TREATMENT OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY IN THE POEMS OF TENNYSON

ABSTRACT

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
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BY
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ABSTRACT

The present thesis attempts to bring out the impact of Tennyson's classical learning on his sensibility and his response to it in his use of Greek mythology in his poems. Such a study has been long overdue and there is a need for an exploration of Tennyson's deep involvement in and his rapport with the past, often resulting in his ruminative absorption in it. More often than not he sought comfort of the classics, especially Greek mythology, during the trying periods of his life. Its contemplation helped him to analyse his own situation objectively, for Greek myths were a refuge for him from the harsh realities of life. They invigorated him and helped him to resolve his tensions.

Tennyson has written thirteen poems on Greek myths. They are, chronologically, "Hero to Leander," "The Sea-Fairies," "Ilion, Ilion," "Oenone," "The Hesperides," "The Lotos-Bathers," "Ulysses," "Tithonus," "Tiresias," "Semele," "Demeter and Persephone," "Parnassus," and "The Death of Oenone." They have been divided into two broad categories for the purpose of this study, viz., poems on mythical personages and poems on mythical places. The
poems on mythical personages have been further subdivided, on the basis of some formal and thematic criteria, into three sets:


(3) Odeitations on life and death by some Greek mythical heroes: "Ulysses," "Tithonus," and "Tiresias."

There are just two poems on Greek mythical places, "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus." They form the fourth set.

The study is divided into six chapters. The above four sets of poems are analysed in the first four chapters which are entitled "The Choric Songs," "Poems with Greek Mythical Heroines as Protagonists," "Poems with Greek Mythical Heroes as Protagonists," and "Poems on Mythical Places and Miscellaneous Uses of Greek Mythology." The fifth chapter is entitled "Form and Style," and the sixth, the "Conclusion," recapitulates the general observations derived from our analysis in the foregoing chapters.
Chapter I deals with Tennyson's inner conflict between art-for-art's sake and the artist's social responsibility. Its genesis lay in his first interaction with the world at large, beyond the insulated world of Somersby, when he entered Cambridge and was absorbed in the coterie of the Apostles. They impressed upon him the onus of the high calling of a poet and asked him to write for the moral edification of society. The mission imposed on him was new. Ostensibly he agreed, but inwardly he was caught in a conflict depicted in "The Palace of Art," "Sense and Conscience," "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," and "The Lotos-Eaters." The two non-mythical poems ("The Palace of Art" and "Sense and Conscience"), express his overt agreement with the Apostles, but the three mythical ones are Tennyson's logical, cogent, sequential defense and defiance of the constraint imposed upon his genius.

Chapter II discusses Tennyson's concept of womanhood. He generally portrays two types of women, the femme fatale and the ideal women. But the fatal women in this set of poems ("Hero to Leander," "Oenone," "Semele," "Demeter and Persephone," and "The Death of Oenone") are rather mild, and in the nature of foils to his ideal women, modelled on his mother whom he adored. The poems of this
set, except "Hero to Leander," are about married love, for their protagonists are sedate wives who are victims of the indiscretions of their husbands. Tennyson's attitude towards love, marriage, and motherhood in these poems is the same as in "The Princess."

Chapter III reflects Tennyson's concept of life through his soulful cogitations on the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam. The mythical poems inspired by this tragedy are "Ulysses," "Tithonus," and "Tiresias." The concept of life in this trilogy is value-based; a long life is not necessarily desirable, just as a short one is neither to be pitied nor feared. The protagonists of this set of poems are men of action. When they are unable to live up to their ideals of life, they prefer death.

Ruminations on the artist's social responsibility which is the theme of the first chapter, persist at a subterraneous level in all the poems of chapters II and III.

The set of poems, "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus," gives a cue to Tennyson's secret ambition of writing an immortal epic, and the final blighting of that hope in Chapter IV. It also throws light on Tennyson's other uses of Greek myths and epics.
Chapter V deals with the form, style, and technique Tennyson adopted in these poems. He makes use of personal allegory, dramatic monologue, and the narrative forms, and employs iterative symbolic images which contribute to the cohesiveness of the poems. He experiments with combinations and permutations of various stylistic devices and techniques in them. He uses nature both as background, and symbol. His landscapes and sea-scapes are a blend of realism and scholarship for he adapts his first-hand experience of nature to make it conform to the topography portrayed by the ancients.

Chapter VI sums up the conclusions of the study. The investigation establishes that Tennyson uses Greek mythology for ornamentation in his non-mythical poems, for translation of passages from Greek epics into English, and for subjects of his poems. The discussion shows the thematic importance and artistic refinement of Tennyson's Greek mythical poems. The salient features of his mode of handling the myths are: his originality in using them by focussing on a mood hardly touched upon in the source myths; his introduction of modifications in the myths to make them suit the themes of his poems; his endowing these poems with a
contemporaneous touch by making them reflect some of the major issues of the age; and his propensity to experiment in form and style.

We find that Tennyson's poems on Greek myths are multidimensional. He projects in them the past, the present, as well as himself, with superb craftsmanship. These poems are a veritable repository of his profound experience and yet have an unmistakable classical flavour.
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feel sure that her unseen presence and her blessings have
all along been with me in my endeavour.
ABBREVIATIONS

The following studies, which have been frequently referred to in the present thesis, have been abbreviated as under:


Tennyson occupies a unique position in the history of English Literature in its transition from the Romantic Age to the Victorian period. Grierson calls him "the heir of the Romantic Revival" by virtue of the age he was born in and because of his own sensibility and imagination. He had "outgrown Byron, he found Shelley thin, but he had learned something from Coleridge and Keats, and tried to learn something from Wordsworth; and he had a solider backing of classical scholarship than any of them." His interest in the classics, however, was not confined to mere scholarship. Its mythology had a special significance for him and he wrote a number of poems with myths as his subjects. One can guess the importance myths had for him from a verse in his prize-winning juvenile poem "Timbuctoo." He affirms that a "fable" is a repository of "men's hope and fears":

All the intricate and labyrinthine veins
Of the great vine of Fable, which, outspread
With growth of shadowing leaf and clusters rare,
Reacheth to every corner under Heaven,
Deep-rooted in the living soil of truth;
So that men's hopes and fears take refuge in
The fragrance of its complicated glooms,
And cool impaleched twilights.

(ll. 217-224)

2. Ibid.
3. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 180. All subsequent citations from Tennyson's poems are from this book. Hereafter only line numbers will be given before the quoted verses.
What Tennyson says of fables is true of his own poems on Greek mythology. They embody the innermost secrets of his soul. They are a veiled expression of his own experiences, tensions and attitude towards art and life. An imaginative restructuring of situations that possibly triggered off the inspiration which blended the childhood haven of legend and lore with the immediate problems that confronted him reveals that, though bunched together in his early years, and sparsely and unevenly distributed from his middle years onwards, these poems invariably reflect the crises that beset him from time to time. They also have a metaphoric and symbolic unity. Poetic composition on the subject of Greek myths was not an academic exercise or recreation for him as it may have sometimes been for some erudite Victorian poets. It can be said that there was a very strong personal bond between the poet and these myths from his early childhood. He was initiated in Greek

4. "Swinburne was not interested in Atlanta, and still less in Erechtheus (whoever he was). Arnold admired Empedocles, as Tennyson admired Lucretius; but he cared nothing for Merope. He had to write a long preface explaining the story, and its previous treatments, and his reasons for choosing it; but its very style, so dull and dutiful... shows that the whole thing was a boring task for him."

classic by his father and was so fascinated by its mythology that he often lost himself in reverie, seeing in his mind's eye the image of the Trojan women "floating along the streets of Troy with their long dresses flying out behind them -- windy Troy." In a fragmentary poem, "Lines," he reminisces his day-dreams about Iliion on the shore of Kablethorpe:

Here often, when a child, I lay reclined,
I took delight in this locality,
Here stood the infant Iliion of the mind,
And here the Grecian ships did seem to be.

(11. 1-4).

Such ruminative absorption transcended within him all sense of space and time and brought about an identification of the poet's self with mythical personages. This emotive involvement is a distinctively significant and unique feature of his treatment of Greek myths. It can be said that in later life, too, they were for him a refuge from the harsh realities of the world, a potion that invigorated his supped energy and provided for him a region of calm.

5. Hallam Tennyson writes about Rev. Dr. Tennyson's contribution to his sons' education:

No doubt the children profited by the dominating force of their father's intellect. A Hebrew and Syriac scholar, he perfected himself in Greek, in order that he might teach his sons.

A Memoir, I, p. 16.

contemplation on matters of serious import. These poems are therefore crucial to an understanding of the poet.

Tennyson wrote thirteen poems on Greek mythical subjects. They are — "Hero to Leander"; "The Sea-Fairies"; "Ilion, Ilion"; "The Hesperides"; "The Lotos-Eaters"; "Oenone"; "Ulysses"; "Tithonus"; "Tiresias"; "Semele"; "Parnassus"; "Demeter and Persephone"; and "The Death of Oenone." A striking aspect of Tennyson criticism with regard to these poems is that though few in number they have not yet been studied together exclusively. Their numerical paucity seems to account for the scant attention paid to them as a group.

Two out of even the thirteen poems listed above, "Ilion, Ilion" and "Semele," are incomplete pieces. This reduces the number of the complete ones to just eleven. They have, till now, received inadequate critical attention because their group identity has remained camouflaged by Tennyson's classicism.

7. It is noteworthy that Sir Charles Tennyson, in his preface to Six Tennyson Essays (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1954), p. vii, writes that in this work he tries to deal with aspects of Tennyson's poetry "which seem hitherto to have received inadequate consideration." But even he does not include Tennyson's Greek mythological poems amongst them.
There are articles on Tennyson's classical poems but since the critics have in view the wider canvas of Tennyson's classical tradition, their scope is not limited to the poet's treatment of Greek mythology. They take within their purview a broader frame inclusive of Tennyson's poems on classical writers like Lucretius and Virgil, his adaptation of classical prosody to English verse, and reflections of his classical scholarship in different ways in his non-mythical poems. This diffuseness of outlook detracts from a fuller attention to the group of poems on Greek myths. There are random studies of individual poems, singly, or in combination with other mythical or non-mythical ones. Apart from this, they have, at times, been studied together.


All these critics have missed the cohesiveness, the metaphoric unity, and the note of sustained personal allegory in these poems.

9. "Ulysses" can be said to have received the greatest critical attention.
as part of a larger whole, as a link in the chain of a historical study of an era, or as an aspect of literature with Greek mythology or classicism as its main theme. Some of these studies are: Mythology and the Romantic Tradition by Douglas Bush, The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature by Gilbert Highet, and The Victorians and Ancient Greece by Richard Jenkyns. In Classical Echoes in Tennyson, W.L. Huxter shows the influence of the classics on the whole corpus of Tennyson's poetry.

Besides, critics like Hugh I'Anson Fausset, Harold Nicolson, P.F. Baum, J.H. Buckley, Philip Henderson and Christopher Ricks have merely touched upon certain aspects of these poems in passing in their assessment of Tennyson as a poet. However, the excellence and aesthetic quality of these poems have, by and large, been accepted by the twentieth-century critics. Clyde De Vane, in his introduction to Selections from Tennyson, says that whenever Tennyson treated the same

10. Tennyson's poems on Greek mythology were criticised rather vehemently in the nineteenth century. This was mainly due to the rapid spread of education which resulted in an evergrowing reading public which wanted its leading poet to become their prophet and their guide. Tennyson was pressurized by the Apostles, the reviewers and the general public to shoulder the social responsibility of improving their morals. E.F. Shannon in Tennyson and the Reviewers (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 86, 87, 88, writes that Tennyson's predilection for antiquity and the classics brought forth complaints that he was merely "the poet of scholars, and not, as might have been... the poet of the people." Critics accused him of frittering away the rare gift of genius "given to a man for a high and holy purpose..." and charged him for forgetting his "mission" as a poet and complained that he hardly alluded to the era.

It can be said that distance in time has made the perspective clearer and enabled the twentieth-century critics to gauge the true worth of these poems.
mood or subject in a modern form and again through a classical myth, his classical poem is almost invariably better.\textsuperscript{11} It is, therefore, surprising that a comprehensive study of poems under reference has not yet been attempted. Poems such as "Hero to Leander," "The Sea-Fairies," "Tiresias," and "The Death of Oenone" have often been considered as his minor poems, while "Ilion, Ilion," "Parnassus," and "Semele" have not been commented upon though "Semele" shares the allegoric and symbolic features of his mythical poems on personages. The absence of any study on these poems as a cohesive group has motivated this investigation. The image of Tennyson as a poet of Greek myths has till now been an image in a silhouette against the background of the glowing tributes paid to "In Memoriam" and his other lyrical pieces. This study is an attempt to illumine the shaded mythic vision of the poet to discover his deep insight into the nature of Greek myths and his deftness in handling them.

These poems have been divided into two broad categories for the purpose of this study, viz., poems on mythical personages and poems on mythical places. They have been further regrouped into four cohesive thematic groups or sets. Each group has been given a heading which is based on a

common formal and thematic feature of the poems of the group or set. These sets are— (1) **The Choric Songs**: "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," and "The Lotos-Eaters." These poems comprise songs sung by a group of mythical characters. (2) **Poems with Greek Mythical Heroines as Protagonists**: "Hero to Leander," "Oenone," "Semle," "Demeter and Persephone," and "The Death of Oenone." The dominant characteristic of these poems is a kind of lament by some heroines from the classics. (3) **Poems with Greek Mythical Heroes as Protagonists**: "Ulysses," "Tithonus," and "Tiresias." These poems are reflections on life by some heroes from the classics. (4) **Poems on Greek Mythical Places**: "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus." This pair is seemingly related to mythical places instead of mythical personages and hence is distinct from the foregoing sets on personages.

Besides using Greek myths as subjects for his poems, Tennyson used them for ornamentation in his non-mythical poems. He also tried his hand at translating some passages from Greek epics.

This study is an endeavour to evaluate Tennyson’s poems on Greek myths and show how the poet vitalizes these hoary tales of the past with a new life. These poems have
been analysed in the context of his other works and major contemporary issues. He makes them reflect some of the salient controversies of his age, viz., (a) social responsibility of the artist, (b) the problem of love and marriage, especially with relation to women, within the Victorian framework of society, (c) the growing vista of knowledge, the theory of evolution and its impact on society, and (d) the age-old conflict between Hellenism and Hebraism as envisaged in the Victorian era. While (b) and (c) are discussed at length in the second and third chapters of the thesis, (a) is the theme of the first chapter. Both (a) and (d) are, however, subterraneously present in nearly all his poems on personages. Since the conflict between Hellenism and Hebraism has been given sporadic attention in the main body of the present study it needs some elaboration at this stage.

Jenkyns says that some of the greatest Victorians experienced, not always consciously, a conflict between their passion for ancient Greece and their Christianity. He illustrates this with the following lines from a sonnet by Newman:

Why, wedded to the Lord, still yearns my heart
Towards these scenes of ancient heathen fame?  12

This conflict was not new, for the two currents of Hebraism and Hellenism flowed side by side, though in varying degrees, from Renaissance onwards. Schiller had initiated the controversy again with "The Gods of Greece" (1788). Hellenism, with its mythology, came in for a great deal of criticism in the Victorian era. The depictions of the pagan world as enchanting visions of "heaven on earth were false in fact and morally dangerous." Novels like The Last Days of Pompeii (1834), Hypatia (1853), Ben Hur (1880), and Quo Vadis (1896), show the immorality of the pagans and try to establish that Rome fell because it was an immoral pagan empire. Tennyson did not join the fray. But his mythical poems reflect his attitude towards paganism and Christianity. As stated earlier, these poems mirror the poet's innermost tensions and aspirations. It can be said that Tennyson's treatment of Greek mythology brings forth his creative genius at its best.

The present study is divided into six chapters. The first three chapters are devoted to a detailed discussion of the first three sets of poems mentioned earlier and are

entitled: "The Choric Songs," "Poems with Greek Mythical Heroines as Protagonists," and "Poems with Greek Mythical Heroes as Protagonists." The fourth chapter, "Poems on Mythical Places and Miscellaneous Uses of Greek Mythology," deals with the fourth set of poems as well as Tennyson's dabbling in translation of passages from Greek epics into English and his use of Greek mythology for ornamentation in his mythical and non-mythical poems. The fifth chapter consists of an analysis of the form, style, technique and Tennyson's experiments in it, in those highly symbolical mythological poems and is entitled "Form and Style." The sixth chapter, "Conclusion," sums up the analysis and deductions arrived at from the investigation.

Relevant excerpts from translations of the source myths have been given in the Appendix followed by a select bibliography.

15. I have taken the liberty to club the poems on mythical places with Tennyson's other uses of myths as I thought this set as rather insufficient for a full chapter.
The poems comprising this group are amongst the earliest Greek mythological poems of Tennyson, composed about the same time, though published within the space of a few years in two different collections of poems, namely, Poems Chiefly Lyrical (1830) and Poems (1833). They are "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," and "The Lotus Eaters." These poems belong to the period generally known as Tennyson's Cambridge days, i.e., from Nov. 1827 to March 1831, though many critics feel that this should extend until Hallam's death. This phase is extremely important as it was Tennyson's first exposure to the world beyond the narrow confines of his family circle. He found himself amidst a new set of energetic young people, the Apostles, and their ideologies, which were in direct conflict with the poet's natural propensities.

Before joining Cambridge Tennyson's acquaintance with the world was limited mainly to Somersby, a village tucked away in some remote corner of Lincolnshire, with its brook flowing through its upland valley, of the 'ridged wolds' that rose above his home, of the mountain-glen and the snowy summits of his early dreams, and of beings, heroes and fairies, with
which his imaginary world was peopled. 1

Apart from this, he had the company of books in his father's library. His poetic talent, with this limited exposure, flowed mainly in two channels, not always strictly separate, because escapist poetry formed part of both. They are:

(a) Poems suffused with rich descriptions, embodying his "passion for the past" expressed through themes of history, or the classical and romantic lore.

(b) Melancholy poems expressing the sorrow of his heart.

(a) These are poems of sumptuous thumbnail descriptions with vivid and sensitive "embroideries" in words, and his "passion for the past," expressed through re-creating themes of history and of the classical and romantic lore. A glance at his poems till 1827, when he joined Cambridge, reveals that they were mainly derivative in nature, written on themes taken from books on history, folklore, or legends, e.g., "Written by an Exile of Bassorah," "The Druid's Prophesies," "The Expedition of Nadir Shah," "The High Priest to Alexander," "Mithridates Presenting Berenice with the Cup of Poison,"

1. A Memoir, I, pp. XII-XIII.

Paden observes that in this "most inaccessible and sparsely populated region of Lincolnshire ... young Tennyson seems to have had no regular companions of their own age; from the servants and villagers they were separated by a consciousness of caste. Their knowledge of people was rather narrowly limited to the immediate family; a fact which implies that the lives of the young Tennyson boys were dominated by the figure of their father."

(Paden, Tennyson in Egypt,
etc. "Oh Ye Wild Winds, that Roar and Rave" tries to project in a cogent form the fascination he had for the past and the strange way in which he said he had felt voices speaking to him on the wind. The phrase "far far away" had a spell-like hold on him, so much so that in ripe old age he made it the theme of a poem and had it set to music.

(b) The melancholy poems were the uncontrolled effusion of his suffering heart. Life at home was not a happy one, partly because of pecuniary bottlenecks but largely because of the uncongenial domestic environment.

Young Alfred's "adolescence was dominated by the stern figure of Rev. Dr. Tennyson -- tutor, father and priest -- a man given to spells of neurotic despair," and Tennyson being a sensitive and obedient child was "scared by his father's fits of despondency" and often wished to die, to sleep for ever, for to wake was depressing.

In "Memory [Aye me]" he says:

Why at break of cheerful day
Doth my spirit faint away
Like a wanderer in the night?

Why in visions of the night

2. The poem was begun in Sept. 1888 and published in 1889. (See The Poems of Tennyson, p. 1405).


4. Ibid.
Am I shaken with delight
Like a lark at dawn of day?

(ll. 29-34).

The poems composed in such moods were invariably tinged with death wish, e.g., "Remorse," "I Wander in Darkness and Sorrow," "The Grave of a Suicide," "Unhappy Man, Why Wander There," "No More," etc. But often, brooding over his lot, he would slip into his world of dreams where

All adown the busy ways
Come sunny faces of lost days,
Long to mouldering dust consigned,
Forms which live but in the mind.

("In Deep and Solemn Dreams," ll. 13-16).

It may be said that escaping into a dream world of the past from the harsh realities of the present became a habit with him.

Tennyson's entry into Cambridge, under the given circumstances, was a landmark in his poetic career. When he joined Cambridge he was a young boy with an exceptionally keen sensibility and an unquestionable genius for poetic composition. His poems reflected the isolated, insulated Somersby that he knew, untouched by the hustle and bustle of the outside world. His genius was surprisingly facile.
in luxuriant descriptions of Nature and in composing poems on themes far removed from the concerns of his time. He believed that the work of the poet was to suggest the beauty of virtue to men, but chiefly by perpetuating this lovely paradise, adding perhaps another rose-blown arbour, or a fresh fountain, where ageless nymphs might trip down and unveil their limbs in the moon of an eternal summer.

Poems like "The Merman" and "The Mermaid" are poems of sheer delight and escape from the realities of life:

I would sit and sing the whole of the day;  
I would fill the sea-halls with a voice of power;  
But at night I would roam abroad and play  
With the mermaids in and out of the rocks,  
Dressing their hair with the white sea-flower;  
And holding them back by their flowing locks  
I would kiss them often under the sea....

("The Merman," ll. 9-15).

Escaping from the mundane realities of life into such a fairy world was a habit formed at Somersby. He felt he could live there for ever. But his Apostle friends, Blackesley, Trench, Maurice, Hallam and the rest, thought otherwise. They enjoined on him the ethics of art. They had very high ideals about the vocation of a poet, as is evident from what F.D. Maurice wrote in "The Athenæum":

The mind of a poet of the highest order is the most perfect that can belong to man. There is no intellectual power, and no state of feeling, which may not be the instrument of poetry, and in proportion as reason, reflection, or sympathy is wanting, in the same degree is the poet restricted in his mastery over the resources of his art. The poet is the great interpreter of nature's mysteries, not by narrowing them into the grasp of understanding, but by connecting each of them with the feeling which changes doubt to faith.... He sympathizes with all phenomena by his intuition of all principles; and his mind is a mirror which catches and images the whole scheme and working of the world. He comprehends all feelings, though he cherishes only the best.... He cannot be a scourer, or selfish, or luxurious and sensual. He cannot be untrue, for it is his high calling to interpret those universal truths which exist on the earth only in the forms of his creation.

The Apostles felt that it did not behove the artist to give himself up to the mere pleasure of creation. Although the "Aesthetic Movement" whose "roots lie in the German theory, proposed by Kant (1790), that aesthetic contemplation is 'disinterested', indifferent both to the reality and to the utility of the beautiful object..." did not enter England before the last part of the nineteenth century; its vogue on the continent might have made it a subject of debate among the Cambridge undergraduates. Tennyson appears to be easily influenced by them, for he composed a number of

6. Quoted by Paden, op.cit., pp. 149-150.

poems on the sanctity, sublimity, and the power of the poet, reflecting in them the large claims for poetry current in Cambridge. "To Poesy [O God make this age great], " "The Poet’s Song," and "To Poesy [Religion be Thy Sword]," a joint composition of Tennyson and Hallam, are some such poems. It seems, however, that the Apostles were not quite satisfied with what Tennyson wrote, even though, ostensibly, he agreed with them. Their arguments to convince him, continued. Once Trench said to him, "Tennyson we cannot live in art," The poet’s response was in the form of a poem prefixed to his allegory, "The Palace of Art," stating that it was prompted by his (Trench’s) remark.

He said it was about

A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
That did love Beauty only, (Beauty seen
In all varieties of mould and mind)
And Knowledge for its beauty; or if Good,
Good only for its beauty ....

(ll. 5-9).

This was a total submission to their will. Baum, however, points out an interesting fact about "The Palace of Art." He says that although Tennyson condemned in it art for art’s sake, in practice he seemed to adhere to it, for the poem has "an explicit moral, characteristically Victorian

(the compromise) and confused (because most of the poem is on art's side and the poet is not)." Tennyson's explanation of "The Lady of Shalott" to Alfred Ainger, that it was about coming "out of the region of shadows into that of realities," becomes extremely significant in this context. It might be taken to imply that perhaps opting for reality, for the poet, was akin to opting for death. Since "The Lady of Shalott" also belongs to the Cambridge days, it can be treated as a work throwing light on this mood. Thus, in "The Palace of Art," in spite of his assertion, and in other non-mythical poems, without any such assertion, Tennyson gives himself away, though he seems to be on the defensive, almost accepting a weakness he feels ashamed of. Baum illuminates the truth about the poet with his comment on Yeats's judgement of Tennyson. He first quotes Yeats:

The poetry which found expression in the poetry of writers like Browning and Tennyson, and even of writers, who are seldom classed with them, like Swinburne, and like Shelley in his earlier years, pushed its limits as far as possible, and tried to absorb into itself the science and politics, the philosophy and morality of its time; but a new poetry, which is always contracting its limits, has grown up under the shadow of the old. Rossetti began it, ... 12

and then reflects:

Rossetti did not exactly begin it, for it was already in Tennyson (but had in some degree been driven out of him by the reviewers) and of course had existed long before Tennyson...13

The Apostles, however, took upon themselves the responsibility of driving it out even before the reviewers entered the scene. Critics have realized and accepted that the natural instinct of the poet lay in the sheer joy of art. A great deal of his descriptions of nature are "external and pictorial," "just as a great deal of his 'music' is music only, without the depth which distinguishes melody from a mere tune." Baum continues that such admired lines as "The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm," "The moan of doves in immemorial elms,/ And murmuring of innumerable bees--" suggest Tennyson's leanings towards art-for-art's sake which he seemed to severely condemn.14 Aubrey de Vere says about "The Palace of Art," a poem supposedly upholding responsible art, that, "nearly every stanza is a picture condensed within four lines. It describes a Palace not a Temple, one created by the imagination exclusively for its own delight...."15

Tennyson used to say that the source of the power

of his poetry is described in "Merlin and the Gleam," where "Gleam" stands for the poet's "higher poetic imagination." Uptil now the "Gleam" had helped Tennyson to escape from the trying present. The habit persisted during the Cambridge days, for we find that the Cambridge days, too, were fraught with problems. Arthur Hallam urged him for "an honest examination of things as they were; he would beg his friend not to flee the Real in his love for the Ideal... and he would argue that 'where the ideas of time and sorrow are not, and sway not the soul with power, there is no true knowledge in Poetry or Philosophy.' "

Tennyson's reason would agree but his heart would not. The struggle is depicted in an unfinished allegory -- "Sense and Conscience." "Conscience" is projected as a giant, drugged by "Sense." "Memory" reminds the giant of his plight and he weeps tears of blood. In "The Palace of Art," the "soul"


17. Tennyson wrote to his aunt, Mrs. Russell, from Cambridge: "I am sitting owl-like and solitary in my rooms (nothing between me and the stars but a stratum of tiles) ....What a pity it is that the golden days of the Faerie are over! What a misery not to be able to consolidate our gossamer dreams into reality!"

(A Memoir, I, p. 34).


It is ironical that even Hallam, in his zeal for the social-responsibility of a poet and the relevance of his creation to the time, overlooked completely that it was real sorrow that swayed the soul of the poet into composition.
is made a sinful "soul" which first rejoices and makes "merry" in its own world of art but in the end feels lonely and repents.

The 'Choric Songs', (i.e., "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," and "The Lotos-Eaters"), are related in theme to "The Palace of Art," "Sense and Conscience," "The Poet" and "The Poet's Mind." The three mythical poems embody the conflict between Tennyson the pure artist and Tennyson the poet who is but lately made aware of his responsibility towards society. These 'Choric Songs' reflect his efforts at resolving the tussle between the pure artist and the poet through the medium of myths.

The subject of "The Sea-Fairies" is drawn from the Odyssey and is also influenced by Croker's Fairy Legends.¹⁹ The poem is about Ulysses and his crew sailing past the island of the Sirens on their way to Ithaca.

Homer's Circe had warned Ulysses that the Sirens, with their power of irresistibly sweet music, enchant the mariners on the high seas, and once they have the unwary sailors on their shore they kill them. Homer says, the "verdant meads" have become "white" with "human bones" and the ground is polluted "with human gore" which floats on the "dreadful shore."²⁰ Homer does not describe these

¹⁹. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 254.
seducresses and leaves their appearance to the imagination of the readers. Tennyson describes them but his Sea-Fairies do not show any trace of their bloody aspects. They are depicted as rather "innocent creatures, almost angels in appearance, who invite not to sin, but to a carefree holiday." There is no suggestion whatsoever of human carnage tainting the shore with "gore." The poet does not even call them Sirens. He gives them a new name — 'Sea-Fairies' — and makes them sing:

Whither away from the high green field,  
and the happy blossoming shore?  
Day and night to the billow the fountain calls:  
Down shower the gambolling waterfalls  
From wandering over the lea:

(ll. 8-11).

Tennyson's mariners are "weary," yet "wary" as they sail slowly and see "Betwixt the green brink and the running foam,\textit{/} Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms prest/ To little harps of gold...." (ll. 2-4). The opening stanza provides the setting and context of the situation and then the actual song, with its insistent invitation, takes over. By the time the poem comes to the last stanza the song-filled call of the Sea-Fairies assumes undertones of almost a challenge to the stoic self-control of the sailors.

with the question:

Who can light on as happy a shore
All the world o'er, all the world o'er?
Whither away? listen and stay: mariner,
mariner, fly no more.

(ll. 40-42).

They ask the mariners to take heed:

0 listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
With pleasure and love and jubilee:
0 listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
When the sharp clear twang of the golden chords
Runs up the ridged sea.

(ll. 35-39).

The lush green shore contrasts with the "ridged" briny sea
the mariners are ploughing with their oars. The gay life
of the Sea-Fairies, with their "sweet faces," "rounded arms"
and "little harps of gold" press to their bosom is in
opposition to the fatigued state of the mariners; the
playful, carefree, flirtatious song of the Sea-Fairies is an
antithesis to the frigid "whispering" of the mariners, half
in fear. Tennyson does not even once make his Sea-Fairies
call Ulysses by his name, or sing of his exploits on the
Trojan fields as Homer's Sirens do. The latter's open praise
of Ulysses takes up almost the whole of their song in
the Odyssey, with just two lines about the temptations they
offer: "Approach! thy soul shall into raptures rise/
Approach! and learn new wisdom from the wise!" The first line offers pleasure to the "soul" and the second "new wisdom from the wise." The offer could hardly tempt the rough and tough seamen who are returning from a war fought for the most beautiful woman of the world. It appears that Homer himself did not dilate at all on the wiles the Sirens employed. Tennyson gauged the potential of the situation, for this was a gap in an ancient tale which provided ample scope to his inventive genius and creative imagination.

The poem almost begins and ends with the song of the Sea-Fairies. Tennyson, from the beginning, arouses our curiosity about the outcome of the tussle that ensues between the will power of the sailors to resist, and the wiles of the Sea-Fairies to entice, with their "shrill music" which reaches the "weary mariners" in the middle of the sea as they muse, "Whispering to each other half in fear" (line 5). The setting removes them in time and place from the rigours of the present. Tennyson provides through them beautiful images of a remote and romantic world.

The portrayal of the Sirens in "The Sea-Fairies" is quite different from that of Homer. Tennyson is keen to

highlight their beauty, grace, and music. Their charm is both visual and aural. They sing tantalizing songs, and promise to make the life of the mariners one long honeymoon on the "blossoming shore" with its fountains and "gambolling waterfalls." Homer describes at length Ulysses' precautions to resist the Sirens. Tennyson's forewarned mariners are, instead, awestruck and resist the enticements with their will power. "The Sea-Fairies" can be said to be a symbolic presentation of the enchantment of art.

If "The Sea-Fairies" is about the strong attraction of art, "The Hesperides" is an attempt to understand and explicate it. Just as "The Sea-Fairies" is formally the song of these beautiful maidens, "The Hesperides" is mainly the song of the three sisters, the Hesperides. There is, however, an atmosphere of sanctity and mystery in "The Hesperides," for the act of creation is in itself a holy act. Discussing its sources, Ricks suggests the religious mythologizing of G.S. Faber, Milton's Paradise Lost, Edward Davies' Celtic Researches and Hanno's Periplus. Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica and Hesiod's Theogony, from amongst the classics, give parts of the myth of the Hesperides though

Ricks does not mention them as sources. The myths of Hesper and Hesperides are not as well known as those of Iliad, Odyssey, or Aeneid. In his treatment of the myth Tennyson provides a setting for the song of the Hesperides, as he does for that of the Sea-Fairies. However, in "The Sea-Fairies" the background is epical but in "The Hesperides" it is historical, comprising Hanno, the Carthagian, and his crew. This may have been done to make it appear to be less misty, though the poet throws over it a strange charm of other-worldly antiquity as well, with the mystical hierophantic chant, whose aura makes it vacillate between a


G.R. Stange in "Tennyson's Garden of Art: A Study of 'The Hesperides'," Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson, p. 101, says: "All the elements of the myth upon which the highly individual structure of 'The Hesperides' is built can be found in Hesiod's rendering of the fable."

Paden in Tennyson in Egypt (Appendix, p. 99) quotes a passage from T.R. Lounsbury's The Life and Times of Tennyson (Yale University Press 1915), in which Lounsbury says that Xenophon and Apollonius Rhodius are directly referred to in Poems by Two Brothers. Paden also cites Harold Nicolson, Tennyson (New York, 1925, p. 51), who states: "at the age of sixteen Tennyson had read... Apollonius Rhodius...."

The myths of the Hesperides as found in Hesiod and Apollonius Rhodius are given in Appendix I, Aii, pp. 222-223, and Aiii, pp. 223-224.
historical and mythical world. With great sensibility, scholarship and dexterity, Tennyson attempts to fix the event, historically and geographically, by the use of Greek place names like "Soleö" and "Thymiaterion." He then focusses on the palpable calm and silence that prevails in that region, for as long as Hanno sailed through it, he

Heard neither warbling of the nightingale,
Nor melody o' the Libyan lotus flute
Blown seaward from the shore....

(ll. 6-8).

The implication obviously is that the nightingale had stopped singing and the 'lotusflute' was silent in reverence to the sacred song of the Hesperides. Consequently, there was just one sound floating towards the sea from a slope "That ran bloombright into the Atlantic blue,/ Beneath a highland leaning down a weight/ Of cliffs, and zoned below with cedarshade,/(ll. 9-11), -- that of "voices, like voices in a dream,/ Continuous, till he reached the outer sea." (ll. 12-13). It is obvious that these voices are the voices of the Hesperides who keep singing to guard and rear the "golden apple" which is "the hallowed fruit."

Like "The Sea-Fairies," this poem too is about art and the artist, but of a different cast. Robert Stange.
makes an important statement with regard to this poem. He writes: "... in a sense Tennyson's will remained divided. In his more popular work there is an attempt either to suppress his conflicting desire for social engagement and for the life of art, or to resolve his conflict in favour of 'the whole life' — to treat the withdrawal to a palace of art or to a lotus-land as an aberration—of what 'the people's poet' came to feel was the devil's side in this continuing debate."25

Although Tennyson's will was divided during this period (and for a long time to come), a close perusal of this poem reveals that the poet simply describes here conditions conducive to and required for the creation of art. It is difficult to agree with Stange's view that the poem indulges in the ethics of art. We can say that in Tennyson art-for-art's sake is in its nascent form. It can be called both innocent and beautiful. It did not remain so with others for by the end of the nineteenth century we find that in Swinburne it becomes a defiance, "an apotheosising the Devil rather than God."26 This becomes obvious when the


poem is viewed against the background of certain non-mythical poems on a similar theme. In "The Poet's Mind" the poet explains that a certain environment alone can stimulate the poet's creative powers. His mind should not be "vexed," and "sophists" should not venture near the spot where he stands, for it is hallowed ground and would be desecrated, and the poet's power would vanish, by their intrusion:

Vex not thou the poet's mind
With thy shallow wit:
Vox not thou the poet's mind;
For thou canst not fathom it.

(ll. 1-4)

The poet says that he will perform certain rituals to keep the garden of poetry in full bloom: "Holy water will I pour/
Into every spicy flower" (ll. 12-13). But if the "cruel cheer" of the logician will come near, these "flowers" will be blighted. All this points to Tennyson's extreme sensitiveness. Its seeds were sown when he was still quite young. This is evident from the Latin epigraph he wrote on the title page of his play, "The Devil and the Lady," when he was only fourteen:

Spes alit juventutem et poesin, vituperatio premit
et laedit (Hope nourishes youth and poesy, abuse
represents and injures it). 27

This shows the extravagant sensitivity to criticism which he was never able to shake off even at the zenith of his fame. It had already started "shadowing his boyish mind." In "Fenian and the Glen" he shows that harsh, unsympathetic criticism is harmful to the inspirational "gleam" of the poet:

Once at the crook of a haven who crost it,
A barbarous people,
Blind to the magic,
And deaf to the melody,
Snarled at and cursed me.
A demon vexed me,
The light retreated,
The landscape darkened,
The melody deadened,...

(11. 24-30).

The poems have, therefore, to be guarded against vile criticism, or else the poet's power would decline. This is symbolically expressed in "The Hesperides," where the fruition of the "golden apples" is a sacred act, and so, while the Hesperides (who symbolize the inspired artist) are singing -- "Standing about the charmed root" -- everything else is mute as though a holy sacrament is being performed, which demands reverence and sanctity, and can be

27. This epigraph was written on the title page of possibly only one of the manuscripts of the play. It is in Sir Charles Tennyson's possession.

(The Poems of Tennyson, p. 8).

The fact that snide remarks and adverse comments dampened his spirit and affected his inspiration is evident from the epigraph and is expressed symbolically in "The Hesperides."
defiled by the slightest light-hearted banter or ridicule.

The poet, in the opening stanza, carefully depicts the unearthly and awe-inspiring silence all around, with just faint voices coming to "Hadonian Hauno," which seem "like voices in a dream." The impression of the reverent, holy silence is heightened by the song of the Hesperides who chant:

Round about all is mute,
As the snowfield on the mountain-peaks,
As the sandfield at the mountain-foot,
Crocodiles in briny creeks
Sleep and stir not: all is mute.

(11. 16-22).

Singing is a compulsion and is akin to the reciting of hierophantic hymns. Here it helps in the creation and regeneration of the golden fruit of the sacred tree and the Hesperides are performing their duty with dedication:

Keen-eyed Sisters, singing sailily,
Looking warily
Every way,
Guard the apple night and day,
Lest one from the East come and take it away.

(11. 36-47).

The poem begins with an epigraph from "Corus": "Jes-urus and his daughters three, yet sing about the golden tree." Stange, drawing attention to its spiritual tone, writes:
Milton's Garden of the Hesperides is a place of repose and joyful freedom... The chief resemblance of his [Tennyson's] poem to Milton's is in the parallel conception of the garden as a restful abode for the privileged spirit and as a source of creativity — in Milton's one of the higher life, and in Tennyson's of the life of art. 28

Creation of art, of poetry, is akin to and is symbolized as the creation of the golden apples in this poem. The poet says:

For the blossom unto threefold music bloweth;
Evermore it is born anew;
And the sap to threefold music floweth,
From the root
Drawn in the dark,
Up to the fruit,
Creeping under the fragrant bark,
Liquid gold, honey sweet, through and through.

(11. 30-37).

In "The Poet" also Tennyson expresses the act of creation of poetry through the image of vegetation and growth:

Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower,
The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew
Where'er they fell, behold,
Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew
A flower all gold,
And bravely furnished all abroad to fling
The wingèd shafts of truth,
To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring
Of Hope and Youth.

(11. 19-28).

Just as "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" are mainly the songs of the Sirens and the Hesperides respectively, "The Lotos-Eaters" is, basically, the song of Ulysses' lotos-addicted mariners who are fed up with their toil of a seemingly endless voyage in search of their homeland, Ithaca. The poem begins, like "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides," with a brief account of the setting. It seems that after a tiring and hazardous long voyage, Ulysses espies land. He tries to instil hope in the worn-out mariners. "'Courage!' he said, and pointed toward the land, 'This mounting wave will roll us seawards soon.'" (ll. 1-2). The mariners who were resisting the temptation of the green isles in "The Sea-Fairies" willingly land on the Lotos-Isle. The rest and joy offered by the Sea-Fairies is now to be got from the somnambulent lotos-fruit. It can be said that the lotos-fruit replaces the Sea-Fairies metaphorically. The source of the poem is Odyssey. It is noteworthy that Homer does not gloss over the feelings of the mariners after their partaking of the lotos-fruit. He simply states that since they were not willing to set sail again, Ulysses had to take them back to the ships by sheer physical force. Buckley hints at the link between the two poems in respect of both theme and

The Lotos-Island, the island of the Sea-Fairies, is a land of streams,ountains, and meadows. Eating the lutos-fruit can be said to be symbolically akin to accepting the invitation of the Sea-Fairies to a life of pleasure. The very u resistant mariners at last succumb to the hold of the lutos-fruit resulting in their complete surrender to the pleasure of the fruit.

"The Sea-Fairies" and "The Lotos-Eaters" appear to be not just modern reconstructions of certain situations from a wider canvas of Greek mythology; they are forms of escape from the demands of a world of reality into a world of art, of losing oneself in art. While "The Sea-Fairies" signifies the struggle of the artist to resist the call of art-for-art's sake, "The Lotos-Eaters," symbolically presents the artist's surrender to this call. Like these two mythical poems, the duo of "The Palace of Art" and the incomplete "Sense and Conscience" have the same theme but with a difference. In the non-mythical poems there is remorse on the realization of the poet's submission to the hold of

30."'The Sea-Fairies' anticipates 'The Lotos-Eaters' in both theme and imagery as a dramatic rendering of the seductions of a sensuous art, the temptation to escape from reason and responsibility."

art, a hypothetical case, forever, the poet raises out a case for such a surrender: "All things have rest: why should we toil alone, we only toil, who are the first of things, and make perpetual Noon, still from one sorrow to another thrown" (ll. 60–63). The mariners complain: "Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?" (line 69). They argue: "Let us alone. What pleasure can we have, to war with evil? Is there any peace, in ever climbing up the climbing wave?" (ll. 93–95), and conclude: "Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease." (line 98). This line points back to the Somersby Tennyson who flees from home to the graveyard and longs to die or to lose himself in dreams of the heroic past. This is what he seems to be doing in the guise of the mariners of the legendary Ulysses in this poem.

There are a number of things that are strikingly similar in these three "choric songs." There is music on the island of the Sea-Fairies, there is music in the Hesperian garden, and there is music on the Lotos-Isle as well: "Music that gentler on the spirit lies, than tired eyelids upon tired eyes...." (ll. 50–51). The island of the Sea-Fairies has high green fields and the "happy blossoming shore." In "The Hesperides," the three sisters sing and dance on an island whose slope is "bloom bright." In this
garden, sacred to the gods, "Every flower and every fruit
the redolent breath/ Of this warm seawind ... ripeneth "
(ll. 83-84). There are "Two streams upon the violet deep"
(line 88), just as on the Lotos-Isle there is a "slender
stream" which "Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall
did seem." (line 9). The pleasure described in the poems
is more like an opiate to escape into a romantic dreamland
of song, dance, music and enjoyment. In this context it
is interesting to note that song, dance and music are
sacred to the Muses. Hesiod calls them "nine like-minded
daughters, whose one thought/ Is singing, and whose hearts
are free from care./ There on Olympus are their lovely
homes..." He describes them in the long introductory hymn
in Theogony, saying:

With Heliconian Muses let us start
Our song; they hold the great and godly mount
Of Helicon, on their delicate feet
They dance around the darkly bubbling spring
And round the altar of the mighty Zeus.

Dance, fair and graceful, on the mountain-top
And whirl their feet about....

A few lines later Hesiod writes that the Muses "delight/
with song the mighty mind of father Zeus/ Within Olympus..."

31. Dorothea Wender, Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days;
32. Ibid., p. 23.
and continues, "the halls of father Zeus/ The Thunderer, shine gladly when the pure/ Voice of the goddesses is scattered forth;/ The echo spreads to snowy Olympus' peak/ And the immortals' homes." "The Sea-Fairies," "The Lotos-Eaters," and "The Hesperides" may be regarded as poems of different versions of the Muses and their homes. The landscape depicted in them recalls the hills and meadows of the sacred homes of gods, viz., Olympus, Parnassus, Helicon, and Pieria. The last three are the specific mounts of the


Tennyson describes the abode of the Greek gods in "To E.L. On His Travels in Greece," a poem he wrote in praise of Edward Lear's Journal of a Landscape Painter in Albania and Illyria:

Illyrian woodlands, echoing falls
    Of water, sheets of summer glass,
The long divine Penelian pass,
    The vast Akrokeraunian walls,
Tomohrit, Athoe, all things fair,
    With such a pencil, such a pen,
You shadow forth to distant men,
    I read and felt that I was there:

And trust me while I turned the page,
    And tracked you still on classic ground,
I grew in gladness till I found
    My spirits in the golden age.

For me the torrent ever poured
    And glistened -- here and there alone
The broad-limbed Gods at random thrown
    By fountain-urns; and Naiads oared....

(ll. 1-16).
Muses and, significantly, Tennyson points to the three mountain peaks in "The Lotos-Eaters":

They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
From the inner land; far off, three mountain-tops,  
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,  
Stood sunset-flushed...34

(11. 14-17)

The gods pass their time in the pleasures of music in these celestial abodes. So do the Lotos-Eaters. After feasting on the lotos-fruit they declare:

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,  
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.

(11. 153-155).

The Muses dance and sing on the verdurous meadows of the Heliconian and Parnassian heights while Zeus enjoys the music. The Sea-Fairies and the Hesperides dance and sing on their island homes. The Lotos-Eaters, comparing themselves to the mythical gods, like them, become indifferent to the travails of mankind. They enjoy the privileges — such as

34. Paden writes that "The Sea-Fairies" is "related, through the Sirens and Ulysses, to the land of 'The Lotos-Eaters'—which contained the three mountain-peaks that, according to Faber, were characteristic of all holy mountains and hence of all legendary lands of the Blest (Faber, III, 205-207). It is scarcely possible to overstate the close connections that obtained in the 1820's between Islands of the Blest, fairies, sea-fairies, nymphs, mermaids, and Arthurian romance." (Tennyson in Egypt, note 213, p. 157)
the music of the Muses that are the sole domain of the gods. 35 There is, however, a subtle difference. The mariners themselves are the Muses who sing and the gods who enjoy, for they sing and enjoy their own music, are entertained and are the entertainers, at one and the same time, forgetful of all else in the world. The Lotos-Island, by analogy, appears to be their celestial abode. The mariners have already accepted it as their home for they refuse to leave it.

One of the common strands running through the poems is the singing of the protagonists although songs as such do not figure in all the sources of these poems. Homer does give the Sirens' song, but as regards the Lotos-Eaters, he merely mentions the effect of the lotoe-fruit on the mariners and the difficulty with which they are dragged back to their ships by Ulysses. The scattered sources of the Hesperides mention Hesperides' singing while guarding the apples, but do not give the songs. Therefore, the similar opening and the songs embodying the mood of the singers are Tennyson's own innovations. The consistency with which the pattern is followed in these three poems points to a definite relationship between the poems. Possibly they contain a confession

35. The image of the Greek gods, absorbed in pleasure, indifferent to mankind, reminds one of the traditional image of Vishnu, reclining on the lotus-couch, with spouse Laxmi tending him and the lesser gods and mortals hymning to him and his glory.
the poet may not make openly for fear of criticism and disapproval of the Apostles and others. With great refinement and skill he brings alive the situations with the songs and makes them reflect the mood and the psyche of the singers. W.J. Fox, in his review of Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), had complimented the poet on his power of empathy and written that the poet had shown the way towards a new kind of poetry for it had metaphysical depth and psychological profundity. He said the poet seems to enter into a mind as he would make his way into a landscape and portrayed states of mind. He does something more in these poems. In depicting the mariners' state of mind he reflects through them his own state of mind and its tensions, while he projects the mythical characters from within and makes the situations and personages chosen vibrant with life, thought, and emotion.

In depicting the Hesperian Gardens, the island of the Sea-Fairies, and the island of the Lotos-Eaters, Tennyson makes them rich, colourful and blooming with an eternal spring, comparable to the abode of the immortals as portrayed by the ancients. Stange says that it is visualized in the form of a "lost paradise." In "Timbuctoo"

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36 Refer to Dr. O.P. Govil's article, "Browning's Literary Father" in *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, Vol. IX (1968), for a fuller discussion of this aspect.
Tennyson apostrophized the lost Atlantis and Eldorado:
"Where are ye /Thrones of the Western wave, fair Islands
green?" (ll. 40-41). They seem to be located in the
mythical lands of his imagination.

The Green Isles of these poems and the sea are
juxtaposed. But while these garden-islands appear to have
kinship with the sacred abode of the Muses and hence art,
the sea is the common symbol of life. The tenability of
this interpretation is evidenced by what Waterston has said
in this regard:

[Tennyson] sought societal symbols, rejecting images
whose impact was guaranteed only by his private expe­
rience.... Tennyson, used familiar poetic parallels (of
the sea to life, of rocks to death, of birds to escape
and so on)....

The first thing that strikes one in these poems is
that the myths Tennyson chose were comparatively slight
when visualized in the larger context of the narratives,
i.e., the whole of Odyssey or Theogony or Argonautica. They
are not even re-narrations of single complete episodes
chosen from the whole. They are, in fact, fragmentary in

in Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson,
pp. 113-114.
Besides, the opening of the three poems consists of the interaction of the sailors on the sea with the music emanating from the shore. There is evident a progressive modification in the sailors' approach towards the shore and its music in these poems. In "The Sea-Fairies" the sailors are firmly on their guard; they are stiff and resist the call from the shore. In "The Hesperides," Hanno neither resists nor goes towards the music which comes floating from the shore. It appears to him as though he is hearing it in a dream. He sails on, quietly, absorbed in the music. In "The Lotos-Eaters," however, the mariners are exhausted in their struggle with the stormy sea and take to the shore to partake of its leisure and music. It is evident that the attitude of the mariners towards the shore reflects the progressive change in the attitude of the poet himself to art. Just as the resistance of Ulysses and his crew to the Sirens' music is rooted in Circe's warning about its danger, the poet's hesitation in opting for art-for-art's sake is evidently the result of the influence of the Apostles' dinning into his ears the baneful effect of pure

38. "The Hesperides," says T.S. Eliot, "is a fragmentary 'Hesperides', in which only the 'Song of the Three Sisters' is complete."


art. These three mythical poems, taken together, reveal the tension this (the Apostles' influence) creates within the poet's mind and the solution that comes naturally to him. "The Sea-Fairies" is about the temptation of art whereas "The Hesperides" is an attempt to explicate it. This poem can be regarded as Tennyson's answer to the question: What, after all, is art? and the answer: art and its creation are holy and sacred. It is a kind of worship, and hence free of guilt or shame. The poet, therefore, gives in to its call. "The Lotus-Eaters" symbolizes his final surrender. We can say that since the poet is not convinced of the potential of any harm accruing from pure art, he does not resist its call any more. On the contrary, he gathers ample courage to own up his weakness for it, but only from behind the camouflage of mythology. In his non-mythical poems, "The Palace of Art" and "Sense and Conscience," he tries to expound and vindicate socially responsible art, but in the 'Choric Songs' he can be said to uphold "Sense" over "Conscience," almost without a qualm:

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

(11. 171-173)
The 'Choric Songs' first portray the tussle between the Cambridge and Somersby Tennyson, and then, show the victory of the latter over the former.

These three poems are linked together because they share the same metaphors and symbols and are related to each other thematically. The landscapes of these poems are similar to each other and to the abode of the Muses. All of them have lush green meadows, fountains, streams, springs and mountains. Apart from this, interestingly and significantly, the 'Choric Songs' are being sung on the shore of these islands. The islands are places of enchantment, mystery, love, pleasure, leisure, and of creativity symbolized by the endless golden apples nourished and nurtured by the continuous singing of the Hesperides who are the Muses themselves. The sea in "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" is calm, not turbulent. In "The Lotus-Eaters" it is, however, violent. The sea symbolizes life. The mariners signify the poet sailing on the sea of life. Their reaction to the music floating towards them from the shore in the three poems is a symbolic depiction of the gradual change in the poet's attitude towards art. In "The Sea-Fairies" he resists the magnetic attraction of the world of art under the influence of the Apostles, while in
"The Hesperides" he is filled with wonder and admiration at the holy act of its creation. It is in "The Lotos-Eaters" that he willingly submits to art. Some critics have surmised that this poem shows a state of disintegration as a result of total self-surrender. But the mood of the poem and the arguments of the mariners do not seem to justify this view. A mere rejection of the toil of life and the artist's surrender to art may not necessarily involve disintegration. This point shall be taken up and elaborated further in Paris' judgment in "Oenone" where the poet presents two choices to the artist in his option for art.

These three mythical poems are, indeed, Tennyson's earliest attempt to resolve his personal problems regarding art and social responsibility through the medium of ancient Greek myths. He is trying to find an answer to a moral question that confronts him. "The Hesperides" specially may be said to pose the moot query -- why should art-for-art's sake be unethical when its creation in itself is holy? The three poems together represent his search for an answer. The poet does some self analysis, through their thin veneer, without exposing himself to public gaze. In this set he is no longer on the defensive, and describes what he really is
and not what he ought to be according to the Apostles. He is not bold enough to take this stand in the parallel non-mythical poems, "The Palace of Art" and "Sense and Conscience," but in the mythical poems he projects his innermost urges unequivocally.

These poems stand out as a highly symbolical set of poems with a number of common elements in them, viz., their slight indebtedness to various source myths, all having songs embedded in them, their fragmentary character, their introductory stanzas reading like preambles to the songs, the predominance of the hedonistic mood, and their landscapes recalling the abodes of the Greek gods with the Muses singing heavenly music in an atmosphere of endless spring. These 'Choric Songs' are suffused with an innermost magic, reflective of the world of intense poetic imagination of the poet and its irresistible hold on him. In "The New Timon" (part I), he says: "An artist, Sir, should rest in Art." (line 21). He says this in this trilogy too, through these three mythical poems.
CHAPTER II

POEMS WITH GREEK MYTHICAL HEROINES AS PROTAGONISTS

If one of the life-long concerns of Tennyson was art and the artist's relation to it, the other could be said to be the enigma of women, seemingly vulnerable and defenceless, yet with great potential for both good and evil. And just as he has written mythical poems reflecting his attitude towards art, he has composed a number of poems, with mythical women as subjects, throwing light on his concept of womanhood.

The salient feature of these poems is that they are not about maidens consumed with the passion of love, or about vain and wanton beauties who first ensnare handsome youths and then desert them to pine to death like Keats's dame without mercy. The subjects of these poems (with the exception of "Hero to Leander"), are sedate wives who are victims of infidelity, thoughtless over-indulgence, or some intrigue of their husbands. This choice seems to be related to the influence of his mother from early childhood. Hence, although his non-mythical poems on women have a fairly wide variety of characters, ranging from the passionate Fatima to the self-offacing and sincere Dora or the heartless Lady Clara, his portrayal of mythical women is confined mainly to faithful wives and loving mothers.
Tennyson's mythical poems with Greek women protagonists are the following:

1. Translation of Claudian's "Rape of Proserpine";
2. "Hero to Leander";
3. "The Sea-Fairies";
4. "Oenone";
5. "The Hesperides";
6. "Semele";
7. "Demeter and Persephone";
8. "The Death of Oenone."

But all of them do not fit in the criterion adopted in formulating this set. "The Rape of Proserpine" is an incomplete translation attempted between his eleventh and fourteenth years and also has the distinction of being his first extant poem. Since it is not an original composition its proper place is with other translations by the poet. "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" are basically songs sung by a number of nymphs, in a hedonistic mood, in a significantly similar setting and form a more homogeneous group with "The Lotos-Eaters."

The poems chosen for this group are the ones which have only single Greek women in a sombre mood as their protagonists. The poems comprising this set are:

1. "Hero to Leander";
2. "Oenone";
3. "Semele";
4. "Demeter and Persephone";
5. "The Death of Oenone."

1. Christopher Ricks's chronological arrangement in The Poems of Tennyson has been followed in the ordering of the poems.
2. Ibid., p. 3.
These poems have been variously interpreted as projections of Tennyson's views on art, Christian faith, immortality of the soul, and have been treated as mood poems, or as the poet's attempt to distil into English language the classical pattern and style of Greek laments. It will, however, be wrong to assume that they are just vehicles for masked statements on art, faith, immortality, mood, or exercises in emulation of style. They are also reflective of Tennyson's own concept of womanhood. These poems have been grouped and regrouped by critics in various combinations, sometimes only amongst themselves and sometimes with non-mythical poems, with a seemingly common strand of theme running through them. But they have not yet been studied together as poems dealing with women in respect of love, marriage, and motherhood, as embodiments of the poet's own concept of womanhood. In the following paragraphs an attempt has been made to analyse these poems in the light of the above assertion.

Tennyson's female characters may be divided into two broad categories: the femme fatale and the ideal women. Both types figure in his Greek myth poems. A discussion of these types, as reflected in Tennyson's non-mythical poems, would help in putting the mythical ones in a proper perspective and will also bring out clearly the representative characteristics of these poems as poems on women.
Tennyson's concept of the "Fatal Woman" is not that of a metaphorical woman-vampire, somewhat akin to Keats's 'Belle Dame' without mercy or a Cleopatra—"one of the first Romantic incarnations of the type of the Fatal Woman." In "A Dream of Fair Women" Tennyson depicts only two fatal women in his pageant of beauties of lore—Helen and Cleopatra. But Tennyson's Helen is a sad woman who rues: "Where'er I came/ I brought calamity." (ll. 95-96). Cleopatra alone, in keeping with her Romantic image of the femme fatale, is uncontrite and unrepentant. With a naughty smile she says, "I have no men to govern in this wood: / That makes my only woe." (ll. 135-136).

Some of the quaint vignettes of his early days—"airy fairy" Lilians, elusive Madelines, "frolic, falcon" Rosalinds of the 1830's were his femme fatale in embryo. Lilian is gay, frivolous and flirtatious, Madeline alternates between smile and frown and is thus happily engaged in tempting and repelling lovers, and keeps them guessing of her intent. Beauty and a heart of flint are gay Rosalind's weapons, while Lady Clara snares simple yeomen for pastime.


Praz writes: "Cleopatra combined the fabulous Oriental background with a taste for algolagnia, which... seemed to be in the very air of the Romantic period." (p. 231).
It is to be noted that out of approximately more than forty poems on women, just a few are on purely "fatal women." While dealing with the legendary women Tennyson shifts the focus from their fatal charm to certain essentially human and feminine aspects of their characters, for instance, he dwells on the contriteness and repentance of Helen, Rosamond and Guinevere. Lady Clara, Cleopatra and Vivien alone stand out as examples of the fatal woman type but Tennyson's treatment of them is very sketchy and, in a sense, even casual. The fatal women in his mythical poems are Aphrodite, with her guerdon of Helen in "Oenone," Eos in "Tithonus" and Pallad Athene in "Tirannon."

In his long poetical career Tennyson came across a large number of women, ranging from the humblest to the Queen of England herself, but the woman he seems to have loved, admired, and adored above all, was possibly his own mother. He makes her the subject of his poem "Isabel" wherein he describes this "remarkable saintly woman," who, as Hallam Tennyson wrote, "devoted herself entirely to her children." Tennyson himself feels:

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

("Isabel," ll. 38-41)

Sinfield observes:

The wifely ideal seems to have a more specific purchase [sic] for Tennyson, deriving from his admiration for the way his mother coped with the depression and alcoholism of his father. 'Isabel' evokes 'The stately flower of female fortitude, / Of perfect wifehood and pure lowlihead' but is rendered distinctive by the special demands made upon her by her 'wayward' husband.... 5

Tennyson describes her as:

A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,
Till in its onward current it absorbs
With swifter movement and in purer light
The vexed eddies of its wayward brother:
A leaning and upbearing parasite,
Clothing the stem, which else had fallen quite....

("Isabel," ll. 30-35).

Through a nature image the poet projects the moral courage of his mother and her love for his father, which gave her strength to face the odds of life and keep the home intact for her husband and children.

Tennyson's good women are modelled more or less on his mother and reflect one or more of her qualities of patience, nobility, generosity, loyalty, and exemplify true

love, wifehood and motherhood. A few women are drawn as incarnations of an iron will and indomitable courage in the performance of their duties. Examples of the former are Mariana, Oenone, Adeline, Amy, the Miller's daughter, Lady Clare, Dora, etc. "Godiva" and "Boadicea" are about bold, courageous and strong-willed good women.

"The Princess" is the poet's statement on women's role in society. Its heroine, Princess Ida, harks back to a poem of the eighteen thirties, "Kate," whose protagonist Kate, too, is a fierce feminist who calls men "gilded flies" and would not hear of "lover's sighs." It is she who seems to have logically evolved into the rebellious Princess Ida by 1847, when "The Princess" was first published. The image of his mother, projected in "Isabel," continues to be his ideal of womanhood throughout these years as is evident from the manner Ida is finally "won to the role of wife and mother." That this ideal persists till the end of his days is obvious from his last mythical poem which is also his last poem on women protagonists—"The Death of Oenone." While "The Princess" resolves itself into a statement of the wholesomeness of marriage, home, and family for a

6. "Isabel" was published in Poems, Chiefly Lyrical, in 1830.
7. Alan Sinfield, op.cit., p. 139.
healthy society, "The Death of Oenone" brings round the irate Oenone of 1832 to uphold the institution of marriage.

The protagonists of Tennyson's mythical poems on women are a reflection of his ideal of womanhood. The tone of these poems is sombre. Some of them are literary laments, for the poet tries to incorporate in them features of the Greek 'lament.' Others are comparatively free and original in style and form, but a sorrowful mood pervades all of them. This community of spirit—the poet's predilection for suffering women—may have had its genesis in his childhood memories of his unhappy mother. It has been stated earlier that the subjects of these poems are sedate wives who are victims of infidelity or caprice of their husbands with the exception of the first poem of this group, "Hero to Leander."

"Hero to Leander" is a romantic poem about the true and undying love of Hero for Leander. Hero is not a married woman like other protagonists of this set. The tragedy occurs during the nocturnal courtship of the lovers. Leander is bent upon crossing a stormy sea to return home from their rendezvous. He turns a deaf ear to Hero's pleading to stay back. The poem is fragmentary in nature. Based on the pattern of the "aubade," i.e.,

song of farewell, it embodies the reluctant farewell of Hero, who has a premonition of Leander's drowning in his attempt to cross the stormy sea. She swears that if he comes to harm, she, too, would die. The poem ends here and does not indicate whether Leander is ultimately prevailed upon to stay or not. The poem is about youthful love and the lament is due to Hero's anxiety out of love and not because of Leander's infidelity.

Oenone, on the other hand, is a woman cheated in love. She symbolizes the deserted yet faithful wife. It is noteworthy that the poet wrote two poems on Oenone—one in the early phase and the other in the last phase of his poetical career. What could be the reason that impelled him to take up the same theme again? Was there anything inherent in the first poem that became the source of inspiration for the second? In this context, Stange's observation on Tennyson's career may be noted: "the pattern, in its broad outlines, is of a youthful burst of subjective lyricism followed by a half-century of suppression, propriety, and worldly success" and "... the tensions --

9. "T.'s note observes that Oenone was 'married to Paris, and afterwards deserted by him for Helen'."
   (The Poems of Tennyson, p. 384).

and richness— which mark Tennyson's early work can be found at the end as well as at the beginning of the collected poems."

The remarks are with regard to "Demeter and Persephone," a poem of the last phase of Tennyson's career, and hence equally applicable to "The Death of Oenone," his last mythical poem. Since "Oenone" belongs to the early phase of his poetical career, these remarks are relevant to it, too. Their implication clearly is that the poems of the early and later phases of his career are equally motivated by the poet's inner compulsions. The two Oenones belong to these two phases. They are linked by a common subject which reflects his concept of womanhood— as a young man in "Oenone," and as a seasoned, aged sire in "The Death of Oenone." The development and maturing of his views on women during the intervening half-century are reflected in his non-mythical poems of this period, especially "The Princess."

The sources of "Oenone," in both substance and form, range from Ovid, Theocritus, Virgil, Homer, Aeschylus, Lucretius, Catullus and Horace to Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. It has rightly been called "... a distillation, not

of life, but of literature." ¹²

The incidents of this poem are apparently based on Ovid's *Heroides* while the story is derived from the legends of the Trojan War. While earlier poets wrote copiously on the Trojan and Greek heroes and the plight of their women-folk, Oenone was rather neglected till Ovid took up her theme in the fifth epistle of his *Heroïdes*. ¹³ It was from this twilight region of the epical past that Tennyson picked up the faithful nymph wife of Paris to delineate her woe.

As always, his treatment of this myth also is original and fragmentary in nature. Bush refers to it as "a miniature epic in a luxuriant natural background." ¹⁴ The


¹³ Appendix II, B, pp. 226-233.

¹⁴ "For the general mode of treatment, the placing of a miniature epic in a luxuriant natural background, Tennyson was indebted to the Alexandrian idyll and *epyllion*, especially to his favourite Theocritus."


An 'epyllion' is defined as "a brief or miniature epic, such as the poem of Theocritus (XXIV) on the infant Heracles, and that of Catullus on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis" (*The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, ed., Sir Paul Harvey, 1937; rpt., London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969, p. 168).
nomenclature of "a miniature epic" or "epyllion" is, however, hardly justified, as the narrative element is only in the intermittent flashbacks which give the genesis of Oenone's plight, after which there is no development in the narrative. The poem begins with a distraught Oenone, raving and roaming over the hills and dales of her "Mother Ida," and ends with her still being there, though threatening to go to Troy to meet Cassandra. Tennyson's depiction centres around a single mood and location, with the poem ending just where the narrative begins to pick up and take the story forward. The element of stasis could be said to disqualify it even as a "miniature epic." But this rather abrupt end emphasises its incomplete, fragmentary nature. It could have been called a small epic if its sequel, "The Death of Oenone," were included as part of the poem. Without this, the poem remains but a potential narrative, cut short when the story is almost poised to move forward.

The poem was composed sometime during 1830-31. It was about this time that the poet was haunted by the image of a distraught, pining woman, whose lover had deserted her. It was during this period that the two 'Marianas', too, were composed. "Mariana" was published in 1830 and "Mariana in the South" and "Oenone" during 1832-33. All of them are studies of women abandoned by their fiancés or husbands.
About the epigraph to "Mariana" Ricks writes that it is from "Measure for Measure" III, i, 212, ff: "She should this Angelo have married; was affianced to her by oath, and the nuptial appointed... Left her in her tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort... What a merit wore it in death to take this poor maid from the world!... There, at the moated grange, resides this dejected Mariana."  

The idea for "Mariana in the South" came to Tennyson during the same tour in which he conceived the idea of "Oenone"—his tour of the Pyrenees with Arthur Hallam, when the two were "journeying together... through the South of France... came upon a range of country just corresponding to his preconceived thought of a barrenness."  

The poet's composition of three poems in a row, with the same prevalent mood and theme, revealing the agony of deserted women, sometime with the help of scenic parallel of desolation in Nature, sometime with a rich setting made

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15. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 187.

This sense of dejection and loneliness commented on by Arthur Hallam, is noticed by Ricks too but on a broader canvas, though during the same period. He writes: "The seven poems which matter most in Poems (1832) are all concerned in some way with loneliness, guilt, or injustice: 'The Lady of Shalott,' 'Mariana in the South,' 'Oenone,' 'The Palace of Art,' 'The Lotos-Eaters,' 'A Dream of Fair Women,' and 'To J.S.'."  

(Ricks, Tennyson, p.78)
desolate because of the distraught heart, points to something more than a mere exercise of the poet's art. Some personal sorrow or experience, which was growing at his heart, finds expression in these poems. It may be recalled that his own mother was similarly distraught during this period.

The estrangement this lady suffered was not because of the infidelity of her husband but because of the gradual distancing between the husband and the wife, brought about by his mounting ill-temper and fits of violence. The years from 1827 till his death in 1831, seem to be particularly trying. For her it was not a physical desertion but an emotional one. Her faithful heart and loving nature suffered the gradual erosion of companionship and togetherness. That could be a reason for three poems on deserted women being composed during this period. The image of a distraught, pining woman haunted Tennyson in different backgrounds. We have the first Mariana "in the moated grange," and the second Mariana, in a Southern barrenness.

17. "The drink habit continued to increase its hold on the unfortunate Doctor and now began to induce paroxysms of violence which were to have disastrous effect on the family life. Mrs. Tennyson suffered acutely and Alfred suffered with her...."

(Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, 1949; Alfred Tennyson, 1950, p.48.)

18. "Isabel," the two Marianas, and "Oenone" were composed in 1830 initially. "Isabel" and "Mariana" were published in 1830, and "Mariana in the South" and "Oenone" were begun in 1830. It is noteworthy that Isabella and Mariana are two faithful, loving women in Measure for
It may then be surmised that the mountain ranges, cascading waterfalls, and the woods of the Pyrenees, called to his mind the "woody Ida" with the image of a hapless Oenone on its hills.

The poem has been criticized as lacking in sincerity and as being "only a painted grief upon a painted mountain." This is rather a harsh judgement. The stanza that seems to have evoked it possibly is:

Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck, 
Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest. 
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine, 
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade 
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff. 

(ll. 17-21).

Turner says that this image "faintly suggested the association of Oenone with Dido and Cassandra...." But Cassandra's Measure. The poem about the poet's mother Elizabeth is entitled "Isabel" and no brings to mind the Isabella of the play. It may be surmised that there is a conscious relationship between these poems, that they are related to each other for they are inspired by, and are reflections of, aspects of his mother Elizabeth's image. Paden points this out, saying: "From the same play [Measure for Measure] Tennyson took the notion of 'Mariana' and (to a slight extent) of 'Isabel': the imaginative context of the two poems has more interest than has been perceived."

(Tennyson in Egypt, pp. 157-158).


hair floated when she was in a frenzy, and saw visions of Illion burning. Oenone's grief made her lose her sap. While her heart was wild with grief her body seemed to be inert with debilitating sorrow. Her unkempt hair that had blown round her neck "seemed to float in rest." The image contains the paradox of "float" and "rest," which, in a significant manner, symbolically projects the wild state of her heart and the listless state of her body.

The nymph Oenone lives in the lap of Nature amidst mountain streams, under the shadow of snowy Gargarus. She communicates with Mt. Ida, cohorts with its birds and beasts, and its cave is her hideout. Later she seems to make it her home because it is associated with happy and sad memories of the past. It is worth noting that in "The Death of Oenone," too, she is shown in the same background, brooding over her past till "Her Past became her Present." (11. 14). The ivies, once gay with pendent bells and star like flowers are now "dead cords," the earth is "flowerless." She relives the judgement when Aphrodite

... with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whispered in his ear, "I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,"
She spoke and laughed; I shut my eyes for fear;

The poet portrays two different types of women in juxtaposition—Aphrodite, beautiful, flirtatious and tantalizing, with the tempting reward of Helen; and Oenone, a simple mountain nymph, with love and loyalty in her heart for her husband Paris. Tennyson's focus in this juxtaposition, however, is mainly on the second type, represented here as the aggrieved wife, Oenone. The first type is used as a foil.

Oenone is patterned on the poet's ideal of womanhood. With deep sensibility and infallible insight he describes her reaction to the situation where Paris seems to weaken in the face of Aphrodite's wiles to win the prize of the "golden apple." Oenone is pricked at the award being given in exchange for the "fairest and most loving wife in Greece." The contest between the goddesses breaks the confines of their rivalling beauty and becomes a choice between "... ample rule/ Unquestioned, overflowing revenue..." (ll. 109-110); "... a life of shocks, / Dangers, and deeds..." (ll. 160-161); or "The fairest and the most loving wife in Greece..." (ll. 183). Paris' acceptance of Aphrodite's offer is an affront to Oenone, who, but a short while ago, had been adjudged worthy of the gift by him, saying that the ingraven words on the rind, "'For the most fair', would seem to award
it thine' "21 (ll. 71). Being dismissed so easily from his thoughts for another is an insult to her beauty and a slight to her love. She is full of indignation as she sarcastically questions, "Most loving is she?" (line 197) and stakes her claim to a stronger passion for her husband, saying:

Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips press
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick an Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

(ll. 198-202).

The fact that Paris did not appreciate her deep love and fidelity cuts her to the quick. The judgement of Paris, instead of being a judgement of the comparative beauty of the three goddesses becomes a trial of the ethical norms of Paris himself. Constancy is the touchstone of marriage. Paris has failed the test. Oenone is torn between anger, jealousy and self-pity. Her hatred for Eris, for being the root-cause of her misery, is so great that she does not refer to

21. Tennyson makes his Oenone beautiful in keeping with the classical concept of beauty. Theocritus' beautiful girl, watching from the cave has "meeting eye brows." Tennyson's Paris calls Oenone "Beautiful browed Oenone."

(The Poems of Tennyson, note 69, p. 389).
her by her name. She, scornfully calls her the "Abominable" one "that uninvited came / Into the fair Pelian banquet-hall...." (ll. 220-221).

While Oenone treats wedlock as a sacred bond and continues to be devoted to Paris as her husband on the one hand, she is filled with a feeling of revulsion towards him for desecrating this sacred tie on the other. Tennyson highlights Oenone's love-hate response to the situation with the help of a slight deviation from the myth as given in the two well known sources, i.e., Ovid's fifth epitope in *The Heroides* and Quintus Calabar's *The Fall of Troy*. Neither of the two mentions Oenone's child, though Ovid makes her say that she is "worthy of being" and has a "desire to be, the matron of a puissant lord...." 22 Tennyson, it may be noted, makes her desire the contrary when he makes her say:


Robert Graves, however, mentions Oenone's son by Paris:

"Paris had an elder son by Oenone, named Corythus, whom, in jealousy of Helen, she sent to guide the avenging Greeks to Troy."


Graves cites "Conon : Narratione, 22; Tzetzes : On Lycophron 57 ff" as his sources (p. 276). We have no evidence to establish that Tennyson had read Conon or Tzetzes and hence we cannot say with certainty that he borrowed the idea of Oenone's son from either of them and then transformed it into an imaginary motherhood of the nymph. Nevertheless, it may be noted that the manner in which he has introduced the notion makes it different from that of his established as well as the probable sources averred to above.
... I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child! - a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

(ll. 246-251).

Besides offering a deep insight into the psychology of an aggrieved wife, it throws light on an important aspect of Tennyson's concept of womanhood and marriage. Critics have overlooked Oenone's apparent rejection of motherhood. But it not merely reflects Tennyson's sensitive portrayal of a slighted and jealous woman's psyche, but also brings into bold relief her sense of outrage at the defilement of marriage. The special significance of mother and child relationship for Tennyson is evident from "Rizpah" and "The Princess." Motherhood is more potent for Rizpah than even religion, for Rizpah does not care for salvation when it comes to choosing between it and the bones of her dead son:

"And if he be lost— but to save my soul that is all you desire: / Do you think that I care for my soul if my boy be gone to the fire?" (ll. 77-78).

23. The lines, "never child be born of me, / Unblest, to vex me, with his father's eyes!" (ll. 250-251), are an echo of the lines from a surviving scene of a lost play of his boyhood (printed in A Memoir, I, pp. 23-25): "You would look down and knit your baby brows / Into your father's frown, ...." (p. 25).
Tennyson himself says: "The child is the link through the parts of 'The Princess', as shown in the Songs (inserted 1850), which are the best interpreters of the poem...")24. Oenone's imagined motherhood and her reaction to it is the result of the 'love' between husband and wife becoming suspect. The child (a symbol of love and understanding between husband and wife in Tennyson), from such a union becomes an anathema. Ovid's Oenone writes that she too could have played false like Paris, for not only "the swift Satyrs" sought her, she was courted by Apollo himself:

Me, the builder of Troy, well known for keeping faith, loved, and let my hands into the secret of his gifts. Whatever herb potent for aid, whatever root that is used for healing grows in all the world, is mine. 25

It is interesting to note that Tennyson's "Oenone" of 1832-33 is remotely suggestive of Apollo's courtship when she addresses Paris as Apollo: "Welcome Apollo, welcome home Apollo, / Apollo, my Apollo, loved Apollo." In his revised standard version of the poem, however, she drops


Ricks observes: "'Killham studies in detail the relation between the poem and the feminism of the age. 'Whether the marriage-relationship could survive the fulfilment of women's aspirations is the real point at issue' (p.65). Hence T.'s stress on the child, both in the narrative (Aglaia) and in the intercalated songs'."

(Ibid., p. 742).

even this innocuous reference to Apollo. Tennyson replaces the lines with: "And his cheek brightened as the foam-bow brightens / When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart / Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came." (ll. 60-62). In the later poem, "The Death of Oenone," though reference is made to the fact of Oenone's medicinal powers acquired from Apollo (for Paris, wounded with a poisoned arrow, comes to her as a suppliant whom she alone can heal), the god is not alluded to even indirectly. The deletion of the lines from the 1832-33 version of "Oenone" and avoidance of any direct or indirect reference to him makes it obvious that Tennyson intended to emphasise Oenone's unswerving fidelity as a wife. As an aggrieved wife she can think of only one option, i.e., death. This also is the refrain of her lament. The complaints in her wail are but an unburdening of her heart before she silences herself for ever. With fine perception Tennyson makes her change her tone and mood. The thought of dying helplessly, with Paris glorying in his new found love, becomes unendurable. Burning rage mounts within her as

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27. Oenone's taking just one option, that of suicide, is in a way an upholding of the institution of marriage. "The Death of Oenone" gives the poet's well considered statement on this issue.
she imagined her husband and his paramour's shrill laughter breaking in on her "careless road of death." She will not die alone, she declares. "Wild Cassandra" has visions of a fire dancing before her. Oenone's whole being burns with rage so that "All earth and air seem only burning fire." (line 264). The poem ends on her seething anger and revolt. Tennyson took up the subject of Oenone once again, after a lapse of more than fifty years, in "The Death of Oenone." Piske calls it a sequel to "Oenone." 28 The poet might have felt that he had left Oenone in the lurch in the first poem and the 'sequel' was meant to resolve the marital impasse between her and her errant husband.

The source of "The Death of Oenone" is "The Fall of Troy" by Quintus Calabar. Tennyson, in "To the Master of Belliol," a poem introducing "The Death of Oenone," writes that its theme was "Somewhat lazily handled of old.

Mustard refutes Tennyson's claim that this poem is one of "those classical subjects ... which had been before but imperfectly treated, or of which the stories were slight (ii. 13) ... ." 29

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28. "The Death of Oenone" was written between August 1889 and July 1890. It was published in 1892 as a sequel to "Oenone." (see The Poems of Tennyson, p. 1427).

A comparison between the last part of Book X of
The Fall of Troy (line 240 onwards) and Tennyson's
"Death of Oenone" shows that the Greek poet has been
closely followed. The wounded Paris approaching Oenone
for oint, her indignant refusal, his warning her of the
anger of gods at turning away a suppliant, his death on
the hillside while returning, the discovery and
cremation of his dead body by the shepherds who were his
one time playmates, Oenone's realization that the blaze
she saw was of Paris' funeral pyre, and her self-immolation
by leaping into the flames are all in Quintus Calabar in
this very manner, with minor variations that impart to
the English poem an undeniable artistic refinement. Quintus'
Oenone is shown sitting in her father's house, surrounded
by her maids, while Tennyson's keeps brooding in the same
cave from where she "Used to gaze/ Down at the Troad"
(ll. 2-3), or watched from behind this very screen, Paris
as a judge of the goddesses:

... but the goodly view
Was now one blank, and all the serpent vines
Which on the touch of heavenly feet had risen,
And gliding through the branches over-bowered
... were withered long ago,
And through the sunless winter morning-mist
In silence wept upon the flowerless earth.

(11. 3-9)

30. Appendix II, Bi, pp. 233-244.
31. Ibid.
Tennyson's Oenone in "Oenone" keeps recalling her happy time on Mt. Ida which is like a mother to her. She confides her woes to its hills and dales as she roams over them. Although "The Death of Oenone" is based on Quintus Calabar's depiction of Oenone, Tennyson given it some original touches. He does not shift her from Mt. Ida. His adherence to the same location and highlighting the change that has come over the place with the passage of time, the ravage of the woods for ships and weapons, the dried cords that were once blooming vines, strengthen the continuity of the theme of the "Oenone" of his youth. The flora and fauna are the same but altered in keeping with the mood and condition of the second Oenone. This link between the two poems gives the impression that the poem of his old age is not a new one on the same subject but picking up of the threads of the earlier tale with Oenone's (now simmering) anger, which culminates in her refusal to heal him. Thus, Tennyson's not drawing on Quintus Calabar for Oenone's habitation has a dual purpose; thematic, for this change makes it a realistic continuation of the first poem about Oenone, the aggrieved wife; and artistic, because this very realism imparts to it an artistic refinement. That is why he discovers her, logically, in the same cave, lost in her happy past till
Her Past became her Present, and she saw him, climbing toward her with the golden fruit, him, happy to be chosen Judge of Gods....

(ll. 14-16).

In the Greek version, when Paris comes as a suppliant to be healed, Oenone 's spurning him in full of sarcasm and scorn:

Thou comest unto me! -- thou, who didst leave Erewhile a wailing wife in a desolate home!--
Didst leave her for thy Tyndarid darling! Go, Lie laughing in her arms for bliss! She is better
Than thy true wife -- is, rumour saith, immortal!
Make haste to kneel to her -- but not to me! 32

Tennyson's Oenone is cryptic and restrained. Paris pleads:

'Help, heal me, I am poisoned to the heart'
'And I to mine' she said, 'Adulterer,
Go back to thine adulteress and die!'

(ll. 46-48)

In the Greek poem shepherds discover the dead Paris and nymphs weep round the funeral pyre as they recall their childhood with him. In Tennyson's version the shepherd who had reared him finds him on the hill side. In the Greek story Oenone "...feared/No shaggy beast that met her in the dark/ Who erst had feared them sorely"33 as she rushed down the hill. Tennyson's Oenone paces down slowly in

32. Appendix II, B1, p.236.
33. Ibid., p.242.
darkness, though equally unafraid, for she is unmindful of the hissing snake, the springing panther and the shrieking bird of prey. Quintus Calabar's Oenone, without uttering a word, muffles up her face with her mantle and springs quickly into the fire. Tennyson's Oenone does the same, but it is significant that she utters the word "Husband" as she leaps on to the flaming pyre and "mixes" "herself with him" and "passes" "in fire." (ll. 106). The earlier version projects young Tennyson's sense of revolt against an unjust and errant husband, while the later his mature belief in the sanctity of matrimonial relationship. In "The Death of Oenone" the aged poet finally re-establishes the sanctified bond of marriage by a "supreme act of forgiveness," though in death. It is the woman who upholds the sanctity of marriage and thereby keeps the warp and woof of society intact. It may be said that it is perhaps to establish this, and not because Quintus Calabar has "somewhat lazily handled" the theme (as Tennyson wrote to Jowett), that he took up the theme of Oenone again after a lapse of almost fifty years. Bush seems to err in judgement when he labels it as "the only one of the long series of classical poems which is not modernised and animated by personal emotion." 

34. Ricks, Tennyson, p. 291.
35. And read a Grecian tale re-told,
    Which cast in later Grecian mould,
    Quintus Calaber
    Somewhat lazily handled of old;
    ("To the Master of Balliol," ll. 5-8)
    The Poems of Tennyson, p. 1426.
The upholding of marriage for the well-being of a healthy society, the role of women in its upkeep and preservation with their loyalty, love, and self-sacrifice, are undercurrents of the narrative that are as modern as they are ancient. For Tennyson they are emotively personal as well, for they are linked to memories of the tenacity with which his mother tried to hold the home together and give as much security as she could to the children. They are linked to his own domestic life, made happy by the love and cooperation of his wife Emily. The one classical poem that could fit Bush's remark seems to be "Hero to Leander" rather than "The Death of Oenone," for the former is purely an exercise of his poetic art while the latter embodies a significant message, drawn from his own experience, relevant to society.

While Paris' infidelity is responsible for the pain and suffering of Oenone, Semele loses her life due to the over-indulgence of her divine paramour Zeus. "Semele" is an incomplete poem of about 28 lines, a literal fragment, composed during 1833-35, when Tennyson was under the

37. Bush writes: "The upholders of a marital bond between Paris and Oenone were Ovid and Quintus Smyrnaeus; .... Marriage, it would appear, was not a purely Victorian or Tennysonian invention." (Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry, pp. 222-223).

38. Ricks writes that "Semele" was printed by Hallam Tennyson in 1913 (p. XXIV) as a fragment written c. 1835. (See The Poems of Tennyson, p. 574).
shadow of Hallam's death. The poem is based on one of the amorous escapades of Zeus. According to the myth Semele was loved by Zeus, and at the instigation of the jealous Hera, entreated him to visit her in all the splendour of a god. This he did and she was consumed by his lightning glory. But Zeus rescued her unborn child from the ashes and placed it in his thigh, from which in due time it was born. 39 This poem may be regarded as an allegorical depiction of the relationship between the poet's mother and father, revealing particularly the overpowering dominance of his father. His mother was a woman of exceptional simplicity and charm. Tennyson considered her to be "one of the most angelick natures of God's earth, always doing good as it were by a sort of intuition." 40 Often the general atmosphere at Somersby became very tense, for at times Dr. Tennyson was very violent and abusive. His treatment of his wife and children gradually became so unbearable that once, in 1829, she "felt it impossible to continue under the same roof as her husband." 41 The domestic life of this period could be said to form the background of

39. The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, ed., Sir Paul Harvey, p. 147, under the heading "Dionysus."


41. Ibid., p. 61.
this poet. The poem, in a way, depicts Tennyson's affection for both his parents. Although the poem was written when the poet is generally supposed to have been occupied with his friend Hallam's death, it is not to be forgotten that his father too had died just two and a half years before Hallam. Whatever may have been the shortcomings of his father, he (Tennyson) loved him well and often brooded upon his loss, as is evident from the veiled reference to him in some of the poems written before Hallam's death. This pain, however, got absorbed in the later sorrow at his friend's death, for it almost followed on the heels of the loss of his father. 42 Tennyson was labouring under,

42. In a poem published in 1832-33 entitled "To J.S.," the poet is commiserating with him (James Spedding) on the death of his brother. The following stanzas figure in the poem:

This is the curse of time. Alas!
In grief I am not all unlearned;
Once through mine own doors Death did pass;
One went, who never hath returned.

He will not smile - not speak to me
Once more. Two years his chair is seen
Empty before us, that was he
Without whose life I had not been.

(11. 17-24)


"The Two Voices" is a poem hallum Tennyson describes "as begun under the cloud of his overwhelming sorrow after the death of Arthur Hallam", news of which reached T. on 1 October 1833. This statement has not hitherto been disputed, but that T. had begun it before Hallum's death is clear from a letter by J.M. Kemble to W.B. Donne .... The letter is dated 'Saturday 22 June,' and from
not one, but two bereavements from 1833 onwards and the fragment "Gemel" reflects the image and influence of his father.

Internal evidence ... it indubitably belongs to June 1833: 'Next Sir are some superb meditations on Self-destruction called 'Thoughts of a Suicide' wherein he argues the point with his soul and is thoroughly floored. These are amazingly fine and deep, ... 'Clearly a version of 'The two Voices' was already in existence'."

(The Poems of Tennyson, p. 52?).

It is obvious the poem was begun under the shadow of his father's death and absorbed that of Hallam's.

Paden, in Tennyson in Egypt, pp. 86-87, argues that the "Vorte d' Arthur" was written in memory of his father and not of Hallam as is generally assumed. He writes that Arthur Hallam's virtue was "potential rather than operative, his triumph was foreseen rather than achieved. In this he was unlike King Arthur. The 'Vorte d' Arthur' deals with the end, not the beginning, of an epoch.

The alternative is obvious. The reverend Dr. George Clayton Tennyson had died in 1821; he had been in his son's mind as a father the symbol of authority, as a priest the symbol of orthodox faith... that was, apparently, crumbling before insidious scepticism." In "From Sorrow Sorrow Yet in Born," he writes:

But leave not thou thy son forlorn;
Touch me, great Nature, make me live.

As when thy sunlights, a mild heat,
Touch some dun meer that sleepeth still;
As when thy moonlight, dim and sweet,
Touch some gray ruin on the hill.

(11. 3-8).

Dr. Amalendu Bose, in Appendix B of his Tennyson's 'In Memoriam': A Revaluation, has shown that these lines were composed before Tennyson came to know of Hallam's death. They could then be the outpourings of his sorrow on his father's death.

Semele appears to symbolize his mother and Zeus his father, but as the poem progressed it seemed to become uncomplementary to his father, whom he truly loved, and it can be a reason for his neither taking it up for revision, nor ever publishing it in his lifetime. Semele, as the persona of his mother, can be said to be a first-person account of her being face to face with the trident wielding, bright sunlight-encircled form of Zeus as the persona of his father in his violent mood.

Tennyson has often identified 'love' with the sun. In "Fatima," the heroine cries:

O Love, Love, Love! O withering might!
O sun, that from thy noonday height
Shudderest when I strain my sight,
Throbbing through all thy heat and light,...

(ll. 1-4)

In another poem, "Love [Almighty Love]" the poet writes that love is a light "Before whose blaze my spirits shrink." (line 11). Paden too writes: "countless passages in Christian literature which identify God with Love...(as in Milton) figure him as the source of blinding light, [and that] there are a number of [such] passages that young Tennyson may have read...."43

43. Paden, Tennyson in Egypt, note 107, p. 133.
In "Semele" Zeus is the amalgamation of all these symbolical presentations of 'Love' and 'God', akin to the sun, for he is both husband and god to her. She is consumed because of his heat and might. Tennyson's mother's plight is, metaphorically, the same. Her suffering and endurance for the sake of her love for her husband and children is fairly evident from Tennyson's, Hallam's, and Sir Charles Tennyson's accounts. The deep bond of love and understanding between the mother and children comes up again and again in his biographies. That is why, perhaps, when he writes on the subject of both his parents together, he cannot help but become somewhat uncomplimentary to his father. In "Isabel," references to him are as "a muddy stream, "vexèd eddies" of a "wayward brother," a worn-out stem "which else had fallen quite." But in that poem he makes these references genuinely mild and sympathetic. This perhaps became too difficult to be managed in "Semele" and hence he left it half done. But even as a fragment, the poem is complementary to his mother. Semele is consumed by the blazing glory of Zeus. Yet even as she dies she forecasts that her unborn son Bacchus will create heavenly music to delight the world with his troop of Bacchanalians:

Rushing in cadence,
All in order,
Plunging down the viney valleys—

(ll. 26-28).
Bacchus appears to stand for Tennyson himself, (the Bacchanalians for his troop of brothers and sisters), destined to be a great poet. It may be kept in mind that while their father often criticized them for their compositions, their mother kept their spirits up. "Semele" projects a mother's fulfilment in the survival of her children, even in her own death. It is difficult to say whether the myth has been purposely modified or it just happened that the role of Zeus, in saving Bacchus from the ashes and being kept in his (Zeus') thigh, got underplayed as the poet was carried away by his adoration for his mother. The very fact that he gave the poem up shows his own dissatisfaction with it.

Tennyson's mythical poems on women throw light on two major aspects of womanhood — wifehood and motherhood. All of them are victims of their husband's caprice and suffer because of it. Oenone is an aggrieved wife who

44. Tennyson's elder brother Charles is quoted by Paden as saying in his old age that their father would never let them know what he thought of their poetry, and used to tell them to mind their books or else they could never get bread by such stuff.

(See Tennyson in Egypt, p. 19).

Charles Tennyson writes about Tennyson's mother: "... her sons owed much to her encouragement and enthusiastic belief in their powers. Poor Elizabeth! no doubt she spoiled as well as encouraged them...."

(Alfred Tennyson, pp. 14-15).
grieves due to her husband's infidelity. Semele is a simple woman who perishes because of her husband's overindulgence. Demeter is an aggrieved mother whose husband himself is responsible for the abduction of their daughter. Semele's motherhood, however, joys in the prospect of her children's future attainments even as she dies, while Demeter becomes the symbol of motherhood itself as she anxiously looks for her stolen daughter. The poet depicts her unabated and heart-rending search over hills and dales and changing seasons thus:

[...] ... went in search of thee

... Among the wail of midnight winds, and cried

'Where is my loved one? Wherefore do ye wail?'

And out from all the night an answer shrilled,

'We know not, and we know not why we wail'.

(ll. 53-61)

She climbed the "Cliffs of all the seas" and asked the waves:

'Where? do ye make your moanings for my child?'

And round from all the world the voices came

'We know not, and we know not why we moan'.

(ll. 64-66).

This desolate goddess mother "started from every eagle peak," "pored through tomb and cave," 'thridded' through the "black heart of all the woods" till she came to the Fates themselves, spinning "the lives of men," and even they
could not tell her of her lost child. She did not rest till she had discovered the whereabouts of her daughter, and on coming to know the complicity of the highest amongst the gods—Zeus himself, her own husband—in her agony she challenged even him as she cursed the "Gods of Heaven." Demeter's moving search, we surmise, is vibrant with the poet's own sorrow at the death of his son Lionel. "It tears me to pieces, he would say...." 45

A noteworthy fact that emerges at this juncture is the inordinately long time after which Tennyson undertook the composition of a poem on Greek mythology. When we take into consideration all the mythical poems of Tennyson (excluding the revised "Tithonus" and "Tiresias"), we find that "Demeter and Persephone" was composed after a gap of about fifty years. The mythical poems prior to this were "Ulysses," "Tithon," and "Tiresias," written on the death of Hallam between 1833-35. The intervening period was one of achievements and happiness for the poet. Tragedy had struck once again in the form of his son's death. This

45. Fausset writes:

"In April, 1886, he lost his son Lionel, who was returning from India. It was 'a grief as deep as life or thought'. The boy had always been so affectionate, unselfish and capable; a bright, useful future lay before him, and the thought of his lonely moonlight burial in the Red Sea, with all the waste of manhood it implied, and the unuttered farewells of a father's love, haunted the dreams of Tennyson. 'It tears me to pieces', he would say...."

(Tennyson, p. 276).
The poem is related to it, although strangely enough, Hallam Tennyson in *A Memoir* does not mention any connection of this poem to Lionel's death. Dahl establishes the link with the argument:

Through line 125 the poem is a strongly emotional account of the grieving mother's search for her lost daughter. Here the poem logically and dramatically could have ended. Demeter, having temporarily regained her daughter, once again blesses the fields; the rhythmic seasonal alternation of death and birth can begin. But, probably thinking of the very recent loss of his son Lionel..., Tennyson is unsatisfied by the simple pagan narrative and adds to it his "frame" of Christian hope.... 47

The sources of this poem are "Homer's *Hymn to Demeter,*" Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* and *Fasti.* As motherhood

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46. In *A Memoir,* II, p. 364, about the reason of "Demeter and Persephone," Hallam simply writes:

"The poem from which the book was named was written at my request, because I knew that he considered Demeter one of the most beautiful types of motherhood."


48. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 1373. The *Hymn* is reproduced in Appendix II, Bii, pp. 244-267.

Pater writes that the myth of Demeter is unique in itself. Although "Alien in some respects from the genuine traditions of Greek mythology, a relic of the earlier inhabitants of Greece, and having but a subordinate place in the religion of Homer, it yet asserted its interest, little by little, and took a complex hold on the minds of the Greeks, becoming finally the central and the most popular subject of their national worship."

was the chief concern of the poet, he leaves out incidents like the goddess's serving as a nurse to Demophoon, Metaneira's discovery of her putting the child in fire, and her eventual departure from Celeus' palace and later brooding in the temple built in her honour by the king.

Tennyson's treatment of the myth is not a mere knitting together of material from the sources but creative.49 The poem begins after Persephone has been won back and brought to her (Demeter) on the fields of Enna, and ends with the mother and daughter embracing each other as Persephone gradually gets accustomed to the daylight and her surroundings. Demeter, in the meanwhile, narrates her own suffering at her loss and her wild, untiring search until she finally gets her back. The main thrust in this poem is on the union of mother and daughter through the power of motherhood. The poet's

extraordinary insight into the nature of myth, his ability to relate a private or social distress to the radical dualities of human experience, makes a poetic triumph out of personal despair. 50

49. Tennyson had said to his biographer son Hallam that he did not wish to give "a mere réchauffé of old legends." His attempt was to put them in a new frame with something modern about them.

(See A Memoir, II, p. 364).

Tennyson's Demeter assumes the character of the universal mother. She embodies the spirit of motherhood in its various manifestations:

Child, when thou wert gone,
I envied human women, and nesting birds,
Yes, the cubbed lioness; went in search of thee
Through many a palace, many a cot, and gave
Thy breast to ailing infants in the night.

(11. 52-55).

Demeter is consoled only when she wins back Persephone from Hades and her 'Dark One'. The power of motherhood subdues even the gods. Through the establishment of this power the poet also seems to establish his own faith in the immortality of the soul.

It can be said that just as the set of poems, "The Choric Songs," represents Tennyson's view of art, the group of poems on Greek mythical women epitomize his concept of women. And just as his love of art had taken roots in his young mind at Somersby, his concept of women had been imperceptibly formulated by the constant company of his often ill-used mother, and the rapport that existed between him and her.

In the poems grouped as Tennyson's poems with mythical Greek women as protagonists we find undertones of a tension between the poet's devotion to pure art and his sense of social responsibility. The poems can be taken
to be a continuation of the theme of "The Choric Songs" at a subterranean level. In "Hero to Leander," Hero is akin to the Muse, and the island is her abode. She tries to restrain Leander, the artist, from taking a plunge into the stormy sea of life and cross it in its violent state. The Garden of the Hesperides is symbolic of the world of art in "The Hesperides" and the 'golden apple' of its creation. In "Oenone" the golden apple in the 'guerdon' of beauty.

The conflict among the goddesses is a projection of the conflict within the poet himself, the conflict between his instinctive leaning towards art-for-art's sake and the compulsion of the duty imposed on him. The choice of Paris is crucial as it is not a free choice between pure art and reality like that of the Lotos-Eaters. It is severely limited for in "Oenone" it boils down to his choice of Helen, the "guerdon," and not Aphrodite, the principle of pure art. Valerie Pitt makes the following observation on the lines from "Oenone" quoted below:

What he chooses is not an Aphrodite who represents the charms of the aesthetic life, but the bait she holds out to him, the wanton Helen. The presence of Oenone, the discarded mistress, defines the status of his choice; it is not a noble worship of beauty but an illicit love. The overtones of sensual self-indulgence in the description of Aphrodite are transferred to his choice.

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

(ll. 170-178).

Pallas, the goddess of reason and war, had offered him a  
"life of self-achievement." In refusing her offer for the  
sake of Helen, he chooses not art but sensual self-  
indulgence which destroys both him and Ilion. 52 The Lotos-  
Eaters of "The Choric Song" opted for pure art which resulted  
in their withdrawal from the world of social responsibility  
into that of the contemplation of art. "Demeter and Persephone,"  
too, has been interpreted as an allegory of poetic creativity.  
Stange says:

... the Vale of Enna, closely resembles certain recurrent  
scenes in Tennyson's poetry, locations which are symbolic  
of the proper home of the spirit... Persephone ...  
clearly the personification of fertility ... may also  
express the principle of poetic creativity ....  53(a)  
and elaborates

The descent and the resurrection of Persephone are ...  
Tennyson's sense of the poet's penetration of the realm  
of imagination, of the forbidden region of shadows which  
must be entered before the highest beauty or the highest  
meaning of experience may be perceived. 53(b)

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52. Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate, p. 53.  
53(b). Ibid., p. 144.
Viewed in this light, "Semele" may be said to be a variation on the same theme. Parallel to Persephone's descent and resurrection can be put Semele's annihilation on being face to face with the light of the greatest and highest experience, which both annihilates and creates. While Semele perishes, the creation germinating in her lives on. The 'truth' of life and 'experience' alone give birth to pure poetry. In "Demeter and Persephone" it is realized through the 'Dark One', in "Semele," through his brother, the 'Bright one'. Both "Semele" and "Demeter and Persephone" can be treated as myths of regeneration and creation, wherein Semele and Demeter are like the poet. Stange says that Demeter is akin to the sensitive mind searching for creativity. 54 Both the poems may then be said to celebrate (what Stange says for the third section of only "Demeter and Persephone") "the precarious triumph of life and fertility over death," 55 as Demeter says to Persephone: "So in this pleasant vale we stand again,/ The field of Enna now once more ablaze/ With flowers that brighten as thy footstep falls..."(ll. 34-36).

In "Semele," as she is being consumed by the blazing brightness of the "Bright One," Semele says to Bacchus: "But

55. Ibid., p. 145.
thou, my Son, who shalt be born/ When I am ather, to
delight the world" (ll. 12-13) with the troop of

Bacchanalian, 
Rushing in cadence, 
All in order, 
Plunging down the viney valleys—

(ll. 25-28).

Here the "viney valleys" can be equated with Elysium or the fields of Enna. But Stange points out that Tennyson's field of Enna "intentionally echoes ... Milton's description of the Garden of Eden"56:

Not that faire field
Of Enna where Proserpin gathering flowres,
Hersefl a fairer flowre by gloomie Dis
Was gathered, which caused Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the World ... 
... might with this 'Paradise'
Of Eden strive....

(Paradise Lost, Bk IV, ll. 268-275).

He continues:

Imaginary places analogous to the Eden garden are abundant in Tennyson's poems; they usually suggest a refuge from active life, a retreat to the past (as in "The Hesperides" and "Maud"), or a sacred bower of poetic inspiration (as in "The Poet's Mind"). 57

56. The lines from Paradise Lost, Bk IV, quoted, and commented on, by G.K. Stange, op.cit., p. 145.
57. Ibid., pp. 145-146.
Mt. Ida may be added to the list of these locations along with the Isle of the Sea-Fairies and the Lotos-Isle.

Although some of these poems were composed after a lapse of more than fifty years, Tennyson's basic approach to Greek myths remained the same. For him they were vehicles for the expression of his innermost concerns and conflicts as well as his concepts and creed. These poems on Greek mythical women reflect his views on love, marriage, and motherhood on the one hand, and are related to "The Choric Songs," (Chapter I), on the other, for along with them they throw light on his attitude towards the relationship between art and the artist.
CHAPTER III

POEMS WITH GREEK MYTHICAL HEROES AS PROTAGONISTS

The 'Choric Songs' stemmed from Tennyson's dilemma in art, the poems on mythical women were inspired by his admiration for women as sustainers of society, and the poems with mythical heroes as protagonists were born from his soulful cogitations on the loss of his friend Arthur Hallam.

The fact of Tennyson and Hallam's friendship and its immortalization in "In Memoriam" is well known. This friendship may be said to be the fulfilment of an inherent, long cherished dream of his Somersby days. The young Tennyson felt the need of a friend, inspite of the company of his brothers and sisters.¹ From amongst the poems of this period, in two poems, "Friendship" and "The Dying Man to His Friend," the poet extols the virtues of friendship, saying that it alone gives solace to the parting soul of man and to the heart "racked and riven / By the hot shafts of baleful calumny."² When the spirit of man is driven to despair, it advises his "lonely grief" to lean on it and "pour" within

¹. In the stanza given below, from "In Memoriam", he affirms that Arthur Hallam was dearer to him than his own brothers:

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widowed race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

(IX, 11. 17-20)

its ear "the tale of misery." But the poet feels that friendship seldom abides in this world, and since his heart yearns for it and despair of it, in "Friendship", in a voice charged with emotion he asks, "But where art thou, thou comet of an age,/ Thou phoenix of a century?" (11. 19-20) and answers that the notion of its existence is but fancy: "Perchance/ Thou art but of those fables which engage/ And hold the minds of men in giddy trance." (11. 20-22). "The Dying Man to His Friend," in retrospect, appears to portend Tennyson's loss of his friend as something pre-ordained. "Friendship" and "The Dying Man to His Friend," taken together, seem to say that the poet almost despaired to find a true friend in life, and feared that even if he found one, death would snatch him away from him. It is a strange coincidence that this is what actually happened. Hallam died on September 15, 1833, at Vienna, and the news of his death reached Somersby on October 1, 1833. 3

Hallam's death was "the most significant single event in Tennyson's life and more than anything else determined the course of his mind." 4 It caused a break in Tennyson's poetic career that separated the lotos-world of his Cambridge days from the rest of his life. Yet, a born poet that he was,

3. Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p. 144.
4. Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate, p. 78.
grief flowed through his pen in verse. This to him was his
only hope to keep a hold on himself:

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.
("In Memoriam," V, 11. 5-8).

Some fruits of this "sad mechanic exercise" are the following
poems:

"From Sorrow Sorrow Yet Is Born," "Hark, the Dogs
Howl?" "Whispers," "On a Mourner," "Youth," "Oh, that
'twere Possible," "Break, Break, Break," "Ulysses,"
and "In Memoriam," the composition of which was spread over
seventeen years. Amongst these poems, "Ulysses," "Tithonus"
and "Tiresias" stand out as poems on Greek mythical heroes.
"Ulysses" was composed soon after Tennyson got the news of
Hallam's death\(^5\) and the other two were also, initially,
composed round about the same period, i.e., 1833-34. But
"Ulysses" was first published in 1842, "Tithonus" in 1860,
and "Tiresias" in 1885. It is rather difficult to point out

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\(^5\) Christopher Ricks in the headnote to "Ulysses" in The Poems
of Tennyson, p. 560, states that it was written soon after
Hallam's death. The poem is dated October 20, 1833 in the
Heath MS. The news of Hallam's death reached the Tennysons
at Somersby on October 1, 1833.
which was the poem or which were the first lines that burst forth when he experienced the agony of the loss on hearing about Hallam's death. But amongst the poems specifically dated, "Ulysses" could be a fair guess as being the first full effusion on a tragedy of this dimension. Amongst the mythical poems of Tennyson, this poem could be said to mark the junction of the two phases of his poetic career — that of the lotus-world of his Cambridge days, and the rest of his life.

It is noteworthy that Dante is related to both "Ulysses" and "In Memoriam," two poems of rather different genres, yet emanating from the same source of inspiration — Hallam's death. Tennyson had acquired an understanding of Dante from Hallam. The chief source of "Ulysses" was "Inferno" in The Divine Comedy, though the genesis of the hero himself was in Homer's Odyssey.

Critics have generally conceded that "Ulysses" is a personal allegory. The ambiguity that has remained unresolved, however, lies in the opening passage of the poem. How and

6. The lines, "and vile it were/ For some three ounc to store and hoard myself" ("Ulysses," ll. 28-29), seem to indicate that after three days of benumbing inactivity at the news, he tried to collect himself and perhaps either began "Ulysses" or contemplated the poem.


why does the hero of the poet of the hearth and home reject his hearth and home in "Ulysses" and that too when Penelope is no Guinevere, Telemachus is a responsible son, and as per *Odyssey* Ulysses' father Leartes is still alive. It is this rejection that seems to make the identification of the poet with the hero difficult. His dereliction of duty and yet his justification of it in the words:

> It little profits that an idle king,  
> By this still hearth, among these barren crags;  
> Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
> Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
> That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.  

(11. 1-5).

has intrigued most of the critics. Baum feels that those lines "hardly avoid the charge of inconsistency."9 Chiasson says that "Ulysses" may be read as a "dramatic presentation of a man who has faith neither in the gods nor consequently in the necessity of preserving order in his kingdom or his own life."10 But both these comments run counter to Tennyson's own statement as given by James Knowles: "There is more about myself in 'Ulysses', which was written under the sense of loss and all that had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end. It was more written with the feeling of his

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loss upon me than many poems in 'In Memoriam'." This statement clearly indicates that the poem has a deeply subjective note, with each section reflecting some internal turmoil or pain. Beaum, Chissom and critics like them appear to delink Tennyson the poet from Tennyson the man and do not take cognisance of Tennyson's mental state at the time of the composition of the poem. His father's death had created many problems which were aggravated by the death of Hallam. Valerie Pitt points out that after Rev. Dr. Tennyson's death, circumstances forced him to become the head of the Somersby household consisting of brothers and sisters of difficult temperaments, beset with problems of career, marriage, nervous illness etc. Added to this, Frederick, Charles and Alfred were being compelled by their grandfather to take orders instead of going back to Cambridge. Frederick and Alfred were totally unsuited to the clerical profession and opposed the move which caused a great deal of family friction and tension. Still, the household had to be run and individual needs looked after. He had to shoulder the burden of the day-to-day problems of the Somersby home.  

In this, and in almost everything "the Somersby household

was overshadowed by the disapproving control exercised from Bayons Manor." 13

Though Tennyson had become the "head of the family" he was a most powerless head for the "purse strings" were controlled by grandfather Tennyson, the "ultimate arbiter." 14 Charles d' Eyncourt, the favoured son, supported the elder Tennyson's approach in everything about the Somersby Tennysons and thus, when Alfred wanted to go back to Cambridge, there was virtually no one to look up to for support. 15 His total dependence on his grandfather for means to tackle the various problems according to his (grandfather's) wishes, left no room for his own initiative. This must have greatly depressed him.

The difficulties the first five lines of "Ulysses" present to the critics arise because they fail to view Tennyson in the totality of his situation and focus their attention only on the poet's bereavement on Hallam's death. The poem truly has much more about Tennyson than even "In Memoriam," for "In Memoriam" is about his grief, faith and doubt, and the ultimate restoration of his faith. The

13. Valerie Pitt, op.cit., p. 79.
14. Ibid., p. 49.
15. Philip Henderson writes: "When Alfred left Cambridge there seemed little likelihood of his returning there to take a degree. 'I told him that it was a useless expense unless he meant to go into the Church', his uncle Charles wrote to Bayons."

(Tennyson Poet and Prophet,p.24)
autobiographical stanzas of "In Memoriam" that reflect life at Somersby are mostly related to the family in its relationship to Hallam, whereas "Ulysses" reflects the immediate problems confronting Tennyson.

Symbolic mode is Tennyson's favourite style. His statement that there is more about himself in "Ulysses," which was written under the sense of loss and all that had gone by, is but half the truth if looked at merely from the viewpoint of Tennyson's grief on his friend's death. As a matter of fact, this grief had, in a way, aggravated his sorrow on his father's death, and made him feel unbearably lonely in facing the various problems that surrounded him. Tennyson's situation in its totality with his relationships with the rest of the world and his own immediate family is as important as the bereavement in gauging the depth of this cryptic statement.  

16. J.H. Buckley throws light on Tennyson's situation in the following words:

"Tennyson had indeed been close to nervous collapse ever since his father's death in March. His sense of bereavement, greater than he could have anticipated, had led him into a not unfamiliar hypochondria.... A real source of his misery was no doubt the burden of responsibility which had been thrust upon him in his new position as virtual head of the whole uneasy establishment at Somersby. He still wished to return to Cambridge and, in order to do so, was almost willing to satisfy his grandfather's requirement that he plan to enter holy orders. But he knew that he had no 'call' to the Church; ....He considered himself essentially the artist, but, despite the counsel of the Apostles, he was not at all sure how art might sustain society or even give him a means of self-support."

(Tennyson the Growth of a Poet, p. 42.)
for him in many ways. He "alone understood his problems, [and] strove to fortify in him the sense of dedication." 17
And now Hallam too had died. 18

Ulysses is the persona of Tennyson, the "King" of
Somersby, with its "still hearth," for it has suffered
two losses, Dr. Tennyson's, and now Hallam's. This can be

17. J.H. Buckley, Tennyson the Growth of a Poet, p. 42.

18. Hallam Tennyson in A Memoir, I (p. 72) refers to
"the double loss of Tennyson, that of his father
and of his friend" in lines incorporated in
"In Memoriam":

As down the garden-walks I move,
Two spirits of a diverse love
Contend for loving masterdom.
glimpsed in some passages of "In Memoriam." He is an "idle king" for he has no scope to act on his own initiative and no finance to manage his "kingdom" as he wants to. The

19. The following two stanzas from "In Memoriam" are like an exposition of the phrase "by this still hearth":

For by the hearth the children sit
Cold in that atmosphere of Death,
And scarce endure to draw the breath.
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair, and think,
'How good! how kind! and he is gone'.

(XX, 11. 13-20).

The stanzas given below, also from "In Memoriam," are a reminder of the once joyous household which makes the silence of the present "still hearth" of "Ulysses" come alive by contrast and reflects the full import of the phrase in relation to his own home:

At our old pantimes in the hall
We gambolled, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

(XXX, 11. 5-8).

Then echo-like our voices rang;
We sung, though every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year: impetuously we sang:

(XXX, 11. 13-16).
futility of such a situation is sounded in the very first line of the poem:

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

(11. 1-5).

The exacting requirements of looking after his temperamental and difficult siblings, with their ailments, seem to make him turn them, metaphorically, into "a savage race" in the poem. His work is to "mete and dole" "unequal laws" to them. "Unequal," here means, not in the same measure, but dispensation to each according to his need. "Laws" stands for the advice and guidance he must have been giving to his brothers and sisters to reorganize their lives. The word "savage" generally connotes brutality and violence, but it is significant that Ulysses does not accuse the Ithacans of violence. Their only acts of 'savagery' appear to be "to hoard, and feed, and sleep,
and know not me." Weighed down by their own individual maladies, his brothers and sisters, who are akin to the Ithacans, are reduced merely to the level of eating and sleeping, and have become immune to the finer things of life. Tennyson feels that he is wasting his time and talent on them.

20. Valerie Pitt in Tennyson Laureate, p. 79, writes about the different maladies and exacting needs of the individuals of the Somersby household of which Tennyson was the head. Septimus and Edward were getting mentally ill, Emily had taken to a "prolonged bout of Gothic suffering."

We can say that they had been reduced to a state in which they could no longer appreciate his poetic genius.

Philip Henderson, in Tennyson, Poet and Prophet, p. 90, shows that there was no appreciation of Tennyson's poetic powers by his relations at Bayons Manor. His uncle Charles refused to acknowledge it even when he had been made Poet Laureate. When he heard the news he is reported to have said, "Horrid rubbish indeed! What a discredit it is that British taste and Poetry should have such a representative before the Nations of the Earth and Posterity!"

Keeping this in mind it appears that grandfather Tennyson and uncle Charles could also be included in the metaphor "savage race, / That hoard and sleep and feed, and know not me," for both of them failed to recognise Tennyson's genius.
The most intriguing phrase, ensconced between these lines is where Ulysses refers to Penelope as "an aged wife." This could be a phrase picked up from *The Heroides* of Ovid from Penelope's epistle to Ulysses. She ends the letter with:

> As for myself, who when you left my side was but a girl, though you should come straightway, I surely shall seem grown an aged dame. 21

The use Tennyson makes of it imparts realism to the situation of Ulysses and Penelope in the myth. He calls himself and his mariners also "old" — "Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I are old." (line 49). But the reference to Penelope as the 'aged wife' has a symbolical implication too. It can be taken to stand for the misery that would not leave him. 22 Since as long back as he could remember, there were memories of unwholesome scenes, frayed tempers, a wronged, dipsomaniac father, a silently suffering mother. Then death deprived him of the shelter of his father first, and the strength and solace of his...

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22. In "In Memoriam," too, he equates 'sorrow' with wife:

> O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
> No casual mistress, but a wife,
> My bosom-friend and half of life;
> As I confess it needs must be ....
>
> (LIX, 11. 1-4)
friend soon after. The "aged wife" therefore, metaphorically, is the ever loyal minxery, an inseparable partner in life. These lines thus state that he finds no substance in such kingship, and hence wants to leave such a kingdom and wife, and go forth in search of new worlds.

In its allegorical mode the poem seems to vacillate between the ironic and the romantic mood. It becomes ironic when the reference is to Tennyson's home life, and poignantly romantic with reference to his own aspirations, dreams, and ambitions which are on the verge of collapse, as he tries desperately to retrieve them. If the first passage, by the mode of indirection, is about his family life, the second (11. 6-32) is an allegorical presentation of the world of intellect in which Tennyson was no less an adventurer than Ulysses was in the physical world. In Somersby he used to explore his father's library and during the Cambridge period, the vast expanse of knowledge that opened up before him at the University, gave him an endless appetite for it. The lines:

Much have I seen and known: cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honoured of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

(11. 13-17)

show the increasing vista of his understanding and knowledge at Cambridge. The company of the Apostles, the pressure of
their creed, the heated debates and endless arguments amongst them were akin to the "delight of battle with my peers," which "Ulysses" was "drunk" with. To be "an idle king," constricted within the confines of a "kingdom" of "barren crags" and "savages" was uninspiring, dull, and oppressive. The world of the mind—seen through the "arch" of his experience, gleams in front of him, tempting him to explore its untravelled regions and not vegetate in this "kingdom." Wasting his time in mundane tasks is not his concept of life. He believes in a full-blooded, active, and fruitful existence, and feels that there is so much to be seen and done in the world that one life is too short a time for it. In his Cambridge days when tragedy had not yet struck him, he had written a sonnet, "Life," reflecting his attitude towards it:

Why suffers human life so soon eclipse?  
For I could burst into a psalm of praise,  
Seeing the heart so wondrous in her ways,  
En scorn looks beautiful on human lips!  
Would I could pile fresh life on life, and dull  
The sharp desire of knowledge still with knowing!  
Art, Science, Nature, everything is full,  
As my own soul is full, to over flowing -  
Millions of forms, and hues, and shades,that give  
The difference of all things to the sense,  
And all the likeness in the difference.  
I thank thee, God, that thou hast made me live:  
I reck not for the sorrow or the strife;  
One only joy I know, the joy of life. 25

23. The Poems of Tennyson, pp. 296-297.
Allegorically, the second passage of "Ulysses," then, can be said to hark back to Tennyson's Cambridge days with all its varied experiences. The poet scorns inactivity but it has been forced upon him in the role of "an idle king," and he moans:

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!  
As though to breathe were life.  

(11. 22-24).

In "The Two Voices" he declares:

'Whatever crazy sorrow saith,  
No life that breathes with human breath  
Has ever truly long'd for death,  
'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want."  

(11. 394-399).

The object of this life, as set at the end of the passage in "Ulysses," is a romantic ideal which incorporates the ideal of the Cambridge enthusiasts. It is

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.  

(11. 31-32)

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24. "If the absorption into the divine in after-life be the creed of some, let them at all events allow us many existences of individuality before this absorption; since this short-lived individuality seems to be but too short a preparation for so mighty a union."

(Tennyson's statement quoted by Hallam Tennyson in A Memoir, I, p. 319).
But in his other poems Tennyson has always shown a distrust of pure, unalloyed knowledge. The theory of evolution based on the knowledge of Geology had already struck at the very foundation of the Biblical concept of creation. This made him feel insecure and restless. This sense of insecurity was intensified by Hallam's death. He was in dire need of some support. He was afraid of the outcome of pure knowledge and yet the goal he set for Ulysses was that of 'Knowledge.' In the "Prologue" to "In Memoriam" he says:

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;

(11. 25-26).

He felt that though "knowledge" was attractive it was still in its infancy. For a healthy growth beneficial to mankind it needed curbs, controls, and careful channelization. He said he was not against the thirst for knowledge that had gripped the age, but he felt that an uncontrolled and undirected passion for it could spell disaster for it had in it great potential for harm. In "In Memoriam" he writes:

25. In "Parnassus" the poet shows his fear of Astronomy and Geology and calls them "terrible Muses." The latter was responsible for Darwin's theory of evolution.

The doubts and uncertainty the new investigations and scientific researches created in his mind are recorded in "The Supposed Confessions of a Second Rate Sensitive Mind," which is printed in The Poems of Tennyson, pp. 197-202.
Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper! Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire:
She sets her forward countenance
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain-
She cannot fight the fear of death.
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power. Let her know her place;
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain; and guide
Her footsteps, moving side by side
With wisdom, like the younger child;

(CXIV, 11. 1-20).

Why was it then that he made knowledge alone the goal of
Ulysses? Was it simply because his Ulysses was drawn from
Dante?

It is possible that the romantic urge to follow a
goal like knowledge was rooted in Dante, but critics have
failed to see that here, too, Tennyson is careful to make
knowledge subordinate to wisdom. This becomes clear from
a comparison of the commencement of the voyages of the heroes
of the two poems. Dante's Ulysses starts his voyage at dawn
and sails towards the East : " ... To the dawn/ Our poop
Contrasted with this, Tennyson's Ulysses gets ready to set sail in the evening and turns his ship to the West:

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:  
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep Moans round with many voices....

(11. 54-56).

He tells his sailor friends his goal, "... my purpose holds/ To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths/ Of all the western stars, until I die." (11. 59-61). We find that Tennyson's and Dante's Ulysses take opposite directions, at totally different times of the day, though both choose the same objective—"to follow knowledge." What could have made Tennyson be at variance with Dante? It appears that Dante was voicing the pure Renaissance spirit of enquiry while Tennyson belonged to an age confronted with some of the results of such an enquiry. Many of its findings posed a challenge to the established concepts of Christianity. This caused confusion in the minds of the people who were afraid of losing their moorings at this onslaught of knowledge on their faith and beliefs. To Tennyson "wisdom" and "reverence" appeared to be the two tenets that could maintain a healthy balance and check the possible offshoots

of knowledge from harming the fabric of society. By turning his ship to the West he symbolically turned towards the treasure house of "wisdom," to pursue knowledge through the path of wisdom. There is no dichotomy here because in pursuit of the one he has chosen the path that goes through the other. Knowledge is, in this way, tempered with wisdom.

Ulysses' address to his mariners in Tennyson's poem is imbued with the poet's own subjective experience. This is in contrast to Dante's Ulysses. Dante's Ulysses, in the "Inferno," narrates to Virgil and Dante how he prepared his mariners to undertake this last voyage:

'O brothers,' I began, 'who to the west Through perils without number now have reach'd; To this short remaining watch, that yet Our senses have to wake, refuse not proof Of the unpeopled world, following the track Of Phoebus. Call to mind from whence ye sprang; Ye were not form'd to live the life of brutes But virtue to pursue and knowledge high'. 28

27. "The East is the common day of human action; the West is the evening of a consecrated half-light, of mystery and quiet contemplation and 'hoarded wisdom.'"

(J.H. Buckley, Tennyson the Growth of a Poet, p. 47).

In "The Hesperides" the three sisters sing as they guard the "golden apples": "...watch the treasure/ Of the wisdom of the west." (11. 26-27)
Thus "wisdom" lies in the West.

Tennyson's Ulysses almost cajoles them affectionately, reminding them of their happy togetherness in the past:

... My mariners,
Sould that have toiled, and wrought and thought with me-
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads - you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end....

(11. 45-51)

... Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.

(11. 56-57).

Just as Ulysses is the persona of Tennyson, the mariners may be said to stand for the rest of the Somersby set, with Emily at their head. The lines hark back to their close companionship in the past. They were the souls who "with a frolic welcome took/ The thunder and the sunshine" at Somersby. Hallam's death had hit them hard but for "Alfred and Emily the blow was overwhelming." Ulysses' address to the mariners appears to be more in the nature of Tennyson tenderly coaxing his sister to help her to pick up the threads of life once again.

29. Hallam Tennyson, A Memoir I, pp. 4-5, describes how the Tennyson brothers and sisters enjoyed their imaginative games together—mock tournaments, writing tales and putting them under vegetable dishes at dinner "to be read aloud when it was over," or Alfred with young Cecilia on his knee, Mathilda, Arthur and the other young brothers and sisters surrounding him, listened to his fascinating tales by the fireside in winters.

30. Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p. 145.
Ensconsed between the two passages just discussed is a rather small para of about ten lines (11. 35-43) wherein Ulysses justifies leaving the burden of administering the kingdom on the shoulders of Telemachus. It has made critics charge him with not only justifying dereliction of duty but showing a positive contempt for it. Baum finds him "diplomatic, at the very least, when he changes 'savage race' to 'rugged people'." In his (Baum's) view the "description of Telemachus as 'Most blameless', devoted to 'common duties', as 'decent not to fail' in tenderness and in worship of 'my household gods', has an air of condescension with a tinge of contempt. His words, 'the useful and the good', become almost sarcasm. When he dismisses Telemachus with 'He works his work, I mine', it is hard to miss a note of polite scorn."31

Baum has detected the right tones, but since his attention was perhaps fixed mainly on the mythical hero and his son, he has missed the target this contempt was directed at, i.e., Tennyson's uncle Charles and grandfather Tennyson. Telemachus appears to symbolise the favoured son—Tennyson's uncle, Charles d'Eyncourt. The lines

31. P.F. Baum, Tennyson Sixty Years After, p. 301.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle-  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and through soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  

(11. 33-58)

are an ironic comment on the impression grandfather Tennyson  
had about his favoured son in particular and the Somersby  
Tennysons in general. Old Mr. Tennyson and the other  
incumbents of Bayons Manor considered the Somersby Tennysons  
to be uncouth. The whole passage from lines 33 to 43,  
where it closes with "He works his work, I mine," is a  
veiled criticism of the elder Tennyson who is, in effect,  
the real master of the show with Charles d' Eyncourt playing  
his tune. Alfred as the redundant "idle king" is no longer  
prepared to mope in this "silent hearth" but wishes to  
employ himself in a task after his heart. His uncle  
Charles, at the behest of old Mr. Tennyson, is handling  
the family at Somersby, and never fails in paying "meet  
adoration" to this worthy (old Mr. Tennyson), the "household  
god" of both the branches of the Tennysons. The appreciation  
of the father and son is reciprocal. It is he (Charles d'  
Eyncourt) who is considered by Tennyson's grandfather to  
be endowed with "hard headed practicality [which] promised  
better to preserve and augment the fortunes of
Bayons Manor. 32 Both father and son were responsible for the troubles at Somersby which stemmed mainly from the injustice perpetrated on the elder son. Later, too, they showed little understanding in the control they exercised over the lives and finances of the elder son, Rev. Tennyson's family. From behind the thin veil of the persona of Ulysses, Tennyson declares his intention to remove himself from the scene altogether. The personal allegory reflects Tennyson's real situation—the grief that gnawed at his heart, the trouble ridden house, and his own helplessness in setting things right. The situation had the potential of bringing to naught his life-long ambition of becoming a great poet, and hence the compulsion of extricating himself from it so that

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

(11. 52-53).

It is in this respect that "Ulysses" gives out the poet's feelings about "the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life," as Tennyson says, "perhaps more simply

32. J.H. Buckley, Tennyson the Growth of a Poet, p. 3.

The text of footnote 15 ante of this chapter is an example of how Charles supported and implemented all that his father said, specially as regards the Somersby Tennysons.
than any thing in ‘In Memoriam’.” \(^3\)\(^3\) “Ulysses” expresses the determination of the poet to fulfill his aspirations, however grave "the sense of loss" under which the effort is going to be made. As Valerie Pitt puts it:

His grief for Hallam jerked him into a realization of his choice, the realization of what it meant to live in the real world in relationship to others of his own kind. \(^3\)\(^4\)

Supporting Miss Green’s analysis as a cogent assessment of Tennyson’s mood, Pitt says that the new theme of Tennyson was "a determination to face and not to escape the world." \(^3\)\(^5\) He was now, "to strive, to seek, to find," the truth of life through his higher poetic vision, and was "not to yield"

\(^3\)\(^3\). \textit{A Memoir}, I, p. 196.


\(^3\)\(^5\). Ibid., pp. 125. Pitt gives Miss Green's argument from the latter's essay "Tennyson's development during the ‘Ten Years Silence’" (P.M.L.A., LXVI, 1951). Pitt writes:

"Miss Joyce Green, in an essay on the revisions of the 1832 volume, shows how Tennyson's intention in collecting and arranging all this work for the 1842 volume was not so much to placate or satisfy the critics of his earlier work, as to present a collection of poems which should be homogenous in tone and theme. The tone and theme of such a collection would, of course, be dictated by Tennyson's mood in the late thirties and not by that of his undergraduate years. This would require considerable revision of the undergraduate poems, and Miss Green, in a compelling analysis, shows how these revisions support Tennyson's new theme of a determination to face and not to escape the world. The new collection of poems was both to satisfy Tennyson's aesthetic conscience and his moral determination not to withdraw from the world into the weak indulgence of sorrow. The most telling evidence which Miss Green offers for her thesis is the withdrawal of "The Hesperides" not only from the 1842 volume but from all subsequent editions of \textit{Poems} issued in Tennyson's life time."

(\textit{pp. 125-126}).
to any debilitating sorrow and then withdraw into a "Palace of Art." With a new "moral determination" he was bent upon satisfying his "aesthetic conscience." This is what Hallem had urged him to do. The fulfilment of his friend's desire might have seemed to him to be a way of meeting his lost friend, which, it can be said, is metaphorically expressed in "It may be we shall touch the Happy Island; / And see the great Achillen whom we know." (11. 63-64).

The arousal of the aesthetic conscience of the poet brings to the fore the question of the position of the artist as projected in this poem. In the 'Choric Songs' (Chapter I), the world of pure art has been symbolically represented as a garden island, fringed with mountains, with cascading cataracts, flowing streams and fountains. Enchantment and mystery pervade the whole atmosphere as heavenly nymph-like beautiful maidens—the Sea Fairies or the Hesperides sing continuously, or the mariners relax on the lush green isles and sing with contentment and joy. The singers, as has been argued in the chapter on the Choric Songs, are akin to the Muses, and the islands are symbolic of the abode of gods. The calm sea is the sea of life. The mariners, when on the sea, represent the uncertain artist who is magnetically drawn towards the enchanting island.
This island is the home of the Muses and symbolizes pure art—the world of art-for-art's sake, where Tennyson had often taken refuge and which he was reluctant to leave.

We have earlier established that Hallam's death was one single event that had in a significant way determined the course of his mind.36 The course that he now seems to have adopted is to free himself from the hold of pure art and devote his energy to purposeful poetry. The phase of self-indulgent languor by escaping into art is now over. This change is brought about by the shock of Hallam's death.37 The transformation, it may be said, is symbolically expressed in "Ulysses." The island, the mountains, the sea, the mariners—all figure in it as they do in "The Sea-Fairies," "The Lotos-Eaters," and "The Hesperides." The music and the Muse, too, are there but just as the mirror of the Lady of Shalott "cracked" and the magic web "flew" as soon as she "looked down at Camelot," it can be said that the symbols of his Muse's abode are transformed into the sterile "barren crags" of Ithaca at the shock of Hallam's

36. Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate, p. 78.

37. "Hallam's life no less than Hallam's death had left its mark on his personality. In five years of a sane friendship the world of fantasy had lost its compelling power. The fragile escape worlds of the Arabian Gardens and the Merman's taverns were closed to Tennyson in his new grief; he had to endure what he could not now avoid." (Ibid., p. 121).
death. The spell of self-indulgent art is broken. The lush green island (with its mountains, streams, and fountains) of his dream world now shows up its reality as a bleak Ithaca. The singing of the choric songs is contrasted with the "still hearth" of this poem. The consciousness of silence is a realization of the absence of music. The beautiful nymphs, symbolic Muses, are replaced by an "aged wife," bereft of charm. The implication clearly is that this is the reality of what the artist had mistakenly taken to be a beautiful haven of retreat under the hold of some romantic charm. Confronted with the truth of the situation he decides to set sail again on the sea of life with the mission of a search for knowledge. This can be a search for the knowledge of life itself, with its good and evil. Since his path lies through the West, the abode of "wisdom," this search will be monitored by it.

An interesting and significant aspect of Tennyson's Ithaca is that from amongst his sources for this poem, Dante does not mention Ithaca at all while Homer's Ithaca, as shown by Sargeaunt, has all the potential of being cast in the mould of Tennyson's favourite isles like those
of the 'Choric Songs.' But since Tennyson's trance has been broken, for him the forest-covered peaks of Ithaca's Mount Neriton no longer seem rich with greenery. They have become its "barren crags."

Apart from projecting the chastened artist through the myth, Tennyson makes it reflective of the widening horizons of the mind in the nineteenth century. Sergeant says that the value of the poem "is founded securely on the life of the modern world. As knowledge increases and spreads, men see more and more of the 'unharvested' sea of experience stretching in front of them;... they are saddened with the thought of the brevity of their experience...." The search for knowledge, reflective of the great advances made in his time which opened new vistas for still greater ones, ad infinitum, from the secrets of the mind to the secrets of stars and the secrets in the bowels of the earth.

38. G.M. Sergeant in his essay, "The Eternal Wanderer," Classical Studies (1929), pp. 13-14-15, shows that Homer's Ulysses applies the epithet "sweet" to this island. There is the mountain Neriton "with trembling forest leaves, standing manifest to view...." There are "the long paths and the sheltering havens and steep rocks and trees in their bloom...." There is also "a pleasant cave and shadowy, sacred to the nymphs; and there moreover do bees hive, and there are great looms of stone wherein the nymphs weave raiment of purple stain, a marvel to behold, and therein are waters welling evermore." There is "the fair flowing spring with a basin fashioned, whence the people of the city drew water.... Around it was a thicket of alders that grow by the waters all circlewise, and down the cold stream fell from a rock on high."

Ulysses expresses it thus:

I am part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience in an urn where through
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.

(11. 18-21).

"Ulysses," as a myth recast by Tennyson, appears to have borrowed almost nothing from Homer except the figure of Ulysses. His debt to Dante, though somewhat greater, does not amount to a re-narration of Dante's story either. He has narrated no story at all for his tale begins and ends with the intention of Ulysses' undertaking a new voyage. The poem reads like a preamble to a tale of which Ulysses is the hero. Tennyson's Ulysses is often criticized for cursorily brushing aside Penelope as an "aged wife" in favour of his new pursuit. Critics have found Ulysses' treatment of Penelope indefensible. Dante's Ulysses, at least, is not self-righteous whereas Tennyson's is. Why does the poet portray him as such a hard hearted husband? It is well known that in classical epical literature heroes are depicted as polygamous. Those were the days when women were part of the booty of war. The whole of *Iliad* is based on the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon over Briseis. As for desertion—Aeneas' desertion of Dido, Jason's of Medea, Paris' of Oenone, with the devastation that followed

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40. A perusal of Appendix III, C and C1, pp.268-274 will support it.
in its wake, are but a few examples of the general attitude of men towards women. The protagonist Tennyson is portraying hero in a man of action and vast experience and in from the epical world of the classics. He is the beloved of beautiful Calypso and Circe, and admired by princess Nausicaa, who, like Desdemona, listens to his tales of adventure at her father's court. Though, with an adamantine will, he manages to reach Ithaca, vanquishes Penelope's suitors, and re-establishes his claim on his kingdom and his wife, it can be said that he took the risks and bore the hardships not merely for Penelope but for his own reputation as well. His honour and his kingdom were at stake. He retrieved both with glory. As for his disenchantment with Penelope, there was nothing unusual in deserting one woman after another in those days, specially for a hero like Ulysses. He had left Penelope twenty years earlier when he undertook the Trojan adventure. Then he left Calypso and later Circe and now he decides to leave Penelope again for a fresh adventure. It may be recalled that in this poem Tennyson is portraying Ulysses and not Penelope and hence the focus is on Ulysses' feelings. The very charge of insensitivity on Ulysses embodies a compliment to the sensibility of the poet for the perceptive eye. It is an established fact that when Tennyson takes up a subject,
he also takes up its "name, feelings, nerves, and brain" along with the name and local habitation. In taking up Ulysses, Tennyson takes up the hero's possible attitude towards women as well. Thus, the new "sea-fever" that is gripping him can no longer be stayed by a wife who has lost her youth and beauty. To blame him for being heartless is to judge the mythical hero by the nineteenth and twentieth century standards of social behaviour and morality.

If "Ulysses" is a poem, inspired by the poet's realization of "the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life," "Tithonus" is a plea for being freed from it. "Ulysses" was composed in the first flush of sorrow and the urgency of overcoming it, and "Tithon," as a "pendent" to it, was written about the same time. While "Tithon" may be said to be the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," "Tithonus" presents an emotion "recollected in tranquility," for it is a revised version of the former, after a lapse of


about a quarter century. 43

"Tithonus" is not so much a symbolical portrayal of Tennyson's love for Hallam as of "the grief of Tennyson's sister Emily..." 44 Her condition was a constant cause of anxiety to the poet. When he was at Kitlands she had written to him that her health had become worse since his departure and at times she had felt the "chilly hand of death" upon her. More than nine months had elapsed since Hallam's death but she still seemed to be buried under "a grave of tears" and longed for death. A stanza in "In Memoriam" shows the grief as equally shared by both:

O what to her uhall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me no second friend.

(VI, ll. 41-44)

43. Ricks in Tennyson, (p. 128), writes that Tennyson's mind turned to it when Jowett wrote to him, after a visit to Hallam's grave, that it brought on him the disturbing and strange realization that "while we are getting old and dusty they are as they were."

Donahue writes that "Tithon" underwent revision in 1859 on Thackeray's urgent request for a poem for the "Cornhill" publication.

("Tennyson's 'Hail, Briton!' and 'Tithon' in the Heath Manuscript," op. cit., p. 400).

44. Ricks, op. cit., p. 128.
It seems that while the figure of Ulysses emerged from the past as an emblem of courage, Emily's condition conjured up the image of Tithonus, longing to die, yet forced to live. While "Ulysses" embodies the urge for "life in death," "Tithonus" represents the experience of "death in life," for immortality is not necessarily a boon.

Tennyson's sources for the myth of this poem are "Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite" and two of Horace's odes. He utilizes this myth to highlight the ironic aspect of immortality, coveted by us mortals. As is his wont, he does not re-narrate the myth but explores the crisis it contains. There are two versions of the myth. The one which shows Tithonus changed into a grasshopper is already discredited by him in an earlier poem—"The Grasshopper." The myth, as given in the Homeric Hymn, outlines the story of Eos' love for Tithonus. It is overweighted with the golden glory of the gods and reveals the casual manner of the goddess' granting immortality to Tithonus. It causes him immense suffering but this is not glossed over in the hymn. A cryptic, "he babbles endlessly, and no more has strength at

45. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 1113.

46. Ibid., pp. 234-235. In "The Grasshopper" Tennyson says: "No Tithon thou as poets feign/(Shame fall 'em they are deaf and blind)" (ll. 5-6).
all, such as once he had in his supple limbs" does away
with his plight. Tennyson's perception discovers the
potential of the frightful prospect of a life of eternal
decay. With his keen sensibility and dramatic power he
explores it.

The tone of the poem and the time of its composition
indicate clearly its deep, subjective, undertones. The
poem takes on the hue of an emotionally charged personal
allegory. "Ulysses" is a veritable epitome of indomitable
will and an unquenchable thirst for a life of action till
the last moment of death. "Tithonus" is the obverse of
"Ulysses." If Ulysses has too little of "life," Tithonus
has too much of it. He envies things "blessed" with
mortality, as he surveys things having the power to die:

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burden to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.

(ll. 1-4).

He complains that he alone has been singled out by "cruel"
immortality to "wither slowly" yet not die. Yoked to
immortality, without the concomitant blessing of "eternal
youth," while the rest of the life forms are consumed by
death, he ironically, is "consumed" by "life."

47. Appendix III, Cii, p.275.
Me only cruel Immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
More at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-haired shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,...

(ll. 5-9)

The lines seem to very strongly suggest Emily who had become a shadow of her former self and yearned for death at each moment of her life. From now onwards Hallam would always remain youthful in her memory, but like Tithon she would wane and wither, compelled "To live confronted with eternal youth;/ To look on what is beautiful nor know/ Enjoyment save through memory...." ("Tithon," ll. 13-15).

Tennyson's empathy must have made him experience each moment of his sister's agony. Hallam was out of reach of the ravage of time—Emily and the poet were inextricably caught in its meshes. The allegorical note is obvious. The pathetic pleading of Tithonus for release from such a life can be construed as that of Emily's, through the persona of Tithonus, as he wails:

Or let me call thy ministers, the hours,
To take me up, to wind me in their arms,
To shoot the sunny interval of day,
And lap me deep within the lonely west.

("Tithon," ll. 24-27).

48. "In consequence of her sudden and terrible grief my aunt Emily was ill for many months, and very slowly recovered. 'We were waiting for her', writes one of her friends, 'in the drawing room the first day since her loss that she had been able to meet anyone, and she came at last, dressed in deep mourning, a shadow of her former self!'...

(A Memoir, I, pp. 108-109)
These lines are part of the first composition of the poem as "Tithon" during the "Ulysses" period. The revision they underwent twenty-five years later is significant:

Put thy strong Hours indignant worked their wills,
And beat me down and marred and wasted me,
And though they could not end me, left me maimed
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was in ashes.

("Tithonus," ll. 18-23).

On the artistic plane they are definitely superior to the former as they show the invincible "Hours" disfigure, maim, and weaken Tithonus, without actually killing him. But, with subtle artistry, they also reflect the process of aging and weakening of the physical faculties with the passage of time. The retouched lines are an imaginative polishing of the frieze of sorrow by the aging poet. The death wish of the earlier lines in "Tithon" is replaced by a description of the havoc wrought on him by "life" for his failing to die.

As a restructured myth the poem's sole concern is the bane of immortality. It begins and ends with the plight of old Tithonus' endless aging and endless life, ignoring the rest of the narration of the original myth. The poem comes to an end without resolving Tithonus' predicament. It is thus as fragmentary in nature as his other mythical poems. The Homeric Hymn merely states the plight of Tithonus. The
poet enriches this myth by bringing to bear on it his cogitations on life and death. Horace is the source of these reflections. 49 The Roman poet says that whatever the status or virtues of a person, be he a scholar, or friend, or confidante, or beloved of gods, death for him is inevitable and desirable, just as it is for other common mortals. Citing the example of Achilles and Tithonus he writes:

Brief was Achilles' life, but great his fame!
Tithonus wastes and wastes, but still must live. 50

Like Tennyson's other mythical poems, this poem also throws light on the position of the artist. But in this poem he employs the symbols of East and West, Phospher and Hesper, light and dark, morning and night. Both Stange and Waterston have stated that Tennyson used words related to East and light to connote work, action, life, and hope. Words related to West and dark are associated with quiet, peace, death, and silent regeneration. 51 This myth is about

49. Appendix III, Ciii(a) pp. 275–277 and Ciii(b) pp. 277–279.
50. Ibid., Ciii(b), p. 277.

Eos or Aurora, the goddess of dawn, who was charmed by the
godlike beauty of Tithonus—a mortal—and fell in love
with him. He reciprocated. The 'Choric Songs' show Tennyson
delighting in losing himself in art, unmindful of the
responsibilities the vocation of an artist entailed. In
"The Lotos Eaters" this is expressed by the mariners'
surrendering themselves to the joy of art depicted by their
relishing the loteo-fruit on the Lotos-Isle. Their life
after this is akin to the pleasure-filled life of the gods
in their abodes. Tithonus, literally, resides in the abode
of goddess Eos, in the "halls of the East" and loses himself
in her love. E.D.H. Johnson observes that Eos stands for
the Keatsian ideal of beauty which holds the poet in bondage. 52
He loses himself in her love. This poem, too, is a symbolic
representation of Tennyson's aesthetic philosophy. Commenting
on the lines quoted below Johnson observes "Tithonus
remembers the first thrilling visitations of the creative
impulse"; 53

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch — if I be he that watched —
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood

52. E.D.H. Johnson, An Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry:
Sources of the Poetic Imagination of Tennyson, Browning,
and Arnold (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University

53. Ibid.
Glow with the glow that slowly crimsoned all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kissed
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

(ll. 50-63)

It can then be said that in keeping with the mythical
metaphor adopted for the interpretation of the 'Choric Songs'
for this study, Eos is akin to the Muses. "Ulysses" shows
that when the spell is broken, the place of the hero's
happy sojourn is transformed from an illusion of grace and
beauty into the truth of what it is—a region of "barren
crags" inhabited by "savages." The charm of Tithonus, too,
is broken but in a different way. The poem can be interpreted
as being symbolic of the two stages in the life of the artist,
that of the Lotos-Isle, and its eventual conversion into a
bleak Ithaca. With "East" and "Dawn" equated to work, and
work equated to poetic creativity, the love between Tithonus
and Eos may be treated as a poetic version of the devotion
of an artist (here Tennyson) to his Muse. The lines describ-
ing the love between the goddess and Tithonus allude to
Apollo's music which brought into being the towers of Ilion.
They seem to hark back to the days of the poet's infatuation,
his total involvement in and commitment to art, to the
exclusion of all else, during his Cambridge days. He too,
like Apollo, had tried to build "faerie" cities to his music, but that ebullience had died out with the death of Hallam. The loss of his friend seems to age him metaphorically and stands between him and that faerie world of art just as Tithonus' war stood between him and Eos, reducing him to a bare shadow of his former self—forsaken, forlorn, weak, and condemned to endless wasting. The warmth of the love of Eos could no longer dispel the benumbing coldness and indifference within him towards his earlier self-indulgent dedication. The symbolic depiction of this apathy has been managed through the opposition between "warmth" and "cold" with their connotations of "life" and "death". The "glow" of dawn that once infused warmth in him is now "cold" and the "lights" are "cold" as are his wasted and "wrinkled" feet. The poet says that "the gleaming halls of morn can no longer promise any true dawn for Tithonus." He highlights the silence and emptiness which have overpowered the brilliant world of love between Tithonus and Eos. It is a reflection of the emptiness that pervades his being which no amount of warmth or light can fill up. The transformation is similar to the transformation

54. In "Ilion, Ilion," a fragment of his Cambridge days (discussed in Ch.IV, pp.152-154), we can see that the poet's desire of another Ilion contains the implied though unuttered ambition of creating one himself.

55. Ricks, Tennyson, p. 130.
of the lake green island of the 'Chsuite Bome' into the
"still hearth" and "barren crags" of Ithaca. The mood in
the poem is the suicidal mood of "The Two Voices":

Thou art so steeped in misery,
Surely 'twere better not to be.

(ll. 47-48).

The poet here depicts revulsion from the terms of life and
health and gives vent to a yearning for death. "Tithonus"
projects an image of "death in life." A permanent release
from such a thraldom is sought and the protagonist pleads:

Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

(ll. 73-76)

The phrase "earth in earth" reminds one of the Biblical
curse of God: "for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt
return." In order to safeguard against such an interpre-
tation Tennyson is careful to point out that Dante's
Paradiso is his source. There is a significant difference
between the Biblical and Dantesque implications. While there

56. M.J. Donahue, "Tithon: A study in Revision, in
Tennyson's 'Hail, Briton', and 'Tithon' in the Heath

57. Authorized Version of The Holy Bible (Cambridge: Printed

58. The Poems of Tennyson, p.1118. In note 75 Kicks writes:
"Trinity 1st draft ended with this line; ...T. quotes 'terra'
in terra (Dante)'. T.'s reference is to Paradiso XXV
124-6:...('My body is earth in earth, and it will be there
with the rest till our number tallies with the eternal
purpose.')."
in nothing further to be hoped for after man's final return to "dust" according to the former, Dante's lines contain an indication of regeneration at some future time for there is a 'wait' for "the eternal purpose." In "The Poet" Tennyson says that poetry is like the seeds of a field flower: "Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower, / The fruitful wit/ Cleaving, took root...." (ll. 19-21). The implication can be said to be that the poet's response to art, wan and faint at present, might for a time remain buried, be "earth in earth," and patiently regenerate itself for some possible future revival (its purpose) like seeds of the field flower. Ulysses has rejected Ithaca but does harbour a faint hope of coming across "the Blessed Isles" and meeting "Achilles" once again. Tithonus, too, hopes to get rest and possibly new life on being restored to the ground by being amidst the "grassy barrows of the happier dead."

"Tithonus" projects yet another aspect of Tennyson's treatment of Greek myths. The pantheon of Greek gods in Tennyson's mythical panorama of "Oenone," "The Lotos-Eaters," and "Demeter and Persephone" are an epicurian lot, proud, jealous, and generally ranged against each other. In "Ulysses," however, the sole purpose of the "household gods" is to have a surety of "meet adoration" and Telemachus will dutifully
give it. In "Tiresias," the vengefulness of the gods will come to the fore again. In "Tithonus" Tennyson has modified the original mythical Eos where she heartlessly locks Tithonus up to let him 'babble' till eternity. His Eos, instead, sheds helpless tears which are still on Tithonus' cheeks, for "The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts." (line 49). Since Tennyson's Eos is the persona of Hallam, he could not possibly make her indifferent like her Greek original. But whether sympathetic or not, the pagan gods do not seem to do any good to mankind. It may be said that by choosing Dante's "terra in terra" (earth in earth), and giving it the implication of regeneration, the poet incorporates the Christian message of hope similar to the one contained in "Demeter and Persephone," when Demeter blesses the fields and flowers, after getting her daughter back. The poem, inspired by Hallam's death and his sister's bereavement, was an attempt to seek answers to the poet's questions on life and death. He perhaps feels that the consolation and faith offered by Christianity is salubrious for mankind. It stood for a life of duty which the poet was to uphold in art as well, instead of indulging in the sensual pleasure of art-for-art's sake as he had been doing till now. In "Tiresias" the Christian undertones

are more strongly pronounced.

Tennyson's frame for this poem appears to be the justification of death in a mortal world. Not only is it relevant to life, it is one of its basic essentials:

Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

(11.28-31)

Death is the law of nature. It should be accepted as such. Besides, a mere continuation of breathing is not life, just as its termination is not necessarily death. The last poem of this set—"Tiresias"—takes up this theme.

The undercurrents of a palpable sorrow in "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" seem to weaken somewhat in "Tiresias."

Although the poem's conception was contemporaneous with the other two, it was revised and given its final form half a century after its first composition.60 The poem was possibly composed in three parts which were later joined

60. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 568.
This poem, too, is a personal allegory. The first part of the first verse paragraph can be said to recall his boyhood. With 'eyes of wonder' he tries to understand his own being and explores at will the countryside around Somersby and Mablethorpe:

These eyes, now dull, but then so keen to seek The meanings ambushed under all they saw, The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice, What omens may foreshadow fate to man And woman, and the secret of the Gods.

(ll. 4-8)

61. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 568.
In his discussion of the poem, on the basis of its different sections appearing in different Tennyson note books, Ricks conjectures that the published poem was not composed as one continuous whole. It was written in three sections. He does not specify the length of the opening section but writes that the second section comprises lines 82-145. He surmises that both of them were composed during the 'Ulysses' period. The last section consisting of lines 160 till the end, is in Tennyson's late hand and it could be said on the authority of Tennyson's wife Emily, and friend F.T. Palgrave, that this section was composed at the time of its revision in 1883. It was published in 1885.

62. Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, pp. 35-36.
In the lines that follow:

My son, the Gods despite of human prayer,
Are slower to forgive than human kings.
The great God, Ares, burns in anger still
Against the guiltless heirs of him from Tyre,
Our Cadmus, out of whom thou art,...

(ll. 9-13)

the phrase "the guiltless heirs" suggests the family feud
born of an injustice perpetrated by Tennyson's grandfather
on his eldest son, which had made the rightful "heir" and
his progeny suffer immense hardship and misery. The god
Ares may be taken to symbolize grandfather Tennyson, -- the
supreme authority as head of the family--and the "guiltless

63. Dr. Tennyson's "primogeniture had been slighted" and
consequently his relations with his father gradually
worsened till, round about 1820 they "became morbidly
irreparable." Ricks quotes at length a letter written
by Dr. Tennyson to his father and comments: "It is a
letter whose pain, fragility, and dignity are touching.
It is the letter of a son whose father had done him the
greatest injury of all: making it superhumanly difficult
for him to treat his own sons with 'that consideration
and kindness which a son has a right to expect from a
father'."

(See Ricks, Tennyson, pp.4-5-6).

"Meanwhile Dr. Tennyson could only contrast his own
lot with that of his younger brother Charles, his
father's favourite, with his rich wife, a house in
Park Street, Westminster, and an affectionate welcome
whenever he chose to visit Bayon's Manor. Indeed the
glaring discrepancy between his father's treatment of
Charles and himself, when, after all, he was the
rightful heir and should have had first consideration,
but had only unkindness and brutal rebuffs, weighed
increasingly on the doctor's mind as his health declined."

(Philip Henderson, Tennyson, Poet
and Prophet, p. 5).
the tone of the first part of the poem with the legend of Arês' anger with Cadmus for killing the dragon by the springs of Dirçê. He then moves on to describe his own encounter with the goddess Palæs Athene and its disastrous consequence. He had an innocent curiosity

For larger glimpses of that more than man
Which rolls the heavens, and lifts, and lays the deep,
Yet loves and hates with mortal hates and loves,
And moves unseen among the ways of men.

(11. 20-23).

He says he wandered over different regions where he had a strange experience. He writes about it thus:

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

(11. 24-28).

The description reads like a metaphoric exposition of the poet's exploration of the Muses' domain and his own sojourn in it during his Somersby and Cambridge days when he had given himself up to the worship of art to the exclusion of all other concerns. The fact that he did this to forget
the privations and tensions at the Somersby home is imaged thus:

There once, but long ago, five-fold thy term
Of years, I lay; the winds were dead for heat;
The noonday crie made the hard burn; and slick
For shadow - not one bush was near - I rose
Following a torrent till its myriad falls
Found silence in the hollows underneath.

(11. 32-37)

The privations under the roof of a violent, ailing, and frustrated father was the metaphoric "heat" which made him "sick/ For shadow." His mind closes itself to the present and follows the "torrent" and "myriad falls" of his world of imagination, and finds "silence in the hollows underneath.

What he gazes on there, symbolically, may be taken to be the kingdom of Art, the abode of the Muses, contemplating which it possibly dawns on him that if wisdom, reason, and purity are taken to be tenets of one's life, all its trials can be faced with courage and overcome with honour. The awareness sharpens his perception and arms him with an exceptional power of penetrating into the very nature of things. The attainment of this keen insight is symbolically represented as his chancing on the naked goddess Pallas Athene emerging after her bath from the pool. She is the deity of "wisdom, reason, purity."\(^{64}\) It is she who

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promised "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control" to Paris as her "guerdon" which would push him "through a life of shocks, / Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow/ Sinewed with action." ("Oenone," ll. 160-162). Angered at the trespass of young Tiresias, the goddess transfixed him with her cold and steady gaze till his eyes grew dark—

"Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much/ And speak the truth that no man may believe." (ll. 43-49). The symbolic implication is obvious. Things not visible to others are clear and easily comprehendable to him. As soon as he envisions danger and disaster he warns the people, but the irony of his fate is that he is not heeded. This part of the first section appears to reflect his political opinions during his Cambridge days. These views are expressed in a number of his non-mythical poems of that period. Donahue writes that "Hail Briton!" a poem of early thirties, projects the poet's views on the political affairs of those days. 65

Almost all his major concerns in "Hail Briton!" form the subject of Tiresias' anger in the passage that follows that of his blinding.


66. This leads to the probability of this part of the first section being composed between 1833-34.
As the poem moves towards the central section it deepens emotively. In "Hail Briton!" Tennyson recalls great men of courage who sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom:

Who lit on times from which our own
Look diverse, when the court grew vast
And public rights were wholly cast
In shadow from the growing throne.

They gave their bodies to the death.

(ll. 69-73).

In "Tiresias" the seer tells Menoeceus that the freedom of Thebes is threatened, and the fear of enslavement is overbearing:

Along the sounding walls. Above, below,
Shock after shock, the song-built towers and gates
Reel, bruised and butted with the shuddering
War-thunder of iron rams; and from within
The city comes a murmur void of joy,
Lest she be taken captive -- maidens, wives,
And mothers with their babblers of the dawn,
And oldest ago in shadow from the night,
Falling about their shrines before their Gods,
And wailing 'Save us.'
And they wail to thee!

(ll. 95-104).

The opportunity of "nobly to do, nobly to die" has come to Menoeceus. The names of such men are
Graven on memorial columns, are a song
Heard in the future ... 
... their examples reach a hand
Far through all years, and everywhere they meet
And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
To mould it into action pure as theirs.

(ll. 120-125).

A similar sentiment is expressed in "Hail Briton!"

Tennyson says:

They wrought a work which time reveres,
A precedent to all the lands,
And an example reaching hands
For ever into coming years.

(ll. 81-84).

Another poem of this period—"I Loving Freedom for Herself"—expresses the same thought:

Clean temple of the Memory,
Save thou for ever, carved in gold,
The name that such a patriot wears
Who dares be wise and bold,
To pluck us backwards from a time,
When only to be bold shall be
The whole of wisdom and the last
Resource of liberty.

(ll. 37-44).

These stanzas reflect the zeal of the Apostles.

Tennyson and Hallam had taken part in their Spanish adventure swayed by these ideals. "Tiresias" here reflects those ideals. The sage rues his blindness which prevents him from fighting for his country but he extols the virtue of
responding to the call of the country's need of the hour with sacrifice. He urges Menoeceus to perform his duty. The prince's assent is suggested in the lines: "This useless hand! I felt one warm tear fall upon it, Gone! He will achieve his greatness." (ll. 159-161). With the utmost economy of words and restraint, the poet depicts the highest of sacrifices which promise real immortality to the mortals of this world. The poem ends on a note of the seer's own frustration and disillusionment with the times. This part of the poem, it may be added with certainty, was written when the poet was an old man. Hallam Tennyson quotes his father's words to describe the frustrated poet's sadness: "I feel sometimes as if my life had been a very useless life." This feeling of disillusionment, it could be said, brought back his old urge to escape from such a world into the "past," but the escape he visualizes now is a kind of poetic escape from the present, into the world of his beloved and familiar Elysian vales:

67. Footnote 61 ante, p. 126.

68. A Memoir, II, p. 337.
I would that I were gathered to my rest,
And mingled with the famous kings of old,
On whom about their ocean-islets flash
The faces of the Gods — the wise man's word,
Here trampled by the populace underfoot,
There crowned with worship....

(ll. 162-167).

He yearns to go to a region which is depicted in the following lines:

In height and prowess more than human, strive
Again for glory, while the golden lyre
Is ever sounding in heroic ears
Heroic hymns, and everyway the vales
Wind, clouded with grateful incense-fume
Of those who mix all odour to the Gods
On one far height in one far-shining fire.

(ll. 171-177).

The personal allegory sustains itself till the end. It is a sort of metaphorical autobiography of the poet's soul, beginning from his childhood and coming down right up to his old age when the final version of this poem was written.

As a myth recast by Tennyson, it incorporates three myths, viz., Ares' anger with Cadmus, Pallas Athene's blinding of Tiresias, and Menoeceus' sacrifice to save Thebes. Euripides' Phoenissae is the source of the first and third myths, while Calimachus' fifth Hymn provides the second one. The myth of Ares' anger with Cadmus provides the

69. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 568, and note 219, on p. 569.
occasion of Menoeceus’ sacrifice which is the theme of the poem.

As always, Tennyson’s depiction is different from his source, Phoenissae or The Phoenician Women, in a number of ways. In Euripides’ play Tiresias addresses Menoeceus as “Young Menoeceus, Creon’s son.” The dialogue that ensues, regarding the danger confronting Thebes, is between the sage and Creon, with Menoeceus within hearing distance. Tiresias does not reminisce about his loss of sight and attainment of prophetic powers. There is no indication in his statements to conclude that he is not believed. Creon is distraught with sorrow on hearing Tiresias’ prophecy and would not have it known to the people of Thebes. At this, Tiresias, with subdued resentment, says: “A man’s a fool to use the prophet’s trade. / For if he happens to bring bitter news / He’s hated by men for whom he works; / And if he pities them and tells lies / He wrongs the gods.” 70 Euripides’ Tiresias is initially reluctant to let Menoeceus know the prophecy. Creon, on learning it, would rather let the city be razed than sacrifice his own son: “I wasn’t listening, I didn’t hear,/ City,

70. Appendix III, Civ, p.288. Capitalization in this and other quotations from this source (excerpt of translation of the Phoenissae from Greek into English, under the heading Appendix III, Civ), has been done for the sake of English syntactical consistency.
farewell."71 Euripides' Tiresias turns down Creon's request to remain silent. After the sage departs Creon asks his son to flee before the "chiefs and captains" come to know about it, while he himself leaves in haste to get gold to help his son to escape. Menoeceus then addresses the Chorus: "This can be forgiven/ An ancient, but not pardoned in myself, / That I would so betray my father land./ Know well, I'm going, and I'll save the town,/ And give my life to death to save the land."72

It is significant that Tennyson changes the set up and modifies the myth, as depicted by Euripides, by making Tiresias address Menoeceus directly. He calls him "My son" as he extols the virtue of such a sacrifice. The address itself has marked undertones of the great "sacrifice of God and His Son,"73 for Menoeceus is called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice for Thebes. E.D.H. Johnson overlooks Tiresias' address as being that of an ancient sage to a youth, with an underlying Christian message in it, when he says, "To his son Tiresias confesses that the vision still survives...."74 In assuming the expression "My son" to

72. Ibid., p.291.
73. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 569.
mean Tiresias' son Johnson takes it too literally. Since the curse is on Cadmus' family, treating Menoeceus as Tiresias' and not Cadmus' son is a misreading by the critic that deprives the poem of a significant statement of the poet on paganism and Christianity. In "Demeter and Persephone" Dahl points out that underlying the last verse passage, where Demeter blesses the fields and renews the cycle of life and death, there are undertones of the message of "Christian hope." Tiresias could be said to impart a message of Christian sacrifice as exemplified by God's own Son. In handling the myth Tennyson enriches it by adding a new dimension to it. The pagan tale takes on a Christian hue. In the lines, "... and from within/ The city comes a murmur void of joy, / Lest she be taken captive - maidens, wives, / And mothers with their babblers of the dawn,/ And oldest age in shadow from the night,/ Falling about their shrines before their Gods,/ And wailing 'Save us'./ And they wail to thee!" (11. 98-104), the poet skilfully changes the whole perspective by shifting the focus from "their Gods" directly on to Menoeceus with "And they wail to thee." Their gods can do nothing while he, addressed by Tiresias throughout as "My son," becomes the metaphoric persona of Christ, the Son of God. But the expression, "My son,"

recalls another image, in the same poem, of the son of another god—Arêns. It is that of the dragon beside the spring of Dirê, whom Cædmon "insulted" for the sake of the people. Their "trembling fathers" called it "The God's own son." It was for this crime that Arês was angry with the progeny of Cædmon. Young men, who had not yet known "the embrace of love," was to stone it the Christian way to pacify the god and save Thebes. The contrast between the selfish, self-centred god and the beneficient, kind, God comes out clearly in the use of the epithet "God's own son" for both the dragon and for Christ. The dragon of Dirê is reminiscent of another similar figure—the Kraken (in a poem with that title)—which possibly is a symbolic vision of Satan. Recalling the forecast of the destruction

76. It is well known that Satan himself took the form of a serpent to achieve his vile designs, as the arch foe of God's Son, on God's earth. Milton describes Lucifer's search for a guise in which he might enter the precincts of the Earth which was still in its vernal purity:

thus the Orb he roamed
With narrow search; and with inspection deep
Considered every Creature, which of all
Most opportune might serve his Wiles, and found
The Serpent sulli'st Beast of all the Field.

Paradise Lost Bk.IX, 11.82-86, p.184.

Satan is punished by God for seducing Man. Since he did it in the guise of a serpent, God makes him a serpent for ever:
of world by fire in the "Revelation" in the Bible, the poet writes in "The Kraken" :

His Arms clung to his Ribs, his Legs entwining Each other, till supplanted down he fell A monstrous Serpent on his Belly prone....


His followers also became serpents but "... still greatest hee the midst, / Now Dragon grown...."


Paden writes:

"... it is possible to note that, according to Faber, the ancient mythologies used the serpent as a symbol of the evil principle and that 'it was thence employed to represent the deluge', usually in the form of a sea-snake. Thus were created figures of Python, Typhon, and the Midgard serpent.... The notion leads up to Tennyson's verses on 'The Kraken' (1830), which lies sleeping on the sea-floor until 'The latter fire shall heat the deep'."

(Tennyson in Egypt, note 204, p. 155).

Satan stands for the evil principle and so do the other serpents in mythologies.
There both he lain for ages and will lie
Battering upon huge seaworms in his sleep,
Until the latter fire shall burn the deep;
Then once by man and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

(11. 11-15).

"The Kraken" can then be treated as Tennyson's symbolic vision of Satan. The dragon of Dirce, too, lurked in Dirce and is the son of god Arês. All the pagan deities can, indirectly, be arrayed on the side of Satan and set against and contrasted with the Christian faith through the re-enactment of the supreme act of sacrifice of the Son of God, Christ, by Menoeceus. It can be conjectured that the pagan gods are Satanic (by being of the same set as Arês, father of the dragon of Dirce who is akin to Satan), in their indifference to or their nefarious designs on poor humans. The Christian "Son of God," re-enacting Himself through Menoeceus' sacrifice, makes "Tiresias" a poem of Christian hope and faith.

It is in the theme of Menoeceus' sacrifice that

77. Douglas Bush in Pagan Myth and Christian Tradition in English Poetry (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968), gives the tradition of conjoining pagan myths with the Christian cult in a number of ways, such as "pagan myths were garbled versions of Biblical truth" and that the "wars of the Giants and Titans against the gods suggested the revolt of Satan and his fellows against God and their imprisonment in hell." (p.4).
"Tiresias" can be regarded as a complement to "Ulysses" and "Tithonus." According to Ricks: "Faced with Hallam's death, Tennyson in 'Tiresias' seeks strength and consolation in the deliberate self-sacrifice that redeems death." 78 He says that the poem tries to envisage circumstances in which "suicide was not merely condonable but honourable." This was an urge "with its roots in Dr. Tennyson's misery, Tennyson's early misery, and now the death of Hallam...." The story of the ancient curse which can be removed only "if one of these/ By his own hand" can take his own life makes Menoeceus accept this challenge.

"Tiresias" can be said to have a double purpose.
In keeping with the general pattern of Tennyson's mythical poems it attempts to fill up a small breach in the structure of Greek mythology. The poet taken up the mysterious blind prophet, with strange powers of divining, at a critical juncture of his life and reveals him as a man by depicting the state of mind and despair of this father figure. To this patriarch he ascriber the episode embodying the virtues of self-sacrifice for a noble cause. This could also be taken as a modern frame for this poem, with the poet himself as Tiresias.

When compared with "Ulysses" and "Tithonus," it is

78. Ricks, Tennyson, p. 134.
evident that the poem lacks their strong emotive power. This is because the poet's identity is merged with that of the protagonist in "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" and there is just one mood that is built up. In "Ulysses" it could be summed up as a purposeful quest for the knowledge of good and evil, with courage and an indomitable will. In "Tithonus" it is a rejection of purposeless existence. In "Tiresias" the identity of the narrator is merged with that of the prophet but the theme of self-sacrifice is realized through Menoeceus who is but a silent auditor. His presence is felt through Tiresias' repeated address to him as "My son," or when Tiresias feels Menoeceus' tear on his hand and indicates his abrupt departure with the exclamation - "Gone!/ He will achieve his greatness."

(ll. 160-161). Besides, the narration is somewhat diversified as the poet brings in the background of Tiresias' blinding, and concentrates on the plight of the prophet at length. The poet is taken up much more with his own bleak world view. This detracts attention from the theme of sacrifice and thereby dilutes its impact.

The elegiac poems of "In Memoriam" are "short swallow flights that dip their wings in tears, and skim away." These three mythical poems ("Ulysses", "Tithonus", "
and "Tiresias"), born of the same sorrow that inspired "In Memoriam," delve into the problem of life and death and try to resolve it. There is a difference in the approach, depth, and vision of the poems of this set and other verses inspired by Hallam's death. Though all such poems are deeply subjective, "In Memoriam" from amongst them takes up the question of faith and doubt that assails the poet. The resolution is in the form of a re-establishment of faith. The multifaceted semi-like Greek myth poems can be said to stand apart as a class by themselves. They can be treated as the poet's "objective correlative[s] for braving the struggle of life." These poems, like a prism, reflect the multiple concerns of the poet. They are a statement of the position of the artist. They are an assertion of life over death. The conclusion he reaches after a prolonged inner struggle of "to be or not to be" is recorded in them. They are interlinked thematically, and the themes they embody are multidimensional. As the poet's statement on art, they auger the awakening of his aesthetic conscience which shatters the hold of art-for-art's sake on him. To repeat what we have mentioned earlier in "Ulysses" and "Tiresias"—this world of art is expressed through the

symbol of a lush green landscape of mountains, streams, and dales, inhabited by nymphs and gods. In "Thou" it is symbolized by the East—a region of love, pleasure, and social interaction. By a note of instruction Tennyson makes these poems harbinger of the Christian message of faith and love for the sustenance of life. But what in life? The keynote of the answer is struck in the very first poem of this set with "Ulysses": "How dull it is to pause, to make an end,/ To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!/ As though to breathe were life." (ll. 22-24). The hero of "Locksley Hall," too, on realizing the futility of his misery, says: "I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair." (line 98). "To mix with action," to rescue life from living death, could be said to be the refrain of these poems. Their heroes are made to project, from various angles, action which saves life from being reduced to mere existence. This would be a sheer waste of the privilege of having a human form, the best Nature has yet been able to evolve. In "The Two Voices" the poet says:

I said, 'When first the world began,
Young Nature through five cycles ran,
And in the sixth she moulded man.

'She gave him mind, the lordliest
Proportion, and, above the rest,
Dominion in the head and breast.'

(ll. 16-21).
Man is at the moment on the highest rung of the ladder of evolution. It does not behove him to scale down the value of life to the level of brutes. Resigning oneself to grief and inaction would be akin to doing so. The concept of life and death of these three Greek heroes is different from that of the clinical concept. It is this which perhaps drew Tennyson towards them in his hour of crisis. These Greek heroes provided him with a plank from which to dive into life and seek its essence. Buckley seems to have seized the poet's inner conflict as reflected in these poems. He says that in his "less elegiac verses" he had begun to contemplate over "the counter claims of dying and living, denial and assent." 80

Tennyson did not adhere to the view that the protagonist had always to attain heroic stature. 81 Ulysses, Tithonus, Tiresias, are all old men, long past their prime of youth. Ulysses does display heroic qualities in his resolute will to forge ahead, but Tithonus and Tiresias are victims of their circumstances and, inspite of their ideals of life, do not seem to rise to heroic heights. Their approach to life is, however, the same. "Ulysses" is

80. J.H. Buckley, Tennyson the Growth of a Poet, p. 60.

supposed to be a poem of exemplary courage and will power of an old man, a poem of life and action. But so are "Tithonus" and "Tiresias," though from a different angle. Tithonus begs for death because he has already lost what he considers life. He calls himself "this gray shadow, once a man" and "A white-haired shadow roaming like a dream." The juxtaposition of the contrast between him and Eos makes his plight come out with greater intensity. "Immortal age beside immortal youth." The contiguity seems to heighten the loss of vigour, youth, and beauty of Tithonus. Instead of continuing to live a crippled life "marred," "wasted," and "maimed," he seeks to be released from the burden of immortality. His is not a rejection of life but the rejection of a particular state of life. This is not life but a living death. It recalls Ulysses' sarcastic comment, "as though to breathe were life." By implication then, "Tithonus" can be taken to be a plea for active life, a tacit statement of the poet's concept of life.

Tiresias is handicapped by both blindness and age. Though not yet reduced to the state of decrepitude of Tithonus, he has severe limitations. Thebes is endangered, others will defend it while he will have to endure his own helplessness. Menoeceus will live even in death while
Tiresias is doomed to oblivion. "He will achieve his greatness," says the sage, "But for me, if I were gathered to my rest." (ll. 161-162).

By rejecting insipid, inactive lives, which vary only in degree, Tithonus and Tiresias uphold the life of Ulysses—active, purposeful, even in old age, the life of Menoeceus that embraces death in its prime of youth. The juxtaposition is of an active purposeful life with that of a helpless vegetative existence. In "The Lotus-Eaters" the protest is against toil and action: "All things have rest: Why should we toil alone, we only toil, who are the first of things, and make perpetual moan." (ll. 60-62). But in this trilogy he makes amends by making toil the prime condition of life. The concept of life here is value based. Nothing, not even grief, should let life be wasted in sloth. He makes out a case for the salutary contribution of death in enhancing the value of life. He reinterprets the meaning of life which cuts across the barriers of death and makes it seem less formidable. As protagonists of these poems, these heroes are men of action, and when unable to live up to their ideals of life, they prefer death.

This set indeed occupies a central place among the mythical poems of Tennyson. Its poems "half reveal and
half conceal" the tension and conflict in the mind of the poet which impelled him to recast the myths. With great dexterity he exploits their inherent plasticity to serve his own purpose and makes them reflect his moods and creed. It may be said that he is at his best in treating themes of a by-gone age. He is, in them, a true poet.
CHAPTER IV

POEMS ON MYTHICAL PLACES AND MISCELLANEOUS USES OF GREEK MYTHS

In the preceding chapter, the discussion centered round Tennyson's mythological poems on personages. We are now to take up the set of poems named after mythical places, viz., "Ilion, Ilion," a fragment (not published in his lifetime), written during the poet's Cambridge days and hence belonging to his early youth,¹ and "Parnassus," a poem written when the poet was an old man.² Though the titles of these poems are drawn from mythological places, their themes are related to these places only to the extent to which they are relevant to Tennyson's aspiration as a poet. While the poems on personages are the repositories of his tensions as a man and a poet, with claims and counterclaims of pure art and social responsibility on him, these two poems are about this dream of being a great poet and the ultimate blighting of that dream.

¹. The Poems of Tennyson, p. 258.
². Ibid., p. 1410.
Tennyson's aspirations were based on an early realization of his exceptional power as a poet. The first poetry that moved him was his own when he was just five years old. He says of his early compositions:

"... when I was about eight years old, I covered two sides of a slate with Thomsonian blank verse .... About ten or eleven Pope's Homer's Iliad became a favourite of mine and I wrote hundreds and hundreds of lines in the regular Popeian metre...." He continues: "At about twelve and onward I wrote an epic of six thousand lines à la Walter Scott,—full of battles, dealing too with sea and mountain scenery...." Hallam writes, "These poems made my grandfather say with pardonable pride, 'If Alfred die, one of our greatest poets will have gone'." The awareness of his own poetic potential made him ambitious. Once, in one of his "long rambles" with his brother Arthur, Tennyson emphatically said, "'Well Arthur, I mean to be famous'. (From his earliest years he felt that he was a poet, and earnestly trained himself to be worthy of his

4. Ibid., I, p. 11.
5. Ibid.
vocation)."6

The life time dream of almost every poet has been
to write a great epic. Jenkyns, however, draws our
attention to a strange phenomenon regarding a queer kind
of diffidence that had come over the poets of the nineteenth
century. It was a failure of confidence. He writes:

This failure of confidence may seem strange in the
age of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley, but
it is an attitude that runs through much nineteenth
century literature. Its origins are in the experience
of an earlier generation. 'By the general consent
of critics', wrote Johnson, 'the first praise of
genius is due to the writer of an epic poem'; yet
the eighteenth century produced no great epic poem,
either in England or anywhere else. The critics
called for epic, but the poets failed to provide it,
and this failure was bound to produce a sense of
defeat. Shelley wrote, 'The human mind attained to
a perfection in Greece which has impressed its image
on those faultless productions, whose very fragments
are the darpmir of modern art'.

Thirty years before Keats even Goethe had felt
the same oppression.... Realizing that the Ilnd is
inimitable ....never again did he attempt epic poetry.
In his old age... he declared that modern writers
could create only heroines: 'Nothing can be done with
the men. Homer has got all beforehand in Achilles and
Odysseus, the bravest and the most prudent'. 7


Browning said of Tennyson, "...nobody has more fully
found at the beginning what he was born to do-- nor
done it more perfectly."

(Churla Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p. 326).

7. Richard Jenkyns, The Victurinaq and Ancient Greece,
pp. 21-22.
"Ilion, Ilion" can be said to reflect the secret ambition of the poet to venture into a region where even Goethe dreaded to tread. Poets have often treated Apollo as the lord of the bards, the supreme, incomparable and heavenly poet. In his "Hymn to Apollo" Keats pays homage to him as "God of the golden bow, / And of the golden lyre," (ll. 1-2). Tennyson makes him his symbol of the supreme poet -- an ideal poet -- who created 'Ilion' on the notes of his music and alludes to him as such in "Ilion, Ilion," "Oenone," "Tithonus" and "Tiresias."

"Ilion, Ilion," however, appears to be underlined with the poet's deep yearning for another masterpiece like Iliad, wherein figures the archetypal poet Apollo's melody born Ilion. Remembering it he sings:

Ilion, Ilion, dreamy Ilion, pillared Ilion, holy Ilion,
City of Ilion when wilt thou be melody born?
(ll. 1-2)

and thus brings alive the "blue Σκαμανδήρ" and "yellowing Simois" from the heart of "piny Ida" in the following words:

Roll Scaumander, ripple Simoës, ever onward to a melody, Manycircled, overflowing thorough and through the flowery level of unbuilt Ilion, City of Ilion, pillared Ilion, shadowy Ilion, holy Ilion, To a music merrily flowing, merrily echoing When wilt thou be melody born?

(ll. 5-9)

... ... ... ... ... ...

To a music from the golden twanging harpwire heavily drawn. Manygated, heavy walled, many towered city of Ilion, To a music sadly flowing, slowly falling, When wilt thou be melody born?

(ll. 17-22)

It is noteworthy that the poet is young, conscious of his powers, with an ambition to prove his mettle and yet, instead of closing the verses with lines suggesting that he will make it "melody born," he persists with the refrain—"When wilt thou be melody born?" It can safely be conjectured that it is not mere modesty but the general mood of defeatism of the poets, added to Tennyson's own self consciousness, that has contributed to his hesitation. We are, however, positive that he had a deep yearning to create a masterpiece like Iliad, and Ilion which figures in it, is its symbol. In "Tithonus" he writes that in the first flush of his love for Eos, he "could hear the lips that kissed/ Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,/ Like that strange song I
heard Apollo sing,/ While Ilion like a mist rose into towers." (ll. 61-63). Tithonus' love for Eos has been described as "the first thrilling visitation of the creative impulse" by E.D.H. Johnson. And this "creative impulse" is "whispering" things both "wild and sweet" like the strange songs of Apollo to whose music rose the towers of Ilion. When the poet is under the spell of a strong creative urge, his vision inspires him for something similar to what Apollo achieved with his music — an Ilion in an epic like *Iliad*. In "Tiresias" he says that in his explorations of the hills "Subjected to the Heliconian ridge" his "wont/ Was more to scale the highest of the heights/ With some strange hope to see the nearer God." (ll. 26-28). This again points to his deep rooted desire and attempts at writing poetry which would be "the highest of the heights" — obviously the greatest epic. Adumbrated in the refrain "When wilt thou be melody born?" is a ray of hope which keeps assuring him that he himself would be the creator of such a creation on the notes of his melody.

"Parnassus" in a poem of his old age. A long interregnum separates "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus."

His life during this period can be succinctly summed up in the words of his own Ulysses: "... all times I have enjoyed/ Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those/ That, loved me, and alone ...." ("Ulysses," ll. 7-9). The searing pain of bereavement at the death of loved ones, the sense of loneliness in the face of calumny in the garb of criticism, the sweet taste of success at the reception of "In Memoriam," the quiet pride in the recognition of his genius on being honoured as poet Laureate—all these seem to compress and condense themselves in these soulful lines composed much before success came to him. One dream, however, remained unfulfilled—the dream of writing a great epic. But by the time the poet reached "Parnassus," the hope that underlined "Ilion, Ilion" was already dead. Time, people, values, all had changed. Poetic vision and imagination had been gradually eroded by the new cult of science and knowledge. The poet, in this poem, rues that two mighty and fearful Muses—Geology and Astronomy—have created a havoc on the sacred mount. They have blasted the evergreen laurels of the bards, till now secure on Parnassian heights, and have caused all the other Muses to fly from their sacred habitat.
This makes the poet despair of ever attaining the greatness and immortality achieved by the bards of old. The age and its environment is no longer conducive to the creation of a great epic. Imaginative creativity can hardly withstand the onslaughts of science and its new knowledge. The onset of scientific temper is a sign that the age of poets and poetry is past. The poet should no longer "hope for a deathless hearing." The note of hope gingerly sounded in "Ilion, Ilion" is dead, not because of the poet's diffidence but because of the changed values of the people. The spread of industrialism, along with new inventions and discoveries, made life more materialistic and matter of fact. Just as "Ilion, Ilion" symbolizes the poet's secret aspiration to write a great epic, "Parnassus" pronounces the impossibility of the creation of such a work any more.

A major part of Tennyson's poetry is built out of his reminiscences of Homer, Virgil, Theocritus, Catullus, Pindar, Horace, Sappho, Ovid, Euripides, and other classical writers. He used some of the myths culled from their works as subjects of his poems. They have already been discussed. We now take up his use of Greek mythology in two other ways:
(a) as allusion and imagery in his non-mythical poems and
(b) translations of passages from Greek epics into English.

(a) Some of his mythical allusions in non-mythical poems are so picturesque that they seem to be inspired by actual paintings. Given below is an allusion to Aphrodite in "The Princess":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Glowing all over noble shame; and all} \\
\text{Her falser self aript from her like a robe,} \\
\text{And left her woman, lovelier in her mood} \\
\text{Than in her mould that other, when she came} \\
\text{From barren deeps to conquer all with love... .} \\
\text{(VII, ll. 145-149).}
\end{align*}
\]

Similarly, a blend of Christian faith and pagan myth, visually realized, is noticed in the following allusion in "On a Mourner":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And when no mortal motion jars} \\
\text{The blackness round the tombing sod,} \\
\text{Through silence and the trembling stars} \\
\text{Comes faith from tracts no feet have trod,} \\
\text{And Virtue, like a household god} \\
\text{Promising empire; such as those} \\
\text{Once heard at dead of night to greet} \\
\text{Troy's wandering prince, so that he rose} \\
\text{With sacrifice, while all the fleet} \\
\text{Had rest by stony hills of Crete.} \\
\text{(ll. 26-35).}
\end{align*}
\]
Allusions, by their very nature may either "build a remote, unearthly world of imagination, or they may lift everyday things into ideal perfection." In Tennyson's use of allusions one can say that "mythology becomes a kind of evocative short-hand, a language that satisfies the human need for imaginative and emotional transcendence of mortal and earthly imperfection." Sometimes Tennyson gives titles drawn from mythology to his non-mythical poems, e.g., "Amphion" and "The Golden Year." These titles are a kind of artistic device to reinforce the theme and are, in a way, a novel use of the technique of allusion.

(b) Tennyson was fond of translating passages from the classics. His first extant poem is a translation into English of part of the myth of Persephone from Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpineae*, which he did between the age of eleven and fourteen. He often translated passages from Homer's *Iliad*. Rawnsley considered these attempts to be extremely good. It was often suggested to him that he should translate the whole of *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, but

Tennyson always declined, saying he did not think it a poet's task. The poet felt translating Homer was difficult. As for his own translated passages from Homer, he said their merit could be judged only by a comparison with the Greek original, for it "can only be appreciated by the difficulties overcome."

In his translations and compositions he did not seem to make a distinction between Greek and Roman names of the gods and heroes and used them according to the appeal of their sounds to him. He used Roman names of Greek deities in his translation of a passage from Iliad (XVIII, 202). Gladstone criticized it and argued with him on the usage. He (Gladstone) insisted that the very softness of the sound of Jove instead of Zeus, and Greek instead of Achaens made the passage appear less Greek.


Palgrave recalls: "One evening...he read off-hand Pindar's great picture of the life of Heaven in the second Olympian into pure modern prose, splendidly lucid and musical. This feat, incomparably more difficult and effective than when pseudopoetic facile disguise of some archaic form of language is resorted to, so struck me, that I begged him to think of preparing a version of these all but unique relics of the Greek Heroic Ode for English readers. But he smiled and said that 'in his mind the benefit of translation rested with the translator'."


inspite of his assertion that "These lines are word for word. You could not have a closer translation...." 15

The fact that Tennyson eventually accepted the contention is obvious from his substitution of Greek names. 16

Tennyson translated orally, too. Hallam recalls that when at Farringford in 1854, the poet translated aloud three idylls of Theocritus -- "Hylas," "The Island of Cos" and "The Syracusan Women." This dabbling in translation is significant only to the extent to which it throws light on his great love of the classics and the use he made, as a pastime, of the myths contained in them. As stated earlier, he never undertook to translate a whole epic. He considered himself to be only a poet who had a deep and tender love for Greek epics and legends.

15. Philip Henderson in Tennyson, Poet and Prophet, p. 146.

16. The translated passage is printed in The Poems of Tennyson. In the headnote to the passage Ricks has pointed out the substitution, p. 1158.

Herbert Paul writes:

It is a commonplace and a platitude to lament that we have not more of Tennyson's Homeric translation. Only two short fragments have ever been given to the world. The first is the comparison of the watch-fires kindled by the Greeks with the stars shining in the heavens, from the eighth book of the Iliad. It is a test passage. The man who could translate that could translate anything.

(Men and Letters, pp. 22-23).
The forgoing thematic analysis of Tennyson's mythical poems brings into focus the allegorical design and symbolic mode of those poems. An effort is made in the present chapter to determine the salient features of Tennyson's technique and form and style to demonstrate how they contribute to the cohesiveness of these poems as a group.

One of the most striking features of Tennyson's poetic style, in the poems under consideration, is his use of symbols. He makes use of three iterative pairs of symbols in his mythical poems. They are the symbols of (a) light and dark, (b) East and West, and of (c) lush green landscapes and mountains, streams and fountains. All these can be said to be his private symbols.

On the authority of Paden it is surmised that these images started formulating in his mind from the impressions he had gathered while reading the books in his father's library, specially Savary's Letters on Egypt.  

and Hugh Murray's *An Historical Account of Discoveries and Travels in Africa, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. Savary's letters mention Athor (the Egyptian goddess of darkness), as well as oases (as similar to Elysium). Murray mentions only the oases. The significance of light-dark and East-West dichotomy for Tennyson becomes clear from the third section of the unpublished fragment of the poet's early days "Ode: On Bosky Brook." He writes that for his concept of darkness he draws inspiration from Athor and indicates its special significance for himself:

```
I savour of the Egyptian and adore
Thou, venerable dark! august obscure!
Sublimest Athor!
It is not that I dont upon
Thy glooms, because the weary mind is fraught
With fond comparison
Of thy deep shadow to the inward strife,
But rather,
That as thou wert the parent of all life,
Even so thou art the mother of all thought,
Which wells not freely from the mind's recess
When the sharp sunlight occupies the sense
With this fair world's exceeding comeliness....
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(11. 83-95)

The poet goes on to describe how the "fair world's exceeding comeliness" consists of trees, flowers, hills, river-cloven valleys, strewn with lordly cities with towers, gliding white sails on their rivers — in short, the hustle and bustle of activity, the "Chirp, bellow, bark and distant shout of man." All this seems to distract one out of solemn thought, for which, says the poet,

Rare sound, spare light will best address
The soul for awful muse and solemn watchfulness. 3
(ll. 111-112).

The notion of creation expressed here is the same as in "The Hesperides." The sets of images — of light and dark, of East and West, and of the garden isles — were not only drawn from the sources averred to above, but were based on his knowledge of the classics as well. This gave an added dimension to these images and can be said to have related the garden isle images to the Heliconian abode of the Muses. (The affinity of the garden islands in "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides" and

3. The fact that to Tennyson such surroundings are conducive to composition can be seen from the following fragment from a letter to Emily Sellwood: "I require quiet, and myself to myself, more than any man when I write."

"The Lotos-Eaters" with Elysium and the abode of gods was taken up in chapter 1). Ryals, while discussing a passage in another poem, "Youth," drawn attention to the similarity of one of the images of the poem to an image in "The Lotos-Eaters":

Warm beats my blood, my spirit thirsts;  
Fast by me flash the cloudy streaks,  
And from the golden vapours bursts  
A mountain bright with triple peaks:

With all his groves he bows, he nods,  
The clouds unswathe them from the height,  
And there sit figures as of Gods  
Rayed round with beams of living light.

(ll. 104-111).

Ryals poses the question: "Is the mountain with its triple peaks the same image as is used in "The Lotos-Eaters"?"

They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,  
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,  
Stood sunset-flushed....

("The Lotos Eaters," ll. 14-17).

4. This poem was written in 1833 but not published till Ricks included it in The Poems of Tennyson, pp. 577-581. It may well be regarded as a record of the poet's aesthetic growth.
Are the gods at the end of the poem the Epicurean gods of "The Lotus-Eaters?" He is not sure and surmises that the poet did not publish "Youth" because of "its unrealized symbolism." Could it be that the poet was trying to symbolize the twin-peaked Parnassus, or, Parnassus and Helicon? Or could it be that the poet had in mind Parnassus and Helicon along with Pierian slopes of Olympus? It can be said that the poet has made a poetic use of this image for all the holy mountains of the classics.

The poet employs two sets of images to symbolize escape from the world of action into a world of meditative ease and bliss. They are used both in the Greek mythical as well as non-mythical poems. But they act as an interlocking device in the mythical poems, and project the poet's concept of the temporal aspects of life. The symbol of the garden island with hills, dales, rivers, rilles, and a pleasant atmosphere is akin to Tennyson's

image of Elysium as well as the abode of gods as depicted in "The Lotus-Eaters." There seems to be very little difference between the two in Tennyson's

6. W.P. Mustard writes about Pindar's influence on Tennyson:

The Memoir tells us that Tennyson especially admired "The great picture of the life of Heaven" in the second Olympian ode, and the picture of Elysium in Hades in the threnody...

He gives another example of Pindar's influence on Tennyson's concept of Elysium from "The Princess," iii, 323:

for indeed these fields
Are lovely, lovelier not the Elysian lawns,
Where paced the Demigods of old, and saw
The soft white vapour streak the crowned towers
Built to the Sun.

This picture in his view recalls Pindar's "Olympian Ode," ii, 75:

Then whosoever... have refrained their souls from all iniquity, travel the road of Zeus unto the tower of Kronos; there round the islands of the blest the Ocean-breezes blow, and the golden flowers are flowing...

(Classical Echoes in Tennyson, p. 27.)
portrayal. The abode of the gods, besides having the pleasant environment of a bracing climate and an eternal spring, has music as well. Tennyson depicts this island as a place free from stress, strain, and pressures of the world. Its pleasure and peace are supposed to be conducive to creativity. The islands of "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," "The Lotos-Eaters," Mt. Ida of "Oenone," the field of Enna of "Demeter and Persephone," and the lands "subjected to the Heliconian ridge" in "Tiresias," signify this place.

The island of Ithaca is a place of disillusionment as indicated by its "barren crags." Ulysses sets off from there with a faint hope that perhaps he may, in the course of his voyage, reach the Isle of the Blest. It can be seen that, as a symbol, the land of the Lotos-Eaters is specially significant because there is not only "blissful ease" but also sleep. The toil-worn mariners pray for "rest" which comes either with "dark death" or the "dreamful ease" of sleep. But "dark death" and "dreamful ease" belong to the region of half-light and darkness. This brings us to the second set of images which may be explored and understood with the help of the images in the third section of the poem, "Ode: 0 Bosky Brook," quoted earlier. Here Tennyson addresses "Athor" as "venerable dark! august obscure!"
and calls her the "Sublimest." She is one of the most ancient Egyptian Deities which, in the Coptic, signifies Night. The morning star, Phospher, the harbinger of day, and the evening star, Hesper, the harbinger of night symbolize respectively, dawn brightening into day with its hustle and bustle of life, and evening shading into night and darkness, with peace, calm and quiet of sleep. The images of East and West, too, have the same connotations as Phospher and Hesper. In "The Hesperides" the poet shows that "the wisdom of the west" is treasured in the West. Besides, it is the "... western sun and the western star,/ And the low west wind, breathing afar,/ The end of day and beginning of night/ Make the apple holy and bright" (ll. 89-92) and "All good things are in the west." (line 96). In "Ulysses" he declares: "... for my purpose holds/ To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths/ Of all the western stars, until I die." (ll.59-61). As for Phospher, signifying dawn and day, the lines in "The Hesperides" are: "Guard the apple night and day,/ Lest one from the East come and take it away," (ll. 41-42)

7. See The Poems of Tennyson, p. 265.
or, "Half-round the mantling night is drawn,/ Purple-fringed with even and dawn./ Hesper hateth Phosphor, evening hateth morn." (ll. 80-82). A glance at "Ode: O Bosky Brook" makes this antimony between Hesper and Phosphor clear. All creations, whether of art or Nature, are possible in peaceful and calm surroundings which are characterized by the twilight and night of the West as symbolized by Hesper. Phosphor stands for the choirs of men marked by noise and light-heartedness, the "Chirp, bellow, bark and distant shout of man..." (line 105). These disturb the creative mood. For it one requires "Rare sound" and "spare light."

In "Tithonus" it is the skyscape which forms the background: it consists of dawn with the steeds of Aurora shaking darkness from their manes, while hapless Tithonus yearningly peers for glimpses of the "dark" world below. He cannot savour the vigorous activity of the steeds straining at their reins. East with its connotations of work, distractions, and worldly responsibilities, enfeebles the creativity of the artist who pleads for release from the work this world of daylight demands of him. He can no longer meet its
domands. He yearns for the restful dark, down below on the earth, in the West. In this respect, the mariners of "The Lotos-Eaters" and "Tithonus" strike a common chord, for both want "... long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease." (line 98). In his veneration for Night in the ode the poet makes it clear that it is for her positive qualities that he worships her. He treats her as "the parent of all life," "the mother of all thought." These thoughts do not and cannot rise "freely from the mind's recess/When the sharp sunlight occupies the sense" (ll. 93-94) with concerns of the world.

We find that the garden isle as well as the West, Hesper, twilight, darkness, and even death (for it entails regeneration), are symbols of escape from the responsibility of the work-a-day world into a region of twilight and the West, conducive to artistic creativity and imagination. "Gold" and "golden" symbolize creativity hence the "little harps of gold" of "The Sea-Fairies" signify creative art, and the "golden apple" of "The Hesperides" and "Oenone" its artefacts. Other symbols fused in these poems are "sea" for life but "ship" for active life, "mariners" for artist-poets,
and "sorrow" for wife. This too is his private symbol. In these poems Leander, the Hesperides, the lotos-addicted mariners, Ulysses, Tithonus, Tiresias, Semele, Demeter, and Paris, all symbolize the artist; but Paris and Tithonus stand for the self-indulgent artist. The Sea-Fairies, the Hesperides and the Lotos-Eaters on their islands, symbolize the world of art, and the lotos-fruit and its effect represent the spell of art. Aurora and her East are akin to Helen (who was mistakenly taken as the principle of beauty and art), like the isles of the Sea-Fairies and the Lotos-Eaters, which bared their ugly truths as Ithaca with its barren crags. They bring suffering in their wake, endless aging and decrepitude for Tithonus, destruction of Troy (the city built to music, hence art), and death of Paris and Oenone. In the 'Choric Songs' the poet is not aware of it and mistakes it for pure art, but as he matures he becomes more perceptive and discriminative. The mythical poems of his last phase, especially "Tithonus" and "The Death of Oenone," may be treated as his final considered statement on art and the artist.

8. Footnote 22 ante, Chapter III, p. 93.
The fragmentary nature of the poems, referred to in the foregoing chapters, is mainly due to Tennyson's concentration on a single mood depicted through single episodes from epics or myths. This concentration on one mood makes exposition, and not narration, the focal point of the artist. It would, however, be wrong to assume that all the mythological poems of Tennyson are, invariably, fragmentary in nature. "Tiresias," "Demeter and Persephone," and "The Death of Oenone" are somewhat different in this respect. Exposition of a mood continues to be the main concern of the poet in them, too, but they may not be called fragmentary, for he rounds them off with a finale which is conspicuous by its absence in the other mythical poems. As for mood, "Tiresias" highlights the hapless frustration of the aged, and "Demeter and Persephone" projects the sentiment of motherhood. "The Death of Oenone," however, is different in style, too, from all his other mythical poems. It is a narrative in the third person and not a dramatic monologue in the first person like the other mythological poems of Tennyson. This poem, however, is an extension of the sorrowful state of the first "Oenone." The indignation that had started taking hold of Oenone towards the end of the
first poem, shows itself in an unattenuated form when she spurns the dying Paris from her doors. There is no element of incompleteness at the end of this poem.

The poet uses the device of juxtaposition of opposites to emphasize the main tenor of the poems. Sometimes the contrast is provided by agents distinct and separate from each other, at others, it is within the person of the protagonist in the form of a reminiscence of a person or event. The gay abandon of the Sea-Fairies is contrasted with the fear of the mariners; the wary vigil of the Hesperides with Hanno's hearing their songs, as though in a dream; the music of the Hesperides with the silence all around; the languor of the Lotos-Eaters with memories of contending with the tides on the rough sea. The present woe of Oenone is contrasted with her happiness in the days before Paris' judgement. Her sorrow is also contrasted with the imagined happy laughter of Paris and Helen. Ulysses' present idleness is in contrast with memories of his hectic active life on the basis of which he makes a case for a renewed life of action; Tithonus' age is juxtaposed with Eos' youth, and the bounding energy of her impatient steeds contrasts with his debility. The old, handicapped
Tiresias is put alongside the young Menoeceus; his nobility and spirit of self-sacrifice are an antithesis of the thoughtless, faceless mass of people, deaf to wisdom and reason. But the impact of Menoeceus' sacrifice is diluted when the poem reverts to Tiresias' bitterness. "Demeter and Persephone" highlights the anguish of a desolate mother by contrasting it with the contentment of motherhood in "human wives," "nested birds" and the "cubbed lioness." The converse of Oenone's indignation and anger, when she spurns Paris with disdain, may be seen in her forgiveness and love as she leaps into the flames of his funeral pyre with the ejaculation, "Husband." The sustenance of wedlock is the focal point of this poem.

Critics hold different opinions about the form of these poems. Even a brief review brings up varied points of view. Douglas Bush prefers to class "Oenone" with epyllions and idylls.\(^9\) Grierson considers it and "Ulysses" the poet's first essays in dramatic monologue.\(^10\)

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The poet himself calls "Tiresias" a "brief idyll." 11 Langbaum refers to "Tithonus" and "The Lotos-Eaters" as "dramatic monologues with an over-richness of landscape, imagery and cadence...." 12 A researcher in the '70's, Linda Kay Hughes, calls all the mythical poems of Tennyson his "classical dramatic monologues," 13 while another investigator, Karla Payne Elling, surmises that this genre was evolved in the nineteenth century when poets like Tennyson and Browning placed an auditor at the scene of a romantic soliloquy. 14 Viewed from this angle, all Greek mythical poems of Tennyson may be said to have a speaker and an auditor. The poem "Hero to Leander" indicates it in the title itself, but the rest of these poems, except "The Death

11. In "To E. Fitzgerald," a poem in which Tennyson dedicates "Tiresias" to this friend, he writes:

   'One height and one far-shining fire',
   And while I fancied that my friend
   For this brief idyll would require
   A less diffuse and opulent end....

   (ll. 57-60).


of Oenone" have a similar speaker-auditor relationship, though not so clearly indicated in the title. The Sea-Fairies address the mariners, and the Hesperides address each other and father Hesper. In "The Lotos-Eaters" the weary mariners can be taken to be arguing their reluctance to leave the Lotos-Isle with Ulysses, their captain (though critics generally prefer to treat the often emotionally charged arguments as part of an internal monologue of the lotus-eating mariners); Oenone addresses Mt. Ida, calling her "Mother Ida"; Ulysses speaks to the mariners, his crew, in "Ulysses"; Tithonus pleads with Eos; Tiresias speaks to Menoeceus; and Demeter to Persephone. "The Death of Oenone" alone is a narrative, with the poet as its narrator. But all these poems are imbued with a dramatic element that varies in degree from poem to poem, and barring the last poem, all of them can be called Tennyson's Greek mythological dramatic monologues. But this raises certain problems. Langbaum, in his study of this form, says that dramatic monologue, in a broad-based, non-restrictive approach, would include "almost all love songs and laments . . . all kinds of excerpts from plays and narratives"; 15 but if the criterion

is made "too restrictive" then the dramatic monologue "must have not only a speaker other than the poet but also a listener, an occasion, and some interplay between speaker and listener."  

16. It is perhaps in this "restrictive" sense that Pettigrew considers both "The Lotos-Eaters" and "Oenone" to be soliloquies.  

Dramatic monologue, in a way, stems from soliloquy. Langbaum observes that

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17. While discussing the passage in which Ulysses addresses Telemachus, Pettigrew says that the opening of the poem consists of an interior monologue, for the tone is of caustic contempt for his wife. He further says that the tone in the Telemachus para changes:

The change in tone corresponds, I believe, to a change in form, occurring with the gesture implicit in 'This is my son, mine own Telemachus', from interior to exterior monologue. Awareness of the Victorian genius and fondness for the dramatic monologue tends to make one forget how very tentatively Tennyson moved in its direction (witness "Oenone" and "The Lotos-Eaters"), and how very new "Ulysses" is in form. The reader of 1842 must have begun the poem by reading in terms of the familiar soliloquy and not of the relatively unfamiliar exterior monologue, especially since the presence of the mariners is not directly indicated until late in the poem...."

the form is largely modelled on the Shakespearean soliloquy because when the nineteenth century poets read it, they thought they had found the form by which they could "objectify and dramatize their essentially subjective and lyrical impulse." For such dramatization they adopted a conversational method. It may be said that with remarkable acumen Tennyson chooses this form and almost instinctively spots situations in Greek mythology with a potential for the depiction of his moods and experiences. These situations are mostly those that have not been fully elaborated in their source myths. The very nature of this genre suited Tennyson's purpose. The form "has no necessary beginning and end but only arbitrary limits..." It is this which gives a seemingly fragmentary character to this group of Tennyson's poems. Browning exploits this form fully for exploring abnormal psychology. "Tennyson's knowledge of human nature was not so wide nor perhaps so deep as Browning's; but simple types and single moods he could


render with a firm pictorial touch. The moods reflected in Tennyson's mythical poems are not only single moods, but also those, which he himself had experienced during the different phases of his life.

Since dramatic monologue is a genre with the potential of a drama with characters, action, and setting, though by itself it cannot be said to be a fully realized form of drama, it is the most objective form of poetry in terms of the poet's relationship to the poem, for in it the speaker is a character distinct from the poet. But by making these mythical poems repositories of his own concepts and experiences Tennyson brings an element of subjectivity in seemingly objective poems. He identifies himself with the speaker and projects his own tensions through the persona of the protagonist.

Critics have written at length on Tennyson's deft handling of rhyme, meter, and blank verse. An interesting but till now relatively untouched aspect seems to be the poet's experiments with the form of the dramatic monologue, specially in the Greek mythical poems. It is noteworthy

that the four mythical poems, "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," "The Lotos-Eaters" and "Oenone," are a combination of two forms. They begin as narratives and then slide into the dramatic mode. Their structure consists of two parts, the introduction which is narrative and non-dramatic, and the monologue with dramatic elements in it. The sole purpose of the introductory section is to provide a narrative basis for the dramatic part of the poem which follows. Since these poems are basically mood poems, Tennyson uses the introduction to project the mood. This brings to mind a faint resemblance with the Greek drama. It also has two chief components — the chorus and the protagonists. The chorus divides the play into acts, shows the significance of the events taking place, and either comments on the action or leads up to it. Tennyson's introductory passages are similar to the chorus of the Greek drama, and the poems can be called his experiments with the form of the dramatic monologue and the Greek dramatic technique. The poet uses the narrator as its chorus. "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" are an attempt at conjoining the blank verse of the chorus to the lyrical mode of the dramatic monologue of the protagonists. But "The Lotos-Eaters" is different. The whole of it,
including the chorus-like narrative introduction, is in lyrical form, just as the whole of "Oenone" with its introduction is in blank verse. Tennyson may be said to be the closest to Greek lyrical drama in "The Lotos-Eaters." It may be said that if Tennyson had written the whole episode of the Lotos-Eaters instead of stopping at just one stasimon and one episode, "The Lotos-Eaters" would have been the first lyrical drama of the Victorian age.  

"Oenone" is an experiment of a different nature. Here the poet attempts a combination of various Greek

21. It is difficult to say whether Tennyson's classical learning or his introduction to Shelley, or both, were responsible for these fleeting feeble forays in the Greek dramatic form. O.H. Ford in Keats and the Victorians (1944; New Haven: Yale University Press, second reprinting 1945), pp. 23-24, surmises Tennyson's acquaintance with Shelley and Keats on Palgrave's authority. He writes: "If, as Palgrave says, the Apostles introduced him to Shelley, it is quite probable that he made the acquaintance of Keats at the same time." Whether the form of "Prometheus Unbound" and "Hellas" inspired him for these peripheral experiments, embodying but a single mood, is an open question. What is certain is that after trying various combinations and permutations, Tennyson gradually moved to the dramatic monologue to embody his myths. He did not attempt the Greek dramatic form again though he wrote a number of plays in the later part of his career.
and English forms and styles. While the narrative passage has the poet as the chorus, the monologue that follows is patterned on the Greek lament, and the whole is rendered in blank verse. In "Ulysses," the poet, after experimenting with the chorus in the four earlier poems, withdraws it altogether, and what is left then is one of the best dramatic monologues of Tennyson in the whole range of his poetry, and perhaps the best amongst his Greek myth poems. The tone of the poem changes from section to section. The background is provided through hints and suggestions contained within the framework of the poem.

The narrative passages which provide the background are comparatively short in "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides," six lines and thirteen lines respectively; but they are fairly long in the two other poems, twentyone lines in "Oenone" and fortyfive lines in "The Lotos-Eaters." The introductory stanzas of "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" indicate a calm sea. In "The Sea-Fairies" the poet devotes just two lines to depict the sea and the mariners, the rest describe the Sea-Fairies and their green island. The mariners are weary and sail slowly. At first they see
the running foam and the "green brink" of the island with beautiful young maidens with harps of gold and just muse at the sight when shrill music reaches them on the "middle sea." They become tense with fear as they realize that the maidens are the Sirens. In a succinct manner the poet depicts the state of the mariners with the help of just four significant words—"slow," "weary," "fear," and "whispering"—in the opening stanza which is in the narrative form. The rest of the poem is devoted to the song of the Sea-Fairies who describe at length the leisure and pleasure they can give the tired weather-beaten mariners. Their epicurean and hedonistic mood is apparent in their song. In "The Hesperides," on the other hand, almost the whole of the introductory verse paragraph is devoted to the location, the stillness and silence that prevail in the region. This silence is not eerie. It is the solemn silence of a holy place. There is nothing to denote fear, though "The North Wind" has "fallen," the bays are calm, and there is "neither warbling of the nightingale,/ Nor melody o' the Lybian lotus flute." "Zidonian Hanno" simply hears voices like "voices in a dream" floating from the isle continuously, till he reaches the outer
sea. The song the Hesperides sing is totally unconcerned with what happens on the sea. It is more in the nature of an incantation for the perpetuation and security of the tree bearing the "golden apples." The singers are wholly absorbed in currying for and guarding the tree and its fruits. The epigraph is a symbolic indication of the sanctity of the music Hanno hears: "Hesperus and his daughters three,/ That sing about the golden tree."

The setting in "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" is only seemingly alike. The basic difference lies in the content of the songs and the cause and effect of the singing. The Sea-Fairies deliberately direct their songs towards the sailors to entice them. The Hesperides, on the other hand, are indifferent to travellers on the sea. They are engrossed in their singing. In both the poems music emanates from the garden inlands and floats over the sea, towards the tired mariners in "The Sea-Fairies" and Hanno in "The Hesperides." The tension in "The Sea-Fairies" arises out of the Sea-Fairies' attempt to tempt the mariners and the latter's efforts to resist it. Such tension is absent in "The Hesperides" and the transporting effect of music on its hearers is highlighted instead. Calm pervades the region and the voices are to Hanno "like voices in a dream." The progressive change in the
attitude of the mariners towards the music-filled island and the sea is significant. The effect of music in this poem is somewhat similar to that of the lotos-fruit in "The Lotos-Eaters." The absence of resistance of Hanno anticipates the surrender of the sailors to the charm of the garden isle in "The Lotos-Eaters." The setting in this poem is the same as that in "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides," as it comprises the sea with a ship and sailors and the verderous green shore of the island. There is in them a consistent use of the same symbols and images which constitute the backgrounds. But here the likeness ends. The placid sea of "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" is replaced by a turbulent sea with "climbing" waves, which, in a way, push the sailors on to the shore. The sailors, too, desire to get respite from the inclement sea and reach the shore where there is music "that softer falls/ Than petals from blown roses on the grass," but the rough sea of life has ennervated them. Its billows toss them on the Lotos-Isle. In "Hero to Leander," too, the sea is stormy but Leander is bent upon crossing it. Contrasted with this, the mariners of "The Lotos-Eaters" have managed to escape from the rough sea. Both Leander and the mariners are akin to the artist and
reflect two different moods. Leander wants to come to grips with life even if he perishes in the attempt, but the mariners in "The Lotos-Eaters" have experienced the grim struggle it entails and are happy to escape it.

Pettigrew brackets "The Lotos-Eaters" with "Oenone" in judging them both as soliloquies. But in doing so he appears to ignore the situation and context of Ulysses' mariners on the Lotos-Isle in the source poem, *Odyssey*. It may be noted that Tennyson takes up the incident from just before the point of the mariners' landing on the island. The poem begins with a specific reference to Ulysses, not by name, but with the pronoun, "he," which is meant to contextualize the poem and fix it in its epic source. Even though the foregoing and subsequent events are not taken up, they are to be kept in mind, as one reads the poem. It begins with: "'Courage' he said, and pointed towards the land, / This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon." (ll. 1-2). The rest of the poem, upto line 45, is devoted to a description of the languid surroundings filled with soft sweet music, and line 46 onwards, to the "Choric Song" the mariners break into, after eating the lotos-fruit. This, in a way, puts Ulysses

22. Footnote 17 ante, p. 177.
in the background though his presence is not to be forgotten.

The second stanza of the "Choric Song" in "The Lotos-Eaters" is underlined with the mariners' reflective questions and musing: "Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,/ And utterly consumed with sharp distress,/ While all things else have rest from weariness?/ All things have rest: why should we toil alone..." (ll. 57-60). They point out the irony of the situation-- "We only toil, who are the first of things/ And make perpetual moan,/ Still from one sorrow to another thrown:" (ll. 61-63). The third stanza points out other forms of life which have a peaceful sojourn on earth and as quiet an end -- the "leaf" unfolding out of the bud, flowering, and then floating "adown the air" in death; "the full juiced apple" dropping silently in autumn night; the flower that "Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil ...." (line 82). But the life of the mariners themselves is full of struggle. A mood of being fed up with such an existence is gradually built up. The dramatized reflection and musings take on a stronger tone in the fourth stanza. The statements could have been taken to be just a mode of expression common in all poetry, especially romantic poetry, but the fact that the poet has indicated in the opening stanza that the depiction is of an incident in an epic makes one look at it as part of
a larger whole. The bolder, stronger and louder statements are then no longer directed at themselves but at a will antithetical to their own. This can be none else except Ulysses, who in there with them but has not eaten the lotos-fruit. The Odyssey simply tells us that he had to take the mariners back by force. Tennyson, especially in the fourth stanza, depicts the mariners' resistance to compulsion. The lotos-eating mariners have a highly motivated leader whose sole objective is to reach Ithaca. If the poet had meant the poem to be a soliloquy he could have begun it not with Ulysses urging his mariners to make it to the shore, but after they had landed there. Since he begins the poem with Ulysses' importuning them for one more attempt, it can be said that reflection has given place to open argument and the conflict in the fourth stanza is between the reluctant mariners and Ulysses. They ask him to leave them alone for they find incessant toil on the sea unfair, unreasonable, and a waste of the little life left at their disposal:

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone.

(11. 84-90).
Tennyson makes the weary mariners employ their song as a medium to apprise their leader of their changed attitude towards life and their determination to stay on the island even if it meant disobedience to him. Their tone in "Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more" (line 173) amounts to an outright flouting of his orders. It is obvious that Ulysses is the persona of the Apostles while the mariners symbolize Tennyson, with his regressive impulse, justifying his escape into the world of pure art.

"The Choric Songs" (Chapter I), may be said to be Tennyson's experiment in dramatic lyric. The songs are appended to verses that show an affinity with the chorus in Greek drama but since the poet does not develop the poems into fuller lyrical plays they remain dramatic lyrics. "Oenone" is a poem on the same pattern but in blank verse. The speaker-auditor relation is but a matter of form, for Oenone's addresses to Mt. Ida to unburden her woe are in conformity with the artistic mode of the classical lament. The first twentyone lines are an exposition of the situation of Oenone in her familiar haunts of the hills and dales
of Mt. Ida in the narrative form. It takes on a dramatic turn only towards the end when she gets agitated at the thought of Paris and Helen sharing the joys of love that are rightfully hers. Casting out thoughts of seeking comfort in death she sets out to meet Cassandra who has visions of raging fire all round. Oenone, too, is burning with the fire of revenge. The poem may be treated as a dramatic monologue in its widest sense only.

The rest of the poems of this group, with the exception of "The Death of Oenone," may quite unequivocally be said to be dramatic monologues. The conflict in "Hero to Leander" is between these passionate lovers who have to part at day-break. The sea is stormy. Hero pleads with Leander not to risk his life by swimming across the turbulent waves. "Ulysses" opens with the hero surrounded by the mariners he has mustered to set sail with him. Since they are old companions who have "toiled, and wrought, and thought" with him, he treats them as his confidants and shares his troubles with them. He tells them about the tedium of his life at home and the boredom of his role as a king. The first forty-three lines of the poem may be regarded as an
explanation and self-justification, perhaps an answer to some uncomfortable questions by the mariners, such as the future of the kingdom and its people after he departs for a life of adventure. The auditors cannot possibly be town's people, or even courtiers, for he could not then have called the Ithaca savages who just "hoard, and sleep, and feed," and are immune to the higher and nobler things of life. He would not have spoken of Penelope in derogatory terms in the presence of Telemachus. It can, therefore, be assumed that he keeps walking towards the shore from his "still hearth" with his intimate companions who are his confidants as well. Telemachus joins him later, on the coast. With a gesture of his hand towards his son he tells them: "This is my son, my own Telemachus," "well versed in the affairs of state," mindful of his duties and hence will pay "meet adoration" to the family gods. Ulysses is here justifying his action of entrusting the Kingdom in his son's hands. By this time the sun is about to set. He makes his companions to take their places in the ship and sitting in well-ordered files, "smite/ The sounding furrows." Tennyson may be said to be the closest to Browning in handling dramatic monologue in Greek myth poems, especially "Ulysses." The
subtle irony and sarcasm underlying the poem are deftly managed. The setting of these poems consists of the same symbolic stage properties as are found in "The Sea-Fairies," "The Lotos-Eaters," and "The Hesperides," viz., the sea, the sea-coast, and the mariners. But the shore in this poem is no longer the pleasant shore of the earlier poems. The relationship between the auditors and the speaker emerges as one of sympathetic understanding rooted in long association through the thick and thin of life. The conflict is internal, as it exists within the protagonist himself. His self-righteous justification in shifting his responsibility on to Telemachus is not quite convincing even to himself, but he does not wish to think too much over it, and dismisses the whole thing in just eleven lines. The remaining twenty-seven lines are devoted to Ulysses' prospective venture, for that is his chief object.

The auditor to Tithonus' sorrow is the perpetrator of his plight, Eos herself. Being a goddess she is gifted with eternal youth. She, however, continues to have a tenderness for him though he has become a pitiable wreck in his decrepitude. She listens to his pleadings, is pained at his suffering, and departs in silence, with
her "tears" on his "cheeks." The dramatic monologue here brings out the helplessness of both god and man and creates a poignant situation with great finesse. The dawning sky is covered with scattered clouds through which Tithonus has glimpses of the cycle of life and death by looking at "... the homes/ Of happy men that have the power to die,/ And grassy barrows of the happier dead." (ll. 69-71).

The fact that Menoeceus is the silent and receptive auditor of the word blind sage is made clear by Tiresias' remark: "I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone! He will achieve his greatness." (ll. 160-161).

The scene is Thebes under siege. Here the conflict is not between Tiresias and Menoeceus but between Tiresias and the general public of Thebes, as well as within the psyche of the sage himself, between his handicap of blindness, old age, and hence his helplessness on the one hand and his desire to serve his country on the other.

The auditor in "Demeter and Persephone" is the happy Persephone, reunited with her mother. Demeter is in her daughter's loving embrace as she listens to her tale of woe after she (Persephone) had been kidnapped by Aidoneus. Finding that her mother is still afraid
of the "black blur" of earth left by the closing chasm through which she had been abducted, she touches the spot lightly with her foot, and it is covered with flowers like the rest of the field. The tension and conflict here is not between the devoted pair of the speaker and the auditor but between the speaker and the wily gods. The poet provides the background through the technique of flashback.

The focal point in these dramatic monologues is a single mood which, allegorically, projects the poet's own mental state. Apart from the chorus-like introductions in some of the mythical poems, Tennyson incorporates some other classical modes in this nineteenth century genre. "Oenone" occupies a place of distinction in this respect. The poem has the characteristics of a Theocritian lament, an idyll, and of the dramatic monologue in its wider sense. Ovid's fifth epistle in The Heroides shows Oenone gazing at the sea day after day, awaiting Paris' return. His ship is finally descried by her but she also catches sight of a woman in his embrace and knows too well who she is. "Then indeed did I rend my bosom and bent my breast, and with the hard nail furrowed my streaming cheeks, and filled holy Ida with wailing cries..."
of lamentation ...." 23 Tennyson caught hold of this moment, adopted and adapted classical epithets and devices and wrote this pastoral lament with an unmistakable classical flavour. The opening of the poem conforms to the norms of "the pastoral love-lament: hopeless lover, loved one, setting." 24 But "Oenone" also incorporates the modern nineteenth century concept of the pastoral, for, like Wordsworth's Lucy (as Oenone in Nature's child, brought up by elemental forces. She lives under the shadow of snowy Gargarur, communicates with Mt. Ida, makes its grotos her hideouts and a cave her home. When evil days fall on her it is these very hills and dales she turns to, to recount her woe. Her address to Mt. Ida as "mother" in a merging of the classical and the modern. One of the characteristics of Theocritus' laments is the use of a refrain. 25 Tennyson introduces variations in the refrain in Oenone's lament to avoid monotony:


24. The Poems of Tennyson, note 1, p. 385.

25. Ibid., note 22, p. 386.
O mother Ida, many fountained Ida.  
(line 22).
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
(line 63).
Yet mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
(line 191).
O mother Ida, hear me yet before I die.  
(line 203).

The phrase "ere I die" is also a traditional feature of the pastoral love poem.  
He also adopts a "classical commonplace" in "O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?/ O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?"  
(line 232-233). This given an archaic touch to the poem. Apart from "Oenone," Tennyson's other poems, too, have classical phraseology and images. Mustard has sorted them out painstakingly in his Classical Echoes in Tennyson. While in the non-mythical poems the practice enhances the aesthetic appeal of the poems and reflects the poet's scholarship, in Greek mythical poems it gives them a classical flavour.

Tennyson also employs the technique of allusion to infuse an antique spirit in these poems. He does this in three ways:


27. Ibid., note 233, p. 396.
1. by alluding to mythical personages,

2. by alluding to events and episodes related to mythical personages, and

3. by alluding to superstitions and traditions of the past.

1. Ulysses' allusion to Achilles in "Ulysses" or Tiresias' allusion to Cadmus in "Tiresias" exemplify the first type.

2. Ulysses' allusion to his own great deeds in the past:

   Much have I seen and known; cities of men
   And manners, climates, councils, governments,
   Myself not least, but honoured of them all;
   And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
   Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

   (ll. 13-17)

   Hera's allusion to Paris' background in "Oenone":

   ... such boon from me,
   from me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee kingbom,
   A shepherd all thy life but yet kingbom, ....

   (ll. 124-126),

   and Tiresias' allusion to his blinding in "Tiresias"
   illustrate the second type.

3. The allusion to belief in omens in "Tiresias" is an example of the third type:
These eyes, now dull, but then so keen to seek
The meanings ambushed under all they saw,
The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice,
What omens may foreshadow fate to man....

(11. 4-7).

Sometimes Tennyson makes use of Homeric epithets
to give a classical and epical touch to the poems, e.g.,
"light-foot Iris" and "Idalian Aphrodite." The poet
gives a description of ancient battle scenes to enhance
and strengthen the spirit of the past:

Menoeceus thou hast eyes, and I can hear
Too plainly what full tides of onset sap
Our seven high gates, and what a weight of war
Rides on those ringing axles! jingle of bits,
Shouts, arrows, tramp of the hornfooted horse
That grind the glebe to powder! Stony showers
Of that ear-stunning hail of Ares crash
Along the sounding walls.

(11. 88-95).

Mustard's study in Classical Echoes in Tennyson reveals
that classical images and idioms are interwoven throughout
Tennyson's poems, but in Greek mythical poems they enhance
the mythopoeic element of the poems. The poet is fond
of using archaic expressions like, ere, hark, doth,
shalt, clomb, hath, athwart, madest, yonder, twain,
yon, thee, thou, thy, thine etc. in mythical poems,
though he is not consistent in their use in all of them.
Tennyson uses Nature both as background and as symbol in these poems. Tennyson's love of realism surfaces in this context. Whatever the theme, the landscape in his poems is invariably modelled on places he himself has visited. This maker Nicolson complains that though he does not mind the scenery of "Oenone" being based on the valley of Gauteretz, he is, however, shocked "to learn that the island of 'The Lotos-Eaters' is no more, after all, than an idealized Torquay." 29 It is, however, unfair to expect realism in a poem of this kind. T.S. Eliot observes that a poet's mind is like a receptacle which stores up numerous feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can form a new compound are present together. 30 Tennyson himself said that people who try to localise the sights and scenes depicted in his poems and thereby try to pin him down to a particular spot and meaning hardly understand a poet's mind. What he describes is not one scene but "the result of the impression

28. James Kissane's comment on "Demeter and Persephone" illustrates this point. He writes:

... Demeter's change of emotions is made correspondent to the seasonal pattern... Her desolation is portrayed against a winter landscape; her joyful reunion with Persephone is accompanied by sun and flowers.


of a hundred nights and scenes woven into one."\[31\] In composing the landscapes of these poems he blends what he himself has seen in Nature with the essentials he has gathered from the classics and makes his depiction conform to the topography portrayed by the ancients, especially landscape.\[32\] The sea image in these poems is significant. The mariners in "The Sea-Fairies" are frightened and tense, Hanno in "The Hesperides" is pleasantly drugged with music of the Hepperides; the sea in them is calm, almost immobile. The sailors in "The Lotus-Eaters" are harried, fed up with their toil. The sea is turbulent with high rising tides, one of which rolls them to the shore. In "Ulysses," landscape as well as seascape provide a cue to the sadness behind the mask of enthusiasm.


32. Given below are two excerpts which throw light on Tennyson's knowledge of the landscape and seascape in the classics:

(a) Knowledge of the Homeric mountains: "The sight of the cleft peak of Pic du Midi d'Ossau A. thought 'grand' from the head of the valley, and made an outline sketch of it. 'The Pyrenees' he said, 'look much more Homeric than the Alps'. Many of the mountains are wooded up to the summit." *(A Memoir, II, p. 157).*

(b) Knowledge of the Homeric seas: "This place, the Cambrian Brighton, pleases me not... a sea certainly today of most lovely blue, but with scarce a ripple. Anything more unlike the old Homeric 'much sounding' sea I never saw."

*(Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, I, from Tennyson's letter to Emily Sellwood, dated July 1839, p. 171).*
The crags are "barren" and in the distance "loom the dark broad seas" while "the deep/nouns round with many voices." These seem to communicate the real mood of Ulysses, who is taking to a life of adventure once again. Tennyson, in the image of Ulysses, is trying to pick up the threads of life.

The opening passage of "Cenone," -- "There lies a vale in Ida..." -- closely resembles the layout of Ovid's Ida. Ovid writes: "A mass of native rock looks down upon the unmeasured deep -- a mountain it really is;..."33 In Tennyson's Ida too

On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling through the cloven ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.

(ll. 5-9).

These finer details, added by Tennyson from his own experience, make the description vivid, realistic, and beautiful. They are picked up from impressions, stored up in his mind, of the valley of Cauteretz. Tennyson was "the painter's poet."34

He had minute observation, painter's eye for colour,34(a) and

33. Appendix II, B, p. 228.


34(a). In this he resembled Keats for "both Keats and Tennyson attempted to make words serve the function of pigments." (G. H. Ford, Keats and the Victorians, p. 36.)
his knowledge of birds and animals, his knowledge of astronomy, his rich and fertile imagination and sensitivity to nature, helped him in creating striking visual images. These were influenced by his extreme short sight which made him "move in a world of over-emphasized detail . . . . 'The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,/ rests like a shadow' . . . ." 35 The Greek myth poems of Tennyson are not only remarkable for their descriptive beauty, but also for the nature images in them which are in a harmonious rapport with the emotional state of the protagonists. Where it is not so, it is to highlight the mood by contrast. "Oenone" and "The Death of Oenone" illustrate this in their flora and fauna:

For now the noonday quiet holds the hill;
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops: the golden bee
Is lily-craddled: I alone awake.

(11. 24-29).


Given below is another example of Tennyson's close observation, from his letter (July 13, 1852) to his wife. He writes:

I found a strange fish on the shore with rainbows about its wild staring eyes, enclosed in a sort of sack with long tentaculun beautifully coloured, quite dead, but when I took it up by the tail spotted all the sand underneath with great drops of ink so I suppose a kind of cuttle fish. I found too a pale pink orchis on the reed bank and a pink vetch, a low sort of shrub with hore and there a thorn.

(The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, II, p. 33.)
Here, rest, sleep and death are the province of Nature but denied to Oenone. The juxtaposition points to the maiden's gentleness. In "The Death of Oenone" the vines which once screened the cave with colourful blooms and foliage "... were withered long ago,/ And through the sunless winter morning-mist/ In silence wept upon the flowerless earth." (ll. 7-9).

The birds and animals in "Oenone" are benign and friendly, but in "The Death of Oenone" they are grim looking. The "cold crowned snake" of "Oenone" becomes a "snake that hissing writhed away," and instead of the "crested peacock" that "lit" upon the bowers ("Oenone"), there is "a bird of prey that screamed and past; ..." ("The Death of Oenone"). The "wanton pard/ Eyed like the evening sun," who "with playful eye/ Crouched fawning in the wood" ("Oenone") is replaced by a panther that springs across her path, in all probability kills a prey, for immediately she hears "The shriek of some lost life among the pines ...." ("The Death of Oenone").

The foregoing discussion shows that these poems are a unified group in the allegorical mode, with a common set of images and symbols in a predominantly
dramatic monologue form. They are like little pictures from the classics just as "Idylls of the King" are vignettes from the saga of English romantic heritage, or the "English Idyls" are glimpses of English life. These mythical poems can be said to form a third group of poems which are a blend of the classical and a nineteenth century form. They truly are Tennyson's "Hellenic Idylls,"36 adopted in the genre of dramatic monologue.

36. In his 'Personal Recollections', F.T. Palgrave recalls a meeting with Tennyson thus: "But he began at once where we sat, in the left hand recess, and repeated without pause or lapse of memory the whole of that beautiful 'Oenone' which, latest to appear of all his Hellenic Idylls, is perhaps the one most instinct with the peculiar grace of Grecian simplicity."

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study of Tennyson's treatment of Greek myth poems highlights their thematic implications and artistic values as well as correlates them with the rest of his poems. Two poems from this group, "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus," are rather basically different from the others. They express, through images from Greek mythology, his longing to be a great epic poet and his eventual sad realization that this dream could not be fulfilled in his materialistic, unimaginative age. The rest of the mythical poems, whether by conscious design or by some sub-conscious impulse, employ a common set of images and symbols which reinforce their bond with classical antiquity. Their mythical, metaphoric and symbolic unity makes them stand apart as a cohesive group. The framework of mythology incorporates personal allegory which makes them a unique diary wherein the poet records his innermost secrets through the symbolic hieroglyphs of the myths. They tell us more about him than any single biography, including his son's, for they mirror the poet's mind and soul in
an uninhibited and unselfconscious manner. The thematic grouping of the poems for the purpose of this study throws into a bold relief the crucial phases of his life. The dramatis personae in them are not merely the identifiable Greek characters, but his parents, the Apostles, Arthur Hallam, his own brother,mintern, and the poet himself, all hidden behind the smoke-screen of the various personages from the pages of mythology.

The salient features of these poems are: (1) his originality in handling Greek myths, (2) the subtle modifications he makes in the stories to suit his purpose, (3) his fusion of personal allegories, except in "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus," with Greek myths, and (4) his experiments in form and style. The experiments display a distinctive aesthetic beauty and refinement which stems from the fine balance he strikes between the myth, the allegory and the age, and sets them apart from the mythological poems of the other Romantic and Victorian poets. These poems depict the poet's experiences on the one hand and reflect his views on some of the major issues of the controversy ridden era on the other.

1. When Tennyson took up the theme of "Demeter and Persephone" he said: "... when I write an antique like
this I must put in into a frame--something modern about it. It is no use giving a mere réchauffé of the old legends."\(^1\) But Tennyson needlessly bothered about a modern frame if it was just to save them from being "mere réchauffé." The originality with which he handles them is in itself a refutation of such a charge. Tennyson, with his deep knowledge of the classics, sharpened with a keen perception, spotted situations that promised ample scope to his genius. And since his genius lay in the delineation of "single moods"\(^2\) he concentrated only on them. There is, therefore, no overlapping in the handling of the myths by the Greek writers and our English poet. He takes up situations somewhat slurred over in the source poems and focuses only on the mood of the moment. This flood-lighting of an emotional state at just one juncture imparts a fragmentary character to the composition. "The Death of Oenone," however, is different in this respect. The poet concentrates on a single mood in this poem, too, but since the poem concludes with the self-immolation of Oenone, it

\(^1\) The Poems of Tennyson, p. 1373.

cannot be called fragmentary or preface-like, like the rest of the poems on personages. With "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus" these criteria do not apply as they are not part of events of longer narratives but merely names of important mythical places.

2. Tennyson very often modifies the myths he handles to suit his purpose. Homer’s description of the Sirens’ island depicts a rather repulsive and frightening place with patches of its sylvan meadows whitened with bones and made foulsome with gore. But Tennyson’s imagination transforms it into a beautiful place blessed with Nature’s bounty. He also avoids calling the enchantresses Sirens. He calls them Sea-Fairies, instead, and highlights their beauty and grace to emphasise the metamorphoses he has brought about. Homer mentions their songs to the accompaniment of lyres but does not describe them vividly. Tennyson shows them stringing their golden harps as they sing. The golden harps, suggestive of Apollo’s golden lyre, symbolise poetic creativity. This enrichment through symbols and descriptions and through juxtaposition of fear and gay abandon in sylvan surroundings in the midst
of the vast and dreary expanse of the ocean in Tennyson's own innovation to give new meanings to the old tales. In "Oenone" he suppresses the fact of Oenone's already having a son by Paris and thus makes her shun such motherhood. In "Ulysses" he makes the hero follow a different course from the Ulysses of Dante. Homer does not describe Ulysses' last voyage but merely hints at it in Tiresias' forecast when the former meets the sage in the underworld. The direction Ulysses will take and the purpose of his last voyage is not mentioned at all. Both Dante's Ulysses and that of Tennyson's, however, undertake the last voyage to pursue the same goal, i.e., knowledge, but the subtle change in the direction of this voyage, introduced by Tennyson, indicates the difference in the attitudes towards knowledge between the Renaissance and the Victorian poet. In "Tithonus," likewise, Tennyson makes his Eos unlike the one in the Homeric Hymns. The goddess of the 'Hymns' callously shuts up the aged Tithonus in a room to babble incoherently till eternity. Tennyson's

3. Chapter II, pp. 55-56 note. See notes also on the same pages.
Eos, however, suffers at being the unwitting cause of Tithonus' misery. In Euripides' *Phoenissae* (The Phoenician Women), Tiresias talks only to Creon while Menoeceus stands apart at a distance. It is noteworthy that Tennyson does not bring in Creon and makes the sage address Menoeceus directly calling him "My Son," which gives a Christian slant to the Greek myth. We can say that the seemingly small modifications carry weighty implications thematically. In "The Death of Oenone," however, the variations are more of an aesthetic nature.

3. The mythological poems of Tennyson, in keeping with a statement he once made about putting such antiques in modern frames, are given a contemporaneous colouring. It is, however, noteworthy that the modern element is not the theme but an issue that stems from them as an aside. The poems grouped in "The Choric Songs" are an exception, for in them the theme and the current controversy coalesce. This set of poems can be said to exemplify Tennyson's "modern frames" for these myths at their best. The major issues of the age, relevant to these poems are: (a) the question of the artist's social responsibility, (b) the

4. Note 1 ante of this chapter, p. 207.
problem of love and marriage with relation to women and the growing awareness of their rights and status in society, (c) the sudden explosion of knowledge resulting from the major inventions and discoveries and the impetus they gave to still further research and their influence in different walks of life, and (d) the dichotomy between Hellenism and Hebraism. These issues run at the subterranean level in the poems where they are not the main theme. The continuity of these problems in poems spanning his whole life, incidentally, throws light on the growth and maturing of the poet's mind and the evolution of his views accordingly. This advantage accrues to the mythical poems because of their homogeneity and the poet's use of them as masks.

(a) One of the crucial issues in the Victorian era was the question of social responsibility of the creative artist. This problem is the theme of "The Choric Songs" (Chapter I). The question, however, is not resolved fully in these poems. It seems to haunt the poet throughout his career, for the poet's cogitation on it is evident as an undercurrent in the rest of the mythological poems on personages. The evolution of the poet's views on this subject and his ultimate acceptance of the general
attitude of the Victorians towards art and the artist's responsibility is symbolically expressed in these poems. "The Death of Oenone," his last mythical poem, is his belated but final verdict on this issue. In the poems between "The Choric Songs" and "The Death of Oenone" he keeps pondering over the issue from various angles. He finally agrees that it is the moral duty of the artist to employ his genius for the ethical upliftment of society.

(b) Tennyson's poems on Greek heroines revolve around two aspects of married love—wifehood and motherhood. From his reflections on wifehood stem his reflections on the status of women and their role in society. His indignation at the injustice perpetrated on them finds expression in Oenone's revolt against Paris' treatment. In the absence of any hope of redressal, she is made to abjure even her motherhood. But as the poet matures he realizes the harm such a revolt entails to the very fabric of society. "Semele" depicts a woman's fulfilment in motherhood while "Demeter and Persephone" proves the power of motherhood. "The Death of Oenone" upholds the institution of marriage. We find that on this issue, too, the poet is at one with his age. It is true that he upholds the cause of women, but only within the framework of wedlock.
His appreciation of the role of women as home-makers with their constancy, and as the succour of their children in their hour of need can be seen contrasted with the self-indulgence of men folk in these poems. Paris as a faithless husband and Zeus as a thoughtless father cause untold misery while Oenone and Demeter sustain society.

(c) Tennyson's approach to knowledge is one of caution and restraint. Though none of the mythological poems has knowledge as its theme, his view of it is reflected in "Ulysses" in the seemingly innocuous modification in Ulysses' setting off for his voyage towards the West at sunset instead of the East at dawn as in Dante. Critics in general find Ulysses' goal of search for knowledge a romantic and unending quest. They, somehow, overlook his fear of unbridled knowledge, expressed unequivocally in "In Memoriam." Tennyson gave a clue to his concept of the 'West' in "The Hesperides." It harbours wisdom. Stange interprets this wisdom in the following words: "But, 'wisdom' has here, as it so often did in Tennyson's work, a special connotation. His consciousness was so clearly centred on poetry and on the problems of art, that wisdom came to mean for him the artist's powerful insight, the poet's supreme attribute." Tennyson

gives an added dimension to wisdom in "Ulysses" by making it the repository of knowledge. Since Tennyson treats wisdom as the "artist's powerful insight," the poetic vision born of this insight makes him realize the dangers of unbridled knowledge. The Greeks too were great lovers of knowledge. They had a passion for truth and an infinite curiosity. But deep in their blood was the "sophrosyne or moderation, which is more and more recognized as their most characteristic attitude of life." Euripides says about knowledge:

I bear her no grudge. I take joy in pursuit of her. But the other things are great and shining. Oh, for a life to flow toward that which is beautiful, till man through both light and darkness should be at peace and reverent, and, curing from him laws that are outside justice, give glory to the gods.

We can say that Tennyson displays the Greek spirit when he puts 'wisdom' above knowledge by charting Ulysses' course for the quest of knowledge through the West.

(d) The Victorian age was in the grip of a religious crisis born of the failure of traditional religious


beliefs. Nature was "emptied of spiritual meaning, classical myth [which] might seem to be a last symbolic medium for transcendental longings... ... were subject to the general process of skeptical attrition..." 9 Tennyson and Arnold were at the "center of the Victorian religious crisis and most of their chief poetry, including the mythological, is conditioned by that fact ..." 10 Bush maintains that generally speaking, the mythological poems are "decorously classical and secular in tone, and religion, if present at all, remains in the background or between the lines." 11 Reflections on the antimony between Hellenism and Hebraism is present in Tennyson's mythological poems from "The Lotos-Eaters" onwards but in a kind of aside. The Greek gods are depicted as an epicurian lot for their hard hearted repose is sweetened, not troubled, by the endless wail from the earth in "The Lotos-Eaters." In "Oenone" he projects them as immoral, mean and quarrelsome. Paris, Oenone, the royal house of Priam, the house of Agamemnon, Ulysses, Achilles and innumerable others suffer; Troy is burnt, annihilated, simply because the envious goddesses would not let Paris judge on merit. Semele becomes a victim of Hera's

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 58.
11. Ibid.
Jonas of his love; Arfau anger will be
announced only by the blood of a youth in his prime from
Cadmus' progeny, while Pallas Athene's indignation
afflicts Tiresias with blindness; the brothers Zeus and
Aidoneus plot to get Persephone abducted and forcibly
married to the latter without the knowledge and consent
simply project the wanton Greek gods. "Tithonus,"
"Tiresias" and "Demeter and Persephone," however, provide
a contrast also between the callousness of these gods and
the nobility and all pervading love of Christianity,
with its message of hope through self-sacrifice for the
good of mankind as exemplified by Christ himself. In
the triumph of Demeter "Tennyson's vision attempts to
comprehend not only the reconcilement of life to death
but even the attainment of ultimate triumph 'Till thy
dark lord accept and love the Sun,/ And all the Shadow
die into the Light' (ll. 135-136). This may be seen from
the poem's pagan perspective, as an anticipation of the

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12. Arnold, too, in a non-mythological poem "Obermann
Once More," draws a contrast "between the hellish
self-disgust of 'that hard Pagan world' ... and the
new born hope, and asceticism, of Christianity."

(See Douglas Bush, Pagan
Myth and Christian Tradition in English Poetry, note
44, p. 58.)
Christian dispensation; but it is more the expression, in his own peculiar accents of evolutionism, of Tennyson's dim yet emotion-tinged personal faith in that 'one far-off divine event/ To which the whole creation moves'.

4. These poems exemplify Tennyson's proclivity to experiment in form and style. Some of these poems are lyrics while others blank verse pieces. "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," "The Lotos-Eaters," and "Oenone" can be treated as his tenuous, fragmentary, attempts at writing verse drama on the classical pattern. (They can also be treated as his experiments in combining the lyric and blank verse forms within the framework of dramatic monologue). The chorus-like introductions are in blank verse in "The Son-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" while the rest of the poems are in rhymed verse. The introductory chorus and the following monologues in "The Lotos-Eaters" and "Oenone" are, however, of a uniform nature, i.e., rhymed verse in "The Lotos-Eaters"

and blank verse in "Oenone." Except "Ilion, Ilion" and "Parnassus," which are lyric, and "The Death of Oenone," which is a narrative, all the other poems on Greek mythology are dramatic monologues. He employs archaic words, Homeric epithets and classical allusions to enhance and reinforce the effect of antiquity in these poems in a nineteenth century genre. His depiction of nature in them is both symbolic and realistic.

Tennyson's poems on Greek mythology are multi-dimensional. With the warp and woof of the past, the present, and himself, he weaves inimitable poetry with superb craftsmanship. These poems are the innermost sanctuary of his being, a veritable repository of his profound experience of life, and yet retain an unmistakable classical flavour.

14. Tennyson wrote a number of plays as a young boy. Most of them have not survived or survived only as fragments. The chorus of one such fragment has been published in The Poems of Tennyson, pp. 236-237. Ricks writes that the scene to which this chorus was attached was possibly the one printed by Hallam Tennyson in A Memoir I, pp. 23-25. An interesting aspect of the chorus and this scene is the combination of rhymed verse and blank verse. The chorus is in rhymed verse in three stanzas while the longer passages of this scene are in blank verse, i.e., an experiment of combining rhymed verse with blank verse in Greek drama form. This, in a way, substantiates our surmise regarding these four poems. The lost play obviously was on the Greek pattern.
APPENDIX - I, A.

SOURCES OF "THE CHORIC SONGS."

(London: Frederick Warne and Co, n.d.).

"Then thus: 'The lot of man the gods dispose;
These ills are past: now hear thy future woes,
O prince attend; some favouring power be kind,
And print the important story on thy mind!

"'Next, where the Sirens dwell, you plough the seas;
Their song is death, and makes destruction please.
Unblest the man, whom music wins to stay
Nigh the cursed shore, and listen to the lay.
No more that wretch shall view the joys of life,
His blooming offspring, or his beauteous wife!
In verdant meads they sport; and wide around
Lie human bones that whiten all the ground:
The ground polluted floats with human gore,
And human carnage taints the dreadful shore.
Fly swift the dangerous coast; let every ear
Be stopp'd against the song: 'tis death to hear!
Firm to the mast with chains thyself be bound,
Nor trust thy virtue to the enchanting sound.
If, mad with transport, freedom thou demand,
Be every fetter strain'd, and added band to band."

*Odyssey*, Bk. XII, pp. 623-624.
"O friends, oh ever partners of my woes,
Attend while I what Heaven foredooms disclose.
Hear all! Fate hangs o'er all; on you it lies
To live or perish! to be safe, be wise!
"In flowery meads the sportive Sirens play,
Touch the soft lyre, and tune the vocal lay;
Me, me alone, with fetters firmly bound,
The gods allow to hear the dangerous sound.
Hear and obey; if freedom I demand,
Be every fetter strain'd, be added band to band."

"While yet I speak the winged galley flies,
And lo! the Siren shores like mists arise.
Sunk were at once the winds the air above,
And waves below, at once forgot to move:
Some demon calm'd the air and smooth'd the deep,
Hush'd the loud winds, and charm'd the waves to sleep.
Now every sail we furl, each oar we ply:
Lash'd by the stroke, the frothy waters fly.
The ductile wax with busy hands I mould,
And cleft in fragments, and the fragments roll'd;
The aerial region now grew warm with day,
The wax dissolved beneath the burning ray;
Then every ear I barr'd against the strain,
And from access of frenzy lock'd the brain.
Now round the masts my mates the fotters roll'd,
And bound me limb by limb with fold on fold.
Then bending to the stroke, the active train
Plunge all at once their oars, and cleave the main

"While to the shore the rapid vessel flies,
Our swift approach the Siren choir descries;
Celestial music warbles from their tongue,
And thus the sweet deluders tune the song:

"Oh stay, 0 pride of Greece! Ulysses stay!
Oh cease thy course, and listen to our lay!
Blest is the man ordain'd our voice to hear,
The song instructs the soul, and charms the ear.
Approach! thy soul shall into raptures rise!
Approach! and learn new wisdom from the wise!
We know whate'er the kings of mighty name
Achieved at Illion in the field of fame;
Whate'er beneath the sun's bright journey lies.
Oh stay, and learn new wisdom from the wise!"

"Thus the sweet charmers warbled O'er the main;
My soul takes wing to meet the heavenly strain;
I give the sign, and struggle to be free:
Swift row my mates, and shoot along the sea;
New chains they add, and rapid urge the way,
Till, dying off, the distant sound decay:
Then scudding swiftly from the dangerous ground,
The deafen'd ear unlock'd, the chains unbound.

*Odyssey*, Bk XII, pp. 626-628.


Hesiod narrates how Dark Night gave birth to the Hesperides, and the work the latter are employed in:

And Night bore frightful Doom and black Ker,
And Death, and Sleep, and the whole tribe of Dreams.
Again although she slept with none of the gods,
Dark Night gave birth to Blame and sad Distress
And the Hesperides, who, out beyond
The famous stream of Oceanus, tend
The lovely golden apples and their trees.

(*Theogony*, p. 30).

Hesiod sings about the abode of other mythical figures and incidentally about the Hesperides too:
And the Gorgons, they who lived beyond the stream
Of famous Ocean, on the edge near Night
Where the clear-voiced Hesperides are found.

(Theogony, p. 32)

And Atlas, forced by hard necessity,
Holds the broad heaven up, propped on his head
And tireless hands, at the last end of Earth
In front of the clear voiced Hesperides....

(Theogony, p. 40)

R.C. Seaton, trans. The Argoonautica by Apollonius Rhodius

Jason, Peleus, and their comrades, were thirsty and
searched frantically for some spring. This was after they
had landed on the Libyan sands:

Then, like raging hounds, they rushed to search
for a spring; for besides their suffering and anguish,
a parching thirst lay upon them and not in vain they wander;
but they came to the sacred plain where Ladon, the serpent
of the land, till yesterday kept watch over the golden apples in the garden of Atlas; and all around the nymphs, the Hesperides, were busied, chanting their lovely song. But at that time, stricken by Heracles, he lay fallen by the trunk of the apple-tree; only the tip of his tail was still writhing; but from his head down the dark spine he lay lifeless; and where the arrows had left in his blood the bitter gall of the Lernean hydra, flies withered and died over the festering wounds. And close at hand the Hesperides, their white arms, flung over their golden hands lamented shrilly....

Bk. IV, pp. 389-391.

In Tennyson's "The Hesperides," the nymphs guard the apples warily. The excerpt given above shows the place after the theft of the golden apples.

Aiv


Nine days our fleet the uncertain tempest bore
Far in wide ocean, and from sight of shore:
The tenth we touch'd, by various errors toss'd,
The land of Lotus and the flowery coast.
We climb'd the beach, and springs of water found,
Then spread our hasty banquet on the ground.
Three men were sent, deputed from the crew
(A herald one) the dubious coast to view,
And learn what habitants possess'd the place.
They went, and found a hospitable race:
Not prone to ill, nor strange to foreign guest,
They eat, they drink, and nature gives the feast:
The trees around them all their food produce;
Lotus the name: divine, nectarous juice!
(Thence call'd Lotophagi); which whose tastes,
Insatiate riots in the sweet repasts,
Nor other home, nor other care intends,
But quits his house, his country, and his friends.
The three we sent, from off the enchanting ground
We dragg'd reluctant, and by force we bound;
The rest in haste forsook the pleasing shore,
Or, the charm tasted, had return'd no more.
Now placed in order on their banks, they sweep
The sea's smooth face, and cleave the hoary deep:
With heavy hearts we labour through the tide,
To coasts unknown, and oceans yet untried.

*Odyssey*, Bk. IX, pp. 574-575.
APPENDIX-II B

SOURCES OF POEMS WITH GREEK MYTHICAL HEROINES AS PROTAGONISTS


Will you read my letter through? or does your new wife forbid? Read --this is no letter writ by Mycenaean hand. It is the fountain-nymph Oenone writes, well known to the Phrygian forests-wronged, and with complaint to make of you, you my own, if you but allow.

What god has set his will against my prayers? What guilt stands in my way, that I may not remain your own? Softly must we bear whatever suffering is our desert; the penalty that comes without deserving brings us dole.

Not yet so great were you when I was content to wed you --I, nymph-daughter of a mighty stream. You who are now a son of Priam --let not respect keep back the truth!-- were then a slave; I deigned to wed a slave --I, a nymph! Oft among our flocks have we reposed beneath the sheltering trees, where mingled grass and leaves afforded us a couch; oft have we lain upon the straw, or on the deep hay in a lowly hut that kept the hoar-frost off. Who was it pointed out to you the converts apt for the chase, and the rocky den where the wild beast hid away her cubs? Oft have I gone

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a. She taunts Paris with fear of Agamemnon and Menelaus.
with you to stretch the hunting net with its wide mesh; oft have I led the fleet hounds over the long ridge. The beeches still conserve my name carved on them by you, and I am read there OENONE, characted by your blade; and the more the trunks, the greater grows my name. Grow on, rise high and straight to make my honours known! O poplar, ever live, I pray, that art planted by the marge of the stream and hast in thy seamy bark these verses:

IF PARIS' BREATH SHALL FALL NOT, ONCE OENONE HE DOITH SPURN,
THE WATERS OF THE XANTHUS TO THEIR FOUNT SHALL BACKWARD TURN.

O Xanthus, backward haste; turn, waters, and flow again to your fount! Paris has deserted Oenone, and endures it.

That day spoke doom for wretched me, on that day did the awful storm of changed love begin, when Venus and Juno, and unadorned Minerva, more comely had she borne her arms, appeared before you to be judged. My bosom leaped with amaze as you told me of it, and a chill tremor rushed through my hard bones. I took counsel—for I was no little terrified— with grandams and long-lived sires. 'Twas clear to us all that evil threatened me.
The firs were felled, the timbers hewn; your fleet was ready, and the deep-blue wave received the waxed crafts. Your tears fell as you left me -- this, at least, deny not! We mingled our weeping, each a prey to grief; the elm is not so closely clung by clinging vine as was my neck by your embracing arms. Ah, how oft, when you complained that you were kept by wind, did your comrades smile! --that wind was favouring. How oft, when you had taken your leave of me, did you return to ask another kiss? How your tongue could scarce endure to say "Farewell."

A light breeze stirs the sails that hang idly from the rigid mast, and the water foams white with the churning of the oar. In wretchedness I follow with my eyes the departing sails as far as I may, and the sand is humid with my tears; that you may swiftly come again, I pray the sea-green daughters of Nereus --yes, that you may swiftly come to my undoing! Expected to return in answer to my vows, have you returned for the sake of another? Ah me, 'twas for the sake of a cruel rival that my persuasive prayers were made!

A mass of native rock looks down upon the unmeasured deep—a mountain it really is; it stays the billows of the sea. From here I was the first to spy and know the sails of
your bark, and my heart's impulse was to rush through the
waves to you. While I delayed, on the highest of the prow
I saw the gleam of purple --fear seized upon me; that was
not the manner of your garb. The craft comes nearer, borne
on a freshening breeze, and touches the shore; with trembling
heart I have caught the sight of a woman's face. And this
was not enough --why was I mad enough to stay and see? --in
your embrace that shameless woman clung! Then indeed did I
rend my bosom and beat my breast, and with the hard nail
furrowed my streaming cheeks, and filled holy Ida with
wailing cries of lamentation; yonder to the rocks I love I
bore my tears. So may Helen's grief be, so her lamentation,
when she is deserted by her love; and what she was first to
bring on me may she herself endure!

Your pleasure now is in Jades who follow you over
the open sea, leaving behind their lawful wedded lords; but
when you were poor and shepherded the flocks, Ocnone was
your wife, poor though you were, and none else. I am not
dazzled by your wealth, nor am I touched by thought of
your palace, nor would I be called one of the many wives
of Priam's sons --yet not that Priam would disdain a nymph
as wife to his son, or Hecuba would have to hide her
kinship with me; I am worthy of being, and I desire to be,
the matron of a puissant lord; my hands are such as the
sceptre could well beseen. or despise me because once I pressed with you the beacon front; I am better suited for the purpled marriage-bod.

Remember, too, my love can bring no harm; it will beget you no wars, nor bring avenging ships across the wave. The Tyndarid run-away is now demanded back by an enemy under arms; this is the dower the dame brings proudly to your marriage-chamber. Whether she should be rendered back to the Danai, ask Hector your brother, if you will, or Deiphobus and Polydamas; take counsel with grave Antenor, find out what Priam's self persuades, whose long lives have made them wise. 'Tis but a base beginning, to prize a stolen mistress more than your native land. Your case is one that calls for shame; just are the arms her lord takes up.

Think not, too, if you are wise, that the Laconian will be faithful --she who so quickly turned to your embrace. Just as the younger Atrides cries out at the violation of his marriage-bel, and feels 'tis painful wound from the wife who loves another, you too will cry. By no art may purity once wounded be made whole; 'tis lost, lost once and for all. Is she ardent with love for you? So, too, she loved

a. Of his career as a Prince after his recognition.
Menelaus. He, trusting fool that he was, lies now in a deserted bed. Happy Andromache, well wed to a constant mate! I was a wife to whom you should have clung after your brother's pattern; but you -- lighter than leaves what time their juice has failed, and dry they flutter in the shifting breeze; you have less weight than the tip of the spear of grain, burned light and crisp by ever-shining suns.

This, once upon a time -- for I call it back to mind -- your sister a sang to me, with locks let loose, foreseeing what should come: "What art thou doing, Oenone? Why commit seeds to sand? Thou art ploughing the shores with oxen that will accomplish naught. A Greek heifer is on the way, to ruin thee, thy home-land, and thy house! Ho, keep her far! A Greek heifer is coming! While yet ye may, sink in the deep unclean ship! Alas, how much of Phrygian blood it hath abroad."

She ceased to speak; her slaves seized on her as she madly ran. And I -- my golden locks stood stiffly up. Ah, all too true a prophetess you were to my poor self -- she has them, lo, the heifer has my pastures! Let her seem how fair soever of face, none the less she surely is a jade; smitten with a stranger, she left behind her marriage-gods. Theseus -- unless I mistake the name -- one Theseus, even before, had stolen her away from her father's land. b Is it

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a. Cassandra.
b. Theseus and Pirithous had carried away Helen in her early youth.
to be thought she was rendered back a maid, by a young man and eager? Whence have I heard this so well? you ask. I love. You may call it violence, and veil the fault in the word; yet she who has been so often stolen has surely lent herself to theft. But Oenone remains chaste, false though her husband prove—and, after your own example, she might have played you false.

Me, the swift Satyrs, a wanton rout with nimbled foot, used to come in quest of—where I would lie hidden in covert of the wood—and Faunus, with horned head girt round with sharp pine needles, where Ida swells in boundless ridges. Me, the builder of Troy, well known for keeping faith, loved, and let my hands into the secret of his gift. Whatever herb potent for aid, whatever root that is used for healing grows in all the world, is mine. Alas, wretched me, that love may not be healed by herbs! Skilled in an art, I am left helpless by the very art I know.

The aid that neither earth, fruitful in the bringing forth of herbs, nor a god himself can give, you have the power to bestow on me. You can bestow it, and I have merited—have pity on a deserving maid! I come with no Danai, and bear no bloody armour—but I am yours, and
I was your mate in childhood's years, and yours through all time to come I pray to be!


Bi


Sorely groaned Paris; with the torturing wound Painted his spirit. Leeches sought to allay His frenzy of pain. But now drew back to Troy The Trojans, and the Danaans to their ships Swiftly returned, for dark night put an end To strife, and stole from men's limbs weariness, Pouring upon their eyes pain-healing sleep.

But through the livelong night no sleep laid hold On Paris: for his help no leech availed, Though ne'er so willing, with his salves. His weird Was only by Oenone's hands to escape Death's doom, if so she willed. Now he obeyed The prophecy, and he went— exceeding loth,
But grim necessity forced him thence, to face
The wife forsaken. Evil-boding foul
Stricken o'er his head, nor darted past to left,
Still as he went. Now, as he looked at them,
His heart sank; now hope whispered, "Haply vain
Their bodings are!" - but on their wings were borne
Visions of doom that blended with his pain.
Into Oenone's presence thus he came.
Amazed her thronging handmaids looked on him
As at the Nymph's feet that pale suppliant fell
Faint with anguish of his wound, whose pangs
Stabbed him through brain and heart, yea, quivered
through
His very bones, for that fierce venom crawled
Through all his inwards with corrupting fangs;
And his life fainted in him agony-thrilled.
As one with sickness and tormenting thirst
Consumed, lies parched, with heart quick-shuddering,
With liver seething as in flame, the soul,
Scarce conscious, fluttering at his burning lips,
Longing for life, for water longing sore;
So was his breast one fire of torturing pain.
Then in exceeding feculency he spake:
"O reverenced wife, turn not from me in hate
For that I left the widow'd long ago!
Not of my will I did it: the strong Fates
Dragged me to Helen --Oh that I had died
Ere I embraced her --in thine arms had died!
Ah, by the Gods I pray, the Lords of Heaven,
By all the memories of our wedded love,
Be merciful! Banish my bitter pain:
Lay on my deadly wound those healing salves
Which only can, by Fate's decree, remove
This torment, if thou wilt. Thine heart must speak
My sentence, to be saved from death or no.
Pity me --oh, make haste to pity me!
This venom's might is swiftly bringing death!
Heal me, while life yet lingers in my limbs!
Remember not those pangs of jealously,
Nor leave me by a cruel doom to die
Low fallen at thy feet! This should offend
The Prayers, the Daughters of the Thunderer Zeus,
Whose anger followeth unrelenting pride
With vengeance, and the Erinnys executes
Their wrath. My queen, I sinned, in folly sinned;
Yet from death save me --oh, make haste to save!"

So prayed he; but her darkly-brooding heart
Was steeled, and her words mocked his agony:
"Thou comest unto me! --thou, who didst leave
Era while a wailing wife in a desolate home! --
Didst leave her for thy Tyndarid darling! Go,
Lie laughing in her arms for bliss! She is better
Than thy true wife --is, rumour saith, immortal!
Make haste to kneel to her --but not to me!
Weep not to me, nor whisper pitiful prayers!
Oh that mine heart beat with a tigress' strength,
That I might tear thy flesh and lap thy blood
For all the pain thy folly brought on me!
Vile wretch! where now is Love's Queen glory-crowned?
Hath Zeus forgotten his daughter's paramour?
Have them for thy deliverers! Get thee hence
Far from my dwelling, curse of Gods and men!
Yea, for through thee, thou miscreant, sorrow came
On deathless Gods, for sons and sons's sons slain.
Hence from my threshold! --to thine Helen go!
Agonize day and night beside her bed;
There whimper, pierced to the heart with cruel pangs,
Until she heal thee of thy grievous pain."

So from her doors she drave that groaning man --
Ah fool! not knowing her own doom, whose weird
Was straightway after him to tread the path
Of death! So Fate had spun her destiny-thread.
Then, as he stumbled down through Ida's brakes,
Where Doom on his death-path was leading him
Painfully halting, racked with heart-sick pain,
Hera beheld him, with rejoicing soul

Throned in the Olympian palace-court of Zeus.
And seated at her side were handmaids four
Whom radiant-faced Selene bore to the Sun
To be unwearying ministers in heaven,
In form and office diverse each from each;
For of these Seasons one was summer's queen,
And one for winter and his stormy star,
Of spring the third, of autumn-tide the fourth.
So in four portions parted is man's year
Ruled by these Queens in turn --but of all this
Be Zeus himself the Overseer in heaven.

And of those issues now these spake with her
Which baleful Fate in her ill-ruining heart
was shaping to the birth --the new espousals
Of Helen, fatal to Deiphobus --
The wrath of Helenus, who hoped in vain
For that fair bride, and how, when he had fled,
Wroth with the Trojans, to the mountain-height,
Achaca's sons would seize him and would halo
Unto their ships --how, by his counselling
Stronn Tydoys' son should with Odysseus oscle
The great wall, and should slay Alcathous
The temple-warder, and should bear away
Pallas the Gracious, with her free consent,
Whose image was the sure defence of Troy;—
Yea, for not even a God, how wroth soe'er,
Had power to lay the City of Priam waste
While that immortal shape stood warden there.
No man had carven that celestial form,
But Cronos' Son himself had cast it down
From heaven to Priam's gold-abounding burg.

Of these things with her handmaids did the Queen
Of Heaven hold converse, and of many such,
But Paris, while they talked gave up the ghost
On Ida: never Helen saw him more.
Loud wailed the Nymphs around him; for they still
Remembered how their nursling wont to lisp
His childish prattle, compassed with their smiles.
And with them mourned the neatherd light of foot,
Sorrowful-hearted; moaned the mountain-glooms.
Then unto travail-burdened Priam's queen
A herdman told the dread doom of her son.
Wildly her trembling heart leapt when she heard;
With failing limbs she sank to earth and wailed:
"Dead! --thou dead, 0 dear child. Grief heaped on grief
Hast thou bequeathed me, grief eternal. Best
Of all my sons, save Hector alone, wast thou!
While beats my heart, my grief shall weep for thee.
The hand of Heaven is in our sufferings:
Some Fate devised our ruin --oh that I
Had lived not to endure it, but had died
In days of wealthy peace! But now I see
Woes upon woes, and ever look to see
Worse things --my children slain, my city sacked
And burned with fire by stony-hearted foes,
Daughters, sons' wives, all Trojan women, haled
Into captivity with our little ones!"

So wailed she; but the King heard naught thereof,
But weeping ever sat by Hector's grave,
For most of all his sons he honoured him,
His mightiest, the defender of his land.
Nothing of Paris knew that pierced heart;
But long and loud lamented Helen; yet
Those wails were but for Trojan ears; her soul
With other thoughts was busy, as she cried:
"Husband, to me, to Troy, and to thyself
A bitter blow is this thy woeful death!"
In misery hast thou lost me, and I look
To see calamities more deadly yet.

Oh that the Spirit of the Storm had snatched
Me from the earth when first I fared with thee
Drawn by a baleful Fate. It might not be;
The Gods have meted ruin to thee and me.

With shuddering horror all men look on me,
All hate me! Place of refuge is there none
For me; for if to the Danaan host I fly,
With torments will they greet me. If I stay,
Troy's sons and daughters here will compass me
And rend me. Earth shall cover not my corpse,
But dogs and fowl of ravin shall devour.

Oh had Fate slain me ere I saw these woes!"

So cried she: 'But for him far less she mourned
Than for herself, remembering her own sin.
Yea, and Troy's daughters but in semblance wailed
For him: of other woes their hearts were full.
Some thought on parents, some on husbands slain,
These on their sons, on honoured kinsmen those.

One only heart was pierced with grief unfeigned,
Oenone. Not with them of Troy she wailed,
But far away within that desolate home
Moaning she lay on her lost husband's bed.
As when the copse on high mountains stand
White-veiled with frozen snow, which o'er the glens
The west-wind blast have strewn, but now the sun
And east-wind roll'd it fair, and the long heights
With water-courser stream, on down the glades:
Slide, as they flow, the heavy sheets, to swell
The rushing waters of an ice-cold spring,
So melted she in tears of anguish'd pain,
And for her own, her husband, agonized,
And cried to her heart with miserable moans:
"Woe for my wickedness! O hateful life!
I loved my hapless husband --dreamed with him
To pace to eld's bright threshold hand in hand,
And heart in heart! The gods ordained not so.
Oh had the black Fates snatched me from the earth
Ere I from Paris turned away in hate!
My living love hath left me! -- yet will I
Dare to die with him, for I loathe the light."

So cried she, weeping, weeping pitously,
Remembering him whom death had swallowed up,
Wasting, as melteth wax before the flame --
Yet secretly, being fearful lest her sire
Should mark it, or her handmaids --till the night
Rose from broad Ocean, flooding all the earth
With darkness bringing men release from toil.
Then, while her father and her maidens slept,
She slid the bolts back of the outer doors,
And rushed forth like a storm-blast. Fast she ran,
As when a heifer 'mid the mountains speeds,
Her heart with passion stung, to meet her mate,
And madly races on with flying feet,
And fears not, in her frenzy of desire,
The herdman, as her wild rush bears her on,
So she but find her mate amid the woods;
So down the long tracks flew Oenone's feet
Seeking the awful pyre, to leap thereon.
No weariness she knew: as upon wings
Her feet flew faster ever, onward spurred
By fell Fate, and the Cyprian Queen. She feared
No shaggy beast that met her in the dark --
Who erst had feared them sorely -- rugged rock
And precipice of tangled mountain-slope,
She trod them all unstumbling; torrent-beds
She leapt. The white Moon-goddess from on high
Looked on her, and remembered her own love,
Princely Endymion, and she pitied her
In that wild race, and shining overhead
In her full brightness, made the long tracks plain.
Through mountain-valleys so the sun to shore
Wailed other other Nymphs round Alexander's corpse.
Roared up about him a great wall of fire:
For from the mount'ns: far and near had come
Shepherds, and heaped the death-bale broad and high
For love's and sorrow's latest service done
To one of old their comrade and their king.
Sore weeping stool they round. She raised no wail,
The broken-hearted, when she saw him there,
But her mantle muffling up her face,
Leapt on the pyre; loud wailed that multitude.
There burned she, clasping Paris. All the Nymphs
Marvelled, beholding her beside her lord
Flung down, and heart to heart spake whispering:
"Verily evil-hearted Paris was,
Who left a leal true wife, and took for bride
A wanton, to himself and Troy a curse.
Ah fool, who recked not of broken heart
Of a most virtuous wife, who more than life
Loved him who turned from her and loved her not!"

So in their hearts the Nymphs spake: but they twain
Burned on the pyre, never to hail again
The dayspring. Wondering herdmen stood around,
As once the thronging Argives marvelling saw
Ev'ry flame leaped up to the fire her lord
Capaneus, slain by Zeus' dread thunderbolt.
But when the blast of the devouring fire
Had made twain one, Oceanus and Paris, now
One little heap of ashes, then with wine
Quenched they the embers, and they laid their bones
In a wide golden vase, and round them piled
The earth-mound; and they set two pillars there
That each from other ever turn away;
For the old jealousy in the marble lives.


Hugh G. Evelyn-White, trans. The Homeric Hymns and Homerica

I BEGIN to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful goddess—of
her and her trim-ankled daughter whom Aidoneus rapt away,
given to him by all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer.

Apart from Demeter, lady of the golden sword and
glorious fruits, she was playing with the deep-bosomed
daughters of Oceanus and gathering flowers over a soft
meadow, roses and crocuses and beautiful violets, irises also and hyacinths and narcissus, which Earth made to grow at the will of Zeus and to please the Host of Many, to be a snare for the bloom like girl — a marvellous, radiant flower. It was a thing of awe whether for deathless gods or mortal men to see: from its root grew a hundred blooms and it smelled most sweetly, so that all wide heaven above and whole earth and the sea's salt swell laughed for joy. And the girl was amazed and reached out with both hands to take the lovely toy; but the wide-pathed earth yawned there in the plain of Nysa, and the lord, Host of Many, with his immortal horses sprang out upon her— the Son of Cronos, He who has many names.¹

He caught her up reluctant on his golden car and bare her away lamenting. Then she cried out shrilly with her voice, calling upon her father, the Son of Cronos, who is most high and excellent. But no one, either of the deathless gods or of mortal men, heard her voice, nor yet the olive-trees bearing rich fruit: only tender-hearted Hecate, bright-coiffed, the daughter of Parsaeus, heard the girl from her cave, and the lord Helios, Hyperion's

¹ The Greeks feared to name Pluto directly and mentioned him by one of many descriptive titles, such as "Host of Many"...
bright son, as she cried to her father, the Son of Cronos. But he was sitting aloof, apart from the gods, in his temple where many pray, receiving sweet offerings from mortal men. So he, that Son of Cronos, of many names, who is Ruler of Many and Host of Many, was bearing her away by leave of Zeus on his immortal chariot — his own brother's child and all unwilling.

And so long as she, the goddess, yet beheld earth and starry heaven and the strong-flowing sea where fishes shoal, and the rays of sun, and still hoped to see her dear mother and the tribes of eternal gods, so long hope calmed her great heart for all her trouble.... and the heights of the mountains and the depths of the sea rang with her immortal voice: and her queenly mother heard her.

Bitter pain seized her heart, and she rent the covering upon her divine hair with her dear hands: her dark cloak she cast down from both her shoulders and sped, like a wild bird, over the firm land and yielding sea, seeking her child. But no one would tell her the truth, neither god or mortal man; and of the birds of omen none came with true news for her. Then for nine days queenly Dee wandered over the earth with flaming torches in her
hands, so grieved that she never tasted ambrosia and the
sweet draught of nectar, nor sprinkled her body with water.
But when the tenth enlightening dawn had come, Hecate,
with a torch in her hands, met her, and spoke to her and
told her news:

"Queenly Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of
good gifts, what god of heaven or what mortal man has rapt
away Persephone and pierced with sorrow your dear heart?
For I heard her voice, yet saw not with my eyes who it was.
But I tell you truly and shortly all I know."

So, then, said Hecate. And the daughter of rich-
haired Rhea answered her not, but sped swiftly with her,
holding flaming torches in her hands. So they came to
Helios, who is watchman of both gods and men, and stood in
front of his horses: and the bright goddess enquired of
him: "Helios, do you at least regard me, goddess as I am,
if ever by word or deed of mine I have cheered your heart
and spirit. Through the fruitless air I heard the thrilling
cry of my daughter whom I bare, sweet scion of my body and
lovely in form, as of one seized violently; though with my eyes
I saw nothing. But you — for with your beams you look
down from the bright upper air over all the earth and sea —
tell me truly of my dear child, if you have seen her anywhere,
what god or mortal man has violently seized her against her will and mine, and so made off."

So said she. And the Son of Hyperion answered her: "Queen Demeter, daughter of rich-haired Rhea, I will tell you the truth; for I greatly reverence and pity you in your grief for your trim-ankled daughter. None other of the deathless gods is to blame, but only cloud-gathering Zeus who gave her to Hades, her father's brother, to be called his buxom wife. And Hades seized her and took her loudly crying in his chariot down to his realm of mist and gloom. Yet, goddess, cease your loud lament and keep not vain anger unrelentingly: Aidoneus, the Ruler of Many, is no unfitting husband among the deathless gods for your child, being your own brother and born of the same stock: also, for honour, he has that third share which he received when division was made at the first, and is appointed lord of those among whom he dwells."

So he spake, and called to his horses: and at his chiding they quickly whirled the swift chariot along, like long-winged birds.

But grief yet more terrible and savage came into the heart of Demeter, and thereafter she was so angered
with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos that she avoided the gathering of the gods and high Olympus, and went to the towns and rich fields of men, disfiguring her form a long while. And no one of men or deep-bosomed women knew her when they saw her, until she came to the house of wise Celeus who then was lord of fragrant Eleusis. Vexed in her dear heart, she sat near the wayside by the Maiden Well, from which women of the place were used to draw water, in a shady place over which grew an olive shrub. And she was like an ancient woman who is cut off from childbearing and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite, like the nurses of king’s children who deal justice, or like the housekeepers in their echoing halls. There the daughters of Celeus, son of Eleusis, saw her, as they were coming for easy-drawn water, to carry it in pitchers of bronze to their dear father’s house: four were they and like goddesses in the flower of their girlhood, Callidice and Cleisidice and lovely Demo and Callithoë who was the eldest of them all. They knew her not, —for the gods are not easily discerned by mortals—, but standing near by her spoke winged words:

"Old mother, whence and who are you of folk born long ago? Why are you gone away from the city and do not draw near the houses? For there in the shady halls
are women of just such age as you, and others younger; and they would welcome you both by word and by deed."

Thus they said. And she, that queen among goddesses answered them saying: "Hail, dear children, whosoever you are of woman-kind. I will tell you my story; for it is not unseemly that I should tell you truly what you ask. Doso is my name, for my stately mother gave it me. And now I am come from Crete over the sea's wide back, -- not willingly; but pirates brought me thence by force of strength against my liking. Afterwards they put in with their swift craft to Thoricus, and there the women landed on the shore in full throng and the men likewise, and they began to make ready a meal by the stern-sabler of the ship. But my heart craved not pleasant food, and I fled secretly across the dark country and escaped my master, that they should not take me unpurchased across the men, there to win a price for me. And so I wandered and am come here; and I know not at all what land this is or what people are in it. But may all those who dwell on Olympus give you husbands and birth of children as parents desire, so you take pity on me, maidens, and show me this clearly that I may learn, dear children, to the house of what man and woman I may go,
to work for them cheerfully at such tasks as belong to a woman of my age. Well could I nurse a new born child, holding him in my arms, or keep house, or spread my masters' bed in a recess of the well-built chamber, or teach the women their work."

So said the goddess. And straightway the unwed maiden Callidice, goodliest in form of the daughters of Cceleus, answered her and said:

"Mother, what the gods send us, we mortals bear perforce, although we suffer; for they are much stronger than we. But now I will teach you clearly, telling you the names of men who have great power and honour here and are chief among the people, guarding our city's coif of towers by their wisdom and true judgements: there is wise Triptolemus and Diocles and Polyxoimus and blameless Eumolpus and Dolichus and our own brave father. All these have wives who manage in the house, and no one of them, so soon as she had seen you, would dishonour you and turn you from the house, but they will welcome you; for indeed you are godlike. But if you will, stay here; and we will go to our father's house and tell Metaneira, our deep-bosomed mother, all this matter fully, that she may bid you rather to come to our home than search after the houses of others. She has an
only son, late-born, who is being nursed in our well-built house, a child of very prayer and welcome: if you could bring him up until he reached the full measure of youth, any one of womankind who should see you would straightway envy you, such gifts would our mother give for his upbringing."

So she spoke: and the goddess bowed her head in amont. And they filled their shining vessels with water and carried them off rejoicing. Quickly they came to their father's great house and straightway told their mother according as they had heard and seen. Then she bade them go with all speed and invite the stranger to come for a measureless hire. As hinds or heifers in spring time, when sated with pasture, bound about a meadow, so they, holding up the folds of their lovely garments, darted down the hollow path, and their hair like a crocus flower streamed about their shoulders. And they found the good goddess near the wayside where they had left her before, and led her to the house of their dear father. And she walked behind, distressed in her dear heart, with her head veiled and wearing a dark cloak which waved about the slender feet of the goddess.
Soon they came to the house of heaven-nurtured Clouds, and went through the cortico to where their queenly mother sat by a pillar of the close-titled roof, holding her son, a tender scion, in her bosom. And the girls ran to her. But the goddess val'ed to the threshold: and her head reached the roof and she filled the doorway with a heavenly radiance. Then awe and reverence and aco fear took hold of Metaneira, and she rose up from her couch before Demeter, and bade her be seated. But Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of perfect gifts, would not sit upon the bright couch, but stayed silent with lovely eyes cast down until careful Lambe placed a jointed seat for her and threw over it a silvery fleece. Then she sat down and held her veil in her hands before her face. A long time she sat upon the stool without speaking because of her sorrow, and greeted no one by word or by sign, but rested, never smiling, and tasting neither food nor drink, because she pined with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter, until careful Lambe—who pleased her moods in after time also—moved the holy lady with many a quip and jest to smile and laugh and cheer her heart. Then Metaneira filled a cup with sweet wine and offered it to her; but she refused it, for she said it was not lawful for her

1. Demeter chooses the lowlier seat, supposedly as being more suitable to her assumed condition, but really because in her sorrow she refuses all comforts.
to drink red wine, but bade them mix meal and water with soft mint and give her to drink. And Metaneira mixed the draught and gave it to the goddess as she bade. So, the great queen Deo received it to observe the sacrament.¹

And of them all, well-girded Metaneira first began to speak: "Hail, lady! For I think you are not meanly but nobly born; truly dignity and grace are conspicuous upon your eyes as in the eyes of kings that deal justice. Yet we mortals bear perforce what the gods send us, though we be grieved, for a yoke is set upon our necks. But now, since you are come here, you shall have what I can bestow: and nurse me this child whom the gods gave me in my old age and beyond my hope, a son much prayed for. If you should bring him up until he reach the full measure of youth, you will straightway envy you, so great reward would I give for his upbringing."

Then rich-haired Demeter answered her: "And to you, also, lady, all hail, and may be gods give you good! Gladly will I take the boy to my breast, as you bid me, and will nurse him. Never, I ween, through any heedlessness of his nurse shall witchcraft hurt him nor yet the Undercutter:²

¹ An act of communion—the drinking of the potion here described—was one of the most important pieces of ritual in the Eleusinian mysteries, as commemorating the sorrows of the goddess.

² Undercutter and Woodcutter are probably popular names (after the style of Hesiod’s "Boneless One") for the worm thought to be the cause of teething and toothache.
for I know a charm far stronger than the Woodcutter, and I know an excellent safeguard against woeful witchcraft."

When she had spoken, she took the child in her fragrant bosom with her divine hands: and his mother was glad in her heart. So the goddess nursed in the palace Demophoon, wise Celeus' goodly son whom well-girded Metaneira bare. And the child grew like some immortal being, not fed with food nor nourished at the breast: for by day rich-crowned Demeter would anoint him with ambrosia as if he were the offspring of god and breathe sweetly upon him as she held him in her bosom. But at night she would hide him like a brand in the heart of fire, unknown to his dear parents. And it wrought great wonder in these that he grew beyond his age; for he was like the gods face to face. And she would have made him deathless and unaging, had not well-girded Metaneira in her heedlessness kept watch by night from her sweet-smelling chamber and spied. But she wailed and smote her two hips, because she feared for her son and was greatly distraught in her heart; so she lamented and uttered winged words:

"Demophoon, my son, the strange woman buries you deep in fire and works grief and bitter sorrow for me."
Thus she spoke, mourning. And the bright goddess, lovely-crowned Demeter, heard her, and was wroth with her. So with her divine hand she snatched from the fire the dear son whom Metaneira had born unwished-for in the palace, and cast him from her to the ground; for she was terribly angry in her heart. Forthwith she said to well-girded Metaneira:

"Witless are you mortals and dull to foresee your lot, whether of good or evil, that comes upon you. For now in your heedlessness you have wrought folly past healing; for — be witness the oath of gods, the relentless water of Styx — I would have made your dear son deathless and unaging all his days and would have bestowed on him ever-lasting honour, but now he can in no way escape death and the fates. Yet shall unfailing honour always rest upon him, because he lay upon my knees and slept in my arms. But, as the years move round and when he is in his prime, the sons of the Eleusinians shall ever wage war and dread strife with one another continually. Lo! I am that Demeter who has share of honour and is the greatest help and cause of joy to the undying gods and mortal men. But now, let the people build me a great temple and an altar below it and beneath the city and its sheer wall upon a rising hillock.
above Callichorcos. And I myself will teach my rites, and henceforth you may reverently perform them and so win the favour of my heart."

When she had so said, the goddess changed her stature and her looks, thrusting old age away from her: beauty spread round about her and a lovely fragrance was wafted from her sweet-smelling robes, and from the divine body of the goddess a light shone afar, while golden tresses spread down over her shoulders, so that the strong house was filled with brightness as with lightning. And so she went out from the palace.

And straightway Kataneiris's knees were loosed and she remained speechless for a long while and did not remember to take up her late-born son from the ground. But his sisters heard his pitiful wailing and sprang down from their well-spread beds: one of them took up the child in her arms and laid him in her bosom, while another revived the fire, and the third rushed with soft feet to bring their mother from her fragrant chamber. And they gathered about the struggling child and washed him, embracing him lovingly; but he was not comforted, because nurses and handmaids much less skilful were holding him now.
All night long they sought to appease the glorious goddess, quaking with fear. But, as soon as dawn began to show, they told powerful Celeus all things without fail, as the lovely-crowned goddess Demeter charged them. So Celeus called the countless people to an assembly and bade them make a goodly temple for rich-haired Demeter and an altar upon the rising hillock. And they obeyed him right speedily and harkened to his voice, doing as he commanded. As for the child, he grew like an immortal being.

Now when they had finished building and had drawn back their toil, they went every man to his house. But golden-haired Demeter sat there apart from all the blessed gods and stayed, wasting with yearning for her deep-bosomed daughter. Then she caused a most dreadful and cruel year for mankind over all-nourishing earth: the ground would not make the seed sprout, for rich-crowned Demeter kept it hid. In the fields the oxen drew many a curved plough in vain, and much white barley was cast upon the land without avail. So she would have destroyed the whole race of man with cruel famine and have robbed them who dwell on Olympus of their glorious right of gifts and sacrifices, had not Zeus perceived and marked this in his heart. First he sent golden-winged Iris to call rich-haired Demeter,
lovely in - or, so be endured. And she obeyed the
dark-clouded Son of Cronos, and sped with light foot across
the space between. She came to the stronghold of fragrant
Eleusis, and there finding dark-cloaked Demeter in her
temple, spake to her and uttered winged words:

"Demeter, father Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting,
calls you to come join the tribes of the eternal gods:
come therefore, and let not the message I bring from Zeus
pass unobeyed."

Thus said Iris imploring her. But Demeter's heart
was not moved. Then again the father sent forth all the
blessed and eternal gods besides: and they came, one
after the other, kept calling her and offering many very
beautiful gifts and whatever right she might be pleased
to choose among the deathless gods. Yet no one was able
to persuade her mind and will, so wrath was she in her
heart; but she stubbornly rejected all their words: for
she vowed that she would never set foot on fragrant Olympus
nor let fruit spring out of the ground, until she beheld
with her eyes her own fair-faced daughter.

Now when all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer heard
this, he sent the slayer of Argus whose wand is of gold to
Erebus, so that having won over Hades with soft words, he might lead forth chaste Persephone to the light from the misty gloom to join the gods, and that her mother might see her with her eyes and cease from anger. And Hermes obeyed, and leaving the house of Olympus, straightway sprang down with speed to the hidden places of the earth. And he found the lord Hades in his house seated upon a couch, and his shy mate with him, much reluctant, because she yearned for her mother. But she was afar off, brooding on her fell design because of the deeds of the blessed gods. And the strong Slayer of Argus drew near and said:

"Dark-haired Hades, ruler over the departed, father Zeus bids me bring noble Persephone forth from Erebus unto the gods, that her mother may see her with her eyes and cease from her dread anger with the immortals; for now she plans an awful deed, to destroy the weakly tribes of earth-born men by keeping seed hidden beneath the earth, and so she makes an end of the honours of the undying gods. For she keeps fearful anger and does not consort with the gods, but sits aloof in her fragrant temple, dwelling in the rocky hold of Eleusis."

So he said. And Aidoneus, ruler over the dead,
smiled grimly and obeyed the will of Zeus the king. For he straightway urged wise Persephone, saying:

"Go now, Persephone, to your dark-robbed mother, go, and feel kindly in your heart towards me: be not so exceedingly cast down; for I shall be no unfitting husband for you among the deathless gods, that am own brother to father Zeus. And while you are here, you shall rule all that lives and moves and shall have the greatest rights among the deathless gods: those who defraud you and do not appease your power with offerings, reverently performing rites and paying fit gifts, shall be punished for evermore."

When he said this, wise Persephone was filled with joy and hastily sprang up for gladness. But he on his part secretly gave her sweet pomegranate seed to eat, taking care for himself that she might not remain continually with grave, dark-robbed Demeter. Then Aидонeus the Ruler of Many openly got ready his deathless horses beneath the golden chariot. And she mounted on the chariot, and the strong Slayer of Argus took reins and whip in his dear hands and drove forth from the hall, the horses speeding readily. Swiftly they traversed their long course, and neither the sea nor river-waters nor
grassy glens nor mountain-peaks checked the career of the immortal horses, but they clove the deep air above them as they went. And Hermes brought them to the place where rich-crowned Demeter was staying and checked them before her fragrant temple.

And when Demeter saw them, she rushed forth as does a Maenad down some thick-wooded mountain, while Persephone on the other side, when she saw her mother's sweet eyes, left the chariot and horses, and leaped down to run to her, falling upon her neck, embraced her. But while Demeter was still holding her dear child in her arms, her heart suddenly mingave her for some unseen, so that she feared greatly and ceased fondling her daughter and asked of her at once: "My child, tell me, surely you have not tasted any food while you were below? Speak out and hide nothing, but let us both know. For if you have not, you shall come back from loathly Hades and live with me and your father, the dark-clouded Son of Cronos and be honoured by all the deathless gods; but if you have tasted food, you must go back again beneath the secret places of the earth, there to dwell a third part of the seasons every year: yet for the two parts you shall be with me and the other deathless gods. But when the earth shall bloom with fragrant flowers of
spring in every time, the first, the realm of darkness and gloom, then light, then light, to be a wonder for gods and mortals: and now, oh tell me how you kept you away to the realm of darkness and gloom, and by what trice did the strong 'bat of my beautiful?"

Then beautiful Persephone answered her thus:

"Mother, I will tell you without error. When luck-bringing Hermes came, swift messenger from my father the Son of Cronos and other Sons of Heaven, bidding me come back from Erebus that you might see with your eyes and so cease from your anger and fearful wrath against the gods, I sprang up at once for joy; but he secretly put in my mouth sweet food, a pomegranate seed, and forced me to taste against my will. Also I will tell you how he rapt me away by the deep plan of my father the Son of Cronos and carried me off beneath the depths of the earth, and will relate the whole matter as you ask. All we were playing in a lovely meadow, Leucippe and Phaeno and Electra and Ianthe, Melita also and Iache with Rhodea and Callirhoe and Melobosis and Tyche and Ocyrohoe, fair as a flower, Chryseis, Janeira, Acaste and Admete and Rhodope and Pluto and charming Calypso; Styx too was there and Urania and

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1. The list of names is taken with five additions—from Hesiod, THEOGONY 346ff: for their general significance see note on that passage.
lovely Galaxaura with Io, who rouses battles and
Artemis delighting in crocuses; we were playing and gathering
sweet flowers in our hands, soft crocuses mingled with
irises and hyacinths, and rose-blooms and lilies, marvellous
to see, and the narcissus which the wide earth caused to
grow yellow as a crocus. That I plucked in my joy; but
the earth parted beneath, and there the strong lord, the
Host of Many, sprang forth and in his golden chariot he
bore me away, all unwilling, beneath the earth: then I
cried with a shrill cry. All this is true, sore though
it grieves me to tell the tale."

So did they then, with hearts at one, greatly cheer
each the other's soul and spirit with many an embrace:
their hearts had relief from their griefs while each took
and gave back joyousness.

Then bright-coiffed Hecate came near to them, and
often did she embrace the daughter of holy Demeter: and
from that time the lady Hecate was minister and companion
to Persephone.

And all-seeing Zeus sent a messenger to them, rich-
haired Rhea, to bring dark-cloaked Demeter to join the
families of the gods: and he promised to give her what
rights she should choose among the deathless gods and agreed that her daughter should go down for the third part of the circling year to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts live with her mother and the other deathless gods. Thus he commanded. And the goddess did not disobey the message of Zeus; swiftly she rushed down from the peaks of Olympus and came to the plain of Rhaurus, rich, fertile corn-land once, but then in nowise fruitful, for it lay idle and utterly leafless, because the white grain was hidden by design of trim-ankled Demeter. But afterwards, as spring time waxed, it was soon to be waving with long ears of corn, and its rich furrows to be loaded with grain upon the ground, while others would already be bound in sheaves. There first she landed from the fruitless upper air: and glad was the goddess to see each other and cheered in heart. Then bright coiffed Rhea said to Demeter:

"Come, my daughter; for far-seeing Zeus the loud-thunder calls you to join the families of the gods, and has promised to give what rights you please among the deathless gods, and has agreed that for a third part of the circling year your daughter shall go down to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts shall be with you and other deathless gods: so has he declared it shall be and has
bowed his head in token. But come, my child, obey, and be not too angry unrelentingly with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos; but rather increase forthwith for men the fruit that gives them life."

So spake Rhea. And rich-crowned Demeter did not refuse but straightway made fruit to spring up from the rich lands, so that the whole wide earth was laden with leaves and flowers. Then she went, and to the kings who deal justice, Triptolemus and Diocles, the horse-driver, and to doughty Eumolpus and Celcus, leader of the people, she showed the conduct of her rites and taught them in mysteries, to Triptolemus and Thyooctimus and Diocles also, — awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep are of the gods checks the voice. Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is unminitiate and who has no part in them, never has a lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.

But when the bright goddess had taught them all, they went to Olympus to the gathering of the other gods. And there they all beheld Zeus who delights in thunder, awful and reverend god . . . Right blessed is he among men on earth whom they truly love: soon they do send
Plutus as guest to his great house, Plutus who gives wealth to mortal men.

And now, queen of the land of sweet Eleusis and son-right Paros and rocky Antron, lady giver of good gifts, bringer of seasons, queen Dem, be gracious, you and your daughter all heretous Persephone, and for my song grant me heart-cheerin: substance. And now I will remember you and another song also.

Homer's Hymn II, "To Demeter", pp. 289-325.

Virgil hero guides Dante to the eighth gulf of Inferno and from over the arch shows him numberless flames. Each flame contains a sinner except one strange flame that divides itself into two at the top. Diomede and Ulysses are enclosed in it. Dante narrates the encounter:

Upon the bridge I forward bent to look
And grasp'd a flinty mass, or else had fallen,
Though push'd not from the height. The guide, who mark'd
How I did gaze attentive, thus began:
"Within these ardours are the spirits; each
Swathed in confining fire." "Master! thy word,"
I answer'd, "hath assured me; yet I deem'd
Already of the truth, already wish'd
To ask thee who is in yon fire, that comes
So parted at the summit, as it seem'd
Ascending from that funeral pile where lay
The Theban brothers." He replied: "Within,
Ulysses there and Diomede endure
Their penal tortures, thus to vengeance now
Together hasting, as erewhile to wrath
These in the flame with ceaseless groans deplore
The ambush of the horse, that open'd wide
A portal for the goodly seed to pass,
Which sow'd imperial Rome; nor less the guilo
Lament they, whence, of her Achilles 'reft,
Deidamia yet in death complains.
And there is rued the stratagem that Troy
Of her Palladium spoil'd. —"If they have power
Of utterance from within these sparks," said I,
"O master! think my prayer a thousand-fold
In repetition urged, that thou vouchsafe
To pause till here the horned flame arrive.
See, how toward it with desires I bend."

He thus: "Thy prayer is worthy of much praise,
And I accept it therefore; but do thou
Thy tongue refrain: to question them be mine;
For I divine thy wish; and they perchance,
For they were Greeks, might shun discourse with thee."

When there the flame had come, where time and place
Seem'd fitting to my guide, he thus began:
"O ye, who dwell two spirits in one fired
If, living, I of you did merit aught,
Whate'er the measure were of that desert,
When in the world my lofty strain I pour'd,
Move ye not on, till one of you unfold
In what clime death o'ertook him self-destroy'd."

Of the old flame forthwith the greater horn
Began to roll, murmuring, as a fire
That labors with the wind, then to and fro
Wagging the top, as a tongue uttering sounds,
Threw out its voice, and spake: "When I escaped
From Circe, who beyond a circling year
Had held me near Caieta by her charms,
Ere thus Æneas yet had named the shore;
Nor fondness for my son, nor reverence
Of my old father, nor return of love,
That should have crown'd Penelope with joy,
Could overcome in me the zeal I had
To explore the world, and search the ways of life,
Man's evil and his virtue. Forth I sail'd
Into the deep illimitable main,
With but one bark, and the small faithful band
That yet cleaved to me. As Iberia far,
Far as Marocco, either shore I saw,
And the Sardinian and each isle beside
Which round that ocean lathes. Tardy with age
Were I and my companions, when we came
To the strait pass, where Hercules ordain'd
The boundaries not to be o'erstepp'd by man.
The walls of Seville to my right I left,
On the other hand already Ceuta past.
'O brothers!' I began, 'who to the west
Through perils without number now have reach'd;
To this the short remaining watch, that yet
Our senses have to wake, refuse not proof
Of the unpeopled world, following the track
Of Phoebus. Call to mind from whence ye sprang:
Ye were not form'd to live the life of brutes,
But virtue to pursue and knowledge high.'
With these few words I sharpen'd for the voyage
The mind of my associates, that I then
Could scarcely have withheld them. To the dawn
Our poop we turn'd, ...."


"When lo! the mighty Theban I behold;" To guide his steps he bore a staff of gold; Awful he trod! majestic was his look! And from his holy lips these accents broke:

"Why, mortal, wanderest thou from cheerful day, To tread the downward, melancholy way? What angry gods to these dark regions led Thee, yet alive, companion of the dead? But sheathe thy poniard, while my tongue relates Heaven's steadfast purpose, and thy future fates.'

"While yet he spoke, the prophet I obey'd, And in the scabbard plunged the glittering blade: Eager he quaff'd the gore, and then express'd Dark things to come, the counsels of his breast.

"Weary of light, Ulysses here explores A prosperous voyage to his native shores; But know --by me unerring Fates disclose New trains of dangers, and new scenes of woes. I see, I see, thy bark by Neptune toss'd, For injured Cyclops, and his eyeball lost! Yet to thy woes the gods decree an end,

1. The mighty Theban: Tiresias.
If Heaven thou please; and how to please attend!
Where on Trinacrian rocks the ocean roars,?
Grazo numerous herds along the verdant shores;
Though hunger press, yet fly the dangerous prey,
The herds are sacred to the god of day,
Who all surveys with his extensive eye,
Above, below, on earth, and in the sky!
Rob not the god; and so propitious gales
Attend thy voyage, and impel thy sails:
But, if his herds ye seize, beneath the waves
I see thy friends e'erwhelm'd in liquid graves!
The direful wreck Ulysses scarce survives!
Ulysses at his country scarce arrives!
Strangers thy guides! nor there thy labours end;
New foes arise, domestic ills attend!
There foul adulterers to thy bride resort,
And lordly gluttons riot in thy court.
But vengeance hastes amain! These eyes behold
The deathful scene, princes on princes roll'd!
That done, a people far from sea explore,
Who no'or knew salt, or heard the billows roar,
Or saw gay vessel stem the watery plain,
A painted wonder flying on the main!

2. Trinacrian i.e. three-painted, an epithet applied to
   Sicily from its form.
Bear on thy back an oar: with strange amaze
A shepherd meeting thee, the oar surveys,
And names a van: there fix it on the plain,
To calm the god that holds the watery reign;
A threefold offering to his altar bring,
A bull, a ram, a boar; and hail the ocean king.
But home return'd, to each ethereal power
Slay the due victim in the genial hour:
So peaceful shalt thou and thy blissful days,
And steel thyself from life by slow decays:
Unknown to pain, in age resign thy breath,
When late stern Neptune points the shaft with death:
To the dark grave retiring as to rest,
Thy people blessing, by thy people bless'd!
"Unerring truths, O man, my lips relate;
This is thy life to come and this is fate."

Bk. XI, pp. 606-607.

G11

Hugh G. Evelyn-White, trans. The Homeric Hymns and Homerica

So also golden-throned Eos rapt away Tithonus who
was of your race and like the deathless gods. And she
went to ask the dark-clouded Son of Cronus that he should be deathless and live eternally; and Zeus bowed his head to her prayer and fulfilled her desire. Too simple was queenly Eos: she thought not in her heart to ask youth for him and to strip him of slough of deadly age. So while he enjoyed the sweet flower of life he lived raptuously with golden-throned Eos, the early-born, by the streams of Ocean, at the end of the earth; but when the first grey hairs began to ripple from his comely and noble chin, queenly Eos kept away from his bed, though she cherished him in her house and nourished him with food and ambrosia and gave him rich clothing. But when loathsome old age pressed full upon him, and he could not move nor lift his limbs, this seemed to her in her heart the best counsel: she laid him in a room and put to the shining doors. There he babbles endlessly, and no more has strength at all, such as once he had in his supple limbs.

Excerpt from Homeric Hymn V, "To Aphrodite", pp. 421-423.


ARCHYTAS

Though in thy time, Archytas, skilled to weigh
The immensity to sands and earth and sea,
Poor gift of trivial dust by Matine bay
Confines thee now! Little avails to thee

The starry heights to have scaled, and to its end
Heaven's arch surveyed, since doomed at length to die!
So Tantalus died, yet he to gods was friend;
Tithonus too, though love-borne to the sky.
Minos, Jove's confidant, died. Hell will not yield
Twice-born Pythagoras now. Once more he's fared
To Death's dark realm, though he unfixed his shield
From temple-wall, proving Troy's war he shared, --

And that, then dying, naught to Death he passed
But flesh and skin; though too, as thou dost know,
No mean judge he of Nature. At the last
One night waits all; Death's road we all must go.
The Furies some to gloating Mars assign;
Of some the insatiate Sea his meal doth make.
Thick perish young and old; and Proserpine
Fails not from each in turn a lock to take.

Me the Southwind, which ever comes in storm
When sets Orion, whelmed in Hadria's wave.
O sailor, to this poor unburied form
Grudge not unkindly the small boon I crave, --
A pinch of sand! For thee thus kind I'll vow:

"When 'gainst Hesperian waves the Eastwind's driven,
Let the Venusian woods be tost, but thou
Unharmed remain! Let guerdon free be given

By Jove who's just and can give, Neptune too,
The god who guards Tarentum's sacred fane!"

Art thou so reckless as foul wrong to do,
Which may for doom to thy poor babes remain?

Scorn of thy rights may yet such wrong repay;
Then shall my vengeance come! Nor gift nor groan
Shall save! Brief, though thou haste, the needful stay;
Thou 'rt free to run, when thrice the dust is thrown.


CIII (b)

TO GHOSPHUS

Peace from the gods the sailor craves if caught
In open Aegean Sea, when clouds arise
And hide the moon, and guiding stars show naught
To watchers' eyes;
Peace that war desires, when rage of war burns high;
Peace, Parthian bowmen, while they bear the quiver;
Peace, that by gems or gold or purple's dye
Is purchased never.

For not king's wealth nor counsel's power can daunt
The angry passions which keep souls in thrall,
Or the fell cloud of carking cares which haunt
The fretted hall.

Well yet at little cost he lives, who shows
No silver on his board to outshine his sire's;
His easy sleep nor sordid terror knows,
Nor mean desires.

Why, when so brief our day, shoot we so wild
At marks so many? Why quit home to find
Lands warmed by other suns? Who, self-exiled,
Leaves self behind?

Soul-cankering Care climbs mighty ships, though ringed
With brass; riders she dogs across the plain;
Swifter is she than deer, or tempests winged
With clouds of rain.

Let not his mind, who's happy now, be fixed
On distant ills, but soothe life's present pains
With imperturbable smile; a good unmixed
  For none remains.

Brief was Achilles' life, but great his fame!
Tithonus wastes and wastes, but still must live.
So what Time keeps from thee, perchance that name
  To me he'll give.

Round thee a hundred flocks and heifers low,
Sicilian bred; to greet thee whinnies loud
A mare, for chariot fit; thy vestments show
  Adornment proud

Twice purple-dyed. Fate grants me small estate,
But with it, breath of the Greek Muse's air;
And granting, too, of vulgar insolence hate,
  Grants me full share.

bk. 11, ode XVI, pp. 49-50.

Civ


(Enter the prophet Tiresias, led by his young daughter, accompanied by Menoeceus).
Teiresias

Now lead me on, my daughter. You're the eye for my blind steps, as star is to a sailor. Now set my path upon the level plain and lead me lest I stumble. Your father's weak. Guard my lot-tablets with your maiden hand which on my holy seat of prophecy I drew when I had marked the oracle-birds. O young Menoeceus, Creon's son, now tell me, how far is still our journey to the town, and to your father? My knees begin to buckle. I've come so far I hardly can go on.

Creon

Take courage. You have come to harbor now, among your friends. Now hold him up, my son. Mule cars, and old men's feet, they need the help of someone else's hand.

Teiresias

Ah, we are here. Why did you want me, Creon?

Creon

I've not forgotten. But collect your strength,
and draw your breath; forget your laboring road

Teiresias

I am fatigued, since only yesterday
I came from labor for Erechtheus' sons.
There they had war against Eumolpus' spear,
and I gave Cecrops' children victory.
So, as you see, I wear a golden crown,
as first fruit of their plunder from the foe.

Creon

I'll take your crown of victory as an omen.
We're in mid-wave of danger, as you know,
Danae's sons against us, strife for Thebes.
Our king is gone, dressed in his warrior-arms,
against Mycenae's force, Eteocles.
But he enjoined me to find out from you
what we should do in hope to save our city.

Teiresias

As far as he goes, I'd have locked my mouth,
withheld the oracles, but at your asking,
I'll tell you. Creon, the land has long been sick,
since Laius made a child against heaven's will,
and begot poor Oedipus, husband to his mother.
The bloody ruin of his peering eyes
is the gods' clever warning unto Greece.
And Oedipus's sons who tried to cloak this up
with passage of time, as if to escape the gods,
erred in their folly, since they gave their father
neither his rights nor freedom to depart.
And so they stung the wretch to savage anger.
Therefore he cursed them terribly indeed,
since he was ailing and, besides, dishonored.
What did I not do, what did I not say?
All the result was hatred from those sons.
Death by their own hands is upon them, Creon;
and many corpses fallen over corpses,
struck with both Argive and Cadmean shafts,
will give the Theban land a bitter mourning.
You, my poor city, will be buried with them,
if no one is persuaded by my words.
This would be best, that none of Oedipus' house,
live in the land as citizen or lord,
since the gods hound them on to spoil the state.
But since the bad is stronger than the good
there is one other way to save the town.
But even for me it is not safe to say
that which is bitter to the man in power
who yet could save this city. Fare you well.
One among many, I will take what comes.
What else to do?

Creon

Stay here, old man.

Teiresias

Do not lay hands on me.

Creon

Now wait! Why flee?

Teiresias

Luck flees you, not myself.

Creon

Speak the salvation of the town and townsmen.

Teiresias

Now you may wish it, soon you'll wish it not.

Creon

I could not fail to wish my country's safety.
Teiresias

You really want to hear, and you are eager?

Creon

What should I be more earnest for than this?

Teiresias

Soon you will hear about my prophecies.
--But first there's something that I need to know.
Where is Menoeceus, he who brought me here?

Creon

He isn't far away, he's close to you.

Teiresias

Let him withdraw, far from my prophecies.

Creon

He is my son and will not talk at large.

Teiresias

You wish that I should speak while he is here?
Creon

Yes. He'll be glad to hear of what will save us.

Teiresias

Then shall you hear the way of prophecy, what you must do to save the Theban town. You must kill Menoeceus for his country's sake, Your child—since you yourself have asked your fate.

Creon

What are you saying? What's your word, old man?

Teiresias

Just what it is, and this you needs must do.

Creon

Oh, you have said much evil in short time.

Teiresias

Evil to you, great safety to your city.

Creon

I wasn't listening, I didn't hear.

City, farewell.
Teiresias

This is no more the man he was. He dodges.

Creon

Go, and goodbye. I do not need your seercraft.

Teiresias

Has truth now died because you are unhappy?

Creon

Oh, by your knees and by your old man's beard-

Teiresias

Why fall before me? What you ask is ruin.

Creon

Be quiet: don't reveal this to the town.

Teiresias

You tell me to do wrong; I won't keep quiet.

Creon

What will you do? You plan to kill my child?
Teiresias

Others must deal with action. I must speak.

Croon

Why is this curse on me, and on my son?

Teiresias

You are right to ask, and bring me to debate. He must, in that chamber where the earth-born dragon was born, the watcher over Dirce’s streams, be slaughtered, and so give libation blood for Cadmus’ crime, appeasing Ares’ wrath, who now takes vengeance for his dragon’s death. Do this, and Ares will be your ally.

If earth gets fruit for fruit, and human blood for her own offspring, then this land shall be friendly to you, she who sent up the crop of golden-helmeted Sown Men. One of their race, child of the dragon’s jaws, must die this death. You are the one survivor of the Sown, pure-blooded, on both sides, you and your sons. Haemon’s betrothal saves him from the slaughter. For he is not unwedded, though still virgin.
This boy, who belongs to none but to the city, if he should die, might save his fatherland, make harsh homecoming for Adrastus and the Argives, casting the dark of night upon their eyes, and make Thebes famous. There you have your choice, to save your city or to save your son.

Now you have all know. Child, take me home. A man's a fool to use the prophet's trade. For if he happens to bring bitter news he's hated by the men for whom he works; and if he pities them and tells them lies he wrongs the gods. No prophet but Apollo should sing to men, for he has nought to fear.

(Exeunt Teiresias and his daughter)

Chorus

Creon, why are you silent, holding your tongue? But I myself am stricken and amazed.

Creon

What can one say? But my response is clear. I'll never walk into such wretchedness as to give my city the slaughter of my son.
It's part of human life to love one's children.
No one would give him own son up to death.
Let no one praise me who would kill my sons!
Though I, since I am in the prime of life,
am ready to die to set the country free.
Up, son, before the whole town learns of this,
pay no attention to these wanton bodings,
fly quickly, get yourself outside this land.
For he will tell this to the chiefs and captains
making the rounds of the gates and their commanders.
If we anticipate him, you are safe.
If you come second, we're destroyed, you die.

Menoeceus

Where shall I flee, what city and what friend?

Creon

As far away from here as you can get.

Menoeceus

You'd better tell me where, and I will do it.

Creon

Go beyond Delphi-
Menoeceus

and where on beyond?

Creon

into Aetolia.

Menoeceus

And where after that?

Creon

Thesprotia's plain.

Menoeceus

Where holy Dodona stands?

Creon

Yes.

Menoeceus

What protection will that be for me?

Creon

The god will guide you.
Menoeceus

And for my supplies?

Creon

I'll give you gold.

Menoeceus

Thank you for that, my father.
Go get it then. I'll go to see your sister
Jocasta, she who nursed me at her breast,
when my mother died and I was left an orphan.
I'll go to see her, and I'll save my life.
—Please hurry, Father, you don't want to keep me.

(Exit Creon. Menoeceus addresses the Chorus.)

Women, how well I've taken away his fear,
cheating with words, to get what I desire.
He'd steal me out, robbing the state of safety,
give me to cowardice. This can be forgiven
an ancient, but not pardoned in myself,
that I should so betray my fatherland.
Know well, I'm going, and I'll save the town,
and give my life to death to save the land.

The Phoenician Women, trans. by
Elizabeth Wyckoff, pp. 492-500.
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**PAPERS**


