POEM, THEME, AND ILLUSTRATION IN
THE MOXON TENNYSON

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by

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ABSTRACT

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In 1857, when Moxon produced an illustrated volume of Tennyson's poems, he introduced the designs of Pre-Raphaelite artists Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais, whose designs represented the new concept of narrative illumination: elucidation of the poems by portrayal of both literal and thematic elements. The illustrations of these three artists reflect their contrasting approaches to the art of illustration: Rossetti sought to present pictorial allegory, Hunt combined various thematic elements into a single design, and Millais attempted to focus upon the motivating idea of a theme. Their innovative designs, in contrast to the traditional narrative illustrations in the Moxon Tennyson, give the volume a dissonant, uneven quality; but the book's significance is historical rather than aesthetic, for it represents the development of thematic unity in the visual-verbal presentation of literature.
In 1857, the new concept of narrative illumination in book illustration was introduced when Edward Moxon, Tennyson's publisher, produced an illustrated edition of Tennyson's poems. Severely criticized for its unevenness but praised for the striking originality of certain of its illustrations, this volume has received considerable attention from prominent twentieth century historians such as David Bland, Raymond Watkinson, and Malcolm Salaman. Bland, who discusses the unevenness of Moxon's Tennyson, explains that "it contained work by eight different artists ... engraved by five different engravers, so it is not surprising that there is little harmony either between the designs themselves or between the illustrations and the book."¹ Despite its disharmony, however, the book has "an epoch-making character," according to Salaman, because of the designs of its Pre-Raphaelite illustrators—Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais. In all of their designs, Salaman states, "there is genuine poetic interpretation, with freshness of pictorial invention and vividness of suggestion."² These poetic and innovative qualities of the designs are praised by Watkinson also, for he regards them as a vast improvement over previous illustrations in which themes from literature were handled with little understanding of their meaning.³ Watkinson, however, does not attempt to study the visual-verbal relationship of illustration and poem, nor does Bland or Salaman make such an attempt. Instead, these
writers follow the general direction of interest indicated in 1894 by George Somes Layard, author of the first significant work on Moxon's Tennyson.

Layard's book, *Tennyson and his Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators*, is subtitled "a book about a book," for it is just that. In his preface, Layard states that his book is written "for the purpose of indicating the methods by which a book may be made to yield discursive and innumerable delights ..." Layard's book contains anecdotes and comments about the publication of Moxon's Tennyson, but his primary concerns are its illustrations *per se* and its three Pre-Raphaelite illustrators. Therefore, since the subject never has been thoroughly explored, my discussion of Moxon's Tennyson will focus upon the poems, their themes, and the manner in which these were illustrated by Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais.

These artists, men of contrasting personalities and ideas, used widely different approaches to the art of illustration, and their designs reflect these contrasts. Perhaps each man's collective designs would not be so distinctive were it not for Tennyson's laissez-faire attitude; for the poet, according to Layard, was "completely indifferent to the graphic arts." Thus the artists were free to select at will the passages they wished to illustrate, and to interpret these passages in accordance with their own ideas. Apparently, save for two or three exceptions, Tennyson was satisfied with the
graphic interpretation of his work, and it is probable that he truly would be amazed could he know of the controversy that even today surrounds Rossetti's design for "Palace of Art." Some critics herald this design as memorable, others complain that it contradicts the text; and unfortunately, their intense interest in Rossetti's design has diverted their attention from other, equally important illustrations in Moxon's Tennyson.
It is interesting to note some varied comments about Rossetti's ideas of art, his approach to illustration, and his design for "Palace of Art." Of Rossetti's concept of art, Watkinson remarks:

He saw art as a key to the expression and discovery of ideas, universal or personal, poetic, dramatic, rich, strange, mysterious; art as a medium in which the individual could develop and expand emotional responses, emotional states otherwise circumscribed.

Bland comments also about Rossetti's theories of art, and he seems to approve of the design for "Palace of Art:"

Of course it is Rossetti's designs that make Tennyson's memorable... and they gave a great deal of trouble to the Dalziels as well as causing some ill-feeling between them and the artist. But they show a wholly new conception of illustration which emerges too from a remark of Rossetti's in a letter to Allingham: 'I... fancy I shall try the Vision of Sin and Palace of Art, etc.--those where one can allegorize on one's own hook on the subject of the poem, without killing for oneself and everyone a distinct idea of the poet's. This, I fancy, is always the upshot of illustrated editions, ... unless where the poetry is so absolutely narrative as in the old ballads...'. Rossetti was illustrating another man's poetry and the result in this case seems to be something far from Tennyson's intention.

Layard objects to this departure from the poet's intention. "Rossetti," he claims, "at times contradicts the text." Nor does Layard take Rossetti seriously as an illustrator, for this writer states:

Doubly fastidious over the guise which his work assumed at the hands of the wood engravers, he corrected, altered, protested, and sent back blocks to be amended...
from which he was not to be moved; his own habits, from which he was not to be jogged.

The mere fact that a man's drawings are reproduced in a book, and labelled with the names of the literary productions that find a place in that book, is not enough in itself to constitute that man an illustrator in the truest sense of the term. ... Rossetti, even when professing to be so occupied, gave freest reins to his imagination.

In this observation, Layard seems to imply that Rossetti and the Dalziels quarrelled about interpretation of the poems, but in truth the disagreements arose from the quality of the Dalziels' wood engravings. As did Hunt and Millais, Rossetti sketched his designs on the wood block rather than on paper, and he was naturally disturbed when his drawings were altered in the carving process. The end result, of course, is that the illustration in the book is thus once removed from the original work of the artist. The distortion of Rossetti's drawings is noted by Bland, who quotes Ruskin as saying that the designs "are terribly spoiled in the cutting ... The whole work should be taken up again and done by line-engraving." Also quoting Ruskin, Salaman states in British Book Illustration Yesterday and To-day [sic]: "In the cutting, ... the best part, the expression of feature, is entirely lost." Actually, much of the distortion was the fault of Rossetti himself, according to Salaman, for with his customary lack of self-discipline, he used not only pen-and-ink, but also chalk and wash, media not easily transposed into the linear patterns
present in wood engravings. However, despite the possible inaccuracies of reproduction, one can see why Rossetti's design for "Palace of Art" impressed both Layard and Bland as a departure from Tennyson's ideas. Layard, for example, objects to the fact that "Rossetti ignores the spirit of "Palace of Art." "He changes the angel into a voluptuous human," not just kissing, but almost devouring, "the fair face of the lovely martyr."\textsuperscript{12}

Layard's point is valid, for the drawing indeed appears to ignore the ideas expressed in "Palace of Art." This poem explores the artist's or poet's dilemma of withdrawal versus commitment, and presents also a study of derangement. Man, states the narrator, does not live by art alone. Art cannot be self-sufficient, and unless the artist brings real people into his art, he will go mad.

Ward Hellstrom, who writes \textit{On the Poems of Tennyson}, sees the palace as "a pleasure house for intellectual joys." Hellstrom continues:\textsuperscript{13}

The poet may not isolate himself in such a palace because, as Tennyson tells us in the introduction, equally important to the beautiful is the good.

... In the fourth year the soul fell. The preceding section is full of the language of hubris: the soul speaks of her isolation as "God-like," while men are no more than "darkening droves of swine." Her sin is ... that she dwelt in a palace of art isolated from mankind.

... The palace must not be destroyed because it is a palace of art, and the soul is both soul and artist.
The palace of art is a palace of beauty to which others may be brought by the proper kind of poet, that is, by the poet who loves his fellow man and wishes to bring them to the beautiful.

In the following passages, the ideas discussed above appear:

A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain, That did love beauty only,...
And knowledge for its beauty, or if Good Good only for its beauty, seeing not That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are three sisters That dote upon each other, friends to man, Living together under the same roof, And never can be sunder'd without tears [4-14].

My soul would live alone unto herself In her high palace there, [11-12].

"O all things fair to sate my various eyes"
"My Gods, with whom I dwell!" [193-6].

"O God-like isolation which art mine, I can but count thee perfect gain, What time I watch the darkening droves of swine That range on yonder plain [197-200].

The madness begins:

"I take possession of man's mind and deed I care not what the sects may brawl, I sit as God holding no form of creed, But contemplating all." [209-12].

The soul spends three years alone in the palace, and there is a suggestion of madness in her "solemn mirth" [217]. In the fourth year, she definitely is mad, for "she fell, / Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears, / Struck thro' with pangs of hell" [217-207]. The soul seeks a remedy: "Make me a cottage in the vale,... /
Where I may mourn and pray." She does not tear down the
palace, for she plans to return; but she will come with others \(291-67\).

It is significant that Rossetti selects none of these meaningful passages for illustration. Perhaps their lines too explicitly state Tennyson's ideas, and thus provide no justification for the artist to allegorize on his "own hook." Instead, for reasons of his own, Rossetti chooses to illustrate the narrator's relatively unimportant descriptions of the paintings in the palace.

The first design, which disturbs Layard so much, is Rossetti's controversial portrayal of the passage that refers to St. Cecilia:

Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,
Near gilded organ pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily:
An angel look'd at her \(97-1007\).

There are several possible interpretations of Rossetti's design (fig. 1) in addition to Layard's appraisal. Some readers connect the soldier eating an apple to the words "Sin" and "Devil" in the poem, thus associating man's original sin with the fall of the soul. Others believe that the design may be intended to portray the idea of humanity's indifference to one person's moment of truth. However, an intensive study of this drawing could lead one to conclude that Rossetti's graphic allegory really is not a radical departure from this poem's theme. Admittedly, the angel does not resemble the traditional angelic image, but perhaps Rossetti
intends him to represent the seductiveness of Beauty for the sake of Beauty. Thus the soul is being seduced by its love of isolated splendor and is asleep, surrounded by imitations of reality. Her teeming surroundings, depicted in minute detail, are full of the life from which she remains aloof. The man holding the spear could be her guard; but no one desires admittance to the palace, so the man casually munches his apple and ignores the splendid edifice. He could represent the idea that no one cares about the artist who isolates himself, for life does not seek the artist; the artist must seek life.

Like Rossetti's controversial St. Cecilia, his other design for "Palace of Art" illustrates a passage that describes a painting in the palace. This selection, the death of Arthur (fig. 2), presents a disturbing element, for Rossetti depicts more than three queens, thus contradicting the traditional Arthurian legends. Perhaps he intended this deviation to convey an idea, but if so, his meaning is obscure. Therefore, one may defend Rossetti's choices, or argue that he really does not contradict thematic statements, but it is doubtful that his designs would illuminate "Palace ..." for an unsophisticated reader; one needs to understand the poem in order to interpret the pictures. Secondly, Rossetti's designs are too profusely detailed for the amount of space allotted to them. Details may produce marvelous effects on a large canvas, but the minute particulars in Rossetti's illus-
trations indicate that the artist does not understand the medium and tries to crowd too much into a small design.

In contrast to his designs for "Palace of Art," Rossetti's illustration of the last passage of "Lady of Shalott" (fig. 3) is free of artistic allegory, and Rossetti properly interprets the mood set by Tennyson:

Who is this? And what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
    All the knights at Camelot,
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."  

Rossetti's design beautifully portrays the curious, impersonal onlooker and the sympathetically musing Lancelot, and it illuminates the varied emotions suggested in the stanza: fear, curiosity, and sympathy.

In this instance, Rossetti has designed a traditional narrative illustration.

Equally traditional, his design for "Mariana in the South" has no allegorical significance. "Mariana" is the image of loneliness (fig. 4). She appears forlorn, brooding over old letters; and a sentimental lady reading the poem would be likely to identify with the abandoned maiden of the illustration.

Rossetti's "Galahad" also relates closely to Tennyson's text (fig. 5), but there are subtle touches in this design that may have allegorical implications. Rossetti chooses to illustrate Stanza II:
How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favors fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart at work and will.

Oddly, even though this passage does not mention water, Rossetti has drawn a container that resembles the ecclesiastical vessel for holy water. Moreover, he depicts Galahad in the act of lapping the water from his hand, in imitation of the biblical Gideon (Judges 7:6). Perhaps Rossetti means to compare and contrast the two warriors. Both were brave, both were men of faith; but Gideon had wives and concubines, while Tennyson's Galahad is immune to feminine charms. Such a comparison could imply that Galahad, a mere imitation of Gideon, is a mockery, a hollow man who ignores the lovely ladies in the shadows, and who does not perceive reality. This interpretation, of course, is merely surmise, and it is doubtful that a reader would indulge in so much speculation about Rossetti's Galahad; but in view of Rossetti's allegorical approach to art, one cannot deny the possibility of such an interpretation. Moreover, whether or not allegory is present in Rossetti's "Galahad," the relative positions of Galahad aloft and the ladies in the shadow is compatible with the basic idea of the poem:
total commitment to an ideal rules out the possibility of human love. This illustration must be the type that Rossetti had in mind when he expressed his desire to inject his own symbolic meanings into his designs without ruining the poet's ideas.
Hunt's illustrations approach narrative illumination more closely than those of Rossetti because Hunt's designs are thematically comprehensive. For his illustrations, Hunt selects key events in Tennyson's narratives, but he also incorporates in his designs important thematic elements from other passages, so that he can present a poem's idea as well as its drama. This technique is the natural result of Hunt's approach to art, as defined by Watkinson, who says that Hunt's goal was to use his art as "a potent means of conveying ideas;" for the artist has "a sacred duty ... to use his powers." Moreover, it is apparent that Hunt attempts conscientiously in his designs to use his powers to convey the ideas of Tennyson. For example, Hunt's selection from "Godiva" is most appropriate to the theme of the poem:

Then fled she to her inmost bower, and there
Unclasp'd the wedded eagles of her belt,
The grim Earl's gift; but ever at a breath
She linger'd, looking like a summer moon
Half-dipt in cloud: 4th stanza.

Hunt's design catches the significance of the poem as well as dramatizing a crucial moment (fig. 6). Lady Godiva pauses—it is difficult for her to begin her act of utmost humility, to overcome her innate modesty. Just as Tennyson reveals the magnificence of her act, so Hunt portrays her humiliation by revealing the symbols she discards—crown, belt, binding of the hair, rich raiment—all outward manifestations of rank and virtue. By
contrast, the illustration heightens the effect of the stanza that follows:

Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity:

Fantastic gables, crowding, stared: 'but she
Not less thro' all bore up .... [stanza 27].

Hunt adds an effective touch by directing the lady's gaze at a crucifix, for she appears to seek courage from her God. This element also suggests sacrifice: the lady offers herself as a sacrifice for the town. One is reminded that in the Christian faith, it is believed that Christ offered his life as a sacrifice for man. However, this is one of several instances in which Hunt happens to introduce religious symbols into his illustrations.

It is rather surprising that Hunt chooses to portray the lady's preparations, for an artist would be lured quite naturally by the drama of the ride. Hunt's choice, therefore, is evidence of his adherence to the ethics of illustration, for an ethical illustrator subordinates his own preferences to the thematic demands of his literary subject.

In praising Hunt's ethics, Layard demonstrates at the same time the way in which an illustrator can weaken the "motive of the poem," for in a pictorial study made by Hunt in preparation for "Lady of Shalott" (fig. 7), the artist depicts small mirrors about the large one. Layard states:

The successiveness of the sights, and of the persons who went by 'to tower'd Camelot' that proved too much
temptation for the Lady, is an essential element in the poem that would necessarily be sacrificed. The sense of a gradual weakening of the will... when at last the unholy desire to look down to Camelot could be restrained no longer is important. With a true sense of artistic fitness... this mode of treatment was... abandoned.

Hunt's final version of his drawing is based upon part II, 4th stanza:

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;  
On burnished hooves his war horse trode;  
From underneath his helmet flowed  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down to Camelot;  
As often through the purple night,  
Below the starry clusters bright,  
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
Moves over still Shalott ∫100-08∫.

Hunt's selection reflects careful attention to the poem's basic idea, for this is a highly significant passage in "Lady of Shalott." The earthy Lancelot, an excellent choice of knight errant, is an excellent contrast to the lady: he is happy; she is unhappy. Lancelot is also a symbol of the world that the lady sees only by the images that appear in her mirror.

Hellstrom states that this poem and "Palace of Art" share the same theme, although "Lady of Shalott" presents the theme from "a different point of view." He observes also that the poem's "imagery suggests not only isolation but also a kind of death-in-life," and he cites the narrator's references to "four gray walls, four gray towers" ∫157∫, and a "silent isle" surrounded by "willow trees" ∫177∫. The "shadows of the world," according to Hellstrom, are related to Plato's allegory of the cave; and
"when the Lady first faces reality, it appears ... in the sun." Hellstrom views the above passage as significant to the meaning of the poem, because Lancelot also "is associated with the sun." Hellstrom explains: 22

The curse ... is ... the Edenic curse of mortality, and it has all the paradoxical quality of that curse. ... The curse may kill, but it also frees the Lady ... from a kind of death-in-life. It is only by the acceptance of death that the lady can embrace life. ... She dies when she enters life, as all must die when they enter life, but she also lives for the first time.

Thus the poem establishes a conflict between art and life, between isolation and involvement, between the shadows of dreams and the sunlight of reality. The poem also poses a question: must the artist remain aloof in order to survive? This question, like much of Tennyson's inner conflict, is unresolved, for the lady feels compelled to break her bonds and seek the real world, but she loses her life by so doing.

Interestingly, the illustrations also leave the question unresolved, for Hunt portrays the frustration of the artist in her shadows, and Rossetti depicts the fatal result of her rebellion. Therefore the two designs echo the poem's dilemma: does the artist choose a living death in shadows of isolation or does he expose himself to the sunlight of reality that may be fatal to his talent?

Hunt's illustration is an example of the way in which he combines several thematic elements in a single design. His image of Lancelot in the mirror is the only bright or
sunlit area in the drawing. The room, like Plato's cave, is in shadow, and the passionate expression on the lady's face suggests her outburst—"I am half sick of shadows" [71-72]. She continues to spin her web and wear her bonds, but she appears to be in rebellion. Her hands grip the tight bonds in an effort to break them, and even her hair defies the confines of a snood or other restraint.

According to Layard, Tennyson objected to the abundance of hair that Hunt had bestowed upon the poem's heroine: 23

"My dear Hunt," said Tennyson, ... "I never said that the young woman's hair was flying all over the shop."

"No," said Hunt; "but you never said it wasn't."

The validity of this anecdote is difficult to verify, for other writers who repeat it invariably cite Layard as its source. Layard himself uses the tale as an example of Hunt's use of legitimate artistic license. Apparently, Layard deems as illegitimate the figure of Christ on the cross, shown on one side of the mirror. No creed, he claims, is denoted by the poem, but Hunt makes it a Christian one. In his complaint, Layard overlooks the fact that the Arthurian legends have a Christian motif—the search for the holy grail. Furthermore, the poet's theme could have a parallel in the story of Christ, who descends from the heavens to become involved in mankind, and thus loses his life. It is unlikely, however, that the artist deliberately set out to allegorize in his
illustration, and the important consideration in an
evaluation of his work is his obviously faithful repre-
sentation of Tennyson's ideas in all seven of his designs.
Furthermore, there are no Christian symbols in his illus-
trations of "...Arabian Nights" or "The Beggar Maid."
Therefore, it is apparent that whenever Hunt's designs
include a religious symbol, that symbol is compatible
with the theme Hunt is illustrating.

Hunt's adherence to Tennyson's ideas is apparent in
his designs for "Oriana." Hunt's portrayal of the poignant
parting of the lovers heads the poem (fig. 9), and the
lover's grief over his tragic error is placed at the end
of the poem (fig. 10). Hunt's first illustration is
based upon stanza III:

In the yew-wood black as night,
   Oriana,
Ere I rode into the fight,
   Oriana,
While blissful tears blinded my sight
By star-shine and by moonlight,
   Oriana,
I to thee my troth did plight,
   Oriana.

This poem's plot level resembles a ballad, but the poem's
thematic level, remorse and guilt, is universal. The
motif of inconsolable grief in the mournful repetition of
"Oriana" reminds one of the mournful refrain of "Nevermore"
in Poe's famous poem, "The Raven;" for both poems use a
single word as a cry of lament. In fact, it has occasion-
ally been suggested that Tennyson borrowed the idea of his
poem from Poe. However, this poem's similarity to "The
Raven" is entirely accidental, for "Oriana" was first published in 1830, and "The Raven" did not appear until 1842. Moreover, the narrator of "Oriana" suffers from guilt, and this element is not present in "The Raven." The two poems only seem similar, because their common element is universal: grief brought about by loss of love.

Upon reading Tennyson's ode to grief, the reader would instantly relate the poem's plot to Hunt's design; yet Layard accuses Hunt of allegorizing, for he states:25

"Oriana" ties her kerchief around the wings of her lover's helmet whilst he strings his bow for luck against her foot—that bow which, before it is again unstrung, shall wing the "false false arrow"... and pierce "thy heart, my life, ..." aimed though it was against the "foeman tall, atween me and the castle wall."

The artist seems to feel that the poem is paganistic, ignores divine providence. So, he emphasizes the tragic horror by putting the lover down on his idolatrous knees to her, and stringing his bow "for luck" against her foot, whilst she "for luck" ties her kerchief about his crest. "Here, seems to say the artist who believes in God above all things, "here is an opportunity to strike a blow against (superstition) and to give at the same time additional force to the tragedy."

Layard seems to read a great deal into this illustration, and few readers would have known as much about pagan superstitions as Layard seems to know. If Hunt drew the sketch with pagan customs in mind, he may have been striving for authenticity. Furthermore, it is doubtful that Hunt would seriously have expected readers to draw Layard's conclusion from this illustration.
III

Layard is less imaginative and more accurate in his appraisal of Millais' contributions to the Moxon Tennyson, and he cites Millais as the most "ethical" illustrator of the period. Because an illustrator must have a sympathetic understanding of a writer's concepts, Laird believes, lack or originality is a virtue. Layard observes also that whereas language is slow in conveying one man's idea to another, a picture's presentation is instantaneous. 26

Bland, also, cites Millais' excellence and discusses the reasons why Millais was so successful as an illustrator: 27

Millais ... was a born illustrator and the most prominent figure of the sixties. "As a good artist," says Trollope ..., "it was open to him simply to make a pretty picture or to study the work of the authors from whose writing he is bound to take his subject. I have too often found that the former alternative has been thought to be the better, as it certainly is the easier ... . An artist will dislike to subordinate his ideas ... and will sometimes be too idle to find out what /an author's/ ideas are. But this artist was neither proud nor idle. In every figure he drew it was his object to promote the views of the writer ..., and he never spared himself any pains in studying that work.

Complementing Bland's appraisal, Salaman asserts that Millais' illustrations were the most significant in the Moxon Tennyson because of Millais' ability to get "a visual grip of the essentials of a situation suggested or described by the author."28 This "visual grip of essentials" that Salaman cites is inherent in the simplicity of Millais' designs. Unlike Hunt, who includes several thematic
elements in a single illustration, Millais seeks to illuminate the motivating idea of a poem's theme by restricting his design to that idea exclusively. For this reason, his illustrations upon occasion impart to a poem a thematic dimension that the reader might not otherwise perceive. Obviously, Millais was less desirous than were his colleagues to convey his personal concepts. For example, a brochure published by the State Galleries of Australia presents an amusing anecdote about Millais' indifference to the emphasis of his own ideas. "Millais," says the anonymous narrator, "once painted a nice bit of ivy background, and then looked for a subject to tack on to it."\(^29\) This incident is used by the narrator to point out a difference between Millais and Rossetti, for Rossetti always centered his art about a central image or idea. Contrastingly, Millais was content to begin with the ivy, in a sense working inward from the outside. His approach to illustration was similar, for he began with the ivy—his first reading of a poem—and worked inward toward its theme.

Millais' design for "The Sisters" has exactly the features that Bland and Salaman admire (fig. 11). Millais avoids the poem's dramatic scenes, such as the seduction or murder of the Earl. Instead, he astutely seizes upon the poem's incremental repetition: "The wind is blowing in turret and tree."\(^30\) The main verb of this line changes in successive stanzas, so that the wind
is blowing, howling, roaring, raging, raving, and—again—blowing. Millais' design echoes graphically the violence and madness that create the poem's atmosphere: the moon shadowed by a cloud, the trees bent against the force of the gale—these representations suggest the speaker, who is possessed by the consuming fury of her desire for revenge and driven by the storm of hatred that rages in her heart.

Another example of Millais' close attention to a poem's motivating idea is his first illustration of "Dora" (fig. 12). Too melodramatic and sentimental for modern literary taste, this poem tells the story of a father and son who quarrel violently because the son refuses to accept the wife whom his father has chosen for him. Years of estrangement follow and the son dies, leaving a widow and child. Finally, the three survivors are united by Dora, the rejected candidate, and the now elderly father bitterly repents his coldness of heart.

Millais' selections of passages from this narrative could hardly have been otherwise, but they are notable for his emphasis upon the emotional conflict described by Tennyson. Free of superfluous detail, these designs focus the reader's attention immediately upon the men. It is obvious that neither will yield, and the confrontation is depicted as potentially violent, with the father raising clenched fists as if invoking God's wrath upon the son. Years later the father repents, and Millais'
second design presents a striking corollary to the conflict in the first (fig. 13). Millais has succeeded in illuminating the basic idea of "Dora": only grief and self-reproach can follow a stubborn unwillingness to forgive.

Interestingly, Millais' design for "Mariana" of the Moxon Tennyson is different from one that he designed for his earlier painting of "Mariana." Therefore, because Millais was so scrupulous about adhering to theme, one concludes that there are two possible interpretations of the poem.

In the Moxon edition (fig. 14), Millais presents Mariana as she sits alone on the window-seat and rests her head on her hands as if weeping, stricken with absolute despair, and vulnerable. This picture suits the mood of the poem's impression of forlorn hopelessness. The partly drawn curtain and Mariana's pose suggest verse II:

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary
I would that I were dead!"

In Millais' painting of "Mariana" (1851), the young lady appears less despairing than bored and fretful (fig. 15). She arouses less sympathy than the "Mariana" in
Moxon's Tennyson, and perhaps Millais is suggesting that her inability to accept the loss of her lover is an unwillingness to face reality. She appears to have lost all interest in life, but the element of despair is missing. This painting stresses Mariana's weariness or boredom; the illustration shifts the emphasis to her despair.

Millais' selections from "Locksley Hall" must have presented great difficulty of choice for him because of this poem's many thematic levels. As stated by George K. Anderson and William E. Buckler in their anthology of English literature, Tennyson himself once declared that "'Locksley Hall' represents young life, its good side, its deficiencies, and its yearnings." Naturally, a poem with this many elements is extremely difficult to interpret; but Anderson and Buckler cite Tennyson's statement as "an indispensable key to a right reading of the poem."33

It is an expression of the Byronic self-consciousness of a disillusioned ... idealist who, in his hurt and ... exaggerated frenzy of youth, berates his age for its materialism, its rationalism, its prudentialism, and its faithlessness. The progress of the poem is from rejection to acceptance, from an "Everlasting No" to an "Everlasting Yea." (The influence of Carlyle upon the poem has been demonstrated).

One problem with this poem is its frequent shifting of mood and thematic focus; and Hellstrom suggests that the shifts in subject matter may be the result of hysterical adolescence on the part of the speaker.34 First, this youthful narrator extols "the present for the promise that"
science disclosed \( t_4 \), and sees "the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be" \( t_5 \). Next, he presents an idyllic description of young love in springtime, followed by a bitter statement of cynical disillusionment: "Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung, / Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue" \( 41-27 \). He then indicts the hypocrisy of society: "Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth! / Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!" \( 59-60 \). Again altering his mood, the speaker invokes the spirit of negation, then turns to the center of indifference: \(^{35}\)

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth
the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.
Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof \( 75-87 \).

The speaker at length begins to seek egress from his despair: "I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair" \( 98 \); but he digresses to a criticism of materialism: "... the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honor feels, / And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels" \( 105-67 \).

Finally, the speaker finds his everlasting yea in communion with others "among the throngs of men" \( 1167 \), and then follows the poem's prophetic section, as the speaker envisions "those wonders that will be" \( 207 \). He
predicts the age of air transport, aerial warfare, and the United Nations:

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of purple sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue \[121-4]\;

Till the war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags werefurled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world \[127-9]\.

He also reflects transcendental philosophy by prophesying man's eventual self-perfection:

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns \[137-9]\.

Returning to the present, the narrator rejects his idea of escaping to some pagan island: "Fool, again the dream, the fancy! I know my words are wild" \[173]\.

He also exhibits rank provincialism: "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay" \[184]\.

At last, he says, "I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set" \[187]\, and he will forget Locksley Hall and follow the sun: "For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go" \[194]\.

Millais chooses to honor Tennyson's own concept of "Locksley Hall" as a statement of youth, and his first illustration presents the image of young love (fig. 16):

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.
Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight.
Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper thronged my pulses with the fullness of the spring.
Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips [31-37].

Millais' second illustration illuminates lines 41-42, (fig. 17):
Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat and servile to a shrewish tongue.

Exercising artistic license, Millais adds a nice touch in the letter held by Amy's "shrewish" mother. The letter probably is one written to Amy by the speaker, and upon viewing Millais' illustration, one can almost hear the mother's tirade.

Millais' choices are appropriate, for his designs stress the poem's youthful viewpoint. Because "Locksley Hall" is a young man's indictment of adult society, the two illustrations effectively demonstrate the happiness of young people in love and the misery that they subsequently suffer from the interference of their elders.

Suffering is also the motif of "Dream of Fair Women;" and the speaker of the poem begins by stating that he had always associated anguish with the death of certain legendary beauties:36
... In every land
I saw, wherever light illumineth,
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death [4th stanza].

But Cleopatra reveals to the speaker that death is not always a tragedy; it can be a welcome release, an alternative to life:

"And there he died; and when I heard my name
Sigh'd forth with life I would not brook
my fear
Of the other; with a worm I balk'd his fame.
What else was left? Look here!" [27th stanza].

Millais undoubtedly finds in these lines the significant idea of the poem, for he portrays Cleopatra as she bares her breast and invites death from the bite of the asp (fig. 18):

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half
The polish'd argent of her breast to sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a laugh,
Showing the aspick's bite [28th stanza].

In Millais' second illustration for "...Fair Women," he illustrates the statement that love can conquer death (fig. 19):

Or her, who knew that Love can vanquish Death,
Who kneeling, with one arm about her king
Drew forth the poison with her balmy breath,
Sweet as new buds in Spring [56th stanza].

Thus, in his characteristic fashion, Millais refuses to be misled by the speaker's stated preconceptions, for Millais was not only adept at interpretation; he also had a sense of focus, an unerring instinct for selecting passages that emphasize what Layard has designated as "the
motive" of a poem.
IV

Millais' interpretive ability is discussed by G. H. Fleming, who writes a biography of the three founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Fleming says of Millais:

He was one of the most prolific of all English illustrators. ... Not merely the most productive of his time, he was also one of the best. And his illustrations, appearing in mass circulation periodicals and widely read books, were viewed by such an enormous audience that ... he educated millions.

Fleming appreciates Millais' illustrations for their interpretive value, a value that is noticeably absent from Rossetti's designs. Because Rossetti deliberately sought to present allegory, his drawings—although based upon passages in Tennyson's poems—are but partially successful as narrative illumination of Tennyson's themes. Indeed, his designs for "Palace of Art" apparently disturbed even the indifferent Tennyson, for Bland states that "Tennyson himself ... could never see what Rossetti's St. Cecilia illustration had to do with his poem."38

Contrastingly, Hunt indeed illuminates the themes presented by Tennyson in the Moxon edition. Unlike Millais' designs, however, Hunt's illustrations convey a central idea by combining thematic elements from various parts of a poem. Furthermore, Hunt's occasional insertion of religious symbols into his designs suggests the possibility that he, like Rossetti, may have desired to convey ideas of his own via the illustrations he designed. Hunt
does not, however, depart from the text of Tennyson's poems, even though he exercises artistic license by adding details unstated therein; and his designs are highly original.

Originality, in fact, is the quality that gives the Moxon Tennyson its piquant charm. Admittedly, the volume is dissonant in its unevenness, for it includes both conventional and unconventional illustrations. Even in the collective designs of the three Pre-Raphaelite artists, one perceives considerable individuality rather than a common philosophical basis. Their designs, however, are by far the most interesting in the volume because they frequently represent ideas beyond the literal level of Tennyson's poems. Therefore, despite its flaw of disunity, Moxon's Tennyson is significant because it represents a most important innovation in the illustration of books: narrative illumination.

This volume was "the last cooperative venture for the three Pre-Raphaelites," who, according to Fleming, went their separate ways and never again worked together. Rossetti, who had sought to convey his own ideas in his illustrations of another man's work, abandoned altogether the art of illustration; Hunt, who illuminated theme by combining various thematic elements, did little subsequent work in this field; and Millais, who imparted to Tennyson's poems a vital dimension, later returned to traditional narrative designs and became the most prominent
illustrator of the Victorian period. Each of these artists was a unique individual, and each man approached his art from a different point of view. However, the collective work of these three—Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais—in the Moxon Tennyson is a memorable example of pictorial imagination and poetic vision in the illustration of books.
Notes


5 Layard, pp. 6-7.

6 Watkinson, p. 51.


8 Layard, p. 9.

9 Layard, pp. 50-57.

10 Bland, The Illustration of Books, p. 76.

11 Salaman, p. 17.

12 Layard, p. 56.


16 Tennyson, "Mariana in the South," pp. 82-5.


18 Watkinson, p. 51.


20 Layard, pp. 39-40.
22 Hellstrom, pp. 10-14.
23 Layard, p. 41.
25 Layard, pp. 45-7.
26 Layard, pp. 19-20.
28 Salaman, p. 18.
34 Hellstrom, p. 71.
38 Bland, The Illustration of Books, p. 76n.
39 Fleming, p. 81.
Bibliography of Works Cited


The Palace of Art

Illustr. by Rossetti
Fig. 2

The Palace of Art

Illust. by Rossetti
Lady of Shalott

Illust. by Rossetti
Fig. 4

Mariana in the South

Illustr. by Rossetti
Fig. 5

Sir Galahad

Illustrated by Rossetti
Fig. 6

Godiva

Illust. by Hunt
Fig. 7

Lady of Shalott

Preliminary Pictorial Study by Hunt
Lady of Shalott

Illustr. by Hunt
The Ballad of Oriana

Illust. by Hunt
The Ballad of Oriana

Illust. by Hunt
Fig. 11

The Sisters

Illust. by Millais
Dora

Illust. by Millais
Dora

Illust. by Millais
Fig. 14

Mariana

Illustr. by Millais
Fig. 15

Mariana

Painting by Millais
Locksley Hall

Illust. by Millais
Fig. 17

Locksley Hall

Illustr. by Millais
Fig. 18

A Dream of Fair Women

Illust. by Millais
Fig. 19

A Dream of Fair Women

Illustr. by Millais