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THE BLACK BLOOD OF THE TENNYSONS: RHETORIC OF MELANCHOLY AND
THE IMAGINATION IN TENNYSON'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Critics of Tennyson view his melancholy poetics as a self-evident manifestation.

However, not until recently have scholars examined melancholy as a rhetorical structure in Tennyson's poetry. To address this particular gap in scholarly research, this thesis examines the use of black, similar images, and descriptive language in Tennyson's "Mariana and the Moated Grange," "Mariana in the South," and "The Lady of Shalott."

From a close reading of the text and a comparative analysis of Tennyson's poetry, common connections between the four poems become clear. These connections emerge through the contextual evidence for melancholy existing in the imagery, diction, and syntax of Tennyson's writings. Tennyson's use of colors and images creates not only an atmosphere reflective of melancholia, but also manifests the melancholy effect of the restrictive Victorian gaze on the freer imaginary elements of the Romantics.

This research provides a framework for identifying the traits of Tennyson's melancholic rhetoric found throughout his poetry. Therefore, this framework offers a starting point for further study of the rhetorical and stylistic development of melancholy in Tennyson's poetry. Additionally, by juxtaposing the obvious melancholic themes in the two Mariana poems with "The Lady of Shalott," one can interpret this poem as more than a

representation of the isolated poet. Thus “The Lady of Shalott,” when examined in tandem with The “Mariana” poems, affords the necessary link between the imagination and melancholy. Hence, a close examination of “The Lady of Shalott” illuminates the melancholy which overshadows the unbridled imagination.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“With blackest moss the flower-plots were thickly crusted one and all,” begins Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem entitled “Mariana in the Moated Grange” (line 1). As the initial image of Tennyson’s primary melancholic poem, the appearance of the black moss presents an interesting question. Why did Tennyson choose to begin this poem by describing the blackness of the moss? What made this image so essential that it was positioned first? One might dismiss the image as merely an interesting way to open a broader description of the decrepit state of Mariana’s environment. However, several key facts indicate that this more purposeful. Instead of being an isolated instance of such attention to black, Tennyson uses this color in a similar manner in other poems. “Mariana in the South,” a reworked version of the original begins: “[w]ith one black shadow”(1). Black, in both occasions, appears in the opening image of these two poems. Furthermore, other images of darkness, night, and shadows occur in both. Blackness has a significant presence in a number of other works of Tennyson. When associated with an image, black functions as one of the building blocks for a set of rhetorical techniques Tennyson utilizes to create the melancholic form of poetry. Scholars and Tennyson’s contemporaries

acknowledge that his poetry contributes to the larger genre of the melancholy form called “black melancholy.” Literary critics characterize this genre as containing passages which exhibit a preoccupation with death and despair. Therefore, melancholy is prevalent in Tennyson’s own writings. However, critics fail to address how Tennyson and other Victorian writers utilized nuanced techniques and scientific advancements to portray melancholy effectively in their poetry. The word “melancholy” itself means black bile or black blood and this concept of melancholy originates from the medieval theory of the humours which suggested that the presence of black blood caused what scholars consider the predecessor of modern depression.¹ In both the psychological and literary uses, black plays a dominant role in establishing the melancholic tone. Thus, examining images of black in Tennyson’s poetry can aid in establishing the characteristics of Tennyson’s rhetoric of melancholy.

Moreover, its appearance in poems such as “Maud” and “The Lotus Eaters” further supports the assertion that Tennyson often associates images of darkness and blackness with melancholy. “The Lotus Eaters” specifically focuses on the lethargic element of melancholy. “Maud” presents an escalation of a disturbed mental state in its portrayal of the various stages of madness.

Although these are apparent examples of melancholy poetry, Tennyson includes this image of melancholy in a poem that is not often linked to melancholy. “The Lady of Shalott” is a poem often associated with imagination and the creative impulse of the poet. Scholarly criticism on “The Lady of Shalott” centers on the isolation of the poet. The curse, these critics explain, is a result of the unsolvable conflict between the private and

¹Stanley Jackson, in *Melancholy and Depression* notes that transition from melancholy to depression in medical terminology occurred in the late nineteenth century, [Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (Ann Arbor: Yale University Press, 1986)], 4.

public life: the poet's interior world of imagination and creativity as opposed to the bustle and responsibilities of the social sphere. Yet in many ways "The Lady of Shalott" is similar to the Marianas in her isolation as well as the images leading up to her demise. The noted difference is the subtle nature of her dissatisfaction which, in contrast with the wailing of the Marianas, makes her seem unrelated to the melancholic nature. However, her slow, freezing death is a clear manifestation of a common feature of black melancholy, which often focuses on the act and contemplation of death. The curse, too, act as an uncomfortable and restricting presence. The Lady hears the whisper of the curse before it activated; thus providing a possible link to hereditary cases of melancholy. The curse is activated at a significant place in the poem. The rich description of Lancelot, as he rides past Shalott, reflects the Lady's gaze and fascination with his image. A long description of his armor, horse, and shield precedes the first and only physical description of the man. Lancelot's hair is mentioned as the final image of the man who the lady looks at directly and so gazes upon the forbidden Camelot, and triggers the prophetic curse. The impetus towards the Lady's doom included the description of his "coal black curls." If the connection between "The Lady of Shalott" and the Marianas is primarily in the similar reflections of melancholy, then it is easier still to conclude that the imagination—as both a collection of images as well as an element of the creative impulse—relates to representations of melancholy in Tennyson's poetry. The use of the word "black" in Tennyson's "Mariana," "Mariana in the South" and "The Lady of Shalott" provides the link between these poems and the melancholic poetry of Tennyson. Furthermore, similar images of darkness, shadows of people from the past, and mirror images all connect the

imagination to melancholy. These various images and literary techniques Tennyson uses to develop a rhetorical style of melancholy distinctly his own.

“I am black-blooded like all the Tennysons. I remember all the malignant things said against me, but little of the praise,” Hallam Tennyson quotes his father in his two part biography.² The “black blood” description of Tennyson persists in critical biographies where scholars expand on the cursory description of Tennyson’s preoccupation with melancholy. This statement illustrates not only his father’s hesitation to engage in debates with those that criticized his writings, but also this declaration reveals Tennyson’s insight into his own melancholy reflections. The black bloodedness, distinctly Tennysonian, was the retrospective obsession with the “malignant things said” against the poet. Critics credit Tennyson with a distinct consciousness of his role as a poet in society and the general conflict between the isolated poet and his society. Yet no distinct connection has been made between the melancholic nature of Tennyson’s poetry and the anxiety of approval.

Tennyson’s societal awareness, apparent in his poetry, prompts several critics to example his writings through a cultural lens. A second source developing the theme of Tennyson’s melancholy is that of Arthur Hallam, whose review of Tennyson’s work is a key starting point for critics who discuss Tennyson’s poetics, especially through a cultural theory of literature. David Riede expands on Hallam’s assertions about the artistry in Shelley and Keats that lacks a sense of social responsibility. Hallam’s criticism enables Riede to speculate that cultural and social implications cause Tennyson’s poetic melancholy. However, Hallam’s preoccupation in distinguishing Tennyson from the Romantic poets with their excessive use of unregulated imagination further indicates the

²Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1897), 120.

Victorian apprehension concerning the Romantics. The melancholy rhetoric, therefore, germinates from an attempt to control the imagination, rather than the fear of cultural changes.

The advancements in science in the Victorian Age corresponded with the renewed interest in the infant psychology movement. Ekbert Faas addresses the relationship between Victorian poetry and the growing prominence of psychiatry and in doing so establishes Tennyson as one of a group called the “Psychological School of Poetry.” Faas provides a perspective on the heightened interest in the development of the mind probing psychology that so interested Tennyson. He credits Tennyson as a pioneer into the new merging of “mental science” and poetry.³ Faas further traces the origins and developments of Tennyson’s incorporation of mental science and psychology into his writings.⁴ However, he neglects to develop an explanation of the rhetorical style produced by these psychological poets, but his coinage of the term is useful for later critics who focus on the cultural implications of melancholy.

Since the publication of “Mariana in the Moated Grange,” scholars have acknowledged that it is a poem distinctly steeped in melancholia. Once established as a self-evident proposition, critics have overlooked the manner in which melancholy is exhibited in the poem and others like it and instead have focused their attention on more cultural and gendered theoretical approaches to the text. As a result, scholarly writings that focus on Mariana’s melancholy are sparse. However, David Riede and Ann Colley are two scholars who have reopened the question concerning the significance of melancholy in Tennyson’s poetry.

³Ekbert Faas, *Retreat into the Mind: Victorian Poetry and the Rise of Psychiatry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 47.

⁴Faas, *Retreat into the Mind: Victorian Poetry and the Rise of Psychiatry*, 47.

David Riede addresses the elements of melancholy in Tennyson's writings and offers an overview of Victorian melancholy and examines the role melancholy plays in Tennyson's poetry. His article entitled "Tennyson's Poetics of Melancholy and the Imperial Imagination," provides a fresh and new perspective on Tennyson's melancholy. In this article, Riede argues that melancholy is a conservative political tactic to prevent dramatic change by expressing despair at the loss of the past.⁵ Riede furthers the scholarship on Victorian melancholy through *Allegories of the Mind*, which contains the primary scholarly text on the origin and development of melancholy in Victorian poetry. To address Victorian melancholy, he first transitions between the late Romantics and the Victorians by establishing how each portrays melancholy in literature. Riede distinguishes between the Romantic view of melancholy as a symptom of genius and the Victorian notion of melancholy as synonymous with depression. Riede indicates that specific attention to Tennyson's melancholy poetry is severely lacking. He suggests that it might be due to a lack of a significant work dedicated to Victorian melancholy.⁶ Riede, therefore, provides such a work on Victorian melancholy in poetry to enable further studies on specific Victorian poets and their use of melancholy.

Ann Colley, in *Tennyson and Madness*, makes the case that Tennyson's poems "reflect his lifelong struggle to avoid madness by observing and mastering its manifestations."⁷ Colley's suggestion that Tennyson's family experience was the impetus for the melancholy in his poetry is central to my thesis. However, she, like Riede, examines the allegorical aspects of Tennyson's melancholy rather than the use of

⁵David G. Riede, "Tennyson's Poetics of Melancholy and the Imperial Imagination," *Studies in English Literature 1550-1900*, 40, no. 4 (2000): 659-678.

⁶David G. Riede, *Allegories of One's Own Mind: Melancholy in Victorian Poetry* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2005), 3-16.

⁷Ann C. Colley, *Tennyson & Madness* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), cover page.

imagery. This focus, however, is a relatively recent area of scholarship and articles specifically on the topic are rare. Therefore, Colley and Riede contribute greatly to a deeper understanding for Tennyson's melancholy rhetoric.

Tennyson's poetry reflected the interest and anxiety of his times, but also drew on the influence of the Romantic poets such as Shelley and Keats. Scholars have noted in general that these poets influenced Tennyson, both in their figurative techniques and extensive use of imagery and melancholic themes. Tennyson developed his style through close examinations of classical literature and his poetic predecessors. During the Victorian Age, there was a growing interest in the study of the mind. It was at this time that psychology and clinical diagnosis of melancholy became popular. Tennyson himself developed a curiosity into the possible methods of treatment. This vested interest was not merely an arbitrary interest in the subject. Tennyson was intimately acquainted with the wide spectrum of mental disorders since many of them were present in members of his own family. Tennyson's family, including three of his brothers, had a history of mental illness. Tennyson's father was an alcoholic and temperamental, Tennyson's brother Septimus was institutionalized, and Tennyson himself took the rest cure for his melancholia. With so much personal experience involving melancholia, it is understandable that his writings would reflect on such topics.

Numerous critics acknowledge a depreciation of Tennyson's work and attempt to rectify the misapprehensions concerning his style. However, critics like Alice Meynell, must split Tennyson's poetic self in order to justify criticism of what Laurence Mazzeno characterizes as the "laureate suitable for drawing rooms" while praising the sensitive and imaginative poet. Meynell, therefore, determines that there were two Tennysons as

opposed to one. She asserts that Tennyson's rhymed meter needed to be separated from his faulty blank verse. The two Tennyson theories, proposed also by Eliot, is an attempt to discredit Tennyson's more Victorian sensibilities.⁸ However, I would argue that his Victorian sensibilities, not only impelled his greatest metrical feats, but the carefully formed meter was a reflection of the careful and restrained nature of Victorian oversight in flights of fancy and unruly imagination.

David Riede's argument pertaining to Tennyson also suggests there are two Tennysons, the darker melancholic poet and the straightforward Victorian that often characterizes his public persona. Riede refutes Eliot's assertion that Tennyson is successful simply due to his use of sound. Riede argues that Tennyson writes in what he terms the "melancholy allegorical mode," which unveils the melancholy that exists under a layer of metaphors and allegory. Since Riede provides an overview of melancholy in Victorian poetry and specifically "Mariana" and "The Lady of Shalott," Riede provides a useful background for these elements in Victorian literature.

Riede argues that the Victorians were critical of representations of melancholy in literature largely due to the overused of the topic in the previous Romantic period. In addition, one might add, Victorians disapproved of melancholy as they classified melancholy as a mental disorder akin to depression rather than a spiritual impetus or mode of genius. Hence the Victorians found the glorification of melancholy to be dangerous and heavily criticized it. Flights of fancy and the overwhelming sense of the imagination require strict regulation for the public good. Here Riede's reference to politics comes into play, but merely as a reflection of Victorian sensibilities rather than

⁸Meynell via Laurence W. Mazzeno, *Alfred Tennyson: The Critical Legacy* (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), 65.

the influence of imperialism. For a socially conscious Victorian, the danger of the inner self being unrestrained or overly imaginative required constant vigilance and power of will to resist. Tennyson reflects this Victorian will in his carefully constructive figurative language.

Critics differ in their assessments of Tennyson's use of imagery. Meynell also downgrades Tennyson by stating that he was "hardly a mastery of imagery" but she also explains that his expertise lay in his ability to develop scenes, not unlike a skilled artist.⁹ She, however, does not connect his ability to create scenes with his use of imagery. Thus her criticism typifies the nature of much of the criticism on Tennyson which praises a particular aspect of his poetry, while simultaneously undercutting him overall. Another developing argument of critics asserts Tennyson's importance as a representative of a past age of lyrical mastery, but considers his style outdated. Yet Tennyson's imagery used for rhetorical effect is masterful and conveys a larger, more nuanced presentation overlooked by more simplistic explications of his poetry.

David Riede's argument linking melancholy with imperialism notwithstanding, he hints at a new insight which is pertinent to a discussion of melancholic imagery in Tennyson's writings. Drawing on Kristeva's terms concerning the poetics of melancholy, Riede discusses the imperialism of melancholy instead of further developing the idea of how the imagination functions in connection with melancholy. Riede's focal interest is in the political aspects while ignoring what he at first recognizes as the physical aspects of melancholy transferred into symbolic imagery.

⁹Meynell via Laurence W. Mazzeno, *Alfred Tennyson: The Critical Legacy*. (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), 65.

Several scholars have attempted to establish a theoretical framework for a reader response that focused on the clinical nature and examination of the soul or mind through metaphor and narrative structure. John D. Boyd and Anne Williams address the gap in scholarship concerning the “lyric perspective” that is found in Tennyson’s “Mariana.” Boyd and Williams contend that the scholarly research that focuses solely on Tennyson’s use of language misses the rhetorical narrative that exists within the work. They discuss specifically how point-of-view shapes the reader’s understanding of Tennyson’s “Mariana.”¹⁰ Boyd and Williams establish their argument as an introduction to a new understanding of poetry, which is not simply a collection of language structures, but produces, by the simulation of a fictitious person, a narrative perspective in the poem. They further assert that there are degrees of differences between the speaker, reader, characters, and even the implied author. This foundation informs their reading of “Mariana.” In “Mariana in the Moated Grange,” Boyd and Williams argue that the “implied narrator” is a disembodied spirit which examines a second consciousness of the “Other.” This sense of perspective is psychologically based, according to Boyd and Williams and the removal of the pronoun “I” creates what they call a disembodied entity which simultaneously displays the various possible levels of consciousness.¹¹

This study of narrative perspective also contributes to the identification of the soul in Tennyson’s poems. Numerous critics of Tennyson convincingly argue that “Mariana” and “The Lady of Shalott” represent the artist. Yet they have not made the connection between the artistic creativity represented in “The Lady of Shalott” and melancholy in “Mariana.” Both characteristics can exist in “Mariana” and a comparison between the

¹⁰John D. Boyd and Anne Williams, “Tennyson’s ‘Mariana’ and ‘Lyric Perspective,’” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* (1983): 579-593.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

two poems reveals a cause and effect relationship between the imagination and melancholy. The creation of the mood of melancholy through imagery reveal its presence in poems such as “The Lady of Shalott” and therefore, attention to sensory details and the narrative perspective enables scholars of Tennyson to properly identify the relationship between melancholy and the imagination, especially when contrasted with Romantic representations.

Melancholy appears in these two poems in contrast with its representation in Romantic poetry. The melancholic isolation of despair strikes a different tone exhibited by Shelley and Keats. Scholars have argued that Tennyson was influenced primarily by the Romantics and others assert that Tennyson was anti-Romantic and thoroughly a Victorian. The isolated nature of Mariana and the Lady shows not only a possible attempt at controlling madness, but also presents the interior activity through an exterior landscape. Tennyson’s poetry provides a self-reflective doubt as to the instability within by showing the decay without. The female characters such as Mariana and the Lady of Shalott symbolize the turbulence of the mind inherently found in melancholy.

Although much fanfare has been made about Tennyson’s rhetorical style—his masterful use of language and sound to create images reflective of the mind—little connection has been established between his purposeful rhetorical style and his melancholic mood created in his most famous poems: “Mariana in the Moated Grange,” “Mariana in the South,” and “The Lady of Shalott.” Admittedly, a poet with such a significant capacity for language and technique as Tennyson necessitates a broad range of rhetorical style even in the use of melancholy. Thus to argue indiscriminately concerning Tennyson’s use of melancholy is simplistic. However, if the starting point of such a

study centered on a specific, but overlooked image and examines how that image tends to color the overall rhetorical style as it relates to melancholy, then such a study will provide greater clarity into what I will call Tennyson's melancholy rhetoric or his manipulation of language through figurative devices to create a definitive mood of melancholy.

We cannot deny that the interrelated elements of melancholy in Tennyson's poetry stem from a similar anxiety. Representations of that anxiety might address the issue at different stages and thus produce slightly different manifestations of the condition. Yet even with slight variations, the process of peeling back the various layers of meaning results in new insight into the interrelated aspects of melancholy in the poems as well as a perceivable thread of melancholic rhetoric woven throughout Tennyson's poetry.

To understand a significant aspect of Tennyson's formation of his melancholy rhetoric, we must begin with an examination of the word "black"—where it appears and what effect it has upon the landscape and images it overshadows. As a word closely related to melancholy and images of darkness and gloom, it provides an opening for the explanation of Tennyson's larger creation of mood through the prevalence of darkness in the landscape and metaphorically in the mind of the focal character. Furthermore, it provides a connection between shadows and bright images, as Tennyson's rhetorical style mixes night and day. Tennyson juxtaposes light with darkness or shadows, and thus melancholy. Both the well-tended garden and the lavish Southern scenes of Romantic sublime are covered with this ominous shadow.

The presence of this black shadow demands an explanation and requires further inquiry into what it symbolically represents. The subtleties of this image lie in its double

meaning and dual purpose. It is more than a physical representation of melancholy or a hint to the vague melancholic mood of the poem. Rather it functions as part of a larger conflict between the regulated expectations of the Victorian Age and the unbridled imagination of the Romantic Age. Tennyson reconciles the two through the unrestrained and open images of despair so romanticized by the previous era, fully managed and meticulously crafted through a masterful control of rhetoric. However the strain of these battling forces, along with the precarious pact between imagination and melancholy, produces an anxiety that Tennyson repeatedly attempts to control. This terror seeps under the surface and eludes detection. It reverts instead to a hidden and unknown fear which Tennyson continues to explore in his poetic case studies of melancholy. Although Tennyson shares the Victorian beliefs concerning the need to regulate and tend the mind, he still must dive into the imagination and the unrestrained for his inspiration—a method frowned upon. Hence, in his quest of reconciliation, Tennyson reverses the Victorian sentiments by repressing the regulated to his style and language while presenting the melancholic immobility through distinct visual images. Though exposed in order to be regulated, in the mind of the melancholic poet there lingers still the apprehension of disapproval or worse a failure of control. Thus the symbolic image of what must be repressed becomes, at the same time, an image representing the hovering and oppressive presence of the Victorian sensibilities mitigating the Romantic images with the blackest moss and the darkest night.

CHAPTER II

USE OF BLACK IN TENNYSON'S POETRY

Black and melancholy are indissolubly linked together since the word “melancholy” originates from two Latin words meaning “black bile” or “blood.” The black bile played a role in the medieval theory that different humors affected individuals and caused various illnesses and dispositions. Later, melancholy itself would become a term to describe, in various details, those who were overly contemplative, despondent, depressed, and troubled. In its literary form, melancholy saw an evolution from associations with delinquency to genius with lovesickness and spiritual melancholy portrayed as passing symptoms. In the Renaissance Era, melancholy was indicative of thoughtfulness as well as deviance. It was not until the Romantic period, however, that melancholy became associated with the artist's temperament and evidence of his genius. Poets romanticized the beautiful and terrible through the sublime and melancholy plays a significant part in creating this particular mood. The Victorian Era saw a reinterpretation of melancholy in the medicalization of the term. This not only affected the understanding of the term, but also its connotation in literary representations which Victorians viewed with more skepticism and concern than in previous eras. The historical evolution of the

word “melancholy” is essential to understanding melancholic rhetoric because the origin of words played a significant part in Victorian literature.

Tennyson's masterful use of language and careful consideration of diction requires scholars to attend to significant words. When studying Tennyson's style, scholars of Tennyson, like Lionel Stevenson, largely focus on repeated images or tropes. However, Patrick Scott designates the role “linguistic awareness” plays in understanding Tennyson and his readership. Scott suggests that Victorians considered sound and word origins as essential to their study of language. Tennyson owned several dictionaries and books on entomology and vigorously studied them to properly incorporate what he learned in his own work. Scott explains that “throughout his life he retained a sense...that behind each word lay an older, more forceful original.”¹² Furthermore, Scott connects Tennyson's statement concerning Virgil with Tennyson's own view of the importance of words to shape rhetorical language: “the charm of all the Muses/ often flowering in a lonely word” (11-12). Thus scholars ought to pay careful attention to Tennyson's word choice. Scott also cites Tennyson's contemporary, R.C. Trench, who asserts that emotions and imagination compose the thought of a single word.¹³ Therefore, for Victorians, words and their origins contain powerful connotations which point to deep and potent emotional meaning. According to Scott, Tennyson place great emphasis on the original Greek or Latin roots of “infant” and “choral” in his poems. Instead of the colloquial meaning, Tennyson harkens back to the origin of each of these words to establish their significance in the poem. Scott's argument, combined with specialized attention to word origins, broadens the scholarly understanding of Tennyson's pervasive melancholy rhetoric.

¹² Patrick Smith, “Flowering in A Lonely Word’: Tennyson and the Victorian Study of Language.” *Victorian Poetry* (1980): 371-381,376.

¹³ *Ibid.*,

However, I would suggest that Tennyson chooses to utilize “black” due to its connotation with literary melancholy and its association with the Latin roots from which melancholy is derived. Tennyson's use of the word “black” signals to the reader its connection to this particular mental disorder. In addition, Tennyson makes use of the root word as a separate entity, using the word as an independent detail while at the same time indicates that readers might associate “black” with melancholy. Tennyson translates the diagnosis of melancholia into a series of images, each associated with despondency, delusions, and heightened sensitivity to sound and sensation. Consequently, Tennyson not only makes use of word derivatives, but also enables the root words to act as a synecdoche of sorts; melancholy is thus represented by the images associated with black. Tennyson more effectively enshrouds his poetry in the atmosphere of melancholy by drawing out the images and sensations experienced by the melancholic patient. Therefore, Tennyson's melancholy rhetoric gains its strength and impact through its ability to draw the reader into the mind of a melancholic sufferer through vivid imagery and carefully chosen words.

Melancholy functions not only as a physical and psychological ailment, but as a poetic structure, a rhetorical construct developed through particular imagery and sensory details. The genre of melancholic writing divides the literary expression of melancholy into several different types: white melancholy, religious melancholy, lovesickness, and black melancholy. Tennyson's three poems: “Mariana,” “Mariana of the South,” and “The Lady of Shalott,” appear to fall under the category of lovesickness. However, the aspects of black melancholic imagery and imagination combined with the Victorian underpinnings of metric restraint and control distinguish Tennyson's rhetorical sense of

melancholy. Eleanor Sickels provides a useful definition of black melancholy and how it exists in early Romantic poetry. She states that “once let the death theme present itself in its more intimate relationship with the individual, let it clothe itself in religious terrors, or work in the imagination with its grisly details of pain and correction, and the emotional-philosophical mood... is at once shattered... This is black melancholy.”¹⁴ Sickels also relates that the form of death often appears as such to the poet. She continues to describe it by stating that when “it is cultivated objectively, or rather dramatically, and for its own sake, it feeds on realistic horrors and outworn half-believed-in superstitions—in a word, on terror-romanticism.”¹⁵ This is the black melancholy of the Romantic Era. Victorian poets such as Arnold and Browning, present a more clinical, but no less frightening aspect of this black melancholy that Tennyson exhibits in his poetry. Although Tennyson’s poems such as “Mariana and the Moated Grange” do not necessarily follow the macabre and terror expressed in Romantic poems, the unregulated mind and hopeless despondency produced an equally terrifying reaction for a Victorian audience whose main objective was a well-regulated exterior and interior.

In order to examine effectively the use of black as a touchstone to a broader analysis of Tennyson’s melancholy, one must begin with a careful analysis of a poem that is universally acknowledged as a representation of poetic melancholy. “Mariana in the Moated Grange” provides an excellent first study. Scholars have noted that “Mariana in the Moated Grange” functions as a clinical study of a mental state. Ann Colley, in particular, acknowledged this phenomenon, noting that “[o]f all the character poems...the most vivid examples of Tennyson’s interest in being clinical are The “Mariana” poems...

¹⁴ Eleanor Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 130-1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

a poem in which Tennyson, in a manner still resembling the physicians' case studies, charts a frustrated woman's loneliness and increasing despair.¹⁶ This can be deduced from several key factors. First, Tennyson's use of imagery enables the reader to ascertain the character's mental state. Secondly, the landscape within the poem plays a significant role in creating the imagery characteristic of melancholic representation in poetry and which applies particularly to Tennyson's work. Both the landscape and the exterior of the house reflect Mariana's inner mental decay. Tennyson utilizes concrete images to reveal the state of thought and create the feeling of despair and emptiness that Mariana is experiencing.

In the first verse, color and image are carefully controlled through a manipulation of language. Tennyson chooses to begin the poem with an anastrophe or inversion of the syntax. The predicate appears first, followed soon after by the subject. The verb and adverb "thickly crusted" arrive last. The effect, therefore, is that the reader's attention fixates on the black moss, noticing first the color and secondly the object. Tennyson crafts the opening of "Mariana in the South" in much of the same manner. The first line, "[w]ith one black shadow," like the previous "Mariana" poem, begins the poem with the predicate. Not only is the word "black" stressed through diction, but also through another manipulation of language: rhythm. Tennyson's iambic tetrameter in the first line necessitates the stressed syllable in "black," causing the word to be emphasized through sound as well as in the syntax of the poem. "Mariana in the South," however, the stressed syllable is on the word "one." In this instance, "black" isn't neglected; rather the syntax draws attention to the singularity of that black shadow. In the first "Mariana," the black moss develops from a magnified detail to a creeping influence, overshadowing and

¹⁶Ann C. Colley, *Tennyson & Madness* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 68.

covering one and all. The prolific moss, a plant that grows primarily in the shade, suggests the entire landscape is enshrouded by this dark shadow. The narrative style directs the reader's gaze to this particularly disturbing image.

The presence of black also develops focal points and narrative perception to magnify the melancholy mood. As stressed through rhythm and syntax, the striking opening line “[w]ith blackest moss, the flower-plots were thickly crusted one and all” (1) begins with a distinct and specific focal point then broadens to focus on the larger image. This focus reflects a disturbing preoccupation with the black moss—so small a detail, yet so large and looming in the poem. Both the color of the moss and the moss itself are foreboding. The moss is disturbing for several reasons. First, the black color of the moss creates the atmosphere of darkness and its thickness suggests both an extensive growth covering the plot and based on the nature of this particular plant a creeping unstoppable continued growth. One can imagine the moss creeping towards the house and soon covering everything in sight. In fact, the narrator states that the plots were thickly crusted with moss and to stress the significance the narrator further notes that the moss covered “one and all.” This statement indicates that not only the single flower plot in view, but every flower plot was coated with a thick crust of black moss. The thickness further enhances the troubling image of this dark, creeping moss, crustily covering all. It indicates that it has been in the place for a significant time and is alive and thriving in an otherwise desolate area. This particular stress on the word “black” as the first words in the passage presents a picture of foreboding and disturbing images. The moss too, seems, to demonstrate a terrible anxiety, transferred from an abstract idea, to a manifestation of that fear in the overgrown moss. What terrifies the reader is that both excess and

bleakness appear at once; the landscape holds no other tree, but one, whose shadow rests on the brow of Mariana, and yet the moss continues to grow and to consume all. Nothing of a floral order exists in this world: only the black moss, crawling and creeping, soon to cover everything in sight. If it is meant to represent the state of mind, what else could this be but “the instinct-presentation” which “develops in a more unchecked and luxuriant fashion if it is withdrawn by repression from conscious influence. It ramifies like a fungus, so to speak, in the dark and takes on extreme forms of expression, which when translated and revealed to the neurotic are bound not merely to seem alien to him.”¹⁷

Hence the peculiar excessive growth of a moss or fungus whose position is so unsettling that the narrator narrows in on it and repeats its growing presence in another section of the poem. This extreme image generates in the mind of the melancholic individual, such as Mariana, and manifests itself through the narrator’s intense focus on these details. The repressed fear transfers to the imagination which produces the manifestation of fear unrestrained in the intensified images. Freud goes on to explain that the repressed instinct representation is strong and its strength “of instinct is the result of an uninhibited development of it in phantasy and of the damming-id consequent on lack of real satisfaction.”¹⁸ This consequence meant unbridled images and all that is adverse to Victorian sensibilities.

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 98.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

CHAPTER III

BLACK IN LANDSCAPE AND IMAGERY

The startling image of a desolate landscape found in “Mariana in the Moated Grange” introduces the reader to the mind of Mariana. This association is typical of the Victorian Age. It was commonplace for them to construct an outward image which represents the inner mind. This connects the image to the mind and therefore presents an externalizing of the imagination. As Herbert Tucker asserts, it is “amply evident in Victorian literature, not only as a symbol, but also as a process: a deliberate turning-inward, and even a making-inward of what was external Nature.”¹⁹ It is easy to conclude that Victorian readers would have recognized the connection between nature and the mentality of the character. The images themselves offer further insight into the mentality of the main character in the poem.

For the Victorian mind, the images of disrepair and disorder would have been especially troubling. While the Romantics encouraged the wildness of the sublime, the Victorians preferred their gardens to be well-regulated. There is something public, too, about a well-regulated garden, as it is meant to be viewed by passersby. The private garden on public display symbolizes public criticism and examination of the proper

¹⁹Herbert Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 173.

regulation of the mind. Tucker discusses Victorian opinions concerning gardens and explains that in “the Victorian imagination in general, it follows that the search for strength and selfhood in Nature can no longer be an escape or enfranchisement, but must become a troubled retreat.”²⁰ His explanation indicates further that Victorians saw the tending of the garden as akin to how a person regulates his or her mind. The soul should not wander freely in the realms of the imagination, but must be strictly enclosed and monitored. Consequently, will power plays a pivotal role in the orderly cultivation of the self. Not only did the Victorians relate landscape with the creation of atmosphere and the mood and mind of the main character, but they also directly associated that tending of their gardens and surroundings with the careful moderation of their minds. Thus Colley’s argument that Tennyson strove to manage melancholy against the threat of its overrunning his consciousness corresponds with the Victorian frame of mind. “The impetus, though for this struggle did not come from Tennyson alone. It also belonged to the mood of his age, which feared the excesses of the Romantics and, therefore, anxiously explored the darkness, using analytical and clinical tools. The Victorians did not want to become victims of that darkness and believed that one way to overcome such a fate was to attempt to understand, to shed light on the misery and pain.”²¹ However, the revelation of melancholy disturbed the reader and poet alike. Therefore physical manifestations of the disease were subsumed into the landscape, thus distancing the reader from a portrayal of the melancholic sufferer. However, this subtlety did little to remove the fear and anxiety produced by the overall melancholy mood encompassing Mariana and her surrounds.

²⁰Ibid., 173.

²¹Ann Colley, *Tennyson & Madness*, 8.

Another element of the landscape appears to be infected by the black nature of melancholy. The color black returns again with “a sluice with blacken’d waters slept” which was a black stream by her wall. In this instance, the mosses creep over the wall and into the water. In this new image, not only is the house surrounded by a solid growth or fungus, but the blackened waters surrounding the wall are filled with moss as well. In this horrible scene, the variety of colors is limited to different degrees of blackness. If the moss is the initial representation of the creeping influence of melancholy, the combination of the moss and the water create that black bile, or thick blood like substance which surrounds the house. The sluice itself is interesting as it is defined as a gate which controls the flow of the water. It is described as sleeping, not roused and therefore no longer in use.

To suggest the ugliness as well as the pervasiveness of this particular spreading plant, the word thick appears again. The poem begins with the blackest moss thickly covering the flower plots, and immediate transitions to describing the night as the thickest dark, creating an image that is both heavy and physically pressing. Thickest dark trances the sky, or covers it just as the moss covers the walls and the flower plots. These distressing images of nature found in the poems causes the reader to be “troubled by the impression that what [the poet] confront[s] is not nature, but phantasmagoria” and the absence of substance, as in the numerous mentions of shadows, which are images that most potently represent nothing.²² The image of the moss, spread out onto three lines, seems a little excessive and this presents a problem associated with the dismal state of the character. As Harold Bloom explains, the “troublesomeness comes from a sense of excess from a kind of imagery of limitation that seems to withdraw meaning even as it thickly

²²Bloom, *Poetry and Repression*, 150.

encrusts meaning... and the overwhelming impression of absence seems irreversible.”²³

To prevent the images from becoming unrestrained, Tennyson subdues this excessive attention to details. He carefully controlled them through the use of metric repetition, which symbolizes the aspect of despondency so typical of the melancholic as well as the restraining force of Victorian disapproval.

²³Ibid.,150.

CHAPTER IV

COLORS AND SENSORY DETAILS IN MELANCHOLY RHETORIC

Several common symptoms of the melancholic disease such as sleeplessness, confusing imagery, and despondency appear in Tennyson's poetry. Heightened sensitivity appears as a prominent symptom of melancholic patients and Tennyson uses this exaggeration of sound and sight to his advantage. This new imagery creates a more clinically accurate portrayal of melancholy which, combined with the literary aspects of melancholy, enhances the similar themes of night and a longing for death. This gloomy obsession or longing for death also relates most especially to melancholy. The oppressive assertion provides a physical manifestation in nature to reflect the effect of this invisible yet all-encompassing force on the mind visual through nature. As the moss surrounds the house where Mariana or the soul waits, so melancholy, laced in ambiguous certainty, hovers over the poet's soul and threatens to enter his mind. Once Tennyson establishes the physical manifestation of melancholy, the gaze moves inward to the mind of Mariana and the interior of the house.

Tennyson's vivid imagery and heightened sensory details perform a function beyond mere artistry. They are part of a larger rhetorical style founded on a narrative structure similar to indirect discourse in a novel. As Boyd and Williams explain, "the

lyric poem is not *merely* a piece of language,” but includes, as other literary forms do, a narrative persona who “is a fictional entity very much akin to the ‘narrator’ of a piece of narrative prose...devised as to create the illusion of a human, often garrulous observer, who implicitly reveals a point of view in relation to the living consciousness, and its objects, which it is his function to conjure up, to the fictional world he ‘observes.’”²⁴ In this light, both “Mariana” and “The Lady of Shalott” contain an “implied poet” whose narrative relationship with the central character lacks distinction. Tennyson demarcates the separation between the speaker and Mariana, but purposefully blurs the lines of separation. Boyd and Williams denote this sense of lyrical story-telling as “psycho narration” and explain that “the defining characteristic of that fictional perspective is that the narrator, while presenting the character’s consciousness *in narrative form*, adopts a voice which ‘imitates’ or resonates with the character’s verbal idiom... a particular blending of narrator and character consciousness.”²⁵ The effectiveness of this blending produces a disturbing sensation in the mind of the Victorian reader. Tennyson directs and controls the gaze, produces atmospheric images whose effect is to draw the reader into the mind of the melancholic patient while at the same time examining the mind from a third-person narration. This speaker leads the reader into the interior of the house and thus metaphorically into the mind of the melancholic patient.

Both the colors and images of decay surrounding the desolate house act as a disturbing metaphor the state of Mariana’s mind. As with much of Tennyson’s work, not only does he revise and alter his poems, but he constantly redefines and refines his images. For Mariana, a poem entitled, “The Deserted House” provides clues and parallels

²⁴Boyd and Williams, “Tennyson’s ‘Mariana’ and ‘Lyric Perspective,’” 581.

²⁵Ibid., 582.

to what Tennyson is constructing in the landscape and the house he describes. A general reading of the poem, "The Deserted House," easily renders the interpretation of the house both as a deserted dwelling place as well as symbolically what is left behind when the soul has died. However, several images found in this poem echo the house inhabited by Mariana. Therefore, the similar images in "Mariana" and "The Deserted House" link the established symbolism found in "The Deserted House" to the melancholy images developed in "Mariana." The tenants of the deserted house have left for "A mansion incorruptible" or rather an incorruptible body in heaven, as this is an obvious biblical reference to the afterlife. Other images Tennyson presents connect Mariana and her sister poem "Mariana in the South" with "The Deserted House." One stanza describes the interior of the house with the blackness of the house. In the blackness is the absence of movement, of people, and all of which culminate in the images of the unused hinge. "All within is dark as night:/In the windows is no light; /And no murmur at the door, /So frequent on its hinge before."(II, 5-8). Tennyson changes the wording in Mariana, slightly, by not stressing the frequency of the doors opening, but rather on the lack of movement in the first description of the gable fence: "unlifted was the clinking latch" (6). The doors constantly creak and move. There is action, but also inaction, as it is no one who is opening or closing the doors, but the wind and the shadows in her memory: "All day within the dreamy house, /The doors upon their hinges creak'd.../Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,/Old footsteps trod the upper floors,/Old voices called her from without"(61-62, 66-68). In contrast to "The Empty House," the house in "Mariana" has noise and movement, but it is the movement of the wind— itself a force without substance. This combines with the dreamy nature of the house where visions and

shadows move throughout the house. The building in “The Empty House” has been vacated and the memories are merely implied rather than stated fully in the poem. The syntax suggests a focus on the positive position the house had in the past. Whereas, in “Mariana,” the despair is in the illusory hope and remembrance portrayed in the vigorous noise and action, all of which is merely a result of the decay of the house as the mice scurry about and the wind moves the doors. In the poem, it is not even clear if the doors creak or if the sound is part of the illusory reality Mariana is imposing upon her physical reality as her melancholia confuses the two.**

The repetition of her desolate state combined with the various actions during the night, midnight, and dawn provides a constant friction between the cyclical stages and the melancholic immobility of Mariana in her despair. Scholars have examined the progression of the poem or its movement. They have noted the cyclical aspect of the narration, the distortion of the concept of time, and the displacement of the narrator. However they have not made the connection between the distortion of night and day and the melancholic significance. The colors and description of the day are not sunny, bright or filled with color. Mariana instead walks the house and sees shadows. The night and the day are equally dreary. The poem also spends much of the verses writing about various stages of the night. Night comes immediately in the second stanza and remains the predominate setting for much of the action of the poem. When day is mentioned, it is prefaced as Thus, the view darkened as the depressing mental shadow hovers over all.

Sensory details pervade the poem and are essential to examine when attempting to understand how Mariana’s mental state is reflected through the detail of the images.

“Mariana’s heightened sensitivity is suggested” and the narrator “both sharpens small details and obliterates the distinction between large ones.”²⁶ For instance, the moss growth, along with the details of each sound of individual animals, from a cow to a mouse, provide a heightened attention to details and they are kept separate from any other substantive sound or movement, making the sound stand out as unnecessarily important. Kincaid notices this specifically in the attention to the tree and suggests that the over-detail is what makes the poem so disturbing and adds to the troubling nightmares Mariana experiences. He explains that the narrator describes “the patterns on the bark of the single poplar tree but confuses waking and sleeping states... The distortion here resembles that of nightmare, with its terrifying clarity of detail.”²⁷ Kincaid believes that the contrast between the tree and the moss requires closer examination due to Tennyson’s use of color and detail. “Mariana... is not caught by this last image only; she is caught between the two. On one hand there is the ‘blackest moss,’ but on the other is the poplar tree. In the midst of the dark and stagnant waters of the marsh grows a single poplar tree. One entire stanza... is devoted to the shadow of this tree.”²⁸ Kincaid’s argument suggests that the ordered and civilized connotations of the poplar tree and its color suggest a fleeting hope in a dismal world. He argues that the conflicting colors create a comic or ironic style to the poem. The clash of bright light and darkness is not an ironic use of imagery, but is rather a reflection of the melancholy nature. Cheerful colors and sunlight take on a negative aspect in both Mariana poems.

²⁶James R. Kincaid, *Tennyson's Major Poems: the Comic and Ironic Patterns* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 21.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

Structurally, the color black is represented in some form, first as the color itself in the opening line, then as darkness and finally by night. The action of the main character all seems to happen during the night. Day appears in the poem, but it is akin to night in its dreariness. Tennyson makes references to previous classical and canonical writings. With the decision to use Shakespeare's Mariana from *Measure for Measure*, Tennyson's "Mariana" attention to a short aside and how he alters the story till it little resembles the original. The love that Mariana waits for reunites with her in Shakespeare's play. However, at this point in Tennyson's poem, Mariana seems perpetually fixed in the state of despair. Tennyson also uses the phrase "grey eyed morn" which is an oft-used phrase from Ovid and Virgil, and also in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. As Mariana is itself taken from another Shakespeare play, it is suggestive that Tennyson uses another phrase from the same author. A comparison between Shakespeare and Tennyson's use of "gray-eyed morn" presents a distinction between the two and demonstrates Tennyson's rhetorical technique of utilizing familiar phrases and tropes in new ways. This also enables him to alter the meaning of the phrase and enhances its effectiveness through this juxtaposition.

We can continue to see this the comparison of Friar Lawrence's speech and Tennyson's "Mariana." Shakespeare's quote provides a significant difference. The use of "gray-eyed morn" by Friar Lawrence suggests that the morn is optimistic and its smile reduces the night to nothing: "The gray-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night,
/Checkering the eastern clouds with streaks of light,
/And fleckled darkness like a

drunkard reels/From forth day's path and Titan's fiery wheels" (I.ii.4).²⁹ The figurative language suggests the heat of the sun removes the night. Light, day, and fiery wheels, defeat the "frowning night" and present a syntactic focus on the brightness of the sun, rather than the darkness of the night. Lawrence continues to discuss the "burning eye" of the sun, which cheers the day and removes the dew or evening, one might infer the tears of night that the sun cheers, comforts, and renews. All of this produces a positive, bright sense of the dawning of the day. The opposite occurs in Tennyson's "gray-eyed morn." Tennyson's version causes the morn to act as the object in the sentence rather than the subject. It is the wind, which wakes the morn, cold and dismal night wind. The heat and burning brightness so present in Shakespeare's soliloquy, is dramatically absent from the Tennyson's. Instead, the opposite, cold and chill, are used as companions, not to darkness, but to light. "Till cold winds woke the grey-eyed morn/About the lonely moated grange" (31-32). The peculiar positioning of cold winds and sunlight once again reflect the manifestation of melancholy symptoms in the environment. Those suffering from melancholia recounted exhibiting both extreme heat and chills due to the mixture of the blood and black bile.³⁰ Therefore, in the poem the atmospheric elements which create heat also bring with it chills. Tennyson's rhetorical repositioning of the physical ramifications of melancholy onto the environment suggests that the melancholic mood expands outward, coloring and overshadowing the exterior landscape as well as the inner.

Plant imagery contained within the two passages further expands upon the slight shifts in meaning based upon the placement of the words and their context. The soliloquy

²⁹William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*. *The Norton Shakespeare*. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print), 897-972.

³⁰See Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*, 32.

of Friar Lawrence moves into his explanation of his work gathering herbs through his discussion of mother earth feeding and caring for these various plants. He asserts that “mickle is the powerful grace that lies/In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities./For naught so vile that on the earth doth live/But to the earth some special good doth give.”(I.i.15-18).³¹ In contrast, Tennyson does not directly declare the vileness of the herbs, but shows the audience through the distasteful images of the sluice, gnarled tree and desolate wasteland. Tennyson, too, after his mention of the “grey-eyed morn,” provides an opposition to the positive cliché of the beneficial qualities of plants. The poetry provides a significant difference to the description that follows the “grey-eyed morn:” “A sluice with blacken’d waters slept,/And o’er it many, round and small,/The cluster’d marish-mosses crept./Hard by a poplar shook alway,/ All silver-green with gnarled bark:/For leagues no other tree did mark/The level waste, the rounding grey”(38-44). Despite the hopeful color green, there is nothing that suggests that good or productivity is happening. The only movement is the creeping mosses, a weed growing apace. The area is described as a level waste, hardly providing beneficial crop. Thus, as a slight reference to Shakespeare’s play, Tennyson quickly diverges from the conventional use of the epithet to further enhance his intentions to remove the connotations of dawn and day and replace it with shadows and gray.

Night and day are opposites and so it is striking when such opposites are paired together as if they were the same and had the same characteristics. Black shadows produced by the sun, creating darkness from light. Light and dark, night and day are used to provide for the manifestation of the shadow. So, too, do despair and the imagination, combine to create the images of melancholic poetry. Shadows are used in the poem as the

³¹Ibid.,32.

illusory form of melancholy as well as the ghostly visions appearing while she sleeps walk. The combination between light and dark creates these shadows of the mind. Thus Tennyson provides a clue as to what produces imagination.

CHAPTER V

MELANCHOLIC IMAGES AND IMAGINATION

Scholars often discuss the dualism in the context of the Victorian understanding of melancholy. The idea of the self that is split and in dialogue with itself is characteristic of Tennyson's poetry, such as the "Two Voices," and the further poetic discourse on the manifestations of melancholy. Imaginative and controlled verses and his didactic Victorianism, convey new meaning for critics who make the claim concerning the two Tennysons. In fact, the poet's soul itself divides in half, as the poet strives to probe the depths of the self and to develop the appropriate tone for his melancholic poetry.

Thus the two Mariana poems present such a dualistic idea. "Mariana in the Moated Grange," residing in England, and "Mariana of the South," occupying the tropical region—Tennyson's trip to the Pyrenees produced this Romantic and subliminal landscape—present a Victorian and Romantic dualism as the first "Mariana" is the controlled English Victorian and the second is the romantic figure overshadowed by the ominous shifting disapproving eye. Melancholy in Tennyson's writings presents a dual image. First, the fearful and dull state of depression into which Tennyson attempts to mediate. Secondly, it presents the dark, sober nature of the pervasive and oppressively regulatory Victorian eye seeping into Romantic subliminal landscapes

tantalizes the poet's soul with the images of the imagination and the longing for that inspiration, in the form of the lover, to come, but fearing the emptiness or the condemnation.

“Mariana in the South” is a choice poem to connect the images used in “Mariana in the Moated Grange,” to those in “The Lady of Shalott.” Arthur Hallam describes this particular poem as a “pendant” to the first Mariana poem. Hallam explained that the purpose of this poem was “intended... as a kind of pendant to his former poem of ‘Mariana’... both being the expression of desolate loneliness, but with this distinctive variety in the second, that it paints the forlorn feeling as it would exist under the influence of different impressions of sense... the essential and distinguishing character of the conception requires in the Southern “Mariana” a greater lingering on the outward circumstances, and a less palpable transition of the poet into Mariana’s feelings, than was the case in the former poem.”³² Hallam’s criticism provides important facets of the poetry to consider. Though “Mariana in the South” does indeed spend more time discussing the exterior of the house, “Mariana in the Moated Grange” spends a significant quantity of time discussing specific details of the moss and forsaken flower plots which surround the house.

The extensive editing that Tennyson went through on his works may be attributed to Tennyson’s continual obsession with perfecting style and technique and due to his concern about the response to his poems. Either way, a concern for perfection seemed to reign in Tennyson’s mind. The alterations are useful for understanding the melancholic rhetoric in Tennyson’s poetry as Tennyson often changes words and phrases to provide

³²Arthur Hallam via Tennyson, Alfred. *Poems and Plays*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 82.

both a smoother reading of the passage and, in the case of “The Lady of Shalott,” creates a connection to blood and blackness.³³ Christopher Ricks, a significant scholar of Tennyson’s work, argues that Tennyson’s insecurity concerning the reception of his poetry caused him to write several pendants that acted as complements to each other and also attempts to improve his poems. His motivation for doing so was due in part with his apprehension over the perceived quality of his poems and the reaction of the audience. According to Ricks, “Tennyson early evolved these ‘pendants,’ as he called them: he was enabled at once to do justice and to escape having to judge. Many such pendants may seem only complements, but on reflection the need for such complements can often be both magnanimous and evasive.”³⁴ Ricks lists numerous pairings to demonstrate the proliferation of such combinations in Tennyson’s writings.

We can then characterize “Mariana in the South,” as a pendant to Tennyson’s earlier poem on the subject. In a study of “Mariana in the South,” attention must be paid to its function as part of a pair as well as its own merits. Since these poems are considered pendants, a comparison of the two provides evidence that the melancholy rhetoric does not exist simply in one poem, but crosses over into other poems. “Mariana in the South” functions as a bridge to this intertextuality of Tennyson’s melancholy rhetoric. The similarities and differences inherent in the two Mariana poems provide striking insight into Tennyson’s use of scenic imagery to reflect the turbulent mind, imagined images, shadows, and the color “black.”

³³ The 1842 version of “The Lady of Shalott” adds “Till her blood was frozen slowly/And her eyes were darken’d wholly”(147-8) This addition suggest not only aspects of dying, but presents a manifestation of physical characteristics of melancholy patients as well as the theory that thickened or slower moving blood was symptomatic of melancholy. See Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*. (Yale University Press, 1986),77.

³⁴ Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Poems and Plays*. Ed. Christopher Ricks, 55.

Imagination plays a significant role in Mariana as the poet reflects the interior mind through exterior images and these images are used symbolically. The imagination plays a part in the thoughts of Mariana as forms from her past resurface and become actualized in shadows and echoes. In “Mariana in the South,” however, these echoes become one shadow that appears twice, the latter seems to be a foreboding of death. As with “The Lady of Shalott,” Tennyson’s “Mariana in the South” alterations are suggestive. The striking change between the two versions manifested itself an emphasis on the silence rather than the noise in “Mariana in the South.” Instead, Tennyson stresses the heat of the sun and how it overwhelms Mariana. Killham also notes the significance of the single shadow and credits “Mariana in the South” with retaining a more organized and purposeful use of detail than the previous poem. “A comparable concentration on limited detail marks “Mariana in the South.” In contrast with the jumble of poignant, but unselected, detail of the earlier ‘Mariana’ we have here the single magnificent vision of the house ‘with one black shadow at its feet’... and silent in its dusty vines.”³⁵ The surrounding landscape, being essential to the development of the state of mind of the Mariana, is significant. The “Mariana” poems start with a narrow description of one element of the landscape. In “Mariana and the Moated Grange,” Priestley analyzes the original version of “Mariana in the South” and compares the details of the landscape in the original to the revised version. He compares the landscape to a portrait, where the narrator presents the broader landscape before To Priestley the alteration is striking: “The eye now is made to move from foreground to background, and what dominates the landscape is the house with its shadow, the only black shadow in a great level glare. The background which dominated the earlier description is now reduced to setting... The

³⁵ John Killham, ed. *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*. (London: Routledge & Paul, 1960), 121.

language is still strongly visual, but no longer simply so. It now carries a double function as a symbol: the landscape is still a brilliantly drawn landscape, but it is also a symbolic one.”³⁶ The symbolism and sensory details combine together with the oppressive heat.

The melancholy aspects in “Mariana in the South” heighten the focal attention to the sensory details. The intensification of colors and sound works to create an atmosphere of gloom. It is more apparent that melancholy factors in the poem “Mariana in the South” as the word itself appears in the second stanza. Black plays an essential role in the poem as well. It begins “[w]ith one black shadow at its feet” in describing the atmosphere of the house as well as setting the stage for the dramatic movement of the poem. This stanza provides an interesting contrast between the ominous shadow of the house and the bright shine of the sun and the oppressive heat. The house is closed to the heat and the light. In the earlier poem, “Mariana and the Moated Grange” the shadow played a more sinister role at the height of her depression. In this, the shadow acts not only as a looming actor and introductory element, but as a reprieve from the too much heat and light. Hence, melancholy and darkness play both a troubling and a beneficial role.

This one clear shadow returns at the end of the poem in a slightly different symbolic form. It appears in an awkward syntax which must be unraveled. The sun flames downward and the heat decreases. This might be conceived as being a reprieve from an oppressive heat. However, the one black shadow drops down upon her. In a similar fashion, while “Mariana in the Moated Grange” is in her bed, the same shadow casts itself upon her. The shadow is not indicated as black in the first “Mariana.” In the Southern “Mariana,” the shadow hints at both the coming night, which the sun brings. Hence, the despairing cry “[t]he day to night, /The day to night, the night to morn, /And

³⁶ Ibid., 54.

day and night I am left -alone” (81-83) Here, the day brings night and the night brings morn. As scholars of Tennyson’s language have noted, Tennyson juxtaposes the word “morn” with “moaning” as they have similar vowel sounds. The morn brings nothing but more mourning for Mariana. Night, too, plays a role in this poem as it appears eleven times and in the refrains. The morning and night, despite the heat, are equally oppressive for Mariana.

“Mariana in the South” is a reiteration of Tennyson’s “Mariana in the Moated Grange.” This particular poem provides a perfect bridge between “Mariana” and “The Lady of Shalott” since the images used in both Mariana poems appear in “The Lady of Shalott.” Each poem combines images and their connotations to develop the visual landscape of the poem. “The images... have only a contagious relationship, and their effectiveness depends upon a use of language that approximates Berkeley’s theory of vision ... because these nouns are already... ‘collections of ideas,’ and represent judgments the mind makes about the sensations of the eye.”³⁷ Hence the movement of the eye from the narrator’s description of broad and wide panoramic views and specific details is a rhetorical technique found in both poems. The Southern “Mariana” provides a similar structure of imagery with “Mariana in the Moated Grange.” The two Marianas might even be considered to follow a similar pattern of images. Both begin with a description of the exterior of the house as being described as “black” or “blackest.” Both include a refrain that presents the longing to be dead. Mariana’s melancholy expresses itself in stages that appear stagnant, but slowly reach a climactic moment, which occurs as the sun begins to set. It is then that the shadow of the poplar, mentioned in both poems returns.

³⁷Donald S. Hair, *Tennyson’s Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 54.

All three characters have similar scenes, but “Mariana in the South” is “close-latticed” where the window is dark and just like in Mariana. “The Lady of Shalott” does not even look out from the mirror. Thus these characters exist in a room or world of darkness. In regards to the other images shared by all three emphasizes on walls surrounding them provides the similarities. The mirrors used in various forms in the two poems are symbolic of the morbid, self-reflective obsession that is found in these poems. The shadowy images that appear in both Mariana poems provide both images that are part of her imagination as well as the past, whereas, “The Lady of Shalott” is looking at images from a mirror. However, the desire to make those images real exists in all three poems, and the stark reality of their unreality and the representation of the images as negatives, as shadows which are not light, but produced by the light refracting objects and reflecting back their distortions. Scholars have noted the similarities and connections between these poems thematically. Robert Pattinson explains how “Mariana in the South” derives some of its imagery from “The Lady of Shalott.” He states that “*Mariana in the South* continues the theme of *The Lady of Shalott*, by depicting the psyche as it confronts itself and the external world and conveys the prevailing tone of melancholy.”³⁸ Pattison also suggest that the connection between “The Lady of Shalott” and “Mariana in the South” is the strongest: *Mariana in the South* builds upon this theme by picking up much of the imagery of *The Lady of Shalott*, such as the Lady’s mirror... The world of flux so prominent in *The Lady of Shalott* also surrounds *Mariana in the South*.³⁹ Pattison continues “Like the Lady, Mariana dwells in a world of images; she is haunted by the

³⁸Robert Pattison, *Tennyson and Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 55.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 55.

image of her lover as the Lady was by Lancelot's reflection in the mirror."⁴⁰ He then contrasts the original Mariana with the other two poems by suggesting that "The Lady of Shalott" and "Mariana in the South" are characters whose realities are in flux rather than bitterly set for doom. Pattison believes that "The Lady of Shalott" and the Southern "Mariana" "inhabits a twilight world where illusion and reality blend."⁴¹ With the narrative of images, faces, and voices that call to Mariana in the original version as well as the reference to the "dreamy house" it is possible to refute Pattison's dismissal of the original Mariana's connection to the twilight world between sleep and waking. Mariana is overtly entwined in a dreaming and waking state which increasingly confuses her until the sound of the clock "did all confound/ her sense" (176-77).

Shaw differs with Pattison and others on the effectiveness of "Mariana in the South" as compared to "Mariana in the Moated Grange." He explains that the initial Mariana poem, or as he calls Tennyson's English "Mariana," effectively conveys mood because it "is also a poem of sustained implication" wherein the absence of the physical forms of the images portray themselves as negative images. In "The Empty House" these images are referred to as the people and voices that were not there. In the first "Mariana," the absence of individuals and voices are not explicitly stated. However, in "Mariana in the South," Tennyson interweaves the self-conscious acknowledgement that while dreaming "she knew it was a dream" yet at the same time she "felt he was and was not there" (49-50). Instead of describing images that Mariana sees in her mind's eye or in reality, Shaw argues that the images mentioned are negative images and their absence is stressed. He describes how nonexistent images become themselves imaged. In this way,

⁴⁰Ibid, 57.

⁴¹Ibid, 57.

the negative images exist outside of dreams and add to the confusion of Mariana's waking dream. Tennyson's language and syntax also create this negation for the reader. This creates the powerful implication of a dark void wherein the images exist through their nonexistence. This confusing breakdown indicates that "[t]he most potent of the imagined omissions are the absent visitors who lift the latch, people never mentioned but implied."⁴² It is the absence of the people and the desire to have them repopulate the house which conjures these images. Thus the despondent state produces images, as melancholy becomes the originator of the images that people the imagination of the poet.

In order to understand the connection between imagination and melancholy, a comparison of the way images are created through Tennyson's diction is necessary. Tennyson develops the imagery of his two poems through more than visual diction. Sound and sensation are complementarily placed to create a holistic sensory experience, submerging the reader fully into the images surrounding the poems. James Kincaid provides an excellent link between the sensory details in Mariana and the images they produce. As other scholars have mentioned, both "Mariana" and "Mariana in the South" engage the five senses to create a haunting sensory experience. Kincaid further expands on this element of sensory detail by explaining how Tennyson uses language to enhance minute details, such as the squeaking of a mouse, or the buzzing of a fly. However, at the same time, Tennyson refuses to clarify or stress the boundaries between waking and sleeping and the demarcations of time. Hence scholars discuss the circular nature of the poem and question whether the plot of the poem has any progressive or regressive movement. Kincaid suggests that Tennyson plays on this desolate repetition to create an ironic function. The repeated, though varied refrains also reinforce this blurring of a

⁴²Shaw, W. David. *Tennyson's Style* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 78.

larger concept, whose distinction would provide clarity and relief to an otherwise desolate atmosphere.⁴³

The English “Mariana” wishes plainly that she was dead. The Southern “Mariana” asks when she will no longer feel alone. However, with the juxtaposition of the dark shadow and her statement of the “night that knows not morn” (94) as well as the whisper that she will be alone no more, all provide a subtle hint that death is coming. This provides a smoother transition from the English “Mariana” to “The Lady of Shalott” because it moves from stagnantly longing for death, to the certainty of death. The eventuality of death transforms into a dark shadow that hovers over the landscape. In “The Lady of Shalott,” the images of darkness disappear almost completely, leaving only a whisper of a curse that is certain to come to her. Whispers and voices signify the predestined terror in both the Southern “Mariana” and “The Lady of Shalott.” In “Mariana in the South,” the whisper is an image which seemed to say that she would be alone no more. The whisper in “The Lady of Shalott” specifies the fatalistic outcome of looking at Camelot. Although altered dramatically, the rhetorical imagery still is there. “The Lady of Shalott” rejects the shadows that she has seen as they are not enough and turns towards Lancelot and his “coal black curls.”

Just as with the other Mariana poems, “The Lady of Shalott” ends her story at night, lying down as the Marianas do in a trance or sleep. Sleep itself creates a different level of complication in how it is used in these three poems. In the first Mariana, she wakes and sleeps, seeing images of people long past. This Mariana sees various faces of people who are gone within the dreamy house. The idea of the house being dreamy seems

⁴³James R. Kincaid, *Tennyson's Major Poems: the Comic and Ironic Patterns* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 21.

to indicate a state of semi consciousness and darkness, where Mariana cannot tell if she is awake or asleep, if the images are real or part of her dreaming. The Southern “Mariana” believes that she sees an image pass her door several times. Another image appears to her when awake. Images of people appear in a more literal sense in “The Lady of Shalott” as people passing her tower are reflected in the mirror. Although more subtle, the element of sleep is finalized in the Lady’s demise.

“The Palace of Art” develops themes which manifest themselves again in “The Lady of Shalott” and to a lesser extent, The “Mariana” poems. I would further argue that this poem provides a framework for understanding Tennyson’s melancholy rhetoric as it provides a clear metaphorical purpose for the isolated female in the tower and includes several tropes seen in the other poems that provide further evidence to the fluidity between the different poems. Tennyson prefaces his poem, “The Palace of Art” with an explanation as to the purpose of the poem. Tennyson explains that he has sent the reader “a sort of allegory... of a soul/A sinful soul possess’d of many gifts, / A spacious garden full of flowering weeds” (1-4). Tennyson makes it clear that the poem is not literal, but figurative and the female character is the soul. This preface includes several factors that assist in further understanding Tennyson’s rhetoric. The soul’s gifts are a garden full of weeds, providing the subtle hint that the gifts are not regulated or controlled. Tennyson then arrives at his focal point, the sinful element of this soul is that it “did love Beauty only, (Beauty seen/In all varieties of mould and mind)” (6-7). Tennyson responds directly to the Romantic notion of Keats’s “Ode to a Grecian Urn” which declares “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all/Ye known on earth, and all ye need to know” (49-50). He argues that admiring something only for its beauty, without consideration for knowledge

or goodness, results in suffering. To better understand the contrast between Romantic imagination and Victorian imagination, we look no further than “The Palace of Art” and “Kubla Khan.”

Critics also cite “The Palace of Art” as a significant link to “The Lady of Shalott” and its symbolism of the artist. However, scholars have not given sufficient attention to the images of darkness and elements of melancholy that overshadow the artist’s work in “The Palace of Art.” If “The Palace of Art” presents the same soul-as-poet symbolism as found in “The Lady of Shalott,” then it is equally likely that the images of melancholy appear in both. This interpretation I feel to be correct, and it further discredits the popular feminist reading of “The Lady of Shalott” as a sexual encounter rather than an allegorical poem concerning the artist’s soul. Critics consider “The Palace of Art” as both the primary poem which utilizes the allegorical “soul as woman” motif that Tennyson continually repeats, but also can be linked as the model for the “high-born maiden” theme found in The “Mariana” poems and “The Lady of Shalott.” Thus Tennyson engrafts his own interpretation of the female soul, by combining this trope with that of Shelley’s “high-born maiden” enclosed in an isolated tower.⁴⁴ As Riede states, the rhetorical style defines the melancholic aspects found in each poem. “The imposition of the speaker’s consciousness on nature, the rampant excess of figurative meaning in the pathetic fallacy, is above all symptomatic of the speaker’s morbid subjectivity the kind of solipsistic alienation that afflicted the entrapped Mariana, ‘The Lady of Shalott,’ the soul in ‘The

⁴⁴See Stevenson’s explanation concerning the “high-born maiden.” He argues that “[e]choes of these poems are to be recognized in the many passages in which Tennyson recurred to the image of an isolated and unhappy maiden with a persistence amounting almost to obsession” [Stevenson, Lionel. “The ‘High-Born Maiden’ Symbol in Tennyson.” *PMLA* 63.1 (Mar., 1948):234-243. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Sept. 2013,235]

Palace of Art”⁴⁵ “The Palace of Art” transitions from beautiful colors to the appearance of darker images. The contrast between the two is merely a matter of increased subtlety in the symbolism. Tennyson removes the guilt and obvious motive as well as the clear denomination of the Lady as the poet’s soul. Yet the enclosed tower and other images create a striking similarity, especially since both poems were grouped and published together. Although Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” influenced Tennyson’s “The Palace of Art,” his depiction of the embowered soul shrouded in darkness matches both “The Lady of Shalott” and the “Mariana” poems, and the poet builds for her a castle high above where she overlooks the landscape and is alone. As what originally seems glamorous and wonderful turns sour when she sins and feels as if she is a god. Loneliness takes over and the scene shifts. At this moment, images central to the melancholy rhetoric, which are so clearly articulated in “Mariana,” appear. This poem produces the most explicit tropes of black melancholy, where the punishment for the soul’s action or threat to surpass God causes the soul to undergo severe punishment. Tennyson’s “Mariana in the South” ceases her prayers, and thus represents the Godless romantic vision. Yet the Victorian intervention serves as a voice which reassures her that she will no longer be alone. At the close of the poem, she looks to heaven, which indicates the coming of death, where the soul goes to God. The infinite advancements of the night, by the last line, no longer oppress her, but radiate with a fatal hope.

God appears in Tennyson’s Mariana poems and in “The Lady of Shalott.” He is another manifestation of the non-image or the absence of the image. Themes of God and sin are part of the black melancholy and religious melancholy. God named yet absent in the poems and the desire of the Lady and Mariana to achieve love and peace increase in

⁴⁵David G. Riede, *Allegories of One’s Own Mind: Melancholy in Victorian Poetry*, 85].

intensity by the desperation plea by Mariana and the end of the poem and the benediction of Lancelot as a way of closing and subtly relating to the aspects of melancholy that stem from works such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Since Milton has been mentioned as an influence for Tennyson's poetry, his influence upon Tennyson's black melancholy is a possibility. Milton's chaos and old night and the biblical allusions to the absence of God being part of the "outer darkness" provide the religious link between black melancholy and Tennyson's use of black, darkness and a longing for death expressed through a plead with a God that seems to be asleep. This absence of the divine results in the blackness of melancholy. However, once Mariana's cry becomes in the most despair, she cries to God and the cyclical repetition ends. Symbolically, the altered change and the mention of God provide a relief from the repetitive rumination. Yet this relief provides neither peace nor a reprieve from the mood of despair. The second Mariana also seems to repeat a prayer more explicitly with her petition to the Virgin Mother. However, towards the end, she ceases from referencing Mary and her religious assertions seem to diminish as her dissolution increases. All three poems, therefore, have various elements that link them to an interrelationship between the texts proceeding from Tennyson's development of his melancholy rhetoric. To understand more fully why these texts are intertwined in their symbolism, we will examine the text that provides the clearest explanation of the symbolism of the female embodied soul and the clash between the Romantic imagination and the Victorian melancholy.

The most significant instance of contrast between Tennyson's poetry and a work of a Romantic poet would be Tennyson's "Palace of Art" and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." In a close examination comparing and contrasting the two texts, one can see that

Tennyson both adapts Coleridge's style and provides a striking contrast. Tennyson's regulates his lines through anaphora in "Palace of Art" while Coleridge's uses loose iambic tetrameter. Coleridge's images of the sublime are terrifying and exciting and end with pleasure and paradise. Yet notions of self-gratification do not exist in Tennyson's "Palace of Art." A quote commonly associated with a reading of this work, states "Tennyson, we cannot live in art."⁴⁶ Tennyson's reading of "Kubla Khan" provides the doom of the artist first by describing what the artist does, namely To mimic heaven. Even more fearfully, the poet takes the place of God through isolation: "O God-like isolation which art mine" (197). God is not mentioned in "Kubla Khan," but in Tennyson condemnation hovers over the sinful Palace.

Tennyson then provides a reason for the development of melancholy in the poet. It is not from a loss of self, but a need of the divine to regulate this sinful excessive use of the imagination to the point of becoming God, the ultimate sense of depravity. Tennyson explains the reason for God's intervention by stating that "Lest she should fail and perish utterly, / God, before whom ever lie bare/The abysmal deeps of Personality" The syntax separate God from the action by several asides: "God, before whom ever lie bare/The abysmal deeps of Personality" indicates that God can probe the mind. God's actions are similar to what Tennyson and other psychological poets attempt to do. The critics of his work and the larger Victorian society also joined in this particular activity. Therefore, God is not only an omnipotent force, but is anthropomorphic. His restraining and plaguing of the soul with melancholy reflect the effect the Victorian regulation had on the melancholic anxieties of Tennyson. Tennyson fully describes the melancholic nature that arrives, each action harking back to God as the hand that creates confusion, plagues the

⁴⁶Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 86.

soul and divides it: “Plagued her with sore despair/When she would think, where’er she turn’d her sight/The airy hand confusion wrought, /Wrote, “Mene, mene,” and divided quite/ The kingdom of her thought. /Deep dread and loathing of her solitude/ Fell on her, from which mood was born” (221-230). Although this passage seems on the surface to be didactic, God acts as a domineering symbol for the Victorian sensibility which enters the mind and regulates it, spoiling the excessive images produced by the Romantic imagination.

The division mentioned in “The Palace of Art” describes the psychological theories concerning the mind and melancholy. As Patricia Ball asserts, the distinction between the Romantics and the Victorian self-contemplation, is that with it came the residue of melancholy for Victorian poets like Tennyson. Ball explains that “there is contrast as well as similarity with [Tennyson’s] Romantic predecessors... with a single mind, rival ideas and emotions may simultaneously exist and if this is so, the chameleon power may take on a quality of menace, dividing, and giving awareness of division.”⁴⁷ Unlike the Romantics, who felt that imagination was essential to achieving the pleasure of the sublime, the practical minded Victorians noted another aspect of the imagination: delusions. Imagination becomes less of the mood of inspiration and more of a symptom of an unbalanced mind. Records of melancholic patients include references to their delusions and “vain imaginations.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, as Ball states, “Byron acknowledged the tension... but for him it opened the way to self-recognition, it did not act as a threat to a unified experience of self nor suggest grounds for a suicidal, self-cancelling alarm.

⁴⁷Patricia M. Ball, *The Central Self: A Study in Romantic and Victorian Imagination*. A&C Black, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 168-9.

⁴⁸ See [Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*. (Yale University Press, 1986)],107.

Tennyson's chameleon creativity on the other hand brings this ... fear with it."⁴⁹

Tennyson masterfully exhibits this fear and confusion through the disjointed syntax in "The Palace of Art." Thus, to the soul, the "[d]eep dread and loathing of her solitude/ Fell on her, from which mood was born" (229-230). Hence Tennyson provides his readers with the emerging darkness which develops into the overshadowing theme. Tennyson maintains it throughout as the mood of melancholy.

Once this humor emerges, it evolves into the manifestation of shadowy images. These images of horror are expressions of black melancholy and are quite different from the horrible witch wailing in "Kubla Kahn." "Kubla Khan" also includes weeping, but it is romanized and not an image of gothic horror that Tennyson presents. Instead of a witch, it is the images in "The Palace of Art" that emerge and cry. The images themselves are not fully formed, initially. As melancholy develops, Tennyson progresses slowly, starting with indeterminate shapes. The uncertainty reiterates in the second line, further indicating the lack of cognitive awareness of the onset of melancholy: "But in dark corners of her palace stood/uncertain shapes; and unawares/On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood, /And horrible nightmares, /And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame" (237-241). The images weep tears of blood; One explanation is that the blood represents melancholy. The phantasms who weep blood combine images of the imagination with blood. Then the melancholy ailments increase and phantasms become nightmares. Heat, blood, and tears reflect the physical manifestations of melancholy and once again we see these elements being used to create and color the imagery. This enables us to connect Tennyson's purposeful rhetoric to a literary clinical study of a

⁴⁹Patricia Ball, *The Central Self*, 169.

poet's melancholic mind. A return to "Mariana" also provides a more sure connection between this poem and Tennyson's melancholy rhetoric.

Elements from "Mariana" appear in this poem in a more overt and terrifying way. We see both the despair of a lack of sound as well as sound that seemed, but is not to be substantial. "Back on herself her serpent pride had curl'd/"No voice," she shriek'd in that lone hall, /"No voice breaks thro' the stillness of this world:/One deep, deep silence all" (257-260). Finally, the image of blackness appears with its first association with the mouldering earth's sod. The repetition of time occurs yet, at the same time, no progression of time appears. The soul is surrounded utterly by blackness: "She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,/ Inwraught tenfold in slothful shame,/Lay there exiled from eternal God... Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round/ With blackness as a solid wall"(261-264,273-274). Her final statement echoes more subtly in the "Mariana" poems. Tennyson uses the word "mouldering" in "Mariana in the Moated Grange" and in "The Palace of Art" it is the "mouldering sod" which enwraps Mariana. The earthy elements of sod and moss germinate an image of blackness. Using the same verb for the action of the soul and soil, Tennyson is able to connect the two. This is yet another way to convey the original Mariana's situation as she too is surrounded by creeping moss. As Stevenson's "high-born maiden" trope establishes, the soul is embowered. Yet in this instance, Tennyson explicitly states that it is a "crumbling tomb" which relates directly to the rusting, decrepit house in "Mariana." Furthermore, she is 'girt round' not by an actual wall, but "with blackness" which is "as a solid wall." What could this be, but melancholy that completely enwrapped the soul in darkness.

Though influenced by a careful reaction to “Kubla Khan” and echoing elements of artful imagination, Tennyson moves away from the sense of pleasure and provides the most overt reason for the unspecified doom in “The Lady of Shalott” and the two Mariana poems, namely, the godlike overuse of imagination, which brings the poet a mere temporary pleasure, but requires Godly restriction and regulation. This results in the emerging images of melancholy and the development of the mood itself upon the poem. Thus, the poet is compelled to turn away from the excess and return once the guilt is purged, or when the excess is contained and controlled. Thus the black melancholy rhetoric outlines and symbolically demonstrates the Victorian disapproval of excessive imagination with the divine condemnation of the sin. Thus God’s appearance in “Mariana” as one, who is called upon, but not responsive, is explained. The melancholy must be analyzed, contained, and purged before salvation can be reached.

CHAPTER VI

VICTORIAN REGULATION OF ROMANTIC IMAGINATION

Victorian regulation appears in the optical perspective found in Tennyson's poetry. The "implied narrator," to use the term that Boyd and Williams devised, disapprovingly gazes upon Mariana and the Lady of Shalott; it also is presented as the black invasiveness, which dims the Romantic landscape, exposing the highly idealized nature as barren and lifeless. "The Palace of Art" parallels the Romantic "Kubla Khan" yet presents a contrast in the sobering influence of disapproval and sinful awareness in the form of the black darkness which entombs the artist in a grave of self-reflection. God, evoked or mentioned in all three poems, also provides the regulatory eye of Victorian disapproval. He serves as a resolution to the disturbance in "Mariana and the Moated Grange" as his appearance fulfills her wish to die by making her plea to God the stopping point, the ending of the poem. It is God, who in "The Palace of Art," puts the curse on the poet's soul in order to rouse him from his sinful excessiveness and perpetual dwelling in art and imagination. God, therefore, causes melancholy for the purpose of regulating imagination.

In "Mariana" and "The Lady of Shalott," images are enlarged, distorted, overwhelming, ominous, and oppressive. Details enhance and obsessively repeat

themselves while Tennyson, with exacting control as if by a force of iron will, wields his strained Victorian regulation upon the images. In “The Lady of Shalott,” Tennyson once again regulates the language through rhetorical devices such as the repetition of “Shalott” and “Camelot.” Imagination, which is fearful and overwhelming, manifests in the overly excessive detailed description of Lancelot. Also, the danger of pleasure and lust play a part as the narration magnifies Lancelot’s physical description in what some scholars interpret as a sensual gaze of the Lady. Yet, it is that gaze which proves fatal and therefore, the melancholic rhetoric of overblown images is carefully and didactically seen as the impetus for bringing on the unknown curse.

The curse has puzzled scholars and some have suggested that the curse implies a sexual connection and the possible repercussions. As death and sex have distinct associations to each other, this theory has gained some traction. However, it is important to pay careful attention to the details. The curse is not triggered due to the Lady looking at a man, but looking on society and attempting to venture out into society. Other critics have noted the society versus private connection, but have not sought to examine other possibilities of a looming curse that is prophesied. A prophecy indicates an event or circumstance that is predetermined and nothing can the individual do to prevent it from manifesting itself. The curse is a whisper which says a curse is on her, suggestive of the innate fear of surrendering to an unknown disease. Such a situation in the modern sense could be construed as heredity. Several scholars have suggested that it is fairly obvious that Tennyson had a preoccupation with mental disorders, especially since the fear of the “black-blood of the Tennysons” might become a reality for him personally. Though only a dim hint, a whispered possibility, the thought of succumbing to the madness inherited in

his family, was deeply troubling to Tennyson. Ricks notes that Tennyson spent “many hours and many verses in brooding on whether madness and melancholia were hereditary.”⁵⁰ Other biographers and scholars such as Anne Colley have gone into further depth concerning this anxiety. Colley has suggested that Tennyson’s poetry can be read as an attempt for Tennyson to control the terror of melancholy and madness by close examination and a concerted effort not to fall prey to its dire effects.

In “The Lady of Shalott,” both the poet’s isolation and the resulting melancholy drive the action of the poem. Unlike “The Palace of Art,” the sin that the Lady has committed is more ambiguous and vague. To be cursed for looking at an object or person is more subtle than the direct statement that God confounded her because she compared herself with God. In “The Lady of Shalott,” the manifestation of melancholy comes during the weeping night. Love sickness, leading to thoughts of death, demonstrates a transition from two separate aspects of melancholy, love melancholy to black melancholy. Other physical manifestations begin to appear as the Lady gets closer to the dreaded Camelot. As Tennyson’s family had such melancholy conditions as a family trait, the fear and anxiety over such a curse is a likely subject to explore through poetic expression.

“The Lady of Shalott” is more than a romantic version of the love melancholy. When a close reading focuses on the death of the Lady, characteristics of the physical state of melancholy appear. Tennyson purposefully changed the section concerning her death to include the blood freezing slowly. The Lady slowly sinks down into melancholy as she floats down the river. The river reflects the freezing of the flowing blood. As black bile or blood defines melancholy, the appearance of these various symptoms of

⁵⁰ Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson*, 56.

melancholy, including darken eyes and hair. The Lady's submergence in water as she floats down to Camelot is reminiscent of the water cures used to treat melancholy patients.⁵¹ As Tennyson altered the 1832 edition, he added this section and the word "blood." The slow moving blood reflects the listlessness of the melancholia. The darkened eyes of the Lady further represent these melancholic symptoms.

Critics have argued that Lancelot is an image so overwhelming that he consumes much of the attention both from the Lady and the narrator. His image appears twice in the mirror and it is not enough. The Lady must look directly at him and in doing so she must also look at Camelot. The curse is then triggered by a glance at Camelot not because of a physical connection with Lancelot. He is, however, the cause, or rather his image in the mirror is the cause. Much has been made concerning the sexual overtones of "The Lady of Shalott" and Lancelot. However, the impact of the curse is more striking since the Lady has been doomed by a glance and this follows the general tenor of how "The Lady of Shalott" relates to The "Mariana" poems. Although the Lady is the most active of the three despondent ladies, in leaving the embowered tower, she is still a victim of the melancholic curse that causes her to freeze and die. The Lady of Shalott's longing for an image, of something that is unattainable, and her subsequent demise reinforces further the element of black melancholy which, however subtly, still hovers over the poem.

Tennyson chooses a tale that contained more interaction between the two principal characters. The Lady, Elaine, nurses Lancelot and falls in love with him. When he returns to Camelot she becomes lovesick and dies. Tennyson removes this significant plot line completely. This was done deliberately. He purposefully altered this interaction

⁵¹Ann Colley discusses the water cures mentioned. See [Ann C. Colley, *Tennyson & Madness* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983)].

to increase the Lady's isolation and inner consciousness. Her fatal lovesickness is a manifestation of her thought which mirror the imagination and reflection of how she views the images and the tangled web and broken mirror reflect the disturbed consciousness. Therefore, the love aspect diminishes and the melancholy effect is dramatized.

John Killham is one of the few scholars who have spent any length of time discussing the use of colors in "Mariana" and "The Lady of Shalott." However, he does not make the connection between the term "black" or melancholy. Yet his attention to color suggests its importance in Tennyson's poems. For Killham, "The Lady of Shalott" contains "a grouping towards symbolic colouring: the 'colours gay' of the magic web, set within 'four grey walls and four grey towers,' duplicate the jewel colours of the knight as he rides through yellow fields."⁵² Hence the idealized reality of the real world is shaded darker or greyer through the contrasts between the travelers to Camelot and the images presented to the Lady in her mirror.

The image of Lancelot presents a striking alteration in the poem. The structure of the previous versions vanishes as Lancelot becomes the focal image. Stylistically, the descriptions of Lancelot seem uncannily similar to medieval descriptions of knights. Yet Tennyson's rhetoric masterfully overwhelms the reader with images of Lancelot almost too obsessively, harkening back to the hypersensitivity of The "Mariana" poems. Lancelot's flashing light engulfs and bedazzles the eye. He appears twice in the Lady's mirror. Unlike the other images that appear and pass to Camelot, this image stays, expands, and returns. It is not enough: the Lady must gaze on the actual person without the intermediary mirror. She must look directly at the object of her desire. The black

⁵² John Killham, ed. *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*. (London: Routledge & Paul, 1960), 121.

melancholic image of death is merely inferred as the possible fate of the Lady if she activates the curse. The color, black, however, is part of the detailed descriptions of Lancelot: his hair. All other details describe what he wears on the outside, but his black curls flows out from inside his helmet. Lancelot's hair plays an important role in connecting him with melancholy. Not only is the color "black" part of Tennyson's poetic rhetoric which he utilizes in his melancholic poetry, but it is also relates to a belief concerning the physical traits of those prone to melancholy. Medieval scientists thought that the melancholic person had black everywhere, even black hair. As a twelfth century document details, "Melancholiacs show the same color of the head, face, and eyes and the same blackness and thickness of hair and face."⁵³ Therefore, Lancelot's black hair suggests his connection with melancholy. However, in Lancelot's case, the blackness does not stand on its own, but is surrounded by light.

The light and brightness dazzles and produces heat and ultimately overwhelms the Lady. Lancelot makes her forget the consequences of looking into the mirror. The mixture of brilliancy as well as the subtle use of "black" in the person which triggers the curse, presents the combination of the imagination and melancholy represented in the image of Lancelot. This, according to William Buckler, defines her momentary retrogression into madness. The excessive image overwhelms the Lady's sense and triggers the curse. "The Lady's moment of madness...is clearly...according to the basic formula...she invokes the curse as a result of the imaginative collision brought on in her developed susceptibilities by the peculiar way in which she suddenly perceives

⁵³Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*. (Yale University Press, 1986),77.

Lancelot... as a magnificent emblem of cosmic reality.”⁵⁴ However, Buckler does not explain the over detailed description of Lancelot or why this narration plays such a significant part. As a glowing light that overwhelms the Lady, Lancelot becomes both the image of the imagination as well as an image of reality. In fact, his reality is secondary and his image, primary in the mind of the Lady. So many elements of Lancelot’s description are rooted in his reflection in the mirror. He flashes into the mirror in two places, flashing on the banks and the river. He sings a song whose words “tirra lirra” seem appropriately reflective. The Lady wishes to look at this image directly, making a reality of imagination, tapping directly into the glorious source of inspiration. Instead of a desired reality, Lancelot himself fits nicely into the supposition that he is part of a repressed representation of the Lady’s desires. As Bloom indicates, “Any definition of Freud’s notion of “repression” should make clear that what is repressed is not an instinctual drive or desire, but rather the representation of it *in an image*. The repressed image is not wholly confined to the unconscious. However...it is an aspect which distorts, expands, and intensifies the aspect still apparent in consciousness.”⁵⁵ The representation is an image. This is essential in Tennyson’s melancholic rhetoric. The image is the expression of an idea which more abstract yet as a symbol, it does not merely exist in the unconscious but can manifest itself in reality. This easily explains how Lancelot can be both the image and the reality as some aspect of himself is what the Lady desires to gaze upon and take in. Lancelot’s passage, the longest and most detailed, provides an expanded or intensified attention to Lancelot’s clothing, appearance, and

⁵⁴William Earl Buckler, *The Victorian Imagination: Essays in Aesthetic Exploration*. (New York University Press, 1980),83.

⁵⁵Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 143.

lingers on his “broad clear brow” and “coal black curls” (100,103). Thus Lancelot symbolizes a Romantic glorified vision, whose awe inspiring image is tinged with the blackness of melancholy.

The second section of Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott” begins to establish the Lady’s own perspective and her view through the mirror. The order of images is essential in this part, which functions as a list of progressive images that parade in front of her window. They first appear as shadows in the mirror rather than the actual individuals passing through. It is through this intermediate that the Lady views the world. Through the mirror, she then observes the highway. The asyndeton which continues for the entire stanza, lists the images that she sees. The images change from younger female characters, to pages and finally to knights. Thus the images become increasingly more sexual. It is at this moment when the day turns to night and a funeral appears. Finally, two lovers appear and in a manner reminiscent of Mariana’s cry, the Lady announces that she is “half sick of shadows” (71) indicating that reflected images are no longer maintaining her interest. This next stanza once more stresses that the Lady does not see these images and her cry of despair indicates her dissatisfaction with them.

The foreshadowing of the funeral procession, of the oncoming night, and of the knights and lovers precedes a dramatic shift in the narrative structure. The third section of “The Lady of Shalott” is almost entirely devoted to Lancelot, providing that exacting and obsessing description of detail similar to The “Mariana” poems. The repetitious pattern—four lines with the fifth ending with “Camelot” and the last ending with “Shalott”—is disrupted when Lancelot first appears in the first stanza of part three. Lancelot replaces Camelot, as if to suggest that Camelot and Lancelot were the same, each equally

damaging to look upon. In this description, Lancelot so overwhelms the narrative in vivid description that it overflows the lines to an excessive degree, each line with metaphorical comparisons as if a mere description was not enough. This passage seems to harken back to medieval descriptions such as might be found in *Gawain and the Green Knight*. However, there is a slight and subtle underpinning of melancholy repetition. Starting with the first line, which begins the description and the essential initial focal point, the narration stresses the distance between the Lady and Lancelot. The word order has altered slightly, stressing first the “bow-shot from her bower eaves”(73) as the distance between the knight and her window. Then the second line begins the repeated phrase “He rode between the barley-sheaves”(74) which echoes again in the second stanza as “he rode” repeats twice. The focal points of Lancelot that the narrator describes in great detail also prove to be enlightening. Lancelot comes through the barley and the sun moves in a similar way through the leaves to shine upon him. The first attention is on his “brazen greaves” or his armor that covers his ankles and knees. Then gaze moves to his devotional shield, bridle, and finally to his bugle and armor. Finally, the top of his helmet comes into view, as if the distance between him and the onlooker is diminishing. Finally the narrative gaze passes over his face and hair. The description provided by the narrative gaze attempts to draw the reader into viewing Lancelot from the perspective of both the Lady and the disembodied narrator. Just as in “Mariana,” the “psycho-narration” merges the gaze of the speaker with what the Lady sees. His helmet and plume appears at the end of the stanza which describes the Lady’s moving to look directly at him. These images of Lancelot act as a stream of consciousness, which diminishes once the narrator describes Lancelot as merely reflected in the mirror.

It is as if the narration suggests that the mirror's reflection is not as glorious as the original image and cannot effectively reflect what needs to be seen. Yet Lancelot's image in the narration does not simply appear in the mirror as the narration declares concerning the other images the Lady observes. Instead, Lancelot "flash'd into the crystal mirror" (106). Though the Lady did look to see Lancelot, he is such an overwhelming image that the narration does not state that she saw Lancelot, but that she saw his helmet and feather. A metaphor describes the feather in great detail. The feather and helmet "[b]urn'd like one burning flame together"(94). The shining and burning of the helmet act as a synecdoche. Lancelot symbolizes one burning flame, or a meteorite that is streaking across the sky. The straightforward narration breaks down in a further aside, which produces another longer metaphor concerning Lancelot's plume. As the second aside, this metaphor continues with the bright and glorious light, which embodies Lancelot's presence. After each aside or wave of ecstasy that sends the narration off course, the meticulous narration returns and notes an aspect of Lancelot's physical appearance. In the first, the narrative gaze focuses on his leg armor, and in the second, the image of the helmet and plume lead the view to his face and hair. The overall effect of Lancelot's image and the narrative fumble it produces harkens back to the sublime. Thomas Weiskel's work concerning the Romantic sublime aptly describes the image of Lancelot as he appears in "The Lady of Shalott." He states that the "imagination reaches the flash point—the moment of absolute overextension—only because it remains unaware of the hidden master who enjoins comprehension. Once the soul has become 'conscious,' the 'glory,' or brief numbus, of sense is past."⁵⁶ Hence, the poet is ripe for a fall and the gaze activates the curse.

⁵⁶Thomas Weiskel and Harold Bloom, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure*

Tennyson's final line in the third section of the poem indicates that the Lady abandons her work twice and then Tennyson provides a variation of an anaphora which Tennyson often uses to stress an essential or climatic moment in the writing. This moment is when the Lady sees. Tennyson's anaphora echoes that she "saw the water-lily bloom,/She saw the helmet and the plume"(111-112). When the narrative gaze arrives at the intended object, it cannot utter his name. Instead, it uses a synecdoche, replace Lancelot's name with his helmet. His name and form are merely denoted in the helmet and plume. Then Tennyson alters the wording of the anaphora as he states that she "look'd down to Camelot," (113) eerily echoing the statement in part two concerning the curse if she "stay/To Look down to Camelot" (40-41). Mirror images reflect themselves in the dual repetitions: Lancelot's description repeats twice, "tirra lirra" which Tucker notes is a "kind of tirra-lirra reflection in words" which sound and seem like a mirrored reflection.⁵⁷ Finally Lancelot's appearance in the mirror, Tennyson states directly, once again stressing the distance away from the Lady: "From the bank and from the river/ He flash'd into the crystal mirror" (105). The overuse of the mirrors and reflections comes to a head when the mirror cracks and the curse falls upon the Lady.

The unraveling and cracking images indicate a defect and befuddled state of an otherwise clear conscious. If the mirror's reflections are the mental images, the crack in the mirror indicates that the curse has brought a defect to the mind of the Lady. The doom returns once again and is foreshadowed first by the funeral and second by the water-lily, a flower associated with death. This hints at the onset of melancholy which already hovers

and Psychology of Transcendence (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 43.

⁵⁷Herbert Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, 112.

over the Lady. As with “The Palace of Art,” the curse has marred the art and what was once sunny and beautiful, is now a stormy dark night. Thus the next action of the poem indicates the melancholy aspect has interfered with the imagination as image upon image reflect the imagination going beyond its own bounds, reflecting and reflecting until it spirals out of control.

CHAPTER VII

MELANCHOLIA AND THE POET'S CONFLICT

“The Lady of Shalott” stands out more perceivably different than “Mariana” as her melancholic manifestations appear as she delivers herself to Camelot. Continuing the consequence of the curse, the Lady finds a boat, writes her name, and floats down to Camelot. It is then that the physical manifestation of melancholy appears. In “The Lady of Shalott,” Tennyson’s Lady embodies the symbolic, the soul within the protected isolation of the poet, working out the ideas transferred through images. These mental images woven together form the imagination—as yet not poetry. Lancelot, as the inspired image, overwhelms the mind and forces the poet to enter the public sphere, exposing her to the elements and producing the melancholic anxiety concerning the ultimate reception of the poem. The Lady is tempted not by “a reality but an image, the shadow of an ideal from the fantasy world of romance... in a flashing of light that never was on sea or land.”⁵⁸ The poem reaches the apex at the moment when a number of significant symbolic connotations associated with the Lady combine in the ultimate allegorical meaning of the poem. “The climax of the poem literalizes the allegorical

⁵⁸David Riede, *Allegories of the Mind*, 54.

linking of feminine beauty, desire, aesthetic image, and death in the figure of the Lady's corpse, a signifier floating into Camelot as a signed and titled work of art."⁵⁹ The Lady then is not merely a corpse, but transforms into a symbolic body of art, sent down to Camelot for the knight's approval.

The true significance of the Lady of Shalott's entrance into Camelot presents an interesting answer to the significance of the Lady and her entrance. When we examine the concept of the Lady of Shalott as a poet, her dualistic symbolism becomes clearer. If symbolism, as critics state, plays a pivotal role in this poem, then the Lady and her actions are to be viewed allegorically. The Lady sings a last song, her carol, which appears at the beginning as the only evidence the farmers have that the Lady exists. Tucker, although hesitant to take the argument further, asserts that the Lady's "exit from life into art" through singing her last song. He suggests that the Lady of Shalott's name written across the boat also acts "as a title and equate the Lady's carol with Tennyson's poem... the suggestion is there."⁶⁰ This is how the Lady communicates, through her compositions. She sings and in her song she dies or pours out all of herself into her art. She died at the end of her song as she arrives at Camelot. What enters the public sphere is a boat, with the name of the Lady, and her corpse. Often interpreted as the death of sexual or social innocence, "The Lady of Shalott," through a nuanced interpretation, points to a change in the Lady's symbolism from artist to art. When the Lady dies, she becomes the lifeless art that is sent to Camelot. Tucker explains that at the moment when "the artist dies her art remains, and is imagistically a closer representation of the real."⁶¹ Thus the

⁵⁹Ibid.,54.

⁶⁰Herbert Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, 116.

⁶¹Ibid.,289.

Lady becomes a lifeless symbol of her work which travels down to Camelot to be viewed by one and all.

The Lady's journey to Camelot can actually be likened to delivering a poem to be published, where the poet puts his soul into the poem and writes his name. The narrator notes that the Lady has no knight that is loyal or a lover. This absent lover figures into the "Mariana" and "Mariana of the South" as well. If the Lady represents the poet and his work, we can then infer that the knight represents an advocate for the Lady's work.

Tennyson's sensitivity to criticism becomes evident in the concluding lines of the 1832 edition of "The Lady of Shalott." In its literal sense, the passage reflects the reaction to the Lady as she floats down to Camelot. However, considering the Lady's symbolic function as the artist turned into art, the response to the Lady echoes Tennyson's anxiety.⁶² To further Erik Gray's argument, I would suggest that Tennyson presents a meta-narrative, predicting, like the whisper, the curse of criticism that might result from the poem's publication. In his original conclusion, Tennyson takes a jab at his critics by describing the "wellfed wits at Camelot" (176). However, he alters the 1842 edition to produce a more satisfying conclusion where he can provide the Lady with an admirer who appreciates her worth.

Scholars have questioned the sincerity of Lancelot's benediction as it seems simple and trite. However, such a benediction at its core is emblematic of the essentially Victorian sentiment. Gray compares the formula for Lancelot's blessing to Tennyson's unpublished poem on the death of his first-born son. Gray describes the parallelism between Lancelot's response to the Lady and Tennyson's reflection on his son. Scott explains that Tennyson "praises the child's appearance—the only aspect of the stranger to

⁶²Erik Gray, "Getting It Wrong in "The Lady of Shalott"" *Victorian Poetry*, 47, no. 1 (2009), 56.

which he has access— and then; like Lancelot, follows with a blessing and a concluding address (‘dearest child’).⁶³ This highly personal poem ends in a way similar to the conclusion in “The Lady of Shalott.” One can infer, as Gray does, that Tennyson “was not inclined to be critical of Lancelot’s closing words.”⁶⁴ This enables us to interpret Lancelot’s reflection as sober and filled with compassionate similar to Tennyson’s own response to such a scene.

The statement “she has no loyal knight and true” implies that the Lady lacks a defender or advocate for her work. Lancelot functions, at the close of the poem, as a representative of such a knight or an observer who assesses the Lady. Since his assessment of the Lady is positive, it is often interpreted cynically as a too brief and simplistic dismissal of the Lady. Yet the Lady requires an advocate like Lancelot to properly interpret her arrival in Camelot and convey the necessary homage in benediction to her soul. The Lady’s vulnerable state exposed her to every kind of criticism. At the end, the people who read her name now know who she is. She is open and helplessly exposed to their comments and criticism. The Lady, as the artist’s soul, is dead and in her death is transformed into the work. She is both the artist and the work. However, the artist cannot influence the audience as the work is passive or dead, the object being observed. Hence the question over passivity and gender might be reinterpreted as a symbol for the soul of the work, which leaves the protective enclosure of the poet’s mind, and sent into the hands of disinterested critics who are not invested in the well-being of the work or its poet. Clearly, in Tennyson’s own experience with critics, such apprehensions were reasonable, if not justifiable.

⁶³Ibid., 56.

⁶⁴Ibid.,56.

CHAPTER

VIII

CONCLUSION

Although the most dominant poet of the nineteenth-century, Alfred Lord Tennyson remains underrated and undervalued in colleges and universities. Studies in Victorian poetry in general are sparse, with literature classes specializing and focusing on literature up to the Romantic period and then skipping on to modern and post-modern literature. The vested interest in literature which conforms to the modern sensibilities of what constitutes poetry might provide a sound reason for the omission of critical attention to the Victorian Age. With the advent of the post-modern era, every aspect characterizing that age, in turn, dismisses the values and artistry of the Victorian Age. When given a cursory glance by scholars and professors, such critics define the Victorian sensibilities in terms of restraint, conservatism, and moral rigidity. Scholars such as James Kincaid, in his book *Annoying the Victorians*, have attempted to expose subversive inklings in Victorian literature. However interesting these revelations might be, it reinforces the notion that the Victorian Age lacks the magnitude of poetic genius that would enable critics to gain new insight into its literature without needing to apologize or justify an interest in the field.

Equally overlooked is Tennyson's meticulous rhetorical development of melancholy in his poetry. As a noticeable and prevailing rhetorical structure, scholars have dismissed its significance. Yet a clearer understanding of the cultural clash between the Victorian and the Romantic sensibilities develops through close examination of Tennyson's poetry. This illuminates a unique conflict for the poet between the unbridled imagination of the isolated genius and the reserved Victorian and socially conscious poet. Moreover, the clash between the restricting Victorian sensibilities and the fanciful imagination produces the nervous melancholy that overshadows the poet's imagery with the color black. Tennyson manages to reconcile the imagination and social responsibility by a complex juxtaposition of images to illustrate the effect imagination has on the poet's contribution to society. Tennyson's melancholy rhetoric serves as a linguistic palette from which Tennyson carefully crafts a controlled poetic image established through the medium of language and diction. Understanding the craft behind the artistry, we can glean the rhetorical style which conveys melancholy in such a profound manner. This clarity would enable scholars of Tennyson to more effectively interpret his poetry.

It is the imagination of the poet that overlooks the apprehensive warnings and forces the poet's soul out into the opening. Thus the bright flash of inspiration produces the later exhibition of melancholy. Imagination and melancholy intertwine, as one produces the other. Hence the black images and shadows, which play upon the poet's mind, combine together. The immense concern for representing contained imagination to gain the Victorian approval produces the melancholy rhetoric, as the fear is subsumed and transformed in the thick and malevolent black. Tennyson himself provides the concise statement for his poetic style in regards to melancholia and its representation in

his work: “I am black-blooded like all the Tennyson’s. I remember all the malignant things said against me, but little of the praise.”⁶⁵ As “Mariana the Moated Grange” represents this oppressive nature of melancholy, so “The Lady of Shalott” reflects its antidote. The poet must take the risk, regardless of the curse or censor and send his work down to Camelot. Hence Lancelot’s praise represents both the poet’s wish-fulfillment and desire for the poem. Peace—a cessation of criticism and a final acknowledgement of the poet and the poem—lies in Lancelot benediction: “She has a lovely face /God in his mercy grant her grace/ “The Lady of Shalott”(171).

⁶⁵Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 120.

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