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# Pure Atmosphere of Feeling: The Creative Interdependence of Tennyson, Hallam, and Sterling

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Richard D. Altick begins his chapter "The Victorians: Actors and Audiences" with the observation: "One of the most distinctive features of Victorian literature is its social orientation."[1] What the industrializing Victorians lacked in playwriting, they supplemented not only with novels but also with the newly, and voluminously, public spectacles of daily life. Not only was literature written emphatically about society, but it was increasingly written for the increasingly literate public. Even as difficult a reading as Tennyson's *In Memoriam* was read widely by the masses.[2] Tennyson himself, though reclusive in his later years, largely had outlived the Wordsworthian ideal of writing in idyllic leisure in the Lake District. So, in order to begin to appreciate his life, one must pay homage to the crowd behind the scenes, within the cloistered walls, and secret gatherings at Cambridge University.

The most famous – and most secretive – of these groups was the Cambridge Apostles, an elite debating society whose reputation remains well known even though its proceedings have



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long been kept largely private.[3] "Little is known about its first few years," admits Peter Allen,[4] "probably because there is little to know." Its nickname "was earned at some unknown time…and for some unknown reason, perhaps because membership was limited to twelve, perhaps because the members were led by their religious (if not, Evangelical) views to give themselves as some sort of spiritual elite".[5] But what is known, and what is most pertinent to the current discussion, is that this society, formed in 1820 as a modest debate club called the Cambridge Conversazione Society,[6] came to include all those figures who became central to the "pure atmosphere of feeling" (Hallam)[7] that is, in deference to non-Apostle S. T. Coleridge, eventually acquired – namely Tennyson, Arthur Hallam, and John Sterling.

The most influential of Tennyson's "crew members" is Arthur Hallam, his dear friend and a prominent Apostle whose early death inspired Tennyson's great elegy, *In Memoriam*. But one must look beyond any single pair to perceive the group: to apprehend the undeniably social – not merely dyadic – character of the backstage activity. Studying Hallam is necessary to appreciate that activity, but only examining the entire group in its interdependence can adequately account for it.

Much Tennysonian scholarship aims at that understanding and continues to pursue it today; it therefore exceeds the scope of any single study. However, one step toward it is a close examination of multiple members of Tennyson's social network. One useful case is the Apostle John Sterling, whom Anne Kimball Tuell – Tennyson's biographer in 1914 – compares to Hallam:

> Arthur Hallam, through not an intimate of Sterling, suggests always a comparison, – more steady, more conversational, more orderly, more correct, – but like Sterling, imaginative, brilliant, untroubled in wit, gallant and sage and mighty of phrase, with the


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> same superb loquacity in his early letters, the same penchant for pathos and for dealing largely with noble causes. Above all he recalls Sterling in the tragedy of his still earlier death.[8]

But Hallam and Sterling were similar in more specific ways. Both wrote modest poetry but gained outsized reputations as critics before dying young. Both were influential, charismatic members of the Cambridge Apostles. Both wrote reviews of Alfred Tennyson that may have affected his career. Both were drawn to what Hallam called a Coleridgean "pure atmosphere of feeling." Tuell does not pursue a detailed comparison of them. Her biography is one of only three well-known accounts of Sterling (the others by Julius Hare and Thomas Carlyle), so few comparable analyses exist. The following is an exploratory attempt to compare Hallam's and Sterling's environments within that "pure atmosphere of feeling," and to examine each man's relationship with Tennyson and his poetry.

Hallam's review of Tennyson's first volume "is a brilliant critical essay, one that makes no concessions whatsoever to the prejudices of the ordinary reader, who would probably be as skeptical of the ecstasy of admiration to which Hallam gave way in the later part of the review as he would be puzzled by the extremely complex argument that makes up the first part".[9] Perhaps his simplest, and yet his boldest, move was to contrast Wordsworthian "poesy of reflexion" with Keatsian-Shelleyan, and now Tennysonian, "poetry of sensation," and to side against the Poet Laureate (Wordsworth) in some favor of Tennyson's "picturesque delineation of objects".[10] As for the remainder of his essay, Allen has an interesting observation:

> If [the reader] understood [Hallam's] argument at all, he might very well conclude that on the one hand he was being asked to accept the unknown, Mr



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> Tennyson as a great poet, while on the other he was being assured that he wouldn't recognize a great poet if he saw one... Of course Hallam was quite right; from our vantage point in time it is easy to see how such avant-garde cliches as the Apostles served to bring new ideas into general consciousness. But he could scarcely hope to further Tennyson's career by publicly asserting that his poetry was likely to be unpopular with all but a privileged few.[11]

Hallam lacked the practical sensibility to turn his thorough analyses into marketable work. His criticism stayed formal and abstract. Sterling was sharper and more pragmatic. His review advocated making writing marketable and useful. He treated Tennyson's work as an artistic complement to society's technological progress. Sterling grouped Tennyson's poems into idylls, lyrics, fancies (nostalgic pieces), and moralities (allegories).[12] Idylls and lyrics both portray private-life incidents, but lyrics prioritize feeling over concrete character or setting, whereas idylls emphasize character and place. Idylls and fancies share a broad, descriptive style and a personal tone; the key difference is temporal vs. spatial focus – fancies evoke temporal sanctuaries (a remembered moment or mood), while idylls celebrate spatial retreats (quiet, specific locales in contemporary England).

Evidently, Sterling viewed Tennyson's poems as escapes from a frenetic, industrializing society. Moreover, although his critical style differed much from Hallam's, it presents us with such a subtle and clever analysis of escape strategies as to leave us wary of persistent doubts concerning Sterling's intellect – all the way from Mill's (albeit quickly qualified) complaint that "he was never, in the full sense of the word, a profound thinker"[13] to Millar's more recent, and even less kindly qualified, gripe that


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"Sterling's poetry ranges from the merely competent to the sentimental and contrived"[14] and the contention that even his criticism, despite being his redeeming quality, is occasionally imprecise and simplistic.

Sterling was indebted to Coleridge's notion of the "clerisy," which integrates civilization with cultivation, insofar as Sterling saw Tennyson's poetry as a voluminous artistic supplement to technological proliferation; and perhaps he was even indebted to Hallam's early attempt to classify Tennyson's poetry (as poetry of sensation), insofar as Sterling devised an even more discriminating typology. But that his typology was not entirely seminal does not necessarily mean that it was not profound, any more than Linnaeus's indebtedness to Aristotle's early biological taxonomy should nullify the praise that figures as large as Goethe heaped upon him. On the contrary, it scenes remarkable that Sterling was able to theorize about the functions of poetry after a long-lamented absence of great poets – i.e., that he was able to theorize sans empirical trends or precedents – and that he was able to presage scholars as late as Altick[15] by examining Victorian poetry with an explicitly, emphatically, and extensively social context.

Miller's latter point – that notable exceptions to Sterling's usual keenness exist – appears, in retrospect, at least partially correct. "Sterling's...1842 review of Tennyson...dismisses 'The Palace of Art' as 'a many colored mistake'...he complains even of 'Ulysses' that 'a modern English poet should write of Ulysses, rather than of the great voyagers of the modern world'".[16] That such an antiquated "mistake" as the latter piece would still be read and praised two centuries later is puzzling indeed. Sterling favored idylls and fancies over lyrics and moralities, but he criticized fancies for their temporal remoteness, arguing that their nostalgic focus could feel remote and less relatable to


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nineteenth-century readers. Only when we realize that "In Tennyson's mind [a crier's] scorn far outweighed the Apostles' [including Hallam's] approval, and to their dismay he set his face against all further publication,"[17] and that, a decade later, he was rumored to become so depressed by the negativity interspersed throughout Sterling's article that he considered writing no more "fancies",[18] can we see Tennyson as a persistently pessimistic poet. And only after a review of both Hallam's and Sterling's relationships to Tennyson can we begin to delve confidently into the psyche and the poetry of this very sensitive – this deeply feeling – man.

* * *

Seventeen-year-old Arthur Henry Hallam arrived at Cambridge in October 1828.[19] His father's demand that he study at Cambridge rather than Oxford, along with the onset of the vascular disease that ultimately would kill him, concocted a deep depression that could be remedied only by good friendship and by "the pure atmosphere of Feeling",[20] both of which he soon found in the Coleridgian Cambridge Apostles and especially in Tennyson, himself an outsider in that he was more disposed to poetry than to prosaic debate, and in that he, like Hallam, was unhappy in his early time at Cambridge.[21] Hallam, a promising poet himself, wanted to publish a joint volume with Tennyson, but his father forbade it.[22]

During his Apostolic life, Hallam nurtured Tennyson's poetry and psyche – the latter of which was perhaps even more volatile than Hallam's – and became engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily. Meanwhile, it began to seem 'as if Hallam and the Society were identical, as if Hallam's opinions needed only to be known in order to know what the others were thinking'.[23] While in Vienna with his father in 1833, at the age of only 22 years, he died of a 'massive cerebral haemorrhage',[24] leaving an



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intellectual void in the Apostles and an emotional one in Tennyson. The former void manifested itself in the 'indefinable but quite distinct gap' that soon 'separated those who merely belonged to the Society and those who knew and loved Hallam';[25] but the latter void became, as Allen[26] points out, transparent when Tennyson referred to the 'master–bowman' of oration, in canto LXXVII of *In Memoriam*.

Hallam's many surviving letters show how he motivated and enabled Tennyson to write. In fact, letters themselves are among the endeavors that Hallam inspired in Tennyson, who pointedly summarized his feelings on the matter overall: 'I would any day as soon kill a pig as write a letter – heaven first sent letters for some wretched Aid!' so I think Eliza says to Abelaid in Pope. For 'said' read 'curse'.[27] Considering this fact, the sober cadence of Tennyson's correspondence with Hallam – let alone the mystical powers he ascribed to that correspondence in canto XCV of *In Memoriam* ('A messenger seized my heart, I read / [...] The noble letters of the dead [...]') – is word by word, and line by line, 'the dead man touched me from the past')[28] – is quite astonishing.

Hallam's short but significant role as Tennyson's earliest biographer is further substantiated by letters such as the one he wrote to Tennyson's brother, Frederick, four months after the Tennysons' father had died,[29] and Alfred was suffering from depression and hypochondria.[30] 'What can be done for him?' Hallam asked Frederick. 'Do you think he is really very ill in body? His mind certainly is in a distressing state. I wish you, or somebody, would transcribe for me some of his recent poems.'[31] Indeed, 'Hallam made every effort to bring him back into ordinary life and was almost entirely responsible for arranging the publication of his second volume.'[32] But despite his best efforts, including the provision of guidance as to how best to


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react to the volume's terrible reception in Blackwood's Review,[33] Hallam could not aid Tennyson's spirits – much worse, further disappointed by Hallam's death in 1833 – and would not motivate him to publish in the immediate (ten-year) aftermath of that reception.

It could be argued that Hallam unintentionally helped set the stage for Tennyson's poor early reception: conservative (Tory) reviewer John Wilson Croker (writing as Christopher North) famously dismissed both Tennyson and his poetry as lacking intellectual merit. But Hallam, despite whatever responsibility he may have had, was not entirely to blame for it: "the ferocity of Croker's attack was due at least in part to [Tennyson's] apparently radical connections, both through his friends and [through] his reviewers".[34] By this time, Croker's political biases and utter insensitivity to poets as human beings had become infamous: "Byron had accused Croker's notorious 1818 review of Endymion of killing Keats".[35] Then again, Hallam's glowing review of Tennyson's first volume seems to have inflated his ego to the point at which some ridicule of his second volume was to be expected. In the preface to that volume, Tennyson wrote:

> Mine be the power with which ever to sway.
> Will in the waste ocean, and by degrees
> May into unmanageable spirits flow,
> Even as the warm gulf-stream of Florida
> Floats far away into the northern seas
> The lavish growths of southern Mexico.[36]

But such self-confidence was the exception rather than the rule for Tennyson, whose "picturesque delineation[s] of objects," as Hallam (1910) called his poetry, were often sombre sights. Tennyson's relentless metaphors, intertwined with themes of isolation and depression, are encapsulated in such ironically


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immortal works as "Mariana," "The Lady of Shallot," and his great elegy for Hallam, *In Memoriam*.

Except perhaps to the most stoically objective readers, such as the "new critics," and in spite of its *Memoriam*'s poem's conclusion that only through a thoughtful re-examination in society can one escape the structure of depression, the intensely personal character of the poems' sombre origins and roots – is etymologically "radical" constitutions – its unmistakable. Even so, its sheer length and sectional division have permitted countless readers to extract, for special savoring, those sections most relevant to them as individuals.

Queen Victoria herself did this when her husband died, and, in response to her success with this activity, she made Tennyson the poet laureate. And perhaps the vast majority of readers can relate to (or find guidance in) that touchstone of English thought: "Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all."[37] But in order to appreciate this piece fully as a poem specifically about Hallam, as must be done in an attempt to appreciate it emphatically as a piece by Tennyson, one must connect the piece not only to Hallam's biography – as several of the poem's editors (e.g., Ricks; Collins and Rundle) have done so well – but to his philosophy as well. A few themes that were of great conceptual importance to Hallam were faith, love, and sympathy. The first two of these are undoubtedly relevant to the substance of *In Memoriam*, and will be discussed presently. Hallam's views on sympathy have been discussed in connection with Tennyson's "The Palace of Art."

Hallam's philosophical insights were unusually sophisticated for any writer, and especially remarkable coming from someone so young. So intricate was his review of Tennyson's first volume that James Spedding, a fellow Apostle, once complained, "The worst of it is that it is not written for the


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vulgar…but it is dangerous to tell him so, for he immediately assails you with cunning sentences…proving that if you object to his expressions you are ignorant of the truth of metaphysics".[38] Thus, it is with both sympathy for Hallam and empathy for the reader that what follows is by no means an attempt to revive Hallam's intellect exhaustively, but, its instead, a gross simplification of that intellect which cannot go without mention in a review, no matter what its size and scope, of the impact of Tennyson's friends upon his poetry.

Hallam's most renowned exploration of faith occurred in his paper with the less-than-esoteric title, "Theodicea Novissimum: Hints for an Effectual Construction of the Higher Philosophy on the Basis of Revelation," which he most likely read "at the 29 October 1831 meeting of the Apostles, when the subject was" the equally intimidating question, "Is there ground for believing that the existence of moral evil is absolutely necessary to the fulfillment of God's essential love for [sic] Christ?".[39] In a word, Hallam's paper said, "yes," to the delight of most (three to one) non-"neutral" members who voted on the issue.[40]

In spite of the paper's rather overbearing title, it ended up in the venerated hands of Hallam's fiancée – prompting Hallam to react with some ambivalence. On the one hand, he wrote to Emily, "I do not think women ought to trouble themselves much with theology; we, who are more liable to the subtle objections of the Understanding, have more need to handle the weapons that lay them prostrate".[41] Hallam argued a paradox: individuals possess both intellectual (traditionally labelled "masculine") and intuitive (traditionally labelled "feminine") capacities, which he uses to confront the problem of evil[42] in a world governed by a benevolent Creator. Both the masculine and feminine routes to conquering this paradox must first accept it for what it is: a necessary paradox wherein the existence of evil is a given. The


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masculine route was described in Hallam's paper; the feminine one took shape in Hallam's letter:

> But where there is a greater innocence, there are larger materials for a singlehearted faith. It is by the heart, not by the head, that we must be convinced of the two great fundamental truths, [...] the reality of Love, & the reality of Evil. Do not, my beloved Emily, let any cloudy mistrusts and perplexities bewilder your perception of those, & of the…Redemption, which makes them objects of delight and of horror. Be not deceived; we are not called to effect a reconciliation between the purity of God and our own evil: that is done freely for us. We are forgiven: all that remains is to rejoice, to rejoice & to ask all things of God confidently, knowing that He has pursued us all things. All our unhappiness comes from want of trust & reliance on the insatiable love of God.[43]

Given Hallam's interest in theodicy, it is fitting that Tennyson shapes his sensitive study of Hallam's life as a theodic work, treating Hallam's death as the "necessary evil" to be reconciled. Noteworthy is the care with which Tennyson weaves Hallam's distinction between masculine and feminine approaches[44] into his larger moral vision, explicitly alluding to the former path to faith in Canto XCV:

> Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
> At last he hears his music out;
> There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.
>
> He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
> He would not make his judgment blind,


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He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own.[45]

And, in the following canto, Tennyson sensitively alludes to the feminine route to faith:

For him she plays, to him she sings
Of early faith and pious vows;
She knows but matters of the house,
And he, he knows a thousand things.

Her faith is fix'd and cannot move,
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
'I cannot understand: I love.'[46]

That final stanza could equally describe Emily's faith in and love for God or for Hallam. Tennyson would likely have approved: his apotheosis of Hallam in *In Memoriam* and Hallam's standing among the "Apostles" attest to his authority.[47] Alongside his reflections on faith, Hallam argued that love of God is mediated through earthly/physical love – for Christ, for beauty, or for one's fellow man[48] – a view he partly shared with F. D. Maurice.

In fact, so enamored was Hallam with love itself that he defended his esoteric review of Tennyson's poetry by confessing to a passion – an emotional propensity – for the intellectually challenging style: "It is true," he admitted to Edward Spedding, "I thought more of myself and the Truth, as I thought I perceived it, than of my probable readers…It is no easy matter, however, for a man to show himself when he gets into full swing, and begins to write *con amore*" (emphasis added).[49] Perhaps Hallam's evident amore *di* amore explains why Tennyson – while leaving biographers to debate whether his feelings were romantic or


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Platonic – makes unmistakably clear in *In Memoriam* that his attachment to Hallam was intense and powerful.

* * *

At this point, after a tribute to Hallam, one may permissibly wind down a general review of the social effects upon Tennyson, having paid homage to an undoubtedly necessary influence upon his poetry and psyche. But the central point of this discussion is that this influence is by no means a sufficient condition for the ultimate state of the latter things. To move closer to sufficiency, we should consider John Sterling: though his life was tragically short, he outlived Hallam by a decade, and his relationship to Tennyson's work offers a useful contrast with Hallam's.

Sterling criticised Tennyson's "Ulysses" and "Morte d'Arthur" as overly nostalgic for nineteenth-century sensibilities. Although Sterling carefully blended eloquent praise with pointed critique, he underestimated Tennyson's psychological fragility: both poems were tributes to Hallam, and Tennyson had a troubling propensity to see the glass as half-empty in the face of critical ambiguity.[50] While it would be unreasonable to ask Sterling to compromise his sincerity for Tennyson's fragile psyche, it is reasonable to attempt to reconcile Sterling's views with Tennyson's intentions and Hallam's influence.

Thomas Carlyle[51] recalls that "John Sterling was born at a Kaines Castle, a kind of dilapidated baronial residence to which a small farm was then attached, rented by his Father, in the Isle of Bute – on the 20th July 1806," the son of an ardent editor known as "the Thunderer of the Times Newspaper".[52] At Cambridge, where he studied law but eventually dropped out and moved to London, he became active in the Apostles and became friends with F. D. Maurice, R. C. Trench, and J. C. Hare – the last of whom later chronicled Sterling's brief foray into ministry in a


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biography that the cynical Carlyle, who became Sterling's friend in Sterling's later life, was more than happy to supplant. A novelist and poet in his own right, Sterling is perhaps best known for his oratory prowess[53] and his journalistic interest – including his purchase of the Athenaeum – both of which he presumably inherited from his father. After resigning from his religious position, he spent the remainder of his life "in almost perpetual movement which ended with his death, at Ventnor, on the Isle of Wight, in 1844".[54] Carlyle and Anne Kimball Tuell have written directly about Sterling; Robert Keith Miller has studied him indirectly in his critical analysis of Carlyle's biography.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Sterling by any of the Victorians came not from Carlyle but from John Stuart Mill, who, in his autobiography, credited Sterling with affirming, if not outright facilitating, his ascent from depression. Sterling's influence was foregrounded by Mill's finding "Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, [in] that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty".[55] Like Hallam, Mill found solace in a "culture of the feelings";[56] and, also like Hallam, Mill found such a culture embodied in the Cambridge Apostles – or at least in two of them, F. D. Maurice and John Sterling, the latter of whom had echoed the former's sentiments, in the London Debating Society, that Wordsworth's poetry was about more than "flowers and butterflies"[57] and that Byron's, in contrast, was not all "the poetry of human life"[58] and was, much more, "the lament of a man who had worn out all pleasures, and who seemed to think that life, to all those who possess the good things of it, must necessarily be [a] vapid, uninteresting thing".[59] Though Mill maintained that, as with two Apostolic friends, "Maurice was the thinker, Sterling the orator, and impassioned expositor of thoughts which...were formed


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almost entirely for him by Maurice",[60] he came eventually to respect Sterling's own persuasive talents; "the distance between us was always diminishing: if I made steps toward some of his opinions, he, during his short life, was constantly approximating more and more to several of mine: and if he had lived...there is no knowing how much further this spontaneous assimilation might have proceeded".[61] Mill found release from Benthamite hyper-rationalism not among men of mere sentiment, but among thinkers whose keen intellects were matched by even greater hearts, allowing well-articulated feeling.

* * *

Most – including Mill – agree that Byron's poetry is sensuously expressive, while many – including Hallam – find Wordsworth's work more philosophically reflective. Or, if we consider Mill's and Sterling's take on Wordsworth, we could say that Wordsworth was, in fact, sensuous (i.e., he had a good sensory apprehension of the natural world); but in contrast to Byron, his sensuousness led, via the objective correlatives in his poems, toward mentally enriching ends.

In Hallam's estimation, Tennyson's poetry is primarily sensuous (not wholly unlike that of Byron, we might interject); but to Sterling, Tennyson's craft nonetheless was tasteful (as was Wordsworth's, we – along with Mill and the Mill-Sterling coterie – might add). His work was tasteful in the sense that it included useful idyllic escapes,[62] and in the sense that it offered a masculine complement to the "prodigious sea of bonnets, and under each of these a separate sentient sea of notions, and feelings, and passions"[63] that added "one small share of moral culture [to] the mass" of people and their technology.

This juxtaposition of Hallam and Sterling, through which we may see the (eventually) emblematic Tennyson as both perceptive and pragmatic, seems fitting, as the Victorian age was


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one of sensual disturbance and social upheaval that required both keenness and caution. But Sterling alone recognised this dual necessity and was careful not to understate the importance of pragmatic thought. This caution is evident in his assessment of "Morte D'Arthur," which he dismissed as an antiquated piece, as "less costly jewel-work, than some [other poems], and not compensating for this inferiority by any stronger human interest"[64] – only to laud it, later in the same paragraph, as a superb "combination of a thoroughly speculative intellect with full results, abundance of beautiful imagery." The fact that Sterling wanted Tennyson's poems to be marketable, even though fellow Apostle Hallam could not even write a marketable review of Tennyson's poems, begs the question of why two members of the clerisy would differ so greatly in their ability to accomplish the clerisy's Coleridge-assigned task of informing society at large with cultivation.

Additionally, if Mill is right that Sterling preferred Wordsworth to Byron, Sterling's stance toward Tennyson is ambiguous. It could be argued that he implies and thereby augments his praise for Wordsworth by praising Tennyson most when his poetry appears "Wordsworthian" – idyllic and marketable – which may signal indirect praise for Wordsworth. But at the same time, Sterling's criticism was partly pragmatic. Although Tennyson was swept by the abundance of criticism in Sterling's otherwise positive review (relative to reviews others wrote of early Tennyson), he downplayed that approval to make his critique acceptable to contemporaries and fit for the *Quarterly Review*.[65] Thus, Sterling's own need to be practical and marketable has paradoxically obscured the extent to which he preferred practicality and marketability in Tennyson's poetry.

Moreover, an assessment of Sterling's interest in marketability – in the exoteric effects of poetry – is confounded


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by the esoteric and self-sufficient atmosphere that he, under the influence of F. D. Maurice and along with Edward Romilly, lent to the Apostles. They "became rather less earnest and constructive, arguing at considerable length without necessarily expecting the answers to lead anywhere".[66] Even their involvement in political causes, such as the Sterling-spirited Spanish insurrection, seems to have been conducted in "a fashion less political than literary and metaphysical...When political views were touched upon, it was in an amused and rather patronizing way" (Greene).[67] It's interesting to speculate as to whether this effort in any way predisposed Tennyson to take such a poised and curious stance on the famous "Light Brigade," toward whose tactical blunders he could as easily have launched an impassioned polemic.

After all, Sterling supported John Stuart Mill's struggle to untangle himself from the subduing chains of pure utilitarianism. The self-sufficiency of this environment was so pronounced that Richard Deacon devoted an entire chapter, "The Lotus-Eaters," to it – taking as its namesake Tennyson's Odyssian-inflected poem – and prompting in the reader curiosity as to what, if any, causal impact the Apostolic experience had on Tennyson's poetic descriptions of stagnation. Additionally, this generation of the Apostles seems to have inherited Coleridge's fondness for opium – a real "lotus" of sorts – under whose revered influence Coleridge most certainly had written "Kubla Khan",[68] and in whose honor Tennyson writes, in *In Memoriam*, that composing poetry is itself "like dull narcotics, numbing pain" (Canto 5, line 8). It's peculiar that such an "avant-garde" group would favor reveling in conceptual ambiguity, whether through debate or through intoxication, as opposed to taking visibly progressive charges. But perhaps it could be argued that coming to terms with ambiguity is itself among the most radical of charges.


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In fact, as Linda K. Hughes pointed out in her 2001 review of Tennyson scholarship, it has been argued that Tennyson's long poem, "The Palace of Art", is most directly a commentary on the Cambridge Apostles. Like the Apostles-as-Lotus-Eaters,[69] the poem itself "abandoned any direct call for reform in favor of an ascetically distanced revisiting of the issues".[70] Additionally, "the palaces' architecture and depopulated, art-filled rooms recall the Great Court and halls of Trinity College...and the soul's duration in the palace is coincident with that of 'Trinity undergraduates'."[71] The omitted clause in Hughes's preceding statement is presently offered for special consideration: "the poem implies hopes that in [the] future the soul might return in company with the many rather than the elite few." That the lonesome soul becomes mystically disenchanted with the palace could, by analogy, suggest that Tennyson's experience with the Apostles was not entirely satisfactory. The suggested metaphor is by no means mixed, because the down-to-earth and poetic Tennyson did, in fact, become disenchanted with the formal and prosaic Apostles.[72]

It may be noteworthy – if not in an analysis of Tennyson's conscious intentions, then in one of his unconscious motivations – that he got in considerable trouble with the Apostles for refusing to present a prose debate on "Ghosts",[73] but versified in "The Palace of Art" some ghastly apparitions, perhaps in compensation for his inability to devise a good prosodic account of such apparitions in any real-life analog. The reader should note that the poem's "she" is a fabrication of the narrator's soul.

> But in dark corners of her palace stood
> Uncertain shapes, and unawares
> On white-robed phantoms were they bent of blood,
> And white-robed phantoms, and hollow shapes,
>
> And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,


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And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at pink, she came,
That stood against the wall.[74]

Regardless of how Tennyson may have been unconsciously inspired to write this piece, he seems to have been consciously motivated by two other sources, both of whom were Cambridge Apostles. As with other poems, he prefaced it with a versified prologue, given the prosaic heading "To ... With the Following Poem." Collins and Rundle[75] think it was "probably addressed to R. C. Trench, a member of the Cambridge Apostles. Tennyson remarked that Trench 'said, when we were at Trinity together, "Tennyson, we cannot live in Art." This poem is the embodiment of my own belief that Godlike life is with man and for man.'" A complementary possibility, relayed by Linda K. Hughes in 2000, is that Tennyson incorporated into the piece a view of sympathy that Hallam had conceived: "To the degree that, as Hallam argued, sympathy enables us to relate to others and achieve a stable self over time by imagining future phases of self as we imagine others, Hallam undermined differentiation between self and other, allowing only for endless absorption that can lead to 'stagnation,' as in 'The Palace of Art'."[76] But in addition to being affected *by* the Apostles, the poem seems to have held its own effect *on* at least one of them: John Sterling. Sterling was quite fond of art,[77] and he seems to have cultivated a sort of self-sufficient – stagnant, one might say – environment for the Apostles.[78] One may speculate as to how much this pair of attitudes contributed to Sterling's dismissal of the poem as a "many-coloured mistake".[79] And ultimately, it remains unclear, however, how far Sterling's critique was driven by anxieties about marketability or by a morbid pleasure in melancholic effects. Only when this question is resolved can it be understood how truly in accord with Sterling – and, therefore, how correct on


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Sterling's account – Tennyson would have been in his purported sensitivity to the negative side of Sterling's ambivalence to the critique of "Morte D'Arthur."

Even Sterling's friend and biographer, Thomas Carlyle – the champion of work and practicality – said little that could help us on this matter, for even Carlyle did not develop a valid or consistent strategy for attacking or explaining what he perceived to be Sterling's impractical blunders: his religious preaching and his poetic writing. Despite prompting in Carlyle's biography "some of the more pronounced statements Carlyle had yet made against organized religion",[80] the former blunder concurrently prompted a questionable underestimation of Sterling's faith. This argument suggests Sterling suffered a momentary lapse in otherwise sound judgment[81] and that critics underestimated his enduring post-clerical Christian sensibilities. According to Tuell,[82] those sensibilities actually remained intact even despite his growing preference for ahistorical "philosophical Christianity." And yet, despite undermining this blunder, Carlyle oddly came to praise the other one, lauding "those poor Two Volumes [of poetry] gathered from him, such as they are," as 'graceful, ingenious and illuminative reading, of their sort".[83] Miller theorizes that Carlyle implied his real disdain for poetry by diluting this praise with qualifiers such as "such as they are" and "of their sort," and by connoting pity for the now-deceased Sterling, if not making a backhanded attack on his poems, with the phrase, "those poor Two Volumes." Even so, it's intriguing that Carlyle resolved his dissatisfaction with one of Sterling's "impracticalities" (religion) by denying its negative impact on Sterling, whereas he resolved his dissatisfaction with another (poetry) by undermining its negative impact on himself.

And, Miller's case about Carlyle aside, it remains entirely unclear how adamant Sterling himself – let alone his famous


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biographer – was about publicly functional or "useful" action. On the one hand, Sterling joined Mill in his rebellion against strict, dispassionate utilitarianism. But on the other hand, paradoxically, Sterling emulated the immensely passionate Coleridge by hoping that the clerisy could visibly imbue society at large with cultivation – that it could serve its purpose, that it could be *useful*. Thus, it remains noticeably unclear how sincere Sterling was in his stated preference for Tennyson's more marketable pieces, and for those aspects of poems acceptable to the average readers and readily relevant to Victorian times.

Sterling's actual views of Tennyson's work are important, not simply because his review promoted the practical effects of writing (in Tennyson's poems) or exemplified them (in its own tactical ambivalence), because that review may have influenced Tennyson himself. When we consider Tennyson's sensitivity to his critics, "we are not surprised to remember: William Allingham's gossip that Tennyson, having read [Sterling's] study, gave up the notion of a heroical Arthurian epic – no doubt in depression at Sterling's strictures upon the remoteness of his "mythological" machinery".[84] The mere fact that he did go on to write *Idylls of the King* does not invalidate this "gossip," because the *Idylls* began to take shape in the 1860s,[85] a good two decades following Sterling's criticism, during which he may have been more motivated to write something like it – which may have differed from later efforts – had he not been discouraged by Sterling's criticism, if he was indeed discouraged by it to the extent that Allingham reported.

It would be most unfair, however, to conclude that Sterling's efforts were entirely antithetical to Tennyson's. He intended, after all, to promote Tennyson's writings via his review, and he had been and remained good friends with Tennyson. Moreover, and despite this friendship, Sterling's poetic and


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critical career – limited as it was by his premature demise – and Tennyson's own literary career, were largely independent of one another's influences and effects,[86] except perhaps for the possibility that Tennyson's fame eclipsed Sterling's such that if it hadn't, Sterling rather than Tennyson would have become poet laureate.[87]

No matter what, then, Tennyson had little ultimate reason to complain. But it's still interesting to speculate about how much acclaim would have befallen Sterling if Tennyson's fame had not eclipsed his own; about whether Tennyson's fame was solely responsible for Sterling's failing to become poet laureate; and about the separate issue – but a tremendously puzzling one, given the proposition that Sterling could have become poet laureate – of whether Tennyson's fame was the sufficient condition for Sterling's ultimate preclusion from the entire literary canon.

And it should be remembered that, despite ambiguities about Sterling's stance on utility, he exerted at least two clearly beneficial effects on Tennyson. First, he "actually purchased the *Athenaeum*, and through his managements of that paper set up in London a meeting place and dining club for Apostles who were thereby introduced to people in the sphere of literature".[88] Second, he inspired "the Sterling Club, a discussion and dining club organized in 1838 and named in Sterling's honor",[89] attracting figures as large as Tennyson, Mill, Carlyle, and fellow Apostle Monckton Milnes.

Perhaps these Sterling-enabled clubs helped to mediate the younger Tennyson's experiences in the apostles and the older Tennyson's involvement in the Metaphysical Society, "which brought together during the seventies, for the purposes of high-level philosophical discussion, a remarkable assortment of minds" who "debated in correct parliamentary fashion".[90] The fact that Tennyson's relative disinterest in prosaic debate – which


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culminated in his tearing up an essay on "Ghosts" that he had been supposed to read – led to his being asked to resign from the Apostles[91] must somehow be reconciled with his later involvement in a society whose very name contained the word "debate." Perhaps the very idea of intellectually fruitful societies came to be more salient to Tennyson than did those societies' incidental association with debate, thanks in no small part to the associations between socializing and intellectualizing made by friends like Sterling and Hallam. Thanks to those associations and through their differing efforts to promote Tennyson, Sterling and Hallam – both members of the Apostles – ironically helped integrate Tennyson and his poems into society at large.

* * *

Arthur Henry Hallam's influence was undoubtedly necessary but far from sufficient for the development of Tennyson's poetry and psyche. The sufficient conditions cannot be even modestly understood prior to an exploration of the dynamic "pure atmosphere of Feeling" in which Tennyson and Hallam participated, and which was fashioned in particular by Apostles F. D. Maurice and John Sterling, the latter of whom had a personal and critical impact upon Tennyson that may be comparable to, if less pronounced than, that of Hallam.

Among the tasks that may constitute such an exploration is, first, a comparative summary of Hallam's and Sterling's critical effects upon the extremely sensitive Tennyson, who received these men's criticism not only as their subject but also as their friend. Perhaps such a summary may look something like this: Sterling helpfully categorized Tennyson's poetry into a group of aesthetic "escape strategies," but unfortunately may have discouraged Tennyson from writing, ironically, one of Sterling's favorite types of poetry, due to Tennyson's pessimism in the face of critical ambiguity. Hallam, seizing on that very sensitivity,


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certainly motivated Tennyson to write, but he lived perhaps too short a life in order to scrutinize, in publicly accessible terms, the nature of his work. So perhaps only through a juxtaposition of Hallam and Sterling can a relatively balanced presentation of Tennyson's means, or his psyche, and ends, or his poetry, emerge.

Second, it might be useful to inquire into Sterling's utilitarian qualities and values: into the extent to which he really disapproved of the apparent non-marketable and non-functional nature of Tennyson's nostalgic pieces, with this extent further weighed against the extent to which he manufactured that particular criticism in order to market his own review. Such an inquiry could shed light on the aspects of Sterling's critique that were most sincere; this matters because sincerity was a central Victorian virtue and could affirm or undermine the subtitle of Tuell's biography of Sterling: "A Representative Victorian."

That subtitle is weighty: Sterling lived for only a small fraction of Victoria's reign, while others, such as Tennyson, lived through the vast majority of it. So a clue to Sterling's proper place in both canon and criticism may lie in his thoughts on Tennyson: Tennyson's proper status may be examined relative to Sterling's, and, all in all, their statuses as embodiments of Victorian thought may be intimately interwoven.

Finally, the Apostles-as-Lotus-Eaters, having rejected utility itself, rendered their efforts directly antithetical to that of the utilitarians – to Mill's delight. Perhaps this is due to the "pure atmosphere of Feeling" conceived by Coleridge and funneled into the Apostles first by Maurice and second (but more eloquently) by Sterling, to whom Maurice himself had funneled it. The line between eloquence and poetry was drawn by none other than Mill[92] himself, leaving the reader to wonder what Mill and others thought of Sterling not only as an orator but as a poet. Unfortunately, the scarcity of Sterling's poetry has so far


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prevented a robust scholarly discussion of these questions. Likewise, the loss of the correspondence between Sterling and Maurice – apparently dispersed or destroyed over time as they have become the victim of "time and trustees" – further hinders research;[93] future scholarship may yet recover evidence to clarify Sterling's position.

Aside from Mill's discussion, then, there might be no way to know the nuances of the Sterling-Maurice friendship. But the Coleridge-Maurice-Sterling dynamics ought somehow to be better understood, because these dynamics helped to engender the "pure atmosphere of Feeling" in which Tennyson and Hallam partook, and to which they contributed in return: Tennyson, with his introduction to the Apostles of poetry as a means, rather than a mere subject, of discussion (Deacon),[94] and Hallam with both his compassion toward Tennyson and his philosophy of love.

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# ბრძნობათა სუფთა ატმოსფერო: ტენისონის, ჰალემისა და სტერლინგის შემოქმედებითი ურთიერთდამოკიდებულება

(ანოტაცია)

საკვანძო სიტყვები: კემბრიჯის მოციქულები, პოეზია, ფილოსოფია, დებატები, საიდუმლო საზოგადოება, ალფრედ ტენისონი, ართურ ჰალემი, ჯონ სტერლინგი, სემუელ ტეილორ კოლრიჯი, ფ. დ. მორისი, რიჩარდ ტრენჩი, კრიტიკა, ლიტერატურა, ინგლისი

რიჩარდ ალტიკი ვიქტორიანულ ლიტერატურას ძირეულად სოციალურ ლიტერატურად მიიჩნევს: მწერლები მიმართავდნენ საზოგადოების განათლებულ, რიცხობრივად მუდმივად მზარდ ნაწილს; ისეთი რთული ნაწარმოებიც კი, როგორიცაა ტენისონის „ხსოვნას“, ფართო აუდიტორიის ყურადღებას იპყრობდა. ტენისონის კარიერა განუყოფელია მისი სოციალური გარემოსგან, განსაკუთრებით, „კემბრიჯის მოციქულებისგან“, რომელშიც შედიოდნენ არტურ ჰალემი, ჯონ სტერლინგი და თავად ტენისონი. „მოციქულთა“ კოლექტიური ზეგავლენა ნებისმიერ მეგობრობას აჭარბებს, თუმცა ჰალემის როლი გადამწყვეტი იყო: ტენისონთან მისმა ახლო მეგობრობამ და ნაადრევმა გარდაცვალებამ გამოიწვია ისეთი ნაწარმოების შექმნა, როგორიცაა „ხსოვნას“.

ჰალემმა ბიძგი მისცა ტენისონის გამოქვეყნების მცდელობებს, სარედაქციო დახმარება გაუწია და მზარდი



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ფილოსოფიური კონსულტაციებით უზრუნველყო. ჰალემის მიერ ტენისონის ადრეული ლექსების კრიტიკა განასხვავებს უორდსვორთის „რეფლექსიის პოეზიას“ უფრო ახალი „შეგრძნების პოეზიისგან“, როდესაც განადიდებს ტენისონის სიტყვით ხატვის ტექნიკას და აღიარებს, რომ ძალიან მცირე რაოდენობის დამფასებელი თუ ეყოლება მსგავს დახვეწილ სტილს. ჰალემის ინტენსიური, მეტაფიზიკური მაღალზნეობრივ განსჯას ანიჭებდა უპირატესობას, თხზულების მარკეტინგულობასთან შედარებით. თეოდიციის თაობაზე 1831 წელს გამოქვეყნებულ ცნობილ ნაშრომში, მორალურ ბოროტებას იგი თხზვის შინაგან პარადოქსად განიხილავს და გამოკვეთს რწმენისაკენ მიმავალ, ურთიერთშემავსებელ ინტელექტუალურ („მამაკაცურ“) და ინტუიციურ („ქალურ“) გზებს; ეს სქემა განსაზღვრავს „ხსოვნის“ თეოდიციურ საზრუნავს და ტენისონის დამოკიდებულებას ეჭვის, რწმენისა და მიწიერი სიყვარულისადმი.

ჯონ სტერლინგი გვთავაზობს კონტრასტულ, უფრო მეტად საზოგადოებაზე ორიენტირებულ გავლენას. მას, როგორც ჟურნალისტსა და ორატორს, მჭიდრო კავშირი ჰქონდა იმ ეპოქის ისეთ ცნობილ ფიგურებთან, როგორებიც იყვნენ ქრისტიანული სოციალიზმის ერთ-ერთი ფუძემდებელი, ანგლიკანური ეკლესიის მღვდელი და თეოლოგი, ნაყოფიერი მწერალი ფ. დ. მორისი (1805-1872) და პოეტი ეპისკოპოსი რიჩარდ ტრენჩი (1807-1886). სტერლინგი ლექსებს სოციალურ პროდუქტად თვლიდა და ტენისონის შემოქმედების შემდეგნაირი კლასიფიკაცია შემოგვთავაზა: იდილიები, ლირიკა, ფანტაზიები და მორალური ლიტერატურა. იგი განსაკუთრებით აფასებდა ნაწარმოების აღქმის სიიოლესა და სოციალურად გამოსადეგობას. შესაბამისად, იდილიებსა და ფანტაზიებს ინდუსტრიული თანამედროვეობისგან უკან გადადგმულ



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ნაბიჯად მიიჩნევდა. სტერლინგისთვის დამახასიათებელი ბაზრის მოთხოვნებიდან გამომდინარე კრიტიკულ თვალსაზრისს, განსაკუთრებით, მის 1842 წლის მიმოხილვას, მარტივად შეეძლო მგრძნობიარე პოეტისთვის გულის ტკენა. ჰალემის აბსტრაქტული მხარდაჭერისგან განსხვავებით, სტერლინგი აქცენტს აკეთებდა მკითხველის მიერ ნაწარმოების აღქმადობასა და მის სოციალურ დანიშნულებაზე. მან განჭვრიტა ვიქტორიანული ეპოქის პოეზიის სოციალური ასპექტით წაკითხვის პერსპექტივა.

ორივე ეყრდნობოდა კოლრიჯისეულ „გრძნობათა სუფთა ატმოსფეროს“ და, შესაბამისად, „მოციქულებში“ ქარიზმატულ როლს ასრულებდნენ, იმის მიუხედავად, რომ მათი ტემპერამენტი ძირითად ასპექტებში ერთმანეთისგან განსხვავდებოდა: ჰალემი ფილოსოფიურ დახვეწილობასა და თანაგრძნობით სავსე ინტიმურობას აფასებდა ინდივიდუალურ ინტელექტუალურ განვითარებაზე ფოკუსირებით, ხოლო სტერლინგი მოითხოვდა პრაქტიკულ ეფექტებსა და უფრო ფართო გაგებას, როდესაც აქცენტს აკეთებდა ლიტერატურის საზოგადოებრივ ზეგავლენასა და ხელმისაწვდომობაზე. ამ განსხვავებამ ჩამოაყალიბა ტენისონის აღქმა და შემოქმედებითი რეაქციები: ჰალემის მაღალფარდოვანი ხოტბა მკითხველთა ფართო მასების გაუცხოების რისკს შეიცავდა მაშინ, როცა სტერლინგის საზოგადოებრივ ამბივალენტობას შეეძლო ტენისონისთვის ხალისი დაეკარგა და, როგორც ამბობდნენ, ზეგავლენა მოეხდინა მის გადაწყვეტილებებზე უმთავრეს პროექტებთან დაკავშირებით.

სტერლინგის თეორიის მიხედვით, პოეზიას სოციალური ინსტრუმენტის ფუნქცია უნდა შეესრულებინა: კოლერიჯიანური ინტელიგენციის იდეალითა და ჰალემის ტიპოლოგიური განსხვავებებით



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ჩამოყალიბებულ ლექსებს საზოგადოებრივი გემოვნების, მორალური გრძნობებისა და სამოქალაქო განვითარების კულტივირება უნდა მოეხდინა და არა – განყენებულად ეარსება პირადი გამომსახველობითი დანიშნულებით ანუ შემოფარგლულიყო საკუთარის გადმოცემით.

„მოციქულები“ ერთობლივად უჭერდნენ მხარს ტენისონს: ჰალემის თეორიულმა მხარდაჭერამ და სტერლინგის მიერ ტენისონის თანამედროვე გემოვნების ფარგლებში განთავსებამ, პოეტის კრიტიკული პოზიცია ჩამოაყალიბა. ჰალემის გავლენა აუცილებელი იყო, მაგრამ არასაკმარისი; ტენისონის გაგება საჭიროებს ყურადღების გამახვილებას მეგობრობაზე, კრიტიკასა და სოციალურ კონტექსტზე „მოციქულთა“ წრის შიგნით.

კრიტიკოსები ხშირად ადარებენ ბაირონის დაუმუშავებელ, უშუალო მგრძნობელობას ვორდსვორთის სენსუალურ აღქმას, რომელიც ფორმირებული და ამაღლებულია მორალურ-ფილოსოფიურ ხედვამდე. ჰალემი ტენისონის შემოქმედებას, უპირატესად, აღიქვამს გრძნობების პოეზიად, რომელშიც აფასებს რაფინირებულ შემეცნებით დეტალებს, შინაგან თანაგრძნობასა და დახვეწილ ფსიქოლოგიურ ნიუანსებს. სტერლინგი, პირიქით, ხოტბას ასხამს იდილიებსა და მარკეტინგულად მომგებიან ლექსებს, რომლებიც გრძნობით მასალას გარდაქმნიან ხელმისაწვდომ, მორალურად სასარგებლო ფორმებად; მოსწონს სიცხადე, აღქმის სიმარტივე და სოციალური ეფექტურობა. მათ შორის არსებული დაძაბულობა იმაში მდგომარეობს, რომ ჰალემი პრივილეგიას ანიჭებს ესთეტიკურ გულწრფელობას და შინაგან ნიუანსებს მაშინაც კი, როდესაც ეს ბევრისთვის გაუგებარია. სტერლინგი ლექსში ამჯობინებს ისეთ თვისებებს, როგორიცაა საზოგადოებისთვის იოლად გასაგები და სოციალური ზემოქმედების უნარის მქონე,



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თუნდაც მხატვრული სიღრმის აღქმადობის გაუარესების ხარჯზე.

ეს შინაგანი, თვითკმარი კულტურა – „ლოტოსის მჭამელის“ ატმოსფერო, რომლის იდენტიფიკაციაც უფრო გვიანდელი პერიოდის კრიტიკოსებმა მოახდინეს, პოლიტიკურ ჩართულობაზე წინ აყენებდა კონცეპტუალურ ბუნდოვანებასა და ესთეტიკურ განყენებულობას. ტენისონის „ხელოვნების სასახლე“ სწორედ ასეთი იზოლირებულობის წინააღმდეგ განაცხადად შეგვიძლია აღვიქვათ: მისი გაუკაცრიელებული, ხელოვნებით გაჯერებული სასახლე ტრინიტი კოლეჯსა და შეფერხებულ, თვითშეზღუდულ სულს გამოიხმობს, რაც „მოციქულთა“ ელიტარული იზოლაციის ამბივალენტობაზე მიანიშნებს. ლექსი ჰალემის შეშფოთების გამოძახილია სხვებში თანაგრძნობასა და ზეჩართულობასთან დაკავშირებით. ეს, შესაძლოა, თვითკმაყოფილებად მოეჩვენა სტერლინგს.

სტერლინგის პოზიცია წინააღმდეგობრივი იყო: მან უარი თქვა ბენთამისეული უტილიტარიზმისთვის დამახასიათებელ უხეშ გაანგარიშებაზე, თუმცა მხარი დაუჭირა ინტელიგენციის პროექტს, რაც საზოგადოების გემოვნებისა და მორალური გრძნობების დახვეწას ისახავდა მიზნად. ამიტომაც ემხრობოდა მარკეტინგულად მომგებიან ანუ გასაყიდად ვარგის, სოციალურად სასარგებლო პოეზიის შექმნას, რომელსაც მკითხველის განათლებისა და ცივილიზების ფუნქციათა აღსრულება ხელეწიფებოდა. ამ დროს კი, თავად ინტელექტუალურად შიდა, ხშირად მეტაფიზიკურ წრეში რჩებოდა. ორი ბატონის ასეთმა მსახურებამ შეუსაბამო განსჯა განაპირობა – შეაქე ლექსი, თუ ცივილიზებულ მიზნებს ემსახურება და გააკრიტიკე, ოდნავ აბსტრაქტული ან თავშეკავებული თუ აღმოჩნდება; ამგვარად აიძულა, მისი



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საზოგადოებრივი შეფასებები მოერგო მედიააუდიტორიის მოლოდინებსა და შეზღუდვებზე.

სტერლინგის გავლენა ორაზროვანი და მიზეზ-შედეგობრივი იყო: როგორც ჩანს, მისმა მკაცრმა კრიტიკამ ტენისონს გადააფიქრებინა დაგეგმილი ართურისეული ეპოსის განხორციელება. თუმცა, მოგვიანებით ტენისონი დაუბრუნდა ამ თემას „მეფის იდილიებში“. ამავდროულად, სტერლინგი აქტიურად აყალიბებდა ლიტერატურულ სფეროს – ხელს უწყობდა ქსელების შექმნას ენეუმის საშუალებით, რაც შთააგონა სტერლინგის კლუბმა, და ტენისონი ისეთ ადამიანებს დააკავშირა, როგორიც მილი და კარლაილი იყვნენ. ამიტომ მისი როლი აერთიანებდა დამაბრკოლებელ კრიტიკას პრაქტიკულ დაწინაურებასა და ინსტიტუციურ მხარდაჭერასთან.

საბოლოო ჯამში, სტერლინგის ორატორული ენერგია, ჟურნალისტური ინიციატივა და სოციალურად ეფექტური ლიტერატურის კატეგორიული მოთხოვნა ჰალემის ინტიმურ ფილოსოფიურ გავლენას ამშვენებდა. განსხვავებებისა და პერიოდული დაძაბულობების მიუხედავად, მათ ხელი შეუწყვეს ტენისონის კონტაქტს მკითხველთან, ინსტიტუციებსა და ვიქტორიანული კულტურის კიდევ უფრო ფართო სფეროსთან.

ჰალემის გავლენა ტენისონის განვითარების აუცილებელი, მაგრამ არასაკმარისი პირობა იყო. ჰალემის განთავსება „მოციქულთა“ „გრძნობების სუფთა ატმოსფეროში“, კონკრეტულად ფ. დ. მორისსა და ჯონ სტერლინგთან დაკავშირებით, საშუალებას იძლევა უფრო სრულად განვიხილოთ ტენისონის ინტელექტუალური და სოციალური ჩამოყალიბება. საბოლოო ჯამში, ჰალემმა უსაზღვროდ გაათამამა და ფილოსოფიურად ჩამოაყალიბა ტენისონი, მაგრამ ძალიან ახალგაზრდა გარდაიცვალა და ვეღარ მოასწრო საკუთარი იდეების გასაჯაროება.



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სტერლინგმა კრიტიკული, პრაგმატული ზეწოლა მოახვია თავს – ტენისონის ნამუშევრების კლასიფიცირება მოახდინა გაქცევის ესთეტიკურ საშუალებებად და მოითხოვდა იოლადაღსაქმელ, მარკეტინგულ პოეზიას, რაც ზოგჯერ პოეტის გულის აცრუებას იწვევდა. ჰალემის თანაგრძნობით სტიმულირების შედარება სტერლინგის პრაქტიკულ მოთხოვნებთან იძლევა ტენისონის ფსიქიკისა და პოეტიკის დაბალანსებულ ახსნას.

სტერლინგის მოტივებთან დაკავშირებით ძირითადი კითხვები ჯერაც ღიად რჩება: ნოსტალგიური, არამარკეტინგული ნაწარმოებებისადმი მისი მისწრაფება პრინციპულობის შედეგი იყო თუ ნაწილობრივ წინასწარგანზრახული, გამოცემის სურვილით განპირობებული. ამ საკითხის გარკვევა ნათელს მოჰფენდა სტერლინგის, როგორც ვიქტორიანული ეპოქის ტიპური პოეტის სტატუსს და იმასაც, თუ როგორ ეწინააღმდეგებოდა ინტელიგენციის იდეალები (მორისისა და სტერლინგის მიერ გადმოცემული სემუელ ტეილორ კოლრიჯის „გრძნობათა სუფთა ატმოსფერო“) უტილიტარულ მიზნებს. მოცემული გამოკვლევის მასშტაბს ზღუდავს სტერლინგის ლექსების სიმცირე და ეპისტოლარული მასალები, რადგან მორისთან მიმოწერის ნაწილი დაკარგულია. ამ მასალების აღმოჩენა გაცილებით უკეთ წარმოაჩენდა სტერლინგ-მორისის კრიტიკული პოზიციის დინამიკასა და მათ როლს „მოციქულთა“ იმ გარემოს შექმნაში, რომელმაც პოეტებად ჩამოაყალიბა ტენისონი და ჰალემი, თავისი წვლილი შეიტანა პოეტებისადმი თანაგრძნობასა და სიყვარულის ფილოსოფიაში, ხოლო ტენისონის პოეზია, როგორც საჯარო დისკუსიის საშუალება, განავითარა.



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