TENNYSON'S ULYSSES AS WALTER PATER'S AESTHETE

Tara McDonald Johnson

> If opium-eating be a sensual pleasure, and if I am bound to confess that I have indulged in it to an excess, not recorded of any other man, it is no less true, that I have struggled against this fascinating enthralment with a religious zeal, and have, at length, [. . .] untwisted, almost to its final links, the accursed chain which fettered me.
> Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (2)

Critics such as William E. Buckler, Carol Christ and Angela Leighton define Tennyson's philosophy of aestheticism and its relationship to his poetry, but most of the critical discussion treats "Ulysses" as an exception to Tennyson's preoccupation with art and beauty. Most Tennyson scholars argue that the form of "Ulysses" communicates Tennyson's aestheticism because of its lyricism, but few have considered the poem's content as contributing to our understanding of Tennyson's aestheticism. Most critics, like Dramin and O'Brien, view Ulysses as a mythic military hero. Edward Dramin argues that Ulysses is representative of the Victorian heroic paradigm, which includes "great courage before physical danger"; "delight in combat and dangerous voyages; an unconquerable will"; "[obsession] with attaining glory; passion for travel to distant lands"; and "experience in governance" (117). For Lynne B. O'Brien, Ulysses is a victim of his own success. Success as a military hero prevents his return to the social and domestic sphere. His return to Ithaca is his first defeat (174). My argument shifts readers' view of Ulysses as a military general and an explorer to Ulysses as a beautiful artifact that Tennyson extracts from Homer's epic for the purposes of his lyrical poem. Using this perspective, readers can analyse Ulysses not only as a military hero seeking a different life but also as a beautiful artistic construction, one that contributes to readers' understanding of Tennyson's philosophy of aestheticism.

Tennyson has extracted Ulysses from Homer's epic art and placed him in an Ithaca of mundane domesticity. Most of the poem's critics, who focus on Ulysses as a military hero, claim that Ulysses's monologue reveals his struggle to choose between an active or passive future, but his decision is more philosophical than that. Ulysses must choose between an ordinary existence and the life of Walter Pater's aesthete, a type of aesthetic personality that has a superior capacity for appreciating beauty. Ulysses's search for active adventure is actually the search for beauty in art, to rediscover his place in Homer's artifice, and his spoken words communicate not

only his search for beauty but also the aesthetic personality's struggle against desensitisation. Tennyson does not reveal how his speaker Ulysses develops the aesthetic personality, but he does reveal, through Ulysses's struggles, the conflicts that mature aesthetic personalities must resolve: Ulysses becomes desensitised and dissatisfied with his domestic life because it lacks pleasure and novelty. He regains sensitivity and can experience the pleasure that beauty produces once again by functioning as a peripatetic aesthete who moves from place to place while seeking beauty and novelty. Ulysses's role as an aesthetic personality becomes clear after examining various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theories of aestheticism and two additional poems by Tennyson, "The Palace of Art" and "The Lotos-Eaters."

Ulysses confronts similar issues that the aesthetic personality confronts in Walter Pater's, Archibald Alison's and Arthur Hallam's theories of aestheticism. Tennyson's conclusions about the aesthetic personality's search for beauty contribute to a discussion of aestheticism that spans two centuries. Even though Tennyson published "Ulysses" (1842) decades before Pater published *The Renaissance* (1873), the similarity between Tennyson's and Pater's theories of aestheticism is not surprising when one examines other theories of aestheticism and how these philosophers define the aesthetic personality. Oscar Wilde makes Walter Pater's concept of the aesthete famous in the 1890s, but the term *aesthete* is one of many for the aesthetic personality. Eighteenth-century philosophers of aestheticism, such as Anthony, Lord Shaftesbury, Edmund Burke, David Hume, and Francis Hutcheson, discuss the aesthetic personality, referring to it as the man of taste, the man of wit, and the man of feeling. Each of these terms identifies a specialised form of the aesthetic personality by focusing on specific characteristics, but all of the types are fundamentally the same; they all possess sensitivity, heightened perception, and a superior capacity to appreciate beauty.

For Pater and his theory of aestheticism, a person must be sufficiently sensitive in order to appreciate beauty and experience the pleasure that beauty excites. In *The Renaissance*, Pater argues that beauty does not exclusively lie within the subject or the object, but instead, both share the power to create beauty and are mutually dependent upon one another. Art provides the opportunity to experience beauty and pleasure because, according to Pater, a work of art contains "the property" that "[affects] one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure" (*The Renaissance* xxx). An artwork, such as a painting, independently possesses some property, some general essence, that interacts with its perceiver, producing beauty and pleasure. Within the confines of Pater's aestheticism, a painting hanging in a museum still retains the elements to create beauty even if no museum visitor perceives it; therefore, the painting possesses the potential for beauty despite the absence of the perceiver. However, the painting still needs the perceiver's senses and mind to act upon its elements or characteristics before beauty can exist. Perceivers of art can become aesthetes if they are acutely sensitive to the world and are conscious of their perceptions. For aesthetes, maintaining sensitivity is vital

because if they form habits – repetitive behavioral or intellectual patterns in their search for beauty – they will develop a condition that Pater terms "rough eyes" (152), dulled senses that cannot perceive slight stimuli, which prevent aesthetes from sensing the world around them and the beauty in the world. Aesthetes prevent the development of rough eyes and desensitivity by seeking invention and novelty. According to Pater, art can particularly aid aesthetes in maintaining their sensitivity by giving quality to their moments and by enabling them to recognise beauty and passion in their everyday surroundings.

Before Pater's *The Renaissance* (1873) and Tennyson's "Ulysses" (1842) were published, Archibald Alison and Arthur Hallam identified key characteristics of the aesthetic personality; specifically Alison discusses the aesthetic personality's search for novelty in his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790). Alison argues that no definitive set of beautiful objects exists; instead, beauty is bestowed upon objects by the human mind, and therefore, people have the power to find beauty in even crude objects. Because beauty is tied to the mind, artists and perceivers are free to find new utility and genius, thereby initiating progress and invention (426-33). The aesthetic personality is free to discover new sources of beauty everywhere because beauty exists everywhere. Alison's philosophy encourages aesthetic personalities to view the world as a rich source of beauty and novelty that they can use to avoid habits and to maintain sensitivity.

Like Alison and Pater, Arthur Hallam and David Hume also argue that sensitivity is crucial for the aesthetic personality. In his review, "On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson" (1831), Hallam claims that poets of sensation, like Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson, are susceptible to nature's impulses because their fine organs experience colours and movements not noticed by others. Their rich perceptions of the visual and deep feelings of music cause them to live in a world of images and emotions conversant with sensation (186). David Hume purveyed a similar idea in his essay "Of the Standards of Taste" (1757) published almost seventy-five years earlier: the aesthetic personality or the man of taste possesses a delicacy of taste and imagination as well as exquisite sensitivity, so delicate and exquisite that no sensation escapes his notice (246). Even though Hallam and Hume do not explain how these poets and men acquire their specialised sensory organs, they explain their characteristics so that readers can identify any aesthetic personalities that they might encounter. In his poem "Ulysses," Tennyson contributes to this philosophical discussion regarding the aesthetic personality's sensitivity and search for beauty by presenting Ulysses as an aesthetic personality who was once vibrant and mature but has now degenerated to his present state because of desensitivity. Tennyson's ideas regarding the importance

of sensitivity and beauty for the aesthetic personality are consistent with earlier aesthetic traditions.[1]

Tennyson uses lyrical drama, communicating his ideas about beauty in a beautiful way. Pater admires Tennyson's art in his essay "Style": "how illustrative of monosyllabic effect, of sonorous Latin, of the phraseology of science, of metaphysic, of colloquialism even, are the writings of Tennyson; yet with what a fine, fastidious scholarship throughout!" (94). William E. Buckler in *The Victorian Imagination* (1980) identifies the effects produced by the strengths that Pater mentions: Tennyson "devoted himself to poetic constructs that were lyric/dramatic in a retrospectively climactic way, poetic moments in which the whole history of a person or a people comes to poise" (176). In his poem, "Ulysses," Tennyson creates one such moment: while Homer's Ulysses is a great warrior, an epic adventurer, Tennyson's Ulysses is a dejected man sitting next to his hearth. Through Tennyson's creation of Ulysses's internal world, the audience sees Ulysses as not only a classical hero and a mythological construct but also as a human. Ulysses is an aesthetic personality exhausted by the world. His domestic life and mundane duties have dulled his senses, giving him Pater's "rough eyes," and as a result, Ulysses lacks the sensitivity to locate beauty and novelty in his everyday world. Tennyson causes Ulysses's artistic epic past to intersect his domestic twilight years. This intersection causes the poem's conflict: Ulysses must choose between his domestic life of duty and a work of epic art.

Tennyson reveals Ulysses's conflict through the poem's images. In his chapter "The School of Giorgione," Pater identifies the ideal that dramatic poets should strive for by emphasising the importance of the image, its circular and compact nature:

> Now it is part of the ideality of the highest sort of dramatic poetry, that it presents us with a kind of profoundly significant and animated instants, a mere gesture, a look, a smile, perhaps – some brief and wholly concrete moment – into which, however, all the motives, all the interests and effects of a long history, have condensed themselves, and which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present. (95)

Tennyson presents Ulysses in this pose to the reader: Ulysses, the conqueror of Cyclops, lover of Circe, navigator of Scylla and Charybdis, sailor and soldier, gazes at Ithaca's port. Pater claims in his *La Gioconda*, that da Vinci captures "all the thoughts and experience of the world" in his portrait of Mona Lisa (80). Tennyson is

---

[1] Tennyson's aestheticism and its consistency with earlier traditions are well documented. Carol Christ in *Victorian and Modern Poetics* discusses how Tennyson's aestheticism compares to that of Romantic and Modern writers.

painting a similar portrait of Ulysses, but he doesn't ask Ulysses to string the bow only he can string, to open a divine bag of wind, to build a gift horse, or to listen to the sirens' song. Ulysses simply gazes contemplatively at a port he knows well: "There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail: / There gloom the dark broad seas" (44-45). Ulysses describes the port as dynamic, not only visually but audibly: "The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks: / The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep / Moans round with many voices" (54-56). Readers consciously recognise Ulysses's adventurous past when he says, "For always roaming with a hungry heart / Much have I seen and known" (12-13). All of Ulysses's adventures, all he has seen and known, have brought him here to this port in Ithaca, creating this brief, concrete image.

This view of Ithaca's port functions as art in Tennyson's poem. Carol Christ argues in *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (1984) that landscape often functions as a character in Tennyson's poetry. Because the ambiguous organising principle in Tennyson's poems is the blurring of subject and object, the landscape itself acts (59). The port's landscape is not only the poem's setting and a character interacting with Ulysses, it is art acting upon him. Homer has already developed Ithaca's landscape in *The Odyssey*, so Ulysses's description of the port is not only a description of a location but also a description of art. The landscape, the art that is literally framed by Ulysses's castle window, contains Pater's aesthetic essences that can operate upon Ulysses if he is a sensitive perceiver. He craves novelty and invention, what Pater and Alison claim is necessary to maintain sensitivity: "every hour is saved / From that eternal silence, something more, / A bringer of new things" (26-28). To be active as an aesthetic personality, Ulysses should immerse himself in a world where his five senses can operate on that which is ignored by others, producing rich perceptions, deep feelings and emotions conversant with sensation. He should use his five senses to experience Ithaca's port, allowing the aspects of its art to interact with him, producing beauty and pleasure. At this point in the poem, Tennyson does not provide Ulysses with this opportunity. As a result, Ulysses's domestic life dulls his five senses, and he lacks the necessary sensitivity.

Ulysses's inability to experience the beauty around him is surprising because returning to Ithaca and its people, Penelope and Telemachus was Ulysses's primary goal after the Trojan War. In *The Odyssey*, Ulysses battles mortals and gods, the supernatural and the natural, to return to this beautiful port. In Tennyson's poem, he views leaving the port as a starting point for a new adventure. Tennyson reveals how Ulysses's past affects his present and future when he says,

> I am a part of all that I have met;
> Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
> Gleams that untravel'd world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move. (18-21)

Ulysses's gaze, which penetrates the port, forms a brief, concrete moment, condensing his own epic history, and because the audience can see Ulysses's past, present and future, Tennyson has created what Pater terms a circular and concrete image. Ulysses poses in the midst of an aesthetic moment.

Tennyson presents Ulysses as not only a character in an aesthetic moment but as an aesthetic personality, despite his lack of sensitivity, because of his desire to escape the ordinary, domestic world and to return to beauty in Homer's epic art. Ulysses invites his mariners to return with him to epic adventure, regaining their beauty as epic art. He longs to be in his crew's company, to experience the same fervor that Pater claims the Renaissance artists feel: they "do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts" (*The Renaissance* xxxiii). Ulysses calls out,

> My mariners,
> Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me –
> That ever with a frolic welcome took
> The thunder and the sunshine. (45-48)

Ulysses invites these same men to join him once again in adventuring: "It may be that the gulfs will wash us down: / It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles, / And see the great Achilles, whom we knew" (62-64). Ulysses wants to begin his adventure again and to abandon domestic life; Pater advises, "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits" (152). While Tennyson presents Ulysses as sitting by his castle's still hearth, Ulysses is not burning in jewel-tones or experiencing ecstasy. In fact, he says, "How dull it is to pause, to make an end, / To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use! / As tho' to breathe were life" (22-24). Breathing is not burning with a "hard gem-like flame," and rusting is not equivalent to maintaining ecstasy. Tennyson reveals through Ulysses's words that he does not want to simply breathe and rust, but his habits have imprisoned him. His domestic life and habits have caused his sensory organs to atrophy because he has not used them to experience art and beauty. Despite this lack of sensitivity, he wants to be beautiful, to shine, and to live a useful, active life in art and as art.

According to the "l'art pour l'art" component of aestheticism, Ulysses as an artifact cannot have a use. As epic art, he should not govern Ithaca, leave offerings for his household gods, and complete domestic chores. He will be beauty, and beauty will be his end. In the above lines, Tennyson makes the opposite claim. Tennyson suggests that in the domestic world of his poem, Ulysses's stasis, his lack of use, causes decay and rust, but in Homer's epic art, he is useful. How can Tennyson make the claim that somehow epic art is useful and the domestic life is useless? Nevertheless, he argues that use is necessary for Ulysses's survival and for Ulysses's art because without use, he is "idle."

Tennyson's claim, written in 1833, opposes Theophile Gautier's aestheticism as he presents it in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1834): beauty is dispensable and cannot be useful because usefulness is ugly, expressing man's need. For Gautier, superfluity itself is a necessity, and therefore, "the most fitting occupation for a civilised man is to do nothing, or to smoke analytically his pipe or cigar" (xxv-xxvi). Tennyson's Ulysses should enjoy his domestic excesses and leisure instead of complaining. "Enjoyment appears to [Gautier] to be the end of life and the only useful thing in the world," so he suggests that men use their senses to perceive the external world: use their mouths to kiss, their eyes to see the light, their noses to smell flowers, and their hands to pet their greyhounds (xxvi). Flowers, greyhounds and kisses are unnecessary domestic fixtures that Ulysses's senses should be acting upon; the resulting sensations would bring him enjoyment, and he would not think about rust, idleness and uselessness. A civilised man should not involve himself in useful domestic activities, but instead he should locate a life of leisure within domesticity. Unfortunately, Ulysses is not satisfied with the life of leisure that he has; his lack of use is destroying him.

Unlike Gautier, Pater does not exclude usefulness from his theory of aestheticism and offers a different path to enjoyment in which use is actually a vital component: art is useful in that it creates perceptions for the aesthete who in turn experiences pleasure and passion.[2] Pater explains in his conclusion to *The Renaissance* that aesthetes possess a "quickened, multiplied consciousness," which enables them to experience passion. Art has the greatest potential of producing this passion when it acts upon the aesthete's consciousness. Pater explains art's usefulness when he writes, "For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" (153).

Beauty in art transforms life's mundane moments into passionate moments of experience. When readers encounter Ulysses in Homer's epics, he is participating in the adventures of epic art, which produces passionate moments of beauty for readers. In Tennyson's poem, Ulysses rusts away because he is useless, unable to experience passionate moments of beauty himself or produce them for readers. While he makes laws and sits by a still hearth, he admits,

---

[2] In his essay "Utilitarianism," published in 1861, J.S. Mill claims that utilitarianism includes a similar idea. If an object causes people to experience pleasure and the absence of pain, then that object is useful: "every writer, from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained the theory of utility, meant by it, not something to be contradistinguished from pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain; and instead of opposing the useful to the agreeable or the ornamental, have always declared that the useful means these, among other things" (136). If, as Pater suggests, a beautiful object causes a person to experience pleasure and if, as Mill suggests, a useful object causes a person to experience pleasure, then beauty and utility are similar concepts.

> I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
> Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
> Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
> That loved me, and alone. (6-9)

He searches for the high quality moments produced by art's beauty, drinking life not resting from it. In Tennyson's Ithaca, Ulysses doles out laws to civilise a savage people, he lives as a husband to Penelope, and he performs those common duties that eventually will be Telemachus's duties. Ulysses breathes to take care of these responsibilities. Before he returns to Ithaca, every breath led to more adventure, more beautiful art. Timothy Peltason, in "Tennyson's Philosophy: Some Lyric Examples" (1984), does not state that Ulysses is an aesthetic personality but points out that Ulysses "leans into [the world] [. . .], extracting from every hour the maximum value by investing in every hour all the energies of the self" (62). Peltason identifies the aesthete's sensitive personality in Ulysses, one who craves perfect moments produced by beauty in art and in the external world. Because beauty produces these perfect moments, beauty is useful in that perfect moments make life meaningful. Therefore, Ulysses can be beautiful art and still be useful because he experiences perfect moments for himself and, as art, produces perfect moments for his audience. Since Ulysses can be both beautiful and useful, he does not have to choose between the two.

Even though Tennyson suggests that Ulysses denies his usefulness, his domestic duties make him useful in Ithaca, even though he denies it. William E. Buckler recognises this fact and discusses its devastating results. According to Buckler, replacing beauty with utility causes sterility. Buckler explains that "Ulysses's acutest need is for spiritual refreshment, for a revitalized faith in his ability to convert deep personal stress and soul-sterility into energy that will enable him to renew himself and voyage into new spiritual spaces" (171). Ulysses and Buckler seem to differentiate between Ulysses's utility in Ithaca and his utility in art. Both claim that passion and art can renew Ulysses, and Tennyson suggests that Ulysses is conscious of this fact when he says, "Every hour is saved / From that eternal silence, something more, / A bringer of new things" (26-28). Every hour that Ulysses lives should bring new perfect moments where he experiences beauty, causing him to burn with a "hard gem-like flame." Beauty can restore him, and Gautier lists domestic moments of beauty where Ulysses can begin.

Tennyson creates a context in which Ulysses should be able to restore himself, but Ulysses, as an aesthetic personality, fails in Ithaca. Surely Ithaca contains the capability for beauty that will sustain his soul. Surely there are flowers, wives and greyhounds in Ithaca. His own aesthetic personality should allow him to experience beauty; he should be living in a constant state of heightened perception and have access to beauty that most people overlook. Pater addresses this problem in his discussion of the School of Giorgione; of "[t]hose spaces of more cunningly blent

colour," he writes, "Giorgione detaches from the wall. He frames them by the hands of some skillful carver, so that people may move them readily and take with them where they go" (90). Pater considers this mobility a strength of Giorgione's paintings because if art remains in one location, viewers become desensitised to it. Looking at the painting becomes a habit, and the master and mistress of the house get "rough eyes." They must renew their own perceptions of its beauty by assigning it a new unexpected location.

Tennyson provides Ulysses with an obvious source of beautiful art: Ithaca's port. Unfortunately, Ulysses grows tired of and desensitised to it because it's always in the same place, framed by his castle window. He needs to move this image to a new location in order to renew his perceptions of it. Unlike Giorgione's art, Ithaca's port is not detachable. Since the port is immobile, Ulysses must move, becoming a peripatetic aesthete. This lifestyle will expose him to new artistic beauties that will restore him through passion and usefulness. He must leave his castle on the island, where he has been rusting, and return to epic art in order to restore himself.

Ulysses is not the only Tennyson character to function as a peripatetic aesthete in order to regain passion and sensitivity. In "Ulysses" and two earlier poems, "The Palace of Art" and "The Lotos-Eaters," Tennyson presents aesthetic personalities who are in different stages of the aesthetic life. In "The Palace of Art" (1832), Soul experiences the same difficulties as Ulysses. She must leave her palace of beauty, where she has been stagnating, for a cottage in the vale so that she can be sensitive to and appreciative of beauty once again. In "Touching Forms: Tennyson and Aestheticism" (2002), Angela Leighton argues that

> Tennyson [. . .] offers the nineteenth century one of its most memorable, sensuous, aesthetic voices; the strain of "pure aestheticism" in Tennyson does not stop with the earthly paradises of "The Lotos-Eaters" and "The Palace of Art". It runs all through his work [. . .] when beauty for its own sake becomes separated from the moral and narrative action of the poem. (65)

Leighton mentions Tennyson's "The Palace of Art" as a starting point for his aestheticism because, in the poem, beauty is separate from plot; the poem, in fact, has no substantial plot or action. Soul simply moves from her palace of beauty to a cottage in the vale. While the plot is simple, Tennyson forces Soul to consider a problem of heavy philosophical weight. In the fourth year of her "Godlike isolation" with beauty, "slothful shame" causes her to be "exiled from eternal God, / Lost to her place and name" (lines 196, 262-64). Her isolation with beauty and her avoidance of ugliness cause Soul to transform:

> And death and life she hated equally,
> And nothing saw, for her despair,

> But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
> No comfort anywhere. (265-68)

Tennyson argues that a life exclusively devoted to beauty and pleasure causes despair, discomfort, and a disregard for life. Tennyson proposes that Soul's only salvation from this existence is for her to issue this command, which begins her life as a peripatetic aesthete:

> "Make me a cottage in the vale," she said,
> "Where I may mourn and pray.
> Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
> So lightly, beautifully built;
> Perchance I may return with others there
> When I have purged my guilt." (291-96)

Soul's guilt results from the crime of isolating herself with beauty and pleasure and insulating herself from ugliness. She must leave her palace and live in a cottage where she can experience both beauty and ugliness. After mourning in the cottage, she must move once again, perhaps returning to her castle.

Tennyson's idea in "The Palace of Art," the necessity to include ugliness and pain in the aesthetic life, seems to contradict Pater's idea that aesthetes must immerse themselves in beauty, wherever they find it. L. Robert Stevens claims in his article "The Logic of Tennyson's Aestheticism" (1973) that this guilt and penance resulting from Soul's palace life is an inherent flaw of aestheticism. He argues that "delight escalates its demands continually until it no longer delights. It is as though delight by definition tends toward boredom, as though by its own nature it creates its own ugliness" (117). According to Pater, art possesses the capability to produce beauty and pleasure for its sensitive perceiver, but Stevens claims that naturally, the perceiver will become bored, requiring different and innovative beauties in order to experience the same degree of pleasure.[3]

Francis Hutcheson explores this process in its extreme. In his work *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, and Design* (1725), Hutcheson argues that wealth and power are means to gratify people's needs for sensory experience, but wealth and power supply more pleasures than people can enjoy (87). The degree of

---

[3] This aesthetic phenomenon is also a medical one as seen in drug addiction. According to *Mosby's Medical Nursing and Allied Health Dictionary*, when a person is repeatedly exposed to a stimulant, he acquires a tolerance to the substance and can no longer experience the original degree of pleasure. A larger amount of the stimulant is required to produce the same pleasurable experience, a condition termed negative adaptation (33). This condition occurs with all kinds of substances: alcohol, opium, caffeine, etc. A similar process occurs with the experience of beauty and pleasure: beauty is the stimulant that the aesthetic personality needs more of in order to experience the same original degree of pleasure.

pleasure that one person can experience is limited, and according to Hutcheson, when this limit is finally reached, the abundance of pleasure cloys the appetite, which is necessary for enjoyment, causing people to become disgusted and nauseated by the excess of a pleasure that was originally pleasing (88). Soul's wealth and power allow her to acquire more art and beauty than she can possibly enjoy, and the resulting abundance of pleasure cloys her appetite for beauty; she becomes desensitised to beauty and pleasure. This lack of sensitivity is a serious condition for the aesthete who must be exquisitely sensitive to the world and its impulses. Tennyson's philosophy of aestheticism offers a cure for the lack of sensitivity. He suggests that the life of the peripatetic aesthete offers exposure to the novelty and invention that ensures sensitivity.

Soul may come to this realisation and leave her palace for a modest cottage, but Ulysses's mariners struggle to remain in their palace of art in Tennyson's "The Lotos-Eaters" (1832). The mariners have not yet reached Soul's conclusion, for they prefer to recline "like Gods" instead of toiling like men: "Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore / Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar; / Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more" (lines 154-55, 171-73). The mariners prefer to remain within the walls of their own palace of art and not accompany Soul to her cottage of mourning. They have not yet lost their appetite and sensitivity, but, taking into account Soul's experience, they will inevitably lose them, choosing to seek out Soul's cottage in the vale.

In these three poems, Tennyson presents three different stages of the peripatetic aesthete's cyclical life. In "The Lotos-Eaters," the mariners function in an early stage; they have yet to lose their sensitivity and appetite for beauty, so they do not need novelty. Their appetite for beauty is voracious. In "The Palace of Art," Soul functions in one of the middle stages. Because she has lived for so many years exclusively with beauty, excess has cloyed her appetite, and she has lost her desire for the beauty that she loves. She needs the contrast and novelty of ugliness, found in her cottage, in order to regain her appetite and sensitivity. Ulysses functions in one of the later stages of the aesthetic life. For ten years in Homer's *Odyssey*, Ulysses not only lives with beautiful epic art, he is beautiful epic art. Lacking novelty and invention, he desires to return to the domestic comforts of home, Penelope, Telemachus and his loyal subjects. Like Soul's cottage, Ithaca contains the novelty that Ulysses needs to regain his appetite for beauty.

The mariners reject the cottage, and Soul has just moved into the cottage, but Ulysses has lived in the cottage for quite some time. Even though Ulysses is thrilled to return to the beauties of home in *The Odyssey*, Ulysses is now tired of Ithaca in Tennyson's poem. Just as the excess of epic art cloys his appetite for beauty, the excess of Ithaca cloys his appetite. He is ready to return to epic art. The cottage will lose its novelty and invention for Soul, too, and she wisely forbids the destruction of her palace. Eventually, Soul must move back to her palace, seeking its novelty and

invention. This moving around makes the peripatetic aesthete's life cyclical, always requiring different experiences with beauty to produce passion and pleasure.

Ulysses must move back and forth between epic art, its beauty and adventure, and Ithaca, its crudeness and domesticity. These moves provide different experiences and restore Ulysses as an aesthetic personality. William E. Buckler claims that "as [Ulysses] restores himself to heroic proportions, he restores us, too" (177). Within the confines of Tennyson's poem, Ulysses transforms himself from a merely useful king and husband to a beautiful epic hero on the brink of adventure. Pater encourages this transformation in Ulysses and in the reader when he writes in his conclusion,

> While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. (152)

Readers revitalise themselves by experiencing beauty in art, in Homer's epics, in Tennyson's poems, and in Pater's prose. Ulysses is useful because he revitalises himself and his audience by recapturing beauty in art and his epic adventures:

> That which we are, we are;
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (ll. 67-70)

Failing to strive for exquisite passion is to go to bed at 3:00 pm on the shortest day of the year. Telemachus can go to bed early after a long day of governance and domestic duties; Ulysses cannot. To seek passionate adventuring and art is to strive for exquisite passions, the life of the aesthete.

According to Pater, art is the path to the aesthetic life and is therefore useful. Tennyson places Ulysses in lyrical poetry, revealing how an aesthete searches for beauty, utility, and passionate fire. Like Soul in "The Palace of Art," Ulysses spends too much time confined within the palace of epic art and adopts the life of the peripatetic aesthete. He has to leave for a time and mourn in Ithaca, his cottage in the vale. Ulysses's epic adventures are the art that can lead him back to his aesthetic life. This revitalisation of the aesthete not only happens with epic heroes but readers also experience a similar revitalisation by eavesdropping on Ulysses's musings.

Discriminating in each moment some passion is to experience art for its own sake and according to its own terms. Art is useful because art, and beauty and novelty in art, is the vehicle by which aesthetic personalities and meaningful lives are produced.

Works Cited

Alison, Archibald. *Essays on the Nature and Principle of Taste*. 1790. Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1825.

Buckler, William E. *The Victorian Imagination: Essays in Aesthetic Exploration*. New York: New York UP, 1980.

Christ, Carol T. *Victorian and Modern Poetics*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.

De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. 1821. Ed. Grevel Lindop. 2 vols. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

Dramin, Edward. "'Work of Noble Note': Tennyson's 'Ulysses' and Victorian Heroic Ideals." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 20 (1992): 117-39.

Gautier, Theophile. *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. 1834. New York: Random House, 1923.

Hallam, Arthur Henry. "On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and On the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson." 1831. *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*. Ed. T.H. Vail Motter. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1943. 182-98.

Hume, David. "Of The Standard of Taste." *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*. London: Grant Richards, 1904. 231-58.

Hutcheson, Francis. *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, and Design*. 1725. Ed. Peter Kivy. The Hague: Martinus Nuthoff, 1973.

Leighton, Angela. "Touching Forms: Tennyson and Aestheticism." *Essays in Criticism* 52.1 (2002): 56-75.

Mill, John Stuart. "Utilitarianism." 1861. *On Liberty and Other Essays*. Ed. John Gray. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. 131-201.

"Negative Adaptation." *Mosby's Medical Nursing and Allied Health Dictionary*. Ed. Kenneth N. Anderson. St. Louis: Mosby, 1994. 33.

O'Brien, Lynne B. "Male Heroism: Tennyson's Divided View." *Victorian Poetry* 32.2 (1994): 171-82.

Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance*. 1873. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

---. "Style." *Selections from Walter Pater*. Ed. Ada L.F. Snell. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924. 86-108.

Peltason, Timothy. "Tennyson's Philosophy: Some Lyric Examples." *Philosophical Approaches to Literature*. Ed. William E. Cain. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1984. 51-72.

Stevens, L. Robert. "The Logic of Tennyson's Aestheticism." *Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Romantic Assessment*. Ed. James Hogg. Salzburg: Institute für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1973. 114-22.

Tennyson, Alfred. "The Lotos-Eaters." 1832. *The Poems of Tennyson.* Ed. Christopher Ricks. 2 vols. Essex: Longman, 1987. 467-77.

---. "The Palace of Art." 1832. *The Poems of Tennyson.* Ed. Christopher Ricks. 2 vols. Essex: Longman, 1987. 436-56.

---. "Ulysses." 1842. *The Poems of Tennyson.* Ed. Christopher Ricks. 2 vols. Essex: Longman, 1987. 613-20.