The forgoing thematic analysis of Tennyson's mythical poems bring into focus the allegorical design and symbolic mode of those poems. An effort is made in the present chapter to determine the salient features of Tennyson's technique and form and style to demonstrate how they contribute to the cohesiveness of these poems as a group.

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

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

---

and Hugh Murray's *An Historical Account of Discoveries and Travels in Africa, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day.*

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 The significance of light-dark and East-West dichotomy for Tennyson becomes clear from the third section of the unpublished fragment of the poet's early days "Ode: O Bosky Brook."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

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

(ll. 83-95)

---

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

\[
\text{Rare sound, spare light will best address} \\
\text{The soul for awful muse and solemn watchfulness.}
\]

(ll. 111-112).

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

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

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

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

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

(ll. 104-111).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Classical Echoes in Tennyson, p. 27.)
portrayal. The abode of the gods, besides having the pleasant environment of a bracing climate and an eternal spring, has music as well. Tennyson depicts this island as a place free from stress, strain, and pressures of the world. Its pleasure and peace are supposed to be conducive to creativity. The islands of "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," "The Lotos-Eaters," Mt. Ida of "Oenone," the field of Enna of "Demeter and Persephone," and the lands "subjected to the Heliconian ridge" in "Tiresias," signify this place. The island of Ithaca is a place of disillusionment as indicated by its "barren crags." Ulysses sets off from there with a faint hope that perhaps he may, in the course of his voyage, reach the Isle of the Blest. It can be seen that, as a symbol, the land of the Lotos-Eaters is specially significant because there is not only "blissful ease" but also sleep. The toil-worn mariners pray for "rest" which comes either with "dark death" or the "dreamful ease" of sleep. But "dark death" and "dreamful ease" belong to the region of half-light and darkness. This brings us to the second set of images which may be explored and understood with the help of the images in the third section of the poem, "Ode: 0 Bosky Brook," quoted earlier. Here Tennyson addresses "Thor" as "venerable dark! august obscure!"
and calls her the "Sublimest." She is one of the most ancient Egyptian Deities which, in the Coptic, signifies Night. The morning star, Phospher, the harbinger of day, and the evening star, Hesper, the harbinger of night symbolize respectively, dawn brightening into day with its hustle and bustle of life, and evening shading into night and darkness, with peace, calm and quiet of sleep. The images of East and West, too, have the same connotations as Phospher and Hesper. In "The Hesperides" the poet shows that "the wisdom of the west" is treasured in the West. Besides, it is the "... western sun and the western star,/ And the low west wind, breathing afar,/ The end of day and beginning of night/ Make the apple holy and bright" (ll. 89-92) and "All good things are in the west." (line 96). In "Ulysses" he declares: "... for my purpose holds/ To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths/ Of all the western stars, until I die." (ll. 59-61). As for Phospher, signifying dawn and day, the lines in "The Hesperides" are: "Guard the apple night and day,/ Lest one from the East come and take it away," (ll. 41-42)

7. See The Poems of Tennyson, p. 265.
or, "Half-round the mantling night is drawn,/ Purple-fringed with even and dawn./ Hesper hateth Phosphor,
evening hateth morn." (11. 80-82). A glance at "Ode : 0 Bosky Brook" makes this antimony between Hesper and Phosphor clear. All creations, whether of art or Nature, are possible in peaceful and calm surroundings which are characterized by the twilight and night of the Wont as symbolized by Hesper. Phosphor stands for the choirs of men marked by noise and light-heartedness, the "Chirp, bellow, bark and distant shout of man." (line 105). These disturb the creative mood. For it one requires "Rare sound" and "spare light."

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

'One height and one far-shining fire',
And while I fancied that my friend
For this brief idyll would require
A less diffuse and opulent end....
(11. 57-60).


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

is made "too restrictive" then the dramatic monologue "must have not only a speaker other than the poet but also a listener, an occasion, and some interplay between speaker and lister." It is perhaps in this "restrictive" sense that Pettigrew considers both "The Lotos-Eaters" and "Oenone" to be soliloquies. Dramatic monologue, in a way, stems from soliloquy. Langbaum observes that


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

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

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

render with a firm pictorial touch.²⁰ The moods reflected in Tennyson's mythical poems are not only single moods, but also those, which he himself had experienced during the different phases of his life.

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

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

that the four mythical poems, "The Sea-Fairies," "The Hesperides," "The Lotos-Eaters" and "Oenone," are a combination of two forms. They begin as narratives and then slide into the dramatic mode. Their structure consists of two parts, the introduction which is narrative and non-dramatic, and the monologue with dramatic elements in it. The sole purpose of the introductory section is to provide a narrative basis for the dramatic part of the poem which follows. Since these poems are basically mood poems, Tennyson uses the introduction to project the mood. This brings to mind a faint resemblance with the Greek drama. It also has two chief components — the chorus and the protagonists. The chorus divides the play into acts, shows the significance of the events taking place, and either comments on the action or leads up to it. Tennyson's introductory passages are similar to the chorus of the Greek drama, and the poems can be called his experiments with the form of the dramatic monologue and the Greek dramatic technique. The poet uses the narrator as its chorus. "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Hesperides" are an attempt at conjoining the blank verse of the chorus to the lyrical mode of the dramatic monologue of the protagonists. But "The Lotos-Eaters" is different. The whole of it,
including the chorus-like narrative introduction, is in lyrical form, just as the whole of "Oenone" with its introduction is in blank verse. Tennyson may be said to be the closest to Greek lyrical drama in "The Lotos-Eaters." It may be said that if Tennyson had written the whole episode of the Lotos-Eaters instead of stopping at just one stasimon and one episode, "The Lotos-Eaters" would have been the first lyrical drama of the Victorian age. 21

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The auditor to Tithonus' sorrow is the perpetrator of his plight, Eos herself. Being a goddess she is gifted with eternal youth. She, however, continues to have a tenderness for him though he has become a pitiable wreck in his decrepitude. She listens to his pleadings, is pained at his suffering, and departs in silence, with
her "tears" on his "cheeks." The dramatic monologue here brings out the helplessness of both god and man and creates a poignant situation with great finesse. The dawning sky is covered with scattered clouds through which Tithonus has glimpses of the cycle of life and death by looking at "... the homes/ Of happy men that have the power to die,/ And grassy barrows of the happier dead." (11. 69-71).

The fact that Menoeceus is the silent and receptive auditor of the aged blind sage is made clear by Tiresias' remark: "I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone! He will achieve his greatness." (11. 160-161). The scene is Thebes under siege. Here the conflict is not between Tiresias and Menoeceus but between Tiresias and the general public of Thebes, as well as within the psyche of the sage himself, between his handicap of blindness, old age, and hence his helplessness on the one hand and his desire to serve his country on the other.

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

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

24. The Poems of Tennyson, note 1, p. 385.
25. Ibid., note 22, p. 386.
0 mother Ida, many fountained Ida.
(line 22).
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
(line 63).
Yet mother Ida, harken ere I die.
(line 191).
0 mother Ida, hear me yet before I die.
(line 203).

The phrase "ere I die" is also a traditional feature of the pastoral love poem. 26 He also adopts a "classical commonplace" in "O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?/ O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?" 27 (11. 232-233). This gives an archaic touch to the poem. Apart from "Oenone," Tennyson's other poems, too, have classical phraseology and images. Mustard has sorted them out painstakingly in his Classical Echoes in Tennyson. While in the non-mythical poems the practice enhances the aesthetic appeal of the poems and reflects the poet's scholarship, in Greek mythical poems it gives them a classical flavour.

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

27. Ibid., note 233, p. 396.
1. by alluding to mythical personages,
2. by alluding to events and episodes related to mythical personages, and
3. by alluding to superstitions and traditions of the past.

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

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

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

(ll. 13-17)

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

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

(ll. 124-126),

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

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

(11. 4-7).

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

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

(11. 88-95).

Mustard's study in Classical Echoes in Tennyson reveals
that classical images and idioms are interwoven throughout
Tennyson's poems, but in Greek mythical poems they enhance
the mythopoeic element of the poems. The poet is fond
of using archaic expressions like, ere, hark, doth,
shalt, clomb, hath, athwart, madest, yonder, twain,
yon, thee, thou, thy, thine etc. in mythical poems,
though he is not consistent in their use in all of them.
Tennyson uses Nature both as background and as symbol in these poems. Tennyson's love of realism surfaces in this context. Whatever the theme, the landscape in his poems is invariably modelled on places he himself has visited. This maker Nicolson complains that though he does not mind the scenery of "Oenone" being based on the valley of Caunteretz, he is, however, shocked "to learn that the island of 'The Lotos-Eaters' is no more, after all, than an idealized Torquay." 29

It is, however, unfair to expect realism in a poem of this kind. T.S. Eliot observes that a poet's mind is like a receptacle which stores up numerous feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can form a new compound are present together. 30 Tennyson himself said that people who try to localise the sights and scenes depicted in his poems and thereby try to pin him down to a particular spot and meaning hardly understand a poet's mind. What he describes is not one scene but "the result of the impression

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

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


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

31. K.D. Rawnsley, Memories of the Tennysons, p. 111.

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

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

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

(Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, I, from Tennyson's letter to Emily Sellwood, dated July 1839, p. 171).
The crags are "barren" and in the distance "loom the dark broad seas" while "the deep/known round with many voices."

These seem to communicate the real mood of Ulysses who is taking to a life of adventure once again. Tennyson, in the image of Ulysses, is trying to pick up the threads of life.

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

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

(ll. 5-9).

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

33. Appendix II, B, p. 228.


34(a). In this he resembled Keats for "both Keats and Tennyson attempted to make words serve the function of pigments."

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

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

(11. 24-29).


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

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

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

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

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

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

\textit{(A Memoir, II, p. 509).}