

Amateur hours: the visual interpretation of Tennyson's poetry in two manuscript albums

Article (Accepted Version)

Field, Hannah (2016) Amateur hours: the visual interpretation of Tennyson's poetry in two manuscript albums. *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 21 (4). pp. 471-499. ISSN 1355-5502

This version is available from Sussex Research Online: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/59628/>

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies and may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the URL above for details on accessing the published version.

Copyright and reuse:

Sussex Research Online is a digital repository of the research output of the University.

Copyright and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable, the material made available in SRO has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Amateur Hours: The Visual Interpretation of Tennyson's Poetry in Two Manuscript Albums

Hannah Field (University of Sussex)

Abstract:

This article seeks to gauge Victorian readers' responses by looking not at how readers wrote about their experience of texts, but at how they responded to their reading visually. To this end, the article presents a case study of two Victorian manuscript albums from the Tennyson Research Centre in Lincoln, in which Tennyson's poetry has been transcribed alongside amateur illustrations. While these items improve our understanding of nineteenth-century manuscript culture in a similar way to commonplace books or scrapbooks, their sustained attention to single poems or groups of poems is distinctive. The private nature of amateur illustration, and the fact that the amateur illustrator's interpretations remain implicit, can encode responses to texts that are less articulable in other media. The first album, which contains Tennyson's 'The Day-Dream', sheds new light on the problems of signification posed by the poem's multiple endings, showing a reader who creates the 'meaning suited to his mind'—mentioned and then dismissed by Tennyson's narrator—by way of the illustrations themselves. The second album, produced by a talented group of sisters, illustrates the 1859 *Idylls of the King*. The sisters' pairings of word and image interpret the original four-poem *Idylls* in significant ways, for example, mitigating Guinevere's guilt through their choice of extracts, and tacitly encouraging the reader-viewer to revel in Vivien's triumph over Merlin through an arresting illustration of Vivien in motion. As such, the album intervenes in contemporary debates surrounding female character, as the Taylor sisters sympathise even with the *Idylls*' villainesses.

Keywords:

Tennyson, amateur art, history of reading, illustration, fandom, manuscript culture

List of abbreviations:

RED Reading Experience Database
TRC Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council

The Reading Experience Database for the United Kingdom includes a number of records of Victorian readers responding to Alfred Tennyson's poetry. The database logs, for instance, that Robert Louis Stevenson found the 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington'—first published 1852—'one of the experiences in life worth having', and that John Ruskin wondered, to Tennyson himself, whether the 'art and finish' of *Idylls of the King* (1859) was too apparent. While Stevenson and Ruskin are professional, indeed, celebrity readers, the thoughts of less storied readers are also collated by RED. These tend to be sketchier, perhaps giving a picture of a family's reading rather than an individual response, as when M. V. Hughes notes that her parents 'accumulated a large number of books, which we were allowed to browse in as much as we liked,' before listing Tennyson alongside other authors.¹ Each response catalogued by RED—whether favourable or critical, extended or glancing—goes some way towards remedying the history of reading's central problem: that is, reading's status as an 'internalized and ephemeral' practice that is difficult to trace.² Nevertheless, in-depth responses to texts from ordinary readers remain in short supply, even where an author as widely read as Tennyson is concerned.

¹ Robert Louis Stevenson to Bob Stevenson, [29 October 1874], in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford Allen Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994–), II: *April 1874–July 1879* (1994), p. 65; John Ruskin qtd. in Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1897), I, pp. 452–53; M. V. Hughes, *A London Family 1870–1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 7. All responses come from UK RED, Open University <<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK>> [accessed 4 January 2016].

² *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading*, ed. by Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (London: British Library, 2005), p. vii.

This article seeks to gauge Victorian readers' responses by looking not at how readers wrote about their experience of texts, as RED permits one to do, but at how they responded to their reading visually. I focus on a group of artefacts from the Tennyson Research Centre in Lincoln: Victorian manuscript albums in which Tennyson's poetry has been transcribed and then illustrated by amateur artists. I begin by placing amateur illustration in the context of Victorian manuscript culture, before examining two albums in depth. The first reproduces the whole of Tennyson's poem sequence 'The Day-Dream' (1842), while the second contains short, hand-lettered extracts from the 1859 *Idylls*.³

My aim is less to provide indicative examples of the reception of Tennyson's poetry, than a case study of new methods for examining Victorian readers' responses to the texts they read. Aside from being included in the 2009 exhibition 'Tennyson Transformed: Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture' and its accompanying catalogue, the TRC albums have not been discussed by scholars.⁴ This is a lacuna: while these items resemble other trends in nineteenth-century manuscript culture (including the commonplace book and the scrapbook), their engagement with a single text means that they provide sustained evidence of how individual

³ 'Tennyson's "Day Dream"', Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4335; Ella, Rose, and Emmie Taylor, 'The Idylls of the King illustrated by three Sisters' [1860], Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4332. All items noted using a shelfmark beginning TRC are from this source; dates in square brackets for TRC material are those given by the album-makers or their families.

⁴ For colour reproductions of pages from some of the amateur albums, see *Tennyson Transformed: Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture*, ed. by Jim Cheshire (Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2009), p. 103 ff. The amateur albums are mentioned in passing elsewhere in this volume too. See Cheshire, 'Introduction: Tennyson and Victorian Culture', pp. 1–19 (p. 17); Julia Thomas, "'Always another poem": Victorian Illustrations of Tennyson', pp. 20–31 (p. 22).

readers received, and made use of, Tennyson's poems. The 'Day-Dream' album reveals how changes to professional illustration might trickle down to amateur artists, affecting their perception of the proper relationship between illustration and text. By contrast, the illustrations in the 'Idylls' album represent women's responses to texts; like other Victorian albums and scrapbooks, the volume of amateur illustrations is a feminized cultural object. Both the form (visual, and hence implicit) and context (private) for the interpretive work of amateur illustration are significant: the illustrator's interpretations of a text are not directly stated, nor widely shared with others, meaning that amateur illustration may proffer readings less articulable in other media—such as, for instance, the written records or published accounts of reading Tennyson offered by RED.

1. Amateur Illustration and Victorian Album Culture

The TRC's albums of amateur illustrations conform to features of Victorian albums and scrapbooks explored by Patrizia diBello and Samantha Matthews, among others: they contain images and text, were mostly made by women, and encode gendered values pertaining to domestic handicrafts and women's work. Virtually all of the half-dozen albums arrange illustrations next to quotations from the published text (rather than, for example, simply referencing a text in a title). Excepting a rollicking set of illustrations to *Idylls*, produced by the writer and amateur painter Hugh Reveley in 1864, women made most of the attributed albums—corresponding to the album's status as central to (in Matthews's words) 'the intellectual, artistic and affective culture of middle- and upper-class younger women'.⁵ While amateur illustrators

⁵ Hugh Reveley, 'Illustrations of Tennyson's [*sic*] *Idylls of the King*' [1864], TRC/W/4332;

Samantha Matthews, 'From Autograph to Print: Charles Lamb's *Album Verses, with a Few Others* (1830)', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 153 (2011), 143–54 (p. 145).

may often have been young, as is the case with the three sisters who made the *Idylls* case-study album, the TRC albums imply such ‘ideals’ for nineteenth-century femininity regardless of the age of their makers. Frances Gwenllian Bishop produced her illuminated *Enoch Arden* in the 1880s while she was ill with arthritis. A long presentation inscription, written by Bishop’s nephew when he gave the album to his daughter in 1945, holds Bishop’s labour and self-sacrifice up for admiration: Bishop ‘was only able to use her hands for writing with great deliberation & support of one with the other. Yet she managed to produce these beautifully executed pages’.⁶ The good taste and hard work of female amateur illustrators stands in opposition to a consumerist society, just as the album’s focus on arrangement, drawing, and calligraphy deflected what diBello calls ‘the charge of an extravagant and potentially corrupting interest in purely commercialized forms of culture’.⁷ While the albums themselves were typically bought readymade (perhaps from an *au courant* stationer such as Ackermann or the Fuller brothers), each amateur illustrator augments their premade album through their own labour.

Ann Bermingham has shown the redefinition of amateurism in the lead-up to the Victorian period, as a firm boundary between ‘original works of genius intended for public exhibition’ and ‘derivative works intended for domestic decoration’ came to be enforced.⁸ The TRC albums, many of which were bestowed as gifts to friends or family members—Reveley’s is dedicated to his daughter Mabel, for instance—occupy the latter territory. Bermingham’s phrase ‘derivative works’, if *derivative* is taken in a non-pejorative sense to mean ‘coming or emanating

⁶ Frances Gwenllian Bishop, ‘Enoch Arden’ [1880–1885], TRC/W/4332.

⁷ Patrizia diBello, *Women’s Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Ladies, Mothers and Flirts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 240.

⁸ Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 128.

from a source', seems tailor-made for works structured around a copied-out text.⁹ Indeed, the idea of the amateur was a gendered one. In placing amateur sketches and choice quotations between the pages of a bound but blank book, these albums synthesize the two least-known, specifically feminine paradigms of art-making as identified by Margaret Higonnet: 'the tradition of albums and amateur painting'.¹⁰ At the same time, amateur illustration borders on a different paradigm: grangerizing or extra-illustration, which 'extends or augments a published book with extraneous materials'.¹¹ The pictures are presented alongside poems that had not always yet been professionally illustrated, and as such function as 'extraneous materials' extending a published text.

These albums depart from prevailing manuscript cultures, too. Whereas many Victorian women's albums contained premade images (either alongside or at the exclusion of pictures by the album-maker), most of the illustrations in these albums have been produced by their makers.¹² The pictures follow the arc of each poem or poem cycle, either by transcribing the whole poem or by giving snippets in order from a longer poem. This is another deviation from the pictures in many other Victorian albums, which were often diverse in terms of medium and theme: watercolour landscapes next to photographic portraits, and so forth. (The encyclopaedic

⁹ *OED Online*, s.v. 'derivative', sense 2a.

¹⁰ Margaret Higonnet, 'Secluded Vision: Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Radical History Review*, 38 (1987), 16–36 (p. 16).

¹¹ Luisa Calè, 'Gray's Ode and Walpole's China Tub: The Order of the Book and the Paper Lives of an Object', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 45 (2011), 105–25 (p. 106).

¹² The popularity of premade images for albums increases over the century. Samantha Matthews, 'Albums, Belongings, and Embodying the Feminine', in *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, ed. by Katharina Boehm (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 107–29 (p. 110).

impulse of grangerizing also mitigates against sustained and coherent illustration, as Luisa Calè has pointed out.)¹³ These albums differ even from other traditions of amateur art because they offer narrative illustrations; to borrow Lindsay Smith's assessment of a photographic album, amateur illustrators 'substitute for the customary subject matter of water-colour that of "grander" academic painting'.¹⁴

Importantly, these albums' engagement with texts is also distinctive. Most Victorian albums, scrapbooks, and commonplace books contain short verses or snippet quotations from a variety of sources; they privilege miscellaneousness and heterogeneity. This aspect of their composition interests the scholars who examine them, as when Corin Throsby positions commonplace books as active bricolages of reading, or when Robert Macfarlane praises the scrapbook's collage aesthetic for the 'sense of literary fragmentation' it implies.¹⁵ In such productions, scholars glean an impression of an album-maker's sentiments from the relationship between multiple selected extracts and pictures, curtailing the coherence of the reading of any single text or author.

The TRC albums, by contrast, devote prolonged attention to Tennyson's poetry. This can range from feats of transcription—"The Day-Dream", transcribed in full in the first case-

¹³ See Luisa Calè, 'Dickens Extra-Illustrated: Heads and Scenes in Monthly Parts (The Case of *Nicholas Nickleby*)', in *The Arts in Victorian Literature*, ed. by Stefano Evangelista and Catherine Maxwell (= *Yearbook of English Studies*, 40 (2010)), pp. 8–32 (p. 9).

¹⁴ Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 58.

¹⁵ Corin Throsby, 'Byron, Commonplacing, and Early Fan Culture', in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture*, ed. by Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 227–44 (p. 230); Robert Macfarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 143.

study album, is almost 2,000 words—to lavish attention paid to shorter excerpts, as when album-maker Anne Wiswall White gives each line of ‘Splendour falls on castle walls’, one of the short songs added to *The Princess* in 1850, a whole page, elaborate illuminated capitals, and multiple illustrations both premade and original.¹⁶ Such sustained attention can constitute a more-or-less coherent reading of the chosen poem—a reading that is also notable for the form in which it is expressed. Matthews has argued: ‘The fact that the album is ostensibly not to be taken seriously is precisely what makes it suitable to encode unregulated and unspeakable feelings and thoughts’.¹⁷ The amateur illustrator’s implicit visual interpretations of poems work in a similar way. The illustrator is not forced to state direct admiration for a particular character, or to articulate which parts of the poem they find stimulating; this means that amateur illustration inscribes readings that might be less articulable—even ‘unspeakable’—in other media.

The album of amateur illustrations is dependent on both image and word to make meaning, offering original interpretations of the poems they reproduce in the process. To borrow Leah Price’s phrase, the albums are ‘material artifacts that can make one reader knowable to another’.¹⁸ As such, they raise many questions about Victorian readers and their responses to Tennyson. Which poems do album-makers transcribe and illustrate? Do they refer back to a printed text, or generate a manuscript reproduction independent of it? Within poems, which moments are depicted? What do the style, medium, and composition of the illustrations, among other aesthetic choices, suggest about the reception of individual texts? Are there echoes of Tennyson’s professional illustrators in these amateur albums? And does reading Tennyson’s poetry via its amateur illustrations give a distinctive perspective on the poems themselves—their

¹⁶ Anne Parker Wiswall White, ‘The Bugle Song’ [ca. 1880], TRC/W/4334.

¹⁷ Matthews, ‘Albums, Belongings’, p. 110.

¹⁸ Leah Price, ‘Reading: The State of the Discipline’, *Book History*, 7 (2004), 303–20 (p. 304).

meanings within Victorian culture? The two case studies in the following sections provide answers—if partial ones—to these questions.

2. An Amateur's Daydream

It is difficult to turn the pages of the TRC's 'Day-Dream' album (a lithographic reproduction of an original manuscript) without thinking of the pejorative connotations of the word *amateur*: 'One who cultivates anything as a pastime, as distinguished from one who prosecutes it professionally; hence, sometimes used disparagingly [to mean] dabbler, or superficial student or worker'.¹⁹ The album contains a number of indifferent drawings, a variety of ambitious yet ill-realized artistic choices, and one notable transcription error (in the title of a section, no less). However, the album suggests that the contexts for a poem might make it a peculiarly seductive object for the talents of an amateur illustrator: in this case, the threads of 'The Day-Dream' that concern the fairy-tale, remediation, and the sister arts. It also shows a potential crossover between Tennyson's professional illustrators and his amateur ones—not echoes between actual pictures, but rather a shared philosophy of illustration in which illustrators respond to a text creatively rather than simply portraying a poem's subject or events.

Tennyson's 'Day-Dream' was first published in its entirety in 1842. The sequence uses an earlier poem, 'The Sleeping Beauty', which appeared in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), as centrepiece, adding around it sections entitled 'Prologue', 'The Sleeping Palace', 'The Arrival', 'The Revival', 'The Departure', 'Moral', 'L'Envoi', and 'Epilogue'. Based on textual variations—the king's phrase "'*somenbat* stiff'", rather than "'*something* stiff'", with the retention of 'purpled coverlet' for the later 'purple coverlet'—it would appear that the maker of the TRC album

¹⁹ *OED Online*, s.v. 'amateur', senses 2a and 3b.

engages with the revised version of the text from the 1862 *Poems*.²⁰ From the title onwards, poetic subject and the album's visual style meld: the rudimentary forms of the pictures suggest doodles, the artist's daydream as he or she (the artist is not known, although some pictures are signed MJM) responds in a seemingly improvisatory way to the poem's repetitive sequence of dreaming characters—a leitmotif in both the frame narrative, and the central retelling of 'Sleeping Beauty'.

Take the first page opening, an illustration for the prologue, in which an unnamed speaker addresses a retelling of the fairy-tale to his love, Lady Flora. Inspired by the sight of Flora sleeping, the speaker, too, begins to dream. The amateur illustrator shows Lady Flora dozing at top right of the page—an apparition above the speaker, who reclines at bottom left and whose gaze is obscured, suggesting that he also dreams (fig. 1). The poem's text is interspersed between the two images, with the bottom illustration in particular acting as an L-shaped pictorial frame for the verse. This layout at once apes contemporary trends in book design—the proximity of word and image enabled by wood engraving—and extends them, using the manuscript album as a vehicle for an even more experimental layout.²¹ The manuscript book's design possibilities, in which image and text might be arranged dynamically, let the form of the illustrations reflect the poem's content: the pictures float on the page, evoking the nested fantasies that are the subject of the poem.

The interpretive work of the amateur illustrator takes place within an environment in which the role of illustration itself was changing. 'The Day-Dream' had already been illustrated

²⁰ 'The Day-Dream', in *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Harlow: Longman, 1987), II, pp. 48–59 (p. 52, ll. 26, 3, my italics). Further references will be given by page and line number in the body of the text.

²¹ Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 54.

before the production of this album: it was included in the celebrated 1857 Moxon Tennyson, illustrated by artists including the three founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Holman Hunt). As Lorraine Janzen Kooistra has pointed out, debates as to whether illustrations should ‘presume to comment on’ texts are constitutive of the Moxon Tennyson. In contrast to the more generic or representational illustrations from other artists, the Pre-Raphaelite illustrations in the volume ‘materialized a bold poetics of reading, making a spectacle of the art of interpretation and asserting the reader’s right to make meanings’.²² This ‘spectacle’ manifested in a number of ways. Most famously, Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s illustration to ‘The Palace of Art’ suborns the central subjects of Tennyson’s poem by exclusively representing a tapestry of St Cecily mentioned in passing: an aesthetic decision so daring that it subsequently came to represent the illustrator’s autonomous capacity to respond to text with, in Julia Thomas’s words, ‘an independent creation dissociated from the poem’.²³

With this background in mind, it is illuminating to counterpoint the Moxon Tennyson with MJM’s amateur album. Both of the Moxon illustrations for ‘The Day-Dream’ are by Millais. The first image depicts a page, frozen at the moment he steals a kiss from a maid-of-honour (fig. 2). The *mise en scène* represents a number of details from the poem, such as the peacock, martins, fountains, and terraces described in the second stanza of ‘The Sleeping Palace’. At the same time, Millais boldly shows a character who has not yet appeared in the poem: the fairy-tale prince, who Millais imagines coming upon the kissing page and maid with an expression of shock. Moreover, the focus on a subsidiary romantic pairing—rather than the Sleeping Beauty

²² Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing: The Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture 1855–1875* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), pp. 45, 43.

²³ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, illustration to ‘The Palace of Art’, in Alfred Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, 1857), p. 113; Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians*, p. 58.

and the prince—is itself unexpected. Millais’s second image, which shows the king awaking in surprise to find his beard grown down to his lap, likewise combines the straightforwardly representational with the whimsical. The detail of the chancellor playing with his gold chain is faithfully shown (p. 55, l. 31), but courtly animals including an eagle and a monkey are added to the composition. Once again, Sleeping Beauty herself is absent—she does not appear in either of Millais’s illustrations, despite her centrality to the poem.

Much as Millais’s pictures for the Moxon Tennyson had done, the amateur illustrations in the ‘Day-Dream’ album combine a faithful attention to Tennyson’s imagined world with a degree of aesthetic license. The amateur illustrator read ‘The Day-Dream’ with great care, as the central image of the Sleeping Beauty demonstrates (fig. 3). The corresponding section of the poem details the princess’s room and habiliments: her coverlet embroidered with stars; her pearly hairband; her diamond bracelets; her ‘gold-fringed pillow’ (p. 52, ll. 3, 6, 9, 14, 22). The album’s illustration reproduces all of these minutiae. The image adheres to details of the poem even when these pose technical challenges, as is most marked in the delineation of Sleeping Beauty’s hair as it cascades over the side of the bed. At the same time, the illustrator adds a number of extra flourishes: the lilies twining from the bedhead, the swan and shell carvings adorning the bed, the continuation of the star pattern into the carpet of the room, and the crown monogram on the draperies.

Artistic license is yet more evident in the playful touches in other pictures, even those that might be expected to illustrate the fairy-tale romance. On the first page giving the ‘Revival’ section, mis-transcribed as ‘Reviel’ but corrected in pencil, the scene of the prince kissing the princess and bringing her back to life is depicted at the top of the page. The text of the poem, though, is set within a circular space surrounded by varied illustrations of other scenes (fig. 4). These range from the bawdy (a man chasing a woman at left, evoking the page and maid-of-honour), to the scenic (the peacock and fountain), to the outright comic (a toper at bottom left who awakens only to resume drinking from his tankard). The inclusion of these scenes reads the

poem's background details as the most compelling parts, the moments best equipped to represent the poetic motifs of growth versus stasis. The illustrator does not ignore the poem's content, but rather alters the relation between its subjects: the love plot of 'Sleeping Beauty' is only part of the poem, equal with but not superior to the multiple details of courtly life. Furthermore, the reordering of subjects in this illustration reflects the questions of meaning and interpretation posed by the multiple endings to 'The Day-Dream', as I shall discuss shortly.

At other points, the album-maker adds entirely new elements to 'The Day-Dream'. The illustrator orientalizes Sleeping Beauty's court: the décor chosen for a scene-setting illustration includes minarets and an unusual dragon sculpture (fig. 5). The only illustrations in the Moxon Tennyson to make such an aesthetic choice—those provided for 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights' and 'A Dream of Fair Women'—respond to references in the poems themselves.²⁴ While Parvin Loloi names 'The Day-Dream' as one of Tennyson's poems influenced by the 'mystical imagery' of the twelfth-century Persian poet Hafez, it seems unlikely that the amateur illustrator is aware of such symbolic threads, which would require sophisticated intertextual knowledge.²⁵ By another token, though, the choice to exoticize the Sleeping Beauty's court reads storytelling itself as orientalized: the nested narrative of 'The Day-Dream' is a miniature of the most famous

²⁴ William Holman Hunt, illustrations to 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights', in Moxon Tennyson, pp. 13, 19; John Everett Millais, illustration to 'A Dream of Fair Women', in Moxon Tennyson, p. 149. For a discussion of these illustrations, see Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, 'The Moxon Tennyson as Textual Event: 1857, Wood Engraving, and Visual Culture', *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. by Dino Felluga, accessed 13 February 2016 <www.branchcollective.org>.

²⁵ Parvin Loloi, 'Hafiz and the Language of Love in Nineteenth-Century English and American Poetry', in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. by Leonard Lewisohn (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 279–94 (p. 290).

story collection in this mode, the *Arabian Nights*, used by Tennyson to thematize imaginative ‘transport from one realm to another’.²⁶ While the visual interpretations of ‘The Day-Dream’ made by the amateur illustrator are not as radical as some evident in the Moxon Tennyson, the album’s romantic, orientalized court provides a self-assured interpretation of the location of fairy-tale and fantasy.

Why choose ‘The Day-Dream’ as a subject, and how does reading it in this format illuminate the poem? Although the poem may be less well known than *Idylls*—and is certainly less often written about by critics—both *Idylls* and ‘The Day-Dream’ share subject matter: folklore and fairy-tale. Edward FitzGerald’s comments regarding the prologue to ‘The Day-Dream’, ‘added [...] for the same reason that caused the Prologue of the *Morte d’Arthur*, giving an excuse for telling an old-world tale,’ suggest that Tennyson linked the Arthurian cycle with this fairy-tale poem based on their status as retellings.²⁷ In the context of the amateur album, Tennyson’s ‘excuse’ evokes layered forms of creativity, whereby the telling of an old tale parallels the copying-out and illustration of a new-cum-old tale into an album. Moreover, the practice of retelling is germane to the album form, since the characters contained within the poem are in an important sense common cultural property, shared between the amateur illustrator and the poet.

The ‘excuse’ for retelling as an invitation to the reader to imagine and to dream is borne out by the prologue’s contents. The account of the narrator’s dream is laid out thus: ‘Across my fancy, brooding warm, / The reflex of a legend past, / And loosely settled into form’ (p. 49, ll. 10–12). Reading these verses in the pages of an album opens up a fresh angle on their meaning. The key line here is ‘loosely settled into form’, which insists that the forms of tales are not final; the album makes an associated implication—that they may be remediated by the reader.

²⁶ Timothy Peltason, “The Embowered Self: “Mariana” and “Recollections of the Arabian Nights””, *Victorian Poetry*, 21 (1983), 335–50 (p. 336).

²⁷ Edward FitzGerald qtd. in *Poems of Tennyson*, III, p. 48.

Tennyson's prologue explicitly couches this assertion within a doctrine of the sister arts whereby the oral tale and the handicraft are placed side by side. The poem goes on:

And would you have the thought I had,
 And see the vision that I saw,
 Then take the broidery-frame, and add
 A crimson to the quaint Macaw,
 And I will tell it. (p. 49, ll. 13–17)

This scene can be read as a domestic storytelling session in which a woman sits silent listening to a man, or as a manifesto placing embroidery on equal footing with other forms of visionary creativity (including the creativity of the poet himself). The detail given over to the embroidery metaphor, which otherwise might be read as a convenient device to explain why the fairy-tale can be told uninterrupted, suggests the latter. Even the 'quaint Macaw' draws significant material details from the history of Victorian handicrafts: the general popularity of animal studies but perhaps even a specific design, the 1840 Berlin wool-work pattern based on *Islay, Tilco, a Macaw and Two Lovebirds* (1839), Edwin Landseer's painting of Queen Victoria's pets.²⁸ Embroidery is a 'derivative' art, characterized by what Talia Schaffer calls (in relation to Berlin wool-work) 'an enthusiasm for realistic copying' in which 'creativity and originality are not artistic desiderata'.²⁹ At the same time, like the albums, and like folklore itself, embroidery uses another's design as a

²⁸ See Barbara J. Morris, *Victorian Embroidery: An Authoritative Guide* (London: H. Jenkins, 1962; repr. 2003), p. 21.

²⁹ Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 42.

spur to creative activity, as the embroiderer works contours provided by someone else into something new.

The questions about originality and interpretive work occasioned by the handicraft motif persist into the mutually antagonistic viewpoints on poetic meaning in the concluding sections of ‘The Day-Dream’. The first perspective, given in ‘Moral’ (the third-to-last section), supports the themes of revision and re-envisioning by way of a defence of the integrity of each reader’s response to a story. In a return to the frame narrative, the storyteller asserts to Lady Flora that his tale would become ‘cramp[ed]’ if it were ‘hook[ed] [...] to some useful end’ in the form of a definitive moral; instead, ‘any man’ can find in the tale, or in any tale, a ‘meaning suited to his mind’ (p. 56, ll. 16, 12). However, Lady Flora is not satisfied with this hazy model of interpretation, and in the next section, ‘L’Envoi’, demands a more definitive judgment of what the fairy-tale means. The narrator then provides this assessment:

In the name of wife,
 And in the rights that name may give,
 Are clasped the moral of thy life,
 And that for which I care to live. (p. 58, ll. 53–56)

This statement, which leads into the romantic ‘Epilogue’ where the story is revealed to have been shaped for its individual listener (p. 59, ll. 5–6), closes down multiple interpretations in favour of the romance plot, doubled by its appearance in both the frame narrative and the fairy-tale.

The conflicting endings reflect, as Molly Clark Hilliard has pointed out, the poem’s long composition period, ‘reaching across the decade from Romantic to Victorian literary production, from timeless fragment (a perfect form in perfect rest) to timely narrative (a fairy kingdom

framed by a Victorian present)³⁰ They also, though, echo the Victorian debates, mentioned above, about the illustrator's autonomy. One of the most famous Pre-Raphaelite mission statements concerning illustration is that of Rossetti, who wrote of his choice of poems to illustrate for the Moxon Tennyson, 'I shall try [...] those where one can allegorize on one's own hook on the subject of the poem'.³¹ Juxtaposing Rossetti's letter with 'The Day-Dream', any moral 'hooked' by the narrator onto the poem gives way to an interpretation expounded on the illustrator's 'own hook'. The material existence of the album confirms that at least one reader ignored the ultimate poetic viewpoint given in 'The Day-Dream', or, at least, did not view it as a shutting-down of possibilities for their own creative vision. Sally Bushell's recent work on Tennyson focuses on creative composition: 'the literary text before it becomes a completed work of art'.³² The amateur illustrator extends this cycle, making the 'completed work of art' subject to creative re-envisioning in the hands of readers—whatever its moral.

3. Sister Arts: The Women of the 1859 *Idylls* and the Amateur Illustrator

The second album for closer analysis includes short, hand-lettered excerpts from Tennyson's 1859 *Idylls*, interspersed with ten etchings that reproduce amateur illustrations of scenes from the poems. The illustrations were designed by three sisters, Ella, Rose, and Emmie Taylor, while the

³⁰ Molly Clark Hilliard, "'A Perfect Form in Perfect Rest": Spellbinding Narratives and Tennyson's "Day Dream"', *Narrative*, 17 (2009), 312–33 (p. 319).

³¹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham, 23 January 1855, in *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. by William E. Fredeman, 8 vols (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), II, p. 7. See also Kooistra, *Poetry, Pictures*, p. 48; Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians*, p. 60.

³² Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 1.

album was given by four: a presentation inscription on the front endpaper reads, ‘presented to Mr Deichmann by | Ella, Rose, Emmie, & Alice Taylor March 27th 1863’. There is at least one other version of the album in existence, also with etched illustrations and handwritten texts.³³ The album’s status as a sisterly production and gift mirrors the division of the 1859 *Idylls* itself into ‘four poems of unequal length, each of which bears a lady’s name’.³⁴ This structuring around four women presents four possible points of identification for the makers and givers of the album. Indeed, upon the *Idylls*’ release, *Blackwood’s* reviewer positioned Tennyson’s four female characters as sisters, remarking, ‘We would implore Mr. Tennyson, as a father, never again to sacrifice the welfare of two elder daughters (even if somewhat unpromising) so completely as he has done this time, to the success in life of their younger sisters’. The reviewer then enjoins the reader to ‘skip the first two *Idylls* boldly, and at once make acquaintance with “Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable”’, converting a reading of the 1859 *Idylls* into a debutante ball, the reader partnered variously with appealing and less appealing partners.³⁵ The *Blackwood’s* reviewer suggests that the charms of the 1859 *Idylls* are feminized—derived from the contemplation of a group of women—while the Taylors’ album confirms this point from the opposite direction, showing the meanings the 1859 *Idylls* had for a group of real-life women.

³³ Although I have not been able to consult in hard copy the other album, which was made in 1859 and put up for sale in the 1970s by Peter Eaton Booksellers, the TRC possesses a complete set of photocopies of it; the albums are virtually identical except for the title-page.

³⁴ Kathleen Tillotson, ‘Tennyson’s Serial Poem’, in Geoffrey Tillotson and Kathleen Tillotson, *Mid-Victorian Studies* (London: Athlone Press, 1965), pp. 80–109 (p. 93).

³⁵ The ‘elder daughters’ are Elaine and Guinevere; the younger Enid and Vivien. [Elizabeth J. Hasell], review of *Idylls of the King*, by Alfred Tennyson, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, November 1859, pp. 608–27 (p. 615).

Who were the album-makers? At the time of the 1861 England census, an Ellen Taylor, aged 33, lived in Hastings with her widowed mother Frances; her younger sisters Rose, Emma, and Alice; her unmarried aunt Louisa Mather; and three servants.³⁶ All four of the Taylor sisters' birthplaces are given as 'Hanover—British subject', while other census entries give variants of the sisters' names that match the diminutives listed in the album. It is very likely that the eldest sister is Ella Taylor (1827–1914), an accomplished amateur artist whose sketches and watercolours are held in the Royal Collection.³⁷ Many of these works were produced in situ at royal residences: one pencil sketch dated 24 December 1858 includes a self-portrait of Ella admiring the Christmas tree belonging to Prince George, 2nd Duke of Cambridge, alongside her brother John Du Plat Taylor—in a version of the modesty topos, she looks away from the viewer (fig. 6). The family's royal connections were military in nature. Ella's father was Paymaster-General to the German Legion, and in a 1900 memoir Ella recalls participating in amateur theatricals with Prince Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge (the youngest surviving son of George III and Queen Charlotte), while growing up in Hanover; Ella is also mentioned several times in Queen Victoria's journal.³⁸ The recipient of the *Idylls* album may be Carl Deichmann, a German violinist and professor who gave music lessons to acquaintances of the Taylors in the

³⁶ 'Ellen Taylor', *Census Return for Eversfield Place, St Mary Magdalen, Hastings, Sussex* (Public Record Office: PRO RG9, piece 561, folio 31, 1861), p. 55 <www.ancestry.co.uk> [accessed 5 January 2016].

³⁷ Delia Millar, 'Ella Taylor (1827–1914)', in *The Victorian Watercolours and Drawings in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen*, 2 vols (London: Philip Wilson, 1995), II, pp. 845–55.

³⁸ C. Kinloch Cooke, *A Memoir of Her Royal Highness Princess Mary Adelaide Duchess of Teck, Based on Her Private Diaries and Letters*, 2 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), I, p. 16, p. 16n; *Queen Victoria's Journals*, 10 March 1877; 28 June 1877; 7 May 1879; 12, 14, and 16 January 1884 <<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/>> [accessed 30 January 2015].

1850s, and perhaps to them as well.³⁹ As such, the album is payment in kind for the teaching of a genteel accomplishment—musical knowledge rewarded with amateur illustrations.

While the ‘Day-Dream’ album is clearly the work of an amateur in a sense of the word compatible with twenty-first-century usage, the Taylor sisters produce illustrations marked by considerable technical expertise and creative vision. Indeed, the level of skill demonstrated by their *Idylls* illustrations led the TRC to document the images as tracings from a set of outlines for illumination released by Winsor and Newton around 1859, but I do not believe this likely.⁴⁰ Instead, Ella Taylor’s career and skills expose the historically and culturally specific nature of amateurism: she became celebrated in royal circles for her drawing and painting, even if she received no formal training (or payment) for her works. Her artworks correspond to her somewhat ambiguous social position, and her insistence on the value of this position, as when she wrote in her reminiscences, ‘I never was the paid Servant of Royalty,—but an honoured guest’.⁴¹

I view the drawings as a tutelary exercise, with Ella teaching her younger sisters, who were in their teens or early twenties, to draw. It has been speculated in correspondence regarding

³⁹ See Cooke, *Memoir*, I, p. 196; Karl Traugott Goldbach, ‘Remarks on Delius’s Violin Teacher, Carl Deichmann’, *Delius Society Journal*, 154 (2013), 72–88 (p. 75). The National Portrait Gallery holds a carte-de-visite likeness of Deichmann, made in the same year he received the album. Deichmann was from a military family in Hanover, so the connection might be social rather than musical.

⁴⁰ See Cheshire, p. 103. The Winsor and Newton sheets do not record the same moments from *Idylls*, and a coloured version of the sheets, held at the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum (classmark II.RC.D.3), gives only small images as handmaidens to lavish gilded calligraphy.

⁴¹ Ella Taylor qtd. in Millar, p. 845.

the album at the TRC that the images might have been submitted as one of the 43 entries to the Art Union of London's January 1860 competition to illustrate *Idylls*, which was won by Paolo Priolo.⁴² This provenance would explain why the illustrations are etchings: perhaps the Taylor sisters' drawings, even though they did not win, were professionally etched in order to be gifted to admirers who had seen them on display. It is not impossible, just unlikely, that one of the sisters etched the images herself—as a notable amateur put it in 1880, 'I am well persuaded that etching, of all the arts, is the one least fitted to the amateur [...] But there are amateurs and amateurs,' and Victoria and Albert were themselves keen etchers.⁴³ Whether produced for the Art Union or for private pleasure, the album shows the collaborative production and then circulation of amateur art by women.

Supporting my interpretation of a tutelary collaboration, there is a mix of styles and abilities in the illustrations, indicating different hands at work. This collective production of the album and its illustrations limits the evidence of the individual ways in which the sisters read the poems. If Ella did tutor her sisters, then Emmie and Rose may have produced their pictures in a variety of attitudes: to please, or to follow her guidance, or in outright disagreement. While one of the pictures is signed, the others are not, and in the absence of a signature my concept of the 'Taylor sisters' as an artistic entity in the discussion that follows is a necessary simplification—one that may occlude differences of opinion or interpretation, not to mention collaboration within a single image.

Regardless of who produced the individual images, the Taylor album follows a set format. Each extract from *Idylls* has been inscribed beneath the title of the poem from which it comes, with a page reference given below. Across the album, quotations are given in

⁴² See Miss Gates to R. M. Ford, 27 April 1979, TRC.

⁴³ J. Beavington Atkinson, 'Etching: Its Relation to the Artist, the Amateur, and the Collector', *The Art Journal*, n.s., 6 (1880), 348–50 (p. 348).

chronological order in line with the printed text. While attention to poetic detail in the ‘Day-Dream’ album is most evident in the illustrations themselves, the Taylor sisters’ adherence to Tennyson’s written text is clear from their transcriptions. Occasionally the extracts miss punctuation within lines, but by and large the quotations are correct and careful. Between the two versions of the album, minor errors have been fixed: the TRC album, for instance, emends a page number for one quotation.⁴⁴ As noted above, the illustrations face these extracts. Just as the four poems from the 1859 *Idylls* are of uneven length, there is no set number of pictures per poem. ‘Enid’ is given three illustrations, ‘Vivien’ two, ‘Elaine’ four, and ‘Guinevere’ three again. In further contrast to the ‘Day-Dream’ album, these illustrations reflect early responses to the poems: the 1859 *Idylls* was not illustrated in standalone volumes until Gustave Doré’s individual gift-books for each poem, produced between 1866 and 1868.

How do the Taylor sisters interpret the *Idylls*? Their preferences are shown by what their illustrations omit as well as by what they include. The only moments illustrated from ‘Enid’ take place in the poem’s first half—‘The Marriage of Geraint’, once the two parts of the poem are subdivided and given individual titles in the 1886 *Idylls*. Hence the illustrators exclude, among other things, Enid and Geraint’s time on the road, Edyrn’s story, the couple’s return to Camelot, Geraint and Arthur’s reconciliation, Guinevere’s second symbolic dressing of Enid, and Enid and Geraint’s afterlives as folk heroes. Moments of the poem focalized from Enid’s perspective, and more specifically her love story, are the exclusive subject matter of the excerpts and illustrations. Within this broad focus, the ‘Enid’ images stress the domestic and the relational. Enid is shown serving Geraint in two of the images, and being dressed by Guinevere in the third. The final illustration—the only one to be initialled, by Emmie, the youngest Taylor sister to contribute to the album (E. J. T.)—encodes Enid’s centrality through contrasting period costumes (fig. 7). Enid is dressed in a Victorian silhouette suggesting jacket and stomacher; her

⁴⁴ In the body of the essay I refer to the 1859 *Idylls* using their original, rather than final, titles.

low chignon with hair parted in the middle is likewise a plausible nineteenth-century female hairstyle. By contrast, Guinevere's costume is marked by medievalized touches, such as fluted sleeves, flowing hair, and a dress patterned with heraldic crosses fleury. The viewer is cued to empathize with Enid, not Guinevere, by the fact that she is pictured as a Victorian girl—an aesthetic decision that links exemplary characters in the poem to the contemporary moment, while historically distancing the *Idylls*' alluring adulteress.

This image, which centres on the not insignificant parts of 'Enid' that concern the intricacies of dress—'And Enid fell in longing for a dress' is something of a mission statement—contrasts with Priolo's winning entries in the Art Union competition.⁴⁵ One of Priolo's 'Enid' illustrations, for example, illustrates the martial lines, 'Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a ball / The russet-bearded head roll'd on the floor'.⁴⁶ In Priolo's picture, a headless body reels back into a banquet table as its matching severed head, mouth agape, lies on the floor (fig. 8). The Taylor sisters' illustrations to 'Enid', then, provide a miniature case study of Victorian women readers responding to what Herbert Tucker calls the novelistic rather than the epic preoccupations of the Geraint and Enid episodes.⁴⁷

Indeed, the illustration seems to luxuriate in the scene of one woman dressing another. The choice of this moment to illustrate may relate to a genteelly aspirational fantasy of having a lady's maid. In 1861, the Taylor family had three female servants; while these are not identified, they were probably a cook, a parlour-maid, and a house-maid. (In the 1871 census entry, these

⁴⁵ 'The Marriage of Geraint', in *Poems of Tennyson*, III, pp. 323–49 (p. 343, l. 630). After first footnote, references to the *Idylls* will be identified by line number in the body of the text.

⁴⁶ 'Geraint and Enid', in *ibid.*, pp. 255–463 (p. 369, ll. 727–28).

⁴⁷ See Herbert F. Tucker, 'Trials of Fiction: Novel and Epic in the Geraint and Enid Episodes from *Idylls of the King*', *Victorian Poetry*, 30.3/4 (1992), 441–61.

roles are identified specifically.)⁴⁸ These three servants could, in John Burnett's phrase, 'minimally minister to all the requirements of gentility,' but the sisters and their older relatives were not dressed by servants—although their social milieu would have meant they met people who were, and perhaps envied them.⁴⁹ Second, the artist's signature locates this fantasy of role reversal with a *younger* sister, for whom the episode of the superior Guinevere serving her inferior, Enid, might have held particular appeal in the context of the family relationship and the possible tutelary function of the album itself. Emmie's visual interpretation of what is important about *Idylls* stems from both the social context of her class position, and the more local one of birth order.

The editing of extracts also gives information about the ways in which the illustrators read the poem. One depiction, showing the final meeting between Guinevere and Arthur, constitutes a possible tension between image and excerpt. The illustration shows Guinevere in a posture of utter submission, her hands clasped around Arthur's ankle (fig. 9). Only the parting of her hair is visible. Arthur, by contrast, is pictured in full regalia, his hand outstretched in a gesture of benediction. The image exemplifies what Barbara Tapa Lupack and Alan Lupack call 'the posture of the "grovelling Guinevere" (the prostrate queen lying in submissiveness and repentance before her godlike husband)'—a composition that 'became an iconic image of Victorian morality favoured by many artists and illustrators'.⁵⁰ However, the quotation from the poem comes before both Arthur's vaunted forgiveness of Guinevere, and the long

⁴⁸ 'Frances Taylor', *Census Return for Eversfield Place, St Mary Magdalen, Hastings, Sussex* (PRO RG10, piece 1031, folio 109, 1871), p. 30 <www.ancestry.co.uk> [accessed 5 January 2016].

⁴⁹ John Burnett, *The Annals of Labour: Autobiographies of British Working Class People, 1820–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), p. 176.

⁵⁰ Barbara Tapa Lupack and Alan Lupack, *Illustrating Camelot* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), p. 41.

condemnation of her which seems its necessary precursor. The passage transcribed is lines 411 to 420, and the handling of the final lines is a miniature of the overall technique.

Then came silence, then a voice,
 Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
 Denouncing judgment, but though changed, the King's:
 'Liest thou here so low,[]'.⁵¹

The Taylor sisters break off with a comma, but in the printed text, Arthur continues with the rebuke: “the child of one / I honoured, happy, dead before thy shame? / Well is it that no child is born of thee” (ll. 419–21)—lines that Julia Thomas reads as a microcosm of punitive Victorian attitudes to female adultery.⁵²

The extract refers to a voice ‘like a Ghost’s / Denouncing judgment’, but the details of what that voice says are withheld. The extract in the album has been chosen so as to exclude most of Arthur’s recriminations, which span more than a hundred lines. The effect is heightened when all of the ‘Guinevere’ illustrations and passages are considered in conjunction. Just as the second edited passage ends “Liest thou here so low”, the first extract given in the album also removes a narrative of Guinevere’s guilt: the one given by the little novice (ll. 182–350). Meanwhile, the final excerpt in the album is an account of Guinevere’s later virtues from the end of the poem beginning, “Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life’ (l. 687). The sisters edit the extracts to produce a more sympathetic portrayal of Guinevere, even when, as in the case of the ‘grovelling Guinevere’, their images present conventional readings of the poem. The album

⁵¹ ‘Guinevere’, in *Poems of Tennyson*, III, pp. 529–47 (p. 540, ll. 416–19).

⁵² Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians*, pp. 150–51.

models a variety of methods for encoding attitudes to Tennyson's women characters, methods related to the bitextual status of the album itself—the dynamic interrelationship of word and image, typical of Victorian illustrated books.⁵³

The 'Enid' and 'Guinevere' illustrations show how the Taylor sisters read the poems, but as with 'The Day-Dream', amateur illustration can also give information about how Tennyson should be read today. Páraic Finnerty has recently discussed 'Elaine' through the lens of Victorian celebrity culture. I share Finnerty's opinion that female fandom is central to such key episodes in the poem as Elaine's attempts to 'get to the life and mind of the mysterious celebrity-knight' by poring over Lancelot's face and adoring his shield, or the final logic of the poem by which Elaine herself 'floats into the annals of Camelot celebrity'.⁵⁴ The Taylor sisters' album adds substantially to Finnerty's centralization of female fandom in 'Elaine', drawing an analogy between Elaine's creative acts of fandom within Tennyson's poem, and the Taylor sisters' subsequent remediation of that same poem.

Elaine's creative fandom, which coalesces around the shield-cover, is the subject of two of the Taylors' illustrations (figs 10, 11). The first represents the poem's beginning:

Elaine the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east

⁵³ The word *bitextual* comes from Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *The Artist as Critic: Bitextuality in Fin-de-Siècle Illustrated Books* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1995).

⁵⁴ Páraic Finnerty, "'Much Honour and Much Fame Were Lost': *Idylls of the King* and Camelot's Celebrity Circle', in *Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson's Circle*, ed. by Charlotte Boyce, Finnerty, and Anne-Marie Millim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 191–233 (pp. 218–19, 221).

Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot,
 Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray
 Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam,
 Then fearing rust or soilure fashioned for it
 A case of silk, and braided thereupon.⁵⁵

The image shows Elaine in her tower working the shield-case on an embroidery frame. Her head is bowed, and there is a high level of realist detail given over to the act of embroidering: she has looped the thread around one hand, and uses the other to draw the needle through or fix a pin. Like Enid (and unlike Guinevere and Vivien), Elaine is marked as a Victorian lady by way of her costume.

The embroidered shield-case, I would suggest, is a piece of what is today called fan art: Elaine reads Lancelot's shield (as she later reads the sword) and translates its heraldry into another medium, just as fan artists use pre-existing characters and stories as the subject for new, unauthorized artistic productions.⁵⁶ In the larger poem, the quotation given by the Taylor sisters continues thus:

and braided thereupon
 All the devices blazoned on the shield
 In their own tinct, and added, *of her wit*,
 A border fantasy of branch and flower,
 And yellow-throated nestling in the nest. (ll. 8–12, my italics)

⁵⁵ 'Lancelot and Elaine', in *Poems of Tennyson*, III, pp. 422–62 (p. 422, ll. 1–8).

⁵⁶ *Urban Dictionary*, s.v. 'fanart' <<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=fanart>> [accessed 11 May 2015].

Tennyson's choice of phrase emphasizes the imaginative dimension of Elaine's fan activity, which augments an existing representation with her own 'wit'. In the process, Elaine's signifying word *fantasy* signals not a condemnation of the poem's teenaged modes of feeling, which have ensured the Elaine/Lady of Shalott figure's remarkable afterlife in young adult fiction,⁵⁷ but rather an elevation of such feelings into a wellspring for creative activity.

The album-makers' labours—their illustrations as a visual interpretation of the poem—are likewise significant for crystallizing Vivien's interest in questions of interpretation and meaning in the second and most controversial of the *Idylls*. For instance, *interpret* might substitute for *expound* in Vivien's challenge to Merlin: “‘The people call you prophet: let it be: / But not of those that can expound themselves. / Take Vivien for expounder’”.⁵⁸ While questions of interpretation are central to the ending of ‘The Day-Dream’ as well, their appearance within the story of Vivien's struggle against Merlin makes them explicitly gendered. Merlin's unreadable book containing his charm—‘every margin scribbled, crossed, and crammed / With comment, densest condensation, hard / To mind and eye’ (ll. 674–76)—insists on a superior knowledge that is gender-specific, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out in their famous analysis of these lines.⁵⁹ At a basic level, this is a scene about *readings*: who gets to read and, once they do,

⁵⁷ See Kristi Janelle Castleberry, ‘Re-Envisioning Elaine for Young Adult Literature’, *The Camelot Project*, University of Rochester <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/theme/elaine-of-astalot#YA>> [accessed 16 February 2015]; Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 235–39.

⁵⁸ ‘Merlin and Vivien’, in *Poems of Tennyson*, pp. 393–422 (p. 404, ll. 315–17).

⁵⁹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988–94), I: *The War of the Words* (1988), pp.

whose interpretation is correct, as Merlin's initial sarcastic remark, "'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien!'" (l. 665), confirms. Once more this echoes 'The Day-Dream', as the concern with interpretation is intrinsic to the very project of the poem: the *Idylls* is itself an exercise in Tennyson reading Malory, as critics including Roger Simpson and resources including the Camelot Project at the University of Rochester have explored at length.⁶⁰

The obverse of Merlin jealously guarding his superior glosses is Vivien's 'rhyme' from earlier in the poem, which envisages multiple creative interpretations: "'this rhyme: / It lives dispersedly in many hands, / And every minstrel sings it differently'" (ll. 454–56). Vivien then goes on to suggest that the verse nevertheless contains "'one true line, the pearl of pearls: / 'Man dreams of Fame while woman wakes to love'" (ll. 457–58). Yet this statement, far from solving problems of interpretation, complicates them: the 'pearl of pearls' is the most deceptive statement in this speech, considering Vivien's falseness as a lover. Perhaps, then, her earlier model of meaning made 'dispersedly in many hands' is more reliable?

It is certainly an apt description of the Taylor sisters' second illustration to 'Vivien', which represents the sisters' most compelling reading of the poem. Images of Tennyson's Vivien often privilege the poem's languorous pace or the strangeness of Merlin's final fate—*viz.* Julia Margaret Cameron's dreamy photographic illustration, 'Vivien Enchants Merlin' (1875). Even the women artists discussed by Clare Broome Saunders as incarnating a female medievalism in

257–58. See also Derek Attridge's critique of this reading in *Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 110–11.

⁶⁰ Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson, 1800–1849* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990); 'Alfred Lord Tennyson', *Camelot Project* <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/creator/alfred-tennyson>> [accessed 15 February 2016].

their illustrations to the *Idylls* produce a certain effect of stasis.⁶¹ Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale's redheaded Vivien from 1911, for instance, is either imperious but frozen in her tiger cloak, or winsome and falsely charming while sitting in Merlin's lap. None of these illustrations conveys the dimension of 'Vivien' that is about activity, movement, and will to power—Vivien's rather than Merlin's. Think not just of Vivien's final enchantment, but also her epithet 'wily' (l. 147 *et passim*), 'her petulance, and play' (l. 173), or her provocative address to Merlin after days spent in silence: "What, O my master, have ye found your voice? / I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at last!" (ll. 266–68). The latter exclamation begins the first excerpt from 'Vivien' given by the Taylor sisters, which spans lines 268 to 277, and contains an account of Vivien's service to Merlin (ll. 273–74). These moments of servitude stand in ironic counterpoint to Enid waiting upon Geraint, the subject of the first and second images in the album. Moreover, Vivien's terse speech in the written excerpt counterpoises the image itself, which is a conventional rendition of an oversized Merlin and a kneeling Vivien.

This image of Merlin and Vivien is a static tableau; however, a more compelling option for depicting Vivien's story might be a picture of her in motion. Gustave Doré approaches this territory in his illustration 'Vivien Encloses Merlin in the Tree' (1867), where Vivien is pictured in the foreground with one foot off the ground, turning back to look at the 'overworn' Merlin (l. 963). Doré's imagining of Vivien in motion is almost mournful: her backwards glance implies regret. By contrast, the Taylor sisters picture Vivien dancing for joy after she has trapped Merlin (fig. 12). The illustration is linked to lines 963 to 972 in the poem, envisioning the last stanza in particular:

Then crying 'I have made his glory mine,'

⁶¹ Clare Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), ch. 7.

And shrieking out 'O fool!' the harlot leapt
 Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
 Behind her, and the forest echoed 'fool'. (ll. 969–72)

The extract centres on a moral condemnation of the 'harlot' Vivien, but the illustration implies alternative sympathies. Vivien's upraised arms, tilted head, loose hair, and sparkling eyes all indicate triumph. Details such as the double chin produced by Vivien's posture convey spontaneity and energy, while the sensuous outline of Vivien's breasts and waist suggests that her character might offer possibilities for draughtsmanship that are unavailable when showing less transgressive women characters.

The Taylor sisters' jubilant Vivien returns us to Samantha Matthews' point, noted above, concerning the 'unregulated and unspeakable' emotions of the album. The illustration suggests a response to the poem that is not just absent from, but rather inexpressible in, contemporary discourse around the *Idylls*. As Linda H. Peterson has shown, the 1859 *Idylls* form part of Tennyson's career-long meditation on female character, with Enid representing the 'faithful wife', Vivien her antithesis, Elaine a 'would-be Enid', and Guinevere a 'failed ideal' of womanhood.⁶² In such formulations, 'Enid' and 'Elaine' mitigate the impact of 'Vivien' and 'Guinevere'; nonetheless, the Vivien character was scandalous enough to necessitate the recall of *Enid and Nimue: The True and the False*, Tennyson's original pairing of Enid with Merlin's destroyer.⁶³ Alternative identifications with Vivien and Guinevere may be evident in Victorian professional illustrations: for instance, Cameron's photographs emphasize Vivien in order 'to

⁶² Linda H. Peterson, 'Tennyson and the Ladies', in *Tennyson at Two Hundred*, ed. by Herbert F. Tucker (= *Victorian Poetry*, 47 (2009)), pp. 29–43 (p. 40).

⁶³ See *Poems of Tennyson*, III, p. 260n.

minimize slightly a sense of the idyll as developing Merlin's tragedy'.⁶⁴ They seldom, though, go so far as the Taylors' amateur illustrations, which focus exclusively on Vivien's triumph (unmixed with regret) and hence refuse the expected condemnation of her character. In fact, throughout the album the Taylor sisters offer an independent-minded, sympathetic depiction of Tennyson's four Arthurian women: either through illustrative choices, or the editing of extracts, or both.

4. Coda: Tennyson Fan Art

The 'Day-Dream' album and the Taylor sisters' *Idylls* album provide visual evidence of how the album-makers read Tennyson's poetry. In the case of the former poem, the album-maker includes the fairy-tale love plot as only one element in his or her illustrations, equally paying attention to the comic and the picturesque elements of 'The Day-Dream'. The illustrator's freedom to stress such details, and to devise new ones—for instance, to depict the Sleeping Beauty's court as an oriental fantasy—parallels the license some of Tennyson's professional illustrators took with his poetry, as they used it as a 'hook' for their own meanings and interpretations. In the Taylor sisters' album, the selection of extracts and moments for representation reflect nuanced readings of Tennyson's female characters. The privileging of the domestic rather than the martial dimensions of 'Enid', the refusal to condemn Guinevere, the

⁶⁴ Constance C. Relihan, 'Vivien, Elaine and the Model's Gaze: Cameron's Reading of *Idylls of the King*', in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. by Sally K. Slocum (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1992), pp. 111–31 (p. 118). Relihan's longer discussion of Cameron's Vivien images provides an interesting counterpoint to my argument about the Taylor sisters; see, for instance, her reading of the static pose and exclusion of the 'harlot' line in Cameron's work, pages 119 to 120.

stress on Elaine's creativity and craftsmanship as well as her melancholic fate, and the focus on a triumphant Vivien, are all significant readings of *Idylls*.

Throughout I have discussed these albums as works of amateur illustration, but they are also—like Elaine's shield-cover—examples of fan art. The poems' subject matter is significant once more: as Sheenagh Pugh has pointed out, folktales can themselves be considered a cross-century version of fan fiction based on the 'accreted stories' of an Arthur or a Robin Hood (or a Guinevere or a Sleeping Beauty).⁶⁵ These albums also resemble fan art because of the dedication they require to produce and the sense of longing towards the text that they embody—both qualities that differ from the album that combines multiple different sources. Inscribing a favourite line or even ten lines in an album implies less commitment than transcribing a whole poem, or substantial sections of one, and then furnishing it with your own illustrations, while the object of fandom in the albums is not Tennyson as celebrity, but his poetic creations.

These features of the album of amateur illustrations might invoke specific and prejudicial discourses of fandom: say, the sense of female fans 'unable to maintain critical distance from the image' or text.⁶⁶ However, amateur illustration turns the notion of critical distance upon its head: the private, seemingly trivial, fan-made album provides evidence of readers' interpretations that may not be found in more public records of reading. While extant amateur illustrations may be rare, and the nature of album culture means that certain authors (chiefly poets) may be better represented than others in available materials, amateur illustration should be included as a distinctive resource in the history of reading—particularly when the readers in question were women and when the texts they illustrated were about women.

⁶⁵ Sheenagh Pugh, *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context* (Bridgend: Seren, 2005), p. 9. Pugh goes on to mention *Idylls* and Arthur on page 10.

⁶⁶ Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 15.

5. Figure Captions

FIGURE 1. ‘Prologue’ page, from ‘Tennyson’s “Day-Dream”’. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4335.

FIGURE 2. John Everett Millais, illustration to ‘The Day-Dream’, from Alfred Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, 1857), p. 317.

FIGURE 3. Detail from the ‘Sleeping Beauty’ page, from ‘Tennyson’s “Day-Dream”’. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4335.

FIGURE 4. The ‘Reviel [*sic*]’ page, from ‘Tennyson’s “Day-Dream”’. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4335.

FIGURE 5. One of the ‘Sleeping Palace’ pages, from ‘Tennyson’s “Day-Dream”’. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4335.

FIGURE 6. Ella Taylor, *The Cambridge Family around the Christmas Tree* (1858). Royal Collections, RL 18813A. A key on the reverse of the image identifies the figures at far left as J. Du Plat Taylor and Miss Ella Taylor.

FIGURE 7. Emmie Taylor, Guinevere and Enid, from Ella, Rose, and Emmie Taylor, ‘The Idylls of the King Illustrated by Three Sisters, 1860’. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4332.

FIGURE 8. Geraint, from *Illustrations of Alfred Tennyson’s ‘Idylls of the King’ Provided Expressly for the Art-Union of London by Paolo Priolo 1863* (n.p.). Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4332.

FIGURE 9. Guinevere and Arthur, from Ella, Rose, and Emmie Taylor, ‘Idylls by Three Sisters’. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4332.

FIGURE 10. Elaine at her embroidery, from Ella, Rose, and Emmie Taylor, ‘Idylls by Three Sisters’. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4332.

FIGURE 11. Elaine with Lancelot's shield, from Ella, Rose, and Emmie Taylor, 'Illustrations to Idylls of the King. Designed by E.T., R.T. & E.J.T., 1859'. This image is missing from the other version of the album. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4333.

FIGURE 12. Vivien triumphant, from Ella, Rose, and Emmie Taylor, 'Idylls by Three Sisters'. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire County Council, TRC/W/4332.