

摘 要

传统上，关于维多利亚时代（1837-1901）桂冠诗人阿尔弗雷德·丁尼生（1809-1892）及其诗歌的研究是从两个角度来进行的。一是以诗人的长子哈雷姆·丁尼生所著的《备忘录》为代表的传记研究；一是以丁尼生的宗教信仰为研究对象的主题研究。这两个角度往往会有交叉的情况。丁尼生对英国读者来说已家喻户晓，然而，在中国读者中却鲜为人知，更是缺少系统的研究。本文在以往的研究基础上，从诗中言者的角度进一步探讨丁尼生的心路历程。

包括引言与结论，本文分为五个部分。

第一章主要研究丁尼生的早期诗歌《艺术殿堂》。这首诗中的艺术家既是诗中言者，又是现实中丁尼生本人。在诗中根据主题体现的需要，诗中言者巧妙地变换着自己与代表艺术的诗歌的关系，由亲密到疏远，体现了早期丁尼生对艺术和社会之间关系的矛盾观点。

第二章主要研究丁尼生的力作《悼念集》。这本诗集不仅抒发了丁尼生对英年早逝的挚友的悼念，而且记录了诗人由绝望、到怀疑、到最终坚定信念的心理变化过程。在这部诗集中，作为丁尼生的代言人的诗中言者对诗中听者的有目的选择恰恰体现了这一情感与精神的演化过程。

第三章主要研究丁尼生晚年所著的《王者之歌》。这部作品在题材上以中世纪亚瑟王与其圆桌骑士的传说为蓝图，在主题上是《悼念集》所体现的主题的延伸。在这部作品里，丁尼生重申了信仰以及个人融入社会的重要性。作品中全知全能的诗中言者（叙事者）不仅分析了重要人物的心理，而且还对与作品主题的揭示有重要意义的情节进行了评论。这体现了丁尼生为赋予亚瑟王传说以新的社会意义做出的努力，同时还表达了诗人对现实社会的关注。

综上所述，诗中言者对其与诗歌的关系的变换，对诗中听者的有目的选择，以及其所表现的全知全能，都与诗人丁尼生在不同时期对人生、艺术和社会之间关系的探讨及所持观点相一致。关于诗中言者进行的三个方面的分析阐释了丁尼生的心路历程。

关键词：丁尼生，诗中言者，心路历程

Abstract

The Victorian Poet Laureate Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) is renowned to his countrymen and the study of his poems has been in full swing in the past decades. Traditionally, Tennyson is studied from two approaches which are often overlapped: biographical approach represented by his son Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir*, and psychological approach, namely the study of Tennyson's religious concerns. This thesis focuses on Tennyson's spiritual growth from the perspective of relation between the poet and the speaker in his poems. The speakers in his poems are often identical with the poet.

This thesis is divided into five parts, including introduction and conclusion.

In Chapter One, the focused poem "The Palace of Art" shows the sprout of Tennyson's spiritual growth. The artist in the poem, as the speaker, changes his degree of involvement in the poem. The analysis of this change reveals Tennyson's ambivalent attitudes towards life, art, and social obligations in his early life.

In Chapter Two, Tennyson's *In Memoriam* is studied. This collection of poems stimulated by the poet's friend A.H. Hallam's death records the poet's spiritual growth. The analysis of the speaker's intentional choices of different hearers illustrates Tennyson's emotional and spiritual evolvment. These hearers are the impersonal hearers, Hallam as the hearer, the singular "I" and the plural "we" as hearers.

In Chapter Three, *Idylls of the King*, a narrative poem modeled on the legends of King Arthur and his Round Table Knights, is studied as a thematic extension of *In Memoriam*. It manifests the final phase of Tennyson's spiritual growth. This part of the thesis analyzes the narrator's omniscience revealed in his psycho-analysis of characters and his comments and substantiates Tennyson's recognition of social commitment.

In conclusion, the speaker's change of his degree of involvement in the poem, the speaker's choices of different hearers, and the narrator's omniscience, these three aspects related to the speaker in Tennyson's poems are in concord with Tennyson's spiritual growth and properly reveal Tennyson's thematic concerns.

Key Words: Tennyson, the speaker, spiritual growth

学位论文独创性声明

本人所呈交的学位论文是我在导师的指导下进行的研究工作及取得的研究成果。据我所知，除文中已经注明引用的内容外，本论文不包含其他个人已经发表或撰写过的研究成果。对本文的研究做出重要贡献的个人和集体，均已在文中作了明确说明并表示谢意。

作者签名：刘苏景 日期：2005.6.15

学位论文使用授权声明

本人完全了解华东师范大学有关保留、使用学位论文的规定，学校有权保留学位论文并向国家主管部门或其指定机构送交论文的电子版和纸质版。有权将学位论文用于非赢利目的的少量复制并允许论文进入学校图书馆被查阅。有权将学位论文的内容编入有关数据库进行检索。有权将学位论文的标题和摘要汇编出版。保密的学位论文在解密后适用本规定。

学位论文作者签名：刘苏景

导师签名：

日期：2005.6.15

日期：2005.6.15

刘苏景硕士学位论文答辩委员会成员名单

姓名	职称	单位	备注
单俊毅	副教授	华东师大英语系	主席
陈茂庆	副教授	华东师大英语系	
金衡山	副教授	华东师大英语系	

Acknowledgements

My gratitude goes first to Prof. Liu Naiyin, my supervisor, for his consistent help, constructive suggestions and fatherly encouragement in my thesis writing and my graduate life. What I've learnt from Prof. Liu will continue guiding me in my future study. Secondly, my gratitude goes to my friends, with whom I've happily spent three years' graduate life and their support will be always cherished in my whole life. Last but not the least, my family should be specially thanked for their unreserved love and support.

Introduction

Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) was one of the poet laureates in the Victorian age (1837-1901) and was often regarded as the spokesman of that historical period, which was characterized by social and religious crises. As a principal poet of the Victorian age, Tennyson has never stopped being studied either by his contemporaries or by the literary critics after. This thesis focuses on Tennyson's spiritual growth from the perspective of relation between the poet and the speaker in the poems: what is the relation between Tennyson and his speaker in his poems? Are the two identical with each other in a general sense? If yes, how does the speaker express the thoughts or sentiments of the poet and contribute to the success of the poems, both artistically and thematically?

J. Paul Hunter says, "Poems are personal. The thoughts and feelings they express belong to a specific person, and however 'universal' or general their sentiments seem to be, poems come to us as the expression of a human voice—an individual voice. That voice is often the voice of the poet. But not always. Poets sometimes create a 'character' just as writers of fiction or drama do—people who speak for them only indirectly. A character may, in fact, be very different from the poet, just as a character in a play or story is different from the author, and that person, the speaker of the poem, may express ideas or feelings very different from the poet's own."¹ In fiction or drama, a specific narrator, either omniscient, or of limited knowledge of what happened, is happening, or will happen, in the writing, may be the spokesperson or mouthpiece of the author or may be not. In terms of this aspect, poetry is no exception: "the speaker of the poem may express ideas or feelings very different from the poet's own" (ibid: 59). Usually in the verbal communication, the term "speaker" is defined as the source of message, as one of the three components of communication, the rest of which are the message and the audience,² and more technically this term "speaker" refers to an unmarked discourse role, namely a person who is speaking and articulating his own will. And moreover, the speaker exerts and executes the functions,

¹ Hunter, 1986, p.59

² Hasling, 1982, p.6

rights and obligations of both the author and the mouthpiece in the process of verbal communication.³ However, the above-said definitions of the term “speaker” are communication-oriented and can’t be applied in this thesis until poetry is also taken as a means of communication. In fact, poetry is not only an expression of the ideas, either lyrical or narrative, but also a passage between the poet and the reader and a poem contains a triangle of the poet, the speaker and the reader. Accordingly, in poetry, the speaker is a persona who is either explicit or implicit in the poem, is equal to the source of the message in the actual verbal communication or speech, and is either independent of the poet’s will or is the mouthpiece of the poet, i.e. identical with the poet. Then who are the speakers in Tennyson’s poems chosen to be studied in this thesis?

Tennyson was well-known to his contemporaries in the Victorian age and had drawn a considerable amount of attention from the literary critics in modern times as well. With help from the poet, his son Hallam Tennyson provides plentiful historical sources about the poet’s life, interaction with his contemporary men of letters, and his unpublished poems, in the book *Memoir* (1897). Among the merits of the book *Memoir*, the most important one is that the book shows the close relationship between the themes of the poems and the thoughts of the poet: the poems are an expression and refinement of the poet’s heart contents. Hallam Tennyson’s *Memoir* has become the authoritative source to the literary critics of interest in the Poet Laureate. Among modern criticisms on Tennyson and his poems, voluminous books have been produced, like representative books listed as follows: the 1960’s *Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet* by J.H. Buckley; the 1970s’ *Tennyson: A Critical Study* by Stephen Gwynn, *The Poetry of Tennyson* by Henry V. Dyke, *A Tennyson Companion: Life and Works* by F.B. Pinion, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, An Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism* edited by Robert H. Ross, *Language and Structure in Tennyson’s Poetry* by F.E.L. Priestley and *Tennyson and Tradition* by Robert Pattison; the 1980s’ *Studies in Tennyson* edited by Hallam Tennyson (the poet’s grand-grandson), *Tennyson: the Unquiet Heart* by R.B. Martin, *Tennyson’s Romantic Heritage* by Dr. Asha Viswas, *Tennyson* by Christopher Ricks, and *The Poetry of Tennyson* by Alastair W. Thomson; and the 1996’s *Tennyson* edited by Rebecca Stott. From the titles of

³ 何兆熊, 2000, p.330

these books, it seems there is a tradition to study Tennyson's poems on the canvas of Tennyson's life, more concretely, the spiritual growth in his career as a poet; and these books are a mixture of biographical ingredients and critical perspectives. The modern studies of Tennyson and his poems have enhanced the point that the poet's spiritual world finds presence in his poems and becomes the essence of his poems, and the two are not discernible.

Here, what should be further emphasized is, from 1970s on, the literary critics started to attach importance to the artistic techniques used in the poems to reveal the themes and the concerns Tennyson had. For example, *Language and Structure in Tennyson's Poetry* (1973), *Tennyson and Tradition* (1979) and *Tennyson's Romantic Heritage* (1987) have respectively highlighted the significance of linguistic and structural features in the revelation process of the thoughts, pointed out the experimental features based on the understanding of the traditional poetic forms like allegory, idyll, and epic, and have illustrated the heritage of theories and themes of Romantic poetry. The three books have attached more attention to the poetic forms rather than the repetitive study of the thoughts. In the 1990s, due to the development of literary critical theories in the 20th century, the literary critics more or less have employed rather novel approaches to the study of Tennyson and his poems. For example, *Tennyson* (1996) is a collection of essays on Tennyson's poems from modern and even postmodern perspectives, among which feminism in *The Princess* (1847) and homosexual love tendency in *In Memoriam* (1850) are the representatives.

Based on the study of these books and the poems, two conclusions can be drawn: one is that the speakers in the poems are Tennyson's spokesmen, otherwise, it is impossible to form a research tradition that combines the biographical study of the poet and the study of the thematic features of the poems; the other is that there is a tendency to affirm the value of Tennyson's poems in the modern time by adopting more modern critical theories or perspectives, so that Tennyson and his poems can be renewed and function as the guide to new generations.

Then the questions put forward in the beginning boil down to one question: since the speaker and the poet in Tennyson's case are usually identical, how does the

speaker express the mind or sentiments of the poet, which contributes to the success of the poems, both artistically and thematically? The possible solution for the question is the major concern of this thesis. Based on the fact that Tennyson has spoken out his mind and his spiritual growth finds revelation in his major works, "The Palace of Art", *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King*,⁴ the aspects related to the speaker in the three poems will be studied: the change of the speaker's degree of involvement in the poem, the speaker's intentional choices of different hearers and the narrator's omniscience over the poem. The study manifests Tennyson's complicated artistic techniques that serve the purposes of his poems, either to reveal the contradictory thoughts or to illuminate the inner experiences or to enunciate the highly abstract spiritual values, and this study shows the consistent relationship between the form and the content.

This thesis is divided into five parts, including the introductory part and the conclusion:

Chapter one mainly deals with the poem "The Palace of Art" in which the speaker "I" is devoted fully to the soul and indulges in the pursuit of artistic beauty. The speaker "I" is the spokesman of Tennyson in the second phase "a non-committal attitude". The change of the speaker's degree of involvement in the poem, from a passionate involvement to an indifferent observer, shows the bewilderment and dilemma in which Tennyson struggles between aesthetic isolation and social obligation. The ending of the poem indicates the speaker's hope to combine a free aesthetic life and a social involvement. It is the beginning of Tennyson's troubled thought.

Chapter two studies *In Memoriam*. This collection of poems is often taken as a record of the poet's spiritual journey, from despair, through doubt and hope, finally to faith. The speaker's intentional choices of different hearers are analyzed, as they are the speaker's choice of the impersonal hearers, choice of Hallam as the hearer, choice of the singular hearer "I" and the speaker's choice of the plural hearer "we". The

⁴ Viswas has divided Tennyson's spiritual growth into five phases, as they are the phase of the "thoughtless chamber" up to 1830, the phase of "a non-committal attitude" in the volume of 1832, the phase of "rational enquiry" until the finish poem *In Memoriam* was published in 1850, and the phase of "a calm and serene relationship with the outside world". Viswas, 1987, p.88-89

speaker's choices of different hearers coat the poem in a context of conversation of various hearers, according to the variety of inner experiences. The change of the hearers reveals the poet's spiritual evolvment in parallel with emotional evolvment and facilitates the enunciation of the theme that the poet is reassured of the meaning of life, the existence of immortality as the final truth, and the way to immortality which is faith in the eternal process revealed in life. The study from this perspective is inspired by Weiser's analysis of the modes of the speaker in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Chapter three focuses on *Idylls of the King*. The analysis of the similarities between *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King* shows that the narrator in the latter is identical with the poet, as the speaker in the former is; and Tennyson extends his maintaining concern with man and the universe in the *Idylls* and affirms his social involvement, enhanced by the promotion of his social position as the poet laureate and peerage. The psychological approach to the characters and the narrator's comments reveal the poet's detachment from the medieval legends and his devotion to the modern indication of the legends, with an emphasis on the significance of the moral and the spiritual values in man's survival and prosperity.

Chapter 1 “The Palace of Art”: the Speaker and the Poet

“The Palace of Art” is Tennyson’s most well-known poem in the 1832’s volume of poems which had brought great impact on Tennyson. This part of the thesis illustrates that “The Palace of Art” is the beginning of Tennyson’s spiritual growth, and the speaker’s change of degree of involvement in the poem is studied.

1.1 Interpretations of “The Palace of Art”

In “The Palace of Art”, the soul addressed as “she” lives isolated in a palace of “a lordly pleasure-house”, whose artistic ornament represents the totality of human experience, of all that man has seen, thought, and done.⁵ In the first three years, the soul lives happily, “well-pleased, from room to room”; but till the fourth year, she starts to be tortured by helpless despair and loneliness, aware that everything she once enjoys herself is all hollow and empty. Finally, the soul confesses and repents that she would have herself purged by another kind of isolation in a more human life-like cottage. The female “soul” in “The Palace of Art” finally comes to see the clash between her fantastic life and the reality of human world, which are incompatible. The “soul”, doomed to failure and death, is weak in the end and incapable of adjusting herself to the normal human life.

In view of the content of the poem introduced as above, the themes of “The Palace of Art” have been given various interpretations. Generally speaking, these interpretations can be categorized into two groups: interpretations with emphasis on the female “soul”, including her role as a character and as a symbol of deeper allegorical meaning; and interpretations highlighting what the art represented by the palace of art indicates. First of all, the soul, as a character, is depicted as the soul wishing “to become ‘god-like’, that is, to become like the Epicurean gods, secure in their pleasures and ‘careless of mankind’, seek to renounce their humanity”.⁶ Further, the Epicurean gods and the soul are discriminated in respect that the soul has

⁵ Priestley, 1973, p.41

⁶ Priestley, 1973, p.40

humanity and is characterized as someone of human traits, for she can't bear the despair that the Epicurean gods are not aware of. Therefore, the soul's possibility to live happily isolated is bleak. Secondly, concerned with interpretations of the second group, art itself in "The Palace of Art" is brought into light. Rather to mean "the isolated Beauty" in Jerome Buckley's book, the soul refers to the art which is segregated from Good and Knowledge for the sake of Beauty, as Tennyson said in the dedication previous to the poem. The art in the poem exists alone, either when the artist makes it, or when the soul lives in it, or when the soul leaves and repents for her sin of mere withdrawal to Beauty, and the art is inhuman when it is separated from Good and Knowledge. In this sense, "The Palace of Art" as a whole, can be interpreted as an allegory, in which the soul is a character able to separate from the reality of human world and enchanted in her selfish careless life, and also can be taken as a sermon: the danger of selfish withdrawal, whether by an individual or by a class of custodians, is shown in the punishment of a soul which tries to live in god-like isolation among the riches it seems to possess.⁷ The poem has a moral connotation.

All the interpretations, in essence, provide certain ways to penetrate into the themes of the poem, either by illustrating the poem's instructive significance, or by depicting the soul and the art with the purpose to enunciate the moral of the poem—withdrawal to an imaginary world of Beauty or engagement to social obligation, and with an emphasis on the overall meaning to all people or to the real artist Tennyson of the period. They are reasonable and feasible to interpret the poem. However, what is important here is that the literary critics have paid exclusive attention to the soul and the art, either singly or combined, but have neglected the artist—the speaker—in the poem. It is assumed that there is a certain indispensable relation between the artist in the poem and the artist over the poem, namely, Tennyson, and Tennyson's ideas of art and his spiritual aspects are revealed by the artist in the poem.

⁷ Thomson, 1986, p.35

1.2 The Change of the Speaker's Degree of Involvement in the Poem

There is a visible pattern in "The Palace of Art" with regard to the speaker, which is outlined by the speaker's degree of involvement in the poem. The poem begins with "I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house, /Wherein at ease for aye to dwell. /I said, 'O Soul, make merry and carouse, /Dear soul, for all is well" (1-4). Here, the speaker "I", consistent with "I" in the dedication, refers to the artist, the maker of the palace. From then on until Line 156, the speaker dwells on the process of building and decorating the palace: "A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd brass /I chose" (5-6); "Four courts I made, East, West, and South and North" (21); "Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung, /Moved of themselves, with silver sound; /And with choice paintings of wise men I hung /The royal dais round"(129-132); the speaker makes full use of the artistic talents to make the palace as "lordly" as it can: "Nor these alone, but every landscape fair, /As fit for every mood of mind, /Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there /Not less than truth design'd" (89-92), "Nor these alone: but every legend fair which the supreme Caucasian mind /Carved out of Nature for itself, was there, /Not less than life, design'd"(125-128). So that the palace has surpassed what truth and life can provide and become a completely imaginary world; the speaker "I", as the creator of the palace of art, dominates the palace through the creative power, and the speaker is entirely involved in the poem. It is like a painter who details his painting as he paints, like a poet who articulates his methods of composition and diction, when he composes a poem, and the speaker "I" enjoys the creative work—the process of ornamentation. It is the artist's power.

Aristotle says in his *Poetics*, "In constructing the plot and working it out with the proper diction, the poet should place the scene, as far as possible, before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the utmost vividness, as if he were a spectator of the action, he will discover what is in keeping with it, and be most unlikely to overlook inconsistencies."⁸ That is to say, a certain distance between the creator and the created should be maintained in order to prevent inconsistencies in terms of plot. Tennyson, as the creator of the poem and the idea in the poem here discussed, applied

⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, XVII. in 姚乃强, 2003, p.45

this technique and changed the speaker's degree of involvement in the poem in order to heighten and objectify the allegorical connotation.

Then from Line 157, the speaker "I" withdraws himself from the events of the poem and acts as an indifferent observer: "But over these she trod: and those great bells /Began to chime. She took her throne: /She sat betwixt the shining Oriels, /To sing her songs alone" (157-160). If there is a person that moves in the poem, before Line 157 it is the artist as the speaker who is busy around, but after Line 157, it is the soul who enjoys the isolated life, then becomes impatient with and finally despairs in solitude. As an indifferent observer, the speaker observes the process of the change of the soul's attitude toward isolated happiness, fantastic "Palace" and towards the relationship between retreat and commitment, and doesn't instruct the soul to live a fruitful life. The poem, from then on, becomes rather a report made by the speaker than an extension of the creative work as before. It is like a painter who appreciates his own finish painting, like a poet who indulges in the beauty of rhyme and diction of his poem, but in the speaker's case, it is no emotional involvement but aloof observation.

When the poem comes to the end, the soul is aware of the emptiness of her life and turns to the artist for help: "Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said, / 'Where I may mourn and pray" (291-292). The poem ends with the soul's desperate demand for a cottage as a sign of confession, but it is still uncertain that the soul can be redeemed, because the artist's power of creation finds limitation.

Therefore, the pattern mentioned at the beginning of this part becomes clear: at first, the speaker "I" is the central character who is endowed with creative power and is passionately involved in the creation of the palace of art; and then the speaker "I" becomes an objective indifferent observer, bringing the soul's growth into the sight of the readers, when the speaker "I" is still powerful as shown by the soul's being trapped in the palace of art; and finally, before the speaker stages on again and exerts the creative power, the poem ends in confession. The speaker's degree of involvement changes, from enthusiasm to indifference, and this is coherent with the poet in reality as well as his idea of art.

1.3 The Artist in the Poem, the Speaker, and the Poet

It is necessary to study a natural component of the poem—the dedication, “To—with the following poem?”. The dedication starts with the lines: “I send you here a sort of allegory, / (For you will understand it) of a soul, / A sinful soul possess’d of many gifts, / A spacious garden full of flowering weeds, / A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain, / That did love Beauty only” (“To—With the Following Poem”, 1-6).⁹ These lines indicate the allegorical feature of the poem. In the lines, “I”, the speaker is meanwhile the composer of the allegory, addressing to “you” who are supposed to be able to understand the allegory and are possibly the readers “us” who can echo the ideals of the speaker, or possibly a single artist since artists, such as poets, share something in terms of temperament and level of spiritual achievements. The power of “I” as the creator of the palace of art and composer of the poem is omniscient: a sinful soul, a spacious garden and a glorious Devil, together with their connotations, are designed by “I”, the speaker. The shadow of the poet in reality is projected.

In the following lines, the philosophical understanding of the relationship between Beauty, Knowledge and Good further reveals the artist’s intention to maintain a distance with the poem, though the artist himself is in the poem. The speaker thinks that Knowledge and Good both contain the element of Beauty, therefore, if only Beauty is loved, isolated from Knowledge and Good which are the carrier of Beauty, Beauty then becomes empty and evil, “howling in outer darkness,” as human experience shows, “he that shuts Love out, in turn shall / be shut out from Love” (ibid: 13-14). The speaker here discusses the relationship between Beauty, Knowledge and Good as three interdependent “sisters”, which is further affirmed in “The Palace of Art” and retorts to the unfair statement that “The Palace of Art” doesn’t explore the interrelationship.¹⁰

Poetry is communication that is highly personal, either to the poet or to the fictive speaker he creates,¹¹ and in “The Palace of Art”, like the other two poems to

⁹ Brown and Bailey, 1962, p.10

¹⁰ Ricks, 1989, p.86

¹¹ Montague, 1972, p.6

be studied in this thesis, the speaker can be taken as one identical with the poet in reality. As a result, together with the dedication, "The Palace of Art" is the expression of Tennyson's power in creating the beautiful and illustrating the profound philosophical thoughts by poetic words. The artist in the poem creates the palace that is "not less than truth, design'd" and "not less than life, design'd," with enthusiasm, but the creative artist and the imaginary palace are both out of Tennyson's creative power, and it is by the enthusiastic poet that the poem comes into being. As the dedication shows, the ending of the poem is preconceived and Tennyson has the power over the destiny of the soul. When the artist coldly leaves the palace and the soul alone, the poet Tennyson rationally leaves his poem alone, observing whether the soul can happily live in the palace of art for ever, without being disturbed by the opposite aspect such as human sufferings, worries and despair. Tennyson has experienced such a life in the poem, with a preconceived ending. When the soul confesses and desires "a vale cottage" to repent in, the artist disappears. In addition to what the open ending indicates, this reveals Tennyson's dilemma between withdrawal to artistic world and participation in social life and implies his wondering whether it is feasible for one to achieve both aspects of life. In this sense, the artist and the poet in reality are identical, and it would be reasonable to conclude that in the dedication, the speaker "I" indicates the poet himself, while, "you" indicates an imaginary artist of understanding that would appear as "I" in "The Palace of Art", and cyclically, this artist as the speaker addresses Tennyson, the reader, and himself.

1.4 "The Palace of Art": the Beginning of Tennyson's Spiritual Growth

Priestley says in his *Language and Structure in Tennyson's Poetry* (1973), "Its theme seems to support one of the main theories about Tennyson's psychological and poetic development. This theory holds that during his time at Cambridge, the poet was torn between two conflicting impulse: an impulse towards withdrawal into 'Art for art's sake', and an impulse towards what modern jargon calls 'commitment', towards

recognizing the social function of poetry and the poet".¹² Whether "art for art's sake" can be taken as "one of the main theories about Tennyson's psychological and poetic development" is still questionable, but, at least, at the time "The Palace of Art" was composed, Tennyson's ambivalent attitude to the function of art is obvious, shown in the above-said poem. Also for the same reason, Tennyson is called "a Pre-Raphaelite before the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded and after its leader was dead",¹³ and is said to have certain relation with Aestheticism in the Victorian age. However, this statement is suitable to Tennyson's early poems, such as the 1832's volume of poems as well as the poems before, rather than to his later works.

After the analysis of "The Palace of Art" from the perspective of the speaker's relation with the poem, it is overt that the speaker's change of degree of involvement in the poem is consistent with the poet's dilemmatic attitude to the function of art. "The Palace of Art" illuminates the beginning of Tennyson's spiritual growth, philosophical and metaphysical, shown by one of the concerns in the poem—split soul and body.

Tennyson's concern with the issue of soul and body is not unexpected because Tennyson has the heritage of his Romantic predecessors, caring about human nature and emphasizing the power of imagination. In addition to a complicated family background and domestic troubles that have shaped him as a sensitive figure, Tennyson had been acquainted with various classic works such as by Ovid, Homer, Dante, *Vigil*, and natural science as well since childhood. When Tennyson studied in Cambridge between 1828 and 1831, Tennyson was influenced greatly, despite that "the narrowness and dryness of the ordinary course of study at Cambridge, the lethargy there, and absence of any teaching that grappled with the idea of the age and stimulated and guided thought on the subjects of deepest human interest had stirred" Tennyson "to wrath".¹⁴ This influence mainly came from the Apostles (a group of young people in favor of radical political ideas and enthusiasm in literature), who not only debated politics but read their Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Butler, Hume, Bentham,

¹² Priestley, 1973, p.38

¹³ Brown, 1962, p.XIV

¹⁴ Tennyson, 1897, p.66

Descartes and Kant, and discussed such questions as the origin of Evil, the Derivation of Moral Sentiments, Prayer and the Personality of God.¹⁵ It is unavoidable for Tennyson, a man of the most sensitive heart, to indulge himself in philosophical thinking of metaphysical issues on Good and Evil, Faith and Doubt, Body and Soul, Death and Life, those duet terms.

R.C. Trench once reminded Tennyson that “Tennyson, we cannot live in art”. But whether Tennyson composed the poem “The Palace of Art” as a reaction to Trench or as a defense of his own idea of art, it is evident that Tennyson started to meditate the split soul and body in conflict, as shown by the apparent isolation of the “soul” from the human world, the separation of Beauty from Knowledge and Good, and the artist who grows too in the poem from a powerful dedicated artist to one that realizes the peril of such isolation. “The Palace of Art”, the most representative among his early poems, reveals Tennyson’s dilemma in his spiritual world and it is the beginning of Tennyson’s spiritual growth.

¹⁵ Tennyson, 1897, p.43-44

Chapter 2 *In Memoriam*: the Speaker and the Poet

In “The Palace of Art” and his other early poems, Tennyson’s troubled thinking about the philosophical or metaphysical issues has commenced. In “The Palace of Art”, the artist who is the speaker of the poem strategically alternates his involvement degree in the poem, from immediate involvement to an indifferent observer. This pattern of changes of the artist’s involvement degree in the poem is consistent with the theme of the poem and expresses Tennyson’s ability in constructing allegorical poems of philosophical depth. This early sprouted philosophical thinking is further developed and explored in Tennyson’s mature poems, namely the poems in the collection *In Memoriam*. It is universally admitted that *In Memoriam* isn’t an allegory but a series of lyrics putting together with the literal function of a long elegy, “which have only the unity and continuity of a diary, the concentrated diary of a man confessing himself.”¹⁶ *In Memoriam* records the poet’s spiritual growth after the death of his beloved friend A.H. Hallam, and this record can be interpreted from the perspective of the speaker’s choice of different hearers purposefully.

The study from this perspective is inspired by Davis K. Weiser’s *Mind in Character: Shakespeare’s Speaker in the Sonnets* (1987). In this book, Weiser focuses on the speaker in the sonnets and completes the study by a New Criticism approach—the exclusive study of the mental development of the speaker in Shakespeare’s sonnets. Weiser points out four modes through which the speaker achieves his own growth: “the first mode is entirely impersonal, inasmuch as it excludes both ‘I’ and ‘thou’ pronouns while permitting only those of the third person. It presents poetic themes and imagery in their most abstract form. The second mode admits ‘thou’ but not ‘I’, so that the central themes are closely linked to the person who is being addressed. The Soliloquy, as the third mode in this progression, allows the first person but not the second. As we have seen, it concentrates on the clearly defined figure of the ‘I’ whose thoughts and feelings it articulates. Finally, dialogue dissolves the soliloquy situation by incorporating both ‘I’ and ‘thou’. This fourth mode gives the

¹⁶ Eliot, T.S. “*In Memoriam*”, in Ross, 1973, p.175

fullest and most dramatic expression of thematic material by providing a framework in which speaker and auditor can fully interact.”¹⁷ Through the study of the four modes which are categorized by the criteria of thematic clarity, employment of the pronouns “I” and “thou”, and the speaker’s consciousness of expression, Weiser has successfully explored and depicted the growth of the speaker as an independent entity in Shakespeare’s sonnets.

Inspired by Weiser’s study of the four modes of the speaker in Shakespeare’s sonnets, the study here focuses on the relation between the speaker and the hearer in Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*: the speaker addresses or communicates with different hearers, as they are the impersonal hearers, the late Hallam as the hearer, the singular “I” and the plural “we” hearers. Different hearers are the result of the speaker’s deliberate choices made to reveal his chosen purposes.

As mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis, a tradition of Tennyson research and criticism has been formed and it clearly shows that the speaker in most of Tennyson’s poems is identical with the poet, and among these poems, *In Memoriam* is the representative. The change of hearers in *In Memoriam* contributes to the revelation of the themes and corresponds with the process of Tennyson’s spiritual growth in the period “rational enquiry”, which includes two aspects—emotional evolvment and spiritual evolvment.

2.1 Emotional Evolvment: the Impersonal Hearers and Hallam as the Hearer

2.1.1 The Impersonal Hearers

The speaker in *In Memoriam* takes the impersonal hearer as his first choice. The impersonal hearer refers to the objective subjects of no human traits, like the natural objects as the tree, the bird, the ship, or the non-personified human feelings as Sorrow and Soul. In the poem, the impersonal hearer finds expression in sections 2, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 39, 59, 65, 88, and 128, of which these before Section 39 are grouped in

¹⁷ Weiser, 1987, p.99

the first part of the poem (sections 1-27), the sections after Section 39, including itself, are in the last three parts of the poem (sections 28-77, 78-103, 104-131), according to the descriptive sections 28, 78, 104 of three Christmas after Hallam's death as the divisional lines.¹⁸ The sections of the impersonal hearers reveal the emotional load that has made the poem comparable with Milton's *Lycidias*, Shelley's *Adonius* and Shakespeare's sonnets.¹⁹

In sections 2, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 17, this emotional load is shown as grief and sorrow for the loss of the loved Hallam. In Section 2, the "old yew" becomes the impersonal hearer which indifferently witnesses the death of men in the churchyard. In view of the emotion of the speaker immediately after the bereavement, the impersonal hearer "old yew" is characterized by "thousand years of gloom" and called as "sullen tree"; the tone is full of grief and even hatred as Line 14 shows "sick for thy stubborn hardihood." Therefore, the long-lived yew makes the speaker more grievous for the transient life of his friend.

Sections 9, 10, 14, and 17 are grouped together, for they have the same impersonal hearer: the ship, which takes home the dead Hallam from the death site. By addressing the "ship", the speaker expresses his worries that his beloved friend wouldn't be disturbed in the sea. The speaker's denial of the death shown in lines, "And if along with these should come / The man I held as half-divine; / Should strike a sudden hand in mine./ And ask a thousand things of home" (14:9-12) and his disillusion shown in lines, "I shall not see /Till all my widow'd race be run" (17:19-20) are mingled together to be communicated to the ship. This indicates the speaker's sorrow for the death of A.H. Hallam.

In these sections, the impersonal hearer is directly addressed as "thou" and functions as a passive hearer of the grief and sorrow of the speaker who dominates the unilateral conversation. Why does the speaker need an impersonal hearer who can't provide comfort? The possible reasons can be summarized as follows: firstly, the speaker, impacted by the news of Hallam's death, isn't qualified to communicate in a

¹⁸ Bradley, A.C. "The Structure of *In Memoriam*" in Ross, 1973, p.197-200

¹⁹ Abrams, p.1084

socialized way, and it is a sign that the speaker withdraws into his inner world and endures the grief and sorrow without comfort from the human world; secondly, through the monopolized conversation with an impersonal hearer, the speaker can possibly achieve some comfort as the catharsis of the grief and sorrow brings, without any check on what aftereffect would be caused. Therefore, an impersonal hearer directly addressed as “thou” serves what the speaker needs at the time, and helps the speaker lessen the grief gradually, as revealed in the latter sections.

In sections 39, 59, 65, 88 and 128, the above-said possible reasons are verified. In Section 39, written in 1868 and added to *In Memoriam* in 1870,²⁰ the impersonal hearer “yew” appears again, which, though characterized still by the epithet “Dark”, is described “with fruitful cloud and living smoke”, revealing that after years of struggle the speaker has achieved the “calm despair” (11:16), though he feels gloomy again at the sight of the scenery where the loved is buried. In sections 59 and 65, the impersonal hearers are respectively “Sorrow” and “Sweetest Soul”, who are not grievously addressed: “And set thee forth, for thou art mine,/ With so much hope for years to come, / That, howsoe’er I know thee, some / Could hardly tell what name were thine”(59:13-16) and “Since we deserved the name of friends, /And thine effect so lives in me, / A part of mine may live in thee / And move thee on the noble ends” (65:9-12). In Section 65, it is detectable that the speaker identifies “Sweetest soul” as the soul of Hallam, hopefully, expecting a noble end for the loved.

In these three sections, the emotional load isn’t grief or sorrow, if there is, it has been much lessened, and in sections 88 and 128, the sense of hope is stronger. In Section 88, the impersonal hearer is the nightingale, a bird of spirits and inspiration. Through this impersonal hearer the speaker attempts to justify his poem: “And I—my harp would prelude woe—I cannot all command the strings; /The glory of the sum of things /Will flash along the chords and go” (88:9-12), meaning that the poem would contain the elements of the truth later defined. In Section 128, with an echo to the “Victor of Hours” in Section 1 which is merciless and indifferent to human loss, the speaker addresses the impersonal hearer “Wild Hours” “with Hope and Fear,” which,

²⁰ Ross, 1973, p.26

in a chaotic order, makes the speaker “see in part /That all a sin some piece of art, /Is toil cooperant to an end” (128:22-24), and the theme of the poem has been partly revealed: “an end”.

Through the analysis of the speaker’s choice of impersonal hearers in the particular sections, we see that the choice of impersonal hearers promotes the revelation of the theme of the poem as an elegy. These sections of impersonal hearers consist of a self-contained elegy and they are also sporadically fused into the sections of the other three choices of hearers.

2.1.2 Hallam as the Hearer

Similar to the case of the impersonal hearers, the hearer Hallam addressed as “thou” is studied for a better understanding of the relations between the personae in the poem and the themes of the poem.

First of all, as the previous part says, when Tennyson was first impacted by the death of Hallam, mainly in the poem, Tennyson had an inclination to either express or lessen his grief and sorrow by addressing an impersonal hearer, as a natural way for a sensitive mind to nurture himself. But strangely in Section 8, the speaker aims to converse with “thou” specified as Hallam, saying “So find I, every pleasant spot/ In which we two were wont to meet, / The field, the chamber and the street, / For all is dark where thou art not” (8:9-12), and directly speaks out that the death of his friend has darkened his world. And then until Section 40, by the analysis of the impersonal hearer, it is clear that the grief for the bereavement has been gradually lessened, and the speaker commences to address “thou” with reference to Hallam again, to reveal Tennyson’s emotional evolvment.

Generally speaking, the speaker’s choice of the late Hallam as the hearer has two functions: one is to illustrate the speaker’s emotional evolvment and the other to enunciate the features of the poem as an elegy. Accordingly, from Section 40 on, the sections of Hallam as the hearer can be categorized into two groups, fulfilling the two functions: sections 40, 41, 44, 63, 67, 74, 84, 91, 92, 93 and 121 as one group, and sections 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 127 and 130 as the other group.

In Section 1, the speaker mentions “I held it truth, with him who sings /To one clear harp in divers tones, /That men may rise on stepping stones /Of their dead selves to higher things” (1:1-4), and this implies the speaker has held in his early time the truth that higher life in a larger world exists after man dies. It is further proved in the sections of the first group defined in the above paragraph. For example, the lines in Section 40 “And, doubtless, unto thee is given /A life that bears immortal fruit, /In those great offices that suit/ The full-grown energies of heaven”, the lines in Section 41 “Thy spirit ere our fatal loss/ Did ever rise from high to higher” and “Thro’ all the secular to-be, /But evermore a life behind”, the lines in Section 44 “My guardian angel will speak out /In that high place, and tell thee all”, and the lines in Section 63 “The circuits of thine orbit round /A higher height, a deeper deep”, all show the eternal truth of immortality and afterlife that Tennyson attempts to confirm. Tennyson had never tired, either, of asserting the meaninglessness of this life unless another followed it, or of detailing the ways in which he might commit suicide if he ceased to believe that one existed.²¹

Here, the speaker has chosen Hallam as the hearer, because the live Hallam was loved for his merits, and such a loved person is the right one to live a higher life and can fulfill what the speaker believes. Therefore, in the other sections of the same group, the speaker can continue the affirmation of the believed truth and desire a spiritual contact with the soul of the dead. For example, in sections 91, 92 and 93, the speaker fancies that the spirit of Hallam “come, beauteous in thine after form, /and like a finer light in light” (91:15-16) and “That in this blindness of the frame /My Ghost may feel that thine is near” (93:15-16), by the means of spirituality rather than “the canker of the brain” (92:3). The vision of the dead is the fulfillment brought by the truth of immortality and afterlife. The speaker’s choice of Hallam as the hearer facilitates the manifestation of this point rather than other three choices in the poem.

The second group mentioned above does justice to the elegiac features of the poem because the sections in the group, centered on the loved Hallam, are a series of elegiac hymns. They are all in the last part of *In Memoriam* when the speaker’s troubled thoughts, namely questions about the nature of man and his society, the place

²¹ Collins, Philip. “Tennyson In and Out of Time” in Tennyson, 1981, p.150

of man in the physical universe, and the nature of that universe,²² are gradually smoothed. They are written in a sense of “architectonic power” as W.W. Robson comments that Tennyson’s some poems do suffer from the lack of it.²³ For example, in sections 109, 110, 111, 112 and 113, a consistent well-structured series of hymns present before the reader: the first four lines in Section 109 “Heart-affluence in discursive talk /From household fountains never dry; The critic clearness of an eye, / That saw thro’ all the Muses’ Walk” (109:1-4) summarize the height of Hallam’s intellect and force; the influence of Hallam’s conversation on the audience which is “The graceful tact, the Christian art” (110:16) is emphasized in Section 110; In Section 111, Hallam’s temperament is described as “Nor ever narrowness or spite, / Or villain fancy fleeting by, /Drew in the expression of an eye, / Where God and Nature met in light” (111:17-20) and Section 112 compares the speaker’s wisdom to the hearer’s, bettering the latter; and in Section 113, the speaker addresses the hearer who would have been achieving “A life in civic action warm, /A soul on highest mission sent, /A potent voice of Parliament /A pillar steadfast in the storm”(113:9-12); finally, the speaker sublimates his hymn as “To feel thee some diffusive power” “mix’d with God and Nature thou, /I seem to love thee more and more” (130: 7, 11-12). As a result, Hallam becomes an ideal man to the speaker and the elegy fulfils its purpose of mourning a dead soul that revives in a higher form.

Consequently, the speaker aims at the illustration of the elegiac features of the poem by addressing Hallam as a specified hearer “thou”. On the one hand, it is the need of elegy as a poetic form; on the other hand, it is the inevitable result of the speaker’s years of meditation on the philosophical and the theological, in view of the fact that the sections mentioned here appear late in the poem. The speaker’s choices of the impersonal hearers and Hallam as the hearer reveals Tennyson’s emotional evolvment, but this revelation is the result of retrospection and communication with the other specified hearers, namely the singular hearer “I” and plural hearer “we”.

2.2 Spiritual Evolvment: the Singular Hearer “I” and Plural Hearer “We”

²² Mason, Michael. “The Timing of *In Memoriam*” in Tennyson, 1981, p.156

²³ Robson, W.W. “The Present Value of Tennyson” in Tennyson, 1981, p.60

2.2.1 The Singular Hearer "I"

Weiser mentions that soliloquy allows the first person but not the second and concentrates on the clearly defined figure of the "I" whose thoughts and feelings it articulates,²⁴ and when he says so, there is an implication that a hearer exists before the articulator of soliloquy. And it is what soliloquy means: one role in a drama, standing on the stage and highlighted, speaks out of his mind with little care about other roles either on the stage or off, to the audience, on purpose for the revelation of the personal inner world or the promotion of the plots in the drama. Based on this understanding of soliloquy, soliloquy doesn't fit Tennyson's *In Memoriam* because when Tennyson wrote the poem he had no particular audience in mind, and moreover, the speaker directly addresses the singular hearer "I", that is to say, the speaker himself. As a result, it is more appropriate to identify this relation between the speaker and the hearer as monologue. Tennyson wonderfully makes use of this technique, as analyzed in the following paragraphs.

Sections 7, 11, 15 and 16 are the first representative ones of a similar subject matter: the speaker's state of mind after Hallam's death. Section 7 describes that in an early morning the speaker came to the house where Hallam once lived and wished that the loved would reach a hand, but in vain. The section consists of only 12 lines, but the feelings of grief and sorrow are intense and impressive: "Dark house, by which once more I stand / Here in the long unlovely street, / Doors, where my heart was used to beat / So quickly, waiting for a hand, / A hand that can be claps'd no more" (7:1-5), and the desperate tone is pervading to whoever reads it. Then sections 11, 15, and 16, besides the grief revealed in Section 7, further describes the nature of the grief and the speaker's struggle for a balanced heart: "a calm despair" (11:16) and "the wild unrest" (15:15), are they able to "Be tenants of a single breast, / Or Sorrow such a changeling be" (16:3-4) ? The speaker becomes introverted and retreats to his own inner world, feeling the despair all by himself, and this willing isolation is similar to the isolation revealed in the speaker's choice of impersonal hearers in the sense that both of the choices deny the possibility of the heart-broken despair being communicated to any human hearer

²⁴ Weiser, 1987, p.99

except for the impersonal objects and the speaker himself. This isolation finds expression in another group of sections which focus on the speaker's self-conscious mind on his poem, as they are sections 4, 5, 25, 26, 27 and 37.

In Section 4, the lines "And with my heart I muse and say: ... /Thou shalt not be the fool of loss" (4:4, 16) reveal the speaker's self-encouragement in case of being drawn in despair, and then naturally in Section 5, the speaker finds consolation in the composition of the poem though he is aware of the inadequacy of words in the expression of deep thinking and emotions, shown as "For words, like Nature, half revealed /And half conceal the Soul within" (5:3-4) and "But that large grief which these enfold /Is given in outline and no more"(5:11-12). The speaker decides to be comforted in "The sad mechanic exercise, /Like dull narcotics, numbing pain" (5:7-8). This consciousness of the writing activity appears in Section 37 again, in which two Muses as Urania, whom Milton transformed into the Muse of the loftiest poetry, and Melpomene, who is the Muse of elegiac poetry, are in conflict,²⁵ and the speaker, on the stance of Melpomene, defends the meaning of writing the poem to himself. This introspection reveals his struggle for a meaning, lonely. The rest of the sections in this group give an illustration of how the speaker in isolation finally understands the meaning of grief and sorrow as in Section 27: "'Tis better to have loved and lost /Than never to have loved at all" (27:15-16).

The last grouped sections in which the speaker addresses the singular hearer "I" are sections 34, 43, 45, 47 and 48. These sections uncover the speaker's central concern in the poem, in a sense of reassurance: in Section 34, the speaker expresses his belief that "life shall live for ever more, /Else earth is darkness at the core, /And dust and ashes all that is" (34:2-4), which has occupied the sections of Hallam as the hearer; however, in the same section, the speaker can't specify what makes immortality possible except for a vague awareness "In some wild Poet, when he works /Without a conscience or an aim" (34:7-8). It includes paradoxical elements in the speaker's belief. Then Tennyson, in sections 43, 45 and 47, attempts to explore the reason for the existence of immortality: "If sleep and Death be truly one"(43:1), Death would bring no

²⁵ Ross, 1973, p.25

loss to man but love in “Time” and at “the spiritual prime”, and this explanation is an attempt to blur the distinction between sleep and death. The image of “the baby” who acquires knowledge about man in growth suggests the dead obtain the second birth other than the vain of blood and breath after death; the possible existence of “the general Soul” would bring man “upon the last and sharpest height” and “in light.” Finally, in Section 48, the speaker’s introspection is the revelation of what is in the speaker’s mind rather than an intentional exploration of “the deepest measure from the chords” (48:12). The speaker here attempts to solve his own problematic thinking by simplifying the matter, and on the one hand it is detectable that the speaker has an inclination to escape from the thinking of the elusive truth he holds, and on the other hand, it is a way to soothe the troubled soul for a better goal.

The speaker’s choice of the singular hearer “I” clears up the grief and sorrow for the bereavement of his loved friend Hallam, to some extent, through retrospection and isolation that facilitates the revelation of the themes of the poem. Meanwhile, the central theme of the poem is nurtured in the speaker’s introspective meditation and a fuller expression of the theme in the speaker’s choice of the plural speaker “we” is paved for.

2.2.2 The Plural Hearer “We”

As mentioned before, *In Memoriam* has an obvious feature of conversation caused by the speaker’s choices of different hearers. The speaker’s choice of the plural hearer “we” is discussed in this part of the thesis. In the poem, the pronoun “we” exists as an identified hearer addressed by the speaker for the sake of intimacy, and what is revealed in these sections becomes what the hearer is concerned with, either congenial to the speaker’s opinion or simply listening. The sections concerned here are respectively grouped as sections 54, 55, 56 and sections 118, 124.

Section 54 has five stanzas and at the beginning of the section, the speaker comes near the hearer signified as the pronoun “we”, communicating what he believes, “Oh yet we trust that some how good /Will be the final goal of ill, /To pangs of nature, sins of will, /Defects of doubt, and taints of blood” (54:1-4), from which the hearer “we” are surely the

Victorians who traditionally believe in the final Christian perfection. Then in the following three stanzas the speaker of optimism admits the power of human will and the fruitful efforts either in mankind or other organisms, as “That nothing walks with aimless feet; /That not one life shall be destroy’d” (54:5-6) with nothing worthy, and he employs the traditional images like a cloven worm and a burned moth. The lines “we know not anything; /I can but trust that good shall fall /At last—far off—at last, to all, /And every winter change to spring” (54:13-16) reveal that the speaker surely believes in the truth of being all good. However, in the last stanza, despite the belief in the final good of the whole world, nature or mankind, the speaker is entangled by his meditation on the predicament faced by a single man in the universe again: he addresses the hearer as identified with the Victorians and tells out his grief for the loss of an ideal man Hallam, wondering what is the meaning of the individual life in the universe, and the unconvincing traditional belief in the final good puzzles him and puts him in the light of night as a helpless baby: “An infant crying in the night: /An infant crying for the light” (54:19-20). Eleanor B. Mattes in her essay “The Challenge of Geology to Belief in Immortality and a God of Love” mentions that Tennyson was once influenced by Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* and later by Chamber’s *Vestiges of Creation*,²⁶ but the influences from the two books were contradictory, and Section 54 implies Tennyson’s ambivalent attitude towards the fate of human beings caused by these influences.

This dilemmatic situation is further uncovered in Section 55. At the beginning of Section 55, the speaker puts forward a question to the hearer “we” who is assumed to share with the speaker: “The wish, that of the living whole /No life may fail beyond the grave, /Derives it not from what we have /The likest God within the soul” (55:1-4)? It points out the nature of the belief in Section 54 as something intuitive granted by the Divine in human. It is a sign for the speaker to think about the nature of the faith in the poems and the approach to the faith. Then in the following four stanzas, the speaker excludes the hearer “we” but totally indulges in his own speech. “Are God and Nature then at strife,

²⁶ Mattes, Eleanor B. “Further Reassurance in Herschel’s Natural Philosophy and Chamber’s *Vestiges of Creation*” in Ross, 1973, p.131-132

/That Nature lends such evil dreams? /So careful of the type she seems, /So careless of the single life” (55:5-8) are frequently quoted, since this stanza reveals the speaker’s concern with the single life in the strife between God and Nature. The traditional Christian doctrine describes God of love as omnipotent and omnipresent, but phenomena of pains, sufferings and evils in Nature counteracts the description, and here, the speaker separates God and Nature as independent entities, seemingly with a purpose that in Nature the love of God finds no expression. The last two stanzas reveal the speaker’s dilemmas, *“I falter where I firmly trod, /And falling with my weight of cares /Upon the great world’s altar-stairs /That slope thro’ darkness up to God, /I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope, /And gather dust and chaff, and call /To what I feel is Lord of all, /And faintly the larger hope”*(55:13-20), in a sense of oxymoron shown by the words like “falter” vs. “firmly trod”, etc. What is “the larger hope” felt by heart is not clear.

This vague “hope” appears in Section 56 in which the hearer is different from the previous two sections: a conversation between the speaker “I” and Nature “she” retold to the hearer Hallam. Similar to the discussion about the speaker’s choice of Hallam as the hearer, Hallam in this section is the only one that the speaker can be soothed by for the time being: *“O life as futile, then, as frail! /O for thy voice to soothe and bless”* (56:25-26). However, the consolation and reassurance obtained from the dead can’t make the vaguely defined or felt hope stronger, either, shown as the lines *“what hope of answer, or redress? /Behind the veil, behind the veil”* (56:27-28). Here, the speaker’s change of the hearer from the plural hearer “we” to the late Hallam meets the speaker’s psychological need: “we” with reference to the general Victorians can’t provide consolation to one who feels more keenly and acutely about what haunts them, but, the ideal Hallam as a hearer and a diffusive power of God and Nature can provide sympathy. The change of hearers corresponds with the revelation of Tennyson’s spiritual growth.

Section 118 has the same hearer “we” as Section 54, but the theme of the two sections are contrastingly distinct: *“Contemplate all this work of Time, /The giant laboring in his youth, /As dying Nature’s earth and lime; /But trust that those we call the dead /Are breathers of an ampler day /For ever nobler ends”* (118:1-7). The speaker tries to convince the hearer

“we” that a higher form can be achieved as scientific discoveries prove, “To shape and use. Arise and fly /The reeling Faun, the sensual feast; /Move upward, working out the beast, /And let the ape and tiger die” (118:25-28). Further, in Section 124, what is called “the larger hope” in Section 56 and after the mystery as “behind the veil, behind the veil” in Section 56 is named as “The Power in darkness whom we guess”. Though it is still vaguely defined, the section finds no pessimism and struggle in Section 54, 55 and 56, and the speaker realizes his identification with the hearer “we” as he addresses “we” in his belief rather than positing “we” in a traditional belief.

2.3 The Nature of Tennyson’s Faith

In Memoriam is Tennyson’s spiritual journey which generally consists of despair, doubt, hope and faith. Since there is no clear demarcation available in this journey, *In Memoriam* is a complicated mixture of intertwined emotional and spiritual evolvment. Through the analysis of the speaker’s choices of different hearers on which the poet depends to illustrate the theme of the poem, the process of such evolvment is clear. However, it is still imperative to further study what the spiritual maturity to Tennyson is and what the nature of Tennyson’s faith is. It is this faith that guides Tennyson to struggle in the harsh dawn of a new and more positive age in which the older spiritual lights gradually fade out.²⁷

In Section 33, the speaker addresses the late Hallam as the hearer, comparing two types of faith. “Leave thou thy sister when she prays, /Her early Heaven, her happy views; /Nor thou with shadow’d hint confuse /A life that leads melodious days. /Her faith thro’ form is pure as thine, /Her hands are quicker unto good: /Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood /To which she links a truth divine” (33:5-12). This is the first type of faith which focuses on doctrines and good deeds, a faith of an external form. The speaker, however, has a preference for the second type of faith, “O thou that after toil and storm /Mayst seem to have reach’d a purer air, /Whose faith has centre everywhere, /Nor cares to fix itself to form” (33:1-4). This preference can be detected throughout the poem, but it doesn’t mean that the speaker denies the

²⁷ Willey, Basil. “*In Memoriam*” in Ross, 1973, p.153

first type of faith. On the one hand, as the speaker, in the sections of Hallam chosen as the hearer, praises Hallam as the leader of the intellectual and faith-holder in “honest doubts”, the speaker further emphasizes Hallam’s foresight as he can count “reason ripe /In holding by the law within” in the age “for want of such a type” (33:13-16); on the other hand, in this section immediately after the first part of the poem, the speaker has announced his preference for a faith that has no certain form or doctrines, as distinguished from cold dogmatism and traditional creeds, and a faith which does not shun doubt and mystery, but triumphs over them and faces the unknown with fearless heart.²⁸ This stance in faith is further developed and affirmed in sections 94, 96 and 131.

In Section 94, the speaker establishes a conversation with the singular hearer “I” and attempts to find the way to communicate with the dead Hallam who is in the speaker’s mind the one of higher spirit in a higher world. The way is sought by the comparison of two “hearts”: “pure at heart and sound in head, /With what divine affections hold” and “the heart is full of din, /And doubt beside the portal waits” (94:1-2, 9-10). The first attempt is in vain and the second attempt is successful, though the spirits with whom the living wants to communicate “can but listen at the gates, /And hear the household jar within” (94:15-16). The heart of doubts can establish the communion between the present and the future, the secular world and the other world, and the secular life and the spiritual life.

This way is further emphasized in Section 96, in which the speaker addresses to a vague hearer who insists that “doubt is Devil-born” (94:4), as “perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds, /At last he beat his music out. /There lives more faith in honest doubt, /Believe me, than in half the creeds” (96:9-12). This quatrain not only reveals the speaker’s preference for “honest doubts” to “creeds” as a way to faith but also highlights the function of mental struggle and intuitive perception in achieving faith. This is more clearly revealed in the last two quatrains of the same section, “To find a stronger faith his own; /And Power was with him in the night, /Which makes the darkness and the light, /And dwells not in the light alone, /But in the darkness and the cloud, /As over Sinai’s peaks of old, /While Israel

²⁸ Dyke, 1973, p.275

made their gods of gold, /Altho' the trumpet blew so loud" (96:17-24). "The stronger faith of Moses—found in the darkness of the cloud through commune with the Power therein dwelling—is of a higher order than the creeds, of those who walk by sight rather than by insight."²⁹ We find a summarization in Section 96 of Section 33 and 94: faith is available through profound doubts and mental struggles for the transcendental communion between the realistic life and the idealistic higher spirit named "Power", rather than through dogmas.

The way to the faith is one aspect of Tennyson's faith and another aspect of Tennyson's faith is sporadically revealed in *In Memoriam* and collectively illuminated in the Prologue of the poem: the belief in immortality and afterlife that can't be scientifically proved and known to us. This aspect of Tennyson's faith is the essential theme of *In Memoriam*, and is enunciated by the exploration of the relationship between religion and science, a concrete epitome of the relationship between God, Nature and man. In Section 36 and 114, in addition to the analysis of the sections in which the speaker chooses the singular hearer "I" and plural "we", the relationship between religion and science is discussed as the relationship between wisdom and knowledge: "For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers, /Where truth in closet words shall fail, /When truth embodied in a tale /Shall enter in at lowly doors" (36:5-8) and "For she is earthly of the mind, /But Wisdom heavenly of the soul" (114:21-22). Clearly, the speaker puts knowledge and Wisdom in the order of second-to-first, part-to-whole, earthly-to-heavenly, and affirms his attitude toward scientific developments that science doesn't contradict wisdom but is compatible with wisdom, shown as "I would the great world grew like thee, /Who grewest not alone in power /And knowledge, but by year and hour /In reverence and in charity" (114:25-28). In the prologue, knowledge is metaphorized into "broken lights" of wisdom, and "of things we see; /And yet we trust it comes from" wisdom. Therefore, Tennyson's belief in immortality and afterlife is projected in his belief that some day science and religion will become one and reveal the oneness of the universe, and as knowledge is subservient to wisdom, the present life is fragmental of the eternal process to immortality and afterlife, a belief "where we

²⁹ Ross, 1973, p.62

cannot prove.”

Many critics criticize Tennyson’s attempt to communicate the incommunicable³⁰ because the end of Tennyson’s spiritual development in *In Memoriam* is followed by no reconciliation and no resolution.³¹ Those criticisms may have their own merits, but Tennyson’s affirmation of his faith that the eternal process, which not only leads to perfection but already contains it, provides the explanation of the sufferings and pains in life and the conflicts in religion and science. Also his affirmation of such a faith injects the vein of hope in the present life. He believes that the goal of eternal process is but perfect process and even the present striving toward the goal already embodies in a germinal stage the thing it aims for.³² This theme, as Tennyson’s major concern in his life, is further developed in Tennyson’s another masterpiece *Idylls of the King*, which symbolizes his spiritual maturity and his universal concern.

In *In Memoriam*, Tennyson realizes his spiritual growth and achieves his reaffirmation of an intuitive and transcendental faith that the eternal process to immortality and perfection is the final truth and the life is only fragmental part of the eternal process, inevitable and inerasable.

³⁰ Willey, Basil. “*In Memoriam*” in Ross, 1973, p.167

³¹ Eliot, T.S. “*In Memoriam*” in Ross, 1973, p.178

³² Pattison, 1979, p.151

Chapter 3 *Idylls of the King: the Narrator and the Poet*

In Memoriam is a poem on which Tennyson spent about sixteen years and which records Tennyson's emotional and spiritual evolvment until his troubled faith in immortality and perfection is reassured and reaffirmed. After the publication, Tennyson stepped into the fourth phase of his life— "a calm and serene relationship with the outside world". His last major work, *Idylls of the King*, besides *In Memoriam*, *The Princess* and *Maud*, is composed in almost fifty years: between the publication of "Mort De Arthur" in 1833, immediately after Hallam's death, and the publication of the twelve-book-long edition of *Idylls of the King* in 1885. The poem reveals the poet's awareness of what the society demanded of an official poet, and this awareness is enhanced by the fact that in 1850 Tennyson achieved an indubitable position in the Victorian age as the Poet Laureate and he married Emily Sellwood who brought order and tranquility to his life. Therefore, if Tennyson's *In Memoriam* is the proof of his spiritual growth from the darkness of heart to the light beyond,³³ it is reasonable to take his *Idylls of the King* as extension of this light to a real human world from the larger heart of the poet, in a body of "parabolic drift".³⁴

The purpose of this chapter is to find out this extension of the theme of *In Memoriam* in *Idylls of the King* in order to see Tennyson's increasing social concerns as part of his spiritual growth. How Tennyson avoids inebriation in the medieval legends and innovates or remodels the model in a novice way is studied from the perspective of narrative techniques, as the development of the previous study of the change of the speaker's degree of involvement in "The Palace of Art" and the speaker's intentional choices of different hearers in *In Memoriam*.

3.1 Congruities between *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King*

3.1.1 Central Characters in Parallel

In the *Idylls of the King*, King Arthur is the central character and his life threads

³³ Viswas, 1987, p. V

³⁴ Tennyson, 1897, p.127

the plots in the poem. The coming of King Arthur is a mystery. This mysterious sense is enhanced by Leodogran's (the king of Cameliard and father of Guinevere) doubts and hesitant situation in marrying his daughter to King Arthur, and by Queen Bellicent's allusion of Merlin's riddling triplets: "Rain, sun, and rain! And the free blossom blows: /Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows? /From the great deep to the great deep he goes" (*Idylls*, p.23).³⁵ The birth of King Arthur is said by Merlin's mentor Bley that "Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame: /And down the wave and in the flame was borne /A naked babe" (*Idylls*, p.22), and it is as mysterious as "a night /In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost" (*Idylls*, p.21). Obviously, from the beginning of the poem, a man of mystery is created, and this sets the mysterious tone of the whole poem which is consistent with the poet's vague description of the vows King Arthur used to bond his knights and stabilize the kingdom: "Swear on the field of death a deathless love. /And Arthur said, 'man's word is God in man: /Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death" (*Idylls*, p.15).

Tennyson once said that he couldn't see God in nature but in man, and Arthur's vow is the revelation of Tennyson's belief. Further on, this revelation makes us recall the beginning lines of the prologue in *In Memoriam* as an eulogy for the late Arthur H. Hallam: "Strong Son of God, immortal Love, /Whom we, that have not seen thy face, /By faith, and faith alone, embrace, /Believing where we cannot prove" (Prologue: 1-4). King Arthur is also a man of faith in God and Love, similar to Arthur in *In Memoriam* as "strong son of God, immortal love" (ibid: 1-4). It is reasonable to say that to Tennyson King Arthur is also a man of diffusive power mixed with God and Nature as Arthur in *In Memoriam*. Implied by Swinburne's accusation of Tennyson to change the original plot in the Arthurian stories in which King Arthur was the father of the incestuous son Modred, who later rebelled against King Arthur, Tennyson intentionally avoids the king's relation to any demerit because King Arthur and Arthur H. Hallam have the same first name. And this avoidance is also used to impress the reader of the similarity between the two ideal men in the poet's opinion.

This similarity between King Arthur and the poet's beloved friend also finds expression in the ending of the poem, "The Passing of Arthur", which is also a

³⁵ Alfred, Lord Tennyson. 1969

mystery. King Arthur's death is prophesied by Merlin that he won't die but in the company of three queens continues his life in the other world, as "From the great deep to the great deep he goes" (*Idylls*, p.23). Tennyson affirms that Death transplants the virtues of the dead in the other world and believes "he lives in thee, and there /I find him worthier to be loved" (*In Memoriam*, Prologue: 39-40), in which "thee" refers to God, indicating that God in the poem is different from any god in religious doctrine but the Power that guarantees immortality and perfection. This is the first congruity between the two poems: the central characters are parallel.

3.1.2 Thematic Congruity in *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King*

Another major congruity is the thematic one. "The whole," Tennyson said, "is the dream of man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin."³⁶ This statement compactly summarizes all the sections of the poem *Idylls of the King*: the "man" invariably refers to King Arthur, the symbol of the Soul, the Spiritual, and the ideal; and the "one sin" indicates the sinful love between Guinevere and Lancelot, respectively, a better form of sensuous Vivien and degraded Tristram. But sin is the general term for human weakness that contradicts the ideal and finally bears down the ideal. In this sense, Tennyson justifies his comment on the poem "the sense and the soul at war".

In the same group with the ideal man King Arthur are two knights: Gareth and Galahad. Gareth is a young man of self-confidence, who is capable of triumphing over Sir Kay's contempt, Lynette's taunts and over the trials, and is a man of faith in King Arthur's vows: "Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness, /And, loving, utter faithfulness in love, /And uttermost obedience to the king" (*Idylls*, p.43). He is the symbol of the prosperity of the kingdom. However, Galahad, another Gareth, of purity and innocence, faithful, unselfish, and ready to lose himself at the service of others, is criticized: Galahad is pure in the worldly sense of the word, but it is the false motivation that makes his earthly happiness and glory turn to dust, and his withdrawal from the world marks his

³⁶ Tennyson, 1897, p.127

acceptance of defeat.³⁷ This criticism is pertinent to what the poem implies— only King Arthur is totally a blameless ideal man, and the rest of his knights are only contradiction to his idealism, due to personal weakness or false interpretation of the ideal. This point is clearly revealed in the section “The Holy Grail”.

“The Holy Grail” is a dialogue between Sir Percivale and his monk friend Ambrosius about the various experiences of the questers for the Holy Grail: Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale, Sir Gawain, Sir Lancelot and Sir Bors. The five visions are misinterpretations of the Holy Grail and its quest, due to the questers’ own natures and circumstances and the perfection or imperfection of their Christianity.³⁸ Sir Galahad’s quest is a success and his vision of the Holy Grail is the holiest one, but only a consequence of the sacrifice of earthly pleasure and obligation and of the sacrifice that King Arthur opposes. Sir Percivale’s quest is a failure because of physical and volitional weakness and his quest ends just at the moment Galahad disappears in the light of the Holy Grail. Sir Lancelot suffers from madness which is caused by the tormenting conscience of the sinful love between him and Guinevere, but still as one of the bravest and mightiest knight of King Arthur, he sees the Holy Cup of healing and admits that the quest is not for him. Sir Bors sees the vision of “a mocking fire” and “a greatest stone” that traps him in difficulty and darkness, as a symbol of the perdition of King Arthur’s vows. Lastly, Sir Gawain’s vision is the sensuous one and what he achieves in the quest is “a silk pavilion in a field, /And merry maidens in it” (*Idylls*, p.233), that is to say, sensual pleasure.

On the whole, the five visions parallel the content of the other sections: “Balin and Balan” represents the disastrous function of personal weakness in the ruin of one’s ideal and faith; “Pelleas and Ettarre” contains the element of evanescence by personal weakness and disloyalty and betrayal by both his naïve ideal and other people’s behavior; and “The Last Tournament” which appears after “Pelleas and Ettarre” exposes the degradation of Tristram who sings a music that breaks King Arthur’s and advocates free love that undermines the stability of the kingdom.

³⁷ Pinion, 1984, p.182

³⁸ Tennyson, 1897, p.63

Tristram is invalid in coping with the times and then surrenders to his own volition rather than King Arthur's vows, as Modred sells himself to the pursuit of power and fame, Merlin gives himself up to the seduction of Vivien, Pelleas and Balin yield to passionate feelings, while, Lancelot is blinded by his ideal of youth and beauty presented by Guinevere.

"The Holy Grail" collectively reveals the theme of the ideal's destruction in a fleshly and selfish world, and Tennyson affirms his spiritual maturity. The poet suggests that a life of no vision, which itself is one with God and the divine, is ineluctable before one fulfills what the present life requires, rather than a quest for the thing beyond his power that consequently becomes an escape from reality. This suggestion is made through King Arthur, who always opposes the Holy Quest and insists: "Who may not wander from the allotted field /Before his work be done; but being done" and "In moments when he feels he cannot die, /And knows himself no vision to himself, /Nor the high God a vision nor that One /Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have seen" (*Idylls*, p.238). This is also what Tennyson believes will come some day—the oneness of God and man and immortality and perfection, as illustrated in *In Memoriam*. The present life is lived by the people with a faith in the ideal of manhood and love and with a belief in the eternal process to immortality and perfection. Such a life is worth living and reveals the eternal process. The "eternal process", the guiding spirit of *In Memoriam*, is at work in the *Idylls of the King* as well.³⁹ This is the thematic congruity between the two poems and also the whole spiritual journey Tennyson goes through: *In Memoriam* witnesses a personal growth from a perplexed mind to a reassured mind, while, *Idylls of the King* witnesses the approach of the poet to the society and reveals the poet's social commitment which has already been flowering in *In Memoriam*.

As Tennyson remarked his *Idylls of the King*: "it is not the history of one man or of one generation but of a whole cycle of generation",⁴⁰ the universality of the theme in *Idylls of the King* is emphasized, and this emphasis manifests that based on the medieval materials as a matter of fact, Tennyson doesn't mean to withdraw himself to

³⁹ Pattison, 1979, p.150

⁴⁰ Tennyson, 1897, p.127

a remoter time and a more isolated world from the Victorian Age. He interprets rather than to escape the larger spiritual crisis of his culture, hoping in the *Idylls of the King* to give his vision of modern society perspective, objectivity, and dramatic substance.⁴¹ This point is enhanced by the poet's son Hallam Tennyson's remark in *Memoir*, "On Malory, and later, on Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*, and on his own imagination, my father said that he chiefly founded his epic; he has made the old legends his own, restored the idealism, and infused into them a spirit of modern thought and an ethical significance, setting his characters in a rich and varied landscape; as indeed otherwise these archaic stories would not have appealed to the modern world at large".⁴² This statement not only claims the modern indication of the poem *Idylls of the King* based on the medieval Arthurian legends, but also emphasizes the originality of the poem, both thematically and artistically. The critic F.B. Pinion also generalizes the differences between Tennyson's *Idylls* and Thomas Malory's *Le Mort Darthur* and arrives at the conclusion that "Tennyson makes changes as he thinks fit, for both artistic and spiritual reasons".⁴³ The "artistic" reasons, though, in the preceding criticism, not clearly illustrated, are the reasons that enunciate the theme and facilitate the narration in a modern way, in view of the times Tennyson lived in. Generally speaking, the artistic innovations find expression in the narrative process: the psychological approach to the characters and the narrator comment.⁴⁴

3.2 Innovations in the Narrative of *Idylls of the King*

3.2.1 Psychological Approach to the Character

In view of the acknowledged fact that *Idylls of the King* is a narrative poem and has elements of the literary genre of fiction in which the narrator functions more or less similar to a speaker in poetry, it is more proper and reasonable to adopt the term "narrator" than "speaker" in the analysis of *Idylls of the King* in this part of the thesis. The narrator of the *Idylls* is omniscient and capable of providing information of all

⁴¹ Buckley, 1960, p.192

⁴² Tennyson, 1897, p.121-122

⁴³ Pinion, 1984, p.173

⁴⁴ <http://www.Anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/NarrativeSituation01.htm>

details; he never shuns making full use of his omniscience about the time sequences, the characters' personality and both the inner and outer world in which the characters move. In a narrative text dominated by an omniscient narrator, usually it is easy for the narrator to freely go into and out of the inner world of the characters, not to be blamed because of the authorial intrusions to the text.⁴⁵ In the *Idylls*, the most typical revelation of this omniscience is the psychological intrusion to the characters' mind, purposefully, at the interval of narration.

In the very beginning of the poem, "The Coming of Arthur," the narrator, after introducing the king to the narration, describes King Arthur's thinking as follows: "... for saving I be join'd /To her that is the fairest under heaven, /I seem as nothing in the mighty world, /And cannot will my will, nor work my work /Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm /Victor and Lord. But were I join'd with her, /Then might we live together as one life, /And reigning with one will in everything /Have power on this dark land to lighten it, /And power on this dead world to make it live" (*Idylls*, p.13). This illustration of King Arthur's mind reveals the purpose of his intention to marry Guinevere and his spiritual isolation among his knights as well. This psychological analysis of King Arthur sets the general pattern of the narration: an ideal marriage, connected with the prosperity of a nation, is deluded, shown as the ruin of the nation, and King Arthur's attempt to combine personal happiness and national prosperity as a whole is doomed to fail. And the ideal soul and the fleshly sense represented respectively by King Arthur and Guinevere, in an attempted combination, conflict with each other. The narrator not only spreads the seed of idealism in the beginning but foreshadows failure and disillusionment as well, shown by King Arthur's speechless thinking and the "dead world" that needs healing and saving.

The psychological approach is often employed to the characters that have significance in revealing the theme of the *Idylls*. The second expression of this narrative technique is found in the section "Merlin and Vivien" after the exposure of the sinful love between Lancelot and Guinevere indirectly ruins the knights Balan and Balin. Merlin, the mage of King Arthur, "mutter'd in himself" after Vivien accused

⁴⁵ 申丹, 1998, p.242

Lancelot and Guinevere of sinful love and disloyalty, "Being so bitter: for fine plots may fail, /Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face /With colours of the heart that are not theirs. /I will not let her know: nine tithes of times /Face-flatterer and backbiter are the same. /And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime /Are pronest to it, and impute themselves, /Wanting the mental range; or low desire /Not to feel lowest makes them level all; /Yea, they would pare the mountain to the plain, /To leave an equal baseness; and in this /Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find /Some stain or blemish in a name of note, /Not grieving that their greatest are so small, /Inflate themselves with some insane delight, /And judge all nature from her feet of clay, /Without the will to lift their eyes, and see /Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual fire, /And touching other words. I am weary of her" (*Idylls*, p.165-166). In his words, we can see that Merlin is an impartial man of insight, pointing out that man and woman of virtues or no virtues are the like because the spiritual is the same and lashing that the crowd fail to find the real truth in reality. Therefore, it is congruous with Tennyson's belief in the reality of the unseen as revealed in "The Holy Grail",⁴⁶ and the narrator tells his mind through the character Merlin who is also a bard of King Arthur. Of thematic significance, it is proper for Merlin to speak out his mind without addressing any actual characters because they lack insight and impartiality in the spiritual, and it enhances the revelation of the theme as the psychological analysis of Merlin's mind appears between the dialogues of Merlin and Vivien.

Finally, in "Pelleas and Ettarre", the narrator exerts his omniscience again and speaks out Pelleas' mind when this character saw Gawain and Ettarre sleeping side by side: "And so went back, and seeing them yet in sleep /Said, 'ye, that so dishallow the holy sleep, /Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword, and thought, / 'What! Slay a sleeping knight? The King hath bound /And sworn me to this brotherhood; again, / 'Alas that ever a knight should be so false" (*Idylls*, p.252). Pelleas feels deceived by King Arthur's vows on knighthood and betrayed by his ideal of love originated from his false admiration for Queen Guinevere who wasn't as pure as thought by. And he is in dilemma: on the one hand, he feels bound by his vow to the King as a knight; on the other hand, he is shocked by the falsehood of Gawain who should abide by his own promise as a knight. Therefore,

⁴⁶ Tennyson, 1897, p.90

Pelleas' belief in the vows and knighthood is swayed and he is at the edge of disillusionment, which does come when he is reassured of the reality of the sinful love between Lancelot and Guinevere. Pelleas becomes the typical example of disillusionment, and foreshadows the chaotic situation after "The Last Tournament" where Lancelot sees "the laws that ruled the tournament /Broken" (*Idylls*, p.262) and Tristram degrades and becomes the victim of lawless sensuality and disloyalty.

The three examples of psychological analysis of the characters' mind all have significance to the development of the narration and the revelation of the theme; and besides these, there are also some parts in the same category which function as a means to break the monotony caused by long descriptions of dialogues and add the sense of entertainment by the dramatic descriptions of the characters' inner world, like in "Gareth and Lynette", "Geraint and Enid" and "Guinevere". What is more, the psychological approach at the same time shortens the distance between the characters and the audience, between the medieval materials and the modern situation ever when the narrator releases his intimacy with the narration and suddenly stops his authority over the narrative by plundering into the characters' mind. Therefore, Tennyson's attempt to add a modern implication to the archaic materials is heightened through the occasionally shortened distance with the audience and the comparatively enlarged distance with the narrative, in concord with Tennyson's trend to social commitment. The effect of this narrative technique is also achieved in the employment of narrator comment in the *Idylls*.

3.2.2 Narrator Comment

In a narrative text, there exist three persons who are connected with the creation of a narrative text and also closely related to one another: real author, implicit author and narrator; the implicit author refers to the image of an author constructed by the reader through the apprehension of the text and the second-self of the real author revealed in the concrete text. When the narrator is omniscient, the distance between the narrator and the implicit author is greatly shortened; while, if the distance between the implicit author and the real author is minor, it is reasonable to take the narrator as

an authorial narrator or the spokesman of the real author.⁴⁷ This modern narrative theory has great significance to this thesis, for in the analysis of “The Palace of Art”, *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King*, the speaker or narrator is posed in a position equal to the poet (the real author of the text), as a conclusion based on the study of the poet’s ideological tendencies and his poems, and the theory makes it possible to study Tennyson’s poems from the perspective of narrative forms, including the narrator comments which are being discussed. The narrator comments in the *Idylls* reveal the aspects of Tennyson’s spiritual growth and facilitate the revelation of the aspects.

When the narrator moves the narrative from the flashback of Geraint’s happy marriage to Enid to Geraint’s tormenting perilous journey with Enid to the court of Camelot, a narrator comment is inserted: “O purblind race of miserable men, /How many among us at this very hour /Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves, /By taking true for false, or false for true; /Here, thro’ the feeble twilight of this world /Groping, how many, until we pass and reach /That other, where we see as we are seen” (*Idylls*, p.95). This comment distinguishes itself from the narrative by its position detached from the sections and its present tense which becomes distinct in a poem mainly written in the past tense. Another important reason to mark it as a comment is the use of the pronoun “we”, referring to a plural audience, including the narrator, the characters in the poem and mostly the reader, and the universality of the situation in which man mistakes the truth for false and the false for truth is heightened. This comment not only functions as a prelude to the “twilight of this world” (*ibid*: p.95) in which Geraint almost exhausts himself to death in jousts and puts Enid and his principedom in danger, but also has significance to the whole poem: Balin and Balan’s being mistakenly killed by each other, the questers’ misapprehension of the Holy Grail, Pelleas’ mistake of superficial beauty for the purity of the spiritual and Tristram’s mistake in taking hedonism as escape from the turmoil. In the poem, no character perceives the real of the “unseen” that King Arthur symbolizes but only is entangled in the transient truth or false of the present life. Similarly, both Tennyson’s contemporaries and the generations after, to whom

⁴⁷ 申丹, 1998, p.229-232

appearance and reality seldom coincide,⁴⁸ also lack the insight to see through reality the eternal truth, so here is Tennyson's attempt to make a direct moral commentary. The enlarged distance between the narrator and the narrative and the enhanced intimacy between the narrator and the reader contribute to the achievement of moral functions of the poem and therefore the poem is added with originality.

In the same section, another narrator comment is made, "But as a man to whom a dreadful loss /Falls in a far land and he knows it not, /But coming back he learns it, and the loss /So pains him that he sickens nigh to death" (*Idylls*, p.109), which is also an expression of the narrator's power over the narrative, naturally transiting from commentary to narration. Such kind of narrator comments can be found in "Lancelot and Elaine", like "But she was happy enough and shook it off. /As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us" (*Idylls*, p.193), and "As when we dwell upon a word we know, /Repeating, till the work we know so well /Becomes a wonder, and we know not why" (*Idylls*, p.200). With regard to the second quotation here, besides the same function of breaking the monotony of dialogic narrative and enhancing the communion between the narrator and the reader, it also exposes the identity of the narrator with the poet who once said he would lose himself in the wind after repeating his own name several times unconsciously and mysteriously.⁴⁹

The last obvious narrator comment which is characterized by the use of the present tense and the pronoun "we" finds a variable in "Guinevere": a commentary in the past tense but strongly impressive as a narrative intrusion: "... for in those days /No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn; /But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him /By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall, /Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect, /And he was answer'd softly by the king /And all his Table" (*Idylls*, p.282). It is a report rather than a description, telling the reader the customs of the medieval knight life and implying the difference between the present and "those days" which indicates a temporal distance between the narrator and the narrated event.

Consequently, it is clear that the narrator comments create a change of the distance between the narrator and the narrative, the narrator and the reader, for the

⁴⁸ Buckley, 1960, p.178

⁴⁹ Tennyson, 1897, p.11

purpose of conveying the theme of the poem to the modern reader. By constant reminding of the time and situational detachment from the narrative, the reader's indulgence either in romances or in monotony of didactic moral lessons are avoided, and T.S. Eliot's accusation of the *Idylls* as something "suitable for a girls' school"⁵⁰ becomes inaccurate.

In conclusion, Tennyson's *Idylls* is not merely a narrative simply modeled on Thomas Malory's *Le Mort d'Arthur* or some other assumed materials, but a great poem that consists of the poet's maintaining concerns about man, society and the universe, and of the poet's moral indication to the modern times. As *In Memoriam* records the poet's spiritual growth, *Idylls of the King* fulfills the poet's social commitment as the extension of the spiritual maturity. The creativity in the narrative forms shown as the psychological approach and narrator comments illustrates Tennyson's extraordinary powers over situation and mood, over what is narrated and what is really implied, and facilitates the revelation of the theme of the poem: the significance of the spirit and the spiritual values.

⁵⁰ Ricks, 1989, p.258

Conclusion

Poetry, if it is to last, must deal with the truths that are neither old nor new—truths that each generation in the cycles of mankind rediscovers for itself.⁵¹ This generalizes the major reason why some poems can become eternal and are loved by generations—the universality of truth incised and renewable, i.e. the depth of thoughts and the demand of the poet to be capable of profound thinking, rather than shrouded in either deliberate diction, or hollow personal emotions, or thoughts that serve the hour. According to this understanding of poetry, Shakespeare's revelation of human beings' desire for the eternity of beauty and youth in his sonnet 18 has contributed to the eternity of the poem. Emily Dickinson's poems, which are uniquely ungrammatical in syntax, announce the poetess' mind and her meditation on religion, death, immortality, love and nature, and it is the universal thematic concerns that win Emily Dickinson renown in the history of American poetry. Similarly, Tennyson, sculptor of the Victorian poetry, becomes the figure in the limelight of the literary critical circle, in view of his maintaining concerns with the nature of man and the universe that lingers ever in the mind of human beings. Tennyson's poems function as a guide not only to the Victorians but also to the coming generations.

The themes of death, love and isolation in the universe that man experiences, find expression in his early poems, like "The Vision of Sin", "The Two Voices" and the discussed "The Palace of Art", which reveals Tennyson's premature obsession with the conflict between the microcosm and the macrocosm. *In Memoriam*, as a poem of spiritual quest,⁵² witnesses the process of Tennyson's spiritual growth from desperate isolation to social commitment. In the poem Tennyson reaches the height of his ideological profundity—the existence of immortality and perfection which can be revealed in the life of sufferings, pains and confusions, embodied in nature, and can be achieved in an eternal process, and he reaffirms himself as well as his contemporaries of the faith which is transcendental and distinctive.

Tennyson expresses his concerns with the society in his poems. For example, *The*

⁵¹ Gwynn, 1972, p.47

⁵² Johnson, E.D.H. "In Memoriam: The Way of the Poet" in Ross, 1973, p.228

Princess is an exploration of the relationship between man and woman and a discussion about the women education, and *Maud* is a poem more biographical than *In Memoriam* and further explores the relationship between man and the society. Tennyson fully expresses his social obligations, both as a man of larger heart and an official poet, in *Idylls of the King*. This long-drawn-out creation of the *Idylls* reveals the dilemma of a nineteenth-century Romantic intent on what Wordsworth called “some of glory”, deeply troubled by the inability to find the local habitation and the name, and desperately persisting in the hope that all will be well, as Wordsworth describes himself at the beginning of *The Prelude*.⁵³ However, Tennyson heightens the significance of the spiritual values as embodied in King Arthur’s vows, rather than the chaotic situation in which King Arthur and his knights lived and the social and religious crises that the transitional Victorian age went through. Tennyson’s poems, therefore, become “the note which rings from a great mind,”⁵⁴ and Tennyson himself becomes one of the prophets—a witness for God and for immortality.⁵⁵ And this alone arouses the interest of the modern reader in his poems and renews the instructive functions of his poems.

This thesis approaches Tennyson’s three major works “The Palace of Art”, *In Memoriam*, and *Idylls of the King*, from the perspectives of relation between the speaker and the poet, to be specific, the relation between the speaker and the poem, between the speaker and the hearer, and narrative forms, which reveal Tennyson’s spiritual growth. In “The Palace of Art”, the pattern formed by the change of the speaker’s degree of involvement in the poem, from immediate involvement to detachment, affects the distance change between the speaker and the reader, the reader and the poem, which goes in concord with the poet’s complicated attitudes toward aesthetic life and social life as well as his dilemma in deciding which should be preferred. In the beginning aesthetic life is preferred, symbolized as the artist’s devotion to the soul, and gradually social life is favored, symbolized as the soul’s despair in isolation from the human world. Involvement and detachment in the poem

⁵³ Thomson, 1986, p.199

⁵⁴ Longinus, *On the Sublime* in 姚乃强, 2003, p.101

⁵⁵ Dyke, 1973, p.254

coincide with the poet's stance in life.

The analysis of the speaker's choices of different hearers in *In Memoriam* manifests Tennyson's power over the speaker who can address the specific hearer to illuminate the process of emotional evolvment and spiritual evolvment. The speaker's choice of the impersonal hearers properly illustrates the poet's inadequacy to address any person of his despair and grief immediately after the death of the loved A.H. Hallam and reveals his inclination to be isolated and to taste the grief in the meditation on death. The speaker's choice of Hallam as the hearer, on the one hand, exemplifies the features of a poem as an elegy, and on the other hand, reveals the emotional evolvment through the fruitful contemplation on philosophical topics as the relation between God, Nature and man, and the relation between immortality and the present life. The analysis of the two choices mentioned above reveals the process of the poet's emotional evolvment. The speaker's choices of the singular hearer "I" and the plural hearer "we" enhance the sense of conversation in *In Memoriam*, the one is monologue and the other conversation. The purpose is to be consistent with the poet's meditation on what is highly incommunicable, and either in tumultuous doubts or in tranquil contemplation, addressing oneself, it is easier to make the incommunicable communicable. As a result, the speaker's choices facilitate the poet's emotional and spiritual evolvment and contribute to the success of the poem, both thematically and artistically.

Finally, *Idylls of the King* is explored from the perspectives of the narrator's intrusion into the characters' psychological world and the narrator's comments on the situations. In the *Idylls*, the omniscient narrator makes full use of his advantage by psychological analysis of the characters and comments on situations. Both of the narrative techniques change the distance between the narrator and the character concerned, between the narrator and the reader. The shortened relation between the narrator and the reader and the enlarged distance between the narrator and the character, coincide with the poet's intention to withdraw as much as from the ancient or the imaginative world but to participate in a discourse between the narrator and the reader in reality. Tennyson's detachment from the materials clarifies his modern

implication of the Arthurian legends to the modern people. Actually the narrative techniques fulfill their assigned mission, as innovative as the features of the idyll which is an amalgam of epic, romance, allegory and idyll.⁵⁶

In an age of dull, heavy, faithless materialism, Tennyson's poetry blows like a pure wind from a loftier and serener height, bringing life and joy into that narcotic air. His face looks out upon these darkening days—grave, strong, purified by conflict, lighted by the inward glow of faith.⁵⁷ It is the best possible conclusion to this thesis, which will do justice to Tennyson in the past as well as in the present time; and the openness of Tennyson's poetry makes itself renewable and everlasting.

⁵⁶ Pattison, 1979, p.146

⁵⁷ Dyke, 1973, p.254

Bibliography

Primary Sources

1. Brown, E.K. & Bailey, J.O. 1962. *Victorian Poetry*. New York: The Ronald Press Company.
2. Ross, Robert H. 1973. *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, an Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
3. Tennyson, Alfred. 1969. *Idylls of the King*. New York: Airmont Publishing Company, Inc.
4. Tennyson, Hallam. 1897. *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son*, vol. I & II. London: Macmillan and CO., Limited.

Secondary Sources

1. Abrams, M.H. etc. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
2. Aristotle. 2003. *Poetics*, XVII in Yao Naiqiang: *Western Classsics in Literary Criticism from Plato to Henry James*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. p.24-63.
3. Bradley, A.C. 1973. "The Structure of *In Memoriam*" in Robert H. Ross: *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, an Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. p.193-200.
4. Buckley, J.H. 1960. *Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
5. Collins, Philip. 1981. "Tennyson In and Out of Time" in H. Tennyson: *Studies in Tennyson*. The Macmillan Press LTD. p.131-154.
6. Dyke, Henry Van. 1973. *The Poetry of Tennyson*. New York: Haskell House Publisher's LTD.
7. Eliot, T.S. 1973. "*In Memoriam*" in Robert H. Ross: *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, an Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. p.175-178.

8. Gwynn, Stephen. 1972. *Tennyson: A Critical Study*. Folcroft Library Edition.
9. Hasling, John. 1982. *The Message, the Speaker, the Audience*, 3rd ed. McGraw-Hill Book Company.
10. Hunter, J. Paul. 1986. *The Norton Introduction to Poetry*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
11. Johnson, E.D.H. 1973. "In Memoriam: The Way of the Poet" in Robert H. Ross: *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, an Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources; Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. p.219-228.
12. Longinus. 2003. "On the Sublime" in Yao Naiqiang: *Western Classics in Literary Criticism from Plato to Henry James*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. p.93-136.
13. Mason, Michael. 1981. "The Timing of *In Memoriam*" in H. Tennyson: *Studies in Tennyson*. The Macmillan Press LTD. p.155-168.
14. Mattes, Eleanor B. 1973. "Further Reassurance in Herschel's Natural Philosophy and Chamber's Vestiges of Creation" in Robert H. Ross: *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, an Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. p.126-137.
15. Mattes, Eleanor B. 1973. "The Challenge of Geology to Belief in Immortality and a God of Love" in Robert H. Ross: *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, an Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. p.120-126.
16. Montague, Gene. 1972. *Poetry and a Principle*. J.B. Lippincott Company.
17. Pattison, Robert. 1979. *Tennyson and Tradition*. Harvard University Press.
18. Pinion, F.B. 1984. *A Tennyson Companion: Life and Works*. London: Macmillan.
19. Priestley, F.E.L. 1973. *Language and Structure in Tennyson's Poetry*. London: Andre Deutsch Limited.
20. Ricks, Christopher. 1989. *Tennyson*, 2nd edition. London: The Macmillan Press LTD.
21. Robson, W.W. 1981. "The Present Value of Tennyson" in H. Tennyson: *Studies in Tennyson*. The Macmillan Press LTD. p.45-65.

22. Tennyson, H. 1981. *Studies in Tennyson*. The Macmillan Press LTD.
23. Thomson, Alastair W. 1986. *The Poetry of Tennyson*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
24. Viswas, Dr. Asha. 1987. *Tennyson's Romantic Heritage*. Shalabh Prakashan.
25. Weiser, Davis K. 1987. *Mind in Character: Shakespeare's Speaker in the Sonnets*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
26. Willey, Basil. 1973. "In Memoriam" in Robert H. Ross: *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: In Memoriam, an Authorative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. p.153-174.
27. 何兆熊, 2000, 《新编语用学概要》, 上海外语教育出版社。
28. 申丹, 1998, 《叙述学与小说文体学研究》, 北京大学出版社。
29. 姚乃强, 2003, 《西方经典文论选读: 从柏拉图到亨利·詹姆斯》, 上海外语教育出版社。