

PHONEMIC ANALYSIS OF TENNYSON'S  
POETRY

A THESIS

Presented

By

*shammed*

SOHEIR M. GAMAL MAHFOUZ

B.A. Ain Shams University, 1976

M.A. Ain Shams University, 1979

To

The Faculty of Languages (Al-Alsun)

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

Professor Dr. A. MOHSEN ABU-SEIDA

In Fulfilment of the Requirement

for

The Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In The Field of English Language  
and Literature

Ain Shams University

Cairo, Egypt

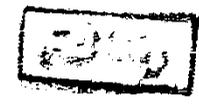
1986

1  
139/1  
1.19.1

22725



414  
S.M



C

*Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,*

*Alfred Lord Tennyson*

*"In Memoriam"*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing this thesis, I have had the benefit of advice and criticism from a number of people, whose kind assistance I wish to acknowledge. I first wish to express my deep gratitude to Professor Dr. ABDEL-RAHMAN MOHSEN ABU-SEIDA, Chairman of the English Department at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Al-Azhar University, for his generosity with his time, his kindness in reading wholly and considering my work. I profoundly appreciate his many valuable and most helpful suggestions that led to further revisions to strengthen the argument.

I owe thanks to the late Professor Dr. GUIRGUIS ZAKARIA, the former Chairman of the English Department at the Faculty of Al-Asun, who was kind enough to read parts while the study was in progress, and who made a number of valuable comments. I am indebted to Professor Dr. RAMSIS AWAD, The current Chairman of the English Department at Al-Asun, for his great help, deep consideration, and constant advice.

I am heavily indebted to Professor NAIM MISHRIKI who taught me poetry in my undergraduate courses, and at the hands of whom my ears have learnt how to feel the charm of the music of the English verse. His sharp remarks have ever lived in our young imagination, and his patience has always had room for our endless questions and interruptions. I am also grateful to Dr. LUCY HAKIM who first stimulated my interest in "Phonetics" in the undergraduate courses.

h

I owe thanks to Dr. SHIBL EL-KOMI for his great help during the preparatory stages of this study.

I am most grateful to Professor Dr. ABDEL-RAHMAN SHOEIB, Dean of the Faculty of Al-Alsun, Ein Shams University, for his constant encouragement and his full consideration and help in the hard times I had in preparing this thesis. I finally owe thanks to everyone of my colleagues for their constant encouragement.

January, 1986.

Soheir M. Gamal Eldin Mahfouz

0

## CONTENTS

	Page
TENNYSON: A PROFILE .. .. .	1
INTRODUCTION: POETIC PRACTICE OF TENNYSON'S Age .. ..	6
CHAPTER I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF TENNYSON'S TECHNIQUES IN WRITING POETRY.. .. .	14
- The Effect of the Reviewers.. .. .	32
CHAPTER II: SOUNDS AS A SOURCE OF MUSIC IN POETRY. ..	66
- Music In Poetry: . . . . .	77
- Chiming.. .. .	78
- Onomatopoeia. . . . .	81
- Varieties of Onomatopoeia.. .. .	83
- Metrical Variations.. .. .	100
CHAPTER III: PHONEMIC ASPECTS AS SHOWN IN TENNYSON'S POETRY: .. .. .	112
1. The Lady of Shalott .. .. .	113
2. Break, Break, Break .. .. .	148
3. Ulysses.. .. .	155
CONCLUSION.. .. .	162
APPENDIX I .. .. .	173
APPENDIX II .. .. .	187
BIBLIOGRAPHY .. .. .	190

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is intended to be a phonemic analysis of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poetry. Its purpose is to highlight the distinctive features of the sound texture of his verse, the features which are manifested in three of his significant poems:

1. "The Lady of Shalott".
2. "Break, Break, Break".
3. "Ulysses".

These three poems have been picked up to represent Tennyson's poetry because of their unique sound pictures, and their good musical qualities. Other poems of Tennyson are also used to support the argument. The analysis applied here does not follow any particular theory of literary or linguistic analysis. Rather the researcher tried to trace out all the functional phonemes, segmental and suprasegmental, as well as all the patterns of sound used, consciously or unconsciously, by Tennyson to bring about that charming music heard in his poems. The musical mellifluence of his poetry is intensified by the study of the metrical analysis applied on the three poems in question.<sup>1</sup>

- 
1. All examples of rhythmic and metrical analysis in this study show only one of the possible performances of the lines in question.

✓

Such an approach is appropriate for the study and the analysis of Tennyson's euphonic, simple, and sensitive style. A phonemic approach is adopted here with a view to underlying the importance of phonology, and its contribution to a better teaching, appreciation, and understanding of poetry in general, and of Alfred Tennyson's in particular.

The dissertation consists of three chapters plus an introduction, a profile of the poet, and a conclusion.

The introduction traces the Victorian dilemma, and its direct and indirect effects over the Victorian mentality, as well as its impact over the poetic practice of the era in general, and over Tennyson in particular, as an interpreter of his age.

Chapter I investigates the development of Tennyson's poetic techniques throughout his literary life. A discussion is attempted concerning the effect of Tennyson's reviewers, and how far did they affect his reviewers, and how far did they affect his revisions and alterations applied on the poems of 1832. The last section of this chapter focuses on the reaction that emerged against Tennyson after his death, with a

^

detailed account of its roots, justifications, and follies.

Chapter II explores the realm of sounds, and highlights their function as a source of music in poetry. Repetition of sounds for various purposes is discussed. Musical effects such as: chiming, onomatopoeia, and its varieties, rhythm and meter, metrical variations and what they convey; are all examined with a special concentration on Tennyson's poetry.

Chapter III is an applied study of the phonemic analysis of three of Tennyson's most eminent works that are characterized by rich musical sound texture, and that represent three different modes of his verse:

1. "The Lady of Shalott" is considered as a descriptive narrative poem written with the touches of a lyric with a refrain after each couplet. Yet it follows the stanzaic form.
2. "Break, Break, Break" takes the form of a lyric and represents Tennyson's gift for onomatopoeia as attained through the choice of sounds that constitute this poem.

- a
3. "Ulysses" represents Tennyson's use of blank verse and his gift for attaining sweet music. Even in the most crowded lines, Tennyson is quite conscious of conveying to our ears the sounds of the sea, the sails in the wind, and the battle.

The conclusion: is an attempt to assess Tennyson's contribution to the musical qualities of poetry that helped to create a refined poetic taste in England. All charts of phonetic symbols that are used in this study are included in Appendix II.

-1-

## TENNYSON : A PROFILE

Alfred Lord Tennyson was born on 6th of August, 1809 at Somersby in Lincolnshire of which place his father was rector. Tennyson, or rather Alfred, was one of twelve children whose mother was beautiful and gentle. She was:

The stately flower of female fortitude,  
Of perfect wifehood and pure lowlihood  
(Isabel)

There were goodness and happiness in the family to match. Both parents were intelligent people who had lively interests, and Dr. Tennyson was a genuine scholar. The children's games took a literary turn, stories would be written, but under the vegetable dishes at dinner, and then read aloud when the dinner was over.<sup>1</sup>

Tennyson was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was contemporary with and an acquaintance of a number of men who were afterwards highly distinguished. During his course at Cambridge Tennyson won the chancellor's prize with the poem of "Timbuctoo", a piece which was said to be above ordinary price-poem level. In 1827, and he was 18 years' old, he joined with his brother

---

1. J.B. Steane, Tennyson (London: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1970), p. 11.

19

Charles in a small volume entitled "Poems by Two Brothers", but these poems were merely boyish, and Tennyson's first noteworthy contribution to literature was the "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical", of 1830. This was followed by another volume bearing the date of 1832 and entitled simply "Poems".

His father died in 1831. At his father's death, Tennyson was so much in a distressing state of melancholy, that he was close to nervous collapse. His sense of bereavement was greater than he could have anticipated. He lost the great scholar who inherited him that great love of reading and who taught him all the knowledge a boy can digest. His father also left to him his big library with its classics that they both used to revere . By his father's death he shouldered the responsibility of his big family ever since. Unfortunately as soon as 1833 Tennyson lost his most intimate friend, Arthur Henry Hallam (1811 - 1833), a writer of high promise. Dying so young, however, Hallam is memorable not so much for anything he wrote himself, as for his influence on his friend, and especially for the fact that he inspired "In Memoriam". For Alfred Tennyson, Hallam's death was the greatest sorrow at his life especially that Emily, Tennyson's sister, was engaged to Hallam, and suffered a nervous breakdown at his sudden death in 1833. Together with these two consequent shocks Tennyson was undergoing

a severe critical attack at his volume of "Pomes" of 1832. He tried to invest the money he inherited from his father, but the project was a failure and it resulted in a loss of his money in a time when he badly needed enough money to get married to the girl he loved. At all that Tennyson decided to stop. He decided to give himself an interval to reconsider everything in his life. His poetry, his way of thinking, his knowledge, as well as his religious belief which has been shaken by his consequent sufferings. It lasted for ten years, known for us as the Ten Years' Silence. During these years he locked himself up in his "Darling Room" where he could find peace and quiet he needed for the big task. He learned German language, philosophy and physical sciences. He was determined not to be a ridicule or a "light-weight"<sup>1</sup> poet any more.

In 1842 he was armed enough to face his reviewers and to present his evidence of change too. He issued his two volumes of "Poems" of 1842 which contained new pomes side by side with new revised forms of some poems of 1832 which were attacked before. Tennyson proved to be a serious artist and a profound thinker as well.

---

1. Abdel-Wahab Elmessiri, "Tennyson and the Lady of Shalott", Aalam El-Fekr, 15 (April, May, June, 1984), p. 223.

The "Princess" (1847) indicates a change in his method of writing and in the nature of his ambitions. While "In Memoriam" (1850) had its roots as deep as his early life. It is connected with the grief it records rather than with Tennyson's later work or with the English society of the second half of the century. In 1850 Tennyson succeeded Wordsworth in Laureateship, a position which he held for a longer period than any of his predecessors. His appointment was the public recognition of him as the chief poet of his time. In the same year he got married to Emily Sellwood after an engagement of fourteen years.

Tennyson continued to write, backed and taken good care of by his loving loyal wife all along. Troubles of fame made them move into another house, "Aldworth" at Hazlemeer, but, still, he was never left in peace. People of his time considered his house an incarnation of the Victorian virtues which they firmly revered.

In 1889 Tennyson wrote his last poem: "Crossing the Bar" which revealed his thoughts and his strong sense of the approaching death that took place as soon as 6th of October, 1892. The image of crossing the bar seems to have occurred to him as he and his family were supposed to move into a new house and cross to Freshwater. He wrote:

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me.  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea ....  
Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark.  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

"Death came in the grand style. Dr. George Dabbs described the event for the readers of The Times:

Nothing could have been more striking than the scene during the last few hours. On the bed a figure of breathing marble, flooded and bathed in the light of the full moon streaming through the oriel window; his hand clasping the Shakespeare...; the moon light, the majestic figure as he lay there drawing thicker breath, irresistibly brought to one's mind his own "Passing of Arthur". His last conscious words were words of love addressed to his wife and son - words too sacred to be written here."<sup>1</sup>

His funeral in Westminster Abbey was too glorious, and he was buried in the Poet's Corner. It was written at The Times that it is "the national belief that the late Lord Tennyson is distinctly and emphatically one of the immortals of English poetry as a whole."<sup>2</sup>

- 
1. J.B. Steane, op.,cit, p. 142.
  2. Ibid., p. 143.

CR