

» A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION »

# TENNYSON'S POETRY

AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS  
JUVENILIA AND EARLY RESPONSES  
CRITICISM



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II

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45  
5

We beat upon our aching hearts in rage;  
We cry for thee; we deem the world thy tomb.  
As dwellers in lone planets look upon 20  
The mighty disk of their majestic sun,  
Hollowed in awful chasms of wheeling gloom,  
Making their day dim, so we gaze on thee.  
Come, thou of many crowns, white-robéd Love, 25  
Oh! rend the veil in twain: all men adore thee;  
Heaven crieth after thee; earth waiteth for thee;  
Breathe on thy wingéd throne, and it shall move  
In music and in light o'er land and sea.

3

And now—methinks I gaze upon thee now,  
As on a serpent in his agonies 30  
Awe-stricken Indians; what time laid low  
And crushing the thick fragrant reeds he lies,  
When the new year warm-breathéd on the Earth,  
Waiting to light him with her purple skies,  
Calls to him by the fountain to uprise. 35  
Already with the pangs of a new birth  
Strain the hot spheres of his convulséd eyes,  
And in his writhings awful hues begin  
To wander down his sable-sheeny sides.<sup>5</sup>  
Like light on troubled waters: from within 40  
Anon he rusheth forth with merry din.  
And in him light and joy and strength abides;  
And from his brows a crown of living light  
Looks through the thick-stemmed woods by day and night.

1830

### The Dying Swan

10

1

The plain was grassy, wild and bare,  
Wide, wild, and open to the air,  
Which had built up everywhere  
An under-roof of doleful gray.  
With an inner voice the river ran, 5  
Adown it floated a dying swan,  
And loudly did lament.  
It was the middle of the day.  
Ever the weary wind went on,  
And took the reed-tops as it went. 10

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5. As elsewhere in the early poems, these lines show Tennyson's struggle to render his notion of passion in the ill-suited snake metaphor. In *Tennyson in Egypt*, pp. 48 ff, W. D. Paden has an interesting, if at times far-fetched, psychoanalytic interpretation in which he sees Tennyson's identification with the snake as a surrogate for sexual experience.

2

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,  
 And white against the cold-white sky  
 Shone out their crowning snows.  
 One willow over the river wept,  
 And shook the wave as the wind did sigh; 15  
 Above in the wind was the swallow,  
 Chasing itself at its own wild will,<sup>6</sup>  
 And far thro' the marish green and still  
 The tangled water-courses slept,  
 Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow. 20

3

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul  
 Of that waste place with joy  
 Hidden in sorrow. At first to the ear  
 The warble was low, and full and clear;  
 And floating about the under-sky, 25  
 Prevailing in weakness, the coronach<sup>7</sup> stole  
 Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear;  
 But anon her awful jubilant voice,  
 With a music strange and manifold,  
 Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold; 30  
 As when a mighty people rejoice  
 With shawms,<sup>8</sup> and with cymbals, and harps of gold,  
 And the tumult of their acclaim is roll'd  
 Thro' the open gates of the city afar,  
 To the shepherd who watcheth the evening star. 35  
 And the creeping mosses and clambering weeds,  
 And the willow-branches hoar and dank,  
 And the wavy swell of the sougling<sup>9</sup> reeds,  
 And the wave-worn horns of the echoing bank,  
 And the silvery marish-flowers that throng 40  
 The desolate creeks and pools among,  
 Were flooded over with eddying song.<sup>1</sup>

1830

## The Deserted House

1

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

6. Compare Wordsworth's line, "The river glideth at his own sweet will," from "Composed upon Westminster Bridge."

7. A dirge.

8. A kind of oboe.

9. A murmuring, sighing sound.

1. As in "The Ode to Memory" and "A Spirit Haunts the Year's Last Hours," the imagery of section 3 particularly seems to be drawn from the Rectory garden at Somersby.

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 Joy c  
 Life  
 Caro  
 No  
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2. Allegorically.  
 3. Here, as in the city as contrasted with the country, assumes positive conclusion of "The City and the Country" a similar vision of social values. The poet's m. Camelot in *Idylls of the King* the city temple of all which  
 4. Suppressed does not reap