). Tennyson, deeply concerned with the moral aspects of individual choice, confutes deterministic views by first alluding in "Elaine" to the evidence of physiognomy and then demonstrating that it gives only a partial and biased picture.
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest; so the face before her lived,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.

(329-37)

Such readings are fraught with danger, Tennyson suggests, because they cannot tell the whole truth, colored as they are by the observer.¹⁷ Elaine, in Tennyson's acutely accurate portrayal of a besotted young girl, understandably interprets Lancelot's actions in terms of her desires. For example, Elaine is unable to read Lancelot's actual intentions toward her because she sometimes mistakes his manners for "nature," as when she thinks "a sudden-beaming tenderness . . . was nature, all, perchance, for

¹⁶ In addition to demonstrating the intensity of Elaine's intense fixation, the painter simile makes Elaine an artist. The analogy plays with the dichotomy between the knower and the known, the interpretation and the sign. We do know from the text that Elaine's interpretation of Lancelot's face accords with Lancelot's own feelings of guilt that stems from the irreconcilable tension between two goods, love for a woman and love for that woman's husband. But we know of the fact of adultery only from Vivien's interpretive slander and from Merlin's demoralized response to Vivien's venom. Truth is difficult to define in the Idylls.

¹⁷ Tennyson does not seem to believe that truth is simply relative, but he does demonstrate repeatedly in the Idylls that truth is not available to a single respondent and that it is more and more difficult to determine what truth is. One of the reasons for the breakdown of the Round Table and of the society that Idylls dramatizes is the growing reliance on individual perception that takes into account only its own interpretation of such things as the supposed adultery.
her." And although it is true that, as Lancelot believes, his only knightly discourtesy is that of not bidding Elaine farewell, that action is a breach only of manners, important though that breach is in signalling to Elaine the end of the relationship. But ironically, what really precipitates crisis in the idyll is Lancelot's willful acceptance of the red sleeve immediately after reading Elaine's face and recognizing danger in the relationship. Tennyson's addition has no precedent in Malory:

Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's. 18

(352-4)

Elaine is here adding a false gloss to Lancelot's face, as he too well knows, but he is correctly reading hers. 19 It

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18 Elaine is here misreading Lancelot's face at the same time he is successfully reading hers. Shuttleworth suggests that in the Victorian novel, Jane Eyre for example, "power resides with the figure who can unveil the hidden secrets of the other whilst preserving the self unread" (10). Although Tennyson is certainly interested in power struggles between characters, such is not his interest in "Elaine." Instead, he demonstrates a variety of readings, some accurate, some flawed, some merely partial.

19 Later in the idyll, Tennyson develops the theme that Lancelot's face is indeed not that of a God's. Lancelot, talking to Lavaine of King Arthur, echoes the Biblical language of John the Baptist speaking of Christ: "In me there dwells / No greatness, save it be some far-off touch / Of greatness to know well I am not great: / There is the man" (447-50). Lancelot's agony is based in large part on devastatingly accurate self knowledge. Tennyson also includes allusions that link Arthur with Christ.
is almost a critical commonplace to blame the women in Idylls for the downfall of the men, but Lancelot’s great discourtesy proves to be not of manners but of nature. He chooses to feed Elaine’s fantasies with solid evidence by wearing her favor on his helm as he has done for no woman before. Lancelot, in serving his own goals, has purposely swerved away from the truth he so clearly had perceived on Elaine’s face. Malory’s Launcelot makes the same decision, but without any comparable insight into Elaine. Joseph suggests that in the Idylls "the individual man’s fate . . . depends upon the strength of the woman to sustain the erotic devotion . . . that he lavishes upon her as an analogue to God" (Tennyson and the Text 185). In Lancelot’s decision to accept the sleeve, knowing that Elaine is "rapt upon his face," the obverse of Joseph’s observation is true. By a single action Lancelot betrays the faith both of Elaine and of Guinevere. Nowhere else in Idylls does Tennyson

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20 Tennyson characteristically blurs Lancelot’s decision, however. Elaine’s beauty had obviously overwhelmed him in the romantically misty morning light: "He look’d, and more amazed / Than if seven men had set upon him, saw / The maiden standing in the dewy light. / He had not dream’d she was so beautiful" (348-51). The implication is that she had unmanned him in a way seven armed men could not. Then, with logic Elaine convinces Lancelot of the efficacy of wearing the sleeve. Lancelot, then, has been attacked both emotionally and rationally; the combination proves overwhelming.

21 In a nod both toward Victorian morality and simplification of his narrative, Tennyson omits Malory’s second Elaine, the daughter of Pelleas and mother of Launcelot’s son, Galahad. In Malory, this Elaine and Guinevere both vie for Launcelot’s favors, relying on enchantment to lure him to their beds. Galahad is the
demonstrate more clearly that an individual action, freely chosen, has definitive consequences for other humans. Perhaps one cannot choose whether or not to love, but one can choose not to deceive. Or can one?

Relationships, Tennyson is saying, are based not on simple bipolarities, but on complexities that shimmer and mislead like shot-silk played upon with varying light.22

result of one such deception, just as Mordred results from Morgan's enchantment of Arthur. Tennyson's elimination of both relationships makes it possible for both Lancelot and Arthur to be utterly loyal to a single woman.

22 Another example of how Tennyson complicates his renditions of Malory's characters is evident in his portrayal in "Elaine" of Gawain. It is frequently noted that Vivien is blatantly seductive and that she is responsible for much of the gossip and slander that circulate through the court. If "Elaine" is read through the same lens, however, it is apparent that Tennyson is making the same point about Gawain, whose unsuccessful attempt to seduce Elaine is described in much the same language as is Vivien's seduction of Merlin:

And there he set himself to play upon her With sallying wit, free flashes from a height Above her, graces of the court, and songs, Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence And amorous adulation. (642-6)

Compare those lines with the description of Vivien:
The people called him Wizard, whom at first She play'd about with slight and sprightly talk, And vivid smiles, and faintly venom'd points Of slander (168-71).

Geraint, in a parallel but unsuccessful sally, also ends his assault with slander against Lancelot and a double entendre that degrades "courtesies" into court-wide sexual profligacy:

'Yes, by God's death,' said he, 'you love him well, But would not, knew you what all others know,' And whom he loves.'

. . . . . . . .
Would he break faith with one I may not name? Must our true man change like a leaf at last?

. . . . . . . .
Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
Elaine can read Lancelot's character, and cannot. Lancelot is noble, and is not. King Arthur can later say, in typically hopeful fashion, "Let love be free; free love is for the best." Yet Lancelot knows, to his sorrow, that "to be loved makes not to love again."

"I have gone mad. I love you; let me die."

The second crucial word Tennyson adds to his characterization of Elaine, a word missing in Malory's rendition of the tale, is "mad." In describing Elaine's love for Launcelot, Malory twice uses "out of all measure," a phrase that to the medieval mind suggested the excess that puts one out of balance and therefore jeopardizes one's relationship with God.23 Shortly before her death, Malory's

May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,
So you will learn the courtesies of the court,
We two shall know each other' (675-95).

Tennyson withhold Elaine's response, so that this exchange, too, ends with a dramatic monologue to which the reader is witness to Elaine's anguished knowledge of the world beyond Astolat, knowledge that will play into the change from "Being so very wilful you must go" to "Being so very wilful you must die."

23 The heading of the chapter in which Malory describes Elaine's death states: "Of the great Lamentation that the fair Maid of Astolat made when Sir Launcelot should depart, and how she died for his love." When Malory's Maid of Astolat realizes that Launcelot is leaving, she shrieks, swoons, and is carried into her room. There she "made such sorrow day and night, that she never slept, eat, nor drank; and always she made her complaint unto sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured about ten days, that she felt she must needs pass out of this world."

When, after her final confession, the priest chides Elaine for continuing to speak of nothing but Lancelot, Elaine herself uses the term "out of all measure" in reference to her actions:
Elaine asks God for forgiveness and says that "it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight" (Walker and Edwards 2: 373). In Tennyson's "Elaine," however, there is a remarkable absence of religious reference, so that we now read a much more secularized tale of a young woman's willfulness, excessive passion, and resultant madness.

Even the few religious references are secularized. When Lancelot speaks of Arthur as a leader who "honours his own word, / As if it were his God's" and as a fighter filled with the "fire of God," the effect is that of genuine religious belief, even fervor, on Arthur's part. But when Elaine speaks of God's mercy, it is not within the context of her death, but in the poem's opening lines, which describe her sexual fixation and fantasy. Day after day she

'And sith it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the high Father of heaven for to have mercy upon my soul; and that mine innumerable pains which I suffer may be allegiance of part of my sins. For our sweet Saviour, Jesus Christ,' said the maiden, 'I take thee to record, I was never greater offender against thy laws, but that I loved this noble knight, sir Launcelot, out of all measure; and of myself, good Lord! I might not withstand the fervent love, wherefore I have my death.' Launcelot uses the term, too, in defending himself to Arthur and the court after Elaine's letter has been read: 'My lord, king Arthur, wit you well that I am right heavy of the death of this fair damsel. God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my will... but that she was both fair and good; and such was I beholden unto her: but she loved me out of measure' (Walker and Edwards 2: 371-3; 375).
isolates herself within her tower and conjectures about the stories that the unknown knight's shield tells:

And ah God's mercy what a stroke was there!
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy (24-7).

Elaine is here the story teller, writing fiction in which God plays a role. There is no sense of genuine religious conviction on Elaine's part. The lord of Astolat uses God's name only casually: "Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre. / And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough." His words impart no belief in a God who "knows" what is going on among a religious people.

Religious references naturally occur when Lancelot and Lavaine spend the night with a hermit, but the caves the hermit has so prayerfully and laboriously scraped from the limestone are described in sensuous rather than ascetic terms:

And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
And cells and chambers: all were fair and dry;
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
The hermit's spacious quarters are described, in one of Tennyson's loveliest passages, as a visual and aural delight, not a place of ascetic retreat. Next morning, when the caves are bathed in earthly, passionate red, Lancelot and Lavaine "rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away." The doggerel quality of the line suggests rote actions, not spiritual belief.

Although Guinevere speaks of "the mother of our Lord himself" and says, "but now I would to God," the phrases are thin echoes of belief in light of her agonized reference to faith in her comparison of Elaine's youthful beauty with her own:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tell her, she shines me down:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O as much fairer--as a faith once fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was richer than these diamonds-- (1218-22)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Although "faith" may well refer to the "bond" between Lancelot and her, the suggestion of religious faith inheres as the word's most usual denotation. There is, then, a strong implication that the religious faith of the sort that Arthur possesses has now been lost to all but him.24

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24 Much is made of Tennyson's famous comment that the Idylls is about the battle of "soul" with "sense." Guinevere's words about "lost faith" could be construed, therefore, as evidence that she represents sense and Arthur, soul. Such an interpretation ignores the work's complexities, however.
Finally, after having described Elaine's motivation in such thoroughly secular terms, Tennyson ends the idyll with Lancelot's remorseful monologue in which religious language is central. Lancelot speaks of his "sin" and agonizes over trying to break the "bonds that so defame me," yet even here his regret is not that he has offended God, but that he has hurt his fellow knights. He trembles because as the kingdom's "greatest knight" he could "make men worse by making my sin known" or make "sin seem less, the sinner seeming great." Tennyson has managed subtly to transmute the sense of sin as a religious offense into the nineteenth-century secular "sin" of being a contagiously bad example for others. In later idylls, Tennyson will demonstrate that Lancelot's fears are well founded, and that, indeed, the contagion is already widespread at the time of Lancelot's contrition. Though Lancelot will die "a holy man," his personal salvation will save neither infected individuals nor Arthur's kingdom. In a religious sense redeemed by his remorse and agony, in a secular sense Lancelot is damned for the moral and psychological damage he knowingly spawns.

Tennyson's treatment of religion in "Elaine" reflects the nineteenth-century's vexed questioning of religious beliefs, but the secularization of Elaine's motivation also deeply responds to the growing popularity of the science of psychology. The several descriptions of Elaine, both by herself and her family, as "wilful," in concert with her
monomaniacal fixation on Lancelot in spite of any evidence that might weaken it, would have led many a Victorian reader to agree with the self-analysis inherent in "I am mad. I love you: let me die."

From early in the nineteenth century, the new science of psychology included deep interest in both the classification and treatment of the insane. Prior to the rise of scientific interest in biological psychology, which offered the possibility of curing the insane, those deemed insane were often simply left to God to cure or not, as he saw fit (Arieno 62-3). In the early 1800s, Gall and Spurzheim’s work on phrenology spurred further, more scientifically defensible studies of the mind. Vieda Skultans notes that nineteenth-century ideas about insanity stem from the differing views of Hobbes and Locke about its causes (5-7). Hobbes writes in 1651 that "madness is nothing else, but too much appearing passion" and compares madness with the loss of restraint during drunkenness. In contrast, Locke states in 1690, "Madmen do not appear to have lost the faculty of reasoning: but having joined together some ideas very wrongly, they mistake them for truths, and they err as men do that argue right from wrong principle." In the nineteenth century the Hobbesian view tends to appear in the views of the materialists such as James Cowles Prichard, John Charles Bucknill or Henry Maudsley, each of whom writes of the moral insanity caused
by the diseased brain of the criminally insane. Such psychologists tended to look for a physical basis for insanity. Early in the century many phrenologists and physiognomists were drawn to this approach; in the seventies the practitioners tended to look at heredity and environment as deciding factors. Generally, however, these psychologists focused on criminality: in the insane, the moral sense is deadened; loss of will is implied.  

Locke's view of insanity comes into play with those psychologists who write of moral management, predicated on the belief that if a person is insane, the entire person may not be affected. Such psychologists give as an example monomania, which "implies that a person can be mad in one respect only and remain unimpaired in other respects" (Skultans 12). The treatment advocated by those who favored moral management replaced with gentleness and kindness the previous eighteenth-century reliance on physical restraint, domination, punishment, and fear. Writing in 1856, for example, John Conolly condemns the use of restraints and advocates cleanliness, good food, seclusion, padded rooms, and kindness. "In short," he writes, "in an asylum conducted on just principles, and where not only mechanical

25 For a study of the interwoven question of how the criminal was perceived and therefore treated, see Martin Wiener's Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law, and Policy in England, 1830-1914. See especially pages 38-45, "Domesticating the passions: the discourse of character," and chapter 4, "A changing human image," 159-184.
restraints, but all kinds of neglect and severity are abolished, patients of every rank appreciate and benefit by the change."

The goal of such treatment was the leading of the patient back to self-control by means of strengthened will. Such treatment was predicated on the belief that free will was an operative principle and that the conditions of insanity were not deterministic. The insane were, in essence, evincing the excess to which all Victorians were presumably in danger of succumbing. Skultans (9) cites the *Times* of July 22, 1853:

> In strictness, we are all mad when we give way to passion, to prejudice, to vice, to vanity; but if all the passionate, prejudiced, vicious and vain people in this world are to be locked up as lunatics, who is to keep the key of the asylum?

Reed observes that Conolly "noted that all men are interested in the subject of insanity because no man is confident that he can reckon on continued perfect reason in himself. The great error of medical men is in seeking and imagining 'a strong and definable boundary between sanity and insanity'. . . . Most insanity resulted, he said, from

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26 *The Treatment of the Insane without Mechanical Restraints*. Although Conolly specifically forbade physical restraints such as leg irons, he did use less painful methods of restraint. He writes, for example, that "A newly received patient . . . sees no wretched patients hobbling about in leg-locks, or, although dressed in strait-waistcoates, which confine their arms, running a-muck at all they meet" (cited in Skultans 152).
excess indulgence of feelings, only relatively few cases 
from the exercise of the mind" (Will 137). J.E.D Esquirol 
and other early alienists believed that insanity, a loss of 
self control, was a possible threat to everyone, but women 
were predisposed, physiologically and psychologically, to 
"religious and erotic melancholy." He wrote of "female 
vulnerability" and believed that unchecked passion, 
religious or sexual, evinced the beginnings of insanity.27 
Tennyson's Elaine evinces the monomania that results from a 
woman's "excessive indulgence of feelings."28

Although there were numerous disagreements and partial 
agreements among the Victorian psychologists about the 
causes, definitions, and treatment of insanity, there was 
surprising agreement that the will was involved. The moral 
managers thought that lack of will caused insanity and that 
strengthened will could cure it. In 1843 the Reverend John 
Barlow presented a paper titled "On Man's Power over Himself 
to Prevent or Control Insanity." Reed notes that Barlow 
"differentiated insanity, a physical disease, from mental 
derangement, essentially a failure of will . . . Madness 
followed from a failure to direct intellectual force and to 

27 See fn. 2.

28 In Malory Launcelot runs mad for three years after 
Guinevere rejects him. Tennyson characteristicially updates 
the madness so that in the Idylls, Lancelot's "mood was 
often like a fiend, and rose / And drove him into wastes and 
solitudes / For agony, who was yet a living soul." 
Nineteenth-century moral remorse replaces the medieval 
madness of unrequited love.
command the bodily organ through habits of calm reasoning" (138). The word "habit" suggests the way in which materialists such as Maudsley also linked treatment of insanity to will. John Stuart Mill argued in his *Autobiography* that "though our own character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape these circumstances . . . our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing" (1872, 119). Maudsley believed that by means of repetition, "will remembers and learns to will, exercise building up faculty and conduct character" (Reed 141). Will, then, could be trained to change habits of behavior in a regime that sounds remarkably like that recommended by moral management. In sum, as Elaine Showalter points out, "In practice, moral and physical causes were often hard to distinguish . . . . Whether drunkenness or excitement was the cause, Victorian doctors believed that in most cases insanity was preventable if individuals were prepared to use their willpower to fight off mental disorder and to avoid excess" (30).

Tennyson, by temperament and personal experience, was intensely interested in the question of madness. His youth was tainted by his father's alcoholism and violent outbursts. His gentle younger brother Septimus required several stays in asylums, including that of Matthew Allen, before his family reluctantly committed him for life.
Tennyson himself voluntarily entered Matthew Allen's asylum near High Beech to take the water cure. Tennyson was a personal friend of Allen and would surely have been familiar with Allen's theories of insanity. Although Allen was a phrenologist, he was committed to moral management as treatment. Tennyson owned a copy of Allen's *The Classification of the Insane* (1837). The family would not have sent Septimus there had they not been sympathetic to Allen's methods. Allen writes that the "greatest of all moral lessons, that which holds the primary place as a preventive, and is always a necessary adjunct in the business of restoration [is] self control" (65). One of the cases he cites is that of a patient characterized as "Mind a perfect wreck--the effect of disappointed love" (24).

Allen's influence on Tennyson is impossible to determine, but Tennyson's characterization of Elaine owes much to the moral management school of thinking. The repetitions of "wilful" along with Elaine's use of the verb "will" indicate Elaine's misdirected use of will. From the idyll's opening lines, Tennyson illustrates not only monomania, but also Elaine's ability to function otherwise. The idyll opens first with a hint of excess and then moves

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29 See Martin's biography *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* for discussion of Tennyson's childhood and its psychological impact. Martin writes, too, of Tennyson's association with Matthew Allen. See also Ormond's *Alfred Tennyson: A Literary Life*.

30 Tennyson's copy is in the Tennyson Research Library, item 406.
to a demonstration of it. First seen is the title, "Elaine." Then come the first two lines: "Elaine the fair, Elaine the loveable, / Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat."

The repetition strikes the reader as unusual at the same time that the uneven cadences stir a slight sense of uneasiness. Then Tennyson, after using the most general of adjectives to describe Elaine, writes a most detailed description of the object of Elaine's fixation. Although the lily is the flower conventionally associated with the Virgin Mary, religious ardor is replaced by Elaine's secular devotion to "the sacred shield of Lancelot." We see, through Elaine's eyes, the details of the embroidered case, the dints and scratches on the shield. We learn that, daily, Elaine, "Leaving her household and good father climb'd / That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door, / Stript off the case, and read the naked shield." Because Tennyson began writing "Elaine" in July of 1858 and published it in 1859, it precedes much of the move toward mechanistic theories among Victorian psychologists. His emphasis, therefore, gives only a nod toward heredity and upbringing in "Father, you call me wilful, and the fault / Is yours who let me have my will." Rather, he emphasizes the choices that Elaine makes. He writes a convincing psychological portrait of a young girl's sexual fixation and the willed choices she makes to defend and then to obtain the object of that passion. "Day by day" she leaves
household and father in order to fantasize, the "naked shield" a substitute for the absent Lancelot. Elaine, willfully absenting herself from family and world, lives "in fantasy," in monomania.

When Elaine in actuality leaves household and father to nurse Lancelot, her reasoning is unimpaired except for her monomania. She sees but two choices: "love or death." Her words to Lancelot, "I am mad. I love you: let me die" indicate that she recognizes the extremity to which her passions have driven her. When Lancelot makes it clear that he cannot love her, but one choice remains, and Elaine wills that end. In Malory, Elaine awakes from her swoon only to remain hysterical until shortly before her death. Tennyson's Elaine, however, is in full control of herself. Though like Ophelia and the Lady of Shalott, she is the victim of unrequited love, she is no helpless victim of determinism. This nineteenth-century Elaine orchestrates her final days, controlling all those around her.

When Elaine, in desperation, had told Lancelot that she wanted to be his wife, and failing that, to follow him and serve him, Lancelot had replied:

'Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation--nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness.' And she said
'Not to be with you, not to see your face--
Alas for me then, my good days are done' (934-43).

Significantly, it is not Lancelot's statement that he cannot marry her that convinces her that she has lost, but it his reference to the world's censure that convinces her that she is powerless. She becomes, in a direct line of descent from the Romantic image of Ophelia, suicidal. Unlike Ophelia, however, Elaine retains both reason and will; her monomania shifts from "love" to "death," in what may be seen as a new form of madness. Showalter suggests that, especially for women, madness may be "the desperate communication of the powerless" (5).

In her powerlessness to achieve the object of her first monomania, Elaine now orchestrates her death, controls her family, and even manipulates what happens after her death. Her final words to Lancelot had been "Of all this will I nothing." When she dreams of going at last to Camelot in the boatman's boat, she says to her grieving brothers, "Now shall I have my will." Her father is helpless; her brothers are helpless to do anything but her bidding.31 Finally, she

31 Tennyson was well acquainted with the tyranny of the invalid, first with his father. His mother was often ill--in Memoir are references to her being pulled in a dog cart. Emily, often in poor health, spent increasing amounts of time on the couch, though she was able to continue to run the household.
fantasizes about the effect her arrival will have upon the court:

'There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at me;
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;
Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to me,
Lancelot, who coldly went nor bad me one:
And there the King will know me and my love,
And there all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest!'

(1045-54)

Tennyson here paints an Elaine just as willfully living in fantasy as the young girl in the poem's opening lines. The reader knows from Gawain's earlier actions and comments, as well as from Lancelot's assessment of the "world" that this court is not "gentle" and would not "welcome" Elaine other than as a center of gleeful gossip. Elaine speaks, as does many a potential suicide, as if she herself will see all this happen upon her arrival and will enjoy her reception. Tennyson quietly points out that, after the funeral's "gorgeous obsequies, / And mass, and rolling music" Elaine's "comely head" is laid "Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings." In Malory, Elaine is not mentioned once the funeral is over. Guenever and Launcelot simply resume quarreling. In the Idylls, Elaine's death is followed by Lancelot's
musing monologue, but court gossip, not Elaine’s love, really forces the final farewell of the lovers.

Tennyson’s Elaine asserts her "will" in the madness of monomania, seeking first love and then death. "She lifted up her eyes / And loved him, with that love which was her doom." Tennyson demonstrates this "doom" not as determinism, however, but as misdirected will. Though it is impossible not to empathize with the heartbreak and death of a beautiful young girl, difficult not to agree with Arthur’s wish that Lancelot had been able to love Elaine, there yet remains a strong feeling that, read in the light of nineteenth-century psychological theory, Elaine makes poor choices that have devastating consequences. Whether materialist or idealist, writing from a scientific or a religious base, psychologists agreed that "having a great purpose in life requiring discipline and self-renunciation contributes to sanity" (Reed 141). Elaine’s great purpose does not contribute to sanity, however — "Being so very wilful you must die." "I am mad. I love you: let me die."

Carlyle’s great exhortation had been to work in the world. "Work, for the night cometh..." Tennyson, in "Palace of Art," concludes that one must be of the world. Maudsley echoes Carlyle: "Not to think and feel only, but to do, is the end of being—to act one’s part in the becoming of things and to affect for good or ill the common weal by
such action" (Will, 174, cited in Reed, 143). Elaine, in her life of fantasy and willed self-destruction, absents herself from the world outside her obsessive attachment to Lancelot. In so doing, Tennyson suggests, Elaine is a Romantically self-involved figure, but not an effective participant in the world. Her will has become willfulness, her passion, excess. Her "doom" is self directed.

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32 Elizabeth Barrett Browning celebrated free will, at any cost, in *Aurora Leigh* (1856):

What we choose may not be good;
but that we choose it proves it good for us
Potentially, fantastically, now
Or last year, rather than a thing we saw,
And saw no need for choosing. Moths will burn
Their wings,--which proves that light is good for moths,
Who else had flown not where they agonize.

(Cited in Reed 175)
CHAPTER FOUR. "GUINEVERE": LOVE, ADULTERY, AND MARRIAGE

"What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?"

In "Guinevere" Tennyson does far more than simply dramatize what Staines calls an "undeveloped moment" in Malory.\(^1\) The poet radically changes his source, foregrounding the adultery by reversing the order of events, inventing the farewell scene between Arthur and Guinevere, making Guinevere newly central, and adding the little novice. In these modifications Tennyson responds to the mid-Victorian fear of women's uncontrolled sexuality, which threatened the order and security of the home.

Tennyson chooses to show his readers not the public queenly life found in Malory, but Guinevere's "character as wife and mistress"\(^2\) because of mid-century fears of adultery. The poet brings the centuries-old issue of adultery into the nineteenth century by secularizing it so that the danger now is not so much that of offending God's

\(^1\) Staines notes that this passage in Malory is the sort of "undeveloped moment" that Tennyson typically chooses to develop in *Idylls* (42).

\(^2\) The phrase comes from Thelma Fenster, who notes that Malory "prefers a public portrait of the queen that shows little of the character as wife and mistress" (xxiv).
laws but of weakening the social and moral structure of the family and hence the nation. Guinevere’s moral lapse is so crucial because mid-Victorians tended to believe that a woman’s moral strength was necessary to sustaining both a home and a kingdom, as I note in the Introduction.

Adultery becomes central to Tennyson’s tale, I believe, because for the mid-Victorian a woman’s moral responsibilities were bound up in fears of selfish individualism, of which adultery would be a prime example. Guinevere’s sin is central to Tennyson’s imaginative version because that is where the middle-class mid-Victorian reader—along with Geraint, Vivien, the courtiers, and Arthur—would tend to place the blame for the broken marriage and the broken kingdom.

Tennyson, however, uneasy about blanket condemnation of adultery, depicts a complex situation. Although the poet does not shrink from showing the suffering related to the adultery, he looks at an individual adultery, not at adultery as defined by law. Malory’s Arthur, in contrast, judges solely by law, condemning Guinevere to die at the stake because by law, he must. Tennyson humanizes the situation so that Guinevere and Lancelot must be judged within a specific context. In so doing, he once more warns

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3 In the spring of 1858 Tennyson’s friend Edward FitzGerald talked to him about his own failing marriage; it was shortly after that meeting that the poet began writing "Guinevere." While Tennyson was still at work on "Guinevere," FitzGerald wrote to him "saying that his marriage had come to an end and that he was once more living
of the difficulty in determining truth. By illustrating the indeterminacy of truth relative to a specific adultery, Tennyson makes problematic the rigidly defined views of adultery contemporaneously being expressed during the Parliamentary debates on the divorce bill. It is Tennyson's empathetic rendering of light and shadow, wealth and woe, qualities of life that Guinevere judges more correctly than does Arthur, that makes of "Guinevere" so richly human a reading experience.

The setting in Malory, from which Tennyson deviates so imaginatively and dramatically, is brief and allows no parting between Arthur and his queen:

And when queen Guenever understood that her lord,
king Arthur, was slain, and all the noble knights,
sir Mordred and all the remnant, then she stole

a bachelor life, as for the thirty years before it, 'only so much older, sadder, uglier, and worse'" (Charles Tennyson 303; 317). I cannot draw a certain correlation between FitzGerald's sufferings and Tennyson's writing except to note that Tennyson knew of actual marital suffering at the time he was writing of Arthur and Guinevere.

The poet was also on friendly social terms with George Eliot and George Henry Lewes and so would have been aware of the suffering caused there by the court's adherence to the letter of the law. After his marriage Tennyson was also more kindly disposed toward Caroline Norton than he had been as a younger man.

Although Tennyson's main source for "Guinevere" is Malory, some aspects appear to be based on Geoffrey of Monmouth's account. In Geoffrey, Arthur wears "a helm of gold graven with the semblance of a dragon"; treasonous Mordred is Arthur's nephew, not his son; and Guinevere goes to Caerleon to join the nuns before Arthur's death (63; 67; 100). Historia Regum Britanniae (c. 1136), rpt. in Arthur King of Britain, ed. Richard L. Brengle. 43-102.
away, and five ladies with her: and so she went to Almesbury, and there she let make herself a nun, and wore white clothes and black; and great penance she took, as ever did sinful lady in this land, and never creature could make her merry, but lived in fastings, prayers, and alms deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed. Now leave we queen Guenever in Almesbury, that was a nun in white clothes and in black, and there she was abbess and ruler as reason would; and turn we from her and speak we of sir Launcelot du Lake (Walker & Edwards 2: 476).

Malory’s Guenever does not choose to seek sanctuary in the nunnery but is driven there because of Arthur’s death. It is in the nunnery that she parts from Lancelot. Guenever is so much less important to Malory’s Arthur than are his knights, especially Lancelot, that the adultery is not the central issue. Toward Guenever the king is neither angry nor forgiving. Instead, the fifteenth-century Arthur says that he feels

much more greater sorrow for my good knight’s loss, than for the loss of my queen; for queens might I have enough, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company. And now I dare say . . . that there was never Christian king that held such a fellowship
together. Alas! that ever sir Launcelot and I should be at debate (Walker & Edwards 2: 431).\(^5\)

Tennyson, however, imaginatively intensifies the situation in Malory, giving Guinevere more control over her fate so that she chooses to leave Lancelot, refuses his offer of help, and then rides to the nunnery before Arthur's death. The result is not an expansion of an undeveloped moment in Malory but an almost completely imaginative rendering of the idyll, intensely pictorial and individualized.

Tennyson's emphasis on the individual is suggested by the poet's imaginative entry into the poem.\(^6\) According to Emily Tennyson, the first lines written were Arthur's anguished final words to his queen:

'But hither shall I never come again,

Never lie by thy side; see thee no more:

\(^5\) In simplifying Malory's complex plot, Tennyson simply alludes to the battle between Launcelot and Arthur and, in so doing, eliminates sir Gawaine's manipulation of the king. The change increases Arthur's moral authority. In Malory Arthur, angry at Launcelot for the supposed adultery, is at one point during the battle ready to be "accorded with sir Launcelot" and "would have taken his queen again" (438), but Gawaine, whose two innocent brothers Launcelot has accidentally killed, "would not suffer him by no manner of means." It could be argued that Tennyson's view of Arthur as forgiving stems from this interchange, but it is more likely that Tennyson is thinking of Christian behavior on Arthur's part. Certainly, Malory's emphasis is on the loss of Arthur's best-loved knight more than on Guinevere.

\(^6\) My belief that Tennyson purposely individualizes the adultery is clearly at critical variance with those whom I cite in the Introduction as viewing the four women as simple contrasting representatives of "true" and "false."
Farewell! 7

No one can doubt this Arthur’s genuine suffering, pain caused by the loss of his wife, not his Round Table.

As Tennyson develops Arthur’s farewell speech from those first lines, however, the character becomes an uneasy mixture of nineteenth-century characteristics. In his monologue Arthur embodies not only the agonized husband but the sort of rigidly conservative thinking that Tennyson deplored. That same rigid approach feared women’s unruly sexuality and made adultery the central issue in the ongoing Parliamentary debates on the proposed Marriage and Divorce Bill.

7 Hallam Tennyson, A Memoir 2: 419. In the entry dated July 9th, 1857, Hallam notes: "My mother writes in her journal: 'A. has brought me as a birthday present the first two lines that he has made of 'Guinevere' which might be the nucleus of a great poem. Arthur is parting from Guinevere and says: 'But hither. . . .'

In the course of writing Memoir, Emily and Hallam rewrote her Journal and then destroyed the original, often enhancing the original entry in light of later events. It may be, therefore, that the reference to "a great poem" was added to the original. Hoge’s notoriously unscholarly edition of Emily Tennyson’s Journal merely muddies the issue because he uses no ellipses. His entry for July 9th, 1857, therefore may or may not be closer to the original. His entry says simply, "He brings me the first lines which may be the nucleus of the parting of Arthur & Guinevere." Both sources agree, however, that the lines of Arthur’s farewell are the first written.

Although Tennyson keeps the lines unchanged in all editions, he does change the punctuation. What in 1859 and 1870 is "Never lie by thy side, see thee no more," becomes in final edition "Never lie by thy side; see thee no more--", changes that make Arthur’s words slower and more deliberate, suggesting, perhaps, his reluctance to leave or his hope that Guinevere will speak.
I suggest that in "Guinevere" Tennyson is reacting to the attitudes expressed in the highly publicized debates. Those debates reflected changing national attitudes toward adultery, feared in mid-century as a sign of moral decay and pollution. Just thirty years earlier, when King George IV had tried, for political purposes, to divorce Queen Caroline on grounds of her "adulterous intercourse," the nation had been so disgusted with the king's personal excesses that many people had sided with Caroline; her alleged adultery was not sufficient to outweigh the king's excesses. But times had changed. Queen Victoria, with whom Guinevere must implicitly and unfavorably be compared, was viewed as an exemplar who "severely discountenanced 'immorality'" (Best 194). The queen apparently adored her handsome husband and by 1857 had borne nine children. Despite her authority as queen, Victoria represented for many Victorians the ideal wife, the sort Mrs. Ellis had in mind when in 1843 she wrote of the "wearied knight's" need of "woman's soothing power" (Wives 38). 8

Adultery, which Tennyson makes the humanly realized thematic spine of his 1859 Idylls, was in legal terms called "criminal conversation" and entailed violation of the

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8 The Queen and Prince Consort were not averse to being associated with medieval metaphors. Girouard notes that "The Prince had been brought up in an atmosphere of German Romanticism; he took chivalry very seriously indeed." Guests to the ball honoring the marriage were invited to wear medieval costumes; the Prince commissioned a portrait of himself in full armor (112-15).
marriage bed by means of voluntary sexual intercourse outside the marriage bond. It was often regarded as a "form of deviation" and even as a variety of criminal offense (Hartman 4). Walter Houghton sums up the Victorian moral ethic:

After marriage, quite as much as before, the Victorian ethic made fidelity the supreme virtue and sexual irregularity the blackest of sins. For a man to be called a moral person came to mean, almost entirely, that he was 'not impure in conduct.' Adultery, especially in the case of the wife, and no matter what the extenuating circumstances, was spoken of with horror. A 'feeble and erring woman' became, in fact, a social outcast (356).

By Ellis's standards Guinevere fails miserably. By Houghton's standards, she should be a social outcast. Because Guinevere is a queen, society cannot shun her, but, as Tennyson so realistically points out, society can gleefully gossip about her and use her queenly indiscretions as an excuse for their own actions. By the standards of Ellis and those who shared her opinions, Tennyson's inclusion in Idylls of extenuating circumstances and his sympathy with Guinevere indicate remarkably liberal thinking.9 But the poet shows his ambivalence by also

9 Tennyson could be very conservative in some matters, but his friendship with those of the Pre-Raphaelite circle
putting into Arthur's speech the secular standards by which Guinevere stands damned.

Though no direct correlation between the debates and "Guinevere" can be drawn, we do know that Tennyson was writing the idyll between 9 July 1857 and March 1858, a period that coincides with many of the heated debates. During those debates, adultery became the highly emotional, central issue prior to final passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act. Indeed, adultery became the only basis for divorce in the bill as finally passed and to which Queen Victoria gave royal assent on 25 August 1857. The debates that occurred on July 24, July 30, and July 31, 1857 illustrate the tensions that surfaced (Hansard, third series 147: 373, 722, 825) and to which Tennyson responds.

Arthur expresses the fears of those who worried that adultery would lead to unrestrained passion. Those with political and social power, already uneasy because of the French Revolution and various riots and uprisings in England, feared "the socially disruptive potential of unrestrained sexuality" (Shanley 367). For example, during the course of a debate in 1857, William Gladstone, a man who went to great lengths to rescue prostitutes and who engaged

and his willingness to call on George Eliot and George Henry Lewes indicate a willingness to look at context rather than at absolutes. Because Lewes was by law unable to obtain a divorce, he and Eliot were technically in an adulterous relationship. Emily Tennyson called on the couple as well. See The Letters of Emily Lady Tennyson, ed. Hoge 277.
in self-flagellation (Stansky 51), warned his colleagues: "Take care, then, how you damage the character of your countrymen. You know how apt the English nature is to escape from restraint and control: you know what passion dwells in the Englishman" (3 Hansard, CXLVII: 854). Arthur says that because of Guinevere's "shameful sin with Lancelot; / Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt; / Then others." The queen's example had caused others to lose control as well.

Tennyson's Arthur blames only Guinevere for the breakdown of his entire kingdom. That same sort of conservative opinion was well represented during the debates. Gladstone, though in favor of protecting a woman's property rights within marriage, tried repeatedly to keep the bill from coming to a vote because, as a Christian, he was very much against divorce for any cause. Henly agreed, claiming that passage of the bill "might have the effect of shaking the sanctity of the marriage vow, and so lay the foundation of a vast amount of social evil" (374). It is just this sort of vast social evil for which Arthur so unjustly blames only Guinevere.

Tennyson also portrays an Arthur readier to blame the female more than the male adulterer, a bias voiced more than once in the debates. Arthur says that "Then others . . . / Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite / Of all my heart had destined did obtain, / And all thro' thee!" Mr. Napier
pointed out during one debate, "With respect to the question of dissolubility of marriage on the ground of adultery, he "should support the proposition, as he believed it was the only ground of divorce which was sanctioned by the Holy Scriptures," but he added that "sin in the members of one sex was greater as regards social consequences than in the other" (405).\textsuperscript{10}

Tennyson adroitly avoids one of the major issues in the debate, that of a husband's adultery, by making Arthur "ever virgin" save for Guinevere, thereby making it possible to keep attention focussed on female sexuality, as it was in the debates.\textsuperscript{11} Wide publicity had attended Lord Cranworth's statement in one of the early debates in 1854 that "It would be too harsh to bring the law to bear against a husband who was 'a little profligate.'" Although Cranworth had been public chided and had modified his language, it was essentially on that basis that the law was finally passed. Despite the position of those like Lord Lyndhurst, who believed that "in principle, there ought to be no distinction made between the adultery of the husband and

\textsuperscript{10} The poet makes it seem as if Guinevere concurs with such condemnation, saying to Lancelot, "Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou / Unwedded." Tennyson, however, undercuts that easy assumption by giving Lancelot almost the identical words: "Mine be the shame; mine was the sin."

Tennyson underscores the point later, when in the parallel situation with Tristram and Isolt in "The Last Tournament," Tristram deserves most of the blame.

\textsuperscript{11} In Malory Arthur is Modred's father, not his uncle.
that of the wife" (142:416), "the majority of parliament readily acceded to the proposition that a woman’s adultery was most inexpedient, while that of her husband was not," notes Shanley (367).

In the light of the final bill, it is notable that Tennyson is sympathetic to Guinevere, makes it clear that Lancelot is an equally contagious and culpable partner in the adultery, and suggests that Arthur is partly to blame.\footnote{12}{This is a double-pointed accusation. The nineteenth-century husband was legally responsible for his wife’s actions, and Guinevere also makes it clear that she felt neglected by Arthur who did not even notice her indiscretions, proof for her that he didn’t love her.} In the bill as finally passed, the grounds for divorce for men were not changed, but in implicit legal recognition of a double legal standard, the grounds for women seeking divorce were far more rigidly defined. For a man to get a divorce, any adultery by the wife, no matter what the circumstances, was morally reprehensible enough to be sufficient grounds. Simple adultery on the part of the husband, however, was not sufficient, either morally or socially, to give cause for divorce. To be sufficiently culpable a man’s adultery had to be combined with incest, bigamy, rape, sodomy or bestiality, extreme cruelty, or unreasonable desertion. Section 27 of the final bill reads:

It shall be lawful for any husband to present a petition to the said court, praying that his marriage be dissolved, on the ground that his wife
has, since the celebration thereof, been guilty of adultery; and it shall be lawful for any wife to present a petition to the said court, praying that her marriage may be dissolved, on the ground that since the celebration thereof, her husband has been guilty of incestuous adultery, or of bigamy with adultery, or of rape, or of sodomy or bestiality, or of adultery coupled with such cruelty as without adultery would have entitled her to a divorce a mensa et thoro, or of adultery coupled with desertion, without a reasonable excuse, for two years and upwards.

In addition to the very explicit differences in the grounds for divorce, a subtle demeaning of women is enacted by the use of the conditional verb in the woman's petition. A husband prays that his marriage "be dissolved," but a wife prays that her marriage "may be dissolved."

Although nowhere in the farewell speech does Arthur recognize the complexity of the situation, blaming only Guinevere, Tennyson elsewhere makes clear the failure of "companionship and mutual support" on the part of both Guinevere and Arthur. Shanley suggests that recognition of the ideal of companionate marriage lay behind the divorce bill debates:

Disputes over the grounds of divorce were, in essence, disputes over what constituted a violation
of the marriage contract, and therefore over the fundamental purpose of marriage. The notion that only adultery justified severing the marriage bond assumed that sexual relationships and the legitimacy of a man’s offspring were the basic considerations of the marriage contract. While the majority of parliament did not consider male adultery a significant threat to such companionship, aggravations such as cruelty, desertion, or bigamy did seem to threaten this aspect of marriage. The discussions over the grounds for a wife’s divorce contained the seeds of the idea that marriage could not properly be understood solely as an institution for sexual reproductive bonding, but as a locus for companionship and mutual support (370–71).

In "Elaine" Guinevere had said bitterly that Arthur "never spake a word of reproach to me, / He never had a glimpse of mine untruth, / He cares not for me" (124–6). Only when it is too late does Arthur say to Guinevere, "Let no man dream but that I love thee still" ("Guinevere" 557). In the entirety of the first four idylls, in contrast with her lengthy conversations with Lancelot, Guinevere’s replies to Arthur consist of two one-sentence answers to his questions. The first is in response to Arthur’s "’Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move / To these fair jousts?’ ‘Yes,
Lord,' she said, 'you know it'" ("Lancelot and Elaine" 79-80). The second is her lie in reply to the king's hopes that Lancelot has fallen in love with the lily maid: "'Yea, lord,' she said, 'Your hopes are mine'" ("Lancelot and Elaine" 602-3). In "Guinevere," in contrast with her conversation with the little nun and her remembered conversations with Lancelot, Guinevere says nothing in reply to anything Arthur says in his lengthy farewell dramatic monologue. Tennyson recognizes in "Guinevere" as he does in "Enid" the tragedy of failed opportunities.

Although many critics, both in 1859 and more recently, identify Tennyson with Arthur's condemnation of Guinevere, I suggest that Tennyson empathetically dramatizes Arthur just as he does his other characters in the Idylls. The poem depicts Guinevere as groveling on the floor, a pictorial moment that would remind many a mid-Victorian reader of the many paintings of "fallen" women, most of which show a repentant wife and an unyielding husband.

13 Gladstone reads the idyll as Tennyson's pronouncement, does not disagree with Arthur's condemnation, and praises the king as "the resplendent pillar of moral excellence." Shaw says, "When Arthur says to Guinevere, 'mine own flesh, / Here looking down on thine polluted, cries / 'I loathe thee' (Guinevere 551-3), he seems to speak of a revulsion which is Tennyson's as well as his own. Such revulsion is an intensification of an unease with women's power registered in the early poems" (122).

14 See, for example, Augustus Egg's popular trilogy, "Past and Present," exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858. The husband sits at an unyielding distance from his prostrate wife. The series leaves no doubt that the wife's adultery caused the irreversible decline of a formerly
Arthur's first words fit that stereotype. Arthur's believable anger is couched in language that is both archaic and filled with imagery current in the nineteenth century:

Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:
For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.

And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
'I loathe thee:'

Guinevere is reduced to a personification, a deadly sexual disease.

Although Arthur simplistically blames only Guinevere; although his condemnation is fraught with inconsistencies,

prosperous middle-class family and the eventual miserable death of the faithless wife.
moving as it does from "his" and "the wife" to "our friends"; although the king unwittingly characterizes himself as a husband whose "cowardice" may well have led him to ignore the adultery; many a Victorian, including Parliamentarians and Mrs. Ellis, would have agreed with him. Arthur's shifting of Guinevere from adultery to prostitution would have resonated with those who believed that a woman who slipped from the path of virtue would inevitably become a prostitute. For Arthur, like Geraint, what is not white must be black; what is not true must be false. Yet Tennyson has made it clear that Guinevere is not promiscuous but is deeply, though adulterously, in love with Lancelot. Arthur's language would convince many nineteenth-century readers, however, despite its irrational merging of categories, because it speaks of Guinevere in familiar terms of filth, contagion, and pollution.

Tennyson's readership as a whole was primed to respond to such images. Concerted public efforts by such Benthamite activists as Sir Edwin Chadwick and Lord Ashley, later the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, had sensitized the British

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15 In his review of the 1870 Idylls, in which "Guinevere" remains essentially unchanged, Swinburne objects strenuously to Tennyson's deletion of Arthur's unknowing incest, the product of which was Modred. The change, Swinburne says, removes the level of tragedy from the story, thereby "reducing Arthur to the level of a wittol, Guenevere to the level of a woman of intrigue, and Launcelot to the level of a 'co-respondent.'" Treated as he has treated it, the story is rather a case for the divorce-court than for poetry" (57). Tennyson, of course, intended exactly what Swinburne decries: the nineteenth-century resonances.
public to health and sanitation issues. Tennyson would have been well acquainted with social issues, too, from his frequent conversations with his close friends Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice, both Christian Socialist activists. By mid-century London's water supply and sanitation were still notoriously inadequate; cholera was common, especially in the overcrowded slums, where some four hundred people a day had died in 1849. Christopher Hibbert notes:

Most of London's water still came from the Thames, polluted though it was by outfall from the sewers, including the now subterranean Fleet, by stable dung, rotten sprats, guano, and by quantities of rubbish and offal thrown into it even at this late period from slaughter-houses, knackers' yards, tanneries and tar works. The colour of the river was a greeny black, its consistency so thick that each time the tide went down a greasy, foul-smelling scum was deposited over the mud. In the hot dry summer of 1858 it was impossible to cross Westminster Bridge without a handkerchief pressed closely over the nose and mouth, impossible ... to breathe in the House of Commons until the windows had been covered with curtains soaked in chloride of lime (187-8).
The upper classes were also at risk, Hibbert notes, especially from typhus, because their houses, too, were connected to the "common sewer." "Queen Victoria's apartments at Buckingham Palace were ventilated through the common sewer; and in many other large houses swarms of rats came up from the sewers every night in their nocturnal search for food. Reports of children in well-to-do households being attacked in their nursery cots at night were not uncommon" (188).

Tennyson's images of the need to cleanse the common sewer would need no explanation to his readership; pollution of the Thames was a common subject of complaint. The widely read Household Words, for example, carried a series of articles, one of which states that "we have utterly polluted and defiled one of the noblest watercourses in the world . . . [and] have made it the receptacle of outcast filth."\(^\text{16}\) The image of contagion would be even more potent after the republication of the 1859 Idylls in 1862 with the added "Dedication" to Prince Albert, who had died of typhoid in 1861.

Seen within the context of mid-Victorian sensitivity to the contagious filth of the Thames and the sewers, along with the growing fear of the sexual contagion spread by prostitutes, the language Arthur uses in his attack on

\(^{16}\) Household Words, July 24, 1858; 435.
Guinevere is indeed potently demeaning. And yet Tennyson complicates that persuasiveness.

Tennyson moves his Arthur away from the stereotypically unforgiving husband by also playing on the growing Victorian belief in what George Eliot called fellow feeling: Arthur's anger is turned to forgiveness not by religious fervor, but by Guinevere's human touch. Arthur pauses in his tirade, "and in the pause she crept an inch / Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet." In that gesture Guinevere has effected an emotional connection that elicits compassion. Arthur's compassion is genuine and moving. Even so, Tennyson paints an Arthur whose pity is expressed with remarkably little self-awareness: "Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes, / I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere, / I whose vast pity almost makes me die." He has urged her crimes and cursed her. His wrath suddenly past,

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17 This turning point in Arthur's speech illustrates Tennyson's secularization of the adultery issue. Although Arthur responds in traditionally Christian terms, it is Guinevere's touch that motivates his response, not his religious beliefs. The moment of "fellow feeling" inspires sympathetic response.

In her letter dated 11 November 1859, Eliot responds to Elizabeth Gaskell's praise of *Scenes from Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* and thanks Gaskell for "the only sort of help I care to have--an assurance of fellow-feeling, of thorough truthful recognition from one of the minds which are capable of judging as well as of being moved." Cited in Helsinger 77 [Eliot Letters 3: 198-9].

It was no accident that as the church's apparent moral influence waned, writers such as George Eliot put more emphasis on love as the prime motivating force for good. See Roberts "The Transformation of God: Religion and Culture in the Post-Darwinian Novel," 34-5. It is Arthur's love for Guinevere that her touch evokes.
he now speaks in the rhetoric of a Christian gentleman too certain of his own holiness: "Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God / Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest." When Arthur speaks in biblical cadences, he shows the same arrogant lack of human understanding that he earlier did in swearing men to vows that only he could keep: "I made them lay their hands in mine and swear / To reverence the King, as if he were / Their conscience, and their conscience as their King" (464-6). In saying to Guinevere that his utopian society "throve until I wedded thee," he shows unawareness of Mark's, Modred's, and Vivien's plots for vengeance. All three used the adultery to weaken the king's authority and to pollute society, but none was personally degraded by it. Arthur takes no responsibility himself, but says that Guinevere's children "are sword and fire, / Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws, The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts / Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea." To Arthur, Guinevere is solely responsible for the loss of home, state, and empire. The king is very nearly the "moral child" Guinevere accused him of being, unaware of lights and shadows, the sort of moral child who in Parliament votes to condemn equally under law any wife who commits adultery under any circumstances.

Yet Arthur again becomes universally human in his anguished realization that the lips he wants to kiss have never been his to kiss. Human, too, is his confession that
"My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life / So far, that my doom is, I love thee still. / Let no man dream but that I love thee still." Most human is his supremely physical regret, "But hither shall I never come again, / Never lie by thy side, see thee no more, / Farewell!" What Tennyson shows then is an enactment, in brief, of the failed marriage. Arthur and Guinevere had not understood each other in marriage, and now Guinevere is unable to tell Arthur of her new understanding.

Critical focus on the parting, and especially on Arthur's farewell speech, neglects Guinevere's dramatic presence and thoughts, which frame Arthur's monologue and comment on Lancelot's remorse.18 Those who read the Idylls in any edition from 1869 on, come to "Guinevere" not directly after "Lancelot and Elaine" as in 1859 but after

18 In order to keep the focus on Guinevere, Tennyson dramatizes neither Lancelot's taking of holy orders nor his death, both highly important in Malory, whose emphasis is on the men's actions and reactions. Instead, in "Elaine" Tennyson reduces Lancelot's last years to: "So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain, / Not knowing he should die a holy man."

A subtle example of the way in which Tennyson makes "Guinevere" accord with Guinevere's consciousness occurs in a small contrast. When Guinevere, made fearful by Modred's watchfulness and her own bad dreams, finally asks Lancelot to leave, "Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd, / And still they met and met" (92-3). But when they finally kiss and part, weeping, Lancelot "past, / Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen, / Back to his land" (124-6). It is a nice touch: Guinevere wants him to love her so much that he will stay despite his promises, and simultaneously to love her so much that he will be "love-loyal" to her "least wish" and will leave. Tennyson makes of Guinevere a very human queen.
"The Holy Grail" and "Pelleas and Etтарre," both of which radically disrupt and darken the central story of the adultery and its effects. After 1872 "The Last Tournament," witnessing the decline of the entire civilization represented by Camelot, appears after "Pelleas and Etтарre" and directly before "Guinevere," further diminishing the effect of individual tragedy. In 1859, however, a reader witnesses Lancelot’s "remorseful pain" and then moves immediately to Tennyson’s intensely realized picture of Guinevere weeping at Almesbury.

Staines says that the queen is weeping "at the moment of her repentance" (44), but the actual scene is more enigmatically stated and is an example of Tennyson’s nuanced approach to the adultery. The poet situates Guinevere in an atmosphere dimly lighted and devoid of all color: "The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face, / Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still" (7-8). Guinevere, who loves warmth and color, weeps in a deathly world of black and white. At the idyll’s end comes the same loss of color with which Tennyson introduces Guinevere’s plight. Guinevere elects to "Wear black and white, and be a nun like

19 Tennyson gives no hint of repentance at the poem’s beginning. Once he places the queen, he moves directly in flashback to "For hither had she fled, her cause of flight / Sir Modred," whose hate for Lancelot had inspired his betrayal of the lovers. Tennyson’s immediate reference to Modred rather than to either Arthur or Lancelot suggests, I think, a more complex and secular approach than that of sin and repentance.
you." As in Malory she chooses to fast, pray, and help the poor. She desires to "wear out in almsdeed and in prayer / The sombre close of that voluptuous day, / Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King." With Arthur's death, the sun will rise; for Guinevere it is the close of day. The "narrow nunnerly walls" look narrow indeed.

Tennyson suggests a great sense of diminished life for Guinevere rather than a life of holy repentance. In both Malory and the Idylls Guinevere is made abbess, but Tennyson subtly detracts from Guinevere's holiness by saying that she was chosen abbess "for her good deeds and her pure life, / And for the power of ministration in her, / And likewise for the high rank she had borne." In other words, she becomes abbess in large part because she had been queen. Finally, when Guinevere dies, Tennyson does not say that her repentance has earned salvation, but that she "past / To where beyond these voices there is peace." "Peace" is a wondrously enigmatic word. It may mean heavenly peace; it may mean the quiet respite of the grave after finding no peace in the nunnery. By means of the idyll's beginning and ending, Tennyson suggests poignant secular loss rather than hope for heavenly reunion with Arthur.

Having said that, however, I must acknowledge Guinevere's dreams and direct statements, which accept both blame and shame, apparently in complete agreement with Arthur's and the community's assessment. We are swayed by
her recurrent nightmare, in which Tennyson equates her destructive influence with the dynamic image of a light-extinguishing solar eclipse:

    An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
    On some vast plain before a setting sun,
    And from the sun there swiftly made at her
    A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
    Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd--
    When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
    And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it
    Far cities burnt. ("Guinevere" 75-82)\(^{20}\)

Then, when Guinevere flees to Almesbury after finally breaking with Lancelot, she moans, "'too late, too late! . . . 'For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea, / Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court, / Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land'" (130-6). Because Arthur and his knights will die shortly after the king leaves the nunnery, it is tempting to agree with the Arthur who so powerfully blames Guinevere:

    'The children born of thee are sword and fire,
    Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
    The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
    Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea.'\(^{21}\)

\(^{20}\) The eclipse image resonates, too, in reference to eclipsing Arthur, who is metaphorically alluded to several times in the Idylls as a sun god.

\(^{21}\) Almost all of Guinevere's literary predecessors are barren as well. Because it is so important in a patrilineal
The total breakdown of order has indeed occurred. This sort of evidence within the idyll leads many readers, including critics such as Leonée Ormond, to conclude that we are meant to blame Guinevere. Ormond writes:

Tennyson places the blame upon Guinevere: 'Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou / Unwedded', she tells Lancelot (118-19). The judgement is confirmed by the words of the novice about the 'wicked Queen' (l. 207), and by Arthur's own speech to his fallen wife, a passage which Tennyson loved to read aloud (143).²²

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society for the king to have an heir, Tennyson's Arthur here indicates not only his own pain but also what must have been for Guinevere a humiliating failure. The ferocity of Arthur’s attack suggests the depth of his anguish at being childless.

Tennyson would have been personally sensitive to the issue of children and heirs because between April 1851 and March 1854, Emily had given birth to a stillborn son and then to Hallam and Lionel.

See Gilbert's "The Female King: Tennyson’s Arthurian "Apocalypse" for a discussion of how in the Idylls Tennyson’s Arthur newly represents the "Romantic idea that the true source of kingly power is natural and internal rather than historical and external," a change that allows "the freeing . . . of feminine energy from its long subservience to male authority and consciousness" (869). Gilbert concludes, however, that Arthur’s failure ironically rests on not having an heir to carry on the patrilineal line. England was particularly sensitive to this issue of lineage because of Queen Victoria’s marriage to a German.

²² Ormond, like many critics, reduces the early idylls to contrasts: "All four books have a woman’s name. Enid and Elaine, the ideals of womanhood, are balanced by two destructive and unchaste women, Vivien and Guinevere" (142). Surely Tennyson’s delight in reading the passage cannot be evidence that he agreed with Arthur’s fictive views.
In the *Idylls*’s overarching investigation of "true" versus "false," Guinevere is clearly the latter, in the sense that she is a false wife. Tennyson is always sensitive to the effects of people’s actions on others, for good or ill.23 However, in spite of the passages that apparently condemn Guinevere, Tennyson also mitigates the evidence against the queen.24

23 Indeed, Tennyson’s addition of gossip’s powerful role in the *Idylls* strongly suggests that the adultery itself is less blamable than what is made of it by idle, envious, or vengeful gossip. Geraint’s unfounded suspicions of Enid stem from rumor. Vivien, stung by gossip, seeks revenge by means of rumor and slander. Her victory over Merlin rests on the one rumor he cannot deny: the adultery. Elaine’s father learns of Lancelot’s shameful attachment to the queen and uses the information to try to sway Elaine. In "Elaine," too, it is clear that the entire court is twittering about Lancelot’s love for the lily maid; the gossip causes the rift between Guinevere and Lancelot, making him painfully aware of Elaine’s purer love. In "Guinevere" even the isolated nunnery is abuzz with the news of Arthur’s downfall and the assumption of Guinevere’s guilt. As late as 1890, Tennyson adds a line to "Guinevere" that links Vivien with Modred in joint vengeance: When Guinevere and Lancelot "were agreed upon a night / (When the good King should not be there) to meet / And part for ever. [Vivien, lurking, heard. / She told Sir Modred]" (95-8).

Tennyson, in the spotlight as Poet Laureate, was acutely sensitive to being spied upon and gossiped about. James Eli Adams argues for a tie between Tennyson’s fears and the role of slander in the *Idylls*.

24 Geoffrey of Monmouth includes the story of Arthur in *The History of the Kings of Britain* (1136), but minimizes Guinevere’s importance in favor of the historically important aspects of the men’s exploits. In medieval German versions, Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec* (1180-85) and Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* (1200-10), no adultery occurs. Instead, Arthur and Guinevere are the ideal courtly husband and wife. Guinevere is loyal, submissive, dutiful, and faithful. The earlier *Charette*, written by Chrétien de Troye (c. 1164), either unknown to or ignored for thematic reasons by the German writers, was the first version to introduce the adultery. In *Charette* the illicit love is mutual, and because of it Lancelot is inspired to knightly
Tennyson changes his source so that Guinevere's love for Lancelot is so great that it persists despite all her desperate, dutiful efforts to forget him. In Malory's chronology Guinevere's parting with Lancelot occurs in the abbey after she has taken holy orders, thereby reducing considerably any temptation to flee with him. Although the lovers' farewells are emotional (Guenever refuses to kiss Lancelot, but each swoons several times), the queen is already in a safe haven, and Malory's emphasis is on saving her soul. Tennyson's version, however, fills the parting of the lovers with details that corroborate their undiminished passion:

Passion-pale they met

And greeted: hands in hands, and eye to eye,

achievements. Tennyson was familiar with the French version, as he was with Geoffrey of Monmouth's work and Malory's version.

For a detailed discussion of the various treatments of Guinevere, Lancelot, and Arthur, see Walters' "Introduction" to Lancelot and Guinevere: A Casebook. See also in the same volume Stones's "Illustrating Lancelot and Guinevere" and "Guinevere: A Re-Appraisal" by Samples.

See, too, Fenster's "Introduction" to Arthurian Women: A Casebook and in the same volume "Female Heroes, Heroines, and Counter-Heroes" by Fries.

Bogdanow analyzes various versions as well in "The Evolution of the Theme of the Fall of Arthur's Kingdom."

25 Malory's Guinivere suggests, during their parting, that Lancelot return home and "there take thee a wife, and live with her in joy and bliss," to which Lancelot replies, "Nay, madam, wit ye well that I will never while I live; for I shall never be so false to you of that I have promised" (Walker & Edwards 479). Tennyson omits this reversal of the parallel situation with Lancelot and Elaine, thereby intensifying Guinevere's genuine love for Lancelot.
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring: it was their last hour,
A madness of farewells.

And then they rode to the divided way,
There kiss'd, and parted weeping.

(98-102; 121-4)

The ruptures within the iambic lines replicate the lovers' emotional torment and final division, testifying to their genuine love for one another. Their love, defended by Merlin in "Vivien" as a naturally occurring attachment, could well fall into Arthur's category of "free love, freely chosen, were best." In both Malory and Tennyson, Guinevere had no choice in the marriage to Arthur.26 However,

26 Compare the transfer of Guinevere from father to husband with that of Enid, who chooses Geraint. Though Geraint is flawed, he is clearly a superior choice to either of Enid's previous suitors, both drunken and violent, and whom she had refused despite potential financial improvements to her impoverished family. Because Enid chooses freely, Tennyson seems to say, the marriage has an inherently greater chance of success than that of Guinevere, who marries without love. The contrast reflects the higher expectations many Victorians had of marriage. Tennyson himself commented on the issue in many poems, including The Princess, in which he has the prince espouse the new goal of marriage:

The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free:

We two will serve them both in aiding her--
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her down--
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her--let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.

The two will become
Tennyson replaces Merlin with Lancelot to escort Guinevere to London so that their falling in love occurs prior to Guinevere's marriage, thereby mitigating somewhat the fact of adultery. By the time she marries, Guinevere is already deeply and naturally in love with Lancelot, so that she and Lancelot are faced with the same dilemma: love or loyalty to Arthur.

In deft touches of psychological realism Tennyson illustrates Guinevere's inability to stop loving Lancelot. Guinevere's sincere repentance is broken in upon unbidden by her recollection of that journey to London with Lancelot:

'But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.

For what is true repentance but in thought--
Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again

The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:
And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more.'

The "surely" in the first line suggests, by its very presence, that Guinevere is not sure that she repents, or she would have said, "But help me, heaven, for I repent."
The impossibility of controlling one's "inmost thoughts"

The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-celled heart beating, with one full stroke,
Life. (243-58; 288-9)

Tennyson comments bitterly on the practice of marriage for profit under the guise of humor in "Northern Farmer, New Style," (1870) in which the father threatens to disinherit the son if he marries a girl who cannot add to their property holdings.
lies behind her next statement. "Sins" still seem pleasant in the midst of repentance, and Guinevere's unconscious use of "us" indicates that she is still emotionally linked to Lancelot rather than to Arthur. Finally, the repetition of "to see him more" proves that she longs to see Lancelot again. Despite her resolve, Guinevere continues to think of Lancelot in a passage that hints at Tennyson's ambivalence:

And ev'n in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
Reputed the best knight and goodliest man.

"Golden days" elicits a positive response, but "from old habit of the mind" suggests that Guinevere has not properly disciplined her habits, a failure that many mid-Victorian moralists and psychologists would note.

Tennyson continues his subtle ambivalence in the narrator's depiction of Guinevere's reverie. It had been "maytime" as they
Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro' the earth.

"Look'd" and "seem'd" add notes of caution, but the overwhelming impression is of paradise, of heaven on earth. In such a setting love could surely bloom as well, Tennyson
suggests, carefully pointing out that "as yet no sin was
dream'd." What follows is not as in Malory the working out
of foredoomed occurrences but individual responses to the
Victorian conflict between love and duty. Although both law
and duty would require Guinevere to be faithful to her
husband, love, Tennyson points out, often adds both the
light and the shadows to life.

And yet it is difficult, too, not to respond
emotionally to Guinevere's recognition of lost
opportunities. It is indeed "too late" to rectify the
failed marriage and its possibilities. In one of the
idylls's most delicately poetic passages, Tennyson shows the
poignancy of Guinevere's belated realization:

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud
'Oh Arthur!' there her voice brake suddenly,
Then--as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Falls in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale--
Went on in passionate utterance:

'Gone--my lord!
Gone through my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.'

(602-9)

We are meant, I think, to remember the failed opportunity
in "Enid," when Enid could utter no tender word to heal
Geraint.
Despite Guinevere's "passionate utterance," however, Tennyson once again demonstrates Guinevere's inability to love Arthur, despite her resolve. After her husband's departure, Guinevere calls Arthur by name only once, thereafter calling him "the King," an impersonal title. Though she says that she desires "the purer life," Guinevere calls Lancelot by name three times in her monologue, including the close:

'It was my duty to have loved the highest: 
It surely were my profit had I known: 
It would have been my pleasure had I seen. 
We needs must love the highest when we see it, 
Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Guinevere's language is that of abstract duty and financial exchange. Her words utterly lack poetry or the "warmth and colour" that she needs and found in Lancelot. Duty says Guinevere should love Arthur; reality says that the marriage exists in the colors in which Guinevere last sees the king: "gray / And grayer."

Are Enid's and Guinevere's failures to be read as a misogynistic comment on woman's failure, as Gerhard Joseph suggests? I think rather that Tennyson gives us his poignant recognition that "We mortal millions live alone," and that the rare opportunity for true fellow feeling can as tragically be lost within marriage as without. It is tempting to speculate here about Tennyson's own marriage,
but Hallam and Emily Tennyson destroyed or so distorted any
evidence that any speculation is suspect. What is clear is
Tennyson's nineteenth-century belief in marriage's potential
as a "locus for companionship and mutual support." Arthur
holds out a hope of a Swedenborgian bodily reunion in
heaven, but Tennyson's emphasis is on earthly potential as
well.

In his invention of the movingly realized innocent,
earnest, and vulnerable little novice, Tennyson comments on
both Arthur and Guinevere. Certainly, as many critics point
out, the young novice serves to show Guinevere her sin, but
Tennyson makes use of her in several other key ways.
Although secluded in a nunnery, the novice knows all the
gossip about Guinevere, Lancelot, and Arthur, thereby
demonstrating the power and rapidity of rumor. The child's
song, "Too late," suggests an unsettling, secular note,
despite its biblical roots. Repentance may not be
sufficient for the bridegroom Christ to allow entrance to
the wedding feast:

'No light had we: for that we do repent
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

Repentance may not bring salvation, just as it cannot redeem
the marriage. The novice's song, coupled with Guinevere's
tentative expression of repentance and her inability to stop
thinking of Lancelot, undercuts any attempt at a
conservative, traditional Christian reading of the idyll's ending.

The little novice also represents the sheltering sisterhood of the nunnery, women who accept Guinevere as one of them in what must have been a healing inclusion. Yet even here Tennyson uses the novice to comment on the world that Arthur has not seen: the harm done by the male fellowship of the Round Table. The child is there because her father, one of Arthur's knights, had "died, / Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,/ And left me" (319-20). This lively and garrulous orphan, through no choice of her own, is immured for life within the quiet black and white confines of narrow nunnery walls. She, too, is in a safe haven, but one without warmth or color.

Finally, Tennyson uses the novice's innocent remarks to comment upon Arthur's character. The child's father had told her that "Of noblest manners ... Sir Lancelot had the noblest," thereby adding to the confusion of interpretation as to whether Arthur is "the highest." What the little novice gives us in her retelling of her father's version of

27 In 1873 Tennyson adds lines to "Vivien" that give her a similar background: "My father died in battle against the King, / My mother on his corpse in open field; / She bore me there, for born from death was I / Among the dead and sown upon the wind" 42-5). There are great hazards in being motherless.

28 See Bogdanow for an elucidation of how the various authors of the Arthur story change the details of the text in order to make either Arthur or Lancelot more or less blamable for the fall of Arthur's kingdom.
Arthur is yet another Arthur, not the same one that Guinevere sees during her marriage or during the farewell scene, not the same one Merlin speaks of in "Vivien," not the same one Lancelot describes in "Elaine," not the one we will see in "The Coming of Arthur" or "The Passing of Arthur." Each of Tennyson's predecessors depicts an Arthur based on the author's concerns. Tennyson gives us multiple Arthurs to illustrate the enigmatic nature of truth. Tennyson's Arthur partakes of the historical Arthur who defies the Romans and conquers the heathen tribes; the Arthur of myth who is doomed to return to "the great deep"; the leader whose throne is decorated with Celtic symbols; Lancelot's heroic warrior-leader; the feminized king who values gentleness; the Christian gentleman who forgives Guinevere; and in the novice's retelling of her father's tale, the hero of mysterious birth, who "by miracle was approved king."

The novice's tale of Arthur's past describes a land "full of signs and miracles and wonders" before the coming of the queen. The child speaks of "little elves of chasm and cleft," "three spirits mad with joy," a "flickering fairy-circle," "a wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand," and "merry bloated things" in the cellars happily pouring wine. Yet these are spoken of as being present at Arthur's coming and not mentioned again. There is an uneasy suggestion that perhaps it was Arthur's coming, not
Guinevere's, that drove them away. The list is conspicuously non-Christian and is reminiscent of the joyous spirits of the woods and waters that were driven away by Christ's birth in Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity."

Richard A. Sylvia points to the novice's version of Arthur as in contrast with Arthur's own account in the farewell speech and with others in the Idylls:

The response to "Guinevere"--and to Idylls generally--should be governed by the indeterminacy that results from multiple tellings, not by the simple--and terrible--authoritarianism of the King (23-28). 29

Sylvia notes that the novice's blame of Guinevere corresponds closely with that of Arthur, a "patriarchally determined attitude toward women and the Queen" (26). What Sylvia does not point out, however, is that the similarity between the two attitudes tends to make Arthur's beliefs seem the simplistic interpretation of a child.

Tennyson has moved, in this analysis of marriage and adultery, from his initial rendering of Arthur'sanguished response to a nuanced and ambivalent look at the multiplicity of factors inherent in the failed marriage and

29 Sylvia suggests that the naive novice's "fairy tale version of Arthurianism suggests that her real motive is the imaginative protection and propagation of her father, who died in battle five years before, and who represents an ideal past she has not herself experienced" (26).
failed kingdom. Arthur, the figure of waning conservative authority, does not recognize that he can no longer control "the world, and all its lights / And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe." Guinevere, in turn, profoundly human in her recognition of life's complexities, has chosen love rather than duty. Tennyson allows us to sympathize with her choice, and yet points out the adultery's tragic consequences in the lives of others.
EPILOGUE

From 1862 to 1885 Tennyson published seven additional idylls, a dedication to Prince Albert, and an epilogue addressed to the Queen, each of which affects, to varying degrees, the dynamics of the 1859 Idylls. The poet’s focus on women’s issues in the early idylls blurs as he widens his lens to include male-dominated metaphysical and political questions. The difficulty of distinguishing true from false, secularization, and the effects of individual action remain key, however, as Tennyson continues to dramatize Romanticism’s legacy, the rise of individualism and its negative components, selfishness and lack of self-restraint.

The shift away from women’s centrality begins in 1862 when Tennyson adds the prefacing "Dedication" to Prince Albert, who had died in December 1861. The four idylls remain unchanged, but the emotional "Dedication" effectively and now explicitly links the medieval content of the Idylls with mid-Victorian male values. What had been in "Guinevere" an important portion in Arthur’s long list of what adulterous Guinevere had destroyed now becomes central to Tennyson’s description of Prince Albert as a chivalrous, nineteenth-century fallen hero. Tennyson praises Albert, "my own ideal knight," by paraphrasing King Arthur’s
description of an ideal knight ("Guinevere" 460-80). Prince
Albert, too, was an exemplar

Who reverenced his conscience as his king;
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong;
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd to it;
Who loved one only and who clave to her.

("Dedication" 6-9)

Arthur's medieval kingdom may have collapsed, Tennyson
suggests, but Arthurian chivalric ideals are still valid
models for nineteenth-century male readers. Chivalry was a
potent source of values for many mid-Victorians, (partly
because of the Idylls) as Mark Girouard demonstrates so
conclusively in The Return to Camelot. Quoting his own King
Arthur, Tennyson declares that Albert, "the flower of men,"
has served "as model for the mighty world" ("Guinevere" 461-2).
Once this "Dedication" precedes the four idylls, the
males' values inevitably assume more prominence, and it
becomes more difficult to applaud the females' defiance of
male authority. It is easier to see Guinevere as a fallen
woman whose immoral example has brought down the kingdom.

Indeed, in the terms set out in the "Dedication,"
women's roles become traditionally subservient. When
Tennyson writes of Queen Victoria in the "Dedication," he
refers to her mainly in terms of her womanly sorrow. She is
urged to "endure" until "God's love" sets her once more at
Albert's side, advice that minimizes Victoria's power as
Queen of England but accentuates her role as the sort of wife Tennyson’s Arthur had hoped for.

When a reader in 1862 moves from the "Dedication" to "Enid," the expectation set up by the idyll’s opening lines is therefore that of chivalric behavior on Geraint’s part and wifely submission on Enid’s:

The brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur’s court,
A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great order of the Table Round,
Had wedded Enid, Yniol’s only child.

After the impact of the "Dedication," a reader is more likely to perceive the idyll as Geraint’s story and incorrectly to reduce Enid to the exemplary patient wife she is in Malory. We read of Geraint’s bravery, his lineage, and his relationship to Arthur and the Round Table. Enid is simply passed from father to husband. In the next two idylls, Merlin and Lancelot may also assume greater importance because of the values espoused in the "Dedication." Finally, because of the poignant reference in the "Dedication" to King Arthur’s chivalric ideals, Arthur’s speech of loss in "Guinevere" perhaps seems more persuasive than does Tennyson’s more delicate rendering of Guinevere’s position.

The tilt toward male issues becomes even more marked with the publication in 1869 of The Holy Grail and Other Poems. In this edition, a notice opposite the title page
changes the earlier "Enid," "Vivien," and "Elaine" to "Geraint and Enid," "Merlin and Vivien," and "Lancelot and Elaine," thereby overtly signalling the increased importance of the male figures and reducing the females to second--or equal--billing. All four early idylls, along with the two new idylls, "The Holy Grail" and "Pelleas and Etтарre," are now subsumed under the sub-heading, "The Round Table" and are framed by "The Coming of Arthur" and "The Passing of Arthur," the latter including the insertion, intact, of "Morte d'Arthur" (1842). Many readers would have been familiar with "Morte" when reading the 1859 Idylls; some therefore had anticipated that the early idylls were part of a larger plan. With the 1869 publication, however, there could be no doubt. The mirrored frame structure, which gives newly commanding significance to Arthur, suggests placement of the Round Table within a teleological framework that develops themes suggested in the 1859 idylls. The unifying themes of adultery, slander, and individual choice in the early idylls now become contributing factors to the larger plan and to the widened investigation of individual responsibility in a world in which traditional authority can no longer dictate truth.

Because "The Coming of Arthur" begins with reference to Guinevere, the "fairest of all flesh on earth," it looks at first as if she might be thematically central. However, Tennyson's purposely misleading beginning is but the first
in a series of profoundly indeterminate episodes that demonstrate Victorian difficulty in fixing truth. The early sub-title "The True and the False" takes on greater dimensions. For example, when Arthur seeks to marry Guinevere, her father, Leodogran, trying to determine the suitability of Arthur's origins, hears three different versions of Arthur's birth and upbringing (none of which corresponds with the little novice's later version in "Guinevere"). Even Arthur's sister is uncertain of the truth. Because there is no authority to whom Leodogran can turn to ascertain truth, he represents the human condition in which an individual must now make decisions based on incomplete or even conflicting evidence.

After clouding what should be the determinable "facts" of birth, Tennyson turns to another category that seems provable: the order of events in time. Tennyson illustrates how chronology, too, is dependent on the perceiver: in "The Coming of Arthur" we read a different chronology from that elucidated by Arthur in "Guinevere." In "Coming," Arthur falls in love with Guinevere, fights her father's foes, marries her, and then "in twelve great battles overcame / The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd" (517-8). In other words, Arthur's greatest successes come after his marriage. Yet in "Guinevere" Arthur tells his queen that the faithfulness of his knights and his success in renowned battles "throve until I wedded thee!" It is as if Tennyson
were using Arthur's changed perceptions of chronology to dramatize Merlin's "ridling triplets":

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

("Coming of Arthur" 405-7)

In addition to seeing three persons' differing versions of a single birth, we now read one person's differing versions of the same sequence of presumably historical events. Truth differs, Tennyson says, not only because of differing perceptions, but also because a single individual's definition of a truth can change with changing circumstances. "True" and "false" become false categories when truth is inevitably colored by perception.

The indeterminacy introduced in 1869 not only enacts the difficulty of fixing truth but also contributes to a possibly more sympathetic reading of the early idylls. If "Every man imputes himself," as Tennyson says, and each of us colors our narrations by what we see and what we need, Geraint's fears become more psychologically realistic. So do Merlin's yielding, Vivien's need for vengeance, and Modred's hatred of Lancelot. "Truth is this to me, and that to thee" also explains why there are so many versions of Arthur's birth and even of his character. To Vivien he is "coward, and fool"; to Merlin, a "stainless gentleman"; to
Lancelot, the greatest "leader"; to Guinevere, "a moral child without the craft to rule."

Tennyson continues to emphasize indeterminacy in the closing frame idyll, "The Passing of Arthur." Tennyson's very method of telling enacts the meaning: the idyll's opening lines tell us that we are reading through the mediation not only of Percivale's extreme old age but also of two additional narrators. Arthur himself does not know "whence I am, nor whether I be King" (145-6). Percivale speaks of what he saw "or thought he saw"; there is left open the possibility of Arthur's return. If the three queens were to tell the story, it would be a different telling. The effect, however, is not that of the inevitable "pastness of the past" but of the potency of the dead past to the present. We are moved--and influenced--Tennyson seems to say, by choices and consequences of long ago.

If the two frame idylls emphasize the enigmatic nature of interpretation, Tennyson uses the two new Round Table idylls of 1869 to demonstrate, with considerable psychological realism, the potentially negative consequences of individualism. Once conventional sources of authority have eroded, an individual's actions have potentially greater effect on others, for good or ill. In "The Coming of Arthur," despite his lack of clearcut patrilineal authority, King Arthur binds the men "by so strait vows to his own self" that "From eye to eye thro' all their Order
flash[ed] / A momentary likeness of the king"; for a space they are "one will" in their dedication to selflessness and purity. In contrast, however, both "The Holy Grail" and "Pelleas and Ettarre" make harsh comment on the potential harm of example and choice, whether religious or sexual.

Tennyson wrote "The Holy Grail" at a time of intense personal and national questioning of religious authority. In 1869 Tennyson was one of the founding members of The Metaphysical Society, established to debate the disparate claims of religion and science. It was a time, too, when the newspapers and journals frequently printed articles about tensions within the Roman Catholic Church, discussions that climaxed with the 1870 papal declaration of infallibility, a decree made necessary by the church’s perception that it was losing authority. In "The Holy Grail" the poet daringly dramatizes how the young can be harmed by the contagion of religious example, here expressed in terms of religious excess. Yet even in this most overtly religious of all the idylls, Tennyson introduces secularized motive.

In "The Holy Grail," Tennyson modifies Malory in order to add sexual frustration as the psychological cause of the young nun’s religious monomania, which results in her fasting-induced vision of the Holy Grail. Tennyson also adds psychological realism to Galahad, whom he uses to exemplify the most extreme response of those Round Table
knights who decide to seek the Grail for themselves. Tennyson makes young Galahad the lonely butt of cruel gossip because of his obscure origins and therefore vulnerable to the young nun's passionate example. The psychological nexus between sexual and religious needs is realized when the nun speaks to Galahad, binding round him a sword-belt she has made of her own hair:

  Saying, 'My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
  O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
  I maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.'
  ....

  She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
  Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
  On him, and he believed in her belief.

  ("Holy Grail" 157-165)

The nun, enacting a variation of Arthur's belief in a maiden's ability to inspire a knight to great deeds, sends Galahad from Arthur's Round Table vows of "strength and will to right the wrong'd" and of "noble deeds" into a selfish quest of religious extremism. Galahad goes to his death. All the others who see the Grail, including the narrator, Percivale, remove themselves from active life in the world. Arthur's "Order" is irrevocably maimed. The individual quest, even in the name of religion, Tennyson says, damages the necessary work in the world of the individual. This secularized sense of diminished use in the world makes even
more poignant Guinevere's reduction to the nun's world of black and white in "Guinevere." "The Holy Grail" may be read as an anti-Papist diatribe or as a polemic to advocate purity. I believe, however, that "The Holy Grail" serves as Tennyson's suggestion that the church can no longer be regarded as an unequivocal guide.

After Tennyson places "Pelleas and Etтарre" immediately after "Lancelot and Elaine," it is no longer possible to read Lancelot's remorse at the end of "Elaine" simply as speculation. In this new idyll, Tennyson dramatizes what Lancelot had feared: a harmful example's brutally destructive effects on an idealistic young knight. Once Lancelot's fears have been explicitly realized, the love between Guinevere and Lancelot is a more psychologically and ethically complicated matter in both "Elaine" and "Guinevere." Young Pelleas, who wishes to be like Arthur, believes literally and unwaveringly in the rigid vows to which Arthur swears him, including the vow "To love one only." Pelleas believes he has found his Guinevere in the person of Ettarre, naively equating her beauty with her soul. He is unable, despite changing circumstances, to re-evaluate his vow to love Ettarre. As a result, when Pelleas learns that both Ettarre and Gawain have broken their vows to him and then learns that Lancelot and Guinevere have broken their vows as well, he flees into the dark, unmanned and desolate, unable to accept the shadows of life.
Tennyson, the father of two teenaged sons, must have been especially sensitive to reality's bruising of the idealistically vulnerable. It is important to note, however, that is is not just the unworthy women who destroy young Pelleas. Blame rests, too, on the rigidity of Arthur's expectations along with the widely differing sexual transgressions of Gawain and Lancelot. What Tennyson gives us is the murkiness of moral choice. Truth lies not in Arthur's unblinking bipolar categories of true or false, but in the ability to distinguish between the sexual "sins" of a Gawain or of a Lancelot. The dilemma, however, as Tennyson's Lancelot recognizes, is that the vulnerable can be tainted by a wide range of examples.

With the 1869 publication, what seemed complete in 1859 is newly complete. The effect of the Idylls is now more somber, ending as it does with the passing of Arthur and his ideals, but the work is richer as well. The one "good custom" of rigid Arthurian vows has given way to individual moral choice, with all its lights and shadows, all its wealth and woe. Individual choice, incorrectly made, however, facilitates the return of the beast.

With the publication in 1871 of "The Last Tournament," Tennyson demonstrates the complete breakdown of order. Disillusioned Pelleas has set up his own Round Table in the north, swearing his men to the opposite of Arthur's vows. We learn that Tristram has mocked the king and his
impossible vows, and that he has used "crowned authority" to justify his adultery with Isolt. In Tristram's dream (in the **Idylls** dreams usually speak truth), we see that Arthur's control over his new knights is so diminished that they break all chivalrous precepts, killing women and children as well as Pelleas's armed men. Camelot's final tournament, called the "Tournament of Dead Innocence," coincides with the breakdown of community. Disorder breeds disorder so that by idyll's end, when even Lancelot does not enforce jousting rules, all of Camelot is soiled and without order. Once Tennyson places "The Last Tournament" after "Pelleas and Ettarre" and before "Guinevere," destruction of the kingdom is so well documented that Arthur's accusations in "Guinevere" seem far more accurate than they did in 1859 when "Elaine" was the immediately preceding idyll. It now becomes more difficult to sympathize with Guinevere or to remember the demoralizing roles of gleeful court gossip, deliberate slander, and unscrupulous vindictiveness.

Only two more idylls remained to be added, "Gareth and Lynette," published in book form along with "The Last Tournament" in 1872, and "Balin and Balan," written in 1872-4 but not published until 1885. Tennyson places "Gareth and Lynette," a story with structure parallel to that of "Pelleas and Ettarre," after "The Coming of Arthur" and before "Geraint and Enid," at a time in the chronology when there are as yet no rumors about Lancelot and
Guinevere. "Gareth and Lynette" closely follows Malory; the ending is happy, if more enigmatic than that in the source. This new idyll provides balance but does not much influence the reading of the 1859 idylls. Its composition so close in time to that of "The Last Tournament" and "Balin and Balan" does prove, however, that the last two dark idylls are not reflections of Tennyson's personal gloom, but rather are necessary ingredients in the unfolding drama, just as is the sunnier "Gareth and Lynette."

In 1873 Tennyson published an amended version of the Idylls, to which he added "To the Queen" as an epilogue that exhorts Queen Victoria to recognize, protect, and expand England's imperial greatness. Tennyson now addresses her in the role of monarch rather than as sorrowing wife, thereby recognizing both her power and woman's role in empire building. Because "To the Queen" appears at the end of the work, however, the suggestion of woman's role seems less important than does the epilogue's explicit comment on the ending of "The Passing of Arthur." As in the "Dedication," Tennyson ties the Idylls explicitly to nineteenth-century England. If, in spite of the many ills of the country, "crowning common sense" prevails, the Republic can avoid the desolation of "The darkness of that battle in the West, / Where all of high and holy dies away" (65-6). The optimism is guarded. The individual must make the correct choices. The "if" is typically Tennysonian, but it is also
realistically based, given the changing conditions in
England and the political and social upheavals in Europe as
well. "To the Queen" underscores, but does not appreciably
change, the reading of the 1859 Idylls or the work as a
whole.

The appearance in 1885 of "Balin and Balan," however,
changes considerably the impact of the 1859 or even of the
enlarged 1873 "Merlin and Vivien," now read immediately
following "Balin and Balan." The new idyll is similar to
the story of Pelleas in its documentation of the destruction
of a young knight who is first changed for the better
through his admiration of the pure Guinevere, and then
regresses to uncontrolled, destructive rage when he is
disillusioned of his belief in the queen.

What crucially changes the reading of the 1859 Idylls,
however, is Tennyson’s depiction of Vivien in "Balin and
Balan." She is now overtly a harlot who has sexual
encounters with Garlon in a cave called the "Mouth of Hell."
She confirms Balin’s vague suspicions about Lancelot and
Guinevere by means of false eyewitness testimony, thereby
spurring Balin to the fury that causes his death. When
Tennyson places this Vivien just before "Merlin and Vivien,"
he makes it impossible any longer to think of Vivien as the
somewhat justified female version of the king who imprisoned
his wife, impossible to think favorably of her as the newly
empowered woman in the world. She is no longer the
"naughty" one whom Tennyson's friend, the Reverend Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol, had liked best in 1859. Vivien is now the female version of a Modred or Mark, the individual who lives for self, who recognizes no moral strictures imposed from within or without, and who is utterly destructive. Balin, who represents the passion and willfulness so difficult to restrain in human nature, destroys his self-controlled other self, Balan, as a direct result of Guinevere's falseness and Vivien's lies. This final idyll demonstrates both the dualism of human nature and how an individual's self-centered actions can tip the balance of control in others. The new individualism fosters choice, but one's choices can influence another's "doom."

The representation in "Balin and Balan" of unrestrained individualism would be utterly bleak were it not for the fact that seven idylls follow it in the completed series. Tennyson implies in "The Passing of Arthur" that a different "good custom" will eventually return with a new Arthur for a changing world. From 1856 to 1874, however, Tennyson could see the danger to community in what he perceived as a rising tide of individualism, and he modified not only his sources, but his own earlier idylls, in response to the heady challenges and potential dangers of democratization.
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