UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Tennyson and the Celts:

The Influence and Use of Celticism in the

Poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson

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Abstract

In recent years there has been much focus in Tennyson studies on the poet's Englishness. However, much less attention has been given to the equally important influence of the Celtic Nations on his poetry. The little work that has been written only touches on specific points in the poet's long career, with most of the work focusing on his Arthurian poetry. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to create a comprehensive overview of the influence and use of Celticism, which is defined as both the study of the reputation of the Celt and the set of values and stereotypes that surround the people, in the work of Tennyson throughout his career and to explore the poet's attitudes towards the Celt and how they shift over time through readings of his poetry. In the early phase of his career Tennyson seeks influence from the Celtic, although always to further a sense of English superiority by placing the Celt in the past in relation to the modern Saxon. What sympathy Tennyson has with the Celt is absent in much of his Arthurian poetry, which is designed to promote Saxon domination over the British Isles. This changes later in his career when, driven by threats to the stability of the British Empire, the poet begins to explore a parental relationship where the Saxon teaches the Celt the Saxonist values of stoicism and rationality. However, there is also a sense that the Saxon can learn how to be more Creative and Romantic from the Celt. This places Tennyson alongside the likes of Matthew Arnold as an important figure who can help modern readers understand Nineteenth Century Celticism.

Introduction

Tennyson and the Celts

In his diary entry for September 19, 1880, the Irish poet William Allingham reports having a lively discussion while having dinner with his friend Alfred, Lord Tennyson. According to Allingham the discussion went thus:[1]

> T[ennyson]. - A Russian noble who spoke English well said one morning to an English guest, "I've shot two peasants this morning" - "Pardon me, you mean pheasants." "No, indeed, two men - they were insolent, and I shot them."
> "'W. A[llingham]. - In Ireland it's the other way.
> T. - Couldn't they blow up that horrible island with dynamite and carry it off in pieces - a long way off?

Allingham follows this by asking why the English had gone to Ireland, leading Tennyson to angrily compare a perceived difference in how the English and Irish were assimilated by the Normans following the conquests of both nations.

> Why did the Normans come to England? The Norman came over here and seized the country, and in a hundred years the English had forgotten all about it, and they were all living together on good terms. (I demurred: T. went on, raising his voice). - The same Normans went to Ireland, and the Irish with their damned unreasonableness are raging and foaming to this hour!

After some back and forth between the two poets over the treatment of Ireland by the English, with Allingham pointing out Irish grievances and Tennyson defending his nation, the English poet exclaimed:

> The Kelts are so utterly unreasonable! The stupid clumsy Englishman - knock him down, kick him under the tail, kick him under the chin, do anything to him, he gets on his legs again and goes on; the Kelt rages and shrieks and tears everything to pieces!

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[1] All quotes from William Allingham, *A Diary* ed. By H. Allingham and D. Radford. (London: MacMillian & Co, 1908), p. 297-298

The exchange between the two demonstrates Tennyson's attitudes towards the Irish during the late nineteenth century debates surrounding Home Rule for the island. He believed in the sensible pragmaticism of the "Anglo-Saxon" in contrast to the "damned unreasonableness" of the Irish. Rather than using the word Irish he uses the term "Kelt" which indicates a pan national identity that includes the Scottish, the Welsh, the Cornish, the Manx, the Bretons in addition to the Irish. This opens up questions of if Tennyson is purely speaking about Ireland or if he is making a wider ideological statement on an "unreasonable" "Celtic" identity? While his writings on Scotland and Wales do not contain the same overt hostility as his statements on Ireland, he did deploy the same Celticist stereotype of irrationality in relation to all the "Celtic" nations of the British Isles.

This thesis places Tennyson in the discussion surrounding the ideology of Celticism taking place in the nineteenth century which demonstrates he did see the "Celtic" peoples as an "Other." I argue that Tennyson is an important Celticist writer due to his position of Poet Laureate which placed him as the voice of a nation. While he is fascinated with "Celtic" literature and mythology, most famously in his Arthurian poetry, his embracing of an Anglo-Saxonist worldview limits his sympathy towards the "Celtic" peoples. His relationship with Scotland, Wales and Cornwall is more cordial than his comments on Ireland but he still deploys Celticist stereotypes to all "Celtic" people, especially the label of unreasonableness.

Tennyson was far from being alone in Victorian England in holding a belief in a violent and unreasonable "Celt." The most prominent English writer on the subject, Matthew Arnold declared "Celts" to be 'undisciplinable, anarchical and turbulent' in comparison to the "Anglo-Saxon," a figure who was "disciplinable and steady obedient within certain limits."[2] However, despite his characterising of the "Celt" as "anarchical," Arnold was what he described as a "Celt Lover" in contrast to unsympathetic "Celt haters."[3] This sometimes caused controversy due to the Colonial Othering of the "Celt" within English society. An unsigned article in the Times of the 8th of September 1866 blasted Arnold for claiming that:

> The Welsh in their culture, their morals, and their intelligence, possess the same
> superiority over their conquerors, the English, as the Greeks in former times over the

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[2] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)
[3] Matthew Arnold, p. 347

Romans, and he [Arnold] exhorts 'the descendants of Taliesin and Ossian' to repeat 'the famous feat of the Greeks and to 'conquer the conquerors'[4]

Tennyson too had moments of generosity towards the "Celts" in regard to their literature. In the same debate with Allingham, he exclaimed:

"The Kelts are very charming and sweet and poetic. I love their Ossians and their Finns and so forth - but they are most damnably unreasonable."[5]

This backhanded comment by Tennyson and the contrasting statements by Arnold both display a sense of ambivalence towards the "Celt" similar to that of Arnold in his *On The Study of Celtic Literature.* Indeed, I shall explore the similarities between the two in chapter four. However, this was not the only discourse being put forward by Victorian writers at this time. Despite being Scottish, an identity that may be associated with being "Celtic," the cultural critic Thomas Carlyle has been noted by John Morrow as seeing the "Anglo-Saxon" character as "nobleness, vigour, and a capacity for leadership."[6] Morrow further argues that Carlyle did not see the "Celti"c identity as "inferior to the English,"[7] although, he also characterises the Critic as a committed Unionist who did not believe that Ireland, Scotland, or Wales should be independent as the nations of the British Isles should "sink or swim together."[8] This would on the surface to appear to be similar to Arnold. However, in his 1840 pamphlet *Chartism*, he laments that the Irish have "sunk from decent manhood to squalid apehood" and that they exist in a state of "squalor and unreason … and drunken violence."[9] The association with the Irish being akin to apes is also reflected in an 1860 letter by Charles Kingsley following a trip to Ireland. Kingsley writes: "But I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country" and follows this with "But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much."[10] This implies a sense that as white skinned peoples the Irish should be "civilized" like the English and not "primitive" like non-European nations. However, the fact that Kingsley used

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[4] Unsigned. 'Article in the 'Times', 8 September 1866)' in *Mathew Arnold: Pose Writings The Critical Heritage* ed by Carl Dawson and John Pfordresher (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1979), pp. 159 – 162 (p. 160)

[5] Matthew Bevis, 'Tennyson, Ireland and "The Powers of Speech' in Victorian Poetry. 39:3 (Fall 2001), pp. 345 – 364, (p. 347)

[6] John Morrow, 'Thomas Carlyle, 'Young Ireland' and the 'Condition of Ireland Question'' in *The Historical Journal* 51.3 (2008), pp. 643-667 (p. 648)

[7] John Morrow, p. 649

[8] John Morrow, p. 650

[9] Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (London: James Fraser, 1840), p.28

[10] Elsie B. Michie, *Outside the Pale: Cultural Exclusion, Gender Difference, and the Victorian Woman Writer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 49

the word "chimpanzee" implies he views the Irish in the same racist terms as Black skinned people. The existence of this attitude among Anglo-Saxonists is evidenced by the need for the Irish to assimilate themselves into White American society as they were not originally welcomed in the United States. Noel Ignatiev argues that Irish immigrants entered the "white race" as a "strategy to secure an advantage in a competitive society" over African Americans.[11] By becoming "white" they hoped that they could be seen as human rather than a "chimpanzee" in the hierarchy of race, something they were denied in their homeland due to English domination. In comparison, the novelist Charles Dickens did not join his contemporaries in condemnation of the "Celtic" Irish. Unlike Kingsley, he "rejected the view of the Irishman as belonging to a lower race" and was able to see attempts for Irish independence with a degree of sympathy.[12] While Tennyson does not use overt racist language towards the Irish or other "Celtic" groups in the manner of Carlyle and Kingsley, he also disagreed with Dickens as he did not believe the Irish were "capable of effective home rule."[13]

Despite the attitudes he displayed towards the "Celts," especially the Irish, most recent scholarship has been focused on questions of Englishness in Tennyson's work and his position as a poet of Empire. Little attention has been given to his relationship with, and representation of, the "Celtic" peoples. Tom Peete Cross' overview of the poet's Celticist influences, *Alfred Tennyson as a Celticist*, was published over a century ago in 1921 and P.G. Scott's *Tennyson's Celtic Reading* was published in 1968. Over the past fifty years there has been no major work on Tennyson and the "Celts." In *Tennyson and the Fabrication of Englishness*, Marion Sherwood does not engage in Tennyson's relationship with the "Celts." When Ireland and Scotland are brought up it is in the context of the genocidal racial theories of Rober Knox without reference to how Tennyson engaged with his work.[14] Colin Graham in *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* poses the important question of "which nation (England or Britain)" Tennyson's Arthur rules.[15] This question is central to understanding the poet's Celticism in his Arthurian body of work, since Tennyson is appropriating a Pre-Saxon mythological figure to promote English nationalism. However,

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[11] Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (Oxon: Routledge, 1995), p.3

[12] Grace Moore, 'Swarmery and Bloodbaths: A Reconsideration of Dickens on Class and Race in the 1860s' in *Dickens Studies Annual* 31 (2002), pp. 175-202 (p. 193)

[13] Laurence W. Mazzeno, *Alfred Tennyson: A Companion* (Jefferson: MacFarlane & Company, Inc, 2020), p. 165

[14] Marion Sherwood, *Tennyson, and the Fabrication of Englishness* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p. 158

[15] Colin Graham. *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 34

Graham does not follow this line of questioning and focuses on the British Empire in general. In 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The "Poems of Ossian" and "The Death of Arthur"', Dafydd Moore mentions echoes of the Ossianic poetry of MacPherson in both *Idylls of the King* and Tennyson's 1827 poetry but warns against making "wild claims for MacPherson's importance."[16] This itself is an echo of a much earlier argument made by Peete Cross, who claimed Tennyson merely "dipped" into MacPherson's work.[17] Yet as I argue in this thesis, several of the poet's early works are directly adapted from the work of MacPherson, who plays a large role in the development of Tennyson's Celticism. Matthew Reynold's *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870: English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* contains a discussion of the "Celtic" nations in relation to the project of Empire but focuses for the most part on Ireland with references to Scotland and Wales. In addition, there have been a handful of articles such as Matthew Bevis' 'Tennyson, Ireland and 'The Powers of Speech' and Matthew Campbell's 'Tennyson and Ireland' that explore the poet's relationship with Ireland but are limited to the poet's final decade. Owen Clayton's 2017 article 'We're All Anglo-Saxons Now: Alfred Tennyson and the United States', touches upon Celticism but mostly focuses on the poet's relationship with the United States. Campbell's *Irish Poetry Under the Union, 1801–1924* provides an overview of Tennyson's writings on the subject of Ireland but does not fully explore the influence and use of Scottish and Welsh Celticism in the poet's work. However, despite the listed works acting as starting points for Tennyson and the "Celts" there has been no study that discusses Tennyson's complete Celticist body of work with reference to all of the "Celtic" nations. This is a notable omission given that Tennyson's work frequently deals with "Celtic" subjects and makes contributions to Celticist discourse.

In this thesis I seek to rectify this omission by building on the small body of work listed above to create an overview of how Celticism works within Tennyson's work across his career. As Tennyson was one of the most prominent poets of nineteenth century Britain his work is valuable in studying the attitudes and values of the nation during the time period. Celticism allows for a deeper understanding of the "Celt's" place within an English dominated United Kingdom whose voice Tennyson, in his position of Poet Laureate, tried to be. While questions about Ireland dominated the discourse of late Victorian politics, the

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[16] Dafydd Moore, 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The Poems of Ossian" and 'The Death of Arthur'' in *the Review of English Studies, New Series*, 57.230 (2006), pp. 374-391 (p. 376)

[17] Tom Pete Cross, 'Alfred Tennyson as a Celticist' in *Modern Philology* 18.9 (Jan 1921), pp. 485 – 492 (p. 485)

hostility that Tennyson displays towards Home Rule is rooted in the construction over a century of a societal bias towards the "Anglo-Saxon" over the "Celt." This knowledge changes how several of his works are read. *Idylls of the King* is a metaphor for the British Empire, but it also contains musings on the characters of both the "Saxon" and the "Celt." The overlooked Celticism of Tennyson's early poetry reveals that despite Scotland being integrated into the United Kingdom it is still an alien land in which the "Saxon" can impose their imagination. The implication of these new readings for Tennysonian studies is to place him in the tradition of Celticist discourse during the nineteenth century allowing for an understanding of Tennyson's place in the construction of the British identity through his poetry.

Defining Celticism

In both this introduction and the first chapter of the thesis, I will discuss the etymology and history of the nineteenth century use of the word "Celt." However, it is important to note that the term will be used throughout the thesis as shorthand for the peoples of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, and the Isle of Man, unless specifically referring to one of these groups. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term was applied to the populace of these geographical areas by the English in order to justify their domination of the United Kingdom. It was not originally a term used by the people to whom it referred. During the period covered by the thesis national identity was considered of greater importance and there was a high degree of competition between the "Celtic" nations over who could claim to have the oldest civilization. It was only after Tennyson's death that Irish Nationalists started to build a Celtic identity for themselves, and the concept of a "Pan-Celtic" grouping of nations has its roots in the early twentieth century. The scope of the thesis focuses on the British Isles, although, Tennyson wrote about the legendry Breton forest of Brocéliande in the 'Merlin and Vivien' Idyll, which will be briefly touched upon in chapter three.

"Celt" is a difficult category to define as it is an ideological construct rather than a clearly defined culture. In a 1955 lecture, the twentieth century's most famous writer of fantasy, Professor J.R.R Tolkien, argued, ""Celt" 'of any sort is … a magic bag, into which

anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come."[18] This idea that the "Celt" does not have any substantive meaning is echoed by the Irish broadcaster Frank Delaney when he commented that he feels "frustration because they [The "Celts"] outwit any attempt to encapsulate them" and that rather than looking at "pure record" of the "Celtic civilization" we should look to "tradition," which he notes to be "long more the ally of opinion than of truth."[19] However, there are several "Celtic" traditions that are not always complimentary. For example, Ireland and Wales are both considered "Celtic" but do not have a shared traditional culture or similar language. The word "Celtic" has shifted in meaning over the centuries. Originally the term was imposed on a grouping of tribes and peoples that spread from what is now Austria to the British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula by the Greek and Roman civilizations. Later from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards, the term came to exclusively refer to the peoples of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, The Isle of Man, Brittany, and areas of Northern Spain due to the perceived similarities in language and culture of these nations and territories. This later use was mostly deployed by the English to differentiate themselves from the other peoples of the British Isles. The leading cultural historian Joep Leerssen argues that the term Celt carries with it an "echo of a specific power relationship" in which the subject has "no power over the fact they were beginning to be called that name."[20] Both uses of the term "Celtic" are used to create a sense of otherness as the "Celt" is defined against another group. Indeed, Colin Kidd in dialogue with Malcom Chapman argues that the term "Celtic" usually involves the projection of uninformed metropolitan attitudes towards a peripheral "other," and rarely pertains with any precision to the substance of Celtic-speaking culture."[21]

It is necessary to explore the construction of the meaning of the Celt through the academic study of Celticism. Leerseen defines Celticism as being: "Not the study of the Celts and their history, but rather the study of their reputation and the meanings and connotations ascribed to the term Celtic."[22] Despite the changes in what groups are considered "Celtic" the "meanings and connotations" of the identity in both the ancient and Victorian periods share considerable similarities. This is due to the label and reputation of

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[18] J.R.R. Tolkien 'English and Welsh' in *The Monsters and the Critics and other Essays* ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: Harper Collins, 2006), pp. 162 – 197 (p. 168)

[19] Frank Delaney, *The Celts* (London: Harper Collins, 1986), p. 18

[20] Jeop Leerseen, 'Celticism' in *Celticism*, ed. by Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1996), pp. 1 – 20 (p. 6)

[21] Colin Kidd, 'Race, Empire, and the Limits of Nineteenth-Century Scottish Nationhood' in *The Historical Journal*, 46.4 (Dec. 2003), pp. 873-892 (p. 874)

[22] Jeop Leerseen, 'Celticism' in *Celticism*, ed. by Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1996), pp. 1 – 20 (p. 3)

"Celt" in both eras being developed by a dominant power as justification for colonial expansion. The ancient "Celts" were, in the words of Delaney, considered warriors who "went naked and shouting into battle. And such famous hospitality. They practised polygamy. And all those gorgeous brooches and chalices."[23] Here we see a picture of a people that are irrational and frightening due to their actions on the field of battle but also creative and friendly. As mentioned, it should be noted that we do not know how the ancient "Celts" saw themselves as our written sources on their reputation were recorded by Greco-Roman observers who regarded the "Celts" as uncivilized barbarians and not the "Celts" themselves. Indeed, the most famous of Roman Generals, Julius Caesar, viewed the "Celtic" Gauls as "extremely devoted to superstitious rites" and described a fighting vision of the mass burning of criminals in Wicker Men.[24] However, archaeology has shown us the "gorgeous brooches and chalices" that Delaney delights in, which are evidence of a society with an appreciation for decorative art. The labels of "irrational," "superstitious" and "creative" are important to understanding how the "Celtic" identity is constructed in the nineteenth century.

In Tennyson's time, the reputation of the "Celts" of the British Isles is based around their relationship with those who claim to be the inheritors of the traditions of the "Anglo-Saxons," especially the English, but is similar to that created by the Romans. To justify English domination on the island of Ireland, the populace was dehumanised. Colin Graham and Richard Kirkland state that the Irish were seen as a "white negro" and, in much the same way as the colonised peoples of Africa, the standard image of them within Saxonist society was the "repulsive and threatening ape-like creature"[25] found in the aforementioned statements by Carlyle and Kingsley. However, the wider "Celtic" community also saw periods of dehumanization. During the Jacobite Uprisings of 1689 – 1745 British government propaganda portrayed Scottish people as "lice-ridden cannibals with insatiable and disorderly sexual appetites."[26] This justified the systematic dismantling of the traditional Highlander way of life following The Battle of Culloden. Therefore, the English, in a comparable manner to the Romans, created the concept of the "Celt" as a device to justify

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[23] Frank Delaney, *The Celts* (London: Harper Collins, 1986), p. 7
[24] Julius Caesar, *"De Bello Gallico" and Other Commentaries* [Online] www.guteberg.org/cache/epub/10657/pg10657-images.html [accessed 15 March 2021].
[25] Colin Graham & Richard Kirkland, *Ireland, and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity* (Basingstoke: McMillian Press, 1999), pp. 53 – 54
[26] Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity, and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 27

colonial rule on the non-English lands of the British Isles and justify a sense of Anglo-Saxonist superiority. Catherine Hall argues that the Saxonist identity was able to "represent itself as 'Britishness' by its marginalization and subordination of other ethnicities" including that of "the Scots, the Irish, [and] the Welsh."[27] This would lead to the hegemonic normative British identity being English to the detriment of all other identities. Due to his position as Poet Laureate Tennyson played a significant role in the construction of the image of the Celt during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Alan Sinfield argues that the poet's 1850 appointment to the laureateship "meant that he became an important token in the construction of literature within the Victorian cultural apparatus."[28] Tennyson was tasked with promoting the dominant values of the age and celebrating both monarchy and empire as Saxonist achievements. While he did not display the overt anti-Irish racism of Carlyle or Kingsley, Tennyson did promote a sense of "Saxon" nationalism that places England at the centre of the creation of both Britain and the wider Empire. In 'To the Queen,' which closes *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson's belief in Saxonism is illustrated when he describes the Empire as an "ever-broadening England" (30). He follows this statement by exclaiming "one isle, one isle" (31) indicating a belief that Scotland and Wales had been assimilated into this "ever-broadening England," while at the same time excluding Ireland despite its status as a part of the Union. Matthew Reynolds argues at the beginning of the nineteenth century a compromise "over-arching British identity coexisted happily with feelings of Welshness, Englishness and Scottishness (but never Irishness)" within society, however, as the century progressed this came under strain as a "national movement" developed in Wales.[29] The concept of "one isle, one isle" becomes an attempt to assert the notion of a "ever-broadening England" on a disunited Kingdom. Throughout this thesis, I will term the construct of Celticism being used as a device to exert control on the "Celtic" nations as "Colonial Celticism" which acts to create an imagined and stereotyped vision of the "Celtic" nations in order to assimilate them into the Tennysonian "ever-broadening England."

As will be discussed in chapter one, Celticism is strongly associated with the theory of Orientalism developed by Edward W. Said. John Mackenzie describes Orientalism as the "means of creating a stereotypical and mythic east through which European rule could be

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[27] Catherine Hall, *White Male & Middle Class: Exploration in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 206

[28] Alan Sinfield, *Alfred Tennyson* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 154

[29] Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870 English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 204

more readily asserted"[30]. Although there has been study into the concept of an "Irish Orientalism," in particular by Said and Joseph Lennon, I argue that Tennyson deploys both a "Scottish Orientalism" and a "Welsh Orientalism" in order to assert English hegemony over the United Kingdom. However, Celticism is also deployed by "Celtic" writers to resist the expansion of England and construct an alternate version of the "Celt" by inventing new traditions based on an idealised version of the past.

Building on history, folklore, ways of dress and art, this version of Celticism is designed to construct a new tradition to either drive nationalism or to create an idealised vision of the history of the British Isles. L.P. Curtis in his book *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* argues that this form of Celticism is an:

> Ethnocentric form of nationalism with a strong measure of race consciousness which many Irishmen used to arm themselves against Anglo-Saxonist claims of cultural and racial superiority. Celticism refers to that body of assumptions, beliefs, and myths, which emphasised not only the uniqueness but the sophistication of early Irish culture and in particular the virtue of ancient Irish political, legal, and social institutions.[31]

While Curtis refers to Ireland in the late nineteenth century, the same process can be found in post-Jacobite Uprising Scotland, as well as in Wales. The upswell in "Celtic" nationalism happened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was intricately connected to the romantic movement of the age. Elizabeth Fry describes Romanticism as

> A Janus-faced movement, always looking back even as it looks forward, anachronistically replaying and revising history even as it proleptically installs a modernity we now recognize.[32]

Important to the form of Celticism described by Curtis is the notion of National Romantic. This is a "symbolic organisation of images and tropes"[33] that build upon the "Janus-face" and constructs a new modernity for the nation based on an imagined past. It is used to celebrate "Celtic" achievements in order to create a positive image for the identity and promote a

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[30] John M. Mackenzie, Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts. (Manchester: Manchester University press,: 1995), p. xiii

[31] L.P. Curtis, Anglo-*Saxons, and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, CT: Conference on British Studies at the University of Bridgeport, 1986), p. 109

[32] Elizabeth Fry*, Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 1

[33] Murry Pittock, 'Introduction' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 1 – 10 (p.

nationalistic revival that challenges the Anglocentrism of Colonial Celticism. The upswing in interest in the ancient history and folklore of the British Isles ran parallel to the development to the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" found in Romantic poetry and the "writing of excess"[34] found in the Gothic. Indeed, Gothicists David Punter and Glennis Byron see the work of early non-Colonial Celticist writers, such as the Scottish Highlander James MacPherson, as being a "reinstallation of a 'native' tradition in counterpoint to the Neo-classicalism of the earlier eighteen century."[35] However, MacPherson and others created tradition rather than inheriting an existing one to create a new reputation to counter the one constructed by the Colonial Celticists. I shall refer to this concept as "Romantic Celticism" due to its connection to National Romanticism.

It has to be stated that Romantic Celticism can sometimes be used as an element of the Colonial. This is due to it being constructed not only by people living in Ireland, Scotland, Wales but also England who wished to construct an idealised vision of the history of the British Isles from "Celtic" Folklore. The English use of Romantic Celticism was still informed by a Saxonist or Colonial Celticist view of the Celt. This is due to what Diarmuid Ó Giolláin refers to as a "provincial-colonial" outlook in which folklorists from the centre sought out the folklore and traditions of the marginalised fringe for collection or inspiration.[36] The influence of the marginalised Celt is presented through a Saxonist lens and may contain the same kind of "Celtic" stereotypes and assumptions found in Colonial Celticism. This form of cultural appropriation is a major feature of Tennyson's own Celticist work. His portrayal of the "Celt," even when he attempts to be sympathetic, is always based upon a sense of Saxonist superiority.

Campbell notes that "Tennyson, along with Arnold before him and Yeats after him, participates in the nostalgia of a peculiarly Victorian form of British poetic Celticism."[37] Although Campbell also states that this nostalgia is reflected in the "diction and prosody of English poetry,"[38] I argue that the past also plays a key role in contextualising Tennyson's Celticism and his interest in "Celtic" literature. The medievalism of the Arthurian myths had become popular during the early decades of the nineteenth century as a reaction to radical

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[34] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 1

[35] David Punter & Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 147

[36] Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, 'People, Nation and 'Combative Narratives': Baltic, Celtic and Nordic Configurations of Folklore' in Stories and Supernatural *Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas* ed. by Ülo Valk & Daniel Sävborg (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2018), pp. 256 – 268 (p. 265)

[37] Matthew Campbell, *Irish Poetry under the Union, 1801–1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 156

[38] Matthew Campbell, p.156

reform since it represented an "ideological vision of the past which not only resisted and abhorred current change but insisted upon a model of the present and future founded on that past."[39] Representations of medieval chivalry and romance were a reaction against modernity. Colonial Celticism's imagined vision of the "Celt" being "primitive" created a space in which medievalist nostalgia could be indulged. However, this nostalgia only went so far, and Tennyson's work existed in a liminal space between a fascination for the past and support for the present. As I will explore in detail in chapter two Tennyson created picturesque "Celtic" landscapes based on his readings of MacPherson but preferred the modern enclosed landscape of the English countryside. He also deliberately placed the "Celt" in the past in relation to Saxonist modernity.

Indeed, Tennyson had an extremely complex relationship with the "Celt" both in his poetry and his personal attitudes. He was certainly affectionate towards "Celtic" literature, which he used and praised in the writing of his poetry and went as far as attempting to learn Welsh so that he could study the original texts of that country for research when writing his Arthurian poetry. However, at the same time there was a great disconnect between his affection for "Celtic" literature and his racism towards the "Celtic" people, especially the Irish. Hallam Tennyson reports that, in 1887 his father stated of the Irish imagination that it "does not allow of his realizing the suffering of poor dumb beasts" and that they "are difficult for us to deal with."[40] Earlier in 1850, Tennyson condemned the "The blind hysterics of the Celt"[41] (CIX: 16) in his magnum opus, *In Memoriam A. H. H*. This line reflects a stereotype common in the mid to late nineteenth century, in which the "Celt" is portrayed as hysterical or unreasonable in comparison to the Saxonist English, who are considered stoic and sensible. While this stereotype had been popular since the previous century, it gained further attention with the publication in 1867 of *On the Study of Celtic Literature* by Matthew Arnold who, like Tennyson, celebrated the creativity of the "Celt" while simultaneously promoting "Saxon" ideals. Indeed, Tennyson made further use of the stereotype in his 1886 work *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, in which he creates a frightening image of the perceived madness of the "Celt" when he describes a "Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the light with blood" (90). This line follows a mention of France, a

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[39] Colin Graham. *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 35

[40] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 338

[41] All quotations from Tennyson's poetry are taken the complete three volume collection of his poetry edited by from Christopher Ricks.

nation that, despite being described as "a light to all men" [89], had gone through a revolution represented by the "demon." By connecting the French Revolution to "Celtic" hysteria, Tennyson is directly contrasting it to the belief that the "sensible" English had not had a revolution similar to the French in the eighteenth century or the wave of uprisings in other parts of Europe in the early nineteenth century. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word "demos" refers to "the populace of a democratic state."[42] This indicates that Tennyson had a fear of "Celtic" democracy connected to his belief that the "Celt" could not be trusted with politics because they are overly emotional and impulsive. This is evidenced by statements made by the poet in 1887, when he opined that Ireland needed a "iron hand in the silken glove" to be controlled as left to itself the nation would develop a "violent, selfish, unreasoning democracy, would bring expensive bureaucracy, and the iron rule of a Cromwell."[43] Therefore, such events are in the "Celtic" character and not in that of the English or "Saxon."[44]

As Helene Roberts states, Tennyson was a "strong nationalist" who supported The British imperial project.[45] The poet's vision for the future of the Empire was a "hope that I may live to see England and her colonies absolutely one, with as complete a reciprocity of the free gifts of God as there is between one country and another in the mother-country."[46] However, Tennyson's nationalism was also based around England dominating the United Kingdom and was aware that the "mother-country was absolutely not one."[47] The divisions were caused by the stereotyping of the "Celtic" nations by colonial Celticism, which greatly influenced Tennyson's thinking. To him the "Celt" was alien, irrational and needed the rational "Saxon" to conduct their dealings in politics. His creation of the bloodthirsty "Celtic Demos" who threatens to bring revolution is an illustration of this attitude. Tennyson was ideologically an Anglo-Saxonist, the belief that "the glory of English civilization… was no freak accident" and instead it was "the result of a set of skills and talents which were the

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[42] "demos, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2021[Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/49859. [Accessed 21 February 2022]
It is interesting to note that the "Celtic Demos" quote is used as an example of use in the definition.
[43] Tennyson, Hallam. *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son Volume II*. (London: The MacMillian Company. 1899), p.338
[44] It should be noted that this line was written a year after the Fenian bombing campaign by Irish nationalists had ended, further creating a sense of an anarchical "Celt" who is a threat to English sensibilities and political power.
[45] Helene Roberts, 'Divided Self, Divided Realm: Typology, History and Persona in Tennyson's Idylls of the King' in
Pre-Raphaelitism and Medievalism in the Arts, ed. by Liana De Girolami Cheney (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 29 - 52 (p.30)
[46] Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870 English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 203
[47] Matthew Reynolds, p.204

unique inheritance of a people bound together by common ancestry or blood who were conventionally known as Anglo-Saxons."[48] Despite Tennyson's Saxonist view of the irrational character of the "Celt" he has a well-documented fascination with the literature created in Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Ireland. This is illustrated by Hallam Tennyson, who states that his father had a "genuine love of peculiar exuberance of the Irish imagination."[49] In chapters two to three of this thesis I will discuss several "Celtic" influences on the poet, starting with an early interest in the Ossianic poetry of James MacPherson, through his journeys to Wales and Cornwall to research the mythology of King Arthur and finishing with his later experiments in capturing the "Irish Genius." The disconnect between Tennyson's Saxonist views on the character of the "Celt" and his fascination with their literature, however, was not unusual in Victorian society and was the product of a cultural discussion between the "Celt" and "Saxon" that began with the end of the Jacobite rebellion and culminated with the "Celtic Twilight."

To discuss Tennyson and Celticism, it is necessary to explore how the ideology developed over the course of the eighteenth century until the beginning of Tennyson's poetic career in the 1820s because his views towards the "Celts" are reflective of Saxonist society during his long life. Prior to this period, there was no "gulf between the characters, values and achievements of the "Celtic" and "Anglo-Saxon" worlds."[50] However, due to the creation of the United Kingdom with the act of Unions of 1707 and 1801, "Celtic" peoples becoming associated with the failed Jacobite Uprisings to restore the house of Stuart to the thrones of England and Scotland, and the subsequent attempts to eliminate the Highlander way of life, both Colonial and Romantic forms of Celticism started to be developed. As already stated, British government propaganda during the Uprisings portraying the Highlander as a primitive creature to justify the elimination of their culture in the years following 1745 was one of the roots of the ideology of Colonial Celticism and, along with other stereotypes, shaped how the "Celt" was perceived by a Saxonist audience. In response to English domination, there was a movement to preserve the national culture of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. However, many of the traditions formulated by writers such as James MacPherson in Scotland and Edward Williams, also known as Iolo Morganwg, in Wales were

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[48] L.P. Curtis, Anglo-*Saxons, and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, CT: Conference on British Studies at the University of Bridgeport, 1986), p. 8
[49] Tennyson, Hallam. *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son Volume II*. (London: The MacMillian Company. 1899), p. 255
[50] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.185

modern inventions, due to the lack of written Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and Cornish sources from the ancient to medieval periods. Romantic Celticism was a crucial factor in nation building during this period. As authentic traditions were eliminated by an expansionist and increasingly Saxonist England, new ones were created under the guise of rediscovering a pre-History of the nation. This is most notably illustrated by Clan Tartans which, despite being a central element to subsequent Scottish national identity, are largely an invention of the early nineteenth century, several decades after the elimination of the Highlander way of life. English writers of Romantic Celticism also played a key role in the creation of the image of the "Celt," most notably Thomas Gray with his 1757 work *The Bard,* which was important in creating of an English fashion for "Celtic" poetry in the late eighteenth century. However, as discussed earlier in this introduction, writers like Gray still worked within a colonial view of the "Celtic" nations and produced works that relied on the Saxonist stereotype of an unreasonable and sentimental Celt.

Tennyson used both Colonial and Romantic Celticism influences in his work, and the lines between them become blurred, especially following his ascension to Poet Laureate in 1850. As I have already stated, Tennyson identified as a "Saxon" and believed in an English-dominated United Kingdom, but he also had a great deal of affection for the imagined "Celtic genius." Even if he portrayed the "Celt" in a negative manner in his work or in personal conversation, he would take inspiration from "Celtic" writers and mythology. In doing so, Tennyson became a creator of a Celticist tradition that celebrated the "Celtic" imagination while preserving the "Saxon" hegemony over the United Kingdom.

Structure of this Thesis.

The quotations cited earlier in this introduction from *In Memoriam A. H. H*. and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* communicate much about Tennyson's feelings about the "Celt" but are passing mentions in larger works and, therefore, represent minor uses of Celticism in Tennyson's body of work.[51] However, he created several major works informed by Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Ireland spanning from his earliest published poetry until the final years of his life. To explore the evolution of Tennyson's relationship with Celticism

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[51] When I refer to a "minor use" of Celticism in a poem it denotes a single mention of the "Celt" in a larger work that is not part of the main narrative. A "major use" is making a substantive comment on the "Celt" throughout the entire poem.

this thesis will be spilt into four chapters. While they will be in a roughly chronological order to demonstrate changes in the poet's thinking there is a considerable amount of overlap as it is impossible to definitely split Tennyson's career into phases. For example, Tennyson's Arthurian poetry is a substantive body of work created over a period of decades. Due to this there is considerable overlap with both the poetry of the early and late phases of his career. The purpose of a chronological approach is to demonstrate that Tennyson's Celticism evolves over the course of his eight-decade long life due to changes in his attitudes and responses to political events such as the Irish Home Rule debate of the 1870s onwards. This debate informs his later poetry when Ireland is notably missing in his early and Arthurian poetry.

Chapter One: The Development of Celticism 1701 -1820

The first chapter will explore the pre-history of Tennyson's Celticism by discussing how the concepts of both Colonial and Romantic Celticism developed before he began his writing career, specifically focussing on the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There will be a focus on the construction of the Primitive "Celt" that was used to justify the English domination of the United Kingdom and led to the development of Colonial Celticism, the creation of English Romantic Celticism and the popularity of James MacPherson's Ossianic poetry, which helped influence Romantic Celticism not only within the British Isles but also the wider European community. I argue that all three of these areas are critical to understanding Tennyson and his relationship with Celticism as he would draw from all of them at different points in his career.

Chapter Two: Experiments in Celticism 1827 - 1856

The second chapter will discuss a range of poetry written between 1827 and 1851 which constitute Tennyson's early work with Celticist themes. Although he uses elements of Colonial Celticism, this period of his writing is chiefly concerned with appropriating Romantic Celticism in the development of his poetry. In 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The Poems of Ossian" and "The Death of Arthur,' the critic Dafydd Moore argues against "an exclusive or exclusively important position for Ossian in relation to Tennyson."[52]

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[52] Dafydd Moore, 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The Poems of Ossian" and 'The Death of Arthur'' in *the Review of English Studies, New Series*, 57.230 (2006), pp. 374-391 (p. 375)

However, I argue that MacPherson was an important early influence on the young poet, especially in relation to the construction of his Celticism. Close readings of Tennyson's earliest works of Celticism, published in the 1827 volume *Poems by Two Brothers,* reveal a direct influence by the work of MacPherson. In particular, the former had an interest in the latter's poem 'The Night-Song of the Bards' and draws on it for several of his own poems in this first collection. A second major theme present in the early phase of Tennyson's career is his appropriation of the "Celtic" Bard and Druid as inspiration and as a poetic device. The poet saw himself as being "a seer who can perceive the spiritual health of the individual and society."[53] He therefore took the visionary aspect of the "Celtic" musician and priest and used it to promote a Saxonist worldview. Even a work such as 'The Druid's Prophecies' which explicitly uses the Roman destruction of the Druidic groves in Anglesey as its setting, limits the Celt so that they are only witnesses to the saviours of Britain who are described as "fiery Goths" (75), in other words the ancestors of the Germanic "Saxons." Tennyson would also use the names of both Merlin and Taliesin, a Druid and Bard from Arthurian and Welsh mythology, as pseudonyms for his hyper nationalistic anti-Napoleon III poetry of 1851. This further illustrates his desire to be identified with "Celtic" visionaries while promoting English led British nationalism.[54] The final theme found in Tennyson's early Celticism is a sense of decay. The poet does not allow the "Celt" to exist in the present. Instead, they are connected to ruins, wild unpopulated areas, old age, and a sentimental connection to the past. The focus on the "Celt" existing in a previous age is an early example of the poet creating a sense of a backwards looking "Celt" in comparison to the forward-looking "Saxon."

Chapter Three: Celticism in Tennyson's Arthurian Poetry

Chapter three discusses Tennyson's Arthurian poetry which I argue is the poet at his most nationalistic, especially in *Idylls of the King* as he transforms the King into a "pattern Victorian gentleman"[55] and a hero of English Nationalism. However, there are differences in attitude between his 1830s work in the mythology and those found in the *Idylls*. His early Arthurian work generally conforms to the appropriation of Romantic Celticist themes found

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[53] Seamus Perry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote, 2005), p. 42
[54] Tennyson would return to identifying himself with Merlin in his final Celticist work 'Merlin and the Gleam' in 1889.
[55] Mark Giround, The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 184

in his work of the 1820s and 30s. There is a heightened sense of sentimentally and wildness found in 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere'. I argue that the early, unpublished, version of 'Sir Launcelot' is non-judgemental towards the eroticised relationship between the Queen and Knight. Within Tennyson's Arthurian work Camelot is identified with London but at this point in his career he had yet to be accepted into the "cultural apparatus" of the nation and therefore felt able to criticise the city at the centre of the "Saxon" world. However, when both poems were published alongside each other in 1842 they were edited to more suit Saxonist tastes. This illustrates the shift away from the broadly positive portrayal of the "Celt" found in, for example, the Ossianic adaptions to what Matthew Reynolds describes as a "subjugation of the Celt within,"[56] in which the "Celtic" needs to be tamed and controlled by the "Saxon." Notable in both poems, and later the 'Merlin and Vivien' Idyll, is Tennyson's use of the faerie to denote women as the "Celtic Other." The Queen, along with the Lady of Shalott and the villainess Vivien are presented as supernatural Outsiders who do not belong in the Saxonized Camelot. The process of taming the Celt would continue into the creation of *Idylls of the King*. Arthur is presented as the aforementioned "Saxon King of the Celts," a perfect monarch who is a sensible and steadying force who will "subdue" the human passions of his Knights.[57] In contrast the Queen's lover, Sir Lancelot[58], is presented as a passionate and sensual character in comparison to the idealised Arthur, yet Hallam Tennyson reports that his father had a particular love of the character. The Saxonized Arthur is also contrasted with the Celticized Guinevere, who in surrendering to her passions is signally blamed for the fall of Camelot. This is illustrated by Tennyson's adaptation of the *Mabinogion* using a Colonial Celticist approach. In the two 'Enid' Idylls, the Queen's "guilty" relationship with Lancelot becomes the central driving force behind the actions of the characters, a narrative that is absent in the original Welsh text. Tennyson also presents rejection of the supernatural as part of being accepted in Camelot. This is a central theme to the 'Gareth and Lynette' section of the Idylls, where Gareth is portrayed as an unbeliever in magic and therefore able to join the ranks of Arthur's Knights. Finally, despite her central role in the destruction of her husband's

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[56] Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870 English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p

[57] Knowles, Sir James Thomas. *The Idylls of the King: [notes used in part by Hallam Tennyson for the complete edition of Tennyson's works, c.1903]* (1903)

[58] Tennyson uses the spelling "Launcelot" for the poem 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere'. However in 'The Lady of Shalott' and *Idylls of the King* he uses the spelling "Lancelot." Therefore if I am referring to the title of the poem I shall use the "Launcelot" spelling, while if I am referring to the character I shall use the "Lancelot" spelling.

kingdom, Guinevere is forgiven and redeemed by Tennyson in her eponymous idyll through the acceptance of Arthur's Saxonist Values. All these aspects illustrate a hardening of Tennyson's Colonial Celticist attuites and an embracing of full bodied Saxonism during the middle period of his life.

Chapter Four: Tennyson's Late Celticism

The final chapter discusses a noticeable change in Tennyson's Celticism that begins while he is still writing *Idylls of the King* in the 1860s but becomes more prominent in his final Celticist works in the 1880s. This change is connected to a sense of doubt both in the British Empire and Saxonism following the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and represents a move away from the overt nationalism of the *Idylls*. This is illustrated by 1864's 'Boadicea' and 1880's 'The Battle of Brunanburh'. Both of these poems show that Tennyson is beginning to believe that the "Celt" no longer is required to "subdue" all their character. Instead, the poet encourages the "Saxon" to find poetic inspiration in their neighbours, believing that the typical English person had "no poetry in his nature like the Celt."[59] This notion has parallels with Celticist thinking of Matthew Arnold who seen as the leading expert in the field in the late nineteenth century. Arnold, like Tennyson, believed in the different characters of the "Saxon" and the "Celt," seeing the former as being the political and moral leaders while the latter are sentimental and poetic dreamers. It is unknown if Tennyson was reading Arnold, however, due to the similarities between the thinking of the two it is important to include Arnold's work in this thesis to place Tennyson's work in an evolving ideological framework of Celticism during the later decades of the nineteenth century. Tennyson's thinking during the 1880s is illustrated in two major works of Celticism published in the early 1880s 'The Voyage of Maeldune' and 'Tomorrow', which are attempts to capture the "Irish Genius." In both poems, Tennyson comments on contemporary Ireland in different ways. This is a rarity in Tennyson's Celticism as prior to this the poet made no comment on the modern state of the non-English lands of the British Isles. In 'Maeldune', he uses the framework of an Irish legend to comment on what he sees as the doomed efforts of Charles Stewart Parnell to raise the nationalist cause in America due to notions that the "Celtic" Irish irrationally lames them in politics. 'Tomorrow' is unusual in the Tennyson Celticist canon as it had a contemporary resonance and explores issues such as Irish migration. I argue that both poems represent

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[59] Hallam Tennyson, Alfred *Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*. (London: The MacMillian Company. 1899), p.338

Tennyson attempting to simultaneously communicate his belief in the "Saxon" being the political leaders and attempting to learn from the "Celtic" imagination. This mutually enriching relationship would be Tennyson's solution to the problem of how the two peoples could come together as one nation. The poet would attempt to vocalise this relationship in his final Celticist work, 'Merlin And The Gleam', written three years before his death. However, his ingrained Saxonist attitudes prevent him from creating a fully sympathetic portrayal of the "Celt." This makes this final phase in Tennyson's Celticist career more difficult to characterise as he cannot fully commit to his own solution.

Chapter One

Fanned by Conquest's Crimson Wing

The Development of Celticism 1701 – 1820

When he began his six-decade-long poetic career in the 1820s, Alfred, Lord Tennyson inherited an complicated ideological discourse between the English and the peoples of Wales, Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall which had been built up, both socially and in literature, throughout the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. I argue that to understand the different facets of Tennyson's Celticism it is necessary to explore this clash of ideologies that produced what I term Colonial and Romantic Celticism during this period and the events and personalities that drove their development. As set out in the introduction both Colonial and Romantic Celticism are intricately connected to Orientalism. The former creates an imagined version of the "Celt" in order to justify "Saxon" domination of the British Isles. The latter is a response to the colonial in which new ideologically driven traditions are created within the "Celtic" nations based upon both existing and imagined traditional cultures. The separation of Celticism into two connected ideologies is important as it helps highlight the differences between how it was deployed in both "Saxon" and "Celtic" writing. While Romantic Celticism is also valued by some Saxonist writers they are appropriating "Celtic" sources and presenting them through an English lens that conforms to colonial stereotypes. Tennyson's work falls into broadly into this hybrid of the Colonial and Romantic. Tennyson was a Saxonist and largely drew on the tradition of presenting the "Celt" as being primitive and irrational in comparison to the noble and stoic "Saxon." However, he also drew on Romantic Celticist sources with the Ossianic poetry of James MacPherson being a key influence on his poetry found in the 1827 collection *Poems by Two Brothers*. This chapter will discuss both the deployment of Colonial Celticism in Jacobite era English government propaganda and the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century enthusiasm for "Celtic" history and literature that developed in England. It will focus on the development and legacy of the Ossianic poetry, a key text in the development of Romantic Celticism whose importance in Alfred Tennyson's work has been underestimated. This will provide an overview of the state of Celticism as Tennyson began his writing career. Further

developments in Celticism during the nineteenth century will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Following England's so called "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, several events helped shape the modern notion of "a vast historical gulf between the characters, values, and achievements of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon worlds."[60] These events are linked to the growing domination of England in the creation of a new United Kingdom. The acts of Union, first between England and Scotland in 1701 and later incorporating Ireland in 1801, cemented this cultural and political domination and the creation of "Celtic" as an identity to signify those who inhabited the British Isles who were not considered "Saxon." What followed was a period of rebellions in Scotland and Ireland coupled with a growing interest in the history and folklore of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, both within the "Celtic" nations and in England. Due to the marginalization of the "Celts" in this new Union, two ideological traditions in Celticism developed. The first, which I term Colonial Celticism, was born out of English propaganda countering the Scottish and Irish rebellions and created the image of a primitive and savage "Celt" who needed to be tamed by the more sophisticated and civilized "Saxon." The second, which I call Romantic Celticism, was a movement within the "Celtic" nations to preserve their culture from being absorbed by English expansion. There were several infamous forgeries of "Celtic" Literature by writers, such as James MacPherson and Iolo Morganwg. Both writers drew on various sources to create works they claimed were authentic ancient texts. Tennyson was an inheritor of both the Colonial and Romantic Celticist traditions. His work is characterized by an ambivalence towards the "Celt" which is influenced by both the anti-Celt attitudes that developed in England and the writings of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh writers whom he wished to emulate. The purpose of this chapter is to give a short overview of the development of Celticism from the first act of Union in 1701 until the start of Tennyson's writing career in the 1820s in order to give context to the poet's Celticist thought. To do this, it is necessary to look at how Saxonist attitudes towards the folk-reputation of the "Celt" developed in this period and the attempts to revive "Celtic" culture by Irish, Scottish and Welsh Nationalists as a reaction to English imperialism.

As mentioned in the introduction, I will be using the word "Celt" as shorthand for Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Cornish, Manx, and Breton, unless it is necessary to identify a specific

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[60] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.185

group. However, it is essential to remember that most people in the period I am discussing would have not labelled themselves such. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the word was used by Saxonist thinkers to denote the non "Saxon" peoples of the British Isles. Colin Kidd argues that there some anthropologists who suggest that "Celtic" is an "empty category signifying "otherness" whose functioning cultural definition has depended more on the vague prejudices of the centre than the actuality of the periphery."[61] While Kidd is personally unconvinced by this statement, I argue that there is truth to it. Until the late nineteenth century when Irish Nationalists laid claim to the label of "Celt," both the ancient and modern idea of a "Celtic" people had traditionally been constructed by outsiders. Therefore, it becomes necessary to look at the etymology of the "Celt" and the problems brought about by the creation of a racial category based on otherness.

The Etymology and Ideology of the Celt and Criticism

The word Celt, derived from both the Greek Κελτοί, and the Latin Celtae,[62] was used by ancient Mediterranean civilizations to categorize the different peoples of Western Europe and was not used by the "Celts" themselves, who used their own names for their own separate civilizations. Due to modern advances in archaeology, the notion that there was a singular ancient "Celtic" culture is being reconsidered as academics have identified a high degree of overlap between the Celtic and Germanic tribes of Northern Europe.[63] The reputation of the "Celt" developed since the eighteenth century likewise denotes difference. In this instance it is between the different peoples of the British Isles who are separated into "Celt" and "Saxon." However, as late as 1770, when Thomas Percy (1729-1811) published his critical edition of *Mallet's Northern Antiques*, there was no attempt to make a clear distinction between the Germanic "Saxons" and the "Celtic" and both groups were depicted as one British people.[64] These changes in the late eighteenth century were due to ideological differences that had been highlighted by the struggles between the nations of the United Kingdom. These struggles created a situation in which "Saxon" and "Celt" became constructs denoting two opposing cultures. As the largest and most powerful nation England, and in

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[61] Colin Kidd, p.185

[62] "Celt, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2021. [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/29532 [accessed 1 November 2021].

[63] Joep Leerssen, 'Celticism' in *Celticism, ed. by* Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 1-20 (p. 2)

[64] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.187

particular the city of London, became the centre of the Union, ideologically pushing the "Celtic" nations to the periphery.

While "Saxon" identity was centred around the idea of Englishness, "Celtic" identity was more diverse. It attempted to categorize a number of different nations and cultures into a straightforward label while also ignoring the numerous differences between them. A "Celt" could be a descendant of the ancient Britons, "the primary peoples of the British Isles"[65] driven into the fringes of the island from what is now England by the invading "Saxons." Likewise, they could be descendants of the Pictish peoples of Eastern Scotland, native to the island of Ireland or the successors of the ancient Gauls. We must also consider that over the centuries groups of Germanic peoples such as the Danes, Angles, Norsemen, including the Nordic-French Normans, and Saxons also migrated to the "Celtic" lands, as well as to England. There is certainly no single Religious link in the ideology of Celticism with Roman Catholicism being dominant in Ireland, Western Scotland and Brittany, Presbyterianism in Eastern Scotland and non-conformism in Wales.[66] The idea of Pan-Celticism, the notion of solidarity between "Celtic" Nations based on perceived similarities in language and culture, did not develop until the later nineteenth century with the first "Celtic Congress," not happening until the dawn of the twentieth century.[67] The disunity of those who are labelled as "Celtic" during the time before Tennyson's career is illustrated by a sense of rivalry between nations to legitimize their past in the eyes of a wider international audience.

In 1792, a group of Welshmen gathered on Primrose Hill in London to perform a Druidic rite devised by Iolo Morganwg, who claimed to be the heir of an unbroken Druidic tradition dating back to the ancient world.[68] Shawna Thorp Licthwaler argues that the choice of London was made by Morganwg, William Owen and others because they wished to reach a larger audience than they could find in Wales.[69] In addition, the publication of "ancient" indigenous poetry from the "Celtic" nations in English aimed to give "Celtic" poetry and culture legitimacy, although it also led to conflict between writers from the different nations. The publication in 1761 of the first volume of James MacPherson's Ossianic poetry was not

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[65] Colin Kidd, p.187
[66] Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870 English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.204
[67] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.185
[68] Shawna Thorp Licthwaler, '" In the Eye of the Light": Ancient Druids and International Influences' in The Wordsworth Circle 36.1 (Winter, 2005), pp. 9-11 (p. 9)
[69] Shawna Thorp Licthwaler p. 10 - 11

designed purely to give the Scottish Highlanders a body of ancient poetry. It also acted as a "cultural revolt against Ireland" as prior to the Jacobite uprisings the Highlanders were not seen as distinct people but instead "racially and culturally… a colony of Ireland."[70] In his essay , 'A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal', MacPherson argues against the notion that Highlander culture was Irish in origin when he states "the inhabitants of Ireland were originally Britons"[71] implying a different direction of culture crossing the Celtic Sea. By rejecting Ireland, MacPherson was attempting to assert the primary of Highlander culture in the hierarchy of Celticism.[72] In turn Welsh antiquarian Evan Evans was inspired in part to publish his 1784 work *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards*, although he claimed to have planned to produce a volume of ancient Welsh poetry before MacPherson,[73] a further indication of a contest between the "Celtic" nations to legitimise themselves. Indeed, the only region that was nearly completely neglected in this explosion of Celticism was Cornwall. In the eyes of outsiders, the county had already become industrialized during this period and therefore "prematurely" modernised in comparison to "premodern" Scotland, Ireland, and Wales" and offered little in the same wealth of folklore.[74]

Malcolm Chapman states that the "Celts" of the various nations did have something that unified them in the eyes of other European peoples: a "folk-reputation" of being "backwards" and "faithful to tradition."[75] As the political gap between the English and their "Celtic" neighbours became wider during the eighteenth century, the folk-reputation of the "Celt" became the main method of differentiating between the two identities. By Tennyson's time, the contrast between the two people had become an accepted fact that built on the idea that the "Celt" was "backwards." This notion had further developed to include ideas of "Celtic" primitivism and a resistance to a modernity embraced by the English and used as a justification for the Saxonist domination of the British Isles.

The process of the creation of an imagined ideal of the "Celtic" Lands is comparable to Postcolonial critic Edward W. Said's theories of Orientalism. Said argues that Orientalism is

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[70] Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland' in *The Invention of Tradition* ed by Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 15 – 42 (p. 16)

[71] James MacPherson, 'A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal' in in *Ossian and Ossianism Vol. 2* ed by. Dafydd Moore (London: Routledge, 2004), Part 1 pp. I – xvi (p.iii)

[72] See later in the chapter for MacPherson's reception in Ireland.

[73] Adam Coward 'Rejecting Mother's Blessing: The Absence of the Fairy in the Welsh Search for Identity' in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 29 (2009), pp. 57-69 (p. 61)

[74] Ronald M. James *The Folklore of Cornwall: The Oral Tradition of a Nation* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2018), p.1

[75] Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992)' p. 5

"a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" in which Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" are created.[76] He further argues that the Orient is "an idea that has history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the west."[77] Celticism, like Orientalism, is a set of "thought, imagery and vocabulary" that defines the Other. Neither deal with the realities of the "Celtic" or Asian nations, instead relying on stereotypical folk-reputations that are used by another group to justify conquest and colonialism. In particular, the coloniser sees themselves as being civilized in comparison to the colonised subject who is defined as primitive. Said describes the English attitude towards the Oriental as people who are "inveterate liars, they are "lethargic and suspicious" and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race."[78] The idea of a people lacking the specific "positive" qualities of the "Saxons" is an essential aspect of Celticism. Matthew Arnold, in his 1867 work *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, states that the "Celtic" character is "undisciplined, anarchical and turbulent" in opposition to a "Saxon" who is "disciplinable and steady obedient."[79] Therefore, in both Orientalism and Celticism the English see themselves as a model of self-control and nobility in comparison to the colonised who lack that same self-control. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this narrative was deployed in relation to Scotland, Ireland, and Wales as justification for English dominance within the British Isles and, as we shall see in the following three chapters is central to Tennyson's writings and views on the "Celtic" peoples. However, the folk-reputation can be used in the cause of building opposition to the occupying power and to define as the English as an Other to the "Celt." In *Irish Orientalism*, Joseph Lennon states that Irish writers "transformed colonial stereotypes and developed a millennium-old Irish narrative for asserting an independent and ancient culture in Ireland."[80] While Lennon focuses on Ireland, this assertion of a counter-narrative using the stereotypes constructed by the English to build national pride and independence is mirrored in Scotland and Wales. The

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[76] Edward W. Said Orientalism (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 1

[77] Edward W. Said, p. 2

[78] Edward W. Said, p. 39

[79] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)

[80] Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p.xxxi

previously mentioned James MacPherson and Iolo Morganwg, while writing works widely dismissed as forgeries[81], are part of this process.

Comparisons between Celticism and Orientalism can be contentious. Some critics, most notably the Irish Celticist Field Day group, embrace the use of postcolonial studies in relation to the Saxonist treatment of the "Celt." In the view of those who do embrace postcolonial approaches the Irish are seen as "de-historicized and de-culturalized much the same as the Indian and were never seen as inhabitants nor legitimate owners of the Irish Landscape."[82] Stephen Howe, in his book *Ireland and Empire*, argues that the implication of the Field Day argument is that "'Irishness' was a colonial creation, the product of English stereotyping and essentialising of 'the native' – and presumably also of the counter-essentialism of cultural nationalist Gaelicism."[83] Therefore, Colonial Celticism is essentially a Orientalist device that allows the English to dictate what is considered Scottish, Irish or Welsh. This is evidenced by Field Day publishing Said's 1988 pamphlet *Yeats and Decolonialism*, in which he placed the late nineteenth and early twentieth century poet W.B. Yeats as belonging with 'the great nationalist artists of decolonization and revolutionary nationalism."[84] In Said's opinion, Yeats' early poetry of the 1890s is concerned "with the recovery and repossession of colonized land through the imagination."[85] This is an essential aspect of the reinvention of the "Celt" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, creating a direct link between Celticism and Orientalism.

However, there are other critics who cast doubt on the value of Postcolonial and Orientalist theory in relation to the "Celt" due to the belief that Ireland, Wales and Scotland were never really colonies of England and, even if they were, the experiences of the "Cel"t are very different to that of the African or the Asian.[86] Such critics see the use of a "colonial" model of study as being connected with questions of both Irish nationalism and unionism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Colin Graham, when reviewing Said's book *Culture and Imperialism*, questioned its "unquestioned assumption that Ireland was colonialised and decolonialised in the same way as all other nations which have been formed from the

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[81] In chapter four, we shall see how Matthew Arnold, the most crucial figure in Celticism during the latter part of Tennyson's life argued against this and placed Morganwg alongside German folklore collectors such as the Grimms.
[82] Lauren A. Scanlon & M. Satish Kumar 'Ireland and Irishness: The Contextuality of Postcolonial Identity in *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 109:1 (2019), pp. 202 -222 (p. 203)
[83] Stephen Howe, *Ireland, and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 118
[84] Edward W. Said, *Yeats and Decolonialism* (Derry, Field Day, 1988), p. 8
[85] Stephen Regan 'W.B. Yeats: Irish Nationalism and Post-Colonial Theory' *in Nordic Irish Studies* 5 (2006) pp. 87 -99 (p.89)
[86] Glenn Hooper, and Colin Graham ed. *Irish and Postcolonial Writing: History, Theory, Practice*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 12

demise of the British Empire (and those other nations too may find Said's all-embracing model problematic)."[87] Unlike the nations and territories created by the colonial powers from the discovery of the Americas until the early to mid-twentieth century, Ireland, Scotland and Wales existed as complete political and cultural entries before their absorption into an English dominated Britain. It is also important to remember that unlike the Indigenous peoples of Asia, Africa, and other non-European lands the "Celtic" nations held a position of both being both "colonized and the colonizer."[88] Therefore, "Celtic" individuals took part in the administration of the project of empire, something that was denied to Non "British" subjects of the crown. Those who argue against a Postcolonial model for the "Celt" believe that Scotland, Ireland, and Wales would not need to be invented in the same way as the nations of the eastern world. Instead, the domination of the "Celtic" nations resembles the history of other European states such as "Albania, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Poland etc."[89] This Eurocentric model thinks in "terms of one national entity being conquered and oppressed by another"[90] in comparison to the creation of nations due to colonial conquest of territories without existing nationhood.

Stephen Howe, in dialog with Field Day contributor Declan Kiberd, goes further in his questioning of the value of "Celtic Orientalism." Gilbert argues that the "English did not invade -- rather they seized a neighbouring island and invented the idea of Ireland" and therefore the Irish "no longer live in a country of their own making."[91] In his counterargument, Howe questions the importance of not being Irish in the formation of Englishness and suggests that being "Not French" is more historically relevant. He further states that Kiberd's argument implies that the Irish "never did live in a country of their own making."[92] This dialogue raises questions of how identity is created. Are the "Celts" a purely an English ideological invention or is the concept based on a romantic ideal of a past culture? The answer is that both Colonial and Romantic Celticism play a role in the creation of what is considered a "Celtic" identity with traditions forged by a combination of both reputations.

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[87] Colin Graham, 'Anomalous Theory' in *The Irish Review* 15 (1994), pp. 117 – 123 (p.118)
[88] Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p.xxvi
[89] Joseph Lennon, 'Postcolonial Ireland? The Battle over a Label. Review of Ireland and Empire by Stephen Howe in *Irish Literary Supplement* 20.2 (2001), pp. 30-31 (p.30)
[90] Stephen Howe, *Ireland, and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 14
[91] Stephen Howe, p. 121
[92] Stephen Howe, p. 121

I argue that due to the creation of the two forms of Celticism, one to justify subjugation and the other to build a counter-narrative, as well as the links developed by Said's work on Yeats,[93] comparisons between Celticism and Orientalism are helpful. The Celtic nations were "de-historicized and de-culturalized" by the creation of an English-led Britain to the point that the creation of new traditions and meaning was necessary for the cultures of Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Ireland to survive. As will be discussed throughout the chapter, one of the effects of this process was the destruction of culture by an expanding England, particularly in Scotland, which in turn created the conditions for the reinvention of what it meant to be a "Celt." Although the Welsh, Scottish, Irish, and Cornish did take an active role in the project of Empire, it was in a junior role to the English, who were central to the expansion. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, there is an argument to be made that all colonial projects, including those exclusively within Europe, contain an Orientalist element in the justification of significant powers to subjugate neighbouring national entities. Therefore, I further argue that Romantic Celticism acts in a similar manner to Colonial Celticism as it allows the writer to impose a "thought, imagery and vocabulary" on an imagined version of the "Celtic" past. As Lennon argues, imposed colonial stereotypes can also be used to build a sense of nationalistic pride. It is here that, as in Kiberd's argument, the "Celt" stops being the "Other" in the relationship between peoples of the British Isles and instead, it is the "Saxon" who gives meaning to the "Celt." It is therefore no accident that Celticism began to gain popularity during the eighteenth century due to the political turmoil following the deposition of James II and VII from the thrones of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Scottish Highlander support for the Catholic James, and his descendants, would create a notion that "all Celts are Catholic, and all Saxons are Protestants."[94] This aided in the construction of presenting the "Celt" as an "Other" who is defined by their not being English in religion or character.

While Ireland would become critical to Celticism of the nineteenth century with the rise of nationalism and questions of Home Rule at this early point more attention was given to Wales and Scotland. This is evident in the writing of Tennyson as discussion of Ireland does not become a feature of his poetry until the later decades of his life. Joep Leerssen

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[93] Despite Yeats belonging to a later period than that covered in this chapter, having little crossover in careers with Tennyson and being problematic due to his Anglo-Irish Protestants Ascendancy, a group seen as part of the Colonization project, background, Said has created a link between Orientalism and Celticism that allows its use in exploring the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[94] Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) p.162

argues that it was Wales that first experienced a "upsurge in Celticist interest" in academic and folkloric circles due to the work of antiquarians including Even Evans and Lewis Morris.[95] Mary-Ann Constantine argues that Welsh hopes that they could have been the "aesthetic, if not political" challengers to "Anglo-Saxon" culture were directly challenged by the publication of James MacPherson's Ossian.[96] However, given that Celticism is a study of the reputation of the "Celts," I argue that the conflicts over the throne of England and Scotland following the so-called "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 had a more significant effect on the creation of the reputation of the Celt in England than the work of the Welsh antiquarians. It was in Scotland that the need to preserve "Celtic" traditions in the wake of the oppression of the Highland way of life following the final defeat of the Jacobites was greatest. Wales and Welsh writers, while producing and inspiring many important Celticist works, did not have the same kind of impact politically or culturally and to paraphrase Constantine, "fades into the Mist"[97] in comparison to Scotland and later Ireland as the centre of the broader European Celticist imagination. This is practically true of the Celticism that the young Tennyson inherited, given his fascination with the work of MacPherson, whose work was directly inspired by the aftermath of conflict.

Tennyson would inherit both the colonial folk-reputation and the Romantic alternative. To understand the creation of each, it is necessary to discuss both English Government propaganda and the Highlander reaction during and following the Jacobite Risings, as it is the crucial event that drove significant development of Celticism in the eighteenth century.

Rebellion and Propaganda

The construction of the Celtic Other during this period is driven by the conflicts that followed the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688–89 in which the Catholic King James II and VII was deposed and replaced by his daughter Mary II and her husband William of Orange. The Revolution was followed over the course of the next seventy-five years by a series of risings against both the Protestant wing of the Stuart family and, later, the House of Hanover, with the majority of the support for the Jacobite cause being drawn from Catholic loyalists in the

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[95] Joep Leerssen, 'Celticism' in *Celticism, ed. by* Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 1-20 (p. 11)
[96] Mary-Ann Constantine 'Ossian in Wales and Brittany' in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe, ed. by* Howard Gaskill (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 67-90 (p.68)
[97] Mary-Ann Constantine, p.70

Highlands of Scotland. Indeed, the final 1745 Rebellion in support of the "Young Pretender," Prince Charles, was characterized by the Jacobites as being a conflict between an "Highland Army" and the English.[98] In addition, English officials believed that "Lowland Scots and Highland Whigs" should share the blame for the Jacobite rebellion.[99] This is despite the involvement of English Jacobites and Scottish supporters of the Hanoverian Crown in the conflict.[100] In addition, the Jacobite cause to restore James to the throne was supported by Irish Catholics leading to the Williamite War between 1688 and 1691. However, by 1745 the attitude of the Irish towards the Stuarts had changed as they had "no love" for the young pretender but still hoped for a Jacobite victory as it would bring an end to Hanoverian Anti-Catholic Laws.[101] However, differences in religions are not the only characteristic used to create difference between the Jacobite and Government forces. There was a conscious effort to construct and demonise the Highlanders as primitive in comparison to the sophisticated and civilized English. Even when the rebellions ended such was the hostility towards the Highlander that the English Government attempted to systematically erase all "Highland distinctiveness" in an attempt to "bring the Scot to heel."[102] The purpose of this was to create the "Celtic Other" against whom the "Saxon" could compare himself. If the "Saxon" English are civilized, sensible and cultured then the Highlander, with their strange clothes, clan system and Gaelic tongue, are the opposite.[103] The Government mission after the war was to pacify the Highlands both militarily, to reduce the threat of a renewal in the Jacobite cause, and through "social engineering of various kinds."[104] This was the beginning of the Colonial Celticism that would later characterise Saxonist thought in the time of Tennyson.

Government propaganda portrayed the Highlander as "lice-ridden cannibals with insatiable and disorderly sexual appetites"[105] and "wild and cruel opponents who only understand violence" in comparison to the government's "justified political activity."[106] While both the

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[98] Murray Pittock, *Culloden: Great Battles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 19

[99] Samuel K Fisher, 'Atlantic '45: Gaels, Indians and the Origins of Imperial Reform in the British Atlantic*' in *English Historical Review* CXXXVI.578 (2021) pp. 85 – 116 (p. 87)

[100] Murray Pittock, *Culloden: Great Battles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 3

[101] Donnchadh Ó Corráin 'Nationality and kingship in pre-Norman Ireland' in *Historical Studies Volume XI: Nationality and the Pursuit of National Independence*, ed. by T.W. Moody (Belfast: The Appletree Press, 1978), pp. 1-35 (p.8-9)

[102] Samuel K Fisher, 'Atlantic '45: Gaels, Indians and the Origins of Imperial Reform in the British Atlantic*' in *English Historical Review* CXXXVI.578 (2021) pp. 85 – 116 (p. 109)

[103] Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1988), p. 61

[104] Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) p.125

[105] Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity, and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.), p. 27

[106] Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) p.126

Welsh, with the derogatory Taffy nickname, and the "drunk and lazy" Irish[107] also faced extreme prejudice from Saxonists, the government reaction to the Rebellion took on a new dimension of cultural oppression via the "pacification of the highlands."[108] The feudal Clan system which lay at the heart of Highlander identity was destroyed by the Act of Proscription 1746, which "banned the teaching of Gaelic, the wearing of tartan, the holding of ceremonial Highland gatherings and even the playing of bagpipes in Scotland."[109] This lasted thirty-six years until King George IV's 1822 visit to Scotland which saw a reintroduction of tartan as a national dress leading Lowland Scots to protest that they had become "a nation of Highlanders."[110] In 1773, Dr Johnson observed a much-changed nation during his visit to Scotland:

> There was perhaps never any change of national manners so quick, so great, and so general as that which operated in the Highlands by the last conquest and the subsequent laws. We came hither too late to see what we expected – a people of peculiar appearance and a system of antiquated life. The clans retain little now of their original character: their ferocity of temper is softened, their military ardour is extinguished, their dignity of independence is depressed. Their contempt of government subdued, and their reverence for their chiefs abated. Of what they had before the late conquest of their country there remains only their language and their poverty.[111]

What Johnson describes is the near-complete destruction of a traditional identity. Everything that made the Scots different to the English is stripped away in an attempt to humble the Celtic nation. However, his statement also reveals much about how the English saw the Scottish before the Rebellion and subsequent laws. He expects a land of "people of peculiar appearance," reinforcing the differences between "Saxon" and "Celt" by giving the example of dress. He follows this up using the word "antiquated." This indicates that Johnson believed in the common belief that the English were modern and sophisticated in comparison to the perceived "feudal" and "Primitive" Scot. Indeed, he saw the feudal structure of the Clans as being lost during Scotland's assimilation into the United Kingdom.[112]

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[107] Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity, and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.), p. 29

[108] Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *Essential Histories: the Jacobite Rebellion 1745 -46* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing. 2011), p. 89

[109] John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, '"The Graves of the Gallant Highlanders": Memory, Interpretation and Narratives of Culloden' in *History and Memory* 19.1 (2007) pp. 5 – 38 (p. 12)

[110] Murry G H Pittock 'The Jacobite Cult' in *Scottish History* ed. by Edward J. Cowan & Richard J. Finley (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020) pp. 191 – 208 (p. 192)

[111] Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *Essential Histories: the Jacobite Rebellion 1745 -46* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing. 2011), p. 90.

[112] This destruction of a traditional way of life by an invader would create the need to preserve the folklore of the Highlands that would give birth of James MacPherson's Ossian, which is explored later in the chapter.

That Johnson saw Scotland as being backwards before 1746 is testament to the power of government propaganda during the Rebellion. This forms another direct link between Colonial Celticism and Orientalism. In recent years, the primitivism that Johnson saw in the feudal Clan system and dress of the Highlanders has been reassessed as not a "simple and natural state" but a "civilization that does not stand up to the standards of the European Powers."[113] These changes to the Highlander way of life, alongside the later Highland clearances and enclosure of land, were designed to modernise Scotland along the lines of England. However, despite the elimination of the clan system the moulding of the two nations into a United Kingdom was imperfect. Matthew Reynolds notes that there remained "administrative inconsistencies" such as "Scotland's separate banking system and legal code," although Scotland would come to be "predominantly happy with the Union" throughout the nineteenth century.[114]

Pre-1745 Scotland was not alone in being seen as primitive in comparison to England. As we have seen all three nations had stereotypes ascribed to them that created a sense that their populace was not treated as being equal; specifically, the Welsh were seen as stupid, the Irish drunk and the Highlander savage. As I shall discuss in the next section of this chapter, there was a post Jacobite fascination in the alleged primitivism of the "Celt." However, this "primitivism" was based on the Colonial Celticist notion that "Saxon" civilization was a higher level than the "Celtic" nations. Literature and art played an essential part in crafting the image of the Highland Scot as a treacherous savage who was held in contempt by the English Government. This attitude would lead to the counter search for and invention of "ancient" Celtic Literature to prove that the there was a sophisticated body of "Celtic" poetry that predated the English.

When originally written, during the final uprising of 1745, the ballad 'God Save the King' contained a fourth verse praising George Wade, the commander in chief of the government forces in the early phases of the conflict.

> God grant that Marshall Wade
> May by thy mighty aid
> Victory bring.

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[113] Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), p. 61

[114] Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870 English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.204

May the sedition hush,
And like a torrent rush
Rebellious Scots to crush.
God save the King.[115]

While this verse was later dropped, perhaps due to Wade's replacement by the Duke of Cumberland before the decisive Battle of Culloden in April 1746, when the ballad was taken up as the anthem of the United Kingdom in 1790, the connection between English, and therefore "Saxon," patriotism and anti-Highland Scottish attitudes is clear. The use of the word sedition gives the impression that Scotland, and therefore the "Celt," was the property of the English, a sign that England treated the "Celtic" lands as a colony and that their peoples should swear loyalty to the English King. Another widely used piece of propaganda was the artwork 'the Highland Visitors' published by Act of Parliament by I. Dubios in 1745. The image depicts an English village in which Highlanders are 'stealing, looting and raping' the local populace.[116] Notably, the attackers are depicted as being clothed only in their tartans in comparison to the fully clothed victims, further reinforcing the image of the Highlander as an uncivilized savage. By discounting the "civilized" lowland Scots, the British Government created a sense of a clash of civilizations. This demonstrates the comparisons between Celticism and Orientalism. Both the "Celtic" and Oriental subjects were considered peripheral to the "Saxon," suffering a "civilizin" mission in which their traditional social structures were dismantled in favour of a new system based on the values of the dominant culture. However, from this defeat would come a new assertion of Highlander identity as we shall see later in this chapter.

Dr Johnson's description of the Highlands a mere forty-five years after the final defeat of the Jacobites and the widespread acceptance of the Union post 1745 illustrates how robust the process of colonialization was in Scotland. It would have not been possible without the hardening of English attitudes towards the "Celt" through derogatory stereotypes found in anti-Highlander propaganda. However, these attitudes would outlive the mid-eighteenth century and become fully engrained in the minds of later English writers who, despite attempting to promote the "Celt" as a subject, still relied on the stereotypes of the backwards "Celt" emerging during the year years of the century.

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[115] Richard *Clark, An Account of the National Anthem Entitled God Save the King!* (London: S and R Bentley, 1822), p.9

[116] Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity, and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.), p. 26

From Hate to Ambivalent Fascination.

Once the threat of the Stuart Pretender had been put down, the Highlander, and indeed other "Celtic" peoples, ceased to be a threat to the Saxonist establishment and instead became a source of curiosity. While Scotland remained a country of deep interest in England, especially after the publication of Ossian, Wales also enjoyed considerable attention due to Thomas Gray's 1757 poem *The Bard* and the work of Iolo Morganwg, Even Evans, and other Welsh antiquarians. However, this was still a form of Colonial Celticism as although writers were more sympathetic towards the "Celtic" subject they retained the Orientalist stereotype of primitivism and presented the "Celt" with a sense of ambivalent fascination. Patrick Rafroidi states that the English fascination with "Celtic" subjects, even when still holding old prejudices, was "perhaps because they saw in them as it were a pure state, a repressed state of their character, the resistance to the despotism of the real."[117] A significant characteristic of Saxonism is the idea that a "Saxon" is sensible and unimaginative. In comparison the "Celt" is seen as imaginative, romantic, and believing in the imaginary realm of the supernatural. Therefore, many English writers, including Tennyson as we shall see in the next chapter, looked to the "Celt" for poetic inspiration as the "Saxon" is seen as having repressed their imagination for success in the spheres of politics and business. Saxonists projected a desire on the "Celt" for a primitive state untarnished by the increasingly urban, and later in the century industrial, society that was developing within England. The "Celtic" nations of Britain were considered as being wild remote places where people spoke other languages, wore different clothes, lived in strange houses, and ate unusual food. While this was seen as a negative during the period of the Jacobite rebellion, industrialisation and the ideas of the Enlightenment made this image of the noble savage became more palatable to Saxonists[118]. Michael Bell argues that in "Civilized" cultures, there is a "nostalgia … for a return to a primitive or pre-civilized condition."[119] However, this fascination is ambivalent as the "Celt" is still Othered and considered a source of revulsion. Saxonists saw the "primitivism" and wildness they belived the "Celtic" to process as a virtue, yet they also display a revulsion towards the "rough and

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[117] Patrick Rafroidi, *Irish Literature in English: The Romantic Period* (Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe Ltd, 1980), p.150

[118] Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1988), p. 61

[119] Michael Bell, *Primitivism* (London: Methuen & Co, 1972), p.1

irregular"[120] character of the sublime "Celtic" landscape in comparison to the controlled and tamed English one. Already we can see similarities between this colonial idea of what constitutes the savage and that of the Romantic. However, while romantic Celticism looks back at a bygone golden age that has been lost through the passage of progress, colonial Celticism uses the supposed primitive state of "Celtic" peoples as a justification for English political control.

Most of the information that the typical English person would have encountered in relation to the "Celtic" population was found in books and pamphlets prepared by intellectuals who could have afforded to travel and research these far-off regions, or from the growing industry of collecting traditional stories and songs. The reliance on second-hand information and works of creativity led to an Orientalist-like standard set of "thoughts, imageries and vocabularies" being developed surrounding the "Celt," that while considerably less derogatory than the Colonial Celticism found in the Jacobite Wars, was still ideologically driven to create a difference between "Saxon" and "Celt." One of these was that the "Celt" became valued for their poetry and stories rather than their contributions to other areas of life. Indeed, the figure of the "Celtic" bard, who was seen as the poetic equivalent to the presumed priesthood of the ancient Britons known as the Druids, became highly valued and desirable within English poetry dealing with "Celtic" matters. Many proto-romantic English poets adopted the Bard in their works. In particular it was Gray's 'The Bard' that helped kickstart the fashion for "Celtic" poetry that was popular throughout the romantic and early Victorian periods. Roger Lonsdale notes that Gray's 1757 advertisement for the poem read: "The following Ode is founded on a Tradition current in Wales, that EDWARD THE FIRST, when he completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards, that fell into his hands, to be put to death."[121] However, rather than presenting the story from the English perspective, which most of his readers would have known from history books, he attempts to give the defeated Welsh a sympathetic voice. In trying to adopt a Welsh voice for the narrator of the poem, Gray had to adopt a form of anti-Englishness in order to create empathy for the "Celtic" subject.

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[120] Ann Bermingham, *Landscape, and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition. 1740 – 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 69

[121] Roger Lonsdale, *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith*. (London: Longman, 1969) p. 180

Ruin seizes thee, ruthless king!
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing
They mock the air with idle state. $_{(1-4)}$[122]

Gray creates the sense that Edward and his army are antagonists of the narrative by deploying the negative language such as "ruthless," "Conquest" and "mock." However, this is not a translation of an existing Welsh text written to mourn the loss of the battle. It is a narrative that is created entirely from Gray's own imagination. He has been accused of trying "to impose [the English] language on his image of the Welsh Bard."[123] This is a precursor to the Victorian poetic form of the dramatic monologue, of which Tennyson was one of the most famous proponents, in which the author adopts a character that may not fully align with his or her own experiences. Therefore, 'The Bard' is the prototypical "colonial" Celticist text as it imposes meaning on the "Celt." Indeed, Gray uses the poem to discuss events that have little to do with Wales, including that of the alleged murder of Edward II:

The winding-sheet of Edward's race.
Give ample room, and verge enough
The characters of hell to trace.
Mark the year and mark the night,
When Severn shall re-echo with affright
The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's roofs that ring,
Shrieks of an agonizing King! $_{(50-56)}$[124]

The choice to include this episode is interesting and carries some Celticist implications. Later Celticist scholars, notably Matthew Arnold, ascribe the qualities of madness and femininity to the "Celt." Edward II is historically believed to have been a homosexual and therefore feminized according to heteronormative expectations of masculinity which prevailed on the nineteenth century. During the eighteenth century there was a movement towards the "Victorian configuration" of both homosexuality and the homophobic response to it.[125] As

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[122] Thomas Gray, 'The Bard' in *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith* ed by. Roger Lonsdale (London: Longman, 1969) pp. 177 – 200 (p. 183)

[123] Fiona J, Stafford, 'Primitivism and the 'Primitive' Poet: A Cultural Context for MacPherson. in *Celticism* ed by. Terrence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 79-96 (p. 83)

[124] Thomas Gray, 'The Bard' in *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith* ed by. Roger Lonsdale (London: Longman, 1969) pp. 177 – 200 (p. 189)

[125] George E. Haggerty, 'Literature and Homosexuality in the Late Eighteenth Century*: Walpole, Beckford, and Lewis'* in *Studies in the Novel*. 18.4, pp.341-352 (p.343)

the "Celt" is seen as being different to the "Saxon" it therefore becomes easy for an English writer to ascribe undesirable connotations to them.[126] In this instance the "Celts" are connected to undesirable sexuality by the paralleling of the murder of a homosexual King to a force opposing an English army. The echoing of the King's shrieks with those of the Welsh, therefore, represent a direct connection between Gray's poem and the Celticism that would develop over the next century.

Gray is the first in a new tradition of Colonial Celticist writers who still impose a colonial meaning on the "Celt," but unlike the earlier Government propaganda it is designed to invoke sympathy for the "Celt." *The Bard* was not written for Welsh consumption, instead the poem is designed to appeal to an English audience with its vision of the primitive Bard and discussion of English history. The popularity of the poem would pave the way for many followers in the field of Celticism and for that reason it must be seen as an essential stepping-stone between the consciously Saxonist works found during the Jacobite Rebellion and the well-meaning works of the Romantic and Victorian periods, including that of Tennyson in his early and late phases.

William Collins' work *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, written circa 1749 1750, is another early work in this new Celticist tradition. The poem is not an attempt to explore traditional Highland custom but instead to inspire an English and Lowland Scottish audience to find inspiration within those customs. However, while, as we shall see, Collins wrote passages that conform to the Orientalist aspect of Celticism there is controversy surrounding the most openly Saxonist passages of the poem. Collins did not publish *Ode* during his own lifetime with it not seeing print until almost 30 years after his death due to the loss of the manuscript.[127] When it was rediscovered in 1781 there were a number of passages missing and therefore and therefore the gaps in the narrative were filled with replacements written by one Henry Mackenzie at the request of editor Alexander Fraser Tytler.[128] While these sections are not the original poet's words they still create a picture of how the Scottish were seen in the final decades of the eighteenth century. This is illustrated by passages, identified as added by Mackenzie, that celebrate the defeat of the Highlanders at Culloden:

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[126] In much the same way that the English Government Propaganda of the Jacobite Uprisings described the Highlanders as having "disorderly sexual appetites."

[127] Roger Lonsdale, *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith*. (London: Longman, 1969) p. 492

[128] Roger Lonsdale, *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith*. (London: Longman, 1969) p. 507

Illustrious William! Britain's guardian name!
One William sav'd us from a tyrant's stroke.
He, for a sceptre, gain'd heroic fame.[129]

The William referred to in this passage is Duke of Cumberland, the youngest son of King George II and commander of the army that ended the Jacobite cause. By praising Cumberland as a hero and guardian of Britain while referring to Prince Charles as a tyrant, Mackenzie as Collins is speaking to an anti-Highlander audience who believe that the Scottish, and indeed all of Britain, has been saved from the Stuarts. Since the Highlands were seen as distant, both geographically and metaphorically, from the accepted urban centres of British society, they could be seen as backwards in comparison. In particular, the dominant Protestant "Saxon" culture saw superstition as being an undesirable trait and connected to Catholicism, the religion of the Jacobite. By equating tradition and custom with superstition seen as the antithesis of the Enlightenment, Mackenzie as Collins is creating a negative sense of primitivism. This is further evidenced in the a Collins written section of the original text that claims that ruins on a Hebridean Island contain "small vaults a pigmy-folk is found."[130] By evoking the supernatural figure of the faerie, the poet is suggesting that this far off land is filled with wonders and exotic creatures that do not exist in the metropole of England.[131] This reinforces the Orientalist aspect of Celticism as it creates an imaginary Hebrides that further seems other and primitive in the mind of the Saxonist reader.

The English fashion for "Celtic" poetry in the late eighteenth century has direct continuity from the propaganda of the Jacobite Uprisings as it continues the Colonial Celticist project of creating a primitive Celtic Other. Gray and Collins both create works that, on the surface, celebrate Welsh and Scottish characters and imagery. However, neither poet challenges the "Celt's" folk reputation as backwards and primitive in comparison to the "Saxon." The Highland Scottish and Welsh are the far off "other" who are alien in character to the English and therefore a curiosity.

James MacPherson and the Invention of Tradition

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[129] Henry Mackenzie as William Collins, 'Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland' in *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith* ed by. Roger Lonsdale (London: Longman, 1969) pp. 492 – 519 (p. 508)

[130] William Collins, 'Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland' in *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith* ed by. Roger Lonsdale (London: Longman, 1969) pp. 492 – 519 (p. 518)

[131] As will be discussed in chapter three, Tennyson used the figure of the faerie to create a sense of Otherness in "Celtic" Women during his work on the Arthurian Poetry.

While English writers working with Scottish, Welsh, and Irish imagery were being celebrated, the actual voice of these peoples was being marginalised by the privileging of the "colonial" ideas being forced upon them. However, The Ossianic poetry of James MacPherson,[132] first published in 1760, challenges this balance of power and helped popularize Romantic Celticist works written by "actual" Celtic writers throughout Europe. In these opening lines of 'Cath-loda,' the first of the Ossianic poems, the reader is transported back to a time when the Bard was central to the storytelling traditions of the "Celtic" peoples of northern Scotland.

> A TALE of the times of old! -- Why, thou wanderer unseen! thou bender of the thistle of Lora, -- why, thou breeze of the valley, hast thou left mine ear? I hear no distant roar of streams! No sound of the harp from the rock! Come, thou huntress of Lutha, Malvina, call back his soul to the bard.[133]

Rather than use the mode of verse, in the manner of Grey and others, MacPherson chooses to write the main body of Ossian in prose. David Lehman notes that in the prose poem "the poet can appropriate such unlikely models as the newspaper article, the memo, the list, the parable, the speech, the dialogue."[134] Here, MacPherson deploys it to capture the sense of the traditional oral storytelling he claimed to have transcribed and translated in the writing of Ossian. The use of exclamation marks adds to this power and creates a sense of sentimental romanticism. MacPherson is creating a vision of a glorious Highland past that is to be celebrated, hence the line "call back his soul to the bard." By opening the cycle in this manner MacPherson is stating his desire to restore something lost from Scottish society following the failure of the Stuart cause and English cultural retribution. And it would be this connection to a romantic vision of the country's past that makes the work not only influential on other writers of Romantic Celticist works, but also becomes one of the seeds, alongside movements such as the German *Sturm und Drang* poets, of the broader European Romantic movement.

MacPherson, a Highlander, had witnessed first-hand the brutal retribution of the government army following the crushing of the Jacobite rebellion at the 1764 Battle of

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[132] As we shall see later in this chapter there is doubt over the authorship of the work. MacPherson claimed to be the translator of earlier works, but it is generally agreed that he wrote it himself based on oral sources.

[133] James MacPherson, 'Cath-loda. a Poem' in *Ossian and Ossianism Vol. 2* ed by. Dafydd Moore (London: Routledge, 2004), Part 2 pp. 179 – 200 (p.181)

[134] David Lehmen, 'The Prose Poem: An Alternative to Verse' in *The American Poetry Review, 32. 2 (2003) pp. 45 – 49 (p.49)*

Culloden.[135] Like many natives of Northern Scotland, he recognised the need to preserve the traditions and culture of the Highlands as they became threatened with extinction due to the policies of the English government. The epic poem concerning Ossian and Fingal established an "ancient tradition" that embraced the "Otherness" of the "Celt" and transformed it into a source of nationalistic pride. When it was first published, many readers believed that the text constructed an authentic and authoritative voice for the "Celts." Ossian was so successful that it was reported to be Napoleon's favourite poem and led Voltaire to proclaim that MacPherson was the "Northern Homer"[136], giving "Celtic" literature a sense of legitimacy by comparing it to the classical legacy of the Mediterranean civilisations. Johann Gottfried Herder, the father of the *Sturm und Drang* style of poetry in the Holy Roman Empire, was an aficionado of MacPherson, and he also saw Ossian as being comparative to the works of Homer and many critics argue that his later German nation-building works owe a great deal of debt to the Scottish work.[137] Likewise, another leading figure in the development of eighteenth century German poetry, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, is noted by Kristine Louise Haugen as having a "conviction" in the authentic nature of *Ossian*.[138] As the *Sturm und Drang* is seen as the root of the European Romantic rebellion against the rationalism of the Enlightenment it is therefore valid to see Ossian, by extension Celticism as one of the seeds that gave birth to that root. Within Scotland, Ossian paved the way for the most famous of Scottish writers, such as Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott, who were given the confidence to produce works that celebrated the country, its history, culture, folklore and traditions, something that had been taken away after the Battle of Culloden. However, MacPherson has become a mostly forgotten poet in the modern world, with a lack of twentieth century editions of the work being published.[139]

The reason for this is that MacPherson's authorship of the text is questionable. While he claimed to be the translator of the original ancient stories transmitted by oral tradition in Scots Gaelic, there were, even at the time, serious questions over whether or not this was

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[135] Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1988), p. 18

[136] Dafydd Moore, 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The Poems of Ossian" and 'The Death of Arthur'' in *the Review of English Studies, New Series*, 57.230 (2006), pp. 374-391 (p.375)

[137] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.203

[138] Kristine Louise Haugen, 'Ossian and the Invention of Textual History' in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59. 2 (1998) pp. 309 – 327 (p. 323)

[139] Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1988), p. 1

fact. One of the major accusations levelled at MacPherson was that he stole traditional folk tales from other "Celtic" nations and claimed them for the Scot. In particular, many Irish critics of Ossian were astonished to find that parts of their own folklore and mythology had been taken from the Ulster and Red Branch cycles and transplanted into a Scottish setting.[140] Samuel Johnson questioned the idea that Ossian could have come from an oral tradition as he believed that such methods of communication "denied the possibility of a stable or empirical idea of truth."[141] Johnson was a Saxonist and displayed a hostility towards any cultural developments coming out of Scotland. But even among those who did believe that MacPherson could have transcribed the work from an oral tradition, there was controversy over his use of the English language when publishing it for a general audience. To them, English was unable to represent the characteristics of the Gaelic language and distance the tales from the grandeur of the original telling. Gaelic is a quite different language to English therefore making an accurate translation almost impossible; therefore, MacPherson would have been forced to use his own imagination to fill the holes in what was possible in the foreign tongue.[142] Even MacPherson's own identity has been questioned with accusations that he might have not even considered himself as belonging to the "Celtic" grouping. This is due to the belief put forward by writers such as Sir George Mackenzie and Sir Robert Sibbald that the MacPhersons belong to a confederation of clans that rather than claiming Pictish roots instead were descendants of Germanic groups that settled in Scotland. These questions of authenticity severely damaged MacPherson's reputation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and answers the question of why this once Europe wide phenomenon is now confined to academic circles in the twenty-first century.

Yet despite the questionable origin of Ossian as a work of literature, it cannot be discounted as a Celticist text. The poem still serves as an example of how the "Celtic" is seen both from inside and outside of its subject. Even his supporters acknowledge that MacPherson may have knitted together several different sources to create his epic. Herder, who was working on the German translation of the poem before his death, assumed that rather than using purely Scottish sources MacPherson drew upon a shared Irish and

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[140] Patrick Rafroidi, *Irish Literature in English: The Romantic Period* (Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe Ltd, 1980) p.151

[141] Dafydd Moore, 'The Reception of Ossian in England and Scotland' in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe, ed. by* Howard Gaskill (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 21 – 40 (p.30)

[142] Susan Manning, 'Henry Mackenzie and Ossian: Or the Emotional Value of Asterisks' in Gaelic *to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* ed. by Howard Gaskill and Fiona Stafford (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 136 - 152 (p.146)

Highlander literary heritage.[143]   However, rather than highlight the shared "Celtic" links between the two nations, MacPherson was deliberately breaking them. Hugh Trevor-Roper argues that before the Jacobite uprisings, the Highlanders were not a distinct people but instead "racially and culturally… a colony of Ireland."[144] MacPherson argued against this notion by claiming that Irish "pretensions to antiquity" are "improbable fictions."[145] He further states that "Ireland was first peopled from Britain, is ... a matter that admits of no doubt."[146] This is illustrated in the argument of part one of the Ossianic poem 'Temora' in the ancestry of the legendary King Cormac mac Airt:

> Cormac was lineally descended from Conar, the son of Trenmor, the great-grandfather of Fingal, king of those Caledonians who inhabited the western coast of Scotland.[147]

By connecting the bloodline of the High King of Ireland back to the Caledonians, MacPherson is creating a sense that Ireland is "racially and culturally… a colony" of Scotland rather than the other way round. MacPherson's ideologically driven project was not only to preserve tradition but also to create it. Trevor-Roper describes the creation of the new traditions in MacPherson's work as having three stages. In the first stage, history is rewritten so that Scotland, rather than Ireland, can lay claim to being the "Celtic Mother Nation." This is followed by the "Artificial Creation" of new traditions which become accepted as belonging to the Highlanders. Finally, the new traditions are adopted by lowland Scotland.[148] Through this process, MacPherson helps create a culture that would be taken up by later writers such as Walter Scott and Robert Burns and became the accepted Scottish Identity. Ossian was a nation-building project. Coupled with the later reconstruction of the Clans with individual tartans, the poem created a new image of the Highlanders independent of being a cultural colony of Ireland. It also created the idea of Scotland as being a unified "Celtic" nation in character rather than a diverse collection of peoples. MacPherson's choice of

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[143] Howard Gaskill, 'Herder, Ossian and the Celtic' in in *Celticism, ed. by* Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 257 – 272 (p. 269)

[144] Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland' in *The Invention of Tradition* ed by Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 15 – 42 (p. 15)

[145] James MacPherson, 'A Dissertation' in *Ossian and Ossianism Vol. 2* ed by. Dafydd Moore (London: Routledge, 2004), Part 2 pp. i – xxiv (p. iii)

[146] James MacPherson, p. vii

[147] James MacPherson, 'Temona: An Epic Poem. Book First' in *Ossian and Ossianism Vol. 2* ed by. Dafydd Moore (London: Routledge, 2004), Part 2 pp. 1 – 24 (p. 1)

[148] Hugh Trevor-Roper p.16

language also points to a project of knitting together the people of the nation and gaining legitimacy elsewhere in Europe. English Literature was privileged over its Scottish counterpart, and so the poet was doubtful that the new Gaelic tradition he was creating would attract a wide readership.[149] In knitting oral and written traditions together and using English as the language of the poem, he was allowing the Celtic voice to be heard and taken seriously by the literary circles outside Scotland, thereby create an independent Highland tradition.

Despite helping to create a new national character for Scotland, MacPherson was not a nationalist and was a keen supporter of the concept of the United Kingdom. Kidd notes that the highlander was not anti-Saxon and celebrated the achievements of the now United Kingdom in his later work. Parts of his introduction to his 1775 work *Original Papers, Containing the Secret History of Great Britain from the Restoration, to the Accession of the House of Hannover*, read as if written by an English Saxonist rather than a Highlander Celticist:

> "In this country the supporters of the freedom of the people, and those who favour the high prerogatives of the crown, make equally their appeal to antiquity, and, with a kind of mutual content, rest the justice of their respective claims on the authority of former ages"[150]

And

> "The people of England, in particular, were … successful, when they made their greatest efforts to be free."[151]

In MacPherson's view, the English needed the Monarchy to be considered free, since their attempts at a republic in fact led to slavery under Cromwell and the Commonwealth. Such was his devotion to the Crown and Government of the United Kingdom that he would produce anti-rebel pamphlets during the American Revolutionary War, inducing *The Rights of Great Britain Asserted Against the Claims of America* in which he argued against the reasons for rebellion by stating "The discretionary and uncontrollable authority of the British

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[149] Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1988), p. 80

[150] James MacPherson, *Original Papers, Containing the Secret History of Great Britain from the Restoration, to the Accession of the House of Hannover. to which are prefixed extracts from the life of James II as written by himself* (London: W. Strahan & T. Cadell), p.3

[151] James MacPherson, p. 4

Legislature being granted, their right to tax all the subjects of the British Empire can never be denied."[152] Therefore, MacPherson sought respectability in the "Saxon" dominated post-Jacobite world, by embracing rather than rejecting the new United Kingdom. This sense of respectability is an important step in spreading Celticism as an expression of Romantic sentiment, as otherwise it would have been confined to the small group on the fringes of society. That he was able to reach the broadest possible audience for his work meant he could demonstrate that Scottish culture rather than being inferior to the "Saxon" was worthy of producing works that stood alongside the best of European literature.

GJ Watson commenting on MacPherson and his work remarks, "Celts" produce "Celtic writing."[153] In other words, Ossian is a Celtic work because MacPherson, who would have seen himself as Scottish or British, is perceived by his audience to be a "Celt" himself. He is not like Gray, writing work based on second-hand sources, but working within and creating his own national tradition. Ultimately, it does not matter whether MacPherson did use an oral tradition or if he mixed in his own original creations with stories that he may have heard as a child in the Highlands. He created a new work that stands up as an example of literature that would project an image of what the "Celtic" meant to the people of 1760s Scotland. Indeed, we should see MacPherson as being a collector of folklore in much the same way as the collectors of Germany and France operating during this period.

MacPherson's legacy would be several writers coming forward with their own national body of poetry. The most infamous of these is the Welshman Edward Williams, otherwise known as Iolo Morganwg. A Glamorgan stonemason and Welsh Nationalist, Morganwg established many modern Welsh and Druidic traditions. These include the Gorsedd, a meeting of Druids, and the Eisteddfod music and literature festivals, which are noted by Mary-Ann Constantine to be the "prime movers in the Welsh Revival."[154] He also devised a pattern of Druidic festivals based around the Solstices that are still in use by Pagans in the twenty-first century.[155] However, these traditions and the text that he claimed to have based them on; *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ab Gwilym*, a collection of the poetry of the

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[152] James MacPherson, *The Rights of Great Britain Asserted Against the Claims of America: Being an Answer to the Declaration of the General Congress* (Edinburgh, Charles Elliot, 1776), p. 3 -4

[153] GJ Watson, 'Yeats, MacPherson and the Cult of Defeat' in *Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* ed. by Howard Gaskill and Fiona Stafford (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 216 – 225 (p.225)

[154] Mary-Ann Constantine, 'Songs and Stones: Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826), Mason and Bard' in *Eighteenth-Century* 42.2/3 (2006), pp. 233 -251 (p. 233)

[155] Ronald Hutton, 'Modern Pagan Festivals: A Study in the Nature of Tradition' in *Folklore* 119.3, pp. 251 – 273 (p. 254)
  These are Alban Arthan (21 December), Alban Eilir (21 March), Alban Hefin (21 June) and Alban Elfed (23 September)

14th-century Dafydd ap Gwilym, are like Ossian the product of the eighteenth century and not the medieval world. He had been seeking traces of the pre-Christian Druids but was unable to do so. Therefore, as Ronald Hutton notes, he "proceeded to forge the missing evidence and pass it off as a scholarly discovery."[156]   Morgannwg was arguably more successful in his deception than MacPherson in literary circles with the forgery not being detected until the twentieth century.[157] However, there are still members of the public who believe that his poetry and rituals are authentically ancient or medieval,[158] as the continuing tradition of the Eisteddfod demonstrates. The reason for Morgannwg's success lies in his efforts to give his Romantic Celticism legitimacy. As discussed earlier in this chapter, he chose London to demonstrate his Druidic rites, due to it leading to a larger audience than he would get in Wales. However, Morgannwg also claimed that the Druidic faith was a Christian faith that had retained all its "purity and simplicity" rather than indulge in "popish superstition."[159] By ignoring the fact that the Pagan Druids would have not practiced anything resembling Christianity and setting them against Catholicism, which was still treated with suspicion in England, Morgannwg gave his work legitimacy with literary circles that would remain untarnished for over a century.

Celticism having legitimacy with an English audience is important for a discussion of the poetry of Tennyson. In both chapters two and three, we shall see how the poet struggled with producing Celticist texts that would be acceptable for a Saxonist audience. There is a direct collation between his rise to fame and the abandonment of an early fascination with the "Celt," and MacPherson in particular, and the creation of works that directly criticize them.

Conclusion

Celticism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was both used to legitimise the absorption of the "Celt" into an English-dominated Britain and as a reaction against this process designed to promote nationalistic pride. Colonial Celticism, which is connected to the ideology of Orientalism, was developed by the British Government during the Jacobite risings to demonise the "Celt," and make them seem primitive in comparison to

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[156] Ronald Hutton, p. 253 -254

[157] Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Political Radicalism of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 47

[158] Ronald Hutton, 'Modern Pagan Festivals: A Study in the Nature of Tradition' in *Folklore* 119.3, pp. 251 – 273 (p. 254)

[159] Shawna Thorp Licthwaler, '" In the Eye of the Light": Ancient Druids and International Influences' in The Wordsworth Circle 36.1 (Winter, 2005), pp. 9-11 (p. 10)

the "Saxon." Indeed, at this stage "Celtic" was a term primarily used by Saxonists to differentiate themselves from the other peoples of the British Isles. The "Celts" described themselves in national terms as Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Cornish. Colonial Celticism was later used by English writers who displayed a fascination with "Celtic" subjects but relied on stereotypes developed and deployed during the Risings. The counter ideology of Romantic Celticism was designed to prove that Wales, Scotland, and Ireland had a body of literature that was equal to that of England. This drove the process of a "Celtic" revival spearheaded by writers such as MacPherson and Morgannwg that meant "Celtic" tradition was not "something that died five hundred years ago, and now is a safely inert body to be picked over by scholars."[160] Instead, Romantic Celticism is something that allows for the reinvention of tradition, which in turn helps the notion of "Celtic" Culture survive. In the next chapter I shall discuss how Tennyson falls into a similar Colonial Celticist space as Gray and Collins, and also that he deployed tropes from the Romantic Celticist tradition with a particular influence from MacPherson.

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[160] Alexei Kondratiev, 'New Myths for Old: The Legacy of Iolo Morgannwg and Hersard de le Villemarque' in *Mythlore* 10.2 (1983), pp.43 – 46 (p.45)

Chapter Two

Appropriating the Bard

Experiments in Celticism 1827 - 1856

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was a Colonial Celticist and a major contributor to the discourse surrounding the "Celt" through his poetry between 1827 and his death in 1892. Over the course of his six decades long poetic career, however, there is a noticeable shift in how he expresses his Celticism. When he began his publishing career with the collection *Poems by Two Brothers,* which contains the earliest examples of Tennyson's Celticist poetry, his main interests lay in appropriating elements of Romantic Celticism to help develop his poetic vision through adaptation of *Ossian* and appropriating the Bardic model for the poet's place in society. However, in a similar fashion to Gray in *The Bard*, Tennyson's writing also displays an Orientalist fascination towards the "Celt." As discussed in the previous chapter, the notion of the "Celtic" people is an ideology constructed over the past four centuries as a reaction to the Saxonism of the English society to which Tennyson belonged. The young poet appropriated the poetic aspects of the identity while simultaneously deploying Colonial Celticist tropes and attitudes such as the "Celt" being irrational, sentimental, and primitive in comparison to the "Saxon." These early works are key in understanding how Tennyson's Celticist ideology developed over the course of his career.

This chapter covers a body of work that begins with aforementioned 1827 collection, *Poems by Two Brothers* and ends with the poem 'Harp, Harp, the voice of Cymry' from 1856,[161] which constitute Tennyson's experiments with appropriating Romantic Celticism. I also argue that Tennyson develops a Colonial Celticist sense of "Celtic Decay" in which the "Celt" is associated with the past, aging and death. The majority of the chapter will discuss *Poems by Two Brothers* with reference to the later poetry due to the collection's importance for Tennyson's early Celticism.

One noticeable feature of Tennyson's early Celticism is his use of picturesque landscapes. The picturesque is a pictorial mode that landscape designer Uvedale Price separated from the categories of beauty and sublime to idealise aspects of the landscape

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[161] Although Tennyson created the first examples of his Arthurian poetry in this period, it is essential to discuss that body of work as a cohesive whole and therefore will it be discussed in chapter three.

that have passed and that if they still existed would be demonised or critiqued. Malcom Andrews states that these aspects include: "ruins, Gothic architecture, hovels, the insides of old barns, old mills, rough when park fences, broken surfaces of water, shattered oaks, worn-out carthorses, shaggy goats, angry lions, gypsies and beggars."[162] Price believed that there is a "natural revulsion towards the rough and irregular" that these objects, creatures, and people that made them "charming to the eye" but "offered no temptation to touch."[163] He also considered picturesque "transitional" as what was once seen as an accepted part of the landscape would become "picturesque" and then "deformed" in the eye of the viewer.[164] Ann Bermingham connects the devolvement of the theory of the replacement of "irregular" common land with enclosed land with farmers having set plots.[165] The Northamptonshire "Peasant Poet" John Clare was a witness to what Timothy Morton terms "community and custom obliterated by capitalist procedures such as enclosure."[166] In his poem 'Remembrance', written circa 1835, Clare attacks the transformation of the land:

> Enclosure like a Bonaparte let not a thing remain,
> It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill
> And hung the moles for traitors (68-70)[167]

Clare's use of the name of "Bonaparte" and the hanging of the moles creates an image of enclosure being a tyrant that is destroying everything that made the countryside beautiful in the name of progress. However, twenty-six years later Tennyson celebrates the economic "improvements" that came with enclosure in his 1861 Lincolnshire dialect work 'Northern Farmer, Old Style'.

> Dubbut looök at the waäste: theer warn't not feeäd for a cow:
> Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looäk at it now—
> Warn't worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's lots o' feeäd, (37 – 39)

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162 Malcom Andrews, 'Introduction' in *The Picturesque. Volume.1 The Idea of the Picturesque and the Vouge for Scenic Tourism*. ed by Malcom Andrews (Mountfield: Helm Information, 1994), pp. 3-38 (p.23)
163 Ann Bermingham, *Landscape, and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition. 1740 – 1860* (Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 1986), p. 69
164 Ann Bermingham p. 69
165 Ann Bermingham p. 70
166 Timothy Morton, John Clare's Dark Ecology in Studies in Romanticism 47.2 (Summer 2008), pp. 179-193 (p. 191)
167 Clare, John. *Poems Selected by Paul Farley*. ed by. Paul Farley (London: Faber & Faber, 2007) p. 37

Tennyson's framer celebrates the removal of "waste" which prevented him from feeding herd of cows. Before it was nothing but "bracken" and "fuzz" which indicates the wildness of the common land that was now undesirable. Indeed, the farmer believes that before his work his hectares were worth nothing because of their wildness. Tennyson rejects Clare's notion that the untamed natural landscape is preferable to human intervention and promotes the ideology of making maximum use of the land in order to make it economically productive.[168] Therefore, the wild commons of Clare have become undesirable and "picturesque." Indeed, G.E. Migay argues that that Tennyson took "pleasure in the flowers and birds, the flowers and the beauty of the trees which broke up the former great fields"[169], indicating that enclosed land had become preferable as a beauty standard.

In terms of Tennyson's Celticism, the picturesque is deployed to denote difference between "Saxon" and "Celtic" landscapes. Rather than the ordered and enclosed English countryside, the poet presents the "Celtic" lands as wild and filled with ruin and decay. This corresponds to the perceived characters of the "Saxon" and the "Celt" laid out in both the introduction and chapter one, in which the former is seen as sensible and rational, and the later who is presented as passionate and irrational. Therefore, Tennyson uses the picturesque to help craft his Colonial Celticist ideology and impose meaning on the Celtic landscape.[170]

Despite its title, *Poems by Two Brothers* was a collaboration between three bothers: Alfred, Charles, and Fredrick Tennyson. The nature of this collaboration, coupled with the fact that there is no attribution attached to any of the poems in its original printing, raises the problem of determining authorship. Indeed, Alfred's son Hallam wrote in a preface of an 1893 reprint of the collection that his "uncle, Fredrick Tennyson, cannot be certain of the authorship of every one poem, and […] the hand-writing of the manuscript is not known to be a sure guide."[171] However, due to the work of both Hallam and later Christopher Ricks in his authoritative three volume collection of Alfred's work, it has become clearer which of the poems were written by his hand. Therefore, the Celticist work discussed in this chapter has been positivity identified as that of Alfred.[172]

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[168] Ann Bermingham, *Landscape, and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition. 1740 – 1860* (Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 1986), p. 66

[169] G.E. Migay, *Rural Life in Victorian* Britain (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Company, 1976), p. 9

[170] As we shall see the realities of "Saxon" England and the "Celtic" Highlands of Scotland were not too different.

[171] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987) p. xi

[172] It is interesting to note that one of the other brothers also contributed a Celticist poem to Poems by Two Brothers: 'The Bard's Farewell'. The poem, a narrative of a Bard leaving his native land of Wales shares similarities with Alfred's

Eight of Alfred's contributions to the collection fall into three district styles of Celticist discourse; the first being the direct interaction with the Ossianic work of James MacPherson. I argue that MacPherson was one of the most important of poets, Celticist or otherwise, to have an influence on the young Tennyson. The poet both adopted the Ossianic mode of writing Romantic visions of nature and adapted a lesser-known section of the main Ossian narrative in a number of his works. There is a strong sense of liminality found throughout both of these poems that is a direct result of their nature as adaptations. As I have set out in the previous chapter, these particular poetic themes became popular for writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a direct result of MacPherson's work. In *Poems by Two Brothers* works such as 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' and 'Midnight' are strongly Ossianic in nature. Both poems also are direct adaptations of 'The Night Song of The Bards,' a shorter work within *Ossian.* That Tennyson was not only reading *Ossian* but also adapting it into his own work creates a compelling argument in favour of placing MacPherson as an influence.

The second type of Celticist discourse found in *Poems by Two Brothers* is an interest in using "Celtic" poetic visionaries to tell stories that reflect the history and ideals of the Germanic "Saxon." 'The Druid's Prophecies' is the major example of this kind of work in the collection. The narrative of the poem is a prophecy detailing revenge for the crimes of the occupying Romans against the ancient British. However, these "Celtic" people have no agency in the eventual fall of Rome. Instead, the Druids are reduced to passive witnesses of Germanic glories. It is with this type of discourse that the poet's credentials as a writer of Colonial Celticism becomes apparent. Tennyson uses the figures of the Druid and, more commonly, the Bard, both of whom are taken from "Celtic culture," yet the visions of these figures serve to promote nineteenth century Anglo-Saxonist ideology. Tennyson would use these figures in this way consistently over the next thirty-nine years, including in 'What Thor said to the Bard before Dinner,' 'The Golden Year' and 'Harp, harp, the voice of Cymry'.

The third and final discourse is the sense of "Celtic decay." While Tennyson throughout his work praises the British future and past, his work on the "Celtic" past is characterized by the themes of age, destruction, and primitivism. The otherness of the "Celtic" past allows Tennyson to muse on important subjects, such as the horrors of war,

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contributions in both style and the themes set out in his section of the chapter. This indicates that the Bard was not solely a concern of Alfred's. However, it is unknown which of the brother's authored the poem as it only Alfred, due to his fame, has been given attention.

that he would not be able to do using early nineteenth century British characters and locations without insulting the confidence that Britain was experiencing during that period. However, the poetry, including 'The Exile's Harp,' 'The Vale of Bones,' 'The Old Chieftain' and 'Inverlee,' deals with the "Celt" being firmly placed in a dying past. I argue that this is Tennyson's most colonial theme in the body of work explored in this chapter and is connected to an idea of a British future.

The 1827 Ossianic Adaptations

There is both biographical and textual evidence that Tennyson was both interested in and influenced by James MacPherson and the Ossianic poetry. Charles Tennyson, his grandson and biographer, places *Ossian* as a text the poet read while a child in Somersby, Lincolnshire.[173] Tennyson would continue to have an interest in MacPherson until at least the 1870s when he requested to borrow a "splendid copy of the Gaelic Ossian" from the Scottish writer George MacDonald.[174] Claims that MacPherson directly influenced Tennyson's poetry, however, are contested. Tennyson himself in an 1824 letter to a Miss Bousfield, denied that his poetry contained any "Ossianic, Miltonic, Byronic, Milmanic, Moorish, Crabbick, Coleridgick etc. fire."[175] Whether or not this is meant to be a humorous comment is open to interpretation, although the critic Dafydd Moore also objects to the terming of the 1827 work as being "Ossianic." He argues against identifying the poet's "characteristic preoccupations in the same vicinity as his early interest in *Ossian*"[176]. While admitting that there are "echoes" of MacPherson in Alfred's contributions, Moore states that it is not his intention to make "wild claims for Macpherson's importance" as a major influence on the young poet.[177] These "characteristic preoccupations," include medievalism, a keen interest in the sublime aspect of nature and an imaginative use of the supernatural I argue that these "echoes" of MacPherson are substantive and that close reading of both poets reveals a direct link of influence, especially since Tennyson freely adapted the Ossianic poem 'The Night Song of The Bards' on a number of occasions. The influence of MacPherson also

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[173] Charles Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. 32

[174] Dafydd Moore, 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The Poems of Ossian" and 'The Death of Arthur'' in *the Review of English Studies, New Series*, 57.230 (2006), pp. 374-391 (p. 374)

[175] Alfred Tennyson, 'To Miss Bousfield' in *The letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson Volume.1* ed by Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 3 – 5 (p. 3)

[176] Dafydd Moore, 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The Poems of Ossian" and 'The Death of Arthur'' in *the Review of English Studies, New Series*, 57.230 (2006), pp. 374-391 (p. 374)

[177] Dafydd Moore, p. 374

manifests itself in Tennyson's creation of descriptions of the natural world throughout his contributions to *Poems by Two Brothers*. The poet borrows a sense of wildness and a feeling of the Gothic from *Ossian*. To explore how this construction of an Ossianic space works, it is necessary to look at both MacPherson's original poetry and the work by Tennyson that it inspired.

In his scholarly collection of MacPherson and later adaptions of Ossianic poetry, *Ossian and Ossianism*, Moore does not include Tennyson at all despite arguing that "a significant expression of admiration of Ossian took the form of turning MacPherson's pose poetry into something else."[178] However, I argue that Tennyson is part of this tradition of poetic adaptation and that his choice of inspiration from Ossian is evidence of this. That the poet was particularly drawn to 'The Night-Song of the Bards' is in itself significant. The poem was originally presented as a footnote to the Ossianic epic 'Croma' to illustrate a Bardic tradition, where five bards present a story in turns, mentioned in the main text. According to MacPherson's opening paragraph to the footnote these "extempore compositions were in great repute among succeeding bards." However, he claims that he could not produce an example of this type of poetry that was 'contemporary' to Ossian and instead states that 'Night-Song' was written a 'thousand years later,' although in a similar manner to the main narrative he claims to be the translator, not the author of the work. Tennyson would have discovered 'Night-Song' in the 1809 edition of the first volume of the poetry found in his father's library (now housed in the Tennyson Archive in Lincoln) and this copy reveals much about the poet's relationship with MacPherson's work. Despite being a family copy, Alfred wrote "A. Tennyson" on the fly leaf, signifying that he had a particular interest in the poetry found in the book.[179] What is evident however, is that Tennyson was not just reading the main narrative of *The Poems of Ossian*. By focusing in on a poem used as a footnote it is evident that the poet at a young age was reading the work closely, being attracted to Ossianic themes and language that he would be later appropriate for his own work. As I will now demonstrate, textual analysis of Tennyson's adaptations of 'The Night Song of the Bards' further reinforces this argument.

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[178] Dafydd Moore*, Ossian and Ossianism Vol. 1* (London: Routledge, 2004) p. cvii

[179] Furthermore, the bottom corner of the page on when 'The Night Song of the Bards' begins has been folded inwards, indicating that someone wanted to remember that particular section of the collection. While there is no anecdotal evidence that it was Tennyson who made this fold, it is interesting that one was made at the start of a poem that he would adapt in two separate works.

All quotes from 'The Night Song of the Bards' presented in this chapter are taken from this volume.

MacPherson's opening argument for the poem is "Five bards passing the night in the house of a chief, who was a poet himself, went severally to make their observations on, and returned with an extempore description of night."[180] The wild picturesque Celtic landscapes that MacPherson creates within the poem are replicated in both of Tennyson's adaptations. However, there are also elements in other poetry found in *Poems by Two Brothers*, such as 'The sun goes down in the dark blue main' and 'I wander in darkness and sorrow' along with an extra work, 'Unhappy man, thy wander there', that did not see publication in the collection, but which contain unmistakable similarities to the themes and style of MacPherson's work.

'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' is an adaptation of the bards' observations using the same attention to the natural world and supernatural elements of the Ossianic work. However, it does not retain the same structure of six narrative voices, choosing instead to focus on a single voice in the form of a soliloquy. Isobel Armstrong describes this form of poem as "the purest form of expressive lyric;" however, unlike the public performance of the Bards the drama found in soliloquy is not a "public transaction between actor and audience."[181] There is no clear "addressee'" to whom the narrative voice is speaking and therefore the form exists in a liminal space between public and private. As the Victorian age of poetry progressed Tennyson, along with Robert Browning, would lead the way in further developing the dramatic soliloquy into the Dramatic Monologue. Inspired by the use of character in the novel and drama during the eighteenth century[182], the writer attempts to place himself in the place of a narrative character and present their innermost thoughts and private feelings to the reader. 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' and other examples of soliloquy poetry found in *Poems by Two Brothers* represent Tennyson's early experimentations with the Dramatic Monologue. His later success at this poetic form leads the critic W. J. Fox in 1831 to exclaim; "Our author has the Secret of transmigration of the soul. He can cast his own spirit into any living thing, real or imaginary."[183] This departure from the original structure, also present in 'Midnight,' is important because it shows that while Tennyson is interested in the themes and language of *Ossian*, he is not simply copying

[180] James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p. 269
[181] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry – Poerty, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.137
[182] Bernard Richards, *English Poetry of the Victorian Period. 1830 – 1890* (London: Longman, 1988), p.94
[183] W.J. Fox, 'On Poems, Chiefly Lyrical (1830) 1831' in *Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*. ed by. John D. Jump (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967), pp. 21 – 33 (p. 27)

MacPherson. Instead, he has taken the elements of the work that interest him and is using them to create something that is both Ossianic and that represents a contemporary mode of poetry. However, the Ossianic elements are central to understanding the poem. Indeed the nature of 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' as a major adaptation of 'the Night-Song of the Bards' is evidenced by Tennyson's choice of a quotation from the fifth bard as the epigraph of his work: "It is the great army of the dead returning on the northern blast."[184] By choosing this line he is drawing attention to the fact that both poems share the same basic theme of the weather creating a gothic sense of the supernatural in the mind of the speaker. This further becomes apparent when reading the two poems side by side. In particular, Ricks claims that Tennyson was "clearly influenced" by the words of the second Bard in 'Night-Song'.[185] I would further argue one of the aspects that the poet deploys from *Ossian* is the use of external elements, notably sound, stimulating the imagination. Both works contain a gothic eloquence which helps create the notion of being surrounded by an invisible army:

MacPherson: Ghosts ride on the storm to-night. Sweet is their voice between the squalls of wind. Their songs are of other worlds.[186]

Tennyson: Heard you that sound? It was the hum
               Of the innumerable host,
      As down the northern sky they come.
               Lamenting o'er their glories lost $_{(29 – 31)}$

The army of the dead is not described in great detail in either poem; indeed, Tennyson refers to his ghost as "formless misty sons of old." Instead, the bards have to rely on the sound of the wind to create the sense that they exist. The reader is told of the "voice" and "songs" in MacPherson and the "sound," "hum" and "Lamenting" in Tennyson but are not given a solid description of the host. When both poets do try to use the visual for their supernatural

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[184] This is a misquoting of the fifth bard's observations:
Hark! The whirlwind is in the Wood! A low murmur from the vale.
It is the great army of the dead returning from the air.
James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p.272
[185] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 154
[186] James MacPherson, p.272

beings, they both invoke the natural world, in particular meteors,[187] indicating that the ghosts may only be nature playing tricks in their minds:

MacPherson: I see a dim form on the plain. It is a ghost! It fades, it flies. Some funeral shall pass this way. The meteor makes the path. (First Bard)

Tennyson: Your robes the vapours of the dell
                      Your swords the meteors of the sky? (39 – 40)

By adapting the suggestion of the supernatural there is an acceptance of the dead in Tennyson's narrative that displays a degree of the "resistance to the despotism of the real" that Matthew Arnold would later find in the "Celt."[188] While the speaker of 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' initially has doubts about the supernatural by stating to the wind: "methinks, upon your moaning course," this is soon replaced with the absolute belief in the "innumerable host." The use of the supernatural in both poems brings to mind the popular late eighteenth and early nineteenth century form of the Gothic. A reaction against the classical vogue of the mid-eighteenth century, Gothic rejected conventional reason and embraced the darker aspects of the medieval superstitious mind. In the words of David Punter and Glennis Byron: "Where the classics offered a world of clear rules and limits, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilized."[189] Strongly associated with the sublime, Gothic writers routinely deployed images and narratives where "imagination and emotional effects exceed reason."[190] Although the form is more popularly seen as being linked to the novel it is no accident that it is found both in Ossian and Tennyson's adaptations. *Ossian* played a central role in inspiring the revival in British medieval history that eventually led to the formulation of the Gothic.[191] Tennyson was attracted to the same supernatural aspects of MacPherson's work. While Tennyson is not considered a writer of Gothic there is an argument to be made that he used similar notions

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[187] MacPherson also uses the meteor as symbol of death in the third Bard's observations:
   The clouds, divided, fly over the sky, and show the burning stars.
   The meteor, token of death!
James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p. 271
[188] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 345)
[189] David Punter & Glennis Byron, The *Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 7
[190] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 3
[191] David Punter & Glennis Byron, The *Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 147

of the uncanny in his work. Colin Manlove describes Tennyson as "exploring the unconscious imagination in relation to […] to its neurotic and absorptive force" rather than a "spiritual or liberating one."[192] This is particularly true of his Ossianic adaptations as they contain a claustrophobic imagination that abandons rationality in favour of creating a space where the supernatural and the uncanny attain a subjective reality. Therefore, I would argue that any of trace of the Gothic found Tennyson's work is a part of his Celticism.[193] Nor is the Gothic the only literary trope that Tennyson adapted from MacPherson and Ossian: he also utilises a sense of the Celt as a liminal character.

In *Ossianic Liminality: Between Nature, Tradition and Preromantic Taste*, Joep Leerssen puts forward two arguments. The first describes what exactly constitutes an Ossianic Mode and the second is for MacPherson as one of the originators of liminality as literary inspiration. Both of these arguments are important in relation to 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' as they link Tennyson's work back to that of MacPherson. Leerssen argues that the Ossianic mode is "the private and the Universal [..] not so much an epic description but a simile for private emotion."[194] He further sets out his argument by stating that the private/public nature of the mode manifests itself in "a general imaginative strategy involving the distribution of emotion, space and chosen moment."[195] In 'The Night-Song of the Bards' this strategy is displayed in the performance of the Bards. Each of the Bards report their own observations of the night and while there is some overlap between each episode, for example the army of the dead or the state of the weather, they all constitute a personal reaction based on a personal temporal experience. However, this is also a group performance, which by its very nature is a public event. Indeed, the figure of the Bard is closely identified with oral tradition given their performative nature. This contrasts with the emphasis on writing and personal emotion that Tennyson inherited from the Romantics. The group experience is reinforced by the Chief's closing comments to the performance which are detached from the Bard's narrative in terms of language. Here the Chief attempts to command the elements:

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[192] Colin Manlove, *The Fantasy Literature of England* (Basingstoke: MacMillian, 1999), p. 145
[193] This will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.
[194] Joep Leerssen, 'Ossianic Liminality: Between Nature, Tradition and Preromantic Taste' in *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* ed by Fiona Stafford & Howard Gaskill (Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1998), pp. 1 – 16 (p. 2)
[195] Joep Leerssen, p. 2 -3

> Let the clouds rest on the hills: spirits fly, and travellers fear. Let the winds of the woods arise, the sounding storms descend. Roar streams and windows flap, and green meteors fly![196]

The language here has shifted from the passive observations of the five Bards to an active magical spell. When the Chief commands "let the clouds," he is dispelling the experiences of the Bards to remind them that they are now within his house and safe from the night outside. However, by shifting from the passive to the active voice, MacPherson casts the Chief in the role of a director whose function is to represent the universal in contrast to the Bard's personal. He reminds the reader that even although people can experience the same event in diverse ways, these events are temporal and will eventually end. The Chief also asks the Bards to "raise the song, and strike the harp," thus reinforcing the concept of the Bardic oral tradition. This reminds the reader that each Bard is a storyteller by trade and each experience is designed to be performed to the public. Therefore, the Chief's speech acts in much the same manner that, for example, Puck's closing speech for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* does; both to bring a sense of closure to the story and also remind the audience that what they have witnessed is a performance.

The theme of the public performance of private emotions is very much part of 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave'. This is not surprising given that Tennyson is noted for his "anxiety about making the private public" in later works such as *In Memoriam A.H.H.*[197] and his role in the development of the Dramatic Monologue. However, in the case of 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave,' there is a particular Ossianic deployment of the 'imaginative strategy" as the poet is adapting the manner of MacPherson's Bards. From the opening lines of the poem the reader is given a sense that the narrative voice is having a private and solitary experience as it describes the elements and landscape:

> Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave
> Around the headland's stormy brow $_{(1-2)}$

The opening "Oh" is ambiguous: the reader does not know what emotion the speaker is expressing, whether it be surprise, anger, or joy at the sight of the storm. Tennyson treats

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[196] James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p. 273

[197] Holly Furneaux, An *Introduction to In Memoriam A.H.H.* [Online] www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/in-memoriam [accessed 1 November 2016].

the elements as a character to be addressed as if they were human. Jonathan Culler defines this form of lyric poetry as "centred on the subject, producing the effect of hearing a voice, and structured by an opposition between man and the world."[198] The Bards of 'Night-Song' are not the subject of the poem; rather, they are impersonal witnesses to events. Tennyson's speaker, however, establishes a relationship between themselves and the natural world. However, the wind cannot provide the same kind of answers that the chief functions to provide in 'Night-Song' and the relationship is one-sided. The effect of this change gives Tennyson's poem a more detached and lonely feeling than the social performance found in MacPherson's work. While there, the Bards were relaying a past experience to a group, whereas Tennyson's work is in the moment of man's experience of nature. This is particularly illustrated by the uncertainty of the narrative voice over the sounds that it is hearing:

> Methinks, upon your moaning course
> I hear the army of the dead. (9 – 10)

He cannot be sure and can only "think" that the army of the dead is on the move, heightening the sense of fear. Tennyson's uncertain relation and performance to a non-human audience is in direct contrast to the certainty and group experience that the Ossianic work provides. However, while the nature of the narrative of 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' may be personal it is a published work and therefore meant to be read by a public audience. In the same manner that 'The Night-Song of the Bards' is meant to be an example of an oral Bardic tradition; Tennyson's poem demands to be read aloud. It was the "mouthability of poetry, the urge to roll it around" that attracted the young Alfred to the medium rather than silent reading.[199] This demonstrates Tennyson's appropriation of the Ossianic/Bardic traditions into his own performative poetry. John Stuart Mill in his 1833 essay *What is Poetry?* set out the difference between public performance and the Romantic emphasis on writing as being "eloquence is *heard*; poetry is *over*heard."[200] He further theorised that poetry's appeal lay "in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener."[201] Tennyson's work complicates this argument as the listener is not completely forgotten. The

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[198] Jonathan Culler, The Theory of Lyric (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 80
[199] Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson* 2nd Ed (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1989), p. 12
[200] John Stuart Mill, 'What is Poetry?' in *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory* ed. by Thomas J. Collins & Vivienne J. Rundle (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 1999), pp. 1212 – 1227 (p. 1216)
[201] John Stuart Mill, p. 1216

ambiguous 'Oh!' that opens 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' in particular gives a sense of a poem that is designed to be listened to and not silently read. By incorporating Bardic eloquence into Romantic observation poetry Tennyson is both creating a sense of his work as public performance while trying to distance himself from that platform. Matthew Bevis links this blurring of the lines between the two traditions as playing a key role in the development of "internalized speaker-author relationship" of the dramatic monologue.[202] Therefore Tennyson's early experiments in Ossianic poetry are important in that they prepare the poet for significant developments in his writing later in his career. However, 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' also adapts the theme of liminality that Leerssen has identified as a particularly Ossianic concern.

In Leerssen's words, liminality as a literary device is a "setting for heightened or poetic inspiration."[203] While traditional anthropological liminality is defined as "A transitional or indeterminate state between culturally defined stages of a person's life,"[204] he stretches this to include a state of personal in-between-ness, a place where the "superhuman and supernatural"[205] exist, influenced by both topographical and temporal factors. This could include the liminal spaces in-between land and sea, such as the entrance to a cave, forests, between day and night. Leerssen further explains that such liminality can be achieved "at the price of abandoning rational control over one's human identity."[206] MacPherson and Tennyson, in the latter's adaptation of Ossianic themes, deploy this strategy in their respective poems. Indeed, Leerssen argues that *Ossian* was one of the earliest texts to present this form of liminality in literature and the success of "Ossianic formula" is the "treatment of the inspired poet in a liminal setting and as a liminal character."[207]

The liminal nature of the topographical and temporal setting is noted by both poets in their musings on the nature of the experience of the supernatural with Tennyson paraphrasing from MacPherson:

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[202] Matthew Bevis, *The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 146
[203] Joep Leerssen, 'Ossianic Liminality: Between Nature, Tradition and Preromantic Taste' in *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* ed by Fiona Stafford & Howard Gaskill (Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1998), pp. 1 – 16 (p. 3)
[204] "Liminality, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press,. September 2016 [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/248158 [Accessed 7th November 2016]
[205] Joep Leerssen, 'Ossianic Liminality: Between Nature, Tradition and Preromantic Taste' in *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* ed by Fiona Stafford & Howard Gaskill (Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1998), pp. 1 – 16 (p. 3)
[206] Joep Leerssen, p. 3,
[207] Joep Leerssen, p. 7

MacPherson: Their songs are of other worlds (Second Bard)[208]

Tennyson: The sigh of other worlds (6)

Both poets are aware that their narrative voices are experiencing a state of in-between-ness which allows them to transcend the limitations of the world of rational thought and experience something more spiritual. However, the experiences are notably different due to Tennyson's paraphrasing. For MacPherson's second bard it involves experiencing music, an active and communal act. For Tennyson it involves a sigh, a more passive and personal sound. The poet is again personalising the Bard's narrative so that the communal aspect of the experience is minimised, and private emotion prioritised. As I have already explored, central to this experience is the temporal setting of night. Similar supernatural visitations could not happen during the daylight hours as both the Bards and Tennyson's narrative voice would be in total command of their senses instead of having to rely on their imaginations. Indeed, both poems contain references to the light of the Moon and Stars being blocked:

MacPherson: No Star with green trembling beam; no moon looks from the sky (First Bard)

The moon rests behind the hill. The beam is still on that lofty rock […] Now dark is over all. (Fifth Bard)[209]

Tennyson: For when the moon conceals her ray,
And midnight spreads her darkest veil. (13 – 14)

In both poems this hiding of light with a liminal device such as the clouds or the landscape which serve to create a barrier between the narrative voices and their rational thoughts and heighten the sense of the supernatural. In the case of the first bard, this is when he encounters the ghost that "fades and flies." In both cases of the Fifth Bard and Tennyson's narrative voice, total darkness is connected to their experiences of the army of the dead. They have all entered a state of in-between-ness due to being robbed of their sense of sight, and with only their sense of sound and their imaginations to inspire them, the characters lose themselves to rational impossibilities. However, while the temporal is the most

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[208] James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p.271
[209] James MacPherson, p. 272

important factor in creating liminality in both works, they also share a topographical setting of bodies of water which also acts as a liminal space between different bodies of land.

In 'The Night-Song of the Bards' MacPherson makes use of both lakes and rivers as places between life and death in a literal sense. Both the Second and Third Bards' stories contain episodes where people lose their lives while attempting to cross bodies of water:

> The growing river roars. The traveller attempts to the ford. Hark! That shriek! He dies! (Second Bard)

> The waves dark-tumble on the lake, and lash its rocky sides. The boat is brimful in the cove; the oars rocking on the side. (Third Bard) [210]

These deaths in an in-between place add to the sense of unease found in the poem. The night not only creates rational impossibilities but also makes places that would be safe to cross during the daylight into death traps. Tennyson also identifies the space between land and water as a place where the living can meet the dead. His more metaphorical approach is intricately connected to the creation of the imaginary army of the dead with the setting of the narrative being the space where land meets sea:

> Around the headland's stormy brow (2)

> And mingle with the madden'd skies,
>   The rush of wind, and roar of wave (23 – 24)

The effect of darkness in a liminal space, however, is the same in both poems. It creates the unreal and the unknowable. Tennyson may only present sounds that cause his speaker's irrational imagination to create the supernatural, but his headland is no less a location of fear as MacPherson's rivers and lakes. This is very much due to the status of 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' as an adaptation of 'The Night-Song of the Bards'. Tennyson has not just taken Ossianic, and therefore Romantic Celticist, imagery but has also tapped into the larger themes of MacPherson's work. The same must also be said of the personal and public aspects of MacPherson's work for which Leerssen argues. 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' would not be the last time that Tennyson would use either theme in his poetry. Over the remainder of his career, he would return to both repeatedly.

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[210] James MacPherson, p. 270

The linguistic and thematic links between the poems demonstrate that Tennyson did have a deep interest in using MacPherson as an early influence on his poetry. In particular he was interested in the Ossianic depiction of the weather and landscape. 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' is an example of a poet using a source to craft a world that he does not belong to. And yet the romance of this other world found in Ossian inspired him to make his own additions to that style of work. It is well documented that Tennyson was influenced by the English Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, the particular influence of MacPherson in *Poems by Two Brothers* demonstrates that Romantic Celticism in the form of *Ossian* was an early interest for him. Further evidence for this argument is found in 'Midnight,' the second major adaptation 'The Night Song of the Bards' found in

Poems by Two Brothers.

In the original 1827 printing of the collection, Tennyson included a note declaring that lines nineteen to thirty-six of 'Midnight' are a 'paraphrasing of Ossian'.[211] In the same manner as 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave', the voice is changed from six voices to one. However, unlike its sister poem 'Midnight' is purely a description of the nocturnal world, taking the aesthetics of the wild landscape and the weather from 'Night-Song' but lacking the supernatural elements. Due to this lack of formal connection, coupled with the fact that the lines paraphrased can appear to be randomly chosen from the first two bards, it becomes more difficult to identify the links between Tennyson's work and that of MacPherson's. Fortunately, Christopher Ricks has identified which lines of 'Night-Song'[212] the poet adapted and by reading the two works side by side, the reader can discern a range of interesting observations concerning Tennyson's Celticism:

MacPherson:	The distant dog is howling from the hunt of the hill. (First Bard)
	The Hunter starts from sleep, in his lonely hut (Second Bard)
	Load roar two mountain streams which meet beside his booth (Second Bard)[213]
Tennyson:	Spreads its black mantle o'er the mountain's form;

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[211] Alfred Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) Ed by Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 124
[212] Christopher Ricks, p. 125
[213] All MacPherson Quotes on this page from
James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p. 270

And, mingled with the rising roar, is swelling,
From the far hunter's booth, the blood hound's yelling. (24 – 26)

MacPherson: The heath-cock's head is beneath its wing (First Bard)

Tennyson: The heath-fowl lifts its head at intervals. (20)

MacPherson: The old tree groans to the blast; the falling branch resounds (First Bard)

Tennyson: The moaning pine-trees to the blast bending. (30)

Resound with crash of falling branches (33)

MacPherson: The squalls of wind (Second Bard) [214]

Tennyson: Wet, driving, rainy, come the busting Squalls (21)

Tennyson's adaptation of MacPherson's work takes the wild uncontrollable aspect of the "Celtic" landscape and creates something new, yet familiar to a reader of both poets. The weather in particular is portrayed as something sublime, even if without the supernatural aspects found in 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave'. The violence of the wind in the tree, the sound of a hunter's dog and the nesting heath-fowl all serve to create a wild rural space far removed from the English rural landscape Tennyson knew. Separating the reader from their familiar world and placing them in one in which they do not belong is designed to induce terror in their hearts. An element of primitivism with the romantic image of the lone hunter living in the wild is also painted in the mind of the reader. Interestingly, however, Tennyson does not seem to fall back on the classical view that the wild remote places should be either 'tamed or ignored'.[215] At no point does he present the landscape as anything other than something that should be admired, and he delights in the details of the natural world. However, this use of the picturesque is founded in Colonial Celticism. Tennyson's "Celtic" wildness is based entirely on his reading of MacPherson and not on the realities of Scotland. However, in the 1820s the country was experiencing the Highland Clearances, which included the transformation of farmland, which had been organised in the "runrig or open field basis," into enclosed crofts. Therefore, the Highlands were becoming "modern" and losing the wild character that Tennyson admired.

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[214] James MacPherson, p.271
[215] Fiona J. Stafford, The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), p. 8

While lines nineteen to thirty-six are directly paraphrased from 'The Night-Song of the Bards,' there are other elements found elsewhere in 'Midnight' that connect it back to MacPherson. The structure of both poems is based around an oncoming storm that builds up throughout the narrative. MacPherson's first Bard begins by describing the night as "dull and dark"[216] but this builds through the second bard's narrative until the storm breaks. By the turn of the third bard, the situation has become wilder, with images of destruction such as, for example, "the waves dark-tumble on the lake and lash its rocky sides."[217] In the same manner, while Tennyson describes his landscape as 'windy' in the second line of 'Midnight', he still creates a vision of a beautiful, serene night in the first half of the poem.

> A wan, dull, lengthened sheet of swimming light
> > Lies the broad lake: the moon conceals her ray,
> Sketched faintly by a pale and lurid gleam
> > Shot through' the glimmering clouds: the lovely
> > > planet
> Is shrouded in obscurity. (7-11)

However, beginning with line nineteen, there is an Ossianic change in the atmosphere when the storm breaks and the picturesque images are replaced with those of the destruction of the trees and "Wet, driving, rainy, come the busting Squalls." The obscuring of light and the liminal space of the lake also tie 'Midnight' to the themes found in 'The Night-Song of the Bards,' and Tennyson's own 'Oh! Ye Winds that roar and rave,' that Leerssen argues originate with MacPherson. That these themes are also present in a second adaptation of 'Night-Song' strengthens the links between Tennyson and an Ossianic, and therefore Celticist, mode of discourse.

That there is so much content by MacPherson in 'Midnight' is evidence that the poem was an attempt to write an Ossianic work by the young Tennyson. His careful choice in which images that are emulated in the poem demonstrate an attachment to 'The Night-Song of the Bards'. This is possibly further evidenced by the fold in his copy of Ossian on the page the poem begins.[218] Tennyson must have found something special in this poem to want to spend so much time adapting it and it appears that it was the Celticism of the landscape and

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[216] James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p. 269
[217] James MacPherson, p.271
[218] Found in the collection of Tennyson Research Centre which is housed in Lincolnshire Archives

imagination in which he found the most inspiration. Indeed, such is the apparent importance of the poem to Alfred that it seems to have had a wider influence on his contributions to *Poems by Two Brothers*, allowing him to indulge in the picturesque nature of the "Celtic" landscape.[219]

While 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' and 'Midnight' are adaptations of 'The Night-Song of the Bards,' the other poems contain noticeable echoes of MacPherson's work. Take for example 'I wander in darkness and sorrow,' a poem concerning a nocturnal walk disturbed by the elements and which uses similar bleak landscapes and wind imagery to that of the Ossianic work:

> The bleak river's desolate moan.
> The rise of the volleying thunder
> The mountain's lone echoes repeat:
> The roar of the wind is around me $_{(4-7)}$

Later in the poem, Tennyson makes mention of "voice of the owl" $_{(41)}$, a creature that also features not only in 'Night-Song' but also in his own 'Midnight'. Throughout *Poems by Two Brothers*, there is also a focus on the night. While a poem such as 'The sun goes down in the dark blue main,' a short poem describing the transition from day to night, may take its epigraph from Virgil[220], however, it still takes some of its language for the nocturnal from Ossian. "The Moon goes down on the calm still night" $_{(5)}$ brings to mind the fourth bard's exclamation that "Night is calm and fair."[221] Likewise, 'Unhappy man, thy wander there', another poem which concerns a nocturnal walk that is disturbed by the elements, but which was excluded for "some forgotten" reason from *Poems by Two Brothers*,[222] contains the line "Oh! murky, murky is the night" $_{(5)}$. That these echoes exist alongside two major adaptations of 'The Night-Song of the Bards' is unlikely to be accidental. Therefore, as Tennyson is taking the most Ossianic elements of the poem and adapting them for his own purposes, I argue

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[219] However, as I shall explore in the next chapter in my reading of 'The Lady of Shalott' the traditional sublime "Celtic "landscape would be replaced by an Arcadian vision of rural England in his adaption of "Celtic" Legend.
[220] Irreparabile tempus. A shortening of 'sed fugit interea fugit irreparabile tempus' (but it flees meanwhile: irretrievable time flees) from Virgil's *Georgica.*
[221] James MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian. Translated by James MacPherson Esq in Two Volumes. Volume 1* (London: W. Huttly and B. Cosby, 1809), p.271
[222] Alfred Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) Ed by Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 167

that it should be counted as one of the most important early influences in Tennyson's own Celticism.

However, it is important to remember that the Celticism that inspired him was a construct. As explored in the first chapter, MacPherson had been both writing with the objective of creating a mythology for the Highlands and asserting the primacy of the Gaelic Scots over the Irish. In this sense *Ossian* was both culturally and politically significant in the development of Romantic Celticism. Tennyson would in turn deploy Colonial Celticism as a cultural and political device in his own work. He was fascinated by aspects of "Celtic" culture and how they could be used in his poetry. However, at the same time Tennyson was uninterested in fully embracing "Celtic" ideas. This is evident when reading the poet's body of work concerning the Celtic figures of the Bard and the Druid. Here we see a desire to tap into the visionary nature of the "Celts," however, Tennyson uses this desire to deploy Anglo-Saxonist ideology.

Bards and Druids

Despite the Ossianic nature of the language of 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave,' the narrative of the poem does not take place in MacPherson's Scotland but by "Baltic Wave." This change of location is extremely important in Tennyson's relationship with Celticism found in *Poems by Two Brothers*. While he has an interest in using the narrative form and style found in MacPherson's work, he uses it to create a "Germanic" rather than "Celtic" space. This small example seems unremarkable in isolation but when considered in conjunction with other poetry both from *Poems by Two Brothers* and other sources, a Colonial Celticist thread becomes apparent in Tennyson's work. In this body of poetry there is no attempt to portray the "Celts" as a people capable of being active in the fields of politics and war. Instead, they are passive, used to promote the achievements and concerns of an English Saxonist culture. This construct was achieved throughout the body of work covered by this chapter primarily through the appropriation of the "Celtic" figures of the Druid and the Bard.

The ancient Druids were described by Julius Caesar as the priesthood of the "Celtic" peoples who kept "things sacred, conduct the public and the private sacrifices, and interpret

all matters of religion."[223] Both Roman oppression and later the establishment of Christianity in the British Isles caused Druidry to eventually die out as a practice. However, as discussed in chapter one, Iolo Morganwg and other Welsh Celticists in the eighteenth century had attempted to reconstruct Druidic traditions as a new national religion. The connected figure of the Bard is defined as "an ancient Celtic order of minstrel-poets, whose primary function appears to have been to compose and sing (usually to the harp) verses celebrating the achievements of chiefs and warriors, and who committed to verse historical and traditional facts, religious precepts, laws, genealogies, etc."[224] While Tennyson was not the first to appropriate the priests and poet prophets of the ancient '"Celts" in English poetry, the trend dates back to Gray's '*The Bard'*, the poet's use of them is characterised by an Anglicisation of both figures. While Tennyson's Druids and Bards perform the trappings of the "Celtic" they are deployed to promote Colonial Celticism.[225]

The prophetic aspect of the Bards and Druids were of particular importance to Tennyson in his development as a poet. Catherine Barnes Stevenson connects his interest in both of these figures of "Celtic" lore with his search for a "model of the poet's relationship to his society and of poetry's potential impact on the world."[226] Tennyson longed to capture the "mystical qualities" that both Bards and Druids were considered to possess. A.A Markley observes that Tennyson saw himself as 'being akin to the classical conception of the Vates, the poet as seer who can perceive the spiritual health of the individual and society'.[227] However, the "Bardic" or "Minstrel" poetry that Tennyson was reading was a recently developed Celticist literary form. While the figure of the "Celtic" Poet-Prophet had been in the English public consciousness since the publication of Richard Stanihurst's *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis* ('On the History of Ireland', 1584)[228], it was not until the Celticist writers of the eighteenth century, such as MacPherson, Gray, and Walter Scott, making the character

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[223] Julius Caesar, *"De Bello Gallico" and Other Commentaries* [Online] www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10657/pg10657-images.html [accessed 15 March 2021].

[224] "bard, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022 [Online], www.oed.com/view/Entry/15474 [Accessed 22 March 2022]

[225] As I shall explore in the next chapter Tennyson would go through a similar process with the Arthurian Mythos. Transforming them from "Celtic tales" into something that reflected the spirit of Saxonism. The character of Merlin in particular is deeply connected to the poet's use of the Druid and the Bard.

[226] Catherine Barnes Stevenson, 'Druids, Bards and Tennyson's Merlin' in *The Victorian Newsletter* 57 (1980), pp. 14 -22 (p. 16)

[227] A.A Markley *Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2004) p.10

[228] Edward Larrissy, 'The Celtic Bard of Romanticism: Blindness and Second Sight' in *Romanticism* 5.1 (2010), pp. 43 -57 (p.43 -44)

the central aspect of their poetry that "Bardic" became popular[229]. Ossian himself was a bard and, despite the controversy surrounding MacPherson and his authorship of the work, readers believed the epic to be what real "Minstrel" poetry looks like[230]. Therefore, if we are to think of Tennyson's work belonging to a "Bardic tradition" it cannot be one based in the actual poetics of the medieval period. Instead, it should be seen as a new 'tradition' appropriated from the founding Celticists of the previous century.

Tennyson's users of second sight are not described as being blind, unlike those found in the work of MacPherson and other authors writing during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Edward Larrissy points out that blindness and second sight, the ability to have visions of the future, the dead and spirits, are intricately linked in Romantic writing.[231]. Indeed, the most famous of the literary bards of the time, Ossian, was described by MacPherson as being blind. There is no documented reason for this rejection of blindness. However, it must be seen as another example of the poet wanting to use "Celtic" culture in his work but not wanting to engage with tradition. It is therefore understandable that he would seek to use the "Celtic" equivalent to this Greco-Roman concept as it belonged closer to home. However, the disconnect between Tennyson's Bards and Druids and "Celtic" tradition becomes apparent in the reading of the poetry. In every case they are used as little more than mouths into which the poet can put his own words.

The major example of the Celtic serving as background to other concerns in *Poems by Two Brothers* is found in the dramatic monologue 'The Druid's Prophecies'. The title explicitly links Tennyson's tradition of prophets with the figure of the priest class of ancient Britain. The poem concerns the destruction of sacred groves of the Isle of Anglesey, or Mona[232] as it was known, at the hands of the colonizing Romans in AD60.[233] The speaker, wracked with grief over this event, prophesises a series of disasters upon Rome, including the eventual fall of the Empire, while seeking justice for Mona. However, there is no direct surviving "Celtic" account of this traumatic event and Tennyson was using the writings of a Roman, Publius Cornelius Tacitus, as his source.[234] Therefore, he has to attempt to speak for

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[229] Erik Simpson, *Literary Minstrelsy, 1770 – 1830: Minstrels and Improvisers in British, Irish and American Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 6
[230] Erik Simpson, p. 13
[231] Edward Larrissy, 'The Celtic Bard of Romanticism: Blindness and Second Sight' in *Romaicism* 5.1 (2010), pp. 43 -57 (p.43)
[232] It is interesting to note that while Mona is a place in "Celtic" lore a Mōna appears as a Moon goddess in the "Saxon" pantheon.
[233] Tennyson would return to the events of that year in 1862 with the poem 'Boadicea'
[234] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) Ed by Christopher Ricks (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 117

the Celt through the medium of the dramatic monologue without the luxury of a primary source. Furthermore, despite Tennyson's interest in using the prophetic nature of the Celtic Druid, his presentation of the "Celt" as a character is almost non-existent. The "Celt" functions purely to explore notions of Empire, represented by Rome, and the achievements of the peoples that make up the forefathers of the "Saxons."

While the "Celt" is depicted as actively mourning the destruction of Mona, Tennyson does not grant him the same curiosity when it comes to gaining revenge. They are, instead, passive witnesses to the course of history and more strongly associated with the past than the present or the future. The closest that Tennyson comes to exploring the differences between "Celt" and Roman is in the descriptions of Rome's wealth and decadence.

> Ah! What avails his gilded palace,
> Whose wings the seven-hilled town enfold?
> The costly bath, the crystal chalice?
> The pomp of gems- the glare of gold? (21 – 24)

The Druid is clearly unimpressed with the wealth and privilege of the occupying Romans, questioning the overabundance of gold and other precious items. It is useful to contrast this distaste for the decadence of Rome with Tennyson's celebratory promise of British wealth in his later Celticist poem 'The Golden Year':

> With silks, and fruits, and spices, clear of toll,
> Enrich the markets of the golden year.

Here exotic commodities are connected to a golden age of plenty in comparison to the greed of the Romans seen in 'The Druid's Prophecies'. This illustrates Tennyson's sometimes contradictory attitude towards Empire. While he was an enthusiastic supporter of the British Imperial project, he was generally hostile to foreign Empires. This is illustrated in early poetry denouncing Spanish colonialism, such as 'Anacaona' and 'Columbus' through to his anti-Napoleon III poetry of the 1850s. Therefore, it is not entirely surprising that, despite his love of Roman poetry and popular comparison of the British to the past Empire at the time, Tennyson would write a work that attacks the people who invaded the lands now known as

England.[235] However, his pride in the British Imperial project also means that he does not present a counterbalance to the achievements of the "Saxons" by depicting the ancient "Celts" way of life. Instead they exist purely as an appropriated voice whose function is to present Tennyson's views rather than explore the condition of the "Celt." His interest in the Druid as prophet, however, manages to overcome his disinterest in the Druid as actual character and manifests itself in a series of denunciations of the future of Rome.

Only one of these denunciations relates to the Celts themselves. However, it does not relate to the Druid's own conquered people, instead referring to The Scots who managed to resist conquest by Rome:

> But thou shalt see the Romans flying,
> O Albyn! With yon dauntless ranks.
> And thou shalt view the Romans dying,
> Blue Carun! On thy mossy banks. (57 – 60)

Tennyson is careful to establish that the people of Albyn[236] are separate from the Britons by mentioning the Carun, an archaic name for the River Carron in Central Scotland. It is these outsiders who will "view the Romans dying," not the speaker's own people, hence his use of the word 'but' at the beginning of line fifty-seven which indicates that, while the Britons may have been conquered, the same will never be said of the ancient Scots.[237] Interestingly, this battle is not taken from Tacitus. Ricks notes that it is an "allusion to the real or feigned victory obtained by Fingal over Caracul or Caracalla"[238], further evidencing the influence of Ossian in Tennyson's Celticist poetry found in *Poems by Two Brothers*.

However, the final denunciation, discussing the fall of Rome, demonstrates that the "Celt" is incapable of enacting his own vengeance for Mona, and instead salvation shall come from another enemy of Rome:

> They come! They leave their frozen regions,
> Where Scandinavia's wilds extend;
> And Rome, through girt with dazzling legions,
> Beneath their blasting power shall bend.

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[235] Ironically, while he denounces Roman and Norman domination of the British Isles, Tennyson never attacks the "Saxons" who themselves were invaders.

[236] A Gaelic term for the Highlands of Scotland. It is also similar to the world Albion an alternative name for Britain and the Gaelic work for Scotland: Alba.

[237] Who, while not part of the culture of the regions now known as England and Wales were still Britons themselves despite Tennyson's attempts to distance the peoples.

[238] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 120

> Woe, woe to Rome! Though tall and ample
> She rears her domes of high renown;
> Yet fiery Goths shall fiercely trample
> The grandeur of her temples down! (69 – 76)

While the image of an army being like the wind is strikingly similar to the Ossianic pictures painted in 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave,' it is the Germanic peoples who finally defeat the might of Rome. The exclamation "They come!" gives the Scandinavian Goths a sense of being the Druid's saviours. They are able to sack Rome despite the Empire being described in grandiose terms. However, this will never be the "Celt's" achievement. They are allowed to witness the achievement of the Goths through the medium of vision. But they cannot actually take part in the action. When, in the final lines of the poem, the Druid proclaims, "all thy wrongs shall be requited," the reader is left with a sense that the Britons were incapable of saving themselves from the rule of Rome and required the actions of others to achieve what they could not achieve themselves. Therefore, 'The Druid's Prophecies' is a poem interested in "Celtic" history, but Tennyson is not prepared to give the "Celt" agency over his own future. Instead, the Druid becomes part of his own vision of appropriated Celticism. "Celts" are supposed to be thankful for being saved from one kind of Imperialism by the ancestors of the English.

'The Druid's Prophecies' is the earliest of Tennyson's Celticist poems to use the figures of the Druid or Bard and perhaps the most explicit use of them outside of his writings concerning Merlin. Later poetry would either mention them but not use them as the narrative voice or take the idea of the "Celtic" visionary and present them in a different context. However, the function of the poetry remains the same in that the "Celtic" is being used to discuss Tennyson's own Saxonist interests.

Tennyson's attempts to connect himself with the figure of the Bard would be crystalized in 1832's 'What Thor Said to the Bard Before Dinner'. Written as an attempt to deify "the malignant censures of his critics in his own sort of way"[239] the poem imagines the poet receiving advice from the god Thor in a light-hearted fashion. The god commands Tennyson to crush his critics through the medium of poetry, crafted in much the same way that a blacksmith creates his wares:

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[239] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 542

> On squire and parson, broker, and banker,
> Down let fall thine iron spanker,
> Spare not king or duke or critic. (19-21)

The violent imagery of the hammer being used to forge poetry to silence his critics is reinforced by the repeated refrain "Thy rhymehammer shall have honour."[240] However, while there can be little doubt that the Bard of the title is representing Tennyson himself, this is another case of him using a "Celtic" figure in a poem that promotes Germanic culture. The Thunder God Thor comes from the Norse pantheon[241] and is not connected to the ancient peoples of Britain. Yet rather than using the word Skald, the Nordic equivalent of a Bard, he chooses to connect himself to the traditional poets of Wales. This mixing of cultures further indicates the hybridity of Tennyson's Celticism. Much as British Orientalist writers would do with India, China and "the East," he is perfectly happy to ignore the fact that the figure he identifies with and the deity that he uses as a narrative voice come from two entirely separate cultures.

Following the ascension of Queen Victoria in 1837, Tennyson would return to the idea of a hybrid "Celtic" and "Saxon" culture. His 'The Queen of the Isles,' written but unpublished in the year she became queen, is quick to remind the reader that Victoria rules over Britain with variations on the repeated refrain of "health to the Queen of the Isles," yet there is no attempt to present the different peoples of the Isles. Instead the poet creates the image of a homogenous "satisfied people" (17) that doesn't distinguish between "Celt" and "Saxon." "Celtic" identity becomes subverted to the larger British identity through loyalty to the Queen. He would further expand on this theme, along with that of Druids and Bards, in 1856's 'Harp, Harp, the voice of Cymry'.

In contrast to 'The Queen of the Isles' where there is no attempt to engage with the Celtic character, Tennyson in 'Harp, Harp' speaks directly to an intended Welsh audience imploring them to honour the queen by using emotive picturesque language:

> Speak, speak, thou land of Aedd
> Land of stream and mountain peak,
> Land of Arthur and Taliesin,

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[240] 'Rhymehammer' is a compound word. These are features of Germanic languages rather than "Celtic" and therefore are imported to the British Isles. This further demonstrates Tennyson's imposition of Saxonism on "Celtic" subject matter.
[241] Although he is also found among other Germanic religions. The "Saxons" called him Þunor, for example. It is interesting that Tennyson chose him as he has no connection to poetry.

Land of old Anurin, speak
Speak, speak ye mountain voices,
Cataracts breaking down the vales,
Caer Eryi, Cader Idris
Honour to our Queen of Wales. (5-12)

The mentioning of Aedd, Talissin and Anurin, bards of ancient Wales, in this impassioned plea is central to the Celticism of the poem. Catherine Barnes Stevenson has observed that the poet's use of Bards as "inspired speaker of hidden truth, chastiser/consoler of society and prophet of future hope or doom" and therefore they occupy a position of leadership within "Celtic" Culture.[242] By invoking the names of the most famous of Bards, Tennyson is appropriating their authority to strengthen his argument that the Welsh should honour and love the Queen. This is reinforced by his addition of other icons of the Welsh (King Arthur), legendary locations ("Caer Eryi, Cader Idris") and the scenery of the country, in particular the mountains. The effect is a plea that appeals directly to the hearts and minds of the presumed Welsh audience. Yet in line thirteen the reader is reminded that the poem is not about the Welsh as a people but solely in their capacity as subjects of the monarch; "Hers, hers the men of Cymry." The love that Tennyson is asking of the Welsh is not based on their actual affection for the Queen but on the fact that she is their ruler. He further sets out the place of their position of subjects in line fifteen where he describes the people of Wales as "Praying God to guard and guide her." Both 'The Queen of the Isles' and 'Harp, Harp, the voice of Cymry' present the monarchy as being central to an idea of a united Britain in which devotion of the crown is seen as more desirable than separate ethnic or national identity.

'The Golden Year,' published in 1846, is another major example of Tennyson using the visionary aspects of the Druid or Bard without actually referencing them. The poem was composed while Tennyson was vacationing in Llanberis, Wales[243]. However, while the village at the foot of Mount Snowdon also provides the background setting for the work, the narrative itself has little to say about Wales and the Welsh. Roger Ebbatson states that the poem, written in idyll form, is problematic due to Tennyson's use of "an English poetic form superimposed upon a predominantly Welsh-speaking community and landscape." He further argues that the vision of the future found in the poem is intended to present the "Whiggish

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[242] Catherine Barnes Stevenson, 'Druids, Bards and Tennyson's Merlin' in *The Victorian Newsletter* 57 (1980), pp. 14 -22 (p. 16)

[243] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 2* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 149

myth of material and spiritual progress," to which Tennyson subscribed.[244] However, alongside the themes that Ebbatson points out, there is also a sense that the location and visionary nature of the poem feeds into the Bardic mode.

The characters who provide the narrative, the narrative voice and his companions are explicitly identified as outsiders to the country as they are on a tour of Wales:

> It was last summer on a tour in Wales:
> Old James was with me: we that day had been
> Up Snowdon; and I wish'd for Leonard there,
> And found him in Llanberis (1-5)

By placing his characters as tourists Tennyson is creating a disconnection between the narrative voice, James and Leonard and people of the land they are visiting. The discussion that follows may take place in the Welsh mountains, but the "Celt" is excluded from the proceedings. However, Tennyson's Celticism goes further in the poem. Even though he sets up Wales as the location of his narrative, there is no reason the poem should have been set there other than the fact he was personally in Llanberis when it was composed. Rather than discuss Wales, his characters are concerned with progress and change in English society. Moreover, Tennyson sees the progress of society as something the English Christians should spread to the world as he extolls the virtues of a free press, free trade and the Christianisation of lands that are conquered by the Empire:

> "Fly happy sails and bear the Press;
> Fly happy with the mission of the Cross;
> Knit land to land, and blowing havenward
> With silks, and fruits, and spices, clear of toll,
> Enrich the markets of the golden year. (42-46)

While Tennyson's desire to "knit land to land" is identified with Britain's Colonial domination of non-European lands, it still has implications for the "Celt." The poem was written as a potato famine was devastating Ireland, prompting nationalistic resentment towards the ruling English. The promise of a future golden age identified as heaven and "clear of toll" would have rung hollow to the non-anglicized, non-landowning Irish suffering as a result of

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[244] Roger Ebbatson, *Tennyson's English Idylls: History, Narrative, Art*. (Lincoln: Tennyson Society, 2003.), p. 23

their crop failing. Tennyson is more interested in the promise of the importation of exotic goods ("silks, and fruits, and spices") than he is current events. By not engaging with the present, the vision found in the poem represents the promise of wealth from an expanding overseas Empire. The main beneficiaries of this exploration of foreign lands would have been capitalist Englishmen, Lowland Scots, or members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. As the "Celtic" peoples were traditionally an excluded and marginalised group within Britain they, like the working classes of England, depended on those in power. Therefore, in a similar manner to 'The Druid's Prophecies', there is a message that the "Celt" needs to be saved by the "Saxon." The questionable use of location, coupled with a message of unity in the face of resentment, illustrates that Tennyson's Colonial Celticism had not developed in a significant manner between 1827 and 1849 and still reflected English cultural supremacy.

Tennyson's final appropriation is perhaps the most subtle and has little to do with actual poetry. Following Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's coronation in 1851 as monarch of the Second French Empire, the poet became increasingly concerned by the notion of renewed conflict between France and Britain. Acting on these concerns, Tennyson wrote a number of poems urging his fellow Britons to prepare for war. Published in *The Times* and *The Examiner*, these poems included: 'Britions Guard Your Own,' 'Hands All round,' 'Third of February' and 'Suggested by an Article'. Anna Barton describes this body of poetry as "without exception, shrill, overwritten and overexcited."[245] An example of this is found in 'Hands All Round' when Tennyson uses hyperbolic language in an attempt to warn not only of a war with France but also that Queen Victoria cannot be considered the same as the monarchs of Continental Europe:

> O Speak to Europe through your Guns!
> > They *can* be understood by kings.
> You must not mix our Queen with those
> > That wish to keep their people fools;
> Our freedom's foemen are her foes. (51-55)

In Tennyson's view Bonaparte rules by keeping his people ignorant of his position as a tyrant, hence they are "fools." This is in contrast to Victoria who represents "freedom." Her people must violently protect their rights as violence is the only language the European "other"

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[245] Anna Barton, *Tennyson's Name: Identity and Responsibility in the Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), p. 88

understands. However, keeping citizens as "fools" is only one kind of oppression. The Irish in particular did not enjoy the same kind of freedom that Tennyson enjoyed due to their own othering in the eyes of the English. Again, his position as a privileged "Saxon" is displayed by his disregard for the differing status of the "Celtic" peoples.

Tennyson chose not to attach his own name to this body of work but instead chose to publish under a number of pseudonyms due to concerns that the overtly political nature of the writing could affect his position as Poet Laureate[246]. Due to this role, it would have been a diplomatic blunder for him to be seen as writing against a potential British ally in such violent terms.[247] While none of the content of this body of work directly concerned "Celts" or Celticism, other than what is ignored[248], it is in Tennyson's choice of pseudonym where his appropriation becomes apparent. 'Hands All Round' and 'Third of February' were attributed to a poet named "Merlin" while 'Suggested by reading an Article in a Newspaper,' a poem which was supposedly written by an admirer of "Merlin's" work, was published under the name of "Taliessin" [sic].[249] As mentioned in the discussion around 'Harp, Harp, the voice of Cymry,' Tennyson is very much aware that both characters originated in Wales. Yet he chose to evoke them when writing British (or English) hyper nationalistic poetry. Tennyson appropriates "Celtic" symbols and characters to defend the British Empire. In doing so he subsumes "Celtic" cultural specificity with a larger British identity. In the case of "Merlin" and "Taliesin" he wishes to become the prophetic Bard himself. According to Catherine Barnes Stevenson, Tennyson chose to adopt this persona to evoke "a quintessential national ideal of bravery and liberty" in the face of the perceived French threat[250]. Both characters are seen as wise and authoritative, qualities that the poet desires to make the poetry successful. Unlike the case of 'The Druid's Prophecies,' Tennyson did not have the luxury of history to provide himself with the basis of the visions presented in each

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[246] Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson, and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), p. 115

[247] Anna Barton, *Tennyson's Name: Identity and Responsibility in the Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), p. 88

[248] Although Emily Tennyson commented that her husband's 1852 work reminded her of 'old Welsh marches'
Christopher Ricks,. *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 2* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 477

[249] Tennysons accompanying note to the poem:
'Sir – I have read with much interest the poems by *Merlin. T*he enclosed is longer than either of those and certainly not as good; yet as I flatter myself that it has a smack of Merlin's style in it, and as I feel that it expresses forcibly enough of the feelings of our time, perhaps you may be induced to admit it. *Taliessin*
 Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 2* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 477

[250] Catherine Barnes Stevenson, 'Druids, Bards and Tennyson's Merlin' in *The Victorian Newsletter* 57 (1980), pp. 14 -22 (p. 17)

piece of writing. Rather they constituted his own idea of what the future may hold.[251] In this manner Tennyson finally becomes the "poet as seer who can perceive the spiritual health of the individual and society"[252] that he had longed to become, hence his desire to appropriate the names of famous seers of the past. However, Tennyson's act of appropriation exposes the impossibility of fully reconciling "Celtic" and "Saxon." Instead of evoking the power that he believed they would, "Merlin" and "Taliessin" ring hollow. They are being used to promote a "Saxon" and "Protestant" conflict with a nation that was traditionally seen as being sympathetic to the "Celtic" areas of the British Isles that rejected Protestantism in favour of Catholic or Non-Conformist beliefs.

Tennyson's appropriation of Druids and Bards is deeply problematic. He strips them of their cultural connotations until they no longer function to speak on behalf of the "Celt." Instead, they become a useful costume for Tennyson to adopt when talking about English matters. However, this is not the fullest extent of Tennyson's Celticism. The final form found in his early poetry I shall be discussing shares many similarities with the adaptations of Ossian and the appropriated Bard but goes further into the differences between "Celt" and "Saxon."

Celtic Decay

One of the most notable features of the Celticist poetry that has been explored in this chapter is the lack of direct engagement with Ireland. In the first decades of his career Tennyson focuses his attention on Scotland and Wales with some Cornish interest related to the Arthurian mythology. However, the fact that he does not focus on Ireland speaks to his desire for a British future in which Ireland was excluded from the Ideology of what is British. The price of Tennyson's future, however, is a sense of a decaying "Celtic" past. The final four poems that will be explored in this chapter, written around 1826 - 1827, all deal with this sense of decay by tapping into the sentimentally of the Celtic character. The first two of these poems to be discussed, 'The Old Chieftain' and 'The Exile's Harp' both provide a Bardic performance as their central symbolic device while discussing the decay of either the body or the symbols of "Celtic" Minstrelsy.

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[251] However, he would be proved wrong as no hostilities between Britain and France occurred.
[252] A.A. Markley, Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2004), p.10

The epigraph of 'The Old Chieftain' is taken from the opening line of the third canto of Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*: "And said I that my limbs were old!."[253] This quotation not only introduces the theme of age to the poem but also, due to its source, sets out that the reader is about to experience a work of Bardic/Minstrel poetry. Scott stated in the introduction to his work that the poem was "intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland." He further explained that he wrote "in the mouth of an ancient minstrel" due to the people of the borders being "often engaged in scenes highly susceptible of poetical ornament."[254] As Scott's work was written to be Bardic in nature the fact that Tennyson chose a quotation from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* means it acts as a statement of intent concerning the mode of his own work.[255]

Tennyson's poem concerns an elderly Chieftain making a rousing speech to his assembled kin. During the speech he makes a toast to the memories of his glory days when, both as a warrior and a poet, he inspired his fellows to victory. This is set out in the first, and repeated in the last, stanza of the poem:

> Raise, raise the song of the hundred shells!
> Though my hair is grey and my limbs are cold;
> Yet in my bosom proudly dwells
> The memory of the days of old;(1-4)

Unlike the private nature of many of Tennyson's Celticist contributions to *Poems by Two Brothers*, 'The Old Chieftain' contains references to an implied audience who are invited to "raise" their shells. They are invited to participate in the both the communal acts of song and drinking, as indicated by the mention of shells, which in this context are drinking vessels. By framing his work in this way, Tennyson is moving away from the passive speaker found in other poetry found in *Poems by Two Brothers* and towards a form of active dramatic monologue that speaks directly to others rather than providing private observations on the world. However, the active nature of the speech is disturbed by the Chieftain's advancing age. This is reinforced by line five that mentions "When my voice was

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[253] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 140
[254] Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Ome. 1805), p. 1
[255] Although Tennyson does not mention the Chieftain's geographical location, it must be inferred by Scott's influence that he intended to be a Border Chief.

high and my arm was strong" indicating that what made the Chieftain a great leader, both physically and orally, is now firmly in the past. This illustrates how in Tennyson's poetry the "Celtic" subject is not allowed to exist or be truly active in the present world. The poet is using a perceived "Celtic" tradition when he appropriates the Bardic, however, as I have already explored with 'The Druid's Prophecies' and 'the Golden Year,' the present and the future are the realm of the "Saxon." The speakers in both of those poems allowed for Germanic and British peoples to be active in the shaping of events rather than having to remember them. Therefore, when talking about "Celtic Decay" it must be seen as an ideological Colonial Celticist choice to undermine the "Celt" being active in the present moment. 'The Old Chieftain' deals with the idea of the decay of the body as a source of looking back at the past. Although 'The Exile's Harp' shares the theme of the Bardic, it presents its decay in a quite different manner; the abandonment and rotting away of the instrument most associated with the "Celtic" bard, the Harp.

'The Exile's Harp' has been described by John Hughes as a "turning away from the now impossible, perhaps even prohibited, pleasures of music."[256] Indeed the poem concerns a Bardic character who, having left his ancestral home, is forced to regretfully give up his harp. However, this act of abandoning music is not purely just a part of the narrative. It also represents a rejection of the minstrel function of the Bard.[257] I have explored how the visionary aspect of the Bardic mode was very much at the forefront of Tennyson's thinking about his contemporary world, yet when he produces poetry that highlights the musical aspects of the "Celtic" poets, this is always framed by existing in a lost past. This illustrates the problematic nature of his attempts to use Romantic Celticist influences. The echoes of James MacPherson and Sir Walter Scott found in his poetry are disturbed by his readings of the English Romantic poets. When creating the conventions of their new form of poetry, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge "shed the lexical and figurative apparatus" of the social activity of minstrelsy in favour of the personal experience of writing.[258] To Tennyson, the English Romantic mode would have represented modernity while the medievalist writings of MacPherson, Scott and others would have belonged to a distant

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[256] John Hughes, 'The Exile's Harp': Tennyson's Lost World of Music'. In *Nineteenth-Century Music Review,* 3.2 (2006), p. 113-135. (pp. 119)

[257] A social performative mode similar in function to Minstrelsy, troubadours, improvvisatori and imptovvstrici found in other cultures.
Erik Simpson, *Literarily Minstrelsy: Minstrels and Improvisers in British, Irish and American Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 1

[258] Erik Simpson, p. 3

past. However, tensions between Romantic and Bardic that exist in the poet's writing means that 'The Exile's Harp' is a hybrid of the two traditions. While the poem adopts the personal experience that is central to English Romanticism, there remains a desire for the older form of writing poetry.

Violet E Beasley notes that most of Alfred's works in *Poems by Two Brothers* link the natural landscape with 'artificial moods of nostalgia' and that they have "deteriorated and decayed."[259] This is illustrated in 'The Exile's Harp' in its opening lines which set the mood for the poem by returning to the wild and untamed natural landscapes of his Ossianic adaptations. The exile, in a state of despair, proclaims that he will put aside his harp in a picturesque landscape:

> I WILL hang thee, my Harp, by the side of the fountain,
> On the whispering branch of the lone-waving willow:
> Above thee shall rush the hoarse gale of the mountain,
> Below thee shall tumble the dark breaking billow. (1 – 4)

Recalling 'Oh! ye wild winds, that roar and rave' Tennyson presents a bleak, wild image of the wind battering the mountains, reminding the reader that the speaker exists outside the urban and within the primitive. Also of particular interest is Tennyson's mentioning of the willow, a tree which in its weeping form is associated with grief,[260] which further adds to a sense of the poem taking place outside the realm of modernity. Rather than celebrating the triumph of the romantic mode, the speaker mourns the loss of the older "Celtic" Bardic tradition.

That Tennyson chose to express grief at the removal of a "Celtic" mode from English poetry is at odds with the image of the believer in the Saxonist future found in his Bardic work. However, the object of the Harp becomes a symbol of desire for a past that is quickly disappearing:

> Oh! Harp of my fathers!
> Thy cords shall decay,
> One by one with the strings
> Shall thy notes fade way;
> Till the fiercest of tempests

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[259] Violet E. Beasley, *The Role of Memory in the Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (Simcoe: Dauvis Publishing, 2010), p. 19
[260] The willow is also featured prominently in the doom filled first part of Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832). A poem that ends in the death of its title character.

Around thee may tell,
And not waken one sound
Of thy desolate shell! (8 – 16)

Because the bardic harp belongs to the exile's "fathers" it represents a tradition. By giving up the instrument, the exile is rejecting this tradition and allowing it to die. This is illustrated by the use of the language of decay. First the "notes fade way" as they are forgotten until the poetry and music of the bard is utterly annihilated into a "desolate shell" and cannot be relieved by even the loudest of efforts. Tennyson's choice of language in the poem is both sorrowful and accepting of the loss of the past. The poem's brutal language of decay and destruction also has an undercurrent of sentimentality with the exclamation "Oh! Harp of my Fathers." The death of the Bardic mode is inevitable but there is still a desire by the poet to cling on to it.

However, in the end English Romantic modernity asserts itself over the "Celtic" Bard past with the final line: "For ever farewell." While Tennyson would continue to use "Celtic" themes and images in his work until his death in 1892, there are no examples of poetry that use the Bardic Minstrel mode, and he prefers instead to use the Romantic mode of the personal experience. The clash of "Celtic" and English Romantic influences runs through other examples of poetry from *Poems by Two Brothers*, especially works based on Tennyson's reading of Sir Walter Scott's 1803 collection of Border ballads *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

Ricks identifies the influence of both John Leyden's 'Ode on Visiting Flodden,' found in the *Minstrelsy*, and Scott's *The Lady of the Lake* on Tennyson's 'The Vale of Bones'.[261] However, unlike his Ossianic-inspired work it is not a straightforward adaptation. Instead, he takes the landscape of ancient battlefields and similar sublime language for the Highlands of Scotland and crafts his own imagined tale of a nostalgic revisit to a long-forgotten site of battle littered with bones. The title of the poem evokes the Biblical "Resurrection of the Dry Bones" found in chapter thirty-seven of Ezekiel. Here Ezekiel describes a valley full of bones and how "God enters into the bones to give them life." However, while Tennyson's title and central image correspond with the biblical text, his description of the bones lacks the hope that comes with the promise of

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[261] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 108

resurrection.[262]Rather, the poet lingers on the horrifying nature of a battlefield long after the conflict is over.

From the opening lines of the poem the reader can see that Tennyson deploys the same gloomy, desolate language as in his Ossianic adaptations to describe the landscape. They are picturesque in their description of the speaker's night-time entrance into the Vale of Bones as the reader is presented with a sublime image of natural beauty:

> Along yon vapour-mantled sky
> The Dark-Red moon is riding high;
> At times, her beams in beauty break
> Upon the broad and silvery lake;
> At times more bright they clearly fall
> On some white castles ruined wall;
> At times, her partial splendour shines
> Upon the grove of deep-black pines,
> Through which the dreary night-breeze moans
> Above this Vale of Scattered bones. (1 – 10)

Tennyson's landscape is otherworldly with its description of the moon and black pines to remind the reader that they are not in the safe environment of the tamed English countryside. The haunted atmosphere of the Vale, enhanced by the ghostly white castle, brings to mind a Gothic horror that inspired fear in the minds of English visitors to the "Celtic" lands in the mid eighteenth century[263] that was part of the process of making the "Celtic" fashionable. Central to this are the image of decay founds in these lines. The castle is ruined and therefore uninhabited, while the ground is covered in scattered bones. Leyden, who was Scottish, was writing about the 1513 Battle of Flodden. The battle, fought as part of the War of the League of Cambrai, was a crushing defeat of the Scottish, led by James IV who was killed in the battle, by invading English forces commanded by the Earl of Surrey. Therefore, the images of decay found in Leyden's poem are designed to represent a traumatic episode in his nation's history. Compare lines 55 to 60 of Leyden with the images found in Tennyson:

> Rush from brown ruins scarr'd with age,

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[262] It is interesting to note that line 22 reads 'Nether shall they be divided into two kingdoms'. While a reference to 'children of Israel' and 'the heathen' in the context of early nineteenth century writing it is also a noticeable parallel to England and Scotland.

[263] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Invention of Celtic Nature Poetry' in *Celticism* ed by. Terrence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 97-124 (p. 110)

> That frown o'er haunted Hermitage;'
> Where, long by spells mysterious bound,
> They pace their round with Lifeless smile,
> And shake with restless foot the guilty pile,
> Till sink the mouldering towers beneath the burden'd ground

These lines are written in sorrow for his nation's loss that day hence the sorrowful language of decay such as "scarr'd with age," "haunted," "lifeless" and "mouldering." Tennyson identifies with the "Celtic" forces by describing his lost army as wearing "tartans," a signifier, although a fairly recent invention[264], of Scottishness, in line 59. This not only acts to cement the poem's place as a work of Celticism but also to add to the sense of decay that characterizes the poem. In lines 85 to 90 Tennyson writes about the slaughter during the battle:

> When battle's brazen throat no more
> Raised its annihilating roar.
> There lay ye on each other piled,
> Your bows with noble dust defiled;
> There, by the loudly-gushing water,
> Lay man and horse in mingled slaughter.

The slaughter of the "Celtic" army is not presented as something glorious. The image of bodies piled on top of each other and horses mingling in with dead soldiers, even the use of the word "annihilating"[265] are reminiscent of the anti-war poetry that would become vogue after the horrors of the First World War. In much the same manner that Tennyson would attack the Empires of other nations while proclaiming the glories of that of the British, he will not allow the "Celt" the same glory in death that he would later ascribe to the forces of Queen Victoria in his laureate work, in particular 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. Instead, they are left to rot away in the remote and forgotten Vale of Bones. This horrifying point is asserted in the final stanza of the poem when the narrative voice describes the literal decay of the bodies and how it has affected the landscape:

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[264] Despite Sir Walter Scot's claim in an 1805 essay in the Edinburgh Review that Ossian himself would have worn 'a tartan philberg', the tradition was unknown before the eighteen century. It was invented by an Englishman after the act of Union in 1707. "Clan Tartans' were devised by two other Englishmen as part of a pageant devised by Scott in honour of King George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822.
Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland' in *The Invention of Tradition* ed by Eric Hosbawn & Terence Ranger. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), PP. 15 – 42 (P. 18 – 19)

[265] While the work that inspired Tennyson was based on a sixteenth century battle between the English and the Scots it is hard not to think of the more recent battle of Culloden which not only had an annihilating effect on the Jacobite armed forces but also on the entire Highland culture that Tennyson is appropriating in his work.

> But years have thrown their veil between,
> And altered is that lovely scene
> And dreadful emblems of thy might
> Stern Dissolution! Meet thy sight;
> The eyeless socket, dark and dull,
> The hideous grinning of the skull,
> Are sights which memory disowns. (115 – 121)

The reader is left with an uneasy sense of horror at the images of human remains that reoccur throughout the work. The images found in these lines are gruesome in their depiction of human skulls. However, as the speaker is placed in a remote, alien, and primitive location and the horrors of war are inflicted on an "Other" the poem is detached from Tennyson's presumed English speaking and "Anglo-Saxon" audience. This is also achieved through the medium of memory. As the battle took place in the distant past the effects of the horrors of war do not feel as relevant to the audience as something touching on current events. However, despite being detached from the events the speaker still desires to remember the decaying sights they see beyond "the veil" of years and is forced to disown the memory. The sense of decay and detachment is also found in the poetic style. Unlike 'The Exile's Harp,' the narrative voice presented in the 'Vale of Bones' is commenting on events after the fact as the battle was fought several generations before their visit. This firmly places the "Celt" in the past rather than the present. The aforementioned 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and other British war poetry written by Tennyson, such as 'The Defence of Lucknow' among others, tended to comment on current events.

'The Vale of Bones' and other "Celtic" war poetry, such as 'Boadicea,' 'The Battle of Brunanburh' and the poet's Arthurian work, all refer to a primitivist past. Stafford notes that the writing of primitivist poetic was "a badge of respectability" as it "asserts the writer's membership of the non-primitive culture."[266] Therefore, in attempting to find respectability with his audience, Tennyson uses the "Celtic" past in a manner that he cannot articulate with the British present in case he loses said audience. The past can be filled with decay and horror as it is as distant as the remote locations that the poet uses in his work. In contrast the present cannot be awarded the same connotations as it would upset the confidence in Britain and its Empire that characterized the early to mid-nineteenth century.

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[266] Fiona J. Stafford,, 'Primitivism and the 'Primitive' Poet: A Cultural Context for MacPherson. in *Celticism* ed by. Terrence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 79-96 (p. 81)

The final poem I shall be looking at, 'Inverlee,' was like 'Unhappy man, thy wander there' not included in *Poems by Two Brothers* although it was written in 1826.[267] Written as a dramatic monologue, it concerns a description of an ancient castle and the loss of the life that once filled it. The castle is fictional but the use of the "Celtic" prefix "Inver" places the location of it firmly within Scotland. Ricks suggests that the poem was inspired by Scott and the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* based on Tennyson's use of details from the second canto such as the word "Oriel."[268] However, there are also strong links between 'Inverlee' and the poet's adaptations of MacPherson, particularly in the use of the wind:

> With varying mournful melody.
> The Wind is moaning through the vales,
> The stony vales of Inverlee
> And through the steeple walls,
> And the deserted hawthorn tree. (8 – 12)

In the same manner as 'Oh! Ye wild winds, that roar and rave' and 'Midnight' the wind creates a haunted mood to the work. Although these lines do not invoke an actual spectral haunting, words such as "mournful melody," "moaning" and "deserted" do invoke the same kind Gothicism in the mind of the reader as Tennyson's other works. Another link between the poetry of *Poems by Two Brothers* and 'Inverlee' is the temporal situation of the castle.

The reader is explicitly informed that the time in which the castle was filled with life is now over. The poem has many examples of words that describe the building as being in a state of decay, such as "broken," (17) "failing," (19) "obscurity," (20) "subterranean dusk" (21) and "mouldering husk" (25). However, it is when Tennyson talks about the population of the castle that the reader is given the greatest sense that their glory days are long gone.

> When around the holy table prest
> The old and young at Inverlee,
> That race of buxom youth grown old
> Are fading far beyond the sea. (25 – 28)

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[267] It would not in fact be published until 1936 when Sir Charles Tennyson, Alfred's Grandson, included it in his 'Alfred Tennyson's Commonplace Book' article for the Cornhill Magazine.
Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed) (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 174
[268] Christopher Ricks, p. 174
Scott: And each shafted Oriel glimmers white (1: 6)
Tennyson: And the rich Oriel's blazoned height (39)

The idea that there might be young people living in Inverlee is sharply disturbed by Tennyson describing their race as being "Old" and "fading." In the same manner as 'The Old Chieftain' the implied "Celtic" people of the castle are denied the right to exist in the present and are shown to be in decline. Tennyson follows this by stating that:

> To them all life's uncounted ills
> Hold no such curse as Memory. (31-32)

While in 'The Old Chieftain' memory was shown as source of pride, here it is shown to be undesirable. This can be seen in two ways. The first is that the "Celts," while belonging in the past, cannot actually relive past experiences, which becomes a source of pain for them. The second is that Tennyson found himself in a situation similar to the "Celt." Herbert Tucker describes the poet as having "a psychic fixation upon the days that are no more" while at the same time having a "fascination with inevitability."[269] The paralysis he ascribes to the "Celt" is the same he would experience throughout his career. Like them he wants to exist in the present and be part of the progress of time but cannot fully escape the past. Tucker goes on to explain that while Tennyson lived in a time of progress his "genius gave its real allegiance to an older and darker wisdom." [270] Here we have a reason why Tennyson is attracted to Celticism despite paradoxically being ambivalent about the "Celt." He fetishizes what he believes to be their connection to the past, something he himself desires to experience.[271] The tyranny of memory is reinforced by the poet's description of past events:

> The merry, merry hall, whose bowers
> Rang loud to midnight minstrelsy;
> What time in gay and glorious light
> Lay the long feast at Inverlee
> And the rich Oriel's blazoned height
> Shone readly through the dark countrie (35 – 40)

This joyous scene is disrupted by the fact it does not exist in the present temporal moment. Each example of leisure is framed as being in the past tense. The music "Rang loud," the feast "lay," and the Oriels "shone." In this context I argue that 'Inverlee' is the culmination of

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[269] Herbert F Tucker, *Tennyson, and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 13

[270] Herbert F. Tucker, p. 14

[271] However, as I shall explore in the final chapter Tennyson would eventually allow the "Celt" to become part of the modern world in the poem 'Tomorrow'.

part of Tennyson's work on the "Celt" in the 1820s. It contains the language of the adaptations of MacPherson, places the "Celt" firmly in the past, unable to affect the present or the future, and gives the reader a vision of decay.

As we have seen with all four of these poems, Tennyson was not interested in allowing the "Celt" a place in the modern moment. He only gave the English that privilege as well as that of being able to shape the future. Because of this the "Celt" is cursed to remain in a rapidly disappearing past. This is represented in Tennyson's poetry by a range of different kinds of decay, whether it be of the body, mind, or environment. However, as I have argued with 'the Vale of Bones,' he used the decaying world of the "Celt" to explore topics, particularly the horrors of war, that he would have not been able to in an English context.

Conclusions

Tennyson was developing his Colonial Celticism from the beginning of his career. This is evident in his contributions to *Poems by Two Brothers* which deploy elements of Romantic Celticism, in particular the Ossianic poetry of James MacPherson, but retain Saxonist attitudes. The picturesque "Celtic" landscapes the poet creates are designed to invoke primitiveness that is pleasing on the page but not so in Saxonist society. Tennyson "Others" the "Celts" by placing them in a liminal space in which the real and unreal meet, reaffirming that they are not part of the rational Saxonist world and belong to the far-off wild places of the world. He also appropriates the figures of the Druid and Bard from the "Celt" as he feels he can learn something about being a poet from them and tap into the prophetic aspects associated with Bardic poetry. Indeed, when as Laureate, he needed to disguise his name when writing poetry prophesying a war with Britain's ally France, he chose to use the names of famous Druids and Bards in order to give himself an air of authority. Finally, Tennyson deploys a sense of "Celtic decay" in other to further separate the "Celt" from the "Saxon." The former is denied the modernity of the later through use of old age, temporal setting and the picturesque. All of this contributes a sense of an imagined world in which the "Celt" occupies a space of magic and myth. However, while the "Saxon" finds this space pleasurable to gaze at it is not a space in which it is desirable to exist.

During the time Tennyson was still writing the poetry explored in this chapter, he had also turned his attention to "Celtic" King Arthur leading to the creation of *Idylls of the King* over the course of decades. In this Arthurian body of work, which forms the basis of the next

chapter, the poet continued his appropriation of "Celtic" creativity while simultaneously developing a Colonial Celticism that was characterised by a strong sense of English Nationalism.

Chapter Three

The Saxon King of the Celts

Tennyson's Arthurian Poetry

In *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry*, Colin Graham notes that in Tennyson's work the legendary character of King Arthur is "transmuted into that of [a] nationalist leader." He follows this by posing an important question "which nation (England or Britain) he [Arthur] is leader of?"[272] Although Graham is discussing *Idylls of the King* as a work concerned with the wider British Empire this question has significant importance to the poet's Celticism. Is Arthur a King for all of Britain or has Tennyson appropriated him as a symbol of English nationalism? The answer is the latter. Tennyson takes the Pre-Saxon King of the Britons and placed him within the narrative of an English led British nationalism. Joanne Parker notes that the anti-Celtic feeling of Tennyson's England meant that Arthur could not be presented as a "Celt" and, therefore, there was a movement to give the king "Saxon" prestige in order to save him from the "negative stereotypes" related to the "Celtic" people.[273] This is a Colonial Celticist appropriation of the King in that his "Celtic" character is stripped away and replaced with Saxonist values in order to create a symbol of English nationalism. In particular, Tennyson's Arthur is presented as stoic, rational and his round table represents a prototype of a Parliament[274] with the democratic ideal that Saxonists believed their forbearers possessed. However, no academic attention has been giving to the poet's construction of a "Saxon King of the Celts" who was, in the words of an 1870 anonymous critic of Tennyson's work "an anachronism."[275] Through close readings of several examples of Tennyson's Arthurian works, including *Idylls of the King*, I shall demonstrate how the ideology of Colonial Celticism is deployed to appropriate Arthur for the English in a manner that is more overtly nationalistic than the poetry discussed in chapter two.

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[272] Colin Graham. *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 34

[273] Joanne Parker, '*England's darling': The Victorian cult of Alfred the Great*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 38

[274] Joanne Parker, Joanne, p. 38

[275] Anonymous, 'Idylls of the King' in *The Cliftonian* 2.1 (July 1870), pp. 161 – 165 (p.162)

Although not published until twelve years after it was written, 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' was the first of sixteen poems on the subject of Arthur written over the course of the next fifty-five years, including the twelve that make up the *Idylls of the King* cycle. This passion for the Arthurian myths led Tennyson to undertake extensive research on the subject. Hallam Tennyson reports that his father's sources included "Malory, Layamon's *Brut*, Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*, the Old Chronicles, Old French Romances, Celtic folklore and largely his own imagination."[276] Biographical information shows that the poet was extremely interested in lesser-known materials concerning the King in addition to the major existing works. Tennyson travelled widely through both Wales and Cornwall to acquire Arthurian material, going as far as to study the Welsh language.[277] Indeed, Tom Peete Cross in his 1921 essay 'Alfred Tennyson as a Celticist' notes that such was Tennyson's love of Welsh culture that in 1881 he was elected vice president of the national Eisteddfod.[278] This shows that, while Tennyson's ultimate goal was to create an Arthur for a Saxonist British nationalism, he was still building on existing traditions.

Tennyson was not the first English writer to tackle the Arthurian mythology, but he was one of the first to modernise him to reflect Saxonist attitudes.[279] While previous English Arthurian writers, such as Thomas Malory, author of the fifteenth century *Le Morte d'Arthur*, are traditionally seen as Tennyson's starting points in the mythology, he made use of original Celtic works to shape his Camelot. This is evident from Lady Charlotte Guest's comments in the endnotes to the tale of 'Geraint and Enid' that the only other version of the 'Geraint the Son of Erbin' narrative in English is that found in Tennyson's *Idylls of The King*.[280] Despite this use of Celtic texts, Tennyson's epic was still written with a colonial mindset. The "Celtic"

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[276] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 3* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 255

[277] J.M. Gray, Thro' the Vision of the Night (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1980,) p. 15

[278] Tom Peete Cross, 'Alfred Tennyson as a Celticist' in *Modern Philology* 18.9 (Jan. 1921), pp. 485 – 492 (p.492)

[279] Edward Bulwer-Lytton published his epic *King Arthur* in 1848-9, which is noted for giving Arthur a "Saxon Character," predating *Idylls of the King*.
Joanne Parker, '*England's darling': The Victorian cult of Alfred the Great*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 38.
 However, this was almost 20 years after the beginning of Tennyson's Arthurian writing. Despite being two important figures in the creation of a "Saxon" Arthur, Tennyson and Bulwer-Lytton had an adversarial relationship with the later penning the poem *The New Timon* (1845) attacking the former. Tennyson would respond in *The New Timon and the Poets*, the following year.

[280] C.E. Guest, *The Mabinogion* (Glastonbury: The Lost Library, 2014), P. 214
This makes both "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid" unique in the Idylls as they owe nothing to Malory and everything to a Celticist text. As there is no reference to Geraint, Enid or *The Mabinogion* in the "Knowles Memorandum," the early plan for what will become it is safe to presume that Tennyson's original plan was written prior to the publication of Guest's translation and therefore is evidence of the poet reacting to a development in popular Celticism.

signifiers of wildness, sentimentality and mysticism are removed from the character of Arthur and replaced with the aforementioned Saxonist ideals of stoicism, moderation, and rationalism. The ideological construction of this version of Arthur was developed over the course of the writing of the *Idylls*. However, the overt nationalism found in Tennyson's major Arthurian work is absent in earliest poems based in the mythology.

In comparison to the *Idylls* the early versions of both 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott' are sympathetic towards the "Celtic" outsider and character. But as Tennyson's reputation as a poet grew the more Saxonist his Camelot became. Both poems were edited and rewritten to remove lines that either, for example, condoned infidelity or gave the "Celt" a chance to speak for themselves. The editing of both poems is an important step in the creation of Tennyson's "Saxon King of The Celts." This chapter will illustrate how the hardening of Tennyson's Colonial Celticism impacts the development of his Arthurian poetry through readings of 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere,' 'The Lady of Shalott' and *Idylls of the King* with reference to other examples of his work in the mythology. To achieve this following a section on the background of the poet's work within the Arthurian tradition, the chapter will be divided into three sections exploring different themes that Tennyson develops over the decades to answer the question posed by Graham of which nation Arthur is King.

The first section will discuss Tennyson's early Arthurian poetry with a focus on 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott'. The poet had started writing 'Sir Launcelot'[281] in 1830, although it would not be published until ten years later in the poet's two-volume 1842 collection, entitled *Poems,* alongside a number of other "Medievalist" poems. One of these other "Medievalist" works was a rewritten version of 1832's 'The Lady of Shalott'. Both poems are connected by the use of Sir Lancelot as a major character and by their structure. The two works share a rhythm of AAAABCCCB, although 'Sir Launcelot and Queen' lacks the "Camelot/Shalott/Lancelot" refrain found in 'The Lady of Shalott,' indicating that Tennyson intended for them to be companion pieces. Furthermore, they both underwent considerable revisions between being written in the early 1830s and publication in 1842, illustrating the transition from Tennyson's Macpherson imitations to his later Imperialistic Celticism. The published version of 'Sir Launcelot' removes passages and call backs to Tennyson's early Celticist work that would have been unacceptable to his growing,

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[281] Due to the length of the title in most cases I shall shorten it to 'Sir Launcelot'.

predominantly Saxonist, audience. The version of 'The Lady of Shalott' that appeared alongside 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' had been considerably revised to remove passages that give the "Celtic" voice and criticise the English establishment. This changes due to his accession to poet laureateship. In 1850 Tennyson became the official voice of the nation, writing poetry that reflected the national mood on behalf of the Monarchy and the English establishment, which is reflected in the *Idylls of the King* cycle.

The second section of the Chapter will look at the major characters, including Guinevere, The Lady of Shalott and Sir Lancelot. All three represent "Celtic" stereotypes and tropes. The two female characters are marked out as being akin to faeries. While Tennyson's inclusion of the supernatural creatures of "Celtic" folklore is not confined to his work on Arthur, it has a particular purpose within it to denote otherness and the outsider. For example, Guinevere is compared to a faerie Queen in 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere'. This marks her as an outsider, further evidenced by Tennyson's depiction of her originating from "Celtic" lands outside of the Saxonist realm of Camelot. Indeed, in *The Idylls of the King* it is Guinevere, as an outsider, who is blamed for the destruction of Camelot. The eponymous Lady of Shalott is directly referred to by characters in the poem as being a "fairy" upon hearing her singing from her tower. Music and sound play an important role in the poet's invoking of faeries and draws on both Irish and Ossianic tradition. Connected to this use of the faerie is the use of sound. While the creatures may not physically appear in the poet's work they are suggested by descriptions of songs, bells, the wind, and other sonic devices. Therefore, the use of faeries in Tennyson's Arthurian work is ambiguous. It suggests the irrational belief in the supernatural ascribed to Celticism, however, it also provided rational explanations for the faeries, suggesting a Saxonist worldview. The section will end by discussing Lancelot in 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott' and how the Knight is presented as a Celticist figure. Unlike the depiction of Arthur, who is represented as a Victorian Gentleman, Lancelot is a character whom Tennyson allows to be romantic and wild in the mould of the Celticist stereotype.

The final section will discuss Tennyson's final rejection of his early sympathetic Celticism in writing *Idylls of the King*. Unlike the poetry of the 1830s, the *Idylls* epic is a work more concerned with Saxonist ideals of fidelity and rationalism rather than the Celticist ideals of passion and imagination. The section will open by disusing the twin poems of 'Marriage of Geraint' and 'Geraint and Enid'. Unlike the other works that make up the cycle

the two Geraint poems owe nothing to English sources such as Malory and are instead taken from the *Mabinogion*. Therefore, Tennyson becomes part of a tradition of retelling tales that were considered "Celtic," although there is some debate about this. However, the poet still had to rework his text to make it fit in with the wider project of the Idylls. The tale, which stood alone in its original context, is now part of a sequence and therefore must have connections to the other works in the sequence. This is most evident in the changes that Tennyson made to the central characters and their connection to the Queen. Unlike the anonymous medieval compilers of the *Mabinogion,* Tennyson is not interested in preserving Celticist culture. Instead, he makes conscious and unconscious changes and compromises in order for the poem to fit both his society's worldview and the greater structure of the *Idylls* project. Secondly the section will discuss how in the Idyll of 'Gareth and Lynette,' Tennyson subverts the faerie as an Outsider theme by having Gareth's Orcadian companions express belief that Arthur is a faerie Changeling[282] and that the city of Camelot was built by magic. However, the intent of this subversion is not to suggest that the King or his capital are magical in nature. Instead, Tennyson dismisses the Celticist belief in the supernatural of the Orcadians in comparison to the rational Gareth, who is destined to become part of the Knightly establishment of the Saxonist Camelot. Finally, the chapter will return to the character of Guinevere and how in the idyll named for her Tennyson redeems the Queen by having her accept Saxonist authority and becoming a dutiful servant. This process begins subtly with Guinevere expressing scepticism over prophecy but becomes more overt after her conformation with Arthur in which the King forgives her. In redeeming the Queen in this manner Tennyson is asserting the Saxonism that the King represents as the dominant value of the British Isles.

Background to Tennyson's Arthurian Poetry.

The year 1830 would mark an advancement in the poet's Celticist focus as he began to explore the mythic and folkloric aspect of the British Isles. Central to this was the figure of King Arthur, who would become a major concern to Tennyson after his ascension to Laureateship in 1850. Traditionally, Tennyson has been seen as "a starting point for the cultural phenomenon of nineteenth-century Arthuriana" due to the marginalization and rejection of the king by "powerful voices in Victorian culture" such as Elizabeth Barrett

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[282] In folk belief A Changeling, known as a Crimbal in Wales, is a faerie which has been substituted for a human baby. The human would be taken away to be brought up in the otherworld, while the faerie would be brought up by mortal parents. Marc Alexander, *A Companion to the Folklore, Myths and Customs of Britain*. (Bath: Sutton Publishing, 2002), p. 47

Browning and Tennyson's predecessor as Poet Laureate, William Wordsworth.[283] However, despite the long shadow that Tennyson casts over the Victorian fascination, he was part of a movement rather than its origin point. The publishing of new editions of medieval Arthurian works, in particular Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* had reintroduced the mythology into the popular imagination in the first decades of the century. Both a full version of Malory published by Robert Southey in 1817 and cheaper editions based on "William Stansby's 1634 bowdlerized and corrupt version" were popular with British public.[284] Southey's edition in particular is seen as the point of origin for the "nostalgia for a chivalric world" that would characterise the later Victorian passion for both medievalism and Arthuriana.[285] This is typified by the 1838 Eglinton tournament which consisted of "pageants and jousting in full medieval costume" and was at the time "the biggest spectator event in British History."[286]

However, despite the popularity of Medieval Romances, such as that of Arthur, they were not a popular subject in contemporary English Literature[287] when the first version of 'The Lady of Shalott' was published in 1832. Indeed, when the poet's 'Morte D'Arthur' was published in 1842 he added the separate work 'The Epic' to give the Arthurian narrative a new context; "a tale told in Victorian house at Christmas."[288] Graham argues that Tennyson did this to circumvent "perceived objections to an epic project by removing the text from his own voice, while signposting 'tradition'."[289] By this Tennyson could tap into the popularity of medieval Arthuriana while avoiding the stigma of working with an unpopular subject among pre and early Victorian writers. It was the popularity of his work, along with other writers such as Thomas Westwood and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*, and visual art, such as that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, that helped the mythology reach a degree of respectability that allowed for a major work such as *Idylls of the King.*

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[283] Colin Graham. *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 32

[284] John Tasker Grimbert, 'The Evolving Iconography of the Tristan Legend from the Middle Ages to the Present, with Special Emphasis on the Arthurian Revival in British Art' in *Arthuriana* 29.3 (Fall 2019), pp. 65 – 95 (p. 72 -73)

[285] Colin Graham. *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 35

[286] Colin Graham, p.35

[287] *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 178 - 179

[288] Mark Giround, p.179

[289] Colin Graham. *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 33

There is confusion over how Tennyson came to Arthurian myth as a source of inspiration. Although *Morte d'Arthur* is generally recognised as Tennyson's main source of Arthurian inspiration, there is confusion about when he first encountered it. J.M. Grey has suggested that Tennyson may have not read Malory before 1831.[290] This is evidenced by Tennyson claiming that he was not aware of Elaine of Astolat, a character found in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, when writing 'The Lady of Shalott'.[291] Both Elaine and the eponymous lady die due to unrequited love for Sir Lancelot on a river journey down to Camelot. The problem with this argument is that it doesn't take into account that the poet had already written the Arthurian themed 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' a year previously. This makes exactly when Tennyson became inspired to work with the Arthurian mythology unclear. However, it is reasonable to believe that he would have encountered tales of the King and his knights in his father's library. Tennyson claimed, when questioned on the origins of 'The Lady of Shalott' by Frederick James Furnivall, that "I met the story first in some Italian novelle: but the web, mirror, island, etc., were my own."[292] It is also possible that the poet had been inspired by Louisa Stuart Costello's 1829 work *The Funeral Boat* which dealt with the same Arthurian episode found in the medieval Italian source, *Donna di Scalotta*, Tennyson claims to have been based his poem upon.[293] The poem 'Guinevere', although published after 'The Lady of Shalott', marks not only the beginning of the Arthurian thread of Tennyson's work but also a refocusing of his Celticism. This is evidenced by Tennyson planning to write the *Idylls* early on following his first writings on Arthur.

In his biography of his father, Hallam Tennyson notes that in 1869 the poet presented a memorandum containing an allegorical outline for the Idylls to Sir James Thomas Knowles which was believed to be written 30 or 40 years beforehand. This indicates that the elder Tennyson was already thinking of what would become his longest work on Arthur soon after completing his first works in the mythology. The "Knowles memorandum" is striking because it presents a different allegorical context for several characters from the final work. Arthur is

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[290] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 3* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 387

[291] 'The Lady of Shalott' remains one of Tennyson's most popular poems having influenced several different mediums of art. These include the paintings Pre-Raphaelite and inspired artists including William Holman Hunt and John William Waterhouse, among others. Several musical versions of poem have been produced, notably by the Canadian musician Loreena McKennitt on her 1991 album *The Visit*. There also has been a film version produced by WAG Screen and Crow's Eye Productions in 2009. For more on the lasting influence of Tennyson's Celticism please refer to the conclusionary chapter.

[292] Naomi Levine, 'Tirra-Lirrical Ballads: Source Hunting with the Lady of Shalott' in *Victorian Poetry* 54.4 (2016), pp. 439 – 454 (p. 439)

[293] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987,) p. 388

noted as representing "Religious Faith," Mordred "Sceptical Understanding" and Merlin "Science."[294] In a letter to Hallam Tennyson, written in preparation for the biography, Knowles notes that Alfred had planned for Arthur's Knights to represent "human passions which the soul [Arthur] was to order and subdue."[295] As I shall explore Tennyson originally included passionate extremes of feeling in 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and treated the adulterous relationship at the heart of the poem in a sympathetic light. This suggests that the memorandum was written after 1830 when Tennyson first wrote the poem. The revised final version of 'Sir Launcelot' was published in 1842 implying that his decision to make Arthur a steadying force over the passions of his knights over the course of the 1830s. Furthermore, he planned to include three different versions of Guinevere. The first labelled "The Lady of the Lake," possibly a combination of the Queen and the unrelated water spirit, is mentioned but no meaning or indications of Tennyson's plans for the character are laid out. The poet, however, does set out his intentions for the allegorical meaning of the other Guineveres. The first is described as "prim (primitive) Christianity" and is "put away and dwells apart." The second represents "Roman Catholicism" and "flies" from Camelot. Tennyson then describes Arthur reconciling with the first but "finds her changed by the lapse of time."[296] The implication is a rejection of the church of Rome found in the second Guinevere and an embrace of a different kind of Christianity, most likely Tennyson's own Anglicanism. The allegory outlined in the "Knowles memorandum" would not find its way into the poet's published version of the Idylls as Tennyson had decided against his original plan. In his letter to Hallam Tennyson, Knowles mentioned that the poet had remarked "that allegory should not be pressed too far and that there are many glancing meanings in everything that he wrote."[297] However, there remain echoes of these plans in the Celticism found in the poetry.

With the newfound fashion for Arthur in Victorian poetry came the aforementioned need to save the King from the "negative stereotypes" of being a "Celt" by transforming him into a "Saxon." On his accession to laureateship Tennyson became the official voice of the

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[294] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 123 Hallam also notes that his father's original plan was to present the Arthurian tales as a "musical masque" in five acts with greater emphasis on Mordred's role in the mythology. (p. 124 – 125)
[295] Sir James Thomas Knowles, *The Idylls of the King: [notes used in part by Hallam Tennyson for the complete edition of Tennyson's works, c.1903]* (1903) This proof marked as private is housed in the Linconshire archives, Lincoln.
[296] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 123
[297] Sir James Thomas Knowles, *The Idylls of the King: [notes used in part by Hallam Tennyson for the complete edition of Tennyson's works, c.1903]* (1903)

nation, writing poetry that reflected the national mood on behalf of the Monarchy and the English establishment, which is reflected in the *Idylls of the King* cycle. Noelle Bowles argues that at the centre of this project is an alignment with The Church of England.[298] While no longer represented by a version of Guinevere, Tennyson deals with the tensions between Anglicism and Catholicism. Arthur is presented not only as the head of English Christianity but also as overthrowing Rome, the heart of Catholicism. This act not only reflects the rejection of Papal authority, as Bowles argues,[299] but also an attempt to reject the Celticism at the heart of Arthurian myth. While the Anglican Church of Ireland was the official Christian denomination its followers were outnumbered by those who followed the teachings of the Church of Rome.[300] Until the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1791 and the later Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829, Catholics in the United Kingdom, had had strict controls placed over their freedom of worship. However, lingering resentments towards Catholicism, especially Irish Catholicism, existed within Protestant society. By rejecting the majority religion of Ireland, Tennyson not only promotes the supremacy of the English Church but also the supremacy of "Saxon" over "Celt." The poet's efforts to reject a Celticist Arthur are found in a multitude of other techniques found throughout the cycle. In 'The Coming of Arthur,' the reader is presented with a list of the foes that stand in the way of the King uniting Britain under a single crown:

> Carados, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,
> Claudias, and Clariance of Northumberland,
> The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
> With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
> And Lot of Orkney (111 – 115)

These are not Saxons, traditionally the group that Arthur protects Britain from, but "Celtic" lords[301] opposed to the "English" Arthur. In the "Knowles Memorandum," the poet mentions the "Saxons" as a "sea-people" and that the sea is "theirs," indicating that they were part of his original allegorical plan for the Idylls.[302] The word "Saxon" is never used in the published

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[298] Noelle Bowles, 'Tennyson's Idyll's of the King and Anglican Authority' in *Christianity and Literature* 54.4 (2004), pp. 573 – 594 (p. 574)
[299] Noelle Bowles, P.575
[300] See chapter four for examples of Tennyson's Anti-Catholicism in relation to Ireland.
[301] Although the Orkney islands were settled by the Norse and retains a Scandinavian culture, Tennyson still depicts them as having "Celtic" attitudes. This will be discussed in the final section of this chapter on faeries.
[302] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 123

version of the work. In the 'Guinevere' idyll Tennyson does refer to "the brood by Hengist[303] left" (16), however, this brood is not explicitly referred to as "Saxon." Instead, Tennyson chooses to use the word Heathen. In doing this he places Paganism in opposition to the Christianity of Arthur and his court. Making this the defining feature of the sea peoples gives the impression that Tennyson was trying to avoid linking the actual forefathers of the English nation with being invaders, and indeed Pagans, while simultaneously celebrating the defeat of the "Celtic" peoples of Britain.

Therefore, although Tennyson would concede that Arthur was either Cornish or Welsh in origin, politically and religiously the King has been stripped of his "Celtic" identity and remade as an idealized symbol of the English hegemony over the British Isles. While much has been made of Arthur as a "pattern Victorian gentleman"[304], less attention has been given to the "Celtic" undercurrent that Tennyson inherits from his sources that disrupts this project of British Nationalism. The character of Lancelot acts as a counterpoint to the Arthur. The Knight is an earthy and passionate character in comparison to the stoic "faultless" King. This is particularly noticeable in the poet's early work on the mythology where Lancelot, not Arthur, is presented as the central character. In addition, Tennyson uses the figure of the faerie to denote "Celticness."

Tennyson's use of the faeries in Arthurian works began with his early work in the area. Both 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott' contain mention of the otherworldly creatures of British and "Celtic" folklore. As already discussed, Tennyson used linguistic and thematic techniques to mark the Queen and the Lady as outsiders. These included focusing on the Queen's infidelity with Lancelot and changing his language surrounding the Lady between 1832 and 1842 to mark her out as not being part of the English Camelot. However, both female characters are further marked out as "Celtic" outsiders by Tennyson comparing them to faeries. When, in his Arthurian poetry, Tennyson invokes these creatures of folklore he uses the term, *fairy*. However, while *fairy* and *faerie* are interchangeable in their use to describe such creatures, there are differences in meaning that has led me to choose the latter over the former for the purposes of this thesis. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word fairy is defined as:

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[303] Named by Bede as one of the first "Saxon" leaders in Britain along with his brother Horsa.
Bede, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People ed. By Bertram Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 49
[304] Mark Giround, The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 184

Such a being having the form of a tiny, delicate, and beautiful girl or young woman, usually with insect-like wings.[305]

While faerie is:

Deliberately chosen to describe beings which differ from the conventional representation of faeries as small, delicate winged creatures, esp. in being more dangerous or sinister.[306]

Both the Queen and Lady are compared to the supernatural creatures but not in the pleasant form of the delicate form of the diminutive fairy. They are mysterious and magical but dangerous in their "Celtic" otherness. The Queen will bring about the fall of both King and Kingdom and the Lady is explicitly linked to fear of the outsider in the 1842 version of the poem. Therefore, even though he uses the term fairy, Tennyson's comparisons between the outsider and folkloric creature more closely invoke the definition of faerie.

The Alterations to 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott'.

Tennyson's first Arthurian poems, 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' (1830) and 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832), occupy an important and interesting phase in the poet's career. Firstly, they represent a change in his Celticism. In addition to the greater focus on mythic and folkloric themes taking precedence in this work, the mystical component to the "Celtic" character that interested Tennyson in his early years begins to be downplayed. Also notable is the absence of King Arthur as a character. Neither poem contains any reference to the central figure of the mythology at all. Instead, both focus on Sir Lancelot, who is considered to be the most famous of Arthur's Knights of the Round Table.[307] Tennyson would not include the King in his work until 1834's 'Morte d'Arthur'. This suggests that the young Tennyson was originally attracted to Lancelot, and not Arthur, as literary inspiration. Therefore, the poems represent the poet at a crossroads. They retain aspects of the poet's early Celticism while, at the same time, show him to be in the process of developing new interests. At this early point in Tennyson's Arthurian poetry, the "English" Camelot he would depict in the *Idylls* is not

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[305] "fairy, n. and adj.." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020. [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/67741 [accessed April 19, 2020].

[306] "faerie, n. and adj.." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. March 2020 [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/67603 [accessed April 19, 2020].

[307] Phyllis Karr, *The King Arthur Companion*. (Hayward: Chaosium Inc, 1983), p. 56

fully formed. However, the revised versions of the poems published in 1842 illustrate the poet's movement towards the Imperialistic Celticism of his later work.

Editing 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere'

The final published fragmentary version of 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' focuses entirely on the Knight, the Queen, and the natural world around them, with Tennyson choosing not to include any other characters. However, the annotations found in Ricks' three volume complete collection of the poet's work reveal that this was not originally the case. Merlin, Arthur's infamous advisor and druid/wizard, was intended to be included in the narrative of the poem:

> Wherefrom stood out the staring bone
> The Wizard Merlin wise and grey.
> His shanks were thin as legs of pies
> The bloom that on an apple dries
> Burned beneath his cat like eyes
> That twinkled everyway.[308]

The mystical nature of Merlin is emphasised here both in his position of being "wise and grey" and in the supernatural image of him having "cat like eyes." That these eyes "twinkled everyway" further creates the sense that the druid is someone with authority and wisdom that is beyond the veil of the everyday world. Indeed, when greeting Lancelot, Merlin is depicted as prophesying over the Knight's future when he states, "Your Fame will flourish pure and bright."[309] This is a direct link back to the poet's interest in the prophetic aspect of Druids as poetic inspiration, as explored in the previous chapter and refers to the Knight's future fame as part of the Grail Quest. However, Tennyson chose not to include any of this in the final poem. This is the first sign that Tennyson's Celticism is beginning to transition from the early interests he expressed in his MacPherson-inspired works. The mystical aspect of the "Celt" that the young poet identified with slowly begins to disappear from his work. 1846's ''The Golden Year' is prophetic but in a non-supernatural/Druidic manner, unlike 'The Druid's Prophecies', for example.[310] This indicates that Tennyson desired to limit a recognizable "Celtic" influence in his poetry as his audience grew.[311]

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[308] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 3* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 456
[309] Christopher Ricks, p. 386
[310] However, as will be discussed in chapter four, Tennyson will return to identifying with the "Celt" as prophetic
[311] He would not be entirely successful, however, as we shall see.

A second major edit to the poem has even larger implications for Tennyson's Celticism and the ways in which the poem would have been received by the English public. J. M. Kemble, having heard the complete lost version of the poem during a visit to the poet, reports in a letter to his friend W. B. Donne, dated June 1833, that Tennyson intended to include a song sung by Lancelot to Guinevere when taking her "to live with him at Joyous Gard, having rescued her from being burnt as an adulteress."[312] It is unclear, however, how the aforementioned Merlin stanza would have fit in with the poet's Arthurian chronology developed in his later poetry. The flight of the Knight and the Queen takes place at the end of the Arthurian mythic cycle. In the later *Idylls*, Tennyson placed the aforementioned beguiling of Merlin before the trial and attempted execution of Guinevere. This indicates either that Kemble was mistaken in Tennyson's intent or that the Merlin stanza was written after June 1833 and the poet had changed his mind with regards to where the poem takes place in the Arthurian timeline. Kemble regretted not being able to provide a full version of the poem to Donne, but he did copy down Lancelot's song.[313]

> Bathe with me in the fiery flood
> And mingle kisses, tears, and sighs
> Life of the life within my blood,
> Light of the light within mine eyes.[314]

The passionate extremes of feeling found in the song are possibly the reason why Tennyson choose to remove it from his final version of the poem. English society of the 1830s frowned upon adultery and, despite being part of the Arthurian mythology for centuries, any attempt by Tennyson to portray the affair of Lancelot and Guinevere in a positive and romantic light would have caused a great deal of controversy. The line 'And mingle kisses, tears and sighs' is explicitly sexual in nature. Indeed, Kemble did not want Donne to make public the content of the song for the sake of "Alfred's and Sir L's Character."[315] Although the affair of Lancelot and Guinevere is central to Arthurian mythology, being one of several events that trigger the beginning of Camelot's fall, it was removed so as to not cause offence. Furthermore, the poet had planned to include Galahad, Lancelot's son, as a model of chastity, as a foil for the

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[312] Mark Giround, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (*New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 181

[313] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 547

[314] Mark Giround, The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 180

[315] Mark Giround. P. 181

lovers.[316] However, like Merlin, the Knight is excised from the poem. If he had been included, he would have represented a chaste counterpoint to the lovers whom Saxonists would have identified with. Therefore, by excluding the younger knight Tennyson protects further "Sir L's Character" by not giving the audience a representative of their own attitudes and instead focusing on the central two characters.

Rewriting The Lady of Shalott

As already noted, 'The Lady of Shalott' was first published in Tennyson's *Poems* of 1832. However, for the poem's second appearance in the two-volume 1842 *Poems* it had undergone a heavy rewrite with six of the eight passages found in the original omitted or altered.[317] Both Edgar F. Shannon Jr.[318] and Chrisopher Ricks[319] note that in rewriting the poem a decade after its original publication Tennyson was responding to negative comments made by several reviewers, notably John Stuart Mill and John William Crocker, the latter of whom is noted by Ricks as deriding the poem as a pun on the word "spinster."[320] In his interaction with his critics Tennyson demonstrates the same change in attitude towards the "Celt" found in the revisions made to 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' over the same chronological period. This new version of the poem not only changes the wording of the original but also its meaning. In the 1832 original Tennyson is more sympathetic to the "Celt," represented by the remote island of Shalott, and critical of the English metropole, represented by Camelot. However, in 1842, his sympathies lay with Camelot at the expense of Shalott. The change in focus made over the decade between the publication of either version of the poem, demonstrate Tennyson's transition towards an Imperialistic Celticism in a similar manner to 'Sir Launcelot and Queen', although with location rather character.

In both versions of the poem Tennyson uses the terms "remote Shalott," "silent isle" and describes the location as "the island in the river," giving the impression that the location is separate from Camelot. However, in the 1832 original he creates additional barriers between the Island and the outside world:

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[316] Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: the Arthurian Revival And Tennyson, 1800- 1849.* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990.), p.201

[317] Edgar F. Shannon Jr., *Tennyson and the Reviewers: A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon His Poetry, 1827–1851* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvad University Press, 1952) p. 39

[318] Edgar F. Shannon Jr. p. 41 - 42

[319] Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1989) p. 76

[320] Christopher Ricks, p. 76

> The little isle is all inrail'd
> With a rose-fence, and overtrail'd
> With roses: by the marge unhail'd (19 – 21)

The rose-fence surrounding the Island, in a similar manner to the river, creates a physical border that encloses the Lady in her tower. In addition, the "marge[321] unhail'd" also suggests a social barrier. No one is acknowledging Shalott as a location which adds to the sense of remoteness that Tennyson is creating. This recalls the Saxonist notion, explored in the previous chapter, that remoteness is a "Celtic" quality and that it should be "ignored."[322] However, this does not necessarily make Shalott a "Celtic" space on its own. England, despite being the centre of Tennyson's Saxonism, contains its own remote places, although during the poet's time these were disappearing as railway travel expanded. In order to qualify Shalott as being Celticist, consideration has to be given to the echoes of the poet's earlier Celticist poetry. For example, in 1832 the lady is described thus:

> A pearl garland winds her head:
> She leaneth on a velvet bed,
> Full royally apparelled,
> The Lady of Shalott. (24-27)

This rich and luxurious language set among a remote and forgotten location recalls the memories of the narrator of 'Inverlee,' explored in the previous chapter. Indeed, Shalott is much the same as the castle in that earlier poem:

> The stony vales of Inverlee
> And through the steeple walls,
> And the deserted hawthorn tree. (8 – 12)

While Shalott lacks the overt "Celtic" decay of the deserted and ruined Inverlee, they are both remote and forgotten. However, the unchanging nature of the Lady's existence that drives her to be "half sick of Shadows," is in itself a form of decay. All the Lady can do is work, leading to a sedentary existence. She is not dynamic and forward moving and,

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[321] "An edge or border of something; *esp.* a river bank, shore"
"marge, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020 [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/114035. [Accessed 7 May 2020]

[322] Fiona J. Stafford, The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), p. 8

therefore, much like the "Celts" of the poet's past work, trapped in the past. Like that earlier Celticist work, this poem illustrates Tennyson's paradoxical nature of both being attracted to the "Celtic" yet at the same time conforming to Saxonist ideas such as the belief that "Celts" belong to remote fringes. The luxurious language used for the Lady is removed in the 1842 version of the poem, a move welcomed by James Spedding in his review of the collection published in April 1843 in which he is noted as stating that "the suppressions and revisions were indicative of improving taste and increasing power."[323] Shannon Jr. concurs with this argument stating that "the divestment of the Lady of Shalott's pearl garland, royal robes and other finery was a vast improvement in taste."[324] In a Celticist reading of the alterations, however, the removal of the Lady's finery is indicative of a removal of the Lady's power in the 1842 version of the poem which is further evidenced by other aspects of the text including the relationship between Shalott and Camelot.

The Celticist nature of Shalott is further evidenced when compared to Tennyson's depiction of Camelot. Critics such as Richard D. Mallen argue that the poet's Arthurian work is a commentary on English politics in the 1830s onwards, practically an "anxious moment in the evolution" of the monarchy to a figurehead following the Reform Bill of 1832. [325] Furthermore, Tennyson would make an analogical connection between Arthur and the "ever-broadening England" (30) of Empire when he included 'To the Queen' as a postscript to *Idylls of the King*.[326] Therefore, if Arthur is a commentary on English politics, then Camelot is his London. This is evident in the description of the Lady's entry into Camelot in the 1832 version:

> Under tower and balcony,
> By gardenwall and gallery,
> A pale, pale corpse she floated by,
> Deadcold, between the houses high,
>   Dead into towered Camelot.
> Knight and burgher, lord, and dame,
> To the planked wharfage came: (154 – 160)

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[323] Edgar F. Shannon Jr., *Tennyson and the Reviewers: A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon His Poetry, 1827–1851* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvad University Press, 1952) p. 77

[324] Edgar F. Shannon Jr. p. 77

[325] Richard D. Mallen, 'The "Crowned Republic" of Tennyson's "Idylls of the King"' in *Victorian Poetry* 37.3 (Fall 1999), pp. 275 – 290 (p. 275)

[326] Jeffrey J. Jackson, 'The Once and Future Sword: Excalibur and the Poetics of Imperial Heroism in Idylls of the King' *Victorian Poetry* 46.2 (Summer 2008), pp. 207 – 229 (p.209)

Towers, gardens, and high houses suggest that Tennyson is depicting a metropolis. The "planked wharfage" refers to docklands, a feature of London. Furthermore, the word "burgher" refers to "an inhabitant of a corporate town."[327] This illustrates that, unlike the remote and ignored Shalott, Camelot is a population and trade centre. In addition to this, at the end of the poem, Tennyson mentions "The wellfed wits at Camelot" (167). Here "wits" means "Wisdom, good judgement, discretion, prudence," suggesting that these are leaders of the city. They are "well-fed" which further suggests that they are an elite. Yet Tennyson criticizes this group by saying that they are "puzzled more than the all rest" (166) by the appearance of the dead Lady. This is interesting in the context of the year 1832 and the Reform Bill. The poet was in favour of it and other "contemporary movements for political change"[328] and "directly knew the anger of the rural disenfranchised," having witnessed the Reform riots in Cambridge in 1830.[329] Therefore, here he is criticizing a "well fed" London elite who do not understand the outside world. This further creates the sense that Camelot represents a London, the centre of English power, in the poem.

By making Camelot the centre and Shalott remote, Tennyson reinforces this power dynamic between "Celt" and "Saxon." This becomes even more apparent in Tennyson's transition from his early to later imperialistic Celticism. Tennyson's paradoxical use of barriers and luxurious language is removed as is his criticism of the London elite. The Lady of 1832 is "queenly" and "royally apparelled" suggesting a sympathetic character in a similar manner as the poet's celebration of the infidelity of the Queen found in 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere'. Yet the only time Tennyson comments on the Lady's appearance in the 1842 version it is in the final stanza when Lancelot muses that she has "a lovely face" (169). This change diminishes the inhabitant of the "Celtic" Island who, as we shall see, must be given meaning by the observations of the inhabitants of the "Saxon" City in the later version of the poem. In addition to this, while the barriers between Shalott and the outside world are removed in 1842, the Island is made to feel even more remote in relation to Camelot by a change in direction of the movement of characters.

In lines eighty-four, ninety-three and one hundred and two of the 1842 version of the poem Tennyson uses the refrain "As he rode down *to* Camelot" to describe Lancelot's

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[327] "burgher, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020 [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/24940 [Accessed 8 May 2020]

[328] John Batchelor, Tennyson*: To strive, to seek to find.* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2012), p. 52

[329] Francis O'Gorman, 'Tennyson's "The Lotus Eaters and the Politics of the 1830s' in *Victorian Review* 30.1 (pp. 1-20), p. 6

movements before he is seen by the lady in her mirror. However, in the earlier version the same refrain reads "As he rode down *from* Camelot." Likewise, in lines sixty-five and sixty-six, Tennyson describes a "A funeral, with plumes and lights and music." In the earlier version of the poem, it "*came from* Camelot." Yet in the rewritten version, funeral's direction is changed so it "*went to* Camelot." This small deliberate word change of "from" to "to" has the effect of making Shalott more remote and ignored in 1842 than it had been depicted in 1832. In the earlier version of the poem the only journey towards the capital is the Lady's final voyage and characters can leave the city to travel in the outside world. However, in 1842 everything is directed towards Camelot at the detriment of Shalott, which is pushed even further away. Therefore, Camelot becomes the absolute centre. This would have chimed with the poet's growing Saxonism that saw London as the centre of the world, especially in relation to the concept of an "ever-broadening England" and its empire. The shift in thinking demonstrated here corresponds with the editing of 'Sir Launcelot' in Tennyson moving towards a more Saxonist view of the Arthurian mythology that is centred around England and English attitudes towards the world.

This is also evident at the end of the poem. The final stanza of the nineteen-stanza original version of the poem ends with the Lady, through the medium of a letter she wrote before her death, introducing herself to the gathered "Knight, minstrel, abbot, squire, and guest" of Camelot:

> 'The Web was woven curiosity,
> The charm is broken utterly,
> Draw near, and fear not – this is I,
> The Lady of Shalott. (168 – 171)

In the act of writing down a message for the assembled audience at Camelot, the inhabitant of the "Celtic" Island speaks for herself. This is noticeable in Tennyson's choice to have her state "this is I." The lady is given an authoritative voice with which she has the ability to assert herself. She is able to communicate that she is the victim of the curse by using the words "web" and "charm" harkening back to the poet's previous use of both words to describe her confinement. The line "Draw near, and fear not" is an attempt to reassure the gathered dignitaries that, while she is an outsider, she is harmless. By giving the Lady an authoritative and assertive voice Tennyson creates a sense that the act of entering Camelot

is done on the Lady's own terms and that she wants her own voice to dictate these terms to those who will see her as an outsider.

However, when it came time to rewrite the poem in 1842 Tennyson fundamentally changes this scene by removing the letter. No longer does the Lady use her own voice to communicate her terms to those in Camelot, instead she has to be discussed and given meaning by the metropole:

> Who is this? And what is here?
> And in the lighted place near
> Died the sound of Royal cheer;
> And they cross'd themselves for fear,
>   All the knights at Camelot:
> But Lancelot mused a little space;
> He said "she has a lovely face;
> God in his mercy lend her grace,
>   The Lady of Shalott." (163 – 171)

Edgar F. Shannon Jr. notes that Tennyson was responding to comments made by John Stuart Mill that the original conclusion of the poem was "lame and important" when rewriting the poem in 1842.[330] However, Abigail Joseph argues that this is a "puzzling" alteration due to the letter read by the assembled crowd being "a central object in the medieval Italian novella, *Donna di Scalotta*, that was Tennyson's source for the poem; more or less the whole point of that very brief story, in fact, is to reveal what this document says."[331] A Celticist reading of the changes between the two versions of the poem answers the puzzle set out by Joseph. The major alteration made to the conclusion of the poem creates a question of who should speak on the "Celts" behalf. By removing the parchment, and therefore the Lady's voice, Tennyson creates the idea that the "Celt," symbolised by the Lady, is an outsider who has entered a space in which she does not belong. The crowd is not given the information contained in the parchment hence the question of "Who is this? And what is here?," when the boat carrying her body enters their midst. The Lady cannot communicate that she should not be feared and instead becomes an object of fear who disrupts the "royal cheer" of the gathered knights. This is in direct contrast to 1832 where she can assert herself as harmless.

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[330] Edgar F. Shannon Jr., *Tennyson and the Reviewers: A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon His Poetry, 1827–1851* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvad University Press, 1952) p. 41 - 42

[331] Abigail Joseph, ''Impressions of Weird Fate': Revision and Crisis in 'The Lady of Shalott' in *Journal of Victorian Culture* 22.2 (2017) pp. 183 – 203 (p. 198)

Instead, the crowd knows nothing about her other than her name. In the 1842 version of the poem this is achieved by the Lady writing her name at the front of the boat:

> And around the prow they read her name
> The Lady of Shalott (161 – 162)

Originally in 1832, the Lady had written her name on the back of the boat:

> "Below the carven stern she wrote" (125)

While Tennyson was inspired to make this change by reviewer John William Croker who "noted with derision" the placement of the name of the Lady of Shalott was "below the stern" of the boat[332] it gains further significance when read in conjunction with the removal of the parchment. By moving the Lady's name to the front end of the boat the crowd can be given her name without the added information that Tennyson has chosen to remove from the poem. This both makes her mysterious and dangerous to the knights evoking the same feelings of fascination and revulsion in the reception of the "Celts" by Tennyson. Rather than speaking for herself, the Lady is given meaning by Lancelot.

Tennyson illustrates a change in attitude towards the "Celtic" outsider between 1832 and 1842. As he became more established as a poet, Tennyson began to conform to an Imperialistic Celticism that centres the English, represented by London. The earlier Tennyson was free to depict the "Celtic" in a positive light and criticise the English elite. However, as he becomes more established and better-known, he must remove these ideas from his work to suit his Saxonist attitudes. The "Celt" can no longer speak for themselves or be glorified. As Camelot is meant to represent England in his Arthurian work, the poet has to centre it as a metropole that people travel to, instead of traveling away from and the veiled criticism of the English establishment is completely removed. This would continue throughout his Arthurian work and is central to the project of creating a Saxonist Camelot.

Tennyson's "Celtic" Characters: Guinevere, The Lady, Lancelot

The changes Tennyson made to his poetry over the course of the 1830s reveal a changing attitude towards the "Celt." The early versions of his work show a willingness to

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[332] Edgar F. Shannon Jr., *Tennyson and the Reviewers: A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon His Poetry, 1827–1851* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvad University Press, 1952) p. 41

show sympathy towards the "Celtic" and criticize English society, something that changes in 1842. However, despite his Celticism being broadly sympathetic, Tennyson was still working with Saxonist stereotypes of the "Celt." This changes little throughout his writings on the Arthurian mythology. While Arthur is saved from negative stereotyping, by being transformed into a "Saxon," the same cannot be said for characters such as Guinevere. She is depicted as an outsider to the Saxonist Camelot whose dangerous passions led directly to its fall. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, rejecting the "Celtic" is portrayed as virtue which allows the outsider to be accepted into Saxonist society.

However, that is not to say that that Tennyson's stereotyping is inherently negative. Hallam Tennyson notes that his father admired Sir Lancelot whom in both 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott' is portrayed as an earthy and passionate Knight, quite unlike the later stoic and rational depiction of Arthur. In exploring this complicated relationship between the poet and his stereotyping in the 1830s Arthurian poetry, two major themes appear. The first is his use of the folkloric figure of the faerie. This mystical and otherworldly figure is exclusively used in his descriptions of the major female characters of this period; Guinevere and the Lady of Shalott, both of whom are marked out as outsiders by being compared to faeries. Although this would be challenged by a contradictory episode in the 1859 idyll of 'Guinevere' which portrays the Queen as destroying the faerie aspects of Camelot. The second is the aforementioned depiction of Lancelot. Both themes display stereotyping within Tennyson's work, the faerie outsiders being negative in comparison to the positive manner in which Lancelot is portrayed.

The Faerie Queens

Tennyson's construction of Queen Guinevere and the eponymous Lady of Shalott as faeries is an Orientalist device. It is designed to exoticize both women and mark them out as outsiders to the English world of Camelot and is closely connected to their gender. In contrast Mordred, the knight who leads the final rebellion against Arthur, is depicted as an Orcadian. In Tennyson's work the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands, with the exception of Gareth, are given Celticist qualities, such as the belief in faeries. This is evidenced by Gareth's followers readiness to believe that Camelot was constructed by magic which I shall explore later in the chapter. However, it is only the female characters who are directly compared to faeries, implying that it is not only their "race" that separates them from the

Saxonist Arthur. This opens up questions over the role of gender in the construction of the relationship between the Saxonist coloniser and the "Celtic" colonised. Said argues that "that Orientalism is a praxis of the same sort, albeit in different territories, as male gender dominance, or patriarchy, in metropolitan societies: the Orient was routinely described as feminine."[333] In the words of Shirley Foster, the oriental is positioned as a "female object of male desire."[334] The feminisation of the Other by a "male" metropole is also a characteristic of Colonial Celticism. During the nineteenth century, English Celticists applied Orientalist ideas to the "Celtic Races" including the notion that they are feminine in comparison to the masculine "Saxon."[335] Tennyson's use of the faerie in his Arthurian poetry is explicitly connected to both desire for and fear of the Feminine "Celt." Guinevere is presented as an ethereal figure, yet it is her betrayal of the patriarchal Saxonism of Arthur that brings about the fall of Camelot. As I have already stated, the Lady of Shalott causes fear when she appears in Camelot and is also exorcized when Lancelot comments, she "has a lovely face." The connection made between the feminine and the faerie by Tennyson therefore is indicative of the poet's ambivalent Colonial Celticism in which the "Celt" is a source of fascination and revulsion.

The first example of faeries in Tennyson's Arthurian poetry is in a description of the ride of Lancelot and Guinevere.

> Then she whose elfin prancer springs
> By night to eery warblings,
> When all the glimmering moorland rings
> With jingling bridle-reins. (33 – 36)

As we will see in the Geraint poetry, sounds and music form an important aspect of Tennyson's Celticism. Here we see the beginnings of this thread in the poet's work with the juxtaposition of the supernatural "ery warblings" with the natural "glimmering moorland," which brings an ethereal feeling to the poem. In Irish folklore faeries, or *Sidhe*, are closely connected to sound and music. This gave rise to the folk belief that gifted musicians are

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[333] Edward Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered' in *Cultural Critique* 1.1 (Autumn, 1985), pp. 89 – 107 (p.103)

[334] Shirley Foster, 'Colonialism and Gender in the East: Representations of the Harem in the Writings of Women Travellers' in *The Yearbook of English Studies* 34 (2004), pp. 6-17 (p.8)

[335] Joseph Lennon, Irish *Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 139

given their gift by faeries.[336] Therefore, Tennyson's use of otherworldly sound being compared to faeries is directly drawing on "Celtic" traditions. It is reminiscent of the use of sound to create the supernatural found in Tennyson's imitations of MacPherson explored in the previous chapter, implying that the poet may have continued to be influenced by the Highland bard at this later point in his writing career.[337] However, MacPherson is not the only influence on Tennyson in his use of sound to evoke the supernatural and faerie. D.L Chambers suggests that this image was inspired by a similar one found in Thomas Carlyle's *Essay on Goethe's Helena* (1828):

> I and tripping on the light fantastic toe: to our ears there is a quick, pure, small-toned music in them, as perhaps of elfin bells when the Queen of Faery rides by moonlight.[338]

In both cases the sound of a horse's bridle being compared to a faerie sound is used to create an otherworldly effect. It is also important to note that Tennyson chooses to use the Germanic "elfin" rather than the "Celtic" "faerie" in this case. The poet would use the two terms to describe the same being and poetic effect throughout his career. Tennyson possessed Irish folklorist Thomas Keightley's 1828 work *Fairy Mythology* (1828),[339] which collected folklore from across Europe, making connections between the mythologies of different nations and peoples. It is reasonable, therefore, to believe that Tennyson would have seen "elf" and "faerie" as the same being, leading him to use both terms interchangeably. Roger Simpson adds a more concretely Celticist alternative source of

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[336] Dimitra Fimi, *Celtic Myth in Contemporary Children's Fantasy: Idealization, Identity, Ideology*. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), p. 55 - 52

[337] A non-Arthurian example of this in Tennyson's work is found in the 'Splendour Falls' song in The Princess: A Melody. It was written as reaction to the subline nature of the hills of Killarney in Ireland, which the poet visited at the invitation of Aubrey de Vere, in 1850 and uses the same Irish and Ossianic device of music and sound creating images in the mind of the narrative voice.

> O sweet and far from cliff and scar
> The horns of Elfland faintly blowing
Blow, let us hear the purple glean replaying
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying,
> Dying.

While a physical faerie does not appear, the use of the wind as "horns" being played in the otherworld, gives the song the same ethereal feeling that would exist as if one had walked into the narrative voice's view. Hallam Tennyson in his Memoir of his father describes the location as "as in a dream," "mystic" and "primeval" further reinforcing the idea that the poet had an almost supernatural reaction to the "Celtic" landscape that is reproduced in his use of the faerie in his poetic works. Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 292

[338] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 546

[339] Christopher Ricks, P. 546

inspiration for these lines: Sir Walter Scott's telling of the traditional border ballad 'Thomas the Rhymer' in his *Minstrelsy*. At the beginning of the Ballad Thomas is approached by a lady on a horse:

> Her skirt was o the grass-green silk,
> Her mantle o the velvet fyne,
> At ilka tett of her horse's mane
> Hang fifty siller bells and nine.[340]

Thomas addresses the lady as "thou mighty Queen of Heav'n" a title she rejects and informs him that she is "the Queen of fair Elfland."[341] Tennyson by choosing to recall both Carlyle and Scott in his description of Guinevere is creating a direct link between the Queen of Camelot and the Queen of faerie. This heightens the romantic content of his poem as Guinevere becomes the height of beauty and Queenship, and therefore leaves the boundaries of the English imagination. She occupies a Celticist space of irrationality and hyperbole. It also places her as an outsider. Tennyson's later work firmly blames her for the fall of the perfect English vision of Camelot. She also originally comes from a wild land beyond the King's control that has to be tamed before becoming part of the respectable state. All this creates the idea that Guinevere is an "Other" whose presence and actions threaten the status quo. To be compared to The Queen of Faerie, the monarch of a realm that exists beyond what is accepted as real, further creates the impression that Guinevere is not only desirable for her beauty but also someone who does not belong in "Saxon" Camelot.

The theme of otherness coupled with sound is also present in 'The Lady of Shalott'. The Lady, like the Queen, is an outsider to Camelot as she exists in her own reality that is placed on the fringes of society. In the fourth stanza of the 1842 version of the poem, Tennyson describes farm workers encountering song coming from the tower:

> Only reapers, reaping early
> In among the bearded barley,
> Hear a song that echoes cheerly
> From the river winding clearly,
>   Down to tower'd Camelot:
> And by the moon the reaper weary,

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[340] Sir Walter Scott. 'Thomas the Rhymer' in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* Volume 2 (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne, 1802), pp. 244 – 296 (p.251)
[341] Sir Walter Scott, p.252

> Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
> Listening, whispers ' 'Tis the fairy
> Lady of Shalott'. (28-36)

The lady is given an otherworldly aspect by the poet by directly characterising her as a "fairy." Throughout the poem she is referred to as merely "The Lady of Shalott," however, here Tennyson adds "fairy" to her title. In the minds of the reapers, then she is someone who exists outside of human understanding and, therefore, must be supernatural. This is further evidenced by Tennyson's choice of the rhyme of "airy and "fairy." Airy can mean "light and delicate, as if capable of floating in the air," the meaning which Tennyson is using for his uplands, but it can also mean "of a thing: light and delicate in appearance."[342] These last two meanings give an impression of the ethereal and the playful, characteristics associated with the "Fairy." Indeed, in his 1830 poem 'Lilian' Tennyson uses the rhyme to compare feminine beauty to that of the supernatural creature; "Airy, Fairy Lilian" (1). Therefore, the poet creates the image of a figure that is otherworldly in nature. Also, the fact that her song has to travel down the river to Arthur's fortress further enforces the impression that the Island of Shalott exists outside the "Saxon" centre that was explored in the first section of this chapter. However, unlike the Celticist Queen entering Saxonist society and destroying it, it is the entry into this society that destroys the Lady. As I argue the sense of otherness found in Tennyson's comparisons of characters to faeries is connected to gender. Due to this the negative Celticist portrayals of the Lady and the Queen are in direct contrast to Tennyson's positive attitude towards the passionate male figure of Sir Lancelot.

Lancelot: The "Celtic" Knight

His admiration for Lancelot is evidenced in his wanting to protect his reputation by editing out the problematic aspect of the affair with the married Guinevere. Hallam Tennyson notes that his father "loved his own imaginative knight, the Lancelot of the Idylls."[343] Indeed, in these early poems the knight, despite his affair with the Queen, fills the role of chivalric purity that Arthur would later embody in *The Idylls.* Compare lines 78 -79 of 'The Lady of Shalott' featuring Lancelot:

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[342] ""airy, adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022 [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/4429 [Accessed 10th April 2022]

[343] J.M. Gray, *Thro' the Vision of the Night* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1980), p. 165

A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield.

To Lines 293 – 294 of 'Lancelot and Elaine', the seventh book of *Idylls* featuring Arthur.

By castle Gurnion, where the glorious King
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head

Both the Knight and the King wear iconography of the Virgin Mary, although Lancelot's commitment is depicted as being greater than Arthur's due to the fact he is "for ever kneel'd." John D. Rosenberg argues that while Tennyson "never forces the analogy between Christ and Arthur, it is ever present just below the surface."[344] Arthur wearing the iconography of Christ's mother is an attempt to compare the two saviour figures as the epitome of the ultimate ideal of kinghood: pure, godly, and just. Lancelot's wearing of the Virgin is more problematic due to his relationship with his King's wife. And as I have already explored, he is also presented as the object of the eponymous Lady of Shalott's sexual desire. This is further underlined by him singing "Tirra lirra" when she sees him in her mirror in line 107. This line is taken from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* in which it is sung by Autolycus when thinking of "tumbling in the hay," a euphemism for sex.[345] However, Tennyson still chooses to use Lancelot as the ultimate expression of Knighthood. Mark Girouard notes that Tennyson was as excited by the passion that the knight had for his Queen as he was by the purity found in the knight-errantry of Sir Galahad.[346] Therefore the poet holds up Lancelot not for the Christ-like qualities found in Arthur but in his passionate feelings, something that is normally associated with the "Celt"rather than the stoic Englishman that Tennyson would portray the King as in later works.

However, Lancelot is also described as a "red-cross knight" evoking the Cross of Saint George which had been adopted as the flag of England. Tennyson's choice of language is inspired by The Redcrosse Knight, the hero of the first book of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie*

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[344] John D. Rosenberg, *The Fall of Camelot: A study of Tennyson's "Idylls of the* King (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press. 1973), p. 39

[345] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 1* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 397

[346] Mark Girouard, The *Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 180

Queen.[347] Spenser's work is usually regarded as an allegory of the state of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, partially representing the struggle between English Protestantism and Irish Roman Catholicism, with Redcrosse embodying Saint George who slays the Irish Dragon.[348] By choosing to dress his knight in the colours of England, Tennyson complicates his own Celticism when portraying the character. Lancelot is both the passionate and earthy "Celt," who transgresses the rules of English society, and also a devoted symbol of Englishness. Furthermore, the iconography of the Virgin is more closely associated with Roman Catholicism than Protestantism. Therefore, Lancelot in these early poems is a hybrid figure embodying aspects from both Celticism and Saxonism and therefore also a symbol of Tennyson's dream of a United Britain with a single culture.[349]

A second reason for the change in focus away from the earthy Lancelot and towards the faultless Arthur, particularly in the *Idylls,* is one of morals. The older Tennyson, married and an Establishment figure with his title and laureateship, had become "welded to conventional Victorian morality."[350] It was no longer a case of passages approving of adultery being edited out in case of moral outrage among his readership, since such an idea would never have been expressed in the first place. Indeed, the love of Lancelot and Guinevere in the *Idylls* is not presented in the sensual terms found in the rejected lines written in the 1830s. Instead, it is portrayed as a taint on the character of the lovers and eventually becomes the sole reason for the civil war that brings about Camelot's fall. As shall be explored in the section on faeries, Guinevere is a "Celtic" outsider to Tennyson's Saxonist Camelot, the land that she came from having to be tamed before it can be joined with Arthur's. This suggests that the "taint" is an infection that comes to the centre from the fringes.

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[347] The influence of *The Faerie Queen* is also found in the image of the Lady first seeing Lancelot though a mirror. In Book III, Canto II, Stanzas 22 -24 the character of Britomart spies "A comely knight' through 'that mirrhour fayre." Peter Cash, *Alfred Tennyson*. [Online] www2.le.ac.uk/offices/englishassociation/publications/bookmarks/68.pdf [Accessed 14th May 2019]

[348] J. Fritzpatrick. 'Spenser's Nationalistic images of beauty: The ideal and the other in relation to Protestant Engalnd and Catholic England in the Faerie Queen Book 1' in *Cahiers Elisabethains: Late Medieval and Renaissance English Studies*. 53. (p.13-26), p. 17

[349] A possible reason for the later change of focus from Lancelot to Arthur is the death of Arthur Henry Hallam in 1832. Ricks notes that 'Morte d' Arthur' was written 'under the shock' of Hallam's passing' (Christopher Ricks, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: Selected Poems.* (London: Penguin Classics. 2007), p. 313). Given that Tennyson's close friend shared the name of the King it is reasonable to conclude that the Christ-like veneration of Arthur is inspired in part by this event.

[350] Mark Giround, The *Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 181-182

In Knowles' letter to Hallam Tennyson, he states that Alfred planned for Arthur to be the soul that will "subdue" the human passions of his Knights.[351] Arthur is meant to symbolise English control of "Celtic" emotions. Arthur is the "pattern Victorian gentleman"[352], symbolising characteristics ascribed to the "Anglo-Saxon." In having to subdue the passions of others there is a direct coloration to the English desire to control and teach outsiders how be "civilized." Although this allegory was mostly abandoned as Tennyson further developed the *Idylls*, it is evidence of the poet's thought process changing in between the writing of 'Sir Launcelot' and his Arthurian magnum opus, which represents the final transition from the early Celticism of the Poet to the Imperialistic version found in the later poetry.

As I will now discuss, Tennyson deploys two very different stereotypes about the "Celt" in this early Arthurian poetry. The first is to create an unknowable and, in many ways undesirable, outsider through the medium of the faerie. The second is using what are commonly thought of as undesirable characteristics of the "Celt," in particular their passionate feelings, to create a sympathetic and desirable character. As Tennyson's career progressed and he wrote *The Idylls' of the King*, however, this second theme vanishes. In its place is a hardening of the poet's disdain for the infidelity of the queen and a total rejection of the outsider.

Idylls of the King

Idylls of the King is a departure from the poetry written in the early 1830s. The sympathetic Celticism found in both of the original versions of 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott' has been abandoned and the Saxonist-inspired Celticism of the later versions fully established. The passions that Tennyson valued in 'Sir Launcelot' are totally rejected for the stoicism and rationality of Arthur. I will now argue that the rejection of Tennyson's past Celticism is illustrated by both his use of the Welsh *Mabinogion* and in Gareth having to prove his Saxonist credentials to be accepted into Camelot.

The Mabinogion and Infidelity.

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[351] Sir James Thomas Knowles, *The Idylls of the King: [notes used in part by Hallam Tennyson for the complete edition of Tennyson's works, c.1903]* (1903)

[352] Mark Giround, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 184

The Mabinogion is believed to have been compiled between 1382 and c. 1410 from a number of sources including the White Book of Rhydderch, the Red Book of Hergest and a number of twelfth century romances.[353] Much like MacPherson and *Ossian* it was created at a time when a "Celtic" culture was under threat from English domination. In this case the Welsh lost their traditional independence from their eastern Anglo-Norman neighbours and much like the situation the Highlanders found themselves in in later centuries, there became a need to preserve their oral traditions and stories because of a threat to language and culture. While the tales of the White and Redbooks, otherwise known as 'The Four Branches of the Mabingoi'[354] are seen as the authentic mythology of Wales, there are questions concerning the Arthurian Romances. Lady Charlotte Guest was of the belief that the "Cymric tales" had crossed borders into the continental tradition via the work of Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth.[355] Indeed, Tennyson's own edition of the first volume of Guest's translation, now housed in the Lincolnshire Archives in Lincoln, contains not only the original Welsh and English translated versions of four tales from *The Mabinogion*[356] but also French, German, "Scandinavian," Danish, Swedish and Icelandic versions. Included are several facsimiles of the original medieval texts that Guest had encountered. This indicates that Guest's intention was to highlight the European context of the stories found in *The Mabinogion.* In using Guest's translation as basis for his 'Geraint' poetry Tennyson becomes part of a multinational tradition of retelling the Romances, this time in an English context.

Tennyson began work on what was originally one poem covering the Geraint story on the 16th of April 1865. Initially in his letters he complained that the process of writing the work was "harder to manage" than 'Merlin'[357], his previous Idyll, and that the heat was slowing his progress.[358] However, a family holiday to Wales spurred him to complete the poem, perhaps aided by exposure to several Celticist texts that he read while there. Hallam Tennyson reports that his parents, with the help of local schoolmasters, attempted to learn the Welsh language so that they could both read "Hanes Cymru (Welsh History), the Mabinogion and Llywarch Hen."[359] Emily Sellwood Tennyson notes that her husband also

[353] Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion: The Great Medieval Celtic Tales*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. ix
[354] Sioned Davies, p. x
[355] C.E. Guest, *The Mabinogion* (Glastonbury: The Lost Library, 2014), p. xiv
[356] 'The Lady of the Fountain,' 'Ywyne and Gawin,' 'Peddur' and 'Percival'.
[357] Alfred Lord, Tennyson, 'To William Young Seller June 16th 1856' in *The letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson Volume.2* ed by Cecil Y Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 152
[358] Tennyson, Alfred Lord. 'To Emily Sellwood Tennyson June 26th, 1856' in *The letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson Volume.2* ed by Cecil Y Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 153
[359] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 415

read 'A Historical Essay on the Manners and Customs of the Celtic Tribes' (1840) by Elizer Williams[360] and *The Literature of Kymry: being a critical essay on the History of the Language and Literature of Wales during the Twelfth and Two Succeeding Centuries* (1849) by Thomas Stephens[361] during this time. This indicates that Tennyson was taking a special interest in the mythology, language, and history of Wales. Indeed, the poet literally sought to walk in the footsteps of his Arthurian characters. On the 16th of September he made an excursion to the location of Arthur's Welsh capital, writing: "The Usk murmurs by the window and I sit like King Arthur in Caerleon."[362]

Annemarie Drury argues that despite the noted "uniqueness" of Tennyson's use of *The Mabinogion* in the creation of the 'Geraint' poetry the focus of scholars has been limited to narrative comparisons between the Medieval and Victorian texts rather than how the alterations the poet made manifest in his work.[363] She further argues that there is "more to say about identity and its implications than simply that Tennyson used and altered a source text in creating his poem."[364] As already noted the poet is creating an Saxonist identity for his Arthurian poetry and the alterations he makes are part of this project. This manifests itself both in small language choices, such as the anglicization of the name of Arthur's Welsh capital from Caerllion into Caerleon,[365] to major thematic changes that tie the Geraint poetry into the major themes of the wider *Idylls*.

"Geraint the Son of Erbin" is a standalone romance with little connection to other tales in *The Mabinogion* other than sharing the characters of Arthur and Guinevere, the latter of whom is referred in the Welsh spelling of Gwenhwyvar.[366] However, 'The Marriage of Geraint' and 'Geraint and Enid' are part of an interconnected collection of poems and therefore the story had to be adjusted to fit the themes and narrative of the *Idylls*. In *The Mabinogion*, Geraint's mistaken suspicion of Enid's infidelity comes from hearing her say "Alas, and I am the cause that these arms and this breast have lost their glory and the war like frame which they so richly enjoyed!"[367] when he is awakened from sleep. He believes

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[360] Emily Sellwood Tennyson, 'Emily Sellwood Tennyson's Journal July 18th – 16th September 1856) in The letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson Volume.2 ed by Cecil Y Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 157
[361] Emily Sellwood Tennyson, P. 158
[362] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 415
[363] Annemarie Drury, *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge United Press, 2015) p. 57
[364] Annemarie Drury p. 57
[365] Annemarie Drury p. 79
[366] Another example of anglicization. As the majority of the *Idylls* is derived from Malory, Tennyson choses to use the English spelling.
[367] C.E. Guest (Trans) *The Mabinogion* (Glastonbury: The Lost Library, 2014), p. 162

that she is not thinking of him when speaking these words but of another lover and sets out to prove that he is as powerful as ever. In contrast Tennyson creates a connection between Geraint's suspicions and the greater theme of the Queen's "guilty" relationship with Lancelot.

> But when a rumour rose about the Queen,
> Touching her guilty love for Lancelot
> Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard
> [....]
> Not less Geraint believed it; and there fell
> A horror on him, lest his gentle wife
> Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
> Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint. (24 – 31)

The Victorian morality that Tennyson infuses into his Arthurian narrative once again frames Guinevere as the sole cause of tension in Camelot. If the Queen could be unfaithful to the noble Arthur, then those around her, especially women, could display the same behaviour. Indeed, Hallam Tennyson notes that the "Sin of Lancelot and Guinevere begins to breed, even among those who would 'rather die than doubt'."[368] This makes the infidelity seem like an illness infecting a healthy body and creates a sense that it comes from the outside. In returning to this major theme of the greater work the poet removes the personal feelings found in *The Mabinogion* and replaces them with public concerns. In contrast to the seriousness of the situation found in Tennyson's version of the tale, with infidelity being one of the causes of the downfall of Camelot, the medieval version is more personal to the characters. Geraint's honour is damaged when Enid believes him slain by Giants and states "the only man I have loved, or ever shall love, is slain" to the Earl of Limours. Geraint, who still lives, believes her to have abandoned him for the Earl. Unlike in Tennyson's Idylls there is no sense that the Knight believes his wife to be unfaithful beforehand as Gwenhwyvar, unlike her Victorian counterpart, is not depicted as being anything but loyal to the King.

Drury notes that Tennyson's adaptation of 'Geraint the Son of Erbin' is in conflict with Guest's "ambition as a champion of Welsh Literature."[369] This is evident in the creation of a text that conforms to the morality of the *Idylls*. Tennyson is not interested in preserving

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[368] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 414
[369] Annemarie Drury, *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge United Press, 2015) p. 58

the narrative details of the work translated by Guest and, instead, imposes his own ideology upon the text. Adaptation of *The Mabinogion* is one of several Saxonist additions the poet makes to the Arthurian mythology in the *Idylls*. A second is a return to the use of the supernatural and in particular the figure of the Faerie found in his earlier work within the mythology which is used in two different fashions.

Faeries in the Idylls.

Tennyson's use of the faerie in 'Gareth and Lynette' is noticeably different from his early writings in the Arthurian mythology. Whereas in 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'The Lady of Shalott' being compared to a faerie is a mark of an outsider, here Tennyson subverts this notion. Rather than those outside Camelot being mysterious and magical, it is the fortress and its King who are compared to the supernatural. This is unusual in a text that is designed around creating a Colonial Celticist appropriation of the mythology. However, the aim is not to Celticize Arthur, but rather to reveal the "Celtic" imagination of the outside observer and contrast it with the rational mind of the Poet's Saxonist audience. This is particularly evident in lines 195 – 225 of 'Gareth and Lynette'.

Gareth and his party, having travelled from Orkney, met Merlin on the road on the road to Camelot. One of the group comments on the King and his Fortress:

> "Let us go no further, lord;
> Here is a city of enchanters, built
> By fairy kings." The second echo'd him:
> Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home
> To northward, that this king is not the King
> But only a changeling out of Fairyland,
> Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
> And Merlin's glamour." (195 – 202)

In Tennyson's earlier poetry, it is the rural that is portrayed as mystical and alien. The men have heard of the city, but it is through the medium of the "wise man," who has created an idea of the city in the minds of his followers. This is reminiscent of how the urban English's ideas of the "Celtic" rural was influenced by the travel writers of the eighteenth century. In particular, the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Herring helped create the sublime image of the "Celtic" landscape when he commented that a journey in Wales filled him with 'pleasure

mixed with horror'.[370] Statements like this create expectations in the minds of the reader. In a similar manner to Herring's commenting helping to create the notion that the "Celtic" landscape induced terror in the heart of the "Saxon," the Wise Men of Orkney create the image of a Camelot that is built on magic. Furthermore, Tennyson's "Saxon" Arthur himself appears to be Celticized into a "changeling out of Fairyland," a mystical and unknowable creature who fights his battles by sorcery rather than the stoic and rational warrior King the poet has created in his work. However, it is not the King who is really being Celticized here, it is Gareth's party. The Orkinians come from a rural world far outside that of Camelot, making the urban magical and unusual. Their rural status is confirmed in line 238 where Gareth states "We are tillers of the soil," implying that they are farmers rather than belonging to an urban vocation. They do not see things in a rational way and, therefore, embody the imaginative qualities of the "Celt." They do not understand the city or its king and so reach for magical explanations by constructing a romantic notion of him being supernatural.

This is further evidenced when the party reach the gates of Camelot and they believe that the carvings on it are alive:

> Then those with Gareth for so long a space
> Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
> The dragon-bought and elvish emblemings
> Began to move, seethe, twine, and curl: they call'd
> To Gareth, 'Lord the gateway is alive'. (227 – 231)

Despite the presence of the magical symbolism of dragons and elves Tennyson does not present this as an actual supernatural occurrence, but rather one of the imagination. This is enforced by the poet stating, "at last," to indicate that that this is a trick of the mind caused by the party staring at the gate for too long. That they do look upon the gates for "so long a space," coupled with their beliefs surrounding Arthur, also indicates that they were expecting the vision of a living gateway. The party are, therefore, presented as having "Celtic" imaginations that create magic out of what would be a normal everyday object to the rational Saxonist mind.

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[370] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Invention of Celtic Nature Poetry' in *Celticism* ed by Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 97 -124 (p. 106)

However, there is one member of the party, who does not believe that Camelot is magical or an illusion: Gareth himself. When conversing with Merlin at the gates of the city he states:

> But these, my men,
> (Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
> Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
> From Fairyland; and whether this be built
> By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens;
> Or whether there be any city at all
> Or all a vision; and this music now
> Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth (240 – 247)

Unlike, the rest of this party Gareth is destined to become a Knight and therefore part of the establishment at Camelot. He rejects the notion that the city is magical in nature by stating that it his men's belief, not his. He does concede that the city did seem to move, however, he gives a rational explanation that it was a trick of the mind brought about by the mist. This leads to the anger he feels for his companions falling for a false vision of the magical, boiling over and he demands that Merlin tells the truth about the nature of the city. Therefore, by portraying Gareth as a rationalist Tennyson is positioning him to be worthy of Saxonist society. Both of his companions are set in Celticist ways of thinking and are akin to scared children who need the truth explaining to them. However, Gareth embraces "the despotism of the real" and refuses to accept what his imagination tells him. The rationality of Camelot is reflected in Merlin's reply to the accusations the Orcadians made about the city.

Rather than agree with Gareth, Merlin decides to mock the Celticist ideas of the Orcadians in a cruel speech in which he states that it is true that a "Fairy King And Fairy Queens have built the city" (244 – 255). Arthur is, likewise, built up a terrible and unknowable ruler;

> Then wilt thou become
> A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
> Will bind thee by such vows, as it is a shame,
> A man should not be bound by (264 – 267)

Here Merlin creates a Satanic image of Arthur by creating a King who bewitches people and who makes deals for souls. This cruel mockery of the Orcadian's beliefs reinforces the notion

that said beliefs are undesirable. The readership of *Idylls of the King* would understand that Tennyson's Arthur was neither Satanic nor magical. Instead, they are led to identify with the future Knight whose rationality was a seen as Saxonist virtue. Even in the face of Merlin's mocking of him and his party, Gareth sees through the King's Druid and scolds him for his cruel actions.

> Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been
> To thee fair-spoken? (278 – 279)

This further demonstrates Gareth's rational character. He has completely rejected the notion of the magical in his world view that he refuses to believe Merlin, whom he refers to as "Old Master." That someone in the Druid's position would mock him with tales of the fanciful is deeply insulting. However, Merlin's purpose for mocking them is itself a form of irrationality that rejects Tennyson's earliest Celticism. Having been scolded by the future knight, Merlin asks:

> 'Know ye not the Riddling of the Bards?
> Confusion, and illusion and relation,
> Elusion, and occasion and evasion"?' (280 – 282)

As discussed in the previous chapter, Tennyson had a deep interest in Bardic traditions. While Merlin is more traditionally depicted as a druid or a mage, the poet had used his name, alongside that of the bard Taliesin, as a pseudonym when writing his Anti-Napoleon III poetry. However, unlike Tennyson's earlier attempts to capture the prophetic nature of the Bardic in his work, here he presents it as something undesirable. The poet uses the discourse of lies, denouncing the irrational and mystic connotations connected to the "Celt," to convey to a reader that no truth can be found in the words of the "Celtic" Bard. This demonstrates the hardening of Tennyson's Saxonist nationalism. While identifying himself with the bardic in the past was acceptable, his newfound position and audience have forced him to move on from his old Celticism.[371] Merlin's final words is further evidence of this; he says in warning to Gareth's party:

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[371] However, as I shall discuss in the final chapter, he would return to the Bardic for inspiration which makes this apparent reception appear hollow.

> And now thou goest up to mock the King
> Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie. (286 – 287)

Tennyson's Arthur is the perfect Victorian English gentleman and to bring Celticist "lies" into his court is seen as a major insult. There is no room there for faeries, magic, or the imagination. As previously discussed, Camelot represents London and therefore, Tennyson is implying that these symbols of Celticism are unwelcome at the heart of England. Gareth, in his rejection of the "Celtic" imagination, is proving himself to be worthy of a place within English society. However, his companions are only worthy of being mocked for their insistence on believing that faeries built Camelot.

A more traditional Tennysonian use of the faerie occurs in the 'Merlin and Vivien' idyll. Vivien has been described by Tama Lea Engelking as the "star femme fatale in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*."[372] She is the character who seduces and brings about the downfall of Merlin. Other critics have noted the evil nature of the character with Thomas Hoberg reporting that the poet Algernon Swinburne described her as being "the most base and repulsive person ever set forth in serious literature"[373] and Thomas P. Adler comparing her seduction of Merlin to "Satan's use of flattery to soften Eve."[374] Like Guinevere and the Lady of Shalott, Vivien is compared to a faerie. This occurs when she hears the word "'harlot' muttered twice or thrice" leading her to confront Merlin in her anger:

> White was her cheek; sharp breaths of anger puffed
> Her fairy nostril out; her hand half-clenched
> Went faltering sideways downward to her belt,
> And feeling; had she found a dagger there
> (For in a wink the false love turns to hate)
> She would have stabbed him; but she found it not

This passage conforms to the femme fatale or repulsive nature of Vivien as she is shown to be quick to anger. It is notable that the word "fairy" is coupled with the language of anger and violence as it connects Vivien to the concept of "Celtic" irrationality with Merlin only being saved by the absence of her weapon. This violent image of a faerie, coupled with

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[372] Tama Lea Engelking, 'Renée Vivien and The Ladies of the Lake' in *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 30.3/4 (2002), pp. 362-379 (p.366)

[373] Thomas Hoberg, 'Duessa or Lilith: The Two Faces of Tennyson's Vivien' in Victorian Poetry 25.1 (1987), pp. 17-25 (p. 17)

[374] Thomas P. Adler, 'The Uses of Knowledge in Tennyson's Merlin and Vivien' in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 11.4 (1970), pp. 1397-1403 (p. 1399)

Tennyson placing her as an ally of the Cornish king Mark, creates the impression that she is a "Celtic" outsider akin to Guinevere and the Lady of Shalott. It should also be noted that the location of Merlin's downfall is outside of the Saxonist world of Camelot. As noted in the introduction, Tennyson for the most part chose to set his "Celtic" works in the British isles, however, 'Merlin and Vivien' takes place in the legendary Breton forest of Broceliande. The poet refers to Broceliande throughout the poem as being "wild woods," setting it apart from the ordered world found in Arthur's kingdom. This furthers the sense that the centre is a place of rationality and that to leave it means to enter an irrational world.

Tennyson's use of the faerie in his Arthurian work is therefore to mark out difference from the English norm. Guinevere, whose infidelity challenges these norms, the Lady of Shalott, who lives outside the English Camelot, and Vivien, the femme fatale who brings about the downfall of Merlin, are directly compared to faeries to denote them as being outsiders. However, it is in the Orcadians that Tennyson supplies the strongest rejection of "Celtic" superstition and the belief in the faerie. The two are both mocked and compared unfavourably to the rational Gareth, whom will be accepted as a Knight into the English society of Camelot. The theme of embracing Saxonism as route to being accepted by society is given a redemptive quality by Tennyson in the fate of Guinevere in the *Idylls*.

Guinevere accepts Saxonism

The change between the early Arthurian poetry and *Idylls of the King* is also evident in 'Guinevere' written in 1859. In contrast to the connection between the "Celtic" Outsider and faeries portrayed in 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere,' the Idyll depicts the Outsider as robbing the world of magic. Following the revelation of her relationship with Lancelot, the Queen has fled Arthur's court and taken sanctuary in a convent at Almesbury. Here she encounters a novice who, unaware she is speaking to the Queen, relates a story told to her by her father, who was a Knight of the Round Table. Her father claimed that:

> the land was full of signs
> And wonders ere the coming of the Queen (230 – 231).

The word "ere" firmly places a world of wonder existing before Guinevere's marriage to Arthur, implying that her sin is not only the cause of the fall of Camelot but poison on the imagination of the land. Among the wonders described by the Knight are "white

mermaiden" (243), "little elves of chasm and cleft" (246), "three spirits mad with joy" (250), a "fairy circle" (255), and "airy dancers" (259). The novice also mentions a spirit known as a "spigot" (266). Ricks notes that Tennyson took this faerie creature from 'The Haunted Celler' found in Thomas Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland.*[375] Croker describes the Creatures as "a little figure, about six inches in height" and able to sit on a man's shoulder.[376] In each case, these spirits are connected to joy, the life of the land, and feasting and drinking implying that they are part of a golden age of magic destroyed by the coming of the Queen. Guinevere displays scepticism towards this rosy vision of a magical past and "somewhat bitterly" asks:

> 'Were they so glad? Ill prophets were they all,
> Spirits and men; could none of them foresee,
> Not even thy wise father with his signs
> And wonders, what has fallen upon the Realm?' (270 – 273)

The barbed comment about the novice's father reinforces the Queen's disdain for the notion of visionaries and their prophet's ability to foresee her part in the downfall of Camelot. By questioning this ability Tennyson is subtly beginning the Queen's transition from being a "Celtic" outsider into being more Saxonist that will crystallize in her confrontation with Arthur. The novice replies that "one, a bard" (275) did foresee the "evil work of Lancelot and the Queen" (305). In choosing a bard as a true prophet, Tennyson recalls his earlier interest in the figure as a model for the poet's role in society, outlined in chapter two. It is tempting to read this bard as Tennyson himself, given his identification with the bard and his Saxonist blaming the "Celtic" lovers for the fall of the Realm.

However, the notion of a magical past connected to Arthur contradicts Tennyson's Celticist work on *Idylls of the King*. As I have argued, Gareth rejects the supernatural as part of his acceptance into the Saxonist Camelot, rendering any idea that men and spirits can live together impossible. This contradiction gives the novice's story a sense of picturesque nostalgia as she describes a world that has passed. Still, that world contains elements deemed undesirable in Saxonism's eyes. It also takes nothing away from Guinevere's status as an outsider as she still performs the function of a hostile outside influence whose

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[375] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes Volume 3* (2nd Ed). (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 537

[376] Thomas Crofton Croker, Fairy *legends and traditions of the South of Ireland (London: John Murry, 1834), p. 84*

passions are to blame for the destruction of Camelot despite her scepticism towards prophecy.

As I have stated, this scepticism is evidence that Tennyson is transitioning Guinevere from being a Celticist figure to accepting Saxonism. This process continues through the Queen's confrontation with Arthur towards the end of the Idyll. Tennyson's intention in this episode is to redeem her of her crimes in line with Malory's depiction of the end of her crimes. Ellie Crookes argues that *Idylls of the King* is "often held up as the apotheosis for the many demonized depictions of Guinevere that inundated the cultural landscape of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" and that it is, therefore, "remarkable" that Tennyson, through Arthur, chose to forgive her at the end of the narrative.[377] The sincerity of the Queen's redemption is questioned, however. Stephen Ahern argues that "her change of heart-which is phrased in the idiom of the king, and not the queen-rings hollow."[378] I cannot entirely agree with this line of argument as the Queen is notably changed by the King's forgiveness. I argue that Tennyson is redeeming Guinevere by transforming her into a dutiful servant who accepts Saxonist authority.

This is evident in the Queen's attitude before receiving Arthur's forgiveness for her crime. When the King arrives at the convent, Guinevere recalls her first meeting with Arthur, where she:

> Thought him cold,
> High, self-contained, and passionless, not like him
> 'Not like my Lancelot' (402 – 403)

Here the Queen sees her future husband in the language associated with the "Saxon" creating the impression that he is unexciting. Arthur is contrasted with "my Lancelot," indicating that Guinevere prefers the passionate nature of the "Celtic" Knight. This is affirmed in lines of the Idyll in which the Queen states that she "yearned for warmth and colour which I found in Lancelot"(642 -643). Unlike early Arthurian poetry, this is not portrayed as desirable due to Tennyson's construction of a perfect King who inspires others to control their emotions. Ahern argues that in *Idylls of the King*, the Queen is the "loathsome

[377] Ellie Crookes, 'And there she lete make herself a nunne': Guinevere's Afterlife as a Nun in British Culture of the Mid-Nineteenth to Early Twentieth Century' in *Arthuriana* 29. 1, (Spring 2019), pp. 124-147 (p.126)

[378] Stephen Ahern, 'Listening to Guinevere: Female Agency and the Politics of Chivalry in Tennyson's "Idylls"' in *Studies in Philology* 101.1 (Winter, 2004), pp. 88-112 (p.110)

opposite" of Arthur's order.[379] As this order is Saxonist in character, this reinforces the sense that she is an outsider to Camelot as she does not value the "self-contained" character that the King represents.

When Arthur begins his speech scolding Guinevere for her transgression, he informs her that he believes:

> The Children born of thee are sword and fire.
> Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws $_{(422-423)}$

Here, Tennyson creates a distinction between the Saxonism that Arthur represents and the Celticism that Guinevere embodies. As will be outlined in the next chapter Tennyson believed that the "Celt" needed the "Saxon" to temper what was perceived as their more violent and anarchical tendencies. This makes the language of violence, and the usurpation of order used by the King is evidence of this. By transgressing from the Saxonist norms of Camelot, Guinevere has unleashed "Celtic" anarchy, which the perfect Arthur can no longer control. Margaret Linley argues that in his attack on Guinevere, the King is "at his most conventionally masculine and authoritarian."[380] The use of the metaphor of the Queen being a mother of the destruction is evidence of this. By reducing Guinevere to her reproductive function, Tennyson is making a misogynist statement on the King's loss of control over his domestic relationship with his wife. Ahern concurs with this notion and states that the Queen's "unregulated sexuality subverts her husband … and as a result is mocked by his fellow men."[381] The fear of being perceived as dominated by a woman is connected to the fear of a "Celtic" threat to the "Saxon" order. The belief that the "Celt" is "a primarily emotive rather than rational being" led Matthew Arnold and French Celticist Ernest Renan to label them as a "feminine race" who lacked "the practical male capacity for "high success" in the world of "fact."[382] Arthur's "Saxon" authority comes in part from being masculine, and his inability to control Guinevere diminishes his ability to achieve "high success" in the administration of the Kingdom.

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[379] Stephen Ahern, p. 105

[380] Margaret Linley, 'Sexuality and Nationality in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King"' in *Victorian Poetry Volume.* 30.3/4 (Autumn-Winter, 1992), pp. 365-386 (p.375)

[381] Stephen Ahern, 'Listening to Guinevere: Female Agency and the Politics of Chivalry in Tennyson's "Idylls"' in *Studies in Philology* 101.1 (Winter, 2004), pp. 88-112 (p.106)

[382] T. J. Boynton, '" Things that are Outside of Ourselves": Ethnology, Colonialism and the Ontological Critique of Capitalism in Matthew Arnold's Criticism' in *ELH* 80.1 (Spring 2013), pp. 149 – 172 (p.169)

The loss of "Saxon" authority is further evidenced when the King describes the construction of his Kingdom that now lays in ruin:

> The realms under together under me, their Head
> In that fair Order of my Table Round
> A glorious company, the flower of men
> To serve as a model for the mighty world. (459 – 462)

The choice of "realms" rather than the singular "realm" indicates Arthur's Kingdom is akin to the Empire or the United Kingdom is under one crown. By using grand language such as "glorious" and describing the knights as the "flower of men," Tennyson is communicating his belief in the Saxonist Camelot being the ultimate ideal of nationhood. Due to the Queen's actions, this ideal is now lost, which echoes Tennyson's anxiety for the future of England's position as the model for all other nations. He articulates this anxiety in 'To the Queen,' an address to Victoria which closes *Idylls of the King* when he fears that "The voice of Britain" (24) will be lost and questions if the nation will become "Some third-rate isle half-lost among her seas?" (25). The transgression of infidelity that has brought about the fall of Arthur's Saxonist authority is explicitly linked to Celtic characters when the King states:

> Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot.
> Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt. (484 – 485)

I have already argued for Guinevere and Lancelot's "Celtic" status, but it is significant that the second couple to fall to sin is Tristram and Isolt. In *Idylls of the King*, the two appear in 'The Last Tournament,' although the original cycle involving them "often seems independent of, although co-existent" with the Arthurian mythology.[383] Catherine R. Harland describes the Tristram of the *Idylls* as "emphasizing the condition of decay in Camelot."[384] I argue that his connection to moral decay is because of his status as the nephew of the "Celtic" King Mark of Cornwall. In 'The Last Tournament,' Tristram is presented as a passionate and shameless figure who playfully encourages Lancelot to "Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine" (204). There is an ambiguous nature to this comment by Tristram as he is involved with two Queens named Isolt who hail from "Celtic" lands. The first is his uncle's Queen, who is

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[383] Phyllis Karr, *The King Arthur Companion*. (Hayward: Chaosium Inc, 1983), p. 99
[384] Catherine R. Harland, 'The Modernity of Tennyson's Tristram' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 22.4(Autumn, 1982), pp. 647-657 (p.647)

described by Tennyson as having "black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes" (403), and the second is "Isolt of Brittany" (584), whom Tristram has married while overseas in the "Celtic" region of France. This "Celtic" love triangle, unlike that of Guinevere and Lancelot, does not end in redemption.[385] Tristram is murdered by Mark for both his affair with the Irish Isolt and his betrayal of her by marrying the Breton Isolt. Philip Eggers argues that "Tristram's sudden humiliating death cancels any belief that he offers a viable alternative" to Arthur.[386] As the King symbolizes "Saxon" authority, this alternative given by Tristram is the same kind of "Celtic" passion that I have described as belonging to both the Queen and Lancelot, which is presented as a threat. This is reflected in the 'Guinevere' idyll when the destructive infidelity of the "Celtic" characters is compared to Arthur, who informs the Queen that he "was ever a virgin save for thee" (554). The King's ability to keep his passions in check helps give him authority, something that will become central to Tennyson's model for the relationship between the "Saxon" and the "Celt" in his later poetry, explored in chapter four.

Following the King's forgiveness, Guinevere comes to accept the values Arthur represents. This is evident in lines 643 -646, in which the Queen muses:

> now I see thee what thou art,
> Thou art the highest and most human too,
> Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
> Will tell the King I love him though so late?

This illustrates Guinevere's conversion to the Saxonism of Arthur by both accepting the King as the "highest," recalling the King's description of his court as a "model for the mighty world," and rejecting the passionate Celticism of Lancelot. This is in marked contrast to her thinking that Arthur was "cold" when she first met him. Although her revelation has come late, the King has returned to a war from which he will not return, meaning she is too late to save the Saxonist vision of Camelot that her passions have brought about the destruction of. This does not mean, however, that Guinevere herself is lost as she accepts her place at the convent as a servant of God and plans to atone for her transgression. Addressing the novice, the Queen exclaims:

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[385] Although Tennyson does not describe Lancelot's fate within the narrative of the Idylls at the end of 'Lancelot and Eilane' he describes the King as "Not knowing he should die a holy man" (1418), implying that he, like the Queen turns to the church and is redeemed.

[386] Philip J. Eggers, King Arthur's Laureate: A Study of Tennyson's Idylls of the King (New York Univ. Press, 1971), p. 174

> I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
> Let no one dream but that he loves me still (667-668)

The *he* that Guinevere speaks of is ambiguous as she could be speaking about Arthur or the God she will serve. In a Celticist context, *he* is undoubtedly Arthur as she accepted his values as her own. She refuses to "scorn" herself when in line 617, she states that "nor can I kill my shame." By embracing Saxonist values, she is able to atone for her "Celtic" transgression. This is reflected in the Queen's desire to use her new status both to help those in need and to purge herself of her destructive passion:

> And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;
> And so, wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
> The sombre close of that voluptuous day,
> Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King'. (680 – 684)

By describing the Queen's hurt as "loathsome" and portraying her as planning to redeem herself through religious discipline, Tennyson is removing the passion from Guinevere that he celebrated in 1830. Instead, he transforms her into a dutiful domestic servant who accepts Arthur's Saxonist authority. Unlike in his first Arthurian poem, the Queen rejected the "Celtic" Lancelot and never saw him again. This is reflected in Tennyson describing her past deed as "voluptuous," indicating a sense of sexual attractiveness and connecting it with sorrow over the ruin of the Saxonist ideal of Camelot. In redeeming the Queen in his manner, she is spared the fate of Tristram and is allowed to live out her life in the convent, eventually becoming the Abbess and finding "peace" (692).

Guinevere's redemption through the acceptance of Saxonism coupled with the murder of Tristram illustrates the hardening of Tennyson's "Saxon" nationalism since 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere'. In that early poem, the romance of the Knight and Queen is celebrated, and their escape from Camelot is rewarded in life together. By 1859, however, such a "Celtic" romance has become unacceptable, and "Celt" must either accept Saxonism and become a good servant, in the case of the Queen, or else be destroyed in the manner of Tristram.

Conclusions

In answer to the question posed by Colin Graham in the opening of the chapter, the nation that Tennyson's Arthur is king of is an expansionist England. This is due to the poet's construction of an anachronistic figure who symbolises Victorian Saxonist values of rationalism, stoicism, and moderation. As his Kingdom and his revenue of knights expand the "Saxon King of the Celts" becomes a steadying force over "Celtic" coded characters who are unable to control their passions. This is contrasted with the figure of Guinevere, depicted as a "Celtic" outsider who surrenders to her passions and becomes the reason why the kingdom falls into ruin. However, Tennyson's Celticism shifts considerably over the course of his writings surrounding the Arthurian mythology. While he remains Colonialist in his depiction of the "Celt," there are considerable differences between the Celticism found in the first versions of 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and 'Lady of Shalott' and the "Saxon" nationalism that characterises *The Idylls of the King*.

His early Arthurian works are sympathetic towards the "Celt," albeit with some stereotyping both of the "Celtic" peoples and their culture. He not only condones the infidelity of the Queen and Sir Lancelot but also celebrates it. Tennyson also critiques English society in 'The Lady of Shalott' in a manner, that while in line with his more liberal younger years, would be unusual to readers who know of his later Saxonism and conservatism. As he developed as a poet and voice of the nation, slowly his Celticism grows more antagonistic. The condoning of the infidelity is completely edited out of 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' and eventually the Queen would be portrayed as the outsider who would destroy the Saxonist ideals of Camelot. Her position as an outsider is displayed in Tennyson comparing her to a faerie. He takes out the criticism of English society from 'The Lady of Shalott' and the outsider cannot talk for themselves, instead having to be defined by their relationship to the centre. In the 1859 'Guinevere' idyll the Queen is only redeemed by accepting the Saxonist values that the King represents further evidencing the underlying nationalism Tennyson uses the Idylls to promote.

However, despite the expansionist English nationalism found in the final version of *The Idylls of the King*, Tennyson had by the 1860s began to question the project of empire. This would lead him to compose a series of poems between 1864 and 1889 that explored both the "Celtic" Genius and the relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt."

Chapter Four

Following the Gleam

Rethinking Celticism 1864 - 1889

Although *Idylls of the King* is a work of English nationalism that promotes the glories of the British Empire, doubts about the Imperial project had begun to enter Tennyson's mind as early as 1864, beginning a process in which he started to question the relationship between the "Saxon" and the "Celt." The process began with questioning the "Saxon" achievements of the past and ended with the construction of a new relationship designed to unify both identities together within the context of Britain. Rather than the model of "Saxon" domination found in the *Idylls*, the relationship found in his later poetry is a mutually enriching model in which "Saxon" and "Celt" learn from each other to supplement something missing in their respective characters. Corresponding with the theories of Celticism put forward by Matthew Arnold, Tennyson came to believe that the "Celt" lacked political discipline while the "Saxon" lacked poetic imagination. He is quoted by Allingham as saying "the Kelts are very charming and sweet and poetic. I love their Ossians and their Finns and so forth - but they are most damnably unreasonable."[387] In contrast Tennyson sees people of "Saxon" stock as reasonable and reliable in politics but lacking "poetry in his nature like the Celt."[388] Therefore, Tennyson saw a need for the "Saxon" to be the leaders in field of British politics while learning poetics from the more creative "Celt."

Despite a shift from the ideological thinking found in *Idylls of the King* the attempts to construct the new mutually enriching model are undermined by the poet's characteristic ambivalence. Herbert F. Tucker notes that Tennyson as a poet "put so little stock in action, and in the capacity of human character to conceive a plot and bring it to fulfilment."[389] This is also true of Tennyson as an ideological thinker as despite making progress on developing a new model for the relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt" his thinking is underpinned by the Colonial Celticist notion that the English cannot understand their "Celtic" neighbours. His inability to understand the Irish in particular further gives a sense of ambivalence which means he does not fully fulfil this project. He retained some of the Colonial Celticist

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[387] Matthew Bevis, 'Tennyson, Ireland and "The Powers of Speech" in Victorian Poetry. 39:3 (Fall 2001), pp. 345 – 364 (p. 347)

[388] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*. (London: The MacMillian Company. 1899), p.338

[389] Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., 'Tennyson and the Measure of Doom' in *PMLA*, 98.1 (Jan., 1983), pp. 8-20 (p. 11)

attitudes found in the *Idylls* as evidenced by the 1880 conversation with William Allingham in which he exclaimed "The Kelts are so utterly unreasonable"[390] and the frightening image found in 1886's *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* of the "Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the light with blood" (90). Although Tennyson is rethinking the relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt" it is something he struggled with during the latter part of his life typified by comments such as "The Irish are difficult for us to deal with. For one thing the English do not understand their innate love of fighting, words, and blows."[391] The implication here is that the "Celtic" Irish are violent in comparison to the peaceful English.[392] Tennyson's answer to this problem of understanding was to try and place himself in the place of the "Celt" with a focus on the Irish imagination. This means that his later Celticist poetry both has continuity with and deviation from themes found in his earlier poetry.

During the 1880s Tennyson composed two long works 'The Voyage of Maeldune' (1880) and 'Tomorrow' (1885), which both are concerned with his attempts to capture "the Celtic genius" through Irish myth and, unusually for the poet, modernity. 'Tomorrow' has a nineteenth-century setting, with references to Irish immigration to both Great Britain and the United States of America. This is a noticeable change from Tennyson's past work regarding the "Celt." Previously the "Celt" has been placed in the past with a sense that they are a decaying people in comparison to the modernity of the "Saxon." The poem is also written in the Irish brogue which further gives a sense of Tennyson trying to place himself in the mind of a Modern Irishman. Meanwhile, 'The Voyage of Maeldune' while placed in the mythic past serves as an example of Tennyson attempting to communicate his belief that the "Celt" needs guidance in politics while also attempting to understand their character and "genius." As stated in the introduction to this thesis Tennyson had a negative opinion of Ireland and the Irish. While his writings based on Wales and Scotland contain Colonial Celticist stereotypes and tropes he never speaks of those countries in the same terms as wanting to blow up Ireland with dynamite. It is therefore remarkable that neither poem contains the hostility that Tennyson displays in his personal statements.

The final example of Celticism in Tennyson's work is the 1889 poem 'Merlin and The Gleam'. Written two years before the poet's death the narrative is a semi-autobiographical

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[390] William Allingham, *A Diary* ed. By H. Allingham and D. Radford. (London: MacMillian & Co, 1908), p. 298

[391] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*. (London: The MacMillian Company. 1899), p.338

[392] Although, as will be discussed later in the chapter Tennyson approved of when the English violently put down rebellion indicating that the "Saxon" did have a love of fighting.

exploration of human imagination. In contrast to 'The Voyage of Maeldune', which is focused on how the "Celt" must learn politics from the "Saxon," there is a sense that the unpoetic "Saxon" must follow the example of the imaginative "Celt" providing the closest expression of fulfilment in his project of creating a new British identity which takes what he sees as the best of the two geniuses.

To explore the transition from *Idylls* to 'Merlin and the Gleam' it is necessary to discuss how Tennyson's attitudes developed between the 1860s and 1880s. This process begins with 1864's 'Boadicea'. The poem is a revisiting and refinement of the themes of 'The Druid's Prophecies,'[393] however it introduces an element of doubt over the future of Empire caused by the 1857 Indian Rebellion. This doubt is key to understanding the shift in Tennyson's sympathies as he begins to rethink the relationship between the English and the rest of the Empire. This is further evident in his 1880 translation of the medieval poem *The Battle of Brunanburh*. The original text celebrates the defeat of a Scottish/Nordic alliance by the "Saxons" under King Æthelstan, the first monarch of a united England, in AD937. However, Tennyson's word choices in the final stanza of his version of the poem demonstrates a degree of sympathy with the "Celt" for the English invasion of their lands.

This chapter also links Tennyson's Celticism in his later years with the writings of the foremost authority on the "Celts" in England of the Victorian Age, Matthew Arnold. There is no direct evidence that Arnold directly influenced Tennyson, but there are many similarities between their conclusions regarding Celticism. Like Tennyson, Arnold believed the "Celt's" unreasonable nature could only be managed if the "Saxon" took a lead in the sphere of politics. While Arnold saw "philistinism" in the "Saxon," he believed that it could have "steadied the Celtic genius in politics"[394] and argued that the "Celt" was "undisciplinable, anarchical and turbulent" in comparison to the "Anglo-Saxon" who was "disciplinable, and steady obedient within certain limits."[395] Due to the similarities between the conclusions of the two writers, I argue that Tennyson was in dialogue with Arnoldian ideas. We need to consider both figures in order to explore how Celticism developed post-1860, looking at how both writers crafted a popular image of the "Celt" in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

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[393] See chapter two.

[394] Douglas Bash, *Matthew Arnold: A Survey of His Poetry and Prose* (Basingstoke: MacMillian. 1971), p. 110

[395] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)

The purpose of this chapter is to explore questions of doubt in Tennyson's later Celticism and discuss his construction of a "mutually enriching" relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt." It begins with a discussion of the Celticist viewpoints of Arnold, due to his importance to the discourse surrounding the Celt in the late nineteenth century with reference to where he intersects with Tennyson. It is followed by an exploration of the post-1860 transitional phase in which 'Boadicea' and 'Battle of Brunanburh' are written to explore the shift in Tennyson's Celticism from the Saxonist domination of his Arthurian work until the start of the 1880s. It will then discuss 'The Voyage of Maeldune' and 'Tomorrow,' with particular focus on the context of Arnold and late nineteenth century Irish politics. Finally, the chapter will explore 'Merlin and the Gleam' and how Tennyson returns to all the themes explored in this thesis as he tries to follow the "gleam" of inspiration and how, in the figure of a new version of King Arthur, Tennyson creates a figure that represents both "Saxon" reliability and "Celtic" creativity.

Matthew Arnold

As stated in the introduction to this chapter there is no direct evident that Tennyson was directly influenced by Arnold's Celticist writings or that the two contemporaries ever discussed the subject. They are reported as having an ambivalent relationship by Tennyson biographer John Batcherlor. Tennyson and Arnold "were seldom cordial about one another's work" writes Batcherlor, "but they regarded each other with a good deal of respect" with Tennyson going as far in 1858 to say "that if anything happened to him, Matthew Arnold ought to be his successor as Laureate."[396] However, given that Tennyson comes to the same conclusions as the man who is credited with popularising the image of the "antiscientific, immaterialist, highly sensitive, spiritual, pantheistic, and politically ineffectual" "Celt"[397] indicates that either he was aware of Arnold's work, even if only by reputation, or that both writers drew on the same Colonial Celticist traditions.

Arnold had first become interested in the subject of the "Celt" both by a visit to Brittany in 1859 and his own maternal connections to the Cornish "Celts."[398] This led to a series of lectures over the next eight years culminating in the publication of 1867's *On the*

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[396] Batchelor, John. *Tennyson: To strive, to seek to find.* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2012), p. 157

[397] Lennon, Joseph (ed) *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 266

[398] Kenneth Allott, ed. *Writers and their Background: Matthew Arnold.* (London. G. Bell and Sons, 1975), p. 20

Study of Celtic Literature. What Arnold attempts to understand was the differences between the "geniuses" of various peoples. He defines the genius of the English people as "energy with honesty," while the Germans have "steadiness with honesty."[399] Both groups are seen as being sensible in business and politics but as lacking the emotions needed to succeed in the Arts. In contrast he opines that "the Celtic races are best summed up with one word: Sentimental" and "always ready to react against the despotism of fact."[400] Unlike the two Germanic peoples, the "Celts" are not sensible in business and politics but are imaginative and capable of creating "poetry with an air of greatness."[401] However, in much the same manner as Tennyson in his later period, Arnold displayed an ambivalence towards the "Celt." At the heart of this ambivalence was a belief in the value of the "Celtic Genius" and a desire to save it contrasted with a belief that the "Celt" was "ineffectual"[402] in the world of business and politics.

Arnold believed that "Celticism ether inspires love or hate," counting himself as a "Celt lover" defending attacks on the integrity of Celtic Literature from "Celt Haters"[403]. To this end he championed "translations" of old literature by writers such as Iolo Morganwg, whom had been accused by "Celt haters" of forging their work. In Arnold's opinion it was wrong to "pooh-pooh" texts such as *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* as forgeries[404] and he compares Morganwg to the collectors of Germanic folklore such as The Grimms.[405] This generosity towards the "Celt" and their "genius" included an admiration of their enthusiasm of their character. In the fourth lecture included in *On The Study of Celtic Literature* Arnold refers to the Romantic nature he sees in the "Celt" leading him to state that:

> The same sensibility made the Celts full of reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning, and the things of the mind; *to be a bard, freed a man*, —that is a characteristic stroke of this generous and ennobling ardour of theirs, which no race

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[399] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 341)

[400] Matthew Arnold, p. 344

[401] Matthew Arnold, p. 345

It should be noted that Arnold did not believe that the "Celt" had produced "great poetical work" such as Seneca the Younger's *The Agamemnon* or Dante's *Divine Comedy* as those works "come only after a steady deep searching survey, a firm conception of human life, which the "Celt" has no patience for." Instead, he argued the "Celt" was only able to produce work that while appearing great was lacking compared to the Latin and later Italian poets.

[402] Matthew Arnold, p. 346

[403] Matthew Arnold, p. 307

[404] Matthew Arnold, p. 315

[405] Matthew Arnold, p. 312

has ever shown more strongly. Even the extravagance and exaggeration of the sentimental Celtic nature has often something romantic and attractive about it.[406]

Arnold, like Tennyson is attracted to the creative aspect of the "Celt." Both writers see being a Bard to be a noble calling, in Tennyson's case he wanted to become a bard to embody their prophetic aspect[407] and in Arnold's case he believes that it is a key component to the "Celtic" character. Rather than seeing the emotional "extravagance and exaggeration" of the Celt as a negative, Arnold celebrates it as attractive. This enthusiastic approach to attractive aspects of the "Celt" in terms of learning and the arts is contrasted with the sense that the English are "Philistine." Joseph Lennon argues that Celticism, like Orientalism, is attractive because of its "antimodern and mystical reputation and its semiotic opposition to Victorian conventionality."[408] Arnold is lamenting the "decline of the place of literature in [what he believes to be] philistine Britain."[409]Tennyson agrees with the assessment that the Germanic "Saxon" is philistine in nature. Hallam Tennyson reports that his father believed that "The Teuton has no poetry in his nature like the Celt."[410] Arnold's attraction to the romance of the "Celt" is to find something he finds missing in Saxonist society in a similar manner to Tennyson's attempts to identify with the Bard. Both men believe in the romantic and creative aspect of the "Celt" as a positive in opposition to a perceived lack of creativity in the "Saxon." However, the enthusiasm displayed by both writers for the "Celt" in the sphere of literature did not extend to the sphere of politics in which the "Saxon" is seen as an undisputed master.

Arnold stated that he believed that Ireland had "a grievance to which I find no real parallel elsewhere in Europe" in which the nation is reminded "that she is a conquered country."[411] However, his answer was not for Ireland to become an independent nation. Instead, he argued the answer to the question of Ireland was for the country to be further integrated into England. The Irish were to him both "wolves ready to fly at the throat of England" and a people who would "experience confusion and misery from being separated

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[406] Matthew Arnold, p. 347
[407] See Chapter Two
[408] Joseph Lennon, Irish *Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 249
[409] Joseph Lennon p.54
[410] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*. (London: The MacMillian Company. 1899), p.338
[411] Matthew Arnold, 'The Irish University Question in *Matthew Arnold: English Literature and Irish Politics*. ed by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1973), pp. 56-60 (p. 56)

from England."[412] He also articulated fear that the Irish may join themselves to a power hostile to Britain as they "will give themselves 'body and soul' to a leader," unlike the "Saxons "who are "disciplinable."[413] This recalls Tennyson's statement that the Irish were "damnably unreasonable" and both writers believed that English were needed to steady the Celt's nature. In Arnold's opinion:

> The English people, with its ancient and inbred purity, integrity, good nature, and good humour, has considerable merits and has done considerable things in the world. I refuse to believe that such a people is unequal to the task of blending Ireland with itself in the same way that Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall are blended with us.[414]

He admitted there are difficulties with the blending of the cultures as the English adopt "a conventional account of things."[415] While the English are in Arnold's view capable of great things in the sphere of politics, they lack imagination. However, this was not seen as a barrier to the merging of England and the "Celtic" nations as they are "brothers in the Great Indo-European family" and there was no "original chasm" between the two groups.[416] However, due to various issues such as language, politics, and religion, the two peoples had become estranged.[417]

The English-led "blending" that Arnold argues for is designed to address racial estrangement. Key to this was the death of the "Celtic" languages. In *On The Study of Celtic Literature* he states that there was a "practical inconvenience" in speaking Welsh or Cornish and that "Celtic" people are better off for adopting English.[418] David Cairns and Shaun Richards point out that Arnold believed "Celtic" language to be "the badge of a broken race" and that the decline of the languages was desirable as it would lead to the Islands of Britain and Ireland being "one homogeneous English-speaking whole."[419] While Tennyson does not touch on language as part of his project of blending the two peoples together in his later

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[412] Matthew Arnold, 'the Incompatibles' *in Matthew Arnold: English Literature and Irish Politics*. ed by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1973), pp. 238 – 285 (p. 238 - 239)

[413] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)

[414] Matthew Arnold, 'the Incompatibles' in *Matthew Arnold: English Literature and Irish Politics.* ed by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1973), pp. 238 – 285 (p. 239)

[415] Matthew Arnold, p. 239

[416] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 302)

[417] Matthew Arnold, p. 300

[418] Matthew Arnold, p. 296

[419] Cairns, David & Richards, Shaun. *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 46

poetry, there still is a sense that there is something holding the "Celt" back from being able to achieve their full potential unless they give up their nature and adapt to being Saxonized.[420]

To Arnold, the Celtic nature is "undisciplinable, anarchical and turbulent" in comparison to the "disciplinable and steadily obedient" "Saxon."[421] The merging of England and the Celtic nations would tame the "Celt" and make them more like the "Saxon" in terms of political temperament. However, Arnold also believed that the "Celtic" nature had something "romantic and attractive about it"[422] and was enthusiastic about their creativity over that of that of the "Saxon." This ambivalence is reflected in Tennyson's work in his later period. Like Arnold, he is attracted to the more romantic aspects of the "Celt," especially their creativity and mythology, due to these qualities being missing in "Philistine" nineteenth century "Saxon" society. However, Tennyson is also against the idea of "Celtic" independence because he believes that they are unreasonable and unreliable in politics and need the "Saxon" to be a steadying influence.

As we shall see throughout this chapter, the poet uses Arnoldian ideas to try and create a harmonious, although unequal, relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt." To understand why Tennyson concludes why such a relationship was needed I shall now explore the period between 1864 and 1880 in which doubt over Empire, and by extension the treatment of the "Celt" by the "Saxon," begins to crystalise in Tennyson's work.

Questioning the Imperial Project

Unlike the Saxonist triumphalism found in *Idylls of The King*, Tennyson's later period of Celticism is characterised by doubt over the enterprise of Empire and the "Saxon" character. However, these doubts had begun when the poet was writing the *Idylls.* 1864's 'Boadicea' represents the beginning of a transitional phase where the Saxonist domination found in the Arthurian poetry begins to give way to a more sympathetic view of the Celt. While the mutually enriching relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt" has not yet crystallised, both 'Boadicea' and 1880s 'The Battle of Brunanburh' represent a step away from presenting the "Celtic" as a culture to be obliterated to one that must be assimilated

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[420] This is particularly true in 'The Voyage of Maeldune,' in which the eponymous chief of the Irish, attempts to be "Saxon" in temperament but is held back by his essential "Celtic" character.
[421] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)
[422] Matthew Arnold, p.347

into the family of Britain to supplement the "Saxon" genius. 'Boadicea' corresponds with the vision of "Saxon" domination found in *Idylls of The King* and discussed in the previous chapter. The poem concerns the Iceni revolt against Roman rule in AD60. As explored in chapter two of this thesis, Tennyson had previously written about the destruction of sacred groves of the Isle of Anglesey, which took place at the same time as the revolt in 1827's 'The Druid's Prophecies'. 'Boadicea' shares both the dramatic monologue form and prophetic denunciation of Imperial Roman rule as the earlier poem. Because of this, it can be read as an updating of the work of his youth, although it does little to change, and indeed strengthens, the Saxonist undertones that lay beneath the Celticist visions found in 'The Druid's Prophecies'. However, given the time it was written, the aftermath of the unsuccessful Indian Revolt against Britain of 1857 – 1858, also gives the poem a sense of doubt for the future of the Empire. The trauma of the rebellion for the English and the push for Irish home rule could be the inspiration for Tennyson's transition from a "Saxon"-dominated Britain to a mutually enriching model that is more open to "Celtic" participation in a family of nations. By 1880 this concern was beginning to be explored in his poetry. 'Battle of Brunanburh' is unusual in Tennyson's writing in that it is not an entirely original work. It is a translation of an Old English poem concerning a battle between Athelstan, King of the English and Constantine II, King of Alba, and his Norse–Gael allies in AD937. James Knowles had commissioned the translation in 1872 and Tennyson had been working alongside a prose adaptation of the poem written by his son, Hallam.[423] Michael P Kuczynski praises the translation as "a faithful, sensitive, even eloquent recreation of its source."[424] However, some of Tennyson's word choices make the "Anglo-Saxon" migration into the "Celtic" lands to be less than glorious than the original, further transitioning Tennyson towards rethinking the "Saxon" domination that characterised *Idylls of the King*.

Boadicea

'Boadicea' concerns the eve of the sacking of Camulodune[425] by a confederation of British tribes under the command of the eponymous Icenian Queen and takes the form of a speech she makes to inspire the massed ranks of warriors. However, in a similar manner to 'The Druid's Prophecies', this speech is not designed to praise the achievements of the

[423] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987), p. 18.
[424] Kuczynski, Michael P. "Translation and Adaptation in Tennyson's Battle of Brunanburh" in *Philological Quarterly*. 86.4 (2007), pp.415–31. (p.415)
[425] Latin name for the city that is now Colchester in Essex.

"Celt," but rather their "Saxon" successors in the land now known as England. Indeed, the opening line of 'Boadicea' reads as a direct continuation of the earlier work:

> While about the shore of Mona those Neronian legionnaires
> Burnt and broke the grove and altar of the Druid and Druidess (1- 2)

This summing up of the events in Mona, which 'The Druid's Prophecies' is centred around, demonstrates that Tennyson is acknowledging that he has worked in this time period before and is making an addition to his poetic legacy. While in 'The Druid's Prophecies,' these are conveyed to the reader by the first-person narrative voice of the Druid, 'Boadicea' is a mix of second and first-person narration. This helps create a sense that the poem is a continuation of the 1825 work, as it gives a shift from one location and character to another. 'The Druid's Prophecies' was written in 1827 during the reign of George IV, however, 'Boadicea' was composed well into the reign of Victoria. Both the words Boadicea and Victoria have the same root, meaning Victory. It is therefore tempting to see the change from an unidentified Druid to the Icenian Queen as a tribute to the then current British Queen. Indeed, Robert Keir Shepherd suggests Victoria as a model for her ancient namesake.[426] However, this notion is complicated by Tennyson creating a Colonial Celticist version of Boadicea who inspires madness in her followers.

> Mad and maddening all that heard her in her fierce volubility,
> Girt by half the tribes of Britain, near the colony Camulodune,
> Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters o'er a wild confederacy. (4-6)

Unlike the picture of stoic and sensible Saxonism that is associated with the nineteenth-century Queen, Boadicea is volatile, dangerous and "either that she is whipping up her motley army or dragging them down to her own level of animal savagery."[427] This is borne out by the use of "mad and maddening," "Yell'd and shriek'd" and the2 description of her confederation of tribes as "wild" which create a sense that Boadicea's followers are, to quote Arnold, "wolves ready to fly." In terms of Tennyson's Celticism there are echoes of this terrifying "Celt" mob in the "Celtic Demos" found in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,* written twenty-two years later, that is also described as having "shriek'd." Therefore, the Queen and

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[426] Robert Keir Shepherd, 'How the Red Ring Became the Bronze Horse and the Horse Became the Ring: Tennyson's "Boädicea"' in Journal of Literature and Art Studies 6.2 (February 2016), pp.121-134 (p. 131)
[427] Robert Keir Shepherd p. 124

her followers are presented in manner that conforms to the Arnoldian stereotype of the irrational and violent "Celt."[428] This is ironic as Boadicea is intended to be the heroine of the narrative and complains about "Roman Robbers" mocking "a barbarous adversary" (18). Indeed, Tennyson's sympathies in the poem are ambivalent. Despite this vision of the terrible "Celt" ready to destroy the coloniser, Tennyson retains the revulsion of Roman degeneracy found in 'The Druid's Prophecies'. Lines 61 - 62 of 'Boadicea' read:

> They drank in cups of emerald, there at tables of ebony lay,
> Rolling on their purple couches in their tender effeminacy.

This rich language of decadence which the poet negatively associates with Rome is mirrored in the earlier poem.

> The costly bath, the crystal chalice?
> The pomp of gems- the glare of gold? (23 -24)

It is interesting that Tennyson chooses to associate "effeminacy" with Rome due to the feminine usually being associated with the colonialised rather than the coloniser. Displaying the negative aspects of both groups illustrates the poet's struggle with the imperial project. The coloniser is decadent and, although Tennyson intended his audience to identify with them, the colonised are mad. As I will explore later in the chapter, this ambivalence is central to the poet's Colonial Celticism throughout the final decade of his life.

Both 'The Druid's Prophecies' and 'Boadicea' share the theme of prophetic visions of Rome falling and Britain rising as a world power. However, despite these visions being communicated by "Celts," they will not be the ones who will achieve these victories nor reap the rewards. Instead, Tennyson is using the history of Boudica's rebellion to discuss the growth of a greater Britain long after the end of the Roman Empire. However, in 'Boadicea' the poet is not entirely interested in promoting Saxonist achievement as there is an undercurrent of concern for the future of the British Empire. Although the poem was published in 1864, Tennyson had been working on it since 1859, with Hallam Tennyson reporting that his father had completed the poem in 1860 but delayed publication as he feared people would not understand the "New English Metre" in which the poem was

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[428] The vision of a "Celtic" leader who is as mad as their followers is in contrast to Tennyson's later 'the Voyage of Maeldune' in which the poet attempts, unsuccessfully, to depict the Irish captain with some Saxonist qualities.

written.[429] However, there is another reason why the publication of the poem may have been delayed. When the poet began writing, the Indian Rebellion, or Indian Mutiny as it was termed in Britain, of 1857 – 1858 would be fresh both in his own mind and that of the public. Given that both poems concern a Rebellion against a colonial master it would have been unwise for the Poet Laureate to publish while the wounds were still fresh. Keir Shepherd argues for the direct connection between 'Boadicea' and India and names Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi state as the model as an alternative to Victoria for Tennyson's "Celtic" Queen due to their Queen regent status and participation in massacres.[430] Indeed, the prophecy given to Boadicea includes language that is similar to descriptions of massacres of Europeans in India. In 'Boadicea' the Queen proclaims:

> Take the hoary Roman head and shatter it, hold it abominable,
> Cut the Roman boy to pieces in his lust and voluptuousness,
> Lash the maiden into swooning, me they lash'd and humiliated,
> Chop the breasts from off the mother, dash the brains of the little one out,
> Up my Britons, on my chariot, on my chargers, trample them under us. (66 – 70)

Compare this scene of indiscriminate killing of Colonialists to both Private John Bowater's recount of the massacre at Meerut on the 10th May 1857 and an unnamed eyewitness to the aftermath of the Cawnpore massacre on the 17th July of that year.

> Simultaneously, the native infantry fell upon and massacred their British officers and butchered the women and children in a way that you cannot describe. Gaolbirds, bazaar riff-raft, and Sepoys - all the disaffected natives in Meerut - blood-mad [Bowater][431]

> The place was one mass of blood. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that the soles of my boots were more than covered with the blood of these poor wretched creatures. [I found] quantities of dresses, clogged thickly with blood, children's frocks, frills, and ladies under clothing of all kinds, also boys' trousers, leaves of Bibles ... and hair, nearly a yard long; bonnets all bloody, and one or two shoes. [Unknown][432]

Both the poem and the reports from India refer to the murder of civilians, women, and children in particular. Boudica's command to "Chop the breasts from off the mother, dash

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[429] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume I* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899), p. 459

[430] Robert Keir Shepherd, 'How the Red Ring Became the Bronze Horse and the Horse Became the Ring: Tennyson's "Boädicea"' in *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 6.2 (February 2016), pp.121-134 (p. 130)

[431] Gregory Fremont - Barnes, Essential *Histories: The Indian Mutiny 1857 – 1858* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007), p. 31

[432] Gregory Fremont - Barnes, P. 53

the brains of the little one out" is reminiscent of being "butchered… in a way you cannot describe" and the vision of "poor wretched creatures" whose clothes and belongings are scattered in the streets. Furthermore, Bowater's "blood-mad" comment is echoed in Tennyson's treatment of the "Celtic" Tribes madness inspired by their Queen. The use of "Celts" as allegory for events in India is evidence of the connection between Orientalism and Celticism. Both the "Celtic" and Indian people were seen as "wayward" and in need of "British Imperial guidance."[433] The parallels in language between Tennyson and eyewitnesses of the revolt along with Keir Shepherd's suggestion of the Rani of Jhansi as model for the "Celtic" Queen affirm the poem's status as a work of Celtic-Orientalism.

Events such as these during the Indian Rebellion had a profound effect on British public opinion. Tennyson, himself, is described as being "stirred to the depths" by the rebellion.[434] On hearing the news of the death of Major General Sir Henry Havelock, British hero of the war, the poet wrote the lines "Tender great and Good, and every man in Britain, says I am of Havelock's blood!."[435] When defending Edward John Eyre's handling of the 1865 Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica, he wrote that British response to the Rebellion was "a warning to all but madmen against want of vigour and swift decisiveness."[436] Therefore, Tennyson, like most of the British public, was not sympathetic to the Indian cause. However, the Revolt in India would show the need for a more Unified Empire.

'Boadicea' reveals Tennyson's fears for future of the Empire. By using a symbol of Britain's "Celtic" past, the poet draws parallels between the rebellions against Empire happening in his Victorian world. As mentioned above, Tennyson believed in the benefits of Colonies being in union with England but fears the effects of the native societies not blending with that of the "Saxon."[437] Tennyson believed the Empire was akin to The Italian Risorgimento in that he saw them both as "instances of unification, and unification was in his mind almost universally a good."[438] In order to unify the "Saxon" and the "Celt" there is a need for a Arnoldian blending of the races. This would lead Tennyson to further try and understand the "Celt" beginning with an important moment in the shared history of the two peoples.

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[433] Josepeh Lennon, Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 193
[434] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume I* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899), p. 431
[435] Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Havelock, Nov. 25th, 1857.* (Unpublished, 1857), lines 13 - 15
[436] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume II* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899), p. 41
[437] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume I* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899), p. 431 - 432
[438] Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870 English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 203

'Battle of Brunanburh'

The 1880 translation of the anonymously written early medieval poem, 'Battle of Brunanburh', despite being a work that originally celebrates an important moment in English history is transformed by Tennyson's lexical choices into a work that sympathises with the defeated "Celts." The poem is the story of the 937AD victory of a "Saxon" army under King Athelstan over a Nordic and "Celtic" alliance under Constantinus of Scotland and Anlaf of Ireland. This victory led to Athelstan being secure as the self-appointed king of the united "Saxon" kingdom envisioned by his grandfather Alfred the Great and thus the father and first king of modern England.[439] Damian Love argues that Tennyson's translation is fairly accurate.[440] However, the lexical choices the poet makes, particularly in the final stanza, do represent a change not presented in the original in which the poet questions the glory of the English victory.

Tennyson had developed an interest in Old English poetry during this time as an undergraduate at Cambridge. Love notes that the poet's notebooks for 1830 included a "glossary of old and middle English words" along with "grammatical notes on old English" and a six-line attempt of a translation of the most famous of early English poems, *Beowulf*, which Love claims is the first by a major English poet.[441] This indicates that the poet had a lifelong passion for early English poetry that would be used in the creation of poetry later in his life. Tennyson would later display interest in the story of Brunanburh in his play *Harold*, published in 1867 with the line "that old song of Brunanburh/Where England conquered" (v: I).[442] The translation of the Anglo-Saxon was originally commissioned for the founding issue of *The Nineteenth Century,* a periodical edited by James Knowles, in 1877 and Tennyson freely admitted that he had "more of less availed" himself of an earlier prose retelling of the poem written by his son, Hallam, and published in the November 1876 volume of the

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[439] Michael Livingston, *Battle of Brunanburh, A Casebook*. Ed by Michael Livingston (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011), p. 10 - 11.

[440] Damian Love, 'Hengrit's Brood: Tennyson and the Anglo-Saxons' in the *Review of English Studies, New Series* 60:245 (June 2009) (pp. 460 – 474) p. 461

[441] Tennyson's Translation of Beowulf consists of 258 to 263 of the second section of the poem:
> Him the eldest / answered / the army's leader/ this wordhoard locked / we are by race / Gothic people / And Higelacs / Hearth ministers / My Father was / to folk known.

It is contained in Notebook 4, now housed in Harvard University.

Damian Love, p. 461

[442] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987), p. 18.

Contemporary Review.[443] Tennyson commented that "in rendering this Old English war-song into modern language and alliterative rhythm I have made free use of the dactylic beat" believing that the original poem was "chanted to a slow, swinging recitative."[444] This gives Tennyson's work the feel of how the original would have been orally performed at "Saxon" courts in celebration of the memory of the victory. Indeed, Hallam Tennyson notes that his father "liked the rush of the alliterative verse, as given something of the old English war-song."[445] Ricks notes that both Tennysons based their translations around one found in Edwin Guest's 1838 work *A History of English Rhythms*, where it is presented as "the Brunanburh War-Song."[446] Guest presents the battle as that of one between "races."[447] Given the Victorian vogue of celebrating the achievement of their supposed "Saxon" forefathers, along with Tennyson's own belief in "Saxon" supremacy explored in previous chapters, this would appear to be an ideal subject for the poet. However, in Alfred Tennyson's version the "Saxon" becomes an ambiguous figure, who while still praised for a heroic victory becomes the subject of the same kind of doubt over the project of colonisation found in 'Boadicea'.

The opening of Tennyson's translation of the poem explains the background of the battle and the chief players in it:

> Constantinus, King of the Scots, after having sworn allegiance to Athelstan, allied himself with the Danes of Ireland under Anlaf, and invading England, was defeated by Athelstan and his brother Edmund with great slaughter at Brunanburh in the year 937.

From, there the story of the battle and the defeat and retreat from England of both Constantinus and Anlaf is told. One key change Tennyson that makes is in the depiction of the King of Scotland. In the original his flight back to Scotland is described thus:

Old English	Translation
Swlice þær eac se mid fleame com	So there also the old one came in flight
On his cyþþe norð; Constantinus	to his home in the north; Constantine
Har hilderinc,	that hoary-haired warrior

[443] Joanne Parker, 'Brunanburh and the Victorian Imagination' in *The Battle of Brunanburh, A Casebook*. Ed by Michael Livingston (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011), pp. 385 – 407 (p. 395)

[444] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987), p. 18

[445] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume II* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899,) p. 272

[446] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987) p. 18. 'The Brunanburh War-Song' is found in Volume 2 of Guest's work.

[447] Edwin Guest, *A History of English Rhythms* Volume 2 (London: William Pickering, 1838) p. 60

$(37 – 39)^{448}$

Guest in his translation makes Constantinus return to Scotland seem more heroic by using the word eke, indicating a difficult struggle and replaces "old one" with "sage one"[449], giving an impression of intelligence that is missing in the original's use of him purely being "old." Given that the original poem was written from the English perspective, Constantinus, being the enemy and on the losing side of the battle, it is expected that he be treated in a negative light, making Guest's choice of words indicative of how attitudes towards Scotland had changed since the early medieval period. This in turn influences Tennyson's own word choices, however, in 'Battle of Brunanburh,' Constantinus is depicted as both villain and hero at the same time:

> Also the crafty one
> Constantinus,
> Crept to his north again,
> Hoar-headed hero! (61 -65)

Like Guest, Tennyson choses to invoke Constantinus' intelligence. Here he is described as "crafty," meaning he achieves his goals through deceitful means. The sinister nature of the king is reinforced by the poet's choice of the word "crept" to describe the king's journey back to his homeland, bringing to mind the image of an untrustworthy individual. However, he is still termed an aged "hero." This is illustrative of the doubt surrounding the "Celt," found during this transitional period of Tennyson's career.[450] As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, this duality of respect and scorn for the "Celt" was typical for the poet later in his life as he saw them as "charming and sweet" but also as "dammed unreasonable." Such ambivalence is typical of Tennyson. The poet is noted by critics such as John Killham as being consistent in being inconsistent in matters of idealism and doubt.[451] Love adds that the poet

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[448] Michael Livingston, (trans) 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle [Version A, Battle of Brunanburh]' in *The Battle of Brunanburh, A Casebook*. Ed by Michael Livingston (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011), pp. 40 – 43, (p. 40 – 41)

[449]   So there eke the sage one in flight came
         Northward to his kith—Constantius---
         Hoary warrior!

   Edwin Guest, *A History of English Rhythms* Volume 2 (London: William Pickering, 1838), p. 69

[450] And indeed, as we shall see would continue into his final Celticist poems of the 1880s.

[451] John Killham, 'Tennyson and Victorian Social Values' in *Writers and their Backgrounds: Tennyson*. Ed D.J. Palmer (London, G. Bell, and Sons, 1973), pp. 165 – 180 (p. 179)

never resolves his inner conflicts in any of his major work.[452] This is particularly true of his later Celticist work. There is a sense of moving towards a solution to the problem of the relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt." However, with every step forward Tennyson cannot relinquish his Saxonist worldview. Therefore, any doubt found in Tennyson's poetry must be qualified due to the poet's characteristic inconsistency. This process of qualified doubt becomes even more noticeable later in the poem when the narrator turns from praise of the battle to "Saxon" history.

The final stanza is concerned with the story of the arrival of the "Saxon" into what is now England. It is here that Tennyson's lexical choices undermine the intended message of "Saxon" glories and expose his doubt over English history. The original reads:

Old English	**Translation**
Engle and Seaxe upp becomon,	the Angles and the Saxons came ashore
Ofer brad brimu Brytene sohtan	Over the broad salt-sea they sought Britain
Walance wigsmiþas. Wealas ofercoman the	those proud war-smiths, They overcame Welsh,
Eorlas arhwate, eard begeatan (70 – 73)[453]	glory-eager earl. And took hold of the land.

Edwin Guest's translation is broadly similar to the original with only minor differences in word choice.

Up came Engle and Sexe,
And, over the broad seas, sought Britain;
And mighty war-smiths the Waels overcame;
And earls, after honour keen, gat the land.[454]

However, Tennyson's translation makes significant lexical choices that transform this moment of celebration into a statement of doubt about the "Saxon" invasion;

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[452] Damian Love, 'Hengrit's Brood: Tennyson and the Anglo-Saxons' in the Review of English Studies, New Series 60:245 (June, 2009), pp. 460 – 474 (p. 461)
[453] Michael Livingston (trans) 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle [Version A, Battle of Brunanburh]' in *The Battle of Brunanburh, A Casebook*. Ed by Michael Livingston (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011), pp. 40 – 43 (p. 42 – 43)
There are two versions of the poetic version of the story found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. According to Livingston most modern retellings and translations of the poem is the manuscript housed in Corpus Christi College. However, a second prominent version of the poem is housed in British Library which reads mostly the same as the Cambridge manuscript, however, the final line reads "eard begeat**o**n" (Took over the land) rather than "eard begeatan" (Took Hold)
Livingston, Michael. 'Notes to Item 4: Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Battle of Brunanburh' in *The Battle of Brunanburh, A Casebook*. Ed by Michael Livingston (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011), pp. 174 -177 (p.174)
[454] Edwin Guest, *A History of English Rhythms* Volume 2 (London: William Pickering, 1838), p. 69

>Saxon and Angle from
>Over the broad billow
>Broke into Britain with
>Haughty war-workers who
>Harried the Welshmen, when
>Earls that were lured by the
>Hunger of glory gat
>Hold of the land $_{(118\text{ -}125)}$

Tennyson changes "Britain they Sought," which reads as the island being a goal of the "Saxon's," to "Broke into Britain," which suggests that the taking of England was a crime akin to burglary. The island of Britain already exists and does not need the "Saxon" to invent or define it. Instead, it is taken from those already inhabiting the land. Tennyson's choice of haughty over proud is also significant as it implies a sense of "Saxon" arrogance rather than satisfaction over the conquest. Similarly, rather than "the Welsh they overcame," present in both the original and Guest's translation, the word overcame invoking the image of a glorious struggle against a superior foe, the poet chooses "Harried the Welshman." The word "Harried" is more negative suggesting that the "Saxons" were the ones harassing the "Celtic" population of Britain rather than it being a source of pride. In addition, it gives a sense of an ongoing process of harassment which remain unresolved. This is reinforced by Tennyson choosing "Earls that were lured by the hunger of glory" rather than "glorious warriors." While Guest uses the word "keen," giving the impression that the earls are eager for the glory they would find in Britain, Tennyson's choice of "hunger" gives the impression of greed. By using the image of the Earls being seduced by the promise of glory, Tennyson makes them more sinister than the victorious warriors of the original version. These changes demonstrate that by 1880 Tennyson's Celticism was evolving. Rather than a direct progression of his Saxonist nationalism found in *Idylls of the King*, there is a direct admission that the "Saxons" were invaders. However, this progression is still undermined by the poet's characteristic inconstancy, as illustrated by the duality of his portrayal of the character of King Constantinus.

Tennyson struggled with the question of "Saxon" history. Doubt concerning the Empire had already started in the 1860s, as seen in 'Boadicea' where rebellion, even a doomed one is shown as virtuous, despite being written at a time of rebellion against the British in India. But by 1880 Tennyson's doubt has grown, even if he cannot fully commit to

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that doubt. The original 'Battle of Brunanburh' is a celebration of the battle that cemented the kingdom of England, and therefore is the point that the road to the global empire begins. Yet, Tennyson, who in general was a firm supporter of empire questions its foundations. The King Constantinus, whom is the vanquished villain of the original, is portrayed as ambiguous, both "crafty" and a "Hero." The actions of the "Saxons" in their coming to England are questioned and made to seem sinister. In the previous chapter we saw the gradual rejection of the "Celtic" as Tennyson became more prominent in the English public imagination. Here, we see a limited retreat from the certainty found in *Idylls of the King*. Perhaps because of the rebellion in India, the growing political unrest in Ireland surrounding Home Rule and other events,[455] Tennyson is no longer sure in the Saxonist supremacy of the Empire that his Arthurian romances promoted. Therefore, the "Saxon" domination found in his past poetry slowly transforms and he becomes concerned with blending the two peoples together. This is particularly evident in 'The Voyage of Maeldune,' which promotes the need for the "Celt" to take lesions in the sphere of politics from the "Saxon."

'Boadicea' and 'Battle of Brunanburh' represent a transitional period in Tennyson's Celticist writing from certainty to doubt. The Empire is no longer unquestioningly celebrated but instead its very origins are questioned. While this appears on the surface to be a progression from the Saxonist attitudes of the Arthurian period, it is also a regression to the poet's earliest Celticism. 'Boadicea' recalls pre-*Idylls of the King* works such as 'The Druid's Prophecies' in its setting and prophetic narrative. However, unlike those early works, the poem poses questions over Saxonist society. Doubts over Empire, found in both poems, would lead the poet to begin questioning the relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt." The Saxonist domination found of *Idylls of the King* begins to fade away in the 1880s and is replaced by explorations of how to blend the two peoples together. This is most apparent in two long poems written to attempt to understand the Irish in this period: 'The Voyage of Maeldune' and 'Tomorrow'. However, as in this transitional period, Tennyson is unable to fully commit to the understanding he seeks, leaving the project ultimately unresolved.

The Irish Poetry: 'The Voyage of Maeldune' and 'Tomorrow'.

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[455] Battle of Brunanburh,' although written before 1880 was published at the time of the First Boer War, a conflict that the British would eventually lose.

The 1880s saw a very significant development in Tennyson's Colonial Celticism. While, as explored in previous Chapters, the poet had taken from Scottish, Welsh, and Cornish folkloric traditions earlier in his career, the "Celtic" nations primarily served to provide poetic inspiration for his work. The "Celt" as a character was seen as something of the past and was only present when Tennyson desired to use them as a mouthpiece for his own thoughts.[456] However, this changed when the poet composed two lengthy works on the subject of Ireland.

Like Matthew Arnold, Tennyson was firmly against the notion of Irish independence from England. Batchelor notes that in 1886 Queen Victoria, who was personally opposed to the proposed Home Rule bill for Ireland, mentioned the matter to Tennyson in a letter saying that she "cannot in this letter allude to politics, but I know what your (Tennyson's), feelings must be."[457] The poet replied in agreement with the Queen. Indeed, 1886 was the year of the publication of *Locksley Hall - Sixty Years After*, which demonstrated the poet's fear of Ireland removing itself from the Union with the frightening image of the "Celtic Demos." Being against Home Rule for Ireland brought him into conflict with his friend, the then Prime Minister William Gladstone who attempted to introduce Home Rule for Ireland. Hallam Tennyson reports that in 1887 his father told Gladstone that he feared that if Ireland did detach herself from England that she could fall under the influence of a hostile foreign power adding "She has absolute freedom now, and a more than full share in the government of one of the mightiest empires in the world. Whatever she may say, she is not only feudal, but oriental, and loves those in authority over her to have the iron hand in the silken glove."[458] The poet both others Ireland by calling the country "feudal" and "oriental" and affirms the need for the steadying influence of the "Saxon" or else the "Celts" would fall prey to those who would not treat them as kindly as Tennyson believes the English treat them. Tennyson's use of the word "oriental" is significant due to the connections between Orientalism and Celticism. The "oriental" subject is treated as being backward and uncivilized in their thinking in comparison to the sophisticated European. In this utterance Tennyson is asserting the "Celt's" place as being undeveloped and in need of guidance that only the "Saxon" can provide. His use of the word "feudal," questions the "Celt's" ability to

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[456] See 'The Druid's Prophecies,' 'The Golden Year' and the poet's use of the names of Merlin and Taliesin in chapter two and the 1832 version of 'the Lady of Shalott' in chapter three.

[457] John Batchelor, *Tennyson: To strive, to seek, to find* (London: Chatto &Windus: 2012), p. 348

[458] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume II* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899), p. 338

participate in democracy as they are perceived to need a hierarchical structure in order to be controlled. The demon connected to "Celtic" democracy found in *Locksley Hall - Sixty Years After* that "shriek'd and slaked the light with blood" is textual evidence of this belief. The mention of France in line 123 connects the demon to the 1789 Revolution suggesting that the same kind of terror could happen if the "Celt" cut themselves away from "Saxon" control. That "Celt" in this instance means "Irish" is demonstrated by Tennyson questioning "Rome of Caesar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller? which was worse?." The "Rome of Peter" refers to the Catholic faith that, like the French, the majority of the Irish followed. By asking if it was "worse" than the ancient Roman Empire, the poet is further creating a sense that the "Saxon" is needed to temper the Irish "Celt" and prevent Catholic excesses within the British Isles.

As explored earlier in this chapter, Arnold describes the "Celt" as being willing to "give themselves body and soul to a leader" in opposition to the "Saxon"who believed in "freedom."[459] Both writers believe that in order for the "Celt" to become "free" they must be disciplined and ruled over and therefore, Home Rule in which the Irish look after their own affairs is unthinkable. Tennyson's fear of Ireland being controlled by Rome is connected to this Arnoldian belief. It should be noted, however, that in keeping with his character Tennyson appears to have changed his mind on the matter of Home Rule only to change it back in the final years of his life. Batchelor notes that in 1890, the poet and prime minster reconciled their differences and Tennyson even said that he believed Gladstone had been right to pursue policy of Home Rule.[460] However, on the eve of the 1892 election the poet wrote to an unknown journalist stating: "I love Mr Gladstone but hate his current Irish Policy."[461] Tennyson's feelings over Ireland are coloured by his characteristic ambivalence. This is also evident in the two major Irish poems of the 1880s.

In fusing the politics surrounding the Irish in the late nineteenth century, particularly, Home Rule and migration, as well as Celticist stereotypes that correspond to the theories of Arnold, Tennyson creates poetry that directly explores both the "genius" of the "Celt" and the contemporary situation in Ireland. The first, 'The Voyage of Maeldune,' still places the "Celt" in the legendary past and uses stereotypes and political commentary to explore the

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[459] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)

[460] John Batchelor, *Tennyson: To strive, to seek, to find* (London: Chatto &Windus: 2012), p. 359

[461] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume II* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899), p. 411

"Celtic Genius" and how elements of Saxonism can be used to supplement it. The second, 'Tomorrow,' is set firmly in the present and written in the Irish brogue. However, despite being Tennyson's only contemporarily set poem to deal with the "Celt," it still contains references to his past Colonial Celticism. As I will now argue, the poem is both an evolution of the poet's Celticism and a work that continues the traditions surrounding the subject he used throughout his career.

'The Voyage of Maeldune'

Published in 1880, 'The Voyage of Maeldune' is noted at the start of the poem as being "founded on an Irish legend A.D. 700." Tennyson comments that he read the original form of the legend in P.W. Joyce's Old "Celtic Romances" after being sent a copy of the book by A.P. Graves, whom the poet had asked to suggest a "suitable subject" for a "Irish poem."[462] The narrative of the poem is a journey akin to that of Jason or Ulysses. Maeldune, an Irish chief, sets out with his followers to avenge his father, visiting several islands on the way before being talked out of seeking revenge by a Saint and travelling home to Ireland. In Tennyson's telling of the story, however, the journey is an exploration of "Celtic Genius" and the need for the "Saxon" to take the lead in politics. This is evident in Tennyson's intent for the poem, rooted in late Nineteenth-century politics, which is to demonstrate that the "Celts" are unable to rule themselves due to perceived flaws in their character. As already explored, Tennyson feared the breakup of the United Kingdom. His desire to keep the United Kingdom together is central to 'The Voyage of Maeldune'.

Matthew Bevis notes that Tennyson began work on the poem the same month that the Irish nationalist Parliamentarian Charles Stewart Parnell, who like Maeldune was described as a Chief by his followers, left on a voyage to America to raise funds for the newly formed Land League.[463] Given Tennyson's hostility to Irish nationalism, it would not be unreasonable to believe that he wanted Parnell to return in a similar manner to Maeldune with his quest unfulfilled. Indeed, Bevis interprets the final episode of the poem, in which the crew encounter a "a Saint who had sail'd with St. Brendan of Yore" (115) who commands them to "Go back to the isle of Finn and Suffer the Past to be the Past" (186), as advice for Parnell. Tennyson is compelling the sentimental "Celt" to forget the past and accept their

[462] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987), p. 62
[463] Matthew Bevis, 'Tennyson, Ireland and the Power of Speech' in *Victorian Poetry* 39:3 (Fall, 2001), pp. 345 -364 (p. 358)

place within the United Kingdom. The result of this message is paradoxical in both placing the "Celt" in the past, as Tennyson has traditionally done, and telling them to forget the past and join "Saxon" modernity.[464] In this Tennyson endorses the Arnoldian notion that the "Celt" must work towards becoming more like the English. This would allow them to be stronger in politics and less open to being led astray by a foreign power. The need for the "Celt" to be disciplined is evidenced in Tennyson's depiction of the relationship between Maeldune and his crew.

The crew are, as in Arnold's words, "undisciplinable, anarchical and turbulent"[465] and ready to be savage if put in an unfamiliar situation. The only thing that keeps them from destroying each other is the steadying influence of Maeldune, who while Irish is in places given a less passionate and more Saxonist role in the narrative. The Saxonist influences on Maeldune are apparent when the crew lands on the fifth island, "The Isle of Fruits." Here the crew again are driven to violence this time by the act of eating:

> We gorged and we madden'd, till every one drew
> His sword on his fellow to slay him, and ever they struck and slew;
> And myself, I had eaten but sparely, and fought till I sunder'd the fray,
> Then I bad them remember my father's death, and we sail'd away. (67 – 70)

In this episode the passions of the crew are driven by greed for the fruit making them anarchical and bloodthirsty. By limiting his intake of fruit, Maeldune is able to remain in control of himself and therefore take control of the situation. It is notable that he uses his father's death as to break the bloodlust of his fellows. Here Tennyson makes use of the stereotype of "Celtic" sentimentality. The "Celtic" dedication to a romantic cause, in this case the desire for revenge, is portrayed as a positive trait in comparison to their hysterical and uncontrollable passions. In his ability to withstand the allure of his violent nature and use of sentimentality to control the passions of his crew, Maeldune becomes the sensible and steadfast influence that Arnold argued the "Celtic" world needed. However, Tennyson is inconsistent in his portrayal of the captain. While he is depicted as a steadying force on "The Isle of Fruits" later on when visiting "The Bounteous Isle," he does indulge in the "passion of battle' with his crew when a game of ball escalates to violence. Therefore, the poet has

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[464] Tennyson himself would take his own advice move on from placing the "Celt" in the distant past in his next Celticist poem 'Tomorrow'.

[465] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)

created an example of Arnold's ideal for the "Celt." Maeldune retains the romance and passion of the "Celt" but cannot accept "the despotism of the fact"[466] and be a moderating force, both believed to be Saxonist qualities. Maeldune's attempts to be a stabilising influence on his crew are used throughout the poem to highlight the Arnoldian stereotypes of an unruly and undisciplinable "Celt."

The first island they set foot on is "The Silent Isle," "where a silent ocean always broke on a silent shore" (12). However, it is also impossible to speak on the island as Maeldune notes that "the crow couldn't crow, and the bull couldn't low, and the dog couldn't bark." (18) This is contrasted with the second island 'the Isle of Shouting' where:

> A score of Wild birds
> Cried from the topmost summit with human voices and words (27 – 28)

Both islands represent extremes, one of total silence and the other of near constant sound, however, the reaction of the crew to both extremes is the same: they are driven to want to commit violence. On the Silent Isle the crew becomes unable to speak more than a whisper including:

> … The Men that were mighty of tongue and could raise such a battle-
>   cry
> That a hundred who heard it would rush on a thousand lances and
>   Die (23- 24)

The silence that even effects the strongest of wills among them causes the crew to become so angry that "they almost fell on each other" (26) and are only stopped by the act of leaving the island. The reaction to the Isle of Shouting is more extreme and the shouting of the birds drives the crew to the point they "shouted along with the shouting and seized one another and slew" (34) until their leader manages to calm them down and leave the Island. These acts of violence are the invention of Tennyson. Ricks notes that while an episode including an "Isle of Speaking Birds" is included in Joyce's version of the story it is "without the violent consequence."[467] It is here that the poet inserts an Arnoldian element to the narrative. The "Celti"c Crew are reacting "against the despotism of fact." Unlike the "Saxon" who is seen as sensible and therefore able to adapt to situations, the Crew's passions are raised in these

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[466] Matthew Arnold p. 85
[467] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987), p. 63

two extreme situations. Arnold believed that it was this passionate nature that "lamed" the "Celt" in "the world of business and politics," and therefore was the reason why they needed the steadying influence of the "Saxon."[468] He noted that the Irish are "wolves" who "destroy in the most savage and mortifying ways."[469] In this case the "Celt" is seen as a creature of wildness and base passions, reminiscent of the Anti-Highlander propaganda of the Jacobite Rebellions that depicted the "Celt" as violent primitives. With the "Silent" and "Shouting" isles, Tennyson is demonstrating the same attitude. As demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three, the poet had long held the opinion that the "Celt" was unreasonable and unstable in comparison to the "Saxon." This is most apparent in the 109th canto of *In Memoriam A. H. H.* in which he comments on "The blind hysterics of the Celt" (CIX: 16). It also occurs in the poet's 1831 – 1833 imperialist work 'Hail Briton', where he warns his fellow "Saxons" to "Yet fear that passion may convulse/Thy judgement: fear the neighbourhood/ Of that unstable Celtic Blood/ That never keeps an equal pulse." (17 – 20) This is contrasted to "men of Saxon pith of nerve." (65) The "Celtic race's" blood is the reason they are fiery, unstable, and hysterical. This is contrasted to the "Saxon race" who show nerve and therefore, are in control. Given that Tennyson personally invented these episodes of violence it is reasonable to infer that they have been added to conform to the stereotype of the passionate "Celt" to which both Arnold and Tennyson subscribed. To balance out the chaotic "Celt" there needs to a man of nerve to take charge and calm the situation. The romance of the "Celt," admired by both Tennyson and Arnold, is further explored in the crews' experiences on "The Bounteous Isle."

On this island the crew at first find rest before descending into violence upon each other due to not having enemies to fight. During this rest, Tennyson depicts the Celtic Crew indulging in romantic remembrance of the glories of the past:

And we sang of the triumphs of Finn, and the boast of our ancient blood (88)
…..
And we chanted the songs of the Bards and the glories of the Faerie Kings. (90)

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[468] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 346)
[469] Matthew Arnold, 'the Incompatibles' in *Matthew Arnold: English Literature and Irish Politics*. ed by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1973), pp. 238 – 285 (p. 239)

Finn, Bards, and faeries have figured in the past phases of Tennyson's Celticism, connected with "Celtic" Romanticism. Finn is the father of Ossian, the central character of MacPherson's eighteenth-century work. Tennyson was fascinated with the figure of the Bard, wanting to emulate them in his poetry. And, as discussed in the previous chapter, the poet used faeries in his Arthurian poetry to create a supernatural atmosphere. Here Tennyson brings them together as aspects of a "Celtic" Heritage. This is evident in the use of the word "Blood." In much the same way that the passionate and violent impulses of the "Celt" come from their blood, so does their attachment to ancestors, the mystical figure of the Bard and the crew's celebration of the past and faeries parallels Arnold's musings on the connection between the "Celtic" and Romanticism. In On *the Study of Celtic Literature* he states:

> Some people have found in the Celtic nature and its sensibility the main root out of which chivalry and romance …. spring.[470]

He also notes that he believes that "Celtic" poetry does not contain a "Medieval personage" and that it belongs to an "older, pagan, mythological world."[471] Tennyson by choosing a mythic subject for his Irish poem reaffirms this attitude. The poet is also returning to the idea of "Celtic" decay found in the early Celticist works in *Poems by Two Brothers* wherein the "Celt" is not allowed to be part of the Modern world and exists only in the past. By noting that the poem is "founded on an Irish legend A.D. 700," the poet is already separating Maeldune and his fellow Irish "Celts" from his contemporary Victorian society. This is reinforced by describing the crew's blood as "ancient," giving the impression that the "Celtic" race was already old in 700AD. Therefore, the blood connection to the past is a form of decay, in contrast to the forward-thinking ideology of Saxonism. The "Celt" can only look back at past glories, not look forward to future endeavours. However, in addition to the "Celts" being placed in the past, they are also given a sense of the unreal with their praising of "faerie Kings." The poet paints them, as he did so many times previously, as sentimental, childlike, and romantic, believing in the mystical and magical and in need of the calming influence of the sensible "Saxon," who is more modern and rational. The "Celt," therefore,

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[470] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 347)
[471] Matthew Arnold, p. 51

seems to be denied a place in the world of Saxonist modernity in which Tennyson lived, they instead belong to that "older, pagan, mythological world" of which Arnold speaks.

Previously Tennyson had not directly spoken on "Celtic" politics in his poetry. He used Celticist elements such as the use of the pseudonyms of Merlin and Taliesin for his 1851 anti-Napoleon III poetry and statements on the character of the "Celt," but he had not explored the politics of the "Celt." 'The Voyage of Maeldune' marks a change in the poet's work. From this point the poet feels more confident in exploring the politics of the "Celtic" fringe, especially those of Ireland with his allusions to Parnell and use of Arnoldian stereotypes. While here politics are discussed metaphorically, the same cannot be said of 1884's "Tomorrow." It is almost unique[472] in the poet's Celticist canon in that it is not set in the distant past and attempts to portray Ireland in a contemporary manner.

Tomorrow.

'Tomorrow' is remarkable for Tennyson choosing to write in an approximation of Hiberno-English. While he had experience working with the nonstandard English of the Lincolnshire dialect, 'Tomorrow' is the only work by Tennyson where he wrote in a dialect of which he had no practical experience and required assistance in the writing of the poem. Irish poet and friend William Allingham reports in his diary that he helped Tennyson to correct the dialect and some of the background to the writing of the poem:

> "I've [Tennyson] done an Irish poem and I want you to help me with the brogue" .. Then he produced the MS of Molly Maghee [working title of the poem] (I asked him to strike out the "h") and we spent an hour over it ….. Aubrey de Vere[473] gave him the subject as fact …. The same incident is told of a Cornish miner"[474]

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[472] The only other example is 'The Golden Year,' explored in chapter two, which uses the backdrop of 1840s Welsh mining and comments on the future of the British Empire.

[473] As mentioned in the previous chapter Tennyson visited De Vere in Ireland in the 1850s leading to the writing of the 'Splendour Falls on Castle Walls' song found in *The Princess* (see later in this chapter for a discussion of this poem and how it connects to Tennyson's use of "Celtic" landscapes in 'Merlin and the Gleam'). However, the Irish poet was critical of his English contemporaries Saxonist way of ways of writing. Seamus Parry reports that De Vere was particularly unimpressed with Tennyson's temperament asking that:
> "Why will not Tennyson give up absurdities of every kind – the errors of his morbid Germanized, and Smoke-sodden temperament and set about writing like a man"
> Seamus Parry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote, 2005), p.97
Note how the German, and by natural extension Saxonist, temperament is "morbid" and "smoke-sodden." This is in sharp contrast to the fiery and passionate "Celtic" temperament that both Tennyson and Arnold identified. It is possible that the Irish man did more than just give Tennyson the subject of the poem to write but also spur the poet to take up an Irish subject in the first place to make him "write like a man."

[474] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987), p. 120

Ricks notes that Tennyson used *Traits of the Irish Peasantry* by William Carleton to further his understanding of Irish culture.[475] This indicates that the poet had an interest in presenting the Irish in an authentic manner. However, Matthew Campbell argues that the poem contains "many things that this Irish reader might at first wish had not been written" and goes on to describe a "catalogue of stage-Irish clichés" found in the poem including "yer honor," "the top of the mornin," "the thrue ould blood" among others.[476] Tennyson also makes at least one Celticist misrepresentation with his language. The word "Sassenach" is used on three occasions in the poem. This often-derogatory term borrowed from Scottish and Irish Gaelic refers to "England or its inhabitants; English."[477] It is derived from the word "Saxon." Tennyson, despite wanting to portray Ireland chooses the Scottish spelling of the word. In Irish there is a different spelling: "Sasanach." This indicates that Tennyson may have been unaware of the differences between the two forms of Gaelic or saw them as interchangeable. This points to the Colonial Celticist attitude of the different cultures being seen as the same, despite having significant differences.

Despite Campbell's concerns over Tennyson's use of "stage-Irish clichés" and the confusion over the term "Sasanach," the poem's uniqueness is connected to the notion that it was not written with an English audience in mind. Unlike the other poetry discussed in this thesis 'Tomorrow' is a pure example of Tennyson using a "printed voice." [478] By using a Hiberno-English dialect, he is both embodying the character he is creating and distancing himself from the narrative. The poem is not designed to be read aloud by an individual with an English accent meaning Tennyson could not perform the poem himself. The distance created by the dialect choice works to create the sense that the poem was created for an Irish audience, even more so than 'The Voyage of Maeldune'. Donald S. Hair argues that "the voice of Tennyson's laureate verse is thus an ambitious one, aiming to appeal to readers' minds, wills and hearts."[479] Although 'Tomorrow' was not part of his official laureate work its voice is designed to directly speak to the Irish in a similar manner. As a consequence of this the poem explores the "Celtic Genius" through the medium of a dramatic monologue in which the poet is completely performing the role of the "other."

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[475] Christopher Ricks, p. 120 - 121

[476] Matthew Campbell 'Tennyson and Ireland' in *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, 6.3 (November 1994), pp. 161-173 (p.161)

[477] "Sassenach, adj. and n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022 [Online] www.oed.com/view/Entry/171140. [Accessed 10 April 2022]

[478] Donald S. Hair, 'The Voice of Tennyson's Laureate Verse' in *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, 8.1 (November 2002), pp. 2-10 (p.5)

[479] Donald S. Hair, p. 9

The dramatic monologue takes the form of a testimony to a magistrate. The witness relates the story of Molly McGee, who has recently died. Forty years previously the witness overheard Molly and her "bachelor" Danny O'Roon discussing his going away to "cut the Sassenach whate." (14) He promises that he will return "tomorra" at the "chapel-door." (16) Molly's mother, who dislikes Danny, calls her away. The next morning Molly goes to the chapel, but Danny is nowhere to be found. Over the years many men, including the speaker, try to woo Molly but are always rejected, even after she is told that he has gone to "the states" (49) and married someone else. Eventually Molly loses her mind from waiting. Years later Danny's preserved body is found in a bog where he had drowned the night he left. He is laid out at the Chapel door, where Molly finds him and drops dead. Finally reunited at the spot they had promised to meet years before, she is laid out beside him like "husban' an' wife" (82). This has echoes of both the Colonial Celticist notion that the "Celt" is "romantic" and "feminine" in comparison to the "masculine" "Saxon" and his idea that the "Celt" "will give themselves 'body and soul' to a leader" or in this case a man. Molly is a dutiful woman who waits for her man to return and when he turns up dead then she must die too. Her doom is caused by the highly romantic notion of giving herself "body and soul' to a person without whom she cannot live.

As noted, the poem is different from Tennyson's past Celticist work as it is not set in an ancient or medieval setting. While written mostly in flashback, the time gap is only forty years. The local priest appears to be aware of the scientific properties of a body being preserved in a bog, due to so called "bog bodies" being discovered in Ireland since the eighteenth century. He compares the process to ancient Egyptians who "could keep their haithen kings in the flesh for the Judgement Day" (70) but adds that the mummification process would have been easier if the Egyptians had access to an "Irish Bog" (72). This comment is ambivalent in nature and questions the "Celtic" modernity that Tennyson promotes with the poem. The priest displays modern scientific knowledge, however, at the same time the process of preserving a body in a bog is more primitive than the mummification process. This gives a sense that the "Celt" belongs in a liminal space where they are seen as being more advanced than an Oriental civilization but not as advanced as the "Saxon" due to their "primitive" methods. The Irish and "Celt's" place in a racial hierarchy is reaffirmed in the opening of this episode in the poem where Tennyson uses racial language to dismiss the Egyptian when the priest refers to "Them ould blind nagers in

Agypt" (69). By using language that is used to dismiss Africans as primitive and reaffirm Imperial power Tennyson is placing the "Celt" in a higher position in said hierarchy than the African. This helps build the idea of a mutually enriching relationship between "Saxon" and "Celt" by invoking white skin as a unifying force against the non-European peoples of the Empire.

The poem also deals with Irish migration reinforcing a contemporary setting. During and following the Great famine of the 1840s, many Irish people opted to leave their homeland for both England and the United States. The phrase "cut the Sassenach whate," refers to going to England to cut wheat. In 1883, the-then Prime Minster William Gladstone mentioned to Tennyson about the practice of Irish labourers travelling to Northern England to work on farms cutting wheat.[480] In addition Tennyson includes a mention of "The States." The United States of America had only existed for little over a century and had become a popular location for Irish migration. The high level of Irish migration to the young country was, however, a point of displeasure for Tennyson. The poet supported the Confederate cause in the American Civil War of 1861 – 1865, not due to any love of the Slavery the South wanted to preserve, but due to what he sees as a "rigid social hierarchy based on Anglo-Saxon superiority"[481] in comparison to a "Yankee" north that has had too much "Celtic" migration. Owen Clayton reports that this continued after the end of the conflict because the poet believed "Yankee" culture was a "corrupted Anglo-Saxon culture, one that had allowed itself to mix with "Celtic" blood and

"Celtic" values."[482] This usurps the hierarchal order that Tennyson was trying to create with the "Saxon" being a political force that steadies the passions of other peoples. However, that the poet is acknowledging the movement of the Irish people in search of work or a new life, indicates that 'Tomorrow' is an attempt to explore the "Celtic" world as it was in the late nineteenth century, as opposed to placing them in the distant past in the manner of the past examples of poetry found in this chapter.

Tennyson's mission to understand and speak to the Irish in 'Tomorrow' is complicated by a sense of continuity with his past Colonial Celticism. The poem retains the Arnoldian "Celtic" romance and sentimentality found in 'The Voyage of Maeldune'. The character of

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[480] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 274
[481] Owen Clayton, 'We're All Anglo-Saxons Now: Alfred Tennyson and the United States' in *Victorian Review*, 43: 1 (Spring 2017), pp. 87-110 (p.93)
[482] Owen Clayton. p.92

Molly cannot let go of her promise to Danny. As she grows older and lost in madness, she takes to repeating "Tomorra, Tomorra," giving the sense much that like Maeldune's quest to avenge his father, Molly is driven by the promise of a past wrong being rectified. However, this attachment to the past is what destroys her in the end, and therefore is another example of Tennyson's "Celtic decay." The witness too indulges in romance in his description of the younger Molly:

> Och, Molly Magee, wid the red o' the rose an' the white o' the May,
> An' yer hair as black as the night an' yer eyes as bright as the day
> Achora, yer laste little whishper was sweet as yhe lilt of a Bird!
> Acushla, ye set me heart batin; to music with ivery word! (31 – 34)

Arnold states that the "Celt" is "often called sensual" and is attracted to "emotion and excitement."[483] He further believed that they created "the glorification of the feminine ideal."[484] Here, Tennyson creates this sensual feeling by painting Molly as a figure who creates intense emotion in the speaker. She is presented in heightened romantic terms and compared to nature: roses, the month of May and the cycle of day and night. The witness goes on to describe her dancing as "as light as snow on the lan'" (36) and when he saw her on the street "the sun kem out of a cloud" (37). Molly is not a person, rather a force of nature that inspires love and admiration, linking back to the Celticist idea that "Celts" are closer to the wild and to nature than their "Saxon" counterparts. Furthermore, sound plays an important role in this portrayal; her voice is compared to a bird, and she inspires music in the heart of the witness. This is reminiscent of Tennyson's past use of music and sound to create emotion, such as Lancelot's song which entices the Lady to break her curse in 'The Lady of Shalott' or the ghostly over worldly "Horns of Elfland" in *The Princess*.

Although the poem is designed to speak to an Irish audience his construction of his narrative voice is problematic. As Campbell argues, Tennyson is performing a role that is designed to present a stereotyped version of the Irish character and Hiberno-English. Campbell further argues that the poem contains "anti-Catholicism" in the language used, giving the examples of "hiven," "the holy mother o'glory," "the divil," and "the blessed Mathyrs an' Saints."[485] The use of these caricatures of Irish Catholicism connects to the

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[483] Matthew Arnold, *The Study of Celtic Literature* (London: Smith Elder & Co. 1905), p. 85
[484] Mtthew Arnold, p. 91
[485] Matthew Campbell 'Tennyson and Ireland' in Tennyson *Research Bulletin*, 6.3 (November 1994), pp. 161-173 (p.161)

derogatory statement that Tennyson would make two years later in *Locksley Hall - Sixty Years After*, in which he questions if "The Rome of Peter" was worse than "The Rome of Caesar." Both examples display a hostility towards a Church that the poet connects to bloody revolution and that undermines the supremacy of Anglicanism within the British Isles. In addition to stereotyping the Irish through mimicking their speech and attacking their religion, Tennyson also builds the Colonial Celticism found in the poem through the lens of Arnoldian Celticist theory. By creating the heightened sense of an ideal woman in Molly, the poet is tapping into the notion of the sensual and romantic "Celt" that Arnold promoted, by representing her as a passive woman who has given herself "body and soul" to a man she cannot live without. There is also a sense that like in 'The Voyage of Maeldune,' Tennyson is returning to the theme of "Celtic" decay found early in his career. While the setting is contemporary, the figure of Molly is held back by her sentimental and romantic attachment to her promise to Danny which prevents her from moving on and ultimately destroys her. Finally, Tennyson introduces a racial hierarchy in which the "Celt," while existing below the "Saxon" in terms of advancement, is placed above the African and therefore deemed acceptable. However, Tennyson's attitudes towards the hybrid "Celt" and "Saxon" society of the "Yankee" north of the United States reaffirm that the "Celt" will never be fully accepted as an equal, merely a junior partner.

In his two Irish poems, Tennyson attempts to understand the character of the "Celtic" people so that he can integrate them into the British family. Politically the poet sees the "Saxon" as a natural leader and in the 'Voyage of Maeldune,' Tennyson expresses this through making the Chief of the Irishmen a stable force in the mould of a sensible "Saxon," however due to Maeldune being an Irishman he is unable to fully be the leader his "Celtic" crew needs to be successful. This is evidenced by the noted parallels between Maeldune and Charles Stewart Parnell's failures. The modernity and dialect choice of 'Tomorrow' represent a progression in Tennyson's mission to understand the "Celt." By adopting an approximation of Hiberno-English, he is creating a character that can both embody and communicate Irishness. Rather than turning to the distant past as he traditionally has done, he chooses to explore the contemporary situation in Ireland. However, this progression is complicated by Tennyson's Arnoldian ideas of the "Celt" which always means that he is seeing them through the lens of Saxonism. In both poems Tennyson presents a more benevolent attitude towards the "Celt" in comparison to his past work but does not recognise the "Celt" and "Saxon" as

fully equal. However, he comes closest to his goal of blending the two peoples together, with "Saxon" leadership, in his final Celticist work.

Merlin and the Gleam

Tennyson would write one final Celticist work: 'Merlin and the Gleam,' published in 1889. The poem reads as an autobiographical tale of the poet's career and is deliberately designed to textually recall a number of Tennyson's past works while moving towards a solution to the problem of how to integrate Celticism and Saxonism. Unlike the work of the early 1880s, however, it owes little overt debt to Arnoldian theories. Instead, it draws on themes found in the 1827 – 1852 poetry Tennyson's his work on King Arthur to create a final statement on the "Celtic" and "Saxon" imaginations.

Unlike the nineteenth century setting of 'Tomorrow' for his final Celticist poem Tennyson returns to the Arthurian mythic cycle. However, this is not to say the poet returns to the sense of Saxonist domination found in *Idylls of the King*. Rather, it is a progression towards what Tennyson portrays as poetic enlightenment. The Gleam of the title refers to what Tennyson termed "the higher poetic imagination," something the narrative voice of the poem is chasing throughout several different landscapes representing a different kind of imagination. These include Saxonism, Celticist, Medievalism, one akin to Shalott, Camelot, and Pastoral before ascending to the heavens. Unlike the other examples of poetry found in this chapter there is no sense of the need for the "Saxon" to temper the passions of the "Celt" in the sphere of politics, nor does the poem contain Colonial Celticist stereotypes. Instead, there is an acceptance that the poetic imagination that Tennyson admired in the "Celt," may in fact be superior to that of the "Saxon."

Tennyson speaks in the poem through the voice of Merlin the Druid of Arthur's court. The poet introduces this in lines 5 to 10:

> The gray Magician
> With eyes of Wonder,
> I am Merlin
> And I am dying
> I am Merlin
> Who follow the Gleam.

These lines do not just introduce Merlin as the narrative voice; they also reveal the autobiographical nature of the poem by calling back to Tennyson's earlier Celticism. The second chapter of this thesis illustrated the poet's fascination with the figures of Druids and Bards in the early phase of his Celticist writing. Tennyson had wished to emulate them in the creation of his work, going as far to adopt the name of Arthur's Druid when publishing 'In the Third of February 1851' one of his controversial anti-Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte poems. In 1851, Tennyson, as new Poet Laureate, could not put his own name to this work given Queen Victoria's wish to have good relations with the newly crowned Emperor of France.[486] However, the choice of "Merlin" as a pseudonym was also made to reflect the prophetic nature of the poem in which the poet envisioned another Napoleonic war between the United Kingdom and France. By stating "I am Merlin," the poet is returning to identifying with Merlin, although this time as a magician seeking poetic knowledge. The poet was eighty when the poem was published and he would only have three years of life left in him. This is not only reflected in the image of the "gray magician" but also in the blunt line "I am Dying." That this line comes in between the repeated line of "I am Merlin" reinforces the sense that Tennyson is returning to a name he used in the past to look back over his poetic career using the device of the Gleam to travel forward through the different phases and themes of his work.

The third stanza opens with an episode in which a people reject the magic of Merlin and by extension

> Once at the croak of a Raven who crost it,
> A Barbarous people,
> Blind to the magic,
> And deaf to melody,
> Snarl'd at and cursed me. (24 -28)

Ricks notes that the connection between the words "Raven" and "Barbarous" suggests "the Danes and their standard"[487]. While Danes are more commonly associated with the Viking raiders of the seventh and tenth centuries giving their name to the Danelaw, the Nordic ruled portions of England, the forerunners of the Danes, the Jutes and Angles, were part of the Germanic "Saxon" migration to the British Isles in the early Medieval period. By creating

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[486] F.J. Sypther, 'Politics in the Poetry of Tennyson' in Victorian Poetry 14:2 (Summer, 1976), pp. 101 – 112 (p. 102)

[487] Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson in three Volumes. Volume 3.* (Harlow: Longman. 1987), p. 120

a sense that the Germanic peoples are "Blind to the magic" and "And deaf to melody," Tennyson is saying that they do not appreciate the poetic imagination that the Gleam represents. This recalls Arnold's condemnation of "philistine Britain" and reaffirms Hallam Tennyson's claim that his father believed that "The Teuton has no poetry in his nature like the Celt"[488]. Given the direction that the Gleam takes in the fourth stanza, this reads as an Arnoldian rejection of the Germanic/"Saxon" imagination. This is in sharp contrast to Tennyson's thoughts on the different political attitudes found elsewhere in his chapter, and I argue that it is here that the poet demonstrates the belief that the "Saxon" needs to embrace the imaginative and poetic aspects of the "Celtic Genius." While in, for example, 'The Voyage of Maeldune,' the "Celt" must learn how to be successful in politics from the "Saxon," here in 'Merlin and the Gleam' the "Saxon" must learn how to be successful in poetry from the "Celt." The mutually enriching relationship is borne out in the progression of the poem wherein the gleam moves away from the "blind" Germanic imagination into a Medieval and Celticist landscape.

In the fourth stanza the gleam leaves the Danes behind to find a place that Tennyson refers to as "the early imagination." However, when contrasted to the third stanza with its condemnation of the philistine Danes this space of fantasy, romanticism, and the supernatural reads as being "Celtic."

> Then to the Melody,
> Over a wilderness
> Gliding, and glancing at
> Elf of the woodland,
> Gnome of the craven
> Griffin and Giant,
> And dancing of Faeries. (35 – 41)

It is telling that the poet uses the word "melody" to describe what the gleam is moving towards. The "Germanic" Danes of the previous stanza are described as "deaf to melody," indicating their lack of poetic imagination. However, this new landscape is described as having a melody, indicating that it is a space that contains the poetry that Tennyson as Merlin is seeking. That this land is a "wilderness" is key to recognizing this as a Celticist space. In the second chapter of this thesis, I explored the difference between

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[488] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son*. (London: The MacMillian Company. 1899), p.338

Celticist and Saxonist landscapes. The Saxonist landscape is ordered and controlled and connected to the enclosed farming land established in the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. In contrast, Celticism relates to the wild, untamed picturesque and remote landscapes of the British Isles. A "wilderness" indicates the latter as it is not the orderly and civilized landscape of Saxonism. This is reinforced by it being populated by creatures of the imagination. Elves, gnomes, griffins, giants and faeries cannot exist in the rational world of Saxonist landscape. Instead, they belong to the remote, unknown places that the Celticist imagination occupies. As explored in the previous chapter, Tennyson had also used faeries to denote a Celticist and feminized otherness from the Saxonist and masculine centre of power. However, it is notable that Tennyson does not use actual "Celtic" people in this discussion, only the landscape, which he fills with creatures of the imagination. This contrasts with both 'The Voyage of Maeldune' and 'Tomorrow' which seek to discuss the politics and in which the "Celt" is very much present. Likewise, the Germanic Danes, despite lacking in poetry, are allowed to be present in the previous stanza. This is further evidenced by Tennyson referring to this stanza being representative of "the early imagination," indicating that the "Celt" is once again being placed in the past after the contemporary focus of 'Tomorrow'. This indicates the notion that the poet is purely interested in seeking the poetic imagination of the "Celt" and not their participation in the physical world.

The Celticist nature of this landscape is also reflected in Tennyson recalling 'The Splendor Falls on Castle Walls' section of *The Princess*. At the end of the fourth stanza of 'Merlin and the Gleam' he writes:

> By warble of water,
> Or cataract of music
> Of falling torrents
> Flitted the Gleam (45 – 48)

This is similar in language and feeling as the earlier poem:

> The splendour falls on castle walls
> And snowy summits old in story:
> The long light shakes across the lakes
> And the wild cataract leaps in glory.

> Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
> Blow, bugle; answer, echoes dying, dying, dying. (1 – 6)

Both deal with powerful waterfalls that create otherworldly sounds, the blowing of horns in the earlier work and music in the latter. In 'Merlin and the Gleam,' the poetic imagination "Flitted" near this place of natural inspiration. 'The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls' was based on an experience Tennyson had while visiting Ireland in the 1850s.[489] The echo of the earlier poem indicates that the poet was recalling the sublime and imaginative power of the "Celtic" landscape in 1889. The lack of a physical human character in both poems, reinforces the idea that Tennyson was purely taking imaginative inspiration from the "Celtic" and was interested in little else.

This Celticist space is more agreeable to the type of poetic imagination that Tennyson is seeking than the Germanic one found in the previous stanza. This reinforces the notion that the "Saxon" needs to supplement his character with "Celtic" poetics. However, it is only the poetic nature of the "Celt" that is desirable to Tennyson, not their participation in the physical world.

Having found a space that he can learn the poetic imagination from, Tennyson has his gleam move on to a landscape that resembles that of Shalott:

> Silent river
> Silvery Willow
> Pasture and plowland (52 – 54)
> ……..
> Homestead and harvest,
> Reaper and gleaner (58 – 59)

The words "silent," "river," "willow," "reaper" and the pastoral landscape are refences to the language and setting of the 1831 poem. However, the "Pasture and plowland" and "homestead and harvest" lines indicate a Saxonist landscape in comparison to the previous Celticist wilderness. This continues the progression of the journey though Tennyson's Celticist career. It both represents the transition from the poet's earliest "Celtic" themed

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[489] John Batchelor names Killary Castle as inspiring the song. However, he also notes that there exists an "alternative tradition" that the song was "either composed or revised" by a visit to Malvern in England.
John Batchelor, *Tennyson: To strive, to seek, to find* (London: Chatto &Windus: 2012), p. 152

poetry to the Arthurian work by referring to 'The Lady of Shalott' and his increasing Saxonist nationalism in this era through the use of an orderly English pastoral landscape.

Camelot is contrasted to the earlier episode with the Danes. While the "Germanic" imagination is "deaf to melody," the Gleam is attracted to Arthur's city by "a melody, stronger and statelier." This demonstrates Tennyson's enthusiasm for the Arthurian mythology which lasted decades. Outside of *Idylls of the King*, the poet wrote five other works dealing with the mythology with 'Merlin and the Gleam' being the final poem of the canon. This enthusiasm is further reinforced by the Gleam choosing Arthur as the highest form of poetic imagination:

> Flicker'd and bicker'd
> From helmet to helmet
> And last on the forehead
> Of Arthur the Blameless
> Rested the Gleam. (70 – 74)

In doing this Tennyson finally creates the harmonious mixture of "Saxon" and "Celt" that he was unable to do with Maeldune, due to the Irish chief giving in to irrational "Celtic" nature. The poet's use of the phrase "Arthur the Blameless" recalls his depiction of the King in *Idylls of the King* in which the poet transforms Arthur the "pattern Victorian gentleman"[490]. The King has already been Saxonized by Tennyson in his previous work and therefore embodies the rational and stoic nature that both he and Arnold believed was necessary for political leadership. However, the gleam, which as we have seen is invisible to the "Barbarous" "Saxon," passes over the heads of others in the court and rests on the "forehead" of Arthur. This indicates that Arthur also has poetic imagination, a trait that is ascribed to the "Celt." Here Tennyson creates a figure that is capable of being a steadying force in politics but whom is not a "Philistine." Therefore, Arthur here represents a union of the "Saxon" and the "Celt," the rational and the irrational, who can bridge the chasm between the two peoples.[491]This is the culmination of all Tennyson's work and ideas on the "Celt." From the early ambivalent fascination in the works of MacPherson and others, through the nationalistic period of the Arthurian poetry to the questioning of how best to integrate the

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[490] Mark Giround. *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1981), p. 184

[491] See previous chapter for a full discussion of how Tennyson transforms Arthur from a "Celtic" King to a" Victorian Gentleman" and how that was used to criticize the "Celtic" character.

"Celt" into an English led Britain in his final years. It is also a representation of the ideal blending of the two peoples argued for by Arnold. This powerful image of harmony is reaffirmed in the next stanza where Tennyson as Merlin describes Arthur as "The King who loved me and cannot die" (79 – 80), despite the King having vanished and Camelot fallen.

Tennyson's final Celticist poem is hopeful in comparison to his past use of the "Celt." He has created a new version of Arthur who embodies both Saxonist and Celticist ideals, indicating that the poet was hopeful of the successful blending of the two people. Indeed, 'Merlin and the Gleam' was published in 1889, the year before he is reported to have told Gladstone that he had been right to pursue a policy of Home Rule. Although he would later, characteristically, change his mind in the last year of his life at this point it seems he had moved away from the fear of the "Celtic Demos" and was, in Arnolds words, a "Celt Lover."

Conclusions.

Tennyson's late Celticism is a both a progression away from and a continuation of the Celticism found in his earlier poetry. The poet begins questioning both Empire and the treatment of the "Celt" between 1864 and 1880 which informs his translation of 'Battle of Brunanburh' which is sympathetic to the "Celt" in terms of their historical treatment. However, this period is also characterised by Tennyson's traditional ambivalence as the poet cannot fully commit to being sympathetic to the "Celt." Like Matthew Arnold, the foremost Celticist of the late nineteenth century, Tennyson believes that the "Celt" is imaginative and romantic but unable to manage their own affairs politically. The "Saxon," therefore, must function as steadying force in relation to the "Celt." 'The Voyage of Maeldune,' shows that a "Celt" may act like a rational "Saxon" but ultimately will fall back on irrationality. While 'Tomorrow' places the "Celt" in a racial hierarchy below the "Saxon" but above the African. It is in 'Merlin and the Gleam,' Tennyson's final Celticist poem that Tennyson comes closest to creating a harmonious relationship between the two people by having a new version of King Arthur embody the Arnoldian qualities of both the rational "Saxon" and romantic "Celt."

Conclusion

The title of the thesis is "Influence and use of Celticism in the work of Tennyson" and as I have argued the poet displayed an ambivalence towards the "Celt" in which he found both inspiration and revulsion in the identity. To illustrate this, we shall return to the dinner conversation between Tennyson and William Allingham that opened the introduction. During the debate, Tennyson said the following that sums up the Celticist attitude I have been exploring:

> "The Kelts are very charming and sweet and poetic. I love their Ossians and their Finns and so forth - but they are most damnably unreasonable."[492]

Here Tennyson refers to the aspects of the identity that he has found desirable, especially their perceived poetic nature, however, he cannot let go of the Saxonist perception that the "Celt" is unreasonable. He names the Scottish Ossian alongside the Irish Finn, indicating they come from the same culture, indicating that he did see "Celt" as a monocultural identity. His fascination with, for example, the work of MacPherson and Arthurian mythology is inseparable from this. While the two forms of Celticism, Colonial and Romantic, I have described in this thesis have separate characteristics, they serve the same purpose; to create an Orientalist style imaginary "Celt" in which a writer can create their own vision of what the "Celt" should be.

Over the course of Tennyson's long career, he deployed aspects of both Colonial and Romantic Celticism in his work. His views on the Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and Cornish were informed by the power relationship within the British Isles between "Saxon" and "Celt" in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Through his poetry, he helped reinforce Celticist stereotypes created during this time period. He was, however, attracted to the sentimental and romantic aspects of the "Celt" and sought to adapt them for his work. In chapters two to four I have explored the evolution of Tennyson's Celticism from appropriation and use of the picturesque to create a sense of an undesirable "Celtic" landscape, through the Saxonisation of the Arthurian mythology to the explorations of the "Celtic Genius" of the poet's final decade.

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[492] Matthew Bevis, 'Tennyson, Ireland and "The Powers of Speech' in Victorian Poetry. 39:3 (Fall 2001) pp. 345 – 364 (p. 347).

Colonial Celticism drew on traditions built up in England since the Jacobite uprising of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, traditions in which the "Celtic" Scottish Highlanders were demonised as primitive in British Government propaganda. Following the end of this period of conflict a number of English writers, such as John Gray, began to use "Celtic" subjects in their poetry. However, these works continued the tradition of treating the "Celt" as being "backwards" and "faithful to tradition."[493] in comparison to the modern "Saxon." In reaction to Saxonist encroachment on their lands and culture, writers such as James MacPherson and Iolo Morganwg, created a counter Romantic Celticism in order to create new traditions on which "Celtic" nationalism could be built. Therefore, both Celticisms are similar to Orientalism in that they create an imaginary version of the "Celt." In the case of Colonial Celticism it is used to justify "Saxon" domination, while Romantic Celticism is used to promote a positive image of the Celt in order to resist said domination.

In the poetry of 1827 – 1856, Tennyson appropriates aspects of Romantic Celticism while simultaneously positioning the "Celt" in the past in comparison to "Saxon" modernity. Central to this was his creation of liminal picturesque "Celtic" landscapes in his adaptations of James MacPherson's 'Night-Song of the Bards'. Despite critics such as Dafydd Moore warning against terming Tennyson's work as Ossianic[494], I argue that the importance of this poem in the creation of several works places the poet as an inheritor of MacPherson's work. In these poems Tennyson places the "Celt" in an undesirable wild and untamed land to highlight their perceived primitiveness. This is reaffirmed by other works both in *Poems by Two Brothers* and written later in which Tennyson presents a sense of "Celtic Decay" in which the "Celt" exists in the past with no future and is associated with ruin, desolation, and old age. Tennyson was also fascinated with the "Celtic Bardic tradition" as he wished to be a Bard, or the closely related figure of the Druid, who can "can perceive the spiritual health of the individual and society."[495] However, the poet's vision of the Bard promotes a Saxonist idea of an English-led Britain. Therefore, this body of work creates the foundations for Tennyson's later Celticist works.

The poet's work focused on the Arthurian mythology, sees a hardening of his Colonial Celticism in which characters who display "Celtic" attributes are presented as the causes of

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[493] Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 5

[494] Dafydd Moore, 'Tennyson, Malory and the Ossianic Mode: "The Poems of Ossian" and 'The Death of Arthur'' in *the Review of English Studies, New Series*, 57.230 (2006), pp. 374-391 (p. 376)

[495] Samus Perry, *Alfred Tennyson* (Tavistock: Northcote, 2005), p. 42

the fall of an idealised Saxonist Camelot. The rational and enlightened King Arthur that Tennyson creates is a symbol of "Saxon" domination over the British Isles. However, his early works in the mythology, 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' were originally open to portraying a Romantic vision of the "Celt." Tennyson's shift towards a Camelot that represents English Nationalism led to the poems being rewritten to suit his new vision.

The discussion between Tennyson and Allingham that opened his thesis took place in 1880, when the English poet was creating the first of his explorations of the "Celtic Genius," 'The Voyage of Maeldune'. Tennyson's interpretation of this "Genius" as Matthew Campbell argues is itself ambivalent as it is both the 'very charming and sweet and poetic' as well as the 'damnably unreasonable'.[496] In 'Merlin and the Gleam', Tennyson appears to soften by presenting the Germanic "Saxons" as "A Barbarous people, Blind to the magic, and deaf to melody" in comparison to the "Celt" who are imaginative. Tennyson had long believed that the "Celt" needs the "Saxon" to run their political affairs but here he admits that the "Saxon" needs to supplement his stoicism with the imagination he found in the "Celt."

How Tennyson presents the "Celt" is confused due to his sometimes-contradictory nature. His debate with Allingham also took place in the year he published his translation of 'Battle of Brunanburh' which I argue contains a sense of doubt in the "Saxon" capture of "Celtic" Britain. In his earlier Arthurian works, Tennyson creates a passionate "Celtic" Sir Lancelot as a counterpoint to the stoic "Saxon" King Arthur, whom the poet wishes to be idealised. Yet Hallam Tennyson reports that his father loved Lancelot as "his own imaginative knight."[497] In his final years, Tennyson's worries over the future of the British Empire led him to attempt to understand the" Celtic Genius" and his final Celticist work 'Merlin and the Gleam' creates a picture of "Saxon" philistinism in comparison to "Celtic" creativity. Therefore, Tennyson's relationship with the "Celt" was more complex than him being a simple, in the words of Arnold, "Celt Lover" or "Celt Hater" due to his characteristic inconsistent portrayals of them in his work.

Implications for Tennysonian Studies

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[496] Mathew Campbell, 'Tennyson and Ireland' in Tennyson Research Bulletin 6.3 (November 1994), pp. 161 – 173 (p. 170)
[497] J.M. Gray, *Thro' the Vision of the Night* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1980), p. 165

As I said in the introduction this thesis is the first full study of how Celticism impacted the work of Tennyson. My findings offer a new way of looking at the poet's work in different areas.

The thesis places Tennyson in the ideological framework of Celticism during the nineteenth century and how his use of the "Celt" in his work evolved over time. In the past criticism has focused on certain periods of the poet's career in relation to the "Celts." However, I have demonstrated it was a lifelong interest that did help shape several major works, including *Idylls of the King.* Having this framework also allows for greater understanding of Tennyson's Englishness or Angelo-Saxonism as it reveals an important "Other" against which Saxonism was constructed. For example, I have demonstrated what was taken away from King Arthur in the creation of the perfect Saxonist King.

With this overview of how Tennyson's Celticism evolved, I have also demonstrated how it did change over time. My discussion of the editing of both 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' provide for new readings that illustrate how Tennyson's growing fame could change how he presented the "Celt" to his audience. For example, in the early 1830s, the poet presents a sympathetic and unjudgmental vision of the affair of Lancelot and Guinevere. However, in both the editing of the poem and the later *Idylls of the King*, the poet becomes more hostile to the idea of infidelity and Guinevere becomes the figure who is most to blame for the collapse of Camelot.

Although he deploys elements of Romantic Celticism, Tennyson is an English nationalist who sees the "Celtic" world through the lens of stereotypes. He cannot fully speak for all the "British" peoples due to his belief in "Saxon" superiority. This allows for a greater understanding of the poet's position in the cultural apparatus of the United Kingdom. As Laureate, Tennyson was the foremost voice of the nation and therefore, his work including negative stereotypes of the "Celt" were widely read implicating him as major contributor to the dissemination of Colonial Celticism to the public during the nineteenth century.

I have placed Tennyson in dialogue with Matthew Arnold during the later decades of the century. While there is no evidence that the two ever discussed Celticism with each other, there are striking similarities in their conclusions. Both displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the "Celt" in their writing with fascination with "Celtic" literature, which

they both hoped to supplement what is seen as a lack of imagination in the "Saxon" but revulsion at the "Celtic" Character. They believed the "Celt" needed the "Saxon" to temper the perceived irrational aspects of their character. This further places Tennyson in the discourse surrounding Celticism in the Victorian world as it demonstrates that the poet was conforming to the popular ideas of his time and interacting with them in his poetry, especially the later work that attempted to explore the "Celtic Genius."

I have also established the Ossianic poetry of James MacPherson as a central influence on the young Tennyson. The existence of several works by the poet inspired by 'Night-Song of the Bards' is evidence that MacPherson did have an impact on Tennyson that goes beyond a simple shared interest in Medievalism.

There are no easy answers when it comes to Tennyson. While he was a Colonial Celticist at heart there could be disconnect between what is found in his poetry and statements made in his personal life. A major example being his final statements on Celticism in 1889's 'Merlin and the Gleam' where he appears to have suggested an answer to the problem of the different characters of the "Saxon" and the "Celt" by presenting King Arthur as representing the stoic pragmaticism of the former and the creativity and imagination of the later. Indeed, as stated in chapter four, Tennyson appeared to be more sympathetic towards the idea of Irish Home Rule than he had in the past. However, in 1892, the year of his death, he made the statement "I love Mr. Gladstone but hate his current Irish Policy"[498] indicating that he had changed his mind. This contradictory nature can make the poet hard to label in specific situations, however, Celticism helps create a general picture of the poet that can be used to understand why sometimes there are no clear answers with him.

Suggested Further Explorations

As stated in the introduction the contribution of this thesis to Tennysonian studies is providing new readings of Tennyson's work that place him within the Celticist tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth century allowing for an understanding of the role he played as poet laureate in the construction of a "Saxon" led British identity. However, the scope of the thesis only covers Tennyson's lifetime and the events before he was born in order to give context to his Celticism. A starting point for further study is Tennyson's Celticist Afterlife.

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[498] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson A Memoir, by His Son Volume II* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1899), p. 411

How did the content of the poetry I covered influence those who came after him both in England and the "Celtic Nations," how was he received, and did his Celticism before part of a dialogue with his followers? There are clues to how he was received in Ireland in statements by writers of the late Victorian and Modernist eras. In a letter to William Blackwood dated 1 March 1898 W.B. Yeats remarked:

> I think too that Tennyson, a very essentially English writer, should be done by someone who has grown up among English people and English scenery. He is in the best sense of the word the most English writer of the century and could not be done justice to by a writer, who has grown up like myself mainly among the lean kine of a Celtic Country.[499]

Yeats does not explain what the difference between Tennyson as an "English" and himself as a "Celtic" is, inviting a Celticist comparison of the two poet's work. James Joyce was considerably harsher in his reception of Tennyson when he wrote:

> "Classicism was all right when it was paganism, but when it came to the Renaissance it has lost its purpose, and so has continued miserably until this day getting weaker and weaker until it has petered out in Tennyson."[500]

This invites a study of how writers like Joyce would have seen the degeneration of "Classicism" through the poetry of Tennyson. In addition to these Irish examples, the question could be asked if and how Tennyson's Celticism became part of the tradition in English writing. He was an important voice of poetic authority in the Victorian world and attracted admiration and derision from the English poets who came after him. Another possible Afterlife is the use of works such as 'The Lady of Shalott' as mentioned in footnote twenty of chapter three. A study of art, music, film, and other mediums could explore how the image of The Lady has become associated with the "Celt." Tennyson's Celticism has also become part of the British and Irish fantasy tradition. In his 1924 novel *The King of Elfland's Daughter,* the Irish fantasist Lord Dunsany directly alludes to "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls" section of *The Princess* when discussing the Horns of Elfland being heard in the world of Men:

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[499] Robert O'Driscoll and W. B. Yeats 'Letters and Lectures of W. B. Yeats' in *University Review* 3.8 (Spring,1966), pp. 29-55 (p. 30)

[500] Fred Radford, The Nautilus, and the Tower: John Ruskin and the Victorian Medievalism of James Joyce in James Joyce Quarterly, 28.3 (Spring, 1991), pp. 595-615 (p.605)

Tennyson speaks of them as heard "faintly blowing" even in these fields of ours, and I believe that by accepting all that the poets say while duly inspired our errors will be fewest. So, though Science may deny or confirm it, Tennyson's Line may guide me here.[501]

In the twenty-first century English novelist Robert Holdstock choose to use Tennyson's alternative name for the Avalon in the title of his 2009 fantasy novel *Avilion* in which the isle and a version of Arthur's journey are depicted. Holdstock also uses quotes from 'The Passing of Arthur', the final poem of Idyll's of the King as an epigraph to the novel further creating a Tennysonian connection.[502] Likewise, his earlier 1994 novel Merlin's Wood, which is set in Brocéliande forest and deals with the conflict between Vivien and Merlin, begins by quoting the opening lines of Tennyson's 'Merlin and Vivien'.[503] Therefore, a final possible Afterlife could be to explore how Tennyson's Celticism influenced the Fantasy genre.

Celticist Afterlives is not the sole area of study that could be undertaken. Other major Victorian writers could be explored through both Celticism and dialogue with Matthew Arnold. How can Celticism be applied to the likes of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market,' Charles Dickens's body of Ghost fiction or George Meredith's 'The Woods of Westermain' for example? These works resist, in Arnold's words, "the despotism of fact"[504] and could be examined in a similar manner to Tennyson's work in Poems by Two Brothers in relation to explore how Celticism may have played a role in their creation. In addition, a writer such as Charles Kingsley is noted for anti-Irish statements[505] but there are no studies into how Celticism helped shaped those attitudes, offering up another possible study.

Final Conclusion.

Celticism played a vital role in the poetic development of Alfred, Lord Tennyson who inherited his colonial view of the "Celt" from notions developed in the eighteenth century. The "Celt," to whom he would return repeatedly over the decades, was for the poet equally fascinating and repelling. They provided him with models for how he wanted to present himself as a poet, King Arthur whom he would use as a symbol of British glory, and a space in which he could indulge his poetic imagination. Yet he found them irrational and resented their character in comparison to that of his own "Saxon" character. Although he was never

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[501] Lord Dunsany, *The King of Elfland's Daughter* (New York: Del Rey, 1999) p. 93
[502] Robert Holdstock, *Avilion* (London: Gollancz, 2009) p. vii
[503] Robert Holdstock, *Merlin's Wood or The Vision of Magic* (London: Harper Collins, 1994) p. 11
[504] Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature' in *Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism* ed. By R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) pp 291 – 386 (p. 346)
[505] See Introduction

fully at peace with his relationship with Scotland, Wales and, especially, Ireland, Tennyson nevertheless deserves to stand alongside Matthew Arnold as one of the major Celticist voices of the Victorian Age.

Word Count: 77019

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