

Introduction

The Edition and the Critics

As generations of critics have observed, Victorian illustration had a long and complicated history. More illustrated material was published than ever before, and the “bitextual” or “bimodal” text became the dominant publishing idiom.¹ In an age before television and film and with limited access to photography, the most convenient way to see visual information was in the pages of comic magazines such as *Punch* (1841), in the leaves of literary periodicals of the 1860s, in the serial parts of fiction by Dickens and Thackeray and their contemporaries, and in editions of illustrated poetry. Transmitted through the technologies of copper and steel-plate etching, wood engraving, and occasionally lithography, a wide-ranging imagery was made available to diverse audiences. Indeed, the conjunction of literature and visual art became the norm, converting readers into reader/viewers engaged in an intricate, intimate transaction with the printed page; the talents of a wide variety of artists were employed and intermedial texts underwent a series of changes while still contributing to a recognizable canon.² Mapping this tradition is problematic, and several alternative pathways have been traced through a corpus of work that includes the luxury imprints of Morris and Company at the Kelmscott Press, wood engravings of the “Golden Age” of the 1860s drawn by Millais and Sandys, the satires of Cruikshank and Phiz, and the bleak realism of Herkomer and Holl in *The Graphic*.

Taken as whole, with all of its multitudinous turns, the discourse labeled “Victorian illustration,” essentially an updating of the eighteenth-century traditions of the “Sister Arts,” is rich, complex, and contradictory. It defies a formulaic

reading, and its development was more like a flow of change than a series of discrete compartments. Nevertheless, several books and magazines can be identified as turning points, junctions where new directions are signaled. Two publications stand out. One is Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1837), visualized by Seymour and Phiz, which established the pictorial novel as a dynamic form; and the other is Beardsley's erotic treatment of Wilde's *Salomé* (1891).³ The movement between these two, from scratchy narrative caricatures to the elegant arabesques of Art Nouveau of the end of the century, is a measure of how much Victorian illustration had changed in a period of sixty years, moving from mass, commodified imagery for serialization to arcane designs for an esoteric elite. Yet in between these works is a third publication with an important role in the evolution of the discourse: the gift-book collection of reprinted poems known as the "Moxon" or "Illustrated Tennyson."⁴ First published on May 25, 1857, by Edward Moxon as a slightly edited anthology of verse originally issued in 1842,⁵ this challenging work, with its striking array of fifty-four fine engravings cut on wood, printed on luxurious glazed paper and bound in an elaborate cloth binding, is routinely described, in the words of Martin Hardie, as a "landmark in the history of book illustration."⁶

The Moxon Tennyson has always been the subject of critical scrutiny and analysis, and its claim to fame is both multifaceted and in many ways curiously unsatisfying. Its principal importance, according to critical orthodoxy, is its promotion of Pre-Raphaelite illustration. Although Maclise, Horsley, Mulready, Creswick, and Stanfield provided almost half (twenty-four) of the total montage, it was only in this edition that Rossetti, Holman Hunt, and Millais were brought together. Most critics have argued that their presence set new standards; often called the "Pre-Raphaelite Tennyson,"⁷ the book is anatomized in terms of its revolutionary approach, lauding the Pre-Raphaelites as radicals who changed illustration as they had changed painting a decade earlier. It is more generally regarded as the first important work in the style of illustration known as "the Sixties," anticipating the poetic naturalism of Sandys, Du Maurier, and Keene,⁸ while clearing the way for the artist's new role as a coauthor in the production of meaning, rather than a secondary talent: the start, Walter Crane observes, of a "new epoch."⁹ As Gleeson White remarks, writing at the end of the century with the advantage of hindsight, "The whole modern school . . . regard it rightly enough as the genesis of the modern movement."¹⁰ But much remains unsaid, unknown, or simply misunderstood; though it is one of the best-known publications of the century, criticism is often repetitive and overdependent on previous interpretations. An intervention, I believe, is needed.

Introduction: The Edition and the Critics

The key issue is the question of the Pre-Raphaelites' dominance, which is always made at the expense of the other contributors. Victorian analysis focused exclusively on this group of artists: G. S. Layard's slim volume of 1894, *Tennyson and His Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators*, is almost entirely concerned with the work of the three Brethren; while the only recent critic to consider the book more inclusively is Lorraine Janzen Kooistra. In her wide-ranging and penetrating analysis of the Victorian gift book (2011), Kooistra offers a series of readings which explore the contribution of the non-Pre-Raphaelites and the ways in which Romantic illustrators, exemplified by Stanfield, struggled to visualize both lyric and narrative poetry. Revealing many new ways of reading the interactions of visual and verbal texts, she does much to rehabilitate these artists' efforts and offers several insightful readings. Yet she does not consider them at length, and maintains the traditional view of the Pre-Raphaelites' hegemony.¹¹

The aim of this inquiry, by contrast, is to modernize analysis of the Moxon Tennyson by reading it not only as a showcase for Pre-Raphaelite design but as a book illustrated by eight, rather than three, artists, exploring the work of Maclise, Mulready, Clarkson Stanfield, Creswick, and Horsley on *equal terms* with the contributions of Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt. These contributors are read as copartners in visualizing the book's meanings, and I further consider the significance of the other participants in this process of making—the engravers, the publisher, the binding designer, the technicians who produced the material object, and (of course) the author. In so doing, I draw on, and aim to advance, other recent readings, notably one by Jim Cheshire (2017), who studies the book in the continuum of Moxon's imprints, and another by Julia Thomas (2009), who places the work in the context of a long tradition of visualizing the poet's work as one response in a line that ultimately includes photography by Julia Margaret Cameron and narrative paintings. In particular, I aim to build on Kooistra's writing on the Moxon Tennyson in her extended *Branch* essay,¹² placing the tome in its historical moment. So this study—to borrow Layard's subtitle—is “a book about a book,” the first since that writer's publication in the 1890s. Where, then, to begin? The Moxon Tennyson's complexity offers numerous points of entry, but the best place to start is by unraveling its history and focusing in detail on the development of criticism which views the *Poems* purely as an exemplar of Pre-Raphaelite design.

THE BOOK AND ITS CRITICAL TRADITION

The Moxon Tennyson's history is well known, although it is not quite the case, as D. M. R. Bentley remarks in his recent study of Rossetti's designs, that it is so

well known as not to require any further explication.¹³ In fact, the narrative as it currently stands is both well known and riven with misinformation. Some basic, contextual facts have to be clarified and others put in place.

The brainchild of Edward Moxon, Tennyson's usual publisher and the individual who had established the writer as a popular figure, the edition was projected as an illustrated gift book of the highest quality; produced at the end of the fifties when this type of publication, essentially a replacement for the illustrated annuals of the thirties and forties, was becoming popular, it aimed to exploit a growing market of middle-class readers and appeal as widely as possible to multiple audiences. Known popularly as the "poet's publisher,"¹⁴ Moxon wanted to shape and generate markets as well as respond to them. For traditional tastes, he assembled a cast of well-noted names. William Mulready, John Callcott Horsley, Thomas Creswick, Frederick Clarkson Stanfield, and Daniel Maclise were all Royal Academicians, better known as painters than illustrators, although all of them had significant experience as graphic designers.¹⁵ The Pre-Raphaelites, conversely, were still regarded as proponents of the avant-garde and appealed to the forward-thinking. Formerly members of the famous Brotherhood, which had revolutionized painting at the end of the 1840s, Millais, Rossetti, and Hunt were still in the process of building a reputation in the artistic mainstream and had only limited experience of illustration: Millais and Rossetti had published single designs in William Allingham's *The Music Master* (1855), and Holman Hunt had drawn an illustration for Thomas Woolner's "My Beautiful Lady" in the Pre-Raphaelites' short-lived journal *The Germ* (1850). The Moxon Tennyson was therefore a combination of expertise and relative inexperience, familiarity and novelty; nevertheless, the two sets of designers created fine drawings on wood, and invested heavily in making the best possible work. All of the images underwent extensive preparation in the form of preparatory drawings, many of which survive, and all of the contributors were committed to upholding the standards of fine art, a position epitomized by Mulready's insistence on expending the same amount of labor, or "pains," with an illustration as with a full-scale work in oil.¹⁶ Neatly packaged in a binding displaying a neoclassical motif, this quality product was aimed at the aspirations of a bourgeois audience stabilizing its position after the political and social upheavals of the 1840s and intent on acquiring the cultural capital of high art as a sign of status and respectability. As Moxon intended, it presented itself as a fine artifact, a "little illustrative gallery" of painterly images for fireside consumption.¹⁷

However, the publication was far from seamless, and the effect has always been one of aesthetic unevenness, with two competing styles—Pre-Raphaelite

and non-Pre-Raphaelite—contending for dominance. The terms applied to this mismatch are remarkably uniform and extend from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. Reid (1928) describes the two schools as a grating opposition, only notable for creating a “hotch-potch”;¹⁸ Holman Hunt calls the book an “apple of discord” (1901);¹⁹ Layard, a “bundle of splendid incongruities” (1894);²⁰ Burne-Jones, a “mixed pleasure” (1896);²¹ Harris, “an odd amalgam” (1988);²² Kooistra, a “mishmash of visual messages,” a blatant piece of “book-cobbling” (2002);²³ and Engen, a “mixed bag” (1995).²⁴

More especially, modern interpretations have focused on discriminating between the two sets of contributors. As noted in the section above, in scholarship of the last century or so the Moxon Tennyson’s reputation is *almost entirely* based on extravagant praise for the Pre-Raphaelites’ contribution—and contempt for the work of Maclise and the other academicians. The Pre-Raphaelites are viewed as better artists than the vilified others, positioned as part of a dichotomized construction in which the “old” and “new,” the dynamic and moribund, the innovative and the conventional, are broadly opposed. In the opinion of Percy Muir (1971), for instance, the “new men” score “heavily all the time,” creating a clear space between the purported shoddiness of Creswick’s and Horsley’s drawing and the “splendid” draftsmanship of the PRB.²⁵

More important still is the question of the effectiveness of the illustrations *as* illustrations—as graphic images produced with the aim of enriching the text. Once again the Pre-Raphaelites are championed, with the imaginative qualities of Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt contrasted with what is said to be the textual mirroring and replication in the work of the “older” artists. The Pre-Raphaelites are identified as the “innovators” and “interpreters,” and the others as no more than slavish “illustrators” whose work depicts what was already inscribed in the poems’ imagery. Writing in 1907, Martin Hardie observes that the “older men . . . clung to the older traditions; they picked out a piece of a poem and illustrated it with the same dogged fidelity and commonplace honesty with which they painted a patch of nature, [while the Pre-Raphaelites offered] a symbolic and interpretive art [which expressed] their own instinct and temperament.”²⁶

The Pre-Raphaelite illustrations for Tennyson are thus described as idiosyncratic readings of the poems which uncover new meanings, add new inflections, develop strata of implication, and generally extend the reader/viewer’s experience of the verse. According to this line of reasoning, the Pre-Raphaelite part of the book represents a great improvement in the aesthetics of illustration while also defining a new, imaginative approach to the interpretation of the

verse, projecting a “new impulse,”²⁷ and transforming the literary source into “something rich and strange,”²⁸ well beyond the purely paratextual. Stein (1981), Vaughan (1988), Lewis (1997), and Suriano (2000) are all broadly of the same opinion; although their readings are more nuanced than most earlier accounts,²⁹ they still champion the Pre-Raphaelites’ imagery as the *only* important element in book usually viewed as a “curate’s egg,”³⁰ as if in Du Maurier’s famous *Punch* cartoon, with the good bits being very good and the bad bits unappealing, or even distasteful.

Taken to the logical extreme, and bearing in mind Kooistra’s commentary on some of the academicians, this approach deletes the non-Pre-Raphaelite designs from the record, physically removing them from sight. The Scholar edition (1976) reprints all of the designs, but the Freemantle album of 1901 reproduces only the imagery of the three favored illustrators—dismissing the others as worthless—and so does the Academy imprint of 1978. The work of the older designers is traditionally denigrated or erased, and we are left with a modern construction, a partial representation which accounts for only thirty of the fifty-four illustrations. In place of the original book, we have an abstraction, distorting the historical record and offering in its place an edited version.

But how did this situation arise? The notion of the Pre-Raphaelites’ interpretive superiority is so often repeated that it has hardened into a dogma, and one hard to challenge. The Pre-Raphaelites, it seems, *must* be the greater artists. Vaughan sounds a cautionary note, observing how the “older artists were no less attentive” to the texts than the Pre-Raphaelites, insisting Maclise and company were “more sensitive to the tone and narrative” than their fêted counterparts.³¹ The point is not developed, but it clearly refocuses attention on the need to challenge an orthodoxy which seems unassailable but is, in fact, a critical construct, a reflection of taste changing over time. Crucially, it has not always been the predominant view.

The idea of the Pre-Raphaelites as insightful interpreters was first established in the 1880s, when the painting of the original Brotherhood was part of the mainstream and the work of the second generation of Pre-Raphaelite artists, notably that of Burne-Jones and Waterhouse, was the dominant artistic idiom. This privileged position set the tone for criticism of Pre-Raphaelite book art; predictably, the impact of painting enhanced the reputation of the images printed in ink. Writing in 1882, William Sharp observes that Rossetti and his colleagues were the producers of “original creations” in the manner of fine art which did not illustrate, as such, but encapsulated the “spirit” of the text,³² and this reading was further developed in the 1890s. Laurence Housman explains the situation in

his study of Arthur Boyd Houghton (1896), noting how “the illustrations of the pre-Raphaelites were personal and intellectual readings of the poems to which they belonged, were not merely echoes in line of the words of the text. Often they were the successful summing up of the drift of an entire poem within the space of a single picture.”³³

Moreover, this opinion extensively recurs in reviews and reflections, with George Du Maurier offering a typical opinion in his self-reflective analysis of his own practice, “The Illustrating of Books from the Serious Artist’s Point of View” (1890). Pre-Raphaelite illustration, he claims, is a vigorous form, extending the poet’s meanings through a series of unpredictable insights and new understandings. Du Maurier and Housman are unambiguous in their advocacy, and both had a vested interest: heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite approach, their own illustrations are interpretive rather than illustrative. As Du Maurier explains of his own work, “Sometimes . . . an other’s [*sic*] idea lets loose the fountain of one’s own originality [and the text becomes] a theme or motif for endless contrapuntal additions and variations, and fugues, and unforeseen embellishments.”³⁴

The inspiration for this approach came from the Moxon Tennyson, but Housman and Du Maurier were directly influenced by Rossetti’s oft-quoted claim, writing to William Allingham, that the role of the illustrator was to “allegorize on one’s own hook on the subject of the poem, without killing for one’s self and everyone a distinct idea of the poet’s.”³⁵ Indeed, using the text as a “hint and an opportunity”³⁶ for Rossetti’s own inventions became by the nineties a mantra—a strategy empowering the artist and superseding the older model of the forties and fifties, in which the illustrator was still regarded as very much the writer’s servant and bound, at least in principle (and sometimes challenged, as in the case of the relationship between Dickens and Phiz) to re-create in a visual form the author’s messages.

If we move to the book’s own period, however, the approach to illustration is far more nuanced, with extensive, thoughtful reviews appearing in *The Art-Journal*, *The Westminster Review*, *The British Quarterly Review*, *The Examiner*, *Fraser’s Magazine*, and a number of daily newspapers. Although there are grumbles about draftsmanship, there is no differentiation of the two sets of illustrations as readings of the text, with critics detecting both strengths and weaknesses: sometimes the illustration is read as a mirror image of the text, sometimes it is seen as interpretive, adding provocative extra dimensions of thought, and sometimes it is judged to be at odds with its literary source.

The older artists (with the exception of Horsley) are praised for the sensitivity of their readings, which privilege the tonalities of Tennyson's verse. Creswick is hailed as a nature poet, a landscape artist to match the writer's ruralism; Maclise is singled out for his depiction of the heroic "attitudes" and feelings of "sorrow" in "Morte d'Arthur";³⁷ and Mulready is admired for his catching of "pathos" in "The Deserted House" and for his re-creation of Tennyson's humor in "The Goose."³⁸ The Pre-Raphaelites also gain plaudits for their capturing of the poems' emotional tone and ambience. Rossetti's illustrations are praised for their deeply felt responses to the text while displaying "originality of thought,"³⁹ while Millais's "Mariana" is eulogized for its extreme emotionalism, managing to present in a frame of "extreme simplicity" the writer's "sense of utter desolation."⁴⁰ Holman Hunt's sensuous design for "The Arabian Nights" is highlighted for capturing the poem's "dreamy" tone, and the same artist gains credit for his visualization of Godiva's "great dignity and beauty."⁴¹

On the other hand, the lack of correspondence between the text and the engravings is a serious issue, and one which complicates responses to all of the artists. Writing in *The Times*, Samuel Lucas, yet to become the editor of *Once a Week* and an influential critic of illustration, voices a prevailing complaint: "The most common defect [of books such as the Moxon Tennyson] is the extent to which [the artists fail to] give the best possible thought or attention to the text. It really is extraordinary to what an extent they can mistake or contradict the meaning of the author confided to them."⁴²

Lucas goes on to critique Maclise's illustrations, which are supposedly ill-matched with the text, and other reviewers were quick to focus on this incongruity. Rossetti and Holman Hunt are condemned as the worst culprits. *The Art-Journal* finds that Rossetti's "Sir Galahad," though "vigorous and effective," bears no relationship to its poem: "as far as we can make out," it lacks "the slightest reference to any descriptive line it professes to illustrate."⁴³ Similarly, there is agreement as to what constitutes the *worst* match with the texts. Of all the illustrators, Horsley is the least highly regarded—setting him up as the book's weakest artist and establishing a reputation which, I shall argue later, deserves to be rescued. But he was not alone in bearing the brunt of some vituperative commentary. Two Pre-Raphaelite designs are singled out by several reviewers for condemnation: Rossetti's "St Cecily" and Holman Hunt's "The Lady of Shalott." Each of these is considered an extravagant piece of riddle-making. Writing of Rossetti's design, the *Quarterly* can only detect a baffling absurdity, a "grievous mistake" of bad drawing with no linkage with the verse. The artist, the reviewer complains, has completely

missed the point, showing the saint “in the midst of her playing. . . . She has lost her balance, and is supported by a figure intended for an angel [who boasts] a peruke much disordered [and seemingly] biting a piece of out of her forehead.”⁴⁴

Holman Hunt’s illustration is similarly ridiculed as a “child’s scribble,” an arabesque of a swirling hair in “imitation of a spider’s web . . . totally unreal and impossible [and] wound about her figure without aim or meaning . . . [hair] that violates so flagrantly the laws of gravitation [that it makes us think] Is there some profound significance in this? Or is it a mere flourish?”⁴⁵

This illustration baffled Tennyson, and as far as the reviewers were concerned it went beyond both illustration and interpretation. Such images, *Fraser’s* complains, do not “harmonize with, or throw light, upon the book”; instead, they become an “impertinence,”⁴⁶ a challenge to the author’s authority.

ILLUSTRATION/INTERPRETATION

So criticism of the end of the century was decidedly at odds with contemporary reviewers. Late Victorians championed the Pre-Raphaelites at the expense of the so-called traditionalists, but commentators of the book’s own time, in the late fifties and early sixties, were far more even-handed in their judgments, with blame and praise being equally apportioned between the two sets of designs; instead of imposing a binary opposition between the interpretive and the purely illustrative, mid-Victorian critics assessed the designs individually, on a case-by-case basis. Their approach, in other words, is far more inclusive than later criticism, enabling us to see the effect of the book as whole rather than a series of divisions.

It is time, I believe, to reinstate this organic model and use it as a means of studying the engravings as a whole, with both sets of artists being viewed as illustrators and interpreters. Indeed, it is pertinent here to justify this critical position by interrogating the long-established division of the “literal” and “interpretive” design: the early reviewers insist that all of the artists used both techniques, and close investigation of a range of images shows there are many overlaps and similarities between them. A good place to start is to by comparing two examples of a mood piece: Millais’s design for “Mariana” (fig. I.1) and Mulready’s “The Deserted House” (fig. I.2).

According to the long-established reading of the book, the first should be interpretive and the second purely a mirror of the text, replicating its detail. “Mariana” is certainly an imaginative response which edits, reorientates, and

THE MOXON TENNYSON



MARIANA.

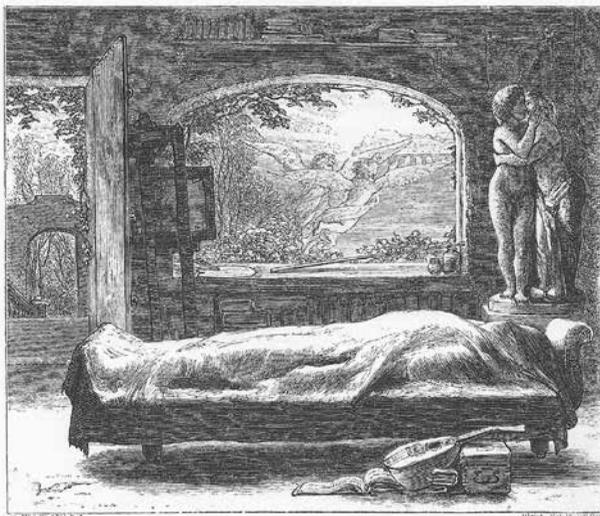
“Mariana in the moated grange.”—*Measure for Measure*.

I.

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all :
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the peach to the garden-wall.

FIGURE 1.1. John Everett Millais, “Mariana.” Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel, 94 × 78 mm. Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Moxon, 1857), 7.

extends the textual information. It shows the moment when the sun is sinking in the “western bower” (10) in accordance with the text, but it does not include any other physical detail; at the same time, it epitomizes the character’s despair in a melodramatic pose absent from the writing. The illustration is in this sense a visual gloss, an interpretation which visualizes the poem’s emotionalism without re-representing specific information; and, if we follow the usual argument that Pre-Raphaelites are interpreters and the others simply illustrators, it should be entirely different from Mulready’s design.



THE DESERTED HOUSE.

I.

LIFE and Thought have gone away
Side by side,
Leaving door and windows wide :
Careless tenants they !

II.

All within is dark as night :
In the windows is no light ;
And no murmur at the door,
So frequent on its hinge before.

FIGURE I.2. William Mulready, "The Deserted House." Engraved by John Thompson, 81 × 97 mm. Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Moxon, 1857), 43.

When we turn to this image, however, we find that Mulready is far from being a prosaic artist of "commonplace honesty,"⁴⁷ but is just as imaginative in his approach to the text as Millais. The poem describes the house as a dim zone where "Life and Thought / Here no longer dwell" (44); but Mulready encapsulates the atmosphere by making his own invention, entirely missing from the verse, in the form of a shrouded body. Far from being radically different from each other, the two artists thus adopt parallel interpretive strategies: Millais presents Mariana's gesture as a sign of frustration and despair, and Mulready creates

a distinct visual equivalent to literary implication. The two artists are also alike in their creation of a suitable setting, which acts as a psychological metaphor. Millais's room is a cramped enclosure, physically pressing in on the figure as light breaks in through the limited perspective of a window, while Mulready's deserted house is inhabited not with human life but with the emblems of a life's achievements—a painter's palette, a neoclassical sculpture of embracing figures, the tokens of love and romance, a mandolin and a traveler's box. These are the signifiers of "Life and Thought," "mirth and merry-making" (43–44), but all of them are the artist's and not the poet's inventions.

The parallelism between the approaches suggests that the binary model collapses under close scrutiny, and there are many other examples of the Pre-Raphaelites and the putative traditionalists working in a shared idiom which moves between illustration and interpretation in a single design. The Arthurian illustrations of Rossetti and Maclise (figs. I.3, I.4) epitomize this creative merging. Both respond to specific textual information. Rossetti visualizes a stanza from "The Palace of Art":

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
 In some fair space of sloping greens
 Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
 And watch'd by weeping queens. (118)

and Maclise responds to the passage in "Morte' d'Arthur" where the "dusky barge" (197) carries the king to the afterlife:

That all the decks were dense with stately forms
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
 Three Queens, with crowns of gold—and from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars
 And, as it were one voice, an agony
 Of lamentation. (198)

These lines provide distinct, imagistic details for the artists to work with, and both provide efficient illustrations, anchored in, and respectful to, their texts. Rossetti visualizes the "weeping queens" in a group surrounding the supine king, with the "sloping greens" presented as a verdant mass of flowers, while Maclise pays close attention to the setting of "tingling stars" and the "full-breasted swan" of the ship's figurehead.

However, the artists also distort their images in order to convey a powerful sense of grief, making them interpretive in very similar ways. Richard Stein insists the Pre-Raphaelite emphasis on the psychological differentiates the work of



FIGURE I.3. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, second illustration for “The Palace of Art” (“The Weeping Queens”). Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel, 80 × 93 mm. Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Moxon, 1857), 119.

FIGURE I.4. Daniel Maclise, “Morte d’Arthur.” Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel, 120 × 93 mm. Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Moxon, 1857), 199.



Rossetti from that of Maclise and the others,⁴⁸ but the comparison made here suggests there is little difference. Praised in the contemporary press, both artists focus the emotional charge of the closely knit embrace. In Rossetti's design the "weeping queens" (118) become a cluster of ten figures, with six identical faces (probably Elizabeth Siddal's) surrounding the dying king, linked by a nexus of gazing looks and gestures of grief; and in Maclise's the monarch is embraced by one of the "Three Queens" (198), who leans tenderly over him. The keening gestures of hands positioned against faces likewise figure in his design, the signs of overwhelming emotion. Posture and pose are therein deployed by both artists as a means of highlighting the obsessive emotionalism, magnifying Tennyson's emphasis on grief to the point of hallucinatory dreaminess.

Space and detail further contribute to the effect. In Rossetti's design the claustrophobic crowding of the surface, with its rhythms of faces and crowns, is pathologically intense; in the words of one reviewer, "it takes some time to separate . . . the head and helmet of Arthur from the arms, and hands, and dresses crowded around him,"⁴⁹ the perfect formulation of an all-absorbing sadness which draws the viewer into the circle as s/he struggles to make sense of the arrangement. The crowding of figures into an impossibly small space is likewise Maclise's approach, and here, as in Rossetti's illustration, the physical proximity of the figures becomes a visual metaphor, as if they were literally unwilling to let him go. The closeness of the moment, emotionally speaking, is given a final touch in the deployment of the horizons. In the "Weeping Queens" the background is compressed into a tiny space, and in Maclise's illustration the sail, echoed by the rounded shape of the top of the design, acts as a womblike, protective enclosure, a sign, I have argued elsewhere, of the idea that Arthur will be born again.⁵⁰

Gesture, the replication of detail, and emotionally charged space are used, then, as a means to illustrate and interpret the source material. Rossetti approaches the lines in his brother's terms as an interpretive "hint" and "opportunity";⁵¹ Maclise does the same, and so do Millais and Mulready. Though divided into old and new, illustrators and interpreters, traditionalists and revolutionaries, a close inspection reveals very negligible difference between them.

NEW APPROACHES

So illustrations to the Moxon Tennyson are more harmonious and integrated, I suggest, than is so often claimed. The Moxon Tennyson, Thomas observes, has always been "contentious";⁵² yet if we remove the pointless binaries of "old" and "new," "faithful to the text" and "purely imaginative," it is possible to achieve a more organic view. Released from earlier judgments, this study focuses on

the process of illustration as it is applied to the reading of the text, enabling the imagery of *all* the artists to be studied in detail in a series of thematic investigations.

One possible way of focusing aspects of the verse would be to follow the illustrators' own divisions, who, as we shall see in chapter 1, were free to make their own choices;⁵³ I might otherwise have divided the material along stylistic lines. However, to maintain my emphasis on the book's unities I have chosen to divide the chapters into a series of thematic nodes which underpin and characterize the selection of poems offered here, focusing on the underlying messages to which the artists responded and gave material form. These readings are framed by consideration of the writer's and artists' contexts as working professionals, the book's afterlife, its continuing interest to scholars and readers of today, and its commodification as a piece of Victorian (and modern) merchandising.

In chapter 1, I examine the book's cultural setting as a product of the mid-nineteenth century. As noted earlier, significant work has been done in this field: Kooistra, especially, has examined the book's publishing contexts and made specific connections between the text, technology, and events of 1857. This scholarship provides valuable information, but I widen the perspective to consider the book's emblematic status as a piece of capitalist publishing, produced in a series of artisanal and industrial collaborations, involving new technologies, and engaging the changing taste of its bourgeois consumers. Drawing on new material, I also trace the relationships between the illustrations and fine art, especially the deployment of preexisting painterly idioms.

Taking up on the theme of painterliness, I explore in chapter 2 the ways in which Tennyson's visuality is reinscribed in the accompanying designs. I consider in detail how the illustrators represented the poet's writing of time and analyze the visualization of landscape and its effects. These readings focus on the rural imagery of Stanfield and Creswick, the genre pieces of Horsley, and the poetic set pieces of Millais and Maclise.

In chapter 3 I examine the representation of the key Tennysonian themes of Englishness and modernity and how the artists navigated these concerns by deploying a series of semiologies to match, materialize, and interrogate the writer's ideas. I further trace the illustrators' registration of Tennysonian realism as a means of depicting the world of the everyday, focusing especially on the deployment of naturalistic gestures and Pre-Raphaelite verisimilitude. In chapter 4, in complete contrast, I explore the other side of Tennyson's modernity: his deployment of an apparently escapist mode to anatomize the psychological. In this chapter I trace the artists' manipulation of medievalist iconography and symbolic space as a coded means to create equivalents to the verse, focusing on

the intricate strategies of Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt as they enhance and extend the implications of the poems.

The final theme is essentially a subtext. Taking up on clues inscribed in all of the poems, in chapter 5 I anatomize the visualization of gender as the illustrators negotiated the writer's troubled, ambivalent treatment of sexuality. This involves consideration of the Pre-Raphaelites' treatment of androgyny, the picturing of love and marriage, and the imaging of Tennyson's unstable versions of gender. I complete these readings with a chapter on the book's afterlife. This chapter links with chapter 1 to create an overall view of how the edition was received by diverse audiences, and how its meanings have changed over time.

Analyzing the illustrations as part of a whole as it operates in a series of contexts, I set out to provide a detailed evaluation of a work that despite its inconsistencies has always been regarded, in the words of an anonymous reviewer in *The Athenaeum*, as "beautiful" and "splendid,"⁵⁴ a precious item to be valued by all. More recently, Kooistra has described it as a "particularly generative" text or "textual event,"⁵⁵ a complex, difficult piece that demands investigation. Its multiple meanings, generated in the interactions of words and illustrations as it engages with and is produced by a series of complex overlapping frameworks, are the subject of the following pages.